

# Public Figures and Stalking in the European Context

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**Abstract** The paper presents a brief overview of the international scientific research regarding stalking, threats and attacks on public figures. A special focus lies on European research and its tradition. Particular attention is directed towards the concept of pathological fixations on public figures which covers different forms of harassment and aggressive behaviour. A closer look at the history of scientific research and relevant case examples in this area reveals that pathological fixation on public figures is a phenomenon which was described by psychiatrists as early as 150 years ago. As stalking can affect various kinds of public figures, the research presented here covers stalking of celebrities, politicians, corporate figures and royals who become the victim of harassment or violent attacks. Finally, the state of the art regarding the management of public figure stalking and harassment and the prevention of assassinations by fixated persons in Europe is reviewed.

**Keywords** Assassination · Attacks on public figures · Celebrities · Politicians · Public figure protection · Stalking · Threat assessment

## Introduction

Stalking cases in which a public figure is harassed or threatened often receive much public attention and sometimes even worldwide news coverage. This is in contrast to the rather small amount of scientific research addressing this phenomenon. It is estimated that less than 1% of all scientific studies and reports on stalking are related to celebrity victims (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008a). A closer look at the relevant scientific literature may illustrate this: In an international meta-analysis of 175 empirical studies on stalking there was not a single publication that focussed only on public figure incidents although some of the reviewed studies offered mixed samples including general and public figure cases (Spitzberg and Cupach 2007).

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Fortunately, in recent times there seems to be more scientific interest in public figure stalking, especially in Europe. If one adopts a broader perspective, including also research that focuses not only on stalking but also on unusual communication and on attacks on public figures, more scientific work can be identified (Meloy et al. 2004).

Also, from a theoretical perspective it makes sense to link different behaviours such as stalking, other forms of unusual contacts and approaches, threats, and assassinations. The idea of a pathological fixation on a public figure brings together these at first glance quite different phenomena. Pathological fixation is a psychiatric and psychological concept that was recently brought into the discussion on stalking (Meloy et al. 2008a; Mullen et al. 2009). In a general sense, fixation is defined as an intense preoccupation with an individual, activity or idea. In its normal form fixation finds its expression for instance in romantic love, parental affection or intense loyalty (Mullen et al. 2009). In pathological fixations on public figures the individual believes that there is a special and individual connection to the famous person although in reality no mutual relationship exists and often there is no real connection at all. This belief may or may not be rooted in mental illness. For the fixated individual the pathological fixation increasingly becomes the centre of attention and activities in day-to-day life. Due to this dynamic the social network often erodes leaving the fixated person isolated and destitute (Meloy et al. 2008a).

Pathological fixation can be primarily attached to a cause or to an individual or there can be a mixed focus on both cause and person. An example for an attachment to a cause is a fixation on a politician who the fixated person believes could advance his interests or who on the contrary has injured his interests. An example for an attachment to an individual is a fixation on a celebrity with whom the fixated person believes to have an intimate relationship or who the fixated person believes is willing to have an intimate relationship with him or her (Mullen et al. 2009). Nevertheless, the belief of the fixated person places an obligation upon the public figure, and the believer demands acknowledgement due to his expenditure of time and resources, a dynamic which is called entitled reciprocity (Meloy et al. 2008a). Fixated persons may become angry and resentful if their expectations are not fulfilled, this being the reason why a pathological fixation sometimes results in a violent act against a public figure.

Stalking is a behavioural concept. Stalking describes a pattern of unwanted and enduring contacts, approaches or other acts of harassment, threats or physical violence. Pathological fixation on a public figure is a psychiatric or psychological concept describing a state of mind (Mullen et al. 2009). It does not necessarily lead into unpleasant behaviour directed at a public figure although it regularly does. This unpleasant behaviour may be a single strange letter or phone call, it may be a pattern of stalking, a violent attack or a combination of all these.

Having said this, this review does not only take the stalking of celebrities or of other publicly wellknown individuals into account. Also, other forms of harassment or violent behaviour towards these groups will be discussed. A brief summary of the research in the USA will be followed by a more detailed review of the studies carried out in different European countries.

