

**WOMEN STALKING WOMEN AT WORK:
A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON NURSES' EXPERIENCES**

Dr Charmaine Hockley
Charmaine Hockley and Associates, SA

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Introduction

There has been increasing attention given to the various antisocial behaviours and activities associated with workplace violence, such as workplace bullying, mobbing and horizontal violence but there has been little recognition given to workplace stalking and the impact this behaviour has on the victim and the workplace. If employer/employee relationships are to be meaningful so as to ensure a healthy workplace environment they must develop a better understanding of the different behaviours, such as workplace stalking, that contribute to workplace violence.

This paper will explore nurses' experiences of workplace stalking. The data were analysed and compared with a secondary analysis of data from an earlier study into violence among nurses (Hockley 1999a). Five main themes were derived from the data: (1) perpetrator and associated behaviours, (2) victim and associated behaviours, (3) language of reporting (4) emotions, and (5) outcomes. Although these themes are listed individually they are not mutually exclusive and in the final reporting it will be shown that it is a combination of the themes that will help organisations to formulate, achieve and maintain a healthy work environment. These themes were also recognised in the secondary analysis of earlier data but the content of the data were different. For example, the language used to describe workplace stalking was significantly different to that which was used to describe other behaviours that constituted workplace violence. Furthermore, one of the interesting and horrifying outcomes of workplace stalking came from those victims who believed that workplace stalking had a more devastating effect upon them than when they were bullied or harassed.

Concept of Workplace Stalking

The concept of workplace stalking arose from the content of conversations with nurses, some of whom were clients of this author. Nurses were discussing workplace violent behaviours such as "being bullied at work" however the language they were using was different to the nurses' responses in an earlier study by Hockley (1999a). In the earlier study, participants mainly used military or sexual metaphorical expression such as "I'm returning to the bunker" or "I feel like I have been screwed by management" to describe their feelings. In comparison this particular group of nurses were now using "hunting" or "stalking" terms such as "I felt like I was being preyed upon" or "I had this feeling I was being tailed."

The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (1997, p. 1513) provides a definition of stalking as: "pursue or approach (game or an enemy) stealthily ...[to] follow, dog, haunt, shadow, trail, track (down), hunt (down), prey on, pursue, hound, chase, colloq. Tail". Based on this general interpretation and through lack of a more precise definition, in the context of this paper, workplace stalking is defined as:

A single protracted period of time or repeated following, surveillance, loitering, watching, or similar behaviour by one or more other persons on a second person, in their formalised working relationship(s); the outcome being that the victim feels professionally and/or socially harmed (Hockley 2000a).

This definition is in keeping with the legal interpretation on stalking (Queensland Criminal Law (Stalking) Amendment Bill, 1998) and evidence from Hockley's (1999a) study, thus giving it a firm foundation to build further enquiry.

Literature Review

The review of literature was initially based on three main themes:

- Stalking
- Workplace stalking studies, and.
- Interfemale workplace stalking studies.

Stalking

It appears from the Australian literature this phenomenon is only just beginning to be reported (for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1996, Pathe & Mullen 1997), and mainly from a legal perspective, (Nash, Paton, Wight, Nicolson and Dussuyer, 1999, Goode 1999). This is not surprising since it has only been between 1993 and 1996 that Australian jurisdictions have introduced the offence of stalking (Nash et al 1999). For example, in January 1995, the "Victorian Parliament created a new offence of stalking by inserting section 21A into the Crimes Act 1958" (Nash et al 1999, p2). Goode (1999, p196) states that "the South Australia scheme underwent a complete rewriting in 1994 in order to make separate provision for cases of domestic violence and so that the content of both domestic violence and other restraining orders would harmonise with the stalking legislation (Summary Procedures (Restraining Orders) Amendment Act, No 20 of 1994; Domestic Violence Act, No 22 of 1994)." The ABS survey showed that 15 per cent of women had been stalked at sometime in their life (Nash et al 1999, p3). Pathe and Mullen (1997) identified that 80 per cent of stalking victims were women (Nash et al 1999, p3). Nash et al identified in their study that 87.7 per cent of stalkers were male and 82.4 per cent of stalking victims were female (Nash et al 1999, p4). Of the 12.3 per cent of women offenders the majority were under the age of 40 years (Nash et al 1999, p 4-5).

