

Hidden by Hate: Understanding Women's Roles in White Supremacist Deradicalization

by

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ABSTRACT

White women are and have historically been an integral part of White supremacy. Yet their role in the movement remains understudied, especially as it pertains to deradicalization. As such, in the current investigation I focused on women's roles and experiences in White supremacist deradicalization. My dissertation comprised two studies: Study One, which explored the experiences of women who left White supremacist groups and became anti-hate activists, and Study Two, which sought to understand the experiences of women who facilitated the disengagement and deradicalization of White supremacists. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a methodological framework, I identified significant themes from the experiences of women who left their hate groups and became anti-hate activists, as well as from the experiences of women who facilitated hate group exit. I found that for women who left their hate groups and became anti-hate activists, hate group exit was a gendered experience, psychological transformations were common, and loving and supportive connections facilitated the exit process. For women who facilitated hate group exit, they identified love and compassion as driving forces while also feeling emotionally burdened due to lack of external support. These findings can help guide the development of preventative and rehabilitative interventions as well as further integrate women into White supremacist prevention and deradicalization interventionist roles.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Although White women historically have been less visible in the discourse concerning White supremacist hate groups, they have in fact been prominent actors in developing and maintaining White supremacist ideology and violence for over a century (Belew, 2018; Blee, 2005; Daniels, 1997). From the Ku Klux Klan to Nazism, to neo-Nazism, women have been on the front lines in extending the reach of White supremacist violence (Darby, 2021). In addition to participating in pre-established White supremacist hate groups, women have also created their own racist organizations (e.g., Aryan Women's Group, KKK Women, Valkyrie Voice; Blee, 2002). While many White supremacist women tend to operate as auxiliaries rather than leaders, they play essential roles in recruitment, production, and circulation of family-oriented White-supremacist products (e.g., homeschooling information and social gathering invitations) and social normalization of young racist activists (Blee, 2002; Belew, 2018; Love, 2020). Women also serve symbolic roles within White supremacist mythology that help justify and perpetuate the racist ideology. For example, their portrayal as mothers and doting housewives who host church socials and picnics helps to normalize the movement in the public's eyes (Love, 2020). Also, White supremacist women are seen as sexually vulnerable and in need of protection against men of color. This conception thus justifies racial violence by White men against potential assailants; Blee, 2005). Finally, when women do in fact serve in leadership roles, they operate indirectly, elusively and personally (Blee, 2002). Women leaders tend to downplay their leadership roles and focus on strengthening social bonds within their groups (Blee, 2002; Ezekiel, 2002). As

opposed to the White supremacist men's manipulative, distant, and authoritarian leadership style, this indirect approach may in fact be more dangerous.

The rise of women's participation in White supremacist hate groups appears to parallel a growing trend of racist rhetoric and violence in the U.S. in general. For instance, the FBI (2023) announced that more than 8,000 hate crimes were reported in the U.S. in 2020, the highest number in over a decade. In their most recent Homeland Threat Assessment, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2020) stated that White supremacist extremists represented the "most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland" (2020). President Biden echoed this sentiment in 2023, when he declared before Howard University's graduating class, "White supremacy ... is the single most dangerous terrorist threat in our homeland" (Ewing, 2023). Finally, a Southern Poverty Law Center poll found that 29 percent of Americans know someone who believes that White people are the superior race (Janik & Hanks, 2021). This last statistic points to the important notion that White supremacist views do not merely represent the perspective of a "lunatic fringe," but rather reaffirm racist and gendered views that permeate society (Feagin & Hernan, 2001; Perry, 2000, p. 89). As such, addressing White supremacist violence forces us to confront the implicit and pervasive racism and sexism in the U.S. more broadly.

For example, in June 2022, the U.S. supreme court overturned the nearly half-century constitutional right to abortion access. It has been found that women of color have higher rates of abortion than white women due to systemic barriers in healthcare and society as a whole (Mengesha, 2022). Thus, restricting these women's access to abortions further limits their reproductive autonomy and perpetuates healthcare disparities in

communities of color. It is important to note that the court's decision represented only the most recent step in the White supremacist war against women of color and their reproductive rights (Riley et al., 2022). For instance, when the slave trade was abolished in 1808, slaveholders systematically forced the reproduction of slaves to increase their profits (Manning, 2000). Later, involuntary, and dangerous medical experimentation performed on enslaved women helped form the foundation of the medical field, particularly obstetrics and gynecology (Khabele et al., 2021). Subsequently, leaders of the eugenics movement instituted a program of involuntary sterilization among Black, poor, immigrant, and incarcerated women (Nuriddin et al., 2020). Between the establishment of the first eugenic sterilization law in 1907 and the beginning of WWII, it is estimated that 60,000 people were sterilized (Reilly, 2015). It took until 1974 for the government of North Carolina to repeal its original sterilization law, and until 2002 for the governor to issue a public apology for the state's participation in eugenic sterilization programs (Severson, 2011). Thus, the supreme court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* was not unique in its racist effect. It was just the latest U.S. public policy blocking women of color from their bodily autonomy.

Although much of the scholarly literature and media attention has been placed on White supremacist men, more research is accumulating that identifies White women as a sustaining feature of White supremacy (Darby, 2021). In fact, discussing the threat of White supremacist women, the U.S. Committee of Foreign Affairs (2019) warned:

We are seeing increasing participation of women in white supremacist groups, both in the U.S. and in Europe, even in violent fringe groups and even in terrorist violence. They are still, by far, the minority compared to men in terms of

violence, but they are engaging. They are also engaging on channels like YouTube, setting up channels that promote the ideology, that draw people in, and that kind of soften it a little bit, and are supporters in that way—enablers ... they play a very important role and have been overlooked.

Although White women occupy positions of power within the White supremacist movement, they are simultaneously objectified and oppressed by an ideology that centralizes White masculinity above all. Although White supremacist men consider women integral to the movement, they define women's role exclusively as physical reproducers of the White race, keepers of the home/family, and supporters of White men (Blee, 2002; Daniels, 1997; Ferber, 1998). As such, women in White supremacy groups have been historically objectified and made to fit an archaic and dehumanized stereotype of womanhood. Furthermore, women are used as symbols to justify the movement's racist mythological foundations. On one side sits the meek and domestic White mother in need of White male protection against non-Aryan aggressors (Blee, 1991). On the other side is the man-hating feminist who threatens White masculinity and the constitution of the traditional White nuclear family (Ferber, 1999). With the polarity of womanhood so established, White supremacist women have found that expressing their agency in any way beyond homemaking and childbearing often decreases their standing within the movement (e.g., Manning, 2021). As such, White supremacist women fight for what they view as a cause that, while offering a sense of belonging and purpose, simultaneously subjugates them and crusades against their own empowerment.

Finding themselves oppressed and mistreated within the movement has caused some women to leave their White supremacist hate groups (Latif et al., 2020). Among

other disillusioning factors like violence and unsatisfying relationships within the movement, women have become frustrated with the lack of personal agency and strict roles forced upon them, especially as sexual prey for men (Blee 2002; Latif et al. 2020). Unfortunately, to date there is only one study (Latif et al., 2020) that has explicitly explored how and why women leave their White supremacist groups. To my knowledge, no study has investigated the paths that women have taken to speak out against their former racist ideologies. As such, I sought to build upon my previous research, in which I explored the experiences of nine former White supremacists (i.e., seven men and two non-binary participants) who went on to become anti-hate activists (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). I am especially interested in understanding women's roles in White supremacist deradicalization because some of today's most prominent former White supremacist-turned-anti-hate activists are women. Learning from leading voices like Shannon Martinez, Angela King, and Lauren Manning about what it was like to leave their hate groups and then speak out against White supremacy can contribute a gender-specific layer to our conceptualization of the hate group exit experience. As such, I explored cisgender women's phenomenological experiences of disengagement and deradicalization from White supremacist hate groups in the current studies.

In addition to women who have left their hate groups and become anti-hate activists, it is also necessary to learn from those women from outside hate groups who have facilitated White supremacist deradicalization. Women have been instrumental in drawing White supremacists away from their hate groups (Blazak, 2003; Gadd, 2006; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021; Bates, 2017). While some studies have explored the ways in which relationships with non-White supremacist members have pulled extremists out

of their hate groups (Fisher-Smith, 2020; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021; Mattson & Johansson, 2018), only one explicitly focused on how non-White supremacist *women* facilitated hate group exit and deradicalization (Blazak, 2003). However, Blazak's (2003) research focused on the perspectives of White supremacist *men* who were assisted by women in their hate group exits. In the current studies, I explored the experiences of *women* who developed deradicalizing relationships with White supremacists.

Extending findings from my master's thesis (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021), in this dissertation I addressed gaps in the hate group exit literature by pursuing two studies. The purpose of these studies was to explore the roles women take in both engaging in and facilitating disengagement and deradicalization from White supremacist hate groups. In the first study, I explored the paths White women take in leaving their hate groups and becoming anti-hate activists by: (a) learning about how and why White women exit White supremacist hate groups (b) examining White women's post-hate group exit experiences, and (c) exploring how and why former-White supremacist women come to speak out against their former hate groups. In the second study, I explored how women *outside* of hate groups influence the disengagement and deradicalization of White supremacists by (a) learning how these women became connected with White supremacists, (b) studying their experiences in connecting with White supremacists, and (c) recording how these women influenced White supremacists to leave their hate groups.

In chapter two, I review the literature on White supremacist hate group exit. First, I summarize the state of White supremacist hate groups in the U.S. today. Second, I synthesize the literature regarding White women's historical and contemporary position in the White supremacy movement, as well as literature concerning their disengagement

and deradicalization from hate groups. I begin by discussing White women's role historically within the White supremacy movement. I then describe White women's current position within the movement. Third, I review the literature concerning White women's disengagement and deradicalization from White supremacist hate groups. Fourth, I articulate important limitations in the literature and identify avenues for future research.

Next, I provide an overview on the literature concerning women's influence and experience with deradicalizing White supremacists. Building on findings from my thesis research, I review literature that describes the perspectives of former White supremacists who were drawn out of hate by women. Then, I summarize the literature that explores the perspectives of women who have participated in deradicalizing White supremacists.

In chapter three, I provide a general overview of the methodological approach that I use for both studies. First, I outline the interpretative phenomenological analytical approach I used as a methodological framework. Second, I provide an explanation of my stance as a researcher. Third, I explain how I went about ensuring trustworthiness and methodological rigor in the findings.

In chapter four, I discuss Study One, which is concerned with understanding the experiences of women who have left their hate groups and become anti-hate activists. First, I provide a brief introduction to the study. Second, I outline the study's participant selection and recruitment strategy. Third, I provide an overview of the study's data sources. Fourth, I outline the data collection and analysis procedures in detail. Fifth, I describe how I kept data secure. Sixth, I detail how I ensured that findings were trustworthy.

In chapter five, I describe Study Two, which explores the experiences of non-White supremacist women who played a part in deradicalizing White supremacist members. I conducted the same six steps for Study Two as I did for Study One.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Although there is a great deal of research exploring hate group radicalization, a similar body of research regarding deradicalization is emerging (Bubolz & Simi, 2015; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; 2013; Horgan, 2009; Sageman, 2004). In addition to outlining common experiences that former White supremacists have faced, scholars have begun to create models to help contextualize and specify the ways in which former White supremacists leave their hate groups (Bubolz & Simi, 2019; Fisher-Smith et al., 2020; Simi et al., 2017; Simi et al., 2019). Though researchers have recently explored common psychological elements of the hate group exit experience (Fisher-Smith, 2020; Latif et al., 2020; Simi et al., 2019), there are areas in need of further exploration. First, there is a need to explore disengagement and deradicalization through a gendered lens, specifically by studying the experiences of women who have left hate groups. To date, there is one study that has explored this subject directly (Latif et al., 2020). As noted above, women are and have been essential in maintaining and perpetuating White supremacist violence in the U.S. At the same time, they face a unique set of conflicts as women in a misogynist environment. As such, I intended to develop an understanding of women's hate group exit experiences to see if unique factors emerged.

In addition to studying how White women have extricated themselves from hate groups, it is also important to explore how non-White supremacist women outside of hate groups influence hate group exit. Previous literature suggests that connections with White women and women of color (for both White supremacist women and men) have been prominent and significant in drawing hate group members away from their racist

communities (Blazak, 2003; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021; Manning, 2021). As such, I further investigated the experiences of women who have played a part in deradicalizing former White supremacists.

White Supremacist Hate Groups in the U.S.

In order to be able to speak about the state of White supremacist hate groups in the U.S., I employ the following definition of “hate group” from the Anti-defamation League (ADL; 2022):

An organization whose goals and activities are primarily or substantially based on a shared antipathy towards people of one or more other different races, religions, ethnicities/nationalities/national origins, genders, and/or sexual identities. The mere presence of bigoted members in a group or organization is typically not enough to qualify it as a hate group; the group itself must have some hate-based orientation/purpose.

With this definition established, I now specify what I mean by the term *White supremacist*. For our purposes, I draw on Ferber’s (1994) definition of White supremacist hate groups as those “sharing common ideologies and goals and an overriding commitment to maintaining white supremacy” (p.49). Simi (2010) separated the White supremacy movement into four main organizations: KKK, Christian Identity, Neo-Nazis, and racist skinheads. All four of these organizations utilize legal tactics to accrue power like forming political parties, organizing public marches and rallies, creating and distributing extremist literature, and developing separatist communities (Simi, 2010). They also pursue illegal means such as bombing abortion clinics, attacking “out-group” members, robbing banks, distributing drugs, committing identity theft, counterfeiting, and

engaging in tax evasion (see Berlet & Lyons 2000; Blazak 2001; Diamond 1995; Freilich & Chermak 2009; Freilich et al. 2001; Hamm 2002; Kaplan 1995; McCurrie 1998; Simi et al. 2008; Smith 1994; Sprinzak 1995; Weinberg 1998).

In addition to forming racist organizations, White supremacists also utilize what is referred to as *leaderless resistance*, or “lone wolf operation[s] in which an individual, or a very small, highly cohesive group, engages in acts of anti-state violence independent of any movement, leader, or network of support” (Kaplan, 1997, p. 80). This tactic makes it more difficult for law enforcement to identify potential threats due to the small number of involved individuals and because they are isolated from organized entities (DHS, 2011). Arquilla and colleagues (1999) and Enders and Jindapon (2010) explained that modern extremist groups tend to be less top-down organizations to guard against infiltration (Sageman, 2008). Flatter organizations facilitate more openings for down-up organization, which is consistent with leaderless resistance.

Also, much of White supremacist rhetoric, communication, recruitment and planning has shifted from physical groups to online platforms. For instance, a Tech Transparency Project (TPP) web analysis showed that of 221 identified White supremacist groups, 113 (51%) maintained a Facebook page. Another example: before it was taken down in 2017 following the Charlottesville Rally, the Neo-Nazi website “Stormfront” had 300,000 registered users (SPLC, 2017). Using the internet as a political tool has helped White supremacist groups drastically increase recruitment and organizability of groups, as well as create new White supremacist online communities (SPLC, 2017). More recent hubs of hate include the /pol/ boards (pol meaning Politically Incorrect) on 4chan.com, which have been linked to acts of violence including the

Christchurch mosque shootings (March 2019), the Poway synagogue shooting (April 2019), the El Paso Walmart shooting (August 2019), and the Buffalo Top's Supermarket shooting (May 2022) (Conway et al., 2019; O'Sullivan, 2022). As one can see, White supremacist hate groups and their communication strategies have evolved and are present in different forms within multiple sectors of contemporary society.

History of Women's Role in White Supremacist Groups

Women have played a key role in White supremacist hate groups ever since the end of the Civil War (Blee, 2005). Though they have received less attention in the literature than White supremacist men, a body of research exists concerning their place in White Supremacy (see Blee 2002, 2005; Daniels, 1997; Ferber, 2004). Below I provide an overview of the literature regarding women's historical role and current involvement in the White supremacist movement.

Women and the Post-Antebellum KKK

After the Civil War and in the wake of abolition, the most prominent White supremacist hate group was the KKK. The Klan was formed to dismantle the Reconstructionist state and to maintain the White supremacist social system that was threatened by the newly gained civil and political rights by southern Black people after the Civil War (1861-65) (Blee, 2005; Bryant, 2020). After gaining the right to suffrage, White southern men were concerned with making sure freedmen did not disrupt the racial caste system through their voting power. The KKK used violence against both minority groups and White supporters of the Republican party as a means of political intimidation. They burned Black churches and schools, attacked teachers, and killed freedpeople who failed to show sufficient deference (Bryant, 2020).

Women played little to no role in this first version of the Klan. The post-Antebellum Klan was predicated on both White, and more specifically, White *men's* authority. In many ways, the original KKK represented the embodiment of White southern men's loss of privilege in the wake of the Civil War. As such, men constructed a men-only hierarchical organization based on the preservation of White masculinity, which left little room for women to participate (Blee, 1991). Yet women did maintain influence in the Klan, if only symbolically. Women occupied a central position within the KKK's mythology. As White southern men confronted the newly gained political power of freedmen, they began to emphasize the taboo of sex between White women and Black men with new urgency (Hodes, 1993). Klansmen justified using violence against Black men as a means of protecting vulnerable White women from sexual violence at the hands of those very Black men. As the Klan once explained, "females, friends, widows, and their households shall ever be special objects of our regard and protection" (Hodes, 1993). Klansmen used women as "objects" to justify their political intimidation and mutilation of Black men. Yet at the same time, Klan members physically punished White women who connected romantically with Black men. For example, a Georgia Klansmen "shot five balls through Rice Heath, a negro who was living in adultery with a white woman named Griffin. They then strapped the woman across a log, and whipped her so severely that she could not sit up" (Joint Select Committee, 1872, p. 1096). Even having a "less-than-pure" reputation could earn White women violent responses from the Klan. For instance, in North Carolina the KKK approached a White girl with a "bad" reputation, "took her clothes off, whipped her very severely, and then lit a match and

burned her hair off, and made her cut off herself the part that they did not burn off with the match” (Hodes, 1997, p. 161).

Women and 20th-century White Supremacy

In the early 20th century, women maintained a much more prominent role in the KKK. In fact, more than half a million women joined the Klan and created their own female-led chapter, *Women of the Ku Klux Klan* (Blee, 2005). These women were directly active in all aspects of racial terrorism, which included lynchings and their public celebrations (Blee, 2005). Women were also essential in the effort to rid communities of Jews, Catholics, African Americans, and immigrants (Blee, 2005). They used such tactics as financial boycotts of Jewish merchants, campaigns to fire Catholic school teachers, and attacks on African Americans and their property (Blee, 1991). Women also contributed to the Klan’s intent to economically devastate their enemies, for example, by spreading rumors about Catholic school teachers or Jewish merchants (Blee, 2005).

Certain conditions laid the political groundwork for the introduction of women into the KKK. First, women’s gaining the vote in 1920 made them attractive recruits for the new Klan, which sought to increase its size, financial assets, and electoral power (Blee, 2005). Also, by the 1920’s the rigid patriarchal ideals that originally barred White southern women from participating had disintegrated to the point that it was acceptable for women to act in the public sphere (Blee, 2005). With their increase in political power, women had become important assets for re-burgeoning organized racism.

In the later-20th century, women played central roles both as social facilitators and symbols within the movement. In the 1960’s the civil rights movement did away with legal segregation and anti-miscegenation laws. At the same time, the women’s movement

also put forth claims to women's equality in the home and workplace, reproductive rights, and freedom from sexual violence. In 1973, *Roe vs. Wade* became law, legalizing abortion. These gains in political and physical freedom directly challenged traditional White masculine hegemony. White supremacists believed that gains in civil rights for people of color and women threatened the racial and gender power hierarchies, while legal abortion encouraged a decrease in the procreation of White children, and thus threatened the future of the White race.

In response to these challenges, the White supremacist movement renewed their efforts to transform the White woman's body into an ideological battleground. Drawing on traditional racist White supremacist tropes, White men pushed the narrative that a cabal of Jewish people in the government, known as the Zionist Occupational Government (ZOG) "wanted to abort white babies, admit immigrants, allow people of color to have unlimited children . . . allow black men to rape white women, and encourage interracial marriages . . . to destroy the white race" (Belew, 2018, p. 159). In articulating the social conditions thusly, White men used women as political tools to justify the war against those they framed as enemies of the White race.

Importantly, this frame was not far off from that of the American public's perspective at the time. Feagin (2013) explained that while White supremacists have historically represented extreme racist views, their attitudes are rooted in a traditional American sociological perspective. White American men have traditionally dominated the U.S. social hierarchy by employing a mechanism known as the *White racial frame*, an "overarching White worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and

reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (p. 3). For instance, in 1987, fourteen White supremacists were charged with seditious conspiracy to levy war against the U.S. government. Despite overwhelming evidence, the charges were dropped, in part, because of the presentation of one of the men’s wives, Sheila Beam. In an affidavit, Beam recounted her and her husband’s arrest. She recalled having been thrown over a chair by the arresting officers, kept in jail handcuffed for five days, threatened with torture, and sustaining an abdominal injury (Belew, 2018). She quickly became a martyr for White supremacists, representing governmental betrayal and conscious destruction of the White woman. The defendants tapped into a deep historical frame rooted in the protection of White women’s bodies, which swayed not only the jury, but also mainstream media and subsequent public perceptions of the case.

Women and 21st-century White Supremacy

Racist groups in the 21st century have made concerted efforts to recruit women (Blee, 2002; Cunningham, 2003). The groups perceive women as key parts of the movement because they serve as central family figures and are less likely to become police informants (Blee, 2005). Some White supremacist organizations, like Neo-Nazi and Christian Identity groups, recruit women in an effort to normalize and make their image appear more benign (Blee, 2002). As more women have joined groups in recent years, there has also been a rise in violence committed by White supremacist women (Blee, 2005). But the vast majority of violence is still carried out by men (US Committee of Foreign Affairs, 2019). It has been noted that women, though they have not historically participated as much in racial terrorism directed at state institutions (e.g., the

Oklahoma City Bombing), have had greater involvement in violence directed at racial minority groups (Blee, 2002).

The U.S. Committee of Foreign Affairs (2019) also pointed out how women are used as public figures in the movement: “Women are being used as mouthpieces, as recruitment vessels. They are often the ones tasked with doing the podcasts, making the videos, because women attract more men to the organization.” For example, Lana Latkoff, a renowned White supremacist YouTube star who became one of the faces of online hate has for years been the face of the online multimedia company, “Red Ice,” which endorses American far-right rhetoric, racism, and antisemitic conspiracy theories. Using her platform, she has disseminated racist views including the notion that “the promotion of interracial relationships, mixed race babies [and] open borders . . . is trying to destroy, in whole or in part, a group of people [i.e., White people] and trying to prevent births within that group. Well, that, folks, constitutes . . . genocide” (Gais, 2019). At its peak, her channel had 335,000 reported subscribers. In 2019, YouTube banned Red Ice’s channel for hate speech violations. Within days of the original channel’s removal, the backup channel had regained 20,000 followers (Gais, 2019).

Modern White supremacist women also serve an essential role as social facilitators for the movement. For example, White supremacist women have historically been responsible for building and maintaining White supremacist social networks, recruitment, the production and dissemination of White family-oriented products (e.g., recipes and homeschooling materials), and the social normalization of racist activists (Belew, 2018). Women legitimate racist activism and violence by cultivating a perceived normalcy that surrounds White supremacist extremism (Blee 2002; Dobie 1997). For

instance, April Gaede organized her two young daughters into a performing musical child duo called “Prussian Blue,” named after the color of the residue left by Zyklon B in Nazi gas chambers (Darby, 2021). Singing of racial holy war (often referred to by the acronym RAHOWA by movement members) at White power festivals and online, Prussian Blue became a vehicle through which racist rhetoric could be associated with youthful innocence (Simpson, 2015). They also evoked images of the ideal White American family to recruit teen girls into the movement (Love, 2012).

In addition to normalizing White supremacist hate groups, women promote group cohesion in organized racism by cultivating solidarity among group members (Blee 2002). For example, women often organize group rallies and gatherings that leave people feeling positive. Importantly, these gatherings appear normal, fun, and family oriented. As one neo-Nazi recalled, the racist event he attended was “kind of like a big powwow or something. There was no cross burnings or screaming” (Blee, 2002, p. 13). In organizing these rallies thusly, women both create a family-like atmosphere for group members and soften the image of organized racism to make it more palatable for potential recruits. Women also use social ties to facilitate White supremacist recruitment. While male hate group leaders tend to be manipulative and harsh in their demands when leading and recruiting new members, women tend to use a more subtle and personal approach (Blee, 2002). Instead of telling potential recruits to “take your last dime and spend it on gas and starve to death to get there [a racist rally] . . . [women] say, ‘Hey, it’d be great to have you’” (Blee, 2002, p. 135).

