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A Critical Rhetorical Analysis of Selected White Supremacist Hate Sites

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Introduction to the Problem

Hate, as a principle, is a word that usually carries with it negative connotations, and when put into practice, should always be taken seriously. On the internet, however, this is not always the case. In the virtual world, hate is becoming more and more common, is increasingly easy to propagate, and is easily accessible by nearly anyone, including youth. Furthermore, with discussion forums with topics like "Hang Em' High: Share Your Lynching Photos!" and "Racist Jokes," and with free gaming sites offering violent and racially inflammatory titles like "Kill the Jew," "Kick the Nigger," and "Border Control" in which players can casually beat and kill ethnic minorities, hate is being glorified, glamorized, and made into after school fun and games. However, this is no laughing matter. As the incidence of online hate has grown so has public concern.

According to Black's Law Dictionary, 8th Ed. 2004, hate speech is "speech that carries no meaning other than the expression of hatred for some group, such as a particular race, especially in circumstances where the communication is likely to provoke violence (1436)." Far from being a new concept, hate speech has existed for centuries; however, twenty-first century technology, especially the internet, adds a new dimension to this age old issue. The creation of the internet and its ever growing popularity as a means of communication allows the expression of hate to flourish worldwide in ways never before possible.

In turn, it has been variously noted among scholars and researchers that the internet is the ideal medium for hate groups to communicate with their audiences. The 2002 article "Regulating Hate Speech in Cyberspace: Issues of Desirability and Efficacy" by Irene Nemes supports the assertion that the internet is the best means of communicating hate speech, pointing

out that it provides an inexpensive way to reach an audience of millions, and furthermore, that it

offers an unprecedented level of anonymity that protects and reassures offenders (199). Brett

Barnett makes a similar observation in his 2007 book Untangling the Web of Hate: Are online

"Hate Sites" Deserving of First Amendment Protection?, noting that nearly anyone who wishes

to disseminate hateful messages now has the ability to realize that dream in a relatively

inexpensive way, an option that was simply not available to hate mongers before the

telecommunications revolution of the last few decades (108). Nor were these obvious

advantages lost on Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization that

tracks hate groups and hate speech across the country, who also discussed the ease with which a

hate monger could now reach his or her audience from both financial and logistical standpoints,

noting that putting a considerable amount of time, effort, and money into producing a pamphlet

that might only reach hundreds of people suddenly seems absurd when comparatively fewer

resources need be put into the construction of a web site that has the potential to reach far more

people (Potok).

Perhaps more importantly, however, this point was not lost on Don Black. Black, a

pioneer of hate mongering on the early internet, was quoted, long before the surge in internet

hate over the last decade, as saying, "There's a potential here to reach millions, I think it's a

major breakthrough. I don't know if it's the ultimate solution to developing a white rights

movement in this country, but it is certainly a significant advance ("163 and Counting…")."

Black's prediction was correct. He and a great many others have continued to exploit the

internet as a vehicle for their hateful messages ever since. In fact, in recent years communication

scholars and organizations that track online hate speech have widely noted a sharp rise in the

number and variety of U.S. based online hate sites. In other words, this problem is not one that is going away, it is getting worse.

In this introductory chapter, the internet will be explored as a contemporary means for disseminating hate speech, including a brief history of how hate has evolved on the internet, the growth of the problem, the opportunities that hate mongers find online, and how each contributes to the problem's severity. This introductory discussion will provide a baseline knowledge for the investigation of this paper's main focus: the assessment of the overall threat level posed to youth by online hate groups.

Background and History

Online hate speech, since its earliest days, has evolved at a pace approximately equivalent to that of the internet itself. The first "hate sites" were very primitive. They existed in the form of Bulletin Board Systems, or BBS's on which users could post material such as articles, messages, text and other files, make them available for download, and communicate with one another in a message board or forum type format that is still common today. These BBS's were online even before the existence of the modern internet and were accessible by relatively few (Berlet 1).

At a time when the majority of those who had access to what would later become the internet were government defense contractors and academics, few noticed when, in early 1984, George P. Dietz, a well known anti-Semite, racist, and radical right-wing author, became the first to launch a public BBS dedicated to hate mongering. Dietz's BBS, known variously as both "Info. International Network" and "Liberty Bell Net," claimed to be "The only computer bulletin board system and uncontrolled information medium in the United States of America dedicated to

the dissemination of historical facts—not fiction!" It's contents, comprised mainly of articles

published in Dietz's monthly print magazine, the <u>Liberty Bell</u> (1973-1999), covered a wide range

of racist and anti-Semitic subject matter with headings such as "On Race and Religion,"

"Historic Facts and Figures," "The Jew in Review," "The Holocaust: Fact or Fiction," and "The

Holohoax," among others, the latter two being obvious references to Holocaust denial

propaganda (Berlet 1-2).

Soon after Dietz took "Liberty Bell Net" online, others began to follow suit. Later in

1984, the well known and well organized hate group known as Aryan Nations was brought

online by Louis Beam, Aryan Nations member and leader of several Texas Ku Klux Klan

groups, who saw the potential of the internet for advancing the White Supremacist movement

(Berlet 3).

Next, in early 1985, came the "White Aryan Resistance Computer Terminal" or W.A.R.

BBS (Chiang et al. 29). Already, online hate was on the rise. The pioneers of online hate had

broken the technology barrier; new BBS's popped up all over the country, giving various hate

groups a new voice.

In February of 1985, less than a year after the first hate BBS went up, the public learned

of this new medium for hate speech through the <u>New York Times</u>. The article, titled "Computer

Network Links Rightist Groups and Offers 'Enemy"' List by Wayne King, painted a portrait of a

newly created, members only, computer network which enabled participants to communicate

with each other from virtually anywhere in the country with new found ease. For the Aryan

Nations, this article represented a bit of bad publicity—the article focused solely on the Aryan

Liberty Net BBS, their messages, and the violence for which they were allegedly responsible.

The BBS, self described as being for "Aryan Patriots Only" expressed anti-government

sentiments, continually referring to the U.S. Government as the "Zionist Occupational Government," or ZOG, and declared that it had been taken over by Jews. King even described the group and their off-shoots as having declared "war on the United States." In fact, it seemed that the threat was not only present in the virtual world, but in the physical world as well. The FBI, King reported, had named members of the Aryan Nations and subsequent "splinter groups" as being responsible for several serious crimes including armed bank robberies, assaults on federal law officers, and the slaying of Denver based radio talk show host, Alan Berg, who publicly denounced far-right extremists and their ideologies. In addition, the article reported that the BBS gave members access to an "Enemy List," which, though short, certainly sent a threatening message (King 17A).

People were beginning to take notice, however this seemed to do nothing to slow the progression of hate groups' migration to the online world. Despite the negative publicity, more and more BBS's with racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic agendas continued to pop up through the mid-nineties, including a BBS launched out of Florida by Don Black known as Stormfront (Berlet 8-9).

In the months and years following the landmark New York Times article which first exposed the cyber hate phenomenon, various other publications and organizations began to explore the problem, taking different stances and making predictions, including the Anti-Defamation League, the Detroit News, and PC Magazine, among others.

The April 1985 article "'For Aryans Only' Hate mail sent via computer" from the Detroit News by Ric Bohy provided an interesting contrast to concerns about the dangers of hate propaganda. Alan Shefman, who was director of Canada's League for Human Rights when this article was published, placed little stock in any potential threat that online hate speech might

pose, telling the <u>Detroit News</u> "Whether computerization will have any substantial impact is

doubtful." However, those disseminating these ideologies optimistically saw the advent of the

BBS as a key development for their movement. An early message left on Aryan Liberty Net

spoke to this sentiment:

> Finally, we are all going to be linked together at one point in time.
> Imagine if you will, all the great minds of the patriotic Christian
> movement linked together and joined into one computer. Now
> imagine any patriot in the country being able to call up and access
> those minds, to deal with the problems and issues that affect him.
> You are on line with the Aryan Nations brain trust. It is here to
> serve the folk (Bohy 1).

By 1995, most BBS's had disappeared. Online hate, however, was just beginning.

Bulletin Board Systems had become obsolete, replaced by a new graphic interface system which

transformed the online world from a text-only, BBS dominated space to the multi-media driven

World Wide Web that we know today. Soon, many of the old BBS's began to sprout modern

counterparts on the WWW, and in May of 1995, Don Black launched Stormfront.org, the

world's first major internet hate site (Berlet 11).

Growth of the Problem

Since the inception of Stormfront, online hate has grown at an alarming rate. While there

are no exact numbers to go by, given the ever changing nature of the internet and the lack of an

exact standard or definition on which to base a count, several organizations have attempted to

track the number of hate sites, both U.S. based and worldwide, over the years.

One of the earliest counts, conducted by the SPLC in 1998, found that only 34 months

after Black's hate site went up, there were 163 active hate sites on the web. The SPLC noted in

the article, however, that this count erred on the conservative side and only included sites that

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contained "explicitly racist or anti-Semitic material," in other words, Holocaust denial and

Patriot or anti-government militia sites were not included in the count even though the sites'

content might be based on or endorse racist beliefs. In addition, the SPLC article stressed that

these sites didn't simply represent lone individuals, more than half of these sites represented

actual hate groups that could be "contacted or joined, or from whom racist materials can be

ordered ("163 and Counting…")."

In 2000, the SPLC conducted another count of U.S. based hate sites, again using the

criterion that the site must contain explicitly racist or anti-Semitic material. In only two years,

the number had nearly doubled, reaching 305—a staggering 142 more hate sites than were

counted in 1998 (Potok).

In 2007, author Brett Barnett cited two more statistics illustrating the growing problem;

noting that in 2004, when the study for his book was being conducted, there were fewer than 500

U.S. based hate sites, and as the book was being written in 2007, that number was closer to 600

(Barnett xix).

While experts do agree that SPLC estimates are conservative and "almost certainly

undercounted," several more liberal estimates have also been reported (Breckheimer 1497). In

contrast to the SPLC estimate of around 300 active U.S. hate sites in 2000, Peter J. Breckheimer

cited an estimate of around 600 active U.S. hate sites for the same year in his 2002 article "Note:

A Haven For Hate: The Foreign and Domestic Implications of Protecting Internet Hate Speech

Under the First Amendment*" from the *Southern California Law Review* (1496-97).   While

Alexander Tsesis, in his 2001 article "Hate in Cyberspace: Regulating Hate Speech on the

Internet" from the *San Diego Law Review,* cited an even larger estimate of at least 800 U.S.

based hate sites in 1999 (833).

This discrepancy likely resulted from the particular organization responsible for generating the estimate and the criterion on which it was based. When an organization used a rather broad criterion, the resulting estimate was higher. For instance, the Simon Weisenthal Center in Los Angeles also monitors hate content on the internet, and in the year 2000 counted over 3,000 "hate related" web sites based in the United States alone (Breckheimer 1518-19). This illustrates how varying descriptors can produce very different results (i.e. "explicitly racist or anti-Semitic"- 305 sites in 2000 vs. "Hate Related"- 3,000 sites in 2000).

More recently, in 2009, the Simon Weisenthal Center identified over 10,000 "problematic hate and terrorist websites, hate games and other internet postings" as part of their ongoing Digital Terrorism and Hate project (**"**Release of Simon Wiesenthal Center").

While exact numbers may remain impossible to generate, this evidence illustrates two points quite well: first, that even based on the most conservative estimates online hate is on the rise, and at an alarming rate; and secondly, that a reasonable person would consider this a problem. As technology continues to advance, the opportunity for hate mongers becomes greater and greater, a point to be examined in detail next.

Severity of the Problem: The Internet Opportunity

It comes as no surprise that the internet is widely popular among hate groups as a means of disseminating hateful messages and propaganda. However, cost effectiveness and audience accessibility are far from the only perks enjoyed by the hate mongers who use this twenty-first century tool.

The internet presents a unique opportunity for recruitment as well, not just of inteligent adults capable of making reasoned decisions for themselves, but of children and youth who may

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be highly impressionable and vulnerable (Ray and Marsh). Writing for the journal *Analyses of Social Issues and Public* Policy, Phyllis Gerstenfeld, Diana Grant, and Chau-Pu Chiang note in their 2003 article "Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites" that hate sites are an "important port of entry into the movement (30)." Furthermore, they observed that given the high levels of internet use and proficiency among today's youth, the internet is extremely well suited to the task of their recruitment (Chiang et al. 38). Online hate mongers are well aware of this and as a result recruitment efforts routinely target youth. Hate groups seek to target youth through a variety of multimedia content, ranging from music to cartoons to videogames (Ray and Marsh), all of which are known to be especially appealing to youth (Chiang et al. 38-39).

Furthermore, there are several hate sites which have separate "kid's pages." Stormfront represents one such example, which, in addition to its main page hosts a separate kid's site as well. Derek Black, son of Stormfront founder Don Black, created Stromfront's kid's page when he was only twelve years old ("Derek Black"). This site features posts by Derek that appeal to youth through essays, games, music, and optical illusions (Breckheimer 1497-98; Eberwine 353-54). At one time he even offered a free download of the violent videogame "White Power Doom (Ray and Marsh)."

Besides being a great outlet for recruitment, the online world of hate offers several other benefits which the SPLC recognized as early as 1998. The internet unveiled a host of new possibilities that had the potential to advance hate groups' agendas as never before. For instance, hate groups' ability to generate revenue became infinitely easier with the advent of online stores through which hate sites can sell any number of hate related products as well as promote racist

rock bands and their music, an ability once relegated to specific print publications that reached a very limited audience ("163 and Counting…").

In addition, the advent of e-mail and other forms of social communication has allowed hate groups to target victims in a way never before possible, giving new meaning to the term "hate mail ("163 and Counting…")." This ability expanded again with the creation of social networking tools like Facebook and YouTube that gave hate mongers even more ways to victimize the unsuspecting in personal, creative, and novel ways, a main focus of the Simon Weisenthal Center's newest publication ("Release of Simon Wiesenthal Center").

Furthermore, and perhaps most frighteningly, the internet has opened up a Pandora's Box of violence. Now, material that teaches anything from how to stage an urban guerilla rebellion to how to make bombs and grenade launchers is easy to find and readily accessible at the click of a button (Ray and Marsh). Much controversy has arisen in the last decade concerning this and scholars are beginning to investigate possible correlations between online hate and real world violence.

Finally, a topic of equal controversy and concern, is the idea that hate mongers from all over the world are beginning to seek refuge in the United States as other parts of the world continue to ban and enforce the illegalization of online hate speech (Nemes 210). Sharp increases in the number of U.S. based hate sites in recent years, some scholars say, support this assertion (Breckheimer 1517-18).

Each of these issues paints a clear picture of the severity of the online hate speech problem. As each year passes, a trend can be seen of hate sites growing in number and diversifying in content and threat. It seems that this is a pattern that will not change in the near future. Further investigation is certainly warranted.

In the following chapters these issues will be discussed in greater detail. This paper will seek to assess the overall threat level posed to youth by online hate groups, their members, and the messages they disseminate. Through a critical rhetorical analysis based on the methodology established by Campbell and Burkholder's Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism, this paper will investigate the recruitment of children and teens on selected White Supremacist hate sites.

Overview of Procedures

To accomplish the goals set forth in this introduction, this paper will complete several specific tasks. First, in Chapter Two, the international cyber-legal-landscape of online hate speech will be explored in order to gain necessary perspective on how efforts to regulate the problem abroad might affect the problem on domestic soil.

Next, in Chapter Three, selected hate sites and content will be introduced, especially that which is geared towards younger audiences, in order to make a general assessment of the threat posed to youth.

