Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation and Philosophy of Language (Draft, 1 February 2016: Do not cite without permission)

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> You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." By 1968, you can't say "nigger" — that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now [that] you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me — because obviously sitting around saying, "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger, nigger."
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> Lee Atwater, quoted in Lamis 1990

In recent years, two very welcome changes have come to philosophy of language. The philosophy of language that I was "raised" in was that of the eighties and nineties in the US. Our focus was almost exclusively on semantic content, reference and truth conditions. I say "almost exclusively" because Grice's notion of conversational implicature was a notable exception to this—this notion was the topic of great interest, because it allowed semantic theorists to explain away

intuitions that seemed to conflict with their preferred theory as "merely pragmatic".

Recently, philosophy of language has broadened in two significant ways. The most important shift, to my mind, is a move to consider the ethical and political dimensions of language. These were never forgotten by philosophers more broadly, but until recently they were left almost exclusively to ethicists and political philosophers. Now, however, philosophers of language are working to understand hate speech, political manipulation, propaganda and lies. These issues—vital in the real world—have not yet become central to philosophy of language. But they are at least a part of the conversation, in a way that they weren't twenty years ago. With this shift (though not wholly as a result of it), has come an increasing interest in matters other than semantic content and reference. Implicature, accommodation and speech acts are the central notions in these new debates, rather than semantic content.[1]

And yet, I will be arguing, these new discussions have not yet moved far enough away from the focus on content. Fully making sense of politically manipulative speech will require a detailed engagement with certain forms of speech that function at an implicit level—with something other than semantically expressed *or* pragmatically conveyed content; and with effects of utterances that are their very point and that nonetheless vanish as soon as they are made explicit. None of the machinery developed in detail so far is equipped for this task.

This task, however, is an absolutely vital one. Dogwhistles, we will see, are a disturbingly important tool of covert political manipulation. They are in fact one of the most powerful forms of political speech, allowing for people to be manipulated in ways that they would resist if the manipulation was carried out more openly— often drawing on racist attitudes that are consciously rejected. If philosophers focus only on more overt speech, which does its work via content expressed or otherwise consciously conveyed, they will miss much of what is

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[1] This isn't meant to suggest that speech act theory is new, just that it had fallen out of fashion at least in the circles I moved in.

most powerful and pernicious in the speech of our political culture. This paper is a call to start paying attention to these more covert speech acts, and a first attempt at beginning to theorise them.

1. Dogwhistles

My focus in this paper is on dogwhistles. 'Dogwhistle' is a relatively new term in politics, arising out of US political journalism in the 1980s. The first recorded use of the term seems to have been by Richard Morin of the Washington Post, discussing a curious phenomenon that had been noticed in opinion polling.

> Subtle changes in question-wording sometimes produce remarkably different results… researchers call this the 'Dog Whistle Effect': Respondents hear something in the question that researchers do not. (1988)

The idea of a political dogwhistle shifted somewhat over the next decades to focus mainly on a kind of deliberate manipulation, usually by politicians (or their handlers), designed to be unnoticed by most of the public. (We will refine this definition over the course of this paper.) We will see, though, that this sort of manipulation comes in importantly different varieties, which we will tease apart and examine over the course of this paper. Dogwhistles may be explicit or implicit, and within each of these categories they may be intentional or unintentional.

2. Intentional Dogwhistles

2.1 Explicit Intentional Dogwhistles

Kimberly Witten (forthcoming) is one of very few linguists who has worked on dogwhistles. Her focus is exclusively on the sort of dogwhistle that I call an explicit intentional dogwhistle, and her definition (of 'dogwhistle') is an excellent one for an explicit intentional dogwhistle.

A[n explicit intentional] dogwhistle is a speech act designed, with intent, to allow two plausible interpretations, with one interpretation being a private, coded message targeted for a subset of the general audience, and concealed in such a way that this general audience is unaware of the existence of the second, coded interpretation. (Witten: 2)

Although the main interest of dogwhistles lies in their political use, Witten rightly argues that the concept applies more broadly. As a parent, I was shocked to revisit some of my favourite childhood entertainments and see much that I had missed as a child. Watching Bugs Bunny with my small son, I was surprised to see references to old movies that children couldn't be expected to know, and even more surprised to see that one of these was *Last Tango in Paris*. Finding these references of course made the endless re-viewings less tedious. And, of course, this was the intent of their makers. Witten suggests that this should be considered a dogwhistle—a concealed message for a subset of the cartoons' general audience.[2]

The most important sort of intentional explicit dogwhistle, however, is that used by politicians. Dogwhistle utterances allow a candidate to send a message to one portion of the electorate that other portions might find alienating. These will be my main focus here. We'll start with some examples.

2.1.1 "Wonder-working power"

George W. Bush faced a tricky situation with respect to his faith throughout his candidacies. He desperately needed the votes of fundamentalist Christians, and yet it was also clear that many others—whose votes he also needed for the general elections—were made nervous by fundamentalist Christianity. The solution his speech-writers used was to dogwhistle to the fundamentalists. A nice example of this is Bush's utterance in his 2003 State of the Union speech:

Yet there's power, wonder-working power, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people. (Noah 2004)

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[2] Witten discusses different examples, but the idea of dogwhistles for parents in children's entertainment is hers.

To a non-fundamentalist this is an ordinary piece of fluffy political boilerplate, which passes without notice. But a fundamentalist Christian will hear the dogwhistle. Amongst fundamentalists, "wonder- working power" is a favoured phrase that refers specifically to the power of Christ. There are two messages a fundamentalist might take from this. The first is a kind of translation into their idiolect, to yield an explicitly Christian message that would alienate many:

> Yet there's power, the power of Christ, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people.[3]

The second is simply the fact that Bush does speak their idiolect—indicating that he is one of them.

The first message is very clearly an explicit intentional dogwhistle: it is a coded, concealed message, intended for just a subgroup of the general audience. In fact, it functions rather like the exploitation of a little-known ambiguity. The second is a little messier. It is somewhat like speaking in a regional accent that gives a feeling of kinship to a particular audience. But it's crucially different because, unlike an accent, it can't be heard by everyone. Arguably, then (assuming that it is done intentionally), this is still an explicit intentional dogwhistle—it is a coded message for a subgroup, concealed by an apparently straightforward message.

2.1.2 "Dred Scott"

George W. Bush also, like many conservatives, makes a point of declaring his opposition to the *Dred Scott* decision, which 1957 affirmed that slaves remain their owners' property even when taken to free territories. This is somewhat baffling to those it's not directed to, who take it for granted that even a right-wing Republican opposes slavery, and who think this opposition should go without saying. But most viewers were not who Bush was addressing with this dogwhistle. Bush was addressing the anti-abortion right, and he was dogwhistling about his opposition to abortion.

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[3] Presenting this paper to audiences in the US, I've found that this interpretation is controversial. Some Christians think it's exactly right, while others think it would be wrong to read it this way, and that doing so would yield a heretical utterance. For the latter group, obviously the second interpretation in the text will make more sense.

This dogwhistle functions somewhat differently: it works because it is very common for right-wing commentators to discuss the Dred Scott decision when discussing abortion rights, but in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is an example of a bad Supreme Court decision in need of overturning (like *Roe V Wade*). Sometimes it is a part of an analogy between the unrecognized personhood of slaves and (purported) unrecognized personhood of fetuses. But it is so common to discuss it when discussing abortion—and, crucially, so baffling to discuss it otherwise—that it can serve to signal Bush's opposition to abortion, and his desire to see *Roe* overturned.

