

## *Review Paper*

# Public Prejudicial Discourse as a Global Socio-Ethnic Phenomenon: Using Digital Media to Limit Detrimental Language Flows

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### ***Abstract***

*Studies continuously seek answers to how harmful speech delivered by any group or individual to three or more people affects their wellbeing. Specifically, deliverers target specific individuals or groups with their speech often unjustifiably or incorrectly based solely on the individual's association with a group. Various avenues have been used to disseminate prejudicial data, creating different reactions. Whether verbal antagonism—casual racial slurs or disparaging race-sensitive comments or non-verbal expressions—explicit and implicit images published to denigrate an individual or group, prejudicial narratives have massive socio-economic and cultural consequences. Nevertheless, prejudice is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on their membership in a particular social group (Allport, 1954); it is common against an unfamiliar cultural group and behaviors associated with prejudice such as discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism are now rife in communities worldwide and digital media networks. This paper analyzes some behavioral theories and uses the matrix of self-awareness and its ability to unlock our understanding of communication between groups and enhance group cultures. Referencing the use of prejudicial language in America and the United Nations Human Rights Commission's efforts to track prejudicial discourse, it suggests steps to limit anti-other behaviors.*

### ***Keywords***

*prejudice, discrimination, discourse, digital media, racism*

## 1. Introduction

Discourse is written or spoken communication, a debate, information authoritatively shared about a topic, the ability to express thoughts and feelings by articulating sounds and words. Paraphrasing the Cambridge Dictionary, prejudicial discourse is a public speech that encourages violence towards a person or group based on race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Prejudicial speech is anything verbalized or written to induce resentment in another person or directed at a group. Verbal or nonverbal communication expresses prejudice against an identified individual or group based on race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, veteran status, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Prejudicial speech aims to incite intense dislike based on specific attributes.

Scholars have identified concepts responsible for two primary outcomes of prejudicial speech: (a) speech aimed at intentionally and explicitly showing discrimination (b) speech delivered to stereotype. Gordon Allport, an early leader in comprehensive social science, articulated the sequential steps by which an individual behaves negatively toward members of another racial group. For Allport (1954), negative behavior includes verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attack, and extermination. Verbal antagonists consciously and unwittingly use disparaging race-laced remarks against persons and groups outside their ethnic or racial category. Together with nonverbal expressions of antagonism, they can create a hostile environment in public places, including schools, workplaces, communities, social gatherings, business locations, and sporting arenas.

Prejudice persists in society through social learning and conformity to social norms. O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson (2011) have observed that children learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs from society, while this author believes that their peers, parents, teachers, friends, the media, and other socialization channels. Cognitive behaviorists hold that normative pressures to conform and share prejudiced beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors occur when a society accepts certain types of prejudice and discriminative practices. No wonder prejudicial speech users seem satisfied because they believe they are in the right mind when using such language, no matter how destructive, to the intended receiver. Such thinkers are widely considered to have the characteristics of a racist.

The seasoned hate monger uses reverse psychology, a technique involving the assertion of a belief or behavior opposite to the one desired, with the expectation that this approach would encourage the subject of the persuasion to do what is expected. This technique, coined by the world-renowned German-born sociologists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, relies on the psychological phenomenon of reactance. Writing about “psychology in reverse,” also known as belief or behavior that is opposite to the one desired, Adorno and Horkheimer advanced the notion that common prejudices could inadvertently or deliberately damage the esteem of persons in marginalized groups, i.e., Blacks, LGBTQ+, international students, immigrants, women.

## 2. Method

Method 1: This paper is loosely guided by a combination of behavioral theories and archetypes propounded by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Peter Ludwig Berger, which largely explain that conscious and unconscious factors in our personality and behavior identify us and highlight our beliefs. It is also based on Berger & Luckmann's (1967) psychoanalysis perspective that irrational, unconscious drives and motives, often originating in childhood, underlie human behavior. To refresh our memory, Jung (1981) theorizes that people are motivated by a more general "psychological energy" that pushes them to achieve self-realization, "psychic wholeness," and harmony. For Jung, a person's purpose in life is to have their conscious and unconscious selves become fully integrated to become their 'true self.' Jung's psychology reportedly lacks the necessary scientific basis, making it mystical and based on foundational truth (Cattoi, Ordorisio, & David, 2018, p. 72). Jung's analytical psychology is the premise upon which a clear explanation of manifestations of prejudicial speech should be offered because we are not mind-readers, so we cannot succinctly determine the true intentions of a hate language user. For example, an individual or group can use hateful speech if they have limited knowledge of those being targeted by it or do not care about the psychological, emotional, physical, and economic damages such speech may have on the other.

Method 2: Analysis of the human self per the Johari approach

To understand the mindset of prejudicial speech users, the contexts, conditions, or circumstances for the interactions, and the environment that nurtures and fosters prejudicial speech, I refer to an exercise that explains how people can identify their strengths, weaknesses and blind spots. The Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955; Luft, 1969), a communication model used for self-disclosure and understanding how people communicate in a group and convey and accept feedback, shall provide a context to analyze the psyche of prejudicial speech users. For reference, the Johari Window model is based on two principles: that (1) trust can be acquired by revealing information about you to others, and (2) you can learn about yourself from their feedbacks. It is a standard window with four panes; two represent the (known) self, and the other representing what is unknown to self but known to others. It is important to note that information transfers from one pane to the other based on mutual trust achievable through socializing with others and the feedback from members of that group. Factors unknown to others within the context of prejudicial speech delivery include:

