Chapter # 15

THE EVOLUTION OF HATE LANGUAGE IN POLITICS: SHIFTS IN PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND RECOGNITION OVER TIME

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perception of hate language in political speeches and its impact on voter preferences, comparing data from 2013 and 2023. In 2013, neutral language was preferred, followed by critical language, with hate speech rated the lowest. Over the decade, public preferences shifted, with speeches promoting equality and inclusion becoming the most favored in 2023. A significant correlation between age and education was observed, indicating that older and more educated individuals tend to reject hate language more strongly. Younger respondents were more likely to identify hate speech.

For example, respondents aged 18-35 rated hate language significantly higher. ANOVA and post-hoc tests revealed generational shifts, as younger respondents in 2023 demonstrated greater rejection of hate speech compared to their counterparts a decade earlier. The study also explored perceptions of hate language targeting specific groups (age, religion, gender, sexual orientation), finding that while most forms of hate speech were clearly identified, ageism remained less recognized. These findings reflect societal changes in attitudes toward political discourse and highlight the role of demographic factors in shaping perceptions.

Keywords: hate language, equality, perception, political behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hate language, defined as the use of derogatory or inflammatory speech targeting individuals or groups based on their characteristics (Cervone, Augoustinos, & Maass, 2021), has become increasingly prevalent in media and political discourse. This article presents an attempt to contribute the understanding of the phenomenon of hate language through the lenses of social psychology and political psychology, focusing on its impact on individuals, groups, and society as a whole.

Hate speech and its evaluation in political discourse have garnered increasing attention in recent years. Hate language in political discourse has long been a contentious issue, with varying perceptions across different demographic groups. Political speeches are a primary platform for influencing public opinion and voter behavior, and the language used can significantly shape these perceptions. This study aims to explore how hate language in political speeches is perceived over time, focusing on changes in voter preferences between 2013 and 2023. Additionally, it examines the role of age, education, and other demographic factors in shaping attitudes toward hate speech. By comparing data from two distinct periods, this research provides insights into evolving societal norms and the growing preference for inclusive political discourse. Understanding these dynamics is essential for informing strategies to promote more respectful and constructive communication in the political sphere.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Social Psychology Perspective

Several theoretical perspectives may help us to understand why it is so "favored" by politicians and not only, what are the background mechanisms that make hate language effective. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals derive their self-concept from their group memberships and engage in ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation to enhance their self-esteem. Studies on news consumption have shown that people are more likely to favor media narratives aligning with their ingroup's perspective, while derogating outgroup perspectives. Hate language often serves as a tool for reinforcing ingroup solidarity by vilifying outgroups, thereby exacerbating intergroup conflict and prejudice (Leach, Van Zomeren, Zebel, Vliek, Pennekamp, Doosje, Ouwerkerk, & Spears, 2008). This may mean that using hate language makes ingroup and outgroup division more salient, this promoting attitude of hate as a mechanism to make ingroup more favorable, and by this serving enhancing self-esteem. This only may be enough to get the idea how deep are the roots of impact of hate language.

From the perspective of social cognitive theory of prejudice, cognitive biases such as confirmation bias and illusory correlation contribute to the selective processing of information that confirms existing stereotypes and prejudices (Devine, 1989). Media representations of marginalized groups often perpetuate negative stereotypes through sensationalized reporting and selective framing, fueling the proliferation of hate speech and discriminatory attitudes (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Furthermore, the contact hypothesis suggests that positive interactions between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and intergroup hostility (Allport, 1954). However, hate language in media and politics can create a hostile environment that inhibits intergroup contact, perpetuating stereotypes and increasing prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Thus, the impact of hate language does not stop at creating distance between the ingroup and the outgroup. It also strengthens "cognitive filter" to process further information about the target group, creating such a strong barrier, that it increases the rift, over which it becomes difficult to reach each other and come into contact.

