H

Hate Speech

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In the western world, hate speech is most commonly understood as derogatory public expression targeting historically disadvantaged social groups. Expression characterized as hate speech typically targets racial and ethnic minorities but it can also be directed against women, LGBTQ people, and religious minorities. Although "hate speech" as a form of expression is universally condemned its defining features and the use of the term in public discourse are often contested. When a speaker publicly characterizes another speaker's prior speech as an instance of hate speech such characterization is invariably seen as a condemnation not only of the referenced speech but the speakers themselves. An alleged speaker of hate speech is portrayed as someone who has violated deeply held norms of a society and as someone with a flawed (hateful, prejudiced, racist, homophobic, sexist, authoritarian, etc.) personality that prompts her or him to perform hate speech. Because the public use of the term as a normative challenge (Hall, 1988/1989) is likely to have negative social consequences alleged speakers of hate speech tend to respond to the accusation with a counterchallenge in order to save face and to promote the positive public identity of their social groups. Usually, such counterchallenges feature an alternative interpretation of hate speech and a challenge to the prior speaker's credibility.

Language and social interaction research on racist hate speech brings two related sets of communication phenomena into view: the stigmatization and avoidance of overt hate speech, and context-bound acts of alleging and responding to accusations of hate speech. First, the vast majority of people living in western societies no longer tolerate overt, public expressions of racial prejudice, or white supremacy (Billig et al., 1988). Race-based aggression led to the establishment of international treaties such as the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). Numerous antiracist nongovernmental organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and member organizations of the European

Network Against Racism (ENAR) routinely monitor racist groups and their activities. In 2013, the Council of Europe launched the No Hate Speech Movement to combat racist hate speech online. These institutions express and sustain the widespread social consensus about the reprehensible nature of openly prejudiced public expression. That consensus is bolstered by the quick public condemnations of politicians' and celebrities' racist remarks, and antihate speech legislation in a number of countries in the western world. As a result of such near universal consensus, the act of identifying and condemning hate speech in public discourse has come to be seen as a hallmark of democratic social and political order, and most public speakers refrain from producing public expression that can be readily characterized as hate speech.

Second, accusations of racist hate speech and responses to such accusations occur in particular social, cultural, political, and discursive contexts, and are designed to achieve particular sociopolitical ends. Those who allege hate speech strive to achieve two social ends: to sustain a political and moral order in which hate speech is not tolerated, and to challenge another speaker who violated that political and moral order. Such accusations imply a moral disparity between challenger and the challenged. Public speakers often attempt to translate such moral disparity into political advantage. Antiracist advocates may allege hate speech in order to discredit racist speakers or groups and to pressure politicians to pass antihate speech legislation. Politicians may charge an opponent with hate speech to display a morally upright citizen identity and to expand their voter base. In response to such accusations, speakers may respond with a counterchallenge. Speakers may argue that the communicative act their challengers characterized as hate speech did not occur or it did not qualify as hate speech. They may further attempt to mitigate the face threat of the normative challenge by morally discrediting the speaker who made the original accusation, or by claiming that the accusation itself constitutes hate speech. The use of the term tends to result in social and political polarization between speakers and the groups they represent. In the context of such polarization, the very act of defining hate speech reinforces the social division between those who advocate a particular definition and those who interpret that definition as an accusation targeting their brand of political expression. In some contexts, the political use of the term hate speech and debates surrounding its proper definition have led to such an expansion of the term's meaning that it can be used to label any kind of public expression a political actor finds objectionable. This expansion becomes a practical communication problem for antidiscrimination advocates.

LSI scholarship on racist hate speech

The majority of Language and Social Interaction (LSI) scholarship on hate speech is concerned with racist expression. Scholars have been finding answers to two questions: How do speakers express racist or sexist views without risking being labeled racist (or sexist)? How do speakers use "hate speech" and related terms in public discourse?

