Covert Hate Speech: White Nationalists   2
and Dog Whistle Communication on Twitter   3

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INTRODUCTION   5

White supremacists have long invested their resources in using the Internet   6
to communicate. Through websites such as *Stormfront.org* as well as online   7
discussion groups, bulletin boards and forums, they have connected to   8
other supporters and formed online communities in support of their ide-   9
ology (Daniels, 2018). Before social media emerged, individuals had to   10
actively seek out such platforms. Therefore, the reach of these online plat-   11
forms was limited and mostly confined to isolated corners of the web.   12
Conversely, Twitter, as a mainstream social networking site, offers white   13
supremacists a platform to reach out to a wider set of audiences (Kaiser &   14
Rauchfleisch, 2019). Moreover, unlike other social media platforms such   15

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as Facebook, Twitter does not have a real-name policy, a feature particularly appealing to white supremacists who regularly disguise themselves (Crosset, Tanner, & Campana, 2018).

In recent years, machine learning technology such as Google's Perspective has been developed to detect online hateful speech (cf., Siapera, Moreo, & Zhou, 2018). Tools such as these allow users to filter out harmful tweets from personal Twitter feeds and can help platforms in their moderation efforts. As a result, automated moderation—where content is taken down before it is flagged—is becoming more and more common on Twitter (Singh, 2018). In part due to this moderation, mainstream social media platforms are –compared to forums or spaces such as Gab, a "free-speech" platform with a primarily far-right user base—perceived to be used by hateful groups primarily for outward-oriented communication, aimed at influencing the political agenda and reaching the mainstream (Fraser, 1990, as cited in Kaiser & Rauchfleisch, 2019; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Inward-oriented communication, consisting of creating a group-identity and identifying common enemies is also common on these platforms, albeit less visible. This can, at least in part, be attributed by these machine-learning detection tools as these could pick up on these forms of inward-oriented communication which are often offensive in nature. Therefore, white supremacists are forced to adapt their online behavior, using coded language and symbols, as to circumvent censorship.

This chapter examines covert hate speech in the form of dog whistling and cryptic messaging, as employed by white supremacist groups on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The study considers tweets and the bios of white supremacist users. Studies examining online discursive practices of white supremacist groups on social media have primarily focused on detecting white supremacist groups (Sutton & Wright, 2009), how groups are linked to each other (Chau & Xu, 2007), and to the mainstream far-right (Eddington, 2018). Other studies address the salience of issues discussed by these groups (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003), or how their discourse relates to mainstream political discourse (Graham, 2016). More technical studies are aimed at improving the detection of hateful speech primarily focus on keyword detection (cf., Burnap & Williams, 2015). No study to date has looked at how these groups create their own language, culture and symbols to use Twitter for communicating coded hateful speech.

Our study fits the ongoing debate on Twitter's democratizing potential (Rosenbaum, 2018). Twitter offers a space for marginalized voices

(Dreher, McCallum, & Waller, 2016) as well as those who feel that they are being disproportionately treated like strangers in their own land (Hochschild, 2018). As a result, the platform is, by some scholars, viewed as a more inclusive and egalitarian space than the mainstream media. This chapter, however, puts into question this optimistic view. Online discontent can manifest itself in hateful ways, using communication strategies that are often difficult to effectively moderate.

The chapter first describes how the Internet has been employed by white supremacists in the United States over the years, and the breakout of these groups into mainstream platforms such as Twitter. While Twitter's open architecture and the possibility to forward and retweet messages enables reaching broader audiences (Daniels, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Murthy, 2013), it has also forced white supremacist groups into using practices like *dog whistling*. After detailing our data-gathering procedure and the methods used to examine tweets by white supremacists, we present how dog whistles were used on this platform during the 2016 presidential election. The chapter finishes with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

'Dog Whistle' as a Discursive Strategy

In the past few years, the use of dog whistles has become a salient feature of the American political rhetoric (McCutcheon & Mark, 2014). A relatively new term, dog whistles, or dog whistling, is first said to have been used by *Washington Post* pollster Richard Morin in an article back in 1988. Describing what he referred to as the "dog whistle effect" in opinion polling, Morin (1988) wrote that small changes in question-wording sometimes led to strongly different outcomes. He argued that: "respondents hear something in the question that researchers do not" (Morin, 1988, quoted in Saul, 2018, p. 361).

