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# THROUGH THE LURKING GLASS: A QUALITATIVE MEDIA ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL GENDER NORMS AND STALKING DEPICTIONS IN FILM

Alexandra Baril
bari7580@mylaurier.ca

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By

Alexandra Baril

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines to what extent traditional gender norms are adhered to by the depiction of stalkers within films. Stalking has only recently been recognized as a social problem. Due to the relatively new attention, there has been a lack of research surrounding the way in which stalkers and stalking behaviours are being portrayed within popular media, particularly film media. This paper uses a qualitative ethnographic content analysis approach to examine these stalking depictions. Twenty films that had a high level of stalking portrayed behaviours, and thriller genres rather than horror genres, were collected and analyzed. It was found that traditional gender norms were largely adhered to by the stalker, both male and female. However, there were two outliers when it came to diversion of traditional gender norms for female victims of stalking. The analysis demonstrated female victims were more likely to appear nude and victims of more cruel violence. Lastly, the larger picture of stalking as a social problem also found that stalker narrative films leave the victim without legal help; rather they opt for a more neo-liberalist approach to protecting oneself from the perpetrator.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Though stalking has likely always existed, it has only been within the last 25 to 30 years that lawmakers have paid attention to the behaviour. Most researchers agree that the Rebecca Schaeffer case prompted the initial wave of criminal legislation. On July 18, 1989, Schaeffer, a Hollywood actress, was killed by an obsessed fan who had been stalking her for several months prior (Davis, Lurigio, & Herman, Davis, 2001; Melton, 2000; Lowney and Best; 1995; Mullen, Pathe & Purcell, 2001; Sinwelski & Vinton, 2001; Tjaden, 2009). This prompted extreme pressure from the public and the film industry to criminalize stalking, which led to the first anti-stalking law, enacted within California in 1991. Soon thereafter, other American states and the District of Columbia passed similar laws criminalizing stalking (Davis et al., 2013). Canada enacted its own anti-stalking law, referred to as criminal harassment, under the *Criminal Cod*e in 1993 (Gill & Brockman, 1996). Hereafter, stalking became a criminal and social phenomenon that saw a spike in both research and media focus.

To date, a considerable amount of research has examined real-world stalking patterns including perpetrator and victim characteristics. However, less research has focused on media constructions of stalking as a social problem. Studying and analyzing the media's depictions of stalking assists in identifying how peoples' perceptions of reality are formed. The media is not a neutral entity, but rather it shapes and forms the publics' opinion about reality. Whatever agenda the media seek to push upon the public, is done through displaying messages through varying outlets, such as film. It could be stated that the media even control the public through their messages of one-sided manipulation of emotions. As the public cannot immediately interact with the media, it is wholly one dimensional (Mullen et al., 2001). Although media can provide

differing versions or views of a particular subject, it typically fails to do so. For example, when confronted about the coverage of the Iraq war of 2003, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* admitted that they backed the views of the Pentagon rather than looking out for the "public interest" (Winter, 2007). Society understands and gives meaning to reality through their absorption of the messages the media portrays. As such, although media may bring attention or awareness to different issues, when media is not accurate or factual, societal beliefs can become misleading.

Although some research has been undertaken pertaining to stalking in film, there does not appear to be any comparison concerned with the depiction of stalking within film and how these depictions of stalking create a social problem. The closest research study to answer this comes from Shultz, Moore and Spitzberg (2013), who looked at depictions of stalking in films and compared them to real-world crime statistics. They found the films greatly exaggerated general violence and murder and down played the portrayals of sexual violence (Shultz et al., 2013). Additional studies on Australia's print media, and media report analysis from Italy were found to be largely consistent with actual crime statistics in their respective countries (Dussuyer, 2000; Caputo, 2013; De Fazio et al., 2009). None of these researchers compared stalker narrative films under their study to each other in order to study the problems within. This means there has not been enough research to fully understand how stalkers depictions on screen influence the perceptions of society and how this further relates to a broader social problem. This research will establish the research on stalking depictions of gender norms within the realm of stalking narrative film portrayals.

A few question remain (a) Has the depictions of stalking within film changed, such as, has the social problem of stalkers become more violent with time? (b) Do images of stalking

within stalker films reinforce traditional gender norms and roles? Or do they reinforce other dominant ideologies? (c) If stalking depictions have changed over time, what does this mean for social problems and how does this connect with the larger picture of stalkers in the real world? The main purpose of this research is to identify if the depictions of stalkers and stalking has created a social problem. This paper hypothesizes there have been few changes throughout the years as stalkers have always been violent; as well, depictions of gendered roles of females and males within film will largely demonstrate and display traditional gender roles. Additionally, it is hypothesized that females will outwardly display emotions through mental illness and overtly emotional responses to rejection; whereas, male stalker rejection will be more likely violent and aggressive in their pursuits. I examined twenty films pertaining to stalking and analyze their changes over time, through 20 films from the 1970s to now, through qualitative ethnographic observations and analysis as well as descriptive quantitative analysis.

To address these questions, my research thesis will be organized as follows. First, Chapter Two will begin with an overview of Social Problems theory and Constructive Criminology, followed by a definition of stalking, and review of existing stalking research. Chapter Three will focus on the study's methodology including an overview on the sample and coding process adapted in the current study. Next, Chapter Four will examine the results and analysis of the twenty stalker films through a qualitative ethnographic method consideration. Qualitative findings/analysis will first be presented which found traditional gender role reinforcement and diversion. Chapter Five will look at the lack of legal help found within the films, and how this is related to social problems. Next, in Chapter Six, data that was collected for base-level variables, scene-level variables and interaction-level variables will be given. Chapter Seven establishes how disengagement from a stalker and the justice-oriented response to

the problem is neoliberal in its approach. Chapter Eight includes the paper's major findings, the limitations of the study and future research areas.

# Chapter Two

## Review of Literature/Theory

### Social Problems Theory

To understand Social Problems theory, it is important to first establish what a social problem is and how it is formulated within society. In general, a social problem is something that negatively effects a group or groups of people in society as a whole, such as: drugs, human trafficking, global warming, poverty, racism, etc (Schneider, 1985). A social problem is subjective, and is based upon what society constitutes as a 'problem', the nature of the problem and/or the cause of the problem, and solutions to the problem. As such, social problems are highly based upon ones cultural beliefs and interactions with others (Henry & Milovanovic, 2000). It is an undesirable problem that needs to be dealt with on a bigger scale as it effects so many, hence why it is a 'social' problem (Schneider, 1985). A social problem is established so that a solution can be found to negate the problem. The problem is there to be solved and overcome; in order to accomplish this the problem must be considered, explained and discussed. All three of these actions can be completed through analyzing the media (Ferrell, 1999).

Michailakis and Schirmer (2014) suggest that social problems should be looked at from the observer's point of view. Not everyone will have the same definition or understanding of a social problem, and this needs to be established before a solution can be determined, as even the solution will be different for everyone (Michailakis & Schirmer, 2014). Social problems are then wholly subjective and dependent on the observer. How the observer sees a social problem is influenced heavily by the media. Through emphasizing the media's crime portrayals and the interaction of symbolism between media and crime, crime takes on a more political meaning. Hence, social problems are in fact political in meaning and thus crime imagery created by the

media impacts public opinion and perceptions on social problems (Ferrell, 1999). As crime is political in nature; viewers will form their own thoughts on crime that can evolve into viewing a subject matter as a social problem. This explanation is a social construction of social problems, where societal interaction defines what is a 'problem'.

As Social Problems theory hinges upon what constitutes a 'social problem', the theory itself is based upon the process of social processes and social interactions (Best, 2013). In fact, Spector and Kitsuse's (1977) analysis of the theory is stated as "the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" (p. 75). The theory provides that there is a process of activities that defines social problems, made by making claims or allegations by lawmakers, claims-makers, media culture, etc. The theory focuses attention on these processes and how they develop over time (Spector & Kitsuse, 1977). Claims-making itself involves the practice of attracting viewers and trying to convince an audience of their viewpoint(s). However, not all claims-making will be successful and may need to be reworked to better suit the viewer(s) attention span. Over time claims-making tends to become uninteresting, over-used and over-saturated; new and exciting ways of reworking a potential social problems are expanded to hold the audiences' attention (Best, 2013). Exaggeration by these claims-makers are then commonplace and meanings can easily become misconstrued. It is in this sense in which the Social Problems theory connects with and builds off of constructive criminology.

**Constructive Criminology**

Constructive Criminology itself examines how crime is coproduced and influenced by cultural institutions, social byproducts, and social structures. Crime and offenders cannot be separated from social interactions and institutions; crime is a byproduct of such things.

Constructive criminologists are not concerned with the 'why' of crime, but rather the underlying relations between the two in order to reduce harm (Henry & Milovanovic, 2000). As media is part of societal culture, crime can also be considered a byproduct of media entertainment. Media culture/entertainment "participates in the formation of dominant understandings of the world and the highest values…what is considered [sic] moral or evil" (Nisic & Plavsic, 2014, p.76) At least part of how society formulates their opinions and thoughts are in direct relation to how the media portrays entertainment. People conceptualize their view of the world through their interactions with the media. Through this analysis, criminal constructs are an outcome of the media's influence over society.

A behaviour may be criminal in one culture but seen as honourable in another; thus, the underlying social construction of crime is learned through social interaction. The behaviour itself is not necessarily criminal; the societal reaction itself labels the behaviour as criminal or otherwise (Rosenfield, 2009). For constructive criminologists undertaking an analysis of the relevant research and studies derives from the idea that it,

> *must be undertaken with a view to determining its underlying elements, diagnosis and prognosis, or cause, classification of the abnormality, and the probable outcome (Peyton, 1918, pg. 912).*

Looking and analyzing the behaviours of crime is not likely to produce a reasonable explanation for crime. However, looking at the social response can predict a reasonable outcome of that crime and potentially how to stop that crime from occurring. Additionally, the act of the crime is not solely the only element viewed by society, but "the social and moral standing of the offender and victim" are also taken into consideration (Rosenfield, 2009, pg. 516). The offender and victim are not just scrutinized for their present actions, but their past actions are also taken into consideration, and analyzed to determine their legitimacy as an upstanding citizen.

Social Problems theory defines social problems as subjectively provisional; however, social problems are defined as affecting large groups of people and are generally accepted as a widespread issue. The underlying assumption of the theory stipulates that these problems are different for everyone, as they are influenced by differing societal culture and institutions. The processes, interactions and activities of these societal events formulate the understandings of the world and what constitutes a crime. From this, the cultural media uses their platforms to push their own agendas, which in turn helps society comprehend crime and social problems. What is good or bad can be understood by viewing the media. In order to keep entertainment interesting the media can become over-saturated and misconstrue true meanings of crime. The following section of this chapter will outline and seek to define how the term 'stalking' is defined within the literature.

**Stalking Defined: Difficult to Deduce**

In general, criminal stalking usually falls under the umbrella of harassment. According to the Criminal Code of Canada, "where the behaviour is overtly threatening, a single incident may be considered criminal harassment" (Department of Justice Canada, 2003). Under the federal Criminal Code of Canada, Section 264.2, criminal harassment is defined as repeatedly following a person from place to place, consistently communicating with them or watching their work, home, or places they frequent, and threatening the person or their family (Department of Justice Canada, 2003). Although harassment and stalking may overlap in their definition, it is important to note the difference between the two is the distinction within the law. Stalking consists of a pattern of harassment, whereas harassment itself can be considered, and typically is, a singular occurrence. Similar stalking laws have been implemented within the United States; wherein, *repeated* threats of harm or *repeated* proximity to the victim must occur for stalking to be

considered the specific crime committed (Davis et al., 2013). For both Western countries, more than one singular event needs to transpire that is unwanted by the victim (Spitzberg & Cupbach, 2014) *before* the actions can be considered stalking. The difference between stalking and harassment is distinct; however, the definition of stalking has been debated over the years as to what constitutes the definitive actions of stalking and when it is to be considered a criminal act. Here is where confusion about the definition of stalking can become complicated.

There is little consensus between researchers on how to define stalking that both embodies its true and complete meaning (Owens, 2015; Sinwelski & Vinton, 2001; Tjaden, 2009). Spitzberg and Cupbach (2014) argue that general definitions, conceptual definitions, behavioural operational definitions and legalistic definitions of stalking all serve a different purpose and do not encompass the same understanding of the crime. Additionally, as the term stalking was not readily used prior to the 1980s, where expressions such as: "obsessive pursuit", "obsessional following", "erotomania", "sexual harassment" or "psychological rape" were commonplace when describing the different elements of stalking (Gediman, 2017; Lowney & Best, 1995; Spizberg & Cupbach, 2014). Although, all terms above carry a different characteristic of the crime; none concisely or correctly include the entire explanation of the crime. As stalking can be understood throughout a varying amount of differing definitions it is important to identify what the accurate and complete definition of stalking means for the purpose of this paper.

**The History of 'Stalking': Hunter and Prey**

Origins of "stalkers" and "to stalk" can be traced back to the sixteenth century, where the term inferred that one was both good at hunting their prey *and* was a stealthy walker (Mullen at al., 2001). The word itself means "to steal up on game", originating within the hunter vocabulary

(Dillen, 2009, p. 77). In fact, according to psychological literature stalking behaviours in animals, including humans, is the brain's normal function of maintaining survival. Genetically speaking, according to evolutionary psychologists, the brain has developed codes that govern the timing of stalking which allows for the promotion of survival and avoidance of adverse dangers (Gediman, 2017). Stalking is, and has been, hereditarily encoded within humans as a functional and important part of maintaining human existence and survival. Although the occurrence and understanding of psychological stalking has been prominent throughout history, it was not until the early 1990s that a more criminological and sociological explanation of stalking was developed for use.

In 1995, Meloy and Gothard defined stalking as, "an abnormal or long term pattern of threat or harassment directed toward a specific individual" (p. 259). This definition, unlike the legal or psychological definitions, was intended to further scientific investigation and clinical knowledge of the subject. Two years later, Pathe and Mullen (1997) defined it as "a constellation of behaviours in which one individual inflicts on another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications" (p. 12). The authors wanted to operationalize the definition of stalking that was dependent on observable actions, whereby the crime was solely identified by how the actions were unwanted by the intended victim (Pathe & Mullen, 1997). Although both of the above definitions express the main element of stalking, that of repeated harassment, they do not encompass the entirety of the crime. Westrup and Fremouw (1998, p. 258) add an additional 'fear' element to stalking where the stalkers actions, "(a) are repeatedly directed towards a specific individual (the 'target'), (b) are unwelcome and intrusive, *and (c) induce fear or concern to the target*." By these researchers account, the crime is wholly victim-defined, as the victim must feel they are in danger or fear brought on by the perpetrator. It is the reaction of the victim,

not the initial action(s) of the stalker, that create a stalker-prey occurrence, that essentially results in a crime.

**Current Definitions: Five Encompassing Elements**

More recent definitions of stalking encompass the physicality of the crime. The 2003 *International Handbook of Violence Research* offered that stalking should be defined as, "an act of the leading to intentional physical injury of another, regardless of whether its purpose for the agent is actually in carrying it out (orderly to demonstrate power) or whether the action is intended to be translated into threats and leads to lasting subjugation (as binding power)" (Dillen, 2009, p. 76). In this definition, the perpetrator intends to injure the victim through use of demonstrating their power over the victim. In addition, this definition leaves out the actualized fear of the victim and adds the certainty of physical proof of harm. The power imbalance must be 'lasting', meaning the victims' suppression cannot be short-lived. To offer a more succinct definition, Spitzberg and Cupbach (2017) suggest that stalking is "repeated unwanted harassment that the victim experiences, or that a reasonable person would perceive as highly distressing" (p. 15). This definition includes a particularly crucial concept to classifying stalking, that of a 'reasonable person' feeling distressed. Those being stalked may not fully understand their situation, especially those who are mentally ill or disabled. Yet, with the addition of these two words, it can help the court to protect those vulnerable persons if their situation warrants that a 'reasonable person' would feel fear or distress.

