

Women Targets' Experiences of Stalking

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Background to the Research

The current study involved collecting stories and experiences of women targets of stalking within the Regina, Saskatchewan area. This community-based research built on a previous study conducted by Family Service Regina's Domestic Violence Unit, which was funded by a Prairie Action Foundation CARE Grant, designed to collect stories and experiences from women targets of stalking in order to raise awareness and understanding about what these women go through on a daily basis.

The current study expanded on previous findings by collecting stories from an additional 6 women who were the targets of stalking from former intimate partners. Previous findings showcased the tremendous impact that stalking has on women targets; however, more participants were needed in order to reach theoretical saturation needed for dissemination of findings to international publications. Collecting an additional 6 stories from women, who had experienced intimate partner stalking, allowed us to better assess the services and resources available for women within our community.

Ultimately, narrative interviews were guided by three main research questions: 1) What is the impact of stalking on targets? 2) What were target's experiences with the Regina Police Service? 3) What services and resources within the community did the targets find to be helpful during different stages of their ordeal?

Individuals approached to participate in the study were current or former clients of Family Service Regina whose experience included being subject to stalking behavior. For the purposes of this study, identifying a stalking case was not reliant on a charge of criminal harassment under the criminal code of Canada; however, most of those asked to participate had interactions with police and the justice system. Of the 15 stalking victims approached, 6 chose to participate in the study.

Data collection and analyses were guided by narrative inquiry methodology. This methodology was the most appropriate approach for the given research questions as we aimed to hear stories from the viewpoint of targets. Narrative inquiry encourages participants to tell their stories from their own perspectives and in their own words. It allows participants to share, from beginning to end, what they have experienced (Lieblich et al., 1998). These data allowed us to hear a coherent story from the narrative interviews shared by the participants.

The nature of the current project involved a number of narrators that shared their stories and experiences with intimate partner stalking; as such, it seemed most appropriate to employ a categorical perspective for the data as a large number of narratives were analyzed. In addition, narrative analyses focused on the content as opposed to the form of the narratives provided by participants; in sum, analyses were based on a "categorical- content" approach as recommended by Lieblich and colleagues (1998), which is applicable when analyzing narratives for a specific topic of interest and from a group of people who have experienced similar life events.

The study is novel in that no previous Saskatchewan or Canadian studies have utilized narrative inquiry methodology in an attempt to understand the experiences of women targets of intimate partner stalking. As such, this research fills a significant gap in the current research literature.

This project was based on a strong collaborative relationship between Family Services Regina and RESOLVE Saskatchewan. In particular, Dr. Mary Hampton, Provincial Academic Research Coordinator for RESOLVE Saskatchewan, and Kimberley Zorn, Research Coordinator for RESOLVE Saskatchewan, worked alongside the domestic violence unit at Family Services Regina through every aspect of this project.

Summary of Themes of Findings

Results from narrative inquiry analyses revealed a number of important themes shared by participants who experienced intimate partner stalking.

- 1) **Participants reportedly noticed red flags early on in their relationship**; for instance, frequent controlling behaviours at the hands of their intimate partners. Partners began monitoring their phone calls, asking frequent questions about where they were going, what they were doing and who they were spending time with, and ultimately worked to isolate these women from friends and family:

Participant: Since then I haven't had a lot of friends because he never really, whenever I wanted to go out with a friend, even if it was a girlfriend, I had to I guess like lie about it. Hide it. Which would get me in more trouble.

Participant: And if I would ever like go out he would constantly call me like 80 to 100 times, non-stop wondering where I am, when am I coming home, who am I with?

Participant: There were other times where he would follow me if he didn't think I was doing what I said I was doing. He would follow me to my friend's house or home to see if I was actually going home to make sure I was telling the truth I guess.

Participant: As I began to make friends and have social life, he really cut those things off at the knees. He hated every person that I actually was reconnecting with. So, I ended up very very isolated... very isolated.

- 2) **Controlling behaviours and red flags seen within the first months of dating turned to more aggressive and violent outbursts from intimate partners**; for instance, women within this sample reported substantial psychological and emotional abuse at the hands of their partners. For some women, they also reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse during their relationships.

