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Unwanted Pursuit:

Perceived Social Support and Its Impacts on Coping

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**Unwanted Pursuit:
Perceived Social Support and Its Impacts on Coping**

**by
Jihye Kim
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beloved family who waited for me this long. I am forever grateful for your unconditional love and support.

한없이 기다리고 믿어 준 가족에게 이 논문을 바칩니다. 고맙고, 사랑합니다.

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Abstract

Unwanted Pursuit:

Perceived Social Support and Its Impacts on Coping

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The characteristics of unwanted pursuit behaviors and associated negative consequences are often researched and well documented in the literature. Nevertheless, how individuals deal with the victimization and whether their choice of managing the trauma will have impacts on consequences remains unclear. A majority of existing research examines the role of social support and coping techniques using non-college populations. Moreover, less is understood on the relationships among perceived social supports and available coping techniques on the trauma symptoms associated with the victimization. The purpose of this project was to explore aforementioned associations. The current study examined (a) the prevalence of use of different coping techniques and how the use of coping differed by sex, (b) the associations among the unwanted pursuit experiences, perceived social support and coping techniques, as well as traumatic symptoms resulted from the victimization, and (c) how perceived social support and available coping techniques have impact on alleviating trauma symptoms. College-aged participants (N = 202) responded to a series of online questionnaires. The data collected from this project answered research questions and hypotheses and they were consistent with the preceding research and their findings. The study found that unwanted pursuit victimization is a gendered phenomenon, victimization yields more trauma symptoms as well as seeking

more coping behaviors, and the use of social support and coping techniques have positive associations, and social support and coping techniques were served as a significant moderator and mediator in certain conditions. The use of coping strategies mediated the relationship between unwanted pursuit experience and the trauma symptoms, but this did not significantly vary by perceived social support. Altogether, the current study supports existing research in unwanted pursuit and highlights some insightful information on the relationships among perceived social support, coping, and trauma symptoms from the victimization.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On December 31, 2014, the White House released the January 2015 as National Stalking Awareness Month presidential proclamation addressing that one in six American females faces the risk of being a victim of stalking (The White House, 2014). In specific, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, one in six women and one in 19 men have been stalked during their lifetime (Breiding, Smith, Basile, Walters, Chen, & Merrick, 2014). Approximately 7.5 million individuals are stalked every year in the United States (Breiding et al., 2014). Nearly half of victims experience a minimum of one instance of unwanted contact on a weekly basis and feared not knowing what would happen next (Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009). The majority of perpetrators were identified as former relationship partners (i.e., 61% of female victims, 44% of male victims; Breiding et al., 2014). In particular, an additional 25% of female victims and 32% of male victims are stalked by someone they have known for a while (Breiding et al., 2014).

Stalking, however, is not the only pursuit behavior of consequence. More generally, unwanted pursuit is an intimate violation that involves harassing and intrusive behaviors that can range from persistent attempts of unrequited love to acts of physical aggression. Such behaviors could be moderate (e.g., uninvited phone calls, texts, or emails, and unexpected show-ups or visits) or severe (e.g., intimidation, threats, vandalism, or assault; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). In addition, the rapid advance of technology and other communication tools have facilitated this deviant behavior

(Ashcroft, 2001; Baum et al., 2009; Bossler & Holt, 2009; Fernandez, 2011; Lee 1998). Moreover, the common use of words such as “Facebook-stalking someone” causes misconceptions and minimizes the seriousness of these deviant behaviors (Chaulk & Jones, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2012).

Unwanted pursuit has been examined with such terms as relational stalking (Emerson, Ferris, & Gardner, 1998), obsessional harassment (Rosenfeld, 2000), obsessive relational intrusion (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998, 2004), and unwanted pursuit behaviors (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2000; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Rohling, 2000). Generally, Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) refer to unwanted pursuit as “the repeated and unwanted pursuit of intimacy through violation of physical and/or symbolic privacy” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007, p. 66) and involves persistent invasion of an individual’s life (Cupach, Spitzberg, & Carson, 2000). Nearly 30% of victims experienced unwanted pursuit and harassment and more than half of the victims expressed fear regarding their experiences (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Another study found that 40% of victims identified their victimization suffered from unwanted harassment (Campbell & Moore, 2011). The research suggests that the more intense forms of unwanted harassment will negatively impact victims in the long run. This study took a broad approach and adopted the general umbrella term *unwanted pursuit* when referring to such behaviors.

Persistent and uninvited acts from pursuers may result in mental and physical damage to the pursued (Sheridan, Blaauw, & Davies, 2003; Spitzberg, 2002). Pursuers contact targets repeatedly and such interaction might yield negative consequences

ranging from short-term to long-term impacts (Breiding et al., 2014). Victims tend to suffer from fatigue, frustration, helplessness, sleeplessness, anxiety, fear, distrust, depression, paranoia, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even physical injury (Amar, 2006; Breiding et al., 2014; Leidig, 1992; Logan, Shannon, & Cole, 2007; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Tjaden & Thoenes, 1998). Victims may have a fight or flight response from this suffering and embrace a wide range of tactics to deal with the situation.

Victims typically take some action to deal with the intrusion (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). They tend to cope with the violence by communicating with others (i.e., family members, friends, coworkers, police, therapists, etc.; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). In general, victims tend to keep the coping process private (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002) or only seek social support from their close social network members (Amar, 2006). Yet, because the effects of the pursuit vary, victims might adopt different coping techniques to manage negative symptoms (Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). To date, few studies have examined the effectiveness of coping in unwanted pursuit. Social support is a useful coping source (Thoits, 1986) as it may ease physical/psychological symptoms associated to stressors (Goldsmith, 2004). Thus, analyzing how social support affects consequences associated with unwanted pursuit is essential. Examining different coping mechanisms in response to unwanted pursuit would be beneficial to expand the existing research and facilitate education and interventions (de Becker, 1997; Spitzberg, 2002).

Further, despite the growing body of research in this area, unwanted pursuit has yet to be sufficiently examined in college student populations. In fact, college students

experience the highest rates of victimization as compared to the general public (Basile, Swahn, Chen, & Saltzman, 2006; Baum et al., 2009; Haugaard & Seri, 2003; Jordan, Wilcox, & Pritchard, 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; Westrup, Fremouw, Thompson, & Lewis, 1999). For example, nearly half of stalking victims reported being stalked before they reach the age of 25 (Breiding et al., 2014). College-aged individuals are also more likely to be victims than the general public—4.3% of college students experienced stalking in 2013 as compared to 2.2% of general public (Brady & Bouffard, 2014). More generally, Geistman Smith, Lambert, and Cluse-Tobar (2013) found that approximately 28% of college students have experienced unwanted pursuit victimization (i.e., overall lifetime prevalence). The social and environmental structure of college life and students' limited romantic relationship experiences place young adults at a heightened risk for experiencing unwanted pursuit (Fisher et al., 2002; Kirkland, 2002; Ravensburg & Miller, 2003), and additional research amongst this population is needed.

Even less is known about college victims' coping mechanisms. There is a lack of research examining victims' formal (e.g., law enforcement, counselors) and informal (e.g., family, friends) support systems (Dutton & Winestead, 2011; Jordan et al., 2007; Spitzberg, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Research suggests that college-aged victims tend to disclose their experiences to informal (i.e., close friends) rather than formal support systems (Buhi, Clayton, & Surrency, 2009; Jordan et al., 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Although victims who are young adults are at a higher risk of suffering from unwanted pursuit, they are less likely to file reports to law enforcement as compared to the general public (Brady & Bouffard, 2014). In addition, Nobles and Fox (2013)

found that only 32% of female and 18% of male college students reported their victimization. Furthermore, victims have difficulty advocating for themselves because they are incapable of defining or identifying the acts comprising unwanted pursuit and are not fully educated about negative impacts of unwanted pursuit (Tjaden, 2009). Some research, however, has found a correlation between victims' level of disclosure and coping processes. To illustrate, victims who have high level of self-esteem and view their friends as supportive were more likely to view themselves as worthy of help, and disclose their victimization to their informal support system, seek support through a formal system, and engage in active coping (Liang et al., 2005; Nurius, Macy, Nwabuzor, & Holt, 2011). Overall, we need to better understand how college students cope with unwanted pursuit.

Communication scholars are poised to make significant contributions toward this front. As the unwanted pursuit could negatively influence the victims' well-being, they need not only better information but also sound interventions. Communication is the key for fulfilling such needs. As unwanted pursuit becomes more troublesome considering its potentially damaging effects, it is important to investigate characteristics and coping strategies the pursued adopt to deal with the unwanted pursuit. Although research on unwanted pursuit has drastically increased, even on topics that were uncommon in the past (e.g., same-sex, pursuit in non-Western cultures; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014), there is a long way to go in order to understand and explain the dynamics of unwanted pursuit (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). This study tries to bridge the existing research on unwanted pursuit and the impact of perceived and available social support in coping processes. The

purpose of this study is to focus more on the role of perceived social support in the facilitation of coping from unwanted pursuit among college students. This study reveals the relationships among unwanted pursuit experience, resulting symptoms, and the perceived support from close social network members as well as functional and dysfunctional coping strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Imagine the following scenarios. First, there is a strange person standing outside of your driveway and you have noticed that creepy person for two weeks. Second, your ex-partner with whom you broke up a month ago constantly shows up wherever you go and begs you for one more chance. Finally, your coworker sends you numerous texts and messages through multiple social media channels because she has crush on you even though you said you are not interested in her. The scenarios depicted in here represent a wide variety of relational types, communication tools, and contexts. They are all considered unwanted pursuit.

One type of unwanted pursuit is stalking. Prior to California passing the first anti-stalking legislation in 1990 due to the death of a young actress by an obsessed fan, stalking was not considered a crime (Mullen, Pathe, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999; Spitzberg, 2002). However, stalking behaviors have existed for a long time. The image of obsessive pursuit of love is often regarded as positive and even highly encouraged in popular media as well as in our culture (Lowney & Best, 1995). Initially, stalking became criminalized as the victimization of famous public figures increased; however, stalking is prevalent and worrisome among acquaintances and relational partners as well (Spitzberg, 2002).

It was not until the 1990s that social scientists and clinical researchers investigated unwanted pursuit. For example, *erotomania* (i.e., a psychological disorder involving delusions of being in love with someone) has been studied in relation to stalking tendencies (see Gillett, Eminson, & Hassanyeh, 1990; Lipson & Mills, 1998;

Lloyd-Goldstein, 1998; Meloy 1999; Mullen, 2000; Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993). Other research topics such as unrequited love (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993) or unrequited lust (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004a) are often linked with unwanted pursuit behaviors. Due to a relatively short history and lack of research, knowledge of this particular phenomenon is still in its infancy (Mullen, 2000; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Although unwanted pursuit has been researched for about two decades, there are not enough studies documenting its prevalence and perceptions with non-clinical populations (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010). It is also important to investigate how prevalence of unwanted pursuit (e.g., perpetration and victimization) differs across various social domains, such as workplaces, schools, and households (Lynch, 1987).