In other words, dog whistling refers to the use of words, phrases, and terminology that mean one thing to the public at large, but that carry an additional, implicit meaning only recognized by a specific subset of the audience. Also known as multivocal communication (Albertson, 2015), dog whistling is typically employed as a communication strategy by individuals or organizations who stand to gain from conveying certain messages implicitly, rather than stating them explicitly. In this regard, Kanner (2000) provides the example of Subaru advertisements in which the car's license plates read "XENA LVR" and "P TOWN" along with taglines

92 such as "Entirely comfortable with its orientation," which were meant to
93 appeal to gay and lesbian customers without alienating others who were
94 unaware of the relevance of these license plates. In fact, its potential to
95 convey tailored messages to a subset of the population makes dog whistle
96 appeals an extensively used communication strategy in the field of adver-
97 tising (Brumbaugh, 2002).

98 Politicians, who look for shrouded ways to address divergent audiences,
99 often find dog whistling to be a suitable strategy, mainly because of its
100 potential for deniability. Political dog whistling is so widely prevalent that
101 scholars like López (2015) have called it the "central feature of American
102 democracy." As Mendelberg (2001) points out, it allows the speaker and
103 their audiences to violate certain social norms while plausibly denying
104 doing so. She argues that American society is characterized by prevailing
105 norms of social equality and as a result, people resent being called racist.
106 Given this national revulsion toward racism and the significant social,
107 political, and economic costs associated with being perceived as a racist,
108 politicians use dog whistling in order to surreptitiously communicate sup-
109 port to "small groups of impassioned voters whose commitments are not
110 broadly embraced by the body politic" (López, 2015, p. 4). In other
111 words, dog whistling allows political figures to speak in code to a target
112 audience on topics that might be considered too controversial, less popu-
113 lar, or undesirable by others and provides them with the space to deny the
114 charge of racism. The use of dog whistling achieves what could not be
115 achieved by explicitly stating its coded message (Mendelberg, 2001). For
116 example, consider the following quote of Republican politician Paul Ryan:

117 We have got this tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular, of men
118 not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working
119 or learning the value and the culture of work, and so there is a real culture
120 problem here that has to be dealt with. (Whitaker, 2014)[1]

121 It is evident from this quote that Mr. Ryan's message is targeted at an
122 audience that believes that welfare programs are encouraging a culture of
123 dependency among African-Americans (Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005). When
124 criticized for making racist remarks against African-Americans using code
125 words such as "inner city" and "culture," Ryan responded saying:

[1] http://www.msnbc.com/politicsnation/ryan-generations-men-not-working

> This isn't a race-based comment it's a breakdown of families, its rural poverty in rural areas, and talking about where poverty exists—there are no jobs and we have a breakdown of the family. This has nothing to do with race. (Lowery, 2014)[2]

He positions the problem as one of poverty and not of race. Likewise, crime, forced busing, affirmative action, immigration, terrorism are some of the words that are used as dog whistles by politicians. As is typical to this form of coded communication, these words have distinct meanings to different audiences. While the words appear innocuous to a general audience, the target audience may understand the implicit messages they carry. In this regard, Khoo (2017) argues that words by themselves are not a code for anything but are simply used to exploit the audience's stereotypical beliefs about what they are talking about. Citing the example of "inner-city," which could either mean a "densely populated, high crime, urban area" or "African-American," Khoo maintains that its inference depends on the preexisting beliefs of the audiences. Further, he claims that a specific code word may be effective regardless of what the speaker intended and what she foresaw as effects of her speech because the inference goes through thanks to the preexisting stereotypical beliefs held by the audience. He suggests that it is important to distinguish between the speaker using the code word with certain intentions and whether the use of this code word may succeed in priming racial resentment.

Recent scholarship has focused on the effects of dog whistling on public attitudes toward politicians, political parties, as well as government policies. For instance, White (2007), in his study on the effects of racial priming of the opinions of white Americans, found that the words "inner city" evoked greater racial prejudice among white American toward African-Americans. Further, these words caused white participants to base their support for increased spending on food stamps on outgroup resentment. In a different context, Albertson (2015) conducted an experimental study to test the effectiveness of coded religious appeals. In this study, subjects were asked to watch a brief video of a congressional candidate. The speeches in each condition were identical except for the last sentence, which was manipulated to include either multivocal religious language, obvious religious language, or no religious language. This study found

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[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/03/18/paul-ryan-poverty-dogwhistles-and-racism/?noredirect=on

that coded religious entreaties were persuasive for the ingroup while obvious religious appeals tend to trigger a negative reaction from a religiously more diverse group. Her research concluded that religious meanings, when carefully embedded in a dog whistle, elude religiously diverse groups. Similarly, Calfano and Djupe (2009) examined the use of religious dog whistles in the speeches delivered by Republicans and found that it proved to be an effective code for white evangelical Protestants but that it had no effect on mainline Protestants and Catholics. In this context, the authors concluded that dog whistles enabled Republicans to cue the support of religiously conservative voters without alienating others who may not share the same social issue agenda.

