

## **Hate Speeches and Behaviour: A Précis**

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### **Abstract**

*Expressions of hate pervaded the international media recently, with Nigeria being so badly hit that war was anticipated in some quarters. This scenario motivated this search for a deeper understanding of the subject of hate as a psychological concept by seeking answers to these questions: What are possible explanations and motivation for hatred? Is hate to be understood from the perspective of aberrant behavior? What are possible mitigation measures? Through a deductive application of the Duplex Theory of Hate, the Limbic Energy Hypothesis, and the Social Responsibility and Role Integration Theory, the paper identified miscreant, mindless or inappropriate leadership at all levels of socialization: family, ethnic, religious and political as responsible for hate cognitions and behaviour. Hate speeches and crime will drastically reduce in the face of the rule of law, joined with psychoeducation for adequate parenting, responsible and mindful leadership from the family through the agents of socialization and government agencies. This will in time develop a people with enthusiastic positive and productive outlook in life: an antithesis of hate attitude.*

**Key Words:** *Hate, Theory of Hate, Limbic Energy Hypothesis, Hate speeches, Behaviour.*

### **Introduction**

Every human overt or covert behaviour is a matter of concern to psychology, more so when it has universal application, potential for behaviour change, or health implications. Hate is one such attitude/behaviour: it is perceived as dangerous, and deemed untoward, hence should be modified. However, modification of behaviour is only possible after good analyses and understanding of same. The major objective of this thesis is thus to explicate on hate so as to engender better holistic understanding.

From the mid year of 2017, the world media rampantly reported and discussed hate speeches and behaviour to the extent that in a meeting of the United Nations same year, it came up as an issue. In Nigeria, there was a protracted reaction to social media video hate broadcasts against South Easterners credited to a Northern Nigeria Youth forum. Within

the same period, a self identified Yoruba youth also did independent broadcast of raw derogatory remarks against the same group of ‘fellow Nigerians’ who were using legitimate styles to press home their grievances over marginalization and other unfair treatments as a Federating Nationality. At the heart of the publications was a sack order so malevolently and unscrupulously advertised that genocide was threatened. Indeed, the 2017 hate expressions produced hundreds of internally displaced persons who fled their locations of normal residence in search of safety. Again, in the period around the Nigerian general elections in 2019, political dimension was added to the hate speeches and persuasions to the extent that the Government felt threatened hence decided to introduce legislation to criminalize ‘hate speeches and broadcasts’. Hate persuasions and inuendos have not abated; rather ethnic and racial colours are being projected, with attendant crimes.

This author conducted a quasi experiment in a post graduate class by administering the STAI form Y (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), and the DASS (Henry & Crawford, 2005) to nine students after noting their pulse rates. After that, the lecture commenced and lasted for two hours, the students were allowed fifteen minutes after the examination before the two videos mentioned above were played for them twice after which Post tests of the tests and pulse rates were taken. Comparing the pre and post tests scores, 60% of the students had increased anxiety scores, 42% had increased depression scores, while 36% had increased post test pulse rates. No inferential tests were applied yet results of this mock experiment serves as an indicator that hate speeches could have substantial physiological consequences hence it buttressed the need for exploration of the subject of hate through an attempt to provide answers to pertinent questions:

\*What is hate?

\*Why do people hate others?

\*Is hate to be understood from the perspective of aberrant behavior?

\* What are possible mitigation measures?

### **Hate or Hatred:**

Hate or hatred is used to describe a feeling of intense dislike, a negative affectional state with associated loathsome behavior towards designated stimulus object, person or group. It is also used in association to the undesirable. The American Psychological Association explains that hate is a hostile emotion combining feelings of detestation, anger, and a desire to retaliate a real or imagined harm (APA 2007). Hate or hatred therefore has cognitive, affective and behavioral components: a belief or perception that is biased (prejudiced) against the stimulus object, person or group, the emotion of intense dislike, and an approach behavior with intent of causing harm. Hate could thus be viewed partly as an

attitude because of its obvious three components: Cognitive, emotional and action components, it seems that the emotional component, the intense dislike feeling is the key motivator of hate behavior. The level of harm desired/desirable against the stimulus certainly must be proportional to the intensity of the dislike (Loath). Hence crimes of hate often leave the victims either dead or in very severe agonizing states.

