THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN SURVIVORS OF STALKING:
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

by

Chantelle Klassen
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Department of Educational, Counseling Psychology, and Special Needs

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Seven women who have experienced stalking, or criminal harassment were interviewed about the nature of their experience. Specifically, each participant was asked how they were impacted by the event and the ways that they managed the experience. Participants were also asked to comment on their recommendations for future services. Constant comparative method drawn from the grounded theory approach was used to guide the analysis process and to develop themes related to the narratives. Six major themes emerged from the collective discussions with the sample of female stalking survivors. These included: “Stalking as an Ongoing, Abnormal Event;” “Fearing the Unknown;” “Needing to Be Supported and Validated;” “Searching for Safety and Healing;” “Concern for Others;” and “Being Re-victimized.” Findings indicated that although participants found innovative ways to manage the negative impact of being stalked, additional support systems were needed. Participants described a variety of different stalking experiences, including post-intimate stalking, stranger stalking and acquaintance stalking. Commonalities related to the description of the event and its impact, as well as the methods of coping with the experience. Suggestions for improvement for future survivors of stalking are offered.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen a burgeoning interest in stalking behaviour and its repercussions. A small but convincing body of evidence suggests that the experience of being stalked by a stranger, acquaintance, or former intimate partner is related to a variety of affective, cognitive, and behavioural outcomes (Abrams & Robinson, 1998a; Hall, 1997; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Romans, Hays, & White, 1996). At present, no published study has been generated from an in-depth, narrative perspective to assess the experiences of women who have been criminally harassed. Although stalking has occurred in a wide array of situations and settings, and to a number of individuals, the vast majority (80%) of reported stalking targets were female according to court and police records (Ministry of Women's Equality, Ministry of Attorney General, 1997). The purpose of this study was twofold: to describe the experiences of a select group of women who have been criminally harassed/stalked and to generate practical suggestions for improvement of service for women who have experienced stalking.

Background

Stalking is not a new occurrence. The term to “stalk” dates back to 15th century Old English meaning “to steal; to pursue quarry or prey stealthily” (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1984, p. 1147). Although stalking is sometimes referred to as the “crime of the nineties,” Schaum and Parrish (1995) suggest that it is the visibility of the crime, rather than the newness of the offence itself that has lead to the aforementioned title. Hall (1997) attributes the current spotlight on stalking to the ever-growing popularity of crime stories, especially violent crime stories. She cites an array of television programs,
movies, television newsmagazines, and daily news coverage that focus on stalking incidents as evidence of the visibility and fascination of stalking in America.

The impact of media and television aside, it is important not to overlook the importance of the Women's Movement in shifting the public attention to injustices against women. Moreover, it is important to note that stalking cannot and should not be viewed as separated from the larger context of violence against women. Education campaigns and public rallies undoubtedly fuelled public pressure to address the ever-present problem of violence against women. Thus, violence against women takes many forms: rape, battery, murder, sexual harassment, and stalking.

As a result of public pressure to prevent stalking-related violence such as the tragic murder of actor, Rebecca Schaeffer, California instituted the first anti-stalking legislation in 1990. Canada followed this legislative initiative in 1994, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. Although anti-stalking laws are an important and necessary first step to curtailing the problem, it appears that the law was fuelled by public pressure and media attention as opposed to empirical research.

The paucity of research in this area may be suggestive of an assumption: stalking is a low base-rate behaviour (i.e., stalking occurs infrequently), therefore it is difficult to study. Moreover, stalking is frequently a precursor to other crimes against women such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, homicide, and domestic violence (Coleman, 1997). Perhaps stalking has seldom been examined on its own because it has been subsumed under other categories of violence against women. However, recent data suggest that stalking may be both behaviourally distinct from other forms of violence and more common than previously believed (Burgess et al., 1997).
Rationale

The incidence and prevalence of stalking helps explicate the nature of the problem. Results of a recent national telephone survey that examined 8000 women and men (cited in Meloy, 1998) indicate that 8% of American women, compared with 2% of American men, experienced stalking at some point in their lives. Abrams and Robinson (1998a) offered a more conservative estimate that 1 in 20 women in Canada have been stalked. Other studies have examined university undergraduate females in the U.S. and found that the incidence rate was slightly higher—9.2% (Coleman, 1997) and 10.5% respectively (Ehrhardt Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999). Statistics Canada in a published report for the years 1994 and 1995 revealed that of those women who were stalked, 58% were stalked by a current or former partner compared with only 13% of men in the same category (The Daily, 1999). Meloy (1998) in an overview of stalking behaviour notes that the frequency of violence in all stalking cases is 25-35%. Furthermore, although the severity of violence in stalking cases varies, evidence suggests that there is an escalation of violence over time. The homicide rate offered by Meloy in his overview was just under 2%. However, the rate of violence may be much higher for women who are stalked by a former intimate partner (Burgess et al., 1997; Sev’er, 1997). Regardless of the exact rates, it appears that stalking is a significant and serious societal problem requiring further investigation.

Several studies have reported both the negative impact of stalking (Abrams & Robinson, 1989a; Hall, 1997; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Romans et al., 1996), and the inadequacy of current legal responses to stalking as a crime of violence (Abrams & Robinson, 1989b; Hall, 1997; Sheehy, 1999). It is argued that although these survey-based studies further the interest in and understanding of the crime of stalking, they lack the depth
of knowledge that is gained from discourse. In order to develop programs that adequately address the needs of women who have been stalked, it is important to inquire directly through a process of emergent discussion.

Definitions

Meloy and Gothard (1995) offered a straightforward definition of "stalking," asserting that it involves "the wilful, malicious, and repeated following and harassing of another person that threatens his or her safety" (p. 258). Although the term "safety" typically refers to a person’s physical safety, anti-stalking laws make it an offence to cause another "reasonable" person to "fear for their safety, or the safety of anyone known to them" (Martin’s Criminal Code, 1997, s.264). This means that it is a crime to wilfully threaten a person’s physical safety as well as their psychological safety. Ehrhardt Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999) define a "stalker" as a person who “persistently pursues another individual in a way that instils fear in the target” and a “victim of stalking” as a person who is “repeatedly followed, harassed, or physically threatened by other persons” (p. 44).

Although the term “criminal harassment” is the legal term used in Canada to indicate the more commonly used word stalking, the terms will be used interchangeably within the remaining sections of this paper.

Throughout this research, persons who have been stalked are referred to as “women who have been criminally harassed/stalked” or “women survivors.” Participants were not referred to as “victims” as a descriptive term because of the negative connotation often associated with being a victim. This difference in terminology is reflective of my assumption that women are not passive or helpless victims, nor are they responsible for violence that is inflicted upon them within society. It is argued that the disproportionate amount of violent
crime against women occurs not because women are "victims" but rather because society affords women less power. These definitions can be considered a key from which the majority of the research can be understood.

Locating Self in Process

For the past few years, I have been working as a counsellor with families who have experienced violence in the home. This experience has provided me with a first-hand knowledge of the devastating impact that fear and feelings of powerlessness can have on a person's life. Continually in my work I have observed the benefit that support, collaboration, and appropriate information and referrals for individual families. Additionally, I am continually struck by the amount of courage, strength, and knowledge that is located within the women themselves. It is with these basic premises that I approach my research.

Prior to my recent work with women, my experience with this topic was focused on the crime/perpetrator of stalking, rather than the experience of women who have been criminally harassed. Conducting psychological assessments and engaging in quantitative research designed to predict and manage risk for violence allowed me to examine the crime of stalking and its repercussions. What was missing from my previous experience was a sense of how a person deals with the experiences described clinically by police officers in their reports and indifferently by the stalkers in their accounts of the incidents. This curiosity prompted a search of the available literature to examine the experiences of criminally harassed individuals.

I approach this study with the assumption that women who have been stalked, whether from a former intimate partner, stranger, or acquaintance, also experience personal agency that allows them to make sense of their experience. Studies that examine
characteristics of women who are stalked tend to decontextualize the wrongful act, ignoring the culture that implicitly allows women and children to be victimized. Unfortunately, victimization of women occurs frequently within society. Moreover, blaming women for the crime of violence may suppress their sense of control and power. These qualities may well be the precise qualities that are necessary for an individual to insure self-protection in the event of a stalking experience.

Ultimately, change must occur at the societal level. Rather than asking women to "cope more effectively" with violence, perhaps eradicating all forms of violence and the permissiveness in which violence occurs should be the goal. In the words of advocate, Sharon Lamb:

If preventing male violence becomes the focus of a new solidarity that replaces the current rhetoric on the development of women's individual power and voice, our power would come from action rather than expression; women would seize power rather than ask for it. Sick girls can't fight back. Empowered girls can" (Lamb, 1999, p. 134).

This assumption is reflected in my research design by incorporating questions that imply a degree of purposefulness on the part of the participants in managing the experience of being stalked and approaching participants as experts of their individual experiences.

My second assumption relates to my research questions. Simply, the current services available to women who have been stalked do not appear to be particularly specialized. This assumption is based on my experience in working with women who have experienced violence. I am frequently reminded in my work of the prevalence and injustice created by crimes against women. Although many resources have been established to support women, I am dismayed to hear accounts of criminally harassed women who felt that they had nowhere to turn to for help. For example, one courageous woman who had been stalked was told by
her family and friends as well as the local police that she was powerless to do anything proactive and therefore she should just “move forward.” She began to blame herself and withdrew from her typically high-paced lifestyle.

Spurred by this woman’s negative experience, I began to inquire about the services devoted to women who are/have been stalked. Unfortunately, I was unable to find services that specialized in criminal harassment. Women’s resource centres referred me to the victim service programs; Victim Services referred me to local battered women’s organizations, rape crisis centres, or the Criminal Harassment Unit at the Vancouver Police Department. Although these agencies are likely better informed and equipped to be of assistance as a result of the recent anti-stalking law, many of the professionals with whom I spoke were unsure about the specific factors involved in criminal harassment and how to best meet the demands. Moreover, one of the helpful individuals I spoke with asserted that although she was not aware of any person or agency specializing in stalking, she would definitely refer criminally harassed women for counselling. Therefore, counsellors specializing in women’s issues have an obligation to be aware of the factors involved in stalking and the specific needs of their clients.

Purpose

The empirical research available on stalking is sparse and generally focused on the perpetrator of stalking rather than the target. Additionally, it is argued that the services for women who have been stalked are lacking. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women who have been stalked and to generate suggestions for improvement to current services aimed at supporting women survivors. Consequently, one of the objectives of this study was simply to gain in-depth information about the experiences
and perspectives of women who have been stalked. The second main objective is to make explicit the needs garnered from the individual interviews with women survivors. An important and anticipated consequence of the study is that it will draw attention, albeit in a small way, to the seriousness of the crime of stalking. Another desired outcome of the study included creating a supportive atmosphere whereby women could discuss and make sense of their experiences of being stalked.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of stalking is a complex social problem that has only recently been addressed in the legal arena. Increased public awareness is to a large extent the result of media and Hollywood coverage of the offence than from empirical endeavours. To quote Bonnie J. Campbell, Director of the Violence Against Women Office in the U.S. Department of Justice:

Although stalking has entered the public consciousness through some highly publicized cases, stalking affects many people every day, crossing all racial, social, religious, ethnic, and economic lines. We know that stalking is a crime of terror, power, and control. But we do not always know how to prevent or respond to this complex crime. To meet the challenge of formulating an effective criminal justice strategy for combating stalking, we must increase our knowledge about stalkers, intervention techniques, prevention efforts, and law enforcement policies and practices (U.S. Department of Justice Report, 1999, p. 170).

The lack of research pertaining to women who have been stalked is a serious gap in our knowledge because it makes the task of identifying the needs of these women difficult. The majority of literature published on stalking is confined to typologies and explanations of the perpetrator of the offence. For the purposes of this review, I attempt to provide a basis from which the experiences and needs of women who have been stalked can be understood. The review has been separated into several sections: an overview of two dominant theoretical explanations of violence against women (power and feminist theories), the relationship of stalking to domestic violence, the types of stalking experiences; legal factors pertinent to women who have been stalked; the potential negative effects of stalking; and a description of the services currently availed to women who have been stalked residing within Vancouver and the lower mainland area.
Theoretical Position: Stalking Does Not Occur in a Vacuum

To assert the notion that stalking occurs in a society whereby stalking violence is an isolated occurrence, that males are as likely to be stalked as females, and that the perpetrators of stalking are frequently female would be untrue on all accounts. Instead, the majority of stalking behaviour is more aptly described as part of a larger and historical trend of violence perpetrated by men toward women. Although there are incidents involving women stalking men or women stalking other women, official and unofficial data indicates that those most at risk are women, particularly from a previous heterosexual, romantic partner. Two divergent theoretical perspectives help to explicate the issue of stalking within the larger context of violence against women.

One of the popular explanations of violence against women within the family domain is the family violence/power theory pioneered by Murray Straus and his colleagues in the 1970s. The crux of the explanation is that in an effort to cope with life’s changing social structure, an increasing lack of social support, and aggressive male socialization, violence becomes a legitimate form of managing the ensuing conflict (Henderson, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1997). Thus, a loss of power leads some males to attempt to regain their sense of power through the use of abuse and violence. The often-cited “intergenerational cycle of violence” is then perpetuated by the dependence of women on the family to provide organization and structure, whereas men within the family are enabled to assert authority and dominance.

Some empirical evidence supports the cycle of violence based on social learning theory (Johnson, 1996). Specifically, men who are exposed to male violence in the family home during their childhood are significantly more likely to become violent toward their
female partners (Straus, 1983). Interventions following this theoretical model are often
designed to target the perpetrator of the violence, while merely supporting the "victim." One
might legitimately ask however, why should the offender receive all the resources and aid?

This theory does not explain how stalking exists outside of the family domain or how
some males who are exposed to family violence do not become violent. Additionally,
according to feminist theories, examining the family context in light of violence may lead to
erroneously blaming women for the abuse. Whereas family systems/power theory locates the
source of violence within the family structure, feminist theories place the violence within a
larger historical and political context whereby systematic oppression against women and
children is supported (see Johnson, 1997 for an overview).

Feminist theories of violence assert that men perpetrate acts of violence against
women because of the power imbalance between men and women in society. In this context,
violence is a behaviour that is "chosen" by the abusive partner as a method of power and
control within the relationship. The responsibility for the abusive behaviour is therefore
placed with the perpetrator and the larger structures that serve to support power inequity.
Advantages of the feminist theories include a refusal to blame women, validation of women's
experiences, consideration of the larger social context, and a focus on interventions aimed at
empowering women and supporting their efforts to escape violence. Feminist theories fit
with my worldview more broadly, and specifically as they pertain to the societal problem of
stalking.

To extrapolate feminist theories to stalking, women who are stalked may benefit from
being empowered to manage the event and being supported in protecting themselves.
Moreover, they require adequate structural and social support systems to appropriately
respond to the crime. Public awareness of the problem may help to reduce any potential stigma involved in being stalked and to aid others in recognizing the signs of a serious crime. It is argued that feeling empowered in this context is not an easy task in a society in which women have historically experienced less power. By exposing the problem and the context in which it occurs and by using feminist theory to inform the research, it is argued that women are encouraged to place the blame of the crime of stalking where it rightfully lies: with the perpetrator and the organizational systems and culture that supports the notion that women are powerless.

The Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Stalking

One of the primary reasons for legislating a law aimed at stalking was due to the relationship of stalking to violence (Meloy, 1998). According to official statistics of reported stalking incidents, the group most at risk for violence in the context of being stalked appears to be women who survive domestic abuse (Coleman, 1997). Three studies addressing the link between domestic violence and stalking also suggest that violence may be more likely in cases involving prior domestic violence (Burgess et al., 1997; Coleman, 1997; Sev’er, 1997).

Burgess et al. (1997) investigated a sample of accused batterers and found that 30% of the sample (3 females and 30 males) used some form of stalking behaviours to harass their estranged partners. Characteristics of the person who was stalked that were related to current stalking included whether the individual was a known drug or alcohol abuser, whether he/she had previously been stalked, and whether he/she lived alone. This study suggests that a significant proportion of individuals who have been stalked have experienced prior domestic abuse from the person from whom they are stalked. Implications for services may include an aspect of support and education related to the dynamic of abuse within relationships.
Although Burgess and associates (1997) present an explanatory model that increases awareness about the relationship between domestic abuse and stalking, suggesting characteristics of the “victim” as explanatory factors in stalking is very problematic. As previously stated, efforts to root crimes against women within the context of their own behaviour erroneously blames women for the abuse, invalidates their experience, and ignores the larger social, political, and historical context in which it occurs (Johnson, 1996). Furthermore, any explanation of a woman’s experience should evolve directly from the woman herself, enabling each woman to explicate how she is uniquely affected.

The second study that examined the interplay between stalking and domestic violence was focused on a convenience sample of university students. Coleman (1997) surveyed 141 undergraduate female students’ experience with stalking based on their responses to a relationship questionnaire. Participants who reported being stalked scored higher on the verbal and physical violence self-report scales. Based on these findings, Coleman suggests that stalking played a role in the cycle of violence. Moreover, males who were physically/verbally abusive during the relationship were more likely to stalk their partners after the relationship had terminated. This finding is supported by other literature examining the risk markers for future violence. One of the best indicators of future violence is previous violence (see Webster, Douglas, Eaves, & Hart, 1997, for an overview). Implications for this study are that the safety needs and concerns of women who are stalked by a previous violent partner might differ from the needs of a woman who is stalked by a person with no history of violence. In addition, Coleman’s study suggests a continuum of violence within some heterosexual relationships.
Sev’er (1997) describes the diversity of stalking by critically reviewing the literature pertinent to violence against women and commenting from a feminist perspective. Her position is augmented with several stories drawn from an earlier study of women and divorce in Canada. Based on the literature she argues that imminent or recent separation from a romantic partner greatly heightens a woman’s risk for violence. This phenomenon is unfortunately linked to social, economic, and political disadvantages that exist in our culture in the sense that they represent further barriers to women seeking safety. This author asserts that control is related to the intimidation of women. Intimidation may take many forms, of which stalking is just one. Other forms of intimidation include using children and loved ones, economic deprivation, coercion, threatening behaviour, and assault. The crucial task, as Sev’er defines it, is to change the perceptions of lawmakers and justice personnel. She draws on an expanded version of the power and control model to underscore the risk to women during a separation from their partners.

The conclusions of Sev’er’s (1997) article have implications for the needs of women who are stalked by previously abusive partners. Change must occur at the societal level, including the legal response to crimes of violence. Additionally, she recommends that women develop specific safety plans, in the event that the physical separation leads to their partners feeling powerless and attempting to compensate through escalating violence.

It can be surmised based on the literature that stalking and domestic violence cannot be considered mutually exclusive concepts; although some batterers stalk their estranged partner, not all stalkers are batterers. However, for those stalking-batterers, the cycle of stalking may resemble the more general cycle of violence.
Using case studies, as well as interviews with individuals who have experienced violence, advocates, psychologists, legal experts, and security professionals, Shaum and Parrish (1995) assert that the domestic violence stalking frequently is a repeat cycle that increases in severity and intensity. The first phase in domestic stalking is called the “Tension Building” phase where the stalking progresses from seemingly harmless behaviour such as irritating phone calls to actual threats. The second phase is called the “Explosive or Acutely Violent” phase whereby minor violence escalates into serious attacks such as assault, or other escalating behaviour. A third phase is called the “Hearts and Flowers” phase during which the target of stalking may be subjected to different tactics aimed at getting her attention. Alternatively, the stalker may ask for forgiveness. This phase may also appear to be the end of the stalking behaviour, only to have the stalker resume the harassment at a later time when the woman’s guard is down.

The authors are cautious to point out that not all women will experience each phase, as one of the frightening elements of stalking is that it is not predictable. They also noted that cycles of stalking can continue for years. Thus, it is hypothesized that the repercussions for the individual who has been stalked is that their needs might feasibly change over the course of the stalking experience. During the Tension Building and Acutely Violent phases a proactive, educational/safety-oriented approach might be most helpful, while during the Hearts and Flowers phase and beyond, safety could be combined with emotional support aimed at regaining a sense of trust, control, and security. However, these assumptions are mere hypotheses and must be verified with the experiences of women who have been stalked.
Types of Stalking

Based on the current literature, it is accepted that stalking occurs between people who have various relationships. Meloy (1998) suggests that these relationships can be categorised in one of three ways: intimates or former/post intimates, acquaintances, and strangers. This categorisation is not important for the prosecution of the crime (stalking is considered illegal whether a perpetrator stalks a stranger or their estranged spouse), but it can be useful for practice in providing services to women who have been stalked. For example, if a woman has been stalked by a stranger, she might express different needs than a woman who has endured ongoing, escalating harassment and abuse from a previous partner. Thus, it is argued that the consequences of stalking may vary, depending on the relationship in which the stalking arises. A summary of the three types of stalking provides information helpful in understanding the different forms of stalking.

**Prior/post-intimate stalking.** Papple (1999) reports that although there are likely a large number of unreported stalking cases, almost 70% of the cases reported to police involve prior intimate partners as the perpetrators. The period following the termination of a relationship is a critical time in which violence and harassment may ensue. Hence, it follows that post-intimate stalking incidents are at a statistically higher risk for physical harm and constitute the largest group of stalking incidents. Post-intimate stalking can be further broken down into women who were previously abused by their stalker during the relationship and another group of women for whom the stalking is the first explicit sign of violence.

