

## Intimate partner violence and stalking

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## **Chapter 10**

### **Interpersonal Violence and Stalking**

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*“Stalker guilty of stabbing ex-girlfriend to death in 'brutal' attack”, reads the London Evening Standard news headline (Bailey, 2010). This article goes onto describe how Gemma Doorman, 24, was stabbed to death in July 2008, as she left a restaurant in South-West London, by her ex-partner Vikramjit Singh. The ‘frenzied attack’ occurred after months of stalking and harassment, which Miss Doorman had previously reported to the police.*

This is just one example of many worldwide media headlines that depict stories of relationships that have culminated in the murder of one partner. While, not all cases of partner homicide are characterised by stalking and harassment, most victims of stalking know their perpetrator, and in a large proportion of stalking cases the target is an ex-intimate partner (Spitzberg, 2002). Such murder cases provoke questions about why the fatality occurred and whether this arguably foreseeable event could have been prevented. These are questions that many academics and practitioners in the field have endeavoured to answer.

In order to understand why the most severe cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) happen, it is necessary to understand the nature and aetiology of the violence that can occur in intimate relationships. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a comprehensive account of these issues. The aim of this chapter is to provide readers with an overview of the IPV and stalking literatures, through which reference will be made to the most influential research in order to provide a firm foundation for further investigation. The chapter will examine definitions, rates, theories, and typologies of IPV and stalking, before considering the implications that such knowledge has for risk assessment. See also Chapter 3 for a further discussion of this topic.

### **Definitions and Terminology**

In order for professionals to respond to IPV and stalking in an accurate and consistent manner, agreement must be reached about what each term refers to. Definitions determine what an agency will class as IPV or stalking and therefore who they will provide services to, or include in official statistics, that guide policy and practice (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, submitted; Bowen, 2011a).

### **Intimate Partner Violence**

IPV has been increasingly understood as a public matter and social problem since the 1970's (Dutton, 2006). It takes place between members of a couple from various social groups, ethnicities, gender and educational backgrounds and as such cannot be said to be associated with one particular sub-section of the population. Definitions of IPV (of which numerous exist within the literature) share some reference to the different forms of aggression it can encompass. Typically, definitions provide some reference to physical, psychological and sexual aggression, emphasising that IPV should be understood as more than just physical

violence. Some definitions also acknowledge that more subtle ‘controlling behaviours’ should be included in any definition (examples of each form of IPV are provided in Box 1). The importance of recognising controlling behaviours has been shown by research which has demonstrated that they may be a precursor to physical aggression and are likely to co-occur with it; that some women report them to be more damaging than physical aggression; and that they are unlikely to diminish over time (Graham-Kevan, 2007).

| Box 1: Examples of the different forms of Intimate Partner Violence |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Form of Intimate Partner Violence                                   | Explanation  | Examples of behavioural acts  |
| Physical aggression/coercion  | To make physical contact with the intent to cause pain or injury to another, or to coerce that person into doing something against their will  | Push, slap, grab, bite, punch, pull hair, kick, hit with an object, choke, use a weapon against person  |
| Sexual aggression/coercion  | To use physical force or verbal coercion to make sexual contact with a person against their will   | indecent assault, using physical force to force other into sexual intercourse, use verbal threats or intimidation to coerce other in sexual intercourse   |
| Psychological aggression  | To expose an individual to behavior that may cause psychological harm (i.e., harm to intellectual or mental capacity that results in impairment of a persons ability to function (Browne & Herbert, 1997))                 | Insult, name calling, humiliation tactics, threats to harm other or others loved ones, destroy property   |
| Controlling Behaviours  | Behaviour enacted with the aim of controlling or monitoring another person’s actions. While all of the above categories may be described as controlling behaviours, often more subtle behaviours are overlooked - examples | Control another’s money, tell the other they are confused or have ‘got it wrong’ when they have not, follow another person without their consent, check another person’s email or telephone calls without their consent, make the |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | here are concerned with such subtle behaviours | other jealous on purpose, limit another's access to friends and family, monitor another's movements and contact with others in some way |
|--|--|---|

In any definition, particular attention should be paid to the terminology that describes the relationship status and gender of the couple involved in the violence. Much empirical research has determined that violence can occur in dating relationships in young couples (e.g., Bowen, 2011c; Ko et al., 2008), in estranged couples (e.g., Dutton & Kerry, 1999), and in same sex relationships (e.g., Nowinski & Bowen, 2011; Renzetti & Miley, 1996). A broad definition should therefore include current and former marital, dating and cohabiting relationships and heterosexual and same sex couples. Hence terminology should be inclusive of all relationship types and be gender neutral in description.

The adjectives used to describe the violence must also be given consideration in any definition. Words that allude to severe and chronic violence (such as *battering*) apply to only a minority of all cases and therefore exclude less severe and frequent assaults. The spectrum of acts recognised as IPV will be limited where such restrictive terms are used in a definition. Academics working in the field of aggression research have suggested that distinct terms should be used to coin the different severity of acts, with *aggression* used to refer to acts which are less likely to result in injury (e.g., slapping) and *violence* used to highlight acts more likely to result in injury (e.g., choking and stabbing) (Archer, 1994; 2000).

For the purpose of consistency, this chapter will use the term *IPV* to refer to acts of aggression or violence that take place between intimate partners. The definition of this term is understood to be "...any form of aggression and/or controlling behaviours used against a current or past intimate partner of any gender or relationship status" (Dixon & Graham-

Kevan, 2011, p.1) to reflect this problem can occur between people of any gender, in any relationship status and be of varying forms and severity.

