

**THE ONLINE BATTLEGROUND: THE USE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS BY  
EXTREMIST GROUPS AND HACKTIVISTS TO FORM NETWORKS AND  
COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the use of social and virtual media by white supremacists, Islamic extremists and the hacktivist groups that surveil and dispute them. Social media platforms are commonly used to share opinions, have conversations and create followings of like-minded people. Extremist groups have adapted to new technologies to control their communications, allowing them to shape the way in which their messages are seen and understood by a global audience. Hacktivists use similar tactics and sites to gain traction for their movements against those they oppose.

The research questions at the centre of this project explored the functionality of digital platforms that enable extremist groups and hackers to disseminate their ideologies en masse to a global audience, and how the use of metaphors of war aid in enticing individuals to engage. The platforms were chosen as they facilitated the tracing of communication and interactions between hackers and extremists with those who become participants on those sites. Data collection focused on textual and graphical uploads, tweets, and forum posts on these platforms, as well as the interfaces of the websites through which the groups choose to interact. The data was analyzed using actor network theory and critical theories of race.

The results of this research showed that platforms make possible rapid and widespread dissemination of the beliefs of the hate groups, as well as the circulation of instructions on how to gain traction for their movements. Becoming a part of the networks created by these platforms allows new actors to modify their behaviours to emulate those they are interacting with. Users on the sites shape their identities based on the content they read, as well as the relationships they form with others in their networks. By understanding the way in which the groups use social

media platforms to become accessible by their intended audience, it is possible to determine how followers shift from engaging to carrying out orders.

## **Lay Summary**

The purpose of this research was to understand the use of social media platforms by white and Islamic extremist organizations, and hacker groups. Data collection focused on textual and graphical uploads, tweets, and forum posts on these platforms, as well as the interfaces of the websites through which the groups choose to interact. The results of this research showed that the expansion of the battlefield to encompass the cyberspace. This has allowed for 1) communities to be formed by anyone who wishes to engage with the groups, regardless of geographical location, 2) anonymity on the platforms to provide a cover for those who don't want to link their online activity to their offline identities and 3) regulation of the groups on these sites to not be an effective deterrent, as they will simply move their activity to a different online location.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Jasmeet Bahia.

<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Lay Summary .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 White Supremacists Ideologies and Online Tactics .....	6
1.3 The Islamic State Ideologies and Online Tactics .....	12
1.4 Hactivism and Online Movements .....	15
1.5 Defining Race and War .....	17
1.6 Thesis Overview.....	19
<b>Chapter 2. Methodology .....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Overview .....	21
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	21
2.3 Data Selection .....	27
2.3.1 White Supremacists .....	29
2.3.2 The Islamic State .....	31
2.3.3 Hackers .....	33
2.4 Data Collection.....	35
2.7 Limitations .....	37
<b>Chapter 3. “White Pride Worldwide”: White Supremacy Online.....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.1 Overview .....	40
3.2 Stormfront .....	41
3.2 Popular Media .....	49
3.2.1 Reddit.....	49
3.3 Infiltrated Media.....	56
3.3.1 4chan.....	57
3.3.2 8chan.....	63
3.3.3 Voat .....	68
3.4 Finding Cohesion Among Disparate Ideologies .....	77

3.5 Summary .....	82
<b>Chapter 4. The Invisibility of the Islamic State .....</b>	<b>84</b>
4.1 Overview .....	84
4.2 Cyber Jihadism .....	86
4.3 The West Versus Islam and Islam Versus the West.....	94
4.4 Summary .....	99
<b>Chapter 5. From the Lulz to Legitimacy: Counteractions Against Extremists by Hacktivist Groups.....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.1 Overview .....	101
5.2 Twitter as Judge, Jury, and Executioner .....	102
5.2.1 The Murder of Michael Brown and the #opKKK and #hoodsoff Movements. ....	107
5.2.2 The Charlie Hebdo Massacre, #OpISIS and #OpICEISIS .....	111
5.3 We Are Legion .....	114
5.4 Summary .....	119
<b>Chapter 6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>121</b>
6.1 Summary .....	121
6.2 Key Findings .....	122
6.3 Changing Ideas of Warfare .....	124
6.4 Future Research and Limitations.....	125
6.5 Reflection .....	126
6.6 Contributions to the Field.....	127
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>147</b>
Appendix A: White Supremacists .....	147
Appendix B: The Islamic State .....	152



## List of Tables

Table 1: White Supremacy Dataset Information .....	31
Table 2: Islamic State Dataset Information .....	33
Table 3: Hactivist Dataset Information A.....	34
Table 4: Hactivist Dataset Information B .....	35

## List of Figures

Figure 1: An example of Steganography .....	3
Figure 2: The SPLC created an infographic to depict the trends of hate groups' online activities since 1999 to 2016 .....	8
Figure 3: An example of a typical anti-Semitic post from 8chan's pol .....	11
Figure 4: An example of a tweet from an ISIS sympathizer threatening the United States .....	13
Figure 5: A tweet from Anonymous regarding the group's actions against the Islamic State .....	16
Figure 6: Anonymous hacked many of the ISIS accounts that they uncovered .....	32
Figure 7: The data scrapers used for Twitter and Reddit created .json and .txt files respectively .....	36
Figure 8: Stormfront's front page .....	42
Figure 9: New users frequently state that they visited the site before becoming active members .....	45
Figure 10: An example of anti-Semitic propaganda that can be found on Stormfront .....	47
Figure 11: An example of a thread from /r/altright .....	51
Figure 12: Evidence of /r/alternativeright's distaste for other sites used by white supremacy groups .....	53
Figure 13: An example of the types of discussions happening on TRP .....	54
Figure 14: TRP members speak of the struggles of white people, their hate for Hitler, and Cultural Marxism .....	56
Figure 15: The list of Geographic Locations 4chan's /pol/ offers its contributors .....	58
Figure 16: An example of the white superiority and racism that can be found on threads in /pol/ .....	59
Figure 17: An example of how contributors react to others who oppose their beliefs and the community .....	62
Figure 18: 8chan's creator, Frederick Brennan, or Hotwheels, was able to gain traction for 8chan by exploiting 4chan's dismissal of Gamergate .....	65
Figure 19: The 8chan text formatting guide .....	66
Figure 20: An example of the text formatting available on 8chan, including the "spoiler" redactions .....	67
Figure 21: Members of the /pol/ community have no issue admitting to their racist ideologies ..	68
Figure 22: Voat's lack of censorship allows for members to be "free" in their self-expression ..	69
Figure 23: Part of the list of users banned from /v/altright .....	71
Figure 24: The welcome message of /v/identitarian before and after data collection .....	72
Figure 25: Ideas of how to increase the Identitarian movement .....	75
Figure 26: Discussions of what it means to be "white" frequent on /v/identitarian .....	77
Figure 27: Twitter page of potential ISIS sympathizer. The account has been deleted since data collection .....	86
Figure 28: An ISIS Sympathizer looks to recruit the African Americans in Ferguson after the cases of police brutality had sparked massive outrage and violent protests .....	89
Figure 29: The pre-written statment provided by Al-Khilifah Aridat .....	91
Figure 30: A tweet from a user who openly supports the Islamic State .....	92
Figure 31: A feature of the app Telegram is secret chatrooms where one needs to be invited to join .....	93
Figure 32: Twitter account bio of known Pro ISIS account .....	96

Figure 33: The Islamic State hacked into the United States’ Central Command’s Twitter account in 2015 .....	99
Figure 34: Anonymous is famous for wearing Guy Fawkes masks .....	103
Figure 35: The BLM hashtag has been used by those who oppose the movement .....	104
Figure 36: A French User can connect with the hacktivist group using #opKKK .....	105
Figure 37: An example of an anon unhooding a white supremacist sympathizer .....	107
Figure 38: The flier distributed by the Missouri KKK chapter threatening the protesters in Ferguson.....	107
Figure 39: Anonymous hacked the KKK’s Twitter account signalling the start of OpKKK. The chapter renewed its threat in 2017 .....	109
Figure 40: Anonymous released this instruction guide for those willing to participate in OpISIS on Pastebin .....	112
Figure 41: A tweet from a Twitter account connected to Anonymous in regard to OpISIS .....	114
Figure 42: A user tweets about the 2015 unhooding of white supremacists two years after the initial release of the list .....	115
Figure 43: Anonymous and other hacktivist groups use the term “war” when speaking of their actions .....	116
Figure 44: A tweet from an affiliated Anonymous account speaking to how the Islamic State is able to recruit individuals outside of the Middle East .....	118
Figure 45: The Global Ruled of 4chan .....	147
Figure 46: The above image is the Kekistan flag. As you can see, the flag is akin to a German Nazi flag.....	148
Figure 47: The Right Stuff’s explanation of the triple parenthesis .....	148
Figure 48: An example of the historical inaccuracies that members of 4chan use to bolster their arguments .....	149
Figure 49: The “diversity” of white people .....	150
Figure 50: The user information shown when they post on Stormfront .....	151
Figure 51: The Twitter account of CtrlSec continuously updates with potential ISIS sympathizer accounts .....	152
Figure 52: Instructions for the use of social media provided by the creators of Al-Khilafah Haridat.....	153

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and

To those who resist.

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

“Every time there's a new tool, whether it's Internet or cell phones or anything else, all these things can be used for good or evil. Technology is neutral; it depends on how it's used.”

---Rick Smolan, CEO of Against All Odds Productions (Honan, 2017)

### **1.1 Overview**

In the 1990s, the internet initiated a new trend in the communication strategies and organizational structures of extremist groups (Aly, 2010; Reid & Chen, 2007; Zhou et al., 2005; Levin, 2002). The use of digital technologies has given these organizations the ability to reach members worldwide, shift from hierarchical to network structures, and move beyond a centralized command. Under these new institutional systems, actors can be directed and plans disseminated through virtual networks (Reid & Chen, 2007; Hoffman, 2006; Levin, 2002). Regarding physical attacks, extremist organizations can now set their sights on targets outside of their geopolitical borders and pursue them at a faster pace (Reid & Chen, 2007). Groups use media outlets to create more global attention for their cause (Reid & Chen, 2007; Hoffman, 2006). Extremist organizations have become adept at using cyber tools, adopting new technologies, and creating innovative methods to communicate ideologies. The internet has become a forum for the groups to avoid many of the information gatekeepers found in traditional communication media.

White extremist groups (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan and National Alliance) have created numerous websites, chat rooms, forums and listservs (Chaudry, 2000). White extremist groups use digital technologies on a much smaller scale than Islamic extremist groups. Islamic terrorist organizations, which are widely covered in the media, are exceptionally sophisticated in their use of digital technologies (Coll & Glasser, 2005). The number of websites and forums used by

Islamic Extremist groups range in the thousands, with the level of design complexity varying from simple text interfaces to interactive multimedia features that allow interested parties to communicate with members throughout their organizations (Reid & Chen, 2007). Since the 2000s, white supremacist groups have used social media platforms to disseminate their ideologies and recruit new members (The Leadership Conference, 2009). Moreover, a study conducted in 2014 estimated that ISIS had at least 46,000 active Twitter accounts (Berger & Morgan, 2015), demonstrating the ability of the Islamic extremist groups to use the internet to grow their base of support.

Extremist groups have been harnessing the power of the internet to facilitate their interactions with potential sympathizers. For these groups, the internet is a tool of communication, collaboration, and persuasion (von Behr et al., 2013). Due to the growing amount of radical information available online, the processes of recruitment and radicalization are becoming increasingly clandestine, creating challenges for security and intelligence agencies. Encryption tools and techniques, including steganography<sup>1</sup> (an example of this can be seen in Figure 1) and “dead dropping”<sup>2</sup>, allow the extremist groups to be covert in their tactics. The online world also provides a global list of potential donors; online funding for these groups is facilitated through everyday services such as PayPal (Kaplan, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Steganography is the practice of hiding of messages in seemingly normal texts (Kaplan, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> “Dead dropping” is the transmission of information through email accounts that are accessible to anyone with the password (Kaplan, 2009).





Figure 1: An example of Steganography: Ann Coulter was commended by White Supremacists for tweeting out the number 14, the code for “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children,” a slogan coined by David Lane of The Order. A Supporter tweeted back “88” which is code for HH, or Heil Hitler (Fleishman, 2017).

The United States Institute of Peace<sup>3</sup> identified eight of the major uses of the internet by extremists’ groups: psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, networking, recruitment and mobilization, fundraising, data mining, information sharing, and planning and coordination (Weimann, 2004). As noted above, the internet has facilitated changes in the arrangement of the groups, allowing organizations to be more decentralized and linked horizontally rather than vertically (Weimann, 2004; Levin, 2002). While technology has resulted in more cost-efficient and swift coordination and communication among group members, it has also fostered connections between different organizations through the rapid exchange of both praise and practical information (Zhou et al., 2005; Weimann, 2004).

Traditional media often restrict propagating messages of extremist groups, which have formerly been dependent on the coverage of media outlets to spread their ideas (Hoffman, 2006). The internet has provided groups more control over their communications, allowing them to shape how they and their message are perceived by a wider audience (Weimann, 2004). The

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<sup>3</sup> USIP is a non-partisan, federal institution that aims to reduce conflict on a global scale, and in turn bolsters national security (USIP.org).

groups make a clear attempt to legitimize their cause, seeking support from their audience, specifically people in the West, who cherish their belief in freedom of expression and may feel as if their identities are being attacked.

Extremist campaigns look for support for the organizations' missions, while invoking fear and threats in a form of psychological warfare. Psychological attacks take the form of "cyberfear," or the fear of cyberterrorism (Atwan, 2015; Singer, 2012; Weimann, 2004). The sympathy that the organizations garner can be used to recruit and mobilize supporters. Not only do the hate groups use a full array of media to attract potential recruits, these tech-savvy organizations collect data on the people who visit their websites, and then contact the ones they feel are best suited for the organization (Weimann, 2004). Other potential members are found through chatrooms, e-bulletin boards, and cybercafes, which are generally used to try and reach out to youths (Atwan, 2015; Weimann, 2004). The ease of access to a global audience, the lack of regulating bodies, and the ability to disseminate information quickly have given rise to recruitment tactics that could not be facilitated by traditional forms of media and within-border solicitation (Berger, 2016; Zhou et al., 2005; Weimann, 2004).

While extremist groups have started to use digital media as of the 1990s, hacker groups have been using the online world as the primary source of their social interactions for far longer. Hacktivist movements emerged in the 1980s, with organizations spreading computer viruses as a form of protest (Denning, 2015). The term became part of the mainstream media in the late 1990s when hackers<sup>4</sup> protested the Kosovo conflict; since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century hacktivism has become a common form of dissent (Denning, 2015). Unlike most other hacking practices, hacktivist movements are typically undertaken to express dissent rather than pursue financial

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<sup>4</sup> A hacker is an individual who uses their skills to gain unauthorized access to information.

gain (Trendmicro, 2015). In the current political climate, hacktivism has turned its attention to vigilante acts in reaction to both international and domestic right-wing action.

This thesis answers a series of questions about extremists' and hackers use of digital media. Additionally, I looked at how the extremist groups are surveilled by hackers. The researched aimed to answer the following questions: How do the unique mediated properties of social and virtual media facilitate the visibility and engagement methods of the three groups? In what ways do extremists and hacker organizations present their ideologies to suit this new digital paradigm? What new forms of surveillance and political mobilization have emerged as these tactics are monitored and addressed by hacker groups? How do all three groups use metaphors and images of war as mechanisms of interpellation? These questions are significant as they can lead to future research on recruitment and radicalization practices by all three groups. By understanding the way in which the groups use social media platforms to become accessible by their intended audience, it is possible to determine how followers shift from engaging to carrying out orders. Discerning the process through which orders are carried out by individuals, would increase the viability of countermeasures and preventative programs, such as e.g. Denmark's de-radicalization program (Cobiella, 2015).

To understand the functionality of the technology, and how these features guide the practices and actions of its users, my research integrated Actor Network Theory (ANT) and theories of interpellation and identity formation. ANT provided me with the framework to understand how technologies allow for the creation of networks and relationships as well as how the sites affect how extremists and hacker ideologies are packaged and disseminated. While ANT is able to show how the networks are made through media, the theory has its limitations. ANT is insufficient when we are exploring the power and time of relationships on social media platforms

(Couldry, 2008). ANT is unable to explain the long-term consequences of these networks and the effects on the actors (Wise, 1997). As will be discussed throughout this thesis, users of the platforms face social consequences, both positive and negative, due to their use of the social media sites. Due to these limitations, ANT was complimented with different theories of race, power and identity to make sense of the specific kinds of identity formation that occur through media amongst the different groups. This theoretical framework was used to formulate my research questions.

This chapter gives an overview of research questions for this thesis and gives an overview of the way in which white supremacists, the Islamic State, and hacktivists have used the internet historically and in more recent times, as well as the main ideologies of the groups. The background information of each group also includes review of the literature on their use of digital technologies for engagement and tactics to increase their visibility. The chapter ends with an explanation of the structure of this thesis.

## **1.2 White Supremacists Ideologies and Online Tactics**

White supremacy revolves around the racist ideologies that propose white people possess the highest civilization and culture. Based on this perceived superiority, white supremacy stipulates that white people should form a ruling body over non-white people (Jenkins, 2016). Racial terms, such as white and black, have their roots in a system of racism that favoured white people and normalized the othering and inferiority of non-European peoples (Moore, 2008; Gilroy, 2000). Systemic racism has taken multiple forms since its inception. Conversation around divine creation and white people as “Children of God,” while people of colour (POC) are designated as not fully human, depriving them of human rights (Gilroy, 2000; Omi & Winant 1994). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, white superiority relied on pseudoscience and scientific

racism to legitimize its ideologies (Moore, 2008; Baum, 2006). The attempt to legitimize racism through science gave rise to the idea that races are biologically prone to behave in certain ways and there were racially-based differences in intelligence (Moore, 2008). Belief in the need to preserve the purity of the white race still persists through the white supremacy movements after the civil-rights era, although it takes less explicit, overt forms (Bonilla-Silva, 2001)

The white supremacist movement is a network of organizations that can be categorized into three groups: neo-Nazis, skinheads, and the Ku Klux Klan (hereafter, the KKK) (Zhou et al., 2005). The Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC, 2018) estimated that there were approximately 917 active hate groups in the United States in 2016. White supremacist groups comprised 44% of the total number of groups. This includes 99 Neo-Nazi groups, 78 skinhead groups, 130 KKK groups, and 100 white nationalist groups (SPLC, 2018.). There was a clear rise in the number of organizations after President Obama took office in 2009 and then again in 2015, due in large part to Donald Trump's presidential campaign (Begley, 2018; Moskowitz, 2017). The cause of this surge is detailed in Chapter 2 and is focused on the United States as most spikes in white supremacist online activity can be correlated to American events. The SPLC ascribes the decline in the number of hate groups during Obama's two terms to extremists moving their activities to online platforms (2018).

## HATE GROUPS 1999-2016

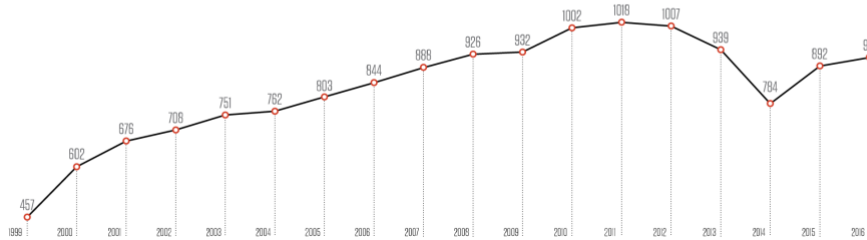


Figure 2: The SPLC created an infographic to depict the trends of hate groups' online activities since 1999 to 2016 (SPLC, 2018).

White extremist groups frame their ideologies and recruitment techniques within two major themes: (1) white peril and (2) the superiority of the white race as justified by God (Adams & Roscigno, 2005). The organizations rely on ideological movements by reinforcing the white identities of their followers and new recruits (Adams & Roscigno, 2005; Berbrrier, 2000). The use of religious rhetoric and ideas of white victimization serve as powerful arguments to call new recruits to arms (Johnson, 2018; Adams & Roscigno, 2005; Berbrrier, 2000). White hate groups capitalize on the notions that white people are made to be ashamed for expressing pride in their whiteness and that social movements by people of colour and women unjustly denigrate white people, putting them at a social disadvantage (Adams & Roscigno, 2005). Organizations such as the KKK and neo-Nazis perpetuate ideas of white peril and rely on the creation of a collective identity. These groups tend to emasculate and feminize men of colour, while constructing the white man as preferential to all other categorizes of races (DeVega, 2015); the men in these groups feel that people of colour threaten their race and their identities as men.

White supremacists are prevalent online. Almost every white supremacy organization has an online presence, with the number of websites ranging in the hundreds (Burris, Smith, & Strahm, 2000). Virtual communities provide safe spaces for those who hold the same ideals to connect and support one another (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Online platforms that are created by white extremist groups give them the ability to manage their image free from the judgment for their bigoted rhetoric by the media (Schmitz, 2016). This allows the groups to create their own notion of community while spreading their extreme racial ideologies, roping in those that may feel they are being wronged because of their whiteness.

White supremacy groups were among the first hate groups to adopt online forums in the form of e-bulletins (Zhou et al., 2005). These sites gradually evolved into one of the first major “hate sites,” stormfront.org, in 1995 (Zhou et al., 2005; Hara & Estrada, 2003; Burris et al., 2000). The website, created by Don Black, a former KKK leader, is a neo-Nazi site that allowed groups to share their hatred for minorities and affection for Hitler’s ideology (Zhou et al., 2005; Hara & Estrada, 2003). Stormfront continues to play a significant role in communication of the white supremacist movement (Zhou et al., 2005). The website consists of a dating service, private forums for members to engage in discussions, posts for children, and news on upcoming events (Ray & Marsh, 2001). The site has created an interactive cyber community, with prominent white right extremist writers posting on the forums (SPLC, n.d-a.). As of May 2015, the website claims to have over 300,000 members and, in its own words, “Our mission is to provide information not available in the controlled news media and to build a community of White activists working for the survival of our people” (Stormfront, n.d.). According to the SPLC, registered members of the website have been responsible for the murders of up to 100 people in some of America’s most lethal hate crimes (SPLC, n.d-a.). The notoriety of Stormfront

has made it a popular forum to research, with many studies speaking to its ability to create an online community (Wong, Frank, & Allsup, 2015; Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Back, 2002; Thompson, 2001).

The Alternative Right group, or Alt-Right, is a term coined by white Nationalist Richard Spencer, the head of the National Policy Institution (SPLC, n.d-b.). The organization is a far-right movement with significant ties to white supremacy, as evidenced by its most prominent members. The Alt Right embodies a new type of movement that overlaps with many hate groups' ideals, such as anti-feminism and Islamophobia (McAfee, 2017). The organization gained notoriety during the 2016 presidential election in the United States, supporting Donald Trump's more polarizing platforms, such as the Muslim ban and the opposition to immigration laws. The Alt Right, as explained by their affiliated website, Breitbart, manifested from the "underground edges of the internet," pointing to the social media sites 4chan and 8chan (Nagle, 2017; Romano, 2016). The group claims to be created by young men; their primary manner of operating is the use of internet memes to spread their thoughts on women, race, and nationalism (Nagle, 2017; Romano, 2016). The movement promotes white male entitlement that can easily be twisted into white nationalism, fostering friendships among the followers (Romano, 2016). The Alt Right uses sexist language such as "cuck," a play on the word "cuckold," to describe emasculated Republicans, as well as "alpha" and "beta" to refer to manhood and gender roles (Al Jazeera, 2017; Romano, 2017; Stack, 2017). Many men were initially attracted to the organization to boost their self-confidence after being rejected by women but have found themselves on the extreme-right wing.



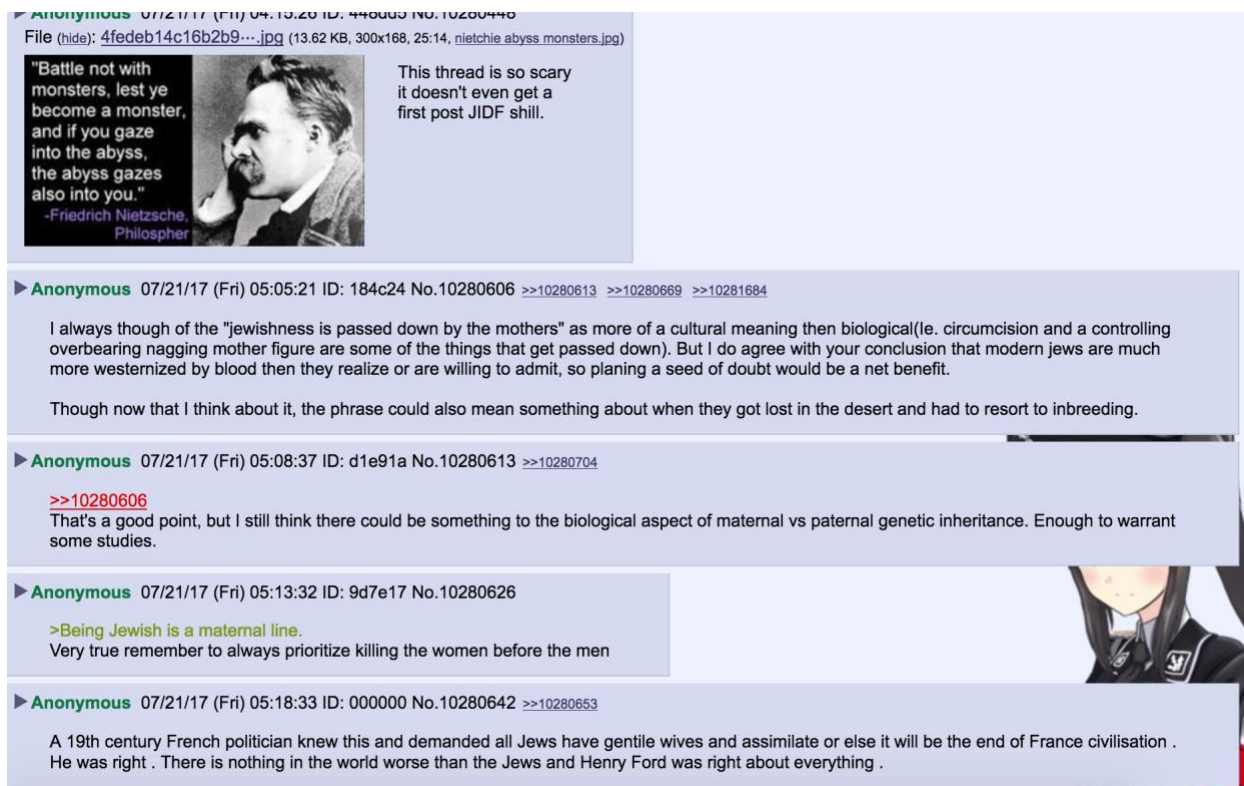


Figure 3: An example of a typical anti-Semitic post from 8chan's pol (/pol/, retrieved June 2017).

Typically, white supremacist websites show men as naturally dominant, never to be victimized by women or non-whites. When this power is taken from white men, they can feel a sense of aggrieved entitlement (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010). Aggrieved entitlement refers to the unwillingness of these men to be part of a society in which there is gender and racial equality (Kimmel, 2013). These men may also need to protect their masculinity from insults that come from men and women around them, which can take the form of bullying or being ignored sexually (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010). The groups are enraged by the idea of handing over some of their privilege to those they deem as inferior; violent revenge becomes pivotal to reclaiming their manhood (Kalesh & Kimmel, 2010). The sense of aggrieved entitlement drives the Alt Right, creating insecurities around the new-found social movements created by women and people of

colour. Chapter Three expands on the use of social media sites by these organizations to communicate their racist ideologies<sup>5</sup> and to create networks of like-minded individuals.

### **1.3 The Islamic State Ideologies and Online Tactics**

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), originally formed in 1999 as *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (Congregation of Monotheism and Jihad), pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda (Roggio, 2014). The group has been independently active since April 2013. ISIS gained notoriety when it captured the city of Mosul, followed by the siege and massacre of Sinjar, and the defeat of Iraqi forces in multiple conflicts (Arango, 2014). The UN designated ISIS a terrorist organization for its role in extensive human rights abuses and war crimes (Amnesty International, 2014). The group proclaimed itself a worldwide caliphate (a one-world government) over all Muslims (Al Akhbar, 2014<sup>6</sup>).