Then, in Chapter Four, selected hate sites will be subjected to a brief content analysis in order to assess the threat level of each site. This will help narrow the selection of hate sites and artifacts appropriate to a critical rhetorical analysis that will be the main methodological device employed throughout this paper in order to make a more specific assessment of threat.

Next, in Chapter Five, selected artifacts from three hate sites will be thoroughly analyzed based on rhetorical frames adapted from Campbell and Burkholder's Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism. As set forth by Campbell and Burkholder, the Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism call for an intrinsic, analytical description of an artifact, relevant contextual and historical

research, and a critical evaluation of both. Both Campbell and Burkholder's frame and the format used for the purposes of this paper can be found in the appendix.

Lastly, in Chapter Six, results and findings of the rhetorical analysis will be discussed as well as the larger implications and conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

Chapter 2: International Attempts to Regulate the Problem

While Americans often take freedom of expression for granted, it is sometimes forgotten that the United States is the only Western nations to grant this right so extensively. Before exploring the issue of online hate speech in the U.S., it is important to first research the international cyber-legal-landscape and how it shapes this issue. The internet is a vast and borderless entity accessible from virtually anywhere in the civilized world. However, laws regulating the internet can often be as various as the numbers of countries from which it's accessible. The following chapter will explore these laws and the importance that they have to the American debate over online hate speech.

When it comes to online hate speech, while many countries have united in an effort to eradicate such speech, there is no unanimous effort to regulate it. In addition, given the very nature of the internet, the variability of those laws and regulations, from nation to nation, that do attempt to control the flow of hate speech, poses significant difficulties for lawmakers and enforcers.

As a multijurisdictional entity, and indeed one that affords global accessibility to its users, the internet allows a purveyor of hate speech, whose website might be in conflict with the laws of the governing body of the nation in which they are based, to simply move the base of their operation to a nation or region which has more tolerant laws. In doing so, this individual would be effectively circumventing the law, while not affecting the accessibility of their website at all. While speech found on a certain website might still violate the laws of a nation in which it is being viewed, unless that website is based in the same nation¸ jurisdiction issues often prevent a course of legal action from being taken (Van Blarcum 783).

This very idea, Breckheimer claims, is causing hatemongers from around the world, and especially from Europe, to view, and in turn use, the United States as a "safe haven" from which to operate their hate sites (Breckheimer 1518-19). By posting content via American-based internet service providers (ISPs), purveyors of racist beliefs and materials are able to take full advantage of the protection of free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment, while at the same time avoiding prosecution in their own nations. This concept of an American haven for online hate speech is unsurprising given the changing landscape of the online world in many European countries.

In contrast to the extensive protection of free speech afforded in the U.S., many European countries have in place stringent laws regarding hate speech, the regulation of which is largely a result of post-WWII initiatives to eradicate discriminatory language, symbols, and other forms of expression in an effort to prevent atrocities such as the Holocaust from happening in the future (Van Blarcum 786).

In addition, the U.N.'s International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which has been ratified by all but four members of the Council of Europe, requires signatory members to, in part, "criminalize the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred" and "declare illegal and prohibit organizations that promote and incite racial discrimination and shall recognize participation in such organizations or activities as an offense punishable by law." As a result of these international campaigns against hate, virtually all European countries have, to some degree, developed and ratified laws that try to stifle hate speech. However, while European nations have extended traditional hate speech laws to the internet, the degree of variability of such laws and the extent to which they are enforced has tended to limit their effectiveness across the continent (Van Blarcum 783-87).

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In recognition of this obstacle, stemming largely from legislative differences and jurisdictional barriers (to which the internet pays no heed), European nations sought a solution to the problem in the form of a cooperative multinational approach that would unify legislation across Europe (Van Blarcum 787). The Council of Europe, which has proclaimed that it "considers racism not as an opinion but as a crime," was charged with the task of making this idea a reality (Timofeeva 265).

What the Council of Europe eventually created was The Convention on Cybercrime (COC), "the first ever international treaty on criminal offenses committed against or with the help of computer networks such as the Internet (Timofeeva 265)." This convention drafted treaty language specifically geared towards online hate speech, intended as an all encompassing regulation that would cover a whole host of computer and internet related crimes, such as copyright infringement, fraud, and child pornography (Van Blarcum 789). While an Internet hate speech protocol was drawn up during the initial drafting of the COC, by the time it reached final stages and was subsequently opened for signature, the protocol had been removed (Van Blarcum 791). The United States, which had played a part in drafting the convention as a whole (Timofeeva 265), and whose signature was still desired, voiced its decision to refrain from signing the treaty, because of its conflict with the First Amendment, unless the protocol was removed (Van Blarcum 791).

Still determined to address the issue of online hate speech, the Council of Europe, advised largely by the Committee of Experts on the Criminalization of Racist or Xenophobic Acts Using Computer Networks, drafted a Additional Protocol to the Convention of Cybercrime to deal with this issue. As a separate protocol, this allowed both member and non-member states to sign and/or ratify the Convention on Cybercrime without necessarily having to agree to the

terms of the additional protocol, and thus refrain from signing this ancillary segment. For the

Council of Europe and the Convention on Cybercrime this would mean that the United States

would become a signor of the convention. However, it also meant that the Additional Protocol,

as for all practical purposes a separate document, would suffer the loss of the United States as a

signor, but likely the loss of many other nations as well (Timofeeva 265).

The Additional Protocol to the Convention of Cybercrime, "concerning the

criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems,"

was opened for signature on January 28, 2003 and required five countries to ratify the protocol

for it to take force (Van Blarcum 791). Less than a year later, the Additional Protocol to the

COC had been signed by twenty-three members of the Council of Europe and had been ratified

by two (Van Blarcum 792). According to the latest update on the Council of Europe's website,

by February 17, 2006 an additional four more member countries had ratified the protocol and

another two had signed it ("Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime").

While six ratifications means that the Additional Protocol has officially entered into

force, it may still be too early to tell what effects this will eventually have on the regulation of

online hate speech in the European arena. Nevertheless, this first step in a regional effort to

eradicate online hate speech is considered a huge success; it may level the legal playing field in

Europe, thus making offenses that violate hate speech laws much easier to prosecute. However,

this poses an important question: will the changing legal landscape in Europe mean the United

States will become a haven for hate mongers trying to avoid increasingly stringent laws? And if

so, might this increase the level of threat posed to U.S. citizens? Increasing numbers of hate sites

once based in Europe, posting their URLs under American ISPs, suggests this might be the case

(Breckheimer 1519), but it is hard to know for sure until the idea is investigated more thoroughly.

While the Council of Europe's multilateral approach is the most novel and one of only very few of its kind, it is not the only approach. There are several nations around the world that deal with online hate speech in much different ways. Even within the Council of Europe, since the Additional Protocol of the COC has not entirely unified laws across member states, there are varying approaches that attack the problem of online hate speech from new angles.

Spain, for instance, rather than attacking hate speech on the internet only from within, has launched an effort to keep online hate speech out (Van Blarcum 784). Legislation was recently passed in Spain that gives Spanish authorities an alternative to simply tracking down and prosecuting proprietors of websites who violate national laws; the alternate legislation now gives judges the power to block unacceptable content from ever being viewed on Spanish soil by simply preventing the content from being accessed by web browsers (Van Blarcum 784). While this method may be slightly flawed from a logistical standpoint, as seeking out and identifying every website with illegal content seems nearly impossible if not extremely tedious, it is still a valuable tool for law enforcers when jurisdictional issues might otherwise prevent any legal recourse from being taken. Now, with more than one tool at their disposal, Spain is very well equipped to fight online hate speech from multiple angles.

The European Union (EU), even before, and separate from, the Council of Europe's most recent efforts, has also implemented strategies that aim to restrict and impede further proliferation of online hate. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom (ECHR) was adopted by the EU in an effort to encourage the "safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content" such as "racist and xenophobic ideas

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(Breckheimer 1510)." However, the COE's Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional

Protocol, since the COE is a larger entity than the EU, has wider coverage of legal ground—

while the ECHR may be useful, the unification of laws that should result from the COC's

Additional Protocol will likely remain the primary weapon against online hate speech in Europe.

Given the numerous multilateral policy implementations and the novel efforts of

individual nations across the continent, Europe seems to be at the forefront of the fight against

online hate. Canada, however, the only non-member state to sign both the COE's Convention on

Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol, did not seem to be very far behind. While a great leap

was recently made by Canada to eradicate online hate from their information superhighway, it

was undone a relatively short time after.

In 2001, Canada added a provision to the Canada Human Rights Act in an attempt to

make online hate speech illegal. The act was originally implemented in the 1960's to regulate

the proliferation of racist telephone hotlines and hate speech disseminated over other traditional

mediums, but was expanded in 2001 to include the internet as well (Brean).

However, in September of 2009, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found Section 13

(the section which regulated cyberspace) of the Canada Human Rights Act to be

unconstitutional, declaring that the restriction set forth by this section violated the Canadian

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the purpose of which, comparable to the First Amendment, is to

guarantee Canadian citizens the right to free opinion and expression ("Internet hate-speech law

unconstitutional"). As a result, online hate speech remains unregulated in Canada.

Policies across most of Asia and the Middle East all but preclude their involvement with

the anti-Semitic movement sweeping across the information superhighway in Europe and North

America. For the sake of this investigation, Western nations and their potential impact on the

American cyber-hate landscape will be the primary focus, however, gaining perspective by briefly looking at policies all over the world can undoubtedly prove useful.

In other parts of the world, online hate speech and anti-Semitism is arguably less of a problem than in Europe and North America. However, even if it were a major problem, there is a good chance that such speech would have little opportunity to flourish in certain areas. In China and Southeast Asia, for example, online hate speech would likely be suppressed very quickly. Although this is not necessarily a good thing when nearly all other speech and content that is deemed offensive is also blocked or suppressed by Asian authorities.

The Chinese government, at the extreme end of internet censorship, mandates that all internet users register with the police, resulting in nearly unprecedented monitoring—any content deemed offensive or seditious is subject to tight regulation and is usually entirely blocked. Singapore and Vietnam also enforce similar practices (Breckheimer 1509).

The Association of Southeast Asia, whose member states include several prominent Southeast Asian countries, has formed a multilateral effort, similar to the Council of Europe's, but is much broader in the speech it intends to regulate. Like China, Singapore, and Vietnam, the Association has agreed to heavily regulate internet use in member nations, attempting to block any content that runs counter to "vaguely defined 'Asian Values (Breckheimer 1509).'"

The typical Middle Eastern approach is similar but could be considered somewhat less severe. Most governments in Islamic nations adhere to Islamic law and extend its principles, in turn, to the internet, meaning that any content deemed offensive is typically blocked. Although in this case the target content primarily consists of pornographic and otherwise obscene material (Breckheimer 1509).

Iran, however, presents an interesting exception. While internet censorship takes place down to vigorous monitoring of e-mail correspondence, placing communicators at risk for simply using the word "freedom" or "sex (Batir 10)," anti-Semitic speech, including but not limited to Holocaust denial, seems to be welcomed and all but outright encouraged.

The internet community is an enormous, borderless, and highly accessible entity, and since its low tech beginnings, hate propaganda has remained common and extremist groups well represented. This continues to be the case today, and with the changing tides in European free speech policy, the United States may soon emerge as the worldwide epicenter for online hate. This raises some important questions: what threat, if any, does this pose to the American people? As online hate becomes more common, will web users find themselves increasingly exposed to such material? If this indeed is the case, most adults should still be reasonably equipped to recognize and identify extremist propaganda as such, and in turn filter out undesirable material from their browsing repertoire. The youth, however, represents a less aware, more vulnerable, and perhaps more exposed demographic.

The next chapter will explore the question of youth further. With a focus on White Supremacist hate sites, the chapter will introduce the kind of content slanted to youth and explore the tactics and appeals that these sites use in their attempts to target younger audiences.

Chapter 3: A General Assessment of the Threat to Youth

Over the last decade, the youth of the United States of America have become increasingly internet proficient. In 2001, one survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, concluded that 73% of Americans ages 12-17 used the internet (Chiang et al. 38). Eight years later, in 2009, the same survey's results showed a dramatic increase in this number, reporting that now 93% of Americans ages 12-17 use the internet. According to these statistics, then, American youth are among the most common internet users in the nation, second only to young adults (ages 18-29, 95%), and by a very small margin ("Updated: Change in Internet Access by Age Group"). Furthermore, in May 2010, the same group reported that a total of 71% of American adults ages 18 and older have internet access in their homes ("Home Broadband Adoption").

This means that a great many American youth have access to the internet in the privacy and security of their own home, where they would likely feel more comfortable to freely explore than they might at their schools or local public libraries where internet use is probably somewhat monitored and restricted.

Given the changing tides in European free speech policy and increasing internet use, American youth represents one of the groups most at risk for exposure to online White Supremacist hate speech. The young mind, until it matures well into adulthood, is incredibly malleable. While ideologies and associations are beginning to form, they remain anything but firm during adolescent and teenage years. Young people are highly impressionable, and in turn, susceptible to persuasive propaganda.

Persuasive propaganda, a specialty of anti-Semitic and white supremacist groups, is a common tool of the online hate site. And with hate sites containing material that is geared specifically towards children and young adults, American youth are at risk of being victimized

by such groups. This chapter intends to introduce the ways in which online hate sites might pose a threat to our nation's younger and increasingly technologically adept generations.

Online hate sites are extremely diverse, both in terms of ideology and content, even among the narrower categories of 'anti-Semitic' and 'White Supremacist' that will be the main focus throughout the course of this paper. Gerstenfeld, Grant, and Chiang's 2003 study identified seven sub groups of the broad 'white supremacist' label (white nationalist, Holocaust denial, skinhead, neo-Nazi, Christian identity, Ku Klux Klan, and militia) and noted that each of these groups have several sub groups of their own as well (39).

As a result of this diversity and a lack of cross group collaboration (commonly found intergroup links from site to site are an exception), there is no standard model for hate sites, or for their strategic approach to persuasion and propaganda, since a wide variety of ideologies, beliefs, and levels of extremism are represented.

In the following pages, a variety of content types (with a specific focus on multimedia content), as well as propaganda and persuasion techniques, used by online hate groups will be introduced and discussed, including how such content might appeal to or pose a threat to youth.

Content, material, and entire sites designed specifically to appeal to or persuade children and young adults are surprisingly common throughout the online white supremacist community. Though very little scholarly work has been published explaining this problem, to offer some perspective, in one recent study eleven sites, or a rather significant 7% of the 157 site sample, contained material or pages designed specifically for kids or teens (Chiang et al. 35).

MartinLutherKing.org (MLK.org) and Stormfront for Kids (Stormfront.org/Kids) represent two examples of sites designed with youth in mind. Both are formally operated by

Stormfront, however, while MLK.org is the product of a collective effort, Stormfront for Kids is the sole creation of Derek Black. His site will be looked at first.

Upon entering Stormfront for Kids, users are greeted with a message from Derek, the site's webmaster, who was only twelve years old when he created it. He makes clear right away through his message the subject matter of his site, writing "I can see by the fact that you have visited my page that you are interested in the subject of race." While he does not try to disguise this, he is somewhat cryptic nevertheless; he does not necessarily come off as hateful. Once his young viewers learn of Derek's age, they are likely to immediately relate to him, if in no other way than by recognizing him as a peer. Furthermore, anyone in his age group viewing Derek as a peer, would likely be impressed by the fact that he owns and operates his own web domain. His personal appeals and relatable qualities are exactly what makes this site dangerous and why it is potentially capable of influencing the youth who visit it.