## **Stalking**

The term 'stalking' is a colloquial term adopted as a consequence of a number of high profile cases in which individuals experienced repeated criminal behaviour and/or harassment (Budd & Mattinson, 2000). Implied by the term 'stalking' are predatory pursuit behaviours (Westrup & Fremouw, 1998), and while following may constitute a proportion of the behaviours identified as stalking, the actual range of behaviours that fall within this term is much broader. Sheridan and Davies (2004) suggest that an infinite array of behaviours may be defined as stalking because definition of the phenomenon is in fact driven by victim perceptions. Indeed, this is one reason why there are alternative terms used within the literature. For example, 'obsessional harassment' (Zona, Sharman, & Lane, 1993) and 'harassment' and 'obsessional following' (Meloy & Gothard, 1995) are frequently used to refer to a range of behaviours, which might include, but are not limited to, pursuit or following behaviours.

Contention surrounds the use of the word "obsessional" which suggests that it is the presence of repeated intrusive thoughts about the target, ultimately directly cause stalking behaviour. This assumption is yet to be scientifically scrutinised. It has also been argued that both the terms stalking and following do little to differentiate between a range of behaviours and one specific action (Westrup & Fremouw, 1998). The term harassment is also used within the literature to reflect persistent unwanted behaviours that may or may not elicit feelings of fear, which is identified by some as the defining feature of stalking behaviour.

A final term within the literature that has been inaccurately used to refer to these behaviours is 'erotomania'. Erotomania is a psychiatric disorder that is classified within the

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association. (2000), as a subtype of delusional disorder in which the patient has ‘delusions that another person, usually of higher status, is in love with the individual’ (American Psychiatric Association, 2004, p. 328). However, as many individuals who are diagnosed as erotomaniac also have other psychiatric conditions, it is unclear the extent to which erotomania actually leads an individual to engage in stalking behaviour. Indeed, few stalkers are ever diagnosed as erotomanics, and fewer erotomanics engage in stalking which directly challenge the relevance of this disorder to the phenomena of stalking (Westrup & Fremouw, 1998).

In the 2004/05 British Crime Survey, stalking was defined as “two or more incidents that caused distress, fear or alarm of obscene/threatening unwanted letters or phone calls, waiting or loitering around home or workplace, following or watching or interfering with or damaging personal property by any person including a partner or family member” (Finney, 2006 p. v). This definition is very broad, and shows that the majority of stalking behaviours would not be unwanted within different contexts, for example in some contexts having someone wait for you outside your home would not be viewed as fear provoking. In addition, the definition emphasises that for stalking behaviour to occur, the victim must feel fearful as a result.

Consequently, this definition highlights the extremely subjective nature of stalking which makes it unlike any other form of crime (Fox, Nobles, & Fisher, 2011). Individual perceptions of what constitutes threatening and fear-inducing behaviour will differ, consequently if a target does not formally recognise they are being stalked, then stalking is not actually happening. However, research indicates that there is considerable consistency in people’s perceptions of what does and does not constitute stalking behaviour (e.g., Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001; Sheridan, Gillet, & Davies, 2000; 2002). These difficulties aside,

across the terms and definitions of stalking offered in the literature, it is generally agreed that stalking constitutes a range of unwanted and repeated actions directed towards a specific individual that induce fear or concern for safety or which induce harassment (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Sheridan & Davies, 2001; Westrup & Fremouw, 1998). Consequently this is how stalking will be defined for the purpose of this chapter.

### **Lifetime and 12-Month Prevalence Rates of Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking**

Typically, surveys around the world have attempted to determine lifetime, and 12-month, rates of IPV and stalking by asking a representative sample of a community to self-report their experiences of victimisation. Accurate prevalence rates for a country can only be determined by surveying nationally representative community samples (Gelles, 1990), as this approach is more stringent than using official police arrest or conviction records which notoriously underreport actual figures (Bowen, 2011a). However, this methodology is not without its problems.

### **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**

Results from surveys with nationally representative samples show IPV to be an international social problem of significant magnitude (e.g., the World Health Organisation [WHO], 2005). However, while many surveys utilise nationally representative samples, their design is informed by a feminist perspective, which assumes that IPV constitutes men's violence to women (not women's violence to men; see the Theories section for a more in-depth description of the feminist perspective). Consequently, surveys designed from this perspective necessarily only ask females about their victimisation (e.g., WHO, 2005; Moracco, Runyan, Bowling, & Earp, 2007). This one-sided approach limits knowledge to female victimisation, and prevents learning about male victimisation, female perpetration and reciprocal aggression (where both partners aggress against one another).



Crime surveys typically identify rates of victimisation in nationally representative samples via self-report methods. The British Crime Survey (BCS) identifies victimisation rates of different types of crime for large samples of men and women aged between 16-59 resident in households in England and Wales. The BCS gathers information about incidents that are not reported to the police, which is particularly important for intimate violence as it notoriously underreported to the authorities (Bowen, 2011a). Since 2004 the BCS has consistently included a module on “intimate violence”, which respondents’ complete alone. Approximately 25,000 respondents completed the module in the 2008/09 BCS. Findings showed that around 13% of men, and 24% of women, reported they had been a victim once or more of any “partner abuse” (non-physical, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking) ever since the age of 16. Furthermore, around 3% of men and 5% of women reported this had happened in the last 12 months (Smith et al., 2010).

