

## Chapter 1

**Semanticists should direct their theoretical pursuits to the linguistic needs and concerns of speakers.**

(Wierzbicka 1987: 2)

### 1.1 Introduction

‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me’ asserts the folkloric adage. In contrast, speakers often equate emotive thinking with sensation. When someone is *insulted* he or she can say *I feel hurt*. When someone is *offended* he or she can say *I feel wounded*. When someone *feels humiliated* he or she can say *my ego is bruised*. Speakers can say that *prejudice* is an *illness* while *racism* is often talked about as a *disease* that can be *contagious* or *cured*. Speakers can perform hatred with speech and words can constitute an immediate breach of the peace. How do speakers talk about, think about and act out abuse, hatred and discrimination? This thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this practical area, ultimately in pursuit of “the linguistic needs and concerns of speakers”.

The way we talk about discrimination is a critical topic. Van Dijk’s (1987, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993) extensive research into discourse and discrimination identifies the social and ideological dimensions of inter-group conflict. From a semantic viewpoint, this research expands on this idea. This thesis takes a comprehensive analytical approach, considering three main elements of discrimination, namely the rhetorical, social and cognitive dimensions. The *rhetorical* dimension consists of divisive speech acts, to *insult*, to *abuse*, to *offend*, to *vilify* and to *denigrate*. The *social* dimension consists of the everyday, social practices of discrimination against individuals or different groups, to *discriminate against*, to *demonise*, to *dehumanise*, to *stigmatise*, and to *marginalise*. The *cognitive* dimension consists of the beliefs and attitudes, *intolerance*, *xenophobia*, *stereotypes*, *sexism*, *racism* and *prejudices* that function as the motivation and legitimatisation of discriminatory practices. The selected concepts are all pivotal, salient terms in the lexicon of discrimination, forming a semantic set.

Language is an intrinsic tool in acts of abuse, hatred and discrimination. It acts as a precursor to and instigator of forms of conflict, and typically accompanies acts of violence, in all of its forms. We closely associate the language of discrimination with these themes, for example, the *fighting words* that incite a race riot, the derogatory *abuse* in a situation of domestic violence, a national *insult*, graffiti that *vilifies*, the seditious *hate speech* of the supremacist movements, and the verbal *dehumanisation* of wartime propaganda. Language is an inseparable component of discord.

As a primary tool in socialisation and an indicator of relations, language shapes our perceptions (Whorf 1956; Wierzbicka 1999). The language we hear, learn and use influences our attitudes and behaviour, meanwhile encoding socio-cultural attitudes. Language reflects contemporary discrimination, revealing any prejudice of its day. It is a synchronic ‘snap shot’ of how we think about different kinds of people. Analysing linguistic areas such as key terms, derogatory language, speech acts, metaphor and euphemism will assist us in an investigation of discrimination.

Bolinger (1980) asserts that language is not a neutral instrument, it is biased. This view is supported by Fairclough (1992: 7) who observes that “language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of”. The language we use is influenced by our own perceptions and prejudices. Words can attempt to create peace, solidarity and understanding, such as Martin Luther King Junior’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Alternatively, words can *vilify*, provoking hatred and hostility, such as the vitriolic rhetoric of the Nuremberg Rallies.

Historical and contemporary incidences of inter-group conflict reveal the power of language, to influence, manipulate and harm. Language creates the conditions by which a phenomenon comes to be recognised as such, and thus the potential for its use in discrimination, e.g., when *refugees* become *queue-jumpers*. Language that is psychologically abusive, discriminatory and incites hatred is the verbal manifestation of violence, language employed as a weapon.

Discrimination, in all of its potential forms, is widespread, affecting all sections of our communities (Feagin 1991; Zajicek 2002). Van Dijk (1996) asserts that the processes of discrimination are visible in all major social domains, including areas of immigration, integration, employment, education, housing and health, media, welfare and social security, politics and law and order. These forms may be covert or overt, all resulting in social inequality with the potential for other forms of conflict.

But what is *discrimination*? Although this question will be treated throughout this thesis, a brief discussion is needed here. On a salient, prominent level, discrimination is perceived as social prejudices, especially racism, sexism, ageism, sexual orientation-based or disability-based prejudice. On an embedded level, discrimination is perceived as Human Resources/Equal Opportunity issues of inequitable practices, suggesting *favouritism*, *disadvantage* and *unfairness*. It could be argued that these are the effects resultant of discrimination, or they serve as adjectives to describe the way we perceive acts of discrimination. For example, this can be illustrated pragmatically, when someone *discriminates against* someone it is *unfair*, it shows *favouritism*, it *disadvantages* people. *Discrimination* is polysemous, with a secondary sense that has positive connotations of an ability to ‘value quality’ or be ‘attuned to subtle differences’, showing *discernment*, *distinction* and *good taste*, e.g. *He shows discrimination in his taste in wine*. However, there appears to be a semantic change taking place, with the ‘negative’ sense supplanting the ‘positive’ sense. It is a common phenomenon in polysemy (meaning variants of the same form) for a dysphemistic sense to become more prominent than a neutral, innocuous sense, or to even displace it. Allan and Burridge (1991) note that this process often occurs with homonymous forms and words bearing a phonological similarity to a taboo word.

The scope of discrimination is more extensive than concepts of prejudice, and the effects go well beyond inequity alone. *Discrimination* can be perceived as a superordinate ‘umbrella’ term. This is a broad label that covers a wide range of specific attitudinal and behavioural labels (i.e., hyponyms) that can be considered as the processes or forms of discrimination. Therefore, discrimination-related words will be presented as a semantic set.

What is the ideological basis of discrimination? A key to understanding this lies with pragmatics, we discriminate against *other* people (i.e., *different kinds* of people). As observed by Morris (1969), it is a human practice, to identify differences between people. We categorise ourselves into different kinds and types. We ‘sort’ ourselves into categories. It is a cultural impulse for us to do this, and we differentiate between ourselves and other people based on factors such as ethnicity, physical appearance, accent, age and gender. Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 4) assert, “Where there is variation, there is evaluation”. Seemingly, it is natural for us to do this, and classification is important to meaning. However, discriminatory thinking, or profiling,

especially on a collective scale, can progress to a negative *us and them* attitude, a process also known as *othering*.

Lenman (2003) notes that *othering* has become a pejorative verb in English, involving the cultural, social or racial categorisation, differentiation and negativisation of *others* (i.e., other kinds of people). Othering is a way of thinking that is expressed, displayed or communicated to other in-group members, then enacted against out-groups members. Scholars Edward Said (1979) and Jacques Derrida (1984) have given prominence to the role of *othering* and exclusion in thought, with Derrida (1984: 116) remarking that, “Every culture is haunted by its other”. *Othering* is not solely an issue of ethnicity and division. Beauvoir’s (1949: 11) seminal feminist text, *The Second Sex*, claims that historically, women have been defined as the ‘other’ sex, and perceived as an aberration from the ‘normal’ male sex.

Lenman (2003) further defines *othering* as a process by which individuals or social groups define who they are by discrediting or demeaning other individuals or groups, and denying common ground. For example, when countries colonize other countries, perceiving themselves as advanced and civilized, while seeing the country they have colonised and the people as being *primitive* and *backward* and therefore *less important*.

Othering includes an ‘us and them’ mentality. Van Dijk (1996: 17-19) constructed an ideological structure to explain the *us and them* dichotomy:

THEY are different from US

THEY look different

THEY have a different culture

THEY do not (want to) integrate

THEY do not speak OUR language

THEY have different customs

THEY have different norms and values

THEY have a different mentality

THEY do not work hard enough

THEY cannot be trusted

THEY are deviant

THEIR culture is intolerant

THEY are fundamentalists

THEY are violent and criminal  
THEY engage in riots  
THEY are terrorists  
THEY are drug addicts  
THEY are a threat to us  
THEY threaten OUR culture, country, city, neighbourhood  
THEY make us feel unsafe  
THEY take away OUR jobs  
THEY take away OUR houses  
THEY live off OUR welfare  
THEY threaten OUR standard of living, the welfare state

Scholars of many disciplines have long argued that the existence of an *other* is an essential prerequisite for the development of a social and cultural identity (Cromer 2001). The *other* is always the medium by which a society demarcates its own cultural space and boundaries. Specifically, *othering* progresses beyond noting socio-cultural differences, and a positive sense of camaraderie and solidarity. It is prejudice when we perceive ourselves as 'better' than "other" groups, whom we define as "less than" us. The significance of this process, creating 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', cannot be discounted, it can lead to further processes such as alienation, stigmatization and ostracism of a target, and is therefore a preliminary stage of social hostility. Othering is also a component of domination, an early stage of more extreme forms, such as oppression, subjugation and slavery (Stanton 2001).

Classifying 'differences' between ourselves and other people can be positive when it helps us to develop our own sense of identity. However, classification is harmful and destructive when it generates inequality, when it implies the superiority of one group and the inferiority of another group, or when it becomes a systematic power abuse (i.e., human dominance, empowering one group but also depriving another group of power). Classifying 'differences' between people is also negative when we stereotype, when we 'limit' and 'reduce' people, believing that we can predict behavior on the basis of these perceived 'differences'. These polarising acts all create a hierarchy of difference between individuals, groups and nations, but they are only social and mental constructs. These negative classifications form the basis of discrimination, the theme of this thesis.

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives

**One of the fundamental principles of science is to define the key terms of a subject.**

(Shermer 1994: 14)

Van Dijk (1987: 7) asserts that the various processes of discrimination “are major problems in society, requiring permanent and persistent critical enquiry”. This thesis aims to identify the key words in the discourse of abuse, hate and discrimination, and to examine their meanings and usage, from a synchronic perspective.

Lovdal (1995) asserts that, until recently, English did not have set names or phrases for discriminatory behaviour such as *sexism*, *racism*, *marginalisation* or *sexual harassment*, so it was difficult for society to think about these concepts as realities or truths. The creation of terms that identify and label discriminatory behavior and attitudes has allowed these concepts to be seen as significant and serious matters, both socially and in legal spheres.

The prevalence of discrimination has resulted in the proliferation of specific terms to refer to the language, attitudes and behaviours that signify discrimination. As Schultz (1975) asserts, a rich vocabulary on any given subject reveals an area of concern in society. There is a rich vocabulary of derogatory language, and of words that allow speakers to talk about the processes of discrimination.

What are these processes? In order to understand discrimination, we need to identify them, to accurately define the labels, and to examine their usage. The terms selected for analysis not only label certain acts, attitudes and behaviours, but also form a semantic field. This is the discourse of discrimination, the way we talk about discrimination. The words treated are:

*insult, abuse, denigrate, vilify, offend*  
*dehumanise, demonise, marginalise, stigmatise, discriminate*  
*stereotype, intolerance, prejudice, xenophobia, racism, sexism*

These words represent only a small part, although a well-known and well-used one, of the lexicon of discrimination. But why are these terms so important? This question can be answered by factors of social relevance and frequency of usage. The increased

frequency of usage of these terms is a strong indication of the socio-cultural relevance of these terms and our need to understand their meanings. While some of the selected terms have been in existence in various forms for centuries (e.g., the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) reports that the first recorded usage of *vilify* dates back to 1450), social awareness of these concepts and usage of these terms has dramatically increased in the last decade.

The online media corpora offer some interesting statistics showing increased patterns of usage. A Lexis Nexis database search (of international English) for *vilify* and its variant forms for the year of 1994 produces a total of four examples of usage. The same search for the year 2004 produces 994 examples of usage. A search of the Factiva corpus for the usage of *dehumanise* and its variant forms for 1994 reveals only a single usage while the same search produces 89 examples of usage. A Factiva search of 1994 provides 3888 uses of *racism*, while a search of 2004 revealed 7854 results. Similarly, a search for *xenophobia* proves increased usage. In 1994 there were 196 uses of the word, while a 2004 search produces 682 “hits”. While the examples cited on these corpora are media sources, they reflect a greater public awareness of these phenomena and terms themselves. As we will see, the mass media influence usage through exposure. The prevalence of a social phenomenon creates a need for key discourse terms. Furthermore, the appearance of new lexical items crystallises and focuses attention on the issue.

Haven't these words already been defined by conventional dictionaries? Lexicographical sources provide definitions for the 'key terms' of discrimination. However, these descriptions are often inaccurate, inadequate or fraught with methodological errors (these issues will be discussed throughout this thesis). Nida (1975: 172) explains that while dictionaries provide “practical clues” to meaning and usage, they are “inconsistent in organization” and “deficient in the representation of relevant data”. Nida adds that lexicographical sources typically define words by synonyms rather than by distinctive features.

Dictionaries and other reference works typically provide a superficial definition for the terms examined in this thesis. The inherent problem is that these words have an extremely complex semantic structure. Some of these terms encode cultural components of meaning that are difficult to express without resorting to complex, formal language. If we want to clearly and accurately explain the meanings of these words we need to employ a tool that is explicit, comprehensive and resists

obfuscation. For the treatment of meaning in dictionaries to be radically improved, preparatory work has to be done by linguists (Wierzbicka 1987; Zgusta 1971). This thesis endeavours to enhance the contribution of semantics to lexicography.

This thesis takes an holistic approach to semantic analysis, adopting the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) as a methodological tool. This approach, originated by Anna Wierzbicka, is a formal framework for semantic analysis. This method employs basic terms with culturally-shared meanings (semantic primes) as a vocabulary for semantic and pragmatic description [see the in-depth discussion of this theory and methodology in 1.3 and 1.4].

Aiming for a comprehensive semantic analysis, this thesis endeavours to treat all levels of meaning, comprising structure, interpretation, usage and perception. Where applicable, theoretical aspects of etymology, syntax, synonymy, polysemy, pragmatics, ambiguity and metaphor will be discussed, including features of collocation and idiom. These phenomena will be examined, to contribute to our complete understanding of each term.

Of course, the study of discrimination is an interdisciplinary responsibility. Existing research has primarily come from the social sciences, including psychology, history, anthropology and sociology, and emergent multi-disciplines such as ethnobiology. Areas of natural science, such as biology, genetics, neuroscience, psychiatry and zoology are investigating the cognitive and behavioural processes of related areas of aggression and violence. So, what contribution has linguistics made to this broad field, and how can lexical semantics augment this body of knowledge?

There is a substantial collection of scholarly literature that treats specific spheres of ‘discrimination’. However, linguistics has only recently been recruited to assist in our understanding of these phenomena. Van Dijk (1987: 14) asserts that, prior to Critical Discourse Analysis, “linguistics, discourse analysis, speech communication and cognitive psychology have contributed little to the study of discrimination”. Van Dijk has contributed much to our understanding of discrimination in discourse, particularly on a micro level. However, the specific ‘themes’ of discrimination have been severely neglected by the field of lexical semantics, an explanatory area of linguistic research. As noted by Shermer above, definition has a primary function in any scientific undertaking.

How can we think about or talk about a subject with precision if we haven’t systematically defined it? For example, in reference to the term *stigmatise*, Katz

(1981: 2) observes, “there has been no comprehensive definition of this word”, further adding that scholars “find the task of comprehensive definition to be a daunting one and profess these terms to be vague and difficult to identify”. However, this thesis attempts to demonstrate that these words, although complex, have a distinct semantic structure that can be accurately and wholly portrayed utilising the NSM method.

As noted above, lexicographical sources provide a pragmatic definition for non-academic purposes. However, for expository purposes, a comprehensive definition is the foundation for any scholarly venture. Semantic analysis is a thorough and revealing scientific method of explanation. Furthermore, the cognitive element to the NSM method aids in our understanding of the thoughts and attitudes associated with abuse, hate and discrimination.

What is the scientific value and effect of definition? The following example attempts to illustrate the importance of identifying, then describing the acts and processes of discrimination. In 1943, the Polish Jewish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin (1944) coined the word *genocide*. This word was composed from the Greek root *genos*, referring to ‘family’, ‘group’ or ‘tribe’ and the Latin root *cide*, meaning ‘massacre’. This label was invented to name acts such as the Nazi perpetrated Holocaust during World War II and similar historical episodes involving the systematic ‘killing off’ of an identifiable ethnic group. It has since been used to label contemporary events that took place in the Sudan, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, amongst others, during the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

While the heinous events of the Holocaust prompted Lemkin’s creation of the term, this was not the first recorded instance of this phenomenon. According to our modern model of this crime, genocide has been an extensive and recurring feature of the history of civilization. Many historical episodes exhibit the characteristics of genocide, for example, the many violent campaigns of the Roman Empire, through to the often more subtle and methodical destruction of indigenous communities in America and Australia, in the colonial eras and beyond. Lemkin’s label, *genocide*, filled a critical lexical gap, an empty ‘hole’ in our vocabulary. Until this event, there was no word to name a crime of this magnitude, a crime against humanity. How can we discuss important issues, or realise their significance, without having identified and labelled the concept? This measure initiates the psychological process of perceiving and establishing a concept as fact, and aids in the development of social

awareness about the problem (Lovdal 1995). To talk about something, we need to have a reference, a name.

Once we have identified a concept, such as *genocide*, and designated a name for it, we need to describe it, define it and explain it. This is not a task to be left to the lexicographer alone. This is an interdisciplinary responsibility, involving specialists from the natural and social sciences and from the humanities. In this task, linguistics is an essential area of scholarship. The linguist, as an authority and investigator of language structure and use, social relations, and cognitive science, has a primary function in understanding the nature of discrimination.

Taking the example of *genocide*, defining this word is an initial and crucial stage in identifying historical and contemporary episodes of this act (cf. Langford 2002). This is a significant word that symbolizes not only the act itself but the complex social stages and processes involved. Therefore, the word *genocide* acts as a frame for a whole series of events, resulting in this crime. The processes that precede genocide are predictable and have been identified as levels of discrimination. What processes constitute genocide?

Stanton (2001) cites eight characteristics of genocide. Each stage, leading to this crime, is a process of discrimination. In brief, stage one involves social division, the process of *othering*, creating an 'us and them' dichotomy. This can progress to *marginalization* and/or *stigmatization*. The second stage contains facets of *prejudice* and *intolerance*, and the semiotic expression of hatred. The next stage involves *dehumanization*. This can be seen as polysemous, with multiple, related meanings, depersonalizing and treating humans without empathy, and also as desensitizing and brutalizing society, to overcome the natural revulsion against murder. The following stages involve acts of *vilification*, inciting hatred, through to actual acts of 'extermination', murder. As we can see, the processes of discrimination are themes throughout this development, forming a chain of accountability. The different types of discrimination are the stages, but also the root causes of genocide, and other serious forms of hostility and violence, such as riots, civil war and domestic abuse.

Defining the processes of discrimination has important applications for academic studies, but also has practical relevance to law, education and public policy. For example, as a crime under international law, defining *genocide* is of extreme importance to the International Court of Justice, other domestic tribunals and to education and history. Much international debate over genocide is in the disputed

definition of the word. Acts of genocide are difficult to establish, for this reason. As the processes of discrimination (such as vilification and marginalization) are legal concerns in most countries, this research also has important applications to state and federal laws. Furthermore, defining these words and investigating individual incidents of these phenomena is a vital phase in recognising and understanding these phenomena.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

**The search for semantic primitives is at the center of research in semantics.**

(Myhill 2001: 218)

As previously outlined, researching discrimination is an interdisciplinary undertaking. This thesis is a linguistic venture, but external disciplines can offer further insights into this investigation. Where relevant, a cross-discipline perspective is used to complement the semantic analysis. Therefore, this thesis will encompass related research from lexicography, philosophy, psychology and other branches of linguistics. As explained in section 1.2, the aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive semantic analysis.

As a methodological tool, this thesis employs the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach, a unifying theoretical framework for semantic analysis. This section provides an overview of the major approaches to semantic analysis, and evaluates the compatibility of each method with the aims of this thesis.

#### **Componential Analysis and the Binary Feature approach**

An early form of Componential Analysis (CA) involved a binary feature approach to semantic analysis. CA reduces meaning to a series of binary components. This structuralist methodology is used to describe semantic features and to compare and contrast meaning. The use of binary features in semantic analysis developed from distinctive feature analysis in phonological theory. Crystal (1993) notes that this method was initially devised by anthropologists for use in the cross-linguistic analysis

of vocabulary. Eugene Nida (1964; 1975) is a major proponent of this technique, as adapted for semantic analysis.

The CA binary approach analyses the logical relations of words, and their corresponding meaning relations. A semantic set is created (a list of related words), and binary features are used to describe the characteristics of each word, and any similarities and differences between each word. As an example of classical CA, using a prototypical theme of basic gender terms for classifying humans, Löbner (2002: 133) provides the following feature matrix.

<i>child</i>	[+HUMAN]	[-ADULT]	
<i>girl</i>	[+HUMAN]	[-ADULT]	[-MALE]
<i>boy</i>	[+HUMAN]	[-ADULT]	[+MALE]
<i>adult</i>	[+HUMAN]	[+ADULT]	
<i>woman</i>	[+HUMAN]	[+ADULT]	[-MALE]
<i>man</i>	[+HUMAN]	[+ADULT]	[+MALE]

As shown by this example, CA systematically and clearly reveals the immediate similarities and differences between the words in this set. A feature of commonality is +HUMAN, while the meanings differ according to features of maturity and sex. However, the component representing biological sex presents a problem. Löbner observes that the preference for ±MALE (rather than the use of both ±MALE and ±FEMALE) can appear to be chauvinistic. Furthermore, the unequal weighting of this selection seems to suggest that MALE is a prior or more essential descriptor.

As Löbner (2002) explains, this type of CA is useful for capturing some types of hyponymy and complementary opposition. Goddard (1998) adds that the approach appears to work, if the word set is comprised of well-defined, limited semantic field. Binary features in CA have been used successfully in the analysis of kinship terms, especially in cross-linguistic studies. In a general sense, CA may also be of use for L2 learners as an introduction to the key contrasts of meaning in a language.

However, this approach has severe limitations. For example, it is chiefly used for nominal categories, and is not particularly suited to other word classes and therefore difficult to adapt for verbs, adjectives, etc. Therefore, it is only applicable to a limited range of lexemes and would not be of use for the focus words of this thesis. In addition, this method is not suitable for the analysis of abstract concepts, such as

the semantic set of the key words in the discourse of discrimination. Louw and Nida (1988) also consider that CA may have some shortcomings, noting that this method often only treats the minimal features of distinctiveness, and can overlook supplementary and connotative elements of meaning. CA is not intended to be an exhaustive system of analysis, while the subject of this thesis requires a more comprehensive approach.

### **Non-Binary Componential Analysis**

Eugene Nida's non-binary CA framework is another structuralist approach to decomposing the semantic structure of a word. Like the form explained above, Nida's later approach to CA examines words in relation to one another, as part of an overall system. As Nida (1975: 151) explains, "A meaning is not a thing in itself, but only a set of contrastive relations". However, this later form of CA is not as minimal in its approach, instead considering factors of synonymy and connotation. This technique advocates the analysis of a word in terms of its *paradigmatic* features, i.e., to *paraphrase* the word by compiling any near-synonymous forms that comprise a semantic domain. This is followed by an analysis of *syntagmatic* features, by considering lexical *co-occurrence* and *opposition*. A set of semantic features is composed, producing an analysis of the meaning structure of the word.

Nida (1975: 160) provides an analysis of nominal *hoe*. Each phase of the decomposition process is labelled a *step*. Step 1 involves the categorisation of the noun, using a superordinate or high level term. This is important in identifying the 'type of thing' being defined. For *hoe*, this label is "an agricultural tool". Step 2 is to provide a hyponymous form, a specific label, e.g., *irrigation hoe*. Step 3 involves comparison, to locate any near-synonymous forms with "meanings on the same hierarchical level". Nida provides the forms *spade*, *rake* and *pitchfork*. Step 4 involves listing the componential features of the *hoe*, in a logical order of dependency. This also distinguishes the object from any similar forms.

1. tool.
2. for agricultural use
3. hand use
4. consisting of a straight handle

5. a metal blade
6. with a sharpened edge
7. at right angles to the handle.

The final process, Step 5, is to formulate a definition of hoe, on the basis of these relevant “common and diagnostic” components. This breakdown provides the definition of a hoe as: “An agricultural tool for hand use, consisting normally of a straight handle (normally long) and a sharp metal blade at right angles to the handle”. Nida reports that this definition includes conceptual features and compares the target word to objects in the non-linguistic practical world.

An important feature of CA is that the method can be used for different word classes, and can be used to define abstract words (although a shortfall of CA is that not all words can be categorised according to strict semantic fields). To demonstrate the greater flexibility of non-binary CA, Nida (1975: 164) provides an analysis of adjectival *beautiful*. As per the approach listed above, Nida provides the near-synonymous forms of *handsome*, *pretty* and *lovely*. In considering the syntagmatic features, Nida observes that *beautiful* can function in phrases that these other forms cannot, e.g., a \*handsome lake, a \*pretty skyscraper. There is some overlapping of usage, e.g., we can say a *beautiful woman*, and we can also say, a *pretty woman*. However, the meaning is not the same, and *beautiful* implies something “more intense’ than these other forms. For instance, “a lovely dress is not necessarily a beautiful dress”. Nida lists the significant features of *beautiful* as:

1. attractiveness of
2. overall form in
3. a comparatively high degree.

Nida compares this with a near-synonymous form, describing *pretty* as: “relating to more superficial aspects, having a lesser degree of attractiveness, and particularly applicable to smaller objects”.

This form of CA produces an analysis that is similar to a lexicographical definition. As a result, the approach provides an explanation of meaning that is often obscure. For example, *attractiveness*, *overall*, *comparatively* and *degree* are extremely complex words to explain *beautiful*, and tend to complicate, rather than simplify its

meaning. However, Nida's CA attempts a broad analysis of the target word, possibly in response to the extreme reductionism of binary CA. Similarly, this thesis will examine semantic phenomena such as synonymy, co-occurrence and opposition. These features assist in providing a comprehensive description of meaning.

### Conceptual Semantics

Ray Jackendoff's (1983, 1986) theory of lexical Conceptual Semantics (CS) is another method of semantic decomposition. Unlike binary and non-binary CA, CS uses a vocabulary of primitives, a metalanguage for describing meaning. This is a small repertoire of abstract primitive concepts (e.g., CAUSE, GO, TO, ON) and conceptual categories (including EVENT, THING, PATH and PLACE). There have been several iterations of this inventory. The CS method uses a formal apparatus for meaning representation and adheres to specific principles of combination, with a syntax and semantics of its own.

Jackendoff (1990: 54) provides the following decomposition of the 'theme' to *butter*, as found in the example sentence, *Harry buttered the bread*.

[event CAUSE ([thing ]i, [event ([thing BUTTER], [path TO ([place ON ([thing]j )]]))] )]]]

This can be loosely paraphrased as 'to cause something (esp. butter) to be placed on something'. However, there is ambiguity to the interpretation of CS formulae. The above formula for *butter* could easily be confused with synonymous forms such as *spread*, *smear* or *apply*. Jackendoff (1990: 54) further explains that conceptually, *butter* is a specialised version of *cover*, and means to "cause something to go someplace". However, this phrase can also describe to *move* and is too general to refer specifically to *cover* or *butter*. To *butter* and to *cover* are not necessarily comparable. To *cover* can suggest a single, sweeping action, while *butter* can be a repetitive sweeping movement across a section of something. To *cover* can also imply complete concealment, rather than to distribute a liquid-like paste over a part of a surface. In this way, *cover* usually implies putting something solid on top of something, while *butter* implies the use of a fluid-like substance.

Unlike CA (especially binary forms), CS is not immediately transparent. The complex metalanguage and syntax must be first learnt, in order to decipher the

formula and embedded components. This is almost like reconstructing meaning. CS uses abstract ‘conceptual primitives’ rather than basic terms, based in ordinary, natural language. As Allan (2001: 7) remarks, “formalisms within a theory are no excuse for obscurity”. Furthermore, CS can also provide a circular definition. In the above example, the formula defines *butter* in terms of the target word itself.

CS is mostly concerned with verbs, reducing each form to a limited number of general patterns. As a result, CS is not compatible with all of the word classes treated in this thesis, such as *stereotype*, *racism* and *xenophobia*. Some scholars have created approaches similar to CS for use with other word classes, including Bierwisch’s (1989) examination of adjectives and Pustejovsky’s (1995) analysis of nouns. However, CS does not provide the comprehensive, clear analysis as sought by this thesis. CS analyses are obscure, impractical representations, and unsuited to defining processes of discrimination that are, in themselves, abstract.

### **Frame Semantics**

While the above theories are best equipped to deal with semantic fields and ‘ideal’ forms of language, other theories are useful in treating more pragmatic concerns. For example, Charles Fillmore’s (1976) ‘Frame Semantics’ assesses the ‘big picture’ of a word, identifying its characteristic features, qualities, functions and associations. Fillmore and long-term collaborator Sue Atkins (1992: 76) state, “A word’s meaning can only be understood with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs, or practices, constituting a kind of conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning”.

The current incarnation of Frame Semantics is FrameNet, a lexical semantics project in its third iteration, that is finding practical applications for language in use, particularly in artificial intelligence. FrameNet documents the range of syntactic and semantic valences of the different senses of each word. This is achieved through computational annotation (i.e., ‘tagging’ of ‘target’ words, selected from corpus-based example sentences). Fillmore and Atkins (1992: 76) explain,

Within such an approach, words or word senses are not related to each other directly, word to word, but only by way of their links to common background

frames and indications of the manner in which their meanings highlight particular elements of such frames.

This context-based analysis dissects the semantic components of a word, and provides a complete semantic description, supported by language in usage. The following Lexical Unit analysis is for *feeling*, and provides a definition and a set of Frame Elements (semantic roles).

**Definition:**

In this frame an [ ] experiences an **Emotion** or is in an **Emotional\_state**. There can also be an **Evaluation** of the internal experiential state.

[ ] **FEELS** anger towards his mother.

[ ] **FEELS** angry.

[ ] **FEELS** good.

Inalienably possessed aspects of the [ ] frequently stand in for the **Experiencer**.

[ ] **FELT** angry.

**FEs:**

**Core:**

- Emotion [Emot]** The **Emotion** is the feeling that the [ ] experiences.  
[ ] **EXPERIENCE** high anxiety levels at time of admission to hospital.
- Emotional\_state [Emo\_s]** The **Emotional\_state** is the state the [ ] is in.  
Her heart was galloping so fast that [ ] **FELT** quite giddy with happiness.
- Evaluation [Eval]** The **Evaluation** is a negative or positive assessment of the [ ] regarding his or her **Emotional\_state**.  
[ ] was **FEELING** worse than he'd ever felt in his life.
- Semantic Type Sentient** The [ ] experiences the **Emotion** or is in the **Emotional\_state**.  
After two pints, [ ] **FELT** a bit better and Ted arrived.

As illustrated by this example, Fillmore perceives meaning as dependent on a set of interconnected notions. FrameNet is especially useful for working on groups of related words at one time. This thesis aims to treat words on a more discrete level. However, there will be some discussion of comparative words, to reveal the subtle nuances of meaning. FrameNet has a strong focus on semantic roles and the verb 'target', and is often only tangentially related to definition.

With a current database of 625 semantic frames and almost 9000 lexical units, the FrameNet project is of interest to this thesis, in a supplementary role. The Lexical

Unit (LU) Index contains information that is occasionally drawn upon, to complement an overall semantic analysis. For example, each lexical entry report contains a frame 'name', definition, 'supporting' or 'governing' words, a table of frame elements and their syntactic realisations and a table of valence patterns. Where relevant (Chapter 2, in particular), this thesis will draw on information from the FrameNet project.

## **Scenarios and Scripts**

A contemporary approach to cognitive semantics is the concept of 'scenarios' or 'scripts'. Early versions of this approach were adopted by Wierzbicka (1972), by Schank and Abelson (1977), and by Lakoff and Kovesces (1987). These scripts are structures that "describe appropriate sequences of events in a particular context" (Schank and Abelson 1977: 41). Traditional scripts have often been employed to describe stylised everyday situations, in a predetermined, stereotyped sequence. For example, Schank and Abelson's 'restaurant script' is a classic example of this theory. This script includes the following characteristics or 'scenes':

1. Entering
2. Ordering
3. Eating
4. Exiting

Each 'scene' includes specific actions, e.g., 'Entering' involves being seated at a table, or selecting a table; 'Ordering' involves viewing and selecting food items from a menu; 'Eating' involves the order being brought to the customer's table; 'Exiting' involves a financial transaction.

There is an inherent problem associated with this particular approach. A script predicts a series of events and outcomes in a relatively fixed order, not accounting for the infinite range of potential variables, according to culture and individual factors. However, Allan (2001: 250) asserts that scripts are valuable in showing how "the semantic associations are organized in respect of one another". Scripts are useful in suggesting a logical or prototypical progression of events, a sort of semantic dependency. For example, in a restaurant scene, the customer would not typically pay for food, and then exit without consuming the order.

The NSM method has recruited prototypical scenarios to explicate emotions, and in this thesis, to explain specific behaviours and attitudes. This approach has also developed the tool of *cultural scripts*, models that explain socio-cultural customs, beliefs and mindsets, of a collective nature (Goddard 2006 (d); Wierzbicka and Goddard 2004). This technique is useful to reveal the semantic dependency and order of components involved in an event. For example, in an instance of the speech act verb *insult*, the locution precedes the perlocution. The two events cannot be reversed. The perlocution, or result, is dependent upon the outcome of the locution.

### **Prototype Theory**

Also in the realm of cognitive science, the notion of prototypes is of interest to semantic research. Prototypes focus on the intuitive semantic perceptions of speakers. Various prototype approaches attempt to assess how people think about a specific category, to determine what is considered to be the ‘best examples’, ‘good examples’ and ‘marginal examples’ within a category.

William Labov’s (1973) *cup experiment* analysed denotation conditions for the category of *cups*. Specifically, subjects viewed drawings of various shapes of vessels, to determine the prototypical features that distinguish a ‘cup’ from a ‘bowl’ or a ‘vase’. The results revealed the following prototypical perceptual features of a *cup*:

1. a cup has a handle
2. it is used for drinking
3. it has an equal height to width ratio

This approach assists in semantic analysis, and reveals the fuzziness of category boundaries. Labov’s research pioneered *fuzzy set theory* in linguistics (from its origins in mathematics), the non-discreteness of categorisation.

Similarly, Eleanor Rosch’s (1977, 1978) investigations into the *prototype effect* revealed prototypical exemplars within a category (also cf. Wittgenstein 1953). Rosch compiled various word categories (e.g., words for types of ‘furniture’, ‘fruit’ and ‘clothing’) to assess speaker’s perceptions about salience. For example, Rosch’s research into perceptions of the category ‘birds’ suggests that there is graded structure within a category. Rosch found that subjects perceive ‘robins’ to be a ‘better example’

of a 'bird', than an 'ostrich', or a 'penguin'. In addition, Rosch tested reaction times to questions about different kinds of birds, e.g., 'Is a penguin a bird?' 'Is an eagle a bird?' Rosch found that the less typical the example, the longer the response time was in answering the question. This research has generated numerous studies that attempt to explain linguistic categorisation (cf. Taylor 2003; Hampton 1997; Lakoff 1987). Prototype theories are also related to the more recent theories of schemas, stereotypes and *Gestalten*.

As a topic for future research, an interesting venture would be to examine a prototype structure of intuitive social perceptions of *discrimination*. For example, is to *stigmatise* a 'better' example of 'to discriminate against' than to *dehumanise*? In addition, when people think about 'types of discrimination', would they think about 'racism' or 'sexism' before they would think about 'xenophobia'? Of course, this lies outside of the immediate aims of this thesis, to provide a semantic analysis of these terms.

For our purposes, *discrimination* is used as a superordinate term for a wide category of acts, behaviours and attitudes that share commonalities signifying negative bias, abuse or hatred. After Wittgenstein (1953), it could be argued that these words exhibit *family resemblances* (i.e., share common attributes). For example, *dehumanise*, *stigmatise* and *demonise* all involve 'thinking something bad' about the target. Similarly, the speech act verbs to *insult* and to *abuse* both involve 'saying something bad' about the target. Wittgenstein's theory also emphasises the discreteness of meaning, an important principle of the methodology used in this thesis.

A problem with prototype theory, as noted by Goddard (1998: 74-75), is that experimental designs of prototype effects can evoke artificial boundaries and do not necessarily "reflect people's conceptualisation of meaning". Traditional prototype analysis is not useful for this thesis. However, a combination of prototypes and scenarios form part of the methodology used here. Where recruited in this thesis, prototypes are inbuilt into a cognitive scenario. Here they serve an exemplar purpose, to explain the cognitive elements of an explication, e.g. the attitudinal components expressing possible thoughts and opinions. These prototypical scenarios employ the 'similarity' primitive LIKE or the relational substantive KIND OF. Further discussion of this usage follows in the methodology section below.

## Conceptual Metaphor

Another important contemporary approach to semantic analysis is that of *conceptual metaphor*. Chiefly developed and advocated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), this theory claims that we perceive abstract concepts by way of concrete concepts. They argue that metaphor provides a fundamental description of how people talk about *and* think about abstract concepts, claiming “human *thought processes* are largely metaphorical” (author’s emphasis). Basically, this theory claims that people speak about figurative concepts in terms of literal concepts, but furthermore, people map these metaphorical concepts onto thought (cf. Grady et al. 1996; Turner 1996).

Lakoff (2004) has since combined aspects of conceptual metaphor theory and Fillmore’s *frame semantics*, applying this in a pragmatic way, to language in use. Lakoff adapts *framing* to the idea of *reframing*, to rephrase discourse within a topic, allowing for different perceptions. Lakoff recently founded the Rockridge Institute (2004), a think tank dedicated to the notion of reframing political rhetoric (i.e., to analyse political speak, and rephrase the language of “progressive ideals” to enable people to think in different ways about politics and society).

What can metaphor tell us about meaning? The prevalence of metaphor in language supports the notion that this is how we *can* ‘talk about’ abstract concepts. However, this does not necessarily prove that this is how we ‘think about’ abstract concepts. For instance, can an abstract concept be compartmentalised into a single metaphorical perception? Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 139-46) discuss fixed phrases in terms of multiple metaphorical perceptions of ‘love’:

*love demands patience* = LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART

*I’m crazy about her* = LOVE IS MADNESS

*It’s a healthy (or sick) relationship* = LOVE IS HEALTH

*this relationship isn’t going anywhere* = LOVE IS A JOURNEY

These are certainly thought provoking comparisons. However, these groupings are arbitrary and problematic. We can find numerous counter-examples: *love is a rose*, *love is gentle*, *love is a curse*, *love is blind*. These additional examples can be loosely attributed to the above categories, but we clearly ‘talk about’ love in so many varied ways that no single metaphor captures the way we ‘think about’ love. Furthermore,

the above metaphorical conceptualisations are not 'love-specific'. For example, it is a popular metaphor to refer to *racism* as a *sickness*, a *cancer* or a *disease* that can be *cured* or *healed*. Therefore, *racism* could also come under the HEALTH metaphor. This, in some way, equates *love* and *racism* (perhaps as polarities love/hate). However, most speakers do not immediately 'link' these two seemingly discrete concepts.

Overall, conceptual metaphor provides some intriguing semantic insights into language in usage. Metaphor may not explain the 'secrets' of cognition, but it is a valuable phenomenon to describe. The research for this thesis has revealed many interesting metaphors demonstrating that it is prevalent in the discourse of discrimination. Metaphor gives linguistic coherence to these abstract concepts. To aid in a comprehensive analysis of meaning and usage, this thesis will discuss metaphor in the discourse of discrimination. As a result, this analysis makes an innovative contribution to the theory of metaphor in language, as prototypical characterisations of abstract concepts.

### **Natural Semantic Metalanguage**

The Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is based on a concept devised by Andrzej Boguslawski (1966) and has been further developed by Anna Wierzbicka since 1972. The main premise of the theory, the existence of universal semantic primes, is an important concept with a long-standing tradition in philosophy, as espoused by 17th luminaries Pascal, Descartes, Arnauld and Leibniz. This concept has been revived by contemporary linguistic theory, and various applications have been advocated by Katz and Postal (1964), Fillmore (1971), Lakoff (1970, 1972), Jackendoff (1983, 1986, 1990) and many other scholars. Specifically, the NSM method is a popular framework that is further advocated by many eminent scholars, including Cliff Goddard, Bert Peeters and Felix Ameka. Goddard (2006) maintains that the NSM method is arguably the most well-developed, comprehensive and practical approach to cross-cultural and intra-language semantics in contemporary semantic research.

The NSM approach is another method of semantic decomposition. In addition, it incorporates aspects of cognitive semantics. The NSM approach suggests that decompositional and cognitive methods of semantic analysis are not rival approaches, but are complementary.

There are three major constituents of the NSM theory. Firstly, the approach claims the existence of *semantic primitives*, that there is a small group of basic words that are indefinable or incapable of being explained further, an irreducible semantic core. This research has produced a small inventory of 63 words, the *semantic primes* (this list is not yet regarded as complete). Below is the current model of the proposed semantic primes.

**Table 1: Proposed English semantic primes (2007)**

substantives:	I, YOU, SOMEONE/PERSON, SOMETHING/THING, PEOPLE, BODY
relational substantives:	KIND, PART
determiners:	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER/ELSE
quantifiers:	ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH/MANY
evaluators:	GOOD, BAD
descriptors:	BIG, SMALL
mental predicates:	KNOW, THINK, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
speech:	SAY, WORDS, TRUE
actions, events, movement, contact:	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH
existence, possession:	BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS/EXIST, HAVE, BE (TO BE)
life and death:	LIVE, DIE
time:	WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT
space:	WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW; FAR, NEAR; SIDE, INSIDE
logical concepts:	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF
intensifier, augmentor:	VERY, MORE
similarity:	LIKE

It is further claimed that these words are translatable *lexical universals* (an expression that has a counterpart, an exact translation, in every human language). These universal meanings can be found as words or other linguistic expressions (bound morphemes or fixed phrases) in all natural languages. This theory is supported by over thirty years of empirical research that has revealed evidence from numerous languages (including

English, Polish, French, Japanese, Yankunytjatjara and Maori) and across language families (Peeters 2006; Wierbicka and Goddard 2002).

The NSM theory also hypothesises that certain syntactical combinations of primitives are found universally. The NSM approach has adopted the hypothesis that there is substantial universality in both the lexicon and the grammar of the semantic metalanguage (Goddard 2002). It is also theorised that certain patterns of combinations of primitives are found universally and that there exists an essential irreducible grammar that governs how primes may be combined in a language (Goddard 1998).

The third principle of NSM is that the meanings of words can only be understood by means of other words, and to avoid problems of obscurity and circularity it is practical to describe complex meanings in terms of simpler ones (Wierzbicka 1972). The approach demonstrates that the semantic primes comprise a metalanguage constituting a kind of ‘mini-language’ with the same expressive power as a full natural language, hence the term *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (Goddard 1998).

This mini-lexicon of ordinary, natural language can be used to perform semantic analysis in a technique of semantic decomposition called *Reductive Paraphrase*. The primes are combined in natural-sounding components to create an *explication*, i.e., an explanation of meaning. For example, Goddard and Wierzbicka (In press) present the following explication of *happy*.

X feels happy =  
X feels something good like a person can feel  
when they think something like this:  
    something good happened to me  
    I wanted this to happen  
    I don't want anything else now  
because of this, this person feels something good  
X feels like this

As illustrated by this example, the metalanguage is comprised of simple, non-abstract words. Like CA and CS, the NSM approach considers meanings to be complex and composed of more general components. These theories all aim to identify a word's

components and how these parts are combined. However, transparency is a goal of the NSM approach to deconstruct meaning in a simple and clear way, to avoid obscurity and circularity. As observed by Löbner (2002), ‘basicness’ is a central issue in the NSM approach.

This is to ensure that explications are easier to understand for non-semanticists, children and L2 learners, and so the explications are readily translatable across languages. As Allan (2001: 279) comments, “One of the most attractive features of NSM is that the ordinary reader can easily relate to the meaning definitions”. The NSM aims to meet the test of *substitutability* without change of meaning, for a native-speaker to concur that an explication completely corresponds with its original expression. This process also circumvents other problems that plague traditional lexicography, including superfluous components and disjunctions, narrow or broad definitions, the lack of distinction between polysemy and generality, false components and non-predictive definitions [for an overview, see Goddard 1998: 26-35]. Rather than serving as an esoteric theory, NSM aims to be functional and non-technical, to have practical applications for lexicography, and to be accessible for other disciplines.

This accessibility can be misinterpreted. Allan (2001: 279) further claims that NSM explications are “deliberately ‘naïve’, consequently, some readers have remarked upon their childlike quality”. It is a misconception that NSM explications are simplistic. While the NSM lexicon is comprised of basic, primary words, the construction of an explication is anything but “naïve”. Empirical research demonstrates that the semantic primes are universal words, found in all natural languages. Rather than being simple, these words are crucial linguistic and cognitive elements, indefinable concepts that cannot be semantically ‘broken down’ any further.

The NSM approach is useful for cross-linguistic analysis. In addition, it is applicable to all word classes, and has offered descriptions of a wide range of cognitive and social themes that other methods are unable to decompose, including emotion words, colour terms, socio-cultural key words, speech act verbs, interjections and fixed phrases (cf. Goddard 2006). This flexibility and accessibility makes the NSM a suitable tool for analysing culture-specific terms, and for the purposes of this thesis, to understand words with socio-cultural significance. This is crucial to the analysis of discrimination, and the NSM is pivotal in examining underlying rhetorical, social and cognitive processes. This approach is ideal in illuminating the ‘us and

them' mentality and circumventing potential ethnocentrism, unlike the specialised, ephemeral (i.e., short-lived) nature of political jargon, and formal semantic methodologies. In addition, the NSM approach is able to capture meaning relations that are important to the topic of this thesis, including taxonomies (KIND OF) and meronymies (PART OF).

The NSM technique decomposes meaning to a meticulous degree, revealing subtle nuances of semantic structure. Although the metalanguage is simple, the approach is rigorous and the explications can be precise and unambiguous. Furthermore, the reductive paraphrase has internal structure, clearly assigns semantic roles and is capable of elucidating sociolinguistic information. As Wierzbicka (1999: 40) states, "the NSM approach seeks above all to distinguish the essential from the optional, to capture the invariant, and to break complex concepts into maximally simple ones, relying exclusively on independently established conceptual primes and lexico-grammatical universals".

This review has discussed the 'pros and cons' of the major existing approaches to semantic analysis, in terms of methodology and appropriateness to this particular project. In themselves, logic-based, formal and conceptual semantic analyses are too abstract and limited in function for this practical subject that requires an approach in applied-semantics. As the NSM method studies the links between language, meaning and culture, and has been recruited to treat subjects in cross-cultural semantics and ethnopragsmatics, the topic of discrimination fits in neatly with the aims and purposes of this framework. Therefore, in consideration of the above factors, the NSM approach will be adopted for this analysis.

## **1.4 Methodology**

**Meanings can be analysed in a fully determinate way; that is, any complex meaning can be decomposed into a combination of discrete other meanings, without circularity and without residue.**

(Goddard 1994: 8)

As explained above, this thesis utilises the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach, as advocated by Anna Wierzbicka and colleagues [among the numerous

works of this school: Goddard 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006; Harkins and Wierzbicka 1997, 2001; Wierzbicka 1972, 1987, 1997, 1999, 2004; Wierzbicka and Goddard 2002 all give useful overviews and background]. This method has been under development by Wierzbicka for over thirty years, in conjunction with a growing community of NSM scholarship. This thesis makes an important contribution to this body of knowledge.

The collection of NSM literature contains numerous works in cross-linguistic research, endeavouring to forward the theory of the universality and translatability of semantic primes. Recent works include Ameka's (2006) study of West African languages, Goddard's (2004) research on Malay, Hasada's (2006) analysis of Japanese, Peeters et al's (2006) research of Romance languages, Tien's (2005) work on semantic primitives in children's Mandarin Chinese, Travis' (2002, 2006) examination of Colombian Spanish primitives, Wierzbicka's (2001, 2002, 2005) exploration into German, Polish and Russian, and Yoon's (2006, 2003) investigation into Korean semantic primitives.

Alternatively, this thesis employs the NSM approach as a methodological tool, in effect 'showcasing' the capacity of the approach to explicate concepts of a complex abstract nature, within the English language. In this undertaking, this thesis contributes to the growing body of research into English language specific themes. Recent research includes Alexander's (2006) study of *play* and *game*, Langford's (2002) analysis of forensic terminology and Nicholls' (2003) research into pain-related terms. The NSM literature also contains English dialectal studies, including: Singaporean English (Besemeres and Wierzbicka 2003; Wong 2000, 2004, 2005), Hawaii Creole English (Stanwood 1997, 1999), and Australian English [see Goddard 2006; Peeters 2004; Olivieri 2003; Stollznow 2002, 2004]. Using the NSM approach, this thesis attempts to explain the meaning structure of a set of abstract English words.

This section presents an overview of the NSM approach to semantic analysis and explains how this will be used within this thesis. The following four Chapters examine a selection of words related to the processes of discrimination. Each word will be treated as a discrete, individual entry, although the terms are grouped as 'semantic fields' (i.e., related sets). This is to draw attention to semantic similarities or differences. Chapter 5 will attempt to synthesise these analyses.

As semantic analysis is an in-depth study of meaning, an initial stage is to consult a range of lexicographical sources. This serves as a concise, practical description, a 'working' definition and platform for analysis. Several sources will be

consulted, and compared, as required. From these, a brief semantic ‘sketch’ can be constructed. While dictionaries provide a functional definition of a word, they are not intended to serve as rigorous semantic explorations (There are apparent problems associated with lexicography, especially in academic applications, and relevant facets will be discussed throughout this thesis).

There are many lexicographical sources, some that are dialect specific. This thesis concentrates on the major international English dictionaries, although is not necessarily confined to these texts. An initial source is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), often perceived as the ‘definitive’ text, but, for the purposes of this work, is primarily of use as an etymological tool. The OED compiles historical examples of usage from primary sources and is therefore useful as an observational and descriptive source of any diachronic developments in semantic structure. Furthermore, the comprehensive entries in the OED ensure the most listemes (forms) for each word, both canonical (the standard form) and lexemes (variants).

Other lexicographical resources will also be consulted in conjunction with the OED. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English will be used as an excellent, modern guide to definition. Various Cambridge and Collins publications will also be enlisted for brief semantic descriptions, as will various web-based dictionaries, including the Macquarie Online, American Heritage and Webster-Merriam online editions. Further to these online resources, this thesis will cite relevant research from WordNet, the Princeton University project. WordNet is particularly useful as a tool in treating synonymy, as the project’s taxonomical ‘synsets’ (synonyms sets) group near-synonymous forms in a linear manner. It must be noted that all of these sources treat discrimination-process words as a summation, and are useful in an overview only.

The structure of each section of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will be as follows. Each word will be examined from a lexicographical perspective, presenting a selection of current definitions from major dictionary sources. Each definition will then be assessed in terms of accuracy and clarity. For example, the Macquarie Dictionary (2002) provides the following definition for *insult*.

*insult*. v. to treat with contemptuous rudeness, affront.

This definition is flawed for several reasons. To *insult* is an act, but there is no blatant reference to an act having been performed, and while *treat* is a polysemous,

ambiguous term. The definition is too stylistic. *Contemptuous* and *rudeness* are both obscure, if we do not understand *insult*, how can we possibly comprehend “contemptuous rudeness”? Furthermore, *rudeness* inaccurately assumes that to *insult* is invariably intentional. This definition provides a superfluous and inaccurate component. It is imprecise to define *insult* as directly synonymous with *affront*, as the latter term invariably implies a deliberate act. The definition also falls prey to circularity. Assuming a reader needs to then consult the entry for *affront*, the Macquarie Dictionary defines this new word in terms of *offend*, then glosses *offend* as *insult*, creating an hermeneutical cycle. Of course, this definition would be highly inadequate for a younger reader or a non-native speaker of English. Goddard (1998: 26) maintains that a model definition “should cover the full meaning and usage of a word or phrase, including polysemy, without being vague, obscure or resorting to circularity”. The NSM methodology strives to achieve this ideal.

Following an analysis of existing definitions, a semantic explication will be proposed. This is a formula for explaining a word, framed in the NSM metalanguage of semantic primes (as listed above in Table 1, 1.3). Each explication is composed of discrete elements, and the primitives may have variant forms (allolexes or allomorphs such as *me* instead of *I*). Most metalanguage terms are polysemous but each prime represents a single sense that will be explained where applicable (e.g., the NSM sense of *have* is possessive, not obligatory, as in *I have to do X*).

Each explication contains multiple components of interrelated clauses, these are ‘texts’ composed in a specified subset of ordinary language. The explications begin with a prototypical scenario, usually introducing cognitive elements. The ‘body’ of the explication may describe behavioural attributes, while a final component is a reference to a social evaluation. Each explication ‘decomposes’ the semantic structure of each word, each component carefully phrased to accommodate the subjectivity and vagueness of many of these abstract terms. The explications will attempt to be an exhaustive semantic explanation of these words, as they are used in contemporary English.

The explications will occasionally make use of terms which are not currently included in the proposed list. However, these non-primes will conform to the principle of only using simpler terms (which can ultimately be defined in terms of the primitives). The objective is for each explication to be *reductive*, and any use of non-

primes will be discussed. [Although not relevant to this specific semantic field, see (Goddard 2007) for discussion on *semantic molecules*].

The example below is an explication of nominal *stereotype*, followed by an extended explanation of each component.

*stereotype*

- (a) a way of thinking about people of one kind
- (b) when many people think about people of this kind, they think something like this:
  - (c) "I know some things about people of this kind"
  - (d) some of these things aren't true
  - (e) when people think like this, they think about all people of this kind in the same way
  - (f) they can't think about people of this kind in other ways for some time
  - (g) people think: it is bad if people think like this

#### **Explanation of components:**

(a) A *stereotype* is an attitude, *a way of thinking*. This attitude is directed towards a target group (or an individual by membership of this group). The target group is categorised as *people of one kind* who may be visually identifiable by a group membership based on factors such as nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, etc. For example, an Australian person, a female person, etc. Furthermore, *people of this kind* institutes a divisive *us and them* dichotomy.

(b) A *stereotype* is a social attitude shared on a collective scale, the way that *many people think about people of this kind*. This is a prototypical cognitive scenario, and the following indented lines express the attitude associated with attributing a *stereotype* to a target.

(c) A *stereotype* presumes information about the target. This supposition is touted as knowledge or fact, to *know some things* about the target group. This is a cognitive 'template' of assumed knowledge about the character and behaviour of a group of people.

(d) A *stereotype* can be an applicable, exaggerated or inaccurate representation of the target, as illustrated by the following dichotomous examples: *false stereotype/true stereotype*, *fits a stereotype/doesn't fit a stereotype*. Therefore, the truth or falsity of the *stereotype* is independent of its status as a *stereotype*. Any given *stereotype* may or may not be accurate, but the label suggests that this generalised way of thinking is at least partially untrue.

(e) A *stereotype* is an assumption of the target, a simplified belief that is accepted without evidence. A *stereotype* is a generalised and uncritical assessment of a group, a *kind* of people. They are perceived as identical and invariable, *all people of this kind* are 'seen' as being *the same*. This is a dismissive attitude that deprives the target of individuality and diversity.

(f) A *stereotype* is a rigid and inflexible perception of the target. This component suggests that once a *stereotype* is established, people do not reassess their perception of the target. People cannot 'get past' this limiting, narrow perception of the target, *they can't think about people of this kind in other ways*. A *stereotype* has a temporal aspect, *for some time*, indicating some degree of permanency, as suggested by the collocations: *persistent stereotype*, *classical stereotype*, *traditional stereotype*, *old stereotype*, *enduring stereotype* (Collins Word Bank).

(g) This final component reflects a social negative evaluation of this behaviour. *Stereotype* is part of the lexicon of anti-discrimination and to label a perception as a *stereotype* is reproachful of this attitude. People who employ this word, e.g. *that's a stereotype of X*, perceive a *stereotype* as a negative representation, 'a bad thing'. Even a so-called *positive stereotype* represents an uncritical assumption. For example, the statement that *all Australians are great swimmers*, although ostensibly complimentary, still reveals a fixed and limiting image of the target.

Where required, an explication may identify semantic roles, labelled as *X* (usually the *agent*) and *Y* (usually the *target*). Any labelling will always be explained. Explications that refer to a person's attitude will contain prototypical cognitive scenarios that explain the 'way of thinking' or 'intention' of the 'agent' (i.e., the *actor* or *performer* of the act). These components will be introduced with a line similar to: *X wants*

*people to think something like this*. The attitudinal components will be indented and will appear in single inverted commas. Every explication will contain 'behavioural' components that describe the characteristics of 'X'. As some terms are reproachful of certain social behaviours, each explication will contain a component similar to *it is bad to be like this*. This component explains that it is bad to display the attitude, behaviour and/or characteristics outlined in the preceding components.

The words in this thesis label specific attitudes and behaviours although they are indicative of the attitude of the actual speaker/author. For example, a speaker identifies X as a person who *demonises* Y. It is plausible that the increasing popularity of accusatory terms that label attitudes and acts, such as *racist* and *dehumanise*, may be attributed to an emergent tendency to reproach 'bad attitudes' and 'bad behaviour' through this form of social conditioning. This is corroborated by the adoption of *racialist* over the non-preferred term *racist*, by proponents of theories of ethnic superiority. This euphemistic preferred term is intended to disassociate from the stigma of the epithet *racist*, and also to imply a scientific basis to racial-based theories [This discussion will be expanded in 4.5]. In NSM primes, this 'socio-cognitive' conditioning may be expressed by the following example: *it is bad to think X. When a person thinks X, they are someone very bad. I want other people to know this. When other people know this, they can think it is bad to think X.*

As we can see, the metalanguage of semantic primes is well suited to the semantic field of *discrimination*. Some primes seem to encapsulate the very themes of discrimination, both literally and figuratively. All cognitive-related terms include components based on THINK and KNOW. Inclusive, in-group speech involves LIKE and THE SAME, while an exclusive, out-group *us and them* dichotomy relies on the primes OTHER and KIND OF. Metaphorical perceptions can include relational notions, e.g. superiority ABOVE and BIG, versus inferiority BELOW or SMALL, and the figuratively inclusory INSIDE. The metalanguage can express majority group ideas of MANY and MORE, and allegoric allusions to social neglect and marginalisation, people who lack, (i.e., WANT), and minority groups that society does not figuratively SEE or HEAR. The primes also include socio-cultural evaluations of GOOD versus BAD. The *us and them* dichotomy can be glossed as: *X are not like me, because of this, I think something bad about X*. The symmetry of the metalanguage is appropriate to the divisive implications of these themes.

As mentioned in 1.3, while the NSM approach often gives the appearance of simplicity, this does not mean that the explications are superficial. NSM is a rigorous methodology that produces a comprehensive semantic explanation. Each component contains easily recognisable phrases with intuitively intelligible meanings. These explications have been thoroughly researched and subjected to numerous drafts and revisions. The explications within this thesis have been tested by native and non-native speakers of English in accordance with intuitive meanings, and compared against the full range of available definitions, also subjected to substitution testing against natural examples of usage. Each explication has been painstakingly constructed, and with each word carefully considered. In his comparative text of semantic analysis, Allan (2001: 414) acknowledges:

Perhaps Wierzbicka's NSM is easier to read than the other metalanguages we have been discussing, but it is harder to write, and a good deal more wordy, than RRG's 'logical structures' and Jackendoff's 'lexical conceptual structures'.

As such, the reader's attention should be drawn to the subtle distinction of meaning which can be represented through the NSM approach.

This analysis aims to be comprehensive. In the manner of Ogden and Richards (1923: 23), this analysis will comprise "descriptive meaning" (i.e., denotation, the core factual meaning), and also "emotive meaning" (i.e., connotation), any evoked or suggestive meanings. An effective way of determining "emotive meaning" is by analysing the context and range of usage. The semantic structure of individual words can be supported by pragmatic evidence. Following each proposed explication and justification will be a section providing natural examples of each word, to illustrate usage and test the validity of a definition. Wierzbicka (1987: 20) maintains that it is crucial to provide naturally occurring examples, "not invented ones that read as artificial, contrived and unconvincing as illustrations of real speech, and can obscure meaning and usage".

The explications are richly exemplified by natural examples which have been extracted from a variety of sources including corpus data, the Internet, and media resources such as newspapers and television. The source of each example will be listed beneath each quote, while samples taken from published sources will be

included in the bibliography. Various corpora will also be consulted, both scholarly and network-based. The Collins Cobuild Bank of English® is a 524 million word corpus of linguistic data, to which data is constantly being added. The information is extracted from Australian, British, New Zealand, American and Canadian sources, including textbooks, novels, newspapers, reports, television and radio broadcasts, guides, magazines and websites. Other corpora used include online sources such as Factiva, and the search engines Yahoo, Google and Web Ferret.

These databases of modern English text allow for the analysis of semantic content, including areas of syntax and pragmatics. These large samples of text are vital for comprehensive linguistic study, providing evidence of natural usage. For the purposes of this thesis, corpus data has assisted in the collection of frequency, concordance patterns, collocations, idiom, and semantic, pragmatic and syntactical features. These sources are enormously helpful in lexicographic and semantic projects. As common socio-cultural themes, the processes of discrimination and the language of abuse and hatred feature prominently in these natural-language corpora.

Each example will include a commentary of the meaning of the target word, evident from the usage. These examples will further support the explication as each facet of the examples is referred to the explication components. Some constructed examples of negative usage (i.e., 'wrong usage') will appear in discussion. This is to test the semantic and pragmatic range of each word, and for comparative and contrastive discussion relevant to synonymy. Negative examples are important guides, demonstrating semantic constraints, what we 'can' and 'cannot' say in usage. This test differentiates acceptable from unacceptable sentences, based on usage. In these example sentences ? indicates a questionable usage, \* indicates an erroneous usage while an unmarked example indicates a standard, acceptable usage.

Another key to understanding the meaning of a word is to examine concordances and collocations (co-occurring words) (e.g., *a false stereotype*). Collocations, as commonly found pairs of words, are helpful in establishing the meanings of the words in the pair (Moore 2000). Common phrase patterns can provide invaluable semantic insight and 'hints' into the speaker's perception of meaning. For example, the following collocations, extracted from the Collins Word Bank corpus, reveal the common targets of the act of stereotyping: *group stereotyping, cultural stereotyping, racial stereotyping, ethnic stereotyping, gender stereotyping, sex stereotyping, sex-role stereotype, male stereotype, female stereotype*.

These examples suggest that the act of *stereotyping* identifies and classifies a target according to factors such as “group”, “culture”, “race”, “ethnicity”, “gender” and “sex”.

Modifiers often describe or reinforce the meaning of a word. Nominal forms may be preceded by an adjective in what may be termed as a ‘near-tautological collocation’. The addition of an adjective with a similar meaning provides semantic ‘clues’ and may have emphatic value.

(1) I had this **fixed stereotype** of how lesbians were supposed to look and act.

<http://www.sonic.net/~posimage/jena.html> (10/06/04)

(2) They are **blinded by biased prejudice**.

<http://www.soompi.com/forums/lofiversion/index.php/t292652.html> (15/07/04)

(3) We cannot stand by and watch the **bigoted racism**.

[http://www.witchvox.com/wren/wn\\_detaila.html?id=10077](http://www.witchvox.com/wren/wn_detaila.html?id=10077) (7/08/05)

This analysis will also include discussions of semantic phenomena, including aspects of synonymy, ambiguity, polysemy and metaphor associated with each individual word. Each section on synonymy examines near-synonyms to the word in question and compares and contrasts semantic aspects of the terms. For example, *stereotype* will be examined in relation to *typecast* and *pigeonhole*, words that are perceived as near-synonyms. Sections treating polysemy will discuss polysemous forms of each term, for example, *dehumanise* appears to have three senses. One sense is *to mechanise*, another sense is *to brutalise*, while a final sense is the one I will be assessing in detail, *to deprive of human qualities*. Aspects of metaphor will also be considered. Examining metaphor relevant to each word allows us to consider usage and perception, in order to examine how speakers ‘talk about’ these abstract concepts. My research has revealed that each of these terms has a metaphorical counterpart, for example, *stereotype* is to *label*, *denigrate* is perceived as to *lower*, while the *marginalised* are perceived as being socially *outside*, as opposed to those of central social importance being viewed as socially *inside*.

Chapter 5 considers discrimination in language, and is structured differently to Chapters 2-4. Rather than presenting a semantic analysis, Chapter 5 attempts to

integrate the analyses that are presented in Chapters 2-4. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the sixteen words as processes (rather than word meanings), to examine how these processes are represented in language. In Chapter 5, I have labelled the representation of these key word processes in language as the *linguistic enactment of discrimination*, i.e., how these processes are performed, using language. Chapter 5 will discuss how the analysis words are enacted (i.e., performed) in language. For example, the Chapter will describe how *racism* is enacted with words, and how *stereotypes* can be expressed. For the purposes of classification, the discussion will be divided into two main types of discrimination as it appears in language, specifically, *covert discrimination* (implicit, indirect forms) and *overt discrimination* (i.e., explicit, direct forms).

With our semantic principles established, the explanatory work will now follow. The terms are categorised into semantic sets to allow for the comparison and contrast of these distinctive terms. Chapter Two will explore speech-act verbs relevant to abuse and hate: *insult, abuse, offend, denigrate* and *vilify*, the rhetorical dimension of discrimination. Chapter Three examines discriminatory acts: *dehumanise, demonise, marginalise, discriminate* and *stigmatise*, the social dimension of discrimination. Chapter Four considers discriminatory ideologies: *stereotype, intolerant, prejudice, racism, sexism* and *xenophobia*, the cognitive dimension of discrimination. Chapter Five is a discussion that attempts to synthesise the preceding analyses by examining how these processes of discrimination are represented in language. Chapter 6 presents a review of this topic, a summary of findings and will conclude the thesis.

## Chapter Two

### The Rhetorical Dimension of Discrimination

#### *Insult, Abuse, Denigrate, Vilify, Offend*

#### 2.0 Introduction

**Names do hurt. Words are weapons. Bones heal faster than psyches.**

Hugh Rawson (1989: 2)

This Chapter focuses on the rhetorical dimension of discrimination, abuse and hate, and investigates the semantic structure of a range of relevant speech act verbs. This Chapter will examine the meaning of *insult*, *abuse*, *denigrate*, *vilify* and *offend*. These are all ‘acts of saying’ that can be categorised as expressions of negative evaluations (*thinking something bad about someone* and *saying something bad*), also implying the superiority of the agent and comparative inferiority of the target. This study will be confined to ‘reportive’ uses of speech act verbs, that convey a specific kind of message. Goddard (1998: 137) explains this as “an amalgam of intentions, assumptions and feelings involved along with the act of saying something”.

As explained in Chapter 1, the NSM approach will be used to explicate the words in this set. This method has been used previously to treat the important area of speech act verbs, most notably Wierzbicka’s (1987) *English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary*. Other related research in the NSM collection include Wierzbicka (1977, 1985 (a), (b) and (c), 1987), Goddard (1998, 2002), Langford (1997) and Maher (2002). Relevant examples from these works will be used as comparative explications.

Of all English speech act verbs, SAY is the most semantically basic, and is the only speech act in the NSM inventory. However, we will see that the primes can be used successfully to explicate more complex, specific speech acts. Empirical NSM research has revealed that equivalents of SAY are found universally. This fundamental prime is the focus of the following explications. These terms can also function as non-verbal acts (except *denigrate*) (e.g., we can *insult* with a gesture, or we can *vilify* with graffiti). For this reason, some linguists use the term “verbs of

communication” in preference to ‘speech act verbs’ [see Allwood 1978]. However, this section focuses on the verbal, interactive forms of these acts. This Chapter will not use the classification methods of other speech-act theorists, or the Searlean approach of description, instead using the plain wording of the NSM method.

The speech-act verb literature identifies two main subclasses within this category: 1. performative verbs, and 2. non-performative verbs. Goddard (1987: 145) asserts “Performative verbs and utterances are the exception, not the rule, both in English and other languages”. The selection of speech acts for this Chapter are not performatives, like *warn* or *curse*. Searle (1989: 539) explains that, as an identifying feature, performative utterances characteristically take “hereby”, for example, “I hereby promise that I will come and see you”. However, we cannot use *insult* or *vilify* in a first-person, present tense frame. In English, we do not have the conventional forms \*I insult you!, or \*I hereby vilify you! These phrases are pragmatically meaningless and do not function as the intended act. Kannetzky (2001: 8) observes, “If I want to offend someone, I will miss my intent if I say “Hereby I offend you!” Such an utterance is not an offence”.

We do not use non-performative speech act verbs to perform the acts they name, *insult*, *vilify*, etc. function as labels, not declarations. Lenz (1997: 2) remarks, “One cannot say *I insult you that you are an idiot*, but when someone says *you are an idiot* this utterance usually counts as an insult”. The speech acts in this Chapter cannot be invoked to produce a ‘doing-it-by-saying-this-now’ effect. Instead, they qualify as non-performative speech acts (e.g., words like *threaten* or *boast*). They can be used in the frame: *In saying what I said, I was vilifying them* or *In saying that, I was trying to insult him*. Furthermore, these terms can still be classified as speech act verbs as participants can metacommunicatively refer to the act (e.g., *Why did you insult me?*).

The words in this section further ‘behave’ like traditional speech acts from a pragmatic perspective. In accordance with Austin’s (1962) notion of felicity conditions, *abuse*, *insult*, *denigrate*, etc. must all be performed under facilitative ‘sincerity conditions’, otherwise the act will ‘misfire’ (this theory was further developed by Searle’s 1969 “constitutive rules”). Furthermore, each speech act features the defining characteristics of a locution, illocution and perlocution. Speaker intention and hearer interpretation are major semantic facets of these speech acts, and are often conflicting. As Cameron (1995: 159) notes, “Our interpretations of other

people's speech-acts are based not on simply looking words up in a mental code-book but on a whole constellation of contextual judgements”.

Speech act verbs are an important interdisciplinary link between linguistics and philosophy. Furthermore, this phenomenon is illuminating from a cultural perspective. This section discusses how speech-acts reflect socio-cultural attitudes and how words can produce discrimination, abuse and hate. Rawson (1989: 17) asserts, “Verbal attacks frequently serve not just in lieu of physical violence but as a prelude to it”. I further argue that language can accompany and even enact violence. We will find that these speech-act verbs reveal a great deal about the nature and performance of discrimination in society. In addition to this semantic analysis, pragmatic factors will be discussed, as well as relevant sociolinguistic issues such as politeness, political correctness, language reform and legal perspectives.

This Chapter aims to explain the meaning of *insult*, *abuse*, *denigrate*, *vilify* and *offend*. Of these words, Holdcroft (1979: 130) asserts that they comprise a set of “offensive kinds of speech acts that are associated with activities in which a speaker addresses an audience that is not expected to reply, and have in common the fact that they are activities the primary aim of which is to make remarks about the character of another”. We will see that these remarks express *something bad about someone*, they cause *someone to feel something bad*, and are often viewed as socially reproachful acts. This analysis will reveal the similarities between these words, and draw out the differences. We will even see that the different word classes differ semantically. For example, *an abuse*, *to abuse* and *feel abused* are semantically discrete, with entirely distinct connotations. Polysemy adds a further dimension of complexity.

While all of these words are related semantically, there are some further pairings and distinctions within this set. Regarding the order of this Chapter, both *insult* and *abuse* bear a close relationship, and so are immediately compared and contrasted. While *denigrate* and *vilify* are paired, as corresponding words sharing specific features. Intuitively, it would initially seem that *offend* should follow *insult*, as these are often used interchangeably, or as glosses. However, we will see that *offend* has some unique characteristics, particularly in perlocutionary structure. To *insult*, *abuse*, *denigrate* or *vilify* can also be to *offend*. Let us now begin with *insult*, often perceived as the most basic and broad of these acts.

## 2.1 *insult*

**I never insult anybody unintentionally. If I insult you, you can be goddamn sure I intend to.**

John Wayne

Transitive speech act verb *insult* refers to a discourse situation whereby a speaker produces an utterance that is offensive to the addressee or referent, it is an expressed negative assessment of the target. As suggested above in the popular quote by actor John Wayne, to *insult* can be construed as either a deliberate or an unintentional act. A speaker might not intend to communicate a negative attitude, but inadvertently or ambiguously imply something bad. Would this example still be the act of *insulting* someone?

On a superficial level, to *insult* can appear to be an innocuous act, to 'give cheek', or 'be rude', something 'not to be taken too seriously'. However, the speaker *intent* and hearer (s) *interpretation* of the act differs according to the situation. On a cross-cultural level, to *insult* can lead to deep umbrage, or be a simple misinterpretation, either can result in a serious breakdown of relations or endless miscommunication. The situational variables are immense. To *insult* can be a humorous expression of solidarity, an unintentional social gaffe resulting in mild embarrassment, or a deliberate act that enrages the target. On a more severe level, we can *insult* with *fighting words*, slurs or language that constitutes "an immediate breach of the peace" (as in the landmark case of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 1942). Flynn (1977: 15) remarks that in more isolated societies in Malaysia, *insulting* someone with the epithet *dog* or *pig* will leave the target "ready for a fight". Flynn (1977: 7) reports that, among the African Bambara people, to label a man *a son of a dog* will incite the target to "exact physical revenge".

While these earlier examples might strike us as an over-reaction, we only need to refer to recent examples that are more salient to Western society, contemporary riots, gang warfare or fights in the United States and Australia, instigated by the use of a racial epithet. Such derogatory labels are not terms of 'reference' but rather encode potent negative beliefs. Harvard Law Professor Randall Kennedy (2002: 100) identifies "the n-word" as the "ultimate fighting word", revealing that it is often used

as a justification for physical violence. Kennedy (2002: 100-112) further cites modern accounts where usage has become a “defense strategy for murder”.

As we can see, to *insult* can have pervasive effects, on a collective or individual level. Depending on the domain, to *insult* can result in extreme reactions, a workplace resignation, a family division, ostracism in a school environment, or even suicide. Clearly, *insulting* someone is not always ‘harmless’. Flynn (1977: 55) remarks, “Few have recognized the role of the insult as an important vehicle for discrimination”. On a more subtle level, to *insult* can result in psychological consequences, issues of low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. To *insult* is an obvious indicator of our perceptions of, and relations, with people. When does *insult* reveal hatred, and when does it express camaraderie? Taking all of these semantic and pragmatic facets into account, what does it mean to *insult* someone?

### 2.1.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *insult*

In the otherwise comprehensive text *Insult and Society*, Charles Flynn (1977: 3) posits only a brief definition, “To insult is an act, remark, or gesture which expresses a severely negative opinion of a person or group”. Is perlocution an important semantic component of *insult*? Can we *insult* a target if they aren’t present? How do we differentiate between to *insult*, to be *insulted* and an *insult*? What can lexicographical sources reveal about *insult*?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) cites the earliest recorded usage in 1592: H. SMITH *Wks.* (1866-7) I. 439 Let no man insult beyond the lists of humility. The OED (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1989) defines the contemporary meaning of verbal *insult* as:

To assail with offensively dishonouring or contemptuous speech or action; to treat with scornful abuse or offensive disrespect; to offer indignity to; to affront, outrage.

This verbose definition is clearly problematic. It is replete with archaic terms (*scornful*, *contemptuous*, *dishonouring*) and obscure metaphorical phrases (*assail*, *offer indignity to*). The entry features many superfluous components and is obscure in defining *insult* as *abuse*, *offensive*, *affront* and *outrage*. Moreover, if we need to consult a dictionary for *insult*, would we understand any of these complex, stylistic

glosses? If we asked a native speaker, would they intuitively agree that to *insult* is to *assail*, *dishonour* and *offer indignity to* with a *contemptuous*, *scornful* act?

What about other current lexicographical definitions of *insult*? While the OED is venerated as the ‘definitive’ source, as we can see, it is very formal and stylistic. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English reflects a more pragmatic approach, defining to *insult* as:

To offend someone by saying or doing something they think is rude.

This is a better semantic representation of *insult*, it is couched in plain language and includes a perlocutionary element. However, this definition forms part of an hermeneutical cycle that defines *insult* in terms of *offend*, *offend* in terms of *rude* and *rude* in terms of *offend* and *insult*. Moreover, this definition doesn’t account for the full semantic range, ignoring illocution. Likewise, the Cambridge Dictionary of English defines *insult* as: “to say or do something to someone that is rude or offensive”, also incurring the same shortfalls. So, how has *insult* been treated in the academic arena?

At the time of writing, Fillmore’s FrameNet does not include *insult* in their index of Lexical Units. Princeton’s lexical database WordNet does supply a synonym set (‘synset’) for *insult* (a group of words, seen as representing a single underlying concept). WordNet glosses *insult* as to “treat, mention, or speak to rudely” and linearly displays the word as: *diss*, *insult*, *affront*. Of course, these are not direct synonyms of *insult*, *diss* is a colloquial form of *disrespect* and connotes derision, while *affront* invariably denotes a deliberate and usually public act. Clearly, single-word glosses are inaccurate and inadequate.

Anna Wierzbicka’s (1987) *English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary* addresses an impressive 250 speech act verbs, using an earlier version of the NSM approach and inventory. This text provides the following explication of *insult*:

*insult*

I think something bad about you

I feel something bad towards you (person X)

I want to say something bad about you (person X)

I want to say: (something bad about you (X))

I assume you will feel something bad because of that  
I assume people would understand that I say this not because I want to say  
what is true  
I say this, in this way, because I want to cause you (X) to feel something bad

Wierzbicka (1987) used an inventory of 150 common words, while this thesis uses the modern model, a further reduced inventory of approximately 60 NSM semantic primes. While this is an explicit and detailed explication, it presupposes the presence of the target. Taking a fresh perspective, how can we explain *insult*?

### 2.1.2 NSM Explication of *insult*

As discussed in 2.0, to *insult* can be performed as either a speech act (SAY) or a behavioural act (DO). As specified, this section solely deals with ‘reportive’ speech acts. As a semantic subset, the illocutionary force of *insult* is prototypically deliberate. The perlocution of *insult* (i.e., ‘feeling’ *insulted*) means that the target must always be affected, otherwise the act is ‘infelicitous’.

Wierzbicka’s explication above (2.1.2) is in first-person, while the explications in this Chapter instead present an active use, and then a prototypical cognitive scenario, after Goddard (1998: 136-64). The model used here is a slightly modified version.

*X insulted Y*

- (a) X said some bad things about Y
- (b) when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time:
  - (c) “I think something bad about Y
  - (d) I want to say something bad about Y
  - (e) I want Y to feel something bad”
- (f) because of this, Y feels something bad
- (g) people can think: it is bad to do something like this

## Explanation of Components

*X insulted Y* is an active, prototypical usage.

(a) This component represents the locution. Here, it is specified that *X* uttered *something bad* (i.e., a negative speech act), as opposed to *something good* (i.e., to *compliment*). Note the use of prepositional *about* rather than *to Y*. This indicates that we can *insult* someone without speaking directly to them (i.e., the hearer(s) may not be the direct target of the locution). The act may be direct or communicated indirectly via a third party.

(b) To *insult* suggests the following cognitive scenario (i.e., to *insult* is like revealing the following attitude and thought processes).

(c) The quotation marks here indicate the prototypical cognitive components. This line represents the agent's negative evaluation of the target.

(d) This line indicates the agent's impulse to communicate this negative thought. Not expressing this attitude would not be to *insult*. Merely *thinking something bad about someone* does not constitute the act of *insulting* someone.

(e) This component indicates the illocution of the act, it is *X's* intent to cause *Y* to *feel something bad*. To *insult* is a deliberate act of wilfully causing *someone to feel something bad*.

