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Bloody Wednesday in Dawson College - The Story of Kimveer Gill, or Why Should We Monitor Certain Websites to Prevent Murder

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Bloody Wednesday in Dawson College - The Story of Kimveer Gill, or Why Should We Monitor Certain Websites to Prevent Murder*

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Abstract

The article deals with the Dawson College Massacre, focusing on the story of Kimveer Gill, a 25-year-old man from Laval, Montreal who wished to murder young students in Dawson College. It is argued that the international community should continue working together to devise rules for monitoring specific Internet sites, as human lives are at stake. Preemptive measures could prevent the translation of murderous thoughts into murderous actions. Designated monitoring mechanisms of certain websites that promote violence and seek legitimacy as well as adherents to the actualization of murderous thoughts and hateful messages have a potential of preventing such unfortunate events. Our intention is to draw the attention of the multifaceted international community (law enforcement, governments, the business sector including Internet Service Providers, websites' administrators and owners as well as civil society groups) to the shared interest and need in developing monitoring schemes for certain websites, in order to prevent hideous crimes.

KEYWORDS: internet monitoring, violent websites, Dawson College Massacre, Jokela High School Massacre, Internet Governance, Kimveer Gill, VampireFreaks.com

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INTRODUCTION¹

When the idea of the Internet was first conceived by visionaries such as Vannevar Bush,² Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider,³ Douglas Engelbart⁴ and Paul Baran,⁵ they could not have imagined the present fascinating state of the Internet. The multi-faceted nature of the Internet and its international proliferation has benefited millions of users around the world. The Net serves as a communication medium comprising all other media. It is an arena for a wide array of public debate, a social network, an infrastructure for digital commercial activities, and a mega-sized information bank. The Internet, however, can be used for positive purposes as well as for negative and wicked purposes.

As usage of the Internet became widespread, some of the expectations we had for the Internet, including its ability to facilitate global communication, serve as a new central public space, and provide a point of free access to a variety of information sources have already been realized; however, other expectations have not yet come to fruition, including its capability to function as a democracy enhancing tool and as a device to lessen literacy gaps.

Expression over the Internet enjoys nearly unrestricted freedom, obtained mainly as the result of the web's architecture:

1. Dissemination of information is far-reaching, global, cheap, and fast.
2. There is a vast range of websites on every human-interest topic, which are free of charge and open accessed, providing a public stage.
3. Internet users can ignore time and geographical gaps.
4. The ability to encode contents is quite simple.
5. Most websites allow anonymity, identity games and maleficent impersonation.

All of the above can serve the interests of negative agents and their harmful objectives. The web is replete with detailed, accurate manuals designed to "teach" the average person how to commit crimes, assemble weapons and explosives, and commit suicide. New technologies are facilitating traditional criminal activities

¹. All websites were last accessed on October 2, 2008.

². Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think", *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 176, No. 1 (July 1945), pp. 101- 108. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/194507/bush> .

³. Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider, "Man-Computer Symbiosis", *IRE Transactions on Human Factors in Electronics*, Volume HFE-1 (March 1960), pp. 4-11. <http://groups.csail.mit.edu/medg/people/psz/Licklider.html> .

⁴. Douglas C. Engelbart, "Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework", Summary Report AFOSR-3223 under Contract AF 49(638)-1024, SRI Project 3578 for Air Force Office of Scientific Research, Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, Ca., (October 1962). <http://www.bootstrap.org/augdocs/friedewald030402/augmentinghumanintellect/ahi62index.html> .

⁵. Paul Baran, "On Distributed Communications Networks", *IEEE Trans. Comm. Systems*, Vol. CS-12 No. 1 (March 1964), pp. 1-9.

and creating avenues for new and unprecedented forms of deviance.⁶ On the Internet people exchange fantasies as to how they would like to violently rape and murder young girls.⁷ Recipes for producing weapons and bombs are posted as well as manuals on acts of violence, including how to become a successful hit-man,⁸ how to build practical firearm suppressors, and how to carry out car bomb attacks.⁹ One site calls on people to "save the planet, kill yourself."¹⁰ It advises people to "do a good job" when they commit suicide, saying: "Suicide is hard work. It's easy to do it badly, or make rookie mistakes. As with many things, the best results are achieved by thorough research and careful preparation."¹¹ While some celebrate this as a democratizing, publicly empowering characteristic of the Internet that promotes intellectual and social progress, the hazards of such websites should not be ignored. In the absence of clearly defined boundaries to free expression, anarchy might encroach on both the virtual and the real world.¹²

One of the ways to confront the dangers of boundless speech over the web is monitoring such dangerous, anti-social websites as well as ones that are likely to be used for creating social support groups for potential criminals. The idea is not to implement surveillance of the entire Internet, something that we oppose on principled, free speech grounds and that is very costly and probably impractical, but to monitor the spaces of the Internet that are potentially harmful in order to detect and forestall crimes. This article focuses on the story of Kimveer Gill, a 25-year-old man from Laval, Montreal who wished to murder young students in Dawson College. We hold that the monitoring of certain sites on which criminals voice their violent goals could potentially prevent unfortunate events like this particular incident. We do not support censorship of the Internet, nor do we aim to induce Moral Panics¹³ among Internet users because we do not see the Internet

⁶. Matthew Williams, "Policing and Cybersociety: The Maturation of Regulation within an Online Community", *Policing and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2007), pp. 59-82, on p. 60.

⁷. Cf. *U.S. v. Baker and Gonda* 890 F. Supp. 1375, U.S. District Court, E.D. Michigan (June 21, 1995); *U.S. v. Alkhabaz* 104 F.3d 1492 (6th Cir. 1997). For further discussion, see Jennifer E. Rothman, "Freedom of Speech and True Threats", *Harvard J. of Law and Public Policy*, Vol. 25, Issue 1 (2001).

⁸. <http://ftp.die.net/mirror/hitman/>; for further discussion, see *Rice v. Paladin Enterprises Inc.*, No. 96-2412, 128 F.3d 233 (November 10, 1997).

⁹. Yaakov Lappin, "Al-Qaeda's car bomb guide", *Ynet* (January 7, 2007) (Hebrew).

¹⁰. <http://www.churchofeuthanasia.org/index.html>.

¹¹. *Ibid.*

¹². Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "In Internet's Way" in Mark Fackler and Robert S. Fortner (eds.), *Ethics and Evil in the Public Sphere* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, forthcoming).

¹³. Moral Panic is a sociological term coined by Stanley Cohen. The term refers to a reaction made by a group of people based on a false or exaggerated perception that a cultural phenomenon, behavior or group (mostly minority group or subculture) is dangerously deviant and poses a threat to society. An important factor in Moral Panic is the deviancy amplification spiral – an increasing cycle of media reports on undesirable events or behaviors which induce the moral panics in society

as "a threat to societal values and interests."¹⁴ Technology is not the problem. The problem is created by individuals who abuse technology to advance criminal agendas. Indeed, the Internet is a useful platform that has changed daily life forever and is here to stay, but we must devise ways to deal with its less positive aspects. Our intention is to draw the attention of the multifaceted international community -- law enforcement officers, governments, civil society groups -- to the urgent need of developing monitoring schemes of potentially problematic websites, in order to prevent homicide. Our expectation for international cooperation by all parts of society is not based on any existing legal obligations but rather upon the moral obligations that crosses borders and cultures regarding the sanctity of life and the urgency to save lives and prevent crimes. The Internet business sector (Internet Service Providers, websites' administrators and owners) bears an even heavier responsibility, since the moral obligations imposed on them may in due course become a legal obligation as was the case with child pornography and cybercrime.¹⁵ By "potentially problematic websites" we refer to websites that have the potential to attract criminals to post their criminal ideas and criminal intentions. Law-enforcement agencies are acquiring experience and understanding of social networking on the internet. Their work facilitates flexible schemes for identifying those websites and how criminals are using them. Analyzing several case studies most notably that of Kimveer Gill and VampireFreaks.com, the site which hosted his murderous thoughts, we argue that if the police were to monitor this site as well as other known such sites on a regular basis, bloodshed could have been prevented.

THE MURDEROUS ATTACK

On the morning of September 13, 2006, Kimveer Gill dressed in black combat boots, a black Matrix style trench coat and armed with three guns, drove his black car downtown with the aim to kill. Gill walked past the Dawson daycare center,

and can lead to legislation, designed to further penalize those established as the threatening deviants at the source of the panic. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1987). See also Chass Critcher, *Moral Panics ad the Media: Issues in Cultural and Media Studies* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 2003); Media Know All Web Guide: Moral Panic, <http://www.mediaknowall.com/violence/moralpanicnotes.html>.

¹⁴. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, *op. cit.*, p. 9. For further discussion, see Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, *UK Children Go Online: Final Report of Key Project Findings* (London: ESRC, April 2005), p.7. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/children-go-online/UKCGO_Final_report.pdf.