Participant: And so, I think the biggest part of it for me was the emotional crap, it wasn't the physical because it never was physical. He never touched me, you know, in a way that left bruises. It was all the emotional. It was all about the control that he had over me. Um, and that's the hard, those are the hard things to prove. Bruises are easy to show and easy to take pictures of and to have evidence. But, it's the emotional things, it's the abuse that you know,

his words, his actions, in the sense that you can't prove and it's the fear of not being able to prove and not being able to have somebody believe you.

Participant: We were living together at the time and he would rarely let me leave the house ... like if I was going to leave and he thought I was hiding something he would grab me, he would physically hold me to the floor and he would swing at the floor. He wouldn't hit me; he would hit the floor beside my head.

Participant: It started about 2 years ago was when he had first assaulted me. I guess that's the first time he had physically abused me. I had bruises all over my shoulder, my chest, down my arm. I had a bruised ear. Like from there I guess he did it because like I had a lot of friends that were guys at that point in time and he thought I had been cheating on him – which I wasn't.

3) **At some point, women within this sample made a decision to leave the relationship.**

Regardless of how or when the woman was able to end the relationship, leaving marked a new horrifying chapter of endless psychological abuse and fear perpetrated by their former partners.

Some believed that leaving the relationship would bring an end to the abuse and violence they had experienced. Unfortunately, the end of the relationship brought new types of controlling, obsessive, and abusive behaviours through the form of stalking. For most, stalking behaviours included repeatedly following them, texting or calling hundreds to thousands of times a day, leaving notes or gifts at her home or place of work, driving by her home or work, and showing up unexpectedly at her home:

Participant: He'd just the constant, the phone calls and phone calls, eventually he stopped leaving voicemails because I had an actual answering machine he'd left voicemails on and the police had taken that, he used to leave voicemails on my cell phone as well.

Participant: And the stalking was really frequent in the beginning. Like the phone calls were constant and after a while, it slowed down but it doesn't go away. Um, but it would slow down if he'd end up incarcerated and he couldn't call.

Participant: Valentine's Day, he showed up with an engagement ring. I cannot state strongly enough that we had no type of reconciliations, we never once, there's police involvement, it's done and so that thinking really scared me badly.

Participant: So he knew like, he was watching my house. My parent's house, my sister in law's house... just, checking to see when I was around. So, was I being watched? Yeah, all the time I felt watched. Everywhere I went I felt watched. And, you know, the prickles on the back of your head, like I knew I was being watched.

Participant: When like I took the kids to the park and he was there, I took them to the exhibition and he was at this gate and then he was at that gate and so he was watching. We went to church and he was there.

Participant: The day that I moved in I got, there was flowers on my doorstep. Roses on my doorstep. And it says, welcome home.

Participant: I remember in August was when he had followed me to my work actually, at like 5:30 in the morning. He would follow me to work if I didn't want to talk, he would just come find me and talk to me if I didn't want to talk to him he would pretty much try to force me to talk to him.

Participant: He would drop off flowers or he would drop off food or whatever... I would always give the flowers away. I never took them home. Not once. And, it became kind of a joke around the office saying, when's he gonna bring flowers again my desk is looking a little bare.

- 4) **Tactics were used repeatedly and contributed to the emotional and psychological trauma experienced by women targets within this sample.** Often times, the phone calls, e-mails, and letters would move between harassing and abusive messages to apologies and declarations of love for the victims. Other times, the perpetrators would leave messages threatening acts of suicide or faking medical health conditions. These statements were made in an attempt to get the victim's attention or to manipulate her into contacting him:

Participant: He'd call and he'd call and he'd call and he'd call and he'd call ... It would always, that starting you know, I'm sorry I just want to talk to you and then I'd say like I want nothing to do with you... and then he gets mean, right? He always threatened me all the time so one of your basic human rights is to be safe, right and to feel safe. After your basic need to survive, you need to be safe. And when you're in that, you're just, you never feel safe.

Participant: Oh, and I haven't even touched on the phone calls, at this time I only had a land line and daily he would fill up the machine. So, he'd fill it up almost every month and they would range from him screaming, "You miserable whore, I'm going to go buy a piece of ass" to sobbing, "I'm sorry baby and I love you" to you lying this and that and the other thing it just... on and on and on and on and on, and emails and it just wouldn't quit.