All definitions noted above bring different understandings of the crime; however, individually they do not include all pertinent aspects of the crime. Looking across all definitions a clear pattern emerges that encompasses the general, but comprehensive, elements of stalking, that is:1) repeated harassment or a pattern of harassing behaviour by the perpetrator; 2) the

intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant to the event(s) that transpire; 3) the victim or victims are specifically targeted by the perpetrator; 4) the victim must feel fear or a rational/reasonable person would perceive as fearful; and 5) expression by the victim that the harassment is unwanted. For the purpose of this paper, the term stalking will involve all five fundamental elements stated above.

The origins of the word 'stalking' is derived from hunting vocabulary, to mean someone who was a good hunter and a stealthy walker. Evolution saw the term evolve into one of psychological and biological meaning, where it meant survival if one was good at stalking. If one could stalk their prey, they were more likely to survive. Even so, evolutionary psychologists found the brain itself is genetically programmed to know when and how to stalk. Eventually, increases of fearful person-to-person stalking, a switch from animal/food stalking, the term became more sociological in definitions with criminal connotations. Definitions of stalking at this point became muddled and lacked a definitive and encompassing criminological outline for prosecution. However, by looking at all of the important sociological definitions, a pattern emerges that fully encapsulates the true meaning of the term through five key elements. Next, arrests and convictions of stalkers are looked at to demonstrate how hard it is, not only to define, but to charge and convict a stalker.

**Overview of Anti-Stalking Laws: Act, Threat and Victim Fear**

As anti-stalking laws were first encoded within California law in 1991, it is important to begin with their current statutes. The statute follows three main components for stalking to be present and considered criminal; a deliberate act, a threat, and victim fear:

> *Any person who willfully, maliciously, and **repeatedly follows or willfully and maliciously harasses** another person and who makes a **credible threat** with the intent to place that person in reasonable **fear for his or her safety**, or the safety of his or her immediate family is guilty of the crime of stalking…(Beagle, 2011, p. 48).*

The majority of states follow the above directive, and can be classified into three different categories. The first have adopted the same three components that California developed, such as, some states require an act, a threat and the perpetrator's intent. Some states only require an act and the perpetrator's intent (Beagle, 2011). Additionally, some states have added to the statute through harsher punishments for those who are repeat offenders, those who violate a protective order, and commit the act while in the possession of a deadly weapon (Jordan, Quinn, & Jordan, 2000). Most states have now encoded anti-stalking laws that broadly encompass the definition of stalking in the most basic sense.

For many victims of stalking their first response in seeking help is to reach out to the police. It is stated that 89% of victims call or go to the police to report stalking. Most of these complainants are female, whereas males are less likely to report incidents of stalking (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The majority of people who are stalked rely on the police to solve their matter, making police officers the number one contact for keeping the victim safe. There is limited research regarding police arrests for stalking. Although, some research suggests that police do not understand the laws pertaining to stalking and most likely advise against seeking a protective order for the victim (Geistman, 2011). This may be due to the fact that many police officers are not familiar with the stalking definition within the law or have stated that the entire statute was confusing to comprehend. Those officers who had not previously been involved with stalking cases felt that it was more challenging to arrest and charge (Geistman, 2011). Police officers that did feel comfortable laying charges felt that they had a better grasp of the statute and could identify the reoccurring problems within the law (Lynch & Logan, 2015). Not all police officers are educated in stalking laws, making it difficult for them to navigate, arrest and charge someone who is being accused of stalking behaviours.

Even after an arrest, the process of prosecuting stalkers is often difficult and results in lesser convictions under sentences divergent from 'stalking' such as harassment, intimidation, etc. Sometimes, it is recommended that civil lawsuits are better suited over criminal charges in order to obtain a conviction of stalking. It is harder to obtain convictions as victims do not want to come forward due to the bad reputation of obtaining convictions for these types of crimes Shiels, 2000). Even when stalkers are charged the two most frequent outcomes are to (a) dismiss all charges or (b) plead guilty to a lesser offence, which was most often a misdemeanor or another "threat-related crime" (Jordan, Logan, & Walker, 2003, pg.159). From 1998 to 2003, the conviction rate of criminal charges fell from 54% to 28.5%, within the United States, including those cases that were amended or reduced to a lesser charge (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998 & Jordan et al., 2003). In five years, criminal convictions fell almost in half, signifying that prosecuting stalkers are becoming harder to convict.

Since California first encoded anti-stalking laws in 1991, many states, and the Canadian federal courts, have also enacted some sort of statutes to prosecute stalkers. All states that have anti-stalking laws include one of four elements: an act, a threat, the perpetrators intent and/or the victim's fear. However, when funneled down to police officers, which is many victims' first point of contact for help, the officers are unsure or cannot comprehend the stalking laws. Lack of knowledge leads to less stalker arrests, even when harassment has been present. Those officers who do lay charges have already been involved in stalking cases previously. However, if a stalker is arrested and charged, it leads to even smaller conviction rates that are most commonly reduced or dismissed altogether. Although stalking is hard to convict, it is pertinent to look at the current stalking data in the real world to understand who will be effected by this crime and how to properly stop it.

**Traditional Gender Roles: A Dichotomy**

Traditional gender roles are inherently socially constructed through social interaction with other individuals. The guidelines that shape gender roles are collectively created and guided through larger social structures (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). It is not physical sex that identifies one's gender identity, but rather it is socially learned and not biologically inherent (Levant, 1996). Male and female differences are then socially developed and based upon situational contexts. Social development of gender identify is what makes up the factors that influence attitude, behaviour, opinions and cultural viewpoints. Historically, females domestically existed in the 'men's domain' of the household, as males were the breadwinners of the home. Although females were in charge of the domestic household, males were the ones that held all the power in the public arena (Walby, 1997). However, as a shift in traditional gender roles saw women heading to work, the role of the "domestic female" changed (Valentova, 2016). The gender gap between men and women, although not closed, does continue to shrink.

There are very distinct differences between the two sexes that differentiates their roles both within public and private domains (Walby, 1997). Although traditional gender roles were not taken as seriously as in previous years, there continues to be gender roles that are socially constructed for both men and women that are implicit and that they are expected to follow. Those who adhere to traditionally defined gender norms are regarded as 'normal', whereas those who do not are labelled or judged by societal intolerance (Schnittker, 2000). This is particularly true for women who violate their gendered roles, as it is stereotypically believed that the male sex should control their household, including the female (Butler & Geis, 1990). Those that did not adhere may be diagnosed with Gender Identify Disorder, a mental illness. This illness is based on "stereotypical sexist and heterosexist assumptions regarding normative male and

female experience, as serves to reify a traditional gender-based hegemony" (Lev, 2005, pg. 42). Whatever is outside of the 'normal' gender roles was to be considered an identity crisis, and criticized heavily by society often leading to a mental illness diagnosis.

According to Johnson (1995), male aggressive behaviour in efforts to control women has been coined as "patriarchal terrorism". Early socialization processes have historically taught men that women are their property. Boys are given more leadership roles, told to look after their sisters and given the right to more freedom from a younger age compared to their female sibling(s) (Johnson, 1995). Boys are told to put their feelings aside, 'suck it up' and are generally not fussed with to ensure the boy grows up into a strong man and need to display this behaviour to secure their position at the top (Walby, 1997). This goes back to the fact that the man is the figure of the household, he is the one who hands out the punishment to the children. The male's duty is opposite of the female, and each has a role to play that helps in the function of the household. However, both roles are very different in their structure. The male job is very structured, he must meet deadlines, and perform well in order to be promoted. Yet the female's role is highly unstructured; the performance of the housewife depends on her own self-motivation. If she falls behind in her housework it is unlikely, at least for a while, that her husband will notice. As such, their performance is less visible and gives them more time to think about their emotions and worries (Gove, 1984). Hereby, females are more likely to come to terms with their emotions and display them outwardly.

The notion to submit to gender roles is also deep-rooted within both genders well before birth. Females receive gifts for their babies that signify the gender cues even before they can fully understand their meanings. Even something simple such as blue clothing for boys and pink for girls can imply gender roles as blue is viewed as a 'tough' colour whereas pink is 'frilly'

(Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Women continue to be bombarded by gender socialization throughout their lives through the media, news and magazines. For example, women are much more apt to compare themselves to other women due to the constant bombardment from the media of what constitutes a 'perfect woman' (Valentova, 2016). In addition, traditional gender norms characterize women as inherently more emotionally unstable, as they are allowed the freedom to express their emotions, whereas men are not as freely given this ability. As it is believed, through traditional gender norms, that mothers needs to be nurturing for her child, young females are taught how to be soft and compassionate (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). While males are strong and stern, females are kind and encouraging for the development of their children. Both genders work together to raise their child for the best possible outcome.

The gendered nature of stalking is related to traditional gender norms and roles, where the male is the head of the household and controls what the women does. Females are emotional and submissive, and must obey the male as he is the breadwinner of the family and controls her because he is in charge of the money. Males can then become the aggressor due to the fact that they are the controller of the relationship. If one steps outside of their traditionally defined gender role, there are consequences that they can suffer such as being labelled as mentally ill. This is especially detrimental for females who are supposed to be submissive to their male counterpart. The dichotomy between the male and female gender is vast and largely unrelenting.

**Gender Perceptions on Media Depiction of Stalking**

Depictions of sexual and violent content are frequent within films in general; these depictions can skew the perceptions of acceptable sexual behaviour for both genders. Congruent to previous research, a study of 182 college students on how they viewed sexual television content, found those who perceived  television to be realistic also influenced their attitudes

(Taylor, 2005). Viewing television content consistent with sexual talk led to those who held realistic portrayals of television as true to believe female peers are more sexually active. Consequently, the more sexual content that was viewed the more permissive of sexual intercourse with *less* relationship commitment the subjects/students were. Sexual content then becomes more commonplace and acceptable in any form of depiction in film (Shultz et al., 2013). Hereby, the more sexual content the subjects were exposed to, the more they felt it to be acceptable and commonplace. Sexual content and stalker content can be, and is most often, intertwined within film depictions, meaning that stalker sexual harassment may be viewed as acceptable and commonplace by the audience.

In a similar conclusion on violent content, Dexler, Penrod, Linz, and Saunders (1997) described how repeated exposure to violent films influenced participants' opinions on victimization. Females who feel they are personally similar to the victim/who have had similar experiences as the victim are more likely to contribute the harassment of stalkers to random chance, rather than blaming the victim for their clothing, behaviour, attitude, etc. Males who are more inclined to watch or be exposed to violent media are less sympathetic to the victims when compared to those men who are not exposed to the same media (Millburn, Mather, & Conrad, 2000). These findings are especially worrisome as, at least in slasher horror films, it is the female characters that are the most likely to be portrayed as the victim of violence when compared to males (Welsh, 2009). Overall, these messages suggest that sexual and violent content adversely influences viewers' perceptions of real-world-victims.

In relation with these findings Welsh (2009), in an analyses of 50 horror/slasher films, found when violence occurred against female characters their depiction on screen lasted "significantly longer in duration in slasher films as compared to interactions involving male

characters" (Welsh, 2009, p. 19). In addition, Welsh determined that the most common form of sexual content portrayals was voyeurism, which included scenes with characters in some form of disrobing. Out of all sexual content scenes noted, more than half (55.9%) depicted some form of voyeurism, surpassing less frequent depictions of sexual content such as: intimate kissing, affectionate touching, sexual touching, and intercourse (Welsh, 2009). It can be stated that depictions of stalking or voyeurism are high within both stalker and horror films. Although this is not alarming in and of itself, the over exposure of violence and harassment by the stalker, when compared to real-world data, may distort perceptions of realistic stalking and heighten fears unrealistically. Over exposure may also lead to endorsements of stalking myths and stereotypes.

**Stalking in the Media**

Most people have no contact with crime or the criminal justice system. Not surprisingly then, the media serves as a significant source of public information about crime (Winter, 2007). In fact, it is accepted that media is a major source in understanding crime, while film itself is one of the primary sources of media in which "people get their ideas about the nature of crime" (Rafter, 2007, p. 403; Winter, 2007;). Given the important role media plays in forming public opinion about crime and justice issues, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of how various media sources construct crime (Rafter, 2007). A vast majority of people will not be stalked within their lifetime; however, the general public accepts the media's interpretation of their depictions of stalking events as true.

Opinions are further formed through discussing film and media with others, who have themselves been persuaded and shaped their opinions through viewing media (Winter, 2007). It is in this sense that a consistent and constant cycle of media influences viewpoints, while these

viewpoints circulate the media's own interpretations of stalking (Shultz et al., 2013). There is a back and forth between the two, that impacts both the media and the public respectively. This concept is what has been termed 'hall of mirrors', where the messages created by "criminals, criminal subcultures, control agents, media institutions, and audiences" continuously ricochet off of one another (Ferrell, 1999, p. 402). Therefore, media and crime is in a constant loop, where discourses and counter discourses are circulated (Ferrell, 1999). Through the concept of the 'hall of mirrors' the original message can become misconstrued and even exaggerated, leading to blurring of messages that can cause firm beliefs in stalking myths and stereotypes.

**Stalking Myths and Stereotypes**

Some research focuses on how stalking and stalkers are presented within film in relation to how it affects perceptions about reality. For example, Lippman (2018) looked at the effects of media portrayals of stalking on an individual's perceptions of stalking myths. Specifically, she tested participants on a 21-item scale pertaining to stalking myths that ranged from victim-blaming, stalking as an expression of relationship love, and stalking as a victimless crime. Lippman (2018) found a causal relationship between media depictions of stalking on film and stalking myths. Films that depicted less threatening or less scary stalking resulted in lower stalking myth support. Those who perceived romantic films' depiction of stalking as more realistic were associated with higher levels of stalker myth support (Lippman, 2018). Simply put, if the depiction resulted in romantic relations the myths were supported, whereas if the depiction resulted in unwanted harassment the myths were rejected.

Similarly, Lowney and Best (1995) identified five main stereotypes held by viewers of stalking depictions regardless of the stalking depicted (romantic or fearful): 1) celebrity stalking is most prevalent; 2) stranger stalkers are most common; 3) women are victims, males are

stalkers; 4) stalkers are not of sane mind; and 5) stalking and courtship are mutually exclusive. It is likely myths about stalking and courtship being mutually exclusive are due to portrayals of non-threatening 'persistent pursuit' in which the target realizes he/she is meant to be with the pursuer, after repeated rejections, resulting in positive reinforcement. In fact, it has been found that men who are depicted as pursuing a romantic partner (either new or former) follows one of two patterns within the media. Where the second pattern, 'negative reinforcement', follows the pursuer who is deranged mentally and in a scary manner, while the target tries to escape. The audience is likely to view the negative reinforcement depiction as stalking, while the positive reinforcement as a normal process of courtship (Shultz et al., 2013; Spitzberg & Cadiz, 2002). These reinforcement patterns are harmful to the perceptions or endorsements of both males and females.

One of the most widely used and cited content analyses of media depictions of stalking was conducted by Lowney and Best (1995). Through an examination of newspaper articles, TV news reports, journals, law reviews and congressional proceedings, Lowney's and Best's main conclusion established that media's reporting changed over time. Beginning in 1980 through to 1988, prior to any anti-stalking laws, women were depicted as the victims of males in a general sense. These crimes were labelled under the terms: harassment, obsession and psychological rape. Subsequently, from 1989 to 1991, media shifted their attention to celebrity stalkers that were portrayed as mentally ill. Hereafter, between 1992 and 1994, more attention was given to stalking as an issue of domestic violence, where the female knew the perpetrator through a romantic connection (Lowney & Best, 1995). As their research ended in 1995, any changes to the depictions of stalking within the media thereafter were not studied. However, at least in Australia trends have shown a broadening of stalking and surveillance definitions. Over time,

news articles focused more on the stalking legislation itself and was relatively positive in conclusion (Caputo, 2000). From this trend, after 1995, it can be stated that the definition or the trend for stalking was seen as more general, with focus on positive enforcement of the legislation.