In response to the first question, discourse analysts have been arguing since the early 1980s that the social stigma attached to overt (or Jim Crow) racism prompted speakers to express their prejudiced views in more subtle ways. Prejudiced speakers who belong

to the white majority have a wide variety of argumentative, semantic, rhetorical, and pragmatic strategies at their disposal to express and disseminate socially problematic attitudes (van Dijk, 1984). Such strategies protect speakers from being held accountable for harboring prejudiced views and they sustain large-scale discourses about racial and ethnic difference that, in turn, sustain the social disadvantage of minority groups (van Dijk, 1993). Discourse analysts have referred to this form of racism as everyday racism (Essed, 1991) and reasonable racism (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000).

One strategy highlighted in this line of research is the denial of racism. Speakers who anticipate being charged with expressing racist views can respond to such anticipated moral challenges with: a direct denial; an indirect denial (downplaying the seriousness of the norm violation, for example, by referring to racist views as expressions of "resentment"); justification (arguing that the problematic statement is justified by the facts, e.g., a racial group's observable violations of social norms and expectations); and moral reversal (arguing that those who are likely to charge the speaker with racism are the "real" racists) (van Dijk, 2002). These strategies do not guarantee that a speaker's prior expression will not be characterized as racist hate speech. Nonetheless, they are designed and used to decrease the likelihood of such moral challenges.

LSI scholars who address the second question seek to identify the ideological and cultural basis of using particular terms to evaluate the expression of others as "hateful," "racist," or "prejudiced," and to respond to such accusations. Michael Billig and his associates (Billig et al., 1988) showed that contemporary accusations and counteraccusations of prejudice were equally rooted in the western ideology of prejudice. The notion of prejudice emerged during the European Enlightenment; 18th-century European philosophers identified religion as a prejudiced mode of thought. Today, however, the term "prejudice" tends to refer to those irrational feelings or attitudes toward particular social groups that ought to be made the object of universal condemnation. Public expression criticizing prejudiced attitudes and prejudiced people is grounded in a moral system that prizes the liberal values of universal freedom, equality, and fraternity. Such morally grounded criticism sets up a disparity between the enlightened, rational critic, and the prejudiced, irrational target of criticism.

Accusations of prejudice are reversible: The accusation, or the anticipated accusation, of irrationality can be met with a counteraccusation of irrationality. To illustrate this reversibility Billig (1988) used the example of an article that had appeared in the official magazine of the National Front, a British far-right political party. The author of the article claimed that liberal critics' accusations of prejudice against the National Front were, in fact, evidence of the critics' prejudiced attitudes against anyone who did not share their political views. The ideology of prejudice allowed the author to argue, in the same breath, that prejudice was wrong and that the liberal critics of the party were wrong for being prejudiced. Such discursive moves are designed create a contrast between the author's rationality and the critics' irrationality.

The ideology of prejudice, as described by Billig, allows public speakers to make accusations and counteraccusations of hate speech in a variety of speech communities. Different speech communities draw on different sets of linguistic resources to charge one another with harboring irrational attitudes toward particular social groups and their representatives. In debates of contemporary racism on US English television the

charge of hate speech or supporting hate speech can be diffused by appeals to the universal right to free expression and by the implicit accusation that one's opponent refuses to respect that right (Chiang, 2010). In addition, US English speakers can frame a prior utterance as an accusation of racism and refute the accusation by charging their opponent with "race-baiting" or "playing the race card" (Chiang, 2010). Both of these terms are used to allege that one's opponent is raising an unwarranted concern about racism for the purpose of claiming a moral high ground and achieving positive self-representation.

In Hungarian public discourse, the term *gyűlöletbeszéd* ("hate speech") was frequently used in the first decade of the 21st century to characterize an opposing political group's public statements as irrational and morally objectionable (Boromisza-Habashi, 2013). As a result of frequent use in contentious public debates the meaning of the term hate speech became unmoored from its original antiracist use and the subject of contestation in the Hungarian context. The contestation of the term's meaning revolved around two competing interpretations. One interpretation held that the defining feature of hate speech was its content. From this perspective, expression that conformed to a particular legal or normative definition of hate speech (such as Holocaust-denial or public incitement against a social, political, or religious group) counted as an instance of hate speech. The competing interpretation held that hate speech was characterized by the hateful tone of public expression targeting particular social and political groups. Advocates of the content- and tone-oriented interpretations of hate speech did not simply disagree about the proper definition of hate speech. Their contestation of the term's meaning amounted to essential contestation, a zero-sum game whose ultimate goal was to portray oneself as morally superior to the advocate of a competing definition. As a result of the persistent essential contestation competing definitions of hate speech have gradually become increasingly powerful communicative resources for political identification (Boromisza-Habashi, 2010).