¹⁵. Council of Europe – Convention on Cybercrime – http://cis-sacp.government.bg/sacp/CIS/content_en/law/item06.htm; see also - <http://www.cybercrime.gov/intl.html#Vb1>. This issue will be elaborated in the subsection ISP's Responsibility.

which daily oversees 48 toddlers, along a busy street- the Maisonneuve. Gill disliked cigarettes, and when he saw some students smoking outside the college main entrance he shot two of them. Then he went inside to the atrium. It was lunch time; many students filled the cafeteria as Gill began shooting at random with his semi-automatic weapon.¹⁶ He killed 18 year-old Anastasia Rebecca De Sousa, a Dawson college student, and injured at least 20 people (four of them were hospitalized in critical condition).¹⁷ The gunman showed no mercy for wounded Anastasia and refused to allow a fellow student to help her.¹⁸ Her autopsy revealed she was shot nine times from a close range.¹⁹

Kimveer Gill took hostages and used them as human shields while the police were pursuing him. During the gunfire exchange, the gunman was hit in the arm. He then committed suicide by shooting himself. This dramatic chain of events took less than 10 minutes from beginning to end.²⁰

Gill had no known connection to Dawson College, the largest and most well-known college in downtown Montreal. Unlike other universities in the city, it is housed in one vast interconnected building (1,000,000 square feet area). At noon the students congregate in two cafeterias.²¹ It is reasonable to assume that Gill deliberately chose this location in order to kill as many people as possible.

KIMVEER GILL'S MENTAL CONDITION AS REFLECTED THROUGH HIS BLOG

Kimveer Gill was a depressed and troubled young man. He was an unemployed loner who lived in his parent's basement in Montréal suburban neighborhood of Laval.²² He lived most of his last months in the virtual world of a website named VampireFreaks.com, dedicated to Goth culture.

Kimveer Gill's posts to VampireFreaks.com website reveals his disturbed nature and provide an insight into his predictable end:

1. His screen name was Fatality666.²³
2. His favorite video game was Super Columbine Massacre. The player becomes Dylan Klebold or Eric Harris and embarks on a cartoon slaughter, walking through Columbine High School shooting students

¹⁶. Jan Wong, "Get under the desk", *Globe and Mail* (September 16, 2006), p. A8.

¹⁷. Daniel Renaud, "Gunman showed no pity to girl", *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 3.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹. Tu Thanh Ha, Ingrid Peritz and Andre Picard, "Shooter had brief military service", *Globe and Mail* (September 16, 2006), p. A9.

²⁰. Andre Picard, "Gunman shot student again and again," *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A8.

²¹. Jan Wong, "Get under the desk," *Globe and Mail* (September 16, 2006), p. A9.

²². Jain Ajit, "Raging, alienated, Gill was a walking time bomb", *India Abroad* (New York) (September 22, 2006), p. A1.

²³. Natalie Pona, "Net violence unchecked", *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 4.

and teachers.²⁴ "Work sucks... school sucks... life sucks... what else can I say?," wrote Gill, maintaining, "Metal and Goth kick ass. Life is a video game, you've got to die sometime."²⁵

3. His profile reveals his likes and dislikes, for example: **Achieve This Year** – Stay Alive; **How do you want to Die** – like Romeo and Juliet – or – in a hail of gunfire.²⁶; **Favorite Movie** – *Natural Born Killers*²⁷; **Favorite Weapon** – Tec-9 semi-automatic handgun (Gill noted that this was an illegal weapon in Canada).²⁸
4. On his profile Gill described himself: "His name is Trench. You will come to know him as the Angel of Death... He is not a people person. He has met a handful of people in his life who are decent. But he finds the vast majority to be worthless, no good, conniving, betraying, lying, deceptive."²⁹
5. Gill has uploaded more than 50 pictures to his page in VampireFreaks.com. Those pictures depicted him dressed like his heroes from Columbine, long black trench coat and boots to match while carrying various weapons. In one of the pictures, titled "You're next," he was seen pointing a handgun at the camera.³⁰ In another picture he held a sign in order to deliver a message – "My Gothic Princess Leaves a Trail of Tears. God Has Forsaken Her. God Will Pay."³¹ In his last photo on the VampireFreaks blog, he was wearing his signature trench coat and holding up an automatic weapon with a text message "ready for action."³²
6. On his virtual tombstone he wrote "Kimveer – Lived fast. Died young. Left a mangled corpse."³³
7. Gill sent many posts to VampireFreaks; sometimes he would post entries every fifteen minutes. He wrote: "I love VampireFreaks. This is my new

²⁴. Charles Gibson *et al.*, "A closer look; A mind of a killer", *ABC News Transcripts* (September 14, 2006).

²⁵. Tony Harris *et. al.*, "Rounding up the Enemy; Lone Gunman Opens Fire on Students in Montreal", *CNN* (September 14, 2006).

²⁶. "Profile posted by Kimveer Gill", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A4.

²⁷. Phinjo Gombu, "Web Diary, photos reveal angry man who loved guns and hated people", *Toronto Star* (September 14, 2006), p. A1.

²⁸. *Ibid.*

²⁹. Phil Couvrette, "Rampage shooter an angry loner", *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (September 15, 2006), p. A4.

³⁰. Natalie Pona, "Net violence unchecked", *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 4.

³¹. *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 4.

³². "Montreal Shooting - The Blog: Excerpts 'I hate this world...I hate so much'", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A4.

³³. Phil Couvrette, "College Gunman liked Columbine role-play", *Sun-Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) (September 15, 2006), p. 20A.

home. I shall reside here till the day I die."³⁴ Reading excerpts from his blog exposes the psychotic personality of a man who was obsessed with hate, death, and guns. For example, on March 15, 2006 Gill wrote:

"I hate this world
I hate the people in it
I hate the way people live
I hate god
I hate deceivers
I hate betrayers
I hate religious zealots
I hate everything
I hate so much

(I could write 1000 more lines like these, but does it really matter, does anyone even care)

Look what this wretched world has done to me."³⁵

8. His role models were outlaws such as Bonnie and Clyde, as well as Romeo and Juliet -- couples who snubbed societal norms and who had died tragic deaths as a result. He admired the Germans, especially Adolf Hitler, and wrote one entry in German: "I will crush my enemies and eliminate them."³⁶
9. About two hours before the rampage, Gill wrote on the site he had been drinking whiskey in the morning ("mmmmmm, mmmmmmmmm, good!!") and described his mood the night before as "crazy" and "postal"³⁷

In another post he wrote "Give them what they deserve before you go." The word "them" referred to a vast array of people, places and things. Between his most hated things were comedies, governments, sunlight, and country music.³⁸ Gill expressed loathing towards authoritative figures such as police, teachers, and principals; he singled out "jocks" for high school bullying.³⁹ Furthermore, nine

³⁴. "Killer likened life to a video game", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

³⁵. "Montreal Shooting - The Blog: Excerpts 'I hate this world...I hate so much'", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A4.

³⁶. Sue Montgomery and Jeff Heinrich, "Acting out his fantasy: Dawson College gunman posted visions on his blog of what he enacted Wednesday", *Edmonton Journal* (September 15, 2006), p. A3.

³⁷. Combined News Services, "A blog of violence and death", *Newsday* (September 15, 2006), p. A32; "Killer likened life to a video game", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

³⁸. "Killer likened life to a video game", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

³⁹. Phinjo Gombu, "Web Diary, photos reveal angry man who loved guns and hated people", *Toronto Star* (September 14, 2006), p. A1.

months before his rampage he wrote specifically that the day in which he planned to seek revenge would be grey, "A light drizzle will be starting up."⁴⁰ Indeed, such was the day of his rampage. Gill did not restrict his violent thoughts to his blog on VampireFreaks. He posted various disturbing and distressing comments on other websites as well.

Gill's dark attitude towards the world was confirmed by personality tests he took on the Internet: A test named "Evil-O-Meter" rated him as "pure Evil." Another quiz, "which dictator are you?" suggested that his personality was consistent with Adolf Hitler's personality. A personality test based on one of his favorite video games, **Postal**, rated him as having an 84% chance of "going postal" (which is to say, being involved in a violent massacre) and an 86% chance of killing someone. These outcomes were accompanied by a recommendation to seek **professional help immediately**.⁴¹ A police source commented in the aftermath of Gill's rampage: "It was very obvious his state of mind was deteriorating greatly over the last three weeks."⁴²

All of these materials were visible and unconcealed on the VampireFreaks site. Possibly because of this openness, Gill thought the police was after him. On his blog he wrote in February 2006, "I know you're watching me mother-fuckers. I laugh at thee. There is nothing you can do to stop me. HA HA HA HA HA..."⁴³ Later that month he claimed that officers were pretending to be "nice little Goth girls" as part of their surveillance.⁴⁴ Unfortunately the police did not monitor Gill's actions. If they had, then the policemen would have undoubtedly come across Gill's explicit threat: "Turn this fucking world into a graveyard/Crush all those who stand in your way/ Let there be a river of blood in your wake/Walk through that river with pride."⁴⁵

The Goth culture attracted a great deal of criticism after Gill's deadly visit to Dawson College. Let us consider this culture, and then specifically discuss VampireFreaks.com.

THE GOTH CULTURE

The Goth culture first arose in the U.K. during the 1980s as an offshoot of the post-punk rock era. Goths favour black clothing; dyed black, bleached blond, red or purple hair; body piercing and extreme pallor. Some members of the culture

⁴⁰. Jan Wong, "Get under the desk", *Globe and Mail* (September 16, 2006), p. A8.

