

Use of vignettes to understand perceptions of stalking



The idea of stalking is a behaviour which Meloy and Gothard (cited by Mullen, Pathé & Purcell, 2009) classifies as “obsessional following.” Meloy and Gothard also considered stalking as a “abnormal or long-term pattern of threat or harassment directed toward a specific individual.” In the cases of stalking it is believed the use of Vignettes can be utilised to understand the perceptions of stalking, for example why a person might feel they are being stalked and their actions to reduce it. Vignettes are “stimuli, including text and images, which” (Hughes & Huby, 2004) people are to respond to, but these are typically done to be theoretical and create an imaginary scenario in a person’s head. In this essay, I will be discussing such use of vignettes and its aid in understanding the perceptions of stalking.

Vignettes have a connection to understanding the perception of stalking by using stimuli to understand how a person can feel because of stalking, especially considering the event of stalking may be done several times over a period, even when being considered seemingly harmless at first glance, so having a “rich descriptive base of information about stalking, it is recommended that priority should shift to more theoretical issues surrounding stalking” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Vignettes may be able to help understand what might cause the fear of the event for a victim. As Vignettes are stimuli, a form of trigger for an emotional or mental call back to the event, they can be used to understand how to counteract stalking or even reduce the fear for a person who is the victim of stalking behaviour. This can be done to reverse the condition of a fear of a specific stimulus which can usually trigger the terror of stalking and change the stimuli to not give the victim a conditioned response towards the Vignette or similar

stimuli. This may be done to many victims to help understand perceptions of stalking as there are no genuine definitive anti-stalking law and stalking is only prohibited in a variety of ways. Moreover, “ Although stalking was only recently accorded criminal status, it soon became clear that it represented a significant social problem” (Sheridan, Blaauw & Davies, 2003), therefore furthers the need for aid to be given to these victims as it can cause social harm as well as mental. Tracking down the source of this fear of stalking through Vignettes can help victims tremendously in contrast to the limited anti-stalking laws available, as they seem to have a lack of aid to the victims.

Moreover, due to a lack of prohibitions to stalking, Vignettes can also help identify the reactions and methods victims use to deal with the fear of stalking. This can aid in narrowing down issues such as paranoia or insomnia due to a belief of a presence always observing the victim. To many “ stalking is a considerable public health issue” (Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan & Freeve, 2002). So rather than just simply changing the stimulus found through Vignette methods to result in giving a less frightening response, the use of Vignettes can be used to help improve public health which is caused by stalking. In many cases, phobias have similar impacts of paranoia that stalking can cause to a victim. The belief or even fear of being stalked by someone can be viewed in a similar way as phobias with conditioning. According to Miller (2012), many “ victims should secure their homes and workplaces as much as possible with locks, alarm systems, a dog, and so on” to feel protected from stalkers and this is seen to be a behaviour quite frequent in victims. Having a vignette being used here can help create a hypothetical situation to show how the excessive protection may not be

needed, for example using a stimulus of a picture of an alley and showing to the victim no impact has happened other than the victim overthinking about the situation and having too much reliance on being over protected.

Although a stalker may no longer be present, the violation the victim feels during that period of isolation with the stalker can cause symptoms of PTSD and possible forms of OCD, so these processes may take time and need to be repeated. But, showing a certain stimulus that has a connection to the event may lead the victim with “ Clinical syndromes” (Miller 2012) may help researchers and psychiatrists gain better understanding of why victims may be paranoid in their own homes and have excessive protections that is considered not appropriate of social norms. This is a long-term process in some cases and depending on the extremity of the situation, the victim may have a resistance to the rational belief that they are now safe as the stalker may have disappeared or has been put away.

In some scenarios, stalkers can either be men or women despite stalking being a universal phenomenon in all cultures and society, yet “ Members of minority communities are generally noted to experience higher rates of discrimination and harassment than are non-members” (Simpson & Eriksson, 2011 in Sheridan, Scott & Campbell, 2016) particularly due to the small numbers they typically may represent in a community. Simpson and Eriksson (2011) believed that “ size of communities influences the rate of discrimination and harassment received” due to how “ deficiency of power” is shown through the “ numerical minority.” So, the less minorities there are, the higher the likelihood of stalking will occur for them. The issue here is on whether Vignettes can aid the victims or not as they have a lack of control <https://assignbuster.com/use-of-vignettes-to-understand-perceptions-of-stalking/>

over the number of people in their ethnic background or racial background. Situations like this, vignettes seem more useful in gaining an insight on why the stalker themselves stalk, perhaps by creating a hypothetical scenario of if a specific minority is the majority and see whether that could create the urge for a stalker to conduct the act. Another method is to give the scenario and see if a certain text or image in the scenario puts the culprit stalker into thinking they wish to conduct the act, such as seeing a certain person alone. Despite Vignettes not being entirely useful in the understanding how to help minorities with issues of stalking and give an insight on how to keep victims safer, vignettes are more useful in the scenario of understanding why stalkers prefer to go after minorities.

Despite minorities being a key victim for stalkers, vignettes may also be valuable to understanding sexual differences in stalkers and even their victims. This may be particularly helpful for understanding why women are stalked more than men. Research by Tjaden & Thoennes (1998) found a percentage of 8000 men and 8000 women who participated in telephone-based interviews only resulted in women being more likely to be victims than men by 76%. These women were mainly 18 years old when the assault started, however an issue with the study is that it may require vignettes to be specific to stalking, as the data found was a mix of sexual assault, rape and other derogatory crimes. It needs to be considered on whether vignettes can be specific enough to pick out specific victims of an act such as stalking amongst victims of all sorts of assault. Many traits of the act may be picked on in a vignette to help create a stimulus for these victims and these may overlap into other acts such as rape or physical assault rather than stalking.

In addition, this cannot really help identify sexual differences as men and woman may feel the same for the scenarios apart from some men feeling less pride due to the commonality belief that men who are abused do not have masculinity, contrast to women who will feel worthless because of such an act. So even if one was to identify stalking amongst all these acts, the only clear identifier for some of these acts are lack of masculinity and pride for men and women having a belief of worthlessness which again repeats in a lot of acts like stalking. Therefore, one can see vignettes as being partially effective in specifying acts but not useful enough to present clear difference for a specific act such as stalking.

To conclude, yes vignettes have a large usefulness in issues of stalking especially considering it creates a hypothetical scenario for victims to help gain understanding, rather than having the victim remember the event and create a chance for trauma to overtake them. But it still has its downsides on being individually unique to victims as people who gather information from the victim's exposure to a vignette may not see a specific individual trend between the negative consequences of stalking and the victim.

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