Stormfront for Kids might be discovered by those who are already looking for racially motivated subject matter, and while it might be found by mistake from time to time, it was not intentionally designed to be so. For MLK.org, however, the same cannot be said. The site, designed to resemble a legitimate educational website in both appearance and with its .org domain extension, can be found by carrying out a simple search on nearly any search engine for the famous civil rights activist's name. This means that virtually anyone researching MLK is at risk for happening upon this site—likely without the knowledge of it's true purpose.

Deception is not the only tactic employed here. Upon entering the site, it becomes immediately apparent that it was designed to appeal to young people, and especially to young students, reading in bright blue letters across the top: "Attention Students: Try Our MLK Pop Quiz." At face value the entire site appears to be a valuable educational resource, it is only upon

looking closer that racially motivated undertones can be detected. However, not all youth will have the skills to detect them. In fact, one college professor who asked her freshman honors class to critically evaluate the MLK.org, found that a very small percentage of her students actually picked up on the fact that it was a hate site (Chiang et al. 41). Taking this into consideration, it can be seen how younger students might be even less likely to realize what they were actually looking at.

Besides those designed specifically for youth, other hate sites often contain sections or material that might appeal to youth in various ways. For example, discussion forums that deal with youth related issues might draw visitors. Furthermore, multimedia content will often appeal to youth as well—things like cartoons, music, games, graphics, jokes and stories.

One area in which certain parallels are found that support the assertion that youth are particularly vulnerable to these sorts of appeals is the food marketing industry. Food marketers, who have the gain or loss of millions of dollars at stake, are increasingly turning to the internet to deliver their messages. Furthermore, the strategies they employ to increase the youth appeal of the products they represent, both on and off the internet, are very simmilar to those employed by hate groups to increase the youth appeal of their ideologies. These strategies and appeals will frequently include product placement in music, humor, attractive language, interactive games, and cartoon characters or animated spokespersons which are often portrayed in "enjoyable situations." These tailored messages, food marketers find, are "likely to increase their [product's] appeal to underage youth," and furthermore, the industry also recognizes the internet as a valuable tool for developing more intimate and personal relationships with members of their target audiences (McGinnis and Gootman 163-97).

While the appeals and techniques utilized by online hate groups are not limited to these, each is well represented in the examples provided below. That these groups are employing well known techniques that have proven successful through the marketing strategies of other industries, establishes some level of intent—hate groups are likely well aware of what they are doing; increasing youth appeal is not an unintended consequence, but rather a sought after goal.

Several sites found throughout the course of the research conducted for this paper have included one or more such multimedia elements; however some, including Stormfront and Aryan-Front, have contained virtually all, making them especially appealing to the media driven youth our nation's popular culture has fostered.

One site particularly ripe with such content is Aryan-Front.com, a discussion forum based site similar to StormFront. Aryan-front, like Stormfront, does require a membership to post content or to create a new topic for discussion, however, non-members can view virtually any posting or discussion "thread" on the site. Threads are indexed by topic and range widely in content. Upon scrolling through Aryan Front's main index, it becomes apparent which topic headings are meant to draw young people's attention: "THE DATING SECTION: Are you looking for that special someone or trying to find a soul mate that has the same beliefs and interests as you? Perhaps you can start here;" "ARYAN FRONT YOUTH;" "PICS AND OR IMAGES REGARDING THE CAUSE;" "VIDEOS;" "THE PET SHOP: Post pics of pets, cats, dogs, fish, dragons, etc;. Also, to talk about care & problems with your pets;" "CARTOONS;" "JOKES AND FUNNY STORIES;" "MUSIC, BOOKS, MOVIES, ETC; What are you listening to? Talk about movies and or books." Some are more direct than others; however each topic has elements that might spark the interest of a typical young browser. Once a topic is chosen, a user is then directed to that topic's main page, each typically having dozens of individual discussion

threads. Within individual discussion threads users are free to converse about whatever they wish and to post their multimedia content.

The cartoons section has individual threads with titles like "Holocaust Cartoons," "Adventures of the White Man!" and "Aryans Fight Back!!" which contain dozens of individual cartoons with racist and hateful themes. Some are even comic strips with entire story lines; for instance, one comic's central character is a super hero figure similar to Super Man. He is pictured wearing a caped uniform that has a Swastika on the chest and is engaging in missions to eradicate renegade Jews and African Americans who are trying to take over the world and destroy the "White Race." These comics and cartoons are an excellent way for hate mongers to express their ideologies in ways that can easily get a young person's attention. Rather than reading an essay, which a young person might find dry and boring, reading a comic strip can seem fun and entertaining. An example of one of the more simple "Holocaust Cartoons" is pictured below:
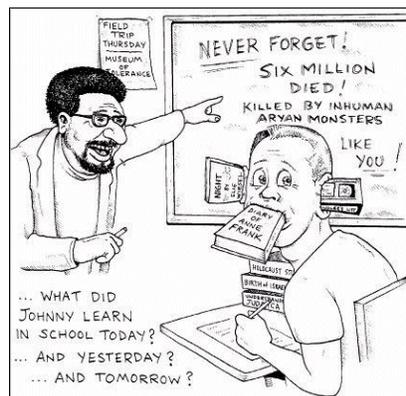
Within the carton section one post links users to an outside site; the link reads "Nice Game: Kick The Nigger!" Following the link brings the user to an apparently unaffiliated gaming website where hundreds of simple games of all genres can be played. This particular game is won by controlling an Aryan looking man who kicks the African American character as far as possible.

Games, cartons, and graphics can be used to appeal to young users, while other threads may be intended to grasp youth attention in a deeper way. Many threads within the Aryan Youth forum address issues common in many young people's lives. Some contain advice about relationships, school, trouble at home, and drugs, while others pertain strictly to race. Although, not all threads are race related, young people might feel that this forum is not only a place where beliefs can be openly discussed, but a place they can turn to for advice from their peers. Fostering a sense of belonging and positivity can reassure users and lead to the belief that they are not participating in anything wrong. One thread about drug use, titled "To All My Fellow Young People; Please READ," actively urges readers to remain drug free, an overall positive message, while at the same time reinforces racist beliefs. The comment posted by Aryan-Front forum member, WaffenSS Stormtrooper, reads as follows:

> Hello my fellow kids, I am 16, i would like to URGE ALL OF YOU not to do drugs. You hear that repeatedly, and many think its idiotic. People who do pot, crack, any drugs, have no future, have no power. Do you want to be futureless? be powerless, because i dont. I want power, control, i want people to fear me, i want money, i want the world, i want our cause to be praised world wide, i hope you do too. Doing drugs will make you inferior, and will not help you become an elite. So kiddies, whether your my age, or younger, please dont do drugs, i would hate to see one of our Aryan brothers polluted by substances created by some fucking disgusting spic asshole in columbia or mexico (WaffenSS Stormtrooper).

This comment in turn spawned a lengthy dialogue among members which manages to stay focused on the two main themes introduced above, the negativity and undesirable consequences associated with drug use and the inferiority of non-Aryan races.

These brief examples are presented as evidence in order to support the conclusion that Aryan Front and Aryan Front members intend to appeal to youth through various rhetorical and propagandistic tactics. The content found on Aryan Front, which has nearly identical parallels

with content found on Stormfront, is extremely extensive, however from looking at only the above examples, it is reasonable to assert that such content might be intentionally designed to appeal to and attract youth, to make racism seem like a fun and exciting practice, and to foster a sense of community and belonging among members and visitors alike.

Other hate sites, rather than simply containing some multimedia elements, seem to be dedicated entirely to white supremacist music and video. For instance "DJ Ghost of the Reich's" website (DJGOR.com) features what he calls "National Socialist War Trance" that features electronic dance music infused with audio clips of Hitler addressing the German people and other like sound bites. While DJ Ghost of the Reich has albums for sale on his site, unlikely to be purchased by many young visitors who do not have credit card access, he also offers free "music videos" on his site. One of the four free videos found on the site shows Hitler addressing his people and talking and playing with young children, while another shows German soldiers wreaking havoc throughout Europe. Each of the videos featuring the DJ's music seems to idolize Hitler and glamorize the terror of WWII.

While DJ Ghost of the Reich's site appears to be the result of a single individual's effort to promote both his music and his beliefs, WNTUBE.com, the home of "White Nationalist Tube: YouTube Done The White Nationalist Way!," is the result of a major collective effort. This site is exactly what the name and slogan suggest, a site designed just like YouTube but intended only for videos dealing with white supremacy. With an apparent database of thousands of videos, users can view a plethora of clips that are both searchable and categorized into various headings such as "Cartoons," "Humor," "Music Videos," "Jews," "Negroes," "Illegal Immigration," "Culture and Traditions," "Weapons," etc… making it particularly easy for one to find an exact topic and even easier for one to just simply browse the database.

In taking these examples together, a clear picture is painted of a grim underworld that exists on the internet. The threat posed to a young person's impressionable mind after being exposed to a site like this, while hard to quantitatively measure, is still easy to imagine. To understand the true effects that online hate mongering might have on today's youth, further investigation is required.

Given the changing landscape of internet culture and the ever increasing infusion of the online world into the physical world, such investigation is warranted, if not necessary. The following chapter will formally introduce the hate sites to be examined in this study and will subject each of them to a content analysis in order to assess potential threat level.

<u>Chapter 4: Selection of Sites</u>

<u>Part I: Introduction to Selected Hate Sites</u>

In recent years, hate on the internet has become more widespread than ever before; the latest estimates place U.S. based hate sites numbering anywhere from the hundreds to the tens of thousands (Breckheimer 1496-1519). Furthermore, the most organized of these will often employ any number of techniques to make their sites more appealing to both broad and specific target audiences, including deception, masking hate as something more positive, and presenting hate in a way known to appeal to specific audiences. Analyzing any great number, or even a fraction of these sites thoroughly and effectively, was an undertaking too great to attempt within the confines of this study. Thus a representative selection needed to be made. When considering this, the tactics and techniques hate sites employ to increase their audience appeal, especially those geared toward youth, became an area of major focus. In turn, a brief content analysis was designed and conducted in order to help narrow down the sites most appropriate for critical rhetorical analysis that is the main focus of this paper. Initially, six representative sites were chosen for examination, ranging from children's sites to those for all ages and from text based to media based. The following content analysis aided in providing guidelines by which to narrow down this original number to a more manageable three, making the task of conducting an in-depth rhetorical analysis more feasible.

The six hate sites selected for study included:

1) *Aryan-Front.com*: a vast, interactive, forum based site. *Aryan-Front* (*AF*) is maintained by its designers but is essentially sustained by the site's members. It consists of an index of sections and topics, most racially motivated, which when selected reveal lists of

"threads" or conversations in which the site's members participate by posting a variety of content. This content can range from simple comments, writings, essays, jokes, and stories, to a wide range of multimedia material. The site does not allow its members to have completely free reign however, the site's "moderators" and "administrators" loosely monitor member postings in an effort to make sure all posts fall within the site's guidelines.

2) *Stormfront.org*: Like *AF*, this site is also a forum based, user driven site, with a nearly identical user interface that is designed to function in the same way. *StormFront* (*SF*) however, is more advanced, functions more smoothly, has a more professional appearance, and is much more popular. It is widely recognized as being one of the first hate sites ever built. Additionally, *SF* contains much more content than other similar sites, much of it user generated. *StormFront.org* is the brainchild of well known white supremacist Don Black who launched the site in 1995.

3) *StormFront.org/Kids*: a site entirely separate from the SF main site forums, *StormFront for Kids* was created and designed by Don Black's son Derek when he was only twelve. The non-forum based site is relatively simple and contains comparatively less content than its parent site but is nevertheless notable for the fact that it is designed entirely and specifically to appeal to youth.

4) *MartinLutherKing.org* (*MLK.org*): the third site that completes the SF trio, was created and designed by Don Black, just like its parent site. Unlike *StormFront*, *MLK.org* is non-forum based; instead, it is solely informational. The site is designed to appear to be a valuable educational resource for youth researching Martin Luther King or the Civil Rights Movement. However, instead of providing a well rounded and unbiased history, the site consists of one-sided, anti-King/anti-Black, persuasive rhetoric and propaganda. Like *StormFront for Kids,* this

site is also notable in its design; *MLK.org* was designed entirely and specifically to appeal to younger audiences.

5) *DJGOR.com* is a site dedicated to the music of DJ Ghost of The Reich, an electronic music DJ whose original compilations are infused with sound bites of Third Reich era Hitler speeches. This site contains relatively little content but is notable for its potential appeal as it consists almost entirely of multimedia content, primarily music and music videos.

6) *WNTube.com*, or White Nationalist Tube, is the self proclaimed "YouTube of White Nationalism." The site itself mirrors YouTube in both concept and design; it consists of a vast database of user uploaded video clips to which both members and visitors have access. The site functions as a search engine for this database, allowing users to run key word or title searches to locate specific content. It is notable that *WNTube* requests that all videos uploaded to the site be related to White Nationalism in some way. Furthermore, anti-WN propaganda, content, or comments are strictly prohibited.

Part II: Content Analysis

The chart below illustrates the results of the content analysis conducted for this study. Each site was assessed based on criteria that falls into three main categories: first, criteria that assess whether or not a site was designed specifically to attract and engage youth, either in whole or in part; secondly, criteria that assess how appealing youth might find a specific hate site to be, based primarily on multimedia content and level of interactivity; and third, criteria that assess the rhetorical tactics employed by a site's creators, such as deception, persuasion, and appeals to specific action.

	Is the Site Designed Specifiically to Appeal to Youth?		Is the Site Intentionally Deceptive?	
	The Entire Site?	Section or Portion(s)?	Is racism masked as something else?	Is racism made to seem positive/fun?
Stormfront.org	N	Y	Y/N	Y
Aryan-Front.com	N	Y	Y/N	Y
DJGOR.com	N	N	Y	Y
WNTUBE.com	N	N	N	Y
MartinLutherKing.org	Y	–	Y	Y
Stormfront.org/kids	Y	–	N	Y

	Does the site contain multimedia elements?					If present, are multimedia elements related to racism and/or hateful ideologies?
	Music?	Games?	Videos?	Symbols?	Pictures/Graphics/ Cartoons?	
Stormfront.org	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (P, G, C)	Y
Aryan-Front.com	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (P, G, C)	Y
DJGOR.com	Y	N	Y	Y	Y (P, G)	Y
WNTUBE.com	Y	N	Y	Y	Y (P, G, C)	Y
MartinLutherKing.org	N	N	Y	N	Y (P, G)	Y
Stormfront.org/kids	Y	Y	N	Y	Y (P, G)	Y

	Does the site/portion of site specifically urge racially motivated action?	Is the site interactive or does it have certain interactive elements?			
		Chat Rooms?	Forums?	Chat Rooms/Forums Specifically for Youth?	User based interactive comment/reply?
Stormfront.org	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Aryan-Front.com	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
DJGOR.com	N	N	N	N	N
WNTUBE.com	N	N	Y	N	Y
MartinLutherKing.org	Y	N	N	N	N
Stormfront.org/kids	N	N	N	N	N

	Does the site require membership?			Is the site affiliated with a physical hate group?	Is the site affiliated with/linked to other hate sites?
	To View Content?	To Post Content?	Age Requirements for Membership?		
Stormfront.org	N	Y	Y (13 yrs or older)	N	Y
Aryan-Front.com	N	Y	N	N	Y
DJGOR.com	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y
WNTUBE.com	N	Y	N	N	Y
MartinLutherKing.org	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y
Stormfront.org/kids	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y

	Does the site state that racism/intolerance is unacceptable?	Is the site actively and intentionally trying to persuade youth?	Is the site iself, or are site members actively trying to recruit youth?
Stormfront.org	N	Y	Y
Aryan-Front.com	N	Y	Y
DJGOR.com	N	N	N
WNTUBE.com	N	N	N
MartinLutherKing.org	N	Y	Y
Stormfront.org/kids	Y	Y	Y

	Does the site offer a warning about the subject matter, i.e. "for mature audiences only?"	Does the site ask visitors to confirm their age before entering?
Stormfront.org	N	N
Aryan-Front.com	N	N
DJGOR.com	N	N
WNTUBE.com	N	N
MartinLutherKing.org	N	N
Stormfront.org/kids	N	N

While each site studied in this analysis fulfilled each criteria set to varying degrees, a clear consensus as to the potential threat level of each site could not be arrived at from examining this data alone. Instead, what this analysis showed was that one site stood above all others in content variety, audience appeal, and rhetorical tactics: Stormfront. Each of the other sites rated similarly. Furthermore, links to each of the other sites can be found on SF—in other words, all of the material on each of the other sites is essentially accessible through Stormfront. For instance, DJ GOR's music can be accessed through SF, but conversely, the wealth of additional content that is available on SF is not represented at all on DJGOR.com.