As Hall (1997) points out, for the latter group of women, stalking behaviour can be a disturbing surprise. For these women, it might be particularly important to provide education about the dynamics of stalking and tips on safety planning to ensure that the stalking is taken
seriously from the beginning. Hall’s dissertation explored the relationship between the stalker and the person who was stalked, the impact of the crime, the types of contacts made by the stalker, and the effectiveness of protection orders. She designed a questionnaire to collect data from individuals who were stalked, advertising for participants throughout several large cities within the United States.

Hall hypothesized that the majority of people who are stalked are female and that the most commonly reported perpetrators were male post-intimate stalkers. She found strong support for both hypotheses using descriptive statistics. Specifically, the majority of respondents were female (83%), and 57% of participants were stalked by previous partners (35% of participants were stalked by acquaintances, 6% were stalked by strangers).

Using a chi-square test, Hall attempted to explore the relationship between violence and stalking. She found that post-intimate stalkers were much more likely to commit acts of violence than non-post intimate stalkers (60.3% compared to 30.6%). This finding was similar to Pathe and Mullen’s (1997) finding that violence was more likely to occur in a former intimate relationship. Hall also found a gender difference in that females were more likely than males to be injured by their stalker.

Another unique quality of post-intimate stalking that differentiates it from other categories is the level of knowledge regarding aspects of the target’s life. This intimacy factor allows the person who is perpetrating the stalking behaviour to potentially know their former partner’s schedule, friends, family, fears, etc. Hence women who are stalked by a previous partner might be forced to accept that the person that they once trusted and loved is now potentially dangerous.
Acquaintance stalking. A second category of stalking includes the next most common incidence, acquaintance stalking. Frequently in this category of stalking, the pattern of harassment is precipitated by a spurned romantic attempt on the part of the stalker toward the target that turns to obsession (Meloy, 1998). According to Zona's study (1992, cited in Hall, 1997), 13% of stalking incidents involve workplace stalkers. This means that a significant proportion of stalking occurs as a direct result of relationships generated outside of the home. Moreover, because women are joining the work force in increasing numbers as compared to several decades ago, they are now more susceptible to being followed and harassed by a co-worker. Hall (1997) offers an explanation for this disturbing trend in workplace stalking as the emerging emphasis of career over family and declining community involvement. However, she also points out that some acquaintance stalking involves non-romantic initiatives, such as misunderstandings among neighbours, and professional relationships gone awry.

For example, Romans, Hays, and White (1996) surveyed a random sample of counselling centres around the United States and found that 5.6% of the 178 female and male participants admitted to being stalked by a former or current client during their career. Moreover, 8% of the sample reported a family member/friend being stalked by a former/current client. As further evidence of the prevalence of stalking as a larger societal problem, 10% of the participants knew of a supervisor who had been stalked. Overall, 64% of the sample experienced some form of harassing behaviour from a client. These results appear consistent with the more general population in terms of incidence of stalking, but bear important implications for the nature of professional practice within counselling centres. All participants who had been stalked reported the incident to be psychologically injurious,
leading in some cases to lost work time, and changes in lifestyle because of safety concerns, stress, and worry. However, the overall level of concern appeared lower than levels reported from other groups of individuals who had been stalked (i.e., individuals who were stalked by a former partners).

**Stranger stalking.** The third, and often cited as the most publicised type of stalking, is referred to as stranger stalking. Celebrity stalking falls into this category whereby a public figure is stalked by an obsessed fan. Frequently these stalkers suffer from some form of mental illness that causes them to fixate on a particular person (Meloy & Gothard, 1995). The stalking perpetrator may believe that the person that they are harassing shares romantic feelings with them that must be asserted at all costs (Meloy & Gothard, 1995). This type of stalking can be perplexing because the person does not know what brought on the obsession and several of the behaviours exhibited by the stalking perpetrator may seem strange and nonsensical. For example, the stalker may send cryptic “love letters” or send inappropriate gifts that appear out of context given the nature of the relationship. Although this form of stalking is often more visible than other forms of stalking, it is also very rare and involves a smaller proportion of overall stalking cases (Schaum & Parrish, 1995).

**Legal Components Involved in Criminal Harassment**

The Canadian definition of criminal harassment is an indictable offence that carries a maximum term of imprisonment not exceeding 10 years. Before 1994, Canadian women had little recourse to prevent stalkers from following and harassing them. Without actual physical harm or threats, police could not charge perpetrators of stalking with an offence. Now however, Canada’s criminal harassment law (section 264 of the Criminal Code) makes it a crime for a person to stalk another person. The legal definition of stalking includes:
(a) repeatedly following [a person] from place to place (b) repeatedly communicating with [a person], either directly or indirectly (c) besetting or watching the dwelling house, or the place where the other person or anyone known to them resides, works, carries a business, or happens to be; or (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or a member of their family.

Thus, a key component of criminal harassment is the *repetitive nature* of the activity. Other key components include that the stalker possess a degree of *intent*, and that the stalking causes or would reasonably cause a degree of *emotional harm*.

Notwithstanding the importance of anti-stalking provisions, to what extent does the new law meet the needs of women who are criminally harassed? Currently, several barriers exist that prevent the law from being effective. First, because the crime is based on the premise that no physical harm has been committed, punishment for the crime tends to be relatively minor. Jail time for stalking cases is uncommon and frequently stalkers who are found guilty are given a sentence of probation. This could have a lack of deterrence effect on the person committing the criminal harassment, but also may deter women who are harassed from coming forward. Second, experts in Canada such as Sergeant Doug Lepard of the Criminal Harassment Unit in Vancouver, British Columbia (Papple, 1999), and Gavin deBecker in the United States (Shaum & Parrish, 1995) indicate that early intervention in the sequence of stalking behaviour is essential to prevention.

However, not only must the target of the stalking identify the stalker’s behaviour as serious, they often must endure *repetitive* acts of stalking prior to the police filing a report for a criminal charge. Shaum and Parrish cite numerous stories of individuals who recount frequent filing of police reports with minimal repercussions. They describe essentially a “waiting game” for the stalking to increase in severity, thus enabling a more serious charge such as threatening, assault, or attempted murder. Hence, one of the areas to inquire with
women who have been stalked is the extent to which they feel the legal system is meeting their needs and to what extent service providers can help in navigating this system.

A third problem with the current system is those individuals who are stalked may be reluctant to involve police and the courts because they feel that the system will not/cannot support their needs. Tragically, this was the case for Poonam Randhawa, an 18-year-old local female who was shot to death after more than 2 years of harassment from a school acquaintance (Bolan, 1999). Although Randhawa changed schools in an attempt to flee the male who was stalking her, school officials, police, and even her own father were not aware of the extent of the harassment until her death.

Another recently publicized case points out the other face of stalking violence; when those attempting to help others who are stalked become harmed. When Starbucks manager, Anthony McNaughton, came to the aid of a female employee, her estranged husband, who had been stalking her for several weeks, stabbed him to death (Kines, 2000). In this case, the woman had courageously filed a harassment complaint 2 weeks previously, but she declined any police intervention because she reported that physical violence had not been an issue. This tragedy suggests the importance of public education of the dangers of stalking, the need for early and swift intervention from local authorities, and the risks inherent not only to the woman who is stalked, but also to those attempting to support her.

Effects of Stalking

The experience of being stalked has implications for necessary services. For example, if the majority of women who are stalked do to report negative consequences as a result of their experience, then support-based programs targeting them as a group may not be appropriate. In order to address the needs, it is important to be aware of some of the typical
consequences that women might experience. In one of the few descriptive studies that examined the impact of stalking, Pathe and Mullen (1997) surveyed 100 victims of stalking in Australia using a 50-item questionnaire to explore the psychological and social effects of being victimized. They concluded that stalking effected a negative change in 94% of participants within the realms of social relationships, work lives, and psychological well-being. Major findings included high levels of anxiety for 83% of those who had been stalked, intrusive recollections and flashback in 55% of respondents, and suicidal ruminations for 24% of participants. Criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were present in 37% of participants.

Consistent with previous findings, physical violence was significantly more likely in cases where the stalker and the person who was stalked were former intimate partners (comprising 29% of the total sample). Unfortunately, the article does not report the details of the statistical analysis to support their findings. Results indicated that 58% of participants were overtly threatened, 31% involved physical assault, and 7% of participants reported sexual assault. One of the implications of the Pathe and Mullen study is that prior-intimate-stalking cases in the study involved a disproportionately high degree of violence.

All participants surveyed by Pathe and Mullen (1997) sought some form of assistance. This included turning to family/friends, police, lawyers, medical practitioners, co-workers, or supervisors. This implies that people who are stalked may be interested in assistance. Moreover, although participants surveyed sought help, the majority found the assistance lacking in effectiveness. This indicates that there may be a gap between the existing support structures available and a more desired structure or set of structures. It is important to keep in mind that women who do not seek assistance and/or support may feel
that existing services fail to meet their needs. Alternatively, some women may feel that they are not deserving of the necessary support and aid. It is argued that this belief can be located within the larger context of a society that devalues women as a group and allows violence toward women to grow to epidemic proportions. For those individuals who are stalked and choose not to seek support and assistance, a larger societal change may be necessary to create a change at the individual level.

No published study to date has explored the necessary support services by directing the inquiry to the women who have been stalked. In order to meet the needs of these women, and more importantly, to insure that the services offered will be adequately utilised, it is crucial to extract the opinions from a sample of women who were stalked through a process of in-depth discussion and feedback.

Abrams and Robinson (1998b) came to the same conclusion in their article aimed at examining existing problems with the practical support available and the emotional consequences of stalking. They asserted that existing treatment available to individuals who are stalked is insufficient. Similar to Pathe and Mullen’s (1997) results, Abrams and Robinson summarized the negative effects of stalking to include anxiety, depression, guilt, helplessness, and more severe symptoms associated with PTSD. However, their results were based on a review of existing literature and publications from victim/women’s organizations pertinent to stalking. To support their findings they included illustrations from their work with persons who had been criminally harassed. They conclude that stalking is a topic that has been neglected at a societal level and based on the seriousness of the repercussions of being stalked, treatment and research should be aimed at this growing problem.
Based on these two key studies, it appears that stalking bears a significant impact on survivors of stalking, affecting relationships, work, leisure, and psychological health. It follows that some individuals who are stalked might benefit from counselling services aimed at restoring their sense of safety and trust in the world. However, these reported studies do not inform service providers about the potential stages that a person who has been stalked might experience, as the stalking experience becomes more distant temporally. Moreover, no study to date has reported a continuum of experience for people who have been stalked. Do some individuals who have been stalked experience a change in what is experienced as most helpful over the course of being stalked? Is there a progression from crisis intervention to grief counselling to social support? Without more information, it is impossible to ascertain this important question.

Stalking-related Services

Services currently available in Vancouver and throughout the lower mainland to women who are stalked include police intervention, victim service-related agencies, and agencies specializing in violence against women. According to a recent newspaper interview with the Unit Leader Doug Lepard, the Criminal Harassment Unit is trained in dealing with perpetrators of stalking and treats each complaint individually (Papple, 1999). The unit consults regularly with clinicians to decide the best course of action. Lepard points out that without the proper training, police can exacerbate the problem by unwittingly enraged the stalking perpetrator. One of the initiatives of the unit is to raise public awareness and to encourage people who are stalked to contact police during the initial phase of the stalking experience.
Victim service agencies are also a source of referral for women who are stalked, according to the information offered in a brochure co-published by the Ministry of Women’s Equality and the Ministry of the Attorney General (1997) entitled “What to do if you’re being stalked.” Depending on the stage of the stalking, women who are currently being stalked are directed to the police-based victim services at which point they would be provided with information, and referred to counselling if appropriate. If charges have been laid against the person who is committing the stalking behaviour, the person who is stalked may be referred to the Crown Counsel-based victim services, where they are given information about the court process, support and referral information, and accompanied through the trial if necessary. The third source of referral for women who have been stalked includes an array of services available to women who have been affected by violence. Such agencies include community transition houses, Battered Women Support Services (BWSS), Rape Relief, and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVA). These agencies are known within the community for their work with women who have experienced the immediate and long-term effects of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Information pertaining to criminal harassment law and procedures is more accessible than previously. However, it is argued that a woman who is stalked who is not in an abusive relationship may not feel comfortable seeking counselling and support from a transition house, BWSS, Rape Relief, or WAVA. Despite some important overlap among the various groups, in terms of the need for a safety plan and police intervention, it is plausible that the lack of clarity around stalking may play a role in the lack of specialized services provided for women who have been stalked. Hence it is important to flesh out our understanding of the needs of women who have been stalked to gain insight that can be used for future practice.


CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the method used to collect, analyse, and make sense of the data in the current research. Several steps were taken to ensure that the themes garnered from the participants were systematically and methodologically supported. These steps are described in the section below.

Research Questions

The two main research question of the present study were: (a) What are the experiences of women who have been stalked, and (b) What are women survivor’s suggestions regarding improvements to support services. I examined participant’s descriptions of their experience including their narrative of the stalking event, the impact of the event on their lives, the ways that they managed the event, and their recommendations based on their experience.

Method

Grounded theory techniques and procedures taken from Strauss and Corbin (1998) were used to guide the data collection and analysis in this study. Specifically, the constant comparative method, based on grounded theory, was used to systematically uncover major themes that appeared pivotal to each woman’s account of her experience of stalking. Key objectives of the grounded theory method include offering insights about a phenomenon, enhancing understanding within a chosen field, and providing an impetus for future action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The second research question, although it appears different from the some other questions linked to grounded theory, is included because it relates to the latter objective espoused by the authors. Specifically, the recommendations taken from participants is meant to imply the need for and useful for a meaningful social action.
Grounded theory can lead to two potentially satisfactory outcomes. First-level analysis involves organizing data into categories or themes according to their requisite properties and dimensions. This level of analysis is called “conceptual ordering” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Second-level analysis involves constructing a central idea, or “core category” and building theory development. Consistent with the goals of this research, the data were analysed according to the first level analysis or conceptual ordering. Therefore, a definitive theory is not offered as part of the research. Constant comparative method was used to develop major themes exclusively, and not as a contribution to theory development.

The process of constant comparative method involves drawing upon and immersing oneself in the participant’s narratives in order to develop collective themes and provide interpretive analysis regarding the meaning of the text. A key component to this method is that it reflects upon what appears to be emerging in the data and critically examines one’s own processes and biases inherent in the research process. At the meta-level, this process involves taking what is determined to be the essence of what the participant is saying and comparing it with other aspects of the participant’s story as well as with other participants’ stories. At the micro-level, the constant comparative method involves a variety of “tools” aimed at helping the researcher break the data into formidable chunks of meaningful information. One of the ways suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to perform this operation is called “coding.” Coding refers to the process that the researcher uses to break down the text and conceptualise it in a descriptively meaningful way. Open coding is defined as: “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Data are examined closely for the thoughts, idea and meaning located inherently within the text.
In the present study, open coding was used to uncover categories or themes that lend descriptive meaning to the data. The process of open coding began with a line-by-line analysis to generate categories or themes from the text. Once several categories emerged from the data, entire sentences were coded in relation to the established categories. Reflexive questions were asked throughout the analysis such as: “What are the data really saying,” and “How is this similar to and different from the previous text?” At the next level of analysis, efforts were made to identify the variety of conditions, actions, and consequences associated with a particular category or theme. The data were then examined for potential clues as to how the themes might relate.

Memos and additional diagrams were also used as part of the grounded theory method to provide a container for ideas, biases, and insights generated during the data analysis and final writing of the manuscript. Memos are described as essentially a running log of thoughts during the research, while diagrams are a visual display of the ideas emerging from the data. These are referred to during the writing of the manuscript as a reference point to key ideas. These processes added to the reflexivity of the data analysis and helped to record and chart the themes as they emerged from the participants’ words.

This method of inquiry was the most suitable for this study for several important reasons. First and foremost, the research on stalking to date has not focused on the individual experiences of women who have been stalked (Hall, 1997). In fact, a dearth of literature exists pertaining to the experience of stalking from any method of inquiry, quantitative or qualitative. The existing studies of stalking either focus on the stalker (Meloy & Gothard, 1995), or they focus on the relationship between the stalker and the individual’s who are stalked (Burgess, et al., 1997; Ehrhardt Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999; Romans, et al., 1996).
By understanding the experiences of a select group of women who have been stalked, service implications can be generated by using examples from individual experiences. Additionally, an inductive research method is more consistent with the feminist perspective because it accepts that the participants are the experts of their experience and are most able to provide useful information regarding their experience.

Participants

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of 7 adult women who have experienced stalking. The women in the study either responded to an advertisement located in several targeted areas or they volunteered to participate through a process of word-of-mouth. Selection criteria for the study were explicated in the advertisement included in Appendix A. Specifically, participation in the study was restricted to women who were at least 19 years of age to limit the findings to adult females who have been stalked. The stipulation that participants have been stalked in the past was intended to ensure that participants were not in any immediate danger by engaging in the interview process. However, despite this criterion, several of the participants admitted that although participation in the research did not put them in any immediate danger, that the stalking that they have endured is of an ongoing nature and that they are not “out of danger.” This speaks to the unfortunate reality of stalking—that it is of a continuous nature.

Efforts were made to include a diverse sample of stalking experiences to add to the richness of the final results. On many levels this goal was achieved (see Table 1). The participants represent a cross-section of ages (within the mid-adult range), educational backgrounds, professions, family types, and stalking related incidents (see Table 2). The one demographic that lacks diversity is ethnicity. This is recognized as a limitation of the results
and will be addressed further in the discussion section to follow. However, on several other demographic variables, participants varied considerably.
Table 1

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>JOB</th>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>FAMILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Pam&quot;</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some post-</td>
<td>Community education</td>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>C/L (divorced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Lee&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Counselling/political</td>
<td>$40-60,000</td>
<td>C/L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jane&quot;</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some post-</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>No income</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Reilly&quot;</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some post-</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>$20-40,000</td>
<td>C/L (divorced with adult children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Matilda&quot;</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>$20-40,000</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Beth&quot;</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Therapist</td>
<td>$20-40,000</td>
<td>C/L, with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Karen&quot;</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>Single (divorced with adult children)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.

a. Pseudonyms were used; these are not participant’s actual names
b. C/L connotes a common-law relationship
Table 2

Description of the Stalking Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Pam&quot;</td>
<td>Prior intimate</td>
<td>2 separate urban cities</td>
<td>7 years (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Lee&quot;</td>
<td>1. Stranger</td>
<td>1. Urban city</td>
<td>1. Several weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Prior intimate (same sex relationship)</td>
<td>2. Rural city—other province</td>
<td>2. Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jane&quot;</td>
<td>Acquaintance (work-related)</td>
<td>2 separate urban cities</td>
<td>5 years (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Reilly&quot;</td>
<td>Prior intimate</td>
<td>Urban city</td>
<td>5 years (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Matilda&quot;</td>
<td>Acquaintance (work-related)</td>
<td>Urban city</td>
<td>Just under 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Beth&quot;</td>
<td>Acquaintance (work-related)</td>
<td>Urban city</td>
<td>Just over 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Karen&quot;</td>
<td>Prior intimate</td>
<td>Rural city</td>
<td>5 years (ongoing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a. Pseudonyms were used; these are not participant’s actual names
Similar to Hall’s (1997) dissertation on stalking, participation in the study was not limited by the legal definition of criminal harassment. Interested participants who were not involved with a formal legal investigation were not excluded. Because the study was aimed at understanding the nature of the experience of a diverse sample of women who have been stalked and potential barriers to support systems, this criterion for inclusion in the study was kept purposefully open to each participant’s definition of stalking. Despite this open criterion, all participants met the legal criteria for criminal harassment. However, one participant did not label the behaviour as stalking during the initial course of the harassment and therefore did not feel “threatened” until more recently. It was not until the initial experience ended in physical violence and the stalking began anew that she began to fear for her safety. This aspect is discussed in more detail in the ensuing results section.

An effort was made to include participants from all three of the stalking groups (post-intimate stalking, acquaintance stalking, and stranger stalking) to gain an understanding of the potential similarities and differences among these women’s experiences.

Recruitment Process

Advertisements for participation in the study were distributed to several locations, including several local transition houses, community services centres, and specialized victim’s assistance organizations, anti-violence associations, as well as a large university distribution electronic mailing list. In addition, participants were recruited through word-of-mouth regarding the study. Specifically, several colleagues agreed to forward copies of the advertisement to potential participants, and were given the researcher’s contact phone number to arrange for participation in the study. Interested participants contacted the researcher for further details of the study. Participants were informed of the purpose and
nature of the study, and the requirements and criteria for participation (i.e., audio-taping).

Once it was established that the participant was interested in taking part in the research, arrangements were made for an accessible and safe meeting place. All of the interviews occurred in a private and confidential space that was determined to be convenient for participants. The majority of the participants were interviewed in their homes. However, one participant arranged to be interviewed in the researcher's office, while the two other participants were interviewed in their private offices.