The exact details of how this one works are a little bit murky. It may work like the old movie references in children's cartoons: designed to trigger allusions for those in the know. Those who know the prominent role of Dred Scott in anti-abortion discussions will know that Bush is deliberately reminding them of these, and take from this the message that he too is anti-abortion, and thinks *Roe* should be overturned. Alternatively, it may even be that "I oppose Dred Scott" and similar utterances have come to serve as generalized conversational implicatures indicating opposition to abortion. One can certainly tell a story of how they'd be calculated: *He's stating his opposition to Dred Scott. But everyone opposes Dred Scott, and that's not relevant to the question he was being asked. He must be trying to convey something else—that he is opposed to abortion, like those other people who talk about Dred Scott.*

Either way, this is an explicit intentional dogwhistle: it is a conveying of a coded, concealed message to a subset of the general audience.

2.2 Implicit intentional dogwhistles

Implicit intentional dogwhistles are far more complicated to make sense of. They play a special role in American race discourse, due to presence of what Tali

Mendelberg calls the Norm of Racial Equality. (Mendelberg does not use the term 'dogwhistle' for these, though later writers such as Ian Haney Lopez 2014 do. She simply refers to 'implicit political communication'.) Prior to the 1930s, Mendelberg argues that it was acceptable to explicitly express racist attitudes in American political discourse. More specifically, she notes that it was acceptable to use obviously pejorative terminology; to assert that black people are innately inferior to white people; and to express support for legal discrimination, such as legally enforced segregation or refusal to hire black people. Not everyone did so, of course—but doing so did not render one beyond the bounds of acceptable political engagement. Those courting racist voters could do so by simply proclaiming their racist views. From the 1930s to the 1960s, according to Mendelberg, the prevailing norm of racial inequality "began to erode" (Mendelberg 67). After the 1960s, however, this became increasingly unacceptable. Most voters now no longer wanted to think of themselves as racist.

However, it remained the case that large numbers of white voters displayed high levels of what psychologists call "racial resentment" toward black people. White voters are highly unlikely to endorse claims of innate black inferiority. However, a belief system that psychologists have called 'racial resentment'[4] remains widespread. Racial resentment includes four main claims: "blacks no longer face much discrimination, (2) their disadvantage mainly reflects their poor work ethic, (3) they are demanding too much too fast, (4) they have gotten more than they deserve." (Tesler and Sears 2010: 18, citing Henry and Sears 2002, 2005.) Psychologists standardly test for racial resentment by asking for degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements (Tesler and Sears 2010: 19):

- Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favours.

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[4] Tesler and Sears, who I quote below, use the term 'symbolic racism', but they note that they use it interchangeably with Mendelberg's preferred term, 'racial resentment'.

- Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
- It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

The various possible responses are assigned scores on a score ranging from most racially liberal to most racially conservative. White Americans are, overall, on the racially conservative end of the spectrum, and Republicans significantly more so than Democrats.

Mendelberg describes this situation as one in which a "norm of racial equality" is in place, despite the persistence of racial resentment. Her phrasing may be somewhat misleading, however. It seems to me certainly not the case that the majority of white Americans assent to any very strong notion of racial equality, if they give the answers that count as racially resentful on the above items. Moreover, it is clearly still quite socially acceptable to make reference to the ills of black *culture,* blaming black poverty and even police killings of unarmed black people on this cause. What Mendelberg calls the 'norm of racial equality" clearly doesn't preclude these sorts of utterances. Indeed, she herself notes a tendency to conform to the norm "in the most minimal, symbolic way possible" (Mendelberg 2001: 92). One plausible way of understanding this is that white Americans feel the need to pay lip service to something that could be called "racial equality". Exactly what this comes to may vary somewhat, but it seems to preclude the use of obvious pejoratives, assertions of *genetic* (though not cultural) inferiority, and support for obviously discriminatory behavior (legally enforced segregation, rules against hiring black people, etc). The only kind of racial equality this commits one to is an extremely thin sort of formal equality. But Mendelberg is clearly right that the bounds of permissible racial discourse have shifted somewhat, even if they do not yet require support for any

substantive sort of equality.[5] Despite these reservations about terminology we will follow Mendelberg and refer to the current situation as one in which the Norm of Racial Equality is in force.

Politicians who might in a different era have explicitly expressed obviously racist views in order to reach proudly racist voters now need to find a subtler way to signal a kind of psychological kinship with these "racially resentful" voters.[6]   An explicit racist dogwhistle wouldn't work—while it would improve on an unambiguously racist utterance, it would still be recognized as racist by its intended audience. And most of this audience would reject something that was explicitly and unambiguously racist—doing otherwise would call into question their now-cherished commitment to egalitarianism. (Importantly, of course, not everyone would reject explicit racism. But our focus here is on the large segment of the population that would.)

An implicit dogwhistle, however, could do the job. Such an utterance would appear on its face to be innocuous and unrelated to race—lending deniability if confronted with racism accusations. And, if the dogwhistled content could do its work outside the dogwhistle-audience's awareness, it would not be rejected in the way that an explicitly racist dogwhistle would be.

But how could a dogwhistle work in this way? How can a racist message be communicated effectively enough to influence an audience's voting decisions, without the audience being aware of it? Working through examples will help us to see this.

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[5] It is also worth noting, and exploring at a different time, that many white Americans have come to think of *themselves* as victims of racial discrimination, and to openly assert this (Lopez, citing Greenberg: 71). This may be another way that racial resentment can be expressed without violating the Norm of Racial Equality: those who express this view would claim that they support *equality,* but that they (not black Americans) are the ones being treated less well.

[6] Which utterances are obviously racist is obviously a matter on which disagreement arises. It seems to me that assertions of black cultural inferiority are obviously racist, but it is clear that for many white people these are not obviously racist. But as noted, these have survived the presence of the "norm of racial equality".

2.2.1 Willie Horton

The most famous example of an implicit intentional dogwhistle is the immensely successful Willie Horton ad, used in George H. W. Bush's campaign against Michael Dukakis. (I take my discussion of this from Mendelberg, Chapters 5-8.) This ad criticized the prison furlough programme that was in place during Dukakis's time as governor by telling the tale of a furloughed convict, Willie Horton. Horton assaulted a couple in their home, raping the woman and stabbing the man. Race is not mentioned at any point in the ad. However, the illustration for the ad is a photo of Willie Horton, and Horton is black. The Bush campaign made Horton a key issue, and this led to the ad receiving enormous airplay on the news.

Prior to the Willie Horton ad, Dukakis was substantially ahead in the opinion polls. As the ad aired and was discussed, he immediately began to plummet. During most of this time, the ad was not discussed in connection with race. It was discussed as a part of stories on the role of crime in the campaign, or negative campaigning. However, quite late, Jesse Jackson called the Willie Horton ad "racist". This charge was at the time viewed with great skepticism (though it's extremely widely accepted now), and viewed as an illicit attempt by Democrats to "play the race card". But it was widely discussed. As soon as the possibility of racism was raised, the ad ceased to function wholly on an implicit level. Viewers began to consider the possibility that something racial might be going on. And at this point, Dukakis started to rise in the polls again—some indication that the ad had ceased to be effective once race was explicitly under discussion.