## Research in the USA

Literally all empirical studies on stalking and unusual contact behaviours towards public figures outside of Europe were conducted in the USA. The starting point for such scientific efforts was 1981 when an assassination attempt on US president Ronald Reagan occurred

which stimulated the first systematic research project on stalking of public figures. The reason for this was that the attacker John Hinckley had shown an enduring pattern of unusual contact and approach behaviour towards several public figures (Clarke 2006). First, Hinckley was pathologically fixated on actress Jodie Foster stalking her on different occasions. In addition, he was repeatedly approaching President Jimmy Carter on public appearances and later on also the next President Reagan whom he finally shot wounding him almost fatally.

As a consequence of the attack a research group started analyzing inappropriate communication addressed to politicians and Hollywood celebrities looking for warnings signs that indicate later approach behaviour (Dietz et al. 1991a, b). The results showed that there are different patterns: communications to celebrities were more intimate and informal than those to congress members. Those sending inappropriate communications to celebrities were less likely to cast themselves as enemies than were those writing to politicians. They were more likely to express idolization and an interest in love, marriage and sex. The congress communicators focussed far more on perceived personal injustices and violent themes. Celebrity communicators often focussed on the world of Hollywood and on the celebrity him or herself. They expressed a wish to meet the celebrity, whilst those who communicated with politicians wanted their concerns and injustices to be addressed. This may all be diluted into issues of romance versus issues of power and violence.

In a number of studies addressing threatening and harassing contacts to members of US congress several risk factors for problematic approach behaviour could be identified (Scalora et al. 2008). For instance subjects who display mental illness symptoms tied to the target or to a personal motive demonstrate a heightened risk of problematic approach behaviour. The same holds for subjects with recent life stressors or prior arrest records. Furthermore, the likelihood of problematic approach behaviour is significantly heightened by the perceived level of personal relevance of the issue presented by the subject, especially if help-seeking requests or other demands are made. Looking at risk factors indicated within contact behaviour, subjects who made multiple contacts through multiple modalities such as, e.g. phone calls and letters were more likely to present a higher risk. If threats emerged as part of an escalating pattern of problematic contacts, a problematic approach is likely to occur.

One of the most influential studies in the field was conducted by the US Secret Service, a governmental organization that has the mission to protect the American President and other high-ranking politicians. The so-called Exceptional Case Study Project analyzed 83 persons known to have engaged in 73 incidents of assassination, attack, and near-attack behaviours from 1949 to 1995 (Fein and Vossekuil 1999). The findings revealed that assassination is an often discernable process of thinking and behaviour. Assassins and attackers plan their attacks and are motivated by a wide range of issues. Often they consider several targets before acting but rarely direct threats either to the target or to law enforcement. The findings also suggested that mental illness is not critical to determining dangerousness; the ability and capacity to develop and execute a plan is much more significant. Most importantly, the findings indicated that there is no "profile" of the assassin, but rather a common set of "attack related behaviors" exhibited by the subjects. Approach behaviour could be seen in almost 40% of the cases in which, however, was often necessary for preparing the violent assault. Stalking, in the narrow sense of the word, occurred in only 10% (Fein and Vossekuil 1997) of the cases.

The most comprehensive sample of celebrity stalkers in the international literature until today was presented by Meloy et al. (2008b). The group of 248 stalkers of celebrities was

drawn from a security department for a large entertainment corporation in Los Angeles. The majority of the stalkers were men, although one in four were women. The motivation for stalking was usually sexual, affectional or help-seeking. The inability of those who stalk celebrities to establish a stable history of both work and love was also apparent in the data. It was also common for the individuals to stalk or harass another target, one out of five of the subjects were legally constrained in some fashion before or during their stalking. Half of the large sample of stalkers of celebrities went on to stalk again. The latency period was eight months.

The celebrity stalkers showed low rates of physical violence and high rates of mental illness. One out of four of the subjects was psychotic at the time of the stalking and 2% attacked a public figure. In 18% of the cases threats were uttered. Although most stalkers did not attempt to approach the celebrity, one out of four did. Those who approached were significantly more likely to have had a police intervention, threaten, have a mental health diagnosis other than thought disorder, escalate, and have a longer duration of stalking.