In fact, unwanted pursuit is a natural activity for individuals at the initial or ending stages of romantic relationships (Finch, 2001)—a type of unwanted pursuit labeled as obsessive relational intrusions. Lee (1998) asserted that the opportunity for developing romantic relationships and intimate interactions opens up the door for obsessive attraction and deviant pursuit behaviors to exist. When relationships are not mutually negotiated and one party seeks a higher degree of closeness than the other, objects of nonmutual intimacy have a higher risk of being victims of unwanted relationship pursuit. Despite the positive outcomes associated with closeness in personal relationships (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989), if there is no mutual desire in forming a relationship, the unsolicited closeness might be damaging to the targets.

Pursuers often do not acknowledge whether their persistent behaviors are appropriate or not. For example, Sillars, Roberts, Leonard, and Dun (2000) found that

rejected individuals overestimated positive contributions of their actions to their one-sided relationship (e.g., reconciliation attempt), and underestimated the negative impacts on the pursued (e.g., psychological wear-outs, distress). Moreover, Dunn (1999) found that reconciliation attempts are fairly common for the rejected individuals and their attempts tend to be aggressive. Research findings on post-breakup adjustment suggest that intense feelings and emotions from individuals were positively associated with the likelihood of pursuing former partners (Cupach, Spitzberg, Younghans, & Gibbons, 2006). Indeed, victims typically experience pursuit after breakups (Dunn, 1999; Cupach & Metts, 2002; Jordan et al., 2007). Thus, overall, unwanted pursuit can come in many forms.

DEFINING UNWANTED PURSUIT

Researchers use vastly different definitions and research findings are shaped by how unwanted pursuit is defined within the study (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Further, legal definitions are inconsistent, and constructions of unwanted pursuit differ by individuals depending on the society (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Yet because, as detailed below, the strategies and consequences of varied types of pursuit are similar, the current study assesses all forms of *unwanted pursuit*. Before using this umbrella term, characteristics of the two major types—stalking and obsessive relational intrusion—will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Stalking occurs when someone is followed, harassed, or threatened by a person regularly (Meloy, 1996; Mullen et al., 1999; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Westrup &

Fremouw, 1998). Objects of stalking tend to feel fear and apprehension, and this experience is unsolicited and undesired (Westrup & Fremouw, 1998). When it comes to defining stalking, there are legal and research definitions (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). The legal aspect of stalking refers to deliberate and repeated behaviors toward a person that are unwelcome and induce fear to the extent that a reasonable person would view as frightening and/or threatening (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Stalking consists of continuing and recurring deviant behaviors (Bjerregaard, 2000; Boon & Sheridan, 2001; Meloy, 1996; Mullen et al., 1999; Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003, 2007). The fear inducing behaviors of the pursuers meet the criteria for legal issues, and pursuers can only use restraining orders when such legal conditions are met. The requirement of fear or threat is often the most legally problematic criterion (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). That is, when the experienced behaviors are not qualified as fear-provoking, reports from victims would not be considered as stalking.

Research, on the other hand, operationalizes stalking through a list of related actions and behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Research has begun to examine how normal people define stalking (see Amar, 2007; Dennison & Thomson, 2002, 2005; Dunn, 1999; Farrell, Weisburd, & Wyckoff, 2000; Hills & Taplin, 1998; Kamphuis et al., 2005; Kinkade, Burns, & Fuentes, 2005; Sheridan & Davies, 2001; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). To illustrate, examples include being followed, receiving unsolicited phone calls or messages, involving victim's social networks such as friends or family members for learning victims' whereabouts, or showing up wherever victims are. Most of all, victims indicating that pursuers attempt to communicate with them against their will was an

evident characteristic in identifying stalking victimization (Amar, 2007). Furthermore, Tjaden, Thoennes, and Allison (2000) investigated victims' definitions of stalking victimization. They found that individuals who experience obsessive behaviors did not recognize or label their experience as victimization per se (Tjaden et al., 2000) because stalking and unwanted relationship pursuits typically weigh heavily on interpretation of victims (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). That is, unless victims feel or react to relational pursuit behaviors as unwelcomed, fear-inducing, and/or intimidating, unwanted pursuit experiences might not be labeled as victimization (Mullen, 2000; Pathe & Mullen, 1997).

Turning to obsessive relational intrusion (ORI), Cupach and Spitzberg (1998, 2004) define ORI as “the repeated and unwanted pursuit of intimacy through violation of physical and/or symbolic privacy” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007, p. 66). ORI is similar to stalking, but different in terms of intentions and relational types as well as levels of threats used. ORI involves a person desiring an intimate relationship with the objects of pursuit, while stalking involves pursuing the target to inflict threat, harm, or revenge (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Not all pursuers follow their objects in order to have romantic relationships. ORIs could be irritating and frustrating, whereas stalking behaviors are intimidating and induce fear in victims (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000, 2004). Thus, it could be understood that ORIs and stalking behaviors are subsets under the more general idea of unwanted pursuit.

ORIs refer to invading a person's physical space or repeated physical or symbolic privacy (Spitzberg, Nicastro, & Cousins, 1998). ORIs occur when one person persistently chases a nonmutually desired relationship with the other (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998).

Pursuers engage in ORIs in order to seek intimacy with the pursued who do not wish the same kind of intimacy in return (Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007). Similarly, unwanted relationship pursuit behaviors are characterized by ongoing, unwelcome pursuit of a romantic relationship (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). Behaviors of unwanted pursuit are characterized by relentless pursuit of a romantic relationship involving individuals who are not in a consensual relationship (e.g., strangers or ex-romantic partners), using any forms of contact (e.g., texts, phone calls, or surveillance; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000).

Overall, unwanted pursuit becomes most detrimental when the pursuers' actions make the pursued more than just anxious and extremely fearful (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998). When the pursuit behaviors are at its extreme, inducing apprehension and terror within targets, the potential physical and psychological damages from the violence are worrisome. Indeed, unwanted relationship pursuits can yield negative consequences for targets (see Briere & Jordan, 2004; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Kamphuis, Emmelkamp, & Bartak, 2003; Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999). Most ORIs are not meeting legal definitions of stalking behaviors (i.e., actions of perpetrators must be fearful and threatening to victims in the eye of reasonable persons), but they still interfere with victims' lives and overall well-being. The destructive nature of unwanted relationship pursuit is especially dangerous as more and more people are experiencing unwanted pursuit. Also, it is commonly observed within personal relationships. For the purpose of this study, unwanted pursuit will be defined as the recurrent and unsolicited pursuit from a pursuer resulting in a violation of physical and mental privacy of an individual.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF UNWANTED PURSUIT BEHAVIORS

According to a meta-analysis on stalking, Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) grouped pursuing tactics into eight categories including: hyper-intimacy; mediated contacts; interactional contact; surveillance; invasion; harassment and intimidation; coercion and threat; and aggression. *Hyper-intimacy* relates to exhibiting standard courtship behaviors in extreme manners. The pursuers display unwarranted interest and behaviors to the victims such as giving excessive amounts of gifts, calling multiple times, or waiting for countless hours. *Mediated contacts* are associated with pursuers' communication attempts using a variety mode of communication technology, such as phone calls, text messages, e-mail, instant messages, social networking sites, etc. *Interactional contacts* represent assortments of both direct (e.g., physical appearance, interruption, invading personal space) and indirect (e.g., communicating with victims' social network) contact. Although some perpetrators use explicit strategies, Fisher and colleagues (1999, 2002) identified that stalkers tend to use implicit means to engage in unwanted pursuit. Most pursuers used phone calls as their medium of communication with the pursued, and relatively high numbers of stalkers used letters and emails (Fisher et al., 1999, 2002). As the cell phone usage has increased generally, it is assumed that more pursuers would adopt this type of communication tool to engage in their relationship pursuit. Recently, Chaulk and Jones (2011) studied online ORIs on Facebook and classified that online ORIs also consist of direct and indirect contact attempts (i.e., contacting targets versus contacting their social networks), monitoring/surveillance, expressions, and invitations. Researchers concluded that use of Facebook facilitates ORI behaviors for both perpetrators and victims, and has

potential for negative outcomes regarding users' privacy and security (Chaulk & Jones, 2011). *Surveillance* is all about obtaining information about the target of pursuit without letting them know, such as spying on, observing in public, or cyberstalking.

The latter half of these tactics become more threatening. *Invasion* involves felonious violation of victims' personal property or privacy. Following and waiting for victims were commonly used methods for pursuers as well (Fisher et al., 1999, 2002). *Harassment and intimidation* include various destructive verbal or nonverbal behaviors, such as insulting or damaging victim's reputation, contacting victim's close networks excessively, and troubling victims and their life in general. *Coercion and threat* comprise of implicit or explicit suggestion of potential harm. Pursuers may intimidate the pursued by mentioning that they will cause self-harm, hurt the pursued, or hurt people around them. Some pursuers use fear or threats that qualify for the legal definition of stalking (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). For example, more than half of obsessive pursuers used explicit (i.e., direct) as compared to implicit (i.e., implied) threats, and the majority of threats were directed toward the objects of pursuit (Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006); fewer threats were targeted toward the social network of the pursued (e.g., friends, family members) or others. The final category is called *aggression*, in which stalking activities include destruction of property, physical and sexual assaults, suicide, as well as homicide. Sexual and physical assaults were often reported by victims as experiences of stalking (Jordan et al., 2007).

Most unwanted pursuit of intimacy is annoying, frustrating, or mildly threatening (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000). Yet, victimization could involve a range of violent

behaviors. For instance, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) found that more than half of perpetrators used explicit threats. Moreover, Mohandie and his colleagues (2006) found that nearly half of victims indicated that they experienced intentional physical aggression. The violence includes physical or psychological aggression towards the pursued or a third party, sexual violence, homicide, abduction, destroying assets or vandalism, or use of weapons. Specifically, physical assault and vandalism were the most common form of violence.

As such, perpetrators use plethora of ways to get in touch with their objects of the pursuit. Some pursuers will use one or two categories of pursuing tactics whereas other pursuers will adopt all eight categories of pursuing tactics. Research suggests that pursuers adopt more than one type of pursuing behaviors to engage in unwanted pursuit (Holmes, 1993; Sheridan et al., 2001). Jordan and colleagues (2007) found that victims experienced multiple pursuit behavior (e.g., only physically followed by the pursued, only received excessive messages, or both physically followed and received excessive messages simultaneously). In fact, receiving multiple types of contacts from pursuers was prevalent (Meloy, 1996).

