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STALKERS: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

By

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B.A., Indiana University, 2011
M.Ed., University of Louisville, 2014

A Dissertation
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University of Louisville
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A Dissertation Approved on

December 6, 2018

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ABSTRACT

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Bethany L. Keller

December 6, 2018

Stalking became a prominent term in U.S culture in 1990 after a celebrity was murdered by a stalker in 1989. While media portrays stalking as a violent crime, often directed towards celebrities and prominent political figures, this is a much more common occurrence than people are aware, most often directed at women and perpetrated by men. Stalking often consists of the milder end of the continuum of behaviors, such as spying and leaving gifts for the target, and is often perpetrated by an individual the target knows, such as an acquaintance of an ex-intimate. Forty-eight percent of stalkers fall in a category described as engaging in mild behaviors for the purpose of obtaining a desired relationship. Stalking can have deleterious effects on the target, regardless of the severity of the behavior. It affects the target, as well as third parties close to the target, both mentally and physically. The current study utilized a mixed methods approach to examine the impact of empathy, self-esteem, and anxious attachment on the engagement of milder stalking behaviors. Findings show that most stalking behaviors are significantly predicted by lower levels of empathy. Higher levels of anxious attachment and lower self-esteem were also shown to be related to engaging in several stalking behaviors. Qualitative results tended to be consistent with facets of Relational Goal Pursuit Theory

and suggested that those who engage in stalking behaviors might experience difficulty with perspective-taking and lack awareness of their own behaviors.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Stalking has emerged as an area of interest in the literature over the past two decades, gaining popularity in the criminal, social, and psychological realms in the 1990s after the celebrity Rebecca Schaeffer was murdered by a stalker in 1989 (West & Friedman, 2008). The murders of five women in Orange County who had been stalked by former boyfriends or spouses (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002) also piqued interest. California, where both of these events took place, was the first state to pass an anti-stalking law in 1990, and in a mere 3 to 5 years later, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had criminalized stalking behavior (Amar, 2007; Miller, 2012). In 1996, the U.S. Congress passed the federal stalking law (Tjaden, Thoennes, & Allison, 2002). “Stalking” became an established term in scientific literature in 1990, and research studies finally started to gain speed in 1995 (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003).

Twenty-six years after “stalking” became a recognized term in the United States, research on this topic continues to grow and is expanding to include many topics related to stalking. Due to the infamous incident that prompted stalking research and the lens through which media portrays this phenomenon, stalking was primarily associated with celebrities in the public eye for a while and thus not seen as a legitimate concern for non-celebrities. Research, however, has shown that stalking dates back much before Rebecca Schaeffer, and is a much more common occurrence among the general population.

This chapter will be discussing the academic literature on stalking in two main sections: the research on victims of stalking and the research on the stalkers themselves. However, the majority of the research on both the victims and the stalkers has been conducted through the perspective of the victim. This chapter will outline: (a) prevalence, (b) the debate on the definition of stalking, (c) effects on the victims or targets, (d) theoretical perspectives, (e) stalker typologies, and (f) behaviors. Based on theoretical underpinnings, this study will focus on stalkers' cognitive process throughout the course of the stalking experience, specifically honing in on levels of empathy and self-esteem or self-views in order to gauge how those thoughts inform the development of the stalking experience.

Victims

Prevalence

When the phrase “violence against women” is uttered, one is typically referring to either intimate partner violence or sexual violence from a non-intimate, such as rape (Garcia-Moreno, Pallitto, Devries, Stockl, Watts, & Abrahams, 2013). The United States Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women considers stalking as a crime that is included under the category “violence against women,” however this is not a phenomenon that often comes to mind. Amar (2006) showed that stalking is actually more common than other crimes, stating that women are three times more likely to be stalked than raped. According to one of the largest studies on stalking to date, one in twelve women reported having been stalked at some point during their lives (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) was done through random telephone calls of 8000 U.S. women and 8000 U.S. men ages 18 and

older. Results showed that 1% of the women and 0.4% of the men surveyed reported being stalked at some point during the last year, with 8% of those women and 2% of those men reporting being stalked at some point during their lives (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, 2000a). These percentages and prevalence ratings only include what would be considered criminal cases of stalking since the research study adhered to a strict definition of stalking based on statutes that exist among the states. In order to count as a stalking victim in this study, participants had to respond “yes” to experiencing one of eight stalking behaviors, indicate that the behavior(s) happened repeatedly (more than once), and endorse feeling “very frightened,” or “fearing bodily harm.” According to the percentages resulting from this study, 1,006,970 women and 370,990 men are stalked annually; however, more recent data show that 7.5 million people age 18 or older are stalked annually in the U.S. (Black et al., 2011). The NISVS was a random-digit-dial telephone survey of 14,155 individuals nationally using both landline and cellphone numbers. In order to be considered stalking cases, victims had to report experiencing repeated stalking tactics and feeling very frightened by these tactics.

Prevalence of stalking has been shown to increase as criteria for fear decreases (Budd & Mattinson, 2000). When the definition of stalking is loosened to feeling “somewhat frightened” or “a little frightened” by the stalker’s behavior, 12% of women and 4% of men meet the criteria for being stalked at some point in their lives (Basile, Swahn, Chen, & Saltzman, 2006; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In a study conducted by Fisher et al. (2002), the annual prevalence rates jumped to 6% when the definition was relaxed to “somewhat” or “a little” frightened, which is more on par with the stalking that most women experience. Davis & Frieze (2000) posit that the discrepancy between

prevalence rates in the National Violence Against Women Survey study and other studies is due to the fact that 60% of the people who self-classified as stalking victims did not meet the fear criterion of the behavioral definition used. The average estimate of stalking across gender is about 5% (Douglas, 2001) or about 5.9 million individuals per year (Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009).

The Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) study is one of the largest to date, but their methods excluded individuals living in institutional settings, such as college students in dorms (Fisher et al., 2002). Many studies have examined prevalence rates, but as of late, college campuses have been a primary source of interest in the stalking literature. Even though Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) might not have captured the experience of college women, they still found that the majority (52%) of victims are in the range of 18 to 29 years old. Haugaard and Seri (2003) similarly reported that victims tend to be disproportionately younger women in their late teens and early 20s. Victimization rates specifically for those young adults attending college appear to be significantly higher than those of the general U.S. population (Campbell & Moore, 2011). Several studies have backed up these findings, showing that 13 to 40% of college women are affected by stalking, indicating that college campuses are prime environments for this type of perpetration (Amar, 2006, 2007; Bjerregaard, 2000; Fisher et al., 2002; Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker., 1997; Haugaard & Seri, 2003; Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000; Miller, 2012).

Many more studies have suggested that younger women experience stalking more commonly (e.g., Amar, 2006; Campbell & Moore, 2011). One study categorizes victims as women under 55 years of age who are white, unmarried, and employed (Basile et al.,

2006). Another study agrees that the majority of stalking victims are white, and adds that they are also usually in their early 20s, with a mean age of 23, and have a father whose education level is some college or more and a mother whose education level is high school or less (Coleman, 1997). The skew toward young women could be because younger individuals, especially those who grew up in the 1980s and '90s, when stalking started to gain recognition, are more familiar with and aware of this phenomenon, and thus tend to define their experiences as stalking more often than older individuals (Davis & Frieze, 2000; Tjaden et al., 2002; Schaum & Parrish, 1995). Amar (2006) states that stalking often appears among highly educated victims, which can help explain why stalking is more prevalent on college campuses. It is also hypothesized by more conservative observers that victims tend to live alone and engage in more behaviors that enhance risk, such as engaging in casual sex and drinking (Fisher et al., 2002).

As demonstrated by many of these prevalence ratings, women are more often victims of stalking (Basile et al., 2006), while men are often seen as the perpetrators of stalking cases. Prevalence rates for women who are stalked in their lifetime range from 8% to 16% (Budd & Mattinson, 2000). The reverse happens as well, but is much less commonly seen in the literature. Prevalence rates for men who are stalked in their lifetime range from 2% to 7% (Budd & Mattinson, 2000). A couple of studies found that 81% of reported stalking incidents were perpetrated by men (Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Spitzberg, Cupach, & Ciceraro, 2010) and another found that 97.6% of the stalkers in their study were male (Fisher et al., 2002). College students in general often endorse engaging in stalking behavior as well. For example, 99% of individuals in one sample reported committing at least one type of stalking behavior as assessed by the Unwanted

Pursuit Behavior Inventory (e.g., unwanted phone calls, unsolicited in-person conversations, following) after the termination of a dating relationship (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2000). Other studies have suggested that 8% of college students self-report engaging in intrusive contact (Haugaard & Seri, 2003) and that 40% of college students perpetrate (de Smet, Uzleblo, Loeys, Buysse, & Onraedt, 2015). These percentages range up to 75% of undergraduates who endorse engaging in one or more stalking behaviors at least occasionally and 47% who endorse engaging in those behaviors repeatedly or frequently (Dennison & Stewart, 2006).

Studies either primarily focus on clinical samples or college samples. Clinical samples make up only a few of the stalking cases, as they are much more violent and pathological than most cases of stalking. College samples experience significantly more stalking cases than the general public and can look different based on the environment of the college campus; however these environments house primarily younger individuals who are highly educated, who are more prone to stalking. The current study was interested in examining a generalizable sample of participants by looking at both college and community populations and excluding the severe or violent clinical cases that could skew the study to less accurately represent the more common stalking experience. Since the current study was interested in the stalker's perspective, the sample consists of self-identified men (who indicate experiencing romantic interest in women) as they are more likely to be the perpetrator in stalking women.

Most of the prevalence rates reported above are based on U.S. statistics as much research has been conducted on prevalence rates in the U.S, both as a whole and by state (Black et al., 2011). Research on stalking is also heavily dominated by Caucasian

populations. However, research has expanded to other countries, such as Australia (Dennison & Thomson, 2000, 2002; McKeon, McEwan, & Luebbers, 2015); Canada (Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006); the United Kingdom (Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001a, 2001b; Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012); Korea (Gu & Lee, 2016); Finland (Bjorklund, Hakkanen-Nyholm, Sheridan, Roberts, & Tolvanen, 2010); Armenia, Egypt, and Indonesia (Sheridan, Scott, & Roberts, 2016); India (Jaishankar & Kosalai, 2007); Italy (Maran, 2014), Japan (Chapman & Spitzberg, 2003); Austria (Hirtenlehner, Starzer, & Weber, 2012); Portugal (Ferrelra & Matos, 2013); Scotland (Morris, Anderson, & Murray, 2002), and Trinidad (Jagessar & Sheridan, 2004). Not all of these countries yet recognize stalking as a criminal offense or even use the term “stalking,” but the behaviors exist nonetheless. Sheridan, Scott, & Roberts (2016) showed that the rate and experience of stalking vary per country based on culture and experience of gender empowerment, but the idea of stalking as a phenomenon primarily exists in English-speaking countries (Dressing, Kuehner, & Gass, 2006; Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2001).

Definition of Stalking

Stalking is difficult to define and appears on a continuum from mild behaviors (e.g., calling, texting, sending gifts, knowing schedules) to more severe behaviors (e.g., making threats, engaging in physical violence or destruction). It can be conceptualized as a continuum from normal but persistent courtship behaviors to various forms of harassment ending in violent stalking (Davis & Frieze, 2000). Because of this, various researchers have come up with alternative terms to capture different types of obsessional behaviors along this continuum, such as “criminal harassment” (Douglas, 2001), “pre-stalking” (Emerson, Ferris, & Gardner, 1998), “obsessive relational intrusion” (Cupach &

Spitzberg, 2004), “unwanted pursuit” (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000), and “obsessional following” (Meloy, 1996). The most commonly used alternative terms in the literature are “unwanted pursuit behavior” (UPB) and “obsessive relational intrusion” (ORI). Obsessive relational intrusion is defined as engaging in unwanted, persistent attempts to achieve a relationship that the target does not accept or does not wish to continue (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). De Smet et al. (2015) posits that any relational intrusions that do not necessarily meet the fear or threat threshold of the legal definition of stalking (and are mostly aggravating and annoying), and are exclusively driven by intimacy motives are labeled as either ORI or UPBs. Much of the literature, however, does not delineate the terms and recognizes all behavior along the continuum as “stalking” (Duntley & Buss, 2012). The term “stalking,” however, excludes those individuals who mean no harm or do no harm, or who stop their pursuit after the target indicates that the pursuit is unwanted. Both ORI and UPB capture more of the mild end of stalking behaviors, and Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) show that often severe stalking begins as obsessive relational intrusion by individuals who desire to pursue an intimate relationship with the target.

UPBs are activities that continue ongoing and unwanted pursuit of a romantic relationship between individuals who are not currently involved in a consensual romantic relationship with each other (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). These UPBs often lead to negative outcomes, such as more severe forms of stalking, but also can sometimes lead to positive outcomes that reinforce the pursuit behaviors. Davis, Ace, and Andra (2002) actually found in their study of college students that a pattern of multiple breakups/reunions in a relationship contributed to stalking in their sample. UPBs, like all

stalking behaviors, exist along a continuum of mild courtship persistent behaviors to more severe behaviors. However, Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2000) found that intimate relationship stalkers seem to be more motivated by their need to continue or reestablish their relationship (related to intensity and characteristics of romantic love) than by their level of psychopathology than traditionally thought. The cases that are motivated by love or a desire to reestablish a relationship, then, are less likely to engage in severe behaviors that would hurt the target. This is especially true of the non-criminal populations. Much of the earlier research on stalking looked specifically at criminal or forensic populations, which exhibit more severe stalking behaviors and different traits than more common stalking seen on college campuses and in the community. Very few cases of stalking are criminalized as compared to the prevalence of stalking at large (Dressing, 2006). Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) further suggest that the stalking definition that includes crimes actually excludes much of the stalking that women experience. Other research shows the motivation mainly as being retaliation or revenge or from feelings of anger or jealousy, wanting to hurt and being deceived, or because of a need to establish or regain control, but these behaviors typically exist in cases on the more severe end of stalking. The current study is interested in the milder end of the spectrum, including ORI and UPBs which are primarily motivated by a desire for a relationship. However, the study uses the term “stalking” interchangeably with ORI and UPBs.

There is no universal definition of stalking among the 50 United States, which means that the “burden” of recognizing criminal stalking falls on the victim (Campbell & Moore, 2011). It is a victim-defined crime because many stalking behaviors are commonly associated with and seen as indistinct from traditional culturally-accepted

courting behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). A large part of this is due to the fact that stalking can often times appear benign to observers. In fact, what criminalizes the stalker's behavior is not strictly the behaviors themselves, but rather the victim's interpretation of it (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b). The victim's reaction to the behaviors is the key here since what could appear harmless to others might be terrifying to the victim. Stalking behaviors often have specific meaning that is only understood between the perpetrator and the victim (Draucker, 1999). Therefore, this distinction between what is culturally acceptable and what is illegal is fuzzy and blurred. Davis and Frieze (2000) conducted a study among college students to attempt to find that line between courtship behaviors and stalking. Stalking often begins as persistent courtship and then escalates into something more. Research has shown that most victims do not recognize the behavior as stalking in the beginning, but could initially be flattered or see it as romantic, and then, when looking back on the behavior, see it as stalking (Brewster, 2003; Emerson et al., 1998; Melton, 2000; Haugaard & Seri, 2003). Cultural courtship scripts that portray men as dominant and women as submissive may also prevent women from seeing intrusive pursuit behaviors as problematic (Dunn, 1999). Davis and Frieze (2000) stated that the research on stalking cannot be limited to only the legal definition but that researchers must look at courtship persistent behaviors and milder forms of stalking (i.e., ORI and UPBs) to fully understand the phenomenon.

Another area of research interest is the perception of the community as to what constitutes stalking and the role of official intervention. A study done by Cass in 2011 shows that participants saw stalking as including some sort of physical pursuit, an invasion of privacy, being persistent in attempts, and delivering threats. The authors

pointed out that even though the scenarios they presented to participants met the legal definition of stalking, several participants did not see the case as stalking simply because it was not physical in nature. A study conducted in the UK, however, found that “even when there was no explicit evidence of intent to cause harm or fear to the target, and even when the target did not in fact experience any fear or harm, but rather an invasion of privacy, the behavior was still perceived as stalking” (Dennison and Thomson, 2000).

A universal definition in the research literature on stalking does not exist. Also, different individuals have varying views of what stalking really is. The entire experience of the stalking case lies in the eye of the beholder. Many studies use the victim’s perspective or the community’s perspective to study stalking, but this study sought to focus on the stalker’s perspective in order to gain a more accurate view of this phenomenon.

Laws

Due to the discrepancy in how stalking is viewed and the lack of clarity surrounding the definition of stalking, the laws vary between state to state and country to country. Kentucky has reportedly had the highest incidents of stalking in the United States (Black et al., 2010) and was the last state to put into effect protective orders for stalking cases. Kentucky recently passed a law on January 1st, 2016 that now allows individuals to obtain protective orders for stalking. Stalking as defined in Kentucky refers to an intentional course of conduct that a) is directed at a specific person or persons, b) seriously alarms, annoys, intimidates, or harasses the person or persons, and c) serves no legitimate purpose (KRS 508.130). As a testament to the growing recognition of stalking, Stalking Awareness Month was established nationally in January 2004 to increase the

public's understanding of stalking and to help develop and implement responses to the crime, such as strengthening law enforcement's response to the crime.

All 50 U.S. states have passed laws criminalizing stalking, as well as several other countries including England (Dennison & Thomson, 2002), Australia (Dennison & Thomson, 2000), and Canada (Douglas, 2001). England does not use the term "stalking" legally, but they have laws for putting people in fear of violence and for causing harassment or distress (Dennison & Thomson, 2002). By the year 2000, all U.S. states had their own anti-stalking laws, varying from state to state. In 1996, President Clinton signed a bill validating nationwide restraining orders and extending protection to family members of the victims and the Interstate Stalking Punishment and Protection Act, making it a crime to cross state lines with the intention to stalk a victim (Davis & Chipman, 1997; Dietz & Martin, 2007). Since not all states' stalking laws are equal, some studies have discussed the nuances present and the role that fear and intention play in the different laws. In 1998, 32 of the United States included a requirement in their laws of the intent to instill fear in the targets, and 14 of those states that did not require the intent of fear did require the stalking to be done purposefully. Twenty-six of the states required the target to fear death or bodily injury, five states required fear of physical safety, and 14 states protected against fear such as emotional distress (Dennison & Thomson, 2002). Only six of the states did not require fear in their anti-stalking statutes. Whether stalking-type behaviors are only illegal when the perpetrator intends to cause harm or fear, and/or causes harm to the victim are issues that fuel the debate on stalking legislation in Australia and the U.S. (Dennison & Thomson, 2000). The existing laws on stalking have provided some confusion for academic research and have created the problem of

narrowing the scope of stalking cases, ignoring an entire phenomenon that does not exist in this category.

Fear

Dietz and Martin (2007) claimed that “of all violent crimes against persons, only stalking requires victims to say they feel fear or threat for their experience to qualify as having been a victim (as compared to rape, robbery, domestic violence, assault, and murder).” In the U.S., in order to warrant a legal response, the case has to meet three conditions, which are a) the perpetrator repeatedly following or harassing the victim, b) the behavior being unwanted by the victim, and c) the victim experiencing threat, as evidenced by admitting to feeling fearful (e.g., fear for one’s life, safety, or well-being, or the safety of one’s family) (Dietz & Martin, 2007). Some states have required even more, such as North Carolina who required victims to inform the person that the contact was unwanted in order to legally classify as a stalking victim (Bjerregaard, 2002). Dennison & Thomson (2000) looked at Australia’s laws around stalking. Some parts of Australia, like some parts of the U.S. have stricter laws. For example, Victoria requires not only that particular behaviors have been engaged in by the stalker and that the intent to cause harm or fear is present, but also that the victim suffered fear or harm as a consequence of the behaviors. However, legislation in other areas of Australia are different in that the prosecution is not required to prove that the target actually feared personal injury. Western Australia added a “simple offense” where it is only necessary to show that the behavior in question could reasonably be expected to intimidate and that it does in fact intimidate, which Dennison and Thomson (2000) pointed out removes the intent to cause fear or harm and instead constructs it as what a reasonable person would foresee.

The fact that the legal definition requires repeated acts makes the recognition of criminal stalking more difficult because it is not always clear where one incident ends and the next begins. For example, if somebody follows their target for days, that could be considered one incident of following, or it could be considered repeated incidents since it lasted for days. Several studies have examined community perceptions of stalking due to the confusion of specifically what stalking constitutes (e.g., target-victim relationship, fear, threat, repetition) and the lack of incidents that are reported to the police. Cass (2011) reports that fear being felt by the victim was the most inconsequential factor in the labeling of a vignette as stalking. The community at large tended to view stalking as physical in nature, persistent, involving threats, and more likely involving strangers or acquaintances. Since stalking exists on a continuum, the fear requirement limits the scope of this phenomenon and excludes many experiences. The confusion exists in the academic literature, and even in community perceptions. By requiring the presence of fear, laws are not taking into account individual differences, case-by-case distinctions, and more importantly for this study, the occurrence of milder forms of pursuit, such as ORI and UPB, which are still distressing for the individuals engaged in the experience. The laws surrounding fear make it difficult for individuals who are experiencing distress from ORI or UPBs to seek help with their situation.

Reporting

One area of research has been dedicated to examining reporting among stalking cases. The majority of individuals who are stalked do not seek legal intervention or law enforcement. Studies show that some stalking cases are reported to the police, but percentage rates of cases that are reported are well below the rates of incidents that occur.

Over several studies, 55% of women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998), 2/3 of college stalking victims (Bjerregaard, 2000), 12% of self-identified victims (Campbell & Moore, 2011), 41% of female and 37% of male victims (Cass & Mallicoat, 2015), and fewer than 50% of stalking cases (Davis & Chipman, 1997) are reported. These are all examples of significantly low reporting rates. In Campbell and Moore's (2011) study, over half of the sample decided not to contact law enforcement about their stalking experience even though they perceived a sense of danger from their stalker.

One reason for the low numbers of victims who contact the police is that victims might not have the access to legal resources because the legal definition of stalking is not met (Amar, 2007). As noted previously, the fear and/or threat requirements are sometimes difficult to meet. Another reason is that victims could be frustrated in their attempts to seek help, especially from law enforcement, which can then dissuade later help-seeking (Melton, 2004). All states now offer restraining orders; however, out of a college sample of 581 victims, only 4% sought a restraining order or used some type of formal action offered on their college campus (Fisher et al., 2002). In San Diego, of the 50% of cases that are reported, only 57% of those end in temporary restraining orders (Davis & Chipman, 1997). In another study, 20% of those who reported claimed the police took no action (Baum et al., 2009). Klein, Salomon, Huntington, Dubois, and Lange (2009) found that law enforcement and advocates neglected to recognize the true threat of intimate stalkers. Those who finally summoned the courage to seek help are "forced into hiding, terrorized into silence, and ignored or disbelieved" (Davis & Chipman, 1997). Law enforcement in particular may not take stalking seriously without threatened or other forms of violence and may even ignore stalking that takes place in the

context of other forms of domestic abuse (Mechanic, 2002). Other studies found that even when victims sought help (e.g., restraining order or police intervention), it related to a decrease in stalking either not at all or just a little bit (Cattaneo, Cho, & Botuck, 2011) or even escalated the intensity of the stalking (Davis & Chipman, 1997; Meloy, 1997).