Finally, women are also responsible for disseminating family-friendly White supremacist materials to group members. For instance, the Aryan Woman’s League, run

by Kathleen Metzger, the wife of former KKK leader, Tom Metzger, provided rules and tips for being a successful White mother. She disseminated information on homeschooling, celebrations of new births, and requested donations for new mothers (Darby, 2020). A 2017 post by Victoria Garland on the White supremacist website, *American Renaissance*, summed up the archetypical self-concept of the White supremacist woman:

Aside from our most valuable role as the vessels that literally carry our people into the future, women have also been the leaders of the household, responsible for creating safe, stable environments for nurturing greatness. We have been providers in our own right, tending gardens, helping in the harvest, and preserving food for the lean season. We have been governesses and teachers; our school rooms were places where raw talents were cultivated into staggering accomplishments and discoveries that changed the course of history. We have held our communities during times of crisis.

This passage clarifies the essential aspects of the White supremacist woman: reproductive vessel, housewife, teacher, and social facilitator. Propaganda such as the text above helps to disseminate and normalize this conception of the docile and vulnerable White woman upon which the justification for the fear and mutilation of non-White bodies is fastened.

Sexism in Modern White Supremacist Groups

While White supremacist women fight for the preservation and elevation of their race, they do so in the name of a movement that oppresses them as women. White supremacist women have detailed myriad complaints against racist White men who have oppressed and abused them within the movement. First, White supremacist men generally

exclude women from taking active roles in racial terrorism. As a former Hammerskin (i.e., the most violent and best-organized neo-Nazi skinhead group in the U.S.; ADL, 2017), Lauren Manning, was once told by a male comrade, ““There’s no way you’re fighting on the front lines for the sake of white power. That isn’t a woman’s role. Women are happier in their natural habitat and anything beyond that is a product of feminism. Damaging to women and the white race” (Manning, 2021, p. 123). Women are often relegated to two general roles: mother or sex object (Blazak, 2003). Jesse Daniels (1997) explained that these roles could be broken down into five categories: (a) women as glorious, naturally maternal mothers, (b) women as sexually desirable objects, who serve as proof of White racial supremacy, (c) women in need of protection from Black rapists, Jewish feminists, and others, (d) women as race traitors, who are sexually weak towards Black men, feminism, and homosexuality, and (e) women as racial warriors supporting their men. In all these depictions of women, none is exempt from the underlying grasp of motherhood or sexual objectification. Even women’s designation as racial warrior comes with the addendum of being a supporter, not leader or even equal, of White men. The White woman becomes an object for White supremacist men sexually, politically, and symbolically. As Ferber (1998) explained, at its core, “white supremacist discourse is about redefining masculinity” (p. 10). The White woman’s body serves as a reminder of the threat to the White race. While sexually attractive White women stand as symbols of White supremacy, White women who engage sexually with enemies of White supremacy are considered traitors to the White race. In either case, White supremacist men reduce women to symbols of either glory or treachery. They exploit women’s sexuality and

convert it into a weapon in the racial holy war. White supremacist men thus consider it a duty to control White women's bodies as dangerous objects.

Consequently, men physically dominate women in White supremacist groups. Women in racist hate groups tend to feel threatened by White supremacist men, and some have been physically abused by racist boyfriends or husbands (Blee, 2005). Battered women in White supremacist groups have few outlets of support, as they distrust police and have little faith other group members will prevent further violence from men in their groups (Blee, 2002). In some instances, men in White supremacist hate groups treat women as property from which they can profit. For instance, some men prostitute their female partners to generate income for the movement (Latif et al., 2020). These women are not allowed full discretion as to with whom they conduct such business. As one woman who worked as a prostitute explained, "we were told [by the group] that we could only have white customers" (Latif et al., 2020, p. 9).

Paradoxically, despite the oppression and abuse women suffer in White supremacist groups, they themselves endorse the very anti-feminism that subjugates them. Dworkin (1983) theorized that right-wing women have traditionally endorsed anti-feminism as a means of self-preservation in the face of male oppression. As she explained, "Feminists, from a base of powerlessness, want to destroy that [male] power ... Right-wing women, from a base of powerlessness, the same base, accommodate to that power because quite simply they do not see a way out from under" (Dworkin, 1983, p. 236). Other women feel they have been betrayed by third wave feminism. They claim that feminism has robbed them of the opportunity to have a "traditional" life with a "male provider, a happy family, and a nice home" (Love, 2020). Ironically, other women

believe that *traditional* (i.e., strictly patriarchal) living “does ‘what feminism is supposed to do’ in preventing women from being made into ‘sex objects’ and treated ‘like a whore’” (Smith, 2017). As one can see, White supremacist women find themselves in a cognitively dissonant position where they fight for a cause that is antithetical to their own health and independence. This cognitive dissonance becomes so distressing that it leads some women to eventually leave their hate groups.

Why and How Women Leave White Supremacist Hate Groups

Though White supremacist hate group exit research is growing in general, there has been only one study explicitly studying the exit experiences of women (Latif et al., 2020). As noted above, women maintain unique roles and have quite different experiences than men within these hate groups. As such, it is important to explore the unique nature of their hate group exit experiences as well. Latif et al. (2020) analyzed the connection between disillusionment and hate group exit by gathering the life histories of 21 women who were previously affiliated with violent racist groups in the U.S. The authors explored the reasons why women left White supremacist groups. They found that the leading causes of disillusionment, which led to exit, were poor relationships with other White supremacists, violence, and mistreatment of women in the movement. Eight of twenty-one women interviewed for the project explained that they had hoped the hate group would serve as a substitute family, especially younger women from destructive families or those who previously lived on the streets. Some of these women ended up being betrayed by others in the movement, which led to a sense of being let down by one’s family (Blee, 2002). The second most common reason women left the movement was violence. Some experienced shame and regret for personally carrying out violence.

Others became exhausted by the constant infighting between White supremacists as well as the violence between hate group members and enemies. The third reason women left White supremacist groups was because of their dissatisfaction with repressive gender and social hierarchies within the movement. Women became disillusioned by their primary roles as bearers of White children or sexual partners for White supremacist men, especially when many of these men were sexually promiscuous and having children with other women. Women decried their loss of agency within an organization that relegated them to tightly defined roles, especially as sexual objects for men (Blee, 2002). Others became fearful that the White supremacist lifestyle might result in their losing custody of their children. Ultimately, women became disillusioned with White supremacist hate groups that encouraged White men's violence, aggression, and power over women.

Although women took different amounts of time to leave their groups after becoming disillusioned, they left only when they could imagine the possibility of doing so (Latif et al., 2020). The authors described three types of perceptions that led to exit: *perceived necessity*, *perceived life on the outside*, and *perceived opportunity*. One example of perceived necessity was a woman who decided to leave the movement after her children started to participate in racist violence. Another woman felt moved to exit when she began to worry that her daughter was becoming a vulnerable target for physical and sexual violence from movement men. Women generally became able to imagine life outside of their hate groups after developing social relationships outside the movement. For some, these relationships were with other White people. For others, becoming friends with people of color moved them to abandon their White supremacist ideology. These relationships also provided opportunities for members to inherit a natural support system

after exiting. This support was important because most women had few material or social resources and lacked protection from the violent backlash of former hate group members after exiting.

Another important finding uncovered by the authors (Latif et al., 2020) was that women sometimes became more disillusioned *after* leaving the group. Making a clean break with the group allowed women to reestablish their sense of self in a non-racist identity. It allowed them to explore ideas counter to White supremacy and to connect with those who would be considered enemies of the movement. These connections, especially those with people of color, led to a further questioning of their White supremacist worldview. Removing themselves from the group also allowed for women to reassess their former relationships within the group and see leaders in a more realistic light. Such distance helped women realize the misogyny present in the group. Finally, disengaging from the group created an opportunity for women to self-reflect. This self-reflection led to realizations of guilt and an inclination to repent for the violence they committed.

The authors noted that not all women left after becoming disillusioned. Some stayed because they still felt tied to the White supremacist ideology and cause. Others had trouble leaving behind the sense of fulfillment and accomplishment they experienced as actors within the movement. Being attracted to violence itself also made leaving difficult for some. Part of the reason for this odd reality was that violence had become a core element of the movement that helped cultivate *solidarity*, itself a valuable and intoxicating aspect of group membership (Blee et al. 2017; Futrell and Simi 2004; Simi and Futrell 2010). Other women were coerced and threatened into remaining in the group

and feared the consequences their children would face if they left. Lastly, disillusioned women stayed in the movement because of social ties with other hate group members.

Some women disengaged from White supremacy groups but did not surrender their connection to the ideology. The authors (Latif et al., 2020) identified four reasons why these women did not become disillusioned after exiting. First, some maintained contact with the movement, mostly through the internet. Second, women continued to communicate with former hate group comrades. Third, some women left for strategic opportunities (e.g., one's husband's job opportunities were being affected by hate group involvement), which did not open the opportunity for wider self-reflection. Fourth, unlike those women who became more disillusioned upon reflecting about their former groups, some women used the space they created to fantasize about an idealized White supremacist movement they might join in the future. Fifth, many former White supremacist women felt alienated from their family and friends outside the movement. In comparison, they found that the relationships they had within the movement were fuller and more satisfying. The current studies built on these findings by exploring the psychological consequences that female formers experienced after leaving their hate groups (e.g., post-traumatic symptoms, paranoia, continued belief in conspiracy theories). Also, the current investigations focused on descriptions of what it was like to become an anti-hate activist after leaving one's hate group.

Though the findings discussed above represent the sole academic research specifically focused on women's exit processes from White supremacist hate groups, other literature written by and about former White supremacist women both support and expand upon Latif et al.'s (2020) insights. Below I discuss the experiences of two

women, Lauren Manning and Corinna Olsen, as detailed in Jeanette and Lauren Manning's (2021) *Walking Away from Hate: Our Journey Through Extremism* and Seward Darby's (2020) *Sisters in Hate: American Women in White Extremism* respectively.

Lauren & Jeanette Manning

Lauren Manning and her mother, Jeanette (2021), wrote a firsthand autobiographical account of the White supremacist radicalization, disengagement, deradicalization, and anti-hate activism experience from both the former White supremacist's (Lauren) and the non-White supremacist mother's (Jeanette) perspectives. I begin by exploring Lauren's process in deciding to leave the Hammerksins, a racist skinhead group. First, Lauren detailed how she became disillusioned with her hate group after the murder of her movement comrade. Lauren realized that the Hammerskins were not who she once believed them to be:

[They] didn't care one way or another about Jan [the slain movement member], either as a human being or as a white power member. How much of a brotherhood was this when members didn't care for one another? . . . I tried to avoid the ugly and sobering truth I didn't yet have the courage to admit – that the movement I'd been part of for five years was full of delusion (p. 180)

It is important to note here that what bothered Lauren was the lack of integrity of the brotherhood, supporting Latif et al.'s (2020) findings that being disappointed in the family-replacement aspect of the movement can deeply influence members to exit. She also began to question what she termed the "victim mentality" (i.e., blaming other races

for one's own personal problems). She realized that White supremacists were in fact responsible for creating their own misery.

Lauren also described how gender discrimination played an important role in her decision to leave the Hammerskins. She explained that she was pressured into childbearing, to be subservient, ridiculed for wanting a job in construction, belittled, and used by men in the movement. She realized that if she “died tomorrow, no one would really care and they'd easily find another girl to replace me” (Manning & Manning, 2021, p. 185). As Latif et al. (2020) detailed in the experiences of former White supremacist women, Lauren felt that she was not allowed to be her full and authentic self as a woman in the movement. In addition to her gender, Lauren described that her sexual orientation also caused her to struggle within the movement. Now identifying as bisexual, Lauren understood that she could not express this identity while inside the group: “Being gay wasn't natural, according to the movement, and I wanted to fit in, to be normal” (p. 121). In order to belong to the movement, Lauren was implicitly and explicitly forced to repress the expression of her authentic sexual orientation. The strain of this repression ultimately played a part in her decision to leave White supremacy.

Lauren noted different turning points/ “a-ha” moments in her exit journey, phenomena that Ebaugh (1988) identified as essential parts of group role exit. First, she started to find movement conversations “boring,” “stupid,” and “ridiculous” (Manning & Manning, 2021, p.188). Second, she realized how the hateful ideology she endorsed was in fact hurting her:

Hate, I suddenly understood, was unnatural. Constantly having to work out every situation to ensure it fit the movement's narratives was exhausting. Seeing the

world of hate through the lens of hate hadn't kept me safe, hadn't kept me from being hurt. It had actually restricted me. It was another "a-ha" moment (p. 186). These moments moved Lauren to reconsider her involvement in the group and ultimately to leave it altogether. But as Latif et al. (2020) also noted, Lauren only left after being able to imagine a life outside the movement. Happy with her job and feeling connected to her family outside the skinheads, she realized she no longer needed the ideological self-aggrandizement the movement offered. She felt content to merely be herself. Lauren also mentioned family concerns as having influenced her exit decision. She noted that she both feared consequences for her current and future family. After her friend and movement comrade died, Lauren imagined her own mother having to endure the same loss. This thought made an emotional impact on her. In addition to not wanting to hurt her mother, Lauren worried about bringing her future children into the movement. She feared the consequences of raising children in such a hate-filled environment, which caused her to challenge the ideology she used to endorse.

In addition to detailing her pre-exit experience, Lauren explained what her life was like *after* exiting. After leaving, she struggled to both shed her previous movement identity and address emotional wounds she had left unattended in the past. She worried about confronting the painful emotions she had repressed while in the movement, especially because she had difficulty trusting people after her disillusioning experience in the hate group. One emotion she mentioned encountering was guilt. At her new job, she came into contact with people of color, which triggered identity residual (i.e., lingering feelings, physiological responses, and behaviors formed in the hate group; Bubolz & Simi, 2015). When she saw Black friends at her job, she would have the racial epithets

intrude into her thoughts. She experienced guilt related to how she could not shake her White supremacist indoctrination. This guilt also impacted the way she saw herself as a potential romantic partner. She wondered who would want to be with someone who had once been a White supremacist. Another feeling she cited was loneliness. Without her group, she felt unsure of her identity, without a set of beliefs, and alone. As Latif and colleagues (2020) similarly noted in their participants, Lauren contemplated wanting to return to the group because of this loneliness. In addition to the emotional consequences, Lauren experienced threats from hate group members.

After leaving, Lauren committed to self-healing. She began to practice meditation, which helped her integrate realizations she had about her time in her hate group. She also practiced critical thinking, or the basing of opinions on observable reality and facts as opposed to personal biases. With the combination of introspection and mindfulness, Lauren began to take accountability for her time in the movement. As she put it, “My white power life was an obstacle I’d thrown in my own path . . . I couldn’t blame anyone else” (Manning & Manning, 2021, p. 203). Lauren’s internal work coincided with integrating into a new community outside of the movement. She cited getting a new job as an important step of her post-exit journey. Having a vocation helped her develop a sense of self-esteem. It also provided her with the opportunity to make new friends and build a social support system outside of the movement. In this way, Lauren was able to begin building a new sense of self embedded and reflected in a new community, a part of the exit process emphasized by Fisher-Smith et al. (2020).

After witnessing the death and slandering of Heather Heyer, an anti-racism activist who was killed at the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” Rally, Lauren decided it

was time that she begin to make amends for her time in the movement. She noted that in addition to making up for the violence she had perpetrated as part of her hate group, reconciling through activism would also help her feel better about herself. She reached out to Life After Hate, a hate group exit program run by former hate group members whose mission is to facilitate hate group exit and reintegrate former extremists back into society. After connecting with the group, she posted her story on Exit USA, a Life After Hate website created to connect those looking to leave the movement with former extremists (i.e., “formers”) who could help. She also began to take part in academic interviews with deradicalization researchers. Her activism culminated in publicly sharing her experience in and out of White supremacy at the “Partnering in Practice” anti-hate conference dedicated to fighting violent extremism.

To date, Lauren has participated in deradicalization research, appeared in print and television interviews, spoken publicly, and counseled former hate group members. She summed up the sense of meaning that being an anti-hate activist gave her thusly: “Being involved in Life After Hate makes me feel I’ve contributed more to countering hate than I ever contributed to the white power movement. Sharing my story is the most important thing I can do” (Manning & Manning, 2021, p. 227). As discussed by Fisher-Smith et al. (2020), anti-hate activism provides formers with a renewed sense of self and provides a healthy sense of purpose formerly occupied by the hate movement. Thus, in the current studies I sought to understand what role participating in exit programs played in the identity reconfiguration of women who had left their hate groups.

Corinna Olsen

Darby (2020) traced the White supremacy experiences of three women in her book, *Sisters in Hate: American Women in White Extremism*. Of the three, only one disengaged from her group and deradicalized: former neo-Nazi and radio personality Corinna Olsen. Olsen shared similar reasons for leaving with Lauren Manning. First, she became disillusioned by the movement. As Darby (2020) put it, “What white nationalism had promised her [Corinna]—meaning and camaraderie—it was no longer providing. The accumulation of disappointments had left her disenchanted and disgusted” (Darby, 2020, p. 77). Like Manning, Olsen also experienced specific turning points in her path to disengagement. First, she was appalled by the attempted pipe bombing of a 2011 Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Spokane, Washington. The bomb’s engineer was Kevin Harpham, a White supremacist who had once been part of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. His stated goal was to use the bomb as a protest against multiculturalism (Clouse, 2017). Second, Olsen cited a conversation she had during the investigation of the bombing with radio show co-host and founder of the racist Northwest Front, Harold Covington, who explained that bombing was a necessary measure in a time of racial war even if it meant killing innocent bystanders. Olsen described this conversation as the turning point in her decision to leave the movement. Finally, Olsen shared Manning’s concern about raising children in a White supremacist environment. As she explained, “I wanted my kids the hell away from the whole scene . . . I began to realize that my kids are going to be turned into really miserable breeding stock” (Darby, 2020, p. 70). Before exiting, Olsen decided to become an FBI informant. She explained that she needed the

financial compensation and that working as an informant while inside the movement would provide a humiliating blow to its leadership.

After exiting, she sought a new identity, and tried out different pursuits including bodybuilding and blogging. She ultimately found refuge and structure in religion and converted to Islam. Darby (2021) writes of Olsen's attraction to Islam:

She liked how the religion gave structure to her days. The mosque was a place to go where there were people she knew. She liked that Islam was a topic she could learn about from books. Keeping her body covered meant that it was hers and no one else's. "It is freeing, actually, to feel like I'm taking something away from men" (p. 89).

Islam gave Olsen structure, community, and a way of re-owning her body, which had been objectified by the hyper-masculinized White power movement. Like being an informant, Olsen also enjoyed the fact that publicizing her religious conversion would offend White supremacists.

Olsen also ended up speaking out against White supremacy after leaving her hate group. She created a podcast under her old radio pseudonym "Axis Ally" and titled the first episode, "Axis Ally Comes Clean." In the episode, she denounced the White supremacy movement as an idiotic and inept political phenomenon. She received immediate backlash from those on the internet who called her a "slut," "race traitor," "a Jew," and referred to her daughters' bodies as "wasted commodities" (Darby, 2020, p. 83). Olsen also appeared in the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) 2013 *Intelligence Report*, where she stated that "people of other races have never done anything to me or

my children in the way white nationalists have. This is the real enemy . . . This entire movement is a huge waste of life” (Darby, 2020, p. 85).

As discussed above, women both play an integral part in the White supremacy movement and have unique experiences exiting their hate groups. As such, it is important that researchers continue to explore the roles women play in White supremacist hate groups and study their hate group exit and post-exit experiences. The research makes it clear that women tend to leave their hate groups after becoming disillusioned with the movement. It has also become evident that these women work with outsiders to help facilitate their exit. Consequently, our understanding of White supremacist disengagement and deradicalization would be incomplete without studying the experiences of those who have *facilitated* hate group exit.

Role of Women of Color and White, Non-Movement Women on Disengagement and Deradicalization

In addition to women who have left their White supremacy groups, women of color and non-White supremacist White women have made significant contributions to the deradicalization of hate group members. Unfortunately, little research exists that focuses on the role that outsider (i.e., not affiliated with White supremacy) women play in terms of influencing hate group exit and deradicalization (Blazak, 2003). To my knowledge, there is only one study that specifically focuses on the influence of women on hate group exit facilitation (Blazak, 2003). Taking an inductive ethnographic approach, Blazak (2003) recorded the “life histories” of five former racist skinheads. He discovered that the relationships participants formed with outsider women had a positive effect on exiting their hate groups. Fisher-Smith et al. (2020) described these kinds of

relationships as “transgressive,” in that they violate “the normative standards of the White supremacist organization and symbolically represents the participant’s explicit means of moving away from the group” (p.18). It is important to note that all interviews were conducted with White supremacist *men*. As such, the research did not explore the experiences of the women who facilitated hate group exit. To address this gap, I explored the experiences of women who have engaged in the hate group exit facilitation process. Below, I discuss the types of relationships with outsider women that have been found to facilitate hate group disengagement and deradicalization.

Romantic Relationships

Connecting romantically with women of color or non-White supremacist women has influenced hate group members to leave the movement and deradicalize (Blazak, 2003; Gadd, 2006; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). For example, Blazak (2003) identified the significant role that a romantic connection with a women of color played in the deradicalization one of his participants, a former racist skinhead. The participant credited dating a woman of Asian descent with his disengagement from the movement:

Yeah, she kicked my ass. She was like, “this shit is so bullshit!” I got the whole story about how she has to deal with racism and sexism every single day. All kinds of little things I never even thought about. I thought whites had it so rough, but I had no idea. It’s like I couldn’t even see what is so obvious . . . I became a SHARP [Skinhead Against Racial Prejudice] because I wanted to be a part of something important . . . And I also want to undo all the bullshit that I did, so if I can do that and beat some bonehead into the ground at the same time, well then right on! (p. 167)

Being with a woman of color challenged the participant's racist belief system and opened his eyes to the plight that White supremacy caused a woman for whom he cared deeply. Liguori and Spanierman (2021) found that these kinds of relationships can lead to cognitive dissonance between members' White supremacist ideologies and their love for the very person they have been taught to hate. For example, four of the nine former White supremacists interviewed for their study described falling in love with Black and Jewish women, which ran directly counter to their racist ideologies. All four ended up leaving the movement to explore relationships with these women.

Maternal Relationships

Mothers of hate group members also impacted members' decisions to leave their hate groups. For example, Lauren Manning and her mother, Jeanette, wrote an autobiographical account (2021) detailing not only Lauren's journey in and out of White supremacy, but also describing how their relationship played a pivotal role in her disengagement. At one point, Jeanette decided to no longer allow Lauren to live in her house because of her daughter's racist beliefs. Yet, she continued to be involved in her eventual deradicalization. Jeanette summed up her experience of being the mother of a racist skinhead thusly:

I've never forgotten the advice I received when Lauren first left—keep the door open. Those words gave me hope when I thought I'd lost my daughter, strength when I wanted to crumble, responsibility when I wanted nothing more than to write Lauren off as a lost cause . . . I've learned to love my children unconditionally . . . I'm imperfect, I've made mistakes—why should I expect my kids to be any different? (Manning & Manning, 2021, p. 231).

This passage highlights two key components that facilitate hate group exit: one, openness to change, and two, unconditional positive regard towards the member.

While it is essential that the public hold former White supremacists accountable for the immense pain they have caused individuals from marginalized communities, it also appears that openness, compassion and forgiveness are essential elements that allow for women outside the movement to effectively communicate *why* White supremacy is illogical and harmful. For example, Blazak (2003) cites a participant whose mother changed his mind on racism:

My mom found a bunch of racist shit in my bedroom and sat me down. She's always been straight with me, and I figured I should listen. We talked for hours about what was going on in the world. She's an old hippie, so you can imagine her views. But it just started to make sense to me. So things are changing, they're always changing. I mean, why shouldn't I be friends with the Mexicans? So I said, screw it and just started hanging out with them. (pp. 166-167).

Instead of admonishing her son for his racism, this participant's mother was able to remain open enough to have a conversation about why his philosophy was incoherent and damaging. This vignette appears to parallel research suggesting that compassion and related skills are trainable (Kanov et al., 2004; Klimecki et al., 2014). In both cases mentioned above, mothers made use of openness and unconditional positive regard to effectively create space for their children to realize the incompatibility and hurtful nature of their belief systems and actions.

