

Chapter 7 Stalking, the media and raising public awareness

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Introduction

This research feeds into a wider context of mounting concern about violence against women and girls. Karen Ingala Smith is identifying and cataloguing the murder of women, by men, in her *Counting Dead Women* blog, and together with Clarissa O'Callaghan has founded the Femicide Census¹, which reveals a woman in the UK is more likely to be killed by a partner or former partner than any other man, and the number of women known to have been killed by men over the last ten years from 2009 to 2018, reached 1,425 (Long et al. 2020). The *We Can't Consent to This* campaign has successfully challenged the use of the 'rough sex' defence in abuse and homicide trials. The murder of Sarah Everard has led to increased media coverage of public concern for women's safety on UK streets, exemplified by the 'Reclaim these Streets' website and the vigil on Clapham Common that saw controversial arrests of women for breaching Covid-19 restrictions. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 lockdowns have prompted media discussion of domestic abuse and femicide. This is a global issue, with Mexico's nationwide protests against femicide following the brutal murder of Ingrid Escamilla and Fátima Cecilia Aldrighett, France's 'NousToutes' (All of Us) protest against rising femicide rates, the 'Not One Less' protest in Argentina, as well as the mass scream against domestic violence and gender inequality in Switzerland, as 'men's violence against women is a leading cause of the premature death for women globally,' (Femicide Census 2020).

This chapter focuses on one particular type of crime that poses a significant threat in the UK and beyond – stalking. In the UK, one in five women, and one in ten men will be stalked in their lifetime and there were an estimated 1,472,000 victims of stalking in England and Wales in 2018/19 (ONS 2019, see also Bracewell et al 2020). Whilst in recent years, stalking has received significant attention from the criminal justice system, support services, charities, researchers, and trainers, who aim to educate others on the catastrophic impact of stalking, it is still a crime that is not identified, is under-reported and misunderstood. Sheridan's (2005) research tells us that 75 percent of people suffer 100 incidents of stalking before reporting to the police. The term 'stalking' is often minimised; phrases like, 'I stalked them on social media,' are common in modern life. 'Romantic' narratives of stalking are plentiful in popular culture and most recently stalking has been used as a humorous gesture on Valentine's day cards (for instance cards are available that depict the character of Joe from the Netflix series *You* – who is shown to stalk, kidnap and murder – accompanying the image of Joe is a strapline 'Stalker is a strong word, I prefer Valentine' and 'From your stalker').

Stalking is also often associated with celebrity. As Lowney and Best (1995) assert, stalking became much more visible in media of the late 1980s when it was framed as a news story of obsessed fans who engage in 'star-stalking'. Such links to celebrity can lead people to believe that stars are the main target of stalkers, or that it is a crime that is very rare and largely involves strangers lurking behind bushes. However, stalking is a crime that can affect anyone. As Mullen, Pathé and Purcell's (2009) research outlines, motivations for stalking vary greatly and can be broadly organised into five types. Some stalkers are motivated by a fantasised or 'delusional' love for someone that they do not currently have a relationship with, in the belief, or hope that they will achieve one (*Intimacy Seeker* in Mullen et al. 2009). Others are motivated by a desire to get a date with someone or a short-term sexual relationship, but lack the necessary social training, as a result they may pursue someone in a crude, 'inept or unreasonably persistent manner' (the *Incompetent Suitor*). In some instances, stalking

¹ Definitions of femicide vary. The narrowest definition refers to women killed by their current or former partner, a slightly wider definition extends to women killed by male family members, but as Karen Ingala Smith (2020) notes, the Femicide Census looks at a wider definition - women who are killed by men (Femicide Census Webinar for the release of the report, UK Femicides 2009 – 2018. *If I'm not in on Friday I might be dead*).

is motivated by a sense of ‘injustice and/or humiliation,’ which is a driver for perpetrators’ attempt to achieve retribution and regain a sense of control (the *Resentful* stalker). In some cases, stalking is motivated by a ‘sadistic sexuality’ that is for sexual gratification or preparatory to an assault (the *Predatory* stalker). However, the most common motivation for stalking behaviour, which makes up around half of all stalking cases, and usually the most violent, high risk cases, are perpetrated by ex-partners and those who have previously had some form of intimate relationship with the person they are stalking (the *Rejected* stalker). Whilst overall, stalkers can be any gender, nearly 90 percent of perpetrators in the rejected stalker category are men, who predominantly stalk women (Mullen, Pathé and Purcell 2009, p.70).

The impacts of stalking cannot be underestimated. Those who are subjected to stalking are often told to ignore the unwanted attention, or even, to feel flattered by it. However, in reality, during my ISAC training (Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker) and my work supporting victims-survivors, I have observed that stalking takes a great deal from people; it has been described as ‘emotional rape’ and ‘psychological terrorism’ (Suzy Lamplugh Trust 2020). Stalking is a complex, insidious crime, where the absence of violence does not necessarily reduce risk to those who are targeted. It can cause extreme alarm and distress and force people to significantly change aspects of their life. These impacts can isolate people from their support networks and social life. Those experiencing stalking may delete social media sites, avoid certain routes to work, not use their garden, or even become house-bound. It can cause significant emotional and psychological harm and result in mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, as well as impacting physical health in the form of sleep deprivation, weight fluctuations and dizziness, among other symptoms. Stalking has financial implications. People may be forced to invest in expensive security equipment, they may lose their jobs. If a stalker is a previous or current partner, a person may be prevented from accessing their finances, they may be subject to violence and coercive controlling behaviours and this can have devastating effects on children within the relationship and can also lead to people being revictimised through the courts. In high-risk, extreme cases, stalking can result in murder and suicide.

