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# Green vs. White: An Examination of of Media Portrayals of Radical Environmentalists and White Supremacists

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GREEN VS. WHITE: AN EXAMINATION OF MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF  
RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Justice Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Laurence Michael Pedroni

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RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS

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## ABSTRACT

### GREEN VS. WHITE: AN EXAMINATION OF MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS

by Laurence Michael Pedroni

The rise of the Trump presidency has highlighted not only the white supremacist history of the U.S., but also reflects danger to the survival of the species in the form of wholesale climate change denial. These ideologies are not unique to Trump or his cabinet, instead reflecting long standing U.S. policy. This research seeks to examine how the U.S. media supports and propagates propaganda to support these hegemonic goals. Relevant literature and research seem to suggest that because radical environmental movements often challenge the hegemony of capital accumulation, they might be portrayed as more violent and a greater terrorist threat than white supremacists who support the long standing “white racial” hegemony of racial hierarchy and domination in the U.S. This research examined the relative media portrayal of these two groups, the radical environmental movement and white supremacists in the traditional mainstream news media. Content analysis of three different papers of record (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*) was performed over a 30-year period from 1985 to 2015. Results showed that radical environmentalists were referred to as terrorists three times as often when compared to white supremacists. Mixed results were found in relation to the use of violence frameworks. Additionally, the media plays a significant role in the framing of these groups, both under and over covering these groups and activating certain frameworks to serve hegemonic goals.

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## Chapter I - Introduction

The crowd chanted “we are white, we are a people, we will not be replaced”. This is not the chant from the Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction era; instead this was a rallying cry from protestors in early 2017. A group of torch-wielding white nationalists were protesting the removal of a Confederate monument in Charlottesville, Virginia. No arrests were reported and police only arrived after counter-protesters appeared (Vozella, 2017; para. 2). This image is striking against revelations that the Department of Homeland Security labeled anti-Trump protests as domestic terrorism (Devereaux, 2017). It highlights a longstanding policy in anti-protest rhetoric across the country including bills that would allow drivers to run over and kill highway protestors as long as they do so “accidentally” in North Dakota, another that would allow the state to stiffen fines and seek a year in jail against highway protestors in Minnesota, a Washington state proposal that would reclassify felony civil disobedience as “economic terrorism”, and a shelved anti-picketing law in Michigan that would have made it easier for businesses to sue protestors (Woodman, 2017). While each of these policies have met varied success, they signal a continuing practice by the state of repressing protest against its aligned ruling class interests, namely that of capital accumulation and white racial hegemony.

The study presented in this thesis explores how dominant political discourse and a shared understanding of political movements are framed by capital and the capitalist state via the private mainstream news media. Specifically, this study examines the ideological and discursive applications of “terrorism” and “violence” by the state and presented in the mainstream, corporate media to contemporary sociopolitical movements in the U.S.

Given the current politicization of “terrorism” and “violence,” this research analyzed the application of these labels to Radical Environmental Movements [REM] and White Supremacist [WS] groups. REM include groups like the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, who were at one time considered the “highest domestic terrorism investigative priority” for the FBI (Lewis, 2004). More mainstream environmental groups have been targeted for surveillance, prosecution, and supervision as well. On the other side of the political spectrum, white supremacist groups have witnessed a resurgence both during the tenure of the first African American president and later during the 2016 election cycle. The Southern Poverty Law Center measured a 14% increase in hate groups between 2014 and 2015 (784 to 892). This increase is certainly under-representing the number of white supremacist organizations in the U.S., particularly with the rise of online forums radicalizing racists (i.e. Stormfront or the “Alt Reich” Nation; SPLC, 2016). White supremacist rhetoric reached a pinnacle in 2016 with the presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump who not only mainstreamed white supremacy (with the support of the alt-right movement) but invited it into the White House.

This study examines the extent to which and how papers of record applied discourses of terrorism and violence in the description of radical environmentalists and white supremacists as people, organizations, and political movements. To do this, this study made use of Herman and Chomsky’s “propaganda model” published in their classic work, *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). The propaganda model offers a useful theoretical framework to understand and describe the relationship between capital, the state, and the

mainstream news media. Understanding this relationship is important because it allows researchers to critically examine the processes available to the state and owning class (via private mainstream news media, namely the dominant “papers of record”) to shape the public perception of various political movements and their legitimacy.

This research will build upon and review the theoretical concepts of “violence” and “terrorism” by examining the processes through which some political movements are socially constructed as public threats and others as relatively benign. This research will also examine the extent to which this construction is borne out by empirical evidence (news media “calling it like it is”) and/or reflect dominant ideological interests (e.g. capital accumulation, white supremacy). To do this, the author examined the application of these concepts in mainstream media through a content analysis of three major national newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*) in the United States.

This study seeks to help us to understand the ways in which media frames political questions and political struggles. Two movements were examined, the white supremacist (WS) and radical environmental movements (REM). The reasons to examine these groups are twofold. First, they lie on opposite ends of the political spectrum; WS groups lie on the far-right of the spectrum lying close to fascism. In contrast, REM lie on the far-left with many of them embracing variations of anarchist ideologies. Secondly, both groups represent a pressing danger to the health and survival of certain communities.

To understand these media frames, this study relies on relevant literature and past research which suggests that in the context of a global struggle for human (and various

other species) survival in the face of climate change, and a U.S. political regime that currently reflects a policy position of wholesale climate change denial and dedication to fossil fuels, the dominant, mainstream media will frame the *participants* of radical environmental movements as terrorist and violent actors. Following this framework, the dominant, mainstream media will likely frame the *targets* of radical environmental movements as sympathetic actors. Additionally, past research and literature suggest that contemporary factors (including the new civil rights movement confronting contemporary systemic racism, the color-blind discourse of the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>, and the ideological framework of white supremacy<sup>2</sup> that undergird American sociopolitical history and culture) will result in a dominant media are likely to construct and frame white supremacists as something shorter than a dangerous threat to public safety; that WS will be normalized in their actions and behaviors. They will also construct and frame the victims of white supremacists, largely African American, as undeserving. This is because white supremacists are upholding the white supremacist hegemony that permeates our society and presenting their victims as unworthy actors

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<sup>1</sup> Michelle Alexander (2010; p. 248) notes that “mass incarceration is predicated on the notion that an extraordinary number of African Americans (but not all) have freely chosen a life of crime and thus belong behind bars. A belief that all blacks belong in jail would be incompatible with the social consensus that we have ‘moved beyond’ race and that race is no longer relevant. But a widespread belief that a majority of black and brown men unfortunately belong in jail is compatible with the new American creed, provided that their imprisonment can be interpreted as their own fault. If the prison label on them can be blamed on their culture, poor work ethic, or even their families, then society is absolved of responsibility to do anything about their condition.”

<sup>2</sup> Ansley (1989: p. 1024) defined white supremacy as not only “the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings”.

continues to uphold that hegemonic ideology. Finally, when Radical Environmental movements and White Supremacist groups are compared, the media will *not* apply the concepts of terrorism and violence consistently. This disproportionate application will largely be because radical environmentalists are ultimately challenging the hegemonic control of the corporate owning class and capitalism itself. As the climate crisis gets worse, the choice ultimately becomes between capitalism and the survival of the planet (Klein, 2014).

In the sections that follow, this thesis will examine the connections of hegemonic controls of the state and capitalism, their relation to radical environmentalism and white supremacy, and methods for the creation of propaganda that benefits those ideologies. The next section provides a breakdown of the propaganda model and its connections to Gramscian hegemony and Critical Race Theory. Next, concepts of terrorism and violence are conceptualized before examinations of WS and REM. Chapter III provides details on the methods and methodologies of the current research. Chapter IV examines the current findings and their significance. Finally, Chapter V discusses the limitations and future implications of this work.

## **Chapter II - Theoretical Framework**

### **The Propaganda Model**

The propaganda model, originally outlined by Herman and Chomsky (1988), provides a framework to explain the “performance of the U.S. Media in terms of the basic institutional structures and relationships within which they operate” (p. xi). The propaganda model was created to describe the political economy of communication to help explain the behaviors of mass media in relation to news production. The mass media serve the purpose of communicating messages to their audience, and within a highly unequal class system those messages inevitably take the form of propaganda (Lippmann, 1921). In state-owned media, it is easy to see the takeover of the media and the dissemination of an ideology that benefits the owning classes. In a system in which the media are privately owned, compete amongst themselves, and expose government misdoings in the interest of free speech, this dissemination of propaganda is harder to examine (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This is especially difficult when concepts such as press freedom and freedom of thought are so closely associated with Western Democracies (Goodman, 2017) The propaganda model helps to examine this dissemination of propaganda by uncovering the role of wealth and power and its effects on media interests and decisions. “Filters” in the propaganda model work to marginalize dissent and ensure that the news that is presented to the public serves the ultimate purpose of supporting the owning class and their corporate interests. The filters presented by Herman and Chomsky include: (1) the ownership of mass-media firms; (2) advertising; (3) reliance of the media on government and business interests for

information; (4) flak; and (5) anticommunism. Through these five filters, the propaganda model illuminates how democracy can be undermined or staged through the use of a corporate media that acts as a propaganda machine – effectively “manufacturing consent” of the public in political and corporate processes.

**Mass media ownership.** As any other capitalist enterprise, the media are subject to processes of concentration which result in the shrinking of the number of competing media empires over time. The effects are concerning because as media organizations shrink and consolidate, it becomes easier for the owning classes to centralize and streamline the dissemination of propaganda that benefits them. This also has the effect of limiting what is socially acceptable in terms of political thoughts and behaviors.

Chomsky (1998) points out that limiting the spectrum of opinion but allowing a very lively debate within that constraint gives the illusion of free thought limited by the “presuppositions of the system” (p. 43). This limit on acceptable opinion can have a chilling effect on activism, particularly the radical activism practiced by REM groups, and limiting the forms of activism that people should and more importantly *should not* practice. In contrast, these constraints can also benefit white supremacy through the maintenance of the socially acceptable way to combat racism (i.e. color-blind discourse).

This concentration of control over the media are due to a combination of factors, including a market logic whereby high profitability is equal to survival and neoliberal policies that emphasize deregulation (Pedro, 2011). This concept has only become more apparent over time. In the revised edition of their work, Herman and Chomsky (2002) note the vertical integration of media corporations that marked the 1990s and resulted in

the domination of the media industry by a few corporations. The number of media companies in the U.S. has continued to shrink in recent decades, going from fifty major media companies in 1984 to five in 2004 (Bagdikian, 1997; 2004). This trend has continued to the point where a total of six companies own 90% of the media consumed by Americans (Stewart, 2014). The recently cancelled merger between Comcast Corporation and Time Warner Cable would have resulted in a corporate media giant controlling 57% of the market share under current broadband definitions. FCC Chairman, Tom Wheeler, commented that this merger would have posed an “unacceptable risk to competition and innovation especially given the growing importance of high-speed broadband to online video and innovative new services” (Trefis Team, 2015; par. 3). In addition to consolidation, the media are subject to conglomeration, the form of cross-ownership that is common among giant corporations. This effectively prevents journalists from criticizing the business operation of their parent companies (Klinenberg, 2003; Pedro, 2011). An example of this could be found in the then ownership of General Electric by NBC Universal until 2011, when the latter sold its majority stake to Comcast (O’Toole, 2013). Another example is the Walt Disney Corporation, which not only produces movies and TV shows, but also owns 277 radio stations, multiple cable networks including ESPN and ABC, and book publishing companies; including famed comic book company Marvel Publishing. Today, it is almost conceivable to have a child who only consumes media owned and approved by the Walt Disney Corporation.

The combined effects of concentration and conglomeration have resulted in the financialization of the media empire, where the number of financial managers and similar

actors infiltrate the company through the board of directors and as shareholders, increasing pressure to make as much money as quickly as possible (Pedro, 2011). Finally, as these corporations grow larger and form closer alliances, the elites of these corporations will form their own in-group, aligning their interests even further. While these in-groups will usually reflect financial interests of the owning class, some media owners will represent other right-wing ideologies.

The apparent rise of neo-fascism and right-wing populism in the West, demonstrated by the “Brexit” debate/vote, the rise of right wing Nationalist parties in France, Italy, and Austria, and most notably the election of Donald Trump, whose campaign played to fear, racism and xenophobia to secure the white electorate, is also clearly reflected in the news media. While it is beyond the scope of this work to engage in a “chicken or egg” debate on causal relationships between right-wing media and the rise to power of right-wing politicians, it is important to note the correlated rise of right-wing media, the voracious coverage of reactionary politics by more “moderate,” liberal mainstream sources (papers of record, CNN, BBC, MSNBC, and so forth), and the political success of those touting nationalist, neo-fascist, and/or right-wing populist solutions to contemporary social problems. Perhaps one of the loudest voices touting white supremacist propaganda is Stephen Bannon, former executive chair of the popular online conservative news outlet, *Breitbart*. Bannon has become a vocal defender of the alt-right movement and has used his platform to push against the rise of “political correctness” (Posner, 2016). Alt-right adherents view themselves as the “true conservatives” because of their hatred of globalism and support for the preservation of the “apotheosis of Western European

culture” (Bokhari & Yiannopoulos, 2016; para. 30). Objectively, the alt-right movement reflects white supremacy, anti-Semitism, and a fear based xenophobia (NPR, 2016). Its spokespeople and armies of bloggers argue that they are the “true conservatives” in the U.S., in that they wish to conserve the white racist, patriarchal, white nativist elements of U.S. policy and practice, present and past. In their “guide to the alt-right”, Bokhari and Yiannopoulos (2016; para. 34) “describe establishment conservatives who care more about the free market than preserving western culture, and who are happy to endanger the latter with mass immigration where it serves the purposes of big business, as ‘cuckservatives’”. Within this context, “Western culture” is a code-word for “white culture,” which needs to be protected at all costs, even the profits of big business. The toxic masculinity of the alt-right is also apparent here; establishment conservatives are cuckold to corporate interests, and are therefore not “real men.” Instead, it is the alt-right who are authentic examples of masculinity. Bannon reached new fame during the 2016 election cycle in the U.S. with his support of President-elect Donald Trump—support that culminated in Bannon’s selection to Chief White House Strategist for the Trump administration. Bannon’s platform (both in the White House and with *Brietbart*) serves to create a news media (through the boost in legitimacy afforded to *Brietbart*) that produces and reflects white supremacist ideologies much in the same way that media has traditionally reflected the ideological dominance of the capitalist class.

