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How To Counter Dangerous Speech

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#DEFYHATENOW | CHAPTER 4

HOW TO COUNTER DANGEROUS SPEECH

HATE SPEECH VS DANGEROUS SPEECH
Is some hate speech more dangerous than others?

The US political scientist Susan Benesch has created a model to help figure out when hate speech becomes dangerous speech – with dangerous speech being communication that may help catalyze mass violence by moving an audience to condone, or even take part in, such violence.

Benesch's model includes five variables for analysing the dangerousness of hate speech:

· The degree of the speaker's influence over an audience

· The grievances or fears of the audience that can be cultivated by the speaker

· Whether or not the speech act is understood as a call to violence

· The social and historical context (such as previous episodes of violence)

· Whether the means distributing the speech is also influential (such as when a media outlet is the sole
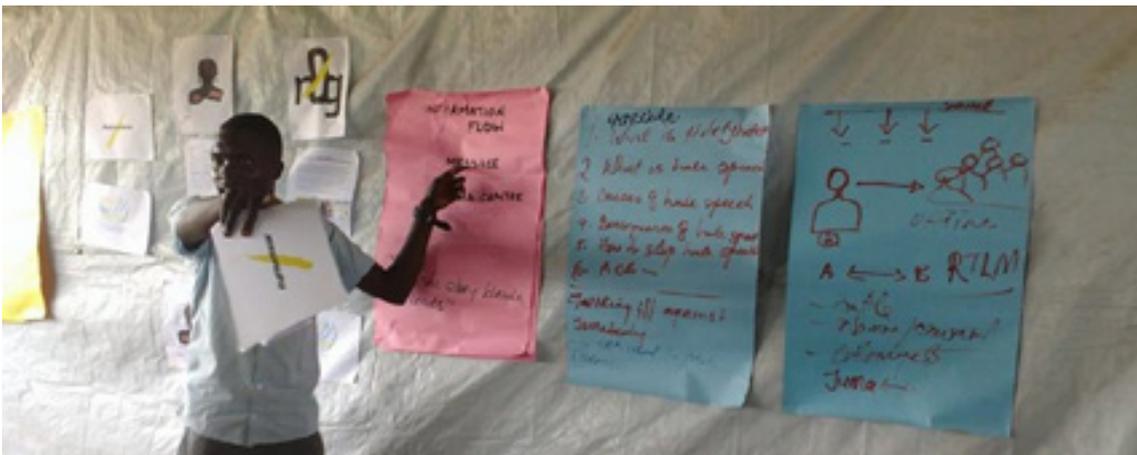 broadcaster of information in that area)

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VIDEO [USB STICK]:

What is Dangerous Speech?
Susan Benesch introduces the concept and analysis of Dangerous Speech in this short video.
https://dangerousspeech.org/what-is-ds/
Dangerous Speech Project, January 24, 2018

#defyhatenow social media #Peacejam, Rhino Camp Uganda 2017

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DANGEROUS SPEECH : A PROPOSAL TO PREVENT

Dangerous Speech is any form of expression (speech, text, or images) that can increase the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group. Susan Benesch coined this term (and founded the Dangerous Speech Project) after observing that fear-inducing, divisive rhetoric rises steadily before outbreaks of mass violence and that it is often uncannily similar, even in different countries, cultures, and historical periods. We call these rhetorical similarities 'hallmarks' of Dangerous Speech.

One of them is dehumanization, or referring to people as insects, despised animals, bacteria, or cancer. This can make violence seem acceptable: if people seem like cockroaches or microbes, it's okay to get rid of them.

Another hallmark is to tell people that they face a mortal threat from a disfavored or minority group, which makes violence seem not just acceptable, but necessary. This hallmark has been dubbed 'accusation in a mirror' because it asserts that violence would come from the opposite side – from those who are actually the would-be victims of violence.

How can one know which speech is dangerous? One must make an educated, systematic guess. Dangerous Speech cannot be identified solely by the hallmarks or by any aspect of its content, since its capacity to inspire violence depends so much on its context – on who spreads it, how, to whom, and in what social and historical context.

There are at least three ways in which inflammatory speech presents an opportunity for violence prevention, and therefore three distinct applications for the guidelines. First, such speech can serve as a key indicator for early warning, since it is often a precursor - if not also a prerequisite - for mass violence.

