

CYBERSTALKING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF STUDENTS AT A MID-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has become a medium for people to communicate locally or globally in the course of business, education and their social lives. The increase use of the Internet has created an impact on the number of online harassing/cyberstalking cases. This exploratory study of 302 undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-Atlantic university found that 13% of students were a victim of cyberstalking. This study argues that cyberstalking and harassment will only decrease when the extent of the problem is fully understood and potential victims and law enforcement understand the protections necessary under the law.

Keywords: cyberstalking, stalking, online harassment, electronic communication

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become a medium for people to communicate locally or globally in the course of business, education and their social lives. The Internet has made it easy for people to compete, meet a companion, or communicate with people on the other side of the world with the click of a mouse. In 2009, according to the Internet World Stats Report, 237,168,545 people used the Internet in the United States; as a result there is a concern for Internet safety [11]. The increased use of the Internet has created an impact on the number of online harassing/cyberstalking cases.

Since the 1990s, stalking and harassing have become more common via the Internet. Megan Meier was a teenage girl who regularly used social network sites. Meier, a 13-year-old, became friends with a boy named Josh on MySpace. For weeks, Meier was very happy with her new online romance when suddenly Josh became angry at Meier implying that she was not very nice to her friends. The last posting by Josh to Meier read, "The world would be a better place without you" [16]. On October 17, 2006, Meier hung herself in her bedroom 20

minutes after receiving the message from Josh. Her reply to Josh read, "You're the kind of boy a girl would kill herself over" [16]. It was later found out that Meier was not communicating with a boy named Josh but with a 48-year-old woman named Lori Drew. Drew created a fake MySpace profile as Josh, to contact Meier in order to see what she was saying about her daughter. Drew's online stalking of Meier led to her death.

The United States Department of Justice defines cyberstalking as the "use of the Internet, e-mail, or other electronic communication devices to stalk another person" [20]. Offline stalking is a crime with which many people are familiar. Stalking is a "repetitive pattern of unwanted, harassing or threatening behavior committed by one person against another" [13]. Stalking that involves the use of multiple individuals to stalk, harass or threaten a victim is known as gang stalking [7]. Although offline stalking acts have been reported since the 19th Century, cyberstalking is a crime that is just being examined and reported since the late 1990s. The U.S. Attorney General stated, "stalking is an existing problem aggravated by a new technology" [20]. Similarities have been noted between offline stalking and cyberstalking cases, including the fact that "the majority of cases involve stalking by former intimates, most victims are women, most stalkers are men and stalkers are generally motivated by the desire to control the victim" [20]. Using technology to stalk a victim can include, but is not limited to, the Internet, e-mail, text messaging, global positioning systems (GPS), digital cameras, video cameras and social network sites. One of the differences between cyberstalking and offline stalking is that cyberstalkers face no geographic boundaries. A person can live in Hawaii and be stalked by a person in Italy. The Internet makes it possible for a person to be stalked virtually anywhere in the world.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Citizens should be able to feel safe when using the Internet without being stalked or harassed. But, the increased use of the Internet has caused a national increase in the number of online cyberstalking/harassment cases. The purpose of this research study is to explore online harassing/cyberstalking experiences at a Mid-Atlantic university. This study argues that cyberstalking and harassment will only decrease when the extent of the problem is fully understood and potential victims and law

STALKING DEFINED

Offline stalking acts have been reported since the 19th Century. Cyberstalking is a new crime that is just being examined and reported since the late 1990s. Many similarities exist between stalking and cyberstalking. In order to understand cyberstalking, it is necessary to define stalking. The U.S. Department of Justice defines stalking “as harassing and threatening behavior that an individual engages in repeatedly” [19]. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, following a person, repeated phone calls and phone messages, appearing outside a persons home or work, vandalism, taking an individuals mail or entering a persons home. The U.S. Department of Justice [19] reports most stalking laws require the perpetrator (the person committing the stalking) to make a credible threat of violence against the victim. Stalking, therefore, can be used to instill fear and/or intimidate the victim.

A person commits stalking if they cause another person to fear for their safety. “Stalking is a crime of power and control” [14]. As defined by Tjaden and Thoennes[18], stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that involves repeated (two or more occasions) visual or physical proximity, nonconsensual communication, or verbal, written or implied threats, or a combination thereof, that would cause a reasonable person fear.

