

# Stalkers and their Worlds

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## Abstract

This chapter proposes a synthesis of clinical and forensic studies of stalker types, suggesting that the vast majority of cases can be encompassed by six types. The types are (a) rejected, previously abusive, partner; (b) rejected, nondangerous partner; (c) love obsessive stalker; (d) erotomanic stalker; (e) disorganized, delusional obsessive stalker; and (f) sadistic stalker. The Paradigm Case methodology, originally developed by Ossorio (1981), is the major tool for delineating the types. The characteristics of each type identified in this analysis are used to delineate potentially successful strategies for treatment of stalkers and the management of cases that currently have poor prognosis for treatment. A successful case application of a status-dynamic world reconstructive therapy (Roberts, 1985) is illustrated for a *rejected, nondangerous* stalker—one of the most common types (Meloy, 2002; Sheridan & Boone, 2001). These six types and the differential plans for treatment and case management should be helpful both to criminal justice and to mental health personnel. We identify briefly the crucial steps in risk management plans for victims.

Numerous typologies of stalkers have been presented (Meloy, 1997; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000; Sheridan & Boon, 2002; Zona, Palarea, & Lane, 1998) with the goal of guiding the treatment and management of stalkers by mental health professionals and the police and prosecutors who deal with them. There is, however, no universally agreed upon typol-

ogy, and it is perhaps fair to say that the four approaches above have had the most widespread use in practice. (See Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004, pp. 69-74 for a comprehensive review both of clinically oriented and research based typologies—and a critique of the current state of knowledge.)

Without a coherent classification system, it is difficult both for the police, other members of the criminal justice systems, and mental health professionals to provide appropriate treatment of the stalker. In this chapter, we use two tools for the creation of a coherent typology: (a) Ossorio's (1981) Paradigm Case Formulation (PCF) as the method for bringing order to these competing views of stalkers and (b) a careful comparison of the various empirical typologies.

PCF is a technique for articulating a domain when one has no guarantee of being able to give an adequate definition that will sort all cases into the appropriate categories and exclude non-instances. It operates as follows: Pick a real, if possible complex case, describe its important features, then transform one (or more features) to generate a new, genuine case. Repeat step 2 as often as necessary to cover the entire domain of cases. The result is that all real cases are identified and non-cases are excluded. Notice this procedure depends upon competence in recognizing cases—not in the definition of words. In his classic article, Ossorio (1981) applied the technique to the identification of the subject matter of the family. Subsequent students working with him have used it to good effect in delineating the types of humor (Littmann, 1983) and of intimate relationships (Roberts, 1982). In Ossorio's PCF of the family, he picked out instances that anyone familiar with the field would have recognized. Among these were married parents of the opposite sex with several biologically natural children of their own, unmarried parents living together as a family, adoptive families, single parent families, and it included some types that are valid in other cultures but not within the United States--polygamous families. The resulting types were not necessary novel, but their systematic generation allowed individuals and groups with different "definitions" of the family to be precise about their respective boundary conditions. For example a person or group who insists that "families" can only be composed of opposite sex parents who have the potential to raise

children, one sees that one is intentionally excluding same-sex parents who may also be willing and able to raise children—and, indeed, in some cases are successfully raising children. For holders of this position, it is clear that the childrearing function of the family takes second place to the gender of the parents.

Thus while it is not necessary to using a PCF that one can see “dimensions” such as the “childrearing” function vs. the biological sex of the partners that distinguish among types, that is often the case. We plan to show that four characteristics of the stalkers and their relationships with their victims emerge as useful in identifying the six stalker types. Furthermore, these types enable both mental health professionals and the police to handle individual cases more effectively and to provide feedback that is more realistic to clients about the dangerousness of their situations when being stalked. Case illustrations taken from the clinical-forensic literature and from one case on which I collaborated with a psychiatrist will be used to illustrate the potential benefits of a status dynamic, world reconstructive approach to the management of a *rejected ex-partner* whose behavior placed him at the borderline between the dangerous and nondangerous stalker.

For those who are counseling victims, providing some practical suggestions that are relevant for case management of stalkers is essential. In one of the major national studies of stalking victims, Tjaden & Thoennes (1998) found that victims were satisfied with the way that police and courts handled their situation in less than 50 percent of the cases. The same was true for mental health services. Clearly, there is room for improvement.

