**The University of Hull**

Department of Criminology and Sociology

# Online Abuse of Women
## A Criminological Approach

Being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of BA (Hons) Criminology

April 2020

Lydia Robinson

# Abstract

The technological developments within society have initiated the recent phenomenon of the abuse online, which his often aimed towards women. This is an issue which divides cyberspace according to gender, despite efforts create an inclusive environment. This divide has encouraged groups and cultures to form online leading to hostile behaviour and attacks to take place, which is now considered a norm on some online forums and domains. As well as cyberspace becoming another dimension to continue harm, other than in real life. The abuse online is significantly aimed towards women which creates the issue of gender bias and gendered hate, but it leaves no explanation for why this takes place. This dissertation will include responses to the abuse online by both women and legislations and will identify the perpetrators and their motives to their behaviour, in order to explain this form of abuse. It will also focus on how being online facilitates this abuse, as well as it being a possible reflection of norms and values in real life.

This dissertation aims to explain the online abuse of women using criminological theories and determine which theory best explains this. This will be a literature-based dissertation, using academic sources found at the Brynmor Jones Library at Hull as well as reliable sources from the internet, in order to reach a reliable and representative conclusion.

# Contents

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the academic staff at Hull University for their support, guidance, and knowledge throughout my three years of my criminology degree. More specifically I would like to thank Dr. Michael McCahill, as has been my supervisor throughout writing this dissertation, giving me direction and advice throughout, especially under the change in conditions due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

# 1 Introduction

The computer networking revolution began in the 1960s, where the internet was used primarily for military and scientific purposes. It has since significantly grown, with over 4.54 billion active users globally (Clement, 2020), becoming a social phenomenon. The online environment, also known as cyberspace, consists of more than just the internet but a place where users have social interactions and have influence over others using digital media (Techopedia, 2012). However, this global networking has a negligible amount of centralized control which can then blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication (Williams and Rice, 1983). It can be argued that this results in the exposing of new opportunities and risks in relation to the way individuals liaise with one another (Williams and Rice, 1983).

One of the risks that being online and in the cyberworld facilitates is the abuse of women. This includes a wide range of violence and hostile behaviour including threats of violence, discrimination, online harassment, doxing, sharing sexual and private images without consent and trolling (Pinto, 2017), where the perpetrators are 80% men (Martin, 2015). Amnesty International carried out a survey across 8 different countries and found that 23% of women are said to have experienced online abuse or harassment, which is nearly a quarter of the women surveyed (Pinto, 2017), showing that there is a trend across many countries that women are victims of abuse online. This abuse is often highly sexualised and misogynist and it has become normalized for women to be exposed to this gendered cyber-hate, which perhaps is a reflection of the norms and values in societies. This is also illustrated in the statistics from the Crime Survey of England and Wales, where 67,000 gender hate crimes were reported, with 85% of these being reported by women (The Fawcett Society, 2019).

This shows how gendered hate crime online has become commonplace but that there are still forms of resistance which is illustrated in the statistics of people reporting it. However, the difference between real life behaviour and the online sphere is that there is a lack of centralized control so there may be less or no consequences for negative behaviour (Williams and Rice, 1983). This may be a possible motivation for users to abuse females or to exaggerate their real-life hatred as well as the cyberspace allowing anonymity, freedom of speech and indications that users may feel a lack of restraint because of communications being through a screen which are key concepts that will be discussed in this dissertation.

This is a particularly interesting topic to research and base my dissertation on. The book

'Only Words' (MacKinnon, 1993) gave me an insight to the defamation, discrimination, hate speech and sexual harassment that women are victim to, relating this to pornography as an objectifying tool to promote this behaviour that men commit in real life. However, this an example of how current literature is often based purely on a feminist perspective. Therefore, I wanted to investigate this further and relate it to the online abuse that women often receive online. Instead of focusing on the pornography aspect, I wanted to use established theories to explain why women are victims of this and why it has become an online phenomenon. My objective is to still research relevant feminists' theories, but I will research other perspectives to gain a better insight in order to achieve the best explanation.

This dissertation is literature based, so does not include any primary information. It is based upon the material available at the Brynmor Jones Library at Hull University as well as online academic sources. The sources have been reviewed in order to give as wide a range as possible. Throughout this dissertation the theories have been critically analysed to evaluate the significance they have to explain the online abuse of women.

# 2 Literature Review

Current literature identifies gender as a key factor in explaining why there is a division within the online sphere and the type of interactions that take place. Rellstab (2007), argues that the internet should be used as a form of liberation, as computer mediated communication allows users to hide their identity, preventing the judgement of one's character, unlike face to face interactions. However, this is not always the case.

Kendall (2000) studied the groups that develop on the online sphere and how they choose to communicate. She investigated a group of white, heterosexual, males who were the stereotypical 'nerds' with computer and engineering backgrounds. Kendall (2000) examined the 'nerds' relationship with hegemonic masculinity, which is the role of men exerting their dominant position within society which justifies the subordination and oppression of women. She found that despite these users rejecting some forms of hegemonic masculinity, such as interests in sport, they still conform to other aspects which include distancing themselves from any form of femininity and continuously referring to women only as sexual objects. Kendall (2000) argues that these gendered behaviours are exaggerated within online communities to achieve gratification from one another, which can become a discouraging environment for females who are trying to become a part of the internet sphere. An example of this is Gamergate, which displays that not only have online environments become unwelcoming for women, but the dominance of males can create a hostile environment. The Gamergate movement began in 2014, when a female gamer was accused by her ex-boyfriend of trading sexual pleasures in order to succeed in the industry (Lees, 2016). It became a widespread topic of interest across multiple online chat forums, where these accusations led to a multitude of planned harassment and violence towards the female gamer, including death and rape threats, leaking personal information and doxing (Lees, 2016). According to Hathaway (2014), a majority of these participants were white male gamers, which Kendall

(2000) previously referred to as 'nerds'. Gamergate illustrates how gender is an issue on the online sphere, as females have to overcome obstacles in order to be accepted, such as to achieve in the gaming industry. However, this male dominated environment has become hostile towards females which is what leads to events like Gamergate taking place, where violence is used to discourage females from entering this field. It suggests that the 'nerds' communities online not only reject being part of a feminine identity but reject females as a whole, using negative

behaviour in order to prevent women entering this domain. This is supported by the theorist Messerschmidt (2001). His ideas are heavily influenced on feminist and postmodern approaches in explaining why men use their dominance to abuse females, which can be related to the 'nerd' subculture that Kendall (2000) discusses. Messerschmidt (2001) argues that hegemonic masculinity is the ruling masculine culture within society, however some men have subordinate masculinities which means that they do not desire to accomplish having a hegemonic masculinity or they may not have the resources to do so. So, in order to achieve some form of masculinity they may take part in crimes or forms of abuse (Messerschmidt, 2001). This can then be related to the abuse that takes place online towards females and support Kendall's (2000) theory. As 'nerds' have a subordinate masculinity, rejecting forms of hegemonic masculinity. However, in order to achieve a masculine identity, they turn to abusing females online, such as when the Gamergate movement took place. Messerschmidt's (2001) study was not originally focused on the online sphere and can be criticised that not all males have a desire to accomplish some form of masculinity. There are other groups within the online domain which target females online, which are not part of the stereotypical nerd culture which Messerschmidt (2001) and Kendall (2000) fail to acknowledge.

Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016), give a feminist perspective on the era of gender wars online which is dominated by violence towards females. They acknowledge that there are disparities within violence online, as it does not always stem from gender but is related to race as well, as women of colour are a particular target online (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016). Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) briefly refer to anonymity and insufficient legal frameworks as a factor contributing to this taking place. However, they overlook this and fail to develop it any further. Instead they argue that the most important explanation for harassment online for females is the deep-rooted structure of misogyny that is embedded within western culture. They put forward the idea of popular feminism, which encourages females to be confident which they argue is the key to overcome the structural and societal problems such as to 'lean in' in the workplace to avoid scrutiny. However, Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) can be criticised as confidence cannot eliminate death or rape threats and does not solve the wide problem of females being attacked online.

A radical feminist approach, contrary to Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) is Dobash and Dobash (1979). Like Messershmidt (2001), Dobash and Dobash's (1979) theory is not related to the online abuse of females but to the violence that females are subjected to by men in real life, which we can then relate to the online sphere. Dobash and Dobash (1973) argue that violent attacks

from men stem from their dissatisfaction from their partners, which may relate to their sexual or domesticated needs. Because of this, men then exert their dominance over females, such as restricting their partners' activities or having control over their economic assets (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). This can be related to the domestic abuse cases that are online, as 48% of UK females who have experienced violence from their partner have also reported experiencing abuse once they have left the relationship (Smith, 2014), showing a relationship between domestic abuse and abuse online. However, this only represents the online abuse cases that are online, which is not the sole reason why females are abused online.

Overall, gender and the online abuse that takes place deserves further investigation. These studies identify gender as a factor within cultures and divisions of groups online, which affects the way users communicate and behave towards each other. Real life studies have been used in order to understand why men target females in the real world which we can relate to the online sphere. However, current literature only focuses on two groups of offenders, which are the nerd subcultures and domestic abuse cases, which will still be points of interest within my dissertation. My dissertation will aim to fill in a gap that I believe current literature leaves. Therefore, it will not only explain why certain groups abuse females online but what factors facilitate this, such as technological developments, legislations, and cultures.

# 3 Feminist Theory

Online abuse has become particularly common in both men and women showing that 73% of adult internet users have witnessed some form of internet abuse whilst 40% have personally experienced it (Duggan, 2017). However, according to Pew Research Centre, men are less likely to be subjected to severe harassments and are likely to be exposed to name calling and embarrassment, however particularly young women experience serious forms of harassment including sexual harassment and stalking (Duggan, 2017). This gender difference often trivialises the abuse women receive as males and society as a whole cannot often relate to the severity of the crimes taking place to females as they do not have first-hand experience of this. It can have a significant effect on females psychologically, professionally and have financial impacts on their lives which can become crippling (Jane, 2014). According to Jane (2014), many females have to self-censor themselves, write anonymously or under a pseudonym or even remove themselves from the online sphere altogether in order to avoid the online abuse. However, in a new wave of fourth feminism some females have rejected this and have become a part of the 'call out culture' where victims publicize and shame the actions of those males who are being abusive online in order to create a movement where the abuse of females on-line is no longer a norm within society.

Many of the online abuse cases have been linked to offline domestic abuse against women. This is shown in statistics released by Women's Aid where 48% of UK females who have experienced violence from their partner have also reported experiencing abuse online once they have left the relationship and 38% reported that they had been stalked by an ex-partner (Smith, 2014). Radical feminists explain this as a form of men maintaining a patriarchal society, as being in a relationship is seen as a key instrument to dominate and oppress women by using physical or online violence (Millett, 1970). This explains why women are most likely to be the victim of abuse, but this theory fails to mention the abuse and violence that takes place in lesbian relationships. However, Dobash and Dobash (1979) support this theory on heterosexual couples as they found that violent behaviour often takes place when a female challenges her male partner's authority and becomes a threat to his patriarchal ideology. Male partners have a huge power on the online domain as it is an environment where other abusive males can be contacted to encourage more frequent and severe attacks on females. An example of this is in the U.S where a man posted a fake advertisement online titled 'Rape Me and My Daughters' and used his ex-wife's address where over fifty men turned up (Sandoval, 2013). This shows the mob mentality that can be created online, as it is a sphere where people across the world can communicate with each other and

create groups to discuss and stimulate actions online as well in the real world. This then reinforces to females the impact and consequences that can take place as a result of encountering an abusive male both online and in real life, which cannot always be avoided. It creates the question of where do females feel safe as neither online or the real world have safe domains for females to express themselves freely and be themselves which then encourages females to self -censor or removes themselves from being online altogether to avoid being victims of abuse (Jane, 2014).

Social media platforms have been heavily criticised for abusing women's rights online. Despite Twitter having to abide by human rights under the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Amnesty International (2018) has particularly demonstrated Twitter to be a toxic environment for females. For example, they have found an abundant of abuse such as direct and indirect threats of physical and sexual violence, discriminatory abuse, harassment and privacy violations like doxing or sharing intimate and sexual images without consent. Twitter is a huge online domain where over five hundred million tweets are sent per day and there are over twenty million Twitter users (Amnesty International, 2018). Amnesty International (2018) investigated Twitter users including those who have a high number of followers such as gamers, politicians and bloggers as well as those who do not have a high following and are normal members of the public. The findings highlighted women of colour, ethnic minority backgrounds, religious minority backgrounds, lesbian, bi-sexual, non-binary and disabled females have an intersectional experience of being online. This means that women cannot be investigated as one group, as there are subgroups within this that have different experiences to one another. Such as a white female has a different experience to online abuse compared to a black bi-sexual female. Abuse online stems from being a minority, which is why females experience it in the first place, however men now target those within this group who are a minority which is why these subcategories are targeted even more. An example of this is Diane Abbot, a British politician, who released a blog post on Amnesty International (2018) expressing that she feels she receives double the abuse online against her due to her being a female and being black, shown in the abuse she receives is heavily sexualised and racialised. She argues that it has a long-lasting damage on her psychologically as she does not participate on on-line forums, such as Twitter, as the abuse is a repellent to her freedom of speech which is what Twitter is intended to be used for, but instead makes women and particularly women of colour selfcensor or remove themselves from Twitter. Amnesty International have emphasised Twitter as they believe that this is one of the main domains where females are abused, so if they target this then it may have significant impacts for females online. Therefore, it can be argued that radical feminists fail to recognise the difference

in females' experiences when it comes to online abuse, especially on online forums such as Twitter, where females are a target and victimised for their other religious, racial and sexual identities.

However, not all females have retracted from the usage of the internet and social media forums, as the internet has facilitated a global community of feminists who use the internet for discussion and activism. Munro (2013), argues that the internet has enabled a shift from third to fourth wave feminism where the 'call out' culture has emerged. The 'call out' culture is when sexism and misogyny can be challenged and those accountable are publicly shamed. An example of this is Alanah Pearce who is an Australian gamer who Tweeted "Sometimes young boys on Facebook send me rape threats, so I've started telling their mothers" (Bahadur, 2014) and she included a screenshot of a message from a mother apologising to Pearce once she had seen her sons abuse towards her online. Despite not publicly shaming the young boys who send her abuse, she has put these boys in a position where they may receive consequences for their actions. Pearce received a significant amount of support as over eleven thousand users retweeted her (Bahadur, 2014), showing this as an act of vigilantism which creates a positive environment online for women to stand up against the abuse they receive.

