Dangerous Speech and New Methods of Prevention
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What is Dangerous Speech?

- "Hate speech"
    - Large, inchoate, variously defined category. Usually **offensive** to members of groups it purports to describe, but **may not increase the chances of violence** being committed against them.

- Dangerous speech
    - communication that may help catalyze mass violence by moving **an audience to condone - or even take part in – such violence**.

The Dangerous Speech Project: Two Research Goals

- Identify **which speech is dangerous**

- Find best ways to **limit speech's dangerousness** without curbing freedom of speech

Framework to Identify Dangerous Speech

Five Defining Criteria for Dangerous Speech

- **Powerful speaker** with **influence over the audience** most likely to react

- Audience vulnerable to incitement e.g. **fearful**

- Meaning of the speech act: **understood as call to violence**

- Conducive **social and historical context**

- Influential **means of dissemination**

The Speaker

- Does the speaker have **authority, power, or influence** over the audience?

- Is the speaker **charismatic or popular**?

The Audience

- Does the audience have the **means or capacity** to commit violence against the targeted group?

- Is the audience experiencing **economic insecurity**, demonstrating **excessive respect for authority**, or **fearful**?

Meaning of the Speech Act

- Was the speech **understood by the audience as a call to violence** ?

- Did the speech exhibit hallmarks of dangerous speech?
  - Did it **dehumanize its targets** e.g. comparing them to vermin or insects?
  - Did the speaker use **'accusation in a mirror'** or assert that the target group **posed or poses a threat** to the audience?

Mémo
PAR K. K. MAURICE
CES RATS
D'ÉGOUT...

"Abobo assailants are 'Ouattara's 'Blakaros,' rats in the cassava fields, followed by Burkinabes mercenaries …these rebels…who have infested Abobo like city and field rats, come in fact from the stinking sewers of the rebellion."

– **K.K. Maurice, *Le Temps Hebdo*, Ivory Coast, 2011**

Social and Historical Context

- Are there **underlying or previous conflicts** between relevant groups?

- Have there been **recent outbreaks of violence** following other speech acts?

- Are **other risk factors** for mass violence present?

"Trouble-making Muslims should be wiped out from the country ... kick out the four crore [40 million] Bangladeshi Muslims and then the country will be secure."

– Bal Thackeray, India, 2002

Means of Dissemination

- Was the speech delivered through a **particularly influential source** such as music, social media, or a media outlet with no competitors?

- Does the audience have access to **alternate sources of information**?

- Was the speech **frequently repeated**?

The Umati Project: Monitoring Dangerous Speech

- Test a methodology to track and classify levels of inflammatory speech online.

- Develop a process for speech monitoring in electoral contexts that can be replicated elsewhere.

- Launch an online peacekeeping effort that encourages individuals to report and counter malicious speech.

- Further civic education on dangerous speech in Kenya.

New Experiments to Counter Dangerous Speech

- *Nipe Ukweli*, "gimme truth" – an outreach campaign to encourage citizens to resist and speak out against dangerous speech online and in person

- *Vioja Mahakamani* – episodes of a popular Kenyan courtroom-based TV drama were infused with messages about dangerous speech and hate speech law.

NipeUkweli

Dangerous Speech is:

Speech capable of moving the audience to harm, or to condone the harm of a group of people.

What Makes Speech Dangerous?

Hate speech is more dangerous (can spur violence) when:

- The speaker has influence over people who are already in fear or angry

- The language describes other people as animals or pests, and suggests that it's ok to hurt them or to "defend" against them

- The language is very offensive

- There has been violence between the two groups in the past

**Dangerous speech often suggests that the audience faces a threat from another group.
It is FALSE**

What can YOU do?

Correct the lie. Spread true and positive messages to counter the negative messages.