The organization firmly believes that it represents the restoration of the governance of early Islam, a goal to which every Muslim should be devoted. The organization consists of Sunni Muslims that believe in the enforcement of Sharia Laws, and one of their main goals is the creation of a strictly Sunni Islamic State (Beauchamp, 2014). There are reports that the group looks to kill whoever does not agree with their interpretation of the Qur'an (Beauchamp, 2014). What sets ISIS apart from other Islamic extremist groups is its emphasis on Islamic eschatology<sup>7</sup> and apocalypticism (Wood, 2015). The latter refers to the religious belief that an apocalypse will occur; ISIS believes that the Day of Resurrection is approaching, and God will make a final judgment on humanity, separating the righteous and the damned (Wood, 2015).

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<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, ideology pertains to the three groups' personal systems of ideals and theories about social and political issues.

<sup>6</sup> Since data collection, the website Al Akhbar has deleted the information on the Islamic State.

<sup>7</sup> Eschatology refers to the "Day of Judgement (Musselwhite, 2016)



Figure 4: An example of a tweet from an ISIS sympathizer threatening the United States (Martosko, 2014).

After the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the media catalyzed the spread of anti-Muslim sentiments; this accompanied heightened international security and the introduction of new anti-terrorism laws (Khan, 2013). The prevailing climate in the United States and its allies, has also embraced these notions and contributed to the systematic discrimination against Muslims or “Muslim looking” individuals (Considine, 2017). This emphasis on the appearance of Muslims is less about skin colour and more about contributing to the underlying system of “othering” that exists in the Western world. Thus, ISIS’ rhetoric echoes the injustices faced by Muslims in the Global North to capitalize on the feeling of disenfranchisement caused by the continual insistence on differences. Strategically ISIS looks to ensure allegiance to their organization through extraordinary fear and intimidation tactics, while simultaneously constructing a hate discourse about their enemies (Reardon, 2015). They look to polarize Muslims in the West by attacking the Global North and allowing the population to be ostracized (Reardon, 2015). By

their logic, the more structural violence and racism that Western Muslims face, the more appealing ISIS and their ideologies appear, enabling more effective recruitment and radicalization.

In 2015, an estimated 90,000 pro-ISIS messages were posted on social media (Blaker, 2015), but with the availability of retweeting, researchers estimate the number to be closer to 200,000 (Greenberg, 2015). The use of social media by the organization to spread its propaganda is a practical idea, as supporter and recruiters have mastered harnessing the functions of sites for their own purposes (Hapal, 2015). ISIS has only become one of the largest, most intricate, jihadist organizations. Social media platforms provide information and propaganda published by the organization in real time. Additionally, studies have found that Twitter can intensify connections within the organization by constantly updating people on events and returning shared values and priorities to the attention of their readers (Carter, Maher, & Neumann, 2014). Twitter also allows for anonymity, as supporters do not have to have any contact with recruiters to consume their ideas (Berger, 2015). Although Al-Qaeda also used cyber technologies to spread their ideas and find recruits, ISIS has a thorough understanding of the way in which social media platforms can aid the organization in achieving its goals.

Studies have found that the Islamic State takes leverages its international engagement by spreading propaganda in many different languages and using media (such as music) that will appeal to youth in the West (Gates & Podder, 2015). The CIA has reported that 20,000–31,500 people from over 80 countries have joined the organization (Chatfield, Reddick, & Brajawidgda, 2015; Franz, 2015). Advancement in media fosters worldwide connections with family and friends, but also with strangers that face the same social climate. ISIS has been able to use functions specific to social media platforms to gain new members from outside their immediate

borders in the Middle East and circulate their ideologies to the public via mass media. ISIS' web of actors is continuously growing, faster than the social media platforms or even the state can react. Online engagement between the organization and those they wish to join them has become increasingly surveilled, leading ISIS to shift to more covert methods. These new techniques and the forms of communication are discussed in Chapter Four.

#### **1.4 Hacktivism and Online Movements**

In 2008, the 'hacker' group Anonymous began Project Chanology, a protest against the Church of Scientology for what the group called "internet censorship." The Church had attempted to delete an interview in which Tom Cruise praised the religion (Coleman, 2015; Hampson, 2012). In reaction to the institution's pushback, the hackers became more reactive and narrowed their focus, learning more about the issues that related to Scientology (Dibbell, 2009). The collective took to 4chan to express its discontent, and Anonymous launched several attacks on the Church<sup>8</sup>, including DDoS attacks, prank calls<sup>9</sup>, and black faxes<sup>10</sup> (Coleman, 2015; Kushner, 2014; Dibbell, 2009; Singel, 2008).

The Steubenville High School Rape<sup>11</sup> that occurred in 2012 launched hacker groups further into popularity, gaining them notoriety and praise. In the December following the sexual assault, Anonymous and KnightSec<sup>12</sup> took justice into their own hands by threatening the people

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<sup>8</sup> Project Chanology was a worldwide movement with the Church of Scientology in Europe and the USA being targeted (Kushner, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Hackers "trolled" the church, in some instances ordering the Church unwanted pizzas.

<sup>10</sup> Black faxes are blocks of black ink, in attempt to deplete the institution's ink.

<sup>11</sup> A 16-year-old Steubenville student was sexually assaulted by two of her peers in August 2012. Pictures of the assault were posted to several social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter (Oppel, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> KnightSec is a hacktivist group affiliated with Anonymous.

of Steubenville and taking direct action. KnightSec leaked information about 50,000 residents<sup>13</sup> that they believed were the perpetrators (dubbed the “Rape Crew”) and conspirators, threatening the town with further action if justice was not achieved; this signalled the start of #occupySteubenville (Abad-Santos, 2013; Simpson, 2013). Anonymous became a powerful ally<sup>14</sup> to the 16-year-old victim, organizing a protest, posting videos of the alleged assaulters laughing at their acts, and leaking court transcripts (Abad-Santos, 2013; Simpson, 2013; Broderick 2013; Levy, 2013).

```
user : LatestAnonNews
text : Hacktivists smash ISIS website with Prozac
      and Viagra ads. #OpISIS
      http://on.rt.com/6xl2 pic.twitter.com/wPwiV
      TcYJC
fullname : Anonymous
id      : 669870785675198466
timestamp : 2015-11-26T13:30:15
```

Figure 5: A tweet from Anonymous regarding the group’s actions against the Islamic State (LatestAnonNews, 2015).

Anonymous and offshoot hacker groups start their ‘campaigns’ with a perceived injustice, inaction by police or lawmakers, and then declare ‘war’ in the form of an “operation.” Hacker groups are amorphous collectives, with no leadership and no induction process. A person can become a part of the collective by simply identifying and declaring themselves as part of the organization. For example, Deric Lostutter, the initiator of #occupySteubenville, pursued the

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<sup>13</sup>Including Fred Abdalla, the town Sheriff, in efforts to give light to the town’s corruption and protection of the football team (Abad-Santos, 2013; Simpson, 2013).

<sup>14</sup>Lostutter was convicted of lying to an FBI agent and hacking (Blake, 2017).

group after watching the documentary *We are Legion*, purchasing a cheap Guy Fawkes Mask and creating Twitter and Facebook accounts under the alias KYAnonymous (Kushner, 2013).

Members wanting to pursue their selected targets publicize their manifestos, often on YouTube, and gather traction on other social media sites if they are able to garner enough outrage. The invisible web of individuals, both hackers and civilians, created by the online community manifests itself in part due to the online forums and platforms used by the groups. The collective is made up of several dissimilar parts that equally contribute to the movements, the platforms, and those engaging with them. The platforms used by the groups range from ones used by tech savvy users (e.g., Ghostbin<sup>15</sup>) to ones designed for people with low skill levels (e.g., YouTube), with the actors also being differentiated by these categories. The hacker groups appeal to both sets of individuals by instructing each differently, playing to their believed skillset. The movements would not be possible without the various platforms and the support of the various user groups. The hacker organizations' communication tactics via Twitter and platforms such as Pastebin<sup>16</sup> as well as their ability to utilize the current political climate to garner attention and further their movements are discussed in Chapter Five.

### **1.5 Defining Race and War**

While all the groups use online platforms, another similarity they share is the use of language associated with war. Groups refine their recruitment techniques to engender a sense of urgency within those who help and follow them; they imply that there is an impending cataclysm that must be dealt with. Communications describing perceived threats often couch them in the language of war which perpetuates a state of constant conflict. White supremacists and ISIS

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<sup>15</sup> A paste service that deletes the text file after the poster's chosen time (Howett, n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> A site where users can store text documents for public access ("FAQ", n.d.)

manipulate the emotions of individuals that they wish to engage with, who tend to be vulnerable to suggestion because of the contemporary social and political climate (Alarid, 2016). Non-state actors, such as members of extremist organizations, operate outside the territorial borders of their homelands and the boundaries of their target societies. The exploitation of modern technologies for engagement and propaganda has resulted in conflicts that are ongoing and that can be easily continued. The racial wars of white supremacist groups and the religious war of ISIS appear to be indefinite and should be regarded as more than random terror attacks done by fringe members of society. Cyber platforms enable the creation, reproduction and mass circulation of the ideologies of extremist groups, resulting in aggressive means of information sharing.

In terms of network creation, individuals can seek out information that supports their prejudiced ideas, engaging with organizations and others who share the same views. The frustrations of those reaching out to the hate groups are weaponized and taken advantage of by the organization. War no longer follows the script of past conflicts, with one nation fighting another nation until there is an end in sight.

While both extremist groups believe that they are being targeted by society to be eliminated for their beliefs, they also use intense hate rhetoric centered on other groups to further their agendas. Because both groups utilize ideas of racism and race, the concepts needed to be clarified from their hegemonic meanings. For this thesis, race is defined as a power relation between two groups where one is trying to assert its political and cultural dominance over the other (Hesse, 2004). The organizations use racial discrimination as means of explaining the wrongdoing that they face and justifying their ideologies and actions. The creation of hierarchies allows for the recruitment of individuals who feel that their desired existence is in jeopardy and that those that they deem the enemy, or the “other,” are the cause of their downfall. Race has



been historically categorized as physical and cultural characteristics, with racialized groups being compared to European, or white, people, populations, and societies. (Garner & Selod, 2015; Naber, 2008). While ISIS is commonly thought of as a religious organization, Islam and Muslims have been continually racialized as Jewish people have been, which results in the organization taking part in a race war. Over the centuries Jewish people have been vilified by the Christian majority for their religious and cultural differences, however the manifestation of those differences has shifted forms. Initially, the “otherness” of Jewish folk was highlighted by stereotyping facial features and behaviours before evolving to their current characterization as a separate race from white Christians (Green, 2016). A similar shift has occurred with Muslims with the advent of ISIS. While Al-Qaeda was responsible for 9/11, the group was primarily focused on the political consequences of their actions, ISIS’ social media campaigns has produced a framework for what a “good Muslim” should look and act like. This image has made it easier for Islamophobes to stereotype. What started as distrust of those with brown skin has transformed into a fear of Muslims who outwardly express their faith. Foucault theorizes about such ideas in his notions of biopolitics. This and the other theories used in this research will be further explained in Chapter Two.

## **1.6 Thesis Overview**

This thesis examines the process of online communication and engagement by white and Islamic extremist groups through social and virtual media, how they are surveilled by hacktivist groups using the same properties of those media, and how the digital age and our notions of warfare and political action have evolved. I conducted an examination of 1) the functionality of the electronic media which exposes them to counteractions even as they use platforms to grow, 2) the ability of the hacktivists to crowd-source vigilante action, and 3) the ability of extremist

groups to leverage the intensification of racial politics to gain followers. To understand these complex relationships, my data was analyzed using a theoretical framework that incorporated Actor Network Theory, Interpellation, Orientalism, and Foucauldian ideas of biopolitics and power. This thesis is organized into six chapters. My data selection, collection and analysis methods are described in Chapter Two. The theories which guided my research questions and the evaluation of my results are outlined in the chapter as well. Chapters Three, Four and Five outline the data collected on white supremacists, the Islamic State, and hacktivists respectively. Each chapter delves into the utilization of online platforms by these organizations to create systems of interconnected people who believe in their movements. Additionally, an explanation of the platforms' functionality and analysis of the data collected on the sites is provided. The communication methods, including language use, by each group are also discussed and exemplified by data. Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a reiteration of the research findings, answers to key questions, and future directions

## **Chapter 2. Methodology**

“What we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society (or at least not the social body, as defined by the jurists), nor is it the individual body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.”

---Michel Foucault, Social Theorist (1997)

### **2.1 Overview**

My thesis focuses on two aspects of online engagement and communication: the functionality of social and virtual media, as well as the online activities of extremist groups and the hacktivist groups that observe and react to them. My data collection focused on textual and graphical uploads, tweets, forum posts, memes, and other images shared on these platforms, as well as the interfaces of the websites through which the groups choose to interact. I examined media reports as secondary sources for their capacity to provide insights into how the organizations use online platforms to engage with the broader public and reactions to the movements. The reports also provide evidence of online counter movements against the groups. The data sources and methods of data collection for each group are discussed in the following subsections beginning with the theoretical framework that guided my data selection and analysis. My project does not seek to explain why individuals partake in extremist activities online, but rather how the specific properties and structures of the platforms they utilize shape the way users interact with this media.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

My theoretical framework consists of Actor Network Theory (ANT) and theories of interpellation and identity formation. While ANT is able to explain the different actors in networks created by social media platforms, the theory is unable to provide an explanation about

the effects that the relationships have on the different entities (Couldry, 2008). This section gives an in-depth look at the theories used to analyze the data in this research.

ANT posits that both humans and non-human entities are equal participants within a network, having the same capacity for agency in this relation. Their function is dependent on their interaction with other actors within the system (Latour, 2005). Networks refer to a series of connections between the actors involved. The networks that are created can be thought of as ever-evolving associations that guide processes between the elements of the relationship (Crawford, 2004). ANT focuses on the creation of a third, novel entity through the relation of the two individual entities (Latour, 2005). This new entity has capacities that the two base objects did not have or were not capable of if they were not connected through a network (Latour, 2005). The theory does not attempt to explain why the relationships exist, but rather how the networks are built and maintained (Caroll, 2014). ANT has been used to document and explain the relationships between the “natural” and “social” worlds, which are sometimes thought to be continually changing (Crawford, 2004). This means that social and natural worlds are connected through ever-evolving relationships (Simandan, 2017). ANT disputes notions of social and technological determinism, substituting it for a socio-technical approach that recognizes effects of each actor on collective political realities (Tatnall & Gilding, 1999).

In the context of my research, networks are composed of individuals using the social media accounts and the virtual media itself. Extremists use social media platforms to facilitate the rapid spread of information to masses of people. What arises is the ability to communicate and potentially persuade on a more global scale (Weimann, 2004). The platforms used by Islamic and white supremacy groups have their own specific features (e.g., Twitter and retweeting, Reddit and SubReddits). These media platforms have agency in that their mediated interfaces affect the

way in which information is produced and circulated. ANT provides a framework to understand how the technologies and those using them affect how extremists and hacker ideologies are packaged and disseminated. ANT also focuses on the associations between the actors in the network (Latour, 2005). Latour states (2005),

Using a slogan from ANT, you have ‘to follow the actors themselves’, that is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish (p 12).

By allowing us to think of the actors in the system as having their own agency, even if they are non-human, ANT allows us to have a better understanding of the workings of the network. The theory provides a rationale of how the associations between those actors allow it to become stronger and more powerful, making them more influential and, consequently, durable (Latour, 2005).

I also use ANT to analyze the systems created by the vigilante organizations. The hackers use the media to both surveil the relationships of those they are watching, but to also connect with their supporters. Using ANT, I am able to map the functionality of the interfaces with the visibility and engagement practices of the three groups. Hacktivists use many of the same social media platforms as the extremists, albeit for a different purpose, which exposes the latter groups to counter-surveillance by those they are working against. These platforms have become new tools for engaging in conflicts online. By comparing how the three groups use media platforms against their enemies and one another, we are able to see how the same platforms can be used in a diverse number of ways.

Theories of power, race and identity aid in the understanding of the formation of online personas. Foucauldian theories of power and biopolitics explicate how power is exercised

through organizations and institutions. (Foucault, 2003). Through his ideas of biopolitics, Foucault likens racism to warfare, a battle between the oppressed and the oppressors (Taylor, 2011; Macey, 2009; Foucault, 2003). Foucault theorized racism as a break within society which did not exist before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mawani, 2009). Racism stems from the fear of becoming politically obsolete, being replaced by another group because of inferiority and weakness (Mawani, 2009). Like warfare between nation states, the continuation of one group's life is thought to depend on the control, or death of the others (Macey, 2009). Because of this, the relationship between groups constructed as discrete 'races' takes on a sense of a constant struggle for dominance to ensure that the dominant group's power persists (Mawani, 2009).

Foucault speaks to the threat and subsequent fear of death that is created by the power of a sovereign ruler (2003). Through the data that was collected it was seen that in this digital age one-way biopower is exerted through a fear of needing to protect one's life from the state's constant monitoring of its citizens, including their online footprint. White supremacists and the Islamic State see themselves as engaged in a continual race war as they fight the censorship and oppression they believe has imposed by state institutions. The two organizations continually note that it is their skin colour and ideological leanings, including their religious beliefs, that put them at a disadvantage in society and make them subject to the state's overt control. On the other hand, the organizations demonize those they believe are different from them. Both groups feel as though their existence is threatened by the survival of the groups that they persecute, a key feature of biopolitical racisms. The fight to eliminate the undesirable populations plays into Foucault's ideas of "making live and let die" and "making live and making die" (Foucault, 2003, p. 241). Both the white supremacists and ISIS fight for the elimination of the existence of the inferior species, or races. The groups wish to have ultimate power over who is within their

society and who they wish to exclude, and in extreme cases exterminate. An example of this race-based eugenics is the hate white supremacists have for those of Jewish descent. White supremacists believe that Jewish people control all aspects of mainstream society, from the media to the political realm (stormfront.org). Both ISIS and white supremacist groups use their belief in racial and societal hierarchies to incite fear(s) about cultural peril and civilizational collapse. Foucault describes biopower (2014),

[A]s a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species (p.16).

While Foucault (2014) was alluding to 18<sup>th</sup> century practices of population control via social practices and expectations, his ideas can be extrapolated to include differences in ethnicities (the set of cultural and social characteristics that people of certain regions identify with). These differences are used to divide and then assumed into the identities of extremists as part of their ideologies.

Right-wing groups target the interpellated identities of individuals by giving voice and community to those who feel disenfranchised. By “hailing” potential recruits, the extremists allow them to express their “true” identities and openly adhere to radical views on whiteness or Islamic practices (Althusser, 1970). The recruit becomes a subject, one who bases their identity on the way an authoritative figure interprets the world. They have their fears and biases confirmed by extremist views and find a position in those regimes. Hacktivists entice those who may feel drawn to act in these conflicts, but do not feel that they are technologically competent enough to do so. The individuals who have the potential to be recruited may be more susceptible

to radicalization than others due to their feelings of power deprivation because of the changing structure of contemporary society.

Historical notions of othering can be found in the rhetoric of both the Islamic State and white supremacists. Edward Said argued that, in contemporary society, the Western media's portrayal of Muslims as terrorists and anti-Western are conditioned by the paradox of the Orient and Occident (1979). The binary of the Orient, a homogenization of the countries in the Middle East, and the Occident, referring to Europe, started with the colonization of the countries in the Arab world by European civilizations (Said, 1979). The boundaries of these two worlds are arbitrary, rooted in the oppositions between the civilized West versus uncivilized East. In this context, colonization was rooted in the idea that the people of the Orient were inferior to those of the Occident; therefore, it was the duty and burden of the latter to take on the task of reforming them (Saeed, 2007; Said, 1979; Said, 1981). Europeans began characterizing the people of the Orient with certain negative attributes, which were then incorporated into their media and literary works. As a result, European knowledge of Islam and Muslims has been generated through the attribution of characteristics that do not “exist” in the West, or at least cannot be applied to Western civilization, and not through actual truths. While Said’s ideas of the East encompass multiple regions, the Occident is mainly focused on European countries and ideals (Said, 1981). For my research, I define the West as North America and Europe, and the East as countries that are often referred to as the Global South, such as the Middle East and Asia. It is unclear of what the boundaries of the East and West are for these extremist groups.

Said’s ideas can be seen in the rhetoric of both white supremacists and ISIS. Both extremist groups employ the ideas of othering, with white supremacists rooting their polarizing ideologies in the purported savagery and inhumanity of individuals and societies that are not



white. The Islamic State augments their hatred of Western civilization through arguments that the Middle East, or the Orient, and Islam are inferior to the West. The hacker movements against the Islamic State and white supremacists display an urgency for finding potential sympathizers of ISIS in comparison to their white counterparts. The organizations appear to harness the paranoia about another attack in the West to uncover accounts connected to ISIS en masse. Said's ideas are used to analyze the ways in which both extremist groups contextualize their ideologies of hate and racism, with both relying on historical oppression and fears.

### **2.3 Data Selection**

The primary data analyzed in this research were chosen for each group based on where the most activity for each was documented in media reports, scholarly texts, and hacktivist lists. My project does not seek to explain why individuals partake in extremist activities online, nor am I able to explain the architecture of these sites; instead I describe how the specific properties and structures of the platforms they utilize shape the way interactions occur with those looking to potentially join the organizations and anyone that comes across the media. The data consists of posts that pertain to my research questions and social media feeds of prominent actors in the movements and their followers. The forums and platforms each have behavioral expectations, "netiquette," that users need to abide by, which will also be examined.

The specific media were chosen because they house platforms on which all three groups communicate with those they look to persuade and deter from their movements. The extremist groups and hacktivists share space on Twitter, allowing for open access to their methods of communication and surveillance. The accounts of ISIS and white supremacy groups provided an overview of the hate rhetoric they use to entice readers to become users of the same platforms. The groups also sensationalize negative comments made about them and the ethnicity they are

representing. By analyzing a vast array of interactions between the organizations and those using the platforms, I was able to view and understand how the extremists broadcast their ideologies and the way in which media affect how those messages are delivered to their intended audiences. Hacker groups tend to publicly broadcast their own processes and movements. They have given readers access to lists of potential extremist sympathizers and their social media handles, via Twitter and Ghostbin. The hacker organizations encourage others to take part in these vigilante actions by using methods that are easy to replicate.

I initially used media reports to choose the platforms and websites that the three groups use; however, I also found more sites, such as Voat and The Red Pill, as they were mentioned by users on the primary platforms. The sites were chosen because they allowed me to trace communication and interactions between the extremists and hackers with those who become participants in the websites they use, as well as, potentially, their movements. The anonymity of the sites allows posting of rhetoric that is contrary to the political correctness against which the users often dissent, with them facing no real-life repercussions for their posts and beliefs (Kang and Kiesler, 2013). Media reports were utilized to gauge which platforms had the most impact on the activities of these groups. Many of the sites and their users reference one another, typically to insult one another. I used these remarks to choose other platforms used by the hacker and extremist groups.

The temporal period for my data is from January 1st, 2012 to July 30th, 2017. This period encompasses Barack Obama's second term, Donald Trump's presidential run, and Trump's initial months in office. The American timeline was chosen as it marked the revival of white supremacist groups and ISIS' attacks on the West. Twitter's Advanced Search was the only platform that allowed me to set the timespan for the search; for every other website, I had to

manually check the dates of all the posts and comments. Due to my inability to speak Arabic and European languages, only posts and comments in English were analyzed. The following sections includes a full list of the sites used, the forum names (if applicable), the number of posts collected, and any search terms used for each group.

### **2.3.1 White Supremacists**

Alt Right forums on Reddit were the first platform I selected for data collection. Reddit contains an aggregation of discussion boards ranging from World News to location-specific boards (e.g., Kelowna or UBCO), or subreddits. While the details of the event are unclear, Reddit began to take down subreddits that were connected to the Alt Right because they released personal information about others, a practice known as “doxing” (Statt, 2017); doxing was a violation of the Terms and Conditions of Reddit (Statt, 2017). Because certain Alt Right sites were shut down in February 2016, data from these sites was collected first. Using the internet archive called Wayback Machine, I gathered all the data that was available, most of which was from 2016. While the archive had titles of the posts of the subreddits, it did not archive the discussions or comments for most of the links. These two sites provided insight into the development of the Alt Right mindset and their strategies to draw more people into their group.

One subreddit that has lasted the purge by Reddit is /r/trp, or The Red Pill. While TRP is not explicitly a white supremacist subreddit, the ideologies of the Alt Right can be found within the posts and comments on the site. TRP is home to men who claim that they are being oppressed in society, an idea that plays into the Alt Right’s dogma. This platform was chosen because it exemplifies the manner in which white supremacists can be covert in popular social media and still make their ideas visible. Because of the popularity of the subreddit, I needed to narrow down the posts to those that are connected to the hate group. To do this, I used words that

are associated with the hate group, such as cuck, alpha, and SJW (Social Justice Warrior) that are frequently used by the redditors. An extensive list of the search terms can be seen in Table 1.

The bulletin board platform Voat, is a mirror site to Reddit. The platform garnered attention and popularity due to resistance to Reddit's removal of offensive subreddits and restrictions against bigoted speech and imagery. Voat is home to two subverses (their equivalent to subreddits) that are connected to white supremacists: /v/AltRight and /v/Identitarian. Both subverses were a part of the data for this research because they are sites that have been appropriated by the white supremacists. The takeover by white supremacists has been credited to the platform's tolerance of hate rhetoric and offensive threads.

The imageboards<sup>17</sup> 4chan and 8chan are both home to the board Politically Correct, or pol. Both platforms were created for users to discuss topics ranging from video games to anime, with 8chan being the platform that markets itself as "free speech friendly". The sites gained notoriety for being the source of aggressive hate messages connected to white supremacist groups. These boards were also chosen as instances of sites that have been taken over by white supremacists.

Stormfront was chosen for its long-standing history as one of the very first hate group websites. The infamous site was created by and for white supremacists. Unlike the other platforms chosen, Stormfront was created specifically to spread white supremacist ideologies and connect individuals who wish to partake in the movement. The site has many forums. For this research, five forums were chosen to be part of the dataset: Strategy and Tactics, New Members, Ideology and Philosophy, Politics and Continuing Crisis, and eActivism and Stormfront Webmaster. These forums provided insight into the recruitment and persuasion tactics used

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<sup>17</sup> Similar to a bulletin board system, an imageboard operates using images instead of text (Lim, 2011)

online and offline, individuals who join the site, and the ideologies that the white supremacists look to spread.

Table 1: White Supremacy Dataset Information

Platform Name	Search Terms (if Applicable)	Number of Screenshots* (or Posts**) Collected
/r/Alternativeright	N/A	13
/r/AltRight	N/A	1,301
/r/TRP	SJW AWALT Beta Alpha Snowflake Cuckold Cuck	Posts: 80 Comments: 14, 060
/v/Identitarian	N/A	491
/v/AltRight	N/A	184
4chan /pol/	N/A	770
8chan /pol/	N/A	543
Stormfront	N/A	4,916

\*Screenshots were of more than one posts/comment.

\*\*/r/TRP allowed for the counting of each post's comments

### 2.3.2 The Islamic State

Data on the Islamic State's use of social media was gathered from (1) the list of names that Anonymous and their splinter groups released in 2015, and (2) accounts of those potentially affiliated with the terrorist organization. Most of the accounts on the hacker's list have either been suspended or boast the image of anime characters, a symbol of the hackers' takeover of their account. Some of the accounts were still running; however, they had very few tweets and followers, making it almost impossible to verify at first glance whether that they are affiliated

with ISIS at first glance. The existing accounts and their followers were examined and selected based on account tweets, profile pictures, and personal information found on them that pointed to potential ISIS connections or desired affiliation.



Figure 6: Anonymous hacked many of the ISIS accounts that they uncovered (Twitter, retrieved August 2015). In the true sense of the hacker group (i.e., doing it for the lulz), the accounts were plastered with pictures of anime characters, mocking the organization and the jihadists.

Twitter accounts were found using search terms such as dawla<sup>18</sup>, daesh<sup>19</sup>, and infidels<sup>20</sup>.