Police not taking the case seriously enough has been found to be a significant concern of victims in the literature. The perception is that this type of crime is the victim's problem, and that they are the ones to take care of it and explore their options, such as coming up with additional security (e.g., changing phone numbers, relocating, installing home security) and that they must develop some level of tolerance towards the behaviors (Davis & Chipman, 1997). Some of the most commonly stated reasons for not reporting stalking to police are: thinking the event was not serious enough; thinking of the experience as a "private matter;" recognizing the stalking had not progressed to a physical nature; fearing retaliation from the stalker; experiencing shame or embarrassment; knowing the stalker (compared to the stalker being a stranger); not feeling fear; feeling nothing else can be done to stop the behavior; thinking the police won't believe them or won't think their situation is serious enough; not experiencing a crime, perceived threat, or act of violence from the stalker; and lacking proof of the experience (Campbell & Moore, 2011; Cass & Mallicoat, 2015; Fisher et al., 2002). Even when the case is reported and legal intervention takes place, the stalkers have been shown to be able to circumvent the law and continue the harassment (Draucker, 1999).

Impact on Victims

Impact has been studied in several ways: the actual harm done to the target, harm done to those close to the target and the way victims cope with the stalking behavior.

Harm done to the target will be discussed first. This category can include general disturbance, behavioral disturbance, affective health, cognitive health, physical health, social health, resource changes, spiritual effects, and resilience effects (e.g., experiences that elicit positivity or enhance an appreciation of life) (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Miller, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) in their meta-analysis of 143 studies found three levels of effects (or harm) to targets. First-order effects include the harm to the victim. As a consequence of stalking, targets might notice a decrease in their quality of life. They might experience a loss of property or money as stalkers damage or interfere with their finances. Other relationships in their life might be lost or strained due to isolation or manipulation attempts by the stalker, including relationships with higher powers as their faith and beliefs potentially change. They might notice their patterns of behavior changing, such as engaging in more aggressive tendencies. Stalking has been referred to as “psychological terrorism” because its victims perceive they must be in a constant state of readiness to protect themselves, and they often feel forced to alter their lives (Hall, 1998). Melton (2007) found that “the most common reported negative effect of stalking was related to the mental and emotional impact,” such as feeling scared, depressed, humiliated, embarrassed, distrustful of others, and angry or hateful. Even though some targets report not feeling fear, this does not mean that they are not impacted in some way by the stalker and the stalker’s behavior. The victim can be impacted affectively by experiences of disgust, irritation, and anger (Buss, 2013; Davis & Frieze, 2000; Dietz & Martin, 2007; Lippman, 2015; Meloy, 1997; Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012). The sheer duration in and of itself can wear down a victim both physically and mentally as the average length of stalking is about 2 years (Davis &

Frieze, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007), and can last anywhere from 1 day to more than 20 years (Bjerregaard, 2000; Fisher et al., 2002; Pathé & Mullen, 1997).

Threats, physical violence, and sexual violence are consequences that have been fairly well-studied in the literature (Amar, 2006; Bjerregaard, 2000; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Davis et al., 2002; Douglas, 2001; Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Fisher et al., 2002; McEwan, Mullen, & Purcell, 2007; Sheridan & Davies, 2001; Lau & Davis, 2003). Several cases have been shown to include these severe consequences. The National Violence Against Women Survey reported that 45% of female stalking victims experienced overt threats by their stalkers (Basile et al., 2006; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a), and the National Crime Victimization Survey reported that 21% of victims were physically attacked, 24% experienced property damage or break-ins, and 15% reported an attack on a third party (Baum et al., 2009).

A second-order effect is an impact on the target's relationships with others, such as family, friends, coworkers, romantic partners, and relatives (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

When a person is aware of being followed and aware that friends and possible dates or partners will be subjected to harassment, it inhibits the exploration of their worlds. The fear can lead them to withdraw, isolate, and curtail social activities (Davis, Swan, & Gambone, 2012; Duntley & Buss, 2012) and increase their use of alcohol and other substances to cope with the daily stress of being pursued so persistently (Davis et al., 2012). Part of coercion (of which the stalker engages in) is arranging the social ecology so the target is isolated, which is gained by moving the partner away from family and friends, restricting use of telephones and computers, providing extremely limited

financial resources, and insisting on knowing where the target is at every moment (achieved by surveillance and persistent communication) (Davis et al., 2012).

The target is not the only one affected by stalking incidents – the impact extends even further. Third-order effects include direct effects to third parties (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004), such as the stalker harming the target’s family members, or friends of the target losing that social interaction due to the target withdrawing and isolating him or herself. This category of effects also includes societal effects, such as suspicion and fear of crime (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014).

The other way that victims are impacted is through their use of coping mechanisms in order to deal with the harm that could come from the stalking behaviors. Not only is stalking a victim-defined and –recognized crime, but the problem that comes from the crime is seen as the “victim’s problem” (Davis & Chipman, 1997). The victim is expected to develop tolerance for some of the stalker’s behavior and explore her own options for security and management of the stalking behaviors. One of the most common ways that victims end up coping with the stalking behavior is through avoidance, such as changing their schedule, changing addresses or moving out of town (Davis & Frieze, 2000), unlisting and changing their phone number in order to avoid or deter the stalker and making it harder for the stalker to find them or follow them. Fremouw et al. (1997) found in their study of undergraduates that changing schedules was one of the most common coping strategies, as well as ignoring, confronting, and hanging up on their stalker. Five patterns of coping were identified by Cupach and Spitzberg (2004, 2014) based on Horney’s (1945) model on how humans relate to one another: moving with (efforts to interact with the pursuer), moving against (efforts to harm the pursuer),

moving away (efforts to avoid the pursuer), moving inward (efforts to focus on the self as a way to manage the pursuit, such as taking self-defense classes or attending therapy), and moving outward (efforts to gain the assistance of third parties). Cupach & Spitzberg (2004) identified 491 coping tactics that they compiled from 58 studies. Studies have also shown that most victims told someone they knew about the stalking and engaged in their own actions to try to prevent the stalking. The cases may not always have reached criminal definitions, but it still impacted the victims' lives enough for them to take some sort of action and feel a violation of their lives (Fisher et al., 2002). About one quarter of all victims have also sought counseling because of their stalking experience, and some have bought guns as protection (Davis & Frieze, 2000).

Targets are impacted negatively through either direct psychological or physical harm or through the necessity of coping behaviors that are uncomfortable regardless of the severity of the actual stalking behavior. Targets of stalking experience distress in a myriad of ways. Not only do the milder forms of stalking have negative impact of their own, but they many times are stepping stones to the more severe forms of stalking.

The information gleaned from research conducted to understand the category of victims would be moot without also understanding the role that the stalkers themselves play. This understanding provides a more complete understanding of this phenomenon and allows us as a field to take action. The research on the victims provides reasoning as to why this area is such an important one to address, but the research on the stalkers provides information that allows intervention and helps to hone in on characteristics of the stalker.

Stalkers

Theories

Much of the literature on stalking has emphasized various theories that help to explain this concept of stalking and understand why stalkers do what they do. Some theories that are prominent in the literature include lifestyle-routine activity theory (Fisher et al., 2002), which aims to provide reasons why college students are more often involved in stalking experiences, and evolutionary theory (Duntley & Buss, 2012), which addresses the reason behind why stalking has lasted as a phenomenon for so long. Lifestyle-routine theory suggests that individuals who lead lifestyles characterized by being in close proximity to motivated perpetrators, frequently being exposed to risky situation that could expose the individual to crime, being exposed as attractive targets, and lacking capable guardianship to deter perpetrators (Fisher et al., 2002). According to this theory, college students fit these four lifestyle characteristics due to housing on campus being in close proximity to each other, the tendency to frequent bars and clubs at night, having a predictable routine, and being independent and often living and walking alone. Evolutionary theory explains that humans evolved adaptations for stalking in order to solve mate problems and secure mates and reproduction (Duntley & Buss, 2012). The evolution of these stalking adaptations suggests that stalking is sometimes effective, leading to positive outcomes for the pursuer. These theories describe situations on the more severe end of stalking. Since this study is focused on milder forms of stalking such as ORI and UPBs, this study focuses on constructs from attachment theory, relational goal pursuit theory, and social learning theory.

Attachment Theory. Every individual develops an attachment in infancy dependent on their bond with a primary caregiver. Infants can exhibit three attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A secure attachment is demonstrated when distressed infants successfully rely on caregivers. Both anxious/ambivalent and avoidant attachments are considered to be insecure attachment styles. Infants with an avoidant attachment will show signs of detachment and avoidance when distressed. An infant with an anxious/ambivalent attachment style will show both approach and avoidant behaviors when distressed. These attachment styles become internalized as a working model or schema that guides orientation to attachment figures throughout the life course (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). People are assumed to have a global attachment style, as well as a relationship-specific attachment style that may differ across relationships (Collins & Read, 1994).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) took this theory even further by suggesting four attachment types based on a working model of self and other. According to their model, a secure style consists of a positive working model of self and of other. A preoccupied style is made up of a negative working model of self and a positive working model of others. A fearful-avoidant (i.e., anxious-avoidant) attachment style consists of a negative view of both self and other, and a dismissive-avoidant style is a positive view of self and a negative view of other.

Anxious attachment, including preoccupied and fearful, develops from an inconsistent and intrusive pattern of caregiving, and those with anxious attachment tend to have higher emotional distress and experience anxiety and anger over perceived abandonment (Davis et al., 2012). Anxious attachment is exhibited by obsessively

worrying about such abandonment and loss, yet needing extreme closeness (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Anxious attachment is further characterized by a strong need for reassurance, resentment when their partner spends time away, and chronic worry about the status of their relationship (Dutton & Winstead, 2006). This need for attention and reassurance about their acceptance by their partners makes them prone to coercively controlling behaviors when threatened by real or imagined loss of a partner (Davis et al., 2012), whether they are aware of this controlling stance or not. Follingstad, Bradley, and Helf (2002) found that this attachment resulting from early experiences led to an angry temperament, which led to a controlling style, and ultimately to physical aggression. Since so much of their self-worth and sense of security is tied to their relationship, they are likely to reestablish their relationship through pursuit (Dutton & Winstead, 2006). Anxious, insecure, or preoccupied attachment is associated with jealousy and anger towards a romantic partner, and individuals with this type of attachment style are more likely to engage in physical and psychological abuse, experience jealousy, and exhibit surveillance behaviors (Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000; Guerrero, 1998; Marshall, Bejanyan, Di Castro, & Lee, 2013). Insecure or anxious attachment has been shown to be a predictor of courtship persistence (Guerrero, 1998) and is correlated with more perpetration of stalking behavior after a breakup (de Smet et al., 2015).

Those with anxious/ambivalent attachment in adult romantic relationships described experiencing love as involving obsession, desire for reciprocation and union, emotional highs and lows, and extreme sexual attraction and jealousy (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). A breakup is perceived as a rejection of the perpetrator's identity and self-worth. Relationship dissolution represents one of the most distressing and identity-threatening

events people experience (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Miller (2012) further comments that this rejection prompts action to reclaim the relationship to prove the stalker's worthiness. Preoccupied attachment is associated with rumination about past relationships and the belief that the breakup was a mistake and should be rectified (Barbara & Dion, 2000). The attachment anxiety dimension represents the need for approval from others, the inclination to worry about rejection or abandonment by important others, and to feel distressed when significant others are unavailable or unresponsive. This is the dimension most correlated with unwanted pursuit behaviors (UPBs) and stalking. During times of distress, such as separation, the specific attachment style is activated.

Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2000) stated that those with insecure attachment lack the skills to successfully meet their relationship needs while they are dating and may also lack the skills to endure relationship termination successfully. Preoccupied attachment is associated with problematic separation resolution (Henderson, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1997) as they tend to engage in a pattern of breaking up and getting back together (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994).

According to the research, perpetrators are more likely to have attachment, either preoccupied or fearful. These individuals tend to have a negative view of themselves, experience more emotional distress, obsessive worrying over the relationship, and equate their self-worth and security to relationships. Since relationships termination is already one of the most distressing events people can experience, individuals with anxious attachment experience this rejection as even more difficult based on these characteristics.

They also lack the skills to meet relationship needs or maintain relationships due to their childhood attachment-related experiences.

Relational Goal Pursuit Theory. Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) proposed a theory to explain the phenomenon of stalking. Relational goal pursuit theory hinges on several key concepts including linking, rumination, self-efficacy, and emotional flooding. This theory is built on the premise that relationships can be conceptualized as goals which relationship pursuit is motivated to achieve. Relationship pursuit is any strategic activity designed to reach a relational goal. Obsessive relational pursuers exaggerate the importance of this relationship goal because they believe it is essential to their happiness and self-worth. In a nutshell, the combination of the importance placed on this relationship goal and the frustration with not being able to attain the goal leads to what Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) describe as rumination, rationalization, and emotional flooding or strong negative affect, which contribute to further persistent relationship pursuit.

The first key concept to understand in this theory is that of linking. People tend to create hierarchies of goals, including lower level goals that are easier to attain and, when achieved, are usually building progress toward the attainment of a goal higher up on the hierarchy (Davis et al., 2012). Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) further explain that goal linking is when an individual believes that the attainment of a lower order goal is essential to achieving a higher order goal. In the case of stalkers, they link the lower order goal of intimacy or of being in a specific relationship with the higher order goals of happiness and self-worth. Some beliefs that help to exacerbate this goal linkage are that there are no alternatives (no other relationship prospects) and that there exists a strong

bond or destiny between the pursuer and the target. In the forensic literature, stalkers often appear socially unskilled and to have achieved few satisfying relationships – these individuals believe they have few alternatives and that only one particular person with whom they are trying to establish a relationship can satisfy their needs, thus they rely solely on that particular source for fulfillment (Davis et al., 2012). Goals tend to be abandoned when they are seen as substitutable, lack importance, and perceived to be unattainable and tend to be persistently pursued when seen as attainable, highly desirable, and not substitutable (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Individuals have the natural impulse of escalating their goal-directed behavior when experiencing initial resistance (DiPaula & Campbell, 2002; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). The root motive for the persistent pursuit lies in the pursuer's goal of intimacy remaining unfulfilled, thus the desire to achieve the goal intensifies, and the pursuer may direct more energy toward attaining the goal of being in that relationship (Davis et al., 2012). Rejection fuels the pursuer's effort and desire to meet his/her goal (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). In conjunction with this increased energy and goal intensity, the resistance and frustration behind the difficulty of reaching the goal leads to rumination, which is defined as the nagging and persistent thoughts about an unmet goal (Cupach, Spitzberg, Bolingbroke, & Tellitocci, 2011). The pursuer worries about the consequences of not meeting the goal. Pursuers make dire predictions of the consequences of the goal because of the necessity of reaching the goal on their self-worth. They imagine the sadness, distress, fear, and overall emotional impact that would come from failure and they imagine the immense joy and happiness they will experience once the goal is attained. Rumination continues to persist over time, and any attempt to suppress the

thoughts of the desired partner or relationship results in more intense thought intrusion, which means that goal achievement or abandonment is the only pathway to experience relief from the distress (Davis et al., 2012).

The denial of something so important that one wants so desperately causes immense emotional distress. Interpersonal rejection regardless of the goal linkage to happiness and self-worth elicits emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, shame, jealousy, and sadness. The more pursuers ruminate on their unmet goal of a relationship with the target, the more overwhelmed they feel until emotional flooding occurs. Emotional flooding is when negative thoughts and feelings are absorbing and consuming. A cycle then emerges consisting of negative feelings that serve as a reminder of the unmet goal, which leads to ruminating about the unmet goal, which increases the negative feelings, thus initiating the cycle again.

In order to defend against the devastating consequences of failure, the persistent pursuers rationalize their own behavior, idealize their target and the positive experience that will come from the attainment of their goal, and explain the target's cues in a positive light (e.g., finding evidence of wanted pursuit). The pursuers also inflate their own self-efficacy in being able to attain the goal and outcome expectancies since the attainment of this relationship is of the utmost importance and failure is not an option. They believe the goal is not only desirable and necessary, but they have the confidence that they have what it takes to accomplish the goal and win the desired relationship. Pursuers at that point of persistence are so consumed with reaching their goal that they have tunnel vision and either are unaware of the consequences to or inappropriateness of

their behavior or they do not care because the attainment of the goal is that much more important than battle wounds along the way or what others think.

The theory of relational goal pursuit posits that individuals experiencing jealousy, possessiveness, desperation, insecure attachment, and intense attraction are more likely to engage in obsessive relational intrusion (Davis et al., 2012). Research has in fact shown that these characteristics do tend to predict stalking behavior (Dutton & Winstead, 2006; de Smet, Loeys, & Buysse, 2012). Cupach et al. (2011) tested their theory among 433 college students, ages 18 to 37 who had recently terminated a romantic relationship. They found that rumination and self-efficacy explained most of the variance in mild pursuit behaviors. The predictors varied depending on who initiated the termination. If the participant's partner was the one who wanted to end the relationship, then linking, rumination, and self-efficacy were predictors of pursuit persistence. If the participant is the one who terminated the relationship, linking and rumination were predictors, and if it was a mutual agreement to end the relationship, rumination was the only significant predictor of relationship pursuit persistence. Further, determination to win their partner back, goal linkage, and rumination were the most powerful predictors of all forms of obsessive relational intrusion (ORI) among both those who had rejected their partners and those who were rejected. For those who had been rejected, emotional flooding and intensity also predicted ORI.

This theory overlaps with attachment theory in a couple of ways. According to relational goal pursuit theory, stalkers tend to ruminate about not meeting their goal, or worry about the relationship, which is also a component of anxious attachment. The negative emotions that they either perceive or feel consume them. Those with anxious

attachment have a tendency already to experience more fluctuation in their emotions and experience those emotions more intensely. This theory also emphasizes the importance of the relationship, which, in the stalker's eye, equates to happiness and self-worth. The individuals are thus lacking in self-worth until they can achieve their goal. These individuals most likely have experienced difficulty in achieving relationships in the past and thus feel they have no relationships. They also have the tendency to be socially unskilled and hold onto romantic beliefs toward relationships, such as believing they are destined to be with one person.

Stalking not only has costs and risks for the target, but it has a lot of risks for the perpetrator, so often it is more effective to relinquish the pursuit of someone who is not interested in a relationship and seek potential mates who might be more receptive (Duntley & Buss, 2012). However, Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) propose that obsessive relational pursuers believe having a particular relationship is the key to happiness and self-worth and the pursuers experience frustration when their desired relationship is not achieved and push harder for it. Thus, for some individuals, stalking can make the difference between acquiring a mate or a transient sexual opportunity and being excluded from mating entirely (Duntley & Buss, 2012).

Social Learning Theory. A crime is a social phenomenon that is learned largely by interacting within intimate groups, such as peers, where an actor models and imitates deviant behavior of fellow group members, including their techniques as well as their rationalizations. Since stalking is considered a crime, Fox, Nobles, & Akers (2011) hypothesized that social learning theory could be used to explain this phenomenon. They hypothesized that stalkers imitate the behavior of their peers (or family or media), or in

other words, model the behavior whether this modeling is intentional or unintentional. Some individuals may misperceive stalking as an expression of dedication, loyalty, or love for an individual who has yet to realize their own true feelings. They also experience differential peer association, which in this case is socializing with other individuals that stalk. This is due to a self-selecting bias that takes place when individuals form their social groups and can be either an intentional or unintentional process. These groups tend to have the individual's same biased views toward relationships and gender roles. Both of these views can also lead to stalking behavior. The individual then starts to adopt attitudes that are favorable toward stalking, which corresponds to the social learning theory concept of definitions. Finally, the individual engages in differential reinforcement, which is balancing the risks and rewards associated with the stalking behavior. This differential reinforcement may account for the persistence, as this process continues to take place, and as they believe more and more that the perceived benefits are worth the risk. This leads perpetrators to believe that stalking is sometimes justifiable, which is similar to findings other researchers have found (Cass, 2011; Lippman, 2015; McKeon et al., 2015; Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993). Because of this view, social learning theory indicates that stalkers are likely to rationalize or neutralize their own deviant behaviors and are likely to feel reified by condoning the stalking activities of others.

Findings show evidence of social learning theory describing the act of stalking. Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Rohling (2002) looked specifically at unwanted pursuit behaviors and found that males with a history of parental breakup and separation had the highest means of UPB severity perpetration among a sample that had experienced unwanted termination of a relationship and that experiencing negative parental conflict

were associated with an increased number of unsolicited pursuit. These experiences that they witnessed and were modeled for them corresponded with their own actions in relationships.

Burgess, Baker, Greening, Hartman, Burgess, Douglas, and Halloran (1997) found that childhood physical abuse is a risk factor for domestic violence stalking. Exposure to violence in one's family of origin has also been seen as a predictor of stalking perpetration and victimization (Dye & Davis, 2003; Menard & Pincus, 2012). Exposure to abuse during childhood by either witnessing or experiencing abuse has been shown to be a strong predictor of engagement in stalking behavior (Carr & VanDeusen, 2002; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Rohling, 2002). Social learning theory describes that children learn both by absorbing and processing what they have personally experienced and by direct imitation of others. For example, if they see their parents argue, separate, and/or divorce, they learn that these higher levels of conflict and instability are acceptable and normal, and they are more likely to engage in these behaviors themselves.

Research has previously focused on the intergenerational transmission of relationship instability and the intergenerational transmission of violence, which is based on the social learning theory principle of modeling (and group differentiation) that children who have endured marital conflict or violence are more likely to experience violence and conflict in their own adult relationships. MacKenzie, Mullen, Ogloff, McEwan, & James (2008) provides further support for family of origin impacting future stalking behavior as stalkers recalled parents as being emotionally neglectful and less caring. Tonin (2004) stated that stalkers tended to have overprotective fathers in childhood.

For individuals who lack social skills and experience difficulty in initiating or maintaining relationships, they might resort to watching what others around them are doing, such as peers, parents, or other individuals in their lives who they might look up to. These individuals might also resort to media, such as books, movies, or TV to see how the characters achieve relationships.

Media/Culture

Many researchers have theorized that media has been a major influence in shaping the behavior and “normalization” of stalkers and persistent pursuit. Several popular movies and songs that are enjoyed and taken for granted in our culture actually depict stalking, representing it as normal, romantic, and an acceptable way to show love (e.g., songs such as *Animal*, *Every Breath You Take*, *Latch*, and *Sugar We’re Going Down*, and movies such as *There’s Something About Mary*, *Crazy*, *Stupid Love*, *Love, Actually*, and *Twilight*). This romantic persistence is a quality that has been prized within our culture and celebrated in film and music (Dunn, 1999; McKeon et al., 2015). Many romantic comedies and soap operas portray persistence as an effective way to win the heart of someone you like, equating stalking to love and affection (Brewster, 2003). Western culture has a general belief that if you persist, your efforts will be rewarded, and persistence in romantic pursuit is no different in that it is seen to beat all odds. Social cognitive theory states that behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to be imitated, and that the likelihood a behavior will be modeled increases if the model is perceived to be realistic, similar to the perceiver, or having admirable qualities. Men in our culture, especially men who desire a relationship that they can’t quite achieve, might admire the romantic male characters on television and view their pursuit of love as realistic.

Lippman (2015) found this to be true in her study. Those individuals who watched rom-com portrayals of stalking, and felt the movie was realistic, were more likely to endorse stalking myths or stereotypes (e.g., stalking is romantic).

