The influence of threat on tactical choices of militant anti-fascist activists

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Abstract

The rationale for social movement tactical choices is rarely discussed in social science literature. This article presents the impact of perceived threat from a countermovement on the rationale of militant anti-fascist activists for their tactical choices. Threat is described as physical, political, and spatial. Physical threat involves the fear of violent attacks by opponents, political threat involves the fear of being politically undermined by the activity of its opponents, and spatial threat refers to fear of losing literal and metaphorical subcultural space to opponents. Militant anti-fascists reported facing physical threats, political threats, and spatial threats from white supremacists who operated in similar subcultures and have frequent contact.

Introduction

White supremacist movements in the United States are often identified as a relatively marginal threat; the average American is unlikely to have an interaction with an individual who is a white supremacist, and even hate crime experts assert that only a small proportion of such crimes are committed by hardcore movement members (Levin 2007). However, despite the lack of public consciousness regarding this movement and its activities, there is a distinct conflict between opposing movements of white supremacists and anti-fascists that occurs outside of the boundaries of mainstream culture and political discourse. This conflict is most evident within subcultures such as Punk and Skinhead where distinct factions organize in support of or opposition to white supremacy (Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009; Sarabia and Shriver 2004; Wood 1999). The conflict between these two movements serves as a unique opportunity to understand the nature of threats perceived by members of opposing movements as well as a means of understanding the rationale behind the choice of engaging in militant tactics as a response to such threats.

Scholars of social movements have developed several explanations for how tactical choices are determined, but these models have largely avoided discussions of the role that threat plays in the deployment of tactics; although the concept of threat is crucial to the understanding of movement-countermovement dynamics. This dynamic has largely been understood in relation to movements mobilizing on opposing sides of an issue of state policy (e.g. abortion, the death penalty, immigration, etc.). However, many contemporary "new social movements" and

"lifestyle movements" are not oriented toward the instrumental goals of policy development or change, but are seeking non-state social transformation through the construction of prefigurative social spaces or subcultures. The construction of "alternative" culture and change through individual transformation in such movements often generates intentionally diffuse and decentralized action, which produces a distinct movement-countermovement dynamic of face-to-face conflict. Such a dynamic produces a unique interplay between opposing movements that makes them especially susceptible to threats that necessitate a direct response.

The choice of anti-fascists to engage in militant tactics may be explained by analyzing the perceived level of threat that white supremacists pose. It is my contention that anti-fascists who prefer confrontational and violent tactics justify their tactical choices as not only strategic, but necessary to maintain what Jasper (1997, 122) refers to as "ontological security" which he defines as "an *autonomy of bodily control* within predictable routines" (Giddens quoted in Jasper 1997, 123, italics in original). These activists generally face a greater threat from white supremacists than their counterparts, who prefer non-confrontational and nonviolent tactics, and the general public as a whole. This threat may come in three distinct forms: 1) physical; 2) political; and 3) spatial. Physical threat is the fear of physical harm or danger at the hands of white supremacists that is often the result of individuals being specifically targeted for violence. Political threat involves a threat to the political activity of anti-fascists as a result of their adherence to an ideology that is directly contradictory to that of white supremacists. Spatial threat manifests itself when white supremacists engage in political activity within a subculture, which is perceived as a threat to the integrity of the subculture by other participants who view the subculture as a "safe space." While these three types of threat are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive and may overlap for militant anti-fascists which may in fact increase the intensity of the threat felt by militants.

Tactics, threats, and movement types

A variety of models have been developed in order to understand social movement tactical choices such as strategy, repertoires, ideology, identity, and culture. Models that emphasize strategy suggest that social movement participants make rational decisions regarding the tactics that they deploy in order to be most effective in achieving a desired goal (Gamson [1975] 1990). Countermovements especially devise tactics strategically because of their focus on opposing and reversing other movements' mobilization and achievements (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Mottl 1980; Peleg 2000; Zald and Useem 1987). This rational model of strategic thinking in relation to tactical choice requires social movements to devise tactics that open new or seize upon existing political opportunities (McAdam 1982; Meyer and Minkoff 2004) which is often achieved by developing access to power through

constructing alliances with political parties and/or economic and social elites (Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Tarrow 1996; 1998). Such models portray tactical choice as a rational decision made in the service of specific movement goals in a policy arena controlled by the state.

Social movement tactics may also be described using a dramaturgical metaphor that focuses on the performative aspects of tactics. In this case, tactics are viewed as part of a distinct "repertoire" of social action that involves the social movement and a number of other key actors (Tilly 2006). Theoretically there is an infinite continuum of repertoires available to use by any social movement actor or group of actors. However, at any point in time the number of available repertoires becomes bound by cultural history and opportunity. The variation in repertoires can ultimately be explained by changes in the political opportunity structure (POS) of a given society. When changes in the POS occur rapidly, repertoires of contention involve a great deal of innovation on the part of both power holders and challengers. As this cycle comes to an end, there is a demobilization and shift in innovations and available repertoires. Implicit in this definition of repertoires is that they are "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests... in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 4). While this definition leaves a space for countermovements, it focuses almost entirely on actions where the state becomes one of the primary actors in social movement activity.

Some analysts see tactical choice as tied to ideological orientation. This focus on the state as the primary locus and target of social movement tactics is often the product of the ideological orientation of the social movement organization under analysis. Kathleen Fitzgerald and Diane Rodgers (2000) demonstrate the differences in tactical choices between traditional, reform-oriented social movement organizations that seek policy action on the part of the state and radical social movement organizations (RSMOs) that emphasize structural changes. Because they do not rely upon the state, RSMOs engage in non-legalistic, direct action to affect change. They are also more likely to innovate their tactical repertoire because RSMOs possess "the freedom of being not constrained by moderate financial supporters" (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000, 584) or a desire to not alienate the state and other potential allies within the system. RSMOs often rely on alternative forms of communication that are both part of their tactical repertoire and the culture of the organization – music, street theater, pamphlets, newsletters, and more recently, the internet as means of communication (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000) – which generates prefigurative practices and subcultures associated with movement participation. In this model, ideological orientation is seen as either constraining or expanding the tactical repertoires of social movement organizations.

Tactical repertoires have also been explained by understanding them in relation to identity. Repertoires are significantly impacted by the collective and individual

identities of movement participants. Identities are constructed as part of an interactional process where of negotiation of "imagined community" by individuals who share a common characteristic, often involving "boundary formation" that designates group membership. This process may be internal (individuals coalesce around an identity), external (individuals with power, structures, or systems may construct identity for groups), or a combination of both (Tilly 2005). Tactical choices often reflect the collective identity of the movement creating limitations and innovations as they are mobilized in social movement activity. Factors such as class, gender, race, and sexual orientation often inform individual and collective tactical choices on strategic and personal grounds (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Smithey 2009; Wood 2007). At the individual level, movement members may identify with a particular tactic or embed the use of the tactic in an individual, "activist" or "tactical" identity (Jasper 1997; Polletta and Jasper 2001, 293). As tactics become part of and reflect individual identity, they may move into the sphere of individual action as part of collective "lifestyle movements" where individual choices are viewed as contributing to larger social change by altering cultural practices and expectations (Haenfler, Johnson, and Jones 2012). Tactical repertoires, therefore, reflect the identity of movement participants and also serve to construct identity.