These terms were searched with their standard spelling and in the form of a hashtag (e.g., #dawla) to ensure that any tweet containing the words could be found. I chose the accounts using

<sup>18</sup> Dawla Means “State” or “Dynasty”

<sup>19</sup> “Daesh,” is the transliterate acronym for the Arabic term for ISIS, *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī l-‘Irāq wa-sh-Shām*. However, the word also means “to trample down or crush,” or “bigot.” The Islamic State threatened those who use the term, as they do not perceive themselves as such (Garrrity, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> “Infidels” can be found in the Quran to refer to those who reject Islam.

the same criteria as those on the hacker list. Media reports were used to try to find accounts that were known as ISIS sympathizers, but most of them had already been deleted or suspended. Using the accounts found in the news, I identified common words used by the sympathizers, such as such as umm<sup>21</sup> and kafir<sup>22</sup>. These words were used to find Twitter accounts using the Advanced Search function on the site.

Due to the extensive pressure from media, hackers, and civilians, the Islamic State has taken to more covert tactics of communication<sup>23</sup>, such as direct messaging potential recruits and even moving to the dark net. Although ethical concerns prevented me from exploring these alternative methods and media used by the organization, the secondary sources that were used helped me understand the process and dynamics that ISIS uses on these platforms.

Table 2: Islamic State Dataset Information

Search Terms	Number of Tweets Collected
Dalwa Kafir ISIS ISIL Jihad AmessagefromISISToAmerica Umm	16,692

### 2.3.3 Hackers

Anonymous and its splinter groups have multiple accounts, none of which are verified. This meant I needed to find a method to deduce the legitimacy of the accounts I wanted to examine. Using the number of followers, tweets, and the interactions with users outside of the

<sup>21</sup> “Umm” means “mother.” Used frequently in the Twitter names of female ISIS members.

<sup>22</sup> Kafir is a derogatory term, meaning “non-believer.”

<sup>23</sup> For more, see chapter 4.

hacker collective, I chose three hacker accounts: @youranonnews, @latestanonnews, and @anonops. I collected tweets that were pertinent to the operations against white supremacists and ISIS. The tweets were found using the Advanced Search of Twitter, which allowed me to narrow down the number of results using specific functions. To understand how users interact with the groups and their movements, I used a similar search method. I did not specify the accounts to search through, which allowed me to collect any tweet that mentioned the operations. Anonymous shared a “how to” guide to recruit the public in their movements against the Islamic State and white supremacy on the paste services Ghostbin and Pastebin. Paste services are text storage sites that allow the data to be deleted after a selected period. Because the guide seems to have been removed by the hackers, I used secondary sources to look at the original texts of the guides and to understand the vigilantism that the group is fostering. The secondary sources that I used were from news media such as, The Guardian, VICE, VOX, and MIC. These were chosen because the articles published through these media are more focused on internet culture and place a greater importance on online activities and the insights they can provide

Table 3: Hactivist Dataset Information A

Account	Search terms	Number of Tweets Collected
@YourAnonNews	hoodsoff opKKK opISIS	196
@LatestAnonNews	hoodsoff opKKK opISIS	95
@AnonyOps	hoodsoff opKKK opISIS	25



Table 4: Hacktivist Dataset Information B

Search Term	Number of Tweets Collected
hoodsoff	489
opKKK	2,197
opISIS	3,374

## 2.4 Data Collection

Data was collected using two methods: screenshots and data scrapers. Data scrapers use algorithms to locate the data on web pages that have been specified within the code. The information is stored in the selected file format that has been encoded into the scraper. Scraping, or web scraping, refers to the process of collecting the data displayed on web pages by loading them into a program run on a computer and storing the harvested information in a local file. The Red Pill data was collected using a data scraper, navRedditScraper<sup>24</sup>. Once a post was selected to be part of the data set, the OP's (original poster) post was screenshotted and then the comments were scraped. The scraper compiled all the comments into one .txt document, taking out the users' names. This method was used for every post that was taken from TRP.

A similar method was used for Twitter data. The Twitterscraper<sup>25</sup> was used to scrape all the tweets between January 2015 and June 2016 of the chosen accounts and word searches. The

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<sup>24</sup> Created and programmed by Navdeep Bahia.

<sup>25</sup> The scraper runs via python. It was found online.

scraper created .json<sup>26</sup> files and the files were read using an online JSON Editor. An example of a tweet from the JSON Editor appears below.

```
user : [REDACTED]
text : In Syria, Usualy You get
      Klashenkov bullets in the
      markets as easily as you get
      eatable seeds in the
      grocery...pic.twitter.com/KBG
      43975h4
fullname : [REDACTED]
id : 724621688810405888
timestamp : 2016-04-25T15:30:48
```

This is the initial step in him becoming a cuckold. Of course he feels walked all over. He might be too big of a pussy to take control and get the hell out of the relationship though. Another idiot who wants to live out porn fantasies. God these stories make me feel sick. I'm glad they are here to learn from though. Someone should send him this thread as advice. But they had so much in common? It's hilarious and sad at the same time how mainstream reddit passively encourages cucking. People act like they're so "enlightened" and "progressive" by letting some dude cum in their bitches mouth, because they buy into that sex positive feminist horse shit about "its just sex" and "don't be insecure".

Figure 7: The data scrapers used for Twitter and Reddit created .json and .txt files respectively (Twitter, retrieved June 2017; The Red Pill, retrieved June 2017).

Web scraping cannot be done with every website; this could be due to the sensitive nature of the data stored within the web pages, copyright laws in the site's country of origin, or the Terms and Services of the site. The other platforms did not have explicit information regarding scraping in their terms and conditions and therefore were not scraped. Data was collected by taking screenshots of posts and their subsequent comments. For 8chan, 4chan, and Voat, every post and comment was screenshotted; for Stormfront 100-130 posts per discussion were screenshotted from the five forums chosen. This was done because of the popularity and the

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<sup>26</sup> "JSON" files are Javascript Object Notation.

lengthier history of the website, making the discussions longer and unwieldy for a project of this scope.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, I went through the posts and comments for each website and noted information that was relevant to my research questions. For the extremist groups, I examined data that was pertinent to their engagement with users, as well as visibility to those they look to recruit. The information was divided into 1) data on the functionality of the sites, and 2) data on the packaging of ideologies by these groups. The hacktivist data was evaluated in a similar manner, but the data was split in terms of their use of platforms and the way in which they can mobilize movements and create new means of surveillance. The language, pictures (including GIFs<sup>27</sup>), text format, and user interactions were examined for patterns on the different platforms through the use of the theoretical framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

## **2.6 Ethics**

Due to the nature of my thesis research, data was stored in password protected files and hard drives. To collect my data, I used the Tor Browser<sup>28</sup> and NordVPN<sup>29</sup>, allowing me to view the publicly available data on an encrypted network, protecting my identity and location.

## **2.7 Limitations**

Many of the limitations of the research stem from the timeframe of a Master's degree and safety concerns. I did not include forums or apps that required me to log in, as the aim of my

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<sup>27</sup>Graphics Interchange Format, which is a moving image format.

<sup>28</sup> Tor Browser hides users' internet history from internet service providers and others who attempt to track browsing patterns. Upon closing the application, users data and searches are deleted ("Tor Overview" n.d.)

<sup>29</sup> NordVPN, a virtual private network, allow users to connect to the internet via an encrypted connection ("NordVPN," n.d.)

research was to understand how all three groups are able to reach broader populations. My data is a snapshot of the use of platforms by the groups: I was not able to collect every forum, post, and comment of each website due to the time constraints of my degree. As I mentioned with Stormfront, the amount of data collected resulted in repetition of information on the platforms and the visibility of the groups, specifically with the hackers and white supremacists. Because of this duplication, I believe I obtained an accurate understanding of the way that these individuals interact and spread their ideas and practices. In the same vein, there are other websites and media that are connected to these groups, such as the Islamic State's Magazine *Dabiq*, specific websites connected to white supremacy and the Alt Right, and the various hacker forums. Additionally, the use of platforms such as Instagram and YouTube were not part of the dataset for this research. These media were not analyzed because interactions between users cannot be seen. As previously mentioned, the data collected was limited to posts in English, which was detrimental for collecting tweets from potential ISIS sympathizers.

Because of the increased mainstream invisibility of extremist groups as a consequence of both the 2016 US Election and unrest in the Middle East, many sites are shutting down forums and accounts that extremist groups are using. Thus, my data was limited to what was still available on each site, or archival websites such as Wayback Machine. Sites such as 4chan and 8chan do not keep extensive archives, with the deletion of posts occurring every three days. Voat's archive presented an error message when I tried to go past page 25 of both /v/Identitarian and /v/AltRight. This means that I was unable to gather data past what was on the sites on the dates of collection, and I was not able to go back and see the data on the site if I needed to.

My analysis was completed with the understanding that I would not be able to conclude why the individuals participate in a specific organization and believe in the ideologies of the hate

groups without speaking to individuals in those positions. My personal safety concerns led to the decision to abstain from doing field work, including entering chatrooms such as those on Discord, an app that would have required me to prove my whiteness to enter, and I did not choose to delve into the dark web<sup>30</sup> to find the Islamic State.

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<sup>30</sup> The dark web is a series of encrypted content sharing networks that make use of the Internet's infrastructure. However, this content is only accessible by certain software or if users have been given authorization by the maintainers of the network (Glance, 2015).

## Chapter 3. “White Pride Worldwide”: White Supremacy Online

“My friends, the Internet gives millions access to the truth that many didn’t even know existed. Never in the history of man can powerful information travel so fast and so far. I believe that the Internet will begin a chain reaction of racial enlightenment that will shake the world by the speed of its intellectual conquest. Now, there is a new racial consciousness growing in our people that will sweep the West... As the new millenium approaches, one can feel the currents of history moving swiftly around us. The same race that created the brilliant technology of the Internet, will — through this powerful tool — be awakened from its long sleep. Our people will learn that our very survival is in jeopardy. We will finally realize that our culture and traditions are under attack; that our values and morality, our freedom and prosperity are in danger...”

---David Duke, former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (2007)

### 3.1 Overview

The longevity of white supremacy groups has often depended on their ability to evolve through technological advances. The spectrum of rhetoric used by these groups also assists in their appeal to different generations. Organizations with longer histories such as the KKK gain traction by using ideologies typical of the Jim Crow era and fears of the extermination of the white race. Newer groups affiliated with the Alt Right use distinct hateful rhetoric and notions of fragile masculinity to garner support. The properties of platforms that the organizations use govern the communication and engagement between users by allowing for their extreme ideologies to live and spread with little consequence. The white supremacists utilize the fear of losing their power as the superior race to people of colour. For these groups, the elimination of the “other” is the only way that the white race will be able to survive, and strategies to support this elimination are carried out on the sites.

This chapter examines the online platforms used and often taken over by white supremacist groups and the ways in which they use their hate rhetoric and other ideologies to engage with those that are looking to join the movement. The texts produced through these

platforms were analyzed and categorized into infiltrated sites and popular media. Infiltrated sites refer to websites that were created for other purposes like gaming and anime, but have been taken over by white supremacy groups and gained notoriety as sites for racism and bigotry. The mainstream media are identified as such because the white extremist groups and their sympathizers represent a small portion of their users. I treated Stormfront as distinct from both categories, as it was created solely for the use of white supremacists. The chapter begins with an in-depth look at the functions of each platform; then the findings for each forum are presented, ending with a discussion of the use of the theoretical framework to explain the networks and identities that these platforms engender.

### **3.2 Stormfront**

White supremacy groups were among the first hate groups to adopt online forums in the form of e-bulletins, gradually evolving into one of the first major “hate sites,” stormfront.org, in 1995 (Zhou et al., 2005; Hara and Estrada, 2003; Burris et al., 2000). stormfront.org, created by former KKK leader Don Black, is a neo-Nazi site that allowed groups to share their hatred for minorities and affection for Hitler’s Germany (Zhou et al., 2005). Stormfront continues to play a significant role in communication for the white supremacist movements (Zhou et al., 2005). The website consists of a dating service, private forums for members to engage in discussions, posts for children and news on upcoming events (Ray & Marsh, 2001). As of May 2015, the website claims to have over 300,000 members. Its mission is “to provide information not available in the controlled news media and to build a community of White activists working for the survival of our people” (Stormfront, n.d.). A study by the South Poverty Law Centre (SPLC) showed that registered members of the website have been responsible for the murders of up to 100 people in some of America’s most lethal hate crimes (n.d.).

In August 2017, Stormfront's domain service provider shut down the website after the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law sent the domain server registrar letters stating that the website was in violation of the domain's anti-discrimination policies (Hern, 2017). The closure lasted just over a month. The website came back online in October 2017 when Don Black and Network Solutions made a deal to unlock the domain name so that it could be moved to another domain registrar (Schulberg, Liebelson, & Craggs, 2017).

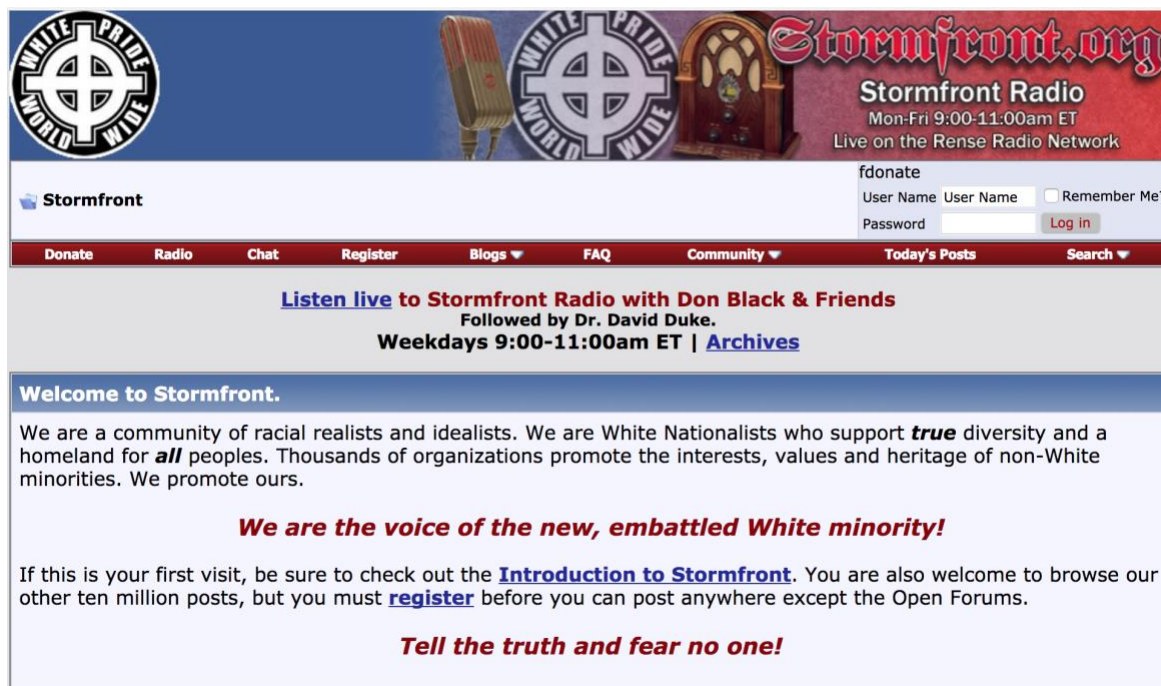


Figure 8: Stormfront's front page (stormfront.org)

Stormfront's design is relatively simple for a website that has existed for over 20 years. The site looks outdated compared to newer websites that have a modern, technological feel and are ever evolving (e.g., Facebook)<sup>31</sup>. The site has nine overarching themes for forums, ranging from private to international forums, specific to white supremacy movements in countries such

<sup>31</sup> The site's age was exemplified by a man that claimed that he was unable to access the site through certain up-to-date web browsers ("New Members," retrieved July 2017).



as Canada, Serbia, and South Africa. As of November 19, 2017, Stormfront had 977,082 threads, over 12 million posts and 328,622 registered members (Stormfront Statistics, n.d.). Stormfront provides a space for the KKK, neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and the British National Party. There seems to be very little Alt Right presence. Many users are happy to see youth engagement, while others denounce the group.

The rules for the site, posted by David Duke, include the need to use proper grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as to avoid racial slurs<sup>32</sup> and profanity. The rules also discourage the use of Swastikas in avatars and signatures. When Duke created the website, he consciously chose to not use the Swastika. He believed that Jewish people have co-opted the symbol, using it to their advantage by appropriating it as a symbol of the oppression they have faced (“Swastika avatars-not permitted on Stormfront,” 2011). However, some users believe that the symbol is a sign of greatness. One user wrote of the sacredness of the swastika, hoping to “die in battle under the symbol” and another stated that “it is the symbol of the sun, the seasons, our people, our nationhood.” These ideas about the Swastika are in line with its use during Nazi Germany, when it serves as a spectacle of their hatred and a sign of superiority (Gilroy, 2000).

Duke urged users to not post anything on Stormfront that could be used against the users in a court of law, warning members to not,

[C]ome back in a few months or years and ask us to delete all your posts....It wouldn't make much difference anyway, since public posts are cached by search engines and recorded by countless other people with varying motives.

Duke recognizes that, due to the renewed scrutiny of white supremacists, they are under constant surveillance such that there is potential for what users write to be viewed by the public and then used against them. The rules give the site a semblance of legitimacy, ostensibly distinguishing

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<sup>32</sup> Although “negro” and “Orientals” are still considered to be acceptable.

itself from the list of hate sites and forums that are based in extraordinary forms of discrimination and hate, some of which were used in this research.

Membership with the website is free, only requiring a username, password, and an email to which an activation code can be sent. Users that choose to donate for a prolonged time have their status changed from “Forum Member” to “Sustaining Member.” Users speak of how they “creeped” the website for months, sometimes even years, before finally deciding to register. \* Many users cited Hurricane Katrina as the catalyst for their more active participation on the website. One such member discussed how they were appalled by the laziness of African Americans and the lack of gratitude they demonstrated after getting help from the government. When contributors post on forums, certain details are included along with their post: their chosen avatar, username, location (if available) and the number of posts they have created<sup>33</sup>. The discussions contain few dissenting opinions and aggression that is proportional to the anger of the users and are very community-oriented. In comparison to many of the other sites in this research, the aggression that users on Stormfront display is not excessive. Members can tag other users or quote them when they want to engage with them specifically, whether it is to agree or argue with their points.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, five discussion boards were chosen from Stormfront: New Members, Strategy and Tactics, eActivism and Stormfront Webmaster, Politics and Continuing Crisis, and Ideology and Philosophy. In the New Members forum<sup>34</sup>, newly registered users are requested to introduce themselves. Long-standing members often personally welcome the users to the site. Men and women are both present on the site, although women are likely to speak of their motherhood and families when they introduce themselves. The collected

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendix A for example.

<sup>34</sup> There are currently six introduction threads on the New Members forum.

data showed a vast age range among users, ranging from 17 to 64 years of age. When registering, most new members mention that they had searched for “pro-white” websites in hopes of finding a like-minded community and people that share their values. Many are in awe of the “intimate and caring” Stormfront community (“New Members,” retrieved July 2017). Others credit their own “racial awakening” as a reason to register. Some members speak of experiencing “reverse racism”, which they describe in terms of the shame they are made to feel for having white pride. One user stated that he joined the site because he has “eyes that see passed [sic] the politically correct smokescreen of lies” (“New Members,” retrieved July 2017). In addition to explaining why they joined the site, new members speak of their physical appearance and their “white lineage” in an apparent attempt to prove their legitimacy as a white person and their ties to the white supremacy cause.



Figure 9: New users frequently state that they visited the site before becoming active members. While motives for joining the site differ, most join because of the comradery they feel with other members due to the similarities in their beliefs (“New Members,” retrieved July 2017).

Threads in the Politics and Continuing Crisis forum have conversations about the plights of white people; these consist of “race realities” and the guilt white people are made to feel.

Overarching themes of white genocide and the survival and extinction of the white race permeate the threads, with many stating that “Diversity is code for white genocide” (“Politics and Continuing Crisis,” n.d.). Some posts pertain to why the white supremacy movement is not thriving as much as they believe it should, which causes many posters to express hopelessness for the cause. Some users attempt to find ways to mobilize white supremacy sympathizers beyond the visitors to these forums. A thread dedicated to effective ways of using propaganda was filled with quotes from Hitler, anti-Semitic posters (such as Figure 3.4), and tips on how to make better use of propaganda. Along with derogatory conversations about Jewish people, Holocaust denial is present on the board, but not as aggressively as on Voat. Many members urge the swarming of other platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, and Wikipedia, instructing others to disseminate their ideologies using these other sites. In some instances, they even provide prewritten Tweets that other users can simply copy and paste or retweet.



Figure 10: An example of anti-Semitic propaganda that can be found on Stormfront ("Continuing Crisis," retrieved July 2017).

The eActivism and Stormfront Webmaster boards and the Strategy and Tactics board are dedicated to spreading white supremacy. Conversations have a "learn online, use offline" mentality, with users creating tactics for both on- and offline. Members find humour in getting banned from Facebook for violating its terms and conditions yet want to represent themselves legitimately to the world. Many suggest that they should not preach hate or aggression and speak of the successes and failures of white people. Other users believe that the best way to entice people is to explain how white people are affected by other races. A common example on the threads is how migrant workers are taking the jobs of white people. There is communal input in marketing tactics, which can be seen with the posting of recruitment posters for everyone to use. Also, a discussion about producing a White Activist Manual, and the push to have Stormfront

and Jew Watch on the front pages of search sites. One thread, “Internet Warriors Needed,” speaks to the understanding that the internet can be a powerful tool to circulate white supremacists’ ideas and gather new members. It features sentiments of needing to “wake up” other white people and the urgency to take back what is theirs to aid in the fight against their enemies and restore white power. The conversations on the boards allow people to discuss how they are resisting the injustices that they face as part of their fabricated racial group.

Although all of the forums contain discussions of the ideologies of the white supremacy movement, the Ideology and Philosophy forum is entirely dedicated to such threads. Topics include discussions of whether members should eat “ethnic” foods and whether skinheads are part of the movement. Equality of the sexes, women against feminism, and the idea that non-whites are superior to race traitors are debated on the board. Like many other media, Stormfront members discuss who they are willing to support and fight for versus those that they consider adversaries to the movement. Conversation like these can be seen in threads such as “How much white blood would you accept?” (“Ideology and Philosophy,” n.d.)

As one of the oldest hate websites, Stormfront gives users a multitude of avenues to speak their “racial truths” and find support on the platform. The website does not discriminate about which white supremacy organizations can participate, bringing the movements together. The sects bring their ideas of communication and marketing to one another, which allows for the exchange and implementation of plans to further their agendas. Stormfront users speak of many different topics and communicate with others on the site, giving the platform a communal atmosphere. The engagement methods and relationships between users are discussed further in the chapter.

## **3.2 Popular Media**

Popular media are defined as platforms which were created for the purpose of those with similar interests to be able to network, with white supremacists making up a small portion of their users. I define Reddit as a popular media as it was created for like-minded individuals, or those living in the same regions to connect. Unlike the infiltrated media, Reddit has not been overwhelmed by the presence of Alt Right ideologies. This category of popular media also refers to the manner in which the site moderates their users to ensure that rules are followed, and those who do not abide by them face consequences. The site continues to function as a forum for like-minded individuals to converse about shared interests.

### **3.2.1 Reddit**

Created in 2015, Reddit works like a bulletin board where users, “redditors,” can subscribe to specific boards, or subreddits. Subreddits are user-created forums designated for specific interests, such as video games or makeup. Registered users can “up” or “down” vote submissions which determines the thread’s popularity among readers and visibility on the platform. This system determines the visibility of the submission on the front page of the site. Like many other popular media sites, Reddit has its own language. Users articulate abbreviations such as TIL (today I learned), and AMA (ask me anything); the latter acronym is connected to one of Reddit’s most popular threads, where celebrities or newsworthy people are interviewed by users (Moreau, 2017). Reddit users are identified by their chosen user names, allowing for anonymity; however, the site is moderated, a feature that Reddit is known to spend quite a bit of money on (Ohlheiser, 2016). Another aspect that sets Reddit apart from the infiltrated media is the enforcement of the rules of the site. By monitoring the posts and comments, the website ensures that users adhere to their rules and face consequences if they do not abide by them.

In 2015, /r/altright, /r/alternativeright and /r/TRP were <sup>35</sup> among the 638,959 subreddits (/r/nostupidquestions, 2015). When it was deleted, /r/altright was one of the three openly Alt Right subreddits<sup>36</sup> and hosted 12,711 registered users. It was dedicated to explaining the Alt Right and its ideologies. Regardless of their political and cultural stances, the subreddit expected users to adhere to Reddit's site-wide rules and policies including no vulgarity or calls to violence. The subreddits also expect users to abide by "reddiquette." Reddit does not enforce these rules; it was created by Redditors as a social contract to enforce civility among users ("Reddiquette," n.d.). Noncompliance by the users was met with the threat of banishment from the community. While the board uniquely welcomed "normies"<sup>37</sup>, they strictly forbade leftist agitation and recommended that people remain inactive who did not prescribe to the ideologies, save for a few questions here and there. /r/altright postings typically followed the rhetoric of the Alt Right. Discussions tend to focus on injustices facing white people, perpetration of anti-Semitism, the problems that immigrants and refugees bring to the Western world, homophobia, and connecting users to prominent members of the movement via AMAs. Relative to other websites that will be discussed, the comments on the threads were respectful and not aggressive. For instance, the original posters (OP) and subsequent commenters are not harassed by other users for having ideas that clashed with the harassers'.

The forum had posts that explained what the Alt Right is and what the movement entails. The language in the posts was not polarizing, perhaps to seem more inclusive or to appeal to a demographic that was wary of the more hard-core ideals of the movement. Notably, the board

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<sup>35</sup> On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, /r/altright and /r/alternative right were deleted and banned from Reddit.

<sup>36</sup> /r/The\_Donald is the only prominent surviving Alt Right subreddit, created in 2016 during the presidential campaign of Donald Trump.

<sup>37</sup> People that Alt Righters and their sympathizers believe think in a mainstream way, instead of for themselves.



used language accepted by the Reddit community, depicting the regular Redditor culture injected with fringe and radical ideas. The familiarity of the language is an attempt to form a network in two ways: 1) with Redditors who may not believe in the rhetoric of the subreddit, but the shared lexicon fosters kinship, and 2) with Redditors who align with the Alt Right and now have a platform to communicate with those who share those beliefs. Threads included Alt Right book suggestions to help users understand the political position and calls to action, including the need for monetary funds. Along with legitimate ways to advance the movement, post topics centred around ideas that will garner outrage among users who are firm believers in the Alt Right movement, such as Black Lives Matter news and hatred against the left, who are often referred to as “libtards.”

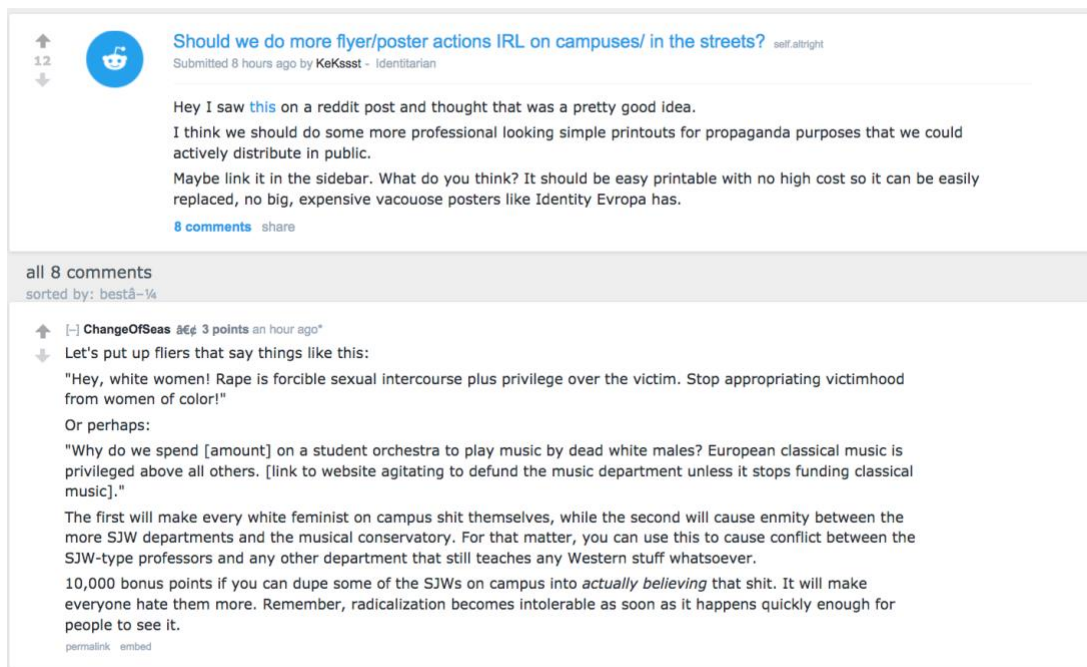


Figure 11: An example of a thread from /r/altright (Wayback Machine Archive, retrieved June 2017). IRL is an abbreviation for “In Real Life.”