However, long before research on public figure stalking started in the USA, psychiatrists in the old world had already described the phenomenon.

## European Research

For the last 200 years at least there have been reports in different European countries on unusual behaviour which today we would call public figure stalking or pathological fixations.

For example, in 1838 the French psychiatrist Esquirol coined the term erotomania. He saw it as an insanity characterized by an exaggeration of nonsexual love towards another person which in reality did not exist. In one of his case studies, Esquirol described a man who was following an actress throughout Paris. Notwithstanding her repeated rebuffs, he remained convinced that the actress was in love with him. Dr. Esquirol confronted his delusion by unempathically inquiring, "How could you believe she loves you? You are not handsome. You possess neither rank or fortune." The stalker of the actress answered him poetically, hinting that his erotomaniac delusions of a mutual relationship may have served to overcome his solitude: "All that is true, but love does not reason, and I have seen too much to leave me in doubt that I am loved" (Mullen et al. 2009, p. 94).

Around 50 years later, the arguable father of forensic psychiatry, the Austro-German psychiatrist von Krafft-Ebing described obsessions with celebrities in the past. In his classical textbook *Psychopathia Sexualis* (von Krafft-Ebing 1912), he noted that women of all ages can be fascinated by successful actors, singers or athletes in such a manner that they overwhelm them with love letters. A more sinister form of pathological fixation on public figures was reported in cases of paranoia. Eugen Bleuler from Germany, one of the most influential psychiatrists in the beginning of the 20th century, found mental illness to be a possible trigger for violent attacks against public figures. "If the mentally ill thinks that he cannot help himself anymore with legal means, he acts in self-defense, shooting his enemy or attempting a nonserious attack on a high-ranking figure because he wants to enforce an 'unprejudiced' investigation" (Bleuler 1943, p. 501).

Around the same time French psychiatrist de Clérambault published some case studies of Erotomaniac patients (1921, 1999). In one of his reports he described a French woman who was stalking the British King George V delusionally believing that the sovereign was in love with her. "She persistently pursued King George V from 1918 onwards, paying several visits to England. She frequently waited for him outside Buckingham Palace. She

once saw a curtain move on one of the palace windows and interpreted this as a signal from the King. She claimed that all Londoners knew of his love for her, but alleged that he prevented her from finding lodgings in London, made her miss her hotel bookings, and was responsible for the loss of her baggage containing money and portraits of him. Such doubts as she had never persisted for long. She vividly summarized her passion for him. ‘The King might hate me, but he can never forget. I could never be indifferent to him, nor he to me’” (Enoch and Ball 2001, p. 21).

Even though case studies have been published for a long period of time in a European context, systematic research is rather new. Currently, some studies have been conducted on stalking, harassing, threatening and attacking four different kinds of public figures, namely (1) celebrities, (2) politicians, (3) corporate figures and (4) Royals.

## Celebrities

In Europe, only three empirical studies could be identified addressing celebrity stalking.

In the Netherlands, 105 public figures who had experienced “repeated harassment originating from an obsession with the victim as a public figure” took part in a study that sought to determine some characteristics of public figure stalkers and their victims (Malsch et al. 2002). Celebrity agents and publishing house employees distributed questionnaires among clients who they believed had been targeted by stalkers. Members of the Dutch government were also mailed questionnaires. Thus, the sample comprised politicians, writers, performing musicians, actors, and television and radio presenters. Of the 105 public figures who responded, 35 (33%) self-reported that they had been stalked. A majority (76%) were male. The most common methods of harassment were telephone calls, letters, faxes, and e-mails, the sending of flowers and gifts, physical following, surveillance of the victim’s home and harassment of family and friends. Many of the stalkers were said to be mentally disordered, with 34% of the public figures reporting that their stalker had undergone psychiatric treatment. Most of the public figures questioned took the stalking very seriously, with the majority reporting to the police. The stalkers of those in the entertainment world were more likely to physically pursue their target. It was noted that those respondents who more regularly appeared on television and radio had a greater chance of experiencing multiple stalking. Thus, the extent of media exposure may be an important risk factor. The same effect was not found, however, among politicians.