### ***Paradigm Case Formulations***

The essential step in this procedure is that one starts with a genuine case, preferably a complex one containing as many features of other real cases as possible. Second, one changes single characteristics of the starting case (or paradigm case) so that one obtains a new, genuine case of stalking. The second step is repeated until one has identified all (or all of the important) cases relevant to the task. Note that, in contrast with

some views of good scientific procedures for creating typologies (See Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004, for a statement of this position), the PCF procedure does not proceed from an identification of dimensions but from the sequential creation of real cases. The logic involved is akin to that involved in the recognition of family resemblances in the creation of all kinds of typologies of animal, vegetable, and mineral world. The crucial competence involved is the ability to recognize distinct, real cases—not the creation of categories out of some more primitive distinctions.

From a legal perspective all cases of being stalked share two features: The perpetrator has engaged *repeatedly* (at least twice) in behaviors that have made the victim *very afraid* for her safety or that of her family or property. From a Descriptive Psychology perspective, stalking is an *activity* description, because no commitment is made about the specific social practice being performed or about the motives of the stalker. But a result is specified—namely that the stalker has generated a high level of fear of harm in the victim. This latter criterion corresponds to Ossorio's (1981) category of an *achievement* description, and again it neither commits the describer to the motive nor to the significance of the activities in which the stalker has engaged.

Those who encountered stalkers in the criminal justice and mental health systems quickly became aware that there were several types of stalkers (Meloy, 1997 and Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993). In my view, the two best studies of the variety of stalkers have been done in Australia (by Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000) and in Great Britain (by Sheridan & Boon, 2002). But valuable information about variations in stalker types and their management can be found in Meloy (1997, 2002) and in Zona, Palarea, and Lane (1998). Because the independent results of the two major classifications are so similar, I have drawn on them extensively for this paper. When the descriptions of their types are compared, one sees that they agree in finding four distinctions essential to their sorting of types: (a) the motives of the stalker, (b) the nature of the prior relationship between stalker and victim, (c) the degree of reality contact of the stalker, and (d) the degree of dangerousness of the stalker. In the presentations of each type, I will describe the values these four parameters

take for each case and use these variations as the characteristics that guide treatment and case management options.

The Mullen et al., (2000) and Zona et al. (1998) typologies each attempted to make use of variations in the types of psychopathology associated with stalking behavior, but evidence for specific associations of types of psychopathology and risk of danger or for specific treatment/management recommendations is weak. Indeed the evidence suggests that the non-psychologically impaired stalkers are more likely to be dangerous (Meloy, 2002; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000). The one exception to this generalization is the case of predator, sadistic stalkers (type 6 below) who seem to fall within the category of dangerous psychopaths (Hare, 1993).

**Motives.** Almost all research groups have noted three categories of motives: (a) desire for revenge for mistreatment or rejection, (b) pursuit of an unrequited love, or (c) desire to degrade the victim (where the victim has not mistreated the stalker). The primary variation in *relationship history* is (a) whether the perpetrator had an intimate enough relationship so that *betrayal* was possible vs. (b) being merely a stranger or acquaintance. Betrayal is possible in both romantic and nonromantic relationships. In the former, having been sexually intimate prior to a breakup dramatically increases the risk of violence (Meloy, 2002). In the case of co-workers and friends, evidence of case studies suggests that whenever the persons are interdependent enough so that one person can harm the other's reputation or standing in an important community, then betrayal or humiliation can lead to stalking and violence (De Becker, 1999; Kienlen, Birmingham, Solberg, O'Regan, & Meloy, 1997; Meloy, 1996).

The issue of *reality contact* can best be summed up by the answer to the question: Are crucial beliefs (e.g., that he and the victim have had an intimate relationship) of the stalker delusional or not? Psychiatrists have long been interested in the variety of delusions and obsessions held by their patients, and patients who stalk have been no exception. Finally, stalkers vary greatly in how likely they are to be engaged in physically *dangerous behavior* toward their victims, including property damage as well as personal harm or death. Many stalkers want merely to be in their

beloved's world and have no desire to harm. Yet out of their insistence on being part of that world, they become a major violator of their victim's privacy and engage in harassing and stalking behaviors such as persistent unwanted telephone calls or emails. They show up at the victim's home, school, or workplace uninvited and at inappropriate times. They presume a relationship with the victim that does not exist, and while this may not technically be dangerous, the inappropriateness of the stalker's behavior strikes fear in the heart of the object of his attention. It is worth noting that stalking episodes often persist over extended periods, with the median time being between 18 to 24 months (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). To have an unwanted suitor in one's life for such a period is wearing.

