

The Hate Model



The Seven-Stage Hate Model The Psychopathology of Hate Groups

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The manifestations of hate are legion, but the hate process itself remains elusive. Limited research in this field precluded the development of a comprehensive hate model. Understanding hate groups is essential for the development and implementation of successful intervention strategies, which depend on an understanding of the hate process. The proposed hate model consists of seven stages, including how hate groups define themselves, how hate groups target their victims and taunt them with verbal insults and offensive gestures, and how hate groups attack their victims with or without weapons.¹

DEFINITION OF HATE

Hate, a complex subject, divides into two general categories: rational and irrational. Unjust acts inspire rational hate. Hatred of a person based on race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or national origin constitutes irrational hate.

Both rational and irrational hate mask personal insecurities. Everyone experiences personal insecurities in varying degrees throughout their lives. The more insecure a person feels, the larger the hate mask. Most people concentrate on the important issues in life, such as earning a living, rearing a family, and achieving personal goals. These

pursuits give meaning and value to life.² Nonetheless, irrational hate bleeds through day-to-day activities in the form of racial barbs and ethnic humor. Not all insecure people are haters, but all haters are insecure people.

With respect to rational hate, haters do not focus as much on the wrong done to them or others, but, rather, on their own helplessness, guilt, or inability to effect change. The object of rational hate often is despised or pitied.³ In the same way, irrational hate elevates the hater above the hated.⁴ Many insecure people feel a sense of self-worth by relegating a person or group of people to a lower status.⁵



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SKINHEAD GROUPS

During a 7-year FBI investigation of skinhead groups in Southern California between 1992 and 1999, specific patterns emerged. Skinhead groups typically consist of uneducated, young, white males between the ages of 13 and 24 who have no long-term prospects for success. Although many come from single-parent, dysfunctional families, some exceptions exist. For example, members of the Western Hammerskins in Hemet, California, had high school educations and came from two-parent, middle-class families. Further examination revealed that both parents made long, daily commutes to work in Los Angeles and left their teenage children unsupervised. The lack of parental supervision and guidance spawned personal insecurities similar to those found in skinheads who come from dysfunctional, single-parent environments.

Fortunately, most skinhead groups are not well organized and

lack the leadership structure found in the majority of street gangs engaged in "for-profit" criminal activities. However, the Western Hammerskins group has a stronger leadership hierarchy than most skinhead groups, and it boasts a very active recruitment program. Potential members receive a recruitment package, which includes a swastika armband, a T-shirt with white supremacist slogans, white supremacist literature and band stickers, and other supremacist materials. Recruiters also pass out business cards embossed with the Western Hammerskins' logo and the recruiter's name and telephone number. The group's higher educational level may explain the sophistication of its recruitment techniques.

Skinhead groups subdivide into two categories: criminally motivated and hate motivated. Criminally motivated skinhead groups spend most of their time engaged in for-profit criminal activities, such

as drug sales and burglaries. Incidental to their criminal activity, they commit hate crimes. The San Fernando Valley Peckerwoods (SVP) in California was a criminally motivated skinhead group. SVP members primarily sold methamphetamines and committed residential burglaries. Periodically, SVP members attacked minorities with weapons and, on one occasion, placed packages resembling bombs near an apartment complex where African-Americans lived. Members intended for the fake bombs to frighten current residents to relocate and to discourage other African-American families from moving into the complex.

Conversely, hate-motivated skinhead groups dedicate the majority of their time to hate crimes.⁶ Incidental to hate crimes, these hard-core skinheads commit petty thefts or sell small amounts of narcotics to support daily needs, such as food, cigarettes, and alcohol and other drugs. The Nazi Low Riders (NLR) skinhead group located in Lancaster, California, exemplifies a hate-motivated skinhead group. At one time, NLR members spent their time prowling the streets of Lancaster looking for minorities to attack. The NLR matured to the point where their members routinely beat and stabbed minorities, and, in one instance, murdered an African-American.

