

## INTRODUCTION

*Blood and soil. . . Jews will not replace us. . . White lives matter.*

CHARLOTTESVILLE MARCHERS (VICE, 2017)

*We talk to these young people, we give them literature . . . they go and they start their own white youth gangs to counter the terrorism of the black youth gangs.*

SKINHEADS USA (KEANE, 1993)

At 8:45 p.m. on Friday, August 11, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, America's white power movement (WPM) reemerged from the secluded spaces it had been festering in for the last 25 years (Heim 2017; Lyons 2018; McAuliffe 2019). Over the next few days, the level of vitriol, along with barefaced far-right messaging expressed by the alt-right (short for alternative right) shocked people around the world. The images of bellowing white males brandishing flaming tiki torches harkened back to a history of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rallies (see Chalmers 1987; L. Gordon 2018; Wade 1998), while violent clashes with counterprotesters and bystanders seemed aggressively new (First Vigil 2019; McAuliffe 2019; PBS 2018a; VICE 2017). It was at this moment that the WPM blipped back onto the radar of mainstream America, creating a turning point in US history. For many, the anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racist rhetoric combined with youthful adoption of neo-Nazi, neo-Confederate, and far-right imagery was horrifying, given the belief that this sort of blatant white supremacy had dissipated in our "post-racial" society (see Anderson 2016; Bhopal 2018; Bonilla-Silva 2015; Walton 2018; Ward 2018; Wise 2010). The fact that youth were now adopting these alt-right designations was all the more disturbing. Law enforcement, policy makers, and the general public continue to be stumped trying to understand why youth are joining these groups and how to deal with them (see Reitman 2018). Yet, for those who investigate the far right, the Charlottesville protest was simply the visible face of a movement that has never disappeared (Belew 2018; Daniels 2018; Futrell & Simi 2017; Lyons 2018; Neiwert 2017). Additionally, for those who study street gangs, such alt-right youth groups and the violence they participate in are not surprising (Reid & Valasik 2018; Simi 2006, 2009; Simi, Smith & Reeser 2008; Valasik &

Reid 2018a, 2019). In fact, gang researchers, in particular, are uniquely situated to help demystify these groups. As such, the purpose of *Alt-Right Gangs* is twofold. First, we wish to provide a timely and necessary discussion of present-day youth-oriented groups in the WPM, which we refer to in this text as alt-right gangs, and how they need to be integrated into the current paradigm of street gang research. The goal is to provide researchers, students (graduate and undergraduate), law enforcement officials, and policy makers with knowledge aimed at understanding and, hopefully, combating membership in these groups. Second, this book provides a pathway to guide future research in studying these alt-right groups and their members. *Alt-Right Gangs* is the first book to conceptualize alt-right youth groups and situate their appearance across a broad array of academic literature. The interdisciplinary nature of this book synthesizes research from criminology, sociology, communication studies, social movements, political science, history, cultural studies, religious studies, media and information, and computer science to underscore the need to take alt-right gangs seriously and not dismiss them as just a youthful phase or subculture (e.g., Hamm 1993).

While the book is aimed at discussing the intersection of conventional street gangs and alt-right gangs, there remains a great deal of research to be done to fully understand the overlap between these groups, especially in terms of how gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs and policies apply to these youth. The current understanding of alt-right gangs has been greatly hindered by historical decisions about who is and is not considered to be a gang member. For over three decades, gang scholars have explicitly disregarded white youth who are active in overt white power groups (e.g., neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, and white separatists) or influenced by implicit white power ideologies (e.g., Christian Identity, Creativity, manosphere, and the patriot movement). This resistance to acknowledging or discussing alt-right gangs in such foundational and accessible texts has only aggravated our lack of knowledge (e.g., Curry, Decker & Pyrooz 2014; Hamm 1993; Klein 1995).

As a new wave of culture wars and identity politics continues to inundate the United States and Europe, scholars and policy makers have grown concerned over the radicalization of youth, both domestically and internationally (Dandurand 2015; Decker & Pyrooz 2011, 2015a; Pyrooz, La Free, Decker & James 2018; Valasik & Phillips 2017, 2018). The “alt-right,” a term coined, arguably, in 2008 by Richard Spencer, a white supremacist, consists of young, white identitists who present themselves as a leaderless, loosely organized “fun movement, one using Internet jargon familiar to tech-savvy millennials” and who are striving to redefine the American political landscape (Hawley 2017: 20). “Free speech” demonstrations by white supremacists in cities that are seen as liberal bastions, such as Charlottesville, Virginia; Berkeley, California; and Portland, Oregon (see figure I.1), have resulted in hate/bias-related crimes, violence, and even murder (First Vigil 2019;



FIGURE 1.1. Proud Boys among others in the far right protesting at a “free speech” rally (photo by David Neiwert).

