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White Power music and the mobilization of racist social movements

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the 1970s a racist rock music movement known as White Power music emerged in Great Britain in connection with political parties of the extreme right and remains a vibrant force in racist social movements today. Throughout the 1990s, White Power music expanded significantly from its origins in a clandestine network of punk-inspired live shows and record promotions into a multi-million dollar, international enterprise of web-pages, radio stations and independent record labels promoting White Power musicians performing a wider range of musical genres. In this article, we view White Power music as a cultural resource created and produced by racist movements and used as a tool to further key movement goals. Specifically, we examine White Power music's role when used to 1) recruit new adherents, especially youth, 2) frame issues and ideology to cultivate a White Power collective identity, and 3) obtain financial resources. In doing so we rely upon in-depth interviews with White Power musicians and promoters as well as representatives of watchdog and monitoring organizations. Interviews were conducted by the lead author from 2002-2004 or accessed through transcripts of similar interviews made available by another researcher. This research also relies upon an extensive examination of White Power music, lyrics, newsletters and websites.

We conclude that White Power music continues to play a significant role in the mobilization of racist political and social movements by drawing in new youth, cultivating a racist collective identity, and generating substantial sums of money to finance a range of racist endeavours.

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WHITE POWER MUSIC AND THE MOBILIZATION OF RACIST SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

"The biggest mistake, in terms of counter-strategic policies, is to relegate the whole phenomenon as a "psychological problem" and in this way omit the presence of political forces behind [White Power music.]"

(S. Larsson, personal communication, 2002)

INTRODUCTION

"White Power music is the soundtrack of the white revolution" according to *Resistance Records,* a leading White Power music label. This racist rock music movement first emerged in the late 1970s in Great Britain in connection with British political parties of the extreme right. Throughout the 1980s and to a greater degree during the 1990s, the number of White Power music bands grew rapidly along with White Power music newsletters, radio stations and, eventually, web pages. Similarly, revenues generated by the White Power music market developed into a multi-million dollar international enterprise providing direct financial support to racist political parties and White Power movement organizations. With as many as 350 bands currently active in the U.S. and Western Europe, the White Power music scene remains vibrant and plays an increasingly significant role in the mobilization of contemporary racist political parties and social movements in Europe, the U.S. and beyond (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2002).

Prevailing research on social movements has, more often than not, relegated cultural products like music, art and film to a secondary status analytically compared to more tangible social and political movement productions like protests, political turnout or media coverage (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002). The research presented here, on the other hand, analyses the origins of White Power music and three specific roles it plays in supporting the current mobilization of a highly fragmented White Power movement. In doing so we utilize analytical themes from what is broadly known as "resource mobilization theory" in the analysis of social movements (See Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). The resource mobilization perspective emphasizes the fact that collective endeavours like white power movements must gain access to a mix of financial, human, social, cultural and moral resources to operate, grow and persist through time.

In this article we use the term "White Power" to refer to a broad reactionary mobilization among a small subset of "whites" who see themselves as an embattled minority at risk of extinction in the increasingly multicultural societies of Western Europe and North America. White Power music expresses and promotes this ideology and is an important cultural resource created and produced from within such racist political and social movements. White Power music is a political tool used to further key movement goals. Specifically, we examine how this internally-produced cultural resource is used to 1) recruit new adherents, especially youth, 2) frame issues and ideology to cultivate a White Power collective identity, and 3) obtain financial resources. In doing so we rely upon in-depth interviews with White Power musicians and promoters as well as representatives of watchdog and monitoring organizations. Interviews were conducted by the lead author from 2002-2004 or accessed through transcripts of similar interviews made available by another researcher (Back, 1998). This research also relies upon an extensive examination of White Power music, lyrics, newsletters and web sites.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND MESSAGE OF WHITE POWER MUSIC

EMERGENCE

The fusion of racist lyrics and punk rock that evolved into the earliest White Power music first emerged in England during the late 1970s from the work of Ian Stuart Donaldson—singer and leader of the band Skrewdriver. Donaldson collaborated with an extreme right-wing political party called the British National Front (NF), to promote Skrewdriver. Together they founded a record label called White Noise Records that produced, and in 1983 distributed, Skrewdriver's album *White Power*, considered the anthem to the movement. Thus, Donaldson is widely considered the founding father of White Power music as it developed in the 1980s.