This cultural script and underlying notion of romance that exists in Western culture might help to perpetuate and explain stalking behaviors (Lee, 1998). These cultural scripts of romantic relationships portray males as the initiators of the early stages of relationship escalation (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996; Vanwesenbeeck, Bekker, & Lenning, 1998). Brewster (2003) plays off of this cultural norm to hypothesize her feminist theory of stalking. Brewster states that the gender-role expectations that have been perpetuated by society reinforce the concept of the male as dominant and the female as subservient. Men are expected and encouraged to aggressively pursue women, whereas women are expected to express their level of interest passively and indirectly (Kim et al., 2007), which establishes a thin and blurred line between heterosexual courtship and stalking (Lippman, 2015; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000).

Another cultural misconception is that when women say “no,” they mean “yes” and are just playing hard to get and thus flirting with the pursuer. The resistance then is seen as something to overcome or persevere through (Lippman, 2015). Stalkers potentially believe that their persistence is truly desired by their target and that the victim’s lack of reciprocation is a “test” (Duntley & Buss, 2012). They might also believe that any attention they are given by the target signals deeper romantic feelings towards them. The feminist theory bases its views on the prevalence rates indicating that the majority of stalkers seem to be male, and the majority of victims seem to be female. The cultural view of stalkers vary based on gender in that male stalkers are often seen as

romantic while women are often viewed as maniacs, thus men are rewarded for their persistence and traditional gendered courtship is reinforced (de Becker, 1997). Based on media and cultural scripts and relational goal pursuit theory, some men may be likely to romanticize relationships, especially less socially adept men who model their courtship after media examples. This depiction of courting in our culture and in movies can make it difficult for stalkers who are more interested in achieving a romantic relationship to understand the discomfort their behavior creates for the target.

Types of Pursuer-Victim Relationship

Research has proposed three types of stalking cases: that with intimates, acquaintances, or strangers (Meloy, 1996). Close to 80% of stalking victims know their stalker in some way (Miller, 2012; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007), indicating that cases involving intimates and acquaintances are most common. The majority of cases involve an intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998), especially as a relationship is breaking up. The cases most likely to be reported as and viewed as stalking cases, however, are those with a stranger. Only 23 participants in the large-scale NVAWS study endorsed being stalked by a stranger (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). These statistics that most stalking cases involve an intimate or acquaintance are echoed throughout the literature. Pathé and Mullen (1997) state that when a behavior is identified as stalking, the majority of victims know their stalker. Dennison and Stewart (2006) found that 49% of the stalking cases in their study were towards an ex-partner, 13% towards a current significant other, and 12% towards an acquaintance. Seventy-seven percent of female victims and 64% of male victims reported being stalked by someone they either knew or had a relationship with in the past (Baum et al, 2009).

Terminated romantic relationships represent the most common context in which stalking occurs (Cupach et al., 2011). For example, in one study, 46% of stalkers pursued a person who ended a romantic relationship while 16% pursued a person who rejected their advances (Dennison & Stewart, 2006). Miller (2012) mention that the largest number of stalking cases develop from pre-existing intimate relationships, and that the more intimate the prior relationship, the longer the stalker is likely to persist. Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2000) reported that typically the victim of stalking cases were once involved in a sexually intimate relationship with the stalker, with the stalking usually occurring after the breakup of the dating relationship. Amar's study (2006) identified their stalker as either a former boyfriend or someone interested in dating them. These same results that stalking usually occurs with an ex-intimate or acquaintance by someone who is interested in initiating or resuming a relationship pervades the stalking literature (e.g., Bjerregaard, 2000; Coleman, 1997; Fisher et al., 2002; Fremouw et al., 1997; Hall, 1998; Logan et al., 2000; Meloy, 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Logan and Walker (2009) focused specifically on "partner stalking" and the distinctions of this form of stalking compared to acquaintance or stranger stalking. The authors pointed out that "partner stalking" provides the more conducive context for stalking because the stalkers intimately know the pursuant, thus, they are aware of this individual's interests, vulnerabilities, schedules, and can easily access information about the partner. Research has been done on the differential effects of various types of stalkers and has shown that ex-partners are actually the most dangerous stalkers and are the least likely to be recognized as engaging in stalking behaviors (Mohandie et al., 2006). There is a very high risk of threats and violence among prior sexually intimate stalkers,

however ex-partners are often not considered as stalkers among those who are affected and laypersons who are witnessing the behaviors (Mohandie et al., 2006). Stalking by ex-intimates poses the greatest risk for violence to the victims (Cass & Mallicoat, 2015; Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011). Regardless of the severity or prevalence of stalking cases involving current or past significant others, research finds that most of these cases go unreported and are viewed by laypeople (and potentially victims) as less severe than cases involving strangers.

Participants in studies seem to consistently identify cases where stalkers were former intimates as less threatening than those where stalkers are strangers to the target (Campbell & Moore, 2011; Hills & Taplin, 1998; Phillips, Quirk, Rosenfeld, & O'Connor, 2004). Dunn (1999) did argue that victims are likely to view stalking behaviors differently on the basis of the stalker's relationship with the victim. This could be partly due to the finding by Langhinrichsin-Rohling et al. (2000) that 99% of individuals involved in the ending of a romantic relationship commit at least one type of stalking behavior. This type of behavior is seen as relatively normal under the circumstances of the dissolution of an intimate relationship. This view has been supported in the literature. When college students were surveyed, they responded that the cases involving ex-intimates were less likely to be reported to authorities because these stalking behaviors are "not out of the ordinary when people have a breakup" (Cass & Mallicoat, 2015). Scott, Lloyd, & Gavin (2010) found that cases with strangers compared to ex-intimates or acquaintances were more likely to be identified as stalking and perceived as serious. Cass (2011) showed the same with cases involving strangers and acquaintances being more likely to be seen as stalking than cases between ex-intimates.

Even police officers and advocates share this view of stalking, neglecting to recognize the true threat of an intimate stalker (Klein et al., 2009).

Reasons given for this discrepancy is that behaviors by ex-partners could be used as attempts at closure or reconciliation (Cass, 2011) and could be perceived as innocent, normal courtship behavior (Dunn, 2002). Stalking behavior has in fact been shown to be effective, at least in terms of securing a relationship (even if transient) with the target. Several studies have found that targets do end up in relationships with individuals who have stalked them (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Cupach et al., 2011). Some partners have had on and off again relationships with their pursuer and some have even married their pursuer. Engaging in this behavior does work at times for stalkers in achieving the function of their pursuit. About 5 million couples or 10% of all currently married couples in the U.S. have experienced a separation and reconciliation in their marriage, and about 40-60% of dating relationships have reconciled (Cupach et al., 2011). Dissolution and reconciliation is a common experience for many couples, and for several, this happens not just once, but multiple times with the same partner.

The most common forms of stalking occur with individuals known to the victim since these individuals possess more knowledge about the target. These tend to be the most dangerous stalking cases and the most misunderstood. Cases with strangers are actually very rare. Due to the prevalence, misperception, and potential severity of stalking cases with a known individual, the current study focuses primarily on the two types of victim-pursuer relationships that include a perpetrator known to the victim: ex-intimates and acquaintances. About 80% of stalking victims knew their stalking in one of

these capacities (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). These cases are also less likely to be considered clinical cases as less pathology is associated with these perpetrators. Most individuals at least initially view these cases as relatively normal, so the behaviors tend to congregate on the milder end of the stalking spectrum.

Motives

Many people in the field have tried to understand who stalkers are and what motivates them to engage in stalking behavior, which has led to several studies attempting at typologies. Miller (2012) summed up the motivations as fitting into a delusional belief for a romantic destiny, a desire to reclaim a prior relationship, a sadistic urge to torment victims, or a psychotic over-identification with the victim and a desire to replace him or her. Research has shown that the term “stalking” tends to refer to behaviors motivated more by fear and threats, and that unwanted pursuit behaviors or obsessive relational intrusion is motivated more by a desire for a relationship. There is no agreed upon way of classifying what we know about stalkers thus far as several studies have attempted to create typologies. Two prevalent categorizations in the literature have been presented by Davis and Chipman (1997) and Mullen, Pathé, and Purcell (2000).

Davis & Chipman (1997) developed three broad categories of stalkers. The erotomaniacs falsely believe the target is in love with them. This comprises the least amount of stalking cases at 10%, and includes those who select a complete stranger as the target (random-targeting stalker), which also includes pursuing a celebrity or public figure. These stalkers tend to rarely engage in face-to-face contact and believe they are loved by the object of their delusion and tend to capture the clinical and forensic cases of stalking.

Another type of stalker described by Davis & Chipman (1997) is the “simple obsessional,” which comprises 50% of cases. This general typology typically goes unreported but is the most injurious and usually involves ex-partners. Stalkers in this category are typically targeting intimate partners and are interested in control. The individuals who fit this category seem to lead a normal life from all outward appearances and the stalking results from a power struggle of the insecure individual after a perceived rejection by the partner.

Another type of stalker posited by Davis and Chipman (1997) is the “love obsessional.” They describe this type of stalking as the “middle ground of the stalking spectrum,” and it makes up about 43% of stalkers. These stalkers engage in “harassment” behaviors intended to make the target aware of the stalker’s existence. This individual’s goal is to become the most important thing in the target’s life and tries to make this wish come true. The casual acquaintance stalker perceives and builds a fantasy relationship from a passing casual interaction with the target.

These typologies all represent characteristics of a more malicious stalker who is on the severe end of the stalking spectrum. Other typologies that represent this end of the spectrum are the “rejected” and “resentful” stalkers described by Mullen et al. (2000). These individuals want payback or revenge who desired a relationship but were hurt due to either a hit to their ego or an inability to move on from the relationship. The “sadistic” stalker derives pleasure from terrorizing their victim and sits at the extremely severe end of the spectrum, including pathology and describing clinical cases of stalking. However, some stalkers might have motives that are not hurtful, such as the “rejected” male who passionately loved the object of his unrequited affection and seeks to establish that

desired relationship. Additionally, not all stalkers aim to seek control or make sure the target is aware of the stalker's existence. Some stalkers engage in more covert behaviors (e.g., following the target) which would not lead to an awareness of the stalker's existence, and in fact, the target possibly may never know they are being stalked (Duntley & Buss, 2012). These stalkers are not represented here.

Mullen et al. (2000) suggest a couple more types of stalkers that get closer to describing the milder stalker. The "incompetent suitor" is obsessed with the object of their affection, but are seeking a date or sexual encounter, not necessarily a relationship. This type of stalker is said to typically be a socially inept male. The "intimacy seeker" desires a relationship with their object of obsession, convinced that he and the target are destined to be together and that the target is secretly in love with him. He takes every reaction as proof of her love for him. Both of these typologies include aspects of theories outlined in this paper, such as being socially inept, obsessing over the relationship, believing that he and the target are destined to be together, and taking every reaction as proof that she is in love with him. However, these typologies do not align completely with the main theories of interest in this study. These two typologies are very specific but some stalkers might be a mix of the two. For instance, a socially inept male who obsesses over a relationship and believes that the object of his affection is the one he is destined to be with.

These typologies are based on cognitions that stalkers possess regarding the motives behind their behaviors. Most of this research has actually been conducted through the victim's perspective, which limits the validity and scope of understanding this knowledge can provide. The current literature that exists on stalking does not seem to

have expanded their focus on cognitions to those that are aimed at the pursuers themselves. Most of the cognitions assessed are aimed towards the victims or are emotionally based. The current study focuses on cognitions directly from the pursuers themselves and fills a gap in the literature by examining not cognitions behind motives, but cognitions pursuers have about themselves, furthering our understanding of how these cognitions relate to stalking behavior.

Stalking Behaviors

Besides categorizing types of stalkers, research has also focused on categorizing types of stalking behaviors. Spitzberg and colleagues (2002, 2014) have developed 9 distinct categories of behavior. “Hyperintimacy” captures typical romantic courtship behaviors that are taken to an extreme level. “Mediated contacts” include the use of phone, email, and text to contact the target. “Proxy pursuit” refers to the use of third parties in gathering information about the target. “Interactional contacts” consist of efforts at interpersonal encounters, such as signing up for the same classes as their target or obtaining a job at the same site the target works. “Surveillance” tactics are probably the most recognizable stalking tactic, and are defined as “espionage” by Spitzberg (2002). These tactics include following the target around, spying on them, and taking candid photos of them. “Invasion” tactics include vandalizing the target’s property, breaking in, or hacking into the target’s various online accounts. “Harassment and intimidation” tactics consist of verbally harassing the target or damaging their reputation. “Coercion and threat” tactics include threats to harm either the target, their family, their pets, their belongings, etc. The final category is “physical aggression and violence,” which includes attacks to the target, their friends, family, pets, etc. Approach (or interactional contacts as

posited by Cupach and Spitzberg [2004]) and surveillance tactics are most recognizable as stalking by the general public (Yanowitz, 2006).

Several other studies have conducted research to examine the frequency of various stalking behaviors and found the behaviors to be less extreme and more covert. Campbell and Moore (2011) point out that stalking can appear benign and that many stalking behaviors are in fact associated with traditional courting behaviors. Amar (2006) identified the most commonly reported behaviors to be following or spying on the target, trying to communicate with the target against their will, and making unsolicited phone calls. Only 20 of the 601 participants in this study endorsed experiencing any sort of physical harm (which including anything from scratches and sore muscles to black eyes and bruises). Fisher et al. (2002) had similar results in their study, reporting that the majority of stalking cases in their study did not involve any threats of physical violence. Unwanted telephone calls seem to be a commonly reported behavior (Amar 2006; Campbell & Moore, 2011; Fisher et al., 2002). Other common behaviors from these studies include spying on the target, following them, waiting for them inside or outside places they visited, sending letters or gifts, and showing up uninvited (Amar 2006; Campbell & Moore, 2011; Fisher et al., 2002). Even though most of these studies report stalking as consisting of more covert behaviors, Cass & Mallicoat (2015) reported that a common perception in their qualitative study was that stalking needed to progress to a physical nature in order to warrant intervention.

Research suggests that though stalking can escalate to more severe behaviors (e.g., violence, direct threats, aggression), the more common occurrence consists of the milder behaviors (e.g., following, spying, leaving gifts and messages). The current study

focuses on the milder end of the continuum as that is what is most generalizable and lacks clarity in the current literature. Looking at the milder forms of stalking are necessary for fully understanding this phenomenon (Davis & Frieze, 2000).

Gender

Study results have shown that men are more likely to engage in violent stalking behavior and are more likely to instill fear in their targets than are women stalkers. Davis and Frieze (2000) report that violence is more serious for women perpetrated by men and that there is more chance of serious injury in these cases. This discrepancy in level of fear and seriousness between men and women victims could be due to results indicating that the same behaviors are viewed differently by men and women. The same activities when engaged in by a man rather than a woman are appraised as more dangerous, and, in general, females are more likely to perceive their stalker as threatening (Bjerregaard, 2000; Davis & Frieze, 2000) and to categorize intrusive behaviors as stalking (Phillips, Quirk, Rosenfeld, & O'Connor, 2004).

Gender differences seem to exist when examining stalking behaviors on the more overt and extreme end of the continuum; however, both genders engage in persistent pursuit and show no difference in their engagement of the milder forms of stalking. Men have been shown to leave unwanted gifts and messages of affection more often than women and to engage in direct communication more often (overt tactics), but there is no gender difference on more covert forms of pursuit (Dennison & Stewart, 2006). Cupach & Spitzberg (2000) did not find gender differences on obsessive relational intrusion. Similarly, other studies have found no difference between men and women's tendency to engage in intrusive behaviors (Haugaard & Seri, 2004; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000; Spitzberg

et al, 2010). Men and women perpetrate an equal number of tactics over a similar time span (de Smet et al., 2015). Even though there is no gender difference in the engagement of pursuit behavior, women are twice as likely as men to be victims, and men are three times as likely to pursue than women (Spitzberg et al, 2010). Men have also been shown to experience rejection, or unrequited love, more often than women, especially during the young adult/late adolescent years, which is often a motive for persistent pursuit (Hill, Blakemore, & Drumm, 1997). Women are much more likely to be victims of stalking behavior by men, so in order to provide focus, this study will target stalking relationships where women are the target and men are behaving in ways that make the women feel stalked. Due to the fact that men are overwhelmingly more likely to pursue and the lack of differences in milder forms of pursuit (e.g., ORI) between men and women, the current study focuses on men who pursue by engaging in obsessive relational intrusion.

Awareness and Empathy

Relational goal pursuit theory and attachment theory suggest that lack of social skills is a potential reason that stalking occurs. Research has suggested that stalkers might have less developed social skills, which might especially explain the risk of stalking or unwanted pursuit behaviors in college samples (de Smet et al., 2012). Empathy is defined as possessing the awareness, sensitivity, and vicarious experience of another individual's thoughts or feelings (Lewis, Fremouw, Del Ben, & Farr, 2001), which is a necessity to some degree when engaging in relational interaction and courting. Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) describe empathy as a social skill, reporting that empathy is part of interpersonal competence and that accurate empathic understanding is required for dialogic

communication (Johannesen, 1971), which is a huge part of our social experience. This social skill of empathy seems to be one that is especially lacking among stalkers.

The research literature on stalking states that stalkers are typically unaware of how their behaviors are affecting others. De Becker (1997) explains that a number of pursuers are “naïve” because they are oblivious to the reality that their pursuit is unwanted and creates discomfort for the individual being pursued. Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2000) conducted a study where 27.5% of their sample admitted to having engaged in at least one thing that had a negative impact on their former partner; however, only 3.3% reported engaging in a severe pursuit behavior such as threats or damage to property, even though 14% of initiators reported receiving a much higher level of severe stalking. This discrepancy between the reports of receivers of a breakup and the reports of the initiators of a breakup suggests that most stalkers do not understand the impact of their behaviors. In addition, they do not see their behaviors as being as severe as their targets do. Among individuals that self-reported engaging in persistent pursuit behaviors, few believed that their behaviors frightened the target or constituted “stalking” (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000). Stalkers seem blind to the impact of even their milder stalking behaviors and do not see themselves as engaging in the level of severity as those who initiate the breakups (Davis & Frieze, 2000). Media further blinds stalkers to the impact or inappropriateness of their behaviors as it presents these pursuit behaviors to be romantic and a normal way of initiating relationships, leading to achievement of the sought after relationship and happy endings.

The discrepancy shown in the literature of perpetrators reporting a lesser level of severity than targets could be due to insight or awareness, but a methodological limitation in these studies is that they have no way to directly assess targets and stalkers from the same cases. A few studies have deliberately included the construct of empathy in their studies. Dennison and Stewart (2006) looked at the role of shame (which they theorized consisted of low empathy) in stalking after a relationship breakup. They found that shame was related to self-harm and rumination while engaging in stalking behaviors, which is associated with obsession. The emotions accounted for 56% of the variance in engaging in intrusive behaviors following rejection. These researchers, however, did not look directly at the role of empathy in stalking. Lewis et al. (2001) examined empathy directly in their study and found no significant difference in empathy of those college students who have exhibited stalking behaviors compared to those who had not. However, the researchers did not have a sound study, as sample composition prevented a valid interpretation of the results. Men's emotional empathy has been shown to correlate strongly with emotional and verbal abuse, and less significantly with dominance or isolation behaviors and pursuit/persistence behaviors (Lau & Davis, 2003).

Empathy includes two components: affective and cognitive. Lau and Davis (2003) examined affective empathy in particular, but neglected to include cognitive empathy. Affective, or emotional, empathy is defined as the "vicarious sharing of emotion" and promotes altruistic behaviors; whereas cognitive empathy is defined as "mental perspective taking" and enhances social functioning by facilitating relationships (Smith, 2006). Emotional empathy, or the lack of, has been associated with more violent behaviors (Lau & Davis, 2003) while cognitive empathy involves understanding the

minds of others; thus, it would be expected that stalkers with malevolent intentions would have higher capacities of cognitive empathy as it is associated with crafted manipulation (Smith, 2006) as compared to stalkers who think of themselves as well-intentioned and genuinely seeking a relationship.

Perspective-taking in stalking cases is difficult due to the vague nature of the phenomenon. As discussed earlier, community perceptions vary, along with perpetrator and target perceptions of similar situations. In one study conducted by Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell (1993), individuals were asked to write a true story about a rejection and a true story where they were the rejector. The stories written from the perspective of the rejected individual included accounts of mutual attraction, feelings of being led on, and vague communication that directed blame at the rejector; whereas the stories written from the rejector's perspective included accounts of innocence throughout the situation and finding the persistent efforts of the pursuer intrusive and annoying (Baumeister et al., 1993). Sinclair and Frieze (2005) had similar results in that stories written from the pursuer's perspective clearly included receiving signals that their feelings were reciprocated while targets reported that they were very clear in signaling that the feelings were not reciprocated. These two studies demonstrate the difficulty in perspective-taking among these types of scenarios and how pursuers justify their behaviors, limiting their ability to understand the target's reactions and experience. They also demonstrate the tunnel vision aimed at achieving this goal of the desired relationship as alluded to in relational goal pursuit theory. Without the understanding of the target's experience, pursuers are likely to continue to strive towards their goal, assuming no harm is being done.

All of the studies discussed that have directly touched on the construct of empathy have had difficulty in interpreting their results, which has either resulted in null outcomes or guesswork, or have neglected important aspects of empathy that could play a role in stalking situations. The current study looks directly at the whole construct of empathy (affective and cognitive). Attachment and relational goal pursuit theories (and partly evolutionary theory) suggest that stalkers potentially lack social skills, which could thus suggest less empathic skills as compared to non-stalkers. Several studies mentioned above also indicate a potential lack of awareness regarding the impact of their actions, which is further explored in this study.

Self-View

Several studies have examined stalker's cognitions as related to motivations for behaviors from both the victim and the perpetrator's perspective, but few studies have examined cognitions related to the stalker himself. One study examined unrequited love, which is a common impetus for stalking behavior, and found that "would-be-lovers" or those individuals who were rejected experience a loss in self-esteem and feel inferior and attempt to use self-enhancing statements to recover from this humbling self-view (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993).

Attachment theory and relational goal pursuit theory describe the stalker as feeling insecure with himself and his relationships, and thus having the false belief that a specific person or specific relationship can provide the stalker with self-worth and true happiness. Attachment theory describes those with preoccupied attachment as viewing themselves negatively and striving for the acceptance of others who they view positively (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Stalkers have been shown to primarily have a

preoccupied or fearful attachment style (de Smet et al., 2015; Guerrero, 1998; Lewis et al., 2001; Tonin, 2004). Those with a fearful attachment view both themselves and others negatively (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This held true in a study conducted by MacKenzie et al. (2008) where 60% of the stalking sample endorsed viewing themselves negatively. This also provides more evidence for the relational goal pursuit theory, which states that stalkers are attempting to restore self-worth by persistently pursuing something (or someone) they value so highly. Following these theories then, it would make sense for the stalker to experience internalized negative beliefs about himself that help to perpetuate the pursuant behaviors and prompt him to behave in obsessive and potentially aggressive ways.

Current Study

The current study explored the development of stalking by examining the stalker's cognitive processes and how these inform the course of the stalking experience. This study was particularly interested in how empathy, self-esteem, and anxious attachment (relational anxiety) affect the course of and the likelihood to engage in stalking behavior. It was hypothesized that individuals with lower levels of empathy, lower levels of self-esteem, and higher levels of anxious attachment (relational anxiety) would have a greater tendency to stalk.

By knowing the cognitive processes of stalkers, therapists can work with them to develop empathy and flexibility in perspective taking so they understand the impact of their behaviors on and how they are being received by the target. They can also learn appropriate ways to initiate or reconcile relationships and gain self-awareness of their tendency to stalk and the reasons behind this tendency.