While there is a growing and extensive literature on stalking in Australia and overseas, the term stalking still lacks clarity of meaning because other factors such as place, time and context will influence how stalking is perceived, interpreted and codified. Viewing stalking from a reductionist perspective it can be considered a continuum of actions, including being harassed, threatened, or followed. Each of these concepts has a different definition and connotation, but all in varying degrees contain the potential to cause harm to another person. Furthermore, although at a personal and systemic level, stalking continues to be a male construct mainly associated with maleness, there is an increasing awareness that females can also be stalking offenders.

Workplace Stalking Studies in Australia

The review of the literature showed that there was a scarcity of specific studies into workplace stalking. One Australian study into the after hours medical care and personal safety of rural general practitioners (Tolhurst, Bell, Baker, Murray, Talbot, McMillan & Sutton 1999) included the act of stalking in their report. Their definition of stalking is related to the "patient(s) who stalk medical officers by following them from home or their place of work "(ie surgery, home visit or hospital)" (Tolhurst et al. 1999, p. 3).

Although there did not appear to be any specific studies into workplace stalking the literature shows that in recent years the reporting and scope of antisocial workplace behaviours have been broadened (Gorman 1996, 1998, 1999, Hockley 1998a, 1999a, 1999b, 2000b, Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith 1998, Barron 1998). These behaviours include a variety of acts from non-physical to physical including homicide. All of these terms imply some form of harm to another person (a victim) including suicide (Hastie 1996) or contemplating suicide (Hockley 1999a). However, to date workplace stalking, particularly interfemale stalking, has not been generally one of the behaviours included in the list of activities that leads to someone being professionally harmed.

Interfemale Workplace Stalking Studies

A search of the literature for studies into inter-female workplace stalking suggests that there is a scarcity of reporting of workplace stalking in general and scarcely, if any, specifically on inter-female workplace stalking (Hockley 2000a). There is a plethora of reporting of similar antisocial workplace behaviours, such as workplace bullying, sexual and work harassment, and horizontal violence however even these reports have not been gender specific. The study of inter-female workplace violence, particularly in nursing, as a phenomenon in itself has only recently begun to receive due attention either through conferences such as this, the media, and publications (Hockley 1991, 1996a, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e, 1999f, 1999g, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c).

Interfemale violence in the workplace has remained a private matter attracting little, if any, research in nursing (Hockley 1999a, p25). Hence any attempt to understand interfemale violent behaviours has been from other disciplines, such as psychology or criminology or from the gay and homosexual domestic violent relationships literature. In all types of violent behaviours there is some overlap in each between the public and private aspects. Furthermore, even though there is a scarcity of literature on female workplace stalker offenders Hockley's (1999a, 2000a, 2000b) work shows that females are equally able to be perpetrators of other antisocial workplace behaviours. In the context of this paper antisocial workplace behaviour includes (but not exclusive) bullying and/or harassment, from one or more persons with whom they have a formalised working relationship. Moreover, although females' approaches may be subtler, the outcomes of their behaviour are just as damaging to the victim as if a male had been the perpetrator (Hockley 1999a).

Methods

Participants for this exploratory study were selected from female registered nurses who had experienced workplace stalking. The participants fell into two specific categories. Namely, those who did not initially identify they were experiencing workplace stalking and those who did. Both groups initially contacted this author, through various means such as telephone, email or written correspondence, regarding their experiences of antisocial workplace behaviours. The initial verbal contact generally by telephone rather than face-to-face consisted of listening to their experiences. However, some had expressed their experiences via an email or by letter. All contacts were requested to write in their own words their experiences. Their responses were an important part of the data collection along with their initial contact comments.