Denial and reversal in response to accusations of hate speech: A case from Hungary

The following excerpts from a radio call-in episode serve as illustrations of accusations of hate speech being both deniable and reversible, and of the local, cultural foundations of deniability and reversibility. The call-in episode was aired as part of the program *Szóljon hozzá* ("Have your say!") on September 24, 2003 on a Hungarian state-sponsored radio station (*Kossuth Rádió*). On this particular day, the host of the show invited two expert guests—a sociologist and a political scientist—to discuss and clarify the meaning of the term hate speech and to respond to debates surrounding those meanings. At the beginning of the show, the two guests explained their takes on the meaning of the term. The political scientist argued that the defining characteristic of hate speech was its capacity to evoke fear in a social group. The sociologist advocated a legalistic definition according to which hate speech meant targeting social groups with derogatory or discriminatory public expression that assigns negative attributes to

the group as a whole. The sociologist criticized the political scientist for not offering clear enough criteria for what counted as expression evoking fear.

Immediately after the sociologist voiced his critique against the political scientist's definition of hate speech the host took a call from an unidentified female caller. The caller began with an accusation of hate speech against prominent members of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Party. She then provided various examples of Socialist hate speech, and concluded by contrasting left-wing hate speech with right-wing "talk about love."

(1) Caller's accusation

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01 CALLER:     Én teljesen megdöbbentőnek tartom a
               I find hate speech completely shocking, and I
               gyűlöletbeszédet, és megdöbbentőnek tartom a szocialisták
               find the hate speech of the Socialists shocking.
               gyűlöletbeszédét. Lassan mondom, hogy mindenki
               I will say this slowly, so that everyone
               értse. Tehát. Azt amikor tajtékozva, szinte habzó
               understands. So. When she speaks such terrible things,
               szájjal beszél olyan szörnyűséges dolgokat, olyan
               close to foaming at the mouth, almost trembling, such
               gyűlöletes dolgokat az a bizonyos hölgy,
               hateful things in a mad rage, that lady,
               szocialista hölgy.
               the Socialist lady.
02             (4 turns omitted)
03 CALLER:     Szóval olyan olyan iszonyatos módon olyan
               So, in such such ghastly manner, so
               gyűlöletesen a tessék meghallgatni egy Orbán
               hatefully, just listen to a speech by [former conservative
               Viktor beszédet. Tessék meghallgatni. Hogy soha
               Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán.
               Just listen to it. That
               nem volt gyűlölet, mégis rásütötték, hogy mindig
               there was never any hate, even though they accused him
               a szeretetről beszél, tessék megnézni,
               of it, he always talks about love, just look at,
               összehasonlítani egyszer, egy jobboldali
               compare just once a speech given by a right-wing
               politikusnak, a beszédét, és tessék egy baloldali
               politician, and look at the speech of a left-wing
               politikusnak a beszédet. Szóval egyszer.
               politician. So just once.
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Accusations of hate speech are marked by the presence of an allegation, precipitating events, and metadiscourse. The caller starts with an *allegation*: Socialists speak "hate speech," which is "shocking." She follows up with various examples of *precipitating events*, concrete moments of public expression that, according to the accuser, merit the allegation of hate speech. These include a Socialist politician speak[ing] "such terrible

things, close to foaming at the mouth, almost trembling, such hateful things in a mad rage." Socialist public expression is described as deeply irrational, bordering on the psychotic. The caller uses explicit *metadiscourse* to draw up a contrast between speaking in "such ghastly manner, so hatefully" and "talking about love." This makes it clear that she is using a *tone-oriented* interpretation of hate speech according to which the hateful tone of public expression is the defining characteristic of hate speech. According to this interpretation, hate speech is a token of hateful feelings toward a particular group—in this case, the Hungarian political right.