Furthermore, nothing seems to work to dissuade the stalker. Initially many victims try the polite "No, I am not interested in a relationship.", only to find that such statements may increase the intensity of stalking. Some stalkers take this polite rejection as a test of their intentions and respond with redoubled effort. The plight of the victim takes on even more stressful aspects to the degree that the stalker makes verbal threats, damages property, and/or gains access to private information about the victim (Davis & Frieze, 2002; De Becker, 1999). There is no good longitudinal study that would allow one to estimate the probability of dangerous behavior by stalkers as a function of time, specific types of events, or stalker characteristics. By extrapolating from extensive research on domestic violence, one can offer some useful guidelines (Walker & Meloy, 1998). The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior; thus any evidence that the stalker has been violent previously toward the victim or toward others immediately indicates higher risk. Threats by the stalker to harm himself or the victim again must be given some weight—although these are often ploys to force the victim to take the stalker seriously and thus to continue interacting with him.

## Stalker's Worlds: Six Paradigm Cases

### *The Rejected, Previously Abusive, Partner*

In the samples collected in all three countries—USA, Australia, and Great Britain, this is the largest single subgroup of stalkers. Thus it is an appropriate starting place for a PCF because it is common, embodies many of the essential elements of stalking victimization and of the stalker's worldview.

Out of their rejection after having had an intimate relationship, these stalkers wish either to re-establish their control over their former partners (and hence reverse the status degradation involved in being rejected) or to exact revenge upon the person who has humiliated them. Both rating scales by undergraduates (Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000) and interviews with forensic cases (Walker & Meloy, 1998) suggest that the control and revenge motives are mixed together in many cases. And our efforts do not require that we impose a pure type upon these messy data. If the partner who has been left had a history of using interpersonal violence in the relationship, it becomes more likely that he will resort to it again as part of his stalking strategies (Meloy, 2002).

The crucial motives are revenge or closely associated motives such as the desire to re-assert control or dominance over a partner who has left a previous, intimate relationship. In most respects, the stalker has good reality contact with the exception that he tends to see her behavior as provocative to a degree that would not be seen by impartial observers. The level of dangerousness for this subtype is high for two reasons. The harassment is typically characterized by high levels of verbal threat, property damage and physical violence, and this pattern is often a continuation of a previous physical and verbal abuse prior to the breakup. The breakup provides a set of new issues for the stalker to become angry about. In the case of married or cohabiting partners, the division of property and associated financial questions provides a rich source for potential disputes. If children are involved, then issues of custody and child support offer another opportunity for conflicts that can easily escalate into violence. New relationships formed by the target of stalking can also elicit jeal-

ousy and aggressive behavior. In short, for partners whose status and control have been threatened by the breakup, the multiple potential for additional provocation makes it wise to treat danger for the victim as a genuine possibility.

The stalker sees himself as a victim of the former partner's unacceptable (to him) behavior. His righteous indignation allows him to justify his threatening and violent behavior toward his ex and makes it possible for him to recruit his friends and relatives to assist him in harassment of his ex. Indeed some stalkers feel so justified in what they are doing that they will use the victim's own friends and relatives as a source of information to aid in regaining control or harassing the victim (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000; Walker & Meloy, 1998). In summary, revenge motivation, a prior intimate relationship, a high level of dangerousness, and moderately good reality contact can characterize the first type.

***Case management implications.*** Because the risk of property damage and violence is high, a danger management plan needs to be in place. This plan should identify a safe place to go in case one's residence is not secure, and provide for an alternative set of keys, money, credit cards, medication, and important papers should the victim need to take quick action to avoid the stalker (Mechanic, 2002). Avoidance of the stalker is likely to produce better results than confrontation or threats. De Becker's (1999) maxim is "Don't engage, don't enrage." Because the police cannot protect the victim even after a court-ordered restraint on contact with the victim has been issued and after the potential danger is clear to everyone, some stalking victims chose to move away to entirely new locations (11% in the NVAW sample, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

