Cyberhate and young offenders: emerging forms of violent ideation

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Starting points

- Hate = intense hostility, aversion and anger
- Cyberhate (i.e. online hate, online hate speech) targets individuals and groups
  - Hostile and intensive
  - Takes various forms
    - Death threats
    - Harassment and stalking
    - Insults and defamation
    - Negative stereotyping

Early developments

- Early studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC)
- Role of anonymity
- Online behavior as group behavior

People in computer-mediated groups were more uninhibited than they were in face-to-face groups as measured by uninhibited verbal behaviour, defined as frequency of remarks containing swearing, insults, name calling, and hostile comments.

Kiesler et al. "Social Psychological Aspects of Computer-Mediated Communication", *American Psychologist,* **1984**

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Hate groups going viral

- Organized hate groups as early users
  - Neo-Nazi publisher George Dietz used the bulletin board system (BBS) in 1984
  - *Stormfront.org* (1995)

- Dissemination and recruitment
- 954 active hate groups in the U.S. (Southern Poverty Law Centre, 2017)
- Terrorist groups

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Terror online

- ISIS and YouTube terrorism: hate propaganda

- Online sources as an inspiration for shooters
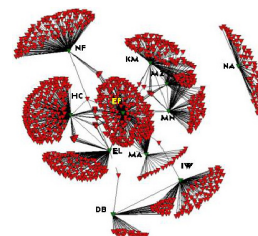
- Live suicide murder on social media

Mohammed Emwazi (AKA Jihadi John), Involved in ISIL beheading videos on YouTube during 2014–2015

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iHate – social media

- Fast new world
- Affectivity and impulsivity
- Negative emotions as a fuel

- Small world and homophily
- Group-formation (*us* vs. *them*)
- Algorithms and bubbles

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Fear and hate in mediated society
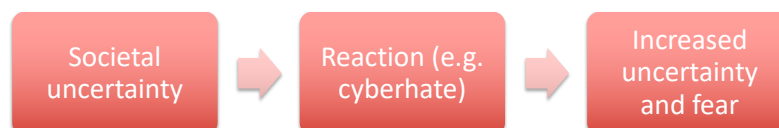
"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933

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Viral uncertainty

Societal uncertainty → Reaction (e.g. cyberhate) → Increased uncertainty and fear

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Projects

- **Web of Rage and Violence? Virtual generation and Youth Cultural Change in Finland in the 2010s**
    - Funding: Finnish Youth Research Network & The Ministry of Education and Culture (2012–2013)

- **Hate Communities: A Cross-National Comparison (HC)**
    - Funding: Kone Foundation (2013–2016) and Paasikivi Found. (2015)

- **Web of Rage? Extreme online communities in the light of research and analytic journalism**
    - Funding: Kone Foundation (2014–2015)

- **Disruption, Social Capital and Resilience: A Longitudinal and Comparative Approach (SAMRISK)**
    - Funding: The Research Council of Norway (2015–2017)

- **Problem gambling and social media (YouGamble)**
    - Funding: Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies (2017–2019)

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Survey data

- **Hate Communities Project**
    - Country samples from Finland (2013, n=555), US (2013, n=1032), Germany (2014, n=978) & UK (2014, n=999)
    - 15–30-year-old respondents
    - Questionnaire focusing online behavior and cyberhate

- **Samrisk Project**
    - The 1st survey collected in December 2015, one month after Paris attacks
    - The 2nd survey collected in January 2017
    - Nationally representative samples from Norway, Finland, France, Spain, and the United States
    - 15-80-year-old respondents
    - Questionnaire focusing on societal uncertainty and social resilience