Other research suggests that media construction of stalking, particularly in film and television, do not always line-up with real-world crime statistics. Shultz et al. (2013) analyzed 51 films with stalking themes and compared the depictions with actual stalking patterns. Overall, the real-world data and film depictions were largely consistent with one another. The only discernible difference in the data was the over-exaggerated violence and harassment enacted by the stalker, not only to the victim but to third parties as well (such as police and family), found in the movies (Shultz et al., 2013). Although Austria's definition of stalking is sometimes very broad, Caputo (2013) also found that newspaper coverage of stalking was wholly consistent with police and court statistics. Similarly, in the social representation of stalking in the Italian media, it was found that domestic violence and stalking were highly correlated and covered frequently. Men used stalking as a way to equal out gender imbalances: to make women look weak and conforming to cultural myths about stalking (Caputo, 2013). Although this study did not look at films, or other entertainment media, it does give an idea on how women's social conditions are related to a wider phenomenon. Media constructions of stalking can also be related to stalking statistics in the real world.

Not everyone will be stalked in their life or come into contact with crime, therefore the majority of information about crime and justice comes from the media. Just as victims and perpetrators of stalking are gendered, so is the both male and female audience perception within film. Females are more likely to feel empathetic to victims, whereas males are more likely to

believe violence to be commonplace the more they are exposed to it. Film media influences people as the concept of 'hall of mirrors' demonstrates that criminals, social institutions, audiences and the media constantly and continuously bounce messages off of one another. These messages can be harmful to both sex's views, as the more someone is exposed to sexual or violent content the more likely they are to view it as commonplace and potentially as acceptable behaviour. Even more so, stalking myths are developed from observing media and understanding crime as it is presented. However, it appears that real-world data is closely consistent with newspaper articles and even films pertaining to stalking. It is important to note that the films over-exaggerate the offender's violence and harassment behaviours towards the victim and third parties.

**Summary**

In summary, Social Problems theory argues that a social problem is wholly subjective and is based upon what society views as an 'issue', the nature of the problem and/or the cause of the problem, and solution(s) to that problem (Henry & Milovanovic, 2000). A social problem is defined as something that harms a person or groups of persons (Schneider, 1985). Constructive Criminology adds to this theory by stating that crime is influenced by social interactions, and social institutions as well as cultural institutions and social structures (Michailakis & Schirmer, 2014). It is the processes, interactions and institutes of these societal events that formulate society's understandings of the world and what ultimately constitutes a crime. It is through this lens in which this paper will analyze the findings.

Major findings throughout the research found that although historical and current definitions of 'stalking' are broad and confusing, once broken down there are five distinct elements brought forth: 1) repeated harassment or a pattern of harassing behaviour by the

perpetrator; 2) the intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant to the event(s) that transpire; 3) the victim or victims are specifically targeted by the perpetrator; 4) the victim must feel fear or a rational/reasonable person would perceive as fearful; and 5) expression by the victim that the harassment is unwanted. Similar to the definition, the legislation of stalking also has three distinct elements to it and is broad encompassing: 1) a deliberate act; 2) a threat of act; and 3) victim fear (Beagle, 2011). However, it can become confusing for police offers to comprehend the legislation and how to interpret it which leads them to make less arrests of stalkers (Lynch & Logan, 2015). This is very detrimental to females, as stalkers are often male and most victims are female, meaning that the crime of stalking is highly gender-based (Lippmann, 2018; Spitzburg & Cupbach, 2007).

Intimate relationships make up 80% of stalking cases, with violence and domestic abuse being one of the most used controlling stalker behaviours (Melton, 2000; Mullen et al., 2001). As well, gendered viewings of violent content found that males are less sympathetic to the victim, whereas females are more likely to be sympathetic (Dexler, et al., 1997; Millburn, et al., 2000). This is significant as viewing media in any form can inform and socialize those who view it. Media both influences society, while society influences the media in a cycle termed 'hall of mirrors'(Ferrell, 1999; Shultz et al., 2013). Through this cycle, the images and discourses can become misconstrued and distorted, which is harmful to society as society determines what a social problem is through interaction and cultural constructs. In fact, media has been accepted as one of the major sources in which people understand crime (Winter, 2007).

Although much research has been done in the stalking field, there is a significant gap. Film analysis has only looked at comparisons to real-world data and not at the changes of stalking portrayals as a social problem itself. Thus the limitations of previous research have

viewed stalking changes compared to the real-world and not compared it within the media's depiction of stalking; as well, most research regarding this social problem is quantitative and not qualitative in representation. Using qualitative instead of quantitative methodology can garner more insight as it is more rich in depth and information that is not possible with quantitative data, and usually definitive in its analysis. As society and media influence each other, it is pertinent to understand stalking depiction changes throughout the years through film. This paper will add and build upon previous research in the stalking narrative field through analyzing this social problem and giving insight into how the portrayal of stalkers and stalking is a social problem. Within the following chapter, Chapter Three, it will be explained how data was collected to answer these questions.

## Chapter Three

## Methodology

In this chapter, I will outline and explain the methodology adopted in the present study. Recall that the main purpose of this study was to examine the representation of common and discrepant themes and narratives within stalking films. Briefly, through a Social Problems theory and Constructive Criminology lens these films were analyzed. This study looks at how depictions of stalking reinforce gender roles and if this has changed over time. The following three questions were then proposed: a) Have the depictions of gendered stalking within film changed and, if so, how have they changed? Has the stalker become more violent with time? (b) Do images of stalking within stalker films reinforce traditional gender norms and roles? Or do they reinforce other dominant ideologies? (c) If stalking depictions of gendered roles have changed over time, what does this mean for social problems and how does this connect with the larger picture of stalkers in the real world? More specific questions developed following the initial coding phase:

1. Do male and female portrayals within stalker narrative films adhere to traditional gender roles?
2. Do female stalkers become more sexualized and emotionally unstable/mentally ill throughout their depiction? Do male stalkers become more aggressive and violent?
3. If stalkers are depicted as more violent and mentally ill throughout the decades, does this pose as a social problem?
4. Are justice-oriented portrayals of victims realistic and do they support a neo-liberal ideology?

The following chapter will provide an outline of this study's research design to answer these questions. It will begin with the sampling size, how big the sample size is and why the sample size was used. This is followed by the research design of how the qualitative data was collected through an ethnographic content analysis. Next, the unit of analysis for the descriptive quantitative data is explained, followed by the variables or measures of the units of analysis.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research is a non-statistical way of gathering scientific data that is also often used to gain an understanding of participants or characters and how they describe their experiences (van den Hoonaard, 2018). A more ethnographic approach to this method was used; detailed observations were gathered to account for the social life and culture of particular persons (van den Hoonaard, 2018), in this case stalkers and their victims were of sole interest. Specifically, the present study adopted an ethnographic content analysis approach (ECA). The ethnographic content analysis is used to understand the "communication of meaning" and to "verify theoretical relationships" (Altheide, 1987, pg. 68). At the center of ECA, the researcher uses their methodology (sampling, data collection, coding, analysis, etc.) to be systematic and critical but not singular in their approach. Variables and categories are used to guide the researcher; however, other variables arose and allowed the study to be guided in a new direction. There is a constant and continuous discovery and comparison of the collected data, noting that one variable can be fit into several categories (Altheide, 1987). As such, the researcher consistently found overlapping and differing meaning to social interactions, that were included within the data and subsequent conclusion.

Ethnography recognizes that the researcher observes their focus of study and does not necessarily interact with them, they "seek detailed knowledge of the multiple dimensions of life

within the studied milieu and aim to understand members' taken-for-granted assumptions and rules" (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 35). It is important for ethnographers to learn about events and activities as they are unfolding within their specific settings and situations. Essentially, ethnography is the "analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions; the product of this analysis primarily takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations" (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 103). Therefore, meaning is not necessarily implicit and the researcher may have to use their own knowledge to interpret the meaning. From the social interactions and cultural situations viewed, the researcher created new knowledge and insights, generating theoretical explanations from the empirical data.

ECA findings were procured through viewing all twenty films at least twice, to ensure a thorough analysis was gathered. During the first viewing of the film, the researcher solely took notes on the observations of the film; however, the second viewing the researcher took even more detailed notes on what was being described, depicted, spoken and social cues or inferences that were not overtly acted out. At times, the researcher re-watched a scene or slowed down a scene to better transcribe what was happening. From these findings the researcher looked for patterns that appeared to be of interest to this particular study. Script dialogue was utilized to better understand, explain and relay the emergent themes. The script dialogue was procured through *The Internet Script Movie Database,* where certain words such as "sick", "psycho", "help", etc., were deliberately searched for. Additional measures were taken to ensure that the codes were firmly grounded in within the theoretical framework; however, the first step in this process was primarily deductive.

Rather than immediately filtering data into the differing codes searching for themes, the researcher looked through the codes to identify categories. These categories represent "buckets

of codes" that are deemed to share a certain underlying construct or meaning (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The first themes began to emerge, which were: male stalkers, female stalkers, female victims, male victims, disengagement from stalker, stalker behaviour and victim behaviour. This left the researcher with many codes to identify themes and patterns with. This initial phase was used to assess whether or not the primary codes adequately captured how male and female stalkers and their victims interacted with each other. Throughout this coding, the researcher continuously remaindered themselves to code the interaction how the characters were experiencing it without putting their own experiences or inferences within the coding. For example, male stalkers were prone to exert their dominance through derogatory language towards the female victim. Although it was not always prominent, the female victims reactions were coded for her emotions depicted and not how the researcher would have reacted. Hereby, the researcher used the subsequent emotions of the characters' reaction and the overall interaction to bring understanding to the scene. The female reaction was placed within the code for "victim behaviour", whereas the male stalker initial interaction was placed within "stalker behaviour". Inferences to theory or meaning were not given at this first step of coding.

The next step is to look within and across these categories to derive themes based on the codes similar meaning (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The themes that the researcher came up with from the codes were: emotionally unstable female stalkers, angry male stalkers, no cure for stalking (death as end result), stalker as non-human, wolf in sheep's clothing (female sexualization) and female victims fight back. These themes were broad in their examples and were used as a first step within the thematic collection. A second viewing of the films, a more clear picture of themes had developed: females stalkers using emotion to entice victim, male aggression related to husband patriarchal role, male and female stalkers distance themselves

from others, female stalkers appear first as demur, but turn sexual when they do not get what they want, and female victims of abuse turn more masculine before they can fight back. After the second viewing, themes were funneled down even further, to a) encompass the most pertinent/important themes and b) include the themes that were most at the forefront of the stalker narratives. These final themes were: male adherence to traditional gender roles, female adherence to traditional gender roles, female victim diversion from traditional gender roles, lack of legal help and neo-liberalism. From these themes, the theoretical considerations were then applied to produce meaning and how this relates to greater social problems of crime, which will be explained within the next chapter.

**Sample Size**

A non-probability or purposive sampling method was used to identify and collect the films that were analyzed. Specifically, purposive sampling was used to ensure that the sampled movies included prominent narratives that focused on stalking. In addition, the researcher wanted to ensure the movies included in the sample were accessible and widely seen by potential audiences. Given that the study was interested in major constructions of stalking as a problem, the focus was put on those movies that potentially reached wider audiences as they would have been more likely to influence subjective perceptions of stalking.

According to El-Masri (2017), in his description of non-probability sampling, there are three steps to this method. The first step in the process is to identify the population of study, the second step is to "identify the sampling frame…the target population that is accessible to the researcher" (El-Masri, 2017, p. 17), and the final step is to recruit the sample participants from the sample frame. For the purpose of selecting the films being studied, the Internet Movie Database, or IMDb, was used to search for films pertaining to stalking using the keywords

"stalking", "stalk" or "stalker". Additional searches were done through basic Google searches for "stalking movies" and "stalker films", to ensure a complete list of films. Schultz et al. (2014) used this method of data collection for their study of stalker films, starting with the film *Play Misty for Me* (1971) by and starring Clint Eastwood. Specifically, *Play Misty for Me* (1971) was chosen as the starting point, as it is generally regarded as the first stalker film (Schulz et al., 2014). Stalker narrative films were viewed through streaming websites and video on demand platforms, such as *Netflix* and *Crave TV*. Using this criteria, a sampling frame was created of all 50 potential movies for inclusion in the present study.

From this sampling frame, the final sample of 20 movies were selected following a more detailed examination of the synopses provided on IMDb. Films were excluded if the available synopsis suggested that stalking was not a central aspect of the narrative. For example, horror films, such as *Halloween* (1978) and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), were excluded despite having 'stalking' included as a key word, due to their unrealistic contexts. Genres such as fantasy and science fiction were also excluded for this reason. In addition, box office revenue, which is also included on IMDb, was examined to determine the relative popularity of the movies in the sampling frame. Lastly, only English-language films produced in North America were included in the present study. From this, a working framework to answer the research questions emerged and were sorted into Chapter Four's findings.

**Unit of Analysis**

**Base-Level Variables**

For consistency across all films being analyzed, a codebook used by Schultz et al. in their 2014 study was replicated within this study. The predetermined codebook was divided into six relevant categories:

> *victim (e.g., gender, race, criminal history, character classification), stalker (e.g., gender, race, criminal history, character classification), relational (e.g., relationship type, previous sexual encounter, duration, resolution), stalking behavior (e.g., surveillance, hyperintimacy, harassment, threat), victim response (e.g., fear, reciprocal stalking, family help, friend help), and justice (e.g., victim seek protective order, victim granted protective order, police involvement, stalker arrested) (Schultz et al., 2014, p. 205).*

Stalking behavior's were excluded as the following they were included within the following scene and interaction level variables. A mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative analysis were used to accurately plot changes or similarities throughout the films, while also gathering a more in-depth analysis beyond statistical data. As such, categories will be expanded past a simple yes and no conclusion of their occurrence within the film and will be concluded within the qualitative analysis of this paper.

Some of these sub-categories, and others mentioned above, require the subjectivity of the researcher through a qualitative lens. At times, the meaning, intentions and characteristics of the stalker or victim were not explicitly stated by the end of the film. Therefore, interpretation by the researcher was necessary to document the significance and meaning of the selected films. Examples and direct quotes from the film are then utilized to demonstrate the researcher's understanding of the film. A complete list of the selected films along with the year they were released, their ratings on IMDB and the gender of the stalker in the film are included in Table 1.1, Appendix A.

Twenty stalking films were hand-selected by the researcher based upon: selective sampling, a heavy emphasis on realistic stalker depictions within the thriller/drama genre, movies produced after the 1970s and within Canada and the United States, the five elements of the definition of stalking established above, the popularity ratings on IMDB, gender roles of the perpetrator and the availability of films. Four films were chosen from each decade beginning

with the 1971 film *Play Misty for Me* to present. Each of these films were watched and analyzed in order to identify the six categories and subcategories that correlate to their prevalence, including: victim, stalker, stalker history, relationship between victim and stalker, victim response, and justice.

**Scene and Interaction Level Variables**

Films were next coded according to the scene depicted, and categorized into three different measurements: violent scenes, sexual scenes and sexually violent scenes. Scenes changed once the physical location had transitioned, signifying the beginning and ending of that scene; however, the director's cuts or edits to a scene did not necessarily mean an end to the scene (Welsh, 2009). For example, if a stalker is chasing a victim from inside their house to outside their house this still constitutes as one scene. If an edit or cut to another physical location or character perspective lasts longer than one minute or sixty seconds this was taken as an end to the scene and was coded as such.