The NF's initial interest in rock music generally, and punks and skinheads in particular, sprang from their desire to counter the success during the late 1970s of left-wing political parties in using rock music and events like "Rock Against Racism" to recruit a new generation of youth. Left-wing political activists in Britain had somewhat opportunistically claimed an affiliation with punk music and used that association to legitimate their causes in the eyes of punk rock youth (Frith, 1980, pp. 166-67). Steve Silver, the editor of the English anti fascist magazine *Searchlight* recalled of the time that "...the NF was quite a reasonably sized organization, but with no culture element to it whatsoever, it was not able to attract young people" (personal communication to Back, 1998). In this context the NF sought to co-opt the skinhead subculture and draw it into the orbit of the extreme right, despite the fact that the broader skinhead music scene included many non-racist or even anti-racist bands and individuals. In doing so the NF supported the skinhead subculture, referring to it as the "cream of British youth", while virtually everybody in Britain condemned it (Marshall 1991, p. 124).

Marco Balestrino was the singer in a then prominent, non-racist, Italian skinhead band, Klasse Kriminale. He recalls that "The NF, and in particular Ian Stuart Donaldson and his band Skrewdriver, pushed for an internationalization of the skinhead movement in terms of a sort of alliance between skinheads worldwide, utilizing 'love instead of hate, showing acceptance toward the skinheads where no one else did'" (Balestrino, personal communication, 2002). This suggests a theme, discussed below, that from early on the NF used White Power music to reframe its message from one of overt hate (typically of immigrants, Jews, blacks and ethnic minorities more generally), to one of self-love and collective defence of the white race in an effort to draw in new adherents (also see Back, 2002). Furthermore, this change of frame became more used and elaborated in the years following the initial emergence of White Power music, becoming one of the dominant themes of racist movements more broadly.

Music was not only a medium for spreading a political message to youth and a tool for recruiting new adherents; it also provided a significant source of economic resources for the party. Profits from White Power music, concerts, cassettes and related merchandise enabled political parties of the far right, like the NF, to pursue more traditional political activities. In the early days of *White Noise Records,* Patrick Harrington, who was involved with the NF, and Ian Stuart Donaldson described the situation as follows:

> "...we (NF) weren't happy with Nazi imagery, and there were a lot of conflicts over the music. I think it was done in the wrong way. The music was a big earner for the

movement in terms of money-and spin-off things like badges and patches and all that kind of things. So, I mean, it was a merchandising thing. The Party could have earned a lot more if it'd been done more professionally. If I was doing it now, I'd be involved with electronic music a lot…I'd be interested in rap as well. I think there's a lot of potential there" (Harrington, personal communication to Back, 1998).

Through the 1980s and early 1990s, before the Internet became widely available, White Power music played an integral role in spreading and internationalizing a highly fragmented racist movement. In many European countries, the touring of White Power bands, the mail-order distribution of merchandise, such as photocopied magazines and audio cassettes, and the selling of White Power material that was often illegal relegated the entire White Power phenomenon to the margins of society. White Power music also held ties with nationalistic movements in specific countries and served as the international connection between these movements (Lööw, 1998). Laws against Holocaust denial and activities aimed at inciting hate in a number of European countries forced White Power music to function underground and operate in a clandestine way. Nevertheless, it remained active, vibrant and militant. The widespread adoption of the Internet opened up vast new opportunities to use White Power music to support racist movements and parties.

DIFFUSION THROUGH THE INTERNET

One main reason for the wide diffusion of White Power music globally was the ability of White Power forces to tap into the potentialities of the Internet. In fact, since the mid 1990s, as a consequence of Internet popularization, White Power music became available to a larger number and greater variety of individuals through websites selling music, vastly expanding its market niche and profitability (Back, 2002). The Internet allowed White Power groups to bypass national "hate" laws in Europe and enabled nationalistic movements to further develop international networks. The number of people involved in White Power cultural productions grew along with the different racist organizations that used this medium. Nonetheless, estimations of how deeply racist music affects individuals politically are problematic (Back, 2002). The identity and affiliations of those behind the production, distribution, and selling of White Power products are often kept secret, further complicating research. Yet available research indicates that White Power music production is still connected with the political movement and political parties of the extreme-right (Dobratz & Shanks-Meile, 1997; Larsson, personal communication, 2002; Lööw, 1998; MacKay 2006).

Currently, a wide array of political groups with international reach use White Power music to further their goals. In the U.S. these include white supremacist organizations like the National Alliance (NA), Hammerskin Nation and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), as well as historical revisionists, racist skinheads and white separatists. In Europe, nationalistic parties like the British National Party (BNP), the National Front (NF), Forza Nuova in Italy, the National Democratic Party (NPD) in Germany, and New Democracy (NyD) in Sweden have officially included White Power music in their political and recruitment campaigns. While these groups are different, their messages share common themes: "1) a rhetoric of racial and/or national uniqueness and common destiny, 2) the ideas of racial supremacy, superiority, and separation, 3) a repertoire of conceptions of racial otherness, 4) a utopian revolutionary world view that aims to overthrow the existing order" (Back, 2002, p. 97), and 5) a clear opposition to immigration. Similar to other social movements, national and international links between these groups come across in the

music, and connections are strengthened through large White Power concerts and multi-day music festivals with wide, cross-national participation (Lööve, 1998; Staggenborg, *et. al.* 1993).