Stalking has been addressed in books, movies, and publications. Stalking can even be recognized in music lyrics. The band “The Police” wrote a song called *Every Breath You Take*. The lyrics of the song can be considered by some to be written about stalking.

Every breath you take / Every move you make
Every bond you break / Every step you take
I'll be watching you.
Oh can't you see / You belong to me

enforcement understand the protections necessary under the law. This study explores the following research questions:

RQ1 – What is the relationship between online activities and occurrences of cyberstalking?

RQ2 – Are women more likely than men to report being a victim of cyberstalking?

RQ3 – What is the level of fear associated with victims of cyberstalking?

[17] Even if “The Police” were not talking about stalking, by reading the lyrics, the true meaning of stalking can be heard.

CYBERSTALKING DEFINED

The Internet and use of telecommunications technologies have become easily accessible and are used for almost every facet of daily living throughout the world. Cyberstalking is “the use of the Internet, e-mail and other electronic communication devices to stalk another person” [19]. For this study, cyberstalking will be referred to as online stalking and is similar to offline stalking, which is being aggravated by new technologies. Cyberstalking “entails the same general characteristics as traditional stalking, but in being transposed into the virtual environment as it is fundamentally transformed” [15]. Stalking itself is not a new crime, but cyberstalking is a new way to commit the crime of stalking while using the Internet or other forms of electronic communication devices.

Stalkers, both online and offline, “are motivated by the desire to exert control over their victims and engage in similar types of behavior to accomplish this end” [20]. The term cyberstalking can be used interchangeably with online harassment. “A cyberstalker does not present a direct threat to a victim, but follows the victim’s online activity to gather information and make threats or other forms of verbal intimidation” [12]. A potential stalker may not want to confront and threaten a person offline, but may have no problem threatening or harassing a victim through the Internet or other forms of electronic communications. One can become a target for a cyberstalker through the use of the Internet in many forms. The victim can be contacted by email, instant messaging (IM) programs, via chat rooms, social network sites or the stalker attempting to take over the victims computer by monitoring what they are doing while online. Bocij, Griffiths and

McFarlane [3] conclude that there are no genuinely reliable statistics that can be used to determine how common cyberstalking incidents occur.

Cyberstalkers can choose someone they know or a complete stranger with the use of a personal computer and the Internet. Basu and Jones [1] remind us that growing up our parents told us not to talk to strangers, but one function of the Internet is to talk to strangers. The Internet, as a communication tool, has allowed people the freedom to search for information from anywhere and anyone in the world. Fullerton [6] states that Internet Service Providers (ISP's) e-mail, web pages, websites, search engines, images, listservs, instant chat relay (ICR's) are all cyberstalking tools. Other forms of communication used to stalk a victim include cell phones, text messaging, short message services (SMS), global positioning systems (GPS), digital cameras, spyware or fax machines. The information that is available about people on the Internet makes it easy for a cyberstalker to target a victim. With only a few keystrokes, a person can locate information on an individual via the Internet. The types of information that can be found include e-mail addresses, home telephone numbers, bank accounts, credit card information, and home addresses. Some services, such as Intelius and People Finders, charge to provide confidential information for any person that is willing to pay. Imagine a teacher posting a syllabus online to instruct students what date and time a particular class is in session. Someone that is a cyberstalker can use this small amount of information to follow the instructor to school or try to get inside the instructors home since they know when she will be in class. Thanks to search engines such as "Google," a cyberstalker can in type a person's home or work address and see where they live or work. Once the cyberstalker can physically see what the home or place of employment looks like the stalker can use the descriptions of the locations as a way to let the victim know they are being watched. "The fact that cyberstalking does not involve physical contact may create the misperception that it is more benign than physical stalking" [20]. It is not uncommon for cyberstalkers to progress into offline stalkers. "If not stopped early on, some cyberstalkers can become so obsessed with a victim that they escalate their activities to the level of physical stalking [10]. Gregorie [9] indicates that people who do not have access to the Internet, or choose

not to go online are not immune from cyber-based crimes. Databases of personal information available on the Internet can enable a person to find the necessary information to stalk or harass a victim.