**Advertising.** The second filter Herman and Chomsky (1988) consider integral to the propaganda model is the dependence on advertising revenue that is felt among the media. This filter can further be divided into the direct and indirect influence of revenue on

media outlets (Pedro, 2011). Advertisers are directly able to influence the media through the money they pay for advertisements in newspapers. Before the growth of advertising, newspapers were priced to cover the cost of doing business. When advertising came onto the scene, papers that attracted ads could afford copy prices below their production costs, putting papers without ads at a serious price disadvantage (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). This effectively resulted in advertisers choosing which media sources were most sympathetic or congruent with their needs, leaving working class and radical media at a significant disadvantage. The indirect influence occurs without any direct or intentional pressure, mainly through journalists changing their behavior so as not to “bite the hand that feeds them” (Pedro, 2011, p. 1881). Media companies learn what programming and stories are most likely to make them the most money, and will continue to produce it, resulting in media content that is the most market friendly (Herman & Chomsky, 1998).

In an interview with Mullen (2009), Herman and Chomsky have also argued that advertising has become an even stronger force on the production of news because of greater competition between traditional media outlets and internet forces. This (along with concentration of ownership) has created an even stronger focus on the bottom line and an “integration between editorial and business operations” (p. 14). An example of this integration can be the use of native advertising which is the integration of advertisements and editorial content (Attinger, 2014). While the website BuzzFeed is most famous for sponsored content, sponsored ads have also appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, and *Time Magazine*. An example of this can be found in a *New York Times* (NYT) page titled “How

Our Energy Needs Are Changing in a Series of Interactive Charts”. In what is essentially a full-page ad for Chevron, the *NYT* examines the changing energy needs in the U.S. without examining the causes of those changing needs, namely climate change and the role Chevron and other energy companies played in it. While the *NYT* does make sure to point out that this is branded content made without the input of the editorial board, this type of advertising is still dangerous as a many people still find it difficult to distinguish between editorial and advertising content in native advertising (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016).

The second filter works as a two-way street for corporate media’s bottom line. Media acts a mouthpiece for advertisers, selling us products and identities. In this process, corporate media are also selling a product to advertisers – viewers (Goodman, 2017).

**Reliance of the media on government and corporations for information.** The third filter on the propaganda model holds that because of daily news demands coupled with the immense pressure to cut costs, the media are forced into a "symbiotic relationship" with government and private sector sources as a source of information (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 18). Economic factors force news sites and media to concentrate their resources on places and sources where they are most likely to receive some significant news and where news conferences are likely to be held: the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, and Washington, D.C. in general. This results in what is called the principle of bureaucratic affinity “only other bureaucracies can satisfy the input needs of a news bureaucracy” (Fishman, 1980; as cited in Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Other

reasons given for the symbiotic relationship between the media and official sources are to maintain an air of objectivity and the high potential cost of taking information from sources that are not “*prima facie* credible” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 19). This reliance on official sources causes the media to turn to the government consistently without questioning the information given (Pedro, 2011).

Major papers of record recently showed this reliance on government sources that are not “*prima facie* credible” by publishing anonymous leaks from the CIA over the 2016 elections. The *Washington Post* recently published an article claiming that unnamed sources reported to them that the CIA, in a secret assessment, concluded that Russia deliberately interfered in the elections to help Donald Trump win the U.S. presidency (Entous, Nakashima, & Miller, 2016). *New York Times* published a similar article, claiming that unnamed sources asserted that Russian hackers attacked both the RNC’s and the DNC’s computers in an effort to disrupt the elections and undermine faith in the vote (Sanger & Shane, 2016). Little evidence was given beyond anonymous sources and closed-door briefings, but these claims are still presented as *prima facie* credible (Greenwald, 2016). While evidence continues to come forward about the possibility of the Russian Government attempting to interfere in the election, no conclusive evidence has been presented and investigations are still ongoing.

Media companies’ reliance on government sources also extends to the experts that are contacted by the media. This is done through “coopting the experts”; where the government will hire the experts as consultants, fund their research, or organize think tanks which will act as intermediary in this process (Owen & Breutigam, 1978, p. 7;

Herman and Chomsky, 1988). These experts often promote neoliberal policies designed to benefit corporate interests. This can also take the form of *free market environmentalism* where neoliberal ideologies are applied to maintenance (or lack thereof) of the climate and planet (Beder, 2001). In this case, neoliberal experts argue that by expanding the rights of corporations to buy more and more of the environment, they will be incentivized to protect it. This use of experts, who act as "supposedly impartial intellectuals" serve to legitimate the ideas and propaganda put out by the state; examples of this can range from the free market to the war on terror (Pedro, 2011, p. 1886).

**Flak.** The fourth filter, flak, refers to negative responses the media receives in response to its programming or statements. Flak can take many forms, including letters to Congress, calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches, or most recently blog posts on the internet (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Mullen, 2007). While some level of variety and disagreement is expected in a capitalist democracy, other elements (i.e. organized responses of governments and multinational corporations) limit the scope and variety of generally available information to limited scope of information that supports hegemonic goals (Pedro, 2011). Producing flak that is consequential to mass media requires power to back up that criticism; power that can only come from other corporate powers resentful of media criticism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In other words, criticism will only be considered consequential if it comes from another corporate media source. This means that only another corporation is capable of threatening the corporate media in a meaningful way. Pedro (2011) argues that flak takes three different forms. The first is as a preventative threat mechanism where information is stopped from being published

because it might be negatively received by the elite. The second is an attack and neutralization mechanism whereby inconvenient information is attacked and its credibility questioned, so as to neutralize its effect. The third form is the reinforcement of media tendency to accept pro-elite opinions and interests. This can take the form of the media being accused of “being unpatriotic, leftist, anti-business, or of not sufficiently attacking totalitarian regimes” (Pedro, 2011: 1886). In the age of the internet, flak has begun to come from the growing number of right-wing bloggers (largely taking the place of right-wing radio hosts; Mullen, 2007). This, along with the right-wing push against so called “liberal bias” has pushed the mass media to the right and has resulted in a greater reluctance to challenge corporate propaganda and agendas (As discussed above; Alterman, 2003).

Recently, flak has taken on a new form in the term “fake news”. Fake news can be defined as information that is made up and designed to look a credible journalistic report (Holan, 2016). While fake news has taken on a variety of forms over the years, including chain e-mails, the rise of Donald Trump and Facebook provided new means towards dominating media culture. Facebook algorithms and online advertising allowed bloggers to monetize fake news with some making up to \$30,000 a month (Snydel, 2016). Trump turned fake news into a weapon by both relying on previous claims that were proven untrue, like the fact that he was against the Iraq War, and calling any media source critical of him fake news (Holan, 2016). This call of calling unfriendly media as fake news was picked up by his supporters, most often against mainstream sources like CNN and the New York Times.

**Anti-Communism.** Originally theorized as anti-communism, the fifth filter focused on content that prevented any meaningful criticism of capitalism, and the capitalist empire of the U.S. This was largely to prevent challenges to the capitalist system and the U.S. as a capitalist state, but also to prevent other sovereign nations from exerting control of resources that would not benefit the United States and its perceived economic and/or military interests.

This can be seen in the modern economic history of Latin America, where individual countries would nationalize their resources, at the cost of American corporate interests (i.e., the Bolivian Gas Wars or the Banana Wars). The United States then imposed an economic charter designed to end all forms of economic nationalism (Green, 1971). The threat of economic nationalism, and certainly communism, was not understood as a military threat, but as a threat to the economic interests of the United States (Chomsky, 2004). Ultimately, anti-communist ideology in the U.S. operated through the creation and maintenance of fear. During the first War on Terror under the Reagan administration, U.S. citizens were told to be fearful of Libyan hitmen, Russian bombers, and *Mein Kampf*-carrying Nicaraguans. Herman and Chomsky (2002) acknowledged the weakening of this filter in the second edition of their book (attributing it to the collapse of the Soviet Union), arguing that it would be offset by the ideological force of the miracle of the market popularized by President Ronald Reagan. Essentially, to manufacture consent, a common enemy is required to focus the electorate against (Goodman, 2017). The specter of communism would be replaced with various other bogeymen of the time: the Taliban, Hamas, Al Queda, Iran (Pedro, 2011). Most recently groups like the Islamic

State, and the ever-present fear of terrorist attacks of all sorts have become the new target for defeat, reasons for fear, and justification for islamophobia.

The label of terrorism has historically been used as a delegitimizing force against activist groups, including environmental groups (Potter, 2011). In this sense, terrorism becomes a buzzword that is ill-defined, allowing the state near free reign in criminalizing REM. The question remains however: Are these labels empirically accurate? Have REMs historically caused damage on par with international acts of terrorism such as 9/11? Along the same lines, why has the label of terrorism not been applied to groups that have historically, terrorized minority groups in this country, either legally (i.e., the police) or illegally (i.e., the KKK)?

### **Hegemony**

The propaganda model helps us to understand the connections between capitalism, the capitalist state, and the mainstream—largely private—news media. It also helps us to understand in a more specific and fleshed out way how the media, specifically the papers of record, contribute to the hegemonic process. Originally theorized by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), the concept of hegemony has become one of the most important contributions to modern Marxist thought (Bates, 1975). Gramsci points to the fact that the ruling classes rule not only by force, but also through the production of ideological consent (Bates, 1975). In this sense, “the foundation of a ruling class is equivalent to the creation of a *weltanschauung* [worldview]” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 75). Marx made a similar observation, noting that “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class” (Tucker, 1978, p. 489). Gramsci and the neo-Marxist

schools that would follow him expanded upon this idea, creating a frame to analyze the methods of the dominant class to exert forms of power and social control, in part through their capture and/or influence over the state and media. Every state has the ability to impose coercive methods of control—primarily violence—when confronted with resistance. Hegemony provides capitalists the ability to maintain control of the capitalist state and its populace through the maintenance of their ideas and ideologies (Bates, 1975). It is important to note that hegemony is not all encompassing or uniform. Though media discourse might be “encoded” with hegemonic messaging, it is not always effective—and consumers may or may not “decode” such messages as intended. To remain effective, hegemony must be constantly produced and constructed through a series of “specific economic, political and ideological practices” (Hall, 1986, p. 14).

Gramsci argued that intellectuals play a large role in hegemonic construction, and by studying their roles, he broke down Marx’s vague notion of the “superstructure” (the supporting infrastructure of the capitalist mode of production, including the arenas of cultural and ideological production via education, media, art, and so forth) into two “floors”: civil society and political society. The civil society consists of “private organisms,” groups such as churches, clubs, and journals, which contribute to the “molecular fashion to the formation of social and political consciousness” (Bates, 1975, p. 353). Public education fits into the civil society as well, particularly curricula that place emphasis on training children for life and the push towards vocational schools (Mayo, 2014). For Gramsci, this push towards vocational training mortgaged the futures of students and was the first steps in creating what he called a “Fordist *gorilla*

*ammaestrato*” [“trained gorilla”] (Gramsci, 1971, p. 139). The political society refers to public institutions—such as courts, police, and the military—that allow the government to exercise direct control over the population. When hegemony cannot be reproduced through the civil society, through their control of the state, the owning classes will resort to the political society, thus forcing compliance on the populace.

Forced compliance is not the ideal process for the purposes of hegemonic social control, because it is highly costly, easily visible, and can delegitimize the authority of the state. Instead, the owning classes prefer to manufacture consent by creating a “world view compatible with the existing structure of power in society” through the media (Hallin, 1994). While not building directly from Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, the propaganda model can be accurately referred to as a hegemonic theory of the mass media (Patrick & Thrall, 2007). It is through this process (mass media ownership, advertising, government sources, flak, and anti-communism) that the capitalist state and the capitalist class can take control of the media and create a world view that is consistent with their needs. Through this process of manufacturing consent, mass media are creating a shared worldview that favors the wants and needs of the owning class.

### **Hegemony and Race**

Traditional discussions regarding hegemony have focused on the role of class and capital in the creation and employment of dominant ideologies. Hall (1986) argues that although Gramsci did not write specifically about “the problems of racism”, the deeper themes of his work provide an intellectual and theoretical lens that are helpful in understanding contemporary racism (p. 10). Critical Race Theory and other critical

sociological scholarship examining “institutional” or “systemic” racism have applied the concept of hegemony to understand constructions of race, whiteness and white supremacy, affording us a greater understanding of contemporary systemic racism. For this work specifically, understanding the creation and maintenance of those racial frameworks helps to provide a roadmap for examining media representations of the most obvious forms of white supremacy.

The white racial frame consists of racialized stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, narratives and idealized imagery (Feagin, 2013). It allows those constructed as white to rationalize their existing racial prejudices and privileges. The white racial frame is more than just a singular frame; it routinely defines a broad perspective and provides the interpretations that not only structure and normalize our society, but allow people to make sense of it.

Hegemonic whiteness, or white racial hegemony is created and maintained in part through ideologies and ideological narratives of white supremacy. White supremacy was defined by historian George Fredrickson as the “attitudes, ideologies, and politics associated with blatant forms of white or European dominance over ‘non-white’ populations” (1982, p. xi). White supremacy assumes that race (a social construct) is biologically significant; that there is some significant biological variable to explain, legitimate, and/or justify the socio-political dominance of those constructed as white. This belief persists despite the overwhelming anthropological and biological evidence that disproves the biological significance of race (Sussman, 2014). This notion of biological significance contains both the means and justification for white rule: white

people have the superior, biological features to rule over others and are superior because they rule. Its construction and application is systemic, absolutely and necessarily including the state. While the biological paradigm of white superiority serves as the basis of white supremacist beliefs, other forms of racism (i.e. differentialist (Taguieff, 1987), culturist (Blaut, 1992), and colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva E. , 2010)) have stronger currency in contemporary culture. It is important to note that white supremacy requires constant production and maintenance, through the civil and political floors, for it to maintain its hegemonic effect.

Whiteness as a concept and an identity, is (for example) a legal construction, where the state—through the maintenance of slavery, Jim Crow, and other forms of segregation—codified racial categories into law and its application (Haney-Lopez, 1991; Roediger, 1991). While the state does play a role in the maintenance of race, “civil society” plays an important role as well in the production and maintenance society in a “racially structured form” (Hall, 1986, p. 26).

In the contemporary “post-civil rights” era, white supremacy is rarely expressed as overtly as in previous eras. Instead, “color blind racism” rationalizes racial inequalities and inferred black inferiority as the “product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and black’s imputed cultural limitations” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Following the civil rights movement(s) in the U.S., it became less socially acceptable for public policy and white institutions to espouse outright racist beliefs. Instead, racist ideologies are hidden in coded language (Haney-Lopez, 2014). Examples of this can include conversations where white people try to justify the over-policing of African-American

communities by blaming African-American culture or the fact that African-American people are supposedly “more aggressive and high tempered” than whites, or that black people are worse off because “they don’t want to work hard” (Bonilla-Silva, 2002). This reformation of racism allows whites to safely internalize and espouse racist ideology and support white supremacy without believing that they themselves are racist.

