“Yeah well, that’s just your opinion man”

The fallouts of abusive language detection

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Zeerak Talat
University of Sheffield | Digital Democracies Institute
Twitter: @zeerakw

Clean up the Internet

Clean up the internet is an independent, UK-based organisation concerned about the degradation in online discourse and its implications for democracy. We campaign for evidence-based action to increase civility and respect online, and to reduce online bullying, trolling, intimidation, and misinformation.

Unilever warns social media to clean up “toxic” content

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Two ways social networks could control toxic content

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Abuse, racism and hate speech - help us clean up the comments online

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Computational Modelling

Goals of abuse detection systems

Imaginaries

- Protecting marginalized communities and people from abuse
- Encode ideological positions into labelled data
- Obtain an understanding of the subjective nature of abuse.

Realities

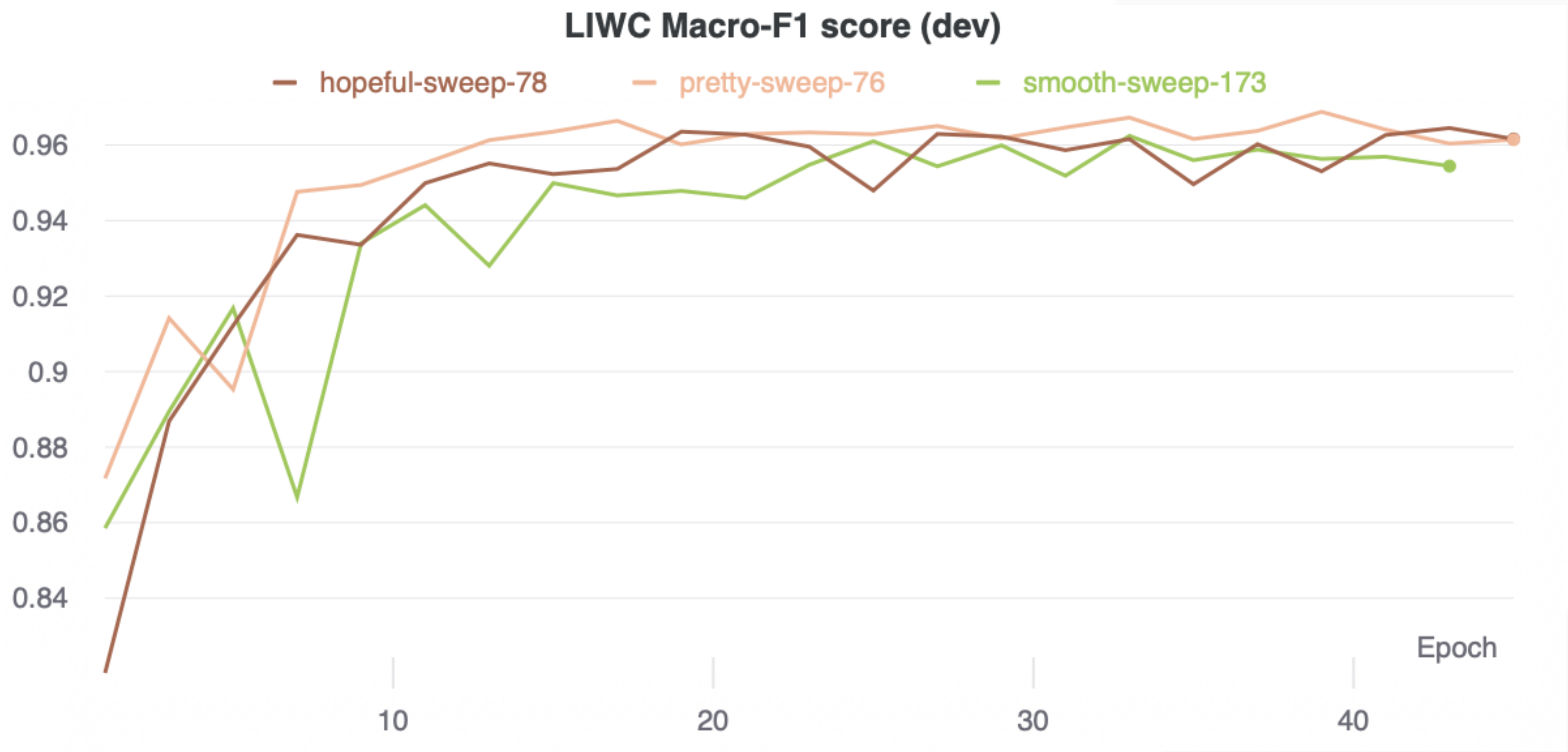
- Minority language (e.g. sociolects and dialects) use is penalized
- Use of crowd-sourcing labels as a source of ground truth
- Hardwiring (simple) correlations into the model