The use of coded language by white supremacists is not a new phenomenon, as Sanchez (2018) finds in his analysis of key terms used by groups including the Ku Klux Klan. What is novel, however, is the ease with which such coded words can be disseminated more widely using Web 2.0. It is no surprise then that dog whistling has also become a popular online strategy, especially after the introduction of Google's Perspective tool aimed at detecting insults and online toxicity. The automated removal of explicit insults forces hate groups to use symbols and keywords so as to circumvent these forms of detection. Subsequently, a group of users on 4chan began a loosely organized effort called *Operation Google*, with the idea of creating a coded language that would circumvent such A.I. systems. As a result, users came up with a list of words, where seemingly innocent terms, most of which were names of computer-related tech companies, were used in lieu of racial slurs. For instance, this movement involved referring to Black people as "Googles," Jewish people as "Skypes," Muslims as "Skittles," people who identify as LBGTQ+ as "butterflies," Chinese people as "Bing," Mexicans as "Yahoo," and establishment conservatives as "Reagans." In essence, the trolls were seeking to take revenge on Google by compelling it to censor itself and by turning its brand name into a racist slur.

Situating the scholarship that examines the use of dog whistles in a variety of settings, this chapter addresses the question: how have dog whistling strategies been employed by white supremacists on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election?

Data and Methods   196

To analyze how dog whistling tactics were used as a practice during the   197
2016 US presidential election, we analyzed tweets and bios of white   198
supremacist users. Using the R package rtweet (Kearney, 2018), we   199
extracted a list of all the Twitter followers of Ann Coulter, Pamela Geller, 200
and Richard Spencer, three figures who are considered prominent anti-   201
Islam activists by the mainstream media (Schreckinger, 2018; Walsh,   202
2016). As of August 2016, these three Twitter accounts collectively had   203
760,000 followers. Two criteria were then used to select accounts from   204
those 760,000 followers that could be considered as white supremacist.   205

First, we had to determine if the profiles belonged to individuals who   206
subscribed to the broader white supremacist ideology. Therefore, we   207
selected accounts that, in their Twitter bio, used terms such as "white   208
nationalist," "alt-right," "white race," "anti-multiculturalism," and   209
"white-genocide" to describe themselves and their ideology. We also   210
looked at the images, logos, and symbols used in the Twitter profile, such 211
as the confederate flag, Nazi-symbols, or memes celebrating whiteness,   212
which indicated their association with the white supremacist movement.   213
Crosset et al. (2018, p. 8) consider these as indicators of online identity, 214
arguing that such information provides "an occasion for users to define   215
their aspirations and enemies."   216

Second, in our sample we selected the accounts that had the most fol-   217
lowers. Accounts with a large number of followers typically act as impor- 218
tant vehicles for disseminating information (Bakshy, Hofman, Mason, &   219
Watts, 2011). These individuals are known as "superspreaders," "influen-   220
tials," or "influencers" (Bakshy et al., 2011; Watts & Dodds, 2007). Only   221
publicly available accounts were included. After selecting the publicly   222
available accounts that contained keywords in their biographies, we   223
selected the 250 accounts with the most followers.   224

After identifying 250 accounts, we selected the 20 most recent tweets   225
from each of the accounts, creating a corpus of 5000 tweets. Data was   226
gathered between July 2016 and January 2017. Links to tweets were man-   227
ually selected, leading to the difficulty that much of the data, especially in 228
the case of tweets or accounts posting infringing content, were removed   229
and could not be found retrospectively. If a tweet was no longer available, 230
it was removed from the corpus.   231

Our research employed an ethnographic content analysis. As is the case   232
with offline ethnography, our study aims to describe the "systems of   233