The easiest way to inflict pain on a hated person is through speeches; the so often called hate speeches. A hate speech is an utterance; spoken or written communication that is intended to malign the wellbeing of another person because of dislike. It is an address loaded with descriptive of debasement, humiliation and ruination of the targeted (hated) person or group, such that the one attacked feels really hurt. Hate speeches are violent attacks which traumatize the hated both physically and psychologically. Physically because through the psycho-neuro-immunological route such speeches impinge on glandular physiology and possibly precipitate somatic complaints.

Lakoff (2017) implies that hate speeches have the same effects as violence because language naturally generates thought which is carried out by neural circuitry. Hate speeches change the brains neuro-chemistry of those on the receiving side, and create toxic stress, fear, and distrust. The effect according to Lakoff, imposes on one's ability to think and act like a fully free citizen for a long time, hence, effects of hate speeches are considered more severe than attacks with fists.

Hate speeches can take the form of propaganda; an intentionally well packaged communication against a hated person or group, which among others, proposes to devaluate the target in some ways before neutral/previously unconcerned persons or groups, with the intention of getting 'allies' into the hatred ring. This may take direct or indirect forms, for example Jesus Christ taught love (love God, and love your neighbor; with the Good Samaritan as an example) but people who wish to ridicule Christianity or some of its teachings distort the teaching and cite it out of context, then try to validate their communication with what was supposedly done by the crusaders. Some of the crusaders might have been nursing ethnic or other primordial hatred against those they mistreated but hid under the cover that empowered them at that time to unleash violence that was not defensible in the teachings of Jesus. After all, Jesus also admonished His followers to love one another and pray for their enemies, and not return evil for evil. In this connection, Navarro (2013) wrote "Anger is a complex emotion, and its formation is not simple... For example Christianity has defended loving one another as a source of motivation to save the souls of non believers" PP12.

### **Theories of Hate/Hatred**

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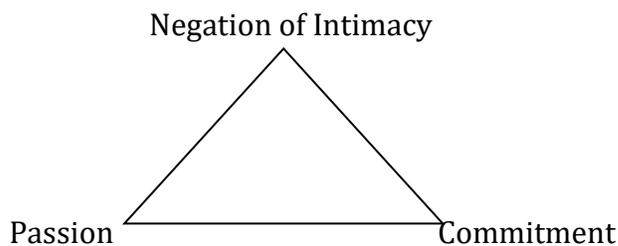
Scholars have tried to explain the origin and development of hatred in many ways. It seems that most researchers believe that like intense violence, hatred develops step by step, sometimes following an untoward argument, perceived denial or maltreatment or in cases involving groups, certain fanatical obligations. The Duplex Theory (Sternberg, 2003), and the Limbic Energy Hypothesis (Obi-Nwosu, 2012) seems most fitted for this paper, hence are examined below.

**The Duplex theory** has two parts: The Triangular Theory, and The Theory of hate as a story. The Triangular Theory holds that hate potentially comprises of three components, which are: Negation of intimacy, passion and commitment. Negation of intimacy (an avoidance behavior) is characterized by repulsion and disgust. This desire to create a distance from the stimulus person or group may arise from an arousal of repulsion or disgust by certain characteristics of the person or group, that may be real, imaginary or might have been inculcated through propaganda which portrays or inscribes disgusting and repulsive characteristics on the target.

The second component of hate is passion. This is expressed as intense anger or fear in response to a threat. Anger often leads to approach behaviour, while fear leads to avoidance. Approach behavior motivated by anger is usually with the intention to hurt. To arouse such passion, information may portray the target as undesirable, a threat to the survival of the in-group that should be done away with, or as a misfit and dangerous stimulus that must be avoided.

The third component (of the triangle) of hate is decision/commitment and is characterized by cognitions of devaluation and diminution through contempt; the in-group views the out-group (the target) as less human and parasitic in the ecosystem. This cognition is usually achieved through ‘education’ (the kind often referred to as brainwashing).