METHODS

Study Design

This study consisted of two parts: (1) an online survey, and (2) an in-person meeting including both a semi-structured interview using the Rappaport Time Line Technique (Rappaport, 1990) along with a “think aloud” method (Eckhardt, Barbour, & Davison, 1998) in response to four scenarios. The online survey assessed several factors, such as stalking behavior and violence, self-esteem, attachment style, romantic beliefs, relationship history, empathy, and adverse childhood experiences and was used as a screener for participation in the interview portion of the study. Participants from Louisville, KY, and Knoxville, TN completed the online survey (inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed below), out of which ten men who endorsed stalking behavior and identified as having romantic interest in women were chosen to come in for the second part of the study (additional inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed below). The online survey screened not only for engagement in stalking behaviors, but the severity of these behaviors. Based on survey responses, ten participants were chosen who exhibited stalking tendencies, but did not exceed into the violent or predatory range of stalking.

The ten men selected engaged in a think-aloud method (that will be explained in more detail below) that included four scenarios, of which three were designed to elicit stalking behavior from those that have a tendency to stalk, as well as their thought processes throughout the course of the situation. The prompts for the scenarios

were to help guide the participant to hone in on their ability for empathy for the target, their hopes for the interaction with the target, and their views toward themselves both as they see themselves and how they think the target sees them in the situation. The four scenarios included a practice scenario in order to orient the participant to the task followed by an acquaintance scenario and an ex-intimate scenario, and finally a role-reversal scenario where the participant takes on the role of victim. These scenarios were chosen to elicit information based on the commonality of stalking towards targets who have some sort of relationship with the stalker (ex-intimates and acquaintances) and our interest in stalkers who are motivated by the desire for a romantic relationship who exhibit less pathology than the criminal population (ORI-type stalkers) and to directly test ability to take the perspective of the target. This scenario task allowed the exploration of the cognitive process over the span of the stalking situation, the examination of any differences in the cognitive process related to ex-intimates versus acquaintances, and provided the opportunity to test the men in hypothetical situations to assess fit of the obsessive relational intrusion stalker.

The same ten men then participated in a semi-structured interview guided by the Rappaport Time Line technique (Rappaport, 1990). Men filled out a timeline that includes all romantic relationships and crushes throughout their lives. As the men filled out this timeline, they discussed these various relationships and were further asked questions in order to gain more detailed information related to any stalking behaviors, understanding of social cues, beliefs about themselves or the “target,” the course of the relationship, and ability to empathize with the target. The exact questions were dependent on the men’s responses and unique relationship history. This task provided the chance to

gain a much more detailed account of the thought processes employed in real-life situations in order to see their thought processes and behaviors in actuality and to give greater insight into the thought processes and behaviors exhibited in hypothetical situations.

Participants

A sample of 206 men were recruited from Louisville, KY and Knoxville, TN through social media and flyers to complete a 30-minute online survey about courtship and relationship initiation. Due to missing data and exclusion criteria (identifying as female/woman), only 117 of these responses were valid. The inclusion criteria for this initial online part of the study were that participants identified as male, were age 18 or older, and spoke English. Flyers were posted throughout the community as well as on both the UofL and UT-Knoxville campus in order to recruit a diverse sample of participants for this study. Snowballing was also used as a method to recruit. Snowballing involves asking interested parties to recommend others or pass on information about the study to others who fit the study criteria. This technique helps to recruit populations that are not readily accessible (Patton, 2002). Participants were entered into a drawing for a \$250.00 gift card. Participants also had a chance on the survey to indicate interest in further participation in this study. From the online sample, ten participants were selected to attend an in-person portion of the study. Inclusion criteria for the in-person portion of the study were that participants indicated romantic interest in women and endorsed engaging in milder forms of stalking (i.e., hyper-intimacy, mediated contact, proxy pursuit, interactional contact, harassment/intimidation, and surveillance). Exclusion criteria for this portion of the study included engagement in violent behavior (e.g.,

physical or sexual violence) and experience of extensive trauma history, which was assessed through cut-off scores on the survey (discussed below under data analysis). The in-person portion took between one to two hours. All men who participated in the in-person portion of the study were entered into a drawing for another \$250.00 gift card.

Measures

Participants completed an online survey that included measures to quantitatively assess levels of empathy and self-esteem, as well as attachment style, relationship beliefs, stalking behavior, violent tendencies, and the witnessing or experiencing of any adverse experiences during childhood. The survey also included a social desirability scale to assess impression management since this study looked at sensitive constructs. The survey began by asking about demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity), mental health history, and relationship history (current relationship status [and duration of current relationship thus far if applicable], sexual orientation, number of past relationships, length of longest relationship, and reason for relationship(s) termination). Listed below are the specific measures that were included on the online survey. See Table 4 for scale statistics (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) specific to the current study.

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009). This self-report questionnaire is a brief 16-item assessment of a wide-range of empathy-related behaviors, including both affective and cognitive components. Participants rate how frequently each statement is true for them. Responses are chosen from a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always.” The TEQ was formed through a composite of several other empathy scales that underwent an EFA analysis. The 142 items from that process were then narrowed down to only 16 after maximizing

internal consistency and item-remainder coefficients. Cronbach's alpha ranges from .85 to .87 and the test-retest reliability correlation is .81. The TEQ has been shown to have high convergent validity with other self-report empathy scales. The TEQ assesses both affective and cognitive empathy. Higher scores on the TEQ indicate higher levels of empathy.

Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). This 36-item self-report measure assesses adult romantic attachment styles. Each statement is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). The ECR-R contains two factors: anxiety and avoidance. Cronbach's alphas are .93 for the avoidance subscale and .92 for the anxiety subscale (Fairchild & Finney, 2006). This scale does not have an overall score, but rather scores on each subscale: anxiety and avoidance. Higher scores on each subscale indicate a higher tendency toward that attachment style.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965). The RSES measures global self-esteem through 10 statements to which the respondent answers on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The test has been shown in some studies to be unidimensional and in some studies to have two factors (self-confidence and self-deprecation), but even so, the measure has been shown to have construct validity. The measure has been shown to have high test-retest reliability ($r=.82$ to $.88$) and high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from .74 to .88 (McCarthy & Hoge, 1982; Rosenberg, 1965; Silber & Tippett, 1965). When scoring this scale, each item is awarded points (SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0). Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are

reverse scored (SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3). The higher the sum of the 10 items, the higher the participant's self-esteem. Scores below 15 indicate low self-esteem.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998). This questionnaire was developed for a large-scale study conducted at Kaiser Permanente's San Diego Health Appraisal Clinic in order to look at adverse childhood experiences in the first 18 years of life. Items measure child abuse (e.g., psychological, physical, and sexual abuse) and exposure to household dysfunction (e.g., substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment, and criminal behavior). Participants respond either "yes" or "no" to indicate if each of the 10 items occurred during their childhood. The number of "yes" responses are added to arrive at a total ACE score. The higher the score, the more adverse childhood experiences the participant endured and the greater the risk of experiencing poor physical and mental health and negative social consequences later in life. The ACE score has been shown to have moderate to good reliability (Dube, Williamson, Thompson, Felitti, & Anda, 2004). According to social learning theory, experiencing or witnessing these types of adverse experiences in childhood increases the risk to engage in similar behavior in adulthood. In fact, studies have shown that adults with higher ACE scores are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and perpetrate domestic violence than those with lower ACE scores. Studies examining couples have found that men who experience a larger number of childhood adversity, scoring a 4 or higher on the ACE, are significantly more likely to engage in male-to-female partner violence (Mair, Cunradi, & Todd, 2012; McKinney, Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, & Nelson, 2009). This measure was used to help screen for men who might fall on the more severe end of the stalking spectrum. In the current study,

men who scored higher than a 4 were excluded from the interview portion due to the correlation found with violent behavior.

Obsessive Relational Intrusion – Pursuit (ORI-P) (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000, 2004, 2014; Thompson, Basile, Hertz, & Sitterle, 2006). This scale measures perpetration of stalking through 77 behavioral items. Respondents rate each behavior on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (never having engaged in the behavior) to 6 (having had engaged in the behavior more than 25 times). The 77 behavioral items assess nine categories of stalking behavior: hyper-intimacy, mediated contact, proxy pursuit, interactional contact, harassment/intimidation, surveillance, invasion, coercion/threat, and aggression/violence. A victim version and perpetrator version of this scale exist, and both versions have been shown to work equally well for males and females. Coefficients for the victim version range from .77 to .92 (Nguyen, Spitzberg, & Lee, 2012). Though less research exists for the perpetrator version, studies have shown evidence of factorial validity, and it has been used as a valid measure of stalking perpetration in several studies with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .71 to .94 (Chaulk & Jones, 2011; Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Lau & Davis, 2003; McCutcheon, Aruguete, Scott, Parker, & Calicchia, 2006; Menard & Pincus, 2012; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). Higher total scores both on the full ORI and the subscales indicate greater levels of stalking perpetration. Men who scored in the top 50th percentile of the survey sample in terms of number of stalking behaviors endorsed were invited to participate in the interview portion of the current study; however, men who endorsed behaviors on the aggression/violence subscale were excluded from participating.

Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979). This scale measures the use of violence between romantic partners. Participants respond to 8 items stating the frequency of each behavior during past disagreements on a scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (Always). Cronbach's alpha has been shown to be .87 for men (Straus, 1979). Higher scores indicate a higher level of violence in the relationship. This measure was used to screen for men who have a tendency toward violent behavior.

Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). This 15-item scale assesses beliefs about romantic relationships related to four categories: love can overcome all obstacles, there is only one true love, idealization of the relationship or partner, and love is possible at first sight. Participants rate each of the 15 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores have been shown to correlate with more passionate love and a fewer number of dates before experiencing love (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) and the tendency to think about one's relationship or partner, especially affectively, when not in the presence of that partner (Cate, Koval, Lloyd, & Wilson, 1995). The total score on this measure is equal to the mean of the 15 items. Higher scores represent a more romanticized ideology toward relationships. Cronbach's alpha has been shown to range from .60 to .87 for men, and test-retest reliability has been shown to range from .47 to .72 for men (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). The "love at first sight" subscale was on the lowest end of those ranges for men.

Social Desirability Scale – 17 (SDS-17) (Stöber, 1999, 2001). Examining stalking from the point of view of a perpetrator may introduce social desirability bias since admitting to such immoral and illegal behaviors might be quite difficult for some respondents (McCutcheon, Aruguete, Scott, Parker, & Calicchia, 2006). This sensitive

topic needs a measure to validate results. The SDS-17 is a 16-item (one item was removed from the scale after validation studies) self-report scale used to assess whether responses to questionnaires are biased by desirable responding. This scale has been shown to have a Cronbach's alpha of .80 and high convergent and discriminant validity, relating to impression-management components of desirable responding and can be used with a wide range of ages (Stöber, 2001). True responses on items 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15 and false responses on items 1, 5, 6, 10, 14, and 16 will be scored as one point. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of socially desirable impression management.

Procedures

The first portion of the current study consisted of an online study that participants completed on their own. The survey was available via Qualtrics, and links to the survey were included on the flyers and the social media advertisements (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and discussion boards). The survey included a preamble consent form since the survey is low-risk and took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The second portion of the study took place in person in a lab in Davidson Hall on Belknap campus and the Student Counseling Center on University of Tennessee - Knoxville's campus; both locations included recording capabilities and allowed for the experimenter to communicate with the participant. This portion consisted of two tasks that commenced after obtaining written consent from the participant. The first was based on a methodology developed by Eckhardt et al. (1998) called the "think-aloud" task through which participants articulate their thoughts in simulated situations. Cognitions are elicited through listening to audiotaped stimuli in which participants are asked to imagine themselves and then talk out loud about their thoughts and feelings as they listen

to the tapes. This method was built off of the work of Piaget, as he found that children talk out loud to themselves while solving problems (Davison, Vogel, & Coffman, 1997). The think-aloud method has been shown to be a more sensitive method for looking at difficult subjects than self-report measures.

Using the think-aloud method, the task is preceded with a neutral practice scenario, allowing the participants to orient themselves to the think-aloud method and allowing the experimenter to give the participant feedback on the process and clarify any instructions. Participants then are asked to imagine themselves in two scenarios. These scenarios are presented in segments and are audiotaped recordings that the participant listens to. Participants are presented with a few minutes of stimuli at a time and are then given time in between each segment to speak out loud any thoughts they are having. These thoughts are recorded and later coded. Participants of the think-aloud method are able to report all their cognitions, and in detail, rather than being limited to experimenter-selected alternatives that may not be representative of their actual thoughts or feelings (Davison et al., 1997). This method also may be able to circumvent inhibitions (Davis & Frieze, 2000), especially since stalking is a taboo topic in our society that can bring up socially desirable responses instead of honest and accurate responses.

In the current study, participants began the think-aloud portion of the study by first describing their beliefs and/or views about themselves. This was achieved by the question, “How do you think others perceive you and how does this perception differ from how you view or think about yourself?” The directions for the remainder of the think-aloud portion are based off of a study done by Davison et al. (1997) that used the think-aloud methodology (see Appendix A). Each scenario in the current study consisted

of four audio-taped segments, between which the participant was allowed to speak their thoughts related to a prompt aimed at the research question before moving on to the next segment. The prompts that the client had in front of them for every segment scenario was to: “Describe your thought process and emotions. Describe what you would do. Describe the thoughts and feelings of others in the scenario.” These prompts were designed to be broad enough to allow for responses that are representative of their actual thoughts and feelings, yet guide the participants to speak in a way that addresses the research question of how stalking develops. The prompt attempted to examine the tendency toward stalking behavior and the capacity for empathy, as well as allow for the expression of self-views. The scenarios started with a practice to allow the participant to learn the think-aloud approach. This was then followed by two scenarios designed to elicit stalking tendencies: one with an acquaintance and one with an ex-partner (see Appendix B for scenarios) as these are the most common forms of stalking. The scenarios were purposely written to be vague so that the participant could create their own inferences and ideas of the situation to allow for more accurate and unbiased thought commentary. They were written to elicit stalking behavior from those participants who have stalking tendencies, yet allow for flexibility so that those without stalking tendencies would not lean in that direction. The final scenario was designed to specifically examine empathy or perspective-taking abilities of the participant by putting them in a role-reversal situation where they are the target being pursued. The scenarios were created to be free from bias and allow the participant to create a mental image of the scenario that best matches their natural tendencies.

Participants completed the think-aloud task in a solitary room to assist in eliciting honest and uncensored talk. The researcher communicated with the participant at the beginning of the task in order to guide them through the practice run, but then the participants completed the remainder of the task on their own.

A risk of this study was slight emotional distress due to the sensitive topic of this study and from answering personal questions. Following completion of the “think-aloud” task, the experimenter verbally checked in with the participant by asking them how they felt about the process.

Participants also completed a face-to-face semi-structured interview guided by the Rappaport Time Line (Rappaport, 1990). This phenomenological approach involves providing the participant with a 24-inch strip of paper that they are told represents their life. Participants are then asked to check off points along this empty timeline that represent any past romantic relationships or significant crushes and indicate the age at which the event took place. As the participants draw these on the time line, the researcher will engage the client in a discussion about each event by asking questions about any actions taken to pursue the love interest, any responses on the part of the target, reasons for behaviors, length of time behaviors persisted, and reasons the relationship did not start, did not work out, or ended. Questions varied per participant as each person has a unique relationship history and provides different details as they are explaining this history. Questions asked were directed towards gaining information on stalking tendencies and assessing empathy levels and self-esteem over time. This method allowed the researcher to explore the lived experience of stalkers and gain a rich understanding of the stalker’s thought process in real-life situations. Following completion of the time line

task, participants were debriefed, and the experimenter verbally checked in with the participant. Those who expressed discomfort during the task were provided with a list of counseling resources in the community and/or university.

Participants met the researcher in person in order to complete the qualitative portion of this study; however, participation in this portion was completely voluntary. Participant data was only associated with a participant number – the same participant number that was given to the survey data. The names and email address of subjects collected at the time of the online survey were kept in a separate locked cabinet from the research data. This list included the participant number for purposes of linking the number from the online survey with the number for the qualitative data. This file was stored in a locked cabinet, separate from the rest of the data. Once all data had been analyzed and reported in the dissertation, the list of names and participant numbers were destroyed so that there is never a risk of associating the data with particular persons. Responses for the interview portion were audio-recorded with the participant's permission. All audio-recordings were labeled with the participant number, uploaded immediately to a locked computer, and deleted from the recorder. All participants who engage in the qualitative portion were entered into a drawing for a \$250.00 gift card.

Data Analysis

The survey data was downloaded into SPSS. Participant numbers and indication of involvement in the qualitative portion of the study were added to each participant's line of data. Each survey was scored according to the protocols set out for each scale. At this point, men who scored more than 4 on the ACEs were excluded from participating in the interview portion due to extensive trauma history. Individuals who endorsed items 6,

7, or 8 on the CTS and/or any items from 65 to 77 on the ORI-P were excluded due to engagement in violent behavior. After checking for exclusion criteria, participants who scored in the 50th percentile or higher on the ORI-P (on items 1 through 64) and in the 50th percentile on the Grand Gestures scale were invited for an interview. We allowed participants with varying ranges of RSES (self-esteem), TES (empathy), and ECS (anxious attachment) to participate in the interviews in order to compare and contrast the impact of our variables within our sample.

The portion of the study that involves qualitative methodology was analyzed using grounded theory. This study focused on a specific population or typology of stalkers. Grounded theory is an approach developed by Charmaz (2006) that looks at data from the “ground up.” Data is analyzed in three phases. The first phase of analysis was line-by-line coding which involves coding responses into short sentences or phrases. The second phase was focused coding during which all of the line-by-line codes are compiled and placed into higher order categories. High order categories were created until all line-by-line codes were accurately represented and new categories were no longer needed, thus saturation had been reached. In order to allow for a more thorough comparison of participants, the higher order categories were then used to inform creation of profiles for each men, highlighting specific themes that emerged from the different portions of the interviews.

RESULTS

The first step of the data analysis was to ensure that the data from the Qualtrics survey downloaded properly. In order to check this, all scale scores were created and ranges of these scores were analyzed by examining the frequencies of each score to ensure they all fell within the expected range of scores for each scale. This analysis was successful with all scores falling within range, showing the dataset utilized for analysis is sound.

Quantitative Analysis

While the survey received 206 survey responses, eight responses were deleted from the sample due to identifying as female and 81 responses were deleted due to extensive levels of missing data (more than half of items were not completed). Thus, 117 completed surveys were utilized for data analysis and selection of the second part of the study. In order to understand the demographics of the sample, percentages were calculated and organized in a table (see Table 1 for percentages of key demographics of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and mental health status). The current study's quantitative sample included an overrepresentation of White participants (91% v. 74.8% in Louisville and 76.1% in Knoxville 2018 census data), underrepresentation of Black/African American participants (4% v. 22.2% in Louisville and 17.1% in Knoxville 2018 census data), and a slightly higher percentage of Latino participants (6% v. 2.9% in Louisville and 4.6% in Knoxville 2018 census data). The current study's sample is on par

with the national average prevalence of anxiety and substance abuse but includes a higher prevalence of endorsed depression (31% v. 17% [Kessler & Bromet, 2013]). In addition, percentages of relationship demographics were also calculated and presented (see Table 2 for percentages of key relationship status information).

Scale scores were created for key constructs of empathy, self-esteem, anxious and avoidant attachment orientations, romantic relationship beliefs, adverse childhood events scale (ACES), conflict tactics scale, and the nine subscales of the Obsessive Relational Intrusion -Pursuit (ORI-P) Scale (including hyper-intimacy, mediated contact, proxy pursuit, interactional contact, harassment, surveillance, invasion, coercion, and aggression/violence). These scores were calculated by reverse scoring select items and summing all items in order to create a total for each scale. After noting the direction of each scale (1=strongly agree OR 5 or 7 = strongly agree), most scales were scored to go in the direction of higher scores meaning more agreement with the variable. Self-esteem, however, is scored so that a higher number indicates lower self-esteem.

The Grand Gesture items were created to tap into stalking-related behaviors stemming from romantic ideals encouraged by society through fairy tales, movies, and other media outlets. The first step was to conduct a factor analysis with varimax rotation to determine if any of the 18 items grouped into subscales. Four subscales were identified and labeled: being around, expressive acts, willingness to change, and fantasy actions. Table 3 shows the eigenvalues for the 18 items in the four scale solution. Table 4 shows the mean, standard deviation, and range of scores for each scale utilized in the study.

Examination of predictors of various types of stalking behavior. A correlation matrix was created of all the scales, showing the relationship between variables pertinent

to the study. Table 5 shows the correlation matrix of all 20 scales utilized in the study. This assisted in identifying important variables to test in the regression analyses. Social desirability was used to determine correlations but was left out of the analysis due to already needing to test several outcome variables with a relatively small sample size. While the correlation matrix showed that ACES scores were significantly correlated with all stalking behaviors, it is a distal variable that was tested as a post-hoc analysis for impact after the more proximal variables were examined. As part of hypothesis testing, empathy was significantly correlated to five of the stalking subscales and was a trend for a significant correlation with three additional stalking subscales. Empathy was thus tested in the regression analysis.

Attachment and self-esteem scores were also found to be either significant or showing trends for a correlation with stalking subscales. Because these scales were hypothesized to impact stalking behavior, they were also tested in the regression analysis in order to provide understanding for how they might be impacting stalking.

To test the hypothesis that low empathy, low self-esteem, and high anxious attachment would predict mild stalking behavior (those behaviors that are less intrusive or violent), simultaneous linear regression analyses examining the impact of the three predictor variables of empathy, anxious attachment, and self-esteem for each of the 9 stalking subscales of the Obsessive Relational Intrusion - Pursuit (ORI-P) Scale were conducted. In addition, simultaneous linear regressions examining the impact of those same predictor variables was conducted for each of the four Grand Gesture subscales.

Lower levels of empathy significantly predicted engaging in 8 of the 9 types of stalking behavior in the ORI-P Scale and emerged as a trend for the 9th subscale. Lower

empathy led to more fantasy actions on the Grand Gesture scale (e.g., engaging in grand gestures such as elaborate marriage proposals even if the relationship is not certain). The Fantasy Actions subscale was the only significant regression of the Grand Gestures measure, $R^2=.14$, $F(3, 113)=5.88$, $p=.001$. Empathy was a significant predictor, showing that those men with lower levels of empathy are more likely to engage in fantasy actions ($b=-.07$, $p=.001$). See Table 6 for where the three major predictors significantly or marginally predicted the fourteen stalking and conflict behaviors.

Low self-esteem emerged as a trend in one of the regressions targeting Grand Gesture sub-scales in that those participants with lower self-esteem were more likely to endorse fantasy actions ($b=.05$, $p=.07$). Having low self-esteem significantly predicted three sub-scales of the ORI-P Scale (interactional contact, invasion and aggression/violence) and marginally predicted three other sub-scales of the ORI-P (hyper-attention, proxy pursuit and coercion).

Anxious attachment significantly predicted proxy pursuit and expressive grand gestures $R^2=.04$, $F(3, 113)=1.6$, $p=.18$ (See Tables 7 and 8), and marginally predicted hyper-intimacy and fantasy actions.

An examination of each stalking behavior (see Table 7) showed that low empathy alone predicted *mediated contact* $R^2=.10$, $F(3,110)=4.18$, $p=.01$, *harassment* $R^2=.10$, $F(3, 109)=3.77$, $p=.01$, and *surveillance* $R^2=.05$, $F(3, 109)=2.09$, $p=.11$. For *hyper-intimacy* there was a marginal impact of low empathy and anxious attachment $R^2=.05$, $F(3,110)=2.04$, $p=.11$. In addition, both low empathy and high anxiety predicted *proxy pursuit* $R^2=.09$, $F(3,109)=3.65$, $p=.02$.