(f) This represents the perlocution, the effect of the speech act (i.e., *Y's* reaction). As a result of *X's* locution, *Y feels something bad*. Whether the target refutes the locution, or is hurt or upset, to *insult* engenders some sort of bad feeling.

(g) This final component is a social evaluation. While *insult* is not as socially condemned as *vilify*, it is still perceived as a *bad thing* to do to other people.

### 2.1.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

As explained in Chapter 1 (1.7), this section aims to provide usage-based evidence to justify the semantic components, and generally substantiate the explications. Natural, textual examples of usage are presented, highlighting pragmatic aspects of *insult*, such as fixed phrases, connotation and perlocution. The selected examples illustrate various linguistic and ethnopragmatic elements of the semantic structure of *insult*, revealing meaning via contextual factors.

The most salient semantic facet of speech act verb *insult* is that it is *saying something bad about someone*. Martino and Lima (2003) recognise *insult* as a speech act that communicates a negative message. This is expressed as the prototypical event: *X said some bad things about Y*. (A key prime here is the preposition, *about* indicating that the target might not be present, and *insult* can be indirectly relayed to the referent by an intermediary). The speech act is preceded by an attitude that is conveyed by the verbal act itself: *when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time*. This is a slight modification of the model used in Goddard's (1998: 136-64) Chapter on speech-act verbs: "When X said this, it was as if X was saying at the same time". This re-wording replaces the functional variant *as if* with the allolex (variant form) *like* to express resemblance and approximation rather than stipulation suggested by *if*. (NB Wierzbicka and Goddard 'in progress' advocates the use of a new component: "X said it like people say something like this to someone when they say it because they think something like this". This new research is exploring the idea that this location can be paraphrased further, and to replace the 'dummy' *it* in the current version. When it is completed, the new model will be the third format for speech-act verbs. For reasons of consistency and accessibility, the author has decided to use the established frame.)

The act of to *insult* is an expression of the agent's negative perception or evaluation of the target. This is represented by the prototypical cognitive scenario: (the agent) *think(s) something bad about Y* (the target). Unless it is an ironic usage, *insult* is never generated by a positive assessment.

- (4) He **insulted** me about being on public assistance.

<http://www.imnotsorry.net/pd.htm> (12/09/05)

- (5) Last time they came to visit they **insulted** my cooking, my housekeeping, and my wardrobe.

[www.mothering.com/discussions](http://www.mothering.com/discussions) (12/09/05)

Truth conditions are irrelevant to this subjective act, to *insult* represents a personal estimation. Jucker and Taavitsainen (2001: 6) note that “One particular insult may be insulting for one particular addressee while it might not be insulting for another”. Example (1) reveals the opinion *it is bad* to be a recipient of welfare, implicitly rebuking the target. Example (2) implies the target’s perceived incompetence. Whether factual, fair, honest or not, the perlocution achieves the illocution, to make the target *feel something bad*. Overall, the agent *thinks something bad* about the target. The negative perception motivates and substantiates the speech act itself, (*because of this*), *I want to say something* (something specifically ‘bad’) *about Y*.

- (6) Clearly your intent is **to insult, is to troll**.

[www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.security.firewalls/2004-05/1182.html](http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.security.firewalls/2004-05/1182.html)  
(12/09/05)

- (7) **I insulted** her but she *is* older and fatter!

[www.users.tpg.com.au](http://www.users.tpg.com.au) (12/09/05)

There is some pragmatic evidence to suggest that to *insult* can be an unintentional act (i.e., the perlocution of a speech act conflicts with the illocutionary force). This would therefore indicate polysemy, and suggest a component such as: *X didn’t want Y to feel something bad*. To *insult* undoubtedly represents a negative thought, *I think something bad about Y*. But can *insult* be an earnest, unintentional expression of *something bad* or is it invariably a deliberate attempt to convey *something bad* to the target *and* cause them to *feel something bad* as a result? What possible proof do we have of ‘unintentional’ *insult*?

Illocutionary force is an important, distinguishing facet of *insult*, what is the underlying intention of the speech act? If the target interprets the act as an *insult*, does this make the act *insulting*? We need to keep in mind that these are different word classes, with discrete meanings and different functions. Lexicographical sources do not claim any unintentionality. What about usage? Pragmatically, a lack of intent to

*insult* is often expressed reflexively by the agent as (I) *didn't mean to insult*... For this common phrase, Factiva lists 50 entries during 2004 alone, Google lists 23 400 current entries and Yahoo lists 38 900 entries (at 9/09/05). This 'caveat' can express regret, precede an apology or serve as an indirect apology for the perceived *insult*.

(8) **I didn't mean to insult** you! I'm sorry.

<http://www.greatestjournal.com/users/vampiresselena> (12/09/05)

Alternately, this qualifying phrase can precede an explanation, justification or a denial of the act.

(9) **I didn't mean to insult** you. If I did, I'm sorry.

[www.iprimus.com.au/users](http://www.iprimus.com.au/users) (12/09/05)

We can often interpret this as a refutation: *I didn't mean to insult you*= *I didn't insult you*. The premeditation underlying *insult* is revealed in insincere or ironic usages, such as refuting a blatantly deliberate intent.

(10) **I didn't mean to insult** you by calling you a jerk.

[www.tacitus.org/comments/2005/2/27/13126](http://www.tacitus.org/comments/2005/2/27/13126) (27/02/05)

We can conclude that *X didn't mean to insult Y* is a fixed phrase, rather than proof of polysemy or even generality of *insult*. 'Unintentional' *insult* is closer to a perlocution. For example, the target claiming *I am insulted by what you said*. Therefore, this phrase is more like adjectival *insulted* than verbal to *insult*.

A sarcastic usage (example 10) compounds the: *I want Y to feel something bad* component of the explication, indicating intentionality. Flynn (1977) asserts that there can be a certain amount of ambiguity to *insult*. Our interpretation can depend upon pragmatic or paralinguistic information. For example, "Where did you get that hat?" can function as a simple question, a compliment or to indirectly *insult* the hearer(s), while the declarative: "You're looking good today", might be received as an *insult*, implying *you don't normally look good*. In reference to nominal *insult*, Hill and Öttchen (1995: 22) state "We define insults broadly. Some sit smug at the center of the definition, clearly intended to cast aspersion. Others come from around the edges

— like disparaging insinuations, self-judgments or cynical observations”. As we can see, the illocution is always to *insult*.

As suggested above, the perlocution is subjective. Flynn (1977: 15) states that it “insults a Yuma Indian girl to be called *skinny* as much as for a woman of the dominant American culture to be described as *fat*”. However, for the appropriate felicity conditions, the target must *feel something bad* as a result of the act (unlike nominal *insult*, which can easily misfire. This is borne out by the collocation: *an empty insult*). The perlocution is expressed in the explication as: *because of this* (i.e., the speech act), *Y feels something bad*. The act can stimulate a range of negative emotions in the target, including *embarrassment*, *hurt* (as in example 8) and *anger* (example 9).

(11) He **insulted** her in front of all his friends and she felt hurt.

<http://www.golivewire.com/forums/> (9/09/05)

(12) He **insulted** me with this lousy remark and it angered me.

[www.birgit-nietsch.de/Muds/Xyllomer](http://www.birgit-nietsch.de/Muds/Xyllomer) (17/11/05)

Because the target inevitably *feels something bad*, *insult* can be construed as an insensitive act, portraying the agent as tactless.

(13) He was so drunk he **insulted** everyone in his wedding speech.

<http://www.depressionnet.com.au/stories/17ehdu792osdsjwo0716903828>  
(09/09/05)

(14) He **insulted** all of the female staff with that chauvinistic joke.

[www.fodors.com/forums/pgMessages](http://www.fodors.com/forums/pgMessages) (09/09/05)

(15) I **insulted** my wife today. Told her she had gained a few pounds...not the right thing to say!

<http://www.mrssurvival.com//ubbthreads> (09/09/05)

Examples (13), (14) and (15) imply a lack of consideration, that the agent ‘should have known better’. The following examples (16) and (17) express that, when

unintentional, the agent has no malicious intent. This is effectively a denial, negating the illocution of *insult*.

(16) I didn't mean to **insult** her, so I apologized for my carelessness.

<http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/leonj/updates/aihara/> (9/09/05)

In the above and below examples, the perlocution conflicts with the illocutionary force.

(17) I felt so bad. I felt like she thought I **insulted** her.

<http://www.migrainepage.com/cgi-bin/dcforum/> (9/09/05)

*Insult* defies socio-cultural rules of politeness. In accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1978) framework of politeness theory, to *insult* is part of the continuum of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). *Insult* can also be perceived as an expression of disrespect or insolence. The following usages support the line *I want Y to feel something bad*, also suggesting pretentiousness and a sense of superiority on behalf of the agent(s).

(18) She **insulted** me by telling me I was ignorant and had no class.

<http://www.rudegirlfriend.com/rudeStory.cfm?ID=84> (6/04/05)

(19) The manager was VERY quick to get rude with me and **insult** me (she called me a wanker while I was still extremely polite).

<http://www.stickmanbangkok.com> (6/04/05)

*Insult* can be interpreted as belittling or diminishing. Ilie (2004) claims that *insulting* a target is a strong FTA on the continuum, allowing the emotional force of the message to exceed its rational force, affecting not only the targeted addressee, but also third party participants who are witnessing the verbal exchange. Furthermore, other FTAs, such as to *accuse* or *criticize*, allow for the target's right and possibility to justify and/or rehabilitate him/herself. In contrast, *insulting* is meant to undermine the target's image, position, and authority so seriously as to inhibit any further dialogue. For these reasons, and the generally unacceptable nature of the act, the explication includes a social evaluation: *people can think: it is bad to do this*.

Comparing *insult* to *denigrate*, Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000) assert that to *insult* can damage the reputation of the target. Example (20) below suggests the target felt demeaned, and ‘lost face’, when the agent (the new manager) asserted his superior status by imposing his authority upon the target.

- (20) Matt (his new boss) **insulted** him and he didn’t like being put in his place.  
[www.jeremy.zawodny.com/blog/archives/006524.html](http://www.jeremy.zawodny.com/blog/archives/006524.html) (10/12/05)

To *insult* is often perceived as rebuking or criticising performance. Examples (21) and (22) present *insult* as harsh, unconstructive and biased. In these instances, *insult* is an expressed negative assessment that conflicts with the target’s favourable self-assessment.

- (21) She continually **insulted** all my hard work.  
[www.jocarra.deviantart.com](http://www.jocarra.deviantart.com) (8/05/05)

- (22) He went and **insulted** the great job I did on the house.  
[www.blurty.com/users](http://www.blurty.com/users) (8/05/05)

Interestingly, *insult* can function as a cathartic mechanism. This is indicated by the component: *I want to say something bad about Y*, the act functioning as a ‘release’ of anger and frustration. The agent wants the target to know that a negative assessment has been made.

- (23) One businessman was furious enough to say that he would kill me. He lashed out for quite a while -- repeatedly **insulting** me.  
<http://www.bobmay.info/oct162003thewall.htm> (5/10/05)

- (24) I **insulted** the crap out of him. It was great to vent like that.  
[www.advogato.org/person](http://www.advogato.org/person) (18/04/04)

Sometimes the ‘therapeutic benefits’ of *insult* subside, leaving the agent feeling remorseful, as though they have overreacted and been too emotive.

- (25) I **insulted** her and I feel terrible.

<http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/friends-and-family-of-alcoholics>

To *insult* is the deliberate expression of *something bad* about someone. This is expressed in the explication as: *I want to say something bad about Y*. In this way, to *insult* is a near-antonymic form of to *compliment*. Further, Andersson and Trudgill (1990) assert that profanity can form the content basis of *insult*. Swearing can also supplement *insult*, especially in an emphatic usage.

(26) She **insulted** me with every swear word under the sun.

<http://www2b.abc.net.au/science/k2/stn/archives/> (14/09/05)

Allan and Burrige (1991: 117) remark that “the very use of taboo terms-whether as insults, epithets, expletives or even descriptives-will often insult Hearer”. As noted, taboo terms can include pejorative epithets, wielded to intentionally *insult* a target. These *bad words* are used to convey a *bad feeling* towards the target.

(27) Your halfback Brian **insulted** her by calling her a bitch.

[www.thevalkyrie.com/stories/1misc7/debbie\\_1.txt](http://www.thevalkyrie.com/stories/1misc7/debbie_1.txt) (14/09/05)

(28) I **insulted** them with racial slurs.

[www.zeedarteretz.com/logs/log21104.htm](http://www.zeedarteretz.com/logs/log21104.htm) (14/09/05)

In example (28), an exclusory usage, the agent is an in-group member while the target is an out-group member. Flynn (1977) asserts that this form of to *insult* is used as a tool of discrimination and dominance. He notes that this can occur on an intra-group level, citing the ‘Untouchables’ caste in India, who use *insulting* epithets self-referentially, and by extension to their families and possessions.

*Insult* can transcend the personal and become a matter of public and international concern. O’Neill (2000: 120) remarks that historically, *insult* is a major provocation of international conflict, and he refers to the act as the “prelude to war”. Clearly, *insult* can be justified by claiming provocation. Example (29) demonstrates aggravation, also implying self-righteousness in response to a backlash against the act.

(29) I **insulted** him because I found his posts to be ignorant and blindly critical of USA. I insulted him because he was provoking.

<http://www.remedylane.com/forum/> (9/09/05)

In the legal domain, the Northern Territory Criminal Code (2004), partly defines provocation as *insult*: “Any wrongful act or insult of such a nature as to be likely, when done to an ordinary person, or in the presence of an ordinary person, to deprive him of the power of self-control”. Interestingly, one court case cites an incident of “snide” laughter, “regarded as an act of insulting for the purposes of provocation” (<http://www.nt.gov.au>). This website further illuminates that to *insult* is not a “conveyance of information”, and serves an affective rather than a referential function. Goddard (1998: 140) confirms that this is common to related, everyday speech-acts, such as *joking* and *swearing*, that are not concerned with the transmission of factual information.

We have established *insult* as a negative speech act with a pejorative illocution, as indicated by our final explication component: *people can think: it is bad to do this*. In this social evaluation, *can* functions as conditional. While *vilify* is invariably a ‘bad act’ in the eyes of speakers, *insult* is more ambiguous, and meaning is context dependent. Is *insult* habitually perceived as ‘bad’? Mateo and Yus (2000: 97) present a contemporary perspective on *insult*, “Ethnologists believe insulting is a refined and civilized way of releasing certain doses of aggressiveness without resorting to force and physical violence”. As explained above, to *insult* can function as cathartic, but even so, the recipient and hearer(s) may not perceive the act as ‘good’. When could *insult* be to *say something good* and even be received as positive?

It is widely acknowledged in sociolinguistics that derogatory epithets can be used to paradoxically express a positive feeling. For example, Kennedy (2002) reports that *insulting* epithets can be used in an inclusive sense, by the in-group, to signal solidarity. [It must be noted that in-group usage can often be differentiated from out-group usage, by way of altered form, pragmatically, orthographically or phonologically (e.g., *nigga* instead of dysphemistic *nigger*)]. In-group *insult* can express camaraderie, and even be ritualistic.

Tannock (1999: 322) explains that *ritual insulting* is considered to involve a competitive exchange of *insults*, in which “two (or more) individuals attempt to out-perform one another by coming up with insults that are ever more outrageous and

clever”. This is where *insulting* someone can be perceived as skill, wit and art. Crystal (1987) reports that this phenomenon is not new, but has many historical precedents. Known as *flyting* and consisting of ritual *cursing*, *insulting* and *boasting*, Crystal dates the earliest recorded example of this act to the 991 AD Anglo-Saxon poem *The Battle of Maldon*. Modern ritual *insulting* is commonly associated with African American communities and is known as “sounding” or “playing the dozens”(Labov 1972: 329). Jucker and Taavitsainen (2001: 24) propose that “ritual insults should perhaps be seen as part of the learning process on how to respond to insults in a non-serious manner”. As we can see *ritual insulting* is not the same as prototypical *insult*.

*Insulting* can reinforce shared group identities and values, and enable interpersonal bonding between members, as indicated by the example below.

(30) We straight out **insult** each other. Always in a joking way.

<http://www.sosuave.com/ubb/Forum6/HTML/001547.html> (10/09/04)

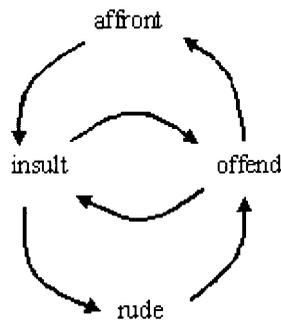
*Insult* can also perform a jocular function. The act has a wide semantic range, and can contain elements of humour and/or teasing, from gentle joking to malicious mockery (see Olivier 2003). On a general level, *insult* is related to: *mock*, *rib*, *dig*, *taunt*, *piss-take*, *punk*, *knock*, *bad mouth someone* and *poor mouth someone*. Considering the nominal form, we can find collocations such as: *a good-natured insult*, *a playful insult*, *a witty insult*. However, a playful illocution may not have the desired perlocution.

(31) Cohen, posing as his Kazakhstani journalist character Borat, **insulted** people in Salem, singing a mangled version of the American national anthem.

*Star Mangled Banner, Herald-Sun, 15/01/05 (From Factiva)*

#### 2.1.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

This section aims to discuss various linguistic properties of *insult*, that further reveal its semantic structure. In examining *insult*, we can intuitively collect an immediate group of near-synonyms, *offend* and *affront*. If we perceive *insult* as one point on a linear plane, these terms appear to be closely related. Certainly, in an hermeneutical cycle, lexicographical sources (including the Macquarie, Oxford, Cambridge and Longman dictionaries) define these three words in terms of each other (2.1).



(Figure 2.1)

Thesauruses and dictionaries list ‘synonyms’ of verbal *insult* by adjectival and perlocutionary phrases with obvious semantic contrast, such as: *rude, slight, abuse, upset, cheek, cause somebody to lose face, outrage, a slap in the face, attack the dignity of*. They illustrate the large network of related words but also the discrete nature of lexical semantics, but can we interchangeably employ *insult, offend* and *affront*?

(32) The padre **insulted (offended, affronted)** the congregation with his remark.

While *affronted* is intuitively questionable (it is stylistic and the nominal and adjectival forms are more common), these terms are ostensibly interchangeable on the basis of the above scenario. However, upon considering each word individually, we can ‘draw out’ any semantic discrepancies. *Affront* is an overt, confrontational (usually nonverbal) act, with invariable intent. *Affront* implies open disrespect, or even hostility. *Affront* is a purposed social indignity, to cause resentment, consider *personal affront, attack someone’s dignity* and *to get someone’s back up*. *Affront* presupposes the presence of the referent while *insult* can be communicated to the target via a liaison, *X said something bad about Y* and *when Y hears this, Y feels something bad*.

*Affront* clearly has a distinct, unique meaning but what about *insult* and *offend*? Are they direct synonyms? Although the terms are often transposed in usage (or dual usage for emphatic purposes), there must be evident semantic distinctions that allow for the following example from the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission:

- (33) The *Racial Discrimination Act* makes it unlawful to **insult**, humiliate, **offend** or intimidate another person or group in public on the basis of their race.

Clearly, to allow for the concurrent usage of both *insult* and *offend*, in a socio-legal context, there must be differentiating semantic factors. To *offend* is perceived figuratively as holistic and intrinsic, affecting the target's morality and 'essence', imposing upon their sense of what is fair and just. While *insult* suggests the agent thinks *something* (specifically) *bad about Y*, *offend* implies that the agent *doesn't think good things about Y*.

- (34) He **offended** (?**insulted**) me deeply.  
You **offended** (?**insulted**) every fibre of my being.  
You **offended** (?**insulted**) everything I believe in.  
She **offended** (?**insulted**) me to the very bone.  
It **offends** (?**insults**) everything I stand for.

Furthermore, *insult/offend* cannot be transposed where the latter would be the perlocution only (i.e., He **offended** (**\*insulted**) me when he **insulted** (**\*offended**) me).

- (35) He **insulted** (**\*offended**) the priest's intelligence.  
She **insulted** (**\*offended**) my taste in clothing.  
They **insulted** (**\*offended**) my hair cut.  
She **insulted** (**\*offended**) his cooking.  
He **insulted** (**\*offended**) me to my face.

Further comparisons will be examined in section 2.3.

### 2.1.5 Metaphor and *insult*

#### To add insult to injury.

(Phaedrus, *Fables*)

As we can see, there is no directly synonymous form of *insult*. Is there any polysemy? While most of the lexicographical sources suggest generality, the OED claims etymological polysemy of the verb form, based on the obsolete, figurative usage of *insult* as to “attack, assault, assail”. Of course, this marks a nonverbal act, to *do something bad* (involving a physical act) rather than to *say something bad*. Contemporarily, polysemy is now only reflected in the nominal form, 1. an insult, i.e. *something* that *insults*, as opposed to 2. an injury, trauma or attack, specific to the register of the medical profession (as in example 36). (NB Word class is distinguished phonologically by stress, verbal *insult*, nominal *insult*).

- (36) The prevailing current view is that schizophrenia is a neurodevelopmental disorder in which structural changes, caused by an early prenatal or perinatal **insult**, confer a predisposition to the development of schizophrenia.

(Pantelis, et al. 2003: 400)

This specialised sense has implications for metaphorical perceptions of *insult* as an act that can *hurt*, *wound* or *injure*. The perlocution of *insult* is often conveyed in terms of metaphorical idioms, referring to injury or pain. While in medicine an *insult* is a physical *injury*, figuratively, to *insult* is to ‘injure’ the psyche. This is expressed within the explication as: *Y feels something bad*.

Clearly, we have a metaphor equating to *insult* with to *injure*. While Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 59) claim that metaphor is how we conceptualise abstract concepts, do speakers understand to *insult* in accordance with the frame INSULT IS PAIN? While we can find much pragmatic evidence to attest that this is how we ‘talk about’ *insult*, is this how we ‘think about’ this act?

The following examples are not only important pragmatically, (especially of perlocutionary effect), but further reveal semantic content. We will see that these common, colloquial usages support the explication components.

Example (11) from 2.1.4 above demonstrates that we equate to *insult* with to *hurt*, at least on an expressive level. To *insult* someone is to cause them to *feel something bad*. We can also convey *insult* as to *harm*, *sting* (37) or *wound* (38), among other ‘inflicting pain’ related descriptors.

(37) My parents just totally **insulted** me. I’m not sure if it was intentional or not but whatever. It really **stung**, like when a wasp lays one on you.

<http://www.blogger.com/>

(38) She **insulted** me. I’m feeling myself **wounded**.

<http://desmoinesregister.com/>

Do we conceive of to *insult* as to inflict *pain*? It appears as though to *insult* is, in some way, *felt* by the target, although manifested as psychological, rather than physical pain. Using semantic primes, when someone *insults* us, we can verbalise our reaction as to *feel something bad*. While this is somewhat figurative, describing our responsive thoughts, this can affect us in such a way, that we have the psychological ‘sensation’ of *feeling something bad*. Pain-related metaphors are not restricted to *insult*, we can also express other speech acts such as *offend*, *abuse*, *affront* and *humiliate* by way of the same figurative forms.

(39) He **offended** me. Yeah, it **hurt**.

[www.marriagebuilders.com](http://www.marriagebuilders.com) (29/11/05)

(40) He **humiliated** me in front of the class. Some things are **painful** to think about.

<http://www.naturallist.com> (29/11/05)

To *insult* is further expressed by way of many other metaphorical allusions. Brown and Levinson’s (1978) notion of *Face* is important to our perception of *insult*. The target of the act has ‘suffered’ a *loss of face*, this combining the metaphorical notion of *insult* = *pain*, and ‘face’ = ‘pride’ or ‘ego’. To *insult* (and to *offend*) can be expressed idiomatically as an ‘injury’ or ‘damage’ sustained to the ‘ego’. When *X insults Y*, *Y* ‘suffers’ a: *bruised ego*, *sore ego*, *wounded ego*, *shattered ego*, *fractured*

*ego, battered ego, blow to the ego* or now has a *fragile ego*. The *ego* needs to be 'tended to', to be *comforted, stroked* or *soothed*. However, not all related adjectival forms are acceptable: we can have a *dented, cracked* or *sore ego*, but not a \**tender, \*scratched* or \**broken ego*.

(41) She'd **insulted** him and left him **nursing a bruised ego**.

*www.manhaters.com* (18/09/05)

(42) So what? So she **insulted** you. Just **lick your wounded ego** and move on.

*www.forums.sohh.com* (18/09/05)

(43) Retaliate by **insulting** them or find another way to **mend your battered ego**.

*www.geocities.com* (18/09/05)

O'Neill (2000: 2) further asserts that "to insult is an assault on face". Do we conceive of INSULT as ATTACK or is this usage based in, and influenced by etymology? The OED dates the earliest recorded usage of *insult* to the C14th and provides a definition as "to leap at or on, assail" or "to attack". Some metaphorical examples corroborate this etymology, suggesting the agent *wants* the target to *feel something bad*. These compare *insult* to a swift, unexpected motion, causing pain: *blow, low blow, blow to the ego, slap to the face, strike, hit, hit below the belt, kick in/to the teeth* or a *kick to the balls* (NB a *kick in/to the guts/stomach* and *gutted* suggest to *disappoint* rather than to *insult* or *offend*). Other idioms contain an element of speed and localised, temporary pain: *deliver/fire a stinging remark* or a *smarting remark*, not a \**throbbing remark*.

(44) He **insults** her in front of everyone and then **delivers this low blow**.

*www.geocities.com* (28/05/04)

(45) I **insulted** them all with some pretty **stinging remarks**.

*www.easy-song-writing.com/lyrics* (28/05/04)

(46) They **insulted** him. Now those guys **hit below the belt**.

*www.nexuscafe.com/bin/bbs.cgi/ShowMessage/reiki/5/85948* (28/05/04)

- (47) This characterization **insulted** the residents of that so-called dangerous neighbourhood. “It’s really a **slap in the face** to the hardworking people of the community.”

<http://www.tolerance.org/news> (28/05/04)

The notion of *insult* as a rapid and violent onslaught is further reinforced by nominal collocations, including: to *throw insults*, *hurl insults*, *fling insults*, *toss insults*, *chuck insults*, *lob insults*, *cast insults*, *heap insults*, *pitch insults*, *sling insults*, *spit insults*, *a storm of insults*, *insults fly* (Collins Word Bank). These examples support the idea of to *insult* as the agent wanting to *say something bad*, and as a result, the target *feels something bad*.

- (48) They were passionately in love, even when they were hurling **insults** and objects at one another.

[www.geocities.com/sylleeh](http://www.geocities.com/sylleeh) (29/07/04)

- (49) They were shouting at us, throwing **insults**, kicking us and throwing stones.

[melbourne.indymedia.org/mail](http://melbourne.indymedia.org/mail) (29/07/04)

*Insult* appears to be linked to a ‘gun’ metaphor that is also suggestive of rapidity: *fire insults*, *shoot insults*, *barrage of insults*, *insult aimed at*, *to be a target for insults*. These examples support the components that to *insult* is to *say something bad* with the intent of causing the target to *feel something bad*.

- (50) You’re shooting **insults** at each other like bullets on a battlefield.

<http://alan.ph.biu.ac.il> (29/07/04)

- (51) They were firing **insults** at him left, right and centre.

<http://randomrubbish.blogspot.com> (29/07/04)

The reciprocal, ‘counter attack’ nature of *insult*, to *not take an insult lying down*, is reflected in the collocations to *exchange insults*, *deflect insults*, *swap insults* or *trade insults* (Collins Word Bank), unlike the typically unilateral act of *abuse* \*trade abuse.

(52) The pair had to be dragged apart by the referee after they exchanged **insults** throughout the match.

*The Age* (20/04/04)

(53) They were still trading **insults** with each other, having opted for verbal combat over physical.

<http://solo.abac.com/lubakmetyk> (29/07/04)

### 2.1.6 Semiotics and *insult*

WordNet provides the following sentence frames for v. *insult*:

Somebody ----s somebody

Something ----s somebody

As we've been discussing the speech act form, *insult* has constituted the frame: *somebody insults somebody*. Of course, a major component of the verb form of *insult* is its nonverbal element. In the explications, this would be marked as: *X did something bad to Y*, rather than the specific SAY component. As this is a major semantic area beyond that of speech act verbs, it will not be treated in full here.

Nonverbal acts, rather than speech acts, constitute a major enactment of *insult*. Like the speech act *insult*, nonverbal *insult* is typically intentional. Where unintentional, this could be miscommunication. Flynn (1977: 12) states, "Acts, expressions, gestures and remarks that are totally innocuous, even friendly, in one culture may constitute grave insults in another". Indicating the arbitrariness of the sign, Flynn (1977: 13) refers to the Western wave indicating a greeting, and cites a Nigerian community where this gesture implies, "that the sexual organs of the parents of the person to whom the gesture is directed are diseased".

Nonverbal correlates can be expressed in many various manners, the flouting of a conversational 'rule' or maxim [see Grice's (1975: 41-58) 4 maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner. These are assumptions that listeners make about the way speakers will talk), a perceived impolite act such as refusing an invitation, not holding open a door for someone, and behaviour such as spitting. In fact, to *insult* can frequently be an *inaction*, rather than an action performed. Cross-cultural

communication is a wealth of miscommunication resulting in *insult*, the inaccurate usage of pronoun or honorific forms, the unwitting use of taboo, the use of a gesture, a socio-cultural convention that is not observed. As we can see, these conform to the idea that to *insult* is deliberate, while ‘unintentional’ *insult* is a perlocution, conflicting with the illocutionary force of the utterance.

## 2.2 *abuse*

**It is surely better a man should be abused than forgotten.**

Samuel Johnson.

Transitive speech act verb *abuse* has an interesting semantic structure, chiefly, it is to address a target using hostile language, in a highly volatile manner, usually in reaction to a perceived wrongdoing. Further to this description, *abuse* has many pragmatic and paralinguistic implications and characteristics. Wierzbicka (1987: 148) explains *abuse* as: “to say ‘bad things’ about the addressee to his face, in a deliberately hurtful and contemptuous manner”. Unlike to *insult*, to *abuse* is invariably and necessarily direct.

Like *insult*, we have a variable pragmatic ‘range of usage’ for *abuse*. An agent can *abuse* a target during a bout of ‘road rage’, or a couple can *abuse* each other during a heated argument. Psychologists and other therapists even offer counselling for those who both perpetrate and experience the act. MacKinnon (1993: 54-55) asserts that *abuse* can be sinister, “Verbally abusing out-group members is an undeniable component of racial and religious discrimination”.

While nominal *abuse*, in a physical sense, is the most semantically salient polysemous form, the speech act *abuse* is important from a socio-cultural perspective, as a tool in the enactment of aggression, discrimination and dominance. What does it mean to *abuse* someone?

### 2.2.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *abuse*

In the first edition of the *Webster Dictionary*, C.J. Smith (1913:379) offers this colourful definition:

*Abuse* is generally prompted by anger, and vented in harsh and unseemly words. It is more personal and coarse than *invective*. *Abuse* generally takes place in private quarrels, *invective* in writing or public discussions. *Invective* may be conveyed in refined language and dictated by indignation against what is blameworthy.

While this definition is couched in obscure language, it reveals some salient descriptors of *abuse*: *anger*, *vented*, *harsh*, *personal*, *private* and *coarse*. (These connotations will be further investigated throughout this section). We would think that, otherwise, Smith's definition reads as antiquated. However, even in modern sources, *abuse* is often described as *invective*, or to address someone in a manner that is *vituperative*, *opprobrious*, or *reviling*. It seems that *abuse* is more difficult to explain than *insult*, and that simple glosses cannot encapsulate the whole meaning of this complex word. The OED defines the speech act *abuse* as:

To wrong with words; to speak injuriously of or to; to malign, revile.

Much like the OED definition of *insult*, *abuse* is defined with metaphorical allusions (to wrong, speak injuriously of), and with obscure, archaic language (malign, revile). In addition, this definition and especially the use of *malign* seem more closely related to *denigrate* or *vilify* than to *abuse*. Can the Longman Dictionary provide a more accurate and translucent definition? Longman treats the polysemy of *abuse*, defining the speech act sense as:

To say rude and offensive things to someone [= insult].

Clearly, this is circular with their definition of *insult*: "To offend someone by saying or doing something they think is rude". Furthermore, [= *insult*] implies that these words are synonymous. *Insult* and *abuse* are not near-synonyms but are semantically discrete. Is *abuse* invariably *rude* and *offensive*? We could argue against this, citing potential scenarios where *abuse* is loud and angry, but not *rude*, or where the target does not find the act to be *offensive*. Finally, Longman's definition focuses on the content of *abuse* (i.e., *rude* things, *offensive* things) but fails to treat the important manner of *abuse*.

The Cambridge Dictionary of American English only defines transitive *abuse* as generality, neglecting to explain the polysemous speech act sense: “to treat (a person or animal) badly or cruelly, or to use (something) wrongly”. While it could be argued that the speech act *abuse* falls under this broad definition, we certainly couldn’t say that the speech act is the same thing as *abusing* someone sexually or using physical violence. Clearly, the speech act needs to be separately defined. Do scholarly sources provide a comprehensive definition of *abuse*?

WordNet provides the following synset of the speech act *abuse*: abuse, clapperclaw, blackguard, shout -- (use foul or abusive language towards; “The actress abused the policeman who gave her a parking ticket”; “The angry mother shouted at the teacher”). WordNet further provides synset relations, listing ‘sister terms’ as: *claw, vitriol, rip, whang, bombard, blister, rubbish*. A ‘direct troponym’ is supplied as: *slang, vilify, curse*.

While these terms provide an interesting glimpse into the ethnopragmatics of *abuse*, they are far removed terms that partly describe the act, but do not constitute a definition in any way. Rather than providing glosses, how can we actually decompose the semantic structure of *abuse*?

Anna Wierzbicka’s (1987: 147) *English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary* provides the following NSM explication of *abuse*.

*abuse*

I think something bad about you

I feel something bad towards you

I want to cause you to feel something bad

I want to say something more than bad about you

I want to say it in words that people would say one shouldn’t say to  
any person about that person

I assume people would understand that I say this not because I want  
to say what is true

I say: (something bad about person X (=you))

I say this because I want to show how I think about you and what I feel towards you

This is a greatly improved definition that explains both cognitive and behavioural aspects of the act, rather than providing superficial word comparisons. This

explication reveals the deliberate illocution of *abuse*, the offensive, socially reproachful dimension. Using reductive paraphrase, we can see the ‘break down’ of the thought processes leading to the act. However, does *abuse* really require a truth component? Can this explication be further simplified and clarified? Using the current NSM model and primes, and removing complex terms such as cause, assume and understand, how can we explain to *abuse*?

### 2.2.2 NSM Explication of *abuse*

*X abused Y*

- (a) X said some bad things to Y in a bad way
- (b) when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time:
  - (c) “I think something very bad about Y
  - (d) Y did something very bad
  - (e) Because of this, I feel something very bad
  - (f) I want Y to know this now
  - (g) I want Y to feel something very bad”
- (h) when this happens in this bad way, Y feels like something very bad can happen
- (i) people can think: it is bad to do something like this

#### Explanation of Components

The first line demonstrates a prototypical active usage, *X abused Y*.

(a) This component represents the locution. This is qualified to represent *abuse* as a (possible series) of negative utterance(s) (i.e., *some bad things*). The use of *bad words* here instead would suggest expletives rather than a negative utterance that may or may not involve swearing. The preposition *to* rather than *about* explains the confrontational aspect to *abuse*, whether said over the phone or in person, *abuse* is direct. Finally, *in a bad way* indicates the unpleasant manner of *abuse*.

(b) This line introduces the cognitive dimension of *abuse*, the attitude underlying the act.

(c) The agent has formulated a negative evaluation of the target. The intensifier expresses the extremity of the act, as opposed to *criticise* or *insult*.

(d) This negative evaluation is in response to a perceived wrongdoing, *Y did something very bad*, amounting to an accusation. This line suggests that *X abuses Y* with apparent reason.

(e) The target's 'wrongdoing' has engendered a negative feeling in the agent. X claims to *feel something very bad* (e.g., angry, upset or hurt as a result of something that Y did). The agent is agitated by the target.

(f) This final cognitive component expresses the illocution, the agent's will to convey this accusation and to ensure that the target understands how the agent feels. *Now* expresses the immediacy and emotional intensity of the act.

(g) *Abuse* is a deliberate attempt to cause the target to *feel something bad*.

(h) This perlocutionary component suggests the menacing manner of the act, *abuse* occurs in a *bad way*. The agent's demeanour implies anger and the threat of physical violence or other impending danger towards the target. Y can feel intimidated and fearful of X's behaviour.

(i) This final line is the social evaluation. This act is generally reproached as being unacceptable social behaviour.

### 2.2.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

Prototypical speech act *abuse* is the expression of something negative: *X said some bad things to Y*. *Abuse* labels an act that consists of *bad* speech. Furthermore, *abuse*, like *affront*, presupposes the presence of the target. It is direct. This is indicated by the preposition: *X said some bad things to Y* (a).

(54) They **abused** us with filthy words.

[www.cpiml.org/pgs/ml\\_upd/vol8/8\\_44.htm](http://www.cpiml.org/pgs/ml_upd/vol8/8_44.htm) (27/04/05)

(55) He verbally **abused** her with sexist and racist language.

[www.caledonianrecord.com](http://www.caledonianrecord.com) (27/04/05)

*Abuse* is often communicated by way of a protracted ‘outburst’. Initially, there is some pragmatic evidence to suggest that *abuse* contains an element of duration. This temporal aspect could be represented with the phrase: *for some time* (a). Examples suggest that there is a lengthy, repetitive nature to the act.

(56) I sat him down at the table, and after I **abused** him for about half an hour, he admitted he was using drugs.

[http://www.fordwreckers.com.au/warnersworld/merdos\\_98-113.htm](http://www.fordwreckers.com.au/warnersworld/merdos_98-113.htm)

(27/05/04)

(57) There were people spitting and **abusing** us for the whole 90 minutes.

[www.archive.thisislancashire.co.uk](http://www.archive.thisislancashire.co.uk) (27/05/04)

(58) He’s been in here **abusing** us for a few minutes.

<http://www.disorganisedcrime.com/personal/et2k.htm> (27/05/04)

The act seems to typically be a prolonged utterance. In contrast, *abuse* could technically consist of an altercation between two people, resulting in the agent using only a single word. For example, an incident of road rage where an agent could utter a pejorative epithet at the target, who could then claim, *X abused me*. For this reason, a temporal element has been omitted from the explication. Instead, a phrase regarding manner has been added (i.e., *X said some bad things to Y in a bad way*). This indicates that the approach taken by the agent in uttering the speech act was in some way *bad* (i.e., offensive or unpleasant). This further alludes to the possible paralinguistic features of *abuse* that will be discussed below.

In the explication, the cognitive scenario conveys the negative attitude of the agent: *I think something very bad about Y*. The agent has formed a negative assessment of the target, and accuses the target of having committed a perceived or real transgression: *Y did something very bad*. Jucker and Taavitsainen (2001: 29) state

that “Abuse involves allegation and has some basis in truth”. In response to this wrongdoing, the agent *feel(s) something very bad*. The agent’s negative reaction incites the speech act, it is in effect a retaliation. The following examples suggest that to *abuse* involves some sort of charge or blame laid against the target. Furthermore, they imply that it is a fair and deserved act, a response somehow warranted by the target’s actions.

(59) Chris **abused** the umpire over some inept decision making.

[www.arach.net.au/~daveiza/stoneheds/2002a/20020513](http://www.arach.net.au/~daveiza/stoneheds/2002a/20020513) (11/07/04)

(60) His ex-con father berated and **abused** him for his stupidity in losing the car.

[www.rintintin.colorado.edu/~doveb](http://www.rintintin.colorado.edu/~doveb) (11/07/04)

(61) So anyways I rang Trent and **abused** the shit out of him for lying to me and going to the party and I told him to like fuck off and never come back and his bags will be at the front door and he can come get them.

<http://tabbie.nightsfall.net/archives/00000055.html> (11/07/04)

(62) I phoned up AAPT and **abused** them for continuing to re-bill me for my old mobile even though I haven’t made a call from it for almost 7 months.

<http://www.glined.net/category/blog-updates/page/7> (11/07/04)

Wierzbicka (1987: 148) asserts that abuse is “spontaneous and hot-blooded”. Certainly, *abuse* is emotive and reactive: *I want Y to know this now*. *Prime now* indicates the immediacy and impulse of the act. It is almost as though the agent has no control over his or her behaviour.

This same component also explains the invariably deliberate illocution of *abuse*: *I want Y to know this now*. We can say *I unintentionally insulted her* but we cannot say *\*unintentionally abuse*. Furthermore, we can say a phrase like *accidentally insult* but *\*accidentally abuse* is pragmatically unacceptable and goes against our intuition. Lastly, we can claim to *inadvertently insult someone*, but not *\*inadvertently abuse*.

There is no ambiguity with *abuse*, it is an explicit act. I can claim that *I didn’t mean to insult Y*, but not that *\*I didn’t mean to abuse Y*. Furthermore, we can *try to*

*insult someone*, but we cannot \*try to abuse. Wierzbicka (1987: 149) observes that “*abuse cannot misfire, insult can*”. We can misinterpret an act as *insult*, hence fixed phrases like *I didn’t mean to insult you*, but never misread the clear signals and meanings of *abuse*. For instance, we can *insult* someone wearing a deadpan expression, while *abuse* has an explicit, emotive delivery.

While *insult* can be covert, *abuse* is an overt act. It implies anger and is delivered with an aggressive demeanour. This connotation connects the verbal act to *abuse* with the polysemous physical act of *abuse*: *I want Y to feel something very bad*. Of course, the two can be performed concurrently or verbal *abuse* can pre-empt physical *abuse*. This is a verbally hostile act with a menacing tone. There is an underlying element of intimidation and threat to *abuse* and it is often suggestive of impending physical harm: *when this happens in this bad way, Y feels like something very bad can happen*.

(63) Her husband **abused** her by threatening to kill her.

[www.wvu.edu/~law/dv/Cases/Miscellaneous/Facemire](http://www.wvu.edu/~law/dv/Cases/Miscellaneous/Facemire) (11/07/04)

(64) The bullies **abuse** her on the bus to school.

[www.education.qld.gov.au](http://www.education.qld.gov.au) (11/07/04)

*Abuse* is communicated in an offensive, intimidating manner. The following examples suggest that the act can incite shock or fear in the target, creating a sense of danger. The target feels distressed and ‘at risk’.

(65) He kept on **abusing** her in front of the kids and she was cowering like he was going to hit her.

[www.christianhealingmin.org](http://www.christianhealingmin.org) (11/07/04)

(66) He **abused** her over the phone and she was scared he’d come over.

[www.advicenators.com](http://www.advicenators.com) (11/07/04)

(67) She was frightened at how he’d verbally **abuse** her when she got home late from work.

[www.malesurvivor.org](http://www.malesurvivor.org) (05/09/05)

As we can see, *abuse* is communicated in a different way to *insult*. Both acts aim to express a negative feeling. However, *abuse* is more ‘animated’ than *insult*. Unlike *insult*, the physical manner of *abuse* suggests accompanying paralinguistic factors. These affect the speech quality of the agent. Paralinguistic changes can include an increase of volume, pitch and speed, conveying anger. While we can *loudly abuse* someone, we cannot \*quietly abuse them. While *abuse* indicates increased volume, and possibly involve yelling or screaming, in isolation, *yelling* or *screaming* do not constitute *abuse*. *Abuse* must involve words, while yelling and screaming can consist of wordless sounds or primary interjections. *Abuse* can also be accompanied by physiological movement, such as facial expressions and gesture, usually indicating anger. Components (a) and (g) imply that *abuse* is not the typical manner of speaking, it is a *bad way* of speaking.

(68) He admitted reacting to problems by either “**abusing** colleagues, hitting the computer, screaming, shouting or hurling parts of the PC.”

<http://www.vnunet.com/articles/print/2042882> (05/09/05)

(69) I was trying to sleep when the complaining upstairs neighbor was loudly **abusing** his wife at 1 am.

[www.livejournal.com/users/calbaer](http://www.livejournal.com/users/calbaer) (05/09/05)

(70) I couldn’t think over the noise of my parents **abusing** each other.

[www.roundtownnews.com](http://www.roundtownnews.com) (05/09/05)

(71) The crowd **abused** them all, yelling and throwing drinks at them.

[www.fanforum.com](http://www.fanforum.com) (05/09/05)

Examples (69) and (70) support the idea that *abuse* is a loud act (*Z can hear X when X is not near*), and can disrupt an otherwise uninvolved third party.

Wierzbicka (1987: 147) observes that *abuse* involves the “intentional breaking of some social conventions”. The speaker might exhibit unrestrained angry behaviour indicating a *lack of* or *loss of (being out of) control*. This occurs through the anti-social behaviour of *abuse*, the paralinguistic attributes (e.g., screaming, being loud,

and the dominating, intimidating and imposing manner associated with the act). *Abuse* can also be discriminatory and exclusory. It can be comprised of personal insults and abusive, derogatory epithets that imply some sort of negative categorisation. This is represented in the explication as: *I think something very bad about Y*, component (c).

(72) All three detainees alleged that officers **abused** them with racial slurs and threats like “you will feel pain”.

<http://billmon.org/archives> (11/07/04)

(73) Staff members verbally **abused** them by calling them names, cursing at them, threatening them, or making vulgar or otherwise inappropriate comments during strip searches. For example, detainees alleged staff members called them names like ‘terrorists’, ‘mother fuckers’, ‘fucking Muslims’, and ‘bin Laden Junior’.

[http://obsidianwings.blogs.com/obsidian\\_wings](http://obsidianwings.blogs.com/obsidian_wings) (8/09/04)

(74) He further **abused** us with the four-lettered F word and added, “I don’t want people like you in my restaurant”.

<http://www.chakkarapani.com/> (8/09/04)

(75) There have been many instances where they **abused** people, calling them wogs and reffos.

[www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories) (11/07/04)

(76) We were trained to think of the North Vietnamese as ‘gooks’ and **abuse** them with slurs.

[www.discoverthenetwork.org](http://www.discoverthenetwork.org) (11/07/04)

Similar to the use of expletives, *abuse* can be exclamatory and emphatic. The act can be comprised of, or include, swearing, to offend the target and show that the agent *feels something very bad*.

(77) You cannot use obscene or profane language to **abuse** your customer (even if the customer uses it first)!

[http://www.itssimple.biz/biz\\_tools/text/P06\\_2850.html](http://www.itssimple.biz/biz_tools/text/P06_2850.html) (08/09/04)

'Expletive' phrasal verbs are fixed, common usages, revealing the emphatic, offensive nature of to *abuse*. This is encompassed by the component: *X said some bad things to Y in a bad way*.

(78) He **abused the shit out of** me.

[www.grouphug.us/confessions](http://www.grouphug.us/confessions) (08/09/04)

(79) I **abused the fuck out of** the pizza guy.

[www.shroomery.org](http://www.shroomery.org) (08/09/04)

Allan and Burridge (1991: 26-29) classify these usages as 'dysphemistic'. They are intended to be offensive. Typical of expletive forms, we can also find alternate, euphemistic examples.

(80) They **abused the hell out of** the match officials.

[www.bloggingitreal.blogspot.com](http://www.bloggingitreal.blogspot.com) (08/09/04)

(81) He found out and **abused the crap out of** me for it.

[www.inthemix.com.au/forum](http://www.inthemix.com.au/forum) (08/09/04)

Semantic variants of this phrase can also be applied to an inanimate referent. These are non-verbal references, indicating a physical, utilitarian component: we can *physically abuse the crap out of the car*, but not \*verbally abuse the crap out of the car. This expresses the 'toughness', durability and resilience of the object, in an admiring way, suggesting the target object can 'take a lot' (i.e., cope with a large amount of rough usage).

(82) We **abused the crap** out of this very loving jeep.

[www.naxja.org/forum](http://www.naxja.org/forum) (05/09/05)

(83) I've got a Ridgid chop-saw that I **abused the fuck** out of.

<http://www.iidb.org/vbb/archive/index.php/t-134285.html> (05/09/05)

#### 2.2.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

To *abuse* is a deliberate act, performed in reaction to a (perceived or real) grievance: *Y did something very bad* (d). In usage, the act is often quantified with causative *for* or *because*. Even where the causative is omitted, *abuse* implies motivation (e.g., *they abused the referee* implies the question, *why did they abuse the referee?* The answer can be qualified with, *they abused the referee because he didn't see the foul.*)

- (84) I **abused** the taxi driver (*because* he was driving aggressively).  
She **abused** me (*for* leaving the baby unattended in the pool).  
He **abused** the waiter (for giving him the wrong meal).

*Abuse* can be instrumental.

- (85) I **abused** him (with foul language).  
She **abuses** him (with cruel taunts).

Collocations can also supply additional semantic information, and reveal polysemy. *Abuse* can be modified adverbially: *verbally abuse* distinguishes the speech act from the physical act, such as *sexually abuse*. This latter sense is the most semantically salient form and appears with the greatest frequency (according to the Collins Word Bank and BNC corpora). Nominal *abuse* is also modified with adjective forms that reveal how the act can be perpetrated. Speech-act based *abuse* can be: *verbal*, *racial*, *mental* or *emotional* (i.e., *doing something bad to Y by saying something bad to Y*). Physical maltreatment or prohibited activity based *abuse* can be: *sexual*, *domestic*, *spouse*, *child*, *ritual*, *animal* or *human rights abuses* (i.e., *doing something bad to Y*). Recent coins that identify contemporary social concerns include: *prisoner abuse*, *employee abuse*, *internet abuse*, *elder abuse*, and addictions: *drug abuse*, *substance abuse*, *steroid abuse*, *alcohol abuse* (these last forms are examples of abuse to oneself, rather than a third party target). *Sexual abuse* never implies *verbal abuse* of a gender-discriminatory nature, it is invariably a criminal, physical act. It appears that the physical sense of *abuse* is overtaking the verbal sense (K. Burridge, personal correspondence).

Like *insult*, the nominal and verbal forms of *abuse* are phonologically dissimilar, the former the glide is followed by a short vowel and has the sibilant /s/, while the verb glide is followed by a long vowel and uses /z/.

While *insult* and *offend* must have a human target, does this also apply to *abuse*? Can we have a usage such as *I abused the dog*? While to *insult* or to *offend* implies a cognitive, emotion-based reaction of the target, such as *hurt*, *shame* or *embarrassment*, to *abuse* conveys anger and can therefore incite fear in the target, including human or non-human animal targets. Therefore, we can have a construction such as: *I abused the dog for chasing the postman*.

Are there synonyms of *abuse*? The speech act is often glossed in terms of *insult* or in terms of nominal *insult* or *offend*, to *shout abuse at*, or *shout insults at*. *Insult* can be pithy or terse, *a slap in/to the face*, *[swift] kick in/to the teeth*, *below the belt*, implying a sudden, unexpected act. However, *abuse* is more aggressive than *insult*, it can be relentless, hence the many related terms that imply a sustained attack, such as *diatribe*, *tirade*, *invective*, or even incessant and repetitious behaviour, like *ranting*, *raving* or *lambasting*. These all attest to the component that to *abuse* is to: *say bad things to someone in a bad way* and to cause the target to: *feel something very bad*.

An interesting comparative term to *abuse* is the recent online concept of *flaming* (with the possible etymology of *inflamm* or *inflammatory*). There are obvious semantic parallels between the two terms. Lindsay (2002) regards *flame* as a speech act verb and likens the act to *abuse*. Currently, *flaming* exists solely in Computer Meditated Communication (CMC). However, *flame* could become adapted to speech (and might have parallels to ritualised insulting).

Most internet sources gloss *flame* simply as *to insult*. While a feature of *flaming* involves *insults*, it might be better described as an online equivalent of *abuse*, without the accompanying physiological paralinguistic behaviour of *abuse*. However, *flame* is a semantically discrete and complex term. *Flaming* is to employ hostile, inflammatory language text in CMC, on public media such as mailing lists or message boards. Unlike *abuse*, *flame* requires a third-party audience. Like *abuse*, *flame* is deliberate. However *flame* is instigated with the intention of inciting anger and humiliation, *to get a rise out of someone*. A *troll*, an 'outgroup' member can randomly select a target to bait. This typically provokes retaliation and potentially results in a *flame war*, a protracted session of scathing, belittling correspondence (NB the

temporal aspect, like *abuse*). The following explanation was taken (unedited) from a *yahoogroups* mailing list (09/11/05).

- (86) You have what ya call a troll on some lists that like to say something to get the list wound up . example you might have a guy go to a battered womans group and say some thing like " what do you call a woman with 2 black eyes? then make a statement like you cant tell her nothing . shes been told twice and that leads to a pretty good flame war . like chell i sport them myself sometimes when i am bored.

*Abuse* is socially reproached, while *flaming* contravenes *netiquette*, the online community's social protocol (Herring 2001). The most blatant difference is that the agent of *abuse* often claims provocation, while *flame* is not invariably aggravated. The target of *flame* can be randomly selected. In their perlocution, both *abuse* and *flame* can provoke a response, although, both acts can incur a submissive, non-response. Should *flame* incur a response, it is more likely to be *anger* and *frustration*, rather than the *fear* incited by *abuse*.

Like ritualised insulting, *flaming* is often perceived as an art form or game, a display of intellect and wit, by its perpetrators. Labov (1972) states that a personal *insult* requires a denial or an excuse, while a *ritual insult* requires a response in kind. However, *flaming* is far more aggressive than teasing and any stylistic flair does not undermine the vicious nature of the act. *Flaming* has many socio-psychological purposes, it can be cathartic, it can express dislike, or establish group hierarchy (Li 2005). The act is generally perceived to be unconstructive as *flaming* does not argue content, rather, it is an unwarranted, personal attack. Furthermore, the anonymity of this forum allows participants to be 'confrontational' without the consequences of 'real life', while the interactive time delay allows for prepared responses. Employing *say* in a metaphorical sense, *flaming* can be best captured in the following condensed cultural script: *I say something bad to Y, because of this, Y feels something very bad. I want this.*

### 2.2.5 Metaphor and *abuse*

Wierzbicka (1987: 148) observes, “Abuse involves some rhetorical figure, some wild exaggeration, some metaphor”. We use rhetorical devices like metaphor and hyperbole when we *abuse*, but also when we talk about *abuse*. Our explication of *abuse* can be used to explain these pragmatic uses. Numerous *abuse*-related figurative terms, phrasal verbs and idioms suggest that *to abuse is to attack* the target somehow, and that *abuse* is often the perlocution of *anger*. In these figurative usages, *abuse* is equated with its polysemous sense: to enact physical violence (Some expressions can also be used in reference to *insult*). These metaphors support the explication component regarding manner, *to abuse is to: say things in a bad way, to want Y to feel something very bad, and that: Y feels like something very bad can happen*.

Here follows a short list of such expressions that describe manner and a sense of impending danger: *to abuse is to attack, launch an attack against, assail, assault, bash, lash out, put the boot in, rail against, fly off the handle at, fly into a rage at, explode at, raket/haul/drag over the coals, blow up at, light into, fly into, lay into, launch into, pile into, pounce on, and go off at*. (Of course, some of these phrases have multiple senses, but all can be used to metaphorically express *abuse*).

- (87) According to press reports, he **exploded**, publicly **abusing** a producer.  
[www.friendsoftheabc.org/heroes.pdf](http://www.friendsoftheabc.org/heroes.pdf) (15/10/05)
- (88) He **lashed out**, **abusing** the students for their behaviour.  
[www.blogs.smh.com.au/newsblog/archives](http://www.blogs.smh.com.au/newsblog/archives) (15/10/05)
- (89) This lady completely **flew off the handle** and started verbally **abusing** my 10-year-old daughter.  
[www.oregonlive.com](http://www.oregonlive.com) (15/10/05)
- (90) Coria **launched into** an amazing tirade against Hewitt, claiming the Australian **abused** him and his captain Alberto Mancini. “He can be the best player in the world, he can win every tournament but he cannot behave the way he does, **abusing** the captain, **abusing** the other players, **abusing** everyone”.  
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/> (15/10/05)

A phrase like *go for the throat/jugular* is also relevant, although this is a complex example that has many indications of precision, direction, relevance, an unobvious verbal attack or reciprocal attack with animalistic ferocity. American English also has a selection of related idioms that suggest an unbridled, angry outburst: *go ballistic*, *go nuclear*, *go postal* (however, this final example also suggests *insanity*). These examples suggest an impending danger and the aggressive demeanour of the agent.

(91) They **went ballistic**, verbally **abusing** her until she cried.

[www.centerforsocialmedia.org/warbeyondbox/tacticaltv](http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/warbeyondbox/tacticaltv) (15/10/05)

As discussed, to *abuse* is often metaphorically compared to literal, physical *abuse*. We can find many idioms containing nominal *abuse*, illustrating the relentless, uncontrollable nature of *abusing* as a tirade that is *unleashed*: to enact a *torrent of abuse*, *mouthful of abuse*, *load of abuse*, *string of abuse*, *volley of abuse*, *barrage of abuse*. These phrases express *abuse* as: *saying bad things in a bad way*.

(92) His family were subjected to a **torrent of abuse**.

[www.soccernet.com/england/news](http://www.soccernet.com/england/news) (15/10/05)

*Abuse* is also metaphorically compared to inclement weather or natural disaster, it is an act that must be *weathered*. These constructions are modified and marked by particle *of*: a *flood of abuse*, *stream*, *storm*, *tornado*, *tempest*, *hurricane*, *avalanche*, *hail*, *shower*, *deluge*, *bombardment*, *torrential rain of abuse*. These phrases present *abuse* as unpredictable, inescapable and dangerous. To *abuse* is to cause the experiencer to: *feel something very bad* and to *feel like something very bad can happen*.

(93) The article precipitated a **storm of abuse** from experts.

[www.city-journal.org](http://www.city-journal.org) (28/09/05)

(94) Taxi's blared their horns, their drivers **hailing abuse** out of their windows, cyclists swerved to avoid him, **raining down** more verbal battery.

<http://members.aol.com> (28/09/05)

(95) I had licensed nutritionists and medical doctors **thundering abuse** on my head.

*www.deanesmay.com/posts (28/09/05)*

*Insult* can be substituted for a few of these phrases (e.g., a *shower of insults*), while other substitutions would seem hyperbolic, a *\*hurricane of insults*, an *\*avalanche of insults*. However, *abuse* collocations are generally more exaggerated. The severity of *abuse* is substantiated by the fact that understatements are unacceptable, unless they are intended as ironic: a *\*drizzle of abuse*, a *\*breeze of abuse*, or a *\*draught of abuse*. These examples run contrary to the explication components: *I want Y to feel something very bad* and *when this happens in this bad way, Y feels like something very bad can happen*.

*Abuse* also has related *tear* metaphors, likening the verbal act to its polysemous sense of perpetrating physical harm against someone. To *abuse* is to cause the target to: *feel something very bad*: to *tear into someone*, to *tear apart*, to *tear strips off*, to *rip a new arsehole*, to *bawl out* or to *chew out*. (Not all variants are permissible, while we can *rip into someone* we cannot *\*rip down someone*, and *rip off* has different connotations of being overcharged or deceived).

(96) He wrote Stanton a letter **abusing** him and **tearing strips off** him.

*www.gracebible.org.au (05/09/05)*

(97) You've been **abusing** Beth mentally and emotionally for years. I heard how you **ripped into** her earlier.

*www.tvmegasite.net:8080/.../transcripts (05/09/05)*

(98) Recently she reverted, however, and **tore into** a new employee, verbally **abusing** her.

*www.workforce.com/archive (05/09/05)*

We can also find *abuse*-related *down* phrasal verbs: to *abuse* is to *tear someone down*, *dress down*, *thrown down* or *beat down* (but not *run down*, which suggests to criticise). *Throw down* is also different, as it implies to *fight*, a reciprocal act. Which

brings us to contrast the *abuse is attack* metaphor with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980: 62) *argument is war* metaphor. The distinction is evident when we consider the relevant prepositional collocations, we *argue with* someone while *abuse* is *at* or *against*. The speech act of *abusing* has no resolution. Conversely, an *argument* usually has resolution, *I won the argument*, *He lost the argument*. The prototypical condition for *abuse* is a situation where there is an aggrieved party (perhaps only perceiving themselves as aggrieved) and a perpetrator (or perceived perpetrator). The speaker who *abuses* feels wronged, and feels that something has occurred to provoke the outburst.

While an *argument* is a mutual act, featuring two parties heatedly positing contradictory viewpoints, *abuse* and related metaphorical expressions generally describe a unilaterally performed act. *Abuse* is a one-sided verbal onslaught, usually directed by a dominant or superior speaker towards a powerless, contrite party. Compare *she abused me for coming home late* versus *they abused each other*. The latter construction implies an argument or fight, executed equally and potentially with a physical aspect.

### 2.3 *denigrate*

**I don't like country music, but I don't mean to denigrate those who do.  
And for the people who like country music, denigrate means 'put down'.**

Bob Newhart

*Denigrate* is an important word in the discourse of anti-discrimination. This is a semantically complex word with a wide range of usage. Kostogriz and Peeler (2004: 13) state that the act presents an *us and them* attitude, positioning the *other* as "passive and powerless in juxtaposition to the dominant group's activeness and power". Kelly and MacNamara (1991: viii) classify the act as a form of "deviant behaviour" and observe that "denigration suggests another dimension of power exercised over those whose behaviors or lifestyles put them in pariah positions. Their social weaknesses make them vulnerable as targets of abuse, scorn and discrimination". These authors further note that there is a need to explain the meaning

of *denigrate*, as it is “not at all clearly defined”. They remark that this lack of a clear, comprehensive definition is a problem confronting students and scholars alike.

*Denigrate* forms a crucial part of legal register and the lexicon of anti-discrimination. In a prototypical usage, *denigrate* is not used as a label by the agent/speaker, unlike Bob Newhart’s ironic usage above. *Denigrate* is a non-performative speech act, used as a descriptive label. The target or hearer typically identifies the act, and employs the term as an accusation against the agent. However, in itself, the act of *denigrating* appears to be an accusation. Somewhat similar to *criticising*, *denigrate* accuses the target of *doing something bad*.

An interesting facet of *denigrate* is its generality. Bordwell and Thompson (1986: 59) illustrate this by explaining that to *denigrate* “means to sully or to degrade”. Rather than two distinct, related meanings, this act has two similar usages that both contain the component ‘to lower’ or ‘degrade’. Therefore, there is no polysemy. Pragmatically, both usages are prevalent and focus on the perceived ‘low’ status of the target, intuitively, neither usage represents a greater salience.

What are these two usages? Ruitenberg (2004: 11) explains that “denigrating is used to mean putting down and speaking ill of, and that it carries a racist history”. (Issues of connotation and etymology will be discussed throughout this section). In this usage, *denigrate* can be likened to *disparage* or to *belittle*, or to *put someone down*, as indicated by Bob Newhart’s above quote. This is comparable to *insult* in some usage and related to *denigrating* language.

In the second usage, *denigrate* has legal connotations of to *defame* a target, to *ruin someone’s reputation*. This parallels *denigrate* with *vilify*. Lasch-Quinn (1999: 74) explains this usage as to “demean by darkening”. This also reveals one of the many metaphors associated with this word. Schement (1998: 44) further defines *denigrate* as to “literally blacken someone”. While the act is figurative rather than literal, this example again shows the close connection between *denigrate*, etymology and metaphor. Beyond stylistic metaphorical representation, *denigrate* can be explained in terms of metaphorical primes. When we *denigrate* we perceive the target as *below* us in some way (i.e., inferior or *not as good as X*). In addition, the perlocutionary effect can result in the target reporting that they have been metaphorically *lowered* or *reduced* in the eyes of others. How have lexicographical sources defined this act?

### 2.3.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *denigrate*

The OED provides the following entry for *denigrate*.

To blacken, sully, or stain (character or reputation); to blacken the reputation of (a person, etc.); to defame.

This definition treats the popular meaning of *denigrate*, but fails to consider the generality. Metaphor is used widely here, reflecting the way we talk about *denigrate*, and also revealing the etymology. Obscure terms are used (sully, reputation), also superfluous components and a non-predictive adverb. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines *denigrate* as:

To say things to make someone or something seem less important or good.

This definition uses a disjunction where generality should be identified. *Important* and *good* are open to interpretation and *make* is vague. The definition provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* exhibits the same problems of accuracy and clarity.

To say that (someone or something) is not good or important.

How has *denigrate* been explained in other forums?

WordNet claims that *denigrate* is polysemous, and provides synsets for both 'senses'.

1. minimize, belittle, denigrate, derogate -- (belittle; "Don't belittle his influence")
2. defame, slander, smirch, asperse, denigrate, calumniate, smear, sully, besmirch -- (charge falsely or with malicious intent; attack the good name and reputation of someone; "The journalists have defamed me!" "The article in the paper sullied my reputation")

Our lexicographical sources have not claimed this polysemy. Are there two related yet distinct senses of *denigrate*, or are these semantic features of one single sense?

### 2.3.2 NSM Explication of *denigrate*

Metaphor in *denigrate* can be confusing, how can the act *minimise* and *blacken* someone, at the same time? Initially, it seems that *denigrate* is polysemous, with two closely related forms of equal salience. This semantic ‘equality’ provides a clue that this is instead a case of generality, especially given that in both usages the act intends to metaphorically ‘lower’ or ‘reduce’ the target in some way. We will see that both usages fit neatly within the one explication.

*X denigrated Y*

- (a) X said some bad things about Y to many people
- (b) when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time:
- (c) “I know that some people think some good things about Y
- (d) I think something very bad about Y
- (e) Because of this, I think about Y like this: ‘Y is below other people’
- (f) If other people think about it, they can think the same”
- (g) people think: it is bad to do something like this

#### Explanation of Components

The explication is prefaced with a prototypical active usage, agent *X denigrated* target *Y*.

(a) This is the locution, the speech act *denigrate* involves *say*. X performed an utterance conveying a negative message about the target. In addition, this utterance is disseminated in some way, to *denigrate* is to *say something bad about someone to many people*. The act presumes a third party and a private exchange between two speakers cannot constitute *denigrate*.

(b) This component introduces the prototypical cognitive scenario, when X performs this utterance, it is suggestive of a certain attitude underpinning the act.

(c) This act presupposes that third parties have a neutral or even positive attitude towards the target. By *denigrating* Y, X is out to ‘un-do’ this perception. This is a deliberate attempt to negatively influence other’s perception of Y. Denigrate suggests a third party’s opinion has been affected, as much as the self-image of the target.

(d) This is the agent’s negative assessment of the target, thinking *something bad* about Y, in contrast to the possible *something good* that others think about Y. This bad attitude towards the target is the crucial motivator for the act.

(e) This negative assessment involves the agent perceiving the target as somehow *below* (i.e., inferior, ‘lower’, ‘beneath’ or ‘less than’ other people). This further has the effect of metaphorically ‘lowering’ the target in the perception of other people.

(f) There is an apparent assumption that in *denigrating* the target, other people will think likewise. This is part of the intent to influence others.

(g) This final component is the social evaluation of the act, it is socially reproached behaviour in the lexicon of anti-discrimination. Using the term suggests the speaker’s reproachful tone towards *denigrate: it is bad to do something like this* to people. The word implies unfairness and misrepresentation of the target.

NB there is no perlocutionary component in this explication. To *denigrate* someone or a group of people could easily cause them to *feel something bad* as a result, such as indignation or embarrassment. However, the act can be indirect, and the target may not necessarily be the hearer(s). For example, *X denigrated the President*, does not guarantee that the target hears of the event.

### 2.3.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

To *denigrate* is an utterance reflecting a negative assessment: *X said some bad things about Y*. This is the act of *saying something bad about* someone’s character. Example

(99) parallels *denigrate* with the act of *insulting* someone, and also reveals that we can *denigrate* with an *insult*. In this usage, to *denigrate* has connotations of *mocking* the target.

(99) They **denigrated** the president, one shouting “A village in Texas has lost its idiot.”

[www.proudtobecanadian.ca/boards/](http://www.proudtobecanadian.ca/boards/) (15/10/05)

To *denigrate* implies a public act. Similar to *insult*, *denigrate* can be indirect (*about* rather than *to Y*), but the act must have an audience. *Denigrating* someone suggests the successful dissemination of a negative opinion, that the agent circulated this *to many people*. We might *denigrate* someone in a shared forum, possibly on the Internet, on the radio, television or via other media. This semantic facet is revealed pragmatically by the collocations, to *widely denigrate*, *openly denigrate*, *publicly denigrate* or to *denigrate public opinion*.

(100) The governments **publicly denigrated** the teaching profession.

[www.aeufederal.org.au/Campaigns/teachersupply.pdf](http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Campaigns/teachersupply.pdf) (15/10/05)

(101) These politicians **denigrated** our House of Representatives, **in front of numerous** diplomatic delegations.

[www.bordermail.com.au](http://www.bordermail.com.au) (15/10/05)

To make the claim: *X denigrated Y* implies the successful diffusion of a negative opinion, that the illocution has been fulfilled. This connotation is borne out by the fixed phrases: *successfully denigrated*, and *effectively denigrate the status of*.

(102) Those sorts of comments hurt our schools, the image of our schools and in doing so it tends to **denigrate the status** of the profession.

<http://backpagesblog.com/cgi-bin/weblog/> (15/10/05)

(103) The conservatives have **successfully denigrated** the word ‘liberal’ in the minds of many voters.

[www.absoluteastronomy.com/reference/progressivism](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/reference/progressivism) (15/10/05)

To label an event *denigrate* is to doubt or deny the truth of the utterance and the honesty of the agent. Similar to *defame*, *malign* and *slander*, *denigrate* implies an *unfair* statement, whether the statement is a subjective opinion, intentionally incorrect, misleading or fabricated. Warby (2002: 27) explains that to “*denigrate* can be to misrepresent” the target in some way.

(104) The comments were **wrong** and **denigrated** a great religion.

*sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/examiner/archives* (15/10/05)

(105) The press **unfairly denigrated** this superb athlete of such enormous integrity.

*http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/WF991022/epf513.htm* (15/10/05)

What is the legal perspective of *denigrate*? While this is largely outside the scope of this thesis, the connotations are important to our analysis. In considering the Australian legal system, while there are current anti-libel laws against *defamation* and *slander*, there are no existing laws against the act of *denigrating* (Green 1991: 65). Green further notes that crimes of libel are “open to interpretation”. However, Ranger (2002) reports that in some countries, notably Zimbabwe, there are specific *anti-denigration* laws designed to protect political figures.

Why do we associate *denigrate* with illegality? In a way, the act is a form of misconduct, and it can affect the way we perceive someone. In usage, the act can discredit an individual, group or institution, metaphorically ‘damaging’ reputation. This can lead the target to attempt to refute the claims and ‘clear’ their name, possibly suggesting the utterance consisted of rumour, lies or gossip: *some of these things are not true*.

(106) The NY Times piece falsely **denigrated** me with concocted facts.

*http://www.dougschafer.com/Olian030425.html* (15/10/05)

The act conveys an attitude towards the target: *when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time*. To *denigrate* often runs contrary to the neutral, sympathetic or positive perception held by the audience: *I know that some people think some good*

*things about Y*. Therefore, to *denigrate* intends to influence, and can affect opinion. This is the act of *saying some bad things* about someone's character, based on some sort of negative assessment. Pautler (2005: 2) explains that to *denigrate* is to "mention a bad trait of the hearer". This is expressed in the explication as: *I think something bad about Y*. This impetus drives the act itself, and amounts to an *accusation*.

(107) Federal Ministers have **denigrated** unemployed people, including people with disabilities, inferring that they are lazy, unmotivated, or too choosy about the type of jobs they want.

*www.headwayvictoria.org* (8/05/04)

(108) These attitudes **denigrate** Islam as a "violent religion".

*www.sfgate.com* (15/10/05)

Spencer (1999: 410) asserts that "spatial diminishing" is included in the meaning of *denigrate*. It is a crucial semantic element that to *denigrate* is about metaphorically 'lowering' or 'reducing' the status or value of a target, in the opinion of other people. This reveals an *us and them* dichotomy. To *denigrate* can be an in-group versus an out-group situation, or may be an agent seeing the target as someone morally or socially 'lesser'. *Denigrate* attempts to reveal difference between the agent and the target. Preston (2002: 276) explains this as an "asymmetrical attitude. In order to obtain positive outcomes individuals look for positive distinctiveness and consequently tend to favour their own group and to denigrate other groups". Comparatively, the agent presents the target as inferior, 'lower' or 'beneath' other people, *not as good as other people*. This attitude underpins the *put down*, and is expressed in the explications as: *Y is below other people*.

(109) They **denigrate** women as being poor drivers, boring conversationalists, irrational harridans, extravagant shoppers, naggers, or sex hungry temptresses who are "always looking for it".

*http://www.alphalink.com.au/~nigel/* (10/07/04)

(110) They engage in lunchtime chatter **denigrating** immigrants who work hard as housekeepers, or painters or tradespeople. They are seen as having fewer rights and less value.

[www.gnelsen.com/TangledVines](http://www.gnelsen.com/TangledVines) (10/07/04)

*Denigrate* can also imply that there is something ‘abnormal’ or ‘wrong’ with the target, suggesting they *not good enough* and compare unfavourably to others. In the following examples, the agent *thinks something bad* about the target, and perceives them as *below other people*. They further suggest that: *If other people think about this, they can think the same*. This is an assumption that other people would share this opinion, and think likewise.

(111) Many people **denigrate** singles over 30 by saying there is **something wrong with them**.

<http://www.chabadtalk.com/forum/showthread.php?t=1837> (15/10/05)

(112) She repeatedly **denigrates** her for being “fat”, calling her a “butterball” and telling her no man will want to marry her unless she loses weight.

<http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/> (15/10/05)

As discussed above (2.4.3), a perlocutionary component has not been included in the explication. Unlike *insult*, *abuse* and *offend*, the intended target of *denigrate* (and *vilify*) might not ‘receive’ the speech act. However, in usage, *denigrate* is often compared to *belittle*, suggesting that the target is metaphorically *minimised* or *diminished* by the speech act. Using semantic primes, we could paraphrase that *Y is like something small* (i.e., unimportant and insignificant). This is usage based though, and could come under the component: *Y is below other people*, suggesting *someone lesser*.

(113) They **denigrated** women to a secondary position as minor and petty beings not suitable to share managerial status.

<http://www.newstrolls.com/news/dev/calgold/080899.htm> (16/12/05)

(114) Just as nothing **denigrates** people like calling them trailer trash, nothing **denigrates** a home like dubbing it a trailer.

<http://www.sfgate.com/> (16/12/05)

Kelly and MacNamara (1991: viii) recognise *denigrate* as “socially disvalued and prohibited behaviour”. The final component in the explication is a social evaluation of *denigrate*. When a speaker uses *denigrate* as a label, he or she identifies the act and implicitly reproaches this behaviour. Kelly and MacNamara (1991: ix) further observe that “social perceptions of an actor or an act determine whether the label is affixed”. The speaker’s attitude expresses anti-discrimination, *it is bad to do something like this*. This attitude is reflected in the conditioning phrase *don’t denigrate*.

(115) He’s a patriot, so **don’t denigrate** his service.

[www.worldnetdaily.com/news](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news) (16/12/05)

These examples illustrate that denigrating is a form of *othering*, we generally *denigrate* someone else. In English, this act is not prototypically self-referential, although we can find constructions such as to *self-denigrate* or to be *self-denigrating*. However, these phrases are not antonymic and are very different to the structure of *denigrate*. In the Chinese culture *self-denigration* is a social ethos. Gu (1990: 2) proposes a politeness maxim in order to account for ‘polite’ language use in Chinese:

#### 1. THE SELF-DENIGRATION MAXIM

a. denigrate self

b. elevate other

Our English near-equivalent is to be *self-deprecating*, to express modesty by downplaying our achievements. This can be an expression of egalitarianism, especially as an Australian cultural ethos. (Interestingly, Allen et al. (1996: 739) report that *self-denigration*, as opposed to *self-deprecation*, can be “characteristic of depression”). Although, being self-deprecating does not mean, by implication, that someone else is ‘elevated’ as a result or that we aim to elevate others by ‘reducing’ ourselves. Gu’s maxim suggests that the act is ‘self-lowering’, the target and agent

are then “seen as the same”. This has relevance for the way we perceive *denigrate*, when X *denigrates* Y, X *lowers* Y but *elevates* X (or non-Y), as in (145) below.

(116) He **denigrated me** to inflate his own moral uprightness.

[www.enneagraminstitute.com](http://www.enneagraminstitute.com) (15/10/05)

What further semantic and pragmatic phenomena can we find, to further explain the meaning of *denigrate*?

### 2.3.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

The speech act *denigrate* is an utterance that focuses on the ‘low’ status of the target. When the direct object of *denigrate* is inanimate (although referring to people as an extension), it is often perceived as *something small* or unimportant, something *below* other things.

(117) HCE [Hawai’i Creole English] has often been **denigrated** as a sub-standard form of English.

<http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/hce.htm> (15/10/05)

(118) These last forms [*sez* and *wuz*] serve mainly to **denigrate** the speaker so represented by making him/her appear boorish, uneducated, rustic or gansterish.

<http://www.jstor.org/view/00031283/ap020120/02a00050/0> (15/10/05)

*Denigrate* is often directed at minority individuals or groups by a dominant group (Inglis 2002). Pragmatically, it is perpetrated against people on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, education, social or financial position, health or age, as shown by the collocations: to *denigrate*: *women, people with mental illness, religious people, seniors* or *homosexual people* (from the Collins Word Bank). *Denigrate* suggests the agent’s assertion of power and subordination of the target, therefore a dominant or powerful group is not prototypically *denigrated*.

(119) They **denigrate** women (\*men) in upper-level management.

[www.midwiferytoday.com/forums/topic](http://www.midwiferytoday.com/forums/topic) (15/10/05)

As *denigrate* is related to marginalisation, the act can be perceived as dismissive or condescending, to disregard or trivialise the value of the referent(s).

(120) To ignore it is to minimize and **denigrate** an important contribution.

<http://www.iccj.org> (15/10/05)

(121) Consequently there was a strong tendency to ignore, bulldoze and generally **denigrate** local differences and traditions.

<http://www.2blowhards.com/archives> (15/10/05)

(122) I don't want to **denigrate** the memory of the \*true\* heroes of the Resistance by dismissing their contribution.

[http://yarchive.net/mil/french\\_ww2](http://yarchive.net/mil/french_ww2) (15/10/05)

However, *denigrate* can imply responsibility or fault. This is to utter a disparaging remark, to defame the reputation or character of a referent(s). *Denigrate* implies social 'bad behaviour' that is deliberate choice, rather than resultant of accident, illness or genetic inheritance. Kelly and MacNamara (1991: ix) assert, "drug addicts, alcoholics and child molesters – those deviants who it is believed choose to act as they do – are likely to be perceived and treated more harshly". These constructions are characterised by prepositional phrases indicating liability, we *denigrate Y for doing Z, because of Z*.

(123) The media began **denigrating** him for numerous immoral traits, including having "two alcoholic daughters".

<http://www.worthynews.com/news-features-2/inside-mid-east-peace-508.html>  
(15/10/05)

(124) I'm **denigrating him because** he's a racist.

[www.freerepublic.com/focus/user-posts?id=12095](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/user-posts?id=12095) (15/10/05)

As we can see, these usages attribute blame to the target. An accusation is made, thereby substantiating the *denigration* as being incurred or warranted in some way.

Considering the prefix *de-* can provide additional insight into the semantics of *denigrate*. The Merriam-Webster dictionary entry for *de-* lists the prefix as 1a. do the opposite of, 2a. remove and 3. reduce. This morpheme has an antonymic effect on words, and can indicate reduction or remove the aspect of the unmarked form. *Denigrate* has a host of related forms: *decrease*, *decline*, *demean*, *degrade*, *deflate*, *degenerate*, *deteriorate*, *derogate*, *devalue*, *depreciate*, *deprecate*, *debase*, *deride*, *decry*, *denounce*, *defile* and *deplore*.