Procedure

The initial semi-structured, in-depth interviews were audio-tape recorded and ranged in length from 1 to 3 hours. Consent for the participation in the study in general and for the audio-taping component of the research was obtained during the initial orientation phase of the interview. Specifically, participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to gain knowledge about the nature of women's experience of stalking and to generate suggestions for improvement to services to this population. Participants were also given a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix B) and told that the interview would proceed in an open-ended manner. Four questions guided the discussion. Broadly, these were: (a) what was their experience, (b) how were they affected, (c) how did they manage their experience, and (d) what would they recommend to improve services. The interview questions were posed to each of the 7 women who had been stalked by a former intimate partner, an acquaintance, or a stranger.

Although the interview process addressed several key questions, the format was aimed at following the participant's experience and direction. The interview questions were
used as a way to guide and focus the discussion. The questions were garnered from the existing literature review with consideration of the aim of the study as a whole.

As the interviews progressed and questions arose with respect to specific themes or ideas, subsequent participants were asked to comment on ideas generated from the previous interviews. Basic empathy and process skills were used throughout the interviews to acknowledge a level of emotional distress associated the experience of stalking. Prompts such as paraphrasing, clarification questions and nods were used throughout the interviews as needed. For the most part, participants spoke easily about their understanding of their experience and required little in the way of prompting. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked about demographic information, such as their age, occupation, income, ethnicity, and family type.

As explicated in the consent form (see Appendix C), all participants were assured of confidentiality, respect, and the right to refuse participation at any time during the study. Participants were asked to fill out the consent form prior to engaging in the interview. Because of the potential emotional impact of discussing an upsetting event, or series of events can have, participants were given an opportunity to discuss their feelings with the researcher at the commencement of the interview. Additionally, all participants were offered specific referral information regarding follow up counselling or support services (see Appendix D).

After completing the first phase of the interviews and coding for themes in the data, participants were contacted and invited to comment/provide clarification relating to the preliminary findings. Specifically, participants were offered summaries of their individual vignette as well as a brief summary of the major themes generated from the collective stories.
Based on the feedback provided, changes were incorporated into the final results.

Participants were also offered a copy of the final project.

Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts of dialogue between individual participants and the researcher were recorded and analysed for general themes related to the experience of stalking and the suggestions for service prior to subsequent interviews. Transcripts reflected explicit verbal as well as nonverbal behaviour of participants (i.e., pauses in speech, laughter, crying, emphasized speech). Quotes used within the study have been edited for the purposes of clarity. The final results are a summary of the key themes that emerged from the collective sample including the properties and dimensions of the themes. All themes presented are supported by and embedded in quotes drawn from the participants. Therefore data were examined and reported in the context of the participants' meaning rather than the researcher's.

A summary of the steps taken during the coding of the transcripts is described in Appendix E. In summary, the first step in the analysis was to take the transcript and proceed in a line-by-line analysis of the data, searching for chunks of meaning units. Each meaning unit was labelled with a descriptive words or short string of words (i.e., "constant vigilance"). These open codes were then compared with other codes within the transcript, examining the ways that they were similar to and different from the other codes. At this stage of the analysis, codes were examined and compared with other units within the transcript. Codes were then grouped accordingly and preliminary categories or themes were established.

One of the diagrams that guided the initial analysis was a conceptual overview of what occurred during the stalking event. This overview was driven by the nature of the
questions that were asked during the interview, and therefore provided a context for the information that was emerging in the data. The final diagram of major themes described in the “Results” chapter (see Figure 2) evolved from and was linked to the initial diagram depicted in Figure 1. It is provided below as an example of a diagram used during the preliminary analysis phase of collating these data and making sense of the open codes as they fit together. In addition, the figure is provided as a means to orient the reader to my process during the data analysis phase of the study. To a large extent, “theoretical saturation” occurred in that no additional categories, properties, or relationships emerged after the seventh and final interview.
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the phenomenon of stalking

Note. "Event" refers to the stalking experience more generally and is not meant to imply that the event was a singular behavioural phenomenon.
As the Figure suggests, all seven women began their narratives by describing details surrounding the stalking event (i.e., the nature of the relationship, early signs of problems, behaviours used by the person who was stalking them), and the general pattern that the stalking followed. As they moved into their stories, the women discussed the different ways that the stalking affected them personally. Participants were also encouraged during the interview process to reflect upon the areas of their life that were affected, both at the time the stalking was occurring as well as in the aftermath.

During their descriptions of the ways that they were personally impacted, all of the women were able to articulate the ways in which their healing and safety were compromised. I initially conceptualised this as: "what hindered coping" as it represented aspects of their story that were articulated as constraints to each woman’s personal safety in relation to the stalking potential for harm and her healing from the experience. These barriers appeared to compound the impact of the stalking and in some cases, resulted in re-victimizing the woman.

All of the women in the sample described a variety of ways in which they managed their experience. These were conceptualised as either what they did themselves to cope with the stalking or ways in which others (systems-people or family and friends) provided support and/or relevant information. Finally, the women were asked what they would recommend to help other women who had a similar experience. This aspect of the data had a specific focus in terms of making suggestions for improvement for service and stemmed from my perspective that the current formal structures are inadequate to sufficiently support women who have been stalked.
As the groupings evolved into more cohesive themes, new information was examined for ways that the theme was supported and ways that the theme might be negated. For example, one of the preliminary themes was named “Impact” to encompass the ways that the stalking experience affected participants. However, as the analysis evolved, this category was renamed as “Fearing the Unknown” as a more descriptive label for what was occurring in the interviews. Negative cases, or examples of participants not conforming to aspects of the theme were identified and examined to provide an explanation for the variance.

To assure fidelity and trustworthiness in the study, several steps suggested by Berkowitz (1996) were taken. I aspired to be transparent with participants about my goals and purpose of the research to stay on track and provide useful information. To the extent possible, caution was used to insure that comments from transcripts were situated in the context in which they arose. Efforts were made to make interpretations that would also be drawn from other “reasonable” researchers (Popham, 1993).

Validation interviews represented another check on these data. Once all of the initial interviews were completed, transcribed and open coded, participants were contacted by phone or email (4 of the participants were contacted by email and 3 were contacted by phone). They were all provided with brief summaries of the preliminary themes and their individual profiles. Participants were asked to provide clarification and feedback and invited to contact me by phone or by email with their suggestions.

All of the participants responded to the validation checks. The first two participants who were contacted offered clarification relating to their stories and offered feedback on the preliminary themes. From the feedback, I went back to the text of all seven interviews and reviewed the codes that emerged from the data in conjunction with the validation interviews.
The criteria used in deciding to make changes to the major themes were based partly on the participant’s accounts as well as whether the feedback was consistent with what the other participants appeared to be saying. If a major discrepancy existed, it was decided to note the difference in the findings, but to report the common, pivotal findings. The remaining participants were subsequently contacted with the updated themes and asked for their feedback. Feedback at this stage of the analysis was consistently positive. Thus, no major discrepancies were discovered in the major themes presented and the women’s feedback. However, clarification related to several dimensions was achieved. The validation interviews were particularly useful in providing further clarification relating to aspects of the themes that were previously unclear.

For example, one of the themes that remained unclear during the early stages of the data analysis was the theme of “Concern for Others.” This theme was initially labelled “Sense of Responsibility” to connote that the participants described a sense of wanting others, in some cases the stalker, to receive the help that was needed. However, after completing validation interviews with several of the participants and discussing the ideas that were generated, it became clear that the majority participants did not necessarily feel responsible in the sense of self-blame (although 2 of the women did convey a sense of shame related to the incident). Rather, participants suggested a sense of wanting others to be looked after and a sense of concern for the welfare of others. Consequently, the theme was renamed accordingly.

Another check on the validity of this study was to engage the feedback of others at several key points in the research process. Firstly, two service providers were informally interviewed for their feedback on general services available to stalking survivors, their
comments on the research and interview questions, and their suggestions for improvement for women survivors. These informal interviews were used to inform and shape the process in the early stages of the research.

Secondly, several individuals were consulted regarding the themes during the data analysis and writing stages. Specifically, two service providers were asked to provide feedback on the themes relating to the pattern and impact of the stalking event, and the needs of women survivors. Conversations evolved out of these brief descriptions of the findings and my initial conceptualisations of the themes. Moreover, I was interested in whether the titles of the themes made intuitive sense, whether the manner in which the material was described was understandable to the reader, and whether the themes were consistent with themes found in qualitative research. They were not asked to confirm the veracity of the participants accounts of their experiences, as this study was clearly interested in the participants’ understanding of their experience of stalking.

Feedback related to other studies finding similar results (e.g. that various system-related problems existed for women survivors, and that women often felt a sense of responsibility to others at some point during the event). The feedback helped to broaden the descriptions of the major themes and to clarify the title of the theme describing the stalking event itself. More importantly, the feedback was used to deepen my understanding of the women’s descriptions and the context in which they were speaking. Following this feedback, a third individual was consulted with respect to the diagram of the major themes and their understanding of the suggested hypotheses as they were depicted. Feedback helped to clarify what was intended visually and to articulate potential relationships among themes. Thus by consulting with others, I achieved more reflexivity in the analytic process.
The final step in checking the validity of my findings was to have my research supervisor read a completed, transcribed interview for potential methodological errors. The first coded interview was reviewed to scan for leading questions during the interview and to check the veracity of the open codes.

Memos

Throughout the research, the grounded theory process of memoing was used to record ideas, biases, and questions as they emerged. The practice of engaging in qualitative research was a rewarding and thoughtful process that provided an added depth of understanding to my work. My position as a therapist for women who experience violence, many of whom are stalked, provided both a level of understanding as well as some biases that affected the research process. For example, my preconceived idea that women who are stalked would desire counselling-related services specific to stalking was not meted out in the participants accounts to any large degree. Overall, I felt that my experience as a counsellor in this area allowed me to step into the process more fully and ask clarification questions related to my experience with the topic.

One of the challenges of the research was in transcending from the open codes of data to the writing phase of the study. In order to deal with this temporary barrier, I engaged in dialogue with others regarding the nature of the data, immersed myself in the data, reviewed the transcripts and grounded theory texts, and essentially “sat with the process” until the material began to make sense. As a starting point, the section of the results related to suggestions for change became the first section of written text because it represented practical suggestions. Thus, it was easier to conceptualise a way of presenting this type of
information as compared to the more broad personal experiences. Once this section was written, the remainder of the themes appeared to flow with greater ease.

Summary

The constant comparative method of analysis was used to develop themes evolving out of individual, semi-structured interviews with women who had been stalked. Participants were selected based on their subjective experience of stalking from a former partner, an acquaintance, or a stranger and their willingness to discuss their experience with a researcher. Seven women were interviewed over a period of 3 months. Participants were also invited to provide feedback on the findings according to their interpretations of the themes. Data comprised of transcribed audio-tapes and memos recorded during the study. All steps during the data collection and data analysis phases of the research were documented and presented. Data were analysed according to the constant comparative method within Straus and Corbin’s (1998) approach to grounded theory. Analysis resulted in the emergence of six common themes described in the subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter summarizes the participants’ accounts of their experience of stalking and presents the emergent themes that arose from the analysis of their collective stories. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of women who have been stalked and to generate suggestions to support women in their efforts to manage their experience. Brief summaries of the women’s individual stories are presented at the beginning of the chapter to orient the reader to the context of the analysis to follow. Major themes are presented, including the central components to each theme as well as the pivotal variations manifested among participants. Additionally, detailed analysis of each theme examined according to its properties and dimensions as a way of providing further explanatory meaning to the data. To support the results, illustrative quotes from the participants are provided throughout the chapter. The final section of the chapter examines the recommendations for change in service to women who have been stalked as offered by the participants.

The next section contains brief summaries of each of the participant’s stories, including an overview of the stalking experience, each woman’s approaches to dealing with their experience of stalking, and identifying aspects of their story to orient the reader to the personal impact of the event. Pseudonyms were used in place of participant’s actual names and any identifying information that might compromise the women’s identity has been changed.

“Pam’s” Story

Pam is a 47 year-old woman of European descent who is currently living with her common-law partner with no children in the family. She has some post-secondary education and at the time of the stalking, she was working in the area of business earning between
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$20,000-$40,000 annually. Currently Pam is working as an educator and advocate for women who experience domestic violence. She was stalked by a former intimate male partner following the break up of their marriage. When the stalking began, Pam was working and living in separate cities. Pam experienced stalking in both cities, a factor that complicated the ensuing police investigation because it meant coordinating two separate police departments. Although she remains in fear of her former partner, the majority of the stalking related incidents took place over a 6-year period.

Pam describes her experience as an escalation of stalking related behaviours, including harassment at her residence and workplace, frequent threatening phone calls, destruction of her property (a corrosive substance was poured into the fuel tank of her vehicle that resulted in dissolving the pipes), and breaking into her house. During the stalking, she related feelings of intense fear and hyper vigilance regarding safety issues.

Safety strategies Pam used included improving her home security system, having friends call her to inform her of the stalker’s state of mind, persisting with police to go forward with criminal charges, using black-out curtains to prevent the stalker from seeing into her house, hiring a civil lawyer to advocate in criminal court regarding protection and safety issues, and getting a personal alarm that was connected directly to the police emergency line.

In terms of how she coped with the experience of stalking, Pam described several factors that were useful in her experience including working with an individual counsellor to help her to deal with the negative impact of the crime, having a Victim Assistance Unit worker inform her of updates in the court proceedings, as well as report to her about the
stalker’s “state of mind” during court proceedings, hiring a private civil lawyer to advocate for her safety, and taking a proactive stance with respect to the criminal harassment.

Pam’s suggestions for improvement to services included a need for more expedient processing of criminal harassment cases, more consistent enforcement of existing laws regarding criminal harassment, efforts to educate women about their rights and ways to improve their safety, and training within the system regarding women’s experience and the reality of violence against women. Additionally, Pam described a sense of frustration that others failed at the most basic level of believing her in her account of the event, and thus her recommendation that the legal system “just listen” to survivors and recognize the seriousness of their needs.

“Lee’s” Story

Lee is a 37 year-old woman of European descent who is currently in a common-law relationship with no children. She is a graduate-level professional who earns between $40,000-$60,000 annually. She discussed two separate stalking incidents, the first incident involving a prior-intimate same sex partner in 1986 in Ontario, and the second incident occurring 7 years ago in the lower mainland involving a male stranger.

The incident involving a stranger was suspected by the police to be a serial stalker who later died in a car accident prior to Lee learning about the criminal harassment. The police approached Lee after investigating officers found photographs of her in the deceased’s possession when he died. Lee also discovered from the police that the man stalking her was a suspect in a murder of a woman and had been linked to similar stalking incidents involving several women associated with the lesbian community.
Throughout the interview, Lee discussed her inclination to minimize the negative effects of her experience. She mentioned the ways that it had initially impacted her life, including feelings of fear, violation, anger, the thought of not wanting to be alone, avoidance of certain stores, an inability to follow through with a work project, and general feelings of confusion. At the same time Lee articulated that her experience with the police was negative in that they failed to recognize the emotional impact of stalking. She also noted that her experience in working with survivors of violence influenced her to feel that what she had experienced was relatively insignificant. This feeling of invalidation with regards to the impact of this kind of “predatory violence” added to her sense of insignificance within the system. After a period of approximately one year, Lee indicated that gradually her sense of fear diminished.

The second experience of stalking involved Lee’s former same sex partner. The stalking behaviour began after Lee ended a relationship that was physically and sexually abusive. The period of stalking lasted approximately 6 months, however, the first 2 months following the break up Lee described as particularly “intense.” Stalking related behaviours included the stalker showing up at her residence, persistent phone calls, threats of self-harm as well as threats to harm Lee, following her to class and waiting for her, and trying to solicit personal information from Lee’s friends. The worst incident involved the stalker aggressively confronting Lee at a grocery store parking lot and yelling at her in public. Lee described the incident as particularly harrowing because of the humiliation involved in being confronted and having her identity as a lesbian on display when she was struggling to deal with her own feelings related to her identity.
Lee explained that due to the invisibility of same sex violence, she found it difficult to hold her partner accountable in the eyes of the legal system. She also addressed her internal struggle regarding the relationship, but discussed how her fear of future violence eventually "won out" and she discontinued the relationship.

In terms of support, Lee utilized the help of a group of friends/roommates. She discussed how her support system helped provide physical safety by accompanying her during her daily routine and deterring her partner from further harassment by confronting her directly. As a result of her experience, Lee's suggestions for improvement to services for women who are stalked included education and collaboration from service providers and the criminal justice system personnel regarding the nature of violence in same sex relationships and how to increase sensitivity for this invisible group of women.

"Jane's" Story

Jane is a 34 year-old single female of Caucasian descent. She is currently living with a family member and is not receiving an income. At the time the stalking incident began, she was working for a small family-operated business earning between $20,000-$40,000 per annum. Jane has a college diploma and would like to pursue more education. However, she indicated that she must restrict her schedule for safety reasons relating to the stalking incident.

The stalking began when Jane was 29 years-old and occurred within a work setting. Specifically, a male co-worker started to romantically pursue her shortly after she began working with the company. She described an immediate, inner sense that told her not to trust him and thus decided to gently but clearly reject his early advances. Despite her clear boundaries, the male co-worker continued to pursue her aggressively, including giving her...
gifts, phone calls, notes, and persistent attempts to engage her in intimate conversation. His anger escalated very quickly on numerous occasions when Jane tried to remove herself from the situation. For example, the stalker began yelling at her and threatening her in front of their fellow co-workers. Her story also includes numerous incidents of property damage inflicted by the stalker to Jane’s personal possessions (i.e., extensive damage to her vehicle on several occasions).

One of the particularly alarming aspects of Jane’s story was the ways in which others, including people at her workplace and the police minimized the level of danger inherent in the stalking behaviour and ignored her obvious need for safety. After enduring this insidious crime for a period of 6 years to date, Jane continues to feel anger toward the police for their lack of action in relation to her case.

When the man who was stalking Jane was finally arrested and found guilty of criminal harassment charges, he was treated as a first time offender and sentenced to 6 months in jail. Following this sentence, he was deported to the United States because of his refugee status. However, he soon returned to Canada unbeknownst to the authorities. Jane stated that it took the police a period of 11 months to believe her claims that he had returned to resume stalking her and that she was in danger. He was later arrested and charged with eight counts relating to stalking, including criminal harassment, threatening, and failure to keep the peace. He was sentenced to 3 years incarceration in addition to probation. During his pre-sentence report it was discovered that he had a history of stalking other women in the United States, and was labelled a serial stalker. Currently, his whereabouts is unknown to the authorities and Jane remains in constant fear.
As a result of her experience, Jane has decided to educate herself on the dynamics of stalking and ways of dealing more effectively with this convoluted crime. She is in the process of educating individuals within the criminal justice system on the effects of stalking on people who experience this form of "psychological terrorism."

"Reilly's" Story

Reilly is a 51 year-old female of European descent. She currently works for a political office earning between $20,000-40,000 as an administrator. Originally trained as a counsellor, Reilly has received post secondary education and training. Her stalking experience began seven years ago after ending a romantic relationship that lasted for just over a year. For Reilly, the stalking began soon after she decided to end the relationship and was the first sign of abuse. However, she described her former partner as emotionally unstable and unable to cope with the demands of his career. Although the intensity of the stalking has decreased significantly, it continues to this day. Reilly is the mother of three grown children and currently lives in a common law relationship with a supportive male partner.

Following a move from a small, northern town, Reilly decided to end the relationship with her former partner. The break up was an impetus for the stalking behaviour, and began when she tried to distance herself from her former partner. One of the first stalking related behaviours included repetitive phone calls requesting contact and reconciliation, sometimes 2-3 phone calls per day. As the stalker’s life became more stressful (he was being assessed for instability within his work setting), he began to put increasing pressure on Reilly to resume the relationship. As she attempted to set boundaries regarding no contact, her ex-
partner became increasingly angry and more intrusive. He began sending gifts (lingerie), flowers, and cards.

One of the first signs of danger Reilly experienced related to a phone message the stalker left demanding that she return his call. Reilly described replying by refusing his demands and asking him to cease all future contact. If he refused to respect her request, Reilly informed the stalker that she would resort to involving the police. Consistent with other stalking experiences, the stalker refused to heed Reilly’s request and the police were called. An officer was sent to speak to her former partner and informed him that he was legally restricted from future contact with Reilly. However, the stalker disregarded all authority figures and the stalking continued—he began parking outside of Reilly’s residence and repeatedly watching and following her.

Areas of her life affected by the stalking included work (restricting her schedule to day shifts only), her family life, and her relationships with others. Reilly described her attempts to withdraw from her social lifestyle. She felt restricted by intense fear and apprehension that the stalker might surface. Her fears were perpetuated by the knowledge that the stalker possessed a gun. She described putting parts of her life on hold because of her experience, causing her additional frustration and anger. Some of the negative effects of the stalking included the fear regarding the unpredictable nature of the stalking and the lack of control created by the stalking event.

In Reilly’s case, the stalker pled guilty to criminal harassment charges and received a one year suspended sentence. Unfortunately, the stalking resumed shortly after the trial. This resulted in Reilly feeling that the system “failed” her. She got the sense that stalker’s rights were maintained and prioritised while hers were ignored.
In terms of what was helpful in her experience, Reilly points out that others showing that they cared, asking her about how they could improve her safety, and allowing her space to talk as opposed to trying to "FIX" the situation was helpful. She also acknowledged using humour to deal with the "sense of futility" of everything that has happened since the stalking began.

