# Current understandings of sex-based harassment and stalking perpetration

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**Abstract**

Sex-based harassment and stalking are highly prevalent forms of interpersonal aggression that often result in an array of detrimental and severe impacts for victims. In this chapter, we examine some of the common challenges associated with defining and legislating against sex-based harassment and stalking, as well as considering existing classifications of behaviour and perpetrator motivations. In doing so, our aim is to highlight the complex nature of these forms of interpersonal aggression and the difficulties associated with ascertaining boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour. We proceed to discuss the importance of appropriately targeted evidence-based educational campaigns to increase public awareness and understanding regarding the reality of sex-based harassment and stalking. Our conclusion is that increased education will enable greater recognition of the diverse behaviours that constitute sex-based harassment and stalking, so that people are better able to identify both their own and others' victimisation experiences.

## Introduction

Sex-based harassment and stalking remain two highly pervasive forms of interpersonal aggression that are widespread across all areas of society (Boehnlein, Kretschmar, Regoeczi, & Smialek, 2020; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; McDonald, 2012; Scott, 2008). Recent years have witnessed an explosion of media and public interest in sex-based harassment; this arose, in part, because of allegations involving UK politicians in Westminster (e.g., Michael Fallon; Damian Green) and high profile cases in the entertainment industry in the USA (e.g., Harvey Weinstein; Bill Cosby), fuelled by influential social campaigns such as the #MeToo movement and Everyday Sexism Project[1]. Early media and public interest in stalking also focused on cases involving politicians and members of the entertainment industry. In contrast to sex-based harassment, however, the politicians and celebrities were the victims rather than the perpetrators of this form of interpersonal aggression. High profile cases include actress Jodie Foster, whose stalker – John Hinckley – attempted to assassinate former president Ronald Reagan to attract her attention (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2009); and director Steven Spielberg whose stalker – Jonathan Norman – intended to sexually assault him while his wife watched (Saunders & Wainwright, 2008). Indeed, the murder of actress Rebecca Schaeffer was integral to the introduction of the first anti-stalking legislation in 1990 (Anderson, 1993; National Institute of Justice, 1993). Rebecca Schaeffer was stalked for three years by an obsessed fan who then killed her whilst she was at home in Los Angeles (Muir & Robach, 2019; National Institute of Justice, 1993).

It must be acknowledged that there has been recent debate regarding the use of the term 'sex-based harassment', and whether it is conceptually distinct from 'sexual harassment'. According to research conducted in collaboration with the Everyday Sexism

[1] An online invitation to share personal stories see: https://everydaysexism.com/

Project, the term sex-based harassment relates to the sex of the person being harassed but is not necessarily sexual in nature (Trades Union Congress, 2016). Throughout this chapter, we use the umbrella term 'sex-based harassment' which has been broadly defined as any behaviour that "derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual's sex" (Berdahl, 2007b, p. 644). Our use of this umbrella term was informed by the growing consensus that 'sex-based harassment' should be used in lieu of the term 'sexual harassment' (Holland & Cortina, 2013; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014; Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011) because it better captures a wider range of unwanted sex-related behaviours that are primarily motivated by hostility rather than sexual desire (Berdahl, 2007b; Fitzgerald, 1993; O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, & Griffin, 2000; Page & Pina, 2015, 2018; Page, Pina, & Giner-Sorolla, 2016).

A plethora of studies have documented that sex-based harassment and stalking are highly prevalent. For example, a survey of women aged 18 to 74 years across the 28 Member States of the European Union (n = 42,002) estimated that 55% have experienced sex-based harassment, and 18% have experienced stalking, since the age of 15 years (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014). Across Europe, the United Kingdom ranks 6th for sex-based harassment and 10th for stalking, with estimated prevalence rates of 68% and 19%, respectively. However, it is important to recognise that both men and women can be the victims of sex-based harassment (Berdahl, 2007b; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998) and stalking (Englebrecht & Reyns, 2011; Sheridan, North, & Scott, 2014).

Although research suggests that sex-based harassment and stalking are predominantly targeted at women (see Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003; Meloy, 1999; O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates, & Lean, 2009; White, Longpré, & Stefanska, 2020), other studies have shown that men, transgender individuals, and those who identify as having

no, or a non-binary, gender also experience these forms of interpersonal aggression (e.g. Berdahl, Magley, & Waldo, 1996; Englebrecht & Reyns, 2011; Holland, Rabelo, Gustafson, Seabrook, & Cortina, 2015; Langenderfer-Magruder, Walls, Whitfield, Kattari, & Ramos, 2020; McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012; Sheridan, Scott, & Campbell, 2019; Trades Union Congress, 2019). In fact, a survey of adults (aged 18 years and above) in the United States (n = 2,009) estimated that 38% of women and 13% of men experience sex-based harassment in the workplace (Kearl, 2018). Similarly, a survey of adults, aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales (n = 33,735), estimated that 20% of women and 10% of men have experienced stalking since the age of 16 years (Office for National Statistics, 2020). A survey of non-binary individuals (no apparent age restriction) in the United Kingdom (n = 1,401), found that, during the previous five years, 35% had experienced sex-based harassment in public spaces, and 8% had experienced sex-based harassment in the workplace, as a direct consequence of their gender identity (Valentine, 2016).

Regarding ethnicity, research has found that sex-based harassment is often entwined with racial harassment (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Imkaan, 2016), resulting in double discrimination for victims. However, data from a report on women's experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace (n = 1,533) revealed that the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women who reported experiencing any form of sex-based harassment was comparable to the overall proportion (52%). Similarly, the Crime Survey for England and Wales revealed that comparable proportions of adults from White and Black or Black British ethnic groups (both 4%) reported experiencing stalking in the previous 12 months (Office for National Statistics, 2020). However, adults from Mixed ethnic groups (7%; particularly women, 10%), were more likely to have been stalked during this time period, thereby highlighting the vulnerability of this particular ethnic group to stalking.