McAuliffe 2019; Stern 2019; VICE 2017) (see chapter 7). Despite the desire to treat alt-right groups as nothing more than atypical or radical youth, a substantial subset of alt-righters, such as racist skinheads, are also involved in delinquent, street-oriented youth groups (Woods 2017). It is these youth and their groups—alt-right gangs—that this book endeavors to understand.

### WHAT IS A STREET GANG?

After nearly one hundred years of research examining street gangs, a universal definition for what constitutes a gang, who is considered to be a gang member, and what constitutes a gang-related incident still eludes researchers, law enforcement agencies, and policy makers (see Curry 2015). Howell and Griffiths (2018: 51) highlight just how challenging it has been to attempt to reach a consensus between scholars and criminal justice practitioners, with “no other deviant group [being] shrouded in more mythic and misleading attributes than gangs.” This lack of agreement in defining gangs, gang members, and gang-related crimes has often meant the explicit exclusion of white power groups in both street gang research and law enforcement’s gang databases, or at best a mere implicit acknowledgment of them (Brosseau 2016; Flores 2017; Howell 2015; Howle 2016; Reid & Valasik

2018; Simi 2006; Simi et al. 2008). As such, it is important to recognize the variations that exist in defining street gangs, paying particular attention to the similarities and differences of these descriptions.

The earliest studies examining gangs were based on school surveys of youth. Sheldon (1898: 428) describes fighting gangs as “predatory organizations” and “the typical association of small boys.” The common age for youth in these predatory gangs was between 10 and 13. Puffer (1912) suggested that beyond the family and the neighborhood, the gang (i.e., the play group) is one of youth’s three primary social groups. Puffer (1912) argues that youth’s instinctive tendency to group themselves, combined with a lack of parental supervision, explains the existence of gangs.

Puffer’s (1912) typical gang had a distinct name and included youth between the ages of 10 and 16, who gathered together daily in a claimed area, participated in initiation rituals, engaged in delinquent/criminal activities, and were likely to have a designated leader. According to Puffer a gang was a “social organism . . . with a life of its own which is beyond the lives of its members” (1912: 38), not only instilling antisocial behaviors in its members, but possibly also encouraging and reinforcing prosocial behaviors.

Thrasher’s (1927) seminal work on street gangs was so thorough and detailed that it took half a century before gang researchers again raised definitional issues. Thrasher, known as the father of gang research, defined a gang as “an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory” (1927: 57). Other renowned gang scholars have subsequently built upon Thrasher’s definition, competing to better describe the social phenomenon and failing to reach accord (see Howell & Griffiths 2018 for an in-depth discussion).

Regardless of the definition embraced by gang researchers, a level of variability exists in the characteristics required for a group to be considered a street gang. This intense focus on attempting to decipher specific features that transform a group into a street gang has greatly contributed to gang researchers’ inability to achieve a universal definition of a gang. Yet, as Papachristos (2005: 644) points out, “Such distinctions mean little to the cop on the street, the victim of gang violence, or even gang members.” Papachristos (2005) adapts Everett C. Hughes’s ([1948] 1984) definition of an ethnic group, contending that a gang is not a gang because of some measurable or observable features distinguishing it from other groups. Instead, a gang exists because the members in a gang, and those individuals outside of it, know that it is a gang, because both the ins and outs socialize, believe, feel, and act as if it is a distinct group. Thus, “gangs take their meaning instead from their function and from the consequences of their actions”

(Papachristos 2005: 644), and the group boundaries of a gang are amorphous, with members fluidly joining and leaving the group (see Fleisher 2005; Klein & Crawford 1967), unconcerned about scholarly semantics and the legal definitions of a street gang. In fact, gangs are dynamic, adapting and evolving, not conforming to a static definition (see Ayling 2011; Densley 2013; Valasik & Phillips 2017).