Her suggestions for improvement included more stringent anti-stalking laws, more protection for survivors following the court proceedings, and providing survivors with practical information about the stalker (i.e., approximate location of residence and work; make and model of his/her vehicle for identification purposes), and creating a support network for individuals who have been stalked in order to connect people with others who understand and can appreciate the impact of the experience.

"Matilda's" Story

Matilda is a 52 year-old single female of Caucasian descent who lives in an urban centre with her four cats. She has a doctoral level degree and earns between $20,000-$40,000 per annum working for a post-secondary institution within the lower mainland. She was stalked for a period just under one year in 1998/1999 by one of her female students.

Matilda first came into contact with the woman who began stalking her while she was instructing a course and the woman was a student. Shortly after the course commenced, Matilda received several messages from the student via electronic mail describing some personal problems she was experiencing. Being exposed to other students in the program with similar struggles, Matilda described how she tried to make helpful suggestions to the student. However, the student sent another message describing her romantic feelings toward Matilda in spite of the fact that she was married with a family. Matilda recalled her feelings
of concern over the messages and forwarded copies of the correspondence to the course coordinator for assistance and consultation. Matilda also made numerous efforts to engage others in authority to help her to deal more effectively with the student’s behaviour, but experienced very little support.

One of the layers that Matilda identified as further impacting her was the “homophobic attitude” that others brought to her experience. Others would minimize her experience or appear uncomfortable at the nature of the apparent attraction. Although Matilda stated that she was heterosexual, she was struck by the discrimination that occurred because her stalker was a female.

One of the turning points in her experience of fear appeared to be when she received a warning from the stalker’s psychiatrist. She began avoiding certain places where she thought she might run into the stalker and stopped answering the phone unless she recognized the person who was calling. She was referred to the police by one of the school officials, but described being unfairly questioned by the officer who pressed her for HER role in the crime. To add further to her sense that the nobody was talking this matter seriously, the officer decided not to pursue criminal charges against the stalker. Matilda noted that a carryover effect of the stalking experience is that she remains weary with her students, thereby preventing any close relationship or personal offering of emotional support.

Matilda suggested that the role of police should be restricted to enforcement and that other professionals who are more capable of empathy and understanding should be brought in to investigate stalking. She also recommended changes to the public education campaign related to stalking after she came across the Attorney-General’s brochure on stalking. Her experience with the current brochure was that it was needlessly anxiety-provoking to women
who are stalked. She suggested several important points to include in a new brochure that were aimed at understanding the issues and how to stay safe, but without scaring survivors.

"Beth's" Story

Beth is a 42 year-old Caucasian female who lives in an urban city within the lower mainland with her partner and their two young children. She works as a therapist and has a bachelor degree. Beth currently works part-time outside the home and earns between $20,000-$40,000 per year. The stalking event that Beth discussed for the purposes of this study related to a female client she was seeing professionally for counselling. The stalking experience lasted for over a period of 1 year and involved several other members of a cult-affiliated group who were recruited into stalking her.

Beth related that the stalking began with what she called “subtle” stalking behaviours that became more obtrusive and extremely violent. For example, the stalking escalated from her client/stalker breaking into Beth's apartment and putting her shoes on the coffee table as a sign that she had been physically present in the apartment, to leaving mutilated animals on her doorstep and using pesticide poisoning to contaminate Beth's office space and home.

The impact of this experience on Beth was far-reaching. Her health was affected by the emotional stress caused by the stalking as well as the effects of the poison on her body. Financially, Beth estimated that the stalking cost her at least $15,000, including the cost of getting her furniture tested for poisons, moving to an alternate residence for safety reasons, giving up her private practice, missed income from clients failing to attend sessions due to illness incurred from the poisons in her office, and the cost of flying across Canada to stay with family for a period of 3 months in order the manage the stress and improve her safety.

In addition to the health and financial impact, Beth described that being stalked in such
insidious and connected ways, raised intense feelings of fear. She states that she continues to experience fear when she thinks about the experience, especially when she sees one of the perpetrators around town.

Despite Beth's numerous efforts to engage the police in charging the individuals involved in this crime, including gathering evidence for the investigation, no charges were ever laid in the case. In fact, Beth approached the police from two different municipalities (because she worked and lived in two separate cities) without avail. The only officer who was open to the information she was sharing and whom she described as believing her story was transferred to another division after their first contact. Evidence that she brought to the police was "mysteriously lost," and no efforts were made to either protect her or to engage in a full police investigation regarding the events that were occurring.

Beth managed the stalking experience in several key ways. She was very proactive in her attempts to seek help and to keep herself safe. For example, when the police neglected to test the furniture in her office for contaminants, Beth went to see an allergist for her symptoms and learned that her symptoms were consistent with pesticide poisoning. This discovery led her to a naturopathic doctor who treated her for poisoning. Additionally, Beth reached out to others socially and discussed her experience. Once the immediate danger had dissipated, Beth engaged in the therapy process. While she continues to feel affected by her experience and somewhat at risk for future acts of aggression from the group that were responsible for the criminal harassment, she feels more secure than she once did.

Beth's suggestions for improvements to services included having multidisciplinary teams who are trained in the dynamics of stalking to act as a resource and follow up service in stalking cases. The team would provide education, safety tips, and a sense of hope for
survivors. Beth also discussed stricter enforcement of no contact orders and a greater recognition of the rights of survivors.

"Karen’s" Story

Karen is a 54 year-old female of Caucasian descent. She is currently living alone within a rural part of the lower mainland region and works full-time in the hospitality business earning approximately $20,000 per annum. She has two adult children from her first marriage and two adult children from a second marriage. She also discussed giving birth to a baby boy when she was a teenager and allowing another couple to adopt him. Recently, Karen was stalked by a male intimate partner.

Karen’s narrative differs from the other participants who are included in the study in a few ways. She initially described her experience of the harassment as more of an act of persistence on the part of the perpetrator than one described as fear-provoking by the other women. She recalled feeling annoyed and controlled by her former partner’s earlier attempts to spawn an ongoing relationship, but that she did not feel fearful or threatened until recently.

The other way that Karen’s story differs from the other women is that the perpetrator initiated the stalking very early into her romantic relationship and the relationship continued for a period of time following the initial stalking behaviours. She described being frustrated by his constant notes, phone calls, and unsolicited visits, but decided to give the relationship a try anyway. The relationship escalated into a common-law partnership for a period of 5 years. During the relationship, her partner continued using behaviours consistent with intimate abuse (leaving numerous notes and letters for Karen, calling her repeatedly at work, giving her gifts), all in an effort to “own” her and isolate her from others in her life.
The relationship ended abruptly several months ago after the perpetrator assaulted her. The police attended and her partner was charged. During the interview, Karen related that she had decided that the relationship was an unhealthy one and that she needed some space to be on her own. As she was packing her belongings, her former partner became verbally abusive, shouting and name calling, and slapped her in the face. He was sentenced to probation for the assault and given a restraining order not to contact Karen for a period of 3 months.

The interview with Karen took place after she had separated from her partner. Although during the preliminary discussion with Karen regarding her participation in the study she stated that she had no contact with her former partner, shortly following the interview she admitted that he had resumed harassing her including repeated phone calls and phone messages, leaving notes on her car, and waiting for her to return from work.

Karen states that her contact with both the police and the police-based victim support services were very positive—also a departure from the other participants. She stated that two police officers attended her residence a couple of months prior to the last assault. She recalled that a verbal altercation between her family and her former partner occurred during a family event. One male officer warned her about the relationship, stating that it was a “bad situation” and that she should get out. She says that this warning really stuck with her and helped her to take the steps to end the relationship. The other contact she had with police was after the final assault. She recalled that the female officer was personable and professional. Following the assault, she received ongoing support from the Victim Assistance Unit. Karen stated that it was helpful “just knowing that someone cared.”
Because her former partner pled guilty to the assault charge, Karen’s contact with the court process was limited. She did not attend court, but was contacted by the Crown Counsel and asked about the details of the offence. She admits that her experience with the criminal justice system is somewhat limited, but she did not feel the same frustration and lack of support that the other women in the study experienced.

Despite feeling supported by the system, friends, and family, Karen is currently going through a period of grief and depression that she related to the relationship issues. She also discussed past childhood trauma, including trust issues, childhood abandonment, abuse, and severe neglect as a factor that might be affecting her current mood. She feels that what she needs most in order to heal from the experience is simply “time.”

As a follow up to our initial interview, Karen described that her former partner has resumed harassing her since his restraining order lapsed. He is continuing to leave unwanted messages on her voicemail at her residence, calls her on the phone to request her forgiveness, and attempts to win her affections back. Recently, he waited for her outside her new apartment building and requested some of his belongings that were in Karen’s possession. Once inside her suite, he threatened her. Although Karen is aware of her rights and safety strategies, she is currently afraid of her former partner. She has since been in touch with police-based victim services for support and legal information and is planning to get a secondary restraining order against her former partner to address some of her ongoing safety needs.

Karen’s felt that the services that were provided to her during her experience of stalking were adequate, and therefore did not identify any necessary improvements. However, she did offer words of advice to other survivors. Specifically, she suggested that
women should simply live their lives and stay strong in their resolve for a healthy relationship. She also discussed how having low self-esteem—rooted in childhood abuse and neglect—affected her ability maintain healthy boundaries in her past relationships.

Description of Major Themes

Six major themes emerged from the women's descriptions of their experiences of stalking. These themes were found to be the most common among the stories of the women as well as the most pivotal to the research questions. However, the themes presented should not be examined in isolation, but rather as connected to and influenced by the other themes comprising the collective accounts of their experience. For example, the theme called "constraints to healing and safety" is connected to the theme of "fearing the unknown" in the sense that lacking protection and support added to a woman's experience of unknown danger.

It is important to point out that one of the aspects of this study that make it both unique as well as challenging is the diversity in the women's experiences of stalking. Despite this fact, the themes that are identified are also to some degree intertwined and reflect the nature of experiential data. Although the major themes are discussed as reflective of the majority of the women in the study, the richness of the stories and unique perspectives of the experiences is evident in the dimensions of each theme as it is explained. Quotes are used to illustrate the findings. Prominent themes that emerged from the participants' stories are included in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Major themes related to women's experiences of stalking.

Stalking as an Ongoing, Abnormal Event

Fearing the Unknown

Feeding the Unknown

Note. Arrows suggest what may be occurring in the data as a potential hypothesis, whereas the broken dotted lines suggest potential interfering factors.

Needing to Be Supported and Validated

Searching for Safety and Healing

Being Re-victimized

Concern for Others

Note. Arrows suggest what may be occurring in the data as a potential hypothesis, whereas the broken dotted lines suggest potential interfering factors.
Stalking as an Ongoing, Abnormal Event

The first emerging theme relates to the women’s experience of “stalking as an ongoing, abnormal event.” For all of the women in the study, this theme represented the beginning of their narrative experience and appeared to be a way of providing important contextual detail regarding how the stalking affected them personally. Moreover, the fact that there was a continuous element to the stalking (ongoing), combined with their description of the stalking behaviour as a non-normative way of relating to others (abnormal) was a common feature among the participants that related to the event being framed as a negative experience.

Although the women’s stalking experiences differed on a variety of levels; the nature of the relationship with the stalking perpetrator, the length of the stalking experience, their personal responses to the stalking event, all of the women reported that the event took place across a period of time (continuous or ongoing) and that it was not a “normal” or healthy way to approach a relationship. This suggests that this theme is a common element among the women as opposed to a quality of stalking specific to particular types of stalking (i.e., only present in prior intimate stalking cases and not present in stranger stalking experiences).

All of the women discussed specific behaviours used over time by the person who was stalking them as evidence of the constancy and abnormal approach to relationships. These behaviours included being followed (6 out of 7 women), receiving constant phone calls, phone messages, emails, and hang up calls (6 out of 7 women), being watched (6 out of 7 women), having their house and/or office broken into (4 out of 7 women), receiving property damage [i.e., toxic substance thrown on her car or put in her fuel tank] (4 out of 7 women), receiving unwanted gifts (3 out of 7 women), using embarrassment and suicide
threats (2 out of 7 women), and leaving threatening notes (3 out of 7 women). In addition to these common stalking-related behaviours, one of the women described being subjected to various cult enactments that were carried out by her stalker such as finding mutilated animals on her doorstep and inside her car. She also described being poisoned with pesticides that were strategically placed in her home and office.

All of the women reported at least three of the behaviours listed above as tactics used by the person who was stalking them. Additionally, all of the women reported these behaviours took place over a period of time. The shortest length of time that a participant described being stalked was several weeks and the longest period of time was 7 years and continues to pose a threat. Further, the stalking experience that lasted for several weeks ended after the participant’s stalker was killed unexpectedly in a car accident. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether the stalking would have continued beyond several weeks. This suggests that the stalking experience for the women who were part of the study was ongoing in nature.

One of the consequences of this theme was that participants attempted to use their understanding of relationships to cope with the situation to the best of their abilities. Some of the women attempted to address the stalker’s inappropriate behaviour directly. For example, Reilly described how her knowledge regarding mental-health related issues provided her with the insight to identify the signs of danger. She discussed how she attempted to balance the early warning signs with her desire to set clear boundaries about the relationship ending.

You know, fully aware that this is somebody who had some real emotional problems he was dealing with. And with my background in counselling and psychology, knowing full well that this isn’t somebody you want to trigger. But he needed to know in a gentle way that... I’m getting on with my life. I remember encouraging
him to date. You know find some friends. Get on with your life because I’m not being a part of it anymore.

Participants varied in the amount of time it took to identify the stalking as a problem that required formal or informal assistance in the form of support, information, or more structured legal involvement. For example, some women understood very quickly that the stalking behaviour was inappropriate, while others gave the person some time to “settle out.”

For example, Jane, who was stalked by a co-worker at her new position, recalled setting a clear and unyielding boundary with the person who was stalking her. From the first contact, she felt that he had “problems” and her intuitive voice told her to reject his romantic advances:

He asked me out a couple of times and I simply told him “no” and each time he asked me out. He continued to—he became more and more descriptive and about what he wanted to do and why we needed to go out, etc., and it became pretty annoying. Like, I’m generally, if I say “no” I mean no and I don’t want to rehash it every couple of days.

For Karen, who was stalked by a former intimate partner, identifying the problem was a little more muddled. She described meeting her former partner through mutual friends. She related that her friend told her that they should meet because they were both romantically unattached at the time. After their first encounter, Karen described that her former partner began bringing gifts by her home as a means to gain access into her life. At first, Karen saw this as a sign of affection and caring, as she felt somewhat lonely in her current life. Because of her stalker’s persistence and her loneliness, an intimate relationship ensued. However, it occurred to her later that the behaviours were intrusive as she tried to set limits on the amount of contact they had within their relationship.

And the next day he phoned me again. And he said: “I’ve got some stuff for you. You don’t want to make this apartment a home. You don’t really like this place.”
And I said: “No I don’t. I don’t like apartments and I’m starting over again.” He said: “Well, I’ve got some stuff.” So he brings me pictures. He brings me a bathroom cabinet thing. Kept bringing me things. Doing this and doing that. I...about the second week, I had a sexual thing with him and it was fantastic. And I really miss sex. It was fantastic. So that’s what I thought—ok, good. But then all the sudden it got to be a little too much.

Over time, Karen felt her former partner’s constant pressure to be closer became constricting to her lifestyle. She noted his inability to form a healthy, individuated relationship with her and his efforts to ignore her boundaries. She described how her former partner’s ongoing attempts to engage her in an obsessive manner began to form.

I just wanted him to stay away a bit and give me my ...freedom. No! I have other friends, like my Uncle Earl. Graham, visiting. Other friends. And it would be like, “I’ve got company. Stay away from me!” And then he would leave notes on my car saying “I can’t believe that you wouldn’t share all your friends with me!” But he needed a life and he was making me include him in my life. And I REALIZED that.

For all of the participants, the theme of stalking as an ongoing, abnormal event was understood in the context of a larger, more general emotional instability on the part of the stalker. The women discussed signs of other problems emerging during their experience in a variety of settings. For example, three of the participants discovered that the person who was stalking them had a history of stalking other women. Lee in her description of being stalked by a stranger related that the police considered the person who was stalking her to be a serial stalker who was obsessed with stalking lesbians. Furthermore, the perpetrator of the stalking was a suspect in a murder. Jane and Matilda also learned that their stalker had a pattern of stalking and were considered to be “dangerous.” However, Matilda described her struggle to make sense of the stalking experience as an obvious departure from the usual way of relating to others. She discussed struggling with the notion of “normality” in reference to relationships. She explained her attempts to make sense of her experience.
It was invasive...It was ...it was CLEARLY not "normal." It's hard to describe that and I'm very careful about...using language. Cause I use language—I'm a post-structuralist! (chuckle) It was clearly not normal. It wasn't within the range of normal responses you get from students. And I KNEW that.

Matilda subsequently learned that her stalker was seeing a psychiatrist for emotional issues and was hospitalised during the course of the stalking. She received an eerie warning from the woman's psychiatrist.

So he said: "I can't break any confidences or anything but I want you to know that if you feel very uneasy, you have EVERY reason to be feeling that. And I want you to be VERY aware and very careful of any dealings you might have." Um...and I...and then I said: "Has she got a history of this?" He said: "It might not be the first time something like this has happened." Oh God! You know. But he couldn't tell me more.

The remaining four participants described a more general sense that the person who was stalking them was emotionally unstable. For example, Pam described her stalker as having "lost control" and how his deteriorating "frame of mind" was evident to others who knew him. "I'd lost contact with him—with the people...because none of our mutual friends were talking to him anymore. He'd just totally flipped out."

Along a different line, Beth who was stalked by her counselling client described how the woman who stalked her suffered from a mental disorder and was connected to a larger group of individuals who carried out cult-related activities. She learned later that her client encouraged others to join in stalking her. She stated: "Well she was very connected with the cult and as time went on she would take other clients of mine who had DIDs (Dissociative Identity Disorder) and recruit them into stalking me as well."

Both Karen and Reilly describe similar signs of instability that were generalized to other areas of the stalker's life. For example, Karen described her former partner's
deteriorating ability to care for himself. She related that he became “forgetful” and in his absent-mindedness, he would make frightening mistakes. She stated: “He’d burn things. He’d go to the store and leave something on the stove. So he was loosing it mentally.”

Reilly explained how the man who was stalking her was consistently receiving bad reports at work that led to his taking a “stress leave.” Unfortunately being on stress leave allowed him more time to focus on escalating his harassment. She describes a stalking related incident that occurred in her attempts to resume her life.

I went out with this fellow a couple of times and (the stalker) left a message on my machine. He said: “I know you were out with (a date),” had the guy’s address. He’d followed me. Didn’t even know he’s followed me. He knew (a friend’s) address. They have an unlisted phone number, but I guess he got the information by going to the voter’s list. Or some, he had SOME way of finding out their name, and their address, and phone #. Now that, this is taking stalking to a really BIZZARE level as far as I’m concerned.

Reilly further articulated her understanding of her experience of stalking, suggesting that the impact of stalking is exacerbated by the ongoing nature of the event as well as the unpredictability that is frequently associated with mental illness.

That it’s got to be the most insidious, intrusive thing that can happen to somebody. Somebody can come and steal from me, hold me up, rob me, right, and that’s done, it’s over with, it happens. They’re punished—I get on with my life. ...A stalker is somebody who is coming from a whole different...(sigh) venue, if you will. This is somebody who is NOT stable, who is NOT making rationale decisions. Who is out of control. Who is totally unpredictable. Who you don’t know how they will react if they see you or hear about you again. So you have...there’s no closure to what happens in a stalking. It doesn’t end. As I say, until their dead, incarcerated or find somebody else...But it’s an ongoing thing. It never goes away. We all have bad experiences that we can say: “Ok, it happened. I’ve dealt with it. I’ve gotten on with it. Resolved it. Said good-bye to it. Let it go. Whatever.” This is an issue that you can’t do that to.

In summary, the theme of stalking as an ongoing, abnormal event provides context and understanding of the women’s stories and is an important aspect of the experience as a
whole. Defining features of this theme included an element of unpredictability inherent in the experience, common harassing behaviours used by the stalker, descriptions of the stalker’s emotional instability in some form, and warnings about the level of danger from self or others. One of the identified consequences of the theme of stalking as an ongoing, abnormal event was that participants attempted to set clear boundaries with the stalker. However, in all cases, the women’s boundaries were not respected. Although all of the participants identified this theme as a problematic component to their experience, the time each woman took to identify the problem varied. It is important to note that this theme was recurrent throughout the women’s narratives and may be a reflection of the participants’ attempts to make sense of their experience.

Fearing the Unknown

The second major theme that emerged from the women’s experiences related to the impact of the event: the experience of “fearing the unknown” element. All participants experienced anticipatory fear in response to the stalking event. For these purposes, fear is defined as an intense emotional reaction to the part of the stalking experience related to the element that is not known to the woman. Although women varied in their descriptions of “fear,” and the point in time when they identified feeling fear, all seven women reported the idea of fear of the unknown as a pivotal element to their experience. To describe their experience of fear in relation to their reactions to being stalked, participants used words such as “scared spitless,” “scared terrified,” “totally, utterly scared,” “apprehensive,” “more and more scared,” “legitimate fear,” “fear for safety,” “adrenaline protection mode,” “level of dis-ease,” “felt threatened,” “totally freaked,” “scary,” “very creepy,” “vulnerable,” and “layers of violation.”
For some of the participants, the experience of fear was described in more detail and with more intensity. However, all of the women described fear relating to the unknown element of the stalking, either stated explicitly or suggested implicitly. Several women described how their experience of fear changed over the course of the stalking event. Beth described her cognitive process relating to the event and how her growing fear evolved out of evidence she gathered from what was happening around her.

