Perceptions of Cyberstalking Among College Students

Eileen M. Alexy, PhD, APRN, BC
Ann W. Burgess, DNSc, APRN, BC, FAAN
Timothy Baker, PhD
Shirley A. Smoyak, PhD, RN, FAAN

This article contributes to a growing body of research investigating the phenomenon of cyberstalking. Participants consisted of 100 students from a state university and 656 students from a large private university. Data were gathered from students about responses to a cyberstalking scenario and their use and experiences with the Internet. Furthermore, an analysis and comparison of students who reported having been stalked to those who had been cyberstalked was completed. An unexpected finding was that male students were statistically more likely than female students to have been cyberstalked, and Caucasian males had the highest correlation. The conclusion indicates that for those individuals who were cyberstalked, the stalking perpetrator was most likely to be a former intimate partner. Recommendations for mental health professionals are provided. [Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention 5:279–289 (2005)]

KEY WORDS: cyberstalking, stalking, Internet crime, online crime, harassment.

Over the past decade, the phenomenon of stalking has emerged as a salient social and political issue. Stalking encompasses a range of behaviors initiated by an individual who engages in a pattern of harassing or threatening behavior (Ashcroft, 2001; Reno, 1999). The threatening behavior may manifest itself in direct or indirect acts, such as following a person, appearing at a person’s home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person’s property (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The emergence of communication technologies, or “new media,” such as the Internet, has provided an additional conduit and method for stalkers to identify and target their victims. This evolution or transformation of stalking in common discourse is known as cyberstalking.
Background

Researchers have only recently begun to investigate the phenomenon of cyberstalking (D’Ovidio & Doyle, 2003; Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000, 2002; Lee, 1998; Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). Findings from these studies support the notion that the ability of an online stalker to instill fear and gain control over a victim reflects the modus operandi of an offline stalker. Although the prevalence and incidence of cyberstalking remain unknown, anecdotal reports suggest that cyberstalking appears to be expanding at a rapid pace, especially among the nation’s youth.

Lee (1998) reported the extent of cyberstalking behavior in a college context and posited that, to a certain extent, it was “a socially-sanctioned behavior, instituted and encouraged by Western courtship mores and ideas of romance” (pp. 373–374). To assess how college students view mutual romance compared to online and offline stalking, the investigator distributed a survey to 556 male and female college students at six universities. Six scenarios were presented to students, two of which addressed cyberstalking. In the first cyberstalking scenario, a stranger contacted a woman strictly through e-mail and chat rooms. In the second scenario, the stranger contacted the woman through e-mail and chat rooms, but he also began to employ conventional offline stalking behaviors, such as leaving messages on her answering machine and gifts on her doorstep. Slightly more than 50% of students responded that the woman was stalked in the first scenario. In the second scenario, 60.9% recognized the behavior as stalking.

Lee (1998) found that romantic treatment obscured the issue of stalking and that “stranger stalking” was perceived as more dangerous than “acquaintance stalking.” In addition, behaviors that were characterized as stalking in an offline context were interpreted more like romance and less like stalking than in an online context. Students may have more readily identified both scenarios as cyberstalking because a stranger in both scenarios contacted the woman. Moreover, as the cyberstalker began to use conventional stalking methods, the physical proximity was increased; thus the second scenario may have appeared more foreboding. Lee concluded that the interpretation of cyberstalking as “stalking” was based on what other types of behavior accompanied electronic activities.

Misperceptions and minimalization about stalking incidents abound are of significant concern and may be attributed to a lack of education and understanding of the crime. Victims, perpetrators, and authority figures (i.e., law enforcement officers, school administrators) often do not grasp the malicious nature of the crime until an individual is the victim of physical assault or personal property is damaged. Services for victims of offline stalking are often insufficient, and for victims of online stalking they are virtually nonexistent (Draucker, 1999; Fisher et al., 2000, 2002).

Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) reported on three pilot studies focused on developing and refining a measure of cyberstalking victimization and the incidence of such victimization. In the main study, they explored aspects of offline stalking that reciprocally cross into the electronic world. Based on responses from 235 undergraduate communication college students, the investigators found that almost one third reported some form of computer-based unwanted pursuit, most of which was relatively harmless but harassing. Spitzberg and Hoobler noted that this relatively innocuous type of “hyperintimacy” displayed over the Internet, in the guise of excessive and redundant messages of affection and disclosure, may elicit a range of relatively apparent coping responses. However, the more severe
forms of computer-based unwanted pursuit showed little or no relationship to coping responses, suggesting that the victims of such computer-based actions and the shifting of pursuit from the Internet to the offline “real” world may desensitize victims of pursuit.

