Online aggression and current youth

Dr. Hana Macháčková

Aggression online

- Seemingly ubiquitous
- Everyday experience?

  Discussions: increased hostility, prejudices, intolerance, aggressivity…
- Without boundaries?

Aggression online

- In the form of direct interpersonal attacks
  - E.g. discussions on SNS
- In the form of shared information and materials
  - On a specific websites
- Often both
  - E.g., comments below the articles

Aggression

Broad and complex term

- Aggression is…."*any form of behavior directed toward the goal of* ***harming or injuring*** *another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment*" (Baron & Richardson, 2004, p.7)

It can take many forms:

- Direct/nondirect
- Verbal/physical/sexual….
- Other-oriented/self-oriented
- Interpersonal/intergoup
- Etc.

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- Etc.

- **Online / offline**

Need to specify type of aggression we are talking about

Aggression online

- Various types
  - Mirroring offline ones
  - Cyberbullying, online harassment, cyberhate, cybercrime, cyberterrorism…

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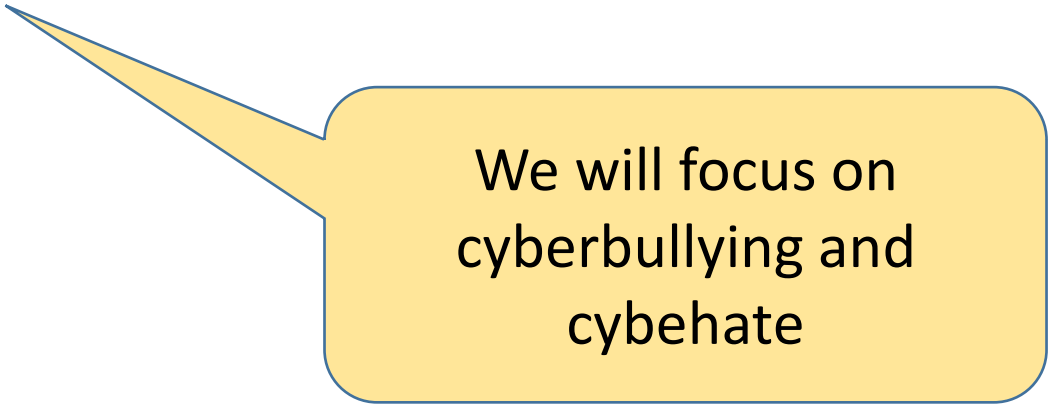

Aggression online

- Various types
  - **Mirroring offline ones?**
  - Cyberbullying, online harassment, cyberhate, cybercrime, cyberterrorism…
- Interconnection with offline life
  - Extension, augmentation, blending…
- Cyberspace: Important aspect of everyday life
  - „virtual“ but „real“
- Cyberspace: specific social environment

Differences from offline environment(s)

- Computer-mediated communication (CMC)
  - Text, visuality, hypertexts
  - A/synchronic communication
  - Absence of many cues
    - Currently, more rich (emoticons, audio-visual cues etc.)
    - „say it with gif“, memes

LOL

Differences from offline environment(s)

Control of self-expressions

- Asynchronous communication
- Visuals (graphs), hyperlinks
- No others clues (gestures, posture, voice, speach)
  - The lack of cues as a source of misunderstandings
  - BUT, they may pose a barrier in communication offline

- Distance, anonymity, invisibility….

- Storing, sharing, spreading
  - Materials and information

- 24/7 accessibility
  - countries with high internet penetration
  - Digital divide

Online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004)

- Anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipstic introjection, dissociative imagination, minimization of status and authority
- Toxic and benign
  - hostillity x self-disclosure and support
- Developed before web2.0
- Anonymity???

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Still applicable

Psychological vs. informatial

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

- Cyberbullying: do you know the term?

- Highly medialized
- Contrast with empirical evidence

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

- Cyberbullying: do you know the term?

- Highly medialized
- Contrast with empirical evidence

Kowalski et al. (2014):
10% - 40%
Also 3% - 70%

Table 18: Ways in which children have been bullied in past 12 months, by age

%	Age 9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
In person face-to-face	13	13	12	15	13
On the internet	3	5	6	8	6
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	2	3	6	3
Has been bullied at all, online or offline	17	19	18	21	19

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Definition of school bullying (Olweus, 1991) – criteria of

1) Intentional, causing harm

2) Repetitive

3) Power imbalance

Also many forms:

- Overt/covert
- Relational/Physical/Social
- Physical/verbal attacks, degradation/humiliation, blackmailing, destroying things, social exclusion, ignoring…

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Cyberbullying: intentional and aggressive act carried out through electronic media, which may be repetitive in nature (Nocentini et al., 2010; Tokunaga, 2010)

What are the forms here?

- Verbal attacks, insults, threats, gossips…
- Spreading of personal and sensitive information
  - Without consent
- Identity theft, mascarade
- Social exclusion, ostracism
- Publishing of harmful audiovisual material (changed)
- Happy slapping
- …

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

We are talking about cyberbullying if the aggressive attacks :

- **are conducted via internet or mobile phones**
- are intentionally harmful (conducted by individual or group)
  - and are harmful for victim
- are repeated (however….)
- there is power imbalance – the victims can‘t easily defend themselves

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Harm is not always present!
Difficulties of harm assessment

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Repetition: problematic online
„once published, always online“
Important in messaging (email, phones…)

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Digital skills?
Always online
Aggressors‘ anonymity (not so common)

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- are intentionally harmful (conducted by individual or group)
  - and are harmful for victim
- are repeated (however….)
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If these criteria are not fullfilled:
online aggression/harassment

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

„New bottle, old wine“?

What is „new“?

No time/space limits – no escape

Distance – the victim does not have to be present (adding comments, likes, spreading of information….)

Wide audience - potential

Spreading and sharing – easy and fast, unlimited

- No control over the content

Can be „hidden“ – out of control of adults

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

„New bottle, old wine“?

What is „new“?

Victims – offline often vulnerable

In cyberbullying: potential for new vulnerability

Remember „diminishing of authority“, anonymity?

More often: frequent internet users, users of webcams and IM

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Cyberbullying: detrimental effect on victims

- Similar to offline bullying

Including:

- Internalization and externalizing behaviors
- Emotional problems (depression, anxiety, suicidal thougths)
- Social problems
- Lower self-esteem
- Helplessness
- Academic problems
- Etc.

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

The impact depends on the severity of the attacks

- importance to distinguish cyberbullying and harassment!

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

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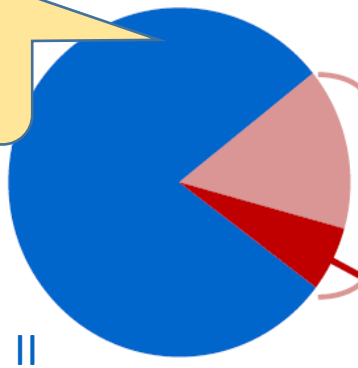
- importance to distinguish cyberbullying and harassment!

Differences in prevalences and impact
Cyberbullying: **less common, but more severe**

Czech project: 79% no victimization



21% harassment

6% CB victims

http://irtis.fss.muni.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/COST_CZ_report_II_CJ.pdf

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

The impact depends on the severity of the attacks

- importance to distinguish cyberbullying and harassment!

Could be more harmful then offline

- Especially cases of public forms, and especially including audiovisual materials (Sticca & Perren, 2013)

Depends on the interconnection with offline bullying

- usually connected („double whammies“)

Also depends on coping with cyberbullying

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Coping with cyberbullying

Many different strategies

- Emotion/problem focused
- Mal/adaptive?

Similar to offline responses

- new – „technological coping“

Question of effectiveneess in coping with online attacks

	Victims of online harassment		
	%	n	Chi
Technological coping			
I deleted the person from my contacts.	66%	173	2.71
I changed my settings so that the person could not contact me anymore (e.g. blocking the person, filtering).	59%	161	0.88
I changed my phone no./email/profile/nickname.	**18%**	**49**	**12.62****
I searched for advice on the internet.	**7%**	**20**	**20.85****
I deleted my profile on the web pages where this happened.	14%	34	2.20
I reported this to the administrator.	21%	55	2.07
Reframing			
I thought to myself that the person was pitiful and stupid.	91%	263	1.14
I thought to myself that whoever is doing this to me is not worth my time.	78%	218	0.83
I thought to myself that something like that could not hurt me.	**46%**	**126**	**13.16****
I thought to myself that it was actually nothing serious.	**41%**	**111**	**37.58****
Ignoring			
I decided to ignore it.	65%	189	1.14
I didn't pay attention to it.	**44%**	**108**	**17.28****
Dissociation			
I thought to myself that if something similar were to happen in real life, it would be much worse.	56%	144	0.02
I thought to myself that such things simply happen on the internet.	**65%**	**172**	**10.76****
I thought to myself that he or she wouldn't do something similar to me in real life.	41%	99	0.89
I thought to myself that it was only happening online, and that it wasn't actually real.	**25%**	**62**	**6.71***
Cognitive avoidance			
I tried to focus on something else to avoid thinking about what happened.	**68%**	**180**	**12.36****
I simply took it lightly.	**58%**	**160**	**26.72****
Behavioral avoidance			
I started avoiding the person in real life.	**39%**	**87**	**25.45****
I deleted the messages, which troubled me.	62%	163	0.28
I stopped visiting the web pages where this happened.	**10%**	**26**	**26.65****
Seeking support			
I told someone about it.	70%	199	2.32
Confrontation			
I tried talking to the person on the internet or via cellphone to persuade him or her to stop.	**38%**	**102**	**5.96***
I tried face-to-face talking about this behavior with the person or somehow persuade her or him to stop.	42%	106	0.94
Retaliation			
I did something similar to the person, face-to-face (in real life).	23%	58	3.49
I did the same thing or something similar to the person online or via mobiles.	12%	31	0.31

Note: * $P < .05$, ** $p < .01$. The percentages are computed from valid values.