Both sex-based harassment and stalking also result in an array of detrimental impacts for victims which may be psychological, social, emotional, health-related or occupational (see Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007 for reviews). These detrimental impacts include; lowered self-esteem, a sense of helplessness, feelings of powerlessness, as well as diagnosable psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety (Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan, & Freeve, 2002; Dionisi, Barling, & Dupre, 2012; Fitzgerald, Collinsworth, & Lawson, 2013; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Larsen & Fitzgerald, 2011; Spitzberg, 2002). Other severe impacts for victims of sex-based harassment and stalking include insomnia, psychosomatic symptoms (e.g. headaches, nausea, palpitations), and even posttraumatic stress disorder (Avina & O'Donohue, 2002; Larsen & Fitzgerald, 2011; Pathé & Mullen, 1997). Moreover, sex-based harassment is associated with diminished job satisfaction, lowered productivity, reduced income and, at an organizational level, includes increased absenteeism, and greater employee turnover (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Pina & Gannon, 2012). Stalking, by comparison, is associated with concerns about personal safety. In fact, stalking victims often invest in additional security measures, socialise less, and stop visiting certain places, including work, through fear of encountering their stalker (Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Sheridan, Blaauw, & Davies, 2003; Spitzberg, 2002).

This chapter focuses on current understandings of sex-based harassment and stalking perpetration, synthesising across elements of the respective literatures, to better understand the reality of these forms of interpersonal aggression. The chapter will begin by discussing the common challenges associated with defining and legislating against sex-based harassment and stalking, as well as briefly outlining the current legislative provisions in the United Kingdom. These challenges are of interest because they highlight the difficulties associated with ascertaining boundaries between 'reasonable' behaviour and 'unreasonable' behaviour.

The remainder of the chapter will then be separated into two sections: one relating to sex-based harassment and the other relating to stalking. Both sections will focus on two key domains: the classification of behaviour and the classification of perpetrator motivations. These classifications of behaviour and motivations are important because they highlight the complex nature of these forms of interpersonal aggression. Finally, the chapter will summarise the common challenges associated with sex-based harassment and stalking, as well as discussing the importance of appropriately targeted evidence-based educational campaigns. Education is required to increase public awareness and understanding regarding the reality of sex-based harassment and stalking, so that people are better able to identify whether their own experiences, as well as the experiences of others, represent one of these forms of interpersonal aggression.

## Definitional and Legislative Challenges

Sex-based harassment and stalking are difficult to define, and there are no universally accepted, all-inclusive definitions of either form of interpersonal aggression (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2017; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012; McDonald, 2012; Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009). Sex-based harassment was originally defined as "unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her wellbeing" (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997, p.15). Men, as well as witnesses and bystanders of this unwanted and offensive behaviour, can also experience the detrimental impacts of sex-based harassment (Glomb et al., 1997). Stalking has been defined as persistent harassment in which one person repeatedly attempts to impose unwanted communication and/or contact on another to such an extent that it causes the victim fear for their safety (Pathé & Mullen, 1997; Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2004). Both definitions rely on the subjective appraisal of behaviour as unwanted and unreciprocated, and as causing

detrimental impacts and adverse emotional experiences. Thus, sex-based harassment and stalking are challenging to define because the respective definitions depend on how behaviour is experienced and articulated by the victim, as well as others exposed to and/or aware of this conduct (e.g., bystanders, friends and family; Mullen, Pathé, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999; Pina et al., 2009).

Sex-based harassment and stalking are also challenging to legislate against because of the difficulties associated with delineating prohibited behaviours, and/or ascertaining boundaries between what is considered 'reasonable' behaviour (e.g., making complimentary remarks on a co-worker's appearance; seeking or attempting to rekindle a relationship) and what is considered 'unreasonable' behaviour (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2001; Pina et al., 2009; Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2001; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). In the context of stalking, two basic models have been applied to the development of legislation: the *list model* and the *general prohibition model* (Infield & Platford, 2005; Lamplugh & Infield, 2003). The list model details specific prohibited behaviours but lacks the flexibility to deal with new forms of stalking (e.g., via new modes of technology) and may encourage stalkers to seek alternative non-prohibited behaviours. The general prohibition model, by comparison, is more flexible because it relies on common-sense judgements to ascertain the boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour; however, these boundaries are difficult to establish given the subjectivity inherent in determining whether behaviour is unwanted and/or causes detrimental impacts and adverse emotional experiences. Ultimately, it is important for legislation to find the right balance between (i) over-breadth, where reasonable behaviour is classified as sex-based harassment and stalking, which may result in a high number of false accusations, and (ii) over-restriction, where unreasonable behaviour is not classified as sex-based harassment or stalking, which may result in a large number of victims

failing to self-identify as such (Ogilvie, 2000a; Pina et al., 2009; Phillips, Quirk, Rosenfeld, & O'Connor, 2004).

Sex-based harassment was first legislated against in the United States, where it was declared a form of illegal sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), which was amended in 1980. Legal definitions originally encompassed only 'quid pro quo' harassment but were later expanded to include 'hostile environment' harassment (Gutek et al., 1999; Paetzold & O'Leary-Kelly, 1994; Wiener, Gervais, Brnjic, & Nuss, 2014). Quid pro quo harassment is generally regarded as the prototypical and most easily recognisable form of sex-based harassment. It occurs when job-related benefits (e.g., pay increases, opportunities for promotion), and reprisals (e.g., demotion, dismissal) are used to coerce sexual compliance from a peer or subordinate. Hostile environment harassment, by comparison, occurs when severe or pervasive sex-based conduct creates an intimidating, hostile and abusive work environment that unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance (Gutek et al., 1999; Wiener et al., 2014). The latter form of harassment is particularly challenging to define and legislate against because it encompasses a wide spectrum of behaviours that may appear ambiguous and relatively innocuous when viewed in isolation (e.g., making inappropriate jokes about women). Furthermore, one-off incidents of unwelcome sex-related conduct at work are not classified as sex-based harassment under the law (Gutek et al., 1999).

