Cases of disturbing online behaviour dominate the headlines. But why does the internet bring out the dark side in some, asks Dr Claire Hardaker?
the internet has brought a new era of communication. It is a gateway to unparalleled resources of education and entertainment, but in recent years, disturbing online behaviours such as cyberbullying and trolling have become more common. In some instances, those carrying out the attacks have been so persistent and cruel that they have driven their targets to move homes, jobs, or schools, to self-harm, and even to commit suicide. So why does the internet bring out the worst in some people?

For a start, the internet offers a perceived anonymity that has no real parallel offline. In fact, we have long been fascinated with the idea of being unidentifiable, and mythology worldwide is rich with stories of magical spells and objects that can bestow invisibility on the user. In Greek mythology, Perseus had the Helm of Hades. In Republic, Plato wrote of the Ring of Gyges. The central device of JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is an evil invisibility ring. And in JK Rowling's series, Harry Potter is given an invisibility cloak.

Invisibility is also linked with stories of monsters, ghosts and psychopaths: Bram Stoker's Dracula can pass through crowds unobserved; Shakespeare's Macbeth is haunted by an apparition only he can see. And after successfully experimenting with making himself transparent, the scientist in HG Wells' Invisible Man turns to theft, arson and violence.

A common theme running through many of these narratives is the use of invisibility for self-protection. For instance, Perseus uses his helm to escape the Gorgons, Harry frequently uses his cloak to hide from teachers, and Dracula shields himself to avoid being hunted down. In other words, invisibility offers the opportunity of going somewhere unauthorised, or doing something unpleasant while minimising the risks of suffering any consequences.

THE INTERNET OFFERS A PERCEIVED ANONYMITY THAT HAS NO REAL PARALLEL OFFLINE

Invisibility and Detachment

When we return to the internet, we find a very similar effect known as disinhibition: while using a computer, we think we are shielded by anonymity (as though it were a cloak of invisibility) that will keep us safe from the repercussions of behaving objectionably. But anonymity by itself does not explain why the internet seems to bring the worst out in some, since many of us are online and anonymous all the time, yet would never think to be deliberately mean. The second issue to consider is detachment.

Linked to disinhibition is the way that the internet allows us to shut down our empathy and, in particular, our compassion. In fact, we regularly refuse to empathise when it suits us. For instance, when someone we love to hate suffers a minor setback, we can choose to enjoy their misfortune rather than to consider how we might feel if we were them. The internet drastically increases that ability, and allows us to emotionally distance ourselves – not just from people we don't like but also from those we don't even know – in several ways.

For example, it is easier to 'forget' that we are communicating with another human, because we lose many indications of emotional response, such as eye contact, facial expressions and tone of voice. Instead, all we have are the words or images we send, and the words or images they send back. This means that we can downplay any emotional reaction that they convey. If they claim to be offended or hurt, because we don't see that reaction, it becomes easier to believe that they are exaggerating or lying. It is also easier to quickly forget the incident ourselves, while it may linger in the other person's mind for days or weeks.

Because of this, it can also be easier to blame the victim for what is happening to them. For example, if someone creates a public memorial page for his deceased friend, and that page is then defaced by trolls, those trolls might say that he brought this on himself by making the page public. But this would be overlooking the fact that the actual wrongdoing is in attacking the page in the first place. Likewise, if a careless driver hits a pedestrian, it is not the pedestrian's fault for being in the car's way.

Online, it is also easier to diminish the severity of our behaviour. Because we each inhabit our own heads, it seems perfectly obvious to us just how seriously (or not) we meant something, so when trolls and cyberbullies are confronted, we tend to hear excuses like: " Stuff said on the internet isn't real, I was just joking, I didn't really mean that threat or insult." But there are problems with all of these: whatever is said online is real, 'jokes' can be very cruel, and how can a recipient know for a fact that a serious-sounding insult or threat wasn't meant?
A third aspect that seems to encourage some to be deliberately mean online long predates the internet. It is simply the human tendency to glorify aggression, and we find evidence of this around the world, stretching back over thousands of years. There are 3,300-year-old ornately decorated weapons in China, bas-reliefs depicting the 1269BC Siege of Dapur in Egypt, and the 1,000-year-old Bayeux tapestry that narrates the Norman conquest of England. Many sports we enjoy today – javelin-throwing, archery, fencing, boxing, wrestling and martial arts – descend directly from military history. And many of our oldest texts, such as Homer’s *Iliad* (around 800BC), *Beowulf* (between 700AD and 1100AD), and the *Bible* (100-300AD), similarly tell of bloodshed, war and genocide. This enjoyment of violence is even responsible for some of our most impressive architecture. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Emperor Vespasian had the Coliseum built so that around 50,000 spectators could be entertained by animal hunts, executions and the gladiatorial combats of slaves fighting to the death.