Strategies applied

CB victims more active

Cognitive strategies:
- reframing to depreciate the bully and avoided or purposefully ignored them
- cognitive distancing
- not much disociation

Tech. Coping – not so often

Machackova, H., Cerna, A., Sevcikova, A., Dedkova, L., & Daneback, K. (2013). Effectiveness of coping strategies for victims of cyberbullying. Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 7(3), article 5. doi: 10.5817/CP2013-3-5

	Victims of online harassment		
	%	n	Chi
Technological coping			
I deleted my profile on the web pages where this happened.	79%	23	0.72
I changed my settings so that the person could not contact me anymore (e.g. blocking the person, filtering).	89%	126	3.74
I deleted the person from my contacts.	**87%**	**139**	**7.14****
I changed my phone no./email/profile/nickname.	**89%**	**41**	**8.84****
I searched for advice on the internet.	78%	14	1.91
I reported this to the administrator.	80%	40	3.73
Reframing			
I thought to myself that whoever is doing this to me is not worth my time.	92%	187	2.91
I thought to myself that the person was pitiful and stupid.	**94%**	**235**	**22.75****
I thought to myself that something like that could not hurt me.	**89%**	**110**	**5.91***
I thought to myself that it was actually nothing serious.	93%	95	4.08
Ignoring			
I decided to ignore it.	**84%**	**151**	**4.79***
I didn't pay attention to it.	**85%**	**87**	**5.17***
Dissociation			
I thought to myself that it was only happening online, and that it wasn't actually real.	89%	48	3.77
I thought to myself that he or she wouldn't do something similar to me in real life.	**80%**	**74**	**4.67***
I thought to myself that if something similar were to happen in real life, it would be much worse.	67%	90	0.56
I thought to myself that such things simply happen on the internet.	**66%**	**108**	**15.42****
Cognitive avoidance			
I tried to focus on something else to avoid thinking about what happened.	**91%**	**159**	**6.08***
I simply took it lightly.	**94%**	**140**	**30.55****
Behavioral avoidance			
I stopped visiting the web pages where this happened.	83%	20	0.53
I deleted the messages which troubled me.	85%	134	0.82
I started avoiding the person in real life.	**83%**	**68**	**7.79****
Seeking support			
I told someone about it.	92%	169	0.06
Confrontation			
I tried talking to the person on the internet or via mobiles to persuade him or her to stop.	71%	66	1.94
I tried face-to-face talking about this behavior with the person or somehow persuade her or him to stop.	74%	74	3.13
Retaliation			
I did something similar to the person, face-to-face (in real life).	85%	45	0.49
I did the same thing or something similar to the person online or via mobiles.	79%	19	0.25

Note: * $P < .05$, ** $p < .01$. The percentages are computed from valid values of those who used the strategy.

Strategies helping emotionally

- generally, less often effective among CB victims

- effective cognitive strategies

- not all, exceptions: „taking it lightly" it „happens online"

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	%	*n*	*Chi*
Technological coping			
I deleted my profile on the web pages where this happened.	**97%**	**29**	**7.58****
I changed my settings so that the person could not contact me anymore (e.g. blocking the person, filtering).	**88%**	**130**	**15.70****
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I stopped visiting the web pages where this happened.	81%	17	2.59
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Seeking support			
I told someone about it.	58%	76	0.05
Confrontation			
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I tried talking to the person on the internet or via mobiles to persuade him or her to stop.	**62%**	**53**	**17.13****
Retaliation			
I did the same thing or something similar to the person onlin or via mobiles.	72%	18	3.17
I did something similar to the person, face-to-face (in real life).	**88%**	**44**	**16.52****

Note: * $P < .05$, ** $p < .01$. The percentages are computed from valid values of those who used the strategy.

Strategies helping stop the attacks:

- technological coping
- but not all (and often not applied)

Ignoring

Confrontation or retaliation not very effective

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Outcome also depends on the context

Including responses of others – the audience

Bystanders in cyberbullying

- much more common than victimization
- Czech project: 53%

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

What can they do? (online and offline)

Support the victim: emotionaly, advice provision, confrontation of aggressor…

Reinforce the bul[illegible]oining in, reposts, sharing, likes, comments…

Passivity: most[illegible]n

Helpful:
decreases impact, can stop the attacks, help to cope

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

What can they do? (online and offline)

Support the victim: emotionaly, advice provision, confrontation of aggressor…

Reinforce the bully: joining in, reposts, sharing, likes, comments…

Passivity: most co mon

Increases the impact, especially when wide audience, causes of repetiveness…

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

What can they do? (online and offline)

Support the victim: emotionaly, advice provision, confrontation of aggressor…

Reinforce the bully: joining in, reposts, sharing, likes, comments…

Passivity: most common

Harmless? No

Increases impact, may be interpreted as silent approval by both victim and aggressor

Metadata: visits, views…

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Who helps victim?

Empathy, prosocial behavior, norms, relationship with the victim…

Who reinforces bully?

Low empathy, aggressive beliefs, relationship with aggressor…

Who stays passive???