Report the dangerous speech **via SMS to 3002** to Uchaguzi. Send the name of the speaker, the location the speech was said and what they said.
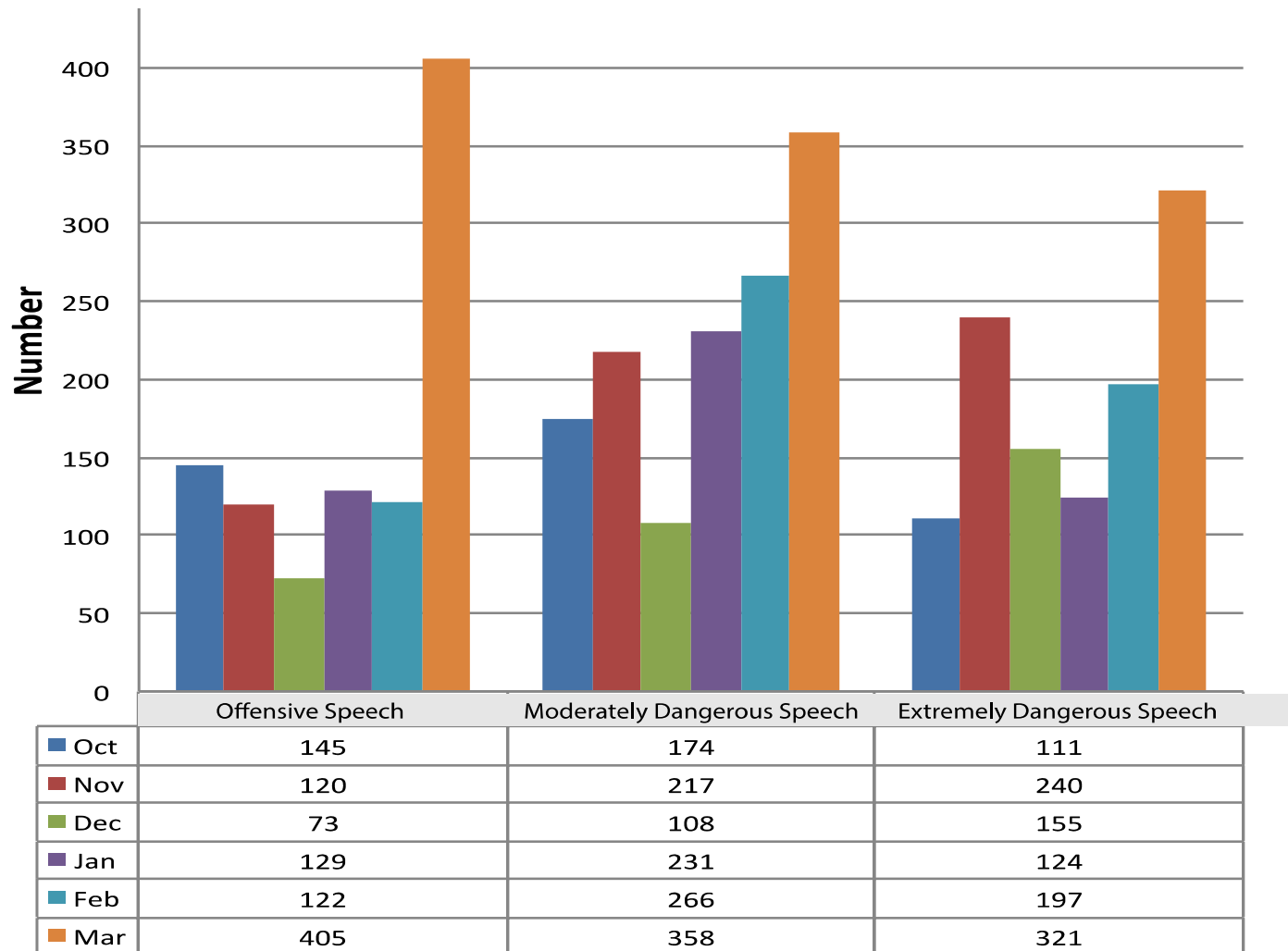
Report the dangerous speech **via the internet** through http://bit.ly/umatikenya

Walk away. Discourage the spread of dangerous speech by refusing to be a listener.