- a natural skill that a person does not realize they possess
- a fear or aversion that a person does not know they are nurturing
- repressed or subconscious feeling
- conditioned behavior or attitudes developed since childhood
- values taught during a child's formative years, especially about their race and other races
- negative opinions a person has received about another person from the same race without the

latter's knowledge

- unverified and untested expertise a person has acquired about another person or persons from another race (See details in Figure 1 below)

Figure 1: Explanation of the Johari model

- Open/free area: The open space is that part of our conscious self—our attitudes, behavior, motivation, values, way of life—we are aware of, also known to others. We move within this area with freedom. We are “open books.”
- Hidden: Our hidden area cannot be known to others unless we disclose it. There is that which we freely keep within ourselves and that we retain out of fear. The degree to which we share ourselves with others (disclosure) is the degree to which we can be known.
- Blind: There are things about ourselves we do not know, but that others can see more clearly, or things we imagine to be true of ourselves for a variety of reasons, but also those others do not see at all. When others say what they see in a supportive, responsible way, and we hear it, we can test the reality of who we are and can improve.
- Unknown: We are more productive and sophisticated than the things we and others know, but often something happens—is felt, read, heard, dreamed —something from our unconscious is revealed. Then we “know” what we have never “known.” Source: <https://primarygoals.com/teams/models/johari-window/>

The model is further explained in this form:

## Johari Window model

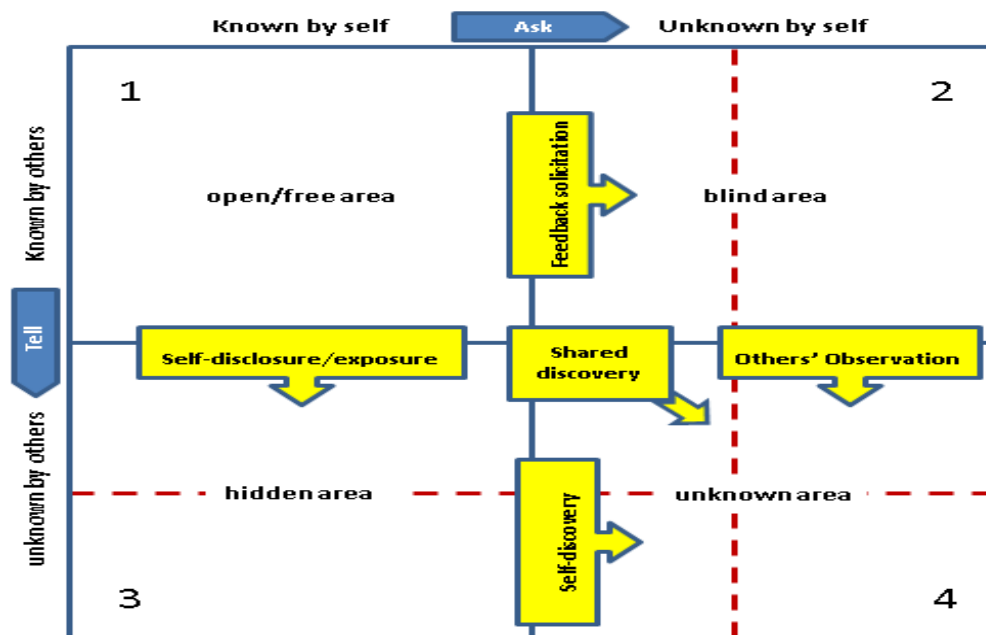


Figure 1. Johari Window Model

Source: <https://www.selfawareness.org.uk/news/understanding-the-johari-window-model>

Through the Johari Window matrix, I identify other behaviors that explain how hateful people think, verbalize, and expected outcomes.

That analysis, which is the epicenter of inter-personal, intra-personal communication, and to some extent, public discourse, offers us valuable insights into the mindset of prejudicial speech users and their intended target(s). More importantly, it illuminates our vision of an actual scene in which the user and receiver are together and what transpires during the entire process of communicating hate messaging.

### 3. Conclusions

Prejudicial speech is rising globally as networked communities interact and share data among themselves and with external groups. The coziness of interacting with like-minded people has created a new linguistic repertoire and a breathing ground for manifestations of hateful expressions against cultural other (s). Members within a cyber-group invent and share xenophobic words and phrases that ultimately mobilize them to express hate-related thoughts or take evil actions against individuals and socio-cultural-ethnic groups whose lifestyles they do not understand or like. These communities exist within the national territory and online, making it difficult for law enforcement authorities to properly track their operations or diminish their power. While the concern over prejudicial speech has moved

away from separate national anxieties and become a global issue, the preferred way of handling prejudicial speech has gravitated toward restricting it by regulation rather than isolating it by more logical reasoning.

Lastly, prejudicial speech is incompatible with democracy itself; therefore, advocacy groups can canvas their governments and persuade their people to curb prejudicial speech. The fact that dominant group members know how their behaviors affect vulnerable groups advises us that racial harmony can be achieved if proper measures are taken. Clinical psychologists have recently established that dominant group members feel more guilt, anger, and sadness after observing severe ostracism of a disadvantaged instead of dominant group members (Petsnik & Varauer, 2020). Although there were no direct effects on behavioral outcomes, their exploratory analyses suggest that observing ostracism of disadvantaged versus dominant group members indirectly impacted behavior proven by increased feelings of anger. These results indicate that ostracism is probably being a relatable experience. When it occurs across group boundaries, it awakens individuals' sensitivity to injustice and discrimination.