SEX DIFFERENCES IN THE PERPETRATION AND VICTIMIZATION

Research indicates that there are sex differences in prevalence of unwanted pursuit. Although both men and women could be victims, more females than males report victimization of unwanted pursuit. In general, obsessive followers are typically identified as males (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011; Meloy, 1996; Morrison, 2001), and after

examining 43 studies, Spitzberg (2002) found that approximately 75% of victims are females. More specifically, women experience stalking behaviors more than men (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In addition, female victims are four times more likely to get physical threats than males (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000), and are nearly four times more likely to feel threatened (Campbell, 2003). Yet, female stalking victims are more likely than male victims to receive the full attention of medical professionals and law enforcement (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003), which can foster feelings of helplessness in male victims. Male victims in many types of intimate partner violence tend to feel that they have no place to stand or speak up. This is particularly worrisome as unwanted relationship pursuit could happen to anyone, and the effects for males can be just as extensive as the effects for females.

Women are generally more cautious about privacy invasion than men are (Buslig & Burgoon, 2000). Men more than women put personal information (e.g., date of birth, sexual orientation, hometown, current city, work/home address, cell phone numbers) on their social networking sites (SNSs) (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Skype; Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Caverlee & Webb, 2008; Lewis, Kaufman, & Christakis, 2008). The SNS could be utilized as a medium for pursuers to cyberstalk and extend beyond the traditional form of stalking. Males who are less sensitive about restricting their private information are at higher risk of being victims of cyberstalking (i.e., the use of computer-mediated-communication to follow their objects of pursuit).

When it comes to characteristics of pursuers, they could be total strangers or could be someone that victims have known for a while (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Davis

& Frieze, 2000; Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Fisher et al., 2002; Meloy, 1996; Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007; Spitzberg et al., 1998; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Often times, stalking and unwanted pursuit result from previous relationships (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002). Yet, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) found this was more true for women; most men reported experiencing stalking from strangers. Victims who initiated the dissolution of their romantic relationships are also often pursued by their former relational partners (Coleman, 1997; Jordan et al., 2007; Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000; Meloy, 1996; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999; Roberts, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Whether the motives are reconciliation or retaliation, the rejected tend to engage in unwanted pursuit and self-initiate pursuing behaviors with their past relational partners (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). In addition, Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999) found that individuals with history of experiencing stalking were more likely to be stalked again.

Perceptions of unwanted pursuit also vary by victims' sex. Men are less likely than women to view the same behaviors as stalking or fear inducing (Campbell, 2003; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). Using vignettes, Dennison and Thomson (2002) found that female participants identified and perceived stalking behaviors more accurately than male participants did. Conversely, male participants regarded what are portrayed in the hypothetical scenarios as rather natural procedures of courtship (Dennison & Thomson, 2002). To further illustrate the gendered perceptions, females expressed worries and fears for scenarios involving stalking incidence, while males expressed lack of concern and even interpreted the situations as flattering (Hills & Taplin, 1998). Harris and Miller (2000) found that although both sexes generally considered that strangers are much

harmful than close relational partners or social network members when it comes to physical assault, women showed heightened fears when imagining intimidating strangers than did men. In general, women experience more fear regarding unwanted pursuit (Bjerregaard, 2000; Davis, Coker, & Sanderson, 2002).

Moreover, Sinclair and Frieze (2005) argued that sex differences in stalking experiences might be comparable to sex differences in perceptions of interpersonal rejection. Researchers found that women were generally more concerned than men about being rejected, regardless of victimization and perpetration (Sinclair & Frieze, 2005). They further asserted that women's use of indirect responses (i.e., to avoid being impolite, or direct rejection) could be one of the reasons why women are vulnerable to the victimization of unwanted pursuit (Sinclair & Frieze, 2005). This is compounded by the fact that pursuers are prone to misinterpret unresponsive, neutral, or rejecting behaviors from the pursued as encouragement (e.g., “no’ means try harder,” “token resistance”; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Ambiguous communication may provide hope for pursuers (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2011). For example, rejecting with a passive statement like “I am just not ready for a new relationship right now” gives room for various interpretations. Pursuers might filter and hear only what they want to hear from statements such as this. They will only focus on the fact their objects of pursuit are “not ready for right now” and reinterpreted this as they have a chance eventually. Further, Sinclair, Borgida, and Collins (2002) found that even when pursuers admitted being rejected and knew that their rejecters had meant it, more than half of pursuers thought developing a relationship was possible if they tried hard enough.

COLLEGE STUDENTS AND UNWANTED PURSUIT

Research suggests that certain individuals are more vulnerable to perpetration and victimization than are others in terms of their demographic characteristics and life style patterns (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Miethe & Meier, 1994). In particular, college young adults are highly vulnerable to unwanted pursuit. Numerous studies highlighted that victims are typically between ages of 18 and 29 years old (Coleman, 1997; Hall, 1998; Nobles, Fox, Piquero, & Piquero, 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In addition, the repetitive and readily identifiable patterns of college students' life could put them at increased risk. Thus, college students are more likely to be potential perpetrators or victims of unwanted pursuit.

College populations are mostly comprised of young adults; however, they are unique and different from the general population. Specifically, Ravensberg and Miller (2003) asserted that college students vastly differ from the general adult population in terms of prevalence of stalking experiences. For example, they suggested that the high prevalence of stalking among young adults might result from developmental immaturities, such as an inability to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships. This could be aggravated by the typical social structure of college life, where students stay close with limited social boundaries (Ravensburg & Miller, 2003). Moreover, research participants from the study of Sinclair and Frieze (2005) reported experiencing annoyance and discomfort from unwanted pursuit (i.e., independent of victim sex), but feeling fear was not reported at all; this signifies that student populations are experiencing pursuit from people they have known for a while which could make the

experience less frightening or intimidating. Thus, mild or implicit ORIs may be insufficient to induce fear in students.

College campuses are also mostly accessible to the greater public with fewer restrictions (e.g., library, campus buildings, parking lots, dormitories, and student commons). This easy access makes unwanted pursuit fairly effortless for perpetrators (Fisher et al., 2002). Besides, students' class schedules, campus employment, and academic activities are highly predictable which makes students susceptible targets of unwanted pursuit (Fisher et al., 2002). In addition, cyberstalking is just as feasible as traditional stalking opportunities given that web-based directories including personal information (e.g., email, local/permanent addresses, phone numbers, major, on-campus job positions) can be available to the public (Fisher et al., 2002). Further, almost all college students are provided with Internet access and use of the technology by their institutions giving them unlimited access to electronic technologies that could facilitate either perpetrating or becoming a victim of unwanted pursuit. Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) suggested that with the advance of technology and easy Internet accessibility via personal computers and mobile devices, stalkers could take advantage and monitor their objects of pursuit via email, phone, web, and so forth. Thus, the social, environmental, and technological structure of college life in addition to limited experiences with interpersonal relationships may create a higher risk of unwanted pursuit victimization among college students.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNWANTED PURSUIT

Some might argue that unwanted pursuit is less serious violence in comparison to sexual violations. However, previous research in intimate violence argues that psychological consequences are more lasting and harmful than physical damages (e.g., Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004; Brown, Testa, & Messman-Moore, 2009; Busby & Compton, 1997; Craig, 1990; Frieze, 2005; Gutek & Done, 2001; Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999; McBride, Reece, & Sanders, 2008; Riggs, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 1992; Temple, Weston, Rodriguez, & Marshall, 2007; Ullman, Filipas, Townsend, & Starzynski, 2006; Williams & Frieze, 2005). The aforementioned research also found that victims of the psychological consequences are often afraid of seeking help from law enforcement as victims themselves also consider that the experiences are not serious enough to report officially. Unfortunately, many experiences are not legally qualified for juridical actions, which discourages victims from formally reporting the unwanted pursuit.

The victims of unwanted pursuit are at risk of physical, behavioral, economic, mental, and/or social symptoms (Davis et al., 2002; Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007; Logan & Walker, 2010b; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001, 2002). Victims of stalking have been found to suffer from fear, anxiety, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, distrust, paranoia, frustration, helplessness, and physical injury (Logan et al., 2007; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001; Pathe & Mullen, 1997). Furthermore, victims must alter their routines, behaviors, and activities such as changing their phone numbers, residence, job, and/or restricting their hobbies and social activities to avoid the persistent perpetrators (Amar,

2006; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Compared to non-victims, those who reported they have experienced stalking reveal considerably greater mental health symptoms and lower perceived physical health status than those who did not report being stalked (Amar, 2006; Emerson et al., 1998). Emerson and colleagues (1998) suggested that unwanted pursuit turning into explicit threats and violent stalking is not rare and victims may suffer from the intensified pursuit process. These victims often have a wide range of psychological issues, and they may have multiple emotional problems (Johansen, Venke, Wahl, Eilertsen, & Weisaeth, 2007).

Although Mohandie et al. (2006) found that more than half of obsessive pursuers did not impede targets' general life, when they did, they interfered with career and interpersonal relationships, invaded privacy, and obtained personal information without permission. While studying unwanted pursuit on college campus, Fisher and colleagues (2002) found that the majority of victims reported experiencing emotional and psychological harm rather than physical injuries or sexual assaults. This finding was in line with previous clinical research that victims of stalking suffered from psychological and emotional issues, such as fear, anger, stress for managing privacy, post-traumatic stress disorder, and being cynical and less trustful (Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Davis & Frieze, 2000; Fisher et al., 2002; Hall, 1998; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Westrup et al., 1999). Moreover, the dynamics of unwanted pursuit not only affect the victims but also people around them (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002).

In categorizing all the types of effects across the research, Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) identified eight categories: general disturbances (e.g., emotional, psychological, or lifestyle troubles); affective health (e.g., negative states); social health (e.g., affiliation with social networks); resource health (e.g., financial costs); cognitive health; physical health; behavioral disturbance (e.g., changes in lifestyle patterns); and resilience (e.g., positive changes in life). Nearly half of the victims experienced one or more of these symptoms (Spitzberg, 2002). Though it appears that some symptoms of victimization could be positive for certain individuals (e.g., resilience), most symptoms are negative (e.g., trauma). In essence, the stalking and obsessive relational intrusion experience could be extremely disturbing and traumatizing for most victims (Spitzberg, 2002). It may be that experiencing severe pursuit behaviors (e.g., sexual assaults) may have far more negative effects on victims than receiving relatively mild hyper-intimacy tactics.

Due to the enduring, invasive, and unpredictable nature of the unwanted pursuit, the potential harm for victims is difficult to assess (Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007). Yet, research shows victims' well-being is negatively influenced in the short-term as well as in the long-term (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002). Hence, the first hypothesis proposes a positive association between the extensiveness of unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms.

H₁: Frequency of unwanted pursuit experience will be positively associated with trauma symptoms.