Repertoires are reflections of and central to culture, just as they are to identity. Cultural expectations serve to establish which tactics are appropriate for any given historical period or society (Tilly 2006). Movements often choose tactics because of their "symbolic capacities to convey shared ideology and values" (Smithey 2009, 664). Similarly, tactics may be employed that challenge culturally appropriate themes and expectations for action in order to spur social change (Jasper 1997; Smithey 2009). "Unconventional" tactics, including the use of confrontation and violence, are included in the repertoires of "countercultural" new social movements which seek systemic change through cultural practice and the construction of "prefigurative spaces" where ideals may be practiced outside of the structures of conventional society (Kreisi, et al. 1995; Polletta 1999). The practice of cultural construction and change typical of new social movements is reflected in the individual actions of "lifestyle movement" participants who often engage in prefigurative activities at the individual level in a belief that such acts are contributing to social change. This belief stems from an understanding that others who share this collective identity are also engaging in such practices out of a similar motivation for cultural, economic, or political change (Haenfler, Johnson and Jones 2012). Movement tactics, like identity, produce and are products of culture.

Despite the attention paid to social movement tactical choices and practices, there has been a limited analysis of the impact of threat, defined as "as a set of actual or potential environmental conditions perceived as jeopardizing, or likely to

jeopardize, groups' 'interests, values, and, at times, survival[1]' (Tarrow 1998: 86, in Reese, Geidraitis and Vega 2005, 289). Jasper (1997, 116) suggests that "anything can be seen as threatening, and any perceived threat can become the target of protest," especially when human activity, rather than nature, is understood as the cause of the threat. Threat is generally seen as a motivating factor for social movement mobilization (Tilly 1978) in response to economic loss, physical danger of fear of death, or political disempowerment (Gould 2002; Reese, Geidraitis and Vega 2005; Tester 2004; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). The relationship between threat and tactical choice was studied by M. Kent Jennings and Ellen Andersen (1996) who found that individuals who were infected with HIV or had experienced the loss of someone close to them as a result of AIDS were more supportive of and more willing to engage in confrontational forms of protest. It is this sense of urgency from direct perceptions of threat that inspires the use of confrontational tactics. This model of the relationship between threat and tactical choice is, however, limited to the fear of physical illness and death.

Social movement studies of threat that have been limited to its mobilizing effects are overly simplistic and account only for the interaction between movements and actors who hold power. Yet, the concept of threat is crucial to the understanding of movement-countermovement dynamics, which have largely been understood in relation to movements mobilizing on opposing sides of an issue of state policy (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Mottl 1980; Peleg 2000). "New social movements," however, generally are not seeking to develop or change policy, but are working toward cultural, political, and social transformation through the development of prefigurative social spaces and/or subcultures (Johnston, Laraña and Gusfeld 1994; Kriesi, et al. 1995; Polletta 1999). These movements generally reject participation in the state and civil society, and desire to develop directly democratic societies through internal movement dynamics and culture (Cohen 1985; Johnston Laraña and Gusfeld 1994; Melucci 1989). Certain elements of new social movements have turned to subculture and counterculture as a means of creating social change, maintaining movement identity, and building movement participation (Kriesi et al. 1995). The emphasis on identity construction and prefigurative practice (Johnston, Laraña and Gusfeld 1994; Polletta 1999) overlaps greatly with lifestyle movement practices (Haenfler, Johnson and Jones 2012) creating a unique tactical repertoire that focuses on subcultural participation as a core movement practice. As this form of social movement activism has developed, subcultures and countercultures become sites of contestation for opposing movements.

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[1] While this definition appears to be similar to the concept of grievance, it differs in regard to the "ontological insecurity" (Jasper 1997) posed by the threat. Threats are understood by those being threatened as effectively endangering or significantly interfering one's ability to engage in everyday activities or expressions of values and beliefs to the degree that their very sense of being is perceived as being under attack.

Unlike the conventional model of opposing movements which positions them on opposite sides of a social issue, opposing movements in the new social movements model engage in contestation over control of culture and prefigurative spaces. This presents a unique set of threats to movement participants that in turn influence movement dynamics. Whereas in the conventional model, opposing movements find themselves competing for the attention of the state and power brokers, the model that I propose places opposing movements in direct contact with one another and in competition for control over prefigurative social space. It is my contention that the unique set of threats – physical, political, and spatial – posed by the white supremacist movement through its participation in prefigurative, lifestyle based social movements generates a distinct set of tactical responses from its anti-fascist opposition. The sense of immediate physical danger stemming from an anti-fascist identity, the ideological threat of neo-Nazism, and the loss of control and security within subcultural spaces necessitates a confrontational and sometimes violent response in order to achieve a sense of security.

White supremacist tactics

Like many social movements, the white supremacist movement engages in public events such as distribution of literature and protest rallies. However, the majority of its activity today takes place within a specific set of youth oriented subcultures, which are used for recruitment and as prefigurative spaces of movement politics. Unlike other social movements, the white supremacist movement is ideologically committed to the use of violence as a movement tactic. Violence is deployed as a means of oppressing individuals targeted for persecution, but also against political opponents. This unique position on the use of violence creates a distinct threat from white supremacists to their political opposition in the anti-fascist movement.

The public face of the white supremacist movement is often its propaganda campaigns, primarily consisting of literature distribution and events such as rallies and concerts held in highly visible locations. White supremacist literature distribution presents much of the ideology of the movement; it is crafted to specifically play on the general public's interests and fears while presenting the white supremacist movement as a legitimate alternative to existing political structures. This is achieved in part by framing the information presented in an intellectual context (Berbrier 1999; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000), or playing on the fears of white Americans by framing the concerns of the movement in populist terms (Berlet and Lyons 2000; Berlet and Vysotsky 2006). The combination of intellectualization and fear mongering gives the propaganda a unique appeal to Americans who may be suffering from economic disempowerment or anomie as a result of changes in the structure of society (Berlet and Lyons; Blazak 2001; Blee 2002; Daniels 1997; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000; Ezekiel 1995; Kimmel and Ferber 2000).

Public events by white supremacists are at their base an example of "demonstrative" social movement behavior (Kriesi, et al. 1995). Rallies in particular are often organized around a specific issue that the white supremacist movement is seeking to make a claim on. The surface level rhetoric of many of these issues reflects the populist concerns of many Americans (Berlet and Lyons 2000) – the deindustrialization of the American economy, the impact of immigration on the cultural, economic, and political landscape of American society, and the death toll in an unpopular war that many believe was started based on fabricated evidence. However, once the surface is scratched, the blame for all of these claims rests solely on Jews and people of color (Berlet and Lyons; Blazak 2001; Daniels 1997; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000; Ezekiel 1995; Ridgeway 1995). The public events serve as not only means of transmitting the message of the movement, but also as a key element in movement membership; attendance at a rally publicly demonstrates one's commitment to the movement and serves as a bonding experience for those who participate (Ezekiel 1995; Ridgeway 1995). Finally, rallies serve as a means of recruitment because individuals who feel economically, politically, or socially marginalized may be inspired by such displays to become involved in movement activity.

The most significant development in white supremacist culture in recent decades has been the linking of the movement to segments of various youth cultures and the expression of white racist ideology in the lyrical content of musical acts within those subcultures (Berlet and Vysotsky 2004; Burghart 1999; Corte and Edwards 2008; Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk 2006). Since the late 1970s, the subcultures that accompanied certain styles of music have become the primary tools of white supremacist organizing. Although there was some resistance to this type of organizing in its early days (Berbrier 1999; Perry 2000), most white supremacists have generally come to accept and even exalt youth subculture as an integral part of the movement. Subcultures in particular have served as prefigurative spaces where white supremacists can indoctrinate new members, reinforce existing membership commitments, and model a future all white society (Blazak 2001; Futrell and Simi 2004).

