

# Assessing the Evolution of Four Far-Right White Supremacist Extremist Groups



# The Threat of the Extreme Right

- within the United States domestic terrorism attacks outnumber international attacks by a ratio of 7:1 (LaFree, Dugan, Fogg & Scott, 2006)
- Significant far right presence in most states (Simone, Freilich & Chermak)
- Far- right extremists claimed more than 250 lives between 1978 and 2000 (Hewitt, 2003)
- extremist far-right is responsible for over 4,000 criminal incidents involving approximately 4,600 offenders, 250 homicides, 100 homicide attempts (Freilich and Chermak, 2007)
- In addition to empirical evidence, no shortage of anecdotal

# Proposed Study

## \*Reason for Study:

- >white supremacist groups and adherents pose a serious threat
- >Prior research has tended to treat violent domestic extremist groups as one in the same (Chermak, Freilich, & Shemtob, 2008)
- >differences in groups may suggest differences in levels of threat
- >understanding differences will contribute to existing literature and possibly suggest new law enforcement policies.

## \*Objective of Study

To examine in-depth the life course of four far-right white supremacist organizations that are similar in their racist beliefs but varied in many other aspects, and compare and contrast how these groups originate, grow, and decline

# Proposed Study – Cont'd

## Methodology

- >selected four groups that differed in characteristics (size, life span, geographic location)
  - \*Aryan Nations
  - \*National Alliance
  - \*Oklahoma Constitutional Militia
  - \*Public Enemy Number 1 (PEN1)
- >performed case study analysis of these four groups
- >wrote historical account of each group
- >identified common themes related to group change over time

## Data

Obtained from a combination of scholarly accounts and open source research

# Typology of White Supremacist Organizations

- Because of numerous differences between white supremacist groups, they are divided into sub-categories.
- For purposes of this study, we employed Berlet & Vysotsky's (2006) suggested typologies for the domestic far-right.
  1. Political groups
    - primarily inspired by political ideals and obtaining political objectives
  2. Religious groups
    - primarily inspired by religious ideals and acting in accordance with those ideals
  3. Youth Culture groups
    - primarily motivated by sub-cultural affiliations

# Origins - Religious Groups

## Aryan Nations



# Birth of Aryan Nations

- Founded by Richard Girnt Butler, a Aeronautical Engineer, who became a Christian Identity pastor in Wesley Smith's Church of Jesus Christ Christian
- In 1973 purchased 20 acres near Hayden Lake, Idaho and sought charter to open branch of Swift's church. Board of Swift's church refused to grant Butler a charter. He formed his own Church of Jesus Christ Christian anyway.
- In 1978 Butler creates Aryan Nations to act as the political arm of his Church of Jesus Christ Christian

# Origins - Religious Groups

## Oklahoma Constitutional Militia

'PROPHET' SENTENCED IN BOMB CONSPIRACY

Albion News/

Monitor

1996

# Birth of the Oklahoma Constitutional Militia

- \*William Ray Lampley, is a fervent Christian Identity adherent and “Prophet Most High” of his Universal Church of God which he founded in 1975
- \*Lampley spends much of the 1980s and early 1990s writing letters to government officials warning of trouble and assassination if they don’t start complying with God’s law
- \*Lampley forms the Oklahoma Constitutional Militia in 1994 with his wife Cecelia, Larry Wayne Crow, and John Dare Baird
  - >Lampley claims to be a religious prophet and leads the group

# Origins - Political Groups

## National Alliance



\*symbol from Norse mythology. Typically referred to as a Life Ruin. Nazis used the Life Ruin on gravestones to indicated date of birth, or death when turned upside down

# Birth of the National Alliance



- \*William Luther Pierce III was an educated man with a Ph.D. in Physics
- \*Left academia to become involved with George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party
- \*Left American Nazi Party to join Willis Carto's National Youth Alliance
- \*Conflict with Carto led to split and Pierce took over National Youth Alliance and converted it into the National Alliance in 1974