Haters cannot stop hating without exposing their personal insecurities. For example, at the onset of the FBI investigation, FBI authorities told hard-core members of the NLR that they would arrest them if their hate violence continued; yet, the hate violence persisted. The FBI

similarly warned the members of the SVP who, however, stopped or were more surreptitious concerning criminal activities, and their hate violence ceased. The reaction of the SVP members comported with general criminal deterrence literature.⁷ The reaction of the NLR members did not, however, because hate, not criminal acts, was their primary motive.

Interviews of both criminally motivated and hate-motivated skinheads may explain this phenomenon. Criminally motivated skinheads identified themselves as criminals first and haters second. They also expressed a degree of personal security in their status as criminals. The criminally motivated skinheads possess a certain sense of self-worth; hence, they have fewer insecurities. However, this was not the case with hate-motivated skinheads. The explanation by one 15-year-old NLR member typified the thought process of hate-motivated skinheads. He said, in effect, "I dropped out of school in the eighth grade, but I stopped learning midway through the sixth grade. I covered my body with hate tattoos. I couldn't get a good job if I wanted to. No one would hire me. Once, I tried to get a job at a fast food restaurant, but the manager refused to hire me because the restaurant served multiracial customers. If I quit being a skinhead, I have nothing. I am nothing. I have no choice but to be a skinhead. I expect to die a young, violent death."

Skinheads converge, get drunk, take drugs, and, at some point, spontaneously seek out hate targets to attack. They conduct little, if any, planning before committing

hate crimes. One hate-motivated skinhead put it best when he stated, "We don't look for trouble but somehow trouble always finds us, and we're ready to deal with it when it comes."

THE HATE MODEL

Several academic authorities on hate crimes in America identified three types of bias crime offenders: the thrill seeker, the reactive offender, and the hard-core offender.⁸ They described the reactive offender as one "who grounds his attack on a perceived transgression,

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such as an insult, interracial dating, or a neighborhood integration."⁹ The authors' model incorporates the thrill seeker and the hard-core offender, but redefines the concept of the reactive offender. This phenomenon can be described as secondary justification; skinheads routinely use this technique to instigate attacks. For example, a group of skinheads encounter a mixed-race couple and shout racial slurs. If the couple reacts in a manner other than a submissive one, the skinheads perceive that behavior as an act of aggression. The skinheads later tell the police they merely defended themselves against aggressors. The skinheads, of course, leave out the

fact that they acted as the instigators. Secondary justification is difficult to detect because skinheads can interpret a simple glance as aggressive behavior.

Secondary justification also exists on a larger scale. When a community reacts to a hate crime, skinheads perceive that reaction as aggressive, which reinforces the notion that skinheads must defend themselves against a common enemy. Secondary justification places the skinheads in a victim status and rationalizes continued violence. To further illustrate this principle, a skinhead, with a swastika tattooed on his cheek, walked into a jewelry store to buy a ring for his girlfriend. The skinhead became incensed when the Jewish clerk treated him poorly. The skinhead later commented that if Jews treated him with more respect he would not hate them so much. The skinhead clearly saw himself as a victim, although he openly displayed a provocative symbol of hate on his face.

Empirical observations show that hate groups go through seven stages in the hate process. Haters, if unimpeded, pass through these seven successive stages without skipping a stage. In the first four stages, haters vocalize their beliefs. In the last three stages, haters act on their beliefs. A transition period exists between vocalization and acting out. In this transition period, violence separates hard-core haters from rhetorical haters.

Stage 1: The Haters Gather

Irrational haters seldom hate alone.¹⁰ They feel compelled, almost driven, to entreat others to hate as they do. Peer validation

bolsters a sense of self-worth and, at the same time, prevents introspection, which reveals personal insecurities.¹¹ Further, individuals otherwise ineffective become empowered when they join groups, which also provide anonymity and diminished accountability.

Stage 2: The Hate Group Defines Itself

Hate groups form identities through symbols, rituals, and mythologies, which enhance the members' status and, at the same time, degrade the object of their hate. For example, skinhead groups may adopt the swastika, the iron cross, the Confederate flag, and other supremacist symbols. Group-specific symbols or clothing often differentiate hate groups. Group rituals, such as hand signals and secret greetings, further fortify members. Hate groups, especially skinhead groups, usually incorporate some form of self-sacrifice, which allows haters to willingly jeopardize their well-being for the greater good of the cause. Giving one's life to a cause provides the ultimate sense of value and worth to life.¹² Skinheads often see themselves as soldiers in a race war.