Whilst stalking affects all age groups, and it is a misconception that domestic violence and stalking do not impact on older age groups, young people are at a high-risk of being stalked². During their ‘Unfollow Me’ campaign, *Vice* in collaboration with Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service and the Alice Ruggles Trust, carried out a survey of 12,000 young people aged 13-24, which found that 35 percent of this group had personally been subjected to stalking, whilst 56 percent knew someone who had been a victim (*Vice*, 2018). Fissel, Reyns and Fisher also found that ‘Stalking victimization prevalence rates for college student samples appear to be much larger when compared to those from the nationally representative adult samples.’ (2020, p.21). However, as this chapter will outline through a consideration of Alice Ruggles, recognition and identification of stalking and coercive control is not widespread amongst those of college and university age groups. Like many young people, Alice did not fully comprehend the extent of the danger she was in; she did not realise that her relationship was one of coercive control and the high risks that stalkers pose. This is reflected more widely in NUS (National Union of Students) research, ‘Hidden Marks: A study of women students of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault’ (2010). The NUS commissioned the research within universities as they perceived that students were at a higher risk of experiencing stalking and sexual violence, but that there was ‘little awareness of this amongst students.’

This report is a wake-up call. We must act now to break the silence: violence against women students is widespread, serious, and is hampering women’s ability to learn. This report is just the start of the work that the NUS Women’s Campaign will be undertaking to tackle violence against women students. But we can’t end the violence alone. Institutions, students’ unions and students have a pressing responsibility to take immediate action to tackle the problem. (Olivia Bailey, NUS National Women’s Officer 2010)

² Further research into age and stalking cases is crucial to ascertain the specific risks posed to people at certain times of their lives. This is particularly concerned with young people, but there needs to be further understanding of how stalking affects people at other life stages including the lifelong effects on the children of ex-partner stalking cases, as well as people from older age groups and vulnerable categories.

Over a decade later, the recent Statement of Expectations released by the Office for Students continues to call for the implementation of more ‘effective systems, policies and processes to prevent and respond to incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct,’ (OfS, 2021) demonstrating the urgent need to address safety and young people. Given the myths and misunderstandings of stalking and the prevalence of this crime amongst all age groups, but particularly the younger generation, it is the central aim of this chapter to outline the need for increased societal awareness of stalking and more specifically the requirement for education to tackle this public health issue. This education should come in many forms, including formal education in schools, colleges and universities, but also placing an emphasis on the role of the media to shed light on this important topic, so that they might help the public to recognise stalking behaviour and guide them to much-needed support. This chapter draws on case study analysis of Alice Ruggles, in order to underline key features of stalking behaviour that need to be more easily identified by bystanders, as we never know when our advice may be needed. Whilst factors of the criminal investigation and legislation of stalking will be considered, the focus here is on how Alice’s case can be used to raise *public* awareness of stalking, especially amongst young people, so that fixated and obsessive behaviour can be identified. The author would encourage further reading of Alice’s *Domestic Homicide Review* (2018) for details of the police response to Alice’s case, and how it highlighted an urgency for criminal justice adjustments and reform.

Before addressing Alice’s case, it is important to reflect on how this research has been carried out and the methodology employed. The research for this chapter has developed out of my own experience as an Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC) and a Trustee for the Alice Ruggles Trust. Alongside this practice-based experience, this chapter is also based upon a media analysis of key written and audio-visual documents, such as ITV documentary *An Hour to Catch a Killer*, Channel 5 documentary *Murdered by My Stalker*, *Real Crime Profile* podcast episode ‘My Daughter Alice’, and the *Vice* *Broadly* campaign ‘Unfollow Me,’ as well as document analysis of Alice’s *Domestic Homicide Review*³ (DHR 2018), government reviews and legislation. It is important to point out that this chapter focuses on *one* particular type of stalker, the ex-partner or rejected stalker, whose motivation comes from a need for ‘reconciliation or revenge for rejection’ (Mullen et al. 2009). This chapter’s focus on ex-partner stalkers who have been in an intimate relationship with the victim-survivor, is due to the relative commonality of this type of stalker, and the high risk that they pose, but ex-partner stalkers have also been selected because this type of stalker is not necessarily what the public, and to some extent, the police, perceive stalkers to be like, when compared to stalking cases that involve strangers (see Weller et al. research on public perceptions of stalking 2012). It is now crucial to begin this chapter with a rounded understanding of Alice Ruggles, readers are encouraged to read Figure 7.3 ‘Alice’s Story,’ that shares details of Alice’s life.

Alice Ruggles

Alice Ruggles was kind, clever and beautiful. She had an infectious personality and an incredible sense of humour: she saw the fun side of everything. She loved life, loved her friends and loved her job. She had so much to live for. Tragically, Alice was murdered in Gateshead on 12 October 2016, aged just 24. (Alice Ruggles Trust 2021)

Summary of Key Events

Alice was originally from Leicestershire, but moved to Newcastle for university and remained living there after she graduated. Alice knew Trimaan Dhillon for just one year. They were introduced online

³ Domestic Homicide Reviews are a multi-agency review that were introduced in England and Wales in 2011, they are a statutory requirement to review the circumstances of deaths to support homicide prevention (Home Office Paper 2011, p.2). With a report of over 100-pages, 32 key findings, and 20 recommendations Alice’s *Domestic Homicide Review* presents valuable learnings concerning managing risk and homicide prevention.

by a mutual friend whilst Dhillon served as a soldier in Afghanistan; he returned to the UK in January 2016 where they met in-person for the first time. Dhillon then flew back to Afghanistan for a further two months. Their face to face relationship, which lasted for less than eighteen weeks, started well, but Dhillon increasingly sought to control Alice. She fell out with friends, lost weight and became withdrawn and isolated. In August 2016, Alice received a message from a woman who Dhillon had contacted on social media. This, and discovering Dhillon had told her other lies, spurred Alice to end their relationship. Dhillon then went on to stalk Alice, and despite Alice reporting him to the police and being served a Police Information Notice (PIN), Dhillon continued to bombard Alice with messages, phone calls, and letters. He tracked Alice both digitally and physically. On the 12th October, a colleague gave Alice a lift home from work. At this time, Dhillon parked his car down the road from Alice's flat. As he waited in his car, he sent texts to another woman arranging to meet up with her. Fourteen minutes after Alice arrived home, Dhillon broke into her ground floor flat, and brutally murdered her. A short time later, Alice's flatmate returned to the property, but could not gain entry through the front door. Feeling something was terribly wrong, she climbed through the window at the rear of the property and found Alice in the bathroom. She called the emergency services; as she did so, she screamed Dhillon's name. Dhillon was arrested shortly afterwards and was found guilty of Alice's murder. He is now serving a life sentence with a minimum tariff of twenty-two-years for the murder of Alice. Alice's parents, Sue and Clive, her sister Emma, and brothers Nick and Patrick, set up the Alice Ruggles Trust with the mission to help prevent what happened to Alice happening to others.