D’Ovidio and Doyle (2003) conducted a descriptive study on cyberstalking using official police records from the Computer Investigation & Technology Unit (CITU) of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). All closed cases of aggravated harassment in which the perpetrator used a computer or the Internet as the instrument to commit the offense were used as the basis for the data. As defined by New York Penal Law § 240.30, a person is guilty of aggravated harassment when, he or she uses mechanical, electronic, or written communication with the purposeful intent to harass, annoy, threaten, or alarm another person. Approximately 43% of the cases reported to and investigated by the NYPD CITU during January 1996 through August 2000 involved the crime of cyberstalking. About 80% of the perpetrators were male, and the average age of the perpetrator was 24. In addition, approximately 26% of the perpetrators were juveniles under the age of 16. Nearly three quarters of the perpetrators were White, whereas 13% were Asian, 8% were Hispanic, and 5% were Black. The majority of victims were individuals, specifically, females who comprised 52% in comparison to males who comprised 35% of the victim population. The remaining targets of victimization were institutions: educational (8%), private corporations (5%), and public sector (1%). Approximately 85% of the victims were White, 6% were Asian, 5% were Black, and 4% were Hispanic. The average age of the victims was 32. In 92% of the cases, perpetrators used only one method to cyberstalk their victims. E-mail was the most prevalent method used in almost 79% of the cases. Instant messages were used in 13%, chat rooms were used in 8%, message boards were used in 4%, and Web sites were used in 2% of the cases. Finally, perpetrators used newsgroups and fake user profiles in approximately 1% of the cases. Unfortunately, the relationships between the victims and the perpetrators were not reported in the study.

Three additional studies provide data on cyberstalking. As part of a large study on the sexual victimization of college women, Fisher et al. (2000) found that 581 women (13.1%) were stalked and reported a total of 696 stalking incidents. Of these incidents, 24.7% involved e-mail. Thus, 25% of the reported stalking incidents could be classified as cyberstalking. Pathé and Mullen (1997) examined the social and psychological impact of stalking on victims. The researchers included receiving unwanted communications through e-mail in their definition of stalking behaviors. Additionally, they reported that one victim received such voluminous and lengthy e-mails from his/her stalker that it gravely disrupted any legitimate communications; this latter phenomenon illustrates the techniques of mail bombing and spam.

Finally, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children commissioned a study involving a national sample of children (ages 10–17) who regularly used the Internet (Finkelhor et al., 2000). In the study, the online victimization of youth was examined. In regard to cyberstalking, the researchers reported that 6% of the youth experienced online harassment in the last year; however, only 2% described the incident as “distressing.” Forty-eight percent of those who experienced online harassment were female, and 51% were male. Sixty-three percent of the perpetrators were other juveniles, and 24% lived within an hour’s drive of the youth. Of the youth who found the episode distressing, 35% of the perpetrators lived within an hour’s drive of the youth. Nearly one fourth of the youth
reported that they did not disclose their experience. Additionally, only 1% of these incidents were reported to law enforcement agencies.

Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive study was threefold: (a) to ascertain the labels, feelings, and behavioral reactions of college students about cyberstalking, (b) to determine the prevalence and coping characteristics of cyberstalking victims, and (c) to compare the labels, feelings, and behavioral reactions of cyberstalked to stalked victims.

Method

Participants

Participants of the current study were drawn from two universities in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, 100 students were from a public institution and 656 students were from a private institution. Students at the private institution were given nominal extra credit for their participation. Students at the public institution who participated in a focus group received $20, and those that completed the questionnaire received a nominal monetary compensation of $10. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 55 (\(M = 20.7\) years, \(SD = 2.94\)). Four hundred and fourteen (54.8%) were male students, 342 (45.2%) were female, 107 (14.2%) were first-year students, 178 (23.5%) were sophomores, 190 (25.1%) were juniors, 247 (32.7%) were seniors, and 34 (4.5%) were in graduate school. The overwhelming majority of the students (72.9%) were Caucasian, 13.0% were Asian, 5.9% were African American, 3.9% were Hispanic, and 4.4% were biracial/multiracial or other. Ninety-one (12.0%) of the students in the study were the first in their family to attend college. Three hundred and nine (41.1%) were affiliated with fraternities or sororities. One hundred and seventy-three (22.9%) participated in intercollegiate athletics. Three hundred and thirty-seven (44.6%) had previously attended a program focused on interpersonal violence.