The data were analysed using an ethnomethodological perspective (Garfinkel 1967). There were three reasons for this approach. Firstly, an ethnomethodological study is interested in sense making, and in this context it is used to discover how nurses make sense of their violent working environments. An ethnomethodologist does not generally explore "why" questions but is more interested in describing "embodied" practices of sense making. In other words, ethnomethodologists explore "how" rather than "why". Ethnomethodology emphasises that individuals maintain their world through tacit skills and knowledge. Individuals put rules into action that are not generally written or formalised; however as members of an identifiable group they share meanings that non-members would generally not understand. The task of this study was to reveal such private action as a public issue. Secondly, because an ethnomethodological perspective was used in Hockley's original study into violence among nurses (1999a) it appeared appropriate to continue to use this method. Thirdly, because a secondary analysis was being undertaken on the original 1999a data it was deemed relevant to use the same method of analysis on both sets of data.

Ethical Considerations

The method chosen for researching an sensitive subject requires as much sensitivity as the topic itself whilst at the same time meeting the aims of the research and the ethical objectives. Four of the objectives that were taken into consideration when undertaking this project were: (1) that no harm comes to the participants, (2) that good will come from the research, (3) that information will be treated in confidence and anonymity, and (4) that the participants have autonomy, such as withdrawing from the study at anytime without fear of repercussions. These objectives are in keeping with the researcher's philosophy, which is that the nurses in the final analysis will not in anyway feel exploited.

A number of strategies were planned to deal with this potential risk. A nurse, on first contact, would not be asked to participate in this study if it was considered that they were experiencing high levels of stress. However, all participants were forwarded a consent form and information sheet regarding the study and these were duly signed and returned.

To protect the participants in this study pseudonyms are used for confidentiality and anonymity purposes.

The ethical issues relating to undertaking secondary analysis were also considered. In this context, secondary analysis is data that has been collected for another research project. Maximising the extent to which qualitative databases can be used is an obvious benefit to nursing knowledge. Thorne states: 'secondary analysis provides a mechanism for extending the contexts in which we are able to use and interpret qualitative research data' (Thorne 1998, p548).

Data Analysis

The five themes generated from the data provide an explanatory structure on how nurses accommodate workplace stalking. The qualitative data were analysed by comparing and contrasting the primary and secondary analysis incidents of both groups of participants. Emerging themes of stalking in the workplace were grouped together. The advantage of such a method in the context of this study is that it not only allows the researcher to describe how nurses made sense of the activities they were experiencing but also if this phenomena was new or not.

In analysing and explicating the concept of "workplace stalking" from the data on workplace violence one is engaged in various activities at one and the same time. Because workplace stalking has yet to be studied in detail there are many basic questions yet to be answered, such as: When did it happen? How did it happen? Who did it and why? However these questions are not permitted within the role of the researcher who uses ethnomethodology to analyse the data. Even so, this does not mean the researcher cannot think about these basic questions. The researcher is explicating from the data knowledge and properties that are relevant to workplace social practices. The fundamental presumption that underlies these social practices is that a person is being professionally and socially harmed through workplace stalking.

Results and Discussion

The five themes that emerged from the data represent the main factors influencing the participants' experiences of workplace stalking. Each of these themes will be considered in greater depth using abstracts from the interviews all of whom have been confirmed by the informants involved in this study, as accurately reflecting their personal experiences.

Perpetrator and Associated Behaviours

The perpetrator emerged as an important theme and it became clear that it was through their relationship with this person that the victim established a basis on which to build their suspicion. Although the following responses could apply to any situation when taken in context, these people were being stalked. For example, one person who was stalked at work realised she was being watched when her supervisor was surprised she was in her office. The supervisor stated: "Oh your car was not there so I thought you were not here." On that morning the car had been parked in a different place. This happened on more than one occasion.

Responses categorised as characteristics of a perpetrator included:

"having a controlling and an obsessive nature."

"evil."

"lacks basic communication skills and is without workplace ethical or moral values."

"She was an opportunist she chose this as a tool to make my life a misery."

The following responses illustrate the position held within the organisation by the perpetrator. Although anecdotal information shows that any person within the organisation can be stalked, in all the cases included in this study revealed the stalker was in a more senior position to those being stalked.