THE DEFINING MESSAGE OF WHITE POWER MUSIC

White Power music is also known as "White Noise," "White Power Rock and Roll" or "Neo-Nazi Music" and cannot be identified by a single musical genre like Skinhead, Punk, or Death Metal. The example of Skinhead music helps clarify the situation of White Power music, which is better identified by its lyrical content and message than by adherence to a specific musical genre. Many observers have incorrectly equated it with Skinhead music, neglecting the fact that the Skinhead music scene is diverse and includes many non-racist and even anti-racist skinhead bands. All skinhead bands have a similar sound and visual image, yet only a subset of skinhead bands can be considered part of White Power music. What differentiates White Power skinheads from anti-racist or apolitical skinheads is the content of their lyrics and public statements.

The distinctive message of White Power music follows the broad contours of racist political ideology as sketched out above, yet the message of the music is generally more implicit or suggestive than the ideological pronouncements of political parties. The message of White Power music also varies because the large number of bands and actors involved express ideas reflecting their distinct circumstances and the variety of racist groups with which they are affiliated. Nevertheless, several themes comprise the core content of White Power music lyrics. First, the lyrics express pride in belonging to an embattled White ethnicity. Second, they promote white supremacy and racist views toward non-whites and immigrants. Third, White Power music is directed against homosexuals, ethnic minorities, "multiracialism," interracial marriage and other forms of what its followers consider to be "race-mixing." Fourth, White Power music lyrics denounce Jews, who are believed to be responsible for a worldwide conspiracy against the "white race" through the promotion of what White Power sympathizers call the "Zionist Occupation Government" (ZOG). Lastly, White Power music lyrics emphasize opposition to communism, socialism and any other leftist, progressive or liberal political programs. Thus, liberalism, feminism and democracy are all portrayed as plagues of modern times by White Power music lyrics (Ball & Dagger, 1997).

The White Power message is not framed exclusively in negative terms, listing what the racist movement is against. For example, George Burdi, ex-singer of the White Power band RAHOWA (acronym for Racial Holy War) and co-founder of Resistance Records, referred to himself as a "racial ecologist" seeking to save the white race from extinction (quoted in Talty, 1996). Chris Telford, a leader in the British National Party (BNP) and singer of the White Power band Nemesis, elaborates a similar sentiment:

> "The white race deserves to survive and prosper as much as any other biological entity in this world, whether it is a type of polar bear or the panda or the thousands of other endangered species. To my mind the world's most endangered species is our people" (quoted in White Off the Scale, 2006).

This review of the origins and development of White Power music indicates its close ties to racist political parties and consistent role in building a broader white power movement internationally. Moreover, the three roles of the music as a means of recruiting new adherents, a medium for framing the ideology, and a vehicle for

raising money were there in the beginning and remain so today. In the sections to follow, we examine each of these three roles in-depth utilizing key concepts from contemporary social movement theory.

FRAMING THE IDEOLOGY BEHIND WHITE POWER MUSIC

Ideology as defined by Geertz (1964) refers to an "integrated and coherent system of symbols, values and beliefs". By contrast, framing refers to the "production of meaning", the "signifying work" through which social movement activists seek to construct their self-presentation and the presentation of events in order to maintain and draw support (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198). Framing and ideology are clearly and unmistakably two different concepts, yet they are intimately connected (Snow & Benford, 2000). The concept of ideology evokes steadiness, while framing is a verb that accounts for the fluidity and dynamism of meaning construction within social movements and subcultures (Snow, 2004, p. 384). Ideology functions as a cultural resource from which social actors draw ideas, values and beliefs to construct meaning through framing processes and framing devices (Snow & Benford, 2000).

Music can be conceptualized as both a cultural resource and a "cultural product" that social movements may create themselves or simply have at their disposal (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 126). Yet, music is also a framing device through which movement ideas are expressed and communicated. Music and lyrics are very effective media to propagate movement ideas. Music, in fact, is both personal and collective and reaches its listeners through emotion. At the personal level, music is related to identity, by providing us with an ideal of what the identity could be—a "self-in-process" (Frith, 1996, p. 109). At the collective level, music can create feelings of belonging to an imagined community (Anderson, 1991; Frith, 2003). In both instances, music gives us an "immediate experience of a collective identity," (Frith, 1987, p. 14) that empowers and exhilarates. Personally owned and intimately tied to our sense of being, music can penetrate our minds, souls and bodies through rhythm and lyrics in ways and to an extent to which we are not fully aware.