Alice's case was well-known and attracted widespread media attention. The case became high profile for a number of reasons, not least because it embodied a number of news values that are prominent in the construction and selection of news stories. Jewkes explains that editors and journalists sift and select news stories based on their 'news values' and ability to garner public interest (2015, p.49). Alice's young age, beauty, warm personality, loving family and friends, good job, in contrast to the shock and devastation enacted by Dhillon, is in line with the news value of 'violence and conflict' that was extremely pronounced in this case. Wider news values such as 'risk' and 'individualisation' were also present in the initial reporting of this case. Another reason for the case's widespread coverage is the visual 'imagery' (Jewkes 2015, p.49) available to news outlets. The media had unprecedented access to Alice's case. Documentary filmmakers were already filming *An Hour to Catch a Killer* in Forth Banks Police Station, Newcastle Upon Tyne, when Alice's murder took place. When the 999 call was made by Alice's flatmate, the crew began filming Detective Chief Inspector Lisa Theaker and her team from Northumbria Police force. They followed their movements and for the first time, detectives wore high definition bodycams, providing unique insights into the investigation, including footage of police and forensic officers as they entered Alice's flat, and later as they arrested, questioned and charged Dhillon with her murder.

Whilst Alice's case included news values that were initially responsible for the story being selected and represented widely within the news cycle, the presence of other important elements has maintained its longevity and relevance as a key case study, used in stalking training and conferences to raise awareness of stalking. This chapter now turns to consider the first of these important features – the prevalence of coercive control within stalking and the need to understand links with domestic abuse and dating violence.

Coercive Control

Coercive control was made an offence under Section 76 of the *Serious Crime Act 2015*. Whilst not all ex-partner stalking cases involved coercive control and intimate partner violence during the actual relationship, these are often key features in this type of stalking case. After relationship separation, the

offender, now devoid of their partner to enact these behaviours on, may turn to stalking⁴. In this way, stalkers replace the time they would have spent with their partner on stalking activities: planning, surveying, tracking, so they exchange one form of control for another. This can be more time intensive than a full-time job. Both coercive control and stalking are pattern-based, as opposed to incident based, offences (Scott, Rajakaruna, Handscomb and Waterworth 2020) and are often undetected by family, friends, law enforcement, and even the person who is being subjected to these behaviours. The independent behaviours may not appear threatening in isolation, but when examined as part of a pattern carry a very high risk and are tantamount to what Evan Stark (2007) has called a hostage situation. In his seminal work, *Coercive Control. How Men Dominate Women in Personal Life*, Stark states that whilst coercive control may be interweaved with physical assault which, in the worst cases, can lead to fatality, ‘the primary harm abusive men inflict is political, not physical, and reflects the deprivation of rights and resources that are critical to personhood and citizenship’ (2007, p.5). Stark underlines that control is the aim of the offender, and is achieved over time through micoregulation of everyday routine roles, such as withholding access to money, food, transport and communication (2007, p.5).

In her book *See What You Made Me Do: Power Control and Domestic Abuse* (2020) Jess Hill highlights links between the pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in domestic abuse and Prisoners of War camps in 1950s North Korea. Both situations include a perpetrator that lives alongside their captive for a significant amount of time, who gradually isolates them from others and becomes the most important person in their life. It is this gradual take-over that causes the captive person to experience a shift in attitudes and beliefs. Albert Biderman (1955) studied the use of coercive control techniques employed in North Korean POW camps where American soldiers had defected, cooperated with the enemy and given false confessions. After interviewing POWs on their return, Biderman found that contrary to press claims that Chinese communists in charge of the camps had developed a new weapon of ‘brainwashing’ and possessed mind controlling abilities that could implant soldiers brains with new memories; what had actually occurred was the age-old technique of coercive control – instilling dependency, debility and dread (Hill 2020, p.15). In this way, the captors gain control of their captive so they become compliant, dependent and begin to share their world view⁵. But as psychiatrist and trauma specialist Judith Herman explains, control is not gained immediately, instead victims-survivors are ‘taken prisoner gradually, by courtship’ (Herman 2001, p.82). Jane Monckton Smith (2021, 2019) asserts in her *Homicide Timeline*, in the early instances of the relationship there is a period of courtship during which perpetrators draw their partner in, seeking ‘early and firm commitment.’ Jealousy may also be demonstrated during this phase, but positioned as a normal aspect of love. (2019, p.14). This equates to an expedited sense of love and devotion, a ‘grand passion’ (Fisher 2004 in Monckton Smith 2019, p.13) or what Laura Richards terms, when discussing the relationship between Alice and Dhillon, ‘love bombing’ (Real Crime Profile 2018).

Initially, Alice and Dhillon’s relationship echoed this early phase and was not immediately characterised by abuse. This is not to say that these psychological aspects were not present at this early stage, but they were carried out in a more covert fashion. Alice’s brother Nick notes, that initially when Dhillon first met Alice there weren’t clear signs, but ‘he was trying very hard’ (*Vice Broadly* ‘Unfollow Me’). He gave Alice gifts and paid her lots of compliments. Dhillon demonstrated intensity, and a need for early commitment from Alice from the outset. Dhillon met Alice after he saw some photographs of her on holiday in Sri Lanka on a mutual friend’s social media site. Dhillon messaged the friend, telling her that ‘your friend is one of the most naturally beautiful girls I’ve ever seen and could she help him contact Alice’ (DHR 2018, p.30). Their online relationship developed, and before long he urged Alice to make their relationship more official and to call him her boyfriend. This intensity also impacted on the amount of contact Dhillon wanted to have with Alice. For the first three months of their relationship, their communication was entirely through phone calls, messages and

⁴ However, this isn’t to suggest that for many, these behaviours do not also occur within the relationship, for instance tracking practices may occur at any time, not just after separation, and coercive control certainly continues after a relationship ends.