In response to this accusation, the host first points out the political bias of the caller and then, in the excerpt below, mobilizes the legalistic definition of hate speech that the sociologist expert guest introduced prior to the call. The host applies the elements of the legalistic definition to the caller's accusation with the sometimes reluctant collaboration of the caller, and formulates a counteraccusation. The caller responds with a direct denial and a justification.

(2) Host's counteraccusation

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01  01  HOST:    viszont hadd kérdezzem meg öntől
                 But let me ask you
02  02  CALLER:  Igen?
                 Yes?
03  03  HOST:    Teljesen egyértelmű volt az
                 It was entirely obvious that
04  04  CALLER:  Igen?
                 Yes?
05  05  HOST:    hogy egyik politikai csoportot támogatja a másik politikai
                 you support one political group and the other political
06  06           csoportot pedig hát nem tudom hogy hogya ö gyülöli
                 group well I'm not sure how to ((say this)) er you hate?
07  07  CALLER:  Hát akik akik ilyen módon tönkreteszik az országot hát-
                 I, well, people who are ruining the country like this-
08  08  HOST:    Nem én most a személyes véleményére egy
                 No, I want your personal opinion.
09  09  CALLER:  Én-
                 I-
10  10  HOST:    Egy szóban szeretném hogyha válaszolna.
                 I would like you to answer in one word.
11  11  CALLER:  Igen természetesen hát én
                 Yes of course well I
12  12  HOST:    Nem érz-
                 Don't you f-
13  13  CALLER:  a mindig gyülölöm ((inaudible)) meg a-
                 I have always hated ((inaudible)) and the-
14  14  HOST:    Nem érzi-
                 Don't you feel-
15  15  CALLER:  Igen?
                 Yes?
16  16  HOST:    Nem érzi ugy esetleg hogy-
                 Don't you feel perhaps that-
17  17           ugye most ezt nagy nyilvánosság előtt mondja el
                 and you are speaking in front of the general public
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18   18  CALLER:  Igen? Igen igen?
                  Yes? Yes yes?
19   19  HOST:    nem érzi azt hogy végülis bizonyos szempontból
                  Don't you feel that after all, from a certain perspective
20   20           talán azzal hogy másokat gyűlölködéssel vádol
                  perhaps by charging others with the expression of hatred
21   21           okkal vagy ok nélkül, nyilván ezt nem tisztem eldönteni
                  with or without reason, that's obviously not my job to decide
22   22           maga is gyűlöletbeszédet folytat?
                  you are also conducting hate speech?
23   23  CALLER:  Én nem hiszem én csak tényeket állapítottam meg
                  I don't think so, I have merely stated facts
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The host formulates a counteraccusation by first getting the caller to admit that her charge of hate speech against members of the Hungarian Socialist Party is an "entirely obvious" (line 3) token of her "hatred" for a particular political group (lines 1–11). This admission satisfies three elements of the legalistic definition: singling out a group (Socialists), speaking in a derogatory manner about them ("'hating' Socialists") on the basis of a negative attribute assigned, in a wholesale manner, to the group (Socialist speak "hate speech"). The caller supplies the last element of the definition when she agrees that she is "speaking in front of the general public." It would be difficult to deny that her expression of hatred against Socialists is currently being broadcast throughout Hungary. Although the counteraccusation is hedged (line 19) and is phrased as a question (lines 19, 22), "you are also conducting hate speech" counts as a counteraccusation in the light of the sociologist's definition and the host's apparent effort not only to identify all elements of that definition in the caller's talk but also to get the caller to agree that those elements of hate speech are present in her talk. The caller, however, is able to directly deny that she has just performed hate speech ("I don't think so") and meet the charge of norm violation with a justification ("I have merely stated facts") on line 23. The host does not pursue his counterchallenge and the call concludes soon afterwards.