Notable Findings:
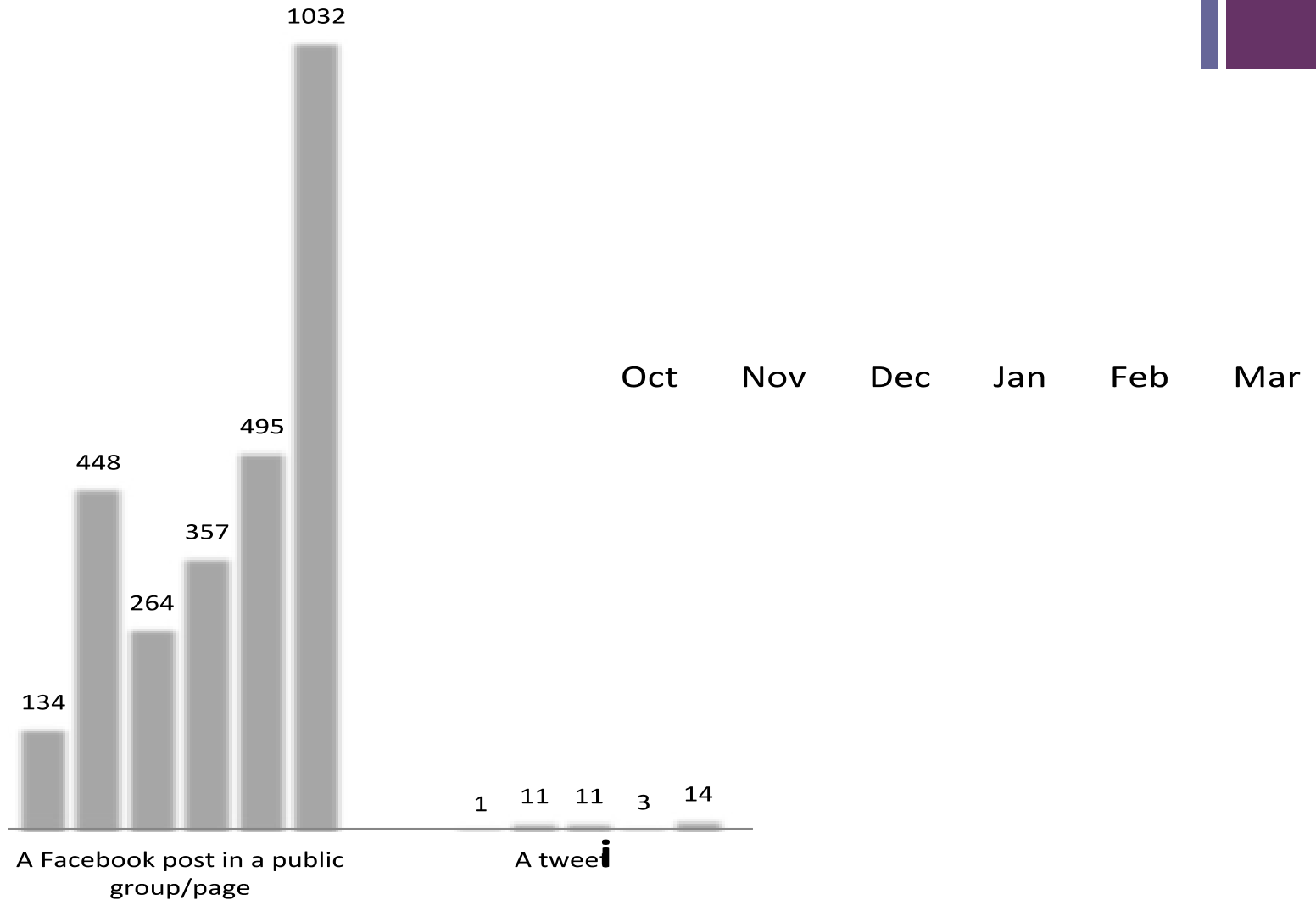Overall increase in hateful and dangerous speech