Stalking was also first legislated against in the United States, where it was declared a crime under Section 646.9 of the California Penal Code 1990. Legal definitions typically incorporate three key elements: conduct, intent, and victim response (Owens, 2016; Stalking Risk Profile, 2011; Tran, 2003). The conduct and intent elements relate to the behaviour and intentions of the perpetrator, and satisfy the *actus reus* (i.e., guilty act) and the *mens rea* (i.e., guilty mind) components of the crime (Dennison & Thomson, 2005; McEwan, Mullen, &

MacKenzie, 2007; Ogilvie, 2000b). The victim response element relates to how the conduct is experienced by the victim and is often incorporated to help establish whether a particular course of conduct constitutes stalking (McEwan et al., 2007). Parallel to hostile environment harassment, stalking is challenging to legislate against because it is a pattern-based crime that incorporates a range of unwanted behaviours over a protracted period of time that often appear routine and harmless when viewed in isolation (e.g., unwanted phone calls and messages; Pathé, Mackenzie, & Mullen, 2004; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). As such, it may be the accumulation of relatively benign unwanted behaviours that constitute stalking and cause the victim fear for their safety.

The Equality Act 2010 offers protection for victims of sex-based harassment in England, Wales, and Scotland. The Act protects against unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of "violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" (i.e., hostile environment harassment). It also protects against unfavourable treatment because of an individual's rejection of, or submission to, inappropriate requests (i.e., quid pro quo harassment). The Act uses a reasonable person test to establish whether the perpetrator ought to have known that their unwanted behaviour constitutes sex-based harassment. Although there are a few exceptions, the Act does not form part of the law in Northern Ireland. Rather, they still use the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act (2002) to protect victims of sex-based harassment.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 offer protection for victims of harassment and stalking in England and Wales. The Acts prohibit the lower-level offences of harassment and stalking, as well as the higher-level offences of putting people in fear of violence, and stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress. Neither Act has an intent requirement. Instead, similar to the

Equality Act (2010), both Acts use a reasonable person test to establish whether the perpetrator ought to have known that their conduct constitutes harassment or stalking. Although the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 includes provisions for Northern Ireland and Scotland, stalking was charged under different legislation (e.g., breach of the peace) in Scotland until 2010 when the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 was introduced (Murray, 2016). The Act offers protection for victims of stalking and prohibits the pursuit of conduct that causes fear or alarm. Regarding the intent requirement, the perpetrator must have intended to cause the victim fear or alarm, or ought to have known that their conduct would cause fear or alarm. In Northern Ireland, stalking continues to be charged under the Protection from Harassment (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, which is similar to the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, although there have been calls for legislative reform (Killean et al., 2016).

## Sex-Based Harassment

Sex-based harassment occurs in a multitude of settings, including workplaces (Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1993), educational environments (Paludi, 1990; Shepela & Levesque, 1998), and public transport (Gekoski, Gray, Adler, & Horvath, 2017); as well as through online channels such as the Internet (Barak, 2005), social media (Van Royen, Poels, & Vandebosch, 2016), video games (Tang & Fox, 2016) and dating apps (Thompson, 2018). Unfortunately, a comprehensive review of sex-based harassment within each of these settings is beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, we focus our discussion on sex-based harassment within the workplace because the empirical and theoretical literature is most well-established within this context (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; McDonald, 2012; Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003). Therefore, this section of the chapter discusses the classifications of, and motivations for sex-based harassment in employment.

### *Classification of Behaviour*

The discussion of definitional and legislative challenges has highlighted the difficulties associated with ascertaining boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour. These difficulties reflect the wide array of sex-related behaviours that fall under the umbrella of sex-based harassment, some of which may appear ambiguous and relatively innocuous when viewed in isolation. How then, should we identify and organise the wide array of sex-related behaviours that fall within the broad construct of sex-based harassment? To differentiate between harassment types, researchers usually adopt a behavioural approach (rather than using specific legal criteria) to reliably measure the incidence of sex-based harassment. The earliest survey-based prevalence studies in the field, administered checklists of potentially harassing behaviours with little theoretical rationale (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). These initial efforts later inspired researchers to develop more psychometrically robust, theoretically derived measures of sex-based harassment, thus empirically confirming its multidimensional structure (e.g., Gruber, 1992; Gruber, Smith, & Kauppinen-Toropainen, 1996).

As operationalised by the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, the most widely accepted and influential classification of sex-based harassment is the 'tripartite model' (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; Gelfand, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1995) consisting of gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion. Gender harassment is the most prevalent type of sex-based harassment (Leskinen et al., 2011; Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003). This consists of verbal, non-verbal, and symbolic behaviours intended to convey hostile, degrading, and contemptuous attitudes about women rather than being expressions of sexual interest and attraction. The complexity of gender harassment is reflected by its subdivision into two main categories: (i) sexist hostility; comprising behaviours such as telling sexist jokes, calling a female co-worker a 'bitch' or a 'slut', as well as making insults

about women's competence or intelligence (e.g., 'dumb blonde'), and (ii) sexual hostility; including behaviours such as making sexual epithets, displaying or distributing pornographic materials, sexual graffiti, and making crude comments about women's sexuality or sexual activity. These sexualised behaviours can permeate the work environment, thereby creating a hostile, humiliating, and disparaging climate for male and female workers (Berdahl, 2007a).

