



Special Edition: Discourses of Hate

Guest Editors' Introduction

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Hate flourishes in an enabling environment; it is nourished by broadly circulating narratives of hostility and demonisation. This has become painfully clear in the aftermath of Donald Trump's election as President of the United States in 2016, where the ongoing xenophobic commentary embedded in his Twitter feeds, public speeches, and even policy initiatives has generated increased hostility directed toward Others throughout the nation. This special edition of the *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* aims to provide insights and analyses into public discourses of hate as found in political speech, popular expression, and media representations, *inter alia*.

These narratives resonate with existing public sentiment around race, religion, gender, immigration, and an array of other flash points. The rhetoric of hate does not fall on deaf ears. Consider Gramsci's (in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 2005) assertion that hegemony must begin with or incorporate prevailing sentiments. Degradation of the Other is on fertile ground in cultures with histories of worldviews which saw non-Whites as heathen savages, for example. Displays and expressions of xenophobia—by public and/or popular figures—give weight to the concerns expressed by white, working-class males in particular, who see themselves losing historical privilege. Public expressions of sexism, homophobia or racism by the state, by the media, or by ordinary people on social media are constitutive of public sentiments of intolerance, dislike or suspicion of particular groups. This diversity of rhetors seems to reaffirm the legitimacy of such beliefs while, at the same time, giving them public voice. Hate rhetoric simultaneously evokes and exploits fears of the erosion of identity boundaries (that is, backlash) at least, and the threats posed by the Other at most. In so doing, the narrators play on cultural symbols that differentiate 'Us' from 'Them': good versus evil; the 'savage' versus the 'civilised'; the 'unnatural' Other versus the 'natural' conformist. For example, they may draw on the age-old mythology of black-man-as-rapist to support contemporary images of the black-man-as-criminal. In the current climate, more emphasis is likely placed on Muslim-as-terrorist.

Public expressions of hate and bigotry are found at many different sites. Politicians' press releases and related sound bites, judicial decisions, social media platforms, and news sites and their attendant commentary sections are laden with images and language—both implicit and explicit—representative of the dominant ideologies of race and gender. And the targets are diverse as the articles in this special issue reveal: women, Muslims, immigrants and people of colour generally, to name but a few.

Hate discourse, then, reaffirms and legitimates the negative evaluations of difference which give rise to exclusionary policy and practice. In this respect, discourse is central to the ‘enactment, expression, legitimation and acquisition’ of bigotry of all types (van Dijk 1995: 2). This sentiment is the thread that ties the papers in this issue together. Each addresses ways in which discourses of hate—in various forms—exploit popular fears of the Other to enhance the legitimacy of those fears. This link is at the core of **Karla Perez Portilla’s** paper with which we open this special issue. She argues, explicitly, that media and political discourses that demonise targeted communities constitute social harm to the extent that they reproduce widespread negative imagery associated with reviled groups. Importantly, Portilla also provides some direction with respect to how this ‘everyday discrimination’ might be challenged, highlighting the work of the social media campaign, Stop Funding Hate, in particular.

While Portilla’s analysis is largely restricted to the United Kingdom, **Jelena Jkanovic** draws attention to patterns of popular discourses of hate in Eastern Europe more broadly, and especially in Serbia. This is a welcome contribution, as the field of hate studies has generally been myopically focused on patterns prevailing in Western Europe and North America. Like Portilla, Jkanovic also draws attention to the role of the media in (mis)representing marginalised communities. However, in this case, it is not the media itself that is the object of analysis but online commentary in response to media reporting. Here we see how, in addition to enabling violence against the Other, hateful narratives might also follow the reporting of such violence. Jkanovic reveals, in fact, that targets of publicised cases of hate crime may also face ‘post-attack denial, sarcasm and further victimisation by the majority’.

Next, **Raphael Cohen-Almagor** expands on Jkanovic’s nod to hate discourse as found on the Internet. Cohen-Almagor’s paper explores online expressions that are explicitly concerned with circulating xenophobic and exclusionary ideologies of hate. He first explores how organised hate groups use the Internet to expand and consolidate their social networks, creating a global movement of hate. He follows this with a consideration of the potential link between online hate speech and offline hate crimes. In so doing, Cohen-Almagor reinforces the notion of harm introduced earlier by Portilla.

While each of the first three articles presented here touch on strategies for challenging hateful narratives, the final two papers have a tactical approach at their core. Both focus on legislative means by which controls might be achieved. Against the background of the ‘migrant crisis’ in Europe, **Viera Pejchal** offers a generational critique of the ways in which the concept of hate speech has been framed in legal discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, drawing her examples from the Czech and Slovak Republics. Tethered to international human rights treaties, hate speech has been progressively conceptualised as inciting different forms of harm: violence, discrimination, and the denial of human dignity. For Pejchal, these changes reflect shifts in the kinds of ‘public goods’ that the state deems worthy of protection. Like Jkanovic, this nascent research on the evolution of human rights and democratic values in Central and Eastern Europe offers a much-needed contribution to the field of hate studies.

We conclude with **Jen Neller’s** assessment that the same criticisms levelled against extant legislative approaches to hate crime also apply to incitement—or ‘stirring up’—provisions. She is particularly concerned with the need to construct hate speech legislation that is both inclusive and flexible. This departs from the hate *crime* legislation which, in many jurisdictions, provides static lists of communities to be protected. Nonetheless, Neller provides an assessment of both the benefits and challenges to an open, rather than predetermined, legislative definition of the harms of hate speech.

Cumulatively, the five articles included in the special issue offer a blend of conceptual and empirical lenses through which to identify, understand, and critique the face and the impact of contemporary hate discourse in a global environment.

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