But of course, none of this really shows that the ad was responsible for these effects, or that race had anything to do with it (though the effect of the Jackson intervention is suggestive.) Far more informative is the data gathered during the campaign about the effects on voters. These data show that while levels of racial

resentment were unaffected by viewing the ad, *the relationship between racial resentment and voting intentions* was strongly influenced by the ad. Specifically, increasing exposure to the ad increased the likelihood of racially resentful voters favouring Bush. And, crucially, as soon as Jackson criticized the ad as racist, this correlation began to decline.

Mendelberg argues that the dogwhistle acts upon pre-existing racial attitudes, unconsciously bringing them to bear where they might previously not have been drawn upon—in this case on voting preferences. But she also notes something else that is vital: once race starts to be consciously reflected on, the dogwhistle ceases to be fully implicit. This drastically diminishes its effectiveness, presumably due to the widespread conscious acceptance of the norm of racial equality. As Mendelberg writes, "As soon as a person is alerted to the need to pay conscious attention to her response, accessibility is no longer sufficient to make her rely upon racial predispositions" (Mendelberg 2001: 210). Mendelberg's experimental data back this up, showing a sizable relationship between racial resentment and policy preferences after viewing an implicitly racial ad, but no relationship after viewing an explicitly racial ad (Chapter 7).

2.2.2 'Inner City'

In the United States, 'inner city' has come to function as a dogwhistle for *black.* Thus, politicians who would be rebuked if they called for harsher measures against black criminals can safely call for cracking down on inner city crime. Psychologists have studied the effects of the phrase "inner city", and it seems to function very similarly to the Willie Horton ad. Horwitz and Peffley (2005) randomly assigned subjects to two groups, with one group being asked question A below, and one group being asked question B (difference underlined by me, from 102-3).

A. Some people want to increase spending for new prisons to lock up <u>violent criminals.</u> Other people would rather spend this money for antipoverty programs to prevent crime. What about you? If you had to choose, would

you rather see this money spent on building new prisons, or on antipoverty programs?

B. Some people want to increase spending for new prisons to lock up <u>violent inner city criminals.</u> Other people would rather spend this money for antipoverty programs to prevent crime. What about you? If you had to choose, would you rather see this money spent on building new prisons, or on antipoverty programs?

This small change—the addition of 'inner city'—turned out to have a significant effect on the answer that subjects gave, but the nature of this effect was strongly influenced by subjects' pre-existing racial attitudes. Prior to being asked A or B above, subjects were questioned about their acceptance of racial stereotypes and their beliefs regarding the racial fairness of the justice system. "Racial conservatives" tended to hold negative stereotypes of black people and to believe the system to be racially fair. "Racial liberals" were the opposite.

When 'inner city' was added to the question (as in B) subjects' attitudes toward spending were strongly influenced by their pre-existing racial attitudes—with racial conservatives more likely to favour prison spending and racial liberals more likely to oppose it. But when 'inner city' was not present (as in A) there was *no relationship* between racial attitudes and answers to the question. This shows that 'inner city' serves to raise subjects' pre-existing racial attitudes to salience and bring them to bear on a question, where they would not otherwise be brought to bear—just as the Willie Horton ad does.[7]

3. Unintentional Dogwhistles

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[7] It is not clear whether the effect on racial liberals was due to implicit or explicit processes. It is possible that racial liberals reflected explicitly on the use of 'inner city' as a euphemism for 'black', rather than simply having their racial attitudes raised to non-conscious salience. In general, racial liberals have not been the focus of studies on racial priming and dogwhistles. Many thanks to Rosie Worsdale for raising this point.

Thus far, our focus has been on intentional dogwhistles. However, a crucial fact about the way that dogwhistles function and do their work in the world is the way in which they can be unintentionally passed on, with identical effects to the original dogwhistle. This is wholly predictable, from the fact that audiences will very often be unaware of a dogwhistle's presence—they may, and do, repeat the dogwhistle unwittingly. I will call these utterances unintentional dogwhistles, and in this section of the paper we will work through a few examples. My working definition of 'unintentional dogwhistle' will be as follows:

> Unwitting use of words and/or images that, used intentionally, constitute an intentional dogwhistle, where this use has the same effect as an intentional dogwhistle.

To see that this is possible, just reflect briefly on the Dred Scott dogwhistle that we've already discussed. Now imagine a debate, in which the left-wing candidate is puzzled by the right-wing candidate expressing their opposition to Dred Scott: they had not taken slavery to be a live issue, and they are unaware of the dogwhistle. Confused, they become worried that they might be taken to support slavery if they do not also start expressing their opposition to Dred Scott—so they, too, start waxing eloquent on the wrongness of this decision. But since discussing Dred Scott dogwhistles opposition to abortion they unintentionally (and falsely) dogwhistle their opposition to abortion.

Very importantly, though, we don't need to rely on fanciful cases like this. Secondary dogwhistles are real, and they are in fact often a part of the primary dogwhistlers' plan.

3.1 Barry Goldwater

Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican nominee for President, gives us a fascinating case of a secondary dogwhistle. (Here I again draw heavily on Mendelberg, 84-88.) Goldwater was, for his time and definitely for his party, relatively on the left when it came to issues of race. He was a founding member

of the Arizona NAACP, an important civil rights organization.[8] However, he was first and foremost a libertarian and opponent of federal interference in (what he took to be) state matters. This is what led him to vote against the landmark Civil Rights Act in 1964. (He spoke in favour of its goals, but against using the federal government to implement these goals.) All this placed Goldwater in a delicate position politically: to win the South, he needed to convince racist voters that he shared their views. But he was unwilling to spend much time discussing race. His handlers found an excellent solution. A part of the solution was to take his one speech about the Civil Rights Act and try to give it as much visibility as they could. But from our perspective the more interesting solution involved Goldwater's advocacy of "states' rights".

In the United States, there is always a balance to be struck between federal laws and the quite substantial autonomy granted to states. There are disagreements over exactly how to strike this balance. Those who advocate more autonomy for states are proponents of "states rights". But this is not the full story. "States' rights" has come to function as a dogwhistle in the American South because of the idea's role in struggles over race and racism. During (and before) the Civil War, the slave-holding states insisted that they should be allowed to maintain the institution of slavery because whether or not to do so was a matter that states, not the federal government, should decide. And during the battle against legally mandated racial segregation, the segregationist states argued that it was their right, as states, to decide whether or not to integrate. This history has made the phrase "states' rights" a potent dogwhistle in the South. Since Goldwater happily gave many speeches on the importance of states' rights—in his case motivated more by libertarianism than by racism—his handlers had many utterances they could play out of context in the South to dogwhistle opposition to integration. These replayings, it seems to me, were unintentional dogwhistles.