The white supremacist movement has become active in three distinct youth subcultures that are represented by distinct musical genres: Punk/Skinhead, Black Metal, and Gothic/Industrial/Noise/ Apocalyptic Folk (Berlet and Vysotsky 2004; Burghart 1999). These are specifically targeted as sites for white supremacist recruitment because participants are seen as more open to movement ideology and messaging as a result of their estrangement from conventional society. White supremacists often find recruits among younger participants or individuals who are new to the subculture and open to supremacist messages about the way in which subcultural values and beliefs are consistent with neo-Nazi ideology (Blazak 2001). As supremacists become engaged in subcultural activity, they work to dominate a local "scene" through violence as part of a strategy of creating an idealized space

that reflects their racist ideology (Blazak 2001; Futrell and Simi 2004). White supremacists, however, do not hold monopoly control over these subcultures; therefore, it is incorrect to associate a particular subculture with the white supremacist movement (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Corte and Edwards 2008). Furthermore, because these subcultures are not specifically oriented toward the overt racism and neo-Nazism of contemporary white supremacists, there is a great deal of contention over supremacist participation in them.

The white supremacist movement, like other reactionary social movements on the right, has an ideological commitment to genocide (Berlet 1992; Garner 1996; Lyons 1995; Passmore 2005). Despite attempts to frame the movement as mainstream and nonviolent (Berbrier 1998a; Berbrier 1998b; Berbrier 1999; Perry 2000), there are still numerous members who openly advocate and occasionally commit acts of violence (Ezekiel 1995; Hamm 1993; Levin 2007; Levin and McDevitt 2002). It is hard to gauge the number of acts of hate violence perpetrated by white supremacists because the vast majority of hate crimes are thrill crimes committed by individuals who are not members of any organized group for "fun" or "bragging rights" among friends. Levin and McDevitt (2002) indicate that only a small proportion of all hate violence may be attributed to individuals who are on a mission and therefore likely to be involved with (or *consider* themselves involved with) a white supremacist group.

However, when white supremacists do commit acts of hate violence, they are likely to be more brutal and deadly than bias crimes perpetrated by "dabblers," individuals who are not ideologically committed to genocidal violence. This is largely because white supremacist hate crimes are designed to either send a terrorist message to the community being victimized or to eliminate as many members of the targeted group as possible (Levin 2007; Levin and McDevitt 2002). Even though white supremacists are fundamentally oriented toward engaging in hate violence, the majority of their violent activity is focused on other white males (Bowen 2009; Simi, Smith and Reeser 2008). A portion of this violence is against fellow supremacists in an attempt to maintain discipline and ideological commitment, however the vast majority is deployed against fellow subculturalists in conflict over control of space and subcultural domination (Blazak 2001; Simi, Smith and Reeser 2008). While this may seem counterintuitive given the ideological imperative toward eliminationist violence, research indicates that white supremacists generally avoid conflict outside of the "safe space" of subculture and movement spaces (Futrell and Simi 2004; Simi and Futrell 2009). This focus on conflict with others in mostly white subcultures is also consistent with the movement's ideology, which prioritizes violence and conflict as a means of taking and maintaining power. Violence, therefore, is used against not only targets of racial, religious, and sexual persecution, but also against ideological opponents and internal dissenters (Berlet 1992; Garner 1996; Lyons 1995; Passmore 2005).

The white supremacist movement clearly prioritizes subcultural activity as the key

form of movement activity and organizing. This shift to cultural and prefigurative activism is consistent with other contemporary movements broadly characterized as new social movements (Vysotsky and Dentice 2008). Unlike other social movements which often build subcultures and countercultures that are consistent with their ideology and movement goals, the white supremacist movement seeks to recruit and build within youth cultures that appear to be receptive as a result of their expressions of angst and alienation (Blazak 2001; Futrell and Simi 2004; Hamm 1993). A significant part of this subcultural recruitment and control process involves the use of violence against other members of the subculture who do not fit supremacist prefigurative visions or resist their participation (Blazak 2001; Hamm 1993). This use of violence creates a unique threat to which individuals targeted by supremacists must respond. This article explains the variety of threats supremacists pose in such contexts and the relationship between these threats and the militant response of the anti-fascist opposition.

Methodology

This study presents results of a 7-year ethnographic study of militant anti-fascist organizations. The research was conducted in two phases in 2001-2005 in an Eastern U.S. city and 2007-2010 in a Western U.S. city. As a participant observer I attended confrontational and non-confrontational protests against white supremacist groups, one regional and two national gatherings of militant anti-fascists, as well as numerous social events[2].

In addition to observation, formal interviews were conducted with 14 individuals in key organizing positions within the anti-fascist movement. Because of the difficulties in estimating the population of anti-fascist activists, a probability sample was unattainable. In order to obtain a national sample of participants, the formal interviews were conducted in one Eastern city, one Mid-Western city, and two Western cities. The formal interview process began with the participant answering a series of survey questions that was followed by a semi-structured interview. In addition to the formal interviews, informal interviews were conducted as part of the participant observation process with 30 additional individuals involved in militant opposition to white supremacists. Interviews were conducted with anti-fascist activists who reside in all regions of the United States. A pseudonym was also randomly assigned to each participant for purposes of quotation.

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[2] The social events included, but were not limited to, Punk, Oi!, and Hardcore shows; DJ nights; film screenings; house parties; and informal gatherings in bars, homes, and other social spaces.

The militant anti-fascist movement

The North American anti-fascist movement was in many ways modeled after its European counterpart that developed out of historical and cultural struggles between left- and right-wing working class and activist youth. The contemporary version of these movements developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s in England, France, and Germany in response to increased activity by extreme nationalist and fascist parties who sought to bring in recruits by aligning themselves with developing youth subcultures (Goodyer 2003; Katsiaficas 2006; 2012; Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009). These anti-fascist movements were often associated with the Autonomist movement, which positioned itself as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, feminist, and anti-statist. Such a movement found itself in direct political opposition to the growing neo-fascist movements in Europe. Because it stressed direct action rather than state based reform, the Autonomist movement often inspired confrontational political actions. In the case of anti-fascism, Autonomists directly confronted demonstrations by right-wing parties and racist violence against immigrants with acts of violence; often putting them in direct conflict with police as well. Their anti-state stance placed the police as allies of fascism and racism in such confrontations (Katsiaficas 2006; 2012). The politics and tactics of European anti-fascism were translated into the North American context through punk and skinhead subcultures via the circulation of fanzines and music. North American anti-fascists often model themselves after their European counterparts and borrow heavily from their innovative cultural aesthetics and practices.

Consistent with the countermovement model, the militant anti-fascist movement is in many ways a direct parallel of the white supremacist movement. The anti-fascists interviewed and observed in this study were overwhelmingly white young adults involved in subcultural activity with a left-wing political orientation. All of the formal interview participants identified themselves racially as white. Additionally, observations of the movement membership at gatherings and events indicated that the majority of individuals presented as white. This, along with the age of the participants, may be the result of their subcultural participation. The anti-fascist movement has extremely strong roots in Punk and Skinhead subcultures (Goodyer 2003; Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009; Wood 1999) which, despite their claims to antiracism, are identified with whiteness (Ramirez-Sanchez 2008; Traber 2001).