⁵ Biderman’s chart consists of eight techniques – isolation, monopolisation of perception, induced debility or exhaustion, cultivation of anxiety and despair, alternation of punishment or reward, demonstration of omnipotence, degradation, and the enforcement of trivial demands.

sending gift parcels. Alice didn't actually meet Dhillon until he returned from his posting in Afghanistan in January 2016. In spite of being separated physically, work friends commented on the amount of contact Alice had with Dhillon. Whilst they appeared to be getting on well at this stage, friends noticed that Alice often spent lunchbreaks calling or texting him and Alice texted her sister Emma saying: 'he speaks [to me] every day [...] and he gets really upset if we can't speak, it's so nice' (DHR 2018, p.30).

As the relationship progressed, Dhillon's behaviour became increasingly domineering. The pattern of controlling behaviour was subtle and typically clandestine, Stark refers to these behaviours as 'technologies' including isolation, intimidation and control (2007, p.228). Over the course of their relationship Dhillon began to isolate Alice from friends and family. She fell out with her housemates and moved to a ground floor flat in Gateshead with her friend and work colleague. Alice's friend articulated Dhillon's isolation of Alice during the documentary *Murdered by My Stalker* (2018). She stated that:

He wanted to spend all of his time, and her time, in the flat. He wouldn't go out drinking or socialising because he wouldn't want her to be in the pub late, dressed up and having people look at her, and perhaps find her attractive.

Dhillon sought a constant presence in all aspects of Alice's life, to the point where he would arrive uninvited at events, despite the significant geographical distance between them (of approximately 130 miles). Dhillon would confront Alice about items on her social media newsfeed, about where she had been and who she was socialising with. For instance, Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review* contains details of when Alice stayed with her parents for the Christmas period, which also included Alice's birthday on Christmas Eve. Alice still had not met Dhillon face-to-face at this stage. On Alice's birthday, Dhillon was annoyed with Alice for being involved in an event that he didn't want her to attend. In response, he sent her a message about another woman, which upset Alice (DHR 2018, p. 31). Later in their relationship, when Dhillon returned to the UK, Alice attended a work meeting in Edinburgh, which included a night's stay in a hotel. Alice went out for a meal and drinks with work friends, and colleagues noticed that she was distracted by messages on her phone and 'looked anxious and worried'. One of Alice's colleagues actually took her phone and suggested she contact him in the morning instead, but later that night, Dhillon appeared at the work event and an argument ensued. When they came down for breakfast, colleagues recalled that Alice looked upset, as if 'they'd been arguing all night' (DHR 2018, p.32).

The *Vice Broadly* video that was produced as part of the 'Unfollow Me' campaign includes interviews with Alice's parents and brother Nick, which further expand on the extent of controlling behaviour. During the five-minute short film, her father Clive describes how Alice lost friends, her self-confidence diminished, and she was physically losing weight. Her mother Sue underlines how 'he used all sorts of things to persuade her, she didn't have enough money, she shouldn't go out.' By employing controlling behaviour, Dhillon undermined Alice's confidence. This slowly dissolved her self-worth and morphed her perspective on how she viewed herself and others. From the information available in Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review*, it is evident that by carrying out small actions that feed into a wider pattern of micromanagement of everyday routines, from selecting clothes, to comments about her appearance, Dhillon attempted to control Alice and this was carried out with such subtlety, that for some time, as is usually the case with coercive control, Alice herself was not even fully aware of her control deficit within the relationship.

As time passed, the situation became even worse for Alice. As the Alice Ruggles Trust documents, 'the cumulative effect of Dhillon's behaviour on Alice was very marked indeed. In a few months, from the happy, outgoing, vibrant person she had been, she had become miserable and lonely. Her work was adversely affected' (Alice Ruggles Trust Website 2020). One particular event that took place a few weeks later, revealed Dhillon to be, in Alice's words, 'possessive, mind-controlling and manipulative.' It was a moment that Alice, herself, felt that he had 'gone too far' (DHR 2018, p.36).

Alice recounted the circumstances to her flatmate, describing how she had been in the shower, when Dhillon wanted to get in to use the bathroom. He banged relentlessly on the door and once he gained entry, he demanded that she must stand in the kitchen, sopping wet, until he had finished in the bathroom. Alice also discovered that Dhillon had been in contact with other women (the full extent of his unfaithful behaviour emerged later). Having lost trust in Dhillon, Alice ended the relationship. Unfortunately, in keeping with the rejected stalker type, Dhillon would not let Alice leave. The more concrete the separation, the more Dhillon lost control over Alice. He therefore began to adopt other measures to maintain his sense of power and dominance; a campaign of stalking and veiled threats. A text message that he wrote to Alice demonstrates his sense of ownership: 'I'm not used to losing something that belongs to me' (DHR 2018, p.40).

Stalking Methods and Risk

Whilst there is no recognised legal definition of stalking⁶, the College of Policing have released a useful mnemonic to outline stalking behaviour. If the behaviour is Fixated, Obsessed, Unwanted and Repeated (FOUR) it should be identified as stalking. Whilst this does function as a useful tool for focusing on behaviours, it is important to keep in mind that the mnemonic does not underline the aspects of fear and distress that are caused by stalking. Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service defines stalking as, '[a] pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive and causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress' (Paladin Website 2020). The methods of stalking are extremely varied and this is reflected in the 'behaviours' outlined in the stalking legislation, the *Protection of Freedoms Act 2012*, which was an amendment to the *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*. For instance, one act of stalking outlined in the legislation concerns 'contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means' (CPS 2018). This can be by constant insertion into someone's life, by turning up at work, home, family or friends' homes, or a place of study. It might be writing on a person's social media, incessantly messaging or calling them. Or it might be more manipulative, subtle gestures of driving past their house at the same time every day, leaving notes and gifts. The legislation includes, 'following a person,' or surveillance, this can be 'spying' or 'loitering' in their space, tracking their car. It can be using apps to survey their whereabouts online, downloading data and monitoring phones. There are methods that are designed to appear innocuous to everyone apart from the person that is being stalked. These can be mental mind games and gas lighting behaviours, which don't appear to be threatening until viewed as a pattern of behaviour. For instance, 'interfering with any property in the possession of a person' (CPS 2018) is often reported in stalking cases, and can involve acts like moving around garden furniture, or removing/inserting items within their home. Actions can be chilling, designed to cause terror and trauma. Justene Reece was stalked by her ex-partner Nicholas Allen, in Staffordshire. Justene tragically took her life in February 2017 as a result of Allen's stalking. Nicholas Allen relentlessly stalked Justene and other people within her life⁷; he threatened her son, committed violent acts, made fake claims about sexual offences of a family member, and posted offensive pictures of her mother's grave on social media. Allen was brought to trial on a charge of 'unlawful killing' and was sentenced to ten years for manslaughter. On sentencing the judge stated that Justene took her life 'as a direct result of your sustained and determined criminal actions – actions which you clearly knew were having a profound effect upon her' (Chambers in Tapley and Jackson 2019, p.94).