### 2.3.5 Metaphor and *denigrate*

Although *denigrate* is a significant word in the lexicon of anti-discrimination, it is not an ‘everyday’ word in the working vocabulary of all speakers. However, the concept of *denigrate*, as expressed by way of metaphor, is extremely common in natural speech, and is more accessible to the average speaker. The use of *denigrate* is a favoured, concise usage in formal domains. For example, a newsreader would claim that *the journalist denigrated the President*, rather than *the journalist stained the President’s reputation*. In contrast, fixed phrases such as *X blackened Y’s reputation* or *X darkened Y’s name* feature more in affective-based talk. We will find that metaphor is highly productive in the creation of figurative terms to describe *denigrate*. The following phrases resonate intuitively as common substitutes or descriptive terms for *denigrate*.

*Denigrate* suggests that a target is previously viewed as someone *good* or *neutral* (*I know that some people think good things about Y*) and that the act influences others to perceive the target as someone *bad*. There is a rich lexicon of metaphorical expressions paralleling *denigrate* with *defame*, to ‘ruin’ someone’s reputation. These terms can come under the umbrella of words related to ‘unclean’ (i.e., they suggest that *to denigrate* is to metaphorically *dirty* the character of the target). This is to *say something bad about Y, something that is not true*. However, we can see that *denigrate* and metaphors like *dirty* are not weighted the same. *Denigrate* has a more complex structure and can stand alone semantically (e.g., *X denigrated Y*). This string contains all the information we need to understand the situation, and provides us with a frame. In contrast, metaphors like *dirty* must be qualified by a

further noun phrase: *X stained Y's reputation*. In a construction such as *X stained Y* the verb would retain its literal meaning.

While there are many examples of this 'unclean' *denigrate* metaphor, *darken* and *blacken* are the most salient. All fit in with the frame: to \_\_\_\_\_ Y's reputation (the noun can be replaced with *character*, *status*, *name*, standing or other relevant terms). Some examples of this metaphor are: to *stain*, *soil*, *spoil*, *blot*, *despoil*, *dirty*, *foul*, *muddy*, *tarnish*, *defile*, *blemish* and to *smear*. [However, some forms that are synonymous with these literal meanings are unacceptable to metaphorically indicate *denigrate* (e.g., \*to discolour Y's reputation)].

(125) Their first tactic, remember, was to diss, **denigrate**, and **soil** her reputation.

<http://www.nationalreview.com> (15/10/05)

(126) We have groups that **denigrate** fatherhood, and they take opportunity to **smear** the value and role of the father in families.

<http://www.fathers.ca> (15/10/05)

(127) **Denigrating** them was a part of image **tarnishing** policy.

<http://www.friends.org.pk> (15/10/05)

Some forms are related to *stigma* or *pollute*, suggest that *denigrate* is to *contaminate*, *pollute*, to make *impure*, or to *corrupt*.

(128) In **denigrating** some members we're **contaminating** the entire profession.

[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au) (11/02/05)

These 'unclean' metaphors have an etymological basis. The OED dates the earliest recorded usage of *denigrate* to the C14th, glossing its meaning as "to blacken, make black or darken". By the early C16th, *denigrate* meant "to blacken, sully or stain". As we have seen, *denigrate* has closely retained these early definitions, but has shifted in modern usage to a figurative interpretation.

As discussed, speakers frequently talk about *denigrate* as to *blacken* or *darken* someone's good name. However, there appears to be a controversy currently surrounding this set of words. Allan and Burridge (2006) observe that forms

phonologically similar to a taboo word can develop the same stigma of the ‘forbidden’ word. This is when the negative connotations of a taboo word in effect ‘rub off’ onto any near-homophonic words, and speakers being to avoid using these similar sounding words. Allan and Burridge (2006: 81) informally label this phenomenon as the “kiss of death” for a word. The authors cite the 1999 example of a Washington D.C mayoral office employee who used the word *niggardly*, denoting *miserly*, in a pragmatically appropriate way. Hearer(s) connected this word with taboo *nigger* and the ensuing crisis resulted in the resignation of this employee. Similar incidents have occurred surrounding the use of *niggardly*.

Allan and Burridge (2006: 83) report that this stigmatisation has affected a number of other related words, including *renege*, and even the echo-reduplicative phrase *nitty-gritty*. This thesis claims that *denigrate* is also becoming affected by this same phenomenon. As derived from Latin to *blacken*, and bearing a phonological resemblance to taboo *nigger*, *denigrate* has become infused with the same negative connotations of the racial epithet.

(129) The past two presidential debates, Bush has used a specific word that has bothered me, ‘**denigrate**’. Maybe it’s just me but it really seems that it could be offensive to some people. I find it in poor taste and I am not even black.  
<http://www.cheapassgamer.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-24211.html>  
(11/02/05)

(130) I hope I don’t get in trouble for using the word **denigrate**. Someone might be offended because it sounds like it COULD be offensive.  
<http://radio.weblogs.com/0100187/2002/09/07.html> (11/02/05)

This taboo extends to the most prominent metaphors of *denigrate*, to *blacken* and to *darken*. Some speakers perceive these root terms to have racist connotations in non-literal usage. Goldberg and Hodes (1992: 51) believe this, and claim that the very use of *denigrate*, given the derivation from Latin *nigr*, “illustrates how racism is implicit in our language”. For speakers, this view is compounded by the almost invariably negative meanings of English *black* and *dark* metaphors (Cameron 1995).

- (131) **Blacken** -- Used as a verb, meaning to sully or besmirch. One more example of whites hijacking the English language to '**Blacken**' the reputation of '**Blacks**'!

[www.frontpagemag.com/GoPostal/CommentsOverview.asp?ID=9322](http://www.frontpagemag.com/GoPostal/CommentsOverview.asp?ID=9322)

(11/02/06)

- (132) It sensitized us all to the hidden and hurtful ethnic slurs that **darken**—oops, sorry—that afflict American life.

<http://www.beachbrowser.com/Archives/Opinion/a-waspish-niggardly-slur.htm>

(11/02/06)

What will become of *denigrate* and its metaphorical near-equivalents? Synchronically, *denigrate* is used with high frequency (over 2 million usages through the Google search engine). Despite this, if sufficient speakers avoid the term, and favour a near-equivalent such as *defame*, it is possible that *denigrate* may eventually drop out of usage over time. At this stage, its demise does not seem imminent. As for *blacken* and *darken*, the salience of the literal senses of these words will ensure their preservation. However, the existing negative connotations of the metaphorical senses may deter continued usage, at least in more formal domains.

Related to these metaphors are idioms that present *denigrate* as an effort to *disgrace* and engender suspicion of someone. To *denigrate* can be to: *drag through the mud/mire*, to *sling mud at* someone, to *bad mouth* or *poor mouth* [also see 1.1.5], to *muck rake*, *cast a shadow over*, or *give a bad name to*. These usages are indicated by the component: *X said some bad things about Y to many people*.

- (133) A local businessman running against him is **slinging mud**, trying to **denigrate** the sheriff.

[www.tnt.tv](http://www.tnt.tv) (11/02/06)

- (134) It is un-American and despicable for an Army officer to **denigrate** and badmouth the President of the United States.

<http://www.ehowa.com> (11/02/06)

As *denigrate* is comparable to: *bring into disrepute*, it is also expressed metaphorically as to ‘damage’ someone’s reputation. While to *offend* is to figuratively *hurt* someone, *denigrate* is to negatively affect someone’s reputation or character: to *ruin, harm, destroy, damage, demolish, shatter, crush, wreck, trash*. Not all synonyms are acceptable: \*to smash Y’s reputation, \*to vandalise Y’s good name.

(135) To **denigrate** him as a union leader and **destroy** his popularity.

<http://www.greenleft.org.au> (11/02/06)

(136) I would care if these people would somehow **denigrate** my past work to try to **ruin** my reputation.

<http://www.agdinteractive.com> (19/06/04)

(137) This **denigrates** educators and causes irreparable **damage** to the teaching profession in a time of teacher shortages.

*The Age*, 22/01/04

Metaphors related to etymological *blacken* and *darken* are not the only examples that can be found with regular occurrence in usage. Also vital is the comparison of *denigrate* as to metaphorically *lower someone* or to *lessen* the importance of someone. This portrays the target as inferior, that someone or something is metaphorically *below* others, *beneath* other kinds of people or *less than* that to which it is compared. This attitude is expressed in the explications as: *Y is below other people*.

(138) He **denigrated** me to the **lowest** rung of the ladder.

<http://www.sparknotes.com> (18/01/05)

(139) **Denigrating** me for most of my life, ‘South of the Border’ has carried a set of connotations with it that meant **less** equal, **less** educated, **less** controlled, **less** developed, more antagonistic and more volatile than anywhere in America.

<http://escapees.infopop.cc/groupee/> (18/01/05)

Further to the comparison of *denigrate* as to *lower*, and the target being seen as *below* others, is the correlation between *denigrate* and metaphorical *down*. This is often

expressed as an act that *reduces* the target, *reducing* a target's value or status. This is represented in phrasal verbs involving the prepositional *down* (e.g., *to put down*). This is corroborated by the fact that we *look down on* those we *denigrate*.

(140) Reagan's movie career was helpful to him in his political career, although his detractors often **denigrated him for** it, reducing him to a B-grade actor.

*www.house.gov/ortiz/releases/pr\_060904.html* (18/01/05)

(141) Admirers of big beautiful women say they are **denigrated** at most clubs and are **put down** by family and friends.

*San Francisco Chronicle* (23/08/05)

(142) She **denigrates** what everybody else has said in a very demeaning and tear down manner.

*http://www.kbdi.org/community\_voice* (19/10/05)

Many of these V-*down* phrases are polysemous, with a literal usage and often several metaphorical senses. The following examples are all used to indicate *denigrate*, to: *cut down*, *drive down*, *put down* (also meaning to *criticise*), to *knock down* (especially in Australian English), to *drag down*, *play down*, *talk down* (also *talk down to*, as in to *condescend*), to *take down* (also indicating *humiliate*), to *bring down* (also to *depose*) to *tear down*, *keep down*, *pull down*, *run down* and to *rip down* (these final three can also refer to *demolish*). Although not meaning *denigrate*, *mark down* is also pragmatically related, indicating a 'reduction in price', that may be perceived as to *reduce* the value or worth of something. Not all *lower* forms are applicable (e.g., to *think less of someone* is the reversal of a formerly high opinion while to *let down* is to *disappoint*).

Several lexicographical sources, including Merriam-Webster and the American Heritage Dictionary, gloss *denigrate* as to *disparage* or to *belittle*. Intuitively, there are definite similarities between these acts. Pragmatically, *denigrate* can be expressed by way of metaphors that perceive or portray someone as *something small*, or cause someone to *feel small* (i.e., minor and therefore unimportant). Other related metaphors present *denigrate* as to *minimise* someone, to *diminish* someone or *reduce* someone.

(143) I'm **small** in her eyes so she thinks its ok to **denigrate** people like us.  
*www.washingtonpost.com* (19/08/05)

(144) These groups **denigrate** us, **belittling** our efforts.  
*www.denvernews.com* (19/08/05)

*Denigrate* psychologically downgrades the target, *reducing* or *diminishing* the self-worth and value of a person or group. This notion is represented by the collocations: to *denigrate the value of, worth of, dignity of, integrity of, rights of, humanity of, culture of, equality of* (Collins Word Bank corpus).

(145) The proposal **denigrates the value of** women's lives.  
*www.prochoiceforum.org.uk/ireland6.asp* (19/08/05)

(146) Many of our citizens claim that it warps the minds of children and **denigrates the dignity of** American culture.  
*www.unb.ca/bruns/0304/01/opinion* (19/08/05)

As these examples suggest, to *denigrate* is in some way connected to our sense of worth and value. This act affects the way that others perceive a target, and is contrary to the self-perception of the target.

## 2.4 *vilify*

**Vilify! Vilify! Some of it will always stick.**

Beaumarchais (1964)

The speech act verb *vilify* is socially and politically contentious. It is the only act in this Chapter that is prohibited by law, in some enactments, in many English-speaking countries. The word has a complex semantic structure, as Meager (2004:5) contends, *vilify* has a meaning that is "hard to pin down". Referring to *racial vilification*, Gibson (1999: 709) explains that the semantic range of this phrase includes:

All acts, conduct, behaviour or activity involving the defamation of individuals and groups on the ground of their colour, race or ethnic or national origins, as well as those which constitute the incitement or stirring up of hatred or other emotions of hostility and enmity against these individuals and groups.

We will see that this definition has relevance to our explanation of the unmarked infinitive. So far, the act appears to involve: *saying some very bad things about someone*. Further, it seems to be an utterance that indicates hate and attempts to incite hate: to *not think anything good about someone*. It is also performed in a public environment with the intention of dissemination: something said *to many people*. Finally, there seems to be a subjectivity of truth to the utterance. Clearly, *vilify* has a multi-faceted structure.

It seems that *vilify* is semantically related to other words in this thesis, particularly *denigrate* and *demonise*. Pragmatically, it is often used interchangeably with *defame*, *slander* and *malign* although Harris (1991) contends that these are not synonymous with *vilify*. It is also aligned to *hate speech* and *hate mongering*. Stokes (2005: 3) parallels *vilify* with *intolerant*, “The true meaning of the word ‘vilify’ today is connected very closely with ‘tolerance’. To be ‘tolerant’ is to see nothing as intrinsically ‘wrong’ but to vilify is to SAY something is wrong, which is therefore intolerant and must be controlled.” In an early study, Klapp (1959: 22) observes that *vilify* has been “mixed indiscriminately with topics such as prejudice, witch-hunting, scape-goating and aggression”. However, it is a semantically discrete word with no immediate synonyms. How can we isolate the meaning of *vilify*?

As mentioned, *vilify* is significant and contentious in legislation. Flavin (2003: 5) asserts that regulating this act is “arguably the most difficult free speech question to resolve”. Many English-speaking countries, including Australia, England, New Zealand and Canada have existing *anti-vilification* laws. Gibbons (2003: 14) observes that these laws comprise “a language act that has been made illegal in most developed nations, with the exception of the US, where freedom of speech is taken as the paramount concern”. Skoze (2005: 1) argues that to *vilify* “is the abuse of free speech. Free speech should not be used as an excuse to incite racial or religious hatred.” O’Donnell (2003) claims that, for those countries with existing laws, the endeavour is to achieve a balance between both free speech and anti-vilification objectives.

In an effort to promote free speech, the United States has no anti-vilification laws. However, a contradiction can be found. Unlike *denigrate*, *vilify* is not solely a speech act, but is also enacted semiotically, *to say something very bad about someone by doing something*. The non-speech act *vilify* is often represented by instantly recognisable symbols of hatred, oppression and violence. Under a US Supreme Court ordinance, the semiotic expression of *vilification* is illegal. This order prohibits “the display of a burning cross, swastika, or other symbol which one knows or has reason to know arouses anger, alarm or resentment in others on the basis of race, colour, creed, religion or gender” (Brems 2002: 485). Other symbolic acts such as flag burning are also illegal, although, this law does not extend to speech acts.

There was an historical exception to this ruling. In the infamous *Fighting Words Doctrine* case of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 315 U.S. 568 (1942), the Supreme Court held that “insulting or fighting words, those that by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace” are among the “well-defined and narrowly limited classes of speech [of which] the prevention and punishment of...have never been thought to raise any constitutional problem.” This doctrine essentially covers the use of abusive epithets that could “reasonably incite the average person to retaliate” and risk immediate civil unrest. Since this precedent, the Supreme Court has declined to uphold any subsequent convictions for fighting words and vilifying language.

Clearly, identifying and explaining this act is problematical. Moreover, *vilify* is not in the general, working lexicon of all speakers. It is a specialised term, mostly featuring in legal domains, and in the language of anti-discrimination. Unlike *insult*, *vilify* is overt, specific and not as open to ambiguity or interpretation, although both acts can be indirect. But if *vilify* is not an ‘everyday word’, why define it? As discussed in Chapter 1, statistics suggest that *vilify* is increasing in general usage and exposure to speakers (1.3). Therefore, this is an important word to include in this analysis. To begin, how do lexicographical sources define this contentious act?

#### **2.4.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *vilify***

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* provides the following non-complex definition.

To say or write bad things about someone or something.

In an attempt at using basic terms, this definition is far too simplistic. While this successfully captures the act itself, it has omitted vital semantic elements, such as the promulgation of these ‘bad things’ (only tacitly implied by ‘write’) and the implication of hatred and intolerance expressed by the agent.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides this entry.

To say or write unpleasant things about (someone or something), in order to cause other people to have a bad opinion of them.

This definition employs the vague, understated *unpleasant* and complex *cause* and *opinion*. While the notion of dissemination is treated, the underlying attitude of hatred is absent. Moreover, this definition could be interchangeable with *denigrate*, *defame*, *slander* or other related terms. The Macquarie Dictionary is also guilty of this charge, defining *vilify* as: “to speak evil of; defame; traduce”. This definition is comparable to *demonise*.

As we can see, *vilify* is a complex, multi-faceted word. However, our sample dictionaries provide an inadequate definition. Using NSM primes we can decompose the semantic structure to ‘break open’ the meaning of *vilify*, and isolate it from other words in this semantic field. Word Net provides the following entry for *vilify*:

1. vilify, revile, vituperate, rail -- (spread negative information about; “The Nazi propaganda vilified the Jews”)

These example sentences better exemplifies the meaning of *abuse*. Using the NSM method, below is the proposed explication for *vilify*.

## 2.4.2 NSM Explication of *vilify*

*X vilified Y*

- (a) X said some very bad things about Y to many people
- (b) some of these things are not true
- (c) when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time:
- (d) "Y is a very bad person
- (e) No one can think anything good about Y
- (f) I want many other people to think like this"
- (g) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

### Explanation of Components

The explication is prefaced by a prototypical usage of the active verb: *X vilified Y*.

(a) This is the locution, *X said something*. This is qualified as some *very bad* things, indicating a highly negative utterance. The intensifier emphasises the severity of the act. In addition, to *vilify* implies an overt, public act that is disseminated to *many people*. To perform the same utterance in a private forum does not constitute *vilify*.

(b) Similar to *denigrate* and *stereotype*, to *vilify* suggests that the truth of the utterance is questionable. To *vilify* implies the statement is misinformed and inaccurate. To present a factual statement is not to *vilify*, therefore, most examples are subjective, affective remarks that often reflect generalisations. This is why *vilify* is often compared to *slander* and *malign*.

(c) This line introduces the prototypical cognitive scenario, the underlying attitude of the agent. There is a specific illocutionary force to *vilify*.

(d) To *vilify* indicates an extreme negative assessment of the target's character. The agent *thinks something very bad* about the target, as a person overall. The act is a severely critical appraisal of the target. This attitude is conveyed by the utterance.

(e) This component attempts to suggest extreme dislike or even hatred: Y is someone of whom no one could think anything positive. This portrays the target as irretrievably bad and contemptible. The line also assumes that other people would or should think the same way about the target.

(f) This is the agent's deliberate intent to incite the ordinary person, *many other people*, to perceive Y in this way. *Vilify* hopes to influence the opinion of the public.

(g) This final line represents the social evaluation of *vilify* as a highly reproachful act. Like *denigrate*, there is no perlocutionary component as one could *vilify Muslim people* without every target member receiving this indirect act. However, to *vilify* can certainly cause the target to *feel something bad*, and this extends to the hearer(s). In fact, *vilify* could cause *something bad to happen* to the target, if the act successfully affects public opinion. In this way, *vilify* could imply *threat*.

### 2.4.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

Asquith (2004: 400) identifies *vilify* as “a public act that utilizes words, images, actions or gestures in order to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons”. This reveals some salient semantic facets of *vilify* as a speech act that expresses an extremely negative viewpoint about a target: *X said some very bad things about Y*. Furthermore, Asquith (2004: 401) identifies *vilify* as a “public act”, involving the public dissemination of a negative attitude: *(X said some very bad things about Y) to many people*. These are key aspects of *vilify*: a highly negative portrayal of the target, voiced in a public domain.

(147) An elected Councillor of the Wagga Council was found to have **vilified** Aboriginal people in his area by **public reference** to them as being “drunks”, “savages”, “half-castes” and the like.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb.nsf/pages/speech5> (02/07/04)

(148) An evangelical Christian ministry **vilified** Islam **during a seminar** and **in a newsletter** by calling the religion “misogynistic and violent”.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/> (02/07/04)

To *vilify* is necessarily a public act. How can the legal system help us to better understand this semantic facet? Section 18C of The Australian Racial Discrimination Act (1975) provides a key provision proscribing the act of *racial vilification*. It reads:

- (1) It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:
  - (a) the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and
  - (b) the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or of some or all of the people in the group.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), an act is taken not to be done in private if it:
  - (a) causes words, sounds, images or writing to be communicated to the public; or
  - (b) is done in a public place; or
  - (c) is done in the sight or hearing of people who are in a public place.
- (3) In this section: public place includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, whether express or implied and whether or not a charge is made for admission to the place.

This further applies to our explanation of the infinitive form as a public act, *something that shouldn't be said in public*. Expressing the same utterance in a private conversation or private environment does not constitute *vilify*. It is an overt act. The explicit, public nature of *vilify* is expressed by collocations such as: to *openly vilify*, *widely vilify* or to *publicly vilify*. Counter examples such as to *\*secretly vilify*, or *\*privately vilify* go against our intuitive understanding of *vilify*.

(149) A number of politicians **publicly vilify** the gay community.

[www.headheeb.blogmosis.com](http://www.headheeb.blogmosis.com) (02/07/04)

(150) Politicians, media, and even academic sources **openly vilify** Islam.

<http://www.islamonline.net/> (02/07/04)

To *vilify* conveys an attitude: *when X said this, it was like X was saying at the same time*. The prototypical cognitive scenario proposes that the agent 'thinks': *Y is a very bad person*. This is often revealed as a portrayal of the target as *someone very bad*

(i.e., someone of very bad character). This is similar to *accuse* someone of certain ‘bad behaviour’.

(151) Christopher Marlowe has been hailed as the finest English dramatist before Shakespeare, but some **vilify** him as a spy, homosexual and atheist.

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/news/media-releases/2004/ruthlunneybookprize.htm>

(02/07/04)

(152) A vociferous press and TV campaign **vilifying** refugees as ‘scroungers’ and ‘cheats’ has reinforced this.

<http://www.wsws.org/news> (02/07/04)

The notions of *hatred* and *promoting hatred* are implicit in *vilify*. Stanton (1998: 3) states that, “Hate propaganda in print and on hate radios is used to vilify the victim group”. This likens *vilify* to the enactment of *hate speech* and *hate mongering*. It is an expression of *hatred*, and a promulgation of the opinion that: *No one can think anything good about Y*. Solomon (1994: 6) explains that in this way, *vilify* is to “instil fear” into others, by presenting the target as “worthy of hatred”.

(153) They **hate** Christianity and Christians and **vilify** those who agree with its rules.

[forum.darwinawards.com/lofiversion/](http://forum.darwinawards.com/lofiversion/) (02/07/04)

(154) Radio hosts **vilified** gays, tribunal rules. The radio station 2UE says it is about freedom of speech. Others say it is about freedom from shock jocks **inciting hatred** and **fear** towards homosexuals.

*Leonie Lamont, Sydney Morning Herald, 23/11/04*

As observed by playwright Beaumarchais (1964), when *vilifying* a target, “some of it will always stick” (i.e., voicing strong, negative opinions about a target can influence attitudes). As a result, the target can suffer social condemnation, humiliation and ostracism, on a personal and professional level. To *vilify* connotes that this is the deliberate intention of the agent: *I want many other people to think like this*. Furthermore, using *vilify* as a label implies the successful performance of the act, that

a third party has been influenced by the utterance. This is suggested by the collocation: to *successfully vilify* someone.

(155) He **successfully vilified** Saudi Arabia in the eyes of the American public.

[www.mepc.org/public\\_asp/whats/cwf090803.asp](http://www.mepc.org/public_asp/whats/cwf090803.asp) (02/07/04)

(156) They **vilified** me in the Israeli media, and twice, ugly protests disrupted my lectures.

<http://www.rense.com/politics4/truth3.htm> (02/07/04)

(157) They destroyed my life, my family. They **vilified** me and called me a child killer.

<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0309/08/acd.00.html> (02/07/04)

The final component is a social evaluation of *vilify*. This reflects the speaker's attitude that can be portrayed as: *When I say X vilified Y, it is like I am saying: It is very bad to do something like this.* The use of intensifier *very* indicates the strong social reproof of *vilify*. This is substantiated by the prevalence of fixed phrases such as: *don't vilify* and *it's wrong to vilify* (Collins Word Bank).

(158) **It is wrong to vilify people** and incite hatred towards them because of their religious belief, on the basis of the dignity and respect they are entitled to expect as fellow human beings.

<http://www.cdp.org.au/docs/Breensecond.rtf> (02/07/04)

(159) Don't **Vilify** Muslim people.

<http://www.zoominfo.com/directory/> (02/07/04)

#### 2.4.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

What exactly *vilifies* people? Skose (2005: 3) makes the following claim about identifying this act.

Racially stereotyping comments, offhand remarks or racist jokes are unlikely to vilify. For example, calling someone a ‘whingeing Pom’, a ‘happy clapper’ or a ‘towel head’ may be offensive but would not on its own be considered vilifying.

“Offhand remarks” (typically) implies a verbal aside uttered in a private forum, while we have established that *vilify* is a public act. However, we could easily think of instances whereby stereotyping, offhand remarks (in a public domain), racist jokes and ethnic-based pejorative epithets could pragmatically be interpreted as acts that *vilify*. Certainly, uttering a racially stereotypical comment might not invariably imply hatred, but it is safe to say that calling a person a *towel head* does not connote anything positive. Greenberg et al. (1988: 74) assert, “No utterance can convey hatred for an individual as quickly or vividly as a derogatory ethnic label”. Reid and Smith (1998: 10) support our premise, explaining that:

A broad spectrum of behaviour is included within the definition [of vilify], ranging from so-called “ethnic jokes” and offensive words, to stereotyping, inflammatory media reporting, historical “revisionism” and racist hate propaganda disseminated by poster campaigns, pamphlets, graffiti and public broadcasts.

To *vilify* is a strong marker of perception. Prototypically, using a derogatory epithet implies the cognitive semantic components: (the target) *is a very bad person* and that: *No one can think anything good* (about the referent). Any of these phenomena uttered in the public domains of the media, music or Internet disseminates opinion and could be construed to influence opinion, and as discussed in Chapter 1, “language can teach us to hate” (1.2).

What constitutes an act of to *vilify*? The following semantic and pragmatic criteria must be fulfilled for an act to be classified as to *vilify* (both speech act and event):

- 1.) A negative utterance that constitutes a public act. (Locution: *X said some very bad things about Y to many people*).

- 2.) An utterance of subjective, questionable veracity (*some of these things are not true*) that reveals an extreme negative sentiment and incites hatred towards a group or individual. (Illocution: *Y is a very bad person: No one can think anything good about Y*).
- 3.) An utterance that is intended to influence opinion and can achieve this. (Illocution: *I want many other people to think like this*. This can have the perlocutionary effect of affecting public sentiment: *because of this, people can think something very bad about Y now*).

How is *vilify* defined in the Australian legal sphere? The following paragraph, extracted from a newspaper article by Sarah Crichton *Abuse by Neighbour Did Not Vilify Gay Man*, clearly illustrates the semantic nuances of *vilify* (and speech act *abuse*) as defined by the legal community. (The italics indicate my emphasis).

A homophobic man shouted obscenities at his gay neighbour, smeared faeces outside his flat, smashed a beer bottle and urinated against his front door but did not vilify him in doing so, the Equal Opportunities Tribunal has found. John Dye's only vilification of his Woolloomooloo housing commission neighbour was when *he defaced Gary Burn's door by drawing a large penis accompanied by the words 'fag lives here, faggots should die'*, the tribunal ruled." The three-member tribunal found that while Mr Dye had shouted 'poofter', 'faggot' and other obscenities at Mr Burns, urinated against his door and smeared human faeces outside his flat, those incidents did not *incite ordinary people to feel hatred towards Mr Burns on the grounds of his sexuality*. "Mr Burns must establish ... that all or part of Mr Dye's conduct was *capable of urging on, stimulating or prompting ... the ordinary person to ... feelings of ill-will* towards Mr Burns. In our view, a section of the community would have dismissed this conduct as the rantings of a drunken, possibly mentally ill individual and, if anything, the attack may have *engendered feelings of hatred, serious contempt* or severe ridicule of Mr Dye himself." In the absence of any accompanying communication explaining why faeces were put on Mr Burns's doorstep, the tribunal said it was not possible to draw a link between 'the offending act' and Mr Burns's sexuality."

*Sydney Morning Herald, 13/03/02*

According to the article, abusive language alone does not constitute *vilify*, nor do violent acts that cannot be connected in some way to the character of the target. While it is offensive to ‘shout obscenities’, to ‘smash beer bottles’ and perform these other hostile acts, they are not semiotically linked to the target’s identity. However, the (public) act of graffiti labels the target as *someone very bad* and encourages others to perceive the target in a very negative manner. The act reveals a subjective, intolerant opinion. As we can see, the scenario fulfils the criteria outlined above, and neatly differentiates between to *abuse* and to *vilify*. Both acts can employ vicious, vitriolic language. However, *abuse* connotes anger but doesn’t presuppose hatred. Furthermore, we prototypically *abuse* a target for their (real or perceived) bad behaviour, rather than intrinsic characteristics. *Vilify* is often based in prejudice and not necessarily provoked by the target’s actions.

Klapp (1959) claims that *vilify* is often confused with *persecute*. While this thesis acknowledges the semantic discreteness of these acts, there are clear resemblances between them. *Vilify* is further related to *propagandise*, *victimise* (usually indicating an individual target, to ‘single out’), *bully*, *harass*, to *hunt down*, and nominal *witch hunt*. While *vilify* can accompany violent conflict, Stanton (2001) observes that the act also serves as a process or warning sign of severe conflict, such as riots, war and genocide.

Geis and Bunn (1991) cite infamous events of to *persecute* such as the C15-18th European and American *witch crazes* and the C15th Spanish Inquisition as historical incidences of *vilify*. The most salient distinction between *persecute* and *vilify* is that the former contains a physical element of to *mistreat* and *ostracise*.

(160) Presidents and political leaders **persecute** and **vilify** lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Victims have been assaulted, imprisoned, expelled from schools, fired from jobs, denied access to medical care, evicted from their homes, and driven into exile or, in some cases, to suicide.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=18204> (18/03/04)

To Geis and Bunn’s list we could further add other verbal and non-verbal acts of *vilify* and social domination upon marginalised groups, imposed ethnic exile, organised lynchings, the Nazi persecution of the European Jewish population (1933-45) and the

McCarthyism era in the United States (1950-54). This is hardly an exhaustive list. In a substitution test, these historical events are all in accordance with the *vilify* explication (2.5.3), and embody each semantic component. We can differentiate between *vilify* and *persecute*, in that the latter assumes a further perlocutionary component: *because of this, something very bad happens to Y*. It must also be noted that *vilify*, like *persecute*, can imply elements of *panic* and *hysteria*, on a collective scale.

(161) Pakistan today charged India with indulging in a “**vilification campaign**” to **whip up** “anti-Pakistan **hysteria**”.

[http://www.outlookindia.com/pti\\_news.asp?id=118251](http://www.outlookindia.com/pti_news.asp?id=118251) (18/03/04)

(162) Arab and Muslim Australians are the victims of increasing **vilification** and violence because of the ‘moral **panic**’ perpetuated by politicians and the media.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/05/> (10/10/04)

(163) Worshippers gathered within the walls of the mosque in central Cairo, **hypnotically** chanting slogans **vilifying** Israel and the United States.

[www.jordan-holylandexplorer.com](http://www.jordan-holylandexplorer.com) (9/07/04)

#### 2.4.5 Metaphor and *vilify*

As demonstrated so far, metaphor assists in our understanding and expression of abstract concepts. It is a useful tool in conveying complex expressions using basic, transparent forms with shared meanings. *Vilify* has an intricate semantic structure and metaphor is particularly important in the way that ‘laypeople’ talk about this phenomena. Despite its long etymology, *vilify* is not an ‘everyday’ word. However, it has an increased usage frequency over the past decade [see the corpus data in 1.3].

As *vilify* is not a mainstream word in the lexicon of most speakers, unlike *insult* or *offend*, a limited range of metaphorical phrases have arisen. These terms either replace or complement *vilify*, and are revealing to our analysis. As a composite of semantic components, *vilify* is too complex for single word metaphorical glosses, like to *denigrate* is to *blacken*. Therefore, fixed expressions and phrasal verbs have evolved to explain the provocation of hatred as a semantic facet of *vilify* as to provoke

hatred. This is expressed in the explication as a prototypical cognitive scenario: *Y is a very bad person, No one can think anything good about Y, and I want many other people to think like this.*

In usage, these components are expressed by way of an ‘ignition metaphor’, suggesting that to *vilify* is a ‘chain reaction’ that will ‘start’ (i.e., *incite* hatred). Examples include: to *ignite hatred, spark hatred, spark off hatred, trigger hatred, generate hatred* and *set off hatred*. These phrases usually precede a prepositional phrase, usually in the model: *X \_\_\_\_\_ hatred against Y.*

(164) He **vilifies** Jews by using anti-Semitic rhetoric to **spark hatred** against them.

[www.uiowa.edu/~c030111/shambaugh](http://www.uiowa.edu/~c030111/shambaugh) (18/04/05)

(165) The West **vilifies** Arabs. [...Arab people] say that terrorism **ignites hatred** against Muslims.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/> (18/04/05)

(166) These sermons **vilify** Wiccans, **triggering hatred**, verbal attacks and even physical attacks.

[www.xanga.com/GaiaDeception/407982094/item.html](http://www.xanga.com/GaiaDeception/407982094/item.html) (18/04/05)

Another category of *vilify* metaphors offer an allusion to strengthening or encouraging existing (and possibly covert) prejudice. These metaphors suggest that *vilify* is a seditious act, to ‘stoke’ (i.e., *agitate* or *power* hatred). This is to: *want many people to think...something very bad* about the target. Examples include: *fire-up hatred, fuel hatred, inflame hatred, re-ignite hatred, rouse hatred, stir-up hatred, whip-up hatred, feed hatred* or *stimulate hatred*. Some examples also refer to *vilify* as a component of cyclical discrimination.

(167) **Vilifying** the enemy **rouses hatred** and is a necessary part of getting wars up and running.

<http://edstrong.blog-city.com/read/1524830.htm> (15/02/06)

(168) Terrorism **feeds hatred, vilifies** Arab people and further **fuels** terrorist acts in a **never ending cycle**.

<http://www.usenet.com/newsgroups/comp.sys.mac.advocacy/msg18483.html>

(15/02/06)

As we can see, some examples invoke the image of *fire*, as a release of energy, and a dangerous, unpredictable element that consumes and destroys everything in its wake. Further to *activate* related metaphorical allusions of *vilify*, is the way we talk about resolving *vilify* and other forms of conflict. Acts of peacekeeping can be expressed by way of *deactivate* metaphors, while intervention can be discussed by employing *negotiator* metaphors.

(169) Russia is expected to try to **defuse the situation**, while the United States has also offered to help **broker peace**.

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/06/02/> (15/02/06)

(172) No UN resolution can **deactivate the situation** in Iraq as long as the US is not prepared to surrender command over the military operation.

<http://la.indymedia.org/mail.php?id=81225> (15/02/06)

(173) The Philippines has reaffirmed its support for the sending of civilian police officers to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (Minustah) to **neutralize the situation** in the war-torn country.

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2004/jun/21/> (15/02/06)

In closing, *vilify* is often expressed in military-political terms as a *crusade*, an *operation* or *campaign*. This further supports the component: *I want many other people to think...something very bad* about the target.

(174) He called on the Church to end its **campaign of vilifying** homosexuals and same-sex marriages.

<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?t=80801> (15/02/06)

## 2.5 *offend*

### **Of what use is freedom of speech to those who fear to offend?**

Roger Ebert

What does it mean to *offend* someone? The Speech act *offend* is an utterance that is objectionable to the hearer(s), causing them to feel indignant or upset. Certainly, it ‘sounds’ more esoteric and elusive than *insult*, but intuitively, it appears to be related. A key differentiating factor here is relevant to pragmatics. While *offend* is often glossed as to *insult* we can find an unequal weighting in usage, we can say: *I insulted her and it offended her*, but we do not say: \*I offended her and it insulted her. Perhaps a term such as *humiliate* is closer to *offend* than the other words in this Chapter?

*Offend* has a wide semantic range. To *offend* can be to *aggrieve*, to *outrage* or even *disgust* someone. However, in themselves, these terms reveal connotation and do not accurately explain meaning. What are some of the key characteristics of *offend*? C.J Smith (1913: 589) provides some aspects for us to consider.

Offend relates always to the conduct of one person towards another, and implies, therefore, conscious agents on both sides, and a condition of real or supposed slight on one side. It belongs to superiors and equals rather than to inferiors to be offended. In the case of equals, it still implies an alleged deficiency of regard or consideration.

Smith observes that *offend* involves two parties, agent and experiencer. The act also implies deliberateness, and that an exchange has been ‘received’ as an insult, whether real or perceived. The hearer(s) feels somehow that the agent has shown a lack of respect. Smith’s remarks further suggest that *to offend* and *being offended* are semantically discrete.

Consider the way we talk about *offend*. When we use idioms such as *he offended me deeply* or *that offended me to the core*, it becomes clear that we are dealing with an act that affects an individual or group in a profound, personal way. We will see that any utterance can potentially *offend* someone. This is a subjective act that hinges on the hearer(s) interpretation. We will discover that perlocution is an important semantic facet of *offend*.

In referring to adjectival *offended*, Wierzbicka (2001: 17) asserts:

*Being offended* does have something to do with the notion of *dignity*, and with our need to have our personal worth acknowledged by other people. I am offended if I think this basic need is flouted: not only does the other person fail to think good things about me, he or she doesn't seem to mind letting me know it.

These insights are crucial to an explication of *offend*. Perhaps an etymological view of *offend* as a *moral transgression*, a *moral violation* or *sin* (OED) can reveal that synchronically, *offend* is still perceived as a transgression, but of a social norm. (This meaning is further preserved in polysemous *offend* as a *criminal offence*.) From a speech act stance, to *offend* is to: *say something very bad that shouldn't be said*. How is *offend* defined in popular lexicographical sources?

### 2.5.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *offend*

Dictionary definitions of *offend* concentrate on the perlocution, how is the act received by the hearer? They also focus on the emotive element of *offend*. The OED explains *offend* as:

To hurt or wound the feelings or susceptibilities of; to be displeasing or disagreeable to; to vex, annoy, displease, anger; to excite a feeling of personal upset, resentment, annoyance, or disgust in (someone).

With so many superfluous components and clauses, this definition makes multiple attempts at isolating the meaning of *offend*. Many obscure, archaic words are employed (*vex*, *displease*, *susceptibilities*) as well as stylistic, metaphorical terms (*hurt*, *wound the feelings*, *excite*). Certainly, some terms are equally complex, and insufficient as glosses (*resentment*, *annoyance*, *disagreeable*).

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* provides a more transparent definition, comprised of more simple terms.

To make someone angry or upset by doing or saying something that they think is rude, unkind etc:

Our chief complaint with this definition is that it is non-predictive. By relying on the vague “etc.” (presumably meaning ‘and other similar things’) no criterion for similarity is made explicit, therefore, this definition is untestable. Goddard (1998: 33) refers to the common complaint of *etc.* as “the lexicographer’s security blanket”. Furthermore, Longman’s well-meaning ‘controlled defining vocabulary’ often results in a circular definition, and here, again, we have circularity with defining terms like *upset* and *rude*. This definition could also apply to *insult*.

As a final comparison, the *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides the following entry.

To cause to be upset or to hurt the feelings of (someone), esp. by being rude or showing a lack of respect.

Like the OED, this definition employs a vague, metaphorical term (hurt the feelings of, showing) and reveals circularity (*rude*, *upset*). Moreover, this is another example of an open-ended definition, relying on the vague *esp.* This term suggests other causes that are unaccounted for, therefore providing an imprecise, ambiguous definition. What semantic information can be provided by academic ventures?

WordNet contains the following synset of *offend*:

1. *pique*, *offend* -- (cause to feel resentment or indignation; “Her tactless remark offended me”).

Of course, *pique* is not a synonym or an equivalent term, unlike *offend*, *pique* is uncommon. Furthermore, this small synset focuses on only one connotation of *offend* (i.e., to irritate, annoy or displease the hearer(s)). This is not the only connotation of *offend*, as we will see. This is a very narrow gloss of *offend*, while the sample sentence demonstrates the use of adjectival *offended* rather than the verb form it should represent. Boris Galitsky (2002: 2) offers the following axiom of *offend*, using a formal model.

*Offend (Who, Whom, Action):- want (Who, Action),  
not want (Whom, Action),  
not know (Who, not want(Whom, Action)),  
do (Who, Action).*

Our initial concern with this explication is that it is obscure and ambiguous, therefore, it is not immediately accessible to speakers. Galitsky (2002: 2) remarks, “To be forgiven, the offender has to demonstrate by some way that the offense was actually unintentional. It is necessary for the offender *Who* to inform *Whom* that *Who* would not *do* that *Action* if *Who* knew *Whom* did not like (*want*) it.” This explication suggests that *offend* is invariably unintentional. Furthermore, this doesn’t treat the important perlocutionary effect of *offend*. Can a natural metalanguage provide a more transparent, practical definition?

Closer to our focus in this thesis, Wierzbicka (2001: 15) uses the NSM method to present a schematic representation of adjectival *offended*. In a semantic analysis of Polish *przykro*, Wierzbicka compares and contrasts this word with its closest English counterparts: *hurt, sorry, sad and offended*.

*I was offended*  
(a) I felt something bad  
(b) because I thought about someone else (Y):  
    “Y did something (Z)  
    because of this I know:  
(c) Y doesn’t think good things about me  
(d) wants me to know this”

This explication illuminates some important semantic elements of *offend*, the experiencer’s negative evaluation of the agent, the agent’s deliberate, confrontational act, that the experiencer feels *something bad* as a reaction. Being mindful of the socio-cultural perception, how can we explicate the speech act version of *offend*?

## 2.5.2 NSM Explication of *offend*

*X offended Y*

- (a) X said something
- (b) when X said this, it was like Y thought something like this:
- (c) "X said something very bad
- (d) people think it is very bad to say something like this
- (e) I now know that X doesn't think good things about me"
- (f) because of this, Y felt something very bad
- (g) people think: it is bad when something like this happens

### Explanation of Components

*X offended Y* is a prototypical usage of the verb form.

(a) This is the locution, an utterance. The prime *something* is not qualified by *bad*, as *to offend* is a subjective interpretation. Therefore, any utterance can potentially *offend* the hearer(s).

(b) This component introduces the cognitive scenario. It is different from the equivalent components for *insult*, *abuse*, *denigrate* and *vilify* in that *offend* focuses on the perlocution. X performs the speech act, while Y receives and interprets the utterance. *Offend* hinges on the hearer(s) interpretation of the speech act.

(c) The hearer(s) form a negative assessment of X's utterance. In effect, Y accuses X of *saying something bad* (i.e., uttering something unpleasant). While the target and direct hearer(s) of *abuse* is the same person/people, this is not invariably the case for *offend*. For example, X *offended* Y by making a derogatory statement about a target group, Muslim people, while Y is a non-Muslim hearer. Furthermore, *to offend* is not necessarily saying something bad *about someone*. Alternatively, the utterance has no target, for example, X utters an expletive interjection and Y interprets this as: *X said*

*something very bad*. This 'open to interpretation' nature of *offend* ensures that we can easily and unintentionally *offend* anyone.

(d) This line suggests that, to *offend* is to say something that *shouldn't* be said. This speech act is all about Y's opinion, that the utterance in question is not the kind of thing that is appropriate to say, or the kind of utterance that Y wants to hear. Y feels that X should show restraint and sensitivity to other people. In addition, the offended party seems to assume that others would sympathise or at least understand this reaction. Y does not perceive this reaction to be capricious or idiosyncratic.

(e) On the basis of this utterance, Y thinks that X is disrespectful or inconsiderate. If X had a positive, respectful perception of Y, X would be considerate of Y's comfort. Y takes the remark personally, thinking that the speaker mustn't care about Y's feelings, to say such a thing. Y feels slighted in some way.

(f) This component is the crucial perlocutionary effect. In response to X's utterance, Y feels *something very bad*. In usage, this is often expressed as Y feeling hurt, upset or offended. *Offend* focuses on the perlocution rather than the straight locution or speaker's illocution.

(g) This final line expresses a social evaluation of the act. As we will see, there is some pragmatic evidence that speaker's are encouraged to not be *easily offended*, or to *take offence*. However, there is strong evidence in usage that it's socially reproachful to say anything that could potentially *offend* an audience.

### 2.5.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

As a speech act, *offend* is comprised of a locution: *X said something*. *Offend* conveys the attitude of the hearer(s), in regards to the speaker's utterance: *when X said this, it was like Y thought something like this*. The perlocution is the most important facet of the utterance, rather than the illocutionary force of other speech acts. To *offend* relies on the interpretation (i.e., the way the message is received). The utterance is construed as: *something very bad*.

(175) You **offended** me with what I perceived as unfair statements.

[http://www.karateforums.com/archive/o\\_t/t\\_1516/start\\_10](http://www.karateforums.com/archive/o_t/t_1516/start_10) (11/02/05)

(176) You know the strange thing is by saying “I’m not trying to be offensive” you **offended** me: the fact that you think asking me this could possibly be offensive is in itself offensive.

<http://surveycentral.org/?x=x&V=7764&A=AdvStats> (11/02/05)

To *offend* is a subjective, personal interpretation. While the agent’s utterance can be in direct reference to the hearer(s), the target can also be a third, unrelated party. The utterance has somehow opposed the hearer’s beliefs, opinions or sensibilities. In the following usage, the hearer is metonymically implicated in the reference “people in Boston” and has interpreted the indirect remark from a stranger as a personal slight.

(177) The two girls **offended** me when I overheard them saying that people in New York are nicer than people in Boston.

<http://kristala.diaryland.com/niceness.html> (11/02/05)

There are many potential variables to the act of *offending* someone, Y, as the hearer(s), is not invariably the target of the utterance. While the agent can say something to *offend* the hearer(s), this may be direct or indirect. Conversely, hearer(s) can claim *X offended me* when there is no target. Therefore, to *offend* can be the negative evaluation of the speaker and the speaker’s utterance, regardless of the illocution.

(178) He **offended** everyone with his foul language.

[vbulletin.thesite.org/archive/index](http://vbulletin.thesite.org/archive/index) (11/02/05)

As a face-threatening act, *offend* contains an element of negative surprise, shock or outrage. To *offend* is to ‘cross a line’ in some way, to break or transgress a social ‘law’, it is to say the kind of thing that people shouldn’t say.

(179) London Mayor Ken Livingstone **offended** a Jewish reporter by comparing him to a Nazi concentration camp guard.

*Red Ken will not say sorry, South Wales Echo, 22/02/05 (From Factiva)*

- (180) AMA grossly **offends** persons with mental illness by labelling them 'loons'. Professor Ian Hickie, CEO beyondblue, stated "Dr Rivett's use of the derogatory term 'loon' is the most offensive remark that I have ever seen in the public arena."

*The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists media release (Factiva 11/02/05)*

To *offend* is to say something inappropriate or insensitive to the hearer(s). It seems to imply that the offended party assumes that other people would understand and share in this reaction. The explication indicates this with: *people think it is very bad to say something like this*. It is almost admonishing, suggesting: *people should know that people shouldn't say Z*.

- (181) He has already **offended** them by saying he cannot tell the difference between Chinese, Japanese and Koreans.

*<http://www.marksfriggin.com/news01/5-14-01.htm> (11/02/05)*

- (182) He has once again severely **offended** me, by saying that god destroyed New Orleans because gay people gathered there for Southern Decadence.

*<http://ff7ac.net/forums/showthread.php?t=968> (11/02/05)*

Like the idiom *never talk about politics or religion*, there is a sort of covert, unwritten 'censorship', whereby a speaker is expected to avoid talking about certain topics (this is also dependent on speaker/hearer relations). This includes topics of an emotional, sensitive nature, regarded as personal and 'sacred' by the hearer(s). This includes factors such as religion or personal conviction. This particularly refers to intrinsic, physical characteristics of ethnicity, sexual orientation or health. This category can include 'language that offends', the use of expletives, discriminatory remarks and pejorative epithets.

- (183) He calls everyone a wog and **offends** everyone.

*[www.pandora.nla.gov.au](http://www.pandora.nla.gov.au) (11/02/05)*

(184) You're a kike/heb/yid. I don't care if it **offends** any of you.  
*www.stormfront.org* (11/02/05)

(185) Jeb Bush **offended** homosexual groups by suggesting people of San Francisco could be an endangered species and describing it as "probably good news".  
*http://www.worldnetdaily.com/* (11/02/05)

(186) KISS bass player Gene Simmons **offended** Australia's Muslim community by launching an attack on Islamic culture while in Melbourne.  
*Sydney Morning Herald* (14/05/04)

To *offend* implies to the hearer(s) that the speaker is inconsiderate and disrespectful. Wierzbicka (2001: 17) refers to this as a "deficiency of regard" and an "apparent absence of good feelings". *Offend* results in affecting the hearer(s) on a very personal, private level. The hearer(s) perceives the act as a deliberate, personal slight, indicating: *I now know that X doesn't think good things about me*. It is as though the speaker thinks something bad about the hearer(s), and wants to express this, regardless of the feelings of the hearer(s). In a definition of adjectival *offended*, Wierzbicka (2001: 17) explains, "I feel "offended" by your action if this action suggests to me that you "don't think good things about me," and that you want me to know it". This suggests that if X thought anything good about Y, X would not say something like this.

(187) They **offended** me by saying that we're all "terrorists".  
*www.angelfire.com* (11/02/05)

(188) She **offended** me by saying I was over the hill and wouldn't work again.  
*www.obesityhelp.com* (11/02/05)

As a corollary to these examples, to *offend* can be to perform an utterance of a socially or personally sensitive or embarrassing nature, to say something that 'hits a raw nerve' by identifying a vulnerability. These instances can suggest the agent was

tactless and judgmental. Pragmatically, this can be a compliment gone awry (example 190).

(189) My boyfriend has really bad hygiene and I **offended** him by trying to discuss it.

*www.nerve.com/regulars* (09/08/03)

(190) I **offended** her by saying that she looked good with the gray hairs dyed brown.

*www.penguin.ca:8000/nf/Book/BookDisplay* (11/02/05)

Probably the most crucial semantic component of *offend* is the perlocution, the result and reactions engendered by the speech act. To a large extent, *offend* describes the effect. The penultimate component in the explication indicates that to *offend* is to cause the hearer(s) to feel something negative: because of X's utterance: *Y felt something very bad*. In some way, the speaker has 'upset' the hearer(s).

(191) He **offended** me and it made me really mad.

*www.phatmass.com/phorum/index* (11/02/05)

The final component of the explication reflects a social evaluation of the act. The pragmatic evidence in the following sections will describe a paradox. Fixed phrases, collocations and related terms suggest that it is socially reprovved to be: *easily offended, oversensitive, touchy* or *quick to take offence*. Conversely, there is usage-based evidence that to *offend* is socially reproachful behaviour, that it is bad to offend people, don't offend, try not to offend, I didn't mean to offend. This social evaluation is expressed as: *people think: it is bad when something like this happens*. This reprovving stance is represented by many examples of usage.

(192) We **don't want to offend** anyone so we have decided to use more appropriate holiday greetings.

*www.chron.com/content/chronicle/business* (11/02/05)

(193) **Try not to use language that offends** people with disabilities.

*www.afscme.org/wrkplace/disab\_08.htm* (11/02/05)

Sánchez-Castro (2003: 3) observes that the failure of an attempt at humour may *offend*, and that shared humour requires the agreement of “moral interpretation” and “shared attitudes”. An example is an utterance with an illocution intending humour, that is received as derogatory, the hearer(s) implying that: *people think it is very bad to say something like this*. This demonstrates the subjective, interpretive nature of *offend*.

(194) This joke really **offended** me! I cannot believe you would post a joke which advocated stalking women!

<http://www.netfunny.com> (09/12/05)

(195) I also told him that his jokes **offended** me and I considered them racist.

<http://www.asianreporter.com/stories> (10/05/03)

Holmes (2000) notes that humour can be used to protect one’s own identity (i.e., to “save face” or to mitigate face threatening acts). Therefore, if the hearer(s) claim offence, the speaker can justify or rationalise the utterance as ‘humour’. This further disconnects the ‘ownership’ of the utterance and therefore the ‘thought’ from the speaker. In Chapter 5 we will discuss the role of humour in the expression of discrimination.

*Offend* is a hierarchical, high-level term, a potential result of the speech acts of *insulting*, *abusing*, *denigrating* and *vilifying* that can all *offend* an addressee or audience. A person can *offend by* or *with* an *insult* or *abuse*. *Offend* is more intrinsic, relative and subjective than related acts, and is closely linked to individual ethical perceptions.

#### 2.5.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

*Offend* has a long history. The origins of *offend* are *to stumble*, evolving to a metaphorical usage of *to stumble morally*, *to commit a sin* or *morally transgress* (OED). This usage is now obsolete, although it provides semantic insight into the contemporary structure of the word, as *to commit a social transgression*. Both the etymology and current usage suggest a ‘mistake’ in some way. These meanings are

also evident in the polysemous sense of *offend*, as to commit a criminal *offence*. As we have seen, breaking a social convention is often perceived to be as serious as breaking a law.

*Offend* is a speech act with a perlocutionary focus that affects the target/hearer(s), on a profound, personal level. It is perceived to violate a person's innate sense of values and personally held beliefs and opinions. To *offend* contravenes the hearer(s) individual sense of right and wrong. For example, we can *personally offend* someone by insulting an intrinsic facet such as ethnicity, or by criticising a strongly held conviction, (e.g., religious beliefs). This deeply felt reaction is expressed in the explication as: *X said something very bad, I now know that X doesn't think good things about me*, and, *Y felt something very bad*.

Pragmatically, to *offend* is idiosyncratic and conceptual. According to usage data collected from the Collins Word Bank, we can *offend someone's: culture, beliefs, morals, sensibilities, sentiment, prejudices, justice, dignity, honour, integrity, public taste, principles or tradition*. While some terms 'sound' obscure, these fixed phrases are still in regular use. Prototypically, we *offend somebody's sense of something*.

(196) Your post had several comments that **greatly offended my beliefs**.

<http://www.ksdp.org/?q=node/view/604> (10/05/03)

(197) He took the Pledge of Allegiance to court because the words "under God" **offended his sensibilities**.

[http://www.affbrainwash.com/archives/007491\\_print.php](http://www.affbrainwash.com/archives/007491_print.php) (10/05/03)

(198) I was so disgusted by what he said, because it **offended my morals and beliefs** so incredibly.

[www.sparknotes.com/mb/epl?b=1759&m=832494&t=207988&w=1](http://www.sparknotes.com/mb/epl?b=1759&m=832494&t=207988&w=1)

(10/05/03)

When we examine usage, we uncover a sociolinguistic code, to *offend: people think: it is bad when something like this happens*. Usage suggests that speakers have a 'fear' of *offending someone*. We deliberately avoid socially unacceptable speech or employ politeness measures, including cautious, apologetic 'disclaimers' such as *I don't want/mean to offend, I'm not out to offend, I'm worried that I'll offend, I'm not*

wanting to offend, please don't be offended. Many of these usages include lexical hedges, to 'soften' the remark (119) and (121).

(199) I really **don't mean to offend** anyone or anything but I truly think she cannot sing.

[www.forums.soccerfansnetwork.com](http://www.forums.soccerfansnetwork.com) (17/07/05)

(200) Anyone may ask anyone to be a partner, but **please don't be offended** if you're turned down.

[www.israelidance.com/playshop/etiquette.htm](http://www.israelidance.com/playshop/etiquette.htm) (17/07/05)

(201) Now don't get me wrong here – **I'm not out to offend** ppl or anything but I'd just like to offer my two cents here.

[www.community.boredofstudies.org/](http://www.community.boredofstudies.org/) (17/07/05)

(202) His principal turned the student away, fearing he might **offend** his classmates.

[www.news.bostonherald.com](http://www.news.bostonherald.com) (17/07/05)

These fixed phrases often act as speech routines that are unwittingly ironic.

(203) To be clear, **I'm not out to offend** or to bash any homosexual or person in sin.

[www.botcw.com/talk/showthread.php?p=120767](http://www.botcw.com/talk/showthread.php?p=120767) (08/11/05)

This concern has led to social precautions to avoid *offending* various sections of society.

(204) A West Yorkshire head teacher has banned books containing stories about pigs from the classroom **in case they offend** Muslim children.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/2818809.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2818809.stm) (08/11/05)

(205) British banks are banning piggy banks because they may offend some Muslims.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/World> (08/11/05)

(206) The term “brainstorming” has become the latest target of political correctness, according to a charity. Trainee teachers are being told to avoid the word for fear of **offending** pupils with epilepsy. Instead they are being advised to use “word storm” or “thought shower”.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1435727/posts> (08/11/05)

However, there appears to be a social contradiction, pragmatic evidence suggests that we are conditioned to *not offend* people: *it is bad when something like this happens*. This is suggested by the fixed phrases *don't offend*, *try not to offend*, and the disclaimer *I don't/didn't mean to offend*. In contrast, we are also habituated to *not be easily offended*, as evidenced by the terms: *easily offended*, *oversensitive*, *touchy*. This suggests that, socially, it is bad to *offend*, but equally bad to be *offended* without sufficient reason. Just as a person is expected to be able to *take an insult*, fixed phrases exist to condition people to not be easily *offended* (i.e., to avoid over reacting to a situation). Examples include: *don't think about it too much*: *don't be easily offended*, *easily upset*, *easily hurt*, *don't take it personally*, *don't take it to heart*, *don't take it too seriously*, *don't dwell on it*, *don't brood*. We even have the fixed phrases: *the right to offend*, *dare to offend*, and *X is not afraid to offend*, suggesting that it is a speaker's privilege to *offend*, if this preserves 'free speech'.

Should we not heed the social 'rule' of *don't be easily offended*, we can be labelled as *touchy*, *too sensitive*, *oversensitive*, *hypersensitive*, *emotional*, *thin-skinned*, *short-fused*, *quick to take offence*. These phrases suggest that the 'offended' is weak or fragile. What might *offend* some is not perceived as serious to others but rather seen as inoffensive, harmless or innocuous. Someone who is seen to be *easily offended* can further be labelled as *conservative*, *old-fashioned*, *prim*, *prudish* or even *humourless*. These are very broad terms, but they are closely related to *offend*.

(207) We are taught that “polite” society doesn't discuss politics or religion. **It's too easy to offend** someone.

<http://blogan.net/blog/2005/02/22/seths-blog> (08/11/05)

(208) If they **offend** you, perhaps you are **too sensitive**.

[www32.brinkster.com/serenemusic/links.asp](http://www32.brinkster.com/serenemusic/links.asp) (08/11/05)

(209) Try not to **offend** one group and you **offend** somebody else. Here's the lesson — you can't win with **thin-skinned** people.

[www.crowhill.net/blog/index.php?p=2359](http://www.crowhill.net/blog/index.php?p=2359) (08/11/05)

These natural examples demonstrate the subjective interpretation of *offend*, Y's opinion that *X said something very bad*. Kulick (1994: 214) asserts, "almost any action is bound to offend someone". It is also a contentious social issue. Most recent efforts to condition speakers to avoid *offending* people with *offensive*, stigmatised language, contributed to the development of so-called *politically correct* (PC) *language*. Deborah Cameron (1995: 116) refers to this as a "verbal hygiene practice" and explains that "The so-called 'politically correct' are known for their insistence on replacing usages which they deem insulting and objectionable to various 'minorities'"

This is a synthetic attempt to create 'polite' language (i.e., to prevent loss of face by the avoidance of discriminatory or offensive language.) It is an effort to change 'bad' language, the kind of language that: *people think it is very bad to say*. These creations aim to produce bias-free, euphemistic preferred terms in substitution of dysphemistic terms. It is a way to make 'palatable' these 'unpalatable' forms. (This phenomenon is related to concepts like *non-sexist language* or *reframing*, or with negative connotations: *spin*, *propaganda*). Attempts to artificially ameliorate language typically result in the stigmatisation of any euphemistic forms. Steven Pinker coined the term the "euphemism treadmill" to label this tendency. Language reform of this kind is notoriously unsuccessful (Cameron 1995; Handke 2001).

Myers (1996) states that, since the 1960s, this well-intentioned attempt at linguistic equality has led to skepticism and a backlash against PC language, attracting criticism for becoming extreme. Cameron (1995: 119-23) also reports the negative connotations of PC language, and further explains that, "What many people dislike, specifically, is the politicizing of their words against their will". Some 'preferred' terms are so non-transparent and distorted that they no longer resemble their referent and are therefore nonsensical. Furthermore, while PC language evolved to provide a euphemistic term for a dysphemistic form, it started to be employed in illogical ways (e.g., *personhole cover* instead of *manhole cover*), and even used for neutral terms (e.g., *pre-woman* for *girl*). This is when PC language goes against the initial purpose (i.e., attempting to change 'bad' language, and rather, changes 'good' or neutral language, the kind that: *people don't think it is very bad to say*).

For this reason, politically correct language is often seen as ‘incorrect’. Rawson (1989: 4) comments, “the ultimate absurdity is reached when fearful people search for ‘bad’ meanings where none exist”. Attempts at devising PC language are often perceived as language manipulation, censorship or an insidious 1984-style *doublespeak*, resulting in a mistrust and resistance to adopt any PC forms. PC language has now developed pejorative connotations or an ironic meaning, and is frequently the subject of satire (for example, the coining of compounds using *challenged* (e.g., *follicularly challenged* = *bald*). PC language is often perceived as dishonest language that camouflages bias, contributing to the creation of latent forms of prejudice. During a live performance in 1994, Billy Connolly labelled this PC speak as “the language of cowardice”.

(210) **Politically correct language is Stalinism** applied to language.

[www.carneiro.com.br/ingles/](http://www.carneiro.com.br/ingles/) (27/11/05)

(211) The constant repetition of imprecise, **politically correct language** is sure to have a cumulative effect upon a target audience -- eventually we begin to accept what we are told. Indeed, the main goal of political correctness, like Orwell’s Newspeak, is to diminish the choice of words and thereby reduce the range of thought.

<http://www.ntu.org/main/> (19/11/05)

Cameron (1995: 123) makes the important argument that “politically motivated verbal hygiene is not a new phenomenon” but is historically a regular occurrence. Author George Orwell advocated the use of clear language, and wrote of the dangers of language manipulation in both his magnum opus, the fictional work *1984*, and in essays such as *Politics and the English Language*. In his essay *Why I Write*, Orwell (1946: 125) states that “Good prose is like a window-pane”, promoting language that is plain, direct, concrete, rational and as neutral as possible. Nunberg (1990: 475-6) writes that Orwell’s, “language criticism was concerned with maintaining a coherent political discourse in a culturally and ideologically fragmented community”.

Some of these themes will be further investigated in Chapter 5. As we can see, *offend* is a complex, interesting word that leads us to many other contentious issues, most of which are beyond the immediate scope of this thesis.

### 2.5.5 Metaphor and offend

Wierzbicka (2001: 18) observes that “*Hurt* is often treated as virtually interchangeable with *offended*”. While this is borne out by usage, these terms are semantically discrete. The most obvious difference is that *hurt* is metaphorical. Furthermore, to *hurt* usually implies a relationship or strong emotional connection between the agent and target. For example, a stranger can *offend* us, but not usually (metaphorically) *hurt* us. Prototypically, we are *hurt* by someone with whom we are familiar or intimate, and we hope or expect that they will not *hurt* us.

As we can see, *offend* is often equated with metaphorical *hurt*. Like *insult*, we talk about *offend* as to metaphorically ‘inflict pain’ upon someone (i.e., to cause someone to *feel something bad*). We talk about *offend* as though the experiencer *feels* actual physical pain. In corpus data, we can find sensory-based idioms that equate *offend* with *pain* and *suffering* (e.g., *that hurt me*) and instrumental features: *you cut me with that remark*. Using metaphorical glosses, to *offend* is perceived as to: *hurt, bruise, upset, wound, injure, crush, shatter, scar, kill, carve, slice and cut (up)*. When *X offends Y*, the *offended* person might *lick their wounds*. That the experiencer somehow conceives of *offend* as to almost physically *feel something bad* is represented in the explication as a perlocutionary effect: *Y felt something very bad*.

(212) When people push our buttons, it **offends, hurts and upsets** us. We’re **shattered and destroyed** by the things that people say or do.

<http://www.buddhanet.net/4noble29.htm> (22/07/04)

(213) He **offended** me. I was terribly **damaged and scarred** by his actions.

<http://www.oaoa.com/columns/nax101200.htm> (22/07/04)

(214) It **offended** her and it’s so easy to **nurse that hurt** and keep it warm and alive.

<http://www.wpbc.org.nz> (03/04/06)

Not all pain-related verbs are acceptable to denote *offend*. *Offend* is not to *ache, burn* or be *tortured*, metaphorically, these terms insinuate *desire*, while *burn* can also suggest betrayal or to *tease* or *humiliate*.

Other *offend*-related idioms are also allusions to physical manipulation, anger or annoyance: to *get/put someone's back up*, to *put someone's nose out of joint*, to get *bent* or to *bend out of shape*, to *be put out* or *feel put out* and to *rub the wrong way*. We can also find instrumental-based similes: *it was like a knife to the gut/stomach/chest*, \*that was like a spoon/fork to the gut. (However, to *stab in the back* indicates to metaphorically *hurt* someone by *betraying* them.) All of these forms suggest that the experiencer: *felt something bad*.

(215) They often get their **nose out of joint**, that is to say I **offend** them when I even try to talk about the subject.

<http://www.cryjustice.com/jerks.htm> (03/04/06)

(216) Sorry he **offended** you and that you were **rubbed the wrong way**.

[www.mrlandlord.com/archives/2003/jan-jun2003datafiles](http://www.mrlandlord.com/archives/2003/jan-jun2003datafiles) (03/04/06)

*Feel* is an important component of *offend*. Consistent with the idea that *offend* adversely affects a person in some profound, fundamental way, the following idioms can be found in usage corpora: to *offend to the core*, to *offend to the bone*, to *mortally offend*, to *deeply offend*, to *personally offend*, to *offend to the quick*, to *offend the soul*, to *offend every fibre*, to *touch, hit or strike a raw nerve* (Collins Word Bank and the BNC). The *offend* explication captures this with the cognitive scenario: *I now know that X doesn't think good things about me*, and with the perlocution: *Y felt something very bad*.

(217) He **offended me to the core** of my being.

[www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/772315/replies?c=26](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/772315/replies?c=26) (03/04/06)

(218) You **deeply offended** me.

[www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article) (03/04/06)

## 2.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has provided a descriptive semantic analysis of speech acts that comprise part of the rhetorical dimension of discrimination. Each section has

examined a relevant word, decomposed its semantic structure and substantiated each proposal with evidence of the discursive reproduction of each act. These words are vital tools in the lexicon of anti-discrimination.

This Chapter has treated speech acts that are performed on an individual basis. Chapter 3 considers the social dimension of discrimination, the collectively performed behaviours associated with discrimination. Analysing *stigmatise*, *demonise*, *dehumanise*, *marginalise* and *discriminate*, these sections attempt to describe and understand the 'ways' that people enact discrimination.

## Chapter Three

### The Social Dimension of Discrimination

#### *Dehumanise, Demonise, Marginalise, Stigmatise, Discriminate*

#### 3.0 Introduction

**Prejudices are neither innate nor arise spontaneously with individual people. They are part of a socio-cultural, shared, consensus.**

(van Dijk 1987: 361)

This Chapter examines the meaning of to *dehumanise*, to *demonise*, to *discriminate against*, to *stigmatise* and to *marginalise*. In considering these social processes of discrimination, this Chapter attempts to answer the important questions: *how* do we discriminate against people and *how* do we talk about these acts? An analysis of these words is revealing both semantically, and socially.

The words treated in Chapter 2 are prototypically individual acts. For example, one person *insults* another, or someone *vilifies* a group of people. In contrast, the words in this Chapter are frequently collectively performed acts (e.g., society *stigmatises* a group of people, or a group *marginalises* an individual). In general, these are collective acts, revealing synchronic discrimination and shared attitudes. As van Dijk (1987) emphasises, the cognitive “programming” of these acts has a social basis. Each act comprises facets of cognition (THINK) and conduct (DO), they constitute the social enactment of discrimination, and the underlying attitudes of the actor. These words label an ‘us and them’ mentality in action, emphasising differences and revealing negative attitudes.

While it may be argued that *demonise* and *marginalise* do not form part of the lexicon of the ‘average’ speaker, these are key terms in the discourse of anti-discrimination. Furthermore, these words label widespread socio-cultural phenomena. Teun van Dijk (1988: 11) highlights the social relevance of these processes and the link between language and discrimination.

If, for instance, governmental authorities decide to cut social programs, the decision, strictly speaking, is only ‘words’, but poverty and hunger, which are

very real consequences, will be the result to those affected. If a manager does not hire a minority person, his or her decision and motivation may be expressed only in talk, but unemployment is a concrete threat to that person's survival.

Van Dijk's comments refer to the acts of *marginalising* and *discriminating against* people, revealing the severe and real consequences of these processes. There are significant psychological and social effects of these processes. They promote division, exclusion and oppression, and in the case of *dehumanise*, sanction violence. For these reasons, Kelly and MacNamara (1991: 82) assert that these words label acts of "social deviance". These are violations of socio-cultural 'laws', the shared perception of what is unacceptable social behaviour. We will see that the law is often a conditioning arbiter in prohibiting some of these acts. In addition, we will consider the different legal perspectives of these words. To *discriminate against* someone or to *marginalise* a person is illegal in some English-speaking countries, while to *dehumanise* or *demonise* a person is not illegal, although individual enactments might involve illegal activity (e.g., violent protests or physically harming a target).

Generally, these acts are socially reproached. These words would not be used as descriptive labels by the agent and would typically be denied as they suggest inappropriate behaviour and unfairness. For example, consider an event where an employer does not hire a potential employee because the applicant is female. The employer would not metacommunicatively refer to that act by saying: *I didn't hire the female applicant because I discriminated against her*. Instead, this truth would be substituted with an outwardly rational validation. Similarly, if someone *demonises* a target, feeling justified in having done so, they would not refer to the act by that name. For legal reasons, a committee would refute an accusation that they *marginalised* a member.

Despite the social codes against these acts, are they abnormal? While they deviate from what is seen as moral and ethical in modern society, are they examples of aberrant behaviour? From a synchronic perspective, these acts shape identity and reinforce social infrastructure. In *The Human Zoo*, Morris (1969: 12) asserts that humans "refuse to lose their tribe" and from an evolutionary perspective, society is a crucial survival mechanism. Therefore, 'differences' can be perceived to pose a serious threat to social assimilation and therefore to existence itself. Throughout this

Chapter we will investigate the theories of various scholars who propose that these processes are fundamental human tendencies, with an evolutionary basis (Buss 1999; Haight 2001). As we have already seen, these acts are a product of socialisation.

These words have been individually treated by scholars in related disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and other social and natural sciences. Mostly, these are investigations into these processes as social phenomena, rather than from a semantic perspective. Relevant results from these studies will feature in this Chapter, to assist in the exploration of meaning, and to provide evidence for the explications.

Why have these words been chosen? Wittgenstein (1958: 355) used commonalities to indicate similarity, arguing that common attributes of objects and situations should be called *family resemblances* (or ‘likenesses’), “a complicated network of over-lapping and criss-crossing, sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of details”. Although semantically discrete, we will see that these five terms share family resemblances. Wittgenstein’s concept of *centrality* also enters into this discussion, in that some words in this Chapter represent more salient examples of the set than other words. For example, *stigmatise* is perceived to be a ‘better example’ of *discrimination* than *demonise* (probably based on usage statistics).

As these terms feature prominently in the language of anti-discrimination, they fill ‘lexical gaps’ by labelling complex behaviour and mentality. In addition, they function as linguistic social conditioning. Of course, this list is not exhaustive, and many other related terms are in need of treatment, including *ostracise*, *objectify* and *victimise* [future directions are discussed in Chapter 6, 6.1]. What can linguistics add to our understanding of these words, as both semantic items and social acts?

These analyses apply the NSM approach to effectively and comprehensively capture these abstract concepts. In addition, these words illustrate the significance and functionality of semantic primes. These basic, simple words encapsulate the key concepts of the focus words, and unambiguously decompose their semantic structure. Using this methodology, let us explore the meaning and usage of *dehumanise*, *demonise*, *discriminate against*, *marginalise* and *stigmatise* in society today.

### 3.1 *dehumanise*

**You dehumanize a man as much by returning him to nature - by making him one with rocks, vegetation, and animals - as by turning him into a machine. Both the natural and the mechanical are the opposite of that which is uniquely human.**

Eric Hoffer (2002: 5)

Morris (1969) asserts that, due to distinguishing factors such as consciousness and language, humans strongly differentiate between themselves and non-human animals. As a result, there is a social expectation that we regard and treat humans with a respect and equality that is reserved for humans alone. To *dehumanise* is to contravene this 'rule'. Using an NSM-like structure, LeMoncheck (1985: 14) explains, "there is nothing wrong with treating X as a Y, a rock as a paperweight, an uncle as a brother, or a person as an object, unless we also stipulate that X is being treated as a Y in ways that X should be treated as an X, but is not being so treated". To *dehumanise* suggests that: *X doesn't think about Y in a way that people should think about other people*. Maslach and Pines (1977: 100) define *dehumanise* (-ize) as a desensitisation towards the humanity of the target. It is a process:

That produces a decreased awareness of the human attributes of others and a loss of humanity in interpersonal interactions. People stop perceiving others as having the same feelings, impulses, thoughts, and purposes in life as they have, and thus psychologically eliminate any human qualities that these others might share with them.

According to the OED, *dehumanise* has been in existence since 1818, initially in an antonymic hyphenated form referring to 'unhuman-like'. By 1889, the contemporary meaning had developed, this usage referring to psychologically 'stripping' away the human elements of someone. A secondary sense evolved circa. C20th, meaning to *mechanise* or literally *depersonalise* a process that once involved human work. Surprisingly, this polysemous form arose well after the Industrial Revolution (Hobsbawm (1962: 4) holds that the Revolution "broke out" in the 1780s).

Hoffer's quote above neatly expresses both of these senses. In the current technological and political environment, both terms are salient, and context dependant. We will also discuss a third, evolving sense. This thesis will only explicate the original sense of *dehumanise*, relevant to the discourse of discrimination. It is an important and frequent word in this lexicon. Of the nominal form, Cheng (2001: 26) claims that "dehumanization has long been *the* tool of discrimination".

### 3.1.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *dehumanise*

Lexicographical sources tend to define *dehumanise* literally. This is a fundamentally metaphorical word for a psychological act, that usually has tangible consequences. The OED provides the following definition of *dehumanise*.

To deprive of human character or attributes.

Can we physically *deprive* a target of human character or attributes, or only in a psychological way? Is not *dehumanise* the way we perceive and treat a target, and the perlocutionary effect? It is not a deprivation of human elements, in any literal sense. In addition to the use of obscure metaphor, this definition employs complex words and phrasing (deprive, attributes). The *Collins English Dictionary* has modelled its definition on the OED, stating that *dehumanise* is "to deprive of human qualities". The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines our focus word as:

To treat people so badly that they lose their good human qualities.

Of course, we cannot literally *lose* our physicality, our *human qualities*, no matter how *badly* someone *treats* us. This is another metaphorical definition, that conjures up a curious literal image. Moreover, this entry is replete with vague phrasing (e.g., what is a *good human quality*?). Illustrating the specialised nature of *dehumanise*, the *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* does not include an entry for this word. However, the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* includes this definition.

To remove from a person the special human qualities of independent thought, feeling for other people, etc.

This definition reveals an occasional third sense, referring to *brutalisation*, akin to ‘brainwashing’ a person, also resulting in desensitisation towards other people. This sense refers to influencing personality and emotions, so that an affected person appears compassionless and is seemingly ‘less human’ or without emotion for others. An ad hoc example would be: *the Army dehumanises its soldiers*, suggesting indoctrination and cognitive control over group members. This act of ‘programming’ would desensitise a person, enabling them to perform various acts of war, without empathy for any target. As in the following examples, this sense focuses on the cognitive condition of a person, rather than the attitude, behaviour and actions of a person who has *dehumanised* a target.

(219) The new recruits undergo brutal training at the hands of the drill instructor who **dehumanises** them and turns them into killing machines, so they are then unleashed into the battle to suffer the misery of war.

<http://www.channel4.com/film/newsfeatures/microsites> (30/03/04)

(220) The more **dehumanised** drug takers will murder in order to get a fix.

[www2b.abc.net.au/news/forum/newsonline2/archives](http://www2b.abc.net.au/news/forum/newsonline2/archives) (19/07/05)

(221) I don’t like violence. It **dehumanises** the aggressor and causes untold suffering to the victim.

[www.williamkelly.com.au/peace\\_projects/prologue.htm](http://www.williamkelly.com.au/peace_projects/prologue.htm) (19/07/05)

It becomes apparent that, aside from allusions to *mechanise*, *dehumanise* has a sense related to *objectify*, and a sense related to *brutalise*. This distinction is complex and initially confusing, as no lexicographical sources treat this degree of polysemy. Moreover, the two forms are very similar, in that both acts lead to a lack of empathy for a target.

(222) When we **dehumanize** others, we **dehumanize** ourselves as well.

<http://www.itshappening.com/showthread.php?t=75045> (19/07/05)

This quote suggests the discrete nature of the two senses, and the close semantic relationship between the two senses, but also reveals a paradox, when we *dehumanise* (as in *objectify*) a target, we *dehumanise* (as in *brutalise*) ourselves. When we treat someone as though they aren't human, we harden ourselves emotionally. Both senses result in desensitisation to others, or to our own emotions. Buber (1958: 12) explains this as “the person who dehumanizes others experiences less emotion, less empathy, and fewer personal feelings, and thus dehumanizes himself or herself as well”. Kelman (1973: 60) further describes how an agent *dehumanises* a target by depriving the latter of “identity and community”, and thereby suffers a loss of his or her own sense of humanity in doing so.

In keeping with the thesis objective, the objectification-related sense will be investigated in this section, regarding the effects of discrimination and social dominance. Demirdjian (2002: 118) explains this sense as “the condition that makes people treat others as objects”.

WordNet is another source that covers the polysemy of *dehumanise*, to a limited extent.

1. dehumanize, dehumanise -- (deprive of human qualities; “Life in poverty has dehumanized them”)
2. dehumanize, dehumanise -- (make mechanical or routine)

WordNet provides brief definitions for two senses only, 1. to objectify by making the target a worthless, passive experiencer; and 2. to mechanise or impersonalise. As ‘hypernyms’ or ‘sister terms’, WordNet glosses *dehumanise* ‘objectify’ as, to *take down* or *reduce*. Clearly, these words are not directly synonymous with our focus word. With vague, metaphorical-based descriptions, no single lexicographical definition can clearly explain any sense of *dehumanise*. We will find that this distinction is more clearly demarcated in usage. Using the NSM, below is a semantic decomposition of *dehumanise*.