Additionally, there is a variant on white antiracism that stresses direct opposition of populist white supremacy (O'Brien 1999a; 1999b; 2001). A radical version of white antiracism associated with the "race traitor" movement argues that whites must take an active role in dismantling their power and privilege (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996; Segrest 1994). Many anti-fascists see their oppositional activism as a version of this political position; they are engaging in a struggle with white supremacists as a means of showing solidarity with people of color, LGBTQ people,

Jewish people and others targeted by white supremacists. The struggle against white supremacy is understood as part of the process of rejecting the privileges of a dominant social position. By taking on this struggle, anti-fascists are demonstrating a rejection of the ideology of white supremacy and on some level their complicity in its most populist manifestations. It is therefore unsurprising that the subjects of this study are exclusively white. Militant anti-fascists are also defined by their radical political orientation. The participants in formal interviews all identified as anarchists though the movement maintains a non-sectarian position on opposing white supremacists. This political position serves as an ideal foil to the neo-Nazi ideology of the contemporary white supremacist movement. As white radicals participating in similar subcultures anti-fascists are placed in a unique position in relation to white supremacists.

Militant anti-fascist tactics

The tactics of the militant anti-fascist movement closely follow the countermovement tactics described by Zald and Useem (1990) described above primarily using the tactics Kriesi et al. (1995) characterize as confrontational and violent actions. It is this willingness to engage in direct confrontation and violence that defines this movement as militant as opposed to other movements that choose to oppose white supremacists through non-confrontational demonstrative actions and juridical cooperation with the state (Rabrenovic 2007). The individuals who participated in formal interviews were surveyed in order to gauge their preferences for specific tactics in response to white supremacist tactics and organizing strategies. The initial measure of militancy consisted of a nine item list of potential responses to a white supremacist event[3]. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of each potential response on a five point scale, with one rated as least effective and five rated as most effective. The final index consisted of the coded

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[3] The items on the questionnaire were listed as follows:
  a. Holding a rally at a different location and/or at a different time
  b. Holding a peaceful counter-rally at the site of the event
  c. Using non-violent tactics (sit-in, blockade, other civil disobedience) to prevent the event from occurring
  d. Using violence against attendees of the event in order to disrupt the event or to prevent the event from occurring
  e. Causing damage or destruction to the location of the event
  f. Verbally confronting potential participants
  g. Using signs, banners, etc. to demonstrate your opposition to the event and its participants
  h. Distributing literature (flyers, anti-fascist newspapers or magazines, etc.) to the community in which the event is held
  i. Distributing literature (flyers, anti-fascist newspapers or magazines, etc.) to the participants of the event

responses to items A through F, generating scores ranging from nineteen to twenty-five with a mean score of twenty-one indicating a high preference for confrontational and violent tactics. In formal and informal interviews militant anti-fascists consistently asserted that confrontation and violence are effective methods for pre-empting and dissuading mobilization as well as damage and destruction of the white supremacist movement.

Studying threat

In previous works, threat has been understood as fear of physical harm (Jennings and Andersen 1996; Gould 2002; Tester 2004), fear of a loss of political rights or power (Van Dyke and Soule 2002), and fear of a loss of economic power (Van Dyke and Soule 2002; Reese, Geidraitis, and Vega 2005). For the purpose of this study, I define threat as a fear of physical harm or a loss of control over economic activity, political rights, or social spaces and activities as a result of white supremacist activity. This sense of fear may be felt indirectly or directly. An indirect threat is either not focused on an individual participant or cannot be carried out directly. The individual experiencing the threat feels a general sense of fear regarding white supremacist activity, but also perceives that she/he has a low likelihood of actually experiencing any sort of intimidation or violence at the hands of supremacists. A direct threat is one that is made specifically against the participant with some sense by the recipient that it may be carried out. This threat is felt more intensely and results in greater emotional trauma to the individual.

In order to understand the threat experienced by militant anti-fascists participants were asked a series of simple, direct questions and gleaned indirectly as part of a question about the participant's history of anti-fascist activism. The participant was simply asked if she/he had ever felt threatened by white supremacists. If the participant answered no, then a follow-up question inquired as to why. In the event of an affirmative answer, the participant was asked a series of follow-up questions designed to illuminate the nature of the threat and the effect that threat had on the participant. In addition, some participants discussed receiving threats from and/or being victims of incidents of violence committed by white supremacists as part of their biography of anti-fascist activism.

Threat and the motivation for action

Given that white supremacists possess an ideological motivation to violently eliminate their opposition (Berlet 1992; Berlet and Lyons 2000; Garner 1996; Lyons 1995; Passmore 2002), it is not surprising that the anti-fascists in this study consistently reported that they had somehow felt threatened by white supremacists. An overwhelming majority of the respondents in the sample of formal interviews answered that they felt threatened by white supremacists. Two

of the anti-fascists who indicated that they felt threatened had not been directly
threatened by white supremacists, but both indicated that they were indirectly
threatened verbally. Of the remaining participants who received direct threats,
only one received verbal threats exclusively. It was not uncommon for anti-fascists
to be the victims of violence at the hands of white supremacists, and of those who
experienced violence four had received verbal or written threats that preceded that
violence. As Darby, an anti-racist Skinhead, pointed out, "I've been beaten by
them, too, so they've followed through on those threats."

Militant anti-fascists were much more likely to be traumatized by the threats and
violence that they experienced at the hands of white supremacists. Helena, an
anarchist Punk and anti-fascist organizer, described her reaction to an extremely
violent attack by white supremacists as experiencing post-traumatic stress
disorder. Kam, an anarchist Punk, described his reaction to direct threats as
follows:

> It feels [expletive] cause... if you're threatened, some of the times you can't do
> [anything] because usually they'll only threaten you if they feel like they can, if they
> outnumber you or if they're physically larger than you... and if they're physically
> larger than you, you're feeling threatened by them, you start getting a bunch of
> adrenaline and you start being scared because you could get hurt, you could get hurt
> bad because they could stomp you, possibly even kill you so it's scary.

However, all of the respondents felt that such threats also inspired action. Lydia, a
queer anarchist organizer, points out that "[they] just make me feel like we need to
get organized." Despite her extremely traumatic experience, Helena was motivated
to continue with her militant anti-fascist activism:

> I think that all sorts of people live in terror all the time all over the world and here in
> the United States – I think about black people being lynched or something, I think I
> can take this on.... I think that's what really makes you an ally is when you say like,
> "no, I'm joining this team." I guess getting your ass kicked by a bunch of white
> supremacists is when you're on that team. It's like we talk a lot about no race and
> trying to get rid of your whiteness and blah, blah, blah, I guess that's to me that's
> what really did it. It's like, it is really renouncing it in that way... it's just too core to
> who I am to wanna be fighting injustice.

The intense threat felt by anti-fascists is a strong motivating factor for becoming
organized against white supremacists activity. Whether it is to maintain their own
"ontological security," a means of acting on their ideological position regarding race
and racism, or as a means of organizing a broader movement, militants believe it

essential to work to stop white supremacist organizing through a variety of tactics in order to protect themselves from white supremacists.

The militant anti-fascists clearly faced strong, immediate, and direct threats from white supremacists. In their discussions of the nature of the threat that they face, militants not only indicate the interplay of different threats, but also point to the importance of taking an uncompromising stand against white supremacist groups as a matter of necessity.