This expansion of the concept of hegemony to examine white supremacy and the white racial frame have proven to be very useful in examining the continued domination of whiteness over other social constructions of race. Because race is a social construct, it must be constantly recreated and reimagined. the propaganda model (which can be seen as model for the creation of hegemony) can be expanded, in a similar way, to not only recognize the creation of media content that supports capitalist and state interests, but also white supremacy.

### **Limitations of the Propaganda Model**

Although the propaganda model allows academics to explore the creation and maintenance of hegemony through mass media, there are important limitations to note. While the model makes predictions on the content of media, it does not specify how to empirically test how those results were created. Because the effects of each filter are often subtle, there is no way to empirically test how strong the effect of each filter was (Boyd-Barrett, 2004). For example, we do not know if an article published by *The New York Times* described a REM activity harshly because the author(s) relied on government sources for information or because of the newspaper’s advertising ties to the oil company, Chevron, or because of the author’s own view. Due to these limitations, this research will

not be examining the effects of the individual filters, but instead it will focus on the stories themselves and the messaging conveyed to consumers. The propaganda model also assumes that the capitalist class will act in unison. While the owning class will have the tendency to act (consciously or not) against class threats, it is important to note that not all members of the owning class will act to protect themselves. Their tendency to work together will at least match their tendency to compete, as we are led to believe they do. Similarly, it is important to note that, similar to hegemony itself, the messaging in the media are not absolute. The media, because of its corporate structure, will compete for viewers, scoops, and messaging. This variance though is limited to socially acceptable opinions and messages that will benefit the state and ruling classes more often. This can explain the variance in media opinion from right-wing sources such as Fox News or Brietbart, to more liberal sources such as Vox and MSNBC. While these media sources will approach the maintenance of hegemony in different ways, their messaging will ultimately seek to maintain the hegemonic processes of capitalism, American imperialism, and whiteness.

Additionally, the rise of new forms of media and their impact on the propaganda model. Despite the role the advent of the internet and other sources of crowd-sourced information has played in modern culture and activism (see the Black Lives Matter Movement), Herman and Chomsky argued that the propaganda model remains as powerful as ever, largely because the internet is subject to the same capitalist controls as everything else in our society (Mullen, 2007). The papers of record, CNN, MSNBC, and other sources of corporate media have the money and power to make their information

much more readily available than any small news agency. Herman and Chomsky argue that the only way to weaken the capitalist effects on the media are the onset of a more egalitarian society.

The propaganda model provides a useful framework for the examination of the media and the role it plays in the maintenance of hegemony. For this work, it is the creation of frameworks of terrorism and violence that are going to be examined because of the role they play in the framing of REM and WS groups. Both of these concepts are social creations designed to reflect powerful interests and will be examined in the following sections.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptualizing and applying “terrorism” to the creation of hegemony.**

Terrorism remains inconsistently defined in applied and scholarly circles, there are some commonalities that can be gleaned from existing literature on both state terror and acts by non-state actors deemed terroristic. It is perhaps most important to remember that terrorism is a social construct (Ben-Yehuda, 1993; Turk, 2002). The state will interpret and label an event and its causes as “terroristic” not in the interest of conceptual consistency or empirical accuracy, but in a “conscious effort to manipulate perceptions to promote certain interests at the expense of others” (Turk, 2004, p. 3). “Terror”, the purposefully vague target of the long running Western wars in the Middle East, could most simply be defined as “terror *they* carry out against *us*” (Chomsky, 2008, p. 330). The accusation of terrorism, even implicitly, has multiple consequences. It grants law enforcement a variety of new powers and fewer procedural limits protecting those

accused. This can also result in a presumption of guilt, indefinite detention, lack of counsel, an inability to receive a fair trial, and guilt by association (Cole, 2003). The term terrorist is ultimately designed to play upon deep-seated fears and aims to create a knee jerk reaction, with or without evidence. The purpose is not to inform, but to mobilize people through fear. By keeping the term amorphous and ill defined, the state and others can silence opposition and intimidate critics (Vaderheiden, 2008).

Different state agencies employ different definitions of “terrorism,” and there are nearly as many definitions of it in academia as there are articles about the issue. Examples of definitions employed by the state include that of the FBI, which defines domestic terrorism as involving acts that are dangerous to human life and appear intended to intimidate/influence a civilian population, government policy or conduct (18 U.S.C. § 2331). Similarly, the Department of Homeland Security’s definition expands the above definition to include attacks on critical infrastructure and violations of criminal law. Criminological definitions of terrorism include “the deliberate fear of getting more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent's will to persist in a political conflict” (Turk, 2004). Sociological definitions state that “terrorism is the strategic use of violence and threats of violence by an oppositional political group against civilians or noncombatants, and is usually intended to influence several audiences” (Goodwin, 2006). The Global Terrorism Database (START, 2016) defines terrorism as “the threat or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (GTD, 2016). This variance in definition and lack of a clear

operationalized definition allows academics and activists and policymakers and security actors and media pundits near free reign in picking the definition that suits their purposes. These above definitions preclude any mention of state terrorism, and in fact limit terrorism to the actions of the powerless against the powerful. If we ignore the parts of the definition that preclude state actions, acts of terrorism are almost indistinguishable from actions of *counter-terror* (sometimes referred to as counterinsurgency) that the United States and other states use regularly, such as torture, the use of drone strikes, or the practice of extraordinary rendition (Chomsky, 2003).

Hadley (2009) separates definitions of terrorism into two subcategories: Political Definitions and Just War Definitions. Political Definitions are usually backed by governmental agencies and argue that a condition of terrorism is unlawfulness. The above definition used by the Department of Homeland Security is a prime example of this. As Hadley points out, the issue with using lawfulness as a requirement of the definition, is that any acts that are not already codified as against the law do not count as terrorism. Definitions that focus on legality or actions committed by individuals also preclude the consideration of terroristic actions committed by the state. Most discussions regarding terrorism are focused on attacks against liberal Western democracies, usually by groups (and sometimes “rogue states”) that presumably hate “us” for no reason. This follows Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) where the racialized concept of the “other” has been applied to Arab Muslims in particular resulting in the stereotype of the “evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs” (p. 27).

The second type of definition, the Just War Definition, draws mainly from philosophers and places the focus on the victim. The Just War Definition is “the organized use of violence (or threat of violence), against noncombatants (“*innocents*” in a special sense) or their property for political purposes” (Coady, 2004, p. 39). Outside of war, (where innocence is determined by connection to each side’s respective armed forces), innocence is determined through individual actions; whether or not an individual has done something to warrant violent action, either through self-defense or preemptory violence (Walzer, 1977). Even when discussing violence as a means to a political end as a necessary component to terrorism, issues remain. Hadley (2009) uses the example of a Party A supporter smashing the campaign table of Party B and violently assaulting Party B supporter. Assault is by nature a violent act, and there is certainly a political motive in this example. But this would not meet the criterion for any of the definitions of terrorism listed above; and if did, there would be no act of “political violence that was not terrorism” (Hadley, 2009 p.372).

This focus precludes any discussion on terroristic acts committed by western liberal democracies. Because standard definitions of terrorism ignore actions by the state, it is necessary to define state terror directly. State terrorism can be defined as “threats or acts of violence [including torture] carried out by representatives of the state against civilians to instill fear for political purposes” (Blakeley, 2007, p. 288). Examples of state terror are common in critical literature, but are not constructed in mainstream media as such. This failure by corporate media to frame state terror can be explained by the propaganda model. The mainstream media, in serving state interests, would be hesitant to directly

criticize state actions due to the potential threat to corporate media interests, and will instead paint victims of U.S. state terror as unsympathetic and underserving of our attention. Some historical examples could include CIA actions in Cuba authorized by President Kennedy which resulted in the bombing of hotels, and industrial installations, the sinking of fishing boats, and the poisoning of livestock and crops. By not covering these actions, the corporate media helps to solidify Cuba (and other countries) as hostile actors bent on destroying the U.S. Terroristic actions against Cuba also include the failed Bay of Pigs invasion and multiple attempted assassinations of Fidel Castro (Bolender, 2010). Other historical examples include the carpet bombing of Laos, now considered the most bombed location in the world, with 30% of those bombs remaining undetonated (Branfman, 2013; Fuller, 2015); or the Nixon administration's overthrow of the democratically elected government in Chile on Sep. 11, 1973 (dubbed appropriately the first 9/11), an action with the goal of killing the "virus" of foreign countries and leaders pursuing a policy independent of Washington (Chomsky, 2016).

This tendency of scholars and the media to ignore state terror in larger discussions of terrorism serves to refrain from challenging existing institutions and power relations and examine terror on state terms (Blakely, 2007). While historical examples of American state terror abound, there are certainly contemporary examples as well. President Obama, instead of ending the war on terrorism, shifted the focus onto extrajudicial assassinations with the use of drone technology. Recently, the Obama administration released a report detailing the death toll as a result of drone bombings in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. The report detailed that the government killed between 2,372-2,581 combatants

between January 20, 2009 and December 31, 2015 (Devereaux, 2016). This report also estimated between 64 and 116 civilian deaths during Obama's two terms. This contradicts even the most conservative international estimate and past evidence. Drone strikes are not accurate, with an estimated two percent of strikes killing "high-level" targets (Alkarama Foundation, 2013). Additionally, the Obama Administration uses problematic methods to measure whether a person killed in a drone strike was a "militant" or not. Any adult male killed in a drone strike is considered a "militant" unless undeniable proof is offered to the contrary. The CIA often does not know who is being killed in drone strikes, legitimizing the strikes after the fact (Engel & Windrem, 2013). All of this together results in violations, not only of the Constitution (the 5th Amendment and Eighth), but of international law (UDHR, Articles 10; ICCPR, Article 14; Armaline, Glasberg, & Purkayastha, 2015).

The definitions of terrorism forged by the state and its agents have long been used to describe the actions of environmentalists and to delegitimize them. According to the state, Radical Environmental Movement (REM) actions have not cost anyone their lives, but instead have cost hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to private industry (and government testing facilities) are deemed "terroristic" actions. These actions can be boiled down to the actions of the weak – marginalized activists – against the strong – capital and the owning class, whose interests are defended by the power of the state (eg., litigation protecting private property, etc).

In contrast, the actions of the state that support and maintain white supremacy (tolerance of racist hate speech, police brutality, mass incarceration, etc.) have never been

considered a form of terrorism. Instead, these actions are connected to a “broken criminal justice system” or the individual failings of those caught up in it, not as a system designed to systematically destroy minority communities. This can be seen in the birth of the American police department out of slave patrols (Walker , 1980). Slave Patrols were disbanded during early reconstruction and replaced with federal militaries, state militias, and the KKK in an effort to maintain individual and societal control over African Americans (Durr, 2015). These then gave way to the first major police departments in the mid-nineteenth century (Walker, 1980). In some areas of the South, publicly-known members of the KKK served as police, prosecutors, judges, and public officials (King, 2012). The militarization of the police and the rise of the “warrior cop” in the 1980s-1990s (Balko, 2014) and the “war on drugs” targeting primarily communities of color created a “New Jim Crow” system (Alexander, 2010), revealing the disproportionate impact of policing and corrections systems on communities of color. More recently, FBI investigations into domestic terror groups revealed that white supremacist groups were recruiting “ghost skins” to strategically infiltrate local law enforcement (Speri, 2017). This historical connection, combined with the rapid militarization, has resulted in what amounts to a standing army with a history of maintaining white supremacy and other power structures.

**Defining and applying the concept of violence.** Kirkpatrick (2008) and others have provided useful lenses to conceptually examine violence, but they do not adequately place that violence in context; instead they place it in the singular category of being “uncivil”. Kirkpatrick does not define her concept of “uncivil” directly, instead relying on

comparing it to the “nonviolent” tactics of the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King Jr. (Carter, 2009). Anything that does not conform to the white-washed history of the Civil Rights Movement is therefore uncivil and an undesirable form of social action. In one section, Kirkpatrick notes that once all references to African American liberation are removed from his speeches, Malcom X’s teachings could be confused for the militia movement, a group that she includes Timothy McVeigh in (Kirkpatrick, 2008). This connection serves as a delegitimization of left wing movements who do not conform to a white washed version of civility. This shows that a more nuanced discussion surrounding activism and violence are needed. To begin, containing violence in this single category is dangerous in two different ways. First, it is problematic to equate violence against property with violence against people or other living beings. Second, to combine all forms of violence into a singular category ignores historical inequities and power struggles. In an interview while she was imprisoned for conspiracy in the armed takeover of the Marin County Courthouse in 1970 (she was later acquitted in a federal trial), Angela Davis was asked whether or not she approved of “violence” in revolutionary movements (2011)<sup>3</sup>. Davis replied “when someone asks me about violence, I just find it incredible. Because what it means is the person who’s asking that question has absolutely no idea what Black people have gone through—what Black people have experienced in this country since the time the first Black person was kidnapped from the shores of Africa”. Historically, minority communities in this country have been the targets of

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<sup>3</sup> To be clear, while Davis was imprisoned and interviewed in 1970, it was later included in the *Black Power Mixtapes* which was released in 2011.

violence, either through institutional forms of oppression such as the criminal justice system or through the actions of individual racists. Ultimately, Kirkpatrick's analysis has less to do with violence and most likely has more to do with being what she considers "uncivil" behavior. An analysis surrounding civility and incivility is problematic because ultimately social norms are created and enforced through the state. In this process of creating social norms, protest is also going to be separated into approved and non-approved forms. The construction of civility would include when public outrage/protest/"troublemaking" is legitimate and constitutionally protected, and when it is illegitimate. An example of this comes in recent legislation in North Dakota that would allow drivers to cause injury or death to protestors blocking traffic so long as the driver does so unintentionally (Levenson & Hassan, 2017). Rep Keith Kempenich, who introduced the bill in response to the Dakota Access Pipeline water protectors, argued that "it turned from a protest to basically terrorism on the roadways" (para. 5). These forms of legal protections show who is protected from violence and property and who is not. Damage by REM actions are heavily criminalized, but individual victims of the KKK are told by the state that they should suffer harms of hate because we prioritize the freedom of speech. This inclusion of civility also assumes a non-violent state, something that is not empirically accurate. In actuality, the State wields a near monopoly on different forms of violence—and it definitely holds a monopoly over "legitimate" violence (Weber, 1921).