⁴¹. "Killer likened life to a video game", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

⁴². Siri Agrell and Paul Cherry, "Blogs reveal a deteriorating mind, police say", *National Post* (September 16, 2006), p. A9.

⁴³. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

⁴⁴. *Ibid.*

⁴⁵. "Killer likened life to a video game", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

have a morbid fascination with death and darkness. Popular cultural influences include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*; movies such as "Interview with a Vampire" and "Dracula," and television series like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." Vampires are a clique among the Goth culture, with rituals that are throwbacks to their eastern European roots.⁴⁶ While most are recreational vampires, some cross the border from bizarre hobby to dangerous cult.⁴⁷

The Goth culture often appeals to introverted, arty young people. It offers a different self-expression and life style. For teens that do not fit into the accepted mainstream, it is a way to break away from their childhood selves, their parents, their teachers, authority, and the herd. The antagonistic entity at large is mainstream society. The Goth culture appeals to young people's morbidity, and lets them flirt with uncommon costumes and nihilism.⁴⁸ One study holds that people choose Goth culture because their emotional distress and disenchantment with society will be understood and accepted by their peers.⁴⁹ Raymond Corrado, a professor at Simon Fraser University specializing in youth violence, explains that it is not the Goth culture that creates violent acts, but rather the susceptible teens who drawn to this culture. The Goth culture, he said, is attractive to teenagers who have problems fitting into the classic high school personalities, such as jocks, cheerleaders, GQ-kids, and have often been victims of some sort of bullying.⁵⁰ Similarly, Wade Deisman, a University of Ottawa criminologist who specializes in cybercrime and cyberspace trends and policy, explained that with Goths in particular, "part of their whole sort of cant is life is (awful), everyone is out to get me, no one understands me".⁵¹ These sentiments are not in themselves alarming, but the possible actions that could result from such thoughts can raise concern.

The Goth culture in cyberspace gives voice to its members' concerns in real world: music, fashion, parenting and discrimination.⁵² Generally speaking, the culture is characterized by "dark," morbid tastes in music and fashion; yet the

⁴⁶ <http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=4346862901>;

<http://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/folklore/vampire.html>

⁴⁷ Robert Remington et al., "This shouldn't have happened to them': Judge orders girl, 12, and adult boyfriend kept in custody", *The Calgary Herald* (April 26, 2006).

⁴⁸ Margaret Wente, "Sugar and spice and everything not nice", Breaking News from globeandmail.com (April 27, 2006).

⁴⁹ Eric Strachan, "Gill, games, Goth and guns", *Pembroke Observer* (Ontario) (September 16, 2006), p. 18.

⁵⁰ Scott Deveau, "More young girls charged with violent crimes", Breaking News from globeandmail.com (April 26, 2006).

⁵¹ Ian MacLeod, "Vampire culture gets another black mark after shooting: Website linked to Medicine Hat slayings", *The Calgary Herald* (Alberta) (September 15, 2006), p. A3.

⁵² Jason Whittaker, "Dark Webs: Goth Subcultures in Cyberspace", *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (May 2007), pp. 38-44.

Goth culture is far from homogenous. It has countless sub-niches such as Cyber-Goth, Industrial Goth and Traditional or Victorian Goth. Each one of the subcultures is represented in its own type of music and dress. "Goth is a splintered, fractious type of culture," said Tim Szantovich, manager of a Goth clothing boutique in Toronto.⁵³ Liisa Ladouceur, an elder-Goth who writes about the culture and its music for Toronto's Eye Weekly, explained that Goths "might look the same, but that doesn't mean they have the same values, ethics and interests. Some are sensitive loners and others have fun being outsiders... Some are disturbed and find solace in the goth community. Being a misfit is how they express themselves."⁵⁴

Goth culture has been associated with acts of hatred, notably the **Columbine High School massacre**, but it is also important to note that most often, Goths are not violent people. Indeed, sometimes they are subjects of assaults themselves because of their different looks.⁵⁵ Goth.net explains what a Goth is and why people become Goths by saying:

Goths have for the most part (not unanimously of course, but mostly) dropped all forms of prejudice. Noone (in the original- RCA & SHA) is afraid within the goth scene to come out as being gay, and noone has to hide their religion for fear of scorn from their peers or zealots wanting to convert them from the arms of Satan. In fact because of these facts (and the general lack of prejudice) the goth scene has a large proportion of gays/bisexuals, and followers of non-mainstream religions and views. This of course is the most important aspect of gothdom, and why most goths became goths in the first place, tolerance.⁵⁶

Michael Hoechsmann, a McGill University educational psychologist, described the correlation between Goth culture and mass murder as "tragic" and "unfortunate". The black trench coat was made into a violent symbol that will be difficult to erase.⁵⁷ Stephen Kent, a sociology professor at the University of Alberta, said while most Goths are harmless and simply like the clothes and subculture, some lean toward self-harm and a romanticism of suffering, including

⁵³. Caroline Alphonso and Margaret Philp, "The tribes of Goth", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9. For more information about the Goth culture, see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goth_subculture; <http://www.gothicsubculture.com/index.php>.

⁵⁴. Kevin Connor, "T.O.'S vampires out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (March 6, 2005), p. 36.

⁵⁵. Goths and Violent Crime –

<http://angst-zine.com/archives/106>; <http://feorag.newsvine.com/news/2008/03/28/1395748-mothers-plea-for-tolerance-after-goth-murder-verdict>.

⁵⁶. <http://www.goth.net/goth.html>.

⁵⁷. Jain Ajit, "Raging, alienated, Gill was a walking time bomb", *India Abroad* (New York) (September 22, 2006), p. A1.

death: "Alarm bells go off when I see a teen involved in Goth culture who may have been involved in a serious crime. But I don't necessarily jump to conclusions right away, because so many factors can come into play," he asserted, yet advising that "investigators must look seriously at the Goth connection."⁵⁸

Though the case study and some of the subsequent examples that are cited involve individuals with ties to the Goth culture and it is useful to place the killers and their actions within their social milieu, it must be stressed that the Goth culture is not at fault for such crimes; nor should one construe that websites associated with the entire Goth culture should be specifically targeted by the monitoring efforts. The places in cyberspace where individuals express their violent thoughts do not belong to one specific cultural group. The individuals that express their murderous thoughts through the Internet medium have a variety of cultural backgrounds.

VAMPIREFREAKS.COM

The VampireFreaks website was founded in 1999 by a Brooklyn resident, Jethro Berelson, who names himself "Jet." The site claims to have 600,000-700,000 members and millions of entrances.⁵⁹ VampireFreaks relates to a blood-lusty subculture of would-be vampires who are distinct from the more pacifist Goths.⁶⁰ This website features web logs and online journals by people with usernames such as SuicideOfLove, TeenageOddity, RottingNails, RazorBladeChris, DrowningInBlood, WiltedBlood and LoveInTheBedOfRazors. Apparently, quite a few of its members share feelings of depression, loneliness and anger mixed with gallows humor.⁶¹ Some of the website members are obsessed with blood, pain, rape, S&M and necrophilia.⁶² One user explains: "It cannot be denied that many people who share our lifestyle are fascinated by blood and death but virtually none of us would ever do anything to hurt another person."⁶³ This statement is not altogether accurate.

VampireFreaks serves as a virtual meeting place for Goths, a place where they can share a sense of community and belonging. Gill belonged there more

⁵⁸. Holly Lake, "Linking the Internet and Goth culture to the Medicine Hat murders may be jumping to conclusions, experts caution", *The Ottawa Sun* (April 27, 2006), p. 5.

⁵⁹. Natalie Pona, "Net violence unchecked", *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 4; Michele Mandel, "Out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (September 24, 2006), p. 5.

⁶⁰. Margaret Philp and Caroline Alphonso, "The Geeks at the back on computers", *Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A9

⁶¹. Robert Remington and Sherri Zickefoose, "12-year-old faces judge in triple murder: Boyfriend, 23, also accused in deaths of Medicine Hat family", *Edmonton Journal* (April 26, 2006), p. A2; Michele Mandel, "Out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (September 24, 2006), p. 5.

⁶². Kevin Connor, "T.O.'S vampires out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (March 6, 2005), p. 36.

⁶³. Michele Mandel, "Out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (September 24, 2006), p. 5.

than he did to anything in his real life. He pledged his allegiance to Goth culture on VampireFreaks.com, liked the black clothing, edgy music, macabre poetry, Mohawk spiky hair and a pervading spirit of social alienation.⁶⁴

Kimveer Gill was not the first criminal over the last few years who were connected to VampireFreaks.com. In 2005, three teens were prosecuted for the slaying of Jonathan, a 12-year-old brother of one of the three and attempting to kill his stepfather. The killer brother was a wannabe vampire with a fetish for blood sipping as a sexual foreplay.⁶⁵ Jonathan was stabbed 71 times. During the trial, it was revealed that a 16-year-old former girlfriend of one of the killers, blogged on VampireFreaks. The girl's posted profile on VampireFreaks listed among her likes "blood, pain . . . cemeteries and knives."⁶⁶ She was the prosecution's star witness, and downplayed her interest in vampire fetishism when she testified at the jury trial. But when her VampireFreaks postings were surfaced later, she had perjured herself in court, and the judge declared a mistrial. A second trial found the men guilty.⁶⁷

In April 2006, a 12 year-old girl who called herself "The Runaway Devil" and her 23 year-old boyfriend, Jeremy Allan Steinke, were charged with the triple murder of Marc Richardson, 42, his wife Debra, 48, and their son Jacob, 8.⁶⁸ They both were part of the VampireFreaks.com scene, where the girl used the online name of Killer-Kitty-X, described herself in her profile as "bisexual," "wiccan" and "insane", and confessed to like "hatchets, serial killers and blood."⁶⁹ The 7th Grade student had abandoned her clean-cut look for a darker, Goth style with heavy eyeliner and nail polish. In one picture on her website, she posed holding a gun to the camera as she pledged her love for Goth, punk, dark poetry and death metal music.⁷⁰ Her boyfriend matched her likes as he preferred "blood, razor blades and pain."⁷¹ He presented himself as a 300-year-old werewolf who

⁶⁴. Jain Ajit, "Raging, alienated, Gill was a walking time bomb", *India Abroad* (New York) (September 22, 2006), p. A1.

