



- ✓ Home
- ✓ Library
- ✓ Press
- ✓ Research
- ✓ People
- ✓ Links
- ✓ Giving

UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Media Release

For Immediate Use

November 7, 2011

CSRC develops methodology to measure hate speech on talk radio

Rebecca Epstein, repstein@chicano.ucla.edu
310.825.2363

A UCLA team of researchers have developed a replicable methodology to quantify hate speech in commercial broadcasting—i.e., speech that expresses prejudice against ethnic, racial, religious, and/or sexual minorities.

In a groundbreaking pilot study conducted by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) in partnership with the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC), the researchers documented language that may be constitutive of hate speech in thirty- to forty-minute segments from three politically conservative talk radio programs: *The Lou Dobbs Show: Mr. Independent* (syndicated by the United Stations Radio Networks), broadcast July 31, 2008; *The Savage Nation* (produced at KFMB 760 AM and syndicated by Talk Radio Network), broadcast July 24, 2008; and *The John & Ken Show* (KFI AM 640, Los Angeles), broadcast July 30, 2008.

Using a new methodology that promises to advance understanding of the nature and prevalence of hate speech in commercial media, the research team found a significant incidence of speech that incorporates targeted statements against foreign nationals and members of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. In addition to targeted statements, the study measured unsubstantiated claims, divisive language, and indexical terms (code words) related to political nativism.

“Based on the evidence we uncovered, the programs reveal a distinct and recurring rhetorical pattern for targeting specific vulnerable groups,” said Chon Noriega, center director and UCLA professor of cinema and media studies. “Through this rhetorical pattern, vulnerable groups were defined as antithetical to core American values, which were attributed by the hosts to themselves, their audience, and the nation.”

Noriega and Javier Iribarren, MSW-Psy.D, the center’s assistant director, chose to examine conservative talk radio because research has shown it accounts for 91 percent of total weekday talk radio programming. In addition, radio has the greatest penetration of any media outlet (print, broadcast, or digital), reaching 90 percent of Americans each week and the news-talk format is the predominant radio format in terms of dedicated stations nationwide (over 1,700).

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has defined hate speech as either “words that threaten to incite 'imminent unlawful action,' which may be criminalized without violating the First Amendment” or “speech that creates a climate of hate or prejudice, which may in turn foster the commission of hate crimes.”

Even with a limited sample, a qualitative content analysis revealed several distinct features of speech among the talk radio programs that qualified as hate speech under the

NTIA definition. The findings also raise useful questions for future studies on hate speech in the media.

Among the study's findings:

- Across the three program segments, researchers identified 148 statements targeting a vulnerable group or their supporters. Seventy-nine percent of these instances (117) targeted vulnerable groups, and 21 percent (31) targeted their supporters.
- Across the three program segments, researchers identified 33 instances of a 'call for action' against a vulnerable group. Of the 33 calls for action, most focused on Latinos and immigration.
- Averaged on a per-program basis, Latinos (both citizen and undocumented) represented 91 percent (43 of 47, including those in public office) of the targeted vulnerable groups on *The Lou Dobbs Show*, 43 percent (15 of 35) on *The Savage Nation*, and 43 percent (15 of 35) on *The John & Ken Show*.
- Of 114 fact-based claims combined, 37 percent (42 of 114) were unsubstantiated, with 11 proven false, 18 found to be unverifiable, and 13 found to be distorted.
- There were 20 instances of indexical terms (code words) to identify certain groups as "other" to the nation. Terms such as illegal alien, gangbanger, killers, anarchists, calamity, and domestic terrorism indexed Latinos, undocumented immigrants, and immigrant rights advocates, thereby associating these groups with crime, terror, and a foreign enemy.

In addition to providing a new methodology to quantify hate speech in commercial talk radio, the study calls attention to the impact of on-air content on the Latino population, as well as highlights the issue of codes of professional conduct for journalists. Moreover, this study may generate questions about content, production, and distribution control and how that control affects the representation of vulnerable groups.

The study was supported in part by a grant from the Social Science Research Council's Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere program, with funds provided by the Ford Foundation. Additional support was provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

To download the report, click [here](#).

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center was established in 1969. Current research areas also include public health, education, economic security, and the arts.

UCLA is California's largest university, with an enrollment of nearly 38,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The UCLA College of Letters and Science and the university's 11 professional schools feature renowned faculty and offer more than 337 degree programs and majors. UCLA is a national and international leader in the breadth and quality of its academic, research, health care, cultural, continuing education, and athletic programs. Six alumni and five faculty have been awarded the Nobel Prize

To learn more about the CSRC, visit [our website](#), [Wikipedia page](#), [Facebook](#) or [email us](#).
To unsubscribe from our listserv please e-mail your request to csrcinfo@chicano.ucla.edu