Despite common antibullying norms

Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

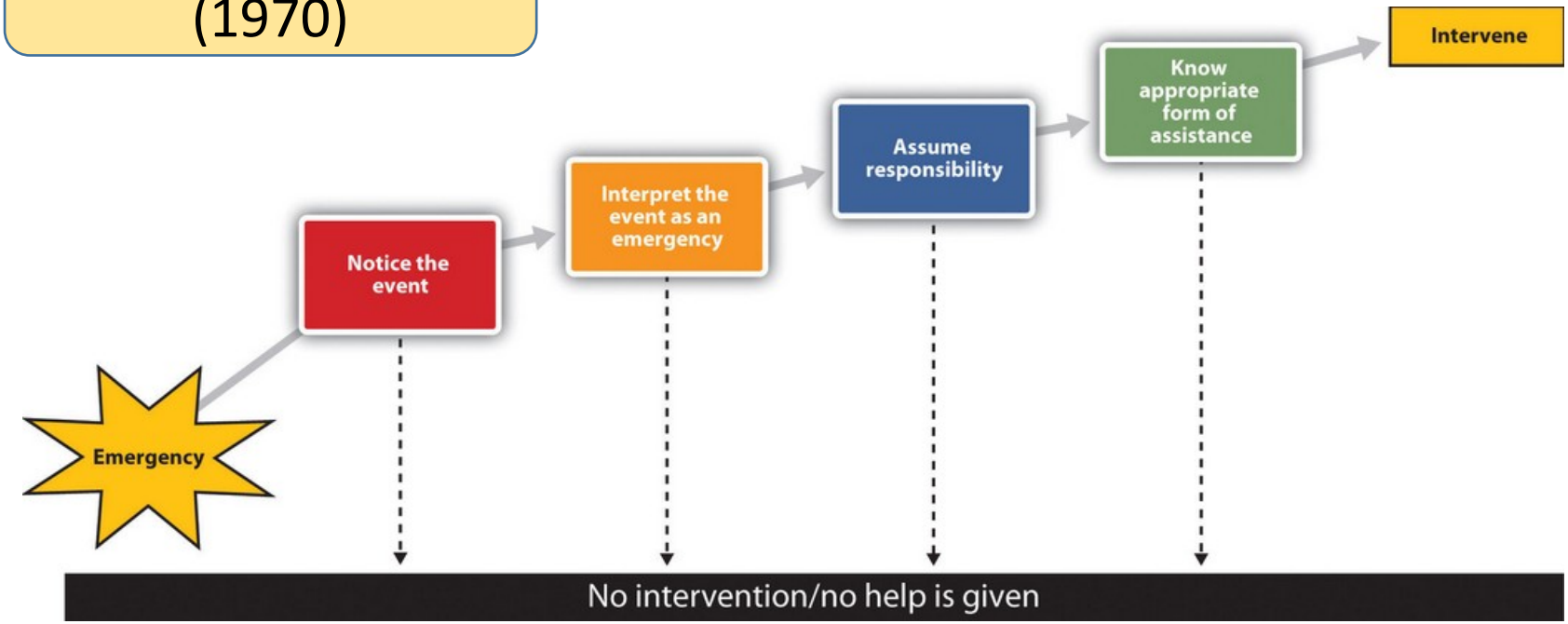
What is „new“? – Context

Specific communication and environment

Distance
Lack of cues
Wide audience

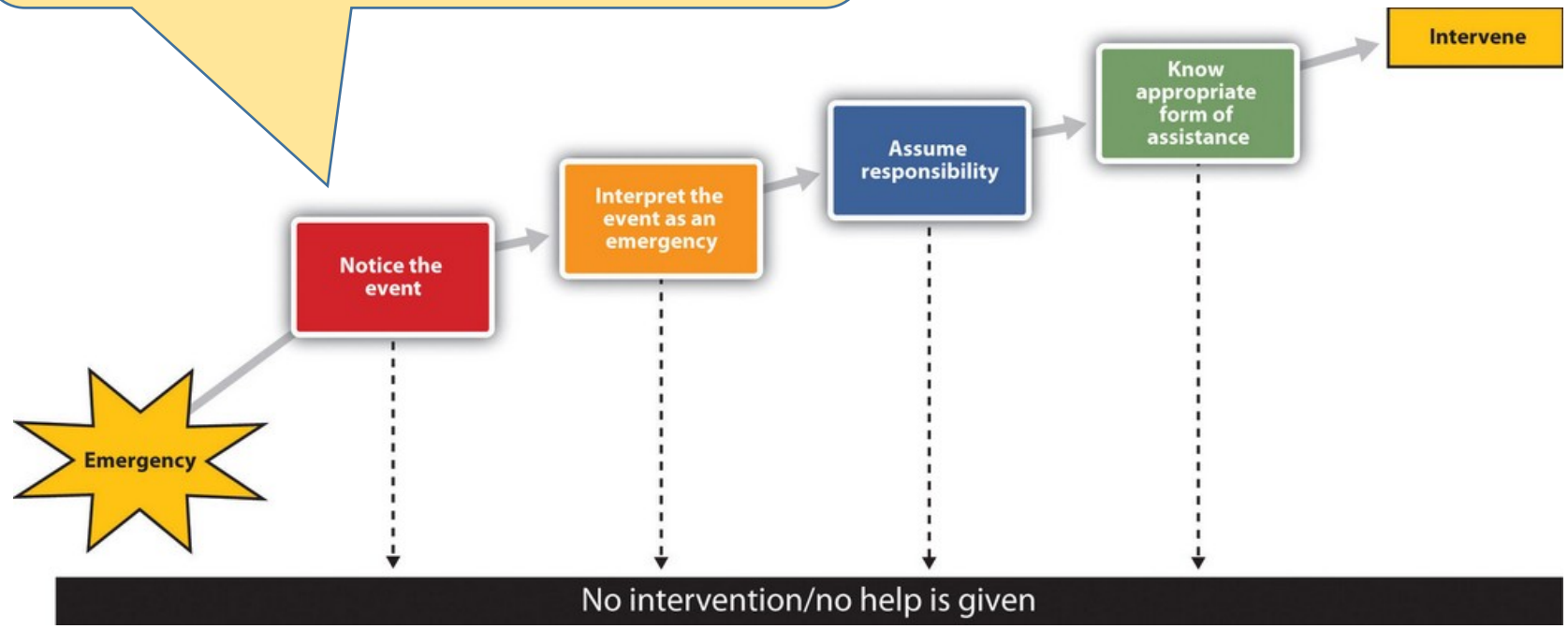
Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Latané & Darley (1970)



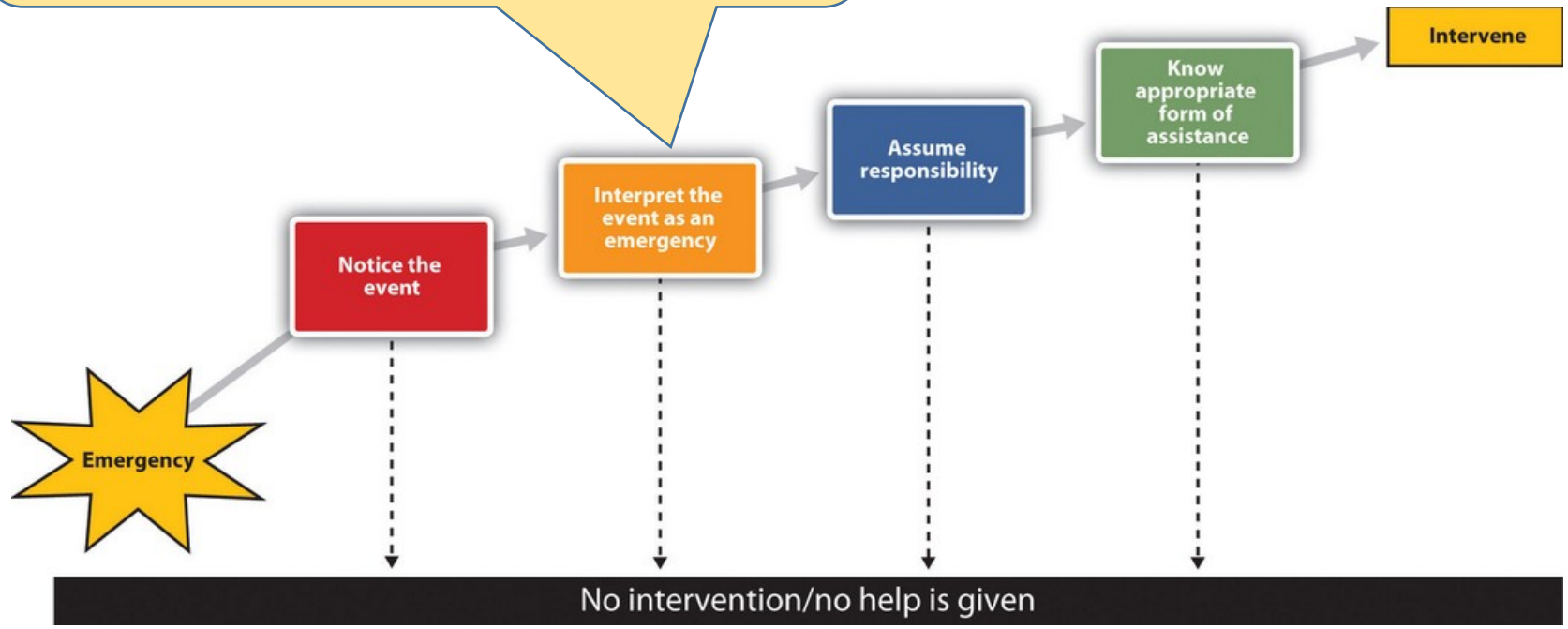
Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Attention and distractions



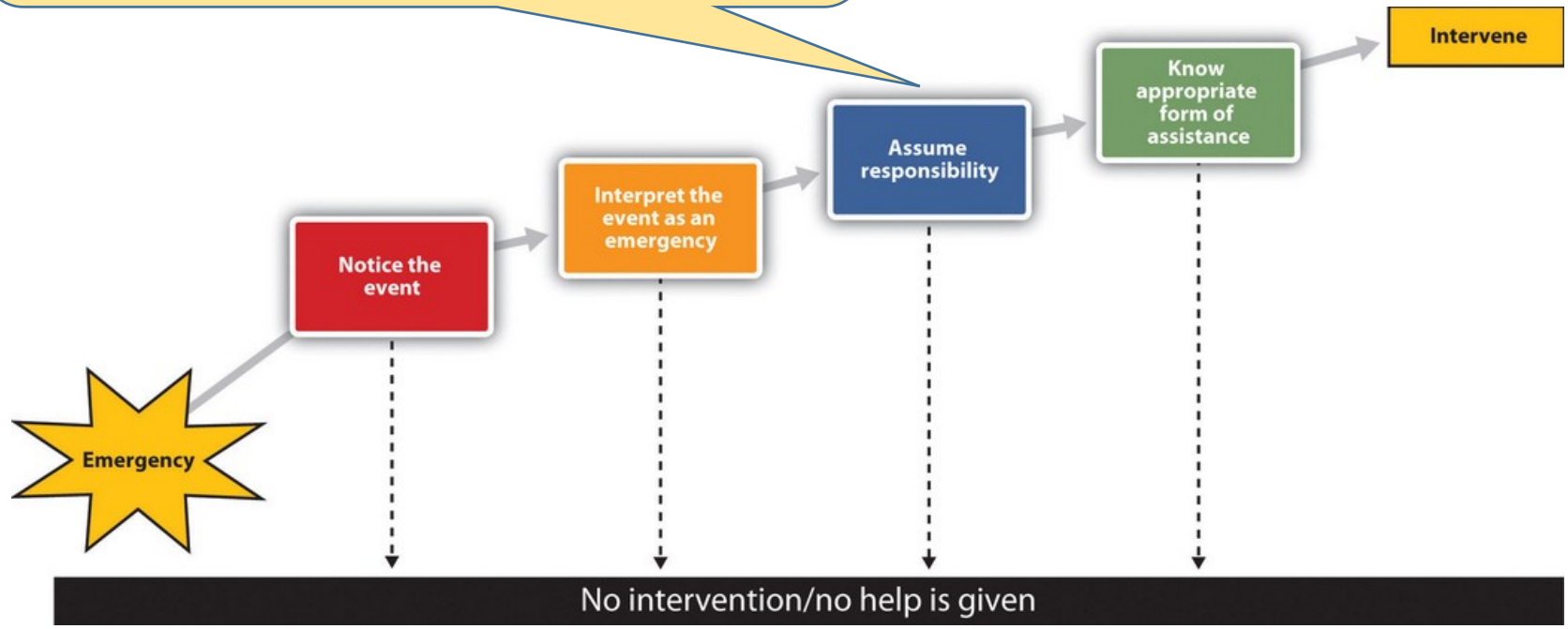
Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Complicated assessment, „just a joke“, not serious