EXISTING LAWS

Stalking laws within the 50 states are relatively recent; the first traditional stalking law was enacted in 1990 in California. California's legal definition of stalking is "any person who willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of their safety" CAL. PENAL CODE § 646.9 [22]. Since California's enactment of the first stalking law in 1990, all 50 states and the federal government have anti-stalking laws. Most stalking cases are prosecuted at the state and local levels. Each state's stalking laws will vary in their legal definitions and the degree of penalty for the offense.

As of March 2009, 45 states have cyberstalking or related laws in place compared to 1998, in which only 16 states had cyberstalking and harassment laws. Two of the five states without cyberstalking laws have pending laws for the implementation of such acts. Cyberstalking is covered in some of the 45 states existing stalking laws. Stalking laws that are written to include forms of stalking using electronic communication devices such as email, Internet, cell phone text messaging or similar transmissions cover the crime of cyberstalking. If a state's current stalking law covers forms of electronic communications that are punishable by law, a separate cyberstalking law is not required. If the stalking laws within the 50 states do not cover any forms of electronic communications such as the Internet, a separate law should be written. For example, the Pennsylvania stalking law states:

(1) a person commits the crime of stalking when the person either engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts toward another person without proper authority, under circumstances which demonstrate either an intent to place such other person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional distress to such other person, or

(2) engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly communicates to another person under circumstances which demonstrate or communicate either an intent to place such other person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional distress to such other person. 18 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 2709.1 (a)(1) and (2) [22]

As used in the definition of stalking under Pennsylvania law, “communicates” is defined as:

To convey a message without intent of legitimate communication or address by oral, nonverbal, written or electronic means, including telephone, electronic mail, Internet, facsimile, telex, wireless communication or similar transmission. 18 PA CONS. STAT. ANN. § 2709.1 (f) [22]

Under Title 18 of the United States Code, Federal Law covers threatening messages transmitted electronically in interstate and foreign commerce 18 U.S.C §875 [22]. This means that a person who is being threatened in Pennsylvania via the Internet, from a person living in Florida, is protected by Federal law. Similarly, in Pennsylvania for example, local Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies may file stalking charges in Pennsylvania even if the electronically transmitted threat originated in another state, but only if the victim receives the threat in Pennsylvania.

Cyberstalkers, if caught, can face criminal charges on three different levels based upon seriousness; a felony, misdemeanor, or summary offense. A felony is a serious crime, as defined under federal law, and in many states the offense can be punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year. A misdemeanor is a criminal act that carries a less severe punishment than a felony but more serious than a summary offense. “Misdemeanors in the U.S. generally have a maximum punishment of 12 months in jail” [5]. A summary is a minor violation of the law prosecutable without a full trial. An example of a common summary would be a traffic ticket.

Victims of cyberstalking need to obtain copies of all electronic forms of communication received from the stalker. The electronic evidence that is obtained can lead to a computer and not an individual. For example, if the stalker is using a computer in a library to send messages to a victim, the electronic trail will lead back to the computer in the library. Potentially, hundreds of people could have used that computer between when the stalking messages were sent and when the IP address was traced to the library.

METHODOLOGY

This study examined cyberstalking of undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-Atlantic university during September 2008. A quantitative methodology was selected for this research project as a means to examine students that have been stalked, harassed or threatened through the use of the Internet, email or other forms of electronic devices. In the student survey, participant responses were used to explore evidence of cyberstalking victims at the collegiate level. This data may be used to assist current and future victims of cyberstalking and assist law enforcement agencies in dealing with the problem. A survey instrument based on the research questionnaires developed by Finn [4] and Bocij [2] was used to gather quantitative data addressing online harassing/cyberstalking experiences at a mid-Atlantic university. Existing anecdotal evidence of cyberstalking victims was combined for additional data collection variables.

The population chosen for the student survey was comprised of undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-Atlantic university. Undergraduate and graduate students who were 18 years of age or older were surveyed in order to gather data on cyberstalking victims. The classes chosen to survey the student population were comprised of undergraduate and graduate students from information systems, marketing, adult and continuing education, science, and business courses. The students surveyed consisted of residential and non-residential students. The enrollment at this University, as of September 2008, was approximately 5,000 students.