⁶⁵. Kevin Connor, "T.O.'S vampires out for blood", *The Toronto Sun* (March 6, 2005), p. 36.

⁶⁶. Christie Blatchford, "Jonathan trial aborted", *Breaking News from globeandmail.com* (February 16, 2005).

⁶⁷. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6; Michele Mandel, "Match made in hell", *Edmonton Sun* (Alberta) (September 17, 2006), p. 7; Siri Agrell, "'Vampire' blog derailed murder trial: Boastful postings cast doubt on credibility of star Crown witness", *Ottawa Citizen* (February 17, 2005), p. A6.

⁶⁸. Lloyd Robertson, "Web Links to shooting", *CTV Television* (September 14, 2006).

⁶⁹. Petti Fong, "Girl apologized to dead family", *Toronto Star* (July 11, 2007), p. A4.

⁷⁰. Holly Lake, "Linking the Internet and Goth culture to the Medicine Hat murders may be jumping to conclusions, experts caution", *The Ottawa Sun* (April 27, 2006), p. 5.

⁷¹. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

liked the taste of blood.⁷² Steinke and his 12-year-old girlfriend each had personal pages on VampireFreaks and made chilling postings prior to the slayings of the Richardson family.⁷³ One message, from Steinke's *souleater52* account, made reference to "doing morbid stuff to others! . . . which I'm going to do this weekend," days before the Richardson family was killed.⁷⁴

After the Richardson triple killing, many Goths irritated by the subculture's media portrayal as dangerous; they took pains to say their interest is a harmless one.⁷⁵ The same month of April 2006, however, VampireFreaks was once again on the news. Eric Fischer, a 23 year-old man, described as a Goth from New York was arrested after showing up at a cemetery expecting to have sex with a 13-year-old girl he met on VampireFreaks. It was the second alleged incident in which Fischer used the site to lure young girls. In March, he had been arrested on rape charges after meeting a 16-year-old girl he had met on the website.⁷⁶

In June 2006, three young men were sentenced for a deliberate fire that destroyed the 105-year-old Minnedosa United Church, in Minnedosa, Manitoba. One had posted his profile on VampireFreaks. Referring to Jesus Christ, he wrote: "If he comes back, we'll kill him again."⁷⁷

Parry Aftab, head of *Wired Safety* (a volunteering watchdog organization that monitors websites) said the Goth culture is not at issue in discussion of Gill's crime, but that the role of the VampireFreaks site cannot be easily discounted. She said her organization has contacted VampireFreaks.com repeatedly and received countless complaints about its content from parents and from teens that were harassed and abused. Aftab said: "I think the site is starting to breed a different Goth... many of the kids who are highly troubled and those who are making trouble for others, are gravitating to that site... the major problem... is that it seems to normalize aberrant behavior."⁷⁸ Aftab maintained, "Some of these kids

⁷². James Stevenson, "Slain boy found in his bed surrounded by blood soaked toys", *Canadian Press NewsWire* (June 12, 2007).

⁷³. Ian Austen, "Gunman at Montreal College Left Dark Hints of Rage Online", *The New York Times* (September 15, 2006), p. 10; Ian MacLeod, "Vampire culture gets another black mark after shooting: Website linked to Medicine Hat slayings", *The Calgary Herald* (September 15, 2006), p. A3.

⁷⁴. Sherri Zickefoose, "Girl accused in slayings back in court today", *The Calgary Herald* (May 1, 2006), p. B1.

⁷⁵. Ian MacLeod, "Vampire culture gets another black mark after shooting: Website linked to Medicine Hat slayings", *The Calgary Herald* (September 15, 2006), p. A3.

⁷⁶. Siri Agrell, "'Troubled kids 'gravitating' to vampire site: Several violent crimes in Canada tied to network", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6; "'Vampire' meets 'teen' in graveyard", *UPI* (April 28, 2006).

⁷⁷. Ian MacLeod, "Vampire culture gets another black mark after shooting: Website linked to Medicine Hat slayings", *The Calgary Herald* (September 15, 2006), p. A3.

⁷⁸. Siri Agrell, "'Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

who are troubled know they'll only get attention on there if they do something different than everyone else. You have to up the ante."⁷⁹ Websites like VampireFreaks.com create virtual communities and put people in touch. On such sites, when someone brags that he was doing something outrageous, people around him often congratulate him, sometimes encourage this sort of behavior.⁸⁰ After another incident that required police intervention in which a 'Vampire' arranged to meet a teen in graveyard via VampireFreaks website, Suffolk County Police Deputy Inspector Mark Griffiths said that VampireFreaks.com attracts people "on the fringe," people who are lonely and depressed.⁸¹

INTERNET WARNINGS

Often times, killers do not just snap and start shooting. Kimveer Gill was a walking bomb ready to explode, filled with growing rage and hatred. Kevin Cameron, a traumatic stress expert, explained that "Serious violence is an evolutionary process."⁸² The process begins with bitterness, degenerates into anger and rage, and if there are no mitigating circumstances, the wrath might end with brawling explosion. People need to vent their hostility, their acrimony, their anger. They provide signs, hints. They find it difficult to contain all these boiling emotions inside them. In the Internet age, it is convenient to vent into the virtual world. If not stopped, said Canadian anthropologist Elliott Leyton, the product of "those who had looked upon their own lives and pronounced them unlivable," and then decide to exact revenge for which they were willing to sacrifice their lives, is gore, death and suicide.⁸³

The April 1999 Columbine slaughter that left 12 people dead, set the benchmark for Gill and other killers. It had also set the tone for them regarding the use of the Internet to publicize their notorious thoughts and their intended evil schemes. In profanity-laden postings, killer Eric Harris began warning months earlier. On his personal Web page he wrote: "I hate you people for leaving me out of so many fun things." Relating to Natural selection, he wrote it is "the best thing that ever happened to the Earth. Getting rid of all the stupid and weak organisms."⁸⁴ Harris could not be more explicit: "I will be armed to the fucking

⁷⁹. *Ibid.*

⁸⁰. Maurice DuBois, "Parry Aftab of wiredsafety.org discusses monitoring of Web sites that could influence violent behaviors among its users", *CBS News Transcripts* (September 16, 2006).

⁸¹. "Vampire' meets 'teen' in graveyard," *UPI* (April 28, 2006).

⁸². Eric Strachan, "Gill, games, Goth and guns", *Pembroke Observer* (Ontario) (September 16, 2006), p. 18.

⁸³. Christie Blatchford, "Social analysis of violent acts could be key to prevention", *The Globe and Mail* (September 15, 2006), p. A10.

⁸⁴. Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

teeth and I WILL shoot to KILL and I WILL fucking KILL EVERYTHING. It'll be very hard to hold out until April."⁸⁵ Warsaw University criminologist and lecturer Kacper Gradon said that time after time, the graphic warnings have been in plain view on Internet discussion boards and websites.⁸⁶ There is a pattern, and this pattern should not be ignored.

On January 8, 2005 Ricky Rodriguez killed a prominent former member of the Christian sect, The Family International, and then committed suicide. Rodriguez recorded a videotape that has been featured on several Internet sites, including ABC.com and CNN.com. In the video he said: "Anger does not begin to describe how I feel about these people. I've seen how ugly humans can get... There's this need that I have. ... It's a need for revenge. It's a need for justice."⁸⁷

September 2006 saw another person besides Gill who went on a shooting spree. In Hillsborough, North Carolina, 19-year-old Alvaro Castillo killed his father before a violent rampage at Orange High School. Luckily among the students there were only a few slight injuries. Castillo's MySpace page lists "handguns, shotguns and rifles" among his "general interests." One of his pictures depicted him brandishing a pair of scissors as he appeared ready to stab in the head, an unidentified young male. "Attempted Murder" the caption reads. Like Gill, Castillo appeared to have been obsessed with the 1999 Columbine massacre. On August 29, just before he took a sawed-off shotgun to his old high school, Castillo sent a videotape and letter to the Chapel Hill News claiming to be obsessed with Columbine.⁸⁸

Matthew Murray, a 24-year-old man killed four people at two religious sites in Colorado before taking his own life in December 2007. Murray had posted numerous online rants, blaming his rage on his mother, Christians and others. Murray quoted extensively from the web postings that were published more than eight years earlier by Columbine High School killer Eric Harris. Murray had repeated this stark description of a state of mind: "I'm full of hate and I love it"; and this warning: "I'm coming for everyone soon, and I will be armed."⁸⁹

⁸⁵. Timothy Apple, "Hiding in plain website; Killers from Columbine to Dawson College have broadcast their intentions online long before going on their murderous rampages. One criminologist thinks mass school shootings can be averted with cyberspace sleuthing", *Breaking News* from globeandmail.com (April 22, 2008).