MUSIC DISSEMINATES AND FRAMES THE WHITE POWER MESSAGE

Political speeches can only go so far in appealing to potential recruits to a social movement, especially among young people, whereas music has the potential to penetrate lives more deeply and steadily. Lyrics can be memorized and sung, concerts are collective, effervescent events to look forward to and remember (Eyerman, 2002), and records can be owned and played repeatedly. Music and lyrics sneak into our private lives, defining our identity and often unconsciously shaping our taste, values and beliefs. As explained by ex-White Power producer and musician George Burdi in the video-documentary "*Hearts of Hate - The Battle for Young Minds*" (1995),

> "We hear the slogan 'White people awake, save our great race' twice per chorus, eight times total throughout an entire song, and if they play the tape five times a week and just listen to that one song, they are listening to [the slogan] 40 times in one week, which means 160 times a month. You do the math behind that" (Burdi quoted in The Center for New Community, 1999, p. 12).

The power of music in disseminating movement ideas is synthesized by Eyerman and Jamison (1998, p. 46): "music suggests interpretation, ideology commands it." Music's power rests precisely in its ambiguity, in contrast to the specificity of ideology tied as it is to particular values, beliefs and meanings. White Power activists

have come a long way from cautiously engaging the Skinhead subculture in the late 1970s and 1980s to skillfully promoting White Power ideals and politics through concert promotion, record production and related merchandising through the 1990s to the present. They have also learned that the aggressive, explicitly racist stance taken by early White Power music and other racist groups in the 1970s and early 1980s proved a counterproductive strategy for recruiting larger numbers and types of youth, as well as politically influencing public opinion. Consequently, White Power groups and music have reframed themselves as the advocates for an embattled, self-loving and proud race actively pursuing the legitimate goals of self-defence and self-preservation against ascendant multiculturalism, immigration and race-mixing (Back, 2002). In an audio speech called *Blood Destiny*, distributed by Resistance Records, Burdi articulates the current frame: "I want you to listen carefully because the future of the white race and even possibly the life on this planet depends on these ideas being realized and acted upon (…) extinction is forever" (Burdi, 1996).

THREE ELEMENTS OF THE WHITE POWER FRAME

Implicit in this framing of the White Power ideology are three elements calculated to broaden its appeal among elements of contemporary youth: 1) White Power as an authentic, non-commercial music form, 2) White Power as oppositional, but not nihilistic, and 3) White Power as the victim of a double-standard imposed by politically correct multiculturalism. Frith argued that, from the standpoint of many music fans, the main distinction between "good" and "bad" music revolves around the concept of "authenticity" (Frith, 1978; 1996). White Power music discourse reveals a substantial interest in being perceived as an authentic musical expression, the antithesis of *American Idol,,* which culls through tens of thousands of aspirants in order to select a small number of artists that are readily marketable to a mass audience. White Power activists emphasize the authentic experience of music, among other things, as part of their effort to more effectively attract disaffected white youth.

OPPOSITIONAL

First of all, White Power music discourse frames itself as oppositional, but not nihilistic. White Power activists position White Power music within a larger current of "resistance music", along with other rock genres like Punk, Metal and Death Metal. All such genres originated to oppose the strictures of mainstream commercial music produced by major record labels. They thus possess an aura of "authenticity" from their stance of resistance to the mainstream.

William Pierce, former leader of the National Alliance (NA) and ex-owner of Resistance Records, routinely portrayed White Power music as "resistance music" (Pierce, 2000). In doing so, Pierce sought to extend the White Power music frame and legitimise it by association with the aura of authenticity already associated with the above mentioned genres in the minds of his target audience. His intent was to reach "customers" from the larger pool of alternative-to-mainstream music fans.

Yet, Pierce sought to go further in framing White Power music to enhance its perceived legitimacy. He argued that there is a substantial difference between other music genres of resistance music and White Power music: while rebellion is the common factor in both kinds of resistance music, the rebellion of other genres would be merely nihilistic, whereas the rebellion of White Power music would be constructive. Furthermore, according to Pierce, the nihilistic rebellion has arisen from an uprooting of people from "white culture", perpetrated by a Jewish

conspiracy to promote multiculturalism through *MTV*. Pierce identified the origin of subcultural rebellion as the "the unnatural environment of multiculturalism" (Pierce, 2000) and claimed that White Power music is a spontaneous phenomenon. Therefore White Power music, and the White Power movement broadly, is not motivated by economic profit but prompted by an understanding among White Power activists of the "pathology of what is wrong with society today". Thus, in his view, the White Power movement and its music represents the "healthiest elements among our ['white'] young people who give expression to their tribal feeling" (Pierce, 2000) to their primordial, racial solidarity and opposition to the multicultural hegemony of an increasingly mixed race world.

AUTHENTIC

> "You are not merely consumers of a product, and we are not merely distributors of a product. Together we are fighting a war to awaken the survival instincts in a dying people ['the white race']. You, our supporters, are our most valuable ally in that war" (Pierce quoted in Southern Poverty Law Center, 2001).