Survey questions administered to University students focused on obtaining information from students who may or may not have been a victim of cyberstalking. The majority of the survey was

a partial replication of the instruments developed by Finn [4] and Bocij [4]. Additional questions were developed from the research of Ogilvie ([15] and Hitchcock [10]. The student survey questionnaire was a seven-page, 18 question document, including a cover letter explaining the survey process, consent form, and a resource page with phone numbers and web addresses for students to detach and obtain for follow-up cyberstalking issues.

The first page of the student questionnaire focused on participant demographics to include gender, age and education. The survey addressed the participant's use of the Internet to include the frequency of Internet use and what types of online activities are accessed. Online activities included email, bulletin boards, newsgroups, instant messaging, chat rooms, social network sites and dating sites. The study addressed the types of online activities in relation to becoming a victim of cyberstalking.

The survey asked participants if they could classify themselves as a victim of cyberstalking according to the definition supplied at the beginning of the survey. The study focused on how a victim was targeted and by whom. The methods that a victim could have been targeted by their stalker include email, bulletin boards, instant messaging, text messaging, chat rooms, social network sites, news groups, dating sites and eBay. Whether the victims personally knew their stalker was addressed, as well as, the manner in which the stalker communicated to them. Communication used by the stalker included friendly, sexual, threatening, hateful, humorous and intimidating language. How long the communication lasted between the victim and the stalker was also addressed.

An important aspect that this study sought to determine was that at anytime during a victim's harassment did they fear for their safety. Stalked individuals that completed the survey were asked to identify the level of fear they possessed, if any. Victims were also asked if they reported the cyberstalking. Victims that answered yes were asked to whom they reported the incident to include law enforcement, Internet Service Provider, campus advisor, cell phone provider, web administrator or online help organization, and if they received help.

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 302 undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-Atlantic university from a population of approximately 5,000 students. A 5% margin of error with a 95% confidence level was used for this study.

The study was a convenience sample surveying both undergraduate and graduate students from the mid-Atlantic university. Professors from the Schools of Computer and Information Systems and Communications, Adult and Continuing Education, Business School, School of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences provided support for the administration of the survey questionnaire. Professors were contacted at the University by email from the above listed schools. In the email the details of the study were explained and the researcher requested that the survey be administered during their class period. Responses were received from professors from each of the contacted schools at the University except the School of Education and Social Sciences. The researcher administered the survey questionnaires to students during their scheduled class time. The survey was administered to 302 students from 18 classes during September, 2008. The survey supplied the students with contact information for future reference if they were interested in the studies findings.

RESULTS

Cyberstalking was defined as threatening behavior or unwanted advances directed at another using the Internet and other forms of online and computer communications. Cyberstalkers can target their victims through threatening or harassing email, flaming (online verbal abuse), computer viruses, chat rooms, message boards, social network sites (such as MySpace), text messages, or tracing a persons Internet activities among others. Approximately 13% of students identified themselves as victims of cyberstalking according to the definition provided at the beginning of the survey instrument.

Male and female genders were not represented in proportion to the participant sample. This could have been because the Information Systems students were mostly male. More than half of the research participants were male, 174, (58%) with 128 female, (42%). The survey instrument requested participants to indicate their age. Of the 302 students, 171 were between the ages of

18-25, 72 were ages 26-35, and 59 were ages 36-65.

All 302 students that completed the survey responded to yes to using the Internet. A majority of the participants, 260 students, (86%) indicated they use the Internet more than once a day and 42 students, (14%) use the Internet less than once per day. This study revealed that there is not a correlation between frequency use of the Internet and becoming a victim of cyberstalking.

The types of Internet use were analyzed to determine the respondent's online activities. All of the 302 participants, (100%) indicated they use email. The majority of students, 211, (70%) access social network sites while 183 students (60%) use instant messaging. The online activities least used include bulletin boards 98 participants, (33%), newsgroups, 39 participants, (30%), chat rooms, 19 participants (7%) and dating sites 11 participants (4%).