Both low empathy and low self-esteem predicted *interactional contact* $R^2=.10$, $F(3, 109)=4.22$, $p=.01$, *invasion* $R^2=.10$, $F(3, 108)=4.07$, $p=.01$ and *aggression/violence* $R^2=.09$, $F(3, 108)=3.73$, $p=.01$. Low empathy significantly predicted *coercion* while low self-esteem marginally predicted it $R^2=.10$, $F(3,108)=4.03$, $p=.01$.

No variables predicted the “*be around*” grand gesture sub-scale (see Table 8). Low empathy marginally predicted “*change*” grand gestures $R^2=.02$, $F(3, 113)=.73$, $p=.54$ while low empathy significantly predicted “*fantasy*” grand gestures and both low self-esteem and anxious attachment marginally did so $R^2=.14$, $F(3, 113)=5.88$, $p=.001$ (see Table 8). Low empathy and low self-esteem marginally predicted *use of violence* as measured by the conflict tactics scale $R^2=.06$, $F(3, 110)=2.49$, $p=.06$ (see Table 9).

Exploratory post-hoc analyses were conducted using other scales given to participants. Since the distal variable of child maltreatment, as measured by the ACES, was correlated with each stalking subscale, we examined its impact on those subscales in concert with the other proximal variables of empathy, low self-esteem and anxious attachment. Another interesting pattern emerged in that men wounded by child maltreatment engaged in hyper-intimacy, proxy pursuit, and interactional contact. The men that were both higher in ACES and low in empathy – perhaps showing signs of sociopathy – used more mediated contact, intrusion, coercion, and aggression. These behaviors are much more negative and dangerous (see Tables 10-11).

Qualitative Analysis

Participants for the interview portion of the study included 10 self-identified White/European American men between the ages of 20 to 36 with an average age of 27.5. See Tables 12-14 for demographic information on the 10 qualitative study participants as

well as their scores in key predictors and stalking behaviors. The current study examined whether self-esteem, anxious attachment, and empathy played a role in stalking behavior, so men who scored in the top 50th percentile on the stalking questionnaires were invited for an interview. Based on the analysis of the quantitative scores on the various predictor variables for these interview participants, the overall cut-off scores for self-esteem was a 20 and for anxious attachment was a 60. Men who scored more than four on the ACE were excluded from participation in the interviews due to the link with more violent behavior. After the 10 interview participants were selected, two groups seemed to emerge from the qualitative data: those with generally lower self-esteem and higher anxious attachment compared to the interview sample (n=5; LSE/HAA) and those with high self-esteem and lower anxious attachment (n=5; HSE/LAA) as compared to the interview sample. A cut-off score of 27 for self-esteem and 70 for anxious attachment emerged as the distinguishing factor in terms of determining in which group (i.e., LSE/HAA or HSE/LAA) the participant would be placed. The majority of interview participants scored in the top 75th percentile on endorsed stalking behavior. This allowed us to compare and contrast the two groups in order to further test our hypotheses that lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxious attachment would be more predictive of stalking behavior.

Several themes emerged from the Grounded Theory data analysis of these two groups of participants. These themes were then overlaid onto and used to inform the creation of participant profiles in order to further understand each group of men and compare and contrast themes across specific categories. Each profile was divided into six sections. The first section indicated the key demographics of the participant (e.g. white, bi-sexual male age 29 with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism currently in a

relationships that has been going on for 8 months. He has been in 8 relationships with longest of which lasted two years). The second section described his scores on the key questionnaires. The third section listed the stalking behaviors indicated from the questionnaires. The fourth section described themes that emerged from the participant's perceptions of the self and the view of others on the self as culled from the interview. The fifth section described themes that emerged in response to the scenarios in the interview and the final sixth section described themes that emerged in response to the actual relationship timeline discussion. Participants numbered 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were in one group with low self-esteem and high anxious attachment while participants numbered 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 were in the second group with higher self-esteem and lower anxious attachment. All participants had fairly high empathy levels in this sample.

Participants in the two groups were mostly similar on dimensions other than self-esteem and attachment style, with a few exceptions, which will be noted below. This paper will cover the themes that emerged from each of the dimensions from the participants' "profiles," first describing commonalities and then highlighting differences among the two groups.

Demographics. All participants identified as White men and were mixed as to whether or not they were currently in a relationship. Those in the LSE/HAA group all reported having experienced mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance abuse), had their longest relationship last one year or more, and had been in at least one relationship previously. They also reported a variety of sexual orientations. Those in the HSE/LAA group all identified as heterosexual and reported their longest relationship being less than one year in length.

Scores on questionnaires and stalking behavior scores. When looking at scores on non-stalking related measures, the groups looked very similar. All participants scored high on empathy and were mixed as whether or not they endorsed romantic beliefs. One difference was that individuals in the LSE/HAA group indicated experiencing more adverse childhood experiences (ACE).

Both groups of participants seemed to be fairly similar with types of stalking behaviors that were endorsed (see Tables 15-16). Only two noticeable differences emerged: those individuals in the LSE/HAA group were the only ones to engage in harassment behaviors and had higher scores on the Expressive Acts scale of the Grand Gestures measure.

Perception of self. This section of the profile included both self-views and how participants thought others perceive them. The themes that emerged from this section tended to help inform responses from other sections. The first, and most predominant, of these qualitative themes that emerged from the profiles is that of *low self-esteem*. Participants across the board, regardless of what category they were divided into or how they scored on the self-esteem scale, described experiencing a general sense of low self-esteem, which tended to present itself within relationships. This theme included several types of responses, including: (a) an expectation of rejection; (b) feeling invisible; (c) past insecurities; and (d) hiding lower self-esteem. One common response that emerged early in the interviews was an expectation of rejection from others, whether coming from friends or romantic interests. Participants described expecting people to back out of plans or have something better to do than spend time with them. A 27-year-old male put it this

way: “If there’s no definite plans, then it’s just not going to happen.” Another participant stated:

In my mind it seems like maybe they are going to blow me off, so that would make me a little bit sad or a little anxious. I would probably go ahead and plan something on the back of them knowing they would probably blow me off. I’ve just had friends blow me off in the past, and it’s just kind of like a custom. Like you go into something, you’re really excited about it but at the same time you kind of have that back side that yeah it might not work out and kind of wanting to plan something on your own. (27-year-old male)

Most of these responses included a sense of distrust in others, assuming negative intentions and expecting negative outcomes, and thus experiencing a need to have backup plans in place in order to protect against and decrease the anticipated resulting disappointment.

Some participants described this expectation of rejection in a way that seemed to go further than just expecting plans to fall through and thus were placed into a separate category, as the responses evoked a sense of feeling invisible, expecting people to overlook them or forget about them. “I would immediately assume that I wouldn’t be hanging out with that person later...because I would just assume that they had forgotten (29-year-old male).” These responses conveyed an image of blending into the background or feeling “less than.”

Participants also described wondering why people have liked them in the past or would like them moving forward. This is partly due to a re-emergence of past insecurities. Participants tended to bring up past insecurities such as being overweight or being homeschooled and used terms such as “strange,” “weird,” or “eccentric” to describe themselves during the interview. An example of a response in this category is from a 28-year-old male:

I don't know. Like I'm not a physically impressive person. Like I'm not one of those - I'm neither hideous nor drop dead gorgeous. So, it's one of those things where it's kind of like 'hey, all right cool.' I've got hair but that's about all I got going for me. As far as personal perceptions of myself and everything, I was bigger for a large percentage of my life. So, after college I trimmed down a lot, lost a lot and started doing a little bit better, but there's still like the stuff in the back of your head which kind of like, 'Ah, people won't like you, people won't deal with you.' Stuff like that. And that's not even necessarily based off of the people that I dealt with because everybody that knew and talked to while I was going through that, while I was bigger, nobody said anything. Everybody was like nice and kind or whatever and stuff like that, but there's still a mental blocking in your head where you sit there and think, 'Well I'm not good enough.'

Some described experiencing past bullying because of these things or described experiencing a lot of "rejection" during childhood from their peers. Participants described assuming people will think less of them or not want to be around/date them. Participants were careful to say they did not want to bother other people and were quick to assume potential cues of interest meant nothing.

Several participants went on to describe hiding this lower self-esteem when in social groups, stating that they come across as the life of the party, rambunctious, optimistic, and energetic towards others. One participant described it this way: "I would say people perceive me as being very outgoing, positive, confident, funny, silly and that mostly is true. I guess the question is how is it different? I think I am much more insecure, negative, critical then, you know, others would perceive (36-year-old male)."

The second theme that emerged from this section of the profile was that of *introversion*. The majority of participants either directly reported introversion as a trait or described aspects of introversion, such as tending to keep to themselves; being quiet, reserved, or withdrawn; liking to observe and read the room; needing "me time;" or preferring one-on-one contact. "I don't typically hang out with groups or invite additional people along. Uh, it would depend on the activity. Otherwise it feels like it'd be very out

of character for me. I usually interact in one-on-one or groups of three or less, typically.”
(21-year-old male).

This theme of introversion permeated other profile dimensions, informing subsequent responses and behaviors. One of the most noticeable outcomes of introversion was in how several of the participants described the beginning of their romantic relationships. Some participants described engaging in deep conversations as their primary way of getting to know someone and that their ability to have a deep conversation with someone is their indication of someone being interested in them. They also described relationships starting by being a listening ear for someone who is going through something emotionally difficult. Men described this trait as a hindrance when it comes to initiating romantic relationships but reported it as helpful in that it allows them to pick up on cues, understand people, and become good conversationalists.

There were a couple themes described under perception of self that pertained specifically to the low self-esteem/high anxious attachment group (LSE/HAA). The first is that of being *sensitive to rejection*. Not only were participants in this group more likely to expect others to reject them and describe feeling invisible, but they tended to also describe their emotional reaction to perceived or actual rejection from others, whether friend or romantic partner. These men described questioning others’ intentions, assuming even if they do hang out with a person or plans work out, that the individual is doing it out of obligation or would rather be somewhere else. They described a lack of trust in others and, most notably, intense feelings, such as shame, hurt, and self-blame.

I’d probably feel kind of hurt that this person just kind of unfriended me and wasn’t talking to me. Like did I do something wrong? Or what’s going on? I don’t know but I guess it would

kind of be my fault. I don't know I'd feel shame. I feel bad about hurting this other person. (27-year-old male)

These men also describe the rejection having a lasting impact, such as, as one participant in his late twenties put it, still not being over a rejection that occurred in high school, stating that it “was tough.” Another participant described not being able to handle rejection, thus avoiding rejection at all costs, which can result in missed opportunities.

The other theme specific to the LSE/HAA group is that of describing *social mishaps*. A few of the participants described being mean to others either presently or in the past. One participant reported that this is because he did not like himself, stating “I used to talk big shit because I didn't think I was shit. You know, fake it 'til you make it.” Another participant described unintentionally hurting others because what he thinks is funny, they think is actually mean and “unhelpful.” This theme also includes participants feeling socially awkward or recognizing that they do not pick up on social cues, such as this explanation from a 29-year-old male: “There are certain social constructs that I don't understand most of the time or in conversations I don't pick up on social cues as quickly as some other people might.”

Response to scenarios. Responses during the scenario part of the interview highlighted certain patterns that either seemed to create difficulty or were advantageous socially/more apt to protect the individual from engaging in stalking behaviors. These themes will thus be discussed in terms of social skill shortfalls and strengths as it pertains to the entire sample.

One of the most noticeable social skill shortfalls was that participants across both groups described experiencing *difficulty with role-plays* or difficulty in imagining what the other person might be thinking or feeling. Although some participants stated that they

were good at reading others or knowing what they need, the men went on to endorse either finding women confusing or stating that they have no idea what might be going on internally for the other person in the scenario. Several participants made a comment such as, “Their feelings, well this is my response so I don’t know what their feelings would be on it. I don’t have the ability to role play two people.” This request proved difficult for most participants. This was sometimes due to being so consumed with perceptions of self that it was hard to believe someone might think something different. For example, a 26-year-old commented, “I don’t know how I’m supposed to describe the thoughts and feelings of others in this scenario because I assume people don’t like me. It’s what I do. I assume that they want no part of any social interaction with me.” Some did not even try to guess what the other person was thinking or feeling, but most still attempted even though it was difficult. Some of the participants ended up putting a lot of thought into what the character was experiencing; while others relied only on surface cues to explain the others’ thoughts and feelings, neglecting to think critically. For example, one participant stated that the ex-partner “must be happy if she is smiling” in her picture on Facebook.

One of the strengths that emerged from the sample as a whole is that of *boundaries* when it comes to interacting with romantic interests. Participants tended to think it was “crossing a line” or intruding on one’s privacy to look at the character’s computer screen and pay attention to her interests. The men described feeling “disturbed” and “creepy” that they were doing this, stating that they would never do this in real life. A 27-year-old participant’s reaction was, “That’s a little weird. Seems like you’re invading their privacy. Um...yeah, that’s just uncomfortable to me, that scenario in

general. I think the person would be uncomfortable too.” They had similar responses to the role-reversal scenario, stating that they thought the character was taking it “too far” and that they would never engage in those behaviors themselves. For example, one participant described in response to the role-reversal, “She’s probably thinking something really long term...it could scare me away because that’s just kind of too much I think. I wouldn’t like a girl doing that to me, and I wouldn’t be doing that to a girl because I just feel like that would invade their privacy.” Participants, on average, recognized that the behavior was unhealthy and stated that they would not want to induce that discomfort in someone else.

Embedded in the scenario responses were descriptions of experiencing *strong negative emotion*. This emotion mostly surfaced in response to the ex-partner scenario when participants were describing their reaction to the break-up. An example of this type of response is from a 28-year-old:

A piece of yourself is lost, kind of, it feels like. Like there’s a part of you missing. That part of you kind of feels like hopeless...and feels the crushing weight of loneliness, right? There’s probably a little bit of helplessness and hopelessness that comes along with that. But in a lot of ways it sounds like I would probably be just feeling sad and despondent... You know there’s a little bit of the idea that this person, if this didn’t work out then what possible hope is there going forward for me? But in this situation I think the majority of what I would feel is just kind of a sadness for the time that you’ve ejected into this relationship and this other person ejected into this relationship and that it didn’t work out. Like I think that’s worth a mourning period as far as this idea that you had in your head that just didn’t turn into anything. I think that’s a pretty big deal.

Many described strong negative reactions to the scenario, but some equated the scenario to an experience they had in their own lives, and proceeded to describe the reaction they had to a previous break-up. Participants reported break-ups being difficult and intense for them, experiencing sadness, depression, or jealousy. Men stated that they “could not

handle it” and that certain breakups “tore them up” or left them feeling lost and alone. One participant described feeling hopeless after breakups because “the one person you thought cared about you the most rejected you even after you bared your soul.”

The next theme that emerged from the scenario responses was that of *hesitation*. This included two separate types of responses: (a) that of being hesitant to continue pursuit of any kind after a breakup or rejection; and (b) being hesitant to initiate interaction with a romantic interest. The men tended to describe as part of their hesitation a stance that break ups or rejection mean they will have no further contact with that particular person. Several participants described seeing this decision, whether mutual or one-sided, as absolute and final, ending all pursuit. A common type of response from this category is:

Well, quite frankly, I wouldn't call my ex. Like, I wouldn't. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I wouldn't call my ex. I've never felt the need to call up an ex and be like “Hey” and find out that they're going off with somebody else and then they're, you know, having a good time. I'm of the opinion that once a relationship is done, it's done. So, I guess, once you've been that intimate with someone, once you've been that close, there's really no going back to being platonic. I've never had it work on any level. They're either still too attached or I'm still too attached, and I fully know that. And it would be unhealthy for me to hang around and pine after them or have them pine after me. (26-year-old)

They described holding onto the memories and remembering the fond times, but not trying to recreate what was once there because it probably would not be the same again. One participant sums this up nicely by stating that “what I would do and what I did do was enjoy the thoughts and memories for what they are but not try to get them back. Getting them back is not the thing that is going to happen. It's more productive to simply enjoy it for what it was and let it be what it was and not try to make anything else that

thing” (29-year-old). Participants stated that if you broke up once, you would more than likely re-discover the reasons for the break-up if you tried again.

The second category under *hesitation* is being hesitant to initiate interaction with a romantic interest. This response highlighted a difference between the two groups of men as well. Many of the participants in the sample said they would initiate in response to cues they assumed were being sent their way. They also sometimes described being mindful to “test the waters” before making a move. However, the men in the LSE group indicated that they would hesitate to the point of not initiating interaction. A 29-year-old participant stated, “I would not approach the person. I might wave at them and see if they recognize me at most... and beyond that, see what their reaction to that was...But I sincerely doubt that I would approach that person.” Most of these men described letting the girl in the scenario initiate, stating that she would say something to them or reach out somehow if she were truly interested. They also described this hesitation in terms of not wanting to bother her, assuming she wants her alone time, is meeting somebody, or is working on something and cannot be distracted. Several participants described that they would most likely sit there and debate with themselves about whether or not to approach the romantic interest and wondering if her cues were actually indication of interest. This often ended in participants describing that by the time they got up the courage to make a move, it was too late, such as described by a 26-year-old participant: “There would definitely be an extended period of arguing with myself as to whether or not I should or shouldn’t, and I would honestly probably miss any opportunity that I had to strike up a conversation because by the time I got the gumption up to do something about it, they would probably be gone, ‘cause I’m a coward.” Participants related this to their own lives

in that by the time their hesitation had dwindled, the person's feelings were gone, they had moved away, or they had started another relationship.

Another result specific to the participants in the low self-esteem, high anxious attachment group is that they tended towards *self-denigration*. This theme showed a level of self-dislike that went deeper than experiencing insecurities. These responses demonstrated a strong, all-encompassing negative view of self that was projected onto others. This theme refers to strong negative language about oneself, such as thinking somebody would be repulsed by them, that people could not care less about them, or feeling like they do not deserve nice things. Several participants expressed a feeling of guilt when others are nice to them or do nice things for them. One participant, age 26, stated in response to the acquaintance scenario, "I'd send them a message and hope that they, you know, don't utterly despise me. I think it will end with them not giving a single shit about me reaching out to them on any level and me accepting the fact that they don't want to actually spend any time with me." These participants speak about themselves in a derogatory manner, assuming others are doing the same, and devalue themselves.

Those participants in the low self-esteem, high anxious attachment group also were more likely to describe *avoidance* when it comes to pursuing relationships and sometimes in response to a pursuit, especially if currently in a relationship in their own lives. Many of the participants in this group not only thought finding out information about an acquaintance was "going too far," but described feeling guilt for seeing and knowing that information. They described putting up walls if the girl they liked was dating someone and backing off for a while if this were the case. They also discussed thinking through what the girl in question would want from them, demonstrating a desire

to make sure she was enjoying herself and her life and not to interfere. The participants also indicated that if they were in a relationship, they would not reach out due to valuing monogamy and not wanting to cheat. These behaviors and values escalated in some cases to the point of complete avoidance, as in the case of this 27-year-old participant:

I would probably try to sneak out without the other person knowing and then try to forget the whole thing ever happened. I'm pretty good at forgetting stuff. Hopefully the other person in this scenario just doesn't notice that I'm even there ...or if they do notice, hopefully they don't say anything. Like this is a problem now that some woman is liking stuff on my Facebook profile. So in that event I guess I would unfriend her and just try to put as much distance between me and her as possible. Never go to that yoga place, never go to that coffee shop again.

This participant described avoidance of confrontation and a value of monogamy that causes him to avoid exes, acquaintances, or anyone who has interest in him at all costs. He described sneaking around so that they would not see him. Not all participants in this group described avoidance to this extent, but described being mindful of giving the romantic interest space.

There were also three themes specific to those participants in the high self-esteem, low anxious attachment group. The first area in which this group differed from the other group is that they exhibited *confidence* in the scenarios when interacting with the acquaintance in the coffee shop. These men were more confident in the fact that the acquaintance was truly exhibiting signs of interest and wanted to pursue some type of romantic relationship with the participant:

Oh now this is really extra pretty good because she friended me. I'd end up messaging her seeing if she wanted to get together sometime or if she wants to do anything. I'd probably consider looking through whatever plans I have made and see if she wants to attend them. [She might be thinking,] "Hey, cool picture. Hope he contacts me or whatever." It depends on the reason behind why she friended me in the first place, but whatever it is it'd be good. (20-year-old)

Most participants in this group felt like they now needed to be the one to reciprocate these intentions that the acquaintance was clearly demonstrating. These men took her signals as meaning she was interested and were more likely to reciprocate by asking her to go on a date, asking for her number, or making conversation. They were more likely to believe that she would want to spend time with them and be happy to hear from them.

Those men in the high self-esteem, low anxious attachment group also were more likely to *try to prove* themselves during their interview by coming across as slightly arrogant. This consisted of finding ways throughout the interview of showing how desirable they are/were and demonstrating that they held the power in their dating lives.

One 27-year-old participant described a relationship he had in this way:

I forgot how to spell her name, and she ended up breaking up with me because I couldn't spell her name the right way. And I forgot...but I had gone, it had gone on for maybe 5 months, idk, but the last month I was already over it and I was just trying to find a way to break up with her. I'm not very good about ending them, I just kind of straggle them along.

Responses under this theme also included bragging about past behaviors, describing "pick up strategies" that worked for them, describing how many girls they dragged along, describing past dates or girlfriends in a derogatory tone even if the relationships were meaningful, exaggerating the number of girls they dated or who were attracted to them, making sure to mention how many women hit on them in a single moment, and opening up about disrespectful ways they interacted with women (e.g., using compliments targeting insecurities to manipulate and have sex with women) in a non-remorseful way. Another response in this category was attempting to make others feel sorry for them in order to maintain and reap the benefits of attention.

Men in the higher self-esteem, lower anxious attachment group were more likely to perceive the behaviors in the role reversal scenario as sweet. They tended to be flattered and want to reconsider why they rejected the girl in the first place. One participant stated, “This is just the kind of girl I like.” They appreciated her thoughtfulness and how she went out of her way to show she cared.

Timeline discussion. The timeline discussion was further divided into categories in order to examine participants’ behaviors in relationships, as well as the trajectory of what happens when the participants become interested in a potential romantic partner.

Number and length of relationships. Most participants reported lacking experience with relationships. Some participants outright stated that they have not been in many, if any, relationships, while some reported a higher number of relationships but then described during the interview that they have not been in many since several of the relationships they reported were crushes, dates they had gone on, or times they hooked up. Participants reported their *crushes lasting a long time*, up to several years. Some participants had secret crushes that they never planned to act on. Others had crushes that were unavailable, so they waited around until that person became available. Others described taking that time to figure out if the object of their crush reciprocated the interest. One participant described liking a girl for three years but never saying anything to her: “And it kind of went on for like almost 3 years where we in church would be together and would just glance at each other and look at each other’s eyes. I thought she was beautiful. I thought she was really pretty...but things just never progressed.” One difference that emerged between the two groups of men in this category is that those in the LSE group tended to have longer relationships, lasting at least one year compared to

those in the HSE group who reported their longest relationship all ending in less than a year's time.

