

**CoRD Labs Statement to inform the Special Rapporteur's thematic report to be presented to the GA, 78th session**

**What is considered to be gendered disinformation and what can be done to further understand this harm, respond to the harm, mitigate the harm for victims and reduce instances of it?**

It's imperative for the general assembly and the Special Rapporteur to understand that past harassment campaigns have had clear components of gendered mis-and-disinformation, something our lab [has documented earlier here](#). Gamergate is one of many such examples. We are heartened to see the Special Rapporteur recognize the particular harm of gendered disinformation, [something we have repeatedly called for more funding and investigation into](#).

Our recommendations are that there needs to be an understanding that 'gendered disinformation' is also incredibly close to gendered misinformation, and that there needs to be individual/granular approaches to understanding and documenting this harm, as well as a systems level or holistic understanding. Meaning, it's imperative to see how an individual is harmed by individuals, as seen with gendered harm faced by journalists, politicians, public and private figures. Along with how individuals can be harmed by other individuals as part of a decentralized, uncoordinated harassment campaign that can happen across many forms. For example, this can be seen when a female journalist publishes an article against a malicious actor, such as a politician, famous business person, etc, and a response from fans/supporters of the malicious actor will engage in their own individualized harassment (meaning each fan/supporter's own actions of harassment). But that individual harassment must be looked at as part of a collective whole, one that is not coordinated or planned, but happening at the same time either from the victim becoming viral, the publication of an article, etc. Relatedly, victims can be harmed by coordinated disinformation campaigns (similar to Gamergate) that also spread into uncoordinated misinformation, when that harassment becomes viral, and is spread by non-members of the coordinated harassment campaign.

Thus, we are asking that harassment be seen both as individual instances as well as collective wholes, meaning each individual content piece of harassment that a victim receives needs to be looked at one whole systemic piece.

Our requests are multifold: more research and support is needed, especially for civil society organizations and community organizations to continue to document and respond to this harm, that platforms share information and further transparency into the harms that happen on their platforms, and that the tooling and policy of said platforms are also be changed to better respond to this harm. We are asking that deep consideration be given to how platforms, in how they are currently designed, are not equipped to actually handle gendered disinformation at scale, given the lack of transparency given to civil society and community orgs, but also given

the issues in how unsupported content moderators are often are, [how their tooling is inadequate to even research and make decisions on this topic](#), and content moderators are often very separate from trust and safety teams-- all of these are compounding issues that must be addressed in order to adequately respond to and mitigate the harms of gendered disinformation. Lastly, there needs to be rapid response, in the form of platforms; responding to victims' reports; rapid response in terms of safety and security for victims; more nuanced policy that understands how gendered disinformation impacts all different kinds of users, including 'public figures' that have less protections; and lastly, better pro-privacy tooling that allows victims to augment and create safer interactions (similar to recommendations made by our lab and Pen America's [No Excuse for Abuse](#) report). Relatedly, the safety of victims and understanding of this issue is paramount, and it needs to be combined with a pro-privacy, pro-security, and encryption protecting world; security is safety, especially for any individual or community facing any form of disinformation. Lastly, all of this needs to take a deeply intersectional, queer, trans and Majority World lens to ensure that any solutions are as inclusive and equitable as possible.

**More of our relevant work can be seen here:**

[Trust Through Trickery: Platform Design, and Online Harassment Facing Journalists](#)  
[What is Secure? An Analysis of Popular Messaging Apps](#)

**About Us:**

Convocation Research and Design Labs (CoRD Labs) is an interdisciplinary research, policy, and investigative think tank working at the intersections of cybersecurity, design, and human rights. We focus on how technology impacts marginalized groups and furthers digital inequity while studying how technology is built, designed, and the harms it amplifies.

Our tools include interdisciplinary mixed methods such as: open source intelligence, reverse engineering (software and hardware analysis), digital forensics, software/tool development, digital ethnography, digital visual anthropology, software development, design research, user research, quant/qual, policy analysis, and creative technology all rooted in digital rights. Our research includes: online gender based violence; digital hate speech; mal/mis/disinformation; transparency and responsible technology frameworks and policies; digital espionage, malware, and cyber-mercenaries targeting civil society, journalists, activists and those supporting freedom of expression; analyzing privacy, security, and information controls of popular applications; along with other areas of focus.

We work directly with organizations, communities, groups, and individuals to increase their online privacy, security, and digital literacy in order to have safer and positive experiences online.