# Origins - Youth Culture Group

## Public Enemy Number 1

(aka PEN1, PEN1 Skins, PEN1 Death Squad)



# Birth of Public Enemy Number 1

Evolved out of punk rock scene in Southern California during early 1980s

\* In mid-1980s youth form gangs. PEN1 is named after punk band called "Rudimentary PEN1"

\* In late 1980s two leaders of PEN1 emerge:

1. The ideologically focused Brody Davis
2. The criminally focused Donald Reed "Popeye" Mazza

\* Mazza wins control of the gang

\* PEN1 becomes a white supremacist criminal gang that specializes in drug trafficking

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Growth of Aryan Nations

1. Justifying Ideology and Action Plan
  - >faith justifies beliefs and hatred
  - >action plan gives direction
2. Creation of Aryan World Congress (AWC)
  - >good for recruitment
  - >makes Aryan Nations central to white supremacist movement
3. Publicized Conflicts with Law Enforcement

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Fall of Aryan Nations

1. Creation of Aryan Nations impacts stability and cohesiveness of inner core of Butler's Church of Jesus Christ Christian
  - >Aryan World Congresses
2. Lack of Funds
3. Lack of Leadership
4. Attention from Law Enforcement
5. Private Lawsuit

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Rise and Fall of Oklahoma Constitutional Militia

## **Rise**

Oklahoma Constitutional Militia had very short life span (1 year). There was no growth in size or status of the group

## **Fall**

1. Lack of Leadership
2. Attention from Law Enforcement

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Rise of the National Alliance

- Publication of "The Turner Diaries"  
-authored by Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew McDonald
- 2. Purchase of 346 acres in Hillsboro, West Virginia
- 3. Creation of National Vanguard Books
- 4. Purchase of Resistance Records
- 5. Strong Leadership

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Fall of the National Alliance

1. Pierce's death
2. Erich "The Aryan Barbarian" Gliebe's failed leadership
  - financial mismanagement
  - conflicts with staff
  - loss of income

# Critical Incidents(Events) to the Rise of PEN1

1. Relationship with Aryan Brotherhood
  - Nazi Low Rider's loss is PEN1's gain
  - provides greater criminal opportunities
  - increases status among white supremacist gangs
  - increased gang's clout within prisons
2. Increased presence in prisons
  - good for recruitment

\*\*PEN1 is still on the rise. No decline in gang observed yet.

# Preliminary Findings

## Common Incidents/Events Linked to Group Birth

1. Founded by individual with strong personality
2. Founder/Leader experienced “eye opening” moment that revealed the true order of things prior to founding the group
3. Groups are born out of conflict with others

# Preliminary Findings

## Common Incidents/Events Linked to Group Growth

1. Capable leadership
2. Events/Incidents perceived as action and thus raising status and seriousness of group
3. Funding

# Preliminary Findings

## Common Incidents/Events Linked to Group Decline

1. Organizational Instability
  - contributing factors
    - >lack of leadership
    - >non-cohesive inner core
    - >lack of funds
2. Responses from law enforcement and non-governmental agencies

# Conclusion

In sum:

- \*the rise and fall of white supremacist organizations are linked to various critical events that act to enhance or destroy the organization.

- \*broadly speaking, white supremacist groups experience growth when they are *stable, profitable, active*.

But:

- \*activity may ultimately lead to a response by either governmental or non-governmental agencies which could hurt the financial well-being and the stability of the organization.

- \*once instability is introduced, organization implosion is possible

Policy Implications

- \*preliminary findings may suggest alternative law enforcement policies for controlling or reducing threat posed by white supremacist agencies

# Future Directions

1. Apply theoretical framework
  - a) Resource mobilization theory
  - b) Political process theory
  - c) theories developed from radicalization studies offered in terrorism literature
  
2. Employ data from U.S. Extremist Crime database (Freilich & Chermak) and apply Ehud Sprinzak's theory of Split Delegitimization.
  - \*will allow us to test his theory of radicalization by looking at criminal activity over time