Over time I very much believed that they were going to kill me. That I was gonna die. I was sure of it. I was sure that they were gonna get me at some point...and um, you know at first I just thought it was veiled threats. And then, you know, getting closer and closer and really trying to make me—like, I was very sick. I just thought that if I didn’t quit, they’d get rid of me. And other therapists would, like another therapist died and I don’t know...two therapists died and I don’t know what happened to them...So I was totally freaked.

Moreover, Beth recalled how the impact of the stalking on her health affected her ability to sense fear and how a progression of fear evolved once the immediate risk for danger decreased. However, Beth noted that a degree of fear always remains with her.

Then you get so sick and it was hard for me to make a good decision. I was, you know, I was numbing to any sense of fear. Fact I didn’t feel fear. Fact the fear didn’t come in until well after I had gone. And it was like—and the analogy was made you know someone’s at war, they don’t feel fear when they’re out there fighting. It’s when they’re back thinking about what they’ve been through that they start to shudder and shake. That’s exactly how—I really did tremble when I thought about it. I physically trembled and my jaw would shiver. I was terribly afraid. And it wasn’t until, um, gosh 5 years ago, that I started to settle out and I did some EMDR around it. And even now at times.

Describing an abstract concept such as the experience of fear can be difficult. Some of the women struggled with the thought of allowing the stalking to affect them personally. For example, Reilly differentiated between feeling apprehension, as compared to actual fear, when the stalking first began. She struggled to put into words her initial feelings regarding the event, suggesting that she experienced gradual feelings of fear. "I wasn’t...scared. But I
was certainly apprehensive. You know, like I wasn’t intimidated. Like I’ve never been 
intimidated by the guy. No…not intimidated...(sigh). I don’t know how to really describe 
it.”

For several of the participants, the unknown element of the stalking contributed to the intensity of the fear response. In essence, it produced a sense that they were perpetually unsafe in the world. The only solution described by these women for this kind of fear was constant wariness on their part. For one of the women, this was described as the worst part of the experience.

(Sigh). The never knowing. The never knowing when the next...hit was coming. And, and I don’t mean physical hit, but the next contact. When it was going to be. When, when he was going to rear his head again. That’s the worst. It’s the never knowing. Because you can never relax…You just never can. You, you just always have to be really weary.

Some of the participants recalled the stalking related incidents that led to their experience of fear. For example, Reilly described an incident that she related to her feeling “incapacitated” in her daily life. She attributed her fear to her cognitive awareness that the stalker possessed a gun given to him by his father. She described being unable to “cope” following an incident that involved the stalker breaking into her apartment building late at night after she returned from a date.

I heard the fire door slam. And something hit my door with an incredible thud. And it was obviously him. And I sat until about 4 in the morning and cried my face off. Uh…never did get back to sleep. It was …no, it was the day after, I guess it was around May 5th, and I came in, um, and he was there, and the terror set in. I remember that I was so incapacitated that I got up the next morning—I didn’t sleep the night. Couldn’t get dressed. I sat in my apartment and cried! For a day. Just…I couldn’t cope with it.
Similarly, Jane recalled her early experience with fear after she received a threatening letter from her co-worker who was obsessed with her. The stalker’s veiled threats appeared to Jane to be evidence of things to come.

And I ended up reading this letter this guy wrote and it’s probably the first incident other than yelling at me when I started to sense fear. And, in the very first paragraph of the letter he said that the other women in the office would like to see me get into a car wreck...And then in the next paragraph he talked about a skirt I wore one day...It really bothered me that he obviously had obsessed on that....And I just thought it was weird how he was projecting these things onto them. And it really bothered me that he’s talking—he wanted to see me in a car wreck. Cause to me, that’s what he was saying. Not them, it’s HIM.

Jane’s experience of fear relating to what the stalker was suggesting in the aforementioned letter led to her attempts to get the police involved. In her words, “And that night I went home and I not only talked to my friends and my mother, but I called the police for the first time.”

Pam described her experience of anticipatory fear during the stalking event and how similar to Reilly, she became emotionally drained as a result of the constant vigilance.

(Sigh). It’s hard to describe...because you don’t realize how it’s affecting you as it’s happening. Like you really don’t. You, you think that you’re coping with it. Like I thought I was coping with it. That everything was ok and that I was dealing with it. because I was trying to, you know I was trying the police, I was keeping myself physically safe, and I thought I was coping with it emotionally. And, because you’re still not sleeping, because you don’t know...Every time you hear a noise—You’re getting no sleep. I was trying to work. And I just basically one day just fell apart.

Another participant also described needing some distance from the initial acts of harassment before she perceived the behaviour as threatening. Karen recalled a complete lack of fear until she was able to have time to think about the situation in hindsight. During the initial interview she described how the relationship felt controlling and suffocating, but not fear-provoking. “Never fearful. No. Never. But I would have to bite my tongue a lot of
the time. Just to say, just leave me alone!” During the follow-up interview, Karen described how her feelings of fear evolved out of the physical assault she experienced and the more recent threats of harm that she received from the stalker. She stated: “It definitely took a while. Now I feel frightened...Cause he said he was going to kill me...The fear is like a festering boil. You gotta get it out.”

In contrast, the fear for another participant occurred instantly once she learned that she was being stalked by a stranger. She described that despite the police telling her that the stalker was deceased, it took some time for the knowledge to “sink in” and she continued to feel threatened for a period of time. She attributed her fear to the unknown element of potential harm in addition to her previous experience and knowledge in working with women who experience violence.

And that he, that he did this, you know, following me around, taking photos and I don’t know what else. At the time, even though he was dead, it took me a while to have that to sink in. So even though, (laugh) it sounds funny when I say it, but I was terrified during that time. And I was also, I think part of the fact that I worked in anti-violence work—I was really wondering, who else is he connected to? I didn’t have the sense that I was safe. Because, also, he was in a drug ring and all these other things that the RCMP knew about, so...He had all these code names “Slotch” and all these other very creepy names and histories. So I felt like he was part of a big group. How do I know that someone else isn’t involved?

For three of the participants, the person who was responsible for stalking them indicated signs of abuse that generalized to their prior intimate relationships. This appeared to add to each woman’s sense that the stalker was capable of further abuse and violence. For example, the women discussed how the physical abuse in their relationships was a defining factor in ending the relationship. However, when all of the women ended the relationship, the stalking began. This suggests that the stalking behaviour was a tactic used by the former partner as a means to continue the control within the intimate relationship.
The consequences of the anticipatory fear appeared to be far-reaching for all of the women. Participants reported work and sleep disruptions, as well as anger and frustration related to the impact of the fear on their lives. Moreover, participant accounts suggest that the women experienced a loss of security as a result of constant fear. For example, Matilda described the woman who was stalking her as being essentially “in my face” with her attempts to maintain contact via the Internet. The impact on Matilda’s previous sense of security is evident in the following quote:

And then I started to feel very uncomfortable because my address and phone number are in the phone book. And I had never felt unsafe at home before. But now I was, like the email was coming right into my face in my living room. I was in a small place. There were messages on my phone. I didn’t know who was calling. I live on the ground floor in a corner and there had been prowlers at some times. And I started to not sleep very well. I kept listening to noises. And trying to make sure my blinds are really closed.

Beth described how her sense of security for not only herself, but also for her family has been threatened since the stalking experience.

When you think of the word safety, that’s it. Because it’s safety of myself, my kids, my family. Um, HUGE. Safety covers. And I remember saying they’re just going to wait until I feel really comfortable and safe again and that’s when they’re going to do something. And so whenever I think in that mode I can get pretty scared again, but on the whole I feel relatively safe. It’s only when I SEE um, not even when I see culty-people, but when I see this one particularly person, who I see a lot, I, um, freak because, he just is evil. And you know when I see him I think of her—they’re brother and sister.

For some of the women, the experience of loss appeared to be internalised in the form of depression, and for others, the loss appeared to provide a drive toward positive change.

For example, Karen discussed being in a state of depression attributed to the incident. Reilly also described wanting to withdraw from the world in order to protect herself. She stated: “You can’t protect yourself. So you withdraw from the world...to protect yourself. And
then in fact you're not enjoying your life at all. Not the way you want to enjoy it.” In contrast, Pam and Jane became proactive in their efforts to educate both themselves and others about the dynamics of violence against women and stalking.

Not surprisingly, some participants described feelings of anger as a consequence of the constant harassment. Pam described feeling exasperated after years of torment from her former partner. This desire to regain control and power over self and environment and end the suffering became akin to a more primal feeling of life or death.

At times I thought—I going to take a gun. I’m going to go stand in front of his apartment. I’m going to yell at him let the bugger come out. I’ll shoot him, shoot myself. To get it over with. I think that’s the biggest thing is to, somehow just get it over with, end it.

Participant accounts suggest that the consequences of the experience of anticipatory fear are complex, intense, and evolving. For example, one participant described the longer-term effects of the constant fear and how part of her feels anger aimed at the perpetrator and a part of her feels self-directed anger for “allowing” herself to be so impacted by the event.

There was I time like I say where I spent 2 days alone in my apartment crying and smoking. I didn’t even get dressed. I didn’t have a shower. Didn’t put my face on. NOTHING. I just, (sigh) I totally withdrew. Right. The terror. It was too overwhelming. It was more than I could cope with…I just couldn’t do it. And it sounds SO insane to tell somebody that. Because I’ve always been in control. You know. Raised three kids on my own. You know. Did the whole thing. Working mother, went off to university, and doing—you know. Did it all right. Been there done that. And this happens in my life and I shut down. And, there’s an almost an anger there that he allowed—I shouldn’t say HE allowed me. I allowed myself, for fear of him, to withdraw from 2 days of my life. And THAT angers me. You know. And its this sort of thing that you do. And I STILL do it.

Some of the participants described how the fear had impacted them in a physical sense. Many recalled feeling exhausted, “feeling run down,” illnesses, such as colds and infections, loss of weight, disrupted sleep patterns, and nightmares. One particularly
poignant dream that Jane described suggests how the stalking is continuing to affect her life and the insidious nature of her fear. Jane’s quote speaks to the complexity of the impact and how anger and fear become intertwined.

I’m now at the point—my family knows if I die, I die. I have told them, if (stalker) comes and he kills me, I’m not happy about it (crying). But I have told them the reality is, my suffering will be over. I’d be really sorry that they were to have to go through my death, but I won’t be suffering anymore. And there’s this bizarre consolation in that. There’s a part of me that wishes he would show up and we could duke it out. I have dreams now where he does, he gets into my house and I literally beat him into a pulp cause I’m so angry. Except part of the dream is he becomes this really gooey mess that gets, I have hardwood floors (chuckle) and he gets into the floorboards and I can’t get him out! I can’t get him out of my house....

Another consequence of the anticipatory fear for many of the women was a predilection towards a wary stance in the world. Moreover, for some of the women, their fear regarding their personal safety caused them to maintain a degree of distance between self and others. For example, Reilly admitted that she does not let people know where she resides. Matilda remains weary about giving out her home phone number within the work setting. Karen stated that because of her experience, she was having difficulty trusting others in relationships. Specifically, she described differentiating intimate relationships in terms of what is required of her versus what her needs are in a relationship.

I just don’t want to be used. Don’t want to be used. And I’m afraid of relationships right now. Like (a friend). He asked me to a wine dinner the other night and I said “no.” I just don’t want to be used...I’m afraid to get into a relationship because then I’m not going to say, “Well excuse me, I want somebody to park their shoes under my bed once in a while!” And I WANT to have a little TLC, not just sex. I just don’t want anybody to NEED me. I need LOVE. But now I’ve categorized love...And if somebody NEEDS you, then it’s not love—it’s being used.

Beth described a change in the way she views relationships, particularly with professional relationships, such as a client-counsellor relationship. She discussed how she has curtailed the amount of herself that she is willing to “put out” into the world as a result of
being stalked. Essentially, she has attempted to separate herself from her work to keep herself and her family safe. "I just cut back on what I know I'm capable of doing. I just won't. I can't. I can't do (client's name) anymore." She goes on to describe how her fear has translated into a more general belief in the world as an unsafe place and that people cannot be trusted.

I still don't feel safe with other people. And certainly that naïve thing that the world is relatively a "good place." Well there is ABSOLUTELY an underside of evil that is just so powerful. That's scary. If I think about it, it scares me a lot."

In summary, the theme of fearing the unknown emerged as a powerful category that was common to all of the participants' accounts of stalking. The women in the sample described a variety of situations in which they experienced anticipatory fear related to the stalking event. It appears that for many of the participants, ability to sense fear evolved from initial feelings of discomfort to complete terror. Integral to this experience was the sense that the stalker was unpredictable and capable of serious harm. This intensity of fear appeared to be linked to the unknown element of stalking. Several women described as a consequence of fearing the unknown, they became hyper vigilant and emotionally drained. Some of the participants drew upon their past knowledge of the stalker as evidence for future harm. Other consequences of this theme included disruptions to sleep and work, loss of security, and anger. Some of the women internalised negative feelings, such a depression, as a result of the unyielding fear. In contrast, others in the sample became active in educating others about the dynamics of stalking and violence against women.

**Needing to be Supported and Validated**

All of the participants in the study discussed "needing to be supported and validated" as a crucial component to their coping with their experience of being stalked. For many of
the women, this theme is directly linked to the theme of being re-victimized because of the result of not getting what they needed from the criminal justice system. Ironically, validating a woman’s experience and supporting her with relevant services and pertinent information appears on the surface to be a relatively simple goal to attain. However, all but one of the women who were interviewed described a need for additional validation and support.

For the purposes of this study, “needing to be supported and validated” is defined as an explicitly identified need to be heard, valued, and completely believed by others and to be provided with the necessary information, appropriate referrals, and empathic understanding regarding a woman’s individual experience. Moreover, the theme of needing validation and support was gleaned from both what others actually did to help the women manage their experience of stalking as well as what participants identified in hindsight as to what would have helped.

Participants varied in the degree to which they needed validation and support and where they sought help. Obviously, validation and support can come from a variety of sources, including friends, family, police officers, victim support workers, counsellors, legal professionals, to name a few. For the participants in this study, women tended to seek, and in some cases, find support from friends and family and look to other professionals for information and validation of the seriousness of the event. For example, Reilly described the value of having friends and family who she continues to turn to for support.

I guess I still have the friends who’ll let me talk about it. And some days when it’s really bothering me or something happens and I wonder if that’s (the stalker), I can talk to them. …Um…having the old boy understand that there are still some times when I need to cry…. (crying) …Um…It doesn’t go away!

Three of the participants described the sense that others who had been stalked before had a greater understanding of their experience. Along with that understanding, the women
felt supported. For example, Beth recalled a feeling of isolation related to the stalking and how other therapists who had been stalked by cult-affiliated groups understood her needs more fully. She stated:

I know that there were other therapists here and in the States who were being stalked by clients. So we had some kind of—I got their heads around the poison they were using in the States. So I called and we talked. So, um, certainly people just didn’t believe. You know. I was pretty isolated.

Pam described how having a current partner who understands abuse in a relationship has been beneficial to her. She stated: “Well, I’m very lucky. I have got a very supportive partner who’d also been in an abusive relationship and he was ABSOLUTELY fantastic. I mean, he’s still supporting me through my work.”

Although Matilda described her reluctance to discuss her experience with others for fear that she would be held responsible and be further impacted in her career, she recalled speaking to a friend who had a similar experience as helpful. She described how hearing another person’s story acted to normalize her experience.

I told a few people, but I felt, I’m not sure this is common, I don’t know why I think I know this, it’s almost like there’s something wrong with me. The other thing that really perturbed me was because I was a (lower-level position), I didn’t want to make a lot of fuss cause I didn’t want them to say, um, she has problems, don’t give her any more work. Cause I know that’s how it works. And I, so I didn’t want to really make a fuss...But I did talk to (friend) and he told me about, um, he was a teacher and he’s gay and how he’s got death threats at home and everything and all this stuff that he went through. And uh, and THAT was kinda reassuring to know that I wasn’t the only one that these kinda things happened to.

Five of the participants described partners, family members, and friends who provided support in the form of validation of the experience. The key element that appeared to be helpful from the women’s point of view related to being believed. For example, Jane described sharing her experience with her friends and family as a way to gain needed understanding,
I was spending a lot of time talking to these friends about it. And you know what was good for me is that they saw my point of view. And they didn’t understand why it was being allowed either. So there was a certain amount of support from them. And I also started discussing the situation with my mother and she thought it was totally out of line too.

Similarly, Lee discussed the support she was able to draw upon to cope with her experience of being stalked by a stranger. She differentiated between those in her life who were supportive to her as those who validated the impact of the crime.

Friends. Definitely my partner. She was just wonderful. And um I mean, she was very validating. She was horrified by the whole experience...Yeah. My family, my parents, you know, weren’t that supportive. (Partner’s) parents were horrified by it and great. Other friends of ours, other couples that we knew, and other women that I worked with. People I turned to.

Several of the participants described how having information related to stalking was a helpful form of support. One of the participants received particularly helpful information and support from a campus counselling service. Matilda described how her contact with an astute counsellor helped her to feel validated and, at the same time, to take steps to help herself.

So I went over and I, um, talked to one of the counsellors over there who told me it’s unusual and gave me a lot of information. And she said one of the things you should do if you’ve got a picture, just post it in the places where you work. Cause she’d actually been around the department and I was talking about it with (someone) in another department who said she hadn’t had any difficulty with her, but she had noticed that this woman was always wearing clothes like me...And so I knew she was still around...So I, uh, I gave a copy of her picture—just if this person was looking for me—I was advised to do that. If this person is looking for me, please don’t give out my name or address or phone number.

Pam described how information related to restraining orders was helpful in her situation. She explained how having a critical piece of information helps women who have been stalked. Specifically, women can use this information to engage the police with the “legitimacy” of an official, registered document.
I think that the Protection Order Registry really helps. I do, because this then tells the policeman that this is official, this is government-sanctioned. That this is the way. It gives your civil restraining order more validity in the eyes of the police.

Another participant, Lee, described a desire to seek support outside of her circle of friends and family as partly a need for information. She also described a more subtle and less articulated need for validation from service providers that was not fully realized in her experience.

I did want to talk to someone who was a bit detached from my friends and that’s when I called (women’s organization)…I don’t even know what I asked them, but I wanted information about the police and questions that I should be asking police. I was really, um, really panicky at the time and I wasn’t very—I didn’t FEEL very coherent at the time. I’m sure I sounded coherent but I didn’t feel it. And so it was helpful talking to them. I think they did help me sort out what questions I wanted to ask. But they didn’t fully validate the impact.

Other participants discussed seeking support from service providers in a more general sense of simply being cared for and understood. For example, Karen described the benefit of a compassionate victim services staff member calling her on an ongoing basis. Although Karen related receiving support from family and friends, her experience with the service provider created a needed sense a being cared for. She explain in the following exchange:

Karen: Victim service called me. They were fantastic. They were just fantastic. Um, (worker) she called me. And she would talk to me on the phone. It was great. And I told her, I have a beautiful family and my daughter talks to me a lot. That’s different she said. Your family you might not say everything to, but you can say everything to me....
Researcher: In what way was Victim Services helpful?
Karen: Just knowing that somebody cared. Just knowing that if I was being harassed still...

Matilda recalled her counsellor’s efforts to link her up to the appropriate resource as a way of validating her in her experience and removing her from being blamed for the stalking experience.
And it was REALLY reassuring to talk to (counsellor) and send me to the (resource). That made me feel ok. At that point it kind of...it wasn't the fact that I'd done a lousy job. Or I hadn't—I don't know—I'd been inappropriate or whatever, you know. Cause you always worry, like what did I do to encourage this. What did I do to make this happen. Like why me?

Pam also felt that her counsellor was a useful resource in her experience of the stalking, but in a somewhat different sense. For Pam, her counsellor served to remind her of her personal strength and to validate her ability to engage in self-care.

Around the time of the breach, I phoned my counsellor again, because I knew that I didn't want to get into too much trouble. So quite often I would phone. And, um, she said at one point, “Well you know what you need to do.” Cause, I'd quit this hiding for 2 days, because, I mean it really is quite self-indulgent. It sounds really stupid. And she said: “You know what you need to do.” I said: “I need to go hide in my bedroom?” She says: “Yeah!”

The theme of needing to be supported and validated appeared to be a key component for all of the women in the study. Although participants varied in the extent to which they received the support and validation from others, all of the participants discussed the value in being believed and supported in some capacity. For some of the women, being supported included receiving relevant information that helped them to deal more effectively with their experience. For others, feelings cared for and having the event normalized was helpful.