**A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE**

Today, our interest in aggression is as strong as it ever was. We need only consider current popular entertainment sources. For instance, the book series *The Hunger Games* is about individuals forced to fight to the death for a reality television show. The enduringly popular film *Shawshank Redemption* tells of a man wrongly convicted for the murder of his wife and incarcerated in a brutal, corrupt prison where inmates are beaten to death, shot and raped. And in the games market, many of the biggest titles, such as the *Call of Duty*, *Halo* and *Grand Theft Auto* series, involve players simulating violence.

The above should demonstrate that humans are entertained by violence, and that this phenomenon has been around for millennia. But for some individuals, simply consuming aggression-based entertainment from fiction (books, films) or simulation (games, sports) is not enough. For these people, the internet is a virtual coliseum where they can entertain themselves by throwing strangers to the lions. At the same time, those few may feel that they can hide from consequences behind a cloak of anonymity, and also silence their own conscience by ignoring their target’s feelings.

The internet is an unrivalled resource, but because it offers an appearance of freedom from consequence alongside many ways to avoid empathy, it can also be used by some to be cruel simply for the sake of amusement. The next question is how can we change this? There is no single answer, but just one powerful way involves taking careful steps to be more empathetic, compassionate and thoughtful about how we behave online.

www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/profiles/claire-hardaker

Dr Claire Hardaker is a lecturer in Corpus Linguistics at Lancaster University. She specialises in studying aggression, deception and manipulation online.
A LASTING EFFECT OF THE 2012 LONDON GAMES WAS A SHIFT IN PERCEPTIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE

I THINK THE GREATEST legacy of last year’s Olympics and Paralympics Games, which will endure long after the medals are forgotten, will be that they changed public perceptions of disabled people and hastened a change in how they are referred to.

I led a team from Lancaster University’s ESRC Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science to undertake work for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport looking at how the Games of 2012 affected media reporting and the English language in general. By far the biggest finding – and perhaps the most unexpected – is the way in which events like the Paralympics are helping to consign offensive terms such as ‘cripple’ to the history books.

Our study looked at approximately 13 billion words of general English from 2008 and 2012. It also looked at 93 million words of UK national newspaper reporting and 35 million words of global press reporting about the Games over the same period. The study used specialised computer software that allowed for the assessment of patterns of meaning in billions of words. That, combined with linguistically informed investigations of the patterns revealed, allowed us an unprecedented insight into what it means for a country (in terms of reputation and other socio-cultural impact) to host the Games.

We were able to see, on a scale that until recently would be unimaginable, how an event like the Paralympics can affect language. In this case, positive media reporting of the Paralympics has helped change the language around disability – with differently abled people increasingly represented as taking an ever more active part in society, and offensive and degrading terms used to refer to them in sharp decline.

The Paralympics nudged our language away from using negative terms

At the same time, the use of more empowering and humanising phrases such as ‘differently abled’ and ‘disabled people’ experienced an increase in media usage in the year of the Paralympics, more than doubling in frequency from 2011. Preferred phrases such as ‘disabled person’ increased by almost 20 per cent per one million words in 2012 compared to the previous year, while ‘wheelchair user’ increased in use by 56 per cent. Phrases such as ‘disabled person’ increased by 135 per cent in the month of the Paralympics, and by more than 100 per cent in September 2012 compared to the month before the Games began. Similarly, the term ‘wheelchair user’ saw a 335 per cent increase in August.

A PROCESS OF CHANGE

So the nudge seems to work in two ways – pushing in preferred words and phrases while pushing out dispreferred ones.

The UK press does not always get it right. But in this case it has played a crucial role in making the enduring legacy of the Paralympics a linguistic one – it has helped to change our language in as sure a way as the Paralympics has changed the attitudes of many people to disabled people. This is a truly British legacy for a very British Games – by comparison, American English has not gone through the same process of change in referring to disabled people. So as Britain’s performance at the games was outstanding – it is also outstanding that Britain leads the way in changing how speakers of English choose to refer to the differently abled.