Second, it may be possible to limit violence by finding ways to limit such speech or its dangerousness. Third, speakers may be held accountable for speech that constitutes crime. Hate speech is variously defined in law and in common parlance, but is generally understood to mean speech that denigrates people on the basis of their membership in a group, such as an ethnic or religious group. This category of speech is too broad for successful early warning of mass atrocities, for two related reasons:

First, hate speech is common in many societies, unfortunately, including those at minimal risk of genocide. Second, some hate speech does not appreciably increase the risk of mass violence, although it may cause serious emotional and psychological damage. In other words, speech can harm directly or indirectly, or both. It may directly offend, denigrate, humiliate or frighten the people it purports to describe – such as when a racist shouts at a person of colour. Speech can also bring about harm indirectly - and with equal or even greater brutality – by motivating others to think and act against members of the group in question.

https://dangerousspeech.org/

DANGEROUS SPEECH GUIDELINES

The Dangerous Speech project has developed a test for dangerousness based on the message itself and four related elements: Speaker, Audience, Context, and Medium. These Dangerous Speech guidelines and their elements are described here in more detail.

MESSAGE
Dangerous Speech often contains 'hallmarks' such as dehumanization or 'accusation in a mirror.' Another example of a hallmark is to portray the target group as violating the purity of the in-group, making violence a necessary method of preserving one's identity. Some Dangerous Speech never makes direct reference to the target group. Instead, it describes members of the in-group either as traitors for being to sympathetic to the other group or as good virtuous in-group members, for example because they express their hatred of the other group.

SPEAKER
Some speakers are more influential than others, and they are therefore more capable of compelling a group to violence. Influence may stem from their status as political, religious, or cultural leaders, or they may gain influence from their natural charisma. The speaker can be anonymous, and in some cases that can make the speaker more influential.

AUDIENCE
When an audience is already 'primed' for violence, they will be more easily swayed by Dangerous Speech. A primed audience might be one that is already fearful of other groups, one that has longstanding and unresolved trauma, or one that lacks ties to other social groups – especially the target group. When Dangerous Speech is delivered to an audience that is not susceptible, it is unlikely to lead to violence.

CONTEXT
The context consists of the social, historical, and political environment in which speech reaches its audience. Aspects of the context that are conducive to Dangerous Speech include longstanding competition over resources, previous episodes of violence, difficult living conditions, an ongoing war, etc.

MEDIUM
The medium, or means of dissemination, can make speech more dangerous if it possesses its own influence. For example, a medium that is the audience's only or primary source of information is likely to have significant influence over that audience. Mediums with influence may be a popular newspaper, a particular language, or a type of communication technology – for example, radio, television, or the Internet.
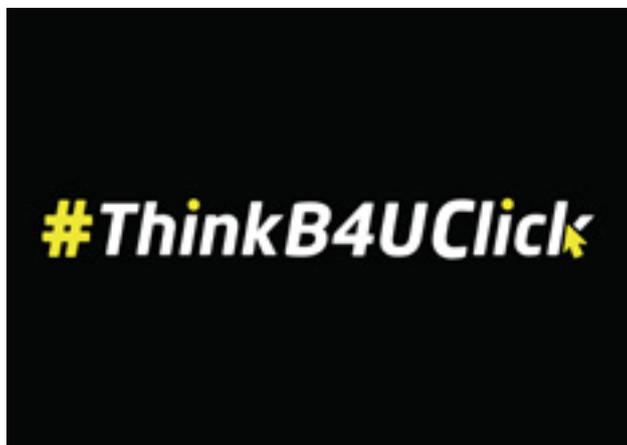
Speak up. #ThinkB4UClick. Share Responsibly

Picture this scenario. Your phone beeps. You open the message and as you go through it your stomach sinks. The content is offensive to you and you wonder what your next step should be. It could be a message that is perpetrating misogynistic, tribalistic or racist stereotypes.

Are you aware that you can take back your power by telling whoever is responsible to stop sending such content to you? Do you know that this can spark a question in the sender's mind and make them want to know more about your stance? You can turn this into a perfect opportunity to open a dialogue, and start to educate them about the personal affect and cultural context of their message.

Alternatively, picture this scenario. Your phone beeps. You open the message and your laughter makes you want to fall to the ground because your legs are not capable of supporting you anymore. You find the contents amusing because that misogynistic, tribalistic or racist joke is comic genius.

Are your fingers itching to share this offensive message with others because you think it is entertaining? Are you aware that once you forward a message, you are responsible for spreading that content, and potentially causing harm to people you know?

All it takes is one click to send, and you are transformed from the innocent receiver of an inappropriate message to an amplifier, who has enabled the the same offensive content to spread far and wide.