Procedure

The participants were asked to anonymously complete a questionnaire in which information was asked about their Internet use and experience with cyberstalking. Additionally, responses to a set of scenarios about interactions between two people were presented. Students were asked to label and express their opinions about the scenarios. The following scenario concerned interaction in cyberspace and was constructed from the first cyberstalking case prosecuted in California (see Miller & Maharaj, 1999).

Scenario

You have been monitoring a live Internet “friends’” chat room for several days when you decide to take the plunge and participate in the discussion. You engage in several online conversations and establish trust with a variety of individuals. One of your friends asks you to speak in a “private chat room.” Having established trust with this person, you engage in a private conversation. Your friend types “I am very attracted to you and would like to meet you in person.” You are flattered but respectfully decline to meet IRL (in real life), because you are concerned with how the person will perceive you in a face-to-face situation. You say good-bye and logoff your computer. Over the next few days when you check your email you receive several messages and solicitations which you consider to be obscene. On at least three occasions,
sometimes in the middle of the night, people
knock on your door saying that they “want to
make your fantasy come true.” Upon further
investigation, you find that your name, tele-
phone number, and address have been posted
on a pornographic Internet newsgroup, with
the message, “I fantasize about a stranger en-
tering my house and forcing himself/herself
upon me.”

Results

Some interesting comparisons can be made
between this study’s findings and previous
research. Although this scenario was derived
from a case where the perpetrator was con-
victed of committing cyberstalking, only 29.9%
of the college students labeled it as such in the
current study. In fact, 7.6% of the sample did
not even label it as harassment, let alone
stalking. This occurred in spite of the fact
that 69% of the participants felt that it was
“physically threatening” or worse, and almost
three quarters (73%) said that they would
report it to the police. As Lee (1998) found,
the behavioral and feeling responses of
students to the cyberstalking scenario may
have been more intense because there were
elements of both online and offline stalking.
The closer physical proximity between the
target and the perpetrator may account for
these intense reactions.

Investigating the interaction of labeling,
feeling, and behavioral reaction, all correlations
were in the expected direction; specifically, the
more intense the feeling, the stronger the
reaction. An examination of the relationships
with other variables in the study found that
there were very high correlations with gender.
Women were more likely than men to report
more severe feelings and stronger reactions. It
was also found that seniors were significantly
less likely to express more severe feelings.
Those who felt that sexually explicit material is
a growing problem on the Internet and those
who had known someone who had been raped
were more likely to have significant positive
correlations with their level of feeling. There
were significant correlations in the opposite
direction on the questions of whether students
knew others who had received threats of
physical violence via e-mail, for those who
had been stalked, and for those who had
received letters in the mail as part of their
victimization. It is possible that this happened
because those who had experienced these
episodes were “numbed” by the experience
(Burgess & Roberts, 2000). Additional research
is needed to explore these dynamics.

Concerning the strength of the response,
there was a positive correlation between the
person having experienced harassment and the
severity of the response. As with the level of
feeling, there were also a large number of
negative correlations between other variables
included in the study and severity. These
included being a sophomore, belonging to
a fraternity or sorority, and knowing others
who had received violent e-mails or who had
been solicited to engage in sexually explicit
conversations online. For those who had been
stalked, there were negative correlations with
length of the stalking, if victims were being
stalked by a family member, if they were being
threatened by a stalker, if they told their
family, if they told their intimate partner,
whether they got a pet or a gun, how other
people would feel, if their intimate partner told
them not to contact the police, and if the stalker
had violated a restraining order.

On the matter of labeling, those with
membership in a fraternity or sorority were
more likely to label the cyberstalking scenario
as stalking and less likely to label it harassment.
Those who were stalked at school were less
likely to label the scenario as stalking and
more likely to label it _harassment_. Surprisingly, those who attended a program focused on interpersonal violence were more likely to respond “harassment” and significantly less likely to respond “stalking.” Also, the longer victims experienced stalking, the less likely they were to label the scenario as “stalking.”