234   meanings" of a certain cultural group (Geertz, 1973). Kozinets (2010)
235   describes this virtual form of ethnography as *netnography,* wherein people's
236   online communication becomes the research setting (Boellstorff, Nardi,
237   Pearce, & Taylor, 2012). In our case, an ethnographic content analysis
238   entailed carrying out a qualitative content analysis using an inductive and
239   iterative approach on tweets that were identified as containing dog whistles.
240   In a first step, we read through all tweets in order to identify those tweets
241   that contained dog whistles. When identifying dog whistles, we specifically
242   looked for code words, symbols, keywords, or images that were not clear to
243   us from the outset and for words or symbols that occurred in multiple
244   tweets. We also relied on information from *Operation Google* to identify
245   dog whistles. Dog whistles can often be identified by looking at the broader
246   linguistic constructions in which these coded words are used. For example,
247   when a tweet portrays denigrating, offensive, or conflicting language in
248   combination with an unknown keyword, this was a strong indication to
249   mark this keyword as a dog whistle. For example, in tweets that would say
250   that "googles" are criminals or "skittles" should be deported, the linguistic
251   context of the words googles and skittles made it clear that these were
252   coded words. In addition to language, visual symbols and emoticons that
253   occurred in multiple Twitter bios or in tweets were included in the analysis.
254   Not all tweets contained dog whistles, and the tweets that did not were
255   excluded from further analysis. This was the case for slightly more than half
256   of the tweets, which were political in nature and only addressed issues such
257   as: who won a television debate or who was running ahead in polls?

258   In a second step, we read through all the tweets that we had identified
259   as containing dog whistles to understand the "deeper meaning of the mes-
260   sage," or the dog whistles (Hijmans, 1996, p. 99). As we had limited prior
261   knowledge of what themes or codes to apply, we used an inductive
262   approach, deriving the codes from the data itself (Hijmans, 1996;
263   Krippendorff, 2018), and relying on information gained from Operation
264   Google as sensitizing concepts. To gain a clearer grasp of the meaning of
265   these and other dog whistles, we relied on an iterative approach to put the
266   dog whistles into context to understand their meaning (Olasov, 2006). By
267   looking at how users responded to the same coded language, we could
268   better comprehend the meaning and usage of these dog whistles. In this
269   sense, in addition to relying on outside concepts as sensitizing concepts,
270   we considered the dog whistles we identified during the analysis as sensi-
271   tizing concepts themselves, further refining them during the process of
272   analysis (Hijmans, 1996, p. 94).

While reading through the tweets, we took a large amount of "field" 273
notes on the nature of the tweet and the dog whistles as well as the 274
responses to these tweets. This generated rich data including information 275
regarding the myriad contexts in which dog whistles were used and vari- 276
ous forms in which they were expressed, such as text, image, symbols, 277
memes, and the plausible hidden meanings of these as understood by the 278
target audience. Furthermore, the iterative approach allowed us, after 279
identifying several dog whistles, to create broader categories of how these 280
symbols and signals are used by white supremacists. The findings below 281
present examples and phrases from the tweets under analysis but, consid- 282
ering the sensitivity of the topic and the need to protect the identity of the 283
Twitter users, does not cite entire tweets. 284

White Supremacist Dog Whistles on Twitter 285

This section of the chapter outlines how dog whistling tactics were used 286
on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election. Our analysis showed 287
that certain dog whistles served specific purposes, but that dog whistles 288
were primarily used (1) to signal hate for outgroups without employing 289
visibly incendiary language, and (2) as identity markers, signaling belong- 290
ing to the white supremacist community. Distinguishing between these 291
purposes of dog whistling can help us gain an insight into how dog whis- 292
tling is applied in the online environment of Twitter. We discuss our find- 293
ings in more detail below. 294

Signaling Hate 295

Findings show that Operation Google, briefly discussed above, was con- 296
tinued on Twitter. For instance, one tweet used the #OperationGoogle 297
hashtag to tell an African-American Twitter user they were born and 298
would die a Google, while another talked about the need to kill all "stink- 299
ing googles." This illustrates how use of the word "googles" makes it 300
undetectable for the A.I. systems looking for hate speech. While most of 301
the code words and their implicit meanings were generated by users on 302
4Chan and other Internet sites, some of them made it on to white suprem- 303
acists' dog whistle lists by taking cues from speeches and social media 304
content posted by Donald Trump and his campaign. For example, Donald 305
Trump Jr. tweeted an image with a bowl full of skittles with a caption 306
that read: 307

308 If I had a bowl full of skittles and told you just three would kill you. Would
309 you take a handful? That's our Syrian refugee problem. (@DonaldTrumpJR)