2.2. Political Psychology Perspective

Group polarization Theory analyses the process, where exposure to extreme viewpoints, facilitated by hate language in political discourse, can intensify existing attitudes and contribute to the polarization of society (Sunstein, 2002). The use of hate speech by political leaders and media figures can galvanize supporters, foster loyalty, and mobilize collective action, thereby influencing electoral outcomes and policy decisions (Bruneau & Kteily, 2017). From another perspective, moral disengagement enables individuals to justify and rationalize hate speech by dehumanizing and delegitimizing outgroups (Bandura, 1999). By distancing themselves from the moral implications of their actions, individuals can engage in hate speech without experiencing guilt or remorse, perpetuating discrimination and hostility (Traclet et.al, 2014). In adition, individuals predisposed to authoritarian attitudes are more likely to endorse hate speech and support authoritarian leaders who espouse discriminatory rhetoric (Altemeyer, 1998). Authoritarian leaders often use hate language to scapegoat marginalized groups, mobilize support, and consolidate power, undermining democratic norms and values (Hetherington & Weiler, 2009).

The Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1984) posits that individuals are reluctant to express opinions that deviate from perceived societal norms, fearing social isolation or reprisal. Hate language, when normalized within a political context, can create an atmosphere of intimidation, suppressing dissenting voices and perpetuating discriminatory attitudes (Moy & Gastil, 2006). Consequently, voters may conform to dominant narratives, even if they personally disapprove of hate speech, leading to polarization and the marginalization of vulnerable populations.

Research has shown that exposure to hate speech can significantly influence electoral behavior. A longitudinal analysis By Green and their colleagues (Green, Edgerton, Naftel, Shoub, & Cranmer 2020) demonstrated a positive correlation between exposure to hate speech on social media and support for authoritarian political leaders. These findings underscore the potential for hate language to shape voters' perceptions and preferences, with implications for democratic decision-making.

Several factors may moderate the relationship between hate language and voters' attitudes. For instance, research by Mutz (2006) suggests that individual differences in media literacy and cognitive processing can mitigate the impact of hate speech, particularly among educated voters. Understanding these moderating influences is essential for developing effective interventions to combat the proliferation of hate speech in political discourse.

2.3. Social Media, Polarization, and Echo Chambers

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally altered the landscape of communication and political engagement. While these platforms facilitate broader civic participation, they also serve as hubs for the spread of hate speech and misinformation, both of which can profoundly influence voter behavior. Research underscores that social media amplifies hate speech, creating environments that normalize prejudice and hostility. The algorithms used by platforms further exacerbate the issue by prioritizing content that generates engagement, often amplifying divisive and hateful rhetoric (Arora et.al, 2022).

Social media has reshaped political communication, offering both opportunities and challenges. While it democratizes information access and amplifies marginalized voices, it also fosters polarization, misinformation, and the entrenchment of echo chambers. Understanding the role of algorithmic design in shaping political discourse is critical for mitigating these challenges and fostering healthier public spheres. As the dynamics of social media continue to evolve, future research must explore innovative strategies to enhance its positive potential while addressing its vulnerabilities.

While social media democratizes access to information, it also fosters political polarization. Sunstein (2017) argues that platforms exacerbate polarization by creating echo chambers, where individuals are exposed predominantly to content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs. Algorithmic personalization intensifies this effect, as platforms prioritize content that aligns with users' preferences to maximize engagement (Pariser, 2011). This design encourages selective exposure and the formation of ideologically homogeneous networks, weakening cross-partisan dialogue and mutual understanding (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016).

Recent studies also highlight the role of social media in amplifying political misinformation. Fake news spreads more rapidly than factual information, especially when it aligns with users' biases (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). This phenomenon has contributed to public skepticism of traditional institutions, increased political cynicism, and

heightened partisan hostility (Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2020). Online platforms are fertile grounds for false narratives, which can manipulate voter perceptions and decisions.

Algorithmic design plays a critical role in shaping political communication on social media. Platforms like Facebook and YouTube use recommendation systems that prioritize engagement metrics, often at the expense of content diversity (Cinelli, 2021). This prioritization fosters filter bubbles that limit users' exposure to opposing viewpoints, reinforcing ideological rigidity (Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, & Bonneau, 2015).