Frith argued (1987; 1996) that the feeling of authenticity, in his opinion a constructed myth, is based on the idea of being independent from commercial forces. Authentic music expresses the genuine feelings of the artist who feels the need to communicate his or her true emotions without constraints imposed by strictly financial or market forces. White Power music is portrayed exactly in this way, as the truest, most authentic music. A White Power web page claimed:

> "The music is good and one even gets to hear pro-white lyrics and that is something many people have never experienced before. Think about it: Is it better to hear a fake do something for money or it is better to hear someone real?" (Resistance Records 2002)

This framing of the music relies upon several rhetorical strategies. Often it is said in White Power Internet pages that White Power musicians are literally giving up millions of dollars by not selling out, by not diluting their image and message. They would certainly reach mainstream success, except that they are true believers in the cause and unwilling to compromise. According to Critcher (1980), this sentiment reflects a common dynamic whereby subcultures can be 'stylistically' diluted in order to appeal to a larger, more mainstream audience and become more marketable. This common dynamic opens an opportunity for White Power promoters to augment the perceived authenticity of White Power music by emphasizing its resistance to such pressures.

White Power music must be authentic because it has achieved so little mainstream acceptance. Moreover, its lack of acceptance must be the result of a hegemonic conspiracy aimed at thwarting it. While this interpretation is framed as an idealistic choice by White Power promoters, an alternative interpretation looms large. White Power promoters may well seek to legitimize their comparatively small industry status and limited product appeal in order to maintain the loyal and stable, albeit narrow, niche market they have carved out. White Power promoters do this by pointing out the importance of their music's meaning. Nevertheless, they may simply be unable to compete for a larger share of a music market dominated by a handful of multinational music corporations, regardless of attempts to dilute their message and make it less extreme and controversial.

PERSECUTED

In most European countries, and some non-European countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Brazil, the use of hate speech is considered a criminal offence prohibited under legislation on incitement to hatred. Furthermore, twelve European countries[1] hold specific laws against Holocaust denial forcing the White Power music scene to operate underground in a clandestine fashion. This situation actually makes it easier for White Power music to portray itself as persecuted by society. In Europe, White Power promoters emphasize the illegal status of both the music and concerts. By contrast, in the U.S., where White Power music and gatherings fall under the First Amendment protections of free speech and assembly, promoters emphasize its rebelliousness and significance for the preservation of the white race. They often warn that unless the white race rises up to resist, the U.S. will eventually impose similar legal sanctions. On both sides of the Atlantic this facilitates the cultivation of perceived persecution. White Power music provides its listeners with an ideal of higher meaning where their participation is very important not simply for their well-being, but for their very survival.

Listeners are portrayed as soldiers fighting a just and defensive war against forces seeking to destroy them. In this context simply acquiring White Power music takes on the imagery of a moral crusade, as described in a testimonial on a White Power webpage called Stormfront.

> "Since 1995, I have been listening to underground (alternative) music that most people my age could not even fathom. Never had I allowed music to be forced onto me. I have tossed over rocks and stones. I have climbed the highest mountains and searched the bottom of the sea. I have pounded down doors and gone through seven levels of hell. This is the effort I make to find the best and truest music" (Stormfront, 2002).

From its beginning White Power music has intentionally provoked a backlash from mainstream society in a way similar to the shock value embraced by early Punks and Skinheads. The reactions they provoke are then utilized by White Power promoters to reinforce their claim to the mantle of underdogs, righteous victims of a double-standard perpetrated by a hegemonic, multicultural conspiracy. Such claims are routinely supported by pointing to other music genres that are arguably as or more explicitly violent. Gangster Rap is most often cited in this context. White Power activists emphasize that such music is sold and performed openly and has achieved mass market commercial success. By contrast, they claim that White Power music is persecuted. A White Power website conveys this sentiment.

> "I am sick to death of hearing twits whine about whether or not White Power music leads to violence against minorities. Every time a White person is involved in any type of racial incident the cops want to search his car/house/body for any type of Pro-White music/literature/tattoos (…). After the L.A. riots did the cops inspect the nigger rioters' homes for rap music? Somehow I don't think so" (Byron 2008).

One of the key tasks of activists in any social movement is to continuously frame their message—which means to purposefully select, emphasize and leave out particular information, trying to predict how it will be perceived by other activists, supporters, the general public and other parties, in order to influence them in desired ways. Framing is an "impression management" of sorts (Goffman, 1959), a kind of "packaging" that deals with conveying the subjectively selected or perhaps even

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1 Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland. Israel also has similar laws.

fabricated part of reality, leaving out what does not fit, and/or presenting it in terms expected to resonate with a target audience. Although White Power activists did not spend time developing explicit theoretical frameworks to understand music's roles in mobilization, they have successfully used this cultural resource not simply to disseminate the content of their ideology, but also to frame and reframe their racist message to appeal to broader audiences. This illustrates the close connection between framing and recruitment of new adherents. In the next section, we examine the use of White Power music as a recruitment tool in more detail.