310 This particular tweet was widely circulated on Twitter and turned "skit-
311 tles" into a euphemism for Muslims. Likewise, when Donald Trump
312 began using the word "globalism" as a synonym for globalization, the
313 phrase entered the white supremacist lexicon. Frequently in tweets, for the
314 far-right, "globalism" has come to signify a group of people who promote
315 diversity at the cost of undermining Christian values and traditions of their
316 country (Stack, 2016). Sometimes, users combined several code words to
317 express their hate toward immigrants and religious minorities, using
318 phrases such as Skypes, googles, yahoos, and skittles in a single tweet to
319 argue how diversity needed to stop.
320 Along the same lines, white supremacist tweets used "Dindu Nuffins"
321 a portmanteau of the sentence "didn't do nothing" to refer to African-
322 Americans (Caffier, 2017). During our analysis, we found that this term
323 was typically accompanied with "he wuz a good boy," which implied that
324 the tweets connected this dog whistle to their belief that the Black popula-
325 tion used these phrases to escape punishment from their violent crimes.
326 We found that this dog whistle was used to criticize both activists from the
327 Black Lives Matter movement as well as sympathizers of the black com-
328 munity for being sympathetic to African-American youth killed in police
329 shootings. By using the sentence "he wuz a good boy," white supremacist
330 tweets not only mocked the dialect and culture of Black people but also
331 trivialized the community's claims to injustice. Similarly, "Goy" a Hebrew
332 word, which literally means "nation" (Shafran, 2018) was widely used in
333 the white supremacist tweets to refer to non-Jews whom they consider
334 tools of the so-called global Jewish conspiracy to control the US govern-
335 ment in collaboration with Israel. This anti-Semitic canard is commonly
336 used in white supremacist tropes to reinforce "Jews run the world" tropes
337 (Perry, 2003, p. 325).
338 Our analysis also identified several symbols that were used as forms of
339 dog whistling. A dog whistle symbol that was widely prevalent in the white
340 supremacist tweets was the use of multiple parentheses. The typographical
341 practice of utilizing three pairs of brackets, for instance, was used to iden-
342 tify someone as Jewish (Daniels, 2017). Several tweets included multiple
343 parentheses ((( ))) around individuals' names to indicate to other white
344 supremacists that the person being referred to is Jewish. A significant

number of accounts in our sample used this symbol when discussing   345
Jewish journalists, academics, and public figures.   346

In addition to code words and symbols, numbers and percentages sym-   347
bolizing certain groups of people were also used to subtly direct hate   348
toward them without being detected. For example, we found numerous   349
tweets using "13%" as a code word for African-Americans originating   350
from the fact that they make up about 13% of America's population. A   351
prominent example of this trend was the use of numbers "1488" or   352
"14/88," which forms a combination of two symbols: "14" is the short-   353
hand for the white supremacist slogan "we must secure the existence of   354
our people and a future for our white children" and "88" was a reference   355
to "Heil Hitler" originating from "H" being the eighth letter in the alpha-   356
bet (ADL, n.d.). These terms act as codes for white supremacists to rein-   357
force anti-Semitic tropes. Very often, these tweets were accompanied with   358
phrases like "Zionist-occupied government," and "an international con-   359
spiracy to undermine white civilization" to convey white supremacist pro-   360
paganda that echoes Nazi-era condemnations of Jews.   361

Not only were dog whistles used for expressing racial and cultural slurs,   362
they were also used to mock and criticize those with divergent political   363
views. The words "cuckold," "cuck," and "cuckservative" prominently   364
featured among white supremacist tweets. These were used to refer to   365
men who were considered liberal or belonging to the establishment   366
Republican group. The pejorative term "cuckold" has typically been used   367
to refer to a man (mostly white) who was cheated on by his wife by having   368
an affair with another (typically African-American) man (Romo, 2017).   369
This slur with racist connotations was used to elicit humiliation by project-   370
ing white men from liberal as well as the establishment Republican group   371
as weak, feminine, emasculated, and sexually inadequate. In our corpus of   372
tweets, it served as a code for referring to conservative politicians includ-   373
ing Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, John McCain, and Paul Ryan as well as writ-   374
ers belonging to conservative magazines such as the *National Review*.   375
"Soy boy" was another term that was widely used to insult and humiliate   376
along the lines of "cuck." A code word for males who lacked masculine   377
qualities (Henderson, 2018), the phrase originated from the idea that   378
those who consume dairy-free milk were weak and effeminate (Varis,   379
2018). Relatedly, men with liberal ideas and political values were also   380
referred to as "Beta male" as they were perceived by white supremacists as   381
lacking the confidence and self-esteem of the alpha male. "Snowflake" is   382
another popular dog whistle within the white supremacist lexicon, which   383

while it has more recently made it into mainstream discourse, in our sample of tweets was used to derisively refer to liberal students on college campuses. These included students from the LGBTQ community and minorities whom the white supremacists viewed as being anti-Trump, anti-Republican, sulky, and juvenile individuals (Roy, 2016).