### 3.1.2 NSM Explication of *dehumanise*

*X dehumanised Y*

- (a) X did something very bad to Y
- (b) when X did this, it was like X was thinking at the same time:
- (c) "Y is very bad
- (d) Y is not like me in any way
- (e) it is like Y is not a person
- (f) because of this, I can do anything to Y
- (g) it is not bad if something happens to Y because of this"
- (h) because of this, something very bad can happen to Y
- (i) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

#### **Explanation of components**

A prototypical active usage: agent person *X dehumanised* target person *Y*.

(a) This is an event. To *dehumanise* is to perform a negative act against the target, to *do something very bad to someone*. The intensifier emphasises the severity of the act.

(b) This line introduces the prototypical cognitive scenario. The act suggests an underlying attitude.

(c) This is X's judgement of Y. The agent had formed an extreme negative assessment of the target. To *dehumanise* someone involves an excessively adverse opinion of the target, the act is an expression of a negative view.

(d) This indicates the agent's disassociation from the target. The target is regarded as dissimilar. This is distancing the target, so that there is no perception of commonality. The agent cannot make any connection with or relate to the target in any way, X cannot find any 'common ground' with Y. This is an extreme version of the 'us and them' mindset.

(e) This indicates that the agent has devalued the target's worth as a human being. X conceptually denies Y's human characteristics, perceiving Y in such a way as to suggest that Y is non-human, that Y is not like a person should be. Prime *below* is not used here, as this would suggest the target's *inferiority* rather than agent's *disassociation*. The target is perceived as something 'less than human', rather than as a 'lesser kind of person'. In this frame, using the preposition could also imply literal spatial *below*.

(f) The agent doesn't perceive the target as 'human', therefore, the agent feels justified in treating the target in an inhumane manner (e.g., to enslave, overwork, violate or kill). This is the agent's mental 'licence' to mistreat, hurt or abuse the target in some way, without regard for the target's humanity. This is the possible malicious intent. This component cannot be any more explicit in the description of events, as *dehumanise* covers a wide range of potential acts.

(g) This component indicates the agent's lack of empathy for the target. X doesn't exhibit the 'normal' care and concern for Y as a fellow person. This suggests that the agent is dispassionate and desensitised to Y's feelings.

(h) To *dehumanise* someone can result in severe consequences for the target who is mistreated in some way (e.g., psychologically abused, tortured, killed).

(i) This final component is a social evaluation of *dehumanise*. To *dehumanise* represents an attitude and the display of behaviour that is strongly reproached in society. This component reflects the opinion of the speaker who labels the act as *dehumanise*. To label an act as *dehumanising*, is to reproach the agent.

### 3.1.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

While *dehumanise* is not an ideology as such, the behaviour incorporates a prominent cognitive element. This also draws a relationship between 'brutalise' *dehumanise* and our focus sense, as McDonald (1957: 240) asserts "Cognitive dehumanization produces actual dehumanization". *Dehumanise* is prompted by an attitude, that may be collective, socio-cultural based acts (e.g., *dehumanising* the enemy during war), or

can exist in isolation with the individual (e.g., a human trafficker). Therefore, the act is 'driven' by thought, *when X did this, it was like X was thinking at the same time*.

Bernard et al. (1965: 76) conceive of *dehumanise* as a psychological defense mechanism. The authors claim that, through the use of this mechanism, "people change their perception of others, viewing them as 'subhuman' or 'bad human'". This enables the agent to perceive the target in a way that is otherwise unacceptable, without the regard we typically (should) have for a fellow human. This perception is illustrated in the explication as: *Y is very bad*. This is borne out by Schneider (2004: 196) who explains, "the denomination of opponents as 'barbarian', 'monster' or 'subhuman being' helps in committing acts of violence and dehumanising victims". To *dehumanise*, the agent must have an extremely negative opinion of the target.

(223) A terrorist mentality **dehumanises** its enemies by picturing them as innately evil, without any redeeming human qualities, thus making it easy to justify any actions taken against them.

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/us128.html> (19/07/05)

(224) The general public tends to label the homeless as people with mental disorders, alcohol problems, drug addictions or laziness. That branding makes it easy for the public to almost **dehumanize** the homeless, making it easy to ignore them without feeling remorse.

<http://www.ntdaily.com/vnews/display.v 1/03/05> (19/07/05)

(225) They are "contemptible, subhuman and disgusting" in the eyes of the torturer, making abuse of such **dehumanised** victims far easier to carry out.

<http://www.newdaynews.com/openhouse/> (19/07/05)

This inability or refusal to relate to the target is further explicated as: *Y is not like me in any way*. Bandura (1990: 38) asserts that to *dehumanise* "divests persons of their human qualities; once dehumanized, they are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns, but as subhuman objects". Of course, no treatment of a human, no matter how severe, can alter their corporeal reality. The attitude and effect of *dehumanise* is psychological and emotional, rather than tangibly affecting the target's existence as a human being. However, we conceive of *dehumanise* as to 'treat

a person as though they are not human', in that their civil rights and freedom have been severely violated or abused.

Maslach and Pines (1977: 115) assert that the agent cannot “perceive and respond to the personal identity of other people, and is more likely to treat them as if they were not human beings”. This significant semantic component is explicated as a prototypical cognitive component, it is ‘as though’ X thinks: *It is like Y is not a person*. (To state ‘Y is a thing’ would suggest *objectify*). Linguistically, to *dehumanise* is often expressed by means of metaphor or simile, suggesting that: *Y is like something bad, not like a person*.

(226) The Nazis **dehumanized** Jewish people to the point where the perpetrators did not consider them human at all, but simply parasites, diseases, animals like rats or cockroaches.

[lukephillips.com/blog/2003/05](http://lukephillips.com/blog/2003/05) (09/10/05)

(227) These faceless companies **dehumanize** factory workers as puppets, drones or serfs.

[www.sierratimes.com/cgi-bin/ikonboard](http://www.sierratimes.com/cgi-bin/ikonboard) (12/09/04)

Example (227) above has allusions to the Marxist (1848) idea of manual labourers as unfeeling, unthinking ‘cogs in the machine’ of capitalism or industrial society, an idea that is further associated with existentialist and critical theorists. This is supported by socialist theories of the public as a faceless, unthinking mass (e.g. Marx’s (1848) view of religion as the “opium of the people”. Although this originally connoted *something comforting*). This is not a further, discrete sense, but is consistent with this discussion, of the agent’s perception of the target as ‘un-human’, thereby justifying maltreatment. To *dehumanise* suggests that the target is unfeeling and unthinking. Without these uniquely human characteristics, they are, in effect, ‘not human’.

(228) He even resorted to calling average Iraqis “sand monkeys with diapers on their heads”, trying his best to **dehumanize** “the enemy”.

<http://www.jayseverin.org/> (10/01/06)

(229) They committed atrocities on them, they **dehumanised** them - stripped of their personhood, as it were. One did not feel sorry for them because, in one's eyes, they were no longer humans, that status had been stripped from them.

<http://content-usa.cricinfo.com/ci/content/story/137705.html> (10/01/06)

(230) We **dehumanised** the other side and branded them as animals. We didn't think in terms of them being people.

<http://ethics.acusd.edu/Resources/PhilForum/Terrorism/Greetham.html>

(10/01/06)

Further to the notion that the agent perceives the target as *not like me in any way*, Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 142) consider *dehumanise* in reference to wartime sniper attacks, proposing that "The enemy's human-ness is negated by various technological means or by the sheer physical distance between the killer and the killed". This adds a surreal, artificial element to *dehumanise*. The authors provide an example where the use of technological apparatus means that *dehumanise* becomes literal, rather than metaphorical, in a distortion of reality. This is a link between *objectify* and *mechanise*, and reduces a human to a physical target.

De-personalisation of the enemy is facilitated for the sniper by the use of telescopes or field glasses that make the shooting appear as though on television screens or computer games. One sniper observed: When you look out a window, everything appears less human. Also when you ride a car and look outside it looks less human. . . That's what makes a difference between riding in a car or on a motorcycle. . . It is much, much harder to shoot a man, and the fact that I look at him through a [rifle] sight it is like looking at something on television more or less. Of course, you know to differentiate between them because this is real, but to look through the sight makes things less human.

Maslach and Pines (1977: 105) assert that *dehumanising* someone alters the natural dynamic of human to human contact, "a dehumanized relationship is more objective, analytical, and lacking in emotional or empathic response". The components: *I can do anything to Y*, and: *It is not bad if something happens to Y because of this*, indicate the

agent's emotional divorce from the target and lack of empathy for the target. This involves desensitisation and a disregard of human similarity, and incorporates objectification, the removal of human resemblance. As an example of this, Keen (1991: 25) notes that during World War II, Japanese scientists used the term *maruta*, 'logs of wood', to refer to their human subjects during inhumane medical experiments. LeMoncheck (1985: 31) explains the difference between *dehumanise* and *objectify*, that *dehumanise* is not a literal phenomenon, it does not reduce the target to an object or body part, but "reduces them to the sort of thing they can treat as a moral subordinate, the sort of thing that can be subjugated or controlled". This presents the human as something utilitarian and emotionless.

(231) I **dehumanized** them and they have become a thing.

<http://organicchurch.blogspot.com> (19/12/05)

(232) The psychopath (as also the sociopath), do not have feelings for their victims, in turn **dehumanizing** them into worthless objects.

<http://www.sociopathic.net/rants/sociodevelopment.htm> (19/12/05)

(233) They **dehumanise** their victims. They don't see them as human beings.

*The Power of Two, The Age*, 25/08/03

When the agent has become 'detached' from the target (*Y is not like me in any way, It is like Y is not a person*), the former can perform inhumane acts upon the latter, in an impassive, 'robotic' manner (with allusions to 'mechanise' *dehumanise*). This is explicated as: *because of this, something very bad can happen to Y*. Holmes (1985: 361) explains this controlled state of mind:

A soldier who constantly reflected upon the knee-smashing, widow – making characteristics of his weapon, or who always thought of the enemy as a man exactly like himself, doing much the same task and subjected to exactly the same stresses and strains, would find it difficult to operate effectively in battle.

In practice, *dehumanise* can have a linguistic element. As a 'coping mechanism' for the agent to separate and distance himself/herself from the target, the act can also

affect language choices. Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 142) note that euphemistic, “sanitizing language” can aid in the perception of the target as a non-person. As treated by Lakoff’s Framing Project in *Moral Politics* (2002) and *Don’t Think of an Elephant* (2004), and Luntz’s *Republican Playbook* (2005), euphemistic language can be used to portray negative social concepts (e.g., *tax* or *globalisation*), in a positive light. Lakoff (2004) claims that his underlying objective is for effective communication, while Luntz’s work is criticised as language manipulation. Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 143) provide examples of euphemism as language manipulation (e.g., the use of “neutralize or clean-up” to refer to acts of killing). Other popularly known military examples include *collateral damage* and *friendly fire* to refer to unintentional damage during a military operation, and *culling* or *ethnic cleansing* to refer to acts of genocide. All of these phrases can *dehumanise* people.

Euphemisms have positive connotations, rather than the blunt reality of the concrete terms. These ‘preferred’ terms present the enemy as an object that must be handled in a rational and unemotional manner, absolving the agent of guilt, empathy and of any social responsibility. Maslach and Pines (1977: 114) explain this mindset as “disengagement” or “repression, “By not responding to the human qualities of other persons, people can find it possible to act in antisocial or inhumane ways toward them”. This is explicated as: *Y is not a person, Because of this, I can do anything to Y*, and: *It is not bad if something happens to Y because of this*. As a result, the agent doesn’t anticipate any social or emotional consequences of his or her behaviour.

(234) Former apartheid spy Craig Williamson on Monday told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that **dehumanising** his targets made it possible for him to carry out acts like letter bomb murders.

<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/media/1998/9809/s980914a.htm> (19/12/05)

(235) I **dehumanized** every woman in my life to keep from facing my crime [of rape].

<http://www.maineCouncilofchurches.org/rjustintro.htm> (19/12/05)

There is almost a mental ‘dualism’ to the act, where the agent is psychologically ‘removed’ from the behaviour, but able to ‘switch’ back to reality, after the act is performed. Day and Vandiver (2000: 52) explain this: “Committing atrocities against

a dehumanized group clearly does not cause many perpetrators to abandon all conventional perceptions of morality. Behavioral norms have not been replaced. A targeted group has simply been removed from the sphere in which those norms are applied". This is supported by theory in abnormal psychology, where social deviants (e.g., sex criminals and murderers), successfully conceal their behaviour and seemingly function 'normally' in society for long periods of time before their deviant behaviour is known (Hare 1993).

In his eyewitness account as a Jewish forensic doctor at the Auschwitz concentration camp, Nyiszli (1993) reports that Nazi officers would perform atrocities in a conditioned, routine manner, then return home to their families and otherwise normal lives, seemingly unaffected by their gruesome 'job'. This is a form of selective disassociation. In her report on the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann, Hannah Arendt (1963: 3) famously labelled this 'routinisation' and 'normalisation' of inhumane acts as the "banality of evil". This labels the ability to perform abnormal, heinous acts as though they are 'normal', 'legal' and even 'mundane'. Arendt (1963: 135) provides this account of Eichmann's rationalisation:

This is the way things were, this was the new law of the land, based on the Fuehrer's order; whatever he did he did, as far as he could see, as a law-abiding citizen. He did his duty, as he told the police and the court over and over again; he not only obeyed orders, he also obeyed the law.

(236) This **dehumanizes** both the prisoners and the guards, leading **otherwise normal** Americans to act as sadists.

*www.albertmohler.com* (19/12/05)

(237) Eichmann is a significant contribution to the growing body of work that stresses that practitioners of genocide come from the ranks of normal, ordinary people. [...] What really matters are the pernicious effects of processes that **dehumanise** the 'other' and disable inhibitions against killing. "Anyone subject to these processes," he writes, "might have behaved in the same way, be it in a totalitarian state or a democracy."

*http://www.theage.com.au/news/Reviews/Eichmann-His-life-and-crimes*  
(24/12/04)

The rationalisation that perpetrators of evil are ‘just following orders’ might have its basis in the Judaeo-Christian (Romans 13: 1-7) belief that:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

In contemporary discourse, this belief is often paraphrased as: *people must obey the laws of the land*. In this way, *dehumanising* people, war, and other social abuses, can be justified by the manipulation of laws and religious belief.

McShea (1978: 45) states that to *dehumanise* is a “blunting of normal human feeling and of the general human morality which rests on that feeling”. As discussed above, to *dehumanise* is often explained as a coping mechanism or adaptive function. Bernard (1964: 52) claims that to *dehumanise* is a “defense against painful feelings of fear, inadequacy, compassion, guilt or shame in connection with one’s behavior towards others”. This rationale is explicated as: *it is not bad if something happens to Y because of this*.

(238) It’s very easy to **dehumanise** an ‘enemy’, thus enabling ordinary people to commit atrocities against their now no-longer ‘human’ foes.

<http://dev.null.org/cgi-bin> (12/08/04)

(239) Indoctrination and a shallow nature would have ensured that we **dehumanised** them and could not empathise with them. With the appropriate indoctrination it could still happen today, as it did in NAZI Germany. I may at times feel like committing murder, though it is overridden by my feelings of compassion because I am able to empathise.

<http://www2.abc.net.au/science/descent/posts/topic750.shtm> (19/12/05)

As explained in the explication, the agent perceives the target as *very bad*. Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 143) exemplify this attitude in the following example, that presents

the target as *something bad*, an annoyance, danger or threat, suggesting: *I need to do something to Y*. (Also note the euphemism of *kill* as *neutralise*).

I disengage from the fact that this is a human being and it becomes an object that is shooting and threatening the situation. I neutralised him and he no longer does what he does and won't do it in the future.

To *dehumanise* can have severe psychological and physical effects on the target, suggesting a perlocutionary effect: *when this happens, Y feels something very bad*. Richards (1999: 117) states, "victims come to think of themselves as inferior and unworthy of respect, and victimizers come to think of themselves as superior and as deserving to do what they wish and to control those under their power". This suggests the adjectival form: *Y feels dehumanised*.

(240) The abuse became progressively worse, he **dehumanised** me, I became a non-person. I was so ashamed and humiliated.

<http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/Personal/Anna.htm> (19/12/05)

(241) Lockups and isolation have the habit of **dehumanizing** prisoners by making them feel anonymous, and breeding ill feelings because of their rejection and condemnation by society as a whole."

[www.uplink.com.au/lawlibrary/Documents/Docs/Doc82](http://www.uplink.com.au/lawlibrary/Documents/Docs/Doc82) (24/03/04)

Goffman (1961: 21) describes the "mortification of self" that occurs when a person is admitted to a mental hospital, and points to several factors that may be critical in *dehumanising* a patient. This is the loss of identity and individualism. For example, the removal of personal possessions and the use of uniform institutional clothing. This also extends to incarceration, revealing that *dehumanise* has connections with *oppress*, implying restricted freedom and imposed control. LeMoncheck (1985: 31-32) states that people are "moral equals of other persons, thus in a morally legitimate position to act autonomously in the world". To *dehumanise* impedes this expected autonomy, the individual's civil rights. The following usages also explain that *dehumanise* implies deprivation and maltreatment, both psychological and physical. This suggests that there's a prototypical way of treating people in society, and that *dehumanise* involves *the kinds of things that people shouldn't do to other people*.

(242) Slavery **dehumanizes** humans. Slaves are stripped of all the other things humans know, age, parents, heritage, etc.

<http://www.people.vcu.edu/~awood/classes/awood/> (08/05/03)

(243) The Nazis stole all of the Jew's belongings. When the trains arrived at the camp, the doomed passengers were separated from their families never to see them again, their heads were shaven and a number was tattooed on each individual's skin. This process efficiently **dehumanised** the prisoners very quickly.

<http://www.dover-web.co.uk/20thcentury/1945-holocaust.asp> (17/12/05)

LeMoncheck (1985: 32) asserts that *dehumanising* people via incarceration or slavery involves the 'confiscation' of independence, the target retains "their distinctive human capacities, but is simply kept from exercising them". This negates the traditional lexicographical definition of *dehumanise* as to "deprive someone of human qualities", but strengthens the idea that it is to restrict the human rights of the individual, and the agent's perception of the target as: *not like me in any way*.

The act of *dehumanising* is strongly socially reproached. When we employ this word, to label an act, we indirectly condemn this behaviour: *It is very bad to dehumanise*.

(244) The use of a closed system of detention is part of a systematic attempt to **dehumanise** refugees and asylum seekers.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human\\_rights](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights) (24/03/04)

(245) **Dehumanising** people is the worst of all crimes.

[www.avforums.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-98495.html](http://www.avforums.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-98495.html) (18/09/05)

### 3.1.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

Sociologist Zimbardo (1970: 20-26) has made a theoretical contribution to our understanding of *dehumanise*, by identifying four prototypical situations in which the act is likely to occur, and the accompanying functions for the agent. Each of these

scenarios is captured within the NSM explication. These four categories are: 1. a socio-occupational structure of imposed dehumanisation, for example, job situations that impose impersonal, *dehumanised* relationships upon workers (*It is like Y is not a person*); 2. *dehumanisation* for self-gratification (e.g., the exploitation of others, solely for one's own gain, pleasure, or entertainment) (*I can do anything to Y*); 3. *dehumanisation* as a means to an end (i.e., the abuse or destruction of groups of people who are seen as obstacles in the achievement of some greater cause), (*It is not bad if something happens to Y because of this*); and 4. *dehumanisation* in self-defense (i.e., the adaptive use of techniques to control disruptive emotional responses in order to perform some necessary service), (*Y is very bad; Y is not like me in any way*). There is some overlapping of these aspects and the relationship with the explication components. Note that these acts can both be performed by an individual or group, against a target individual or group.

Typologically, every form involves the agent's dissociation from the target and a lack of empathy (*I can do anything to Y*, and, *It is not bad if something happens to Y because of this*). This results in the target being perceived as *not human* or something unimportant in the way that a human is important. Seabright and Schminke (2002: 24) propose an analogous distinction between what they see as two sub-sets of *dehumanisation*: *demonisation* and *objectification*.

One route to dehumanization is to dispossess the other of human characteristics and replace these with 'bad' traits; then, this process of stripping away humanness creates an objectified view of the other.

This is to perceive the target as *very bad: not like me in any way*, and *like Y is not a person*. Also encompassing *demonise* and *objectify* is *dehumanise* achieved through semiotic representation. This is a social phenomenon whereby a symbol is allocated to a target group as an imposed form of identification. Through propaganda, the symbol develops negative connotations that are transferred to the target. The target is ultimately *dehumanised* by being metonymically 'reduced' to a symbol with negative connotations. Probably the most infamous example is the use of symbols during Nazi Germany. Riffenburg (2004: 37) provides details of this particular case.

Prisoners in Nazi concentration camps were labeled according to their 'crimes' by inverted colored triangles. 'Regular' criminals were denoted by a green triangle, political prisoners by red triangles and Jews by two overlapping yellow triangles (to form the Star of David, the most common Jewish symbol). Homosexual prisoners were labeled with pink triangles. Gay Jews, the lowest form of prisoner, had overlapping yellow and pink triangles.

In this way, symbols can be employed as potent symbols of hate, repression and ostracism, and *dehumanise* the target. However, as a shared meaning, the symbol is not intrinsically bound to any negative connotation. For example, the Herder Symbol Dictionary (1986) claims that the iconic Nazi swastika was once an ancient pagan symbol denoting natural elements (e.g., the sun, earth). In addition, the concentration camp 'pink triangle' was reclaimed by the Gay Liberation movement in the 1970s and is now regarded as an empowering symbol (Lin 1999). However, the 'yellow triangle', although based on the Jewish Star of David, was used in opposition to the meaning of the religious symbol. The symbol developed a discrete, negative meaning that has not ameliorated.

(246) The Nazis **dehumanised** the Jewish people by forcing them to wear a corrupted symbol of the Star of David.

*www.nizkor.org* (10/11/05)

As we have investigated, *dehumanise* can involve semiotic, linguistic and physical expressions. The act is prototypically defined as: to psychologically divest someone of human characteristics, to de-personify a target in order to maltreat them. *Dehumanising* refers to an act executed against a human target and cannot be perpetrated against non-human animals or inanimate objects. All of the following acts *dehumanise*, but when the target is non-human, the sentence is nonsensical.

\*He **dehumanised** the car by treating it like his 'property'.

He **dehumanised** his wife by treating her like his 'property'.

\*Zoos **dehumanise** animals by keeping them in captivity.

The government **dehumanised** the refugees by keeping them in detention centres.

The appropriate terminology also reveals semantic differences. While both phrases imply restricted freedom, a human cannot be *kept in captivity* while an animal cannot be *kept in a detention centre*. Although a non-human animal can be referred to by a gender specific pronoun (usually pets or zoo animals but also in the personification of limited objects such as cars and ships, specifically as *she*), *dehumanise* is unacceptable in the following marked usage.

\*She **dehumanised** her cat by having him de-sexed.

They **dehumanised** these people by sterilising them.

Again, some terminology is specific to non-human animals, such as to *de-sex*, *spay* and *neuter*. A construction such as \*they wanted to de-sex/neuter the sex offender is unacceptable, while *sterilise* is appropriate for any human or non-human animals capable of reproduction. However, all three terms signify a forced procedure, *having him sterilised* or *sterilising them*, unlike *hysterectomy* or *vasectomy*, which suggest necessity or an elective operation. The acts that *dehumanise* (e.g., *sterilise* rather than *have a hysterectomy*), suggest that the target experiences a loss of control and, as a result, something happens so that they cannot ‘perform’ as a human can, in some way. This is in keeping with the idea that to *dehumanise* somehow affects the target’s identity and sense that they are being treated in the way that a human ‘should’ treat a fellow human.

Clearly, *dehumanise* is a complex concept. For this reason, single word glosses inadequately capture the semantic structure of this term. There are related words that partially represent specific facets of *dehumanise* but cannot function as direct synonyms. Intuitively, what are these terms? To *dehumanise* can partly be perceived as to *denigrate*, to *lower* a target’s sense of worth. However, for full semantic retention, these terms cannot be transposed with *dehumanise*.

(247) He **denigrated** (\***dehumanised**) women by suggesting that men outperform women in maths and sciences because of biological differences.

*www.washingtonpost.com* (10/11/05)

The sentence supposes gender inequality but does not imply that women are 'not human'. The comment belittles the intelligence and capabilities of women but does not de-personify them or render them subhuman by this perceived difference.

*Dehumanise* also shares semantic parallels with *degrade*, as in to debase or humiliate. All of these terms suggest to *lower* although distinctions are apparent in usage.

(248) The firm **degraded** (\***dehumanised**) their long term employees by forcing them all to undergo drug testing.

[http://www.reconsider.org/issues/drug\\_testing/](http://www.reconsider.org/issues/drug_testing/) (10/11/05)

This example suggests that the employees felt they were considered untrustworthy by their employer. It also implies a sense of being controlled, as though they were being treated as irresponsible. The obligatory test renders the employees powerless and encroaches upon their privacy, but not their sense of humanity. *Dehumanise* is also related to *debase*. *Debase* is polysemous but one sense is to *lower* in character, quality, or value. However, there are still subtle semantic differences.

He **debased** (\***dehumanised**) her by calling her a prostitute.

The above sentence suggests that the agent offended the dignity of the patient, lowering her sense of pride but not her sense of humanity. Also related to *debase* and *dehumanise* is *humiliate*. The meanings are clearly demarcated, suggesting disgrace and embarrassment rather than depersonalisation or *dehumanisation*.

The Board **humiliated** (\***dehumanised**) the CEO by demoting him.

*Dehumanise* is also related to *devalue*, implying the depreciation of worth.

(249) The internet has made trawling for employees so easy that it has greatly **devalued** (\***dehumanised**) them in the eyes of the employer.

[www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au) (10/11/05)

The above sentence suggests that the over-supply of potential employees has decreased their 'value' and made them expendable, but not deprived them of any human characteristics. *Objectify* is also comparable to *dehumanise*.

He **objectified** (\***dehumanised**) her by seemingly talking to her breasts.

In the above example, the agent gives offence to the patient by appearing preoccupied with a part of her anatomy, rather than concentrating on the discourse content. While this behaviour may be perceived as disrespectful, rude, sexist and metonymically reduces the patient to a body part, it is not *dehumanising*. LeMoncheck (1985: 30-31) notes that *dehumanise* is not necessarily to *objectify*, "real objects cannot be starved or feel pain or value creating their own working environments", that, the *dehumanised* is not treated in all respects, or even in many respects, like objects". The author further differentiates the two forms, to *dehumanise* is "to treat people as objects, but not as persons, while other forms of distancing, e.g. an artist basing a sculpture on a model, is to treat people as objects, but also as persons".

As has been discussed above (3.1.1), *dehumanise* is polysemous, with a sense that refers to *brutalise*, and the sense that has been the focus of this section, to perceive a target as 'non-human'. As also noted, a third, concurrent sense refers to *depersonalise* or to *mechanise*.

(250) Email and text messaging **dehumanises** communication.

*www.personneltoday.com* (10/11/05)

This example suggests that email contact is an impersonal form of communication that removes the human factor of speech or personal interaction. This sense refers to technology and its effects on people, for example, when a customer complains they are treated as a 'number', rather than a valued, individualistic person. To *dehumanise* in this sense, is to 'replace' a human with technological aid and to 'take away' elements of human to human contact.

(251) There were early concerns that computers might alienate students and **dehumanise** the learning process.

*http://education.otago.ac.nz/NZLNet* (10/11/05)

(252) Luddites were in favor of taking hammers to destroy the machines being introduced in the beginnings of industrialization that began to **dehumanize** society.

*http://www.nanoonline.net/career/Sowers/c-ma-nd.htm* (16/03/04)

(253) Technology **dehumanises** banking. Banks recognise this, although it is rarely reported, and are driven by the reality that electronic transactions are a fraction of the cost of face-to-face.

*http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan* (10/11/05)

### 3.1.5 Metaphor and *dehumanise*

LeMoncheck (1985: 31) asserts that to *dehumanise* is to degrade human status “to the sort of thing which is considered unequal or inferior to other persons with respect to their human rights to freedom and well-being”. As Day and Vandiver (2000: 15) note, “Genocide is never performed on equals”.

To *dehumanise* is, by necessity, a figurative act. An agent can alter his or her perception, to conceive of a target as ‘not human’ or ‘less than human’, but regardless of how severely this is perpetrated and experienced, in no way does the act tangibly compromise the human condition. A person can *feel* as though they are being treated in a way that a human should not be treated, but this does not alter his or her corporal reality.

One of the most common processes by which we *dehumanise* is by designation (this topic will be more thoroughly treated in Chapter 5). We *dehumanise* with various rhetorical devices, especially by referring to people as non-human animals or objects. This can be linguistically conferring non-human status upon a human, to *say someone is something*. However, for a designation to *dehumanise*, it must be dysphemistic.

(254) These people are not members of that community, they are **parasites** on that community.

*St. Petersburg Times, 1/01/03*

Euphemistic or diminutive metaphorical designations do not *dehumanise*, unless they are perceived as sexist or demeaning.

\*She **dehumanises** her husband by calling him ‘teddy bear’.

They **dehumanise** the women in the office by calling them ‘cows’.

Pragmatic evidence may be required to determine the illocution of an utterance and whether it may be classified as to *dehumanise*, according to intention and interpretation. The discourse features of equatives and deferred reference (Ward and Nunberg 1979, Ward and Tilsen 2002) are examples of expressions that refer to an entity not denoted by the conventional meaning of that expression. Ward (2000) states that this usage employs reference mapping via the identification of salient characteristics, rather than meaning transfer. While equatives and deferred reference employ the use of reference points in a non-dehumanising manner, some metaphorical referencing can certainly *dehumanise*.

Metaphor in language can be used to *dehumanise* a target. Day and Vandiver (2000: 53) note that “the role of hateful speech in dehumanization processes is recognized by all genocide scholars”. Greenberg et al. (1998: 78) assert that Derogatory Ethnic Labels (DELS) are a common method of *dehumanising*. These metaphors present the target as *very bad, not like* (the agent) *in any way*, and *like* (the target) *is not a person*. Scholarly research has revealed the prevalence of this phenomenon, particularly during conflict. In this way, it is employed as a tool of propaganda. Shay (1995: 35) cites an example from the Vietnam War (1957-1975):

The Vietnamese were thought of as monkeys, insects, vermin, childlike, unfeeling automata, puny. . .inscrutable, uniquely treacherous, deranged, physiologically inferior, primitive, barbaric and devoted to fanatical suicide charges. Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that American soldiers had the (unofficial) ‘mere gook rule’ which declared that killing a Vietnamese civilian did not really count.

Many industries have their own specialised, covert jargon or terminology to refer to customers and clients. Some terms may be humorous, for example, it is believed that flight attendants refer to passengers as *geese* [this may have originated with a

reference in the Stephen King short story *The Langoliers* (1990)]. However, the use of dysphemistic, *dehumanising* language is currently a significant ethical issue within the medical industry. Many internal industry reports reveal the incidence of medical staff referring to their patients metonymically, according to diagnosis or hospital room number. Smith observes, “Physicians refer to patients by their diseases, not by their names” (1995: 62).

A designation may even be derogatory in itself, for example, to refer to a patient as *the schizophrenic* or *the manic-depressive* (Grover 1997: 71). This seems to be a ‘coping mechanism’ for the agent, so they are prepared to *do anything to Y* (e.g., surgery, treating the body as ‘parts’, rather than a feeling, thinking person) and are prepared for the eventuality that *something bad can happen to Y* (e.g., complications, death). Of course, these examples do not have the malicious intent of prototypical *dehumanise*.

Metaphorical designations are usually based on a salient feature of a patient and may employ metonymy, synecdoche or deferred reference. As a referential tool, a designation must be relevant and appropriate to the situation. A matron may direct her nurse to *give 5mg of diazepam to room 7*, surgical staff might refer to a patient as *room 7* or perhaps by their condition, *the appendicitis*, or the procedure to be performed, *this is the laparoscopy*. Furthermore, metaphorical designation in this environment, unless ironic, is never equative. For example, in response to being asked to provide identification details by a nurse, a patient would not self-referentially say *\*I am the tonsillectomy*.

In this context, the use of such language in a medical setting is of particular concern as condition-related designations *dehumanise* the patient, perceiving the patient as *being* their illness and emphasising the object of anxiety (Smith 1995). This suggests that: *it is like* (the patient) *is not a person*. The practice can also *mechanise* a person, reducing them by synecdoche to a defective, broken or deficient *body part*. However, given the possible unethical, inappropriate nature of the practice, many institutions are taking a stance against such conduct.

(255) Individuals should not refer to patients by their illness, injury, diseased organ, planned technique or procedure or by any other designation that **dehumanises** the patient and fails to regard them as a whole person.

[www.mc.uky.edu/dentistry/Dentistry/clinicmanual0405.pdf](http://www.mc.uky.edu/dentistry/Dentistry/clinicmanual0405.pdf) (10/11/05)

It is difficult to determine the illocution of an utterance without contextual information. While the use of metaphor to refer to patients may have pragmatic referential functions and be justified as a system to retain patient confidentiality, it is more often perceived as impersonal, insensitive, *dehumanising*, inappropriate and, most dangerously, to tempt error.

(256) Check patient ID bracelets or armbands and never refer to a patient as a bed number! An Australian hospital reported that one of their patients recently received a dose of metronidazole IV that had been prescribed for another patient who had previously occupied that bed.

<http://www.ismp.org/MSAarticles/Calendar/Sept01.html> (10/11/05)

Euphemistic metaphor, especially in reference to objects or concepts, can also be employed as a psychological tool. As discussed in 3.1.4, *dehumanise* can be used as a coping mechanism, for both agent and target, in a stressful and fearful environment. In what may be an unorthodox usage, the below example illustrates the positive usage of medical metaphor in 'role-playing', presenting a restaurant 'frame' as a familiar reference point for patients. This example still has the underlying theme of *something bad*, but has a euphemistic, rather than dysphemistic illocutionary force.

(257) In the Medical Day Unit where I work, we jokingly refer to patients coming in for Chemotherapy as 'dinner guests'. The 'menu' (chemotherapy) offers a variety of 'choices' (different drugs) - and we can offer 'appetizers' (anti-nausea drugs) for those that did not 'eat at home' (take them before they came.) Although this is done quite tongue-in-cheek, it actually is a good way to explain the different roles we all take.... And allows us to take something that is often scary, and 'reduce' it to a more mundane pastime.... The Oncologist is the Maitre d', the nurse is the waitress and the pharmacy staff view themselves as the kitchen staff (cooks and bottle washers...) We are all there to support the 'Dinner Guest' - for, without his/her attendance, there would be no 'restaurant'. <http://www.indiana.edu/~hperf656> (06/08/04)

## 3.2 *demonise*

**We demonize the enemy so that our opponent is no longer human. We view ourselves, our people, as the embodiment of absolute goodness.**

Chris Hedge (2003: 38)

To *demonise* (-ize) is to portray a target as *something very bad*. As suggested by the form of the word, the target is represented as a metaphorical, social ‘demon’, someone evil, sinful or immoral. This is primarily a social judgement, based on the behaviour of the target. *Demonise* is, in effect, an accusation of ‘bad behaviour’ and is therefore a synchronic reflection of social morals, ethics and bias. Stahelski (2004: 83) asserts that “Since most cultures define “good” in comparison to “evil,” demonizing is a widely available social psychological conditioning strategy”.

Two further important semantic facets of *demonise* include the element of dissemination and the hyperbole involved in the accusation. White (2004: 400) explains this latter facet as “exaggerating the evil”. To *demonise* can be an individual act but it is typically collective. It is invariably a public act, and is suggestive of propaganda and subjectivism. White (2004: 408) identifies the act as “the primary tool of war. War requires a supporting emotion, either love or hate” and *demonising* a group acts as a persuasive motivation for conflict. As we are starting to see, *demonise* represents someone’s opinion, but more importantly, the way they *want* other people to think about someone.

*Demonise* is polysemous, with a sense that forms part of the register of Christian belief. Passantino (1999: 3) claims that *demonisation* is the current preferred term to ‘demonic possession’ and *demonising* “refers to a continuum of influence and/or control by demons”. This section focuses on the discrimination-related sense of *demonise*, although this religious sense does provide interesting semantic insight into the good/bad dichotomy of this act, and this will be discussed in further detail in 3.2.5.

### 3.2.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *demonise*

To *demonise* is, in essence, a metaphorical act. A useful definition needs to focus on the act, rather than the allusions of the word’s etymology. The OED defines *demonise* as:

To make into, or like, a demon; to render demoniacal; to represent as a demon.

The first clause concentrates on the metaphorical and simile-based aspects of the word's origins. The second clause is obscured by archaic, stylistic words (render, demoniacal) and the third is a superfluous clause that would better function as the entire definition. Overall, this entry uses the nominal form, which doesn't explain the actual meaning of *demon*, or *demonise*. Reflecting that *demonise* is not an 'everyday' word, The *Longman Dictionary* does not include an entry for this word. The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* defines *demonise* as:

To try to make (someone or a group of people) seem as if they are completely evil.

This definition is confusing to read and employs vague, literal phrasing (try to make) and a subjective assessment (completely evil). Although, it is couched in more simple terms, without using the root term as part of the definition. The *Collins English Dictionary* proposes this explanation:

To mark out or describe as evil and culpable.

While this definition accurately identifies blame as a causal factor of *demonise* (that has been overlooked by the other sources), it still uses complex, vague terms such as *evil* and *culpable*. A disjunction is used where the second phrase would be adequate. Furthermore, *mark out* is a metaphorical term that refers more to *stigmatise* rather than *demonise*. WordNet only provides a dialectal orthographical form without any glosses.

WordNet 1. demonize, demonise -- (make into a demon; "Power had demonized him")

The project includes a range of 'sister terms' to *demonise*, but these are based on the notion of a transformation (e.g., "to change, alter, modify" or other terms suggesting to *affect*). Clearly, none of these words are synonymous with *demonise*, and do not

even partly explain the meaning of this word. Using the NSM, below is an explication that attempts to accurately and clearly decompose the meaning of *demonise*.

### 3.2.2 NSM Explication of *demonise*

*X demonised Y*

- (a) X did something very bad to Y
- (b) X wanted many people to think about Y like this:
  - (c) "Y is very bad
  - (d) Y does very bad things to good people
  - (e) other people don't do very bad things like this"
- (f) because of this, people think about Y like they think about a very bad thing, not like they think about a person
- (g) X did this, not because X wanted other people to think something true
- (h) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

#### Explanation of components

A prototypical active usage prefaces the explication: agent person *X demonised* target person *Y*.

(a) This component explains that *demonise* is an event, an adverse act perpetrated against a target, something bad that someone does to someone.

(b) This introduces the prototypical cognitive scenario, and explains that this is a deliberate act (*X wanted...*) intended to negatively influence other's opinions of *Y*. To manipulate the opinion of other people, *X* disseminates the following portrayal of *Y*:

(c) *X* portrays *Y* as *very bad*. The intensifier emphasises the negative opinion. There is no reference to *someone* or *person*, which would humanise the target. *Y* is labelled as *bad*, rather than of bad character.

(d) This is an accusation. *X* claims that *Y* exhibits bad behaviour: *Y does very bad things*. This also implies that there are innocent victims of the agent's actions: *Y* does

these bad things *to good people*. That this behaviour is not representative of *good people* suggests that the target is somehow immoral. This also displays an ‘us and them’ mindset, there are *good people*, like ‘us’ (X), and *bad people*, like ‘them’ (Y).

(e) X compares Y’s behaviour to that of ‘other people’, suggesting that Y is aberrant, exhibiting abnormal behaviour that is uncharacteristic of the average person. This line implies that a ‘normal’ person is not capable of the kind of things that Y does. This also suggests *outrage* or *anger* on the behalf of the agent.

(f) As a result of the agent’s act, other people can be influenced to perceive Y as inhuman, as a *very bad thing*, not a ‘normal, good’ person. This is akin to propaganda. Like nominal *demon*, the target is now seen as some sort of bad, unhuman-like entity, without the moral qualities expected in a person. X’s actions successfully affect other people’s perception of Y so that they adopt a negative perspective of the target.

(g) The agent’s representation of the target is an exaggerated portrayal, suggesting that the agent has an ‘agenda’. Y is depicted as ‘worse’ than the reality. To *demonise* imparts a perception that is not accurate. This is what the agent *wants* other people to believe, rather than a representation of the truth.

(h) This final component is a social evaluation representing the speaker’s attitude that to *demonise* is socially reproached behaviour.

### 3.2.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

To *demonise* is a negative act performed against a specific target: *X did something very bad to Y*. This act is a deliberate attempt to disseminate a negative perception of the target, in order to influence opinion: *X wanted many people to think about Y like this*.

(258) The media **demonized** Hoover, to the point of characterizing him as a closet drag queen who sold his soul to the Mafia because it had photographs of him in drag.

<http://metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/08.07.97/mlkj-9732.html> (12/03/05)

- (259) The media **demonizes** feminists by portraying them as crazy, ill-tempered, ugly, man-hating, family wrecking, hairy legged, bra-burning, radical lesbians. (Lind and Salo 2002: 218)

To *demonise* is a public act, and presupposes an audience. We can *publicly demonise* someone, but not \*privately demonise them. The act is performed in a public forum (e.g., newspapers, public meetings, online), and this portrayal is widely advertised.

- (260) Michael Jackson is planning to escape his native America and move to Berlin, Germany after the media **publicly demonised** him during his child abuse trial. <http://www.contactmusic.com/> (12/10/05)

- (261) The government has systematically sought to undermine public sympathy for refugees seeking asylum, **demonising** and **representing them to the public** as 'illegals' or as 'queue jumpers'. <http://www.thebetterway.info/documents/> (06/08/05)

Scott (2005: 172) explains that *demonise* is invariably a negative portrayal, "To demonize is to represent as evil or diabolic, such as any enemy during time of war". The act advertises the alleged 'bad character and behaviour' of the target: *Y is very bad* and *Y does very bad things to good people*. It is critical, accusatory and presents the target as deviant. Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 144) assert that "the ascription of evil or demonic attributes to enemies, or their portrayal as forces with unnatural powers, contributes to the emergence of fear and hate and to the use of uncontrolled violence in such acts as atrocities". In this way, *demonise* capitalises on the hearer(s) limited familiarity with and understanding of the target. The agent exploits this lack of information to establish a negative image of the target. In the following examples, the target is described respectively as depraved (262), sinful (263), dangerous (264), and a selfish, non-contributing member of society (265). As we can see, there is a wide range of 'offences'.

(262) The MCB website **demonises** same-sex relationships as ‘offensive’, ‘immoral’ and ‘repugnant’.

*http://www.petertatchell.net/politics/sacranie.htm* (06/08/05)

(263) One extreme **demonizes** homosexuals at every turn, making homosexuality the unforgivable sin.

*http://www.ethicsdaily.com/article\_detail.cfm?AID=3398* (06/08/05)

(264) The government **demonises** asylum seekers as a threat to Australian society.

*www.greenleft.org* (06/08/05)

(265) The Government’s approach is to present its draconian plan as caring for the individual while in practice **demonising** people on social security and unemployment payments as shiftless and lazy.

*Welfare replaced by exploitation, Marcus Browning, The Guardian, 5/04/00*

Indicating an ‘us and them’ attitude, *demonise* involves the evaluative semantic primes *good* and *bad*. These are subjective markers. In reference to the current conflict between the Middle East and the United States, Lee (2004: 484) states “George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden demonize each other as evil, portraying human history in terms of the clashes of good and evil”. To *demonise* reveals a biased *good* vs. *bad* dichotomy: *X is very good, therefore Y is very bad*. Using an example of resistance groups or guerrilla movements as ‘good’ and the opposing organised military as ‘bad’, Schirmer (2003: 63) asserts “We can either romanticize those we are certain represent good and demonize those we know to be evil”. To *demonise* depicts the target as a social deviant, implying that a ‘normal’ *good* person is incapable of the anti-social *bad* behaviour exhibited by the target: *other people don’t do very bad things like this*. In this way, the agent dissociates the target from society, presenting the target as the *other*.

(266) The culture is **demonised** as inherently evil and backward, predisposed to denigrating women as sexual objects.

*The media’s obsession with race sheds no light on crime, The Age, 24/07/02*

(267) It is easy, to **demonise** people whom you see as being completely alien.  
**Demonising** the ‘other’ has become all too popular since 11 September.  
<http://www.newstatesman.com/Arts/200210070028> (01/10/04)

(268) It’s pretty easy to **demonise** people who advocate suicide bombing and attacking cafes filled with teenagers.  
<http://episteme.arstechnica.com/> (29/10/04)

Seabright and Schminke (2002: 63) explain that an agent “demonizes the other by imputing sinister or Subhuman Characteristics”. As argued so far, to *demonise* is an attempt to influence social perception, presenting the target as *very bad*. Moreover, the agent depicts the target as ‘unhuman’ in their capacity for malevolence. In usage, metaphors and similes label the target with epithets suggesting an evil, inhuman entity: Y is a *demon*, *monster* or *beast*. The usage of modifiers reveals a similarity to polysemous *demonise* with religious allusions of the target as *bad*, the *demonized* is *evil*, *immoral* or *sinful* (Synchronically, *wicked* is now surpassed in salience by its colloquial form, a paradoxical usage referring to *something good*). Presenting the target as evil (i.e., *something very bad*) is explicated as: *because of this, people think about Y like they think about a very bad thing, not like they think about a person*. This also represents a perlocutionary effect, that *demonise* suggests the successful influence of public opinion.

(269) Society **demonized** him as this hideous, evil **monster**.  
[www.unexplained-mysteries.com/forum](http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/forum) (29/10/04)

(270) Among other things, the church unfairly **demonises** homosexuality and divorce. These are ‘illicit’, ‘**sinful**’ acts.  
[www.rodneycroome.id.au](http://www.rodneycroome.id.au) (29/10/04)

(271) This is the successful **demonising** of the black male as **beast-like**.  
[mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list](mailto:mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list) (29/10/04)

As revealed by these usages, to label an act as *demonise* presupposes that the target’s reputation has been somehow impaired. To accomplish *demonise*, a third party must

be influenced, suggesting: *when X does this, other people think something very bad about Y*. This facet is often expressed by way of adverbial phrases *successfully demonise* or *effectively demonise*.

(272) The antiwar movement successfully **demonized** Vietnam veterans.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1142432/posts> (29/10/04)

Just as we cannot literally ‘turn a person into a demon’, prototypical *demonise* is an exaggerated negative perception of the target. Williams (2003: 435) explains that *demonise* is “where the (perceived) wrongness of outcomes is projected onto someone who is at most only partly guilty”. Using the label *demonise* calls into question the validity and truth of the agent’s act. The explication indicates this as: *X did this, not because X wanted other people to think something true*. The agent *wants* other people to think a certain way about the target, regardless of truth or fairness. This also implies that the agent is somehow biased against the target. Pragmatically, this facet can appear as a split infinitive to *unfairly demonise* or *wrongly demonise* someone.

(273) He agreed it was important not to **unfairly demonize** Mexican migrants.

“They see monsters and ghosts where there really are none”, he said.

<http://www2.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/> (29/10/04)

(274) They were trying to construct HIV/AIDS as an exclusively homosexual disease to **wrongly demonise** gay people.

*Vatican’s Last Word on Safe Sex – No*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2/04/03

Labelling an act as *demonise* is reproachful of this behaviour. When we claim *X demonised Y*, we condemn the agent. This is explicated as a social evaluation: *people think: it is very bad to do something like this*. Therefore, the *demonised* target is portrayed as a victim of injustice.

(275) Don’t **demonise** people with mental health problems or label them all as ‘dangerous’ or use other derogatory expressions like ‘psycho’ or ‘nutter’.

<http://www.drc-gb.org/wales/newsroom/> (29/10/04)

(276) The Archbishop of Canterbury called on Christians and Muslims to **stop demonising** each other.

<http://trushare.com/46MAR99/mr99refo.htm> (29/10/04)

That *demonising* is socially reproached is reflected in examples where the actor denies an accusation. Furthermore, if an agent thinks that the act is warranted, they would deny the label of *demonise*, which suggests the act is not warranted.

(277) The BBC has rejected Israeli accusations of anti-Semitism and denied “**demonizing**” the Jewish state in its broadcasts.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/07/02/1056825462703.html> (29/10/04)

### 3.2.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

To *demonise* is to represent a person, object or concept as *someone or something very bad*, as inhuman or evil. It is the act of ascribing ‘evil’ qualities to, to metaphorically *turn someone or something into a demon*. As a *demon* is a mythical portrayal of evil, to *demonise* is to *depict as evil*. It is invariably an intentional act, the agent *wants many people to think about Y like this*. A construction such as \*He didn’t mean to demonise them is unacceptable. Rather, it is a deliberate act to advance an aim or ulterior motive. Therefore, the act can be likened to the dissemination of *propaganda*. That it is a premeditated act is evidenced by prefacing phrasal verbs, X *tried to*, *sought to*, *attempted to*, or X *campaigned to demonise Y*.

(278) We protest against the racist government that **tries to demonise** us in front of the Australian people’s eyes.

<http://adelaide.indymedia.org/newswire/display/5365> (29/10/04)

While *demonise* and *propagandise* are both deliberate acts to manipulate and influence opinion, the terms are semantically discrete. Like *demonise*, to *propagandise* can present a negative slant, to deprecate an image.

(279) The organisation **demonised (propagandised)** the medical industry to claim that vaccines are more harmful than good.

*www.skeptics.com.au* (29/10/04)

However, *propaganda* can also present a positive slant, to enhance an image of a negative concept.

(280) The media **propagandises** (\*demonises) the public to approve of war. The media and the government sanitize war.

*http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article6165.htm* (29/10/04)

(281) To increase morale during WWI, the German **propaganda** (\*demonisation) machine inaccurately reported that the allies were losing the war.

*www.supranet.com* (29/10/04)

Unlike *propagandise*, *demonise* never presents a positive perspective or image.

\*To publicise and increase membership, they **demonised** the Girl Guides.

To *demonise* can be an element of *propaganda* (using different word classes), but it is invariably a tool of negative, not positive propaganda.

(282) One must resort to the kind of **propaganda** first perfected during World War I: **demonize** the enemy specifically by race or nationality or culture.

*http://rhetorica.net/* (29/10/04)

However, both terms condemn the acts, and imply manipulation and misinformation. To *demonise* is invariably reproached by use of the label, while both 'positive' and negative *propagandise* is perceived as misleading and biased. They suggest a biased perspective, and

To *demonise* is to *make evil*, to *worsen*. However, the target cannot be someone or something that is traditionally and collectively perceived as completely innocuous.

\*They **demonised** Santa Claus.

Without quantification, the statement is nonsensical. An innocuous target cannot be *demonised* unless the usage is ironic or stylistic.

They **demonised** the Easter Bunny as a trespassing, teeth-rotting, oversized hare.

The agent may perceive the target to be *something* or *someone bad*, but to *demonise*, a target must be comparatively innocuous to a traditional perception. The target must be *made to appear worse* than it is in reality: *Y is not as bad as this*.

(283) PETA have attempted to **demonise** the Australian wool industry by portraying sheep farmers as uncaring, faceless corporations who are quite happy to conduct “barbaric acts of cruelty” like mulesing for the sake of a few extra bucks.

<http://www.gravett.org/yobbo> (29/10/04)

As illustrated by the following questionable sentences, it reads as semantically erroneous on an intuitive basis to *demonise* a person, act, product or concept that is traditionally and collectively perceived as *evil* (this will be further discussed in 3.2.6).

?The vicar’s sermon **demonised** Satan.

?When he addressed the jury, the barrister tried to **demonise** murder.

?The book **demonised** Hitler and other genocidists.

?The law is trying to **demonise** school drug dealers.

*Villainise* (-ize) is a comparative term to *demonise*, both alleging the ‘bad character’ of a target. However, *villainise* is a less severe act as opposed to *demonise*. *Villainise* is semantically closer to *defame* and *malign* and portrays a person or person-related concept as a *villain*, or *criminal* (Derived from the stem *villain*, this is a more stylistic, archaic form, that is more tempered in modern usage, like *scoundrel*, *rogue*, *crook* or *thug*). In usage, *villainise* refers to people or people-related concepts but never objects. This may be resultant of the perception of *villainise* as to make into a *villain*, a human character, rather than *demonise*, from *demon*, a conceptual character.

Protesters **demonised/villainised** doctors in abortion clinics.

(284) It's just not good to **demonize** (\*villainise) the tobacco leaf.

<http://www.tobacco.org/quotes.php> (29/10/04)

The equivalent term *demonify* exists, although it is more often found online or in speech and is not formalised or listed as an entry in lexicographical sources.

(285) At times he seems to **demonify** drug use, to show the nasty effects it can have.

[project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/drugs\\_in\\_neuromancer.html](http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/drugs_in_neuromancer.html) (29/10/04)

It appears that *demonify*, to turn into a *demon*, developed as an antonymic form to *deify*, to turn into a *deity*, just as *demonise* is somewhat polemic to *humanise* or *idolise* [see 3.2.5].

Many sources compare *dehumanise* to *demonise*, suggesting that both are tactics employed as coping mechanisms for war (Grossman 1995). Bar and Ben-ari (2005: 142) differentiate the two terms:

In the scholarly literature there appear to be two ways to construct such distancing: dehumanisation, implying the negation of enemies' humanity, and demonisation, entailing the attribution of evil characteristics to their image. Despite certain confusion between the two, each distancing mechanism is accompanied by different emotions and implies different ways of behaving.

The authors further claim that "dehumanisation is usually not accompanied by demonisation of the other side. The objectification is there, but enemies are not perceived as evil and so emotions of hate and disgust are not usually created". Moreover, *dehumanise* necessarily entails a human target whereas we can *demonise* objects.

We shouldn't **demonise** (\***dehumanise**) alcohol as the cause of society's problems.

Such usage depicts a product or article as comparatively *worse* than it is and potentially as a *scapegoat* for a problem.

(286) Confectionery accounts for no more than 2% of anyone's diet. The thing that drives obesity is lifestyle and it's wrong to **demonise** confectionery.

*The Guardian (London) 19/05/04*

(287) Defining some drugs as 'illegal' and **demonising** the users has not eliminated their use.

<http://www.adf.org.au/pdac/pdac-3.3.html> (29/10/04)

This usage has the intent of lowering the perception or reputation of something and is akin to *denigrate*. A search of the Collins Word Bank corpus illustrates the broad usage of *demonise* in reference to something: *demonise cigarettes*, *demonise genetically modified crops* (often likened to an unnatural, aberrant creation and labelled as *Frankenfood*), *demonise the wool industry*, *demonise sharks*, *demonise the nuclear family*, *demonise casual employment*, *demonise carbohydrates*, *demonise globalisation*, *demonise counterfeit goods*, *demonise the union movement*.

Joppke (1993: 24) proposes that, as an exclusory mechanism, collective *demonise* can be a unifying force for the agent, "While "irrational" from an external viewpoint, demonization is instrumental for providing group cohesion and a collective identity". This strengthens the *us and them* dynamic and the dichotomy of *we are something good, they are something bad*. Fiske et al (2004: 1482) "One of the most basic principles of social psychology is that people prefer their own group and attribute bad behavior to outgroups".

(288) The evil Serb community was so **effectively demonized** by the electronic and print media of the West during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/mediterranean\\_quarterly/](http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/mediterranean_quarterly/) (29/10/04)

(289) The West **demonizes** the East and the East **demonizes** the West.

[www.blogs.salon.com/0002222](http://www.blogs.salon.com/0002222) (29/10/04)

Rowan and Bigum (2005: 7) further explain:

It is hardly surprising that Australia—like many other countries—has periodically demonised refugees, ‘illegal immigrants’, and those imprisoned in ‘detention centres’. This is one clear example of producing an ‘other’ to ensure the stability of the centre, in fundamentally troubled and troubling times.

### 3.2.5 Metaphor and *demonise*

*Demonise* is a literal act, with figurative allusions. Like *dehumanise*, to *demonise* (a human target) does not alter the physical reality of the target, only a third party’s perception. As humans with social systems of morals and ethics, someone who deviates from this order, to do *very bad things to good people*, is perceived as being ‘non-human’ in some way.

(290) And it bothers me when people try to **demonise** people who have done evil things. It’s theological really, I suppose: the difference between those who believe that any human is capable of anything, and those who believe that humans are so intrinsically good that something else must be happening to make them capable of doing something so terrible - like demonic possession or what have you.

<http://clanwilliam.livejournal.com/80040.html> (15/02/06)

To better understand the metaphor associated with *demonise*, we can consider the root lexeme. A *demon* is a fictional character found in theology, mythology and literature. Historically, *angels* and *demons* could be paradigmatically ‘good’ or ‘bad’, but in contemporary folklore an *angel* is exclusively ‘good’ while a *demon* is exclusively bad, and regarded as evil personified (Trimpi 2003). In accepted modern Christianity, *demons* were former *angels* that *fell*, to become adversaries. A *demon* is depicted as a malevolent, harmful and destructive force, *something very bad*, that *does very bad things to good people*. These bad creatures, like a *bad thing*, *not like a person*, are portrayed as physically grotesque. In a physiognomic interpretation (where the ‘inside’ personality is believed to reflect the ‘outside’ physicality), the physically

'ugly' appearance of a *demon* mirrors its metaphorically 'ugly' character. *Demons* are associated with *something very bad*, the theological concepts of *sin*, and the netherworld *Hell*, a fearful, eternal place of torment and devoid of redemption. Just as the notion of a *demon* incites fear of something bad, to *demonise* incites fear of *someone bad*.

The concept of a *demon* reveals metaphorical parallels with the act of *demonising*. As to *demonise* is to *make into a demon* or portray as *demonic* or evil, the act is metaphorically likened to the folkloric notion of a *demon*, depicting someone or something as irretrievably bad or sinful, inhuman, anti-social, destructive and 'ugly'. Bar and Ben-Ari (2005: 144) explain that to *demonise* portrays the target as something "malicious, repulsive and hideous". Therefore, when X *demonises* Y, X *wants people to think about them like they think about a very bad thing, not like they think about a person*. As discussed in 3.2.3, using metaphor and simile, the target is often labelled as a mythical, evil, non-human entity (e.g., *monster, beast* or *fiend*).

(291) Are you **demonising** him as a **bogeyman folk-devil**?

[www.home.vicnet.net.au/~ozlit/rev-9726.html](http://www.home.vicnet.net.au/~ozlit/rev-9726.html) (15/03/06)

(292) This **demonized** him as a **Frankenstein-like monster**.

[www.home.intekom.com/tm\\_info](http://www.home.intekom.com/tm_info) (15/03/06)

(293) Don't try to **demonise** me as a **horrid creature** wanting to enslave women.

[www.crusaderwarcollege.org/archives](http://www.crusaderwarcollege.org/archives) (15/03/06)

Hood (2002: 1) explains that 'evil' is a relative concept, and a subjective, social construct.

Demonising any class of people as devoid of humanity and beyond redemption is wrong. Currently any transgressor of under-age sex rules is branded a 'sexual predator', even when no violence or force is alleged, and even when the young person is a month or a day shy of the legal age of consent. In addition, society's fears and hatred of homosexuality often leads to a scapegoating of gay people, falsely stereotyping them as child molesters. Demonisation is destructive even when applied to violent offenders. Those

who commit truly violent crimes do not come out of a vacuum. They come out of our communities and families. To view dangerous offenders as totally 'other' than us prevents us getting to the roots of such crimes.

Hood's comments suggest that bad behaviour is still socialised in some way, that we are all a 'product' of our own environment. To *demonise* a target, when the agent perceives the target as 'too evil' to be 'human', is to deny that a human is capable of great evil. To *demonise* connotes that a perpetrator is 'abnormal' to the point of being unhuman-like. In contrast, contemporary researchers, including Fiske et al (2004: 1482), claim that any human is capable of great 'evil' (i.e., abuse, violence and aggression, by way of socio-psychological conditioning). The authors further assert that the various discriminatory processes, *dehumanise*, *demonise* and other words as treated in this thesis, form the very basis of the socialisation of 'abnormal', pathologically evil acts. As quoted in our discussion of *dehumanise* (3.1.3) Arendt (1963: 3) labels this the "banality of evil" (i.e. the systematic mentality whereby evil, unethical behaviour is normalised).

Poet Leonard Cohen (1964: 52) treats this phenomenon in the poem *All There Is To Know About Adolph Eichmann*, 'humanising' a figure who is traditionally *demonised*.

(294) EYES:.....Medium  
HAIR:.....Medium  
WEIGHT:.....Medium  
HEIGHT:.....Medium  
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:.....None  
NUMBER OF FINGERS:.....Ten  
NUMBER OF TOES:.....Ten  
INTELLIGENCE:.....Medium  
What did you expect?  
Talons?  
Oversize incisors?

Green saliva?

Madness?

This poem expresses that to *demonise* is indeed a metaphorical, rather than literal act. It further suggests the belief that an individual such as Eichmann must be somehow physically and /or psychologically abnormal, rather than an average, ordinary person capable of committing heinous crimes, with specific, psychological preparation and rationalisation. As Arendt (1968: 276) observes, “It would have been very comforting indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster. The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal”.

### 3.3 *marginalise*

**I must shoot straighter than my enemy, who is trying to marginalize me. I must refute him before he silences me.**

Full Metal Jacket

Burton and Kagan (2003: 11) assert that *marginalise* (-ize) is a “slippery and multi-layered concept”, adding that the topic is “strangely ignored” in much of the humanities literature. Certainly, *marginalise* is an abstract and semantically complex word that is often discussed in terms of metaphor. Considering the nominal form, Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001: 43) state “As a metaphor, marginalisation means that a person or group is perceived to be far from the center of a community or society, hence, in the margins”. As in the above usage quote, the act is expressed as to *silence*, or alternately, to *not hear* or *not see* an individual or group, the agent is *blind* to the needs and concerns of the target, who has no *voice*. The *powerful* agent is perceived as *inside* society, while the *weak, powerless* target is relegated *outside* of the ‘mainstream’.

To *marginalise* seems to reveal a relationship dynamic of majority versus minority. Is this an accurate portrayal, or are dominance and power more salient factors? Is the target always a minority group member, or can we *?marginalise the majority?* Burton and Kagan (2003: 4) explain the dynamic nature of *marginalise*.

Whole societies can be marginalized at the global level while classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order. Similarly, ethnic groups, families or individuals can be marginalized within localities. To a certain extent, marginalization is a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status. So, for example, individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at one point in time, but as social change takes place, so they lose this status and become marginalized. Similarly, as life cycle stages change, so might people's marginalized position.

From a sociological perspective, Berry (1970: 240) asserts that to *marginalise* reveals "a set of conditions characteristic of cultural contact between two groups, one dominant over another". Within this discipline, *marginalisation* is often referred to as a form of *deculturation*, especially of a minority or indigenous group. However, *marginalise* can be divided into two main categories. Leonard (1984: 181) classifies the first class as *voluntary social marginality*, for example, commune dwellers or members of religious sects. The second class experience *involuntary social marginality*, people who remain outside "the major arena of capitalist productive and reproductive activity". This section is concerned with this latter, imposed sense of *marginalise*.

*Marginalise* reflects inter-group relations on a synchronic level. The act can comprise minor instances of neglect, through to severe forms of subjugation. Young (1990: 53) argues that to *marginalise* is "perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression". It occurs when a "whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination".

### 3.3.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *marginalise*

The OED provides the following definition of *marginalise*.

To render or treat as marginal; to remove from the centre or mainstream; to force (an individual, minority group, etc.) to the periphery of a dominant social group; (*gen.*) to belittle, depreciate, discount, or dismiss.

This definition is too broad (belittle, depreciate), it has multiple superfluous clauses, and uses metaphorical phrases (treat as marginal, force to the periphery). The Longman Dictionary includes the following entry:

To make a person or a group of people unimportant and powerless in an unfair way.

This definition includes a redundant prepositional phrase. While *marginalise* certainly implies the target is *unimportant* and *powerless*, obviously this is invariably *unfair*. The *Cambridge Dictionary* presents the terse: “To treat someone or something as if they are not important”. This definition is also too broad. It is not difficult to think of examples where a person is treated as unimportant, but where the agent did not necessarily *marginalise* the target. To *marginalise* is semantically discrete and precise, and none of these definitions capture its exact semantic structure.

WordNet provides the following entry for *marginalise*.

1. marginalize, marginalise -- (relegate to a lower or outer edge, as of specific groups of people; “We must not marginalize the poor in our society”)

This example doesn’t account for an individual target, stating that only “specific groups” are affected by this act. Furthermore, as a solely metaphorical explanation, this overlooks the implication of neglect and disadvantage suggested by *marginalise*.

### 3.3.2 NSM Explication of *marginalise*

*X marginalised Y*

- (a) X did something very bad to Y
- (b) when X did this, it was like X was thinking at the same time:
- (c) “it is like Y is something small
- (d) because of this, it isn’t bad if people don’t think about Y”
- (e) because of this, people don’t do something for Y
- (f) when this happens, it is like Y isn’t a part of something
- (g) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

## Explanation of components

A prototypical usage: agent X *marginalises* target Y.

- (a) This is an event, the agent treated the target in an adverse way.
- (b) This act suggests the following cognitive elements:
- (c) The agent perceives the target as unimportant, minor and irrelevant, *like something small*.
- (d) The agent dismisses the target, Y is ignored and X does not feel compelled to be concerned about Y. The target is not considered to be of ‘social central importance’.
- (e) *Marginalise* results in the target being neglected and overlooked in some way.
- (f) This act results in the social exclusion of the target.
- (g) This final line reflects the speaker’s attitude reflected in usage. To *marginalise* is socially reproached behaviour.

### 3.3.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

*Marginalise* labels ‘bad behaviour’. This is an event whereby an agent performs a negative act against a target: *X did something very bad to Y*. The act incorporates an attitude, explicated as a prototypical cognitive scenario. This involves the perception of the target as: *like something small* (i.e., the target is minimised, seen as minor or irrelevant). Indermaur (1996: 129) supports the view of *small* as a semantic facet of *marginalise*, expressing that the act presents the target as “unimportant and without a prominent social status”. This facet is often expressed as the target being perceived as *marginal* or *peripheral*.

(295) So many of you are of the same leaning that it **marginalises** you and makes you more or less **unimportant**.

[www.forums.macnn.com/archive/index.php/t-191613.html](http://www.forums.macnn.com/archive/index.php/t-191613.html) (11/05/05)

(296) This **marginalizes** them. There's a hierarchy of big and **small**, important and **unimportant**.

<http://www.jstor.org/view/01417789/ap050039/05a00190/0> (11/05/05)

(297) The 'core city' was gentrified. This **marginalised** the **peripheral** working class neighbourhoods as the population aged and the number of immigrants and 'underprivileged, **unimportant**' people increased.

[www.geo.unizh.ch/gia/sotomo/publis/GLA02\\_gentrification.pdf](http://www.geo.unizh.ch/gia/sotomo/publis/GLA02_gentrification.pdf) (06/02/04)

To *marginalise* suggests the agent's perspective of the target as somehow inferior or deficient. Osbourne (1996: 285) explains that this as a social mechanism for control, to "normalize minority groups as inferior". This further implies the perceived superiority of the agent. Rhodes (2003: 149) expresses that socially "powerful groups *marginalise* social groups as secondary".

(298) Through discourses that are grounded in the world view of the dominant Anglo-Celtic group in society, schools **centre mainstream** students and **marginalise** Indigenous students.

<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/Abled/quality/Aboriginal> (17/06/05)

(299) Unemployment benefit recipients are becoming **marginalised as inferior** and less worth than those who contribute to society through labor.

<http://diggy.ruc.dk/handle/1800/1776> (12/02/06)

Gallagher (1997: 34) links *marginalise* to overlooking the needs of a section of society, rendering these groups "ignored and unimportant". The dismissal of the target as insignificant and inferior results in the target being ignored, forgotten or overlooked by the agent, and society in general: *because of this, it isn't bad if people don't think about Y*.

(300) Official history has served to **marginalise** ‘Aboriginal’ knowledge, customs and beliefs and further ensures a privileged place for ‘white’ knowledge, customs and beliefs as the foundation of Australian society. ‘White’ Australian culture has come to be considered the ‘natural,’ central or dominant culture of Australia.

<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/litserv/SPAN/32/Trees.html>

(17/06/05)

To *marginalise* invariably leads to neglect, the target’s needs are fundamentally compromised: *X doesn’t do something for Y*. Burton and Kagan (2003: 7) state that *marginalising* affects the welfare of social groups, “Social policies and practices may mean they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as education and health services, housing, income, leisure activities and work”.

(301) Society **marginalises** these communities in a number of ways by socio-economic and other influences, with high unemployment rates, a high proportion of welfare-dependent people, and limited access to services and social activities.

<http://www.crlra.utas.edu.au/files/discussion/2004/> (17/06/05)

(302) Rev Smith said the ban **marginalised** gays and ran the risk of setting a dangerous precedent which could end with gay and lesbian people being cut off from all sorts of community services. “Every time you define a group of people out of something, you are in a way **marginalising** that group of people and saying to the majority that these people aren’t worthy of being part of whatever you’ve pushed them out of,” he said.

*Gay group slams PM’s ban, The Age* (27/05/04)

A key semantic component of *marginalise* is to *exclude* the target from mainstream society. This involves hegemony, and a rejection of the target by the dominant group. Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001: 43) state that to *marginalise* results in the target “perceiving themselves as distant from the cultural reference community to which they belong”. This is expressed as: *it is like Y isn’t a part of something*. Burton and Kagan (2003: 10) describe this as “social dislocation”. The authors further explain, “We ‘become our selves’ through the relations we enter into in the society and its

communities. For those people who are severely involuntarily marginalised, their selfhood, their humanity, is threatened”. As an imposed social exclusion, *marginalise* is often compared to *isolate*, *alienate* and *ostracise*.

(303) Beggar **exclusion** zones push homeless people out of the public view. They are often living in appalling situations and are often victims of crime themselves. It **marginalises** them even further.

*Row over proposals to ban begging, The Scotsman (7/10/02)*

(304) Ghettoisation means not only the physical **separation** of a given ethnic group into a bad part of town. It also means the formation of a ghetto mentality on both sides of the metaphorical (or real) ghetto wall which **marginalises** a minority ethnic group and **separates** it from the majority.

*<http://www.hri.ca/partners/iei/Programs/Ghetto.htm> (17/06/05)*

(305) The establishment of a prerequisite level of education for employment is **exclusionary** and **marginalises** them from both occupational training and entry-level work positions.

*<http://www.nald.ca/FULLTEXT/famcasp/page7.htm> (17/06/05)*

*Marginalise* adversely affects the target. Berry et al. (1989: 188) explain that the act creates “confusion and anxiety. Feelings of alienation, loss of identity and what has been termed acculturative stress”. To *marginalise* is strongly socially reproached as ‘bad behaviour’. As with the other anti-discrimination terms, we can find examples of conditioning phrases such as *don’t marginalise*, and denials of the act, *I didn’t marginalise Y*.

### 3.3.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

*Marginalise* is to employ language or behaviour that excludes an individual or group from a mainstream group or society. It assists in our understanding of *marginalise* to adopt the notion of a hegemonic group or culture and marginal group(s) that are neglected or ignored by the major group. The act of *marginalising* is typically a collective social process that relegates an individual or a group to the periphery of the

dominant culture and deems them to not be of central importance. A group that is *marginalised* may experience some social isolation and be rendered as powerless and/or repressed, their beliefs, needs and concerns overlooked by the dominant group. *Marginalise* is semantically complex, with no direct single-word synonyms.

*Marginalise* evokes the concept of a minority group/majority group dichotomy. However, *minority* and *marginal* must not be confused. While it is often the case that minority groups are targeted, a *marginalised* group is not invariably a minority group. Historically, powerful groups have often been the minority, consider the population minority of the dominant ethnic group during the South African Apartheid regime or the population minority of the Indian Brahmin caste. Either minority or majority, to be *marginalised*, a group must be perceived as socially and/or economically *powerless*.

\*The council **marginalises** the wealthy families in the neighbourhood.

\*The factory workers **marginalised** the executive committee.

By this definition, an intra-group member of a powerful network can still belong to a *marginalised* group, for example, a person with a disability born into a wealthy family. The experience of *marginality* can arise in a number of ways. For some individuals and groups, *marginality* is a permanent experience that severely affects quality of life. Burton and Kagan (2003: 6) state that “For some people, those severely impaired from birth, or those born into particularly marginal groupings (e.g., members of ethnic groups that suffer discrimination - the Roma in Europe, Indigenous people in Australasia and the American continent, African Caribbean people in Britain), this marginality is typically life-long and greatly determines their lived experience”. Alternately, *marginality* can be acquired, through factors such as illness or social change. However, *marginalisation* is not necessarily a permanent state, it can be a shifting phenomenon. Burton and Kagan (2003: 7) explain that at certain stages of the life cycle, the risk of *marginalisation* increases or decreases.

The marginalized status of children and youth may decrease as they get older; the marginalized status of adults may increase as they become elders; the marginalized status of single mothers may change as their children grow up, and so on.

*Marginalise* is related to and often paralleled with *segregate*. Both imply division, the act of separating various *kinds of people*. However, *marginalise* may be a figurative form of separation, to *overlook*, resultant of social neglect, perhaps due to geographical isolation.

The government **marginalises** (\***segregates**) rural communities.

In some usage, *segregate* has lasting connotations of disenfranchisement and racial partition, while *marginalise* may also refer to isolation based on ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other social factors. However, unlike *marginalise*, which consistently implies a subordinated group, *segregate* can also be employed in a non-discriminatory, equivalent sense to indicate grouping.

For some subjects, high schools **segregate** (\***marginalise**) students into classes based on their gender.

*Marginalise* may also be compared and contrasted with *ostracise*. To *ostracise*, like *marginalise*, is to *exclude* but the former has connotations of to *shun* or *snub*. A person can be *ostracised* or indeed *marginalised* for their behaviour or a specific incident, while *marginalise* is most often based on an intrinsic factor, such as gender or ethnicity.

The community **ostracised** (\***marginalised**) their Vietnam War veterans.

Someone who is *ostracised* can be socially alienated, an outcast, especially of a peer group, while the *marginalised* inextricably belong to the group by which they are *marginalised*.

She was **ostracised** (\***marginalised**) from her church.

*Ostracise* also implies an individual target rather than a group or community. Although a single person may be *ostracised* for being a member of a *marginalised* group.

The Army **ostracised** him for his sexual orientation.

*Marginalise* is also related to *oppress*, although there are many semantic discrepancies. Both terms suggest a powerful group that dominates another group, to *keep weak*. However, *marginalise* connotes maltreatment through neglect while *oppress* suggests an element of tyranny or manipulation to deliberately subjugate a group.

(306) The British government today accused Iraq of systematic human rights abuses, charging in a detailed dossier that Saddam Hussein used torture, rape and terror to **oppress** his people.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* (3/12/02)

(307) It is the council's plan to **oppress** our thoughts and opinions, and thus make us mild-mannered, apathetic citizens.

*Dominion Post* (19/04/04 Factiva).

*Marginalise* is also semantically close to *repress*, both terms suggesting to prevent from attaining power or authority. However, to *repress* is to intentionally stifle an opposing force, to keep under control. *Repress* suggests potential influence and power of the target while *marginalise* implies that a group is perceived as powerless and insignificant.

The company tried to **repress** (\***marginalise**) the union.

*Marginalise* invariably refers to people and social groups while *repress* is more esoteric and can refer to the suppression of a concept.

They tried to **repress** (\***marginalise**) religion.

The government tried to **repress** (\***marginalise**) any political dissent.

*Marginalise* also has a political usage, that means to *isolate* or *ostracise* a political perspective. This usage has connotations of to *factionalise* and disseminate

*propaganda*. It also highlights that we *marginalise* someone who is *different* in appearance, behaviour or perspective.

(308) He could seek to shore up his position by misrepresenting arguments against him and by trying to discredit or **marginalise** those who would criticise him.  
*Editorial, The Sydney Morning Herald (5/06/04)*

(309) Unionists proudly displaying their banners is a symbol of unity of those who Howard and his government have sought to **marginalise** through their policy of dividing groups against each other.  
<http://www.zip.com.au/~cpa/garchve2/1003rec.html> (17/06/05)

A polysemous, specific sense of *marginalise*, referring to objects, to *isolate something*:

(310) Privacy advocates say a shift by Microsoft could effectively **marginalise** a particularly intrusive use of web bugs, the tracking and profiling devices used by online marketers and spammers.  
*Finding bugs in the cookies, The Age (26/06/03)*

### 3.3.5 Metaphor and *marginalise*

It seems as though *marginalise* is only part of the language and concerns of activists, or the equity office. In contrast, it is a concern for many people, an abstract concept that is typically expressed in the plain and simple language of metaphor. *Marginalise* has produced some interesting spatial and sensory-based metaphors. As the act reveals social-group dichotomies, *marginalise* is often conveyed in terms of comparative antonyms, *big/small* or *in/out*.

*Marginalise*, like *dehumanise* and *demonise*, is another figurative term employed to comprehend a complex concept. We can better understand *marginalise* by analysing the root *margin*. Nominal *margin* is an *edge*, a *border* or *outskirts*. Adjectival *marginal* is *borderline*, *insignificant*, *minimal* or *minor*. All these factors are relevant to *marginalise* as to *make peripheral* and *unimportant*. Using the analogy

of a page of text, the central section is 'important', information bearing material while the margins are left blank and 'irrelevant'.

Leonard (1984: 180) defines social *marginality* as: "being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity" (*like Y isn't a part of something*). When a person or group is *marginalised*, they are relegated to the metaphorical *edge* or *fringe* of society. In a figurative dichotomy, the dominant group is perceived as *central* while the marginalised group is *peripheral*. The dichotomies of *central* = *inside* versus *peripheral* = *outside* are directly relevant to *marginalise*. *Marginalise* is perceived metaphorically as *out/outside*, while *non-marginalised* groups are *in/inside*. A group can be *marginalised outside/out of mainstream society*, but not \*marginalised inside/into mainstream society.

(311) In practice these reforms have only reinforced the privileges of economic 'insiders' while continuing to **marginalise** 'outsiders'.

*Real new jobs, not 'McJobs': Financial Times (18/02/05 Factiva)*

(312) These people are rapidly being **marginalized out** of the power positions of the Democrat Party.

*www.danieldrezner.com/mt/mt-comments (17/06/05)*

(313) Poverty means not only having a low income, but also being unable to access or having limited access to essential services such as education, health and welfare, being unable to actively participate in decision-making affecting one's own life, and being **marginalised out** of mainstream society.

*http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/social\_justice\_network (17/06/05)*

[NB when preceded by a copula, *marginalised* can be followed by prepositional *in*, meaning *by*, but this refers to the *marginaliser*, not the metaphorical status of the *marginalised* group (e.g., X is marginalised in=by Y, *women are marginalised in=by society*)]

Similarly, in illustrating the rejection and exclusion of *marginalise*, a group is *marginalised from* something, not *marginalised to* something.

(314) A number felt **marginalised from** (\*to) mainstream society, were isolated, and often tied down with the care of children.

[www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc6papers/allan.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc6papers/allan.html) (17/06/05)

(315) Those in a lower socio-economic bracket are considered to be separate and **marginalised from** (\*to) the mainstream community.

[http://www.uniya.org/publications/pdfs/o\\_social\\_justice.pdf](http://www.uniya.org/publications/pdfs/o_social_justice.pdf) (17/06/05)

A *marginalised* group is dislocated from mainstream society, as opposed to other socially *connected* and 'supported' groups. A target is socially *unaccepted* while other groups are *accepted*. This is often expressed by way of exclusion-based metaphors, the target is *not a part of something: cut off, pushed out, away from, sidelined, discounted*, indicating isolation and rejection.

