

STALKING

Knowns and Unknowns

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The current work reviews literature on the nature of stalking. Despite its nebulous nature and differing legal and clinical definitions of stalking, researchers and practitioners are referring to the same phenomenon. Stalking is chronic, consisting of a number of nuisance behaviors that appear consistent over countries and samples. Different categorizations of stalkers and their victims exist, but ex-partner stalkers are a distinctive category with respect to their prevalence, violence risk, and attrition rate. Different samples and definitions and false victimization reports obscure reliable lifetime prevalence estimates, but these appear to be around 12%-16% among women and 4%-7% among men. Stalking has deleterious effects on victims but some of the effects may be the result of stalking's exacerbating of existing vulnerabilities. Future research should focus on subgroups of stalkers and their victims, on cross-cultural investigations, and on the co-occurrence of stalking with other crimes.

Key words: *stalking, stalkers, victims, prevalence, categories, violence*

THE 1990S SAW SUDDEN MOVES by the developed world to legislate against stalking, such that legislators failed to take into account the nature of the crime and essentially outlawed an unknown quantity (Sheridan & Davies, 2001a). As such, many articles on stalking begin by stating that stalking is a "new crime" and that we know relatively little about it. Whereas it is cer-

tainly true that the nebulous nature of stalking has been associated with difficulties in both pigeonholing and legislating against it, it may no longer be the case that stalking research is in its infancy and that we are feeling our way in the dark. Since stalking was first outlawed in 1990, over 150 academic studies, articles, books, reviews, and reports on stalking have been pub-

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lished in the social sciences alone. Although this by no means represents a comprehensive literature, these publications have at least amassed sufficient information to provide a basis for understanding the nature of stalking. The current work will provide an overview of the most important interdisciplinary research on stalking to date and aims to offer a review of what is known about stalking, while identifying what remains to be newly chartered or further investigated.

Although stalking was only recently accorded criminal status, it soon became clear that it represented a significant social problem, rather than an exaggeration of a small number of celebrity cases fueled by significant media coverage. Stalking is typically a chronic, rather than an acute, issue—both overall and in terms of individual cases. Overall, stalking behaviors have been perpetrated for centuries, with Mullen, Pathé, and Purcell (2000) noting elements of what we may now consider to be unacceptable stalking behavior in the work of Dante Alighieri (circa 1292), and Skoler's (1998) highlighting the same in William Shakespeare's *Dark Lady sonnets* (circa 1592). Louisa Mae Alcott's 19th-century novel *A Long and Fatal Love Chase* bears strong resemblance to many contemporary accounts of stalking. Stalking was even outlawed in ancient times. Within Book 4 of the Ancient Roman legal tome *Institutes of Justinianus* (approximately 550 AD) one can read the passage "Iniuria committitur . . . si quis matrem familias aut praetextatum praetextatumve adsectatus fuerit," which roughly means that it is prohibited to inflict injury or cause hindrance by following a married woman, boy, or girl. With regard to the chronicity of individual cases, victims are typically targeted for periods of months, if not years, and subjected to a variety of intrusive, distressing, and sometimes life-threatening experiences. This pervasive nature of stalking warrants significant multidisciplinary interest and helps explain why it has attracted so much attention since 1990.

ISSUES OF DEFINITION

There has been much debate over what elements or processes comprise stalking. Legal

KEY POINTS OF THE RESEARCH REVIEW

- Sufficient research now exists to provide a basis for understanding the nature of stalking.
- Although no satisfactory definition of stalking exists, researchers and practitioners are referring to the same phenomenon and there exists a shared literature.
- Stalking is a chronic problem in which multiple stalking tactics are employed by the stalker, but certain types of conduct tend to occur uniformly.
- Lifetime prevalence rates of stalking appear to be 12%-16% among women and 4%-7% among men, but these rates are dependent on the population of interest and the definition employed and are also obscured by false victimization reports.
- Stalking victims have severe economical, psychological, and social problems, some of which may be the result of stalking compounding on existing vulnerability.
- Anyone may become the victim of a stalker, but people in highly visible jobs, vulnerable people, and people who have a high likelihood of engaging in contacts with single people appear to be at higher risk.
- Many different stalker categorizations exist. Ex-partner stalkers represent a large subcategory of stalkers. Because their tactics, mental health, and risk of violence appear to differ from those of other stalker subtypes, further research is indicated on the evolution of stalking behaviors and tailored intervention strategies for different stalker categories.
- Relatively little is known about how to stop stalkers, but strategies may be victim directed, stalker directed, and stalking directed.

definitions vary between countries and states. Some legislation comprehensively describes which behaviors are punishable, whereas other legislation applies only broad terms. In the United States, most legislation depicts stalking as an intentional pattern of repeated or unwanted pursuit that a "reasonable person" would consider threatening or fear inducing (Miller, 2001). The South Australian Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935, s19AA, defines stalking as

following a person, loitering outside the person's place of residence or another place frequented by the person, entering or interfering with property in the possession of the person, giving offensive material to the person, keeping the person under surveil-

lance, or acting in a way that could reasonably be expected to arouse the person's apprehension or fear.