Based on these characteristics, it is clear that white power youth groups would easily qualify as a gang under these scholarly definitions (see chapter 1 for an explicit definition of an alt-right gang). Researchers are not the only ones interested in classifying what constitutes a street gang. Every state law in the United States includes a definition for a criminal street gang. For instance, looking at the state law for the gang capital of America—Los Angeles—a criminal street gang is defined as “any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more of the criminal acts . . . , having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, a pattern of criminal gang activity” (section 186.22(f) of the California Penal Code).

According to the National Gang Center (2016), every state’s definition for a gang includes illegal/criminal behavior or activity. Forty-four states and Washington, D.C., have legislation explicitly defining a gang. Forty states consider gangs to be an “organization, association, or group.” Thirty-six states require a gang to consist of three or more individuals. Thirty states indicate that a gang must have a common name, sign, or symbol that clearly identifies the group. Clearly, variation exists in how each state defines a criminal street gang.

The takeaway point, however, is that many white power youth groups, along with other youth social groups (e.g., fraternities), are able to fit within these legal criteria. Yet white power groups are routinely not considered to be criminal street gangs by law enforcement and remain generally overlooked from gang databases (Brosseau 2016; Flores 2017; Howell 2015; Howle 2016).

As a response to the lack of consensus among researchers, policy makers, and law enforcement in defining a street gang, a group of international gang scholars began to network and convene, forming the Eurogang Program of Research (Esbensen & Maxson 2018; Klein, Kerner, Maxson & Weitekamp 2001; Weerman et al. 2009). The initial objective driving the Eurogang Program of Research was to ascertain if the troublesome youth groups observed in Europe were comparable to American street gangs (Esbensen & Maxson 2018). To accomplish this cross-national comparison, the Eurogang Program of Research created survey instruments within an integrated research design and developed a common definition for a street gang or troublesome youth group (since the term *gang* does not always translate precisely). A systematic approach with a multi-method, multisite, comparative research design allowed for the ability to measure street

gangs around the world (Esbensen & Maxson 2018). The Eurogang definition identifies a street gang as “any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity” (Weerman et al. 2009: 20). This definition, developed meticulously over the course of several years and multiple conferences, contains four crucial components required for a group to be considered a street gang: *durability*, *street orientation*, *youthfulness*, and a *group identity revolving around illegal behavior* (Esbensen & Maxson 2018; Weerman et al. 2009). Despite the failure of the overall field of gang researchers to reach a consensus, the Eurogang definition “has become widely adopted and appears regularly in publications,” with the Eurogang Program of Research publishing six edited volumes of scholarship (see Decker & Weerman 2005; Esbensen & Maxson 2011; Klein et al. 2001; Maxson & Esbensen 2016; Melde & Weerman 2020; van Gemert, Peterson & Lien 2008) and is the most widely employed modern definition for ascertaining whether a group should be considered a street gang (Maxson & Esbensen 2016: 7).

Despite white power youth groups, particularly long-standing racist skinheads, being treated as the “Schrödinger’s cat” of street gangs (i.e., simultaneously being regarded as a street gang and not being regarded as a street gang), they easily qualify as a street gang based on the Eurogang definition (Klein 1996, 2001, 2009; Klein & Maxson 2006; Pyrooz et al. 2018; Reid & Valasik 2018; Reid, Valasik & Bagavathi 2020; Simi 2006; Valasik & Reid 2018b, 2019). This definitional tension between whether or not white power youth groups are considered a street gang is discussed in much more depth in chapter 1, where the features required for a group to be defined as an alt-right gang are described. Now that it is established that white power youth groups satisfy the requirements to be considered a street gang, either by researchers or law enforcement, an overview of the most recent iteration of the WPM mobilizing today’s youth, the alt-right, is in order (see Daniels 2018; Futrell & Simi 2017).