(316) A large minority of the population has become **marginalised, cut off** from the mainstream, cut off from the jobs market, cut off from education, cut off from housing, almost literally **excluded**, living in a **separate** way.

*ABC Radio National, Social Exclusion* (aired 7/10/03)

(317) The government **marginalises** the poor, the working class and homeless. They are **pushed out** of the way and even in the case of the homeless people, **pushed out** of the city altogether.

<http://scotland.indymedia.org/newswire/> (17/06/05)

(318) The whole idea of gypsies is that they are **not a part of** society. They want to make their own laws amongst themselves, move around and run their own affairs.

<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?t=144463> (17/06/05)

(319) I think a prison don't help a person that much to get away of crime, it only make it worse. They are **away from** society, they won't have a job when they get free, they are often angry cuz some1 put them into prison. U don't solve the problem from the source.

<http://www.offspring.com/forums/printthread.php?t=3556> (17/06/05)

To be *marginalised* suggests the target is treated as unequal and inferior, something *small, insignificant, weak and worthless (it is like Y is something small)*. Conversely, a *non-marginalised* group is perceived as *important, significant and powerful*.

(320) The BBC weather map is probably the most-viewed map in Britain and the new format has Scotland as this tiny thing - **marginalised, shrunken and unimportant**.

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/comment.cfm?id=550222005> (17/06/05)

(321) Where the Third World was seen as **minor** and **unimportant**.

[www.blogs.setonhill.edu](http://www.blogs.setonhill.edu). (01/10/05)

(322) Society **marginalizes** them as **worthless** citizens and makes them **weak** and **vulnerable**.

[www.chronicpoverty.org](http://www.chronicpoverty.org) (17/12/05)

Social influence and power can be perceived figuratively by audial-related metaphors: *to have a voice*. In an egalitarian society, every person is entitled to a *voice*, deserving *a say* and *the right to be heard*. A powerless, *marginalised* group is therefore equated with suppression and disregard, such groups are *unheard, silenced, lacking a voice and without a voice (it isn't bad if people don't think about Y)*.

(323) We are committed to empowering the weak and **giving a voice** to the **marginalised**.

<http://www.virginiajudge.net/speech.htm> (11/07/04)

(324) It **marginalises** and **silences** those who cannot **shout** as **loudly**.

<http://www.mapleleafweb.com/forums/lofiversion/index.php/t2462.html>  
(07/10/04)

(325) As **marginalized** people, migrants in all parts of the world often go **unheard** and **unseen** by government and community groups.

<http://www.afsc.org/community/immigration.htm> (12/04/05)

To be *marginalised* is also expressed metaphorically as to be socially *invisible*, to be *unseen* and by the phrases *out of view* or *out of sight*. The *marginalised* are socially and culturally *hidden, concealed* or *unnoticed*.

(326) They continue to be subordinate to men because their views and experiences are not represented, they are therefore **marginalised** and made invisible.

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/2964/womensordination.html> (12/04/05)

(327) No societies are unaffected by disability, yet disabled people as a group still tend to be **marginalised**, hidden or ignored.

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/echoes/echoes-19-08.html> (12/04/05)

(328) The mentally ill (especially those who are women/elderly) are **pushed out of sight**. No one wants to deal with them, so they are put away somewhere.

<http://endeavor.med.nyu.edu/lit-med/lit-med-db/webdocs/> (12/04/05)

While to *marginalise* is to *lack a voice* this perception is restricted to speech-related metaphors and not linked with other phrases suggesting communicative or sensory deprivation. A *marginalised* target cannot be expressed colloquially as \*to lack vision, this phrase implying a lack of creativity while to \*lack taste connotes a lack of discernment.

They were **marginalised**, out of sight and out of mind.

\*They were **marginalised**, they lacked vision.

### 3.4 *stigmatise*

**The normal and the stigmatized are not persons, but perspectives.**

Goffman (1963: vii)

Goffman (1963: vii) states that “Stigmatizing is a social process through which some individuals are defined as acceptable and others as unacceptable”. To *stigmatise* (-ize) is a discriminatory act that has a complex semantic structure. It reflects the dynamic

state of socio-cultural morals, beliefs, ignorance, fears and prejudices. In common with the other acts in this section, *stigmatise* is based in social-cognition, it is a social construct. As the act reveals underlying systems of ethics and morals, a temporal aspect is involved. *Stigmatising* is an ongoing social phenomena, but with a shifting target. For example, society heavily *stigmatised* divorce during the early to mid C20th (Poppell and Beer 1993). However, the increased rate of divorce has decreased this stigma, and will continue to do so as this becomes a more 'normal' situation (Christensen 2004; Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996). We can already see that there is a link between *stigmatise* and social perceptions of 'normal' versus 'abnormal'.

Psychologically, this is a metonymic act. When we *stigmatise*, we identify an element of a target (e.g., physical condition or social performance). This facet is judged negatively against a social standard or norm. Furthermore, this is perceived as the prominent, overriding, feature of the target. Mansouri & Dowell (1989) explain that "Stigmatising is the process wherein one condition or aspect of an individual is attributionally linked to some pervasive dimension of the target person's identity".

There appears to be a subjectivity, but also a social collectiveness to *stigmatise*. The act appears to encourage social conformity and assimilation. While there are shifting targets across time and cultures, this is an ongoing social phenomenon. Haghghat (2001) has developed a self-interest hypothesis, proposing that *stigmatising* the 'other' is a fundamental human tendency, a vestige of our animal evolutionary heritage:

Stigmatising involves self-sheltering and self-seeking behaviour. It is a protective device for the stigmatiser and, in a good number of cases, unfair on the stigmatised, as the latter may simply be the victim of a rumour or may not be the one among the stigmatised who would cause harm.

These comments suggest that *stigmatise* is an act of self-preservation, that we somehow fear our targets. In addition, there is the implication that a lack of understanding or awareness can underpin the act. Similarly, Gilbert and McGuire (1998: 99) claim an evolutionary influence to *stigmatise*, as an attitude partly fuelled by a need to distance ourselves from "poor reproductive bets". Crisp et al. (2000: 4) extend this to people who are "perceived as 'poor economic bets' when it comes to considerations of reproduction and its more immediate social consequences".

As we can see, this is an interesting yet complex word. How do lexicographical sources define *stigmatise*?

### 3.4.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *stigmatise*

The OED provides the following entry of *stigmatise*:

To set a stigma upon; to mark with a sign of disgrace or infamy; to ‘brand’; *esp.* to call by a disgraceful or reproachful name; to characterize by a term implying severe censure or condemnation.

This definition contains superfluous clauses and is open-ended. It relies too heavily on metaphor (set a stigma upon, mark with a sign) and complex wording (disgrace, infamy, censure, condemnation). Moreover, this doesn’t clearly explain the meaning or usage of *stigmatise* but focuses on labelling.

The *Longman Dictionary* defines *stigmatise* as:

To be treated by society as if you should feel ashamed of your situation or behaviour.

This definition is too narrow, implying guilt and embarrassment rather than the severe social ostracism of *stigmatise*.

The Cambridge Dictionary of English presents this definition:

To treat someone or something unfairly by disapproving of them.

This is too broad. *Disapproval* suggests the target is invariably responsible for their stigmatised characteristic, although this is not always the situation. Moreover, *stigmatise* and *disapprove* are not interchangeable at all, it is easy to think of a situation whereby we *disapprove* of someone, but do not *stigmatise* them.

WordNet provides the following entry for *stigmatise*.

1. stigmatize, stigmatise, brand, denounce, mark -- (to accuse or condemn or openly or formally or brand as disgraceful; “He denounced the government action”; “She was stigmatized by society because she had a child out of wedlock”)
2. stigmatize, stigmatise -- (mark with a stigma or stigmata; “They wanted to stigmatize the adulteress”)

Again, *stigmatise* is equated with metaphorical *brand* and *mark*. While this provides some interesting insight into usage, this does little to explain the meaning of this focus word. Using the NSM, this analysis will now decompose the meaning of *stigmatise*.

### 3.4.2 NSM Explication of *stigmatise*

*X stigmatised Y*

- (a) X did something very bad to Y
- (b) when X did this, it was like X was thinking at the same time:
  - (c) “I want other people to know something very bad about Y
  - (d) something very bad can happen to someone if this person is near Y”
- (e) when many people think about Y they always think about this bad thing
- (f) because of this, something very bad can happen to Y
- (g) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

#### Explanation of components

A prototypical usage introduces the explication: agent X *stigmatises* target Y.

(a) This is an event: X performed a negative act against Y.

(b) This component introduces the prototypical cognitive ‘attitude’ of the agent. Both attitudinal components are negative evaluations of Y.

(c) The agent identifies something 'unfavourable' about Y. This is expressed as an intrinsic possession (e.g., an illness, a physical disability, an 'immoral' reputation). The target is perceived 'as' the stigmatised facet.

(d) This component reads like a 'warning', also expressing a fear. This attitudinal component expresses a kind of "fear" of Y and also a "warning" about Y. This line expresses that "it's not good to be near Y", suggesting that it's bad to have anything to do with Y. Being "near" Y can cause "something bad to happen", suggesting that being physically near Y or being associated with Y can "contaminate" other people in some way. This mindset cautions that other people might somehow "catch" this "bad" trait of Y's or be 'seen the same way', to be viewed like people view Y. Perhaps a person feels uncomfortable associating with or 'being seen with' Y. This attitude may be reflected in the isolating practice of 'institutionalisation'.

(e) The agent has created a situation whereby other people's opinions regarding Y are influenced. As a result, other people develop a negative evaluation of Y, "always" and immediately associating Y with "this bad thing", a specific "bad" trait on a continual basis. When people think about Y, they instantly connect Y with this trait. This component also explains that when X stigmatises Y, the effect is widespread. There is a socio-cultural aspect to the dissemination effect of this act. As a result of X's act, "many people" perceive Y this way. X cannot stigmatise Y if only X treats Y in this way. To *stigmatise* is a collective phenomenon. This suggests that to *stigmatise* results in Y being 'marked' or 'branded' by a trait or reputation, people *always think about Y like this*. There is also an element of duration, indicating permanency. To *stigmatise* leaves a long-lasting stereotypical, social perception of the target. People perceive Y in this way on a long-term basis, "for some time".

(f) This act can adversely affect the target (e.g., resulting in social exclusion, segregation, anxiety or other severe consequences).

(g) This line reflects the speaker's attitude, 'it is very bad to do something this'. The attitude and behaviour underlying to *stigmatise* is socially reproached.

### 3.4.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

Haghighat (2001: 212) labels *stigmatise* as “camouflaged aggression”. We could certainly conceive of the act as ‘social aggression’. The event involves an agent who performs a negative act upon a target individual or group: *X did something very bad to Y*. This act incorporates a perception of the target: *it was like X was thinking at the same time*. The focal point for *stigmatise* is to identify *something* perceived as *very bad* about the target. Rodgers (2003: 319) refers to this aspect as the “stigmatizing characteristic”.

(329) Church leaders often **stigmatise** people living with HIV/AIDS, describing the illness as “God’s punishment” for sinful behaviour.

<http://www.aegis.com/news/IRIN/2004/IR040127.html> (17/01/06)

(330) Communities **stigmatise** people who have served their time and been successfully rehabilitated. They will always be ex-prisoners.

[www.businesscontrols.com](http://www.businesscontrols.com) (12/02/06)

Goffman (1963: 3) labels this ‘bad’ facet as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting”. This facet is perceived as something intrinsic and inextricable from the target, they possess this, it is a part of them: *there is something very bad about Y*. We *stigmatise* something chronic and inseparable (e.g., *stigmatise mental illness*, not something innocuous and ephemeral, \**stigmatise a flu sufferer*). This ‘bad’ facet eclipses other aspects of the target. This can either be a physical or a psychological aspect that the agent associates with the target.

(331) We live in a culture that **stigmatizes** people who **have** HIV.

[www.moviepoopshoot.com/off/12.html](http://www.moviepoopshoot.com/off/12.html) (08/02/05)

(332) Society **stigmatizes** people **with** disabilities as ‘invalid’.

[www.towson.edu/~bhalle/disability-rights.html](http://www.towson.edu/~bhalle/disability-rights.html) (08/02/05)

This 'bad' aspect is not seen as something normal or ordinary, it varies from the norm, it is: *something very bad that other people don't have*. MacRae (1999: 54) states that "persons possessing such an attribute are seen to be different from others".

(333) When a person is given a mental diagnosis, it **stigmatizes** them: it causes others to view them as **abnormal**.

[www.sc.maricopa.edu/sbscience/psy266/](http://www.sc.maricopa.edu/sbscience/psy266/) (08/02/05)

(334) Many Southern regions still **stigmatize** homosexual people as social **deviants**.

[www.janegalt.net/blog/archives/005681.html](http://www.janegalt.net/blog/archives/005681.html) (10/10/05)

According to Goffman (1963) to *stigmatise* is the process of global devaluation of an individual who possesses this 'deviant' attribute. Since Goffman's seminal work into this topic, most other perspectives treat the perception of the target as anomalous. Kurzban and Leary (2001: 187) propose that the act occurs "during a social interaction when an individual's actual social identity (the attributes he or she can be proved to possess) does not meet society's normative expectations of the attributes the individual should possess (his or her virtual social identity)". Pragmatically, *stigmatise* reveals social prejudice.

(335) These people **stigmatize** the other as some sort of carnival freak show.

[www.jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.997/review-4.997](http://www.jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.997/review-4.997)  
(08/02/05)

(336) Language used by the media **stigmatises** those with mental illness. These labels include: funny, abnormal, insane, disturbed, not right, disturbed and non compus mentus.

[www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=69195](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=69195) (08/02/05)

Regarding the process of *stigmatising* HIV/AIDS patients, Brown et al. (2003: 49) claim that the act is based in "a fear of illness, a fear of contagion and a fear of death". This sense of fear is relevant to all examples of *stigmatise*, where the act functions as a social warning. Crisp et al. (2000: 4) report that *stigmatise* reflects idiosyncratic concerns, such as "perceived immediate physical danger, excessive demands for

change, death, infectivity”. The agent not only expresses a fear of the target, who is seen as ‘dangerous’ in some way, but cautions other people that *something bad can happen* if anyone is *near Y*, either by physical contact or by social association. Therefore, *stigmatise* can result in isolation. As Marwick (2001: 592) observes, “The fact that people stigmatise disease is nothing new—from lepers wearing a warning bell to segregating people with a mental illness from the rest of society.”

To *stigmatise* often reveals ignorance about something little understood. Of *stigmatising* psychiatric patients, Rosen (2003: 89) claims that the act is “related to ignorance and fear perpetuated by a lack of information about and experience with these people”. This ignorance and fear can also be extended to social behaviour. Example (119) implies that, according to a kinesic code, the target is socially corrupt and association can metaphorically ‘contaminate’, while example (120) ‘warns’ that to be in the company of the target is somehow ‘dangerous’. Example (121) reveals a fear of literal infection: *It’s not good to be near Y because something bad can happen*.

(337) The practice of untouchability, rooted in the caste system, continues to **stigmatise** the 4.5 million Dalits in Nepal as ‘polluted’ or ‘impure’.

<http://www.ahrchk.net/ma/mainfile.php/0206/80> (10/12/04)

(338) The press and media don’t realise the harm they can do. They **stigmatise** mental conditions. When I read some of the things in the papers I get very hurt and angry. They label us all. ...Sometimes, when I mention that I suffer from mental illness, people will look at you as if to say, ‘Are we safe?’”

<http://www.seemescotland.org/media/include/downloads/A5MediaGuidelines.pdf> (10/12/04)

(339) They socially **stigmatized** people with AIDS. They wouldn’t even shake a patient’s hand, scared they would catch the disease.

[www.info.nwmissouri.edu](http://www.info.nwmissouri.edu) (08/12/05)

Goffman (1963: 14) identified *stigmatising* as “first and foremost a social process”. While an individual can certainly incite stigma, *stigmatise* is a collective process, it is the community or society that *stigmatises* a target: *many people think about Y like*

*this*. This reveals shared attitudes, ideals and values, and indicates the prevalence of the stigma.

(340) Society **stigmatises** young girls who become pregnant.

[www.nationaudio.com/News](http://www.nationaudio.com/News) (12/06/04)

(341) Mexican culture **stigmatizes** both sterility and the desire to give up a child.

<http://www.ashoka.org/fellows/viewprofile3.cfm?reid=97216> (09/11/04)

(342) I know that people **stigmatize** anyone who says that they are bipolar and immediately believe that they have a totally unstable person.

[http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/bu\\_local/article/](http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/bu_local/article/) (11/02/06)

Goffman (1963: 4) outlined three major types of attributes associated with *stigmatise*: 1. bodily disfigurements, 2. a metaphorical ‘disfigurement’ (i.e., “blemishes of individual character”), (this category includes concrete examples such as addiction or mental disorder), and 3. group affiliation, including racial, national, and religious origin. None of these categories, including type (1) are invariably overt. While bodily disfigurements can be overt, there are instances where they are hidden (e.g., a concealed physical ‘deformity’), a ‘devil’s mark’, thought to be evidence of witchcraft during the ‘European Witch Craze’ (McGough 2006). For this reason, MacRae (1999) asserts that people readily *stigmatise* visible and easily detected ‘bad’ attributes while ‘concealability’ can reduce this possibility. However, when an attribute is identified, the risk of *stigmatisation* is greatly increased (MacRae 1999). In this way, *stigmatise* is linked to the root form *stigma*.

To *stigmatise* involves the identification of a trait, as evidenced by the collocations: a *stigmatised trait, attribute, feature, aspect, element*, etc. (Collins Word Bank). MacRae (1999: 54) explains that this trait becomes the focus, resulting in the target being treated as “less than the whole person”. To *stigmatise* involves a narrow, fixed perception of the target: *when people think about Y they always think about this bad thing*. An agent cannot disconnect the target from this attribute. Scambler (1997: 13) states that to *stigmatise* is “enacted stigma”, while “being labelled in this way is that people’s stigma can come to dominate the perception that others have of them and how they treat them”. When an agent successfully *stigmatises* the target, the

*stigmatised* element becomes the focal point. For the agent, the target and trait are cognitively inseparable, thereby the target is defined by this trait.

(343) Anti-same sex marriage campaigners **stigmatize** gay people and same sex couples and **identify them by a single trait**.

<http://www.baywindows.com/media/paper32/news/2004/01/08/LocalNews>  
(11/02/06)

(344) They suffered the paralysing fear of their HIV/AIDS status becoming known and **stigmatising** them.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/waidmash.html> (11/02/06)

This is where the etymology of *stigmatise* reflects contemporary meaning and usage. The OED provides the origins of the stem word as “to brand or mark”. This alludes to a permanent connection, and indeed, a *stigma* has a temporal duration, in accordance with synchronic social morals and beliefs. This is often captured in adverbial collocations featuring *always* or *forever*, *constantly*, *permanently* or *consistently* (Collins Word Bank).

(345) Our society has **always stigmatized** stuttering. People who stutter are assumed to be nervous, incompetent, and even mentally ill.

[www.subid.dentator.com](http://www.subid.dentator.com) (03/02/06)

(346) They **forever stigmatised** him with this bankruptcy ruling.

[www.polipundit.com/](http://www.polipundit.com/) (03/02/06)

Kurzban and Leary (2001: 187) assert that “positive social contact is essential for psychological and physiological health”. The effects of *stigmatise* can be varied, from embarrassment to shame, through to more severe acts of ostracism and marginalisation. This is explicated as: *because of this, something very bad can happen to Y*. Van Brakel (2003: 190) concludes that “despite enormous, cultural diversity, many areas of life affected by stigma are remarkably similar in different countries. They include mobility, interpersonal relationships, marriage, employment, leisure activities and attendance at social and religious functions”.

(347) Raising the alarm of lice **stigmatises** infected children and could cause them long-term psychological damage.

<http://www.joannejacobs.com/mtarchives/013315.html> (10/07/05)

(348) Branding a person a criminal **stigmatises** people; it can cost them their life-savings, possessions and property, and can essentially ruin their lives.

<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v01.n1353.a02.html> (10/07/05)

Fortenberry et al. (2002: 378) observe that the term *self-stigmatisation* is sometimes used synonymously with shame to reflect a person's acceptance of the negative aspects of a stigma. "Shame is clearly distinguishable, however, from the related negative affect states of guilt and embarrassment".

The final component reflects the speaker's attitude. Labelling an act *stigmatise* tacitly condemns the behaviour and underlying attitude: *it is very bad to do something like this*. Even without further pragmatic information, it is an accusation of 'bad behaviour'.

(349) This law targets Muslims, it **stigmatises** Islam and it will lead to exclusion.

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/040203/15/p/nk3o.html> (10/07/05)

(350) There is still a section of our society that **stigmatises** HIV and AIDS and surrounds it with all kind of myths and misconceptions, sometimes just to suit their ridiculous motives.

[http://www.lesotho.gov.ls/articles/2005/Community\\_Council\\_Gateway.htm](http://www.lesotho.gov.ls/articles/2005/Community_Council_Gateway.htm)  
(10/07/05)

#### 3.4.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

To *stigmatise* is to portray a target as disgraceful, shameful, socially unacceptable, inferior or deficient, due to a characteristic perceived as undesirable or even taboo in a culture. The target of *stigmatise* is typically a group, identifiable by (a sometimes covert) trait, or a member of such a group. Foster et al. note (1998: 700) "The nature

of stigmatization is such that smaller populations tend to be more vulnerable and more often targeted”.

Scholars observe that *stigmatise* is a socio-cultural construct (Goffman 1968). An agent *stigmatises* a target within the context of a culture, historical event, political or social situation. A target is relative to the culture in which he or she exists. According to MacRae (1999) society *stigmatises* social behaviours such as divorce, defacto relationships, adultery and children ‘born out of wedlock’, but as these behaviours are normalised due to prevalence, they are gradually ‘losing’ the social *stigma* attached to them.

This is a natural diachronic process, but can we simulate this? Haghghat (2001) observes that artificial attempts to ‘remove’ stigma are of great interest to social scientists. This ameliorative process is popularly called *destigmatisation*, and usually applies to a concerted effort to eliminate *stigma*, rather than natural occurring amelioration. ‘Synthetic’ *destigmatisation* involves language reform, exposure to and contact with the target, public awareness and education, but has had limited success so far (Haghghat 2001). *Stigmatisation* is frequently grounded in synchronic morals. Of course, morals, ethics and beliefs are dynamic, and naturally occurring *destigmatisation* reflects changing attitudes. Crisp et al. (2000: 4) explain that. “Many factors influence the natural history of such stigmatisations: changing familiarity, better general control over the perceived threat, assertiveness of the minority group concerned and changing societal and personal value judgements”.

(351) South African former President Nelson Mandela on Friday paid tribute to Princess Diana on the fifth anniversary of her funeral, saying she was the first celebrity to help **destigmatise** Aids.

[www.iafrica.com/news/sa/155448.htm](http://www.iafrica.com/news/sa/155448.htm) (10/07/05)

(352) Ongoing media and community campaigns have helped to **destigmatise**, and inform about, a wide range of mental illnesses.

<http://www.pr.mq.edu.au/macnews/ShowItem.asp?ItemID=439> (10/07/05)

Similar to the effect of *dehumanise*, the act of *stigmatising* can metonymically *reduce* the target to be perceived only as *one part* of their identity, for example, the target is

perceived *as* their illness or *as* their sexual orientation. This is often represented in a copula form, *X is Y*.

- (353) You may very well have **stigmatized** yourself and have been **stigmatized** as a dialysis patient. How can a person who has been **stigmatized** as being “sick” and non-functioning and dependent feel worthwhile or have a positive self-image? [msl1.mit.edu/ESD10/kidneys/HndbkPDF/Chap07.pdf](http://msl1.mit.edu/ESD10/kidneys/HndbkPDF/Chap07.pdf) (10/07/05)

Typically, *stigmatise* is an overt act. An agent *openly stigmatises* a target, \*secretly *stigmatise*. A target of *stigmatise* is usually socially reproached and isolated. *Stigmatise* entails the attitude of: *I don't want to be near Y*. Unlike *stereotype*, to *stigmatise* implies that the agent regards the target as *bad* or *fearful*. *Stigmatise* can also imply a fear of *contagion* or *contamination* [see section 3.5.5].

- (354) They are so judgemental and **stigmatize** people with AIDS. If you say ‘I’m HIV positive’, they say “I don’t want to be with you.”  
<http://www.agingincanada.ca/Seniors%20Alcohol/1o-1.htm> (10/07/05)

- (355) You are supposed to say ‘I’m an alcoholic’, and that is supposed to do something for you...Sure it does, it **stigmatizes** you. It makes you lose your drinking friends and your non-drinking friends.  
<http://www.agingincanada.ca/Seniors%20Alcohol/1o-1.htm> (10/07/05)

A target can be *stigmatised* with a *bad reputation*.

- (356) [The aim was] to rid the **stigmatised** inner-Sydney suburb of drug dealers and other criminals and clear up the city’s leading eyesore.  
*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/02/04 (03/10/05)

*Stigmatise* and *stereotype* are related terms and often paralleled given that both acts are a collective, prejudiced assessment. However, *stigmatise* is invariably a negative judgment, conversely, to *stereotype* can be a positive and complimentary evaluation.

- (357) Society **stereotypes** women (\***stigmatises**) as being caring and nurturing.

[www.aphroditewomenshealth.com/](http://www.aphroditewomenshealth.com/) (03/10/05)

*Stereotype* can be a dismissive, impersonal act while to *stigmatise* necessarily entails active discrimination.

Society **stigmatised** (\***stereotypes**) single mothers.

*Stigmatise* can also be compared with *ostracise*, as both collective acts can lead to social alienation. Generally, we *ostracise* someone *from* something, eg. a community, organisation or society, while we *stigmatise* someone *by* an act.

They **ostracised** (\***stigmatised**) the whistleblower from the committee.

(358) People with mental health conditions are often **stigmatised** (\***ostracised**) by the community.

[www.cs.nsw.gov.au/mhealth](http://www.cs.nsw.gov.au/mhealth) (03/10/05)

*Ostracise* implies a target is perceived as socially incompatible, for subjective behavioural or moral grounds. Conversely, to *stigmatise* is often to perceive the target as socially inferior.

(359) The practice of untouchability, rooted in the caste system, continues to **stigmatise** the 4.5 million Dalits in Nepal as 'polluted' or 'impure'.

<http://www.ahrchk.net/ma/mainfile.php/0206/80> (15/10/04)

Unlike *stigmatise*, we cannot *ostracise* objects or concepts. *Stigmatise* is related to human interaction.

Suicide is **stigmatised** (\***ostracised**) for religious and cultural reasons.

Some people **stigmatise** (\***ostracise**) the broad Australian accent as being common.

Word Net lists *denounce* as a direct synonym of *stigmatise*. While these terms are related they are semantically distinct. While both terms suggest condemnation by

social disapproval, to *denounce* is more strongly linked with *criticise* than is *stigmatise*. Moreover, *denounce* implies some justification, *X denounced Y for doing something bad*, while a target is usually unfairly *stigmatised* according to cultural bias.

The critics **denounced** (\***stigmatised**) the film as being historically inaccurate.

Hepatitis C is a highly **stigmatised** (\***denounced**) condition.

*Denounce* implies valid blame, a target is *denounced for performing an action*. While a target may be similarly *stigmatised* for socially 'reproachful' behaviour, *the community stigmatised the adulteress*, a target may also be *stigmatised because of a characteristic*. Unlike *denounce*, a target may be *stigmatised* for an intrinsic or cultural factor, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or social group.

The store **stigmatises** (\***denounces**) all teenagers as being shoplifters.

The marriage laws **stigmatise** (\***denounce**) same sex couples.

Society *stigmatises* a target if they are associated with a concept that is culturally perceived as taboo, such as death, sex or illness.

Some people **stigmatise** (\***denounce**) those who work in the funeral industry.

Negative attitudes **stigmatise** (\***denounce**) people living with HIV/AIDS.

It appears that there is not a single word synonym for *stigmatise*. Word Net lists *brand* and *mark* as immediate synonyms of *stigmatise*. However, these terms do not encompass the entire semantic range of *stigmatise*. If we expanded the definition, to metaphorically *brand/mark as bad* or socially undesirable, this would better cover the complex semantics of *stigmatise*. *Brand* and *mark* do not necessarily imply a negative label and may be to *identify something*. Similar to *denounce*, to *brand* or *mark* can be accusatory. A *target is denounced as, branded as, marked as, \*stigmatised as having done something bad*.

They **branded/marked/denounced** (\***stigmatised**) him as the culprit.

### 3.4.5 Metaphor and *stigmatise*

How do we talk about the act of *stigmatising* someone? Like *marginalise* and the other words in this set, *stigmatise* is not an ‘everyday’ word in the lexicon of many speakers. Where *stigmatise* is not a working word in our vocabulary, or we favour informal usage, there are metaphorical ‘substitutes’ that we can access. While these are not direct synonyms or near-equivalent terms, they do convey partial meaning and are expressive terms with shared meanings that can pragmatically complement or replace *stigmatise*.

Metaphor associated with *stigmatise* is primarily based in word origin. The OED provides the etymology of *stigmatise* as: “To mark with a stigma or brand”, or “to mark with a stain, scar or blemish”. Contemporarily, to *stigmatise* can be expressed as to identify a ‘bad’ attribute, and then figuratively ‘brand’ the target with a reputation. We can classify these examples as *negative branding metaphors*, that is, *to stigmatise is to brand someone or something as bad*. While *stereotype* is also realised as to *brand* or *mark*, when used in reference to *stigmatise*, these metaphors carry a different connotation. To *stereotype* is to *label* while to *stigmatise* is specifically to *label as bad*. *Stereotype* may contain neutral, positive or negative connotations (even if *generalising* is socially reproachful behaviour), while *stigmatise* is invariably negative. The act indicates *bad feelings*, the agent’s fear, ignorance and prejudices.

Some *stigmatise*-related metaphors are also similar to *denigrate*-related *dirty metaphors*, including *stain*, *soil*, *blemish* and *smear*. In this way, we talk about *stigmatising* someone as though the target is socially ‘unclean’ or imperfect. Then the target is *branded* or *marked* with this negative image, indicating permanency. With these examples, *stigmatise* is to identify *something bad* about the target and immediately link this to the target’s identity: *when people think about Y they always think about this bad thing*.

(360) To be lumped together with them can **forever stain** a child’s emotional and spiritual development. Society **stigmatizes** them.

[http://www.rutherford.org/articles\\_db/commentary](http://www.rutherford.org/articles_db/commentary) (15/10/04)

(361) That is why they **always stigmatize** their targeted victims with **smears**.

[georgiaheritagecoalition.org/site2/commentary/](http://georgiaheritagecoalition.org/site2/commentary/) (15/10/04)

(362) When society **stigmatizes** a person, he or she is **permanently** seen as having a character **blemish**, viewed and treated as socially undesirable.

<http://www.agingincanada.ca/Seniors%20Alcohol/1o-1.htm> (15/10/04)

To *stigmatise* is also metaphorically related to a fear of *contagion* or *contamination*. This can be a literal fear of physical contamination, of contracting an illness by means of contact, or a figurative fear of contamination, through social connection with a target. This is explicated as: *something very bad can happen to someone if this person is near Y*. This is illustrated by the use of metaphorical terms that imply a *stigmatised* element may in some way be *transmitted* via association: *taint, catch, infect, corrupt* and *pollute*.

(363) Society **stigmatises** people with disabilities. It's an irrational fear that we can somehow be **infected** or **contaminated** by 'sick people'.

[www.workinfo.com/free/Sub\\_for\\_legres/Data/preemptestAids.html](http://www.workinfo.com/free/Sub_for_legres/Data/preemptestAids.html) (18/12/05)

(364) When someone with HIV or AIDS is told '**I can't be near you, I don't want to catch it**', it makes it so much harder. People **stigmatize** HIV/AIDS patients, just because they don't know the facts.

<http://www.redcross.org/news/hs/aids/> (15/10/04)

Writing within the context of being a cancer patient, Sontag (1988: 6) explains:

Diseases acquire meaning (by coming to stand for the deepest fears)... It seems that societies need to have one illness, which becomes identified with evil, and attaches blame to its 'victims'... Any disease that is treated as a mystery and acutely enough feared will [also] be felt to be morally if not literally, contagious.

*Cancer* is one of many common, contemporary conditions that are *stigmatised* in society. Crisp (2000) observes that this *stigma* extends to HIV/AIDS and physical and mental disabilities (and historically to leprosy, today known by the euphemistic label *Hanson's disease*). Allan and Burrige (2006: 166) link *stigmatising* to untreatable, little understood conditions. A *stigmatised* condition is:

One of mystery of uncertain cause with no ready cure. Such a disease is quick to become tainted with attitudes of shame and disgrace. Patients may find themselves branded with a label they find impossible to lose, even after treatment is complete.

*Stigma* is often revealed linguistically, by use of dysphemistic labels. For example, prior to attempts to *destigmatise* HIV/AIDS, a patient was often referred to as a *victim*, *sufferer* or *carrier* by the media. Such terms present the patient as passive and weak and have since been replaced by the phrase *person with AIDS*. Pragmatically, stigmatised conditions can take these labels, while non-stigmatised conditions cannot. For example, *cancer victim* can be found as phrase, while transitory, minor conditions do not take this label (e.g., \* flu victim or \* dandruff victim).

### 3.5 *discriminate*

**This is the worst kind of discrimination. The kind against me.**

Futurama

The act of *discriminating against* a target would have to be the prototype of an *us and them* attitude, and indeed, the key focus of this thesis. Despite the significance of this concept, a semantic understanding is presupposed in scholarly works, and no comprehensive definition is provided (van Dijk 1988).

Similar to *marginalise*, *discriminate* suggests the dichotomy of a majority group *discriminating against* a minority group. However, this act can be performed inter-group or intra-group, regardless of power or dominance. The misconception that *discriminate* is restricted to specific, prototypical situations is reflected by popular phrases that label supposedly 'atypical discrimination', including: *white*

*discrimination, reverse-discrimination, modern discrimination* (many of these terms refer to *racism*, and will be discussed in 3.3.5 and under *racism* 4.4.5). In this analysis, any act that fulfils the semantic criteria of *discriminate* will be classified as such, regardless of the group membership of the agent. Krieger (1999: 26) identifies three main forms of the act.

Diverse forms identified by social scientists include: *legal, illegal, overt* (or *blatant*), and *covert* (or *subtle*) discrimination, and also *institutional* (or *organizational*), *structural* (or *systemic*), and *interpersonal* (or *individual*) discrimination. Although usage of these terms varies, *institutional discrimination* typically refers to discriminatory policies or practices carried out by state or non-state institutions, *structural discrimination* refers to the totality of ways in which societies foster discrimination, and *interpersonal discrimination* refers to directly perceived discriminatory interactions between individuals—whether in their institutional roles (e.g., employer/employee) or as public or private individuals (e.g., shopkeeper/ shopper).

In Australia, *discrimination* is a concern of the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* (<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>). Acts of *discrimination* are illegal, in accordance with specific laws that aim to eliminate *discrimination* and promote equality, namely the *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975), the *Sex Discrimination Act* (1984) and the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992). Within each specific Act, *discrimination* is divided into two forms. *Direct discrimination* involves acts where a person/group is treated less fairly than another person/group. *Indirect discrimination* involves acts where a requirement is the same for everyone, thereby having an unfair effect on people (e.g., a condition, requirement or practice that does not accommodate a person's disability, or a rule that disadvantages a pregnant woman).

Linguistics has a major role in understanding this concept. As Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk (1988) indicate, it is through discourse that we *discriminate against* others. This is a socio-cultural act that is typically grounded in cognitive attitudes such as *racism, stereotypes* or *sexism*. *Discriminating against* a target is the social enactment of discriminatory ideologies and beliefs.

As a final note, *discriminate* is intransitive, typically taking prepositional *against* (or *by*, to a lesser extent). A standard usage would be *X discriminated against*

Y, rather than \*X discriminated Y. For this reason, the phrasal verb will be explicated in this section.

### 3.5.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *discriminate*

To *discriminate* (without against) has a less salient polysemous form meaning ‘to discern’. The OED alludes to this other sense, to define the related form, to reveal negative bias.

To make an adverse distinction with regard to; to distinguish unfavourably from others.

This formal, stylistic definition is non-specific and replete with vague, complex terms (adverse distinction, distinguish unfavourably). The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* states:

To treat a person or group differently from another in an unfair way.

This is a partly redundant definition. It could be argued that to *treat a person or (human) group differently from another* is invariably ‘unfair’ anyway. The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides this entry.

To treat a person or particular group of people differently and esp. unfairly, in a way that is worse than the way people are usually treated.

This definition is open-ended, with a non-specific example. The *Collins English Dictionary* states:

Disfavour, often because of a characteristic such as race, colour, sex, intelligence, etc.

This definition, although complex, is succinct and revealing in that it isolates the underlying themes that engender *discriminate*. However, none of these definitions treat the agent's perception of the target as inferior, and the inferred superiority of the agent.

WordNet claims that *discriminate* is polysemous, with three discrete senses.

1. discriminate, know apart - (recognize or perceive the difference)
2. discriminate, separate, single out -- (treat differently on the basis of sex or race)
3. discriminate -- (distinguish; "I could not discriminate the different tastes in this complicated dish")

Perhaps (1) and (3) could be collapsed into a single sense. As a formal, untypical sentence, example (3) supports Wierzbicka's (1987: 20) advocacy of using natural language for definition, and in providing examples of usage. The glosses provided by WordNet are insufficient to explain the full meaning of *discriminate*, *separate* instead suggests *segregate*, while *single out* only suggests *victimise*.

### 3.5.2 NSM Explication of *discriminate (against)*

*X discriminated against Y*

- (a) X did something very bad to Y
- (b) when X did this, it was like X was thinking at the same time:
- (c) "Y is someone of one kind
- (d) people of this kind are not like other people
- (e) I know some bad things about people of this kind
- (f) people of this kind are not good like people of other kinds are good"
- (g) because of this, something good that can happen to other people didn't happen to Y
- (h) people think: it is very bad to do something like this

## Explanation of components

A prototypical event and usage, *X discriminated against Y*.

- (a) The agent performed an act that had negative consequences for the target.
- (b) When the agent performed this act, a specific underlying attitude can be mapped out. This line also introduces the prototypical cognitive scenario.
- (c) This is categorisation, the agent identifies the target's group membership (e.g., ethnicity, gender, age). This can also suggest that the target is somehow 'singled out'. To *discriminate* notes 'difference' and prepares the agent for treating someone badly on the basis of this.
- (d) This suggests *othering*. The agent has identified the target as 'different'.
- (e) This component suggests a negative evaluation of the target. To *discriminate against* someone also involves some form of generalisation.
- (f) This line indicates perceived inequality, and the agent's sense of superiority. This act suggests that the target is somehow 'not good enough'. There is an underlying sense of bias or prejudice against one group, and therefore favouritism for another group.
- (g) This indicates the action of *discriminate against*, the agent treats the target differently and unfairly from other people. The target is disadvantaged in some way, and affected negatively. The agent has withheld some favourable or beneficial action from the target. To *discriminate against* someone has real life negative consequences for the target.
- (h) This final component is a social evaluation. To *discriminate against* anyone is socially reproached attitude and behaviour.

### 3.5.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

MacDonald (2004: 4) asserts *discrimination* is nominalized as “attitudes, making another agentless passive and removing blame from those who discriminate”. To *discriminate against* is a means of expressing and institutionalising social relationships, our treatment of other people reflects our opinions. Specifically, this is an adverse act that is performed against a target: *X did something very bad to Y*. The target has been treated badly, but also differently, in comparison to the way the agent would act towards other people.

(365) Employers **discriminate against** overweight applicants. They are passed over for promotions, and more likely to lose their jobs.

<http://www.news-medical.net/?id=14066> (13/10/05)

(366) The government’s immigration rules racially **discriminated against** Roma (Gypsies) seeking entry into the UK.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/4081473.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4081473.stm) (10/09/04)

Krieger (1999: 301) explains that certain ideologies underpin *discriminate against*, “with these ideologies revolving around notions of innate superiority and inferiority, difference, or deviance”. The underlying cognition of *discriminate against* is illustrated by the prototypical scenario, prefaced by: *When X did this (act), it was as if X was thinking at the same time*.

From the standpoint of etymological *discriminate* as a ‘distinction’, this is an act of distinguishing the target unfavourably from others. The prototypical underlying ideology of *discriminate against* is that the agent has identified and categorised the target: *Y is someone of one kind*. This is typically a socially defined group (e.g., gender-based, ethnicity-based or age-based).

(367) He **discriminates against** everybody except Ken and Barbie doll look alike: heavy, thin, old, ugly, Korean American, Non American etc.

<http://www.everythingsl.net/askjudie/?r=1148> (11/01/06)

(368) The owner of a popular gay nightclub **discriminated against** black patrons.

<http://www.sfgate.com/> (11/01/06)

The act is a negative evaluation of this group: *I know some bad things about people of this kind*. To *discriminate against* someone suggests a preconceived, negative perception of the target. As Drentea and Lavrakas (2000: 522) assert that this act occurs, “when individuals and institutions use negative group images rather than direct assessments of individuals in their attitudes”.

(369) For centuries, white people **discriminated against** blacks as inferior.

[www.jewishjournal.com/home/print.php?id=11805](http://www.jewishjournal.com/home/print.php?id=11805) (19/04/06)

(370) Companies **discriminate against** obese people, thinking of them as lazy.

[www.ndhuran.tripod.com/whyIdo.html](http://www.ndhuran.tripod.com/whyIdo.html) (19/04/06)

This assessment indicates *prejudice against* one (or more) groups, thereby revealing a *preference for* another group(s). We cannot *discriminate against* without indicating partiality for another, *bias against* presupposes *bias for*. Thereby, the attitude that motivates the act reveals favouritism for another group or groups. The agent *thinks something bad about the target*, and therefore *thinks something good about other kinds of people*. Exclusion and a perceived inferiority versus superiority are also implicit.

(371) He said employers **discriminated against** people over 50 trying to get back into the workforce, **preferring** to hire younger employees.

<http://www.smh.com.au/> (19/10/05)

(372) Ward managers appointing staff to act in their absence have **discriminated against** foreign nurses, instead **favouring** more junior Irish staff.

<http://archives.tcm.ie/irishexaminer/> (16/11/05)

To *discriminate against* suggests the perception of the target as somehow deficient in comparison to other groups: *people of this kind are not good like people of other kinds are good*. This implies that the target *can't do some things* that the agent supposedly can do.

(373) The plaintiff alleged that the company **discriminates against** men by refusing to hire them for particular positions. [...] He was told he would not be hired because he is male, and the manager had a policy to “avoid hiring males for customer service positions, since women related better with the female customers”.

<http://www.epexperts.com/> (16/11/05)

(374) [The board] **discriminates against** females when filling coaching positions.

<http://www.state.wv.us/admin/grievanc/decision/> (16/11/05)

To *discriminate against someone* reveals subjective, relative judgment. Collier and Burke (1986: 86) observe that to *discriminate against* someone is “the unfair treatment of a person based on an irrational preference”. The choice of target is subjective and is often idiosyncratic act. The entire prototypical scenario reveals the imbalance and partiality involved in this act, combined with the preceding components that indicate inequality, this amounts to unfairness. A basic semantic facet of *discriminate against* is unfairness. The Australian Federal Disability Discrimination Act (1992: para 1.) explains that this act occurs: “when a person is treated less fairly than someone else”. This is explicated as: *because of this, something good that can happen to other people doesn’t happen to Y*, indicating disadvantage and unfairness. This is a specific version of: *because of this, something very bad happens to Y*. Kettel and Douglas (2003: 47) remark that *discriminating against* someone “is when people are treated worse than others are because of where they come from, how they look, or what their beliefs are”. In the literature of discrimination, this is known as *direct discrimination*, when a person receives less favourable treatment, specifically “on grounds of racial or ethnic origin or religion or belief” (Chopin 1999: 5).

(375) A lending affiliate of the Ford Motor Co. **discriminated** against black customers by charging them higher rates on car loans.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6448213/did/7208943> (06/11/04)

(376) An Indian motel owner in a Florida town **discriminated** against Black customers by placing them in inferior rooms and preventing them from using the swimming pool.

[http://www.indianexpress.com/full\\_story.php?content\\_id=48208](http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=48208) (19/05/05)

Krieger (1999: 295) explains, “Those who discriminate restrict, by judgment and action, the lives of those whom they discriminate against”. *Discriminate against* must involve the act of disadvantaging the target.

(377) A man with a vision impairment complained that his employer, a Commonwealth Government agency, **discriminated against** him because some of its computer systems were not compatible with adaptive technology so that he lacked access to some information and promotion opportunities.

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/decisions/conciliation/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/decisions/conciliation/)  
(19/05/05)

(378) She claims the fast food giant **discriminated against** her by not hiring her as she is HIV positive.

[www.community.monster.com](http://www.community.monster.com) (12/01/06)

(379) New Orleans’ first black district attorney **discriminated against** 43 whites when he fired them en masse and replaced them with blacks upon taking office in 2003.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1374129/posts> (12/01/06)

As evidenced by the examples, to *discriminate against* has negative consequences for the target. Pragmatically, for this act to be realised, the target must be negatively affected. In addition to a harmful outcome, the act generates a negative response in the target.

(380) The new place I started working basically **discriminated against** me and made it a hostile work environment.

<http://www.psoriasis.org/forum/> (12/01/06)

(381) It **discriminates against** us, and it is an insult to us.

<http://www.cssa.org/hb1266.html> (12/01/06)

Van Dijk (1992 b: 250) asserts that “people are very much aware of discrimination” and that, socio-culturally, there is a “generally accepted norm that discrimination is wrong, even if such norms may only be used in disclaimers”. The final component of the explication indicates that *discriminate against* is a social evaluation. To label an act as *discriminate against*, is to condemn this behaviour. This is explicated as: *it is very bad to do something like this*. Van Dijk (1992 b: 252) adds “Few people are insensitive to accusations of discrimination”. The lexicon of anti-discrimination attempts social conditioning. This is further expressed by way of directives and instructive phrases.

(382) Show you care – **don’t discriminate** against people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

<http://www.worldaidsday.org.au/archives/2001/catherine.htm> (18/12/05)

(383) As a society, we have learned that **it’s wrong to discriminate against** people based on their skin color, their sex, their religion, their national origin, their age, or their disability. It is time for our society to recognize that it's not fair to discriminate against people because of their size or shape.

[http://www.naafa.org/press\\_room/big\\_kids.html](http://www.naafa.org/press_room/big_kids.html) (18/12/05)

Klassen (2001: 10) asserts that “Any kind of discrimination is bad”. Labelling an act as *X discriminating against Y* amounts to an accusation. Further evidence of the illegality and social ‘unacceptability’ of the act, is the occurrence of denial, as found in examples of usage.

(384) I didn’t do anything wrong! **I didn’t discriminate** against anybody!

[http://www.adversity.net/post\\_traumatic\\_0.htm](http://www.adversity.net/post_traumatic_0.htm) (18/12/05)

### 3.5.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

*Discriminate* is highly polysemous although each form is readily distinguishable by pragmatic features. While the prejudice-based form is currently the most salient, the prior sense of *discriminate* indicates to distinguish or discern (dating back to the early C17th, according to the OED). Both senses presuppose a preferred target/object, and a dispreferred target/object. The senses are differentiated by context, especially phrasal verbs, we *discriminate against someone*, and *discriminate between or among some things*. The former sense prototypically refers to human targets (either directly or indirectly), while the latter sense refers to objects. In the scientific registers of chemistry and medicine, there exists a further sense of *discriminate*, referring to an ability to *distinguish* or to *select*.

(385) The immune system evolved to **discriminate** infectious nonself from non-infectious self.

Janeway (1992: 11)

All forms are related by way of *demarcation*, to perceive, observe or mark *difference*.

Intransitive *discriminate against* is to perform an offensive and inequitable action that reveals bias and disadvantages the target. We *discriminate against someone by doing something* (386) or *by saying something* (387).

(386) The Federal Court of Australia has found the Queensland government **discriminated against** a 12-year-old deaf boy by not providing him with a sign language interpreter at school.

*National Nine News, Qld* (16/04/05)

(387) Real estate agents **discriminated against** them by saying certain housing was closed to blacks.

*The Olympian*, 23/02/05

To *discriminate against* is to construct a negative evaluation of the target, to perceive and treat the target as different and regard them as somehow inferior and deficient.

Prototypically, to be in a position to *discriminate against* suggests that the agent wields some authority over the target.

The adoption agency **discriminated against** the same-sex couple.

?The job applicant **discriminated against** the employer.

(The above sentence, if quantified, could be acceptable. For example, a potential employee may *discriminate against* an employer by not accepting a job offer because he/she was in some manner prejudiced against the employer. This would thereby disadvantage the employer, preventing him/her from acquiring a desirable employee. However, it must be noted that the potential employee is in a position of power in this scenario, having been offered a job and having the control to either accept or reject the offer.)

To *discriminate against* implies that the target has a requirement or desire and that the utterance or action has in some way disadvantaged the target.

(388) The female cabin crew contended that Virgin **discriminated against** them [by dismissing them] because they were older workers, and they also argued that the airline's recruitment strategy was indirectly discriminatory because it favoured younger employees. *The World Today, ABC Radio (20/08/04)*

\*She benefited from being **discriminated against**.

To *discriminate against* is necessarily an act perpetrated against a human target.

\*The cat breeder **discriminated against** the grey kittens.

*Discriminate against* indicates a negative emotional response.

The boys were angry because the netball coach **discriminated against** them.

The target *discriminated against* belongs to an identifiable group (*Y is someone of one kind*), as shown by collocations of nominal *discrimination*: *age discrimination, gender discrimination, sex discrimination, sexual discrimination, racial discrimination, disability discrimination, religious discrimination. Discriminate against someone on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity.*

To *discriminate* may be semantically paralleled with many other related terms. Although semantically discrete and of different grammatical categories, act

*discriminate* (THINK and DO) may be compared and contrasted with cognitive *prejudiced* (THINK). Being *prejudiced* can lead one to *discriminate*. Both terms indicate that the agent unfairly and uncritically categorises the target and does not allow for individual variation. Furthermore, the terms equally denote personal bias, against the target and in preference of another party.

The company **discriminated**/was **prejudiced** against non-English speaking applicants.

The terms differ in that the semantic focus of *prejudiced* is bias, while to *discriminate against* necessarily incurs disadvantage via the enactment of bias.

When the company **discriminated against** (\*was **prejudiced against**) disabled drivers they didn't providing parking spots for them.

*Victimise* may also be compared and contrasted with *discriminate*. Both terms indicate inequitable treatment directed towards a target.

The school **discriminated against/victimised** the minority pupils.

*Victimise*, to 'single out' and make a victim of, is invariably a personal, malicious act directed at a specific target. Conversely, to *discriminate against* can be an impersonal or dismissive act. Word Net lists *separate* and *single-out* as synonyms for *discriminate* (against).

The company **victimised** (?**discriminated against**) the employees who joined the union.

Unlike *discriminate against*, *victimise* does not necessarily imply favouritism or bias. To *discriminate against* suggests rejection of the target and a preference for an alternative party, while *victimise* has a target and no favoured alternative.

The employer **discriminated against** (\***victimised**) the gay applicant.

*Victimise* has connotations of harassment and persecution. The term is understood colloquially as to *bully, hassle, pick on, prey on* and *have it in for* while a specific target may be vulnerable, *an easy target*.

They tried to **victimise** (\***discriminate against**) the witnesses by intimidating them.

To *victimise* may be vindictive, an act in retaliation for a perceived grievance. To *discriminate against* may have no identifiable motive, other than bias.

He was **victimised** (\***discriminated against**) for blowing the whistle on the company's illegal activities.

The physics teacher **discriminated against** (\***victimised**) his female students.

### 3.5.5 Metaphor and *discriminate*

*Discriminate* is a semantically complex word. Different facets of the meaning of *discriminate against* may be understood or expressed in terms of metaphor. As this act reveals partiality and lateralisation, to *discriminate against* a target can be conveyed as being *one-sided*.

(389) Unions, however, oppose the legislation, claiming it is a **one-sided** attack that seeks to **discriminate against** the CFMEU.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/09/17/1063625097332.html> (18/12/05)

(390) Anti-Semitism now uses the rhetoric of international law and human rights as a protective cover to **discriminate against** Jews through unfair and **one-sided** criticism of Israel.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/658284/posts> (18/12/05)

To *exclude* or *prevent* is a semantic element of *discriminate*. This is often expressed with metaphors indicating *obstruction*, to *bar* or *block* the target from something

desired (*because of this, something good that can happen to other people doesn't happen to Y*).

(391) Similarly community services available to their heterosexual mates may be **closed** to them and they are often **barred** from joining gay support groups due to fear of legal ramifications.

<http://www.girl.org.au/publications/articles/StateElection.htm> (18/12/05)

(392) The U.S. Constitution wrongly **discriminates against** naturalized American citizens born elsewhere, **blocking** them from serving as president or vice president.

<http://www.unf.edu/thefloridacenter/enews/nov2103.html> (19/12/05)

(393) The cabinet endorsed a bill that could have **barred** 1.2 million Arab Israelis (in a population of 6.5 million) from settling on state land, which covers 90 per cent of Israel. Such a law would be horribly unjust.

*The Age* (18/07/02)

(394) The Court ruled that the legislation, which **barred** single women from accessing IVF technology, is inconsistent with the (federal) Sex Discrimination Act.

<http://members.iinet.net.au/~srcperth/IVF.html> (19/12/05)

To *discriminate against* invokes imagery similar to that of to *marginalise*. Part of the meaning of *discriminate against* is to *disadvantage* the target and this is metaphorically perceived by phrasal verbs indicating to restrain or restrict: *to close off, shut out, lock out, fence off, keep out* or to *close a door*. These figurative terms may have their historical basis in the practise of segregation. The explication expresses this as: *something good that happens to other people doesn't happen to Y*. Specifically referring to women, there is also the phrase *glass ceiling*, to refer to the barrier that women experience in seeking promotions to management roles in the corporate sector. This metaphor is related to the idea of *climbing the corporate ladder*.

(395) They have demanded affirmative action programs to **open the doors** previously **closed** to women in all arenas, and overcome the legacy of centuries of institutionalised **discrimination**.

*<http://www.dsp.org.au/dsp/dspfsoc.htm> (19/12/05)*

(396) They didn't **discriminate** against people who spoke French, so why would the Canadians **lock out** a golfer just because his skin wasn't as white as the driven snow?

*The Houston Chronicle (16/11/04)*

(397) These office hours **discriminate against** working families, by effectively **shutting out** people who work standard 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs.

*<http://www.arc.org/gripp/welfarePolicy/chip/grippChipPg04.html> (19/12/05)*

### 3.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has investigated a selection of words pertaining to the lexicon of anti-discrimination, acts that comprise the social performance of discrimination. Each section has examined the semantic structure of each word and provided an NSM-based explication. The findings have been supported by both natural examples of usage, and evidence from scholarly research. The social significance of these terms has become evident, and we have seen how these terms are closely interrelated.

The following Chapter will analyse the cognitive dimension of discrimination, the ideologies that underlie discrimination, hate and abuse in modern society.

## Chapter Four

### The Cognitive Dimension of Discrimination

*Stereotype, Intolerance, Prejudice, Xenophobia, Racism, Sexism*

#### 4.0 Introduction

**Ideologies are cognitive in the sense that they are properties of the mind, as is also the case for knowledge and attitudes. At the same time, ideologies are social because they are acquired, used, changed and shared by social actors.**

(van Dijk 1996: 7)

This Chapter examines another layer of discrimination, the cognitive dimension. This comprises the ideologies that underlie and motivate acts of discrimination. In effect, these are the attitudes that form the foundations of discrimination. Van Dijk (1982: 85) provides a working definition of an *attitude* as a complex cognitive framework of socially relevant beliefs and opinions.

Just like frames or scripts, they have a schematic organization, and are located in semantic (or rather, social) memory. Opinions are taken to be evaluative beliefs, and an attitude basically consists of a hierarchical configuration of general opinions. Particular or personal opinions characterize episodic memory structures, such as situation models.

Each term identifies specific negative attitudes and expresses a subjective, negative evaluation of the target. Employing these words as labels conveys disapproval, each term signifies a *way of thinking* and concurrently condemns that way of thinking. We will observe that these words function as social conditioning.

These ideologies are socio-cognitive phenomena, they are typical properties of the 'social mind' of a group. Therefore, these concepts are shared perceptions in pluralistic societies. Van Dijk (1996: 8) asserts that these ideologies do not causally 'determine' the social practices of groups and their members, rather:

Social members use ideologies as shared systems of mental resources; rules, propositions, schemata, values, norms, etc., that guide their interpretations, discourses and other social practices.

However, a major premise of this thesis is that, while these ideologies are based in socio-cognitive ‘programming’, they are reproduced at an individual level. Manifestations of *discrimination* are the product of macro-level phenomena, that are enacted on a micro-level. Therefore, each performance of *discrimination* in society is discrete, and based in unique, personal attitudes.

These ideologies are learned behaviours that are constructed discursively. Each system engenders *othering* by identifying perceived differences between people, and further implying hostility towards the target. Each label categorises people, and incorporates an *us and them* attitude. Common categories include gender, sexual orientation, age, perceived ‘race’, ethnicity and nationality. This last category is of particular importance to contemporary categorisation. As noted by Benedict Anderson (1983: 6) in his concept of the *Imagined Community*, “The Nation is an imagined political community. It succeeded the great imagined communities of the past that were religious and dynastic.” As we will see, the notion of nationality is important to both identity and identification.

Prototypically, the target can be categorised by a modifier, *Y is a Z person*. For example, the target is identified as *a Jewish person, an Asian person or an elderly person*. Therefore, group membership is an important aspect of these words. This is represented in each explication by the prime-based phrase *kind of person*, to refer to in-group or out-group membership, based on socio-cultural categories such as ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Thus, these attitudes are comparative indicators. Furthermore, these words represent negative evaluations, with each term implying a hierarchical structure, the perceived superiority of the actor and the implicit inferiority of the target. Pittinsky (2005) claims that the various forms of discrimination are prototypically inter-group, and proposes a cognitive formula with an NSM-like structure, the agent thinks: *we are not Y, and Y is bad*.

As mentioned above, these words incorporate specific attitudes. In his seminal work in *discrimination*, Allport (1954) made an important finding that belief systems shift to justify attitudes. Similar to the words featured in Chapter 3, the themes in this

Chapter are believed to be fundamental ‘hard-wiring’ of humans that have their basis in evolution (Haghighat 2001; Buss 1999; Neuberg and Cottrell 2005).

Each word in this Chapter is highly abstract and multi-faceted. Van Dijk (1996: 7) notes:

Despite the large number of studies in philosophy and the social sciences about ideology, we are still largely ignorant of the internal structures as well as the processes involved in the acquisition, the use and change of ideologies.

However, we will see that the NSM method is capable of eliciting salient aspects of meaning. This socio-cognitive approach is perfectly suited to these ideological-related words. Each explication succinctly decomposes semantic structure, to produce explanations that are both cogent and intuitively accurate. Note that these explications do contain components of ‘effect’ upon the target, as results of the mentality. These are nominal forms that explain attitudes, as precursors to acts.

Each section discusses a word significant to the lexicon of anti-discrimination. While this list is not exhaustive, this thesis treats the major paradigmatic terms. The NSM approach to analysis treats words as semantically discrete, and related terms such as *bigotry*, *bias*, *chauvinism* and scholarly concepts including *ethnocentrism* and *genocide* remain as important areas requiring investigation. Samovar and Porter (1991: 52) claim that *ethnocentrism* acts as a “starting point” for most discriminatory phenomena. Using the NSM approach, what can we understand about the critical processes of *intolerance*, *prejudice*, *racism*, *sexism*, *stereotype* and *xenophobia*?

#### 4.1 *stereotype*

**The whole idea of a stereotype is to simplify. Instead of going through the problem of all this great diversity - that it's this or maybe that - you have just one large statement; it is this.**

Chinua Achebe

*Stereotype* is a core word in the lexicon of anti-discrimination. The social sciences have long been interested in this area, and many perspectives have been presented by both classic and contemporary scholars. However, as observed by Brigham (1971: 15), “there is no single widely accepted definition of ‘stereotype’”. This section will investigate the major issues and theories surrounding this phenomenon, to propose a unified definition.

Perry et al. (1994: 787) assert that “A stereotype is a specific type of schema that organizes knowledge about people who fall into clear categories defined by age, race, religion, etc.” A *stereotype* is a product of social cognition (consider the collocations *social stereotype*, *cultural stereotype*, *national stereotype*), a way of thinking that can be described as a ‘frame’ or ‘knowledge structure’. As a group-based entity, based on a social construction, Smith and Decoster (1998: 27) define *stereotype* as “a representation of attributes associated with a particular group membership, learned through experience with individual group members, or from social learning”. *Stereotypes*, as exemplar models, shape and affect our inferences about group members. Oakes et al. (1994) observe that *stereotypes* dynamically reflect the current inter-group relations.

*Stereotype* can refer to a preconceived idea or expectation of behaviour. Oakes et al. (1994: 5) explain that a *stereotype* is a model that enables people to understand and identify with someone or something, it is a “frame of reference”. Polysemous *stereotype* forms part of the register of information technology, specifically in computer programming, for “user modelling” (Rich 1979: 329). This sense presents a *stereotype* as a ‘benchmark’ or ‘standardisation’.

Prototypically, a *stereotype* refers to a human target. A popular form is the *national stereotype*, these are shared, folkloric representations of nationality and ethnicity, such as *Germans work hard*, *Italians are good lovers* and the *French are great cooks* (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4263755.stm> 12/10/05). These

are familiar, easily recognisable characterisations that are often based in humour. However, as a perception of reality, *stereotype* can also refer to a non-human target. In this way, a *stereotype* can be a cognitive ‘template’, a ‘prediction’ of events or characteristics.

(398) Far from the Hollywood **stereotype** of cactus and tumbleweeds, the Texas countryside features rich farmland and three hundred thousand acres of lakes.

<http://www.chem.unt.edu/brochure.pdf> (04/13/05)

There are many conflicting theories about *stereotypes*, the dichotomies of supposed *positive* and *negative stereotypes*, or the notions of *true* versus *false stereotypes*. We will find that semantic analysis can provide excellent insight into these concepts. This section aims to provide a comprehensive explication of *stereotype*, supported by pragmatic evidence and scholarly research from various disciplines.

#### 4.1.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *stereotype*

The OED provides the following entry of *stereotype*:

A preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception. Also, a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type.

For the usually stylistic OED, this is a clear definition. However, it is open-ended, with the use of *etc.*, and treats the final clause as generality. More likely, this would be a different sense of phrasal *stereotype*, with a different semantic structure. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English states that a *stereotype* is:

A belief or idea of what a particular type of person or thing is like. Stereotypes are often unfair or untrue.

This is a good, simple definition, that treats the important ‘untruth’ factor of stereotype. As we will see, there are still elements that this definition hasn’t captured. The Cambridge Dictionary of Contemporary English provides this entry:

An idea that is used to characterize a particular type of person or thing, or a person or thing thought to represent such an idea.

This definition uses complex terms (characterize, particular, represent), uses a conjunction and, like the OED, defines a *true stereotype* or similar phrase, in terms of a *stereotype*. WordNet provides the following entry:

1. pigeonhole, stereotype, stamp -- (treat or classify according to a mental stereotype; "I was stereotyped as a lazy Southern European")

This definition uses the focus word as part of the definition, rather than decomposing the meaning. In addition, *stamp* is closer to the etymology of *stereotype* than the current semantic structure of the word. Using the NSM, this analysis will try to 'break down' this meaning even further.

#### 4.1.2 NSM explication of *stereotype*

*stereotype*

- (a) a way of thinking about people of kind X
- (b) when many people think about people of this kind, they think something like this:
  - (c) "I know some things about people of this kind"
- (d) some of these things aren't true
- (e) when people think like this, they think about all people of this kind in the same way
- (f) they can't think about people of this kind in other ways for some time
- (g) people think: it is bad if someone thinks like this

#### Explanation of components:

(a) A *stereotype* is a conceptualisation, a way of thinking. This attitude is directed towards a target group (or individuals, by membership of this group). The target group is categorised as *people of one kind* who may be visually identifiable by a group membership based on factors such as nationality, ethnicity, age, gender (e.g., an

Australian person, a female person). In addition, *people of one kind* institutes a divisive us and them dichotomy.

(b) A stereotype is a social attitude shared on a collective scale, the way that *many people think about people of this kind*. As an attitude, a prototypical cognitive scenario follows.

(c) As a cognitive ‘template’, a *stereotype* presumes information about the target. This supposition is touted as knowledge or fact, to *know some things* about the target. A *stereotype* is an assumption of the target, a simplified, accepted belief.

(d) A *stereotype* can be an applicable, exaggerated or an inaccurate representation of the target, as illustrated by the following dichotomous examples: *false stereotype/true stereotype, fits a stereotype/doesn't fit a stereotype*. Therefore, the truth or falsity of the *stereotype* is independent of its status as a *stereotype*. Any given stereotype may or may not be accurate, but the word connotes that a stereotype is at least partly untrue. To label a way of thinking as a *stereotype* calls into question the ‘truth’ of the perception.

(e) A *stereotype* is an assumption of the target, a simplified belief that is accepted without evidence. It is a generalised and uncritical assessment of *all people of this kind* as being *the same*, identical and invariable. This is a dismissive attitude that deprives the target of individuality and diversity.

(f) A *stereotype* is a rigid and inflexible perception of the target. This component suggests that once a *stereotype* is established, people do not reassess their perception of the target. The agent cannot ‘get past’ this narrow, limiting perception of the target, *they can't think about people of this kind in other ways*. A *stereotype* has a temporal aspect, *for some time*, indicating some degree of permanency, as suggested by the collocations: *persistent stereotype, classical stereotype, traditional stereotype, old stereotype, enduring stereotype* (Collins Word Bank).

(g) People who employ this word (e.g., *that's a stereotype*, perceive a *stereotype* as a negative representation, ‘a bad thing’). Even a so-called *positive stereotype* represents

an uncritical assumption. For example, the statement that *all Australians are great swimmers*, although complimentary, still reveals a fixed and limiting image of the target. This final component reflects the speaker's negative evaluation. To label a perception as a *stereotype* is reproachful of this attitude.

#### 4.1.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

A *stereotype* is an attitude, it is: *a way of thinking*. Ashmore and Del Boca (1979: 222) assert "all scholars concede that a stereotype is a cognitive construct". It is foremost a psychological phenomenon. Furthermore, it is a categorisation of a target: *people of one kind*. A *stereotype* has a specific referent, and is a conceptualisation of a group. *Stereotypes* are often expressed as beliefs, opinions, views or other cognition-based descriptors.

(399) (...) it is a **stereotype** to think that all Asians know kung-fu or some martial arts.

<http://www.d12world.com/board/printthread.php?t=159461> (19/10/04)

(400) A related **stereotype** is the belief that most elders no longer engage in any sexual activity or even have sexual desire, and that those few who do are morally perverse or at least abnormal.

<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/aging/curriclinkdetails.asp?name=ageism> (19/10/04)

(401) The problem with this **stereotype** is the idea that all goths are sad, depressed, and suicidal.

[www.myspace.com/skarekrow](http://www.myspace.com/skarekrow) (17/11/04)

Ashmore and Del Boca (1979: 233) observe "In addition to a social category referent, a stereotype comprises a set of personal attributes inferentially related to the social category". Agar (1995: 81) perceives a *stereotype* as a taxonomy link, to make sense of differences through similarities (e.g., *X is a kind of Y*, relating something unfamiliar to something understood). In this explication, there is only one prototypical cognitive component that indicates the most salient aspect of *stereotype*, as a preformed, simplistic assumption of the target: *when many people think about people of this kind*,

*they think something like this: I know some things about people of this kind.* Samovar and Porter (1991: 280) define *stereotypes* as “the perceptions or beliefs we hold about groups or individuals based on our previously formed opinions or attitudes”. Reinforcing the idea of a *stereotype* as an assumption, Smith and DeCoster (1998) report that, by way of the media and social learning, an agent can have ready access to *stereotypes* about groups they have never encountered. Furthermore, these *stereotypes* will be consistent with popular cultural perception.

(402) It’s a **stereotype** that people with glasses are considered good students.  
[www.abcasiapacific.com/englishbites](http://www.abcasiapacific.com/englishbites) (09/01/06)

(403) I was just wondering what you guys thought of the common **stereotype** that all males who dance ballet are ‘gay’.  
<http://www.goats.com/forums/flame/1032.html> (09/01/06)

(404) I know it’s a **stereotype** that British people have bad teeth.  
<http://www.chud.com/forums/printthread.php?t=59975> (09/01/06)

(405) I find it very ignorant for people to actually believe the **stereotype** that all homosexuals are promiscuous.  
<http://www.collegian.com/media/storage/paper864/> (12/02/06)

Lippman (1922: 111) provides an early explanation of a *stereotype* as a generalisation about a group, in which identical characteristics are assigned to all members, regardless of actual variation. This author further described *stereotypes* as “pictures in our heads”. This is borne out by modern scholars Dunkerley and Robinson, (2003: 393) who define *stereotype* as an “overgeneralized and homogenized belief that one group hold about another”. A *stereotype* is an uncritical assessment of a target that is mapped onto an entire group: *when people think like this, they think about all people of this kind in the same way.* Ragin et al. (1984: 222) explain that a *stereotype* is “a form of cognitive shorthand that enables the carrier to typify the members of a group”. This generalisation is a perceptual overextension, often expressed as a *stereotype* about *all Y*. As Nachbar and Lause (1992: 236) explain, “Stereotypes are ‘mental

cookie cutters’--they force a simple pattern upon a complex mass and assign a limited number of characteristics to all members of a group.”

(406) They also believe the **stereotype** that **all Americans** eat a ton of junk food and get all their information from television.

<http://www.learntoquestion.com/class/discussion/> (17/03/06)

(407) This statistic surprises those who believe the **stereotype** that **all feminists** are lesbians.

[http://web2.airmail.net/ktrig246/out\\_of\\_cave/martian.html](http://web2.airmail.net/ktrig246/out_of_cave/martian.html) (11/12/05)

(408) Many people have a **stereotype** that **all Jewish people** are rich.

<http://www.msu.edu/~scottam2/atl/paper.html> (11/12/05)

(409) She identified an underlying **stereotype** that **all Aboriginal people** are alcoholics and once they have some money they will go and spend it on alcohol.

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/> (11/12/05)

Shin and Kleiner (2001: 59) explain that a *stereotype* is a “restrictive portrayal”. It is a limiting, inflexible perception of the target, the agent: *can’t think about people of this kind in other ways*. A *stereotype* bundles an entire group as being *the same*, and deprives members as being perceived as distinctive individuals.

(410) The **stereotype** that gay men are stylish trendsetters may be flattering, but it’s still a **stereotype**, every bit as **restrictive** and dehumanising as the negative ones.

*Sydney is not the sum of its gays, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7/04/03*

(411) Viewing a disabled person or group of disabled persons according to a **stereotype limits** what we expect of them and how we respond to them.

<http://www.mcassessment.org/holexmp.htm> (11/12/05)

(412) The “model minority” **stereotype prevents** Asians from being thought of as creative, or as individuals.

<http://www.audreymagazine.com/July2005/Living04.asp> (11/12/05)

(413) His goal is to spread a particular **stereotype** onto Republicans – that they are all the same, they are unfriendly, they are conservative to the fringe and probably care more about corporate gain than whether your child lives tomorrow.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1420834/posts> (11/12/05)

Diekman and Eagly (2000: 1175) claim there is a “temporal dimension” to *stereotypes*, reflecting people’s views about the past history and future possibilities of inter-group relations. Pragmatically, *stereotypes* are revealed to have a temporal element, as socio-cognitive perceptions borne in popular culture. This is expressed in the explication as part of a component: *for some time*. Ashmore and Del Boca (1979: 242) support this, stating that “in actual practice, the stereotypes held by an individual may remain relatively unchanged for long periods of time”. This idea is reinforced by collocations such as: *enduring stereotype*, *lasting stereotype*, *old stereotype*. These phrases suggest that when these attitudes are accepted social beliefs they are resistant to change.

(414) What do geeks look like? Spotty with glasses, no dress sense and no friends with cone shaped heads (the **classic stereotype**).

<http://www.sciforums.com/showthread.php?t=15091> (11/12/05)

(415) Why do we have a **persistent stereotype** of women as crap drivers, particularly considering that men are statistically (at least by insurance companies) expected to be higher risks?

<http://redpolka.org/blog/archives/001601.html> (11/12/05)

Although they exist for a period of time and reflect synchronic inter-group relations *stereotypes* do change diachronically. As an example of this, Kashima et al. (2003) explain that *stereotypes* held by American people towards Japanese people (between circa. 1930 to circa. 1970) have mirrored American-Japanese relationships before,

during and after World War II (1941-1945). While there is some stability of *stereotypes*, often for many decades or longer, there is an important pervasiveness to them. A *stereotype* is a social construct, on a collective scale, people think about people of this kind in this way: *for some time*. While Collins Word Bank reveals collocations such as a *common stereotype*, revealing the shared nature of this phenomenon (although there are less common, conflicting phrases: *?a rare stereotype, ?an uncommon stereotype, ?an unusual stereotype*.)

(416) Caucasian, male, aging, crooked teeth, messy hair, lab coat, spectacles/goggles, dramatic posing — one **popular stereotype** of mad scientist.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad\\_scientist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_scientist) (15/11/05)

(417) There is a **general stereotype** about Americans as the uneducated, gun-toting, warmongering bully who never admits when they're wrong.

<http://www.killermovies.com/forums/> (15/11/05)

(418) He challenges the **widespread stereotype** that the priesthood is rife with homosexuals.

<http://www.agreeley.com/novels/priestcalling1.html> (15/11/05)

As we can see, speakers can credit a *stereotype* with legitimacy or alternately, reject the belief. Examples can be qualified with modifiers. In sources of usage, we can find conflicting collocations such as a *true stereotype* or a *false stereotype*, employed with equal acceptability and frequency. Lee and Wilks (1996: 18) assert that, as a reference point, a *stereotype* is “a collection of attitudes which are generally applicable to a particular class of agent”. In this way, a *stereotype* can be perceived as anecdotal.

A modifier such as *true* quantifies something that is often seen as *false* or exaggerated, while modifier *false* is emphatic in function. Some *stereotypes* are accepted as ‘true’ or ‘grounded’ in truth. This is often known as the “kernel of truth” hypothesis, a belief that *stereotypes* arise from a real instance or a genuine truth about a given group (Klineberg 1935: 12). In contrast, Hamilton and Gifford’s (1976: 392-407) study found that *stereotypes* arise not out of any ‘grain’ or ‘kernel’ of fact but possibly out of the cognitive tendency to assign positive and negative traits because of

the “co-occurrence of infrequent events”. This research found that artificially creating two groups is sufficient to create a *stereotype* even if the groups were created randomly. This would support the notion of a *stereotype* as a ‘frame of reference’.

The use of the label *stereotype* prototypically denounces a claim as a generalisation, a maxim of folklore. This dismissal can be expressed simply as: *that’s a stereotype*. As a model, *stereotype* labels misconception: *some of these things* (as thought by the agent) *aren’t true*. In an early analysis, MacKie (1973: 431) asserts that a *stereotype* is generally inaccurate, “a false image”.

(419) They don’t conform to the (mostly **inaccurate**) **stereotypes** of computer ‘nerds’.

[www.cis.upenn.edu/~matuszek/cit594-2004](http://www.cis.upenn.edu/~matuszek/cit594-2004) (15/11/05)

(420) Video Game Players Are OK, Study Says **Stereotype** of maladjusted loner is incorrect. All players of video and computer games are maladjusted, sociopathic teens just itching to get their hands on some real firepower and settle old scores. Not according to a new study.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/> (15/11/05)

(421) Country music is often stereotyped as for only hicks, rednecks, farmers, etc. This **stereotype** isn’t true.

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/> (15/11/05)

As *stereotypes* predict the behaviour of a target, and disregard diversity, they are often perceived as unfair, uncritical and ignorant. Subscribing to a *stereotype* is often criticised as ‘poor thinking’, *people think: it is bad if someone thinks like this*. Ashmore and Del Boca (1979: 222) state “For some social scientists, an stereotype is *by definition* ‘bad’, for others this value judgment is not included in the definition of the term” According to this latter group of authors, an ethnic stereotype is simply a ‘generalization’, ‘category’, or ‘concept’”. However, from a semantic and pragmatic perspective, using the label *stereotype*, whether it is popularly perceived as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, ‘true’ or ‘false’, still suggests that the belief is not an objective thinking, but a rigid generalisation. Klineberg (1951: 505) claims that *stereotypes* are acquired through “faulty reasoning”.

(422) **Stereotypes** are **unfair** because they lump numerous people into categories whether or not the characteristics fit each individual.

[http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~cfbhl/CSkills\\_stereotype.htm](http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~cfbhl/CSkills_stereotype.htm) (15/11/05)

(423) **Stereotypes** are **bad**, whether they're positive or negative. It's just a bad way to judge people.

<http://starbulletin.com/2006/01/22/features/story02.html> (15/11/05)

(424) Both groups believe these **stereotypes** are **harmful** by lowering seniors' self-esteem and creating negative perceptions of seniors among young people.

<http://www.bsu.edu/up/article/0,1370,-5544-37652,00.html> (15/11/05)

#### 4.1.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

Moore (1976: 21) defines a *stereotype* as “an oversimplified generalization about a particular group, race or sex, which usually carries derogatory implications. The verb form of *stereotype* is to simplistically and uncritically classify a person or group according to widely-held beliefs, thereby depriving the target of individuality and uniqueness. To *stereotype* is to impose a preconceived, fixed and generalised identity on the target. While *stereotype* is often employed in a negative sense, a mental image revealing a negative attitude, the portrayal can also be positive (i.e., complimentary), although *negative* and positive *stereotyping* are both to ascribe superficial and indiscriminate categorisations to a target. These categorisations are based on popularised, collective assumptions. The prototypical thought underlying to *stereotype* may be succinctly captured in semantic primes as: *everyone knows that X is like this*.

What can corpus data reveal about the semantic structure of *stereotype*? The Collins Word Bank corpus provides the following collocations of *stereotype* that support the explication components. That a *stereotype* is: *a way of thinking about people of one kind* is supported by collocations indicating group-based stereotyping: *cultural stereotyping, racial stereotyping, ethnic stereotyping, gender stereotyping, sex stereotyping, sex-role stereotype, male stereotype, female stereotype*.

Collocations further suggest that a *stereotype* is a collective, shared belief, something that *many people think*: *popular stereotype, prevalent stereotype*,

*prevailing stereotype* and *common stereotype*. The line: *some of these things aren't true* is supported by: *a false stereotype, belies the stereotype, doesn't fit the stereotype, misleading stereotype, mere stereotype, distorted stereotype, uninformed stereotype, unfairly stereotyped, lay to rest a stereotype, defies the stereotype, overcome a stereotype* and *debunks the stereotype*. In fact, the very use of *stereotype* calls into question the truth of the remark. However, these phrases have dichotomous antonymic forms (e.g., *X lives up to/doesn't live up to the stereotype, X fits/doesn't fit the stereotype, X perpetuates/doesn't perpetuate the stereotype*, and a *true/false stereotype*).

The component suggesting limited thinking: *when people think like this, they think about all people of this kind in the same way*, is indicated by the collocations: *stock stereotype, narrow stereotype, oversimplified stereotype*, and *one-dimensional stereotype*.