COPING STRATEGIES OF UNWANTED PURSUIT

Although numerous studies showing an association between stalking victimization and negative symptoms, it is not yet known to what extent the type, depth, or breadth of pursuit behaviors has the most impact on the victim. Because the effects vary from one person to another, victims may adopt different coping techniques to manage or stop their negative symptoms resulting from being pursued (de Becker, 1997; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Zuckerman & Gage, 2003). Victims tend to deal with victimization by themselves and keep the coping process rather private (Fisher et al., 2002) or seek social support from their close network members (Amar, 2006). To date, few studies have examined the effectiveness of coping in unwanted relationship pursuit. Examining different coping mechanisms of victims will be beneficial to expand and advance the existing research on unwanted relationship pursuit as well as facilitate education and interventions for future victims (de Becker, 1997; Spitzberg, 2002).

Victims cope with unwanted pursuit victimization in various ways. There are several categorizations identified by researchers—three will be reviewed here to provide an overview of the various coping mechanisms. First, Spitzberg and Cupach (2001) identified five coping strategies, including moving toward (e.g., working with the pursuer), moving against (e.g., punishing the pursuer), moving away (e.g., avoiding the pursuer), moving inward (e.g., denying the experience), and moving outward (e.g., disclosing the experience). *Moving away* strategies are most commonly used and initially sought by the pursued to deal with unwanted pursuit behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2008; Nguyen, Spitzberg, & Lee, 2012; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001). Some victims opt for

moving against strategies (e.g., reporting to the police) because they are direct and seemed to be effective to stop the pursuers (Nguyen et al., 2012). However, the pursued need to be cautious when choosing this type of coping strategy as the perpetrator might intensify their efforts (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Moreover, this could increase the likelihood of engaging in unwanted interaction with the pursuer (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001, 2007). Studies found that *moving toward* coping strategies are ineffective in dealing with the pursuit because pursuers tend to misinterpret the victim's negotiating effort as their chance to step into the victim's life (Nguyen et al., 2012; Spitzberg, 2003; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). *Moving inward* strategies (e.g., high reliance on self to deal with the problem) are unsuccessful in ceasing the unwanted pursuit behaviors as running away from the reality rarely helps victims to solve the issues (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001). Furthermore, this unresponsive and indirect method to deal with the pursuit may leave too much room for misinterpretation. Nevertheless, moving inward strategies could alleviate the stress and suffering of victims (Nguyen et al., 2012; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Similarly, although *moving outward* strategies (e.g., seeking social support, reliance on others to resolve issues) may not be efficient in stopping the pursuit behaviors, they are effective in managing the experience as they serve as social buffers (Nguyen et al., 2012; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

Second, Fisher and colleagues (2002) reported that victims' reactions toward stalking include four broad categories: *avoidance* (e.g., ignoring messages, shunning from the stalkers), *confrontation*, *prevention* (e.g., moving, improving security/privacy), and *legal actions* (e.g., restraining order). Avoidance is the most commonly adopted

copied response for college-aged victims of unwanted pursuit experiences (Fisher et al., 1999; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Most victims reacted to pursuers with one of avoiding behavioral tactics (Fisher et al., 2002). Furthermore, one in six victims used confrontation as the coping technique (Fisher et al., 2000). Moreover, some victims used interactional and protective behaviors in dealing with unwanted pursuit (Alexy, Burgess, Baker, & Smoyak, 2005; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a particular coping response was not examined in this research.

These first two categorizations are broader strategies, and several overlaps can be seen. For example, moving away and avoidance are similar in nature as are moving toward and confrontation. The third categorization, by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), includes 15 different ways to cope with stressors and are more specific tactics (see Table 1). These coping strategies have been assessed collectively but are also categorized as positive (functional) and negative (dysfunctional) strategies.

Table 1. COPE Strategies (Carver et al., 1989)

Scale	Behaviors
Active Coping	Taking steps to eliminate the problem
Planning	Thinking about dealing with the problem
Suppression	Focusing only on the problem
Restrain Coping	Waiting for the right moment to act
Instrumental Social Support	Seeking advice from others
Positive Reinterpretation	Reframing to believe the problem is real
Acceptance	Learning to accept the problem
Denial	Refusing to believe the problem is real
Turning to Religion	Using faith for support
Emotional Social Support	Seeking sympathy from others
Venting Emotions	Wanting to express feelings
Behavioral Disengagement	Giving up trying to deal with the problem
Mental Disengagement	Distracting self from thinking about the problem
Substance Use	Using alcohol or drugs to reduce distress
Humor	Making light of the problem

Some coping strategies are predominantly constructive/functional, whereas others are less likely so (Carver et al., 1989). In general, adaptive strategies are more likely to lead to positive outcomes than maladaptive coping (Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989). Maladaptive, or dysfunctional coping techniques often involves behavioral and mental

disengagement (Carver et al., 1989). In terms of positive or functional strategies, people may have *positive reinterpretation and growth* from the stressor by thinking in an optimistic manner or learning from the experience. They could focus on *emotional reactions and/or venting of emotions* by letting their feelings out or being honest about what they feel about the stressor. Some individuals seek *instrumental social support*, such as getting advice from someone about the situation or asking people who had a similar experience about what to do. Moreover, they may count on *emotional social support* (e.g., sympathy, understanding) from close friends, family members, or significant others; whereas others may turn to *religious beliefs* to deal with the stressful situations (e.g., praying, going to church). *Humor* can be utilized to overcome the stressor. People might laugh, joke, and make fun about the stressor. *Active coping techniques* could be utilized when taking direct and additional actions to resolve the issues. Others adopt *planning* as their coping strategy by coming up with strategies and methods to best handle the situations. Some individuals *put aside other activities* to concentrate on dealing with the stressor. Moreover, people could *restrain* themselves from taking hasty actions and force themselves to wait patiently for the right time to act on.

On a more passive and negative note, *acceptance* could be selected as another coping strategy (Carver et al., 1989). Victims might get used to the issue they have and think that they must accept what happened because they have no other options. Acceptance is somewhat controversial because it could be argued as a useful method to minimize the distress because accepting the reality of a stressful situation helps the victim to deal with the situation and may facilitate coping process (Cohen & Lazarus, 1973).

However, this method might be beneficial only in the initial phase of the stress management. This strategy is passively giving up the situation and not further seeking other possible solutions. Thus, acceptance is identified as a dysfunctional coping technique as victims appraise the stressor as something beyond their controls and this may potentially hinder the coping process and yield more negative consequences (Carver et al., 1989). Some people could also engage in *mental disengagement*, such as daydreaming, oversleeping, distracting themselves by working or doing different activities, and/or thinking about the stressor less. They could also take part in *behavioral disengagement* by admitting the reality and quitting as well as stop making efforts to solve the problems. In addition, people may use *substances* such as alcohol or drugs to get away from the stressful situations. Moreover, *denial* could be chosen as a coping technique by saying that the situation is unreal, refusing to believe that the stressful event has happened, and pretending that nothing has happened. The study uses this in-depth categorization for analyzing a variety of coping strategies used by victims. This study examines the strategies combined as well as its two major categorizations of positive and negative strategies.

Research suggests victims use a variety of strategies. Most victims engage in more than one or combination of the types of coping strategies (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). For example, college female victims tend to report using more direct coping strategies for efficiently stopping the pursuit (Nguyen et al., 2012). However, the majority college victims are less likely to use responsive strategies against their pursuer

(e.g., *moving against* strategies) or ignore the issue (e.g., *moving inward* strategies; Fisher et al., 1999).

Research has examined some of these coping strategies more than others. For example, one of the more prevalently assessed coping strategies is disclosure, to either formal support systems (e.g., law enforcement, counselor, professionals) or informal support systems (e.g., friend, family member, significant other; Jordan et al., 2007). Research that adopts a conservative, legal definition of stalking found that 35% to 42% of female college victims reported their victimization to law enforcement (Bjerregaard, 2002; Westrup et al., 1999). This is alarming because the unwanted relationship pursuit, just like other types of intimate interpersonal violence, is a highly underreported crime. Student victims are less likely to use formal disciplinary procedures available at their institutions (Fisher et al., 2002), and college female victims, in particular, are less likely to report victimization to the law enforcement compared to the general population (Dutton & Winestead, 2011; Jordan et al., 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

This tendency to not use the legal system is worrisome as more than 80% of stalking incidents were not reported to law enforcement agencies (Fisher et al., 2002). Victims were worried that they might not be taken seriously by law enforcement officers, their experiences would not be identified as a legitimate stalking incidence, their family members or other people might find out, they lacked proof or little information on how to report the incidence, and/or their pursuer might act in retaliation (Fisher et al., 2002).

Using behavioral and contextual definitions (e.g., behavior that can form a course of conduct that causes concern or distress, such as unwanted and repeated communication

or contact) rather than legal definitions, research shows college victims are more likely to report victimization to their informal support systems (e.g., close friends, family member, significant other; Dutton & Winestead, 2011; Spitzberg, 2002). If victims ever report their experiences to someone else, they were mostly close friends or roommates, and parents or other family members (Fisher et al., 2002). Previous research suggests that many female victims disclose their experiences to informal rather than formal support systems (Buhi et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Approximately half of victims sought some type of help (Buhi et al., 2009). The majority of victims (i.e., 90%) looked for assistance from their friends, and only 7% asked help from the law enforcement (Buhi et al., 2009). Some research investigated the relationship between using specific coping strategies and correlates or consequences of unwanted pursuit. For instance, Kamphuis and colleagues (2003) found that passive coping styles (e.g., avoidance, withdrawal) was positively associated with posttraumatic stress disorder.

In addition, there are sex differences in the choice of coping strategies. Fremouw, Westrup, and Pennypacker (1997) suggested that males and females prefer different coping styles regarding the stalking experience. Female victims tend to use avoidance as a strategy, whereas male victims are more likely to use confrontation (Fremouw et al., 1997; Starkweather, 2007). Englebrecht and Reyns (2011) found the sex difference regarding social support; male victims rarely seek or receive social support, whereas female victims tend to seek social support and consider support as beneficial to manage their pursuit experiences (Englebrecht & Reyns, 2011). Moreover, female victims were more likely to adopt a wider variety of coping mechanisms than males in response to

stalking (Hills & Taplin, 1998). For example, Bjerregaard (2000) found that more female victims seek out professional help (e.g., counseling) than male victims. Additionally, Sinclair and Frieze (2005) found that women are more likely to use direct rejection (i.e., saying “no”) when they are dealing with intensely determined and long lasting pursuit. Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002) concluded that women tended to use more coping strategies than men did because they appraise stressors as more serious.

Based on the above review of symptoms experienced by the victims, their coping strategies, and sex differences in the use of coping strategies, the following hypotheses and research questions are posed:

RQ₁: What is the prevalence of each specific coping technique towards the unwanted pursuit experience?