Physical threat

The intensity of the threat faced by most militant anti-fascists is manifested in direct threats to their physical well-being. With the vast majority of militants having experienced some form of violence at the hands of white supremacists, their sense of personal physical security is violated. The anti-fascists in this sample were extremely cognizant of the physical threat that they faced from white supremacists. In part this is the result of them being directly targeted as members of specific categories designated by white supremacists as enemies.

As white anti-fascists all of the participants face a threat of violence as "race traitors" in the eyes of white supremacists because of their rejection of beliefs in racial domination and white superiority. Eowyn, an anarchist Punk and activist, contextualized her sense of physical threat in relation to her Jewish partner and activist friends. When asked, "do you feel threatened by white supremacists?" she responded with the following statement:

> Yes. Maybe not so much for myself by myself, but my partner is Jewish and we are both active in anti-racist politics and ultra-left or anarchist organizing, and we live with each other and near other activists. I do not think this is the same threat that a person of color feels every day of their life and I am not trying to make that comparison for myself, but yes, I do feel that they would do me or my partner or my friends or my neighbors harm.

She is cognizant of the fact that her relationship with a Jewish partner makes her the target of white supremacist derision and potential violence (Daniels 1997; Ferber 2000) and adds that her own activist work places her at risk for white supremacist retaliation. Damon, a long-time leftist and anarchist organizer, explains the severity of the threat that militants face with two anecdotes in response to the same question regarding his experiences with threat:

> when the head of the <state> KKK had his hands around my throat trying to strangle me at that point, yes, I felt threatened.... When the police report on the small group

of <city> boneheads[4] who were pulled over by the cops was turned over to us... they listed what they found in the car. So here's 4 young boneheads and they had 6 guns: 1 revolver, 3 semi-automatics, 1 shotgun, 1 rifle, I think it was Winchester 30 caliber, but I can't remember exactly, 3 baseball bats, a crow bar, every one of them had at least one knife maybe a couple of them had 2 knives and they were looking for us. They weren't looking for unnamed individuals. They named who they were looking for because a lot of the boneheads weren't very smart.... But yeah, they've said they're going to kill me in particular and people that I hang out with a number of times and they've made those attempts in great seriousness so I think I have to at least respect their intentions.

Helena indicated that when she faced a potentially deadly attack from white supremacist Skinheads they had specifically targeted her friend for being a former white supremacist turned anti-racist, "my friend was a former Nazi in England who had turned Redskin[5] so they were, you know, they wanted to murder him, basically. So, they knew who we were at the time." Helena's friend was viewed as particularly traitorous by the white supremacists for leaving the movement and siding with its anti-fascist opposition and his associates were similarly vilified. As known "race traitors," militant anti-fascists face an extremely direct threat of violence from white supremacists.

The anti-fascists in this sample were often directly targeted by white supremacists as a result of the physical threat that is often derived from their status in the eyes of white supremacists. The intensity of the threat faced by anti-fascists makes the potential for violence an everyday reality for participants in this study. As activists who engage in radical responses to white supremacist organizing, anti-fascists often cannot turn to the police who often view them as a rival gang to white supremacist skinheads (Griffith 2010). Many anti-fascists view police as ineffective (often arriving after the fact when violence does occur) at best or sympathetic to the white supremacists at worst. Additionally, the militants' belief in the necessity to take "direct action" against white supremacists often stimulates the willingness to use more confrontational tactics. For militant anti-fascists, the use of

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4 This is a common term of derision used by anti-fascists against white supremacist skinheads. Because the skinhead subculture has its origins in the culture of Jamaican immigrants to England in the late 1960s and was multi-racial, traditional skinheads consider themselves non-racist or actively anti-racist (Wood 1999). The term is therefore used to delineate true, anti-racist skinheads from individuals who may look the part but do not properly represent the subculture.

5 This term, shorthand for Red Skinhead, applies to skinheads who openly identify with leftist politics, specifically socialism, communism, and anarchism. The Redskin moniker is designed to distinguish leftist, anti-racist skinheads from other anti-racist skinheads who may adhere to politically conservative beliefs (especially nationalism) or identify themselves as non-political on issues other than racism. It is not meant to imply any derision of Native Americans or support for the Football team from Washington, DC.

confrontational and violent tactics becomes a necessity for maintaining their own personal safety and ensuring the safety of others in their community. This becomes clear in Damon's response to the violent attack that he faced from a Klan leader discussed above, "After I knocked him down and attempted to break his nose, no, I did not feel threatened." From a strategic standpoint, anti-fascist militancy ensures that the white supremacist threat is neutralized. When Damon managed to turn the tide against his aggressor, he also gave himself a sense of protection and empowerment.

The efficacy of violence on the part of militant anti-fascists becomes evident in the context of sustained threats to the personal safety of militants. If the consistent acts of damage or disruption to the white supremacist movement have the effect of limiting its activity, then white supremacists are unable to engage in acts of violence against individuals that they would normally target. This ultimately serves the immediate goal of maintaining the physical safety and security of militant activists and others who may be targeted by white supremacists for violence.

Political threat

The physical threat posed by white supremacists occurs within the context of a larger political struggle. Despite the characterizations of white supremacists as violent thugs by the media and criminal justice professionals, they are a highly organized social movement. As such, they have a clearly defined ideology and a set of specific social and political goals that they wish to achieve and a series of strategies for how to achieve them. Consistent with Meyer and Staggenborg's (1996) and Peleg's (2000) concept of opposing movement activities, the dynamic between white supremacists and anti-fascists is largely defined by the political ideology and activity of white supremacists and their opposition. The threat of white supremacists is therefore much greater than the simple physical security at the heart of the struggle between movements; it is a threat born of a struggle by movements on two clearly different ideological sides who view each other as direct political opponents. Anti-fascists recognize this political threat posed by white supremacists, but also see them as a distinct threat to their more transformative, revolutionary agenda. For militants, white supremacists pose a direct political threat because they present a reactionary critique of the existing system that may appeal to a similar political base and are willing to use violence to maintain their political domination of the public sphere.

While anti-fascists understand the potential of white supremacists to undermine liberal values of freedom and legal equality, they attribute a much greater level of political threat to the white supremacist movement because they view it as direct political opposition and recruiting within the same political base (Hamerquist 2002). The white supremacist movement also has a long history of suppressing the political activity of the radical left, and militant anti-fascists clearly understand that

white supremacists have specifically targeted them for violence rather than petty harassment because of their radical political affiliations.

The political threat that white supremacists pose to anti-fascists lies in their ability to appeal to and recruit from a similar political base. Darby points out that white supremacist ideals "are typically some form of cultural trapping that… are a window dressing for routing people away from really addressing more fundamental, structural grievances that are typically oriented around economy, community, culture, and over who has a right to determine power relationships and dynamics within those spheres of existence." In an influential text for the militant anti-fascist movement, Don Hamerquist (2002) and J. Sakai (2002) both point out the dilemma that white supremacist movements in contemporary American society pose for anti-fascists – as the white supremacist movement adapts to contemporary concerns, it moves into a political territory that has long been the preserve of the left: globalization and capitalism. The critiques that the movement proposes under a variety of ideological banners address issues that are of primary concern to many working people in the United States. The white supremacists, therefore, become a strong political competitor for supporters of radical social change with the anarchists that make up much of the militant movement. Helena's experience in becoming involved in militant anti-racism reflects this "battle of ideas" in her working class community:

> In the town where I grew up there was definitely a pretty big Nazi population in the city across the river. It was very like 'the other side of the tracks,' you know, and it was basically because of the loss of blue collar jobs like a bunch of industry had moved out so there's all these white men who were angry because they couldn't get the same kinds of jobs that their dad did and the property value there declined and also black people started moving there because it was cheaper to buy a house there and so they equated that and it was like really ripe for recruiters and there would be these creepy, middle-aged men that would come in and start hanging out with the teenagers. It was very much like the stereotype. So there was kind of a lot of them. There was a real fascist presence there and so they were intermingled.… And for me, always I felt like there was this real ideological war, like it was all these working class people were being recruited into fascism and those were the same people that could be potential revolutionaries and just got totally derailed into this asinine world view. So I felt like it was this ideological war, like they were taking all of our potential anarchist army and turning it into boneheads.