Determining the general type of scene was coded based upon the most predominately featured theme of the scene. Violent scenes were categorized as: any depiction of (1) physical actions that cause or intend to cause someone harm, (2) threats, harassment, intimidation, stalking or chasing or (3) any harm, injuries or violence that occurred off-screen (Welsh, 2009). The second scene variable category of sexual violence was noted as: depictions of any partial or full nudity (genitals were clearly viewed), voyeurism/exhibitionism, as well as any physical intimacy that included kissing, sexual foreplay, and intercourse. Finally, a sexual violent scene was coded if the depiction included any sexual touching, kissing and/or intercourse through threat (verbal or physical), coercion, or sadomasochism (Welsh, 2009).

Once the type of scene was established the interaction between characters was measured through the PAT protocol already utilized by Welsh in his 2009 study, *Sex and Violence in the Slasher Horror Film.* PAT interactions refers to the particular perpetrator (P), act (A) or target (T) within a scene. A new PAT interaction is coded whenever the perpetrator (P), act (A) or target (T) changes, even within the same scene or interaction between the same characters. For example, if the victim attacks the perpetrator with a knife, this is one interaction; if the perpetrator retaliates with a gun and shots the victim, this is a second interaction and is coded as such. The length of each PAT interaction was also coded to determine how long each PAT interaction lasted (Welsh, 2009).

**Measures**

**Violence-Related Variables**

In compliance with Welsh's (2009) study, the variables the researcher used were copied from Welsh for all three scene categories. Violence-related scene variables included: *Mode of Violence, Graphicness or Intensity of Violence, Degree of Harm and Seriousness of Violence.* The Mode of Violence ranged from psychological aggression to the most common modes of violence such as: shooting, choking, drowning and/or poisoning. Additional sub-categories were included such as 'unknown' violence, depicted off-screen, and 'other' violence that was not already included into the thirteen other sub-categories of violent modes. An additional sub-category was identified under the second category *Intensity of Violence* as: *Level of Graphic Content.*

*Level of Graphic Content* refers to physical injuries or blood depiction to a victim's body from a result of a violent act. Three factors were used to determine *Level of Graphic Content:* the amount of blood that could be seen, exposure of the wound and if there was protrusion of an

object from the body. This was measured on a five-point Likert scale from *1= None* to *5=Extreme.* Degree of Harm was measured on a six-point Likert scale from *1 = No injury depicted* to *6 = Consequences of violent act are not shown on screen.* The *Degree of Harm* was based upon the physical consequence(s) from the violent act, ie. how much medical help the victim needed to become healthy again. Seriousness of Violence was based on the amount of physical force used by the perpetrator against the victim and was measured on a six-point Likert scale from *1 = No physical force* to *6 = Violent act not depicted on screen.* This category also contained two sub-categories identifying the *Gender of the Perpetrator*, and *Gender of Victim* both containing an 'unknown gender' variable if it was not clear or not depicted on screen.

**Sexual-Related Variables**

Sexual related variables include: *Mode of Sexual Content, Gender of Characters in Scene, Level of Nudity and Nudity and Gender.* Mode of Sexual Content includes five nominal categories ranging from *1 = Voyeurism/Exhibitionism, 2 = Intimate Kissing, 3 = Affectionate Touching* and *4 = Sexual Touching* to *5 = Intercourse.* It is important to note that '*affectionate touching'* and *'sexual touching'* differ not based on level of nudity but on what kind of touching was depicted. *Sexual touching* is foreplay, heavy groping, oral sex, mutual masturbation or any other heavy sexual touching. *Affectionate touching* includes cuddling, massaging, or caressing. *Gender of Characters in Scene* includes a nominal range of only female, only male or both sexes in the scene. *Level of Nudity* includes a three-point Likert scale ranging from *1 = No nudity* to *3 = Full nudity.* Lastly, *Nudity and Gender* pertain to the sex of those characters who appear nude within the scene.

**Sexual Violent-Related Variables**

There were eight different factors included into the Sexually Violent scene category. *Mode of Sexual Violence* included five variables: *1 = Forced or coerced sexual touching, groping or kissing, 2 = Intercourse via verbal coercion or threat, 3 = Intercourse via physical coercion, 4 = Intercourse via threat with weapon* and *5 = Sexual torture.* Where intercourse via threat with a weapon involves the act of penetration with genitalia, sexual torture does not. Additionally, *Use of Derogative Language* was coded in a simple yes or no fashion and pertains to if the perpetrator used sexually derogative language towards the victim during the course of the sexually violent act (ex. calling the victim a "slut", "dirty whore", etc.). The last six measurements *(Gender of Perpetrator, Gender of Victim, Level of Nudity, Nudity and Gender, Degree of Harm and Seriousness of Violence Depicted)* follow the same variables and measurements as previously stated in the *Violent-Related Variables* and *Sexual-Related Variables.*

Prior to introducing the quantitative results/analysis, in the next chapter the qualitative analysis will be introduced first. Qualitative results were procured by watching each film at least twice and writing down observations or depictions that the researcher found of interest. Once observations for all twenty films were collected, the researcher grouped specific findings into similar and differing themes across all films. Next, for all three base-level, scene-level and interactional-level coding procedures the researcher watched each film for presence of all variables. Each variable was coded and entered into SPSS into two separate data files. In the following section each level is analyzed and results are gone into further detail. Both quantitative and qualitative findings will come together in the discussion portion of this paper.

## Chapter Four

## Reinforcement of Traditional Gender Roles

The following chapter will examine to what extent there are consistencies or discrepancies within gender role depictions and what this means for justice oriented repercussions. First, the female stalker depictions will be discussed in the viewpoint of hyper-femininity, and mental illness in the demonstration of adherence to traditional gender roles. Next, male stalker depictions will be discussed through the use of hyper-masculinity, hostile masculinity and sexual aggressor in reinforcement of the male traditional gender roles. The major findings of this chapter were the overtly present female and male behaviours used to solidify the stalker's gender. Females were noted to be more over-sexualized, promiscuous and mentally ill, whereas males were noted to be more controlling and violent in nature.

Through a Social Problems theory and constructive criminology lens, the researcher conducted a qualitative and descriptive quantitative analysis of twenty stalker films to examine patterns and changes throughout the depiction of stalkers in film from the 1970s to present. The findings and analysis will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Do male and female portrayals within stalker narrative films adhere to traditional gender roles?
2. Do female stalkers become more sexualized and emotionally unstable/mentally ill throughout their depiction? Do male stalkers become more aggressive and violent?
3. If stalkers are depicted as more violent and mentally ill throughout the decades, does this pose as a social problem?
4. Are justice-oriented portrayals of victims realistic and do they support a neo-liberal ideology?

Across the film sample, one of the most common narrative themes that emerged was the way in which constructions of stalking reinforced traditional gender norms. Specifically, most of the sampled films reinforced the traditional feminine and masculine roles within society and marriage. Male stalkers are portrayed as aggressive, controlling and powerful whereas the female victim are show to be helplessly weak and/or submissive. Female stalkers are over-sexualized and mentally unwell (highly emotional), whereas their male victim is a traditional male protagonist who supports his family and is viewed in a positive manner. When the male victim diverts from traditional marital roles or societal standards, such as cheating on his wife with the would-be stalker, he continues to be viewed positively as his home life portrayal supports his actions (ie. his wife does not have time for him as she is taking care of their children). Traditional gender roles are then reinforced when the divergent males suffer consequences at the hands of their stalker, due to their own deviating actions. While male stalkers may have differing motives for their criminal actions, female stalkers who stalk males are strictly motivated by their want for a romantic partner; in all movies where this is true, erotomania is present. Erotomanis is the delusional belief that another loves them despite evidence to the contrary. Two films that best demonstrated the adherence to female gender roles are *Obsessed* (2009) and *Fatal Attraction* (1987). Additionally, there were three films that best exemplified the male gender role adhesion, *Cape Fear* (1991), *Unlawful Entry* (1992) and *The Resident* (2011). These films and their adherence to traditional gender role portrayals will be discussed in this chapter.

**Sexualized Hyperfeminine to Mentally Ill Female Stalker**

When female stalkers are first presented on screen they are portrayed as sweet, charming and sometimes mysterious – they draw the victim in with their allure. This is further emphasized by the fact that the female wears white and/or very conservative clothing to hide her true

intentions and appear demure. Once they are rejected by their victim, they try to dress sexy to garner the attention of their victim, which can be classified as hyper-feminine. When this does not work they try to commit suicide to gain the favour of their victim, within three out of the five female stalker narrative films. Their sweet and sexy appearance is completely eradicated and replaced by their mental illness. According to the portrayals, the once affable female is now a mental case with a penchant for stalking. The female stalker is one that, underneath all the frill and glamour, is really just controlled by her emotions and those emotions lead to stalking. This can be seen throughout the decades of stalker films, from *Play Misty to Me* (1971) *to Fatal Attraction* (1987) to *Obsessed* (2009).

**Hyper-Feminine: Sexuality as Reinforcement Tactic**

In *Obsessed* (2009), Lisa is first presented as a tall blonde bombshell in corporate appropriate pant suit attire with a white button up blouse. She fires compliments at both Derek (victim) and his wife, Sharon, gushing about how handsome their son is and how she is learning so much from Derek. Later in the film, when Derek has already rejected Lisa several times, she shows up in a red slinky dress and tries to seduce Derek into having sex with her. When Derek refuses her offer telling her, "You're sick…need help", she goes back to his hotel room and takes pills to commit suicide. When Derek finds her and dials 911, she ends up in the psychiatric ward of a hospital on suicide watch; her red dress replaced by a hospital gown. Derek continues to comment on Lisa's behaviour calling her "psycho" and "sick" throughout the film. Real emphasis is brought to how mentally ill Lisa is, with less direction towards her female prowess – Lisa is emotionally ill, and her façade is brought down. After Lisa's suicide attempt, she is controlled solely by her emotions, believing falsely that Derek loves her (erotomania).

Lisa's switch from her traditional gender role of sweet and demur female, to seductress is a way for the audience to conceptualize and engage in sexual interactions in the production of social life (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). The audience experiences these sexual interactions, believing it is commonplace for a female to be sexualized. Simon and Gagnon (1986) argue that "individuals draw upon cultural scenarios, including romantic and sexual narratives, in order to obtain clues regarding the appropriate performance and interpretation of social roles" (p. 105). The audience take their cues from Lisa and how they are supposed to behave accordingly. Viewers then misunderstand that female urges are meant to be acted upon, no matter the consequences, as the female stalker has no control over herself and is overcome with her urge to stalk. Her sexualized state that leads to breakdown is something that is stereotypically commonplace for women, backed by the fact that she is eventually placed in a mental ward and looks disheveled, completely chaotic; as well as Derek' continuously insults that she is not well and should seek help. While she is first introduced as desirable, her breakdown throughout the film is made to portray how a women should act within her traditional gendered role. Individuals draw from these fictious displays regarding gendered interactions and behaviours and take these displays into their own lives.

Lisa fulfills her traditional gendered role through differing phases. The first phase is what Escoffer (2007) argues is the "assembling of erotic mental fragments and emotions which are then encoded during the second stage into organized cognitive scripts" (p. 139). The first phase is imagery; Lisa is highly sexualized in the first phase, constantly wearing skin tight clothing that shows off her legs, and her long blonde hair is always down framing her face. The second phase is conversation where Lisa tries to entice and convince Derek to give in to his desire by declaring, "Derek relax, no one's around to see us...it's okay." Lisa is trying to make Derek

understand that she can be discrete without anyone knowing, while also trying to arouse him by engaging in something forbidden. These two phases must come together "to realize both the sexual performances and the films versions of the fantasies" for the audience to absorb the film fully (Hoggart, 2004, p. 48). The film uses both phases to display gendered roles both in what to do and what not to do as a female and male.

It is a common gender role belief that females cannot resist their urges and any resistance is actually a non-fulfillment of the female role in and of itself (Millburn et al., 2000). Lisa cannot resist her urge to become consumed by her desire to be with Derek, even though she knows he has a family. Lisa throws herself at Derek without any regard for his feelings; in essence she is depicted as a harlot. Interestingly, we see the viewpoints of both Derek and Lisa, and how each experience the stalking. Kamir (2001) explains this phenomenon as "voyeuristic stalking", in which audiences experience what it is like to be both the victim and stalker at the same time. While Lisa leans into her desires, Derek seems to be able to resist; he remains the 'good husband' throughout. Lisa is beautiful and alluring; however, Derek does not seem to be swayed in the least even when Lisa shows up in his car with only lingerie on. He demonstrates his gendered role of staying by his wife's side throughout the film, as his duty is to his wife and not Lisa. Both Lisa and Derek's character reinforce the traditional gendered roles through the dutiful husband and the appalling seductress.

Similarly, when Alex first meets Dan (the victim) in *Fatal Attraction* (1987) Alex is dressed in a white blazer, smoking a cigarette while they have a casual conversation in a restaurant. She seems cool and collected; confident in who she is. She eventually tells Dan that she can be "discrete" in their relationship; she's mysterious and something that Dan cannot let go of due to her allure. They eventually end up dancing in a club and having sex in the elevator of

Alex's apartment; Alex is wild and free, further emphasized by her frizzy curly hair and long legs. This is drastically different from Alex's character development towards the middle and end of the film. She slits her wrists in an attempt to commit suicide when Dan tries to break off their relationship. She is erratic, crying and begging Dan to stay with her, even though she continues to be dressed in a white dress. When in the beginning her white blazer signified confidence and sophistication, her white dress now appears to make her child-like and fragile. All of her glamour is stripped away, leaving only her fragile mental health at the forefront.

Alex can be seen as being proud of her sexuality in the film, where she outwardly displays her breasts and long legs in an appealing manner to the audience. Research has shown that in recent years imagery for females increasingly depicts them as embracing their sexuality (Gill, 2008). According to Shimmin (2012), objectification of self-sexualization can be detrimental to society, as it creates a false narrative that females are equal to males under the guise of girl empowerment. The sexualization tactic actually serves to disempower women, keeping them under the male's control. As well, this reinforces the "gendered constructions of the female body and its presumed heterosexuality. It works to establish normative connections between sexed bodies and gendered expectations" (Shimmin, 2012, p. 122). Sexualization of the female body, as in Alex's case, makes it seem like the female is only there to look good for the man. The man should feel enticed by the female due to her sexualization, which is exactly how Alex hooks and lands Dan, even though he appears to be happily married. Dan cannot help himself but to fall for Alex because of her sexuality; in fact, due to her alluring behaviour it is insinuated that any other man in the exact situation would behave in the same way. Due to the portrayal of Alex, Dan is not to blame for his transgressions, but it is rather Alex who should be

ashamed of her actions. Alex fits perfectly in her female sexualized box, and continues to act in her traditional gender role.

Alex's character can be classified as hyper-feminine. Hyper-femininity is an extreme exaggerated adherence to female gender roles as it relates to heterosexual relationships. There are three elements that compose hyper-femininity. First, hyper-feminine females believe success as a female is determined by a romantic relationship and that "their sexuality can be used to maintain their relationship" (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999, p. 631). Secondly, hyper-feminine women use their sexuality as a tool to manipulate the male. Third, hyper-feminine women expect that males will adhere to their male gender roles (Dawson, Hamburger, Hogben, & McGowan, 1996). They believe that becoming an object of desire is their duty as a female. Alex seeks out Dan and invites him to a bar; she uses her sexual appearance and words of temptation to make Dan interested in her, stating that she can be "discrete". Alex exploits flirting, sex and excitement to try and maintain her relationship with Dan, by continuously interjecting herself into his life such as showing up at his office and calling him constantly. She invites Dan out to the opera, trying to garner his attention, but he refuses. Although Dan fell for Alex's enticement in the beginning, he is not enticed anymore. According to hyper-feminine theory, Alex's sexuality should be enough to maintain the relationship, yet it does not, and she continues to spiral downwards thereafter.