In England and Wales, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes no attempt to define stalking but rules that a person must not pursue a course of conduct that amounts to the harassment of another person.

As Blaauw, Sheridan, and Winkel (2002) discuss, antistalking laws differ not only with regard to what behaviors comprise stalking but also with regard to the minimum number of occasions required before a person's conduct is considered to constitute stalking (not specified, 2, 3, or more than 3 occasions) and the issue of stalker intent (e.g., no intent required versus the intent to place the target in reasonable fear for his or her safety or the safety of his or her immediate family). Blaauw et al. (2002) argue that it is advisable to exclude specific behaviors, a minimum number of occasions or behaviors, and

Stalking is an extraordinary crime, given that it may often consist of no more than the targeted repetition of an ostensibly ordinary or routine behavior.

consequences for the victim from antistalking laws. Instead, it is suggested that legislators adhere to the requirement that is stated in the England and Wales Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and label a case as stalking where "a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to stalking of the other." Finch (2001a) notes, however, that in England and Wales, relatively few stalkers are handed custodial sentences. She argues that an inherent prioritization of physical over psychological harm toward the victim leads to a minimization of the damage that stalking causes and allows stalkers to walk free. Further research is necessary to ascertain what proportion of the general population views seriously the psychological harm that may result from stalking victimization.

Obviously, differing legal definitions are associated with differing problems and outcomes. For instance, given that under the England and Wales Act any persistent, unwanted behavior can amount to harassment, police may inter-

vene before behavior escalates to violence (Metropolitan Police Service, 1997). Conversely, the liberty of people to pursue everyday activities or sincerely seek to initiate a relationship may be compromised (e.g., Daly, 1996). Differing definitions of criminal stalking clearly also lead to differing perceptions of what it constitutes. For any individual who seeks to quantify stalking, his or her endeavors are further compounded by the fact that researchers and clinicians do not share a common definition. Not all investigators even employ the word *stalking*. For example, Meloy (1996) and others (e.g., McCann, 1998) use the term *obsessional following*, Rosenfeld (2000) refers to *obsessional harassment*, and Cupach, Spitzberg, and colleagues (e.g., Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998) investigate *obsessive relational intrusion*. There are several reasons why no one definition of, or even term for, stalking exists. One reason involves the motivations of the definer. Those who seek to legally define stalking have evidential and judicially based aims, whereby researchers are often interested in how stalking is perceived by its victims (Mullen et al., 2000; Spitzberg, 2002). The main problem, however, concerns the nebulous nature of stalking. Stalking is an extraordinary crime, given that it may often consist of no more than the targeted repetition of an ostensibly ordinary or routine behavior (Sheridan & Davies, 2001a). It does not apply to a distinct single action or actions: rather, it embraces a multitude of activities. Stalkers can harass victims using unequivocally illegal actions, such as breaking and entering or committing acts of violence, but many stalkers do not overtly threaten, instead using behavior that is ostensibly routine and harmless. Examples of this might include standing near somebody in a public place, or frequently walking past his or her house.

Although it is accepted that there exists no satisfactory definition of stalking (e.g., Badcock, 2002; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2000; Perez, 1993; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000), it is clear that researchers and practitioners are referring to the same phenomenon and that there exists a shared literature. Several studies have attempted to quantify the similarities between

various works that have stalking as their primary focus. In 1996, Meloy reviewed 10 studies published between 1978 and 1995 that provided data on 180 stalkers, concluding that although similarities were seen across studies, further data collection was necessary. A review of 12 studies carried out on three continents between 1978 and 1998 revealed that stalkers engage in very similar patterns of activities (Sheridan & Davies, 2001a). By far the most extensive work, however, is that recently conducted by Spitzberg (2002) who undertook a meta-analysis of 103 studies representing 68,615 respondents or cases. The following section will examine the main findings from these and other works in an attempt to clarify what the course of stalking actually involves.