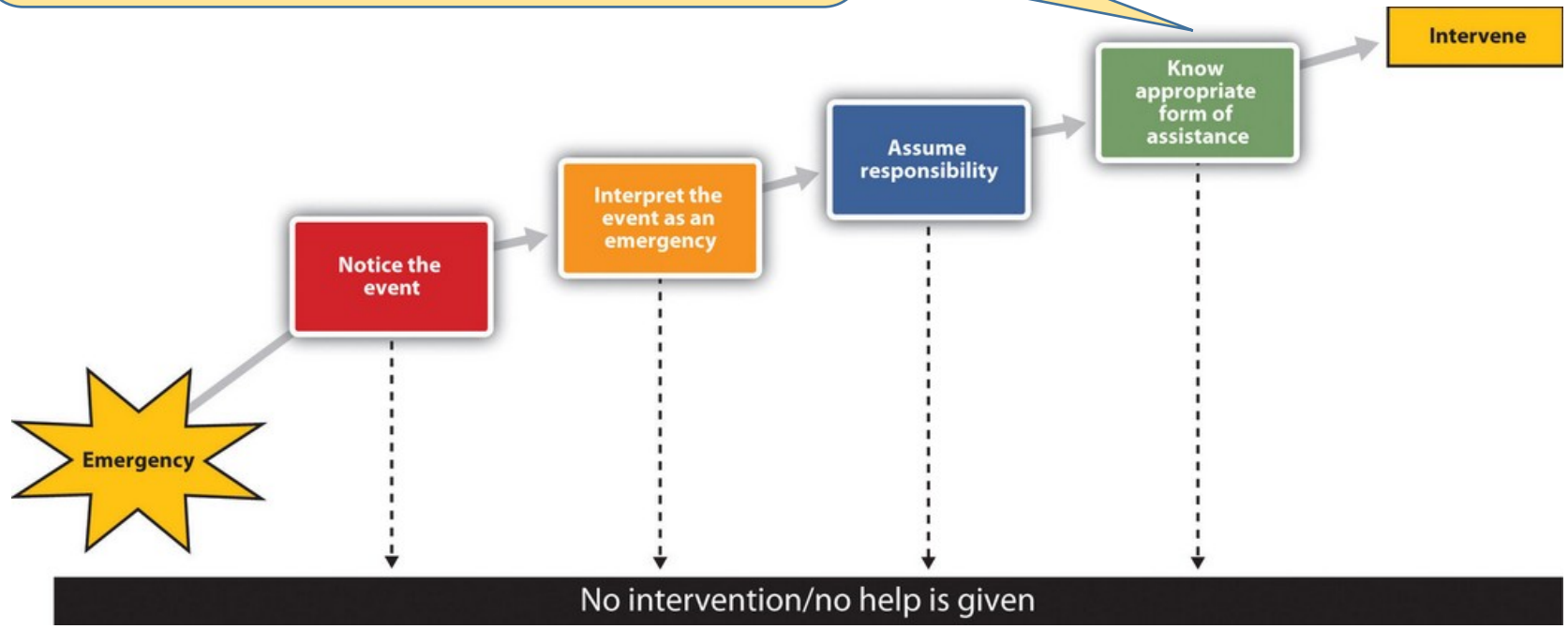
Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Wide audience, who (where) is victim, ongoing event?



Cyberbullying and online aggression (harassment)

Assessment, self-efficacy, own victimization, aggravation of problem?



Audience in aggressive events

- These aspects concern also responses to other aggressive events
- What is your experience with online aggression?

Cyberhate

- Another type of aggression encountered on the internet

- Intergroup aggression

The potential for reaching very wide audience

Detrimental effect for individuals and society

Today one of major topic on international level

Hate speech, cyberhate

Greenawalt (1989): hate speech causes offence, may deeply wound those targeted, might provoke a response of violence, have a degrading effect on social relationships within any one community

Council of Europe, 2013:

- Hate speech has no particular definition in international human rights; it is a term used to describe broad discourse that is extremely negative and constitutes a threat to social peace.
- It covers **all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance.**
- (http://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech)

- Cyberhate: "similar to cyberbullying, but online extremist and hate material aim the abuse at a **collective identity** rather than a specific individual" (Hawdon et al.,2015)

Cyberhate

Roots in offline world

- Attitides, opinions
- Social norms
- Group identity
- In-groups and out-groups
- Prejudices

Cyberhate

Online

Increasing? (increasing internet use)

Dispersing?

- many new platforms
- prominently SNS

Cyberhate

- Online disinhibition
  - Hostility
  - Anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipstic introjection, dissociative imagination, minimization of status and authority
- SIDE model
  - Strengthening of social identity (Tajfel, Turner)
  - Potential for expression of normatively negative attitudes, behavior
- Anonymity vs. identifiability
  - still no such constrains to join such group/express an attitude

Cyberhate

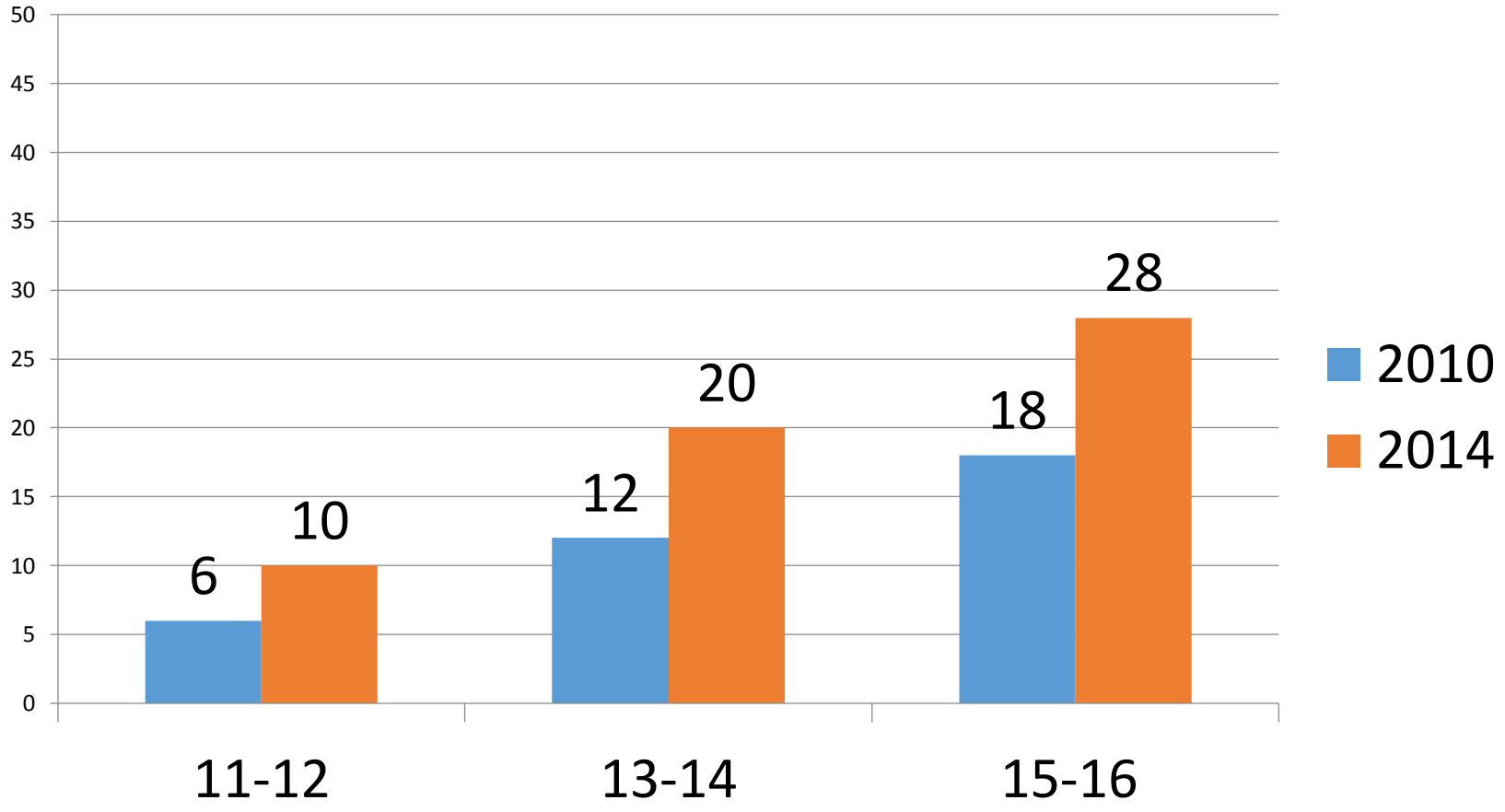
Anonymity

- Lower anonymity connected to **decrease** of aggressive comments in online discussion (Cho & Kwon, 2015)
- Czech study: Constent analysis of 1,080 comments under 54 posts on 9 FB pages arguing against specific social group (1.1. - 12.4.2016)
- The more anonymous autor is, the more vulgar comment and the more negative „atmosphere“ of the statements