The current survey of 39 victims reveals, 25 (64%) were female and 14 (36%) were male. These results are consistent with studies by Finn [4] and Bocij [2] that women are more likely to become a victim of cyberstalking than men. This current study revealed that women were almost twice as likely as men to become a victim of cyberstalking. As a point of relevance there were more males, 174, than females, 128, that completed the survey. To determine the relationship between victim and gender, chi-square was calculated (chi-square = 8.650, $df = 1$, $p < .003$) indicating that a relationship is found between gender and being a victim of cyberstalking. The observed significance level is .003, which is greater than the customary 0.05 indicating that the results did not happen by chance. Chi-square was used to examine differences between 39 students that were cyberstalked. There is no significant relationship between age and gender and being cyberstalked (chi-square = 1.346, $df = 2$, $p > .510$). Chi-square was also used to examine the relationship between education and being a victim of cyberstalking. There is no significant relationship between level of education and being a victim of cyberstalking (chi-square = .196, $df = 2$, $p > .90$).

Research Question 1 queried the relationship between online activities and occurrences of cyberstalking. Students who were a victim of cyberstalking were more likely to receive

harassment by email (chi-square = 5.769, $df = 1$, $p < .016$), text messaging, (chi-square = .026, $df = 1$, $p < .873$) and social network sites (chi-square = 4.333, $df = 1$, $p < .037$). Email and social network sites are statistically significant while no statistical significance was found when victims were contacted via text messaging. The observed significance level for email communication used by the stalker is .016, which is less than the customary 0.05 confidence level signifying that the results did not happen by chance. This research study indicates that there is a relationship between email and social network sites as a communication device used by the stalker and being a victim of cyberstalking.

Of the 34 victims, 25 knew the identity of their stalker while 14 did not know the identity of their stalker. From the students that knew the identity of their stalker, 8 answered the person was a former boyfriend or girlfriend, 3 knew the person from work, 7 knew the person from school, 5 answered the stalker was a friend, and 2 met their stalker online. The result that 25 victims knew their stalker provides evidence that stalking is taking on a new form.

Research Question 2 sought to determine if women are more likely than men to report being a victim of cyberstalking. Three questions on the survey were used to answer the research question in which victims were asked if they reported the cyberstalking incident, to which they reported the incident to, and if they reported the incident, did they receive help. With the current study, the victims that reported the cyberstalking included, 5 male (21%) and 19 females (79%). Of those that did not report the cyberstalking were 9 male (60%) and 6 female (40%). Women are more likely than men to report being cyberstalked. There is a statistically significant relationship between gender and reported cases of cyberstalking (chi-square = 6.154, $df = 1$, $p < .013$). Additionally, a total of 3 males (15%) and 17 females (85%) reported the cyberstalking to law enforcement (chi-square = 7.791, $df = 1$, $p < .005$). This concludes that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender and reporting the cyberstalking to law enforcement. A total of 34 students reported the cyberstalking either to law enforcement, their ISP, a cell phone provider or web administrator. Of the 34 students that reported the cyberstalking, only 11 received help while 23 victims did not receive any type of help. Surprisingly, 68% of victims that reported the incident did not receive any type of help.

Research Question 3 addressed the level of fear associated with being a victim of cyberstalking. Two questions on the survey were used to answer the research question in which students were asked if the harassment made them fear for their safety and what was their level of fear. Out of the 39 students that answered yes to being a victim of cyberstalking 2 males (9%) and 21 females (91%) feared for their safety while the stalking persisted. There is a statistically significant relationship between gender and fear (chi-square = 18.027, $df = 1$, $p < .000$). The remaining victims 12 men (75%) and 4 females (25%) did not fear for their safety at anytime during the stalking. The victims that had a low level of fear were comprised of 1 male (14%) and 6 females (86%). Those that reported a moderate level of fear were 1 male (8%) and 11 females (92%). The remaining victims, 0 males (0%) and 4 females (100%) reported a high level of fear. The victims were asked if they were currently being contacted by the cyberstalker. Out of the 39 victims, 28 students were no longer being contacted by the cyberstalker and 11 students were currently being stalked at the time the survey was administered.

DISCUSSION

The Internet and use of telecommunications technologies have become easily accessible and are used for almost every facet of daily living throughout the world. This study found that approximately 13% of students surveyed were a victim of cyberstalking. The first research objective examined the relationship between online activities and occurrences of cyberstalking. This study discovered that there was not a correlation between how often a student accessed the Internet and becoming a victim of cyberstalking. University students that accessed the Internet one time a day or less were just as likely to become a victim of cyberstalking as someone that accessed the Internet more than once a day. Every participant that completed the survey, 302, indicated they use email.