#### **4. Discussions**

##### *4.1 Interpretations of Prejudicial Discourse*

Prejudicial speech is understood as verbal and nonverbal language or terms or phrases used directly or indirectly to induce an adverse reaction; it is the language directed to intimidate an out-group or influence the behavior of in-group members. Victims of prejudicial speech may be individuals, businesses, financial institutions, government entities, religious organizations, or society. Characteristics of prejudicial speech include harsh terms and derogatory language—peaking, writing, singing, acting, yelling on street corners, advertising, threats, slander, burning flags, etc., to express one's disdain for another person's ethnic group. The inferred meaning makes prejudicial speech more potent; in other words, the prejudicial speech user aims to undermine the integrity of the intended receiver. Prejudicial speech does not necessarily involve a threat or a desire to incite a crime; in open societies, it is generally understood as speech that advocates genocide or incites hatred against an identifiable out-group. Speech demeans based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, or similar ground.

Another context is that understanding or misunderstanding of another culture can and does influence racist language. To clarify this position, we propose that each culture sees language differently. A word in one cultural group may have a different meaning in another culture; the speaker's familiarity with the listener and exposure to the specific language and amount of education determines how they communicate. Other emotional or psychological factors beyond bias and fear can influence one's expression. Hence, before deciding why a person has used prejudicial speech, we must consider the speaker's socio-ethnic circumstances. Their use of inflammatory speech and violent acts could have

come from their limited diction and forms of expression in that particular language.

#### *4.2 Sociology of Prejudicial Speech*

In general terms, discourse is the crucial qualifier for the economic, social, diplomatic, and cultural advancement of individuals, non-profit organizations, businesses, nations, and relationships simply because words evoke mixed feelings, perspectives, and reactions. We cannot fully understand the sociopolitical impact of prejudicial speech on us if we do not know the characteristics of democratic self-governance and the qualities of a tolerant society. For example, the address is dangerous when it causes physical harm, as exemplified in the US Racial Discrimination Act 1975 § 18C. The Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University defines prejudicial speech as vocal communication that demeans or attacks a person or people as members of a group with shared characteristics such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. With this framework, language users can create their semantic meanings from the sounds and lexicon (words) and use them as weapons against a perceived enemy. Culture and language are not analogous; they complement each other in that they include thinking. We think in the language we use, hence thinking and expressing language direct our values/our way of dealing with people and situations.

During communication, offense takes place when three scenarios are present: the receiver is offended when (1) they experience a dislike, and (2) they attribute that state to the wrongful conduct of another source (speaker, spoken or written information delivered), and (3) they resent the other source for their role in causing them to be in that state (Feinberg (1983)). Here, decoding speech harm rests in the individual's interpretation of the language used. Any internalized attributes to that language or affective factors such as the user's skin color, education level, social class, or gender are best determined by the receiver's ability to decode the message's message. Meta-ethical questions arise from this context. A salient one being the type of conduct a nation or society should identify to make prejudicial speech criminal without violating citizens' freedom (rights). Other philosophers and sociologists have attempted to answer that question by proposing liberty-reduction principles based on some aspect of the law. Amdur (1985) agrees that more thinkers believe the society (nation) can impose legal penalties to prevent others from speech harm.

Prejudicial speech and free speech have existed concomitantly since homo sapiens occupied the earth and have since been practiced in all countries worldwide. Why? Because, fundamentally, we (humans) are not born prisoners of conscience; instead, we are born free, as ancient Greek philosopher and polymath Aristotle posits, expected to express ourselves freely. Free will is a necessary spice in human life; otherwise, no one in any society or nation would be able to communicate a thought or feeling. To reiterate the words of British Philosopher Thomas Hobbes, "a free agent is he that can do as he will, and forbear as he will, and that liberty is the absence of external impediments" (<https://iep.utm.edu/freewill>).

The widely cited German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant, brings out the moral angle of one is free will in what he calls the “categorical imperative,”—an unconditional moral obligation that is binding in all circumstances, rather than being dependent on our inclination or purpose. Connecting Kantian ethics with free will, we arrive at a crossroads where our imperative morality clashes with free expression. Suppose an ‘imperative’ is a proposition that declares an action as absolute or unconditional, such as the verbal and non-verbal language used to meet a particular need. In that case, it means that such expressions can and should be defended and recommended within the framework of right and wrong behavior. Free will has always clashed with social order created by regimes and imposed by law enforcement entities (police, gendarmes, military, supervisors, etc.) to bring social justice, peace, and the common good. Each regime creates and practices its social order within its territory, tapping into indigenous customs and values from external forces (more powerful nations).

Thus, free expression can be (and is often) directed by ethnic, religious, institutional, racial, or colonial socio-cultural biases. It follows that prejudicial speech is ingrained in the people’s psyche, no matter their geographical location, ethnicity, religion, gender, social standing, or time in history. However, persons willing to learn the dangers of being neutral in a place where prejudicial speech exists may be hard-pressed to know that staying neutral when (one is) in a position to relay information can be chaotic. We are responsible for speaking publicly about political, social, and ethical issues. As Harris, J. (2013), a professor at the University of Manchester, England, has found out, there may be conflicts speaking up for what is right. Nevertheless, continuously staying neutral can cause problems with our morale.

#### *4.3 Prejudicial Speech as a Human Phenomenon*

Incitement to hatred may permissibly be regulated if we can show that it can harm others by contributing to a climate of hostility leading to discrimination, violence, and injustice against members of certain social groups (Brown, 2008). Prejudicial speech is a form of expression through which speakers or writers strive to humiliate or incite hatred against individuals, a social class, group, or race. As Asante (2003) puts it, prejudicial speech or offensive language is a characteristic of hierarchical language, a self-perpetuating rite de passage. The creator of offensive speech operates from a perceived hierarchy, which gives them the pedestal from which to offend.