Group processess

- The more negative attitudes towards out-group by administrators, the more negative emotions in following comments.
- (Jitka Čurdová (2016). *Vliv anonymity, deindividuace a skupinové normy na míru vyjadřované agrese v komentářích na sociální síti Facebook*. Diplomová práce, Masarykova Univerzita.)

In the past 12 months, have you seen websites where people discuss hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals ? (EUKO, 2010; NCGM, 2013)

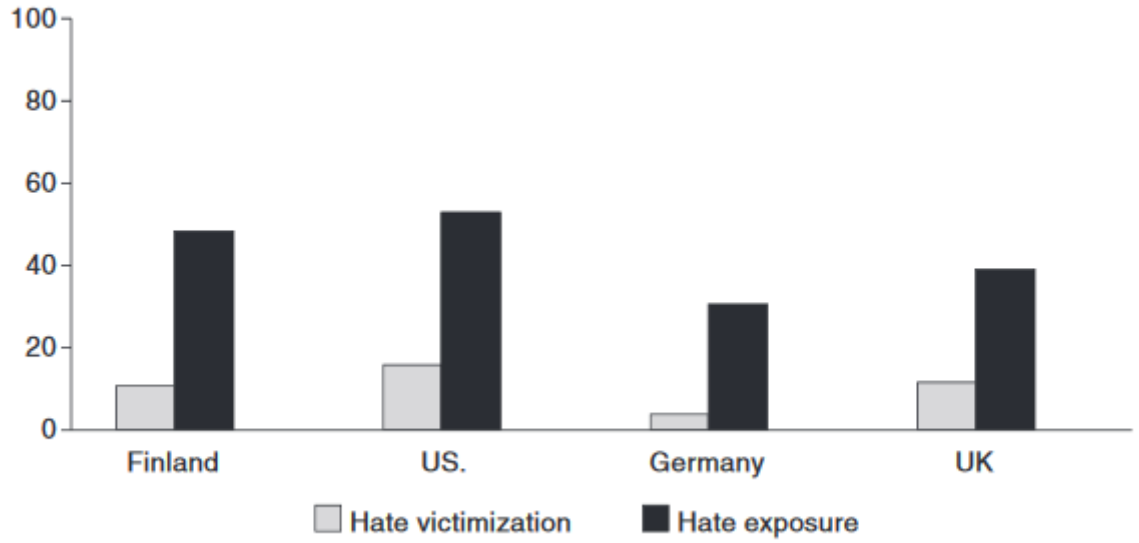


„In the past three months, have you seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online, which inappropriately attacked certain groups of people or individuals”?

“I have personally been the target of hateful or degrading material online“.

AGE 15-30

Figure 1. Exposure and personal victimisation to online hate by country (per cent)



Note: The numbers of observations are Finland=555, US.=1,033, Germany=987, UK=999.

Hawdon, J., Oksanen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2015) Online Extremism and Online Hate.

Table 1. Hate exposure in SNS sites and online environments by those exposed to hate material (per cent)

	Finland	US.	Germany	UK
Facebook	48	63	77	64
YouTube	37	48	44	37
Twitter	4	21	9	26
Tumblr	3	14	4	13
Wikipedia	2	5	4	5
General message board	41	19	15	15
Newspaper message boards	22	6	14	7
Blogs	16	13	8	8
Home pages	5	5	6	2
Photosharing sites (e.g., Instagram)	4	7	3	4
Online games	5	6	5	4
Instant messengers	2	4	4	4
Pop-up sites	2	6	2	5

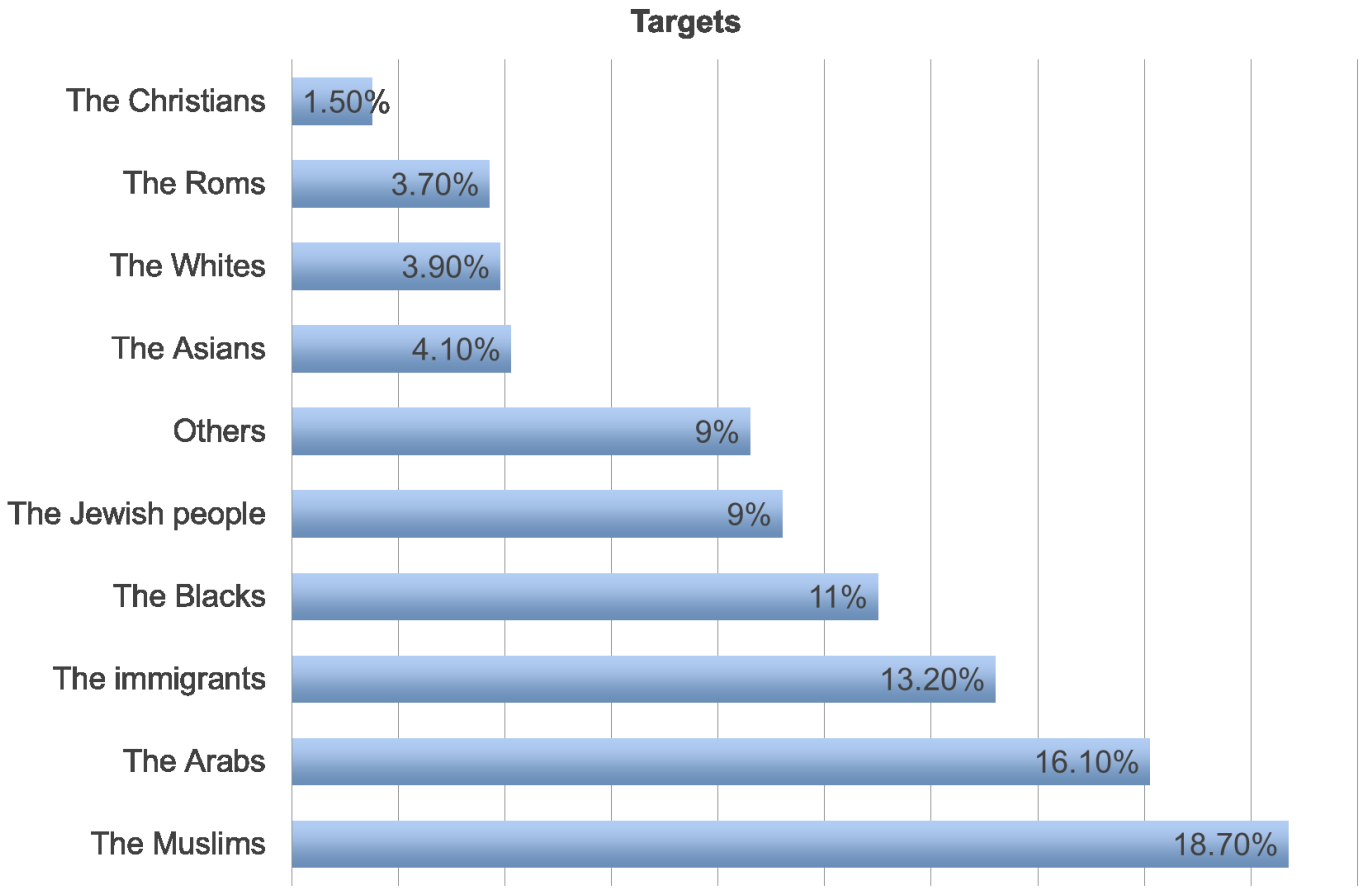
Note: The numbers of observations are Finland=266, US.=551, Germany=299; UK=387.

Hawdon, J., Oksanen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2015) Online Extremism and Online Hate.

French study on cyberhate

Online questionnaire survey with students aged 11-20.

Exposure to cyberhate: 35,2%



Blaya, C. et al. (2016). The involvement of the young people in cyberhate. Presented at the ECREA conference, Prague.