/r/alternativeright, the more popular of the two Alt Right subreddits, had 117,946 users at the time of its closure. The forum’s users held the belief that this subreddit was more legitimate

than 4chan and /r/altright. The board emphasized that only quality<sup>38</sup> posts would be allowed and, like /r/altright, had hard rules for following reddiquette. While vulgarity was said to be punishable, Figure 14 exemplifies one of the many instances of rule-breaking that occurred without consequences after a user used the word “autistic” to negatively describe 4chan. The rules also included “no racial hatred or slurs,” encouraging redditors to use facts and statistics to support their positions. The site emphasized that facts should not be used to further someone’s ideological agenda, as they did not want to “become a hate group” (/r/alternativeright, n.d.)

Articles in the threads document the plight of white people to get the attention and reactions of the readers, such as a feed called “Double Standards: Leslie Jones’ Racist Twitter History<sup>39</sup>” (Kew, 2016). The story featured in Breitbart claimed that Jones, a black comedian, was exempt from Twitter’s rules and was allowed to publish derogatory tweets about white people, while Milo Yiannopoulos, a prominent Alt Right figure, was suspended for asking his followers to send racist tweets at Jones (Kew, 2016). Because Yiannopoulos is a figurehead for the movement, Jones faced much backlash and racism on the social media site.

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<sup>38</sup> With moderators and other users being the judges of what constitutes “quality.”

<sup>39</sup> Wayback Machine did not have the contents of the thread archived.

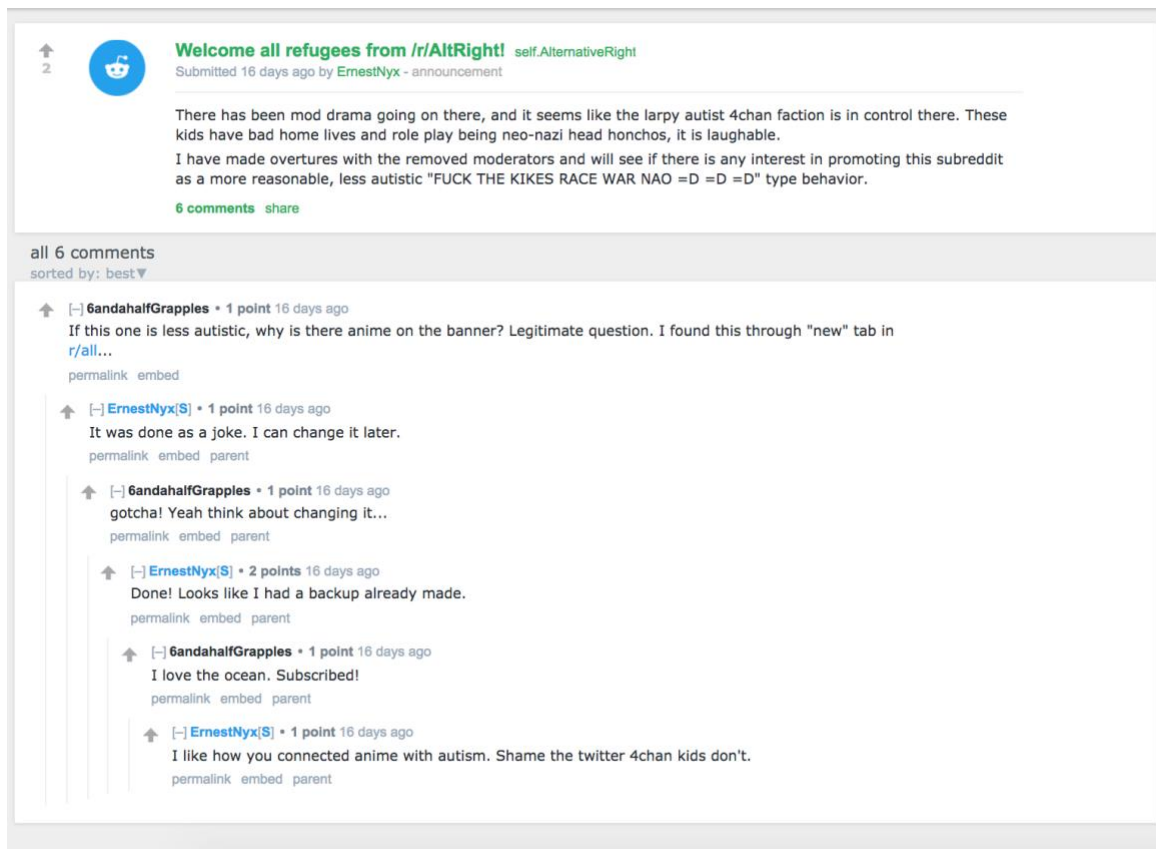


Figure 12: Evidence of /r/alternativeright's distaste for other sites used by white supremacy groups (Wayback Machine, retrieved June 2017).

Another popular subreddit is /r/TheRedPill (TRP). While not an official<sup>40</sup> white supremacist subreddit, TRP prescribes to the same ideologies of the persecution of masculinity as the Alt Right. The name of the subreddit is a nod to the film *The Matrix*, in which the protagonist, Neo, takes the red pill to attain a deeper insight into how the world works, a true reality (Love, 2013). This title suggests that all the members have been awakened to realize the actual wrongdoings of society instead of the “normie” reality. Those on the subreddit subscribe to ideas of the “manosphere,” where men, not women, are the ones suffering under society's

<sup>40</sup> TRP, in comparison to the Voat, 4chan and 8chan forums, was not created solely for rhetoric and ideologies used by the Alt Right and other white supremacy groups.

pressures and are being oppressed (Cohen, 2015). Hosting 233,588 members,<sup>41</sup> TRP categorizes threads ranging from Fitness and Finance to Men's Rights and Red Pill Theory; each topic allows for the discussion of the various plights faced by men. TRP provides readers the official rules of the forum, a glossary, theoretical frameworks, and other informational pages to allow the men to partake in discussion with the right tools and for them to know what is considered "on topic." The subreddit has its own subreddit created solely for providing redditors with advice (/r/asktrp).

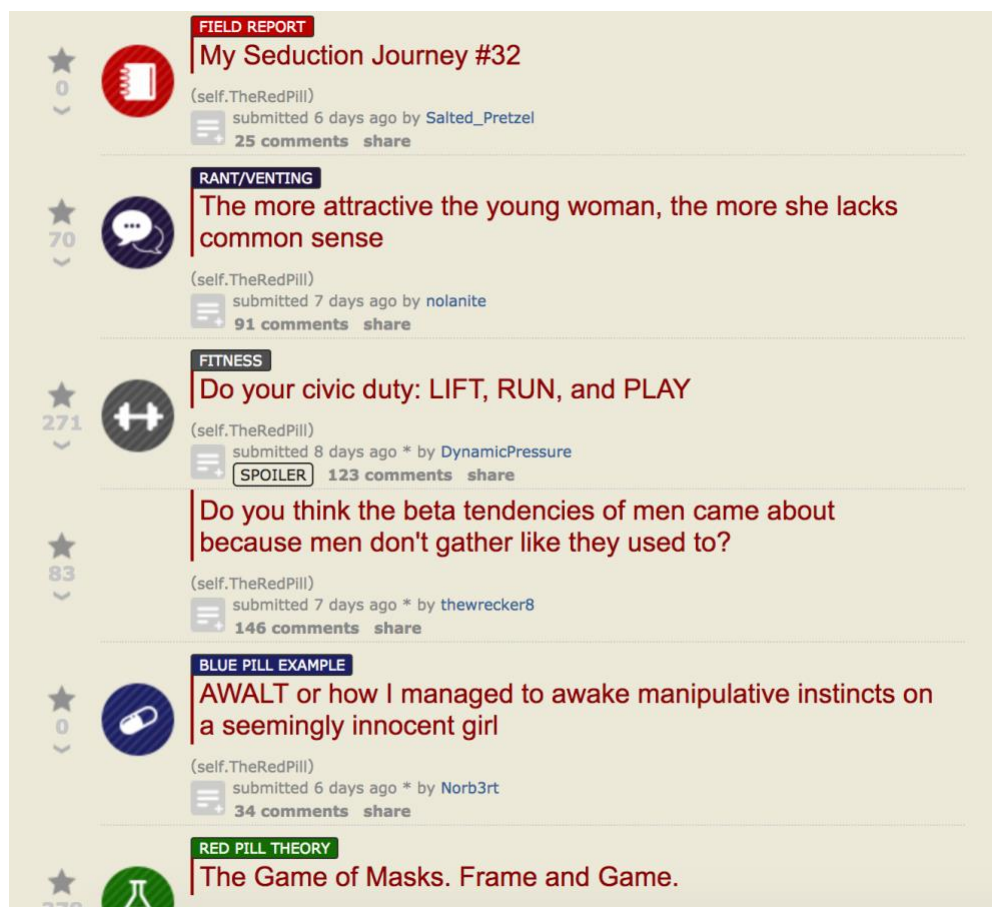


Figure 13: An example of the types of discussions happening on TRP (The Red Pill, retrieved June 2017).

<sup>41</sup>The number of users had grown by 91% since June 29<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

TRP creates a sense of community in which users are safe to speak honestly and openly about the plights they face and the successes they have. Although some members aggressively react to threads or comments, the discussions tend to be positive, providing the OP with compliments, sympathy, and support. Members can openly discuss their flaws, explain how they are bettering themselves, and provide general updates on their lives. One of the most common topics of discussion on TRP is how to attract the “right type” of woman, regardless of her inherent evilness and biology that makes her less than a man. Members try to use science (such as neuroplasticity) to justify why women are the subordinate sex, as they have women “figured out.” Many contributors believe that women are weakening men by teaching them about feminism, a movement that goes against the core principles of the forum. The members of TRP have a clear sense of male superiority, while characterizing themselves as victims. Everything “mainstream” is seen as a conspiracy against men; laws and the media only add to the reverse sexism to which men are being subjected. Members portray a “DGAF” (Don’t give a fuck) attitude, yet there is some sense of a bruised ego articulated on the board, whereby the shortcomings of men are blamed on society and women. Hyper masculinity is applauded on TRP, as exemplified with posts about how to “get laid,” how to let go of beta tendencies, and the poisonous consequences of marriage. Posts are sexually explicit, misogynistic, and homophobic. The actions of one woman are generalized to all women, as exemplified by the acronym AWALT (All Women Are Like That). Although TRP caters to men, they ask users to remain “sexless.” Yet most of the posts focus on the control exerted by women and their capacity to manipulate reality to suit themselves.

It's even more ironic given that white people are actually a minority in the world. Adolf Hitler was the worst thing that could possibly happen to the white identity and the best thing to happen for cultural Marxists. You can now never bring up racial truths/the benefits of eugenics without the brainwashed masses whimpering "Buh buh buh, the Holocaust!" Even though white people are responsible for the majority of society's advances, this one fuckwit will forever make defending our culture from invasion and degeneration an extreme taboo.

And don't ever think any praise will be ever given to the men, the innovators and risk-takers of society. Just look at the men's rights movement. We've tried to respectfully point out the massive gap in suicide rates, homeless rates, divorce rape, and education, and what did we get? A skit on SNL calling us misogynists. A woman being "objectified" results in massive outrage from all fronts. Men actually suffering from real problems? You will never get anything more than a shrug and a "meh".>They don't want equal treatment, they want preferable treatment.

Well, that's just not true. Gay people can still get fired without any legal protection based on their sexual orientation alone. How is one not wanting that to be a thing wanting preferable treatment? What \*exactly\* is "white pride" though..

Figure 14: TRP members speak of the struggles of white people, their hate for Hitler, and Cultural Marxism (The Red Pill, retrieved July 2017).

TRP members use the same language that can be found on explicitly Alt Right forums. References to cucks, alpha/beta males, snowflakes, and libtards are used to speak to the weaknesses of men. The board is against political correctness (PC), as it weakens society. The analogy of spinning plates is a specific example of how un-PC TRP can be. "Plates" refer to women and the idea is that men need to "spin" as many as possible at the same time, meaning they should have multiple prospects (sexual or otherwise) on the go. Members of TRP use the analogy to speak of their escapades with women. The underlying ideology of the plate theory is that "a man is as confident and valuable as his options" (The Rational Male, 2011). TRP's platform allows the spread of men's rights campaigns, with users supporting the hate speech that bolsters their ideas.

### 3.3 Infiltrated Media

The next section examines social and virtual media that were created for users to freely express themselves and connect with others with shared interests. Regardless of the intended

purpose of the forums, they have been valorized as homes for white supremacists and the cesspool of the internet.

### **3.3.1 4chan**

4chan was launched in 2003 as an English-language imageboard where users could discuss anime and manga. It has since expanded to include topics such as literature and 18+ content. Users can anonymously post pictures and engage in conversations with each other by tagging the other person's identification number. Contributors do not need to register and are simply given "Anonymous" status, identifiable only by a randomly generated number. With no identifying information, users cannot be punished for their posts and comments, regardless of the content. Newcomers to the site identify themselves as "newfag," while seasoned members of the community are referred to as "oldfag." The website was modelled after the Japanese imageboard 2chan (Dewey, 2014; Naussbaum, 2017). The site has few rules, with most being connected to laws protecting copyright and posting personal information of others; however, the site does not ban the use of bigoted language and explicit imagery on their random board, /b/<sup>42</sup>. 4chan gained notoriety with Anonymous, as they had their beginnings as a hacktivism group on the site, collectively starting Project Chanology on /b/ (Dewey, 2014). Replacing 4chan's news board (/new/), /pol/, or Politically Incorrect, was launched in October 2011. It has been deemed by the media and the Southern Poverty Law Centre as emulating other white supremacy websites (Neiwart, 2017a).

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<sup>42</sup> For an image of the rules of 4chan, please see the Appendix A.

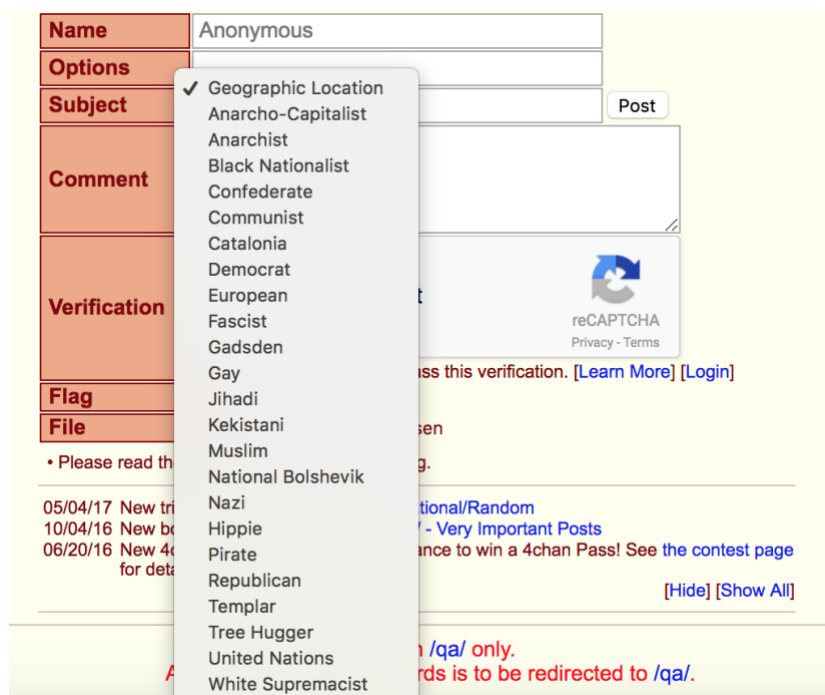


Figure 15: The list of Geographic Locations 4chan’s /pol/ offers its contributors (<http://boards.4chan.org/pol/>).

/pol/’s interface is simple in its design and does not require any personal information from users wanting to create new threads. To create a thread, a user needs to simply click “Start a new thread,” fill out the basic post creation form, and submit. One of the unique features of /pol/submissions is that users can pick their “geographic location” and a flag will appear beside the anonymous number given to them. The locations are not country-based; they are political, religious and other identities to which people may adhere, but not commonly seen as options on any type of user profile (e.g., tree hugger). The rules set by the moderators<sup>43</sup> are contradictory, telling contributors not to post off-topic and /b/-tier threads, unless the posts are “quality” and “well thought out.” A quick scroll through the first page of the board shows that this rule is not obeyed or enforced. The moderators are proud of /pol/ for being a proponent of free speech and

<sup>43</sup> Moderators are the only registered users.



allow flexibility in post variety. Users can interact with one another by tagging the ID number of the person who they wish to engage with. Users are completely anonymous, giving them the ability to write and post anything with little, if any, legitimate consequences to their offline lives.

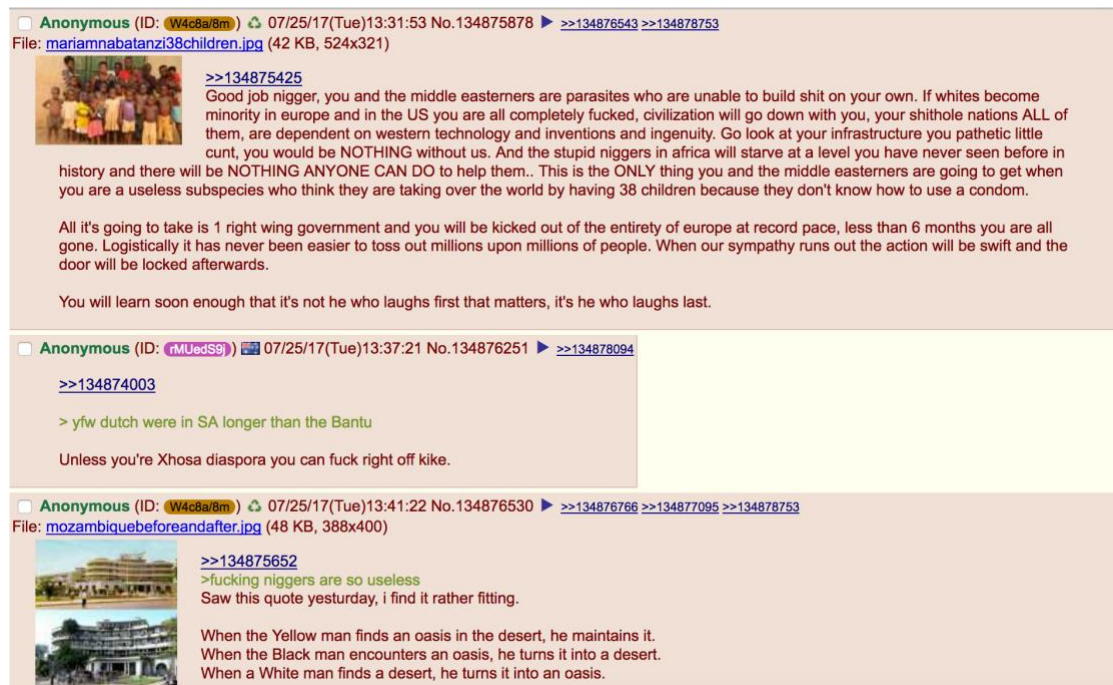


Figure 16: An example of the white superiority and racism that can be found on threads in /pol/ (/pol/, retrieved July 2017).

4chan was created for users to share images found elsewhere online. The boards, including /pol/, use internet language and adhere to meme culture. Pepe the Frog and “Kek” are two notable internet symbols that are used by the contributors. Kek originated in World of Warcraft; when users would send “LOL” (laugh out loud) to other users it would appear as “KEK” due to the Korean encryption in the game (Neiwart, 2017b). One contributor on 4chan made a connection to the Egyptian god Kek, the deification of darkness and chaos, who in his male<sup>44</sup> form was depicted as a man with a frog head (Palau & Roozenbeek, 2017). Thus, the

<sup>44</sup> Kek has been said to be androgynous, taking both male and female form.

image of Pepe the Frog<sup>45</sup> was chosen to be the modern embodiment of Kek, establishing the movement, Cult of Kek. Followers of Kek believe in the kingdom of Kekistan, creating a flag that resembles a Nazi flag<sup>46</sup> (Neiwart, 2017b). According to Alt Righters, Kek represents the pseudo-religion that white supremacy and nationalism movements have created online, goading politically correct liberals and complacent conservatives (Neiwart, 2017b). Kek became a figurehead for Donald Trump's presidential election, with images of Pepe being altered to incorporate Trump's features, and images of the frog wearing "Make America Great Again" hats were posted (Neiwart, 2017b; Nussbaum, 2017). Although Trump was the chosen candidate of /pol/ and White Supremacists, there is some disagreement on the board about whether he has kept to his agenda. The contributors of /pol/ maintain the notion that they were the ones that pushed Trump into power; therefore, he needs to fulfill the agenda of the group by implementing the Muslim travel ban, reversing the legalization of abortion, and punishing the Black Lives Matter movement. Some users stand by Trump and believe that he will fulfill his promises to the right wing, while some are deeply disappointed in his inability to provide them with jobs, or "get their jobs back," and his failure to push the travel ban into law.

The triple parenthesis is another symbol that is frequently used on /pol/. The triple parenthesis, known as the (((echoes))), was originally used online as a symbol of virtual hugging but has been transformed into an anti-Semitic logo by the Alt Right (Fleishman & Smith, 2016)<sup>47</sup>. The parenthesis symbolizes how the damage caused by Jewish people echoes throughout history (Fleishman & Smith, 2016; Yglesias, 2016). The parentheses are typically

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<sup>45</sup>The Creator of Pepe the Frog Matt Furie has vehemently stated that he is not associated with the Alt Right, issuing the DMCA against illicit uses of the meme (Romano, 2017).

<sup>46</sup>Image in the Appendix A.

<sup>47</sup>Explanation from *Right Stuff* in Appendix A.

placed around Jewish surnames to signify how they reverberate throughout history (Fleishman & Smith, 2016; Yglesias, 2016). Along with anti-Semitic rhetoric, /pol/ users use racial epithets such as the N word, “dindu<sup>48</sup>,” and slurs against Muslims and immigrants. The language tactic serves two purposes: 1) to reaffirm their sense of superiority, which aids in the strengthening of community, and 2) the slurs remain in the public sphere and become a part of the vernacular of those that use the site.

The Alt Right ideologies of white superiority, white oppression and the need for a race war are prevalent through many of the posts that were collected. The belief that white people, particularly white men, have been victims of grave injustices throughout history is a popular idea on /pol/, and most other Alt Right forums. Users employ the metaphor of the red pill to explain how they have been awoken and their lives have positively changed. There are, however, a few users that say that since being redpilled, they now find themselves full of hatred and wish they could go back. As seen on the aforementioned Alt Right media, hate for “normies,” “cucks,” and “socialist hellhole” Canada is prevalent on the board. While threads may be made with the intention to promote a discussion, they quickly become a convoluted mess of bigotry and hate speech, often losing the OP’s message within the first five to ten posts. Dissent with the movement is futile on most white supremacy sites but is exceptionally volatile on /pol/. Having ideas and values that differ from than most /pol/ users, leads to the contributor(s) to being subjected to incredible insults, hatred and, in some cases, threats, although typically empty due to the anonymity of the board.

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<sup>48</sup> Used to mock African Americans during the Ferguson riots, “dindu” is derived from the phrase “dindu nuffin” (from “didn’t do nothing”), a reference to unarmed black men who were murdered by police officers (Mister J, 2015).

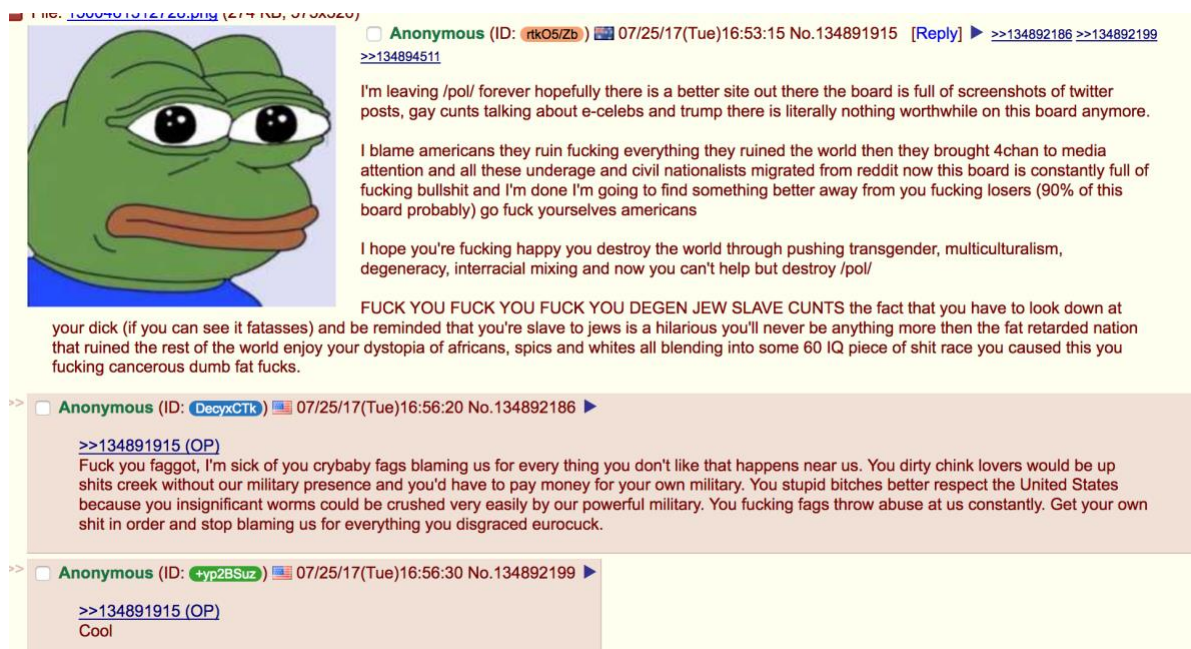


Figure 17: An example of how contributors react to others who oppose their beliefs and the community (/pol/, retrieved, June 2017).

Compared to the other sites that will be discussed, /pol/ does not appear to have an abundance of posts about Holocaust denial. Users tend to lean towards blaming Jewish people for the wrongdoings white people have faced and continue to face. The users believe that Jewish people are in control of the media, politics, and the economy. Historical inaccuracies are used as fact to push contributors' hate agendas. Aside from anti-Semitic remarks, comments championing colonialism can be found along with racist posts about Black and brown immigrants. One user responded<sup>49</sup> to a comment that pointed out white people stole "native" land, stating that,

[W]hites didn't come and stole [sic] all the riches, everything Europe and western civilization is was built by white people you dumb cunt. You act as if non whites were running around building everything nope (/pol/, retrieved June 2017).

<sup>49</sup>See full comment in Appendix A.

Threads and comments on /pol/ share a pattern of believing in genetic superiority. The use of retard (including variations of it), autism as an insult, and other ableism gives the posts a childishness and unsophistication, making the words of contributors both absurd and harrowing. The anonymity and the ability to interact with whichever message users please, facilitates the bullying of users that do not agree with the collective. A popular method of harassment is overwhelming a dissenting user by sending them a persistent stream of hateful messages. Inundating a single user like this exemplifies a mob mentality among the user base. Due to the absence of moderation, no consequences are faced by those who choose to harass others.