Figures from crime surveys typically show higher rates of female victimisation, which are often taken as support for a feminist explanation of IPV. However the context of crime surveys must be considered. People, particularly men, do not typically interpret relationship aggression as a criminal behaviour or view their experiences as violent (Straus, 1999; Povey et al., 2008). Thus, cueing respondents to think about IPV as a crime is not conducive to accurate reporting and hence, crime survey figures should be interpreted with caution.

Surveys that ask representative community samples of men and women about their experiences in the context of conflict in relationships are scarce (Santovena & Dixon, 2011). One exemplar survey that adopted this methodology was the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS; see Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1985). The NFVS’s were conducted in 1975, and again in 1985, with representative US community samples. The surveys measured rates and severity of partner aggression using a systematic measure,

the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), which is a self report tool initially developed in the late 1970's and which has since been revised to the CTS2 (see Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman, 1996). Importantly the CTS/CTS2 set IPV in the context of conflict in the relationship (rather than crime or violence), which is arguably more conducive to honest reporting than the aforementioned contexts (Straus, 1999). Respondents are simply asked to report on a range of predetermined behavioural acts that both they, and their partner, have engaged in during times of conflict with each other.

The CTS2 contains five subscales that distinguish rationale tactics, physical assault, psychological aggression, sexual coercion and injury. Furthermore, minor acts of physical and psychological aggression, sexual coercion and injury are differentiated from more severe forms of these acts, hence less severe acts of physical assault that might not otherwise be considered as constituting IPV (e.g., slapping, pushing, grabbing) are also measured. The behavioural acts listed form clearly defined behavioural categories. Therefore, results can be systematically compared within and across samples. Indeed, this tool allowed the systematic collection of large data sets from which international prevalence and incidence rates have been calculated. This methodology found approximately equal rates (around 12%) of physical partner aggression perpetrated by both sexes in a 12-month period, across time. In terms of lifetime prevalence 28% of respondents reported physical victimisation in 1975 and 22% in 1985.

### **Assessment of stalking behaviours**

A range of methodologies has been employed to assess stalking (Fox, Nobles & Fisher, 2011), and akin to the issues previously discussed in relation to estimates of IPV prevalence, even when survey methods have been used, considerable variations in prevalence have arisen. For example, according to the 2004/05 British Crime Survey just under a quarter of women (23%) and 15% of men reported having experienced stalking since the age of 16.

However, when based on reported victimisation in the last year, the previously identified gender differences disappeared, with 9% of both men and women reporting such experiences. As mentioned previously, stalking was defined through a range of repeated explicitly identified behaviours.

Based on experience since age 16, 33% of women and 25% of men reported that they had been stalked by a partner; 5% of men and women reported being stalked by a family member; 34% women and 35% men reported being stalked by someone else known to them and 42% women and 48% men reported being stalked by a stranger. Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple stalking experiences within the sample. These data show that women are more likely than men to report experiencing stalking perpetrated by an intimate partner, whereas men are more likely to have been stalked by other acquaintances or strangers. In general though, stalking by a stranger seems to be most common for both genders, although women are most likely to be victims overall.

Data from North America present prevalence estimates that are markedly lower than those reported by the British Crime Survey. Estimates of stalking prevalence from the Injury Control and Risk Survey between 2000 and 2003 revealed that 4.5% of adults reported ever having been stalked. Women were more likely than men to report this experience (7% vs. 2%). The low prevalence rates reported are likely due to the definition of stalking used. Participants were asked: “Have you ever had someone besides bill collectors or sales people follow or spy on you, try to communicate with you against your will, or otherwise stalk you for more than one month?” and if respondents said yes, they were then asked to select whether the most recent experience was “nothing to be concerned about, annoying, somewhat dangerous or life-threatening” (Basile, Schwan, Chen & Saltzman, 2006, p. 173). Only respondents who selected the latter two options were then classified as victims of

stalking (Basile et al., 2006) in order to reflect behaviours that were both unwanted and fear provoking.

These data broadly support the findings of an earlier meta-analysis of 103 studies, by Saltzberg (2002) who found that the average prevalence of stalking was 23.5% for women and 10.5% for men, and on average, the stalking occurred over a two-year period. The majority of victims across studies were women (75%) and the majority of perpetrators were men (79%). In just under half of cases (49%) the stalking occurred within the context of an intimate relationship. These findings must be qualified by the possibility of response and reporting bias associated with gender, which also affects estimates of stalking victimisation and perpetration in the same way that it affects estimates of partner violence. That is, men are less likely to report their own victimisation, as they are possibly less likely to feel the necessary extent of threat in order for such experiences to be valid (Sheridan et al., 2002; White, Kowalksi, Lyndon & Valentine, 2002).

### **Intimate Partner Stalking**

Within the international literature, it has been claimed that victims of stalkers are most likely to be current, or former intimates or spouses (Melton, 2000). Although the British Crime Survey reported above suggests that this is not necessarily the most frequently cited form of stalking in general, the apparent gendered nature of intimate partner stalking appeals to researchers of violence against women more broadly. Intimate partner stalking has been isolated as a ‘special case’ of stalking for five main reasons (Logan & Walker, 2009), as shown in Box 2.

