

Stalking

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1

Statistics

- 1 in 4 to 12 women (8 – 23%)
- 1 in 10 to 45 men (2 – 10%)
- Typically about three quarters of victims are female
- The higher end of the above two stats is based on meta-analysis of over 100 studies and includes broader definitions of stalking behaviors
- 3.5 million people annually in the U.S.
- About 7 million women and 2 million men have been stalked at some point in their life
- Half experience at least one contact per week
- 25-35% will be physically assaulted by their stalker at some point
- 81% of intimate female stalking victims will be physically assaulted and 31% will be sexually assaulted
- 76% of femicide victims had been stalked, 89% who had been previously physically abused had been stalked

2

Statistics

- 87% of stalkers are male
- 75 – 80% involve men stalking women
- 94% of stalkers of women are male
- 60% of stalkers of men are male
- Young or middle-aged
- Above average intelligence
- Underemployed
- More prone to anger, jealousy, and the urge to control the other
- 33% had prior adult violent criminal history
- Stalkers can come from every occupation, SES, etc.

3

Definitions

- A series of actions that make you feel afraid or in danger
- Engage in a course of conduct that would place a reasonable person in fear for their safety, and that the stalker intended and did, in fact, place the victim in such fear.

4

Definitions

- 1) a pattern or course of conduct of intruding behaviorally on another person in a way that is unwelcome;
- 2) an implicit or explicit threat that is evidenced in the pattern of behavioral intrusion; and
- 3) as a result of these behavioral intrusions, the person who is threatened experiences fear.
- A constellation of behaviors involving repeated and persistent attempts to impose on another person unwanted communication and/or contact.

5

Definitions

- “Obsessional following,” characterized by “an abnormal or long term pattern of threat or harassment directed toward a specific individual,” and consisting of “more than one overt act of unwanted pursuit of the victim that was perceived as being harassing.”

-Reid Meloy

6

Definitions

- Key themes:
- Repeated unwanted contact and/or following/monitoring of one individual by another that is not part of a professional relationship (e.g., P.I. or P.O.)
- This contact continues in spite of the one being pursued repeatedly asking such contact to cease
- Also typically present is obsessive thinking about and preoccupation with the victim by the stalker
- Instills fear

7

Common types of stalking behavior

- Hyperintimacy (i.e., excessive interest in developing a relationship)
- Proximity/surveillance/following
- Invasion (i.e., trespassing on victim's property, space, or privacy)
- Proxy (i.e., using others to pursue the victim)
- Intimidation/harassment
- Coercion/constraint (e.g., extortion, threats)
- Aggression

8

Common stalking tactics

- Following a person and visually monitoring their whereabouts (>33%)
- Driving by a person's home or workplace
- Repeated phone calls/hang-ups (66%)
- Initiating false rumors (36%)
- Sending unwanted gifts, letters, emails, etc. (31%)

9

Common stalking tactics

- Damaging a person's car or property (29%)
- Killing/threatening to kill a family pet (9%)
- Tracking a person via hidden cameras, recording devices, GPS
- Actively tracking a person via public records or on line search services, contacting family or friends, etc
- Ordering or canceling goods and services on the victims behalf
- Initiating legal contact/filing complaints
- Waiting for the victim at a certain location

10

"Proxy" stalkers

- This refers to individuals who either intentionally or unwittingly facilitate stalking occurring
- They may intentionally stalk the victim on behalf of the stalker (e.g., if the stalker is incarcerated), being a willful and active agent in the process
- This can include family, friends, co-workers, or mutual acquaintances from similar social circles
- They may also include people who do this unwittingly by passing on information about the victim to the stalker or passing things onto the victim from the stalker
- This can significantly magnify the impact of the stalking on the victim

11

Digital dating abuse (DDA)

- Digital dating abuse is a pattern of behaviors that control, pressure, and/or threaten a dating partner using a cell phone or the internet
- A survey of 365 college students found no gender differences in the # of DDA behaviors experienced but women reported more negative reactions than men to sexual messaging
- DDA is correlated with other measures of abusive behavior