"The person who organised the stalking had been my direct supervisor."

"I think it was a staff member joking about how my "boss" always wanted me when I was not around."

"Over a period of time I was told from time to time that my line manager had been walking up and down the passage looking into my office."

Some of the stalking activities included being followed or being watched

"If I drove a work's car I was watched which direction I was taking."

"I was followed because the next thing I knew I had to do a 'please explain' to the regional manager...."

"My car parking space was watched. If the car was not there it was assumed I was not at work."

In the next three examples these people believed they were being watched

"If I booked a vehicle it was rubbed off the booking board."

"Sometimes my keys went missing."

"At times my supervisor was surprised to see me in my office."

When postulating the perpetrator's behaviour as stalking participants drew upon past experiences with this person. These were often described as "negative" and frequently involved some other hostile interaction such as bullying or whistleblowing episodes.

"There was a lot of bullying as well but the stalking issue was following me when I drove a government vehicle."

"... it was during that time that the bullying started..."

"Bullying is institutional in this organisation."

"It was after the whistleblowing that the stalking began."

The participant placed considerable emphasis on the type of person the perpetrator was which, at times, extended well beyond professional work relationships. For example,

"My supervisor used to question me about stories she had heard about me from her neighbour."

Because of the formalised working relationships between the offender and the person being stalked it was difficult to formulate meaningful and realistic approaches to address this behaviour, in part because of the multifaceted relationship making it more difficult to manage and bring meaning to the current situation.

Victim and Associated Behaviours

Findings indicate that any level of worker can be stalked. The data showed that those who had been stalked ranged from registered nurses to senior nursing executive positions.

*"I was a supervisor."
"In my role as a registered nurse ..."
"As a NUM (nurse unit manager) ..."
"When I was district nurse ..."*

Despite the fact that any level of worker can be targeted in this small, preliminary study the results show that stalking mainly occurs in a supervisory role with a person with legitimate power stalking a person they are supervising, or at least getting other staff members to do the "stalking" on their behalf. In other forms of antisocial workplace behaviour, such as workplace bullying, a manager can be targeted by an employee (Hockley 1999a), however in workplace stalking incidents the data did not reflect this behaviour occurring. The secondary analysis of Hockley's (1999a) study showed the perpetrator of workplace violence often worked alone, where there were no witnesses to the behaviour, but in workplace stalking other staff members were generally involved.

"She did not do the dirty work but had the manager of the department ..."

"She told my secretary I was needed immediately then after coming out of a meeting denied that she had said that. My secretary and I believed that she was just checking to see if I was at a meeting or not."

When participants were identifying the behaviours of the perpetrator it was inevitably based on their experiences and information they had gathered from other people about the person. The information gained, therefore, was an important factor in influencing the participants' experiences of workplace stalking. If, for example, no one else on staff had experienced, or admitted to having experienced, this behaviour the victim often discussed their experiences in mental illness terms.

*"My feelings were of being paranoid."
"Not wanting to sound 'paranoid' I did not mention this occurring."
"Depressed."
"Suicidal."
"It was a relief when I became aware of what was happening. I was not mad after all."*

If other people had experienced or observed some form of workplace stalking behaviours they generally reacted in two ways. Some staff would support the person being targeted.

"My friends from work were affected quite a bit as they had to taxi me everywhere."

"Staff withdrew support for supervisor but she got worse, more controlling."

"On reflection I realise that now it must have been happening for a long time but I just ignored all the signals. I probably did not want to believe that I was being stalked. I can't remember what came first. I think it was a staff member joking about how my boss always wanted me when I was not around. After this had occurred several times I jokingly said to my line-manager it looks as if you wait until I am not here before you want me for something. I remember my line-manager laughing at the suggestion but on reflection she did not deny it."

For a variety of personal and professional reasons there were other staff who chose not to support the victim.

"It was an unhappy workplace with lots of backbiting and nasty behaviour and when people realised that I was on the 'hit list' people saw this as a chance to [pause]... I'm not sure - get themselves in a better position, get some revenge on me, but all these lies and half truths started about me and I was constantly defending myself and answering 'please explains...'