### WHAT IS THE ALT-RIGHT?

The WPM in American society has been extremely resilient, continuing to evolve and adapt since the Reconstruction Era (1863–1877) (see Lewis & Serbu 1999; McVeigh & Estep 2019; Parsons 2015). With the advent and ubiquity of digital communications (the internet, social media, etc.) the WPM has undergone a noticeable transformation over the last three decades (Daniels 2018; Futrell & Simi 2017; Levin 2002). Based on the blueprint of “leaderless resistance” laid out by Louis Beam ([1983] 1992), a prominent white supremacist strategist, digital communications (e.g., online message boards) could be used asymmetrically and with minimal resources to spread the WPM’s messages, maintain communication between individuals not spatially proximate, and recruit new members (see Belew

2018; Gardell 2018; Joosse 2016; Kaplan 1997; Levin 2002; Michael 2012; T. Morris 2017; Simpson & Druxes 2015). Under this guiding principle white power groups have been able to covertly expand and extend their footprint, growing a base of support for issues of white identity (Daniels 2018; Futrell & Simi 2018; Hawley 2018). Throughout this transformation, the WPM continues to reinvent their groups' image and branding in order to offset the general stigma associated with white supremacy's racial and anti-Semitic hate (Futrell & Simi 2018; Mudde 2018, 2019). The alt-right is just the WPM's most recent veneer.

The term *alt-right* was conceived of in the important context of an unpopular and frustrating war in Iraq and the burgeoning financial crisis of the Great Recession, both of which were being filtered through new forms of news media (e.g., cable news, the internet, and social media) to discontented Americans (see Crothers 2019; Hawley 2017, 2019; Hermansson, Lawrence, Mulhall & Murdoch 2020; Lewis 2018; Main 2018; Neiwert 2017; Waring 2019; Wendling 2018). The constellation of far-right groups and individuals falling under the alt-right umbrella has shifted since Richard Spencer's christening over a decade ago. Today the alt-right projects itself as being a loosely organized, leaderless far-right social/political movement of young, tech-savvy millennials employing facetious internet jargon to revamp and mainstream white supremacist beliefs behind a facade of white identity politics or Western chauvinist convictions (Hawley 2018, 2019; Hermansson et al 2020; Johnson 2019; McVeigh & Estep 2019; Mudde 2018, 2019; Stern 2019; Valasik & Reid 2018b). Yet there has been some questioning about just how youth-centric the alt-right as a social movement actually is, and whether figureheads in the alt-right (e.g., Richard Spencer) and alt-lite media personalities (e.g., Milo Yiannopoulos) may be overstating the youth-orientedness of the alt-right (see Hawley 2018; Main 2018). The alt-right is also not just a bunch of trolls on the internet, nor are they simply "lone shooter" extremists like those who attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Jipson & Becker 2019; Phillips et al. 2018). While it may be impossible to truly assess the age makeup of the alt-right, what has been documented is that throngs of young, white males routinely participate in "free speech" demonstrations across the United States in "liberal" cities (see chapters 5 and 7) (Crothers 2019; Marcotte 2018; McAuliffe 2019; Wilson 2019).

The alt-right is not a monolith, unified by a strict ideology. Instead, the alt-right is a confederated movement composed of a variety of factions that are generally against feminism, globalism, immigration, multiculturalism, establishment politics, and political correctness, but are supportive of President Trump (Berger 2018; Hawley 2019; Hermansson et al 2020; Perry & Scrivens 2019; Vitolo-Haddad 2019; Waring 2019; Wendling 2018; Winter 2019). In fact, the alt-right is very "dis-jointed and more clearly focused on external enemies than its own internal cohesion" (Berger 2018: 53). Thus, the term *alt-right* has been used to encompass a



range of groups and ideologies. Among them are online trolls who only seek *lulz*, or “amusement at other people’s distress” (Phillips 2015: 27) (see chapter 6). Next, there is the manosphere, composed of misogynistic “meninists,” focused on issues of men’s rights, or “incels” (short for “involuntarily celibates”) (see Baele, Brace & Coan, 2019; Beauchamp 2018; Enloe, Graff, Kapur & Walters 2019; Hawley 2019; Hermansson et al 2020). Then there are survivalists, or members supportive of the patriot (or militia) movement, such as the Oath Keepers or Three Percenters (see Aho 1990; Belew 2018; Crothers 2019; Klein 2019; Lyons 2018; Michael 2015; Neiwert 2017; Simi, Windisch & Sporer 2016). There are also the intellectuals—a group of academics including paleoconservatives (the antithesis of the neoconservative movement, opposing free trade, foreign wars, multiculturalism, and immigration) and racialists (those adhering to questionable race-based theories, such as human biodiversity, who attest to differences in intelligence between racial groups)—who are attempting to establish an intellectual far right outside of mainstream conservatism (Hawley 2019; Hermansson et al 2020; Main 2018; Saini 2019; Stern 2019; Wendling 2018). Another faction within the alt-right is conspiracy theorists (e.g., QAnon, Pizzagate, New World Order [NWO]), white genocide) (see Berger 2018; Berlet & Vysotsky 2006; Coaston 2018a; Hodge & Hallgrimsdottir 2019; Marcotte 2018; Neiwert 2018b; Pollard 2016; Saslow 2018; Stern 2019; Wendling 2018). Lastly, the most prominent factions are the individuals at the core of the alt-right who fully endorse the WPM (see Atkinson 2018; Daniels 2018; Hawley 2017, 2019; Hermansson et al 2020; Klein 2019; Lyons 2018; Main 2018; Neiwert 2017; Stern 2019; Waring 2019). While white supremacist notions may be present among intellectuals, conspiracy theorists, and the other factions, they are not necessarily the beliefs that inspire members in these groups.