In this way, it is almost as if SF acts a central hub for White Nationalism on the web, from which a plethora of other hate sites can be accessed. Furthermore, SF's association with the only two sites involved in this study that are designed specifically for youth audiences further establishes the SF organization as a White Nationalist "internet super power" with content and websites that represent and span every significant content type and genre that is important to the movement. Thus, by choosing to analyze SF and the two other sites which are under its umbrella, each significant area will be adequately represented.

SF is a forum based site which hosts a designated youth area among its dozens of other forums; the SF organization is also responsible for running the kid's sites MLK.org and SF for Kid's. Additionally, both music and videos are extremely common throughout the forums, and other multimedia such as interactive games can be found. While this description includes the kind of content that is typical of all six sites, if WNTube.com or DJGOR.com were analyzed instead, the content typical of the forum based sites would be completely eliminated.

It is important to note that Aryan-Front, being extremely similar to SF in both form and function, received similar markings on the content analysis chart, however, one factor that is not

represented by this chart eliminated AF from the running as a site for potential further analysis: over the course of several months of periodic observation¸ SF had new posts virtually every time it was visited. AF on the other hand, reflected that new posts were made only a handful of times; furthermore, the status and number of memberships remained virtually unchanged; while SF has over 150,000 members and is constantly growing, AF only has just over 1,000. In other words, even if the content found on AF were as plentiful and diverse as that found on SF (which it's not), if the site receives few visitors and is not consistently active, the quantity and quality of the content becomes irrelevant—that which receives little exposure can have little impact.

As a result of these findings, Stormfront, Stormfront for Kids, and MartinLutherKing.org were chosen as the best and most appropriate representative selections of relevant online hate speech to be subjected to further analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Hate Sites

Part I: Critical Rhetorical Analysis: StormFront.org

SF consists of several different forums which revolve around specific groups or topics (youth, graphics, music & entertainment, etc…). Within each forum are individual threads which SF users or SF moderators/administrators create in order to stimulate user to user discourse. User to user discourse makes up the majority of content found on SF, although SF administrators/moderators often have input and occasionally interject to make suggestions, corrections, criticisms of certain language or behavior, or in order to intervene in a particularly heated debate. Threads can be created about nearly anything, but generally address a single topic or issue which usually relates somehow to the subject matter of the particular forum in which the thread is created; threads in the youth forum, for instance, typically address issues among youth and teens, both within and beyond the scope of White Nationalism. Once a thread is created, users have an opportunity to post replies to the initial post, sometimes spurring an ongoing conversation, sometimes not. Ultimately, SF reserves the right and the ability to close threads to reply, delete threads, delete or edit posts, or control content in any other way they see fit, but typically reserve actually removing content for situations when content violates U.S. law.

SF, one of the largest and oldest hate sites on the internet, contains an enormous amount of every kind of content, posted and created by both the site's some 150,000 plus members (over 42% of whom are located in the U.S.) and by SF administrators and moderators ("Statistics for Stormfront"). The entirety of this content would be virtually impossible to analyze within the scope of this study, thus representative selections must be made. Three artifacts of both SF user and SF moderator generated rhetoric were selected for rhetorical analysis, each representing a specific tactic or threat posed to American youth.

The first artifact to be analyzed comes from StormFront's youth room where SF's younger members are invited to discuss "white nationalist issues among teens." The following is an excerpt from the thread titled "So my family's a disaster" and is presented unedited and in its entirety, exactly as it appears on the site.

The first two posts made to this thread represent an exchange between a young, new SF member known as Brahvo (real names are not used[Join date: Aug. 2010; Location Louisville, Kentucky; Posts: 169 as of October 3rd, 218 as of October 14, 2010] and an older, more experienced SF member known as Merlin (Join date: August 2003; Location: Leaky Cauldron, Room 4; Posts: 9136 as of October 3rd, 9150 as of October 14, 2010), who also works for SF as a youth room moderator.

Artifact 5.1: On August 22nd, 2010, Brahvo created a new thread in SF's Youth Room and made the following post:

> **So my family's a disaster**
>
> ---
>
> My family is of German and Prussian(modern day Poland) ancestry, but my mom really screwed that European blood line up. She had 5 mixed children with a black man. Four mixed men and one girl. Fortunately I am not one of those, I only have one other that I call my brother which is white, my brother that currently serves in the U.S. Army.
>
> I am only 16, so I can't really leave this cursed family. I'm in my sophomore year so I have to wait 3 years. Because of those 5 children my mother shamefully had, my family (by law) is now only about 20% white. But remember that me and my brother are the only pure whites my mother had, she had 7 children, and 5 are mostly black. I'd forgive her if she didn't follow the Israeli propaganda pumped out of the American media every day along with my step-father. They think that Israel is innocent and are the good guys, and support the Israelis on bombing the Islamic countries.
>
> My grandpa and grandma both disowned my mother for disrupting the bloodline. I keep my mouth quiet about political things in my

household because they oppose White Nationalism. I think they are race traitors.

Do you guys think after highschool I should just move far away and start a nationalist white family and never speak to them again, or just tell them that I am a White Nationalist and won't ever change my mind about it? It's been in my mind for a while and I'd like some thoughts on this, thanks (Brahvo).

Artifact 5.2: The next day, on August 23rd, 2010, Youth Room Moderator, Merlin, posted the first of many replies to Brahvo's initial post:

Re: So my family's a disaster

You have three years. Keep your mouth shut about WN stuff. It's you against 7, so unless you have the knowledge and skills of David Duke I would let it be. Keep your beliefs in your heart, and take every opportunity to educate yourself. I assume it's not a problem for you to come here, so use the board to its fullest extent.

It's good that you have an "ally" in your grandparents. Have you talked to them? I think it would help to communicate your feelings to someone. You don't necessarily have to "come out" as a WN; just tell them you are uncomfortable with your living situation and the basics of why. If they are not happy with your mother you may not have to say much more.

If you want to leave after you graduate, you should start to save as much money as you can. Start thinking of ways to earn money (mow lawns, shovel snow, run errands for people, odd jobs, etc.). Squirrel away what you can, so that if the time comes for you to leave you can go with some confidence.

Through all this, try not to let your school work suffer. You need that diploma. Do your best to concentrate. You'll make it (Merlin)!

From reading this exchange, a few face value observations can be made, mostly having to do with the environment that SF fosters. Even as a new member, with no more than twenty two days of membership under his belt at the time this was written, Brahvo clearly felt comfortable in his role on the SF forum, sharing aspects of his personal life with other members. Throughout the youth section Brahvo probably noticed several other threads dealing with family or home issues. That Brahvo would not be the first to share such information probably increased his

comfort level about sharing his own issues. Additionally, he probably noticed that those who did share were usually well received by their fellow Stormfronters and were offered a significant amount of positive feedback. For someone who seems not to fit in with his family, it was probably a great relief for Brahvo to find an entire community of like-minded people to whom he could relate.

It is in these ways that SF and SF members have created and fostered an environment of acceptance and tolerance of against-the-majority views. Here, young people who have or are beginning to form White Nationalist ideals can speak out in ways they wouldn't in public. It is clear that the things Brahvo feels comfortable saying here, he would not feel comfortable saying at school or at home.

Furthermore Brahvo is not only allowed to speak freely when he visits SF, but he is encouraged to do so. And rather than being chastised or disciplined for discussing White Nationalism as Brahvo suggests would be the case at home, he can instead expect positive and constructive feedback from his new found, like-minded, fellow SF members. In this way, SF creates an environment in which social or familial outcasts can look to fulfill a sense of belonging and where they might find and establish a support network.

This environment that is so attractive to young minds like Brahvo's is then passed on by SF members; Brahvo's role in the SF community might someday be reversed and he might find himself as the advisor rather than the advised. The way in SF fosters and maintains this type of environment is crucial, especially in the youth room; new members must feel comfortable in their surroundings, for should they not, they will be much less likely to share and thus much less likely to become fully engaged SF members.

While these observations are important in establishing how environment might affect youth's role and level of interaction on SF, the main focus of these artifacts is Merlin's reply to Brahvo. That this reply comes from a SF administrator makes it much more significant than if it had come from just another member. In this example, it can be seen how agents of the site are reaching out directly to the youth who are exploring and becoming involved with SF. As a much higher level of credibility expected forum moderators than with average forum members, Merlin's reply is likely to have a much stronger impact on a young and impressionable SF member than if the same reply came from a fellow forum-goer.

Through his reply, Merlin assumes the role of the supportive, caring, White Nationalist role model who is trying to act as a good influence on a troubled young man. Merlin's opening line exhibits this quite well: "You have three years. Keep your mouth shut about WN stuff. It's you against 7, so unless you have the knowledge and skills of David Duke I would let it be." Here he seems to be trying to persuade Brahvo to remain sensible; since he is vastly outnumbered, for Brahvo to speak his mind at home would not solve anything and would only create unnecessary turmoil. By getting this general message across, Merlin is establishing himself as someone who has genuine concern for Brahvo's issues, and is thus building rapport and establishing further credibility with his correspondent. He is also alluding to the value of patience here in a "good things will come to those who wait" sense.

Furthermore, in this first line, the words "unless you have the knowledge and skills of David Duke…" carry with them certain significance. Merlin is subtly suggesting at least two ideas here. The first is that, as a young White Nationalist, Brahvo cannot possibly have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively deal with such a complex situation. In other words, Merlin is urging Brahvo to "keep it up," to keep learning the ways of White Nationalism

so that he may be better equipped to act one day. Although Merlin just seems to be offering

Brahvo some friendly encouragement, his words are also self serving, as Merlin's motivations

for becoming as involved as he is likely lie in assuring a positive future for White Nationalism.

And, of course, garnering the support of the younger generations who will come to perpetuate

the movement is an inherent requirement for doing so.

Secondly, Merlin's mention of David Duke works as a powerful reference to an equally

powerful and influential authority figure. Merlin mentions the name David Duke in praise, but

does not allude to who the man actually is. If Brahvo were not yet aware of David Duke, he is

now, and Merlin is making the suggestion here that he certainly should be. In one short line,

Merlin has managed to establish some sort of rapport with Brahvo and make his first appeals to

action as well.

Moving on, the second of Merlin's lines deserves similar attention as well. With these

words, "Keep your beliefs in your heart, and take every opportunity to educate yourself," Merlin

is trying to further establish himself as a well-meaning role model by encouraging Brahvo to stay

true to himself and to his beliefs. Furthermore, Merlin appeals to the value of education by

placing heavy stock in the importance that Brahvo continue on. Again, Merlin seems to be

trying to show Brahvo his genuine concern—if Merlin really didn't care, would he even bother

bringing up education? In this particular instance, however, Merlin does not seem to be referring

to school, he instead is referring to the education that Brahvo can receive at SF, as his next words

demonstrate: "I assume it's not a problem for you to come here, so use the board to its fullest

extent."

This is as direct as an appeal can be, a perfect example of a SF moderator deliberately

and directly trying to elicit a specific action from a minor. While the implied action, "use the

board to its fullest extent," does not at first seem as if it could have serious consequences, a youth's association with the SF message board could end up being that youth's gateway into a potentially lifelong involvement with the White Supremacist/White Nationalist movement. This specific appeal to action represents the rhetorical focal point of Merlin's message and the threat that SF's extreme interactivity can pose to our nation's youth. More traditional, non-forum based websites that only offer one way communication are rarely able to mold their rhetoric to specific users and their needs as Merlin has been able to do here with Brahvo.

From the second paragraph on, the rhetorical value of Merlin's message begins to dwindle. Merlin continually reinforces his role model position through his words of advice to Brahvo about how to best approach his grandparents and what his options are after he graduates. Additionally, by encouraging Brahvo to get jobs and save money, he is likely reinforcing the belief that White Nationalism is ripe with good values and thus a good influence on his life.

Also, in saying "If you want to leave after you graduate…" Merlin is leaving Brahvo with a choice rather than simply telling him what he should do. This would likely reinforce Brahvo's perception of Merlin's genuine concern and reduce any possible skepticism as to his credibility or motivations.

Finally, with Merlin's closing line, he is able to further emphasize the good values and positive influence that White Nationalism is sure to have on Brahvo's life, "Through all this, try not to let your school work suffer. You need that diploma…" In general, Americans hold education synonymous with positivity and a bright future; here, Merlin is appealing to and exploiting this belief, using this value to hold White Nationalism synonymous with this same positivity through the eyes of a young man looking for a place to belong.

The next artifact also comes from SF's youth forum and represents the way in which SF can be utilized as a tool for the recruitment of youth by hate organizations. Within the youth forum, the artifact comes from the thread titled "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Youth Corps!!!" started by SF forum member Golfball (Join Date: April 2002; Location: AK; Posts: 3,529 as of 11/1/10).

Artifact 5.3: The first post on this thread appears unedited below:

Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Youth Corps!

Hello to all of the future generations of White Nationalists!
The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan has for racially minded youths a Youth Klan Corp.

All of those young ones that are interested in participating in the Great and Noble organization of The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are encouraged to join!

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are a political movement that promotes White Christian Revival and Values. Yes, we still practice ceremony and we still stand For GOD, RACE, and NATION!

We gather at special times of the year for fellowship and worship and The Knights also encourage White Christian Youths to become involved in their desire to stand For GOD, RACE, and NATION too.

To view the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan webpage, point your cursor to the Confederate Flag and click.
Through this page you can visit a lot of the different aspects of The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

To see the online application for membership in The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, point your cursor to the Knightsbanner on the Right side of Our Country's Flag. This will take you to the online application for membership into The Knights of The Ku Klux Klan.

Follow your Racial calling and allow GOD to guide you to the Truth.

_____

<u>The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Website</u>
<u>Get Involved!</u>
<u>The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Online Application</u>

_____

From reading this artifact it is fairly easy to gather who the speaker, Golfball, is intending to reach with this message. Since the thread was started in SF's youth room, it is reasonable to assume that the speaker's primary target audience is young SF forum members. Furthermore, that audience can be narrowed down even further to SF members between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, since SF does not grant membership to children under the age of thirteen and since those eighteen or older would no longer be eligible to join the Knights of the KKK Youth Corps. While this demographic can be identified as the primary target audience, a much wider range of people represent the actual audience that this message has likely reached—since this thread was created in 2002, it has been viewed over 105,329 times and nearly 700 replies have been posted, the most recent of which in May, 2010. However, before discussing what this might mean, it is important to first understand a bit more about the speech act itself.