RECRUITMENT

"Our motto was: 'You do not want the weekend patriot, you want his son'"
(T.J. Leyden, former North American, White Power activist, 1998).

"Kids are not interested in the ideology as much as they are in resistance music"
(William Pierce, ex-owner of Resistance Records, 2002).

William Pierce was arguably the most important White Power music producer in the world in the early 2000s. He justified his involvement with rock music to other white supremacists who were opposed to such an enterprise: "We want you to know why so many young white kids today are alienated and to give you the opportunity to do something about it and become part of history" (Pierce, 2002). Pierce believed that "white youth" in America and beyond has been swayed to decadent values mainly through the tool of music and later through *MTV*. Burdi articulated their concern:

"They [the Jews] were stealing our youth away using MTV and a whole network, a well-rooted network, promoting decadent values to young people. And the main tool they were using was music. Resistance Records was formed to counteract this whole process" (Burdi, 1995).

To counter the "theft of white youth", William Pierce and other White Power promoters sought to portray White Power music to the broader racist community as an antidote for alienation and rebellion among white youth. Doing so provided a rationale for older racist activists and parents to embrace or at least tolerate White Power music as a legitimate pursuit for racist youth. As George Burdi of Resistance Records and RAHOWA explained, White Power music also provided a key element to recruit new generations of youth and rebuild the movement:

"The reason that the so-called movement had been struggling over the years is because it had operated on a rational — not emotional — level" (Burdi, quoted in Talty, 1996, Back, 2002, p. 112)

"The people who run this company are all young ourselves; we are in our early twenties. We see ourselves as being in touch, culturally, with the young people of our generation and the people who are between the ages of fifteen and twenty right now. We know what makes them tick. We know what they listen to and what they are interested in, and we are providing it to them. And they are responding with such enthusiasm...". (Burdi, 1995)

White Power music concerts illustrate how entertainment events, ideology and political persuasion are intertwined in a way calculated to recruit new generations of youth. At White Power festivals, for example, a movement leader goes on stage between bands to talk for a few minutes about politics. There is, however, a sharp contrast between music messages and the short political speeches. The White Power music frames the message in an appealing, readily defensible and somewhat ambiguous way. In contrast, the political leaders articulate the underlying vision and

political agenda directly and explicitly. The ambiguity of White Power music messages and of the movement ideology is reflected by the conspiracy theories used. These, in fact, may initially appear intelligible, but are very complex. Since all conspiracy theories are, at root, based on faith, debunking them becomes almost an impossible task (Dyer, 1997, p. 107). As Dyer writes: "If a problem arises that seems to contradict a particular conspiracy theory, a new theory is created to explain why the inconsistency doesn't really exist. This is a never-ending cycle, designed to prevent rational argument from assaulting the movement or its goals" (Dyer, 1997, p. 107).

"Project Schoolyard USA" illustrates another recruitment strategy (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2004). In 2004, Panzerfaust Records, a successful North American White Power label, drew on a network of volunteers to help distribute a sample CD featuring its most accessible music – a mix of eclectic musical styles and least politically explicit lyrics – to middle and high school students across the country, so that activists could easily purchase large quantities to hand out the CD that was priced at 15 cents per copy. Resistance Records pursues a similar strategy by asking activists to buy CDs at equally low prices in order to distribute them for free into their community.

> "Get together with a friend or two and commit to buying ten or more issues a month. Can you imagine the impact of a steady stream of Resistance Magazines circulating among the kids in your neighbourhood? (…) You may be saving his life" (Resistance Records, 2002).

Such techniques enable activists to make contact with and establish casual relationships with potential recruits in a targeted neighbourhood or community. The gift of a free CD creates a small obligation of reciprocity in the potential recruit toward the activist who gave the gift. The CDs provide something for them to talk about subsequently. Through a combination of personal interaction and affinity for the music, potential recruits may be invited to local parties or meetings of White Power sympathizers. Eventually, they may be invited into live performance events.

Another facet of the White Power music recruitment strategy involves actively framing the message and position of the music to be accessible to a broader range of youth. Veiling the explicit features of White Power ideology in encoded language or vague and ambiguous lyrics has been part of the approach. There are several reasons for this. First, for a White Power band in Europe to perform openly and engage the larger audience of the mainstream music scene it must circumvent legal restrictions against Holocaust denial. White Power bands with explicit names such as *Angry Aryans*, *White Law*, *Svastika*, *Ethnic Cleansing*, or *Final Solution* would be unable to perform and operate openly in Europe. Even in the U.S., where such bands can perform and market their music openly, the strident tone of their names would put off all but the already committed. By contrast the ideological commitments of groups such as *Bound for Glory*, *Aggressive Force*, *Nemesis*, *Max Resist*, *English Rose*, *Peggior Amico* ("Worst Friend") or *Fortress* are not readily apparent in their names. The latter bands would be more accessible to a broader, though still narrow, range of contemporary youth.

