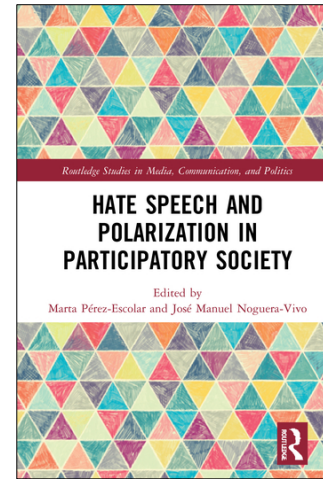


Marta Pérez-Escolar and José Manuel Noguera-Vivo (Eds.), **Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 278 pp., \$160.00 (hardback).

Reviewed by
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Hate Speech and Polarization in Participatory Society, edited by Marta Pérez-Escolar and José Manuel Noguera-Vivo, is a well-conceived and executed edited collection of 16 essays, plus a preface by Fernando Iwasaki, focusing on the nature of hateful speech across Spain, Portugal, South Africa, Britain, Turkey, Brazil, Sweden, and Southern Europe. The editors assembled a diverse set of authors, with 13 from various academic institutions in Spain, and others representing institutions in Australia, Czech Republic, Belgium, Italy, Brazil, South Africa, Cyprus, Germany, Turkey, Sweden, and the United States. The focus of the text is on both print-based media/journalism, as well as social media forums such as Facebook and Twitter. While the primary audience for the text is aimed at colleagues in the countries cited above, it has a strong connection to the international media community. In particular, scholars in the United States will find familiar sources are referenced in the essays; more important, they will discover an entire literature that may well be unfamiliar. Although “rhetoric” is not a common term in the text, rhetorical scholars will likewise be able to adapt the communication-oriented descriptive and critical commentaries to their own work. One further advantage of the text is that several essays provide a critical vocabulary, such as distinguishing types of hate speech, that will prove useful.



Following a concisely written introductory essay by the coeditors, the text is divided into three main parts, focusing in turn on “metaphors for polarization and hate speech” (pp. 13–64), “political and ideological polarization” (pp. 65–176) and case studies of “hate speech in the social, traditional, and community media” (pp. 177–250). As suggested above, the introductory essay well prepares the reader for the ensuing arguments/findings in each of the subsequent essays. In reading the overview, one has a clear sense of which essays might speak to particular interests; the text does not need to be read in order, as each essay functions as a stand-alone piece.

Within Part One, the first essay focuses on “the consequences of deceit” (p. 15) in reviewing the context for political polarization across Spain’s political parties. Pérez-Escolar and Noguera-Vivo draw attention to how polarization is fostered through the dissemination of false information across the Internet. They offer a clear distinction, taken from others’ work, across “misinformation” (no harm meant), “disinformation” (deliberate harm intended), and “malinformation” (genuine information meant to harm, largely by moving private issues to a public forum; pp. 18–19).¹ Their primary aim is to show how falseness

¹ To avoid a long list of references to each chapter, I will use page numbers within the text as a whole to note where specific terms or concepts are mentioned.

contributes to ideological polarization through the analysis of specific case studies of lies and deceit promoted by five political parties in Spain.

The next essay focuses on two current terms, "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles." Axel Bruns offers a compelling case for rejection of both terms as useful descriptors of what they purport to describe. Echo chambers suggest ways in which like-minded people can strengthen beliefs based on what others also believe; filter bubbles keep people from exploring alternative or contrary views (p. 33). There is no real support for these in terms of how people use search engines to find information—there is greater consistency in how search terms are used to locate sites of interest. The danger is that both terms draw attention to information platforms rather than to the actual sociopolitical polarization that surrounds them. The third essay by Liriam Sponholz analyzes "words that wound" (p. 49) as contributors to hateful speech. Speech act theory serves as the grounding frame in contrasting "hateful speakers" who operate from emotion with "hate-fueled speakers" work from their personal convictions. In addition, "hatred-inciting speech" forms a third category of "hate speech" writ large (p. 57). Finally, "dangerous speech" goes beyond these to foster a more physical or violent consequence from its use (p. 58).