⁸⁶. *Ibid.*

⁸⁷. Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

⁸⁸. Dahlia Lithwick, "Networking Born Killers", *Slate Magazine* (September 23, 2006).

⁸⁹. Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

FINLAND MASSACRES

Unfortunately, at the early stage of writing this article, another tragedy took place in Finland. On November 7, 2007, in Jokela, a small town in the municipality of Tuusula north of Helsinki, an 18 year-old pupil, armed with a handgun shot the school principal, the school nurse and six more pupils (5 boys and 1 girl).⁹⁰ He also wounded ten other people before committing suicide.⁹¹

The shooter, Pekka-Eeric Auvinen, was characterized by one of his teachers as a militant radical, showing interest in extreme ideas (both right and left winged). Chief Inspector Tero Haapala said that Auvinen had been determined to kill as many people as possible before committing suicide. CI Haapala added that everything suggested that he had wanted the massacre to be as spectacular as possible.⁹²

As in other instances, signs for this terrible massacre were found over the Internet: In some pictures Auvinen was shown holding a gun, wearing a black T-shirt with the caption – "Humanity is overrated"; similar pictures, apparently left by the shooter, were found online in the wake of the shootings at Virginia Tech in the United States, in May 2007.⁹³ One video named "Just Testing My Gun" showed a young man shooting at an apple in a forest, just a day before the shooting spree in Jokela. The man also took a picture of his SIG Sauer pistol. In another web posting, Auvinen wrote: "I am prepared to fight and die for my cause. I, as a natural selector, will eliminate all who I see unfit, disgraces of human race and failures of natural selection."⁹⁴ In another information package containing 21 files there was also a text of more than 1,000 words with the title **Manifesto of a Natural Selector**: "I cannot say that I am of the same race as this miserable, arrogant and selfish human race. No! I have evolved a step higher," the man wrote. The text ended with the words "To each what they deserve." He had also outlined the planned course of events for Wednesday. The text was last revised on Tuesday, November 6th, 2007 at 11:44 PM.⁹⁵

⁹⁰. "Six pupils, nurse and headmistress killed in a Finnish school shooting", *NewsRoom Finland* (November 8, 2007).

⁹¹. "Breaking News: Death toll in school shooting reaches nine," *Helsingin Sanomat-International Edition* (November 8, 2007), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/BREAKING+NEWSDeath+toll+in+school+shooting+reaches+nine/1135231614979>.

⁹². "Finnish police confirm identity of school shooter", *NewsRoom Finland* (November 8, 2007).

⁹³. See "Massacre at Virginia Tech" – special report from CNN.com – <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2007/virginiatech.shootings/>.

⁹⁴. Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

⁹⁵. "Breaking News: Death toll in school shooting reaches nine", *Helsingin Sanomat-International Edition* (November 8, 2007),

Before the shooting, Auvinen placed a video on YouTube website with the title **Jokela High School Massacre - 11/7/2007**. The Jokela High School clip was one of about 89 videos posted on the site, under the username of "*Sturmgeist89*" (Storm Spirit in German). The video showed a picture of the school which then disintegrated to reveal an image of a man resembling Auvinen against a red background, pointing a gun at the screen.⁹⁶ The video clip was accompanied by the song "stray bullets" of KMFDM. The same song was uploaded to the Internet by Eric Harris, one of the Columbine High School murderers.⁹⁷

The YouTube *Sturmgeist89* profile indicated that the teenager appeared to be fascinated with killing. Auvinen postings included video footage of the Columbine High School shootings; the 1993 Waco siege in the United States; the 1995 sarin gas attack in Tokyo, and bombs falling on Baghdad during the 2003 invasion. Many videos showed victims being wheeled away or people running for their lives. Throughout all of this, the single word "DIE" constantly flashed across the screen. Other video clips included Nazi-war-criminals.⁹⁸

Finnish police said material seized from Auvinen's computer suggests that he had communicated online with a young man called Cossey, who was arrested in October 2007 on suspicion of preparing an attack at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School in Philadelphia. Cossey told a friend he wanted to pull off an attack similar to the one in Columbine because he felt bullied. Apparently the two boys communicated about video games and exchanged videos. The two met through the YouTube video-sharing site and exchanged posts on a website dedicated to the Columbine killers, traded e-mail, shared videos, and chatted on certain websites.⁹⁹

Alas, Auvinen was not the last. During the final edit process of this article, another violent massacre had occurred, alarmingly similar to the previous incidents. A misanthropic young man, 22 years old Matti Juhani Saari from Kauhajoki, a provincial town in western Finland, arrived at the town's *School of Hospitality*, the vocational college where he was a culinary arts student. He walked into a class, dressed in black and wearing a ski-mask,¹⁰⁰ where an exam

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/BREAKING+NEWSDeath+toll+in+school+shooting+reaches+nine/1135231614979>.

⁹⁶. "Finland in mourning after fatal school shooting", *CNN.com/Europe* (November 8, 2007), <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/europe/11/08/school.shooting/index.html#cnnSTCText>.

⁹⁷. "Finland school shooter admired Hitler, Nietzsche", *Reuters* (November 8, 2007), <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL0831998120071108?pageNumber=1>.

⁹⁸. "Finland in mourning after fatal school shooting", *CNN.com/Europe* (November 8, 2007) <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/europe/11/08/school.shooting/index.html#cnnSTCText>.

⁹⁹. Patrick Walters, "Finnish shooter talked online to pa. boy", *The Washington Post* (November 13, 2007), p. A5.

¹⁰⁰. "Updated 23:00: School Shooting in Kauhajoki – Eleven dead, many injured", *Helsingin Sanomat – International Edition* (September 23, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/bUPDATED+1800b+School+shooting+in+Kauhajoki+-+Ten+dead+many+injured/1135239657999>.

was in progress and opened fire. In a killing spree he gunned down nine students and one teacher, before shooting himself in the head.¹⁰¹

Once again, the writing was on the wall. Under the username of *Wumpscut86* (*Wumpscut* is the name of a German electro-industrial Goth band)¹⁰² Saari had uploaded to YouTube website four videos showing him using his 22 caliber handgun.¹⁰³ One of them titled "Me and my Walther P22 Target",¹⁰⁴ is believed to have been uploaded just five days before the atrocity. In it the gunman – wearing a black leather jacket and black jeans – is seen shooting a handgun several times at an off-screen target. This video had a chilling resemblance to the video posted on YouTube by Pekka-Eric Auvinen. In the videos, the shooter shows off his handgun and fires it outdoors; while in the photos, the shooter poses defiantly with his weapon and points it straight to the camera. Both men had photo-manipulated one of the images so that its colors were red and black.¹⁰⁵

On the morning of the shooting, both men acted very similarly. Auvinen and Saari have updated their web profiles within hours of getting out and killing several people. Auvinen wrote his last comments online and added finishing touches to his suicide note – his manifesto – half an hour before commencing the shooting in the Jokela High School at 11:42. Saari uploaded his last pictures on September 23, 2008 at 10:15. About half an hour later, he started his killing spree. In addition, Pekka-Eric Auvinen tried to set the Jokela High-School on fire, but failed in his attempts. There was a fire at the Kauhajoki School of Food Management, apparently set by Saari, with a number of Molotov cocktail-style bottle bombs.¹⁰⁶

According to Matti Saari YouTube profile, his interests and hobbies included computers, guns, sex and beers.¹⁰⁷ Among his favorite videos were clips from the Columbine massacre in 1999.¹⁰⁸ The YouTube page also included what seem to be lyrics from a song called "War" by the German Goth band *Wumpscut*. One part

¹⁰¹. "YouTube gunman slaughters 10 students", *The Independent* (September 24, 2008), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/youtube-gunman-slaughters-10-students-940306.html> .

¹⁰². "Profile: Finnish school suspect", *BBC News- Europe* (September 23, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7631786.stm>.

¹⁰³. See the Killer's full YouTube profile at – <http://www.antville.org/static/spacecat90/files/wumpscut86.html> .

¹⁰⁴. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵. "Updated 19:00: Saari copied Jokela killer Pekka-Eric Auvinen in everything he did", *Helsingin Sanomat – International Edition* (September 24, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Saari+copied+Jokela+killer+Pekka-Eric+Auvinen+in+everything+he+did/1135239698230>

¹⁰⁶. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷. <http://www.antville.org/static/spacecat90/files/wumpscut86.html>.