However, the 'call out' culture has been criticised by Munro (2013), who states that this form of feminism risks marginalizing and separating people who could put their platform to better use over minor disagreements. Fourth wave feminists not only 'call out' individuals but they use online platforms to campaign against large corporations. An example of this is 2013 when feminist campaigners online confronted Facebook about its rules against gendered hate speech as images and videos of the abuse of women did not violate their terms of service (Munro, 2013), however those that were homophonic, racist and Islamophobic were

(O'Toole, 2013). O'Toole (2013) also questions this as Facebook's terms and guidelines seem to censor images of women breastfeeding and body positivity images but repeatedly neglects the abusive content towards women. Despite over 65 gender equality groups with thousands of supporters writing to Facebook in an open letter to address this, Facebook still allows this content to be published and on their online domain encouraging this culture where sexism and misogyny is part of the norms and values of society (O'Toole, 2013). According to Munro (2013), the lack of political representation is leading to no 'real' change taking place, like on Facebook sights and in other domains across the online sphere. In 2019, there were only 200 female Members of Parliament (MP's) in the UK, and 66% of the seats were taken by men, whilst in the Conservative

party only a quarter of its members are female (Duncan and Bushby, 2019). In order to achieve a shift in society where sexism and misogyny do not exist, a movement within Politics needs to be achieved, where females are represented and spoken for. Until this is attained, feminists such as fourth wave feminists, will continue to be activists online and in real life to change the way females are treated.

Feminist theory explains the online abuse of women to be an extension of the abuse females receive in the real world. Particularly in domestic abuse cases it has been explained that the online sphere is another platform where abusive partners can attack females and even use it to encourage others to join in, without having to have any physical contact. Radical feminists develop this and explain the abuse taking place to insure there is a gender imbalance and a patriarchal society remains, as males use violence, online and offline, as a tool to overpower women. This online abuse is particularly present on social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, where the guidelines ignore the abuse which is particularly happening to women across the world creating a culture for the abuse of females online. However, there has been a development of feminist theory where fourth wave feminists have used the internet to create a 'call out culture'. Therefore, the internet is not always a tool to oppress women but can liberate those and create a community to call out certain individuals to tackle the norm that is the abusing of females online. Feminist theory explains the reasons for females being victims of online abuse but does not recognise the difference and subcategories in females' experience, such as those who are homosexual or an ethnic minority. With Feminist theory established, the next chapter will develop the disinhibition effect as a contributing factor to the abuse online.

# 4 Disinhibition Effect Theory

According to Kiesler et al (1984), the introduction of being anonymous online should equalize users, including genders. This is because being anonymous allows people to reduce the amount of information they reveal about their physical and background characteristics. This may act as a disguise for their real-life power difference or groups they may be a part of in real life, that they would not be able to mask in a face to face interaction. Anonymity online means users can reveal information under a new identity or an edited version of themselves and release it under their own terms. However, this is not always the case as many use this platform to target their hate and use anonymity for protection of their real-life identity.

Anonymity online is a factor within the online disinhibition effect. According to Dyer et al (1996), this is when an individual's inhibition and restraint is reduced by being able to be anonymous online. This can be used in both a positive and negative way, as it may encourage someone to seek advice or help, but on the other hand it can be hostile and violent. Suler (2004), argues that anonymity results in a negative online disinhibition, where behaviours of aggression are displayed that would not be in 'the real world'. Examples of this include flaming, doxing and threats. Flaming is a common form of negative disinhibition displayed across all media platforms, often in comment sections of YouTube videos, Instagram Posts and Twitter feeds. This is the use of hostile and aggressive language, often using capital letters and excessive exclamation points to emphasize a point as well as threatening language, swearing, name calling and sexually inappropriate comments (Dyer et al, 1996). The Guardian newspaper has recognised the particular trend of misogynist comments left on feminist writers when publishing about female issues (Stoeffel, 2014). An example of this is

Jessica Valenti, who posted an article about how tampons should be free, and in return received amount of abuse and was told to "take her gaping vagina to North Korea" (Stoeffel, 2014). This illustrates that this form of abuse not only targets female's private social accounts but also uses peoples work profiles and platforms which may have significant negative impacts for female's careers in industries such as journalism. Journalism is a particularly male dominated industry, where females are underrepresented by only making up 37% of the reporters (Rattan et al, 2019), resulting in a lack of information and support on female issues, such as Valenti's (2014) article about how tampons should be free. When this information is covered in the media by a female

writer it is continuously followed by relentless abuse which is discouraging for females who must be tormented endlessly in both their home and work life.

Being anonymous has been illustrated as a contributing factor for people having a lack of restraint and show a lesser regard for social norms and constructs, which can be shown online and in real life. An experiment by Zimbardo (1969) has shown the effects of being anonymous in real life, which we can then relate to the behaviours online. Zimbardo (1969) constructed an experiment where participants had to 'shock' a confederate in another room with ranges of severity from mild to dangerous. He found that those participants who were anonymous 'shocked' the confederate for longer and with more severity compared to those whose identities were not concealed, demonstrating the relationship between anonymity and disinhibition (Zimbardo, 1969). This can be related to anonymous users online, as being anonymous reduces the accountability users may feel when they take part in negative behaviour and abuse online. According to Kimmerle et al (2007), the loss of accountability encourages toxic disinhibition, promoting impulsive, aggressive and abusive behaviours. We can also relate this to the abuse of females online as one in ten women receive some form of online violence from the age of 15 (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017), which shows the aggression that is aimed towards females for having an online presence.

Cyberstalking is a significant form of abuse targeting females which is often dependent on anonymity in order to pursue. The British Crime Survey in 2006 estimates up to 5 million people experience stalking each year, however due to the nature of the crime, many of the perpetrators conceal their identity so it can be hard to achieve reliable statistics (McVeigh, 2011). Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999), highlight the misunderstanding of cyberstalking as it has no material gain for the perpetrator and is not influenced by sexual obsession. Instead cyberstalking stems from a suppressed anger and control issues motivated by interpersonal hostility (Mustaine and Tewksbury, 1999), unlike stalking in real life, the internet acts as a safe haven where the offender can hide, and their identity remains concealed under anonymity. This theory by Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999) supports the disinhibition effect theory as the anonymous users are acting without the usual restraints they would face if they were to display their true identity online. However, it can be argued that this theory overlooks some of the sexuality aspects in cyber-stalking cases, as the Pew Research Centre's study (Duggan, 2014) reveals that 26% of women aged 18 to 24 have been cyberstalked and 25% have been sexually harassed.

Anonymity online allows users to experience freedom of expression and can be perceived as a form of liberation. According to Privacy International (2019), many transgender people often use another gender online before they transition in real life, to ensure they want to progress with the transitioning process. Users having another identity online is not always to take part in online abuse, as it may give a sense of freedom, especially when real life can be oppressive for certain people. Another example of this is that being anonymous online can aid females who have left an abusive relationship. 38% of women have reported that once they had left an abusive relationship they had been stalked online (Smith, 2014). Social media accounts can often leave traces of someone's location and the activities they participate in, which can be detrimental if an attacker is trying to find them. Whereas, if the account is anonymous it stops or significantly reduces any traces of an individual being tracked. Therefore, anonymity can be imperative in order to keep women safe online and in the real world. However, there is a real-name policy which has been introduced on some social media platforms, like Facebook, in order to reduce the number of fake profiles and fraud accounts. Privacy International (2019) argues that this is an obstacle as it removes the power an individual has in "defining themselves on their own terms and protecting themselves from abuse". The real-name policy is a "quick fix" according to Privacy International (2019), as it does not address the real causes of online abuse and harassment, but instead it affects the victims rather than the perpetrator. Privacy International (2019) argues there is no correlation to anonymity and attackers, as the attackers often use their real name as a proud statement when abusing others online.

