



Pre-course activity two: The Virtual Stages of Hate: What Motivates Cyber-Hate?

Task set by Dr Daniel Kilvington, Course Director, BA (Hons) Media Communication Cultures at Leeds Beckett University.

For this session, you are encouraged to watch the following Leeds Beckett Tedx talk: [The Virtual Stages of Hate: What Motivates Cyber Hate?](#)

Dr Daniel Kilvington's TEDx talk explores the motivations for online hate-speech and drew on Erving Goffman's ideas from 1959 to help us understand why we convey hate online. Goffman, a world-renowned Canadian sociologist, said that human beings offer different performances in frontstages (public spaces where an audience is present) and backstages (behind closed doors). For Dr Kilvington, this work can be applied to the internet as we now have virtual frontstages and virtual backstages, whereby we offer different performances (See Figure 1). He outlines how Goffman's traditional model can be updated in regards to social media, and explains that online hate-speech and general abuse is sadly getting worse.

Dr Kilvington also explores the impact of filter bubbles and echo chambers and warns that if we spend too long inside them (by being in our social media bubble) it can have an adverse effect on our views, ideologies and behaviours (See Figure 2). He concludes by offering hope, however, and puts forward a number of solutions to help challenge online hate-speech and turn the virtual stages of hate, into the virtual stages of inclusion and respect.

Study questions/activities:

1. Following on from Dr Kilvington's TEDx talk, have you noticed an increase in hatespeech on social media and other online platforms? Have you ever observed it or been victim of it yourself?
2. The TEDx talk states that anonymity, invisibility, dissociative imagination, and rapid response are among the factors which encourage online hate-speech and abuse (see Suler, 2004). Let's take a closer look at anonymity – what do you think are the benefits and problems of online anonymity?
3. Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013: 102) suggest that 'online environments provide users with the potential to perform and present different identities.' Critically assess your performances (or personas) across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (or the social media platforms you're signed up to). Do you perform differently? If yes, why? Can you compliment your answer with quotes from the TEDx talk? (See Figure 3 for inspiration).
4. Do you think that being abused in the 'real' world is worse than being abused online? Please explain your reasoning.
5. Finally, studies show that online racism, sexism, homophobia, among other forms of prejudice, are increasing annually, which is very unsettling. Dr Kilvington illustrates

some potential solutions for challenging this. Can you come up with one tangible and realistic way to challenge online hate-speech?