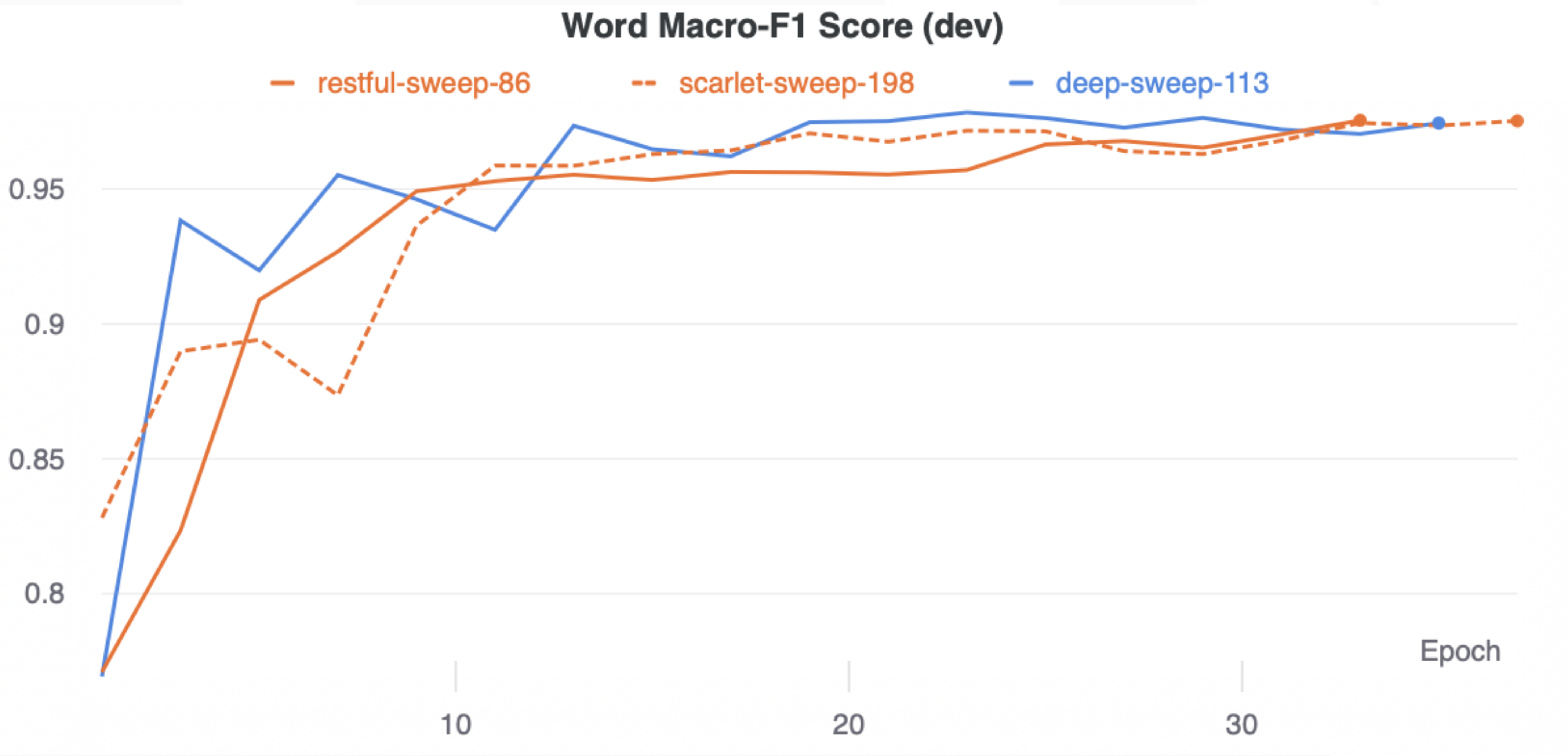
The increasing complexity of abuse detection models