The purpose of this thread, and more specifically the first post (the speech act in question), is not hidden or masked in deception. Rather, it is quite obvious and can be understood from reading just the first few lines. The third line, especially, clearly establishes the speaker's intent with a direct appeal to action: "All of those young ones that are interested in participating in the Great and Noble organization of The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are encouraged to join." In other words, the speaker's primary purpose is to recruit new members for the Knights of the KKK Youth Corps.

To better understand this message and evaluate its success as a rhetorical speech act, it must be thoroughly analyzed in order to gain pertinent knowledge about the speaker, the audience, and the persuasive and rhetorical strategies employed by the speaker in order to elicit a

specific action from audience members, in this case, joining the Knights of the KKK Youth Corps.

Tone, a very important element of any speech act, is important to establish right from the start, and the speaker here seems to know this. Beginning with the title and the very first line, the speaker establishes a lighthearted and excited tone with the simple use of punctuation. Golfball's use of exclamation points early on gives the reader the sense that he is excited about what he has to say. This sets the tone for the rest of the speech act and by doing so he likely increases his chances of gaining and maintaining audience interest.

With the general tone of the speech act ascertained, a closer analysis of the first line reveals more. To start, Golfball tactfully names his primary audience: "Hello to all of the future generations of White Nationalists!" By directly addressing his target audience, he ensures that there is no way that he can be misunderstood about to whom he is speaking. Any SF youth reading these words should realize at this moment, if they had not realized before, that this is a message intended specifically for him, thus encouraging him to read on. Likewise, anyone reading these words who does not fit into this category should realize that this message is not for him, and may or may not choose to read on, with very little consequence either way.

Aside from the punctuation utilized in this first line, the words "future generations" also help to establish and maintain tone. Here, the reader can sense not only the speaker's excitement, but a feeling or conveyed attitude of hopefulness and positivity. By offering this title to his audience Golfball is conveying a certain hopefulness about the future of White Nationalism. Also, he is not just suggesting a title with these words, but a responsibility as well. Being referred to as "the future generations of White Nationalism" might cause members of Golfball's target audience to feel obligated, in a sense, to ensure a good future for White

Nationalism as a whole. In turn, Golfball is setting a hopeful tone, and at the same time, is giving his audience an opportunity to fulfill his hopes. His hope, of course, is the same as his most obvious motivation for starting this thread: to help ensure the successful future of White Nationalism. His recruitment efforts, then, are simply a self-serving means to this end.

The remaining textual content of this post revolves around describing the activities of the Knights of the KKK Youth Corps and how to go about joining the group. Throughout this text, Golfball utilizes several rhetorical styles, strategies, and appeals which add emphasis and strength to his overall message.

The physical construction or design of this message is really nothing out of the ordinary. The text itself exists in a sort of digital poster or digital flyer style. The overall presentation itself is very simple and concise; it is not visually striking and says no more or less than what is required to make the point. In other words, it is not the visual presentation or how much it says that serves to persuade the target audience. In this case, design and length are not what is important, but rather what is said and how the speaker says it—a classic "quality not quantity" situation.

By far, the most common recurring strategy present throughout the text is his references to authority. In fact, every time Golfball mentions The Knights of the KKK by name (which he does repeatedly, and often with added emphasis, for example "the Great and Noble organization of The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan"), he is referencing one of the most revered, well known, and well respected authorities on the subject of race in the White Nationalist and White Supremacist communities. However, just because the organization is well known does not necessarily make it desirable. To start, even a young person who is "racially minded" may find the action of actually joining a known hate organization to be a major commitment and possibly

even a bit extreme; especially considering the very specific value set to whom Golfball's message appeals.

Next to his constant reference to The Knights' authority, value appeals seem to be the most common; primarily those concerning religion, race, politics, and patriotism. Each of these, Golfball establishes as priorities of the group with a sort of mission that he makes immediately following his direct appeal to action: "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are a political movement that promotes White Christian Revival and Values. Yes, we still practice ceremony and we still stand For GOD, RACE, and NATION!" By naming these values so directly and by placing emphasis on those considered to be most important with the strategic use of capitalization, Golfball is ensuring that only those who have serious interest in such values will act upon his appeal to action. In fact, the references to religion are so strong and are so often repeated throughout the message that it almost seems as if Christian involvement is a requirement for membership, although this is never said directly.

Golfball does, however, give his target audience the opportunity to further explore what The Knights are all about: "…point your cursor to the Confederate Flag and click. Through this page you can visit a lot of the different aspects of The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." Directing his audience to The Knights' own web page seems to be a calculated effort to get those who are interested involved on a deeper level. And, of course, the use of the Confederate Flag is extremely symbolic, again referring to a very specific set of political, racial, and, what some might consider to be patriotic values.

Toward the message's end, it can be observed that two sentences, one following immediately after the other, say essentially the same things: "To see the online application for membership in The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, point your cursor to the Knightsbanner on the

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Right side of Our Country's Flag. This will take you to the online application for membership into The Knights of The Ku Klux Klan." The repetition of where the membership information and online application can be found appears to be an attempt to motivate the reader at the message's conclusion. Similar to product displays by registers in retail stores, this strategy is intended to get the shopper, or in this case the reader, to make an impulsive, on the spot decision before leaving—perhaps if the link is followed the reader might sign up right then and there. The first of these two sentences also contains another interesting example of symbolic emphasis: "…the Knightsbanner on the Right side of Our Country's Flag" serves to represent where the organizations values and ideals lie along the nation's political spectrum—the far right.

Finally, Golfball's last line of actual message text is simply a less direct restatement of his previous appeal to action: "Follow your Racial calling and allow GOD to guide you to the Truth." Here, each operative word is emphasized with capitalization, again reinforcing the values that are important to The Knights. And, of course, the "truth" Golfball is referring to is all that one would learn about said values by joining his organization.

Just below the main message text, appearing in a font size far bigger than the rest, are the links to the Knights' website, which Golfball referred to above, in which the size and placement are no mistake—"Get Involved!" in bold text, and "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Online Application" are the last words the reader would see as they continued to scroll down, providing the Knights with one final opportunity to motivate their audience.

Since the values represented by this message are somewhat extreme and controversial, the reception of this message has been far from unanimous throughout the thread. In fact, the religious specificity of Golfball's appeals drew quite a bit of debate. Needless to say, this message did not result in every young and impressionable SF youth joining the group. While

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this likely has to do with the nature of the appeal, especially on religious grounds, there are other factors as well such as dues to pay and geographical boundaries that might make joining difficult even for those interested.

However, what stands out the most, is that regardless of the factors working against Golfball, he seems to have been successful in his appeals more than once. About a month after the thread was first started, Golfball reported the following in a follow up post which he titled "Good News!:" "More youths are contacting The Knights and The Youth Corps are growing! Thanks to all of those White Youths that are contacting The Knights and preparing to take their place alongside The Guardians of White Christianity."

While this may be just another persuasive tactic, other posts have substantiated this claim as well. Here are two examples of SF youth who reported that they had joined the youth corps later in the thread. The first was posted by RebelWereWolf in 2004: "I joined the Knights last week, finally. I'd been looking at joining for months but finally felt like I knew enough about white nationalism and the Knights that I was comfortable joining. I hope to get better acquainted with the rest of the Knights on SF soon." The second was posted by HardCoreChris in 2010: "Just joined the youth corps!"

While these posts are not the only two of their kind, they represent good examples since they demonstrate how Golfball's original post, made in 2002, has had an impact in the past and continues to have one today, eight years later.

Furthermore, it is not how often Golfball succeeds, but that fact that he succeeds at all is what is most crucial to this analysis. This proves that sites such as Stormfront can be successfully utilized as a recruitment tool by SF members whose primary goals are to recruit for the organizations to which their primary loyalties lie. If it has happened once, it will surely

happen again, likely right under the nose of the individual's parents or guardians. This establishes SF as a threat, but the question remains to be answered as to how serious this threat really is.

This next artifact, the third and final form the SF youth forum, represents the way in which music can be utilized as a tool to aid in the persuasion of youth. Within the youth forum, this artifact comes from a thread titled "Project Schoolyard II is here NOW!!! First Press 30,000 copies for distribution!" started by MichigansFinest (Join date: September 2007; Location: Michigan; Posts as of 11/7/10: 474), a "Friend of StormFront" Sustaining Member, who, unlike traditional forum members, provides SF with financial support in the form of donations.

Artifact 5.4: MichigansFinest began this thread with the following post:

> ### Project Schoolyard II is here NOW!!! First Press 30,000 copies for distribution!
>
> Some of you may be a bit young to remember this, so a quick rundown: Panzerfaust Records (Now Tightrope Records) pressed a 100,000 copies of what they called Project Schoolyard. This is a compact disc packed full of pro-white music, with different music tastes for everyone. The discs are mass-produced for distribution at schools, although you could distribute them elsewhere. This project was VERY successful and garnered TONS of support, as well as a lot of coverage from the media. I for one, would like to see this take off again...hell, I would LOVE to see us be even more successful this time around. It is up to YOU to make this happen. The price per CD is only 0.30 cents so I don't want to hear anyone complaining about how they cant afford it!!! HOWEVER...I would like you to continue reading before you participate in this project.
>
> If distributing in your school:
>
> 1. Remember that this is definately going to be in violation of school policies because it is "racially inflammatory" or may include profanities.

2. I do not recommend telling ANYONE that you are distributing these in your school. Only tell those who you ABSOLUTELY trust.

3. Instead, try scattering them about in odd places at the school, taking caution not to identified as the distributor. Try places like the Library shelves, laying on payphones, if your school has lockers with the large air vents at the top, slide them into the locker, leave them on car windsheilds in the parking lot, etc.

4. If you can enter specialty class rooms like the gym, or wood shop, leave them where students will find them.

***Just be creative and try not to get caught. I don't mean to make it sound like it is a felony crime to distribute these CD's, I just don't want to see any of you get into trouble and get kicked out of school. Actually, your consequences would most likely be simple infractions, but still, be careful. We don't need anymore uneducated drop-outs in our movement. Please take the initiative to participate in this project, it is very low cost, and will only take a small amount or time and effort on your part. Thank you 14

*Thread with Project Schoolyard II info: ***ATTENTION*** Project School Yard II Now Available (MichigansFinest)!!!

Even before this post is read, MichigansFinest's choice to begin this thread in the youth room establishes quite well that he constructed this speech act with SF youth in mind as his primary target audience. And as with previous analyses, the title of the thread reveals some rhetorical strategies as well.

The thread title, of course, is extremely important to the overall effectiveness of the speaker's rhetoric. For if the title does not appeal to or spark an interest in the audience, any chance of rhetorical success if effectively destroyed—the first act of persuasion that a speaker in this setting must accomplish is to persuade users to want to find out more. If the speaker fails at this initial attempt at persuasion, and the user is unmoved, it is unlikely that that user will ever click the mouse to view the thread, and thus the message will never be received by that user. In

this respect, MichigansFinest has succeeded around 3540 times, the number of times that this thread has been viewed.

The title that MichigansFinest chose for this thread: "Project Schoolyard II is here NOW!!! First Press 30,000 copies for distribution!" likely succeeded for two main reasons: provocative word choice and the establishment of an excited tone.

The title's wording is provocative in a way that causes the reader to ask questions. For instance, the term "Project Schoolyard" reads as a sort of catchy, and perhaps secretive, code name for something, the question is, what? Furthermore, whatever "Project Schoolyard" is, it's here now, and there is quite a bit of emphasis placed on this fact ("NOW!!!"), begging the question: why now? Thirty thousand copies? Of what? For distribution? Why? Where? The title alone raises many questions, which in turn can cause readers to seek out answers, if for no other reason than to satisfy simple curiosity (the driving force that caused the author of this paper to find out more). To satisfy this curiosity, SF users are left with one option: to view the thread and read on.

Additionally, the emphatic and excited tone that MichigansFinest creates through his use of punctuation and selective capitalization in the title, as with the previous example, gives the reader the sense that the speaker is excited about what he has to say. If instead, for example, the title read "Project Schoolyard II is here now. First press 30,000 copies for distribution," not only is the former eye catching visual appeal lost, but the emphatic tone as well, giving the reader no excitement to reciprocate. This could considerably lessen the overall impact that the title has on the reader, and in turn, greatly affect that reader's choice to find out more or to simply move on. The tone and visual appeal of the original title has the potential to work with the curiosity the words stimulate in order to help guide the reader towards the act of clicking the mouse and

viewing the thread. It is only upon accomplishing this goal that MichigansFinest is presented with the opportunity to get his real message across.

Upon moving past the title and into the speech act itself, further cues as to who the audience is and the role that the speaker plays are present and become more clear as the post goes on. The first of these appear in MichigansFinest's opening line: "Some of you may be a bit young to remember this, so a quick rundown…" These words not only serve to clarify that MichigansFinest is speaking to a young audience, but they also serve to establish MichigansFinest as a role model in the SF community by alluding to the fact that he has been involved in white supremacy for some time; this could be interpreted as establishing a certain level of credibility as well.

Next, MichigansFinest introduces the concept of "Project Schoolyard:" "Panzerfaust Records (Now Tightrope Records) pressed a 100,000 copies of what they called Project Schoolyard. This is a compact disc packed full of pro-white music, with different music tastes for everyone. The discs are mass-produced for distribution at schools, although you could distribute them elsewhere." These lines serve several rhetorical purposes, the first and most obvious of which is to introduce and describe the topic about which he is speaking. Through his discussion of what the first "Project Schoolyard" was, he is also relating to his audience information about what "Project Schoolyard II" will be.

This information also happens to serve a second rhetorical purpose, the description "a compact disc packed full of pro-white music, with different music tastes for everyone," is likely to appeal to his target audience's assumed interest in both white supremacy and music. This, in turn, provides his audience with a reason to read on.

Finally, the third sentence of the above selection provides a glimpse of MichigansFinest's overall rhetorical purpose: "The discs are mass-produced for distribution at schools, although you could distribute them elsewhere." From this, it can be inferred that MichigansFinest's purpose is to persuade youth, more specifically, to persuade youth to participate in the distribution of "Project Schoolyard II" CDs at school. Although this appeal is made much more directly later in the post, the context of MichigansFinest's words change from a description of "Project Schoolyard" to the suggestion of action with the words "although you could…"

MichigansFinest then goes on to describe the success of the first "Project Schoolyard" and the impact which it had. After allowing his audience to see the positive effects of this type of activism, MichigansFinest make his first direct appeal to action: "I for one, would like to see this take off again...hell, I would LOVE to see us be even more successful this time around. It is up to YOU to make this happen. The price per CD is only 0.30 cents so I don't want to hear anyone complaining about how they cant afford it!!!" By describing the success of the first project, and then suggesting that the success of the second depends on his audience, he is not only creating an appeal to action, but he is also appealing to the self importance of individual audience members.

Operating under the assumption that his target audience shares his belief in the advancement of the same cause, MichigansFinest presents an apparently easy way for his audience to make a big difference, thus inflating their self importance and perceived value to the movement. Additionally, MichigansFinest's reference to "us" in the above passage creates the suggestion of a partnership, thus further appealing to the reader's self importance. By participating in this project, the reader would no longer be just a spectator, but instead, would somehow be included in this "us." Being a part of this "us" means that they are a part of

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something, a bandwagon propaganda technique that certainly goes a long way in improving one's own self importance.