Interestingly, researchers have begun to expand the concept of gender harassment to include additional subtypes, thus enabling a more nuanced understanding of the heterogeneous behaviours within this broad domain (Konik & Cortina, 2008; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014; Rabelo & Cortina, 2014). Leskinen and Cortina (2014) proposed that gender harassing behaviours map onto five core dimensions, as measured by their 20-item Gender Experiences Questionnaire (GEQ). These facets consist of: (i) sexist remarks; for example, making derogatory comments about people of the opposite gender or making sexist jokes in someone's presence, (ii) sexually crude/offensive behaviour; which includes making crude or explicit sexual comments to another person; emailing, texting, or instant messaging offensive sexual jokes to someone, (iii) infantilization; for example, using condescending language to speak to someone as if they were a child; treating a person as if they were stupid or incompetent, (iv) work/family policing; such as suggesting that women belong at home rather than the workplace, or that women should not work in management, and (v) gender policing (also known as gender non-conformity harassment; Konik & Cortina, 2008); such as criticising a woman for not being feminine enough or behaving appropriately as a woman should.

Unwanted sexual attention, in contrast, aligns with the stereotypical notion that sex-based harassment represents the misguided pursuit of a sexual or romantic relationship. The term refers to sexual advances that are uninvited, unwanted, and unreciprocated by the recipient. This category of harassment includes a wide range of verbal, non-verbal, and

physical behaviours aimed at establishing some form of sexual or romantic relationship (Lim & Cortina, 2005). Common examples of unwanted sexual attention include; repeated requests for dates, sexually suggestive comments, intrusive questions about sex life, unwelcome comments on looks or clothing, whistling, leering, sexual gestures, or unwanted kissing and touching.

Finally, sexual coercion constitutes a severe, rare form of unwanted sexual attention in which sexual advances are combined with the use of bribes and threats. A typical example of sexual coercion is a situation in which a male boss promises job-related rewards (e.g., bonuses, pay rises, promotion) to a female subordinate in exchange for sexual favours, alternatively threatening job-related sanctions (e.g., demotion, pay reductions, dismissal) for non-compliance. In simple terms, gender harassment is a 'put down' whereas unwanted sexual attention and/or sexual coercion is a 'come on' (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Based on this threefold model, it is apparent that gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention parallel the legal term 'hostile environment harassment' with sexual coercion being analogous to 'quid pro quo harassment.' More recently, however, the categories of unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion have been subsumed under the umbrella term 'sexual-advance harassment' (Holland & Cortina, 2013; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014; Leskinen et al., 2011), both of which may contribute to a hostile work environment.

Alternatively, researchers have proposed that sex-based harassing behaviours can be grouped into two overarching domains: (i) approach-based harassment; which consists of unwanted sexual advances and/or unwanted sexual attention that conveys sexual attraction, and (ii) rejection-based harassment; consisting of hostile and derogatory behaviours that imply a desire to humiliate, punish, or drive away a target, especially a person who is perceived to violate traditional gender stereotypes (e.g., a woman who is considered to

possess masculine traits, or a man perceived as effeminate); (Stockdale, 2005; Stockdale, Gandolfo Berry, Schneider, & Cao, 2004).

These varying classifications highlight the complexities of organising the diverse array of sex-based harassing behaviours into a unifying theoretical framework. It must be acknowledged, however, that significant conceptual overlap exists among the different classifications with gender harassment and its subtypes embedded within the broader domain of 'rejection-based harassment' and both unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (i.e., sexual-advance harassment) conceptually aligned with 'approach-based harassment.' In examining the functions of these behaviours, we will now explore the key motivations that underlie the perpetration of distinct types of sex-based harassment.

### *Classification of Motivations*

Individuals may have a variety of motivations for engaging in different forms of sex-based harassment, but these can be broadly organised into two key domains; sexual and hostile motivations (Diehl, Rees, & Bohner, 2012, 2018; Page & Pina, 2015). The traditional conception of sex-based harassment is that it is predominantly motivated by sexual attraction in pursuit of a sexual or romantic relationship (Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982; Tangri & Hayes, 1997). Evolutionary and biological theories propose that male perpetrated sex-based harassment of women (i.e., sexual-advance harassment; Holland & Cortina, 2013) serves as a mating strategy that enhances men's reproductive success (Browne, 2006; Studd & Gattiker, 1991). These theoretical perspectives, therefore, infer that sex-based harassment represents innocent and misguided attempts at sexual seduction that are misconstrued and unreciprocated by the female recipient. This feeds into the stereotypical notion that some harassers are socially awkward men who are unable to accurately read women's behavioural cues at work, thus, lacking the necessary interpersonal skills to establish normal sexual or

romantic relationships. More recently, however, the evolutionary approach has been extended to account for male-on-male sex-based harassment. Bendixen and Kennair (2017), for example, propose that men's harassment of other men is intended to derogate competitors to reduce their perceived mate value.

Empirical support for evolutionary approaches has been offered through research using the computer harassment paradigm. When interacting with a virtual female chat partner, Diehl et al. (2012) found that men who score higher in short-term mating orientation (i.e., self-reporting a preference for casual sexual encounters) engaged in greater unwanted sexual attention (operationalised as the sending of offensive personal remarks) toward this female chat partner over the Internet. In later research, the predictive link between short-term mating orientation and unwanted sexual attention was strengthened when men were primed with sexual stimuli by viewing posters of semi-naked women (Diehl et al., 2018).