The alt-right contends that they are not a racist movement, but only use caustic and ironic humor as an instrument to facilitate their far-right arguments criticizing social justice warriors (liberals), and condemning the political, social, and cultural status quo. When we apply Ken White’s (2017) slightly paraphrased rule of goats, however, we see that this argument does not hold up. The rule asserts that if you kiss a goat, whether you do it to prove a larger point or ironically, you’re still a goat-kisser. As such, the alt-right are goat-kissers and not some band of ironic, transgressive humorists. As Hawley (2017) states, there is no more appropriate word to describe the alt-right than *racist*.

While racists are at the core of the alt-right and remain relatively limited in number, they are able, however, to exert substantial influence. For instance, compared to the 197 million Caucasian Americans living in the United States, only about 11 million individuals, or about 6%, are supportive of the rhetoric espoused by the alt-right (Hawley 2018). Nevertheless, there is a larger swath of Caucasian Americans who feel that the status, privileges, and authority of being white in America are deteriorating, what Du Bois (1935: 700) called the “psychological wage



of whiteness” (see also Roediger 1999). Kimmel (2013: 18) calls this “aggrieved entitlement,” or the belief that white Americans feel they are being swindled out of the benefits to which they are entitled under the conditions of the current political environment and economic market (see also Hochschild 2016; Kimmel 2018; Norris 2018). Berry (2017: 14) takes this concept further with the notion of “racial protectionism” in which a mythologized racial community (whites) feels obligated to fight for their preservation against imagined racial enemies. This concept is illustrated best with Derek Black’s white supremacist propaganda suggesting that a “white genocide,” also referred to as the “Great Replacement,” a mass extinction of white, European culture through immigration, assimilation, and higher reproduction rates by individuals of non-European descent, is taking place in America (Moses 2019; Saslow 2018). While the “silent majority” of individuals who support the views of the alt-right will most likely remain within the digital realm, the number of individuals that publicly support the alt-right is not insubstantial and exceeds the 4% of the population that supported the KKK in the 1920s (Chalmers 1987; MacLean 1994; McVeigh 2009; McVeigh & Estep 2019). There is still much to be learned about the transitioning of the alt-right from a mostly online phenomenon to a real-world social movement (see chapter 6).

### ALT-RIGHT GANGS: FROM TWEETS TO THE STREETS

While there may be some questions about the decision to use the term *alt-right gang*, this decision was purposeful for several reasons. First, this term is contemporary in a way that speaks to the current iteration of youth involved in these groups. The definition is explicit in that this book is focused on a very particular subset of individuals who are involved in public delinquent behavior, not the broader social movement that is associated with the term *alt-right*. Second, other terms like *racist skinhead* or *far right* or *extreme right* have a history and a set of preconceived notions attached to them. For example, the term *racist skinhead* often invokes an image of a bald thug fighting in the street, and *far right* or *extreme right* overemphasizes ideology-based activities (private meetings, propaganda distribution, etc.). In order to avoid the historical connotations of these terms, and to acknowledge that, while these youth-oriented groups in the WPM are not “new,” they are also not the same as they were in the 1980s and 1990s, we employ the term *alt-right gang*.