## **Box 2: Stalking within the context of an intimate relationship**

- Relationships in which stalking arises, are characterised by a range of violent and abusive behaviours (e.g., Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Davis, Ace & Andra, 2000). Indeed, Douglas and Dutton (2001) have even gone so far as to suggest that the stalking of current or former intimate partners, incorporating psychological and/or controlling behaviours as outlined in Box1, is a form of IPV itself. In a study of 120 male IPV perpetrators, it was found that 30% reported having also stalked their partners (Burgess et al, 1997). In addition it has been found that between 30% and 65% of stalkers had engaged in violence towards the intimate partners that they had more recently stalked (e.g., Kienlen et al, 1997).
- It enables the perpetrator to draw upon a wider range of stalking tactics that are influenced by their intimate knowledge of the victim, in particular their knowledge of specific fears, concerns, and vulnerabilities (Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan & Williams, 2006; Sheridan & Davis, 2001).
- It increases the likelihood that perpetrators will both threaten the victim and use violence (James & Farnham, 2003; Rosenfeld, 2004). In addition, it has been found that violence is more likely to be used by stalkers who first threaten to use it, than those who do not (Brewster, 2000). As typified in the opening case study, stalking is also a risk factor for intimate partner homicide. For example, McFarlane et al (1999) reported that 76% of partner homicide victims had been stalked prior to being killed.
- Such stalking is likely to have been initiated during the course of the relationships rather than once the relationship has terminated (Mullen et al, 2000). Depending on the study, between 25% and 80% of female intimate partner stalking victims reported that the stalking started during the relationship (e.g., Hackett, 2000; Logan, Cole et al., 2006; Melton, 2007). Stalking during a relationship has been found to lower the likelihood of a woman leaving (Logan, Cole et al., 2006). In addition however there is evidence that being stalked after the cessation of a relationship may place a victim at increased risk of ongoing and increased severity violence (Logan et al., 2004; Melton, 2007).
- The occurrence has been found to be associated with greater psychological distress for victims, ranging from anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, symptoms (Logan, Walker, Jordan & Leunkenfeld, 2006) to symptoms of psychiatric diagnoses and severe depression (Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan & Freeve, 2002). Moreover, should stalking occur within a previously violent intimate relationship,

this has been found to further compound the emotional distress caused to the victim (e.g., Brewster, 2002).

Researchers vary in the methodology they employ in conducting surveys to determine rates of IPV and stalking. It is therefore difficult to compare rates across surveys, countries and time. Consequently, it is important to carefully consider the methodology used in studies before generalising figures to represent the population at large. Agreed definitions, terms and consistency in methodological approach will allow researchers to produce comparable studies and resultant prevalence and incidence rates. However, considering large scale self report community studies (e.g., the National Family Violence Survey) it seems likely that an estimate between 20% and 30% for the lifetime prevalence rate for men and women experiencing *physical* violence is a sensible approximation (Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2010), and between 10% and 35% for the lifetime prevalence of stalking. In addition, the evidence suggests considerable overlap between these two phenomena.

### **Risk Factors and Theories**

Theories serve to explain how it is that a phenomenon occurs and identifies the circumstances and factors that lead to its occurrence (i.e., risk factors). A broad range of risk factors have been implicated in IPV and stalking, and are typically identified through comparing the characteristics of individuals who engage in the behaviour of interest to those who do not. In contrast to the empirical evidence base relating to IPV, the stalking literature is less comprehensive and our knowledge about the characteristics of stalkers arises either through sampling clinical groups that have been arrested and which are likely to have greater levels of psychopathology, or university students.

A useful heuristic framework within which to consider the role of risk factors is that provided by the Nested Ecological Model (Dutton, 1985), adapted from Bronfenbrenner's

(1979) Ecological Developmental Model. Within this framework risk factors are identified by their relative proximity to the individual. As such, risk factors are conceptualised as occurring at one of four levels: *Macrosystem* (broad societal/cultural influences); *Mesosystem* (social group influences, such as church/school); *Microsystem* (interpersonal relationship influences), and Ontogenetic (individual developmental/internal influences). Box 3 provides examples of identified risk factors for IPV and stalking within each level of this model.

| <b>Box 3: Examples of risk factors associated with male perpetration of intimate partner violence and stalking</b> |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Ecological levels  | Intimate partner violence risk factors   | Stalking risk factors  |
| Macrosystem  | Patriarchal values/systems   |  |
| Mesosystem   | Unemployment<br>Peer group has pro-violence norms  | Unemployment   |
| Microsystem  | High relationship conflict<br>Low relationship satisfaction<br>Controlling behaviours within intimate relationship   | Unstable personal relationships<br>End of relationship<br>High relationship conflict<br>Psychological abuse of partner prior to break-up<br>Controlling behaviours within intimate relationships<br>Social isolation                 |
| Ontogenetic  | Witnessing IPV as a child<br>Child abuse<br>Borderline personality traits<br>Antisocial personality traits<br>Drug use/abuse<br>Alcohol use/abuse<br>Pro-violence attitudes<br>Social problem solving deficits<br>Negative attitudes towards women<br>Jealousy<br>Poor impulse control | Substance abuse<br>Schizophrenia<br>Borderline personality traits<br>Narcissistic personality traits<br>Attachment<br>Erotomantic delusions<br>Low empathy<br>High trait anger<br>Jealousy<br>High education<br>Poor impulse control |

Box 3 shows that a very broad range of factors have been implicated in both IPV and stalking, and that these two behaviours appear to be indicated by some common risk factors,



which is not surprising given the occurrence of stalking within intimate, and previously violent intimate relationships. Despite the implication of multiple risk factors, the most popular theoretical explanations of IPV have traditionally focused on the role of single factors (see Bowen, 2011a, for a more in-depth examination of relevant theories of IPV).