¹⁰⁸. "Profile: Finnish school suspect", *BBC News- Europe* (September 23, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7631786.stm>.

reads: "Whole life is war and whole life is pain, And you will fight alone in your personal war. War, this is war!"¹⁰⁹ YouTube was not the only website Saari was using to publish his dislike of people. In another website named *LiveLeak.com – Redefining the Media*, Sarri's video depicted him looking down at the camera and pointing a gun towards it. "You will die next," he said in English before shooting four times.¹¹⁰ Moreover, Sarri had a profile on the IRC-galleria site¹¹¹, to which he uploaded his latest pictures on the day of the murder.¹¹²

Some lessons have been learned from the last massacre. The IRC-galleria account was swiftly closed after news referring to the shooting started to come through.¹¹³ The YouTube profile was removed from the website, on the day of the murder, only two hours **before** the shooting spree had begun. It appears that Saari last logged in to the website only about an hour before the shooting took place.¹¹⁴ Additionally, local Finnish police began investigations soon after Saari had posted the violent videos, five days before the murder.¹¹⁵ The police officers interviewed Saari regarding the violent videos on September 22, 2008, only a day before the rampage; but as he had a valid weapon license, there was no evidence of imminent danger and the videos did not threaten anyone, the police freed him.¹¹⁶

Immediately after the Kauhajoki massacre the Finnish police began investigating the possible online contacts that Saari may have had with like-minded people.¹¹⁷ Apparently Matti Saari was part of a loose network formed around YouTube and the IRC-galleria social networking website. Members of this community are united by fascination for school shootings. Message board threads

¹⁰⁹. <http://www.antville.org/static/spacecat90/files/wumpscut86.html>.

¹¹⁰. "'You Will Die Next': Finland School Killer Matti Saari", *OddCulture.com* (September 23, 2008), <http://oddculture.com/2008/09/23/you-will-die-next-finland-school-killer-matti-saari/>.

¹¹¹. <http://irc-galleria.net/index.php>

¹¹². "Details emerging of YouTube videos and connection with Kauhajoki shooting", *Helsingin Sanomat – International Edition* (September 23, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Details+emerging+of+YouTube+videos+and+connection+with+Kauhajoki+shooting/1135239661508>.

¹¹³. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴. "YouTube gunman slaughters 10 students", *The Independent* (September 24, 2008), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/youtube-gunman-slaughters-10-students-940306.html>.

¹¹⁵. "Profile: Finnish school suspect", *BBC News- Europe* (September 23, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7631786.stm>

¹¹⁶. "Profile: Finnish school suspect", *BBC News- Europe* (September 23, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7631786.stm>.

¹¹⁷. "NBI to monitor Internet more closely", *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 25, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NBI+to+monitor+Internet+more+closely/1135239731533>; "NBI struggles to monitor Internet for potentially dangerous content", *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 26, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NBI+struggles+to+monitor+Internet+for+potentially+dangerous+content/1135239763081?ref=rss>.

can be found on the Internet, where Pekka-Eric Auvinen comments on a video. Later an online acquaintance of Matti Saari commented on the same thread. Members of the network in Finland, Germany and the United States publish and recommend videos related to school massacres. The shootings at Columbine High School in the United States and The Jokela High School in Finland are of special interest. Videos have been uploaded either as tributes to the gunmen, or as calls for their rehabilitation.¹¹⁸ Thus, studying social networking is a prudent proactive step to forestall murder. In addition, the Finnish Internet monitoring unit of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) announced that it intends to upgrade its monitoring of the Internet for about a month, because after such tragic events, the Internet world usually sees a surge in activity. The Finnish Ministry of Interior also announced that it would upgrade its monitoring of online content in the upcoming weeks.¹¹⁹

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS' (ISP'S) RESPONSIBILITY

Jet, the VampireFreaks.com owner and operator, immediately responded to Gill's murderous rampage by relieving himself of any responsibility: "Just because someone goes around shooting people and happens to be a member of VampireFreaks, doesn't mean that this website has influenced him to do such a horrible thing."¹²⁰ Jet said the website frowns on illegal behavior and bans nudity, hatred and Nazi paraphernalia.¹²¹ In this context it is important to note that after the murder, Kimveer Gill's profile was taken off this site. Jayson Gauthier, a spokesman for the provincial police force, said an American police force, which he declined to identify, had imposed the shutdown after a request from Canada.¹²²

¹¹⁸. "Admirers of school killers exchange views on Internet", *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 26, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Admirers+of+school+killers+exchange+views+on+Internet/1135239762930>.

¹¹⁹. "NBI to monitor Internet more closely", *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 25, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NBI+to+monitor+Internet+more+closely/1135239731533>; "NBI struggles to monitor Internet for potentially dangerous content", *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 26, 2008), <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/NBI+struggles+to+monitor+Internet+for+potentially+dangerous+content/1135239763081?ref=rss>.

¹²⁰. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

¹²¹. Joe Mahoney, "Killer's grim net warning", *Daily News* (New York) (September 15, 2006), p. 33.

¹²². Ian Austen, "Gunman at Montreal College Left Dark Hints of Rage Online", *The New York Times* (September 15, 2006), p. 10.

This measure should have been taken **before** the murder. Gauthier also said that no police department had been aware of Gill until the shootings.¹²³

As in the Gill case, YouTube removed the Auvinen video and suspended the user's account within hours after the massacre.¹²⁴ The authorities apparently were unaware of the violent warnings prior to the violent rampage.

This was not the case in Saari's massacre. LiveLeak.com decided not to remove the threatening video after the massacre. The website carries a written warning: "The media item you are about to see may contain MATURE elements. Agree to the text below or click out. I hereby affirm, under the penalties of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 1746 that I am at least 18 years old AND want to view the media item on LiveLeak.com at my own risk."¹²⁵ LiveLeak.com ISP's decided to transfer any responsibility they may have on the contents of their website to their surfers. Jet of VampireFreaks.com claimed he was doing whatever he could to prevent the posting of offensive or dangerous material: "We do monitor user messages and profiles for violent, hateful and offensive material. However on a site with over 600,000 users, it is impossible to monitor everything on the site."¹²⁶ Let us quote in full what the site moderator wrote:

MONTREAL SHOOTING - * SEPTEMBER 14, 2006 *

So yes there's been a lot of press lately regarding a shooting in Montreal, where the person involved was a member of this site. I offer my condolences to the victims and their families; it really is a tragic event. Human life is very precious and it's sad that there are people out there who commit such terrible crimes. This is very devastating and I know people are looking for answers, somewhere to point the finger, trying to figure out why this has happened. I'm sure the person who did this was a very troubled and emotionally unstable individual. We do not condone or influence this type of behavior in any way. The criminal was actually a member of other sites such as "MySpace," yet somehow our site is the only one being named. Many people do not understand our scene and would like to point the finger at us, but the Goth scene is a very friendly, nurturing, non-violent community. We are very supportive of our users and do not condone any illegal activities. Please do not condemn us for the wrongdoings of one individual. We have an excellent team of

¹²³ . *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ . "Student Kills 8, and Himself, at Finnish High School", *The New York Times*/[nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) (November 7, 2007), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/08/world/europe/08finland.html?_r=1&ex=1195189200&and=bcfcf75c691f75a30&andei=5070&andemc=etal&oref=slogin

¹²⁵ . http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=33d_1222168770 .

¹²⁶ . Ian Austen, "Gunman at Montreal College Left Dark Hints of Rage Online", *The New York Times* (September 15, 2006), p. A9.

administrators who moderate the site, and a useful system which allows all users to report illegal and suspicious activity. Thank you to all the users who continue to help us moderate the site. I do think this event is a tragedy, but I feel that this site is wrongly being associated with the shooting. I'm sure this kid also had accounts on various other sites, but the media likes to associate crimes with gothic culture because it makes a better story for them. So, I just want to ask our members to really try to set a good example to the world, to show that we really are caring, responsible, non-violent people. In fact I believe we are more mature and responsible than other scenes, in that we value intelligence, part of Goth culture is thinking for yourself and being more aware of the world, rather than just following the mainstream trends. Don't let a few bad seeds ruin our reputation, we are a great community. On another note, due to all the media coverage, the site is slower than usual, but I'm trying my best to keep the site running smoothly and it should be back to normal after the media hype dies down over the next day or two.¹²⁷

VampireFreaks.com is a busy site with hundred of thousands of postings. Some effort is needed for moderators of such large sites to monitor the heavy traffic. A web expert who worked for Yahoo! in monitoring Yahoo! groups told Raphael Cohen-Almagor that a small number of experts who specialize in social networking could devise batches of programs to look for illegal material and remove it. This expert did this for Yahoo! in its struggle against child pornography.¹²⁸ Similarly, Marc Rotenberg, President of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said that the capability to monitor the Internet is greater than what most people assume. It is a question of will, not of ability.¹²⁹

Thus, it is possible to monitor traffic on large websites. It is a question of will and of priorities in allocating resources for monitoring. At present, VampireFreaks is not exceptional in its reluctance to monitor sites and relieve itself of responsibility. Most ISPs shy away from assuming such responsibility as it is the easiest and profitable path to pursue. But this attitude may change. It is already changing in the sphere of child pornography.

The main reason for the changing climate is the introduction of the cybercrime convention. The Council of Europe's convention on Cybercrime¹³⁰

¹²⁷ <http://www.vampirefreaks.com/> .

¹²⁸ . Discussion with a research specialist, George Washington University, Washington DC (June 12, 2008). See Steve Silberman, "The United States of America v. Adam Vaughn", *Wired* (October 10, 2002) <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/10.10/kidporn.html> .