Platonic Relationships

Like the two kinds of relationships mentioned above, platonic relationships made similar impacts on hate group members' exit processes. Platonic relationships included numerous relational dynamics (e.g., student-teacher, friend-friend, interviewer-interviewee). Liguori and Spanierman (2021) found that platonic relationships were instrumental in different ways in terms of the exit process. For example, making personal contact with women of color outside the movement and hearing their stories forced members to confront the fact that their ideology was hurting the actual people sitting across from them. These interactions personalized and realized the effects of their ideology. Also, being forgiven and accepted by women of color was deeply moving for hate group members. Participants recalled that these experiences were cathartic and catalytic in terms of their decisions to begin moving away from the movement. Blazak (2003) explained that women outside of the movement were able to leverage the fact that *they themselves*, as women and/or people of color were victims of White supremacy. This approach alerted members to the potential that their own racist and sexist beliefs could hurt women for whom they cared. It also appears that modeling critical thinking and independence of thought inspired members to leave their racist ideologies behind. For instance, one former White supremacist credited his teacher with helping him turn from his White supremacist beliefs:

I felt like everything was being taken away from me. She was cool. She was like, “look Jay, your life is just starting. Why should you get a free ride? Do you think I get a free ride being a woman? Create your own future.” She’s really bad-ass

and made me feel more bad-ass for walking away from the skinheads and doing it on my own (Blazak, 2003, p. 166)

The teacher both attended to this student's worldview and offered guidance out of it. She acknowledged his struggle for a simple worldview (i.e., victimhood narrative), as well as the anomie he was using the group ideology to subdue. She then encouraged him to create his own future as opposed to relying on irrational ideology (Blazak, 2003). This teacher was not only able to turn the student's attention towards how sexism operates both systematically and personally, but also to empower him to abandon the ideology responsible for that sexism.

Limitations of Previous Literature

Despite the integral part White supremacist women play in the movement, to my knowledge only one study (Latif et al., 2020) has focused on White women leaving hate groups. As hate groups and hate crimes proliferate in the U.S., researchers must explore means of facilitating deradicalization and disengagement of White supremacist women. It is important for researchers to hold accountable women who are just as much involved in organized racism as men, and to learn what we can from those who have left to develop deradicalization strategies geared towards women. The current studies aimed to gather information from former-White-supremacist women in an effort to support deradicalization interventions tailored for women. The current studies built on Latif et al.'s (2020) work by, one, exploring the psychological consequences female formers encountered after leaving their hate groups, and two, investigating what it was like to become an anti-hate activist after leaving one's hate group.

Another important area to address is the experiences of women who have left their hate groups and gone on to become anti-hate activists. To date, there are no studies exploring this population directly. Though some studies have included women in their exploration of post White-supremacy anti-hate activism (e.g., Fisher-Smith et al., 2020), none have specifically focused on the intersection between gender and becoming an anti-hate activist. This gap was crucial to address, as there are differences in the challenges and consequences that women face in this process, as their former White supremacist indoctrination generally encourages a dependent, docile, non-combative position (Blazak, 2003; Daniels, 1997; Ferber, 1998). As such, women not only face external consequences from speaking out as men do (e.g., threats, assault, doxxing), but also internal struggles to overcome their White supremacist-informed conceptions of themselves as women. The current studies aimed to understand what it is like to be a woman who leaves her White supremacist hate group and becomes an anti-hate activist.

Researchers might also learn from women outside of the movement about their experiences of helping to deradicalize White supremacists. It appears from the literature that such contact with women of color and non-White supremacist White women, and its subsequent deradicalizing effects, support Allport's contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The theory states that under appropriate circumstances interpersonal contact can be an effective way to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. While some research does exist supporting the notion that women are instrumental in deradicalizing White supremacists, there has yet to be a study that exclusively focuses on their voices. Without addressing the experiences of these women, we again over-emphasize the experience of men in the White supremacy

movement. For example, in Blazak's (2003) study examining how women affect exit decisions, all five participants were men, and the findings were drawn explicitly from their descriptions of women who helped them leave racism behind. By continuing to emphasize the White supremacist man's perspective, we give credence to the White supremacist notion that men should be at the center of research and that women should be relegated to auxiliary positions. The current studies aimed to address this gap by emphasizing the voices of women who have helped White supremacists disengage and deradicalize.

Purpose and Rationale of Current Investigation

As the number of white supremacist-inspired hate crimes rises in the U.S., it is essential for researchers to explore ways to facilitate the disengagement and deradicalization of White supremacist women. As discussed earlier, women have unique experiences while inside the movement, when leaving their hate groups, and in becoming anti-hate activists. As such, it is researchers' responsibility to understand the experiences of these women in all three phases to guide the development of hate group exit interventions tailored for women. It is also important that researchers engage in the investigation of White supremacist women's exit experiences to de-center men as the dominant subjects of White supremacist research. In the current studies, I explored women's experiences of leaving their hate groups and becoming anti-hate activists to support the development of deradicalization interventions designed for women.

Another important area of deradicalization research involves learning from women outside of the movement about their experiences facilitating hate group exit. As mentioned earlier, there has yet to be a study that exclusively focuses on the experiences

of these women. Ignoring the contributions of these women is detrimental in a couple of ways: (1) it emphasizes the hate group experiences from men's points of view, and (2) it de-emphasizes the social nature of hate group exit facilitation. Thus, incorporating insights from these individuals' experiences is essential if researchers and clinicians intend to create comprehensive and efficacious hate group exit interventions. As such, the current studies focused on the voices of women who have helped White supremacists disengage and deradicalize.

In these studies, I focused on exploring two sets of research questions. In Study One, I investigated the following:

- 1) What is it like to leave one's White supremacist hate group?
- 2) What is post-hate-group-exit life like?
- 3) How and why does one become an anti-hate activist as a former White supremacist?

Then in Study Two, I explore the following:

- 4) Why and how do non-White supremacist women help White supremacists exit their hate groups?
- 5) What is it like for women to help White supremacists exit their hate group?

Chapter III

General Method

Qualitative approaches have been and continue to be used broadly across deradicalization research (e.g., Fisher-Smith et al., 2020; Latif et al., 2021; Simi et al., 2019). For this project, I employed a constructivist epistemology (Schwandt, 2001) and an interpretative phenomenological methodological approach (Smith et al., 2009). The constructivist epistemological approach maintains that (a) numerous equally valid versions of perceived social reality exist and (b) knowledge is co-constructed and cannot be observed directly. More specifically, a constructivist approach posits that humans come to know their experience by living and interpreting it *in terms of* their social, cultural, and political contexts (Heidegger, 1962). The constructivist position also requires a hermeneutical approach, in which the researcher's responsibility is to bring hidden meaning to the surface through deep reflection (see Schwandt, 2000; Sciarra, 1999). The researcher stimulates this kind of reflection through interactive researcher-participant dialogue. As such, the interaction between the investigator and the object of investigation is central to constructivism (Ponterotto, 2005). For the current study, the constructivist perspective provided an appropriate philosophical foundation for the phenomenological methodological approach, which seeks to grasp the essence of the lived experience of a given phenomenon (i.e., that which appears or is seen; van Manen, 1990). Thus, I emphasized interactive researcher-participant dialogue as a means of unearthing phenomenological meaning from participants' lived experiences.

There are two approaches within phenomenological methodology: descriptive and interpretative (Lopez & Willis, 2004). I chose the interpretative approach because it

allowed me to study how participants came to understand their worlds and to explore the *meanings* that they gave to their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Specifically, in the current studies I employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). I used this approach effectively while conducting my master's thesis about exit from White supremacist groups (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). IPA allows for in-depth exploration not only of participants' lived experiences, but also their interpretations of those lived experiences (Merriam, 2009).

IPA offers several advantages for the current investigations. First, researchers have noted that former White supremacists are difficult to access (Simi et al., 2017). Former White supremacists tend to avoid publicity to secure themselves from threats related to their former hate group connections and exits (Simi et al., 2017). This fact makes gathering large samples difficult. Aligned with methodologists' recommendations, I sought samples between four and ten participants (see Noon, 2018). I recruited seven participants for Study One and four participants for Study Two. IPA is particularly well-suited to these kinds of samples because it is dedicated to providing detailed interpretative accounts of the participants' experiences. Thus, the methodology actually *requires* researchers to work with small participant samples. In this study, I employed extensive interviewing to maximize the effectiveness of the data collection process with a small number of participants. As such, IPA is suitable for developing a deep understanding of what it is like to leave one's hate group as a woman and to facilitate hate group exit as a woman.

IPA also emphasizes the researcher's cultural perspectives as inevitably having an influence on data collection and analysis. Such perspectives can both facilitate and inhibit

access to participants' lived experiences. Thus, it was essential that I remain consciously aware of my own preconceptions both before and while conducting this research. Furthermore, it was important that I recognize the limitations of my own self-awareness and admit that I may not be conscious of all my biases prior to analysis (Smith & Flowers, 2009). To protect the objectivity of my analysis to the fullest extent possible, I practiced self-reflection and cyclical bracketing (i.e., separating myself from my preconceptions regarding the phenomenon in question; Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Flowers, 2009; Smith, et al., 1997). I also worked closely with Dr. Lisa Spanierman as an auditor of my interpretations to reduce bias during the data analysis process (Levitt et al., 2017, 2018). Implementing these measures allowed me to remain as close as possible to participants' intended meanings during the data collection and analysis processes.

Researcher Positionality

According to Morrow (2005), it is important that researchers using IPA detail their own cultural backgrounds and understand how certain aspects might affect their interpretations in terms of trustworthiness and methodological rigor. Here, I provide details regarding my positionality. I identify as a White, heterosexual, cisgender, liberal arts-college-educated, American man of European descent. I was raised in an upper-class Los Angeles neighborhood in California. I am aware that these characteristics of mine are, in fact, championed by the White supremacist movement. Currently, I am enrolled in a counseling psychology PhD program where I have conducted prior research with former White supremacists. For my master's thesis, I interviewed nine former White supremacists who had become anti-hate activists. I spoke with each participant multiple times through recruiting, interviewing, and text-checking process. I am aware that even

though I reject racist ideologies and associated violence, I, as a White man in a historically White supremacist country, have benefited from the outcomes of a White, male-dominated sociopolitical hierarchy (Daniels, 1997; Feagin, 2013). Politically, I have spent most of my life surrounded predominantly by left-leaning individuals. I consider myself to be politically liberal.

My positionality affected both my recruitment and interview approaches. For example, one participant informed me after receiving numerous recruitment letters that she felt I was overwhelming her with requests. She also noted that I had not explained sufficiently what led me to become interested in studying the experiences of former White supremacist women, nor had I justified why I was in a position to explore the topic. Finally, she pointed out that the language I had used to describe inclusion criteria (i.e., white women over the age of 18) in the recruitment letter was off-putting. Because of these reservations, she initially declined my interview request.

Receiving this feedback encouraged me to check back in with my research supervisor and with myself to explore the assumptions I made that may have distanced me from the potential participant. I found that I had, in fact, disrespected her privacy by reaching out to her as often and as zealously as I had. I also realized that the participant was correct to point out that, as a man, my request could be met with mistrust. I also understood how my wording in the recruitment letter may have come off as insensitive.

To address these issues, my research supervisor and I explained how the language in our recruitment letter was standard per ASU's IRB protocol. However, we agreed that the language could be considered offensive in the context of the current study. As such, we noted that we would keep her comments in mind for future projects and relay her

concerns back to IRB. We also responded to the participant by mentioning how we had studied her anti-hate activist career history, and as such, how we believed she could provide meaningful insight to the study. Finally, we sent her our published article concerning White supremacist hate group exit (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021) to provide an example of our purpose and focus.

Ultimately, the participant agreed to take part in the current study. Her interview was the longest from the sample (2.5 hours) and included rich, meaningful information about what it was like to be a woman who left her White supremacist hate group and became an anti-hate activist. During the interview, I did my best to keep in mind the fact that I was both in a privileged and sensitive situation as a man interviewing a woman about her gendered hate group exit experience. I believe that our conversation before the interview was highly beneficial to my approach as an interviewer and as an analyst of data from her and subsequent interviews.

Trustworthiness and Methodological Rigor

I ensured that both studies met qualitative research standards by attending to the best practices and standards for trustworthiness and methodological rigor of my data (Levitt et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Morrow, 2005). First, I met the four criteria for qualitative research put forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Second, I attended to the two criteria set forth by Levitt et al. (2018): fidelity and utility. Levitt et al.'s (2018) contribution to the methodological literature is particularly significant as it represents the work conducted by the American Psychological Association Publications and Communications Board Working Group on Journal Article Reporting Standards for

Qualitative Research (JARS–Qual Working Group). This team, composed of a group of researchers with varying methodological backgrounds, research topics, and approaches to inquiry, examined the state of journal article reporting standards as they applied to qualitative research, and specifically to the discipline of psychology. I employed the same means of trustworthiness and methodological rigor for both studies.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the researcher's study measures or tests what is actually intended (Shenton, 2004). To enhance credibility, I employed several techniques. First, I used the semi-structured interview to gather qualitative data. I used this method because it has been utilized repeatedly and successfully in qualitative literature, and as such, represented an approach that was "well established both in qualitative investigation in general and in information science in particular" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). I also identified my role as a research instrument for the current studies (i.e., my background, biases, expectations, and assumptions, how these characteristics might have affected my analysis, and how I managed them; Morrow, 2005). Finally, I worked closely with Dr. Lisa Spanierman as an auditor of my interpretations to reduce possible misrepresentation of participants' lived experiences (Levitt et al., 2017, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability refers to, one, the extent to which the reader can generalize the findings of a study to her, his, or their own context, and two, how far a researcher may make claims for a general application of the theory (Morrow, 2005). To maintain transferability, I provided information about my role as a research instrument, the research context in which interviews took place, study participants, and researcher-

participant relationships to allow for the reader to interpret how findings might be transferrable (Morrow, 2005). As my study is qualitative, I avoided generalizing findings to broader populations or settings (Morrow, 2005).

Dependability

Dependability requires that “the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques” (Gasson, 2004, p. 94). To address dependability, I maintained a detailed chronology of research activities, possible influences on data collection and analysis, emerging themes, categories, models, and analytic notes (Morrow, 2005). I also described all steps of data analysis. To ensure consistency, I reviewed my notes with Dr. Lisa Spanierman at various points throughout the research.

Confirmability

Confirmability represents qualitative investigator’s concern for objectivity. To ensure confirmability, researchers should take steps to help ensure as far as possible that findings result from participants’ experiences and ideas, rather than characteristics and biases of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Because researcher bias inevitably influenced data analysis, I strove to communicate findings that were as representative of participants’ lived experiences as possible (Carlson, 2010; Drisko, 1997; Gasson, 2004). For example, I conducted member checks in which I sent each participant their interview transcript to give each an opportunity to verify for accuracy. As part of this process, I asked participants to edit (i.e., clarify, elaborate, and/or erase) words or passages from transcripts (Carlson, 2010). Across both samples, only one participant asked that certain pieces of her transcript not be shared, and I deleted those accordingly.

In addition to attending to standards for trustworthiness, I also strove to meet criteria for methodological rigor. Following Levitt et al.'s (2018) recommendations, I made all possible efforts to ensure that my findings were faithful to the subject matter and addressed the research questions established by the current studies.

Fidelity

Researchers practice fidelity by selecting procedures that maintain allegiance to the phenomenon under study (Levitt et al., 2018). Researchers can bolster fidelity by a few means. First, they can collect data from sources that illuminate variations in the phenomenon and are relevant to the research goals (i.e., data adequacy). I did so by interviewing participants from various ages, nationalities, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic conditions, employment statuses, and educational levels. Second, researchers can recognize and articulate the influence their own perspectives might have on data analysis and attempt to limit that influence (perspective management in data analysis). As explained above, I addressed my role as a research instrument for the current studies, and pointed out how my background, biases, expectations, and assumptions might have affected my analysis (Morrow, 2005). Third, to enhance perspectiveness (i.e., perspective management in data analysis), researchers can consider how their perspectives may have affected their analytic process. I addressed how my perspectives may have affected my analysis by working with Dr. Spanierman as an auditor. Dr. Spanierman provided feedback about my findings, pointing out instances where I needed to address how my background may have influenced my data analysis. For instance, she noted that many of my demographic characteristics were celebrated by White supremacy groups. Thus, she encouraged me to inquire into how this fact might

affect my communication with participants during data collection and my perspective during data analysis. I assumed that having these characteristics might endear me to participants in a way that could facilitate communication. But I also noted how being so endeared might influence me to report results in an artificially positive light. As such, I committed myself to reporting participants' descriptions as directly as possible while practicing self-reflection and cyclical bracketing. Fourth, researchers should root findings in data that support them (groundedness). I met this condition by using participants' own words wherever possible and also by working with Dr. Spanierman as an auditor of my findings.

Utility

To ensure utility in achieving research goals, researchers select procedures that answer their research questions and address the purpose of their studies (Levitt et al., 2018). Researchers can strengthen utility in four ways. First, researchers can consider data in their context (e.g., location, time, cultural situation). This practice results in contextualization of data. I followed this recommendation by including demographic information about participants, as well as considering the cultural and temporal context within which their experiences of hate group exit and anti-hate activism occurred. Second, researchers can collect data that provides grounds for insightful analyses (i.e., catalyst for insight). I met this standard by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews that lasted between one to two-and-a-half hours. I approached these interviews seeking to gather information about how the participants experienced their own lives, and I considered them experts of their own experience throughout data collection and analysis. Third, researchers should seek findings that meaningfully address the analytic

goals (i.e., meaningful contributions). I addressed this criterion by creating a semi-structured interview protocol that both articulated my research questions and also left flexibility to uncover unexpected findings. Fourth, researchers are obligated to explain differences within a set of findings (i.e., coherence among findings). While participants in this study all had different data in terms of their experiences, IPA allowed me to cluster findings within broader themes. As such, superficial differences were subsumed within more general categories.

Chapter IV

Study One Method: Why and How Women Leave White Supremacy and Become

Anti-hate Activists

The purpose of Study One was to explore how and why women leave White supremacy hate groups and become anti-hate activists. I employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). This approach was appropriate for studying the experiences of disengaging, deradicalizing, and becoming an anti-hate activist because it allowed me to grasp the nature, essence, and meaning of a given phenomenon according to participants' lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). Importantly, IPA recognizes that the researcher's own positionality can facilitate and/or interfere with access to participants' lived experiences. Thus, it was essential that I acknowledged my biases before and during the research process (Smith et al., 2009). I addressed my positionality in several ways including self-reflection, cyclical bracketing (i.e., setting aside biases), and working with an auditor to ensure interpretations matched participant's meanings (Levitt et al., 2017, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Participant Selection and Recruitment

After obtaining approval from ASU's Institutional Review Board, I began recruitment. I recruited seven participants for Study One. This number of participants allowed me to engage in sufficient depth with each. It also provided an opportunity for me to examine, in detail, convergences and divergences between participant experiences (Alase, 2017). Each participant met particular inclusion criteria. First, all participants were over the age of eighteen years (i.e., adults; participants' ages ranged from 32-48 years old; See Table 1 for demographic information). Second, all participants self-

identified as cisgender women. Third, to make sure participants were fully disengaged from their groups, participants had to have been removed from their respective hate groups for at least one year. Fourth, all participants needed to have engaged in at least one instance of public denunciation or activism against racism (e.g., denounced White supremacy through public media like newspaper articles, news footage, books, YouTube, etc.). Women who have left White supremacist hate groups are an “extremely difficult population to locate and study” (Latif et al., 2020, p. 373). Very few women who leave their hate groups speak publicly about their experiences. Even fewer go on to become public anti-hate activists. As such, the sample for this study was relatively small ($n = 7$), but appropriate for this investigation.

For the recruitment method, I used several methods including internet outreach (Hamilton & Bowers, 2006), snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961; Parker et al., 2019), and contacting hate group exit programs. These methods proved successful for recruiting in my prior thesis project (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). I identified potential interviewees who had written about or had been the subject of writing concerning their hate group exit experiences (e.g., Darby, 2020; Manning & Manning, 2021). Using a script, I reached out to these individuals through contact information accessible on the internet (e.g., email, telephone, and social media; See Appendix A). I also used *snowball sampling*, in which participants introduced me to potential participants (Goodman, 1961; Parker et al., 2019). This method was well-suited for the current study because it is designed to facilitate the approach of sensitive and private populations (Biernaki & Waldorf, 1981). I also contacted hate group exit programs and asked if any former White supremacist women would be comfortable participating in an academic interview.

When I contacted potential participants, I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study, and requested interviews. I used a recruitment script when contacting potential participants (see Appendix A). I then conducted interviews via Zoom ($n = 6$) or phone ($n = 1$). To protect anonymity, I provided each interviewee the opportunity to choose a pseudonym by which they would be addressed in the study. Before the interview and as part of the informed consent (See Appendix C), I informed participants that all interviews would be recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Sources

The data sources for this study included a demographic form (See Table 1) and a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix G). I constructed these materials based on scholarly literature concerning IPA, and by collaborating with my research supervisor, Dr. Lisa Spanierman. I also referred to my master's thesis when constructing the materials. The protocol differed in the current study, as it was more focused on how gender affected women's exit experiences and becoming anti-hate activists.

Demographics

Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire in which they were invited to provide their age, marriage status, range of income, employment status, level of education, religious affiliation, and ethnicity (See Appendix E).

Interview Protocol

Following standard IPA protocol, I utilized a semi-structured interview format (See Appendix G). Semi-structured interview questions are broad and open, which allows the researcher to study in detail participants' interpretations of their lived experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This interview style also enables the researcher and the

participant to engage in a dialogue, which affords the flexibility to pursue important issues that may arise in the participant's description (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Lastly, semi-structured interviews encourage participants to be the experts of their own stories (Smith & Osborn, 2009). This interview approach fit well with the phenomenological methodology I used for the current study, which focused on understanding lived experiences from the subjects' points of view (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). I previously employed this interview format for my thesis project, which allowed me to gather rich data to describe men and non-binary formers' lived experiences (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). I asked participants (a) why they left their hate groups, (b) what life was like after exiting, and (c) what factors prompted their decisions to publicly speak out against white supremacy.

I developed interview questions in adherence to Smith and Osborn's (2009) suggestions. First, I generated a list of areas I sought to address in the interview. Second, I ranked the topic areas in terms of the order I planned to speak about them in the interview. The order of the questions was based on the steps former White supremacists took through the exit process (i.e., pre-exit, post-exit, and anti-hate activism). Third, I developed a set of follow-up probes and prompts for each question. Keeping with IPA, I made sure that all interview questions adhered to the following three criteria (Smith & Osborn, 2009): (1) questions were neutral rather than value-laden or leading, (2) questions were accessible and did not use obscure jargon, and (3) questions were open-ended.

Procedures

Once I identified the participants, I sent each an informed consent form (See Appendix C). I reviewed the informed consent form with participants and answered any questions concerning the study. I also provided each participant with a copy of the informed consent agreement for their personal records. Next, I conducted the interviews via Zoom ($n = 6$) and telephone ($n = 1$). Interviews lasted between one to two-and-a-half hours. While I was conducting interviews, I made sure to continually reference the interview protocol. During the semi-structured interview, I engaged in a dialogue with each participant and modified my follow-up questions according to the participant's responses. This flexibility allowed me to examine the experience of hate group exit facilitation as it was expressed uniquely in each individual. After conducting the interviews, I offered each interviewee the option for a follow-up interview. Two of seven participants chose to pursue a follow-up interview. During these interviews, I checked in with participants about how they had been feeling since their initial interviews and asked if there was anything about which they would like to speak that we had not covered. These conversations were not recorded or transcribed and thus were not used in data analysis. I transcribed all initial interviews. I then sent the participants their transcripts and invited them to make any changes they felt were necessary.

Data Analysis

Following Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2012) IPA recommendations, I analyzed transcript data by generating themes for each individual transcript, identifying thematic connections within individual transcripts, and then developing a superordinate theme list

drawn from across the interviews. These steps mirrored the data analysis I conducted in my investigation of White men and non-binary formers (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021).

Multiple Readings and Making Notes

As suggested by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), I closely read each transcript several times. This step helped me become immersed in the data while recollecting the atmosphere and setting of the interview. Each subsequent reading and listening to the recording provided new insights. While reading the transcripts or listening to the audio recordings, I made observational and reflective notes about the interview experience. These notes focused on the content of what is being discussed, language use (e.g., metaphors, symbols, repetitions, and pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments. I also took notes associated with personal reflexivity (e.g., the ways in which my positionality may have affected rapport with the participant).

Transforming Notes into Emergent Themes

Next, I followed Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2012) suggestion of transforming notes into emergent themes. At this point, I began to develop concise descriptive phrases that captured the essential characteristics identified within the researcher's notes. These phrases were grounded in participants' descriptions of their experiences leaving White supremacy and becoming anti-hate activists. At this point, Dr. Lisa Spanierman audited my initial themes to ensure agreement on theme designation. Dr. Spanierman noted that some of the original themes I generated were repetitive and could be connected under more general categories (e.g., integrating the "Receiving support on exit journey" theme into the "Developing/maintaining supportive and helpful post-exit relationships" theme). As such, I went back through the superordinate theme list and condensed the original

themes from eleven to eight. Dr. Spanierman also highlighted quotations that did not seem pertinent to the research questions and identified quotations that fit more accurately under different themes. For example, Dr. Spanierman pointed out that four quotations that were originally designated as being part of the “Identifying areas for increased external exit support” thematic category would fit better under the “Experiencing costs of helping others exit” category. I moved these quotations accordingly. Finally, Dr. Spanierman made recommendations about how to phrase the definitions of the themes so that the essence of the theme was readily identifiable and linked to illustrative quotations. I subsequently made these adjustments.

