

News, hate speeches and other types of notices on the internet

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Whenever the words, “ freedom of speech” are spoken, they bring about much debate. Under Article 10 of the UK’s Human Rights Act of 1998, “ everyone has the freedom of expression”. However, it is not as absolute as one would believe it to be as this freedom may also “ be subject to formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties”. These restrictions arise for the purpose of preventing crime, protecting the rights of others and for national security. Nonetheless, there are many people who believe that there shouldn’t be any boundaries in regards to free speech as it’s the fundamental right of our society. This begs the questions what can really be considered freedom of speech and when does it need to be restricted?

The phenomenon of hate speech has always existed and as with most things, it’s a very subjective and complex topic to understand. Yet hate crime has become not only more widespread but problematic. Back in October 2015, a video went viral after a 36-year-old woman was seen verbally abusing a pregnant Muslim woman on a London bus. It was devastating not only to anyone who watched the three-minute clip but also to the other passengers who had to witness such animosity and foul language targeted at someone for no apparent reason other than the fact she was Muslim. The silver lining of this particular story is that shortly after the clip was posted online, the woman was arrested for an “ alleged racially aggravated public order offence.” Even so, hate speech and crime is something that takes form both offline and online. Whilst the internet is something that enables us to communicate easily, it also makes it easier for people to persistently spread hate with relative anonymity and little control. This makes it difficult for

people to shield themselves online and they can be left to endure this prejudice.

News stories get thrown around and written about so often on social media it becomes difficult to discern fact from false information. Defamation is the act of communicating false statements about a person in order to injure their reputation. Since the press reports on people and events constantly, defamation is something that is bound to occur. It has always acted as a limit on both the freedom of speech as well as the freedom of the press. Those who follow the UK news are aware of the considerable amount of bias, particularly relating to BBC'S article on Brexit. Is what we're reading online true facts or nothing more than propaganda? You have also most likely heard the theory of vaccinations increasing the risk of autism in children. There have been more than a dozen studies such as the Danish Cohort Study on whether or not this theory is correct and no link has been found.

Nevertheless, you will still find "information" online that states this is true. As a result of similar myths, fewer parents allow their children to receive vaccinations and are therefore putting their child at a higher risk of getting and transmitting diseases which otherwise could have been prevented.

These examples make it explicit that false information spread through the freedom of speech can have potential negative outcomes within our society.

On the contrary, having the right to free speech allows for the exposure of immoral or corrupt activities in the midst of organisations or the government. ' Whistleblowing' is the term which refers to this and is officially protected by the government under the Public Interest Disclosure Act of

1998. Despite this, such people are faced with several negative and positive aspects. In theory, It is assumed that one should be able to report wrongdoings they have perceived without the fear of recriminations. Still, the reward for speaking out against such behaviour is more often than not seclusion and financial ruin. Such blacklisting would be enough for most to feel dissuaded and yet, there is still the apprehensive conscience of some people which convinces them that speaking up is above all the right thing to do.

To sum up, all that has been mentioned, I believe that there should be restrictions on some aspects of free speech. However, not to the point where this would lead to the curtailment of all speech and controversial ideas. Unquestionably, there will always be those who react to neutral statements as if they were an attack and there's not much that can be done about these types of hurt feeling. Despite this, hate speech is by definition more than just free speech as it's categorically an attempt at promoting fear, intimidation and discrimination. It allows not only the freedom to think but consequently act freely and when one only thinks of hate those thoughts are bound to incite physical violence as well. As a result, hate speech must not be protected by the blanket and the illusion of freedom of expression.