As discussed above, the ruling class will attempt to manufacture consent through the hegemonic processes. When this fails, they will resort to violence that is often, but not always enacted through the state (in some cases paramilitary forces with tacit state

approval, like the KKK following reconstruction, are also employed). As Weber points out, “the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of a legitimate (i.e., considered to be legitimate) violence” (1958, p. 78). These forms of violence can take various shapes depending on their function. The criminal justice system is ultimately defined by violence, whether that violence is committed by individual law enforcement agencies, or through a whole system of state-sanctioned violence like the “prison industrial complex.” While groups like the police are able to perform state-sanctioned violence (i.e., legitimate violence), violence at the hands of the state exists in almost every form of the criminal justice system. Violence at the hands of the carceral state is legitimate as long as it is preceded by “clearly defined laws, administrative protocol, and due process” (Murakawa, 2014, p. 45). Whereas direct forms of violence have immediate, often grave consequences, violence can also take more indirect forms. As Epstein pointed out “If I take a gun and shoot you, that’s criminal. If I expose you to some chemicals, which knowingly are going to kill you? What difference is there? The difference is it takes longer to kill you” (Achbar & Abbot, 2003). Indirect forms of violence at the hands of the state can take almost limitless forms. One of the most prominent examples maybe the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis which resulted in the loss of 40 percent of the world’s wealth. Despite what might be characterized as the largest financial crime in the history of the world, no one was criminalized or sent to prison (Taibbi, 2014). In this sense, violence at the hand of the state is legitimate and deemed “normal” while violence between individuals is deemed illegitimate and ‘bad’; leading to the almost exclusive use of the term violence to actions between individuals

(Collins, 2008; Lindengerger & Lüdtkke, 1995). While the above examples are more overt forms of state violence, it is important to note that violence at the hands of the state, also known as political violence, can take a variety of forms that are much more covert.

Discussions surrounding political violence should include concepts such as legal violence and the various ways the legal system can perpetuate systems of power and property interests. One of the ways that this can happen is because the wealthy classes have better access to the legal system, they can act as repeat players and litigate to create favorable rules and precedent to their interests (Galanter, 1974). For example, corporations targeted by REM activists can use the legal system to sue activists, and can invoke the power of the state by pressing criminal charges against activists. Similarly, the state can facilitate and protect the political space for white supremacists, for example, through the absolutist protection of free speech – even hate speech. This philosophy (sometimes called the American doctrine), argues that restriction of hate speech is incompatible with the First Amendment (Matsuda , 1989). This practice is at odds with standards set forth in international law (Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) and with standards set forth in other comparable western democracies (the Equality Act in the United Kingdom, Sections 318 and 319 of the Canadian Criminal Code, and hate speech laws in Australia and New Zealand). Legal remedies to racism and hate speech ultimately recognize the structural realities and consequences of racism (Matsuda, 1989).

The concept of political violence helps capture the ways in which the state responds to different forms of “terroristic” activities or organizations designated as “terror” groups.

The tactics of these groups, however, may be characterized by the state as terroristic or recognized as legitimate. Law, power, and capital play a role in this process. In a debate on the legitimacy of political violence, Noam Chomsky (1967) presents a series of important arguments. He starts with the belief that all violence is abhorrent and that anyone who perpetrates is guilty. While Chomsky ultimately supports nonviolence, he is careful to note that there are some arguments in contradiction. The first is that “selective terror—killing certain officials and frightening others—tended to save the population from a much more extreme government terror, the continuing terror that exists when a corrupt official can do things that are within his power in the province that he controls” (Chomsky, 1967 para. 9) The second argument that Chomsky puts forth is that an act of violence can free someone from an “inferiority complex” and allows them to enter into the political life. This is similar to Frantz Fanon’s argument that violence was the best method for liberating colonized peoples. For Fanon, killing an oppressor had two results; elimination of both the oppressor and the oppressed. To Fanon (1963), the act of physical rebellion against one’s (in his context, colonial) oppressors was a social psychological necessity for the long-term empowerment of the oppressed. The third argument is that violence against the state will lead to reprisal against the revolutionary group, an action that in turn will win adherents to that revolutionary group. All of these caveats were presented with the understanding that the state is the ultimate perpetrator of violence and these actions are a response to that violence.

In relation to this work, conversations about violence are crucially important because understanding the different forms violence can take, in support and against hegemony,

can shape media coverage. As will be illustrated in sampled media accounts, and as illustrated in research to date on these movements (Potter, 2011; SPLC, 2016), REM and white supremacist groups both ultimately use violence to advance movement goals, but radically different forms of it. REM chooses forms of violence that tends to cause economic damage—the destruction of capital and interruption of consumption and capital accumulation. REM activists’ tactics include targeted boycott campaigns, the release of animals that are to be farmed or experimented on, or the destruction of property, even with the use of explosives. Even though their tactics vary widely, different environmental activist groups, both mainstream and radical, have been targeted and criminalized on counter-terrorism grounds (Potter, 2011). In contrast, white supremacists choose to focus their actions against black and brown bodies (and preserving *state* symbols legitimizing white supremacy, e.g., Confederate monument/flag debates). When Discussions characterize both REM and WS activities as “violence,” these narratives equate violence against property to violence against people, those discussions ultimately recreate existing structures of power. Instead, social scientists need to operationalize a definition of violence that separates property damage and economic harm from violence against people. Examples of violence are easy to find, but definitions that delineate between what violence is and is not are scarce and far between and describe a wide range of actions (Stanko, 2003). Definitions can vary depending on whether the person views actions as illegitimate or for the greater good (Blumethal et al. 1972; Gelles, 1982).

The formations of terrorism and violence are ultimately social concepts created through hegemonic processes (i.e media, law, social norms) that benefit the state and

ruling classes. This allows powerful interests to shape certain groups as more or less dangerous depending on their relation to power and hegemony. For this work, REM and WS groups will be treated differently because they operate interact with hegemony differently.

**Defining white supremacy and white supremacist movements.** Historically, in post-Civil War United States, race was utilized as a way for the dominant white owning class to maintain their power through the 'wages of whiteness' (Roediger, 1991). Black bodies were demonized and constructed as violent and demonic, and ultimately subhuman. White supremacy in the early United States took multiple forms and continued well beyond the end of chattel slavery. Examples can include the early slave patrols (which can be seen as an early form of modern policing), to Jim Crow laws, and convict leasing. These early forms of oppression, partly born out of a capitalism based on free labor and oppression of Black Americans, helped to eventually shape hegemonic whiteness that we now live with (Durr, 2015; Alexander, 2010; Wacquant, 2000). One of the ways that the criminal justice system has worked to maintain the subordination of black and brown bodies is through the various forms that moral reformers have maintained the War on Drugs for the last one hundred years (Gray, 2000). The War on Drugs was created through Nixon's rhetoric and put into practice by the Reagan and Clinton administrations (Murakawa, 2014). The War on Drugs is less a war on cocaine and marijuana, and more war on specific groups of people. This has resulted in over 1.6 million black men under correctional control (prison, jail, or probation), with Black youth representing 26% of youth arrests, 44% of those detained, and 58% of those admitted to a

state prison. Black people account for nearly one million of the 2.3 people incarcerated in the United States. With the inclusion of Latinx peoples, black and Latinx people make up 58% of the incarcerated population when they only consist of one quarter of the total United States population (NAACP, 2017).

While WS groups are the most blatant forms of white supremacy, it is not limited to the actions of these individual groups. However, WS groups still provide a useful starting point to examine the larger systems of power that make up white supremacy. While full records of white supremacist attacks are scarce<sup>4</sup>, the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) database contains over 4,000 hate-based incidences ranging from leafleting to murder (SPLC, 2016). The SPLC defines hate groups as having beliefs or practices that attack an entire group of people for their immutable characteristics. They compile their databases using websites and publications of groups, news reports, and public reports. Hate incidents have been on the rise since the election of Donald Trump, with over 800 incidents measured by the SPLC since 2016. White supremacists are the second most deadly non-state actors in the United States, second to Islamic terrorism (Bergen, Ford, Sims, & Sterman, 2016). Prior to the Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016, white supremacists were considered the deadliest. These incidents will most likely continue to rise, as white supremacists have been emboldened by a presidential campaign based on xenophobia, the fight against “political correctness,” and the popularization of slogans

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<sup>4</sup> Records of white supremacist motivated actions are especially scarce when compared to records of R.E.M. Industry watch dog groups (i.e. Foundation for Biomedical Research) regularly keep records of environmental actions that have damaged their profit motives.

such as "White Lives Matter"<sup>5</sup>. An example of the rise in WS attacks comes out of Portland, Oregon (Marco, Hanna, & Almasry, 2017). While riding the train, Jeremy Joseph Christian, a known white supremacist, began to yelling at a pair of Muslim teenage girls. When a group of men tried to intervene, Christian stabbed them, killing two and severely wounding a third. While historical white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation are still active, they have been overshadowed and subsumed in mass media by what is now called the "Alt-Right." The Alt-Right, ultimately a loose consortium of white supremacists, right wing extremists, separatist militias, and neo-fascists, has been able to achieve a measure of political power, playing a significant role in the election of Donald Trump. Richard Spencer, founder of the National Policy Institute, and the person who coined the term "Alt-Right" describes the movement as a way for white men to retake America (Al Jazeera, 2016). One of the ways he plans to do this, is through the expulsion of all non-European populations from the United States.

***Theory on white supremacist movements.*** Historically, academics who study white supremacist groups have adopted social movement theory approach (Blee & Creasap, 2010). This characterization as a movement is due largely due to a shared identity that could lead to potential action (Swain , 2002). Right wing movements are characterized by what they are for (in this case white supremacy) and are shaped by interactions through the state (Durham , 2007; Lo, 1982; Karapin , 2007). This turn towards social movement theory comes with some disadvantages. Right-wing movements fit awkwardly into a

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<sup>5</sup> White Lives Matter has been recognized as an official hate group by the SPLC.

framework designed to study progressive movements based on claiming denied rights; these models work poorly for already privileged groups (Blee, 2006; McAdam et al., 2005; Wright, 2007). Despite this, scholars continue to conceptualize these groups through social movement theory (Blee & Creasap, 2010; Simi & Futrell, 2010; Stein, 2001). This framework, while dominant in the literature, treats racism as akin to a cancer that has infected our society and needs to be treated (Feagin, 2013). This pathogenic approach assumes that we live in an otherwise “healthy” society infected by racists. This can easily be seen in examinations of white supremacist that give little attention to the racist society we live in, approaching these groups as if they exist in a vacuum. This framework reduces racial bias to the individual level, ignoring the systemic and structural phenomena that reinforce those systems of power (whiteness). As is the case with other power systems (i.e. patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism), racism reflects the hegemonic constructions of whiteness that pervade our culture. Along these lines, Ansley (1989) defines white supremacy as

not only the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (p. 1024).

Ansley noted that while institutionalized racism would describe many of the same concepts, in the "era of so-called 'color-blindness'" racism can mean the "disfavoring of a white person" (*Ibidem*:1024). Haney-Lopez (2014) speaks to how most anti-racist efforts are boiled down to promoting anti-white prejudice. Because of this, terms like white supremacy convey the subordination of black and brown bodies in the global system.

An understanding of the role WS groups have played, both historically and contemporary, in the maintenance of white supremacy is important for the current study. By studying how the media portrays them allows for a deeper understanding of the maintenance of white hegemony.

**Formation and state response to radical environmental movements.** Radical environmental movements emerged out of a widespread frustration with the perceived failings of more traditional methods of enacting social change, like the civil rights movement (Coglianese, 2001). The 1970's, called the "environmental decade" was largely comprised of insider politics, and the rise of NGOs in the environmental movement. The environmental movements shifted from a bottom up, grassroots organizing strategy, based in direct action and achieving massive change, to a polished, professional organizational strategy that relied on the maintenance of past victories and insider politics, turning the movement into a political lobby like any other (Coglianese, 2001, Glicksman & Schroeder, 1991; Shaiko, 1999). The mainstream environmental movement's increasing reliance on insider politics ultimately prompted the emergence of the radical environmental group Earth First! Following a decision by the United States Forest Service that cost 65 million acres of forest its protection from timber rights, activists decided that they needed an organization analogous the characters in the *Monkey Wrench Gang*, a group of "neo-Luddite rebels with an ecological cause, who scorned the convoluted tactics of environmentalism and instead took direct action in the form of ecotage, to protect the environment" (Manes, 1990). From there, they formed Earth First!, which engages a wide variety of direct action ranging from blockading logging

roads and sit-ins in forestry offices and treetops. In 1984, Earth First! began engaging in a more dangerous form of direct action called tree-spiking, which involves the insertion of a long metal spikes into trees that are marked for logging without harming the tree. The point of tree-spiking is to damage the saws and equipment used to fell the tree or to sabotage the sawmills. The goal of these actions is to serve as a long-term deterrent, slowing down the logging industry and affecting their profits (Foremen & Haywood, 1985).

Other groups involved in the radicalization of the environmental movement included ELF and ALF which will be explored in this section. The Earth Liberation Front was born out police oppression against two peaceful protests. In both cases, protesters were engaging in sit-ins, protecting trees from being cut down. Both protests were met with police use of force to remove the protestors, in one case, cutting off a protestor's pants and using pepper spray on their genitalia (Curry & Pullman, 2015). Finally, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) owes its creation to a group from Great Britain called the Band of Mercy (Molland & Webb, 2007; Best & Nocella II, 2007). The exact beginnings of the ALF in the United States are murky at best, with multiple sources claiming a different first action. Wicklund (2007) identifies the first ALF action as happening in 1977 when two dolphins were released by activists from a research facility in Hawaii. Another commonly cited first action is when activists disguised themselves as lab workers and rescued a cat, two dogs, and two guinea pigs from a New York University Medical Center (Best & Nocella II, 2007). Newkirk (2000) mentions a third "first action" in 1982, when activists broke into a Howard University laboratory and rescued 24 cats who were

being deliberately crippled for research. The actions of the ALF can be separated into two distinct waves. Early on, the group was focused on rescuing animals from research labs and other industries. During this wave, the ALF was able to bring public awareness around to animal confinement and torture in the name of research, institutionalized animal abuse in a variety of industries, and was able to bring about animal welfare reforms, and in some cases, shut down research projects and operations down (Best & Nocella II, 2007). The second wave shifted the focus away from rescuing animals to destruction of property used in these abuses. One of the largest examples of this was in 1987 when ALF activists set fire to a research lab at the University of California, Davis causing over \$5 million in damage.