H₂: The frequency of using each specific coping strategy chosen to deal with the unwanted pursuit will vary by sex.

Victims may use a number of coping strategies to manage their negative symptoms as a response to unwanted pursuit (Storey & Hart, 2011; Zuckerman & Gage, 2003). Coping strategies have been found to be effective for a wide range of symptoms. Coping is the process of spending physical and psychological energy on dealing with problems. Mechanisms used to cope with stress attempt to overcome or attenuate the amount of stress that are experienced. Moreover, to the extent that coping and social support are effectively used, symptoms of the stress should be diminished.

H₃: Frequency of unwanted pursuit experience will be positively associated with use of coping strategies.

H4: The frequency of using coping strategies overall will be negatively associated with trauma symptoms experienced by victims.

Based on the hypotheses above, coping strategies is thus hypothesized to mediate the association between unwanted pursuit experiences and trauma symptoms.

H5: The use of coping strategies will mediate the association between frequency of unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR

Victims of unwanted pursuit might utilize social support to reduce negative symptoms or problems caused by victimization. Social support is offered help to individuals who are in need of some assistance due to different types of suffering (Dunkel-Schetter, Blasband, Feinstein, & Herbert, 1992; Goldsmith, 2004). Social support is provided in various forms (Bippus, 2001; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Cutrona, Suhr, & MacFarlane, 1990; Dunkel-Schetter et al., 1992; Jones & Burleson, 2003; Okun & Lockwood, 2003). Cutrona and Suhr (1992) categorized five general social support system: informational, emotional, esteem, social network support, and tangible support. Informational support refers to messages that include factual information or knowledge such as advice or feedback. Emotional support is expressed with a form of caring, concern, empathy, and compassion. Esteem support contains messages that can help promoting one's values and feeling of accomplishments. Social network support is provided by a companionship that emphasizes belongingness to a

community and being connected to others. Finally, tangible support is instrumental assistance that is provided with needed goods and services.

Social support can serve as a social buffer to lessen their negative symptoms from a life disturbance (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000; Okun & Lockwood, 2003). Harnish, Aseltine, and Gore (2000) found that college students who use high levels of active coping styles tend to overcome the stressor faster than those who use passive coping strategies. Social support is one of the most useful coping sources for victims (Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007; Thoits, 1986) as it may ease physical and/or psychological symptoms associated to stressors, help overcome emotional distress, and make them feel better about the self and the situation (Bippus, 2001; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Cohen et al., 2000; Goldsmith, 2004; Jones & Burleson, 2003; Okun, & Lockwood, 2003; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). In particular, emotional support is frequently used and preferred methods of social support by support providers (Xu & Burleson, 2001). Providing emotional support has beneficial effects to victims. Those who received emotional support from their close networks tend to manage and cope more effectively with the stressors, and maintain positive sense of self (Cutrona, 1996).

As noted above, victims tend to seek social support (i.e., informal support) in response to their victimization (see Amar, 2006; Amar & Alexy, 2010; Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan, & Freeve, 2002; Blaauw, Winkel, Sheridan, Malsch, & Arensman, 2002; Brewster, 2001; Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007; Yoshihama, 2002). Receiving social support from social networks such as family

members or close friends, and/or taking legal action and turning to the law enforcement are typically recommended methods of managing the unwanted pursuit events (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008). Buhi et al. (2009) investigated help-seeking behaviors from college female victims. The pursued tend to receive advice and emotional support from their close social networks and overcome their distress from the pursuer without using the formal support system (e.g., reporting to the police, using the counseling or therapy sessions). Liang and colleagues (2005) found that female victims who perceive their friends as supportive engaged in more active coping processes.

In addition, the severity of victimization predicts a greater likelihood of help-seeking behavior (Liang et al., 2005). The desire to seek social support and attempts to cope are driven by the severity of negative symptoms (Brewster, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Thoit, 1986; Valentiner, Foa, Riggs, & Gershuny, 1996). People seek help for mainly two reasons: instrumental reasons (i.e., problem-focused) (e.g., seeking advice, information, or tangible support) and emotional reasons (i.e., emotion-focused) (e.g., seeking moral support, empathy, or understanding; Carver & Scheier, 1989). Those who experience more pursuit tend to use a variety of strategies to manage their pursuit experiences (Nguyen et al., 2012). However, if the pursued blame themselves for the victimization, they are less likely to seek help and are more likely to deal with their issues on their own (Liang et al., 2005). Moreover, many victims might not initially realize they are being pursued, but when the pursuit becomes apparent and affects their daily life negatively, they utilize various management strategies to deal with the unwelcomed experience.

In general, the availability of social support is associated with how the pursued manage their stressful events. Research found modest correlations between social support and negative symptoms from victimization (Bell, Bennett Cattaneo, Goodman, & Dutton, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2012). For example, social support is inversely correlated with negative symptoms resulting from the pursuit (Nguyen et al., 2012). Although based on correlational data, this might suggest the distress is minimized to some extent by social support. However, the efficacy of such social support has not been thoroughly examined (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008). In one study, a negative correlation was observed between the length of the pursuit and the satisfaction with social support (Kamphuis et al., 2003); as the unwanted pursuit continues, the pursued find it difficult to attain the desired social support, both in quantity and quality. The quality of the social support also needs to be considered—social support may have positive and negative effects (Barbee, Rowatt, & Cunningham, 1998). Depending on the appropriateness of the support for the pursued, it may not be functional (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). In addition, when the pursued actively seek assistance but support is limited, it might create more emotional distress (Burleson, 1990; Cutrona, 1990; LaGaipa, 1990). The availability of social support is vital for victims as it serves as a buffer against stressors. This study explores the relationship between the perceptions of social support and its fundamental role in coping with victimization.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because the current study will examine the role of social support in the coping process related to unwanted pursuit, the Stress-Support Matching Hypothesis (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990) will be applied to understand the association among variables.

Stress-Support Matching Hypothesis. This theory suggests that the effectiveness of support depends on the functional aspects (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). For example, emotional support from friends or family members might protect the face of victims, whereas financial or physical support might directly affect the tangible needs of victims. Close relational partners typically provide social support, and the types of social support range from abstract support (i.e., interpersonal support) to tangible resources (Thompson, 1995). Specifically, examples of abstract support include emotional support (e.g., feeling empathy, caring, love, and trust), informational support (e.g., receiving advices and suggestions) and instrumental support (e.g., sharing of tasks and responsibilities; Barrera, 1986; Dunst & Trivette, 1985; Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Thompson, 1995). This theory hypothesizes that perceived social support alleviates the stressful events on personal wellbeing (see Figure 1).

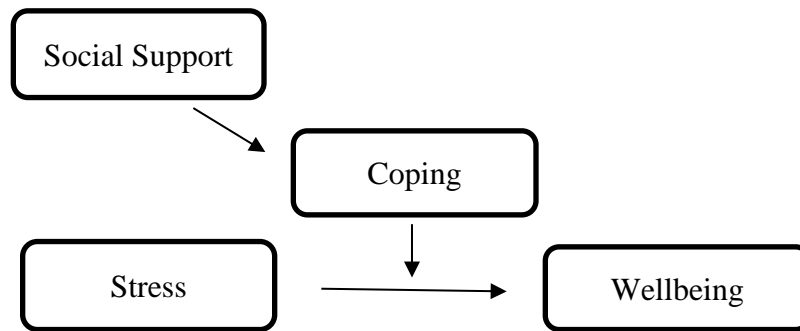


Figure 1. Support enhances coping, buffering the relationship between stress and wellbeing (Cohen & McKay, 1984)

In essence, the theory explains how supportive actions facilitate coping and hypothesizes that social support reduces stress and promotes coping if the types of support matches with the demands of the stressful events (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Various individuals need different forms of assistance depending on the stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For example, if the pursued is feeling threatened by the persistent surveillance of a pursuer, offering monetary assistance would not be an effective way to help the victim. Conversely, identifying legal actions the pursued could take (i.e., providing informational support) or making them feel better about themselves (i.e., offering esteem or emotional support) would be more effective. Although the theory is geared toward explaining how matching specific types of support to the support seekers' needs is advantageous, this study is not seeking to understand the perfect fit. Instead, following research that has studied the link between social support and coping (see Fondacaro & Moos, 1987; Holahan, Moos, & Bonin,

1997; Lakey & Heller, 1988; Manne & Zautra, 1989), this theory will be used to explain how perceptions of social support systems buffer the stressors and facilitate the coping process as a result of experiencing unwanted relationship pursuit.

Based on the theory, the study assumes that coping will mediate the impact of such stress on the outcomes and perceived social support will moderate this mediation. Therefore, to the extent that coping is effective, symptoms of the stress should be reduced. Moreover, those who have greater perceived social support are likely to experience stronger associations between unwanted pursuit experiences and coping (i.e., they engage in more coping) and between coping and trauma symptoms (i.e., the coping was more effective). Thus, it is predicted that coping mediates the relationship between unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms, and that perceived social support will enhance this process. As such, the model employed in this study is modified slightly as compared to Figure 1 in that coping is included as a mediator rather than as a moderator and social support moderates both paths in this model. Thus, these additional hypotheses are posed:

H₆: Perceived social support will be positively associated with frequency of coping strategies.

H₇: Perceived social support will moderate the association between the unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms such that the associations between unwanted pursuit and coping as well as coping and trauma symptoms will be stronger for those with greater social support.

RQ₂: Do the above relationships vary depending on whether the coping is function or dysfunctional?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter specifies participants and procedures of the survey, the scales and/or measurements used, and the planned analyses for answering research questions and testing hypotheses.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

After the study proposal was approved by the college's Institutional Review Board, the data collection took place during the Fall semester of 2018. Initially, there were less than 100 participants ($n = 97$) whom were recruited via a research participation pool for the Department of Communication Studies. Flyers were posted in the department building or common areas such as campus buildings or libraries as a back-up plan as there were not enough participants from the department's research pool. A link to the survey was sent via email to potential participants who met the requirements for partaking in this study in other department undergrad courses. Eventually, a total of 202 respondents from the University of Texas at Austin participated. Nearly over half of participants were enrolled in undergraduate courses offered by the Department of Communication Studies ($n = 110$). Participating students received some form of extra credit at the discretion of their instructors. The remaining participants were recruited from other departments within the same university via the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A for the Recruitment Flyer) and announcements from their instructors.

As the current project is highly sensitive subjects for participants, information on the potential risk or benefits of the study as well as compensation and the voluntary

nature of the study were explained in the consent form for participants (see Appendix B for the Informed Consent). Participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the online survey and informed that they may withdraw at any time without being penalized. In order to protect the privacy of participants, questionnaire responses from the online survey were kept anonymous and the collected data did not contain any identifiable information unique to participants. The online survey questionnaire housed on Qualtrics website was available and distributed to research participants. The duration of survey completion took approximately 30 minutes.