Another dog whistle that was prominently seen was "Social-justice warriors" or "SJWs." While the term has recently made it into the mainstream lexicon, during the 2016 presidential election its usage was far less widespread. The term was utilized to refer to individuals who are generally liberal and are interested in engaging in arguments on social-justice-related topics on the Internet. According to the white supremacist ideology, such individuals use political correctness and virtue signaling to tarnish others with allegations of racism, sexism, and hate speech (Roy, 2016). Sometimes this dog whistle was accompanied with "Gender studies," which was essentially a shorthand for academics, the field of humanities and feminist studies in particular, which white supremacists consider to be anti-conservative (Apperly, 2019; Heikkilä, 2017).

While such usage enables white nationalists to stereotype subordinate groups and express aversion toward them, they do so with the impunity provided to them by the use of seemingly innocuous terms. Since the cloaked meanings associated with them were discernible only to fellow white supremacists and others in the know, they were able to dodge technology that filters out racist terms and freely spread hate speech, albeit in a covert manner. While most forms of dog whistling can be considered as covert hate speech, some examples of dog whistles we encountered were not solely meant to express hate, but also to indicate pride about heritage, and signal belonging to the white supremacist community.

Dog Whistles as Identity Markers

In addition to dog whistles aimed primarily at expressing hatred, we found several coded messages whose main objective was to express feelings of identity and belonging. We identified dog whistles aimed to (1) signal belonging to a political group; (2) identify as a strong male; (3) express identification with and pride in one's (supposed) cultural heritage. Through the use of words and symbols that eulogize white identity and allude to their cultural and racial superiority, these dog whistles served as subtle reminders of the community's glorious past.

First, dog whistles enabled white supremacists to identify themselves as part of the far-right movement. Instead of explicitly including more overt phrases such as "white genocide" "MAGA" (Trump's Make America Great Again campaign), and "white nationalism" in their Twitter bios, several Twitter users who showed white supremacist tendencies in their tweets, simply included "OK" emoji signs with—index and thumb in a circle, and other fingers pointing up—to their profiles. The symbol was popularized within the white supremacist discourse because it mimics Donald Trump's most famous hand gesture (Bishop, 2017). In addition, a meme of Pepe the Frog (another famous example of dog whistling—see our discussion below) mimicking Trump's hand gesture went viral on the Internet, bringing more traction to the symbol from the white supremacists. Its use in Twitter bios and discussions functioned as a giveaway of the users' subscription to the far-right ideology.

Second, the use of hashtags such as "#Milk" or "#MilkTwitter" also worked as an indicator of a white supremacist identity. As mentioned earlier, for members of the far-right, dairy milk represents strength of body and ties into their ideas of masculinity. Conversely, soy and other forms of milk have come to symbolize weakness and effeminacy. In our analysis, we found that milk has been used as a thinly veiled allegory for racial purity. Several prominent figures from the white supremacist movement including Richard Spencer added milk bottle emojis to their Twitter profiles. The hashtags #MilkTwitter embraced and celebrated traditional gender norms and white-dominated patriarchy, while making fun of multiculturalism and feminism. Scholars such as Freeman (2013) contend that the contemporary white supremacist movement appropriated the long association of milk with the intellect. She points out that since the consumption of liberal amounts of milk and its products are associated with having a scientific mind and excelling in other intellectual activities, white supremacists appropriated it to convey their superiority among the racial groups. Therefore, inclusion of these hashtags and/or emojis in user profiles also worked as declarations of users' support for the white supremacist movement.

Finally, alongside symbols, emojis, and hashtags, a large number of white supremacist accounts utilized insignia of ancient Rome and imagery from medieval ages to tie their current movements to the past. These images included leaders of the French Revolution to the architects of US monuments who symbolized their bygone power and legitimacy. Little (2018) shows how by using letters from the medieval alphabet as symbols

in uniforms or flags, white supremacist emphasize that Europe is the "ancestral homeland" of white people like them and no one else. These symbols or flags often reappeared in memes, while images representing medieval events were often tweeted by the accounts we studied. Despite ample evidence that medieval Europe was in fact diverse and multicultural, historical accounts have been criticized for underrepresenting this diversity (cf., Kim, 2019; Little, 2018). Consequently, historical accounts, imagery, and symbols from that time are used to emphasize the supposed whiteness of Europe during these times and the idea that contemporary white supremacists must fight to reclaim this "ancestral homeland."