Figure 1. Virtual Stages of Hate

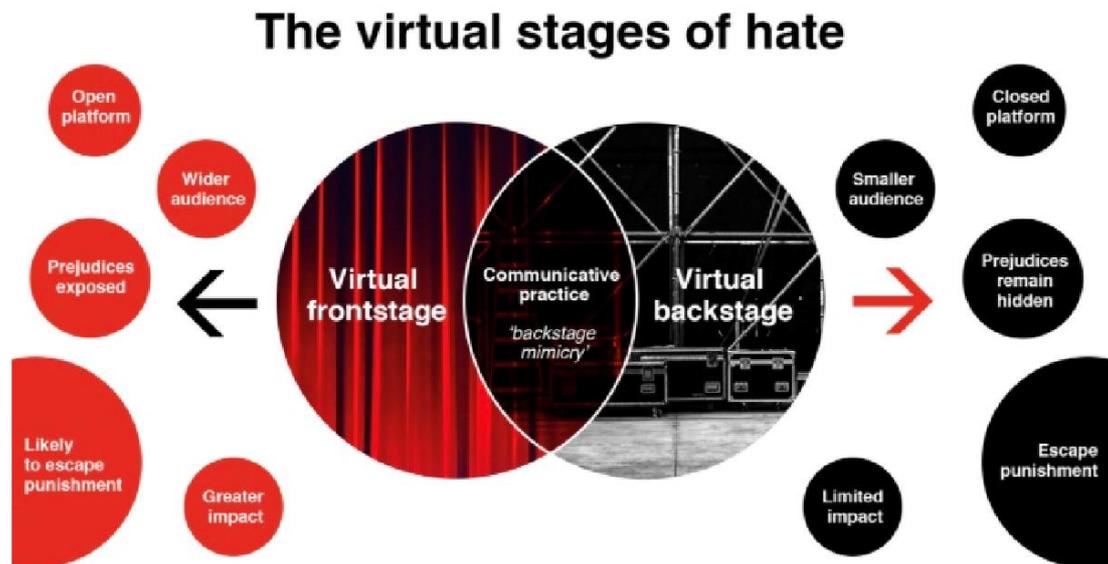


Figure 2. The Filter Bubble Effect

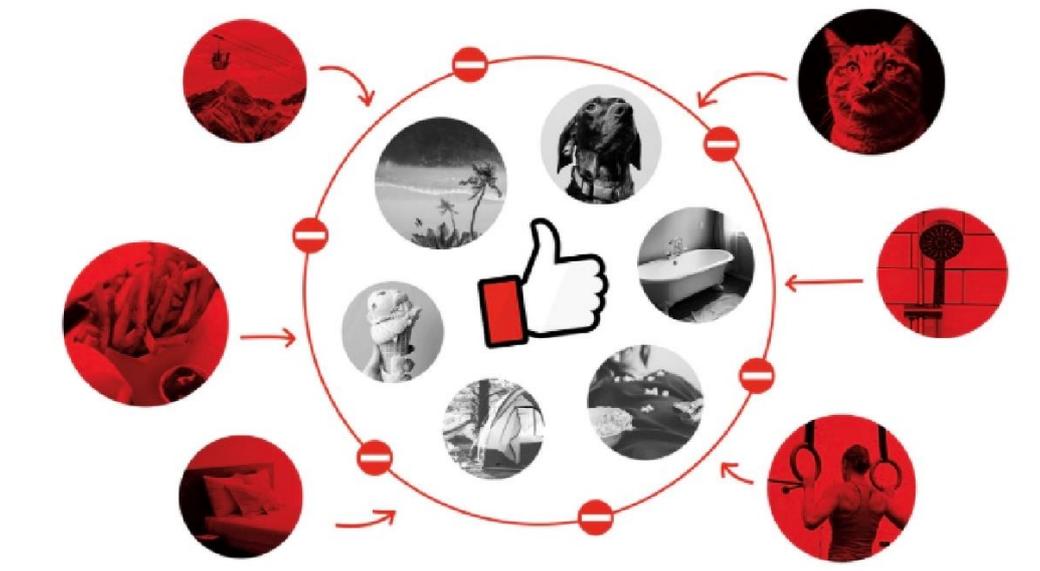
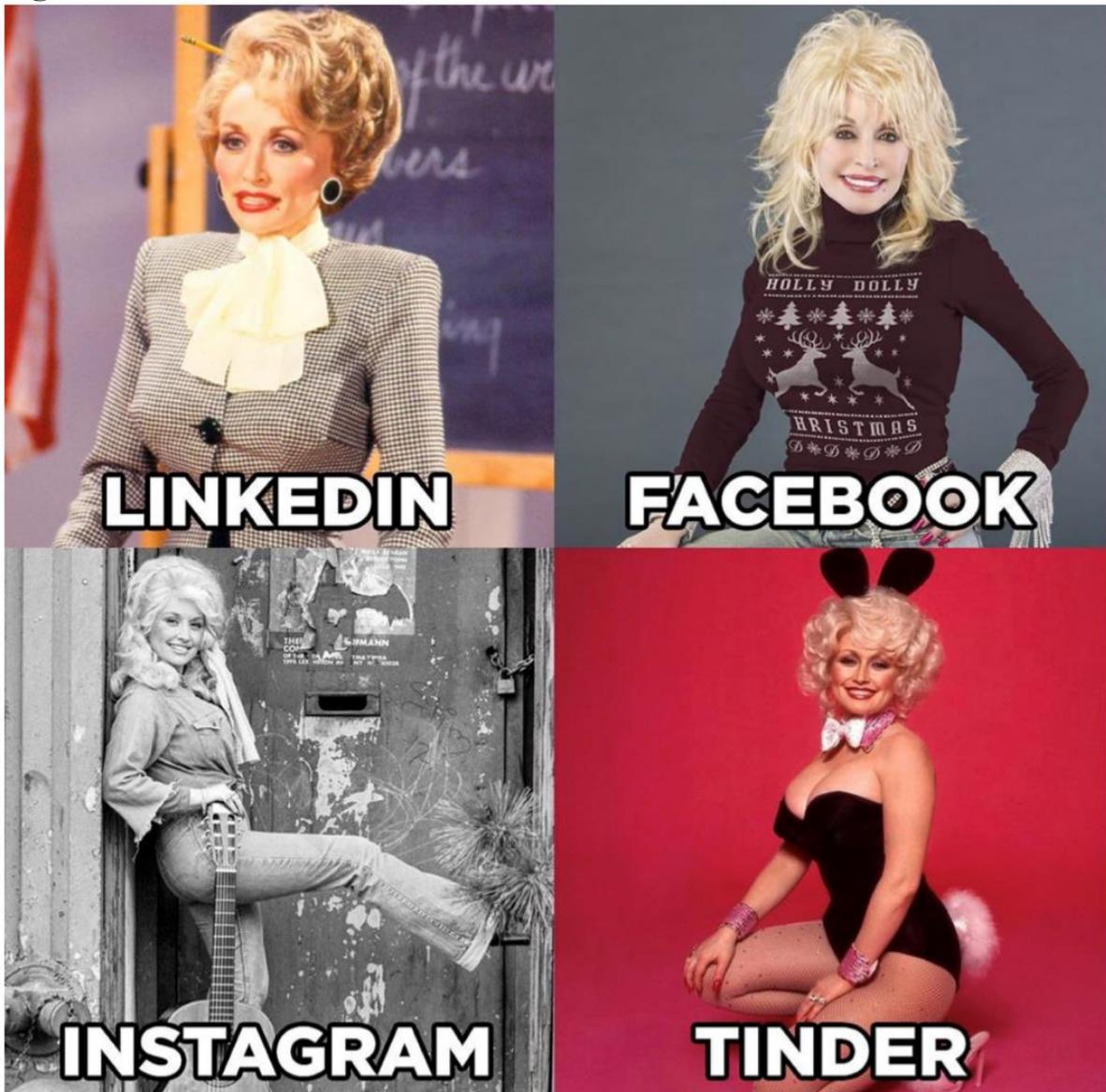