- From feature engineering to inductive biases
- Pre-trained language models

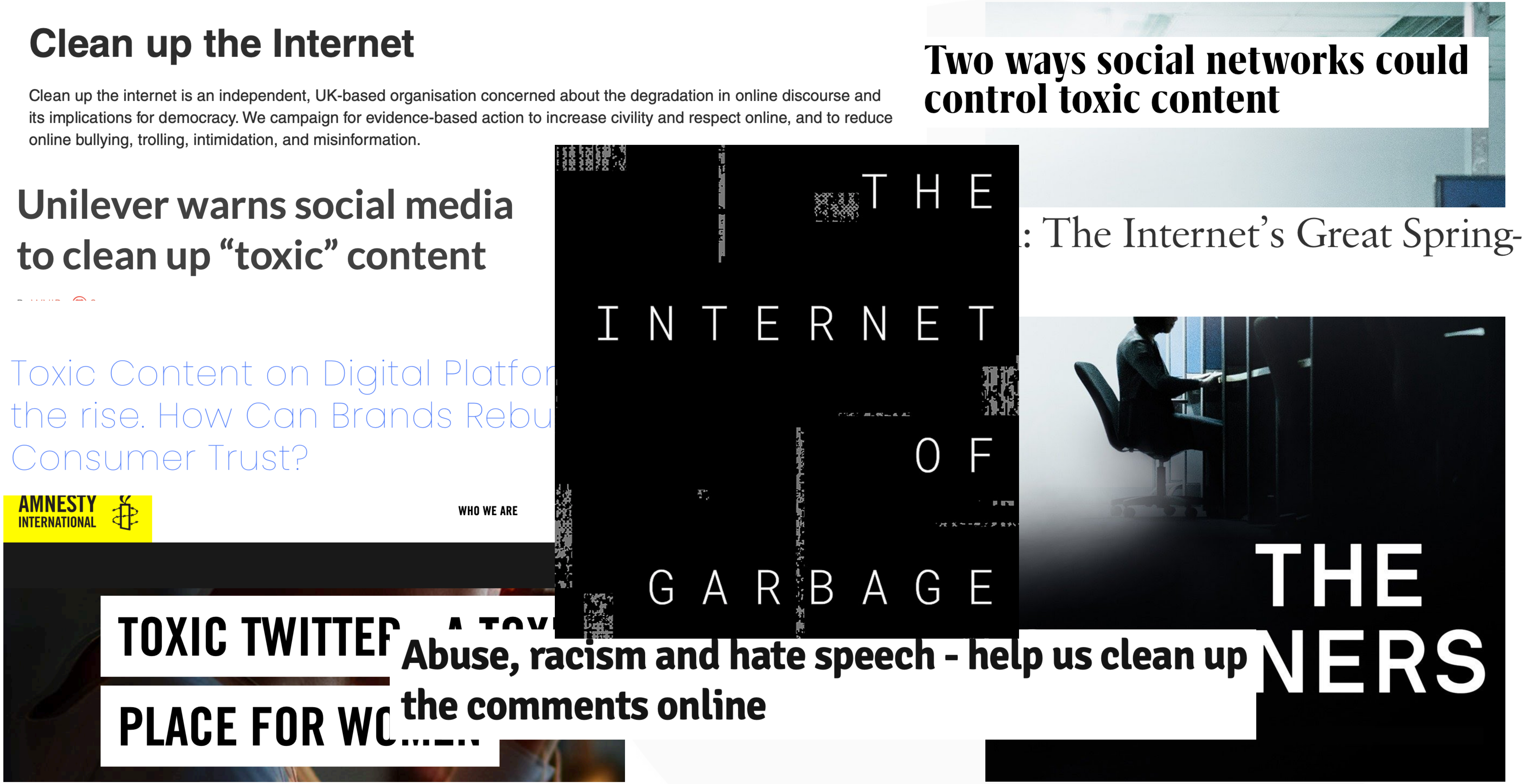
Models and inputs

Very preliminary findings from my dissertation





“Don’t you know that you’re toxic?”