Islam in the news

A recent study has measured how press reporting has subtly created negative views of Muslims

PRESS REPORTING IS contributing to negative ‘terrorist’ stereotypes and an increase in deeply skewed views of Islam, according to what is believed to be the biggest survey of news stories about Muslims ever undertaken.

The study, by Professor Paul Baker at ESRC Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS), used the latest computer technology to search and analyse 143 million words of reporting about Muslims and Islam in the UK press since 1998. Using such a large body of evidence is vital: There is not a great deal of clumsy explicit Islamophobia in the UK Press but there is a more subtle and ambivalent pattern of reporting that indirectly contributes to negative stereotypes and only a large-scale study can reveal this.

For example, some newspapers (mainly right-leaning tabloids) have focused upon a very small number of Muslims who were either extremist ‘preachers of hate’ or terrorists – especially those who were in receipt of government benefits. It is not far-fetched to assume that if someone reads about such people on a daily basis, and this is the main way that they encounter Islam, their views about Muslims will become deeply skewed.

BAD NEWS IS BAD NEWS

Over time the study found that the original tabloid focus on high-profile ‘hate preachers’ who were ‘scrounging’ benefits gradually became extended, eventually encompassing any Muslim who received benefits, as well as appearing to influence the ways in which right-leaning broadsheets wrote about Muslims.

Editors, of course, argue that it is not that newspapers are Islamophobic, it is just that the media’s role is to report on bad news. If Muslims are involved in bad news it will be reported as such. But when the researchers compared stories about Islam against news stories in general they found significantly more references to conflict related to Muslims.

Even taking into account the general press tendency to focus on bad news, the number of conflict stories relating to Islam and Muslims looks suspiciously high. Likewise, there are many other people living in the UK in receipt of benefits who have been convicted of crimes. These people may be Christian, Jewish or atheist, yet their religious identity is not seen as newsworthy.

It is undoubtedly true that the actions of people like Osama Bin Laden have contributed towards the negative representation of Islam in British newspapers. Bin Laden’s goal was to incite conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims so it is sadly ironic that some members of the British press have played an obliging role, reacting in a way that at times threatens to alienate the great majority of Muslims in the UK.

www.linguisticsociety.org

ALTED ACCENTS

Watching television can influence the way we speak

A STUDY HAS PROVIDED the first evidence that active and engaged television viewing helps accelerate language change. Published in the American journal Language, it looked at how watching the TV soap EastEnders is altering certain features of the Scottish accent. Research, led by Jane Stuart-Smith, Professor of Phonetics at the University of Glasgow, found two particular features of pronunciation typically associated with London English that were becoming more apparent in the Glaswegian dialect among people who regularly watched the television soap opera.

The researchers investigated why certain linguistic factors that are normally found within the Cockney dialect in London were gradually entering into Glaswegian. Although this trend was apparent in people who had contact with friends or family living in London, there was a stronger effect for people who had strong psychological engagement with EastEnders characters.

EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The particular features in question are: using ‘f’ for ‘th’ in, for example, think or tooth, and a vowel like that in ‘good’ in place of ‘l’ in words like milk and people. The results show significant correlations between using these features with strong emotional and psychological engagement by the viewers of the soap. The study also concluded that simply being exposed to television is not sufficient to cause accent change; for someone’s speech to alter, they need to regularly watch the show and become emotionally engaged with the characters.

Researchers caution that TV and other forms of popular media constitute only one of many factors that help accelerate language change and other, more powerful factors, such as social interaction between peers, have a much stronger effect on language change in the study.

www.linguisticsociety.org

BRITAIN IN 2014 109
PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE

Knowing and controlling the emotions that affect performance can help in high-pressure situations. Andy Lane explains how

A glorious summer of sport in 2012 saw the mood of the nation improve as Team GB celebrated winning medal after medal. In competitive sports or other high-pressure situations, psychological factors could well mean the difference between success and failure. One factor that has been shown to predict performance is emotion: knowing the emotions that influence your performance and having strategies to control intense and unwanted emotions might help you perform better.