These appear to be counterintuitive findings; however, prior evidence suggests that stalking victims might be hesitant to assume the identity of “victim” (Tjaden, Thoennes, & Allison, 2000). In addition, researchers have found that students who considered themselves “stalked” versus “harassed” experienced more intrusive and threatening behaviors (Westrup, Fremouw, Thompson, & Lewis, 1999). In the current study, those who were cyberstalked experienced additional intrusive behaviors offline in the real world. Thus, the choice of a specific label may be a self-protective coping mechanism for the victim. The rationale for these labeling decisions requires further investigation.

**Student Internet Use and Experiences With Cyberstalking**

Most of the students reported beginning to use the Internet before they were 16 years old. The average student used it 5–6 hr a week. About one third used chat rooms. Most participants reported having some negative experiences on the Internet and knowing others who had experienced such episodes. Three quarters agreed that sexually explicit materials were a growing problem on the Internet and felt that it was too easy to accidentally access sexually explicit materials. Only about a third of the participants thought that the government should regulate selected materials. The primary concern expressed by students was the abuse of their personal information on the Internet.

Not surprisingly, the earlier the students began using the Internet, the more they currently used it, and the more likely they were to know of people who had experienced problems. The fact that first-year students were more likely to begin using the Internet at an earlier age indicates the direction this will go in the future. Research by Finkelhor et al. (2000) illustrated that both the perpetrators and victims of cyberstalking may be increasing among our youth at a drastic rate. Furthermore, the close proximity of the perpetrators to the victims suggests that the threat of violence offline in the real world has increased. Further research on cyberstalking will need to address the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

Women in the sample began accessing the Internet later than men. Counter to the reported national trend, women also used the Internet significantly less than men. In this sample, African Americans started using the Internet earlier than others. Moreover, those in fraternities and sororities began using the Internet earlier than others. Asians used the Internet significantly more than others. In addition, the younger the participants, the more likely they were to use chat rooms, and men were more likely to use them than women. Caucasians were significantly less likely than other races to use chat rooms, with Hispanics having the highest usage. Fraternity and sorority members were less likely to be found in chat rooms. These data provide considerable insight into the potential risk from and interface with cyberstalkers.

As expected, those who had a negative experience on the Internet and knew others who had such experiences were highly intercorrelated with having other negative experiences and knowing others who had had them. The older the participants, the less likely they were to have or know someone who had these experiences. Men were more likely than women to experience negative episodes. On the opinion
Concerning the experience of being cyberstalked, 28 students (3.7% of the total sample and 31.5% of those who reported being stalked) reported such an experience. This is about the same as the 3.2% and 24.7% numbers reported by Fisher et al. (2000). Most of the cyberstalkers were either classmates or former intimate partners; thus, the perpetrator was known to the victim. Those who were cyberstalked were also likely to have experienced other forms of stalking behaviors including receiving telephone calls and letters, being harassed, being followed, being touched, being sexually threatened, and receiving physical injury threats. The majority of the victims (82%) were stalked at home or in the dorms, and 54% were stalked at school. In 79% of the cases, the race of the victim and the perpetrator was the same. The primary ways in which victims dealt with the situation were yell at the person, screen phone calls, try to reason with them, threaten them, and plead with them. The victim chose not to tell anyone in 11% of the cases, whereas 75% told close friends and 54% told a family member.

Perhaps the most unexpected finding derived from the data was the fact that although females were significantly more likely to be stalked than men ($r = .09, p = .011$), comparing those who had been cyberstalked with the others who had been stalked, men were significantly more likely than women to have been cyberstalked ($r = -.25, p = .020$). No significant differences were found regarding age or the other demographic variables, although Caucasian men had the highest correlation when the sex–race groups were compared separately ($r = .31, p = .003$). Those who were cyberstalked were significantly more likely to have had this done by a former intimate partner and were less likely to have been stalked by a stranger when compared with the others who were stalked. Victims of cyberstalking were also more likely to have received threats. Regarding the perpetrators, those who were cyberstalked were significantly more likely to have the perpetrator threaten to kill themselves, to have personal items taken, and to screen phone calls. Finally, those who were cyberstalked were significantly more likely not to do something because they thought that the situation would stop.