**Female Gender Identity: Neurotic, Psychotic or Male**

Both female stalkers are imbued with mental illness, which is portrayed through their actions on attempting to commit suicide and being promiscuous. Being highly emotional is within the gender roles for females; it is noted that females are either neurotic or psychotic in their emotional actions. When females are hospitalized for this illness it is for behaviour such as

depression, suicide attempts, anxiety, paranoia or promiscuity (Shimmin, 2012). Women who attempt to commit suicide are most often hospitalized and/or rejected by a man. It is a conditioned female behaviour, in which they are self-destructive, their anger is directed towards themselves (Chesler, 1998). Both Alex and Lisa attempt suicide after being rejected by the man of their desire. They are adhering to their gender roles, as it is expected of females to be neurotic and attack themselves rather than become aggressive to the male. Both women were promiscuous, or at least Lisa tried to seduce Derek to no avail. Use of the female body and attempting to commit suicide can both be seen as staying true to the traditional female gender role.

In fact, both Alex and Lisa's behaviour is regarded as mentally unstable and within their gender norms,

> *…because it represents a socially powerless individual's attempt to unite body and feeling… Such madness is essentially an intense experience of female biological, sexual and cultural castration, and a doomed search for potency. The search often involves 'delusions' or displays of physical aggression, grandeur, sexuality and emotionality — all traits which would probably be more acceptable in female-dominated culture (Chesler, 1998, p. 143).*

Essentially, Chesler is arguing that because the female has been born into a male-dominated society, out of character gendered actions or behaviours are seen as a mental illness; females cannot give influence and become frustrated by this that equates to an emotional outburst in the form of physical aggression, grandeur, etc. Alex and Lisa's frustration, out of lack of control or power, that is reserved for male gender roles, expresses itself within a suicide attempt. A female is further subjected to her gender role as the hospital itself is a patriarchal structure, made up of male figureheads. She is made to appear infantilized by stripping her of her clothing, giving her a white gown and becomes labelled as sick and in need of help by a male physician (Chesler, 1998). By going to the hospital Lisa is furthering her gendered stereotype not just from

portraying her mental illness, but also through seeking help from a patriarchal structured healthcare system. Her advice is taken from male physicians that reinforce her gendered role, through the use talking down to the female patient and degrading her to just her mental illness.

In both films, *Obsessed* (2009) and *Fatal Attraction* (1987), the antagonist/stalker is sexualized and portrayed as mentally ill. Sexualization is detrimental to the female in two ways; it allows the audience to experience out of character gender norm fantasies, and disillusions females into believing they are equal with males due to feeling they are empowered through their sexuality. Additionally, attempting suicide is seen as a societal norm for female gender roles as she cannot express her angry emotions as well and as freely as males can. Once the female expresses an emotional outburst she is labeled as neurotic or psychotic and can be hospitalized. Once in the hospital, the female is subjected to even starker gender norms, through the patriarchal structured health care system and male figureheads who run the system. These figureheads reiterate the gender norms to the females, while keeping the male in control of the opposite gender. Female stalkers follow the rules of their gender norms; male stalkers, on the whole, adhere to their gender roles as well.

**Male Stalker: Hyper-masculinity, Hostile Masculinity and Sexual Aggressor**

Male stalkers can be grouped into three separate, yet similar, categories: hyper-masculine, hostile masculine and sexual aggressor. All three of these categories were best exemplified in *Unlawful Entry* (1992), *Cape Fear* (1991), *Enough* (2001) and *The Resident* (2011). Male stalkers wholly observed their gendered roles, especially as their roles involved a higher level of masculine behaviour; they strictly adhered to their gendered norms and norms that are highly regarded as ‘male centric traits’. These males were overtly male, and displayed this masculinity through their actions, behaviours and words, especially when contrasted with

their female victims. These four films best demonstrate the aggressive, sexual and controlling behaviour that men display as stalkers in their traditional male gender roles.

**Hyper-masculinity: What Constitutes a 'Real Man'**

The first indication that Pete is aggressive in *Unlawful Entry* (1992) comes when he is on duty as a police officer. Pete pulls over a women stating that she is attractive, "these bitches can't get enough of us [police officers]." He then takes Michael, a citizen, to the bad side of town and tells him to beat up the man who robbed Michael's house. Pete ends up "beating the living sit out of this guy…" Michael believes Pete was showing off for him, trying to look tough and that Pete is "a little too tightly wound". He is becoming more and more aggressive as the film progresses; Pete shoots and kills his police officer partner while on duty. Pete also continues to become display more stalking behaviour such as showing up to the places Michael is at and at his house, believe that Michael's wife should be with him and not Michael. Pete is portrayed as a stereotypical male well within his traditional gendered role.

Traditional male gender roles state that men are socialized to be more aggressive, dominant and sexual initiators (Muehlenhard, Harney & Jones, 1992). Even further, hyper-masculinity is a personality belief that males should strictly adhere to a set of extremely stereotypical principles on what it means to be a "real man". There are three components to hyper-masculinity starting with the belief that danger is exciting (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). Pete puts himself in dangerous situations, which is especially prevalent as he is a police officer. Even though he may get caught, Pete shoots his partner for threatening him. Pete also has sex with a prostitute, taking his danger excitement to the next level, as if he gets caught his job may be taken away. The second component is "men view violence as an acceptable expression of a man's power and dominance over others and a necessary component of masculinity" (Dawson et

al., 1996, pg. 159). Through his work, Pete uses violence to show dominance over Michael. He beats up the man who robbed Michael, when Michael stated he did not feel comfortable with the actions of Pete. Thirdly, hyper-masculinity disregards women's rights and that women are property. Pete is has intercourse in his patrol car with what can be classified as a prostitute. Once he is finished with her, he throws her out of the car and calls her a "sleazy, lowlife whore", even though she tells him she does not know where she is. Pete does not care about the women's well-being or that she is safe, he only cares about his own needs and wants. Pete reinforces his traditional gender role by becoming a hyper-masculine being who is both aggressive, and dominating over Michael, while also disregarding women's rights.

**Hostile Masculinity: Control and Self-Preservation**

Max Cady in *Cape Fear* (1991) is an aggressive character, an antagonist, from the very beginning of the film. As he is just being released from prison the camera pans over all of his tattoos, with a grim reaper sticking out over his right peck – an ominous sign. Once he is released, Max seems unstable and laughs manically in the movie theatre, even with other people in the room with him – he does not seem to care about what others think of him. He then appears in the parking lot of Sam's, his attorneys and victims, parking lot and threatens him, "You are going to learn about loss." Max learned that Sam did not include the previous sexual history of the female who sent Max to prison. Max believes this is a massive disgrace to himself, as this information could have led to him not being convicted. Sam soon learns that Max killed his roommate by snapping his neck as he would nag Max about the smell of his cigars. When Max is jumped by three men sent by Sam, and he comes out victorious, Sam realizes just how dangerous Max truly is. Max admits that his goal in prison was to become more than human and to endure any pain. He demonstrates this when he is set on fire by Sam's daughter and he survives. Max's

aggression comes out in the way in which he tries to exact revenge on Sam, showing his true traditional masculine gender role. Max also continues to show up and stalk Sam throughout the film in wherever Sam appears to be.

Within hostile masculinity, when threatened with the loss of power, the formerly controlling male will want to regain their control once more in their gendered roles. However, there is a significant difference between power and control; where power is the capacity to influence, control is the capacity to limit another's influence (Magistad & Rettig, 1999). Max Cady lost all of his control when he went to jail and wants to, once again, regain control by limiting Sam's influence by taking away what Sam loves most, his family. Max identifies with his socially constructed gender role; as such, it influences his behaviour. Max can also be classified as a hostile masculine. Hostile masculinity asserts that it is the male's agency that "reflects a sense of self and is manifested in self-assertion and protection" (Nail, Sockloskie, Koss & Tanaka, 1991, p. 673). Due to the nature of his past, Max believes he needs to protect himself and seek out revenge on those who did not protect him, such as Sam. This is due to the fact that Max continuously states he wants revenge for the grievance he felt Sam made against him. He is also self-assertive in understanding that what Sam did was wrong and that Max, himself, is right in his pursuits for justice. Max adheres to his traditional gender roles through hostile masculinity, in which he tries to control and seek out revenge on Sam, while also self-preserving.

In the beginning of the film *Enough* (2001), Slim is the stereotypical damsel in distress. Mitch, her future husband and stalker, saves her from being hit on by another male. Eventually they marry and Slim settles into her traditionally defined gender role as a mother and wife. She has long brown hair, wears nice clothing, cleans the house, feeds and looks after their daughter,

Gracie. When Mitch ends up hitting Slim he reinforces the gender roles to her stating, “I make the money.. it’s my rules.” He is the breadwinner of the family and as such he is the one who is allowed to dictate her life and how she lives it (Walby, 1997). She is the female and he is the male; there is no grey area within their relationship. When Slim talks back to Mitch stating that he cannot hit her he further pushes that he is stronger than her based upon his male genetics: “You wanna fight? I’m a man honey, it’s no contest.” What he is saying is that since he is a male he is clearly much stronger than her and he would ultimately win in a physical altercation, and she should not even try. These are the stereotypical gender norms; the female is weak and listens to the male; whereas, the male may do as he pleases, is the head of the household while also setting rules for the female.

Brewster (2003) found that controlling behaviour was present when the controller felt fear in losing power over his partner. Where the partner who is less invested in the relationship is regarded as the more powerful one, hitting or abuse towards the women is higher when the women separates or tries to separate from her husband; in fact, “among victims of violence committed by an intimate, the victimization rate of women separated from their husband was about 25 times higher than that of married women” (Rosen & Bird, 1996; Bachman & Saltzman, 1995, pg. 1). In this example, Mitch is terrified of losing control over Slim and uses abuse to make sure it is known he is in charge. The abuse amplifies when Slim tries to leave Mitch; he hits her, signifying his power and control over her, that this talk of leaving will not be tolerated. When threatened with the loss of control through loss of the partner, the “formerly powerful partner will take action to regain his power” (Brewster, 2003, pg. 208). This is especially true within intimate relationships, where domestic abuse is used to regain or sustain power and control over the other (Rosen & Bird, 1996). Here we see Mitch trying to regain control through

use of abuse, when he feels he is losing his partner's affection. Mitch uses control and aggressive, hostile masculine behaviour to bring Slim back under his control.

**Sexual Aggressor: Dominance and Rape**

On the flip side, Max in *The Resident* (2011) is aggressive towards a female, Juliet. Max secretly stalks Juliet from behind her walls in her apartment that Max owns. Juliet kisses Max, but stops the interaction before it can become intercourse. Max begins to act cold and unbothered by Juliet after this encounter. The audience also learns that Max goes into Juliet's apartment when she is gone to snoop around and masturbate in her bathtub. Max starts ramping up his sexual behaviour and goes into Juliet's apartment when she is sleeping, kissing her, caressing her and even licking her fingers while she is asleep. Juliet can sense something is wrong and places cameras in her room so that she can see what is happening. When she finally watches the playback she realizes that Max has been sedating her and raping her at nighttime. The ending of the film comes to a crescendo when Max tries to sedate and restrain Juliet, but his plan is foiled when she ends up killing him with a nail-gun.

Max can be described as a sexual aggressor due to the nature of his actions. Sexual aggression can be classified as sexual dominance against women, through sexual acts. It is a type of aggression that can be used to maintain power over women, and not strictly used for the male's pleasure. It is also been established that "sexual aggression is primarily caused by the same factors as other forms of delinquent behavior (e.g., delinquent peers)" (Malamuth & Thornhill, 1994, p. 186). Max uses his sexual aggression against Juliet, but in a more passive manner. When Juliet stops their one and only sexual encounter, Max believes the sex is owed to him and takes matters into his own hands, as he drugs Juliet to make her docile and then does as he pleases. Max maintains his control and dominance over Juliet, through his sexual aggression,

by sedating her and by first stalking her. His actions become more and more aggressive, first with just stalking, then with close-stalking/touching and then to rape. Max knows if she is sleeping he can maintain his masculine dominance, something that his gender roles tell him is normal. Thus, Max's need to control Juliet is directly derived from his high level of conformity to his masculine gender role.

In summary, the overarching element to traditional gender roles throughout male depictions of stalkers is that of aggression and dominance. All three male stalkers bought into the idea of masculine gender roles from societal influence, demonstrating they need to be hostile and assertive in order to fulfill their gender roles. In such, they also believed that others around them should behave in socially acceptable gender norm ways. For instance, Pete wanted Michael to be more masculine for Karen, the object of his affection and Michael's wife. Max Cady wanted Sam to "be a man" and do his job properly. Additionally, Max from *The Resident* (2011) wanted Juliet to give him sex, and when she would not he took it for himself. Each individual has strict ideals about what it means to be a man. Thus, the overly aggressive and domineering man is a social problem due to the fact that these men take their gender roles too far. Whatever they want or desire should be given freely, and when it is not, they became irate and do what they feel is necessary to obtain their want(s).

**Summary**

Traditional gender norms for female and male stalkers are strictly adhered to through their depiction on screen. Gender roles and norms are reinforced by how female stalkers and male stalkers react to their victims. Males first reaction is to become upset and potentially become physically violent, whereas females are more likely to draw attention to themselves by committing suicide, self-harm or suicidal ideation. The males' motivation is revenge or control

when aggression is displayed whereas females are motivated by a romantic relationship when suicidal ideation is present. This is a reinforcement of gender roles, as females are made to be more emotional and led by their feelings; however, males should be more in control, stronger in their emotions – their expression is displayed outward, whereas female expression is displayed inward.

Female stalkers are first presented as sweet and submissive, using their sexuality to manipulate the object of their affection. Hyper-feminine female stalker are routinely depicted as believing their sexuality can be used to maintain and manipulate their victim. The success of the female is based upon the woman's ability to obtain a romantic relationship through the use of her sexuality. The audience then draws upon the female stalker narrative to understand their gender roles, through the interpretation of their performance on screen. It is further believed in gender role ideologies that females cannot resist their urges, and any urges that are resisted are actually outside of traditional female gender roles. Audience members then understand that female urges are meant to be acted upon, no matter the results or effects of their actions. Additional gender roles stipulate mental illness is a part of the female characteristic. Stalkers who identify with neurosis or psychosis are labelled as "mental patients" and are often sent to hospitals to deal with their illness. Mental hospitals further the patriarchal agenda because it is a male-controlled structure led by male physicians. Advice is taken from males at the hospital which furthers the traditional female gender role.

Male stalkers can be classified into three categories: hyper-masculine, hostile masculine and/or sexual aggressor. Hyper-masculine stalkers believe that danger is exiting, use of power and dominance is acceptable and women's rights can and should be ignored. Their over masculine behaviour and actions overtly adhere to their gender roles, in an effort to make it

known that they are reinforcing their gendered norms. Hostile masculinity asserts that self-protections and assertion should be used to control and maintain power over others. The assertive and self-preservation of the male adheres to the traditional gender roles as his use of control and dominance over the opposite sex is realized. The third category of sexual aggressor suggests males display their masculinity through using sex and aggression. The use of rape against women proves the power the male has over women, in staying with their gender roles and norms. Male stalkers believe they are of higher value over females, they use their actions, words and behaviours to display this oppression.

## Chapter Five

## Diversion of Traditional Gender Roles

Although the majority of films saw adherence to gender norms, there were some films that saw a direct diversion from gender roles. Diversion from gender roles were seen only in two films, produced within ten years of each other, where the female eventually fights back against her stalker: *Enough* (2002) and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991). These films follow the same pattern of illustration; the victim is weak and has to escape the stalker, the stalker ultimately finds the victim, and the victim ends up fighting back, killing the stalker. However, what makes this different than any other version of stalking films, is that the female has to transition into a more masculine version of herself in order to defeat the perpetrator, which is outside of her gender role. The female victim becomes stronger without the stalker, but only does so under the guise of converging to a more male gender role in looks, mannerisms and attitude. It is only when the female realizes that in order to become stronger she must divert her gendered role into a more masculine version that she can finally defeat her stalker.