In Germany, a sample of 53 celebrities - most of them news presenters - was studied. The celebrities provided the study data by responding to questionnaires (Hoffmann 2005; Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008a,b). Among the sample, 79% (n=42) reported having been stalked at some point in their career. Until now this is the first incidence rate of stalking for a public figure sample. Although this base rate may be higher than in other public figure groups because television personalities would seem to be a particularly frequent target of stalkers, it is clear that celebrity status carries with it a heightened risk of being targeted. Although the data sets are by no means comparable, it is worth noting that when examined against a German population sample (Dressing et al. 2005) the rate for the public figure group was more than six times higher (79% vs. 12%).

Interestingly, there existed a marked distinction regarding the gender distribution of victimization as compared to most other stalking studies. Of the female television personalities 83% claimed they had been stalked, as did a high number of their male colleagues (74%). In the Dutch study of public figure victims, the percentage of male and female respondents who reported incidents of stalking was similar. In many other studies of

stalking both among non-celebrity populations (Spitzberg 2002) and within celebrity groups (Dietz and Martell 1989) an average of 70%–80% of all stalking victims are women.

The celebrities were asked to record their longest period of harassment by one individual. The average figure revealed was 25 months (SD=27.61 months), ranging from periods of one month to more than 10 years. Although these were the most extreme stalking cases the television personalities reported, this number also fits well with findings from the general research on stalking. In their meta-analysis of 175 stalking studies, Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) found that the average case of stalking lasted for 22 months or close to two years.

Only a minority (14%; or 6) of the stalked television personalities declared that they had been targeted just once. The majority had been the target of a stalker more frequently, most between two and five times in their career (62%;  $n=26$ ). Similarly, in Malsch et al.'s (2002) study, 59% of respondents stated that they had been targeted more than once.

Letters sent by stalkers were clearly dominated by themes of love and adoration. Almost half of the sample (43%,  $n=23$ ) were physically approached by an obsessive individual. A quarter of the television personalities (25%,  $n=13$ ) reported that this had happened on only one occasion, but a fifth (19%;  $n=10$ ) had experienced multiple incidents. In virtually all cases the celebrity's workplace was the location of encounter on at least one occasion (96%;  $n=22$ ). This high rate is easily attributable to the profession of the public figures as most worked regularly at a well-known television station, the location of which can be easily traced. Still, there were many cases of approaches made elsewhere. Almost three quarters of respondents (74%;  $n=17$ ) stated that they experienced inappropriate approaches whilst making public appearances at their own homes (40%;  $n=9$ ) or at the home or workplace of a relative of the public figure (14%;  $n=3$ ). Only one violent attack was reported within the study.

Two factors were found to influence the extent of stalking as experienced by our television celebrities. The most powerful predictor was wider media coverage. That is, the extent to which the public figure had been the subject of coverage in other media was related to a greater risk of them becoming the victim of more serious stalking ( $F=4,602$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In Malsch et al.'s study media exposure was positively related to more severe and frequent stalking among television and radio celebrities. Being regularly seen in the media, particularly in entertainment formats, would imply that celebrities more often reveal details of their private life and present a more immediate and personal identity to the public. One central quality of celebrity stalkers is that they confound fantasy and reality aspects in their perceptions of their relationships with others. As such, it is not surprising that they may connect more easily to celebrities with a more private appeal. The second factor significantly related to the extent of stalking victimization in the current study was the time of the celebrity's television appearances. Those who worked mostly in the late evening and night-time were more seriously stalked. It may be that night-time provides a better setting for fantasy development and elaboration (Dietz and Martell 1989).

Sheridan et al. (2006) took another route exploring the relationship between individuals from the general population and public figures. For this purpose a new research instrument was introduced called the Public Figure Preoccupation Inventory (PFPI); 1293 respondents completed the PFPI. Finally, 2.4% of the sample demonstrated a pathological public figure preoccupation reflecting the psychological and behavioural profile of a celebrity stalker. The authors suggest that if the PFPI was administered to a sample of individuals charged with stalking and harassing the instrument could be refined in order to produce a risk assessment checklist tool for those employed in threat assessment environments.