Participant: And, statements like he started threatening to kill himself and statements like, "If I'm going to go, you're going to go"... and I'm what do you mean by that?

Participant: Cause this was another thing since we had broken up, oh he had cancer again and oh he's dying in, it's terminal he only has 3 months to live. I'm going to the hospital, I've been in and out of the hospital. He'd been lying to me about so much stuff. For many women within this sample, the stalking behaviours escalated from phone calls to showing up at her home, constant drive-bys of her house or work, threatening family members, friends or colleagues, vandalizing property, and threats of physical violence. A few women reported experiencing more severe criminal acts such as break and enters or physical/sexual assaults perpetrated by their stalkers:

Participant: So the harassment got really bad and he so one time in the past, he had called and told me he was going to bring a gun to my work ...you know as much as I always believed that he wouldn't actually do it there was just the like what if? What if he does?

Participant: So I had security walk me to my car. Because I was afraid to walk out to my car by myself. And you know wherever I went, I never went anywhere by myself, cause I was waiting for him to show up. Twice my car was broken into in the parking lotno other cars were, you know, like other cars in the parking lot, mine's the only one broken into not once but twice. A little bit suspicious, was it him? I don't know. I can't prove it was him but I'm highly suspicious it was. Highly suspicious.

Participant: But he would periodically come knock on the door and he would call and he'd say like I'm going to burn down your house and stuff like that. So, you know, there's nothing like being terrified every time you walk up, walk home. To be like am I going to find my house in flames?

Participant: When I got home, he was not at my house but he had been. And my house was trashed... There were holes in the walls that I could have climbed in to ... he did a number on that place.

Participant: So, I get home from work and he's there. He's at my house. And, so I went in and I started getting ready for bed and he came into my house and immediately, I knew that I was in trouble. I knew that this was not going to be good. So, he forced me to have sex with him.

Participant: He called and in his ridiculousness told me that he was going to kill me. He was going to shoot me. And he would do it at the school if he had to. So, then I'm like what do you do? Do you send your kid to school, do you not, like um so I pretty much just didn't leave my house for a week...I didn't go to work for a week, I stayed I wouldn't even go to the store, I wouldn't go out to my car, I just stayed inside.

- 5) **Women explained that the psychological and emotional abuse experienced as a target of stalking is constant and relentless.** In addition, a few women within this sample reported that the emotional torture experienced as a target of stalking is far worse than the physical abuse they endured prior to ending their relationships:

Participant: Hitting isn't, I've been hit before. Um, please please please don't take this the wrong way. Constant, relentless, this was worse. Because there was never a break. Emotional abuse, someone focused on you and whatever is important to you and taking that away from you is more painful. It was for me, more painful than something a physical pain. Someone systematically taking my life apart was more painful to me than a hit. Not that I'm ever discounting any kind of physical abuse. I know that it's a terrible terrible thing and it changes who you are and I completely, I actually really do understand that. But, it's important for people to know it wasn't just words or it wasn't just sitting outside your job or it wasn't just sitting... NO. It's way way way more than somebody following you around. It's a systematic destruction of your life and the way that you want to live it. Stalking isn't that. It is someone else is literally running your life.

Participant: Yeah, he never punched me in the eye once, doesn't mean he wasn't violent. And the violence wasn't even the worst part of my abuse, right, like he didn't physically lay a hand on me that often but you know, he destroyed me.

Participant: It's the emotional stuff that it doesn't just go away, it doesn't just end, so yeah. He can't contact me, right. He can't come on my street, perfect. But, he can still have these little controls and he won't give them up and he won't let go of them. And so, it's those things that take the longest to heal from. And, it's that emotional abuse, you don't just heal so like I said he didn't touch me physically but it's the emotional stuff that really takes a long time to get over and to heal from.