The line: (people who think like this) *can't think about people of this kind in other ways for some time*, presenting a *stereotype* as a fixed, longstanding belief, is strongly attested in collocations such as: *persistent stereotype, enduring stereotype, rigid stereotype, traditional stereotype*, and *forever stereotyped*. These collocations also liken *stereotype* to the word etymology, as a something continued or repeated without change.

That stereotypes are socially disapproved, *people think: it is bad if someone thinks like this* is suggested by the collocations: *offensive stereotype*.

These examples provide usage-based evidence that to *stereotype* is based on a common, superficial, rigid and erroneous perception of the target. This is borne out by the following unacceptable constructions: *\*a insightful stereotype, \*an honest stereotype*. As discussed, there exists the collocation *true stereotype*. This pairing implies several factors, that *stereotypes* are usually misconceptions or an element of a particular *stereotype* may contain some truth (the 'kernel of truth') in a specific reference. This is further supported by the idioms: *conform to a stereotype, fit a stereotype, live up to a stereotype, counter-stereotype, anti-stereotype, reverse-stereotype* and *challenge the stereotype*. Counter-examples of *stereotypes*, that contradict a popular perception, are often used for comical effect. For example, phrases such as *an honest politician* or *an honest used car salesman*, that humorously challenge the stereotypes of these professions as invariably untrustworthy.

*Stereotype* is related to *label* although the terms are semantically distinct. To *stereotype* is the act of employing folkloric notions to predict behaviour based on appearance and other observable characteristics while *label* is primarily titular, to metaphorically mark or identify with a negative epithet.

He was **labelled** (\***stereotyped**) a bigot for his extreme views.

It is a **stereotype** (\***label**) that vegetarians are weak, anaemic and unhealthy.

Both *stereotype* and *label* suggest prejudgement and superficial evaluation.

Women are unfairly **stereotyped** as ignorant by mechanics and car dealers.

Blondes are sick of being **labelled** 'dumb'.

Both acts can have negative, derogatory connotations that are limiting.

(425) Hollywood has long **stereotyped** Hispanic women as spitfires, bombshells and maids.

*The Sydney Morning Herald, 30/10/02*

(426) He raises his hand to answer every question; he knows trivial facts that are not on tests; his classmates might even **label** him a "nerd" or a "geek."

<http://humanities.byu.edu/philosophy/aporia/volumes/vol141/> (15/11/05)

Of the two terms, only *stereotype* can have positive connotations. However, even with positive implications the usage is still a simplistic, premature assessment.

Australians are **stereotyped** (\***labelled**) as excellent sportspeople.

Positive *stereotypes* can initially appear complimentary or innocuous although the problem lies in that any person who does not *fit the stereotype* may be perceived as deficient in some way.

The polysemous *label* can have non-negative, innocuous connotations and a referential function, when referring to objects.

The store sells produce that is **labelled** as organic.

The package was **labelled** as a gift.

*Stereotype* is also comparable with *typecast*. With both acts, the target is perceived in only *one way*, a limiting, preconceived expectation of behaviour.

English actors are **typecast/stereotyped** as genteel butlers.

The words are related as *typecast* is often perceived as to represent or regard as a *stereotype*.

(427) Sir Paul McCartney has lashed out at all those who **typecast** his wife Heather Mills as a “gold-digger, wicked stepmother and publicity seeker”.

*Hindustan Times*, 7/02/05 (From Factiva corpus)

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the first recorded usage of *typecast* to 1946. The original semantics, to be formed into type for printing, are traced by the OED back to 1876. In contrasting the terms, *typecast* is used restrictively, to refer to people in the acting industry, who are routinely cast in one type of role or are assigned to a role according to a *stereotypical* model of behaviour and appearance. An actor can be *typecast as a stereotype*, a popular image of a kind of person.

(428) With his crab apple face and sour-lemon voice, Wright was almost instantly **typecast** as a grouch, busybody, or small-town Scrooge.

<http://shopping.yahoo.com/p:Will%20Wright:1800054816> (15/11/05)

Emphasising the limiting nature of *typecasting*, an actor may also be *typecast* for the ability to convincingly act in only one type of role or for playing an iconic character.

(429) It was revealed yesterday that Eccleston has quit as he doesn't want to become **typecast** as the Time Lord.

*The Western Mail*, 1/04/05 (From Factiva corpus)

Regarding contemporary *stereotyping* that is unrelated to acting, *typecast* is unacceptable, unless it refers to a specific person.

Women are **stereotyped** (**\*typecast**) as overly emotional and sensitive.

When they saw his motorbike, her parents **stereotyped/typecast** him as rebellious.

*Stereotype* is also related to figurative *pigeonhole*, both terms referring to a restricted evaluation. Likened to its polysemous sense of a set of sorting compartments, to *pigeonhole* can be to compartmentalise. The terms differ semantically in that *pigeonhole* invariably refers to a salient, factual characteristic, while *stereotype* can be to inaccurately portray a target, based on a popular perception.

Australians are **stereotyped** (**\*pigeonholed**) as beer-swilling yobbos.

After a career of horror films, the actor was **pigeonholed** (**\*stereotyped**) as a vampire.

To *pigeonhole* is to limit potential, to perceive a target according to a restrictive mental model, based on previous behaviour. To *pigeonhole* may be paraphrased as: *X is a Y, because of this, X can't be anything else.*

He was **pigeonholed** (**\*stereotyped**) as a horror writer.

(430) In Hollywood, it's never too early to get **pigeonholed**. Knightley turns 20 this month, but the minute *Pirates* opened she "got sent about 10 scripts that were really good pieces, but kind of the same," she said. "You know, corseted pretty girl in the corner who screams a lot kind of things."

*The Globe and Mail, 11/03/05* (From Factiva corpus)

(431) But that strong brand identity has a downside: It has **pigeonholed** the firm and hampered its efforts to become a serious player in the financial advisory business.

*Registered Rep, 1/04/05* (From Factiva corpus)

(432) Marketers have **pigeonholed** young people since ‘teenagers’ appeared in the 1950s. From bodgies and surfies to crusties, homies, burbanites and glitterazzi, researchers have never left us short of a colourful tag to describe the latest ‘youth tribe’.

*The Sydney Morning Herald, 18/01/05 (From Factiva corpus)*

#### 4.1.5 Metaphor and *stereotype*

**Every stereotype is wrong...Including this one.**

Anonymous.

*Stereotype* can be perceived metaphorically according to several models, it can be conveyed by *attach metaphors* and by *judgment metaphors*. A *stereotype* is a metaphorical *label* that *attaches a profile* to a target (e.g., *people of this kind are like this: Z*). This profile attempts to *ascribe* predictable patterns of behaviour, appearance and attitudes to a target, based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender and other categories that signify group membership. To *stereotype* is often perceived as to *attach characteristics to*, and is used with terms and phrasal verbs such as *affix, stick to, stuck with, tag with, brand with, label with, nail to, stamp with, peg as, pin to, glue* and *mark*. These metaphors suggest over-extension and generalisation: *they think about all people of this kind in the same way*, and also permanency, the agent: *can't think about people of this kind in other ways for some time*.

(433) I think, basically, people (whatever **stereotype** one wants to **attach to** them) go to the festival and HAVE A GOOD TIME.

*http://hurryupharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2004/06/01/ (12/12/05)*

(434) Because there are always a few landlords who are unscrupulous rascals, that **stereotype sticks to** all of us.

*http://www.vacancy411.com/rhol.com/csu/buying/Lesson4.asp (11/12/05)*

(435) Ultimately, **stereotypes pegging** welfare recipients as lazy and unproductive likely influenced much of the punitive policies that resulted from welfare reform.

[urbanjustice.org/publications/pdfs/humanrights/WelfareLegislation.pdf](http://urbanjustice.org/publications/pdfs/humanrights/WelfareLegislation.pdf)

(11/12/05)

(436) I think it is an interesting indication of the sometimes dated **stereotypes** Australia is **pinned with**.

<http://www2b.abc.net.au/science/scribblygum> (12/12/05)

(437) I managed to wipe away hours of biased news coverage and **stereotyped** image-building, **tagging** my nation as terrorist and fanatic.

<http://www.gulf-news.com/Articles/opinion.asp?ArticleID=92906> (11/12/05)

These *attach metaphors* suggest that we perceive *stereotype* as a means of formulaic identification and classification (*I know some things about people of this kind*), often to aid in our own comprehension. This usage also implies the target's unwanted connection with an image, an artificial and imposed link between the target and identity. Perceived as *to stick*, the *attach metaphors* also suggest some degree of a long-standing belief, that *stereotypical* associations are enduring, even when dated (e.g., a *long-standing stereotype*, \*a temporary stereotype).

The second type of *stereotype*-related metaphors appear to be related to forming a hasty and uninformed conclusion about a target. These metaphors suggest that the agent makes a generalised, *uncritical judgment* about the target's character, without evidence. As a high-level term, I have named these *judgment metaphors*, to show that the metaphorical relation suggests a premature conclusion (*all people of this kind are the same*).

When we *stereotype*, we make a rapid, indiscriminate assessment *about* a target. Pragmatically, *stereotype* is related to: *draw a conclusion, make a blanket statement, prejudice, make a snap judgement, quick judgement, rash judgement, hasty judgement, pat judgement, swift judgement, speedy judgement, sudden judgement, make an instant assessment*. Conversely, some of these collocations can indicate a hasty moral judgment of behaviour. Both usages suggest a hasty, unfair assessment of the target (e.g., *superficial stereotype*, \*insightful stereotype).

(438) He is quick to label and make a **snap judgement** based on an incorrect cultural **stereotype**.

[www.fanfiction.net/s/99244/1](http://www.fanfiction.net/s/99244/1) (11/12/05)

- (439) How many times did I **draw a conclusion** about someone based on nothing more than a **stereotype**?

<http://www.goth.net/cgi-bin/ikonboard> (12/12/05)

- (440) It's a **stereotype, a blanket statement**, which should not be applied to every man who goes through a divorce.

<http://www.superiormuscle.com/showthread/t-12138.html> (09/11/05)

## 4.2 *intolerance*

**There's only one thing I can't tolerate - and that's intolerance.**

Anonymous

*Intolerance* is a central word in the discourse of anti-discrimination. Feldmann and Olea (2003: 12) conceive of ideologies such as *racism*, *prejudice* and *xenophobia* as the "expressions of intolerance". *Intolerance* is frequently associated with these more specific terms, as a non-specific label. For example, we can say *racism is intolerance* but not *\*intolerance is racism*, or *xenophobia is intolerance* but not *\*intolerance is xenophobia*. There is nothing in the meaning of *intolerance* to suggest who the target is. Interestingly, Szuchewycz (2001) refers to *intolerance* as a euphemistic term, preferred by the media to avoid the explicit expression of *racism*. Therefore, *intolerance* can be considered as a 'prior' or an 'umbrella' label for concepts of socio-cognitive discrimination.

*Intolerance* is polysemous, its sense in a medical register refers to a literal, physiological inability to tolerate (i.e., accept and process specific matter). This sense can also suggest literal rejection or harmful reaction. In a discrimination-related sense, *intolerance* is a figurative 'rejection' of a target; an 'inability' to accept a 'different kind of person', in a social context. Of course, this latter sense is psychological, rather than physiological, and based in socio-cultural attitudes and individual bias.

Often, *intolerance* is glossed as 'not tolerant', although this definition is circular and unilluminating but not synonymous. Gladkova (2004: 12) presents *being*

*tolerant* as a virtue, “It is a quality of a person who is capable of accepting other people doing something in a different way.” While *tolerant* has positive connotations *tolerate* often has negative connotations, implying magnanimous acceptance in opposition to popular opinion. The Wikipedia’s entry explains tolerance as “disagreeing peaceably”. Kerlinger (1984) further supports the idea that “tolerance is a thoroughly dispensable idea and that to tolerate another view is to look down upon it or to be indifferent to it”. In usage, the word implies judgement on some level. Akenson (2001: 17) reveals that *tolerate* suggests “grudging acceptance”. Minow (1990: 2) further supports this perspective, stating that “tolerance reflects acceptance of others’ views despite one’s own disapproval”. From the discipline of political science, Sullivan, et al. (1982: 18) conceptualise of *tolerate* as “putting up with that with which one disagrees”. Little (1997: 89) summates these views, proposing that:

To tolerate is, at a minimum, to resist a temptation to interfere with or to try to influence or suppress the beliefs and practices of others by using force. It is, in essence, to leave the offending beliefs and practices alone, despite an inclination to act otherwise.

Using an NSM model, an explication of *tolerate* would involve the cognitive perception of: *many people think something bad about Y* and the counter component: *I don’t think anything bad about Y*.

*Intolerance* is subjectively targeted according to group membership, and characteristically based in belief system (e.g., *religious intolerance* or *political intolerance*) or ethnicity (e.g., *social intolerance*, *racial intolerance*). As a severe lack of acceptance of difference, *intolerance* is often associated with concepts connoting extremity of belief, such as *fundamentalism* or *fanaticism*. Martin (2003: 30) claims that *intolerance* is a common characteristic of violence, it is “the hallmark of extremist belief systems”.

Behind each incident of terrorist violence is some type of deeply held *belief system* that has motivated the perpetrators. These belief systems are, at their core, extremist systems characterized by intolerance.

*Intolerance* is widely researched in the disciplines of social science, as a severe socio-cultural problem. The forms and causes of intolerance vary across societies and across groups within societies, often leading to the exclusion of national, ethnic, racial, religious and /or political groups (Ashmore, et al. 2001).

Similar to *bigotry*, an examination of *intolerance* reveals a semantic paradox. Does labelling *intolerance* constitute *intolerance*? This inconsistency will be considered in (4.1.5).

Kerlinger (1984: 65) maintains that “intolerance is difficult to define, and much debated”. This is a crucial term to define in the paradigm of discrimination, and this thesis claims that it can be comprehensively decomposed using the NSM method. In commencing this analysis, how is *intolerance* defined by traditional lexicographical sources?

#### **4.2.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *intolerance***

The OED defines *intolerance* as:

The fact or habit of not tolerating or enduring (something); inability, or unwillingness, to tolerate or endure some particular thing; incapacity of endurance.

It is circular to define *intolerance* as “not tolerating” something. Furthermore, this definition confuses socio-cultural based *intolerance* with the polysemous, chemical-related form, *intolerance* is directed towards someone (e.g., *racial intolerance*), rather than “something”. This definition further features complex terms (incapacity, endurance).

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* provides the following entry.

Unwillingness to accept ways of thinking and behaving that are different from your own.

While this definition is an improvement, using simple, clear language, it is too narrow.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides an entry for the adjective form only:

Disapproving of or refusing to accept people, behavior, or ideas that are different from your own.

WordNet provides the following entry for adjectival *intolerant*.

1. intolerant (vs. tolerant) -- (unwilling to tolerate difference of opinion)
2. illiberal, intolerant -- (narrow-minded about cherished opinions)

This entry circularly defines *intolerant* in terms of *tolerate*. In addition, *intolerant* is presented as an unwillingness to abide an opinion. In meaning and usage, an agent can be intolerant of not only opinions and beliefs but also a target's lifestyle and behaviour. As an antonymic comparison, Gladkova (2004: 13) provides an NSM explication of adjectival *tolerant*.

*person X is tolerant of people Y*

- (a) person X thinks about people Y like this:
- (b) these people are not like me
- (c) because they do some things in other ways
- (d) people can think that it is bad to do things like this in these other ways
- (e) people can want to do something because of this
- (f) I don't want to do this
- (g) if a person wants to do something it is good if this person can do it
- (h) a person can't say to people:
- (i) "you can't do something because I don't want you to do it"
- (j) it will be good if I don't do anything
- (k) because of this, I will not do anything
- (l) because X thinks like this, X doesn't do anything
- (m) people think: it is good if someone can be like this

As we can see, this explication reveals that the agent has identified the target as someone 'different' [lines (b) and (c)] but has not reacted to this in a negative way. It

is like the agent adheres to a social ‘rule’ of understanding and acceptance. In contrast, *intolerance* is to identify difference and to respond to this in a negative manner. Interestingly, components (h) and (i) reveal the paradox that to label *intolerance* is a form of *intolerance* in itself. Now follows an NSM explication of *intolerance*.

#### 4.2.2 NSM explication of *intolerance*

*intolerance*

- (a) some people think some bad things about people of kind X
- (b) these people think like this:
  - (c) “people of kind X aren’t like me
  - (d) these people don’t think the same way as me
  - (e) these people don’t live the same way as me
  - (f) I don’t want this
  - (g) there isn’t anything good about people of kind X”
- (h) these people won’t think about people of kind X in any other way
- (i) very bad things can happen to people of kind X when other people think like this
- (j) people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this

#### Explanation of components

(a) This component explains that *intolerance* is an attitude. This attitude is directed towards a person who has been identified as a group member (e.g., a homosexual male, a Muslim person).

(b) *Intolerance* incorporates the following prototypical cognitive attitude.

(c) The agent identifies the target as someone ‘different’. In this line, *me* is used as an allolex of *I*.

(d) The target is identified to have different beliefs/attitudes to the agent.

(e) The target is perceived to have a different lifestyle/behaviour to the agent.

(f) The agent is unaccepting of these perceived dissimilarities. The agent cannot endure this.

(g) This component indicates dislike, or hostility.

(h) Narrow-mindedness, the agent is unwilling to understand or accept the target. This is fixed, rigid thinking.

(i) *Intolerance* can result in negative consequences for the target.

(j) This social evaluation is implicated by usage of the term, *intolerance* is a socially reproached attitude.

#### 4.2.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

*Intolerance* is an ideology: *a way of thinking* that is directed towards a target of an identifiable group: *a kind of person*, and can result in certain behaviour. McGuire (1985: 233) presents *intolerance* as “a particular attitude, defined as an evaluation of persons, issues or groups on such dimensions as good-bad, like-dislike or favourable-unfavorable”. This is expressed by way of cognition-based phrases (e.g., an *attitude of intolerance*, or a *view, feelings, thoughts, position* or *opinion*). It is social cognition, Gibson and Gouws (2000: 272) report that “intolerance is a social process and is not entirely an attribute of individual psychology”.

(441) This has bred in his followers an **attitude** of **intolerance** towards other religions.

<http://www.makara.us/04mdr/01writing/03tg/bios/Calvin.htm> (18/02/05)

(442) **Feelings** of **intolerance** are generally directed toward other (mostly Moslem and Polish) ethnic minorities.

<http://www.poppolitics.com/articles/2000-11-07-germany.shtml> (18/02/05)

(443) I think what damages our reputation more worldwide is extreme political views of **intolerance** (Pauline Hanson, John Howard come to mind).

<http://www.ebroadcast.com.au/cgi-bin/blah/> (18/02/05)

*Intolerance* entails an attitude, therefore, we can construct a prototypical cognitive attitude that explains the salient and characteristic elements of this concept. A foremost semantic component is the negative evaluation of the target. The agent identifies difference and develops a negative judgement of the target. Sandu (2002: 10) states that *intolerance* can be directed towards those social groups perceived as deviant, including: “criminals, alcoholics, persons with AIDS, drug users and emotionally unstable persons”. Hurwitz and Peffley (1992: 399) report that some agents conceive of *intolerance* as a positive, moral stance:

In some families one learns that different beliefs and lifestyles should be tolerated, while in other families one learns that *intolerance* is a virtue because other views and lifestyles are deemed incorrect or immoral.

(444) It is vehemently venting its pro-life message, fostering an attitude of **intolerance** and trying to shut abortion clinics down. Where I grew up, if you mention the term ‘pro-choice’ people would immediately call you evil.

[http://dishwasher.blogspot.com/2002\\_07\\_21\\_dishwasher\\_archive.html](http://dishwasher.blogspot.com/2002_07_21_dishwasher_archive.html)  
(08/05/05)

(445) This hatred manifests itself as **intolerance** against those seen as ‘heretics’.

[www.nobeliefs.com](http://www.nobeliefs.com) (08/05/05)

(446) This **intolerance** of gays treats them as ‘bad people’ with ‘bad behavior’.

[www.extremeskins.com/forums](http://www.extremeskins.com/forums) (08/05/05)

Conducting analysis into social opinions, Sandu (2002: 10) adds that these are the kinds of people that respondents “wouldn’t want as neighbours”. This lack of acceptance and repulsion likens *intolerance* to *stigmatise*.

An important semantic facet of *intolerance* is the agent identifying the target as ‘different’: *people of kind X aren’t like me*. Viereggs et al. (2003: 19) observe that

“Intolerance is to make of the difference as disadvantage”. This attitude promotes an *us and them* dichotomy, pitting agent against target and presenting the target as the *other*. Specifically regarding *social intolerance*, Hurwitz and Peffley (2002: 407) define this phenomena “as a tendency to see group differences as substantial and undesirable”.

(447) If we try to analyze all the conflicts that arise at national level or international level we will see that most of them are due to the **intolerance** of one community against another, one caste against another, one state against another and one country against another.

<http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit05282001/index.asp> (04/02/05)

(448) They seem to encourage an attitude of **intolerance** for dissent, for if you are not “with us” you are “against us” and must be exiled and silenced.

<http://www.radmod.com/wp-print.php?p=308> (04/02/05)

(449) Also generating an attitude of **intolerance** and threat to everyone with different viewpoints.

[http://www.sunlinepress.com.au/sunline/yr\\_10\\_texts.html](http://www.sunlinepress.com.au/sunline/yr_10_texts.html) (04/02/05)

(450) The fundamental cause of the bulk of the world’s current and past conflicts has been **intolerance** of difference.

<http://www.slattsnews.observationdeck.org/?p=445> (04/02/05)

(451) A recent study on Islam in Great Britain spoke of a resurgence of **intolerance** against individuals belonging to the Muslim community, especially those of Indian or Pakistani origin.

<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/> (04/02/05)

Bernstein (1987: 550) presents *intolerance* as social exclusion, “The standard form of intolerance is one where some group takes itself to be the measure of what is rational and good, and excludes some other group”. Furthermore, *intolerance* manifests itself as the agent’s inability to relate to the target, the agent emotionally segregates himself or herself from the target. The agent’s *intolerance* is directed towards a target with

opposing beliefs or attitudes: *these people don't think the same way* (as me). Akenson (2001: 18) supports this idea, claiming that *intolerance* is a “belief that rejects a belief”.

(452) They urgently need therefore to remedy their continuing **intolerance** towards the views of each other.

[http://freespace.virgin.net/ambrose.ganda/Saturday\\_Commentary.htm](http://freespace.virgin.net/ambrose.ganda/Saturday_Commentary.htm)

(04/02/05)

(453) It recognizes with deep concern the existence of religious **intolerance** against religious communities, particularly limitation of their right to practise their beliefs freely.

<http://www.un.org/WCAR/pressreleases/rd-d45.htm> (20/02/05)

(454) After the March 2004 terrorist attack in Madrid, a new increase in the level of **intolerance** against Muslims was observed in Spain, Germany and other countries, while in the Netherlands, a new wave of attacks on Muslims followed the November 2004 murder of film-maker Theo van Gogh.

<http://www.lbr.nl/nprd/factsheets/> (20/02/05)

(455) But there is still an **intolerance** of left-wing or socialist views which are often regarded as being pro-North Korean.

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/> (20/02/05)

*Intolerance* is also an unwillingness to accept the target's different lifestyle, behaviour, customs or practices: *these people don't live the same way* (as me). There is 'crossover', whereby a target incorporates both factors. *Intolerance* as opposition is often expressed as *X's intolerance against Y*. Kong (2001: 404) presents intolerance as a natural survival instinct, explaining this as the “‘intolerance of difference’, since the ‘ideal of community’ relies on a desire for ‘the same social wholeness and identification’”.

(456) **Intolerance** of others' beliefs or lifestyles has been a destructive force.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006864/usercomments> (27/02/05)

(457) The bill is nothing short of an open and codified policy of **intolerance**, **intolerance** against homosexuals, for the reason of their sexual orientation.

<http://www.humaneventsonline.com/article.php?id=3494> (27/02/05)

(458) Countries that have this type of laws are transmitting a clear message of **intolerance** towards all forms of sexuality that differ from heterosexual relations with reproductive purposes.

<http://www.alainet.org/publica/cmrx/en/inclusion.html> (27/02/05)

(459) There appears to be a rising tide of **intolerance** against Roma/Gypsies.

<http://hungaria.org/print.php?hirid=408&messageid=423> (27/02/05)

Gibson and Gouws (2002: 272) claim that *intolerance* can function as an expression of solidarity with those who are *the same* as the agent, “Intolerance is strongly driven by perceptions of inter-group threat, which are in turn connected to certain aspects of social identities”. In effect, *intolerance* recognises shared beliefs and behaviour, meanwhile rejecting dissimilarity. Geremek (1999: 267) asserts that “intolerance can represent a form of conformity to the community norm of not accepting the ‘stranger’ or the ‘marginal’”. Interestingly, Sandu (2002: 14) observes the comparatively elevated rate of *intolerance* in collectivist societies, “Intolerance towards groups having a deviant/presumed deviant status seems to be at a high level in former communist countries”.

Hurwitz and Peffley (1992: 399) state that “Perhaps the most direct expression of this intolerance is a construct we label *social intolerance*, or an unwillingness to accept, or ‘put up with’, individuals and/or groups with different values, appearances, and behaviors”. *Intolerance* connotes unacceptance of the target, the agent does not want to abide the different beliefs and behaviours of the target: *I don’t want this*.

(460) **Unacceptance** of somebody as a human being and the degradation of somebody’s humanity is cruel **intolerance** at its worst.

<http://www.americasdebate.com/forums/> (09/04/05)

(461) This shows your **intolerance** towards your fellow beings. And *that* is what I find so offensive. You **can't accept** the fact that others have beliefs that differ from yours.

<http://forums.macnn.com/showthread.php?p=2463504> (09/04/05)

(462) I have noticed certain degree of **intolerance** on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Spaniards often have Latin American movies dubbed because they **can't put up with** the 'foreign accent' and Latin Americans, in reciprocity, do exactly the same thing with some Spanish films.

<http://www.sipuebla.com/discus/messages/3/126.html> (09/04/05)

*Intolerance* necessarily indicates the agent's dislike of the target: *there isn't anything good about people of kind X*. *Intolerance* can be presented as hostility or hatred, and an inability to 'see' the goodness or likeness of the target.

(463) Religious **intolerance** is **hate** and violence against those who wish to practice their religion or beliefs, unopposed.

[http://www.suite101.com/print\\_message.cfm/religionandspirituality/](http://www.suite101.com/print_message.cfm/religionandspirituality/)  
(09/04/05)

(464) His supporters carried his message, holding signs reading 'God Hates Fags', 'Thank God for 9/11' and 'Pope in Hell'. counter-protest organizers said they hope to show Phelps' group that their message of **hate** and **intolerance** is not welcome in Durham.

<http://www.pamspaulding.com/weblog/> (09/04/05)

Sandu (2002: 4) observes that "intolerance is a negative expectation towards a social group or role. From this perspective, it appears as distrust manifested as a refusal to accept a different type of behaviour or different values than one's own". *Intolerance* implies a resistance to understand or accept the opposing beliefs or behaviour of the target: *these people won't think about people of kind X in any other way*. Star et al. (1958) found that education, generation and age are the most important factors influencing *intolerance*. This defiant opposition is often represented as a form of

stubborn, fixed thinking (e.g., *self-righteous intolerance*) and a refusal to reconsider perception.

(465) This viewpoint is part of a destructive, **self-righteous intolerance** that helps box many gay adolescents (and adults) into hiding and self-hatred.

[http://www.emory.edu/EMORY\\_REPORT/erarchive/1995/](http://www.emory.edu/EMORY_REPORT/erarchive/1995/) (01/02/05)

(466) You have displayed an attitude of **intolerance** towards those of sexualities other than heterosexual and **refused** to discuss or substantiate these views.

<http://www.matazone.co.uk/forums/lofiversion/> (01/02/05)

(467) The persistence of an attitude of **intolerance**, denial and silence about HIV/AIDS in the African American community is undercutting government and community efforts to stop the spread of the disease.

[http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily\\_reports/](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/) (19/02/05)

Pragmatically, this cognitive ‘immovability’ and insularity is conveyed by collocations indicating *limitation* and *restriction* in thinking, *narrow-minded intolerance*, *small-minded intolerance*, *closed-minded intolerance*. Forms such as \*open-minded intolerance or \*big-minded intolerance are contradictory and intuitively unacceptable.

(468) Treating them differently than anyone else based on their sexuality is **small-minded intolerance** at its worst, very un-American.

<http://911digitalarchive.org/doj/emails/R000879.html> (09/10/05)

(469) She said the government is hostage to **narrow minded intolerance**.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/bulletins/radionz/200511160600/307a1424>  
(09/10/05)

(470) They are a dangerous group not because they disagree with our various paths, but because of their **closed minded intolerance** for any ideas not their own. Fortunately, more and more people are seeing their ‘I’m right and anyone who doesn’t agree is evil’ attitude for what it is.

[http://www.witchvox.com/qotw/qwp\\_detaila.html?id=38](http://www.witchvox.com/qotw/qwp_detaila.html?id=38) (09/10/05)

Rather stylistically, Bollinger (1982: 624) states, “Intolerance is perceived, at least implicitly, as a force within the society that exists under such pressure that the smallest crack in the wall sends the entire structure crumbling down in a heap”. While *intolerance* primarily labels attitude, this mentality can result in negative (i.e., harmful social consequences for the target): *very bad things can happen to people of kind X when other people think like this*. Dassori and Silva (1998: 108) cite the following, “A dramatic example of social intolerance is the incident in River City, California, in which illegal immigrants were beaten by members of the U.S. Border Patrol”. Just as polysemous *intolerance* can result in adverse physiological effects, *intolerance* in attitude has been identified as an underlying cause of conflict.

(471) **Intolerance** leads to a number of nasty things, including violence, against whatever a person is intolerant about. The Crusades come easily to mind, as does the KKK. **Intolerance** led to a desire to rid the world of the things certain people deemed intolerant, and thus a legacy of violence was instituted.

[http://www.witchvox.com/wren/wn\\_detaila.html?id=8460&offset=20](http://www.witchvox.com/wren/wn_detaila.html?id=8460&offset=20)  
(09/10/05)

(472) Throughout history, more wars have been fought and more people have died because of **intolerance** than anything else.

<http://www.dreamviews.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=140471> (09/10/05)

(473) Nigerian archbishop says religious **intolerance** causes terrorism.

<http://www.cathnews.com/news/110/45.php> (09/10/05)

Finally, *intolerance* acts as a label of attitude and potential behaviour resultant of this cognition. This label reveals the speaker’s condemnation of this thinking, *people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this*. This suggests that *intolerance* is socially reproved.

(474) To me anyway, **intolerance** is wrong regardless of whether it’s simply thought or physically acted upon.

[www.beccary.com/blog](http://www.beccary.com/blog) (15/09/05)

(475) Racial **intolerance** must be stamped out.

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0304/S00268.htm> (15/09/05)

(476) The United Nations has a sacred responsibility to combat hatred and **intolerance**. That's what Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in remarks at the inauguration of the Holocaust History Museum in Israel.

<http://www.un.org/radio/print.asp?NewsID=1721> (15/09/05)

#### 4.2.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

As discussed in 4.1, *intolerance* is polysemous. In a medical register, *intolerance* primarily refers to allergy, a physical inability to process food and potential reaction, usually rejection. With examples taken from various corpora, this sense appears in such collocations as *food intolerance*, *lactose intolerance*, *carbohydrate intolerance*, *gluten intolerance*, *glucose intolerance*, or rejection. This sense is purely physiological and organic-based. In contrast, the sense investigated in this section is a socio-cultural phenomenon, and the above sense contrasts semantically with modified examples, such as *racial intolerance* and *religious intolerance*.

This latter, social sense of *intolerance* is to be in unyielding opposition to the dissimilar opinions, beliefs, physicality and/or lifestyle of a target individual or group. *Intolerance* implies active conflict and connotes unacceptance, disrespect and hostility towards the target. Adjectival *intolerable* is to perceive something as unbearable. Similarly, *intolerance* is to be incapable of enduring an alternative viewpoint or lifestyle (*I don't want this*). However, in colloquial usage, *intolerance* and related forms often refer to *dislike*, and are typically hyperbolic. In these usages, the target can be non-human or indirectly refer to a human target.

(477) I like some bluegrass, but not always and I can't **tolerate** country music with words.

[www.musefanpage.com/blog/?p=160](http://www.musefanpage.com/blog/?p=160) (15/09/05)

(478) This is my wife's usual **intolerance** for bad movies.

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/vine/> (15/09/05)

The notion of *intolerance* invokes an interesting paradox. To label an attitude as *intolerance*, may ironically be perceived as *intolerant* themselves for imposing a view that is also hypocritically *intolerant*. This same contradiction can also be observed with the label *bigotry*.

(479) **Intolerance of intolerance** is the only **intolerance tolerated**.

<http://www.fightdemback.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=332> (15/09/05)

Further to this phenomenon, *intolerance* can be seen as a constructive, positive attitude, when the target is perceived as *something bad*. These usages indicate a determination to prevent an event. This can also be expressed by way of related phrases, such as *X won't tolerate Y* or *to have zero tolerance for Y*.

(480) Schools should include social skills training in the curriculum and adopt a **zero tolerance** policy for bullying — including **intolerance** for bullying by teachers and other adults.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/forum/a37ce868f4bd4.htm> (15/09/05)

(481) We will **not tolerate** nuclear weapons in North Korea.

<http://www.news24.com/News24/AnanziArticle/> (15/09/05)

(482) There is no excuse and there must be **no tolerance** for this kind of inhumanity.

[www.partners.nytimes.com/library/world/073197israel-us.html](http://www.partners.nytimes.com/library/world/073197israel-us.html) (15/9/05)

Scott (2001) asserts that, rather than being an innate condition, *intolerance* is a learned, socio-cultural phenomenon that is reproduced socially and individually. As has been discussed, *intolerance* is an attitude, a subjective perception involving a biased, personal stance that reveals morals and prejudices. This evaluation seems to be borne out by collocations listed in the Collins Word Bank corpus. These phrases imply that adjectival *intolerant* is a socio-cognitive process rather than an intrinsic attribute: *intolerant attitude*, *intolerant view* and *intolerant outlook*. Further collocations reveal the social nature of *intolerance* and that the attitude is focused on

an identifiable target group: an *intolerant culture*, *intolerant society*, *racial intolerance*, *political intolerance* and *religious intolerance*.

*Racism* is typically equated with *racial intolerance*, to reveal *intolerance* for other races. However, \*sexual intolerance is not an acceptable phrase indicating *sexism*, instead implying a physiological condition. Similarly, there is no equivalent phrase for other forms of *intolerance*, such as *homophobia*: \*homosexual intolerance or \*gay intolerance, and *ageism*: \*age intolerance. Alternately, there is no single word equivalent for *political intolerance* or *religious intolerance*. Pragmatically, the latter form is often labelled as *racism* or *ethnicism*, equating religious affiliation with ethnicity, based on historical, cultural and political factors.

As mentioned in 4.1.1., Szuchewycz (2001: 109) criticises the media's use of *intolerance* as a euphemistic substitute for "harsher" labels such as *racism*. Through discourse analysis, the author further claims that the media trivialises *intolerance* through pragmatic usage of qualifying phrases such as *intolerant views* and *intolerant attitudes*, which characterise *intolerance* with less negativity. This suggests that *intolerance* is somehow perceived as non-specific and less severe than *racism* or *homophobia*. Van Dijk (1992 a) discusses this phenomenon, observing that qualifying discrimination-related terms, or the use of euphemistic forms, results in the acts themselves being minimised, and partly mitigating the responsibility of the agent.

*Intolerance* is typically glossed in a circular fashion, as the marked antonymic form of *tolerance*. This is consistent with the concept of to be *intolerance* as to be *anti-something*, to be in opposition to something in an hostile, antagonistic manner.

(483) An anti-relativist about morality would show **intolerance** of those who have moral values different from their own and that is an unacceptable position.

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/philosophy> (18/07/04)

*Intolerance* is semantically complex and has no single word synonyms. Like *intolerance/tolerance*, many semantically related forms are glossed dichotomously, such as *approval* versus *disapproval*, *acceptance* versus *unacceptance* and *respect* versus *disrespect*. These examples appear in online thesauruses, such as <http://www.wordsmyth.net/> and Princeton's WordNet <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>.

The following constructions reveal the inadequacy of providing near or indirect synonyms as semantic explanations. This section will compare and contrast:

*disapproval*, *unacceptance* and *bigot*, the three most common glosses provided for *intolerance*.

*Intolerance* and *disapproval* both refer to criticism and rejection of a target's belief, opinion or lifestyle, possibly grounded in a personal moral perspective.

The priest showed **intolerance/disapproval** for her atheism.

However, *disapproval* reveals a personal relationship between the agent and target, it is suggestive of the target receiving harsh or stern criticism from a friend, relative or authority figure, rather than the impersonal, outright condemnation of *intolerance*. This implies that the agent otherwise has a positive estimation of the target. Furthermore, the agent may have a personal interest in the welfare of the target.

His mother gave him a stern look of **disapproval** (\***intolerance**).

The above construction further illustrates that *disapproval* is explicit, *intolerance* must be expressed, even then, it can be implicit.

*Intolerance* and *unacceptance* both refer to *prejudice* directed towards a target.

Her parents showed **intolerance/unacceptance** of her sexual orientation.

However, *unacceptance* suggests a sense of denial, that the agent resists acknowledging or accepting something as true. While *intolerance* is to *not put up with something*, *unacceptance* indicates a lack of social approval for behaviour, rather than intolerance of intrinsic factors such as ethnicity.

She had a fear of **unacceptance** (\***intolerance**).

*Intolerance* shares semantic parallels with *bigotry*. Both terms suggest active persecution and *prejudice* against a target for an opposing belief, opinion or lifestyle. *Intolerant* and *bigot* are both employed as condemnatory labels, although nominal *bigot* functions as an abusive epithet.

He is **intolerance/bigoted** towards people of different faiths.

Both terms can indicate a person with fixed, strong opinions regarding a target.

She was fiercely/heavily/strongly **intolerant/bigoted**.

Neither term is compatible with adverbial softeners.

He was mildly/slightly/moderately **intolerant/bigoted**.

However, *bigotry* indicates an extreme viewpoint and such a person is often perceived as fanatical, dogmatic and/or self-righteous. A *bigot* is glossed as an *extremist*, *diehard*, *fanaticist*, *dogmatist* or *hypocrite*.

They were fanatically/radically/zealously **bigoted** (\***intolerant**).

#### 4.2.5 Metaphor and *intolerance*

As an abstract, multi-layered concept, *intolerance* is commonly expressed by way of metaphorical phrases. Most of the following metaphorical expressions can be hyphenated or compounded with *head* or *mind*, emphasising *intolerance* as cognitive-based. *Intolerance* is often equated with mental immaturity and pettiness, to be *small-minded*, *mean-minded*, *tiny-minded*, *petty-minded* or *little-minded*, insinuating that the opinions underlying *intolerance* are trivial, to be dismissed. This relationship suggests that *intolerance* is 'insufficient' thinking.

(484) It will also be a victory for the **small-minded** but unfortunately very sizeable section of chauvinist elements in the country who show **intolerance** of any other views.

*<http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/07/31/stories/05312524.htm> (17/05/05)*

(485) Little (minded) Johnny (and his **little minded intolerance**) will not be remembered kindly for dividing Australia.

*Sydney Morning Herald, 21/12/04*

In metaphorical expression, *intolerance* is often linked to *stubbornness*, the agent is perceived as dogmatic and obdurate in his or her opinions and unreceptive to alternate views, *X won't budge*, *X can't be moved*. This connection is also expressed with animal metaphors such as: *pig-headed*, *mule-headed* and *bull-headed*, phrases that are associated with obstinate, unyielding cognitive position. These phrases suggest that the agent is not willing to think in any other way, and explicated as: *these people won't think about people of kind X in any other way*.

(486) They won't listen, and they **won't budge**, but worse they have a rabid **intolerance** of any other point of view.

<http://robotnumberone.com/smokinggun/index.php/sg/2005/01/28> (17/05/05)

(487) It's just a shame that the **pig headed views** of a large part of our population is so totally **intolerant** of this change.

<http://www.thisisthenortheast.co.uk/revolution/columnists/> (17/05/05)

(488) Far too often we are **intolerant, dogmatic, bull-headed, and hard-nosed**.

<http://www.fwponline.cc/v1In1reasoner.html> (17/05/05)

*Intolerance* is also conveyed by way of metaphors indicating insularity, obstruction and/or restriction. These phrases also refer to a negative mental attitude, that is unreceptive and immovable, to be *narrow minded* or *closed minded*. It is interesting that these 'minded' terms are dichotomous, with both positive and negative marked forms: *broad minded* = good, versus *narrow minded* = bad. *Broad minded* can also indicate *liberal* while *narrow minded* can suggest *illiberal*, while *open minded* = good, versus *closed minded* = bad. These phrases suggest that *intolerance* is an inability to *think any other way* (i.e., limited, restricted thinking).

(489) His most important consideration is catering to the **closed-minded** individuals who seek to impose their **intolerance** on all Ohio residents.

<http://www.thelantern.com/main.cfm?include=detail&storyid=603682>  
(17/05/05)

(490) “It’s amazing how quickly those who preach ‘tolerance’ become the most vehemently **intolerant** when the topic is abortion,” said McKalips. “We will not stand by while a **narrow-minded** few practice such discrimination.”

<http://www.all.org/rfl/rf030429.htm> (17/05/05)

[NB Not all similar forms are applicable, to be *single-minded* or *one-eyed*, can have positive connotations of being focused. Having a *one track mind* can indicate determination or even obsession, especially in a sexual sense].

There are many metaphorical phrases related to *intolerance* that are also aligned to the polysemous physiological meaning of the term, as an allergic reaction or physical inability to tolerate a foodstuff. Such expressions suggest an inability or lack of desire to tolerate something, and usually refer to a colloquial usage of *intolerance*: *X can’t/won’t put up with something*: to be *unable to digest*, *can’t take something*, *can’t handle something*, *won’t accept something*, *can’t stomach something*, *can’t swallow something*, *something doesn’t sit well with someone*. Of course, physiological forms of *intolerance* indicate an organic effect, while social forms are deliberate and intentional responses.

(491) Is [he] accusing these people too, along with **intolerant** “fundamentalists”, of being unable to “**stomach** the idea of gay and lesbian people having the same civil rights as them”?

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0410/S00188.htm> (17/05/05)

(492) [You] are very **intolerant** to another point of view and **can’t accept it**.

<http://www.voy.com/122776/2/1378.html> (17/05/05)

### 4.3 *prejudice*

**Everyone is a prisoner of his own experience. No one can eliminate prejudices...just recognize them.**

Edward Murrow

*Prejudice* is a critical constituent in the discourse of anti-discrimination. According to Ehrlich (1973: 11), *prejudice* is “a kind of attitude that contains cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings) and behavioural (dispositions to actions) components”. Prototypically, *prejudice* is a biased, negative attitude and belief structure formed of a target, based on the target’s group membership. However, there is nothing in the structure of *prejudice* to suggest who the target is. *Prejudice* is a subjective, emotive conclusion that is usually arrived at, without critical thought. Samovar and Porter (1991: 281) support this statement with their definition of *prejudice* as:

The unfair, biased or intolerant attitudes or opinions towards another group simply because they belong to a specific religion, race, nationality, or another group.

Historically, *prejudice* could equally refer to either a favourable or an unfavourable bias (circa. C17th OED). In contemporary usage, it appears to be in semantic ‘transition’. From a synchronic perspective, *prejudice* has undergone a semantic shift, whereby the term has developed predominately negative connotations of bias *against* a target, rather than favouritism *for* a group. C17th philosopher Spinoza (1675: 21) provides a diachronic perspective of *prejudice*, revealing the original dichotomy. The author glosses *prejudice against* as “hate prejudice, thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant” and *prejudice for* as “love prejudice, thinking well of others without sufficient warrant”. In modern usage, it is difficult to think of an acceptable example of ‘positive prejudice’. This section will discuss the implications of this hypothesis.

Jones (1987: 15) claims that *prejudice* is “a universal condition” that is exhibited in all cultures. It is also habitual on a micro level, the consensus from developmental research is that children as young as 3 years of age, exhibit *racial prejudice* (Cameron, et al 2001; Giles and Hewstone 1988). Some commentators state

that *prejudice* is an unavoidable practice. Philosopher William James is attributed with a quote that highlights *prejudice* as a mode of thinking, that it is a fundamental, essential process, involving unavoidable personal bias: “A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices”. Typically, *prejudice* occurs in pluralist rather than heterogenous societies, when we come into contact with different groups. Cameron et al. (2000: 124) report that “when society makes functional use of racial and ethnic groups, prejudice is a conceivable consequence”.

*Prejudice* is semantically multi-layered. Intuitively, based on the cognate structure of the word, we might think that *prejudice* is just to pre-judge a target. However, this is only one facet of the word that relates to its polysemous sense in a legal register, suggesting external influence and persuasion. The following example is taken from Lawlink NSW, the government agency responsible for the administration of law in the state of New South Wales, Australia.

(493) The prosecution in contempt proceedings is not required to prove that any **prejudice** to a case in fact occurred as a result of media publicity, but merely that the publicity had the potential to cause such **prejudice**.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lrc.nsf/pages/dp43chp04> (28/06/05)

This is a specific mode that is related to discrimination-based *prejudice*, both refer to assumed knowledge, based in preconceived ideas. However, legal *prejudice* is grounded in specific rumour, rather than generalisations. Moreover, the legal sense implies that hitherto impartial judgement has been affected, in such a way as to disadvantage and denigrate reputation. The target of legal *prejudice* is usually an individual, rather than a group, and based in accusations or evidence of behaviour, rather than intrinsic factors (e.g., ethnicity or sexual orientation).

(494) The magistrate aborted a murder retrial because of **prejudice** caused by information on an Internet site.

[www.mailman.anu.edu.au/pipermail/](http://www.mailman.anu.edu.au/pipermail/) (28/06/05)

In this way, discrimination-related *prejudice* refers more to an impersonal form, without any grounds or reasonable belief.

Many definitions of *prejudice* are either too narrow or too broad. Van Dijk (1993: 70) defines *ethnic prejudice* as a “predominately negative social attitude about ethnic minority groups and their members”. While this serves as an adequate, working definition for the purposes of that text, especially for modified *prejudice*, it is too narrow for a unifying definition. This thesis maintains that *prejudice* is not solely perpetrated by majority group over minority group, rather that this attitude can be directed towards a target of any group. Furthermore, *prejudice* can be both inter-group and intra-group.

Similar to *intolerance*, *prejudice* is often perceived as a general, ‘all inclusive’ term for related forms, such as *racism*, *sexism*, *religious intolerance* and *political intolerance*. Of course, this thesis treats these words are semantically discrete, however, it is pragmatic interest to consider popular perceptions and usage. Further to this, *prejudice* also incorporates *semantic* facets of *stereotype*. Jandt (2001: 75) illustrates this link.

The effect of prejudice is that persons within the [target] group are not viewed in terms of their individual merit but according to the superficial characteristics that make them part of that group.

Scholars from various disciplines have categorised specific social manifestations of *prejudice* as *in-group prejudice*, *out-group prejudice*, *classic* or *blatant prejudice* (i.e., overt forms) and *modern* or *subtle prejudice* (i.e., covert forms) (Pettigrew and Meertens 1999; van Dijk 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997). Jones and Quach (2002) differentiate between *intentional* and *unintentional prejudice*, although these forms are related to *overt* and *covert* forms, respectively. These are not discrete senses of *prejudice*, but describe the specific targets and enactments of this process. These theories will be discussed throughout this section. To begin, we need to consult the existing lexicographical sources.

#### **4.3.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *prejudice***

The OED provides the following entry for *prejudice*.

A feeling, favourable or unfavourable, towards any person or thing, prior to or not based on actual experience; a prepossession; a bias or leaning to one side; an unreasoning predilection or objection.

This definition uses *feeling* in a figurative sense, as *prejudice* is based in cognition, rather than physiological factors. This thesis argues that *prejudice* connotes an invariably unfavourable attitude towards a target, rather than an evaluation that is equally 'good' or 'bad'. Furthermore, I argue that *prejudice* invariably has a human target, *prejudice against someone* is a possible construction, while \*prejudice against something is an unacceptable usage. While the OED definition claims that *prejudice* is formed "prior to or not based on actual experience", this thesis contends that it can be based in experience, that is then over-extended to members of an entire group. The OED's use of near-synonymous form *prepossession* is obscure, as are *predilection* and *objection*.

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines *prejudice* as:

An unreasonable dislike and distrust of people who are different from you in some way, especially because of their race, sex, religion etc - used to show disapproval.

This definition is too broad, suggesting that *prejudice* is directed against 'all' "people who are different". Furthermore, "used to show disapproval" is vague, we can assume it refers to the speaker's evaluation of the agent, rather than *prejudice* itself expressing disapproval. However, this explanation is ambiguous.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides this entry:

An unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling formed without enough thought or knowledge.

This definition is too narrow, it implies *bias* rather than *prejudice*. Like the OED definition, this entry uses the figurative *feeling*. In addition, a human target is not specified, inaccurately suggesting that this "opinion or feeling" could be directed

towards a non-human target. What can scholarly sources reveal about the semantic ‘make-up’ of *prejudice*?

WordNet provides the following entry for *prejudice*:

1. prejudice (emanating from a person’s emotions and prejudices)
2. prejudice (vs. unprejudiced), discriminatory -- (being biased or having a belief or attitude formed beforehand; ‘a prejudiced judge’)

Our major problem with this definition is that *prejudice* is defined in terms of *prejudices*, providing a circular, unenlightening explanation. In addition, *emanating* and *emotions* are complex expressions. This entry claims polysemy, or are these really facets of the meaning of a single sense? Using the NSM reductive paraphrase, this analysis will now deconstruct the semantic structure of *prejudice*.

#### 4.3.2 NSM explication of *prejudice*

*prejudice*

- (a) some people think some bad things about people of kind X
- (b) these people haven’t thought about it well
- (c) if they thought about this more, they can know that these things aren’t true
- (d) these people don’t want to think about it more
- (e) people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this
- (f) very bad things can happen to people of kind X when other people think like this

#### Explanation of components

(a) *Prejudice* is an attitude, a mode of thinking. This involves the way we think about someone. In addition, *prejudice* involves a negative perspective, thinking *some bad things* about the target. The target is classified according to perceived group membership: *people of kind X* (e.g., Asian people, overweight people). Unlike *racism*, *prejudice* does not reveal the ‘category type’ of the target. *Prejudice* can be directed

towards any person, or any identified group. In a sense, this thinking supposes a positive attitude towards non-X.

(b) This component suggests a link between *prejudice* and *ignorance*. *Prejudice* is often a ‘gut feeling’, without logic or reason. This line further implies that the agent hasn’t thought ‘enough’ or thought about it ‘properly’. It is a superficial judgement, a poorly considered attitude, and is somewhat a biased, preconceived ‘prejudgement’. The agent hasn’t ‘thought it through’.

(c) In terming something as *prejudice*, we are implying that the negative appraisals are *not true*. *Prejudice* suggests unfair thinking. To *think about this more* indicates deeply, profoundly, intellectually rather than emotionally.

(d) This line suggests that the agent doesn’t want to ‘make the effort’ to apply critical thinking to their *prejudice*. *Prejudice* suggests ‘sloppy’, lazy thinking and narrow-mindedness. This is a fixed, inflexible way of thinking. The agent has ‘accepted’ this attitude.

(e) This line qualifies the cognitive description. It is a social evaluation, the speaker’s attitude disapproves of *prejudice*.

(f) *Prejudice* can result in negative consequences for the target. Like racism and sexism, prejudice can result in an act. For example, *prejudice* against older workers can result in unemployment, people of an ethnic group can’t find housing on account of *prejudice*.

### 4.3.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

*Discrimination* contrasts with *prejudice* in that the former necessarily implies disadvantage. The most salient aspect of *prejudice* is that it is a cognitive process: *a way of thinking about a kind of person*. Allport (1967: 21) identifies *prejudice* as “a feeling or attitude” directed towards a target. Moreover, this is a poorly thought out attitude, based in assumptions and bias: *these people haven’t thought about it well*.

(495) We cannot solve our most challenging personal and environmental problems by thinking and relating with the same **prejudice** and limiting process that causes them.

<http://www.ecopsych.com/nineleg.html> (28/06/05)

(496) The student becomes conscious of the assumptions and **prejudices** that permeate everyone's thinking.

<http://forum.physorg.com/> (28/06/05)

(497) The results showed many people found **prejudice** in areas of employment acceptable and added that more should be done to challenge attitudes.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/3151062.stm> (28/06/05)

Collins Word Bank provides the collocation *personal prejudice*. This reveals that *prejudice* is subjective and individual attitude. *Prejudice* is how *some people think about people of kind X*, involving classification. Van Dijk (1987) asserts that *prejudice* is socio-cognitive programming, that can be reproduced collectively, it is the mode of thinking of the individual towards the various social groups.

(498) They reveal their **personal prejudices** when they express these attitudes and feelings.

<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/> (28/06/05)

(499) Holmes had a **personal prejudice** against him because he was a Jewish attorney.

[http://www.state.il.us/ihrc/decisions/app\\_decis/PDF](http://www.state.il.us/ihrc/decisions/app_decis/PDF) (28/06/05)

Morris (1997: 54) contends that "One of the distinguishing features of prejudice is the existence of stereotypes: set ideas held about the individuals in the group concerned". This element compares *prejudice* to *stereotype*, the agent thinks about *all people of kind X in the same way*. Jones and Quach (2002: 15) assert that "Like stereotypes, prejudice involves the preconceptions of individuals or groups based on unfounded opinions, attitudes or beliefs". From a psychological approach, Quasthoff (1989: 137) describes *prejudices* as "inner psychic functions of stereotypes".

(500) **Prejudice** against the Arabs (that they are terrorists, that they are fanatically Muslims, etc) are a different form from prejudice against the Jews (that they control the world, that they're all lawyers etc).

<http://au.messages.yahoo.com/news/top-stories/55958> (15/02/05)

(501) The **prejudices** against the Bajau often stem from the preconception that all nomadic people are by nature shiftless, rootless, irresponsible and unreliable.

<http://www.pcij.org/imag/EarthWatch/bajau2.html> (15/02/05)

*Prejudice* invariably reveals a negative evaluation. Brown (1995: 49) states "An often essential component in definitions of prejudice is that there is an expression of negativity toward an individual as a result of his or her group membership". Pragmatically, this bias against the target is often represented as *prejudice against* the target: to think some bad things about people of kind X. (This component was selected over *Y is someone bad*, suggesting moral assessment). This component is not justified by further cognitive components, indicating that *prejudice* is a generalised, subjective opinion.

(502) Research still shows **prejudice** against job applicants based on their age.

[www.cipd.co.uk/news/inthenews/](http://www.cipd.co.uk/news/inthenews/) (15/02/05)

(503) UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called on the Western world to end its **prejudice** against Islam, including distorting its tenets and linking Islam with terrorism and violence.

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/securitywatch/details.cfm?ID=10322> (15/02/05)

(504) The whole 'sanctity of marriage' argument is a bullshit cover in my opinion - maybe not for everyone, but I bet a large majority of them are just acting out of their **prejudice** against homosexual people.

<http://www.yessaid.com/forum/showthread.php?p=67297> (15/02/05)

(505) Toward the final years of my schooling, the **prejudice** against Asian immigrants by all other 'Australians' was in full swing.

<http://www.johnkinsella.org/essays/patchofground.html> (15/02/05)

These examples point to categorisation, the agent has identified the target as *a kind of person*. Pragmatically, these groups are based in factors that include ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender or other perceived categories. *Prejudice identifies difference*.

(506) Muslim Australians have told us that they have felt a rising wave of **prejudice** driven by the fear of difference and a need to find ‘someone’ – someone ‘different’ – to blame.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/isma/media/speeches/](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/media/speeches/)

(26/02/05)

Pragmatically, marked *prejudice* can indicate either a favourable or unfavourable opinion towards a target. However, the word has connotations of predominately negative bias and unfairness against *people of kind X* rather than partiality for an individual or group. Nonetheless, *prejudice against* a target presupposes *prejudice for* another group, or at least a more positive attitude towards non-X. Spinoza (1675: 7) calls this “hate prejudice”.

In an early study of *prejudice*, Faris (1929: 484) observed, “When prejudice against a group is found it seems always possible to discover the correlative prejudice for another group. Moreover, both the favorable and unfavorable attitude varies in a continuous series with a middle or zero point of neutrality or indifference”. Brewer (1999: 436) contends that “positive in-group bias is not the same as prejudice”. This further clarifies the semantic contrast between *prejudice* and *bias*, *prejudice* necessarily connotes partiality based on negative assessment of a group. Of course, in-group positivity, in itself, does not invariably connote out-group negativity.

Although *prejudice for* is less salient than *prejudice against* (*prejudice for* can also refer to *prejudice against*) the former is implied by the latter. For example, if X exhibits *prejudice against* Y, it is implicit that X exhibits *prejudice for* people who are *not* Y. Thinking something bad about Y, presupposes that the agent thinks: *something good about other kinds of people*.

(507) That Whites exhibit an aversion to Black neighbors is not surprising. Most researchers interpret this as evidence of persistent racial **prejudice**.

<http://radburn.rutgers.edu/Lahr/509> (18/06/05)

(508) The **prejudice** against singleness has been particularly virulent in America, where survival and salvation alike made it imperative to marry in the eyes of the Puritan fathers.

<http://science.martianbachelor.com/PAB.html> (18/06/05)

*Prejudice* is prototypically inter-group, often serving a function of solidarity. Quasthoff (1989: 143) suggests the cause and effects of this, “prejudices simplify communication within one’s own group, strengthen the sense of belonging, and delineate the outgroup. This is particularly the case during periods of internal strife and in times of rapid social change”.

(509) An explosive mix of **prejudices**, often verging on paranoia, is fuelling local campaigns against immigration. And this mood of anger is being encouraged by national newspapers, which are linking immigration to fears over terrorism, disease and crime.

<http://www.irr.org.uk/2003/january/ak000017.html> (19/12/05)

Quasthoff (1989: 145) defines *prejudice* as “mental states defined (normally) as negative attitudes (the affective element) toward social groups with matching stereotypic convictions or beliefs”. An important semantic facet of *prejudice* is the agent’s preconceived perception, a ‘gut feeling’ or folkloric expectation of the target. In regards to *prejudice against*, Allport (1954: 21) refers to this as “thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant”. This is explicated as: the agent: *hasn’t thought about it well*. This compares *prejudice* to *ignorance*, to ‘lazy’ thinking. This further implies that a *prejudice* is *not true*. However, the agent is not prepared to: *think about it more*.

(510) Awareness groups say **ignorance** is what is causing much of the **prejudice**.

[www.aegis.com/news/bbc/2004/BB041208.html](http://www.aegis.com/news/bbc/2004/BB041208.html) (19/12/05)

(511) It's **prejudice** to think that all Cubans/Mexicans that make it to America are going to be lazy, half-assed people.

<http://www.gta-sanandreas.com/forums/> (19/12/05)

(512) This is their deep-seated **prejudice** about things they **don't even understand**.

[www.answers.yahoo.com/question](http://www.answers.yahoo.com/question) (19/12/05)

*Prejudice*, as an attitude, does not invariably connote that *something happens because of this*, this can be a perception that does not result in a consequence. *Prejudice* is something that the agent can exhibit: *show prejudice*, *reveal prejudice* or *display prejudice*.

(513) Many Americans have small **prejudices** against people of Arab descent even though they are not acting on these **prejudices**.

<http://www.ripon.edu/Academics/psychology/FYS175/> (29/12/05)

By this, *prejudice* contrasts against *discrimination*. Alternately, *prejudice* can certainly result in a negative consequence for the target: *because of this, something bad can happen to people of kind X*. This can be expressed as *prejudice leads to*, *prejudice causes* and other similar phrases. The following examples suggest that *prejudice* pre-empts conflict.

(514) I think **prejudice leads to** violence and aggression, not the other way around.

[www.womengamers.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=11545](http://www.womengamers.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=11545) (29/12/05)

(515) The commission found an increase in **prejudice** against Muslims in Australia since September 11, punctuated with unprovoked verbal abuse and hate-inspired violence. Muslim women particularly suffered, some having their headscarves ripped off and stones thrown at them.

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/06/21/1087669912119.html>

(29/12/05)

(516) **Prejudice** is dangerous, fostering negative consequences ranging from lowered self-esteem to genocide.

<http://academics.vmi.edu/psy/jg/prejudice.htm> (29/12/05)

Jones (1987: 118) observes that *prejudice* lies outside the scope of “truth and logic”. As has been discussed, they are subjective and reveal personal opinion. However, this does not mean that *prejudices* are immutable. There is a large body of literature devoted to *prejudice reduction*, involving rational counter-argument and education. Quasthoff’s (1989: 140) research into this area suggests that that specific (frequent, relatively close, and permanent) forms of personal contact with members of the respective outgroup can positively influence attitudes and beliefs with respect to the outgroup. When we label an attitude or behaviour as *prejudice*, we announce our disapproval of that attitude or behaviour. The speaker’s attitude is reflected in usage: *it is bad if someone thinks like this*.

(517) **Prejudice** is ultimately a product of ignorance.

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/06/21/1087669912119.html>  
(29/12/05)

(518) As a result of this **prejudice**, Canada provided safety for only a few Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany before the outbreak of World War II.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/> (29/12/05)

#### 4.3.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

Psychologist Gordon Allport (1954: 5) conducted seminal work into the nature of *prejudice*, defining the phenomenon as, an “Aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to that group”. Allport’s research focuses more on pragmatic rather than semantic factors. The scholar produced a range of extremity, known as *Allport’s Scale of Prejudice*, that explains the various components and manifestations of *prejudice* [Stanton’s (2001) paradigm of *genocide* [see 1.3] is likely based in Allport’s scale]. These are phenomena that are covered within this thesis.

**Scale 1:** Antilocution. This category involves the verbal expression of *prejudice* against a target. This phenomena is contemporarily known as *hate speech*.

**Scale 2:** Avoidance. This involves facets of *stigmatisation* and *isolation* of the target, based in *prejudice*.

**Scale 3:** Discrimination. This phase involves the marginalisation of the target.

**Scale 4:** Physical Attack. This involves the physical enactment of *prejudice*, the physical abuse and hate crimes enacted against a target. Allport cites historical examples such the lynchings of African American people, and acts of religious persecution against groups such as C19th Mormon people.

**Scale 5:** Extermination. This most extreme enactment of *prejudice* is genocide perpetrated against a target group. Allport cites the pogrom against the Jewish people.

Ibrahim (2005: 58) asserts, “Social psychology defines prejudice as both a negative belief/affect and a discriminatory action towards somebody on the basis of his or her social Membership”. In general, social psychologists assume that *prejudice* leads to *discrimination: very bad things can happen to people of kind X when other people think like this* (Chrysochoou 2004). This thesis disputes this view, asserting that *prejudice* does not invariably lead to an act, rather, it can merely present an attitude. In regards to *discrimination* versus *prejudice*, this thesis distinguishes between these two processes, the former indicates unfavourable treatment, the latter predominately connotes an attitude. *Discrimination* can be a manifestation of, and reveal, *prejudice*.

As broad parameters, Lambert (1998: 149) cites the pragmatic behaviour of *prejudice*.

- *Manifestation*: not always manifest behaviour; only behaviours can be tackled directly; discrimination as distinct from prejudice.
- *Mutability*: prejudices are not immutable; prejudice reduction; countered by rational argument in some cases; change by raising awareness of assumptions; change by negotiation on a social and personal level.
- *Universality*: prejudice is not an unusual condition; we all carry stereotypes; cannot be eradicated; we need to categorise to make sense of the world.
- *Value*: prejudice is not entirely negative; positive prejudices similar to preferences.

*Prejudice* is to harbour a negative bias towards a target individual or group (*some people think some bad things about people of kind X*). This is an uncritical and fixed attitude or opinion about a target, based on features of the target such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other group membership (*these people haven't thought about it well*). *Prejudice* indicates unsubstantiated pre-judgement, and is a socio-cultural perspective that can either be expressed or latent.

Collocations can reveal interesting semantic and pragmatic aspects of *prejudice*. The following have been extracted from the Collins Word Bank Corpus. These modified phrases illustrate that *prejudice* is an attitude towards an identifiable target group (*people of kind X*) and that such *prejudices* function at a socio-cultural level: *racial/race prejudice, age prejudice, religious prejudice, anti-gay prejudice, sexual prejudice, colour prejudice, class prejudice, political prejudice, cultural prejudice, social prejudice, personal prejudice, popular prejudice, establishment prejudice, institutionalized prejudice, national prejudice*.

The following Word Bank collocations indicate the extremity and/or the constancy of *prejudiced*: *Extreme prejudice, overt prejudice, strong prejudice, hardcore prejudice, long-term prejudice, life-long prejudice, continuing prejudice, terminal prejudice, on-going prejudice*. Some collocations imply that *prejudice* is a learned behaviour that can be reduced: *reduce prejudice, decrease prejudice, unlock prejudice, diminish prejudice*.

As *prejudiced* is uncritical pre-judgement, it is paralleled with *unfair*. Constructions like \*fair prejudice or \*sound prejudice are unacceptable. *Prejudiced* also suggests partiality as \*impartial prejudice and \*neutral prejudice cannot exist as collocations.

*Prejudiced* is typically defined as *biased*. Both terms indicate a predilection *for* one group and *against* another group.

The company shows **bias/prejudice** against male employees.

The terms differ semantically in that *biased* refers to external influence or informed decision, leading one to develop *bias* against a target. *Prejudiced* is typically unfounded and uncritical.

Medical doctors are **biased** (\***prejudiced**) against alternative medicine.

*Prejudiced* invariably implies contempt and even hostility while *biased* can indicate simple preference.

He is **biased** (**\*prejudiced**) in favour of Internet Explorer over Netscape.

*Biased* can be a neutral term without the negative connotations of *prejudiced*. *Prejudiced* is invariably negative, \*positive prejudice.

I am **biased** (**\*prejudiced**) towards brunette men.

#### 4.3.5 Metaphor and *prejudice*

Some popular *prejudice* related expressions contain *sight* related metaphors, linking an attitude with a visual perspective. Such phrases illustrate that to *prejudice* is a personal and subjective outlook, *how someone sees something*. *Prejudice* related phrases typically imply figurative vision obstruction or impairment connected with an inability to comprehend something, *X can't see*, *X can't get that*, *X doesn't look at*. While to possess knowledge, *to know*, is often equated with *to see* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), *prejudice* is equated with a lack of knowledge, with ignorance and is expressed as an *inability to see*, to be *blind*, *short sighted*, *dim-sighted*, *myopic*, *blinkered*, *blindfolded*, *mind blind* or *to wear blinders*. This is explicated as: *these people haven't thought about it well* and *these people don't want to think about it more*.

(519) He makes statements that are as absurd as they are **blinkered** by **prejudices** he is unaware of.

<http://foreigndispatches.typepad.com/dispatches> (17/07/04)

(520) They are so **blindly prejudiced** in favour of their own church, and so **blindly prejudiced** against every other.

<http://www.pcanet.org/history/documents/miller-sectarianism.pdf> (25/09/05)

(521) It is **short-sighted** for the government to ignore reforms of labour laws and policies. The government must discard its archaic and **prejudiced attitudes** towards workers' rights and the labour movement.  
<http://www.asianlabour.org/archives/001801.php> (25/09/05)

As a corollary to these *blind* metaphors, *prejudice* is often perceived as a covert bias, a *hidden prejudice* that can be *reflected*, *discovered* or *revealed*. While to *discriminate against* is an overt act, *prejudice* can be a dormant attitude. This may refer to either an unconscious *prejudice* or one that is purposefully concealed, given that this is a socially reproachable attitude. This correlation is expressed as an *unconscious prejudice*, *latent prejudice*, *buried prejudice*, *veiled prejudice* or *concealed prejudice*. An underlying *prejudice* can be *shallow* or *deep* and *thinly*, *barely*, *scarcely*, *poorly* or *ill-concealed*.

(522) Could it be there is a **hidden prejudice** of which you are not even aware?  
[http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200401/20040127\\_goats.html](http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200401/20040127_goats.html) (16/10/05)

(523) Their own opinions are based on nothing more than blinkered **thinly-veiled prejudice**.  
<http://www.doctor-horsefeathers.com/archives/000153.php> (16/10/05)

(524) The language which is used in connection with senior citizens often **conceals prejudice** and negative attitudes towards older persons and ageing.  
[http://www.aeldreforum.dk/publikationer/annual\\_report/foreword.htm](http://www.aeldreforum.dk/publikationer/annual_report/foreword.htm)  
(16/10/05)

*Prejudice*, as a form of bias and partiality, is linked to the inequitable notion of *one-sidedness*. Interestingly, this metaphorical usage implies 'positive prejudice' for one or more groups, thereby disfavours other groups.

(525) I would just like you to come to grips with the **one sided prejudice** and judgemental attitude you seem to display every time someone brings up the Bible.  
<http://www.bautforum.com/showthread.php?p=67351> (16/10/05)

(526) This **one-sidedness** revealed a clear **prejudice** against Israel.  
[www.tachles.ch/aufbau/ausgaben](http://www.tachles.ch/aufbau/ausgaben) (16/10/05)

#### 4.4 *xenophobia*

**Xenophobia, the fear of strangers, is an infection of the soul particularly virulent in our times, but it is not a fear only of foreign people. It's a deeply disturbing anxiety that affects everything we do. At its root is a fear of 'the strange'.**

Moore (1997: 14)

*Xenophobia* is an interesting word in the discourse of discrimination. It is an *us and them* attitude that comprises aspects of *intolerance, prejudice, racism, territoriality, nativism, patriotism* and *nationalism*. Existing definitions often gloss *xenophobia* with one or more of these terms. Pedahzur (1999: 102) observes “Although xenophobia is ubiquitous in contemporary societies, its targets vary across countries and nations”. Socially, a broad range of people have been targeted, from refugees and asylum seekers, through to (especially unassimilated) immigrants and even tourists. Some sources claim *xenophobia* is merely a euphemism for or subsumed by *racism*, while Cole (1997: 19) has labelled it as the “new racism”. *Xenophobia* has been identified in a number of other living creatures, apart from humans. McEvoy (1995) reports that, among humans, a fear of ‘unknown’ people can be detected in babies as young as three months of age.

Most often, *xenophobia* is glossed in accordance with its etymology in Greek roots: *xeno* = *foreigners*, *phobia* = *fear*. However, this provides us with a narrow definition. The Center for New Community (2004: 10) provides a more thorough explanation, revealing the complex structure of the word:

[Xenophobia] refers to fear, loathing and/or hatred of foreigners, outsiders, and others, and particularly the prospect of being in close proximity to such persons. The phobia can apply to racial, ethnic, religious, national or cultural

outsiders - the only point is that they are regarded by the xenophobic individual as different”

Some scholars differentiate between *xenophobia* and *cultural xenophobia*. The first label refers to a literal anxiety, a clinical fear of strangers, while the latter form refers to a strong dislike of people who are culturally different in any way (Judson 1989).

Commentators have perceived *xenophobia* from various angles, as an evolutionary attribute for survival (Rushton 2005), a discriminatory construction of the ‘other’, to an in-group instrument of solidarity (Hunt 2005). Burjanek (2001: 54) explains the ‘protective’ function of *xenophobia*, claiming the following physiological analogy can be found in the human immune system:

Just as the human body is best able to avoid a potential disaster caused by some foreign matter by rejecting it, so may an individual or a group be best able to avoid damage caused by foreigners by a tendency to distrust, avoid or reject individuals who seem ‘foreign’.

Of course, the aim of this thesis is to examine the semantic scope of *xenophobia*, to describe its meaning and usage in a comprehensive and revealing, yet non-judgemental manner. The NSM method will ‘break down’ the semantic structure of *xenophobia*, representing meaning and usage, for this final, important tool in the lexicon of *discrimination*, *abuse* and *hatred*. To begin, how has *xenophobia* been defined by traditional lexicographical sources?

#### **4.4.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *xenophobia***

The OED presents the following definition of *xenophobia*.

A deep antipathy to foreigners.

This pithy explanation employs complex terms (antipathy, foreigners) and is inadequate as a complete semantic description. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English presents *xenophobia* as: “A strong fear or dislike of people from other countries”.

While this definition is couched in more simple terms, it doesn't account for the complete meaning of this word. For example, *xenophobia* can be directed towards a target given his or her ethnic background, although they may have been born in the same country as the agent. The Cambridge Dictionary of Contemporary English doesn't propose a definition for *xenophobia*. However, the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary explains that this is:

An extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions, etc.

While this definition covers a broader range of usage, it is open-ended and employs complex terms (customs, religions). WordNet explains:

WordNet - 1. *xenophobia* -- (an irrational fear of foreigners or strangers)

*Xenophobia* does not invariably connote *fear*, but can refer to strong dislike or even hatred. Using semantic primes, following is a decomposition of the semantic structure of *xenophobia*.

#### 4.2.2 NSM explication of *xenophobia*

*xenophobia*

- (a) a way of thinking about some kinds of people in a place
- (b) when X thinks about this place, X thinks like this:
- (c) "this is my place
- (d) I am like a part of this place
- (e) people like me live in this place
- (f) I don't want people of other kinds to live in this place"
- (g) X thinks about people of all other kinds like this:
- (h) "I don't want to be near people of other kinds
- (i) something very bad can happen if people of other kinds are near
- (j) there isn't anything good about people of other kinds"
- (k) people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this
- (l) very bad things can happen to some people when other people think like this

## Explanation of components

(a) *Xenophobia* is an attitude, directed towards a target who is identified as a *kind of person*. In this usage, *place* refers to *country*.

(b) The following indented components form the agent's prototypical attitude towards this *place*.

(c) This line indicates territoriality and possession, a sense of ownership.

(d) This suggests an emotive bond with this *place*. A sense of belonging and patriotism.

(e) This represents a sense of identity, kinship and an emotive bond towards 'similar' people. This further suggests a sense of solidarity with similar people.

(f) The agent is territorial and protective of this 'possession'. This attitude creates othering and excludes the target. This suggests that the target is somehow 'trespassing' on the agent's 'property'. The agent is opposed to presence of inter-group members.

(g) This line introduces a second prototypical cognitive scenario, suggesting the agent's attitude towards *all people of all other kinds*.

(h) The agent rejects the presence of different kinds of people. This is an aversion to people of 'other' kinds. These different groups are not specified, as *xenophobia* is based in a subjective hatred/dislike of any perceived difference.

(i) This component suggests a fear or phobia of the target, an anxiety about being near different kinds of people. This evokes the idea of an irrational anxiety towards the target.

(j) This line suggests dislike or hatred.

(k) A social evaluation, *xenophobia* is a socially reproached attitude and behaviour.

(l) *Xenophobia* can result in negative consequences for the target (e.g., social exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation or other results).

#### 4.4.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

*Xenophobia* labels an attitude, and the potential consequences of that attitude. In the literature, the agent is often referred to as a *xenophobe*. This *way of thinking* involves a target: *a kind of person*, and is closely linked to the agent's perception of their socio-cultural and political domain: *in a place*.

This explication aims to indicate *country*, rather than other 'places' such as a *house* or *office*. While *xenophobia* prototypically refers to an agent's feelings about *a kind of person* in the agent's *country*, this can also extend to *region*, *town*, *city*, *state* or other specific, delineated 'areas'. An agent can also reveal *xenophobia* when they are outside of his or her place (e.g., overseas). Some examples reveal the subjective, 'selective' nature of targeting *xenophobia*, Simcox (1997: 131) portrays this subjectivity as irrationality, "Xenophobia is most difficult to operationalize: by definition it implies an *undue* or *irrational* fear or distrust of foreigners".

(527) Britain, my country of origin, appears to be infected by such selective **xenophobia**.

<http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no15/Dickens.html> (10/04/05)

(528) President Thabo Mbeki observed that all South Africans must be vigilant against "any evidence of **xenophobia**" against African immigrants.

<http://www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/samppublications/> (10/04/05)

*Xenophobia* is semantically multi-layered, involving an attitude towards *a kind of people*, and *a place*. Therefore, this explication contains two cognitive scenarios, to account for the agent's perception towards their country or area, and the target. The initial scenario treats the agent's attitude towards their 'area': *when X thinks about Z, X thinks something like this*. *Xenophobia* implies 'territoriality', the agent's sense of 'ownership' of their country: *this is my place*. A sense of *patriotism* or even

*nationalism* is suggested and a strong sense of belonging: *I am like a part of this place*. Burjanek (2001: 55) reports that “In the sub-set of Western countries, the factors encouraging xenophobia also include unemployment, right-wing leanings and pride in one’s country.”

Greenhalgh (1995: 152) perceives *xenophobia* as the cognitive foundation of *nationalism*, “Xenophobia is the ideological structure of nationalism different from country to country”. Of course, *patriotism* and *nationalism* do not invariably imply *xenophobia*, however, pragmatic evidence reveals a semantic ‘link’ between these terms. In an early observation, novelist Gaskell (1863: 299) provides a stylistic description of *xenophobia* that retains some modern relevance, “xenophobia is that kind of patriotism that consists of hating all other nations”.

(529) Overly zealous **patriotism** feeds **nationalism** which in its turn feeds things such as **xenophobia** and intolerance.

<http://www.gamebanshee.com/forums/printthread.php?t=30612> (03/10/05)

(530) **Patriotism** - or any adherence to a comfort-giving group, be that religious, political or social - runs the risk of manifesting itself as **xenophobia**.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking\\_point/693433.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/693433.stm) (03/10/05)

(531) **Patriotism** comes wrapped in the assumption that ‘we’ are superior to ‘them’ and that ‘they’ are a potential threat to ‘us’. This assumption lends itself to **xenophobia**.

[www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/merupert/politics\\_and\\_teaching.htm](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/merupert/politics_and_teaching.htm)  
(03/10/05)

*Xenophobia* implies positive feelings of solidarity and an emotive bond towards in-group members: *people like me live in this place*. Furthermore, the agent is opposed to out-group members: *I don’t want other kinds of people to live in this place*. The agent identifies Y as *other*, and is against their presence in the agent’s country. As Wallace (1999: 4) writes, “the ‘other’ represents the antithesis of the ‘good citizen’, they not only ‘threaten’ the categories of normal, civilised life, but they also help to define it”. Other commentators have compared *xenophobia* to *nativism*, *protectionism* and

*isolationism* (Ryoo 2005). Of course, these terms are highly discrete, although they are related semantically.

(532) We need to analyse the extent and character of **xenophobia** amongst the populace at large; South Africans are not tolerant of **outsiders**. These feelings are widespread and cut across indicators of age, education, gender, economic status and race (although whites are generally more hostile than blacks towards African immigrants).

<http://www.eldis.org/static/DOC9378.htm> (03/10/05)

(533) These incidents have also played into traditional **xenophobia** against **foreigners** in Japan, which has long touted its national homogeneity as its uniqueness in the world.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/migration/stories/crime.html> (03/10/05)

(534) I think all humans have basic **xenophobia**. When somebody outside our circles come in, there's always a period of earning acceptance that the outsider has to go through. Some of these periods are shorter than others, and some are more demanding than others, but until the outsider becomes accepted by the group, xenophobia is going on. Then you have extreme xenophobia where outsiders are never accepted by the group.

<http://www.americasdebate.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=1962>

(03/10/05)

As discussed above, *xenophobia* is directed against 'foreigners'. Prototypical *xenophobia* is directed towards a target who is 'in country', *when Y is in Z* (e.g., *Australians show xenophobia towards immigrants*). *Xenophobia* can also be directed against people who are overseas: *The British reveal their xenophobia when they holiday in Spain*.