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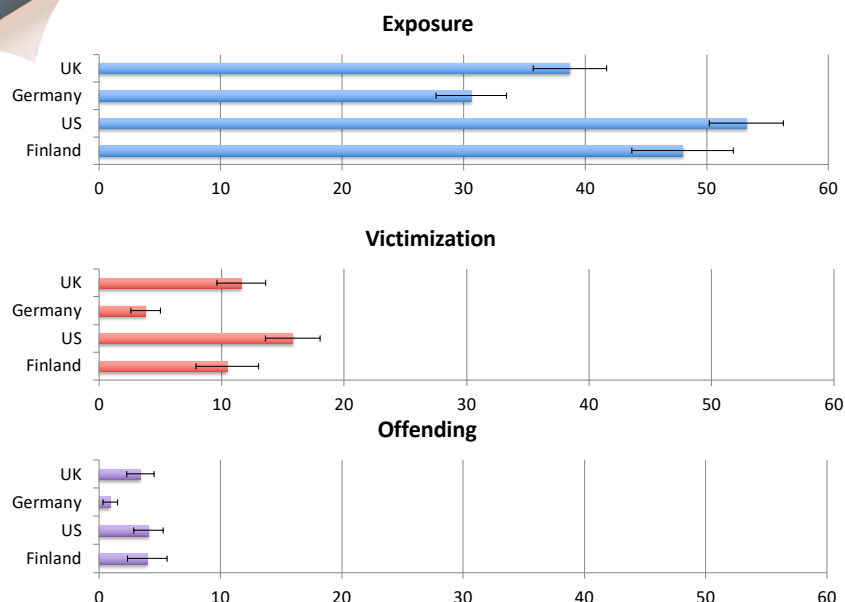
Measures on cyberhate

- **Exposure**: "In the past 3 months, have you seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online, which inappropriately attack certain groups of people or individuals?" (yes/no)

- **Victimization**: "I have personally been the target of hateful or degrading material online." (yes/no)

- **Offending:** "Have you produced online material that other people interpreted as hateful or degrading?" (yes/no)

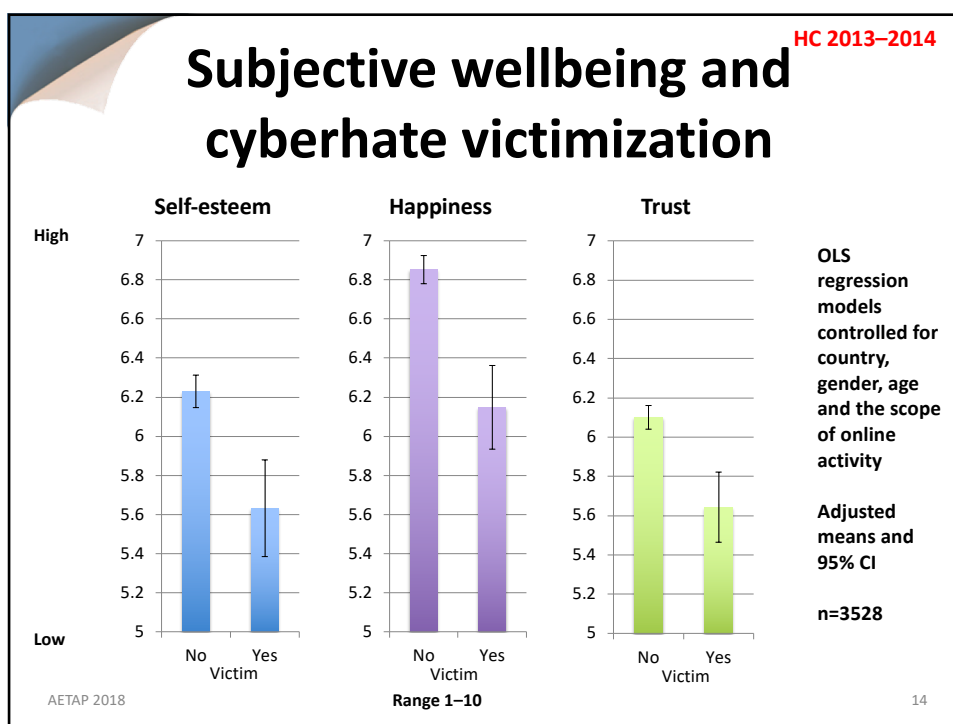AETAP 2018   11

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Predictors of cyberhate victimization