The construction of environmental activists as “terrorists” dates back at least to the moment Ron Arnold, whose stated goal was to “destroy environmentalism once and for all” (Helvarg, 1994, p. 8), of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise first coined the term “eco-terrorism” in an article for *Reason*, defining it as a “deliberate destruction of the artifacts of industrial civilization in the name of environmental protection” (1983; para. 5). Potter (2014) argues that this definition can be boiled down to any “crime committed to save nature” (p. 55). This framework first appeared in the papers of record in a Washington Post article titled “Tree Spiking: An “Eco-Terrorist” Tactic” (Anderson & Van Atta, 1990). Arguably, Arnold was referring to the extralegal practice of “ecotage.” Practiced by multiple radical environmental groups, ecotage generally refers to the tactics used to inflict economic harm and frustrate the process of doing damage to the environment (Martin, 1990; Vaderheiden, 2008). Ecotage differs somewhat from the

concept of civil disobedience, where acts done in the public sphere to gain widespread attention. In contrast, ecotage targets a private actor, usually the corporation or institution attacked by the activists. Arnold was able to frame the conversation, and as a result activists (and not the corporations they were protesting against), became criminalized (Vaderheiden, 2008; Potter, 2011). This framing was successful because Arnold invoked property rights, creating different legal approaches and actions than if he had invoked speech rights. Arnold was successful in his campaign when the FBI labeled a 1987 arson at the University at California Davis as a terrorist action connected to animal rights. This became the first radical environmental action to be labeled eco-terrorism (Potter, 2011). By defining the issue, Arnold was able to control the debate (Cummings as cited in Potter, 2011). Arnold continued his campaign at the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime's 1998 "Hearing on Acts of Ecoterrorism Committed by Radical Environmental Organizations" (Vaderheiden, 2008). In his testimony, Arnold conflated all forms of environmental action with terrorism; calling the process by which loggers lost their jobs through environmental lawsuits a form of economic terrorism, despite the fact that legal actions such as these require no violence and usually aim to force the government to enforce environmental protection laws (Vaderheiden, 2008). This focus on environmental terrorism is an example of the capitalist class using their influence to frame activism to their advantage. By applying the frame of terrorism, an act that has historically taken multiple lives over the years, the owning classes are able to create fear around an act that would affect their interests directly.

This campaign to tie ecotage to terrorism was ultimately codified into law with the passage of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA) in 1992 and later the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) in 2006. The AEPA created a special offense for any person traveling or using foreign commerce for the purpose of causing physical destruction at an animal enterprise (AEPA, 1992). This was not enough to satisfy the corporate interests, who were seeking harsher and harsher sanctions to protect themselves from activists (McCoy, 2014). One of the ways that corporate interests have sought legal changes in the past is through the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Founded in the 70's, ALEC maintains itself as a pro-corporate, conservative non-profit group. Their membership is made up of both legislators and industry representatives, giving each equal weight in discussing model representation (Shirley, 2014). In 2003, ALEC started introducing model legislation called the Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act. During this time period, the private enterprise Chair of the Homeland Security Working Group, the ALEC committee responsible for this legislation was Kurt L. Malmgren, a representative of the industry group Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (ALEC, 2003; Shirley, 2014). While Malmgren was chair, animal research sites, integral to pharmaceutical interests, were the target of 42.5% of all actions claimed by radical animal rights movements from 2000 to 2006, creating an incentive for ALEC to criminalize actions that were harming the profit margins of the pharmaceutical industries (Young, 2010). Despite acknowledging that harming or killing someone was not characteristic of radical environmental groups, ALEC attempted to connect radical groups to PETA by claiming that the group would “aid in the legal

defense of ALF activists charged with crimes” (2003, p. 8) and terrorist organizations by stating that “investigations have shown that that these radical organizations operate in a similar fashion to other terrorist groups like al-Qaeda” (p. 4). By doing this, Alec was attempting to create a sense that mainstream and radical activists were part of the same “terrorist” framework (Shirley, 2014). Through the lobbying of groups like ALEC, the Center for Consumer Freedom, the United States Sportsmen’s Alliance, and the Animal Enterprise Protection Coalition, the AETA was signed into law in 2006 (McCoy, 2007; Potter, 2011).

The AETA’s primary purpose was to expand the AEPA to cover secondary and tertiary targets or any “person or entity having a connection to, or relationship with, or [business] transactions with an animal enterprise” (AETA,2006; McCoy, 2014). This Act increases penalties and brands alleged perpetrators, even if they are not accused of inciting fear, as terrorists. According to the Act, “animal enterprise” is defined so broadly so as to include a wide range of entities, from pet stores to corporate farms. The Act also criminalizes acts that cause economic damage to these enterprises. Grubbs (2010) argues that the AEPA, which included the same sanctions, included a savings clause excluding economic disruption from legal activities. The AETA presents a boycott as the only given example of a “lawful economic disruption” (2006). This argument ignores the fact that traditionally legal activism has been increasingly criminalized in the United States; it is within the realm of possibility for an activist be arrested under the AETA for picketing a fried chicken restaurant.

Given some of the above issues with these laws, challenges to them began entering the courts. One of the first challenges came from Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC) activists. SHAC's goal was to close Huntington Life Sciences (HLS), Europe's largest animal testing laboratory (CCR, 2016). SHAC targeted anyone with economic ties to HLS, pressuring them to cut ties with the company along with holding residential protests of the executives of these companies. While SHAC expressed support for legal and illegal forms of protest, they also expressed support for protest tactics that did not harm anyone. In 2004, six SHAC activists were indicted on terrorism charges under the AEPA despite the fact that they were not charged with any illegal crimes. The charges against the SHAC activists were all protected speech (publishing a website, advocating protest activity, organizing protests, and contacting companies) and the activists were all convicted and sentenced to four to six years each. The activists eventually challenged their convictions. The Third Court of Appeals acknowledged that the much of their speech was protected, but the presence of unlawful activity committed by anonymous actors and the activists support for unlawful protest was enough to constitute a criminal conspiracy. The activists continued their appeals, but the Supreme Court of the United States denied their certiorari.

The next challenge came in the form of *Blum v. Holder* (2011). This case was brought by five animal activists who argued that the AETA unconstitutionally restricted their ability to engage in protest. They argue that the AETA is uncommonly broad, criminalizes protected speech and will chill future protests. Additionally, they argue that the law is unconstitutional because it is vague and discriminates on the basis of content of

expressive speech. In 2013, the courts dismissed the suit on the grounds that the plaintiffs did not have standing. This continued through the appellate courts, with the Supreme Court denying their certiorari.

The last challenge to the AETA comes from Johnson and Lang in the case *United States v. Johnson* (2014). Johnson and Lang were convicted under the AETA for allegedly releasing thousands of mink and foxes from a fur farm, conspiracy to release more, and for spray painting “liberation is love” on a barn. Johnson and Lang challenged their conviction arguing that AETA was unconstitutional. The district court ruled the law constitutional in 2015. The defendants are continuing to appeal the case at the time of this writing.

The above cases are not meant to be an exhaustive list of activists charged under the AEPA or AETA. Instead, they provide a window into some of the ways in which these laws chill protest and free speech. By reframing actions that would be historically considered free speech, the state is able to limit acceptable and unacceptable forms of protest. The terrorist framework also allows for greater sanctions against these now illegal acts, combined with acts that were already illegal at the state level, allows for an even greater restriction on activist activity.

### **Chapter III - Methods**

The aim of this research was to examine and compare media portrayals of radical environmentalists and white supremacists. To do this, the study conducted a content analysis of news stories that report on the actions of these groups. A content analysis can be broadly defined as “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969). This analysis was done by sampling and analyzing stories produced by so called “papers of record” in the United States. Martin and Hansen (1998) identify three characteristics that mark a newspaper of record. First, the paper contains a comprehensive news report of the day. Second, the paper “contains authoritative records or official notices”, and third, that it serves as an archive of events (Martin and Hansen, 1998, pg. 8).

#### **Sampling**

Using the above definition, three papers of record were selected for this study: the *Washington Post* (WaPost), the *New York Times* (NYT), and the *Los Angeles Times* (LAT). The time period studied was between January 1, 1985 and December 31, 2015. This time period allows for analysis of the evolution of movements and their strategy, and includes the era when radical environmental groups emerged and were most active (e.g., the ELF began its actions in the early 1990s). It also provides a sample that allows for examination of how the discourse regarding white supremacists and radical environmentalists has or has not changed. Stories were sourced using a keyword search in two databases. The NYT and WaPost were searched through the Lexis Nexis database. The LAT was searched the ProQuest database. The Lexis Nexis internal database did not

contain the LAT for the entire sampled period, requiring an outside database. Keywords for sampling articles focused on the REM were determined from prior research (Wagner, 2008) and were expanded to include the names of several contemporary radical environmental groups (ELF, ALF, and Earth First!). Keywords for sampling articles focused on WS organizations were developed from the Southern Poverty Law Center's database of active WS groups. REM keywords included; *ecodefense\**, *ecoraiders\**, *ecosaboteur\**, *ecotage\**, *ecoterror\**, *ecovandal\**, *environmental militant\**, *environmental sabotage\**, *environmental terror\**, *monkey wrenching\**, *radical environmental\**, Earth Liberation Front, Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty, Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, and Animal Enterprise Protection Act<sup>6</sup>. Keywords for WS included: Ku Klux Klan, White National, Racist Skinhead, Neo-Nazi, Neo-Confederate, Christian Identity, Alt-Right, White Supremacy, Right-Wing Terrorism, Stormfront, Aryan Nation. Variations of all keywords were also searched (i.e. searches for national, were expanded to include nationalist, etc.). News stories were then read and organized based on their content. Stories that were primarily about REM and WS groups were kept in the current sample. Stories that were not about these groups or were not a news article (letters to the editor, movie/book reviews, etc.) were removed from the current sample. This resulted in a REM sample of 513 stories and 1,981 news stories about WS groups (n = 2494). A coding system was then developed using the NVivo software. An open coding method was utilized to code the content. As themes became present in the analysis, they were then coded into larger nodes before being combined

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<sup>6</sup> Terms marked with a (\*) were sourced from Wagner (2008).

into seven main themes. See Table 1 for a summary of the major themes and their codes. Two codes are not included in the table because the chronology of stories was measured quantitatively through the number of stories published each year and a close reading of those stories to generate qualitative findings. Additionally, the portrayal of victims was measured through the number of stories written (see below) by targets of these groups.

Table 1.

*Summary of Coding and Themes.*

| Terrorism      | Descriptors<br>of Groups | Sources        | Constitution          | Violence           |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Dom. Terrorist | Radical                  | GOV            | 1 <sup>st</sup> Amend | Crime <sup>7</sup> |
| Ecoterror      | Militant                 | NGO/WatchGroup | Speech                | Attack             |
| Terrorism      | Underground              | OtherNon-Gov   | Assembly              | Intimidation       |
| Terrorist      | Extremist                | WS Spokesman   | Peace Protest         | Raid               |
| Cell           | Clandestine              | REM Spokesman  | ACLU                  | Race War           |
|                | Secret                   |                |                       | Sep.of Race        |
|                | Vigilante                |                |                       | Threat             |
|                | Anarchist                |                |                       |                    |

**Methodology: Content Analysis of Papers of Record**

The goal of this research was to examine the media portrayals of radical environmentalists in comparison to white supremacists, using the propaganda model as a guiding framework. The propaganda model would seem to posit that the media will be filtered in favor of the state and the corporate owning class, as well as to the production of hegemonic social representations. The framework put forth in the propaganda model suggests that in the creation of hegemony, the papers of record will construct and frame radical environmentalists as terroristic threats to public safety. Following this, the papers of record will construct and frame the targets of radical environmental actions, namely

<sup>7</sup> Crime was divided into both violent and non-violent crimes.

corporations, as sympathetic actors. To examine this, a content analysis of the paper of records was performed. Content analysis, particularly when performed over long periods of coverage, can be useful in showing social trends (Babbie, 2004). A content analysis allows for a direct reading of the news media providing the opportunity to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, the length of time studied allows for a greater testing of the propaganda model, particularly with groups which sit at political extremes like REM and WS. Studying a smaller time period could potentially limit the findings and ability to make a definitive statement regarding media adhering to hegemonic goals.

## **Chapter IV - Results**

### **Chronology: The Manufacture of Propaganda Over Time**

Examining news stories across a 30-year span illustrates the frequency of coverage over time and how/whether the content of stories has changed. This is especially helpful in contextualizing the data in the current study, for example through demonstrating an overlap between changes in frequency/content of mentions with significant events, such as the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 or the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. Similarly, by comparing these timelines against outside measures of REM and WS (i.e. measures of hate crimes, terrorist actions, etc.), it is possible to measure the accuracy of the coverage and see if it matches up to the number of actions these groups perform or if the news will over or under cover them. This will help to address the first and third research questions under examination: how do dominant, mainstream media frame radical environmental movements, and how do dominant media frame white supremacist groups in the U.S.?

Additionally, identifying the frequency of stories and coded references to terrorism (see the next section), helps to illustrate the fifth filter of the propaganda model; the maintenance of dominant ideologies. By examining how the number of stories responds to major challenges to hegemony, such as REM actions designed to economic damage (i.e the Vail Ski Resort arson), one can examine how the corporate media serve as a method to reinforce those challenged systems of power.

In the case of REM, groups are typically labeled as “terrorists” by the federal government, as seen through legal actions such as AEPA and AETA. Comparing against

databases that measure rates of terrorist actions can provide a sense of the number of actions per year across time. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open source database based on open media reports of terrorism created by The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START, 2016). The GTD collects data on terrorist attacks internationally. Inclusion criterion into the GTD is that the act/activities must be intentional, violent (or have an immediate threat of violence), and must be performed by subnational actors.