Stage 3: The Hate Group Disparages the Target

Hate is the glue that binds haters to one another and to a common cause.¹³ By verbally debasing the object of their hate, haters enhance their self-image, as well as their group status. In skinhead groups, racist song lyrics and hate literature provide an environment wherein hate flourishes. In fact, researchers have found that the life span of

aggressive impulses increases with ideation.¹⁴ In other words, the more often a person thinks about aggressive behavior, the greater the chance for aggressive behavior to occur. Thus, after constant verbal denigration, haters progress to the next more acrimonious stage.

Stage 4: The Hate Group Taunts the Target

Hate, by its nature, changes incrementally. Time cools the fire of hate, thus forcing the hater to look inward. To avoid introspection, haters use ever-increasing degrees of rhetoric and violence to maintain high levels of agitation. Taunts and

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offensive gestures serve this purpose. In this stage, skinheads typically shout racial slurs from moving cars or from afar. Nazi salutes and other hand signals often accompany racial epithets. Racist graffiti also begins to appear in areas where skinheads loiter. Most skinhead groups claim turf proximate to the neighborhoods in which they live. One study indicated that a majority of hate crimes occur when the hate target migrates through the hate group's turf.¹⁵

Stage 5: The Hate Group Attacks the Target Without Weapons

This stage is critical because it differentiates vocally abusive haters from physically abusive ones. In this stage, hate groups become more aggressive, prowling their turf seeking vulnerable targets. Violence coalesces hate groups and further isolates them from mainstream society. Skinheads, almost without exception, attack in groups and target single victims. Research has shown that bias crimes are twice as likely to cause injury and four times as likely to result in hospitalization as compared to nonbias crimes.¹⁶

In addition to physical violence, the element of thrill seeking is introduced in Stage 5. Two experts found that 60 percent of hate offenders were “thrill seekers.”¹⁷ The adrenaline “high” intoxicates the attackers. The initial adrenaline surge lasts for several minutes; however, the effects of adrenaline keep the body in a state of heightened alert for up to several days.¹⁸ Each successive anger-provoking thought or action builds on residual adrenaline and triggers a more violent response than the one that originally initiated the sequence.¹⁹ Anger builds on anger. The adrenaline high combined with hate becomes a deadly combination. Hard-core skinheads keep themselves at a level where the slightest provocation triggers aggression.

Stage 6: The Hate Group Attacks the Target with Weapons

Several studies confirm that a large number of bias attacks involve weapons.²⁰ Some attackers

use firearms to commit hate crimes, but skinheads prefer weapons, such as broken bottles, baseball bats, blunt objects, screwdrivers, and belt buckles. These types of weapons require the attacker to be close to the victim, which further demonstrates the depth of personal anger. Attackers can discharge firearms at a distance, thus precluding personal contact. Close-in onslaughts require the assailants to see their victims eye-to-eye and to become bloodied during the assault. Hands-on violence allows skinheads to express their hate in a way a gun cannot. Personal contact empowers and fulfills a deep-seated need to have dominance over others.

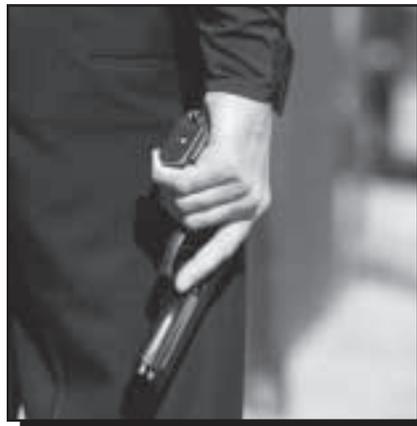
Stage 7: The Hate Group Destroys the Target

The ultimate goal of haters is to destroy the object of their hate. Mastery over life and death imbues the hater with godlike power and omnipotence, which, in turn, facilitate further acts of violence. With this power comes a great sense of self-worth and value, the very qualities haters lack. However, in reality, hate physically and psychologically destroys both the hater and the hated.