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[8] http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-barry-goldwaters-warning-to-the-gop/2014/04/17/9e8993ec-c651-11e3-bf7a-be01a9b69cf1_story.html

3.2 Willie Horton and the Reporters

There is by now ample evidence that the Bush campaign was deliberately dogwhistling about race with the Willie Horton ad. However, there is no reason to believe that the reporters and TV producers of the time were doing this. Certainly some may have been, but many were not. Yet nonetheless they replayed the ad over and over, and discussed Horton and his crimes over and over in the context of the election. This, in fact, was what allowed the effects Mendelberg discusses to be so widespread and so powerful: the original advertisement was only shown briefly in a small area, but it was re-shown again and again as a part of news reports ostensibly about "negative campaigning" or "crime". I take these re-showings to be unintentional dogwhistles. This shows just how important such unintentional dogwhistles can be in accomplishing an intentional dogwhistle's goals. Indeed, such is their importance that they deserve a term of their own. I will call these 'amplifier dogwhistles', since they greatly increase the reach of the original dogwhistle. And, just as an amplifier is not responsible for the original sound that it amplifies, those who carry out acts of amplifier dogwhistling will are not be responsible for the original dogwhistle whose reach they are enhancing.

3.3 Racialisation of 'government spending'

Throughout the 1980s, a converted effort was made by the Republican Party in the US to associate government spending with racial minorities. (Ronald Reagan was especially important to this campaign.) This effort was enormously successful: Media coverage of government assistance, for example, came to focus disproportionately on black recipients of assistance, despite the fact that they are the minority of those on such assistance (Valentino et. al. 75). And, we will see, these efforts have brought it about that even terms like 'government spending' now serve as racial dogwhistles. Utterances containing such terms are, as a result, sometimes intentional dogwhistles—when the utterances are made with the intention of making racial attitudes salient. But these terms are widely used, as what the country should spend money on is an issue that simply has to be

discussed. And so they will extremely often function as unintentional implicit dogwhistles. Indeed, they will often serve as amplifier dogwhistles.

We'll begin by examining the evidence that utterances of these words can function as implicit racial dogwhistles. We can see very clearly that this is the case from Valentino et. al.'s study of racial priming and political advertising. Their study involves showing participants one of several versions of a carefully constructed advertisement. In every version, the words of the advertisement, ostensibly for George W. Bush, criticizes Democrats for "wasteful spending" and says (to take one example from a complex ad) that Bush will "reform an unfair system that only provides healthcare for some, while others go without" (79). What varies across versions is the visuals. One version, Neutral, uses wholly neutral visuals, like medical files and the Statue of Liberty. The second, Race Comparison, uses images of e.g. a black family being helped while the words "healthcare for some" are uttered; and images of a white mother and child while the words "others go without" are uttered. The third, Undeserving Blacks, does not contain images comparing treatment of whites and blacks, but does show images designed trigger associations of race and government spending. So, it shows the black family being helped just as in Race Comparison; but it shows medical files while "others go without" are uttered. A control group viewed a totally non-political advertisement. After viewing the advertisements, subjects completed a test to assess the accessibility of racial attitudes. They then completed a questionnaire regarding their assessment of presidential candidates, the importance of various issues, and their racial and political attitudes. Below is a table (Valentino and Hutchings: 79) showing the workings of the various versions of the advertisement.

TABLE 1. Transcripts of Implicit Race Cue Advertising Manipulation

Narrative	Neutral Visuals	Race Comparison	Undeserving Blacks
George W. Bush, dedicated to building an America with strong values	George Bush in crowd shaking hands	George Bush in crowd shaking hands	George Bush in crowd shaking hands
Democrats want to spend your tax dollars on wasteful government programs, but George W. Bush will cut taxes because you know best how to spend the money you earn.	Image of Statue of Liberty, Treasury Building Bush sitting on couch, residential street (no people)	**Black person counting money, black mother and child in office** Bush sitting on couch, **white person writing check, white person counting money, white teacher**	**Black person counting money, black mother and child in office** Bush sitting on couch, residential street (no people)
Governor Bush cares about families.	Laboratory workers (race unclear) looking into microscopes	**White parents walking with child**	Residential street (shot continued as above)
He'll reform an unfair system that only provides health care for some, while others go without proper treatment because their employer can't afford it.	Medical files	**White nurse assisting black mother, child White mother holding child**	**White nurse assisting black mother, child** Medical files
When he's president, every hard-working American will have affordable, high-quality health care.	X-rays against lit background	**Bush talking to white family, talking to white child, Bush kissing white girl**	X-rays against lit background
George W. Bush, a fresh start for America	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush" and "A Fresh Start"	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush" and "A Fresh Start"	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush" and "A Fresh Start"

Valentino et. al. found that racial resentment had little effect on preference between candidates unless subjects had viewed one of the political advertisements. But if they had viewed one of the political advertisements, the impact of racial resentment on candidate preference was increased—even in the neutral condition in which the advertisement contained no racialised imagery, just words about government spending. Indeed, the effect in the Neutral Condition was just as strong as in the Race Comparison condition (though less strong than in the Undeserving Blacks condition). This shows very clearly that "government spending" has become an implicit dogwhistle, which functions like the Willie Horton ad or "inner city". And this fact should be enormously disconcerting, as it indicates just how very widespread such priming is. The widespread nature of such priming makes it extremely difficult to discuss issues absolutely central to democracy—such as what a government should spend its money on—without opinions being influenced by racial attitudes.[9]

Importantly, Valentino et. al. also tested the impact of *counter-stereotypical images.* In these versions of the advertisement, the images of black families appear as the ad discusses "hard-working families", and so on. These ads are designed to jar with the racist stereotypes that viewers have likely absorbed through cultural exposure. The effects were dramatic.

> When the black racial cues are stereotype-inconsistent, however, the relationship between racial attitudes and the vote disappears... Violating racial stereotypes with positive images of blacks dramatically undermines racial priming. The presence of black images alone, therefore, does not prime negative racial attitudes. The effect emerges only when the pairing of the visuals with the narrative subtly reinforces negative stereotypes in the mind of the viewer.

This is a crucial point, as it raises another possible way of combatting the influence of implicit dogwhistles. It shows that it *is* possible to discuss government spending without priming racial attitudes. But avoiding racial imagery is *not* the way to do this—instead, one must make a concerted effort to include the right racial imagery. The right racial imagery will be counterstereotypical imagery that can serve to undermine the dogwhistles

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[9] This sort of concern is very important to Stanley (2015).

(primary or secondary) that would otherwise be present (whatever one's intentions). This requires awareness and effort on the part of the speaker, who might otherwise think that they have avoided triggering racial attitudes by avoiding overtly racial imagery or words. (See the table below, from Valentino and Hutchings: 80)

Table 2. Transcripts of Counter-Stereotypic Advertising Manipulation

Narrative	Deserving Blacks	Deserving Whites	Undeserving Whites
George W. Bush, dedicated to building an America with strong values.	George Bush in crowd shaking hands, black woman with American flag in background, black veteran smiling	George Bush in crowd shaking hands	George Bush in crowd shaking hands
Democrats want to spend your tax dollars on wasteful government programs, but George W. Bush will cut taxes because you know best how to spend the money you earn.	Treasury building Bush sitting on couch, **black person laying money on a counter**	Bush sitting on couch, **white person writing a check, white person counting money**	**White person counting money, white mother and child in office** Bush sitting on couch, residential street (no people)
Governor Bush cares about families.	**Black family using a computer, black family eating at a restaurant**	**White teacher, white parents walking with child**	Residential street (shot continued as above)
He'll reform an unfair system that only provides health care for some, while others go without proper treatment because their employer can't afford it.	Laboratory workers (race unclear) looking into microscopes **Black women holding baby**	Laboratory workers (race unclear) looking into microscopes **White mother holding child**	**White mother holding newborn receiving medical care in hospital** Medical files
When he's president, every hard-working American will have affordable, high-quality health care.	**Bush shaking hands with black children, black kids sitting in school yard, Bush sitting in classroom reading with black kids**	**Bush talking to white family, Bush talking to white child, Bush kissing white girl**	X-rays against lit background
George W. Bush, a fresh start for America	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush"	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush"	Bush, arm around wife. Screen reads "George W. Bush"

4. Why Existing Accounts Cannot Fully Capture

4.1 What existing accounts <u>can</u> capture

Existing accounts do fairly well with an explicit intentional dogwhistle. As noted in the discussion above, it is quite plausible to suppose that 'Dred Scott' utterances carry conversational implicatures about opposition to abortion.

