

Chapter 7.6

Etiology, Motives, and Crime Hubs

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter describes on the various aspects that surround victimization of women in the cyberspace and goes in depth to analyze the reasons for such victimization. The etiology of cyber crimes against women is something novel as this has overridden the conventional causes of criminality. The motivation behind the cyber crimes against women is also analyzed. Spatial aspect of physical space crime is a well-researched subject and in this chapter the ‘crime hubs’ or the hotspots of cyber crimes are dealt. Apart from this an attempt is made to develop characteristics of victims and perpetrators of cyber crimes against women.

INTRODUCTION

Victimization of women in the cyber space and the nature of cyber crimes that may happen to women may properly be understood if deeper research is done on the etiology of the crimes, the motives of the perpetrators, “crime hubs” and nature and characteristics of the victims and perpetrators.

In the previous chapter we established that the concept of cyber crime against women is not limited only to sexual crimes. The next question, which needs to be addressed for understanding the nature of cyber crimes against women is, *why crimes are done against women in the cyber space*. In this chapter, we have approached this issue from four different perspectives: etiology, motives, crime hubs and the characteristics of the victims and the perpetrators.

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ETIOLOGY

We have observed that majority of studies on gender violence indicate the gender of the victim, the myth of fragile reputation of women, social practices of male dominance over the women, and victim precipitation as some of the main causes for victimization of women (Melton, 2000; Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2002; Mustain & Tewsbury, 1999; Biber et.al, 2002; Bryant, 2009; Milivojevic & Copic, 2010; Condry, 2010; Machado, Dias & Coelho, 2010). In this chapter we will examine few more grounds, other than the traditionally established reasons like the gender of the victim, which could be the main cause for crimes such as stalking and sexual harassment as the *raison d'être* for the growth of cyber crime against women. These are as follows:

He Hi-Tech Help

The hi-tech help had remained the largest reason for the growth of crime in the cyber space, including cyber crimes against women. Along with misusing the technology for harassing women, crooks use it for hiding behind the cyber veil. They play like Meghnaada¹ by attacking their victims shielding themselves behind the cloud of pseudonymity in the cyber space in different 'avatars'.² This is explained well by Citron (2009a). She speaks about mob attacks as well as individual attacks on women internet users from behind the cloak of anonymity and she further shows how misuse of technology wins in a battle with 'rights' (Citron, 2009a). Jaishankar's (2008) criminological theory on the behavior of the perpetrators in the cyber space³ can be used aptly for explaining how 'hi-tech helps' fuel the growth of cyber crime against women.

Victim Precipitation

The victim precipitation theory introduced by Hans Von Hentig in 1940's (Tark, 2007) stands

good for explaining the growth of cyber crime against women. This theory suggests that the victim may initiate his/her own victimization either actively or passively (McGrath, 2009). Analyzing the typology of the crimes that can happen to women in the cyber space and examining the trends thereof, we observe that active precipitation attracts crimes when women victims knowingly visit dating sites or adult sites and give/display their real information to the 'visitors' of their profiles. The saga continues when women wantonly befriend strangers in online public chat rooms or social networking sites and give away their real space information. This is especially true in cases when victims find their morphed pictures and fake profiles in various sites which are not created by them. Such nuisances are often created by the perpetrator for experimenting his technical knowledge. We call it *active precipitation*, because it is often seen that in such cases the victim allures the crime by exposing herself in spite of warning notes provided by the internet safety regulations in general and safety tips provided by the policy guidelines in the ISP rules and regulations. Active precipitation also works when the victim decides to 'fight' the perpetrator by verbally accusing him publicly. However, the theory of active precipitation may not stand good for certain offences like voyeurism. Further, we do not blame the victim as a female identity, but what attracts our attention is lack of cyber awareness in many female victims which in a way encourages active precipitation.

An examination of our typology would suggest that majority of the cyber crimes targeted against women also happen due to passive precipitation. Instances of passive precipitations could be found in cases of *hate crimes* motivated by feminist outlooks of the victim, *emotional injuries* motivated by broken relationships etc, happen mostly due to passive motivations from the victim herself.

Interestingly, it can be seen that women offenders in the cyber space who attack women, are mostly motivated by active precipitation when they pick up a verbal duel with the victim as a result

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