Model Application

Anecdotal evidence suggests that this hate model has a wider application. For example, when a coworker becomes a hate target for reasons other than race, sex, or national origin, the hater immediately seeks out others in the office who dislike, or can be persuaded to dislike, the hated coworker (Stage 1). The group establishes an identity using symbols and behaviors. They

use a lifted eyebrow, a code word to exclude the hated coworker from a lunch invitation, or any number of other actions to demean and isolate. The haters even may adopt a name for their group (Stage 2). At this point, the haters only disparage the hated coworker within their group (Stage 3). As time passes, the haters openly insult the hated coworker either directly or indirectly by allowing disparaging remarks to be overheard from afar (Stage 4). One morning, the hated coworker discovers his desk rearranged and



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offensive images pasted over a picture depicting his wife and children (Stage 5). From the sophomoric to the terroristic, acts of hate have the same effect. Eventually, the haters sabotage the hated coworker's projects and attempt to ruin the individual's reputation through rumors and innuendoes (Stage 6). In so doing, the haters make the work environment intolerable for the hate target (Stage 7). Scenarios like this occur every day across America and, indeed, around the world. The targets of hate may change, but the hate process remains constant.

ASSESSMENT

Assessing and analyzing skinhead groups can help investigators tailor intervention strategies to each hate group, thus increasing the probability of successful intervention and rehabilitation. Law enforcement can assess a skinhead group by first determining if the group is hate motivated or criminally motivated. The best method to establish motivation is through one-on-one interviews, although reviewing police reports and criminal histories prove adequate determining factors as well.

Second, investigators should measure the maturity of the group, which is not determined by the chronological age of the group's members but by the collective actions of the group. Violence constitutes an important maturation indicator. Comparing the group's activities to the stages in the hate model can determine the maturity of a skinhead group. Mature groups commit more violent acts than immature groups.

An additional step in the assessment process involves gauging the strength of the group's mythology. Immature groups have simple mythologies, whereas mature groups have more complex and stubborn mythologies. Studying group mythologies proves difficult because they represent the aggregate of a group's common beliefs, experiences, symbols, and rituals.

SYMBOLS, RITUALS, AND MYTHOLOGY

Fully understanding hate groups involves identifying and defining their unique symbols, rituals, and mythologies. Symbols give

greater meaning to irrational hate. Haters use symbols for self-identification and to form common bonds with other group members. Additionally, they often swear allegiance to these symbols. For example, the swastika, a simple symbol, served as a powerful rallying point for the Nazi movement and helped mobilize an entire country.²¹

Each hate group adopts its own symbols or borrows them from others. Symbolic words and nonverbal behaviors reflect individual disdain and serve as advertisements to attract fellow sympathizers. Offensive language is the most common expression of dislike for others. Hate groups also display contempt by using nonverbal gestures, such as a Nazi salute. Clothes, short haircuts, military boots, tattoos, and bumper stickers also represent symbols that can effectively communicate hate.

Symbols, however, are not enough to unify a group; therefore, more organized hate groups incorporate rituals, which serve two functions. First, they relieve individual group members from deep thought and self-examination. Second, rituals reinforce beliefs and fortify group unity.

The hate group's experiences, beliefs, and use of symbols and rituals combine to create group mythologies. Mythologies unify disparate thoughts and act as filters through which group members interpret reality.²² Group mythologies can have profound effects on its members.²³ A group with a powerful mythology results in one resistant to ideological challenges, and, therefore, it is more dangerous.

Mythologies nurtured, reinforced, and protected from outside ideas provide a forum where group members can escape individual responsibility. "When we lose our individual independence in the corporateness of a mass movement we find a new freedom—freedom to hate."²⁴

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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Ironically, skinheads, especially hate-motivated skinheads, talk to anyone who will listen, including law enforcement officers. One investigator who knew little about white-supremacist ideology simply asked skinheads why they hated, what their tattoos meant, and how skinhead groups were organized. Numerous interviews and observations substantiated the initial information obtained by the investigator. On the other hand, criminally motivated skinheads are less likely to talk because they act more like criminals. Investigators should determine the motivation of skinheads when planning interview strategies.