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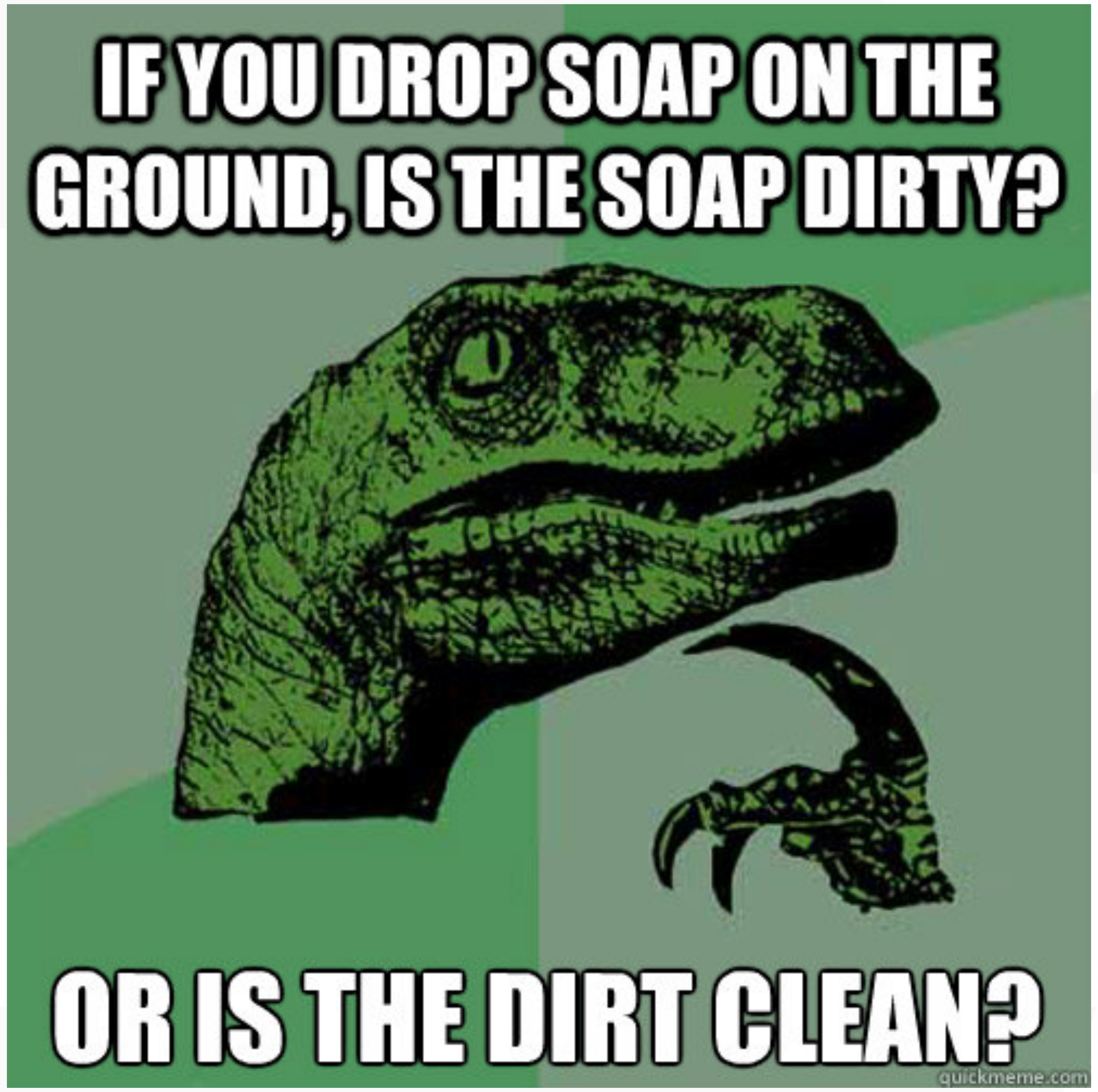
The case of content moderation



- The "toxicity" of words
- Definitional power of "toxic"
- Independent third parties

Content moderation technology as vehicles of oppression

“No one ever accused the God of monotheism of objectivity, only of indifference”

Donna Harraway (1988),
Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.

Embodiment in machine learning pipelines

Designer

- Disassociated from data, model, and outcomes
- “Lack of diversity’ cited as reason for biased models

Data

- Collected from embodied humans, adjudicated on and disentangled from those contexts
- Subjectivity always finds its way
- Annotation == truth (to the model)
- Encode dominant discourses on objects

Future directions of content moderation technologies