## Politicians

Again, only little empirical research was published in Europe regarding cases in which politicians are the target of stalking, threats or violent attacks. As already mentioned, the Dutch study from Malsch et al. (2002) not only asked celebrities about their experiences with stalking but also politicians. One general finding in the study was that the stalkers of politicians tended to remain distant. Also, the theme of the communication regularly contained aggressive elements.

In a study on 14 lethal and non lethal attacks on German public figures, most of them politicians, it was found that the majority of attackers showed clear warning signs before the violent act occurred (Hoffmann and Meloy, *in preparation*). Due to this result it was concluded that prevention in this area should also focus on stalking and unusual contact behaviour.

James et al. (2007) studied 24 non-terrorist attacks on European politicians finding a high proportion of psychotic offenders. Cases examined were attacks on elected politicians between January 1990 and December 2004. Attacks occurred in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Five of the attacks involved fatalities, eight involved serious injuries. The average age of the attackers was 39 years. Five of the assailants were women. In all cases except one, the attacker acted alone. In ten cases, there was evidence that the assailant was a loner or social isolate. Ten attackers were psychotic, four drunk, nine politically motivated and one unclassifiable. The mentally disordered were responsible for most of the fatal and seriously injurious attacks. Most of them gave repeated warnings in the form of obviously disordered communications and approaches. In 19 cases, the attack was either clearly planned or it involved specific weapons suggesting planning. When planning occurred, it was usually over a matter of only days before the attack. Attacks resulting in either death or serious injury were likewise associated with evidence of mental disorder, the presence of psychosis and of delusional beliefs, the perpetrator being a loner and the absence of a political motive. The authors conclude that recognizing the links to attacks on public figures of both delusional fixations and disordered communication could increase the frequency of earlier mental health interventions. This could prevent some of these attacks.

## Corporate Figures

Not much is known about the experiences of renowned businesspeople becoming the victim of stalking or threats. Only a small number of scientific papers, most of them produced in the USA, offer some case studies (Fein and Vossekuil 1997; Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008b; Meloy and Mohandie 2008; O'Toole et al. 2008).

During the 1990s, the economy began to be of greater interest to a broader swathe of the general public. With the boom of the 'New Economy' in many Western countries more and more people started to invest their money in stocks and shares. The mass media followed this trend and enterprises and their leaders became an inherent part of daily news coverage. The names of company figureheads suddenly were known not only to financial experts but also to the general populace. Therefore, it may be more than coincidence that security officers and other representatives of major companies have in very recent years reported increasing numbers of unusual letters, e-mails, and physical approaches. This presumably mirrors a trend arising a few decades before when specialized police units and private security reported rising numbers of stalking incidents concerning politicians and celebrities (Dietz and Martell 1989).

As research in the field of celebrity stalking has shown (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008a; Meloy et al. 2008b), there exists a clear connection between the number of media appearances and the chance of becoming a victim of stalking. To put it into a simple formula: the more a public figure is present in the media the more viewers and readers have virtual contact with her or him which includes a small percentage of unbalanced people capable of developing pathological fixations. However, another dynamic may play an even bigger role. In recent years greater numbers of business representatives have been encouraged to reveal their private personas. For example, in business magazines readers can regularly find portraits of a chief executive officer (CEO) in which his or her personal history is revealed along with 'lifestyle' photographs. It is also more normal for business executives to display a human touch and to speak in talk shows about topics that are out of their area of business interest.

Drawing from this, it seems that individuals who harass company figureheads have more in common motivation-wise with those who fixate on politicians (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008b). To test this assumption a study was conducted by a German research group analyzing inappropriate letters to German CEOs (Hoffmann et al. 2008). The sample included 83 unusual or threatening letters from 75 writers. In a third of all cases the authors showed signs of mental illness. More often than not a fixation on a cause rather than on an individual occurred. Threats and insults were found regularly and in most cases the duration of the contact behaviour did not last very long. Therefore, it was concluded that the letters to CEOs are more similar to inappropriate communications to politicians than to communications to celebrities.