### **3.3.2 8chan**

Modelled after 4chan, 8chan, or infinitechan, was created by Frederick Brennan, who believed that 4chan was restricting freedom of speech and expression (Howell O'Neill, 2014). The mottos for the site are “Welcome to 8chan, the darkest reaches of the internet” and “embrace infamy.” These two phrases give insight into the reputation of the platform. The interface of the website is more complex than its mirror website, 4chan, but is still relatively simple compared to other virtual media sites. Creating boards is a straightforward process, requiring no programming or advanced internet skills. Potential board creators fill out an online form that asks for their board’s URL, the title, and their username and email. The difference between the forums on 4chan and 8chan is that on 8chan users are not given the option of choosing an username; instead they are dubbed Anonymous and given a user ID number. The homepage of 8chan shows recently created threads and boards, “quality threads,” and a section titled “fast threads,” which is updated every minute. Fast threads is a compilation of their “velocity,” or what looks like the number of replies per unit of time.

Another unique feature of the site is the “Nerve Centre,” pages where you can see a grid<sup>50</sup> of every thread that discusses the topic the user chooses, ranging from porn and tech. The only global rule posted under 8chan’s fact page is that users can only post images or create boards if they adhere to American Laws (Bokharia, 2016). Like many of the platforms in this research, there is weak moderation of the activities of the users. The anonymity of the user allows them to evade any consequences that could arise from their posts and comments, making the rule ineffectual. Both 4chan and 8chan use internet language and memes<sup>51</sup>, use the terms “newfag” and “oldfag” to identify contributors, and have very little fact checking and surveillance of poster content.

In 2015, the website changed its domain name from 8chan.co to 8chan.net after multiple users reported that the site had explicit images of children on boards. The creator confirmed the allegations, blaming the presence of the images on the site’s openness to free speech. The sharing of child pornography on 8chan resulted in Google blacklisting the website (Dewey, 2015). A Google search for “8chan” results in the Wikipedia article for the site followed by a link to its Twitter account; users need to find another way to get to the site, even if it is as simple as clicking the hyperlink on the Twitter page.

8chan was publicly implicated in two major events: the infamous Gamergate controversy, and Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, when he tweeted a meme of Hilary Clinton that originated on the platform (McKay, 2016). With the threads about Gamergate deleted and the OPs banned from 4chan, Brennan was able to harness the anger that users felt towards the site to gather followers. 8chan is home to over 16,000 boards with 63 million posts made since October

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<sup>50</sup> See example in the Appendix A.

<sup>51</sup> Including Pepe and Kek.

2013 (8chan.net, n.d.). According to the website's statistics, Politically Incorrect is one of the most popular boards with 10,921,243 posts, only surpassed by /v/, the videogame board that boasts almost three million more posts than /pol/ (8chan.net, n.d.). While both 4chan's and 8chan's /pol/, may share the same name and simplicity of the imageboards' design, 8chan's board appears to be the home to white supremacy, specifically the Alt Right and neo-Nazis.

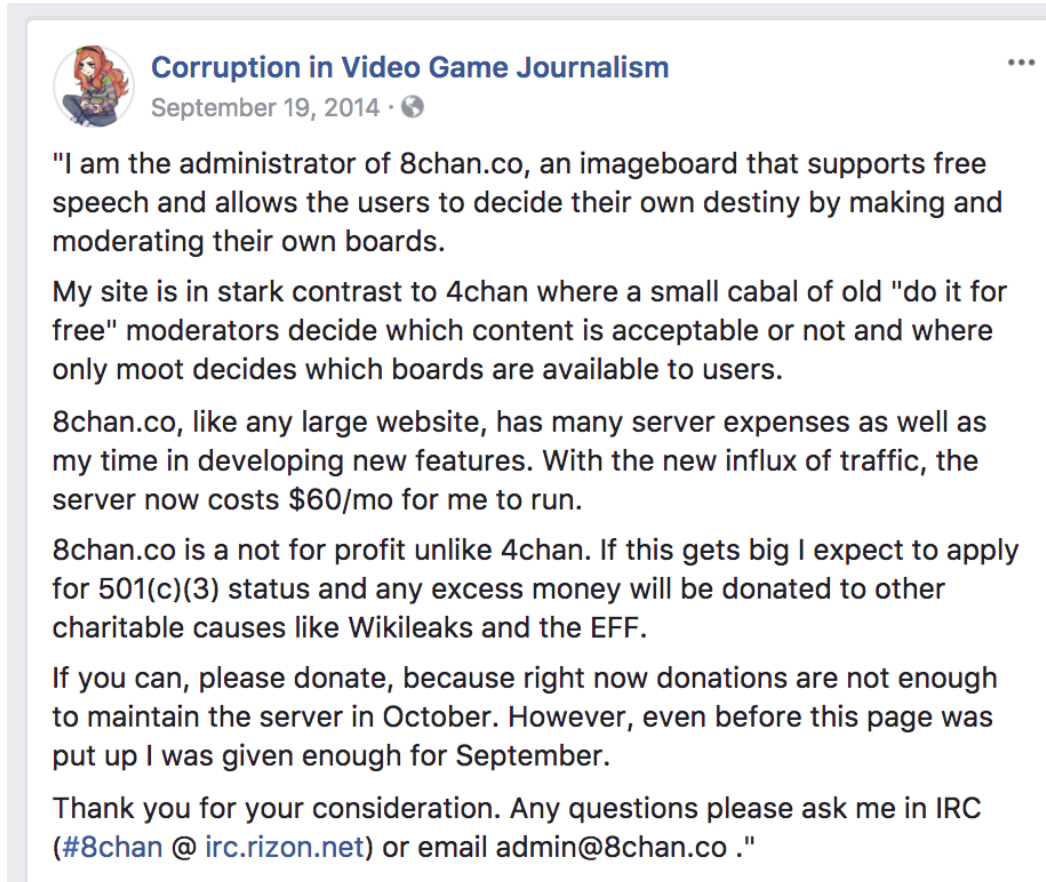


Figure 18: 8chan's creator, Frederick Brennan, or Hotwheels, was able to gain traction for 8chan by exploiting 4chan's dismissal of Gamergate (Facebook.com, retrieved July 2017).

While the 4chan /pol/ utilizes bigotry and hate rhetoric, it seems casual in comparison to 8chan's /pol/ excessive aggression. Talk of violence and over the top racism are applauded and contributors are encouraged and lauded to one up each other's articulations of hatred. Contributors often use language associated with the Alt Right, such as cuck, and other

homophobia. Posts that include violent words like “murder,” “rape” and “slaughter” are often repeated. The board is filled with regressive ideas, such as lynching and pro-colonial beliefs. The community is also concerned with wanted to teach the next generation, “Gen Z”, the tools they need to reinstate white power and fight the oppression and injustices that white people face.

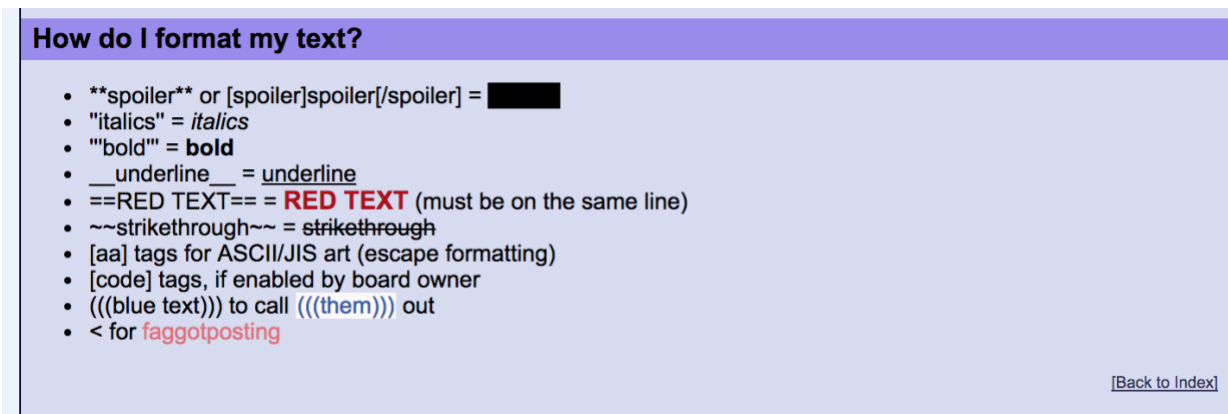


Figure 19: The 8chan text formatting guide (“FAQ-8chan,” n.d.)

8chan’s /pol/ has two unique factors that shape how users can communicate with one another: the capacity for users to redact words, fragments, or whole sections of their comments and their ability to alter text (Figure 21). As the text formatting guide suggests, the redacted part, or “spoiler,” of the comment should be the points the writer deems to be the most important (“FAQ-8chan,” n.d.) However, it is seemingly used at random, with words or phrases that are not derogatory or impactful blacked out (for an example, see Figure 3.14). 8chan’s user interface has the capacity to allow members to change their font. The two most observed alterations are the use of “blue text to call (((them))) out” and “< for faggotposting.” The former is used for commenters to emphasize the anti-Semitic portion of their post, and the latter, which is undefined, appears to be used in response to a disliked comment (“FAQ-8chan,” n.d.).





Figure 20: An example of the text formatting available on 8chan, including the “spoiler” redactions (/pol/, retrieved, July 2017).

Along with anti-Semitic language, other epithets are common in almost every thread, if not in most comments. One contributor changed the spelling of mosque to “mosk” to be disrespectful to Muslims and oppose political correctness and normie behaviours. As with 4chan, the original posting has very little connection to the subsequent comments. As comments progress there is a devolution of ideas and an increase in aggression, with the same bullying tactics and ableism used. 8chan’s singular rule is repetitively broken, along with /pol/’s own generic rules allowing for white supremacy ideologies to flood the threads with no ramifications, except by users attacking each other in the most vulgar way that their keyboards will allow.

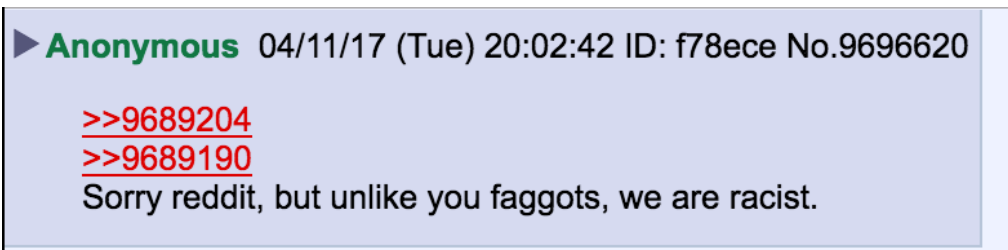


Figure 21: Members of the /pol/ community have no issue admitting to their racist ideologies (/pol/, retrieved July 2017).

### 3.3.3 Voat

Recognized as a descendent of the imageboards 2chan, 4chan, and 8chan, Voat has gained notoriety for its shock value. Originally launched in 2014 as WhoaVerse, Voat is akin to Reddit, a bulletin board site using similar nomenclature (e.g., Subverse instead of Subreddit) (Sherr, 2015). The site gained traction after Reddit banned their more offensive boards, including /r/FatPeopleHate<sup>52</sup> in 2015. Voat cited an influx so large that the platform crashed (Menengus, 2017; Robertson, 2015). The platform appears to be the new haven for Reddit “refugees”, allowing unfettered free speech (Sherr, 2015). Their tagline<sup>53</sup> explicitly states the platform’s beliefs on censorship. The site functions much like Reddit but is simpler to use. Registered users can create subverses and threads, “voat<sup>54</sup>” (instead of upvote/downvote), and like Reddit, the most popular threads are shown on the homepage (with Reddit linking the user’s geographical location to the posts) and user profiles can be viewed by clicking their username. Voat has a finite archive, with an error message appearing when one tries to go past page 20 of the subverses. Voat’s rhetoric is analogous to 8chan’s aggressive nature. Subverses featuring epithets are accepted by the site; one user justified this acceptance stating, “I hate racism-but I

<sup>52</sup> As the name suggests, the subreddit was dedicated to mock obese people.

<sup>53</sup> “A community platform where you can have your say. No censorship.” (voat.co).

<sup>54</sup> Like the voting process on Reddit, readers can like or dislike a post.

hate censorship more...” (Robertson, 2015). Unsurprisingly, with no rules regarding the allowed topics, white supremacist ideas have found their way onto the site, especially after Reddit banned the two Alt Right subreddits. Prior to accessing the website, a redirect screen ostensibly checks the user’s IP address. This is a new feature to the site that did not exist during the time of data collection. Because the Charlottesville protest brought attention to the use of online platforms by white supremacists, the checking of IP addresses could be done to protect the site from those looking to retaliate.

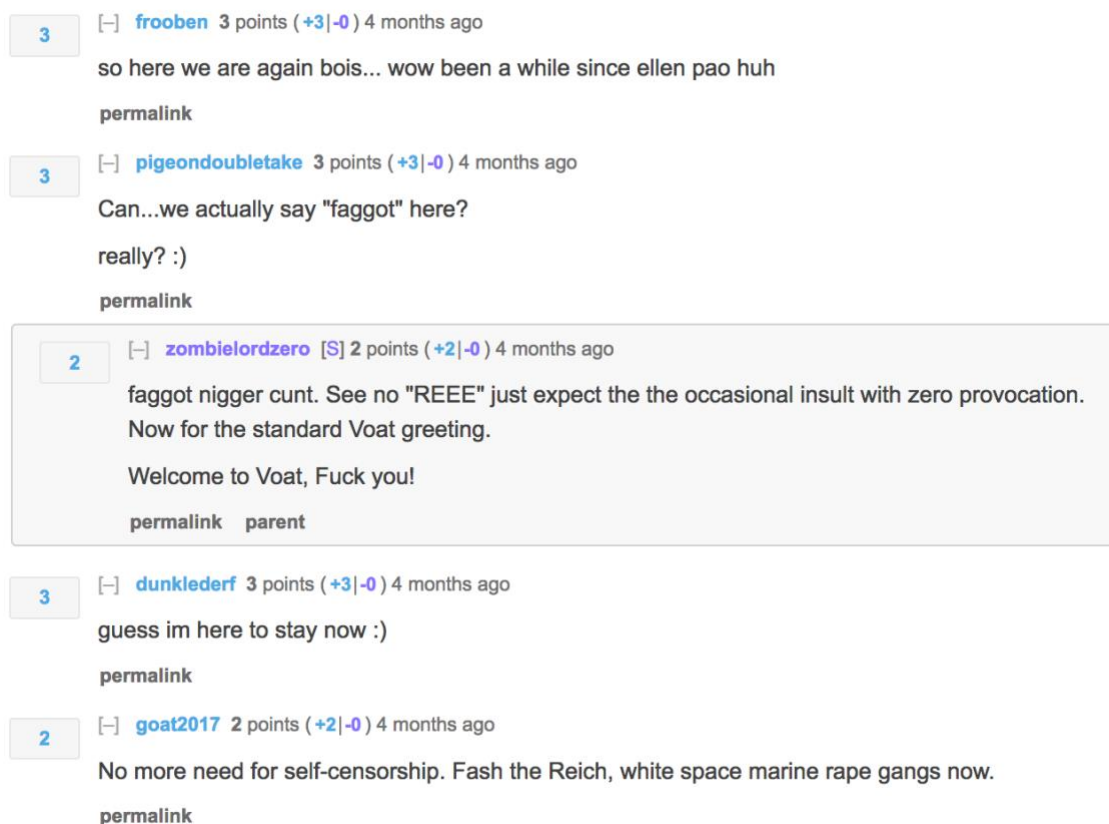


Figure 22: Voat’s lack of censorship allows for members to be “free” in their self-expression (/v/altright, retrieved June 2017).

With only 975 subscribers<sup>55</sup>, /v/altright is the less popular of the two openly white supremacist subverses. Unlike many other hate sites, the /v/altright openly broadcasts their racist and bigoted agenda with their first rule: “no jews, no gays, no niggers. Push any of this shit. Instant ban.” The board emphasizes that posts must be related to the Alt Right and their ideologies. /v/altright is simply designed. Conversation between users are easy to follow, providing information about the submission, including when (if any) edits were made, and comments that were deleted are marked as such. A unique feature of Voat is the list of banned users, comments and submissions. Each subverse and the homepage has a “moderation log” section where anyone, not just registered users, can see what and who was banned and why. Most users were banned for “shitposting,” the posting of rhetoric and memes not pertaining to the board. The list of banned users reveals clues about whom the Alt Right considers enemies of the movement; users have been banned for their usernames (e.g., Naziseatshit), for trolling, and for being Pro-Jewish. Just as its host site user pool was dependent on Reddit’s purge, /v/altright promotes leaving Reddit, telling potential recruits to “reclaim their dignity.” Multiple submissions are dedicated to bashing Reddit and its censorship.

The posts and comments found on /v/altright are relatively simple. Ideological discussions are encapsulated by speaking to the diversity of white people<sup>56</sup> and the homogeneity of people of colour. Any conversations about white superiority and its movements is tarnished by sexually explicit and violent comments, with many discussions circling back to how Jewish people have done white people wrong and are the reason why the world is in a blue pill state. There were very few threads that attempted to aid users in furthering the movement outside of

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<sup>55</sup> As of November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The number of subscriptions grew by 79 users in five months.

<sup>56</sup>In reference to a picture of white people, with differing shades of skin, hair and eye colour. See Appendix A for image.

the internet. One such post called for members to distribute posters in their schools to report illegal aliens. As many of the websites mentioned, bringing public humiliation to dissenting users is almost game-like, with users piling on more aggressive insults and threats one after another. While the use of homophobic slurs is common on the online boards, the intensity with which users employ rape as a threat is unique to /v/altright. There seems to be a female presence on the board, but the assertion of male dominance threatens those who may have dissenting opinions.

<a href="#">heretotroll</a>	smokratez	he was here to troll and got banned for it.	2/2/2017 5:11:54 AM
<a href="#">hamsavage65</a>	smokratez	troll account	2/2/2017 5:09:06 AM
<a href="#">supercunt</a>	smokratez	repeatedly shitposting	1/23/2017 7:49:36 AM
<a href="#">theoldguy</a>	smokratez	repeatedly shitposting	1/23/2017 7:46:38 AM
<a href="#">jerry</a>	smokratez	jew lover	1/23/2017 7:44:43 AM
<a href="#">0fsgivin</a>	smokratez	No shitposting	1/23/2017 7:39:10 AM
<a href="#">Purpleroot</a>	smokratez	spreading lies about jews. Gave him a warning. Didn't listen.	1/22/2017 8:01:43 PM
<a href="#">Saufsoldat</a>	smokratez	Spreading lies about jews. Gave him a warning. Preferred to suck jew dick.	1/22/2017 1:42:36 PM
<a href="#">smokenofire</a>	smokratez	alt of a fat and gay srs user. also anti white	1/19/2017 3:21:02 PM
<a href="#">9-11</a>	smokratez	gay and anti white.	1/17/2017 2:17:32 AM

Figure 23: Part of the list of users banned from /v/altright (“Subverse Banned Users,” n.d.)

/v/identitarian is the more active white supremacist subverse, with nearly 2,300 more members than /v/altright. The name of the forum refers to the white nationalist movement originating in France, quickly spreading to Europe and North America. This subverse has a clear agenda, subscribing to the 14 words and the advancement of white people (those of European

descent only). The change in the welcome message, as seen in figure 24, gives the board an impression of legitimacy, but a quick scroll through the submissions demonstrates that the rules and regulations of the board are not enforced. While the rules may be clear, there seems to be a conscious disregard of them by users. The posts on the board vary from those that can be seen on TRP applauding individual actions and ideas, to threads about the need for white people to regain power. Although racism is present, there are few threads solely dedicated to it, with less jarring language than other white supremacy sites.

## IDENTITARIAN

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**SUBSCRIBE**

2846 subscribers  
~79 users here now

**Welcome to /v/Identitarian**

We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.

Bannable offenses: Calls for violence, leftist shilling, anti-white speech, porn/gore, degeneracy.

14 Words Discord: <https://discord.gg/tr6h9ae>

Normie-friendly Alt-Right FAQ: <http://rightrealist.com/>

No links to other subverses that aren't listed below

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**Subverses to Visit**

[V/TraditionalWives](#)

[V/FolkishAsatru](#)

---

[Education](#)

**SUBSCRIBE**

3269 subscribers  
~33 user(s) here now

**Welcome to /v/Identitarian**

We are here to promote a positive European Identity for all of European descent around the world and to advance our people.

Keep racial epithets and cursing to a minimum so that we promote more inspiring, heroic and attractive language and deeds. Professionalism attracts high quality people and promotes our own best traits and behaviors.

Attempt to present your ideas with "normal" language and imagery. Radical (gets to the root of the problem), but not extreme (alienates unnecessarily).

Bannable offenses: Calls for violence, leftist shilling, anti-white speech, porn/gore, degeneracy, chronic women blaming (MGTOW) and chronic black-pilling.

Normie-friendly Alt-Right FAQ: <http://rightrealist.com>

No links to other subverses that aren't listed below

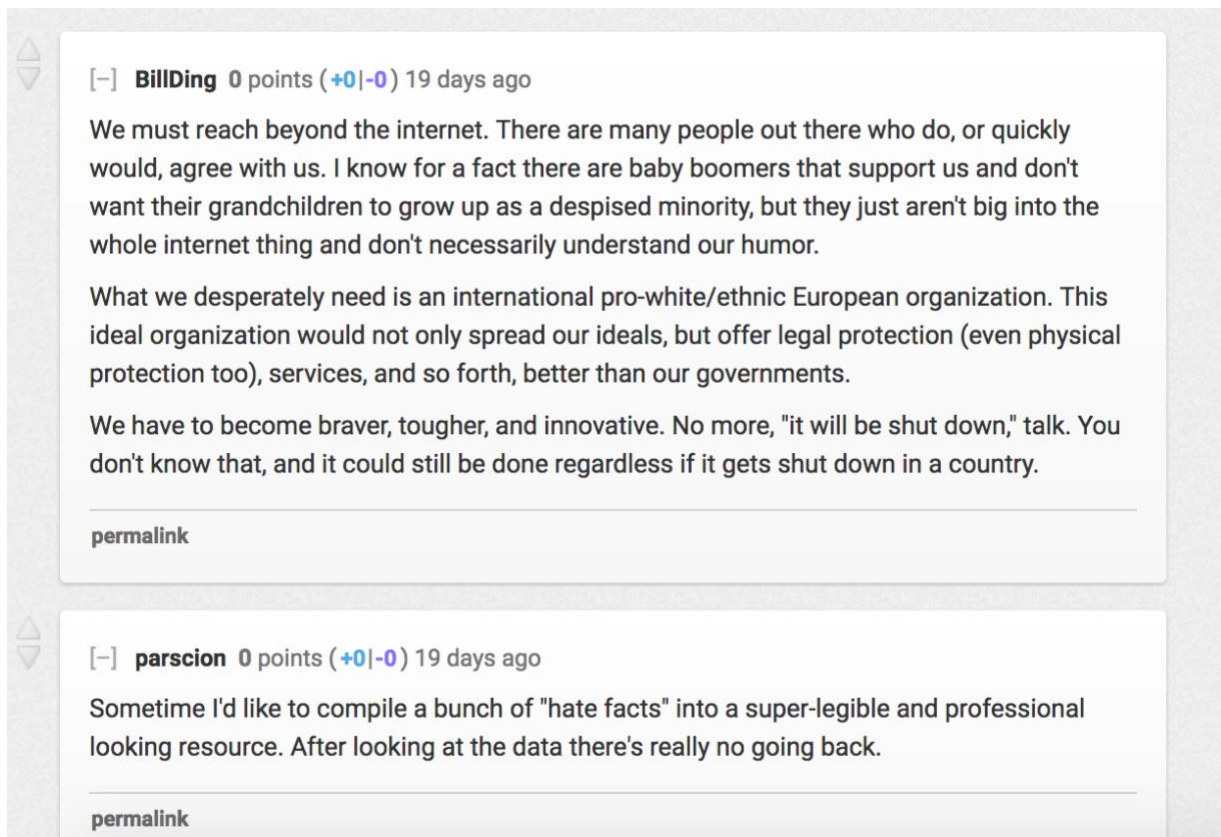
Figure 24: The welcome message of /v/identitarian before and after data collection (<https://voat.co/v/identitarian>).

There is a lack of cohesion in the hate rhetoric of /v/identitarian Users seem to be unable to come up with, or adhere to, core beliefs and values. This is exemplified with pro-Trump threads and users deeming him a “throwback decent man,” while others share their disdain for the President’s inability to keep promises. Other inconsistencies within the posts include fear about the future generation of the white race and white children while also wanting to regress and go back to “the good old days.” White supremacists believe that they are in danger of extinction because people of colour are gaining cultural prominence, putting their superior status in danger. Securing their existence is only possible by actively opposing the threats (e.g., progress made by POC). There is also a debate about who belongs on the site versus who does not. Some want nothing to do with the Alt Right, and others simply want a white only space. Within the white supremacy groups that use the platform, there is an ideological split on who they believe can participate in the forums and who cannot. This exclusivity can be seen in ideas of who can be a part of their desired nations and who must be eliminated for their population to thrive.

Discussions of the imminent takeover by Muslims are more prevalent than racial stereotyping of the groups in comparison to other forums. Although Muslims are vilified, Jewish people are still the white race’s principle enemy on these forums. /v/identitarian’s anti-Semitism stems from an extreme form of Holocaust denial, while believing vehemently in Adolf Hitler, his hatred and above all, the tactics he and the Nazis used. Aside from the frequent use of the (((echoes))), contributors have an intense infatuation with wanting to “fire up the ovens,” and “gas” those who are against them. The Holocaust deniers believe that the Holocaust is a fiction created by Jewish people to further their agenda to rule the world and eliminate white people, echoing the sentiments of Nazi Germany.

As mentioned above, white children and the future are a commonly discussed topic on the forum. This leads to discussions of parenting, often leading to stereotypical depictions of black parenting, such as absentee fathers. Regardless of their racist beliefs towards black people, members of the board believe that fathers are needed to raise a child the “right” way, implying that children, specifically sons, raised by single mothers are defective. On a post about a black man leaving the white mother of his children, one contributor spoke of how interracial relationships are unnatural, with another speaking of mixed children as “genetic waste.” Genetics and pseudoscience are used to bolster justifications for beliefs. Gay people are considered “genetic dead ends,” as they cannot populate the earth with more white children, with many believing that they need to outbreed not only other races, but liberals as well.





Fourth, jew-in-the-oven-style shock messaging may be effective for a meme war against easily triggered autistic commies, but normies are generally repulsed by that kind of thing and will do nothing to endear you to the populace.

Figure 25: Ideas of how to increase the Identitarian movement (/v/Identitarian, retrieved June 2017).

“We are in war” one contributor commented when speaking of how white people need to wake up and be redpilled. /v/identitarian gains some legitimacy as members try to aid each other in mobilizing the movement. Suggestions of how to explain their ideologies are discussed seriously, with an emphasis on not leading with hatred, but the accomplishments and positive aspects of white people, easing people into ideological discussions. Outreach to the real word-

elderly people, Trump supporters<sup>57</sup> and friends that you suspect are “on the edge” of becoming white nationalists are starting targets for the movement, each with their own separate instructions. A thread titled “As a non-white how can I help?” by the user YourPatron, asks for suggestions on how he can help the movement. YourPatron claims to be Indian-American (South Asian and white) but, surprisingly his non-white and mixed status is not attacked. Some users call attention to the shared Aryan blood that parts of Northern India<sup>58</sup> share with European descendants, ranking South Asians above black people. White members see YourPatron as an ally, both to spread the word of white oppression and to convince other Indian-Americans to return to their ethnic homeland. Contributors recognize that they need allies to be accepted into mainstream society. There is also an understanding that other white people may take the word of a person of colour over a fellow white man, using the POC to confirm their biases<sup>59</sup>. This post and comments such as those in Figure 30 exemplify how the movement’s followers determine the bar for entry, both for their allies and for their members. The post below shows that white supremacists want to control the narrative of whiteness, deciding who is white enough and who is be discarded.

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<sup>57</sup> One member suggested that Trump supporters would appeal more with a white genocide angle, compared to positivity.

<sup>58</sup> YourPatron, explains that he is Aryan, not Dravidian in the post.

<sup>59</sup>Can be seen as the “I have a POC friend so I’m not racist” argument.

[–] **GetWithThePogrom** 0 points (+0|-0) 1 month ago

Too inclusive. Keep it to European, like Nordic, Germanic, Welsh, English, etc and maybe some of the Slavs. Once you start including Persians and Turks you're too far down a slippery slope.

Though I will concede that I certainly wouldn't turn my nose up at an ethnostate that included them if it was that or nothing. It'd be better than the niggers we've got in

Figure 26: Discussions of what it means to be “white” frequent on /v/identitarian (/v/Identitarian, retrieved June 2017).