Hate-motivated skinheads have well-rehearsed answers for

questions, such as "Why do you hate?" "Can't you see what you're doing is wrong?" "How would you like it if someone picked on you because of your race?" Skinheads answer smugly; they feel secure as skinheads. Because hate masks personal insecurities, interviewers should temporarily forego questions about why skinheads hate and strive to identify the skinheads' personal insecurities. Interviewers should begin this probe by asking skinheads about their family relationships, which probably represent the source of the skinhead's insecurities because a sense of who people are and where they fit in society typically develops within the family structure. Interviewers also should explore skinheads' future plans, educational goals, and desired employment. This forces skinheads to see themselves as they really are. If forced to look at themselves, skinheads become vulnerable, less resistant to rehabilitation, and, in law enforcement settings, more likely to confess. This process could take several hours or many months depending on the resistance level of the skinhead.

This strategy proves less effective when interviewing criminally motivated skinheads because they view themselves as criminals who hate, rather than haters who commit criminal acts. More traditional interviewing strategies have proven successful with criminally motivated skinheads.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

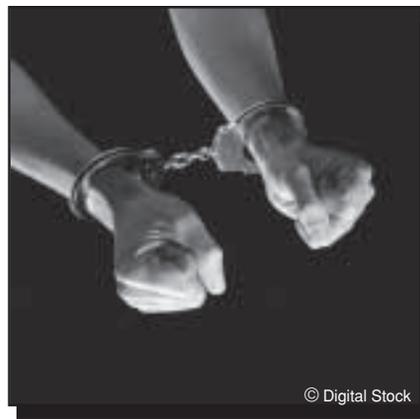
An accurate assessment of skinhead groups is critical to developing intervention strategies.

Dismantling immature skinhead groups proves easier than breaking down sophisticated skinhead groups. Skinheads not solidly committed to supremacist ideology more likely will respond to rehabilitation attempts than hard-core skinheads.²⁵ Skinheads who have not passed from Stage 4 (rhetoric) to Stage 5 (violence) will prove more receptive to rehabilitation strategies than those skinheads who commit violence.

Investigators should approach criminally motivated skinhead groups by using tactics similar to those used against criminal street gangs. Disrupting the activities of mature, hate-motivated skinhead groups requires time and more elaborate interdiction strategies because such groups are more unified and committed to their beliefs. Conversely, aggressive prosecution constitutes an efficient means to disrupt immature, hate-motivated skinhead groups.

Law enforcement used this technique to dismantle Peer Pride, an immature, hate-motivated skinhead group in Palmdale, California. The FBI learned about Peer Pride when the group hung a noose from a tree in front of the home of an African-American family. Five Peer Pride members taunted the family with racial slurs and demanded that they move out of the neighborhood. Local law enforcement initially treated this incident as a prank because hanging the noose was the only reported hate activity by the group. However, a neighborhood canvass determined that Peer Pride members periodically sat in front of a local fast food restaurant and shouted racial slurs

at the African-American patrons. Instead of leniency for the first-time offenders, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Hate Crimes Unit recommended harsh sanctions, including jail sentences. The effect was immediate. The group disbanded and no other similar problems occurred in the neighborhood. The incident, in and of itself, could have been interpreted as a prank, but, in reality, the group was passing from Stage 3 to Stage 4 in the hate model.



In contrast, the Lancaster NLR group was a mature, hate-motivated skinhead group. Four NLR members beat an African-American transient to death to earn the right to wear lightning-bolt tattoos. According to the group's ritual, members only can earn lightning-bolt tattoos by killing minorities. A review of police reports related to NLR criminal activities clearly showed the NLR group progressing through the seven stages of the hate model.