The right to freedom of expression implies that it can be openly debated, scrutinized, and criticized as long as it does not advocate hatred that incites hostility, discrimination, or violence against individuals. Further, the United Nations has weighed in on hate discourse. The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech states that prejudicial speech is in itself an attack on tolerance, inclusion, diversity, and the very essence of our human rights norms and principles. More broadly, it undermines social cohesion, erodes shared values, and can lay the foundation for violence, setting back the cause of peace, stability, sustainable development, and the fulfillment of human rights for all. (Source:



<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml> retrieved, August 16, 2021)

Lastly, cultures articulate prejudicial speech differently; for some, it is a way to engaging or motivating people to respect local laws; for others, it creates harm, and it is prosecuted through the national laws that govern the freedom of expression.

#### *4.4 Discourse versus Use of Derogatory Language by Ethnic Groups*

The media in America can be identified as an essential perpetrator of prejudicial speech among ethnic groups because it provides continued coverage of the activities of known racist and terrorist groups, extending conflicts among them and maintaining the issue on the discussion list of more people. As earlier stated, prejudicial speech takes different forms depending on ethnic orientation, linguistic capability, and social standing. The figure below describes the language used in public settings in America and their intended meaning. While the list is not exhaustive, it offers the caveat that ethnic groups use prejudicial speech to express their feelings. Table 1 shows verbal diction used by the ethnic groups against each other; specifically, it describes what members of an ethnic group think about the other group.

**Table 1. Prejudicial Speech Diction and Intended Meanings in American Neighborhoods**

Ethnic group interaction	Common expressions used in casual conversations	Connotation
American Blacks among themselves	nigga	Derogatory
Africans about American Blacks	akata	Igbo term for “confused person.”
American Blacks to Africans	“What part of Africa are you from?”	“You are not part of us.”
Caucasians to Africans	“When are you going back to Africa?”	“You do not belong here/among us.” This is common during the preliminary stages of interaction

Blacks regularly use derogatory language to describe whites in their absence, and Hispanics behave the same way towards blacks.

Blacks, Hispanics, Africans vs. whites— “white nationalist” is used synonymously with “white supremacist” and “racist,” the latter term delineates an intense hatred of other races by whites.

Also, in American communities, there is controversy over the delineation of terms to describe races. For example, the majority of the American population invariably describes people of African descent as “blacks,” “people of color,” “African Americans,” or “negroes.” Greg Carr, Chair of Howard University’s Department of Afro-American Studies program, highlights the controversy when he states that no term describes people taken from Africa and forced into slavery (Brown, 2008). People born in Africa call themselves “African,” not black. Equally, people from the same heritage born in other regions in the Northern Hemisphere like the UK, Canada, Caribbean Islands are faced with a similar challenge identifying the appropriate terminology.

The most controversial classification of humanity, which is the locus for racial tensions and is responsible for the profuse use of prejudicial speech against other ethnic groups in the world, may have been advanced by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the father of taxonomy, in his book, *Systema Natura* (1735; 1758, 2008). According to Encyclopedia.com, Linnaeus used continental geography and a color scheme that divided man into white European, dark Asiatic, red American, and black Negro. Johann Blumenbach, writing on the Classification of Human Races, describes Europeans as “hopeful,” Asiatic as “sad and rigid,” American natives as “irascible,” Africans as “calm and lazy” without offering any scientific or logical process to classify the races. That most researchers may have seen those adjectives used by the German anthropologist since 1752 lends credence to the alarmingly destructive perception of Asians, a race with 2.7 billion people—(59.54%) of the world’s population, and Africans carrying 1.3 billion people—(17.2%) living on the mainland and abroad, it is no wonder that the social science community, heads of state, international corporations, students of history and people in general marginalize and undermine the values and achievements of Asians and Africans.

Nevertheless, the politicization of those terms does not define anyone’s true identity. Instead, it advances a false sense of race and class structure in society. To view anyone in terms of their skin color (“black,” “white”) is something that members of a social group construct—no human being looks white. Since people associate ‘white’ with light, brightness, purity, etc., and black with darkness, blurred vision, and uncertainty, those who describe descendants of those ethnic compositions in terms of color have essentially constructed their perceptions of such people. Therefore, such a description is faulty and fundamentally designed to sow seeds of discord and racial tensions between the groups.

Prejudicial speech is associated with violence, nationalism, and terrorism. History continues to teach us that, in every society, prejudicial speech has devastating socio-economic and political consequences on its user, its target (the vulnerable), and the community itself. Neurologists and psychiatrists have established that modifiable social and psychological factors contribute to the genesis of a terrorist and violence-prone mood. On a limited scale, prejudicial speech can lower one’s self-esteem when someone else uses derogatory terms to describe one’s body parts, intellect, religion, community, or race, as stated earlier in this article.

### III. Prejudicial discourse and how it influences our perception of others

Speech, by default, is a form of expression; it is an act, a behavior developed and sustained through the perpetrator's prior knowledge of the individual. Prejudicial speech operates as racist speech; it manifests through public paraphernalia displays in audio-visual contexts such as music or physical appearance. Non-verbal aspects of speech include the user's intentions for selecting words and the desired effect of using a particular tone when delivering the words. When creating or conveying the message, the conscious sender considers the intended receiver's linguistic levels and socio-cultural and economic conditions. In short, a wink, nod, any unwarranted verbal or non-verbal communication to another person or party constitutes prejudicial speech. We miss the point when we see prejudicial speech only as the spoken word or written expression. In a way, prejudicial speech is a new form of racism, primarily when a group uses referential or direct means to index identity.