Although some incidents of unwanted sexual attention and/or sexual coercion (i.e., sexual-advance harassment) may arise from sexual interest, there has been relatively weak empirical support overall for the evolutionary and biological perspectives on sex-based harassment (Page & Pina, 2015; Pina et al., 2009). Indeed, these theoretical approaches fail to account for gender harassment (i.e., rejection-based harassment; Stockdale et al., 2004) which does not convey a clear sexual motivation. In fact, many acts of unwanted sexual attention may not necessarily be sexually motivated when they create a hostile work environment that adversely impacts on witnesses and bystanders.

Contrastingly, there is now widespread consensus that sex-based harassment is goal-directed aggressive behaviour that is predominantly motivated by hostility rather than sexual attraction (e.g., Berdahl, 2007a; Farley, 1978; Fitzgerald, 1993; Kelly, 1988; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2000; Page & Pina, 2015, 2018; Page et al., 2016). Adopting a power-based perspective, sociocultural feminist scholars argue that sex-based harassment functions to

preserve patriarchal societal systems of male dominance and female subordination (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979). There is now a widely held view in the literature that gender harassment is primarily motivated by masculinity threat (e.g., Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008). A wealth of studies have demonstrated that gender harassing behaviours are often targeted at women who fail to comply with traditional gender ideals (e.g., Berdahl, 2007a, 2007b; Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015) or who outperform men on traditionally masculine tasks (e.g., Hitlan, Pryor, Hesson-McInnis, & Olson, 2009). As empirical support, Leskinen et al. (2015), for example, found that female employees who violated feminine gender stereotypes (e.g., having a masculine appearance or displaying masculine typed behaviours such as assertiveness and competitiveness) experienced higher levels of gender harassment (operationalised as sexist remarks and gender policing using the GEQ; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014) relative to women who could be regarded as stereotypically feminine.

Relatedly, in the context of male-on-male harassment, it has been theorised that men experience harassment from other men when they are perceived to transgress heterosexual male gender norms; for example, by being viewed as weak, effeminate or gay (Berdahl et al., 1996; Holland et al., 2015; Stockdale et al., 2004). Thus, gender harassing behaviours are used instrumentally by perpetrators to reject, punish, and drive away individuals who violate traditional gender expectations. These behaviours also enable male harassers to communicate to women that they are unwelcome on male territory (e.g., because they are seen to threaten existing male privileges in the workplace or have taken a man's job).

Additional support for hostile motivations can be inferred from the limited available research on harasser characteristics and individual differences in the self-reported proclivity (i.e., likelihood) of men to harass. Interestingly, Lee, Gizzarone, and Ashton (2003) found

that men high in harassment proclivity exhibited lower Honesty-Humility; a personality trait characterised by an individual's reluctance or willingness to exploit others. More recently, Zeigler-Hill, Besser, Morag, and Campbell (2016) observed that each of the Dark Triad personality traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism positively predicted men's proclivity to engage in acts of hostile environment harassment (see Hammond & Egan, this volume for a detailed exposition of the 'dark triad').

Studies have also shown that men with a greater harassment proclivity possess attitudes and social cognitions that are supportive of interpersonal violence against women; for example, displaying hostile sexism (Begany & Milburn, 2002), adversarial sexual beliefs (Pryor, 1987), myths that legitimise sexual aggression (Diehl, Glaser, & Bohner, 2014; Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007), and moral disengagement strategies (Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2013; Page & Pina, 2018; Rudman & Mescher, 2012) to rationalise and justify harassing behaviour. These studies are important because research has consistently demonstrated that self-reported harassment proclivity is predictive of actual harassment behaviour (see Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993; Siebler et al., 2008). Consequently, there is a significant risk that individuals predisposed to harass will eventually perpetrate harassing acts when situational factors are permissive (Pryor et al., 1995).

## Stalking

Stalking occurs across multiple settings, but unlike sex-based harassment, the empirical and theoretical literature has tended to focus on stalking as a whole rather than stalking within a specific setting. The one exception is technology-facilitated stalking (i.e., cyberstalking, online stalking), where some researchers have focused on various aspects (e.g., prevalence, perceptions, typical behaviours) of stalking that occur within this specific context

(Alexy, Burgess, Baker, & Smoyak, 2005; Pittaro, 2007; Reyns, Henson, & Fisher, 2012). Although these researchers have made important contributions to the literature, it has been argued that advances in technology offer additional 'tools' through which to stalk, rather than representing a distinct form of stalking (Fraser, Olsen, Lee, Southworth, & Tucker 2010; Maple, Short, & Brown, 2011; Sheridan & Grant, 2007). Therefore, this section of the chapter discusses the classifications of, and motivations for stalking as a whole, with reference to technology-facilitated stalking where appropriate.

### *Classification of Behaviour*

Similar to sex-based harassment, the difficulties associated with ascertaining boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour reflect the wide array of stalking-related behaviours that lie within the broad construct of 'stalking'; many of which may appear ambiguous and relatively benign when viewed in isolation. Paralleling our earlier discussion of sex-based harassment, it is important to examine the classifications that have been developed to identify and organise the wide range of stalking-related behaviours. To address this important issue, researchers have created several different empirically- and rationally-derived classification systems (McEwan & Davis, 2020). In brief, empirically-derived systems are usually developed by academics and use a 'bottom-up' process of statistical analysis to classify behaviours, whereas rationally-derived systems are usually developed by practitioners and use a 'top-down' process of knowledge and expertise to classify behaviours (McEwan & Davis, 2020).