Similarly, the crusades were often the subject of these images. As Little (2018) shows, the use of imagery referencing the crusades is meant to show how white Christians again have to defend themselves against Muslims in a clash between civilizations, one that is seen as inevitable and whose violence is viewed as justified. How real this connection is to some became apparent in March 2019 when the gunman, who killed 50 people at two mosques in New Zealand, was found to have had the names of Christian Serbian military leaders, who battled the Ottoman Muslims centuries ago, written on his ammunition (Arsenault, 2019).

By taking these medieval symbols out of context and creating their own narrative around it, white supremacists are inventing their own tradition. This invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) is used to create an imagined community (Anderson, 1983), of which right-wing individuals perceive themselves to belong to. Billig (1995), in his book *Banal Nationalism*, referred to symbols and everyday representations that were meant to create a shared sense of national belonging. In this sense, memes and imagery using the symbolism of flags, medieval letters, and representations of the crusades are used to create this sense of belonging to a tradition of a European Christian white race that has been fighting an age-old war against the invasions of Islam.

Along similar lines, we found several white supremacist Twitter users mention "Vinland" in their Twitter bio. "Vinland" is essentially a name given to a grapevine-rich island off the coast of North America. The notion of "Vinland" asserts white supremacists' historical claim over North America (most likely Eastern Canada), and helps to position themselves as defenders in the battles of race, religion, and civilization (Weber, 2018). References to this short-lived Viking settlement appear to have provided them a chance to reenact the imagined glory of their presumed ancestors. We found several tweets make references involving medieval Vikings,

which were accompanied with messages calling for the defense of the 498
Christian West against Islam and Muslims. Such words served as powerful 499
dog whistles because for an outsider, these references may appear benign 500
and harmless even though they have racial connotations and elicit ethnic 501
pride for the white supremacists. 502

Yet another medieval term that was widely visible in the white suprema- 503
cist tweets and that qualifies as a dog whistle is "Deus Vult," Latin for 504
"God will it." Used as a battle cry by Christian crusaders in the early 505
middle ages, the phrase came to symbolize pride in the Christian state and 506
Western culture. Originally used by Pope Urban II in his eleventh-century 507
speech asking Christians to reclaim their holy land from its Muslim occu- 508
pants, the far-right hijacked the term and adopted it to covertly spread 509
Islamophobia. In our sample, we commonly saw this dog whistle used in 510
Twitter bios along with images of crusaders' crosses, implying that another 511
crusade was necessary to protect the white population. White supremacists 512
imagine that the West was at one time, pure, white, and Christian, which 513
was organized around military resistance to non-Christian forces (Perry, 514
2017). In their tweets, they frequently express a belief that immigration 515
and globalization have endangered the composition of Western society 516
and pledge to resist these forces in order to protect the white population. 517
Using these symbols therefore implies that another crusade is necessary to 518
protect the white population. These dog whistles evoke sentiments of 519
patriotism and ethnic unity among the white nationalists in an indi- 520
rect manner. 521

Conclusion and Discussion   522

This chapter described the uses of dog whistles in tweets and in the bios of 523
white supremacists on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election. 524
We found that dog whistles were aimed at insulting, as well as signaling 525
belonging. The examination of the use of dog whistles by white suprema- 526
cists highlights the innovativeness with which such groups reinvent their 527
discursive strategies. The use of imagery, memes, euphemisms, symbols, 528
and cloaked language illustrates how the white supremacist movement 529
organizes and mobilizes its resources to normalize hate directed toward 530
minorities. By using such discrete means and avoiding an overt display of 531
hate, they not only seek to circumvent speech policies designed by social 532
media platforms, but also repackage their ideas in a manner that would 533
make them look less extreme. 534

535   Ingenious ways of appropriating symbols are, however, a necessity, as
536 dog whistles can become too well known and publicly recognized over
537 time. Pepe the Frog is such an example. The comic character Pepe had
538 originally nothing to do with racism or anti-Semitism. Pepe gradually
539 became part of niche Internet subcultures, where white supremacists
540 appropriated it to communicate their messages in a visually compelling
541 manner. In fact, among the Twitter accounts we analyzed, Pepe the Frog
542 was quite ubiquitous. In some instances, Pepe was found wearing a Nazi
543 uniform, dressed in a Ku Klux Klan hood, or saying the words "Kill Jews,
544 man" instead of Pepe's "Feels good, man." In this sense, these images
545 contributed to trivializing hate. Organizations such as the Anti-defamation
546 League (ADL) eventually declared Pepe a hate symbol, rendering this dog
547 whistle useless. The same applies to the "OK" hand symbol and use of
548 phrases such as "snowflakes" and "SJWs." Examples such as these show
549 the white supremacists' skillful use of imagery and popular culture to dif-
550 fuse their messages, and how they constantly need to keep reinventing
551 these to stay undetected.