**Discussion**

For the current study, a scenario was included in which the perpetrator posted messages on the Internet that said the victim had fantasies about being forced to have sex with a stranger. Although this scenario was derived from a case where the perpetrator was convicted of committing cyberstalking, only 29.9% of the participants labeled it as such in the current study. Those with membership in a fraternity or sorority were more likely to label the cyberstalking scenario as *stalking* and less likely to label it as *harassment*. This finding may be due to the recent trend of proactive and preventative education efforts directed toward “high-risk groups” for sex crimes on campus. Surprisingly, those who attended a program focused on interpersonal violence were more likely to respond “harassment” and significantly less likely to respond “stalking.” This suggests that programs focused on interpersonal violence need to illustrate more clearly the differences between stalking and harassment. In addition, the longer victims experienced stalking, the less likely they were to label the scenario as *stalking*. The latter appear to
be counterintuitive findings; however, prior evidence suggests that stalking victims might be hesitant to assume the identity of victim (Tjaden et al., 2000). Lee (1998) suggested that “either people cannot always objectively judge their own experiences, or that they do not easily see themselves as victims” (p. 440). Additionally, researchers have found that students who considered themselves stalked versus harassed experienced more intrusive and threatening behaviors (Westrup et al., 1999). In the current study, those who were cyberstalked experienced additional intrusive behaviors offline in the real world. Thus, the choice of a specific label may be a self-protective coping mechanism for the victim (Tjaden et al., 2000; Westrup et al., 1999). The rationale for these labeling decisions requires further investigation.

As Lee (1998) found, the feeling and behavioral reaction of students to the cyberstalking scenario may have been more intense because there were elements of both online and offline stalking. The closer physical proximity between the victim and the perpetrator may account for these intense reactions. By the cyberstalker posting the victim’s personal information online, he/she “enlisted” third-party participation. Students may not have interpreted the “posting” by the cyberstalker in the scenario as “threatening,” but the ensuing behaviors of third parties may account for the intensity of their reaction. Only 29.9% of the students in the present study labeled the scenario as cyberstalking. These findings contradict those reported by Lee (50% and 60.9%). This result may be due to a lack of knowledge about the legal differences between harassment and stalking and demonstrates the perceptions found in this college population. The primary difference between cyberstalking and cyberharassment is the intent to instill fear or dread in the victim and the repetitive nature of the perpetrator’s actions. Differences between cyberstalking and cyberharassment require further elucidation, and future studies addressing the perception of cyberstalking in the general population are warranted.

To ascertain more definitive characteristics about the victims and perpetrators of cyberstalking, future studies will need to include male participants and a more diverse population. Additionally, the age of victims and perpetrators of cyberstalking and their relationships are areas of inquiry that require further exploration. In the current study, younger students were more likely to begin using the Internet at an earlier age indicating the discernible trend that cyberstalking will take in the future. Both perpetrators and victims as young as 10 years of age were reported by D’Ovidio and Doyle (2003). Moreover, research by Finkelhor et al. (2000) further illustrates the trend that both the perpetrators and victims of cyberstalking may be increasing among our youth at an increased rate. Further research on this particular phenomenon needs to address the age of victims and perpetrators as well as the relationship between the two.

Those who were cyberstalked were significantly more likely to have had this done by a former intimate partner and were less likely to have been stalked by a stranger when compared with the others who were stalked. Victims of cyberstalking were also more likely to have received threats and to have personal items taken. In addition, the close physical proximity of the perpetrators to the victims reported by Finkelhor et al. (2000) suggests that the threat of violence offline in the real world has increased. Brewster (2000) found that threats of violence were significantly correlated with actual physical violence in a group of females that were stalked by former intimates. Overall, a finite amount of literature exists that focuses on the relationships between former intimate partners, threats, and violence.
The role these dynamics play in cyberstalking requires additional attention.

The perpetrators of cyberstalking were significantly more likely to threaten to kill themselves than the perpetrators of stalking. This suggests that the electronic medium may allow the cyberstalking perpetrator to express more “dramatic” or histrionic behavior. Furthermore, those who were cyberstalked were significantly more likely not to report the experience to law enforcement agencies because they thought that the situation would stop. Additional research of cyberstalking is needed to discover and understand the coping and reporting mechanisms employed by victims.