THE NATURE OF STALKING

In the introduction, it was stated that stalking is a chronic phenomenon, given its protracted nature. Stalking represents a course of deviant conduct, rather than an isolated activity, and this has been demonstrated by victim studies that have provided duration periods for stalking cases. A study conducted prior to the introduction of the term *stalking* as it is understood in the current context (Jason, Reichler, Easton, Neal, & Wilson, 1984) interviewed 50 Chicago women who had been harassed either after a relationship had ended or after they turned down romantic overtures. They were harassed for an average of 13 months, with an upper range of 120 months. Pathé and Mullen (1997) reported a median stalking duration of 24 months in a sample of 100 Australian victims. Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan, and Freeve (2002) reported a mean duration of 58 months, with 13% reporting a period of more than 10 years, in a sample of 241 Dutch victims. In Hall's (1998) sample of 145 victims in the United States, 13% had been stalked for more than 5 years. Similarly, 13% of Sheridan, Davies, and Boon's (2001a) British sample of 95 victims had been stalked for 12 years or more (mean of 52 months for ongoing cases, 76 months for historical cases).

It is evident that stalking is a long-term problem, but what actually does the stalking victim

experience? Several studies have reported actual stalking behaviors as part of their results. Blaauw, Sheridan, et al. (2002) compared four studies and noted that "many stalking behaviors have fairly equal distributions in different samples of victims" (p. 55). For instance, Mullen, Pathé, Purcell, and Stuart's (1999) study of 145 stalkers found the most common stalking behaviors to include repeated public approaches, telephoning, assaults, and surveillance and following. The British Crime Survey (Budd & Mattinson, 2000) found that the most common stalking behaviors experienced by their 1,262 stalked respondents were being forced to talk to the stalker, telephone calls, and being physically intimidated and followed. Taking a different approach, Sheridan, Davies, and Boon (2001b) presented a population sample with a continuum of 42 intrusive behaviors and asked them to indicate those they believed to constitute stalking. The highest consensus (above 95%) was found for loitering near and telephoning the target's workplace, following the target, taking furtive photographs of the target, and constantly watching/spying on the target. Unsurprisingly, Spitzberg's (2002) meta-analysis also found the most common stalking behaviors to include telephone calls, personal appearances and contact, and following and surveillance.

Stalking behaviors do not occur on single occasions, nor do they occur in isolation. The victims in Blaauw, Winkel, et al.'s (2002) investigation experienced a median and mean number of six stalking behaviors, whereas in Mullen et al.'s (1999) study, 63% of stalkers employed between three and five methods. The British Crime Survey reported that almost 50% of victims had been subjected to between two and five distinct stalking behaviors. Thus, it may be concluded that stalkers employ multiple stalking tactics and that certain types of conduct tend to occur uniformly and may be considered as examples of common stalking behavior (see also Finch, 2001b). What remains to be clarified, however, is whether duration and diversity are constant for all types of victims and stalkers and whether there is consistency in the evolution of stalking behaviors over time.

PREVALENCE OF STALKING

Studies in representative samples have yielded fairly stable lifetime prevalence rates of stalking victimization: approximately 12% to 16% among women and 4% to 7% among men. An Australian study found that 15% of more than 6,000 women reported having ever been

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stalked by a man (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996). The British Crime survey, sampling almost 10,000 inhabitants of England and Wales in 1998, revealed a lifetime prevalence of 16% among women and 7% among men (Budd & Mattinson, 2000). A study among 1,171 women in Louisiana showed that 15% of the women reported having been stalked during their lifetime (Kohn,

Flood, Chase, & McMahon, 2000). Finally, a study of 16,000 citizens in the United States revealed that 12% of women and 4% of men reported experiences of stalking (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Studies in nonrepresentative samples and studies relying on the return of distributed questionnaires have shown more variable figures (there is reason to believe that a high nonresponse rate in questionnaire research leads to overestimation of prevalence rates because nonvictims are less motivated to return questionnaires than are victims). Lifetime prevalence rates were found to be as high as 24% among 348 female public services trades union members in England and Wales (Sheridan et al., 2001b), 31% among females and 17% among males in a sample of 299 college undergraduates in the United States (Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker, 1997), 32% among 257 female college students in the United States (Blackburn, 2000), 27% in another sample of 130 undergraduate students (Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000), 33% among 105 politicians and public figures in the Netherlands (Malsch, Visscher, & Blaauw, 2002) and 76% among 141 women who

had been killed by their partner (McFarlane et al., 1999). Conversely, rates of stalking were found to be as low as 5.6% among 178 university counseling center staff members in the United States (Romans, Hays, & White, 1996), 13% among over 4,000 female college students in the United States (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000) and 5.1% among 721 teachers in British Columbia (Lyon & Douglas, in press). Finally, a large community sample study of 1,844 Australian citizens revealed a lifetime prevalence rate of 23.4% (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2002), but the nonresponse rate stood at 39%.