The second major component of the victim's approach needs to be a careful documentation of the acts of stalking. Messages, threats, phone calls, and physical contact such as appearing at the victim's home or work need to be recorded and dated. Victims need to alert their family, friends, and coworkers of the stalker's identity and of the possibility that he would contact them for information about her. Successful legal action against the stalker, if necessary, will depend upon the victim's documentation of



the case. If avoidance does not work, then legal action to incarcerate the stalker is a last resort. On one hand, many stalkers in this group have sufficient reality contact that they can be deterred by the potential of serious legal consequences (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000). On the other hand, there are several problems with this approach. Penalties tend to be mild, such as short jail time or only probation, and there is no guarantee that the stalker will not persist from behind bars. There is likewise no assurance of treatment for the stalker during incarceration that might reduce his obsession with the victim (Meloy, 1998). The clinical literature suggests that some dangerous stalkers can benefit from counseling focused on (a) grieving the loss of the relationship, (b) developing greater skills in handling intimate relationships, and (c) new social contacts. Because substance abuse has often been part of a pattern associated with stalking in these cases, rehabilitation is another part of the therapeutic program for ex-partner stalkers (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000).

### *The Rejected, Nondangerous Partner*

The change in PCF #1 to get to PCF#2 is the deletion of “previously abusive.” This is the most promising case for intervention success since the motivational balance between wanting to re-establish the love relationship and the desire for revenge over being rejected tends to lean more to the former. The stalker has not engaged in domestic violence toward his partner prior to the breakup; hence the probability of violence is lower. Reality contact is good—but the stalker may suffer loss of self-control or may exercise poor judgment—as we will see below.

If the stalking victim can communicate the end of the relationship and her determination not to return in a clear but non-derogating manner, then these cases are less likely to escalate into revenge stalking with a high level of dangerousness.

In doing counseling work with stalkers, the best outcomes arise from getting started on a new world construction before the stalking has evolved into a revenge episode. Affirmations of the stalker’s capacity to love and of the potential for new relationships that are reciprocated are crucial parts of this new world construction. (See the case presentation

that follows for an explication of this approach to treatment). Initially, the stalker may hold onto the notion that the ex is his “one and only true love,” but active confrontation of this distorted status assignment by the therapist combined with non-response from the victim will tend to erode this belief.

***Case presentation: A status-dynamic, world reconstructive approach.***

This case was referred via a psychiatrist who shared the case with me and on which I consulted by making some case management suggestions, with the permission of the client. The client came to the psychiatrist for treatment during a difficult divorce initiated by his wife. Previously, he lost his job, his wife, and custody of his children. He was angry at the world and felt the urge to follow and to berate his ex-wife for her treatment of him. He succumbed to this compulsion frequently enough that his wife secured a restraining order. In his view, she had destroyed his life. This case falls at the borderline between the dangerous and non-dangerous type. Although the stalker had no history of prior abuse of his partner, the level of anger he felt at the start of therapy both raised concerns that he might do something genuinely destructive. The extent of the multiple losses that he suffered made anger and aggression a distinct possibility. But, on the other hand, he came voluntarily for treatment because he was concerned that he was losing control over his aggressive urges.

The patient and his wife met in college and over the course of 18 months, he conducted a courtship typical of the 1980's. Her family owned a successful small business, and upon marrying the daughter, he was taken into the business in a sales capacity. For several years, the business did well, supporting the parents, the client's family, and the families of two brothers-in-law (sons of the owner). They enjoyed an upper middle class life-style, which included country club memberships, a second home at the coast, and the social recognition that goes with being a family associated with a successful business. The couple had two children: a daughter, seven (at the time of divorce), and a son, five.

From the client's point of view, the difficulties began when the father and owner of the business died. Subsequently, a son became manager

of the business and made decisions that over-extended the company. Shortly, the business encountered financial troubles because the expansion occurred just before an economic down-turn that had a negative impact on business and family income. The client was openly critical of the bad judgments that he saw his brother-in-law making. Even though she was upset about the state of the business, his wife tended to side with her brothers. The business losses and curtailment of family and personal income caused difficulties for all family members. But the client was treated as “not one of us” when he expressed his views, and when the managing brother fired the client, his wife sided with her brother, saying to her husband: “Well, what did you expect when you criticized him so persistently and so openly.”

Initially, she asked the client to move out, but it quickly became apparent that the managing brother had promised to support her financially if she defended him rather than her husband. When the husband confronted her about the “conspiracy” against him, she denied it, initiated divorce proceedings, and took steps to gain sole custody of the children. Unfortunately for the client, he acted on his anger about the mistreatment in the following ways: Yelling and screaming at his wife in front of the children and some of her relatives, threatening her, and, after he moved out, following, telephoning, showing up at the former place of work, and insisting on greater contact with his children than was provided for in the temporary custody decree. He gave her all the grounds that she needed to have him arrested for stalking and harassment. After being convicted of misdemeanor stalking, his wife was able to use that against him both in the final divorce and custody settlements.