### 3.4 Finding Cohesion Among Disparate Ideologies

White supremacy groups encourage the sense of disenfranchisement that white people—typically white men—experience due to the perceived successes of people of colour and women. The groups’ fears and subsequent hate tactics stem from ideas that people of colour are taking over and that the status quo, or the superiority of the white race, is at risk. The marginalization that white supremacists feel is compounded by societal pressures to be aware of white privilege. Websites and forums linked to these groups gives rise to a network that offers solidarity while fueling their anger, all without requiring the members to share the same physical space.

The platforms affiliated with white supremacist were chosen purposefully as evidenced by the discussions started on them and the ways in which users interact with one another. While Reddit offers a more mainstream audience for white supremacist ideologies, it is the organizations’ takeover of Voat, 4chan, and 8chan that allows for the formation of networks of extreme bigotry and a strong group mentality. While the web of individuals is created because of their shared hatred for minorities and women, the anonymity that these sites provide to users gives the platforms an added attraction (Cho, Kim & Acquisti, 2012). Users can freely spout their intolerance to groups and even towards other users with no real consequences aside from

retaliation from others on the forum. These insults often make way for the devolution of the discussion that the post was originally about.

The content on these websites is often chaotic and riddled with contradictions. While Stormfront and the subreddits have some cohesion in their beliefs around whiteness and masculinity, the other forums have little cohesion. Reddit and Stormfront have heavy moderation and expect individuals to adhere to the rules of the websites and forums. Moderators can be seen stepping into situations on Reddit where users have gone against the regulations, banning them from the site. The infiltrated media are lawless, despite posting rules. The rules give the illusion of the presence of authoritative figures, but a glance at the discussion boards reveals the opposite. Each of the forums has discussions of white identity, what it is and who has it; yet, when compared to staunch white supremacist ideas, as found on Stormfront, these arguments appear fragmented and confused. However, like Stormfront the users construct their own identities as white, self-defining what white means and who they see as such. An example of this identity construction seen in the Geographic Location options on 4chan's pol. The choices are ideological in nature, instead of physical locations, indicating that the creators of the site hold ideology as more important than geography. Usually, white supremacists go against the beliefs of the societies in which they reside, making the beliefs of an individual a more fitting identifier than nationality. The online disparaging of "normies" who reside in the users' home countries indicates that the shared belief system they have found online supercedes any affinity and loyalty for their own country people. Members of such groups find more connection with their online community than people in their physical community.

Despite claiming superiority that they believe is inherent in whiteness, white extremists rebel against any notion that they receive any benefit from society. The construction of whiteness

has had a competitive history, with the idea being created to separate wealthy white slave owners from their slave (Frankenburg, 2001; Roediger, 1999). The notion of whiteness was created to reinforce this hierarchy, and specifically to give white people a position from which they could attack the growing cultural influence of people of colour (Roediger, 1999). Because of this, the contemporary idea of whiteness seen on the social media sites appears to be strict in enforcing exclusivity. This construction of whiteness is founded on a desire to create a unified white identity as a reaction to the increased cultural visibility to people of colour (stormfront.org; 8chan; 4chan).

White supremacists are fighting against the injustices that they perceive coming from the state and society at large. The websites provide a supportive and understanding environment where users can express the hardships to which they are subjected, with Stormfront and The Red Pill (TRP) being prime examples of communities that can be built online. In these examples, the platform is the central actor of their respective network of users. Every connection formed between users passes through the platform as a result of communication via text posts. Essentially, the platform is the intermediary that introduces users to one another to form these bonds of community. TRP is frequented by men who want their insecurities attributed to the faults of women and societal pressures on men to be heard. TRP users provide each other with a degree of sympathy while reminding one another to not be weak and to assert their dominance as males. Stormfront gives users multiple forums on which they can express themselves and ask others for help. The site has created a “family friendly” environment, with forums that are directed at children and women. Users feel “at home” within the posts, stating that they feel relieved to finally have found people like them.

While white supremacists adhere to sexist rhetoric, it is their anti-Semitism and racism that is most extensive on the social media. A topic of discussion between the users is who the organizations are willing to let live and those who need to be removed for the survival of their own race. As exemplified by the interaction between YourPatron and the users of /v/Identitarian, some users were content with the idea of South Asian Americans returning to India and other were willing to have them stay as long as they assimilated and did not race mix, while others called for the end of South Asians (/v/identitarian). This is an example of the types of biopolitical exclusionary tactics that white supremacists debate for the preservation of their race.

In the language and discussion about the Jewish community, as opposed to other threats, Jewish people are spoken of as liars, cheats and manipulators. White supremacists accuse Jewish people of distorting the reality of the Holocaust, achieving long standing sympathy and making the Aryan race the villains, thus hindering their status in history. Jewish people are depicted as being power hungry (Gerstenfeld, 2007). Anti-Semitism has a long-standing history as one of the roots of white supremacy in the West. The hatred stems from the Middle Ages, when Jewish people were given jobs that were in opposition to the beliefs of Christianity, such as providing monetary loans, which would provide them with economic advantages seen in the present day (Ruttenberg, 2017; Klug, 2003). Additionally, Christianity presented Jewish people as the antichrist, being genetically inferior and guilty, as their ancestors were responsible for the killing of Jesus Christ (Gerstenfeld, 2007). Thus, contemporary Jewish people find themselves being categorized as white, which has further riled the hatred that white supremacists have for them, as exemplified by the comments on platforms. White supremacists believe that Jewish people are their own enemy and are the cause of the problems that they have faced since the victories of minorities, notably African Americans in the civil rights battle.

The othering of racialized minorities also has historic ties with white supremacy movements. Users of the social platforms use language that has been associated with colonialism, slavery, and Orientalism to make clear boundaries between white people and those who are inferior; however, the words that are used are part of an online lexicon. With the use of words like “dindu,” “muzzies,” and “libtards,” platforms become an exclusive place for those who understand and use internet language. The platform acts as the central hub of the network with a language that only makes sense to those who are familiar with the terminology. This shared understanding makes it easier for the user actors to recognize one another as members of the same community and forge relationships that exclude those who do not share their values. This privilege emulates the entitlement that white supremacists assert because of their whiteness. Online communities give a supportive environment to people that feel that they cannot express white pride or speak about the oppression that they face because of their whiteness. If someone feels a sense of disenfranchisement or emasculation, the abundance of online users who can sympathize and provide insights to combat the inferiority complex facilitates their recruitment into white supremacist organizations.

White supremacist movements often use ideas of race wars to justify their actions. By consistently signaling to their followers that they are in danger and need to take arms against the “other,” white extremists engender a heightened anxiety amongst their followers that primes them for lashing out in violence both verbal and physical. In biopolitical terms, white supremacists are attempting to control their own community, while calling for the elimination of all “others.” It is the successful encouragement of this progression of vitriol from the virtual world to the real one that is the best indicator of the effectiveness of these online platforms.

### 3.5 Summary

White extremist organizations have utilized digital technologies since their inception, using media created by them, visiting popular sites built by others, and appropriating websites which enable them to disseminate their hate speech and ideologies on a global scale. Data was collected from eight sources, each with its own unique properties. White supremacists do not appear to have active recruiters, but rather depend on those who come across their media to be persuaded by the arguments of threats to the white race. While sites with firm regulations, such as Reddit and Stormfront, provide a friendly environment, it is the infiltrated media that allow the exploration of the boundaries of hatred by removing restrictions on behavior and speech.

The media used by the white extremists, aside from Reddit, do not appear to be deleting the forums, even in light of the Charlottesville protests. The presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump created a space for these groups in the public, emulating colonialism and the Jim Crow eras. White supremacists openly, albeit anonymously, declare their allegiance to the organizations and adhere to the bigotry of the groups. The intense hate rhetoric that white supremacists post and discuss online leaves the question of whether users truly believe in what they are writing or are simply there to goad on others. Additionally, the cohesion of the ideologies is fractured on sites where the users are predominately followers of the Alt Right or a younger generation of the longstanding organizations. Stormfront has a clear vision for its users and requires that those who join adhere to such values.

While the groups, including the newly established Alt Right, continue to spread the ideologies of the initial white supremacist organizations, there is little cohesion in how the groups plan on continuing their fight for the white race. When examined together, the organizations present as fractured pieces, with racism being the principal overarching quality.



The lack of coherence is a stark difference to that of Islamic extremist organizations, including the Islamic State, which is discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4. The Invisibility of the Islamic State**

“You are engaging in war tactics so that you can spread the true dawah and discuss matters of jihad, to uncover news about your mujahid brothers, to dismiss lies. You are entering into a sort of psychological warfare with them; they do not take it lightly, and we do not take it lightly. Therefore, we can trick them and it is totally permissible.”

---Message from Al-Khilifah Ardat (n.d.)

### **4.1 Overview**

The Islamic State inherited Al Qaeda’s understanding of the internet’s potential to disseminate their ideologies across geopolitical borders (Atwan, 2015). ISIS has established itself as a brand, marketing itself to Muslims in the Western world as well as non-Muslims (Atwan, 2015). ISIS’ attention-seeking tactics garnered international scrutiny, giving the organization a greater presence in mainstream media. The growing exposure of the extremists’ online activities has led to ongoing scrutiny by state institutions and non-state actors, including hackers and citizens. ISIS’ sophisticated use of online technologies and their communication strategies aim to persuade Muslims to join their fight to restore the caliphate. The organization’s media use has facilitated a certain kind of branding of their cause (Pelletier et al., 2016). ISIS requires Muslims to feel a sense of unity and purpose, albeit under a strict set of regulations. By using the contemporary political and social climates, ISIS has been able to attract and engage with those who feel wronged by the societies in which they reside (Pelletier et al., 2016).

After 2006, Al-Jazeera became wary of being portrayed as the mouthpiece of ISIS (Klausen, 2015). As a result, ISIS moved to closed internet forums in which they could build a militant group and vet recruits (Atwan, 2015; Klausen, 2015). Social media also allow power to be decentralized within ISIS, exemplified by the fact that there is not a single member that oversees the content that is posted for their organization. ISIS has created an interactive online

environment in which social media coordinators carry out a large portion of the labour (Atwan, 2015; Klausen, 2015; Stackelbeck, 2015). Social media has become one of ISIS' main communication tools, enabling the organization to use religion and retaliation to engage with those outside of the groups (Mahood & Rane, 2017).

This chapter dissects the online practices of the Islamic State engaging with users on Twitter, using the West's Islamophobic sentiments to its advantage. The relationships created on Twitter and the identities assumed by ISIS' sympathizers are discussed in this chapter. The organization's stance on the Western world is also examined. Primary and secondary sources were used to examine the organization's use of Twitter to spread their ideologies and communicate with those outside of their geographical borders. Public profiles cannot be verified as true ISIS sympathizers due to methods of identity hiding. Data that is shown in the chapter will be quoted or have the identifying information of the account redacted (see below), unless the tweets came from secondary sources, making them publicly available information. The redaction was done to protect myself and those that may have had their identities stolen or subsequently left the organization.

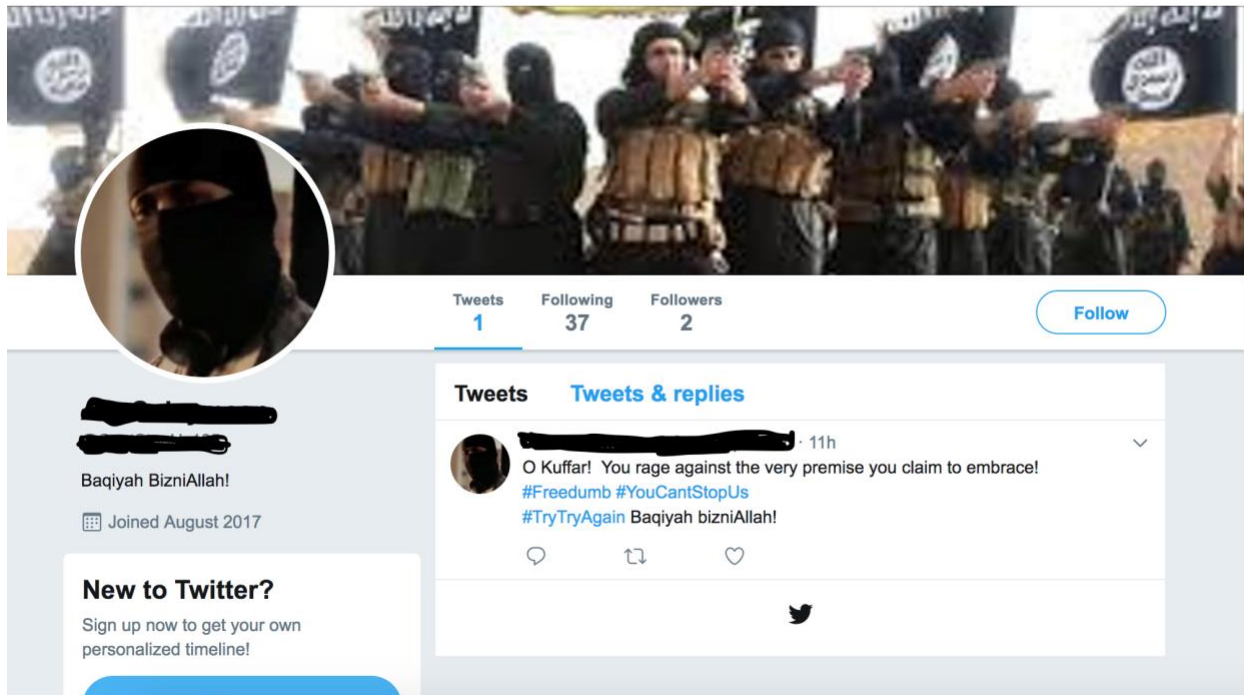


Figure 27: Twitter page of potential ISIS sympathizer. The account has been deleted since data collection (Twitter, retrieved August 2017).

## 4.2 Cyber Jihadism

ISIS uses social media to stay relevant to those they look to engage with in this digital age. The organization recruits Information Technology and marketing specialists to further its use of social media platforms (Atwan, 2015). ISIS uses the cyber world as its main means for communications and recruitment. Recruitment on the ground, specifically in the Middle East, is done by ISIS soldiers, whereas social media platforms are used to recruit those outside of the organization's main geographical borders (Atwan, 2015; Stakelbeck, 2015).

Social media provide the organization a way to appeal to the youth that it hopes will join the movement. Budding social media celebrities, brands, and the new-found career of "influencer" attract followers to further their careers by posting pictures of their purchases, their lifestyles, and activities they engage in with their friends (Marikar, 2014). The Islamic State has used similar tactics to further its agenda against the West. Through its presence on popular

platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, ISIS gives real time updates on its battles and information to those it is attempting to attract (Ciaccia, 2017). The platforms give the organization the ability to conceal its propaganda amongst pictures, videos, and short descriptions of normal activities and the greatness of the jihadi lifestyle.

This branding of the ISIS lifestyle as “jihadi cool” is meant to groom recruits by showing them the extravagant and lush life that jihadists live in Syria (Berger, 2015; Huey, 2015). Jihadi cool refers to the attempt to create a fashionable and trendy rhetoric around the life of ISIS fighters in a bid to entice young people (Huey, 2015). ISIS’ goal is to present the organization as less of a terrorist group and more of a kinship network with the promise of a prosperous familial life (Atwan, 2015). Scrolling through the posts by ISIS sympathizers, one can see a clear juxtaposition with the organization’s ideologies and the brand it presents to new recruits. One of the accounts provided real time updates about “life in Syria” to their “brothers” in the West. The account attempts to put a humorous twist to the war, tweeting anecdotes about soldiers riding their bikes into battle. Posts regarding the fulfillment that the fight against the West has brought the soldiers can be found in the midst of posts about mundane topics such as the weather, religious holidays, and everyday musings. Pictures of jihadi soldiers enjoying each other’s company, tweets about how connected sympathizers feel to Allah and one another are also used to depict the lives of soldiers.

Like white supremacists, ISIS recruiters use popular hashtags; yet the Islamic State does not differentiate between tags connected to their activities and those that are trending. White supremacists sometimes use hashtags that the political “left” would support, such as those associated with BLM and the 2016 Clinton presidential campaign. The Islamic State uses hashtags that are used to reveal the group on social media such as #AllEyesonISIS and tags that

are connected to the organization's terror attacks (e.g., #prayfornice); however, ISIS also uses seemingly random hashtags, such as #WC2014, for the World Cup of Soccer in 2014 (Griffin, 2016; Stakelbeck, 2015; Milmo, 2014). Any posts containing a hashtag<sup>60</sup> may include the messages of the terrorist organization. This indicates that ISIS partially relies on the curiosity of those that accidentally find their way to these accounts. The hashtag is an actor that attracts the attention of those that may not have explicitly looked for the organization online before. These users then join the network and then connected to other users within the Islamic State.

Hashtags are a mechanism for reaching individuals that may not be privy to the Islamic State's other means of communication, such as YouTube and Instagram. Through this expansion of their exposure to the public, ISIS establishes a presence in the Twitter feeds of individuals that may not have been looking to join their organization. In turn, ISIS can also use hashtags to find individuals that it believes it can entice and transform into mobilized subjects. A popular subset of hashtags are those used by political and social movements started by those who have been disenfranchised. For example, when the BLM protests were occurring in Missouri and African Americans were publicly speaking of the injustices they face through the justice system and the state, the Islamic State took the opportunity to aim their messages at those protesting (see Figure 32). The organization tweeted using the hashtags which were connected to the unrest. The hashtags #ISISinFerguson and #JihadinFerguson were used to attract African Americans into engaging with ISIS' desired revolution against American democracy (Stakelbeck, 2015). The use of random hashtags may be unsuccessful because of the hundreds of thousands of users posting about popular world events; however, ISIS sympathizers are known to use aggressive and violent imagery, as well as pictures of the Islamic State flag when using these tags (Atwan, 2015). The

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<sup>60</sup> Such as during the World Cup when ISIS would tweet using the names of the countries that were playing.

presence of this imagery in the feeds of Twitter users provokes a reaction from users. Depending on the nature of the reaction, this can lead into the Islamic State's network of recruitment, which is disguised as examples of a better, more exciting life.



Figure 28: An ISIS Sympathizer looks to recruit the African Americans in Ferguson after the cases of police brutality had sparked massive outrage and violent protests (Beauchamp, 2014).

As exemplified by the image above, the Islamic State, the organization aims to amplify the disenfranchised feelings of individuals regardless of religion and ethnicity. Many North America, specifically the United States, failed to accept that Michael Brown's death and the lack of charges against Darren Wilson were the result of racism. The polarizing consequences of this systemic racism and the racial tensions and othering that African Americans had silently endured were likely to erupt in violence (Lopez, 2016; Logan & Hennessey-Fiske, 2014). The Islamic State attempted to capitalize on the same feelings that many Muslims feel during a time of intense emotional upheaval, especially after an ISIS attack in the West. ISIS endeavored to use religion as a recruiting point for those in Ferguson. The pursuit of a caliphate requires their followers to adhere to their extreme form of Islam; thus, the organization is working to convert as many followers as they can. An increase in the adherents of ISIS' brand of ideology would

broaden its reach within American borders, resulting in a more effective network for recruitment and action.

While ISIS' main communication tool is social media, the instructions that recruiters receive can be found on websites such as Al-Khilifah Aridat (The Caliphate Has Returned)<sup>61</sup>. Al-Khilifah Aridat is a blog site that is supposedly run by ISIS sympathizers. The role of recruiters is to entice, cull, and attract those they deem fit for the organization, while not putting ISIS and its fighters at jeopardy. To accomplish this, anonymity is emphasized. The blog site's homepage explains how to remain anonymous online. Unlike white supremacists, accounts of those (supposedly) affiliated with the terrorist organization are shut down at a rapid rate by both social media administrations and civilians. Twitter accounts such as @CtrlSec,<sup>62</sup> an account that is affiliated with hackers, are dedicated to alerting Twitter of ISIS accounts on a minute to minute basis. Accounts of white supremacy sympathizers boast their support of the movement in the account owner's bio and in the content, they post and 'like', whereas ISIS accounts are more inconspicuous about their allegiance to the organization. The instructions for social media on Al-Khilifah Aridat<sup>63</sup> encourage the deletion of old personal accounts of the ISIS sympathizer and the creation of an alias on a secure<sup>64</sup> connection. This shows the organization is aware of the consequences that the visibility on social media has on the lives of their supporters. Encouraging the deletion of accounts allows them to minimize the chance of facing repercussions in their personal and professional lives. To counteract suspicions, the post provides a statement that people should post before they delete their accounts:

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<sup>61</sup> The website has been taken down as of February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> For a screenshot of the @CtrlSec Twitter page see Appendix B.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix B for screenshot of instructions.

<sup>64</sup> The post suggests the use of TOR browser or a VPN to create a new Twitter account ("Al-Khilifah Aridat," n.d.)



"I recant all opinions deemed dangerous or violent expressed on this page. This page was run for educational and analytic purposes only, to study the radical Muslim community for recreational purposes. I invite all those who follow this page to leave such corrupt ideology. I am not affiliated with any groups or organizations deemed terrorist or dangerous otherwise by any Western government or union of governments. I am a law abiding citizen in every regard."

Figure 29: The pre-written statment provided by Al-Khilifah Aridat ("Al-Khilifah Aridat," n.d.)

This pre-written statement is an attempt to disguise pro-ISIS accounts as those that oppose the organization and their beliefs. Stating that the account holder is against the perverse Islamic ideology and the violence used by the group, demonstrates that there is an understanding of the language required to emulate those who stand against the organization. This further complicates the process of monitoring these individuals. It is already difficult to determine the authenticity of pro-ISIS account; this additional level of obfuscation and explicitly dissenting from ISIS' rhetoric and tactics could be used to counter actions carried out by law enforcement. The statement is evidence that the user publicly declared their opposition to the extremist organization, thus giving the illusion that they are not involved with ISIS. Additionally, individuals are instructed to have no indication of their own personality on the new account. If they choose not to do so, they should ensure they post "nothing that can be proven in the court of law" and which leads back to them ("Al-Khilifah Aridat," n.d.). The importance of the anonymity of ISIS sympathizers online is exemplified by the following tweet.

```
user : ██████████
text : ██████████
      ██████████ there is
      thousands of proof . I have
      contacts of people inside
      isis telling me that so shut
      up
fullname : ██████████
id : 663703663437881345
timestamp : 2015-11-09T13:04:19
```

Figure 30: A tweet from a user who openly supports the Islamic State (twitter.com).

The account's bio referred to ISIS being the haqq, which means the truth and right in Arabic<sup>65</sup> ("And the Answer is ...al-Haqq!," 2013). The user was open about their support and affiliation with the Islamic State, resulting in the suspension of the account. The emphasis on the creation of aliases is needed as the use of the sympathizer's real name would preclude them from making multiple accounts if needed, to preserve their social media presence.

The Islamic State's online strategies emphasize the importance of being invisible to those it wishes to misdirect and visible to those it wishes to recruit. Although the images, videos and posts that sympathizers of ISIS use are graphic, their social media accounts have very subtle hints that they are part of the organization. Looking at everything from their profile picture to the hashtags sympathizers choose, one needs to parse through the filler posts on the accounts to verify that the individual is indeed a part of the terrorist organization. Individuals did not use Twitter solely to communicate their allegiance with the Islamic State. Twitter feeds included tweets about daily life, world events, and seemingly innocent interactions with other users.

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<sup>65</sup> In the Quran, Allah refers to himself as Al-Haqq, or "The Absolute Truth, The Reality" ("And the Answer is ...al-Haqq!," 2013).

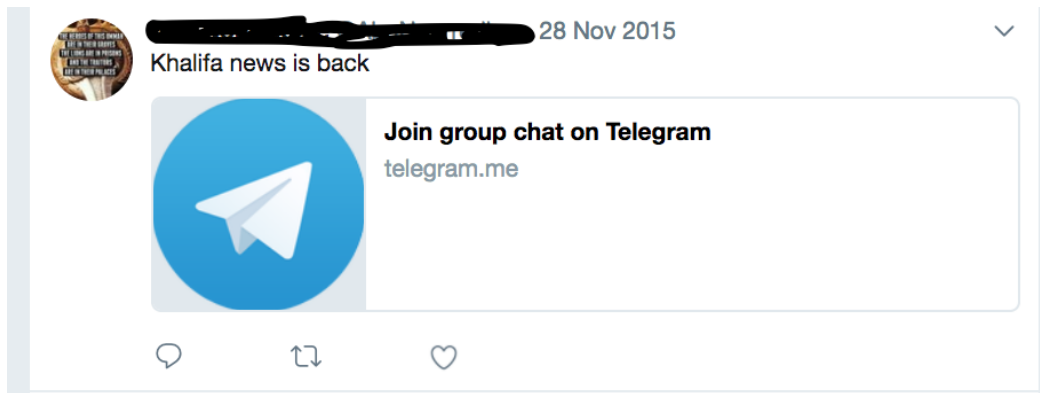


Figure 31: A feature of the app Telegram is secret chatrooms where one needs to be invited to join. The exclusivity of the conversation and the ability to encrypt messages, makes the app a perfect place for the Islamic State to spread their messages (Rottermanner et al., 2015).

Twitter is well-suited for the dissemination of a hate group's ideologies en masse and to bring followers together, regardless of geographic locations; however, the exposing of ISIS accounts on the platform has pushed the organization to find new ways of interacting with recruits using the same site. Terror attacks by the Islamic State in the West have created an urgency to take down the group both in the Middle East and their followers in the West. As a result, the Islamic State has moved to personal apps and the dark web as substitutes for social media. Former FBI Director James Comey attested to the covert ways in which ISIS finds and recruits new members, stating that once someone follows an ISIS account, the recruiter follows them back and then moves to direct messaging to assess the person's fit with the organization. From there they move onto forums that are encrypted, such as the App Telegram<sup>66</sup> (Figure 33)

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<sup>66</sup> Telegram is a messaging app that only allows the sender and receiver to access messages. The app also features secret chatrooms with encryption that is said to be "military grade." Another

(Reilly, 2015). The functions of the platform give the Islamic State networking abilities with individuals outside of their geographical realm, as well as those who may feel disenfranchised but did not necessarily think to join the extremist organization. The Islamic State manages its visibility to those it wishes to recruit and the rest of the world. While the organization's threats and attacks on the West are grandiose, its sympathizers are covert in their allegiance to ISIS on Twitter. Communication with potential new members is done by the sympathizer alluding to their allegiance with vague posts woven throughout their feeds. When a potential recruit is found, the sympathizer reveals themselves. While Twitter and its users<sup>67</sup> have exposed and deleted accounts linked to ISIS, Twitter does not ban the IP address belonging to the perpetrator, enabling the same individual to create new accounts over and over, which is a loophole in their security policy. This means that even though there might be a push from social media platforms to eliminate the presence of the Islamic State on their sites, there will need to be constant monitoring of certain IP addresses. ISIS can create complex recruitment systems using multiple media, untraceable to a single source or individual. While the Islamic State's messaging agenda for non-Muslim white individuals appeals to a sense of adventure and excitement, their marketing tactics for Muslims and people of colour (as seen with the Ferguson protests) stem from taking advantage of the disenfranchisement and prejudice that are faced by these people.

#### **4.3 The West Versus Islam and Islam Versus the West**

After the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks in 2001, Islamophobia has become relatively normalized, especially through the lens of the media, alienating the Muslim population (Altheide, 2006; Frost, 2008). With its intense focus on Muslim fundamentalists, the media has

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feature of Telegram is the ability of messages to be deleted after a set time ("Telegram FAQs," n.d.; Warrick, 2016). Telegram and similar apps are out of the scope of this research.

<sup>67</sup> The methods of exposing ISIS accounts by users is discussed in Chapter 5.

come to homogenize Muslims, intensifying the scrutiny experienced by the community. Acts of terrorism committed by people of colour remain in the public consciousness, influencing the perception of those communities, largely due to media reports that run longer compared to news cycles following acts done by white people (Williams, 2003). The alleged threat posed by Muslims and “Muslim looking people” that they might be Jihadists coming to commit terrorism is becoming increasingly asserted by the media (Frost, 2008). Race is a signifier of difference between the white majority and the Muslim minority in the West. Perpetuating the image of the brown-skinned terrorist reinforces this difference and asserts the power imbalance inherent in systemic racism.