Seeking Relationships and Clustering Themes

Next, I followed Pietkiewicz and Smith’s (2012) recommendation that the researcher looks for conceptual similarities between emergent themes, clusters them together, and labels each cluster. After completing this step, I ended up with a list of themes and subthemes gathered from across all transcripts. I then provided a definition for each theme with links to illustrative quotations in the manuscript. At this point, Dr. Spanierman again audited my themes to ensure agreement. Dr. Spanierman suggested that I combine less salient themes under more general thematic categories. For instance, Dr. Spanierman suggested that quotations dealing with the experience of misogynistic experience, whether pre- or post-exit, could be combined as one theme. Dr. Spanierman also recommended that I re-phrase certain parts of the theme definitions so that one could more easily connect them to the theme content. I then made these adjustments to the theme definitions.

Write Up

In the last step, I translated the final theme table into a written account. This step involved taking transcript themes, writing them up individually and describing each with illustrative extracts from the interview transcripts. I also provided analysis of these themes and quotations. It was important that, where appropriate, I use the interviewees' own words for two reasons: one, it allows the reader to judge the pertinence of my interpretations, and two, it maintained the original voice of the participant and their perspective. In the final manuscript, I emphasized the participants' lived experiences from their point of view.

Data Security

I followed Barnhill and Barnhill's (2015) recommendations for protecting qualitative research data. For phone interview data, I used my password-protected cell phone from my private residence. I recorded the audio using an application on the same password-protected cell phone. I then transferred these data to my password-protected computer, where they were subsequently stored in a secure Dropbox folder. I carried out Zoom interviews on my personal password-protected laptop using a private password-protected Wi-Fi connection. I saved the audio and video files from these Zoom recordings on the same password-protected laptop, and then transferred them to a secure Dropbox folder. I updated the passwords for both my laptop and Wi-Fi connection every three months. To emphasize security, I only used passwords that were at least eight characters long and included upper- and lower-case letters and symbols (Merchant, 2014). Additionally, I installed anti-virus software to guard against malware. Finally, I locked my screen when not using my computer to ensure no passersby could view it.

Trustworthiness and Methodological Rigor

I employed the same trustworthiness and methodological rigor measures as presented in the chapter three. For a full explanation of trustworthiness and methodological rigor measures, please see the “Trustworthiness and Methodological Rigor” section of chapter three. In addition to following qualitative research standards regarding trustworthiness by following best practices and standards for methodological rigor and trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; [Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Morrow, 2005]), I also met criteria for methodological rigor (i.e., fidelity and utility; [Levitt et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2017]).

Chapter V

Study One Findings

Among the current sample of cisgender women, eight themes emerged that illuminated their experiencing leaving White supremacist hate groups and becoming anti-hate activists. The findings include (a) *becoming disillusioned by the White supremacist movement*, (b) *experiencing misogyny and abuse*, (c) *protecting children from the movement*, (d) *encountering social and personal post-exit consequences*, (e) *developing/maintaining supportive post-exit relationships*, (f) *cultivating positive identities through introspection and self-healing*, (g) *feeling motivated to participate in anti-hate activism*, and (h) *navigating consequences of and frustrations with public activism* (see Table 3). In this section, I present each theme with illustrative quotations. I ordered the themes based on the sequence of hate group exit steps that participants described (i.e., pre-exit, post-exit, and anti-hate activism). I address participants by either their self-selected pseudonyms or their legal names (by which they explicitly asked to be identified).

Becoming Disillusioned by the White Supremacist Movement

Participants described experiencing disillusionment with the movement, which led to their exit. Two participants explained how they could no longer reconcile the violence committed by White supremacists with their own involvement in the movement. For example, Acacia, who oversaw web development for one of the nation's largest neo-Nazi organizations, explained: "It was pretty much that I could no longer ignore that the ideology that I was pushing and that I was promoting was behind this [violence] and was the cause of people going and killing other people." While in the process of trying to

extricate herself from her hate group, Hannah, a former member of a Canadian neo-Nazi organization, met with a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress. She remembered being in his office after he gave her a tour of a Holocaust remembrance exhibition. Absorbing the extent of the Nazi atrocities had a profound effect on her. Hannah remembered saying to the member of the Congress:

The only person who's less than anybody else in this room [inside Canadian Jewish Congress] is me, right now, for trying to deny other people their humanity. And for trying to deny these atrocities . . . You know, the Jews and the other people who were, who were victimized in the Holocaust, they had, they had everything taken from them. They had everything taken and they... [voice quivering] and they did everything they could to maintain their humanity. And I had everything. And I freely gave mine away.

In both Acacia and Hannah's experiences, witnessing and understanding the extent of racist violence led to a sense of disillusionment with their hate groups. Lauren and Madison noted that disillusionment led to exhaustion/burnout, which served as a key factor in their wanting to leave. Lauren explained what burning out was like for her:

It's almost like depression . . . A lot of mental exhaustion. 'Cause I feel like in order to keep up with that stuff [White supremacist ideology], like, you do need to be on high alert, number one, and number two I got sick of hearing the paranoia . . . And also, it is exhausting having to create your own answers to societal problems that quite frankly have, like, a lot of answers to them.

For Madison, the burnout from being part of a White supremacist group got to the point where she felt like she could no longer endure it. As she explained, "I wanted to die. I

wanted to, I wanted to kill myself . . . I was just so exhausted with everything.” Both violence and hate exhaustion contributed to these women’s growing disillusionment with being involved in the hate movement.

Experiencing Misogyny and Abuse

Participants cited misogynistic abuse as a reason for their leaving the movement. It is important to note that participants recalled experiencing such treatment both inside and outside of their hate groups. Hannah remembered hearing denigrating comments about herself and other women often while inside her hate group:

I heard constantly that, you know, well my job is to have kids and blah, blah, you know. Like, I heard really gross things like, um, you know, “Stretch marks are a woman’s medal of honor” kind of thing . . . And in other cases [women are] being used by, um, by men the way I was, you know, to try to, like, “Let’s give this a polite veneer” . . . You know, you put a soft-spoken woman out front. It’s going to hit different than, like, someone who’s a skinhead with a bunch of tattoos.

According to Lauren, this kind of gendered objectification was incessant. She remembered “constantly being questioned about why I’m not married, why I don’t have kids, why I look the way I do, why I haven’t had plastic surgery like some of the other guys’ wives.” This bodily objectification was particularly painful for Lauren as she noted that she struggled with body dysmorphia. She explained that “body shaming actually happens quite a bit in this movement.” Lauren would sometimes vent to her mother about how she was becoming disillusioned with the movement. But her mother responded by further objectifying Lauren, pressuring her to have children and shrugging off Lauren’s fear of gaining weight in the process. When Lauren explained that she had broken up

with her racist boyfriend, her mother responded, “Now your first priority needs to be a new boyfriend.” Lauren also described how people constantly ask her and her current boyfriend when they plan to have children. She explained that she has had to learn how to not be triggered by these interactions: “It’s important for me, for my mind not to go back to when I was in the movement and get all defensive. I can literally just say, ‘We just don’t want them.’ And then leave it at that.” For Madison, being in a relationship with a White supremacist man was an oppressive experience:

When you’re in a relationship with somebody that is a White supremacist, it’s not always the best. Having to wake up at 6am every day. Making sure that breakfast was done and clothes were washed and ironed and put away and not being able to talk back, especially whenever he was telling my son he wasn’t allowed to come out of his room. It was being controlled. Like, have you ever seen the movie *Stepford Wives*? It was just like that. Just like that. You had to be the perfect wife to the most vicious husband.

For others, the misogyny and control escalated to physical and sexual abuse. For example, Shannon endured intimate partner violence (IPV) for over four years while dating White supremacist men. She explained: “I had the shit kicked out of me all the time by my intimate partners. But it didn’t challenge my personal view of myself because I felt worthless.” Sarah experienced abuse on two levels. Her father, an active member of the KKK, sexually molested her as a child. He also forced her to appear on a popular television show to endorse racist ideology on air:

It was horrible. I was just saying literally exactly what I was told to say. By my father, his associates, and the producers . . . They wanted me to say the N-word

and stuff . . . They would try to like pump me up and get me upset and stuff, so that way it would follow up over out onto the stage. Yeah, they definitely, um, exploited the hell out of me. Not just my father. It was both parties. Very abusive. I was aware of it, but I didn't have any, I felt like I didn't have a choice. I didn't have any power. I was just a kid.

In addition to experiencing misogyny and abuse inside of their hate groups, some women remembered encountering equally damaging gendered treatment *outside* of the group. For instance, Hannah continued to experience misogyny after leaving the movement and becoming a public anti-hate activist. She explained:

This is a gendered experience that I have. That people feel they have, like, a right to my time and my space . . . Sometimes it can be very unsettling . . . It does make me defensive. I've had people follow me into the washroom after an event to cry on me . . . I've had people, like, try to psychoanalyze me in lobbies of buildings . . . With academics and stuff. . . because I'm a rare commodity as a female former, there's like this sort of odd exoticizing thing that happens . . . I was at a conference in the States . . . and was speaking with somebody. And he's like, "Wow! A female former! I don't get to meet people like you very often." And I'm like, "Yeah...How do I get away from you?"

Shannon and Sarah both experienced misogyny when making medical decisions and engaging with male medical professionals. After leaving the movement, and while attending college, Shannon became pregnant. The first person to whom she reached out was her father. He explained to her that if she got an abortion, he would continue to pay for her education. But if she kept the baby, he would no longer finance her education. She

told him, “‘It’s your money. So, like, you know, you’re entitled to do whatever you want or whatever, but fuck you.’ Because, like, that’s a horrible, horrible fucking, like, decision for me to have to make that way.” At one point while giving birth, Shannon’s male doctor decided that the child’s placenta needed to be removed manually. She described that despite her contestations, the doctor forcibly inserted his hand into her uterus to remove the placenta anyway. As she recalled, “There’s this word for [when] someone angrily puts their body inside your body without your consent when you’re saying ‘No!’ I was like, ‘That’s rape!’” Sarah also described a harrowing experience she had with a male psychotherapist after she left the movement. She had gone to speak with the therapist about how her father sexually abused her when she was going up. She said:

He literally sat there and said to me, “Did you like it [the sexual abuse]?” And I looked at him. I’m like, “No. Of course I didn’t like it.” And he says, he starts badgering me, and says, “We can’t move on unless you admit that you liked it. You know you liked it. Just admit that you liked it.” And I’m like, “What the *F* is going on?” I froze. I, I felt completely unsafe in that moment. And I grabbed my shit. And I literally ran. Went running to my car. I’m crying hysterical.

Unfortunately, this interaction was not the only one wherein Sarah was mistreated by men in positions of authority. Another time when she went to report her father’s sexual abuse to the police, they also disregarded and belittled her:

They brought me back to the chief’s office . . . and he’s sittin’ there reading the affidavit, and he starts laughing hysterical. And I, and I was crying hysterical. And I’m like, trying to compose myself. And then I finally said, “What’s so funny?” And he says, “You.” And I was like, “What?” And he says, “You’re so

funny.” He goes, “Look how upset you are. This is no big deal. Do you know how many people this happens to?” Yep. I can’t even describe. Like, I can’t, you could ask me what that felt like. I can’t. I have no words. I immediately wish I never told anybody, never said anything . . . I suddenly felt like I was surrounded by more pedophiles.

Protecting Children from the Movement

Participants explained that part of their decision to leave the movement was informed by their need to protect their own and others’ children. For some, the changes were incremental. For instance, Frankie moved from group to group trying to find a community that was sufficiently safe for her children to be around. But until she did, she had them stay with their father for the sake of their safety. Shannon realized that she would not want children exposed to White supremacy after living with her racist boyfriend’s mother and his younger brothers:

I was living in a household where there were two eleven-year-old twin boys. And a nine-year-old boy [boyfriend’s younger siblings]. I found myself, like, being like, “Ok, like, you know, like, I don’t want them to be exposed to this White power nonsense or whatever, or these White power ideas.” And then it was, then, for me, began some of the questioning of like, “Ok, well if this is something I’m willing to like die for and see, like, a death would be glorious, for, you know, these ideas or whatever, like, why, why don’t I want these kids exposed to that? Like, why do I want to keep them away from these ideas? Why do I feel like if I revealed the beliefs that I had that they would judge me negatively for them? And why did I not want that?”

Acacia experienced a similar line of thought. She hid her hate group identity from her children. This secrecy made her question the integrity of the movement itself: “I kind of laugh about it now, but it’s like, ‘You know, if you don’t want your kids involved in it, then maybe it’s not a good thing.’” Finally, Madison articulated how taking care of her children superseded her fear of leaving the movement:

Turning ‘round and walking away [from the hate group], and risking it all [life]? Or staying and raising your child in this, this, hate. This world that he shouldn’t be in. It’s scary . . . I made that call when my mom told me that she knows the kind of stuff that I was into [White supremacy]. And that I would never see my oldest son again. And I realized that my children are the reason why I wake up every single morning. They’re the reason why. They’re the reason for everything I do. And that I needed to change my life, and change it for the better for my kids. Not just for me, but for my kids. My oldest son, not being able to see him, and then my youngest son, with him being Hispanic, I know that I needed to give them a better life.

With her experience as evidence, Madison called out to other mothers raising their children in White supremacist groups: “I hope that more women see that it is not a way to live. It’s not a way to raise kids . . . All I want for people, is to look in the mirror and say, ‘I’m better than this.’ And pick up and do better. Make a better life, for them, for their kids, for their families.”

Encountering Social and Personal Post-Exit Consequences

After leaving the movement, participants described encountering social and personal consequences. Two participants described how their social environments were

altered after leaving their hate groups. Sarah found that her connection to her father, a member of the KKK, followed her and negatively impacted her social life after leaving the movement. For example, she described the trouble she had signing her children up for school and finding employment because she was related to her father:

When you register your kid for school, whether it's public or private . . . you have to give their birth certificate. What's it say on the birth certificate? Their mother's maiden name. And where I lived, was where he [my White supremacist father] lived . . . I've lost jobs over this.

Sarah also explained that her father responded to her leaving the movement and reporting his sexual abuse by shooting a gun in the woods behind her house to send a message: "He wanted me dead." Additionally, after being exploited and abused by her father and the KKK as a child, Sarah continued to have difficulty trusting others: "I don't trust many people. It doesn't matter where they come from, who they are, what their background is. 'Cause I kind of always worry...it always goes through my head, like, 'What are their intentions?'" Acacia went through a great deal of social isolation, which negatively affected her health. As she described, "I isolated a lot . . . which affected my health also. I have [an autoimmune disorder]. So, the stress and everything affects that." Madison dealt with residual paranoia from her time in the movement:

So even after leaving [the White supremacist movement], you're still within that paranoid mindset. And so, it's a very difficult thing . . . I find that you still have to watch your back [for retribution from the group], which is frustrating and aggravating and sucks . . . I have pretty much told myself, "You know what? If

people want to come and get me, they can come and get me. ‘Cause I’m tired of constantly, I’m not gonna live my life in fear.”

Finally, Madison recalled being physically threatened by a member of the Aryan Brotherhood who was being investigated for a double murder.

Developing/Maintaining Supportive Exit-Facilitating Relationships

Participants spoke about how cultivating supportive relationships outside of their hate groups positively impacted their exit and post-exit experiences. First, participants described forming relationships with people who helped them physically leave the movement. For instance, Hannah connected with a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress who offered to help her disengage in exchange for information about the group: “He just said, like, ‘You know what? You have to stop doing all your activities. You have to, like, get away from these people . . . And you have to give me stuff [intelligence about the group] . . . like information, to show that you’re serious.”” Similarly, Frankie struck up a relationship with the FBI:

I didn’t know where to start [in terms of exiting], really. Because my only income, I was working for the group doing just the writing [racist] literature and reading it on the radio show . . . But I knew that [co-host of White supremacist radio show] had been contacted by federal agents, so I looked through his office ‘til I found one of their business cards. And I just contacted them and told them I’d been working for [him], and I wanted to leave the group. But I wasn’t sure how to do it.

She would go on to work for the FBI as an informant in exchange for their support getting her out of the group. Finally, Madison called on friends she had from outside the

group when she realized that she wanted to leave. She first explained to a close friend that she was looking for a way out. The two called a third friend who picked Madison up and drove her to another state. She reflected on what it felt like to be supported in her exit: “It was nice because I had somebody who could save me from that.”

In addition to connecting with people who helped facilitate their exit, participants also built supportive relationships with non-White supremacists after leaving. One important type of relationship that participants mentioned was familial. Lauren described how her mother played a key role in helping her leave hate behind:

The fact that [my mother] welcomed me back after some of the shit that I did, like, that’s huge. A lot of people aren’t lucky enough to have that. Yeah, ‘cause, you know, we thought about this and both of us were like, “Yeah, I’d probably be dead unless that happened.”

Participants also found refuge in social support groups. For instance, Hannah connected with the LGBTQ+ community in her city. She explained how she was grateful “just to be able to have the opportunity to get to know other queer folks and to get to just like spend time thinking and exploring and figuring it all out.” Hannah also found it refreshing to be around groups of formers who shared similar experiences to her own:

Every time I’m in the same space as other former extremists, like, I’m just like, you know, just kind of like, it lights me up. I’m so excited [chuckle]. Like, “Oh my God . . . other people have actually been through this.” And, you know, we have, regardless of whatever, um, individual circumstances we may have, like, there’s still that, you know, there’s still a sort of these common emotions and commonalities that we share that we just can’t talk about with other people.

Shannon became involved in a parent support group. In addition to the information she was absorbing, she was also positively affected by the camaraderie: “For the first time, it’s like, ‘Oh, not only do I have this relationship with a bunch of women, but it’s like, like these friendships are so *meaningful* to me.’”

Participants also developed meaningful and supportive *dyadic* relationships during and after exiting. One type of supportive dyadic relationship was romantic. For example, after exiting, Madison entered into a romantic relationship with a Mexican-American Indian woman. When asked how she told her girlfriend about formerly being part of a racist organization, Madison responded, “I told her that I have a history and I have things that I’m not proud of. And she [girlfriend] says, ‘Everybody does. Everybody has done stuff that they’re not proud of. It’s not what you’ve done in your past. It’s how you’re trying to rectify it.’” Madison explained that the relationship she built with her girlfriend helped her stay anchored after leaving the movement.

[My girlfriend] keeps me strong. She helps me keep my head up and moving forward. ‘Cause she knows all about my past. She keeps me, she keeps me sane. She keeps me moving forward and living life to the fullest. And it’s nice. Instead of having somebody be like, “Hey, I mean I’m here for you, but I’m not really here for you.” She’s there for me no matter what.

In addition to her girlfriend, Madison also highlighted the importance of another connection she made with a person of color after exiting. She connected with him through Facebook, where she asked whether anyone knew of a service that could remove her racist tattoos. Though she received a good deal of hateful responses, she also caught

the attention of a Black man who was sympathetic to her search. They ended up meeting in person. The meeting greatly impacted Madison's racial perspective:

I bought him a shake from Steak n' Shake. And we talked for a very long time. And he goes, "You are a good person. You are a good person for changing. You are a good person for not wanting to be this person anymore." And I stayed in contact with this guy . . . It was nice being able to see, see people for who they really are. And not judging them because of the color of their skin. Because I never, I never gave people the chance. I never said, "You know what? I'm gonna look past the color of your skin. I'm gonna get to know you for who you are."

And so, when I was finally able to do that, it was a huge relief off my shoulders. Lauren explained that during her time as a racist skinhead, she worked a scaffolding job with a group of Black Jamaican men. She became close with one of the men when she realized that "this guy cares a lot more than my supposed [skinhead] friends do." Lauren remained close to this man after leaving her group. He was the first person she told about breaking up with her racist boyfriend, which she described as the moment she knew she would leave the movement.

Cultivating Positive Identities Through Introspection and Self-Healing

Participants identified injured aspects of themselves that they both explored and attempted to heal after leaving the movement. Two participants identified a phenomenon they called "the void," a period of time during which they lost and had to rebuild their sense of self. Lauren spoke of the void and how she navigated it:

So we call this the void period, where you're still trying to figure out, like, who you are, what your identity is . . . The thing I had to realize is identity isn't

supposed to be just like one single label . . . It's actually like many, many things about somebody . . . I don't feel the need to wrap my identity around my past anymore.

Hannah also spoke of the void and struggled with its implications:

The period of, like, sort of, like, deradicalizing and, you know, re-assessing your worldview and like rebuilding all this stuff . . . the void . . . It's just the oddest thing to not know even basic things about yourself. Or your life . . . I didn't know what to wear. I didn't know what to eat . . . Because I had gotten into the whole, like, Kosher food conspiracy [the notion that food companies and consumers are forced to pay money to support Judaism, Zionism, and Israel through the costs of kosher certification] . . . I was also not eating, um, food from other cultures . . . I didn't know what TV shows I wanted to watch. I didn't know what I believed about the bigger world. I didn't know, I didn't know what to think when I interacted with other people. Like, just these very basic, sort of, core things that we take for granted, you know? I, I had no idea . . . I went from feeling like I had my whole life planned about who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do, and what world I wanted to see and what I wanted to accomplish to not knowing anything.

Beyond the void, participants also noted their experiences addressing and attempting to heal trauma from being involved in the movement. Four participants detailed PTSD-like symptoms. Hannah, for example, described her nightmares:

I had PTSD-type nightmares for, like, decades, decades, afterwards . . . The dream would start, and I'd suddenly be, like, in a party or a picnic, or a meeting or

something with all these fascists. And I'd be sitting there, like, "I'm not supposed to be here!" Like, "What if they figure out I'm not supposed to be here? What am I gonna do?" . . . I end up waking up just feeling more exhausted than when I went to sleep.

Although Frankie explained that she did not anticipate the mental health consequences of being involved in the movement. She noted one kind of experience she had repeatedly wherein she realized a conspiracy theory she believed in from her time in the movement was untrue. For example, she was convinced that Osama Bin Laden was not a real person, and that the character was created by Jewish people. She realized that Osama Bin Laden was in fact a real person in 2016. She explained that coming to this kind of realization was "embarrassing, discouraging, really disorienting. Like I don't know what things I believe that are real." She also believed that society was entirely racist and that everyone with whom she would interact outside of the group would also be racist. She "believed the entire world was as the racists were describing it. And then I was trying to exist as a newly non-racist person in this terrible world."

Shannon described how the trauma she experienced negatively affected her ability to create a new identity for herself: "I still had horrible, like, interpersonal relationship skills. I still didn't really have . . . positive identity markers. It was kind of like my identity was still really based around on what I was not." She eventually came across a resource that helped her make sense of her trauma responses: "I stumbled across this book . . . [about] Complex PTSD. I was like, 'Holy shit . . . Ok, you know, I have to kind of like rethink everything. Because I have lots of new information.'" Sarah felt the constant anxiety she experienced in the movement negatively affected her physical

health: “All of that [trauma from being in the movement] damaged my . . . autonomic nervous system. My last . . . [orthostatic condition] flare up . . . my cardiologist told me . . . my body was stuck in a fight or flight loop. It felt like I was having a panic attack 24/7 for 3 weeks.”

In addition to addressing the traumatic consequences of being involved in the movement, three participants described having to battle addiction issues after exiting. Lauren spoke about the moment she realized that she was an alcoholic and would need to stop drinking:

I had liver cirrhosis when I was 22. And, let’s just say when I got the news from the doctor I didn’t exactly know how to take it . . . But he said, “Ok, what I mean by you need to quit drinking now is you need to do it *now*.” So, that obviously sounded pretty serious. The withdrawal sucked.

Her sobriety helped her see the movement with more clarity: “Sobriety does change people quite a bit. I often put it to people this way: ‘I needed to be drunk to believe that shit [White supremacist ideology].’” After leaving the movement, Frankie decided to pursue body building. She ended up getting addicted to cosmetic surgery and steroids. She explained that “I really think the main addiction was just to all the attention I was getting. And, something I realized, it was taking over my life and I had to leave it.”

Madison struggled with drug addiction. She relapsed in 2019 and again in 2020. She has remained sober since then with no external support other than her girlfriend.