Like the caller's accusation, the host's counteraccusation contains an allegation of hate speech (line 22) and identifies a precipitating event (the caller's public expression of hatred against a group). Additionally, he uses explicit metadiscourse about the caller's accusation: "it was entirely obvious" (line 3), "you support one political group and the other … you hate" (lines 5–6), "you are speaking in front of the general public" (line 17), "conducting hate speech" (line 22). The host uses these metadiscursive labels to gradually build up the claim that the caller's accusation of hate speech is, in fact, a precipitating event that merits the label of hate speech. The goal of this rhetorical strategy is not only to identify an instance of hate speech but also to defuse the caller's accusation and to undermine her credibility by casting her as a speaker of hate speech, and hence an irrational person who claims to be a judge of hate speech but lacks the capacity to recognize the hateful nature of her own speech.

The host's strategy can be described in terms of the distinction between tone and content-oriented interpretations of hate speech. The basis of the caller's accusation of hate speech against the Socialists was their alleged hateful feelings toward their political opponents. Although in his effort to cast the caller as a speaker of hate speech the host

manages to get the caller to admit harboring hatred toward Socialists her feelings of hatred matter less to the host than the fact that she said she hated Socialists on the air. Her admission, thus, satisfies one element of a content-based interpretation of hate speech, one based on criteria contained in a legalistic definition.

Four observations can be made about the above excerpts. First, there is no reason to assume that hate speech will be interpreted the same way in other speech communities. The range of meanings associated with the term is an empirical question for the LSI analyst. Second, the Hungarian case illustrates the extent to which the meaning of the term "hate speech" can become the object of contestation. In the Hungarian context, by 2003, it was possible to publicly discuss the meaning of hate speech with or without reference to the range of prejudices traditionally associated with the term such as racism, sexism, or homophobia. Defining hate speech had become an exercise in taking sides against one's political or moral opponent and claiming political or moral superiority. However, in other speech communities the meaning of hate speech may be less contested, not contested at all, or differently contested. For example, there is some evidence that in US English use the meaning of the term is less contested (Boromisza-Habashi, 2012). Third, the Hungarian case illustrates that in at least one speech community it is feasible to launch a counteraccusation against anyone accusing another party of hate speech. This point requires further elaboration of the structure of accusations of hate speech. In the conversation between caller and host, the caller accuses Socialists (first party) of hate speech against their political opponents (second party) from a third party judge position. In response, the host positions himself as the new third party judge, and casts the caller as a first party speaker of hate speech against Socialists (second party). The proliferation of the term's local meanings in Hungarian public discourse gave rise to a spiraling cultural form of communication that allowed a speaker to easily maneuver himself or herself into a third party judge position, cast another judge's accusation as a precipitating event, and claim political or moral superiority. Fourth, the various competing meanings of the term are supported by parallel moral systems. The caller's interpretation rests on the proscription of public speech that displays unbridled hatred for an opposing group; the host's interpretation is based on a proscription of public speech whose content contains a set range of elements. Their conversation makes it clear that neither of the competing interpretations and underlying moral systems has enough rhetorical force to invalidate the other. Hence, normative challenges (Hall, 1988/1989) against speakers of hate speech cannot fulfill their function of affirming the moral order of the community by forcing the norm violator to acquiesce to the challenge. All an alleged norm violator needs to do to avoid being held accountable for hate speech is to opt for and advocate an alternative interpretation of the term and the moral system supporting that interpretation.

