

Health Professionals Fear Web Sites That Support Theories on Mind Control - NYTimes.com

FOR years they lived in solitary terror of the light beams that caused searing headaches, the technology that took control of their minds and bodies. They feared the stalkers, people whose voices shouted from the walls or screamed in their heads, "We found you" and "We want you dead."

When people who believe such things reported them to the police, doctors or family, they said they were often told they were crazy. Sometimes they were medicated or locked in hospital wards, or fired from jobs and isolated from the outside world.

But when they found one another on the Internet, everything changed. So many others were having the same experiences.

Type "mind control" or "gang stalking" and Web sites appear that describe cases of persecution, both psychological and physical, related with the same minute details— red and white cars follow victims, vandalism of their homes, snickering by those around them.

Identified by some [psychologists](#) and [psychiatrists](#) as part of an "extreme community" on the Internet appears to encourage delusional thinking, a growing number of such Web sites are filled with stories from people who say they are victims of mind control and stalking by gangs of government agents. The sites are drawing the concern of [mental health](#) professionals and the interest of researchers in [psychology](#) and [psychiatry](#).

Although many Internet groups that offer peer support are considered helpful to the mentally ill, some experts say Web sites that amplify reports of mind control and group stalking represent a dark side of social networking. They may reinforce the troubled thinking of the mentally ill and impede treatment.

Dr. Ralph Hoffman, a psychiatry professor at Yale who studies delusions, said a growing number of his research subjects have told him of visiting mind-control sites, and finding in them confirmation of their own experiences.

"The views of these belief systems are like a shark that has to be constantly fed," Dr. Hoffman said. "If you don't feed the delusion, sooner or later it will die out or diminish on its own accord. The problem is that it needs to be repetitively reinforced."

That is what the Web sites do, he said. Similar concerns have arisen about a proliferation of sites that describe how to commit [suicide](#), or others that promote [anorexia](#) and [bulimia](#), providing detailed instructions on restricting food and photographs of skeletal women meant to be "inspiration."

For people who regularly visit and write on message boards on the mind-control sites, the idea that others would describe the sites as promoting delusional and [psychotic](#) thinking is simply evidence of a cover-up of the truth.

"It was a big relief to find the community," said Derrick Robinson, 55, a janitor in Cincinnati and a member of Freedom from Covert Harassment and Surveillance, a group that claims several hundred regular users of its Web site. "I felt that maybe there were others, but I wasn't real sure until I did find this community," Robinson said.

There is no concise survey of mind-control sites or others describing gang stalking— whose users believe that groups of people are following and controlling them, as part of a test of neurological or other kinds of weapons likely conducted by the government— on the Net. But they are easy to find. Some have hundreds of postings, along with links to dozens of similar sites. One, [Gangstalkingworld.com](#), welcomes visitors with this description: "Gang Stalking is a systemic form of control, which seeks to destroy every aspect of a Targeted Individual's life. The target is followed around and placed under surveillance by Civilian Spies/Snitches 24/7."

The site lists more than 71,000 visitors, and it has links to several other sites, including [Harrassment101.com](#), which has 965 posts.

One poster to Gang Stalking World wrote in August: "It's insane that I daily have to come here to figure out if my Web sites will still be up or shut down. This week they have really been playing with me, and so it was my time to play back. The post directs readers to other gang-stalking sites should their favorite sites be shut down."

Mr. Robinson said in an interview that that he has been tortured and abused by gang stalkers and by neurological weaponry since leaving the Navy in 1982. "To read the stories and the harassment techniques that were going on, to hear about the vandalism, appliance tampering and all the other things were designed to drive a person crazy, who do you go to with this?" he said. "People will be delusional."

For Mr. Robinson and several other Web site users interviewed for this article—all of whom insisted they were delusional, including one man who said he had been hospitalized in psychiatric wards—the sites provide the powerful, unfamiliar experience of being understood by others.

By and large, most people are sane and coherent and can relate exactly what's happening to them, Mr. Robinson said. "They can say the things that would otherwise get them labeled as delusional."