At the time that he came for treatment, he was understandably both depressed and angry at the world. He had undergone multiple degradations, loss of a job, loss of his marriage, and loss of free access to his own children—and, his wife had won all the battles even though she was, in his view, fighting deviously and unfairly.

The principles of a world reconstructive approach involved five steps. The first of these involves helping him to the recognition that he had

suffered genuine losses that validly resulted in anger and grief—which the therapist acknowledged. The second step is medication management with anti-depressants. The third step was based on Bergner (1993) and Holmes (2002) formulation of the status dynamics involved in depression and on selections from Mary Roberts' (1985) "Worlds & World Reconstructions". The key steps involve a focus on rebuilding client's world through narrative home-work in which positive, status enhancing interpretations of his current world were given. For example, he felt that she was his "one and only love" who had done him wrong. The initial approach by the therapist was to review the wife's behaviors toward the client and to ask if a person who was truly his one and only love would do these things to him. A true love would have championed his interests at the time of troubles in the family business, have tried to prevent his being fired by her brother, and would *not* tried to prevent him having any real access to his own children after the separation. As descriptive psychologists will recognize, we were encouraging the stalker to engage in a status degradation of his former lover by coming to the conclusion that she was not and never had been the kind of person who really cared for him as a lover would.

After a reframing of the former love object has been achieved, the next step was to focus on his talents and his opportunities. He had been a successful salesperson, had dated other women before courting his ex-wife, and had shown the good judgment to come for treatment before doing something truly damaging to his ex-wife. An image, suggested to me by Jim Holmes (personal communication), was used to enhance his world. Finding one's true love is a bit like fishing in swampy waters. There is a lot of trash out there—old tires, inedible fish, etc., and the smart fisherman may have to toss back several unacceptable things that she or he has hooked. Patience and not expecting love at first sight are virtues in the business of finding a true partner. Fortunately, for us, the stalker was in fact a fisherman, and when he heard this image, he laughed out loud and immediately took it to heart.

The practical costs of acting on his anger toward his wife and her family were reviewed, and, as his sense of positive alternatives grew, he was

able to let go of the urges to stalk her. The final touch was the introduction of the maxim: “The best revenge is living honorably.” This maxim was not introduced until he was ready to work on its status enhancing potential. By the termination of therapy, he had been able to terminate medication, secure a job relevant to his training and skills, date other women, and begin working on negotiations with his ex-wife that might lead to more equitable visitation with his children. He no longer felt the urge to stalk his ex and he had come to see her behavior vis-à-vis him during the financial problems of the family business as her weakness of character—not as his problem.

### ***The Love Obsessional Stalker***

Transformation #2: Delete “ex-intimates”—these are acquaintances or strangers. The next sub-group of stalkers involves cases in which the stalker has chosen a love object to pursue with which she or he has not previously had an intimate relationship. Because the goal of the stalking is to establish that loving bond, the tactics of the stalker tend to be non-malicious and without the threats and potential for danger of other stalkers. The stalker often assigns unique characteristics of desirability to the target, and frequently believes the victim is amenable to a relationship, despite the absence of reciprocation. From the victim’s point of view, the stalker’s persistence and indifference to the victim’s negative responses brings this to the level of unacceptable stalking. In the nonprobability samples reported in the US (Zona et al. 1998) and in England (Sheridan & Boone, 2001), these cases represent 20 to 18.5% of the cases that come to the attention of the authorities.

The beloved is all-pervasive in the stalker’s thoughts—hence the label, *love obsessional stalkers* (Melo, 1998), and s/he tends to view the world through the lens of this desired relationship. By having a real or potential lover in one’s life, one gains all the affirmations of worth that are implied by being loved by another. Bergner (2000) lays these out in some detail. In the case of a love relationship, one has a person who cares about one’s well-being, who admires and respects one, who is prepared to share intimacies both physical and psychological, and who by accepting a place in

one's life makes each thing that one does more significant than it would be without the love object. When confronted by rejection or third-party interventions that require the stalker to stop pursuit, the stalker faces a situation that he tends to see as equivalent to choosing less behavior potential over more, to choose loneliness over a vital love relationship. It is no surprise that the infatuated stalker has trouble making that choice.

Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell (2000) have described their therapeutic approach to intimacy seekers and one can see that it is in many respects consistent with a Descriptive approach. After establishing rapport and obtaining a descriptive history of the stalking episodes, they propose to shift the focus from the victim's supposed love for the stalker to the stalker's love for the victim. The stalker's behavior is reframed as reflecting his hopes, desires, and investments. The importance of this love is affirmed, and it is placed in a context of previous absence of such relationships for the stalker. Stalkers are characteristically lonely, isolated individuals without adequate feedback about their behavior from peers. The goal is to help the stalker see that his love reflects his needs and desires and not necessarily the feelings of the victim. After accrediting the stalker's motives and feelings, the therapist begins to confront the stalker with alternative interpretations of things that he has taken to be expressions of love by the victim. It is important that these be specific instances and that alternative interpretations be given to help the stalker get unstuck. A second objective is to help the stalker to identify the costs to him or her in time, resources, energy, and embarrassment of the stalking episodes. The third objective is to make salient the distress caused to the victim. Stalkers almost always underestimate the negative impact of their behavior (Sinclair & Frieze, 2002; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2002). Together these steps make apparent the costs to the stalker in terms of legal consequences and to the victim in terms of distress of attempting to sustain his previous world construction.

Now the therapist helps the stalker move to a position from which he can abandon his stalking with dignity. "The target has proved unworthy. The stalker tried and did his or her best. The stalker did not mean to . . . cause any distress, [but he has and he needs to cease doing that.] Time to

move on.” (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000, pp. 286-287). Notice how similar this move is to the status degradation of the target used by the Descriptive Psychologists above. The final moves involve helping to identify potentials for real social relationships and to encourage the stalker to be more involved in these. Sometimes the first step is obtaining a pet. This step is part of the world reconstruction move also recommended by Descriptive Psychologists. The client needs a position of strength from which to play the game of life—and being a convicted stalker is not such a position. Therefore, what we see here is that many of the therapeutic moves recommended by the pre-eminent Australian forensic mental health team are quite similar to those recommended by Descriptive Psychologists.

### *Erotomaniac Stalker*

Transformation #3: Delete “non-delusional”: The result is a stalker who believes that the victim is in love with him and/or that he has an intimate relationship with her—neither of which is the case. Short name: In these cases, the stalker has the fantasy of a reciprocated love relationship with a person who is often a total stranger, and never more than a mere acquaintance. The level of reality contact is poor (delusional) because there is no such love relationship, but the stalker takes even the smallest gestures of politeness as indications of love. The delusions are focused exclusively on the object of affection (thus obsessional) and the stalker does not have other marked indications of other forms of psychopathology. But in the most severe cases, such individuals can manifest enough psychopathology to fit a DSM-IVR category of delusional disorder, but distinct from paranoid schizophrenia or affective psychosis (Badcock, 2002). While these individuals are disturbing to the objects of their affection, they tend to be dangerous only when they become jealous of real-life partners and to see them as rivals for affection (Sheridan & Boon, 2002). By their insistence that the relationship is real and their determination to become part of the victim’s life, their behavior becomes a serious problem for victims. They intrude into the victim’s life and work, give misinformation about the victim’s relationship with them to others, and generally cause problems for the victim. Their persistence can

be extraordinary.

### ***The Disorganized, Delusional, Obsessional Stalker***

Transformation #4: Delete “otherwise good reality contact”—the result is the more significantly psychopathological types who exhibit one or more serious comorbid symptoms along with the delusion of a relationship. The broader pattern of psychopathology associated with the delusion of having a reciprocated love relationship can range from paranoid schizophrenia, to manic-depressive disorders, or to borderline personality disorder, and to coexist with substance abuse problems. Such stalkers are more disorganized in their behavior and more likely make openly sexual advances toward victims. Being treated by the stalker in a lewd manner is, of course, very upsetting to victims. The inappropriateness of the stalker’s behavior and their unpredictability make them seem dangerous to victims (Sheridan & Boon, 2002). In fact, they are more dangerous than the better-integrated stalkers above and somewhat less dangerous than *intimate ex-partners* with a history of prior domestic abuse (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000).