### Fighting Back: From Female Victim to Male Triumphant

*Enough* (2002) is a primary example of how a weak woman escapes her marriage and has to grow stronger as a masculine version of herself to stop the victimization. Slim, the female victim, finally escapes her abusive husband and eventual stalker, Mitch. During the end fight scene, Mitch believes that he can defeat Slim, and that she would not be able to defeat him by herself but would need some sort of help either in a gun or a friend. When he realizes that she is alone and wants to fight him with just her hands, he changes tactics and tries to antagonize her, pushing her to back out of her plan – still unbelieving in what he is seeing:

> *Mitch: "What are you doing? [scoffs] You wanna fight me? Man to man?... You sure that's fair?...No, I'm sorry I can't do this… It's ridiculous."*

The parallel to the beginning of the film is clear – Mitch continues to view Slim as his lesser, a submissive person to control. Her gender role – to him – has not changed at all, but to Slim her gender role has changed drastically. Her change in gender roles, to become stronger as a more masculine version of herself through her appearance and behaviour, allows her to assassinate Mitch.

Expectation States theory argues how it is expected that both genders are different (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999, p, 632). As a result, society dictates the status characteristics and holds the belief that males are of higher value and are regarded as more capable due to their status. Women are valued less and therefore are less capable. As females are lower status they have less opportunity for displaying their competence and those who do not act in compliance with their gender role "might be seen as competing for status and be rejected" (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999, p, 632). Within the film, Mitch continues to act out his status as a more valued member of society, scoffing at Slim's insinuation that she wants to fight him; she's a women and, in his gender norm belief, should not be fighting. What Slim is acting upon is outside of her gender role and is preposterous, which can be seen when Mitch scoffs, "What are you doing? You wanna fight *me?*" In fact, Slim is acting outside of her gendered role and is rejected for it by Mitch. Mitch cannot comprehend what Slim is trying to do and rejects the idea completely when he says, "No, I'm sorry I can't do this… It's ridiculous." Slim is competing for status, not just within their relationship, but also within society. She wants everyone to know that she overtook her abusive stalker and husband, subverting her traditional gender roles.

Slim realizes that to defeat Mitch she has to take matters into her own hands. She cuts her long brown hair into a short male cut and dyes it darker. This change of hair signifies an improved demeanor for Slim; she is more alert, less fragile and more determined to end her

torment. Previously, she was on the run from Mitch, staying at different places and friend's houses; however, after cutting her hair, she rents an apartment and is bold enough to lie to the government, obtaining an illegal birth certificate in someone else's name. She's more confident and sure of herself. Later we see her training in different fighting techniques with a trainer one-on-one. Throughout the montage of training during the film, Slim is wearing shapeless clothing and baggy sweatpants with white running shoes. Her trainer never goes easy on her and never mentions her gender as a possible weakness, but continues to instill in her a strong attitude. While some of the faster and more blurred training techniques, one might even mistake Slim for a male with her short hair and shapeless work-out clothing.

Those who try to cope with or deal with stalking usually do not end up taking action and if they do, it may in fact lead to more emotional problems than resolutions. Action plans, such as refocusing their time to planning on ways to escape their partner leads to heightened symptoms of PTSD, anxiety and depression (Thoits, 1995). Additionally, females in domestic abuse situations are more likely to stay in an abusive relationship than to leave; which is especially true is there is a child involved (Brewster, 2003). As Gracie is Mitch and Slim's child it is more likely that she would stay and suffer through the abuse. However, she leaves him and takes Gracie with her, even though she has little to no money to escape. The traditional female gender role states that she should obey her partner, and do as he dictates. The female is made to be pretty, soft, and quite (Walby, 1997); however, Slim defies these gender roles and becomes more hard, which can be seen in her newly acquired muscles – making her less soft and subjectively less pretty in her appearance. Cutting her long brown hair into a shorter bob also defies gender roles, in which her pretty hair is gone, and replaced by a more masculine style. Moreover, she defies Mitch's wishes and leaves him, continually running from him even when he threatens her.

There is an overlap of this notion in the film *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991). Laura is also married to a man, Martin, that beats her and dictates her every action. At the beginning of the film, Laura is demur, bending to her husband's every want. Their house is perfect and everything has its place, almost as if someone has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; the house has a very sterile feel to it. The gender roles are enforced strongly and it is understood that the female is submissive to the male, while the male is the breadwinner of the family and therefore controls the household. Martin may do as he pleases, while Laura must listen to what he tells her (Walby, 1997). If Laura disobeys, she understands Martin will abuse her – which keeps her in line. Once Laura escapes Martin, by faking her own death. She rents her own house, living by herself as a single women. When Laura goes to visit her mother, she wears a disguise, but not just any disguise – it is that of a man. She dons a short brown wig, baseball hat, mustache, and a muted coloured outfit – signifying Laura's act of defiance against Martin. Yet when Martin and Laura face off, in the ending of the film, Martin continues his controlling behaviour – putting all of her food cans in order (OCD), slapping her and pointing a gun at her. Laura deviates from her gender role and eventually ends up killing Martin when he finds her by shooting him – signifying that her deviation led to her liberation.

Women who possessed male characteristics were regarded as mentally ill (Chesler, 1989). In fact, both genders who deviated from their traditional gender roles are viewed as more "pathological" and were perceived more negatively when compared to their socially defined characteristic-adhering counterparts (Cormack & Furnham, 1998).In fact females differ from males greatly in their gender roles:

> *"by being more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more easily hurt, more emotional, more conceited about appearance, less objective, and less interested in math and science"(Chesler, 1989, pg. 105).*

The dichotomy between both sexes is easily seen in how they act, by being less than men in most things. Yet when faced with the crisis of losing her home, almost losing her child and physical abuse from her husband, Slim choses to become calm, more objective in her plan to kill Mitch and lives independently. She even becomes highly aggressive towards Mitch when confronting him; all of these are outside of her traditionally defined female gender roles. Similarly, Laura learns to live by herself, to be more adventurous in her newfound independence, and eventually to be more aggressive in shooting her husband. Neither Laura and Slim do not care about their looks; Slim progressively becomes more masculine in appearance and Laura disguises herself as a male with a mustache and short hair. Neither female abides by their traditional gender roles, and further act more masculine to escape their stalker.

**Summary**

Only two films, *Enough* (2002) and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), saw a nonconformity to traditional female gender roles. Both females appeared, in the beginning, as meek and unwilful. Once out of the grasp of their abusive husbands and by diverting to a more male gendered version of themselves were they able to stop their abuse. The women become stronger once they transform themselves into a more masculine version of themselves, in order to overcome their stalker. Without this transformation the females would not have the strength that signifies their freedom. Diversion from their traditionally defined gender roles, to more traditionally masculine behaviours and appearances were regarded as pathological; they could be construed as mentally ill for going outside of their traditional gender roles. Both Laura and Slim become more masculine in appearance; Slim by cutting off her hair and gaining muscle, while Laura fully dresses as a male with facial hair and a short wig. This signifies that both women cannot escape their stalker without becoming more masculine. Detrimentally this means that the

women cannot overcome their male counterpart without destroying who they were and entering a more male appearance and attitude.

## Chapter Six

## Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

### Base-Level Variables

Not surprisingly, most victims within the coded films were female at 65%, with a frequency of 13., the other 35% were male victims. Most notably, over half of the victims were married at 55%, with only 40% of victims living alone. Films such as *Single White Female* (1991) were classified as living alone, even though the victim lived with her boyfriend previous to the stalker's involvement. Living arrangements directly correlated with living location, with all but one married family (*Fatal Attraction* (1987)) living in suburban locations and all lone victims living in urban locations.

**Table 2.1** Presence of Victim Variables in Sampled Films

| Variable | Presence in films |
|---|---|
| Victim gender | Female (65%)<br>Male (35%) |
| Victim race | White (85%)<br>Black (15%) |
| Victim living arrangement | Alone (40%)<br>Roommate(s) (5%)<br>Married (55%) |
| Victim living location | Urban (35%)<br>Suburban (65%)<br>Rural (0%) |
| Victim criminal history | Yes (10%) |
| Victim character classification | Protagonist (95%)<br>Antagonist (5%) |

Only two victims, prior to their stalking, had criminal histories; however, Ben's criminal past, in *Swimfan* (2002), had nothing to do with his stalker and her behaviour. However, Bree's prostitution, in *Klute* (1971), is directly linked to her stalker and why he is stalking her. Almost all victims were protagonists, with only Slim from *Enough* (2002) becoming an antagonist once

she leaves her stalker/husband. Lastly, most depictions of stalkers and victims were white, with only three films where the victim's race is black: *The Perfect Guy* (2015), *When the Bough Breaks* (2016), and *Obsessed* (2009), all which were produced in the late 2000s. Victim Variables can be viewed in Table 2.1, and Stalker Variables can be viewed within Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2** Presence of Stalker Variables in Sampled Films

| Variable | Presence in films |
|---|---|
| Stalker gender | Female (35%)<br>Male (65%) |
| Stalker race | White (90%)<br>Black (10%) |
| Stalker unemployed | Yes (15%) |
| Stalker mental illness | Yes (95%) |
| Stalker stalking history | Yes (20%) |
| Stalker criminal history | Yes (20%) |
| Stalker drug/ alcohol consumption | Yes (50%) |
| Stalker character classification | Protagonist (0%)<br>Antagonist (100%) |

Stalker psychopathology was not always explicit in the film. It was coded 'yes' if the researcher felt mental illness was depicted within the stalker by their actions, behaviour and habits. The stalker that was not coded as having mental illness was in *Someone's Watching Me* (1978), as his behaviour was not shown to indicate as such; this was mainly due to the fact that the stalker was not shown on screen. Stalking history and stalking criminal history was only coded as a 'yes' if it was explicitly stated within the film. Those films that did have stalking history and a criminal history were directly correlated to each other, meaning those that had a previously stalked also had a criminal past. Every single film analyzed found that the opposer or

aggressor was the stalker, and was coded as the 'antagonist', which can be seen in Table 2.2, Presence of Stalker Variables.

The majority of the stalkers and their victims had previous contact with each other at 65%, with 45% of them having previous sexual contact (see Table 2.3). All stalkers stalked their victim for longer than a week; however, this was not necessarily explained throughout the film, as such the researcher deduced timelines based upon many factors: number of scenes depicted, character development, day to night scenes or edits, and explicit statements of days or times of day by characters. The most common overall goal for the stalker was a romantic relationship at 67.5%. Two films were split into two differing goals, as the researcher best thought the stalker had two separate goals. Max in *Cape Fear* (1991) both wanted revenge and justice against his victim, Sam. Additionally, Pete in *Unlawful Entry* (1992) wanted to replace Michael and be in a romantic relationship with Michael's wife, Karen. Only one stalker, Seymour in *One Hour Photo,* wanted to help those he was stalking. Additionally, all but four stalkers were killed as a resolution to the stalking and all but four stalkers threatened their victims.

**Table 2.3** Presence of Relational Variables in Sampled Films

| Variable | Presence in films |
|---|---|
| Previous stalker/victim relationship | Yes (65%) |
| Previous stalker/victim sexual contact | Yes (45%) |
| Duration of stalking | <1 week (100%)<br>>1 week (0%) |
| Stalker's goal | Romantic relationship (67.5%)<br>Revenge (7.5%)<br>Replace (7.5%)<br>Justice (2.5%)<br>Service (0%)<br>Help (5%)<br>Control (10%) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Death as stalking resolution | Yes (80%) |
| Stalker threatened victim | Yes (80%) |

Only two victims did not fear their stalker, Dave in *Play Misty for Me* (1971) and Anthony in *Remember My Name* (1979). Both of these films were produced in the 1970s and both had females as the stalker with males as the victim. The two most prominent responses to the stalker was to physically counterattack the stalker (90%) and to receive help from a friend (70%). Most help from family members came from the victim's spouse, after the victim realizes that they cannot go on without letting their spouse know about the immediate danger they are in. When the victim reciprocally stalked the stalker it was due to wanting to understand their weaknesses or trick the stalker. For example, Slim in *Enough*, stalks her stalker in order to understand his daily routine and trick him into killing him in his own house. Mediated contact with the stalker came in many forms such as through another person, letters to the victim, gifts sent to the victim, etc.

**Table 2.4** Presence of Victim Response to Stalker in Sampled Films

| Variable | Presence in films |
|---|---|
| Victim feared stalker | Yes (90%) |
| Victim used third party to surveil stalker | Yes (10%) |
| Victim had mediated contact with stalker | Yes (35%) |
| Victim reciprocally stalked stalker | Yes (35%) |
| Victim physically counterattacked stalker | Yes (90%) |
| Victim verbally threatened stalker | Yes (60%) |
| Victim hid from stalker in public crowd | Yes (15%) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Victim received help from friend | Yes (70%) |
| Victim received help from family | Yes (20%) |
| Victim received help from media | Yes (0%) |
| Victim consulted with lawyer | Yes (15%) |

The most likely presence of justice was for the victim to go to the police at 70%; however, only 15% of the time were police helpful. In two films, *The Perfect Guy* (2015) and *Enough* (2002), the police were coded as helpful as the detective that each female victim went to advised the victim on how to get around the law and kill their stalker. The only legal helpful police involvement was in *Play Misty for Me* (1971), in which Detective McCallum connects the dots of Evelyn, the stalker's crime and warns the victim, killing the perpetrator in the end. Another legal route that did not work for all of the victims was to seek out a protective order. Only three victims went this route, and 100% of stalkers ended up violating the protective order.

**Table 2.5** Presence of Justice Variables in Sampled Films

| Variable | Presence in films |
|---|---|
| Victim sought protective order | Yes (15%) |
| Victim granted protective order | Yes (5%) |
| Stalker violated protective order | Yes (100%) |
| Protective order escalated stalking | Yes (100%) |
| Police involved | Yes (70%) |
| Police helpful | Yes (15%) |
| Police victimized by stalker | Yes (5%) |
| Stalker arrested | Yes (20%) |
| Stalker charged | Yes (100%) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Stalker convicted | Yes (0%) |

**Interaction (PAT) Level Variables**

As the analysis of films were stalker films, most of the Modes of Violence were psychological or non-physical aggression and are presented in Table 3.1. Most psychological or non-physical aggression was noted to be stalking in some manner and accounted for 37.6% of all Mode of Violence scenes. With 21 coded scenes, the second most prominent Mode of Violence was Chopping, Dismemberment, Slashing or Stabbing at 12.1%. Most notably, female victims were the only victims subjected to drowning, choking or strangling, and grabbing or restraining. Male victims were more likely to be shot at, at a ratio of 10:3. Males were also the only gender to suffer from setting on fire, or burning. Female to male ratio was almost equal in hitting with blunt weapons/tools/blunt instruments at a ratio of 6:7, and fist-fighting, pushing or striking at a ratio of 10:9. The least likely mode of violence was poisoning or burning, setting on fire, both at 1.2%.