Language of Reporting

The language of reporting emerged as one of the most important themes because it became clear that it was through the language that workplace stalking was identified. The nurses in this study used a different language to those that discussed workplace violence among nurses (Hockley 1999a). This led the presenter/researcher to undertake a secondary analysis of Hockley's (1999a) study to identify if there were any stalking practices discussed or stalking metaphors used to describe their experiences. The results of the secondary analysis show that workplace stalking behaviours appear to be a new phenomenon because this particular antisocial behaviour was not raised in the data or in any of the journalling field notes.

In conversations with various people, who were discussing their experiences of workplace violence, they used stalking terms such as:

"I felt like I was being shadowed."

"I believed I was being tailed."

These terms did not fit into the usual workplace bullying and harassment vocabulary used in discussing workplace violence and yet the outcome was the same. They had been professionally and socially harmed in some way.

As one nurse who had been stalked at work claimed

"I felt like I was being hunted like an animal."

The language that is used to report antisocial workplace behaviours is important on at least three counts:

- For reporting,
- For surviving, and
- For legitimising the victim's experience (Hockley 1999e).

Emotions

The fourth major theme derived from the data was the participants' emotions on being stalked. The primary and secondary analysis of data showed that not only were there differences in the metaphorical language used to describe stalking but the emotional impact of being stalked was different. Fear was a significant emotion experienced by the nurses when they first realised they were being stalked. Secondary analysis showed that fear was not an emotion described by participants in Hockley's (1999a) study. For example, when victims of workplace stalking described their feelings of fear it ranged from "fear of the known" to "fear of the unknown." Others discussed their feelings of fear expressed in terms such as feeling: "anxious", "panic", and "terror". Examples of how a person feels after becoming aware of being stalked in the workplace follows:

"I felt like nothing, no one, nowhere. It was like I was there but not there."

"I was done over like a turkey dinner."

"I was reeling from cruelty."

"I was walking like a zombie."

"Shut down ..."

The following response is one example of a participant's feelings.

"Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and frequently suicide as I could see no way out."

One nurse who participated in the study describes her experiences of being stalked. Her work colleagues had intimated that her line manager had been "looking for her".

"On these occasions of being told I was not overly concerned. Why should I? I was just going about my work. However, these incidents appear to be getting closer together and on several occasions my e-mails had been opened. When I asked another staff member had anyone been into my office the answer was to the negative."

I then experienced self-doubt about me opening my e-mails. Then it appeared that my letters were being opened and then stuck down again. Not wanting to sound "paranoid" I did not mention this occurring. One day a staff member approached me about my office door being opened some mornings when she knew she had shut it when she had left the night before. She stated: "I don't want to blame anyone but just to bring it to your attention." On all these occasions I either defended the line-manager by saying things like "Oh it must be your imagination" or doubted myself or made excuses. Never did I consider myself being stalked. However, in the end it came out that the line-manager had been stalking me. She called it supervision. I was never formally told for how long these practices occurred and what the outcomes of these stalking/supervision practices were."

In the above response it appears that this stalking behaviour was supported and condoned by the organisation because despite a formal report being made and the stalker admitting that she had been "supervising" this staff member, the outcome was that there was not sufficient evidence to support the complaint. Thus the workplace stalker was protected.

Similar to the response above other nurses described how the stalker justified their actions on the basis that they were undertaking a performance appraisal or they had heard criticism about them and they were "checking to find out if it were true."

The description of incidents by the victims encapsulated the recognition of the fact they were being stalked, their feelings and the difficulty they had with adjusting to the reality of the relationship. In some cases the breakthrough to the true nature was almost an epiphany.

In some cases stalking victims were not aware of being stalked until disciplinary action was taken. Others discussed how they ignored the signs including other staff subtly warning them, sometimes in humour and at other times taking them aside and suggesting that they "watch their back".