- 6) **This relentless harassing created an environment where women did not feel safe and reported being in a constant state of fear.** For example, women reported being afraid to leave their home, were always looking over their shoulder to see who was there, and felt as though they were living in a mental prison:

Participant: You never feel safe. I never feel safe. I and I don't mean like walking in a bad neighbourhood safe. I am constantly aware that at any given time, something may happen and that's not an unreasonable thought. Because, it might. You don't ever fully relax. And, things like if you close the gate when you left, you have to think and if it's open when you come home, you have to think, you have to have your hand on your phone because you're under a safety plan. You've changed your thinking. The hardest part about being stalked is not actually, not that you don't feel safe. That you're not safe. And in your own home. And not being able to make yourself safe because of what someone has decided, you're not going to be safe, so you're not. Someone has decided to hijack your life. That's what's hard. Why does that person get my life? And why can I not stop it? How can I not stop it?

Participant: You can't go home because you're terrified to go home. You don't know where he is and you don't know how much further is this going to go because he just went from you know controlling bits and pieces of your life to not even letting you leave your own house. You're own safe place where everything is supposed to be yours and you're supposed to feel safe at home, not scared to go home.

Participant: I don't think people understand stalking. I don't think that, because it's so hard to explain to someone what it's like to never feel safe. To like, never ever feel safe. And to constantly have to walk you know, be so aware of where you are and constantly looking over your shoulder and I, for a long time like I didn't go to any sort of event that there would be a crowd. Because any type of a crowd, I'd be like well, he could come out of nowhere in a crowd.

- 7) **All women within this sample sought help from the police and justice system in an attempt to stop the behaviours of the stalker.** Unfortunately, for many women, seeking protection from the legal system did little to stop the ongoing abuse. With regard to police response, women within this sample reported a few negative encounters with local police when reporting incidents of stalking:

Participant: There was one officer who was training a female officer. And this was when I had moved to the new house and I really by this time had it down. I could handle giving these reports pretty well, didn't take me seriously. I don't know if he was trying to teach something to this new officer but was condescending clearly didn't believe me ... I had to explain that I had moved, I had changed all my numbers and he said something along the lines of, I can't quote it, but something along the lines of, "...but you just gave him one call?" And I was like

no, I have never no never no, not since this date has there ever and he goes, "...but you did something?" And he said that I must have done something to get him to do this and so that was very harmful.

Participant: That's probably the only negative police interaction I had that I can think of was, the officer that came out I just said like, he broke into my house, he's you know left this threatening note. So the officer when they picked him up and talked to him he said, well you know... I have a key to the house. Which, he never had a key. So the officer called me and just pretty much told me I was a liar and he says he has a key so we're not charging him with break and enter.

- 8) **Although there were a few negative encounters with local police, women within this sample reported having mostly positive experiences with police and how they handled their cases of stalking.** Women explained that having police who listened and tried to understand their experiences helped them to feel safe and comfortable in reporting incidents of stalking and seeking formal supports. They also emphasized the importance of continuing to take women seriously when they come forward to report instances of stalking:

Participant: [Perpetrator name] had a criminal record, again that I didn't know about so, once they responded I actually overall very positive experience with police. But, the officer went to speak to [perpetrator name] and [perpetrator name] said, well if the bitch would just listen we wouldn't be having a problem and the officer immediately drove back to my house, came in and said, "I think you're going to have a problem here" and got some more information. Massive, massive, massive props to that man for listening, looking and going okay this is on the radar.

Participant: The kindness of a couple of police officers validated my experience. I needed someone to go, yeah, yeah, this is a problem. And, you're in trouble. Like, we're going to help you.

Participant: Take the woman seriously. Don't belittle them, you know like listen, actually listen to them. It may not seem like a big deal to you but if you get the history of what's been happening to this woman ah an uncomfortable feeling is a woman's intuition telling her that she's in danger. So, listen to that intuition. If I feel like I'm in danger, I am. And so, if a woman is telling you that she feels like she's in danger, she is. So take that seriously.

- 9) **A number of themes related to women's experiences with the justice system emerged from the data.** For instance, prolonged trial dates, low conviction rates, and constant breaches associated with no contact orders, added to feelings of disappointment and exacerbated fears associated with personal safety and protection. In addition, women reported that many charges were dropped or plead down to a lesser offence, which added to their frustration and dissatisfaction with the justice system:

Participant: And the number of times I know when after the prelim hearings, the prosecutor said to me, he's not going to get off, you know like he's going to stay in jail until you know his trial comes up and like 99% chance that he's going to stay in jail. He was out the next day. Because the judge thought it was too harsh on him, so let him out. So yeah, nothing is 100% for sure you know, it depends who you're talking to that day. You might get a good experience; you might get a bad experience.