However, research also suggests opportunities to mitigate these effects through algorithmic interventions. The overemphasis on the amplification of hate language risks oversimplifying the broader dynamics of social media's role in political discourse. This focus, while significant, should be contextualized within a framework that considers the platforms' potential to foster inclusivity and counter hate speech through community-driven initiatives and policy reforms (Pukallus & Arthur, 2024). For example, systems that prioritize diverse content and encourage exposure to cross-partisan dialogue can reduce polarization (Bail, Argyle, Brown, Bumpus, Chen, Hunzaker, & Volfovsky, 2018). Media literacy has emerged as a critical tool in combating the negative effects of social media on hate speech and voter behavior. For instance, initiatives like the Digital Media Arts for an Inclusive Public Sphere (DMAPS) project employ community-based strategies to counteract hate speech through evidence-based interventions and AI-driven tools (Pukallus & Arthur, 2024). Such programs underscore the importance of integrating local knowledge and cultural sensitivity in designing effective countermeasures.

Social media has also been instrumental in destabilizing traditional political hierarchies, often enabling the rise of populist leaders. Populist movements frequently use platforms to bypass mainstream media, disseminating direct, unfiltered messages to supporters (Moffitt, 2016). These tactics exploit the affordances of social media, such as virality and personalized messaging, to amplify populist rhetoric and mobilize discontent against perceived elites (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).

2.4. The Intersectionality of Hate Language

A major gap in the current discussion is the insufficient emphasis on the intersectionality of hate language. Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Crenshaw (1989), explores how overlapping identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, create unique experiences of oppression and discrimination. In the context of hate language, intersectionality reveals how individuals with multiple marginalized identities are often disproportionately targeted, experiencing compounded forms of hatred and exclusion.

Despite its critical importance, intersectionality remains underexplored in the literature on hate language and social media. Addressing this gap would not only enhance our understanding of the nuances of online hate speech but also inform more effective interventions.

3. THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND THE PERCEPTION OF HATE LANGUAGE IN 2013

There is a strong theoretical framework provided by insights from social and political psychology, particularly in the context of a political environment rife with hate speech. This situation raises several important questions: Does hate speech actually achieve its intended effect of making a politician more likable? Are individuals of different genders, ages, and backgrounds equally influenced by it? Or do some groups have varying attitudes and

reactions to hate speech? How do people perceive, detect, and identify it? The research discussed in this chapter aims to address some of these questions and offer clearer directions for future research.

3.1. Method and Design

Participants: The research was conducted in two stages: the first stage took place in 2013 and the second – in 2023. The sample comprised 210 individuals at the first stage, and 398 individuals (245 respondents in the replication of the original research, 20 experts, 145 respondents in the quantitative research) at the second stage recruited from diverse demographic backgrounds, including varying age cohorts ranging from 18 to 70 years. Respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to represent diverse demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, or location

Procedure: Participants were given three texts as examples of political candidate's public speech. Candidate one used hate language against political opponents. Candidate two focused their speech on the achievement of the speaker and also criticized the opponents. Candidate three used neutral language only speaking about the politician's own accomplishments and goals. After reading three texts, the respondents were asked: "If there would be elections tomorrow, which of the candidates would you vote for in the first place, in the second place and in the third place."

Second stage of the research in 2023 used the same procedure. Additional research component was added: experts were asked to give list of hate language expressions, statements were grouped and used in quantitative research with a larger sample where participants were asked to evaluate each statement. The purpose of this research component was to establish whether expressions of hate language are actually identified as such.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests to examine attitudes towards hate language across different age groups and education level.

Self-report data, especially in relation to sensitive topics like hate speech May imply potential biases like social desirability bias which may cause individuals to underreport socially undesirable behaviors, such as using hate speec. Or self-serving bias which may lead individuals to present themselves in a favorable light, emphasizing positive behaviors and downplaying negative ones. To mitigate these biases, the study was anonymous and used indirect questioning techniques.

3.2. Language of Hate and Voting

In the ratings of three different speeches, neutral language was leading as the first choice for voting (53%), for the second place political speech criticizing opponents was dominating (60%), and political speech expressing hate language was put in the third place by the majority (56%).