Regarding empirically-derived classification systems, one approach has been to use multidimensional scaling (MDS) to classify the behaviours described in court and police records of stalking cases. For example, Häkkänen, Hagelstam, and Santtila (2003) examined court and police records relating to 240 stalking cases in Finland, and identified three

behavioural themes: (i) expressive/violence; which includes blackmail, property damage, theft, rape of the target, and violence towards the target's child(ren) or third parties; (ii) instrumental/pursuit; such as sending letters and messages, delivering unwanted objects, and following the target; and (iii) instrumental/manipulation; which includes intruding, breaking into the target's home, threatening arson and attempting to kill the target.

Similarly, Canter and Ioannou (2004) and Groves, Salfati, and Elliot (2004) both examined police records relating to 50 stalking cases in the United States, identifying four and two overarching behavioural themes, respectively. The four themes identified by Canter and Ioannou are: (i) sexuality; which includes sending letters and gifts, following, property damage, accessing the target's home, and theft; (ii) intimacy; for example, surveillance, researching the target, asking for personal details, and revealing information about the target; (iii) possession; for example, driving by the target's home or workplace, contacting third parties, continuing to contact the target after intervention, and family abuse; and (iv) aggression; which includes threatening third parties, confronting and injuring the target, and threats of suicide. The two themes identified by Groves et al., by comparison, are (i) infatuation; which includes sending letters and gifts, phoning the target, accessing the target's home, theft, surveillance, researching the target, asking for personal details, and revealing information about the target; and (ii) controlling; which includes driving by the target's home or workplace, property damage, confronting and injuring the target, contacting and threatening third parties, family abuse, continuing to contact the target after intervention, and threats of suicide.

Differences in the thematic structures reported by Häkkänen et al. (2003) compared to Canter and Ioannou (2004) and Groves et al. (2004) highlight the complexities of organising the diverse array of stalking-related behaviours, and likely reflect the idiosyncrasies of the court and police records used for the analyses (McEwan & Davis, 2020). By comparison,

differences in the thematic structures reported by Canter and Ioannou compared to Groves et al., reflect differences in interpretation. Inspection of the MDS smallest space analysis plots revealed that (with few exceptions), 'sexuality' and 'intimacy' were subsumed by Groves et al.'s 'infatuation' theme, with 'possession' and 'aggression' embedded within Groves et al.'s 'controlling' theme.

Regarding rationally-derived classification systems, one approach has been to use thematic grouping to classify behaviours described in the stalking literature. For example, drawing on the risk assessment literature, Kropp, Hart, and Lyon (2002) classified behaviours into three groups according to the perpetrator's proximity to the target: (i) remote; comprising behaviours that do not require close proximity to the target, such as sending letters and gifts, and phoning the target; (ii) approach-oriented; including behaviours that require greater proximity but not direct contact, for example, surveillance, delivering gifts to the target's home or place of work, and following the target; and (iii) direct contact; comprising behaviours that require direct contact with the target, such as presenting gifts to the target, and confronting and injuring the target. It is important to note that advances in technology have increased the number of 'remote' stalking-related behaviours available to perpetrators of stalking (Cheyne & Guggisberg, 2018; Fraser, Olsen, Lee, Southworth, & Tucker 2010). Example behaviours include audio and video surveillance, GPS tracking, and use of the internet to gather and share information about the target.

Following an extensive review of the stalking literature, Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) categorised behaviours into eight groups: (i) hyper-intimacy; which includes attempts to establish or progress a relationship, for example, messages of desire, offers of assistance, and messages of a sexual nature; (ii) mediated contacts; comprising attempted or actual contact with the target, for example, phone calls, texts, and emails (iii) interactional contacts; which includes interaction with the target and third parties, such as approaching, appearing, and

invading personal space; (iv) surveillance; which includes monitoring and gathering information about the target, such as loitering, surveillance, following, and driving by the target's home or workplace; (v) invasion; comprising violation of personal boundaries, for example, information and property theft, property invasion, as well as audio and video monitoring; (vi) harassment and intimidation; comprising attempts to make the target change their behaviour and reduce the target's quality of life, for example, by threatening the target, reputational damage, isolation and network alienation; (vii) coercion and threat; which includes threats to harm the target, such as general threats, as well as threats to reputation, property, economic status and self; and finally (viii) aggression and violence; including actions intended to harm the target, such as vandalism, assault, kidnapping, sexual assault, and killing the target.

Differences in the group structures reported by Kropp et al. (2002) compared to Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) further highlight the complexities of organising the wide range of stalking-related behaviours. Interestingly, all classification systems, irrespective of whether they are empirically- or rationally-derived, differentiate between behaviours at the ambiguous and innocuous end of the spectrum, and behaviours at the unequivocal and harmful end of the spectrum. For example, Canter and Ioannou's (2004) 'intimacy' theme, and Kropp et al.'s 'remote' and 'approach oriented' groups, of stalking-related behaviours appear more ambiguous and benign when viewed in isolation compared to Canter and Ioannou's 'aggression' theme and Kropp et al.'s 'direct contact' group. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that themes and groups are not unique, and that perpetrators may engage in behaviours that transcend the different behavioural themes and groups (Canter & Ioannou, 2004; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Groves et al., 2004; Häkkänen et al., 2003; Kropp et al., 2002). In examining the functions of these behaviours, we will now explore the key motivations that underlie the perpetration of distinct types of stalking.