A series of demographic questions were asked to participants. The average age was 20.64 ($SD = 2.09$), ranging from 18 to 27 years old. The majority of students were 19 ($n = 45, 22.3\%$) and 20 ($n = 45, 22.3\%$) and with few exceptions ($n = 12, 6\%$), the sample accurately represents college-aged students within the 18 to 24 year range. In the sample, there were 127 females (62.9%) and 75 males (37.1%). The ethnic makeup of the participants consisted of 29 African Americans/Blacks (14.4%), 32 Asian Americans (15.8%), 23 Mexican Americans/Latino(a)s/Hispanics (11.4%), 3 Pacific Islanders (1.5%), 109 European Americans/Whites (54%), and 6 participants who indicated 'other' (e.g., African American/White, Asian/European American, Middle Easterners, etc.) (3%). The class standings of the participants were mainly sophomores ($n = 51, 25.2\%$), seniors ($n = 48, 23.8\%$) and juniors ($n = 40, 19.8\%$), with the remaining participants being freshmen ($n = 39, 19.3\%$) and 5th years or above ($n = 24, 11.9\%$). The current relational statuses were indicated as: single ($n = 121, 59.9\%$), in a relationship ($n = 74, 36.6\%$), and married ($n = 7, 3.5\%$).

The initial requirement for partaking this study was that participants must have experienced unwanted pursuit. To be specific, two weeks at the very least following the guideline for identifying victimization by the researchers. Mullen (2000) and Purcell, Pathe, and Mullen (2004) suggested a two-week rule for the minimum duration of pursuit experienced, as those victims who experienced the harassment for over two weeks were more likely to identify their victimization. For screening, participants were asked at the beginning of the survey whether they have experienced unwanted pursuit behaviors with the definition. Unwanted pursuit was defined as the recurrent and unsolicited pursuit from a pursuer, which results in violation of physical and mental privacy of an individual. All 202 participants indicated that they have experienced unwanted pursuit behaviors.

Similar to past research on unwanted pursuit, participants were also asked several general questions adopted from Spitzberg and Cupach (2014). In regard to the question whether the unwanted pursuit occur in a manner that they personally felt was threatening, or placed them in fear of their safety, or the safety of their family, friends, pets, or property, slightly over a half of participants ($n = 104$) indicated that they were intimidated by their experiences whereas other half ($n = 98$) indeed felt threatening toward their experience. Unlike previous research (e.g., Bjerregaard, 2000; Blackburn, 1999; Brewster, 2000; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000; Spitzberg & Veksler, 2007), half of respondents considered their experience as not personally threatening or fearful. Also, the majority of participants reported that they have not experienced physical assault (e.g., slap, kick, hit, etc.) from their unwanted pursuit experience ($n = 189$, 93.6%). This suggests that although many people have experienced being persistently followed and/or

obsessively pursued by someone, the participants in this study likely did not deal with serious unwanted pursuit. Moreover, most participants indicated neutral stances when it comes to answering questions whether the pursuit experience occurred only in real life or only in cyber space and identified that the unwanted pursuit experience happened both in face-to-face and online space (82.2%). Preceding studies found that males are much more likely than females to be the pursuers (e.g., Blaauw et al., 2002; Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Meloy, 1996; Mullen et al., 1999) and this was the same case for the current study as 65.8% of respondents reported the sex of their pursuers as male. Consistent with previous studies, most unwanted pursuit emerges from friendship and intimate relationships (Bjerregaard, 2000; Brewster, 2000; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007; Spitzberg & Veksler, 2007). A majority of participants indicated that they have known the pursuers very well (71.8%) and fairly well (23.3%). When asked to identify their relationships with the pursuers, more than half of the sample (54%) reported that they were in romantic relationships, followed by close friends (37.6%). Strangers and acquaintances were identified as pursuers less than 5% respectively. In addition, participants reported on the duration of their experience in an open-ended question. The duration ranged from two weeks to two years ($M = 6.21$ months, $Mdn = 3$ months). Most participants experienced the pursuit for about a month ($n = 52$). See Appendix C for the complete demographic and descriptive questions.

MEASURES

Reliabilities, and means and standard deviations for key variables can be found in Table 2. Correlations among the variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Means, Standard deviations, and Reliabilities for Key Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's (α)</i>
1. ORI	3.27	.50	.93
2. MSPSS	5.77	.60	.94
3. COPE	2.35	.27	.83
4. FUNC	2.36	.19	.72
5. DYSFUNC	2.42	.41	.86
4. SRS	3.95	.80	.75

Note: ORI refers to Obsessive Relational Intrusion, MSPSS refers to Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, COPE refers to the coping technique inventories, FUNC refers to functional coping techniques, DYSFUNC refers to dysfunctional coping techniques, and SRS refers to The Symptoms Rating Scale.

Obsessive Relational Intrusion (ORI). The 63-item ORI scale was used to assess the extent of the unwanted relationship pursuit (see Appendix D). Participants indicated the frequency of experiences: 0 = *Never*; 1 = *Once*; 2 = *Rarely (2 to 4 times)*; 3 = *Sometimes (5 to 9 times)*; and 4 = *All the time (more than 10 times)*. There are four main subscales of obsessive relational intrusion behaviors: Pursuit (e.g., “Showed up before or after your work,” “Waited outside your place,” “Visited you at work”); Violation (e.g., “Sent you offensive photographs,” “Took photographs of you without your previous knowledge,” “Broke into your home or apartment”); Threat (e.g., “Threatened you with physical harm,” “Warned that bad things would or might happen”);

and Hyperintimacy (e.g., “Told others you two were more intimate than you currently were,” “Made things up about your past relationship,” “Refused to take hints that s/he wasn’t welcome”; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000; 2004). All 63 items of ORI can be combined to create an overall index of victimization (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000, 2004). As this study was not examining the different tactics used by the perpetrators separately, all four subscales were combined, and the mean across the subscales was taken to understand the holistic account of unwanted pursuit experience.

The scale allows for additional tactics not covered by the included items; participants can list any ORI behaviors that they have ever experienced that are not listed on the 5-point scale and rate them as 0 = *Never*, 1 = *Once*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Frequently*. A little over the half of participants ($n = 103$) input additional tactics used by pursuers and if they did, they mentioned that they were harassed via their Social Networking Sites (SNS) (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.). To illustrate, participants reported that they experienced: “cyber stalking,” “unwanted tags on Facebook posts,” “looking through my SNS,” “endless comments under Instagram pics,” “too many likes on my SNS posts,” etc. Participants rated that they have experienced such unwanted pursuit “Frequently” ($n = 95$) and “Sometimes” ($n = 8$).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Followed by the ORI scale, the MSPSS (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) was presented (see Appendix E). There is a total of 12 statements assessing the perceived social support on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *Very Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Strongly Disagree*; 3 = *Mildly Disagree*; 4 = *Neutral*; 5 = *Mildly Agree*; 6 = *Strongly Agree*; 7 = *Very Strongly Agree*).

There are three relational types of support providers—significant others, friends, and family members (Zimet et al., 1988). Previous uses of the total scale indicated internal reliability (i.e., $\alpha = .85$, Zimet et al., 1988; see also, Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2006; Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Clara, Cox, Enns, Murray, & Torgrudc, 2003; Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991; Edwards, 2004; Kazarian & McCabe, 1991; Landeta & Calvete, 2002; Miville & Constantine, 2006; Zimet et al., 1988; Zimet, Powell, Farley, Werkman, & Berkoff, 1990). Results of factor analyses consistently support three factor structures, namely family members (e.g., “I get the emotional help and support I need from my family,” “My family is willing to help me make decisions”), friends (e.g., “I can count on my friends when things go wrong,” “I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows”), and significant others (e.g., “There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows,” “I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me”; Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2006; Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Dahlem, et al., 1991; Edwards, 2004; Zimet et al., 1988). Although there are separate scores for each relationship type, the focus in this study is on support from the general social network. Thus, scores across the relationship types was combined into an overall composite. Benefits of using this scale include easiness to administer the survey (i.e., brief 12 items require a fourth-grade reading level; Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000) and insignificant results for social desirability effects (Dahlem et al., 1991).

COPE. Participants completed the full, 60-item version of COPE scale, which assesses different coping techniques of individuals under stressful events (Carver et al., 1989) (see Appendix F). Individuals were asked to indicate what they actually do and feel

when they are experiencing unwanted pursuit on a 4-point scale (i.e., 1 = *Never*; 2 = *Sometimes*; 3 = *Often*; 4 = *Always*). The COPE measures a broad range of what is considered functional or dysfunctional coping responses of individuals with stressful events. Items are characterized as dispositional and situational responses. Dispositional items are in the present tense whereas situational items are in past or present progressive tense (i.e., “I am...,” or “I have been...”).

For this study, I investigated the composite of all strategies as well as separate categories of coping by computing each subscale (i.e., positive/functional coping and negative/dysfunctional coping). There are 15 categories of coping. Functional coping strategies involve social coping (e.g., friendships, parental support) and active problem-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989). The categories under functional coping strategies include positive reinterpretation, instrumental social support, active coping, venting of emotions, restraint, suppression of competing activities, religious coping, humor, emotional social support, and planning. Conversely, dysfunctional coping strategies include mental disengagement, behavioral disengagement, denial, acceptance, and substance use (Carver et al., 1989). Also, although there are overlaps between the social support and coping categories in terms of emotional and instrumental support, the social support measure captures perceived availability of social support whereas the coping measure assesses received support. Thus, both measures were retained. Reliability coefficients for the COPE categories range from .60 to .92 (Carver et al., 1989). The reliability yielded from the functional coping scale was .72 and dysfunctional coping scale was .86. In order to create the overall positive and negative scores, I took the

means. Previous research has been used sums of each item in their study (Carver et al., 1989), but the mean was examined in case there were any missing data.

The Symptoms Rating Scale (SRS). To measure the symptoms of unwanted relational pursuit, the SRS scale was used (Spitzberg, 2011). The SRS considers that individuals vary considerably in the extent to which they manage the effects of unwanted experience in their life. The scale taps two major types of symptoms: trauma symptoms and resilience symptoms (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg, 2011); however, I focused on the negative symptoms regarding unwanted pursuit. The trauma subscale consists of eight items pertaining to different types of symptoms (i.e., behavioral, economic, mental, emotional, anxiety, social, spiritual, and self-destructive symptoms). The questionnaire asked participants to refer to their unwanted pursuit experience and identify direct results from their encounters (i.e., “As a result of the unwanted pursuit, I experienced...”; Spitzberg, 2011). Participants indicated experiences on a 6-point scale (i.e., “Never,” “Once,” “2~3 Times,” “4~5 Times,” “6~10 Times” and “more than 10 times”). See Appendix G for all of the items.