Fixations on business representatives take many forms, ranging from those rooted in the private realm such as ex-partner and familial stalking to stalking by delusionally driven individuals who incorporate the public image of a company figurehead into their fantasies. Because of the variety of personal and psychological characteristics and motivations of those who stalk, threaten and attack corporate leaders, Hoffmann and Sheridan (2008b) proposed some fundamental dimensions to help discriminate different subgroups. The total number of these dimensions is four and includes the dimension of endurance, of relationship, of psychopathology and of motivation. Every individual can be evaluated on each of these dimensions, a procedure which the authors had found to be helpful in understanding the dynamics of a case.

## Royals

In 2002 the Fixated Research Group was founded in the United Kingdom. For this purpose leading researchers in the field of stalking from England, Australia and the USA were brought together. Their major task was to analyze stalking and harassing behaviour towards the British Royal Family. Also, attacks on members of the Royal Family and on politicians were studied.

One of the studies of the Fixated Research Group was conducted on a sample ( $n=275$ ) of files on inappropriate communications or approaches to members of the British Royal Family (James et al. *in press*) which had been compiled by the Metropolitan Police Service's Royalty Protection Unit over a period of 15 years. Of the study sample, 83.6% were suffering from serious mental illness. Different forms of behaviour were associated with different patterns of symptomatology. Cases could be separated into eight motivational groups, which also showed significant differences in mental state. Relevant parameters for the differentiation of motivational groups were, e.g. pursuit of an agenda, delusions of



kingship, amity seeking or the belief of being royally persecuted. Marked differences in the intrusiveness of behaviour were found between these groups.

In a further study, all attacks on a member of the British Royal Family since 1778 for which there public records exist were examined (James et al. 2008; Mullen et al. 2008). In the 23 attacks, there was evidence of psychotic illness at the time in 11 (48%) cases, with evidence of mental disorder in 4 additional ones. Eighty-three per cent of the attackers were male. Seven cases (30%) involved teenaged males. Only two attackers were known to be married.

Nine attackers had stalked their victims. Only two attacks resulted in serious physical injuries. In 1864, Queen Victoria's son, Prince Alfred, was shot and seriously injured. The attempted kidnap of Princess Anne in the Mall in 1974 left the princess unharmed, but led to four people being shot and seriously injured. Minor injuries were sustained by King William IV when he was hit by a stone. Queen Victoria received a black eye and bruise to the head when attacked while riding in her carriage. Thirteen cases (57%) involved firearms, the firearm being a handgun in all cases except one. Of the 12 handguns, six (50%) were not loaded with live ammunition. Three cases involved knives, three involved stones, and one case involved a brass-headed walking cane. Purely political motivations seem to have been unusual. They can be clearly adduced in only very few of the attackers. The objective of most attackers was to commit an outrageous act to draw attention to grievances.

### **Management of Public Figure Stalking and Harassment in Europe**

There are several reasons why the prevention and management of public figure stalking and attacks are worth some closer attention.

- Violent attacks on public figures in Europe occur at regular intervals. According to a European survey based on 24 cases of victimized politicians over 15 years estimates an annual rate of 1.6 (James et al. 2007). All in all, the relative populations of the countries considered are not significantly different from that of the USA.
- Lethal attacks on public figures often also have a symbolic quality causing feelings of insecurity and grievance in the population.
- Attacks on public figures are often preceded by warning signs involving unusual contact behaviour, harassment, and stalking (Meloy et al. 2008c).
- Public figures probably have the highest incidence rate of becoming a victim of stalking in the population (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008a).
- The negative psychological effect on public figures who become a victim of stalking or of other forms of harassment is often also significant (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008a).

Only a few police units in Europe involved in the protection of public figures actually address these issues. Two of the most advanced are in the Netherlands and in Great Britain. In the UK, a special service has been established to manage mentally disordered persons who are repeatedly present at parliament or near a royal palace (Mullen et al. 2009, p. 207–208) and give reason for concern. The so-called Fixated Threat Assessment Centre assesses and crisis-manages such stalkers, usually reconnecting them with their local mental health services. It is hoped that a small number of mentally ill stalkers who would otherwise have progressed to an attack will be prevented from doing so by being diverted into mental health care.

Also, only a few major European companies with CEOs in the centre of high public attention and only few offices of celebrities have some form of threat assessment service for the prevention of attacks and harassment from stalkers and individuals with a pathological fixation (Hoffmann and Sheridan 2008b).