The theory of the online disinhibition effect explains how being anonymous online removes the social obstacles that are in the way of how you behave in real life, resulting in the abuse of women online. It explains that the reduction of inhibitions can result in users acting a way they would not normally do in real life and being anonymous acts as a barrier and safety blanket for other users knowing their real identity. The theory particularly distinguishes the negative behaviour that it can result in, as the lack of restraint can show a lack of respect to the norms and values in society, and result in aggressive and hostile behaviour. Zimbardo's (1969) study supports this, as he uses real life experiences where being anonymous can lead to harsher and less empathetic behaviour towards others. The online disinhibition effect and Zimbardo's (1969) study can be used to explain why anonymous users often account for the significant amount of abuse women receive on their social and work platforms. However, this theory overlooks the positive attributions that being anonymous can lead to, such as those who are curious about their sexuality or females escaping violent relationships. The disinhibition effect briefly acknowledges positive

outcomes of being anonymous, such as seeking advice and help, but puts emphasis on the negative outcomes. The next chapter will focus on crime opportunity theory, in order to explain the differences in offending despite the same level on technological development.

# 5 Crime Opportunity Theory

The phenomenon of the internet has had significant impacts on the way members of society connect with one another, not only as a means for communication but as non-physical encounters. There have been milestones of development in order to achieve the constant and accessible internet connection on a multitude of platforms that we have today. Firstly, in 1992 there was the introduction of dial up internet connections for households in Europe, followed by the first Blackberry devices in 1999 (Van Der Wilk, 2018). This allowed people to connect with one another, through means such as emails, without having to be at work and on a computer device, which was possible through the common commodity of the internet within most households. In 2001, the first camera phones were available in Europe, shortly followed by the introduction of Facebook for anyone over the age of 13 as well as mobile broadband access, of high-speed internet from anyplace on 3G in 2006 (Van Der Wilk, 2018). This meant that internet devices were able to be used not only in the home and at work, but you could use our device almost anywhere, and the introduction of camera phones meant more people were sharing images online. In 2008, Apple launched their app store, allowing people to purchase third party applications, such as Facebook could now be accessed on mobile phones or iPod's (Van Der Wilk, 2018). There have also been developments in the safety and requirements in correlation to the growing and adapting internet networks. In 2016, the European Commission began to focus on online platform's transparency, the illegal content and the right to be forgotten (Van Der Wilk, 2018). This led to the European Commission signing with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube a "Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online" (Van Der Wilk, 2018). Also, in 2016 The General Data Protection Regulation was implemented to regulate and protect consumers when processing their personal data (Van Der Wilk, 2018). But despite the legislations and research into the issues the developing cyberworld has, problems still occur, such as in 2018 the Cambridge Analytica scandal exposed that Facebook had been selling users' data without consent in order to have advertising and political power (Van Der Wilk, 2018).

These developments within the technological sphere, that have taken place globally, have enabled cybercrime more achievable for perpetrators. The crime opportunity theory explains that for a crime to take place there needs to be a motivated offender and the facilities which allow the crime to take place (Jeffery, 1997). This theory can be applied to the online abuse of females as some of the abuse that takes place, such as doxing, is a crime facilitated by the internet and the easy

accessibility of its platforms. However, this does not explain the differences of offending in different countries, despite the opportunities through the internet being the same.

In China, the main cyberthreat that takes place is the 'human flesh search engine', where users identify and publicly humiliate chosen targets who have been accused of anything from corruption to animal cruelty (Lyons et al, 2016). For example, in 2013 Ding Jinhao, a young teenager from Nanjing, became a target after the phrase "Ding Jinhao was here" appeared on an ancient temple in Egypt after Jinhao had returned from a family holiday there (Lyons et al, 2016). His personal information was released of his home and school address, where threats were continuously sent until his family were forced to release a statement online apologising for Jinhao's actions (Lyons et al, 2016). This demonstrates the mob mentality that China particularly has on the online sphere, where justice is believed to be carried out by the users itself rather than leaving it to the criminal justice system. There are over 688 million internet users which intensifies the abuse as it has become a common phenomenon in the last decade (Lyons et al, 2016). China has no specific law to combat online bullying and according to Zhou Zongkui (cited in Lyons et al, 2016) there has been very little academic studies into cybercrime and the effects it has. This may be why the Chinese online culture has taken justice into its own hands and created a mob mentality to perpetuate those who have 'done wrong'.

In contrast the online abuse that takes place in Colombia is often from paramilitary groups who target females, these groups are semi-militarized and are a structured organisation with tactics, training and subcultures. Olga Oaz Matinez, who is the coordinator for 'Take Back the Tech' project in Colombia says that the violence that takes place on the online sphere is often directed towards women's right campaigners and those who speak out about women's rights (Lyons et al, 2016). The threats of stalking, harassment and revenge porn are from paramilitary groups who are urging them to stop their work and these threats often turn into real life violence of feminist's women being raped and abused (Lyons et al, 2016). According to Lyons et al (2016), this online abuse has deep rooted machismo by these paramilitary groups who have hierarchal notions of gender and traditional family roles. This explains why females who reject these notions are targeted from these groups, as they do not follow the stereotypical values that the paramilitary wants to retain in Colombian culture. In 2008, a legislation was put in place for the violence against women (refworld, 2020) however there is no specific association with the abuse they receive online. Therefore, in Colombia the lack of legislation and the power of the paramilitary groups results in attacks for females both online and offline, with few actions females can take as a resistance.

The US and UK have similar cultures online where women remain the target for online abuse. The abuse can be divided into two categories. The first form of abuse is usually directed by a partner or ex-partner, colleague, or anyone the victim has known or had contact with, which is often revenge porn and stalking (Lyons et al, 2016). The second form is often aimed towards someone in the public eye, who has a larger following, which includes death and rape threats from people they may have never been in contact with (Lyons et al, 2016).

However, the US and UK differentiate in how they respond to this. The UK has legislations in place to try and tackle the issue of females being a constant target online such as the 2015 legislation against revenge porn (Lyons et al, 2016), but this is harder to implement on the second form, when there is a larger scale of abuse aimed at a high profile female. The US has less resources invested in this, as it becomes more complicated when trying to prosecute across different states as well as law enforcement officers prioritising other cases (Lyons et al, 2016). For example, in 2015, Anthony Elonis posted graphic content on his Facebook about his desire to murder his estranged wife. However, the US supreme court decided Elonis was innocent because he claimed not to have the intent to follow through with the actions he posted (Lyons et al, 2016). The US and UK are both examples of how legislation can have a significant impact on the culture they have. The UK has put legislation in place aiming to tackle the issue of females being victims of crimes online, trying to create a zero-tolerance culture of the abuse of females, despite many not obliging. However, the US does not address these issues based on the lack of legislation they have, which then creates the environment where abusers online can get away with it so will participate in the targeting of females.   The various trends within countries regarding their rates of online abuse, which the crime opportunity theory could not explain, can be described through the rational choice approach (Cornish and Clarke, 2017). This approach interprets the accessibility of the internet to be an opportunity for abuse to take place, however users have to weigh up the consequences of their actions if they choose to take part in the abuse online or not, and what they will gain from this. This then comes down to an individual's self-interests, also known as homo economicus. However, situational crime prevention theory (Clarke, 1997) describes that there are managerial and environmental changes that reduce the opportunity for the abuse to occur.

This can include legislation's put in place, for example the UK's 2015 legislation against revenge porn. The more input a country has over its situational crime prevention strategies the less opportunity users have to abuse online, but this is dependent on the culture it wants to achieve. Such as China argue they have sophisticated software against abuse online (Lyons et al, 2016)

but still remain to have a huge mob culture mentality which aims to bring justice to those who may have committed crimes as well as Colombia's abuse online is often from the authorities itself so has little in place to prevent their own actions. The hate speech and abuse online reflect societies' perceptions and stands on gender equality and violence against women, which is part of their culture varying from each country.