Participant: So, [family services case worker] had been really happy about the criminal harassment charges and we went to court and I think there was criminal harassment and I think there was a bunch of other stuff that he was dealing with, some related to me and some may not have been. Um, and the prosecutor lowered the charge. I just remember [family services case worker] being so angry because the harassing phone calls just wasn't cutting it like it just wasn't and yeah, they were plea bargaining. I think they ended up like dropping pretty much everything and I don't think he got jail time. So, that was you know frustrating. Super frustrating.

Participant: It was a bad deal. I've talked to two of the officers. They followed up with me. I talked to... I had one crown prosecutor who then left, that was something I really didn't understand, who really wanted it to be a criminal harassment charge and it should have been. And the judge even said that. The judge said that. Two of the officers apologized to me that it wasn't a criminal harassment charge. Very simply, the case got thrown like it went from this person, to this person, to this person and it was telephone harassment because I had about 25 calls recorded and emails and a whole bunch of star 57s and that's actually what he was convicted of.

Participant: It was really wrong. Because there was so much evidence and I truly believed that it had to do, the woman who was my first crown prosecutor absolutely said criminal harassment, this is absolutely this is textbook and she wasn't, no one will ever say this is a slam dunk of course. She was like, this is absolutely and then you know how court that things go different directions and I never saw her again... I think pretty much everyone who had any experience with the case couldn't believe that someone didn't, that the criminal harassment charge didn't get laid because it really really should of. Absolutely, he was guilty of criminal harassment. He was probably guilty of more than that.

Participant: So, you know, his criminal record isn't necessarily reflective of how awful my experience was. So then, you know, when like if you're just going to look at convictions that's only telling a little piece of the story because you stay all these other charges and you know won't charge him because he says something different than I say.

Participant: He didn't follow no contact orders, ever. He was constantly harassing me. He'd constantly call me and it would just be like you know, maybe he'd get a couple months in jail and a no contact order. Well, he doesn't follow no contact orders. If I'm a person who doesn't show up to my court dates, you keep me in custody until I do all my court dates. So, here's a person that isn't following his order so why just, why do we just continue to give him probation and continue to give him probation.

Participant: So, I moved. And it took him 6 weeks to find me. And then he breached again there, I think there was about 6 breaches. And he spent a few days in jail for each one of them.

Participant: It wasn't fun. And, I understand why after being there and being ready four or five times, women would not go the next time. I understand that. I just wouldn't give him the satisfaction. I wouldn't do it. I would not do it.

Participant: The fact that his lawyer could go in and have it stayed and have it stayed and have it stayed and the reason that I know that he did this on purpose is that he thinks it's quite funny to say things in court and go, I can do this forever, bitch. And, he did. It was I don't even know how long, a couple of years. Stayed and stayed and it that, you get I'm sorry but it's all you think about, you know. When you're nervous, you're scared, you don't know what's going to happen. Brutal. It was brutal...and I think that probably after four breaches, I think that it not being kicked up to, even if that, four breaches of a non-contact order. Why wasn't it kicked up to a criminal harassment charge? And I've never had that question answered.

Participant: Besides it takes a long time, which I understand, but the effects of it taking a long time only plays into the more emotional damage that it does. And that's my honest opinion is that the longer it takes, the more drawn out and the harder it is and it's something that I deal with on a daily basis is the anxiety of the court case coming up. Instead of dealing with it right away, it's building up and it's building up and it's building up and it's only adding to the more it's only adding more stress to what I've already gone through, to be honest. But um, the fact that it takes so long, it's just more torture. Cause you don't know what to expect.

Participant: It should have been criminal harassment because that's what happened. Number two, as a witness and the victim, I shouldn't have had to go through that many stays, there weren't valid reasons for it. I shouldn't have had to go through that.

Participant: And, deliberately intentionally dragged it out over the longest period of time possible and it was horrid. It was ... to show up and he would show up with sometimes oh a dozen people... all thinking and some of them would say like what you just live to ruin a man's life? And I'd just be and not only did I not ask anyone to come with me, the people I would have trusted probably wouldn't have.... and it was very humiliating it was humiliating, it was degrading and ... some of the, the biggest problem was this could have been stopped earlier if I had a witness. If someone could have seen what he was doing.