The manifestation and initial evolution of the alt-right began across the digital landscape, primarily on Twitter and Facebook; however, over the last few years they have manifested in the public sphere (see DeCook 2018; Fielitz & Thurston 2019; Stern 2019). This sudden escalation of activity in the public limelight has been documented by the ever-increasing number of “free speech” rallies (in cities such as Berkeley, Charlottesville, New York, and Portland), which regularly

conclude with violence (see KPIX 2017; McAuliffe 2019; Neiwert 2019; Stern 2019; Vice 2017; Wilson 2019) (see chapter 7). The public exhibitions of criminality and violence documented at these alt-right gatherings unambiguously demonstrate a “cafeteria-style” pattern of criminal offending, commonly observed by conventional street gangs (see Klein 1995; Klein & Maxson 2006). Such criminal offenses include harassment, larceny, assault, possessing illegal weapons, hate-related crimes, murder, and serial killings (Duggan 2018; First Vigil 2019; Heim 2018; Martinez 2018; PBS 2018b; Shallwani & Weill 2018; Thompson, Winston & Hanrahan 2018;). The breadth of these criminal offenses shows that dismissing alt-right youth as merely a bunch of online trolls is misaligned with the realities of the alt-right. Given the confederated nature of the alt-right, there are various subgroups whose members also associate with street-oriented delinquent groups (e.g., 211 Bootboys, B49, Proud Boys, and the Rise Above Movement, or R.A.M.). In the wake of the Unite the Right rally in 2017, it was surmised that the alt-right would recede from public view, limiting their activities to Aryan free spaces online (see chapters 6 and 8). Instead, the incendiary rhetoric of President Trump at rallies and on Twitter, using dog whistles and coded language (e.g., *globalist*, *invader*, *nationalist*), has produced an atmosphere receptive to the increased boldness of alt-right gangs in the United States (e.g., racist skinheads, Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, The Base, R.A.M.) to engage in street violence (Strickland 2018; Burke 2018; Dickson 2019; Lamoureux & Makuch 2018a, 2018b, 2019; G. Lopez 2017; Reitman 2018; Roose & Winston 2018; Valasik & Reid 2018a; Ware 2008). In fact, the “branching out from internet activism” has actually allowed these alt-right gangs to strengthen their connections with other far-right groups (e.g., the patriot movement, manosphere, and traditional white supremacists) and forge more extensive ties within the larger alt-right movement (Crothers 2019; Hawley 2019; Klein 2019; Lyons 2018; Main 2018; Nagle 2017; Stern 2019; Wendling 2018). It is this combination of having both a digital and physical footprint that differentiates alt-right gangs from traditional white power groups (e.g., KKK, neo-Nazis) and conventional street gangs.

Additionally, that membership overlaps between factions in the alt-right is also an important consideration when categorizing these groups. Researchers and law enforcement have noted that youth can and do switch between racist and non-racist skinhead groups, marking a fluidity present in alt-right gang membership (Borgenson & Valeri 2018; Christensen 1994). Similar patterns have been documented among conventional street gangs, commonly referred to as “hybrid gangs,” where members switch affiliations or join multiple groups (see Bolden 2012, 2014; Howell, Starbuck & Lindquist 2001; Starbuck, Howell & Lindquist 2004). For example, following an event at the Metropolitan Republican Club in New York City, several Proud Boys members who attacked counterprotesters were also affiliated with street-based racist skinhead gangs such as 211 Bootboys

and Battalion 49 (B49) (First Vigil 2019; Holt 2018). Of 10 Proud Boys arrested, seven pleaded guilty; two members were found guilty of gang assault, attempted assault, and rioting; and at the time of this writing, one is still awaiting trial (Moynihan 2019). While the Proud Boys label may give these individuals a more hip, mainstream persona, a Proud Boys member still fits the definition of being an alt-right gang member (see chapter 1).

As with conventional street gangs, alt-right gangs exist on a spectrum from loosely organized, neighborhood-based gangs all the way to highly structured organizations focused on just a particular subset of crimes (e.g., drugs, fraud, and extortion). Similar patterns also exist for alt-right gangs' criminal activity and their political motivations.

## PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

In *Alt-Right Gangs*, we utilize our interdisciplinary training to inform our perspectives as gang scholars. This allows for a look beyond the specific academic discipline of criminology to engage with the broader WPM literature. The result of this perspective is a book that engages with a diverse set of literature across a range of academic backgrounds to provide a concise synthesis of alt-right gangs. By harnessing and integrating this assorted literature, a more inclusive characterization of alt-right gangs is developed. This highlights just how substantial the similarities are between alt-right gangs and conventional street gangs. Even though our expertise as gang researchers frames our perspective about alt-right gangs, it is through the marriage of these different literatures that a more comprehensive picture and nuanced understanding of what is known about alt-right gangs is developed. This perspective also allows the identification of what research is still lacking or limited.