The hate triangle is represented thus



Sternberg (2003) explained that different combinations of the components of hate produce different kinds of hate. Thus, the disgust of Negation of intimacy alone produces cool hate; No1. Hot hate being no. 2 is produced by passion (anger/fear) alone, while cold hate (No3) is produced by the devaluation of decision/commitment alone. Then Negation of intimacy + Passion produces boiling hate; no. 4, and loathing (from negation of intimacy) + diminution (from decision/commitment) leads to Simmering hate (No5), while Seething hate (No6) is produced by revilement (anger/fear of passion + devaluation/diminution of decision/commitment). According to the theorist, the 7th and most problematic is burning hate: need for annihilation which is produced when the three components (negation of intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment) are combined.

### **The Theory of Hate as a Story**

This theory; (Sternberg 2003&2005) proposes that hate emerges from different kinds of stories. The stories told concerning the target stimulus usually portrays same in strong negative, untoward terms: as unclean, destroyer, ungodly, deadly barbarian, Machiavellian, and malevolent, while the in-group is portrayed as the hunted, mistreated, kind, godly, and benevolent.

The five (5) steps recognized in the instigation of hate through stories include:

- 1 The target is revealed to be anathema
- 2 The target plans actions contrary to the interests of the in-group
- 3 The target makes its presence felt.
- 4 The target translates plans into action
- 5 The target is achieving some success in its goals.

When any or a combination of these become internalized, perception turns to reality. This becomes much stronger if there are elements of evidence in the story. Typically, the 'indoctrinated' does not question the authenticity of the story, but believes same to be true and acts upon it.

This theory convincingly explains the route through which sectional/tribal/racial/religious prejudices transmitted through stories culminate in hate cognitions and motivate hate behaviour. In such cases, significant and revered/powerful in-group persons (the elites) painstakingly inculcate the negative narratives to those being prepared to unleash 'hate crimes' on the out-group, and provide the implements and especially the reinforcement

(rewards) for good script performances. In most cases, the in-group underdogs are used as tools (unknowingly to them) for furthering the political and economic courses of their lords. This theory underscores the value of childhood positive social education in creating an accommodating population in multi group settlements (should the predatory elites repent).

### **The Limbic Energy Hypothesis of Hate**

Obi-Nwosu (2012) propounded the limbic energy hypothesis as an explanation for imbuelement or otherwise of love cognition and behaviour. The hypothesis holds that from the cradle, the limbic system accumulates both positive and negative energy (Limbic energy), the rate and quality of which depends on the integrity of the system plus which of the forces within the environment is predominant. Thus, where the environment is saturated with, or predominantly charged with positive emotional oomph generated by cordiality, low stress level, social warmth and appreciable economy, the limbic system becomes positively charged, but in opposite states (abusive, depriving, unfriendly, or negligent) the limbic system becomes negatively charged. He explained that since all environments consist of both positive and negative emotional events (translating to positive and negative limbic energy respectively), the energy which a person will manifest depends on which energy cancels the other. Humans, according to this hypothesis build up in the limbic system both positive and negative arousing energies, and what determines which radiates or manifests, is the relative strength. If saturated with positive energy, it radiates same, which is experienced as a positive magnetic field (aura) around the person. Such a person would possess a secure confident, calm, attractive and charming personality. If however the limbic system accumulated and is saturated with negative energy, such a person radiates same, and could be described as anxious, unattractive, repulsive, charmless, moody, or irritable and insecure. The person with predominant positive limbic energy is thus expected to be loving and lovable, tolerant and conscientious as well as non violent, while persons with predominant negative limbic energy most likely show evidence of disruptive competitiveness, neuroticism, impatience, resentment, immorality, or **hatefulness**; all, depending on the level of negative limbic energy.

The limbic energy hypothesis of hate therefore strongly suggests that there could be a biological predisposition to hatred. It is settled in science that with progression of generations, gene structures change to enhance better adaptation of species to an ecosystem. Indeed, geneticists hold that only species with genetic make ups that compete favourably survive in an ecosystem. Accordingly it is plausible that through evolutionary difficulties, some races or tribes might have developed genes that trigger very high sense of

insecurity (physical and psychological) which make them potentially violent against any perceived threat, and the underlying attitude is described as hatred.

Also, since it is a scientific truism that psychological states influence neurochemistry, this hypothesis implies that prolonged exposure to adverse psychological environment, especially that which commenced from the cradle (at the formative stages of both the physiological and psychological apparatuses) combines with genetic endowment to determine the level of relevant neurotransmitters (and hormones) that circulate in a person. In this regard, persons (or groups of people) become(s) 'conditioned' to respond in particular ways to particular stimulus signals.