	Offensive Speech	Moderately Dangerous Speech	Extremely Dangerous Speech
Oct	145	174	111
Nov	120	217	240
Dec	73	108	155
Jan	129	231	124
Feb	122	266	197
Mar	405	358	321

Notable Findings:
Identifiable commenters most actively dangerous
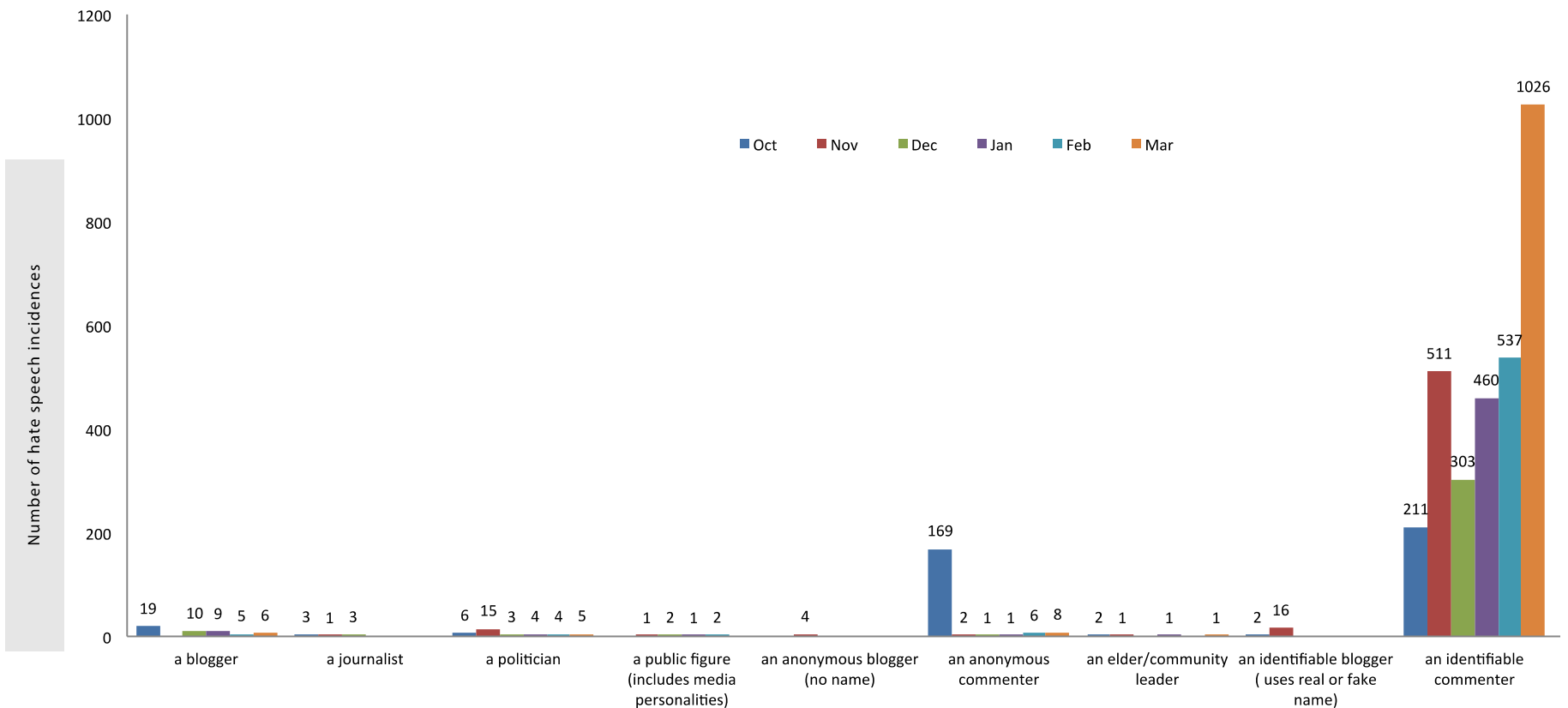
Notable Findings:
Minimal dangerous speech on Twitter

Questions? Want more?

Email benesch@american.edu
or visit voicesthatpoison.org