One victim of stalking who worked for a community agency describes the time her supervisor followed her around in a car (at a discreet distance) and observed how many visits she made in a day and what she did during her working day. The following occurred for several weeks then stopped. The victim did not receive any formal or informal notification for this practice. This event may be perceived by some as a manager supervising staff, some may even consider it over-supervision whilst others may consider it workplace stalking.

In general, victims of workplace stalking described their personal experiences in physical and emotional metaphorical terms. They talked about their public face compared to their private anguish. They discussed how they felt lonely after realising they had been stalked. They were not certain who in the workplace knew about it and who did not. This led to mistrust of those that worked around them. The victim's thoughts ranged from "if they knew why didn't they tell me?" to "were they a part of the conspiracy?" In other words, the initial response to workplace stalking was that the victim thought it was only happening to them. The following response illustrates the turmoil some nurses went through:

"Everyone must know about it therefore who can I turn to for help?"

In their responses not only is there a sense of mistrust but also loneliness, for example:

"I want to be alone and on the other hand I don't want to be alone but all I can focus on is myself."

The victims of workplace stalking also discussed how they had been affected professionally. Feelings of despondency and despair were experienced by most of the victims. Victims discussed feelings of

"Self-doubt about their ability to perform."

"Inadequacy."

"Overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the job."

"Unable to concentrate."

"Resentment."

"Failure."

"Unworthy."

Some of the victims discussed lack of interest in the job such as:

"Being inattentive."

"Impatient."

In these instances they appeared to be beyond helping themselves. Even when they felt they were crying out for help there appeared to be no response. This led to anger and frustration by some. These responses demonstrate that not only is the individual being affected but also the work they are performing. In the long term these responses have implications for the organisation and those that work there.

When describing feelings of being physically and mentally tired victims often put the event into context and the associated decision-making processes. The effect of these practices included not being able to work effectively because of feeling "indecisive", or as one victim stated:

"I appeared cheerful but inside it felt like there was a knot that kept tightening in my stomach. I felt emotionally bruised, shocked. I was working on auto [pilot]."

Outcomes

Because of the small sample size it is too soon to predict what the outcomes maybe for the majority of woman and women-as-nurses stalked at work but for this group of nurse-participants the outcome was resignation. From their responses being stalked affected them more than any other of the antisocial workplace behaviours they had experienced or observed.

The legal definition of stalking states: (1) for stalking to have occurred it must happen on more than one occasion, (2) the stalker intends the victim to know that it is occurring and (3) the person being stalked knows that he or she is being stalked. When undertaking primary and secondary analysis of the workplace stalking data the nurses' experiences did not fall neatly into these three categories. From the data and the secondary analysis of Hockley's (1999a) study it is suggested there is a process of knowing that allows the nurse to recognise or become aware that they are targeted. The three phases of this process, which lead to surviving, are: (1) recognition, (2) re-evaluation, and (3) re-definition (Hockley 1999a, p. 228). For reporting purposes these three phases are linear but in practice a nurse may enter phase 1, 2 or 3 in various time frames and return to any of the phases before proceeding to the next. These three phases do not necessarily coincide with the legal interpretation.

The data showed that the first phase of recognition might occur after one sustained stalking episode or separate stalking activities over a period of time. One nurse who is experiencing stalking for the first time may not recognise it as such compared to another nurse who may have experienced it in their personal as well as their professional life. Therefore, although according to the legal interpretation a stalker intends the victim to know that it is occurring this may not occur if the nurse is unaware until sometime after the event.

"I found out when the person who was put in charge of watching me told one of my friends..."

One nurse was not aware that she was being stalked until she left the organisation.

The next phase is re-evaluation. Re-evaluating the current position is the way in which people are able to assess the situation in which they find themselves. When the participants did this they attempted to make some sense of their actions by understanding it in a particular time, place and context. The following response illustrates how nurses tried to make sense of what was occurring to them.

"I spent a lot of the time trying to understand and rationalise what was happening - trying to make sense of the process."

"The only thing on my mind was what was currently happening to me, what had happened in the past and what was about to happen, my inability to predict what would be done next."