Post 9/11 anti-terrorism policies created by governments have reinforced Said’s ideas of Orientalism, in which the perceived threat that the Muslim community poses creates more hostility towards them (Frost, 2008; Said, 1981). The politics of difference and hegemonic whiteness encourages a divide within societies and reinforces white privilege and a displacement of equality between ethnicities (Perry, 2003). According to the FBI, hate crimes against South Asians, Muslims and Arabic individuals increased by 1600% post 9/11, although it was not until 2013 that the FBI began tracking hate crimes against these groups (YWCA, 2013). Anti-Islam sentiments have been historically present in the West. Although deemed inferior, the East is also seen as having the potential to be a great destructive power. The label of “Islam” symbolizes everything the West disapproves of, even when these countries are partaking in the same, or less destructive activities (Said, 1981). Through the constant defamation of the Muslim population by the media, state actors and many others in Western societies, Islam has been reduced to the religion of terrorists, which is a gross misrepresentation of the motivation of Islamic extremist groups (Said, 1981). ISIS’ rhetoric of the Western world being a threat to Islam and the

caliphate, aggregates ideas, cultures and regions, much of which is also done by those who demonize Islam. This vilification of Islam and this homogenizing of the West reinforces ISIS' rhetoric. The organization condemns Western society and preaches the need to revert to Islamic fundamentalism<sup>68</sup>, taking no issue with using the West's fears and manipulating them for recruitment benefits.



Figure 32: Twitter account bio of known Pro ISIS account (Express News Service, 2014). Klausen reported it to be one of the most popular accounts linked to ISIS fighters (2015).

The injustices faced by Muslims in the Global North are a continual thread in ISIS' rhetoric. Because Islamophobia has become normalized, Muslims are marginalized by society and even by governmental policies. Social media platforms have freed Islamic extremist groups from having to depend on mainstream media to circulate their indoctrinations, and as of 2011 these jihadi groups have emerged on websites such as Facebook and Twitter (Klausen, 2015). By

<sup>68</sup> ISIS' manipulated form of the true Islam followings.

taking control of the publishing of their own information, ISIS has been able to control the narrative in the realm of mass media. The functions of Twitter, specifically hashtags and retweets, allow a novel type of information flow. Supporters and recruiters can share content from the organization's official accounts to a broad network of people (Klausen, 2015). Smartphones allow members to spread messages and images of their own, and create the potential for relationships with possible recruits to form (Farwell, 2014). By using these technologies, the extremists have been able to disseminate propaganda en masse to build credibility and legitimacy.

The Islamic State looks to engage with those who are being impacted by structural racism, which, in some instances, is generalized to people of colour and not just Muslims. However, because of ISIS' belief that establishing a caliphate is a religious duty, and the constant scrutiny of Muslims, taking on the identity of the enemy of the West can be used to their advantage. Those that feel oppressed by their home countries may find comfort online. Studies have shown that people of colour, including immigrants, use online forums to cultivate and connect with their own communities (Parker & Song, 2009). ISIS offers a supportive community of like-minded individuals, appealing to those that already feel a sense of victimization by the West. As mentioned, ISIS presents a fulfilling life under their regime. With the added benefit of seeking revenge against those that wronged them, a potential recruit can shed the identity of being helpless against the oppressive structures in Western society, to become a soldier fighting for a vendetta against those that wrong Muslims.

The Islamic State's recruitment is dependent North American and European societies continuing to provoke polarized attitudes toward the Middle East and those who are identified as the "other." The recent criticism of refugees, "soft" immigration procedures, and support for the

United States' Muslim Ban all feed the recruitment machinery of ISIS. By both explicitly and implicitly persecuting Muslims, Western societies have made the attracting recruits easier for ISIS. The organization offers a solution to those that may feel angered by the prejudices they face. Even those that may have accepted the systemic racism that is ingrained in Western society could find themselves intrigued by the kindness and acceptance that ISIS recruiters display. The normalizing of Islamophobia has allowed non-Muslims to disregard it as a racial issue and see it more like a criticism of a religion, which ignores the emotions and bigotry that Muslims face. If Muslims interpellate the identity of enemy of the West, ISIS can manipulate them and make the inheritance of the jihadi identity easier to adopt.

ISIS uses the negative political and societal climate towards Muslims as evidence that joining their fight against the West to restore the caliphate of Islam is for the greater good. ISIS preys on the disenfranchised in the West and uses their frustration to manipulate and radicalize. Through each indoctrinated individual, ISIS gains actors in its network increasing its reach to parts of the world that do not even touch borders with the territories it controls, eliminating the need for centralized command posts. This gives the organization the capacity to establish connection in enemy territories without having to physically travel there.



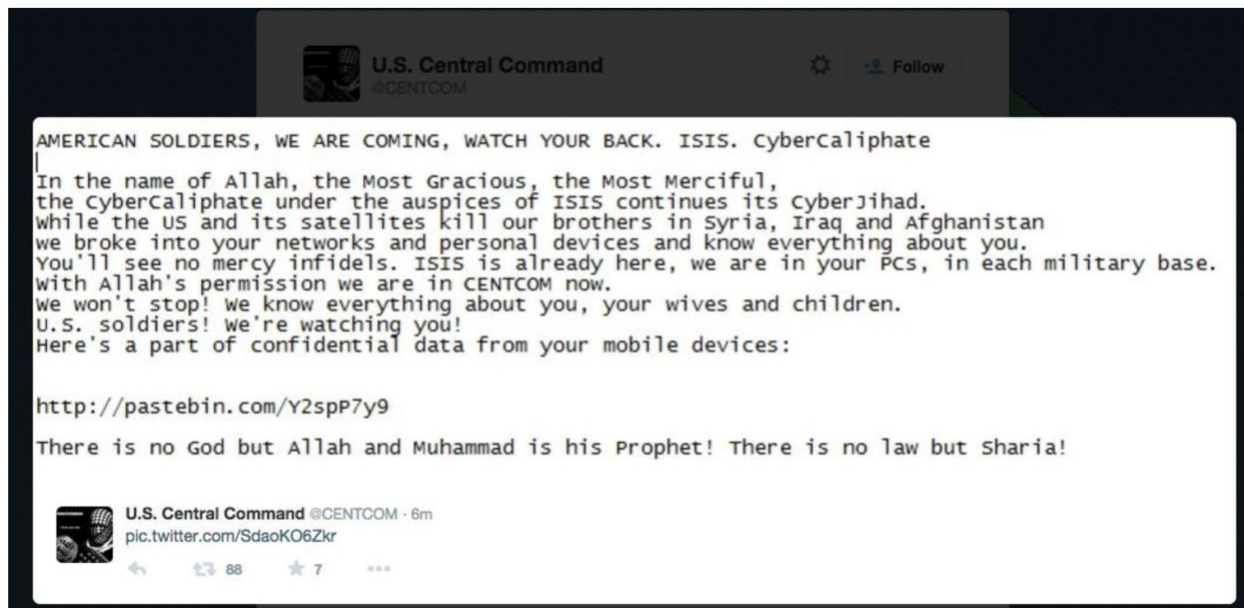


Figure 33: The Islamic State hacked into the United States' Central Command's Twitter account in 2015. This shows the technological and hacking skills that the organization has been able to harness (Lavender, 2015).

ISIS uses every channel of communication at its disposal to rally its followers with allusions to future attacks and claims of how it is going to be the ultimate victor against the West. The anonymity provided by many of the platforms hides their identities and locations, from both their online followers and law enforcement. The breadth of the networks that can be built using social media allows for the widespread dissemination of their beliefs. The duality of a physical and a cyber war ensures that, even though ISIS may be falling in the war of geographical territories, its online presence will persist (Lederman, 2016; Geer 2008) . Regardless of attempts by platforms to purge ISIS sympathizers, the immortality of material that lives online will allow ISIS' ideologies to be found by anyone who searches for them.

#### 4.4 Summary

The Twitter accounts of potential ISIS sympathizers provided a framework of communication tactics that the organization uses. Secondary sources were used to augment the

results, as journalists were able to collect the data (i.e., tweets, user names) when ISIS was more visible online. The decrease in their online presence is a result of an intense surge in the efforts to identify the Twitter accounts belonging to users who have explicitly pledged their allegiance to the Islamic state. Both citizens and the social media company have flagged these accounts for suspension which has forced the organization to use more covert tactics on the same platform. Sympathizers mask their affiliation with ISIS amid mundane tweets that can be found on almost any other Twitter account; however, when speaking of ISIS and their fight for the caliphate, sympathizers emphasize the glamorous and fulfilling life of a jihadi soldier. Recruiters evaluate individuals and decide who they believe can be indoctrinated, starting private conversations and then moving to platforms that are primarily used by the Islamic State.

The long-standing othering of Islam and Muslim individuals and the increased presence of Islamophobia in Western societies and their media since 9/11 serve as fuel for ISIS' recruitment. Muslims and people of colour are facing systemic racism in the West by way of anti-terrorism laws and biased immigration policies. Feelings of disenfranchisement and the desire for revenge on those that have wronged them create the conditions for ISIS to recruit such individuals with the promise of revenge and betterment.

The Islamic State is immersed in both a physical and cyber war with those Western states and institutions as well as others who oppose them or refuse to follow their version of Islam. By speaking in terms of wars and battles in their online rhetoric, ISIS is creating a sense of urgency among those it wishes to enlist. By using language such as "soldiers" and "brothers," the organization gives the illusion of importance and kinship in its fight to overthrow the "corrupt" West. The next chapter discusses the retaliation campaigns that have been started by hackers and advanced by citizens to halt the online presence of the Islamic State and its followers.

## Chapter 5. From the Lulz to Legitimacy: Counteractions Against Extremists by Hacktivist Groups

“We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us.”  
--Anonymous’ tagline (anonofficial.com)

### 5.1 Overview

In the 1980s, hacker groups have taken on vigilante roles to fight injustices online. With their new-found identity, hacker groups target those they believe are a hindrance to free speech and those who are not being dealt with by law enforcement and the state. Anonymous declared an online war against the KKK after the shooting of Michael Brown, using the hashtags #OpKKK and #hoodsoff (BBC Trending, 2015). This was done in reaction to KKK members threatening the lives of those protesting the shooting (Arvinth, 2015). Anonymous subsequently declared an online war against the Islamic State, “Operation ISIS,” by releasing a how-to guide for citizens to track down those associated with ISIS, create a list of their accounts and then notify the members of the hacker organization via an anonymous mail server (Gilbert, 2015). The group announced their vendetta against ISIS after the Charlie Hebdo shootings in France and initially used the hashtag of #OpCharlieHebdo, which evolved to the simpler #OpISIS (Cuthbertson, 2015; Gilbert, 2015).

This chapter examines how the platforms used by the hacker groups and their followers allow counteractions against white supremacists and the Islamic State to take place on their sites, and garner international attraction from new members and gain worldwide recognition. The creation of vigilantism, political mobilization, and new forms of surveillance will be discussed, along with the consequences faced by hackers and those they target. The concept of interpellation is used to analyze the internalization of the Anon<sup>69</sup> mindset by those looking to

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<sup>69</sup> Despite the anonymity of hacker groups, they have given themselves the title of Anon.

become part of the hacktivist operations and how the internalization of this identity aids in the advancement of online movements. The networks created by hacktivists are an agglomeration of multiple websites and people that participate in the exposure of extremist sympathizers. Actor Network Theory is used to explain how the heterogeneous parts of the collective connect and act as a whole to monitor and address white supremacists and the Islamic State.

## **5.2 Twitter as Judge, Jury, and Executioner**

The internet has facilitated the deterritorialization of political movements, which allows those who may not be in physical contact with those that hack to support the cause (Garett, 2006). Twitter has the ability to disseminate information quickly through its functions such as retweeting, sharing, and providing users with a list of trending topics. This functionality gives hacktivist movements the ideal platform to spread their operations, providing instructions to those who wish to partake in the movement and the names of their targets. “Anons” can share knowledge of their enemies and sympathizers; whether it be their place of work, Twitter page or group gatherings, Anons’ online activities have offline consequences. As will be discussed in the following sections, the practice of revealing the names and accounts of ISIS and white supremacy sympathizers has resulted in offline consequences to those who were outed. Consequences range from the loss of social media access to loss of careers and prison times.



Figure 34: Anonymous is famous for wearing Guy Fawkes masks (anonhq.com).

The online protests run parallel with those offline. The longevity of online movements can be contributed to the freedom from physical policing and threats. Coordinating them with offline protests means that the message is grounded in the minds of people as they see it in both realms. The threads of the hacker groups' supposed Twitter accounts give real time updates of progress, independent of mainstream media. Online privacy facilitates the exclusivity and inclusivity of the hacker movements. The use of digital technologies has increased the capacity of these organizations to propagate their movements internationally while they are occurring offline. For anons to pursue the enemy they must be able to find the instructions or understand the hackers' moves, with the use of popular social media sites accommodating anyone. Individuals can use their own online profiles<sup>70</sup>, as the organizations do not require them to hide

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<sup>70</sup> With the option of creating an entirely new account free of identifying information.

their identities. People can openly dissent with institutional or state (in)action while still maintaining their image as law abiding and compliant citizens offline.

The hackers' use of the hashtags allows those who may not be aware of the organizations to see and join their movements. Operations are denoted by their own tags that are used to give instructions, reveal enemy sympathizers, and publicize the activity within the movement. By utilizing hashtags and their ability to lead anyone who is interested down the path of tweets, messages, and videos, hackers disseminate their ideas rapidly. The movements' hashtags tend to appear on Twitter's homepage as trending topics, due to their widespread popularity. They become visible to everyone who uses the platform as opposed to those who already had an interest in the hackers' operations. When users click on trending topics and hashtags, they are taken to a page that displays every post that contains those phrases. When hashtags such as #daeshbags become widely used on Twitter, those whose interest is piqued can be led to the movement via others who are engaging with the campaigns, and with the actual hackers. People consume the rhetoric through connecting<sup>71</sup> with the hackers and others who have joined the movements. From the rhetoric, they come to relate to the anon identity. Hackers use the hashtags to call the public to arms as well as encourage and congratulate those who reveal and publicly shame the enemy.



Figure 35: The BLM hashtag has been used by those who oppose the movement (Twitter, retrieved March 2018).

<sup>71</sup> As the profiles of hackers are not verifiable, it may be that users are contacting fake accounts.

Hashtags and online movements in general can be exploited by those that are against them. Twitter does not bar those who wish to use the hashtags in opposition. Among tweets that pertain to a specific hashtag, there are individuals who are staunchly opposed to the prevailing view within that thread (as seen in Figure 37). Increased invisibility gets the attention of both supporters and detractors. For example, when the Ferguson protests were occurring, many Blue Lives Matter and All Lives Matter supporters took over the hashtags that were connected to the protests. The dissenters used the hashtags to maneuver their ideologies to the trending page, turning the hashtag from a way of resisting police brutality to a method of belittling the BLM movement. The tags are also used by non-English speakers, giving individuals around the world the ability to be a part of the anon movement and organization (see Figure 38 for an example). Hashtags can coordinate individuals globally who want to resist the current political climate.

```
user : 488t0rnado488
text : J'ai ajouté une vidéo
      à une playlist
      @YouTube - [FR]
      Anonymous Opération
      Ku Klux Klan #opkkk
      (2015)
      http://youtu.be/HGEky
      i23Q-k?a
fullname : TORnado ANONYMOUS
          FR
id      : 695742603820724225
timestamp : 2016-02-
           05T22:55:37
```

Figure 36: A French User can connect with the hacktivist group using #opKKK (488t0rnado488, 2016).

As mentioned above, the primary purpose of the hackers coordinating online is to disrupt various individuals and organizations. The act of public shaming and trolling, that groups such as Anonymous are infamous for can be seen in the vigilante movements against extremist groups. People are asked to publicly expose sympathizers of white supremacists and ISIS by posting their names, usernames, and other personal details. By having their information revealed, the adversaries of the hackers are demonized and become targets for punishment. This tactic has led to the closure of many Twitter accounts of Nazi sympathizers, potential ISIS members and others who participate in crimes through the social media platform. This strategy proved to be successful in the wake of the Charlottesville protests carried out by white supremacists. Movements against white extremists use the term “unhooding” when referring to the release of the names and personal information of white supremacists. When hackers began unhooding the white supremacists, they lost their jobs; were shamed on mainstream media; and, in the instance of Christopher Cantwell<sup>72</sup>, charged with acts of felony (Moyer, 2017). Anonymous and their splinter groups’ search for white supremacists, neo-Nazis, the Alt Right, and ISIS sympathizers has given the hackers worldwide infamy which they can use to spread their ideologies. Twitter’s global popularity, functions such as retweeting, hashtags, and link sharing increased the effectiveness of the hacker movements, specifically Operation KKK and Operation ISIS.

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<sup>72</sup> Cantwell participated in the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville and was featured in the Vice news short documentary of the protests. Cantwell posted a video of himself crying after hearing authorities had placed a warrant for his arrest, earning him the nickname “The Crying Nazi” (Reeve & Owen, 2017; Stevens, 2017)



```

user : NatAnonadrestia

text : Please report and block Nazi trash
      @/PepesAryanSon. Hate and targeted. #OpKKK
      #OpResistance #AnonFamily #Antifa
      @afangelar_pa

fullname : (((Anonatasha)))

id : 880000326987792384

timestamp : 2017-06-28T09:50:02

```

Figure 37: An example of an anon unhooding a white supremacist sympathizer (NatAnonadrestia, 2017). The anon outed a Twitter account that is linked to a supposed white supremacist sympathizer. By using the hashtag connected to the hacker movement against the white extremist groups, the anon is able to attract the attention of others pursuing the movement, the hacktivists, and Twitter's staff.

### 5.2.1 The Murder of Michael Brown and the #opKKK and #hoodsoff Movements.



Figure 38: The flier distributed by the Missouri KKK chapter threatening the protesters in Ferguson (Speri, 2014).

The shooting of Michael Brown<sup>73</sup> gave the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement international recognition, with Ferguson, Missouri becoming the epicentre of protest. The unrest in Ferguson sparked outrage amongst white supremacy groups. Frank Ancona, an imperial wizard of the KKK, stated that the protests were “the best recruiters since Obama” (Speri, 2014). As explained by many on white supremacy platforms, the presidential win by Barack Obama turned many to look at white extremism (stormfront.org). The Missouri chapter of the KKK threatened protestors with lethal force, citing Missouri law (Figure 40) that allows individuals to protect themselves if they truly fear for their lives (Speri, 2014).

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<sup>73</sup>Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, a Ferguson police officer on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014.



Figure 39: Anonymous hacked the KKK's Twitter account signalling the start of OpKKK. The chapter renewed its threat in 2017 (AnonyOpNews, 2014).

White supremacists and hacker groups exchanged threats during the Ferguson unrest, each declaring they would attack the other. The Klan threatened to hang the hackers “up next to the chimps. On display for the whole world to see” (Chumley, 2014; Speri, 2014). While Anonymous exposed the white supremacists and the police, supported the protestors and warned the hate group and officers that if they were violent they would face consequences stating, “we

are the law now” (Chumley, 2014). By announcing they are the new law, Anonymous is acting as though they are superseding the existing law. Their vigilantism consists of acts that fall outside of the bounds of the law, emulating the actions of white and Islamic extremists. From their perspective, any violence done by the police and counter protestors against the BLM is an infringement of their rights; thus, it can be counteracted by a force that operates to preserve those rights even if it means taking action against law enforcement. Although the protests were occurring in the United States, it was the Australian chapter of Anonymous that posted about Operation KKK, declaring an official online war against the Klan. Following the Klan’s threats, Anonymous hijacked the groups’ websites and Twitter accounts in a DDoS attack (@AnonyOpsNews, 2014). The hate group was not the only target of the hackers. In retaliation for the noncompliance of the St. Louis Police Department, their website and phone lines were taken down (Rogers, 2014; Perlroth, 2014). The Twitter account associated with Anonymous, @TheAnonMessage, threatened the police chief of Ferguson with the release of information regarding his daughter if the shooter’s name was not revealed (Perlroth, 2014; Rogers, 2014). The release of the supposed perpetrator’s name by the account spurred conversation within the group, with many attempting to distance themselves from @TheAnonMessage (Perlroth, 2014; Rogers, 2014). This resulted in the account being shut down by Twitter (Perlroth, 2014; Rogers, 2014). Like white and Islamic extremists, Anonymous has its own set of rules and guidelines for the behaviours of its members. Those who do not comply, by either jeopardizing the operation or engaging in acts that are deemed inappropriate, are pushed out of the organization. This is done by other hackers ignoring or blocking all communication with and flagging the account for suspension.

In October 2015, Anonymous announced that they would release a list of information on white supremacists and their sympathizers (Arvinth, 2015; Eggert, 2015). This list was published on the website Pastebin. The Anon Intel Group Wordpress released the same announcement on their site along with a YouTube video explaining that the names would be released in early November (Mare, 2015; Kim 2016). On November 1, multiple Pastebin pages were created containing phone numbers and emails of supposed KKK members (Mare, 2015; Kim 2016). Four days later, the Official OpKKK HoodsOff 2015 Data Release, an extensive list of known white supremacy accounts, including Google Plus and Facebook accounts, was made public on Pastebin. This was followed by Anonymous' list, which included affiliated websites and names and aliases of the Klan members (Kim 2016; Lee, 2015; Mare, 2015; Pastebin, 2015). The public nature of the instructions of the hacker groups acts as a hailing mechanism for those who may be sympathetic to their cause. By creating simple instructions, those who are enticed to help the hackers can partake in vigilante acts without advanced technological experience.

### **5.2.2 The Charlie Hebdo Massacre, #OpISIS and #OpICEISIS**

Although Anonymous had announced a movement against ISIS, the shooting at the Charlie Hebdo offices grew the movement exponentially. Anonymous stated that this was because the attacks were a strike against free speech, a central value of the group (Pastebin, 2015). After ISIS sympathizers had hacked the @TheAnonMessage Twitter page in 2014, the collective started Operation NO2ISIS with the goal of shutting down government websites that had been suspected of supporting the terrorist group (Kim, 2015). In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo murders, Anonymous released a statement condemning the attack on freedom of expression and declared war on all Islamic terrorist organizations, signalling the start of #OpCharlieHebdo (Paganini, 2015; Valinsky, 2015; Wei, 2015). In February 2015, the launch of

#OpISIS saw the hacking of social media accounts, websites and email accounts owned and used to recruit for the Islamic State (Kim, 2015). The instructions for OpISIS can be seen below (Figure 40).

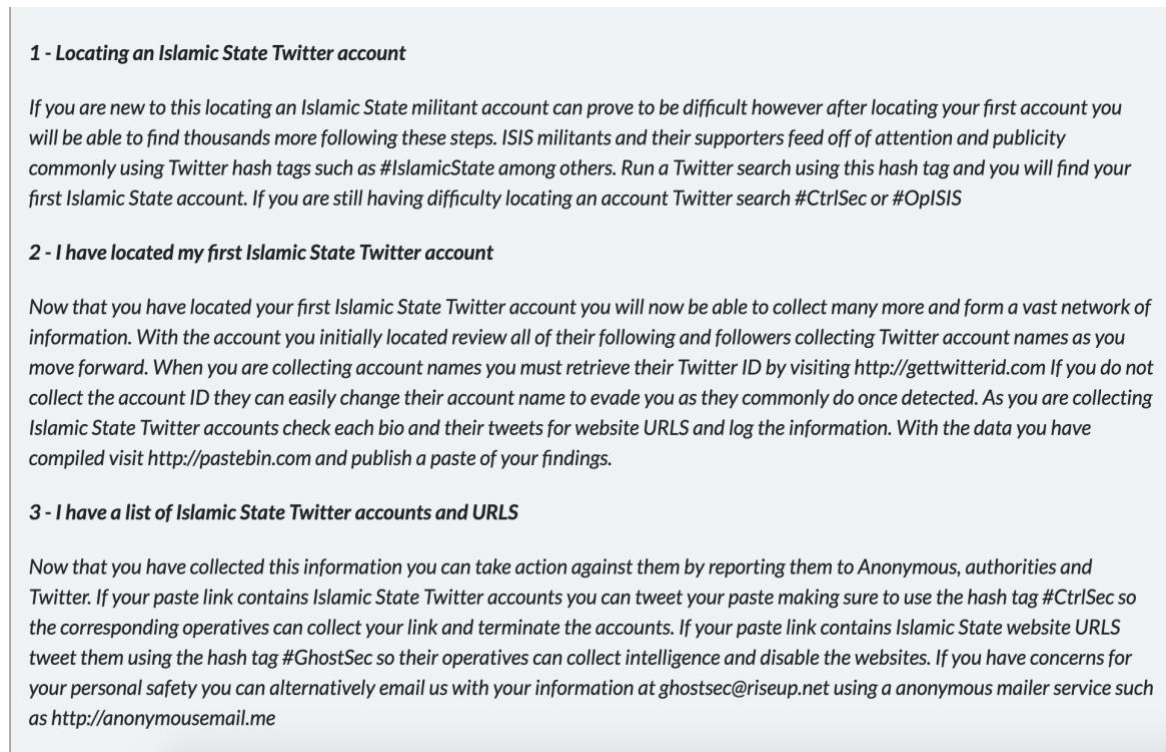


Figure 40: Anonymous released this instruction guide for those willing to participate in OpISIS on Pastebin (Gilbert, 2015).

The instructions created to locate ISIS sympathizers are relatively simple: a series of steps outlining the process of finding ISIS accounts and gathering information in a straightforward manner. As mentioned, the step-by-step guide is written in such a way that even those with minimal technological expertise can reveal ISIS sympathizers. The instructions were available to willing participants, leveraging the collective outrage against ISIS in the West to fuel their movement. The hackers had an idea of the web that the ISIS accounts create with one another and devised a plan to exploit that inter-connected nature to maximize effectiveness.

Within three days, Anonymous had taken down hundreds of websites, Twitter, Facebook, and email accounts and posted the information on Pastebin. The intensity of the online war garnered the attention of the mainstream public and media (Cuthbertson, 2015; Gilbert, 2015; Kim, 2015).

The 2015 Paris attacks increased the velocity of the movement, with Anonymous once again declaring a war against the Islamic State. This time, the Twitter account<sup>74</sup> @GroupAnon also tweeted about the movement, gaining traction on popular social media sites (Kim, 2015). Within days of announcing the revival of the war on ISIS, thousands of ISIS Twitter accounts had been reported and taken down. During the campaign to take down ISIS, the terrorist organization also attempted to retaliate with their own cyberattack, which was followed up by what Operation ISIS coined “Troll ISIS Day” (Kim, 2015; Mastroianni 2015). Participants were encouraged, via Ghostbin, to mock the group by using satirical images on ISIS accounts and to use the hashtags #Daesh and #Daeshbags (Kim, 2015; Mastroianni 2015). This day of belligerent action was reported to have taken hold in major cities globally, with thousands of individuals taking to Twitter and social media to ridicule the Islamic State (Mastroianni, 2015). While the hacker groups are creating movements to take down online accounts of ISIS, they continue to partake in their original behaviours.

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<sup>74</sup> Accounts linked to hacker groups are not verified. See Chapter Two for details.

```
user : LatestAnonNews

text : ISIS terrorists using secretive messaging
      app gets shut down. #OpISIS #Anonymous
      http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-
      news/anonymous-war-isis-encrypted-
      messaging-6860099#ICID=sharebar_twitter ...
      pic.twitter.com/4FyCtBp5l8

fullname : Anonymous

id   : 667428689240596483

timestamp : 2015-11-19T19:46:14
```

Figure 41: A tweet from a Twitter account connected to Anonymous in regard to OpISIS (LatestAnonNews, 2015).

### 5.3 We Are Legion

The hackers have utilized the emotions that the political climate has engendered in the wake of tragedies, including those mentioned above. The lack of responses from authorities and the state spawned the BLM movement, while the slowness of states to eliminate ISIS led to the subsequent actions taken by the hackers and their followers. Citizens' belief that action must be taken for justice leads them to internalize the Anon identity, especially when the wars are taken to social media platforms whose functions are familiar. The Anon identity is associated with acts carried out to obtain justice. The empowering effect appeals to those who desire more action from governments and police forces.



```
user : Rightwatchers
text : Official OpKKK HoodsOff 2015 Data Release -
      http://Pastebin.com
      http://ref.gl/jIMbtGzW
fullname : Far Right Watch
id      : 879955571318726656
timestamp : 2017-06-28T06:52:11
```

Figure 42: A user tweets about the 2015 unhooding of white supremacists two years after the initial release of the list (Rightwatchers, 2017). The tweet is an example of the longevity of movements due to the internet. Movements, whether those of the hacker or the extremist groups, will be difficult to erase when they have been put online.