The case management recommendation both for the *erotomaniac* and *disorganized delusional stalker* is that the victims pursue legal action as quickly as possible. These types of individuals are very difficult to reason with, and their insistence on seeing the world and the victim the way they do makes it necessary to remove them as quickly as possible. Beyond the recommendation of legal action against both the *erotomanics* and *disorganized delusional stalkers*, some differentiated recommendations can be made. Because of their disorganization, the delusional stalkers may have already come to the attention of the police or other authorities. Victims will still have to do all of the recommended things to help the police make a case against the stalker, but the fact of the stalker’s broadly bizarre behavior typically makes this easy. In contrast to intimate ex-partner stalkers, the delusional types seldom take extensive measures to hide their stalking from authorities. For the *erotomaniac* stalker, documentation of the stalker’s behaviors to help make the case is essential. Avoidance whenever possible and firm but non-angry rejection of advances when they are



made is advisable. One's family and work friends should be made aware of the identity of the stalker so that they cannot be unwittingly manipulated to act against the interests of the victim. Even in the non-violent case, the degree of disruption to one's life and family can justify legal action and it should be pursued. For the more dangerous disorganized stalkers, taking steps to avoid contact with the stalker is advisable.

Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell (2000), who have perhaps the most experience in attempting therapeutic interventions with these two types, comment as follows:

[Many experts] have noted the extreme persistence of erotic delusions. . . [the general review literature is characterized] by gloomy prognoses and diminishes expectation for the effectiveness of psychiatry and other mental health disciplines in diminishing erotomanic delusions.

An abiding problem with managing these cases is the almost total lack of motivation for treatment. Those caught up with pathologies of love do not see themselves as ill but as blessed with a romance whose only blemish is the tardiness of response in the beloved or the interferences of third parties. . . The benefits of these disorders should not be forgotten, for they provide some solace for their loneliness, some support for damaged self-esteem, and some purpose to their otherwise empty existences.

[But Mullen & Pathe (1994) reported] that the response to treatment in the disorders varied by the nature and severity of the underlying disorder . . . with treatment required over many months before improvement can be expected. . . improving the social supports and networks of patients with pathologies of love is worthy of greater emphasis. (2000, p. 155).

### ***Sadistic Stalker***

Transformation #5: Delete intimacy seeking as the motive and substitute control and humiliation of victim. This is the most dangerous type of stalker because they are willing to inflict harm on the victim and because they try to control the victim's life once they have established a relationship with the victim. They approach the victim initially as a friend or

as someone with a romantic interest. However, unlike the *erotomanic* stalker where the forms of harassment remain benign, the *sadistic stalker* engages in conduct designed to disconcert, unnerve, and disempower the victim. These can take such forms as notes left in the victim's locked car in order to unsettle the target, subtle evidence of contact with the victim's personal items such as a rifled underwear drawer, re-ordering/removal of private papers, cigarette ends left in ash trays, the toilet having been used, etc. Once the victim's self-confidence has been undermined, the *sadistic stalker* often moves in to establish a relationship in which the victim is now dependent upon him. Sadistic stalkers appear to select with two criteria in mind. First, the target must be regarded as someone worthy to be spoiled. Second, she must be seen as someone vulnerable to being isolated and controlled. The *sadistic stalker* seems to get part of the thrill out of humiliating a person who has lived a stable, happy life. The second part of the motivational package is a sense of power that grows from his ability to control all aspects of the victim's life. A crucial part of the strategy is to isolate the victim from family and friends so that she is truly dependent upon him alone. *Sadistic stalkers* are very good at using a combination of professions of love combined with threats designed to confuse the victim and to render her world uncertain and unsafe. Classic threats include things as having a dozen dead roses delivered or telling her that "We will die together." Killing or torturing the victim's pets is also one of the tactics used. Sadistic stalkers will often fit the DSM-IV-TR criteria for sadistic (aggressive) personality disorder but some fit into the anti-social personality disorder. More broadly, they tend to fit the dangerous psychopathic personality syndrome. The tactics are parallel to those employed by the domestic abuser.

Once a relationship has been established, the stalker is likely to demand that the victim participate in sexual practices that violate the victim's personal standards. Through the victim's humiliation, disgust and shame, the stalker once again asserts his power. These stalkers can be highly dangerous - in particular with psychological violence geared to the controlling of the victim with fear, loss of privacy, and the curtailment of her social world, and with physical violence designed to undermine the victim's confidence in matters normally taken for granted (e.g.

disabling brake cables, disarming safety equipment, and cutting power off). When thwarted the stalker is capable of resorting to direct physical violence toward the victim or those assisting her. Although there is no good epidemiological study, the evidence from clinical-forensic samples suggests that sadistic stalkers constitute approximately 4.7% (of Mullen et al.'s, [2000], predator stalkers) to 12.9% (of Sheridan & Boon's [2002] sample).