Type of relationships. Several participants talked about trying to fit in, increase their social status, or increase their self-esteem by being in relationships. This often led participants to engage in *relationship jumping* or just seeking a warm body. One participant described a relationship in high school as: "It was really just convenient - like we both needed to have a significant other for social status. We were just kind of like let's just say we're boyfriend and girlfriend and go to some dance and people will see that we're not totally inadequate." Participants in this category described dating any available woman they knew in high school regardless of emotional connection in order to meet the expectation that men are supposed to date and thus avoid being seen as odd. Others described this relationship jumping as a way to prove to themselves that they have self-worth, while others described this as a way to suppress their emotions and get through a depressed time, as was the case with a 32-year-old participant:

That was my first significant breakup where it was really rough and I felt really bad... When I rebounded I didn't have much confidence and I kind of masked that with being aggressive and trying to find new ways to find a partner. I just wasn't interested in friends. I was depressed and I think I was just looking for some type of contact to make me get some serotonin flowing or something.

Participant responses in this category described cycling through relationships/sexual partners without feeling fulfilled or engaging in meaningful connections.

A percentage of participants described *reconnection* and were hopeful about getting back together with exes, wanting to check in on them, remain friends, or hook up with them. One participant viewed it as inevitable that there would be a "bounce back" period after every relationship, where two people who have broken up would get back

together for non-committal dates and hook-ups: “Whenever you have a tough breakup there is always a bounce back when you think you’re going to get back together when you achieve some level of intimacy you never have a clean break. You always see something and you hang out and you think it’s another date or something.” Another participant described going on trips with his exes or spontaneously meeting them if they were in fun cities. Men who endorsed seeing break ups as “soft” also tended to describe themselves as spontaneous and impulsive. This involved an impulsive personality, being impulsive in asking someone out, or moving quickly within relationships. Some of the men described inherently being interested in the lives of others and so having a tendency to check in with past partners, while others wanted to either remain involved or remain friends. Checking in could be physically and directly checking in, such as talking with the person, or looking them up or asking friends about the person.

The men in the sample described *infatuation/becoming attached quickly*. One participant described having a series of short, intense relationship where he was consumed with emotions for his partner. Another participant said that he tends to go for “mysterious” women who he becomes “enamored” with. Another participant described feeling like a woman might be the one for him to marry shortly after meeting them. Several responses in this theme included a sense of thinking long-term and thus approaching dating or even just meeting women with this lens of “this could be the one.”

A few participants described being on *different pages* than the individuals they were dating. They mentioned thinking they were either in a relationship with someone or had considered themselves “dating” someone who later denied that label.

Type of person participant dates. A theme that arose in the sample as a whole is that of having an *ideal type* of vision. Several participants described having an ideal girl or type of partner that they were looking for. A participant described his relationship search in this way: “I kind of had a picture of a girlfriend that I wanted and I was kind of like, ‘ok this is it’ - that I found someone to fit that type. Then I’d start talking to them and realize that this person sucked.” Participants described some desired qualities that were very specific, such as a girl with red hair or someone who is petite. Some types were based on past relationships – either trying to find someone who matched qualities of a past relationship / person they dated or knowing what qualities they were no longer looking for. One participant described having a fantasy of what it would be like to fall in love with someone: “My internal fantasy life is just too developed and I would get these big pictures in my head of what it would be like and falling in love with the idea before falling in love with the person.” This participant described that this picture in his head made it even harder to experience rejection because it was smashing the vision he had built up for himself.

Most of the men in the sample reported being interested in or dating women who had *unhealthy qualities*. This included dating women who were going through difficulties, such as dealing with suicidal ideation or trauma, substance abuse issues, or very low self-esteem. Some participants reported that these qualities made it difficult to end relationships with these partners because they either did not want to hurt that person, or they felt manipulated into staying in the relationship. Some participants described liking those qualities in that they could be a listening ear and feel helpful or that they liked the unpredictability that it brought into the relationship. Participants often

mentioned that their friends did not approve of their partners. Another type of response that was coded into this theme was getting involved with women who were simply interested in sex, leaving participants to feel “used.”

Observations of self. Even though men described experiencing emotions throughout their responses in the interview, they seemed intent on *hiding* them. Participants stated that they try to isolate themselves in order to not show their friends that they are having emotions. They also try to push their emotions down and focus on themselves and other things in order to not experience what they are feeling. This response from a 27-year-old participant demonstrates this desire to hide his emotion and to turn it toward focusing on himself: “I would probably be wrecked [after a break-up] but I guess I would want to try it again. I would just take some time to myself and travel and study and focus on me. Hopefully I’m not with anybody, like hanging out with friends. If I am, I would probably find a way to excuse myself to go to the bathroom.”

Men described making an effort to come across as nonchalant when they are, in actuality, experiencing pain. One participant even explained that he tried to adopt a religious practice in order to learn to control his emotion and not feel the negative emotions.

Another theme that emerged in this category was that of *sliding* by either ending up in a relationship that the participant was not necessarily interested in or being in a relationship much longer than intended due to not being able to end it or confront their partner. Another aspect of this theme is moving too quickly in their relationships or becoming attached quickly to their partners. Some participants directly reported receiving feedback that they move too quickly – often without really even knowing the object of their affection.

Men in the low self-esteem, higher anxious attachment group described *setting themselves up for failure*. All men talked about having crushes on and dating unavailable women, whether these are women who are already in a committed relationship, women with mental health issues, such as addiction or depression, or those who have extensive trauma in their pasts. The men in the lower self-esteem, higher anxious attachment group were more likely to engage in actions that would make relationships less likely to start or less likely to be successful. For example, one participant described initiating relationships right before either he or the woman were about to move away and not desiring a long-distance relationship. Another participant described only indicating his interest to his crushes when they were dating somebody since he knew he had no chance with them while they were involved with somebody else.

The men in the higher self-esteem, lower anxious attachment group described acting in response to *polite expectations*. This category refers to behaviors the men would engage in based on societal rules and expectations. They described valuing kindness and “not wanting to be a jerk.” This usually played out in terms of reciprocation. For instance, if someone messaged them on Facebook, they would message back, even if it was to say they were not interested. They also endorsed calling someone back if they attempted, even if they had no interest in maintaining a relationship with the person.

Initiation of relationships. When it came to initiation of relationships, the two groups of men looked very different. Those individuals in the lower self-esteem, higher anxious attachment group described *indirect* ways of indicating their interest, such as writing letters that they would sneak into a crush’s bag, telling friends that they were interested in a particular person to see if word then got around to their crush, giving gifts,

doing favors, or providing compliments. These men often were more likely to wait before acting on their interests. Those who had endorsed higher self-esteem and lower levels of anxious attachment tended to describe *direct* ways of initiation, such as asking a girl for her number, approaching her and asking her on a date, or telling her they found her attractive. These men also tended to value persistence, stating that they think persistence pays off and has paid off for them in the past.

Indication of interest from others. Responses to indicators of interest varied from participant to participant, resulting in several forms of understanding if a person is interested in them romantically. Participants tended to describe confusion over whether or not women were interested in them, and most gravitated toward the assumption that they were not. Participants described watching women to look for specific cues of interest, such as if the person of interest tended to smile at them, look up when they walk into the room, make eye contact, give them “flirty eyes,” touch them, turn toward them, or show up where they tend to spend time. The men described looking for persistence in behaviors, stating if they continued to engage in these cues, then that told them the individual was interested. Participants described additional indicators as: that individual initiating conversation; having smooth, comfortable conversation; going along with their actions, such as responding positively to a compliment, saying yes to hanging out, or engaging in spontaneous plans. Some participants described more direct indicators such as that person simply telling them they like them. Several participants mentioned engaging in sex as a way to know if someone is interested.

Overall Findings

An additional finding that emerged from the interviews was a discrepancy between how participants described their responses to the scenarios and how they described their behaviors in relationships on their timeline. Most participants described being fairly hesitant when it comes to initiating relationships and wanting to implement strong boundaries, noting an especially strong reaction to picking up on interests of the acquaintance in the coffee shop, many stating that they would never do this or felt like this was taking it “too far.” However, when they described their own behaviors, they described being much more lax in their sense of boundaries or hesitancy. They described watching women, intentionally looking for small things, such as how they reacted in situation, if they needed help with anything, specific phrases they might be saying, or any insecurities they might possess.

Many of the men also described having a strong reaction to the role-reversal scenario, again stating that they would never engage in those behaviors when trying to pursue a romantic interest. However, several of those men described believing in persistence and that persistence pays off. They also described engaging in long crushes and becoming attached quickly. They described giving gifts and finding ways to show their affection.

The discrepancies were especially noticeable with the men in the higher self-esteem group as they would describe healthy boundaries during the scenarios but then many described engaging in the exact behaviors they thought were wrong. They were more likely to describe taking a chance on women they barely know due to wanting a relationship or envisioning a romantic future. They also described impulsively and

spontaneously asking people out or letting their intentions be known. Several of the men described relying on their love interests to tell them to stop engaging in their behaviors or to tell them they are being “creepy.”

These participants also stated that they would not contact an ex, and several stated that they would not engage with someone after a rejection. However, in the timelines, participants described checking up on their ex-partners in order to see what they were up to or how they were moving on. They described either actually reconnecting with their ex-partners or contacting them, or desiring to reconnect with their ex-partners, often hoping that the relationship would end up working out or that a close friendship would be maintained.

Participants in the low self-esteem group tended to show more consistency in their responses to the scenarios as compared to their responses in the timeline portion due to a fear in reaching out to a romantic interest. They demonstrated more awareness as to whether or not they were bothering the other person and described a strong desire to not come across as “creepy.” These responses continued in the timeline as these men tended to have more of an internal struggle that created their hesitancy, becoming more consumed with their thoughts. They also assumed their romantic interest would not be interested in them, so they either did not act at all (just fantasized) or acted in indirect ways so they would have less chance of getting hurt.

Another notable difference between the two groups is that men in the LSE group tended to tell the interviewer that they were mean or lacked social awareness; however, men in the HSE group reported being told that they were “jerks” and also demonstrated

arrogance in their answers. This highlights a difference in self-awareness between the two groups of men.

Quantitative results from the current study were fairly consistent with qualitative results. All interview participants scored high on empathy, so it is difficult to know how these results would have compared to survey data. Men in the low self-esteem/high anxious attachment group were more likely to describe indirect ways of showing affection, such as giving gifts, leaving notes, or talking to their crush's friends, which is consistent with the quantitative data that showed higher levels of anxious attachment were predictive of expressive acts. Men in the higher self-esteem/low anxious attachment group were more likely to be direct in indicating their interest; whereas men in the low self-esteem/high anxious attachment group demonstrated indirect ways of indicating interest, which is also consistent with the quantitative data. Anxious attachment was predictive of greater proxy pursuit behaviors, such as talking to friends about your crush.

There were some differences that emerged between the quantitative and qualitative data. All men in the interviews described lower self-esteem even though half of them endorsed having high self-esteem on the survey. The qualitative data was also inconsistent regarding two of the behaviors that were significantly predicted by low self-esteem. Survey results indicated that low self-esteem was a significant predictor of interactional contact, invasion, aggression, and fantasy actions. Men in the low self-esteem group during the interviews did describe some interactional contact, such as wanting to be in places where their crush might be, and fantasy actions, such as thinking they were in a relationship with someone who later denied that label, but did not describe

invasion or aggression. In our sample, however, men who endorsed higher self-esteem were more likely to endorse engaging in harassment behaviors and expressive acts.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impacts of empathy, self-esteem, and anxious attachment on stalking behaviors from the perspective of the stalker. The current study consisted of a mixed-methods approach, allowing the researchers to explore the impact of these factors on a broad level and then to focus specifically on nuances of how these three factors affected thought processes and the trajectory of stalking. This study added to existing literature by conducting a qualitative study with individuals who have engaged in stalking behavior and by including empathy as an independent variable. Findings confirmed this study's hypothesis that lower levels of empathy, lower levels of self-esteem, and higher levels of anxious attachment would be predictive of stalking behavior; however, empathy was the primary predictor while lower self-esteem and higher anxious attachment were only sometimes predictive of stalking behavior.

According to the quantitative results, higher levels of anxious attachment significantly predicted proxy pursuit (e.g., the use of third parties to gather information) and expressive acts (e.g., making declaration of love verbally or in writing, express love for them through song lyrics or love poems). These results are consistent with the literature in that anxious attachment has been shown to be linked to stalking behavior, especially indirect forms of stalking such as surveillance (Marshall, 2013). Anxious attachment in the current study was only significantly related to two forms of stalking, and surveillance was not one of those types of behaviors; however, both proxy pursuit

and expressive acts can be indirect ways of stalking, allowing a safer mode of engaging with their crush that minimizes threat of rejection, which can be debilitating for those with high levels of anxious attachment.

Lower self-esteem indicated increased behaviors of fantasy actions (e.g., marriage proposal while courting), interactional contacts (e.g., showing up at places the target will be), invasion (e.g., breaking in), and aggression (e.g., attacks). Research has not directly looked at the role of self-esteem on stalking behavior, but there are several theories of stalking that include lower levels of self-esteem as a construct. These theories posit that lower self-esteem is linked to higher levels of stalking behavior, which is consistent with the findings of this study and support the hypothesis. Theories, such as the Relational Goal Pursuit Theory, suggest that individuals with lower self-esteem will persist longer and will feel like they have no dating alternatives. These feelings could lead to a desire to act and rely on options that are present in order to provide certainty of reaching their goal and attaining fulfillment, rather than wait and anticipate future rejection (Davis et al., 2012). Individuals with lower self-esteem, if expecting rejection, can engage in interactional contact behaviors in order to feel out whether or not the target likes them and provides a safer way of potentially initiating a relationship that places the power in the target's hands and decreases outright rejection, which would further reinforce the low self-esteem. The current study linked lower self-esteem to more aggressive behaviors, which is not consistent with previous studies or the current study's hypotheses.

Empathy, which is a variable not often studied in the stalking literature, was used to measure awareness in the current study and was significantly related to almost all forms of stalking behavior, with the exception of hyper-intimacy which it only

marginally predicted. Lower levels of empathy were also significantly related to engaging in more fantasy actions, such as making a simple or elaborate marriage proposal or believing to be in a relationship with someone who later denies that label. These quantitative findings support our hypothesis that those with lower levels of empathy would engage in more stalking behavior.

Role of Empathy

The role of empathy was further examined in the qualitative portion of the study by looking at responses to a role-reversal scenario as well as allowing comparison between responses to structured scenarios and descriptions of the participants' behaviors in their own relationships. The results of these comparisons also support our hypothesis that lower levels of empathy or awareness is linked to higher levels of stalking behavior. The literature has briefly looked into empathy as a construct related to stalking and suggested a lack of awareness from stalkers as to the impact of their behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Davis & Frieze, 2000; De Becker, 1997; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000, Sinclair & Frieze, 2000). Findings from the current study are consistent with these suggestions; however, previous studies have examined this construct by comparing quantitative responses from stalkers and targets in order to view discrepancies (Davis & Frieze, 2000; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). This study was able to examine empathy, or awareness, through multiple lenses (e.g., online survey, experimental scenario, description of own behaviors) in order to find gaps in the level of awareness.

Participants in the interviews all endorsed higher levels of empathy on the online survey (perhaps due to self-selection of those wanting to help with the research); however, a few findings emerged that could be linked to lower levels of empathy or

awareness. The majority of participants described experiencing difficulty with role-play, indicating that they were not sure what the other person in the scenario might be thinking or feeling. Some participants indicated outright that they could not role-play. All participants described fairly strong boundaries and awareness during the scenarios that they would not want to come across as “creepy” or intrude too much on someone’s privacy or overstep boundaries. They demonstrated a clear thought process that kept them from engaging in stalking behaviors. However, several of these men, especially men in the higher self-esteem group, then described very different behaviors when interacting with romantic interests in their lives. They displayed much softer boundaries and would often contradict their responses from the scenarios. The majority of men in the lower self-esteem group continued to describe hesitancy, almost to a fault, preventing them from interacting with romantic interests or pursuing any type of relationship. Another finding was that several of the participants in the higher self-esteem group reported thinking the role-reversal scenario was sweet and stating that they had interest in a girl like that.

These findings suggest that many participants, especially those in the higher self-esteem group, are not aware of their behaviors or the impact they have on others. They can point out and condemn these behaviors when they see others doing them or see them written down, thus demonstrating they know certain behaviors are unhealthy. However, when it comes to their own relationships, they seem blind to the fact that they are engaging in the very activity they discouraged. All of the men seemed to experience some difficulty with empathy, or role-play, which could also be due to second-guessing oneself due to the low self-esteem. However, when it comes to stalking behavior, those in the low self-esteem group seemed to be more aware of their own behaviors, such as

coming across as “mean” and other social mishaps, and were protected against engaging in these negative behaviors due to thinking they have no chance and thinking “why even try.” Men in the higher self-esteem group still described experiencing low self-esteem and seemed to be masking this fact from themselves in order to protect their ego. They proved that they are able to recognize unhealthy behaviors from others, but when it comes to their own behavior, they try to convince themselves that they are desirable or good in order to maintain this façade and live in naiveté. Challenging their own thoughts or behaviors seems to be threatening for this group of individuals.

This finding supports our hypothesis that lower levels of empathy would be more predictive of stalking behavior and is consistent with existing literature (De Becker, 1997; Langinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000), but also suggests that empathy and self-awareness should be measured separately as distinct variables. All the men in the sample demonstrated empathy when the situation did not involve them, but had difficulty with empathy or mental perspective-taking when it was related to how a crush might react in their own lives and with self-awareness in recognizing that they are engaging in similar “intrusive behaviors” that they discouraged from others. It aligns with claims that stalkers are potentially “naïve” or oblivious to the reality that their pursuit is unwanted or creating discomfort (De Becker, 1997). Those with lower empathy are not attuned to others’ thoughts and feelings and thus can only rely on their own thoughts and feelings when interacting. As it relates to the current study’s sample, those individuals with lower awareness and lower self-esteem rely on their own desire of wanting to know that others desire them in leading their behaviors. This can cause social mishaps as empathy is an important social skill when it comes to developing relationships. Difficulty with

emotional empathy has been associated with more violent behaviors (Lau & Davis, 2003), which aligns with the findings of this study, but low empathy here was also shown to relate to mild forms of stalking. If the only information one can draw from is their own thoughts and feelings, it would make sense that they would do whatever they can to appease that experience and neglect to necessarily think about the impact it has on the other person. They are simply trying to address their own experience and do what they think might help them. This also creates a ripe environment for these individuals to be on a completely separate page than the person they are targeting. Without that other perspective as information to inform their interactions, they only have themselves as reference. This is a social skill that is needed to appropriately interact; thus, when it is missing, individuals have difficulty aligning with the other person involved and get caught up in their own world and vision.

Role of Self-Esteem

Lower self-esteem was linked to several stalking behaviors in the qualitative sample, and was a component that every participant in the interview portion discussed. Participants described themes such as self-denigration, using relationships to increase social status and self-worth, feeling invisible, seeing “stalking” behaviors as sweet, etc. that, without being able to necessarily engage in perspective-taking, are guiding their interactions and behaviors. It would make sense, then, that men would engage in these persistent, stalking-type behaviors because they want someone to recognize them and are looking for ways to feel worthy and temporarily good about themselves, relying on external sources to do this for them. They do not necessarily think that someone would feel differently. Now, on reflection, some of the participants noticed that their behaviors

were not the best, but in the moment they were consumed with their own thoughts and feelings and did what they needed to do. Introversion can be attributed to some of these results as well in that introverted individuals tend to spend more time in their heads and have a fuller fantasy life, making these particular individuals even more consumed with their own thoughts and feelings (since they have difficulty with perspective-taking) and more infatuated with their romantic and idealized vision of the relationship.

The Relational Goal Pursuit Theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004) was a theory of interest in this study and guided the decision to test the primary constructs of self-esteem, anxious attachment, and empathy. This theory posits that individuals link being in a specific relationship to the ultimate goal of happiness or self-worth, which is exacerbated when an individual believes there are no alternatives or that there is a likely destiny between them and the target. This aligns with the study's results in that the men in the qualitative study reported having lower self-esteem and viewed themselves as undesirable, socially unskilled, and inexperienced, and viewed relationships as the solution to restore self-worth and cause them to feel good about themselves. Thus their pursuit of the relationship is intensified because the outcome is extremely important, and they do not feel like they have many options. Many of the men also described having an ideal or specific type of partner or relationship in mind in terms of leading to this goal of self-worth and increased self-esteem, thus leading them to more intensely pursue individuals who fit in that type and allowing for premature emotions related to destiny, creating exacerbated stalking-like behaviors lasting for years.

It makes sense that the group of men with the lowest reported scores of self-esteem are more avoidant and self-sabotaging when it comes to relationships with

stronger boundaries set up in terms of deciding not to reach out to love interests. The Relational Goal Pursuit Theory describes needing the confidence to believe they have what it takes to accomplish their desired goal, thus inflating their own self-efficacy. The men in the higher self-esteem group still described experiencing low self-esteem (which lines up with the baseline criteria for this theory of believing they have few options and believing this relationship is the only way to achieve a sense of worth); however, they inflated their self-confidence by reporting higher levels of self-esteem and describing to the interviewer their beliefs that the person is interested or that they are highly desired. They may contradict themselves later, but these men tended to overcompensate for their low self-esteem by coming across in an arrogant way in order to prove to themselves and to the interviewer that they are worthy. These men were more direct in their ways of pursuing the target, thus more likely to “reciprocate” based on what they thought the target’s intentions were (typically assumed they were interested), saw “stalking” behaviors (e.g., showing up where they were, giving gifts, calling often, knowing if something happened during their day) as sweet, and were more likely to hold crushes for a longer period of time (persist for longer). Men in the higher self-esteem category were more likely to describe engaging in “polite” behavior, which aligns with this idea of confidence in goal attainment in that they are only reciprocating what they assume the other person’s intentions are. They assume the individual is interested in them or has good intentions behind their actions as compared to the other group of men that assumes negative intentions or a lack of intention behind the other person’s actions.

The intense emotions that interview participants described line up with the concept of emotional flooding in the Relational Goal Pursuit Theory. Emotional flooding

is when negative thoughts and feelings are absorbing and consuming. Participants in the sample described intense negative emotion when experiencing breakups and rejection, taking it personally, and coming to a point where they “cannot handle it.” The intense emotions that they describe experiencing come at the end of a relationship – or crush – and also at the beginning of a relationship or crush in the form of infatuation and over attachment. They are either consumed with finally having “attained” and wanting to maintain the goal or trying to accomplish this goal they have placed for themselves. Then, when the relationship or strong crush does not work out in the way they were hoping or envisioned, they are consumed with negative thoughts, such as depression, shame, and jealousy. The Relational Goal Pursuit Theory states that these negative emotions serve as a reminder of this unmet goal, which leads to rumination, and thus increases the negative emotion. The participants in the sample describe trying to push those emotions down and focus on themselves in order to serve as a distraction and help them get over the relationship (or this unmet goal). This is an adaptive strategy for them so that these men do not spiral into deep depression or unhealthy behaviors. The men who did allow expression of their emotions ended up engaging in harmful behaviors, such as addictions and suicidal thoughts. The men also described how hurt they would be by reminders of their ex-partner. Thus several of the men stated they would set firm boundaries after a breakup and would not contact their ex or check in. Those who were more likely to check in were the more impulsive, persistent individuals who were either trying to use the reconnection as a way to regain a sense of self-worth or were hopeful to remain good friends or get back together.

Another way intense emotions connect to a tendency to engage in stalking behavior is that the men describe being so consumed with emotion that it can take over, leading to what Relational Goal Pursuit Theory refers to as emotional flooding. This type of emotional experience takes up mental energy and space and can cloud one's experience. Since these negative emotions are absorbing and confusing, this can make it difficult to think about another person's perspective (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Since the men in the sample described experiencing such intense emotion both at the beginning and the end of a relationship, the behaviors tended to be enacted at these times due to the men trying to deal with their emotions. This finding also lines up with the research in that we find men mostly pursuing acquaintances and former significant others, thus engaging in stalking behavior when they first like someone (at the beginning of the relationship when they are infatuated) and after a breakup (when they are consumed with negative emotion from the rejection). The negative emotion experienced after a breakup is the stronger, more consuming experience, thus helping to explain why this is the most common form of stalking seen.