From here, MichigansFinest lays out a set of guidelines for his young audience to follow which describe how to go about distributing "Project Schoolyard II" CDs in and around schools. While previous cues have suggested that MichigansFinest's primary target audience is young SF members, this portion of his speech act eliminates any doubt that, more specifically, his target audience is school-age SF youth. The heading "If distributing in your school" points directly to this assertion.

Following this heading, MichigansFinest outlines four numbered points which are essentially guiding principles on which to operate for the successful distribution of "Project Schoolyard" CDs by youth in schools. The first two of these points read primarily as cautionary statements, while the second two provide suggestions for how, when, and where to distribute the CDs without being "identified as the distributor."

Each of these statements serve to remind readers and potential participants that the specific action which MichigansFinest is suggesting goes against traditionally accepted values, and certainly against traditional school policies.

For some audience members, these reminders might serve to dissuade them from participating in the project. Conversely, however, this project might appeal to certain audience members for the same reasons. The risky project suggested in "Project Schoolyard" and the specific direction MichigansFinest provides for how not to get caught creates the sense that to participate in the project is to participate in some sort of secret mission. These elements of the project have the potential to appeal to rebellious youth; what is adventurous, risky, and

furthermore, against the rules, is often attractive to young rebels, exactly the type people who fringe websites like SF tend to attract.

In his last paragraph, MichigansFinest offers some final words of wisdom: "***Just be creative and try not to get caught. I don't mean to make it sound like it is a felony crime to distribute these CD's, I just don't want to see any of you get into trouble and get kicked out of school. Actually, your consequences would most likely be simple infractions, but still, be careful. We don't need anymore uneducated drop-outs in our movement."

Here, MichigansFinest appears to again be taking on the role of White Nationalist role model. His words seem to express concern for his audience's education, future, and general well being, perhaps in an attempt to convey to readers that he genuinely cares. However, while he stresses caution and urges participants to stay out of trouble, he simultaneously downplays the potential consequences of taking part in the project. In doing so, he is making an indirect argument that the benefits of participating in the project outweigh the risks.

MichigansFinest follows up this thought with his final and most direct appeal to action: "Please take the initiative to participate in this project, it is very low cost, and will only take a small amount or time and effort on your part. Thank you." Through this appeal he also provides refutations for common reasons and excuses for not participating in activism, likely in an effort to eliminate potential negatives and leave his audience thinking only about the positive aspects of "Project Schoolyard."

MichigansFinest then provides a link to a separate thread which contains more information about "Project Schoolyard," including how to go about obtaining copies of the CD itself.

User responses to this post were not overwhelmingly positive or negative and ranged from fully supportive to critical. In a follow up post that responds to the criticism that the individual music choices of the "Project Schoolyard" compilation are profane and vulgar, MichigansFinest actually acknowledged the point of using music to attract youth: "…this is just a stepping stone to introduce them to our cause. As they become interested, and grow older, they move on to more mature and educational quests for knowledge. This is one of the most important rules [sic.] propaganda. It is not supposed to appeal to your liking...it supposed to appeal to theirs."

One SF member, Wileysfarm, reports picking up twenty copies of the new "Project Schoolyard" CD but it is not clear as to whether or not this member was a part of the primary target audience or if this post played a part in the choice to purchase the CDs.

When, early in the thread, one user, named Toenail, commented that he expected more of a reaction from SF's youth, feedback was stimulated from another member: "I'm on it right now. I was handed my volume one by some man that was walking past our school and saw me getting into my car. I want to be part of this one." This comment supports the assertion that MichigansFinest's obviously well thought out rhetorical appeal has the potential to be successful in moving his primary target audience to the completion of his desired action, the distribution of "Project Schoolyard II" CDs.

Additionally, this post illustrates how "Project Schoolyard" has been successful in the past. This in turn supports the assertion that if MichigansFinest's appeal to distribute the CDs is successful, there could be an impact beyond the scope of what is reflected by user responses to this thread.

The original post has as of the date this paper was written generated a total of sixty-seven responses. Among these are several posts that contain comments that suggest that MichigansFinest's rhetoric was successful, however there seem to be no reports that serve to confirm that this rhetoric was directly responsible for a particular member's actions.

Beyond SF member responses to this post, it is interesting to note StormFront's response. Merlin, the moderator of the youth room, in a reply post stated that he could not condone the actions that MichigansFinest post urges readers to take for the same reasons that are stated in the his original post; they violate school policy and could result in serious consequences. In the same respect, Merlin also does not ask that people simply not take part in the project at all, but rather that they be "careful and sensible." In the end, however, Merlin's post likely had little impact on the outcome of MichigansFinest's efforts.

Part II: Critical Rhetorical Analysis: Stormfront.org/kids

StormFront for Kids (Stormfront.org/Kids) is a website that was created and designed by Derek Black. While credit for the creation of this site is attributed to Derek alone, it is reasonable to speculate that he received some level of encouragement from his father, Don. StormFront itself does not grant membership to those under the age of thirteen, thus StormFront for Kids provides the SF organization with an outlet through which to target, persuade, and involve younger audiences.

Unlike SF, which specifically names White Nationalism as the subject or topic which the site revolves around, SF for Kids is slightly more vague on this matter. While the subject of White Nationalism is ,of course, implied by the SF name and insignia, this implication would probably be lost on SF for Kids' target audience. Not naming White Nationalism directly,

however, was probably an intentional choice made in order to keep the site's language and terminology at a level consistent with the target audience's intellectual capacity. Instead, simpler expressions are used to define the site's subject matter, such as "the subject of race" and "racial understanding." Unlike the elder Black's SF, Derek's SF for Kids is extremely small, comparatively containing very little content, is poorly maintained, is not visually striking, and is overall, quite unimpressive.

From a design standpoint, that the site was engineered by a fifteen year old shows. Whereas SF's third website, MLK.org, appears to be carefully and strategically designed, right down to text color and the spatial placement of objects and graphics, in order to best serve its rhetorical purpose, SF for Kids shares none of this same attention to detail. Many links to supposed content, such as "The History of Halloween!," are broken and lead nowhere, many graphics and pictures fail to load, captions and lines of text do not appear and cannot be read unless they are highlighted, and all of the above seem to be placed at random throughout the site's visual space. Although the site's overall design seems to be lacking in strategies aimed at the accomplishment of SF's overall rhetorical goals, Derek does seem to make some effort to this end in a different area.

SF for Kids features several multimedia elements which are likely intended to appeal to youth interests and engage and maintain the attention of the visitors whom Derek's hopes to be his primary audience. Some of these elements, primarily in the form of white supremacist music, which can be found by following the "Music!" link near the bottom of the page, contain rhetorical messages of their own. Content such as this can potentially serve to reinforce a particular message while engaging youth in an activity that they already enjoy; however in this instance this kind of reinforcement is unlikely to occur as the music lacks modern appeal. Most

of the featured multimedia, however, seems to exist for the sole purpose of entertaining the site's visitors with the hopes that this will keep them from navigating away from the site. Even these efforts, however, are unlikely to succeed—the "Games!" link only features a single game, and as the site was created quite some time ago (Derek is now 21 years old), it is extremely outdated. Furthermore, the "Kaleidoscope Painter" link and the "Optical Illusions" link are both broken, leading nowhere. In sum, it is highly unlikely that this anachronistic multimedia section, full of faulty promises of content that doesn't exist and internet relics, would succeed in accomplishing its intended goals with today's technologically spoiled youth.

As a result of the lackluster design, outdated content, and poor functionality, the site completely lacks a cohesive feel, and the obviously deficient upkeep serves to undermine any credibility that Derek might possibly have garnered from his audience. Derek's perceived credibility, however, is extremely subjective and is largely based on the requisite knowledge that he is the son of a prominent and prolific white supremacist. Additionally, the only attempt Derek makes on his site to further establish his credibility is thwarted by the same poor design and upkeep that serves to undermine it—in one of two pictures of himself, Derek is shown posing next to the former governor of Mississippi, however, the white text of the caption that is meant to explain this does not appear against the site's white background unless it is highlighted.

Not only does SF for Kids' lack of maintenance and poor functionality (the blame for which Derek, likely accidentally, places solely on himself with the proclamation that he is the site's webmaster) undermine Derek's personal credibility, but it also undermines the credibility of his textual message, which, as the focal point of the page, is really the site's only content of any significant rhetorical value.

The text appears just below the top of the page and is one of the first things a visitor would see upon scrolling downward. This could, as a result, play a determining role on the overall impact SF for Kids has on individual audience members. For example, if one became immediately interested in what the text has to say and decided to read on before exploring the rest of the site the message could potentially have a deeper impact than if one explored the rest of the site first. If the latter were true, one might make a judgment on the speaker's credibility before reading the message, thus changing the potential impact that that message might have. Furthermore, it is possible that after exploring the rest of the site, as a result of a less than positive experience, even a potentially interested visitor might navigate away from the site without having read the message at all. The following analysis assumes that this was not the case and that no judgments about Derek's credibility, positively or negatively, have been made.

Artifact 5.5: Derek's words appear unedited and in their entirety below:

> Hello, welcome to my site, I can see by the fact that you have visited my page that you are interested in the subject of race. I will start by introducing myself, my name is Derek. I am fifteen years old and I am the webmaster of kids.stormfront.org. I used to be in public school, it is a shame how many White minds are wasted in that system. I am now in home school. I am no longer attacked by gangs of non-whites and I spend most of my day learning, instead of tutoring the slowest kids in my class. In addition to my schoolwork, I am also learning pride in myself, my family and my people.
>
> White people are taught in school to be ashamed of their heritage. Teachers try to cram as many politically correct ideas as they can into your head in a single school year. All the great white accomplishments throughout history are diminished. Therefore, I think that now is the time that all of the white people across the globe should rise above the lies and be proud of who we are. To take back our freedom and win for all to see our heritage in its greatest glory.
>
> I want to thank the hundreds of people that have written encouraging letters to me. I am so happy to know that there are people out there that believe as I believe and millions more who have experienced the things that I have experienced in my life,

which lead me to racial understanding. Yet, lately I have been getting very vile messages with subjects varying from mutilating random white people, to stomping my brains in. Well I am getting sick of reading these nasty hate filled messages. I would really appreciate it if the people visiting my site would please keep this in mind, if your thoughts towards me are as sick, and vile as some people, please keep them to yourself. After all, I am only fifteen years old and I really do not need your hateful thoughts in my head.

This speech act takes the form of a direct address to the reader; this is a very personal style and thus sets the personal tone for the message to come.

From the very beginning, Derek's strategy for effectively communicating with his audience seems to revolve around relating to and identifying with his audience through a variety of appeals, primarily to beliefs, values, and personal experiences. Derek wastes no time in engaging his audience: "I can see by the fact that you have visited my page that you are interested in the subject of race." This obvious appeal to one's beliefs sets apart the audience members that Derek does not want to reach from those that he does; those who have no interest whatsoever in the subject of race would probably navigate away from the site at this point. On the other hand, those who are interested would likely read on—this does not mean that it is assumed that their beliefs are the same, but that they are simply interested in what Derek's beliefs happen to be, and possibly in shaping their own.

Next, Derek immediately jumps into a subject with which nearly all American youth are very familiar—school: "I used to be in public school, it is a shame how many White minds are wasted in that system. I am now in home school. I am no longer attacked by gangs of non-whites and I spend most of my day learning, instead of tutoring the slowest kids in my class." These words demonstrate Derek's efforts to try to relate to a younger audience by appealing to their personal experiences through sharing his own. Derek seems to be attempting to foster any negative feelings his audience members might have towards school as a result of similar

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experiences. He appears to particularly direct these appeals towards inner-city youth, who are more likely to be the ethnic minority and experience large class sizes, and would thus relate more closely with Derek's description of his own experiences. Derek then takes advantage of the negative feelings he has just fostered about ethnic diversity with a strategically placed appeal to racial pride, finishing off the paragraph and completing the thought: "… I am also learning pride in myself, my family and my people."

Derek carries on both themes through the next paragraph. He continues to attack traditional schooling, attempting to discredit "the system" and make the teaching of a typical public school curriculum seem like a racially motivated conspiracy designed to suppress the white race: "White people are taught in school to be ashamed of their heritage. Teachers try to cram as many politically correct ideas as they can into your head in a single school year. All the great white accomplishments throughout history are diminished." In this way it appears that Derek is trying to take advantage of any negative sentiments his potential young visitors might have about school. By eliciting these negative emotions it almost seems as if Derek is trying to create or reinforce a vulnerability which he can then exploit—when rationality is blurred by emotion, it can often be easier to rally people for a particular cause, which is exactly what Derek tries to do next.

Using the argument he has presented about the supposed detriment caused to the white race by the educational system as grounds on which to move, Derek makes a somewhat vague, but direct appeal to action: "Therefore, I think that now is the time that all of the white people across the globe should rise above the lies and be proud of who we are. To take back our freedom and win for all to see our heritage in its greatest glory." This is the focal point of Derek's rhetorical message; the desired action is moving his audience towards "freedom." The

importance of achieving this goal he makes not only about righting the wrong that has been done to white people as a whole, but also about preserving pride, ensuring freedom, and protecting heritage; each appeals to values that run deeply through much of American culture, regardless of race. While Derek does not detail any specific action he wishes his audience to carry out, this is was probably not done out of forgetfulness or lack of thoroughness. Leaving this open ended prevents Derek from setting the bar too high and risking the possibility that even those who were moved by his words might not be willing to carry out his request. Especially given the age range of his target audience, any level of continued involvement would probably be considered a successful response to this appeal.

Derek's final paragraph seems to serve the dual purpose of establishing or reinforcing his credibility, depending on the requisite knowledge of the reader, and displacing blame on to those who are the targets of his hate. Derek attempts to achieve each through two distinctive halves, both having to do with the feedback he receives as a result of his involvement in White Nationalism.

First, Derek acknowledges and thanks his supposed multitudes of supporters in an effort to inflate his image and his importance. Additionally, his references to the "hundreds of people that have written encouraging letters" to him and the "millions more" whom he implies share his "racial understanding" serves to convey the idea that Derek is a part of something and that that something is quite important. Especially to those who do not fit in with main stream society, which are often the kind of people that hate groups attract (Ray and Marsh), the opportunity to be a part of something big such as this can have quite a strong appeal.

Secondly, Derek acknowledges his critics, albeit in far from the same positive way: "…lately I have been getting very vile messages with subjects varying from mutilating random

white people, to stomping my brains in. Well I am getting sick of reading these nasty hate filled messages." It is not until this point that there has been a graphic reference to violence or a single mention of the word hate anywhere on the site—if the reader is unaware of the reputation of violence and the level of hate commonly associated with white supremacy, they certainly won't learn about it here. As a result, Derek creates the impression that the group of which he is a part does not practice or tolerate hate or violence, and simultaneously associates both with his critics. Furthermore, even as he is presently practicing targeting youth with persuasive, hate filled propaganda, he displaces blame for this on his critics as well with his final thought: "After all, I am only fifteen years old and I really do not need your hateful thoughts in my head."

Overall, it would seem that despite Derek Black's strategic, carefully constructed, and very persuasive textual message, StormFront for Kids represents a relatively minimal threat level. While Derek's own words remain potentially dangerous to a vulnerable reader who fits his target audience, there is little else on the site of significant rhetorical value. Attempts at engaging younger visitors with multimedia content might have been effective once, but, as the site does not appear to have been updated in years, the effect has probably reversed itself. However, this is not to discredit SF for Kids completely, the site could still have some influence, especially if it was one of the first hate sites a young person discovered. Derek's warm and personal greeting and the appeals therein have the potential to grasp youth's attention, thus allowing SF for Kids' biggest danger to be realized. It is not the hate the site features which represents this danger, but the gateway to hate which it serves. From SF for Kids, interested visitors can easily reach StormFront's main page and in turn one of the most immense collections of white supremacist rhetoric on the internet as well as a lengthy index of other hate sites from all over the nation and the world.