A research project, ‘Can you compete under pressure?’, identified factors that could help people perform better under pressure. Led by myself and Professor Peter Totterdell of Sheffield University, it formed the final study of a four-year ESRC-funded project, Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS). ‘Can you compete?’ was carried out with support from the BBC LabUK. Millions have participated in the different LabUK projects and this level of interest gives the BBC LabUK team considerable expertise on what works and what does not. The BBC LabUK team secured the services of Olympic gold-medal winning athlete Michael Johnson to give the project credibility; he introduced the study, narrated the interventions and provided feedback. The feedback is personalised and required detailed planning to ensure it was meaningful.

The research team was particularly interested in the emotional states people experience when performing successfully and when performing badly in their everyday life. A key aim was to teach participants about how emotions might influence their own performance and so help people manage their emotions better.

**Emotional responses**

Participants were asked about emotional experiences in a situation that was important to them in their own life, choosing from a long list of options that included a sporting event, playing music, or public speaking. Participants reported emotions when they performed successfully, repeating this process when performing poorly. They then received feedback on which emotions appeared to help performance and which emotions did not. The results showed that people generally performed better when feeling happier, more energetic and excited and that people perform badly

**MICHAEL JOHNSON MASTERCLASS**

The American athlete amassed 13 World Championship and Olympic gold medals in his career. Known for his intense focus, he is well placed to give advice on how controlling the mind’s responses can enhance performance. Here are his top tips:

- The mind is absolutely instrumental in achieving results.
- I trained my mind to be disciplined and execute a strategy prior to a race, just like I trained my body.
- Pressure is nothing more than the shadow of great opportunity.
- Ensuring that you fully understand a situation before going into it and preparing for all types of potential scenarios help an athlete. It can also help people in everyday life.

Source: ssl.bbc.co.uk/labuk
STAGE FRIGHT
A common way for emotions to affect performance is stage fright. Many stage performers suffer from this crushing condition. Here are a few famous musicians who have found ways to overcome the obstacle to achieve success in their field.

ADELE
The down-to-earth young songstress has the music world at her feet, but is renowned for throwing up before performances. She has seen a hypnotherapist to control her anxieties.

BARBRA STREISAND
The legendary diva stopped performing live for almost three decades as a result of her crippling fears.

CHER
Hard to believe, but the exuberant and colourful star only joined Sonny Bono to become a duo because when people started recognising her talent in the Sixties she was too shy to perform alone.

DAVID BOWIE
One of our most original and explosive rock stars describes himself as “unbearably shy” – his exotic persona as Ziggy Stardust was a mask to hide behind.

ANNE LENNOX
The former Eurythmics front woman used to suffer appallingly from stage fright before her concerts. Now she uses the mantra ‘Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway’ and it works.

when feeling highly anxious, dejected, fatigued and angry. But closer inspection showed that the difference between too much anxiety and sufficient anxiety was close. This was not the case for other emotions.

Results of the EROS project demonstrated that unpleasant emotions such as anxiety and sadness are not always bad for performance – intense anxiety raises levels of arousal and can energise the individual to try harder. The research also showed that some intentionally use strategies to make themselves feel more anxious or more angry to perform better.

Feedback from participants showed that they gained personal insights and tips to enhance their wellbeing. They also felt better equipped to deal with future pressure situations, such as exams and presentations that extend beyond the realm of game-playing and into everyday life.

www.erosresearch.org

Professor Andy Lane is Professor of Sport and Learning at the University of Wolverhampton.
IMMIGRATION
MIGRATION IN THE NEWS

UK media coverage of migration issues influences the general public’s reactions

Contrary to what the press may suggest, immigrants with legal status far outnumber those without it.

BRITAIN’S NATIONAL newspapers play a critical role in framing the country’s opinions on immigration. Studying the language that these newspapers use to discuss migrants and migration can provide important insights into the nature of this debate.

Researchers at the Migration Observatory, a project of the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, used ‘big data’ research techniques to develop a quantitative analysis of the language used in 58,000 articles – amounting to 43 million words – from 20 of Britain’s main national daily and Sunday newspapers from 2010-2012.

The researchers, Will Allen and Scott Blinder, used computerised linguistic analytics to identify the words that are particularly likely to appear near four key target words: migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This form of ‘big data’ research aims to remove or minimise human bias from analysis by using automated procedures rather than human readers to find significant patterns in a large body of text.

The first noteworthy pattern to emerge is the prominence of the phrase ‘illegal immigrants’. Illegal far outnumbered any other modifier of immigrants and migrants across all three types of publication. Aside from the political controversies around this phrase, it is worth noting that immigrants with legal status far outnumber those without it. Of course, this fact does not carry any automatic implications for news coverage, as newspapers are not obligated to reflect migration statistics in the way they report.