Along with navigating the void and addressing their trauma, three participants came out and explored their sexual orientations after exiting. Lauren came out as bisexual to her family shortly after leaving the movement:

It was at the dinner table one night . . . [My mother] brings up, “Oh yeah, men,” and I’m like, “What makes you think I don’t want women either?” . . . And she’s like, “You’re tryin’ to tell me that you’re bi? And I’m like, “Yes, that is what I’m trying to tell you...” There was an awkward silence after that, I go, “Let’s just say I have many talents that you don’t know about.”

Madison remembered having been attracted to women since a “very young age,” but “my parents were hardcore conservative, republican. And my mom always said, ‘It’s just a phase.’” When asked how she hid her sexual orientation from hate group members, she responded, “Just dated men. And, it was hard . . . A few of the men that I had dated, I let them know, ‘Listen, this is kind of like a front. You can be with whoever you wanna be with. I don’t care. As long as it shows that we are together.’” But after leaving the group, Madison spotted a woman she had gone to high school with: “I sent her a message. I was like, ‘I don’t know if you remember me.’ She [the woman] goes, ‘How could I forget you?’ [Laughs].” The two started dating soon after. While Madison’s transition was relatively smooth, Hannah described her coming out process as difficult:

I was . . . dealing with issues around my sexual orientation. Which was really difficult . . . It was really difficult for me to, um, be ok enough to even explore what this meant in my life . . . I went through a lot of different phases of, you know, trying to figure out, like, you know, “Am I, am I a lesbian or not?” And, you know, to be honest, I still wonder sometimes [chuckles].

She ultimately found that identifying as bisexual felt most comfortable. She explained that coming to that realization “was like such a, such a big deal, even though it was kind of scary. It was such a big deal. Exploring and figuring it all out.”

Feeling Motivated to Participate in Anti-hate Activism

Participants described slowly coming to the realization that they wanted to pursue activism. For instance, Madison was nervous about publicly speaking about her racist past because she did not want to expose herself to retaliation from hate group members. But then she decided, “You know what? I need to do this for me. I’m not doin’ this for anybody else. People can sit there, they can hate all they want, but this is my life. This is what I’m doing for me.” Frankie found herself at a similar crossroads. She was afraid that speaking publicly would put her life in danger. But she eventually got to the point where she said to herself, “I don’t care . . . They’ll come to my house and kill me and this whole thing’ll be over. And they’ll be exposed as people who kill women who leave their group. So, ok. So be it.”

Participants also explained that they were motivated to expose women’s roles in White supremacy to the public. Shannon stated she was only interested in participating in the current study because “it was specifically about women and exiting . . . It’s getting closer to some of the things I wish we were talking about in terms of gender identities and . . . fractured identities and positive identity building.” Acacia explained that unless female formers speak out, the public will not fully understand how the White supremacist movement operates:

There are not many female formers willing to speak out. And it’s a very misunderstood area. Because it is a predominantly male movement . . . I think people, because it is a male-only movement, they forget that, one, females are involved, and two, they also don’t understand the role that females play within the movement. Because it can go anywhere . . . from being used as a recruitment

tool, because you're good looking, you're a female. Also, therefore you'll recruit more males to come because . . . that's what they do. Or, you can be, if you're in a leadership position, much, again, recruitment is a big, big thing. Or, they're raising the next generation of White supremacists. The next generation within that ideology. A lot of the groups, you know, believe in, like, the traditional roles of men and women. The women are home taking care of the family and the kids . . . A lot of people, because women are not in the upfront and center of the White nationalist movement . . . forget that women are used very much within this. And that they [are] . . . a threat, I guess you could say.

Hannah shared a similar sentiment. She noted that it was important for female formers to speak out because “we cannot understand the complexities of these far-right movements if we're not talking to everybody. If we're only focusing on the men, we're only seeing half the picture.” She explained that by focusing only on men, researchers and the public do not get a chance to understand the way women are exploited and abused by men in the movement. In bypassing these factors, “we're not understanding the full nature of the ideology and the way these groups operate. Like, we just can't understand anything without speaking to everybody.”

Navigating Consequences of and Frustrations with Public Activism

Participants described consequences they faced stemming from their public anti-hate activism. Lauren explained that while public speaking is gratifying, it can also be taxing: “Public speaking is actually a little bit exhausting . . . You work yourself up before you go up there. And then afterwards there's, like, nothing. But you still got a crowd of people wanting to know stuff.” In this last sentence, Lauren illuminated the lack

of support she received as a former dealing with the public after her speeches. She also articulated how publicly rehashing her racist past dredged up feelings of self-resentment: “It was very difficult not to, I guess hate myself for it.” Hannah spoke about how giving public talks is emotionally draining:

I get quite anxious when I’m going to do a media interview or give a public talk or anything. Like, you know, it’s always, it’s always a bit of a thing to ramp up for. And it’s also, it’s also always a thing to come down afterwards. Um, and, um, you know, it’s like a very vulnerable thing to, you know, to get up and share my worst life choices, with a bunch of strangers [chuckles]. It’s like...“What are they going to think? You know, what are they going to say? Are they, are they even going to feel safe with me in the room?”

Hannah also pointed out the lack of professional support formers receive in doing this emotionally painful work. She noted that a culture of masculinity might influence this lack of care:

I find it, like, very bro culture that, you know, we’re expected to come out and share all these, like, traumatic experiences and then just like, go on with our days, and like, not be impacted by that . . . Where’s the sort of aftercare for people who are, like, revisiting their trauma?”

Shannon also described activism as emotionally exhausting. She specifically pointed to the fact that despite being considered an expert in the field of White supremacist deradicalization, she is often not paid or employed for her work:

It’s so demoralizing to me. Like, and I know that I have changed and influenced the dialogue in a way that this [White supremacist deradicalization] space, like,

operates. I'm tapped as an expert to talk to NATO or the government of Slovakia or whatever. You know, there is this part where it's just like you feel like, "I am a world expert. Like, how the fuck do I not, like, have a job?"

Finally, Acacia explained that while engaging in anti-hate activism "takes a toll," it also has its rewards. For instance, she explained that taking part in interviews like the one for the current study helped her process her experiences in ways she may not have otherwise. Madison echoed the idea that engaging in academic interviews is a positive experience. When asked about how being interviewed for the current study felt, she explained: "It actually kind of feels good. I don't really talk to a lot of people about it because I don't really feel like people understand."

Chapter VI

Study One Discussion

Findings from the current study support and extend prior research about the factors that influence White supremacist group exit processes (Blazak, 2003; Ebaugh, 1988; Fisher-Smith et al., 2020; Gadd, 2006; Horgan et al., 2016; Latif et al., 2020; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021; Mattson & Johansson, 2018; Simi & Bubolz, 2019). In this study, eight themes emerged from interviews with former White supremacist women regarding their exit processes and transitions into anti-hate activism. The participants' descriptions revealed three commonalities: (1) hate group exit was a gendered experience, (2) psychological transformations, and (3) loving and supportive connections facilitated exit the process. Below, I synthesize and link these commonalities to the extant literature. I also discuss limitations of the study and provide directions for future research. Finally, I conclude with implications for mental health professionals.

Hate Group Exit as a Gendered Experience

In the current study, participants highlighted ways in which leaving a hate group and becoming an anti-hate activist as a woman was unique compared to the experiences of men and non-binary individuals. As noted earlier, women are objectified and exploited by White supremacist groups to recruit new members and maintain social ties within the group (Blee, 2002; Latif et al., 2020; Love, 2012). Women in racist hate groups have also described feeling threatened by White supremacist men, and some have reported being physically abused by racist boyfriends or husbands (Blee, 2005). Participants from the current study confirmed that they experienced similar misogynist treatment and abuse both inside *and* outside of their hate groups. For instance, Hannah, Lauren, Madison,

Sarah, and Shannon described enduring abuse from White supremacist men ranging from strict enforcement of gender roles to intimate partner violence (IPV). Participants also mentioned how they were seen merely as reproductive machines for the White race. They revealed how misogynist treatment left them feeling oppressed, powerless, and worthless. These sentiments seemed to serve as the preconditions for being objectified and used as political tools for White supremacist men and the movement. This objectification was painful, yet it also appeared to trigger increased levels of self-awareness for participants. With this new self-awareness, participants decided that they could no longer tolerate such misogynistic treatment, and subsequently decided to leave the movement. Based on Blee's (2002) prior research, it was not surprising to find that women experienced misogyny within the hate group environment.

What was striking was the misogyny and abuse participants reported experiencing *outside* of the movement. Shannon, Sarah, Hannah, and Lauren noted they encountered misogyny from family members and medical professionals. Hannah pointed out that she faced sexist treatment as an anti-hate activist. For example, she felt that academics "exoticized" her as a female former. Though formers have explained in previous research that anti-hate activism can be taxing (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021), none cited sexist treatment as a cause for concern. As such, misogyny appears to be a White supremacist ideal that pervades both extremist groups and North American mainstream culture (ADL, 2018).

In addition to enduring misogynistic treatment, participants also identified another unique reason for leaving their hate groups: protecting children. It appears that women from the current study were deeply affected by the need to protect children from White

supremacist ideology. Participants expressed this concern for their own and others' children. This effect was profound enough to pierce through the psychological barrier of participants' racism and exposed the real danger that White supremacist ideology represented. Subsequently, participants experienced cognitive dissonance. At one end, they championed White supremacy. At the other, they wanted to shield children from its effects. Ultimately, the responsibility they felt to safeguard children outweighed their allegiance to the hate movement. Thus, protecting children represented a significant influence on hate group exit. This finding was consistent with previous research regarding White supremacists' need to protect children from violence and from the harmful effects of White supremacist ideology (Latif et al., 2020; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021).

Another unique insight from the current study was participants' urge to inform the public about the role that women play in the White supremacist movement. Although a great deal of scholarly literature and media attention has been dedicated to White supremacist men, less research has addressed White women as a sustaining feature of White supremacy (Latif et al., 2020). Participants voiced concern about how the threat that women represent as White supremacists has been largely ignored. They explained that this gap gives the world a distorted understanding of organized racism. The lack of research obfuscates the essential roles that women play in recruitment, childbearing and child raising, social facilitation, and upholding strict gender roles. It also perpetuates a centering of the male White supremacist experience, which itself supports the White supremacist emphasis on propping up masculinity. As such, learning about female White supremacists' experiences both while inside and after leaving their hate groups is

essential for the development of efficacious disengagement and deradicalization interventions.

Psychological Transformations

Participants described going through arduous psychological transformations as part of their exit journeys. They experienced shifts in perspective when they became disillusioned by their hate groups. They became disillusioned because of the violence they witnessed and by what they described as hate “exhaustion.” Disillusionment led participants to see the movement in ways that were closed to them previously (i.e., hate groups were not meeting their emotional needs). It appears these new perspectives anchored their conviction to ultimately leave their hate groups. These perspectives would also come to serve as the foundations for building new positive identities. Through introspection and self-healing, participants established a space within which they could analyze, deframe, and reframe their White supremacist worldviews (Feagin, 2013). This finding parallels Latif et. al’s (2020) research regarding women’s hate group exit factors. The finding also fits with prior research suggesting that doubt and disillusionment serve as significant factors in hate group exit (Ebaugh, 1988; Horgan et al., 2016; Horgan & Braddock, 2010; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021; Simi & Bubolz, 2015).

Finally, I referred to Helms’s (2008) White racial identity development model to help make sense of the findings. By leaving their White supremacist hate groups and rebuilding identities as anti-hate activists, participants seemed to pass through the two broad phases of Helms’ model (2008): (1) abandonment of racism and (2) defining a non-racist White identity. Ultimately it seems as if participants from this sample navigated

towards the goal of Helms's autonomy, or "a lifelong process of discovery and re-commitment to defining oneself in positive [i.e., moral] terms as a White person" (p. 83).

Another distinctive finding from the current study was that five participants described themselves as suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms after leaving their hate groups. This set of symptoms appeared to be triggered by experiences both inside and outside of the hate group. This finding supports prior research suggesting that being part of a White supremacist group can be a traumatizing experience itself (Koehler, 2020). The finding also appears to suggest that both hate group exit and post-exit life are traumatic for women formers. This observation suggests that those who have left their hate groups may benefit from external support to rehabilitate from traumatic experiences. In this sample, two participants sought medical health professionals to address post-traumatic stress symptoms. These interactions had profound effects, both positively and negatively. Competent therapists facilitated the psychological rehabilitation process, while incompetent therapists caused further trauma (e.g., Lauren's therapist helped her proceed with her hate group exit while Sarah's therapist belittled her history of sexual abuse). It is thus important that clinicians are trained to use a trauma-informed approach when working with individuals who are in the process of leaving or have left their hate groups.

In addition to suffering from post-traumatic symptoms, three participants described battling addiction after leaving the movement. It appeared that for these participants, involvement in the movement and substance abuse were intimately intertwined. In fact, intoxicants seemed to serve as a facilitating agent for participants' belief in White supremacist ideology. This insight echoes Simi et al.'s (2015) findings,

which suggested that hate group exit is akin to substance abuse recovery. Yet, the finding from the current study goes further, suggesting that addiction recovery and deradicalization seem to be inseparable for some. This finding should encourage scholars and clinicians to dimensionalize how they treat White supremacists. While it may be tempting to regard White supremacists as terrorists in attempting to deradicalize them, findings from the current study suggest that it might be more efficacious to approach them as addicts, either to hate itself and/or to chemical substances. This perspective would allow for a more comprehensive assessment and treatment of the psychological roots and consequences of endorsing White supremacist ideology.

Given the strict anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes of White supremacist ideology, it was surprising to find that three participants came to identify as lesbian and bisexual orientations after leaving the movement. Coming out after being closeted in their hate groups added an additional dimension to their exit experience. They were now engaging in what Fisher-Smith et al. (2020) referred to as “transgressive relationships.” By participating in same-gender relationships specifically, they became the targets of the very White supremacist ideology they used to endorse. Yet coming out and exploring their sexual orientations appeared to provide a means of self-exploration that facilitated the development of new, positive self-images. Also, connecting with members of the LGBTQ+ community gave participants a sense of human connection that bolstered their senses of self. These findings reflect previous research, which suggested that coming out as a former White supremacist is experienced differently for each individual (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). In all three cases of the current study, participants’ coming out processes were intertwined with their exit processes.

Participants also experienced psychological transformations as a product of engaging in anti-hate activism. It is important to note that although participants described anti-hate activism as transformative, they also found it emotionally taxing and frustrating. These findings mirror those from my previous research with former White supremacist men and non-binary individuals (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021), who noted the positive and negative effects of engaging in public activism. While being an activist gave participants a scaffolding upon which they might build a positive psychological identity, it came at an emotional cost. Hannah, Lauren, and Acacia described speaking publicly against racism as taking an emotional toll. They noted that while public speaking was exciting in the moment, it often led to emotional exhaustion, re-traumatization, and even self-hate. These descriptions point to a lack of psychological resources dedicated to formers engaged in public activism. Choosing to relive traumatic and shameful events in their lives appears to have been emotionally painful for those engaged in public anti-hate activism. It is thus necessary that researchers and clinicians develop psychological tools that can help these people continue their anti-racist work without having to sacrifice their mental health.

Loving and Supportive Connections Facilitated Exit Process

Connecting with others outside of the hate group proved essential for participants' exit journeys. This theme is consistent with prior research suggesting that interactions with non-White supremacists were instrumental in facilitating hate group exit (Blazak, 2003; Gadd, 2006; Fisher-Smith et al., 2020; Horgan et al., 2016; Latif et al., 2020; Mattson & Johansson, 2018). For instance, Hannah, Frankie, and Madison all connected with outsiders (e.g., Hannah connected with a member of the Jewish Canadian Congress;

Frankie worked covertly with the FBI; Madison reached out to loved ones.) to help them exit the movement safely. This insight revealed the fact that hate group exit is a social process as much as it is an individual one. These participants credited their successful hate group exits to those who were willing to lend a helping hand despite the participants' White supremacist backgrounds. As such, the finding suggests that keeping in contact with outsiders is an essential part of disengagement and subsequent deradicalization.

Social, familial, and romantic connections illuminated new perspectives and evoked powerful emotions that challenged participant's White supremacist beliefs. Participants pointed to these relationships as major supports both in remaining free from their hate groups, and in maintaining their sobriety. This finding is consistent with Fisher-Smith et al.'s (2020) understanding that White supremacist hate group exits were facilitated by developing "transgressive relationships" (i.e., connections with people outside of the movement). Former White supremacists described that the "respect," "compassion," and "non-judgmentalness" they experienced through these transgressive relationships helped move them to leave their hate groups (Fisher-Smith et al., 2020, p. 20). It seems that encountering individuals who were open and compassionate allowed for these participants to establish a safe environment in which they could work to overcome their racist pasts.

In addition to making dyadic connections, successfully integrating into new social networks also contributed to participants' psychological transformations. Participants explained that being part of a new social community provided them with a sense of relief, security, and purpose. These findings echo prior research from Mattson and Johansson's (2018) emphasis on the importance of transitioning into post-hate group-exit

communities as part of successful deradicalization. It appeared that achieving a sense of belongingness outside of the hate group gave these participants a foundation upon which they could build new positive identities. Knowing they belonged to and were cared for by a community allowed them to experiment with new identities without having to worry about being abandoned. This space also freed participants to explore missions in life that counteracted the hate they had spread previously.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the current study serves as a critical step in understanding the phenomenological experiences of leaving one's hate group and becoming an anti-hate activist, there exist some limitations. For example, although I gained rich, thick descriptions from the current study, future researchers might interview a sample of women with similar and different characteristics to compare to my findings. In the current study, participants described coming out as lesbian and bisexual after leaving the movement. Because I did not focus on coming out, subsequent studies could center the intersection of sexual orientation and hate group exit as the focus of inquiry. Another important insight from the current study was the lack of support female formers felt they received in the anti-hate activism space. Future research might focus on ways to improve psychological assistance for those formers engaged in public anti-hate activism. Information derived from this research could provide tools for supporting and empowering anti-hate activists.

Another avenue for exploration might focus on the fact that five participants in the current study mentioned experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress after leaving their hate groups. As such, future researchers might investigate the traumatic effects of

being involved in a hate/extremist group. Finally, all participants participated in physical White supremacy groups. But as far-right extremism transitions to a predominately online space, it is important that researchers explore how women are radicalized online, participate in online White supremacist extremism, and how they disengage from these digital spaces. This line of research could also investigate the ways in which formers engage in online anti-hate activism.

Implications for Mental Health Practitioners

Findings from this study suggest that women have a particular experience within White supremacy. Both their roles within the movement their hate group exit processes appear to be inseparable from the ways in which they are objectified and exploited. As women continue to join and play prominent roles in White supremacist groups, it is imperative that researchers develop interventions designed specifically for women who want to leave their hate groups behind. This study confirms prior scholarship suggesting former White supremacists need ongoing emotional support and social skills training after leaving their hate groups. Based on findings from this study and subsequent research regarding hate group exit and anti-hate activism, researchers and clinicians might develop trainings tailored to providing care to White supremacist women at four levels: (1) those contemplating hate group exit; (2) those in the process of hate group exit; (3) those who have exited their hate groups; (4) those who are engaging in activism.

Findings from the current study suggest clinicians should be aware of the ways in which women's exit experiences differ from those of men. First, clinicians can be aware of the likelihood that female formers have experienced some level of misogynistic treatment and/or abuse during the course of their involvement and exit from their hate

groups. As such, it would be beneficial to approach these clients using a trauma-informed perspective (i.e., a model grounded the understanding of how trauma exposure affects clients' neurological, biological, psychological and social development (Harris & Fallo, 2001; Sweeney et al., 2016). Second, clinicians might consider how the indoctrination of White supremacist femininity has affected how formers view themselves as women. It is important that formers are supported in rebuilding both their definition of womanhood and their personal expression of femininity.

Clinicians can also approach treatment of formers from a more general perspective. For example, clinicians should help clients understand and encourage the development of new social connections, as these appeared to be of great benefit in the course of re-structuring a positive sense of self for participants. Mental healthcare providers might also heed the calls from the current participants to understand the intersection between hate group participation and substance abuse issues. According to this study and prior research (Bubolz & Simi, 2019; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021), clinicians who choose to work with White supremacists exiting their hate groups will likely encounter substance abuse issues in their clients. Thus, clinicians interested in this line of clinical work might develop expertise in hate group exit facilitation *and* addiction rehabilitation.

Finally, findings from the current study suggest that connecting with a therapist has a profound effect on the trajectory of former White supremacists' exit journeys and subsequent psychological symptomatology. Participants from the current study detailed how positive experiences with therapists greatly facilitated their exits, while negative experiences were traumatizing and resulted in negative emotional consequences. It is

essential that when conducting clinical work that clinicians remain vigilant to avoid committing acts of misogyny that reify the poor treatment women have experienced within their hate groups and society more broadly. This guidance is especially important for men working in mental healthcare. As many White supremacist women leaving their groups have been oppressed and objectified by men, it is essential that male clinicians are aware of the gendered dynamic within the therapeutic relationship. Male clinicians should take special care to understand how their gender may simultaneously present an obstacle to treatment and an opportunity for the client to establish a safe and respectful connection with a man.

Chapter VII

Study Two Method: How Women Facilitate White Supremacist Deradicalization

The purpose of Study Two was to explore the experiences of women who have facilitated the disengagement and deradicalization of White supremacist hate group members. By examining this under-studied population, I hoped to gain insights into new avenues of development for disengagement and deradicalization interventions. To this end, I again employed interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). IPA was well-suited for research exploring content that is multidimensional, contextual, novel, and related to identity, as was the case for the current investigation (Osborn & Smith, 2006). As IPA recognizes that the researcher's positionality can facilitate and/or interfere with understanding of participants' lived experiences, I identified my biases before and during data collection and analysis (Smith et al., 2009). I addressed my positionality through self-reflection, cyclical bracketing, and working with an auditor to ensure my interpretations were faithful to participant's meanings (Levitt et al., 2017, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Following recommendations for IPA (Smith et al., 2009), I interviewed four participants (See Table 2). Two of the participants are married to the former white supremacists they helped exit; one participant was the former white supremacist's friend; and one participant is the former white supremacist's mother. Smith et al. (2009) explained that "there is no right answer to the question of . . . sample size" when conducting IPA research (p. 56). Noon (2018) posited that three should be the default sample size for undergraduate or Masters-level IPA studies, while samples for

professional doctorate studies should include 4-10 participants. Individuals who have facilitated hate group exit outside of an exit program are difficult to access as they are few in number and oftentimes are not mentioned in media coverage of the formers whom they helped disengage. To participate in the study, participants had to meet three criteria: (1) they had to be 18 years old or older (ages ranged from 35-59); (2) they must have encountered or developed a relationship a White supremacist whom they helped disengage from a hate group and/or deradicalize; and (3) they must not have been a part of a White supremacist group at the time they connected with the White supremacist hate group member who exited.

While the majority of recruitment methods were the same as Study One (i.e., internet outreach and snowball sampling [Goodman, 1961; Parker et al., 2019]), in this study I also contacted participants from previous hate group exit research (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021) who attributed their exit to social contacts or romantic relationships with women from outside the movement. I asked these individuals if they would feel comfortable connecting me with these women for an interview request. One interview resulted from this effort. I followed the same contact and informed consent procedure as in Study One (See Appendices B & D).

Data Sources

The data sources for the current study comprised a demographic form (See Table 2) and a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix H). I assembled these materials based on scholarly literature pertaining to IPA. I also collaborated with my research supervisor, Dr. Lisa Spanierman. Finally, I referred to my master's thesis to construct the materials.

Demographics

Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire to provide background information (See Appendix F). Each participant had the opportunity to record their age, marriage status, range of income, employment status, level of education, and religious affiliation, and ethnicity.

Interview Protocol

Following IPA guidelines (Smith et al., 2009) and recommendations for interview strategies (Kvale, 1996), the interview protocol comprised open-ended questions and follow-up prompts to gather information about participants' experiences facilitating hate group exit (See Appendix H). First, I asked participants about the nature of their introductions to and relationships with the people whom they helped exit. Second, I asked why and how they were able to help White supremacists leave their hate groups. Third, I asked what their experience was like after the White supremacists with whom they were connected decided to leave their hate groups. I strove to use language in the interview that was consistent with the participants' language (Kvale, 1996).

Procedures

After obtaining approval from ASU's Institutional Review Board, I employed the same recruitment, informed consent, and interview process for Study Two as I did for Study One. After recruiting participants and having them sign informed consent forms, I proceeded to conduct one-to-two-hour interviews with each using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix H). All interviews were conducted via Zoom. For greater detail, please see the "Procedures" section of Study One.

