Breaking Down Hate Speech

Essential Question: How can you create a community culture in which hate speech is unacceptable, both online and offline?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: Students learn the definition of hate speech and understand how it affects individuals, groups, and communities. They learn to recognize hate speech by reading an article or by analyzing a brief video. They then explore school-wide solutions for addressing hate speech by role-playing a student mediation committee and creating guidelines for online and offline communities.

objectives

Students will:

• Recognize hate speech and its impact on individuals, groups, and communities, both online and offline

• Analyze situations to determine if they constitute hate speech

• Create a set of community guidelines for dealing with online and offline hate speech at school

Digital Ethics Focus: (Self)   (Family and Friends)   (Community)

Materials and Preparation

Materials

• **"Hate Speech Corrodes Online Games"** article excerpt, one copy for each student

• **"Library"** video

• **"Confronting Hate Speech Online"** article from the Anti-Defamation League (useful background about addressing hate speech)

Preparation

• Preview the lesson as a whole for sensitive materials and issues.

• Preview the article and video and be prepared to discuss one or the other with the class. We recommend that you preview to determine which is most appropriate for your students. Note: it is recommended that you choose between the article and the video to stay within the time frame allotted for this lesson.

Differentiated Instruction

You might have motivated students compile and analyze the results from the Extension Activity survey, and present them to the rest of the class.

Key Vocabulary

• **Hate Speech:** Making cruel, hostile, or negative statements about someone based on their race, religion, national origin, disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation

• **Stereotype:** A simplified and often negative assumption about a particular group of people

• **Derogatory:** Intentionally hurtful and harmful, designed to insult or degrade

• **Mediation:** Efforts by someone who is not part of a situation to settle disputes

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teaching plans

Introduce *(10 minutes)*

Note: If you feel that you need to build trust in your classroom before discussing these sensitive issues, you may warm up with activities from the following websites:

- **Facing History and Ourselves:** www.facinghistory.org
- **Teaching Tolerance:** www.tolerance.org
- **Anti-Defamation League Curriculum Connections:** www.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections

TEACH the Key Vocabulary terms **hate speech**, **stereotype**, and **derogatory**.

EXPLAIN to students that they will learn to recognize hate speech online and offline. They will hear examples of hate speech and explore how it affects individuals, groups, and communities both online and offline. Explain that discussing these matters does not mean anyone approves of the statements.

ENGAGE students in writing short journal entries describing an incident in which they or someone they know has been the target of hate speech of any kind. If they cannot think of one, they can describe an incident in literature, on television, or in the movies. Arrange students in pairs and have them share their journal entries with their partners. Invite volunteers to share their journal entries with the class. Use the following questions to connect students' experiences to common ways that hate speech can manifest online and offline.

ASK *What are some general ways that hate speech can be used in the offline world?* Sample responses:
- Calling people names based on their race, religion, national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or any other type of group that is disenfranchised in our society
- Saying things about people that are based on social identity stereotypes

ASK *What are some general ways that hate speech might be used online?* Sample responses:
- Sending an email or a text to someone that insults their religion, national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- Saying derogatory things about people in a chat room, on Facebook, or Twitter, about these groups

SELECT either **option A** (article excerpt) or **option B** (video) before continuing onto Teach 1.

SHARE with students your plans to read a news story or watch a video from MTV.

Teach 1 (option A): Recognize Hate Speech *(15 minutes)*

INSTRUCT students to read the following excerpt on their own or have a volunteer read it aloud. The excerpt comes from the story "Hate Speech Corrodes Online Games" by Associated Press writer Nicholas K. Geraniols. It can be found at the following link: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36572021/ns/technology_and_science-games/

> It's not just cyberbullets that are exchanged during firefights on the XBox Live version of "Call of Duty." Many gamers also exchange hate speech over their headsets as they stalk each other across the virtual battlefields. Players trade racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic insults so frequently that game makers are taking steps to tone down the rhetoric. The comments would shock parents who may not realize their children are constantly exposed to language that might make a sailor blush. Most parental concerns have focused on violence, not language. One gamer told an opponent he presumed to be Jewish that he wished Hitler had succeeded in his mission. Many exchanges involve talk of rape or exult over the atomic bombing of Japan. There are frequent slurs on homosexuals, Asians, Hispanics

common sense
media

The GoodPlay Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education

DIGITAL LITERACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN A CONNECTED CULTURE
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and women. Such comments can be heard on all online video gaming systems, including PlayStation Network, Blizzard Entertainment (World of Warcraft) and others.

ASK *What are some examples of hate speech that were described in the article?* (Students should understand that the comment about Hitler is hate speech against Jewish people, comments about rape are hate speech against women and girls, and references to the bombing of Japan are hate speech against Japanese people, or Asians in general. In all three cases, the offenders wish their opponents serious harm based on their presumed membership in a particular group.)

Teach 1 (option B): Recognize Hate Speech *(15 minutes)*

PREPARE students for the video "Library" by explaining that what they are about to see may be harsh, but it illustrates the effects of hate speech. They should jot down any examples of hate speech they hear.

WATCH "Library" as a class.

ASK What are some examples of hate speech from the video? (Students should understand that when calling someone "Princess" or threatening to tell their father "how gay they are" are examples of hate speech.)