Even though it is yet to be confirmed that there are significant racial differences in levels of neurotransmitters in the Central Nervous System, it is no doubt that excitatory neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and epinephrine increase and decrease differentially following arousal states. Put differentially, the amount of stimulation that ignites a spark potential differs in individuals (and groups) because of pre-conditioning; determined by the limbic energy status

Stated succinctly therefore, the limbic energy hypothesis of hatred holds that where the limbic system is saturated with negative energy (limbic energy) due to long sustained exposure to adverse psychological environment (especially from early childhood), the bearer becomes conditioned to respond to perceived threat stimuli with mannerisms described as hate and hatred because of an innate sense of insecurity, that demands hyper alertness for self preservation (a survival instinct).

Perhaps, additionally, the limbic energy hypothesis enables better appreciation of the route through which the theory of hate as a story gain scientific expression. Recall that the theory stipulates that hatred develops from well crafted stories which are transmitted from significant persons to young persons, igniting and motivating loath and hedge formation against the target group or person. The limbic energy hypothesis offers a deeper scientific understanding of how these (rather painful) stories told over and over again generate electro-magnetic energy that eventually conditions the receiver of such stories to act out defense/revenge/punishment in the presence of the target of the stories: after all, the prefrontal cortex has important connections with the limbic system through which there is a reciprocal effect of perceptual processes.

The matrix is this: hate stories, just like negative life experiences from early in life through the modulation of the limbic system create negative cognitions, and then generate strong illogical absolutic beliefs, philosophies, and perceptions of insecurity (physical,

psychological or economic) in respect of the target/stimulus. Thus, when in contact with or within perceived vulnerability distance to the stimulus, relevant neurotransmitters and hormones meant to defend/challenge threats to integrity/security (like the fight or flight response) become automatically released, leading to mannerisms described as hate speeches and behaviour.

Furthermore, other parts of the brain that complete the hate circuit includes the putamen and the insula, found in the sub-cortex. The **putamen** is already known to be involved in the perception of contempt and disgust and may also be part of the motor system involved in movement and action. The idea that the **insula** is involved in the formation of our present-moment awareness can be traced back to what is known as the somatic marker hypothesis. ... It has been suggested that the insula plays an important role in the processing of these bodily sensations so they may be used to influence decision making ([www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com](http://www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com). retrieved on 25/6/20). However, the insular cortex; in particular its most anterior portion, is considered a limbic-related cortex. Thus has increasingly become the focus of attention for its function in body representation and subjective emotional experience. In this connection, it is obvious that no part of the brain is exclusively structured to process hate or generate same; rather, the neural processes involves in transmitting strong emotional signals (including love) are the same: perceptual processes determine to which side of 'a continuum' the information belongs, and if hate responses would occur. Resultant distress (psychopathology) and destructive behaviour (crime) that accompany these brain activities designate hate as negative and undesirable.

### **Conclusion**

Hatred is a negative attitude with strong negative emotion that is destructive. The duplex theory and the limbic energy hypothesis aptly explain the nature of hatred and possible ways that hate attitudes, cognitions and behaviour are imbibed; strongly suggesting that notwithstanding obvious biological connections, the environment plays overwhelming role in the development and maintenance of hatred. Logically, psychological, political, and socioeconomic motives are primary motivators for negative indoctrination of underdogs by tribal, religious, political or peer elites to act out hate scripts. Since hate and hate speeches are purposed for debasement, humiliation and ruination of the targeted (hated) person or group, such that the one attacked feels really hurt and traumatized, it incorporates criminal behaviour and surely accrues adverse health and economic states on the victim. It may as well induce counter hatred and revenge impetus thereby tends to prelude anarchy. Indeed, hate strongly correlates with heinous criminality.

Hate cognitions and behaviour could be reduced through relevant education and psychotherapy. Surely, in most cases of hatred, especially where the seemingly better-off group is hated, massive Psycho-education of the perpetrators to address: a) negative narratives and retrogressive ideas, and b) to inculcate contentment and autonomy become remedial. These, coupled with dispassionate application of justice (rule of law) would drastically reduce motivation for hatred and associated activities, encourage inter group rational interaction, as well as improve security and economic prosperity.

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