The second key finding is the emergence of the EU and Eastern Europe as the primary geographic reference point for discussions of immigrants and migrants, especially in tabloid coverage. Again, this balance in coverage does not reflect the prevalence of EU and non-EU migrants in official statistics, as non-EU nationals continue to clearly outnumber EU nationals in the UK’s migrant populations and in new arrivals.

Third, refugees and asylum seekers are described using different sets of terms. Asylum seekers are described as failed, more often than by any other single descriptive word. Asylum seekers are also associated with immigrants in all three publication types, and with illegal (in the mid-markets) as well as being destitute and vulnerable (in the broadsheets).

The terms surrounding refugees, especially in tabloids and mid-market newspapers, are relatively distinct. The discourse around the word refugees is much more international in nature, with descriptive words including camps, the United Nations, war and a number of specific geographical terms. Refugees are depicted as fleeing and, in broadsheet newspapers, are associated with numerous countries of origin. So the word refugees, rather than asylum seekers, appears most associated with international crises. On the other hand, asylum seekers are more likely to be associated with people in Britain seeking refugee status, and often with being unable to attain that status.

DIFFERING MEDIA COVERAGE

This research offers insights into the language used and the ways that different types of newspapers approach the subject of immigration. It also provides a foundation for further research into the relationship between media coverage and public attitudes.

The investigators plan to link the results from this initial work with previous research on public opinion. Prior research based at the Migration Observatory has shown the complexity of public attitudes toward migration, and conceptions of who immigrants are. But does media coverage play a role in generating these perceptions?

By accurately and comprehensively analysing media coverage, and then testing the impact of commonly used media language in controlled experiments, this research will advance understanding of this sensitive issue.

www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/reports/migration-news
www.compas.ox.ac.uk

ONLINE BUSINESS

THE MULTI-PLATFORM MEDIA CHALLENGE

How easy, and economic, is it to deliver content across multiple platforms?

DIGITAL CONVERGENCE and growth of the internet have had a major effect on how media content is produced and distributed in the 21st century and are re-shaping the economics of the media industry.

A three-year project led by a research team at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR) at the University of Glasgow...
SOCIAL MEDIA

WHY THE HATE?

A better understanding of abusive behaviour in social media is needed

THE CARDIFF ONLINE Social Media Observatory (COSMOS) – an innovative interdisciplinary collaboration between the School of Social Sciences and the School of Computer Science and Informatics at Cardiff University – has secured an ESRC-Google Data Analytics Research grant to examine the character of hate speech online.

The proliferation of 'hate speech' in social media is an area of growing concern. For the social sciences, the migration of hate speech to social media platforms provides new opportunities to study hateful and antagonistic behaviours to understand the impact of social media and to identify how agencies can respond more effectively to its threats and consequences.

This project aims to study the 'social media ecosystem' to better understand how the complex combination of user behaviours, global communication networks, and flows of information interact to promote hateful and socially disruptive content. The project involves advice and team mentoring from Google. The inter-disciplinary project team includes academics from the Cardiff School of Social Sciences (William Housley, Matthew Williams, Adam Edwards and Jeff Morgan), from the Cardiff School of Computer Science and Informatics (Pete Burnap and Omer Rana), from the Cardiff School of Mathematics (Vincent Night) and from the Universities of Warwick (Rob Procter) and St Andrews (Alex Voss).

The project aims to create a computational tool, informed by social science knowledge, which will allow users to forecast the spread of hateful content over digital networks, providing an opportunity for intervention before such content 'goes viral' and potentially causes harm to individuals, minority groups and communities. The project will generate computational social scientific insight into antagonistic online behaviour and empirically explore the balance between community, social cohesion, identity and freedom of speech within digital society, economy and culture.

The COSMOS project will provide empirical data and social scientific interpretation to policymakers, commercial providers and relevant agencies to shape policy formulation, intervention and inform wider debates about the emerging contours, rights and obligations of digital citizenship in a 21st-century democracy.

Twitter@cosmos_cardiff
www.cf.ac.uk/sosci/research/researchgroups/comsc-socsi/projects.html

COSMOS is an ESRC and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) investment that brings together social, political, health, mathematical and computer scientists to study the methodological, theoretical, empirical and policy dimensions of Big 'Social' Data.