(RESUME TEACH 1 HERE AFTER EITHER OPTION A OR OPTION B)
ASK *How do you think you might feel if you were the recipient of derogatory messages?* (Guide students to identify feelings such as: humiliated, trapped, angry, intimidated, attacked, alienated, and scared.)

ASK *Why do you think people make derogatory remarks? What might their motives be?*
   Sample responses: • *They are ignorant or have been taught to be racist*
                     • *They dislike people who are not exactly like them*
                     • *They think it is cool or intimidating to use language like this*

ASK *How are these kinds of attacks similar to or different from calling your opponent a "loser"?*
   Sample responses:
   Similarities: • Both types of statements are cruel and hurtful
                   • Both types of statements are publicly humiliating

   Differences: • The statements are based on fixed identity traits, not behavior
                  • The statements are derogatory and threatening towards everyone in the group
                  • The statements imply that all members of the group deserve to be treated differently (badly)

INVITE students to think about why so much hate speech takes place online. Students should be aware that with online hate speech, the offenders often remain anonymous. They may find it easier to make derogatory or prejudiced statements or spread negative stereotypes because they are not face-to-face with the people they affect.

Teach 2: Target School Hate Speech *(20 minutes)*

ENCOURAGE students to think about how hate speech can affect more than just the target. Students should understand that hate speech can create an environment in which it is difficult to learn or work, and in which members of the targeted groups may be placed at a disadvantage.

ASK *How might hate speech damage an online community?* (Guide students to understand that hate speech online can quickly reach many people because information spreads rapidly to vast audiences online. Hate

speech can make targeted members of an online community feel that they are not welcome. Members who are bystanders may also feel scared, trapped, or intimidated.)

TEACH the Key Vocabulary word **mediation**.

ARRANGE students in groups of five to six. Explain that each group will be acting as a Mediation Committee, which has the job of deciding what to do when students behave in an unacceptable way online or offline. Instruct groups to conduct mock Mediation Committee meetings to deal with the offenders in "Library." (Note: If you read the excerpt instead of watching "Library," have students pretend to deal with a student who has written letters filled with hate speech to the named groups.)

GUIDE the committees to brainstorm ways to deal with hate speech when it happens online. (Possible responses include flagging videos or comments, making counterpoint comments, linking to educational resources, or using social networks to reach out to large bodies of people. Encourage groups to think of positive approaches, such as rewarding students who stand up against hate speech or who educate others about hate speech.)

ASK • *Which of the methods you discussed for addressing online hate speech do you feel is most effective? Why?*
   • *Is any one method a "complete" method, or are there drawbacks with each?*
   • *Do the methods you have chosen help prevent hate speech or address it after it happens?*
   • *How might you incorporate some of the methods you have developed into a set of guidelines for your school?* (Guidelines might include a class policy on hate speech or a school-wide education program that includes posters or information that can be shared with classmates through listervs.)

You may wish to have students write and post their guidelines, or take steps to implement a school-wide education program that includes both online and offline activities.

Wrap Up and Assess

Use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK *How would you describe hate speech to another student who might not know the term?* (Students should understand that hate speech includes any cruel, hostile, or negative statements directed toward someone based on their race, religion, national origin, disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation. It includes name calling, spreading stereotypes, and making derogatory comments, either in person or online.)

ASK *How would you describe the impact of hate speech on individuals? On targeted groups? On communities?* (Students should recognize that hate speech can make an individual target feel scared, angry, and humiliated. It can affect members of the targeted group and create a community climate of hatred, mistrust, and inequality.)

ASK *Why do you think it is important to talk about hate speech? Why might it be important to have guidelines for preventing or dealing with hate speech online and offline, and what might those guidelines be?* (Students should recognize that understanding the impact of hate speech and having clear school guidelines could create a safer school environment and discourage prejudice and discrimination.)

Extension Activity

Have students create a survey about hate speech at their school. Instruct them to begin by creating a definition of hate speech. Instruct students to find the following information about their classmates' experiences of hate speech:

what kind, how much, and when and where it happens. Have students explore an online survey application such as Quiz Snack (www.quizsnack.com), which will tally up their responses automatically. Alternatively, they can use a Google Docs poll or "Form" (https://docs.google.com) and employ their math skills to tally up results and convert them into percentages. Have volunteers present the results and identify the most important issues for discussion.

Homework

Have students identify someone in their life who has been discriminated against because of their race, religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation. Students should conduct an interview about that person's experience with hate speech and discrimination and the emotional impact it had on the subject's life. They can either tape the interview or take notes and write up the main points. Have students share these recordings in class, without revealing the subjects' names if they wish to remain anonymous. You may then choose to have students use the program VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com) to create an interactive presentation on the impact of hate speech and prejudice.

Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students© 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

1. Creativity and Innovation
   a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
   b. create original works as a means of personal or group expression
   c. use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues

2. Communication and Collaboration
   a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
   b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats
   d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

3. Research and Information Literacy
   b. locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media
   d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making
   a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
   b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
   c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions
   d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

5. Digital Citizenship
   a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
   b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity
   c. demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning
   d. exhibit leadership for digital citizenship