Justene's ex-partner was a serial offender who had a history of abusive behaviour dating back to 1998. A report carried out by The Independent Office for Police Conduct found that there were 34 occasions where police received reports of incidents, either reported directly by Justene, or by her friends and family, 16 of these were not cross-referenced and the police investigation failed to see the wider pattern of abuse. Detective Chief Constable Nick Baker of Staffordshire Police acknowledged

⁶ Whilst a definition may be useful to raise awareness, there are benefits to this lack of definition, as if imposed, perpetrators may engage in behaviours at the fringes of the legislative definition and this may quickly result in a narrow, outdated understanding of stalking, which does not fully reflect the spectrum of behaviours.

⁷ Sheridan's research from 2005 found that on average 21 people in the victims life will be impacted.

that ‘we did not understand the impact that Nicolas Allen was having on Justene, we did not listen to her as a victim’ (Channel 4 News 2019). The report found that further training was needed for Staffordshire police ‘to improve the linking of incidents and crimes’ (ICPO website). Given Allen’s abusive relationship history (which was on record after Justene had applied for a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) it is crucial for police and wider services to have a joined up approach that cross references evidence so that serial offenders do not continue to go unnoticed. Missing these signposts and deeming violence as ‘one-off incidents’ can result in fatalities. Clare’s Law, named after Clare Woods who was murdered in 2009 by her ex-partner who had a history of violence against women is an important development that recognises the risks of a previously abusive relationship history. Under Clare’s Law, partners, close friends or relatives can apply for a Domestic Violence Disclosures Scheme (DVDS), which can reveal information about their partners previous offences and convictions. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, campaigners have called for a more centralised, statutory tracking system for serial offenders.

The *Real Crime Profile* podcast is very effective in using its platform to raise awareness of issues related to stalking, domestic abuse and homicide. The episode, ‘Profiling Serial and Serious Domestic Violence Perpetrators and Stalkers,’ (2020) documents the campaign for the Domestic Abuse Bill, and particularly the New Clause for ‘serial and serious domestic violence perpetrators and stalkers’ to be tracked in order to prevent further abuse. During the episode, Laura Richards presents case studies of women who have been murdered by their ex-partner who have a history of abuse. Laura discusses the case of Hollie Gazzard, who was stalked and murdered by Asher Maslin who had been involved in 24 previous violent offences. Kerri McAuley was stalked and murdered by Joe Storey who had convictions for abuse dating back to when he was 14, including two restraining orders. Theodore Johnson murdered Yvonne Johnson in 1981 in her Wolverhampton home, he was sentenced for manslaughter for the ‘provocated’ murder. He then went on to murder Yvonne Bennett in 1993, and Angela Best in 2016. This episode joins others from the *Real Crime Profile* podcast to raise awareness of these crimes. The discussion provides important insights into the victim’s perspective, and also educates the public on the need for change within the criminal justice system. At the time of writing this chapter, the Domestic Abuse Bill has received Royal Assent, but the serial abusers and stalkers amendment (amendment 42) was defeated. Whilst this amendment has not been included in the new legislation, Laura Richard in her podcast *Crime Analyst*, highlights important changes that will take place as a result of the campaign. These include a comprehensive perpetrators strategy, new Multi-Agency Public Protection System (MAPPS database), new statutory guidance on expanding Category 3, domestic abuse and stalking services to be included at Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), and £25 million invested in government funds (Richards, Crime Analyst, 2021).

Returning to Jane Monckton Smith’s (2021, 2019) research on the eight stages of the *Homicide Timeline* is useful as this also highlights the need to understand an offender’s relationship history. During stage one, ‘pre-relationship’, Monckton Smith outlines that a previous relationship history is a risk indicator for intimate partner homicide. ‘It was found that a history of controlling patterns, domestic abuse, or stalking was present in every case where a pre-relationship history was recorded’ (Monckton Smith 2019, p. 1274). The history of the pattern of behaviour varied from serial convictions to informal reports and allegations from former partners. Therefore, prominent research within this field is signalling the need to view risk as a pattern of behaviour, and an important part of this pattern is tracking the abuser as he enters new relationships to identify the trajectory of risk. This fundamental need to adopt a broader perspective of stalking, to see the pattern of behaviour, is also echoed in training sessions delivered by Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service, particularly when using risk assessments such as the DASH Risk Checklist⁸. Alongside previous relationship history, there are a number of risk factors that need to be closely assessed; these indicators include previous use of weapons, suicidal ideation, a sense of entitlement, excessive jealousy, previous incidence of strangulation, sexual abuse, abuse of children, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, amongst others. However,

⁸ DASH Risk Checklist stands for Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model (DASH 2009)

when considering risk within stalking cases, Paladin underline that it is vital to keep in mind that the DASH, or comparable risk assessments, should not be viewed as tick box exercises. Risk is dynamic. As new behaviours occur, risk levels will shift, which is why it is crucial to repeat risk assessments. Police officers, advocates and wider services must examine the pattern, or what Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review* refer to as 'the clusters of behaviour' involved. Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review* highlights key risk behaviour clusters in stalking cases, which include i) a history of stalking behaviour, ii) the presence of stalking, control or abuse, iii) separation and iv) escalation.