Students who were a victim of cyberstalking were more likely to receive harassment by email and social network sites. Findings from the research support the first research objective in reference to email and social network sites. There was a direct relationship between email and social network sites as an online activity and being victim of cyberstalking. Although not an

online activity, but a form of electronic communication, almost half of the victims, 49%, were contacted by their stalker via text messaging. The use of text messaging was one of the most frequent ways that victims were contacted by their stalker.

The second research objective examined if women are more likely than men to report being a victim of cyberstalking. The research conducted by Finn [4] indicated that there were no demographic differences in regard to gender in relation to reporting incidents of cyberstalking. Gender and reported cases of cyberstalking were not discussed in the Bocij [2] study. This current study revealed a significant relationship between gender and being a victim of cyberstalking. Women were four times more likely than men to report the cyberstalking incident. Goodson, McCormick and Evans [8] indicated in their study of online sexual harassment that female students were more likely than men to report being a victim. The current study revealed that 85% of victims that reported the cyberstalking to law enforcement were female while only 15% of males contacted law enforcement. There is a significant relationship between gender and reported cases of cyberstalking, as well as, gender and reporting the incident to law enforcement.

The third research objective addressed the level of fear associated with being a victim of cyberstalking. Victims were asked if the stalking made them fear for their safety. Of the 39 victims, 21 females and 2 males feared for their safety while the stalking persisted. These numbers reveal a significant relationship between gender and fear. A total of 6 females and 1 male reported a low level of fear, 1 male and 11 females reported a moderate level of fear and 0 males and 4 females indicated a high level of fear.

Although, not the intent of the original study, additional findings were discovered as a result of the statistical analysis. The student survey revealed that there are almost twice as many female victims (64%) than male (36%). Approximately 30% of the victims were between the ages of 18 and 25. Although there was not a relationship between age and level of education the study revealed that 7 victims 14%, were doctoral students. The 14% of victims represented by they doctoral students shows a slightly higher percentage of becoming a victim

than the 13% revealed from the study. This number stands out because there were only 50 respondents from the doctoral program compared to 166 undergraduate student respondents and 86 master level respondents. There were three times as many undergraduate students and almost twice as many graduate masters' level students that completed the survey.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this present study determined relevant issues in regard to cyberstalking, the study did not examine reasons why students that were victimized did not report the incident. Future research should focus on why victims fail to report cyberstalking. Some of the reasons a victim may not report the stalking could include fear, not knowing they could receive help or not knowing who to report the incident.

The study examined reported cases of cyberstalking to law enforcement, ISP, cell phone provider, campus advisor web administrator, or an online agency. A total of 20 students indicated that they reported their victimization and received help. The researcher did not ask the victims what type of help was received. Future research on the types of help victims received should be explored.

Additional research is recommended to focus on the financial impact of being a cyberstalking victim. Financial impact could result in a victim changing cell phone numbers or providers, purchasing a new computer or possibly missing work.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH TO PREVENTING CYBERSTALKING

Based on my 11 years of experience working in the District Attorney's Office, specifically working with computer forensics along with prior research, the following list can help protect a person from being a victim of cyberstalking:

1. Never use your real name, nickname or any type of suggestive name while online.
2. When online, only type things you would actually say to someone face-to-face. Think about how what you say might be interpreted without eye contact, body language or voice.

3. **THINK BEFORE YOU INK.** Remember once you send an electronic message it can remain in cyberspace indefinitely.
4. Log off immediately if you experience contact from someone that is hostile, rude or inappropriate.
5. Save all communications from the stalker as evidence.
6. Report the incident to your ISP, law enforcement agency, school administration or an online help agency such as www.haltabuse.org or www.cyberangels.org.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies are needed to improve our understanding of cyberstalking. The fast pace at which technology changes, as well as, the inexpensive cost of technologies make it easier for a person to track and stalk a victim. Studies based on victim experiences need to be explored in depth so that the appropriate laws are written to protect victims of cyberstalking. A collaborative effort from victims, law enforcement, and private and public sectors is needed in order to combat cyberstalking and develop an effective response to the problem.

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