Therefore, how technological developments facilitate online abuse is best explained by the crime opportunity theory. It does this well in relation to online abuse to females because it emphasizes that the internet is now a common commodity in many households across the world, which gives people the opportunity and accessibility to take part in abusive behaviour. However, this theory does not recognise that there are other factors involved which influence this type of behaviour. This is shown in the examples of different countries which all have access to the internet and its facilities but vary in the trends of abusive content it has online. Instead, this is explained in the rational choice theory which acknowledges an individual's motivation to commit this abuse online, for example to abuse a female online due to them undermining their societies norms and values. Another theory which develops why countries differ in the type of abuse they have online is situational crime prevention theory. This highlights the environmental factors, which both the crime opportunity theory and rational choice theory fail to acknowledge, where a country's legislations or lack of legislations can have influence over the online abuse that is taking place. Different countries put emphasis on issues that they deem important to represent the culture they want to achieve, which may result in certain groups being a target online, such as in many countries females are victims to many online attacks. Now that the opportunity theory has been developed to explain crime, the next chapter will investigate a particular group and culture within the online sphere.

# 6 The Masculinization of the Computer

The online abuse of females is significantly due to the masculinization of the computer and other technological systems. Particularly in western cultures technological power is dominated by males (Wajcman, 1991), which is initially displayed within the 1980s, where evidence suggests that the technological sphere was favouring males by promoting itself to this target audience, and ignoring females having any positive contribution, still translating in today's society. Examples of this include computer advertising being only aimed towards females when in relation to administrative work or as 'sex objects' to be attained by the typical 'technological skilful man' (Ware and Struck, 1985). Software and computer games throughout the 1980s were particularly dominated by themes of militarism and male violence, with highly sexualised illustrations of women (Lien, 2013). Gibson (1994), illustrates a popular culture of fetishism within online platforms, such as movies and television, in particular with men asserting their power by overcoming obstacles. And the computer science training taking place in the 1980s was teaching similar concepts to the 'hacking' subcultures, where masculine norms of competitiveness and violence are forms of reinforcing gender boundaries to alienate females (Turkle, 1984). These examples display why there is a significant gender disparity in computer science, especially in the mid-late 1900s, as according to National Centre for Education Statistics (2014) (cited in Sax et al, 2016) females only represented 13.6% of computer science bachelor's degrees in 1971. Despite STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programmes being put in place to engage females into science, such as National Girls Collaborative Project and Association for Women in Science, there is still an underrepresentation within STEM subjects, including computer science, shown in the statistics of females representing only 18% of computer science bachelor's degrees in 2014 (Sax et al, 2016), which is still a 14.4% rise from 1971, however a still significant underrepresentation. This masculinization of computing industries reinforces the inequalities in genders and is a significant contributor to the way females are treated in relation to online abuse. There is a cult culture online, known as 'geek masculinity' (Taylor, 2012), whereby males maintain gendered stereotypes and feel a need to protect the male dominated technological sphere and keep it exclusive. These online communities form a culture whereby females become subordinate, which is a trigger for gendered online abuse.

According to Murray et al (1993), geek masculinity is the establishment of males who use their technological knowledge as a foundation to form their masculine identity. Geek masculinity is an adaptation to the label geeks. This stereotype was originally a label associated with the

characteristics of programmers and computer engineers who were socially awkward and recluse (Ensmenger, 2010). However, according to Bell (2013 cited in Hearn et al, 2013), this label was internalized and technology became a form of masculine identification, whereby geek masculinity became a subculture where social capital was built upon the specialised knowledge of technology, and rejecting the mainstream norms of masculinity, such as athleticism. According to Kendall (2011), this subculture is predominately white, male, middle class and heterosexual, where technology such as video games are aimed towards this group, leaving females as outsiders. However, in recent years a 'new generation of geeks' has formed as a result of celebrities such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, who have both been publicised to reach great wealth using technological skill. This has contributed to the de-stigmatisation of the label 'geek', as they have been re-established as economic assets. But despite this, the geek masculinity ethos still shapes the technological working sphere, where females' professional opportunities are limited due to the reinforcement of masculinity in the technological domain. This includes the design of social media platforms which reflect the 'geek' concepts, making females aware they are invading a male domain, such as video games which are still primarily designed and advertised towards a straight, white, middle class and heterosexual man.

Technological environments have become even more hostile to females in recent years, due to the increased participation of females in the technological sphere as there has been a growth in mobile phones, computers and social media, which poses a threat to the male's technological hegemony. For example, Casti (2014) states that females make up nearly half of the game players in the video game industry, however despite the growing female participation it has not become a gender inclusive domain. According to Higgin (2015 cited in Mansell, 2015), geeks make attempts to preserve this domain which is where and why online abuse is being targeted at females, as they are seen as 'outsider' in this domain, which includes online threats and insults to females which are often racially or sexually motivated. Defensive males group together to form alliances within this sphere, which can have similar correlations to anti-feminists, men's rights activists, and white supremacists' movements, as they act against these outsiders (Salter, 2018). A significant example of this taking place is Gamergate, which illustrates the intensity of geek masculinity and the lengths they have gone to in order to protect and preserve masculine technological control.

Gamergate took place in August 2014, when a high-profile video developer, Eron Gjoni, released a 9000-word article about his ex-girlfriend Zoe Quinn. It included multiple accusations of Quinn committing adulteries and suggestions of her gaining her success in the video game industries by

having sexual affairs with other influencers. This article was initially released on the geek discussion forums such as 'Something awful' and 'Penny arcade', where they were quickly taken down. However, Gjoni released them again on 4chan, which is an online page dedicated to the discussion of video games, pornography, comics etc by geeks, where he received a more responsive audience. 4chan has a reputation of being misogynist and explicitly racist amongst gamers, where many orchestrated online attacks take place through posts which are now a norm and part of the culture. Quinn was particularly vulnerable on 4chan as its users were already hostile towards her due to her being a female successor in the video game industry as she was a creator of the game 'Depression Quest' which came under scrutiny on geek webpages as Quinn allegedly had sexual activities with a game reviewer to receive a positive review. So, Gjoni was aware he was going to be escalating the hostility towards Quinn by posting his article, especially on 4chan. The online abuse directed at Quinn was severe, it included a significant amount of online abuse which records show over 16 gigabytes (Jason, 2015), her address was leaked which resulted in her having to move address for safety reasons (Jason, 2015), she was hacked and doxed alongside any females who showed support for her (Romano, 2014), SWATing (sending false tips to the police to prompt a raid on a particular address) and threats so serious she had to cancel events to keep her safe. Right-wing activists encouraged this abuse, including actor Adam Baldwin who tweeted a link to a YouTube video of someone giving abuse to Quinn, and used the #Gamergate, which became a viral trend. Individuals began to make careers and profit at

Quinn's expense. For example, Milo Yiannopoious, built an online following through Gamergate in order to pursue his far-right winged journalism career. Phil Mason used crowdfunding, where gamers donated money to him to finance his abuse towards Quinn as well as other female creators, earning up to US$7000 a month (Idlediletante, 2015). As well as Gjoni used crowdfunding to raise over US$50,000 in order to appeal against the restraining order Quinn put in place (Romano, 2016).