***Case management implications.*** These cases need to be taken very seriously because of the risk of physical harm and because of the extreme distress that they generate for victims. The most important steps are (1) to immediately develop a danger management plan for the victim and (2) to explore relocation to a place and a job that the stalker will be unlikely to find. Confronting the stalker with requests to desist is pointless because these will only feed his sense of power and his desire to continue to control the victim. Victims will need as much support as possible to face the hard decisions required for safety, and they will need to understand the limited protection that can be provided by authorities. Until a successful case for incarceration can be made, the stalker is likely to be free and to be using any means at his disposal to find and harass the victim. Overcoming the obstacles to his control becomes a challenge to sadistic stalkers—not a deterrent.

The police need to be made aware, if they are not already, that this type of stalker presents a special challenge. He will have alternative interpretations of supposed stalking events, some that may even cast the victim in the role of stalker. “[The] Sadistic stalker will be likely to: (a) carefully construct and calculate their activity to simultaneously minimize the risk of intervention by authorities while retaining maximum impact on the victim, (b) be almost impervious to intervention since the overcoming of obstacles provides new and potent means of demonstrating the victim’s powerlessness and (c) if jailed, the stalker will continue to harass both personally and vicariously with the use of a network of associates.” (Sheridan & Boon, 2002, pp. 77).

## Conclusions

Do these six types exhaust all possible cases of stalkers? No. They are presented as sufficient to cover the statistically common cases and to provide guidance to police, criminal justice officials, and mental health workers. Refinements are possible in the identification of specific motives and specific features of the history of the relationship between the stalker and his/her victim. Even within the framework of these six cases, it would be a mistake to think that one of these sizes fits in all respects, for the specifics of the case will often require creative interventions by counselors, therapists, and the criminal justice system.

A PCF procedure can be continued to recognize the existence of further real types whose features offer important issues for treatment or case management. Thus as more cases accumulate and the importance of distinguishing between motives such as revenge, control, love, companionship, status-enhancement (“being a somebody”), become clear, the PCF procedure allows a natural elaboration. No claim is made that the current PCF is the one and only useful way of identifying stalker types. The proof is in the pudding and that is in the degree to which it facilitates effective practice both in mental health and forensic contexts.

The characteristics identified to assist in the handling of stalkers focused on four factors: the motives of the stalker, the nature of the prior relationship—if any, the degree of reality distortion involved, and the degree of dangerousness of the stalker. The six types of stalkers identified herein involved different combinations and patterns of these four characteristics, but attention to these will typically provide a sound basis for (a) providing a realistic assessment for the victim of the courses of action available to them, (b) provide law enforcement with differential treatment options (ranging from warnings, educational interventions, protective orders, and arrest), and (c) provide the counselor with a clear focus for treatment planning. The attempt in this paper has been to pull together implications for “best current practices.” Clearly, careful research evaluation is required to determine which aspects of these proposals are indeed effective for victims, the law enforcement community, and mental

health providers. And because of the kinship of the issues identified herein to those in the handling of intimate partner violence, workplace rage, and school violence, we may see an integrative treatment of all of these areas that would lead to innovations in prevention, treatment, and case management

Considerably more could be said about the management of victim distress and about how both mental health professionals and the police can be of assistance to victims (See Davis & Mechanic, 2005). With respect to case management, I recommend the relevant chapters in Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell (2000), Kropp, Hart, Lyon, & Lepard's (2002) chapter in the Sheridan & Boon volume; and Gross's (2000) self help guide, *Surviving a stalker*.

I hope that I have accomplished the four goals that I set out to accomplish: To present six major types of stalkers, to identify the four characteristics of the stalkers and their victims that may serve as linchpins to provide some practical suggestions for case management of stalkers that are relevant to victims, the police, and to the counseling of victims, and finally, to present two treatment descriptions which either directly embodied descriptive psychology's status dynamic, world reconstruction approach or whose procedures seemed almost entirely consistent with a world reconstructive approach. Finally, suggestions for further reading in the case management of stalkers and in advice for victims were made.

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