### *Classification of Motivations*

Individuals have heterogenous motivations for engaging in stalking behaviour, but in contrast to sex-based harassment, these motivations cannot easily be organised into discrete categories. Nevertheless, theoretical approaches have been applied, and typologies have been developed, to aid understanding of the aetiology of stalking perpetration. Prominent theories include attachment theory, whereby the development of unstable attachments during childhood predispose individuals with insecure attachment styles to stalk (Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Kienlen, 1998); and social learning theory, whereby prior learning via reinforcement and imitation predisposes individuals with abusive and intrusive interaction styles to stalk (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011; Ménard & Pincus, 2012). Empirical support for attachment theory has been offered through research using self-reported stalking perpetration with student samples (e.g., Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Lewis, Fremouw, Del Ben, & Farr, 2001). Furthermore, Patton, Nobles, and Fox (2010) distinguished between two subtypes of attachment and found that insecure-anxious attachment (i.e., view self negatively and others positively) was related to self-reported stalking perpetration, whereas insecure-avoidant attachment (i.e., view self positively and others negatively) was unrelated to stalking perpetration. Regarding learning theories, empirical support has again been offered through studies using self-reported perpetration with student samples. For example, Fox, Nobles, and Akers (2011) examined the relationship between the main components of social learning theory and stalking perpetration, observing that perpetrators were, (i) more likely to have friends who engage in stalking behaviours, (ii) less likely to react negatively to friends who engage in stalking behaviours, and (iii) more likely to believe stalking is justifiable. Similarly, Marcum, Higgins, and Ricketts (2014) examined the relationship between deviant peer associations and technology-facilitated stalking, finding that perpetrators were more likely to have friends who engage in technology-facilitated stalking behaviours.

Two other theoretical approaches, evolutionary and feminist, are interesting because of the fundamental differences in their conceptualisations of gender differences (Campbell, 2006). Evolutionary psychologists argue that stalking perpetration represents a strategy to help solve 'mating problems' (e.g., the acquisition of new sexual partners, the reacquisition of previous sexual partners; Duntley & Buss, 2012). Within this theoretical approach, gender-specific patterns of stalking reflect the fact that men invest in mating effort (i.e., acquiring sexual partners), whereas women invest in parenting effort (i.e., raising children) to maximise their chances of reproductive success. Therefore, men are more likely to perpetrate stalking because it represents a mating strategy that can be used to gain sexual access to women. Feminist scholars, by comparison, argue that stalking perpetration reflects the patriarchal society in which we live and the associated social inequalities (Brewster, 2003). Within this theoretical approach, gender-specific patterns of stalking reflect the fact that 'accepted' gender roles present men as dominant and women as subservient. Thus, men are more likely to perpetrate stalking because it reflects their sense of entitlement and can be used to control women.

Several typologies have been developed which allow us to infer the potential motivations for stalking perpetration (see McEwan & Davis, 2020; Sheridan et al., 2003). Similar to classifications of behaviour, these typologies vary in approach, exploring one or more of the following dimensions: (i) the perpetrator's underlying disorder, (ii) the perpetrator's prior relationship with the target, and (iii) the perpetrator's primary motivation (Sheridan et al., 2003a; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Consequently, there is considerable variation in the complexity of typologies, with some focusing on one dimension only (e.g., Boon & Sheridan, 2001; Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993), and others focusing on two or all three dimensions (e.g., Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2004; Mullen, Pathé, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999). In a recent analysis of the most widely used typologies, McEwan

and Davis (2020) found considerable similarities across typologies and "broadly similar levels of empirical support" (p. 132). However, they argued that identification of the primary motivation, albeit difficult to establish, is crucial to understanding and responding to stalking.

One of the most widely accepted and utilised typologies, that explores all three of the aforementioned dimensions, was developed by Mullen, Pathé, and Purcell (2000, 2001). This clinically derived typology differentiated between five groups of stalkers: (i) rejected, where the perpetrator is motivated to reconcile a relationship with the target and/or exact revenge against the target for having rejected them; (ii) resentful, where the stalker wants to punish the target for having wronged them in some way; (iii) intimacy seeker, where the perpetrator is motivated to establish a loving intimate relationship with the target; (iv) incompetent suitor, where the stalker wants a date or short-term sexual relationship with the target; and (v) predatory, where the perpetrator is motivated by the desire for sexual gratification or the acquisition of information about the target. With regard to the frequency of the different groups, research suggests that 'rejected stalkers' are most common and 'predatory stalkers' are least common (McEwan, Shea, Daffern, MacKenzie, Ogloff, & Mullen, 2018; Strand & McEwan, 2011). Although it may be argued that some motivations are more understandable or justifiable (e.g., wanting to reconcile a relationship or establish a loving intimate relationship) than others (e.g., wanting revenge or to punish the target), it is important that people are able to identify both their own and others' victimisation experiences irrespective of the perpetrator's motivation. This is especially important given that motivations are dynamic and may shift over time (Lyon, 2006). For example, Mullen at al. (2001) described how the motivations of rejected stalkers may fluctuate between wanting reconciliation and desiring revenge.

Although several typologies have been developed, McFarlane and Bocij (2003) highlighted that they all related to stalking as a whole, rather than distinguishing between

offline and online stalking. McFarlane and Bojic, therefore, developed a typology exploring motivations for technology-facilitated stalking based on victim interviews. This typology differentiated between four groups of stalkers: (i) intimate, where the perpetrator is motivated by the desire to restore their relationship, or form a closer relationship, with the target; (ii) composed, where the stalker wants to annoy and irritate the target rather than establish a relationship with them; (iii) vindictive, where the perpetrator's behaviour started after a discussion, debate or argument escalated or where the perpetrator's motivation is unclear; and (iv) collective, where two or more perpetrators want to discredit or silence the target, or punish the target for having wronged them in some way. It is important to note that the different groups of stalkers also tended to engage in offline stalking. For example, some 'composed stalkers' went on to stalk their targets offline, and most 'vindictive stalkers' also stalked their targets offline. This is consistent with Cavezza and McEwan's (2014) finding that perpetrators of technology-facilitated stalking often engage in offline stalking behaviours, also supporting the argument that technology-facilitated stalking does not represent a distinct form of stalking (Fraser et al., 2010; Maple et al., 2011; Sheridan & Grant, 2007).