> " *Have you ever stood on the banks of the River Nile in Juba and shaken your head in disgust at the filth that floats on it? Those unsightly plastic bags and empty water bottles are so annoying. I can bet you always wonder who those individuals are that are spoiling the environment and why do they toss garbage into the Nile so carelessly as if the other people who use that same water don't matter?*
>
> *As if they themselves don't use that water? Imagine if the Nile were the internet and the garbage floating on it represents hate speech on social media, would you be counted among the innocent? If not, what garbage have you figuratively thrown into the Nile and polluted it with? Imagine the ripples along the Nile as your message travels like a stone skipping across the water.* "

Stop and think about how many people might be negatively affected by your actions in one thoughtless moment. Do you really want to be responsible for promoting disharmony or causing insult and potentially

even inciting violence towards other people in your community? Maybe your neighbour, a friend or even family.

What should you do when you receive an offensive message?
A message that *offends your sense of what is right and wrong?
A message that unfairly targets a group of people?

The answer is simple:

Speak up. #ThinkB4UClick.

It could be words, an image, video or audio received through various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or Whatsapp. Is the message from a friend, family member or from someone you barely know? It doesn't matter where the message originates. You have the power to stop it going any further.

People say that sticks and stones may break my bones, that words will never hurt me – but this is not actually true. Your words do have an effect on others.

Speak up. Educate. Share responsibly.
Responsibility on social media is something that many users tend to overlook because there is a false sense of being anonymous. You are hidden behind a screen, as if what happens on social media is not part of reality. Behind every social media message is a person with a conviction, an intention, a certain mindset.

- Are your personal convictions contributing to the betterment of your society, your neighbour's wellbeing and your country?
- Are you standing up for justice, tolerance and understanding?
- Whenever you can make a stand, do so with compassion, and you will make a difference!

How we respond to these messages changes us from passive consumers of technology to active and conscious creators and generators of change.

For every negative message you receive, send two positive messages.
You have the power. Use it wisely!

Speak up. #ThinkB4UClick. Share responsibly

*synonyms for 'offends' – insults / affronts / outrages / disgusts / horrifies / hurts / antagonises

#ThinkB4UClick #defyhatenow #SouthSudan #Peace4ALL #TheSouthSudanWeWant

COUNTERING DANGEROUS SPEECH

Counterspeech is any direct response to Dangerous Speech which seeks to undermine it. Just as influential speakers can make violence seem acceptable and necessary, they can favourably influence discourse through counterspeech. Counterspeech can be a spontaneous response to Dangerous Speech or part of an organised counter-messaging campaign.

The first method to countering is to educate people about Dangerous Speech before it happens, so that they can recognise and resist it. Radio La Benevolencija, an Amsterdam-based organisation that pioneered this kind of effort with fictional radio dramas in Rwanda, named it "inoculation." We use the same term, recognising that Dangerous Speech, like bacteria, cannot be eradicated, so it is much more effective to help people to resist it.

The second is counterspeech – responding to Dangerous Speech in a way that undermines it. Anyone can do this, and (just like Dangerous Speech itself) it is especially effective when done by people who have influence over the relevant audience. For example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Joachim Gauck have repeatedly responded to Dangerous Speech targeting refugees, Muslims, and immigrants by denouncing the speech and calling for unity and tolerance. Merkel said, "There is freedom of assembly in Germany but there is no place here for incitement and lies about people who come to us from other countries." Influence does not need to be political, however, and it can exist at any level - local, regional, national, international, etc.

Violence may be prevented by interfering with Dangerous Speech in several ways: inhibiting the speech, limiting its dissemination, or undermining the credibility of the speaker. The most direct way it can succeed is to have a positive effect on the speaker, convincing him or her to stop speaking dangerously now and in the future.

It can also succeed by having an impact on the audience – either by communicating norms that make Dangerous Speech socially unacceptable or by 'inoculating' the audience against the speech so they are less easily influenced by it. **(Source: dangerousspeech.org)**

Methods of countering Dangerous Speech:
https://dangerousspeech.org/counterspeech/

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VIDEO TRAINING [USB STICK]
Countering Hate Speech on Social Media

Countering Hate Speech on Facebook
https://youtu.be/_kRNx1WHAm0

Countering Hate Speech on YouTube
https://youtu.be/sacqQNyxVe8

Countering Hate Speech on Whats App
https://youtu.be/1PlHuMl0ndQ

Countering Hate Speech on Twitter
https://youtu.be/tLwgoTgbf8E

In 2016, PeaceTech Lab conducted research to better understand the connection between online hate speech and violence on the ground in South Sudan. Learn more about the project here: **http://www. peacetechlab.org/hate-speech-in-south-sudan/**

#defyhatenow training workshop on social media & hate speech mitigation

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COUNTER-NARRATIVE TOOLKIT: RESOURCES FOR CAMPAIGNS TO COUNTER EXTREMIST NARRATIVES.

http://www.counternarratives.org/html/home

Guidelines on how to counter extremist narratives on social media by counternarratives.org
A successful counter-narrative campaign can be broken down into four questions: who is your audience, what is your message, what medium are you going to use and who will be the messenger?