Figure 1.
Ratings of politicians' speeches, 2013.
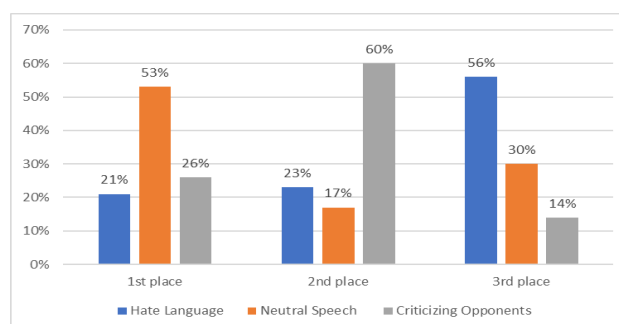
We grouped age into three subgroups: 18-35, 36-50, 51 and above. Analysis of variance was used to look more in detail into correlation of age with the evaluation of speeches. Grouping age into three subgroups revealed significant differences in attitudes towards hate language ($F=6.255$, $df=2$, $p<.05$) and neutral speech ($F=9.625$, $df=2$, $p<.001$) among different age groups. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD test indicated that respondents aged 18-35 found hate speech in politicians' discourse more acceptable ($M=2.1$) compared to those aged 51 and above ($M=2.64$), lower number means higher rating of the speech.

Analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences in attitudes towards hate speech based on education level. Attitudes towards politician's choice of language was significantly different amongst different education levels ($F=4.441$, $df=3$, $p<.005$). Post-hoc analysis revealed that respondents with a university degree perceived hate speech as more unacceptable compared to high school graduates. The first found hate language as more unacceptable ($M=2.4$) than the second group ($M=1.5$).

This it can be assumed that higher the age and education of the person, hate language is least preferred.

3.3. Perception of Hate Language Ten Years After – Data from 2023

The study was repeated ten years later, in 2023, with modifications to the procedure. Participants were again presented with three texts containing examples of politicians' public speeches. Text one employed hate language towards specific target groups – gender, age, or ethnicity; text two remained neutral and focused on the political views of the candidate; and text three expressed values of equality and inclusion for different groups.

The majority of respondents (47%) chose a speech where the political candidate expressed values of equality and inclusion as their first choice. The second choice for 51% of respondents was a speech using neutral language, while hate speech was again rated the lowest, with 72% of respondents placing it in the third position.

Figure 2.
Ratings of politicians' speeches, 2023.
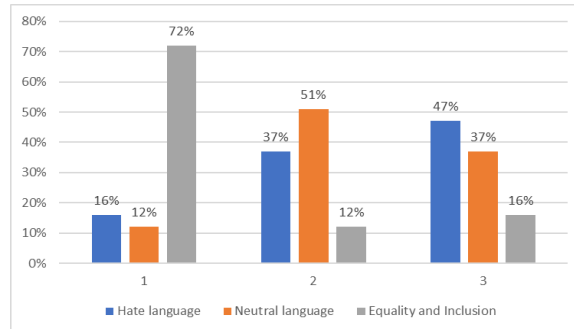
Analysis of variance was utilized to explore correlations between age and the evaluation of speeches in more detail. Grouping age into three subgroups revealed significant differences in attitudes towards hate language (F=9, df=2, p<.001) and language promoting equality and inclusion (F=6.7, df=2, p<.001) among different age groups. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD test indicated significant differences in evaluations of both types of speeches among all three age groups. Hate speech was least preferred by respondents in the 18-35 age group (M=2.8), followed by the 36-51 age group (M=2.4), and was more preferred by respondents aged 51 and above (M=2.3). Language promoting inclusion and equality was most preferred by respondents in the 18-35 age group (M=1.5), followed by the 36-51 age group (M=1.8), and least preferred by respondents aged 51 and above (M=1.9).

Independence Chi-Square analysis was conducted to compare ratings of hate language between the 2013 and 2023 data. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the rating of political speeches containing hate language (Chi Square=32.232, df=2, p<0.001). Ten years later, a smaller percentage of the sample evaluated hate language as more preferred or even as the second choice. Conversely, a larger percentage of the sample rated hate language as least preferred.