*Xenophobia* reveals a dislike or hatred of ethnically different people: *X thinks about people of other kinds like this*. This component introduces the second prototypical cognitive scenario. This commences with a negative evaluation.

(535) This view justifies a negative attitude towards the Jews. It was related to the formation of European totalitarianism that was based on the tradition of **xenophobia**.

[www.lout.ipt.pl/socrates/dodatki/Report\\_BG\\_in\\_EN.doc.doc](http://www.lout.ipt.pl/socrates/dodatki/Report_BG_in_EN.doc.doc) (03/10/05)

Burjanek (2001: 54) observes the divisive nature of *xenophobia*, “The idea of xenophobia is bound up with the distinction between *us* and *them*”. This attitude excludes the target as the ‘other’ by perceiving the target as *different*. Pragmatically, this is constructed as the ‘other’ *is weird, odd or strange*, due to socio-cultural or aesthetic factors. Burjanek (2001: 55) further notes, “Who ‘they’ are is also not difficult. ‘They’ are recognisable as ‘not we’, most usually by colour or other physical stigmata, or by language. Where these signs are not obvious, subtler discriminations can be made”. In this way, an unassimilated immigrant or tourist can be a target. This facet supports the implication that *xenophobia* occurs in multi-ethnic, pluralistic societies. The opposition of *us* and *them*, adds Bauman (1996) serves to distinguish between us, our benevolent and well-meaning nation, and them, our evil, aggressive and constantly intriguing neighbours.

(536) **Xenophobia** can manifest as a deep-seated fear and hatred of those who merely look **different**.

[www.thinkingpeace.com/pages](http://www.thinkingpeace.com/pages) (03/10/05)

(537) **Xenophobia** is the fear or hatred of anything that is strange or foreign.

<http://www.hawaii.edu/suremath/xenophobes.html> (03/10/05)

Burjanek (2001: 55) explains “Concepts of *xenophobia* generally refer to ‘foreigners’, i.e. to someone who comes from somewhere else”. *Xenophobia* suggests that the agent perceives the target as ‘trespassing’ or intruding on something that is the ‘property’ of the agent: the target *is in my place*. The agent opposes the presence of the target: *I don’t want to be near people of other kinds*. Simcox (1997: 131) asserts that the agent is threatened by the target, xenophobia “implies a sense of threat by foreigners or by racial minorities to the familiar and established racial, cultural and social characteristics of the dominant majority”.

(538) They always like to talk about '**xenophobia**' these days - fear - what about people just don't want them here?

<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?t=126717> (17/10/04)

(539) "Given increasing security concerns following (the) Sept. 11 (attacks in the U.S., it) is New Zealand's right to keep out the people we don't want and remove those who shouldn't be here," he said... The Green Party said the review will give the government a chance to establish New Zealand's humanitarian credentials and to reject New Zealand First's **xenophobia**.

<http://www.tkb.org/NewsStory.jsp?storyID=67805> (17/10/04)

(540) Hence my dislike of **xenophobia**, the 'this is ours, not theirs' view doesn't help this, whether it's of money, land or national identity.

<http://drownedinsound.com/> (17/10/04)

This component contrasts with the component in *stigmatise: I don't want to be near Y*. The former line implies rejection based on dislike, while the latter line suggests rejection with a spatial element: *something very bad can happen if people of other kinds are near* (e.g., the target is contagious or dangerous). This likens 'cultural' *xenophobia* to 'clinical' *xenophobia*.

Another significant component of *xenophobia* is the agent's adverse perception of the target: *there isn't anything good about people of other kinds*. Orenstein (1985: 13) conceives of *xenophobia* as "distrust, dislike of and even hostility towards foreigners or to anything and anybody from outside one's own social group, nation, country, etc."

(541) **Xenophobia** is characterised by a negative attitude towards foreigners, a dislike, a fear, or a hatred.

<http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/paphar1.htm> (28/11/05)

(542) **Xenophobia** is hate fueled by fear of the unknown.

<http://www.democraticunderground.com/cgi-bin/duforum> (28/11/05)

(543) His post shows he hates refugees and that is **xenophobia**.

[www2b.abc.net.au/science](http://www2b.abc.net.au/science) (28/11/05)

*Xenophobia* contains a cognitive element, it can also contain a behavioural element: *because of this, something bad can happen*. Harris (2002: 172) asserts that *xenophobia* “is not just an attitude: it can be an activity...a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage”. While *xenophobia* can imply violent conflict, this component can further refer to legal and socio-cultural repercussions for the target.

(544) **Xenophobia** leads to a massive attack on the Chinese.

[www.planetware.com/california/los-angeles-us-ca-la.htm](http://www.planetware.com/california/los-angeles-us-ca-la.htm) (28/11/05)

(545) Increasing **xenophobia** resulted in restrictions of minority rights, for example, in Romania.

<http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/minelres/archive/06161999-21:17:00-11060>  
(28/11/05)

The final component reflects the attitude of the speaker/author, the disapproval of *xenophobia*, as an attitude and/or behaviour: *it is very bad if someone thinks like this*. Labelling an attitude or act as *xenophobia* is to criticise that attitude or behaviour. Pragmatic usage of *xenophobia* in inverted commas, typically questions the validity of this phenomenon and frequently reveals yet denies an incident of *xenophobia*. The following examples suggest that there is a sort of delirium or madness to *xenophobia* that the agent is not in his or her ‘right mind’.

(546) **Xenophobia** is a kind of herpes of the human spirit, sometimes accompanied by fever.

<http://www.penguin.com.au/spotlight/> (04/12/05)

(547) Good luck with you views, but a descent into **xenophobia** is hardly likely to resolve your problems.

[www.strategypage.com/messageboards/messages/567-2613.asp](http://www.strategypage.com/messageboards/messages/567-2613.asp) (04/12/05)

(548) This is not ‘**xenophobia**’, but simply tension created by there not being enough land and jobs to go around, and the fact that wealth is rapidly leaving the country as immigrant workers send it home.

#### 4.4.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

*Xenophobia* applies to an irrational hatred of anything culturally foreign, unfamiliar or different, eg. food, attire. A generality form of *xenophobia* is primarily cultural, and the object of the phobia is cultural elements which are considered alien. All cultures are subject to external influences, but cultural *xenophobia* is often narrowly directed, for instance at foreign loan words in a national language. It rarely leads to aggression against persons, but can result in political campaigns for cultural or linguistic purification.

The Collins Word Bank corpus contains collocations of usage that reveal common targets of this process: *X is xenophobic of: foreigners, strangers, outsiders, people from other countries, people of other races, people of other cultures.* *Xenophobia* is subjectively targeted towards minority groups such as recent immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, tourists and extending to residents and/or citizens perceived to be socio-culturally unassimilated.

Geographical origin of the target is a significant component of *xenophobia*. The attitude can reveal cultural identity-based discrimination, including elements of national, racial, ethnic and religious discrimination but is restricted to these categories. *Xenophobia* is not applicable to physiological-based discrimination, including gender, sexual orientation, disability or age. Specific comparative terms exist for these categories, for example, a 'fear' of homosexual people is *homophobia*, a 'fear' of women is *gynophobia*.

They are **xenophobic** of Australians (\*women).

He is **xenophobic** of religious people (\*elderly people).

The politician is **xenophobic** of asylum seekers (\*homosexual people).

*Xenophobia* has a subjective, non-specific target, while neologisms have emerged to designate specific, targeted *xenophobia*. These terms bear a similar form to *xenophobia*, as blends created with a religious, national or racial prefix and the Greek

suffix *-phobia*, indicating *fear*. There is some evidence that a term for specific *xenophobia* predates this word, the OED dates *xenophobia* to 1909 while the first recorded usage of *Negrophobia* dates to 1819.

In psychiatric register, a clinical *phobia* indicates abnormal fear or anxiety of a target (e.g., *claustrophobia*, a fear of confined spaces). Conversely, neologistic sociological *phobias* denote a negative, stereotypical evaluation of a target (e.g., *Christianophobia*, *Islamaphobia*, *Judaeophobia*, *Anglophobia*, *Afrophobia* and *Europhobia*). Nation-specific *phobias* are likely nonce terms or media constructions with limited application (e.g., *Australophobia*, *Amerophobia*, *Chinophobia*, *Dutchophobia*, *Francophobia*, *Germanophobia*, *Islandophobia*, *Japanophobia*, *Russophobia*, *Polonophobia*). Some related forms are possibly humorous constructions, eg. *Novahollandiaphobia*, *Columbophobia* (sourced from [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)).

The lexeme and its forms are not typically used self-referentially. *Xenophobic* is often employed as a political insult directed against people identified as *nationalistic*, *racist* or *isolationist*.

*Xenophobia* is too semantically complex to be defined by single word glosses. While *patriotism* is likened to *xenophobia* in that both terms indicate a devotion to a facet of one's own country, there are clear semantic distinctions. *Xenophobia* is a continuous attitude while *patriotism* can be a reactionary sentiment, incited by an event, hence the collocations *show of patriotism*, *display of patriotism*.

In a display of **patriotism** (\***xenophobia**), he waved an Australian flag.

While the above construction connotes a 'love' or 'pride' for Australia, it does not consequently imply an antithetical hatred of other countries. Unlike *xenophobia*, *patriotism* has connotations. However, more extreme degrees of *patriotism* may reveal a subjective, perceived superiority of one country and therefore implied inferiority of other countries.

His dislike of non-Australians revealed his **xenophobia** (\***patriotism**).

They are **xenophobic** (\***patriotic**) towards people of different countries.

*Patriotism* is essentially concept-oriented (i.e., directed towards a nation while *xenophobia* is people-oriented, directed towards a nationality). *Patriotic* of a target, *xenophobic* of multiple targets.

He is **patriotic** of Australia.

\*He is **patriotic** of Australians.

She is **xenophobic** of New Zealanders.

\*She is **xenophobic** of New Zealand.

*Patriotism* and *xenophobia* are both often symbolic acts, although they may be expressed by different mediums. *Patriotism*, as pride, is typically expressed in an overt manner, for example, a sticker featuring an Australian flag placed prominently on a vehicle. This explicit display allows an observer to connect the agent to the symbol. However, symbolic acts of *xenophobia* are typically performed covertly but intentionally public and vilifying in display, for example, spray painting racist graffiti on a building wall.

*Xenophobia* is also likened to concepts of *nationalism* and *jingoism*. Both terms are similar in that they harbour negative connotations, unlike the potentially positive connotations of *patriotism*. Furthermore, both terms imply chauvinism and refer to people rather than state. These terms differ in that *nationalism* does not invariably imply discrimination. *Nationalism* is an ideology that can motivate racism but not invariably discriminatory of other groups.

#### 4.4.5 Metaphor and *xenophobia*

Collins Word Bank corpus reveals a set of collocations that metaphorically refer to the social escalation of *xenophobia*. These metaphors typically portray the increase of *xenophobia* as an *upsurge*. Examples include: a *wave of xenophobia*, *swell*, *currents of*, a *flood of*, the *rise of xenophobia*, the *rising tide of xenophobia*, *rising levels of xenophobia*, *high levels of*, a *burst of xenophobia*, *resurgence of*, a *well of xenophobia*, *growing xenophobia*, and the *growth of xenophobia*. These phrases

present *xenophobia* as an alarming phenomenon that has suddenly intensified in society. Furthermore, these represent *xenophobia* as an uncontrollably social problem (*it is very bad if someone thinks like this*).

Metaphor can also be observed in *xenophobic* language that employs the term *alien* to refer to the target. *Alien* is polysemous. In most Englishes it refers to the perinormal concept of *extraterrestrial beings*. In legal and political registers, especially in American English, *alien* refers to immigration status (e.g., a *legal alien* or an *illegal alien*). The Wikipedia (2006: para. 1) defines *alien* (law) as “a person who is not a native or naturalized citizen of the land where they are found.” In this sense, *alien* is predominantly used in visa documentation in the US without pejorative connotation. (As a personal note, the author is identified as the *principal alien* in all US long-term visa documentation).

Beyond bureaucratic designation, *alien* has strong pejorative connotations. There does appear to be a recent shift in the United States whereby so-called *illegal aliens* are now being referred to as *undocumented people* or *workers* (K. Woodman, personal correspondence). Perhaps modifying *alien* with *illegal* adds an extra dimension of negative connotation. In his *Republican Playbook*, Luntz (2005: 158) advocates the use of *illegal alien*, claiming that *undocumented worker* is a manipulative, euphemistic label.

NEVER SAY: Undocumented Workers

INSTEAD SAY: Illegal Aliens

The Dems have adopted the phrase ‘undocumented worker’ but you shouldn’t.

Call them exactly what they are.

This perspective presents the target as criminal, *someone very bad (there isn’t anything good about people of other kinds)*. This attitude is perceived as intolerant, dehumanising and xenophobic by many speakers. When employed affectively, *alien* can have a dehumanising and stigmatising effect, and can socially alienate the target. The Wikipedia (2006: para. 1) also cites the usage of *enemy alien* to refer to “an alien who is designated as an enemy”.

These pejorative references suggest the target is perceived as different in a bad way (i.e., *unfamiliar, weird, scary, strange, unknown and fearful*). *Xenophobia* is also *othering*, a perception of the target as *foreign*, with implications of social exclusion

and rejection, the target *not a part of* or *not belonging* to society (*people like me live in this place, I don't want people of other kinds to live in this place*). Presenting the target as *foreign* also indicates that the agent 'doesn't know much' about the target, suggesting a lack of cultural understanding or familiarity. This further begs the question, what is *foreign*? This is a subjective view, and based on the agent's experience.

In popular culture, *alien* also has parallels with the folkloric concept of its polysemous form, emphasising physical/cultural differences and connoting a non-human entity or *being* from *outer space*, from *another planet*, an *extra-terrestrial*, a *creature* or *martian*. This also leads to a metaphorical link to the notion of *invasion* by the target, implying a fear of cultural domination or influence from the target group (*something very bad can happen to people like me if people of other kinds are near*).

(549) 'Patriotic' citizens are quick to assert, nationalistically, that the '**aliens**' have come to take over their country, their resources, their jobs, their culture.  
<http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/may01/xeno.html> (12/05/05)

(550) These guys weren't like us. They didn't belong, they were **alien**. This thinking leads to 'xenophobia', the hatred or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religion. [www.edges.tv/content.asp?id=11](http://www.edges.tv/content.asp?id=11) (12/05/05)

(551) They were members of an **alien** culture.  
<http://www.proconservative.net/PCVol4Is15BalkAm.shtml> (12/05/05)

A *xenophobic* attitude presents the target members as *alien*, 'they' have: *alien ideas*, *alien beliefs*, an *alien culture*, *alien life*, *alien lifestyle*, *alien way of life*, *alien tongues*, *alien accent*, *alien concept*, *alien race*, *alien mind*, *alien faith*, *alien people* (extracted online and from the Collins Word Bank). This suggests that the agent perceives the target as: *not like me in any way*.

(552) There had been fears of an invasion of **alien culture** if foreigners were allowed to set up companies.  
Factiva (14/02/05)

(553) His English was courtly and correct, yet unmistakably **alien**.

Factiva (14/02/05)

(554) How, so quickly and effortlessly, did this **alien belief system** take over our country?

[www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1168081/post](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1168081/post) (12/05/05)

#### 4.5 *racism*

**Racism is man's gravest threat to man--the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason.**

Abraham Joshua Heschel

*Racism* is semantically complex and multi-faceted. It involves an attitude and the potential for negative treatment on the basis of this. Any definition of *racism* needs to address the following cognitive constituents:

1. Categorisation
2. Negative Evaluation
3. Stereotyping
4. Superiority versus Inferiority
5. Verbal or Physical Manifestation

Etymologically, *racism* is derived from the C16th concept of *race*, the construction of human kinds. *Race* originally referred to a group connected by common descent or origin. However, there has never been a generally agreed upon definition (Stolley 1999). By the C19th, *race* evolved into a biological concept, to refer to a group regarded as forming a distinct ethnic stock. The methods of racial categorisation were based on superficial, vague and inaccurate characteristics (Haslanger 2000). Early *racism* can be defined as a theory of racial classification and the attribution of characteristics and abilities on this basis. The OED dates the earliest English usage to 1936, and the earliest example to French *racisme* only a year before. This theory is now discredited by scholars and proven to be genetically invalid (Stolley 1999).

However, contemporarily, *race* remains as a popular socio-cultural belief and *racism* exists as an extension of this belief.

*Racism* has undergone an extensive semantic evolution. Castles (1996) observes the shifting perception of *racism*, during the 1960s *racism* typically referred to acts, such as the overt segregation in the US Deep South and South Africa, or explicit racial exclusion, (e.g., the White Australia policy or the *colour bar* in Britain). Franklin (1999: 82) provides a traditional description of *racism* as “the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one race’s cultural heritage over that of another race”. These early examples present *racism* as a socio-political manifestation of power and dominance. Further to this, Castles (1996: 17) adds that “*Racism* was often linked to colonialism or neo-colonialism (the political and economic control of former colonies without direct rule)”. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the gradual decline of these overt forms of *racism*, with the development of civil rights movements, desegregation and the introduction of affirmative action (Hernandez 2005).

This section examines *racism*, predominately as an ideology, that underlies *racist behaviour*. Furthermore, a typological argument will be advanced, that classifies popular labels such as *modern racism*, *new racism*, *moral racism*, *everyday racism*, *reverse racism*, *aversive racism* and *racial resentment* under the unitary label of *racism* itself. *Racism* is a specific socio-cognitive mode against *any* ethnic group. This is the belief in the relative superiority of *any* group, with *race* now extended to religious groups and ethnic groups. As Castles (1996: 18) notes, contemporary occurrences of *racism* do not all “easily fit into the traditional white/black schema”. However, this narrow semantic portrayal is a widely held misconception.

(555) **Racism** -- the ideology that non-white racial groups are inferior to the white racial group -- is used to justify racial oppression.

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1996/225/225cen.htm> (03/10/05)

Marable (1992: 5) extends this traditional paradigm to “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms and color”. The explanation presented here will extend this theory

further, to comprise an attitude and manifestation directed against *any* ethno-cultural group.

How can we define this abstract word with a shifting semantic structure and a changing social context? Defining *racism* is both a contentious and problematic task. Definitions fall prey to being too broad, as in Marable's definition above, or the following observation from Knigge and Moody (2003: 7) that focuses on a specific, perceived manifestation, and is clearly too narrow.

**Racism** is the fear and anger white males have about Black men becoming intimate with white women.

Many scholarly definitions focus on the semantic aspects of *racism* that are relevant to that discipline or argument, and do not comprehensively explain meaning. We need to create an explication that accounts for all essential semantic elements of *racism*, without including extraneous or inaccurate components. How has *racism* been defined already?

#### 4.5.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *racism*

The OED provides the following entry for *racism*:

The theory that distinctive human characteristics and abilities are determined by race.

This definition provides a partial explanation of the origins of *racism*, as discussed above (4.5). However, this does not treat the attitude or the acts associated with *racism*. It is also circular by defining *racism* in terms of *race*.

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines *racism* as polysemous:

1. unfair treatment of people, or violence against them, because they belong to a different race from your own:
2. the belief that different races of people have different characters and abilities, and that your own race is the best.

These two components indicate generality, not polysemy. It could also be argued that *racism* can be intra-group and not perpetrated merely because a target belongs “to a different race”. These entries also use a confusing, second-person reference.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* provides a definition that is clear and couched in simple language.

The belief that some races are better than others, or the unfair treatment of someone because of their race.

However, there is the use of a conjunction, and this suggests polysemy instead of generality. As with the *Longman* definition, both clauses should be united under a single definition. What can scholarly sources add to this debate?

WordNet provides the following entry for *racism*.

1. racism -- (the prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races)
2. racism, racialism, racial discrimination -- (discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of another race)

WordNet claims that *racism* reveals polysemy. However, entries (1) and (2) could be collapsed into a single sense as the latter is a consequence of the attitude. While these definitions do provide an accurate overview of *racism*, they are replete with complex terms (prejudice, intrinsically, superior, discriminatory, abusive) and circularity (race). Using the NSM, below is a decomposition of the semantic structure of *racism*.

#### 4.5.2 NSM explication of *racism*

*racism*

- (a) many people think like this:
- (b) there are many kinds of people
- (c) people can know what kind someone is, if they can see this someone
- (d) some of these people think like this about one kind of people:
- (e) "these are people of one kind
- (f) people of this kind are not good like other kinds of people are good
- (g) people of this kind can't do many good things like other kinds of people can
- (h) people of this kind are below other kinds of people"
- (i) people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this
- (j) very bad things can happen to some people when other people think like this

#### Explanation of components

(a) This component precedes a cognitive scenario, suggesting a common, social belief. This is a thought, rather than scientific knowledge.

(b) This provides a background idea of 'race'. This component indicates difference and racial group categorisation, *there are many kinds of people*. The figure is not specified, as race is a dynamic concept of subjective classification. In particular, there has been a blurring of distinction of the usage of *race* and *racism*, now often referring to any ethnic group, religious group, nationality or other group factors.

(c) This line indicates the aesthetic typology of race, a categorisation that is primarily identified by visual factors. This is the idea that people of different races are supposed to be visibly different (e.g., by skin colour, eye shape, nose shape, body shape, hair type). The racial way of thinking assumes that 'superficial' differences like these allow us to identify individuals as belonging to particular *kinds of people*.

(d) Of this section of society that believe in the concept of race, can reveal a specific attitude towards one of these 'races'. The indented components present a prototypical cognitive scenario.

(e) The agent identifies the target as belonging to a racial group. There is no indication of the agent's race', as *racism* can be intra-group.

(f) The agent forms a negative evaluation of this collective group. This is a comparative assessment, the target is perceived in a negative light, relative to other groups. This is *othering*, an *us and them attitude*. This suggests the target is 'not as good as' the agent, in the opinion of the agent.

(g) The agent perceives difference between groups, suggesting inequality. This agent has formed a character generalisation of the target.

(h) This line introduces the superiority/inferiority dichotomy. This is the notion of 'racial superiority' that is a facet of the mindset of *racism*. The agent perceives the target's group as inferior, implying the superiority of other groups.

(i) This component indicates the speaker's attitude. *Racism* is a socially reproached attitude and behaviour.

(j) The preceding components indicate the attitude underpinning *racism*. This attitude can result in negative consequences for the target. No specific 'result' is specified, as *racism* can refer to a broad range of behaviour directed against a target individual or group, based on the target's perceived 'race' (e.g., the use of derogatory language, social disadvantage, segregation, physical violence).

### 4.5.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

Van Dijk (1987, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996) argues convincingly that *racism* is a socio-cognitive phenomenon. It is a concept that entails an attitude: *a way of thinking*. The enactment of *racism* has its basis in social cognition, and is often described as a belief, attitude or an opinion: *many people think like this*.

(556) The ugly side of this **thinking** is **racism**.

(557) Our modern age is plagued by **attitudes of racism**.

<http://www.goarch.org/en/news/NewsDetail.asp?printit=yes&id=854>

(10/11/05)

*Racism* incorporates the contentious notion of *race*, a theory or embedded social construct that the human species can be categorised into a meaningful typology. This theory was pioneered by botanist, zoologist and taxonomist Carolus Linnaeus who created an early scheme for nomenclature, originally classified the human species geographically but later attributed biological as well as cultural characteristics to these “races” (Linnaeus 1735).

A component of *racism* is the pervasive social belief of the existence of a finite number of ‘races’: *there are many (different) kinds of people*. Stolley (1999: 906) observes that the “notion of race is historically linked to racism”. This component is not expressed pragmatically, but is a semantic element of *racism*. As a concept, *race* refers to a group of people, as a prior term can be understood in terms of relational semantic primes, *race = a kind of people*. This is not an empirically proven theory, and one rejected by many natural and social scientists, including geneticists and anthropologists (Stolley 1999:45). The author further observes that racial categories are still used in social research, but given the radically different life experiences across-cultures, “social and economic variables have become mixed up and confused with genetic determinants”. Traditional categorisation recognises four ‘races’: *Africans, Caucasoids, Mongoloids and Australian Aborigines* (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994). However, the notion of *race* has undergone a ‘blurring’ of distinction, whereby religious groups (e.g., Jewish people), and ethnic or nationality-based groups (e.g., Hispanic people, Roma people) are now identified as racial categories. It seems that *race* has semantically broadened to include any socio-ethnic group with which an individual can identify. Indeed, Castles (1989: 27) claims that the idea of *race* is important to identity.

The term *race* has no scientific basis, yet racial categorisation is a crucial factor in social structure and action. Race may not be a biological fact, but it certainly is a social reality. So should social scientists speak of race? Some

scholars have decided that the term is unacceptable yet indispensable, so that it should be used, but only in quotation marks.

*Race* is often of socio-cultural significance to many people, therefore, *race* can be a matter of self-identification and a way of identifying other people. Some individuals identify with and ascribe themselves multiple racial identities, usually based on family background and nationality (e.g., White Hispanic Mexican-American). Castles (1989: 29) further notes, “Many people believe that they belong to a specific race, and that this is important for their social identity: in other words racism helps to define both the *Self* and the *Other*”. Castles (1996: 29) further states that *race* involves solidarity, “in which oppressed groups (such as black Americans or indigenous peoples) assert their unity and equality”.

Beyond self-identification, how do we identify *race* in others? This is where *race* illustrates its subjectivity. Castles (1996: 31) notes that racial groups are categorised “on the basis of phenotypical characteristics, cultural markers or national origin”. *Race* is primarily identified by simplistic aesthetic factors. Webster’s Dictionary defines *race* as “any of the major biological divisions of mankind, distinguished by color and texture of hair, color of skin and eyes, stature, bodily proportions, etc”. This is explicated as: *people can know what kind someone is, if they can see this someone*. The main factor used as a marker of *race* is skin colour, namely the categories of *black*, *white* and *yellow* (sometimes *red* is used to specifically indicate indigenous American people) although this categorisation reduces the number of categories. As we can see, this is hardly a rigorous, scientific classification.

As a concept based in attitude, *racism* contains an important cognitive element. Of course, not all people who believe in *race* perpetrate *racism*. This is decomposed as a prototypical cognitive scenario: *some of these people think like this about one kind of person*. A primary component of *racism* is the assignation of *race* to the target: *these are people of one kind*. The target is perceived as belonging to a specific racial/ethnic category (e.g., *racism against Asian people*). *Racism* cannot be based in other categories, such as gender or sexual orientation, \*racism against women, \*racism against gay men.

(558) His **racism** towards **Africans** is not simply because of prejudiced opinions that he himself has formulated, but because of the social conditioning that he is subject to.

<http://www.literatureclassics.com/> (05/07/05)

(559) Bush feeds their **racism** against **middle easterners**.

[www.democraticunderground.com](http://www.democraticunderground.com) (05/07/05)

*Describing* can lead to *ascribing*. When an agent describes *race* (e.g., *Blacks have dark skin and wiry hair*) ascribing characteristics (*Asians are bad drivers*) can soon follow. *Racism* incorporates a negative evaluation of the target group, in comparison to one (or more) other group(s): *people of this kind are not good like other kinds of people are good*. This component indicates dislike, aversion or hostility towards the target. One form of the enactment of *racism* is a *hate crime*. (Although this can be perpetrated against an individual, it is the individual's group membership that motivates *racism*).

(560) **Racism** is hatred of a group of people based on the mythical concept of 'race'.

[www.revolutionaryleft.com/index.php?showtopic=23680](http://www.revolutionaryleft.com/index.php?showtopic=23680) (05/07/05)

(561) Go to southern USA where some rednecks still display hate (what **racism** is, hate for another race) for the African-Americans.

<http://www.freewebspace.net/forums/showpost.php?p=505305&postcount=18>  
(11/06/05)

(562) **Racism** is a phenomenon in which people mistreat, discriminate against, dislike, or even hate, have disdain for, or regard as inferior, other people based on what is regarded to be their race.

<http://www.teachersparadise.com/ency/en/wikipedia/r/ra/racism.html>  
(05/07/05)

*Racism* entails the ascription of *stereotypes* to the target. As generalisations, they are usually unfounded and unsubstantiated. Larocque (1989: 74) discusses the relationship between these two processes.

Stereotypes have an important function in the maintenance of racism. Between 1500 and 1800 A.D., the stereotype of Indians as savages served to justify the dispossession of Indian lands. The dispossession and its legacy have created a powerful-powerless relationship between white and Native peoples. In order to maintain this power structure, new stereotypes of Native peoples have been created, as the need has arisen.

*The Macquarie Dictionary* (2005) defines *racism* as “the belief that human races have distinctive characteristics which determine their respective cultures”. While this entry is inadequate as a comprehensive explanation, it does reveal that *racism* involves generalisations of the target’s characteristics. We can add that racism ascribes negative characteristics to the target: *people of this kind can’t do many good things like other kinds of people can*. This suggests inequality, and that the target is somehow ‘incapable’ of *something good*. Allen et al. (1989: 424) concur that “The construct of negative stereotypical beliefs are specified explicitly in our model of this belief system”.

(563) **Stereotypes** are a form of discrimination, and as long as they exist, so will **racism**.

[www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~joyoung/hp/racism.html](http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~joyoung/hp/racism.html) (22/11/05)

(564) If you say something like, “All black people are [ ... ],” then that *\*is\** **racism**.

[www.mrrcranky.com/movies/mickeyblueeyes/102/7.html](http://www.mrrcranky.com/movies/mickeyblueeyes/102/7.html) (22/11/05)

(565) **Racism** often stereotypes others. For example, people often say, “All Mexicans are . . . ,” or “All blacks are . . . ,” as if all members of an ethnic group display similar characteristics.

<http://www.goshen.edu/news/bulletin/june98feature.html> (22/11/05)

Miles and Brown (1989: 23) state that *racism* involves “an explicit belief in racial hierarchy”. Indeed, this is the basis of thought in the *eugenics* philosophy, a notion that goes back to Plato but was expanded upon by Galton, suggesting that some ‘races’ are superior and that ‘selective breeding’ can supposedly improve human

hereditary traits (Galton 1865). *Eugenics* has parallels to *racism*, and during the C20th, various eugenics policies and programs have enacted extreme forms of *racism*, such as immigration control, segregation, marriage restrictions and genocide (Black 2003).

*Racism*, as an *us and them* attitude, reflects the perception of difference between groups, and suggests perceived inequality, similar to: *not all kinds of people are the same, some kinds of people are something good, other kinds of people are something bad*. Van Dijk (1996: 7) identifies racist ideologies as “the core of social systems of racial inequality”.

(566) **Racism** against refugees will escalate to racism against those already in Australia who are “different”, be they different cultures, different skin colours, different languages.

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2001/463/463p9.htm> (22/11/05)

(567) BTW by any stretch I'm the nicest racist that a non-white would ever meet but I know where my loyalties lie: to my people only because I am a part of them alone.

<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?t=209390> (22/11/05)

As discussed above, *racism* entails a group-based categorisation of the target. Furthermore, *racism* implies a perceived dichotomy of a ‘superior’ group, as opposed to an ‘inferior’ group. Allen et al. (1989: 423-24) “the very essence of the psychological component of racism is the belief in the inherent inferiority of one race as compared to another”. We can call this belief an ‘imputation of inferiority’ that is exercised on an individual, social and political level. This is a subjective belief with a subjectively selected target. Of course, this can be influenced by socio-cognitive elements. Castles (1996: 31) asserts that “racism is the process whereby social groups categorise other groups as different or inferior”. This is expressed in the explication as: *people of this kind are below other kinds of people*. This perception was further espoused in the controversial, best selling academic text *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Hernstein and Murray 1994). This text is criticised for “sloppy research” to advance the idea of racial differences in intelligence (Stolley 1999: 906).

(568) **Racism** against Travellers and Gypsies is rooted in an ideology of sedentarist **superiority**. This is the belief that the settled person's way of life is the modern norm and that nomadism is a throwback to less civilised times.

<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ws93/travell39.html> (22/11/05)

(569) The Nazi holocaust in which 6 million Jews were murdered alongside an equal number condemned either as political opponents of Hitler or as members of other '**inferior**' groups such as Slavs, gays, Gypsies and the mentally ill represented **racism** in its most extreme and barbarous form.

<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/talks/racism.html> (22/11/05)

This dualism (group X is 'better' than group Y) is a crucial semantic component of *racism*, and is the focus of a definition provided by the Australian *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* (1998):

Racism is an ideology that gives expression to myths about other racial and ethnic groups, that devalues and renders inferior those groups, that reflects and is perpetuated by deeply rooted historical, social, cultural and power inequalities in society.

An important semantic facet of *racism* is effect: *very bad things can happen to some people when other people think like this*. *Racism* is based in attitudes that can result in negative consequences for the target. Socially and historically, there are linguistic and behavioural enactments, these are the forms of *racism*.

(570) I raise my son as an Australian, he is an Aussie but he was told that he wasn't an Aussie at school because he didn't look white enough. This is **racism** and it has to be condemned.

[http://blogs.smh.com.au/newsblog/archives/your\\_say/002994.html](http://blogs.smh.com.au/newsblog/archives/your_say/002994.html) (22/11/05)

(571) There was violence and harassment, ongoing acts of **racism** against non-white students.

[www.heraldnet.com/stories](http://www.heraldnet.com/stories) (22/11/05)

Currently, in most countries where English is the primary language, *racism* is associated with taboo. Burrige (1999) asserts that *racist language*, specifically *racist* and *ethnic* swearwords, are highly offensive, and have surpassed sex-related words as the most provocative taboo [also see 5.1 and 5.2].

Furthermore, *racist* is an objectionable epithet. Most speakers would predominately think of the acts and actors as offensive, although the labels, in themselves, are often interpreted as offensive. Castles (1996: 28-29) observes that “racism is almost invariably pejorative: no one admits to being a racist. Ideas of racial hierarchy are rejected, and the principle of equal opportunity is espoused by politicians of all persuasions”. A search on Internet search engine Google reveals a staggering 84 800 entries of the insistent phrase *I’m not a racist*. This can function as a protest, or a disclaimer. Scholars such as Teun van Dijk (1993, 1996) interpret this phrase, followed by conjunctive *but*, as examples of covert forms of *racism* [see also 5.1].

(572) **I’m not a racist but** I am actually sick of people saying “poor me because I am black”. I’m Native American. Did you ever hear a Native American say “poor me”?

<http://forum.ebaumsworld.com/showthread.php?t=21658> (13/09/05)

Interestingly, *race* has not acquired the invariably negative connotations of these other forms in popular usage. However, it is etymologically and phonologically related, and due to its spurious, pseudo-scientific associations, *ethnicity* is now the preferred neutral term in academia. Of course, *ethnicity* has implications beyond the traditional meaning of *race*, including nationality and culture. As Caldwell (1995: 615) observes:

The terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are often used interchangeably, but they are in fact far from synonymous: ‘Race’ refers to differences of biology, ‘ethnicity’ to differences of culture and geographic origin.

It could be countered that pragmatically, *ethnicity* encompasses the notion of *race*. In this way, it is a more comprehensive and ‘ethical’ term than *race*. In scholarly circles, *ethnicism* is often the preferred term to *racism*, as a result of the negative connotations of *race* and its other lexical forms. *Ethnicism* is mainly used to refer to contemporary,

covert forms of *racism* or specifically, *cultural racism* (see Essed 1996 and van Dijk 1984, 1987 for usage of this term). Wodak and Reisigl (1999: 185) assert that van Dijk “does not neatly distinguish between ethnicism, racism, and adjacent forms of discrimination”. Often, these terms are used interchangeably. Some scholars conceive of *ethnicism* as “liberal” or euphemistic (see Triandafyllidou 2003). I argue that *ethnicism* can function as a more precise and unitary label, encompassing all forms of ‘tribal’ *discrimination*, including those forms not traditionally categorised as *racism*, such as *religious discrimination* and *national origin-based discrimination*. *Ethnicism* considers national and cultural factors, beyond the ambiguous and imprecise categories of aesthetic ‘race’ categories, such as ‘colour’. However, as noted above, in some non-academic usage, there has been a semantic broadening of *racism* to include ethnic and religious discrimination.

The offensive nature of *racism* and *racist* is borne out by the practice of modern racial theorists, who avoid the dysphemistic *racism*. Claiming their beliefs have a scientific basis, they favour the label *racialism*. Haller (1971: x) explains the biased, specious of early C19th racial theorists.

Science became an instrument which verified the presumptive inferiority of the Negro and rationalized the politics of disenfranchisement and segregation into a social-scientific terminology.

This ‘scientific racism’ was a theory of the biological and social sciences until the 1940s, although many beliefs about ‘race’ have largely remained on a social level (Barkan 1993). However, *racism* itself is strongly criticised in society, as evidenced by the existence of *anti-racism* campaigns and movements. As of 10/02/06, the Yahoo Internet search engine lists an astonishing 8 640 000 entries for this phrase. *Racism*, as a word in usage, is socially reproachful, when a speaker employs the label, they condemn the attitude and enactment of racism: *it is very bad if someone thinks like this*.

(573) Free speech is a right, but **racism** is wrong.

[www.ummah.net/forum](http://www.ummah.net/forum) (28/03/05)

(574) **Racism** is destructive.

[www.racismnoway.com.au/library/understanding/index-What.html](http://www.racismnoway.com.au/library/understanding/index-What.html) (28/03/05)

(575) There is **racism** against different nationalities and cultures. There is **racism** against different religions. (all religions think they are the right ones and everyone else is wrong).

<http://www.bigfooty.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-39197.html> (28/03/05)

#### 4.5.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

*Racism* is a subjective, negative evaluation on the basis of a target's perceived or ascribed *race*. As we have discussed (4.5.3) *racism* has broadened in meaning, to target 'difference', on the basis of ethnicity, heritage, nationality and religious affiliation. Detecting *race* or *ethnicity* is often based in superficial judgements regarding a target's appearance or accent. *Racism* further includes the concepts of *ethnic discrimination* and *religious discrimination*. *Racism* incorporates a belief that the notion of ethnic-group membership determines human characteristics and inherent superiority or inferiority. The act of *racism* presupposes animosity towards a target of an opposing ethnic-group.

This thesis has posited that recent 'specific' categorisations of *racism* 'come under' the single, unifying NSM explication proposed in 4.5.2. Recent innovations include: *modern racism*, *new racism*, *reverse racism* (McClelland and Linnander 2006: 81). These phrases presuppose that there is a 'standard' form that involves a model of *racism* perpetrated by 'white' people against 'black' people (Castles 1996: 29). In examples collected online, there is the growing popular usage of the terms *white racism* and *black racism* (both are used to refer to *racism against white people by black people*, or *racism against black people by white people*). This thesis supports the idea that any discriminatory attitude and behaviour, perpetrated against a target on the basis of that target's racial, ethnic or religious membership, can be defined as *racism*. This is the synchronic semantic structure of *racism*. It has broadened in meaning and usage to include these so-called 'new' forms and targets. Implications of this topic are further discussed in Chapter 5 (5.1 and 5.2).

Scholars have identified that *racism* can occur in three spheres: (a) *individual racism*, experienced on a personal level, (b) *institutional racism*, experienced as a result of embedded *racism* in the policies of a given institution, and (c) *cultural*

*racism* results from the cultural practices of one group being lauded as superior to those of another (Essed 1990; Jones 1972). Under the banner of *racial discrimination*, all of these forms are illegal in many countries, including Australia (Racial Discrimination Act 1975).

Further to the legal censure of *racism* is the social condemnation of this act. Existing collocations that demonstrate the ‘moral outrage’ of *racism* support the notion of the attitude and behaviour as a prevalent *bad thing*: *rabid racism*, *atrocious racism*, *rampant racism*, *extreme racism*, *ingrained racism*, *redneck racism*, *ugly racism*, *explicit racism*, *fierce racism* (collected online and from the Collins Word Bank). *Racism* is the new taboo. Burrige (1999) claims that *racist language* is the true obscenity today, given the present social concern for equality and equal opportunity.

*Racism* is not intrinsic, it is learned behaviour. Comedian Dennis Leary is credited with the quote “Racism isn’t born, folks, it’s taught. I have a two-year-old son. You know what he hates? Naps! End of list”. Various scholars report that processes such as *racism*, *prejudice* and *xenophobia* have been detected in children as young as three and are learned in school and the home (Cameron et al. 2001; Giles and Hewstone 1988).

*Racism* is taught, therefore scholars of education suggest that a pedagogical approach should be applied to eradicate it (Hooks 1994). The following collocations suggest that *racism* is socialised behaviour and is socially reproached. These phrases further indicate that education is required to eliminate social *racism*: *reject racism*, *against racism*, *fighting racism*, *curb racism*, *defeat racism*, *institutionalised racism*, *mainstream racism*, *tackle racism*, *combat racism*, *eradicate racism*, *anti-racism*, *stop racism*, *address racism*, *challenge racism*, *inherited racism*, *opposing racism*. That *racism* is a serious, severe social problem is supported by the unacceptability of the constructions: \*mild racism, \*moderate racism. Further collocations will be discussed in 4.5.5.

#### **4.5.5 Metaphor and *racism***

Metaphor associated with *racism* focuses on attitudinal and behavioural elements. *Racism* has inspired some colourful metaphorical allusions that represent a social perspective. For example, it is often metaphorically described and expressed as

something *ugly*, a repugnant way of thinking (*people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this*). *Racism* in behaviour, attitude and language is perceived as ‘morally unattractive’ and is socially reproached, inspiring fear and revulsion. *Racism* is: *something that people don’t want to look at, people don’t want to see. Racism is ugliness, ugly thinking, an ugly opinion, hideous, unsightly, gross, monstrous, revolting, repulsive. Racism* is never antithetically described as *beautiful*, \*beautiful racism, \*attractive racism, \*pretty racism.

(576) If they are going to eliminate **racism** in all its **ugly** forms, they might as well go about doing it the right way.

<http://www.abandongames.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-531.html>

(10/09/05)

(577) The international community and public opinion was able to defeat the **hideous racism** that was degrading to human dignity in South Africa.

[http://eaford.org/UN\\_statement7.htm](http://eaford.org/UN_statement7.htm) (12/09/05)

(578) He makes clear his contempt for the suspect gang of the five ‘evil’ white youths saying they had been “infected and invaded by **gross and revolting racism**”.

*The Guardian* (16/09/05)

(579) **Racism** is not only **repulsive** in its own right, but also acts as a force to divide.

<http://home.mira.net/~sp/magazine/apr97/fascism1.htm> (12/09/05)

Consistent with the description of *racism* as *ugly* is the comparative construction of *racism* as an *ugly head* or an *ugly face* (bad thinking). This illustrates *racism* as an attitudinal aspect, *head* indicating cognition or a behavioural aspect, *face* indicating character. This collocation appears in many phrases: *racism rears its ugly head*, *racism rears its ugly face*, *ugly face of racism*, *the monstrous face of racism*. Many such constructions imply covert *racism*: *the ugly spectre of racism*, *the hidden face of racism*, *the veiled face of racism*, and *the subtle face of racism* or overt *racism*: *the naked face of racism*, *the blatant face of racism*, *the visible face of racism*.

(580) The harsh reality of **racism** reared its ugly head and proved that it is still very much alive and kicking.

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=3271> (12/09/05)

(581) **Racism** is showing its ugly face all over the place.

<http://www.detnews.com/2001/moresports/0104/22/sports-215734>(18/09/05)

*Racist language is also expressed metaphorically as ugly: ugly words, ugly language, ugly rhetoric, ugly remarks, ugly speech, ugly talk.*

(582) I don't use **ugly** words because I am not **racist**.

[www.frappydoo.com/forum/showthread.php?p=35267](http://www.frappydoo.com/forum/showthread.php?p=35267) (18/09/05)

(583) **Racist** language is **ugly** language.

<http://www.vulgar.com.au/poguide.html> (18/09/05)

*Racism is also perceived as physically, morally and socially dangerous, as something harmful and destructive (very bad things can happen to some people when other people think like this). Racism is expressed metaphorically as something malicious: poisonous, venomous, lethal or noxious (there is also toxic racism although this phrase predominately applies to governmental neglect of environmental problems in marginalised neighbourhoods). Counter examples are semantically unacceptable: \*harmless racism, \*innocuous racism, \* safe racism.*

(584) **Racism** is also **poisonous** and it does have the potential to make the persecuted group feel like there is something wrong with them.

[http://avigail.customer.netspace.net.au/hsd\\_conclusions.html](http://avigail.customer.netspace.net.au/hsd_conclusions.html) (25/09/05)

(585) The distortions and misrepresentations of the data constitute a truly **venomous racism**.

<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/026.html> (25/09/05)

(586) The destructiveness of what's going on in our social order that actually is inviting a resurgence of **lethal racism**.

[http://www.cartercenter.org/healthprograms/1770\\_adoc6.htm](http://www.cartercenter.org/healthprograms/1770_adoc6.htm) (25/09/05)

(587) Crucially, however, there must be the ending of **noxious racism** in all its forms.

<http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles> (25/09/05)

*Racism* is also metaphorically perceived as a *symptom* of conflict and social disorder.

(588) **Racism is a symptom** within the context of a larger cultural conflict.

[www.nicabm.com/cgi-bin/discus/show.cgi?tpc=127&post=1723](http://www.nicabm.com/cgi-bin/discus/show.cgi?tpc=127&post=1723) (25/09/05)

As a corollary to *racism* as a symptom, *racism* is commonly expressed as an *illness*, *sickness*, *virus*, *disease*, *condition* or an *infection*. Metaphorical expressions state that *racism plagues* society, it can start an *outbreak* or *epidemic*.

(589) **Racism** is a social **sickness**, no matter which race is practicing it, or which race they choose to hate, blame, and persecute.

<http://www.zianet.com/postpubco/thtwhite.htm> (25/09/05)

(590) **Racism** is an **illness**. It is endemic to those who are ethnocentric. It is progressive and does not diminish. It is terminal.

<http://www.cyc-net.org/reference/refs-kirkland-multicult.html> (25/09/05)

(591) **Racism** is a **disease** that plagues our society.

*Iowa State Daily* (13/02/2004)

*Racism* is perceived as a disease and often specifically equated with *cancer*, a feared, rampant and little understood illness (Allan and Burrige 2006). *Racism* is metaphorically perceived as *cancer* or *malignancy*. A form such as \*benign racism is unacceptable. Usage also illustrates the often aggressive nature of *cancer*, that *racism devours*, *consumes* or *eats away* society.

(592) **Racism** is a **cancer** which needs to be eradicated from our society.

[www.totallyjewish.com/news/stories](http://www.totallyjewish.com/news/stories) (28/09/05)

(593) In truth, **racism** is the worst **malignancy** most everywhere else in the world.

<http://secure.mediaresearch.org/news/cyberalert> (28/09/05)

(594) **Racism** acts like a cancer that attacks the body, turning healthy cells into disease infected cells.

[http://www.iflry.org/libel/libel\\_945f.html](http://www.iflry.org/libel/libel_945f.html) (28/09/05)

Further to the *disease* metaphor parallel, *racism* is metaphorically expressed as *infectious*, *contagious*, *insidious*, *endemic*, it *spreads* and *contaminates*. These metaphors suggest that *racism* is socially disseminated.

(595) This airborne virus of **racism** has been **transmitted** to other countries via Hollywood movies, live television, and reruns. It is highly **contagious** and seemingly **contaminates** members of the coming generation before they are even born.

<http://www.cyc-net.org/reference/refs-Racism.html> (18/12/05)

(596) **Racism**, to varying degrees and in various forms, **infects** virtually every country of the world.

<http://www.ecoi.net/> (18/12/05)

(597) We must not let the roots of **racism** spread for it is **contagious**. We must all work in concert with each other to stop the continuous creation of this dreadful **disease**-- this scourge that has cursed this world.

<http://eserver.org:16080/clogic/2005/cabusao.html> (18/12/05)

Supporting the notion that *racism* is not intrinsic but learned behaviour and can be overcome, educating those who display *racism* is expressed metaphorically by medical terminology, *racism* can be *cured*, *treated*, *purged* and *healed*.

(598) We are still actively working to heal **racism**, but cannot do it alone.

<http://rrnet.org/> (18/12/05)

(599) They say the only cure for **racism** is education.

*Alaska Star*, 14/01/2005

#### 4.6 *sexism*

**Sexism goes so deep that at first it's hard to see; you think it's just reality.**

(Shulman 1978: 57)

*Sexism* is often glossed by the phrase *sexual discrimination* or discrimination on the basis of sex. Although this may cover some pragmatic examples of *sexism*, it is limited in its reference. *Sexism* can refer to differentiation based on sex rather than individual merit. Semantically, *sexism* is a socio-cognitive phenomenon that can be expressed linguistically or behaviourally. The salient semantic elements of *sexism* are as follows:

1. Classification
2. Negative Evaluation
3. Stereotyping
4. Negative comparison
5. Social Manifestation

There are parallels between *racism* and *sexism*, and not only in form. Lee (1994) notes that *sexism* entered the lexicon in 1970 as an analogous form to *racism*. *Sexism* can have an individual target, in an example of sexual discrimination. However, prototypically, *sexism* is extended to an entire sex group, it is perpetrated against *all people of kind X*.

Longino and Doell (1983: 208) claim that “Sexism is reserved for statements, attitudes, and theories that presuppose, assert, or imply the inferiority of women”. There is a widespread presumption that *sexism* refers to female targets only, as espoused by Jones and Jacklin (1998: 612) in the following academic reference:

Sexism is the oppression of women, brought about by discriminatory actions and attitudes based on an assumption that females are subordinate.

In contrast, Sadker et al. (1986: 219) asserts that “Although sexism is frequently associated only with females, in reality sex bias is a two-edged sword, males are also victims”. The misconception of the ‘sex-exclusiveness’ of *sexism* is prevalent in scholarly circles and on a popular level.

(600) **Sexism** is the cultural assumption that men are superior to women and deserve preference and power over them.

*www.college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/women (27/09/05)*

Like *chauvinism*, both terms have connotations of a female target. However, in contemporary usage, *sexism* is an expressed perception of the inferiority of a person or entire group, on the basis of biological sex. *Sexism* is generalised, rather than sex-specific. This section will advance the theory that, in contemporary semantics and usage, there is no *new sexism*, *reverse sexism*, *post-feminist sexism* or *modern sexism*, that the combination of attitudes and behaviours that comprise *sexism* can be directed towards a target of either sex. This thesis acknowledges that *sexism* is ubiquitous and systemic and that females are the predominant targets of *sexism*, however, *sexism* affects and is promoted by both males and females (Tavris and Wade 1984).

From a popular perspective of non-academics, *male* and *female* or *man* and *woman*, ‘should’ or ‘must’ be semantic primes. However, at the time of writing this thesis, the NSM theory has not yet proven or invalidated this belief. Currently, these words have not been established as universal, by empirical research. This issue has posed some interesting complexities for the explication, in differentiating *a kind of person = race*, from *a kind of person = sex*. However, the NSM primes effectively indicate these categories, with transparency. To begin, how do lexicographical sources explain the meaning of *sexism*?

#### 4.6.1 Lexicographical and Scholarly Definitions of *sexism*

The OED provides an excellent definition of *sexism*.

The assumption that one sex is superior to the other and the resultant discrimination practised against members of the supposed inferior sex, esp. by men against women; also conformity with the traditional stereotyping of social roles on the basis of sex.

While this definition treats most of the key semantic facets of *sexism*, it relies upon highly complex terms (discrimination, conformity, stereotyping) and is circular in defining *sexism* in terms of *sex*.

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* provides the following entry:

The belief that one sex is weaker, less intelligent, or less important than the other, especially when this results in someone being treated unfairly.

The first clause seems to implicitly refer to female-directed *sexism*. Overall, the examples are too specific, resulting in a narrow definition. Furthermore, the final clause suggests that *sexism* is prototypically discrimination-based. Again, this is a narrow explanation.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* also provides a definition that is too narrow.

Actions based on a belief that particular jobs and activities are suitable only for women and others are suitable only for men.

It is easy to think of counter-examples to this definition. Further, *sexism* presumes the targets 'inability' to do something, 'suitability' is too narrow.

WordNet provides a good, generalised definition of *sexism* albeit one that suggests it is an opposite sex thing.

sexism (discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of the opposite sex)

This definition is rife with complex terms (discriminatory, sex). Using the NSM, how can we explain the complete meaning of *sexism*?

#### 4.6.2 NSM explication of *sexism*

*sexism*

- (a) everybody knows that there are two kinds of people, because there are two kinds of people's bodies
- (b) people of one kind are men (m), people of another kind are women (w)
- (c) some people think like this:
- (d) "I know some things about these two kinds of people
- (e) one of these kinds of people can't do many good things like people of the other kind can do many good things"
- (f) people think: it is very bad if someone thinks like this
- (g) because of this, something very bad can happen to someone of this kind

#### Explanation of Components

(a) This component suggests the scientific knowledge and folkloric understanding that biological sex is classified according to the two standard anatomical forms. Every human primarily identifies with one specific gender. However, *sexism* implies that every person can be neatly categorised as *male* or *female*. This line also suggests the identification of difference between two forms.

(b) This line names these two categories: kind of person men (m) and kind of person women (w). While these are not yet considered to be strict semantic primes, these terms have been used for simplicity and clarity, and given that this thesis specifically treats the English language. In addition, the use of *one* and *another* endeavours to retain equality, as *sexism* can be equally directed towards men or women. Note that conjunctions are not used, as they are not considered 'universal'. Presenting *women* as *the other kind* would immediately suggest inequality, and that *sexism* is solely directed towards women by men.

(c) This line precedes the cognitive scenario. Note that there is no specification of the agent, that would suggest *sexism* has a standard form. The agent can be either male or female and the target can be either male or female. Furthermore, *sexism* can be directed towards an intra-group member. There is nothing in the structure of *sexism* to suggest the sex of the agent or the target.

(d) This indicates that *sexism* involves presupposition. This attitude is often driven by *stereotypes* and expectations of the behaviour of the target sex. This suggests generalisation of character, based on biological sex (e.g., women are ‘too emotional’, men are ‘oversexed’).

(e) This is a negative evaluation of one sex, as opposed to the other. Using the example above, women ‘cannot’ do good things (be rational, rather than emotional) like men ‘can’, or men ‘cannot do good things (be monogamous, be loving rather than driven by sex) like women ‘can’. This line singles out one sex, and assumes the comparative lack of ability of this sex (e.g., *women can’t drive as well as men can*). This characterises one sex, suggests inequality and sex-based variation. In addition, this line implies the superiority of one sex and inferiority of the target sex. *Sexism* implies *discrimination* and *othering*.

(f) This social evaluation explains that the attitude and behaviour of *sexism* is socially reproached. In addition, labelling an attitude or act as *sexism* is to express disapproval.

(g) This final line treats the potential act that is resultant of this attitude. *Sexism* can and frequently does result in a negative consequence for the target. No one act is specified, as *sexism* can be enacted in many varied forms (e.g., a woman is overlooked for a mechanic’s job, despite her ability and qualifications, or, a man is not granted custody of his children during divorce proceedings as ‘mothers are better parents’).

### 4.6.3 Examples of Usage and Commentary

Campbell et al. (1997: 90) assert that “Sexism is generally understood as endorsement of prejudicial beliefs based on a person’s gender”. We can label *sexism* as an ideology: *a way of thinking about a kind of person*. It is a socio-cognitive attitude that many scholars deem to be heavily embedded in English-speaking cultures. Ng (1993: 197) claims that *sexism* is “normalized in men’s and frequently women’s collective consciousness”. *Sexism* is often referred to as an attitude, an opinion, a belief or other cognition-based terms (*some people think like this*). Examples are most prominent in the adjectival form (e.g., *sexist beliefs*, *sexist opinions*). There is nothing in the structure of *sexism* to suggest that only men target females, so the agent is not specified, this is the way that *some people think*.

(601) You also spoke of the prevalent attitude of **sexism** in our society.

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/> (19/07/05)

(602) One of Montel’s comments at the end of the show revealed his **sexism**.

<http://www.tvtalkshows.com/board/showthread.php?t=17765> (19/07/05)

Although *sexism* is prototypically perceived as an inter-group act, *sexism* can also be intra-group, a woman’s attitude towards women, or a man’s attitude towards men. Pitinsky (2005: 8-9) refers to this phenomenon as *allophilia*, “a positive attitude towards another group” and a negative attitude of the group to which the agent belongs. Meixner (1998: 222) claims that “Racism is the attitude that accords unjustifiable preference to one’s own race, sexism is the attitude that accords unjustifiable preference to one’s own sex”. However, this thesis posits that women can display *sexism* towards women, and men can exhibit *sexism* towards men.

*Sexism* involves sex distinction: *there are two kinds of people*. As both scientific and folkloric/ethnopragmatic knowledge: *everybody knows that there are two kinds of people*. We understand this on a biological level: *because there are two kinds of people’s bodies*. Therefore, we can assert that these two categories can indicate: *there is a kind of person like X* (male or female) and *a kind of person like Y*

(female or male). The plural forms *men* and *women* have been used in the explication, as semantic ‘molecules’ (common words).

The explication does not specifically label the semantic roles. Labelling the agent as *man* or *woman* would presuppose that *sexism* is exclusively directed against one sex by the other sex, whereas labelling the agent Z would erroneously presume a third sex. This explication also complies with the scholarly notion of *gender*, an identity based interpretation of sex.

*Sexism* emphasises difference between the two sexes, and engenders inequality. Sleeter and Grant (1998: 10) assert that “The rationale for sexism is the biological difference between males and females that dictates differential social roles, status, and norms”. *Sexism* can refer to a belief that men and women are fundamentally different, not only in biology, but in aptitude and socio-cultural customs. Dissimilarity is implicit in *sexism*: *these two kinds of people aren’t the same*.

(603) The **sexism** here just reflects the ‘**sexism**’ of nature in making men and women different.

[www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/.../project/theo-3/data](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/.../project/theo-3/data) (18/02/05)

(604) The media shake up **sexism**, always looking for ways to say that men and women are different.

[www.courses.lib.odu.edu/engl/jbing](http://www.courses.lib.odu.edu/engl/jbing) (18/02/05)

*Sexism* is undeniably the expression of a negative attitude towards a target sex. Related to *sexism*, and often classified as specific forms of *sexism*, are the phenomena of *misogyny*, a ‘hatred’ of women, and *misandry*, a ‘hatred’ of men. Of course, *sexism* does not invariably imply hatred, but it does reveal a negative sentiment towards the sex of the target. Furthermore, *sexism* can have a specific, individual target, or be a ‘sweeping’ statement about an entire sex group. Discussing discriminatory, employment-related *sexism*, Warren (1977: 241) explains that “sexism may be due to dislike, distrust, or contempt for women, or, in less typical cases, for men”.

(605) There is so much **sexism** in Hip-Hop those rappers disrespect all women.

[www.dieselnation.blogs.com/hiphop](http://www.dieselnation.blogs.com/hiphop) (20/05/05)

(606) Feminism is about men-hating women and their own brand of **sexism**.

*www.homepage.eircom.net* (20/05/05)

This negative evaluation is often expressed by the phrase *sexism against*, that reveals the target group.

(607) I grew up in Malaysia where there is still, sadly enough, a prevailing **sexism against women**.

*http://www.usaviation.com/forums/* (20/05/05)

(608) Not only does it promote **sexism against males**, but it also persuades individuals that condoms do not help prevent the spread of AIDS.

*http://www.holyhell.net/blog/?p=18* (20/05/05)

Intuitively, we would assume that there would be a greater pragmatic representation of female-oriented *sexism* than male-oriented *sexism*. Using Google (10/01/06) as a corpus provided the following intriguing statistics:

“Sexism against women” 587 entries

“Sexism against men” 843 entries

“Sexism against females” 121 entries

“Sexism against males” 1970 entries

What could account for this unexpected disparity? Perhaps, *sexism against women*, as a prototype, is the assumption that is not typically expressed, or is pragmatically implied. Furthermore, *sexism against men* is a recently explored concept, especially on a pragmatic level, and this may account for a heightened current usage.

Russell and Trigg (2004: 565) observe that, “Previous research suggests that sexism is deeply rooted in traditional gender roles, or in people’s own stereotypical conceptions of traditional gender roles”. Stereotyping is a major component of *sexism*: *I know some things about these two kinds of people*. Assumptions, expectations and generalisations are common linguistic expressions of *sexism*. These *stereotypes* usually focus on the imposition of sex roles, and general statements about presumed intellect, interests and ability. Quinn and Tong (2003: 223) illustrate this premise, “sexism is the view that men are “naturally” more aggressive, violent, and bellicose than women”.

(609) It's **sexism** to think that women can't drive cars or be mechanics.  
[www.cat.org.au/aprop](http://www.cat.org.au/aprop) (07/10/05)

(610) Women still suffer **sexism** in the workplace... They are now in that position because to the bosses they are an unstable workforce, likely to want pregnancy leave, likely to come in late if a child is sick, likely to require a creche or want to work part time. It is because men in society are seen as the breadwinner that they have more secure, more dependable jobs.  
<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ws92/women35.html> (07/10/05)

(611) I don't think it's just **sexism** to recognize that men are more visual and mathematical than women, who are more verbal. Men prefer chess; women prefer Scrabble. Among my friends' 16 to 30-year-old children, all the men are something electronics or IT-oriented; the women are in something related to biology.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/> (07/10/05)

*Sexism* necessarily implies the superiority of one sex and the implicit inferiority of the other sex. This suggests a negative comparison, that one kind of people is 'not as good as' the other kind of people. This is expressed in the explication as: *One of these kinds of people can't do many good things like people of the other kind can do many good things*. Prototypically, *sexism* is perpetrated against a sex category, *against women* or *against men*. Yusuf (1999: para. 4) explains "Sexism is the belief that one sex is superior to the other. In many societies, it is more commonly manifested in behaviour that implies that the male are superior to the female".

(612) **Sexism** is about discrimination on the grounds of sex, based on assumptions that women are both different from and inferior to men  
[www.indiana.edu/~lggender/language-&-sexism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~lggender/language-&-sexism.html) (08/07/05)

(613) The notion that men are smarter and stronger is **sexism**.  
[www.all-science-fair-projects.com](http://www.all-science-fair-projects.com) (08/07/05)

The attitude described in the prototypical cognitive scenario can result in an action perpetrated against the target: *because of this, something bad can happen to someone of this kind*. In this way, *sexism* is the linguistic or behavioural expression of a specific attitude, it is comprised of beliefs and practises. This is a crucial component of *sexism* and the component is open-ended due to the broad range of consequences that can occur. Traditional forms of *sexism* may result in occupational disadvantage, or a comment that reflects a negative evaluation of a target, based on sex category. Cameron (1998: 87) states that “sexism is best analysed at the level of discourse”.

(614) It is women who usually experience disadvantage or discrimination because of **sexism**. **Sexism** can mean women are the subjects of negative stereotypes and attitudes, treated as inferiors and denied the same quality of life as men. It can also mean they face harassment, hatred and violence.

<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/womensda.nsf/a/policies?opendocument>

(08/07/05)

(615) **Sexism** leads to unequal pay and unequal opportunities.

[www.lists.econ.utah.edu/pipermail](http://www.lists.econ.utah.edu/pipermail) (08/07/05)

(616) A US Marines general has been accused of **sexism** because he allowed weekly runs that were so fast that many women dropped out.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/forum/a3b6d06b04589.htm> (08/07/05)

(617) It calls for an end of **sexism** in the church and society, and for a greater use of women in the many roles available to them in the church. At the same time the bishops loyally support the pope’s position against ordination of women.

<http://www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/reese/america/nc9411.htm>

(08/07/05)

Labelling an attitude or event as *sexism* expresses disapproval: *it is bad if someone thinks like this*. There have been concerned attempts to eliminate *sexism*, particularly in social domains such as education and employment. Weick (1984: 40) comments that “Eradicating sexism is an overwhelming goal whose very magnitude can stifle the enthusiasm of its proponents”.

(618) **Sexism** is a problem and I feel the solution should start with communication.

<http://users.rowan.edu/~oliver82/wIntperspaper.doc> (06/10/05)

(619) Well they do have woman's basketball and soccer and umm...other sports I think they just aren't on TV as much but I agree **sexism** is a stupid thing.

<http://forums.thegaminguniverse.com/printthread.php?t=1606> (06/10/05)

#### 4.6.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Phenomena

The academic and public interest in *sexism* has generated a large inventory of labels to categorise the various, specific manifestations of this phenomenon. While this thesis does not dispute the sociolinguistic existence of these forms, it is debated that these do not represent different polysemous *senses* of *sexism*. Furthermore, while some of these are specialised, many are 'popular' terms that are likely ephemeral. However, for a comprehensive account of *sexism*, it is practical to discuss those labels that are of semantic and/or pragmatic interest.

Contemporary commentators assert that *covert* forms of *racism*, *sexism* and *xenophobia*, etc, are the most common manifestations, rather than *overt* forms (van Dijk 1982, 1987, 1996). Perhaps this is due to these forms being less direct and more socially 'acceptable'. More overt forms of both *racism* and *sexism* have been 'pushed' underground by a social disapproval of these acts, combined with legal ramifications and EEO principles of affirmative action. Contrary to popular social assertions that 'sexism (or racism) doesn't exist today', Mills (1998: 248) states that "sexism has not been eradicated but its nature has been transformed into indirect forms".

Terms such as *overt sexism* and *covert sexism* are generally applied in scholarly research and refer respectively to explicit and implicit manifestations of *sexism*. Some scholars refer to *covert* forms of discrimination as *subtle*, implying they are not only restrained, but also insidious. Mills (1998: 247) suggests that overt examples of *sexism* (and *racism*) are easier to challenge than covert forms because they are "very easy to identify". In contrast, Haslett and Lipman (1997: 37) refer to covert forms as *micro-inequalities*, and explain the widespread yet concealed nature

of this phenomenon, “Responding to micro inequalities is especially difficult as they are irrational, intermittent, subtle, and infinitely varied, and demand considerable time and energy because they are so frequent”. Haslett and Lipman (1997: 51) further add, “there appears to be little pay off for speaking out. However, to not respond is to become a tacit accomplice”.

In agreement with Shulman’s (1978) quote above (4.4), Cameron (1998: 89) claims that “sexism is our default way of thinking and talking”. Scholars explain that *sexism* is not only evident in our attitudes and behaviour, but also in our linguistic behaviour, by way of sex-marked forms. It is believed that speakers have internalised this ‘linguistic sexism’ as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’, therefore, it is often unnoticed. This theory has been extended to behavioural *sexism*. Benokraitis (1997: 14) identifies nine types of subtle *sexism*: condescending chivalry, supportive discouragement, friendly harassment, subjective objectification, radiant devaluation, liberated sexism, benevolent exploitation, considerate domination, and collegial exclusion, all forms that are “friendly at face value but have pernicious consequences”. It appears that *sexism* is often an interpretation of an event.

To account for all of these theories, a wide range of popular terms have been coined. Covert *sexism* is labelled as *subtle*, *hidden* or *unconscious sexism*.

(620) When I do this kind of work I'm going to make sure that I don't fall prey even to **unconscious sexism** or other bias.

[www.lquilter.net/blog/archives/category/human-behavior](http://www.lquilter.net/blog/archives/category/human-behavior) (29/05/04)

Over the last few years, there has been an increasing public awareness into the non-specific target of *sexism*, that males can also be targeted (Gough and Peace 2000; Rouse 2002).

(621) But we are still over looking **sexism** against men, not as big of an issue, but still it should be considered.

[http://www.gilestv.com/rants2/2005/11/sexism\\_against.html](http://www.gilestv.com/rants2/2005/11/sexism_against.html) (08/10/05)

(622) I am going to lodge an official complaint ... about the anti-male bias in the way the Child Support Agency operates and its obviously institutionalised **sexism** against males.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/> (08/10/05)

*Sexism* is prototypically associated with a female target, the notion of *sexism* towards men has promoted modified forms that differentiate the two referents: *female sexism* and *male sexism*: *anti-male sexism* and *anti-female sexism*: and also the phrases *female-centric sexism* and *male-centric sexism*, modelled after *ethnocentric*. Context explains the semantic roles of the agent and experiencer, for example, usages can be found to suggest that *male sexism* is *sexism* directed against men (see 157), or *sexism* directed by men towards women (see 156).

(623) The intrinsic problem with **female sexism** is that it misrepresents how men think and why we do the things some of us do.

[www.eurweb.com/story.cfm?id=16667](http://www.eurweb.com/story.cfm?id=16667) (17/04/05)

(624) Women hunters have to overcome substantial barriers of **male sexism** and negative peer pressure from other women.

[www.courses.rochester.edu/miller/poetry.html](http://www.courses.rochester.edu/miller/poetry.html) (17/04/05)

(625) **Male sexism** is now so pervasive that police on autopilot arrest any man named by a woman in a 911 call -- even if her call is fraudulent.

<http://www.prnewsnow.com/> (17/04/05)

Similar to *racism*, whereby 'atypical' acts are perceived as *reverse racism*, *sexism* targeted towards men is often referred to by the labels *reverse sexism* or *inverted sexism*. These examples further reveal the subjective interpretation of *sexism*.

(626) **Reverse sexism** in Old Navy ad. I wonder if the ad editor is either female or is a whipped male. On the back page, right above the khakis, it says: "This Father's Day, let Dad [underlined & in red] wear the pants!"

<http://www.resellerratings.com/forum/printthread.php?threadid=67665>  
(25/04/05)

(627) She clearly displays **inverted sexism** when calling "tribunals, sport and cars" male gossip.

<http://majbloggers.blogspot.com/> (17/04/05)

*Positive sexism* is a popular term, similar to the notion of *positive* versus *negative stereotypes*, and typically incorporates 'positive' *stereotypes*. This is an act that has covert implications of *sexism*, alternately, it can refer to an 'atypical' act of *sexism*. Example (161) uses this label to describe an act of affirmative action (also known as *positive discrimination*).

(628) **Positive sexism** (most women are beautiful, compassionate, pleasant) is not the problem. However, **negative sexism** runs rampant in today's society.

<http://www.rateitall.com/i-90133-sexism.aspx> (25/04/05)

(629) In America, for example, women are equal, in many respects, and here in Britain there is a thing known a **positive sexism**, although I hate the term, it often means that women get jobs- because their women (\*\*note, that only happens with a few occupations where the employer's have to equal the figures- i.e. employ X amount of women).

<http://www.golivewire.com/forums/topic.cgi?topic=95082> (25/04/05)

Another popular term is *retro-sexism* (Budgeon 2005: 24). This phrase refers to acts of *sexism* that are perceived as social 'regression', reverting society to a time before the feminist movement.

(630) The right-wing alliance controlling the Griffith University student union has revived '70s **retro sexism** by attempting to hold a 'beauty contest'.

[http://brisbane.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=188](http://brisbane.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=188) (03/05/05)

(631) Feminists reclaim Barbie, Miss World and romantic fiction, whilst complaining of **retro sexism** in retro auto commercials.

<http://www.sfxbrown.com/Retropreface.htm> (03/05/05)

#### 4.6.5 Metaphor and *sexism*

While some terms of discrimination have single-word metaphorical glosses, such as to *denigrate* is to *blacken* (see 2.3.5), *sexism*, like *racism*, is metaphorically expressed by way of phrases that are inclusive of the term itself. These metaphorical phrases provide semantic and pragmatic insight, revealing how speakers conceive of *sexism*. All related metaphors condemn the attitude/act: *it is bad if someone thinks like this*.

Metaphor in the discourse of *sexism* is syntactically comparable to that of *racism*. However, the figurative allusions are different. While *racism is a cancer* is a common phrase, \**sexism is a cancer* sounds intuitively ‘inaccurate’ and hyperbolic. As a result, this phrase cannot be found in any corpora. *Sexism* is not prototypically equated with a disease but is likened to undergoing *something bad: because of this, something very bad can happen to someone of this kind*. Metaphorically, the experiencer is portrayed as someone who has *suffered, put up with, endured* or *coped with sexism*.

(632) But how can men be feminists when they don't **suffer sexism**?

[www.greenleft.org.au/back/1999/351/351p29.htm](http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1999/351/351p29.htm) (16/09/05)

(633) They expend a considerable amount of time **coping with sexism** and managing the negative fallout from it.

[www.sirc.ca/newsletters/november/feat3.cfm](http://www.sirc.ca/newsletters/november/feat3.cfm) (16/09/05)

(634) [These] words will be immediately recognizable to any woman who has faced or **endured sexism**.

[http://blog-jam.blogspot.com/2005\\_04\\_01\\_blog-jam\\_archive.html](http://blog-jam.blogspot.com/2005_04_01_blog-jam_archive.html) (16/09/05)

The BNC, Collins Word Bank and Internet Corpora data further reveal that *sexism* is pragmatically discussed in terms of a constant social ‘fight’ or ‘battle’ (This metaphor is also applied to *racism*). These phrases suggest the opposition of agent against target.

(635) **Sexism is a battle** that can be won more easily if it can be fought by all women.

[www.terry.uga.edu/~dawndba/4500Zora.html](http://www.terry.uga.edu/~dawndba/4500Zora.html) (27/09/05)

- (636) Women need to work together, regardless of race, to **fight against sexism** and violence against women.

[www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/2000/pr0320.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/2000/pr0320.html) (27/09/05)

*Sexism* is expressed as a *battle* that society needs to oppose, a *war against sexism*: to *fight against sexism*, *combat sexism*, *challenge sexism*, *tackle racism*, *take on racism*.

This further supports the claim that sexism is *socially* reproachful.

- (637) An extraordinary meeting of Western Australia's women MPs has been called for later today to discuss ways to **combat sexism** in State Parliament.

[www.abc.net.au/cgibin/common/printfriendly.pl?.../news/200310/s968020.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/cgibin/common/printfriendly.pl?.../news/200310/s968020.htm)  
(27/09/05)

- (638) In recent years, there have been initiatives to **tackle sexism** on an international level .

[uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_781530140\\_2/Sexism.html](http://uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia_781530140_2/Sexism.html) (27/09/05)

Further to the expression of *sexism as a battle*, *sexism* can also be expressed metaphorically as *male bashing*, *female bashing*, *man bashing* or *woman bashing*. These phrases present the target as a victim of a violent act. However, female-related terms can have literal implications, dependent upon contextual factors (these terms can indicate to *criticise*).

- (639) Had a little story to share after some of the **women bashing** going on in Big Mike's post.

<http://www.ridemonkey.com/forums/showthread.php?t=97594> (27/09/05)

## 4.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has examined the cognitive dimension of discrimination, providing a semantic analysis of the attitudes of *intolerance*, *prejudice*, *racism*, *sexism*, *stereotype* and *xenophobia*. These words encode the key ideologies in the discourse of discrimination.

This research has revealed the similar characteristics of these words, the ‘family resemblances’ that categorise these words as a semantic field. Decomposition has demonstrated that these words are interrelated by semantic features: attitudes, an agent/target dynamic, classification, a negative evaluation, an *us and them* mentality, othering, a perceived inferiority of the target, stereotyping and a potentially negative consequence for the target. Each word reveals a social evaluation, as labels they reveal disapproval, and act as social conditioning. Pragmatic factors can reveal both anti-discriminatory and discriminatory attitudes. In addition, metaphor was explored, to reveal how we talk about these complex concepts.

Each section has provided a comprehensive explication, supported by scholarly research, lexicographical sources and pragmatic evidence. Different perspectives and theories have been presented, from an interdisciplinary approach. Research has suggested that these phenomena have an evolutionary basis, but are resultant of socio-cognitive programming.

The following Chapter will synthesise the analyses in Chapters 2-4. Taking the themes already discussed so far, Chapter 5 will examine these phenomena, as they are represented in language.

## Chapter Five

### Perspectives on Discrimination in Language

#### 5.0 Introduction

**Discrimination is alive and well although it has changed its clothes. Color-blind racism combines elements of liberalism in the abstract with anti-minority views to justify contemporary racial inequality.**

(Bonilla-Silva 2002: 41)

The preceding three Chapters have presented an analysis of sixteen key words in the discourse of discrimination. To synthesise the results, this Chapter examines these key words from another perspective, as linguistic processes. As we have discussed throughout, these key words represent the way we talk about discrimination. A corollary to this is to describe how these processes are represented in language. As explained in the Introduction (Methodology 1.4), this thesis labels this phenomenon as the *linguistic enactment of discrimination* (i.e., performing discrimination using language). To integrate Chapters 2-4, Chapter 5 attempts to describe how these key words of discrimination (e.g., *racism*, *sexism* and *intolerance*) are enacted using language. Of course, these processes are not enacted linguistically by way of the words themselves in a performative manner (e.g., *intolerance* is not performed by saying 'I am intolerant of X'). This Chapter investigates how these key words are enacted linguistically, and also serves as a review of the topic of discrimination in language.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Linguistics has a major role in helping us to understand discrimination. Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk (1988) explain that it is through discourse that we *discriminate against* others. The key words in the discourse of discrimination label how we talk about discrimination, but each word, as a process, can be enacted linguistically. These are identifiable, discrete manifestations of linguistic discrimination. For example, labelling an out-group member with the epithet *Wog* can be construed as *racism* (when the illocution is pejorative as opposed

to an in-group solidarity marker). In contrast, this verbal act could not be construed as *sexism*.

This discussion will show that there can be some overlapping of categories, for example, *I hate people of other kinds* can simultaneously signify *racism*, *prejudice*, *xenophobia* and *intolerance*. However, there are exemplar forms of discrimination. For example, *People X are cockroaches* is a salient example of to *dehumanise*, while *pumpkin* used as a designation is not a prototypical example of this act (although it may exhibit *sexism*).

This Chapter will examine these key words to explain how they can transform into linguistic processes in contemporary use. The discussion will encompass pragmatic features such as intention and interpretation (i.e., illocution and perlocution) and discrimination at both the word and phrase levels. This will include a treatment of phenomena such as abusive epithets, derogatory language, metaphor, euphemism and dysphemism, pejoration and reclamation (amelioration).

In keeping with the current discourse on discrimination, this discussion will be divided in two modes, perspectives on *covert discrimination* (i.e., implicit, indirect forms) in language, and perspectives on *overt discrimination* (i.e., explicit, direct forms) in language. Scholars including van Dijk (1985, 1987, 1991, 1992, 1993) and Bonilla-Silva (2002) claim that expressions of discrimination have metamorphosed into covert forms. However, we cannot overlook the continued enactment of overt forms, as they appear in language use.

## 5.1 Perspectives on *Covert Discrimination* in Language

How is *intolerance* expressed covertly? How do *stereotypes* express discrimination in a socially 'acceptable' way? How is *xenophobia* embedded in utterances? When is *racism* subtle?

*Covert discrimination* is used here as an all-encompassing term for any implicit act of discrimination. This discussion focuses on linguistic manifestations of covert discrimination. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) remark that most research into covert forms of discrimination have focused on the area of *overt racism*. Initially, a neat symmetry can be observed between covert and overt examples: covert = implicit, overt = explicit. Overt forms are invariably intentional. However, can we predict that covert forms are invariably inadvertent, or can they deliberately conceal

discrimination? It appears that covert forms are represented by both intentional and unintentional illocutionary force (Feagin 1991; Ridley 2005). In this way, *covert* is polysemous, with one sense referring to *concealed* (intentional), and another sense referring to *unknown* (unintentional). For example, Ridley (2005) differentiates between *intentional/unintentional racism* and *intentional/unintentional discrimination*.