The goal of this book is to give students, academics, law enforcement, policy makers, and legislators an incisive look into alt-right gangs and establish a usable definition that can be operationalized to systematically examine alt-right gangs in future research and/or policy initiatives. Additionally, this book draws on our own unique research analyzing conventional street gangs, gang-related violence, incarcerated youth, and alt-right gangs (e.g., racist skinheads). There are three primary audiences for this book. The central audience is scholars of criminology or academics studying the broader WPM. As an essential primer on alt-right gangs, this book fills a void in the gang literature, supplementing any graduate or undergraduate course on juvenile delinquency, hate or bias-related crimes, violent extremism, or juvenile subcultures. It may also serve as a primary text in special-topics courses focused on modern gangs or the WPM. The second group benefiting from this book is law enforcement agencies and policy makers bewildered by the dramatic manifestation of the alt-right movement (see Reitman

2018). Finally, the book will provide the public at large with an accessible general background about the WPM and alt-right gangs and offer some possible strategies to effectively intervene.

The format of *Alt-Right Gangs* is designed to apply nearly 100 years of gang scholarship to an understanding of these specific gangs. Chapter 1 discusses the definitional issues surrounding the historical exclusion of white power groups from street gang studies. The chapter focuses on the unique role that ideology plays in excluding these white power groups from gang studies and proposes an interdisciplinary definition for alt-right gangs that can be used to systematically study them. Chapter 2 not only lays out the myths and realities about alt-right gangs, but also unveils the myths that alt-right gangs promote to their membership. Chapters 3 through 7 provide a detailed analysis of specific aspects of alt-right gangs, paying particular attention to the overlap that exists with our knowledge of street gangs and highlighting just how well situated gang researchers are to examine these alt-right groups. Chapter 3 synthesizes the street gang and racist skinhead literatures to consider the risk factors that are associated with joining an alt-right gang. Chapter 4 discusses the integral role that white power music and culture play as a facilitator and recruiter for alt-right gangs. Chapter 5 moves on to the importance and use of space, both physical and digital, for alt-right gangs. Chapter 6 continues to build on alt-right gangs' utilization of the virtual world by focusing on how the internet and social media connect members and have evolved and adapted over time. Chapter 7 examines the "cafeteria-style" criminality and use of violence by alt-right gangs. Chapter 8 concludes with a discussion of the policy implications and next steps needed to better understand and address the public resurgence of the WPM in the form of alt-right gangs.

Most criminological texts discussing street gangs attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic but routinely dismiss alt-right gangs (see Curry, Decker & Pyrooz 2014; Hamm 1993; Klein 1995), fail to acknowledge their inclusion (see Decker & Pyrooz 2015b; Esbensen, Tibbetts & Gaines 2004; Maxson, Egely, Miller & Klein 2014; Howell & Griffiths 2018; Huff 2002; Fraser 2017; Kontos, Brotherton & Barrios 2003), or provide only a cursory discussion or history (see Barker 2019; Delaney 2014; Sanders 2017; Shelden, Tracy & Brown 2012). The failure of these texts to adequately address just how much compatibility exists between conventional street gangs and alt-right gangs is an oversight this book strives to remedy. Guided by an interdisciplinary approach, *Alt-Right Gangs* synthesizes an expansive set of literatures, including emerging and groundbreaking texts analyzing the rise of the alt-right (see Crothers 2019; Fielitz & Thurston 2019; Finn 2019; Hawley 2017, 2019; Hermansson et al 2020; Lyons 2017, 2018; Main 2018; Nagle 2017; Neiwert 2017; Stern 2019; Waring 2018, 2019; Wendling 2018). The integration of scholarly research across a variety of disciplines provides the most coherent and complete understanding of alt-right gangs today.

Incorporating these diverse literatures into a singular definition not only provides a broad categorization of alt-right gangs but allows for a more insightful understanding of those involved in these gangs. This work provides scholars and policy makers with prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies that are not pigeonholed to only to a subsample of individuals involved in the WPM.