Figure 3.
Change of preferences between 2013 and 2023.
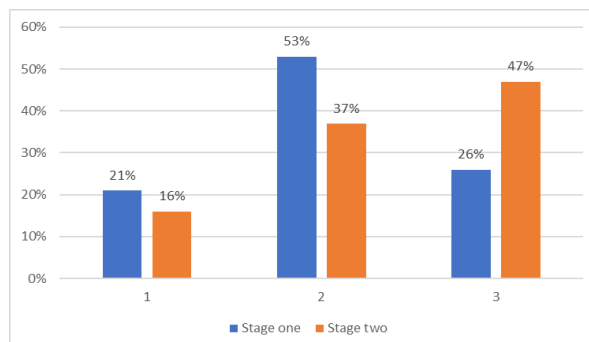
These findings differ from those of the first stage of our research, wherein younger respondents rated hate language more favorably than older individuals. If ten years before, younger people were more accepting language of hate by politicians, now the picture was reversed. It may be assumed that younger generation who grew up to the voting age, are more informed and sensitive to the language of hate and discrimination. This is the generation which grew in more politically stable period, unlike the older generations, which went through politically turbulent times. Besides, younger generation has more online presence that gives them access to broader range of information and opinions.

3.4. Do We Understand Hate Language the Same Way?

Additionally in 2023, the research looked into specific expressions of hate language actually identified by the audience. Four scales were created to see if different types of hate language are perceived differently, and if the age of the audience make difference.

For this purpose, mixed method was used. First, we asked twenty experts (psychologists, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists) to think about examples of hate language targeting gender, age religion and sexual orientation they can remember from media content or from politicians. The respondents were asked to give examples for each category. Responses were grouped based on similarity. As a result, we got statements expressing hate language towards different groups: 16 targeting age, 12 – religion, 14 – gender and 12 – sexual orientation / LGBTQ. These statements were included in the quantitative research, where apart demographic data we asked 133 respondents to evaluate how much did each statement express hate language in their opinion, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 would be not expressing hate language at all. Age range of participants was from 18 to 70. 72% of the respondents were female, 25% male, 2% preferred not to identify.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to evaluate validity of each scale. All four scales had strong internal validity: scale for hate language targeting age – Cronbach's Alpha .897; Scale for hate language targeting religion – Cronbach's Alpha .940; Scale for hate language targeting gender – Cronbach's Alpha .971; Scale for hate language targeting sexual orientation – Cronbach's Alpha .967.

Overall, all types of language of hate were identified by the respondents – those targeting religion, gender and sexual orientation more clearly. It means, that respondents notice and detect these expressions as examples of hate language. Slight difference was found concerning different types of hate language: ageism was least identified, which means that even though the respondents did indicate existence of hate language towards older people in the items presented, some items were still evaluated as neutral. For example statements that contained reverse ageism, or stating lack of technical skills in older people were evaluated as not ageist or neutral. Interesting observation was driven analyzing answers on a scale expressing homophobic language. The respondents clearly identified hate language attacking LGBTQ people, but statements against protecting laws LGBTQ rights or statements about unacceptance of LGBTQ "propaganda" were evaluated more neutral.

Analysis of variance was used to explore whether evaluation of hate language was different among different age groups. This time, we used generation (centennials, millennials, generation x) for grouping criteria.

Interestingly, age did not play significant role in identifying ageism. Even though mean score of the ageism scale is smallest amongst the respondents above the age of 50 and the highest amongst those between 31 and 50, the difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 4.
Age and ageism.
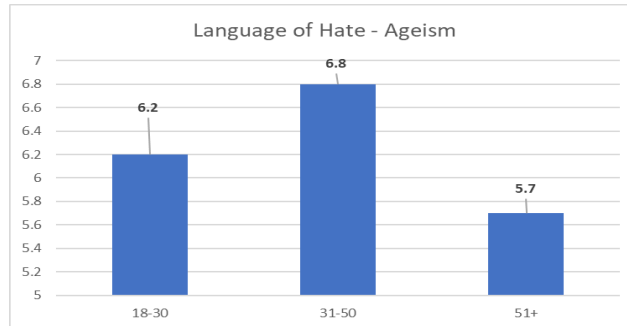
The analysis revealed significant differences in identifying hate language targeting religion (F=9, df=2, p<.001), gender (F=8.9, df=2, p=0) and sexual orientation (F=5.5, df=2, p<.001) among different age groups. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD test indicated that evaluation of hate language towards religion was statistically significantly different between age group 36-50 (M=7.4) and respondents older than 51 (M=6.3). Interestingly younger respondents identified language of hate expressing ageism more than older group. Even though mean evaluations of 18-35 respondents was not significantly different than those by two other groups.