Part Two begins with an essay by Allen Munoriyarwa on racial conflict engendered via Twitter hashtags in postapartheid South Africa. The analysis provides a compelling case for how easy it is to use incendiary language (racist rants), primarily aimed at Black people, on Twitter, as the identity of the discussant can be hidden from view. As noted by the phrase "Online Disinhibition Effect" (p. 69), being able to hide one's identity does have a "freeing" effect on how willing a person is to share information while remaining invisible. One question arises from the analysis—it would be interesting to know whether racist and nonracist comments in circulation were equally retweeted. Unfortunately, there is some disconnect between the claims advanced and the actual textual examples used to support those claims. Laura Cortés-Selva and Susana Martínez-Guillem's essay in Part Two examines misogyny and antifeminism in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The author grounds the study in visual style, including an analysis of cinematography, set design, and costumes, and how these impact actions outside of the story itself (p. 86). As one example, the author focuses on the color of costumes and their relationship to socioeconomic class, noting that gray costumes are worn by "unaccepted women" in the Republic of Gilead. As she notes, women have used the same attention to colors in the *Tale* to symbolically represent their struggles as they participate in real-life demonstrations (pp. 90–92).

The third essay in Part Two focuses attention on Brexit Britain's "Leave versus Remain" (p. 98) discussion. Monika Brusenbauch Meislová argues that the affiliation to either view represents personal identity with a position rather than adherence to a "party-line" orientation. This produces an affective polarization that emanates in an in-group unity hostile to those on the other side of the issue. Using critical discourse analysis, the essay provides a tightly woven theoretical frame for the examination of how Leavers and Remainers construct their image of the "other" in Brexit-oriented speeches presented by prominent politicians. In the process of reviewing the discourse, the author provides a methodologically pristine account of in/out-group discourse that denigrates the other via hate speech.

The next essay is a comparative analysis of Spain's and Portugal's public Twitter debate on the Iberian sphere. While Juan Antonio Marín Albaladejo and João Figueira present three hypotheses, they only

clearly identify H1 in a discussion of results. The reader is left to try and make connections between H2 and H3 and the results, thus making this one of the weaker essays in the collection. The fifth essay examines left-populist rhetoric in a political campaign in Turkey. Gülüm Şener, Hakan Yücel, and Umur Yedikardeş provide an excellent description of the differences between left- and right-wing populism and how it plays out in Turkey. Rhetorical scholars, in particular, will find the construction of “the people” (p. 131), especially in the context of concerns over inclusion and equity, of interest. The sixth essay, by Ana I. Barragán-Romero and María Elena Villar, compares Trump’s and the Abascal’s (president of Spain’s right-wing Vox party) anti-immigration rhetoric on Twitter. The authors distinguish affirmative (no clear enemy), negative (a clear enemy identified), and reactive (wherein the rhetor stands against the enemy) propaganda rhetoric in examining the discourse (pp. 147–148). While overall an excellent study, it would have helped to provide more specific examples of Trump’s tweets to support the claims advanced. Three frames were identified in the comparison: the “threat” posed by immigrants, “law and defense,” in identifying legal issues raised by both, and “preserving values,” to note how continued immigration would negatively impact each country’s values (p. 155). They provide a very clear sense of how each rhetor uses one of the three main types of propaganda to advance their positions.

Part Three, as noted earlier, offers more specific case studies of hate speech across social, traditional, and community media outlets. The essays in this section include analyses of a Swedish street paper that utilizes the voice of homeless people (p. 179), hate speech in the 2017 documentary *The Internet Warriors* (p. 193), asylum-seeker rhetoric in Turkey (p. 205), the stereotypical representation of Muslims in Southern European TV series (p. 221), and a sports communication study of hate speech messages on Instagram (p. 237).

While there is much more that could be said about each of the contributions to this collection, I hope that the above preview might entice American scholars to engage in more direct exploration of the arguments advanced. At the very least, the text adds to the breadth and depth of literature on hate speech. It also reveals that hateful discourse, such as that in the current discursive climate in the United States, is not unique to our culture.