Part III: Critical Rhetorical Analysis: MartinLutherKing.org

MartinLutherKing.org (MLK.org), one of the three individual sites associated with SF (along with StormFront.org and StromFront.org/Kids), was created and is maintained by the online organization, although no one individual is credited with its conception or design.

MLK.org, while not extremely large or intricate, still poses a relatively significant threat, largely because of the way the information is presented—unlike other sites analyzed in this study, which have sections or specific portions dedicated to the persuasion of youth, MLK.org, as a whole, is dedicated to this purpose. The entire site was created with the intent of persuading youth, is intentionally deceptive, and attempts to move its target audience towards certain actions.

To properly illustrate the deceptive nature of this site, it is important to first discuss how MLK.org can be found by the general unsuspecting public. Over the many months that this project spanned, using the internet's most popular search engines, including Google, Yahoo, and Bing, MLK.org has remained among the top three results when searches for "Martin Luther King Jr." or "Martin Luther King" have been conducted. The search engines' imbedded "SafeSearch" tools, which are designed to filter explicit material from search results, generally had no effect on the order that MLK.org turned up in search results or whether or not it turned up at all.

In this way, MLK.org's creators allow the site to be easily discoverable by those who are researching Martin Luther King Jr. or the Civil Rights Movement. While still on the search engines' results list, there are no clues or hints within the site's description that tell of MLK.org's actual content, in fact, the site description establishes quite the opposite. The site's title reads "Martin Luther King Jr.—A True Historical Examination," with the following description

appearing below the title: "The truth about Martin Luther King: Includes historical trivia, articles and pictures. A valuable resource for teachers and students alike." The site's title and description, as it appears on search engines, demonstrates the way in which MLK.org's creators are employing deceptive techniques in order to lure members of their target audience to the site. For all practical purposes the site appears to be entirely viable and seems as if it could be a potentially valuable resource, with key phrases such as "historical trivia," "pictures," and "…for teachers and students alike" making the site seem especially appealing to school age youth.

Moreover, the site's domain name ends with .org rather than with .com, and, with.org meaning organization, this lends a certain sense of credibility and trustworthiness to the site and the information it contains. It is also important to note that both StormFront and StormFront for Kids provide links to MLK.org, however, it is reasonable to believe that anyone who discovers this site via either of these routes would be at least somewhat aware of the site's general intentions and thus the rhetoric contained therein would not have the same impact.
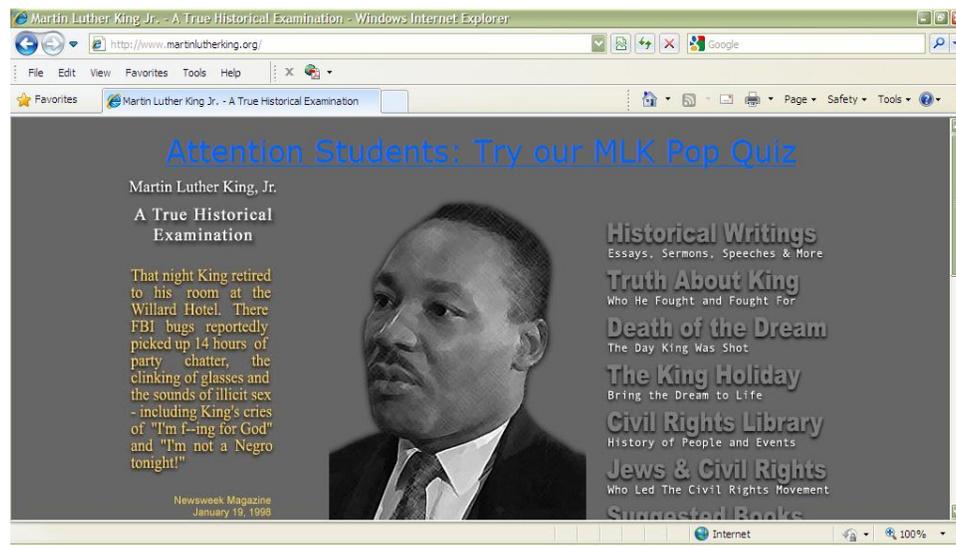

Figure 5.1

Upon entering the site, Figure 5.1 (above) shows exactly what a visitor would see. When viewing this for the first time, the untrained or unsuspecting eye might very well assume that

there is nothing wrong with this site at all. The site appears professionally designed, seems as if it will contain useful information, and appears to be especially appropriate for school age children. These components, however, all come together to form a carefully designed illusion.

The initial impact the site's general appearance makes seems to be the result of intentional efforts specifically geared towards establishing credibility and eliciting a sense of trust from visitors. The site's title, the heading that appears across the top of the page, Dr. King's portrait, and the sidebar that runs along the right hand side of the page, are each components that when taken together reinforce the authentic look and feel of the site.

Furthermore, as soon as the site is entered, the efforts the creators went through to appeal to youth can immediately be seen.

Artifact 5.6: Top of page, large blue print: "Attention Students: Try our MLK Pop Quiz." As a focal point of the top half of the page, this heading is one of the first things one might notice. Strategically centered across the top of the page, it is clearly intended to capture the interest of potential young researchers, and in doing so might possibly detract from a visitor's ability to detect that something is amiss. This could especially be the case if interest in this so called "pop quiz" prevents a visitor from exploring the rest of the site first, where hints to the site's true theme are more readily available.

Besides the heading's spatial placement, MLK.org's designers made use of other physical characteristics to allow it to stand out as well. Overall, the site has a general lack of color, using a bland grey background, generally reserving color to highlight text. The bright blue text of this heading is a perfect example; the brightly colored text stands out quite well against a sea of grey. In addition, the text of this heading is among the largest on the page and is also underlined to provide further emphasis. The placement, text size, and accent of this heading, as well as the

sharp contrast in color it creates, makes it one of the most prominent features of the MLK.org

homepage. This very specific and intentional design provides valuable insight into how

deliberate the site's creators can be in their efforts to appeal to youth.

Other components that work to create the site's initial impact are present just below the

"Attention Students" heading. The title "Martin Luther King Jr.—A True Historical

Examination" implies to visitors that the site offers a unique perspective on the topic at hand,

while the sidebar on the right, containing headings such as "Historical Writings: Essays,

Sermons, Speeches & More," "Death of the Dream: The Day King Was Shot," and "Civil Rights

Library: History of People and Events," misleadingly provides visitors with an idea of the kind

of information the site contains. It is notable, however, that on first glance, unless one reads the

small yellow print on the left side of King's portrait which hints at the real theme of the site, or

scrolls further down, it is virtually not noticeable that something is awry.

MLK.org seems to strive to make a positive first impression on visitors; the site's general

appearance and domain name create a certain level of credibility, while titles, headings, and

sidebars both appeal to youth and suggest that the site contains a plethora of valuable

information.

Creating such a first impression is essential in order to keep visitors form navigating

away from the site so that the real message of MLK.org may be delivered. While clicking on

nearly any link on the homepage would result in the visitor being redirected to pages containing

anti-King or otherwise racially inflammatory content, there is very little content present on the

homepage that alludes to what this message actually is. There are, however, are a few elements

which provide textual cues. These cues, however, are not extremely direct. Instead, they read as

hints, and may not reveal to all visitors the true nature of the site. This, again, may be an intentional tactic. If these cues were more direct, they might serve to deter keener visitors.

There are a total of four such cues present on the MLK.org homepage, each of which double as links that lead to an abundance of anti-King and white supremacist rhetoric. From top to bottom, the first that would appear is the caption of small, yellow text which appears to the left of Martin Luther King Jr.'s portrait. The caption reads: "That night King retired to his room at the Willard Hotel. There FBI bugs reportedly picked up 14 hours of party chatter, the clinking of glasses and the sounds of illicit sex--including King's cries of 'I'm fucking for God' and 'I'm not a Negro tonight!'" Under this caption is a citation: "Newsweek Magazine, January 19th, 1998, page 62." This caption is likely one of the first cues as to the real subject matter of this site that a visitor might notice. While the citation is accurate, it is taken out of context from a book review which paints an overall positive picture of MLK, noting that his momentary lapses of normal human indulgences are far outweighed by the positive impact that he had on the Civil Rights Movement and American history (Meacham 62).

The second and third cues appear below and to the right of MLK's portrait. Each is underlined and written in bright blue text, making them stand out against their surroundings. The first reads: "Why the King Holiday Should be Repealed!" and the second, just below the first, reads: "Black Invention Myths!"

The last appears at the very bottom of the page: "Join MLK Discussion Forum, Hosted by Stormfront." This cue is obviously conditional on the prior knowledge of what SF is and represents; if a visitor to MLK.org is unaware of SF, than this will of course mean nothing to them unless they follow the link. Conversely, however, if a visitor were aware, than this might serve as the clearest indication that the site is not what it appears.

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The purpose of mentioning these textual cues is to show that while MLK.org's creators did not try to completely mask their intentions on their homepage, they were certainly tactfully subtle in revealing them. Although they could have directly stated on the homepage their beliefs about MLK, this approach was probably not in their best interest. In making such a clear declaration that goes against traditionally accepted knowledge of MLK and that would thus serve to reveal their affiliation with the political far-right, MLK.org's creators would have likely turned visitors away. Instead, by appearing for the most part to be an authentic educational resource and providing subtle hints, MLK.org leads visitors away from their toned down homepage and to a vast wealth of rhetoric that carries the site's true message.

Of MLK.org's great collection of rhetoric, some is quite direct in making certain arguments and assertions. Other examples, however, may not read quite as persuasively; instead it may just seem as if the site is offering a new perspective on an age old discussion. Rhetoric typical of the latter description is often very suggestive but generally allows the reader to feel like they've come to a desired conclusion on their own. For example, this conclusion from a letter from the site's webmaster exemplifies this rhetorical tactic: "Read everything, make up your own mind, and then do something about it. Do not let other people tell you what to think. Think for yourself ("Letter")." This letter is not signed, nor are there any credentials provided for author. Despite these words of encouragement from the site's webmaster for visitors to be well informed and to come to objective, independent conclusions, nowhere on the site is there any material which acknowledges MLK's accomplishments or societal-cultural contributions.

Instead, the majority of the site's rhetoric revolves around several arguments that are meant to undermine King's role as an influential historical figure, destroy his personal credibility, and undermine the credibility and integrity of the educational and governmental

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authorities which teach, support, and honor the commonly accepted history of Martin Luther

King Jr. The central arguments presented throughout MLK.org's body of rhetoric are as follows:

A. MLK was a career plagiarist; his scholarly works and his speeches, both before and after he gained notoriety as a civil rights activist, relied heavily on the un-cited work of other authors ("Historical Writings").

B. MLK was a communist. He had ties to both the Soviet Union and the Communist Party USA; much of his activism was funded by Soviet Union who sought to disrupt American society by doing so ("The Beast as Saint")

C. MLK was a philanderer and a sexual deviant who engaged in promiscuous and sometimes abusive sex with prostitutes whom were often hired with misappropriated church funds ("The Death of the Dream").

D. MLK's credibility as a writer, activist, American icon, and influential historical figure is entirely based on false pretenses ("Why the MLK Jr. Holiday Should be Repealed;" "Letter").

E. MLK was a fraud who contributed nothing to American society; his career and work as a civil rights activist had a lasting negative impact on American history ("Why the MLK Jr. Holiday Should be Repealed;" "Letter").

F. The popular image and history of MLK and the events surrounding his life are the result of fabrications, suppressions of accurate historical facts, and false teachings conveyed and upheld by the mass media, the United States government, and the United States educational system ("Why the MLK Jr. Holiday Should be Repealed;" "Letter").

While some rhetoric undermines African American culture and accomplishments as a whole, the above arguments are the central pillars on which MLK.org's overall message and efforts to discredit MLK stand.

Chapter 6: Findings, Implications, and Conclusions

Findings

The critical rhetorical analysis of Stormfront's three individual components show that, as a whole, the SF organization poses a significant threat to the youth members of the online community who are actively targeted for recruitment. This recruitment is conducted by those who directly behind the creation and maintenance of SF, namely Don and Derek Black, and by those SF site members who utilize the SF main site forums as a tool to propagate their messages and advance the agendas of the individual hate groups to which they might belong.

While success in the area of recruitment is what establishes SF as a viable threat, it is the hate that youth are likely to be exposed to that adds an additional element of potential danger and harm. Although the messages and content themselves, featured from the three sites subject to analysis throughout this study, may not seem outwardly and inherently hateful, or may simply appear to be matters of individual opinion, there remains a huge amount of extremist propaganda that is intrinsically and excessively hateful to which youth can be easily exposed.

That the initial messages that target youth directly are not extremely hateful in and of themselves is not surprising; extreme hate in recruitment would be too obvious and would likely deter readers who were not looking for such hate. Instead, measures are often taken during recruitment to mask the hateful nature of the values and ideals that these sites sell and make the online White Nationalist community seem like a positive, supportive network. However, just under the surface exists the ugly truth: these sites are the epicenter and the spawning grounds for online hate. Stormfront.org, Stormfront.org/Kids, and MartinLutherKing.org are the collective homes of an extensive compilation of hateful propaganda. Derek Black's SF for Kid's hosts the least dangerous of the three sites, and hateful expressions are mild; SF for Kids' true danger lies

in that it links to both the SF main site and MLK.org. MLK.org hosts a vast amount of content compared to SF for Kids, however it is mostly anti-MLK propaganda, and in comparison to what can be found on SF's main site forums, much of it seems relatively mild as well. Stormfront's main site, however, which can be easily accessed via conspicuous hyperlinks from either of the other sites, is the host of the bulk of the hateful content found throughout the three sites. In fact, SF's main site forums host one of the most extensive collections of hate propaganda on the internet.

The hate found on Stormfront.org knows no bounds; SF's hate mongers routinely target any and every "non-white" race and minority group imaginable, sparing no one. Hateful messages are often persecutory and personal attacks are not uncommon. Posts are often vulgar and are sometimes graphic, both visually and textually depicting horrendous acts of violence. Pictures, jokes, cartoons, poetry, music, and other artwork often act as vehicles for hateful messages that sometimes strive to make a point and sometimes, it seems, are just for "fun." The ideologies on which much of this hate is based are horrific in their very nature, and the examples that are provided below, in order to demonstrate the severity and extent of this unfounded hate, are the product of their dissemination.

The first example comes from the SF "Lounge," a forum that is meant for the discussion of "less serious" topics. The following post was made in reply to a thread titled "ANGRY Black Woman ruins Famly [sic.] Day at Sea World by Calling White People Racists," started by forum member Deer, which featured a video of an African American woman and a Caucasian family involved in a verbal confrontation over an alleged racist comment made against the woman: "People are getting tired of angry loud mouthed black women, using violent righteous indignation to get their way. I wish people could just shoot them when they start acting that way.

It would be fast efficient, and very effective. This woman is proof that lynching was justified, even necessary (WhiteReverance)."

This post was made by, WhiteReverance, a well respected "Senior Forum Member." Another notable reply to this video was much more succinct but equally powerful in its disturbing symbolism: "Fetch the rope…" was the user Staropramen's only words.