*Figure 5.*
Age and Hate Language towards Religion.
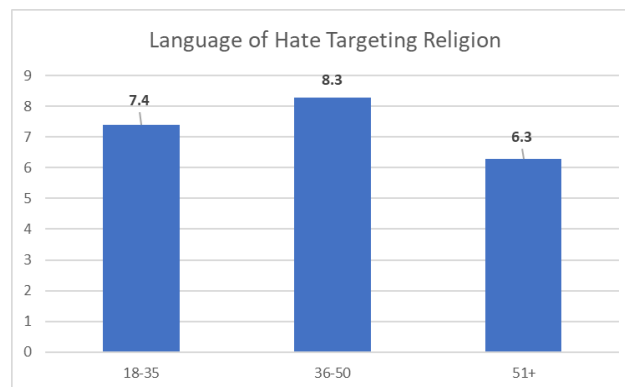
Post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD test indicated that respondents older than 51 identified language of hate expressing sexism, but their evaluation is slightly ebove neutral (M=6.3). Statistically significant differences were found in the responses of this and two other age groups, which strongly identified expressions of sexism as language of hate (age 18-35 – M=8.1; age 36-50 – M=9).

Figure 6.
Age and Hate Language – Sexism.
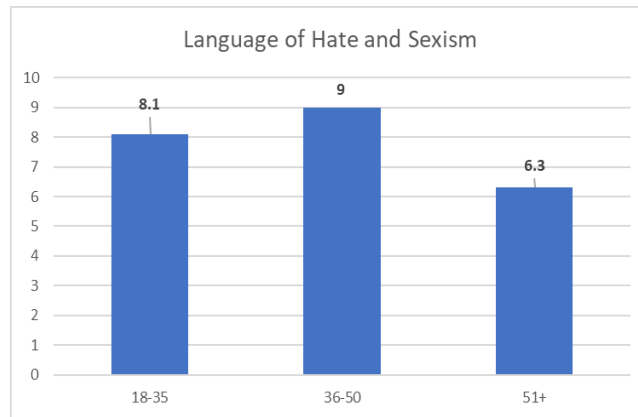
Post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD test indicated that evaluation of hate language towards people of different sexual orientation was statistically significantly different between age group 36-50 (M=9) and respondents older than 51 (M=6.7). Even though mean evaluations of 18-35 respondents was not significantly different than those by two other groups.

Figure 7.
Age and Hate Language Targeting Sexual Orientation.
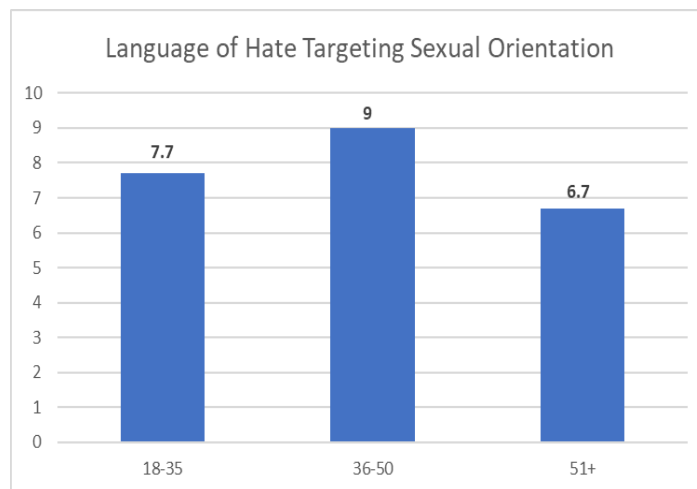
4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research has highlighted significant trends and shifts in attitudes towards hate language and its impact on political preferences. However, several areas warrant further investigation to deepen our understanding of these dynamics and their implications.

With the increasing role of digital media in shaping political discourse, further research should explore how online platforms influence the perception and impact of hate language. This could involve examining how hate speech on social media compares with traditional media in terms of public reaction and political outcomes. While this study differentiated among types of hate speech based on target categories such as age, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, future research could delve deeper into intersectional analyses, that examines how various social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class, disability) intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. Investigating how hate language directed at individuals with multiple marginalized identities is perceived and its effects on their political preferences could provide a more nuanced understanding.