**Table 3.1** Mode of Violence in Sampled Films

| Mode of Violence | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Psychological or Non-Physical Aggression | 65 | 37.6 |
| Abduction, Confinement, or Kidnapping | 13 | 7.5 |
| Threatening with Weapons | 5 | 2.9 |
| Grabbing or Restraining | 8 | 4.6 |
| Fist-fighting, Pushing, or Striking | 19 | 11 |
| Hitting with Blunt Tools or Weapons | 13 | 7.5 |
| Choking or Strangling | 8 | 4.6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Poisoning | 2 | 1.2 |
| Chopping, Dismemberment, Slashing, or Stabbing | 21 | 12.1 |
| Drowning | 3 | 1.7 |
| Burning or Setting on Fire | 2 | 1.2 |
| Self-Inflicted Injury | 4 | 2.3 |
| Self-Inflicted Injury Under Duress | 2 | 1.2 |
| Unknown | 2 | 1.2 |
| Other | 4 | 2.3 |

In order to examine gender differences within Mode of Violence, the 15 categories were collapsed into three general categories. The first category remained as an independent variable for Psychological Aggression. The second category was renamed Moderate Aggression and included four modes of violence as: Abduction, Confinement or Kidnapping, Threatening with Weapons, Grabbing or Restraining, and Fist-Fighting, or Striking. The final mode of violence was collapsed and renamed as Serious Aggression which included the remaining modes of violence (Hitting with Blunt Tools or Weapons, Choking or Strangling, Poisoning, Chopping, Dismemberment, Slashing, or Stabbing Drowning, Burning or Setting on Fire, Self-Inflicted Injury, Self-Inflicted Injury Under Duress, Unknown and Other). The gender of victim that was most likely to be subjected to a mode of violence was female.

In descending order, females were most likely to suffer from Psychological Aggression first at 77.8%, Moderate Aggression second at 58.8%, and Serious Aggression third at 52.3%. The average Length of Violence was fairly close between both male and female, with males at 78.1 seconds and females at 83.9 seconds. Females were subjected to Degree of Harm and Seriousness of Violence at 59.5%. The most common form of Degree of Harm was “No Injury

Depicted" at 45.7%(n=79). Similarly, the most common form of Seriousness of Violence was "No Physical Force Used" at 57.2%(n=99). Females were more likely than males to suffer from minimal injuries (13:3) and minimal force used against them (13:3). Males were most likely to have lethal force and lethal degree of harm against them at the same ratio of 20:14.

**Table 3.2** Gender Differences in PAT-Level Violent Interactions in Sampled Films

| | Gender of Victim | |
|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female |
| **Mode of Violence** | | |
| Psychological Aggression | 29.2%(n=19) | 70.8%(n=46) |
| Moderate Aggression | 41.2%(n=14) | 58.8%(n=20) |
| Serious Aggression | 48.5(n=33) | 52.5%(n=35) |
| **Degree of Harm** | 41.5%(n=70) | 59.5%(n=103) |
| **Seriousness of Violence** | 41.5%(n=70) | 59.5%(n=103) |
| **Length of Violence** | x=78.1 | x=83.9 |

There were a total of 56 scenes containing Sexual PAT-Level Interactions coded. Only 5 scenes were noted and coded to be Sexually Violent PAT-Level Interactions (Forced Sexual Touching**) and were also included within the table below. There were no Sexual and Violent PAT-Level Interaction scenes noted within any of the films. The most common sexual interaction was Intercourse at 31.6%, followed by Sexual Touching (which may have led to intercourse) at 19.3%. Voyeurism and Exhibitionism was third on the Sexual PAT-Level Interactions at a frequency of 10 scenes, and accounted for 17.5% of all sexual PAT-level interactions coded. Most commonly exhibitionism over voyeurism was coded within the 10

scenes. Most Sexual Interaction scenes contained both female and male characters at 91.2% with a frequency of 18.

**Table 3.3** Sexual PAT-Level Interactions in Sampled Films

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Mode of Sexual Content** | | |
| Voyeurism/Exhibitionism | 10 | 17.5 |
| Intimate Kissing | 6 | 10.5 |
| Affectionate Touching | 6 | 10.5 |
| Sexual Touching | 11 | 19.3 |
| Intercourse | 18 | 31.6 |
| Forced Sexual Touching** | 5 | 8.8 |
| **Gender of Characters** | | |
| Only Female Characters | 4 | 7 |
| Only Male Characters | 1 | 1.8 |
| Both Male and Female Characters | 52 | 91.2 |
| **Depiction of Nudity** | | |
| No Nudity | 27 | 47.4 |
| Partial Nudity | 29 | 50.9 |
| Full Nudity | 1 | 1.8 |
| **Gender and Nudity** | | |
| Only Female Characters | 4 | 7 |
| Only Male Characters | 1 | 1.8 |
| Both Male and Female Characters | 52 | 91.2 |

In Sexual PAT-Level Interaction scenes which only depicted one gender, females over males were most commonly portrayed at a ratio of 4:1. This is consistent with scenes of nudity, in which females were more likely to be naked at a ratio of 4:0, against males, seen in Table 3.4 below. Partial Nudity of males and females was second with a frequency of 29, at 50.9%. Only one scene included Full Nudity, which solely depicted female genitalia. Three scenes were coded for Partial Nudity of only one gender, which was also only a female portrayal for 10%. When scenes did included the nudity of both men and women it was at a frequency of 52 scenes, with a percentage of 91.2%, which can be view in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.4** Gender and Depiction of Nudity in Sampled Films

| | Gender | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Only Female Characters | Only Male Characters | Both Male and Female Characters |
| Depiction of Nudity | | | |
| No Nudity | 3.7%(*n*=1) | 3.7%(*n*=1) | 92.6%(*n*=25) |
| Partial Nudity | 10%(*n=3*) | 0%(*n*=0) | 90%(*n*=27) |
| Full Nudity | 100%(*n*=1) | 0%(*n*=0) | 0%(*n*=0) |

**Summary**

In summary, the base-level variables found females were more likely to be the victim at a 65% rate and most stalkers were male. Most of the victims were also married, with less than half of the victims living alone. Although mental illness was not always stated, from researcher deduction it was found that all but one stalker was mentally ill. Those films that did have stalking history and a criminal history were directly correlated to each other, meaning those that had a previously stalked also had a criminal past. However, previous stalker history was only at 20%.

A majority of stalker-victim relationships had previous contact with each other at a rate of 65%, with previous sexual contact at a rate of 45%. Justice-oriented responses to the stalker found it was most likely that the victim sought help from a friend (70%), police involvement (90%) and physically counterattacked the stalker (90%). The stalker's goal was mainly to obtain a romantic relationship with the victim at a rate of 65%.

PAT level variables found that the most common Mode of Violence was Psychological or Non-Physical Aggression which included coding for stalking and/or chasing, at 37.6% or 65 scenes. Females were most likely to be the victim of a Mode of Violence, over their male counterpart. These findings were also consistent with Degree of Harm and Seriousness of Violence, where the female was likely to be more hurt and more force used against her. Length of Violence, or length of the coded scene, was also slightly higher for female, with a difference of 5.8 seconds between solely male and female scenes. Eighteen scenes, the most common Sexual PAT-Level Interaction, were coded for intercourse, with voyeurism/exhibitionism the third most common sexual interaction. Both female and male characters were likely to be in a sexual scene/interaction together. However, in Sexual PAT-Level Interaction scenes which only depicted one gender, females over males were most commonly portrayed at a ratio of 4:1. Only one scene was coded for depicting full nudity and was a female portrayal.

# Chapter Seven

## Justice Response Depictions as Social Problem

As was already established social problems are not inherently good or bad, but they are rather denounced as a problem due to what people say and believe. The media itself, including film, influence society to legitimize emergent social problems (Henry & Milovanovic, 2000). Little is known about exactly how or what role the media play within identifying social problems, but it can be suggested that the media reinforce certain beliefs or stereotypes (Cohen & Young, 1973). The one major problem with media is that they mostly present the problem without ever giving a solution, or a probable solution that is not attainable; this ideology can be classified as neoliberalism.

### Neoliberalism, Justice and Social Problems

Neoliberalism can be described as a 'hands-off' approach to the private sector. It is a deregulation of the capitalist society such as financial markets and free trade markets, a favour for privatization, and stepping away from the notion of governmental assistance for the welfare state (Foucault, 2000). Neoliberalism is based upon the idea that political rationality exists, that the government possesses normative and functional reasoning as an instrument to good governing (Foucault, 2000). In essence, it impinges upon the idea that governmental representatives are rational agents "whose aim is to increase [the state's] strength within an extensive and competitive framework" (Foucault, 2000, p. 319). However there is also an increased control of surveilling the general public to ensure that the public will participate in the capitalist economy (Brown, 2006). Therefore, the government is not necessarily interested in the public's safety, but rather that they are able to be involved and contribute to the economy.

A significant pattern could be seen in the lack of legal or judicial help in dealing with stalkers throughout most all films. Many victims reached out to legal resources to try and stop their stalker; however, in most films, legal measures were not adequate. In fact, in 70% of all analyzed films, the victim sought out the help of police and yet were only of any assistance in 10% of all cases. Only 10% of victims sought the help from a lawyer and in fact in two films, *Cape Fear* (1991) and *Fatal Attraction* (1987), both victims are lawyers themselves. Lawyers were not helpful, and only redirected the victim back to police resources. Additionally, protective orders were only filed in 15% of films (*Cape Fear* (1991), *Enough* (2002) and *The Perfect Guy* (2015)) and 100% of these orders were unsuccessful in stopping the stalker. Charging the stalker happened within 15% of films, but convictions or court proceedings were never shown on screen. The most common end to stalking was for the victim to kill the stalker, which occurred in 80% of films. The above mentioned figures have been included within Table 2.5 Presence of Justice Variables in Sampled Films, in the preceding chapter of this paper.

Legal help and police involvement lacked the authority to bring the stalker to justice without the proper evidence. When Leah goes to the police in *The Perfect Guy* (2015), the detective explains as Carter has not threatened or injured her they have nothing to charge him with. The detective even tells her "stalking is hard to prosecute" and that she is responsible for her own safety. This is echoed in *The Seduction* (1982) when Jamie seeks help from the police Captain when he tells her that as Derek has not threatened her life there is nothing that can be done to rectify the situation. The Captain brushes off her concerns as an overzealous fan that is not of much trouble, telling her "as far as the law is concerned the guy really hasn't committed a crime". Even Leigh in *Someone's Watching Me* (1978) is told by the police that as her stalker has not done anything directly to her they cannot do anything for her. The police end up arresting the

wrong person and stop listening to Leigh when she points out the mistake, causing her to go after her own stalker in the end and putting herself in danger. All victims were told that although they might be suffering at the hands of a stalker, it did not mean anything unless they could prove that they were in some way hurt by this act.

With the practice of neoliberalism in use, none of the victims were able to obtain the proper justice from the government. This may be due to the use of neoliberalism shifting their justice narrative to a crime control process. Crime control refers to the priority of punishment for the criminal over the criminal's own legal rights. In other words, crime control's first priority is to seek out justice (Gilling, 2010). However, within the film's narrative most of the police officers could not arrest as there was not a significant crime being committed by the stalker. Yet, according to the legislation a criminal act of stalking has occurred when there has been a deliberate act, a credible threat of criminal actions, and a victim in fear (Beagle, 2011). In all cases that police were involved, there was threat by the stalker to the victim in 80% of films, and in at least 90% of the films the victim felt fear by stalker (Table 2.4 Presence of Victim Response to Stalker in Sampled Films). By legal definition, the police officers should have arrested the stalker in each case. However, with neoliberalism, and the approach to government that sees an increase in decentralizing the private sector, police officers are less apt to arrest and charge without *significant* evidence. The significant evidence would have to come from something that would injure or hurt the victim, for real proof to be shown.

Seeking the help of a lawyer fairs just as well as speaking with the police for the characters within the film. In *Fatal Attraction* (1987), Dan seeks out the help of police under the guidance of a lawyer. The police tell him that they cannot do anything without proof and the only real way to charge the female stalker, Alex, with criminal activity is to catch of her in the act of

committing a crime. Similarly, in *Unlawful Entry* (1992), Pete's lawyer first tells him to file a complaint with the police department against the stalker, Michael, which he carries out. When the complaint goes nowhere, the lawyer then tells him to pay off the stalker under the guise of "donating to his [the stalker's] favourite charity". Pete never pays off the stalker, and ends up killing Michael in self-defense. *Unlawful Entry* (1992) is different from all the other films as the stalker is a police officer himself. Pete is highly connected as a police officer, which is reflected when Michael plants drugs in Pete's house and obtains a search warrant, ultimately ending in the arrest of Pete. Pete also meets with Michael's police partner, Roy, who believes Michael is harmless and is just "playing" with Pete for fun. Michael is left to defend himself within this neoliberal ideological government practice.

**Summary**

Almost all of the analyzed films found that there was a significant lack of legal help for any of the victims. Victims sought the help of police officers in 70% of the films, but they were only helpful in 10% of cases. Those 10% of cases were only helpful due to the advice given by the police officer to overcome their perpetrator outside of the legal sanctions. Even those characters that were lawyers, in two films, could not help themselves through legal actions. Thus the victim was left to fend for themselves. This notion of the public sector being 'hands-off' can be linked to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism seeks to decentralize the government's control. Neoliberalist societies are most interested in the public's involvement in the economy and not their safety. They only seek safety of the public if it is in the general good for the economy. Therefore, it was the victims that had to take power and the law into their own hands to deal with their stalker. Taking matters into the victims hands creates an even bigger power imbalances between the victim and stalker as the victim has even less resources at their disposal.

# Chapter Eight

## Discussion

As previously discussed, the main purpose of the present study was to address: how stalker depictions adhere to traditional gender norms; what this means for broader social problems; and if the victim response to stalking should be analyzed for accuracy. Based upon the analysis of twenty stalker narrative films, most of the researcher found an alignment to traditional gender norms and roles, whereby only two films saw a diversion within female victims of the crime. Female stalkers saw reinforcement of traditional gender roles through their sexualized portrayal and their emotions succumbing to mental illness. Additionally, male stalkers saw adherence to their traditional gender norms through control, dominance and sexual aggression. Although there is research on stalker narrative films compared to real-world statistics, there is no comparisons within itself. This research provided insight into how both male and female stalkers are depicted on screen and how the victim response to stalking is neoliberal in its execution. These constructs reinforce the belief that there are set gender norms of how both genders are supposed to behave.

### Stalking as a Social Problem

To label stalking as a social problem is to invoke a particular way of classifying human behaviours, and actions, in a way that were not necessarily linked before. Stalking emerged as a social problem due to the harassment and interference on a person's life in general. Stalking is an unwanted behaviour by the victim or target, where the victim can become fearful for their life. In fact, within the late 20th century "harassing behaviours were becoming more common and more obviously disturbing to a wide range of individuals" (Mullen et al., 2001, p. 14). Stalking affects millions of individuals a year, and as such society as a whole deems it to be problematic, as it

affects many. It is a social problem because it is unwanted behaviour, by someone that, due to their behaviour, is classified as a criminal. Even more so, stalking can also be linked to domestic abuse, and violence against women (Mullen et al., 2001). The behaviour or action of stalking is not necessarily violent in and of itself, but it can lead to serious violence and/or aggression by the perpetrator. Therefore, stalking is the precursor or the initial clue to the proceeding violence. What newly emerged was the meaning attached to the action of stalking as criminal *behaviours.*

Society's traditional propensities to support men trying to maintain or re-establish relationships can be balanced by a rejection of strategies which amount to persistent harassment. As stalking is now see as a social problem, those who are stalked by previous relationship partners have the right to be independent and seek equality, without their ex-lover continuing to pursue them. Labelling stalking as a criminal behaviour signifies that females are not to be treated as property of males and that they have a say in who can be in their life. Society is establishing the acknowledgement that women have a choice within their relationship, and it is not just the males choice. The new definition of criminality behind stalking brings an equilibrium between the sexes, as most females are victims of male perpetrated persistent harassment. Additionally, this helps police officers, who are usually the first point of contact for victims, can become versed in stalking and arrest those who breach the law.