The potential of this stealth strategy working so well that a White Power band breaks into the mainstream by appealing to a mass audience is a concern among anti-racists especially in Europe. In fact, this happened in Sweden in the early 1990s, when the White Power band *Ultima Thule* reached the top of the Swedish charts with one

platinum and three gold albums. *Ultima Thule* was the first Swedish group ever to have three albums in the Top 20 simultaneously.

This stealth strategy has been extended by White Power activists diversifying the types of bands and range of musical genres they produce and promote. Currently, pinpointing a distinctive White Power musical genre is nearly impossible. Similarly, recognizing a White Power band from its name or lyrics can be difficult because both are intentionally vague. Moreover, as White Power branched out into new media, their video-magazines have also mimicked, often in parody, the mainstream media. One of the most professionally produced is called *Kriegsberichter*, named after German war correspondents in World War II. The beginning of one episode portrays the *MTV* cartoon characters of *Beavis and Butthead* wearing Nazi t-shirts. Yet, the bulk of the episode mixes film of White Power concerts, interviews with White Power activists, and violent pro-Nazi footage from the Second World War and wars in Africa. Several interviewees confirmed that children who watch them and listen to White Power records do that exclusively instead of watching *MTV*. With no hesitation, Stieg Larsson, who worked for *Expo*, a prominent Swedish "watchdog" organization and magazine that tracks the activities of racist movements, referred to this as an effective strategy of "educational brainwashing"(Larsson, personal communication, 2003).

White Power music has long been associated exclusively with young males and heavily amplified and distorted rock music. The diversification has in particular targeted female musicians and singers aiming to draw in an audience of racist women.

> "The potential market for racist *women* music groups is larger than it is for men. An *all-female band* would have far less trouble in terms of anti-racist violence at gigs. All-male bands have problems. They are far more restricted in terms of the types of clubs they can get into. That limits the audience. (…) A racist *woman* singer would be an excellent role model which might attract women into our cause" (Cindy MacDonald, quoted in Back, 2002, p. 116).

Furthermore, an all-female White Power band is likely to attract media attention due to its novelty and contrast of the stereotypical image of male, violent skinheads.

Recently, the efforts of an overtly racist American mother of twin, pre-teen girls to coach her daughters to become White Power musicians has attracted mainstream press attention. Television news stories have recounted the girls' musical training and shown them playing instruments and singing. The girls spoke on camera about White Power ideology and beliefs. They are called Prussian Blue. As their mother quite self-assuredly explained, "Wait until they turn sixteen. What young, red-blooded American man isn't going to find two blue-eyed, blonde girls who sing about white pride very appealing?" (quoted in Buchanan, 2005) Clearly, the strategies for bringing forward new White Power acts have come a long way from the British National Front "finding" Ian Stuart Donaldson, to racist "stage mothers" pushing their children into the spotlight to pursue a career in White Power music. This approach has already begun to spread as European White Power activists have responded by creating European counterparts of "Prussian Blue" such as "Saga" also referred to as "The Swedish Madonna of the far-right", the German "Annett," and the Italian Francesca Ortolani also known as "Viking".

WHITE POWER MUSIC AS A SOURCE FOR ECONOMIC RESOURCES

"Money is the most important tool that the Pro-White Cause needs to achieve its goals.(…) The money raised and donated to Resistance and the National Alliance is used for a multitude of daily expenses and functions that our activists need for spreading our message and expanding our media. If you find yourself short on time for participating in any public activism, or you would rather remain anonymous, raising and donating money, or even supplies, to the activists of Resistance and the National Alliance is the way to go" (Resistance Magazine, Record Label, Ideology, 2008).

White Power music often portrays itself as "art" rather than "product" implying that it operates independently from market forces when in fact it works much like any other business enterprise. Yet, behind the production of White Power music and its marketing strategies lie politically engaged individuals that use the money generated not only for their own financial gain, but also to fund racist political parties and organizations. The business side of White Power music follows a financial logic in order to raise capital to support the broader White Power movement. Thus a somewhat symbiotic relationship exists between the success of White Power music and the success of racist political parties and groups.

According to Stieg Larsson, political groups of the far-right formerly funded themselves in part through criminal activities like counterfeiting and bank robbery. (Larsson, personal communication, 2003). By contrast, White Power music provides a comparatively low risk opportunity to generate millions of dollars despite being illegal in many European countries. In 1999, Interpol estimated that the European White Power music industry generated about $ 3.4 million a year. Much of that income directly funds racist political parties and movement organizations.