¹²⁹ . Interview with Marc Rotenberg, President of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, Washington DC (May 2, 2008).

¹³⁰ . Council of Europe – Convention on Cybercrime – http://cis-sacp.government.bg/sacp/CIS/content_en/law/item06.htm.

signed in November 2001, aims to increase the efficiency of the fight against cybercrime using the following means: (1) harmonizing national laws by creating a standardization between each state domestic criminal substantive laws regarding cyber-crime offences; (2) improving investigation techniques by providing for domestic criminal procedural law powers which are necessary for the investigation and prosecution of such offences as well as other offences committed by means of a computer system or evidence in relation to which is in electronic ; (3) creating an affective infrastructure which will allow international cooperation. Twenty three states¹³¹ have signed and ratified the treaty as of September 18, 2008; including the United States¹³² (additional 22 states have only signed the convention, without ratifying it). The main offences addressed by the convention are offences against the confidentiality, integrity and availability of computer data and systems; computer related offences; content related offences such as dissemination of child pornography, racial and xenophobic materials,¹³³ and offences related to infringements of copyright and related rights.

Recently, a new service in the aid of fighting children pornography over the web was launched. This free service enables operators and ISP's to deny their users access to websites that contain material depicting children's sexual abuse.¹³⁴ Another example of cooperation between an Internet monitoring organization and an ISP concerns the Anti-Defamation league (ADL). This Non Governmental Organization, founded in 1913, has thirty regional offices in the United States and three overseas offices (Israel, Italy and Russia). The League fights all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights for all, through information, education, legislation, and advocacy.¹³⁵ Brian Marcus who headed their Internet division, told Raphael Cohen-Almagor that private companies may decide not to post messages containing hate speech because this might be bad for their business. The ADL approached a CEO of a web hosting company in Texas, asking him where he would draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate speech. He answered that hate is protected speech, but threats are not. Marcus indicated that one of the sites he hosted claimed all members of minorities should

¹³¹

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=185&CM=8&DF=&CL=ENG>.

¹³². Reporting of child pornography by electronic communication service providers, 42 USC 13032, <http://vlex.com/vid/19244635>.

¹³³. The additional protocol to the convention on cybercrime had addressed the subjects of materials and acts of racist or xenophobic nature committed through computer networks, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=189&CM=8&DF=17/02/2006&CL=ENG>.

¹³⁴. "Teliasonera launches service that prevents distribution of material depicting child sexual abuse", A press release (September 4, 2008), http://www.teliasonera.com/press/pressreleases/item_page?prs.itemId=376763

¹³⁵. See - <http://www.adl.org/default.htm>

be hanged from street lamps. The CEO was surprised. For him, this was a threat. This is not a threat according to the American law,¹³⁶ but for this CEO it was too much. Marcus then showed him some 150 such sites. After deliberation, the company had closed some 110-120 of the problematic sites.¹³⁷

To be sure, ISPs cannot go too far. Adopting an extremely overzealous monitoring policy increases the likelihood of subscribers' being informed about such policy, and thus might create a negative reputation for an ISP, which in turn would encourage its users to experiment with other service providers.¹³⁸ Our argument is very limited in scope, focusing on a relatively small number of potentially problematic websites where potential criminals look for appreciative company, venting their hostile aspirations and plans.

Certainly, ISPs should be attentive when they receive complaints and warnings. After the Gill shooting, a person known as PunchBlades posted praises of Gill as a "saint" and wishing to do the same. "This will happen at Hudson High School Senior," he wrote in his post, "and when it does, I can't wait to die, or help in the process."¹³⁹ Yet the one fellow user, who tried to do the right thing and report him, complained online that he was being completely ignored by administrators of VampireFreaks.com. It was only after the story appeared on the newspapers that Quebec police moved in and arrested a 15-year-old teen and charged him with uttering Internet threats. This teen had allegedly written that Gill was not a very good shot; that he could do a much better job and that he could not wait to die at his own school.¹⁴⁰

READERS' RESPONSIBILITY

Gill was not reprimanded for his postings. Quite the contrary; he received moral support from his website friends. On Tuesday, September 12, 2006, just a day before the shooting "Caranya," a 19-year-old member from Indiana, wrote to Kimveer, "Can I go play with you?? I wanna go hunt down the preppies with

¹³⁶. See Anna S. Andrews, "When is a Threat "Truly" a Threat Lacking First Amendment Protection? A Proposed True Threats Test to Safeguard Free Speech Rights in the Age of the Internet", *The UCLA Online Institute for Cyberspace Law and Policy* (May 1999), at <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/iclp/aandrews2.htm>; Raphael Cohen-Almagor, *The Scope of Tolerance: Studies on the Costs of Free Expression and Freedom of the Press* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 256-258.

¹³⁷. Interview with Mr. Brian Marcus, former Director of Internet Monitoring, the Anti-Defamation League, Washington DC (April 16, 2008).

¹³⁸. Assaf Hamdani, "Who's Liable for Cyberwrongs?", *Cornell Law Review*, Vol. 87 (May 2002), pp. 929-930.

¹³⁹. Michele Mandel, "Out for blood," *The Toronto Sun* (September 24, 2006), p. 5.

¹⁴⁰. Marci Ien, "Dawson College students back in class today," *CTV Television* (September 19, 2006).

you!"¹⁴¹ Subsequent postings from visitors to Caranya's Web page were not kind: "Congratulations on inspiring a psycho to go on a murderous rampage killing innocent kids," wrote one. Another posted: "One has to wonder where he was able to get his moral support from."¹⁴² Gill's blog was immediately removed after the killing, but not before a stream of online comments were posted, most of them denouncing Gill. However, one read: "I've been to Dawson College. The people there are so superficial I actually thought about shooting the school up myself. Thank you, unknown guy with a Mohawk. I salute you."¹⁴³ A 16-year-old VampireFreaks member named Melissa from Sherbrooke, Quebec expressed her surprise that Gill was responsible for the Montreal tragedy. "I found him super cool," she said, "There was nothing strange about his blog".¹⁴⁴ As the Internet continues to grow, the responsibility of the reader is especially important in the identification of new websites that serve as a vehicle for the expression of murderous thought that potentially leads to murderous action.

In spite of the very violent messages included in Kimveer Gill's profile and postings, nobody reported him to the police. Readers of websites should be alert of problematic postings, and speak out when they read warnings of troubled individuals who seem to be on verge of explosion. Teachers, administrators, parents and peers, often are the first-hand recipients of the expressions of rage. They can help prevent violence by seeking treatment for people showing the type of behavior that might erupt into violence.¹⁴⁵

MONITORING POTENTIALLY PROBLEMATIC WEBSITES BY SECURITY AGENCIES

The Internet is a free space, it is not subjected to any supervision other than obligating technical protocols and programming languages rules; nor is it subordinated to defined social and political laws. It can be seen as a potential tinderbox of unguided anarchy, whose messages and influence might unravel important shared values in the social fabric of heterogeneous societies.¹⁴⁶ The reasons for this situation are historical and structural – while the premature Internet was rooted in the United States, it became global only in its recent phase.

¹⁴¹. Allison Hanes, Sean Silcoff and Graeme Hamilton, "Gunman fantasized about rampage", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A1.

¹⁴². Dahlia Lithwick, "Networking Born Killers", *Slate Magazine* (September 23, 2006).

¹⁴³. Lloyd Robertson, "Web links to shooting", *CTV Television* (September 14, 2006).

¹⁴⁴. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

¹⁴⁵. Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

¹⁴⁶. J. Michael Jaffe, "Riding the Electronic Tiger: Censorship in Global, Distributed Networks" in R. Cohen-Almagor (ed.), *Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Tolerance: Essays in Honor and Memory of Yitzhak Rabin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 275-294, p.275.

The chaotic structure of the Internet as a complex web of separate nets results in each state setting its own laws and regulations concerning Internet oversight and monitoring. These laws and regulations differ from one country to the other.

In the UN World Summit for Information Society (WSIS), held in Tunis in November 2005, a new international body was established: The Internet Governance Forum – IGF,¹⁴⁷ comprised of government representatives, public figures, businessmen and industrialists. The Forum is not just a technical body that deals with the technical infrastructure of the web but rather a substantive body, a "form of international cooperation which is both inclusive and egalitarian... with the opportunity to work together towards a sustainable, robust, secure and stable Internet."¹⁴⁸

The forum cautioned against imposing unnecessary restrictions on Internet content, given the benefits of increased information flow. Simultaneously it was stressed that there were legitimate public policy objectives "such as protecting the general public, and particularly children, from objectionable Internet content and prohibiting the use of the Internet for criminal activity."¹⁴⁹

In 2007, European Union states began to share monitoring of militant websites, including sites linked to al-Qaeda. Police say the Internet has taken on huge importance for militant groups, enabling them to share know-how and spread propaganda to a mass audience, and to plan operations.¹⁵⁰ The challenge is enormous. The Internet increases in volume each and every day, and its security is difficult to keep up. It remains an anonymous place in which cyber criminals can operate. The evolving technology increases the criminals' opportunities to partake in global and unlimited actions both geographically and linguistically.¹⁵¹

Global law enforcement agencies have strengthened national laws and international cooperation to catch, prosecute and deter cyber-criminals. Confronting global crime requires not only international cooperation but also an adapted legislation, advanced technologies and creative interrogation methods. There are technological struggles and mind games between the criminals and law enforcement authorities.¹⁵²

Another important initiative is the voluntary establishment of Internet hotlines, by Internet Services Providers (ISP's) from different countries. Through hotlines, anyone can make a report of something they suspect to be illegal on the

¹⁴⁷. Internet Governance – Discussion with Bill Dutton, Oxford Internet Institute (OII), Oxford (March 22, 2006); Internet Governance Forum Website- <http://www.intgovforum.org>

¹⁴⁸. Ban Ki-moon, The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Second Meeting, Rio de Janeiro (November 12-15, 2007), Synthesis Paper, p. 1, http://www.intgovforum.org/Rio_Meeting/IGF.SynthesisPaper.24.09.2007.rtf.