Once the participants had re-evaluated the situation they acted. Thus, while they were acknowledging the tensions and contradictions that have led up to the stalking behaviour, they are entering the next phase of the action.

Revaluation lead to the redefinition phase, which is to choose strategies that are culturally appropriate for the individual. Redefining appropriate strategies depends upon the context the individuals find themselves in. What action they choose depends upon the meaning they have attached to the stalking behaviour. Some chose to speak out whilst others chose to be silent, which is a strategy in itself.

During a conversation with a nurse she described it as a "form of terror". She continues:

"At first I thought I was being harassed but as I reflected upon what was occurring I focused on the notion that I was being stalked rather than harassed. Once confronted with this awareness that for some time I had been stalked my perceived "paranoia" of being watched was in fact a "reality", and my emotions of feeling fear, uncertainty, despondency and despair became manageable. I eventually resigned and have since found a more supportive environment."

"In my opinion this manager's behaviour was supported and condoned by the organisation because even after submitting a formal report no further action appeared to be taken. So I left."

"...to save myself from certain destruction [I left and now] I work away from home and see my family once a fortnight."

"I did have some support from the unions but they had little power in stopping what was happening."

Limitations

The main limitation to this study is that it only included female registered nurses. The reason for this approach was so that both the primary and secondary analysis had the same criteria and could be seen from the same perspective as the earlier study undertaken by Hockley (1999a).

It became obvious from examination of the literature (Mortell 1994) and from the data in Hockley's (1999a) study that the experience of males in nursing may be different from that of females. The way men and women experience workplace violence and workplace stalking is a topic worthy of a study in its own right and beyond the scope of this project. An excerpt from the interview of a male employee in the health care sector illustrates the male employees can also be stalked by females through their workplace relationships. He discusses how 3 female senior staff members were stalking him.

"Line supervisor, Daisy, and her 2 deputies, Lily and Pansy, are stalking me."

Similar to other case studies the main perpetrator often involved other staff members to participate in stalking behaviour.

Although there appeared to be similarities between male and female case studies on workplace stalking in this author's opinion if nurses from both genders had been included in this study it would have influenced the analysis of the secondary data.

Discussion

Critical similarities derived from the data are the parallel experience of nurses who experience workplace stalking and domestic violence victims who have been stalked. However, domestic violence victims of stalking have legal redress. For example, there are various courses of action.

These include (but not exhaustive):

- Intervention orders
- Restraining orders
- Defendant to keep peace and be of good behaviour

These legal actions may be appropriate for stalking in society but may not be appropriate for the workplace.

To address workplace stalking behaviour the targeted person may make a complaint under Commonwealth, or respective State and Territory antidiscriminatory laws or occupational health, safety and welfare legislation as long as the complaint falls into one of the areas in which the public has a legitimate interest and which Parliament has made "unlawful." For example under the antidiscriminatory legislation the cause for complaint must be based on age, religion, gender, culture or disability. Employers who are the perpetrators, or who support or condone this behaviour may find themselves in breach of the occupational health, safety and welfare legislation. Employers have a duty of care for their employees.

In Australia there is significant documentation on stalking behaviours in society with legislation to protect the individual being stalked. The analysis of the data shows that there are several issues to consider which have implications for the individual and their workplaces. Until recently, workplace stalking has remained in the private domain although work is considered to be in the public sphere. For the voices of the victims of workplace stalking to be legitimised they need to be publicly and politically acknowledged. Although workplace stalking invites a legal response, the use of the law is not always the most prudent action in that it fails to consider the short and long term effects on the individual bringing charges (Gorman 1998). Just as victims of sexual harassment and rape often feel they are the "guilty ones", many women taking action against their employer are made to feel guilty (Hockley 1999a, 2000a). The short and long-term consequences for victims of workplace stalking are yet to be studied. Nevertheless, based on other forms of workplace violence and the manner in which the relationships between women within society and workplaces are constructed, workplace stalking has not been adequately challenged or addressed.