The findings demonstrate that women are victimized significantly more frequently than are men and that certain community groups have a higher likelihood of victimization than other groups. The findings also indicate that many people at some point in their lives become the victim of stalking behaviors. However, an actual prevalence rate for stalking victimization remains unknown due to differing requirements in terms of what behaviors constitute stalking, what consequences are necessary to ensure victim status, and the required minimal duration and number of occasions. In the Australian national study, stalking by females was omitted and the respondents were not required to have experienced fear as the result of stalking (60% did not acknowledge having experienced safety fears). In the British Crime Survey, only one occasion was required, harassment before the age of 16 was excluded, and rates did drop when respondents were required to have experienced associated distress or upset. Similarly, in the United States research, prevalence rates dropped several percentage points with the introduction of a more stringent requirement for induced fear. In the Louisiana study, a minimal duration of 1 month was required. Thus, prevalence rates of stalking victimization are highly dependent on the definition that is employed.

Prevalence rates are also obscured by false reports of stalking. Clearly, questionnaire studies are hampered by response biases, such as the tendency to respond positively to whatever is being asked. Additionally, reports of stalking can be false when (a) stalkers claim to be victims, (b) people have delusions that encompass stalking, (c) those who have previously been

stalked have become hypersensitive to recurrence, (d) people seek gratification of dependency needs through adopting victim status, and (e) people consciously fabricate or exaggerate victimization for external incentives (Pathé, Mullen, & Purcell, 1999; for another categorization of false victimization see Mohandie, Hatcher, & Raymond, 1998). In a sample of 95 stalking victims who had identified themselves as such to a London-based charity, 20% were considered to be false claims of stalking and in a sample of 262 self-proclaimed victims who had identified themselves to a similar foundation in the Netherlands, 10% of the cases were considered to represent false claims (Sheridan, Blaauw, & Winkel, 2002). Two percent of stalking reports made to the Los Angeles Police Department involved stalkers who presented themselves as victims (Zona, Lane, & Moore, 1996), which leads to an estimated 10% false claims when other categories of false claims of stalking are also taken into account. Thus, false reports of stalking appear to occur reasonably often but as none of these studies were conducted on a representative community sample, there is no way of telling how many reports may be false.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS

Clearly, traumatic events can have severe economical, psychological, and social impacts on victims. With regard to economical matters, stalking victims have reported suffering financial losses due to a decrease of work hours or cessation of work or school attendance (23%-53%), spending money on increasing security at home, at work, or in their vehicles (22%-73%), replacing broken or stolen property, and so forth (Blaauw, Winkel, et al., 2002; Brewster, 1997; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001; Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). With regard to social consequences other than changes in work or school attendance, victims reported about acquiring unlisted telephone numbers (64%-81%), avoiding social activities (63%-82%), and going underground or relocating residence (11%-66%) (Blaauw, Winkel, et al., 2002; Brewster, 1997;

Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2002; Sheridan et al., 2001a; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). With regard to psychological complaints, victims reported on increased distrust (44%), paranoia (36%-39%), confusion (28%), fear (21%-57%; fear is more common among female victims than male victims) (Bjerregaard, 2000; K. E. Davis, Coker, & Sanderson, 2002), nervousness (31%), anger or aggression (10%-27%), depression (21%-28%) (Bjerregaard, 2000; Brewster, 1997; Hall, 1998; Sheridan et al., 2001a) and chronic sleep disturbance (74%), excessive tiredness or weakness (55%), appetite disturbance (48%), frequent headaches (47%), and persistent nausea (30%) (Pathé & Mullen, 1997). Additionally, Pathé and Mullen (1997) found that 55% of the victims suffered from symptoms associated with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, Kamphuis and Emmelkamp (2001) noted that 59% reported symptoms comparable to those reported in samples of victims of generally recognized traumata, and Blaauw, Winkel, et al. (2002) noted that 78% of victims had symptom levels that indicated the presence of a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. As shown by K. E. Davis et al. (2002), stalking victims are more likely to report poor current health status, to develop a chronic disease, and to report depression. All these findings suggest that stalking has deleterious effects on its victims.

Blaauw, Winkel, et al. (2002) noted that some victims were exposed to a horrifying experience but nonetheless displayed only a few symptoms, whereas others were exposed to only a limited degree of stalking but nonetheless displayed many symptoms of psychopathology. Additionally, several victims did not report about having experienced economical and social consequences due to the stalking experiences. Moreover, stalking features explained only 9% of the variance of the level of distress. Inspection of other studies, too, shows that there are often victims without apparent psychological, economical, or social deterioration (e.g., Brewster, 1997; Sheridan et al., 2001a). These findings indicate that stalking has varying levels of severity and also suggest that some symptoms in victims may be the result of stalk-

ing compounding on already existing vulnerability.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS

Despite the fact that studies have adopted different definitions of stalking and have employed different types of samples (e.g., community samples, student samples, the very young, celebrities), it is clear that stalking affects a large variety of people. Victims are both females and males but Spitzberg's (2002) review of 103 studies showed that a mean of 75% of victims are females. Victims are found to be as young as two (Sheridan et al., 2001a) and as old as 82 years (Blaauw, Winkel, et al., 2002), but the largest group of victims is usually between 18 and 30 years old (Hall, 1998; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998), although older (Mullen et al., 2000) and younger (Budd & Mattinson, 2000) high-risk groups have also been identified. Victims are found across the socioeconomic continuum, but they appear to be more often highly educated (Brewster, 1997; Hall, 1998) and in high-level professions (Hall, 1998; Pathé & Mullen, 1997).

As suggested by the high proportion of female victims, most recorded stalkers are male.

Stalking victimization occurs among unmarried people, married people, and couples, but risk appears to be high among those who are single and who live alone (Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Hall, 1998). Furthermore, high-risk groups have been identified as homosexual men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998), those with a history of childhood sexual abuse or sexual assault by a relative (K. E. Davis et al., 2002), students (Blackburn, 2000; Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Fremouw et al., 1997; Logan et al., 2000), and people working in public services (Sheridan et al., 2001b) or politics or mass media (Dietz, Matthews, Martell, et al., 1991; Dietz, Matthews, Van Duyne, et al., 1991; Malsch et al., 2002). Research has also shown that a prior history of physical abuse is very common among female victims of stalking (Blackburn, 2000; Brewster, 1997; Coleman, 1997; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; see also Baldry, 2002), that many stalking victims have children with their

stalker (e.g., Blaauw & Winkel, 2002; Brewster, 1997), and that the ending of their prior relationship with the stalker causes the onset of stalking in many cases (e.g., Brewster, 1997; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; see also K. E. Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Langhinrichsen, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2000).

Altogether, the research has demonstrated that essentially anyone may become the victim of a stalker. However, it appears that people in highly visible jobs (e.g., politics, media, public services) and people who have a high likelihood of engaging in contacts with single people (i.e., students, young people) are at higher risk of stalking victimization. Additionally, it appears that prior vulnerability and subjection to domestic violence increases the chances of becoming a victim of stalking, especially when potential stalkers perceive that there are reasons to keep contact with victims (e.g., following a close relationship and when children are involved).

CHARACTERISTICS OF STALKERS

As with victims, recognizing a potential stalker is not always a simple matter. As suggested by the high proportion of female victims, most recorded stalkers are male. Meloy's (1997) review indicated that 72% of stalkers were male, whereas Spitzberg's (2002) meta-analysis produced a mean figure of 79% across 47 studies. Stalkers tend to be older than other criminals, with the studies reviewed by Meloy (1997) reporting mean ages of, for example, 35 and 40. Similarly, the median age of Mullen et al.'s (1999) stalker sample was 38 years (range 15-75). Kordvani (2000), however, found that 71% of 100 Iranian stalkers were between ages 17 and 22. It has been noted that failed relationships are a common feature among criminal stalkers (e.g., Meloy, 1999), which is unsurprising considering that many stalkers are former partners of their victim. Mullen et al. (1999) noted that over half of their sample of 145 stalkers had never entered into a long-term relationship and that 30% were divorced or separated.

Mullen et al. (1999) reported that 42% of their sample were given a *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fourth edition)

(*DSM-IV*) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) Axis I diagnosis, primarily for a delusional disorder, but that the primary diagnosis for this group was a personality disorder, present in 51%. One quarter of stalkers had a comorbid substance-related disorder, and 41% were psychotic. Meloy (1999) also noted that most stalkers will have both Axis I and II diagnoses, reporting that the most common Axis I diagnoses, in descending order of frequency, are drug abuse or dependence, mood disorder, and schizophrenia. On Axis II, stalkers are most likely to be diagnosed with cluster B personality disorders (narcissistic, histrionic, antisocial, borderline) and are not as likely to be psychopathic as other criminals. Farnham, James, and Cantrell (2000) examined 50 British pretrial stalkers, more than half of whom were found to be suffering from a psychotic illness. A criminal history is a common feature among those stalkers who have been acknowledged in the literature. For example, 39% of Mullen et al.'s (1999) sample had previous convictions, relating primarily to interpersonal violence and sexual offenses. Blaauw and Winkel's (2002) victim sample reported that 50% of their stalkers had a criminal record.

Meloy (1999, p. 86) neatly summarized the "modal stalker" as an

unemployed or underemployed man in his fourth decade of life. He is single or divorced and has a prior criminal, psychiatric and drug abuse history. He has a high school or college education, however, and is significantly more intelligent than are other criminals. He does not disproportionately appear in any ethnic or racial group.