In this thesis, linguistic *covert discrimination* is defined as an utterance with discriminatory implications that is usually subconscious and more subtle than overt forms (Black-Branch 1999). This underlying meaning is not immediately apparent, so we could say that covert forms of linguistic discrimination represent connotation (i.e., that they are *suggestive* of discriminatory attitudes). We can agree that covert discrimination is invariably the expression of a negative evaluation of a target, without the illocution to offend. In addition, the target is usually categorised as a *person of one kind*, in accordance with a group membership (e.g., a *woman* or an *Irish person*). Using semantic primes I will argue that *covert discrimination* can be generally represented as: *I think something bad about X, Because of this, I want to say something, I don't want anyone to think something bad about me because of this.*

As noted in the discussion on *racism* in Chapter 4, commentators from a number of fields claim that covert acts are the most common forms of discrimination in existence in Westernised societies today (e.g., van Dijk 1987, 1989; Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000, 2002, 2003). Similarly, Bourhis et al. (1997: 152-54) assert that, "Measuring intolerance in modern societies poses a series of challenges, given that prejudice and discrimination are increasingly well masked". This may be due, in part, to the social reproach and legal prohibition of discrimination that has suppressed more overt expressions of racism, prejudice and other processes [also see the discussion regarding the Australian *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* in 3.5 and 4.5.4]. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000: 50) claim that, "The legal and normative changes created by the civil rights movement of the 1960s brought a new racial ideology ('color blind racism'), with new topics and a new form". As noted in 1.3, social and historical factors influence the way we speak, and reveal our attitudes (Lovdal 1989).

Examples of covert discrimination are referred to by a range of academic labels (e.g., *subtle racism*) and popular terms (e.g., *retro sexism*). As noted in the Chapter 4 discussions of *racism* and *sexism*, these phrases do not represent

polysemous senses of these terms, but only refer to identified examples of these phenomena. Specifically in regards to racism and prejudice, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) refer to covert discrimination by way of modifiers such as *color blind*, *competitive*, *laissez faire*, *subtle* or *new*. Van Dijk (1984) uses qualifiers such as *subtle*, *modern*, *new*, *reverse*, *everyday*, *moral* and *aversive* to describe various covert acts of linguistic discrimination [also see 4.5]. As noted in sections 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6, these descriptors have also been used to modify *racism*, *sexism*, *prejudice* and *discrimination*.

Are the labels *overt* and *covert* applicable to all discriminatory processes? As noted in the discussion in Chapter 2, some acts are fundamentally overt, for example, to *vilify* is necessarily an overt act. Phrases such as *covert racism* and *covert prejudice* are semantically acceptable, although to \*covertly vilify and to \*covertly dehumanise seem contradictory. As discussed in Chapter 2, to *insult* can be covert or overt [see 2.1.3], while *abuse* is necessarily overt [see 2.2.3]. Even a *stereotype* can be covertly discriminatory, when it is presented as ‘positive’, or as ‘fact’. We will see that each of the sixteen words can fall under one category, and sometimes under both categories.

Initially, a phrase such as *?covert genocide* reads as intuitively inaccurate. However, historical incidences of *genocide* can be perceived as covert. For example, in Australia during the mid C20th a social programme was introduced whereby Aboriginal children were taken by force from their families and adopted into Anglo-Australian families. This event is contemporarily categorised as an insidious attempt at *genocide*. Let us consider a prototypical form of genocide, the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust (that prompted the very coining of *genocide*) [also see the discussion in Chapter 1]. This was a furtive scheme, the events of the time were only known by the political party who enforced the crime. Therefore, this could be a salient form of *covert genocide*. However, the modifier qualifies the noun, and in an example such as this, *covert* seems to semantically ‘reduce’ the event of *genocide*, a word which has such severe connotations. Corpus data reveals the informal usage of this phrase. These examples suggest a deliberate attempt at preventing the survival of a social or ethnic group, with a disguised motive.

(640) The lack of food supplies has already resulted in a form of **covert genocide** in many countries.

[www.thewebfairy.com/911/cia-drugs/Msg00870.html](http://www.thewebfairy.com/911/cia-drugs/Msg00870.html) (10/02/06)

(641) The concept of AIDS as a **covert genocide** operation against homosexuals was unacceptable, too painful to investigate, too odious to be true.

[www.gaytoday.badpuppy.com/garchive/health/060997he.htm](http://www.gaytoday.badpuppy.com/garchive/health/060997he.htm) (10/02/06)

Covert discrimination comes in many different forms. To demonstrate this, Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 120-121) make the interesting observation that language prescriptivism is a form of covert discrimination, that it “rationalizes prejudice” against non-standard dialects and minority out-groups. Common examples of overt discrimination can be found at the word level, such as the use of an abusive racial epithet (e.g., *nigger*). In contrast, prototypical covert discrimination appears to be at the phrase level. An example of covert discrimination at the word level would be the marginalisation of women by the use of gender biased language (e.g., *mankind* and *layman*) (Cameron 1995).

Covert discrimination at the phrase level typically consists of a qualified expression of a discriminatory opinion. Hidalgo Tenorio (2000) claims that covert discrimination is exemplified by paratactic clauses in the following format: Clause + but. These examples feature a ‘disclaimer’, followed by the expression of a discriminatory belief. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000: 50) refer to this phenomenon as a *discursive maneuver* or *semantic move* that typically precedes the expression of a negative opinion or stereotype of a target. Van Dijk (1984: 120) suggests they function as “shields to avoid being labeled as “racist” when expressing racial ideas” (as discussed in 4.3.4, *racist* is a derogatory epithet that is carefully avoided and often denied by an agent). The *Clause + but* phrasing can be used to express any discriminatory attitude.

(642) **I’m not sexist, but** I can say honestly that of the 10 or 11 female employees I’ve had, only 2 (the two I still have) have been capable of completing the tasks assigned to them without causing unnecessary drama.

<http://www.ferrarichat.com/forum/printthread.php?t=43830> (13/05/05)

(643) **I’m not intolerant but** I still think homosexuality is an abomination.

<http://www.lambic.co.uk/blog/archives/2006/03/> (29/06/05)

(644) **I'm not xenophobic, but** I am not a lover of Europe.

<http://lennykravitz.emiforums.com/lofiversion/index.php/t292093.html>

(29/06/05)

(645) Well **I'm not prejudiced, but** I would be a bit disappointed if he were gay.

<http://www.vince-vaughn.com/archives/000299.html> (03/07/05)

Pauwels (1998: 225) refers to these “meta-linguistic comments” as *apologies* and claims that they represent social awareness of the linguistic expression of discrimination. Pauwels adds, “Even if people don't adopt the changes or embrace the principles of such linguistic change, they can no longer ignore its existence”.

The above examples suggest the very form of discrimination they deny. Example (643), claiming “I'm not intolerant but I still think homosexuality is an abomination” IS intolerance. Example (642), claiming “I'm not sexist but”...preceding a sexist statement IS sexism. The agent does not want to be perceived as sexist, intolerant, xenophobic or prejudiced and therefore pre-empts and denies the charge of discrimination.

In specific reference to racism, Bonilla-Silva and Lewis (1999: 52) assert that this phenomenon “avoids direct racial discourse but effectively safeguards racial privilege”. These usages could further be labelled as ‘hypocritical’ or ironic. They suggest a consciousness about contemporary socio-cultural ethics, meanwhile revealing the very attitudes they condemn. A corpus search of the Internet reveals the similar phenomenon, whereby a discriminatory utterance precedes the fixed phrase “...not that there's anything wrong with it”. This too acts as a disclaimer, and is often in reference to sexual orientation (This can also function as a humorous rejoinder).

(646) You're gay! **Not that there's anything wrong with it.**

[www.nytimes.com/2006/01/01/opinion/01david.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/01/opinion/01david.html) (19/02/05)

(647) They are probably sick of being mistaken for a Christian band - **not that there's anything wrong with it.**

<http://www.sell.com/2GBHV> (19/02/05)

(648) I'm not Jewish --- **not that there's anything wrong with it.**

*www.jewishworldreview.com/1000/wendy100300.asp (28/02/05)*

(649) Has anyone else noticed that most Asian girls prefer to date black or white guys? **Not that there's anything wrong with it.**

*http://www.asiafinest.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=2277 (28/02/05)*

The above examples imply that the speaker has identified and isolated this attribute (e.g., the target is “gay”) because he or she believes, or thinks that others believe, that there IS something (socially) ‘wrong’ with the attribute.

Scholars have observed other examples of covert discrimination in language. Guerin (2003: 30) reports the use of stereotypes, aided by various rhetorical strategies such as lexical hedging, denial, ridicule and humour [also see 4.1]. The author claims that these are “insidious” and that the effect of discriminatory language is reduced by using these indirect forms.

People can soften the impact of racist statements through hedging (‘It probably was an Asian driver, perhaps’), through distancing (‘I’m not a racist, but . . . ’), through quotation (‘I heard somewhere that . . . ’), and through using joking and social forms... “Well I didn’t say it; it was just my friend who said it. I was just reporting it’, and ‘I’m only joking; don’t get your knickers in a twist over it’”.

Pragmatically, “using joking” is likely the speaker’s attempt to defuse a negative perlocutionary effect following an overt statement, while covert forms aim to avert any reproachful response [also see the discussion on humour as a face saving strategy in 2.5.3]. Scholars from various disciplines attest to these forms, and some claim they comprise a new ‘etiquette’ of discrimination, the ‘appropriate’ way to express discriminatory attitudes (Schuman et al. 1998: 212). The authors describe and explain these phenomena as a “mixture of progress and resistance, certainty and ambivalence, striking movement and mere surface change”. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000: 52) refute this stance, but concur with van Dijk’s position on covert discrimination:

There has been a rearticulation of the dominant racial themes (less *overt* expression of racial resentment about issues anchored in the Jim Crow era

such as strict racial segregation in schools, neighborhoods, and social life in general, and more resentment on new issues such as affirmative action, government intervention, and welfare) and (2) that a new way of talking about racial issues in public venues – a new *racetalk* – has emerged. Nonetheless, the new racial ideology continues to help in the reproduction of White supremacy.

Van Dijk's (1984) asserts that discrimination is based in *othering*, an *us and them* mentality that identifies a target as *different* and also *deficient* [also see the discussion of *othering* in 1.2. and *marginalise* in 3.3.3]. In a pluralistic society, this may reveal an expectation that members assimilate to the dominant culture [see section 5.2 on social conditioning]. Henderson (2003: 64) reports the following exchange of covert discrimination. The speakers employ third person plural pronouns (*they*, *their*, or *them*) whose referents ('white people' as a group) are not recoverable from the grammar.

- (a) J.A.: My hairdresser said it's really for their [white people's] hair.
- (b) A.H.: I don't understand who *People* [magazine] picks for sexiest man alive.  
E.F.: I think that's more for them [those attractive to white people].
- (c) A.H.: So what did you think of the O.J. verdict?  
K.H.: Well, it's their [those established by whites] rules.

Van Dijk (1984) reveals that linguistic enactments of covert discrimination are often grounded in stereotyping. As discussed in 4.1, the covertness of stereotypes may lie in their status as shared social attitudes, and socio-cultural models of expected behaviour. Stereotypes are not seen as being as 'harmful' as overt discrimination, and are often perceived as either 'true' or based in fact [see the discussion in 4.1.3 regarding Klienberg's (1935) *Kernel of Truth* theory]. For these reasons, it appears that the promulgation of stereotypes is not always an obvious expression of discrimination.

As further noted in 4.1, stereotypes, as common attitudes usually expressed by fixed phrases, can be perceived to be ethnographic 'knowledge', and therefore acceptable. The following examples present stereotypes as 'fact'.

- (650) It might be a **stereotype**, but it's true, black people love chicken.  
<http://forums.sohh.com/showpost.php?p=5956402&postcount=13> (11/03/06)
- (651) No, it's not racist, it's a true **stereotype**...Jews are cheap.  
[www.finheaven.com/boardvb2/archive/index.php/t-21033.html](http://www.finheaven.com/boardvb2/archive/index.php/t-21033.html) (13/03/06)
- (652) It's not a **stereotype**, it's true: Asian women can't drive for shit.  
[www.myspace.com/annawang](http://www.myspace.com/annawang) (13/03/06)

Examples (650) and (651) recognise the expressed ideas as stereotypes, using this to justify and legitimise the statements. Example (652) also reports a stereotypical idea, but denies the stereotype status, perhaps thinking that the label undermines the perceived truth of the statement.

As noted above, covert discrimination is prototypically found at the phrase level. A rarer example at the word level can be found in ethnic onomastics. Ethnic-based epithets can be derogatory, while terms that designate ethnicity or religious affiliation are generally neutral, innocuous descriptors [also see the discussion regarding *race* and *ethnicity* in 4.5.3]. In usage, some designations have undergone pejoration to become terms of abuse. Discussing euphemism and 'political correctness' in the domain of politics [also see 2.5], Hoggart (1985: 176) observes that when unqualified, *Jew* can be perceived as insulting and offensive.

Almost all politicians dislike displeasing almost all groups of people if they can avoid it, and therefore are usually willing to agree on euphemistic terms for them. [...] Thus, 'Jews' is thought too harsh and even anti-Semitic. Politicians prefer to say 'members of the Jewish community'. 'Community' is no doubt supposed to soften the blunt 'Jew' and implies an identity of political and social interest which might not always exist.

This phenomenon is not restricted to political discourse. In formal domains, modified phrasing is preferred over a single nominal label, for example, *Jewish person* is preferable to *Jew*. Using the adjective form suggests that the user finds the nominal form to be offensive. Bolinger (1980: 79) explains this phenomenon as "the noun

objectifies in a way the adjective cannot. (...) The noun implies that the world puts people like this in a class by themselves". Examples of the use of *Jew* can readily be found, although EEO guides and scholarly treatises advocate the use of modified forms. Isaacs (1997: 1) recommends that speakers favour the expression "An educated Jewish person -- not a Jew with education". Examples can also be found online, although some criticise the preference for the adjective form as 'overly sensitive' and ironically indicative of prejudice.

(653) Is a Jewish person not a Jew? Are all abbreviations now off limits? JakeLA, I'm not railing at you for I suspect your post is correct. It's just that I'm sick of all this PC bull.

[www.audioasylum.com/scripts/t.pl?f=outside&m=108339](http://www.audioasylum.com/scripts/t.pl?f=outside&m=108339) (19/04/06)

(654) Can you believe that some white-bread Midwesterners actually think that 'Jew' is an offensive term, and that you should say 'Jewish person' instead?

<http://unauthorised.org/anthropology/sci.anthropology/august-1996/0683.htm>

(19/04/06)

In some examples the speaker (often the referent) condemns the implication that *Jew* insults and offends. It often appears that the unmodified form offends the speaker rather than the referent(s). As Hoggart (1985: 176) writes, "This often strikes me as offensive in itself; the fact that a euphemism is thought necessary implies that the original term is, in some degree, abusive". However, this appears to mark a semantic shift.

(655) Another word commonly avoided, in America and I'm sure many other places, is 'Jew'. More than half of the people I hear, both Jews and gentiles, will go out of their way to say 'Jewish person' instead of Jew. If you haven't noticed this yet, you probably will if you try. Their motivations are usually positive, but their reasons are sad. The Christian Bible and Christian hate mongers have made Jew a dirty word, so people who don't dislike us try to find a 'nicer' word to refer to us with.

[http://www.importersparadise.com/mj\\_ht\\_arch/v49/mj\\_v49i47.html](http://www.importersparadise.com/mj_ht_arch/v49/mj_v49i47.html) (25/04/06)

(656) In my admission forms, under religion, I wrote 'Jew'. The young woman asked, 'You mean Jewish, don't you?'

You were pressured, but under the circumstances, I think it would be better to insist on Jew. 'Judaism' is the name of the religion. A Jew is a member of that religion. That's an acceptable reason for using Jew in that place. 'Jewish' indeed shows the young woman's screwed up attitude to the word 'Jew' and they way to overcome that is to use the word where it belongs. I hate to say it, but 'with pride'. Correcting people for misusing it would be of little use, and in a way would hurt our best friends. Since those who go to the trouble to say Jewish person instead of Jew are trying to be nice. Sick, isn't it?

This tends to give the impression that the person speaking thinks there is something wrong with the word Jew, or with being a Jew.

<http://www.usenet.com/newsgroups/rec.humor.jewish/msg00052.html>

(25/04/06)

It is apparent that the illocution of these modified forms is to be 'polite' and to not offend, but by their implicature, these utterances often have the perlocutionary effect of offending [also see the discussion in 2.5]. In general, it is perceived as 'polite' in English to use religious affiliation labels as modifiers rather than nominal labels, in reference to out-group members (e.g., a *Muslim person* or *Islamic person* is often a preferred term to *Muslim*).

Religious labels are strongly connected to stereotypes (Kashima et al. 2003). These are dynamic social constructions that evolve in accordance with inter-group relations. Religious labels appear to be associated with both 'positive' and 'negative' social stereotypes of character. For example, in searching for the string *Christians are* in corpus research, *Christian* is often portrayed positively as *charitable* or *good people*, and alternatively as *boring* or *hypocritical*. (As a good cross-section of usage, the corpus used was Google).

(657) The idea of a Christian nation might seem to have some appeal. Christians are charitable, mild-mannered, family-oriented.

<http://www.radford.edu/~wkovarik/misc/blog/15.Religious.war.html>

(12/08/06)

Using the string query *Buddhists are* reveals such descriptors as *peaceful, happy, calm* and *simple* people, reflecting synchronic stereotypes.

(658) According to research carried out by scientists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Buddhists are considerably happier than the rest of us.

<http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006DDCE.htm> (12/08/06)

In light of the current tensions between the Middle East and Western countries, many negative stereotypes have developed about Muslim people (Abouchedid and Nasser 2006). A corpus search of the string *Muslims are* reveals such stereotypical descriptors as *terrorists, evil, crazy, violent, intolerant, anti-American* and *satanic*. These dysphemistic examples attempt to demonise and vilify the perceived enemy [also see the discussion in Chapter 2]. In contrast, some speakers perceive this as propaganda, and attempt to dispel these stereotypes as myths. The same string search reveals views that challenge these stereotypes. Muslim people are perceived as *moderates, suffering, victimised, good, not terrorists*.

(659) Muslims are condemning terrorism. But is anyone listening?

*The Age* (21/09/04)

What is the difference between using the adjective or noun, such as labelling someone a *Jew* as opposed to *Jewish* or a *Jewish person*? Bolinger (1980: 79) claims that nominal labels imply any synchronic stereotypes, and asserts that the “heavier loading” of the biased noun is most visible with names of nationalities. Bolinger provides the following chart, stating that the nominal form is more apt to suggest the ethnic stereotype than the adjectival form.

<b>Noun</b>	<b>Adjective</b>
He's a Jew	He's Jewish
A Swede	Swedish

A Turk	Turkish
A Mexican	Mexican
A Dutchman	Dutch

[As an annotation on current usage, *X is Jewish*, without using the noun, could be used as an insult. In accordance with the stereotype that ‘Jewish people are savvy in financial matters’, *Jewish* is often used with negative connotations of ‘miserly’.]

The use of the ethnic label *Asian*, when a specific national origin could otherwise be specified, can be perceived as offensive. Hoggart (1985) explains that this is covert discrimination as a generic classification does not account for diversity.

(660) Don’t say “Asians”, break them down for all Asian groups.

[http://www.hmongtoday.com/displayreply.asp?op\\_ID=13086](http://www.hmongtoday.com/displayreply.asp?op_ID=13086) (03/05/06)

(661) Don’t say: Asians. Say: Chinese!

<http://www.soccergaming.tv/archive/index.php/t-70025.html> (03/05/06)

[N.b. this is mainly in Englishes other than British English, as *Asian* denotes South Asian nationalities. *Asian* is instead referred to as *Oriental*.]. This non-specific usage could also imply the speaker’s ignorance about geography, and reflect the stereotype ‘all Asian people look the same’. In contrast, the inaccurate application of a national label can be interpreted as offensive. The following example demonstrates a kind of semantic overextension.

(662) Some guy called me chinese.... when I’m VIET! its really annoying when other ethnics call all asians \*chinese\* i know some of us are.... BUT NOT ALL!!! if u don’t know... then just call us an \*asian\* not CHINESE!

<http://www.createblog.com/forums/lofiversion/index.php/t10353.html>  
(03/05/06)

The above examples represent covert discrimination in language, usage that is unintentionally offensive. As Bolinger (1980: 79) observes, speakers produce different forms (or corrupted forms) to be overtly offensive.

When speakers want to be insulting, they produce disparaging nouns: Kike, Wop, Spik, Bohunk, Jap, Chink, Dago, Greaser. A mispronunciation can do the same: A-rab, Eye-talian.

This is reiterated by Kang and Lo (2004: 115) who assert that a person wishing to insult someone would say, “You’re a Jap/Chink/Gook!” not, “You’re Japanese/Chinese/Vietnamese!” Creating and using specific insult terms appears to be the transition and boundary between covert and overt forms of discrimination in language.

Do the examples in this section really represent discrimination? Clearly, they are conscious attempts to avoid offending or insulting the hearer or named. Some examples of covert discrimination attempt to be politeness measures. Speakers are aware that expressing their opinions can be misconstrued, and so these fixed phrases have evolved, to clarify illocutionary force [also see the discussion regarding Face Threatening Acts in 2.1.3].

As discussed in 2.5, speakers have a fear of offending hearers, especially in a public forum. Allan and BurrIDGE (2006) note that this extends to semantically unrelated words that bear a mere phonological similarity to overt terms [also see the discussion regarding homophones in 2.1.3 and 2.3.5].

Gender, sexuality, disability and especially race are now so highly-charged that speakers will shun anything that may be interpreted as discriminatory or pejorative, and this includes blameless bystanders that get in the way. The word niggardly has no etymological connections with the taboo term nigger; yet many Americans now censor out the expression.

This section has described linguistic examples of the processes discussed in Chapters 2-4. In particular, we have seen how stereotypes can reveal covert discrimination, and how speakers can subconsciously stigmatise, demonise, offend, insult and discriminate against people. This section has also demonstrated how racism, sexism, intolerance and prejudice can be expressed in subtle ways. The next section discusses how the key words are enacted linguistically in overt discrimination.

### 5.3 Perspectives on Overt Discrimination in Language

How is racism enacted with language? How do people stigmatise and dehumanise using words? How do speakers denigrate, vilify, insult and abuse? How do people overtly discriminate against others with speech?

Prototypically, we think of overt discrimination as a physical act. As an example, we might think of a micro act of racism where a job candidate is not hired on account of his or her ethnicity. We might also think of racism as a blatant, violent and collective act of oppression such as segregation, slavery and genocide. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is initially strange to perceive language as a source of overt discrimination, in common with these extreme forms. As this thesis has demonstrated so far, discrimination can also be a linguistic process. This section examines how the key words of discrimination can function as linguistic processes that produce overt discrimination. The discussion focuses on derogatory epithets as the primary expression of linguistic overt discrimination.

This thesis defines *linguistic overt discrimination* as a general term referring to any utterance that is explicitly discriminatory. Harris et al. (2005: 163) explain that overt forms of discrimination are “obvious and direct” as opposed to “ambiguous and indirect” covert forms. Usually, these are deliberate enactments of discrimination. Using semantic primes, linguistic overt discrimination can be generally represented as: *I think something very bad about Y. Because of this, I want to say something. It isn't bad if someone feels something very bad because of this.*

Qadeer (1997: 3) claims that “overt discrimination is now rare” in Western countries, while Brouns (2000: 193) similarly claims that it is socially prohibited in these cultures, it is “not done”. Van Dijk (1984, 1987, 1997) asserts that in the post-civil rights era, overt expressions of racism and prejudice have become so taboo that it has become extremely difficult to assess racial attitudes and behaviour using conventional research strategies. As an example, Henderson (2003: 65) asserts of epithet *nigger* that:

The term in its full form has become unspeakable and has now acquired a taboo associated with the most obscene word of the English language: *the n-word* parallels *the f-word* ‘fuck’. It is a word to be avoided at all costs, and the

media will often choose *the n-word* rather than utter the taboo *nigger*, even in direct quotes.

How can it be that a non-expletive epithet can be as offensive as an expletive? The link is that both are categories of taboo language. Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 55) explain that, “In Western societies, we have taboos relating to sex, religion, bodily functions, ethnic groups, food, dirt and death”. In contemporary usage, derogatory racial epithets comprise the key terms of offensive language (Burridge 1999). Perrin (1992) observes that the censorship on religious and sexual words has decreased, while the increase in the expurgation of ethnic terms has been remarkable. Burridge (1999) further observes that this shift is evident in changes to dictionary making conventions where editors are now altering or even omitting definitions of words deemed offensive to certain groups. Allan and Burridge (2006: 47) provide additional insight into this phenomenon:

Sex and bodily functions are no longer tabooed as they were in the 19th and early 20th centuries. While some people still complain about hearing such words in the public arena, what is now perceived as truly obscene are racial and ethnic slurs whose use may provoke legal consequences. For instance sports players are occasionally ‘sinbinned’ but never charged for foul language on the field unless the complaint involves race discrimination or vilification. When a footballer was disciplined for calling Aboriginal player Michael Long ‘black cunt’ during an Australian Rules match, the reports and re-reports of the incident made no reference to the use of cunt. It was the racial abuse that triggered the uproar and the incident gave rise to a new code of conduct against racial vilification both on and off the sporting oval.

This socio-cultural ‘prohibition’ means that even overt discrimination is often reproduced in covert domains, such as private, informal domains, with familiar co-conversationalists. This can be represented by the following semantic primes: *I think something very bad about X. Because of this, I want to say something very bad (Z). I say Z to you. Because you are like me, you won’t think anything bad because of this.*

Derogatory epithets can be categorised as ‘dysphemistic’ forms of discourse, as defined by Allan and Burridge (1991: 26):

An expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason.

For example, an agent utters *Abo* in reference to a target, where euphemistic *indigenous Australian* or neutral *Aboriginal person* would be the preferred terms. Substituting these preferred terms with a derogatory epithet contains pragmatic and semantic information, and additional information about the speaker's attitudes and prejudices. This turns the act of *naming* into the act of *insulting*, and can be classified under the speech acts analysed in Chapter 1, to insult, to abuse, to offend, to denigrate and to vilify.

Derogatory epithets are salient forms of linguistic overt discrimination. Greenberg et al. (1988: 79) claim that derogatory epithets are integral components and instigators of historical acts of overt discrimination, including “wars, lynchings of blacks by white males, Ku Klux Klan actions, race riots, and racial conflicts in schools and prisons”.

Derogatory epithets categorise the target. As Rawson (1989: 12) asserts, “For most people today, the most offensive words are those that disparage individuals according to race, religion, sex and ethnic extraction, or focus on their physical and mental handicaps and peculiarities”. Allan (2001: 154) calls these -IST dysphemisms, including sexist, “racist, ageist, speciesist, and classist putdowns”...that “fails to demonstrate respect for some personal characteristic important to Hearer-or-Named’s self-image; therefore, whether deliberate or unpremeditated, it causes a face affront”. From a pragmatic perspective, most speakers will evaluate a derogatory epithet in terms of the following NSM paraphrase: *it is very bad to say this word*.

As a negative, discriminatory evaluation of a target, derogatory epithets are to be differentiated from expletives, as the latter are not personalised insults. Derogatory language here refers to expressions such as slurs and terms of abuse that categorise a target in accordance with perceived group membership. For example, *fuckwit* is a general insult (in Australian English), applicable to any person, under specific circumstances. However, *frog* is a specific derogatory epithet in English, directed towards French people [also see p. 380]. It is applicable in accordance with certain truth conditions (e.g., nationality), and encoding specific information about both the

speaker (e.g., prejudices) and the target (e.g., origins). These derogatory epithets are based in many of the processes analysed in Chapters 2-4 (e.g., *intolerance*, *racism*).

As noted in 5.1, overt discrimination typically appears to be found at the word level, unlike the qualified, prevaricating and sustained discourse that characterises covert discrimination. Therefore, this section will examine the language of insults and abuse, derogatory language that often has the illocution to offend and invariably has the perlocution of offending the target referent(s) and hearer(s) (unless the hearer is sympathetic). This is a critical area that has received little academic attention, specifically from the discipline of linguistics (Greenberg et al. 1998).

It appears that the key words of discrimination, as processes, are embedded in the language of discrimination. As discussed throughout this thesis, the major themes of discrimination are based in gender, ethnicity, religion, age and physical condition. These are all linked to discriminatory practice, and grounded in social cognition. For example, gender-based discrimination is based in *sexism*, physical condition-related discrimination is based in *stigmatising* and *dehumanising*, status-based discrimination can *marginalise* and *demonise*, and ethnicity-based discrimination is based in *intolerance*, *xenophobia*, *racism* and *prejudice*. It appears that there is semantic overlapping between these processes, that they share common characteristics [see also Chapters 1 and 4].

Derogatory language reveals an agent's negative attitudes towards a target: *I think something very bad about Y*. These are strong expressions of discrimination. Greenberg et al. (1998: 74) assert that "No utterance can convey hatred for an individual based on his or her membership in a group as quickly or vividly as a derogatory ethnic label such as "nigger" in the United States". Furthermore, overt discrimination encodes synchronic sociological information, revealing inter-group relations in pluralistic societies (Kashima et al. 2003).

This thesis has explored the universal nature of the semantic primes. Interestingly, Allan and Burridge (2006: 66) claim the universal usage of derogatory epithets, "So far as we know, all human groups have a derogatory term available in their language for at least one other group with which they have contact". It appears that no group escapes this linguistic branding. Perhaps reflecting xenophobia and positive feelings towards in-group members, inter-group labelling is prototypically negative, rather than positive or admiring. A prolific collector of ethnic slurs, Roback (1979: 2) calls these *ethnophaulisms*, and comments in his compendium that

“Undoubtedly some lay person will interpose the question: Why confine oneself to slurs and not include also the complimentary allusions? The answer is simple. There are practically none of the latter”. It is clear that these slurs form a highly productive area of language, while fond terms, such as *Aussie* and *Kiwi* (used by both in-group and out-group members) are non-productive, forming the exception rather than the norm (Rawson 1989).

Sherif and Sherif’s (1953) early study into inter-group tensions revealed that derogatory epithets develop readily as hostilities between groups escalate, even when the groups have been arbitrarily formed. This is borne out by the sudden increase of abusive epithets that have developed for both American and Iraqi people, in response to the current US-Iraqi hostilities (Kashima et al. 2003). Interestingly, some of these new epithets are etymologically related to existing forms (e.g., *sand nigger* or *dune coon* that exploit the negative connotations of the prior forms). In recognising this phenomenon, Kennedy (2002: 27) labels *nigger* as a productive epithet, it is “the paradigmatic slur. It is the epithet that generates epithets”. This is particularly so in American English. As Greenberg et al. (1988: 74) note, derogatory epithets are “not only products of inter-group hostility but contributors to it as well”. This further supports the idea that language not only expresses and reflects attitudes, but also creates a version of reality and legitimises certain points of view [also see the discussion in Chapter 1].

Do derogatory epithets mean anything at all? Stollznow (2002) asserts that they are semantically discrete. Epithets are not generalised, ‘meaningless’ terms of abuse, but rather are semantically distinct, encoding socio-cultural attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices. Although meaning is dynamic, the semantic structure of each label can be decomposed, to reveal the unique meaning, from a synchronic perspective [see also 1.4].

Lexicographical sources do not always treat this lexical field. Due to their offensive nature, ethnic-related labels are rapidly being expurgated from dictionaries (Allan and Burridge 2006). This decision aims to avoid offending users, but is this problematic from an empirical stance? Some commentators believe that inclusion legitimises and condones these forms, but is this not prescription, by way of exclusion? Allan and Burridge (2006) discuss the annotations of the Encarta dictionary that “They’re PC in the extreme, often censorious and sometimes missing linguistic shifts that are taking place”. A descriptive stance should allow that every

usage must be recorded, and any usage subject to research. Greenberg et al. (1988: 75) assert that this language must be recorded and “studied because they probably constitute the most direct and effective expression of prejudice in everyday discourse” [also see 2.4.4]. Allan and Burridge (2006: 85-86) explain:

While dictionaries used to include religious and racial swear words but omit sexually obscene words, the late 20th century saw mounting pressure on editors to alter, or even omit altogether, political and racial definitions of words.

In 1998, the civil rights organisation, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), petitioned Merriam-Webster Inc. to remove *nigger* from their dictionary. While the word was listed as “offensive”, it was portrayed as a synonym for “a black person”. The dictionary refused to censor the word, but prompted a review of words labelled as ‘offensive’. Removing the word would be an unnatural, prescriptive act, as demonstrated by Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 31), who state that, “In these cases language is a symptom, not a disease in itself. Abolishing racist language will not necessarily abolish racist thinking”. However, a growing concern for discrimination in language has led to a more sensitive treatment of derogatory language in dictionaries. Henderson (2003: 55) explains that these changes are “motivated by the social activism and political leadership of the concerned and affected populations”.

However, most changes appear to have extended to prominent terms only. Lexicographical sources do provide entries for derogatory labels, although they are often inadequate. For example, the Macquarie Dictionary’s (2005) treatment of Australian English defines *Yank* as “American”, without noting the derogatory status of this word. This definition suggests that the epithet is only adjectival. Of course, *Yank* can function as a modifier.

(663) I can’t verify as to the accuracy (it was a **yank** movie after all).

[www.simaqianstudio.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php/t695.html](http://www.simaqianstudio.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php/t695.html) (24/04/06)

(664) I know nothing about **yank** sports, in fact the only ones I like are Hockey, Nascar and I don’t mind baseball when I’m wired.

[www.forum.ebaumsworld.com/printthread.php?t=75577](http://www.forum.ebaumsworld.com/printthread.php?t=75577) (24/04/06)

The Macquarie Dictionary's gloss could further connote that *Yank* is merely referential (i.e., *Yank* = American (person)). However, *Yank* is not a direct synonym, especially in formal usage or fixed expressions, without being ironic or offensive. Given the sensitive and formal nature of the following examples, substituting *American* with *Yank* would be inappropriate, as shown in these examples.

(665) White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said President Bush mourns the loss of **American** (\*Yank) lives in the attack Tuesday in Mosul.

[www.rdu.news14.com/content/headlines?ArID=61169&SecID=2](http://www.rdu.news14.com/content/headlines?ArID=61169&SecID=2) (24/04/06)

(666) You haven't fully studied **American** (\*Yank) literature if you don't read Hawthorne or Dickinson.

[www.web.infoave.net/~lrashley/287group.htm](http://www.web.infoave.net/~lrashley/287group.htm) (24/04/05)

In contrast, nominal *Yank* encodes Australian attitudes about the target referent, especially in a pragmatic context. Derogatory ethnic labels reflect stereotypes and prejudices about the target.

(667) If you're a **yank** reading this and don't know what cricket is, it's a game.

[www.duckboy.net/eng/showpage.php3?id=1527](http://www.duckboy.net/eng/showpage.php3?id=1527) (24/04/05)

(668) There's no money in it, so the **Yanks** won't be interested.

[www.australiablog.com](http://www.australiablog.com) (24/04/05)

When modified, collocations reveal some of these stereotypical perceptions of *Yank*: *loud yank*, *fat yank*, *big Yank*, *crazy Yank*. These collocations provide semantic information about the head term. Usage suggests that abusive epithets are not meaningless insults, but rather encode beliefs, preconceived ideas and the perceived inferiority of the target [also see the discussion in 4.1].

Can derogatory epithets serve any social purpose? While functioning as insults, these epithets can also function as a form of social conditioning. For example, *slut* is not merely a label, to brand a target as sexually promiscuous or insatiable in

some way. It can also reproach social behaviour, and reflect synchronic socio-cultural ethics. Using NSM, this can be represented as a social comment: *it is bad to do this*, and a directive: *don't do this*.

Surprisingly, ethnic-based epithets can also function as social conditioning. We might initially conceive of racial epithets as an inter-group insult, a comment on the target's intrinsic state of being. Let us consider the epithets *FOB* (Fresh Off the Boat) and *whitewashed*, as they appear in American English. These are intra-group epithets that describe different acculturative trajectories, and are used amongst the Korean-American and Vietnamese-American communities. *FOB* is employed to reproach community members who are deemed to be 'too ethnic' (i.e., 'insufficiently' assimilated into the American culture). In contrast, *whitewashed* criticises members perceived as being too Americanised or Westernised (i.e., "too assimilated").

Pyke and Dang (2003: 147) label this phenomena as "intra-ethnic othering" that "serves as a basis for sub-ethnic identities, intra-ethnic social boundaries, and the monitoring and control of social behavior". Therefore, these epithets function as a form of ridiculing a target, as well as social conditioning. In this way, these epithets are important to solidarity and ethnic identity (Kang and Lo 2004). This phenomenon suggests that when we see a person as familiar, we have certain expectations about their behaviour. Using NSM primes, we could express these sentiments as: *X is the same kind of person as me. Because of this, it is good when X does things like me. It is bad when X doesn't do things like me.*

While there are many innovations of this kind (most are ephemeral or nonce creations), the phenomenon itself is not new. Rawson (1989: 12) observes an earlier example, "Even within the same ethnic group disparaging distinctions have been drawn. Thus, *kike* was popularized in the United States by assimilated German Jews, referring to Jews in later waves of immigration from eastern Europe". Today, *kike* is primarily used as a derogatory epithet by out-group members. But can inter-group epithets function as social conditioning, or do they solely function as insults? Australian English *reffo* (an abbreviation of *refugee*) is an othering device that reproves heterogenous culture, and encourages deculturation.

Other terms that label a target perceived as 'too assimilated' into a 'different' culture are used both intra-group and inter-group [also see the discussion regarding Pittinsky's (2005) concept of *allophilia* in 4.6.3]. Although these terms typically begin as pejorative, they can ameliorate to be used as self-identifying labels. Older

examples include *wigger* (also *wigga* and *whigger*) a blend of *white* and *nigger* (also *wannabe nigger*) to typically label a ‘white’ American person perceived as behaving as stereotypically African American. This term often appears in the rap music genre.

(669) And before you say **wigger** you should know what it means, it is a white person who is trying to be black.

<http://www.amiright.com/parody/80s/ironmaiden3.shtml> (18/02/06)

A current, popular example is American English *Oreo*. This is the brand name of a popular (brown) chocolate biscuit, with a (white) cream filling. Metaphorically, this epithet labels an African-American person whose behaviour is perceived to emulate that of a ‘white person’. The term *coconut* is used in this same way in Australia, especially in reference to Indigenous leader and advisor Noel Pearson (E. Ellis, personal correspondence).

(670) A black dude that acts white is called an **oreo**.

<http://www.darkandlight.net/forums/archive/index.php/t-16882.html>

(18/02/06)

(671) I called Noel Pearson a **coconut** and implied his nose was a bit too close to the Howard posterior.

<http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/news/2006/06/115035.php> (18/06/06)

This has become a productive area of epithet creation. A similar example is *bruised banana*, referring to an Asian person who behaves in a manner that is stereotypically perceived to emulate an African American person. These examples bring us to a curious phenomenon, the use of symbolic food name metaphors as derogatory epithets. Allan and Burridge (2006: 148) humorously refer to this as “gastronomic xenophobia” and observe that modern ethnic-based terms of abuse derive from superficial characteristics such as appearance and diet, while earlier racial abuse featured strong moral stereotyping, often with religious overtones. The use of metaphorical stereotypes is a highly productive and evolving category of ethnic epithet creation. Rawson (1989: 13) provides a small sample from this rich inventory:

Your enemy is what he eats. The French have long been reviled as *frogs*, the Germans as *the Boche (cabbageheads)* and as *krauts* (from *sauerkraut*), the British *limeys*, the Mexicans as *chili eaters*, the Italians as *spaghetti benders*.

These epithets are based upon food names that are stereotypically associated with an ethnic group. Brown and Mussell (1984: para. 7) refer to these as “ethnic foodways”, and observe that this phenomenon mostly occurs when the nutritional habits of a minority group are clearly distinguishable from those that form the majority [see also Kalcik 1984]. Besch (2002: 5) remarks that these specific foodstuffs (e.g., spices, meals and eating habits) are “an important part of the cultural conscious of a group. For outsiders, often they are an important pejorative criteria to discriminate a minority”.

Are there any ‘rules’ to the use of food names as epithets? The food must be stereotypically linked to the ethnic group, for example, *meat pie* is a potential insult for an Australian person, while *hot dog* is an existing epithet used in reference to American people (in Australian English). However, transposing the target and label in these two examples would be nonsensical, or perceived as error. A food must in some way be culturally identified with the target, for example, *rice*, as a staple food in many Asian diets, is perceived as a simplistic cultural link for many out-group members. Therefore, this morpheme features prominently in derogatory epithets, including *rice head*, *rice eater*, *rice paddy* and *rice picker* (source: <http://gyral.blackshell.com/names.html>). A label directed towards an Asian target that involved other foodways (e.g., *beaner*, *curry-head*, *potato-head* or *garlic muncher*) would be received as ironic or ‘wrong’, but offensive, respectively, to Hispanic people, South Asian Indian people, Irish people and Italian people, in accordance with contemporary stereotypes of national diets.

Food-based metaphors are most productive in ethnic-based epithets. They also exist in sexist-based epithets, such as *honey*, *peach*, *cookie*, *sweetie pie*, *sugar* and *cup cake*. Females are the prototypical targets of these labels. They are perceived as sexist, in certain domains and relationships. For example, used by a manager to a female staff member in the workplace, they are inappropriate. These diminutives indicate a sense of intimacy where none exists. However, used in an equal or familiar relationship, as diminutives, these terms are not necessarily opprobrious. Other terms,

such as the (predominantly) British English *crumpet* and *tart*, have additional connotations of promiscuity, and are invariably pejorative.

Do food-based metaphors exist in other areas of discrimination? These are very rare, such as the ageist diet stereotype *old prune*. *Lemon* is an insult directed towards lesbians, but is not based in diet stereotyping. Likewise, there do not appear to be diet stereotypes associated with people with disabilities, and therefore no discriminatory epithets of this type. It is conceivable that religious-based epithets could exist, based on ritual and ceremonial foods.

Chapters 2-4 described metaphor in the language of discrimination. Metaphor appears to be a major and common method of derogatory epithet creation, and the primary categories are foodways and animal-based insults. Animalisation, to dehumanise, features prominently in derogatory epithets based in racism and sexism.

Sexist-based examples are prototypically directed towards female targets, including: *bird*, *bat*, *cow*, *bidy*, *cat*, *bitch*, *dog* (examples from Schulz 1975). Schulz notes that there are fewer male-oriented epithets (e.g., *snake* and *pig*). Flynn (1977: 15) asks if there are culturally universal insults, and remarks that “*dog* and *pig* are common terms of abuse in most societies”. All of these terms have folkloric connotations of character (e.g., a *pig* is ‘dirty’ and ‘lacks social abilities’, while a *snake* is ‘untrustworthy’. This latter example probably evolved from Biblical references to the *snake* in Genesis).

As discussed in 3.1, derogatory ethnic epithets based in animal metaphors are dehumanising to the referent, and are common tools of wartime propaganda. Rawson (1989: 13) provides the example *termite*, “an especially popular American metaphor for their Vietnamese opponents during the long war in that country”. Other well-known examples include *monkey*, and *vermin* (as used towards German people during WWI and WWII), and the many examples used by the German propaganda machine towards the Jewish population, including *parasite*, *cockroach* and *rat*.

Why do discriminatory epithets offend? Greenberg et al. (1988: 78) explain that derogatory epithets imply “that the target is less than human”. In a similar vein, Henderson (2003: 64) states that derogatory epithets dehumanise the referent. For example, the stigmatising terms associated with black people dehumanise them:

As animals, such as *buck*, *coon*, or *jungle bunny*, by referring to their color only, such as *blacky*, *darky*, *spade*, or *tar baby*, by suggesting that they are dangerous through supernatural terms, such as *boogie*, *jigaboo* (from its possible relationship with *bugaboo*, *OEDO*), or *spook*, and through metaphorical extension by using terms which refer to children but are applied to both black children and adults, such as *boy*, *pickaninny*, *sambo*, or *tar baby*.

Rawson (1989: 10) suggests that phonological factors increase the offensiveness of these epithets, “The derogatory impact of many words also seems to be enhanced by a hard *k* or *g* sound, as in *cock*, *coon*, *kike*, *jerk*, *nigger*, *pig*, *spic*, etc.” Stollznow (2002) further observes this phenomenon in abusive epithets (e.g., the plosives in *dickhead*, *cunt* and *prick*) that emphasise aggression and contempt.

There also appears to be a cognitive dimension to the production of derogatory terms in some specific cases. In the area of psycholinguistics, there is the phenomenon of *coprolalia*, as a symptom of illnesses such as Tourette’s or Lesch-Nyhan syndrome. Coprolalia is often narrowly glossed as ‘uncontrollable swearing’ (Encarta), but has a wider semantic range than this, including any involuntary utterance of obscenity or derogatory speech, and usually performed in a socially inappropriate domain. In this rare condition, racial epithets are common vocalisations. Allan and Burrige (2006: 194) report that the topics of coprolalia are in accordance with synchronic taboos, “These days religious profanity and blasphemy have given way to sexually obscene words and, commonly, racial epithets”. Interestingly, they find that this may be linked to the theme of this thesis:

One woman married to a man with TS felt that coprolalia was specifically something that affected an area of the brain designed to store hostile reactions toward some perceived group of ‘others’.

As demonstrated, the key words in the discourse of discrimination are reproduced as processes underlying derogatory language. A final point that needs to be discussed is the shifting nature of derogatory language. These processes, as they appear in language, are dynamic rather than static. Words can be created or pejorated by the key word processes of discrimination and can alternatively undergo ameliorating processes.

For example, *Abo* is a contemporary abusive racial epithet that is targeted at indigenous Australian people. However, it was not always derogatory. Wilkes (1978: 67) explains that *Abo* is etymologically an abbreviation of *Aboriginal*, and was once used with affectionate connotations. The author cites an article title from *Salt* magazine, dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 1944, in which *Abo* is used in reference to indigenous artist Albert Namatjira.

(672) **Abo** Paints His World.

During the 1920s through to the 1940s, *Abo* was used in a similar way to modern *Aussie* or *Kiwi*. The word underwent pejoration and by the 1950s had developed derogatory connotations. The *Random House Dictionary of American Slang* confirms that *nigger* has undergone a similar process. It did not originate as a slur but developed derogatory connotations over time. Kennedy (2002) claims that early C17th century *nigger* was referential, but by the early C19th it was established as an insult. More recently, *Lebo* (from *Lebanese*) was a non-derogatory epithet in Australian English that underwent pejoration during the December 2005 ‘Sydney Riots’ (where *Leb* and *Lebo* were used in vilifying slogans).

Semantic variation exists on a regional level too. An epithet can exist in multiple regions and countries with semantic variation across dialects. For example, *Paki* exists in various English dialects. In British English, it is extremely derogatory and, until recently, it was simply used as an abbreviation with friendly connotations in Australian English. The negative connotations of *Paki* in British English appear to be diffusing into other varieties, such as Australian English and American English.

There is a temporal aspect to derogatory epithets. Not all examples have the longevity of *nigger*. Rather, many epithets are ephemeral and, over time, lose their relevance or their intensity or will frequently disappear altogether. Diachronic examples such as *Hun* (in reference to German targets during World War I) or *Tommy* (used towards British targets during World War II) are both ethnic-based epithets that are now archaic. Such examples reflect a synchronic socio-political atmosphere, and the dynamic nature of ethnic terms of abuse.

The lexicon of Special Needs is another area of language where there is a large number of overtly derogatory descriptors and labels with a shifting semantic structure [also see the discussion regarding *stigmatise* in 3.4]. Corbett (1995: 29) claims that

there is a “high turnover” of words in this area, due to the stigmatisation of new labels, (e.g., *special*, *handicapped*). The language used to describe disabling conditions often denigrates and marginalises the individual, presenting the person as a *sufferer* or *victim*. Hume (1996: 5) states:

Due to the importance of language, there is considerable controversy about how people with a disability should be described. Words such as invalid, unfit, disabled, impaired, infirm, incapacitated, defective, retarded start with *in*, *im*, *dis*, *un* or *de* which imply a lack of something or some kind of inferiority.

As discussed in 3.1.5, some forms are overtly discriminatory (e.g., *retard* or *spastic*) while other forms are covertly discriminatory (e.g., *challenged*). Other labels dehumanise the person, focusing on the condition rather than the individual (e.g., a *quadriplegic* as opposed to *someone with quadriplegia*).

In an effort to empower rather than offend, derogatory labels can be *reclaimed* (i.e., used by the target group as an intra-group label, with positive connotations). As an example, Allan (2001: 155) observes that derogatory epithets can be used without irony amongst people of the group identified by the term, “-IST dysphemisms are disarmed by being used as in-group solidarity markers by the targeted group”. Notable sexual orientation epithets that have been reclaimed include *gay* and *queer* (Cameron 1995), while Rawson (1989: 15) adds “homosexuals have defiantly adopted faggot and dyke”.

Reclamation by the in-group does not necessarily invite out-group members to also employ the term. Cameron (1995: 148) explains that “outside the group, such ‘reclaimed’ terms have the potential to connote not solidarity but bigotry”. As a result, these meanings have not necessarily ameliorated, but have broadened (to encompass new meanings), or developed polysemy (multiple senses). For example, Mills (1989) asserts that during the 1960s, *bitch* was reclaimed by the feminist movement that attempted to infuse positive connotations into the word, connoting strength and power. In this reclamation, the insult and the new usage exist concurrently. More recently, ‘sexist’ epithets such as *bitch* and *slut*, previously targeting women, have broadened as they are today also used in reference to men (Stollznow 2002).

Reclamation does not ensure that a negative term will be adopted by all groups or even by all in-group members in a positive light [see also 3.4.4 for the discussion on *de-stigmatisation*]. Disability-related epithets provide a good example of this. The *Disability Studies for Teachers* guide prepared by the Center on Human Policy (2001: 5) reports:

Cripple has also been revived by some in the disability community who refer to each other as ‘crips’ or ‘cripples’. A performance group with disabled actors call themselves the ‘Wry Crips’.

However, used by out-group members, *cripple* or *crip* both retain their pejorative connotations. In addition to the performance group named above, there is also the current animated comedy *Quads*. The scriptwriters of this series are disabled people. Used by out-group members, *Quad* remains a derogatory label.

Forcing euphemism onto traditionally stigmatised areas of language appears to be unsuccessful. For example, Corbett (1995: 46) claims that people with special needs have a “constant struggle with political correctness”. Well-meaning speakers created the label *special*, in an attempt to create a positive identity for disabled people (Corbett 1995). However, *special* pejorated, acquiring derogatory connotations. This is a salient example of Pinker’s *euphemistic treadmill*, whereby a preferred label will be introduced to replace a negative label, yet will eventually acquire the dysphemistic connotations of the preceding term [see also the discussion on *offend* in 2.5.4].

As a negative shift in connotation, pejoration appears to be a much more common process than amelioration, a positive shift in connotation. In regards to amelioration, reclamation, as a deliberate attempt to shift meaning, is the most common and successful form of semantic shift, rather than the more infrequent occurrence of a word simply ‘improving’ in connotation.

As we have discussed, a reclaimed word can still retain its derogatory connotations, but be seized as a positive form of identity and solidarity by the referent group. For example, in a study of teenage speech, Folb (1980: 248) provides the following gloss of *nigger*:

Form of address and identification among blacks (can connote affection, playful derision, genuine anger or mere identification of another black person; often used emphatically in conversation).

In-group reclamation has also occurred in Australian English *wog*. When self-referential among members of the non-Anglo Celtic European community, the epithet has positive connotations of identity and solidarity. Like positive self-referential *nigger*, *wog* has been popularised in music, movies and other media. A lesser known example is that of *vegemite*, which has been employed as an abusive epithet towards indigenous Australian people (Deakin University 2001). Taken from the iconic Australian food product, it is most commonly used in the derogatory phrases *vegemite valley* and *vegemite city* to refer to regions populated by indigenous Australians.

(673) To get away from the wild part of Tamworth known as **Vegemite Village**, where battling whites and Aborigines lived in Housing Commission homes, Sen's mother shifted the family to Inverell.

*Realm of the Senses, Sydney Morning Herald (18/05/02)*

(674) Alice. God, that place. It's full of Aborigines, lousy with them. We've got enough of them out here, down by the creek. **Vegemite village**, we call it.

*Alice Springs, Sydney Morning Herald (15/09/04)*

In contrast, when used intra-group, *vegemite* behaves as *nigger* or *wog*, as a self-referential label with positive connotations of solidarity and mateship. As an iconic product, *Vegemite* is often perceived as quintessentially 'Australian'. For this reason, *vegemite* may be a popular self-referential label by indigenous Australian people.

(675) Apart from a sprinkling of black and white families in homes on the north-eastern side of Fox Street, which is the main street of Walgett, the Aboriginal dominated areas are sometimes casually referred to by some of the local Aboriginal youth as, **Vegemite City**, top camp, lower camp, the Bronx and the like.

[http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/rsrch\\_dp/community.htm](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/rsrch_dp/community.htm) (11/12/03)

Further to this, as a designation, *vegemite* has a unique purpose. In some Australian Aboriginal cultures, the name of a deceased person becomes taboo. Therefore, any community members with the same name will adopt a new name. The following example comes from the article *Exploring Indigenous Palliative Care*, published in the *Newsletter of Palliative Care Australia* (Winter, 2001).

Other relatives in the community will change their name if it is the same as the deceased person. This means that you often get Aboriginal people who have more than one name. Some people may choose to be known by a name such as “Gerry Can”, “Billy Cart”, “Vegemite” or “Two Mile” due to the number of deaths in a community and the regularity of having to change their names.

In closing, these overt forms are derogatory, whenever they are employed or perceived as such. Illocution and perlocution are crucial factors in determining pragmatic features. It must also be noted that, pragmatically, any word can be used in a pejorative way.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Chapters 2-4 analysed the key words in the discourse of discrimination. To integrate these analyses, Chapter 5 has examined these words as processes, as they occur in language. Therefore, this Chapter has demonstrated how the key words are performed in language, and the role of language in the enactment of discrimination.

The discussion was divided into two categories, covert discrimination, (i.e., indirect, implicit forms) and overt discrimination (direct, explicit forms). For example, reproducing stereotypes in language was classified as a covert form of discrimination, while the use of ethnic epithets was described as an overt form of discrimination in language. It was shown that the processes of covert and overt discrimination appear to bring together many of the key words examined in Chapters 2-4. Finally, this Chapter discussed issues of pejoration and amelioration, to illustrate the dynamic nature of discrimination in language.

This Chapter has developed and synthesised the analyses and discussion presented in the preceding three Chapters. Chapter 6 considers some future directions for research and presents the thesis conclusion.

## Chapter Six

### Recommendations and Conclusions

#### 6.0 Conclusions

This thesis presented a semantic analysis of the key words in the discourse of discrimination. The analysis identified sixteen key words, and explicated these using the NSM methodology. The words selected for analysis comprise the key terms in the discourse of discrimination and were selected on the basis of relevancy, frequency and increased usage. As social realities, these words have received considerable academic attention, but were hitherto neglected in the fundamental area of lexical semantics (van Dijk 1987).

The semantic analyses revealed the similarities between the terms. These parallels support the claim that these words are semantically ‘related’, and therefore comprise a semantic set. Some of these terms are often used interchangeably by some speakers (e.g., *insult/offend*, *prejudicial intolerance* and *vilify/demonise*). These words were found to form a set of related words with semantic ‘family resemblances’. Using the NSM method of decomposing meaning, similarities were revealed across the set, as evidenced by recurring semantic primes (e.g., *bad*, *kind of*) and shared components (e.g., *I think something very bad about Y*).

The set of key words were sorted into three main categories, representing the rhetorical, social, and cognitive dimensions of discrimination. The rhetorical category examined speech act verb words that label non-performative verbal acts of discrimination (e.g., to *insult*, to *abuse*). The social category analysed words associated with socio-cultural processes of discrimination (i.e., collective acts, e.g., to *stigmatise*, to *marginalise*). The cognitive category investigated words that label ideological discrimination (i.e., discrimination in thinking, e.g., *xenophobia*, *racism*).

In this set *discrimination* was employed as the superordinate (i.e., ‘umbrella’) label for the sixteen key word ‘hyponyms’ or specific ‘types’ of discrimination (e.g., *stigmatise* or *demonise*). As discussed in Chapter 1, some of these labels are prototypical discrimination words. For example, *vilify* and *intolerance* are exemplar

terms. By contrast, in a ‘fuzzy set’, *denigrate* and *abuse* may be seen as a less archetypal or less ‘obvious’ example of discrimination.

The main objective of this thesis has been to investigate if the key words in the discourse of discrimination can be decomposed using the NSM method. This was successfully achieved, and there are a broad range of theoretical implications and practical implications for the results of this thesis. From a theoretical perspective, this thesis makes an important contribution to the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory. The NSM method has been used previously to examine a wide range of semantic sets, and this thesis tests the theory against an original set of words. These analyses further develop the NSM theory and make an innovative addition to the existing body of NSM literature. Furthermore, this thesis makes an important contribution to lexical semantics, as the semantic set of discrimination key words had formally not been treated by this field.

The key words in the discourse of discrimination comprise a set of abstract words with an intricate semantic structure. This thesis demonstrates that the meanings of such complex concepts can be comprehensively decomposed using the NSM approach. The explications showed that this methodology highlights the subtle nuances of meaning, and reveals both core and peripheral facets of meaning.

In addition, this thesis shows that the NSM method is a useful tool for cultural anthropology, as it has revealed socio-cultural and cognitive elements of meaning (e.g., social evaluations and prototypical scenarios). The Literature Review in Chapter 1 investigated other approaches to lexical semantic analysis, yet found these to be inadequate for the purposes of defining socio-cultural terms.

In providing dictionary definitions for comparative purposes, this thesis shows that the use of semantic primes can circumvent the problems encountered in traditional lexicography, such as circularity and obscurity. The Reductive Paraphrase approach provided explications with components ordered in logical sequence, to ‘unlock’ the meaning of the key words. The NSM method was chosen for its use of basic, core language, in comparison to other decompositional approaches that use a metalanguage that is equally complex to the target word. In addition, this thesis illustrated that the NSM semantic primes, based in ordinary, natural language, provide a clear and understandable explication as opposed to artificial, formula based approaches.

The NSM method is commonly used as a tool for cross-linguistic analysis, and this thesis illustrates the value of this approach in the analysis of English-specific words. In addition, the explications proposed in this thesis are intended to be readily translatable across languages.

As a multi-disciplinary topic, the study of discrimination has practical implications for many diverse fields. Providing a comprehensive semantic analysis is useful as an exposition for academic research in the natural and social sciences. In addition, this thesis has undertaken an investigation into a range of words that have real world applications. As words that label concepts of social significance, defining the key terms in the discourse of discrimination is of functional use in many practical areas in both private and public sectors. In providing a comprehensive explanation of meaning and usage, this study is of particular importance to legislation, public policy, education, human resources and conflict resolution.

The findings of this analysis can be adapted and applied to law (e.g., standardised definitions of discrimination terms), administration and management (e.g., training and job guides), especially in procedures and policies documentation, guidelines and regulatory manuals. It is suggested that information from this study could be useful for Equal Employment Opportunity Divisions (e.g., for glossaries, equity and diversity manuals, anti-discrimination documents and correct naming guides) and interpersonal relations, and adapted for workshops and seminars. The potential applications of this research are far-reaching for the purposes of academic, government and corporate institutions. This Chapter will now summarise the key issues addressed in this thesis, with reference to these theoretical and practical categories.

Chapter 1 explored the idea that topics of practical and social importance to speakers should also be of importance to the theoretical pursuits of linguists [see 1.1]. For this reason, the semantic set of discrimination was selected for analysis. As an issue that affects all speakers at some level, discrimination is a significant social concern and problem. Therefore, the language of discrimination features prominently in everyday discourse. This lexicon is further important to scholars. However, many academics have noted the lack of a definitive definition for the key terms in the discourse of discrimination (Brigham 1971; Katz 1981; Kelly and MacNamara 1991; Shermer 1994; Stolley 1999; van Dijk 1987, 1991, 1993). This thesis addresses this

concern, presenting comprehensive explanations of the meaning of a range of highly salient discrimination-related terms.

As the central label for these processes, *discrimination* was discussed from a sociolinguistic and semantic perspective. This analysis included a discussion of the relevant concepts of *othering*, and an *us and them* mentality. These concepts were further investigated throughout the thesis, in relation to each specific Chapter and word.

Chapter 1 presented a list of aims and objectives for the thesis, naming the processes selected for investigation, the reasons why these words were chosen and explaining the order and categorisation of these words [see 1.3]. This section further examined the significance of these words, as labels for 'lexical gaps'.

Chapter 1 revealed the importance of this topic to speech act analysis, semantic analysis, sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. The Literature Review assessed the major formal frameworks for semantic analysis, including Componential Analysis, Conceptual Semantics and Frame Semantics. The discussion reached the conclusion that the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach is the most appropriate method for the examination of culture-based terms. This method was shown to also involve aspects of prototype theory and the use of 'scenarios' and 'scripts'. An in-depth discussion of the NSM methodology was presented, and the core relevance of the semantic primes to the processes of discrimination (e.g., GOOD/BAD, SAY/DO, THINK/KNOW/FEEL, PEOPLE/KIND/BODY, THE SAME/LIKE/OTHER).

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provided the results of the study. Each word was treated in a unique section and compared and contrasted to other words in the set where relevant. Each section included a discussion of lexicographical and scholarly definitions of the focus word, and an explication was proposed for each word. An explanation of components was provided for each word, to justify the explication and explain the semantic decomposition. A commentary followed, providing examples of usage to further support the use of each component. Each section included a discussion of semantic and pragmatic phenomena, including synonymy, collocations, and usage. The discussion ended with an analysis of metaphor associated with each focus word. Each section further discussed any relevant interdisciplinary issues.

Chapter 2 entered into a discussion of the literature on speech act verbs, in particular the categories of performative and non-performatives [see section 2.0]. This

Chapter provided a descriptive semantic analysis of speech acts that comprise part of the rhetorical dimension of discrimination: *insult*, *abuse*, *denigrate*, *vilify* and *offend*. These words label the major enactments of linguistic discrimination. Each label in this set is connected in that each word expresses a negative opinion about a target (i.e., the illocution), and causes someone to feel something bad (i.e., the perlocution). The first four words were paired (*insult/abuse* and *denigrate/vilify*) to compare and contrast their immediately similar semantic structure. The final term *offend* was particularly distinct from these other terms, in that this speech act focuses on perlocutionary effect [see section 2.5].

Chapter 2 further examined significant sociolinguistic themes in regards to each word. In section 2.1.3, *insult* was examined as a Face Threatening Act while the functions of *insult* as a tool of humour and group solidarity were also investigated. The contemporary usage of *insult* was treated in relation to ambiguity, polysemy, perlocution, semiotics and metaphor [see 2.1.2-2.1.5].

*Abuse* was described as an explicit, direct act. Common paralinguistic features of *abuse* were discussed, and the section treated polysemy and the close relationship between speech act verb *abuse* and the physical manifestation senses of the word [e.g., *sexual abuse*, *drug abuse*. See 2.2.3]. In 2.2.4, the synonymy of *abuse* was treated, particularly in relation to *flaming* in Computer Mediated Communication. We also saw that metaphor is an important factor in the production of *abuse* and the very language of *abuse* [see 2.2.5].

Chapter 2 examined the important implications of both *denigrate* and *vilify* as illegal acts in many countries. In addition, the public, explicit nature of the performance of these acts was discussed. We found that metaphor is highly productive in the creation of popular labels to describe *denigrate*, and that this metaphor assisted us in the assessing the possible polysemy or generality of *denigrate* [as *to lower* vs. *to belittle*, see sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.5]. This section also treated the idea that *denigrate* is becoming tabooed, given the word's phonological similarity to existing taboo terms [e.g., *niggardly*, see 2.3.5]. In analysing *vilify*, relevant issues of censorship and free speech were discussed. The semiotic representation of *vilify* was also treated [such as *to vilify* in graffiti, see 2.4]. This section also reviewed its prohibition in many countries, especially the existing *Anti-Vilification* laws in Australia. As *vilify* is not an 'everyday' word in the working lexicon of many speakers, this section assessed the importance of metaphor in labelling these acts [e.g., *to stir up hatred*, see 2.4.5].

The perlocutionary effect of *offend* was highlighted, as was the close relationship of the current word in regards to its etymology and modern polysemy. *Offend* was also considered in relation to diachronic and synchronic socio-cultural morals and ethics. This raised the topics of Politically Correct language and language criticism [see 2.5.4]. Metaphor associated with *offend* was treated, in particular the linguistic comparison of to *offend* as to ‘inflict physical pain’ (e.g., *you hurt me when you offended me*), and affecting a target in a profound, personal manner [e.g., *to offend to the core*, see section 2.5.5].

Chapter 2 treated speech acts that are often performed on an individual basis. In contrast, Chapter 3 considered the social dimension of discrimination, collectively performed behaviours associated with discrimination. Analysing *stigmatise*, *demonise*, *dehumanise*, *marginalise* and *discriminate*, these sections described the ‘ways’ that people enact discrimination in society. These words were all shown to have a strong grounding in an *us* vs. *them* mentality.

The polysemy of *dehumanise* was examined, including the problems associated with identifying polysemy and defining this figurative act in a literal way. Psychological and philosophical perspectives of *dehumanise* were discussed, as well as the act as a tool of war and propaganda [see 3.1.1-3.1.4]. This raised the discussion of euphemism in language and the concept of re-framing. In section 3.1.5, the semiotic and metaphorical implications of *dehumanise* were also treated (e.g., the use of symbols to *dehumanise* people).

In sections 3.2-3.2.4, *demonise* was analysed with regards to morals, ethics and bias, and in connection with its etymology. The pervasive metaphor of *demonise* was treated, especially treating theological, folkloric and mythological aspects [see 3.2.5]. The relevant dichotomising of *good* versus *bad* was also addressed.

Social dynamics associated with *marginalise* were considered, including issues of dominance, control and power [see 3.3 and 3.3.3]. Aspects of social assimilation and deculturation were treated. The categories of *voluntary* and *involuntary marginalisation* were discussed, including *marginalise* as a shifting social phenomenon. In sections 3.3.4-3.3.5, the sociological and psychological consequences of the act were examined, as well as factors of synonymy and metaphor (e.g., *marginalise* is to *not give a voice* to a group).

*Stigmatise* was presented as a social phenomenon with a shifting target. In sections 3.4.3-3.4.5, links were drawn between the act and subjective, synchronic

social perceptions of ‘normal’ versus ‘abnormal’. *Stigmatise* was explained as a metonymic act, that focuses on a specific attribute of the target. Issues of social stigma and attempts at *de-stigmatisation* were also debated [see 3.3.4].

In sections 3.5 and 3.5.3, the important legal implications of *discriminate* (*against*) were reviewed (e.g., Federal laws against racial discrimination, sex discrimination and disability discrimination). This act was described in regards to social perceptions of inferiority and superiority, and notions of equity and disadvantage. Like *discrimination*, *discriminate* does not imply its target, but is used as an all-inclusive label.

Chapter 4 considered the cognitive dimension of discrimination, including the ideologies that underlie discrimination, hate and abuse in modern society. This Chapter examined the cognitive dimension of discrimination, providing a semantic analysis of the attitudes and behaviours of *stereotype*, *intolerance*, *prejudice*, *xenophobia*, *racism* and *sexism*. These words encode the key ideologies in the discourse of discrimination.

*Stereotype* was examined from a linguistic perspective as a generalisation, but also from a psychological perspective, as categories and frames of reference. In section 4.1.3, the notions of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ *stereotypes* were examined, as well as truth conditions. The dynamic nature of *stereotypes* was treated, including the role of *stereotypes* as indicators of relations, both socially and politically [see 4.1.3-4.1.4].

The polysemy of *intolerance* was treated as a link to the discrimination-related sense. Collocations, idioms and fixed phrases were useful phenomena in investigating the semantic structure of *intolerance* [see 4.2.4]. *Intolerance* was investigated in relation to belief systems, lifestyle and morality. In 4.2.5, metaphor associated with *intolerance* supported the notion of this as a cognitive-based act.

Section 4.3.3 considered the notions of ‘positive’ versus ‘negative’ *prejudice* and issues of group identity and membership. In addition, the claim of the universality of *prejudice* was examined. Synonymy, collocation and metaphor were employed to further understand the meaning of *prejudice* (e.g., *blind prejudice*), and to isolate its meaning from similar, non-specific labels such as *bias*, *discrimination* and *intolerance* [see sections 4.3.4-4.3.5].

*Xenophobia* was described in light of existing psychological and lexicographical definitions, to present this word as a strong dislike, rather than the

misleading pathologising of *xenophobia* as a literal, clinical phobia or fear [see 4.4 and 4.4.3-4.4.4]. *Xenophobia* was analysed in reference to synonymy, and compared and contrasted to traditional glosses such as *nationalism* and *patriotism*. The analysis of metaphor associated with *xenophobia* was illuminating in our understanding the word and its social effects [e.g., ‘undocumented workers’ as *aliens*, see 4.4.5].

In the section on *racism*, *race* was presented as a controversial social and biological issue [see 4.5.3-4.5.4]. The changing semantic structure of the enactments of *racism* was investigated, including historical and current models, nomenclature and discourse on the issue. The discrimination underpinning *racism* was treated, as well as issues such as eugenics, racialism and typology. In section 4.4.5, metaphor in the discourse of *racism* was helpful in revealing the extreme social disapproval of the act (e.g., *racism is a cancer*).

In sections 4.6, 4.6.3-4.6.4, the generalisation of *sexism* was examined, including its perpetration as both an inter-group and intra-group phenomenon. Notions of gender roles, stereotypes, gender bias and feminism were treated. In 4.6.5, metaphor in the discourse of *sexism* was discussed, presenting *sexism* as a *battle, fight* or *competition*, with a target that *suffers* and *endures* the act. Metaphor further revealed the social reproach of *sexism*.

This thesis has revealed the similar characteristics that categorise these words as members of the semantic set of *discrimination*. NSM semantic decomposition has demonstrated that these words are interrelated by their semantic features: attitudes (e.g., X thinks), an agent/target dynamic (X/Y), classification (Y is a kind of person), a negative evaluation (I think something bad about Y), an *us and them* mentality, othering, a perceived inferiority of the target, stereotyping and a potentially negative consequence for the target. It appears that each word reveals a social evaluation (e.g., people think: it is very bad to do something like this), as labels they reveal disapproval, and act as social conditioning. Pragmatic factors can reveal both anti-discriminatory and discriminatory attitudes. In addition, metaphor was explored to reveal how we talk about these complex concepts, on an ‘everyday’ level.

The words were grouped in accordance with semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic features into speech acts, social processes and ideologies. The similarities between these words are intuitively apparent although semantic deconstruction further revealed that these words are all inter-related. They share ‘family resemblances’, the most evident being that these words all label *something bad*; i.e. bad behaviour or bad

attitudes. These words all represent a negative evaluation of a target. This is twofold, the agent has made a negative evaluation of the target (*I think something bad about Y*), and further, the ‘speaker’ uses each word as a label, to reproach the agent. Therefore, the ‘user’ has made a negative evaluation of the agent (*It is bad to think like this*).

Many components were not necessarily appropriate across the entire field, but were frequent elements of many words. For example: a negative act: *X did something very bad to Y* (e.g., *stigmatise, abuse* and *dehumanise*). An attitude: *a way of thinking* (e.g., *stereotype, intolerance* and *xenophobia*). Categorisation: *Y is someone of one kind* (e.g., *discriminate (against), racism* and *xenophobia*). An *us and them* mentality: *Y is not the same as me* (e.g., *discriminate (against), intolerance* and *xenophobia*). Stereotyping: *I know some things about this kind of person* (e.g., *racism* and *sexism*). Inequality: *not all kinds of people are the same* (e.g., *discriminate (against)* and *racism*). The perceived superiority of the agent and inferiority of the target: *people of this kind are below other kinds of people* (e.g., *dehumanise* and *denigrate*). A social manifestation (i.e. a negative consequence for the target): *because of this, something very bad can happen to Y* (e.g., *vilify, marginalise* and *stigmatise*).

The above similarities provide support for the claim that these words form a semantic set. Furthermore, the differences revealed by decomposition suggest the discrete nature of language. In a set of related words, there are rarely exact synonyms, but semantic similarities and differences. For this reason, we cannot gloss *insult* as *abuse*, *discriminate* as *marginalise*, or, *demonise* as *vilify*. Although there are obvious parallels, these words have distinct, unique meanings. Therefore, these words were classified in accordance with their similarities, and were then compared and contrasted, for a systematic and revealing analysis. In addition, this ‘typology’ demonstrated the sociolinguistic ‘necessity’ for these words. While they can be categorised under the loose label of *discrimination*, each word is necessary for expression, semantic distinction, and precision. These words fill the lexical gaps in our vocabulary.

This thesis reveals that metaphor features prominently in the language of discrimination. Examples of metaphor were found for each word in this set. These appeared in two formats. First, metaphor can act as substitution and be used to replace complex concepts. For example, instead of using *marginalise*, a target can claim *X doesn't see me* or *X doesn't hear us*. In this way, metaphor simplifies and

conceptualises communication, allowing an abstract idea to become accessible via imagery. It is also likely that a speaker does not know of a 'formal' or comprehensive word to describe a concept, and so, relies on figurative speech. Words like *vilify*, *marginalise* and *xenophobia* are not 'everyday words', (i.e., in the linguistic repertoire of all speakers). In contrast, alternatives such as *whip up hatred*, *shut out* and *alien* are more common lexical items, and socially shared expressions.

Secondly, metaphor can be used to compare, supplement or emphasise complex concepts. For example, *racism is a cancer*, *you offended me to the core*, or to *vilify is to trigger hatred*. In these examples, metaphor reinforces an idea by way of a concrete reference point. Metaphor was also found to be a productive tool in the creation of abusive and dehumanising language. Metaphorical insults can act as an unfavourable comparative point, transferring the 'undesirable' qualities of the actual onto the target. This process can also reduce a target, and rely on limited, stereotypical perceptions. The discussion reached the conclusion that metaphor does not necessarily represent cognition, but is a useful linguistic device for expressing abstract, complex concepts.

Chapter 5 provides a synthesis of the analyses in Chapters 2-4 by examining how the sixteen key words of discrimination are represented in language. This was labelled as the *linguistic enactment of discrimination*. The discussion was divided into two categories: *covert discrimination* in language (e.g., implicit discrimination, such as lexical hedging in stereotypes) and *overt discrimination* in language (e.g., explicit acts, such as to vilify in a public speech). Chapter 5 provided natural examples of usage of both covert and overt discrimination in language, addressing each of the sixteen key words. This discussion was supported by interdisciplinary commentary.

In assessing covert forms of discrimination, semantic and pragmatic phenomena were discussed, including illocution, perlocution and connotation. This section examined sociolinguistic factors such as hedging, joking, euphemism and politeness strategies. A range of the key words, as linguistic processes, were revealed to be instrumental in the enactment of covert discrimination. These included the use of stereotypes, prejudice, sexism, racism, intolerance and marginalisation to perpetuate covert forms of discrimination in language.

The section on overt forms of discrimination focused on language used to explicitly abuse, insult, vilify, dehumanise and stigmatise a target. These enactments were shown to be grounded in the ideologies and attitudes of racism, sexism,

xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. The discussion challenged the theory that 'overt discrimination is rare', and documented the widespread existence of overt discrimination in the media, online and in public domains.

This section examined the effects of taboo on language, and the increased prohibition on ethnic-based derogatory epithets. The section investigated the structure and creation of derogatory epithets, as a major phenomenon in the production of overt discrimination. This section further treated lexicographical issues relevant to derogatory language, such as censorship and definition accuracy.

The previous two sections described discrimination in language from a synchronic perspective. The final section in Chapter 5 adopted a diachronic perspective by treating the evolving nature of discrimination in language. This section investigated pejoration and amelioration. The discussion provided examples of linguistic shifts in negative and positive connotation, reclamation, semantic broadening, and treated the often cyclical effect of re-appropriation in derogatory language. This section had a particular focus on the key word processes to *offend*, to *stigmatise*, to *dehumanise*, *sexism* and *racism*.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge about discrimination by providing a comprehensive semantic analysis of the key words in this discourse. This thesis has argued that definition is a crucial foundation for any scientific analysis. Therefore, this thesis is a critical step in understanding discrimination. Of course, the linguistic and interdisciplinary examination of this phenomenon must continue.

## **6.1 Directions for Future Research**

This thesis examines a 'cross-section' of sixteen key words in the semantic set of the discourse of discrimination. What other relevant words need to be treated? Goddard (2005) asserts that there is much to be gained from using the NSM method to explore abstract social concepts. Semantic analysis can reveal information about prevailing social and cultural attitudes and behaviours. Of course, there is great scope for researching additional words in the field of discrimination. Probably the most significant is *genocide*. Although *genocide* has been defined and described by many

scholars and specialists, this important word would benefit from thorough semantic analysis.

Additional suggestions for future research have been proposed throughout this thesis, including speech acts (e.g., *humiliate*, *bully*, *ridicule*, *harass*, *slander* and *criticise*), socio-cognitive processes (e.g., *segregate*, *oppress*, *victimise*, *persecute*, *exclude*, *ostracise* and *objectify*), and other specific ideologies (e.g., *ageism*, *bigotry*, *chauvinism*, *homophobia* and recent innovations such as *Islamaphobia* and *Amerophobia* [Applying the *-phobia* morpheme to identification labels is a productive area of coining, and although some forms might be short-lived, they are still important from a synchronic perspective]).

As words important to interdisciplinary research, other concepts such as *conflict*, *war*, *propaganda* and *hate* could be defined. Words related to the discussions in this thesis could also be treated (e.g., *race*, *sex*, *gender* and *slur*) as well as different word classes of the key words (e.g., nominal *insult* and *abuse*, adjectival *racist*, *sexist*, *vilified* and *prejudiced*). It should be noted that the words in this thesis and these suggested topics are related to recent NSM research, including Langford's (1997, 2000, 2002) analyses of legal and crime-related terms such as *murder* and *homicide*; Nicholl's (2003) study of pain and suffering-related terms; and Olivieri's (2003) analysis of teasing-related speech act verbs. In addition, these words can also be examined from a cross-linguistic perspective.

As we have seen, discrimination is a broad topic and offers a considerable scope for potential research opportunities. This thesis has proposed that discrimination is an interdisciplinary responsibility, and that scholars from the natural and social sciences should contribute to the existing body of knowledge. This thesis has also advanced the position that definition is an integral part of this process.

The possible directions for future research of this field are both numerous and diverse. In the area of lexical semantics a comparative analysis of formal frameworks can be undertaken. [Although other methodologies have limitations, as most non-NSM based methods do not have a cultural focus. Furthermore, other frameworks favour a fixed, distinct and often antonymic semantic set, and are therefore ill-suited to the dynamic and productive field of discrimination].

In the related area of lexicography, improvements can be made (e.g., the further development of definition entries). This could involve the modification of existing definitions, to provide comprehensive, current descriptions. In addition,

lexicographers need to be aware of the needs of non-native English language readers, in producing entries in clear, plain English. In general, these definitions should be maximally transparent, and must avoid circularity, obscurity or inaccuracy.

Discrimination in language provides additional prospects for future research topics such as: insults, derogatory epithets, verbal abuse, metaphor in discrimination, language reform, pejoration, reclamation and the linguistic reproduction of discrimination. These themes need to be studied from multiple qualitative and quantitative perspectives, including sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics and lexical semantics [using the NSM method and other formal frameworks]. These all afford exciting and challenging opportunities for future research.

Beyond linguistics, discrimination has been treated by other disciplines within the natural and social sciences. This research must continue. These studies are crucial to our understanding of the linguistic, social and cognitive dimensions of discrimination. There is an urgent need to know more about the causes and effects of the processes of discrimination. It is hoped that these areas will be pursued over the course of time.

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