Feminist theories have to date been most influential in accounting for IPV, despite the fact that little empirical support currently exists for this position. This perspective views IPV as predominantly acted out by men toward their female partner, caused by societal rules that support male dominance and female subordination (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllö, 2005). Hence, 'patriarchy' is viewed as a direct cause of men's violence toward their female partner (Bell & Naugle, 2008). While, it is accepted by the feminists position that some women may be violent to their male partner, it is purported to predominantly occur out of self-defence or retaliation to his aggression (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Respect, 2008). Consequently, violence towards women is viewed as special, unrelated to other forms of violence or crime (Dixon, Archer & Graham-Kevan, in submitted). Therefore, in the long term feminism seeks to change the root cause of men's violence to women, by overturning patriarchal social structures, to eradicate violence to women (Dutton, 2006). Despite these admirable aims, little empirical support for the expected strong relationship between patriarchy and IPV (e.g., Sugarman & Frankel, 1996; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004).

In fact research which tests the hypothesis that either gender may be perpetrators and/or victims of IPV has found that men and women engage in violent acts at approximately equal rates. This gender symmetry is shown in the results of the National Family Violence Survey (Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1985), described above and in other gold standard pieces of research, such as Archer's (2000) meta-analysis. Archer examined gender differences in the perpetration of heterosexual IPV in 82 independent

studies that examined rates of physical violence by men and women. In total a combined data set of 64,487 people was produced for analysis. Results showed that women were slightly more likely than men to use physical aggression against a partner (Cohen's  $d = -0.05$ ), yet overall women were slightly more likely to be injured ( $d = +0.15$ ) and require medical treatment for their injuries than men ( $d = +0.08$ ). He also reported that the sample studied was an important moderator of effect size, with younger and non-clinical samples more likely to be in the female direction. For example, studies using shelter samples produced very high effect sizes in the male direction, community and student samples were slightly more likely to be in the female direction. Such research findings highlight that men *and* women can be both aggressors and victims of physical violence within their intimate relationships, which undermines the feminist perspective as a complete explanation for IPV.

An equally popular theory that has been applied to understanding IPV is Social Learning Theory (SLT, Bandura, 1977). According to SLT, violent and abusive behaviours and pro-violence beliefs are learned during childhood through either the direct experience or observation of these behaviours and attitudes modelled by others, most typically parents. The likelihood that such behaviours will be exhibited depends on whether they are perceived to be reinforced. Woodin and O'Leary (2009) note that behavioural learning is deemed to occur through processes of both classical and operant conditioning, and also through cognitive mediational processes (p. 46). At its most basic then, an SLT account of IPV predicts that violence between parents observed by their children, leads their children to use violence in intimate relationships - the so-called intergenerational transmission of violence which is the most widely tested assumption of the SLT account of IPV. However, the resulting empirical evidence suggests that this association is not straightforward.

For example, in a 20-year prospective study of 582 youths and their mothers, Ehrensaft et al. (2003) examined the prospective role of childhood disruptive behaviour

disorders, childhood neglect and abuse, parenting practices, and inter-parental violence as risk factors for adult IPV. It was found that a diagnosis of childhood conduct disorder was the single most important risk factor for IPV, increasing the odds of it occurring by seven times. However, exposure to inter-parental violence and childhood abuse both remained significant predictors even when childhood conduct disorder was entered as a predictor in the model, although conduct disorder partially mediated the effect of child abuse. The results of this and other prospective longitudinal studies (e.g., Capaldi & Clark, 1998; Lussière, Farrington & Moffitt, 2009; Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi & Silva, 1998; White & Widom, 2003) confirm that the relationship between exposure to violent models during childhood and adult IPV is weak, and is influenced by a range of additional factors, most notably childhood conduct disorder and antisocial personality traits. Along with feminist theories, SLT has been a major influence on the skills-based components of treatment programmes, and many current programmes combine feminist ideology with cognitive-behavioural skills training to a greater or lesser degree (Bowen, 2011a).

Attachment theory is a well-developed theory of early development, which focuses on the formation of early relationships, and the implications of how these relationships are formed for later childhood and adult functioning. In particular, the attachment model proposes the need for infants to have a secure base in the form of one or more preferred caregivers, from which they can safely explore the world, and to which they can return for safety if required (Bowlby, 1988). As a consequence, during healthy development, attachment behaviours such as crying, clinging, and seeking contact lead to the development of attachments or emotional bonds between the child and parent (Goodwin, 2003) and serve to attain proximity to the caregiver in times of fear, anxiety and stress. Romantic attachment patterns have been proposed to hold particular promise in the study of IPV, as attachment regulates proximity and distance in intimate relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Box 2

describes the four adult attachment styles have been identified (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

**Box 4: Attachment styles in brief**

Attachment reflects two underlying dimensions – *positivity/negativity about oneself self*, and *positivity/negativity about others*.

- Those with a **secure attachment style (positive view of self and others)** are theorised to be comfortable with intimacy and are also autonomous in intimate relationships.
- Those with a **dismissing attachment style (positive view of self and negative view of others)** are compulsively self-reliant and typically minimise the importance of intimate relationships. Individuals who view themselves negatively, but others positively.
- Those with a **preoccupied attachment (negative view of self and positive view of others)** style exhibit high levels of dependency on others, and are preoccupied with the importance of intimate relationships from which they gain a sense of self-esteem. Those with a **fearful attachment style (negative view of self and negative view of others)** are afraid of rejection which manifests itself as a fear of intimacy. Consequently, these individuals avoid social interactions and intimate relationships.