DATA ANALYSES OVERVIEW. A preliminary analysis including recoding of reverse coded items, assessment of missing values, outliers, and normality of the data was conducted followed by reliability tests. Normality preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the normality of all key variables. All variables were checked in terms of skewness and kurtosis through the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The shape of the distribution for each variable was visually examined using histograms and suggested that all variables do not depart from normal distribution in an extreme

way. No outliers were found from the collected data. Moreover, reverse coded items were recoded for the data analysis. Also, reliability tests of the collected data were conducted. There were minor missing data points. After identifying how much data was missing, only two questions within the same questionnaire from one participant were missed. In this case, missing values were completely random, as it seemed to be occurred that the subject accidentally forgot to answer the items. The participant could have been tired and/or have not paid attention at the time of participation, and thus missed the questions. To test whether the subject with the missing data differs from others without the missing data, missing value analysis was conducted. The result was significant which is the indication of missing data at random. To treat the missing data, a single imputation technique was adopted. The missing data values were replaced by imputing the means.

Chapter 4: Results

This section presents the findings of the study. The results of each hypothesis and research question were analyzed with the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, the results of a bivariate correlation analysis are reported (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlations of Key Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. ORI	--					
2. MSPSS	.37**	--				
3. COPE	.50**	.59**	--			
4. FUNC	.33*	.45**	.85**	--		
5. DYSFUNC	.53**	.59**	.96**	.67**	--	
6. SRS	.48**	.43**	.65**	.55**	.62**	--

Note: ** $p < .01$; ORI refers to Obsessive Relational Intrusion, MSPSS refers to Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, COPE refers to the coping technique inventories, FUNC refers to functional coping techniques, DYSFUNC refers to dysfunctional coping techniques, and SRS refers to The Symptoms Rating Scale.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Research Question 1 asked about the prevalence of each specific coping technique towards the unwanted pursuit experiences. A repeated measures of ANOVA shows that the use of specific coping styles is significant $F(1, 201) = 8.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$. Overall, functional coping techniques were used more ($M = 2.42, SD = .41$) than dysfunctional techniques ($M = 2.36, SD = .19$). Further, each specific strategy was examined to investigate how they might vary in frequency of use (see Table 4). In order to see the

individual differences in the use of the specific coping, the case summary was conducted.

Individual responses, means, and percentage of the tactics used indicated that participants used combinations of different tactics.

Table 4. Frequency of Using Specific Coping Techniques

Description of Item	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Positive Reinterpretation	2.69 (.61)	<i>M</i> 2.03 (.43) <i>F</i> 3.07 (.28)	8.3%	27.9%	50.9%	13.0%
Venting Emotions	2.87 (.63)	<i>M</i> 2.51 (.61) <i>F</i> 2.98 (.55)	8.2%	29.5%	60.0%	2.3%
Instrumental Support	2.70 (.47)	<i>M</i> 2.33 (.39) <i>F</i> 2.91 (.36)	13.3%	18.6%	53.2%	14.9%
Active Coping	2.29 (.55)	<i>M</i> 2.85 (.34) <i>F</i> 1.95 (.35)	17.3%	44.7%	30.1%	7.9%
Religious Coping	2.53 (.71)	<i>M</i> 1.72 (.39) <i>F</i> 3.00 (.31)	15.6%	29.0%	42.3%	13.1%
Humor	2.21 (.39)	<i>M</i> 2.31 (.38) <i>F</i> 2.15 (.40)	17.0%	48.3%	31.6%	3.2%
Emotional Support	2.42 (.75)	<i>M</i> 1.52 (.33) <i>F</i> 2.95 (.28)	23.0%	26.1%	37.2%	13.8%
Suppression	2.28 (.79)	<i>M</i> 3.18 (.35) <i>F</i> 1.75 (.41)	25.9%	33.6%	28.1%	12.5%
Planning	2.35 (.64)	<i>M</i> 1.72 (.37) <i>F</i> 2.72 (.45)	18.7%	38.4%	32.6%	10.4%
Mental Disengagement	2.09 (.31)	<i>M</i> 1.94 (.27) <i>F</i> 2.18 (.30)	17.1%	58.1%	24.1%	0.8%
Denial	2.41 (.72)	<i>M</i> 1.60 (.26) <i>F</i> 2.89 (.41)	17.6%	35.9%	34.2%	12.4%
Behavioral Disengagement	2.45 (.59)	<i>M</i> 1.85 (.35) <i>F</i> 2.81 (.37)	13.3%	38.4%	38.3%	10.1%
Restraint	2.31 (.68)	<i>M</i> 1.54 (.33) <i>F</i> 2.76 (.38)	21.8%	38.3%	27.5%	12.5%
Substance	2.28 (.64)	<i>M</i> 1.60 (.39) <i>F</i> 2.68 (.34)	19.4%	40.7%	32.3%	7.6%
Acceptance	2.26 (.66)	<i>M</i> 1.59 (.37) <i>F</i> 2.66 (.42)	22.7%	36.0%	33.5%	7.8%

Note: The means and standard deviations for the second column is for the sex differences. *M* refers to male and *F* refers to female subjects.

HYPOTHESIS 2

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the prevalence of using specific coping strategies chosen to deal with the unwanted pursuit varies by sex. A repeated measures of ANOVA shows that there was a statistically significant difference across different types of coping technique, $F(1, 200) = 312.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .61$. Functional coping techniques were used more by female participants ($M = 2.46, SD = .14$) than male participants ($M = 2.09, SD = .14$). Moreover, dysfunctional techniques were also used more by female participants ($M = 2.71, SD = .15$) than male participants ($M = 1.93, SD = .17$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

HYPOTHESES 1, 3, 4, AND 6

A series of correlational analyses were examined to separately test Hypothesis 1, 3, 4, and 6. Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a positive association between the frequency of unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between unwanted pursuit experience and resulted symptoms, $r(200) = .48, p < .01$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypotheses 3 predicted a positive relationship between the frequency of unwanted pursuit experience and use of coping strategies. The result of a bivariate correlational analysis showed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship, $r(200) = .50, p < .01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted a negative association between the overall frequency of using coping strategies and trauma symptoms experienced by victims. A bivariate correlation result indicated that there was no negative relationship between coping strategies and trauma symptoms. Unlike the proposed statement, a positive association was revealed instead, $r(200) = .65, p < .01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted a positive relationship between the perceived social support and frequency of coping strategies. A bivariate correlation test shows that there was indeed a statistically significant positive relationship between the variables, $r(200) = .59, p < .01$.

HYPOTHESES 5 AND 7

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the use of coping strategies will mediate the association between frequency of unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms, and Hypothesis 7 predicted that perceived social support will moderate the associations proposed in Hypothesis 5. These hypotheses were assessed through Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro for SPSS in order to understand the mediating effect of overall coping on the association between experiences of pursuit and trauma symptoms as well as the moderating effect of the perceived social support on this model.

The model that was tested is depicted in Figure 2 (Hayes, 2013, Model 58). As depicted in the conceptual diagram, this model tests the conditional indirect effect of the antecedent *X* variable (i.e., frequency of unwanted pursuit experience) on the consequent *Y* variable (i.e., trauma symptoms) through a mediator *M* (i.e., coping strategies) and a

moderator W (i.e., perceived social support). Specifically, I wanted to discover the associations among perceived social support and the use of the coping techniques on trauma symptoms. The mediated moderation, which refers to the phenomenon in which an interaction between X and a moderator W in a model of Y is carried through a mediator (Hayes, 2013). Further, based on Hypothesis 6, and in order to assess the moderating effect, perceived social support was also modeled to predict coping as well as trauma symptoms.

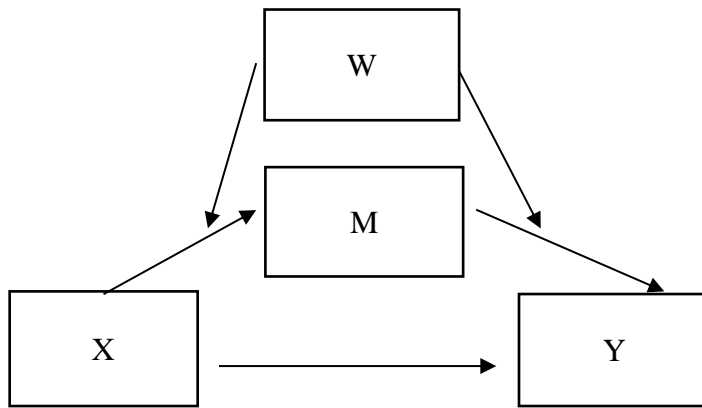
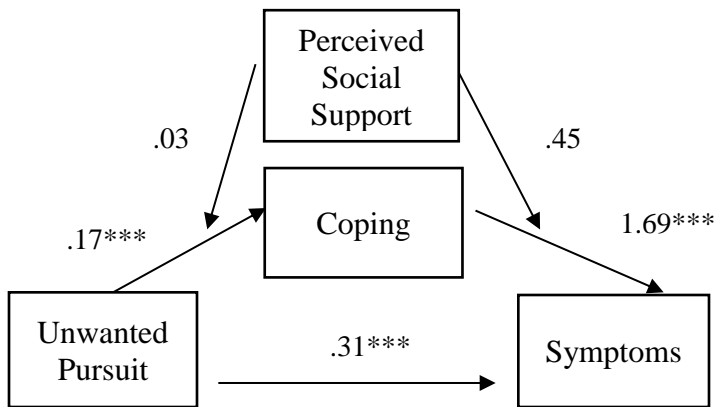


Figure 2. Conceptual Diagram for Model 58 (Hayes, 2013)



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3. Statistical Diagram for General Coping

In terms of direct effects, the unwanted pursuit experience was significantly related to the symptoms (i.e., X to Y), $b = .31$, $t(197) = 3.16$, $p = .002$. Perceived social support predicted coping, $b = .21$, $t(198) = 8.14$, $p < .001$, but not trauma symptoms, $b = .04$, $t(197) = 0.41$, $p = .685$. Perceived social support (W), however, did not serve as a significant moderator for either association. Social support (W) did not interact with unwanted pursuit to predict coping (M), $b = .03$, $t(198) = 0.51$, $p = .609$; it also did not interact with coping to predict trauma symptoms (Y), $b = .45$, $t(197) = 1.34$, $p = .183$. In terms of mediation, the model revealed that unwanted pursuit frequency was significantly associated with coping (M), $b = .17$, $t(198) = 5.39$, $p < .001$, and coping (M) was significantly related to trauma symptoms (Y), $b = 1.69$, $t(197) = 7.40$, $p < .001$; the indirect effect from unwanted pursuit to trauma symptoms through coping was also significant at all three levels of the moderator of social support (low = .23, average = .30,

high = .38). See Table 5 for the confidence intervals (CIs) that did not include zero.