Of course, not all stalkers fit this mold, and a number of studies have identified less archetypal stalker groups. For instance, McCann (1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) has demonstrated that not only do children engage in stalking behavior but that their activities are consistent with those of adult stalkers (McCann, 2000). Pathé, Mullen, and Purcell (2000) examined 29 same-gender stalking cases, comparing the results with a sample of 134 more prototypical opposite-gender stalkers, again finding the two groups to be similar in many respects. Finally, Purcell, Pathé, and Mullen (2001) compared fe-

male with male stalkers, finding that group demographics did not differ but that more males reported criminal histories. Contrary to popular belief, stalkers do not necessarily operate in isolation. Budd and Mattinson (2000) found that 79% of stalkers were said to have acted alone, whereas Sheridan et al.'s (2001a) victim sample identified just 59% as lone offenders.

The literature has indicated that although the majority of stalkers do tend to share certain characteristics, many outliers exist, meaning that it is not possible to readily identify a stalking offender. Furthermore, the following section indicates that victims may first come into contact with their stalker in a broad range of contexts.

STALKER CLASSIFICATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EX-PARTNER STALKERS

Diverse attempts have been made to produce classificatory systems of stalkers—each with differing objectives. The majority of classification systems distinguish between subtypes on the basis of particular characteristics of stalkers or their victims, whereas others have made distinctions according to the nature of the prior relationship between the two. Early attempts include the work of Dietz (Dietz, Matthews, Martell, et al., 1991; Dietz, Matthews, Van Duyne, et al., 1991) who distinguished between those who target celebrities and other public figures and "normal persons" and Geberth (1992) who established a typology of stalkers based solely on their mental states, labeling his stalker types as psychopathic personality stalkers and psychotic personality stalkers. Following a literature review, Holmes (1993) suggested there were six different types of stalkers based on the nature of the victim. These comprised celebrity (who stalks someone famous), lust (who is a serial sexual predator), hit (a professional murderer for hire), love scorned (who had a nonintimate relationship with the victim), political (precipitated by political ideology) and domestic (ex-intimate) stalkers. Kienlen, Birmingham, Solberg, O'Regan, and Meloy (1997) divided stalkers into two groups simply according to whether they were or were not

judged to be psychotic. Zona, Sharma, and Lane (1993) created a dominant forensic classification system of stalkers, placing cases into three categories: erotomantic, love obsessive, and simple obsessive. A more recent taxonomy aimed at law enforcement was provided by Boon and Sheridan (2001). This system partitioned offenders according to their motivational orientations and identified four principal classifications: ex-partner harassment/stalking, infatuation harassment, delusional fixation stalking, and sadistic stalking.

Many of the approaches to classifying stalkers have shortfalls and are incomplete. Some are too simple, given that the population is heterogeneous and is likely to include individuals who are mentally ill and/or personality disordered and those who are not. Others are difficult to decipher and many stalkers may fall either between two categories or may fit into more than one. The reliability of such ad hoc typologies may be questioned, given that the number of cases on which they are based is not always clear and as some are of an arbitrary and impressionistic nature. It is important to remember however, that any classification of stalkers will likely vary in accordance with the goals of the group who develop it (Mullen et al., 2000).

Zona, Palarea, and Lane (1998) posited that the relationship (real or imagined) between

stalker and victim best informs an understanding of stalker motivations. As with classifications based on stalker or victim characteristics, however, there is no one relational category accepted by all professionals. Zona et al. (1993) divided their sample of stalkers into two

categories, prior relationship and no prior relationship, with the former grouping being further subdivided into acquaintance, customer, neighbor, professional relationship, dating, and sexual intimates. Harmon, Rosner, and Owens (1995) classified the type of prior interaction between 48 stalkers and their victims into personal, professional, employment, media (where

the target is a celebrity with no connection to the stalker), acquaintance, none, or unknown. After examining the harassment experiences of college students, Fremouw et al. (1997) produced four victim-stalker categorizations: friend, casual date, serious date, and stranger. Finally, Emerson, Ferris, and Gardner (1998) collected opportunistic victim and archival data from a variety of sources and produced the following relational categories: unacquainted, pseudo-acquainted and semiacquainted stalking.