The first systematic concept for managing public figure stalking in Europe was published by Hoffmann and Sheridan (2005). The concept which is applied by some offices of celebrities and some major companies that are represented in the media by well-known personalities differentiates between five stages:

The first stage is screening, which makes it possible to recognize potentially problematic contacts at the earliest possible time. It is usually quite easy to stop or manage a stalking case in its early stages as the stalker's emotional investment is as yet minimal. As a rule, the fixation is still moderate at this stage and early detection can prevent the development of a deeper fixation.

At the second stage of risk assessment, which is termed first analysis, letters, e-mails, gifts or other objects sent by the stalker are examined. Also, reports concerning contact and any other pieces of information or evidence are analyzed at this stage. Essentially, a "psychological profile" of the stalker or harasser is created. At the end of this stage a decision will be made as to the question of whether the stalker presents a risk to the public figure or not. If the decision is negative, then further communications will be assessed but no further management strategy will be employed unless additional communications or contacts indicate a need to take a more active approach. If the individual is believed to present a viable risk, then the relevant personnel is advised to move to stage three.

In stage three of this as yet passive research, further attempts are made to obtain additional information on the stalker. If sufficient information can be obtained via passive research and if it strongly suggests that the individual presents no viable risk, the screening process should be continued but no intervention is required. If, however, there is evidence to suggest a given risk, then stage four may need to be implemented.

Active Research is a more high-risk strategy of obtaining information, but it may be useful in certain cases. Active research methods can include talking to the stalker or harasser (in an open way or secretly) or talking to people known to or close to the stalker, e.g. family or neighbours.

Each case requires an individual management strategy that is dependent upon factors such as the resources of the victim, the opportunities the stalker has to initiate physical contact with the victim, and many more. One of the most important and immediate actions is to create as much distance (both physical and emotional) as possible between the stalker and the public figure. Any perceived „bond“ between them will only serve to reinforce the stalker's actions. Risk assessment and management are dynamic procedures. If the stalker engages in a novel activity, then the case must be reanalyzed. Should the initial management strategy fail to produce the desired effect, an alternative must be produced and implemented.

## Conclusions

Different kinds of public figures, e.g. politicians and celebrities, are subject to different forms of harassment and stalking. Risk assessment and case management need to take this into account.

If we look at the individuals that cause concern we can indeed detect similarities (Hoffmann and Meloy 2008, p. 167). Summarizing more than one and a half centuries of

clinical experience, case reports and research, a robust picture emerges of persons who stalk, threaten and assault public figures:

- The majority live a socially isolated life with few, if any attachments to others. They rarely have a stable sexual pair bond.
- Frequently, their employment and social history in their community are unstable.
- They are often unhappy people, marked by dysphoria and despair.
- Many show signs of severe mental illness including psychotic symptoms.
- They generally wish to be connected with and reap the benefits of an extraordinary and well-known person and they feel entitled to such a bond. This aspect shows a very clear pathological narcissism. Much less often, they feel persecuted or personally betrayed by the public figure, which suggests a clinical degree of paranoia.

Pathological fixations on public figures have a compensatory function. Very often, things have been going very wrong in the life of the stalker or attacker, and the force of grandiose fantasy has been continuously utilized as a balm. The compensation is also emotional, characterized by yearning, anger and fear.

Case studies suggest that there are sometimes truly European cases where stalkers and victims come from different countries, e.g. as already mentioned in the early 20th century a delusional French woman travelled to London and waited outside of Buckingham Palace believing that King George V. was in love with her (Enoch and Ball 2001). Another example is the case of a German stalker who attacked tennis player Monica Seles who was born in Yugoslavia (Hoffmann 2005; Hoffmann and Meloy 2008).

Mental illness plays an important role in many public figure stalking cases and attacks. This needs to be considered for different reasons: (1) In some European countries the law does not cover the problem of how to deal with mentally ill stalkers. (2) A multidisciplinary approach is necessary for case management.

First steps have been made in Europe, but more research on this phenomenon is undoubtedly needed and also more efforts should be made to protect public figures from becoming victims of stalking, threats and violent attacks.

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