

**Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences**

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| **Proposed Title:**  How do terrorist and extremists use social media networks to target individuals? |
| **School:**  **Social Sciences** |
| **Proposed Supervisory Team:**  Dr Imran Awan  Dr Andrew Whiting |
| **Abstract:**  The aim of the proposed PhD is to generate insights into the role and significance of how social media networks are used by terrorists and extremists. The aim of this research project, is to therefore investigate the rise in use of digital media and communication platforms by and extremists to recruit would-be sympathisers. In doing so, the research will examine the manner in which groups such as Britain First and ISIS utilise social media to influence would-be sympathisers and an external audience more broadly. This will involve exploring how social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram are used for such purposes. The use of social media by terrorists and extremists to promote their cause and recruit is a major concern and it is hoped this project will provide tangible solutions to how best to disrupt online extremist communication for policy makers. Furthermore, it is hoped that this will help us better understand communication networks and also the wider implications of such networks across the world. The project, therefore will be used to map and classify groups and their use of social media networks.  This study will be employing a more traditional qualitative approach embedded within grounded theory, which includes looking at different Facebook pages associated with different forms of extremism. Alongside this there would also be an examination of over 100 different Twitter user accounts online that are linked to groups such as Isis and Britain First sympathisers and also demonstrate signs of extremism and hate. Following this, it is envisaged that the software system Nvivo 10 will be used to collate ‘high frequency’ words and patterns that are directly related to this narrative.  This will also include a section of case studies which have been identified of group behaviour and dynamics. To collect the data, we would be using a human analysis of a sample to help identify different categories we have found. This will help create some subsets which will allow for an in-depth analysis of the language used via both those platforms. |
| **Research Environment:**  The project will be based in the Centre for Applied Criminology and within the Social Media criminology cluster. |
| **Applicant Requirements:**  The successful candidate will meet the following essential criteria:   * Undergraduate degree (minimum 2:1 classification) in Criminology or another closely related social sciences subject. * Awareness of the process of criminological research, preferably through an independent project or dissertation in an area related to the studentship topic.   Desirable criteria include:   * Master’s degree in Criminology or another closely related social sciences subject. * Experience of using online research packages such as NVivo and evidence of social media research methods.   The student will be expected to obtain the PG Cert in L&T as part of their development. |
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