This experience was also reflected in the experiences of other anti-fascists. Most had come to anti-fascism as part of their work in other political organizations and found that they had to address the political activity of white supremacists as part of

that action[6]. Militant anti-fascists recognize the political threat that white supremacists pose to their own organizing efforts. As the quote from Helena suggests and scholarly research verifies, white supremacists specifically target communities that are experiencing economic hardship for recruitment[7]. Since the white supremacist movement engages in direct, often physical conflict with its political opponents, the recruits in these communities then become foot soldiers in a political struggle with the left.

Militancy becomes a practical stand against an opposing movement that has an ideological imperative to use violence against it. For anti-fascists, the use of confrontational tactics is an important political tool because it demonstrates to a movement that highly values violence that its opponents will not simply acquiesce to their demands, but will resist. If white supremacists rely on intimidation to achieve their goals, the confrontational and violent actions of anti-fascists serve to undermine the effectiveness of these threats. When faced with the political threat of white supremacist organizing, militants take the stand that they have acted to respond directly to that threat rather than insulating themselves against it.

Spatial threats

Political activity occurs within specific physical spaces (Martin and Miller 2003; Tilly 2000). The threat that white supremacists pose to anti-fascists is bound to the physical spaces each movement operates within; space becomes fundamental to the perception of threat that white supremacists can pose to an individual. This is true not only in terms of physical proximity, but in terms of the everyday activities and use of space by members of the differing opposing movements. For militant anti-fascists the threat of white supremacist violence was described as being much "closer to home." Militants were much more likely to be involved in subcultures where white supremacists were active in recruitment and "prefigurative" political activity (Blazak 2001; Futrell and Simi 2004). They are therefore more likely to have day-to-day experiences that bring them into contact with white supremacists and vice-versa. White supremacists also pose a much greater threat to a more immediate sense of space for militants as their activities alter the fundamental

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[6] The activists in this study were members of formal anti-fascist organizations and networks, often with several years (and in one case, decades) of activist experience. The organizations that they formed largely stemmed from existing political, rather than subcultural networks. For example, in Eastern City, the anti-fascist group was started as an off-shoot of an existing anarchist organization. However, there is significant overlap between the anti-fascist movement and subcultural participation. In many cases, anti-fascist activism has its origins in subcultural participation, but requires a level of politicization on the part of participants to recognize the threat posed by white supremacists (Goodyer 2002; Meynard 1990; Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009; Snyders; 2008).

[7] See for example: Blazak (2001), Daniels (1997), Ezekiel (1995), and Ferber (2000).

meaning of subculture for its participants.

Militant anti-fascists possess no delusions about the threat that white supremacist pose to them as the result of a much greater amount of contact, which occurs as a result of subcultural activity on the part of both groups. Because much of the activity of contemporary white supremacists occurs within the context of youth-oriented subcultures which they view as prefigurative spaces for social movement activity (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Blazak 2001; Futrell and Simi 2004), they are much more likely to face opposition from members of the subculture who do not share their political orientation. This is particularly true in the context of the Punk and Skinhead subcultures (Goodyer 2001; Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009; Sarabia and Shriver 2004; Wood 1999). By playing off of existing themes and aesthetics, white supremacists have managed to develop a foothold within these subcultures (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Blazak 2001; Hamm 1993; O'Hara 2001; Wood 1999). However, these attempts at recruitment have been met with strong resistance from within the subcultures themselves (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Goodyer 2001; Moore and Roberts 2009; O'Hara 2001; Roberts and Moore 2009; Sarabia and Shriver 2004). Punks and Skinheads have been at the forefront of developing a strong opposition to white supremacists because they pose an immediate threat to the subculture broadly and to the physical safety of its members. The physical spaces that are crucial for subcultural activity — bars and other music venues, music stores, and other locations where Punks and Skinheads "hang out"— become the literal battlegrounds for a conflict over the ideological orientation of the subculture.

Militant anti-fascists are often at the forefront of this conflict because they have taken the strongest stances in response to white supremacist organizing efforts within their communities. As activists within the subculture, they are actively targeted by white supremacists for their involvement not only in anti-fascist activity, as in the case of Helena discussed above, but also for their subcultural activities as organizers of events. Darby, an anti-racist skinhead, described the context of threats and violence direct toward him, "I've hosted or been a part of events that have been threatened." Anti-fascists' participation in subcultural activities places them in spaces that facilitate direct, physical contact between them and white supremacists. Unlike the average American, militants are not sheltered from the everyday activities of white supremacists. Helena explains how the context of violence within her local Punk scene led to her involvement in militant anti-fascist activism:

> [The white supremacists] would come to Punk shows and no one would really know what to do and we sort of figured it out as we went along. We started out just kind of, no one had a really great idea of what to do what to do, but they were extremely violent, they would cause fights, they would start fights with Punks all the time or would prey upon us and beat us up while we're walking home and stuff and so we got

> kind of militant and had to be organized, and that's kind of how I got involved with
> it. And then it slowly got more sophisticated I guess [unintelligible], "there are other
> people that do this too" and there's more sophisticated things we can do than just be
> like "get out of here" and beat them up.

The consistent interaction with white supremacists in subcultural spaces made
Helena and her fellow activists within the subculture legitimate targets for the
violence that she faced. Eowyn also noted that white supremacists target known
anti-fascists when she listed an attack on a local anti-racist Skinhead bar as one of
her reasons for becoming involved in militant anti-fascist activity. It is clear from
these responses that anti-fascists have a greater likelihood of being in the same
physical space as white supremacists because of their interest in similar
subcultures.

In addition to the increased likelihood of violence because of confrontation within
specific spaces, anti-fascists also recognize the danger that white supremacists pose
to the subculture itself. White supremacist activity within the Punk and Skinhead
subcultures creates a situation where subcultural space becomes the focal point of
contention. The spaces within which subcultural activity takes place become
marked as "safe spaces" for anti-fascists or the "prefigurative spaces" of white
supremacist activity. Brock makes such a distinction when discussing the context
of his response to white supremacists hanging out at a local music store:

> it's usually apparent, depending on the situation, it depends on whether the place
> that he's hanging out is particularly sympathetic towards anti-fascism or whether
> they tend to be a little more sketchy, if it's like a Doc store run by like fence-walker
> Skinheads, I'm not gonna be that brash to like, you know, but if it's like the kind of
> place that I'll hang out in comfortably and everything, I would probably just confront
> him, get him to basically admit what he is or at least refuse to admit that he isn't
> `cause usually a lot of times kids won't come out and say it, but at that point is
> basically tell them that they're not welcome and everything. You know, it becomes a
> thing where if they want to hang out there, they're basically gonna have to fight for it
> and at that point it's just not usually worth it to them so they'll move on.