Role of Anxious Attachment

Levels of anxious attachment seemed to be the main construct that distinguishes between men's behaviors in this study. Attachment theory describes two types of anxious attachment: preoccupied and fearful. Preoccupied attachment consists of a negative view of self and a positive view of others, and a fearful style consists of a negative view of both self and others. Anxious attachment involves anxiety and anger over perceived abandonment. The men in the sample who exhibit anxious attachment overwhelmingly describe strong negative views of self that influence their interaction styles with potential

partners. The men describe pursuing love interests in indirect ways and engaging in behaviors that “set them up for failure.” This approach could be because it is threatening for them to put themselves out there. With anxious attachment, an individual’s sense of self-worth and security is tied to a relationship (Dutton & Winstead, 2006); thus rejection (either from a breakup or when asking someone out) can be threatening to one’s identity and can unravel them. Those with anxious attachment need approval from others in order to maintain a positive view (or working model) of self.

Current Study Contribution

The results of this study show that lower levels of empathy are most predictive of stalking behavior. Low self-esteem is linked to stalking behavior in that they need the goal of a relationship in order to achieve self-worth; however, self-esteem that is moderately low but still allows for some self-confidence and appreciation leads to more persistence and more direct ways of pursuing. Higher levels of anxious attachment, at least in the current study’s sample, provides some protection against stalking behavior on some level due to the participants’ strong fear of rejection. They are more likely to put boundaries in place in order to avoid the behavior in which they engage to prevent vulnerability. However, these men are more likely to employ gift-giving, letter writing, and other types of pursuance behaviors in order to stick their toes in the water and feel out interest from their crush. They may often do this when they know the other person is in a relationship or is otherwise unavailable to them in order to protect their sense of identity if the person turns them down. The results of this study also align well with Cupach and Spitzberg’s theory of Relational Goal Pursuit.

This study suggests that empathy is an important factor to be considered when examining stalking behaviors. Low levels of empathy significantly predicted all stalking behavior, and continued to appear as a factor even when self-esteem was seemingly higher and regardless of attachment style. When an individual with low empathy endorsed adverse childhood experiences, this created a dangerous combination, as those participants described engaging in the most direct stalking behavior. These individuals are unaware, have had this behavior modeled for them, and could feel like they have nothing to lose by engaging in those behaviors.

Role of ACEs

While childhood trauma was not the focus of the studies in this dissertation, the measure was included since high ACE scores often predict interpersonal violence (Mair, Cunradi, & Todd, 2012; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). In fact, ACE scores were correlated with all stalking behaviors and items in the Conflict Tactics Scale as well as with low self-esteem and high anxious attachment. It was unrelated to empathy. When this distal variable was included in the regression analyses along with empathy, self-esteem and anxious attachment, it affected previous results as it was significant in all stalking scores and in the fantasy sub-scale of the new measure. Empathy remained significant in three categories of stalking behavior (e.g., proxy pursuit, mediated contact, and coercion) but was attenuated when ACE scores were entered into regression analyses. Previous literature has found a link between child maltreatment and increased risk of stalking victimization (Ménard & Pincus, 2014); however, the current study further suggests a link to increased stalking perpetration. Since this was an exploratory piece of the study, more research will be needed to fully understand the mechanisms that

develop linking childhood trauma with development of attachment schemas, self-esteem and empathy and choices in romantic relationship interactions.

Limitations of Current Study

While the quantitative study gleaned a robust sample of men to help elucidate the relationships between empathy, self-esteem and attachment with stalking behavior, the current qualitative study included a relatively small number of homogenous participants. The sample included ten white males in their 20s and 30s. The results, then, are not completely generalizable to a broader population. Another limitation is that men in only two cities were eligible to participate, thus further limiting the generalizability of the study.

Another limitation of the current study was the relatively low number of stalking behaviors endorsed by the sample at large. The highest score on the ORI-P was a 41.7 out of a possible score of 462. This could be due to the higher levels of empathy present in the current study's sample. All interview participants that volunteered to participate did place in the top 50% of endorsed stalking behavior with most in the 75th percentile of the survey sample. Future research should include participants who engage in higher levels of stalking behavior in order to further assess the impact of the predictor variables (e.g., empathy, self-esteem, anxious attachment) and examine replication of the findings of this study.

It should also be noted that many of the milder forms of stalking behavior discussed in this study could be viewed as healthy courting behaviors depending on the person to which the behaviors are directed and their thoughts on the person engaging in them. The legal definition of stalking states that the behavior must be perceived as

unwanted and as arising fear, thus defining a behavior as stalking is dependent on perception and could vary based on perception of the target versus the perception of the pursuer. This study only includes the perception of the pursuer and thus the limitation of not having that perception from the target in order to indicate whether or not they viewed the behaviors as “stalking” should be taken into account.

Suggestions for Further Research

Moving forward, expanding the quantitative research to include some more mediational measures that could further illuminate the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking with larger samples so that path analyses can be conducted would be a strong next step. This would assist in understanding how empathy, self-esteem, and attachment interact with childhood trauma to contribute to an increase in stalking behavior. In addition, qualitative research should continue to examine empathy/awareness, self-esteem and the role childhood trauma plays in stalking behavior later in life. This study showed that an under-researched group (those with seemingly higher self-esteem and lower empathy or perspective-taking) display more stalking behavior, and more specifically engage in behaviors that are more direct and can cause greater distress than expected. Perhaps these men also were high in psychopathy so directly measuring that construct or related constructs (e.g., the dark triad of traits which includes psychopathy but also narcissism and Machiavellianism) would be helpful in future research to tease out these various predictors of stalking behavior. Probing for more understanding of what men are thinking and feeling leading up to stalking behavior would also be valuable to the field.

Another area of research that could be further explored is how these milder forms of stalking behavior relate to later displays of domestic violence behaviors. Jacobson & Gottman (1998) identified two types of batterers (cobras and pit bulls), of which pit bulls are described to have similar traits to what the literature defines as stalking. Further research could examine whether this milder type of stalking behavior (or the predictors described in this study: anxious attachment, low self-esteem, and empathy/awareness) is a precursor to the pit bull typology of domestic violence and could examine preventative efforts aimed at protecting against these stalking behaviors to also help decrease the likelihood of domestic violence.

Implications for Practice

Counseling and clinical psychologists along with other mental health providers can use the results of this study to guide the kinds of questions that would be useful in further understanding the romantic relationship dynamics of men with low self-esteem and high anxious attachment. In fact, these types of men may enter therapy to take care of relationship issues, but if not, examining their profile using standardized measures can give a mental health professional an advantage in conceptualizing their presenting problems.

Furthermore, if a man is sent to therapy as a way to intervene in his stalking behavior, the research also gives some indication of areas to explore to address underlying issues in therapy. Depending on the severity of violence present in the stalking behavior, mental health professionals can focus on helping perpetrators increase their empathy or level of awareness of what behaviors they are engaging in, as well as their own emotions and self-views (self-esteem). The men in the current study

demonstrated an aversive response to stalking behavior on paper, but often neglected to recognize their own behavioral experiences. Men also seemed to be unaware of the intensity of their own insecurities and negative emotions due to the defenses they had employed to protect their self-concept. Therapy could focus on educating and talking through healthy relationships and healthy boundaries, which will also help to address anxious attachment.

Prevention of these problems is preferable to waiting until men reach adulthood with the kinds of problems that could lead to stalking. Current programs, like relationship education programs aimed at adolescents or social skill curricula, need to update content to address the kinds of problematic thought processes and behaviors exhibited by the men in the qualitative study so as to help young men adjust their thinking and routines. New curricula need to be developed to enhance self-awareness and empathy for a variety of people but particularly for romantic partners. Interventions also need to be rigorously evaluated in efficacy trials to show what works in teaching emotional regulation, perspective-taking, self-awareness and healthy relationship attitudes and skills and how effective these techniques are at addressing issues of low self-esteem, lower levels of empathy, and higher anxious attachment.

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Appendix A: Instructions for Think-Aloud Task

In this study we are interested in the kinds of thoughts people have when they are in certain situations. Often, when people are going about their daily affairs, interacting with others and so forth, they have a kind of internal monologue going through their heads, a constant stream of thoughts or feelings which reflect their reactions to something which is happening. What we'd like you to do is to play a part in a couple situations we have taped. Your part will involve listening to situations and tuning in to what is running through your mind, and then saying these thoughts out loud. The tapes are divided into segments. At the end of each segment, there will be a tone, followed by a pause of 2 minutes, during which time we would like you to say out loud whatever is going through your mind. Say as much as you can. You will hear another tone with a 30 second warning to make sure you have said everything you wanted to say and have completed your train of thought. The final tone will signal the end of the talking portion and the beginning of the next segment. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers, so please just say whatever comes to mind, without judging whether it seems appropriate or not. The more you can tell us the better. Try to imagine as clearly as you can that it is really you in the situation. Note that your task is not to speak back to any one of the voices on the tape, as though you were having a conversation with one of them. Rather, you should tune in to your own thoughts and say them out loud. Your comments will be recorded. You have a prompt in front of you to help provide guidance on specific areas of interest to us, but feel free to add thoughts that are not consumed under those questions. Let's do a practice run first.

Appendix B: Audio-Recorded Scenarios for the Think-Aloud Task

Prompts Provided for each Scenario (In a sheet of paper in front of the participant)

Describe your thought process and emotions.

Describe what you would do.

Describe the thoughts and feelings of others in the scenario.

Practice Scenario

Part A. You run into a friend while grocery shopping – a close friend with whom you feel very comfortable and see often. You trust this friend and always enjoy spending time with them. You consider them one of your closest and truest friends. The two of you decide that you are going to hang out later, but the plans are left open.

At this point the recording ends and the “think out loud” begins. As in the regular scenarios, after the participant has finished their thoughts, they click to begin the next recording.

Part B. You discuss potentially inviting some of your mutual friends for a group get-together, which you do fairly regularly. However, the two of you also discuss how it would be fun to hang out just the two of you to chill and catch up, and maybe catch a movie at the local theater. Plans are uncertain, and you both decide you will be in touch later in the day to specify.

At this point the recording ends and the second “think out loud” segment begins. After the participant has finished their thoughts, the practice session ends. Feedback is given.

Acquaintance Scenario

Part A. You are sitting at a table against the wall in your favorite coffee shop, enjoying your beverage of choice. As you are sitting there, you feel a slight breeze as someone brushes past you. You catch a pleasant whiff of body spray and glance up only to notice that you recognize the individual, dressed in yoga pants, as they arrived. They take a seat at a table by themselves. You remember that this individual was in a class you attended in the past. You find this individual attractive and remember being casually interested in this person when you were in the class together.

Part B. As you sip your drink, you lean back in your chair and take in the sights. Something catches your eye, so you look that way just to realize that the individual you know is glancing around the coffee shop, scanning the environment, their eyes landing on you before they look back at their computer, smile, and sip their drink. They run their fingers through their hair as they lean their head back. As you chill in the coffee shop, you remember they frequent a yoga class in the area and you learn from their t-shirt this individual’s favorite local band and from their screen saver, their place of work. The individual continues to attend to their computer and engage in the occasional conversation with passersby, and you pack up to leave considering you have a prior engagement to attend shortly.

Part C. Time has passed, you have not seen the individual from the coffee shop in a while. She friended you on Facebook and liked one of your posts.

Part D. Once the whole scenario is over have the recording ask: What will you do in this situation? How do you proceed? How do you think it will end?

Ex-Intimate Scenario

Part A. You are now a single man. Your most recent relationship ended not long ago. The relationship was a good one – you have fond memories – and you felt connected to that partner. It was a significant relationship for you. Your ex exhibited many of the traits you thought you wanted in a partner, and the breakup was not easy to go through. You knew them well, felt comfortable with them, and felt the relationship had reached a deeper level. A level of intimacy had been achieved. This individual shared intimate details of their life and interests with you, and the two of you shared inside jokes as well as specific meanings for things only the two of you would understand. You really miss her.

Part B. You find that you are occasionally reminded of your ex. You notice that your thoughts sometimes drift back to this person and the relationship the two of you had. You also notice various reminders you encounter during your days. As you drive to work, you hear a song on the radio that reminds you of them and a moment that the two of you shared. You happen to meet up with a friend at a restaurant that you and your ex

used to frequent often. A TV show that you used to watch together comes on or you see a quote that alludes to an inside joke the two of you shared. As you are checking your Facebook page, you notice a picture of your ex that includes one of your mutual friends. It looks like they are enjoying themselves, but as you scroll through your feed, you don't recognize where they are or who else they are with.

Part C. You call your ex to attempt contact. Your ex dismisses the phone call to voicemail. The voicemail is set up to say that your ex will be out of town starting in a few days to celebrate the holiday with some guy and that anyone who is calling should expect a delayed response during that period of time as she will have limited cell phone reception.

Part D. Once the whole scenario is over have the recording ask: What will you do in this situation? How do you proceed? How do you think it will end?

Role Reversal

Part A. You are hanging out with a group of male and female friends. This group gets together on a fairly regular basis. One of the women in the group asked you out a year ago, and you turned her down because she was just not your type. But, she continues to be really happy to see you.

Part B. You start to notice this girl more often. Last week you saw her running an errand across the street from your work just as you were leaving. Your birthday was last Friday and you received a handmade card from this person in the mail. This morning she walked by you at the gym

on the way to a new Zumba class. You had never noticed her there before. You had a really bad day at work. Your boss picked on you about a small error at work. As you enter your house you notice a pan of brownies on the door step with a note from this girl that says “Hope your day gets better.”

Part C. You message her on Facebook to thank her for the brownies.

Some time passes before you see her again, however she attempted to call you once but you couldn't answer.

Part D. Once the whole scenario is over have the recording ask: What do you think she will do next? How do you feel about this situation? What will you do next?

Table 1

Personal Demographics: Percentage of Participants in Each Dimension

Gender			Race			Ethnicity	Age					Sexual Orientation					Mental Health				
Male	Trans	Nonbinary	White	Black	Other	Latino	18+	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Straight	Gay	Bi	Pan	Queer	Depression	Anxiety	Substance Abuse	Other
97	2	<1	91	4	5	6	8	46	28	8	4	6	77	11	6	3	3	31	30	10	4.5

Table 2

Relationship Demographics: Percentage of Participants in Each Dimension

In a Relationship Currently?	Length of Current Relationship (Years)				Number of Relationships				Longest Relationships Length (Years)			
Yes	<1	1-5	6-10	10+	0	1-5	6-10	10+	<1	1-5	6-10	10+
47	18	40	9	33	6	75	10	9	18	44	11	27

Table 3

List of eigenvalues for the four factors of the Grand Gestures Scale generated from a factor analysis using Varimax rotation

Items in the Grand Gestures Scale:	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Thought up ways to be where they might be (e.g., a favorite store, coffee shop, bar, restaurant) on the off chance that they might be there.	.02	.07	.90	-.14
Actually showed up in places they might be at the times they might be there.	.10	.05	.85	-.02
Showed up on the doorstep of their apartment or house, without an appointment/date.	.24	.19	.49	.16
Brainstormed ways to meet significant people in their lives.	.03	.32	.61	.20
Surprised the person with gifts.	.67	.31	.21	.13
Made a declaration of your love for the person verbally or in writing (e.g., saying "I love you.")	.81	.12	-.04	.21
Made a simple marriage proposal to the person.	.21	.28	-.18	.73
Set up an elaborate way to make a marriage proposal to the person (e.g., through sky writing, atop a tall building with their favorite flowers all around, through a scavenger hunt).	.17	.00	.06	.84
Lavished the person with praise.	.83	.10	.11	-.01
Expressed your love for them through sharing song lyrics, poems, pieces of art, plays, movies, TV shows, novels, etc. created by you or others with them.	.77	.03	.10	-.03
Made grand gestures to show your love for them	.71	.30	.14	.10
Spontaneously touched or kissed them.	.79	.24	-.01	.11
Were willing to change your life, plans for the future, etc. to accommodate needs you perceived they had in order to remain near them.	.42	.75	.08	.04
Actually changed your life, plans, etc. to accommodate perceived needs or in order to remain near them.	.32	.76	.03	.21
Were willing to change your values to accommodate them or match their values to increase chances that you two would end up together.	.12	.85	.17	.02
Actually changed your values to accommodate them or match their values to increase chances that you two would end up together.	.03	.79	.22	.26
Tried to persuade them that the two of you were destined to be together.	.28	.50	.24	.22
Was there a time you thought you were in a relationship with someone and later they denied that label?	-.06	.22	.17	.68

Table 4

List of scales, number of items, Cronbach Alpha scores, means, standard deviations and ranges

	Cronbach Alpha	Means (S.D.) or Percentage	Range
Distal Variables (# items)			
ACES (10)	.74		0-9
0 ACES		39	
1 ACE		18	
2 ACE		16	
3 ACE		13	
4+ ACES		14	
Proximal Variables (# items)			
Empathy (16)	.84	62.36 (6.99)	38-80
Anxious (Attachment) (18)	.95	58.96 (24.54)	18-114
Avoidant (Attachment) (18)	.95	50.61 (21.92)	17-108
Self-Esteem (10)	.91	19.95 (5.97)	10-35
Attitude Variable (# items)			
Relationship Beliefs (15)	.85	57.37 (15.13)	15-95
Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit Scale (ORI) Subscales (# items)			
Hyper-attention (9)	.88	7.76 (9.03)	0-38
Mediated Contact (30)	.92	3.77 (9.54)	0-81
Proxy Pursuit (5)	.68	0.90 (2.20)	0-13
Interactional Contact (5)	.74	1.02 (2.42)	0-14
Harassment (6)	.82	0.70 (2.45)	0-17
Surveillance (5)	.69	1.15 (2.70)	0-18
Invasion (4)	.72	0.25 (1.27)	0-12
Coercion (7)	.89	0.32 (2.07)	0-21
Aggression/violence (6)	.89	0.31 (2.04)	0-21
Relationship Violence (#items)			
Conflict Tactics Scale (8)	.86	0.75 (2.37)	0-14
Grand Gestures (# items)			
Be Around (4)	.75	9.75 (5.14)	4-25
Expression (6)	.89	21.61 (10.59)	6-42
Change (5)	.86	9.78 (5.97)	4-32
Fantasy (3)	.66	4.00 (1.58)	2-14

Table 5

Correlation Matrix

	Empat hy	S-E	Anx .	Avo id.	R. B	AC ES	G.G. Total	H-I	M. C.	P.P	I.C	Har r.	Sur .	Inv .	Co.	Ag g.	CT S	B. A.	E. A	W. C.
Self-Esteem	.08																			
Anxious Attachment	.24**	.56*																		
Avoidant Attachment	-.25**	.32*	.30*																	
Relationship Beliefs ACES	.00	-.03	.09	-.11																
Grand Gestures Total	-.08	.40*	.27*	.24*	-.03															
Hyper-Intimacy Mediated Contact Proxy Pursuit	-.14	.00	-.13	-.16	.02	.14														
Interactional Contact Harassment Surveillance Invasion	-.09	.16	.17	.13	.09	*.27*	.45**	.50*	.61	.59	.78	.67	.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67
	-.25**	.17	.08	.17	.08	*.37**	.61	.59	.78	.67	.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.65
	-.19*	.12	.18	*.26*	**.22	*.43*	.29**	.60	.78	.67	.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.65
		.27*				*.55*		.59	.78	.67	.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.65
	-.15	*	.16	.14	.10	*.31**		.59	.78	.67	.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.65
	-.18	.21*	.15	.18	.16	*.33**		.46	.77	.72	.73	.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.64	.67	.65	.65
	-.18	.13	.06	.13	.16	*.25**		.46	.69	.64	.67	.65	.65	.65	.65	.65	.65	.65	.65	.65
	-.23*	.19*	-.01	.12	.07	*.29**		.39	.87	.67	.72	.76	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70

Coercion						.43*		.28	.83	.60	.60	.75	.64	.92						
	-.28**	.11	-.06	.14	.10	*	.28**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**						
Aggression						.44*		.30	.82	.57	.62	.76	.63	.91	.97					
CTS	-.24*	.14	-.05	.10	.06	*	.27**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
					-	.26*			.28	.20	.25	.32	.25	.38	.34	.36				
Being	-.13	.20*	.10	.20*	.20	*	.10	.12	**	*	**	**	**	**	**	**				
Around					-			.30	.27	.24		.23	.28							
Expressive	-.07	.07	-.02	.09	.11	.13	.59**	**	**	**	.17	**	**	.19	.17	.13	.06			
Acts					-															
	-.07	-.05	.19*	*	.10	.05	.88**	**	.16	.08	.18	.14	.06	.11	.07	.11	.06			.25
Willingness																				
to								.39	.45	.42	.35	.44	.31	.38	.39	.35				.39
Change	-.13	.02	.01	-.05	.16	.14	.81**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	.07	**	**	.55
Fantasy						.30*														
Actions	-.33**	.09	-.13	.07	.07	*	.43**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	.23	.13	**	.28
																				.41

Note: *significant at .01

**significant at .05

Table 6

List of significant hypothesized predictors across all stalking behavior groups, conflict tactics scale

Types of Stalking Behaviors	Empathy	Low Self-Esteem	Anxious Attachment
Obsessive Relational Intrusion- Pursuit Scale (ORI) Subscales			
Hyper-attention	+	ns	+
Mediated Contact	**	+	ns
Proxy Pursuit	**	ns	*
Interactional Contact	*	*	ns
Harassment	*	+	ns
Surveillance	*	ns	ns
Invasion	*	*	ns
Coercion	**	+	ns
Aggression/violence	*	*	ns
Relationship Violence			
Conflict Tactics Scale	ns	+	ns
Grand Gestures			
Be Around	ns	ns	ns
Expression	ns	ns	*
Change	+	ns	ns
Fantasy	**	+	+

Note. +trend between .051 and .19

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 7

Regression Table Examining Predictors of Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit (ORI-P) Subscales

Source	Hyper-Intimacy			Mediated Contact			Proxy Pursuit			Interactional Contact			Harassment		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
				.05+			.10**			.09*			.10**		
Empathy	-.191+	0.13		-.405**	0.13		-.083**	0.03		-.067*	0.03		-.084*	0.04	
Self-Esteem	.117	0.17		.173+	0.17		.001	0.04		.098*	0.04		.062+	0.05	
Anxious Attachment	.060+	0.04		.044	0.04		.022*	0.01		.007	0.01		.013	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19
 *significant at .05 level
 **significant at the .01 level

Table 7 Cont.

Regression Table Examining Predictors of Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit (ORI-P) Subscales Cont.