Elisabeth Camp (2013) goes a step further and introduces the notion of *insinuation.* A speaker *insinuates* some proposition P just in case she communicates P without entering P into the conversational record. The speaker intends her intention to be recognised, but without a willingness or responsibility to own up to it.[10] This is an important notion.

> "Intuitively, the whole point of insinuation – what defines it and makes it rhetorically useful – is that it involves off-record communication: the speaker means (and when successful, communicates) something without putting it on the conversational record. If this is right, then the very existence of insinuation demonstrates that we can't simply equate what a speaker means with her utterance's contribution to the conversational score or record." (REF)

Camp treats Bush's Dred Scott dogwhistle as a paradigm case of insinuation, and this seems plausible. Bush intends to have his anti-abortion message recognized, and recognized as intended. At the same time, though, use of a code phrase gives allows him to avoid placing his contribution on the record—thus achieving deniability.

4.2 More difficult cases

Implicit intentional dogwhistles are substantially more challenging to capture. There are two key reasons for this. First, what is dogwhistled is not

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[10] Camp describes this as 'implicit' communication. This is clearly a different usage from Mendelberg's, as Camp is interested in cases in which at least part of the audience recognizes the speaker's intention, and is expected to do so.

a particular proposition. Instead, certain pre-existing attitudes are brought to salience.   This means that any theory relying on the communication (via semantics or pragmatics) of a particular proposition will fail. Second, this occurs *outside* of consciousness. Crucially, when an audience becomes conscious of the dogwhistle, it fails to achieve its intended effect. Success of an implicit intentional dogwhistle, then—unlike most communicative acts— depends on the audience *not recognizing* the speaker's intention. Any theory which includes the idea that uptake (recognition of the speaker's intention) is required for success will fail entirely as a way of accommodating implicit dogwhistles. Implicit intentional dogwhistles only succeed where uptake is absent; uptake prevents such dogwhistles from being effective.[11]

Two sorts of theories, however, hold out some promise for capturing them: Langton and McGowan's work on conversational accommodation, especially McGowan's notion of conversational exercitives; and Jason Stanley's recent work on propaganda and not-at-issue content. We will see, however, that neither of these is fully able to capture the complexity of these cases.

4.2.1   Stanley

Jason Stanley is the only philosopher to have discussed what I call 'implicit dogwhistles' (both intentional and unintentional), which he takes to be a particularly insidious form of propaganda.   On Stanley's view, these function by introducing into conversation some pernicious "not-at-issue" effects. Not-at-issue content is material that becomes part of the conversation's common ground without being explicitly put up for consideration in the way that asserted content is. This makes it more difficult to notice that this content is being added to the common ground, and also more difficult to object to. It also cannot be canceled (Stanley: 139). Stanley argues that certain words come to carry not-at-issue content of a highly problematic sort:

Jennifer Saul 29/1/2016 20:56
Comment [1]: Check this.

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[11] Dogwhistles are not alone in having this latter feature. Most acts of deception are also like this: if the audience recognizes the speaker's intention to deceive the deception fails.

> When the news media connects images of urban Blacks repeatedly with
> mentions of the term "welfare," the term "welfare" comes to have not-at-issue
> content that Blacks are lazy. (Stanley: 138)

Stanley also suggests that the not-at-issue effect of a term can take the form of a
preference ordering, taking the form of a ranking of groups in terms of worthiness
of respect. So, a term may cause those who encounter it to rank groups
differently, in a way that erodes respect for some groups. One might even come to
rank groups as worthy of more or less empathy, which for Stanley is an especially
important sort of not-at-issue effect.

Stanley's approach is able to accommodate the way that audiences may be
unaware of what is really going on in an implicit dogwhistle utterance. Not-at-
issue content is (sometimes) entered into the common ground without an
audience's explicit awareness that this is taking place: this is a key part of what
makes it so insidious.

Nonetheless, Stanley's approach does not accommodate all that psychologists
have taught us about how these utterances work. Stanley suggests that words like
'welfare' erode respect for black people either by carrying a not-at-issue content
that black people are lazy or causing people to implement a preference ranking
according to which black people are less deserving of empathy than white people
are. Moreover, he suggests that this cannot be cancelled, and that it will be
present in every use of a term like 'welfare'.[12] But this fails to fit with the data in
certain key ways.

The first problem is that the use of implicit dogwhistle terms like 'welfare' or
even the viewing of advertisements like the Willie Horton ads do not (in general)
cause *changes* in racial attitudes.[13] Instead, they make accessible pre-existing

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[12] He does allow for the possibility of change over time, but only when there is
"sufficient control of the media and other instruments of power" (162) by those
advocating a change. He does not allow for conversation-by-conversation
variation.

[13] It is worth emphasizing that the worry I am raising here is specific to the claim
that racial dogwhistles cause changes in racial attitudes, based on specific study
of these utterances. I am not at all skeptical about the general idea of linguistic

attitudes, and bring them to bear on issues where they might not otherwise have played a role in decision-making. This is quite different from Stanley's picture, on which the terms either cause new claims to be added to the common ground, or cause changes in people's preference rankings[14].

The second problem is related to this one. It is that the effects of implicit dogwhistle terms are not quite so monolithically negative as Stanley takes them to be. We can see this either intuitively or by looking at the empirical evidence. Intuitively, we can imagine a black speaker addressing a left-wing black audience and saying "My mother was on welfare while she did the engineering degree that lifted our family out of poverty". This use of 'welfare' will not carry any suggestion that black people are lazy, nor will it erode respect for black people. If we prefer to look back on the empirical data, we can return to the findings discussed earlier. Adding 'inner city' to the question about prison funding caused those low in racial resentment to be *less* likely to agree that more prisons should be built. Pre-existing racial attitudes—*whatever they are*—are activated by implicit racial dogwhistle terms. If the attitudes are racially resentful, then there is likely to be an outcome that indeed fits with a lack of respect for black people. But if the attitudes are not racially resentful, the outcome is likely to be entirely different.

Finally, challenging a dogwhistle successfully may not be as difficult as Stanley suggests. The priming of racial resentment only works if it remains implicit. If a dogwhistle term like 'welfare' is used but race is made explicit, the effect vanishes. Recall also that as soon as Jesse Jackson raised the issue of race, the

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utterances causing changes in attitudes—indeed I think this is widespread. Nor am I even sceptical about the idea that racial dogwhistles cause *some* changes in attitudes: After all, viewing the Willie Horton ad caused many voters to change their voting intentions and their beliefs about who was the best candidate.

[14] Some of Stanley's claims are also at odds with the idea that dogwhistles alter attitudes. For example, he writes, "As Tali Mendelberg shows, stereotypes of black Americans have remained constant throughout the history of the Republic." (135)

Willie Horton ad ceased to be effective. But the fact that it sometimes does shows that some challenges can succeed rather easily.