Prejudicial speech has been described as young people's disease, especially in open societies in the Global North, where established laws allow people to express themselves freely without fear of reprisal. Furthermore, online media platforms in the West (Global North) have not only been relatively efficient in covering the effects of prejudicial speech on identity, but they are responsible for shaping our negative perception of certain groups. In *The Washington Post* (2018), we learn that White-supremacist groups use social media as a tool to distribute their message, where they can incubate their hate online and allow it to spread. However, when their rhetoric reaches certain people, online messages turn into real-life violence. Indeed, several recent years have shown that it can be deadly when online hate goes offline. The Washington Post staff writer Rachel Hatzipanagos in 2018 demonstrates a connection between the spread of hate messages online and violence. In a report published November 30, 2018, Hatzipanagos narrates, "White supremacist Wade Michael Page posted in online forums tied to hate before he went on to murder six people at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012." The Anti-Defamation League, in 2017, published findings that showed most extremist-related killings in the United States were connected to hate messages. Indeed, social media sites have become the epicenter for disseminating white supremacist propaganda.

Experts say individuals inclined toward racism, homophobia, and misogyny have found outlets that reinforce their views and guide them to violence. Social media offer people a platform to publicize their disdain for others. Countries with the vaguest policies on xenophobia, bigotry, and other forms of offensive communication against minorities exploit social media on a large scale. In a Pew Research Center study in 2015, commissioned by the US Council on Foreign Relations that polled people in Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, United States, and in the rest of the world, almost two-thirds of persons polled said the United States (67%) felt people should make offensive statements to minority groups in public, while the Middle East least approved the verbal denigration of minority groups. See Figure 2 showing percentages of people per continent who support the use of

offensive language against minorities.

Looking at the figure above, we learn that the regions with relaxed rules on press freedom and nations whose governments believe in a representative democracy and principles of classical liberalism are prone to allowing people to make offensive statements against underrepresented groups in public. It also shows that a sizeable part of the population appears insensitive to abusive language against minorities. Still, we affirm that prejudicial speech is a risky component in the exercise of human rights. It is challenging to implement a global policy against prejudicial speech rhetoric because policymaking requires population input.

#### IV. Prejudicial speech, human rights, and the United Nations Position

Prejudicial speech is an acceptable form of expression—the bulwark of democracies. Prejudicial speech does not have a legal definition under US law because there is no standard definition for bad ideas, rudeness, sexist language, foul language, unpatriotic speech, or any other kind of speech that everyone might condemn. We also examine speech within a physical and psychological framework. When physical harm or psychological offense is inflicted upon others, four considerations are pertinent: (1) the content of the speech, (2) how the speech is expressed, (3) the intentions and the motives of the speaker, (4) the circumstances in which the speech takes place (Cohen-Almagor, 2001, p. 4).

To understand how prejudicial speech functions across national borders, we must consider the role of mobility factors such as human migration and indigenous values in human rights in a foreign land. Each language group assigns its meaning to words so much that a term used in a particular context in a given language necessarily bears the same meaning in another language or ethnic group. Free speech is the lifeblood of every democratic society because it is a right that allows individuals to argue freely for other rights such as fair trials, free elections, or decent living conditions.

Understanding prejudicial speech in international space and how it affects the rights of individuals requires a review of the post-cold war world rhetoric masterminded by Russia and the United States. The changes in world politics following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led to revolutionary changes sweeping East and Central Europe ending over 40 years of dictatorial Communist rule that precipitated efforts to promote American legal models to regimes in transition throughout the world. Following the Second World War and Hitler's rhetoric that led to the holocaust, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria have instituted hate legislation. In the early 21st Century, Canada and Mexico also have laws prohibiting prejudicial speech against targeted, identifiable groups. In 2008, the European Union passed a treaty requiring European countries to sanction prejudicial speech and deliver punitive measures against individuals or groups engaged in prejudicial speech.

The euphoria associated with communism throughout the former Soviet Bloc ushered in many socio-politico-anthropological scholarships aimed at positioning speech and meaning within the cultural framework, not on individual beliefs. As Soviet and American diplomats and governments

fought to gain international support for their governing system in what is commonly called the Cold War, their social scientists aggressively conducted scientific studies to promote thought processes germane to their political system. American scholars turned to social science laboratories, analyzing human interactions to demonstrate links between the brain and how we express our feelings and thoughts and defend liberal democracy propounded by its ideologues, namely Thomas Hobbs, John Locke, and Victorian philosopher John Stuart Mill who strongly endorses free speech. In his famous chapter titled Liberty of Thought and Discussion (pp. 31-98) from his book, *On Liberty*, first published in 1859 with a second edition in 1960, John Stuart Mill explained.

If all humankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person was of the contrary opinion, humankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than if he had the power, would be justified in silencing humankind (Mill, 1960, Chapter 2). Indeed, in open societies, also known as liberal democracies, especially in the Global North, free speech proponents believe that all speech, no matter how offensive or immoral, should be protected from any regulation or persecution. To foster that philosophy, democratic citizenship anthropologist Clifford Geertz of Princeton University's School of Social Sciences, Institute for Advanced Study in the 1960s, argued that ideology and other forms of expression are cultural systems (Geertz, 1966a, 1973, 1976). Geertz's vision of cultures as systems—associated practices—suggested the existence of some form of uniformity across cultures, languages, and accompanying documents of expression, a trend that raises questions around connotative meaning, social differentiation, social conflict, and associated negotiations and contestations over language itself.

Geertz's stance dangerously persuades us to believe that any member of a language group can manipulate speech or negotiate meaning to suit their circumstances without caring about consequences. Nevertheless, we must be reminded that free speech, of which prejudicial speech is a component, is not an independent value; it has to be limited, for no human society throughout history has existed without imposing limits to its lifestyle. This is why most liberal democracies, whether they operate as a constitutional monarchy or republic, have limitations on free speech. Moreover, the United Nations (UN), the central intergovernmental organization responsible for maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, and harmonizing actions among countries, also recognizes that speech, if not controlled, can cause havoc between nations.