Implications for antiracist advocacy

The LSI study of explicit and implicit accusations of hate speech and related forms of prejudice raises the question: What is the rhetorical force of such accusations? The

answer to this question, of course, depends on what we mean by rhetorical force. Here, the rhetorical force of an accusation (a normative challenge) is thought of as the accusation's capacity to elicit alignment, or the response of acquiescence to the challenge and agreement about appropriate social conduct. Hall (1988/89) argues that acquiescence affirms the local moral order and distinguishes three forms of acquiescence. A redo takes place when the norm violator responds to the violation by redoing the problematic act in a way that conforms to the norms on which the challenge is based. The violator can also apologize for the violation. An extension occurs in the absence of the violator. The problematic act is not repaired but other, third-party speakers affirm the norm(s) implied in the normative challenge, for example, by gossiping about the absent norm violator with the challenger. In the case of accusations of hate speech (and other forms of prejudice), the only form of acquiescence likely to occur is extension. Those who align themselves with the accuser, the accuser's interpretation of hate speech, and the moral system underlying their interpretation, frequently support or join the accusation in the norm violator's absence. This in turn creates and affirms social distance between the accuser and his or her social group and the person charged with prejudice and his or her social group. Hence, the rhetorical force of accusations discussed here are limited.

This observation resonates with warnings about the efficacy of accusations of hate speech, prejudice, or racism in antiracist advocacy. In their discussion of the "prejudice problematic" Wetherell and Potter (1992) note that the complex combination of the ideology of prejudice discussed by Billig (Billig et al., 1988), the notion of prejudice as personal pathology, and the notion of hidden but powerful prejudices in society gives speakers rhetorical possibilities to dodge accusations of prejudice. Dodging prejudice can be accomplished by contesting the accuser's interpretation of prejudice and/or denying the personal pathology of prejudice, while admitting that prejudice does in fact exist in contemporary societies. These moves set the stage for what Wetherell and Potter refer to as the discursive strategy of "splitting" (p. 214), or separating the prejudiced from the nonprejudiced, identifying with the nonprejudiced, and using that identification to justify seeking a kernel of truth in majority society complaints against racial minorities. The result of splitting is the reinforcement of the social status quo — the notion of essential differences among racial groups is affirmed, and forms of discrimination that do not depend on individual agency are hidden from view.

LSI analyses of accusations and denials of prejudice suggest that the antiracist strategy of holding individuals or groups of individuals publicly and directly accountable for racist hate speech or other forms of prejudice is likely to fail in two ways. First, such a strategy does not appear to have the rhetorical power to produce alignment, nor increased political and moral commitment to antiracism in society. Rather, the strategy further entrenches existing disagreement and social distance between antiracists and their critics. Second, the strong focus on individual prejudice and observable forms of prejudice (e.g., Neo-Nazi marches) is not an effective means of eradicating systemic discrimination. LSI research should prompt antiracist advocates to break with the tradition of cultivating a contrast between "good" antiracists and "bad" racists and to focus on how institutionalized forms of discrimination affect the daily lives of

members of historically disadvantaged social groups (Essed, 2000) or how they can improve their rhetorical strategies (Boromisza-Habashi, 2013).

SEE ALSO: Accusatory Discourse; Context; Evaluative Language; Identity Construction; Ideology in Discourse; Metadiscourse; Morality in Discourse; Racist Discourse; Speech Community

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Helpline Discourse

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Helplines all have one aspect in common. Helpline services handle incoming calls initiated by callers outside the service, who seek help in some form. Despite their common features, helplines range widely in the types of services they provide for users, from being able to complain about a product, to seeking information about health and medical issues, to having someone listen to your troubles or concerns, to finding student housing, to undertaking banking or seeking legal advice, to reporting child abuse, to being able to talk through mental health or family matters, and so on (Baker, Emmison, & Firth, 2005). Helplines vary enormously in terms of who responds to the call for help—in some cases volunteers, in other cases professionals with qualifications, who possess specialized knowledge. While the first helplines were operated over the telephone, more recently helpline services are being offered through online chat, e-mail, and other digital modalities.

Bodies of psychological and counseling research that examine helplines generally rely on self-reporting surveys and demographic information to evaluate and explore the services being provided. While they offer information about the ways helplines are used, they do not tend to explore helpline discourse in detail or show how helpline interaction occurs in real time. Harvey Sacks's examination of telephone calls to a suicide prevention center in the 1960s formed the beginnings of a body of research investigating helpline discourse. The dominant methodological orientation has been