Participants described a variety of potential sources of support and validation, including family, friends, counsellors, co-workers, women's organizations, and victim-support services. Although participants appeared to receive some of the necessary support and validation, to a large extent, their needs exceeded what was provided. One of the suggested consequences of this theme was the potential for feeling blamed for the stalking experience in the absence of the required need.
Searching for Safety and Healing

The fourth theme that emerged from the participant’s accounts of stalking was named “searching for safety and healing.” In response to the event of being stalked, all participants engaged in various strategies to help manage their safety and cope with their experience. Some of the women were more proactive in their attempts to deal with their experience in the sense of actively talking steps to try to improve their safety and healing. For the purposes of this section, “searching for safety and healing” is defined as any strategy used by the women in response to the stalking event, regardless of the result. This definition is meant to connote the insidious nature of the crime of stalking and that, despite a person’s best efforts to manage the event, sometimes this goal becomes compromised.

One of the most common ways that participants searched for safety and healing was to withdraw from their usual routines and from the world around them. Although this aspect of the participants’ stories was addressed in the earlier consequence of the theme of fearing the unknown, it is important to include as a safety strategy used by many of the women. Specifically, all of the participants described withdrawing from some aspect of their ordinary lives because of the stalking. For the purposes of this section however, the quotes will be restricted to withdrawal as a safety strategy as opposed to an expressed consequence of intense fear.

For example, both Jane and Reilly described how they altered their movement in the world in order to create safety. Jane recalled changing her usual work routine in order to avoid contact with her stalker. “I started watching HIM. So I wouldn’t take my break until I knew he had his. And therefore he had no reason to be there with me. And so I started altering MY routine.” As the stalking escalated, Jane’s efforts to keep herself safe became
more difficult. She described the parts of her life that she has had to forgo in order to protect herself from harm.

And I haven’t worked in the last couple years. I’m at the point now, I tried to go back to school but because he’s missing, I haven’t been able to continue going to school. And only recently have I started really getting out of my house. My fear is he’s around there looking for me and the more I’m out of my house, the greater the chance he’s gonna find me.

Reilly described explicitly the ways in which she sacrificed her current routine in order to stay safe. For her, self-protection was not without a personal cost to her independence.

Going out, getting there when it’s still light if I can. Not leaving, unless there are other people around. And sometimes that’s very awkward. I want to get going, but I don’t want to walk out by myself. And I can’t tell other people. That hey, walk out with me cause I may have a stalker sitting out there, right...I don’t go to events in the evening unless I can go out with the old boy. You know, there are functions that I would like to go to. And if he can’t go, then I won’t go either. Cause I won’t go out in the night. Not that he’s gonna protect me. It’s just, it’s a silly situation. He could be out there with a gun. He drives by. He takes a pot shot. That’s it...So yeah. You shut certain parts of your life out to protect yourself.

Four of the participants described a more general propensity toward avoidance in the sense of not wanting to be vulnerable to harm. For example, Pam recalled the sense of freedom she got after she received a personal alarm because it allowed her to go outside of her home. Up until that time, she avoided being outside because she felt that her safety would be jeopardized.

So they got me one of those personal alarms so that...so that I could go out in the back yard. Cause what happened until I got that alarm, I didn’t go out in the back yard, I didn’t go anywhere. I didn’t go out of the house unless someone was with me, or unless I had a specific place to go. Because you didn’t know whether he’d be walking down the alley or where he’d be.
Matilda and Karen also discussed avoiding parts of their routine that were associated with the stalker in order to feel safer. Karen described parking on the busy side of the street instead of her usual parking space to avoid potential contact with her stalker. “Victim Services gave me that tip. It just feels safer now because he can’t wait for me anymore.” Similarly, both Lee and Matilda altered their previous routes to avoid the person who was stalking them. Matilda described the extent to which she was willing to go out of her way to avoid her stalker. Despite altering her route, Matilda suggested feeling displaced within her usual familiar surroundings during the following quote:

And I felt so unsafe when I came up here, and this had always been my area. I worked up on the 8th floor, but I wouldn’t actually walk through the building, um, to get there. I would come in the back. I didn’t want to see her in the hallway. Uh, I hardly ever came up to campus unless I had to. And you know, she was always back and forth, so I just avoided everything I could.

Another participant, Lee, recruited the help of a supportive group of friends to help her avoid contact with her former partner who was stalking her. Therefore, instead of avoiding places that her stalker would frequent, Lee engaged the help of her housemates to accompany her wherever she needed to go. She described her role in seeking the support of others in anticipation of potential problems with her former partner.

I think that in retrospect I knew that it was going to be awful when I ended that relationship. I think now that I purposefully set it up that I was in a big house full of people. Yeah. And I knew it was going to be awful.

Lee recalled the planning that went into staying safe and the support she received from others to achieve this end.

I actually remember one night sitting around talking about what to do, and uh, I think they offered. I think they suggested it. Um, that’s probably how afraid I was and I think that...I think they made up a schedule. There was actually my schedule, their timetables, and who was walking me. Especially in those in those first few days.
Beth described that rather than avoiding and withdrawing as a strategy to deal with the stalking event, she became more “social.” In addition, she recalled her process related to her safety as a gamble, but feeling the need to “do something” in the face of the present danger and one of the ways she chose to do that was to inform others about her experience.

It felt like the more that people knew, the safer you were. The more the world knew about this. I went on CBC with a couple of other therapists, but they edited it very inaccurately. (chuckle) But I felt it was going to either make or break me… I thought it would either increase or decrease it. And then I had my car totally smashed.

Another common way that women searched for safety was to take an active stance in terms of the legal system. Moreover, many of the participants became their own advocates within the system in an effort to get the police to take their stories and their needs seriously. Participants varied in the extent to which they took an active stance within the system and the extent to which they experienced difficulties accessing the necessary support within the system as related to their safety needs.

For three of the participants, attempting to get the police involved in an active stalking investigation was met with a large amount of difficulty, and resulted in the women becoming persistent in their efforts to engage help. Pam described repeated attempts to involve and eventually to coordinate the investigation, prosecution, and probation of her stalker. She recalled her initial efforts to try to get some action. “So I phoned the (local) police, again, I don’t know how many times I phoned them, and said, you know, somebody’s got to do something.” Pam described how she was forced to become essentially “the squeaky wheel” in order to gain support of police.

So I finally thought, ok, I'm gonna go down to the police station and I'm gonna sit there until SOMEBODY deals with me! Like somebody has to talk to me cause nobody was talking, they just kept saying: “Phone another number.” I said: “No! I am not leaving until somebody talks to me!” He says: “No, no, you have to phone
911.” So on and on it went until finally I was so scared and so frustrated that I just finally turned around and I was crying and I said: “When I’m DEAD, then you guys I’ll do something!”

Pam also recalled using the same persistence to have her voice heard within the court system. Specifically, she described advocating for her protection with the Crown Counsel for strict enforcement of a protection order. The stalker was attempting to vary the order to give him more access to her property and without the protection order Pam would be in a position whereby she would have virtually no legal safeguards.

So I started phoning Crown and saying: “Hey you guys, get on it!”... I was at work, and I mean I was really lucky that I was at my desk and I wasn’t on the phone... Got this phone call, Crown Counsel: “We’re going into court in 10 minutes for this order, what do you want to say about it?” So, I mean, 10 min—there was a 10-minute window! If they hadn’t of gotten me right then, I wouldn’t have had my say and he maybe would’ve got his order... And I guess, by the time I was finished, she was going: “OK,” no, we will definitely (laugh) NOT go ahead with this order.”

Both Jane and Beth described similar determination in attempting to get their safety needs addressed through the legal system. However, for these women, the police were of no assistance. In Beth’s case, the police refused to engage in any ongoing investigation and the perpetrators of the stalking were never charged for the criminal harassment. For Jane, her attempts to take charge of her safety resulted in a frustrating process.

I phoned the police. They said: “Well sorry, you’re out of jurisdiction. This happened in (another city), you have to go to there.” So I had to drive down to that station. I actually sat in their waiting room from 5:30 till quarter to 9 at night before anyone would even talk to me. I even got on the phone in their payphone in the lobby and dialled 911 to see if I could talk to a police officer, cause I was tired of waiting like that’s how concerned I was. I sat there all that time...to speak to someone.

After repeated attempts to involve the police for her protection, Jane recalled how her motivation changed from wanting the police to protect her to simply wanting a “paper trail” to prove the level of danger she was encountering. She conveys her persistent attitude
became strengthened by the inaction on the part of the police to develop any level of safety for her.

And so I started writing out this long statement that I had taken to the police. And I said: "Fine, you don’t want a report, I’m giving you one.” And I made it very clear: “I end up dead, don’t you DARE tell anyone I didn’t try to report it to you!”

In contrast, the remaining four participants were active in maintaining their safety, but for a variety of reasons, did not describe the same degree of effort involved in trying to engage the system in their safety. For example, both Karen and Reilly discussed their experience with the police as “great” and “incredibly supportive” and perhaps as a result, did not describe the same extent of taking action to facilitate charges being laid against the perpetrator. However, one factor that should be taken into account is that for both women, charges were laid quickly. Thus, it could be argued that for these two women, the need to be proactive regarding the legal system was less of an issue as compared to the other women.

For Lee, the issue of police and safety was not addressed in the same way as some of the other women. For example, Lee discussed her reluctance to involve the police in her search for safety more out of a fear of inherent discrimination than anything else.

I didn’t even have the language to talk about the abuse, the sexual assault. Because I was a lesbian, and I was in my first relationship, there were so many internalised beliefs about lesbians are crazy, they are violent...I wasn’t in a place where I could have come forward. I would never have come out to police. My own homophobia, and the homophobia I’d experienced around me would not, have um created a space where I would have gone for help.

Thus, searching for safety and healing was a common theme among all of the participants in the present study. The key way in which women in the sample achieved this goal was to engage in withdrawal or avoidance strategies that were aimed at removing them from potential harm. Some of the participants avoided locations that were frequented by the stalker, while others utilized a supportive network to avoided specific contact with the
stalker. A few of the women articulated a need to make others aware of what was occurring in terms of the stalking experience. This was viewed as a safety strategy, despite the fact that in some instances, safety was not the eventual outcome. Many of the women noted efforts to be proactive in their attempts to protect themselves and to feel like they could do something to help themselves. Findings suggest that stalking was a severe disruption to the participants' daily routines and caused them to draw upon their resources to manage the event.

Concern for Others

All the participants described a sense of concern and caring for others in relation to the experience of stalking, whether it was in relation to the stalker, or to others around them. Although this theme was a relatively small aspect within the overall text, it was consistent across all of the women. “Concern for others” is defined as a voiced level of caring and concern for others in relation to the experience of stalking. For some of the women in the study, it appeared that feeling a sense of concern for others added to negative feelings, and in other participants, it delayed efforts to seek and maintain safety.

Reilly, Matilda, and Karen described feelings of concern for the person who was stalking them, and a desire to get them the help that was needed. In some cases, this caring attitude caused them to be vulnerable to further acts of stalking and harassment. For example, Karen recalled feeling responsible to continue to provide care for her stalker, given that he was recovering from a recent surgery. She recalled her efforts to prepare his meals for him despite her frustration with his stalking behaviour. She described a feeling of “responsibility for him,” and in choosing to continue contact with him in a care-taking role, she became further at risk. During the follow-up interview, Karen addressed her feelings of
responsibility and how that affected her ability to identify the stalking as a potentially harmful event.

I didn’t label it as stalking until 2 weeks ago. And that was only because he made death threats. He waited for me outside my new apartment. Once he saw me he told me that I still had some of his stuff and could he come and get it. I reluctantly said yes. Once he was in my place, he started saying: “If he can’t have me, no one can.” All that. I guess I thought we could be friends. He made me feel responsible.

Lee also described how she lacked the appropriate language to talk about what was occurring to her and how her own internalised beliefs about how lesbians are treated within the legal system made her reluctant to report the incident to the police. She discussed her inclination to be protective of her partner and her internal struggle between wanting to speak out against the abusive behaviour, and at the same time, feeling concern for her partner as part of a marginalized group.

Because of the homophobia, I would have been very reluctant to contact the police—because my fear of how it would have impacted her. And I think that, I’ve thought about this a lot about other women’s experiences and stories, it’s similar to what African American women and aboriginal women talk about that in terms of the criminal justice system...Just the layers of what it means to use that system against your partner even if your partner—hating your partner (chuckle), but still not wanting the homophobia to be used against them. I, I totally struggled with that. I’m pretty sure I never would have—it’s hard to say—so many things would have had to be different for me to go down that route...My sense of protectiveness despite my rage towards her for what she did.

The layers of protectiveness that I felt towards her made ...leaving hard and ...addressing the violence ...hard. My own sense of injustice of what she was doing eventually won out. It felt like life or death. Like I had to get out of there.

Another common sentiment among some of the participants was the notion of “not wanting to make a fuss,” “not wanting to embarrass the stalker,” or “be rude” by utilizing strong boundaries. This emerged in three of the participants’ stories as they explained the
ways that they tried to escape the harassment while at the same time balance their sense of responsibility to essentially “be nice.”

For example, Matilda described how she was drawn into ignoring her inner sense that told her to avoid her stalker. Moreover, one of her co-workers had conveyed a sense of concern regarding the woman’s problems, which caused Matilda to re-examine her own stance. She discussed how her sense of initial dislike for her stalker was squelched by the stalker’s more immediate emotional needs related to self-harm.

Because I didn’t like her, I felt this kinda, you know, how you kinda bend over backwards to be nice. And I think I might have done that. And, so I was very concerned for this suicidal...information. And I thought: Oh God! So I emailed her encouragement and told her to just keep persevering. Take some time off. You know, take a break. You can’t work all the time. And then I came into work and she’d sent me an email telling me that she was absolutely crazy about me.

Several other participants discussed a sense of concern for others in their lives in relation to the risk of harm from the stalker. Specifically, Beth, Reilly, and Jane all explicitly described a sense of worry for close friends and/or family members being exposed to the potential danger. A consequence of this concern appeared to be increased amounts of stress added to the existing stress inherent in the stalking experience. Thus, not only were the women concerned for their own safety, they were also worried about the safety of those around them because of explicit or implicit threats from the stalker.

In summary, the theme of “concern for others,” although a smaller theme as compared to the other five themes that emerged in the data, appeared to be a key component to the women’s narratives of stalking. Consistent with the general idea that women are socialized to be nurturing and caring, the women in the study discussed a sense of caring and concern for others. For some of the participants, this concern included the stalker’s well-being. For others, a sense of concern evolved around significant others in their lives. The
concern for others often resulted in feelings of increased stress and strain for the women, or a sense of blame and responsibility for the stalking event. In some cases, efforts to convey caring interfered with participants’ safety and healing by placing them further in harm’s way.

Being Re-victimized

The final theme that emerged from the research was related to the idea of essentially being re-victimized by individuals or entire systems. The experience of being re-victimized was common among all of the participants as they relayed their story of being stalked. The ways that the women in the sample described this process varied, but could be consistently described as negative for all of the participants in the study. The women identified several ways in which others acted to somehow worsen, or deepen the impact of an already negative experience. For the most part, these actions on the part of others were not necessarily malicious attempts to hurt the women, but rather appeared to originate from a lack of knowledge regarding appropriate ways to manage the problem.

One of the ways that participants felt re-victimized was when others explicitly trivialized their experience. In this context, trivializing suggests other’s responses that were taken as minimizing the impact of the crime in some way. In the case of four of the participants, this occurred during their experience of stalking and had a detrimental effect on their feelings, thoughts, or behaviours. Both Jane and Matilda experienced being re-victimized in the workplace in response to the stalking. However, the reasons each woman gave for others trivializing their experience were different. For example, Matilda described how the fact that her stalker was female and stalking her romantically affected her co-workers in their assessment of the situation. She also discussed how other’s discrimination acted as a catalyst in their attempts to minimize the crime.
And there was a little bit oh—"Oh dear," you know, "Well never mind!" And then I went to the office and spoke to the supervisor and I think one of the things that emerged for me was, (a), this homophobic attitude around it. Because more than one person, in fact about 3 different people said to me: "Well it wouldn't have been so bad for you would it if it would have been a young guy. I mean you could have coped with that couldn't you?" You know, "Somebody get a little crush on you." And I was really outraged by that. Because to me it wasn't about... sex or anything. It was somewhat darker than that. It was quite... disturbing.

As the stalking continued to escalate and Matilda became more fearful, she maintained her resolve to engage various individuals in positions of authority to help "fix" the situation. Unfortunately, others, including those in supervisory positions, continued to trivialize the stalking.

The whole thing was... well combination of, well I'm making a big fuss about something or, maybe it's not really that important, or, and then this uncomfortableness because it was a woman. Like again, I kept getting that—"You mean this person's a WOMAN!" "..."Been doing this to you?" Yeah. So that was one element. And like people didn't really take it seriously because it was a woman. ...And then I heard all these jokes about fatal attraction.

In Jane's case, her co-workers also failed to recognize the stalking as an unwanted or undesired behaviour. However, for Jane, the discomfort often associated with same sex attraction was replaced by an added element of trivialization. Moreover, Jane described how many of her female co-workers commented on how "cute" the stalker's behaviour was and questioned Jane's decision around refusing to go out on a "date" with the stalker.

What's important is that this is happening at work, and my supervisors and the fellow employees saw this and it actually became... um kind of like the employee situation joke where you know (the stalker) has a crush on me. Everyone thought this was really cute. You know, "Isn't that sweet! Look he really likes her."

Jane speculated about the role of the multimedia and our socialization in perpetuating the image that women want to be "pursued" as a potential explanation for her co-worker's attempts to minimize her experience as a criminal act. She further explained:
This is what they portray in movies and fairytales. You know, the guys likes the girl and he pursues her. So what do you do? You buy her little presents. You know, you ask her out. You offer her MORE.

Lee experienced being re-victimized by members of the police service in her dealings with them surrounding the stranger stalking experience. Lee described her experience of feeling insignificant in the eyes of the police and she recalled feeling as if she did not have permission to be negatively impacted because of the circumstances of the stalking. She addresses the issue of stalking as “indirect” violence versus other forms of “direct” violence such as assault and it’s relationship to the impact of crime.

Definitely the RCMP experience was, you know very, they were sensitive to a point and then I think they thought I was, you know, overreacting. And I am aware that it could have been worse, so you know I was relieved that he was dead, but I think that—there’s the idea that if you experience violence directly, you (laugh) I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but there is this notion that if you experience violence directly, then you have the right to feel the impact. If it’s somehow not direct, if you’re not hit...I think it’s different too, with emotional, verbal, psychological abuse in an intimate relationship, there’s more permission or acceptance that you will be impacted. With a stranger following you around, it’s like, well, what did he DO to you, you know. There’s not a lot of validation, societally for the experience of violation that’s predatory.

In contrast, Karen described that to a large extent, others in her life as well as the police and court officials were both respectful and helpful in her experience of being stalked. However, she did recall an incident where a well-meaning co-worker tried to attribute the stalking behaviour to a cultural issue, thereby absolving the stalker from responsibility for his crime.

She said: “I think it’s a Dutch thing—Just forget about it. They’re all the same!” Well I’ve known other Dutch people who didn’t have the same problem, so I don’t know. It made me feel kind of bad though...Like I was partly to blame somehow. I tried to brush it off. She was trying to be helpful. Make me feel better. But it didn’t.
Six out of the seven participants described being re-victimized through the very systems in place designed to support and protect them. Being re-victimized was experienced by the women in the sample in a variety of ways including examples of the police deciding not to proceed with criminal charges, the legal system using an anti-victim/pro offender stance, and other procedures that resulted in increased the woman’s level of danger. However, the defining feature of the different ways in which the women experienced re-victimization appeared to be that systems-professionals neglected to convey “validation, support, and acceptance” of their stories.

Jane discovered from her own research on stalking the importance of avoiding a power struggle with the perpetrator. Unfortunately for Jane, the importance of maintaining a neutral stance was illustrated during an incident involving police and her stalker. Jane remains angry with the police and her employer for their piecemeal efforts to “make things better” that ended up increasing the level of her danger.

One of the worse things you can do is get into a power struggle between the victim and the stalker. That you need to avoid that and that’s exactly what the system made happen between (stalker) and I. It’s very clear. He knows over and over that the police are gonna do nothing. The Police made the situation between (stalker) and I. My employer made the situation between (stalker) and I. When everyone should’ve been doing everything they could to teach him that this is HIS problem and HIS behaviour and HE is getting into trouble with the police because HE is breaking the law. Not because I’m complaining about it.

Another participant described her exasperating attempts to get police involved and how through their inaction, added to her own sense of futility related to being stalked.

Well at FIRST I was really hoping you know I really believed that that’s what they are there for. And it really surprised me how ...um floored they were by this stuff. They were absolutely paralysed with kind of confusion and concern and, not concern as in: “Oh are you ok?” But concern as in: “This really goes on!” I got a package in the mail at work and it was a box and as you opened it stunk more and more and it was a dead rabbit with all kinds of guts and shit all over the place...And inside were newspaper with cuttings and words in newspaper letters saying: “You’re dead.” And
I remember being at the police station and I remember this thing on the floor and them kicking the maggots back into the box as they were crawling across the floor. And they didn’t have a CLUE what it was and they just wanted it to go away. And we went away and never heard from them again.

Further in the interview, Beth offered a summary of her attempts to recruit police in any helpful way. She recalled:

Nobody DID anything! Nobody ever did anything. ...nothing nothing. They lost my stuff. So that’s all they did. And when I went to pick it up I went with a friend, a big, big man. (chuckle). Cause at this point I was genuinely very afraid, and went to pick it up and there was this guy standing in street clothes and I don’t know if he was a cop or not, but I gave him a number of my stuff and he said: “It’s not here.”