The project aims to create a tool to forecast the spread of hateful content

Content can be disseminated across multiple platforms but to what effect?
CELEBRITY ASPIRATION

Are young people obsessed with finding easy fame or are their expectations much more realistic?

Many of the students were taking exams, and facing university fees and rising youth unemployment. The researchers show that their judgements about celebrities lives create a framework for understanding the world around them, including these inequalities, and reflect dominant contemporary values like hard work. The stories show what kinds of aspirations and futures are seen as desirable and achievable in our society.

Young people are already having critical conversations about celebrities. The researchers believe that rather than dismissing celebrity culture, educators can engage with these cultural stories to talk with young people about their education and career futures.

www.celebyouth.org

Case studies were conducted on 12 of the celebrities that were discussed regularly in initial group interviews.

Who they were

The top men: Tom Daley (Olympian), Justin Bieber (singer, right), Will Smith (film star), Bill Gates (entrepreneur), Mario Balotelli (footballer) and Prince Harry.

The top women: Katie Price (ex-glumour model), Kim Kardashian (reality TV star), Nicki Minaj (singer), Emma Watson (actress), Kate Middleton (princess, right) and Beyonce (singer).

What was said

- Singers Justin Bieber and Nicki Minaj attracted the most negative comments, while Beyonce was considered a role model.
- Katie Price was attacked, but defended by some for her role as a mother.
- Bill Gates was much discussed in relation to his philanthropy, and how stars use money.

Follow on Twitter @ CelebYouthUK and Facebook at CelebYouthUK
LESSONS IN LOVE

Fraudsters are using online dating sites to extort money

AS INTERNATIONAL criminal gangs increasingly target online dating and social networking sites, as a means of extorting money from unwary victims, research by Professor Monica Whitty of the University of Leicester and Professor Tom Buchanan of the University of Westminster suggests that new strategies are needed for tackling the crime and supporting its victims. The research argues that the police, policymakers, doctors and dating companies must take into account the emotional state of those who have been conned, in order to prevent the crime, bring criminals to justice and support victims effectively.

“Daters need to be told, from the moment they sign up, that if a person is not willing to meet them in the first month they should move on. They also need to be told never to respond to requests for money. Dating companies could target advice at particularly vulnerable individuals, especially those with high romantic ideals, previous mental health problems or a history of abuse,” says Professor Whitty.

The study shows that victims are often in denial when they are told that their ‘lover’ is a fiction invented by criminal gangs to extort money. This has important implications for police work, as it means that they are vulnerable to a second wave of attack. Furthermore, victims can feel suicidal when the scam is exposed. The study recommends that the police call in health professionals as soon as the crime is reported. Doctors should also be made aware of these suicidal tendencies.

If courts don’t recognise the psychological trauma of the witnesses, there is a potential for cases to be jeopardised and criminals to remain unprosecuted, Professor Whitty believes. “Imagine having to confront a criminal in court when you had believed them to be the love of your life,” says Professor Whitty.

Whitty, standing in the witness box could be extremely intimidating. She suggests that new policies are needed, which identify victims of romance scams as ‘vulnerable witnesses’ with the right to give their evidence via a video-link.

Professor Whitty has been working closely with courts in several romance scam cases. Much of her advice has already been taken on board. She is also working with the Serious Organised Crime Agency in the UK, and international crime prevention organisations.

“People have to deal with the trauma of being both robbed and jilted,” says Professor Whitty. Standing in the witness box could be extremely intimidating. She suggests that new policies are needed, which identify victims of romance scams as ‘vulnerable witnesses’ with the right to give their evidence via a video-link.

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www2.le.ac.uk/departments/media

Online scams can affect a victim financially and psychologically
WHY MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO COMBAT AGEISM AND SEXISM IN THE MEDIA

THE COMBINATION OF age and gender has emerged as a powerful barrier to the equal opportunities of older women. The discriminatory idea that women age earlier than men in employment leads to the creation of a glass ceiling preventing career progression. In public life too visual representations define age for women in this country, as they have done for many centuries.

This locates the media in a critical strategic position in the transmission of images, positive and negative, of older women. Frequently the physical signs of ageing are negatively stereotyped or become the target of humour. Sometimes they are simply airbrushed out of existence. These techniques of presentation in consumer literature and the media cannot be dismissed as superficial because social value, resources and opportunities, the right to full citizenship, may be assigned by such representations.