## Discussion

This chapter focused on current understandings of sex-based harassment and stalking perpetration to better understand the reality of these forms of interpersonal aggression. We began by discussing some of the common challenges associated with defining and legislating against sex-based harassment and stalking, highlighting the difficulties associated with ascertaining boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour. Both stalking and hostile environment harassment (i.e., gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention) incorporate a wide spectrum of diverse behaviours, often enacted repeatedly over a protracted

period of time, that may appear ambiguous and relatively innocuous when viewed in isolation. There are no universally accepted, all-inclusive definitions of either sex-based harassment or stalking; current definitions, particularly from a psychological perspective, depend on how behaviour is experienced and articulated by the victim, as well as others exposed to and/or aware of this conduct. Legislating against these forms of interpersonal aggression is challenging, therefore, because the boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour are determined by subjective appraisals of specific behaviours as unwanted and unreciprocated, and as causing detrimental impacts and adverse emotional experiences.

We then examined the classification of behaviour and perpetrator motivations, highlighting the complex nature of sex-based harassment and stalking. These classifications are often developed in the context of violence prediction and treatment, but they are also important for informing evidence-based educational campaigns. Classifications of behaviour have been developed to organise the broad spectrum of behaviours associated with sex-based harassment and stalking into unifying frameworks, with some behaviours positioned at the ambiguous and milder end of the spectrum (e.g., staring and whistling; sending letters and gifts), and others situated at the unequivocal and harmful end of the spectrum (e.g., physical contact such as groping; confronting and injuring the victim).

Similarly, theoretical approaches have been applied, and typologies have been developed, to understand the aetiology of sex-based harassment and stalking perpetration. Importantly, perpetrators' conduct often transcends behavioural domains with harassers and stalkers regularly switching between different types of behaviour; for example, harassers may alternate between verbal (e.g., comments on looks and clothing) and physical actions (e.g., attempted touching and fondling) when interacting with the target. Thus, perpetrator behaviour cannot be simplistically classified into distinct behavioural themes or groups, and

it is important to recognise that perpetrator motivations may change over time. Indeed, the sex-based harassment literature, in particular, usually presents harasser motivations within single theoretical categories that are mutually exclusive (i.e., either sexual *or* hostile based motivations). Although not empirically verified, it is conceivable in some cases that a perpetrator's initial sexual motivation could later become hostile if their advances are rejected and unreciprocated by the recipient.

The aforementioned difficulties and complexities are important because people often have limited awareness and understanding of the reality of sex-based harassment and stalking. Individuals may have stereotyped preconceptions of sex-based harassment and stalking as representing the misguided pursuit of a sexual or romantic relationship, without considering the broader functions of the behaviours or the associated perpetrator motivations. In fact, the terms sex-based harassment and stalking are often used 'lightly', with little consideration of the seriousness of these behaviours or of the associated negative impacts (Boehnlein, Kretschmar, Regoeczi, & Smialek, 2020; Gutek, 1985). This lack of awareness and understanding regarding the broad spectrum of behaviours reduces the likelihood of people identifying their own and others' experiences as constituting either sex-based harassment or stalking. In turn, a lack of education regarding sex-based harassment and stalking reduces the likelihood of early intervention and increases the likelihood of escalation in frequency and severity over time (Kelly, 1988; Scott, 2020; White et al., 2020).

Although there is general agreement that education is required to increase people's awareness and understanding of sex-based harassment and stalking (Bell, Quick, & Cycyota, 2002; Scott, 2020), there is less agreement regarding how best to implement appropriately targeted evidence-based educational campaigns. One approach involves the coordination of sex-based harassment and stalking educational campaigns with pre-existing general awareness campaigns (e.g., National Stalking Awareness Week in the United Kingdom;

Boehnlein et al., 2020). Another approach involves the integration of sex-based harassment and stalking education into existing educational programmes (Long, 2020; SPARC, 2020). Our content review of an existing educational programme, Relationships and Sex Education, revealed that the current provision includes a comprehensive and evidence-based summary of what constitutes sex-based harassment (Department for Education, 2018). However, this provision does not appear to consider the classifications of behaviour, nor does it include any information regarding the classifications of perpetrator motivations. This is important because it is reasonable to assume that someone will be more likely to recognise harassing and stalking behaviours if the perpetrator has an explicitly hostile intent rather than a more benign intent that could be construed as romantic overtures (e.g., making repeated requests for dates; sending gifts). Moreover, the Relationships and Sex Education programme makes no reference to either the behaviours that constitute stalking or the associated perpetrator motivations. We believe, therefore, that one way to begin addressing the public's lack of general knowledge and understanding regarding sex-based harassment, stalking and other forms of interpersonal aggression is to extend this and similar existing programmes. The classifications of behaviour and perpetrator motivations presented in this chapter offer a useful platform by which to do this.

It should be acknowledged that the current chapter has only been able to scratch the surface with regard to the complexities associated with sex-based harassment and stalking, including the classifications of behaviour and perpetrator motivations (see Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Lyon, 2006; McEwan & Davis, 2020; Page & Pina, 2015; Pina et al., 2009; Sheridan et a., 2003 for comprehensive reviews). Importantly, however, we have synthesised across elements of the associated literatures to highlight the potential utility of these classification systems in the context of targeted evidence-based educational campaigns. Knowledge of these classifications can help to increase public awareness and understanding

regarding the reality of sex-based harassment and stalking; including the wide array of behaviours that constitute, and the variety of motivations for engaging in, these forms of interpersonal aggression. By increasing awareness and understanding, we hope that people will be better able to identify sex-based harassment and stalking when they experience or witness them, and therefore react appropriately before they escalate (e.g., by taking or encouraging others to adopt self-protective measures such as reporting to authorities).

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