Despite the individuals who are part of this abuse as part of geek masculinity, it can be argued that the online forums, such as Reddit, 4chan and 8chan, encourage this toxic technoculture. The Actor-network theory (Latour, 1996) suggests that the non-human technological agents are what shapes human activity and the specific cultures that are displayed on these non-human forums. Latour (1996) explains that these online forums often measure an individual's success and status by their contribution to the page, which can be measured by number of posts, and the likes and dislikes they received on these. So, when different topics become popular certain users also receive popularity, which is often obtained by users posting explicit and abusive material to get

themselves noticed. Many of these forums do not discourage this kind of material, as administrators have very little to do with the site as it is a place for freedom of speech and there are few ways to report this behaviour. This in turn encourages users to pursue this popularity using this type of hate speech and language as they won't receive any negative consequences, unlike the real world, which creates this community known as geek masculinity and gamers.

However, women who have become subject to this sexual violence and hostility online have used social media to stand up against this. Tarana Burke began the #MeToo movement in 2006 to create female solidarity online (Lawton, 2017), where using the hashtag encourages more females to come forward about their sexual abuse experiences. The use of social media caused #MeToo to go viral, with over a million users using the hashtag in 48 hours (Lawton, 2017), where famous people such as actress Alyssa Milano came forward as well as thousands of ordinary women who also shared their stories. This movement aimed to show males how sexual abuse online and offline is a common experience for females and to reject the culture that has become so normal to sexualise a female in any aspect of her life, such as at work, out with friends or online. In relation to the masculinization of the computer, this movement aims to prevent users abusing females online as this too is a form of sexual abuse when the language they use often sexualise females as insults.

Gamergate is just one event that has taken place illustrating the geek masculinity and gamer culture where the abuse of females has become a norm and part of its culture. The mob mentality within this sphere shows the influence their peers have over each other, as it is a ripple effect when a target has been chosen and gratification from peers becomes a motivation for these attacks. As the internet is a universal tool, the members are from all over the world which heightens the abuse as there it becomes a global scale attack, like Gamergate which involved millions of users. The abuse given is often racially and sexually stimulated such as rape threats, which is a way of geeks online aiming to assert their dominance and gain masculine status amongst their peers. The inequality online and in the technological sphere reinforce to males that they must keep their domain 'safe' and exclusive, increasing the hostility towards males when they try and enter, which becomes increasingly harder due to the accessibility to technology in recent years, which may also be a reason why the hostility has become so violent. Many males have even made careers from online abuse to females, such as Mason and Yiannopoious who have made significant profits and bettered their careers at the expense of females, which reflects the gender inequalities online to the inequalities in real life. However, the masculinization of the computer theory does not take into account the power the use of the online sphere can give to

females, such as the #MeToo movement. This particular movement aims to stand up to the culture that sexualises women and abuses them, creating an online environment where females speak freely on these matters where the online sphere acts as a form of liberation for females.

# 7 Conclusion

To conclude, the initial aim of this research was to display which criminological theory best explains the online abuse of women. This dissertation has depicted reasons behind the abuse which takes place and how the developments of the online sphere have facilitated this. Previous research has shown the significance of gender online in the way users communicate with one another, despite the purpose of cyberspace being to hide user's identities, unlike face to face conversations (Rellstab, 2007). Official statistics display the pattern of abuse that women receive online as 23% of women have self-reported being abused or harassed online (Pinto, 2017), and 80% of the abuse online is committed by men (Martin, 2015). This suggests a link between gender identity online and the gender inequality that takes place, in particular the abuse women receive. However, there is a lack of studies which show this link and focus on the issue's females have as well as the explanation of the abuse they receive by users online. Therefore, this dissertation has aimed to fill in the gap of knowledge there is relating these issues together, by finding the best theory to explain this.

The best theory which explains the online abuse of women is crime opportunity theory. Jeffrey (1997) explains that for a crime to take place, or in this case abuse online, there needs to be a motivated offender and the facilities which allow it to take place. The facilities allowing cyber abuse to take place are the technological developments, such as global access to mobile broadband in 2001 (Van Der Wilk, 2018), which increases users accessibility to internet platforms, increasing the opportunities for cyber-attacks to take place. This theory acknowledges that just because the facilities are there not everyone is attacking others online, which is why it highlights that individuals have various motivations. However, this theory does not focus on the individual motivations that perpetrators may have as this is an individualistic approach. Therefore, in this chapter I have used various countries to relate this theory to how online attacks vary upon the different motivations across cultures. For example, the online culture in China is to target anyone who may have committed a crime in order to humiliate them (Lyons et al, 2016). The examples also show a trend of the abusive culture towards women in many different countries such as Columbia, USA and UK, which reflects the attitudes these societies have on women and then displaying this anger and hostility on online platforms (Lyons et al, 2016). Overall, this is the best theory in explaining the online abuse to women as it views technology as giving users the opportunity to be abusive and it takes place to women based upon the culture of the real life environment the user is in, as women are not the target of abuse in every country, for

example China. However, there is no explanation for why the cases and trend of motivations is different in each country, which can be explained using crime prevention and rational choice which elaborates on Jeffreys (1997) notion of a motivated attacker.

The other theories displayed throughout this essay still show valid representations of the explanation of online abuse of women. However, they illustrate a narrower perspective of the abuse women receive, compared to the crime opportunity theory which can be related to the variety of communities and cultures there are online.

Feminist theory focuses on the internet extending the norms and values that are present in society, giving females another dimension to no longer feel safe or accepted, which is commonly found in domestic abuse cases. This explains that women are abused online if they undermine their partner or ex-partner and become a threat to patriarchal ideology (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Radical feminists explain similar concepts, as in order to remain in a patriarchal society a relationship is a key instrument in maintaining this by men oppressing their partners using forms of violence, such as cyber-attacks (Millet, 1970). This theory can be applied to both real life and online, however what specifies this as an explanation of the online abuse of women is that it explains the online sphere as a domain where other likeminded abusive partners group together and form a community online. This becomes dangerous for women, as attacks become more severe with more members encouraging one another and it becomes a mob mentality. Feminist theory also challenges the patriarchal norms that are within online cultures, shown in guidelines which fail to address the abuse of women online. Feminist theory does well in explaining the domestic abuse cases of online crime that take place, and acknowledge the internet as a communication network for abusers to encourage others. However, I believe this is the least effective theory in explaining the abuse of women online. This is because it only explains the domestic abuse cases, which is not a large representative of the abuse cases online such as celebrities who are trolled online by users who do not have any relationship with them. As well as this, the new fourth wave feminism does not focus on the explanation of women being abused online and focuses their efforts into reacting back, for example creating a call out culture, which means there is no new feminist theory to explain this abuse.

The masculinization of the computer theory shares similar concepts to feminism, which acknowledges that there is deep rooted gender bias within cyberspace, excluding females. Feminism explains this using patriarchal norms within social media guidelines, but the masculinization of the computer approach explains that since the 1980s the technical sphere has

only been promoted to males, such as through video games showing themes of militarism and male violence and only promoting women as sexualised objects (Lien, 2013). This approach further explains that having a male dominated environment has created a culture called geek masculinity, where males online use technological knowledge as a foundation for their masculine identity (Murry et al 1993). This relates to the abuse of females online as recent developments to encourage females in entering the online domain, such as STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics), threaten the geek culture online in the only environment which gives them a masculine identity. Therefore, being online has become a hostile environment for females as geeks aim to preserve cyberspace as male dominated, resulting in targeted attacks to exclude females. An example of this is Gamergate which is a clear example supporting the masculinization of computer theory, as it displays the mob mentality that can be created by geeks on online forums, in order to plan attacks to prevent females entering online. This theory does explain why cyberspace is increasingly hostile towards women, as they are a threat to male domination. This is showing similar trends to feminist theory as both theories explain abusive behaviour to females online as a certain group feel threatened or undermined by them, such as partners or geeks. However, it fails to acknowledge the power it can give women for example the #MeToo movement which publicly acknowledged females to be over sexualised online as well as other communities online and individuals who abuse females, who do not come under the geek category.