4.2.2 Langton and McGowan

Langton (2012) discusses many ways that hate speech might function. For our purposes here the most promising is one based on Lewis and Stalnaker's work on conversational score.

> [Utterances of hate speech] may implicitly *presuppose* certain facts and norms, rather than explicitly enacting them; but these implicit presuppositions may nonetheless work in ways that are comparable to classic Austinian illocutions. Consumers then change their factual and normative beliefs by taking on board the 'common ground' (in Robert Stalnaker's phrase) or the 'conversational score' (in David Lewis's phrase) that is presupposed in the…'conversation'. (83)

Langton further suggests that emotions like desire and hate may be introduced into the common ground through roughly the same procedure—or, in Lewis's terms, their appropriateness may become part of the conversational score. Langton tentatively suggests that the two accounts may be related as follows: Lewis's account captures the immediate way that what counts as acceptable may change, and this then leads to changes in the attitudes and emotions that are part of the taken-for-granted common ground of the conversation.

It is useful to understand this in terms of Mary Kate McGowan's model (2004, 2012). McGowan suggests that these alterations in the conversational score should be understood as due to covert exercitives. These are speech acts which do not require any special authority on the part of the speaker (unlike more standard exercitives such as ruling a play in football as a foul.) Crucially, they may or may not be intended by the speaker or recognized by the audience. McGowan suggests that these acts will be very widespread in any norm-governed activity (and that a huge variety of activities are norm-governed). What is permissible in such activities depends both on the rules (implicit or explicit) of those activities, and on what has happened before. In a conversation,

what is permissible adapts quickly and seamlessly in response to what people say. Suppose Jeff makes an utterance that carries a presupposition, such as (1):

(1) Yes, my wife and I like to do that.

If nobody protests, then it becomes permissible (in this context) to make other utterances in this conversation that assume that Jeff has a wife.   Similarly, McGowan suggests that if Jeff makes a racist utterance and nobody protests, it becomes permissible (in this context) to make further racist utterances. Depending on the context and the nature of the utterance, it may also enact further racist permissibility facts (McGowan 2012: 137-9).

The most appealing elements of this picture for dealing with implicit dogwhistles are that (a) significant changes to common ground or to score may occur implicitly; and (b) it is not just focused on *propositions* believed or taken for granted, but also on norms and emotions. The suggestion would be, then, that e.g. the Willie Horton ad implicitly alters the facts about what it is appropriate to take into account in making voting decisions. The normative score—regarding what one's voting decisions should be based on—is subtly altered by the Willie Horton ad, outside of the awareness of those who view it. This leads viewers to take race into account in their voting decisions. And since McGowan allows that this may occur unintentionally, we can accommodate both intentional and unintentional implicit dogwhistles.

At first, this seems like a very good fit. However, there is a crucial problem: if dogwhistles were *actually* changing permissibility facts, discussing what has been implicitly added would not destroy their effects in the way that it does. When Jesse Jackson raised the possibility that the Willie Horton ads were related to race, viewers stopped allowing their vote to be influenced by their racial attitudes. If the ad actually *had* made it permissible to base their voting decision on racial attitudes, this would not have happened. When we reflect on something that we genuinely take to be permissible, we don't reject it—even if it's something we haven't reflected on. Imagine, for example, that I am immersed in a country with different conventions about personal space, and I take on those

conventions without realizing it. If someone in this country remarks on the fact, I don't reject it: instead, I realize that the permissibility facts have changed for me, at least for the duration of my time in this country. When one calls attention to a racial dogwhistle, what happens is very different: what happens looks, for all the world, like a discovery that one was doing something *impermissible.* This shows that the Langton/McGowan story cannot capture these cases.

4.2.3 Implicit Intentional Dogwhistles as covert perlocutionary speech acts

My view is that implicit intentional dogwhistles must be understood as a species of perlocutionary speech acts. Perlocutionary speech acts are not much discussed by philosophers of language, and with good reason. They are quite a motley and unsystematic collection of acts, difficult to theorise. (Contrast the simple illocutionary act of getting married with the intended perlocutionary acts of being happy, making one's ex jealous, getting to wear that lovely dress, acquiring citizenship, becoming financially secure; and the unintended perlocutionary acts of making one's parents cry, devastating a secret admirer, inspiring some friends to get married, and so on.) However, individual kinds of perlocutionary acts can be extremely important. And the perlocutionary seems very much the right category for implicit intentional dogwhistles upon brief reflection: implicit intentional dogwhistles, after all, are very much a matter of intended *effects* on their audiences.

My suggestion is that implicit intentional dogwhistles should be understood as what I will call *covert perlocutionary acts.* A covert perlocutionary act is one that does not succeed if the intended perlocutionary effect is recognized as intended. Although this category has not been much discussed as a category, implicit dogwhistles are not the only covert perlocutionary acts. Another important kind of covert perlocutionary act is deception. One who deceives can usually only succeed if their intention to deceive is *not recognized.* This is the defining feature of a covert perlocutionary act. An implicit intentional dogwhistle cannot succeed if the intended effect is recognized as intended, so it is a covert perlocutionary act.

There are some clear advantages to this account. Since I understand implicit intentional dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts, I need not understand them as about propositions. Nor need I claim that they are added to the common ground, or in any way consciously available to their audience. I can also very easily make sense of the sorts of variation we have seen: Not every utterance using a particular dogwhistle term will be intended to have the same effect, so we can give the right understanding of the black speaker describing his mother's use of welfare to earn an engineering degree. And not every perlocutionary effect will be intended—so we can accommodate the fact that *anti-racist* attitudes will be raised to salience for some voters, even when this effect is not intended. Finally, perlocutionary effects can be blocked, as Jesse Jackson's utterance eventually began blocking the intended effects of the Willie Horton ad.

4.2.3.2 Unintentional implicit dogwhistles

There is more than one way to fit unintentional implicit dogwhistles into this picture.

> Option 1: Unintentional implicit dogwhistles are not themselves covert perlocutionary acts, since the intention of the speaker is not related to the dogwhistle, which the speaker is unaware of. So there can be no question of the act failing if the speaker's intention is recognized. Unintentional implicit dogwhistles, on this story, are simply speech acts which have particularly pernicious unintended perlocutionary effects. Unintended perlocutionary effects are extremely common, so there's nothing particular special going on, except that these unintended effects are a part of someone else's (not the speaker's) plan. This option perhaps underplays the role of manipulation.

> Option 2: The second option puts more of an emphasis on the way that unintentional implicit dogwhistles fit in to the manipulation that is taking place. Those who create the initial implicit dogwhistles are very good at attaching pernicious associations to words and images (and possibly

other things as well) and sending them out into the world in the hope that they will be taken up and used by others, bringing with them these associations. One might, then, take the creators of the dogwhistles to be in some important sense the utterers of the unintentional implicit dogwhistles. This would allow one to treat the unintentional dogwhistles as covert perlocutionary acts, fully recognizing the way that they fit into this sort of manipulation. The problem with this story, though, is that it underplays the agency of those who repeat the dogwhistles. These people really are the speakers, and they need to be thought of as such, and held accountable for the effects of their speech.