Hateful information online

- Internet as a source of information
  - Huge diversity
  - Sources, mediums, channels

The information and messages are shaped by social environment they are coming from and embedded into
  - „Facts“, „information“ – socialy constructed
  - „Depending on“ the character of the source
  - Creating, spreading, sharing…
  - Selecting specific type of information to present (and to conceal)

- We often pre-select the sources which we use
  - Similarity to our opinions
  - Confirmation bias

- Echo chambers – which information is faciliated, repeated? Which is absent?
  - specific social spaces in which is/are certain information/attitudes/views predominant
  - Based also on diverse algorithms (Google, Facebook…)

Hate communities online/Hate sites

- **ONLINE COMMUNITIES**
- Specific online places in which and through which people interact
- Shared interests, goals, identity (sense of belonging)

- Opportunity for self-expression
  - Individual and group level
- Opportunity for sense of belonging
  - And in-group behavior
- Discourse, materials

- Source of biased information
- Reinforced by the members

Hate communities online/Hate sites

- Positive and negative outcomes
  - Sometimes very hard to untangle
  - For whom?
- Clash of different (offline) communities online
- Attacks **on** and **from** specific (online) communities/groups
- Example: extreme right communities

Hate communities online/Hate sites

- „Link, educate, recruit“ (Douglas, 2007)

Persuasion:

- Not often advocating violence as such
- „Objectivity“
- Establishing specific discourse and norms
- In-group

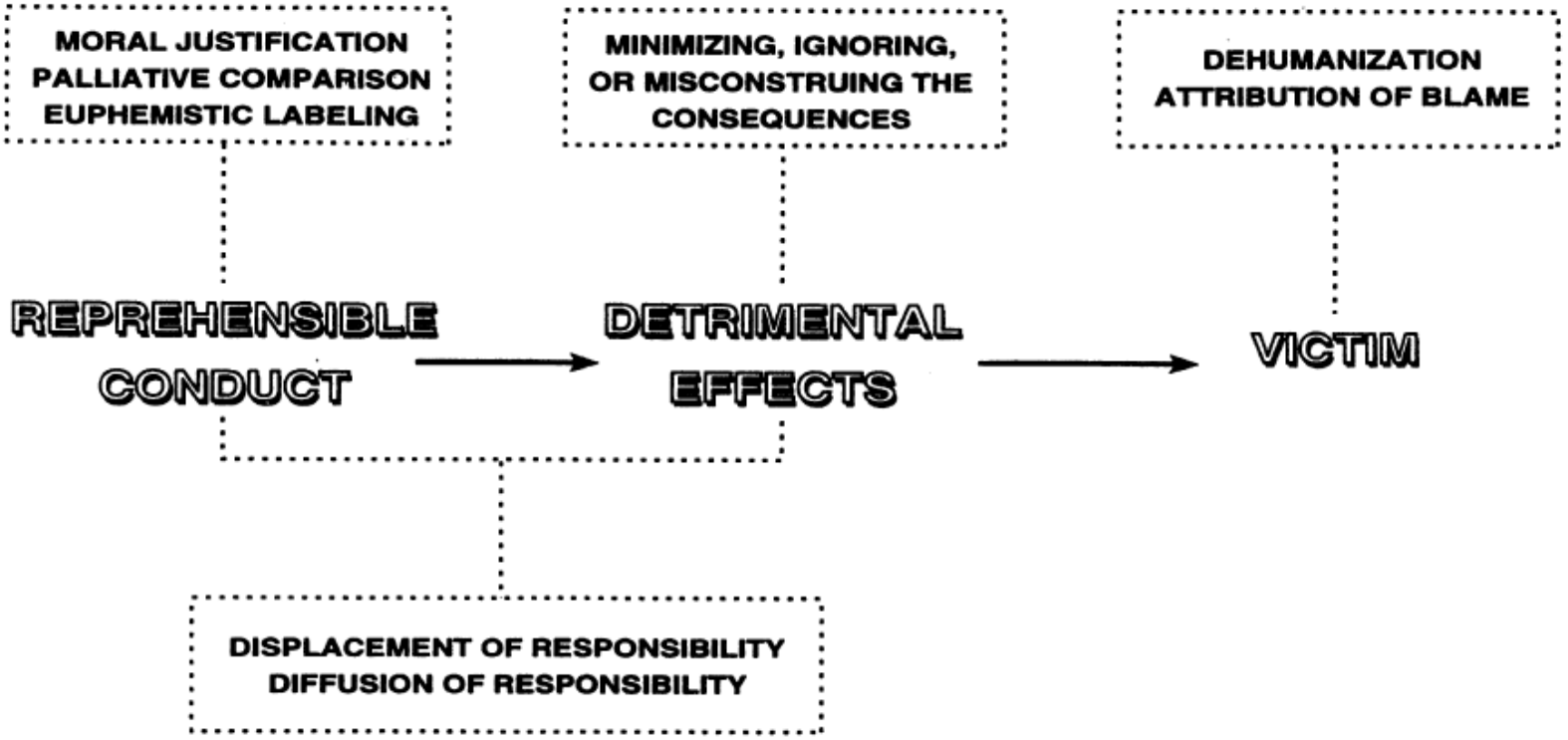
„Socialy creative“
Moral disengagement

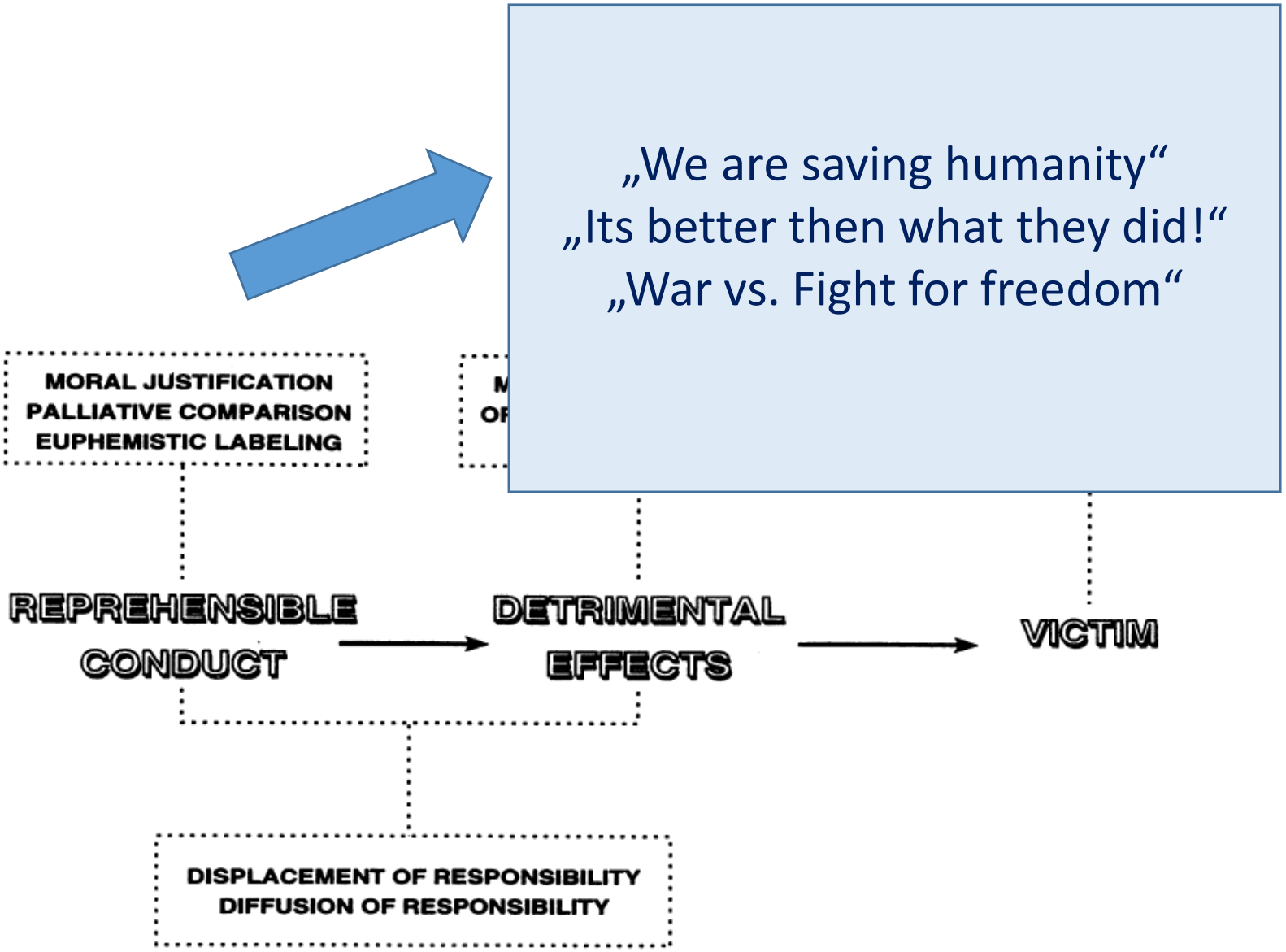
Bandura: Morality – norms, social and internalised sanctions