Lastly, there is the theory of anonymity online and how this results in the disinhibition effect. Dyer et al (1996) explain how being anonymous online can lead users to feel less restrained as communication is no longer face to face, which can be both positive and negative. This theory uses the negative disinhibition effect to explain the abuse of women online. Because there is less restraint, it means users will no longer feel any empathy for the user on the receiving end of abuse, so may let out aggression that the user would not display in real life

(Suler, 2004). Zimbardo's (1969) study is used to support the disinhibition effect as it shows a real-life study of how being anonymous can result in us being harsher and show less emotion for others, which we can relate to anonymity online, as it has the same effect. However, this theory does not necessarily explain the online abuse of females as this can be related to any of the abuse cases online, other than the statistics which show that women are more likely to be victims. Unlike the other theories, this does not focus on explaining a certain group of perpetrators and instead focuses on the internet facilitating users in being anonymous. Having an environment where perhaps there are no or less consequences for negative behaviour, unlike the real world, it

does not deter users from being abusive. However, this theory cannot be used for all abusive content online, as a significant amount of abuse is not done under an anonymous profile, for example Phil Mason who used crowdfunding to abuse Quinn throughout the Gamergate movement (Idlediletante, 2015). Overall, my findings have contributed to the insights into explaining which criminological theories best explain the online abuse of women. The theory which best explains this is the crime opportunity theory as this can be applied to a wide variety of the abuse that is targeted towards women, considering the facilities which enable this as well as the culture of the society of a user which motivates this. Therefore, the culture is a significant factor in determining the type of behaviour there is online and who the victims may be, as this is the only theory which acknowledges that women are not always the victims, despite the online abuse of women being the trend in the UK, USA and Colombia, this is not the case in China. The other theories mentioned throughout this dissertation still give a valid explanation, but they particularly focus on certain abusive behaviour by certain communities online, which is not as representative as the crime opportunity theory. If I were to repeat this study, with more experience and knowledge on the areas I have investigated I would potentially investigate the factors that influence a culture, which vary in each country. Although this was mentioned in the crime opportunity theory, I would investigate further the legislations countries put in place against crime against women and online abuse.

# Bibliography

Amnesty International. (2018) Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women. [Online] [Accessed: 4th March 2020] Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter1/#topanchor.

Bahadur, N. (2014) Game Reviewer Alanah Pearce Is Contacting The Mothers Of Boys Who Sent Her Rape Threats. *HuffPost US*. [Online] 8th December 2014. [Date accessed: 4th March 2020] Available from: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/alanah-pearce-rapethreats-facebook_n_6248928?ri18n=true&guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9jb25zZW50L nlhaG9vLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALz7uVie68Nv6xCt3ZMqxOySS0rHwcddlKJC OD7mTguqYyKC9A0KJREsYhO51cJ0TYaJtpYKzIFHbBA4nmTAnVc9eMpmvHdp8E2yWIj hjAPnY-IZBNzwSogr1dCwxgbkoF9ejLGjUcJ97qYVfdFDevYDeT4CzRAOT_hax4nQSD.

Banet-Weiser, S. and Miltner, K.M. (2016) # MasculinitySoFragile: culture, structure, and networked misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(1), pp.171-174.

Casti, T (2014) Women Play Video Games. Can We Cut The Sexist Crap Now? *HuffPost* [Online] 24th April 2014. [Accessed 24th February 2020] Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/femalegamers_n_5207137?ri18n=true&guccounter=1 &guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9jb25zZW50LnlhaG9vLmNvbS9jb2xsZWN0Q29uc2VudD9zZ XNzaW9uSWQ9M19jYy1zZXNzaW9uXzJhMDg2M2Q0LWViMDYtNGE3ZC05NWE0LTB hOGFjY2Q5ZDAxZSZsYW5nPWVuLXVzJmlubGluZT1mYWxzZQ&guce_referrer_sig=AQ AAAEt98ZxEVdVDc19MCPY9C6Ugg 9t07qMjl6Rh9121UXNss7oZTm3GkSok-NZV8fdcjejIsXLuIQfkbZveXGY8FFlCSr1Y2r3TBJ54Ijmows2EKbXklpwV2s1k-5qHx1Y4yB9iXC4_kG1Xce7jilaV1pNDg0OgyusXIMoCa1cUBIYO.

Clarke, R.V.G. ed., (1997). Situational crime prevention (pp. 225-256). Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Clement, J. (2020) Statista. [Online] [Date Accessed: 3rd April 2020] Available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/ Cornish, D. B. & Clarke, R. V. G. (2017) The reasoning criminal : rational choice perspectives on offending, 1st edition. London: Routledge.

Dobash, R.E. and Dobash, R. (1979) *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy* (pp. 179-206). New York: Free Press.

Duggan, M. (2014) 5 facts about online harassment. [Online] [Accessed: 30th March 2020] Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/30/5-facts-about-onlineharassment/.

Duggan, M. (2017). Online Harassment 2017. Pew Research Internet Project.

Duncan, P, Bushby, M. (2019) UK elects record number of female MPs. *The Guardian*. [Online] 13th December 2019. [Date accessed: 6th March 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/13/uk-elects-record-number-of-female-mps.

Dyer, R., Green, R., Pitts, M. and Millward, G. (1996) April. What's the flaming problem? or computer mediated communication—deindividuating or disinhibiting?. In Proceedings of the HCI'95 conference on People and computers X (pp. 289-302).

Ensmenger, N. and Misa, T.J. (2010) Gender codes: Why women are leaving computing. European Institute for Gender Equality. (2017) Cyber violence is a growing threat, especially for women and girls. [Online] [Date accessed: 6th March 2020] Available from: https://eige.europa.eu/news/cyber-violence-growing-threat-especially-women-and-girls Gibson, JW. (1994) Warrior Dreams: Manhood in Post-Vietnam America. New York: Hill and Wang.

Hathaway, J. (2014) What is Gamergate, and Why? An Explainer for Non-Geeks. *Gawker.* [Online] 10th October 2014. [Accessed: 6th April 2020] Available from: https://gawker.com/what-is-gamergate-and-why-an-explainer-for-non-geeks-1642909080

Hearn, J., Blagojević, M. and Harrison, K. eds., (2013). Rethinking transnational men: Beyond, between and within nations. Routledge.

Idlediletante (2015) Sargon of Akkad and Thunderf00t: #Gamergate's Well-Paid Talking Heads. *Daily Kos*. [Online] 17th March 2015. [Accessed: 24th February 2020] Available from: https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2015/2013/2017/1370280/-Sargon-of-Akkad-and-Thunderf1370200t-Gamergate-s-Well-Paid-Talking-Heads.

Jane, E.A., (2014). "Your a ugly, whorish, slut" understanding E-bile. Feminist Media Studies, 14(4), pp.531-546.

Jason, Z., (2015). Game of fear. *Boston Magazine*. [Online] 28th April 2015. [Accessed: 24th February 2020] Available from: https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2015/04/28/gamergate/.

Kendall, L. (2000) '"OH NO! I'M A NERD!": Hegemonic Masculinity on an Online Forum', *Gender & Society*, 14(2), pp. 256–274. doi: 10.1177/089124300014002003.

Kendall, L., (2011). "White and nerdy": Computers, race, and the nerd stereotype. The Journal of Popular Culture, 44(3), pp.505-524.