On balance, the best approach seems to me to be Option 1. But it is important in adopting this approach that one not lose sight of the way that the utterers of the uninteional implicit dogwhistles have been manipulated—and important to remember that somebody *did* intend the pernicious effects of these utterances, even though their utterers did not. And, in fact, this helps us to see more about what is so insidious: as they unknowingly utter secondary implicit dogwhistles, people are made into mouthpieces for an ideology that they reject. The actual utterers are the speakers, and this is why they need to pay attention to the effects of what they say, and to the careful manipulation that has caused them to say these things.[15]

A further advantage of this approach is that we can accommodate two distinct varieties of unintentional implicit dogwhistle. The first is what I have called 'amplifier dogwhistles', which help to spread the effects of intentional implicit dogwhistles. The second, which is not my focus here, is unintentional implicit

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[15] An especially interesting case will be that of Barry Goldwater's utterances about states' rights. They were made with the intention of merely commenting on constitutional structure. But they were replayed in contexts where his handlers knew they would function as dogwhistles. The initial utterances were not dogwhistles. Their replayings were, however, unintentional dogwhistles. Unintentional dogwhistles, though, are not to be understood as covert perlocutionary acts. Instead they are acts which have unintended (by the speaker) perlocutionary effects. Of course, in this case the effects are unintended by the speaker but intended by the handlers who choose where and when to replay the utterances.

dogwhistles which *don't* originate in deliberate attempts to manipulate. It has been suggested to me that 'crafty' functions this way in sports commentary, dogwhistling whiteness but without any deliberate attempt to manipulate the salience of audience members' racial attitudes.[16]

5. Political Upshot

Of course, what makes this underexplored topic so important is that dogwhistles represent a vital part of strategies by which we are influenced—in fact, manipulated—in our thinking, and in our decisions. In particular, these have enormous and important political effects. The political implications of dogwhistles have not been much discussed by philosophers. Robert Goodin and Michael Saward (2005), however, have discussed the political implications of explicit dogwhistles; and Jason Stanley has discussed the political implications of implicit dogwhistles. All three of these theorists argue that dogwhistles pose serious problems for democracy, although the problems they identify differ. I certainly agree that dogwhistles can pose problems for democracy, but I don't fully agree with any of these philosophers on the nature and seriousness of the problems.

5.1 Dogwhistles and Democratic Mandates

Goodin and Saward argue that explicit intentional dogwhistles (they don't discuss implicit or unintentional dogwhistles, so in fact they just use the term 'dogwhistle') may undermine democratic mandates for particular policies, but that they do not pose difficulties with regard to a mandate to rule. Their focus is on cases in which a political party (or a politician) advocates a particular policy using a phrase that dogwhistles a message to one audience which another audience is unaware of. To take an artificial (though not totally artificial) example, imagine a party that trumpets its opposition to Dred Scott in many of its campaign commercials. The party gets the support of both anti-racism and

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[16] I am grateful to Tyler Doggett and Randall Harp for this suggestion.

anti-abortion voters. This party, when victorious, could not declare a mandate for banning abortion, because only some of the voters took this to be what they were voting for. Hence, Goodin and Saward argue, policy mandates are undermined when policy preferences are merely dogwhistled. However, Goodin and Saward hold that a mandate to rule is not undermined in this way, because everybody who votes for politician P knows exactly what they are voting for: that politician P should rule.

> A conservative party dog-whistles an encouraging message to racists that its own traditional supporters would instantly repudiate. It wins the ensuing election. Half its voters voted for it purely because of its (coded) support for racist policies; half voted for it purely because of its traditionally decent policies on race. Clearly, the party won a majority; clearly, it has a mandate to rule. But under those circumstances, it equally clearly could not claim a policy mandate to pursue either of the two contradictory policies that won it its votes. (2005: 475)

Goodin and Saward argue, then that a party cannot claim a mandate for its policies unless it refrains from engaging in dogwhistle politics (and more than this may be needed as well):

> It is worth firmly reminding political parties that when they engage in dog whistle politics in ordinary general elections, the same phenomenon that they are counting on to increase their share of votes also undercuts the authority that they might secure by winning the vote. (2005: 476)

It seems to me, however, that Goodin and Saward's arguments do not go quite far enough. If they are right about the policy mandate, then the mandate to rule may also often be undermined. This will happen, for example, in the case of single-issue voters, of which there are likely to be many. If a voting decision is based on abortion policy, and different messages are sent about this to different groups of voters, then surely the mandate to rule is also—in any meaningful sense—undermined.

Now let's turn to the case of implicit dogwhistles, which Goodin and Saward don't discuss. Implicit dogwhistles don't involve the same sort of deception. It's not the case that some viewers of the Willie Horton ad will think that Dukakis's prison policy is Q, while others will take it to be R. What will happen, however, is that the ad's target audience will vote for Bush on the basis of their racial attitudes, without

realizing it. Human psychology being what it is, being unaware of one's reason for making a voting decision is surely widespread. People are unaware of the extent to which, for example, their decision of which socks to buys is based on the location of the socks on the table. It stands to reason that people would be unaware of the degree to which they are influenced by music in a commercial, subtleties of tone or body language, being reminded of a loved (or hated!) one, and so on. If such lack of awareness of influences were enough to undermine democratic authority, we would need to give up all hope of democracy.

However, more than this goes on with implicit dogwhistles. In implicit dogwhistle cases, people make decisions on the basis of reasons that they would reject if they became aware of them—as we know from what happens when they are raised to consciousness. Moreover, they do this as a result of being deliberately manipulated. This looks, on the face of it, much more like a threat to democratic mandates.

But if this is sufficient to undermine a mandate, then once more there may in fact be no mandates. What voter, after all, thinks that they *should* base their vote on music played during a campaign commercial, or on a candidate's physical appearance? And yet, all that we know about psychology suggests that factors like these are sure to impact voter choices. And all that we know about the running of campaigns (and about advertising more generally) tells us that things like this are bound to be used by campaign operatives to deliberately manipulate the voters. Being influenced by factors that we don't think should influence us is, it seems to me, an inevitable part of the human condition. And, since this is relatively widely known, using such factors to influence others will also be a standard feature of human life. If this is sufficient to undermine democratic mandates, then there are no democratic mandates.

5.2 Stanley

Stanley is particularly concerned about what I am calling 'dogwhistles', because of the function that they serve in undermining democracy. The terms that particularly concern him—like 'welfare'— have devastating properties:

1. Use of the relevant expression has the effect on the conversation of representing a certain group in the community as having a perspective not worthy of inclusion, that is, they are not worthy of respect.

2. The expression has a content that can serve simply to contribute legitimately to resolving the debate at issue in a reasonable way, which is separate from its function as a mechanism of exclusion.
3. Mere use of the expression is enough to have the effect of eroding reasonableness. So the effect on reasonableness occurs just by virtue of using the expression, in whatever linguistic context" (Stanley 2015: 130).

If every use of one of these terms has these effects, then every use erodes respect for black people, and every use erodes reasonable discussion by excluding their perspective. This is obviously enormously damaging for democracy, even though the official *content* of the term might be a perfectly reasonable contribution to discussion.

If Stanley is right, then dogwhistle terms would indeed be utterly devastating—we simply could not have a debate using terms like 'welfare' because all participants would unwittingly be introducing racist not-at-issue content with every utterance, no matter what the context, and no matter what the rest of their utterance contained. If this were right, then the standard liberal remedy for problematic speech—more speech—would be completely ineffectual.