Several factors underlie the profitability of White Power music and suggest that its proceeds may be under-estimated. First, European laws against Holocaust Denial drive White Power music into the underground economy. This creates a "black market" where proceeds avoid taxation and "bootlegging runs rampant" (Kim, 2006) —the money is used both by local political organizations as well as by individual entrepreneurs, and fierce competition is stimulated between the different White Power producers. Second, unlike the mainstream record industry where bands contract exclusively with specific recording companies, non-exclusive rights prevail in the White Power record business. White Power record labels pay individual bands for non-exclusive, one-time rights to market their music. Thus, White Power bands commonly release the same album on multiple White Power labels (Kim, 2006). Third, and perhaps most significant, is the higher profit margin on White Power music. A White Power CD can be produced for just over $2, yet bring a selling price directly to the producer of about $15. According to an analysis by Interpol, and reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2001), the profit margin for White Power music in Europe exceeds the margin for hashish.

Social movements of all kinds, including the White Power movement, depend on a wide variety of important resources to undertake their actions. Money is only one type of resource. Yet, money is a unique resource because it can be converted into just about any other type of resource needed: organizations can be formed, staff can be hired, volunteers recruited, materials purchased, artists and musicians supported, and web sites developed. Events promoted. Even an *ersatz* moral legitimacy can be purchased by hiring a public relations firm, as is nearly universal in the corporate sector. As a significant source of money, White Power music plays a crucial role in

the current mobilization of racist political parties and organizations. Because that money comes from inside the movement itself, there are no strings attached.

CONCLUSION

The research presented here has sketched out the growth and development of White Power music and its role in the mobilization of racist movements. We began with its earliest emergence in connection with the British National Front in the late 1970s and its embrace of the Internet in the 1990s. Current efforts to penetrate different musical genres and become more accessible to more diverse audience, especially white racist women, were discussed. The analysis utilized a broad resource mobilization theoretical perspective to examine three specific roles White Power music plays in supporting racist movements: recruiting adherents, cultivating a collective identity, and obtaining financial resources.

White Power music continues to be an important organizing resource that draws participants into the movement, educates youth about the White Power message, and effectively reaches out to potential adherents and supporters on an emotional and not only rational basis. The notion of belonging to a White Power group locally, and being tied to an imagined worldwide community of the "white nation", appeals to many youths on a number of levels. White Power music fuels the establishment and maintenance of an international communications infrastructure providing access to public events, web sites, publications, and related symbolic paraphernalia which is crucial to the cultivation and nourishment of a White Power collective identity. White Power music record labels, event promoters and publishers generate substantial financial resources used directly by racist political parties and organizations to fund continued White Power recruitment efforts as well as traditional racist, white supremacist political and other activities.

White Power activists have cleverly sought to attract youth by imitating the strategy of mainstream youth culture marketers and by aligning the movement's music with contemporary, alternative sub-cultural styles to enhance its perceived legitimacy and enlarge its adherent pool. White Power activists have also appropriated existing alternative styles or specific popular non-racist songs and re-framed them to resonate within the White Power movement. For example, White Power music publicizes itself as an independent music scene in which *not* being played by *MTV* and *not* being signed by a major record label confers legitimacy. This posture helps legitimize the White Power message to certain youth who see it as a sign of authenticity that valorises both the bands and the fans.

The desire to recruit more widely also explains White Power efforts to use music to reframe their core message from one of racial hatred to one of racial survival, pride and self-love. Clearly, this sort of framing is more accessible to the world's contemporary white youth than the traditional white supremacist position of aggressive racial hatred advocating the extinction of so called "inferior races". White Power music has been a key tool in shifting from a solidarity and identity based exclusively in archaic biological or genetic notions of "race", toward a more contemporary socially-based conception of "race". In so doing, White Power music has helped racist movements embrace aspects of contemporary identity politics to frame themselves as an embattled, persecuted, minority group at risk of extinction. From this vantage point, White Power seems to be casting itself as one among many

social groups contributing to social diversity and deserving of respect and tolerance when it reaches out to new youth.

How societies respond to the development of White Power music will in part influence the music's success and the appeal of its politics. Several fruitful directions for future research seem clear. For example, differences in political opportunity represented by the contrast between European laws against Holocaust Denial and American protections of free speech and assembly have profoundly affected the geographic dispersion of White Power, the role White Power music has played in mobilizing the movement, and the extent to which White Power music is tied to political parties or more independent, entrepreneurial racist organizations. Furthermore, given White Power music's relatively early embrace of the Internet and subsequent savvy with other new media technologies, a careful examination of their role in shaping the development and spread of White Power music would be useful. Finally, how is White Power music helping racist parties and movements appropriate and reframe the politics of identity and diversity to aid their own ends?

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