AUDIENCE

Understanding your target audience is the first important consideration when planning a successful campaign strategy. Who are you trying to influence through your campaign? Do you want your audience to learn something from your campaign or take action to fight extremism? Your campaign should focus on one main audience.

You may want to reach more than one audience with your campaign but be careful not to be too ambitious and aim to reach everybody. Be as specific as possible when thinking of who exactly is in your target audience. Who might an extremist group target for recruitment? Who in your community might be important in countering radicalisation? Who are the followers of popular extremist accounts online? Often that's the same audience you can think about reaching.

A helpful exercise might be to draw-up a "bio" of a typical member of your audience. The characteristics of your audience should determine the message, the medium, and the messenger for your campaign. It is vital that you know who they are. Think about the following:

- What message do you want to get across?
- What types of messages are likely to appeal to your audience?
- What medium does your audience prefer? Do they watch a lot of videos on YouTube or spend all day sharing photos on Instagram?
- Who might your audience listen to?

Put yourself in the shoes of your target audience. What message, medium, and messenger will be most effective when creating a counter-narrative campaign tailored for them?

MESSAGE
Once you've decided on your audience you need a "story" to tell them. A story is a message with a purpose. At a basic level your message should speak *with* your audience, not *at* them. Creating a message that says "extremism is bad" or "this extremist group is bad" without offering a positive alternative or an explanation why is not the best option. The most effective messages don't sound like they're lecturing the audience - they offer something to think about and reflect on.

There are a number of ways to achieve this:

- Deconstruct, discredit and demystify an extremist message with facts
- Make an emotional appeal to the audience to consider the impact of extremism and violence
- Undermine extremist propaganda through satire or humour
- Choose a specific aspect of an extremist narrative to counter or undermine
- Offer a positive alternative message or narrative

It's definitely worth thinking about what your audience will gain from your message. Do you want to encourage critical thinking in young people and boost their understanding of the intent behind extremist content online? Are you looking to challenge prejudicial behaviour or attitudes towards other races or religions? Or are you attempting to highlight the hypocrisy of an extremist group or ideology?

Thinking about the answers to these questions will give you a more comprehensive understanding of how to craft your message and the best medium or "packaging" to deliver it to your audience.

MEDIUM

Once you've thought about the message you want to send to your target audience you'll want to decide how you package it. A counter-narrative campaign could be made up of one or more mediums. Some examples are:

- Videos: short films or animations
- Text: slogans, hashtags or open letters
- Images: photos or memes

- Online literature: brochures or informative posters
- Audio recording: podcasts or short audio-clip
- Comics: manga, short panels or graphic novels

Extremist groups are becoming increasingly more skilful at producing attractive and interesting content so we must do the same. You're not just competing with extremist content but also everything else out there (mostly cat videos) for the attention of your audience!

The medium you choose can be as imaginative and creative as you like, as long as it appeals to your audience. Think closely about who you want to reach. What kinds of content they tend to watch, and how you plan to get your message across. You also need to consider how much time you will have and the resources you will have available for your campaign in terms of funding or expertise. If your budget is small and time is short, keep it simple! A short, well produced 10 second video for example can be cost-effective but very powerful.

MESSENGER

It is important to have a messenger that your audience will find credible to convey your message. Think of the messenger and message like a song. Who is your audience likely to trust, be inspired by or listen to? There are many possible effective messengers for each audience but some examples could be:

- Former extremists
- Survivors of extremism
- Respected organisations, charities, or projects relevant to who you want to reach
- Individuals who your audience respects such as sporting figures, musicians or actors
- Influential and respected faith, community or youth leaders and activists

The **Against Violent Extremism (AVE) network** is a good place to look for people that might be able to help! There are a couple of security considerations for you to think about. It may be that none of these matter to you, but it's better to be safe than sorry:

- Are you okay for your campaign to be linked back to you or your organisation?
- Are you happy for your organisation to be visible online?
- Are you prepared for members of extremist groups to contact you?
- Have you taken into the account the safety of your messenger or others that may be featured in your content?