Perhaps the most unexpected finding derived from the data was the fact that although females were significantly more likely to be stalked than men, men were significantly more likely to be cyberstalked than women. According to Finkelhor et al. (2000), 51% of the victims of online harassment were male; however, D’Ovidio and Doyle (2003) reported a male victim population of only 35%. Traditionally, stalking studies have focused on female participants. The ever-changing emergence of communication technologies coupled with the evolution of stalking behaviors requires the inclusion of more male participants to understand the victims and perpetrators of cyberstalking as well as its nature.

Implications for Mental Health Professionals

In responding to victims of cyberstalking, particularly given the overarching typology of uncertainty, mental health professionals can offer principal strategies of intervention, including initial reassurance and debriefing, environmental assessment, education, referral, and family- and community-level partnership for positive and proactive change.

Initial reassurance and debriefing comprise the first-line response to the disclosure of cyberstalking. It is essential to define and clarify what the experience of cyberstalking means to the individual. Is it a loss of safety? Is it a loss of control? Is it a sense of uncertainty? Is it a loss of trust? The answers to these questions, emanating from the individual, will guide the interventions.

Environmental assessment, education, and referral follow the initial response to the disclosure. Appropriate risk assessments of individuals, families, homes, schools, and workplaces should be conducted. These risk assessments are critical to establish a baseline of understanding at the time the event is disclosed. Key questions to be asked during such assessments should include the following: What are the current and past experiences as told by the victim? What are the specific exposures to communications that might be considered cyberstalking or harassment? What is the relationship between these unsolicited and unwanted communications (at home, school, and workplace) and the subsequent intrapsychic or affective disruption?

Finally, the mental health professional should help the victim to identify family- and community-level partnerships for the purpose of creating positive change. Although initial reassurance and environmental assessment are likely to occur immediately after the event, community partnership for change is a long-term solution. Mental health professionals can advocate on behalf of the affected persons who may lack the knowledge or social power to adaptively cope with the aftermath of cyberstalking. This includes identification of family members or other community-based support systems (employee assistance programs, human resources personnel, university/college counselors, etc.) to increase a sense of safety while also decreasing a sense of isolation.
In general, it is critical for mental health professionals to be aware that victims often experience a heightened sense of fear that may overshadow every other emotion they are able to verbalize. Fear, as an intense emotion, especially in the immediate aftermath of acts of intrusion such as cyberstalking, is a normal reaction. In some instances, fear may last for months or even years, particularly if a pervasive fear of reoccurrence develops. When victims express fear, it is essential not to dismiss the emotion or refer to it as irrational or unnecessary. Mental health professionals can help victims to understand that fear can sometimes be a protective device that should never be denied. Rather, fear, properly identified and accepted, can promote safety and encourage an individual to proactively increase safety precautions.

Conclusion

The fact that little empirical research exists specifically addressing the phenomenon of cyberstalking is not surprising given the relatively recent adoption of antistalking statutes and widespread use of the Internet. In this article, we focus on this phenomenon in a collegiate community. It examines responses to a scenario on cyberstalking to see how the students classify negative behavior on the Internet and how they feel about it; it presents the students’ experiences with the Internet; and finally it focuses on a subset of the sample—victims who had been cyberstalked.

Reno (1999, 75) recommended that law enforcement and mental health providers “name the behavior as cyberstalking and validate that a crime is occurring when working with individual victims.” Presently, not all states include specific guidelines to address stalking on the Internet in their antistalking statutes. This is an area in need of further investigation.

These data suggest that victims do not report incidents of stalking and cyberstalking to authorities. Often, victims do not think the behavior is a criminal offense or that school authorities or law enforcement officers will take them seriously (Ashcroft, 2001; Fisher et al., 2002; Reno, 1999). Victim advocates need to take a proactive role in identifying and instituting services for victims of online and offline stalking. Supportive services are essential for victims of online and offline stalking to maintain self-esteem. Educational services are needed for victims to navigate the Web sites of administrative and judicial systems. Finally, through supportive, educational, and psychotherapeutic measures victims will become empowered and enabled to recapture the control lost at the hands of their perpetrators.

References