HC 2013–2014

- Socio-demographic
  - Younger age, immigrant background, big city area, living alone
  - Note: gender

- Socio-psychological
  - Scope and frequency of online activity
  - Identification with online communities
  - Not meeting friends offline
  - Any previous victimization

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Subjective wellbeing and cyberhate victimization

HC 2013–2014

OLS regression models controlled for country, gender, age and the scope of online activity

Adjusted means and 95% CI

n=3528

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Slide 15:

HC 2013
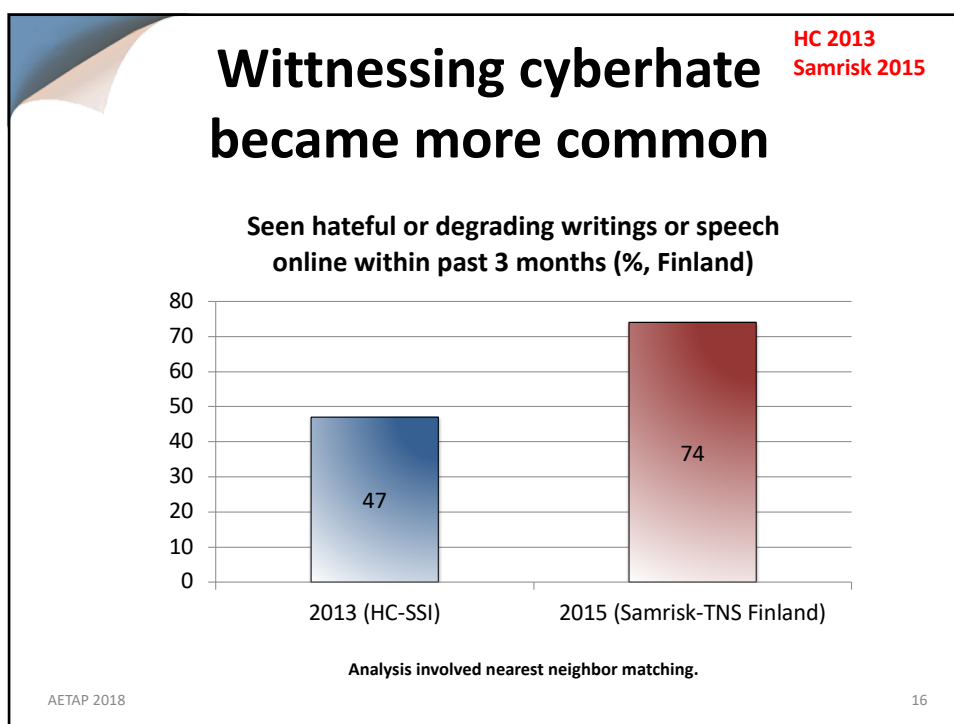**Samrisk 2015**

Finland 2013–2015

- > 30 000 refugees in the Autumn 2015
- ISIS attacks in Europe
- Trigger events (Williams & Burnap 2016)