The challenge with movements on the ground is that they require a constant presence to continue to make an impact, which can be difficult with police, public surveillance and other backlash (Tarrow, 1998). When movements are taken hold of by online communities they need less of a push to continue. This is exemplified by Figure 44, with the user posting about the 2015 outing of white supremacists two years later. The instructions for locating and flagging ISIS sympathizers and white supremacist accounts are constantly being recycled through the use of Twitter. The longevity of the hackers' pursuit for the Islamic State and white supremacists by hackers and their followers has changed what it means to go to war. Anons quite frequently declare a war against their enemies when they start a new operation. Additionally, denoting their movements as operations further bolsters the illusion of a battle against their chosen enemy (e.g. Figure 45). Although white supremacists and ISIS may show a slight interest in protecting themselves and pushing back against the hackers, the battles are greatly skewed. The fight against the hate groups and authorities can be either a cultural war or a war for public opinion. The hackers catch the attention of those who also feel the need to take up arms. The hackers give their battle plans through pointed videos and step by step guidelines, training their recruits from a

distance in a nod to what those who they are fighting do as well. With the everlasting online battles, the wars that Anons find themselves in have no armistice, no victors, and no losers. The stakes of these battles are unlike the traditional wars, with the claim being the gain of labour, or followers of their movements which is a consequence of the connections made through the social media.



Figure 43: Anonymous and other hacktivist groups use the term “war” when speaking of their actions (GroupAnon, 2015).

The search capacities of Twitter include advanced search functions, which allow users to craft detailed queries for all and any tweets containing certain phrases or hashtags. They also grant users the ability to gather all the tweets belonging to one account within a specified period. This has two benefits for hacker operations. First, individuals that want to look at the tweets put out by any of the accounts that are connected to hackers and the movements can do so in quickly and simply. The user can also input the designated hashtag and find what others who are engaged with the movements have said, who they have found, and potentially how they did so. The second benefit that the search options give users is that they can quickly find those that they

oppose. For instance, if one was searching for white supremacists, inputting terms that are associated with the hate group, such as “white pride” or #MAGA<sup>75</sup>, would enable them to find the tweets made containing those words. They could then start searching for those they believe need to be shut down. Individuals can tailor their searches to the specific movements, as well as their allies or their enemies. Twitter’s public nature makes the actions and rhetoric of hate groups and hackers alike more visible, thus more accessible to the public than ever before.

The shift from trolling to vigilante acts by hacker organizations has changed the nature of their roles. The embodiment of their new identity stems from the realization that events in the public conscience can be influenced by their involvement. Because of the new-found publicity that hacktivist groups have, people who did not participate in 4chan culture are able to watch and potentially partake in the collective movements. New participants can engage in two ways, as trolls or as active vigilantes, both of which disrupt normal politics in their own right. This disruption can take on the form of protest which derail public meetings between politicians and their constituents, flooding online question and answer sessions with trolling comments, etc. With the activities of hackers being broadcast by news and social media, and the popularity of the movements causing them to trend on such sites, outsiders can familiarize themselves and connect with the enemies of the hackers. The trending operations are what Althusser classified as hailing, the process by which people can identify those who think like them<sup>76</sup> (1971). By reading about and watching how others interact with the current movements, people recognize themselves and internalize the identity of an Anon. This new-found identity is exacerbated by the constant call to action and praise by Anonymous and their splinter groups, allowing the invisible

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<sup>75</sup>“Make America Great Again,” a phrase commonly used by Trump Supporters and the Alt Right.

<sup>76</sup>For more on this, see Theoretical Framework in Chapter 2.

network to form strong associations. In comparison to white supremacists, few Anons stray from the heart of the operation. With the “leaders<sup>77</sup>” of the movements being in direct contact with the old and new Anons, those that choose to engage follow their guidance, with few personal vendettas being exacted. The engagement within the group allows for personal relationships to be fostered and a group mentality to form, with the initial relationships being built upon usernames in chatrooms and now Twitter accounts and direct tweets.

```
user : LatestAnonNews
text : The Islamic State wants you to hate
      refugees. Don't buy into it. #OpISIS
      https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldvi
      ews/wp/2015/11/16/the-islamic-state-wants-
      you-to-hate-refugees/?tid=sm_tw ...
      pic.twitter.com/cfk7somRSO
fullname : Anonymous
id : 667039986013872128
timestamp : 2015-11-18T18:01:40
```

Figure 44: A tweet from an affiliated Anonymous account speaking to how the Islamic State is able to recruit individuals outside of the Middle East (LatestAnonNews, 2015).

While the hacktivists have created legitimate means to trace and shut down the accounts of extremist sympathizers, their methods are not failsafe. As previously mentioned, the use of hashtags poses its own issue in that anyone can post them; however, the operations and safety of the anons are also not free of potential risks. The operations against white supremacists and the Islamic State, although tense, are lopsided. The frequency and speed at which supposed Islamic State accounts, including those users who tweet in Arabic, are reported and deleted are astronomical compared to those that are white supremacists. @CtrlSec is an account that is dedicated “to limit and destroy online extremism.” CntrlSec is updated on a minute-by-minute

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<sup>77</sup> Those who run the Twitter accounts, and post on sites such as Pastebin.

basis with “targeted ISIS accounts” for Twitter to ban. The ferocity with which users went after ISIS accounts was persistent, with Twitter being quick to delete those accounts. After the KKK was taken down, there seems to have been a lull in aggressively attacking those who sympathize; the Islamic State is the newer threat that seems to have drawn all of the attention. This difference in energy exerted by hacktivists and their allies also appears to correlate with how well these movements were sustained. The take-downs of ISIS accounts went on for a lengthy, continuous time while the removal of white supremacist accounts happens in shorter bursts concentrated in the time around specific world events.

While anonymity is an attractive factor when becoming an anon, engaging in hacktivism does not guarantee users absolute safety. Hackers face the consequence of police action and federal charges, such as Jeremy Hammond<sup>78</sup> and Deric Lostutter<sup>79</sup> (Blake, 2017; Reitmann, 2012). As they do to their targets, anons who may have their mask removed face the consequence of job loss, threats, social ostracism, and being doxxed. If the anon is over zealous and falsely unveils individuals as wrongdoers, they could potentially face backlash from fellow anons and hackers. Another issue with the revealing of potential extremists is that there are no safe guards around those that may be targeted in retaliation for the exposure.

## **5.4 Summary**

Initially hacker communities were exclusive to those who used chatrooms and boards, but the use of social media such as Twitter has greatly broadened their reach. The organizations’ engagement as an extensive anon collective brought their wars to international levels, with

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<sup>78</sup> Hammond, known as sup-g, pled guilty to violating the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act in the 2012 Strategic Forecasting Email Leak. Hammond hacked the company’s servers and aided in the leaking of emails to Wikileaks (Pilkington, 2013; Poulson, 2013; Reitman, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Details can be found in Introduction.

thousands of accounts of white and Islamic targets being taken down. Twitter's ability to disseminate short spurts of information to users in real time allows users to see events unfold before them. Movements have been bolstered by creating networks between users, both on and off Twitter, and their enemies due to the function of the platforms such as retweets, likes, posting of pictures, and the ability to link outside information. When movements that the hackers start gain enough popularity to find themselves on the "trending" page of the site, those that may not necessarily follow the hackers accounts can also become part of the web of vigilantes.

The hackers have given people once outside of their exclusive forums the ability to be a part of the fight against some forms of extremism. By welcoming the public into their movements on social media, the surveillance mechanisms of the hacktivists have grown into a global network. This new type of civil awareness and action has yielded a form of activism that takes place in the virtual world but has real world consequences. The public nature of social media platforms has led to a previously unprecedented level of exposure for white supremacists, ISIS and hackers.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

“If security were all that mattered, computers would never be turned on, let alone hooked into a network with literally millions of potential intruders.”

---Dan Farmer, computer researcher and programmer (1993)

### **6.1 Summary**

My research sought to understand how the digital media used by extremist groups have aided in their ability to recruit and radicalize those outside of their immediate proximity, as well as the counteractions taken by hackers to diminish the prevalence of the extremists online, all while exposing their online tactics. My thesis research and writing was accompanied by growing unrest in the world, particularly in conversations about race. The start of my MA occurred at the same time as Donald Trump’s successful presidential campaign and the aftermath of the Orlando nightclub attack. The Manchester Arena bombing, London Bridge attack, the Quebec mosque shooting, and the public resurgence of white supremacy and the Alt Right occurred during the conceptualization of my project and start of data collection. The end of my data collection for this research ran parallel to the protests in Charlottesville and the attacks in Barcelona. The Muslim travel bans by the Trump administration has been a consistent news story for a year and a half of this research process. The conclusion of my thesis has been marked by the aftermath of the shooting in Parkland Florida perpetrated by Nikolas Cruz. Cruz was active on white supremacist forums, actively advocating hate ideologies online (McLaughlin & Park, 2018). These events, as well as the BLM and Women’s marches, contributed to my understanding of the timeliness and relevance of my research, while making it difficult to manage in terms of the scope and the intensity of the material. This chapter outlines key research findings, limitations and future research directions.

## 6.2 Key Findings

The unique properties of the media chosen by the white and Islamic extremist groups, and the hacktivist organizations allow the specific dissemination of their ideologies in specific ways, while protecting the groups from major consequences. The use of internet language makes the movements of these groups accessible to those who may not yet be completely engrossed in their ideologies. Because their lexicons exist independent of the platforms used, it is easy for individuals to follow the groups away from the initial site of contact. Websites such as Reddit and Stormfront allow connections to be made in a communal form, resulting in networks in which the relationships are strengthened through supportive messages between users and advice on how to better oneself and the movements. The sites that have been infiltrated by white supremacists allow absolute anonymity and have loose rules regarding the speech and rhetoric that users can express. The Islamic State utilizes popular social media sites to give updates about their global battles, as well as the benefits received by their soldiers. Looking to lure those impacted by structural racism and Islamophobia, ISIS portrays itself as an alternative that offers the opportunity to exact revenge on those who have wronged them. The platforms make possible rapid and widespread dissemination of the beliefs of the hate groups, as well as instructions on how to gain traction for their movements. Furthermore, becoming a part of the networks created by these platforms allows new actors to modify their behaviours to emulate those they are interacting with. The users on the sites shape their identities based on the content they read as well as the relationships they form.

Although attempting to counter the moves of extremist groups, Hacktivist groups share similar tactics. The groups share rigidity in their expectations of those who act in accordance with their values and in their movements, while using fear to gain followers. The use of internet



and “meme” language offers an exclusivity to the movements, while also offering some understanding of the disenfranchisement and helplessness felt by those viewing the discussion. By utilizing the current political climate, all three groups gain support from a global pool of potential members.

Hackers have utilized online platforms as a novel mechanism of surveillance of those they believe are doing wrong. The act of exposing white supremacy and ISIS sympathizers can be done rapidly and en masse by allowing users who may not partake in hacking to be a part of their operations. The hackers evoke a sense of vigilantism in their followers, claiming that those who follow are enacting the justice that the state and other authorities should be carrying out, yet are failing to do so.

Actor Network Theory (ANT), as well as the theories of race, power and identity formation, were used to understand the relationships between the platforms and the extremists and hackers. Additionally, the thesis explores the effect of these relationships on those who engage with the groups, as well as the group members themselves, were explored. The theories were used to analyze the conversations and interactions that took place on the forums to help me classify the types of actors present within the system. Using these frameworks, I was also able understand how the sites enabled users to further their causes, regardless of legitimacy, validity and hate rhetoric. ANT posits that two entities come together to create a third novel entity (Latour, 2005). In the case of this research, the code for the platforms and the users of these sites form a network that is constantly changing as result of the effect each actor has on the other. The entity newly created by these networks is a channel for mass communication, often with no bounds on what can be said. ANT showed that while the platforms might have initially been created as entities without any inherent political leanings (except for Stormfront), the use by

those who engage in extremist activities and hacking create new identities for the forums, as sites that facilitate online aggression.

Theories of interpellation and identity formation were used to understand how these groups formed their collective identities. Additionally, they helped determine how the extremists' and hackers' perception of those who are not part of their groups are filtered through those identities. Theories of race and power aided my comprehension of the logic used to construct the arguments and justifications of white supremacists and the Islamic State.

### **6.3 Changing Ideas of Warfare**

The use of social media platforms by extremist groups and hacktivist organizations has caused a compression of time and space, with neither being a considerable obstacle in the way of terrorism or counterterrorism. The expansion of the battlefield to encompass cyberspace has forced changes in the tactics of war (Wagenseil, 2018; Greathouse, 2013; Geers, 2011). Because the internet can be accessed across the world, advancements in the field do not fail to make it out of the West. The ability of terrorist organizations to spread their ideologies to anyone willing to listen also puts them in the spotlight of mainstream media.

The constant negative exposure cements the construction of what a terrorist looks like in the public consciousness of the Global North, which yields disadvantages for the Global South as biases begin to develop towards people of colour and especially those with brown skin (Nagra & Maurutto, 2016). This stereotyping facilitates the continuation of Othering practices in the Global North and allows for extraordinary racialized security measures to be accepted by the public. Regardless of the Other's ability to be on an equal battleground in the cyber realm, the West consistently finds ways to revert back to colonial discourses that pit their inhabitants against the perceived outsiders.

Security and warfare technologies such as drones have given Western institutions the ability to compress time and space and to receive constantly updated information about their enemies (Warf & Fekete, 2016). The enemy can now be traced and surveilled by an operator that is in the safety of their home country. This anonymity also acts as a form of dehumanization, making it difficult to distinguish between soldier and civilian (Pugliese, 2016).

Terrorist organizations in the Middle East have been able to counter the West's increase in technology use with their own. The organizations fight back by harnessing the power of the cyber world and are able to perform counter-surveillance on those that look to defeat them. Although the Global South may not have access to the sheer amount of technologies that the West does, their ability to become experts in the tools that they do have becomes a way of moving past the colonialist oppressions that have continued to reverberate and empowers them to strike back at the systems that have harmed them.

#### **6.4 Future Research and Limitations**

As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, many of the limitations of my research related to the timeline of a MA thesis. These constraints can be used as the framework for future research. During the conceptualization of my research, this limitation was brought to my attention through many of the difficulties of my project, both methodologically and emotionally. Research methods also need to progress with the continuous evolution of social media and the changing paradigms of interactions between people on a global scale. Non-traditional research methods, such as the ones I used, need to be welcomed and taught in academic settings. Traditional methods, such as interviewing, are restricted by ethics, availability and safety concerns. The techniques used in this thesis helped circumvent some of those risks, while also providing additional avenues for exploring subjects. The strengths and nuances of these methods

needs to be supported better in institutions because by standardizing and teaching these techniques, the research community as a whole will benefit by having a greater understanding of the different angles research can be approached from.

The extreme forms of hate rhetoric and trolling by both the extremist groups and hackers casts doubt on whether all of those who are taking part in the movements in this way are truly invested. To get a better understanding of the difference between those that look to disrupt versus those who are true believers of the movements, the consistency of language use and rhetoric could be studied. This could be done by observing a smaller group of users and their activities for a prolonged period of time. This can facilitate the identification of language patterns or inconsistent behavior.

By analyzing how extremist groups and vigilante hacktivists use this new media, intelligence and surveillance studies could be done on a more longitudinal basis to get a more thorough understanding of the extent of their influence. An examination of the methods of hacktivists could aid in developing better social tools to counteract or disrupt the organization of extremist groups. Furthermore, having a better grasp of the reach of extremist groups could lead to more comprehensive counter-measures against radicalization.

## **6.5 Reflection**

During the conceptualization of my thesis project, my skin colour and positionality were a topic of frequent discussion. My skin colour did inhibit my ability to access certain applications, such as Discord, as there is a requirement to verify whiteness on radical servers by providing a picture of your arm. My research questions were designed to limit any biases that my point of view might create. In addition, I allowed myself to deeply explore my data and the implications of what was found to understand all three groups' perspectives. On the one hand, I

was unable to separate myself from the hatred and actions of the two extremist groups as they continued to be visible outside of my research. On the other hand, I was able to see biases in the media and subsequently my research due to my identity as a first generation Canadian and one of the few people of colour in a relatively white program.

Racism, both systemic and overt, is inescapable, particularly in this political climate where there is conflict in the Middle East, as well as domestically. My research forced me to engage with extreme forms of racism, while the anonymity that the platforms provide their users created paranoia that those who participate on the sites were in my vicinity. While people of colour are thriving in research, academic institutions are still predominately white, creating a space that is not necessarily able to support or understand the consequences that we face while doing our work (David & Linder, 2016; Garza, 2000). There needs to be understanding that, although we can separate ourselves from the research, the impact of being immersed in that kind of rhetoric cannot be understated and steps should be taken to ensure that researchers are given the support they need to continue their work effectively.

## **6.6 Contributions to the Field**

This research provided insights into the ability of individuals to use social media to both promote and resist the spread of extremist doctrines. My research was exploratory in nature, with few studies examining the use of all the media used by the extremist groups and hackers, and virtually none analyzing all three groups together. The decision to research all three groups together allowed for the examination of their interactions with each other. While studies have focused on the use of Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit, very few look into the infiltrated media: the two Politically Correct forums and the Voat forums (Nagel, 2017). Many aspects of Stormfront, including the way in which women are represented, have also been a focus of terrorism and

extremism studies (Wong, Frank & Allsup, 2015; Caren, Jowers & Gaby, 2012; Weinberg, 2011; Back, 2010; Bowman-Grieve, 2009). With the Islamic State being a focus of many intelligence agencies, a multitude of studies have been done on their online presence (Berger, 2015; Berger and Morgan, 2015; Blaker, 2015; Chatfield, Reddick & Brajawidagda, 2015; Franz, 2015 Farwell, 2014). Hacker movements, especially those started by Anonymous, have been studied for their duality as both trolls and vigilantes (Coleman, 2015; Klein, 2015; Bodo, 2014; Hampson, 2012). Studies looking at the use of social media as tools for visibility are typically in the field of market research (Botha, Farshid, & Pitt, 2014; Leonardi, 2014; Reyneke, Pitt and Berthon, 2011; Gallagher and Ransbotham, 2010).

I chose to analyze white supremacists, Islamic extremists and hackers as I wanted to show how the online platforms were used for multiple forms of extremism, as well as counteracting them. Because I was looking to understand the changing ideas of war, it was important to to understand how media was being used and produced from multiple angles. While the groups use online platforms to increase their visibility, their tactics for engagement are different. All three groups look to interact with individuals globally, but the desired outcomes diverge based on their ideology. The Islamic State aims to have those who they wish to join their movement leave their home countries and relocate to Syria. There is also a use for those who elect to remain in their countries of origin to carry out actions in the name of ISIS, such as the Orlando Nightclub shooter. White supremacists and hacker movements allow their followers to interact with each other and take action from their own homes. While there are physical protests, such as the marches in Charlottesville, the bulk of the activities are done online. The aim of this research was to understand that digital media is not ideological or geopolitically specific, but a set of tools that can be manipulated to achieve a goal regardless of intentions.

My research looked at social media, engagement and communication from a perspective of their role in the creation of political identities. Infiltrated media can provide a picture of the chaos that persists within white supremacist groups, as well as how exceptional forms of hate garner attention and entice individuals to participate in the extremist movements. My thesis has provided evidence that individuals being targeted for potential recruitment and radicalization turn to social media to associate with like-minded individuals who have ideas that are extreme compared to those in mainstream society, offering them an environment in which they can express their radical ideas.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: White Supremacists

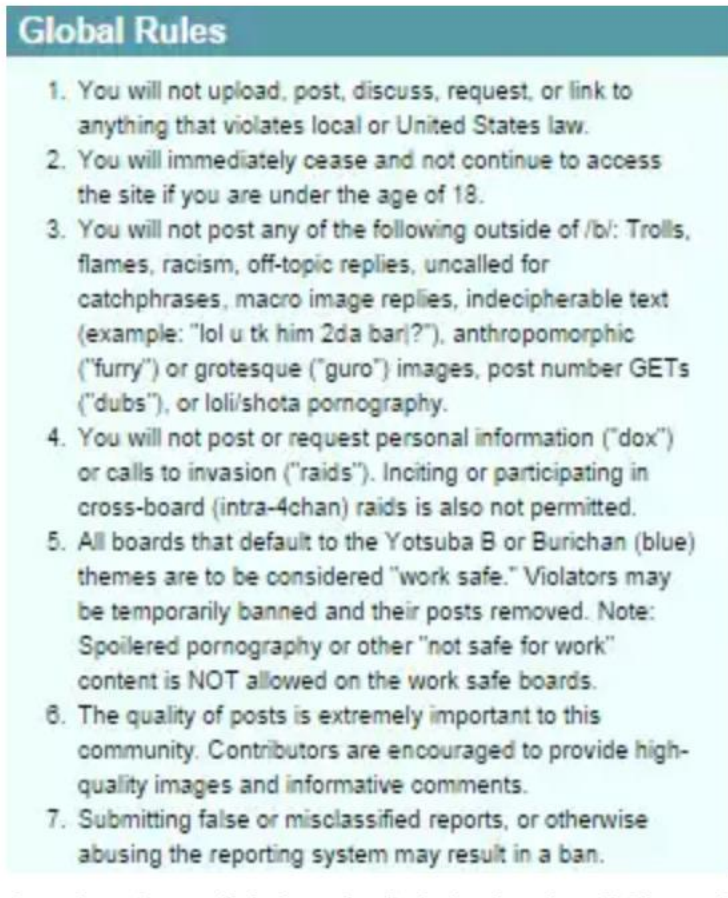


Figure 45: The Global Rules of 4chan ("Rules," n.d.).

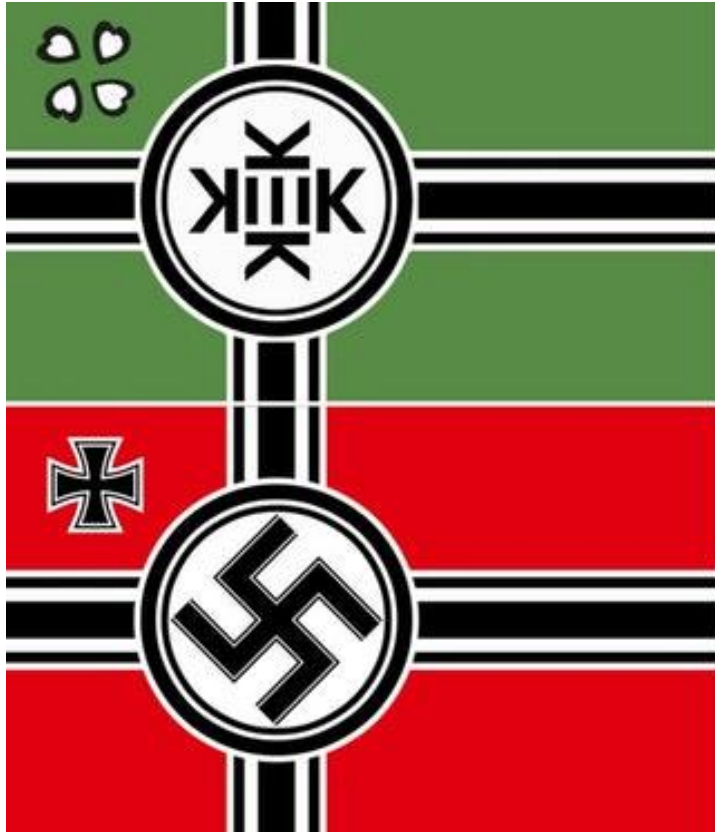


Figure 46: The above image is the Kekistan flag. As you can see, the flag is akin to a German Nazi flag (/r/AskTheDonald, <https://imgur.com/a/mkzmw#MSYiEAa>).

*"The inner parenthesis represent the Jews' subversion of the home [and] destruction of the family through mass-media degeneracy. The next [parenthesis] represents the destruction of the nation through mass immigration, and the outer [parenthesis] represents international Jewry and world Zionism."*

Figure 47: The Right Stuff's explanation of the triple parenthesis (McKay, 2016).

>>134874395  
#RageDidNothingWrong

Anonymous (ID: W4c8a/8m) 07/25/17(Tue)16:42:47 No.134891022  
File: [chimpoutRestaurant.gif](#) (852 KB, 300x225)



>>134884729

>Whites came, took their land and profited off the riches of the land. Whites created their capital off the natives' resources  
What in the world are you talking about, i didn't know it was evening and it was time for nigger fairytales.. Whites didn't come and stole all the riches, everything europe and western civilization is was built by white people you dumb cunt. You act as if non whites were running around building everything nope.. white people busted their ass to build and invent and do all this stuff so that what you see today happened.

Niggers? a) weren't supposed to be there in the first place and picked a little cotton and complained ever since.

Ressources in africa? there's like 80-90% of it left or something like that.. it's ridiculous, niggers through all the time of africa didn't even care it was there, they walked right over it, shoreline/easy access to the sea, didn't build a boat.. forests and trees, didn't saw a foot of lumber, gold, diamonds, all kinds of ore and minerals, niggers didn't even know they were there eventhough they had all the time in the world to figure it out. Metallurgy.. didn't even happen, the wheel? nope..

Then someone else comes and mines some ore and niggers act as if everybody stole everything from them.. niggers you weren't even fucking using it you didn't even know it was there, same with the indians in north america and the aboriginals in australia.

And the truth is the colonialists have left and niggers don't have a fucking clue to do with the infrastructure that was built by europeans there.. Because it's way too advanced for them.. Niggers didn't even know 90% of the stuff in their soil existed or that wood could be used for all kinds of things till that happened.. Before colonialism their greatest achievement building wise was mud huts..

Nope.. what white people built rightfully belongs to them, we even built stuff for the niggers and others and give them all this technology etc.

Figure 48: An example of the historical inaccuracies that members of 4chan use to bolster their arguments (/pol/, retrieved July, 2017)



Figure 49: The “diversity” of white people (/v/altright, retrieved June 2017).

03-27-2016, 11:53 AM

**Coldstar**  
"Friend of Stormfront"  
Sustaining Member



Join Date: Oct 2002  
Location: In the Socialist  
Republic of Canuckistan  
wherein the betrayal of our  
white race is in full swing.  
Posts: 35,279  


Figure 50: The user information shown when they post on Stormfront (stormfront.org).

## Appendix B: The Islamic State



Figure 51: The Twitter account of CtrlSec continuously updates with potential ISIS sympathizer accounts. As of December 2017, the account's efforts had led to 200,000 accounts linked to ISIS being suspended (@CtrlSec).



## Social Media

One might be asking themselves if they can continue using their old social media on these. The answer is yes, but I do not recommend it whatsoever. If one feels they post things in which they would need this security, which is most Muslims upon haqq who are active online, then they should make a disclaimer saying something similar to,

"I recant all opinions deemed dangerous or violent expressed on this page. This page was run for educational and analytic purposes only, to study the radical Muslim community for recreational purposes. I invite all those who follow this page to leave such corrupt ideology. I am not affiliated with any groups or organizations deemed terrorist or dangerous otherwise by any Western government or union of governments. I am a law abiding citizen in every regard."

And then proceed to delete all other tweets/posts on the page and after leaving this up for a few minutes, simply delete the page. Make no indication that you have done this based on instructions. You are in a war with these people, we have discussed this earlier. Now, once you are on either TOR with a VPN, TOR, and/or TAILS OS, make a new bitmessage email. Make an alias. Sign-up for Twitter on TOR. Do not post pictures or any indication of who you are explicitly. If you feel the need to alter your writing style a bit, if you were a popular page, do so. You can make subtle indications that this is so and so, however, nothing that can be proven in a court of law. Allah'u must'a'n, may we never see inside one of those rooms for such a purpose.

Figure 52: Instructions for the use of social media provided by the creators of Al-Khilafah Haridat. The usage of previous accounts held by ISIS sympathizers is frowned upon, but not prohibited. The use of accounts under fake names, with little personal information is encouraged ("Al-Khilifah Aridat," n.d.).