- 10) **Women also reported feeling overwhelmed with the process of gathering evidence and explained that it was very difficult to prove criminal harassment in court.** Women shared that the majority of stalking incidents happened within the home or away from the public eye. As a result, women sometimes felt as though others did not believe their recounts of stalking or experiences of abuse. Difficulties in gathering evidence, proving criminal harassment in court, and having others believe their story added to feelings of isolation and the challenges associated with being a target of stalking:

Participant: So, I have to document all of his phone calls and print out emails and when Facebook started up then you gotta print that kind of stuff and take it in and it kind of was just like, it's just constant, right. You're just constantly dealing with the justice system. There's constant court dates and so I wasn't going and [family service case worker] would just always give me the update of you know, he appeared today here's what happened. Or, he's incarcerated, he's getting released, um which was helpful. But, that first year um was almost a full year, was just you're just you don't live your life. Like, you do what you absolutely have to do and that's it.

Participant: And so, I was ah really failing to thrive as a person, as a human being and I still had no witnesses. No one ever saw anything.

Participant: Right when this kind of was all going on, I was getting tons of phone calls from these numbers. And then just recently, a couple days ago I got another one. But that was the only thing that's happened since... but they're very very very hard to prove because, how do you prove where that came from? I've spoken to the guys with the Regina city police, and it's almost impossible. It takes years to track that. It wouldn't happen. And, and another thing like all these emails I've been getting, surely there's gotta be a way that you can find out where these emails are coming from, right? I could almost guarantee you it's at his apartment. But, in order to do it because the email address is hotmail, you have to have an agreement with Microsoft, which is in the states, which is in ah it's a national agreement, which never happens.

Participant: They can't prove that the emails are coming from him. You can't prove that the phone calls are coming from anywhere because their internet numbers, there, you know, you can go online, you can make phone calls online, and it just generates a phone number, it's not attached to anything. So, you can't prove that. So again, that's my fear that's my anxiety that's where all of this comes from is like I know that it's him and I know but how do you prove it? How do I prove those things? You don't.

Participant: And I couldn't prove anything. I didn't have a cell phone then, I couldn't take a picture, I couldn't record anything. I was poor. I didn't have a vehicle. I was sick. I couldn't I... was so vulnerable. And it took me years to understand that I've never been more vulnerable in my whole life.

11) Steps taken within the legal system did not stop the perpetrators from stalking. In some cases, going to the police actually increased incidents of stalking for women within this sample. As such, participants were queried about what they thought could have been done to stop the perpetrator. Some women reported that more severe penalties and longer incarceration times would have helped to end the stalking sooner. Similarly, women felt as though quicker response times, such as less time spent in the court system, may have stopped the behaviours sooner:

Participant: It was sure nice when he would end up in jail after a breach. I could, boy could I have a good night's sleep. I think and that actually, I had a little bit of a break usually for a week or two. I don't know if he was licking his wounds or just that you know put him off for a bit but I got a I got a break. And I, so, I think yes actually, police intervention did make a difference. It really did. Because I got a bit of a break. It kept front and center that he was obsessing about me but then as something was stepping in front of him and saying, no you can't do that and it was reminding him. It wasn't some piece of paper that was tossed on a desk. It was a human being or the laws of our country saying no, you cannot.

Participant: If it had gone through the court system quicker, and he had some consequences quicker and then it just kept everything, if you're going to do it then you're going to spend the night in cells, then you're going to.... It would have had to boom, boom, boom. It needed to because I was being, crimes were being committed against me that were crippling my life, hurting my job, hurting my relationships, scaring me to death.

Participant: I think he should have been deemed, he's not a dangerous offender but isn't wouldn't that be a long term offender? Couldn't he be classified as a long term offender? And couldn't he, because psychologists said that he's going to, ah psychiatrists have said that he's going to reoffend, he's not going to quit, he's right....and ah he's got a personality disorder, that's not going to change. He's, in his mind he's done nothing wrong and so, what do you do with people like that? Do you commit them for indefinitely or what do you do with them? Or do you wait until he kills somebody and then okay well I guess we should lock him up for good now. Like, where's the line there? I'd like to see him have a non you know a lifelong peace bond, you know. Ah lifelong restrictions on his behaviour because he's not going to quit, he needs constant monitoring. He's not going to, he's NOT going to quit on his own.