- Online discussions
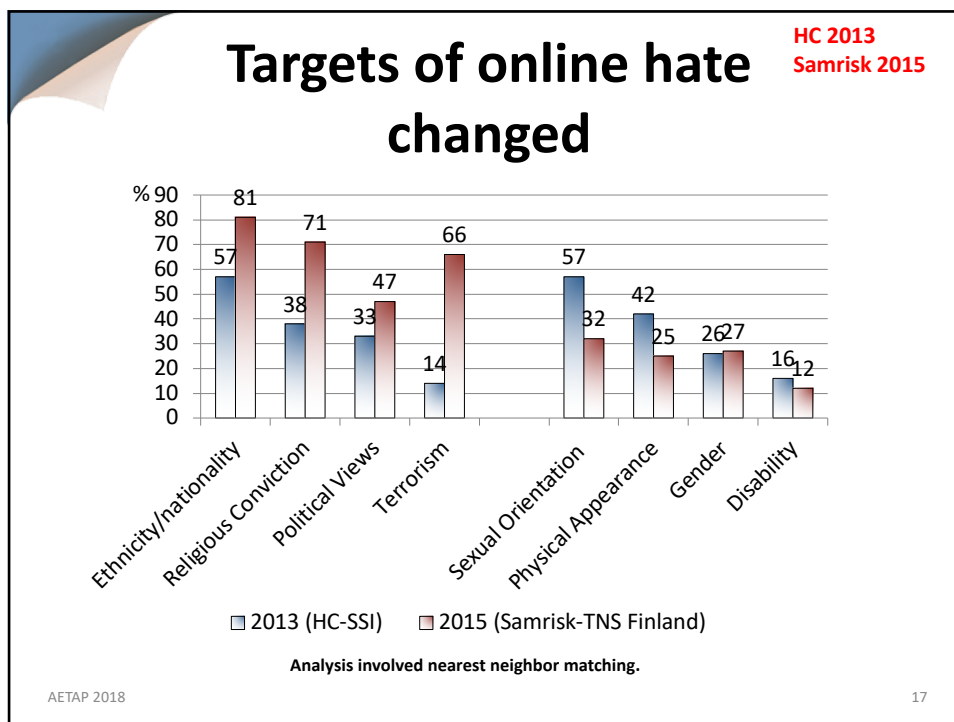- Radical right-wing groups activated
- Everyday racisms

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Photo from a demonstration against a newly opened refugee center in Lahti Finland in September 2015   15

Slide 16:

HC 2013
Samrisk 2015

Wittnessing cyberhate became more common

Seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online within past 3 months (%, Finland)

Bar chart:
- 2013 (HC-SSI): 47
- 2015 (Samrisk-TNS Finland): 74

Analysis involved nearest neighbor matching.

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Targets of online hate changed

Analysis involved nearest neighbor matching.

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Societal fear after November 2015 Paris attacks
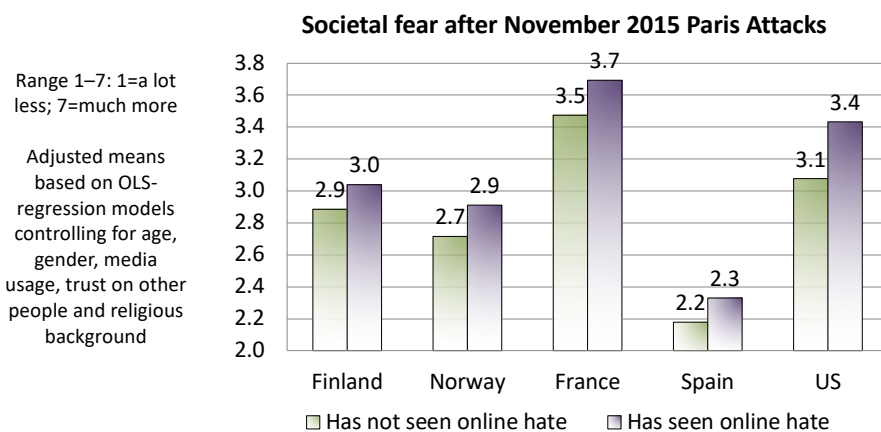
- Fear: outcome of traumatic societal events
- Fear: shaped and induced by social media discussions
-
- Cyberhate → fear

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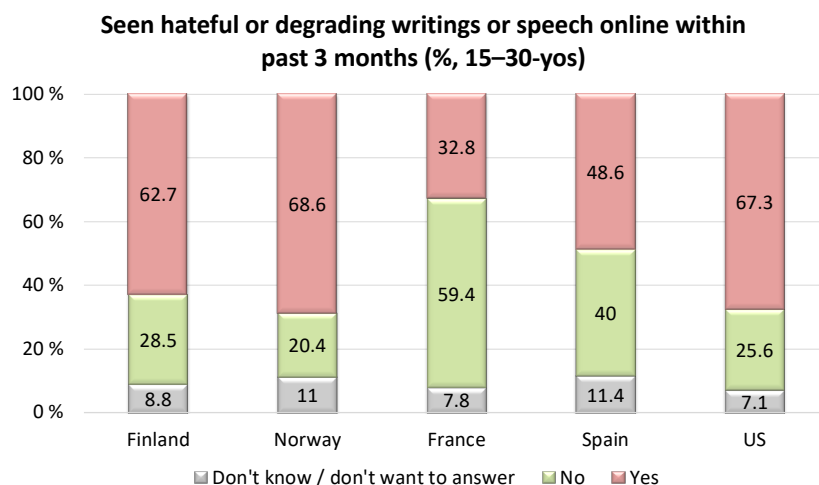
Samrisk 2015