Data Analysis

Following Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2012) recommendations, I closely read each transcript several times. Next, I transformed notes into emergent themes. Here, I started to develop descriptive phrases that represented the essential characteristics identified within my notes. I grounded these phrases in participants' descriptions of their experiences leaving White supremacy and becoming anti-hate activists. Dr. Lisa Spanierman audited my initial themes to ensure agreement on theme designation. Next, I adhered to Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2012) suggestion that the researcher look for similarities between emergent themes, cluster them together, and label emergent clusters. I compiled a list of themes and subthemes gathered from all transcripts. I then created a definition for each theme with complementary illustrative quotations in the manuscript. Dr. Lisa Spanierman audited these initial themes to ensure agreement on theme designation. For instance, Dr. Spanierman recommended that I move participant descriptions of feeling burdened and abandoned/being the lone person facilitating the exit process from the "Identifying areas for increased external exit support" theme to the more fitting "Experiencing costs of helping others exit" theme. Finally, I created a written account drawn from the superordinate theme table. For a full explanation of the IPA data analysis process, please refer to the "Data Analysis" section in Chapter IV. I used the same procedure for Study Two, only with fewer participants.

Data Security

I employed the same data security measures for Study Two as I did for Study One. For a full explanation of data security measures, please see the "Data Security" section of Study One.

Trustworthiness and Methodological Rigor

I employed the same measures for trustworthiness and methodological rigor as presented in the chapter three. For a full explanation of trustworthiness and methodological rigor measures, please see the “Trustworthiness” section of chapter 3. I met qualitative research standards by adhering to best practices and standards for trustworthiness and methodological rigor (Levitt et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Morrow, 2005). I addressed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I also met Levitt et al.’s (2018) criteria for fidelity and utility. I provided each participant with an opportunity to “member-check” their transcript. Participants did not make any changes to the original transcripts.

Chapter VIII

Study Two Findings

Five themes emerged from participants' descriptions of their experiences facilitating loved ones and friends' hate group exits. The findings include (a) *identifying love as driving force behind exit facilitation*, (b) *developing their exit facilitation approach*, (c) *experiencing costs of helping others exit*, (d) *identifying areas for increased external exit support*, and (e) *offering recommendations for hate group exit facilitation* (See Table 4). In this section, I present each theme in order of salience with illustrative quotations from the participants. I address participants either by their self-selected pseudonyms or by their legal names (by which they explicitly asked to be identified).

Identifying Love as Driving Force Behind Exit Facilitation

Participants identified love as a driving emotional component of the exit facilitation process. For example, Melissa, a White participant, described how her love for her husband helped her understand his psychological situation, which in turn pushed her to fight for his exit and deradicalization:

Love is literally the only thing that got me through this process because love is a lot stronger than hate. And I knew that if [my husband] hated himself, I had to love him through it so he could love himself. And to me, I just felt like, I was his backbone, whenever he couldn't stand straight.

Love was also a driving factor for women of color who were attempting to pull White men out of organized racism. Catherine, a Black woman, for example, expressed her love through spirituality. She prayed for the man she was helping to “turn his life around.

Because I was in love with him.” Though Taylor, a Biracial woman, was not in a romantic relationship with the man whom she was hoping to extricate from the movement, she also felt an intense love for him. She noted that when they first met, “there was, like, an intense closeness between he and . . . I felt this intense amount of just, love for him.” She knew that opening up to him was risky, but she decided to do so anyway because of the love she had for herself. She explained that he would either “receive [my love] and be, like, ‘Wow, I’ve never felt that before.’ Or he would reject it . . . Either way . . . I would keep what I intended to keep . . . which was my ability to like and love myself.” As a mother, Jay, a White woman, demonstrated yet another type of love for her daughter, who she desperately wanted to leave the movement. She explained how keeping her home open to her daughter was an expression of this love, and how she hoped it would facilitate her daughter’s exit:

You feed those little kernels [of love], and you wait until there’s a crack, and then those kernels kind of squeeze in and say, “I love you and I’ll still love you no matter what you do.” They [formers] sit there and when there’s a little crack, they whisper, “Well, maybe this movement isn’t what I thought it was.” And, “Don’t forget, you have a family that loves you. Don’t forget.”

Developing Their Exit Facilitation Approach

Individuals who helped facilitate hate group exit broadly detailed three steps in developing their approach: (1) understanding roots of the individual’s racism; (2) accessing empathy and compassion for that individual; (3) developing a communication strategy. To facilitate the exit process of the men about whom they cared, participants first explored and identified the roots of the men’s racism. The central understanding

participants articulated was that racist hate stems from emotional pain. As Melissa explained regarding the foundations of her husband's racism:

Hurt people hurt people . . . And that's what [my husband] was doing, and [he] was hurting. He was hurting from all the trauma that he dealt with overseas [as a soldier in Afghanistan]. He was hurting from the trauma he had built up as a child, and he was going to . . . hurt anybody that hurt him in any way, shape, or form . . . whether it was physically or mental. He was going to hurt.

Taylor developed a similar conceptualization of hate. She offered a way to approach these cases with a certain type of awareness: "I see people that are hateful or whatever. And I just know that it's pain. It's not personal. You know? It's just pain. And so, we can observe it."

After identifying the role of emotional pain in these formers' worldviews, participants developed meaningful communication strategies with them. These communication strategies were based on empathy and compassion. As Jay explained, cultivating a communication approach with her daughter was not easy. Yet her empathy allowed her to communicate with her daughter in a new and refreshing way:

Those [communication] patterns for me, were slow to change . . . Those first little bits of changing the communication style came when she said to me, "Oh, my friend died. He was killed." I really didn't know him, and I didn't know what to ask, but I said, "I'm really sorry." And that was an entirely different answer from what she'd had from her boyfriend and from the group. And so, it was a breakthrough for her seeing that I could be sympathetic, empathetic to something

in her life even if I didn't like what she was involved in. I could still be empathetic as a person.

Taylor found that being openly compassionate was both healing for her and for the man whose exit she was facilitating. She felt this compassion so strongly that it superseded any negativity she felt towards his racist views. As she articulated, "For me it was like this sign of like deep healing that I could be so generous with my, with my love . . . Like, [chuckle] I could be your friend and you could still have your beliefs, but I wouldn't take it personal. Like, that was a big step for me." Catherine incorporated other people into the conversation in order to facilitate the exit process. Again, she turned to spiritual leadership for guidance and support:

I talked to the pastor [of my church]. And the pastor came and talked to [my husband] ... [My husband] was tellin' him what he was involved in [White supremacy]. And the pastor was sayin', you know, "Come to church Sunday, and we'll all congregate in the church, and pray for you."

Catherine then spoke directly to the man she was attempting to help: "When he was in the hospital, I said, 'You're gonna get better. But you . . . have to leave the movement.' 'Cause I was, like, praying, and crying, you know, for the Lord to bring him back . . . get him out of the movement." Finally, Melissa used the love she and her husband shared for their family as leverage. She explained to him that she was going to have to leave with her children because of the danger that he had put them in by participating in his hate group: "I was like, 'I'm literally at the point to where I don't want to leave you. I don't, that is the last thing I want is for my family to be separated.' Because I, I did love him. And I loved him through every step of the way." She ultimately decided to leave him for

a period of time to protect both herself and her children, while also attempting to pry her husband away from the KKK.

Experiencing Costs of Helping Others Exit

Participants identified negative consequences that came with facilitating their loved one's exit process. They explained that attempting to extricate members of White supremacy groups took an emotional toll on them for a number of reasons. For instance, Taylor discussed how, as a biracial woman working with a neo-Nazi caused her own racial trauma to resurface:

At that point [when I decided to record an interview with a neo-Nazi trying to exit his hate group] I felt like I worked through all of my childhood trauma. Come to find out, not even clo[se], I mean, related to like being abandoned by . . . that whole [White] side of the family . . . And like [chuckles] and like, the trauma of, like, growing up with my [Black] dad telling me, that like my [White] mom was embarrassed and ashamed of me . . . Right before he [neo-Nazi] came over to record that interview, I was um, out of the blue, in the fetal position, bawling my eyes out.

In addition to re-traumatization, participants described feeling anxious and exhausted by trying to extricate their loved ones from their hate groups. For instance, Jay described how the emotional pain of knowing her daughter was in a White supremacist group forced her into a type of emotional survival mode: "I put all of that [pain] in the back of my head and just went through every day and focused on . . . work, I'd come home, I'd look after my son, we'd do things . . . That's how I survived." She noted how having a support system was essential for dealing with her emotional pain, and that the

consequences of not having one could be dire: “If you don’t have somebody to talk to [about trying to remove a loved one from a hate group], then you’re gonna break your heart.” Melissa felt defeated in her attempts to save her husband not only from White supremacy, but also from his drug addiction: “It was not easy . . . I felt defeated . . . I’m doin’ all this. I’m tryin’ to save everything. I’m tryin’ to keep my family together. And this is just not working. Like, he’s not gonna give in. He’s not gonna break.” She also feared for her husband’s safety: “I was like, ‘I’m gonna lose him. I’m going to lose him either to the addiction or somebody’s gonna kill him.’” Catherine also worried about the physical security of the man she was trying to help leave White supremacy. The fact that she was falling in love with this man complicated those emotions further:

I worried about him a lot. I was afraid for him that he would make it home ok. I found out I had feelings for him. But he didn’t know it. I kept it to myself.

Because he was in the movement, and I know some of them don’t like mixed race couples. They would probably hurt him.

Participants also explained that they felt abandoned by people close to them and by society at large. They described feeling burdened as the lone facilitators of the exit process. Melissa detailed the desperation she experienced after trying unsuccessfully to get external help for her husband:

I, literally, 100% honest, I had nobody. Because everybody had turned their back. . . . I had nothing, or nobody that I could turn to. Because I felt like if I was to try to reach out, and try to get help, and try to get counseling, then nobody would accept me because I stood by him [and his racist views]. And I literally would

just, whenever you see people talkin' about screamin' into their pillow, or cryin' whenever nobody was watchin', that was me.

Melissa's frustration soon turned to anger. She felt betrayed by those people who she had expected to be there for her and her husband. When they came back into her life after she successfully removed him from the KKK, she described feeling disappointed with them: "Now you're here? . . . But whenever I was at the point to where I could have lost everything, nobody was there. I had cried so many nights. I had screamed so many, just so much anger." Taylor described what it felt like being abandoned by social support systems, leaving her as the only one trying to remove the man with whom she was working from his hate group:

I could get nothing to support him. And so, it was heavy. I mean, I felt abandoned in a way. I felt like, [sniffle] and not just abandoned, like me personally. But, like abandoned by a society that says they believe in one thing [social justice], but, like, can't support it. It sucked. It was lonely. I mean, it was lonely. It was heavy. It was like . . . "I can't let this person drown and he's drowning. But I don't have the capacity to be the only one to rescue him . . . I can barely keep my own head above water right now in working through what I need to work through. And yet I still can't let him drown. Because he's a fuckin' human being."

Identifying Areas for Increased External Exit Support

In response to feeling a lack of support, participants identified external resources that would have benefited their efforts to facilitate the exit process. Jay explained that when she was trying to find help for her daughter, there were no resources available: "In my case in the beginning [2010's], there's nothing to research online. Not having any

webpages nor anybody to tell me anything.” Taylor noted that an organization dedicated to the hate group exit process would have been immensely beneficial:

What would have been great would have been a resource . . . that I could have been like, “Hey . . . lemme drive you [former whom she helped exit] over to this place . . . like a safe house, you know? Where like abused women go, ‘cause these people [formers] aren’t any different than other people that are abused. They have deep layers of frickin’ abuse in their lives, and pain and trauma. Like, they need a safe place where they can go and reside while they’re transitioning. Like, while they’re reframing their thoughts. And reprograming their minds and their brains.

And like, learning how to trust society, trust themselves, trust their instincts.

Melissa recalled that her experiences trying to get mental health professionals to help her husband were disheartening. She noted that the counselors to whom she brought her husband were not adequately trained to work with individuals attempting to leave a hate group: “Do [counselors] know what it's like to have an addiction of hate? Do they know what it's like to have the mentality of a person that is just angry because of something that they've been through, now they're going to go to hate?”

Offering Recommendations for Hate Group Exit Facilitation

Drawing from their own experiences, participants offered advice to others trying to extricate their loved ones from hate groups. Melissa directed her message specifically towards women who are or have dealt with the trauma associated with facilitating a loved one’s hate group exit. She noted that whether their loved one is addicted to hate or drugs, the addictions stem from a similar source: “It’s hate for their self, because they’re battling something. And they hate their self. So, they’re gonna use something else to numb that

pain.” She also acknowledged that now there are more hate group exit resources available to women: “Now that there is more things out there to help women . . . you can reach out and you can talk to somebody and they will have people like [my husband, a hate group exit specialist] now to help with people that battles the same thing that he did.” Jay spoke about the power of accepting one’s loved one back after they leave their hate groups: “Keep the door open . . . Don’t do what I did and give your kid an ultimatum [laughs]. Don’t shut the door.” She also espoused the utility of having difficult conversations with loved ones during the exit process:

Ask those hard questions: “What’s drawing you into this [hate group]? What are you getting from this? Why do you feel the need to be involved in this? Who in your life has made you feel unimportant or less than enough? What in yourself are you feeling uneasy about or insecure about?”

She summarized her intervention strategy as composing three parts: (a) open lines of communication, (b) asking hard questions, and (c) listening to the answers. Finally, Catherine suggested a spiritual practice for helping remove loved one’s from hate: “Ask the Lord. Pray to the Lord to get them out. ‘Cause there’s a better life than that.”

Chapter IX

Study Two Discussion

Findings from this study support and extend prior research concerning how women influence White supremacist group exit processes (Blazak, 2003; Fisher-Smith et al., 2020; Liguori & Spanierman, 2021). Extending Blazak's (2003) findings, which focused on men's narratives regarding women's roles in facilitating the hate group exit process, insights from the current study illuminate outsider *women's* perspectives on the exit facilitation process. Exploring what it was like to help others disengage from White supremacist hate can help researchers better understand attitudes and practices that might be efficacious for developing deradicalization interventions. In this study, participants explained how love and compassion drove them to emotionally connect with White supremacists and help them exit their hate groups. They also described the emotional burden they felt as the lone people facilitating these hate group exits. Below, I synthesize and connect these lived experiences to the extant literature. I also identify limitations of the study and provide directions for future research. I conclude with implications for mental health professionals.

Love and Compassion as Driving Forces Behind Exit Facilitation

Throughout their interviews, participants identified elements of love and compassion as the factors that most deeply influenced their engagement in the exit facilitation process. First, all four participants explained that love moved them to try to extricate these White supremacists from their hate groups. This love took different forms: romantic, platonic, and familial. Melissa, a White woman, and Catherine, a Black woman, were working with men with whom they were connected romantically (i.e.,

Melissa was attempting to save her husband and Catherine was facilitating the exit of a man who would ultimately become her husband after leaving his hate group). Taylor, a biracial woman, was trying to save a friend. Jay hoped to rescue her daughter. In all cases, love was a driving source that allowed these women to overcome psychological impediments and ultimately pull their counterparts out of hate. It also appears that love was a tool that participants used to circumnavigate the racist ideologies that barricaded these men from human connection. By loving them despite their White supremacist ideology, it seems that participants helped these men to see themselves as fundamentally loveable. It appears that by providing this new perspective, participants opened a psychological avenue that was closed off previously. It might be the case that by seeing themselves as loveable, these White supremacists were able to perceive an alternate reality in which their emotional needs could indeed be met. This finding parallels Blazak's (2003) findings, which suggested that encountering unconditional love outside of the movement was a significant factor in White supremacist disengagement.

In addition to revealing love as a driving factor in facilitating hate group exit, the current study also shed light on the role empathy played for participants during the exit facilitation process. Participants drew on empathy to help them understand the underpinnings of White supremacist men's hatred. Instead of rejecting these men for their racist beliefs, participants used empathy to investigate who these people were more fundamentally. Both Melissa and Taylor identified emotional pain and trauma as the source of White supremacist hate. This finding fits with previous research suggesting that many former White supremacists have experienced some form of childhood trauma (Windisch et al., 2020). As such, the participants were able to see these White

supremacist men for who they were underneath the ideology: traumatized people using racism to express repressed emotional pain. Understanding that their racism was based on fear and self-hatred, participants were able to communicate in a more nuanced and compassionate way. Instead of battling their counterparts' ideological positions, participants approached their targets with sensitivity, understanding, and care. Jay used her empathy to begin asking her daughter questions about her experience in the movement. Just as importantly, she learned to *actively listen* to her daughter's responses. Taylor practiced compassion through radical acceptance of the neo-Nazi man she was trying to help disengage. Despite his hateful ideology, she found him to be worthy of her openness and care. Catherine felt similarly about the neo-Nazi man she was attempting to remove from his hate group. She leaned on a representative of spiritual support, a pastor, to communicate with the racist man who would eventually become her husband.

Emotional Burden of Exit Facilitation

Participants explained that although love drove them to help these White supremacists leave their hate groups, the lack of external support they received left them feeling emotionally burdened. For example, all four participants described experiencing painful emotions connected to the exit facilitation process. They noted feeling fearful, anxious, defeated, and re-traumatized. Participants feared for the safety of the White supremacist men with whom they were engaged. Consequently, this fear appears to have left them in a state of anxiety. Participants also felt defeated at times. They expended great amounts of emotional energy trying to pry these men out of their hate groups. Yet their lack of initial success left them feeling rudderless and exhausted. Further, two of the facilitators were women of color, which complicated their emotional responses to their

counterparts. Catherine repressed her romantic love for the man she was trying to extricate because she feared his hate group would hurt him due to their disapproval of multi-racial couples. Taylor experienced painful re-traumatization working to pull a neo-Nazi out of hate. Facilitating his disengagement triggered memories of the racism she had experienced in the past from family members. As such, both women carried additional emotional burdens that the other two White participants did not. Though the negative effects of anti-hate activism have been detailed in prior research (Liguori & Spanierman, 2021), the finding from the current study was unique in that the participants were not activists as such. Rather, they were private citizens doing the work of hate group disengagement facilitation on their own with no professional support.

Because of the lack of support they received, participants identified resources that could have taken the burden off their shoulders. Taylor explained that having a center dedicated to the rehabilitation and social transitioning of formers would have greatly alleviated the pressure she experienced as the sole support to a struggling neo-Nazi. Melissa pointed out the need for mental health professionals trained to work specifically with those leaving hate groups. She noted that these clinicians should also be well-versed in addiction treatment, as her husband struggled to get proper support for his substance issues while leaving the movement. Previous research has found that many formers struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues (Bubolz & Simi, 2019). Prior scholarship has also described the disengagement process as being similar to the experience of substance withdrawal (Bubolz & Simi, 2015). Thus, findings from the current study and previous research suggest that disengagement and deradicalization interventions be tailored to address both hate group exit as well as substance abuse issues.

Finally, participants offered guidance to those engaged in the exit facilitation process. They stressed that people should approach exit facilitation with an understanding of the roots of White supremacists' racist ideology and lifestyle: emotional pain and trauma. Participants offered advice on how to treat people in the process of leaving White supremacist hate groups. Instead of rejecting them or trying to convince them of their obvious moral transgressions, participants suggested inquiring into White supremacists' experiences, and then practicing active listening. Such an approach appears to help White supremacists feel heard and understood beyond their racist ideology. This experience, in turn, seems to allow White supremacists to reconnect with their fundamental humanity, and even return to a tolerant and compassionate frame of mind.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the current study offers important insights in terms of understanding the phenomenological experiences of women who have helped facilitate the hate group exit process, there are some limitations. For instance, the participants comprised only four women. It is important that future researchers interview more participants to increase the dependability of findings regarding exit facilitation. Also, two of the women who facilitated hate group exit were Black and Biracial. As the current study did not focus on the experiences of people of color, but rather hate group exit facilitators in general, future research could explore the intersection of race, ethnicity, and White supremacist deradicalization. Additionally, while this study emphasized the experiences of individuals who were directly involved in facilitating hate group exit, future research might explore the experiences of those *adjacent* to exit facilitators (e.g., children, friends, and family), in order to both develop a broader understanding of how hate group exit affects those

nearby. Research could also explore how these bystanders contribute to hate group exit facilitation. This research might also include the study of dyads (i.e., the White supremacist and hate group exit facilitator) to obtain a more comprehensive portrayal of the hate group exit experience. Also, while the current study explored what kind of resources participants needed *during* the hate group exit facilitation process, future research could also investigate what kind of support facilitators need *after* extracting their loved ones from their hate groups.

Implications for Mental Health Practitioners

The participants' suggestions are significant in that they might be incorporated into novel hate group exit intervention strategies. First, participants noted that the racial hatred they experienced coming from their counterparts was rooted in self-hatred. As such, clinicians might avoid the temptation to attack racism directly by force but might rather trace racist expressions back to their psychological, and often traumatic roots. It seems that this approach was effectively used by the exit facilitators in this sample. Instead of assuming a combative stance towards White supremacists, activists and mental health care professionals might approach such individuals with a sense of gentle curiosity and compassion. Though the approach may sound morally repugnant to some (i.e., treating a racist with compassion), this approach seems to allow the facilitator to engage with White supremacists on an emotional, rather than ideological, level. In doing so, it appears that the facilitator can reach the White supremacist at the level of her basic human experience. As this experience is shared between facilitator and White supremacist, there arises an opportunity for genuine human connection at this level of consciousness. Experiencing such a connection appears to outweigh the White

supremacist's ideological commitments. The White supremacist then has a legitimate reason for leaving the hate movement behind. Second, the exit facilitators in this study talked at length about the emotional burden they incurred as a consequence of trying to disengage White supremacists. It is thus important that clinicians understand the emotional tension that exists within a client whose loved one is in a White supremacist group. At one end, these people are horrified by the racism in which their loved ones are engaged. At the other, they still love these people and are fighting to extricate them. In participating in this struggle, the facilitators may be viewed as choosing the side of a White supremacist, rather than being viewed as supporting someone they love. Keeping this dynamic in mind might help clinicians understand the emotional and social complexity clients in the process removing a loved one from a hate group.

Chapter X

General Discussion

Studies One and Two point to important commonalities regarding women's roles and experiences in the White supremacist deradicalization process. First, women from both studies reported the importance of love and compassion during the hate group exit process. Second, participants experienced deep transformations as a product of their hate group exit journeys. Third, participants identified the need for more external support for those going through, and facilitating, hate group exit.

Love and Compassion

While experiencing love and compassion drew women from Study One out of their hate groups, the same sentiments inspired women from Study Two to pull White supremacists out of the movement. As mentioned earlier, White supremacists join their hate groups in search of a loving and accepting community. Although they may experience relief by being part of the hate movement at first, they soon realize that the love and acceptance they experience within it is conditional. The connections they experience inside the hate group are not based on care and trust, but rather on a shared hatred and paranoia. As such, White supremacists pay for social connection by sacrificing the very needs for which they entered the group. It is only when they encounter authentic love and compassion from outside the group that they realize their emotional needs are not being met. As detailed in Study Two, there are rare individuals who can perceive the human being beneath her White supremacist camouflage.

In two cases, it was women of color who exercised this capacity despite the racism their counterparts endorsed. Interestingly, this finding appears to mirror insights

from French et al.'s (2020) research, which explored psychological frameworks of radical healing in Communities of Color. One of the fundamental tenets of French and colleagues' framework was that of "radical hope and envisioning possibilities" (French et al., 2020, p. 26). The authors argued that radical hope was a key component for healing Communities of Color because "hope allows for a sense of agency to change things for the greater good" (French et al., 2020, p. 26). It appears that in Study Two, the two women of color were radically hopeful that they could extricate White supremacists from their respective hate groups despite the odds. These women also envisioned the possibility of these men to leaving their hate groups and becoming loving, tolerant individuals. Being seen as such seems to have awoken empathy in these hateful individuals and catapulted them into an elevated state of self-awareness. This rise in consciousness appears to have exposed the futility of searching for love and acceptance in the hate movement and catalyzed the urge to leave racism behind. As such, it seems that radical hope may be a key part of removing white supremacists from hate groups and combatting racism in general.

Deep Transformations

The connection between White supremacists and loving outsiders appears to transform both parties in profound ways. First, both people experience increases in self-awareness. This change can be emotionally painful. White supremacists realize that not only are their emotional needs being starved by the movement, but also that they have caused immense damage to innocent people as part of their hate groups. Hate group exit facilitators fear for their loved one's safety and bear the emotional burden of trying to wrench them out of their hate groups. Both White supremacists and exit facilitators come

face to face with unprocessed trauma that expresses itself during the exit process. Despite the pain, however, both people encounter an inner fortitude that propels them to achieve their goals. The White supremacist leaves her hate group and opens herself up to the emotional void she has avoided for years. The exit facilitator perseveres and finally removes her loved one from the grip of hate. This newfound strength serves both people as the foundation for new and positive senses of self.