Participant: Um, yeah, I don't know specifically like it was so challenging um because he was a repeat offender. Like it was years and years um and you know charges would come and they'd just you know, not I'm not a big fan of our jail system but like that was the only time that I was left alone. That's it. That's all I had was him being incarcerated. For some women within this sample, they reportedly felt that the stalking behaviours would only end if the perpetrator died, moved onto another victim, or killed them. Participants expressed feelings of helplessness and hopelessness as a result of the many failed attempts within the legal system and believed that there should be more protections in place for targets of stalking within our community:

Participant: He's going to continue until he dies. Fortunately, he's older, he's 69 years old ... he's not looking really good, so... hopefully he'll die soon. Hopefully he dies before I do and I can have some years of peace before I die.

Participant: Die. He won't quit until he's dead.

Participant: I know, I believe this to be true. That if he is on drugs or drinking and if he decides to harm someone else he will harm me as well and then probably himself. He is absolutely capable of taking a life. He would probably hurt more than one person if he did it and himself. He's a coward.

Participant: If he hadn't moved on to someone else, it would still be me.

Participant: So while so he had been dating a girl and so I think that's why I wasn't hearing from him often. I still would every once in a while but it was fairly limited and then they broke up cause he went to jail for beating her up cause that's what he does. Finally, participants were asked what services they think should be available for targets of stalking within our community. Many women recommended ongoing counseling in order to deal with the years of trauma they endured. All women also reported that the services offered by Family Service Regina's Domestic Violence unit are imperative for women who are experiencing stalking. Both supports were considered necessary by women within this sample:

Participant: All sorts of counselling. Lots of counselling. The women's centre and here [Family Service Regina].

Participant: [Family Service Regina case worker]... kindest, when I would do something stupid like drink too much and be embarrassed and depressed and call and leave messages and... she was fantastic and she explained everything. I have anxiety and depression and posttraumatic stress. She understood. She explained things before they happened, as they happened. She got me one of those safety phones where if it's an emergency, she got me one of those. That made me feel much more secure. I was able to start leaving the house. I was at a point where I was only leaving the house about three times a month. Three times a month (tearful). And so, that helped me get out of the house more. And so that really helped and actually, all of Family Service.

Participant: You know. And ah, but I got in and [Family Service Regina case worker] was my domestic violence worker and she, I couldn't have asked for anything more from her. She validated, she heard me, she helped me and she's a warrior.

Participant: And then just yeah obviously I think Family Service needs to be here and [Family Service Regina case worker] was really you know, she was fantastic and especially like when she very first started calling me it would have been like 2004 and like I wouldn't even talk to her. I'd avoid her calls and just hang up on her. I just you know like okay whatever and just would not and she you know never treated me any different and she would just call the next time, you know, so when I was ready to kind of reach out when I needed that support um, she was there and she was like you know, I would have never been able to go to those last few court appearances that I went to without her doing it with me.

Many participants reported therapeutic gains from sharing their story in the interview. They reported it to be a relief to be able to discuss their experience with stalking and hoped that sharing their story would help other women targets. The use of narrative inquiry proved very effective for this particular topic as it allowed women to share their story from beginning to end, without interruption. We believe that allowing women to share their story, without our intrusion during interviews, provided a safe space for women to speak and be heard. As a result of this style of interviewing, we were able to collect rich data which exemplified the true challenges faced by women targets of stalking within our community. Use of another methodology may not have provided the same richness and detail as narrative inquiry. We would highly recommend that future research continue to use narrative inquiry when collecting data within the realm of family violence.

Finally, through the course of this project, we learned that community service providers have ample knowledge and experience with intimate partner stalking. It became apparent that interviewing service providers (e.g., domestic violence case workers) about their experiences with intimate partner stalking would also be a valuable research study. We would recommend that future studies investigate the experiences of service providers, including police, justice, and domestic violence workers, in order to add to the current literature on intimate partner stalking.

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