

Stalking and Violence

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KEYWORDS

- Violence • Stalking • Classification • Women • Juveniles • Health care providers
- Violence risk assessment • Risk management

KEY POINTS

- There are three well recognized stalker classification systems: Zona and colleagues' Stalker-Victim Types; Mullen and colleagues' Stalker Typology; and the RECON Stalker Typology.
- In female stalkers, the violence risk should be taken seriously. Given their high rates of mental illness and personality disorder, women stalkers should undergo psychiatric examinations.
- Juvenile stalking can also be associated with violence, and risk should be considered.
- Clinicians may be stalked and can become a victim of a special type of stalking behavior, referred to as stalking by proxy.
- Threats and violence are common in stalking. Evaluation of risk factors allows for a violence risk-reduction plan, which can guide stalking intervention.

STALKER CLASSIFICATIONS

Stalking refers to a constellation of repeated and persistent behaviors to impose unwanted communication and/or contact on another person.^{1,2} Communication can be via telephone calls, text, e-mails, letters, paper notes, or graffiti writings. Unwanted contact can be by approaching and/or following the victim; maintaining surveillance; appearing in places the victim is expected; and/or visiting the victim's home, family, and/or friends. Additional behaviors may include ordering goods or canceling appointments on the victim's behalf or initiating bogus legal actions. Threats, property damage, and/or physical assaults may accompany stalking.^{1,2} Stalking behavior can provide helpful insights about the stalkers themselves. Men are more likely than

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women to use stalking as a means of continuing to control and intimidate their ex-partner.³

Most studies have focused on male stalkers because close to 80% of stalking is done by men.¹⁻³ However, the lifetime risk of being stalked is 8% for women and 2% for men.¹

Although there is no consensus in the forensic or psychiatric community on a single stalker classification system,⁴ there are three recognized stalker classifications: (1) Zona and colleagues'⁵ Stalker-Victim Types, (2) Mullen and colleagues'^{1,2} Stalker Typology, and (3) The RECON (RElationship and CONtext-Based) Stalker Typology.⁶

These three typology classifications studied only adult stalkers. Although they may have some validity in juveniles, juveniles were not evaluated in these studies. These stalker classifications were created with the goals of identifying differences among groups of stalkers to develop helpful management and treatment recommendations and to improve violence risk predictions. Published stalker classifications focus on the stalker's relationship with the victim and on the degree to which violence was an issue.⁴

Based on violence risk prediction, Zona and colleagues'⁵ Stalker-Victim typology described three types of stalkers: (1) simple obsessionals, (2) love obsessionals, and (3) erotomanics. This typology was derived from the Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit. The largest group of the simple obsessionals usually has a prior relationship with victims, make more physical contact, and carry a high risk of violence; the erotomanics are the rarest Zona group, usually with less contact with victims, and a lower risk of violence.⁵

The Mullen and colleagues'^{1,2} Stalker Typology originated at an Australian forensic center and expanded the prior classification to include motivation for the stalking. It described five stalker types that are not mutually exclusive: (1) the rejected, (2) the intimacy seekers, (3) the incompetent, (4) the resentful, and (5) the predatory.^{1,2} The rejected stalkers are usually disgruntled ex-intimates with the highest risk for assaults and with initial highly ambivalent motives of reconciliation and revenge. Such stalkers replace the lost relationship with the victim with their stalking behaviors. The resentful and predatory stalkers also carry a higher risk of violence. Whereas the resentful stalker feels wronged by the victim, the often sadistic predatory stalker prepares for a violent and/or sexual attack onto the victim. The intimacy seekers are the most persistent of all stalkers in their stalking, at times stalking for years or even decades.^{1,2}

The RECON Stalker Typology is based on the nature and the context of the stalker-victim relationship and its violence risk prediction.⁶ This latest typology, derived from a study of 1005 North Americans by Mohandie and colleagues,⁶ separated stalkers into two main types based on whether or not the stalker and victim had a prior relationship or not. Then, each type is further subdivided into two subtypes of stalkers based on the context of the stalker-victim relationship⁶:

- Type I, prior relationship
 - A. Intimate stalker
 - B. Acquaintance stalker
- Type II, no prior relationship
 - A. Public figure stalker
 - B. Private stranger

The intimate stalkers, which were the largest group, were most violent and malignant with 83% who threatened violence and almost three-quarters (74%) who were actually violent. They were usually male, with a prior criminal history, and with high recidivism despite a protective order or incarceration. Acquaintance stalkers were

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