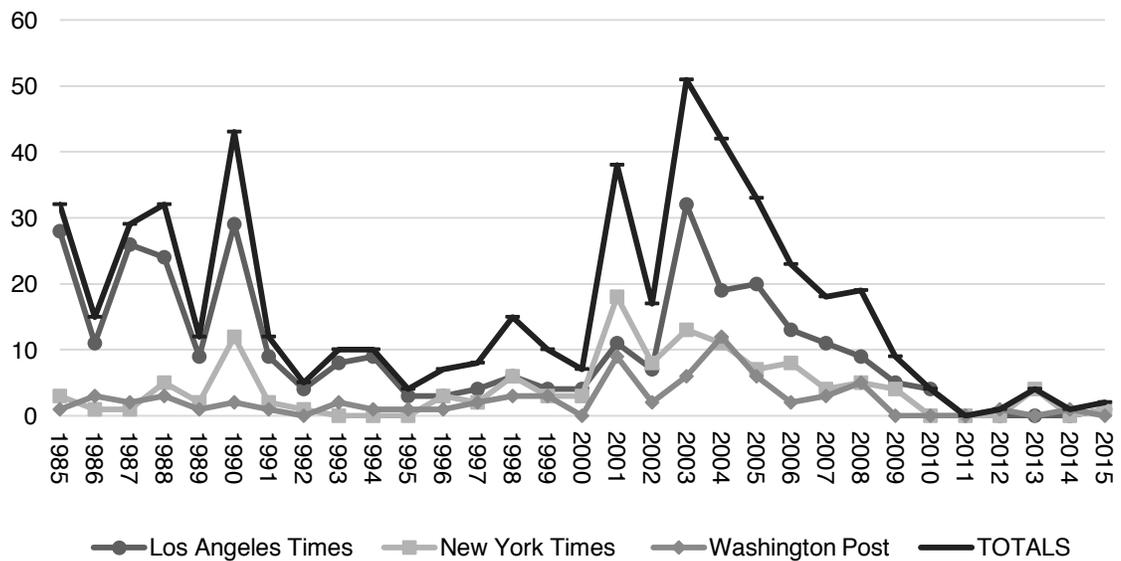


Figure 1. Number of stories coded for REM-1985-2015

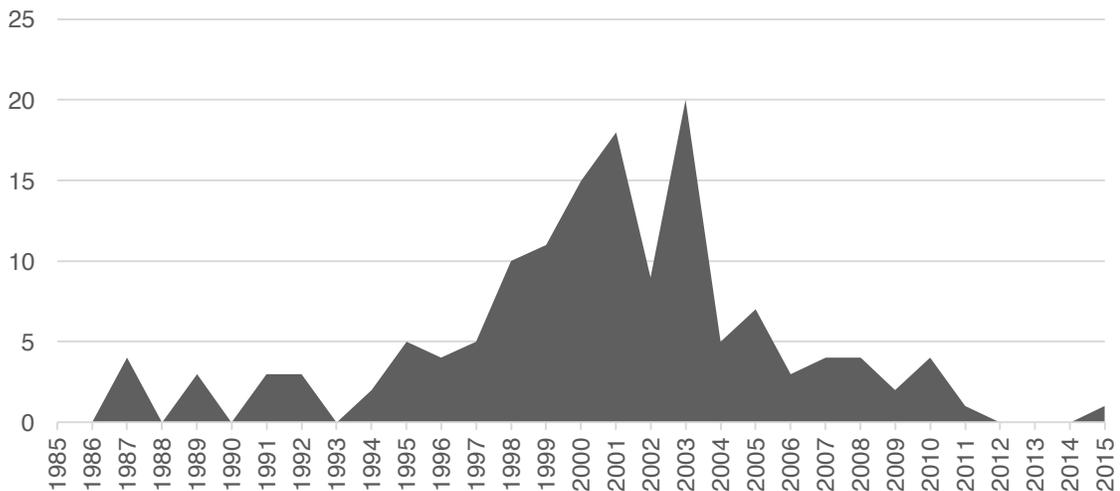
Additionally, inclusion into the GTD requires that the action must meet two of the following three criteria: it must be aimed at reading political, economic, religious, or audience, and/or the action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare. The GTD sources data from media sources, providing a database of comparative and contextual data that can illuminate the frequency of coverage in the current sample.

Figure 1 shows the total number of stories about REM published each year by the three major papers of record. One can easily point to several spikes in coverage from the graph, each corresponding to significant events. The correspondence was not only assumed, but verified through a qualitative analysis of articles from these periods—by checking to see if they made significant mention of each event as they also covered or made mention of REMs. For instance, the peak in 1990 corresponds with a pipe bomb explosion in the car of two Earth First! protestors from Oakland, CA, leaving many to suspect that the protestors themselves had made the bomb and were transporting it to be used since it had blown up in their car. The FBI maintained that Earth First! was going to use the bomb despite the fact that it had been placed under the driver’s seat where it was likely to kill the driver (*Bari et al. v. Doyle et al., 1997*). The two protestors, Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney, maintained their innocence and eventually won a civil rights lawsuit in 2002 in which the judge found that they were unlawfully arrested.

The peak in coverage in 2001 does not reflect a certain incident or action by REM groups, but a rise in coverage of multiple incidents including alleged acts of arson in a series of home fires in an overdeveloped region of Long Island, property damage and graffiti at banks and research laboratories connected to Huntington Animal Services, and graffiti at a McDonald’s corporate office that read “Meat is Murder” (Baker, 2001). The peak in 2003 reflects the largest number of stories about REM in single year (see Figure 1), and the coverage of two main actions by REM groups, both in Southern California. The first is the destruction of an unoccupied five story apartment complex that caused more than \$50 million in damage. The Earth Liberation Front claimed responsibility and

left banners reading “If you build it, we will burn it” (Edds, 2003) The second in 2003 was a firebombing that targeted four different car dealerships and individual SUV car owners in the San Gabriel Valley, destroying or damaging SUVs. One dealership in West Covina, CA reported an estimated \$1 million in damages.

As stated above, comparing the current research sample to outside measures of actions by these groups is helpful in contextualizing the data. When compared to the GTD, the number of stories represented show some similarity with data collected from the GTD (Figure 2.), which shows the incidence of actions labeled as terrorist attacks throughout the same time period.



*Figure 2. GTD - REM actions labeled as terrorist from 1985-2015.  
Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (2016)*

There are similar peaks in the early 2000s (Figure 3), but the largest difference between the two sources can be found in the late 1980s. The media (particularly the LAT), were covering REM actions that occurred during this time period. The peak in

1985 reflects coverage of a series of events, including a raid at the University of Riverside by ALD activists who released 260 animals and damages equipment. Another story that was covered heavily were the actions of activists who targeted Brian Berger, the then-Director of Animal Control and Care Department for the city of Los Angeles over the city’s policy of selling impounded animals to medical researchers. The second peak in 1988 largely reflects media coverage of actions by animal activists who broke in the Loma Linda University Medical Center and rescued a group of beagles from a scientist who specialized in heart surgeries. The activists also damaged approximately \$6,000 worth of research equipment.

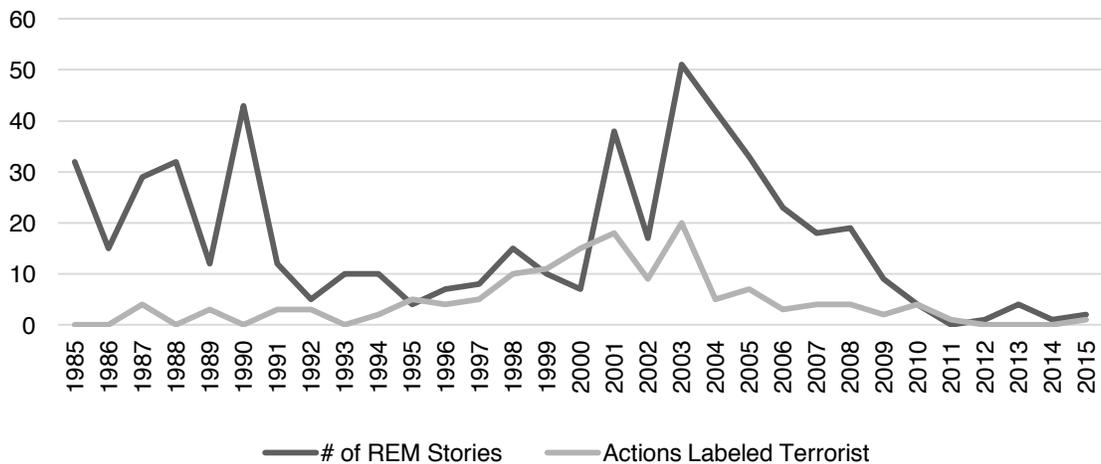


Figure 3. REM news stories compared to REM actions labeled terrorist.

A similar pattern of spikes reflecting certain actions can be seen in the stories published about white supremacists across the same time period (Figure 4). Certain peaks reflect coverage regarding stories that the papers decided to cover heavily. The late 1980’s were dominated by stories regarding “The Order,” white supremacist groups that splintered off from the Aryan Nation. The Order was described as a paramilitary

organization whose goal was to overthrow the United States government because they believed it had been overtaken by a cadre of conspiratorial Jews. The Order funded their actions through a series of armed robberies of banks and armored cars which resulted in an estimated \$4 million dollars of stolen money. Additionally, members of the Order were found guilty in the murder of Jewish talk show host Alan Berg because he was critical of white supremacists on his Denver based talk show (United Press International, 1985).

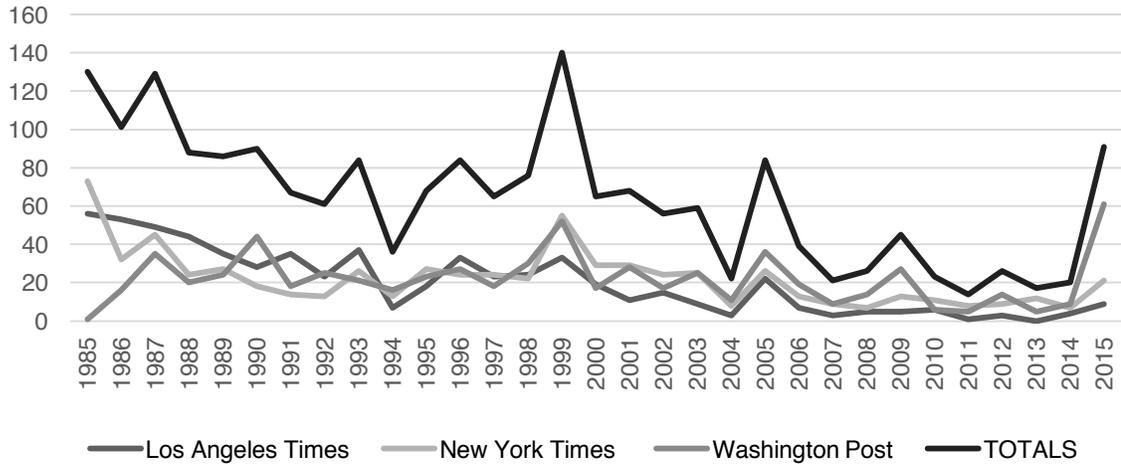


Figure 4. Number of stories coded for WS-1985-2015

The spike in coverage of WS in the late 1990s reflects coverage of the murder of a disabled African American man, James Byrd Jr. After offering him a ride home, three assailants, Shawn Berry, Lawrence Brewer, and John William King, drove Byrd to a remote spot in the woods outside of Jasper, Texas, after smoking a cigarette, sprayed

Byrd in the face with spray paint before allegedly cutting his throat.<sup>8</sup> Brewer and King were both known members of a local white supremacist gang. The attackers then tied Byrd to the back of their truck with a chain and drove through town, dragging Byrd. In the criminal prosecution that followed, forensic experts testified that Byrd was most likely alive while he was dragged through town and that he most likely died when a large bump in the road decapitated him. Parts of Byrd's body were found all along the 10,000 feet of road where he was dragged.

Though the men who attacked Byrd were convicted of murder, their actions would much more accurately be described as a lynching. This distinction is important because of the goals and effects that are specific to a lynching that transcend a murder; namely that a lynching's purpose is to spreading public terror and to further the oppression of people of color and entrenching white supremacy (Cox, 1948). By dragging Byrd's body, his attackers recreated a common method of lynching and sent a warning to any other black person in the area. It is also important to note that actions designed to spread a political message is a common component of most terrorism definitions. Despite this, it is rare to apply the label of terrorist to WS groups. By not applying terrorist framework to WS groups, the state is not applying any of the delegitimizing aspects of the framework listed earlier.

Byrd's death resulted in the passage of the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act in the State of Texas in 2001 and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes

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<sup>8</sup> While the attackers testified that one of them sliced Byrd's throat, forensic experts found no evidence of a knife wound.

Prevention Act at the federal level in 2009. While the passage of these acts suggests that the state is taking a stance against hate crimes and WS groups, the reality of these laws show something else. Because *ex post facto* laws are prohibited, hate crimes legislation do not affect the cases of the victims they are named for. Hate crime laws are also difficult to prosecute because of the difficulty in proving intent, prosecutors lacking the will to use them, and police not always having the requisite training to recognize hate crimes. In Texas, researchers found that out of 981 potential hate crime cases from 2010-2015, only eight people were convicted (Katz, 2017). This suggests that hate crime legislation serves as a symbolic gesture towards limiting hate groups, then an effort to actually limit their activities.

The final peak in coverage of white supremacists in 2015 reflected a mass shooting in Charleston, SC. Dylann Roof entered the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church where he spent almost an hour observing a bible study before shooting the parishioners in attendance, killing nine people. Roof was a white supremacist who was apparently obsessed with failed apartheid states such as Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the regimes of slavery and segregation in the former Confederate south (Tucker & Holley, 2015). Survivors of the shooting stated that Roof made statements like “you’re raping our women”, referencing old racist ideologies where black men are animalistic and will prey upon helpless white women (Corasaniti, Perez-Pena, & Alvarez, 2015). Roof was later charged a total of 33 different federal counts, including hate crimes resulting in murder. An additional 13 state counts were brought against him including 9 counts of murder. Roof was found guilty of all 33 federal counts in 2016 and pled guilty to all state charges

in early 2017 resulting in a life sentence. While these stories seem to reflect the state responding to white supremacy, it is important to note that the state is responding to instances of direct violence. Much in the same way that direct enforcement of hegemony through the political floor (the police or the military) can backfire and delegitimize these institutions, allowing direct white supremacist violence would result in a similar result. In contrast, the state is much more apt to protect and engage in less direct forms of maintaining white supremacy. Additionally, racist incidents like this provide the opportunity for institutional actors reaffirm a commitment to color blind ideology while not directly challenging the more systemic forms of racism (Moore & Bell, 2017). This occurs through the fact that dominant groups tend to view racist incidents as singular incidents; the result of a sick and deranged person resulting to the claim that there is no need for an institutional response to a singular incident (Matsuda , 1989).

In contrast to REM, there does not exist a central database of crimes committed by white supremacists or individuals who espouse their beliefs, largely because the vast majority of actions performed by white supremacist groups are not labeled as acts of terror in the media according to this research. While the GTD does contain some mentions of WS terrorist actions, these actions are few and far between. The Aryan Nations, Aryan Republican Army, The Order, and the Minutemen were the only readily available WS groups available in their database resulting in a list of 23 actions labeled as terrorism. Any measure of hate crimes is inherently flawed because of a variety of issues, including low reporting rates and variance in laws from state to state and federal governments. While there are new efforts to measure hate crimes (including the SPLC),

these efforts are new and do not go far enough back in time to measure against the current sample. The best measure of hate crimes would be the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) which measures indexed crimes each year (Figure 3.). But this introduces new challenges; including some states not reporting hate crimes and the fact that the FBI data only goes as far back as 1996. The passage of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990 prompted the Attorney General to direct the FBI to implement a data collection system that was later incorporated into the UCR. This data also measures the total number of hate crimes measured and does not differentiate between hate crimes committed by individuals and those affiliated with hate groups. Additionally, this is a general measure of hate crimes committed in the United States and does not differentiate between those committed by WS and those committed by other groups. When comparing the number of stories written about white supremacist groups to the total amount of hate crimes committed each year, there is a significant difference. Whereas the papers of record wrote about REM groups in a 3.5:1 ratio (513 stories for 143 incidents labeled as terrorist by the GTD), the papers of record covered roughly 1% of the hate crimes listed in the UCR. While it is not feasible for the papers of record to cover every single hate crime in the United States on a given day, the data still shows that the papers of record over-covered REM groups by while only covering an insignificant number of stories regarding white supremacists. This over coverage of REM, and under coverage of WS, serves two main purposes. First, by over covering REM groups, the corporate media solidify REM as a dangerous terrorist organization – reminding consumers that these groups are dangerous and will cause massive damage. The fact that this damage is largely monetary is left

unsaid. Secondly, by under covering WS groups, the media helps to normalize their actions. While some stories would be sensationalized by the media, under covering WS allows them the freedom to act largely unobserved.