While these posts may seem violent, they are actually relatively mild compared to what else can be found on the SF forums. One photo, posted in a thread titled "On this day August 7th: Black rapists lynched" by War1889, was taken right after two African American men, Thomas Shipp and Abraham Smith, had been hanged in Indiana in 1930. The post spoke praise for the "angry White citizens" who lynched the men without any due process just a day after they were arrested and "charged with robbing and murdering a white factory worker and raping his girlfriend." The caption below the photo reads: "Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith get their just desserts... (War1889)."

Even more violent still are a sinister trio of cartoons, a favorite medium for appealing to youth, that are racially inflammatory, homophobic, and highly graphic. The cartoons were posted in a thread titled "Pictures third discussion" by Child of Fenris, started within SF's "Graphics" forum. The least explicit of the three pictures a sickly looking Caucasian male who is holding up one fist high in protest, in his other hand he is holding up a sign that reads "WE'RE QUEER AND WE'RE HERE!" while the caption along the bottom of the cartoon reads "…YEH, BUT NOT FOR LONG (Child of Fenris)."

The next cartoon addresses the topic of race mixing, a common topic of discussion among SF users. The captions read: "**ATTENTION…** ALL WHIGGERS AND MIXERS… AFTER THE "DAY OF RECKONING" RACE TRAITORS WILL BE THE FIRST TO GO!"

In the foreground of the cartoon there is a male who is wearing a "Rasta Rules" t-shirt, in the background there is a Caucasian woman holding a dark skinned infant; both characters are being held at gun point. The man is pictured on his knees with a pistol pointed at his temple at point-blank range, he is pleading for is life, saying "N-N-NO, Please don't kill me, man… I'll learn to like White stuff, I swear…. (Child of Fenris)" The woman with the infant is also pictured on her knees with a second gunman pointing a pistol indiscriminately at the heads of her and her infant.

The final and most graphically violent of the three cartoons reads: "How's this for a new slogan for the U.S. Border Patrol?... 'IF IT AIN'T WHITE… **WASTE IT!**' Remember, its Stop the Mudslide… or drown (Child of Fenris)!" The cartoon depicts a shotgun in the act of firing multiple rounds upon a man who is meant to look Hispanic. The dying man, who has a terrified look on his face, is literally torn in half at the waist and is exploding with blood and entrails; the assailant is not pictured.

Yet perhaps the most violent and disturbing example comes from a thread titled "For your target shooting pleasure…" started by forum member Cougarspeed. The thread begins with a cartoon image of a masked African American man holding a Caucasian woman at gunpoint; the image was edited to alter the skin color of the man and to add a more realistic photographic image of the man's face. The caption below the image reads: "Edited by me :-) Not sure how you can enlarge it for target shooting, though. Discuss: How would you go about neutralizing the situation (Cougarspeed)?" This post, masked as a survival exercise of sorts, from the "Self Defense, Martial Arts, and Preparedness" forum, quickly turned in to an exchange of violent fantasies motivated by the users' hatred towards African Americans. The first reply was posted by a SF member whose username is ironically "Peace Through Stormfront:"

> Well, I'd have to practice on the pic, but maybe with the laser dot
> from my pistol I could place a shot right in his mouth. My gun isn't

terribly powerful (only 32 cal., a mouse gun, but then I always
have it with me), so much so that it would probably be considered
only a backup weapon by most here, but a bullet through the brain-
stem would pretty much be guaranteed to take out anybody.

Whether or not there would be a trigger pull reflex I don't know,
but it seems I read somewhere that that might be minimized by a
brain-stem shot. I think I'd have to be pretty close and already have
my gun out and pointing at him though…. (Peace Through
Stormfront).

Note that by saying "I'd have to practice on the pic, but maybe with the laser dot from my

pistol I could place a shot right in his mouth," the speaker is insinuating that he could carry this

action out on a live person, not just in a target practice scenario. Here is another reply, from

DESERTFOX63, that stood out as one of the most violent of the twenty-two responses to the

original post:

Shoot his right (gun) hand, preferably at the first finger knuckle,
this would neutralize the hand and the gun.

Then as he is railing from the pain and confused that you didn't
bow down to his demands, walk up and kick him in the nuts,
repeatedly.

Spit in his face and give him a good dose of boot to he face, then
finish off with a head shot.

Keep in mind, do not utter the "N" word at any time when
dispensing justice and for good measure shout at the top of your
lungs, "I'm in fear of my life and the womans life!" repeatedly so
any by standers see you are defending two lives from a gun toting
thug.

For shock value and as a warning to other would be thugs, take his
now disabled gun and shove it up his..... (DESERTFOX63).

The level of graphic violence that is visible in these messages is astounding and is

without question inappropriate for youth audiences, yet there is absolutely nothing to keep youth

from being exposed to such hate once they enter SF.

[77]

These examples are not what one might consider typical, yet they are not uncommon either. Hate at such an extreme level is commonplace on SF and could easily be stumbled upon even when one is not actively seeking it out. However, less violent hate is extremely typical of the SF forums and is virtually impossible to avoid.

For example, the extremely popular "Joke of the Day" thread (nearly 100,000 views) from the SF "Lounge" contains thousands of jokes posted by SF users. While not all of the jokes are racially inflammatory, most are, like the following example posted by AlbertPike33—the 1,362nd post to the thread: "What's the difference between a dead dog in the road and a dead black guy in the road?? There are skid marks leading up to the dog."

Hate of this caliber, while not always in the form of jokes, is everywhere on SF, and is especially present in areas that youth are likely to frequent such as the "Lounge," "Graphics," and "Music and Entertainment" forums.

Furthermore, such hate is often presented through various forms of multimedia and sometimes in ways that are especially appealing to youth. There is even an "Adventures of White Man" comic strip in which an Aryan Super Man like character saves the "White Race" from Jewish and African American super-villains, named "The JEW from Outer Space" and "Supercoon" respectively, and their evil plots to destroy the world. In another ongoing comic strip, which has its own dedicated thread, called "Little Miss Happ and Oi Boy," short stories are told that usually have some sort of White Nationalist lesson. There are several threads dedicated to the proliferation of White Nationalist related videos as well, such as the "Let's Start Our Own Media" thread, from the "Music and Entertainment" forum, on which SF users have posted links to thousands of WN videos hosted on sites all over the web. Links to "White Power" rock music

are extremely common and links to white supremacist or otherwise racist games can even be found, however somewhat more rarely.

For instance, there are several threads throughout the SF forums, mostly in the "Lounge" and "Music and Entertainment" areas, that provide links to the first person shooter games "Ethnic Cleansing" and "ZOG's Nightmare" in which players are able to roam around three dimensional worlds, systematically killing ethnic minorities along the way. While "Ethnic Cleansing" is still available for purchase (not directly from SF), ZOGSNIGHTMARE.com, which made the game available as a free download, has been taken offline for violating the URL hosting service's Terms of Service agreement. Perhaps most offensively, one thread even provided a link to a game that is described as a "Concentration Camp Simulator" in which players, as the director of the camp, are charged with such tasks as "managing the furnaces" and "gathering the gold." Other more simple games, such as the Adobe Flash animation game "Border Patrol" from the thread "A videogame I think most will enjoy," in which players use lethal force to prevent as many "wetbacks" from crossing the border as possible, have also been made available for free through links on SF.

Hate is not ubiquitous throughout SF, there are also many topics that do not deal directly with the subject of race, however, those messages that do have racist undertones are usually at the forefront of discussion in most SF forums.

Stormfront, in apparent recognition of the controversial nature of its community, does have a few selectively chosen forums in their "Opposing Views" area that allow comments from non-registered users, however dissent is usually met with little tolerance and often results in personal attacks on the dissenter.

Beyond making hate so easily accessible on their own site, SF is also an invaluable networking tool for white supremacists on the internet. Links to other white supremacist sites are extremely common on SF; for instance, links to the three other sites examined in the content analysis section of this paper (White Nationalist Tube, DJ Ghost of the Reich, and Aryan-Front) can be found and one post on a thread titled "WN Internet Forums (listed here)" lists 239 other pro-white sites to visit.

Furthermore, SF encourages users to share what they find on their site with as many people as possible. SF creator Don Black, on his site's "E-Activism" forum, even makes a personal appeal to all members of SF to take advantage of the social media revolution by utilizing sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter to "promote hate." On the thread titled "'Promoting hate' on Facebook, social networking sites" that he started himself, Black writes: "We all should be using these social networking sites to reach new people and bring them here. They're huge and their Thought Police won't be able to keep up. To that end, I've also added the "Sharethis" link in the right side of the Navbar on every page, which links to all the social networking sites." This has no doubt expanded SF's reach widely. As a relatively new advancement for SF, and given the widespread popularity of social media among youth, only time can tell how effective a recruiting tool this may be.

Implications

The Stormfront organization takes an educated, multifaceted, well thought out and often proactive approach to the recruitment of youth into the White Nationalist Movement. Extensive observation and rhetorical analysis has generated evidence, however hard to quantify, that suggests that their efforts are often successful. Once youth become involved, the hate they might

be exposed to is virtually boundless; regular visitors to the forums will find that hate is impossible to avoid and ranges from the mild to the extreme. As evidenced, SF has not only the potential to expose youth to an devastating amount of hate via user posted content throughout the site's many forums, but the potential to act as a gateway to hate sites and organizations all over the internet as well. There is no doubt that once youth become actively involved in Stormfront, they will be exposed to value sets and ideologies that at their very core are offensive, reprehensible, and horrific. Youth looking for a group to identify with will find a community of like minded thinkers who endorse and encourage such values and who often make practicing them seem like the moral and culturally sound thing to do.

Furthermore, the interactive nature of the SF main site forums allows users to network and connect with one another in ways never before possible. In this way, SF's affect on youth can carry over from the virtual world and into the real. Youth who are seeking to connect with like minded people in their area can find them here, and organized hate groups who are mindful of this, look to SF as a tool to recruit them. Several hate groups have representatives within SF who will often post information about their organization, including information on memberships and what it takes to join. Some of these groups are even represented within SF's youth forum, encouraging those who want to take their involvement to the next level to join their organization's youth group. While it is known that groups are taking these steps, their success or failure is nearly impossible to effectively track and measure. For even if a SF user acknowledges that they have joined as a direct result of what they have learned on SF, there is no way of knowing if this is an accurate and truthful account. What is certain is that the risk and the threat are there.

How far online hate might spill over into the real world is largely speculative, however, it is nonetheless a significant concern. In addition to an increase in hate group activity, it has been suggested that a possible correlation between online hate and real world violence may indeed exist. Several instances of violent hate crimes have been connected to online hate mongering in recent years, including the shooting that took place at the National Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. in June of 2009 (Hudson). While the association between this crime and online hate mongering is loose, other examples provide far more concrete evidence.

For example, in 1998, what began as the singling out and criticism of an individual who disagreed with white supremacist values on a U.S. based hate site, ended in a far more targeted crime. Bonnie Jouhari, the employee of a U.S. fair housing organization and mother of a bi-racial child, infuriated white supremacists with her work to promote non-discriminatory housing practices and of course for being a "race traitor" and procreating with a "non-white." Jouhari and her child soon became the target of directed hate speech on the site in question. Shortly after this began, Jouhari began to receive harassing phone calls at work and at home which then escalated to being followed to and from her home. This harassment went on for several years and Jouhari had to move several times as a result (Daniels 131-32).

In two more well known examples, hate speech on the internet as well as online guides to weapons and bomb making were allegedly factors in both the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing and the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado (Breckheimer 1495-96).

Conclusion

The impact that online hate speech can potentially have on youth is likely to vary on a case by case basis. Some youth are more susceptible than others and varying degrees of

involvement will produce varying degrees of impact. In any case, such speech can have lasting effects and may shape the values and behaviors of recruited youth for years to come. Furthermore, the prospect of a correlation between online hate and real world violence opens up the possibility for youth to be affected in far more sinister ways.

If the trends of years past prove true in years to come, as technology advances and becomes even more widespread and as foreign hate mongers continue to seek refuge in the United States, as this research suggests is happening, the potential for hate mongers to expand their activities will likely increase, thus increasing the number of people their messages are likely to reach, and in turn, the likelihood that those messages will produce harmful effects.

The research that has been conducted and the evidence that has been generated throughout this study have successfully answered the research question: the threat posed to youth by online hate sites is both significant and real. The caliber of hate that exists on these sites is horrifying, and the rhetorical analysis suggests that recruitment efforts targeted at youth are often successful. Exposed youth are, in turn, at a high risk of being victimized by these groups in numerous ways.

And while there is a lack of sufficient concrete evidence to suggest the restriction of online hate speech, which is protected under the First Amendment, the implications of this research do suggest that further scholarly research must be conducted in order to probe this threat and its potential impact on particularly susceptible youth populations. Producing evidence in order to justify governmental restriction of online hate speech should not be seen as the ultimate goal of such research, but instead, non-governmental solutions to this problem should be further explored. Such solutions might include programs designed to raise awareness, increase the effectiveness of free filtering software, and programs designed to explore the possibility of a

website rating system similar to the rating systems characteristic of other forms of invasive

media such as television and videogames.

<u>Appendix</u>

<u>Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism According to Campbell and Burkholder</u>

I.   Description (intrinsic).
    A. Act's purpose?
    B. Role of rhetor?
    C. Target audience?
    D. Act's tone or attitude?
    E. Structure?
    F. Supporting Materials?
    G. Strategies (styles, appeals, arguments)?

II.   Contextual/Historical Research
    A. History of rhetor?
    B. History of audience?
    C. Competing persuasive forces?
    D. Testing supports?

III.   Evaluation
    A. Effects criterion?
    B. Truth criterion?
    C. Values or ethical criterion?
    D. Artistic criterion?

<u>Adapted framework for the Analysis of Internet Forum-Facilitated Discourse</u>

I. Contextual/Historical Research
II. Identify
    A. Speaker(s)
        i. Singular or multiple
    B. Audience
        i. Primary/target audience
        ii. Actual audience
    C. Topic(s)
        i. Main topic
        ii. Secondary topic
III. Describe/analyze
    A. Act or acts
        i. Purpose
        ii. Tone/attitude

    B. Speaker or speakers
        i. Role
        ii. Credibility
        iii. Motivations
    C. Audience
        i. Role
        ii. Interactions/Responses
        iii. Reception of act
    D. Persuasive/rhetorical strategies
        i. Styles
        ii. Appeals (to values, emotional, to action, etc…)
        iii. Arguments
        iv. References to authority/authority figures
        v. Supporting materials
            1. Multimedia content

IV. Evaluate
    A. Effects/Effectiveness Criterion
        i. Of act or acts
        ii. Of speaker or speakers
    B. Truth criterion
    C. Values or ethical criterion

Adapted Rhetorical Framework for Website Analysis

I. Contextual/Historical Research
II. Identify
    A. Rhetor—who is responsible?
        i. Website creator/designer?
        ii. Individual?
        iii. Group/organization?
    B. Audience
        i. Primary/target audience?
        ii. Actual audience?
    C. Topic or topics
III. Describe/analyze
    A. Rhetor
        i. Role
        ii. Credibility
        iii. Motivations
    B. Website design
        i. Spatial design/placement

        1. Objects
        2. Text
        3. Pictures/graphics
    ii. Physical characteristics—objects, text, pictures/graphics
        1. Size
        2. Color use
  C. Textual content
    i. Context
    ii. Purpose of text
    iii. Message
    iv. Persuasive/rhetorical strategies
        1. Tone
        2. Styles
        3. Appeals
        4. Arguments
        5. References to authority/authority figures
  D. Multimedia content—audio, video, pictures/graphics
    i. Context
    ii. Purpose
    iii. Message

IV.   Evaluate
  A. Overall effects/effectiveness
  B. Truth criterion
  C. Values or ethical criterion

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