It should be noted that the current overview of stalker and victim typologies is nonexhaustive. There exist additional single-axial categorizations to those cited above, and J. A. Davis and Chipman (2001), Hargreaves (in press), and Spitzberg and Cupach (2001) have all provided biaxial systems. Only one categorization system to date is triaxial, however (Mullen et al., 2000). For each of the five stalker subtypes recognized by this taxonomy (rejected, intimacy seeking, resentful, predatory, and incompetent), the context for the stalking and stalker motivations, the stalker's psychiatric status, and the prior stalker-victim relationship are incorporated. What is clear from the majority of stalker categorizations, regardless of their aims or format, is the important role of ex-partner stalkers. This is despite the possibility that ex-intimates were underrepresented in early works due to a focus on erotomantic disorders and a selection bias on the part of law enforcement officers to arrest and prosecute high-profile or stranger stalkers (Meloy, 1997). It is now widely recognized that ex-partner stalkers represent a large, if not the largest, relational subcategory of stalkers, with Spitzberg (2002) reporting a mean proportion of 49% over 40 studies. Furthermore, ex-intimates appear to be more likely to act out violently than stranger or acquaintance stalkers (e.g., Farnham et al., 2000; Harmon, Rosner, & Owens, 1998; Kienlen et al., 1997; Meloy, Davis, & Lovette, 2001; Mullen et al., 1999; Palarea, Zona, Lane, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1999; Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Schwartz-Watts & Morgan, 1998; Sheridan & Davies, 2001b; Zona et al., 1993). Farnham et al. (2000) found ex-intimate stalkers significantly less likely to be psychotic than past acquaintances or strangers. Similarly, Coleman (2000) reported that ex-intimate stalkers were

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more likely to be diagnosed with substance abuse and antisocial and narcissistic personality disorders, whereas nonintimate stalkers were more likely to be diagnosed with schizoid personality disorder. Community samples, however, have stated that they would be less frightened of an ex-intimate stalker than a stranger stalker (Hills & Taplin, 1998) and have judged victims to bear greater responsibility for their stalking where they were previously close to the stalker (Sheridan, Gillett, Blaauw, Davies, & Patel, in press). Blaauw and Winkel (2002) also noted that ex-intimate stalkers had a higher likelihood of engaging in violence against their victims but additionally noted that such stalkers displayed a larger diversity of stalking behaviors and that these behaviors had a faster attrition rate when compared with those of other relational subgroups. These findings warrant further research on the evolution of stalking behaviors and appropriate intervention strategies for different stalker categories.

PREVENTING AND ENDING STALKING

Despite the bulk of literature pertaining to various aspects of stalking, very little is known about how stalking may be curtailed or prevented. Those few studies that have addressed this issue found that victims predominantly reported that their stalking ended because the victim moved away from his or her house, because the stalker entered a new relationship, or because the police warned or arrested the stalker (Sheridan et al., 2001a; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Nonetheless, from a logical point of view it would seem that measures to halt stalking exist within three areas: victim directed, stalker directed, and stalking directed. The notion that the chances of becoming a victim of stalking are related to preexisting vulnerability (such as living alone or having celebrity status) and subjection to domestic violence (which has also been found to be associated with vulnerability; see, e.g., Wileman & Wileman, 1995) suggests that victim safety planning should focus on victims' resilience (see also Blaauw, Winkel, et al., 2002; Kropp, Hart, Lyon, & LePard, 2002). The primary goal should be to prevent (further) impacts on the victim's well-being, but in some

cases this might also lead to a cessation of the stalking as the victim may become a less obvious target. A secondary goal could be to encourage victims to take appropriate security measures and to inform their social network (see also Kropp et al., 2002). In certain cases, however, victim-directed strategies could mean that the victim is encouraged to change his or her residence, job, or leisure activities due to the ineffectiveness of less radical strategies (Boon & Sheridan, 2001).

With regard to stalker-directed interventions, it is important to bear in mind that stalkers are likely to be comorbid for a range of disorders (e.g., Farnham et al., 2000; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2000; Mullen et al., 2000). A positive prospect for the treatment of stalkers is that they as a group do not appear to be very psychopathic (Kropp et al., 2002; Meloy, 1999), which is known to be extremely difficult to treat. However, the apparently high prevalence of personality disorders (e.g., Meloy, 1999; Mullen et al., 1999) does not offer much hope to victims as such disorders tend to be resistant to treatment. Conversely, stalkers without clear psychopathology, psychotic stalkers, and stalkers with Axis I disorders may be receptive to pharmacological (for psychoses, depression, etc., but maintenance may be problematic) and psychotherapeutic interventions (see also Mullen et al., 2000) such as therapy based on a functional analysis approach (see Westrup, 2000) or a cognitive approach (see Lindsay, Olley, Jack, Morrison, & Smith, 1998). Further research, however, is necessary to clarify which treatments are most appropriate for different stalker subtypes.