Like many anti-fascists, Brock recognizes that there are subcultural spaces that are
identified as being friendly or receptive to white supremacists and is unlikely to
individually challenge them. However, he is willing to confront white supremacists
over control of neutral spaces or spaces identified as anti-fascist. Spaces that are
identified as white supremacist are also legitimate targets for militant activity
because they serve as a base from which the movement may safely operate (Futrell
and Simi 2004). Therefore, anti-fascists will often also target these for collective
confrontational activity because they pose a distinct threat.

The threat of a loss of space moves beyond basic resource mobilization concerns over having a "base of operations" from which the social movement can operate or the symbolic meaning that the space may provide for a movement (Tilly 2000). For many subcultural participants, the loss of space to white supremacists also provides a distinct physical threat. Marika pointed out that white supremacist activity increased the level of violence within her local Punk scene. This is consistent with Blazak's (2001) observation that white supremacists use violence within subcultures as a means of recruitment and of establishing dominance. Helena confirms this in the quote above— as white supremacists become involved within the Punk and Skinhead scene, the level of overall violence increases. The ideological imperative toward violent action coupled with a subcultural norm of violence (Hamm 1993) transforms Punk and Skinhead spaces into places that are dangerous for all but a small percentage of racist thugs who may ultimately control them. Anti-fascists have little recourse but to turn to violence as a means of self-defense against white supremacists and of wresting control of these spaces away from them.

The use of confrontational and violent tactics by militant anti-fascists becomes a "necessary evil" in defending a subcultural space against white supremacist incursion. White supremacists have often focused on Punk and Skinhead subcultures as distinct places where they may successfully recruit potential members. The spaces wherein subcultural activity occurs become contested by opposing movements in the struggle against white supremacy. White supremacists often engage in violence as a means of establishing dominance within these spaces which leaves their opponents little recourse but to fight back or leave the subculture altogether. Those who choose to confront the supremacists often become involved in militant anti-fascism as a result of their subcultural activity. As members of the subculture, they face a much greater likelihood of contact with white supremacists who, to paraphrase Darby from earlier in this article, have not only made threats, but carried them out. The importance of the subculture as a "free space" (Polletta 1999) for both white supremacists and anti-fascists makes it an important locus for contention between the two movements.

Threat and tactical choice

The confrontational and violent tactics employed by militant anti-fascists serve as a strategic response to the threats described in this article. These threats occur at both the individual (physical) and collective (political and spatial) level in that the interviewees explain both a threat to themselves and their political and subcultural activities. This is not to imply that the threats are purely the product of collective narratives produced by anti-fascists as justification for their own use of confrontational and violent tactics. The threats described above reflect genuine interactions between activists and white supremacists consistent with supremacist

goals and strategies of recruitment in subcultures through violent intimidation. Once militancy is initiated it may take on a life of its own; however, it originates in white supremacist activity.

The threat experienced by militant anti-fascists can be understood as the product of the interactional dynamic between them and white supremacists. Conflicts with white supremacists generate and reinforce "interactive political identities" (Tilly 2005: 60) at the individual and collective level. The physical threat experienced by militant anti-fascists is based largely on an interactive dynamic between them and white supremacists. As white activists who organize against supremacists, anti-fascists are identified as "race traitors" because of their refusal to adopt racist beliefs and ideals. The anti-fascist identity is therefore constructed in this dynamic as an anti-racist one in direct opposition to white supremacists (Ignatiev and Garver 1996; O'Brien 1999a; 1999b; 2001). Whites who oppose supremacists are automatically branded with the race traitor identity and made legitimate targets for violence (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009). The threat of violence against such individuals further activates the anti-fascist identity as a response to the physical threat posed by white supremacists.

A collective sense of threat is similarly produced in the cases of political and spatial threat. In the case of the activists interviewed for this study, the anti-fascist identity is the product of interplay between the collective political identity of anarchist and the individual anti-racist identity discussed above. Identities are considered political when "they involve relations to government" (Tilly 2005, 62); which may seem ironic for anarchists, but their opposition to the state is such a relation, nonetheless. Both anti-fascists and white supremacists claim an oppositional identity in relation to the existing state, anarchist and fascist respectively. As stated previously, these political ideologies and the identities that are associated with them propose starkly oppositional visions of social order following the overthrow of the state. However, both sides are vying for a similar constituency and attempt to align their political identity with elements of the working class and the disenfranchised. This places the two groups in direct political opposition to one another and generates a political conflict that manifests in physical confrontation.

This collective identity is further enhanced by the subcultural identities of the activists. White supremacists have been active in youth subcultures since the late 1970s, engaging in active recruitment and collective domination of subcultural spaces (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009; Burghart 1999; Corte and Edwards 2008; Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk 2006; Hamm 1993; Roberts and Moore 2009). This process generates a conflict between white supremacists and anti-fascists over the definition of "true" subcultural identity. White supremacists make claims on Punk and Skinhead identity on the basis of representing genuine rebelliousness and working-class status (Berlet and Vysotsky 2006; Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009; Burghart 1999; Hamm 1993), linking political and subcultural

identities. This presents a threat to anti-fascists who view subcultural identity as being linked to a left-wing political orientation[8]. Therefore, the presence of white supremacists in such subcultures represents not only a threat to the physical safety of participants (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009), but to the very core of subcultural identity.

The link between identity and threat described above, however, should not imply that the threat faced by anti-fascists is the product of a narrative regarding collective identity. This is evident in the chronology of anti-fascist militancy in relation to white supremacist activity. In true countermovement form, the militant response of anti-fascists follows violent incidents by white supremacists (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Mottl 1980; Peleg 2000; Zald and Useem 1990). Interviewees consistently stated that their anti-fascist activism followed increased incidents of supremacist activity and violence. These statements are validated by ethnographic observation in this study.

In the Eastern city, anti-fascist activity was initiated after white supremacist activists began organizing among punks and skinheads at a local hangout, which led to a vandalism attack on a local leftist bookstore. The anti-fascists were further reinvigorated when racist skinheads attacked a punk house late one night after a party, injuring several people and sending at least one to the hospital with serious injuries. In the Western city, anti-fascists organized after a resurgent racist skinhead organization announced plans to hold a large white supremacist gathering. In the days preceding the gathering, three supremacists attacked an African-American man, which for anti-fascists signaled a return of the racist violence the city experienced in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. The perception of threat by participants is further legitimized by scholarly data that indicates that supremacist violence often targets anti-racists and subcultural peers (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009). It is therefore reasonable to believe that the interviewees' narratives of the chronology of white supremacist threat and anti-fascist response are not the product of a collective identity narrative, but reflect a genuine countermovement dynamic.

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[8] The political orientation of punk subculture is a point of some contention with some claiming that it has a more generalized anti-authoritarian tendency or what Hamm (1993, 28) describes as "the ideology of fuckyouism" which was highly influential on the nihilistic violence of early racist skinheads as well as non-racist punks. However, Craig O'Hara (2001) outlines a series of distinctly left-wing ideological influences on punk including anarchism, feminism, and environmentalism. Also, punk's subcultural longevity is due in large part to the do-it-yourself practices that are the result of anarchist ideological influence (Clark 2001; Culton and Holtzman 2010; Donaghey 2013). Finally, the anti-fascist tendency punk is largely rooted in the activism of Rock Against Racism, a project of the English Socialist Workers Party (Goodyer 2001; Moore and Roberts 2009; Roberts and Moore 2009). While punk subculture may not be defined by a distinct ideological position, it is safe to assert that there is a strong left-wing influence on the subculture as a whole.