History of Stalking

Dhillon had committed an offence against a woman prior to meeting Alice. In 2014, Dhillon appeared before Kent Magistrates Court and was given a restraining order relating to his behaviour towards his ex-partner. Dhillon's ex-girlfriend had arranged to meet her new partner in a busy high-street. On her way to the meeting, Dhillon appeared, and began to behave in an aggressive manner, blocking her path. As the argument ensued, her new partner arrived. The argument escalated and Dhillon's body language became increasingly hostile towards the couple. When his ex-girlfriend asked if he was going to hit her, he moved towards her, spat in her face, and ran off.

The importance of underlining the history of stalking is identified by Clive Ruggles during his discussion with Laura Richards on *Real Crime Profile*. Clive points out that further knowledge of Dhillon's history of behaviour would have impacted on the police investigation, and would also have changed Alice's perspective on what was happening to her. In the conversation, Laura Richards asserts that 'police should have searched their indices to see the history of the perpetrator.' Clive then articulates the need for a more robust approach that tracks perpetrators backgrounds; 'we have to have joined up databases [...] if it is part of a stalking campaign, you don't concentrate on the one offence, you have to concentrate on the bigger picture,' (Clive Ruggles *Real Crime Profile* 2018).

Stalking, Control or Abuse

This chapter has already highlighted the controlling behaviours that Alice was subjected to. Alice consequently ended the relationship in August, 2016. At first, Alice tried to keep the break-up as amicable as possible, but after a number of attempts to try and get her to come back to him, Alice began to ignore Dhillon's messages. Dhillon then approached other people within Alice's life. For instance, he sent messages to her mother, and other friends, asking them to convince Alice to go back to him. Dhillon invested a great deal of time and effort into planning, tracking and victimising Alice, revealing his fixation and obsession. He turned up at Alice's home (despite the significant distance), constantly texted her and left voicemails. He delivered unwanted gifts and he also sent her photographs.

Dhillon used technology-enabled stalking which had extensive impacts on Alice's life and drove her further into isolation. He gained access to Alice's social media, and Alice suspected that he could read her messages and was tracking her phone, which made communicating with family and friends incredibly difficult. On the 15th August, Alice found that she had been locked out of her Facebook account. Dhillon later admitted that he had accessed the account to stop Alice from using Tinder, to prevent her from meeting a new partner. In early September, Alice went on a short break to Germany to visit her sister Emma, who had been posted there as part of her job in the army. Whilst she was there, Alice started a new relationship. Immediately, Dhillon contacted her new partner and began to mislead him about Alice's character, he even suggested (erroneously) that Alice was cheating on him.

Dhillon also told Alice that he possessed private images of her that she would not want other people to see. Although Alice did not know what these images were, Alice was frightened that Dhillon would post these images on social media, resulting in her severe torment and fear of humiliation. This technology-enabled victimisation caused Alice significant distress. The psychological and social impact of digital stalking needs to be foregrounded in ex-partner stalking cases. One of the key findings in Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review* outlines, 'Digital stalking is often a significant factor in abusive relationships and needs to be robustly reflected within future risk assessments' (DHR 2018, p.88). The

importance of considering the harms of stalking across both digital and physical contexts, and not seeing them as two separate forms of stalking, is also underlined by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust in their 'Unmasking Stalking. A Changing Landscape Report' (2021) that documents a 49% increase in online behaviours for those whose experience of stalking started before lockdown. Similarly, this is also highlighted by Fissel, Reyns, and Fisher's research (2020) who propose that 'stalking by the use of electronic technology should be included as one of the tactics or behaviours used to operationalise stalking' (2020, p.31).

Separation

Separation is considered to be the single biggest risk indicator for homicide (Brennan 2016 in DHR 2018 p.67). As Weller et al. (2013) point out, a number of researchers have underlined the risk involved with rejected stalkers and the increased likelihood that ex-partners may result in violence after separation (Björklund et al. 2010; Farnham, James, and Cantrell 2000; James and Farnham 2003; Meloy 2002; Meloy and Gothard 1995; Mullen et al. 2000; Rosenfeld 2004, 2013, p.321). But they also point out, drawing on Sheridan and Roberts (2011) that if the prior relationship has included physical or psychological abuse, and contained excessively controlling behaviour, this carries an even higher risk, and is a key predictor of physical assault. Separation in Alice's case, functioned as a trigger point. A sense of 'finality' over a relationship ending is a very dangerous point in a stalking case, in fact the first two months after separation are thought to be the most dangerous (DeKeseredy, Dragiewicz, Schwartz 2017, p.38). Finality can also relate to wider elements of separation, such as suicidal ideation and the prospect of losing one's job or home, which can produce 'nothing to lose' or 'last chance' thinking (Monckton Smith 2019). Alongside relationship separation, these wider factors of finality were also present in this case. Senior officers at Glencorse Barracks were being made aware of aspects of Dhillon's behaviour. They had carried out a welfare check in response to information they had received that Dhillon had made threats to take his own life, and he was also breaching orders. During September, Dhillon was temporarily deployed to barracks in Aberdeenshire, but had returned to Edinburgh without permission. When his Platoon Commander questioned him on this, Dhillon 'immediately broke down in tears and appeared genuinely distressed about a separation with his girlfriend' (DHR 2018, p.42). The situation escalated on the 30th September, when Dhillon's behaviour resulted in official involvement from the police, army and local victim services.

Escalation

Escalation points can include varied factors, which are nuanced for each case. These can include meeting a new partner, moving away, death of a friend or family member, pregnancy or birth, and, if not managed correctly, police involvement. Whilst reporting stalking to the police is crucial in stalking cases, police involvement can have significant negative impacts on the outcome, as Alice's case demonstrates. Just before ten o'clock on the evening of 30th September, after driving the two-and-a-half-hour journey to Alice's house, Dhillon knocked on Alice's front door. Alice came to the door and looked out the spy-hole, at which time Dhillon concealed himself. Suspecting it was Dhillon, Alice then called his phone to establish his location. Dhillon told Alice he was in Edinburgh. Dhillon knocked on Alice's front door for a second time. Alice once again looked out, but could not see anyone. Some more time passed, Dhillon then climbed over a six-foot-high fence and knocked on Alice's bedroom window, where she lay in bed. When Alice opened the curtains, Dhillon was outside her bedroom window. He had placed chocolates and flowers on her windowsill, and was now backing away with his hands raised skyward. Dhillon then got into his car and drove back to Edinburgh. During this time, he left Alice messages. In one message Dhillon told Alice that he had been outside her flat since five o'clock that afternoon, almost five hours earlier. Dhillon then left Alice the following voicemail:

You said, guys like me end up killing people. That's why I just left them there and walked straight out. To prove a point that killing you is something that I've never, ever, ever thought about, and I will never ever even think about that. If you want to go to the police, go to the police, but think about what we're talking about, I've literally done nothing, I've never hurt you, never done any physical hurt to you [...] no, I don't wanna kill you, I'm not intending to

kill you. That's all I wanted to say, that I didn't want to kill you, that's why I gave you chocolates and flowers and walked out straight away.