Kiesler, S., Siegel, J. and McGuire, T.W., (1984) Social psychological aspects of computermediated communication. American psychologist, 39(10), p.1123.

Kimmerle, J., Cress, U. and Hesse, F.W. (2007) An interactional perspective on group awareness: Alleviating the information-exchange dilemma (for everybody?). International

Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 65(11), pp.899-910.

Latour, B. (1996) On actor-network theory: A few clarifications. Soziale welt, pp.369-381. Lawton, G. (2017) #MeToo is here to stay. We must challenge all men about sexual harassment. *The Guardian*. [Online] 28th October 2017. [Accessed: 28th March 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/oct/28/metoo-hashtagsexual-harassment-violence-challenge-campaign-women-men.

Lees, M. (2016) What Gamergate should have taught us about the 'alt-right'. *The Guardian.* [Online] 1st December 2016. [Accessed: 6th April 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/01/gamergate-alt-right-hate-trump Lien, T (2013) No girls allowed: Unravelling the story behind the stereotype of video games being for boys. *Polygon*. 2 December. [Accessed 24th February 2020]. Available at: http://www.polygon.com/features/2013/12/2/5143856/no-girls-allowed.

Lyons, K., Phillips, T., Walker, S., Farrell, P., Carpentier, M. (2016) Online abuse: how different countries deal with it. *The Guardian*. [Online] 12th April 2016. [Accessed: 21st March 2020].

Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/onlineabuse-how-harrassment-revenge-pornography-different-countries-deal-with-it.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. (1993) Only words. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Mansell, R., Ang, P.H., Steinfield, C., van der Graaf, S., Ballon, P., Kerr, A., Ivory, J.D., Braman, S., Kleine, D. and Grimshaw, D.J., (2015). The International Encyclopedia of Digital Communication and Society, 3 Volume Set. John Wiley & Sons.

Martin, F. (2015) Women are silenced online, just as in real life. It will take more than Twitter to change that. *The Guardian*. [Online] 23rd April 2015. [Date Accessed: 12th November 2019] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/23/women-are-silenced-online-justas-in-real-life-it-will-take-more-than-twitter-to-change-that.

McVeigh, K. (2011) Cyberstalking 'now more common' than face-to-face stalking. *The Guardian*. [Online] 8th April 2011. [Accessed: 12th March 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/apr/08/cyberstalking-study-victims-men.

Messerschmidt, J.W., 2001. Masculinities, crime and prison. *Prison masculinities*, pp.67-72.

Millett, K., (2016) Sexual politics. New York: Columbia University Press.

Munro, E. (2013) 'Feminism: A Fourth Wave?', Political Insight, 4(2), pp. 22–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-9066.12021.

Murray, F., Owen, J. and Pain, D., (1993). Gendered by Design: Information Technology and Office Systems.

Mustaine, E. E., & Tewksbury, R. (1999). A routine activity theory explanation for women's stalking victimizations. Violence Against Women, 5(1), 43–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778019922181149.

Newham, L. (2020) Russia Takes a Big Step Toward Internet Isolation. *Wired*. [Online] 5th

December 2020. [Accessed: 21st March 2020] Available from: https://www.wired.com/story/russia-internet-control-disconnect-censorship/.

O'Toole, E (2013). Facebook's violently sexist pages are an opportunity for feminists. *The Guardian*. [Online] 23rd May 2013. [Date accessed: 6th March 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/23/facebook-violently-sexist-pagestwitter-fbrape.

Pinto, S. (2017) What is online violence and abuse against women? [Online] [Date Accessed: 4th April 2020] Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/whatis-online-violence-and-abuse-against-women/.

Privacy International (2019) A gender lens to the anonymity on social media debate. [Online] [Accessed: 15th March 2020] Available from: https://privacyinternational.org/advocacy/2778/gender-lens-anonymity-social-media-debate.

Rattan, A., Chilazi, S., Georgeac, O., Bohnet, I. (2019) Tackling the Underrepresentation of Women in the Media. *Harvard Business Review*. [Online] 6th June 2019. [Accessed: 30th March 2020] Available from: https://hbr.org/2019/06/tackling-the-underrepresentation-ofwomen-in-media.

Available online: http://crimsoc.hull.ac.uk/2020/06/25/online-abuse-of-women/

Refworld. (2020) Colombia: Domestic violence, including legislation; state protection and support services available to victims in Bogotá, Santiago de Cali, and Medellín (2014-April 2017). [Online] [Accessed: 21st March 2020]. Available from: https://www.refworld.org/docid/591615304.html.

Rellstab, D. H. (2007) 'Staging gender online: gender plays in Swiss internet relay chats', *Discourse & Society*, 18(6), pp. 765–787. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926507082195.

Romano, A (2014) 4chan hacks and doxes Zoe Quinn's biggest supporter. *The Daily Dot*. [Online] 22nd August 2014. [Accessed: 24th February 2020] Available from: https://www.dailydot.com/parsec/4chan-hacks-phil-fish-over-his-defense-of-zoe-quinn/.

Romano, A (2016) Zoe Quinn's ex-boyfriend says their legal battle is not over. *The Daily Dot.* [Online] 2nd December 2016. [Accessed: 24th February 2020] Available from: https://www.dailydot.com/irl/zoe-quinn-harassment-charges-eron-gjoni/.

Salter, M. (2018) 'From geek masculinity to Gamergate: the technological rationality of online abuse', Crime, Media, Culture, 14(2), pp. 247–264. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659017690893.

Sandoval, G., (2013). The end of kindness: Weev and the cult of the angry young man. The Verge, 12.

Sax, L.J., Lehman, K.J., Jacobs, J.A., Kanny, M.A., Lim, G., Monje-Paulson, L. and Zimmerman, H.B., (2016). Anatomy of an enduring gender gap: The evolution of women's participation in computer science. The Journal of Higher Education, 88(2), pp.258-293. Smith, L., (2014). Domestic violence and online abuse: half uk survivors experience trolling in "tidal wave of hate". International Business Times, 1.

Stoeffel, K. (2014) Women Pay the Price for the Internet's Culture of Anonymity. *The Cut*. [Online] 12th August 2014. [Accessed: 15th March 2020] Available from: https://www.thecut.com/2014/08/women-pay-the-price-for-online-anonymity.html Suler, J. (2004) The online disinhibition effect. Cyberpsychology & behavior, 7(3), pp.321326.

Taylor, T.L., (2012). Raising the Stakes: E-sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming. Mit Press.

Techopedia. (2012) Cyberspace. [Online] [Date Accessed: 3rd April 2020] Available from: https://www.techopedia.com/definition/2493/cyberspace.

The Fawcett Society. (2019). New Fawcett Data Reveals Gender Is Most Common Cause Of Hate Crime For Women. [Online] [Accessed: 12th November 2019] Available from: https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/new-fawcett-data-reveals-gender-is-most-commoncause-of-hate-crime-for-women.

Turkle, S. (1984) The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Valenti, J. (2014). The case for free tampons. *The Guardian*. [Online] 11th August 2014. [Accessed: 15th March 2020] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/11/free-tampons-cost-femininehygiene-products.

Wajcman, J., (1991). Feminism confronts technology. Penn State Press.

Ware, M.C. and Stuck, M.F., (1985). Sex-role messages vis-a-vis microcomputer use: A look at the pictures. Sex roles, 13(3-4), pp.205-214.

Williams, F. and Rice, R.E. (1983) Communication research and the new media technologies. Annals of the International Communication Association, 7(1), pp.200-224.

Zimbardo, P.G. (1969) The human choice: Individuation, reason, and order versus deindividuation, impulse, and chaos. In Nebraska symposium on motivation. University of Nebraska press.