**Manufacturing the Boogeyman: Creation and Maintenance of the Terrorist**

Based on the coding analysis performed, terrorism was not discussed significantly in the sample, where mentions of “terrorism” or “terrorists” appeared in only 15 percent of the stories. While the label was rarely applied, its use was disproportionate. Terrorism appeared in 10 percent of white supremacist stories, the term was applied in 35 percent of stories about radical environmentalists. Figure 5 shows that the timeline of stories coded for terrorism confirms past research that showed a similar jump in terrorism rhetoric post 9/11 in relation to REM (Wagner, 2008). Stories about white supremacy did not reflect this jump in terrorism rhetoric post 9/11. The peak in 2015 represents a turn in rhetoric where journalists began calling the shooting at Mother Emmanuel an act of “domestic terrorism” in addition to labelling it a hate crime.

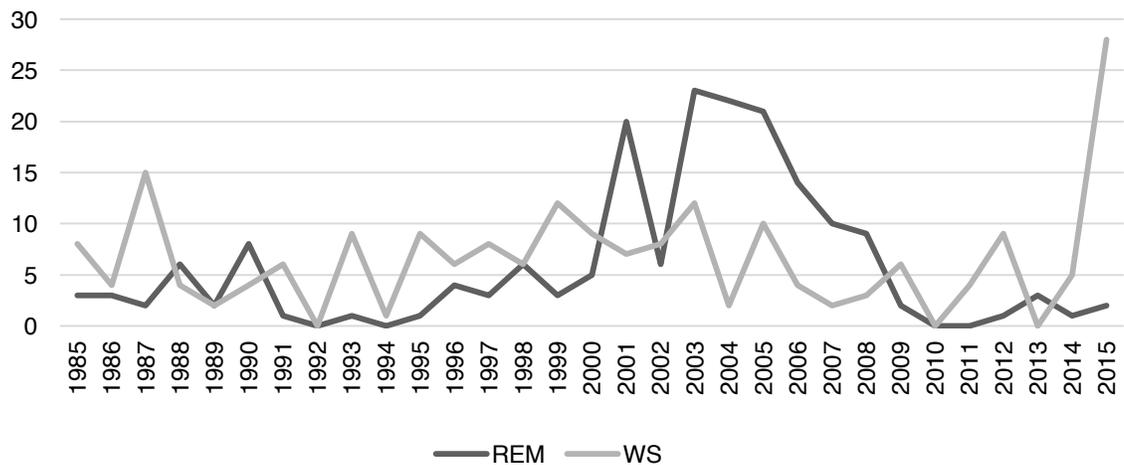


Figure 5. Number of stories coded for terrorism -1985-2015

The last year sampled (2015) represented a high amount of coded references to terrorism in relation to white supremacy, this was an outlier in relation to the rest of the sample, because of the attention the papers of record placed on the attack by Dylann Roof. While the targets of these actions will be discussed in greater depth below, some results can be examined already. Namely that REM actions tend to be limited to the destruction of property whereas the actions of WS target people and property, tending to target African American, Jewish, and (in the climate of anti-immigrant fervor) Latinx populations.

As discussed earlier, the application of the terrorist framework provides the state a variety of tools in silencing dissent. In the case of REM, the extended application of the terrorist framework to the activities of environmental groups provided the state the justification and paved the way for legal tools to suppress movement activity in the form of the AEPA and AETA. These laws provided the FBI and other law enforcement agencies nearly unlimited power in weakening organizations such as the ELF and ALF through prosecution and arrests of key movement leaders/actors. This also grants the FBI and other law enforcement agencies a sense of legitimacy in their actions (Simon, 2007). Framing environmental activists in terms of “terrorism” also provides the means to delegitimize mainstream advocacy strategies, including lawsuits, which Ron Arnold called a form of environmental terrorism (Vanderheiden, 2008).

The unwillingness of the media to activate a terrorist framework for WS groups speaks to the reluctance of the state and media to utilize the same tools listed above to silence WS groups. This lack of labeling white supremacy as a form of terrorism, and

allowing it to prosper, has historical foundations including entrenched white superiority in the U.S. and the infiltration of WS into law enforcement (Speri, 2017) combined with the historical role law enforcement plays in the maintenance of racial hierarchies (Alexander, 2010; Durr, 2015). While there is a significant spike in the terrorist framework use in 2015, more research will be needed to determine whether this readiness to label WS as terrorists is a new trend or a response to a singular event (the Charleston church shooting) and federal prosecution of Roof.

**Setting the Mood: Identification of Descriptors Characterizing White Supremacist and Radical Environmental Groups**

In addition to themes and examples of terrorism, the sample was also coded for descriptor words that would be used regarding these groups. These descriptors serve as a way to determine how the authors and newspapers construct and represent these groups for their readers (Table 2).

Table 2

| <i>Descriptors of Identified Groups</i> |         |          |             |           |             |        |           |           |
|---|---------|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| Group                                   | Radical | Militant | Underground | Extremist | Clandestine | Secret | Vigilante | Anarchist |
| REM                                     | 202     | 69       | 71          | 60        | 9           | 2      | 7         | 11        |
| WS                                      | 74      | 53       | 46          | 215       | 12          | 1      | 11        | 7         |

The descriptors for the REM were radical (47%), militant (16%), underground (16%), extremist (14%), clandestine (2%), secret (1%), vigilante (2%), and anarchist (2%). The descriptors for the WS were extremist (51%), radical 18%), militant (13%), underground (11%), anarchist (2%), clandestine (3%), secret (1%), secret (2%), and vigilante (3%).

By describing REM using phrases like “clandestine nationwide organization” (Avery, 1985) or an “underground environmental group” (Sink, 2001) or even as a “mysterious radical environmental group” (Baker, Week in Review, 2001), the media are able to create REM as a large, amorphous group where anyone, anywhere could be a member. This helps to portray these groups as significant threats to public safety. While a similar effect would be expected from using these descriptors for WS groups, considering the historical legacy of local law enforcement and political figures to participate as members—indeed, this is one reason the Klan employs hoods and masks—it is important to note that the terms *radical*, *militant*, *underground*, and *anarchist* all appeared more often in stories about REM than in stories about WS, despite stories about WS accounting for nearly 80% of the current sample. This suggests that the media utilized more fear-inducing descriptors to stories about REM than WS. This characterization reflects the federal government’s assertion that the greatest domestic terror threat in the United States comes from REM.

The most used descriptor for REM, (radical – 45%) and for WS (extremist – 48%), both connote “taking things too far”. It is normal to care about the environment and animals, but it is radical to care *that* much. This is especially interesting in relation to the use of “extremist” to describe white supremacy. One of the stories where the media

utilized this descriptor was in a 1997 case an army paratrooper and active white supremacist executed an African American couple (Fletcher, 1997). This suggests that some level of white superiority or racism is normal, but when it is actively enforced or involves physical harm (largely outside of the state), that it is too extreme. An example of this shaming into a more moderate approach can be seen early on in regards to stories about REM where in response to a grant designed to better the conditions of animals used in research, it was theorized that radical animal activists would move towards more moderate (i.e. approved) channels (Nelson, 1985)

This line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior is harder to see in relation to WS groups. As a country, we are supposedly ‘post-racial’, and the racism of these groups is supposed to be a thing of the past. This can be seen in how the main-stream media discusses racism. While there is discussion of racism as a concept, it is not portrayed as a systemic issue that permeates every aspect of our society. Instead, the corporate media portrays racism as an individual failing or a relic kept alive by WS groups. By not exploring this concept of race as a *systemic issue*, the media are essentially allowing that system to continue unfettered. This focus on the individual follows Feagin’s framework where society treats racism as an individual failing and not a greater symptom of a racist society (2013). By focusing on the overt, historic forms of racism among WS groups, the media are sending the implicit message that some level of racism is acceptable so long as it does not reach the level of white supremacists. By portraying racism the way that they do, the media are maintaining the hegemonic whiteness that permeates U.S. society

through the message that race is an *individual* issue and not one that scaffolds our entire culture.

### **Maintaining the Symbiotic Relationship of Government Sources**

Following the propaganda model and specifically the third filter, sources of information were also coded. The third filter predicts that the media will rely on governmental sources over other possible sources of information, giving the government a supposed “neutral” mouthpiece in the form of the main-stream media. Fifty-seven percent of sources coded were related to the government (either through a law enforcement agency or as a representative the government [mayor, district attorney, etc.]), confirming the third filter. When these sources were broken down further, law enforcement groups (26%) and private watchdog groups (14%) accounted for the largest percentage of sources. This allows the government to set the tone regarding these groups, effectively controlling the message that consumers receive. While the government accounted for the majority of cited sources, the papers would also seek comments from both REM and WS groups, most likely in an effort to maintain the appearance of neutrality. Comments from REM groups accounted for 5% of the sources while comments from White Supremacist groups accounted for 13% of the total sources. News stories sampled included comments from white supremacists twice as often as those with comments from radical environmentalists, granting them a greater voice and more space within the story to articulate their perspective(s).

## **Testing the Limits of Freedom of Offensive Speech**

Part of this research examines how REM groups are portrayed in stories that cited the constitution. The Constitution was examined because of its potential to be used as a method of legitimization, by protecting the rights of social movement participants, or used to control or delegitimize these groups. In particular, First Amendment rights of Freedom of Speech and Assembly serve as powerful legal doctrines to protect even hateful or racist speech. White supremacist groups often invoke First Amendment rights to protect their abilities to promote racist speech in public fora, and to organize protest and marches. Invoking core constitutional rights and freedoms can be a tool for WS activists to attempt to legitimize their group's goals and activities.

The First Amendment and the related case law is complicated, making it worth taking the time to illuminate the existing law and its limitations. Ultimately, the First Amendment allows individuals the right to express themselves through speech and/or symbolic speech with limited governmental interference (the state can require permits, but cannot regulate the content of speech with limited exceptions). There are two approaches to how this should be done in practice. The absolutist view, where hate speech must be tolerated, and the view where some forms of speech must be restricted and regulated if it infringes on other's rights (Matsuda, 1989). In practice, the First Amendment does have restrictions placed upon it – advocacy of illegal action, fighting words, commercial speech, and obscenity. More specifically, local governments can place regulate public parades and speech for safety reasons. Ultimately, the absolutist view ultimately has the effect of perpetuating racism, because the effects of hate speech

are not “borne by the community at large. Rather, it is a psychic tax imposed on those least able to pay” (Matsuda, 1989, p. 2323).

Media coverage of social movements can shape public perception of advocacy groups and tactics (Rohlinger & Vaccaro, 2013). For example, media coverage can reframe these groups as potentially violent and terrorists unworthy of constitutional protection (REM) or as a non-violent group that needs to be protected despite their offensive speech (WS). The Constitution was directly mentioned in six sources in relation to REM, accounting for one percent of REM sources. The Constitution was mentioned in five percent of articles related to WS. This activation and use of the constitution appears to protect the free speech rights of WS groups while reframing REM activism and actions as being *not* about free speech.

Additionally, the number of mentions of a peaceful protest were coded. Because peaceful protests are constitutionally protected under the First Amendment as a form of association, and nonviolent tactics had been normalized by civil rights movement, framing movement activities in terms of exercising constitutional rights can help to serve as legitimizing factor for these groups. This included instances of leaving leaflets or pamphlets on cars or on driveways. It is important to note that when coding marches and protests done by white supremacists, they were coded as peaceful as long as there was no mention of violence by the white supremacist group itself. If counter protesters were violent, the story would still be marked as peaceful since it was not the white supremacists who were being violent. Peaceful protests accounted for 18% of stories

about radical environmentalists whereas they accounted for 10% of stories about white supremacists.

Some examples of white supremacists engaging in protests include a 2013 protest in Memphis where 75 members of the Ku Klux Klan protested the city's decision to change the names of a series of parks named after confederate generals (Branston, 2013). The marchers were afforded police protection while they marched carrying signs bearing swastikas. This practice of providing police protection to WS protestors was continued in Colonial Heights, VA (Melton, 1987), Washington D.C. (Jordan & Wheeler, 1990), Ann Arbor, Mich. (The Washington Post, 1998), and across the rest of the country.

The Constitution, particularly the First Amendment, serves as method of legitimizing or delegitimizing the actions of these groups. The legitimization of protests as protected speech by the media serves as a greater legitimization for white supremacists than it does for radical environmentalists. When the media portrays WS speech as “robust political expression, *even of odious expressions*, [as] central to our way of life” (The New York Times, 2002; emphasis added), the absolutist approach to Free Speech creates a space where the public is expected to tolerate actions by white supremacists and other groups and people in the U.S. should expect it as a part of life.

The reason given for why society has to deal with these groups is because, as the ACLU said in a *Washington Post* article about the Ku Klux Klan, “free speech is meaningless if the government can pick and choose which group can and cannot speak” (1990). This ignores the McCarthyist history of the U.S. government and actions such as the ACLU's relative silence on the AETA (Potter, 2011). The logic behind this is, that as

part of the social contract, society is supposed to ignore these “odious expressions” as part of life, the price to pay for freedom of speech. Following this absolutist logic, any attempt to limit the free speech of a WS group should be viewed the same way as a limit to everyone’s freedoms and treated equally in the media. When a local government tries to protect their citizens, for example by denying WS groups permits to march, they are overstepping their bounds and it is up to the Supreme Court and the ACLU or other legal advocacy group to enforce those bounds. To be clear, this is not an indictment of freedom of speech, nor a call towards limiting those freedoms. Instead, it is calling attention to a system that treats violent speech towards minorities as worthy of protection because it is a form of speech (Matsuda, 1989). Free speech is limited against violent speech, but the line between protected and violent speech is blurry. When the government treats a Ku Klux Klan march as if it exists apolitically and ahistorically, they are complicit in that terror.

### **Let’s be Civil: Examining Media Portrayals of Violence**

A central focus of this study is on how violent white supremacists and radical environmentalists are substantively presented in mainstream media. Because “violence” is a difficult concept to define, let alone code for directly, data was coded for mentions of violence through a variety of methods including crimes committed, the targets of those crimes, and effects of those crimes. The next sections will examine each of these coding strategies briefly.

Crimes were coded into violent and non-violent categories. Examples of violent crimes include arson, murder, and armed robbery while examples of non-violent crimes

include graffiti, trespassing, and burglary. Fifty-five percent of crimes committed by Radical Environmentalists were violent under this schema. In contrast, violent crimes accounted for 75% of the crimes committed by white supremacist groups.

