



Preparing HE journalism students for online harassment

REFLECTIONS ON AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT BY DELME
PARFITT, COURSE LEADER BA SPORTS JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTH WALES

20 years in journalism – 10 being harassed!


- From fan forums to twitter parody accounts to emails demanding I be sacked
- NOTHING prepared me emotionally
- No support from industry
- Umpteen wrong reactions – from acknowledgement to foul language!



Dai Williams #FBIW @DaiNewpt · Mar 22, 2017

Awesome from **Delme Halfwit**.....

WS ▾ WHAT'S ON ▾ RUGBY FOOTBALL SWANSEA CARDIFF SPORT ▾ BUSINESS ▾ IN YOUR AREA ▾ TV NEWS



Tyler Morgan of Newport Gwent Dragons (Photo: Huw Evans Picture Agency)

W READ MORE

► This is what the British and Irish Lions XV will be if it's picked purely on statistics

1 SHARE

They are not promising an instant fix, but the likes of Phillips and Gareth Davies are putting their reputations on the line in driving this through.

For the Dragons to fail is in nobody's interests, whereas a thriving full-time outfit in an area like Gwent definitely is.

There has been speculation about moving the franchise to North Wales, about reducing the number of Regions from three to four.

But as things stand the WRU commitment to do neither looks genuine. It's the correct stance to take too.

The project plan

- Kean and Maclure's 2020 research and implications for educators, the trigger
- 2 x two-hour sessions with third years in Media Ethics in Sport module
- 1. Intro to situation (students very unaware)
- 2. Coping strategies (crux of topic)



Where should the topic sit?

No precise modular
fit

Professional
practice? It's part of
the job....

Ethics? From
harassers to the
harassed

First, second or third
year?





Laura Kuenssberg Translator

@BBCLauraKT

United Kingdom state-affiliated media.