Another participant described her experience of police as one that could be equated with an anti-victim stance. Earlier in the interview, Matilda had described her negative experience with an RCMP officer and his decision not to proceed with charges. He questioned her role in the stalking and she experienced feelings of blame and anger. In response, she articulated her feelings to the officer: “…You are re-victimizing me. I don’t feel very comfortable. Cause he kept saying, like, “why didn’t you tell her the advances weren’t welcome that’s what you’re supposed to do. Are you sure you’re not imagining it.”

Matilda later attributed her negative experience with the police to the “police mentality” and the systems inability to appreciate the impact of crime in any meaningful way.

My experience of the police mentality is that…that’s the tautological—like that’s an oxymoron, like, I have never, EVER—somebody who’s been in the police force for a long time, I have never ever met a police person who is still caring and capable of seeing people as like anything except perpetrators and victims.

Similarly, Jane also expressed continual attempts to try to engage the police in an ongoing investigation and was met with disbelief and inaction. It was not until she enlisted the aid of a Private Investigator to look into her case before the police would discuss the matter further with her.
And it was getting the PI, basically embarrassing the hell out of the police and having someone else who's an ex-cop and who believed me and understood the system. And the only difference was that he gave me the benefit of the doubt. That I was telling the truth. The police have admitted to me—of course not in documented form—that they thought I was nuts. That they thought I was making up the story. They continually said stuff like: "Well why is he doing this stuff to you? If you never dated him, why would he do this to you?"

In contrast, both Reilly and Karen discussed feeling believed and validated by the police. Karen stated that during her contact with the police and the Crown Counsel in her case, that she felt "totally understood" and that one of the investigating officers warned her about the danger in continuing a relationship with her former partner. For Karen, this warning was one of the pieces of evidence that she used in taking the steps to end the relationship. For Reilly, although she felt that overall, the system "failed" her at the level of overall safety and security, her experience with the police was positive. She attributes this, in part, because they took her story seriously, thus enabling her to recognize the magnitude of the crime and mobilize her resources.

Most of the police were incredibly supportive. Ok. And THAT in and of itself. I wasn't going to press charges and it was [a constable] who said: "Yes you are." And it suddenly impacted on me just how serious it was. And I think just having that kind of support. Because I think at that point I was so distraught that just having someone take over for me was a real relief.

For the three participants who endured a court proceeding related to the stalking, all of the women reported the experience of being re-victimized by the process. Aspects of the process such as all too common "delays" in proceedings, repeated appearances, and "insufficient sentences" in the case of guilty verdicts, acted to make the process even more difficult. Words used to describe the experience included "just crazy," "hoops and ladders," "dragging it out," and "crazy making." Reilly described her disappointment: "It was just an exercise in futility. The only thing that happened was that he got angrier at me."
Another participant explained how the court process became analogous to the experience of abuse as she tried to cope with her feelings of terror. Pam’s first quote includes her description of being re-victimized, and it is followed by her analogy of the abuse within the relationship compared to the abuse of the system.

That was a nightmare... Auggh. It still makes me angry. I’m standing up there, scared spittless. He’s sitting down below. And the Crown Counsel starts asking me questions. I’m testifying and my ex is ranting and raving and yelling at me. “You’re stupid, that’s wrong, that wasn’t right.” And he’s yelling at the top of his lungs, standing up in a threatening manner. This is in the courtroom! And they basically let this go on for a while while I’m trying to testify. Scared out of my mind. Because of course, I have to get out of the courtroom. I have to live after this. This guy is ranting at me.

You spend all this time trying to get away from the control of the relationship and you land up in this control of the system. It’s the same battle, you’re just fighting, well no, yeah, I mean it’s the same battle. I mean initially you’re battling somebody that you love and that is supposed to love you, and then you’re battling somebody that is supposed to be protecting you...It’s like one battle after another (softly).

In summary, Karen represents a departure from the other participants because she was the only participant who reported a positive experience with all of the systems during the course of the stalking event. It is difficult to determine why Karen had a relatively positive experience with systems-people and whether her assessment will change over time. Because her experience of stalking is ongoing and she has reported limited contact with the various systems to date, it is possible that her experience may change. Perhaps another factor at play is the fact that Karen was not forced to try to engage the police to help her manage her safety.

One of the key features of the final theme was the ways that others acted to “victimize” the participant beyond the actual stalking event. This occurred in a variety of situations, but most commonly within the workplace and within the various systems designed to deal with crime. Specifically, others trivialized and minimized the experiences of the
women in the study, thereby creating a further negative experience. Moreover, some systems-related professionals failed to take into account the specific needs and safety concerns of the women, causing them additional stress. Consequences of this theme included feelings of frustration, anger, grief, disappointment and disbelief. It appears that being re-victimized strengthened participants' need to be supported and validated in their experience.

**Recommendations for Improving Service**

Due to the nature of the data, the next section of the findings is reported in a different manner as compared to previous findings. Specifically, the recommendations for improvement to service for women who have been stalked are reported in a less in-depth format because they represent participant's insights and thoughts, rather than their actual experience. Additionally, the data pertaining to this question during the interview was more explicit and therefore required little interpretive analysis. As a result, this section of the data is not articulated in the form of themes, but rather the results are grouped according to how they related to either (a) recommendations to improvements to services for women, and (b) recommendations or tips for women who have experienced stalking. All recommendations were clearly embedded in the women’s narratives and arise from the impact of the experience of stalking.

**Systems-related Service.** One of the most consistent suggestions for improving services to women who have been stalked has been previously mentioned: to validate women in their experiences of stalking. These suggestions were well-grounded in the women’s experiences of not feeling validated by others. For example, several women talked about the importance of the police taking their story seriously. Pam suggested:

They’ve got to listen to the woman!...I mean that was my hardest problem was to get someone to just LISTEN to me! And as I say, if they’re not listening to me, and if I
wouldn’t have had the strength, and the counselling, and the friends to keep it up...Maybe they don’t have to believe it when they finish, but at least listen to them!

Beth echoed the idea that women are not believed in their accounts of the stalking and that the impact of the crime becomes lost. “They don’t believe them. That’s the thing. And I don’t think they really understand what it does to your life...One thing that would have certainly helped is to be believed.”

In discussing her experience of being stalked by a stranger, Lee discussed feeling that her needs were not valid or acknowledged. She linked this feeling to a suggestion that in offering some form of formal victim support, other victims would feel that the impact of the experience was recognized.

I think that would have been validating to have them offer a phone number, referral, say specialized victim assistance program, even police-based victim assistance—there’s someone you can talk to. But I think that they didn’t think I was a victim.

One of the suggestions for increasing sensitivity and understanding around the issues related to stalking and women’s collective needs was related to education and training initiatives at both the micro and macro levels. Specifically, Pam suggested more education at the systems-level. Pam felt that with more education regarding the dynamics of abuse and the tactics that violent men use to achieve the goal of terrorizing women, that the cycle of violence would not be perpetuated through others working in the system.

Beth suggested a team-approach to education that could inform current investigations of stalking-related cases. In Beth’s experience, the police were not a resource, which added to her sense of fear. In her words, “…you know it was SO evident from the beginning that they were not able to help me. That they were not going to be a resource. And if you can’t
count on the police to keep you safe! Yeah. At least fake it or put something in place or have some kind of team or something.”

Lee described a need for education relating to same sex violence and more visible examples of same sex couples at all levels of systems.

Education about same sex violence for counsellors. You know I would have never considered a woman’s shelter because back to that not having the language to talk about it. Education for counsellors, doctors… it’s really important for police to have information about same sex violence because I think in a lot of cases they get called to the scene where it’s a fight between roommates and um they may not be aware of the signs of violence in a same sex relationship. And um the likelihood of women and men coming out to the police is not very likely (laugh). So having a need for sensitivity training gay/lesbian/transgendered issues and having the sensitivity training around same sex violence.

Other suggestions related to timeliness, appropriateness, and consistency of the legal response to stalking cases. A number of suggestions came out of this area, including, suggestions to expedite the criminal justice process to shorten the time frame from when the woman makes a police report to adjudicating the crime and sentencing, more severe sentences for perpetrators of stalking, more stringent enforcement of restraining orders, utilizing mental health assessments in cases of stalking where warranted, and examining the role of police in investigating stalking cases.

Although most of the women saw the value in providing information about stalking to the general public, two of the women described negative reactions to the government published brochure designed to draw attention to the seriousness of criminal harassment. For Pam, the suggestion in the pamphlet that women change their phone numbers to try to elude the perpetrator was akin to adding fuel to an already volatile fire. Specifically, she related that her former partner was angered when he was unable to reach her by phone contact, and would use it as an excuse to attend her residence and harass her in person.
Matilda described the first time she saw the stalking brochure as fear-provoking. In her words:

I found it...like terrifying. I read this thing through and I thought: “Oh my god!” I’m supposed to change my—I think that’s where I heard about the picture—“Change your phone number, and like move, but they’ll probably find you anyway so make sure people...”

When asked what the brochure SHOULD say to women, Matilda suggested the following:

It should say” “Take it seriously. Talk to someone about it. It’s not your fault.” And there should be a place where you can go and talk to someone where they’re not going to JUDGE you for being—you know like the RCMP officer...Yeah. I don’t know. Just it needs to communicate that this is a serious offence, but it shouldn’t terrify you even more.

**Safety recommendations.** Several practical suggestions were offered for women who have experienced stalking. A variety of tips were generated relating to ways to improve the level of personal safety, strategies to help women cope with their experiences of the justice system, and suggestions to help them heal from their experience.

In terms of the safety tips, several women offered suggestions related to the topic of “information.” Specifically, Jane recommended taking the time and effort to document all events and repercussions concerning the stalking experience. She discussed how having detailed records of the incidences of stalking is important for the investigation of the crime, but also in terms of receiving compensation for injuries sustained from the crime. Moreover, she explained how, in failing to discuss in detail her feelings of depression with her family doctor during the stalking experience, she is now ineligible for criminal injuries compensation.
Jane also discussed the importance of removing your name and identifying information, including your address, from the local phone company. This is suggested as an important way to protect yourself from others learning the location of your residence.

Another suggestion was to learn about the dynamics of stalking and general tactics of stalkers. For example, Matilda was told by the investigating police officer that she should instruct the perpetrator that the stalking behaviours are unwelcome in an effort to assert clear and concise boundaries. However, it is important to note that the women in the study attempted to utilize strong boundaries with the stalker, and that despite this fact the perpetrators persisted in the harassment. Nevertheless, Matilda continued to wonder about what she could have done to stop the stalking behaviour from escalating. Specifically, she discussed needing to be more explicit with the woman who was stalking her. This suggests that not all stalking cases are the same in terms of what decreases the behaviour and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This also indicates that knowledge is needed about the dynamics of stalking to better inform women about how to best manage their experience.

To help women cope with their experiences, participants offered several suggestions. Reilly suggested forming a support network for women who have been stalked as a formal way to validate women in their experiences and in recognition that other women who have been through similar experiences would be better able to understand the collective experience.

Karen intuitively felt that women’s self-esteem was affected by the experience of being stalked. Consequently, she suggested efforts to refocus a woman’s sense of self in a more positive way as a means to support other women. She described her own history of
abuse and neglect and how that impacted her sense of self in the world. She expressed a desire to convey to other women the notion that nobody has to live with abuse.

In terms of supporting through the legal process, Lee suggested bringing an advocate during the reporting of the incident to counterbalance any potential negative police contact. The role of the advocate would be to not only to support the woman, but also to provide a challenge to any potential negative systems-response.

The final section of the results represents a summary of participants' suggestions for improvement in services for stalking survivors. It is not expressed as an explicit theme, but rather as a more concrete compilation of recommendations as offered by the women in the study. Recommendations were separated into systems-related suggestions and safety recommendations and are intended to be a practical tool from which ideas can be generated to support women in their experience of stalking.

**Summary of Results**

Participants described their experience of stalking as a negative event that they attempted to manage in several distinct ways. Six pivotal themes emerged from the women's accounts of their experience and are described in the present chapter. Although considerable variability existed in each woman's experience, commonalities were found relating to each of the key themes. Results suggest that stalking may be related to a few key characteristics that produced a negative impact for the women in this study.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of women who have been stalked and to generate practical suggestions for improvements to requisite services. Seven women who have been stalked by a former-intimate partner, a stranger, or an acquaintance participated in an in-depth, semi-structured interview. Pivotal themes suggested that for all of the women in the sample stalking was considered a very negative life event that the women managed in a variety of key ways. Themes also suggested that several factors acted to interfere with participants' healing and safety, including a sense of being re-victimized and one's own sense of concern for others. Despite a lack of empirical research examining women's experiences with stalking from a qualitative perspective, some of the findings were consistent with the previous literature.

Participants described stalking experiences that ranged from a period of several weeks to 7 years. Although considerable variability existed in each woman's account of her experience, the major themes appeared to be common to all of the participants. However, due to the connected nature of these data, there exists some degree of overlap among the themes. This suggests that the experience of stalking is integrally related to other aspects of the story and thus cannot be examined in isolation.

Although a handful of recent studies have examined the impact of stalking, this study is distinctive in that it examines the meanings that a select group of women have ascribed to their experience and offers recommendations for improvement to services targeting women survivors. Several salient findings warrant further description.
Defining the Stalking Event

One of the main ways that participants described the stalking event was the notion that the experience was ongoing in nature and represented a departure from the norm. Some of the women described this theme to a larger extent than others, but the central idea appeared consistent across participant’s narratives. This result is significant, in part, because of the variability of the participants’ experiences. Specifically, the length of time that each of the women were stalked, the relationship to the stalker, and the gender of the stalker all varied considerable across cases. The background of the participants also varied considerably, suggesting that the description of the experience as ongoing and abnormal represented a meaningful component of the event rather than their prior knowledge regarding abnormal behaviour or criminality.

For example, 4 out of the 7 women in the study discussed prior knowledge regarding mental health and anti-violence related areas. This factor did not appear to affect the theme of stalking as an ongoing and abnormal event in the sense that even the participants who did not possess prior knowledge about mental health and woman abuse also described their experience in the context of an ongoing and abnormal event.

This finding appears to be consistent with other literature related to stalking. In an overview of stalking, Meloy (1998) found that stalking was considered an “odd” behaviour that could be measured over a period of months or years, rather than an isolated, criminal incident. The author also noted potential reasons for this feature of stalking. Although many stalkers meet the clinical criteria for a mental disorder, the author concluded that most stalkers are not psychotic at the time of the stalking. Moreover, common diagnoses of stalkers included substance abuse, personality disorders (i.e., antisocial personality disorder)
mood disorders, or schizophrenia. Gill and Brockman (1996) found similar results in their investigation of the criminal harassment policy and procedures. This suggests that although mental illness may contribute to stalking as a continuous and abnormal behaviour, it cannot be the only explanation. This suggests professionals dealing with stalking would be wise to target the abusive behaviour rather than merely the illness suggested by the behaviour.

Another important finding offered by Meloy (1998) is the idea that stalking represents a “continuum” of intrusive behaviours that may not be actual criminal acts. These intrusive behaviours common in stalking have been referred to as “obsessional relational intrusions” (Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999). Spitzberg and Rhea defined obsessive relational intrusion, or ORI as “a form of ongoing and unwanted pursuit of a relationship” (p. 3). They specify that ORI can be defined as stalking when the intrusions escalate to the point of being threatening.

Activities related to ORI are consistent with several of the behaviours described by the women in the present study, including a range of behaviours from constant phone calls, to following and watching. The previous study is useful insofar as it suggests that stalking behaviours in isolation are not considered criminal, but taken together as a pattern of behaviour become problematic because they are designed to induce fear.

This level of fear was described in detail by all of the participants in the present study. The theme of “fearing the unknown” was associated with several negative repercussions, including an intense emotional reaction that caused many of the women to doubt their ability to cope with the event. Women described in detail their experiences of fear and the effects that the experience had on all areas of their lives. Moreover, for women in the present study, fearing the unknown appeared to be related to a need to be supported and searching for safety and healing. This finding suggests that society must recognize the
seriousness of stalking and that it is not simply an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it should be understood as a series of behaviours designed to assert intense levels of fear that can seriously affect the survivor.

Furthermore, thinking of stalking in terms of ORI is useful because it suggests that stalking represents a continuum of behaviours that may involve a process of interpretation from the person being stalked. For example, one of the participants in the present study did not experience the stalking-related behaviours as threatening until her partner became physically abusive. For her, the behaviours were considered intrusive, but not labelled as criminal until she was assaulted by her stalker. A few other participants discussed how society affords a certain amount of validation for women who have suffered domestic violence, but that women who have been stalked are not recognized as being impacted in any significant way. Thus, widespread education related to the potential risks of stalking, as well as education about the impact of stalking, may be useful.

Another possible explanation for this difference in labelling stalking as a crime relates to past experiences with violence in relationships. For example, it is possible that for some women, stalking behaviours although clearly unwelcome, are considered part of a trend toward not being valued and respected. It is therefore society’s responsibility to connote a sense of intolerance for abuse within relationships and to convey the idea that all individuals deserve equality and freedom within interpersonal relationships.

Stalking as Psychological Abuse

Based on the current findings, it may be useful to examine stalking under the lens of psychological or emotional abuse. Stalking appears to be perceived as a way that power and control are used to intimidate and threaten women (Corey & McAndless-Davis, 2000). The
results of this study underscore the importance of examining the impact of stalking and addressing some of the consequences of stalking for women who experience this form of violence.

Consistent with research on psychological or emotional abuse (Gelles, 1999; Corey & McAndless, 2000), the women this study suggested that the experience of fear changed over time, gradually growing in intensity and pervasiveness until it affected most areas of their lives. These areas included career, relationships, financial, and personal health. For example, one woman in the present study used the analogy of "living in a cage" to describe the impact on her life and the ways that she felt constrained by the constant fear. For the women whose experience of fear abated, they described a sense of remaining "weary" or vigilant about their safety and privacy. Several women also described a more permanent change of becoming protective.

Other research supports the idea that stalking is related to a variety of negative consequences related to the emotional impact of the event. For example, Abrams and Robinson (1998a) in an overview of the literature of stalking and its implications found that stalking caused major emotional health consequences related to the experience of fear. In a survey study of stalking-related behaviours experienced by counsellors in a university setting, Romans and associates (1996) found that all of the respondents who were stalked experienced psychological injury, and as a result of their fear, participants incorporated lifestyle changes. For example, participants unlisted their phone number, reported stalking activities to the police, used home security/ or personal defence devices, learned self-defence techniques, changed their residence, used their maiden name professionally, or moved to a new community. Another survey study conducted by Hall (1998, 1997) concluded that the
effects of stalking were analogous to "psychological terrorism" in the sense that due to the intense experience of fear, participants were forced to change all aspects of their previous lives.

Despite the fact that the aforementioned studies were quantitative in design and used survey data to generate their findings, the current study appears to support the main conclusions offered. However, the present design offers important additions to the existing literature by providing women's interpretations of the impact of stalking and suggests ways to improve services to better support women.

In a recent study by Spence-Diehl and Potocky-Tripodi (2001) researchers explored service provider's opinions based on questionnaires related to the needs of stalking survivors. They found that opinions varied across criminal justice versus private/university based programs. Similar to the present study, the authors also found that acquaintance and stranger stalking survivors were perceived to be underserved by the current programs. Public education campaigns were suggested to improve community responses to stalking.

This study supports the suggestion offered by the women in the current study related to the need for stalking education and training. However, participants in the current study also offered several additional suggestions. Specifically, they suggested a need for training related to the importance of validating women in their experience, the need for training on same sex stalking and violence, the value of support groups for women who have been stalked, and various safety tips for women. Although the Spence-Diehl and Potocky-Tripodi (2001) study is a useful addition to the literature, it fails to locate survivor's accounts of their service needs.
Support as Stress Inoculation

The value of support and validation in dealing with a variety of stress-provoking situations is well established. Therefore it was not surprising that all of the women in the sample described a need to be supported and validated in their experience of stalking. This finding suggests that although several participants were unable to receive the level of support and validation that was desired, in the incidents where participants were able to receive a degree of support and validation were helpful to some extent.

Pathe and Mullen (1997) also discussed the role of legal and medical systems as they related to stalking. They concluded based on survey results generated from 100 survivors of stalking that formal systems failed to meet the needs of individuals who were stalked. Participants in their study reportedly received conflicting information or mis-information when it came to stalking. The authors speculated that this lack of support served to exacerbate the effects of stalking. As a result of their findings, Pathe and Mullen formed a support group that was identified as an obvious gaps in service. They suggested that formal systems may erroneously focus on the seriousness of the crime of stalking and essentially ignore the larger but invisible psychological and social damage.

Although the latter point is possible, the results of the present study suggest that formal systems such as the police did not appear to be particularly focused on the perceived dangerousness of the stalking event and did little to help mitigate the impact of the crime for the majority of the women in the sample. However, two of the participants reported positive interactions with the police related to their handling of the investigation. For these women, the officers helped them to acknowledge that the stalking and abusive behaviours were serious and criminal. This suggests that perhaps formal systems-people are capable of
providing support and validation, but it depends on the individual rather than the organizations.