Since its creation in 1945, the United Nations has monitored xenophobia, racism and intolerance, violent misogyny, anti-Semitism and anti-Islam, and anti-Christianity hatred worldwide. The UN Office on Genocide Prevention strives to protect and prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Prejudicial speech has been a precursor to state atrocity crimes, including the genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia. Cameroon used metaphors to turn people against their neighbors and describe minority groups as less human than the media and political leaders.

Political analysts and media experts believe that trends in hate crimes around the world echo changes in the national and global political climate and that social media tend to magnify the discord so much that rumors and invective disseminated on different online platforms have contributed to violence ranging from lynching and killings to ethnic cleansing. Further, many attacks on immigrants and other minorities have raised new concerns about the connection between inflammatory speech online and violent acts and how corporations and states police speech. Zachary Laub (2018), Chief Editor of the US-based Council on Foreign Relations online newsletter, properly pens this, “The response (to violence-prone prejudicial speech) has been uneven, and the task of deciding what to censor, and how, has largely fallen to the handful of corporations that control the platforms on which much of the world now communicates (Laub, 2018)”. Social scientists go further, exposing how widespread the problem of addressing prejudicial speech has become by describing social media posts in Germany versus postings in America. They find a correlation between anti-refugee Facebook posts by the far-right Alternative for Germany Party and its attacks on refugees.

Other social scientists have observed that upticks in attacks, such as arson and assault, followed by spikes in hate-mongering posts, had intensified hatred towards refugees and immigrants. In America, we recall how Dylan Roof, the perpetrator of white supremacist attacks, circulated his vitriol against blacks among racist communities online and relied on social media to publicize his acts. While Dylan was Constitutionally protected to express his beliefs, he had no right to take away anyone else’s right to live, so killing people based on his thoughts was/is a violation of universal human rights.

#### V. Mass media and communication tools as prejudicial speech enablers

A team of George Washington University researchers has developed a mapping model to track how online hate clusters thrive and offered solutions to help social media platforms and law enforcement fight against hate online. According to George Washington University’s Media Relations office, the researchers have seen clusters creating new adaptation strategies to regroup on other platforms and reenter a podium after being banned. For example, groups can migrate and reconstitute on other platforms or use different languages to avoid detection. This allows the cluster to quickly bring back thousands of supporters to a platform on which they have been banned and highlights the need for cross-platform cooperation to limit online hate groups (Press Release, August 19, 2019).

Indeed, mediatized rhetoric on prejudicial speech, especially news coverage on the ease in creating and sharing content on online platforms, fosters extremist beliefs and terrorist activities in Islamic communities against the free world (Ngwainmbi, 2017). Subsequently, the rise of Islamophobia has spread insidiously through communities, creating suspicion, distrust, and even unprovoked physical attacks on innocent Muslims. Yet, the First Amendment in the US Constitution, which guarantees freedom to worship, enunciated by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the speech, January 6, 1941, to Americans, has not been repealed. One reason for the spread of prejudicial speech across

online media is that individuals seeking attention or influencing the masses to follow their beliefs use media platforms. However, their choice of the media to transmit their objectives should not come as a surprise.

Mass communication pioneers Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Harold Lasswell, and Wilbur Schramm in the 1960s presented the likelihood that the media, particularly television, influence our thoughts and feelings, subsequent research suggesting that more exposure to violent narratives increases violent behavior. Since then, the media has become the most conspicuous enabler of prejudicial speech because it is accessible to many information creators and news consumers. Social media has given every user a platform to spew prejudicial speech and radical beliefs to disaffected people, amplifying otherwise weak opinions and making such views viral.

It should be noted that the users' experiences are mediated by algorithms designed to maximize their engagement, inadvertently promoting extreme content. Take the example of YouTube, the most famous tool used by terrorist groups. YouTube is the new global television, with more than 2 billion users, with 80 % of Internet users having their own YouTube account and 95% of the worldwide internet population watching YouTube. Internet watchdog groups say YouTube's auto-play function, in which the player, at the end of one video, tees up a related one, can be especially pernicious (Laub, 2018). Jack Nica's investigative report published in the Wall Street Journal in February 2018 reveals that the algorithm brings people to videos that promote conspiracy theories or are divisive, false, and misleading. No wonder media platforms, especially sites sponsored by advertisers and companies and teenage forums, are filled with discussions and messages about public policies to address violence and prejudicial speech.

For their part, newspapers, cable news networks, television, and radio talk shows are reputed to promote prejudicial speech globally by focusing on outrageous statements made by world-renowned public figures. As suggested in this chapter, statesmen have used their status and derogatory speeches (as public figures) to get news organizations' attention and, consequently, 'infect' viewers/listeners with their modus operandi. This author has previously stated that international news broadcasters construct their coverage of terrorist operations to instill fear and usher in the sense of urgency among audiences (Ngwainmbi, 2017, pp. 203-204). He has found a link between global terrorism and prejudicial speech. He further explains how religious extremists use online media platforms to persuade passive audiences, recruit extremists and promote their political beliefs, causing the media and general public to pay attention to their *raison d'être* (Ngwainmbi, 2016, 2019b). The media is also an enabler within countries.