Chief BBC propagandist. Owns Carrie-shaped

Parody account. Hit notifications bell for my new

© Tory HQ ko-fi.com/bbelaaurakt Joined

19.5K Following **99.5K Followers**

Tweets

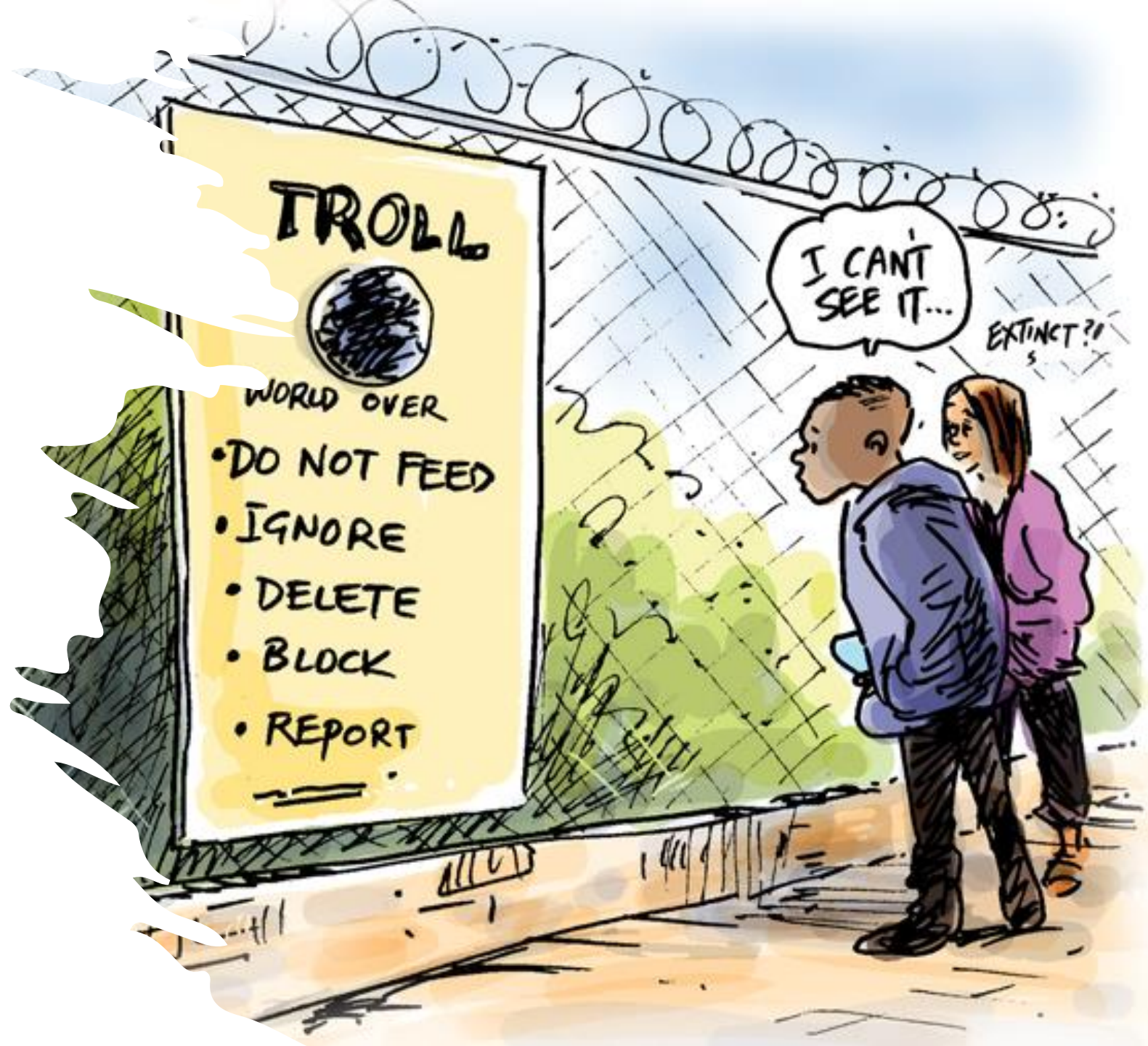
Tweets

Teaching tools

- Stats/studies underlining depth & breadth of problem
- Case study analysis
- Discussion of personal experience (ethical consideration)
- Analysis of character traits required to cope

Recognition and understanding of trolls – and ways to combat them

- Troll techniques and strategies i.e doxxing, cyber mob attacks, online impersonation
- Communication, colleague support, security options, switching off



Resilience....can you even teach it?

- Debated in class
- Medical student comparison
- Influence of upbringing
- Gradual immunity?
- Classroom v real world





Importance of guest speakers

- Real world here and now is respected by students
- Anecdotal reflection vital
- External voice is validation



Extent of the problem

- * 80% journalists say it's worsening;
- * 84% call for more to be done (2020 survey, Reach, Newsquest, Archant, JPI);
- * Anecdotal evidence includes racial abuse, threats to families, rape threats;
- * Leads to depression, paranoia, anxiety, self-censorship and even resignations (Binns 2017);
- * Problem acute for female journalists;
- * UNESCO 2021 report – 75% of 900 females from 125 countries experienced online abuse;
- * Chen et al (2017) problem 'rampant' for women.