RESEARCHING YOUR AUDIENCE
Understanding how your audience acts online and offline will help you figure out who they are and how best to reach them. To better understand your audience you could:

- Have a look at how your audience interacts online, where they go and what they are really interested, in or even set up a social media profile mirroring your audience to see how content is advertised at that demographic.
- Explore relevant content or profiles that your target audience may be engaging with online.
- Learn from former extremists about why extremist messaging appealed to them, how they found it and which online platforms are being used by extremists for recruitment.
- If possible, involve your audience! If you want to reach youth, ask them what they think.

You should be able to produce a short description of the demographic characteristics, languages, locations, interests and online behaviours of your target audience. Once you have looked into your audience and understand them a little more you should be able to think of a detailed "profile" of who they might be.

LEARNING FROM WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO COUNTER

There are often many layers or themes in the narratives of extremist groups. It's difficult to address them all in one go. Instead, be focused on which aspect of the narrative you want to counter. Some will use a mixture of theological, political and cultural themes in their narratives. It may be a big task to try to address these issues in one campaign.

Creating a counter-narrative that gets your target audience to think a little more about just one or two of these may be more suitable and easier to manage. To help you decide what you are going to counter you'll need to consider what it is about the extremist narrative that people can be drawn to, and how does extremist propaganda achieve the effect it is aiming for in its target audience.

SETTING YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Setting achievable goals and objectives will help you focus your counter-narrative campaign and give you the opportunity to evaluate your success. Some campaigns often have goals and objectives that are too broad and not realistically achievable with the resources available. Not every campaign will "go viral", but if you focus on a specific target audience then they do not necessarily need to.

Instead, try to set an overarching goal for your campaign and a series of more specific, measurable and achievable objectives. For example, your goal might be teaching young people in your town about some of the recruitment tactics used by extremists. Your objectives might then be getting 5000 views and 100 shares of your video on YouTube from your audience, putting up 100 posters around town and in schools, and having 200 students attend screenings of the video and share the campaign via their social media accounts.

Depending on the type of campaign, you may also want to seek positive traditional media coverage as this can be a good way to amplify your message. So that you can learn from your campaign make sure you are able to evaluate your success. Most social media platforms have in-built analytics that allow you to monitor your campaign and determine whether you met your online objectives. If you have a website you can use Google Analytics or other similar services.

Remember, your *goals* are there to guide the campaign and keep it focused on your original purpose. Your *objectives* explain how you will meet your goals, and remind you of your tactics, give you targets to aim for, and provide a way to evaluate your success.

DOWNLOAD BEST PRACTICE GUIDES FROM COUNTERNARRATIVES.ORG
Resources To Create & Manage Campaigns To Counter Extremist Narratives:

+

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & PROJECT LINKS [USB STICK]

COUNTER-NARRATIVES AGAINST HATE SPEECH
WHY COUNTER SPEECH?

Counter speech is a way of responding to hateful messages. If left unchallenged, the peddling of myths, lies, and the use of hateful rhetoric and abuse can lead to more harm being done - especially when individuals are targeted without knowing there is support out there and 'haters' gain more confidence about expressing their views both on and off-line.

COUNTERING ONLINE HATE SPEECH
UNESCO SERIES ON INTERNET FREEDOM
Download PDF: Countering Online Hate Speech

COUNTER-NARRATIVE CASE STUDIES
Inspiration from successful counter-narrative campaigns around the world. **http://www.counternarratives.org/html/case-studies**

STOPPING HATE – GET THE TROLLS OUT
Guidelines by the Media Diversity Institute on how to respond to hate speech on Twitter.
http://www.getthetrollsout.org/
http://www.h8hurts.eu/social-media

CYBER-SAFETY ACTION GUIDE, RESPONDING TO CYBER-HATE
Toolkit for Action & Confronting Hate Online, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
https://www.adl.org/adl-cyber-safety-action-guide

DEFUSING HATE: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION GUIDE TO COUNTERACT DANGEROUS SPEECH
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum guide by Rachel Brown
https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/how-to-prevent-genocide/hate-speech-and-incitement-to-genocide/defusing-hate-a-guide-to-counteract-dangerous-speech

Dangerous Speech – Counterspeech
https://dangerousspeech.org/counterspeech/

AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM
http://www.againstviolentextremism.org/

The Against Violent Extremism (AVE) Network is a unique and powerful new global force in the ongoing struggle to tackle violent extremism. AVE uses technology to connect, exchange, disseminate and influence all forms of violent extremism. Through the website and YouTube channel, members can stay in touch, share ideas, collaborate, find investment and partners, and project their messages to wider audiences.