Stalking-directed interventions are the responsibility of the criminal justice system. Research has shown that reporting to the police differs between samples with either the minority (e.g., 18%, Bjerregaard, 2000; 35%, Blackburn, 2000) or the majority reporting to the police (e.g., 89%, Blaauw, Winkel, et al., 2002; 96%, Nicastro, Cousins, & Spitzberg, 2000; 60%, Pathé et al., 2000). It is a consistent finding, however, that far from all cases result in criminal justice responses such as criminal charges, restraining orders, and imprisonment (e.g., 9%, Bjerregaard, 2000; 45%, Blaauw, Sheridan, et al., 2002; 33%, Blackburn, 2000; 56%, Nicastro et al.,

2000). It is also consistently found that restraining orders are often violated by stalkers (with Spitzberg's [2002] meta-analysis providing an overall figure of 40%) and that other criminal justice responses also frequently fail to curtail the activities of stalkers. An important question that remains to be answered is whether the success of criminal justice responses is dependent on the nature of stalking and the type of stalker and victim.

CONCLUSIONS

The current work has reviewed the main areas so far covered by research into stalking by providing overviews of what is now understood about stalkers, their victims, and the stalking process. Additionally, indications have been given as to which issues require further examination. Not all stalking-related work has been included, as lengthy discussions of the most appropriate legal sanctions and debates surrounding the complex area of stalker motivations are beyond the remit of this general review article.

There are other issues associated with stalking that so far have barely been addressed. For instance, there exists very little research on stalking that has been conducted outside Western countries, the authors only being able to identify two such studies: that by Kordvani (2000), who carried out preliminary work on 100 stalking cases in Iran, and Suzuki's (1999) population study of 600 Japanese women. Neither could the authors identify any published cross-cultural studies (but see Jagessar & Sheridan, 2002). It is important that stalking be examined in non-Western countries to identify

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whether it is a global phenomenon, particularly given that many countries have not yet legislated against this form of harassment. One recent work (Human Rights Watch, 2001) however, has identified two serious cases of stalking

in Uzbekistan, noting that the victims were not protected by criminal law.

Still other aspects of stalking prove unequivocal. It is not known how far stalking is linked to other crimes and how often it stands alone. Questions arise such as How many victims of domestic violence become victims of stalkers? (see, e.g., Baldry, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; Walker & Meloy, 1998). How many murder victims have been stalked first? How frequently does stalking facilitate other criminal acts, such as fraud or professional "hits"? These questions are unlikely to be answered in the near future, given that the most dangerous and violent stalkers are difficult to identify within the criminal justice system as they may have been charged with crimes other than stalking or harassment, such as rape, assault, or murder.

One contentious issue that may be raised is that of whether stalking is overrated as a criminal act and social problem, with the subsequent effect that the gravity of more serious stalking cases may not be appreciated. Large-scale representative surveys have indicated that stalking is a widespread problem, affecting up to 1 in 6 women and 1 in 14 men at some point in their lives, but also that the majority of cases are not judged (either by the authorities or, more frequently, by the victims themselves) to warrant criminal investigation. Issues of definition and measurement affect tremendously how prevalent and serious stalking is judged to be, given its nebulous quality (see, e.g., Hills & Taplin, 1998; Sheridan & Davies, 2001a; Tjaden, Thoennes, & Allison, 2000). As a result, researchers need to be continually aware of the possibility of applying overinclusive definitions and rendering acceptable behavior unacceptable.

The most encouraging aspect of the material reviewed is that it demonstrates a huge advancement in awareness of the course and nature of stalking since 1990. Despite the difficulties inherent to providing a definition of stalking, the current state of knowledge has revealed that stalkers do in fact engage in similar patterns of behavior and that researchers and practitioners alike are addressing the same issues within a shared literature. This research

into the general features and diverse aspects of stalking has allowed practical progress to be made in recognizing, understanding, and intervening in stalking cases, both at individual and state or national levels. Of course, this advancement does not suggest that stalking research has reached a peak. Rather, it implies that because

we now possess a basic knowledge of the fundamentals of criminal stalking, research needs to move on to address more specific issues and to uncover new ways of tackling this chronic problem.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, POLICY, AND RESEARCH

- Research and practice should not consider stalkers and victims as homogeneous groups but should pay attention to different subgroups. Certain subgroups of stalkers are more often mentally disordered or violent and persistent than others and certain subgroups of victims appear to suffer more from their experiences than others.
- Given the different types of stalkers and their differential risk of violence, research and clinical practice should focus more on risk assessment.
- Prevention strategies should not focus on victims, stalkers, or criminal justice responses alone but rather on interactions between the three.
- Research should address the extent to which stalking is linked to other crimes and also perceptions and prevalence of stalking in non-Western countries, to identify whether it is a global phenomenon.
- Researchers should be wary of providing overinclusive definitions of stalking that may result in inflated prevalence estimates and the labeling of routine behavior as deviant.

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SUGGESTED FUTURE READINGS

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