School administrators and teachers can use the hate model to informally assess hate group activities on campus. Identifying the stage in which a hate group is

operating provides valuable information to determine how dangerous the group is and what type of intervention strategies to employ. Early intervention increases the probability of success, especially before the transition period from rhetoric (Stage 4) to violence (Stage 5). These strategies can range from informal sensitivity instruction to more formal programs, such as the Juvenile Offenders Learning Tolerance (JOLT) program administered by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Hate Crimes Unit. JOLT is a model intervention program intended for first-time, low-level offenders who face potential criminal prosecution and school disciplinary action.

CONCLUSION

To develop and implement successful intervention strategies to deal with hate groups, law enforcement personnel first must understand the hate process. The hate model identifies the multiple stages of the hate process. Investigators can use this model to identify haters who have not yet transitioned from hate rhetoric to hate violence and target them with intervention programs, which have a higher probability of success. Likewise, law enforcement personnel can identify and target hard-core haters with appropriate interdiction strategies. Knowing how the hate process works helps interviewers penetrate the hate mask and address the hater's underlying personal insecurities. If investigators can attenuate these personal insecurities, haters will become more receptive to rehabilitation. Identifying and understanding the stages of the hate

process constitute the first steps in controlling hate violence. ♦

Endnotes

¹ The authors based this article on their observations and interviews of several hundred self-described skinheads, defined as “usually white males belonging to any of various, sometimes violent, youth gangs whose members have close-shaven hair and often espouse white-supremacist beliefs,” *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1996), s.v. “skinhead.”

² See Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1989).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Statistics, however, reveal that most hate crimes are not committed by hate groups. See U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, *Hate Crime Statistics*

(Washington, DC, 2001). For more information on collecting hate crime, see U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, *Training Guide for Hate Crime Data Collection* (Washington, DC, 1997).

⁷ Raymond Paternoster and Alex Piquero, “Reconceptualizing Deterrence: An Empirical Test of Personal and Vicarious Experiences,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 32 (August 1995): 251-286.

⁸ See Brian Levin, “A Dream Deferred: The Social and Legal Implications of Hate Crimes in the 1990s,” *The Journal of Intergroup Relations* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 10, citing Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt, *Hate Crimes: The Rising Tide of Bigotry and Bloodshed* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1993).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Supra* note 2, 93-94.

¹¹ *Supra* note 2, 93-94.

¹² *Supra* note 2, 99.

¹³ *Supra* note 2, 92.

¹⁴ Charles W. Turner and John F. Layton, “Verbal Imagery and Connotation as Memory

Induced Mediators of Aggressive Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 33 (1976): 755-763.

¹⁵ *Supra* note 8, 10.

¹⁶ *Supra* note 8, 9.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 8, 10.

¹⁸ Dolf Zillerman’s research is described in Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York, NY: Bantam Press, 1997), 60-62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Supra* note 8, 8.

²¹ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Fawcett Crest, 1960), 71.

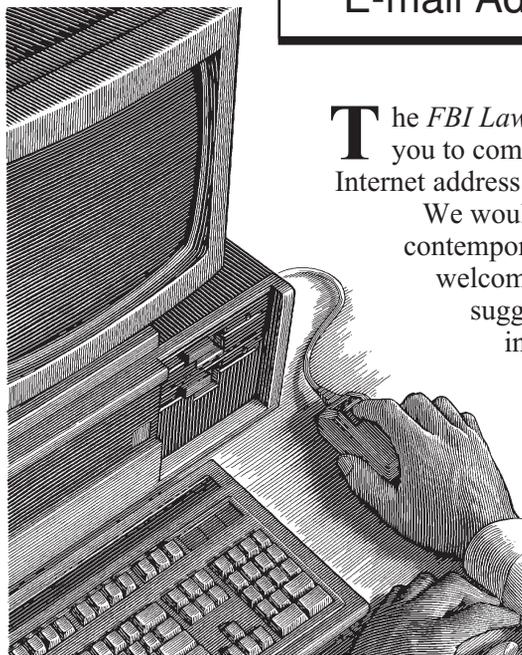
²² Daniel C. Maguire and A. Nicholas Farnoli, *On Moral Grounds: The Art, Science of Ethics* (New York, NY: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1991), 164-167.

²³ Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 31.

²⁴ *Supra* note 2, 100.

²⁵ *Supra* note 8, 10.

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