¹⁴⁹. *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵⁰. Ingrid Melander, "EU states share monitoring of Militant Web sites", *Reuters* (May 30, 2007).

¹⁵¹. *Ibid*.

¹⁵². Anat Bashan, "Internet Café," *Police Sceneries*, Vol. 187 (January-February 2002).

Internet. The hotline investigates these reports to determine if they are illegal, and if so, trace the origin of the content. If the content is illegal, the hotline refers this onwards to local law enforcement agencies as well as the Internet Service Provider for removal. Since 1998 U.S Department of Justice is funding the CyberTipline®, at www.cybertipline.com. The cyber tip line is operated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to act as a national clearinghouse for reports of Internet-related child pornography and other Internet-related sex crimes committed against children.¹⁵³ The majority of concerns are with child pornography, child prostitution, and child sex tourism.¹⁵⁴ Similar hotline can be suggested for alerts about violent messages that threaten committing of murders. Readers who might not wish to alert the police directly should be able to contact a similar cyber tip line and evoke attention to violent threats and signals.

Although awareness is on the rise amongst all interested parties (governments, civil society organizations, business sectors, law enforcement bodies and individuals) concerning child pornography¹⁵⁵ and in Europe hate speech, this is not the case with murderers who use the Internet to publish their malicious plans. The good news is that we can use the international cooperation which was developed through many national and international Internet watch foundations to increase awareness amongst people and to operate a constant monitoring scheme over problematic websites such as VampireFreaks.com and other popular sites that provide social networking for deviant and anti-social ideas. Operating a monitoring scheme and educating people to alert and report whenever they encounter online threats of murders and other violent crimes will prevent murders, save lives and cut down crime. The monitoring scheme and surfers' will assist the law enforcements authorities to track down the crimes devisers before they execute their plans. In addition, when public awareness to the

¹⁵³. Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor and Kimberly J. Mitchell, *Child-Pornography Possessors Arrested in Internet-Related Crimes: Findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study* (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2005), p. ix. See http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/NC144.pdf.

¹⁵⁴. See <http://www.missingkids.com/cybertip/>. See also <http://www.stopitnow.org/>. For further deliberation, see Raphael Cohen-Almagor, *The Democratic "Catch": Free Speech and Its Limits* (Tel Aviv: Maariv Publication House, 2007), pp. 460-463 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁵. William R. Graham Jr., "Uncovering and Eliminating Child Pornography Rings on the Internet: Issues Regarding and Avenues Facilitating Law Enforcement's Access to 'Wonderland'", *L. Rev. Michigan State University - Detroit College of Law.*, Vol. 2 (2000), pp. 457-484, at 465; John Carr, "Theme Paper on Child Pornography for the 2nd World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children", See abstract – <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publications/Abstract.aspx?id=195562>; Yaman Akdeniz, "Regulation of Child Pornography on the Internet: Cases and Materials", <http://www.cyber-rights.org/reports/interdev.htm>; See also <http://www.globalmarch.org/worstformsreport/world/childprostitutionandpornography.html>.

subject arises, the potential criminals will not receive praise from their readers but rather critical and opposing responses. This initiative in turn will fight down the copycat phenomenon.

Of Canada's 61,000 police officers, only 245 are dedicated to catching criminals online. Law enforcement officers monitor child pornography and terrorist websites. They do not monitor sites that potentially could promote violence and they are falling behind in flagging cyber clues.¹⁵⁶ Staff sergeant Gilles Deziel of the RMCP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) said police forces do not monitor the Internet for such purposes unless a specific complaint is addressed.¹⁵⁷ "We don't have guys all day looking at different sites", said sergeant Marty Blais the RMCP's national spokesman.¹⁵⁸ University of Ottawa Professor Michael Geist, an Internet law expert, said Canada already has laws that allow police to effectively prosecute online troublemakers. The problem is that there are not enough officers dedicated to working on the Web to catch them. There are simply no adequate resources.¹⁵⁹

In the United States, the intelligence agencies are not allowed to monitor American sites without predication. The FBI follows the Attorney General's regulations as to how and when it is possible to monitor.¹⁶⁰ Another senior FBI official maintained: "We monitor people suspected of criminal activity. We watch what they are doing, including their use of the Internet. We need predication to follow people. We follow information on links, but we do not surf the Internet."¹⁶¹ Indeed, there is no need to monitor the entire Internet. We are not arguing for assuming such a significant effort. Our aim, we emphasize, is far limited: Monitor only the sites on which people may provide warnings of their aims to kill and maim others. People tend to say on the Internet things they do not usually say or write via other communication means in public. We need to better understand the Internet's social networking – VampireFreaks, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook. What are the implications of these tools on potential criminal activity, especially when this activity involves violence?

In the name of free speech, people object to any monitoring. As much as monitoring problematic websites can interfere and violate the privacy of its users, the need to protect the lives of innocent people cannot be dismissed or ignored. At present, unless a person makes a specific threat, aimed at a specific person, there are no grounds to infringe on his or her freedom. The law enforcement agencies

¹⁵⁶. Lloyd Robertson, "Web Links to shooting", *CTV Television* (September 14, 2006).

¹⁵⁷. Siri Agrell, "Troubled kids gravitating' to vampire site", *National Post* (September 15, 2006), p. A6.

¹⁵⁸. Natalie Pona, "Net violence unchecked", *Toronto Sun* (September 15, 2006), p. 4.

¹⁵⁹. "Police virtually powerless to find killers online: experts", *Cornwall Standard Freeholder* (Ontario) (September 15, 2006), p. 8.

¹⁶⁰. Interview with a senior security officer, Washington DC (March 25, 2008).

¹⁶¹. Interview with a senior FBI official, Washington DC (March 26, 2008).

do not troll websites for potential killers. We suggest the police should monitor specific sites known for their problematic violent content.

Even explicit threats on the Internet before an attack do not necessarily prompt action from police because officers do not patrol Web pages, said inspector John San Agustin, supervisor of the Financial and Computer Crimes Unit for the El Paso County Sheriff's Office. Investigators need to show a judge they have cause to believe one's involvement in a crime before they can get a warrant allowing them to search a person's computer. San Agustin explained that Web pages rarely have reliable details on the location and identity of the person posting information. Even if a potential crime was identified, investigators would not know if it happened in their jurisdiction. "We don't police what's on the Internet. We're kind of a reactive unit," he said. "Very seldomly does somebody report to law enforcement. Until it's brought to our attention, we really can't do anything."¹⁶² Web readers should contact police if they see information that looks like a threat to public safety. Receiving those reports, though, does not always mean a police agency can take action. San Agustin said: "Where it becomes kind of a problem is when somebody says 'I may act out on it,' you don't know where they're going to do this, where they're from... You could be talking about something that may be going on in Nigeria, or in the Orient."¹⁶³

Alan Lipman, founder and executive director of the Center for the Study of Violence, said that often people who committed the school killings told other people about their violent intent: "These individuals do not merely post onto the Internet... They indicate their disturbance in clearly identifiable behaviors, time and again. What we need to do is to teach those who are in regular contact with adolescents and young adults how to identify these behaviors, and how to act."¹⁶⁴ Writings that indicate rage, despair and violent intent are a "leading indicator and precursor" of murderous episodes.¹⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

The Internet is a vast ocean of knowledge, data, ideologies and propaganda. It contains some of the best products of humanity, and some of the worst ones. It served the killers. It should also serve the positive elements in society to prevent murders.

The important lesson from the above tragic events is the urged need to monitor websites which are known for their problematic nature to prevent

¹⁶². Perry Swanson and Kim Nguyen, "Web rants raise red flags for violence: But police can do little to prevent attacks", *The Gazette*, Colorado Springs, Colorado (December 16, 2007).

¹⁶³. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵. *Ibid.*

prospective tragedies. The police must develop the ability to monitor a suspect's Internet activity.

The ascending frequencies in which these events happen urge acting on the international level. Since human lives are at stake, preemptive measures could prevent the translation of murderous thoughts into murderous actions. Such cooperation, through voluntary and organized operations, must include all sectors, starting with governments, through law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations and the business sector (especially Internet Service Providers, websites' administrators and owners) as well as civil society groups in order to be successful.

We suggest monitoring the Internet for problematic websites that are used to promote violence; devising monitoring mechanisms of these websites; publishing overviews and reports; exchanging information to enhance the effectiveness of operations; lobbying for international legislation, helping support groups and institutions that want to set up tip lines and raising the awareness of people by providing information to interested parties.

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