- Self-monitoring, evaluation, regulation (affective)
- **Moral disengagement**: cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into a benign or worthy one

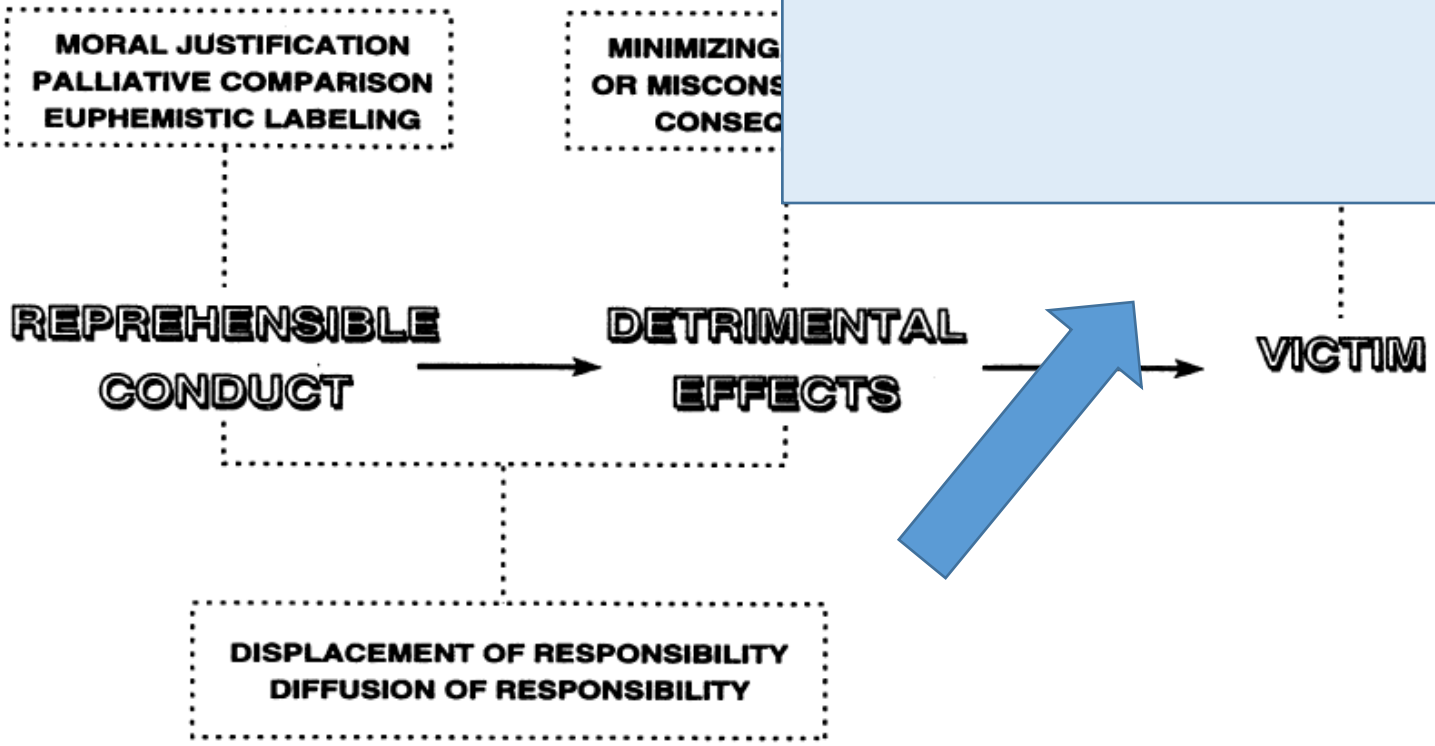
1. moral justification, sanitizing language, and advantageous comparison;
2. disavowal of a sense of personal agency by diffusion or displacement of responsibility;
3. disregarding or minimizing the injurious effects of one 's actions
4. attribution of blame to, and dehumanization of those who are victimized.

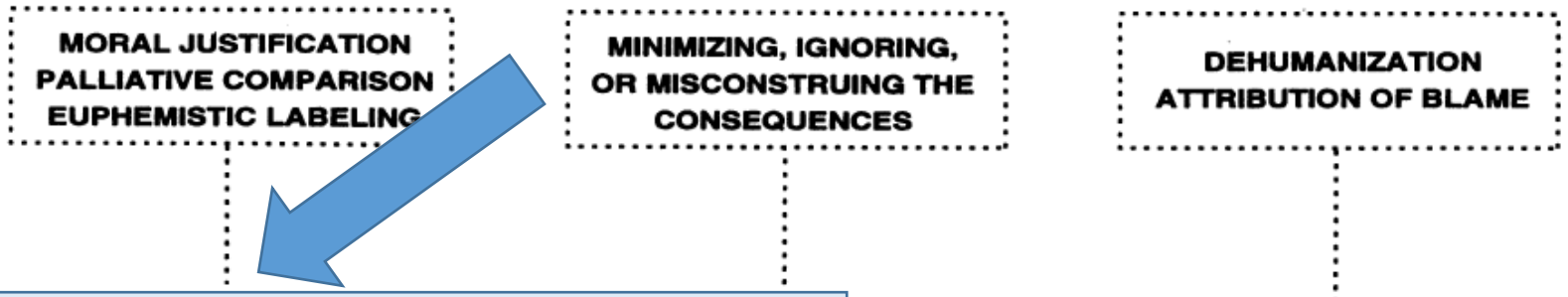
- Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and social psychology review*, *3*(3), 193-209.


MORAL JUSTIFICATION
PALLIATIVE COMPARISON
EUPHEMISTIC LABELING
MINIMIZING, IGNORING,
OR MISCONSTRUING THE
CONSEQUENCES
DEHUMANIZATION
ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME
REPREHENSIBLE
CONDUCT
DETRIMENTAL
EFFECTS
VICTIM
DISPLACEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY
DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

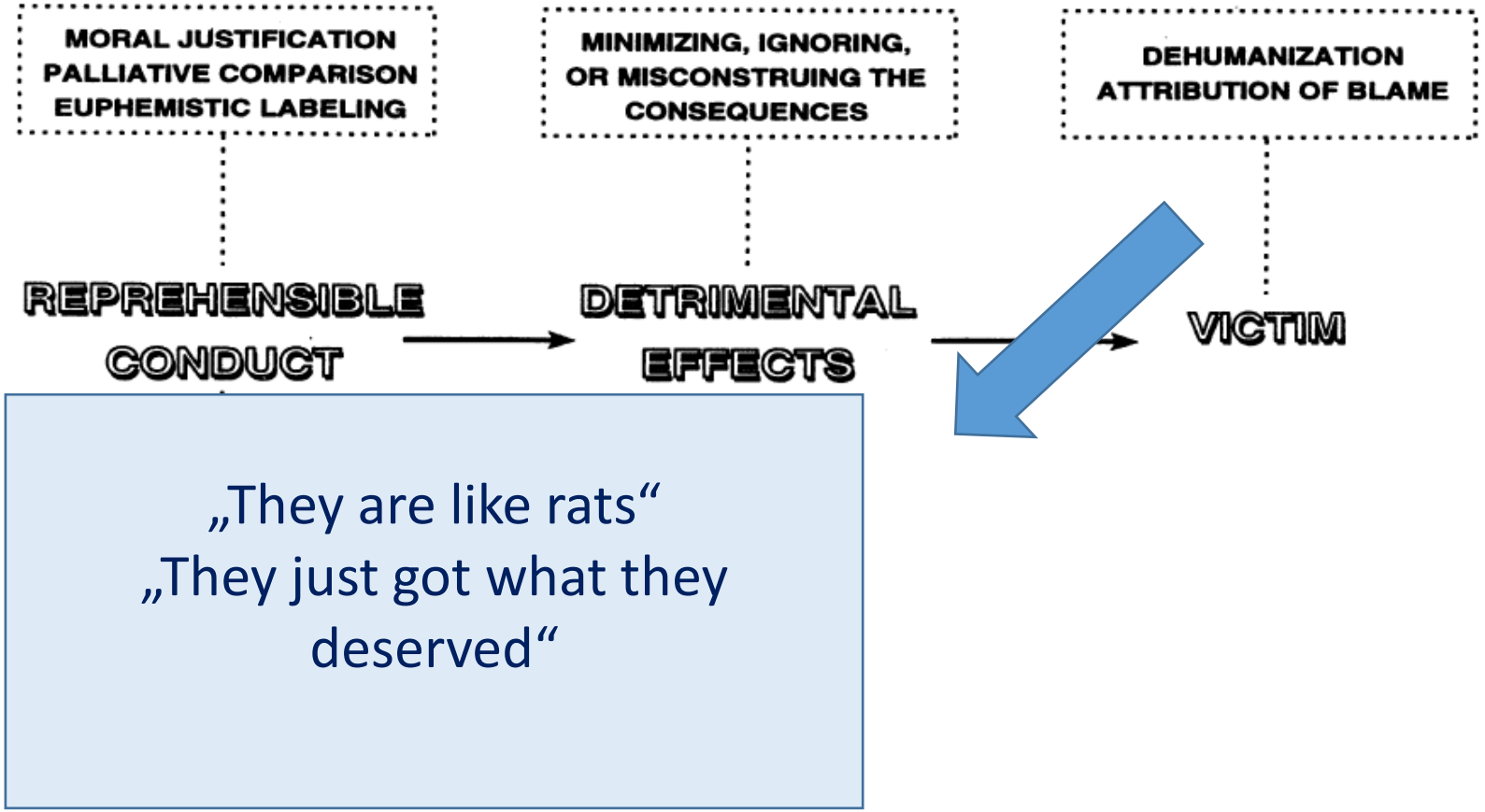

„We are saving humanity“
„Its better then what they did!“
„War vs. Fight for freedom“
MORAL JUSTIFICATION
PALLIATIVE COMPARISON
EUPHEMISTIC LABELING
REPREHENSIBLE CONDUCT
DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS
VICTIM
DISPLACEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY
DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