Potential solutions

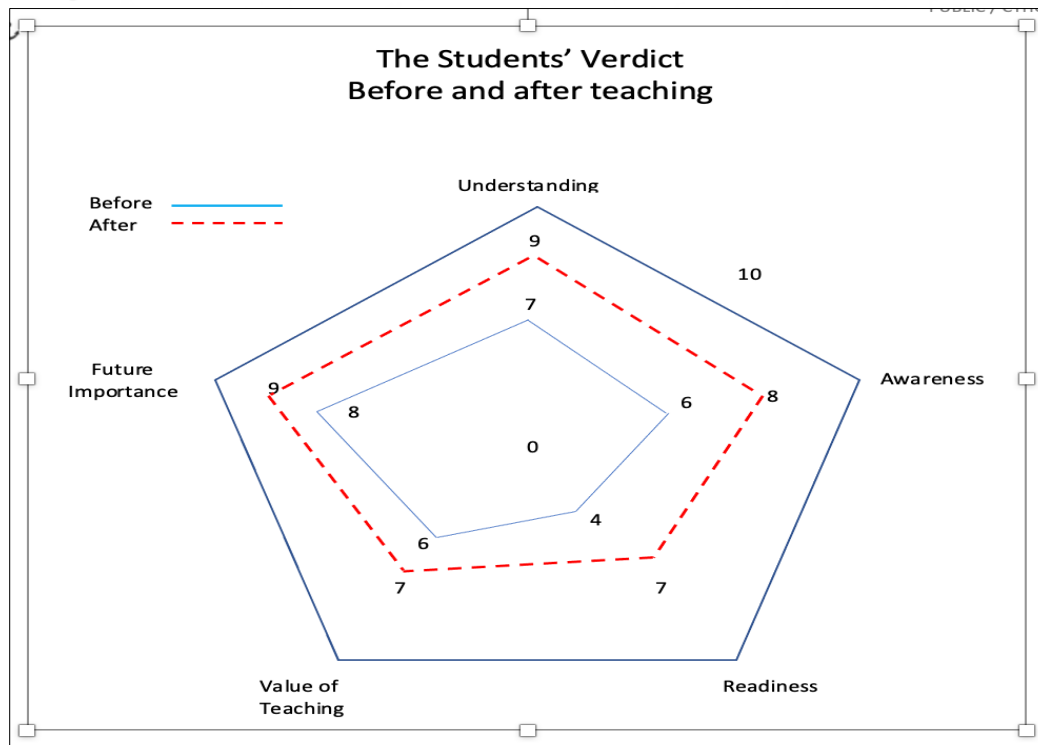
- * Create 'culture of safety' in newsrooms for reporting abuse;
- * Assess risk of physical, psychological, reputational harm;
- * Offer support – digital security, legal, emotional;
- * Assess how effective responses have been. (International Press Institute).



The teaching themes

- * Know what constitutes online harassment, the signs / characteristics;
- * Importance of daily communication;
- * Columbia School of Journalism Tip Sheet: You, bosses, colleagues;
- * Abuser strategies (International Women's Media Foundation);
- * Kean and Maclure (2021): Separate, filter, switch off, stay factual, differentiate, document, report, speak, know it's NEVER acceptable.

Preparing students to deal with the increasingly challenging environment of journalist harassment on social media



Key references

Chen GM, Pain P, Chen VY, Mekelburg M, Springer N, Troger F. 'You really have to have a thick skin': A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences female journalists. *Journalism*. 2020;21(7):877-895.

Binns, Amy. (2017). Fair game? Journalists' experiences of abuse online. *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*. 6. 183-206. 10.1386/ajms.6.2.183_1.



Next steps...

- * Deeper research into subject area
- * Incorporate topic into course curriculum
- * Explore learning and teaching methods e.g guest speakers



Poll questions and data

- * Do you **understand** what constitutes online harassment? Before 7___ After 9
- * How **aware** are you of the problem with online harassment? 6___/8
- * How **ready** do you feel you are to deal appropriately and effectively with online harassment? 4___/7
- * How far can **university teaching** prepare you to deal with the reality of online harassment? 6___/7
- * How **important** is it that dealing with online harassment becomes a part of all university journalism courses? 8___/9



Classroom strategy

- * Students Introduced to concept of journalists being the harassed instead of the harassers;
- * Slides, instruction and two-way discussion of key themes;
- * Students invited to share personal harassment experience;
- * Group tasks based around case study selection and screen-based discussion;
- * Discussion of resilience training as a suitable strategy for subject.

Main takeaways

- Students unaware of what's coming and potential to be public figures
- The topic grabs them – it plugs into emotions and incorporates many social issues e.g mental health, bullying, prejudice etc
- Students see it as valuable and essential (though we must wait for credible measurement of effectiveness)



*And finally...can
HE teaching make
a difference?*

- We're at the start of a long and winding road to truly finding out
- I'll be in touch....