It has been theorised by Dutton (1995, 1998, 1999) that adult IPV reflects insecure attachment styles (dismissive, preoccupied, fearful) developed during childhood, and is associated with abandonment anxiety and anger. Indeed, there is evidence that IPV men are more likely to be characterised by insecure than secure attachment styles (e.g., Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski & Bartholomew, 1994).

In addition, several personality constructs and styles of interpersonal functioning consistent with insecure attachment characteristics have also been found to be prevalent in samples of IPV perpetrators. For example, Dutton et al. (1994) found that fearful attachment styles were related to anger, jealousy and trauma symptoms. Murphy, Meyer and O'Leary

(1994) found that maritally violent men reported higher levels of interpersonal dependency, dependency on their intimate partner, and lower self esteem than did maritally distressed but non-violent, and maritally satisfied and non-violent men. Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart and Hutchinson (1997) found violent men to be more likely characterised by preoccupied and disorganised attachment patterns, jealousy and higher levels of dependency on their partners than non-violent men. Studies have also identified that insecurely attached violent men are also more likely to engage in controlling behaviours, and that this combination predicts the frequency and severity of violence used (e.g., Mauricio & Gormley, 2001).

Given the description of stalking behaviour, its association with IPV and the identified risk factors in Box 2, it is perhaps not surprising that stalking has been conceptualised as a form of attachment behaviour. Indeed, an attachment framework is the only coherent theoretical account of stalking to emerge within the literature to date, although others have argued for a feminist account due to the high rate of controlling behaviours associated with intimate stalking, and indeed the purported use of stalking as a means of control (e.g., Melton, 2000). Meloy (1996) first argued that obsessional following was ‘proximity seeking toward an angry or frightened object that usually responds adversely to the act of pursuit’ (Meloy, 1996, p.150) which uses explicit attachment terminology. There is evidence that stalking behaviours among university students are associated with anxious (preoccupied) attachment, although this seems to be mediated by anger-jealousy (Davis, Ace & Andra, 2000). A more recent study has confirmed the association with both anxious (preoccupied) attachment style and anger (Patton, et al, 2010). Although an attachment approach makes intuitive sense when explaining stalking within the context of intimate relationships, Patton et al (2010) also argue that attachment insecurity may play a role when stalking occurs generally in circumstances where proximity to the target is desired, regardless of whether the target is previously known to the perpetrator.

The benefit of these theories, over the feminist perspective, is that they do not assume the gender of perpetrator or victims; rather it is possible for men or women to be victims or perpetrators. Hence, surveys and empirical research that are influenced by such a gender inclusive approach may feasibly set out to test a two tailed hypothesis about the gender of perpetrators. Empirical research suggests that various theories can account for variance in the aetiology of IPV and stalking and that collectively several theories can a better explanation, rather than any one theory in isolation (O’Leary, Smith Slep & O’Leary, 2007).

### **Subtypes of perpetrators**

#### **Intimate Partner Violence**

Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated the presence of different types of offenders, each with different aetiology. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) proposed a hypothetical typology of IPV men living in the community in their review of the literature. They proposed that three dimensions of severity of marital violence, generality of violence, and psychopathology/personality disorder could differentiate between three types of perpetrators. These were named the Generally Violent/Antisocial, Dysphoric/Borderline, and Family Only perpetrators and were proposed to account for 25%, 25%, and 50% of male IPV perpetrators in the community respectively. These three types are shown in Box 5.

#### **Box 5: Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart IPV subtypes**

- The **Generally Violent/Antisocial** perpetrator has multiple risk factors that increase the likelihood they will act with moderate to severe levels of violence within and outside their family unit. They have the highest levels of exposure to violence in their childhood; extensive involvement with deviant peers; high impulsivity, substance abuse, criminality, antisocial personality and narcissism; negative attitudes toward woman; attitudes supportive of violence in general; lack conflict resolution

skills in a wide variety of situations; and have a dismissive attachment style. They display low levels of empathy; psychological distress, and depression alongside moderate levels of anger. They are likely to engage in violence to a partner in situations where they feel the need to keep or regain control, for example if they feel disrespected or rejected.

- The **Dysphoric/Borderline** perpetrator may also act out moderate to severe violence, primarily aimed at family members. They will most probably have experienced some family violence in childhood and involvement with deviant peers; demonstrate the highest levels of psychological distress, emotional volatility, depression, and anger; hold moderate attitudes supportive of violence, and hostility to women; display low-moderate levels of empathy, criminality, and substance abuse; moderate impulsivity; and low marital communication skills. They display characteristics of borderline personality and preoccupied or fearful attachment. As such they will likely react with anger if they feel rejected, abandoned or slighted. Estrangement or threats of separation may result in stalking or harassment in attempts to maintain or re-establish the intimate relationship.
- The **Family Only** perpetrator is violent to family members and acts out with low severity and frequency. He demonstrates the least criminal behaviour and psychopathology and evidences similar risk to non-violent men. Their violence is likely to result from an accumulation of low level risk factors such as some exposure to family violence in childhood, poor communication skills with their partner; mild impulsivity; dependency on their partner, alcohol and drug abuse.

The typology has gathered support from several empirical studies which find evidence for some or all of the proposed subtypes (e.g., Boyle, O’Leary, Rosenbaum & Hassett-Walker, 2008; Chase, O’Leary & Heyman, 2001; Huss & Langhinirichsen-Rohling, 2006; Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman & Stuart 2000). Limited research has examined whether similar typologies of female perpetrators exist, however work that has finds similarities in US, and UK, non-lethal female offenders (e.g., Dixon, Fatania & Howard, submitted; Babcock, Miller & Siard, 2003). Further research into female perpetration is warranted.