As social problems are identified to remedy them or resolve them, it is pertinent to first identify them. This is a step in the right direction, to classify stalking as a criminal behaviour that should be charged and convicted. Bringing attention to the social problem is also pertinent to dealing with and finding a solution to the problem. By using the media and more specifically film, more attention is brought to the topic of stalking and how it can become hurtful or threatening to the victims. How victims disengage from their stalker is of utmost importance, as

this is the only way in which the perpetrator stops. However, how most victims, within the analyzed films, ended up taking the law into their own hands, as the criminal justice system failed them. The problem with stalking is the lack of proof or evidence that can be collected, as proximity to a person over a long period of time is not necessarily a crime. More attention needs to be brought to the remedy to the problem, now that the social constructs of stalking have been established.

**Construction of Traditional Gender Norms in Female Stalkers**

When viewing the female stalker there was consistency in how they were portrayed. Female stalker adhesion to the traditional gender norms were consistent throughout their portrayal over the films analyzed. Mentally ill and sexualized female stalkers are portrayed throughout the analyzed films as hyper-feminine (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999). The adherence to traditionally defined gender roles raised questions about how the roles of gender play within the media, and how those genders are socially constructed within society. Both Alex and Lisa were portrayed as sexualized female objects. This adherence can raise the awareness regarding the detrimental patriarchal structures that females live within. Female sexuality in these movies is not empowering, but rather it is displayed in a sexualized and nude way in which reinforces the male value (Walby, 1997). The sexualization method actually serves to disempower women, keeping them under the male's control, as they are displays of objectification for the male gaze. In order to justify their actions the hyper-femininity method is manufactured. Hyper-feminine women believe their success is equated with obtaining and maintaining a romantic relationship through use of their body and sexuality. They use their femininity to manipulate the male into sustaining their relationship (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999) The female is then reduced to what

she can give to or do for the male. The female essentially exists for the purpose of exciting and enticing the male gender.

Further research indicated that females were shown to be mentally ill and needing rescuing by a male. Each female stalker was shown to be overly emotional that led to her being either taken to the hospital or helped by a male. For example, films such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *and Obsessed* (2009), reinforce this idea that females are inherently overly emotional that leads to them being labelled as mentally ill (Shimmin, 2012). Her main purpose and structure within society is overlooked by the fact that she is an emotional being, which reinforces the ideal that she is of lesser value than her male counterpart (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999). She does not succeed in obtaining a relationship with the desired victim placing her at an even lower value, as she was not triumphant in winning over the male. Her prowess may have captured the attention of the victim for a small time but in the end her mental illness pushed the victim away. For example, Alex and Lisa were ultimately rescued by their male victim after attempting suicide. While both thought the suicide attempt would bring the victim closer, it did the opposite. Not only is Alex devalued by her victim, she is further degraded by the male physicians that look after her in the mental ward (Chesler, 1998). The male physicians help to reinforce the patriarchal structure of the health care system. Even though she is seeking out help, the alignment she needs is pushed aside to further the male-centric agenda. She is then labeled as either neurotic or psychotic, leaving her to be further lessened to her mental state.

Bringing together both the sexualized and mentally ill female realizes the overall ideal that a female is mainly used as an object of sex and is overly emotional. She is reduced and degraded down to both her body and her psyche, and not what she can do. Her value over males is continuously devalued through the display of her body as a sex object; she is essentially only

on display for the male gaze (Shimmin, 2012). Her existence is in constant relation to what the male can gain from her and how he can keep her in line, even when she needs help and does not know the patriarchal structure is being pushed upon her. Promiscuity is used to further her devolvement into the sexual object for the male. Devaluing and degrading the female stalker, who is supposed to instill fear within the victim, is essentially shrugged off; she is more of a nuisance than a terror. Her status as a female is nothing more than a hindrance on the victim's day-to-day life. She cannot be fearsome because she is a woman, and is displayed as such.

**Construction of Traditional Gender Norms in Male Stalkers**

Another major finding was how male stalkers are overtly masculine in their portrayal, staying true to their traditional gender norms. Specifically, within *Unlawful Entry* (1992), *Cape Fear* (1991), *Enough* (2001) and *The Resident* (2011), each of the male stalkers were depicted through the lens of being overly self-preserving, controlling, powerful and sexual aggressors. They could then be categorized into three groups: hyper-masculine, hostile masculine and sexual aggressor. Each category encompasses differing overly dramatic portrayals of male-centric traits. From this it was easy to identify who the antagonist was and how their control and power was feared by the victim. Most of the male stalker's victims were female and reinforces the idea that females are to be categorized beneath males and should learn to fear the male gender, as he has all the power and control over her.

By use of aggressive and even violent behaviours within the hyper-masculine category, some male stalkers were shown to be highly dominant (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). Coupled with the fact that Pete was also a police officer with authority, he carried himself in a manner that displayed others should fear him. Max Cady was also feared and overtly masculine, categorized as a hostile masculine. as he carried out his plan to seek revenge, he was maniacal, displaying his

behaviour is a way that others should not approach him (Magistad & Rettig, 1999). He was so self-preserving in his stand-offish depiction that he did not care what others think of him. Mitch in *Enough* (2001) was also self-preserving, and controlling over his wife. Mitch's fear of losing control over his wife is viewed through his constant threats and abuse. He is trying to regain his power over his wife, as she no longer wants to stay in the relationship (Brewster, 2003). Further, Max, the predator from *The Resident* (2011), was classified as a sexual aggressor (Malamuth & Thornhill, 1986). When sex was not given freely to him, he took it for himself and ended up raping his victim. Although his aggression was physical over the victim, and his aggression came out in his thought-process of believing sex was owed to him.

Displays of overtly male stalkers characteristics are detrimental to both female and male traditional gender norms. Consistency of violence portrayed by the male stalkers was continuous throughout the films analyzed, from the 1970s to present., The male stalker adherence to gender norms stipulates that he has control over the female sex. Due to his power and control, his outward displays of aggression and violence hold the victim hostage. Male stalkers believe they are of higher value over females, they use their actions, words and behaviours to display this oppression. Specifically, acts of outward displays of violence are acceptable male behaviour. When something is not going in the way in which he wants, he can become angry, upset and loses his temper. The social problem is then that adherence to traditional gender norms hurts the female. She is further pushed into the victim category, where she is to fear the man and from this fear do as he says.

**Diversion of Traditional Gender Norms in Female Victims**

There were two films in which the female victim fell outside of her traditional gender norms, *Enough* (2001) and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991). In the beginning of each movie the

female victim is married to her abusive husband. While they are under the grasp of their husbands, they both can be categorized as the dutiful wife. Eventually both women escape and run away. Once the female escapes their abuser, they learn that the only way to truly escape his stalking is to become stronger by transitioning to a more male version of themselves. The female victim becomes stronger without the stalker, but only does so under the form of converging to a more male gender role in looks, mannerisms and attitude. Not only does this diversion show that females cannot, within their female selves, be strong, but that in order to defeat their enemy they must become something else, as their old self was not good enough.

Both Laura and Slim, the female victims, became more masculine in their features, learned how to be free from their abuser and learn to fight back. Slim and Laura's escape and subsequent transformation into a free and more masculine spirit is un-female and not within their gendered role. Traditional gender roles stipulate that the female should submit to the male; however, neither female followed the rules or guidelines put forth by their husbands. Both men were strong, and abused their wives, displaying their strength; through patriarchal terrorism, both husbands have the right to control their woman (Johnson, 1995). Not only do Laura and Slim defy their traditional gender roles, but they flip the script and end up becoming more masculine to show their own strength over their husbands.

The broader social problem remains that females are not strong enough to overcome their perpetrator without showing the audience their masculinity. Both females were rejected by their perpetrator for being equals, as their newly found masculine behaviour and appearance is threatening to the male. It is seen as competing for status, where females are trying to equal their sex to that of males (Matschiner & Murnen, 1999). Both male stalkers reject this idea, pushing aside their victim as a nuisance rather than an adversary. Even when the female tries to seek

some equilibrium between the sexes, she is pushed aside. The façade of females becoming stronger and braver is under the guise of a more masculine entity, and not in the image of a female. Thus the female depiction is further degraded below that of the male, even with portrayal efforts to thwart the ideology of male dominance.

Not only are female victims viewed as unequal, even with the new masculine touches, but they have to *become* more masculine for the audience to understand and accept their role as the 'final girl'. The final girl is described as

> *a primary character who out-lives all (or almost all) of the other primary characters, who survives one or more attack attempts by the killer, whose battle against the killer is the focus of the final act (i.e., final 1/3rd ) of the film, and who is ultimately instrumental in destroying (or seemingly destroying) the killer (Weaver, Menard, Caberra & Taylor, 2015, p. 36).*

The final girl is empowering and survives due to her rejection of traditional female roles; their tendency to appear androgynous solidifies their final girl classification. The audience, especially males, can only understand the final girl concept if she is less feminine and more masculine in her depiction (Weaver, et al., 2015). It is her masculine transition that allows her to survive, without this her stalker would prevail over her. Once again, this demonstrates the male patriarchy and their controlling power over the female sex. She is not fully understood for her strength without an androgynous appearance, and more powerful behaviours; both characteristics that are classified as male.

**Neoliberalism and Justice Response to Stalkers**

The final major finding in this study was that of neoliberalism and the lack of legal help from police officers and lawyers. Many of the films critically examine the dichotomy between the law and stalking criminality. From the theme of neoliberalism it can be deduced that the decentralization of the government and the pushing away from private sectors decreases the

chances of arresting stalkers. Lack of legal help in the sampled films directly related to real-world police views of stalking. Police officers do not or cannot comprehend stalking statutes, and even if there is an arrest made many convictions are either dismissed or pleaded down to a lesser offence (Jordan, Logan, & Walker, 2003).

The entire criminal justice system failed most all characters in the sampled films due to the two facts that there was 1) not enough evidence to convict the perpetrator and 2) the stalker was gainfully employed. Neoliberal ideology posits that those who are poor are more marginalized by the government; however, since most of the stalkers were not poor, they were not viewed as a problem. Throughout the films, the one major pattern that was deduced is that of lack of legal help. Most of the victims sought the help of lawyers and/or police officers; however, neither resource was able to help the victim stop the stalking. Lawyers could not do anything without an arrest and would direct the victim to the police. Protective orders were not prominent and were procured in three films: *Cape Fear* (1991), *Enough* (2002) and *The Perfect Guy* (2015). The protective order was never successful in deterring the perpetrator. Most often than not the only way to end the abuse was for the victim to kill the stalker. When the victim did not kill their perpetrator, the stalker was charged; however, the conviction was not shown on screen. Overall, legal help through lawyers, protective orders or police officers were not helpful.

The lack of legal help demonstrates how hard it is to charge, arrest and prosecute stalkers and their criminal behaviours. The burden of proof lies solely with the victim, which can be hard to collect. This can be related to the real-world in which police officers do not comprehend the anti-stalking laws and are reluctant to arrest (Lynch & Logan, 2015). The definition of 'stalking' itself is too broad in definition in which it is hard to know when it is appropriate to charge a perpetrator. Therefore, the social problem with the lack of judicial help for victims leaves the

victims vulnerable to their attacker. Those who view this, may indeed think that the police are not worth contacting and ending up take matters into their own hands. Taking matters into the victims hands can be detrimental to the victim as they may end up killing their stalker, as they do in most of the films, and end up arrested themselves. Therefore, depictions of a neoliberal ideology, in which the judicial system is of no real help, reinforces the idea that victims are helpless and should not rely on justice system for assistance.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although much as been understood from this study, there are limitations to also discuss that arose within the research. The sampling procedure from this study was not random, but rather a non-probability or purposive sampling method was used. Additionally, out of thousands of stalker narrative films, only twenty were picked and analyzed for this study. The films were chosen based upon popularity and female stalker narratives were often chosen over male stalker narratives for a more inclusive analysis. As such, the study may not be considered as representative of the entire population of stalker narrative films. Due to the purposive sampling method, it may also have influenced the themes that emerged and may have been more inclined to view gender adherence in their selection. Further, the films that were chosen were produced within Western society and therefore do not have global encompassing results. Other future research should be to identify and analyze films that were produced outside of Western society to add in the understanding of media's interpretation of stalker portrayals.

Resulting findings and analysis were conducted based upon a majority of qualitative findings. To this notion, there were no indications of how these themes can be related to viewers of the same films, but was limited to how the researcher understood the themes. The themes that were found within this paper may be different from another's point of view. It is recommended

that future research should include participant studies and observations of the particular themes noted in this study. Further, future research should look at how stalking victims disengage from their stalkers on an interpersonal level. How victims disengage or attempt to disengage with their stalker would add to the research by identifying and comparing the discrepancies between media depictions of stalkers and public perceptions (Shultz, et al., 2014). To this end, public surveys of stalking depictions in general would add to the broader understanding of stalker depictions and social problems regarding the "hall of mirrors" phenomenon and how this relates to co-construction of gender norm stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

As stalker narrative films are a small niche of films, there is little research regarding how they compare to one another in their depictions and what this means for criminological and socio-cultural themes. Stalking only became popular in 1989 with the murder of Rebecca Schaeffer, therefore little is known of stalking beforehand other than the literal "hunter/prey" definition (Davis, Lurigio, & Herman, Davis, 2001; Tjaden, 2009 2007; Melton, 2000; Lowney and Best; 1995; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2001; Sinwelski, & Vinton, 2001). In general, there lacked research pertaining to how depictions of both male and female stalkers were depicted and what kinds of themes developed throughout. Since stalker narrative films are mostly male stalkers and female victims, there was much adherence to the traditional gender norms of the patriarchal society. Hereby, the overall method to this study involved an ethnographic content analysis to consider how cultural themes and narratives presented in stalker narrative films are constructed in compliance with traditional gender norms, and neoliberal social/crime control.

Throughout the coding of the films, three emergent themes appeared: females as sexualized and mentally ill, males as aggressive and controlling, and legal help as futile. From

these themes a more specified critique was pursued that saw support for traditional gender norms and neoliberal ideologies. Popularized and over-generalized gender roles for females such as being portrayed as over-emotional and sexually explicit, were rampant within the films. Additionally, the propagated idea that males are controlling and oppressive to females was present. Only two films saw a critique of the traditional gender roles, in which the female victims were portrayed as strong but only when they became more masculine. Additional themes saw the lack of legal help for victims due to the overarching ideology of neoliberal decentralization of the government.

While there has been documented research conducted by other studies pertaining to stalker depictions, this study identified a major absence of research pertaining to stalker narrative films. This study contributes to the literature by analyzing cohesive themes regarding media and gender norms. Through examining these themes that depict genders in such a way, the underlying messages are reflected. The major findings of this study found that the sampled films were both supportive of gender norms and stalker depictions, with less emphasis on justice-oriented responses for victims.

## APPENDIX A

**Table 1.1**

| Title of Film | Year of Release | Rating on IMDB | Gender of Stalker |
|---|---|---|---|
| Play Misty for Me | 1971 | 7/10 | Female |
| Klute | 1971 | 7.2/10 | Male |
| Someone's Watching Me | 1978 | 6.6/10 | Male |
| Remember My Name | 1979 | 6.4/10 | Female |
| The Fan | 1981 | 5.8/10 | Male |
| The Seduction | 1982 | 4.8/10 | Male |
| Fatal Attraction | 1987 | 6.9/10 | Female |
| Lady Beware | 1987 | 6/10 | Male |
| Single White Female | 1991 | 6.4/10 | Female |
| Sleeping With the Enemy | 1991 | 6.2/10 | Male |
| Cape Fear | 1991 | 7.3/10 | Male |
| Unlawful Entry | 1992 | 6.3/10 | Male |
| Swimfan | 2002 | 5/10 | Female |
| Enough | 2002 | 5.7/10 | Male |
| One Hour Photo | 2002 | 6.8/10 | Male |
| Obsessed | 2009 | 4.9/10 | Female |
| The Resident | 2011 | 5.3/10 | Male |
| The Perfect Guy | 2015 | 5.6/10 | Male |
| When the Bough Breaks | 2016 | 5.1/10 | Female |
| Unforgettable | 2017 | 5.1/10 | Female |

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