552   As mentioned above, the use of dog whistles by white supremacists is
553 nothing new. But the combination of such tactics with the communicative
554 potential offered by platforms such as Twitter has perhaps made this prac-
555 tice more common. Twitter's features such as retweets, forwards, and
556 hashtags creates an enabling environment for white supremacists to redis-
557 tribute their tweets outside their own immediate network to broader audi-
558 ences (Daniels, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Murthy, 2013). As this
559 might be useful for placing white supremacist issues more prominently on
560 the political agenda (Kaiser & Rauchfleisch, 2019), dog whistles form a
561 useful strategy to hide their more violent nature by repackaging their ideas
562 in a way that their hateful nature is only understandable to a subset of the
563 audience.

564   Despite restrictions of platforms' designs and policies on what type of
565 posts can be shared (cf Bossetta, 2018; Massanari, 2017), our findings
566 suggest these rules and regulations are tweaked by users in innovative
567 ways. Users are not passive agents, but "choose how they use the techno-
568 logical affordances available to them and actively tweak extant narratives
569 to inform their oppositional ideas" (Rosenbaum, 2019, p. 9). Dog whis-
570 tles in the form of coded language and symbols that only speak to a subset
571 of Twitter users are an example of how users tweak their narratives.

572   The findings of this study question the hyper-optimistic view about the
573 democratic potential of social media as sites for meaningful public

deliberation (Morris, 2009; Pfeifle, 2009). Our work puts a critical note 574
(cf., Morozov, 2012) to this cyber utopian view. While research has shown 575
that overt hate speech is prevalent on platforms such as Twitter (cf., 576
Burnap & Williams, 2015), our research reveals that less obvious and 577
more covert hate speech, often reflecting seemingly innocent discourse, is 578
also commonly used. The use of tactics such as dog whistles by white 579
supremacists shows how the medium continues to be an important avenue 580
for forming a larger white supremacist community, denigrating subordi- 581
nate groups, and promoting an exclusivist ideology. By using symbols and 582
code words, users attempt to extract themselves from the mainstream dis- 583
course while still injecting ideas into that same discourse. The use of these 584
keywords can be considered an example of the growing political insur- 585
gence against perceived censorship of social media platforms, "politically 586
correct" journalists, and the political elites. 587

Future research on far-right online mobilization, and their use of dog 588
whistles as a means of communication should address how some platform 589
architectures and policies hamper or help mobilization by these hate 590
groups. Furthermore, due to privacy limitations, we focused only on pub- 591
licly available profiles, therefore neglecting the ways in which hateful 592
speech was expressed in closed-off settings. This is of critical importance 593
when shootings such as those in Christchurch and Pittsburg show that 594
radical right-wing violence related to online radicalization in more closed- 595
off platforms such as 8chan and Gab.ia is on the rise (cf., Amend, 2018; 596
Beirich, 2019; Roose, 2018). Nevertheless, our study provides an insight 597
into how openly visible accounts of white nationalists' use the Internet to 598
amplify a shift in the "boundaries of what is permissible in popular dis- 599
course" (Feshami, 2018, p. 1). 600

This chapter reflects on how open platforms, which could potentially 601
serve as a public sphere and deliberate dialogue, also form a stage for 602
forms of radical speech. The covert nature of these dog whistles limits this 603
possibility of deliberate dialogue, as it excludes those who do not under- 604
stand its actual meaning. Twitter has accounted for this in its recent change 605
in regulations, as in July 2019, the platform argued to put a stronger focus 606
on "protect[ing] the health of public conversation." Nevertheless, as Mac 607
(2019) argues, it was never the regulation that was problematic, but rather 608
the way in which Twitter enforced those rules, taking a rather inconsistent 609
approach toward hateful content on the platform. As we have shown in 610
this chapter, this clear enforcement is made more difficult by the fast- 611
changing and hidden nature of covert hate speech. In short, research 612

aiming to understand how white supremacists communicate in online spaces needs to continually monitor their use of dog whistles to understand how this community utilizes the various platforms' affordances to convey their ideas and stay under the radar.

AU5

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