Further studies show media role in fostering hatred and genocidal behavior. Some regimes in fragile democracies have repeatedly used far-reaching carriers like radio to spread propaganda and anti-Semitism. In Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, the Weimar government introduced

pro-government political news over radio airwaves, increasing Nazi popularity. Adena et al. (2015) have observed that Nazi radio was most effective in places where anti-Semitism was historically high and negatively affected places with low anti-Semitism. We should be reminded that such radio-enabled propaganda set the tone for the rise of Nazism and galvanized the German army to launch the Second World War. Published documents show how Italian prime minister Benito Mussolini's fascist regime in the 1930s installed the Ente Italiano Edizioni radiophoniche (Italian radiophonic auditions) in public places to obtain people's support. The public service broadcaster served as the government's voice spreading fascist ideologies. Radio was the cheapest form of entertainment and the most popular medium during World War II. It reached many citizens, so accessibility and availability to this medium fueled propaganda during the war and helped extend the fighting between the allied forces and Germany's allies. As social scientists and world-class economists contend, one wonders if the radio's inventor, Italian Guglielmo Marconi, had envisaged its dubious but critical role in changing global politics, economy, and culture.

## 5. Conclusions

We consciously or unconsciously utilize prejudicial expressions around strangers and familiar people, no matter the nature of our religious beliefs and cultural values. The derogatory remarks pose various risks; they hurt people's feelings and cause individuals to embrace false ideas or undertake destructive actions. If not monitored, this communication pattern can potentially damage trade agreements and inter-group, inter-ethnic, and diplomatic relations between countries. It is alarming that most countries and provinces have constitutional laws that protect free speech, not prejudicial speech, allowing marginalized persons, including women, children, poor and older people, minorities, LGBTQs, youth, and the unemployed, at the mercy of harmful language that injures their self-esteem.

There is a lack of will to impose heavy penalties against business entities and individuals who use digital platforms to spread prejudicial discourse. Even the United Nations Human Rights Commission continues to play a lame-duck role even though it was mandated to promote and protect human rights worldwide. Established in 1946 "to examine, monitor and publicly report either on human rights situations in specific countries or territories" and weave the international legal fabric that protects fundamental rights and freedoms" (United Nations Humans Rights Council, <https://www.ohchr.org>), the world governing body has ignored public discourse on the prejudicial treatment of ethnic minorities in Cameroon, for example. Since war broke out in that country's south and northwest regions in 2017 when denizens publicly complained about under-representation in and cultural marginalization by the central government, the Council has not taken any meaningful steps to solve the problem. Instead, more social media platforms are cropping up, and sympathizers and pro-government groups continue to spread prejudicial messages online, leading to more killings, the burning of villages, and the massive



exodus of the marginalized population in that region.

## **6. Suggestions for Curbing Prejudicial Speech and Promoting Racial Harmony**

If we agree that most prejudicial speech users have limited education and exposure to other cultures, they should be schooled on humanity to improve racial relations. We must change racist ideologies such as White supremacy, white nationalism, and inferiority complexes to an inclusive culture. To do so, we must first master self-awareness. Human beings are, by nature, mentally vulnerable, and social contact helps us cope with stress and significant life changes.

6.1 I propose that we collectively suffer the effects of prejudicial speech as a human family, but we do not deserve it. Instead, we need to make collective efforts to limit it in our communities. Just as Jung (1981) explains that we have the ‘psychological energy’ that pushes us to achieve self-realization, we can consciously utilize this energy to bring common good for everyone.

6.2 Lawmakers and law enforcement teams adopt and implement strategies globally and simultaneously across all platforms without sharing the sensitive information of individual users or commercial secrets. The United Nations Assembly, which meets annually to promote peace initiatives among nations, can significantly promote racial harmony. Every country hosts people with different racial backgrounds.

6.3 If the organization has a comprehensive policy signed by member states, they would likely implement it properly.

6.4 The UN Human Rights Commission should review national customs and study prejudicial speech patterns in each country before producing a comprehensive strategic plan to enable nations that impose restrictions on free expressions with laws tied to national culture and religion.

However, clinical studies show that prejudicial speech can be prohibited without international policies. Although such prohibitions mean a permissive approach would undermine free speech, complicating a society’s ability to progress on peace terms.

6.5 What makes abolishing prejudicial speech more complicated is that doing so would curtail civil liberties—deny people their fundamental right to express themselves. However, prejudicial speech can be censored at an institutional or corporate level because those entities have their own rules of engagement. For example, speech would be more limited in the military. The underlying values are hierarchy and authority than at a university where the central importance is expressing ideas.

6.6 It is necessary to enhance the individual’s perceptions per the American psychologists’ Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955—the Johari model. They identify four quadrants in each individual’s personality, namely personal information, feelings, and motivations about the person, and show whether the information is known or not known by the person and other people.

VIII. a. Institutions’ responsibilities

6.7 Both the hate speaker and victim need to be educated in the early stages of life. To that end, we make the following propositions:

- i. Lessons on cultural understanding should be taught from kindergarten to college level
- ii. People aged three (cognitive period) should be trained to be critical thinkers, to understand the characteristics of advertisements, government policies, and extremist values stressing factors that have a long term negative impact on the group, community, and nation
- iii. Companies should require cultural training for candidates and periodic socio-cultural training for their employees
- iv. Intercultural communication courses should be mandatory for middle, high school, and university students.
- v. Federal state governments funds should include profit and non-profit businesses requesting funding should show proof of comprehensive cultural awareness programs
- vi. The state governments should work with language experts to create a standard, neutral daily national language that binds all ethnic communities
- vii. Universities and colleges should use virtual learning tools such as documentaries to teach anti-racist speech to students. It should be a required course for all undergraduate students.
- viii. Persons with a unique intersection of cultural identities are best placed to serve as instructors and advisers to combat prejudicial speech and racism.

b. Limiting global social media communication

George Washington University researchers, in 2019, published a study that showed how prejudicial speech evolves online and how clusters interconnect to spread their narratives and attract and recruit people. US News also published information on this topic produced by social media researchers. Using insights from its online prejudicial speech mapping model, the team developed intervention strategies that social media platforms could implement. According to the researchers, social media companies would need to:

- 1) Reduce the power and number of large online hate clusters by banning the smaller groups that feed into them.
- 2) Dismantle online hate groups by randomly banning a small group of individual users so that the global cluster network could fall apart.
- 3) Set large clusters against one another by supporting anti-hate collections in identifying and directly engaging with hate clusters.
- 4) Establish large intermediary groups to engage with hate groups to help bring out the differences in ideologies and make them question their stance.