The digital age has brought increased diversity of visual representations of older women but, also, increased the chances of their misrepresentation by image manipulation. There are fewer images of women than men in the media. Front pages of the major UK national daily newspapers feature women in 36 per cent of photographs compared with men in 50 per cent, and the women who are most commonly the subjects of those photos are young and included because of their appearance rather than ‘strong news-related reasons’.

THE DOMINANT MALE

Further evidence of ageism and sexism in the media is male domination. A log of BBC1’s Question Time in 2011 found the show featured 71.5 per cent male contributors compared to 28.5 per cent female. Ageing female presenters continue to disappear as TV programmes are ‘refreshed’. Dropped suddenly from the BBC programme Countryfile, 51-year-old Miriam O’Reilly’s charge of age discrimination was upheld at an employment tribunal, but not the claim of sex discrimination.

Popular culture colludes in presenting women’s sexual allure as their passport to success and images of ageing, if visible at all, are increasingly influenced by the narrative of the anti-ageing industry. This context emphasises the importance of the ‘Representing Self – Representing Ageing’ (RSRA) project, which focused on the positive representation of older women in public life. It was funded by the ‘New Dynamics of Ageing’ (NDA) programme, an eight-year collaboration between five Research Councils led by the ESRC.

The RSRA project found that women in their fifties and sixties felt more pressure from the media and advertising imagery compared with those in their eighties and nineties; participants wanted to see more images of ‘ordinary’ older women who were still ‘making a contribution’; and images produced by older women themselves revealed the experience of ageing is strongly related to the body, for example in the form of wrinkles and greying hair.

Building on this pioneering project the NDA Programme held two workshops on ageism and sexism in the media. The first was chaired by Miriam O’Reilly. At the second a Charter was presented aimed at combating ageism and sexism. The Charter was developed in conjunction with Age UK, Women in Journalism, Women Ageing and Media and the National Union of Journalists and has been sent to all major media outlets. It calls for the media to recognise the important role it plays in shaping perceptions of women and ageing and to take action to better represent the diversity, complexity and potential of women aged 50 and over. www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/home.html
FREEVIEW IS INTRODUCED, WITH SUBSIDISED SET-TOP BOXES OFFERING 28 CHANNELS.

1935
TV is suspended because of the war – fewer than 20,000 TV sets are in operation.

1936
BBC TV broadcasting begins. In 1937, George VI’s Coronation becomes the first outside broadcast.

1939
The government announces a second TV channel, to be operated on commercial lines.

1940
TV resumes after the war with a £2 licence fee.

1946
The number of TV households exceeds the number of radio-only households, with over 10m by the end of 1950s.

1954
9 million TV licences are bought.

1959
16m TV licences and TV is blamed for plummeting cinema audiences.

1964
BBC2, the third television channel, goes on air in 1964, transmitting in colour in 1967.

1967
The first News at Ten is broadcast.

1968
A colour TV licence is introduced.

1969
ITV goes colour.

1971
Radio only licence is abolished. Morecambe and Wise are smashing TV audience figures.

1982
Europe’s first satellite channel is launched. Rupert Murdoch takes over in 1984 and renames it Sky.

1983
Breakfast TV starts on BBC and ITV. Thames is the first TV station to start 24-hour broadcasting in 1987.

1985
The Cable Authority is created as the first cable systems emerge.

1986
BSB (British Satellite Broadcasting) wins satellite broadcasting franchise.

1987
The original 15 ITV franchises are reduced: Carlton, Granada, United News, Ulster Television, and Scottish Media Group. The funeral of The Princess of Wales is watched by 32.1 million.

2002
Freeview is introduced, with subsidised set-top boxes offering 28 channels.

2005
YouTube is founded – more than 1 billion unique users each month and over 6 billion hours of video are watched each month. Source: YouTube statistics

2006
The first iPad is released.

2010
The government announces a region-by-region programme for the switch from analogue to digital TV. The first analogue signals were cut in Whitehaven, Cumbria in October 2007.

HOW HAS CINEMA BEEN AFFECTED?
Figures have steadily declined since the peak at the end of the Second World War. The 1990s and 2000s saw fluctuations, but now the trend is on the up. Source: launchingfilms.com

MEDIA POWER
Love him or hate him, Rupert Murdoch remains the most influential media baron of the era, with over 40 years of dominant history in British media. Sources: www.ofcom.org.uk and www.publications.parliament.uk