The observed differences in how various age groups perceive and react to hate speech suggest that generational factors play a significant role. Future research should explore these generational differences in more detail, considering factors such as political socialization, exposure to media, and life experiences.

Investigating the emotional and cognitive responses to hate speech could provide insights into why certain types of hate language are more or less acceptable to different demographic groups. This includes studying the psychological impact of hate speech on individuals and how it influences their political behavior and attitudes.

By addressing these areas, future research can use longitudinal mixed-method approaches and/or experimental design to build on the findings of this study and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding hate language and its effects on political attitudes and behaviors.

5. CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

This study delves into the nuanced dynamics of speech evaluation in political contexts, particularly focusing on hate speech and its intersection with demographic variables such as age and education level. Our findings contribute valuable insights into the complex interplay between these factors and attitudes towards political discourse.

The results reveal a notable shift in preferences over the ten-year period between 2013 and 2023. Initially, speeches criticizing opponents were favored, followed by those using neutral language, with hate speech rated the least preferred. However, in 2023, there was a remarkable change, with speeches promoting equality and inclusion garnering the highest preference among respondents. This shift underscores evolving societal norms and values, indicating a growing emphasis on inclusive and respectful discourse in political communication.

Age emerged as a significant determinant of speech evaluation, with younger respondents displaying greater tolerance towards hate speech compared to older individuals in the first stage of the study. This finding contradicts the conventional notion that younger generations are more progressive in their attitudes. Instead, it suggests a potential generational divide in perceptions of acceptable political discourse. Furthermore, older individuals showed a stronger preference for neutral language, reflecting a desire for less contentious rhetoric in political communication. This picture was reversed in the second stage of the research, where younger respondents had less tolerance towards hate speech and more preference of the language of equality, compared to the older respondents.

Education level also played a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards hate speech. Respondents with higher education levels were more likely to perceive hate speech as unacceptable, emphasizing the role of education in fostering critical thinking and tolerance.

Additionally, higher education correlated with a preference for neutral language, indicating a desire for rational and constructive political discourse.

The study sought to investigate how hate language targeting specific social groups (age, religion, gender, and sexual orientation) is perceived by audiences and whether age and gender of respondents influence their perceptions. The creation of four scales to evaluate hate language across these dimensions, along with the mixed-method approach involving experts and the general population, provided a robust framework for understanding public perception of hate speech.

The internal consistency of the scales, as reflected by high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (ranging from .897 to .971), suggests that the developed scales are reliable measures for assessing hate language across the four categories. However, there were nuanced differences in how respondents evaluated different types of hate language. While hate language targeting religion, gender, and sexual orientation was clearly identified by the majority of respondents, ageism was less recognized. This finding aligns with previous research, which has shown that ageism is often normalized in social discourse, particularly when it involves subtle or reverse ageist statements (e.g., highlighting lack of technical skills in older adults). This result indicates that respondents may not universally perceive certain types of age-related statements as harmful or hateful, suggesting a broader societal tolerance or lack of awareness regarding ageism.

The study also highlights generational differences in the perception of hate language. Significant variation was found in the evaluation of hate language targeting religion, gender, and sexual orientation, particularly between younger respondents (18-35 years) and those older than 51. Notably, younger respondents were more likely to identify hate speech in these categories, consistent with existing literature suggesting that younger generations tend to be more aware of and sensitive to issues of social justice and discrimination. For example, respondents aged 18-35 rated gender-based hate language significantly higher (M=8.1) than respondents older than 51 (M=6.3), highlighting generational disparities in recognizing sexism as a form of hate speech.

Interestingly, the study found no statistically significant differences across age groups in recognizing ageism. Despite expectations that older respondents might be more sensitive to ageist language, the results suggest that age may not play a significant role in the identification of age-based hate speech. This finding could be attributed to the normalization of ageist discourse, making it less likely to be perceived as offensive even by those who are its primary targets.