The targets of the above crimes were divided into personal property, corporate property, and public property. Personal property was defined as a car or home; property that we own as individuals. Corporate property was defined as corporations and private laboratory and similar business. Finally, public property was defined as property owned by the government and/or property communities benefitted from such as churches and minority centers. REM actions target private property the most (52%), followed by public property (34%) and then personal property (13%). White supremacists focused their actions on public property (54%), followed by private property (30%) and then personal property (14%).

The effects of radical environmental actions were largely relegated to how much damage they cost monetarily (53%) and property damage (26%). Other effects were animals suffering from their actions (6%), negative effect on medical research (9%), people dying as a result of loss of animal based research (3%) and one instance where someone was injured by their actions (0.4%). In contrast, coded actions of white supremacists end most often in death (52%), multiple people being hurt at once (28%), injuries (8%), monetary damage (6%), property damage (2%) and negatively affecting research (0.6%).

The results of this data allow for a greater examination of the media portrayal of violence by these groups. In a direct measure of the above codes, WS groups are (by the

numbers) more violent, but it is important to consider violence as a contested concept and its relation to the research questions. This research predicted that REM would be portrayed as more violent than they are in reality. A main tactic of REM groups was the use of fires and bombs to start those fires. These actions were coded for violent because of their potential for violence and because of the portrayal these actions took in the media. This can be seen in quotes where the potential for violence is portrayed – “sooner or later, one of these events is going to happen where somebody gets hurt” (NYT2001). or “It’s only a matter of time before they kill somebody” (NYT2003). While the potential for violence is arguable, the question for this research is whether or not the portrayals met the *actual* violence. One way this can be measured is by looking at the effects of actions performed by REM. In the sample measured, 0.4% of stories discussed someone being injured by REM actions and that story was regarding monkey-wrenching, NOT a fire set by REM. This weakens the portrayal of REM groups as violent when very few stories included any injuries as a result of REM actions. In fact, REM actors tended to prefer to cause damage to corporate and public property and cause monetary damage more than anything else. When the same question is asked of WS groups, mainly that they would be portrayed *as less* violent than they were in reality, the answer is not as clear. While violent crimes accounted for 75% of the stories in the current sample, the rest of the sample included nonviolent stories, including nonviolent protests and stories regarding trying to fight for some level of civil rights and legitimacy.

When answering this question of how violent WS are empirically, it is important to remember that (as discussed above) that WS speech may be interpreted as a violent act in

and of itself. When this is taken into account, 75% of stories coded as violent is an underrepresentation of how violent WS groups are. This is more a theoretical argument and cannot be state empirically, but it is important to note that violence is not a straight forward process. White superiority and the reinforcement of non-white subordination are violent acts, even when they are supported through peaceful protests and free speech.

Discussions surrounding concepts of violence are complicated and cannot be limited to uncivil actions or be made to exclude speech. As discussed earlier, it is important to delineate between violence against property and violence against people. In the case of this research, when examining the violence of WS groups which tend to focus on black and brown bodies it is dangerous to equate that with violence against property. Doing this raises property to the same level as black and brown bodies, which even ignoring the history of the U.S., continues the practice of white supremacy. Following this, when the targets of actions are the state or corporations, the most powerful entities on the planet, the definition of violence will be expanded to include any action that threatens their power as is the case of REM. Ultimately, this work does not intend to forward a new definition of violence or to definitively draw lines around what it is or is not. Instead, this work shows that the concepts of violence are extremely complicated and must take in a wide variety of factors before a definition can even be considered.

### **Portrayal of Targets and Victims in the Media**

This section will address the second and fourth research questions - how do dominant, mainstream media frame the targets of REM and of WS movements? This research argues that because the victims of REM groups are related to the state and corporations,

they will be portrayed as sympathetic victims. In contrast, the victims of WS groups, largely black people, will be portrayed as unsympathetic because they do not benefit from white hegemony. This framework is also predicted by the propaganda model which argues that the media will portray the victims of hegemonic interests as unsympathetic.

Similar to the coding for violence, there is no easy way to directly measure this. Direct descriptions of violence against these groups will not gather sympathy in every consumer/reader. Instead, portrayal of victims was measured through stories that were written by victims directly. By giving space to these victims directly, it gave their voices the legitimacy of the papers of record. Additionally, it allowed them to tell their stories directly, unfiltered through a journalist. Seven stories were written by victims of REM groups, in comparison to one by a relation of a victim of white supremacist actions. One such story written by a REM victim was “The animal zealotry that destroyed our lab” (WaPost2005) where the scientist walks the consumer through finding out about the damage his lab received and the “assault” he felt before drawing spurious connections between radical groups and more mainstream groups such as PETA. Another story “I got inspired. I gave. Then I got scared” portrays the writer as victim of terror tactics employed by SHAC (Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty) because of her connection to Huntington Life Sciences through a political donation (Brienza, 2007). However, the writer fails to mention any actions by these groups beyond being doxxed<sup>9</sup> and the feeling that she must limit her future political donations. The single story written by a victim of

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<sup>9</sup> Doxxing refers to the practice of spreading a person’s address, phone number, and other information online.

WS groups was “My father was a victim of a mass shooting. Here’s why forgiveness offers freedom from hate.” (Singh, 2015). Written by the son of a victim of the mass shooting at a Wisconsin Sikh Temple in 2012 in the aftermath of the Charleston Mother Emmanuel shooting by Dylann Roof, the author argues that the way towards a more peaceful world is through forgiveness and “with love and optimism” (Singh, 2015). While more love and optimism is difficult to argue against, it does ignore the systemic issues that support WS groups, further entrenching them and helps to create a system where changing the system becomes an individual endeavor and not something that needs to be accomplished through organized effort. While these results are anecdotal, they can still provide an overall sense of how the media interacts with victims of these groups and the overall messages that they portray.

These results combine to show how, over the course of 30 years, the major papers of record have portrayed both REM and WS groups and how this portrayal has changed. While the implications of these results will be discussed in more detail below, it is clear to say that papers of record have served *powered* interests in the portrayals of the studied groups, confirming the overarching hypothesis of the propaganda model.

## Chapter V - Discussion

The propaganda model argues that the media operate in a guided market system, that the same capitalist ideologies and practices that act on a corporation will affect a media organization in the same way. This research set out to examine whether or not the propaganda model could also explain the ideological connections between the media and the maintenance of white supremacy in the media by comparing the portrayal of WS groups and REM. This comparison was made because these groups perform opposite functions in relation to hegemony. REM challenge the hegemonic capitalist goals of the U.S., while WS groups strengthen white superiority and supremacy in the U.S. Under the propaganda model, REM groups should be treated more negatively in the media and portrayed as a greater threat than WS groups because of their connection to hegemony. The portrayal of REM groups was largely as violent. This portrayal as a violent group was largely because of the perceived *potential* for violence because of their tactics – namely setting fires to cause economic damage. This portrayal as a violent, dangerous group is especially interesting in relation to the coverage of WS groups in the same time period. While the news media would cover certain acts heavily, WS groups were largely under-covered in the current sample when compared to the number of hate crimes committed every year. Additionally, the media would portray WS groups of something worthy of civil protection, despite their violent rhetoric and history; a protection that was not afforded to REM groups. The findings regarding media coverage reveal that the papers of record largely normalized the actions of WS groups. This shows that in the creation of hegemony, the papers of record will construct and frame radical

environmentalists as terroristic threats to public safety and the papers of record will construct and frame white supremacists as something short than a dangerous threat to public safety – that WS will be normalized in their actions and behaviors.

The terrorist framework was used three times as often when applied to REM when compared to WS groups. The use of the concept of violence was not as clear. As stated above, REM groups were portrayed as violent because of their potential for future violence, despite the fact that they have never harmed a person. WS groups were coded for violence in 75% of the current sample, suggesting that the papers of record used framework of violence more often against WS groups. The remaining 25% of stories reflected rallies, marches, and trials where WS groups were advocating for subordination of non-white races or in the extreme, their genocide. This certainly reflects a violent ideology and because of this anything short of 100% coverage of WS groups as violent results in under coverage of their violence because of the role these groups have played politically and historically.

Results from the content analysis still suggest that the corporate media are more likely to give room and to legitimate the victims/targets of REM over the victims of WS groups. Additionally, this research predicted that the main target of REM groups would be private corporations; instead they targeted university research labs and the researchers working there most often. It is important to note, though, the private funding of pharmaceutical and animal research in universities. This suggests that by targeting universities, REM were acting at the intersection of private industries and the state.

## **Limitations of the Current Study**

This research had several limitations that are important to understand in order to improve upon the current theoretical model in the future. The author served as the sole coder for the research. Without any interrater reliability, the current research is limited in its reliability. Additionally, this research relied on three papers of record. This could limit the potential generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample to include additional papers of record, particularly in the South, might provide additional data and increase the reliability of the findings. The focus on the papers of record may potentially be a limit in and of itself in the age of digital media and other sources of information. While the papers of record remain strong, other media sources, including CNN, MSNBC, and digital media sources such as Vox, Mother Jones, and even sources like Teen Vogue, have gained traction as legitimate sources of information. Future research could expand beyond the papers of record and include other sources of media to further test the limits of the findings and the propaganda model. Next, the theoretical model for this research, the propaganda model, was designed around capitalist and American hegemony and not around white hegemony, limiting the theoretical basis for part of the research. This was the first study to draw connections between these theoretical concepts. Future research opportunities will strengthen these connections. Finally, this study relied on a fairly obvious source of white supremacy, mainly WS groups. Future research should examine the connection between corporate media and a less obvious form of white supremacy, namely police, especially in the contemporary age of Black Lives Matter and greater media attention to police shootings of African American men and women.

## **Implications of the Current Study**

**Theoretical implications.** The current research explores the application of the propaganda model to the coverage of REM and WS in the U.S. and their portrayal in the media, especially in relation to the study of white supremacy. By expanding the propaganda model to include hegemonic whiteness, this research begins to test how different hegemonic interests can be examined. This provides future opportunities to continue to test the limits and applications of the propaganda model against a variety of groups in the country, whatever their relation to hegemony. This research also provides a potential method (content analysis) for future researchers to continue testing the limits of the propaganda model.

**Implications for future research.** The results regarding WS groups may provide the most interesting opportunities for future research. Despite the continued claims to a post-racial society that has moved beyond racism, WS groups were not framed as terroristic. This could be because of the common thought that because we now live in a post-racial society and the rise in color blind racism, making the blatant racism of WS groups less desirable. Another way to measure the portrayal of white supremacy in the media are then needed. Law enforcement is part of Gramsci's political floor and serves as a direct method of social control of the populace. It serves to maintain hegemonic processes and one of the ways it does this is through the over policing of poor and African American communities (Alexander, 2010). By studying this less obvious form of white supremacy, the connection between the media and the maintenance of white supremacy may become even more apparent.

**Policy implications.** This research also has implications in the age of Trump. While the media have shown a tendency to challenge Trump, this is because in many ways, he runs contrary to American hegemony. Trump does this through his repeated criticism of NATO, breaking away from decades of international policy, or through sheer ignorance of international policy (Glasser, 2017; Fabian & Zimmerman, 2016; Fisher, 2016). This willingness to challenge Trump disappears when Trump follows past American presidents in the long-term goals of American imperialism and exceptionalism. When he does this, particularly when it comes to war, Trump suddenly becomes presidential, despite his well-documented history of dog whistles and outright racism during the campaign and beyond (Alderman, 2017). The corporate media's unwillingness to challenge the systemic racism of the United States is even more dangerous now that Trump and his cabinet have normalized that racism at the highest levels. The implications of the Trump presidency also include the issue of climate change. The Trump administration represent wholesale climate change denial, claiming it is a "hoax perpetrated by the Chinese" (Jacobson, 2016). When the administration claims that climate change is not real, they are jeopardizing the long-term survival of the human species. When it comes to climate change, it is the grassroots activists who are doing the most meaningful work in challenging the state and slowing the damage to the environment. It is because of this, that when the media portray REM as dangerous, violent terrorists, despite the fact that REM actions have never killed anyone, they are signaling to the state that this is a framework that can be used against activists to delegitimize and criminalize their work as well. While there was a recent period where

REM actions were under covered in the papers of record, it is possible that there will be a resurgence in radical environmental actions given new “ag gag” laws, the rise in anti-dissent legislation, the rise in neo-fascism, and the ever-growing climate crisis (which is being hastened under the Trump Administration). Understanding how the corporate media has responded to past instances of environmental actions can provide a better understanding of how they will respond in the future, and how to fight those frames as necessary.

The media are the most powerful source of information available, but so long as that information is tied up by corporate and state interests, that information will be made to fit their needs. The question becomes how can this control be resisted and the flow of information be made more egalitarian? This is even more pressing in the face of the climate crisis and the global rise in fascism. Herman and Chomsky have argued that a rise in egalitarian attitudes will lower the applicability of the propaganda model. This is unlikely any time soon, forcing readers to rely on other methods for acquiring egalitarian information. On a federal level, a push towards regulations that prevent ownership of the media by a small number of actors, limit the role of advertisers, and anti-trust legislation all could lessen the effects of the propaganda model on the media. Individually, supporting and creating independent content that reflects working class needs can serve to interrupt propaganda. Ultimately, these effects would be limited so long as the media relies on a capitalist, corporate structure that relies on profit over all else.

Beyond the propaganda model and corporate media, this research raises other issues that should be addressed. In relation to REM activism, an immediate repeal of the AETA

is required. When REM activism relies on extreme methods to accomplish their goals, sanctions are already codified into law. The AETA serves to label their activism as terrorism and delegitimize their movement. Conversely, harsher sanctions against WS groups need to be considered at both the local and federal level. Current approaches have shown to be inadequate in curbing their actions. One option to accomplish this, noted above, is to place restrictions on hate speech in the United States. This approach ultimately faces two obstacles. First, absolutists will argue that any restriction on hate speech only opens the government to restrict other speech so it is better to leave all speech free (Matsuda, 1989). This ignores historical restrictions on leftist speech and requires the burden of that hate speech to be unfairly placed on minority communities. Second, restricting hate speech with legal sanctions will not stop WS movements alone. Many European countries place restrictions on hate speech but are noticing a similar rise in neo-fascism (The New York Times, 2016). Restricting hate speech must be accompanied by a larger anti-racist movement for there to be long term success.

All of these processes combined leave for a bleak future. A media controlled by capitalists, rising neo-fascism, and a climate increasingly becoming unfit for human survival provide little hope for improvement. In reality, white supremacy, corporate media, and government repression of activism are all being resisted through grassroots activism. Ultimately, it is through their resistance, and the resistance of many more, that will weaken and eventually defeat these systems and bring about the egalitarianism that will make the propaganda model obsolete.

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