The events of that evening, and the continuous repetition of the phrase, 'I'm not going to kill you,' made Alice feel very frightened and prompted her to call the police's non-emergency number 101. The police phone call Alice made appears on all of the television documentaries of this case, as it was one of the major escalation points, and was a moment that should have been dealt with very differently. Alice had called the police prior to this event, but experienced an initial barrier of a long waiting time, during which time she abandoned the call. When she called the police on this occasion, Alice's tone was calm and polite, akin to her general disposition, but she did state that she felt scared. The call handler presented Alice with two options and asked her what course of action she would like the police to take. The conversation ended with the decision that Dhillon would be served a Police Information Notice (PIN). The PIN⁹ was then served by the senior officers in the army.

However, one week later, Dhillon breached the PIN and contacted Alice once again. Alice phoned the police expecting that this would result in automatic arrest, however the officer on the phone 'was less sympathetic, and no action was taken,' (DHR 2018, p.4). During Alice's initial conversation with the police, she was given a false expectation of what she could expect if the PIN was breached, as PIN's do not constitute formal legal action. This was both devastating to Alice who lost faith in the police's ability to protect her, and revealed to Dhillon that there would not be consequences for contacting Alice. This incessant contact and complete disregard for Alice and authority in the form of the police and the army, demonstrates how relentless and high-risk Dhillon's behaviour had become. On the 12th October, just five days after Alice's phone call to report the breach of the PIN, Dhillon parked his car down the road from Alice's flat. Alice was dropped home by her work colleague at around 5.15pm. Fourteen minutes later, Dhillon moved his car closer to Alice's flat, he broke into her home, and brutally murdered her.

The police handling of this case has been well documented¹⁰. There are a number of issues, oversights and opportunities for safety planning factors that should have been introduced. In summary, some key points include the need for increased training of first response officers so that they can identify the crime of stalking. The police officer mentions harassment on the phone, but Alice's call was not crimed as stalking, despite the fact that specific stalking legislation has been in place since 2012. 'If the incident had been correctly identified as stalking, in line with Northumbria Policy, the option of a PIN would have been inappropriate, and the case would have been investigated and resulted in the perpetrator being arrested' (DHR 2018, p.63). There has been a lot of discussion of the 'victim-led' emphasis on this case, but Alice should not have been put in the situation where she was urged to decide whether Dhillon should be arrested or not. Alice did not have the necessary training to make such a crucial decision. Dhillon had committed a crime, so should have been arrested, but by placing the emphasis on Alice to decide, this made Alice responsible for the outcome (like Dhillon losing his job), a situation which was likely to make Dhillon feel angry with her and further raise the threat-level. Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review* also states that further training is needed for professionals to develop professional curiosity and effective use of the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist as it did not capture 'all associated risks and issues' (2018, p.97). In her statement, Alice confirms that she was 'scared' and 'terrified' and that she was 'being stalked and wants it to stop.' Veiled threats had been made to her life, she had recently separated from Dhillon who had a prior offence against another woman. Dhillon's occupation and military training is also an important part of this picture that was not fully considered by all agencies involved. Dhillon's role within the armed forces may have allowed him to gain knowledge of surveillance methods, and handling weapons, which could impact his ability to target Alice, and to plan her murder. He had recently applied (but was unsuccessful) to the Special Forces which demonstrates his interest in reconnaissance and surveillance work. The documentary *Murdered by My Stalker* demonstrates that images taken from Dhillon's phone revealed he

⁹ These have been removed from police protocol.

¹⁰ Alice's Homicide Review provides a very thorough report of the police including 20 recommendations.

had carried out his own reconnaissance of Alice's flat; the documentary includes a photograph Dhillon had taken of an exterior window (he later gained entry through a window into Alice's flat¹¹). Whilst the army Independent Management Review (IMR) confirms that he did not receive specialist training to warrant these concerns, this was overlooked as a potential risk factor (DHR 2018, p.80).

Conclusion. Raising Public Awareness of Stalking

Over the five years since Alice's death, progress has been made. The following year HMICFRS and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) carried out an inspection into how police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) responded to harassment and stalking, which was published in a report entitled 'Living in Fear', as well as a research report on victim experience. As a result of these findings and further developments in the sector, important change has occurred. This includes the delivery of stalking training to first response areas of the police force, including the College of Policing. There has been an introduction of Stalking Protection Orders in 2019, which if breached, carry a greater likelihood of an offender being remanded in custody. These orders also impose positive restrictions that can be helpful to safeguard those who are being stalked, as well as providing therapies and intervention work with the offenders (although early indications suggest that these SPOs need to be used much more widely). Stalking sentences have been extended to acknowledge the seriousness and high risk of this crime, and specialist stalking units have also been set up. For instance, the Stalking Threat Assessment Unit (STAC) within the Metropolitan Police Service in partnership with Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust; the Integrated Anti-Stalking Unit in Cheshire, and the SPOC (Single Point of Contact) system has been further developed. In terms of services, there has been an increase in roles such as Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISACs) and the plans for Specialist Stalking Psychological Advocates.