More External Support

Both former White supremacists and hate group facilitators identified the need for more external support for those going through hate group exit. Formers explained that in addition to needing help deradicalizing, they could have used support with addiction recovery. They also pointed out how some therapists were not only incompetent, but even psychologically damaging. They needed mental health care professionals who were competent and ethical. As anti-hate activists, participants also called for increased psychological support at public speaking events. Hate group exit facilitators described resources they needed as well. They spoke about how helpful it would have been to have professional organizations dedicated to the work of exit facilitation. They noted how they were *also* let down by mental health professionals who were unwilling to treat their loved ones because of their White supremacist affiliations. These facilitators expressed hope that in the future those leaving hate groups would have access to well-trained mental healthcare professionals as well as addiction recovery specialists.

Conclusion

The participants across both studies were unique in their bravery. Whether they were leaving their hate groups or helping others leave White supremacy, both put

themselves in dangerous positions and experienced deep emotional pain. Those who participated in hate groups can never take back the damage they have done. They all contributed to a movement that has, for centuries, been responsible for harassing, torturing, and killing individuals from marginalized populations. Notwithstanding their transgressions, these people remained human beings. Outsiders used love and understanding to help them realize their humanity once again. They offered a compassion that was more powerful than hate. They showed White supremacists that to be fully human one must choose love over hate.

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APPENDIX A

STUDY ONE PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

STUDY ONE PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1
Study One Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Education	Ethnicity	Religion	Income (Thousands)	Job Status	Marital Status	Years in Hate Group	Years Since Exiting Hate Group
Acacia	38	Associates/ Some College	Bohemian/French /German-American	NR	<20	NR	Single	2	4
Frankie	43	Bachelor's	Scandinavian	Muslim	75-100	Part-time	Married	4	10
Hannah	48	Master's	English-Canadian	NR	N/A	Seeking Opportunities	Married	3	28
Lauren	32	Trade School	Mixed European-Canadian	Spiritual	35-50	Full-time	Single	8	8
Madison	35	Associates/ Some College	Other	Wicken	N/A	Full-time	Single	5	5
Sarah	44	Some College	American	Christian	50-75	Full-time	Married	NR	NR
Shannon	48	Associates/ Some College	German/Irish American	None	35-50	Seeking Opportunities	Single	6	30

Notes. Participants are addressed by either self-selected pseudonyms or their legal names (by which they explicitly asked to be identified). Income is reported in thousands of dollars. To protect participants' identities, I do not specify their respective former hate groups. *NR = no response

APPENDIX B

STUDY TWO PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

STUDY TWO DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 2
Study Two Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Education	Income (Thousands)	Job Status	Marital Status	Race	Religion	Relationship to Former
Catherine	NR	Some High School	50-75	Christian	50-75	Black or African-American	Christian	Spouse
Jay	59	Bachelor's / Trade School	NR	Christian	NR	White	Christian	Mother
Melissa	35	High School	35-50	None	35-50	White	None	Spouse
Taylor	43	Bachelor's	NR	Spiritual	NR	Black or African-American	Spiritual	Friend

Notes. Participants are addressed by either self-selected pseudonyms or their legal names (by which they explicitly asked to be identified). Income is reported in thousands of dollars. *NR = no response

APPENDIX C
STUDY ONE THEMES

STUDY ONE THEMES

Table 3
Study One Themes

Theme	Definition
<i>Becoming disillusioned by the White supremacist movement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants identified reaching a point where they were unable to reconcile the violence of movement with their involvement • Participants described encountering emotional exhaustion/burnout from time in group
<i>Experiencing misogyny and abuse</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants explained how misogynistic treatment drove them from the movement • Participants described the abuse they endured from men that pushed them out of group • Participants noted that they encountered misogyny outside of the movement both before and after exiting
<i>Protecting children from the movement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants described wanting to distance their children from the influence of the movement
<i>Encountering social and personal post-exit consequences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants described consequences that affected their fundamental safety and social environments after exiting the movement (e.g., threats, social isolation, residual paranoia/lack of trust from being in the group)
<i>Developing/maintaining supportive post-exit relationships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants noted relationships with others that were helpful in their exit journeys (e.g., romantic, familial, w/ formers, w/support groups, w/ law enforcement, w/ people of color)
<i>Cultivating positive identities through introspection and self-healing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants identified injured aspects of themselves that they both explored and attempted to heal • Participants experienced the ‘void’, where they lost and had to rebuild their sense of self • Participants explained encountering and addressing mental health issues • Participants went through substance abuse rehabilitation • Participants explained how they explored their sexual orientation/came out
<i>Feeling motivated to participate in anti-hate activism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants described why they decided to participate in public activism despite possible consequences

Navigating consequences of and frustrations with public activism

- Participants explained that engaging in public activism resulted in emotional discomfort, exhaustion, and frustration

APPENDIX D
STUDY TWO THEMES

STUDY TWO THEMES

Table 4
Study Two Themes

Themes	Definitions
<i>Identifying love as driving force behind exit facilitation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants described feeling love towards formers, and identified love as a driving component of the exit facilitation process
<i>Developing their exit facilitation approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants explored and identified roots of former's racism • Following this exploration, some participants were able to communicate empathetically and compassionately with formers directly or through intermediaries during the exit process
<i>Experiencing costs of helping others exit</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants identified negative emotional consequences that came with facilitating their loved one's exit process including re-traumatization, feeling defeated, emotional pain, and fear/anxiety • Participants explained that they felt burdened and abandoned being the lone person facilitating the exit process
<i>Identifying areas for increased external exit support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants illustrated what kinds of resources were not available and would have been helpful during their exit facilitation process
<i>Offering recommendations for hate group exit facilitation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants offered advice to others trying to extricate their loved ones from hate groups

APPENDIX E

STUDY ONE RECRUITMENT LETTER

STUDY ONE RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear X,

My name is Jackson Liguori and I'm a counseling psychology PhD student from Arizona State University. I am conducting a study for my dissertation under the supervision of Professor Lisa Spanierman in an effort to understand why women formerly identified with white supremacist groups leave these groups, what their life is like post-exit, and how they re-integrate back into mainstream culture. I am conducting this research to gather data that can inform and develop interventions to support others trying to leave hate groups.

As I understand you to be an expert in this area, I was wondering if you might have time to have a conversation over the phone/Zoom about your thoughts and personal experience concerning the subject of hate group exit processes. I believe your perspective would add a powerful dimension to deradicalization research, a topic that deserves more public attention.

I am recruiting white women over the age of 18 who were formerly affiliated with white supremacist organizations, but who have decided to leave their group and advocate against racism. The study will consist of a 1-2 hour interview that I will conduct via video conference platform or phone. If the interview is conducted through video conference, I will create an audio and video recording of the interview. If the interview is conducted by phone, I will create an audio recording of the interview. The recording(s) will be stored as a computer file during data analysis. Only Dr. Spanierman and I will have access to these files, which will be used exclusively for the purposes of this study and then will be erased upon completion of this study.

After I have transcribed the interview, you will have the opportunity to read through the transcript and edit/remove material that you feel does not represent your statements accurately or which you feel encroaches on your confidentiality. Reading through the transcript and making edits will take about 1-3 hours. After sending transcript feedback, you will have the option of participating in a 1-2 hour feedback session with me via online video conference or phone about your experience as part of this study.

If you are interested in participating, or have questions concerning any information in this letter, please let me know via email (jbliquor@asu.edu) or phone (424-645-4201). Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,
Jackson Liguori & Lisa Spanierman, PhD

APPENDIX F
STUDY TWO RECRUITMENT LETTER

STUDY TWO RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear X,

My name is Jackson Liguori and I'm a counseling psychology PhD student from Arizona State University. I am conducting a study for my dissertation under the supervision of Professor Lisa Spanierman in an effort to understand how women have helped White supremacists exit their hate groups. I'm also interested in what that experience was like for these women. I am conducting this research to gather data that can inform and develop hate group exit interventions.

As I understand you to be an expert in this area, I was wondering if you might have time to have a conversation over the phone/Zoom about your thoughts and personal experience concerning the subject of hate group exit facilitation. I believe your perspective would add a powerful dimension to deradicalization research, a topic that deserves more public attention.

I am recruiting women over the age of 18 who have been involved in helping white supremacists leave their hate groups. The study will consist of a 1-2 hour interview that I will conduct via video conference platform or phone. If the interview is conducted through video conference, I will create an audio and video recording of the interview. If the interview is conducted by phone, I will create an audio recording of the interview. The recording(s) will be stored as a computer file during data analysis. Only Dr. Spanierman and I will have access to these files, which will be used exclusively for the purposes of this study and then will be erased upon completion of this study.

After I have transcribed the interview, you will have the opportunity to read through the transcript and edit/remove material that you feel does not represent your statements accurately or which you feel encroaches on your confidentiality. Reading through the transcript and making edits will take about 1-3 hours. After sending transcript feedback, you will have the option of participating in a 1-2 hour feedback session with me via online video conference or phone about your experience as part of this study.

If you are interested in participating, or have questions concerning any information in this letter, please let me know via email (jbliguor@asu.edu) or phone (424-645-4201). Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,
Jackson Liguori & Lisa Spanierman, PhD

APPENDIX G

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT: STUDY ONE

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT: STUDY ONE

Women's Roles in White Supremacist Deradicalization

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Lisa Spanierman in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore **hate group exit** experiences.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve filling out a demographic form, participating in a 1-2 hour interview via Skype/Zoom or phone, providing feedback to the researcher on your interview transcript, and an optional feedback interview of 1-2 hours via Skype/Zoom or phone. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Participants who participate in this study will have the opportunity to benefit from conversation and self-reflection about their hate group exit experience. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

In order to protect your confidentiality, you will choose a pseudonym by which you will be identified for the entirety of this study. As such, your responses will be anonymous. All study data and contact information connected to you will be attributed to this pseudonym. A master list of participant names/pseudonyms and contact information will be stored on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. The purpose of this master list is to maintain a secure contact list for transcript and interview feedback sessions. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

For an interview conducted via video conference platform, we ask your permission to audio & video record the interview. For an interview conducted over the phone, we ask your permission to audio record the interview. Only Dr. Spanierman and I will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted after you have reviewed the transcript and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact either Dr. Spanierman by phone at (480) 727-2605 or email at Lisa.Spanierman@asu.edu, or Jackson Liguori by phone at (424) 645-4201 or email at jbliguor@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX H

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT: STUDY TWO

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT: STUDY TWO

Women's Roles in White Supremacist Deradicalization

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Lisa Spanierman in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore **hate group exit facilitation** experiences.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve filling out a demographic form, participating in a 1-2 hour interview via Skype/Zoom or phone, providing feedback to the researcher on your interview transcript, and an optional feedback interview of 1-2 hours via Skype/Zoom or phone. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Participants who participate in this study will have the opportunity to benefit from conversation and self-reflection about their hate group exit experience. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

In order to protect your confidentiality, you will choose a pseudonym by which you will be identified for the entirety of this study. As such, your responses will be anonymous. All study data and contact information connected to you will be attributed to this pseudonym. A master list of participant names/pseudonyms and contact information will be stored on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. The purpose of this master list is to maintain a secure contact list for transcript and interview feedback sessions. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

For an interview conducted via video conference platform, we ask your permission to audio & video record the interview. For an interview conducted over the phone, we ask your permission to audio record the interview. Only Dr. Spanierman and I will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted after you have reviewed the transcript and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact either Dr. Spanierman by phone at (480) 727-2605 or email at Lisa.Spanierman@asu.edu, or Jackson Liguori by phone at (424) 645-4201 or email at jbliquor@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX I
STUDY ONE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

STUDY ONE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Participant Pseudonym	Name of Former White Supremacy Group	Year Participant Entered the Group	Year participant Exited Group

Please enter your age here: _____

Are you married?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

What is your current household income?

- a) Less than \$25,000
- b) \$25,000 - \$49,999
- c) \$50,000 - \$99,999
- d) \$100,000 - \$199,999
- e) \$200,000 or more
- f) Prefer not to say

What is your current employment status?

- a) Employed Full-Time
- b) Employed Part-Time
- c) Seeking opportunities
- d) Retired
- e) Prefer not to say

What is the highest degree of education you have completed?

- a) Some High School
- b) High School
- c) Associates Degree or some college
- d) Trade School
- e) Bachelor's Degree
- f) Master's Degree
- g) Doctoral Degree
- h) Prefer not to say

If applicable, please specify your religion:

- a) Christian (please specify denomination: _____)
- b) Jewish
- c) Muslim
- d) Buddhist

- e) Hindu
- f) Other: _____
- g) Prefer not to say

Which category best describes you?

- a) German-American
- b) French-American
- c) Italian-American
- d) Irish-American
- e) Polish-American
- f) English-American
- g) Other: _____

What is your gender?

- a) Man
- b) Woman
- c) Other (specify) _____

APPENDIX J
STUDY TWO DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

STUDY TWO DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Participant Pseudonym

Please enter your age here: _____

Are you married?

- d) Yes
- e) No
- f) Prefer not to say

What is your current household income?

- g) Less than \$25,000
- h) \$25,000 - \$49,999
- i) \$50,000 - \$99,999
- j) \$100,000 - \$199,999
- k) \$200,000 or more
- l) Prefer not to say

What is your current employment status?

- f) Employed Full-Time
- g) Employed Part-Time
- h) Seeking opportunities
- i) Retired
- j) Prefer not to say

What is the highest degree of education you have completed?

- i) Some High School
- j) High School
- k) Associates Degree or some college
- l) Trade School
- m) Bachelor's Degree
- n) Master's Degree
- o) Doctoral Degree
- p) Prefer not to say

If applicable, please specify your religion:

- h) Christian (please specify denomination: _____)
- i) Jewish
- j) Muslim
- k) Buddhist
- l) Hindu
- m) Other: _____
- n) Prefer not to say

Which category best describes you?

- h) American Indian or Alaska Native
- i) Asian
- j) Black or African American
- k) Hispanic or Latino
- l) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- m) White
- n) Other: _____

What is your gender?

- d) Man
- e) Woman
- f) Other (specify) _____

APPENDIX K

STUDY ONE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

STUDY ONE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A. Pre-Exit/Exit

- **Primary question:** Could you share some of the reasons that led to you leaving [name of hate group]?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) Could you explain the experience of actually leaving?
 - 2) Can you describe any important events or particular experiences during the process of you leaving?
 - 3) Did you leave as an individual or with others?
 - 4) What were some of the emotions you experienced preceding/during your exit?

B. Post-Exit

- **Primary Question:** What was your experience of life after leaving your hate group?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) What emotions were you feeling after leaving?
 - 2) What was your social life like once you left?
 - 3) How, if at all, did you relate to members who were still in the group?
 - 4) Did you experience any consequences of leaving the group? If so, how did you cope?
 - 5) How did/has your relationship with being a white woman change(d) since leaving?

C. Advocacy

- **Primary Question:** What factors prompted your decision to publicly speak out against white supremacy?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) Can you explain the process of coming to that decision?
 - 2) How did the people around you contribute to your decision to speak out?
 - 3) How would you describe your experience of the moments in which you first spoke out against white supremacy?
 - 4) What emotions did you experience speaking out against white supremacy?

APPENDIX L

STUDY TWO SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

STUDY TWO SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A. Contact

- **Primary question:** What was the nature of your relationship/how did you come into contact with the person whom you helped leave their hate group?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) Did you know this person was a White supremacist? If not, how did you find out?
 - 2) What was it like to meet and/or be connected to a current White supremacist?
 - 3) What types of emotions did you feel towards this person?

B. Exit Facilitation

- **Primary Question:** Would you mind telling me about your experience helping [name of White supremacist] exit from the hate group?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) Why did you decide to do it?
 - 2) What did you do?
 - 3) How did you feel about what you were doing?
 - 4) How much did others know about your helping a White supremacist exit? How did you explain this to them?

C. Post-exit Interaction

- **Primary Question:** What was life like after [name of person] left their hate group?
- **Possible follow-up prompts:**
 - 1) Did you maintain contact with [name of person] after leaving the group?
 - 2) Did you experience any consequences for helping [name of person] leave the group?
 - 3) What emotions did you feel after [name of person] had exited their hate group?
 - 4) What advice would you give others trying to help get people out of hate groups?

APPENDIX M

STUDY ONE ASU IRB APPROVAL

STUDY ONE ASU IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Lisa Spanierman](#)
[CISA: Counseling and Counseling Psychology](#)
480/727-2605
Lisa.Spanierman@asu.edu

Dear [Lisa Spanierman](#):

On 8/4/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Study One: Why and How Women Leave White Supremacy and Become Anti-hate Activists
Investigator:	Lisa Spanierman
IRB ID:	STUDY00016306
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liguori_IRB_Study One, Category: IRB Protocol;• Study One Demographic Information Form, Category: Other;• Study One Participant Consent, Category: Consent Form;• Study One Recruitment Letter, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Study One Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, Category: Other;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 8/4/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required.

Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found here. IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Jackson Liguori
Jackson Liguori



	Page: 1 of 7	
	PREPARED BY: IRB Staff	APPROVED BY: Heather Clark
DOCUMENT TITLE: HRP 503 A Social Behavioral Protocol	DEPARTMENT: Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (ORIA)	EFFECTIVE DATE: [9/8/2021]

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete each section of the application. Based on the nature of the research being proposed some sections may not apply. Those sections can be marked as N/A. Remember that the IRB is concerned with risks and benefits to the research participant and your responses should clearly reflect these issues. You (the PI) need to retain the most recent protocol document for future revisions. Questions can be addressed to research.integrity@asu.edu. **PIs are strongly encouraged to complete this application with words and terms used to describe the protocol is geared towards someone not specialized in the PI's area of expertise.**

IRB: 1. Protocol Title: Understanding Women's Roles in White Supremacist Deradicalization: Study One

IRB: 2. Background and Objectives

- 2.1 List the specific aims or research questions in 300 words or less.
- 2.2 Refer to findings relevant to the risks and benefits to participants in the proposed research.
- 2.3 Identify any past studies by ID number that are related to this study. If the work was done elsewhere, indicate the location.

TIPS for streamlining the review time:

- ✓ Two paragraphs or less is recommended.
- ✓ Do not submit sections of funded grants or similar. The IRB will request additional information, if needed.

Response:

Despite the integral part women play in White supremacist hate groups, only one study (Latif et al., 2020) has focused on how and why White women leave hate groups. As hate groups and hate crimes proliferate in the United States, we must explore means of facilitating deradicalization and disengagement of White supremacist women. Extending findings from my previous research (STUDY00011947), the current study aims to gather information from former-White-supremacist women in an effort to support the development of disengagement and deradicalization interventions tailored for women.

Another important area to address is the experiences of women who have left their hate groups and gone on to become anti-hate activists. Though some studies have included women in their exploration of post White-supremacy anti-hate activism (e.g., Fisher-Smith et al., 2020), none have specifically focused on women's experiences becoming anti-hate activists. This gap is crucial to address, as there are most likely differences in the challenges and consequences that women face in this process, as their former White supremacist indoctrination generally encourages a dependent, docile, non-combative position (Blazak, 2003; Daniels, 1997; Ferber, 1998). As such, it might be possible that women face not only external consequences from speaking out as men do (e.g., threats, assault, doxxing), but also internal struggles to overcome their White supremacist-informed conceptions of themselves as women. The current study aims to understand what it is like to be a woman who leaves her White supremacist hate group and becomes an anti-hate activist.

Extending findings from my master's thesis (STUDY00011947), in this study I will focus on exploring the following research questions:

- 1) What is it like to leave one's White supremacist hate group as a woman?
- 2) What is post-hate-group-exit life like as a woman?
- 3) How and why does one become an anti-hate activist as a former White-supremacist woman?

IRB: 3. Data Use - What are the intended uses of the data generated from this project?

Examples include: Dissertation, thesis, undergraduate project, publication/journal article, conferences/presentations, results released to agency, organization, employer, or school. If other, then describe.

Response: This data will be used primarily in a dissertation but may also be used in peer-reviewed articles and conference presentations.

IRB: 4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

4.1 List criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final sample. Indicate if each of the following special (vulnerable/protected) populations is included or excluded:

- Minors (under 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent (impaired decision-making capacity)
- Prisoners
- Economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals

4.2 If not obvious, what is the rationale for the exclusion of special populations?

4.3 What procedures will be used to determine inclusion/exclusion of special populations?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Research involving only data analyses should only describe variables included in the dataset that will be used.
- ✓ For any research which includes or may likely include children/minors or adults unable to consent, review content [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ For research targeting Native Americans or populations with a high Native American demographic, or on or near tribal lands, review content [\[here\]](#)
For research involving minors on campus, review content [\[here\]](#)

Response: Participants must 1) be over 18 years old), 2) be White women who have been a part of, left, and remained disengaged from a White-supremacist group for at least one year, 3) have subsequently spoken out against White supremacy publicly in at least one instance. Minors will not be part of this study.

IRB: 5. Number of Participants

Indicate the total number of individuals you expect to recruit and enroll. For secondary data analyses, the response should reflect the number of cases in the dataset.

Response: 9-12

IRB: 6. Recruitment Methods

6.1 Identify who will be doing the recruitment and consenting of participants.

6.2 Identify when, where, and how potential participants will be identified, recruited, and consented.

6.3 Name materials that will be used (e.g., recruitment materials such as emails, flyers, advertisements, etc.) Please upload each recruitment material as a separate document, Name the document:

recruitment_methods_email/flyer/advertisement_dd-mm-yyyy

6.4 Describe the procedures relevant to using materials (e.g., consent form).

✓

Response: Jackson Liguori, a PhD student, under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Spanierman, Professor and Head of the Faculty of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, will be doing the recruiting. Jackson will reach out to ex-white supremacists who have written books about their experiences, or who have been the subjects of interviews, popular literature, documentaries, etc. via email, phone (text/call) and/or social media direct messaging. Jackson will engage in Snowball Sampling, a sampling approach wherein the researcher draws on existing study participants to help recruit future participants from among their social networks (Goodman, 1961). Participants will be presented with digital consent documents via email or mail prior to participation by Jackson Liguori. The consent documents will be signed and collected directly before participation. These consent documents will be stored separately from all other study data managed by Jackson Liguori. See attached consent form.

IRB: 7. Study Procedures

- 7.1 List research procedure step by step (e.g., interventions, surveys, focus groups, observations, lab procedures, secondary data collection, accessing student or other records for research purposes, and follow-ups). Upload one attachment, dated, with all the materials relevant to this section. Name the document: supporting documents dd-mm-yyyy
- 7.2 For each procedure listed, describe **who** will be conducting it, **where** it will be performed, **how long** is participation in each procedure, and **how/what data** will be collected in each procedure.
- 7.3 Report the total period and span of time for the procedures (if applicable the timeline for follow ups).
- 7.4 For secondary data analyses, identify if it is a public dataset (please include a weblink where the data will be accessed from, if applicable). If not, describe the contents of the dataset, how it will be accessed, and attach data use agreement(s) if relevant.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Ensure that research materials and procedures are explicitly connected to the articulated aims or research questions (from section 2 above).
- ✓ In some cases, a table enumerating the name of the measures, corresponding citation (if any), number of items, sources of data, time/wave if a repeated measures design can help the IRB streamline the review time.

Response: In order to gather data for this study, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with ex-white supremacist women. I will conduct these interviews via video conference platforms (preferably) or phone. I plan to carry out these interviews from August 2022 to January 2023. These interviews will be conducted remotely. I will transcribe all interviews and then engage in feedback sessions with participants in order to ensure accurate translations of their statements. As I will be approaching the research using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), I must take into account that my access to participants' lived experiences is both dependent on, and complicated by, my personal preconceptions and perspectives. Because I may encounter unanticipated emotional reactions during interviews and data analysis that might cloud my analytical objectivity, I will practice self-reflection and cyclical bracketing, or setting aside my biases and preconceptions regarding the phenomenon in question, throughout my research (Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Flowers, 2009; Smith, et al., 1997). Throughout the conduct of the study, I will aim to stay as close as possible to participants' intended meanings. The study procedure is listed below:

1. **Demographic Form** – Using their own computer, participants will fill out a demographic information form detailing their marriage status, income, employment status, level of education, religious affiliation, and ethnic affiliation. The form will be de-identified by giving each participant a study pseudonym by which he will be identified for the duration of the project. Completing the form should take no more than five minutes. See attached demographic form.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews** – Participants will engage in semi-structured interviews with the researcher either via Zoom or telephone. Each conversation will be recorded (with recorded visuals for video conference, without visuals for phone conversation). If a given participant agrees to audio recording only, I will recommend that the participant turn off their video so that only the audio track will be retained. The interviews should take about 1-2 hours of the participants' time. See attached interview protocol.
3. **Transcription** – The researcher will personally transcribe each interview on his personal password-protected computer. Each interview will take between 4-8 hours to complete.
4. **Transcript Feedback Sessions** – After the researcher completes an initial transcription of the interview, each participant will be asked to read through her own interview transcript on a computer to ensure that all translations match her original statements and to edit sections that are either inaccurate or that might have information that reveals too much about her personal identity. Reading through the transcript and making edits should take 1-3 hours of the participants' time.
5. **Optional Follow Up Interview** – Each participant will be offered an optional follow up interview with the researcher via online video platform or phone to discuss the process of the study and to answer questions. These follow up sessions should take at most 1 hour of the participants' time.
6. **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Transcripts/Writeup** – Using his personal password-protected computer, the researcher will read through each interview transcript individually to identify salient phenomenological themes from participant explanations/descriptions. The researcher will then pool themes from individual transcripts and identify superordinate themes which will be compiled in a master list. Superordinate theme titles will be linked with data from the transcripts, and every instance in which a theme is seen in the transcript will be marked with an identifier to assist with the analysis. (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Finally, the researcher will draw from these themes to create a writeup for the study.