Figure 3. Social Media Performances



Recommended Reading

- Brown A (2017) What is so special about online (as compared to offline) hate-speech? *Ethnicities* 18(3): 297-326.
- Bruns A (2019) *Are Filter Bubbles Real?* London: Polity Press.
- Bullingham L and Vasconcelos AC (2013) *The presentation of self in the online world*
- Goffman and the study of online identities. *Journal of Information Sciences* 39(1): 101-112.
- Farrington N, Hall L, Kilvington D, Price J and Saeed A (2015) *Sport, Racism and Social Media*. London: Routledge.
- Goffman E ([1959] 1990) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Books.
- Kilvington D and Price J (2017) Tackling social media abuse? Critically assessing English football's response to online racism. *Communication & Sport*. Available

online:

<http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/view/creators/Kilvington=3ADJ=3A=3A.html>

- Kilvington D and Price J (2019) From backstage to frontstage: Exploring football and the growing problem of online abuse. In: Lawrence S and Crawford G (eds) *Digital Football Cultures: Fandom, Identities and Resistance*. New York: Routledge, pp.69-85.
- Merunkova L and Slerka J (2019) Goffman's theory as a framework for analysis of self presentation on online social networks. *Masaryk University Journal of law and Technology* 13(2): 243-276.
- Moore C, Barbour K and Lee K (2017) Five dimensions of online persona. *Persona Studies* 3(1): 1-11.
- Serpa S and Ferreira CM (2018) Goffman's backstage revisited: Conceptual relevance in contemporary social interactions. *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 6(10): 74-80.
- Suler J (2004) The online disinhibition effect. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior* 7(3): 321–326.

Final Comments

If you would like to discuss your ideas / work, or if any other questions related to the degree programme or studying at Leeds Beckett University, please contact Dr Daniel Kilvington, Course Director of BA (Hons) Media, Communication, Cultures, at:

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