The analysis of the concept of workplace stalking can include use of a legal and criminal framework. It is not possible nor is it the aim of this paper to consider all the complex issues from a legal perspective. Therefore, this paper confined itself to those that have the most apparent relevancy to workplace stalking and which the law refers in its Criminal Law (Stalking) Acts as: "following", "loitering near", "watching", "approaching or entering a place where another works", "interfering with property in the possession of another person", "an intimidating, harassing or threatening act against another person", "serious mental, psychological or emotional harm", and "prevention or hindrance from doing an act the person is lawfully entitled to do".

From the data analysis the "typical" workplace stalker appears to have similar characteristics to other stalkers located in other contexts. For example, the literature shows that the stalker is "someone you know and with whom you have had a relationship. Typically, a stalker is an obsessive person ... " (Crime Victim Compensation Program, 1999). In the workplace this relationship would be a formal working relationship.

There appears to be a theme developing from the conversations with victims of workplace stalking that implies that work performance appears to be the basis (rationalisation) for workplace stalking. Performance appraisals according to Marquis & Huston (2000, p. 414) state that "because a manager's opinions and judgements are used for far-reaching decisions regarding the employee's work life, they must be determined in an objective, systematic, and formalised manner. Using a formal system of performance review also reduces the appraisal's subjectivity". Data are suggesting that workplace stalking would not be considered a formal system of performance review. However this would be in the eyes of the beholder and what some would call "supervision", or even "over-supervision", others would label "stalking".

Figure 1 illustrates a continuum of degrees of supervision a manager may conduct to obtain information to assess a staff member.

Autonomous	Supervised	Over-supervised	Stalked
Overt operation	Overt operation	Overt operation	Covert operation
Staff member usually works autonomously and is supervised when being assessed for annual performance appraisal	Staff member supervised until such time competency is reached	Staff member believes competency is reached but is continued to be supervised	Staff member believes that he/she is not being appraised based on a standard, which other employees in the same classification are.

Conclusion

Although too early to predict the outcome one of the possible reasons that workplace stalking has not been acknowledged in the research literature is that this behaviour has either gone unrecognised and/or unreported. In the main, albeit misguided at times, most employers believe that the workplace is safe and their line managers have responsible workplace ethics, morals and values. Therefore, when individuals realise they have been stalked they suffer both professionally and emotionally. Based on other studies into workplace violence the effects of workplace stalking can potentially extend to those people the victim works and socialises with, including families and friends.

Although this small, explorative study has provided a foundation for further research the results must remain tentative. Because it is difficult to define any activity unequivocally, subsequent research should address the causes, types and outcomes of workplace stalking. Issues worthy of further research include the effects on the individual, the workplace and the community. Issues relating to individuals being continually exposed to workplace stalking include the effect on their work and health, which in workplace violence has the potential to lead to suicide or homicide.

The data indicated that workplace stalking has the potential to impact negatively on organisations. This can be reflected through potential litigation, bad publicity (Whistleblowing), difficulty in staff retention and recruitment, low staff morale, and the associated costs resulting from the effects of workplace stalking such as inefficiency, absenteeism, and Workcover (compensation claims and insurance costs) (Hockley 2000a).

On first analysis the findings indicate that although the causes of workplace stalking maybe similar to other violent working relationships, on closer examination, the nature of stalking creates a unique act of expectations and effects on the victims different to other antisocial workplace behaviours. Future research is needed using a variety of perspectives to capture the breadth of workplace stalking and a larger sample is need to validate these early observations.

Workplace stalking means different things to different people and their views, depend upon the time, place and context. What is constructive supervision to some is workplace stalking to others. In the author's opinion there is some degree of antisocial behaviour present in all people and that only very rarely are people completely antisocial. It can therefore be said that some form of antisocial workplace behaviour is always present and many factors can manipulate to foster and maintain this behaviour. In other words, workplace stalking behaviours are multidimensional and dynamic in nature. Specifically, workplace stalking is continually unfolding and changing in response to life situations.

In closing, evidence based practice is vital if these acts are to be acknowledged and addressed. There is the potential for any one of us to be vulnerable to such an attack and it is only through scholarship and a concerted, intelligent, compassionate effort that a meaningful difference can be made.

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