

The Impact of Cyberstalking: review and analysis of the ECHO Pilot Project

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Definitions of stalking behaviour

- 'The course of conduct by which one person repeatedly inflicts on another unwanted intrusions to such an extent that the recipient fears for his or her safety' Purcell, Pathe and Mullen 2004.



Cyberstalking

- **Cyberstalking is generally considered to be harassment that originates online, however it is also recognised that other forms of pre-existing stalking can transfer into online environments**



Cyberstalking – a old problem through a new medium

- Age-old problem
- Technology means that the temporal nature of harassment has changed
- Time and geography no longer important; asynchronous and remote
- New interventions required



Types of attack

- Identity theft – controlling victim's credentials
- Posting false profiles
- Posing as the victim and attacking others
- Discrediting in online communities
- Discrediting victim in workplace
- Direct threats through email/instant messaging

Types of attack

- Constructing websites targeting the victim
- Transferring attack to victim's relatives
- Use of the victim's image
- Provoking others to attack the victim
- Following the victim in cyberspace



Importance of research in Cyberstalking

- Technological issues
 - The "attribution" problem is the difficulty in proving that an *individual* committed a crime using electronic means, even if it can be shown beyond reasonable doubt that a particular device was used to commit a crime.



Development of Accepted norms for Behaviour in Online Environments

- Unique opportunities to anonymously access information about people
- Perception of personal disconnection from other Internet users.
- Although sensitive to harassment by others, significant numbers of user engaged in persistent and intrusive behaviours



Development of Accepted norms for Behaviour in Online Environments

- Reduced inhibitions are associated with a higher propensity to misbehave
- Relationship formation is accelerated, and intense causing individuals to self-disclose rapidly and form deeply intimate bonds in a short time frame - This poses a risk where one party is misrepresenting themselves or their intentions.



The ECHO Project

- Initiated by Dr Emma Short in collaboration with the Network for Surviving Stalking
- Commenced late 2010, running for 6 months
- Analysis by the team at the University: Carsten, Emma and Antony



Cyberstalking – the Numbers



- How many of the respondents to the survey stated they first met their attacker OFFLINE?



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54%



Myth 1

- If people don't want to be cyberstalked then all they have to do is avoid communicating with strangers online

MYTH



- What is the difference in age between youngest and oldest respondent?



- What is the difference in age between youngest and oldest respondent?

60

Myth 2

- Cyberstalking only affects a small age range of the population

MYTH



The population affected

- The age group most represented in the current 'cyberstalked' group was 20-39.



- What percentage of respondents fear people compiling information about them?



- What percentage of respondents fear people compiling information about them?

80%



- What percentage of respondents experience 3 or more different MODES of cyberstalking?



- What percentage of respondents experience 3 or more different MODES of cyberstalking?

58%



- What percentage of female respondents fear face to face harassment?



- What percentage of female respondents fear face to face harassment?

50%



- What percentage of male respondents fear someone tricking another person into cyberstalking them?



- What percentage of male respondents fear someone tricking another person into cyberstalking them?

54%

- What percentage of women who were murdered by their current or former partner, were stalked by their attacker in the 12 months preceding the murder?*

*Not an outcome of ECHO directly

- What percentage of women who were murdered by their current or former partner, were stalked by their attacker in the 12 months preceding the murder?

76%

85% for attempted murder

*Not an outcome of ECHO directly

Myth 3

- There isn't significant impact of cyberstalking

MYTH



- What percentage of respondents were female?



- What percentage of respondents were female?

68%

Myth 4

- Nearly all cyberstalking victims are female

MYTH



- What percentage of respondents feared Damage to Reputation (other categories included Physical Injury to Self, Physical Injury to Others, Injury to Feelings, Others)?



- What percentage of respondents feared Damage to Reputation (other categories included Physical Injury to Self, Physical Injury to Others, Injury to Feelings, Others)?

34%

- What percentage of male respondents were 40 years old or over?



- What percentage of male respondents were 40 years old or over?

43%



Incidence of PTSD following Trauma

- PTSD is a specific condition in which trauma survivors are unable to get the trauma out of their minds.
- Thought to affect 5-10% of the population
- Incidence varies following exposure to specific events



- What percentage of people experiencing harassment electronically and physically experience PTSD?



- What percentage of people experiencing harassment electronically and physically experience PTSD?

50%

Types of traumas

Cyberstalking
victims 32.7%

Combined
stalking victims
50%

Air crash survivors 22 - 40%

**Sexual assault
22-50%**

RTA survivors 11%

Aid workers 30-50%

Combat veterans 22-50%

Bomb survivors 50%



- What percentage of female respondents were 40 years old or over?



- What percentage of female respondents were 40 years old or over?

30%

- What percentage of male respondents feared Damage to Reputation?



- What percentage of male respondents feared Damage to Reputation?

46%



- What percentage of respondents felt the Police/Law Enforcement should be responsible for taking actions to prevent harassment?



- What percentage of respondents felt the Police/Law Enforcement should be responsible for taking actions to prevent harassment?

38%

Myth 5

- It is solely the Police's/Law Enforcement responsibility to take action to prevent harassment

MYTH

- 29% felt Service Providers should be responsible



- What percentage of respondents fear people using different identities to contact them?



- What percentage of respondents fear people using different identities to contact them?

58%



Some More Common Myths

- We can't catch cyberstalkers
- There is no law under which to prosecute cyberstalkers
- If people ignore stalkers, they will get bored and stop
- If you confront a stalker they will stop



Thank you

Any Questions?