### **Case Study 1: intimate partner violence**

David, a 23-year old man was convicted and sentenced for the attempted murder of his girlfriend, Heather. A prison psychologist has met with David in order to understand the aetiology of his offending in more detail.

In terms of risk factors David was unemployed at the time of the offence, described a childhood with an absent mother and abusive and rejecting father. He explained that he did not care that his mother was not around as “women are useless, in fact there are only a couple of things women are good for – cooking and sex” (indicating negative attitudes about women). He explained how he spent a lot of time on the streets from a young age mixing with his peers on the local estate. They would steal cars, commit burglary, and set fires among other antisocial acts (deviant peer group). David has abused alcohol and drugs intermittently from a young age (substance abuse) and has a long list of criminal convictions for offences such as robbery, drug dealing, burglary, violence to intimate partners, acquaintances and strangers, affray and criminal damage. His file reports a psychiatrist diagnosed him with conduct disorder in adolescence and that he has attitudes supportive of violence.

David had been co-habiting with Heather for three months. David was very controlling over Heather’s movements, restricting her from seeing friends, controlling all her earnings and displaying persistent jealousy over her friendships with other people, especially men (controlling behaviours). Heather had previously confided in a police officer that she thought he was going to kill her.

On the day in question, David had been drinking heavily. David found out that Heather had left the house without his permission. He reports he was angry with her for daring to disrespect him in this way – he remembers thinking, “I will show her who’s boss”. The police statements report that he punched her repeatedly in the face and body and stamped on her head. A neighbour heard Heather’s initial screams for help, who called the police. Heather was hospitalised in intensive care for three weeks. Immediately after the assault David left the house and returned to the pub to continue drinking. He reports feeling no remorse for his actions and stated that he was angry that she had put him in prison and that she “better watch her step when he gets out.” He also reported that she deserved it and that he was glad that he had taught her a lesson not to mess with him.

The prison Psychologist concluded that David evidenced characteristics similar to a **Generally Violent/Antisocial** offender.



## Case Study 2: Stalking

Simon a 36-year old man was convicted and is awaiting sentence for the harassment and threats to kill his ex-girlfriend, Sarah. The probation Psychologist has met with Simon in order to understand the aetiology of his offending in more detail, to inform the judge's sentencing decision.

In terms of risk factors Simon was employed at the time of the offence, described a childhood during which he experienced prolonged physical abuse from his mother and sexual abuse from his father. In addition, Simon reported that his father was also abusive towards his mother, and that he frequently witnessed these incidents. He explained that for many years he experienced flashbacks concerning these incidents, and that such was his fear of his parents he would frequently wet the bed as a young child (trauma symptoms). He ran away from home at the age of 13, and was subsequently placed in Local Authority Care after reporting his experiences. Simon has spent much of his life in intimate relationships but reports that he has difficulty trusting anyone, particularly women. He reports that even when relationships seem to be going well he believes that his partner is unfaithful, and cannot trust them when he can't see what they are doing. Simon claims that these feelings preoccupy him constantly and that regardless of what his partner says or does to try and reassure him, nothing seems to make him feel better. Simon has a criminal record, which comprises mainly convictions for harassment and criminal damage, all of which focus on partners or ex-partners.

Simon had been co-habiting with Sarah for three years before Sarah ended their relationship some five years ago. When they were together Simon was very controlling over Sarah's movements, needing to know exactly where she was going and who she was going to be with. He also displayed persistent jealousy over her friendships with other people, especially men (controlling behaviours). Sarah had never made any complaints to the police about Simon's behaviour.

Sarah has been gathering evidence regarding her harassment by Simon during the course of the last five years, ever since their relationship ended. The evidence under consideration indicated that Sarah had received more than fifty threatening letters, hundreds of seemingly anonymous threatening emails and, for the last six months, a wreath of roses once a month with a doctored photograph depicting her violent death attached to it with a 'date of execution' highlighted.

## Stalking

Given the previous discussion of the application of attachment theory to stalking behaviours, it is not surprising that stalking within intimate relationships has been identified as falling into the **Dysphoric/Borderline** subgroup of IPV perpetrators (Dutton & Kerry, 1999) (see Box 2). However, despite the potential relevance of anxious (preoccupied) attachment to all forms of stalking, considerable attempts have also been made to identify subtypes of stalkers. In contrast to those identified within the IPV literature, stalker subtypes are

typically identified by the characteristics of their victims. A potentially useful typology has been refined by Zona, Palarea, and Lane (1998). They identified three stalking types as shown in Box 6.

**Box 6: Zona, Palarea, and Lane (1998) stalking typology**

- **Erotomaniac** stalking is conducted by individuals who hold the delusional belief that the victim, who is unattainable to them, loves them. The stalking behaviours are therefore used as extreme attention seeking behaviours in order to make the target aware of their existence. Typically this occurs when the target is a member of the perpetrators social network and is more likely to occur in female stalkers who pursue high status males with whom they have no previous relationship.
- **Simple obsessional** stalking typically arises either from an intimate relationship or from an acquaintance known through work or professional setting. Motives within these two subcategories have been identified as either the desire to maintain or re-start an intimate relationship, or vengeance for a perceived act of mistreatment (which Simon from Case Study 2 clearly fits).
- **Love-obsessional** stalking occurs when the target is known to the stalker, but there is no previous intimate relationship between them. Such a target might include public figures with power and/or status or celebrities.