12

Common DDA behaviors

- Monitoring partner's whereabouts
- Monitoring with whom partner is having contact
- Checking partner's private digital information
- It appears that, like many other abusive behaviors, these are common isolated behaviors but can be more damaging as part of a larger pattern

13

Spyware

- Modern technology has made it easier than ever to stalk/monitor others
- These include:
 - GPS in phones
 - GPS planted in cars
 - Small hidden cameras (e.g., "nanny cams")
 - Listening bugs

14

Internet based stalking behaviors

- Facebook and other social media (e.g., Google photos) to determine where a victim is
- Hacking of email

15

Stalkers are relentless

- Most stalkers(2/3) pursue their victim at least once per week
- Most stalkers(3/4) use more than one means of approach
- Average stalking incident lasts 1.8 years
- 2.2 years if intimate partner is the stalker
- 10% are stalked for more than 5 years

16

Motivations for stalking

- To re-establish a relationship
- To exact revenge
- To prey sexually
- To exert power and control over the other
- Two Types of Stalkers:
 - "Love obsession"
 - "Simple obsession"

17

"Love obsession"

- 20 – 25% of all stalkers
- Typically are strangers to the victim
- Typically have a mental disorder such as a thought disorder or paranoia
- 23% of stalkers of women, 36% of stalkers of men

18

“Simple obsession”

- 70 – 80% of all stalkers
- Had a prior relationship with the victim, but not necessarily a romantic one (e.g., neighbor, co-worker, friend)
- About half of all stalking originates from romantic relationships
- Sense of esteem is tied into the victim/the relationship
- Maintain a relationship with the victim via obsessive thinking/behavior

19

Abusive partners

- A sub-category of simple obsession
- Approximately 60 – 75% of simple obsession stalkers are batterers
- 60% of female stalking victims and 30% of male stalking victims
- 75% of all simple obsession victims had experienced controlling behaviors
- 66% of all simple obsession victims had experienced prior physical abuse
- 81% of victims stalked by intimate partner reported prior physical abuse

20

Female stalking victims

- 77% stalked by someone they knew
- 59% stalked by a current/former intimate partner

Male stalking victims

- 64% stalked by someone they knew
- 30% stalked by a current/former intimate partner

21

Stalking is a significant risk factor

- More likely to physically approach the victim
- More verbal threats
- More likely to use a weapon
- More likely to re-offend
- More likely to escalate

22

Impact of stalking--fear

- Victims reported suffering a range of emotions because of the stalking
- Most common fears included:
 - Not knowing what would happen next (46%)
 - The stalking would continue indefinitely (29%)
 - Being murdered (9%)

23

Common impact of stalking

- Compromised health in the following areas:
 - General disturbance (e.g., PTSD, somatic symptoms)
 - Affective (e.g., anxiety, depression, anger, paranoid)
 - Cognitive (e.g., confused, distrustful, reduced self-esteem)
 - Physical (e.g., insomnia, loss of appetite, nausea)
 - Social (e.g., avoidant, going out less)
 - Resource (e.g., work disruption, additional expenses)
- One positive: Resilience (e.g., strengthening of relationships, stronger sense of self)

24

Common impact of stalking

- Social dysfunction
- Social isolation
- Fear/distrust of others
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Forced relocation/moving
- Loss of job and/or compromised job functioning

25

Common impact of stalking

- Those who suffered more tended to:
 - Blamed themselves
 - Ruminated
 - Emphasized the terror of the stalking
 - Think through more of what steps to take and how to handle it
- In other words, the more the stalking is on someone's radar, the more they tend to suffer (and, perhaps, vis-versa)

26

Impact of stalking on employment

- In one year, about 130,000 victims (about 4%) said they had been fired or asked to leave their job because of problems arising from the stalking.
- About one in eight of all employed victims lost time from work, either for fear for their safety or to pursue activities such as seeking a restraining order or testifying in court.