Source	Surveillance			Invasion			Coercion			Aggression/Violence		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
			.05+			.10**			.10**			.09*
Empathy	-.081*	0.04		-.042*	0.02		-.081**	0.03		-.069*	0.03	
Self-Esteem	.054	0.05		.056*	0.02		.065+	0.04		.077*	0.04	
Anxious Attachment	.005	0.01		-.005	0.01		-.008	0.01		-.010	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 8

Regression Table Examining Predictors of Grand Gestures Subscales

Source	Be Around			Expressive			Change			Fantasy		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
			.02			.04+			.02			.14**
Empathy	-.046	0.08		-.015	0.15		-.126+	0.86		-.070**	0.21	
Self-Esteem	.103	0.10		.144	0.20		-.001	0.11		.051+	0.28	
Anxious Attachment	-.016	0.03		-.102*	0.05		.013	0.03		-.010+	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 9

Regression Table Examining Predictors of Conflict Tactics

Source	B	SE B	B	t	p
Empathy	-.054	0.34	-.15	-1.59	.11
Self-Esteem	.079	0.44	.20	1.81	.07
Anxious Attachment	.003	0.11	.03	0.26	ns

Note. R2 = .06 (p < .06)

Table 10

Regression Table Examining ACES and Other Predictors of Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit (ORI-P) Subscales

Source	Hyper-Intimacy			Mediated Contact			Proxy Pursuit			Interactional Contact			Harassment		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
			.09*			.29**			.23**			.32**			.30**
ACE Score	1.02*	0.47		1.337**	0.44		.467**	0.11		.633**	0.11		.636**	0.11	
Empathy	-.142	0.13		-.295*	0.12		-.061*	0.03		-.037	0.03		-.054+	0.03	
Self-Esteem	-.014	0.18		-.068	0.17		-.059+	0.04		.015	0.04		-.020	0.04	
Anxious Attachment	.051	0.04		.010	0.04		.018+	0.01		.002	0.01		.008	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 10 Cont.

Regression Table Examining ACES and Other Predictors of Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit (ORI-P) Subscales Cont.

Source	Surveillance			Invasion			Coercion			Aggression/Violence		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
			.15**			.27**			.26**			.25**
ACE Score	.480**	0.14		.291**	0.59		.459**	0.10		.459**	0.10	
Empathy	-.058+	0.04		-.028+	0.02		-.060*	0.03		-.048+	0.03	
Self-Esteem	-.008	0.05		.019	0.02		.006	0.04		.018	0.01	
Anxious Attachment	.001	0.01		-.007	0.01		-.012	0.01		-.013+	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19.

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 11

Regression Table Examining ACES and Other Predictors of Grand Gestures Subscales

Source	Be Around			Expressive			Change			Fantasy		
	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²	B	SE B	R ²
			.03			.05			.03			.21**
ACE Score	.292	0.27		.525	0.54		.411	0.31		.233**	0.07	
Empathy	-.034	0.08		.006	0.15		-.110	0.09		-.061**	0.02	
Self-Esteem	.070	0.10		.084	0.21		-.048	0.12		.025	0.28	
Anxious Attachment	-.018	0.03		-.106*	0.05		.009*	0.03		-.012+	0.01	

Note. +trend between .051 and .19

*significant at .05 level

**significant at the .01 level

Table 12

Personal Demographics on 10 Qualitative Study Participants: Number of Participants in Each Dimension

Gender			Race			Ethnicity	Age					Sexual Orientation				Mental Health					
Male	Trans	Non binary	White	Black	Other	Latino	18+	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Straight	Gay	Bi	Pan	Queer	Depression	Anxiety	S.A	Other
10	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	8	2	0	0	0	8	0	1	1	0	6	5	3	2

Table 13

Relationship Demographics: Number of Participants in Each Dimension

In a Relationship Currently?	Length of Current Relationship (Years)				Number of Relationships				Longest Relationships Length (Years)			
Yes	<1	1-5	6-10	10+	0	1-5	6-10	10+	<1	1-5	6-10	10+
6	2	3	1	0	1	5	3	1	2	6	1	0

Table 14

List of score means for the 10 qualitative study participants

	Mean	Range
Distal Variables (# items)		
ACES (10)	2.2	0-4
Proximal Variables		
Empathy	64.6	58-72
Anxious (Attachment)	71.7	32-106
Avoidant (Attachment)	60.40	18-95
Self-Esteem	25.8	12-35
Attitude Variable (# items)		
Relationship Beliefs (15)	57.8	42-92
Obsessive Relational Intrusion-Pursuit Scale (ORI) Subscales		
Hyper-attention	11.2	4-21
Mediated Contact	4.40	0-13
Proxy Pursuit	0.40	0-2
Interactional Contact	2.30	0-8
Harassment	0.90	0-4
Surveillance	2.00	0-10
Invasion	0.20	0-1
Coercion	0.1	0-1
Aggression/violence	0.40	0-2
Relationship Violence		
Conflict Tactics Scale	1.40	0-14
Grand Gestures		
Be Around	11.8	5-17
Expression	23.2	14-35
Change	7.30	5-13
Fantasy	3.70	3-5

Table 15

Stalking Behaviors on the ORI-P Endorsed by Interview Participants

	Participant									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1) Leaving unwanted gifts			X		X	X				X
2) Synchronizing activities					X	X				
3) Verbally flirting	X		X			X	X			X
4) Nonverbal flirting	X	X			X	X	X			X
5) Exaggerated expressions of affection	X					X		X		X
6) Being especially nice or ingratiating		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
7) Demonstrating persistence		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8) Trying to repair or deepen relationship				X			X		X	X
9) Leaving unwanted messages of affection in person				X	X			X	X	X
10) Leaving affectionate electronic messages	X	X			X		X		X	X
11) Sending excessively disclosing messages										X
12) Sending excessively needy or demanding messages				X		X	X			X
14) Sending sexually harassing messages										X
16) Constantly monitoring, tagging, or gifting his/her social network site					X				X	
18) Monitoring him/her using GPS or tracking							X			
22) Pretending to be someone you weren't			X							X
27) Sending messages through the mail	X					X				
28) Tracking or engaging social media									X	
29) Exposing private information about him/her to others									X	X
31) Sabotaging his/her private reputation										X
40) Involving others in contacting him/her	X					X				
44) Intruding upon friends, family or coworkers									X	
45) Having arguments or conflicts with him/her			X						X	X
46) Approaching him/her		X			X					
47) Making appearances	X				X					
48) Intruding uninvited into interactions					X					X
49) Invading personal space		X			X					X
51) Negatively influencing reputation									X	
54) Hurting him/her verbally							X			X
55) Turning others against him/her							X			X
56) Coordinating activities around him/her		X								
57) Loitering or hanging around		X	X						X	
58) Following him/her around									X	
59) Watching him/her		X								
60) Monitoring him/her or his/her behavior									X	
62) Approaching or surprising him/her in public places			X							
63) Invading his/her possessions or personal property									X	

Table 16

Stalking Behaviors on the Grand Gestures Scale Endorsed by Interview Participants

	Participant									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1) Thought up ways to be where they might be	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
2) Actually showed up in places they might be at the times they might be there	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
3) Showed up on the doorstep of their apartment or house, without an appointment/date		X		X						
4) Brainstormed ways to meet significant people in their lives.	X	X			X			X	X	X
5) Surprised the person with gifts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6) Made a declaration of your love for the person verbally or in writing	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
7) Made a simple marriage proposal to the person					X					
8) Set up an elaborate way to make a marriage proposal to the person										X
9) Lavished the person with praise	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10) Expressed your love for them through sharing song lyrics, poems, pieces of art, plays, movies, TV shows, novels, etc. created by you or others with them	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
11) Made grand gestures to show your love for them		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
12) Spontaneously touched or kissed them	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
13) Were willing to change your life, plans for the future, etc. to accommodate needs you perceived they had in order to remain near them	X			X	X	X	X			X
14) Actually changed your life, plans, etc. to accommodate perceived needs or in order to remain near them	X				X					X
15) Were willing to change your values to accommodate them or match their values to increase chances that you two would end up together				X	X		X			
16) Actually changed your values to accommodate them or match their values to increase chances that you two would end up together		X			X					X
17) Tried to persuade them that the two of you were destined to be together					X		X	X		X
18) Was there a time you thought you were in a relationship with someone and later they denied that label?		X	X		X	X				X

CURRICULUM VITAE

Bethany L. Keller

Education

- 8/2011-12/2018 **University of Louisville** (APA accredited)
Ph.D., Counseling Psychology
- 8/2011-5/2014 **University of Louisville**
M.Ed., Counseling Psychology
- 8/2007 – 5/2011 **Indiana University**, Bloomington, IN
B.A., Arts and Sciences
Major: Psychology - Honors, Minor: Gender Studies, Music
Hutton Honors College General Honors Notation
Highest Distinction
Overall GPA: 3.956
Psychology GPA: 3.979

Professional/Clinical Experience

- 7/2017-7/2018 **Doctoral Intern at UT-Knoxville Student Counseling Center**
Supervisors: Ashley Ross, Ph.D., Gina Austin, Ph.D., Phil Johnson, Ph.D., Amanda McCune, Psy.D., Maggie Klotz, Ph.D., Amber Thornton, Ph.D.
Provided individual, couple, and group therapy to college students through a short-term model. Utilized biofeedback and personality assessments to aid in therapy. Co-facilitated the Healthy Relationships and Mixed Interpersonal Process groups. Provided supervision to beginning doctoral-level practicum students. Engaged in the Couples Track and the Sexual Assault Track. Provided outreach to the campus community.
- 8/2015 – 8/2016 **Therapist at Providence Self-Sufficiency Ministries, Inc.**
Supervisor: Liz England, Psy.D.
Provided individual, couple/family, and group therapeutic services to adult and child residents involved in current Department of Child Services' cases until they reach reunification and self-sufficiency.

- 5/2014-5/2016 **Therapist at Behavioral Wellness Counseling Clinic/Louisville OCD Clinic**
Supervisor: Monnica Williams, Ph.D.
 Provided CBT-oriented treatment for individuals and couples primarily with OCD, hoarding, PTSD, and other anxiety disorders. Trained new therapists in OCD treatment.
- 8/2014 – 6/2015 **Clinical GA at University of Louisville Counseling Center**
Supervisors: Geetanjali Gulati, Psy.D. & Ruby Casiano, Ph.D.
 Provided individual, couple, and group therapy to college students addressing concerns related to anxiety, depression, eating disorders, LGBT issues, etc. Administered assessments to determine learning disorder and ADHD diagnoses.
- 2/2015 – 5/2015 **Co-Leader of Transgender Support Group**
Supervisor: Joanna Morse, Psy.D.
 Assisted in providing group therapy for transgender clients at a local private practice.
- 1/2015 – 5/2015 **Supervisor to Master’s Students**
Supervisor: Richard Balkin, Ph.D.
 Provided supervised supervision to master’s students in the Counseling Psychology and School Counseling programs in both individual and group formats. Reviewed audio/video tape of individual therapy cases.
- 8/2013-5/2014 **Therapist at The Brook Hospital – KMI**
Supervisor: Stelios Stylianou, Psy.D.
 Provided individual, family, and group therapy to adult and adolescent inpatient residents addressing issues related to past sexual/emotional/physical abuse, suicidal ideation, severe depression, substance use, family problems, and other severe mental disorders.
- 5/2013-8/2013 **Therapist at Cedar Lake Lodge**
Supervisor: Jeffrey Hicks, Ph.D.
 Administered assessments to residents with intellectual and physical disabilities.
- 8/2012-5/2013 **Therapist at University of Louisville College Counseling Center**
Supervisors: Terri White, Ph.D. & Juan Pablo Kalawski, Ph.D.
 Provided individual and group therapy to college students addressing concerns related to anxiety, depression, eating disorders, LGBT issues, etc.
- 1/2012-7/2014 **Therapist on Couple Therapy Study**
Supervisor: Jesse Owen, Ph.D.
 Provided therapy for couples as part of a research study. Responsible for approximately 12 sessions per couple.

- 10/2010-5/2011 **Mentor for Adolescent Girls at Jackson Creek Middle School**
Professor: Linda Sinex, Ph.D.
 Facilitated group for adolescent girls that focused on specific challenges commonly faced by this population, such as eating disorders, self-esteem, and body image.
- 9/2010-5/2011 **Assistant to School Psychologist at Fairview Elementary**
School Psychologist: Cheryl Lewandowski, Ph.D.
 Helped School Psychologist interact with and counsel troubled youth. Analyzed children’s behavior patterns and created behavior graphs.
- 6/2008-8/2008
 IN **Dunn Mental Health Center Internship, Case Manager, Richmond, IN**
Chief Executive Officer: Kay Whittington, Ph.D.
 Mentored and guided autistic/troubled/emotionally conflicted youth. Led groups of various ages in anger management, conflict resolution, and addictions. Evaluated and counseled individuals to promote healthy lifestyles and relationships.

Research Experience

- 8/2014-present **Dissertation - “Stalkers: What are they thinking?”**
Co-Chairs: Laurie McCubbin, Ph.D. & Anita Barbee, Ph.D.
 Proposed mixed methods study and collecting data to examine the cognitive process of anxiously attached, unwanted relationship pursuers regarding the impact of self-esteem and perspective-taking on the stalking trajectory.
- 8/2011-8/2014 **Relationship and Psychotherapy Lab**
Research Supervisor: Jesse Owen, Ph.D.
 Conducted and provided assistance with various research studies related to romantic relationships and/or psychotherapy. Assisted in recruitment, operation, and analysis of research projects.
- 8/2012-8/2014 **Trans*Star Lab**
Research Supervisor: Stephanie Budge, Ph.D.
 Conducted and provided assistance on research studies related to trans* and LGBQ topics. Provided outreach for the LGBTQ community.
- 6/2012 – 1/2014 **Commitment Uncertainty**
Research Supervisor: Jesse Owen, Ph.D.
 Coded videos of couple therapy looking at the emotional experience of the couple, communication style, and alliance. Compared the overall style of therapy for a commitment uncertain couple with that for a commitment certain couple.
- 1/2012-8/2014 **Transgender Positive Experiences**
Research Supervisor: Stephanie Budge, Ph.D.
 Recruited for, organized, and conducted interviews throughout the Midwest with individuals who identify as trans* about the transition

process and the positive experiences associated with that process. Transcribed and coded the interviews to find themes related to emotions experienced throughout transitioning.

2012-2014

13 Reasons Why

Research Supervisor: James Chisholm, Ph.D.

Transcribed and analyzed high school students' discussions over the book "13 Reasons Why." Coded for content themes and group dynamics.

8/2011-5/2013

Within My Reach

Research Supervisor: Jesse Owen, Ph.D.

Compared the number of unsafe relationships that broke up due to specific intervention to the number that remained together. Looked into reasons behind this discrepancy.

8/2011-5/2012

Coworkers With Benefits

Research Supervisor: Jesse Owen, Ph.D.

Investigated the effects of hooking-up in the workplace on productivity and work environment.

5/2010-5/2011

Honor's Thesis on Stalking

Chair: Julia Heiman, Ph.D.

Developed and implemented study as Principal Investigator exploring stalkers' personality traits, coercive behavior, and level of insight in college-age male stalkers.

5/2009-5/2011

Postpartum Depression Study

Research Supervisor: Heather Rupp, Ph.D., Indiana University Kinsey

Institute

Designed SPSS program for Kinsey Institute experiment; entered questionnaire data. Assisted with set up, recruitment, and operation of study. Performed infant assessment while interacting with the mothers and babies.

5/2009-5/2011

Sexual Psychophysiology Lab, Research Assistant

Research Supervisor: Julia Heiman, Ph.D., Indiana University Kinsey Institute

Administered sexual decision-making study to participants. Analyzed data for various research projects. Acquired data and helped to develop and conduct graduate supervisor's dissertation research.

1/2009-5/2009

Social Development Lab, Research Assistant

Research Supervisor: John Bates, Ph.D.

Observed and recorded family-toddler interaction. Coded parent-teen communication through video in EXCEL. Entered questionnaire and home visit data using SPSS program.

Related Experience

- Summer 2015 **Teaching Assistant for Functional Analytic Psychotherapy**
Created quizzes, graded assignments, sent out announcements, and assisted with class content.
- April 2015 **Guest Lecturer for Techniques of Counseling Class**
Taught masters-level and beginning doctoral-level students basic techniques for couple therapy.
- 8/2014-8/2015 **Reviewer for Psychology of Women Quarterly**
Reviewed and provided feedback/suggested revisions on articles submitted for publication.
- 8/2011-6/2015 **Graduate Research Assistant**
Wrote manuscripts for publication and assisted with various research studies. Responsible for creating and updating databases. Provided assistance with research-related projects.
- 1/2009-5/2011 **Hutton Honors College Autism Mentor**
Became a “buddy” to a child with autism, arranged one outing per week either alone with the child or with a group of other students in the program, assisted the child in acquiring skills to function in social settings.
- 8/2008-5/2009 **HOST Indiana University Admissions**
Accommodated junior and senior high school girls considering Indiana University. Provided information about IU, conducted tours of campus, escorted girls to college classes/labs/activities typical of a day on campus.
- 6/2007-8/2007 **Care Giver**
Employer: Erin A. Shadle
Responsible for care and supervision of 6 year old boy with autism. Prepared and served meals/transported child on outings. Supported and guided child emotionally.

Outreach

- 4/2017 **Jamaica Mission Trip**
Provided education on mental health. Trained church leaders, equipping them to provide care in the church. Facilitated discussions on anxiety and gave talks on this topic.
- 9/2015 – 5/2017 **Southeast Christian Church CARE Ministry**
Consultant to leaders of the CARE ministry to aid in development of an anxiety support group as part of their Encounter outreach (support and recovery). Currently helping to facilitate gatherings of the anxiety

- support group. Provided input and feedback on structuring a CARE training for all team members and volunteers.
- 4/2015 **Tunnel of Oppression**
Led small group discussions on relevant issues and emotions that arose due to the witnessing of oppression.
- Spring 2014 **Family Scholar House**
Assisted in facilitating a reading program for children at a residence for single parents. Spent time interacting with families over lunch or dinner in their community.
- 9/2014 **Pride Week Volunteer**
Provided information about the University Counseling Center.
- 9/2014 **Take Back the Night**
Provided support to individuals participating in or listening to the event and information about the University Counseling Center.
- 11/2012 & 3/2013 **Trans101 Presentation**
Provided information on how to be an ally to trans* individuals both in and out of the education system.
- 9/2012 **Compassion Project**
Led focus groups with mothers after they took pictures in the community about what compassion means to them.
- 6/2012 - 9/2012 **Take Back the Night**
Organized and staffed an event raising awareness about violence against women on the University of Louisville campus.
- 8/2012 **Blue Light Special**
Conducted information sessions about campus safety for incoming college freshmen.

Posters & Presentations

Keller, B.L., Barr, S.M., Budge, S.L. (2014, August). *Trans* Women's Emotional Resilience: Reactions to the Intersection of Sexism and Transphobia*. Paper presented at the 2014 American Psychological Association Convention, Washington, DC.

Chisholm, J.S. & **Keller, B.L.** (2014, April). *Leveraging High School Students' Empathic Responses to Literature: Speaking and Listening for the 21st Century*. Paper presented at the 2014 AERA Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.

- Budge, S.L., Barr, S.M., Katz-Wise, S.L., **Keller, B.L.**, & Manthos, M. (2013, June). *Incorporating positivity into psychotherapy with trans clients*. Workshop presented at the Annual Philadelphia Transgender Health Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Keller, B. L.**, Barr, S. M., & Budge, S. L. (2013, April). “*For every bad, there’s 40 good things that happen*”: *A qualitative approach to understanding the positive emotional experiences of trans* women*. Poster presentation at the Spring Research Conference, Lexington, KY
- Keller, B. L.** & Budge, S. L. (2013, March/April). *A qualitative investigation of sexual minority women’s experiences of sexual pressure*. Poster presented at the KPA Foundation Spring Academic Conference, University of Louisville and the Spring Research Conference, University of Kentucky.
- Keller, B. L.**, Barr, S. M., & Budge, S. L. (2013, March). “*For every bad, there’s 40 good things that happen*”: *A qualitative approach to understanding the positive emotional experiences of trans* women*. Poster presentation at the Kentucky Psychological Association Student Research Conference, Louisville, KY.
- Budge, S.L. & **Keller, B.L.** (2012, August). “*She felt pressured, I felt neglected*”: *LGBQ individuals’ experiences of sexual pressure in relationships*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting for the American Psychological Association, Orlando, Florida.
- Fox, R.A., **Keller, B.L.**, Manthos, M., Owen, J. J., & Shuck, B. (2012, April). *Coworkers with benefits: Romance in the work place*. Poster presented at the Spring Research Conference, University of Louisville.
- Keller, B.L.**, Fox, R.A., Manthos, M., Owen, J. J., & Shuck, B. (2012, April). *Coworkers with benefits: Romance in the work place*. Poster presented at the Great Lakes Conference, Purdue University.
- Keller, B.L.**, Hill, Y.N., & Heiman, J.R. (2011). *Personality traits, coercive behavior, and level of insight in college-age male stalkers*. Poster presented at the Indiana University Psychological and Brain Sciences Undergraduate Honors Banquet and Poster Session, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Keller, B.L.**, Hill, Y.N. (2011). *Personality characteristics, sexually coercive tactics, and stalking behavior in college aged men*. Poster presented at the Women in Science Research Conference. Indiana University.
- Hill, Y.N., **Keller, B.L.**, Batchos, E.J., & Heiman, J.R. (2011). *Men's reactions to sexually explicit photos: A linguistic analysis of essays from sexually coercive and non-coercive men*. Poster presented at the Women in Science Research Conference in Bloomington, Indiana. * **2nd Place for Best Social Science Poster Award**.
- Keller, B.L.**, Anderson, C.T, Rupp, H.A., & Heiman, J.R. (2010, March). *Relationship satisfaction in new mothers predicts infant temperament*. Poster presented at the Women in Science Research Conference. Indiana University.

Publications

Chisholm, J.S. & **Keller, B.L.** (2014). Making connections during transactional discussions: Adolescents' empathic responses to 'Thirteen Reasons Why.' *The ALAN Review*, 42, 24-34.

Budge, S.L., **Keller, B.L.**, and Sherry, A.R. (2014). Sexual minority women's experiences of sexual pressure: A qualitative investigation of recipients' and initiators' reports. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. doi: 10.1007/s10508-014-0301-7

Owen, J., **Keller, B.**, Shuck, B., Luebcke, B., Knopp, K. & Rhoades, G.K. (2014). Initial examination of commitment uncertainty in couple therapy. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 3, 232-238. doi: 10.1037/cfp0000030

Luebcke, B., Owen, J., **Keller, B.**, Shuck, B., Knopp, K., & Rhoades, G. (2014). Therapist interventions for couples: A commitment uncertainty comparison. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 3, 239-254. doi: 10.1037/cfp0000031

Manuscripts in Progress

Budge, S.L., Orovecz, J.O., Barr, S.M., & **Keller, B.L.** Affirmative emotional processes for transgender women: A qualitative analysis.

Keller, B.L., Owen, J.J., & Antle, B.F. Predictors of breaking-up within a relationship education program: Intimate partner violence, negative communication, and relationship adjustment. (Submitted to *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*).

Awards/Honors

August 2015 Psychotherapy	Level 1 Training Certification – Functional Analytic
April 2014	Graduate Student Council Travel Grant (\$250)
Spring 2014	Samuels Family Scholarship
2011	Best Social Science Poster Award – 2 nd Place
Fall 2007 - Spring 2011	Dean's List
2008 - 2011	Founder's Scholar (Maintained cumulative GPA of 3.8 or higher)
Fall 2010	Phi Beta Kappa Induction
Spring 2009	Psi Chi Induction

8/2009-5/2011	IU Incentive Grant
Spring 2008	Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society Induction
Fall 2007	National Society of Collegiate Scholars Induction
8/2007 – 5/2011	IU Hutton Honors College
5/2007 – 5/2011	IU County Fee Scholarship (merit-based)
5/2007-5/2011	IU Valedictorian/D&L Brown Scholarship
5/2007-5/2011	IU Deans Scholarship