The findings regarding hate language targeting sexual orientation are also noteworthy. Respondents, particularly those in the 36-50 age group, were more likely to identify homophobic language compared to older respondents. However, language that criticized LGBTQ rights or rejected "LGBTQ propaganda" was evaluated more neutrally, indicating that certain types of hate language toward LGBTQ individuals are either not fully recognized or are considered less offensive by some segments of the population. This suggests that societal views on LGBTQ issues may still be evolving, with residual bias or lack of awareness about the harmful impact of such rhetoric.

These findings, which reveal decreasing preference for hate language in political speeches, must be contextualized within the broader global trends of populism, political polarization, and the evolving dynamics of voter behavior. From 2013 to 2023, there has been a notable decline in the acceptance of hate language in political rhetoric, particularly among younger respondents. This reversal of trends—where younger generations now display greater rejection of hate speech than older cohorts—aligns with the broader societal movements advocating for inclusivity and equality. However, this shift also unfolds in a

political environment increasingly characterized by polarization and the global rise of populist movements (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Mounk, 2018). Populist leaders often rely on divisive rhetoric, including hate language, as a strategy to mobilize supporters and frame political opponents as threats to societal values (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Yet, the declining preference for hate language among the general population may reflect a growing disillusionment with such tactics, especially among younger voters exposed to counter-narratives emphasizing inclusivity (Arora et.al, 2022). The decreasing acceptance of hate language suggests a demand for higher ethical standards in political communication. Politicians relying on divisive rhetoric may face challenges in resonating with younger, more informed voters. Furthermore, this trend could signify a broader societal shift toward rejecting populist and polarizing political strategies, potentially reshaping the political landscape over time (Mounk, 2018; Arora et.al, 2022). Access to diverse narratives likely plays a role in shaping their sensitivity toward hate language. Social justice movements have undoubtedly influenced public attitudes toward hate language by amplifying marginalized voices and fostering a more inclusive dialogue. These movements have used digital platforms to mobilize support, spread awareness, and hold political figures accountable for their rhetoric. The rejection of hate language in the 2023 data may reflect the success of these movements in shaping public consciousness about the dangers of divisive speech and its impact on vulnerable communities (Pukallus & Arthur, 2024).

This shift in public preferences has implications for political actors and their communication strategies. Politicians who rely on hate language may find themselves alienating younger voters, who are increasingly rejecting divisive rhetoric. Furthermore, the trend suggests a growing demand for accountability and ethical standards in political discourse, driven by a more informed and engaged electorate (Arora et.al, 2022).

Hate language in media and politics has profound implications for social cohesion, intergroup relations, and political behavior. Future research should continue to explore the complex interplay between individual attitudes, group dynamics, and institutional factors in shaping the prevalence and impact of hate language. Moreover, efforts to mitigate the spread of hate speech should focus on promoting empathy, critical thinking, and inclusive discourse to foster a more tolerant and equitable society.

In conclusion, this study highlights the intricate interplay between demographic factors and speech evaluation in political contexts. The findings underscore the importance of considering age and education level in understanding attitudes towards hate speech and political discourse. The observed shift towards inclusive speech in 2023 reflects evolving societal values, emphasizing the need for politicians to adapt their communication strategies to resonate with changing public sentiments. Moving forward, continued research in this area is essential to inform efforts aimed at promoting respectful and inclusive political discourse in democratic societies.

Future research should further explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships and investigate additional factors that may influence speech evaluation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for promoting inclusive and respectful communication in political contexts.

This study provides important insights into public perceptions of hate language targeting different social groups and the influence of demographic factors such as age and gender on these perceptions. While hate language targeting religion, gender, and sexual orientation is more readily recognized, ageism remains less salient, highlighting the need for greater public awareness around age-related discrimination. Generational differences in the recognition of hate language suggest that younger respondents are more attuned to

issues of social justice, particularly regarding gender and sexual orientation, while older generations may not perceive certain forms of hate speech as harmful.

The findings underscore the complexity of hate speech perception, showing that societal norms and individual biases can shape how hate language is identified and evaluated. Future research could explore the role of educational interventions in improving awareness of subtle forms of hate speech, particularly ageism, and the impact of evolving societal attitudes on perceptions of LGBTQ-related hate speech. Additionally, exploring gender differences in more depth could provide further insights into how men and women perceive and react to different types of hate language. Overall, the study reinforces the importance of ongoing efforts to address and mitigate hate speech in all its forms.

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