The militancy of anti-fascists, therefore, is an intentional response to the threat posed by white supremacists. Supremacist ideology and action prioritizes the use of violence against individuals who are deemed to be their opposition (Berlet 1992; Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009; Garner 1996; Hamm 1993; Lyons 1995; Passmore 2002). The anti-fascists in this study engage in confrontational and violent action because non-militant responses are largely ineffective against the white supremacists that they encounter. Supremacists who value strength and violence often do not respond to shunning or negotiation; they see such acts as either tacit acceptance or cowardice, and either continue their organizing efforts or seek to escalate negotiation into conflict. In order to eliminate the threat posed by white supremacists, anti-fascists seek to achieve the strategic countermovement goals outlined by Zald and Useem (1990); specifically, damage or destruction of the other group and pre-emption or dissuasion of group mobilization. In this case, these goals can only be achieved through confrontation and violent action. Anti-fascist militancy achieves these goals in a way that non-militant action cannot. Confrontations with white supremacists, especially violent ones, not only physically damage the individuals involved, but also their reputations for violence which are crucial to supremacist collective identity (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009; Hamm 1993). Supremacists who find themselves on the losing end of such confrontations often leave the movement after tiring of such violence (Bowen 2009). This ultimately results in dissuasion of white supremacist mobilization as individuals move away from public displays of supremacist identity. The goals of anti-fascists are therefore achieved because the threat posed by white supremacists is reduced as a consequence of demobilization.

Discussion

The research presented makes several key contributions to the study of social movement activity and movement-countermovement dynamics in light of the development of "post-materialist" new social movements and lifestyle movements. Because such movements focus on identity construction and orient their actions and tactical repertoires toward the construction of prefigurative space and lifestyle-based activities, they generate a unique dynamic between opposing movements. Movement-countermovement interaction occurs primarily in contests over prefigurative and subcultural space rather than the traditional policy issues of conventional politics. This type of interaction generates a unique set of threats for countermovement participants to respond to: physical, political, and spatial. A tactical repertoire that prioritizes confrontational and violent tactics is relied upon to reduce movement effectiveness through "damage or destruction of the other group" and "pre-emption or dissuasion of group mobilization" (Zald and Useem 1987, 260 & 264). In the case explored, the movement-countermovement dynamic between white supremacists and anti-fascists generates a unique set of threats that are responded to with a specific set of tactics.

Typical of new social movements and lifestyle movements, white supremacist activity takes the form of subcultural practices that place them in direct contact with their anti-fascist opposition. This contact creates a more direct sense of threat for the countermovement because it exists in the everyday lifestyle of subculturalists, as opposed to the arenas of policy construction and decision making typical of opposing movements in conventional politics. These findings confirm Jennings and Andersen's (1996) research linking intensity of threat to confrontational tactics. They also present threat as a multi-faceted concept that moves beyond Jasper's (1997) notion of "ontological security" by presenting it as a process of interaction between opposing "interactive political identities" (Tilly, 2005, 61) manifesting in physical, political, and spatial forms. The concept of spatial threat is identified as an original form that influences movement mobilization and tactical repertoires. In the case of this study, spatial threats took on both literal and metaphorical terms in relation to the prefigurative spaces occupied by both white supremacists and anti-fascists.

It is important to understand that the threats outlined in this study operate in relation to one another rather than as independent factors. The physical threat that white supremacists pose to anti-fascists is the direct product of the performance of their political ideology through the use of violence in subcultural spaces and "subcultural others" (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009). Thus, physical threat involves some degree of political and spatial threat. Similarly, the political threat of racist and neo-Nazi orientations held by white supremacists generates a physical threat because of an ideological imperative to use violence (Berlet 1992; Garner 1996; Lyons 1995; Passmore 2005) and a spatial threat because of their ability to define the identity of spaces and the subculture as a whole. Finally, a spatial threat is linked to the physical threat of violence by simply being present in subcultural spaces where white supremacists engage in violence (Blazak 2001; Bowen 2009), which ultimately defines the subcultures and the spaces that they occupy as prefigurative spaces of white power (Futrell and Simi 2004).

The threats created by white supremacists in this dynamic generate a specific set of confrontational and violent tactics designed to respond to supremacist activity. Such tactics are chosen because of their effectiveness as a response to supremacist use of violence that seeks to intimidate targeted groups into submission and political opponents into demobilization. By increasing the costs of participation in prefigurative spaces and subcultural lifestyle activities, anti-fascists force white supremacists to demobilize and retreat from their current primary activity. As confrontational and violent tactics succeed, the level of all threats identified in this study decreases significantly. Facing consistent confrontation and violence forces white supremacists to drop out of subcultural participation and leaves those who remain less emboldened to physically threaten other subculturalists (Bowen 2009). Lack of active participation by white supremacists similarly reduces political and spatial threats as they are relegated to "transmovement" prefigurative spaces online

or in the safety of movement only spaces such as homes of other supremacists or supremacist compounds. Ultimately, in a cycle similar to conventional movement-countermovement dynamics, anti-fascist activists can demobilize as successful mobilization reduces threats (Peleg 2000).

The dynamics, threats, and tactics described in this study are specific to the time and place in which they are practiced, but not limited to them. The white supremacist movement in North America is currently in abeyance because it has little public support and a relatively small membership; however, it is able to rely on prefigurative spaces and subcultural lifestyles as "abeyance structures" which can sustain the movement at this stage in its mobilization cycle (Futrell and Simi 2004; Haenfler, Johnson and Jones 2012; Taylor 1989). This has, of course, not historically been the case, nor does it describe such movements globally[9] or even regionally in North America. Threat must be perceived in order to be confronted; and in many locations, white supremacists have local support which preempts anti-fascist organizing. Conversely, regions, cities, and "scenes" with stronger and/or more committed anti-racist traditions or orientations are likely to develop strong anti-fascist countermovements. The study does indicate that the understanding of threat and tactical repertoires of contemporary anti-fascists are diffused via the political and subcultural networks that they participate in. Groups engaging in anti-fascist activism communicate with one another and promote effective tactics in the conflict with supremacists. North American anti-fascists have adopted many of the tactics of their European counterparts, especially the use of the "black block" where participants dress in black with faces covered in counter-protests against white supremacists (Katsifiacas 2006; Katsifiacas 2012). This indicates that a general movement repertoire exists which is diffused through interactions by anti-fascists in a global movement that manifests in local struggles over prefigurative spaces and subcultures.

The research presented in this study may be useful in explaining conflicts that appear on the surface to be "culture wars" between or within sub-groups in contemporary society. As social movement activity has intersected with lifestyle and identity formation, the politicization of everyday practices generates unique movement-countermovement dynamics in response to movement specific threats. Future research may need to establish the generalizability of the current findings beyond the conflict described to other lifestyle based social movements (e.g. animal rights, environmentalism, queer rights, etc.). The impact of threat may be much greater in the anti-fascist movement because its opposition is ideologically driven to violent action, because it is a political movement that is highly marginalized in contemporary American society, or because there is simply greater contact between individual members of the opposing movements in everyday social contexts.

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[9] This is especially true in nations such as England, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Russia where fascist and white supremacist movements have seen major resurgences in recent years.

Additional research into the relationship between threat and tactical choice would resolve many of these issues.

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