„Nobody did nothing“
„It was an order“
„I was just a messanger“





„It was not that bad“
„Its not like we killed them“
„We just teached them a lesson“



„They are like rats“
„They just got what they deserved“

Hate communities online/Hate sites

- Concentrated materials, information – selected discourse, concealment and repression of opposite views
  - support in the community
  - approving comments
  - reinforcement of attitudes
  - shared identity, belonging
  - providing space for self-expression
  - delineating out-group („media“, „liberals“,…)
  - framing aggression as a mean to – seemingly justified - end

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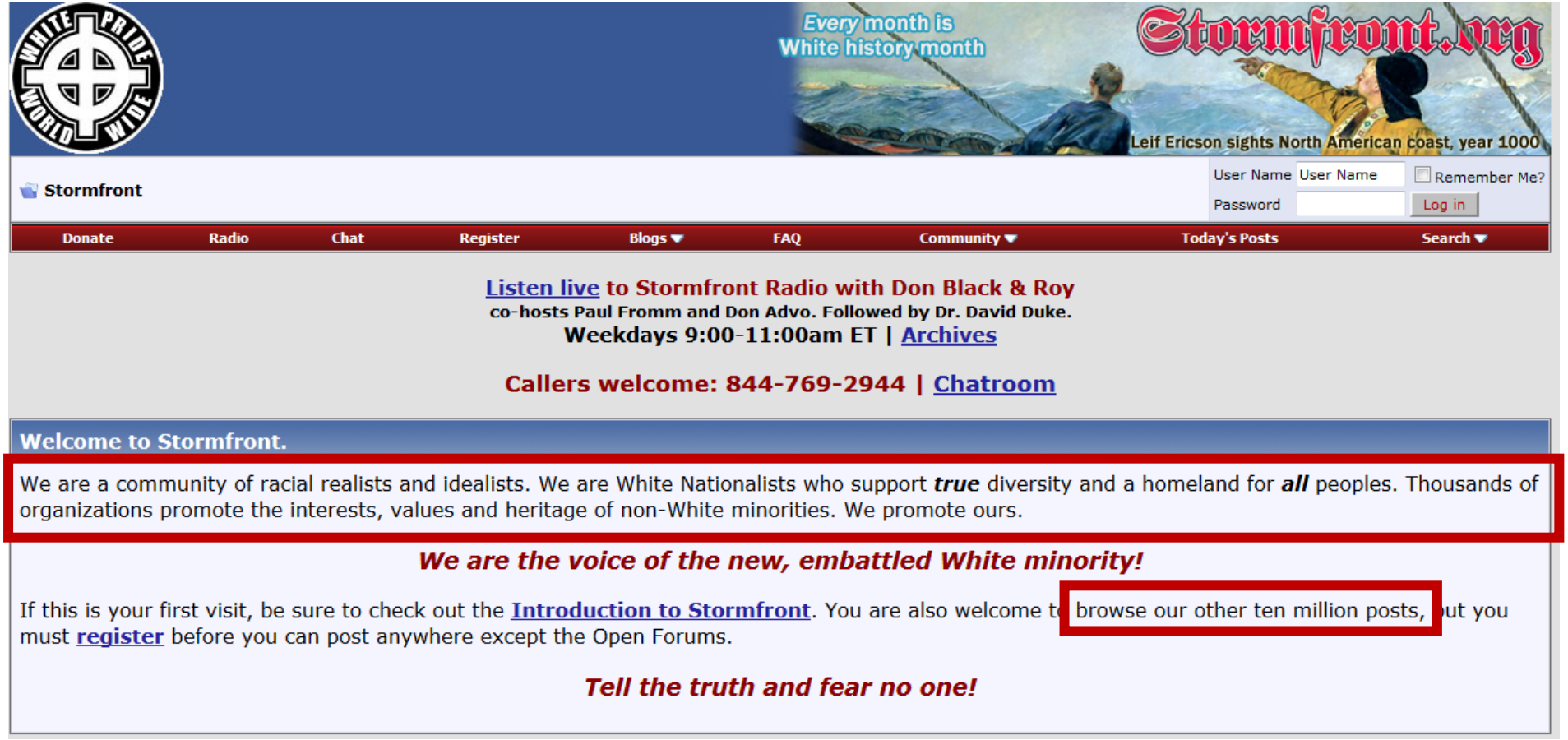
- Specific discoursive space
- Supporting one ideology
- Strengthening social identity

Example: https://www.stormfront.org/



Combating hate online?

Problem with evaluation

What is normal? What is moral? Legitimate? Legal? Normative?

Across cultures?

Back to conceptualization aggression – different types
Different purposes

Treshold?

Combating hate online?

Problem with evaluation

…and freedom of speech

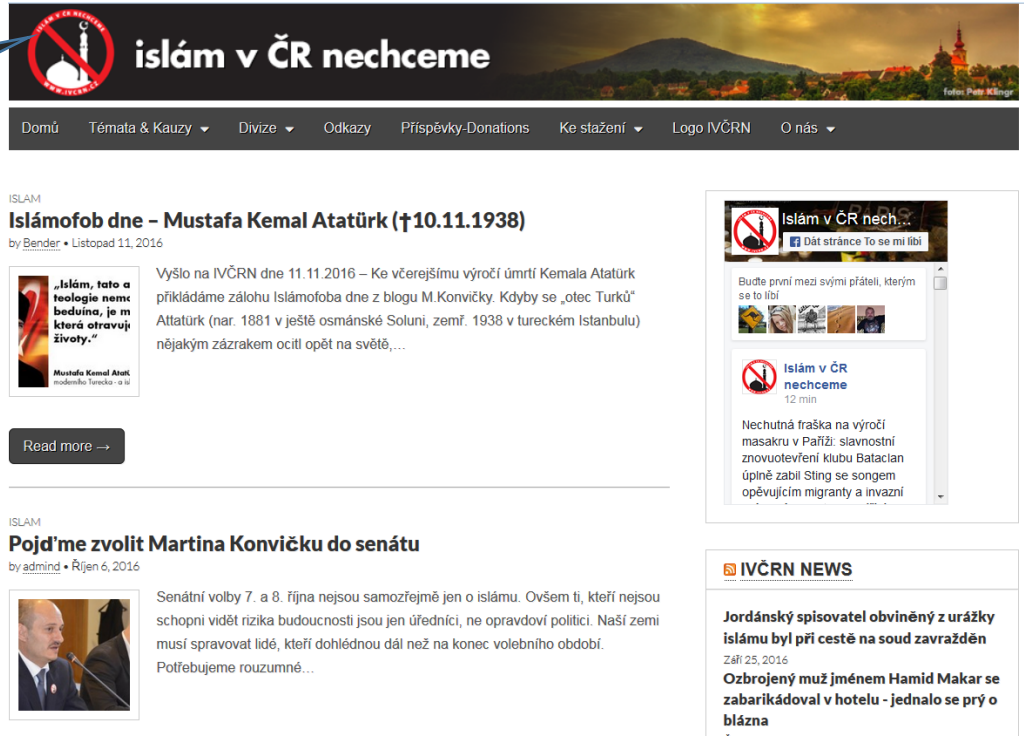
- Ban
  - Resistance, strengthening of identity?
  - Free speech?
- Law
  - no united international law

- General protest
- Humor, sarcasm
- Trolling

- http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/
- http://www.hatefree.cz/
- https://cs-cz.facebook.com/CeskeObludarium

We do not want islam in the Czech Republic

We do not want Iceland in the Czech Republic



„We just want to say that our site does not have anything against normal Icelandic people, because those are just victims of the criminal ideology and perverted lifestyle called ICELAND! Help us to stop this filth which wants (similarly to volcano ash) to cover our beautiful country!