Online hate and societal fear

Societal fear after November 2015 Paris Attacks

Range 1–7: 1=a lot less; 7=much more

Adjusted means based on OLS-regression models controlling for age, gender, media usage, trust on other people and religious background

Finland: 2.9 / 3.0
Norway: 2.7 / 2.9
France: 3.5 / 3.7
Spain: 2.2 / 2.3
US: 3.1 / 3.4

☐ Has not seen online hate   ☐ Has seen online hate

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Samrisk 2017

Exposure to cyberhate in 2017

Seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online within past 3 months (%, 15–30-yos)

	Finland	Norway	France	Spain	US
Yes	62.7	68.6	32.8	48.6	67.3
No	28.5	20.4	59.4	40	25.6
Don't know / don't want to answer	8.8	11	7.8	11.4	7.1

☐ Don't know / don't want to answer   ☐ No   ☐ Yes

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Cyberhate offenders

- Males, often also victims
- Strong social ties online, weak offline
- Impulsivity and psychological problems
- Stronger need for social group validation

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Fascination of hate

- Web sources are attractive
- Sub-cultures
- "Deep interest in school shootings" (Raitanen et al.)
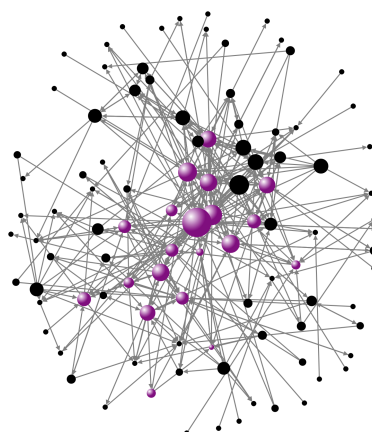 - Researchers, Columbiners, fan girls, copy-cats

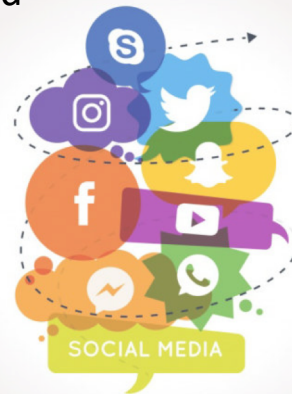**Fig. Social network of 100 school shooting fans on YouTube (Oksanen et al. 2014)**
Note: arrows mark the direction of communication, node sizes based on betweenness centrality, top 20 nodes in purple

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Hate as a new normal

- Social media has changed social norms
- Everything people do online has an impact
- Too quick transformation?
- Online vs. offline?
- Growing up digital

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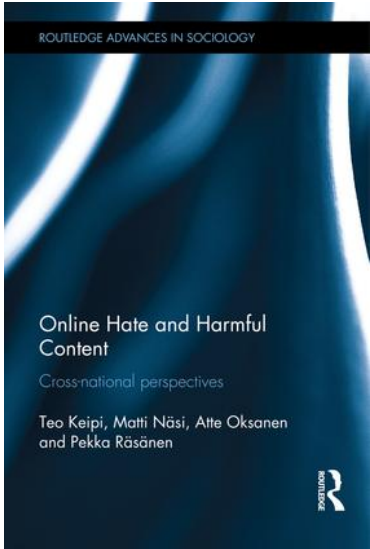
Directions

- Revolution of social media and social interactions
- Turbulent times and societal insecurity
- Public policies under consideration
- Responsibility of major players (e.g. Facebook, Google)

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