Source:<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2019-08-28/researchers-suggest-new-way-s-countries-can-fight-against-online-hate-speech> 07/3/21

Since anyone, including racist groups, can post data on the internet, recruit and motivate vulnerable and like-minded people to block websites with content designed to foster racist discourses and activities. Countries should consider ways of countering prejudicial speech in the media through ethics and self-regulation. A quick way to achieve this is by educating journalists to understand prejudicial speech in their respective languages of expression and raise awareness at all levels. UNESCO blog writer Poni Alice JameKolak (2019) offers five ways to counter prejudicial speech, including the need for the media to raise awareness of individuals and groups' political, social, and cultural rights.

If established electronic and non-electronic media reflect the freedoms and roles of journalists in creating and promoting peaceful societies and educate the masses about prejudicial speech accordingly, the volume of prejudicial speech would decrease worldwide.

However, I recommend the following preliminary steps:

- 1) An appointed UN agency should study the causes, spread, and impact of prejudicial speech worldwide and (a.) work with country representatives. It should prepare a feasible global strategy to combat prejudicial speech. (b.) Based on the international plan, it should establish pragmatic universal policies to handle transnational prejudicial speech practices.
- 2) Countries should shape prejudicial speech laws based on their own cultures and the universal plan and take action on legally defined cases allowed by international law. They should impose fines on violators and use the funds to train at-risk groups and individuals.
- 3) In conjunction with IT companies, researchers should develop software that could help regulators and enforcement agencies implement new interventions
- 4) Other countries should replicate best practices and share them on social media platforms. Here are a few examples of best practices in some countries that countries can replicate:
  - The Indian government has new social media rules, including ordering platforms to remove posts within twenty-four hours based on offenses and obtain the user's identity.
  - In 2018, Germany, in a bid to end the Nazi legacy, made a law requiring large social media platforms to remove posts considered "manifestly illegal" within twenty-four hours. However, as Laub (2019) states, Human Rights Watch raised concerns that the threat of hefty fines would encourage social media platforms to be "overzealous censors."

It might be challenging to block websites, particularly in the US, where free expression is a human right. At the level of professional information and news management, this chapter recommends the following actions:

- Regulating social media flows by enhancing press freedom: Press freedom can be improved through media laws and ethics education.

- Having the newsroom serves as a prejudicial speech police office. The newsroom should have a program to monitor, compile, and evaluate incidents and trends in crimes engendered by prejudicial speech and bring them to the attention of state authorities.
- Encourage conflict-sensitive reporting and multi-cultural awareness campaigns: Conflict-sensitive reporting would help dispel the “us” against “them” fallacy. Journalists should be taught conflict-sensitive reporting skills. Multi-cultural awareness campaigns should emphasize knowledge about and respect for the diversity of cultures and traditions. Journalists must exercise professional standards, write articles, air programs, and even speak with people without taking sides (JameKolok, 2019).
- Responsible reporting of prejudicial speech—Victims and witnesses should be encouraged to report crimes related to prejudicial speech. Most people do not recognize prejudicial speech or take it seriously because most victims do not know where to report the cases. Some victims do not realize that they are victims of prejudicial speech. Thus, each country should have a hotline connected to the police department that victims of prejudicial speech can dial.
- Public institutions, particularly those operating with available funds, should create stringent rules against racial harassment and copiously implement them. Local and state governments should withhold funding for institutions that break the rules. The institutions should be paying fines for breaking the law.
- Non-academic avenues should be encouraged, such as creating opportunities for demonstration projects and discourse and mediation and counseling provisions for all students.
- Minority student organizations should also be strongly supported, multi-cultural events and forums, and workshops to discuss controversial subjects (Bellacossa, 1993).
- The actions in the next segment should be undertaken to end prejudicial speech among Caucasian-Hispanic, based on the findings of a previous study conducted by this author:
  - i. Cultural groups from both communities in the US—Caucasian and Hispanic—should organize events and training where knowledge on the socio-cultural values of each group can be shared.
  - ii. Hispanic and American cultural groups should organize more conferences on myths and stereotypes to allow scholars, program managers, and experts on foreign relations and multi-cultural communication to exchange ideas and develop cultural awareness activities in American suburban communities (Ngwainmbi, 2013, p. 376) where knowledge on Hispanic and American culture is scarce.

### c. Responsibilities of social media CEOs

Social media CEOs should collaborate with their respective national governments to monitor

prejudicial messages and remove content that threatens to disrupt the lives of vulnerable people in the country and destabilize the political systems of emerging nations. They should work with lawmakers to craft and implement policies using platforms they have created, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Facebook owners in America have been able to weed out threats. We understand that Online platform business models depend on maximizing, reading, or viewing times. Facebook and similar platforms generate financial profit by enabling advertisers to target audiences with extreme precision (Laub, 2019). Thus, it is in their best interest to attract people to online communities to spend the most time. Social media CEOs should use their moral compass to create a policy manual for hate language and post it online to address this. Violators should have their accounts blocked, and perpetrators were given a fine. Repeat offenders should be arrested, tried in court, and pay a hefty fine or serve time in jail.

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