There is much that is right in this: It is indeed trickier to challenge dogwhistles than it is to challenge, for example, overtly racist claims. If a campaign commercial explicitly asserts that "black men are dangerous criminals and Dukakis is insufficiently racist", it is exceptionally easy to point out what is wrong with the ad. The racism is undeniable, and even the most timid of journalists will feel comfortable asserting that racism is present. Those who made the ad will have no recourse but to either apologise or confine their electoral prospects to the explicitly racist voter. But the Willie Horton commercial is very different. Many viewers will be unaware that they have watched an ad that makes their racial attitudes salient. The ad contains no overtly racist assertions that are easily pointed to. And politicians can, and did, easily deny that there was racism in the ad or in their intentions. Moreover, Jesse Jackson was vilified as "playing the race card" when he pointed to the

racism of the ad, and the suggestion was said to be ludicrous by mainstream commentators.

But as we have already seen, the truth is not quite this bleak. The effects of terms like 'welfare' vary depending (at least) on the racial predispositions of one's audience, on whether race is explicitly under discussion, and upon the rest of what one says. Also, recall that as soon as Jackson raised the issue of race the ad *stopped working.* This shows that in an extremely important sense it could be challenged. And indeed challenged quite easily. Even those who thought Jackson was wrong to raise the issue of racism were no longer affected by it in the way that its makers intended. Although racism was now a part of the conversation, and so highly salient, it was *explicitly salient* rather than covertly. The ad could only cause them to use their racial attitudes in their voting decisions as long as race was *covertly* salient. A covert perlocutionary speech act is (in at least some cases) very easily challenged: all one needs to do is to make what has been covert into an explicit part of the conversation.
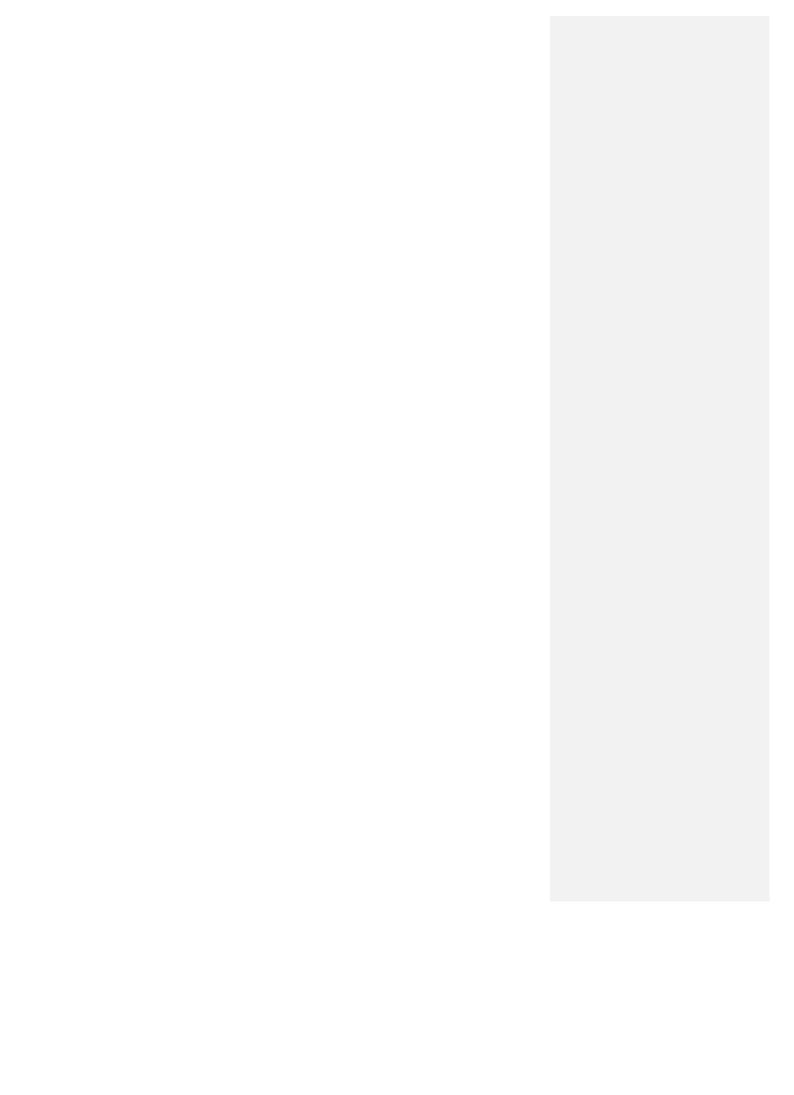
But to fully understand how to combat these speech acts, we must combine this fact with insights from Stanley: it will indeed be *conversationally* challenging to make what has been covert explicit. People will reject what challengers say, and deny that it is true. Sanity may be, and often is, called into question. Challengers will be accused of having a political agenda. The conversation will be derailed, and it will not flow smoothly.   It *is* difficult, just as Stanley said, and as a result it is hard to make oneself do it, or to persist in the face of this resistance. There are, then, important lessons here for those seeking to fight pernicious covert perlocutionary acts. But if challengers are aware of how these speech acts work, then it becomes clear that despite this resistance it is well worth doing. As soon as the issue of race is raised—even if raising it is thought to be a mistake, and met with anger—the speech act we are trying to fight *stops working.* It is both very hard to fight and very easy to win. Those seeking to challenge these pernicious speech acts need to remind themselves of the ease of winning in order to gear themselves up for the difficulty of the fight. And importantly, they need to realize that winning will not *feel* like winning: those responsible for the

speech acts will not back down, concede the truth about what they were doing, or apologise; the intended audience of the speech acts will probably insist that the analysis is wrong and deny the existence of the covert material. Yet nonetheless the battle will be won: the speech acts will be neutralized.

Importantly, of course, we will only win these battles if the norm of racial equality is actually in place. And whether it is or not may vary a great deal over time and place. We know from the sad and terrible history of genocide that a community where this norm is in place can change remarkably quickly into one in which it has disappeared (Tirrell 2012; Smith 2011). And we also know that what is unacceptable to say in one location may be considered perfectly normal just 30 miles away. For this reason, it is undoubtedly an oversimplification to claim that the norm of racial equality is in force. It is, broadly speaking, in force. But there will be times and places where it isn't. And at those times and places, raising the issue of race will not neutralize a racial dogwhistle. (For more complexities on this point, consider the difficulties raised earlier concerning the content of the norm.)[17]

Another limitation is also important to emphasise. What I have argued is that explicitly raising the issue of race can defuse a racial dogwhistle. This a defensive maneuver against a very particular sort of political manipulation. It seems to be highly effective. But it does not alter *attitudes*: the racial resentment may not be brought to bear on the voting choice, but it remains. Nor does it alter concrete realities in the world. Centuries of violence, discrimination and segregation are not changed via a rhetorical maneuver. The world we live in remains just as much structured by racism after a dogwhistle has been openly discussed as it was before. It is vital to openly discuss the dogwhistles, but this should not be mistaken for something more powerful than it is.

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[17] Nor will it neutralize it for those individuals who simply disagree with the norm, for even when and where the norm is in place there are openly racist people who explicitly deny the norm. But, of course, those people don't need to be dogwhistled to in order to activate their racism: they are happy to deliberately vote for the racist candidate.

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