However, as this chapter has found, there is still work to be done. Much of this work is at an institutional level, which includes further training of frontline police and call handling staff as to how to identify and deal with stalking; ensuring investigators look into the history of offenders and consider the wider patterns of behaviour, such as coercive control, abuse, separation and escalation; and the developments of the methods to track stalkers and serial perpetrators. There also needs to be a continued emphasis on considering stalkers and potential stalkers and why they adopt such behaviour. In order to find solutions to stalking, we need to continue to get to the core of the issue concerning what makes someone vulnerable to stalking behaviours. Important perpetrator focused initiatives are already occurring in the sector, which seek to understand, interrupt and provide therapies, but these initiatives need to be resourced and wholeheartedly supported.

Whilst there is certainly a responsibility to tackle stalking at an institutional and systemic level within the criminal justice system, stalking is also a social problem, and improving societal identification of stalking is vital to affect fundamental, long term change. Under Finding 20 of Alice's *Domestic Homicide Review*, the authors outline the need for the general public to have a more detailed understanding of stalking behaviour and particularly the risk attached to incidents that may appear innocent, noting that the '[p]ublic are generally unaware of stalking behaviours and associated risks.' The small acts of leaving gifts, or relentless communications may appear innocuous, they may even make people feel as though they are overacting, being dramatic, or wasting police time, but it is precisely 'within this context that greater public awareness of the risk posed by stalking needs to take place to empower both victims and bystanders.' (DHR 2018, p. 79). Everyone has a role to play in understanding and identifying this crime, so we can support family, friends, and colleagues. Increased circulation of stalking definitions such as the FOUR acronym (*Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted, Repeated*) and the stalking legislation itself, may be a useful way to outline behaviours. But in order to really make an impact and create a public shift in understanding of stalking, work must be undertaken in educating the public, and especially young people about the risks of stalking.

¹¹ Although on the evening of Alice's murder, Dhillon actually gained entry through a different window into the living room (not the window in the photograph) it has been speculated that the living room window may have been open when he arrived at the property.

Collaboration between media content providers and those who have been personally affected by stalking or work in the field, provide rich opportunities for public education. As Lowney and Best (1995) argue in their article, the media has shaped public understanding of stalking in the past, and as the following example demonstrates, these outlets have the potential to raise public awareness of stalking in a meaningful way in the future. We can note these possibilities during the ‘My Daughter Alice’ episode of *Real Crime Profile*. During the episode, Clive Ruggles points out that the initial barriers for people being subjected to stalking lie with identifying what is happening to you, and then with the next steps to take:

We have to raise awareness. Even when the advocates are there, people have to realise that they need them [...] We can create a public change of attitude where stalking is one of the serious issues (Clive Ruggles)

The discussion continues to underline the need for further signposting to the services that are available to ensure that those who recognise they need help and advice can find these valuable resources. *Real Crime Profile* co-presenter Lisa Zambetti, then points out:

The number one topic that our listeners write to us about are concerns over those people in their lives that are being stalked or coercively controlled. We get this every single week, sometime every day, it is a huge issue out there, and sometimes the victims don’t see themselves as victims. (Lisa Zambetti, *Real Crime Profile* 2018)

In this way *Real Crime Profile* functions as an educator, awareness raiser and also a valued service that directs its listeners to help and support. *Real Crime Profile*, along with other documentaries on Alice’s case and particularly the *Unfollow Me* campaign produced by media business *Vice* and Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service, can be used to deliver information to the public and explain these crimes. As this chapter has demonstrated, Alice’s case possesses various news values that have resulted in its extensive coverage. The media campaigns and documentaries that depict the tragic circumstances that led to Alice’s death have made a lasting impact on viewers; it is a news story that engages public attention. Therefore, further comprehensive coverage of Alice’s case and other stalking cases is key to enhance public identification of stalking. Whilst it is true that the media can contribute to unhelpful narrow representations of stalking that can minimize this crime, as Helen Benedict (2005) points out in her analysis of media language of rape, the media also has the potential to lead the way in molding public understanding of sexual violence. ‘The media reflects public opinion, to be sure, but it also shapes it, for it is through the media that the public receives all its news and most of its information.’ (2005, 127)

Alongside the media, the education system is also an important way to inform younger members of the public about stalking and coercive control, as Murphy also highlights in her chapter within this book on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. The Alice Ruggles Trust have already collaborated with the PSHE Association to introduce relationship safety resources in schools and have recently developed a suite of Ofqual regulated SAfEE qualifications to help raise awareness with those working in education environments (Stalking Awareness for Education Environments). Teaching young people about stalking and coercive control will provide staff and students in schools, colleges and universities with the tools to firstly, promote healthy relationships so that these behaviours may be identified, and secondly, to signpost where to go for advice if you are experiencing stalking, including the National Stalking Helpline, Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service, and specialist local services. To be successful, education must address both the potential victims-survivors of stalking, and also, importantly, the potential perpetrators of this crime, as reducing stalking cases will not be possible without early intervention work with potential offenders. Since the publication of the NUS ‘Hidden Marks’ study in 2010, some positive changes in thinking have begun to occur in the Higher Education

sector. University regulators, the Office for Students (OfS), have put forward a set of proposals designed to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct within universities¹² (2020/21). As this chapter has outlined, their Statement of Expectations, outlines a requirement for ‘visible commitment from senior leaders and the governing bodies’ to prevent forms of harassment and sexual misconduct¹³. But there is a long road ahead to ensure that young people who are subjected to crimes of stalking and sexual violence are identified, managed and supported at university level. Further research and initiatives that specifically consider stalking and young people are needed. As the Alice Ruggles Trust underline on their website, ‘We want to know that the next generation, that Alice should have been part of, will recognise stalking for the vile crime that it is — not as a bit of a joke.’ (Alice Ruggles Trust Website, 2020)

Study Questions

- What are some of the stalking behaviours outlined in this chapter?
- What are the impacts of stalking on peoples’ lives? Primarily consider the victim-survivor here, but also think about their family and friends. What about the person who is stalking?
- Why might young people be subjected to stalking more than other age groups? If your friend told you they were being stalked what advice would you give them?
- What are the different motivations behind stalking? Can you think of ways that we might intervene to prevent escalation?
- How can we improve public awareness of stalking?

¹² Their plans draw on findings from previous reports such as Universities UK’s ‘Changing the Culture’ report, (October 2016) and ‘The Equality and Human Rights Commission’s Review’ (October 2019).

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