Pathe and Mullen (1997) also failed to include the role of non-formal systems of support in helping individuals to manage their experience of stalking. It was apparent in the present study that many of the women received various degrees of support from family and friends. However, one of the central themes apparent in all of the women's narratives was the ways in which others, formal systems (i.e., police, courts) and informal systems (family, friends, co-workers) invalidated, minimized, and trivialized their experience. This theme was labelled "Being Re-victimized." This was a particularly poignant in vivo code offered by one of the participants in the present study. It suggests the ways in which women in the present study became secondarily impacted because of their experience of being stalked. Thus, not only were the participants forced to manage the experience of stalking and the ensuing fear, but they were additionally burdened with others' inability to adequately support them in their efforts.

Being re-victimized by the "system" is not a new phenomenon. Clarke (1987) in an article addressing the issue of justice for victims within the prosecution process, discusses how the "victim movement," has formed special interest groups aimed at reducing re-victimization and increased power for victims of crime. Fuelled in part by the Women's Movement, the Victims' Movement is focused on compensating victims for their "loss" that was created during the crime. Along similar lines, Makin (1989) discussed the presence of victim's rights groups as a powerful lobby group that has achieved many of their desired goals including harsher penalties for certain crimes, victim surcharge to the offender, the creation and use of victim impact statements during sentencing hearings, training programs
for Crown attorneys to teach them about ways to more effectively deal with victims, increased compensation to victims of crime, and victim services within the courthouse to help support victims. However, it appears, based on the current findings, that some women who are stalked are still failing to receive the required level of support and service. This was evident in most of the accounts of the stalking experiences. Perhaps the crime of stalking is not acknowledged in the same way as other crimes of violence.

In a review of the criminal harassment law, Gill and Brockman (1996) found major barriers that not only interfered with the objectives of the law as it stands, but also acted to re-victimize survivors. Specifically, they found that a significant number of criminal harassment charges are withdrawn or “stayed” by the courts in relation to others crimes (60%). In cases where the accused was found guilty, sentences were minimal in relation to the offence committed. In terms of resources for survivors, the authors found that victim services were lacking and failed to meet the needs in terms of helping them to participate in the court process. They concluded that stalking survivors were marginalized during the prosecution process, either entirely ignored by the Crown Counsel, or not included in decision-making regarding how offenders should be treated within the legal system.

These findings are consistent with the current research findings. Of the four participants who described some involvement with the legal system, only one woman related feeling that her needs were adequately met. The participant who did not report feeling re-victimized by the system described being supported by an ongoing, one-on-one victim support worker. However, it is important to note that the woman might have received the requisite service and support because she was not only a stalking survivor, but she was also a survivor of domestic violence. Thus, perhaps she received service based on her need as a
battered woman, not a stalking survivor. Nonetheless, this suggests the value in continuous emotional support and information for women who have been stalked.

In an institutional ethnography, Pence (1996) examined how the safety of battered women was compromised through the processes of managing cases. Pence described how the hierarchies located within all levels of the legal system, from police dispatch to probation, act to fragment service and create potentially dangerous gaps in the protection of women. This study is of interest because it focuses attention away from the individual and onto the practices, bureaucracies, and institutions that promote re-victimization. Pence found several key points at which intervention during a domestic assault case could either act to improve the level of a woman’s safety, or jeopardize her risk for further harm. These points included the initial call to police made by the 911 dispatcher all the way to the probation officer revoking the probation order after a breach.

Within these points, Pence documented numerous faulty procedures that led to women’s safety being seriously compromised. She recommends a safety audit process that causes criminal justice professionals to examine their practices regarding cases of domestic violence to address the fragmented services and incident-focused practices to improve safety. Pence’s study offers several important suggestions for improving safety of women that can be generalized to stalking. Moreover, by examining the ways in which procedures and practices such as the piecemeal documentation of stalking evidence and a lack of cohesion among police municipalities, it is argued that the safety of women who have been stalked will be improved.
Stalking and Domestic Violence

To a large extent, stalking and domestic violence appear to be related. Moreover, stalking is a form of violence used within relationships that is based on a power imbalance between the stalker and the survivor. In the present study, stalkers exercised power to avoid legal sanctions against them and to instil fear in the participants' lives. However, it is unique from domestic violence in that stalking can occur outside of the "domestic" arena. It also appears to be less recognized as a form of violence that warrants support services, an adequate legal response, and community and workplace support. The findings in the current study suggest that although several of the women were stalked by former intimate partners, their needs were not met by the existing services and responses designed to help battered women.

Previous literature addressing the relationship between stalking and domestic violence suggests that stalking behaviours are frequently a part of the abusive partner's attempt to regain control of the relationship (Coleman, 1997). Coleman asserts that women who leave abusive relationships are at more risk for being stalked by their former partner. He based his findings on a sample of 141 undergraduate university students who responded to a questionnaire designed to measure the occurrence of stalking behaviours within a relationship.

However, the current study suggests that Coleman's conclusions may be too simplistic to account for all stalking cases. For example, it does not address same sex relationships and the likelihood of stalking incidence within this group of individuals. Additionally, women who are stalked by a stranger, as was the case for three out of the seven
women in this study, are not explained adequately by this explanation. Additionally, his findings do not offer an explanation for women who are stalked for a non-romantic purpose.

Schaum and Parrish (1995) suggest that stalking is linked to domestic violence in so far as it may resemble the cycle of violence cited originally by Walker (cited in Walker & Meloy, 1998). Moreover, for cases of prior intimate stalking, Schaum and Parrish suggest that the stalking-related behaviours may increase in severity and intensity. This was suggested by Walker to occur in cases of domestic violence as well. The authors labelled the three phases of stalking: tension building, explosive, and hearts and flowers phases to connote the cyclical nature. However, the authors are also careful to point out that one of the key features of stalking relates to the unpredictable nature of the event. Thus, not all cases will follow the cyclical path.

In the current study, none of the women described their experience explicitly in these terms. One of the participants, however, did convey the sense that her stalker would “blow up” without provocation and later bring her gifts and inappropriate notes conveying his feelings for her. This may be consistent with the explosive and hearts and flowers phases suggested by the authors. However, the participant who described the stalking in this manner was stalked by an acquaintance at work. This appears to be inconsistent with Shaum and Parrish’s explanation that the proposed cycles follow post intimate stalking. Thus, while it may be a partial description of what is occurring in some stalking cases, it does not relate to all stalking experiences.

For women who experience a power imbalance as a result of being stalked—similar to women who experience woman abuse more generally—it appears that finding ways to take back power in the situation might be advantageous to healing and safety. For example,
one of the participants was encouraged by her counsellor to utilize her own unique style of
coping in order to deal with her fear. The coping style she chose was a strategy of
withdrawal that helped her to refocus her energy and to feel safe and self-nurtured. In so
doing, other women may also feel empowered that they were able to cope with their situation
and avoid being overwhelmed by the constant fear.

Coping versus Trauma

The idea that stalking is a phenomenon related to a traumatic experience appears to be
consistent with the research to date. Several studies have discussed the negative impact of
stalking, leading in some cases to the development of PTSD. However, other researchers
have more broadly discussed events similar to stalking under the rubric of "stress and
coping." Managing the experience of stalking under this microscope might suggest that
survivors of stalking utilize a variety of "tools" at their disposal to manage their negative
feelings, thoughts and responses to a threatening event. This begs the question: "Is it more
useful to view stalking as a traumatic event or as an opportunity to utilize adaptive coping
skills?

Herman (1992) appears to take the former view, comparing various acts of violence
against women to atrocities experienced by combat veterans during war. She suggests that
violence aimed at women should be considered traumatic, and as such, follow the stages of
recovery including a healing relationship, resurrection of safety, remembrance and mourning,
and eventual reconnection to the community. She cites the need for validation in women’s
experiences of violence as a healing strategy and necessary process.

In contrast, Aldwin (1994) discusses the moderating effects of negative events that
can act as a buffer to the impact of an occurrence. Instead of focusing on the trauma, stress
and coping literature focuses on the ways that the event is managed by the individuals and how some individuals are able to inoculate themselves from the stress of the event. The author uses the famous therapist, Victor Frankl, as an example of a person who was able to buffer himself from the psychological and physical torture incurred during the concentration camps of the Second World War. Among other strategies, Frankl used his sense of humour to deal with the human suffering and indignities that he witnessed.

In terms of this research, qualities of both approaches provide merit. For example, several of the participants used a sense of humour to deflect from the negative impact on their lives. Some of the participants conveyed a “futility” relating to the stalking and the legal system’s inability to meet their needs. These participants suggested this as a way of coping that helped them to make sense of their experience and to grasp the part of themselves that remained intact. Others described their use of denial about the event as a way to continue to live their lives without being paralysed with fear.

However, the experience was also described by some of the women as a traumatic event. Some of the symptoms related to PTSD occurred in all of the participants (i.e., nightmares, hyper arousal, intense fear, psychological distress, withdrawal, and irritability) (APA, 1994). Therefore, the present study suggests that although many of the women described effects of the stalking consistent with the trauma based model of treatment, they also possessed the skills and qualities needed to cope with and manage their experiences to the best of their ability.

Interestingly, Arias and Pape found that women who used a greater amount of emotion-focused coping as compared to problem-focused coping were more likely to exhibit higher levels of PTSD symptoms (cited in Arias, 1999). Thus, emotion-focused coping may
increase the risk of developing symptoms related to trauma. They concluded that service providers should encourage women to engage in problem-focused coping strategies more consistently to help ameliorate the effects of abuse and to help women to leave abusive relationships.

Another study that examined women’s ability to cope with negative experiences was conducted by Hurst (1997). She conducted an in-depth investigation into the process of depression for women and found that the core theme of “becoming demoralized” was connected to being abused, being disrespected, and being left. The beliefs that Hurst found to be connected to these themes included the experience of believing that she is not worthy of love, that there is nothing she can do to change things, and nothing is ever going to get better. Depression thus can result from recurrent betrayals beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood.

This theory is compelling for the purposes of the current study because it offers potential clues regarding the experience of depression, patterns of abusive relationships, and a woman’s reluctance to label the stalking event as criminal. Moreover, for women who have experienced ongoing abuse and demoralization from significant others, a sense of futility may develop. Thus, it is important to support women in their effort to cope with their negative experiences and even more important to avoid further re-victimization that could lead to depression.

Limitations

Due to the limited availability of financial resources, it was not be possible to hire an interpreter for the interviews, therefore criteria for inclusion was restricted to English-speaking women. This is a limitation of the study, given that we live in a multicultural
community with a large proportion of non-English speaking residents. Despite this limitation, one of the advantages of research interviews is that they allow participants who cannot read or write to contribute meaningfully to research—an option not available for survey studies or questionnaires. Therefore, even though non-English speakers were excluded from the study, interview methodology does lend itself to other groups that may be otherwise excluded.

Another limitation is related to the selective sample of the study. It is possible that the women who participated in the study represented a sample of particularly serious stalking experiences, and thus do not represent the typical women who is stalked. However, one of the goals of qualitative research is to identify and explore key processes of a particular set of individuals as opposed to generalizing to the larger population. The purpose of this study was to describe key themes representing the experiences of a small sample of women who have been stalked.

It is recognized that the length of time that occurred between the initial stalking experience and the interview varied across participants, and therefore makes the task of identifying the extent to which other variables might be affecting the participant’s description of their experience unlikely. For example, some of the participants discussed feeling a certain amount of distance from the stalking event, while others remain entrenched in fear for their immediate safety. It is impossible to tease out the extent to which this factor would impact their understanding of the experience. However, the purpose of the study was to describe a variety of experiences of stalking and to generate suggestions for improvement to services. Thus the value in this research is located in the rich description and understanding gleaned from the participants’ collective accounts.
Implications for Practice and Research

This study contributes in-depth information related to the nature of some women’s experiences of being stalked. This information is valuable because it suggests that women who are stalked may benefit from support and validation of their experience, information relating to safety planning, and facilitating a survivor’s sense of control, autonomy, personal strength, and resources.

Consistent with some of the propositions offered by the famous therapist, Carl Rogers, the value of listening and accepting the reality of the other person cannot be understated. All of the participants in this study articulated the need and value of others listening to and believing them in their understanding of their experience. Moreover, Rogers explains how this process of being “client-centred” leads us to a greater understanding of the individual, and they of themselves.

Client-centred therapy has led us to try to adopt the client’s perceptual field as the basis for genuine understanding. In trying to enter this internal world of perception...we find ourselves in a new vantage point for understanding personality dynamics...We find that behaviour seems to be better understood as a reaction to this reality-as-perceived. We discover that the way in which the person sees himself, and the perceptions he dares not take as belonging to himself, seem to have an important relationship to the inner peace, which constitutes adjustment. (Rogers, 1947, cited in Raskin & Rogers, 1991, p. 137)

Another implication for practice suggested by the current study is that women survivors may benefit from a more proactive stance from others, including service providers. Specifically, several of the participants identified the actual or anticipated advantage of others providing advocacy on their behalf. For the purposes of this discussion, advocacy can take many forms. A few of the participants described lawyers or private investigators providing advocacy within the legal system as a final check and balance for their rights and
safety. Another participant discussed the idea of “getting loud” as a way of raising awareness regarding the dynamics and rights of women who have been stalked. For counselling practitioners, other participants spoke of helpful counsellors who provided letters to employers explaining their safety needs, advocacy with employee assistance programs to lengthen the period of counselling, and providing specific referrals to supervisors to aid in the prosecution of the crime.

One suggestion offered by a participant who felt unsupported by her counsellor in dealing with the impact of same sex violence was to have advocacy within the criminal justice system. She explained that an advocate could act as a buffer to the potential negative attitude she anticipated from some systems professionals. Thus, it appears that our role as counsellors can be expanded to not only provide the essential qualities of listening and believing our clients, but also to support them in their efforts to manage their safety and healing.

It is important that research participants are not exploited in attempts to gain academic knowledge. Thus, this study attempted to utilize the participant’s individual expertise and offer it to readers in a meaningful and practical way. The themes offered and illustrative quotes are departures from typical psychological constructs, and therefore intended for a wider audience of understanding. It is suggested that presenting these themes and suggestions for improvement to women survivors would be useful to explore some of the meanings that other women survivors have attributed to their experience.

Future research should continue to explore the meaning of women’s experiences with the aim of improving support services and system responses to the crime of stalking. Although research addressing the profile of the stalker may be useful information for the
purposes of prevention, survivors of stalking warrant the same empirical attention.

Specifically, the needs of men who are stalked requires further investigation, as it is not captured in this investigation. Additionally, the issue of same sex violence within relationships appear to add to the invisibility of the experience of being stalked. For example, one of the participants who was stalked by her former same sex partner felt that the nature of her experience added to her layers of victimization that she felt. Thus, this appears to be an area of inquiry in need of further investigation.

In addition, future studies should examine any potential differences between the type of stalking and the relationship to mental illness versus stalking as a way of exerting power and control. For example, are post-intimate stalkers more likely to stalk out of a need to exert power and control within their estranged relationship? Moreover, are stranger stalkers more likely to have a major mental illness that is related to their stalking behaviour? These potential relationships may prove to be important information for society and services, and thus, future research is needed.

More generally, the area of stalking itself requires more empirical investigation, as it appears to be a disturbing means toward asserting power and control within relationships. Consistent with other studies examining the negative impact of stalking (Abrams & Robinson, 1998; Hall, 1997; 1998; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Romans, Hay, & White, 1996), the current study suggests that this is a serious crime that can have a variety of detrimental consequences.

Conclusion

Present knowledge in the area of women who have experienced stalking is limited and does not incorporate the in-depth experiences of women. The purpose of the present
study was to provide practical suggestions related to needed services that would serve to
support women in their experience of stalking and to add to the level of current knowledge
about women who have been stalked. Research findings suggest that six themes were related
to the experience of being stalked for each of the 7 women who were interviewed during the
study. Major themes included: stalking as an ongoing and abnormal event, fearing the
unknown, needing to be supported and validated, searching for safety, sense of responsibility,
and being re-victimized. Several of the themes offered in this study have been addressed in
previous research. However, the unique contribution of this study lies in its utilization of
personal accounts of the women’s experiences, and the informed suggestions for
improvement to services. To date, these aspects of experiences have not been addressed or
documented.
References


APPENDIX B
Interview Questions

**QUESTION #1:** WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF BEING STALKED?

**Leading Question 1:**

⇒ What was the nature of the relationship between you and the person who stalked you?
⇒ What was the duration of the stalking behaviour?

**Probing Question 1b:**

⇒ What were/are your feelings and thoughts regarding your experience?

**QUESTION #2:** WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING STALKED?

**Leading Question 2:**

⇒ What areas of your life were affected by the stalking (when the stalking first began and now)?

**QUESTION #3:** AS A RESULT OF BEING STALKED, WHAT DID YOU DO?

**Leading Question 3:**

⇒ Did you deal with it by yourself, or did you seek out others?

**Probing Question 3a:**

⇒ Who did you contact? [police, other professional support (i.e., Victim Services, etc.), social support (i.e., friend/family, co-worker)]

**Probing Question 3b:**

⇒ Did you find this helpful/effective? If so, how?

**QUESTION #4:** WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED YOU TO DEAL WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE?

**Leading Question 4:**

⇒ Did your needs change over time?

**Probing Question 4:**

⇒ Is the legal system is meeting the needs of women who are stalked? Why/why not?
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study: THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN SURVIVORS OF STALKING:
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Supervisor: Dr. Bonita Long, University of British Columbia, Department of
Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, (604) 822-5259

Co-Investigator: Chantelle Klassen, University of British Columbia,
Department of Educational, Counselling Psychology and Special Education,
(604) 822-5259

Purpose: The aim of this study is to explore the experience of stalking in an
in-depth interview format in order to suggest implication for future services.
Participation in this study will require an estimated 2-3 hours, which includes
an initial telephone contact to verify, interest in the study and to provide
specifics of the meeting time and location. The interview will be audio-taped
and erased at the completion of the study. Participants will be asked to speak
from their personal experience of being stalked.

Expected Outcomes: Benefit of participation includes an opportunity to offer
suggestions on how to improve existing services for women who experience criminal
harassment. Participation includes sharing your story about your experience of being
stalked, which may or may not bring up negative feelings. If you find as a result of
sharing your experience that you have some negative feelings and would like some
additional support, a list of services will be made available to you.
Privacy: Any information resulting from this research study will be kept strictly confidential and no identifying names will accompany the taped transcripts or the final report. A separate record of participant’s names and phone numbers along with transcripts of the discussion groups will be kept in a locked file cabinet with access restricted to the researcher.

Contacts:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please call the co-investigator of the study, Chantelle Klassen at 822-5259. If you leave your name and telephone number, I will return your call as soon as possible.
- Alternatively, you may wish to reach the principal investigator of the study, Dr. Bonita Long at 822-5259.
- If you have any questions concerning your rights or treatment specific to participation in this research, you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration at 822-8598.

Consent:

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to my access to further services.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

I consent to participate in the study.

X

Participant Signature
Date

X

Signature of Witness
Date
APPENDIX D

STALKING RESOURCE LIST

GENERAL INFORMATION
- Vancouver Victim Services (general)..........................1-800-563-0808
- Police Victim Services............................................717-2737
- Crown Counsel Victim Services.................................660-5052
- Women's Resource Centre........................................482-8585
- Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre............................681-8480
- BC Institute on Family Violence................................669-7055

FAMILY/RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE SERVICES
- Battered Women Support Services (BWSS)......................687-1867
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver:
  Children Affected by Violence Program..........................874-2938
  Family Services of Greater Vancouver:
  Family Violence Intervention Project..........................731-4951
- BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses.........................669-6943

MULTICULTURAL SERVICES
- MOSAIC (all languages)...........................................254-9626
- South Asian Information and Crisis............................596-4357
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society.............251-4844

SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES
- Vancouver Incest and Sexual Abuse Centre (VISAC)...........874-2938
- Rape Relief...........................................................872-8212
- Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW)............255-6344
APPENDIX E

Steps in Analysis of Data

1. Audiotape transcripts
   - transcribe immediately following interview
   - include pauses, ums, laughter, and emphasized words in standard fashion
   - use template to record data and format in standard fashion

2. Interviewer completes memo regarding impressions and questions generated from the interview

3. Interviewer open codes transcript
   - the initial open coding is done fairly quickly to help avoid bias
   - identify basic ideas within the interview, using short phrases, in vivo codes, or single words and write them in the right hand side of the page
   - line by line analysis, then sentence/paragraph open code
   - highlight cogent quotes (indicate a quote on right hand side of page)
   - make a list of the open codes in a separate file called themes
   - create memo re: impressions, ideas, and questions
   - all files are dated with the participant's name and date of the interview

4. Interviewer reviews open codes and entire interviews for ideas for future interviews

5. Interviewer summarizes the interview in 1-2 pages as vignettes

6. Interviewer completes a biographical sketch of each participant

7. Interviewer diagrams ideas/potential relationships among ideas

8. Interviewer engages in ongoing discussion with others familiar with research as well as individuals who are not versed in research so as to add meaning to resulting concepts

9. Interviewer proceeds with several validation interviews to ground the open codes

10. Interviewer proceeds to writing phase of results section to begin the creative writing process

11. Interviewer develops properties and dimensions of existing codes

12. Interviewer completes remaining validation interviews and writing of results section, continuing to dialogue with others, memo ideas, and diagram concepts.