27

Most significant triggers of stalking

- Substance use/abuse
- Ending of the relationship
- Jealousy (including an actual new relationship)
- Court hearings

28

Risk factors for violence by stalkers

- **Prior sexual intimacy** (primary factor)
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Criminal history (esp. interpersonal violence)
- Direct threats to the victim
- Mental illness/personality disorder
- Jealousy

29

Factors *not* correlated with stalking risk to former romantic partners

- Prior types of abusive behavior experienced/perpetrated
- Any specific previous abusive behaviors
- Prior psychological problems in the abusive partner
- Age
- Race
- Other demographic variables

30

Problems identifying stalking with conventional risk assessment tools

- Stalking tends to only target a single person which means others are not at risk
- Stalking may include a variety of acts that are only experienced as threatening by the targeted and not technically abusive or viewed by others as abusive
- Stalking can persist for many years

31

Common stages of stalking

- Attempts to woo/reconcile
- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Threatening behavior
- Physical violence
- Lethal violence

Note: no single, predictable pattern and much variation among stalkers

32

Cultural supports for stalking

- What are examples from media and culture that normalizes and/or legitimizes stalking?
- Examples might include:
 - Songs
 - Romantic movies
 - Books/stories
 - Common cultural values of how love is shown/expressed

33

Cultural supports for stalking

- Some common cultural values that justify stalking include:
 - It is driven by love and care for the individual
 - Preoccupation and excessive attention are a sign of love
 - Jealousy and possessiveness is normal and even a positive sign of true love
 - A belief that two people deeply in love are "one" or "destined to be together" or "meant for each other"
- As a result of these cultural perceptions/values, stalking may be minimized or justified as an expression of love and care by either the perpetrator or the victim

34

What victims can do

- Moving away (i.e., avoiding contact)
- Moving with (i.e., re-negotiating the relationship)
- Moving against (i.e., harming, constrain, or punishing the stalker)
- Moving inward (e.g., self-control, self-actualization)
- Moving outward (i.e., seeking the assistance of others)

35

What victims can do

- Seek out a stalking protection order

36

Stalking protective order criteria

- The respondent needs to have:
 - Stalked the petitioner and/or
 - Committed past abusive behavior against the petitioner and/or
 - Committed a crime against the petitioner and/or
 - Threatened the petitioner
- There have been two or more unwanted contacts within the past two years
- The respondent needs to have known the petitioner wished to be left alone
- The contact created fear
- There is fear further contact will occur

37

What victims can do

- About 40% reported the stalking to the police
- About 20% filed charges
- 54% of femicide victims had reported being stalked to the police prior to their murder

38

Legal Interventions

- There are anti-stalking laws in every state.
- In Oregon there is an anti-stalking order that can be obtained
 - Generally similar to a restraining order
 - Not as easy to get an anti-stalking order
 - Good indefinitely, never expiring

39

Legal Interventions

- 69% of female victims and 81% of male victims had the protection order violated
- A meta-analysis found that stalking/restraining orders indicated a violation rate of 40%
- The same meta-analysis reported that things get worse about 21% of the time post restraining order
- If the stalker is on probation, higher levels of supervision, including on-going contact with victims, tends to decrease the rate of recidivism.

40

Other things a victims can do

- "Don't engage, don't enrage"
- Document behaviors
- Tell family/friends and ask them not to give out personal information
- Vary routines and schedules (e.g., work, gym, etc.)
- Carry an "emergency kit"
 - List of phone numbers to call for help
 - Noise maker
 - Copy of the protection order
 - Be ready to take photos

41

Larger social intervention/change is needed

- Clarifying/redefining what is a healthy loving relationship including challenging jealousy, possessiveness, obsessiveness, heavy dependency, and enmeshment as signs of a healthy romantic involvement
- Raising public awareness around what are stalking behaviors
- Naming stalking and stalking behaviors as they are displayed

42

Online resources

- <http://techsafety.org/>
- <http://techsafety.org/resources-survivors>
- http://www.ncdsv.org/publications_stalking.html

43

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44