Classifications of stalkers, as shown in Box 6, have been criticised in the literature due to the vagueness with which subtypes are identified (e.g., Westrup, 1998) and their basis in clinical samples that are unlikely to be representative. However, taken together such evidence about the heterogeneity of IPV and stalking perpetration supports the need for a multi-factor framework to guide understanding of these problems. Indeed, this is important as some research suggests different types of men will benefit from different types of intervention (e.g., Saunders, 1996).

**Implications for Practice: Risk Assessment**

Risk assessments are undertaken in many walks of life to determine the level of risk that an identified threat poses. In the case of IPV, risk assessments are carried out by numerous types of professionals (e.g., police, psychologists, social workers, independent domestic violence advocates) to understand the risk of harm (usually categorised at high, medium or low risk levels) that an individual perpetrator poses to their current or ex-intimate partner. Such assessments are useful in a number of domains such as in safety planning for victims or other family members, developing a treatment plan and evaluating post treatment risk. The validity and reliability of risk assessments is therefore of importance if professionals are to predict the likelihood of harm posed to a victim with a good degree of accuracy.

Risk assessment has been attempted using various methods of clinical, actuarial and structured professional judgement. A clinical approach to risk assessment relies on the professionals experience only; it is not guided by any framework and as such has been found to be open to many biases and less accurate than actuarial approaches which derive risk factors through empirical methods and use cut off scores to indicate risk levels. However, the actuarial method is not without criticism, for example it has a heavy reliance on static factors that cannot change over time resulting in a perpetrator unable to reduce their assigned risk level, as such structured professional judgement tools have been offered as a compromise. This method provides a guide or framework, developed from the empirical literature, that professionals can systematically follow to draw conclusions about risk (see Bowen, submitted; Nicholls, Desmarais, Douglas & Kropp, 2007 for a detailed discussion).

This evidence-base has been instrumental in developing risk assessment tools that can estimate risk of harm or lethality from an intimate partner. Various actuarial and structured professional judgement tools exist, examples of these area the: *Spousal Assault Risk Assessment* (Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1999); *Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk* (Kropp, Hart & Belfrage, 2004); *Ontario Domestic Assault Risk*

*Assessment* (Hilton et al., 2004); and Domestic Violence Screening Inventory (Williams & Houghton, 2004). While, the *Danger Assessment-Revised* (Campbell, Webster & Glass, 2009) has been developed specifically to identify women who are at risk of very severe and lethal partner violence. Only one formal assessment of risk for stalking – the guidelines for *Stalking Assessment and Management* (Kropp, Hart & Lyon, 2006) - has been published and draws upon the structured professional judgement approach to risk assessment (detailed in Bowen, 2011b).

While, the majority of risk assessment tools are developed from studies that have examined men's aggression to a female partner (and not female heterosexual or same sex aggression) they do all assess the presence of multiple factors in a perpetrator's or victim's life, and as such have drawn on the evidence derived from different theoretical perspectives rather than reliance on one perspective. This allows for a comprehensive and thorough risk assessment, which is necessary if the cause of the problem is to be understood properly and the type of perpetrator identified which will necessarily inform treatment and/or management strategies.

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## **Summary**

- It is evident that IPV and stalking are international social problems of significant magnitude that can occur independently or co-occur. Regardless of the survey design used to estimate prevalence rates it is clear that this violence negatively affects a considerable percentage of those examined.
- Consensus on the magnitude of the problems and which sex is primarily affected remains uncertain to date due to differences in understanding about the nature and aetiology of the problems. However, the evidence base shows a gender-inclusive approach to investigating both is needed
- Research into the risk profiles of perpetrators shows that multiple factors provide an explanation for both IPV and stalking and that subtypes with different profiles of

aetiological risk are evident, although further investigations into typologies of IPV women and stalking are clearly needed.

- Collectively, the body of empirical evidence discussed here has led researchers to develop tools that can aid the comprehensive assessment, prediction and prevention of IPV and stalking. Such systematic approaches are necessary if the prevention of fatalities, such as that described in the introduction of this chapter, are to be achieved.

**Essay/Discussion questions:**

‘Multifactor theories provide the best explanation for the aetiology of intimate partner violence and most accurately inform risk assessment’. Critically discuss this statement using the evidence base.

‘Intimate partner violence and stalking are heterogeneous crimes and this should be taken into account during assessment and/or treatment of offenders’. Critically discuss.

Critically evaluate the claim that erotomania is the basis of all stalking behaviours.

Critically evaluate the claim by Douglas and Dutton (2001) that stalking should be considered a form of domestic violence.

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This is a review paper that provides a really useful overview of the issue of stalking and how conceptually it represents an extension of domestic violence behaviours for some individuals.

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This is a book that provides an overview of intimate partner violence from an evidenced based perspective.

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This is an empirical study that tests the validity of the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) typology of male intimate partner violence perpetrators.

Westrup, D., & Fremouw, W. (1998). Stalking behaviour: A literature review and suggested functional analytic assessment technology, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 3, 255-274.

This is a literature review which focuses on stalking as a unique phenomena providing a clear chronological account of the literature, as well as proposing the use of functional analysis in both assessment, treatment and research to clarify the nature of stalking behaviour.

## **Glossary**

**Attachment theory:** Attachment theory is a well-developed theory of early development, which focuses on the formation of early relationships, and the implications of how these relationships are formed for later childhood and adult functioning.

**Intimate partner violence:** physical, sexual, psychological aggression and/or controlling behaviours used against a current or past intimate partner of any sex

**Stalking:** a range of unwanted and repeated actions directed towards a specific individual that induce fear or concern for safety or which induce harassment