IRB: 8. Compensation

8.1 Report the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.

8.2 Identify the source of the funds to compensate participants.

8.3 Justify that the compensation to participants to indicate it is reasonable and/or how the compensation amount was determined.

8.4 Describe the procedures for distributing the compensation or assigning the credit to participants.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If partial compensation or credit will be given or if completion of all elements is required, explain the rationale or a plan to avoid coercion
- ✓ For extra or course credit guidance, see “Research on educational programs or in classrooms” on the following page: <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.
- ✓ For compensation over \$100.00 and other institutional financial policies, review “Research Subject Compensation” at: <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations> for more information.

Response: No compensation will be distributed

IRB: 9. Risk to Participants

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Consider the broad definition of “minimal risk” as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research that are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.
- ✓ Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.
- ✓ If there are risks, clearly describe the plan for mitigating the identified risks.

Response: Because the participants will be taking in part in personal interviews, they may experience discomfort during the conversations. But these risks are minimal as the potential harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater than what these participants encounter in daily life. To safeguard each participant’s identity, I will take several steps:

1. Let each participant select their own pseudonym
2. Ensure that only Dr. Spanierman and I have access to the interview data, which will be stored on password-protected Dropbox folder (recordings will be deleted once transcripts have been verified by participants; transcripts will be kept for 7 years).
3. Provide participants with an opportunity to provide feedback on the interview transcripts so they can delete information that encroaches too much on their confidentiality.

IRB: 10. Potential Direct Benefits to Participants

List the potential direct benefits to research participants. If there are risks noted in 9 (above), articulated benefits should outweigh such risks. These benefits are not to society or others not considered participants in the proposed research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. A direct benefit comes as a direct result of the subject’s participation in the research. An indirect benefit may be incidental to the subject’s participation. Do not include compensation as a benefit.

Response: During the interview process, participants will have the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their lived experiences through self-reflection about their hate group exit journey.

IRB: 11. Privacy and Confidentiality

Indicate the steps that will be taken to protect the participant's privacy.

- 11.1 Identify who will have **access to the data**.
- 11.2 Identify where, how, and how long data will be **stored** (e.g. ASU secure server, ASU cloud storage, filing cabinets).
- 11.3 Describe the procedures for **sharing, managing and destroying data**.
- 11.4 Describe any special measures to **protect** any extremely sensitive data (e.g. password protection, encryption, certificates of confidentiality, separation of identifiers and data, secured storage, etc.).
- 11.5 Describe how any **audio or video recordings** will be managed, secured, and/or de-identified.
- 11.6 Describe how will any signed consent, assent, and/or parental permission forms be secured and how long they will be maintained. These forms should separate from the rest of the study data.
- 11.7 Describe how any data will be **de-identified**, linked or tracked (e.g. master-list, contact list, reproducible participant ID, randomized ID, etc.). Outline the specific procedures and processes that will be followed.
- 11.8 Describe any and all identifying or contact information that will be collected for any reason during the course of the study and how it will be secured or protected. This includes contact information collected for follow-up, compensation, linking data, or recruitment.
- 11.9 For studies accessing existing data sets, clearly describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- 11.10 For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available at <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.

Response: Dr. Lisa Spanierman and Jackson Liguori will be the only persons with access to the study data. A unique password will be generated for each Zoom interview. All digital data (video/phone recordings, transcripts and demographic forms) will be stored on a secure, password-protected Dropbox folder to which only Dr. Spanierman and Jackson Liguori will have access. Recordings will be retained until transcripts have been verified by participants, at which point the recordings will be deleted. We will save transcripts and other relevant study data for 7 years. Digital consent forms will be stored separately from all other participant data on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. A master list of participant names/pseudonyms and contact information will be stored on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. Researcher will create strong password and change every 3 months (Barnhill & Barnhill, 2015). To ensure confidentiality, each participant will choose a study pseudonym.

IRB: 12. Consent

Describe the procedures that will be used to obtain consent or assent (and/or parental permission).

12.1 Who will be responsible for consenting participants?

12.2 Where will the consent process take place?

12.3 How will the consent be obtained (e.g., verbal, digital signature)?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in their preferred language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent. For translation requirements, see Translating documents and materials under <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>
- ✓ Translated consent forms should be submitted after the English is version of all relevant materials are approved. Alternatively, submit translation certification letter.
- ✓ **If a waiver for the informed consent process is requested, justify the waiver in terms of each of the following: (a) The research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects; (b) The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects; (c) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and (d) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.** Studies involving confidential, one time, or anonymous data need not justify a waiver. A verbal consent or implied consent after reading a cover letter is sufficient.
- ✓ ASU consent templates are [\[here\]](#).
- ✓ Consents and related materials need to be congruent with the content of the application.

Response: Participants will be presented with digital consent documents via email or mail prior to participation by Jackson Liguori. The consent documents will be signed and collected directly before participation. These consent documents will be stored separately from all other study data managed by Jackson Liguori. See attached consent form.

IRB: 13. Site(s) or locations where research will be conducted.

List the sites or locations where interactions with participants will occur-

- Identify where research procedures will be performed.
- For research conducted outside of the ASU describe:
 - Site-specific regulations or customs affecting the research.
 - Local scientific and ethical review structures in place.
- For research conducted outside of the United States/United States Territories describe:
 - Safeguards to ensure participants are protected.
- For information on international research, review the content [\[here\]](#).

For research conducted with secondary data (archived data):

- List what data will be collected and from where.
- Describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, homework assignments, student ID numbers etc.), additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).

Response: All interactions will take place on either video conference platform, phone (call/text), social media direct messaging, email, or mail. There will be no in-person interaction.

IRB: 14. Human Subjects Certification from Training.

Provide the names of the members of the research team.

ASU affiliated individuals do not need attach Certificates. Non-ASU investigators and research team members anticipated to manage data and/or interact with participants, need to provide the most recent CITI training for human participants available at www.citiprogram.org. Certificates are valid for 4 years.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If any of the study team members have not completed training through ASU's CITI training (i.e. they completed training at another university), copies of their completion reports will need to be uploaded when you submit.
- ✓ For any team members who are affiliated with another institution, please see "Collaborating with other institutions" [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ The IRB will verify that team members have completed IRB training. Details on how to complete IRB CITI training through ASU are [\[here\]](#)

Response:

Jackson Liguori: 7/21/22
Dr. Spanierman: 5/19/22

General Tips:

- Have all members of the research team complete IRB training before submitting.
- Ensure that all your instruments, recruitment materials, study instruments, and consent forms are submitted via ERA when you submit your protocol document. Templates are [\[here\]](#)
- Submit a complete protocol. Don't ask questions in the protocol – submit with your best option and, if not appropriate, revisions will be requested.
- If your study has undeveloped phases, clearly indicate in the protocol document that the details and materials for those phases will be submitted via a modification when ready.
- Review all materials for consistency. Ensure that the procedures, lengths of participation, dates, etc., are consistent across all the materials you submit for review.
- Only ASU faculty, full time staff may serve as the PI. Students may prepare the submission by listing the faculty member as the PI. The submit button will only be visible to the PI.
- Information on how and what to submit with your study in ERA is [\[here\]](#). Note that if you are a student, you will need to have your Principal Investigator submit.
- For details on how to submit this document as part of a study for review and approval by the ASU IRB, visit <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>.

APPENDIX M

STUDY TWO ASU IRB APPROVAL

STUDY TWO ASU IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Lisa Spanierman](#)
[CISA: Counseling and Counseling Psychology](#)
480/727-2605
Lisa.Spanierman@asu.edu

Dear [Lisa Spanierman](#):

<mailto:Lisa.Spanierman@asu.edu>

On 8/1/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Study Two: How Women Facilitate White Supremacist Deradicalization
Investigator:	Lisa Spanierman
IRB ID:	STUDY00016307
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LIGUORI_IRB Social Behavioral_study2, Category: IRB Protocol;• Prior Research Participant Contact Referral, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Study Two Demographic Information Form, Category: Other;• Study Two Participant Consent, Category: Consent Form;• Study Two Recruitment Letter, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Study Two Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, Category: Other;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 8/1/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found [here](#). IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Jackson Liguori
Jackson Liguori

	Page: 1 of 7	
	PREPARED BY: IRB Staff	APPROVED BY: Heather Clark
DOCUMENT TITLE: HRP 503 A Social Behavioral Protocol	DEPARTMENT: Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (ORIA)	EFFECTIVE DATE: [9/8/2021]

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete each section of the application. Based on the nature of the research being proposed some sections may not apply. Those sections can be marked as N/A. Remember that the IRB is concerned with risks and benefits to the research participant and your responses should clearly reflect these issues. You (the PI) need to retain the most recent protocol document for future revisions. Questions can be addressed to research.integrity@asu.edu. **PIs are strongly encouraged to complete this application with words and terms used to describe the protocol is geared towards someone not specialized in the PI's area of expertise.**

IRB: 1. Protocol Title: Understanding Women's Roles in White Supremacist Deradicalization: Study Two

IRB: 2. Background and Objectives

- 2.1 List the specific aims or research questions in 300 words or less.
- 2.2 Refer to findings relevant to the risks and benefits to participants in the proposed research.
- 2.3 Identify any past studies by ID number that are related to this study. If the work was done elsewhere, indicate the location.

TIPS for streamlining the review time:

- ✓ Two paragraphs or less is recommended.
- ✓ Do not submit sections of funded grants or similar. The IRB will request additional information, if needed.

Response: Extending a key finding from my previous research (STUDY00011947), the aim of this study is to learn about the experiences of non-White supremacist women who have helped deradicalize White supremacists. While some research does exist supporting the notion that women have been instrumental in deradicalizing White supremacists, there has yet to be a study that exclusively focuses on their voices. Without addressing the experiences of these women, we over-emphasize the experience of men in the White supremacy movement. For example, in Blazak's (2004) study examining how women affect hate group exit decisions, all five participants were men, and the findings were drawn explicitly from their descriptions of women who helped them leave racism behind. By continuing to emphasize the White supremacist man's perspective, we give credence to the White supremacist notion that men should be at the center of research and that women should be relegated to auxiliary positions. Learning from these women's experiences can help guide the development of more robust disengagement and deradicalization interventions. As such, the current study aims to emphasize the voices of women who have helped White supremacists leave their hate groups behind. I will focus on investigating the following research questions in the current study:

- 1) Why and how do non-White supremacist women help White supremacists exit their hate groups?
- 2) What is it like for women to help White supremacists exit their hate group?

IRB: 3. Data Use - What are the intended uses of the data generated from this project?

Examples include: Dissertation, thesis, undergraduate project, publication/journal article, conferences/presentations, results released to agency, organization, employer, or school. If other, then describe.

Response: This data will be used primarily in a dissertation but may also be used in peer-reviewed articles and conference presentations.

IRB: 4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

4.1 List criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final sample. Indicate if each of the following special (vulnerable/protected) populations is included or excluded:

- Minors (under 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent (impaired decision-making capacity)
- Prisoners
- Economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals

4.2 If not obvious, what is the rationale for the exclusion of special populations?

4.3 What procedures will be used to determine inclusion/exclusion of special populations?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Research involving only data analyses should only describe variables included in the dataset that will be used.
- ✓ For any research which includes or may likely include children/minors or adults unable to consent, review content [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ For research targeting Native Americans or populations with a high Native American demographic, or on or near tribal lands, review content [\[here\]](#)
For research involving minors on campus, review content [\[here\]](#)

Response: Participants must 1) be 18 years old or older; 2) have encountered or developed a relationship a white supremacist whom they helped disengage or are in the process of attempting to help disengage from a hate group and/or deradicalize; 3) must not have been a part of a White supremacist group at the time they connected with the White supremacist hate group member who ended up exiting. Minors will not be part of this study.

IRB: 5. Number of Participants

Indicate the total number of individuals you expect to recruit and enroll. For secondary data analyses, the response should reflect the number of cases in the dataset.

Response: 9-12

IRB: 6. Recruitment Methods

6.1 Identify who will be doing the recruitment and consenting of participants.

6.2 Identify when, where, and how potential participants will be identified, recruited, and consented.

6.3 Name materials that will be used (e.g., recruitment materials such as emails, flyers, advertisements, etc.) Please upload each recruitment material as a separate document, Name the document:

recruitment_methods_email/flyer/advertisement_dd-mm-yyyy

6.4 Describe the procedures relevant to using materials (e.g., consent form).

✓

Response: Jackson Liguori, a PhD student, under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Spanierman, Professor and Head of the Faculty of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, will be doing the recruiting. Jackson will reach out to women who have helped former White supremacists disengage from their hate groups. Jackson will also reach out to former White supremacists whom he interviewed as part of his previous thesis study to ask them if they would be comfortable connecting him to women who helped them leave their hate groups. Jackson will also engage in “snowball sampling,” a sampling approach wherein the researcher draws on existing study participants to help recruit future participants from among their social networks (Goodman, 1961). Participants will be presented with digital consent documents via email or mail prior to participation by Jackson Liguori. The consent documents will be signed and collected directly before participation. These consent documents will be stored separately from all other study data managed by Jackson Liguori. See attached consent form.

IRB: 7. Study Procedures

- 7.1 List research procedure step by step (e.g., interventions, surveys, focus groups, observations, lab procedures, secondary data collection, accessing student or other records for research purposes, and follow-ups). Upload one attachment, dated, with all the materials relevant to this section. Name the document: supporting documents dd-mm-yyyy
- 7.2 For each procedure listed, describe **who** will be conducting it, **where** it will be performed, **how long** is participation in each procedure, and **how/what data** will be collected in each procedure.
- 7.3 Report the total period and span of time for the procedures (if applicable the timeline for follow ups).
- 7.4 For secondary data analyses, identify if it is a public dataset (please include a weblink where the data will be accessed from, if applicable). If not, describe the contents of the dataset, how it will be accessed, and attach data use agreement(s) if relevant.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Ensure that research materials and procedures are explicitly connected to the articulated aims or research questions (from section 2 above).
- ✓ In some cases, a table enumerating the name of the measures, corresponding citation (if any), number of items, sources of data, time/wave if a repeated measures design can help the IRB streamline the review time.

Response: In order to gather data for this study, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with women who have helped former White supremacists exit their hate groups. I will conduct these interviews via video conference platforms (preferably) or phone. I plan to carry out these interviews from August 2022 to January 2023. These interviews will be conducted remotely. I will transcribe all interviews and then engage in feedback sessions with participants in order to ensure accurate translations of their statements. As I will be approaching the research using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), I must take into account that my access to participants' lived experiences is both dependent on, and complicated by, my personal preconceptions and perspectives. Because I may encounter unanticipated emotional reactions during interviews and data analysis that might cloud my analytical objectivity, I will practice self-reflection and cyclical bracketing, or setting aside my biases and preconceptions regarding the phenomenon in question, throughout my research (Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Flowers, 2009; Smith, et al., 1997). Throughout the conduct of the study, I will aim to stay as close as possible to participants' intended meanings. The study procedure is listed below:

7. **Demographic Form** – Using their own computer, participants will fill out a demographic information form detailing their marriage status, income, employment status, level of education, religious affiliation, race, and ethnicity. The form will be de-identified by giving each participant a study pseudonym by which she will be identified for the duration of the project. Completing the form should take no more than five minutes. See attached demographic form.
8. **Semi-Structured Interviews** – Participants will engage in semi-structured interviews with the researcher via video conference platform or telephone. Each conversation will be recorded (with recorded visuals for video conference, without visuals for phone conversation). The interviews should take about 1-2 hours of the participants' time. See attached interview protocol.
9. **Transcription** – The researcher will personally transcribe each interview on his personal password-protected computer. Each interview will take between 4-8 hours to complete.
10. **Transcript Feedback Sessions** – After the researcher completes an initial transcription of the interview, each participant will be asked to read through her own interview transcript on a computer to ensure that all translations match her original statements and to edit sections that are either inaccurate or that might have information that reveals too much about her personal identity. Reading through the transcript and making edits should take 1-3 hours of the participants' time.
11. **Optional Follow Up Interview** – Each participant will be offered an optional follow up interview with the researcher via online video platform or phone to discuss the process of the study and to answer questions. These follow up sessions should take at most 1 hour of the participants' time.
12. **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Transcripts/Writeup** – Using his personal password-protected computer, the researcher will read through each interview transcript individually to identify salient phenomenological themes from participant explanations/descriptions. The researcher will then pool themes from individual transcripts and identify superordinate themes which will be compiled in a master list. Superordinate theme titles will be linked with data from the transcripts, and every instance in which a theme is seen in the transcript will be marked with an identifier to assist with the analysis. (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Finally, the researcher will draw from these themes to create a writeup for the study.

IRB: 8. Compensation

8.1 Report the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.

8.2 Identify the source of the funds to compensate participants.

8.3 Justify that the compensation to participants to indicate it is reasonable and/or how the compensation amount was determined.

8.4 Describe the procedures for distributing the compensation or assigning the credit to participants.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If partial compensation or credit will be given or if completion of all elements is required, explain the rationale or a plan to avoid coercion
- ✓ For extra or course credit guidance, see “Research on educational programs or in classrooms” on the following page: <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.
- ✓ For compensation over \$100.00 and other institutional financial policies, review “Research Subject Compensation” at: <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations> for more information.

Response: No compensation will be distributed

IRB: 9. Risk to Participants

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Consider the broad definition of “minimal risk” as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research that are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.
- ✓ Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.
- ✓ If there are risks, clearly describe the plan for mitigating the identified risks.

Response: Because the participants will be taking in part in personal interviews, they may experience discomfort during the conversations. But these risks are minimal as the potential harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater than what these participants encounter in daily life. To safeguard each participant’s identity, I will take several steps:

4. Let each participant select their own pseudonym
5. Ensure that only Dr. Spanierman and I have access to the interview data, which will be stored on password-protected Dropbox folder (recordings will be deleted once transcripts have been verified by participants; transcripts will be kept for 7 years).
6. Offer participants an opportunity to provide feedback on the interview transcripts so they can delete information that encroaches too much on their confidentiality.

IRB: 10. Potential Direct Benefits to Participants

List the potential direct benefits to research participants. If there are risks noted in 9 (above), articulated benefits should outweigh such risks. These benefits are not to society or others not considered participants in the proposed research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. A direct benefit comes as a direct result of the subject’s participation in the research. An indirect benefit may be incidental to the subject’s participation. Do not include compensation as a benefit.

Response: During the interview process, participants will have the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their lived experiences through self-reflection about their role in White supremacist deradicalization.

IRB: 11. Privacy and Confidentiality

Indicate the steps that will be taken to protect the participant's privacy.

- 11.1 Identify who will have **access to the data**.
- 11.2 Identify where, how, and how long data will be **stored** (e.g. ASU secure server, ASU cloud storage, filing cabinets).
- 11.3 Describe the procedures for **sharing, managing and destroying data**.
- 11.4 Describe any special measures to **protect** any extremely sensitive data (e.g. password protection, encryption, certificates of confidentiality, separation of identifiers and data, secured storage, etc.).
- 11.5 Describe how any **audio or video recordings** will be managed, secured, and/or de-identified.
- 11.6 Describe how will any signed consent, assent, and/or parental permission forms be secured and how long they will be maintained. These forms should separate from the rest of the study data.
- 11.7 Describe how any data will be **de-identified**, linked or tracked (e.g. master-list, contact list, reproducible participant ID, randomized ID, etc.). Outline the specific procedures and processes that will be followed.
- 11.8 Describe any and all identifying or contact information that will be collected for any reason during the course of the study and how it will be secured or protected. This includes contact information collected for follow-up, compensation, linking data, or recruitment.
- 11.9 For studies accessing existing data sets, clearly describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- 11.10 For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available at <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.

Response: Dr. Lisa Spanierman and Jackson Liguori will be the only persons with access to the study data. All digital data (video/phone recordings, transcripts and demographic forms) will be stored on a secure, password-protected Dropbox folder to which only Dr. Spanierman and Jackson Liguori will have access. Recordings will be retained until transcripts have been verified by participants, at which point the recordings will be deleted. We will save transcripts and other relevant study data for 7 years. Digital consent forms will be stored separately from all other participant data on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. A master list of participant names/pseudonyms and contact information will be stored on researcher's personal password-protected laptop in a password-protected folder for 3 years. Researcher will create strong password and change every 3 months (Barnhill & Barnhill, 2015). To ensure confidentiality, each participant will choose a study pseudonym.

IRB: 12. Consent

Describe the procedures that will be used to obtain consent or assent (and/or parental permission).

12.1 Who will be responsible for consenting participants?

12.2 Where will the consent process take place?

12.3 How will the consent be obtained (e.g., verbal, digital signature)?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in their preferred language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent. For translation requirements, see Translating documents and materials under <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>
- ✓ Translated consent forms should be submitted after the English is version of all relevant materials are approved. Alternatively, submit translation certification letter.
- ✓ **If a waiver for the informed consent process is requested, justify the waiver in terms of each of the following: (a) The research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects; (b) The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects; (c) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and (d) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.** Studies involving confidential, one time, or anonymous data need not justify a waiver. A verbal consent or implied consent after reading a cover letter is sufficient.
- ✓ ASU consent templates are [\[here\]](#).
- ✓ Consents and related materials need to be congruent with the content of the application.

Response: Participants will be presented with digital consent documents via email or mail prior to participation by Jackson Liguori. The consent documents will be signed and collected directly before participation. These consent documents will be stored separately from all other study data managed by Jackson Liguori. See attached consent form.

IRB: 13. Site(s) or locations where research will be conducted.

List the sites or locations where interactions with participants will occur-

- Identify where research procedures will be performed.
- For research conducted outside of the ASU describe:
 - Site-specific regulations or customs affecting the research.
 - Local scientific and ethical review structures in place.
- For research conducted outside of the United States/United States Territories describe:
 - Safeguards to ensure participants are protected.
- For information on international research, review the content [\[here\]](#).

For research conducted with secondary data (archived data):

- List what data will be collected and from where.
- Describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, homework assignments, student ID numbers etc.), additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).

Response: All interactions will take place on either video conference platform, phone (call/text), social media direct messaging, email, or mail. There will be no in-person interaction.

IRB: 14. Human Subjects Certification from Training.

Provide the names of the members of the research team.

ASU affiliated individuals do not need attach Certificates. Non-ASU investigators and research team members anticipated to manage data and/or interact with participants, need to provide the most recent CITI training for human participants available at www.citiprogram.org. Certificates are valid for 4 years.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If any of the study team members have not completed training through ASU's CITI training (i.e. they completed training at another university), copies of their completion reports will need to be uploaded when you submit.
- ✓ For any team members who are affiliated with another institution, please see "Collaborating with other institutions" [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ The IRB will verify that team members have completed IRB training. Details on how to complete IRB CITI training through ASU are [\[here\]](#)

Response:

Jackson Liguori: 7/21/22
Dr. Spanierman: 5/19/22

General Tips:

- Have all members of the research team complete IRB training before submitting.
- Ensure that all your instruments, recruitment materials, study instruments, and consent forms are submitted via ERA when you submit your protocol document. Templates are [\[here\]](#)
- Submit a complete protocol. Don't ask questions in the protocol – submit with your best option and, if not appropriate, revisions will be requested.
- If your study has undeveloped phases, clearly indicate in the protocol document that the details and materials for those phases will be submitted via a modification when ready.
- Review all materials for consistency. Ensure that the procedures, lengths of participation, dates, etc., are consistent across all the materials you submit for review.
- Only ASU faculty, full time staff may serve as the PI. Students may prepare the submission by listing the faculty member as the PI. The submit button will only be visible to the PI.
- Information on how and what to submit with your study in ERA is [\[here\]](#). Note that if you are a student, you will need to have your Principal Investigator submit.
- For details on how to submit this document as part of a study for review and approval by the ASU IRB, visit <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>.