When the CIs (here set at 95%) of the indirect effects do not cross zero, this indicates that the effect is significantly different from zero. Thus, the use of coping method mediated the relationship between unwanted pursuit experience and the trauma symptoms, but this did not significantly vary by perceived social support. This supports Hypothesis 5 but not Hypothesis 7. Overall, this model explained 44% of coping strategies use and 45% of the variance in trauma symptoms.

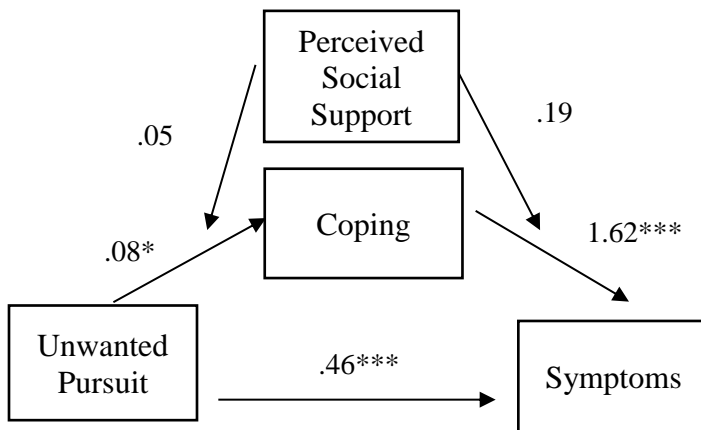
Table 5. Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects for General Coping

Effect	Effect Key	Coefficient	Bootstrap CI	
Direct		.31	.11	.50
Indirect	ORI→COPE→SRS	.23	.09	.46
		.30	.18	.43
		.38	.08	.63

Note: ORI refers to Unwanted Pursuit variable, COPE refers to Coping Technique variable, and SRS refers to Symptoms variable.

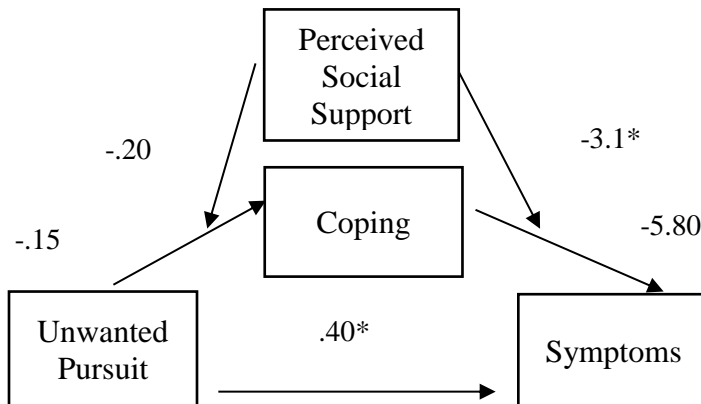
RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Research Question 2 asked whether the relationships examined above vary by whether the coping was functional or dysfunctional. The question was answered by examining the same model with functional and dysfunctional coping assessed separately. There were slight and interesting changes when running the model with different coping strategies.



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4a. Statistical Diagram for Functional Coping



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4b. Statistical Diagram for Dysfunctional Coping

After using the same model (i.e., Model 58), it was found that different degrees of social support slightly vary the relationships. The results for direct effect for functional coping was $b = .46$, $t(197) = 4.84$, $p < .001$. Perceived social support predicted coping, b

= .12, $t(198) = 5.55$, $p < .001$, as well as trauma symptoms, $b = .19$, $t(197) = 2.25$, $p = .025$. Social support (W), however, did not interact with unwanted pursuit to predict coping (M), $b = .05$, $t(198) = 1.08$, $p = .283$; it also did not interact with coping to predict trauma symptoms (Y), $b = .19$, $t(197) = 0.46$, $p = .649$. In terms of mediation, the model revealed that unwanted pursuit frequency was significantly associated with coping (M), $b = .08$, $t(198) = 3.02$, $p = .003$, and coping (M) was significantly related to trauma symptoms (Y), $b = 1.62$, $t(197) = 6.13$, $p < .001$. The CIs yielded somewhat different results from the general model (see Table 6). The indirect effect from unwanted pursuit to trauma symptoms through coping was significant at average and higher levels of social support but not at low levels of social support (low = .09, average = .14, high = .20). Unlike the previous model, the indirect path for low support includes zero, which means that the indirect effect was negative (see Table 6). In the latter two cases, the CIs do not include zero and are entirely above zero (see Table 6). The overall model explained 24% of the variance in functional coping and 41% of the variance in trauma symptoms.

Table 6. Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects for Functional Coping

Effect	Effect Key	Coefficient	Bootstrap CI	
Total		.46	.27	.65
Indirect	ORI→COPE→SRS	.09	-.02	.27
		.14	.05	.23
		.20	.01	.40

Note: ORI refers to Unwanted Pursuit variable, COPE refers to Coping Technique variable, and SRS refers to Symptoms variable.

The results for direct effect for dysfunctional coping was $b = .31$, $t(197) = 3.03$, $p < .01$. Perceived social support predicted coping, $b = .32$, $t(198) = 8.24$, $p < .001$, but did not predict trauma symptoms, $b = .08$, $t(197) = 0.88$, $p = .378$. Social support (W), however, did not interact with unwanted pursuit to predict coping (M), $b = .00$, $t(198) = 0.05$, $p = .963$; it also did not interact with coping to predict trauma symptoms (Y), $b = .13$, $t(197) = 0.57$, $p = .572$. In terms of mediation, the model revealed that unwanted pursuit frequency was significantly associated with coping (M), $b = .29$, $t(198) = 5.89$, $p < .001$, and coping (M) was significantly related to trauma symptoms (Y), $b = 0.96$, $t(197) = 6.24$, $p < .001$. Similar to the general model, the CIs showed that the indirect effect from unwanted pursuit to trauma symptoms through coping was significant at all levels of support (low = .26, average = .28, high = .30). For all cases, the CI includes zero, which would indicate that the indirect effect was not significant (see Table 7). The overall model explained 46% of the variance in dysfunctional coping and 42% of the variance in trauma symptoms.

Table 7. Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects for Dysfunctional Coping

Effect	Effect Key	Coefficient	Bootstrap CI	
Total		.31	.11	.51
Indirect	ORI→COPE→SRS	.26	.13	.46
		.28	.16	.40
		.30	.05	.53

Note: ORI refers to Unwanted Pursuit variable, COPE refers to Coping Technique variable, and SRS refers to Symptoms variable.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Given the ongoing occurrence of unwanted pursuit among college students, the current project attempts to understand the relationships between prevalence of unwanted pursuit, perceptions of social support, coping techniques, and associated trauma symptoms. First, the present study was interested in assessing frequency of unwanted pursuit experiences within a college population and asked questions about the general unwanted pursuit related questions. This study also investigated the perceived social support from friends, family, and significant others. Moreover, the use of general coping techniques and different coping categorizations were examined. Finally, this study examined traumatic symptoms regarding the unwanted pursuit experiences. In the present study, all variables were examined from the victims' perspectives.

First of all, Research Question 1 inquired on the prevalence of specific coping techniques. In terms of prevalence, more functional coping strategies were used than dysfunctional ones. This finding matches with the previous studies. Victims consider constructive coping methods as more effective than destructive coping methods (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2012). Taking active and/or problem-solving coping strategies were identified as more successful in diminishing the negative consequences resulted from victimization (Fremouw et al., 1997; Geistman et al., 2013; Ravensberg & Miller, 2003). Positive thinking, being honest toward their emotions, seeking help from others, support from their loved ones, turning to religion, overcoming the frustrations with humor, confronting pursuers, and coming up with strategic ways to deal with the

victimization might be helpful in managing the unwanted pursuit victimization than accepting the situation, running away from the issue, relying on alcohol and drugs, and/or in being in denial.

Hypotheses 3 expected a positive relationship between the unwanted pursuit experience and use of coping strategies, and the study findings matched this prediction. That is, more unwanted pursuit victimization results in adopting more coping strategies. This finding was on the same line with the previously conducted research. Research suggested that victims may try different coping techniques to manage their negative symptoms because there are no one-size-fits-all solutions for dealing with the unwanted pursuit experiences (Amar, 2006; de Becker, 1997; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Fisher et al., 2002; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Zuckerman & Gage, 2003). As individuals experience unwanted pursuit, they will be more likely to use different tactics to manage their situations.

When examining the use of different coping strategies, most victims used a wide array of coping techniques. Constructive coping strategies including optimistic thinking, use of social/emotional and instrumental supports, turning to religion, and using humor were often used. Victims engaged in dysfunctional coping strategies such as mentally and behaviorally disengaging behaviors as well. As research suggests, victims engage in not just a single form of coping technique, but combinations of different types of coping techniques (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Furthermore, Hypothesis 2 assumed that the prevalence of using specific coping strategies varies by sex. The data supported this hypothesis. Existing research suggests

that there are sex differences in the choice of coping strategies regarding the management of victimization (See Bjerregaard, 2000; Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2011; Fremouw et al., 1997; Hills & Taplin, 1998; Sinclair & Frieze, 2005; Starkweather, 2007; Tamres et al., 2002). Similar to previous research, female participants used both functional and dysfunctional coping techniques more as compared to male participants. The frequency and sex differences in coping strategies could be due to female victims regarding the unwanted pursuit experience as more threatening. Research suggests that female victims tend to appraise the victimization as more serious and threatening (Bjerregaard, 2000; Sinclair & Frieze, 2005; Tamres et al., 2002). More female participants reported that they experienced physical assaults from the unwanted pursuit experiences than male participants, which could be another reason that they used more coping.

A majority of victims struggle to manage their unwanted pursuit experience as they are unsure whether their victimization will end (Orion, 1997). In essence, victimization will lead to experiencing more destructive symptoms. Hypothesis 1 predicted the positive relationship between the frequency of unwanted pursuit experience and trauma symptoms. This finding signifies that individuals with more unwanted pursuit experiences experience more negative symptoms. As noted in previous research, victimization from unwanted harassment damages victims physically and psychologically (Amar, 2006; Breiding et al., 2014; Campbell & Moore, 2011; Logan et al., 2007; Sheridan et al., 2003; Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Obsessive and uninvited interactions might have led victims to experience harmful consequences and the preceding research suggests that

college populations are at high risk of such victimization (Cass, 2007; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Dowdall, 2007; Fisher et al., 2000, 2002, 2010; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999, Schwartz & Pitts, 1995).

Based on the research findings regarding the effectiveness of use of coping strategies in dealing with related negative symptoms, Hypothesis 4 predicted a negative association between the frequency of using overall coping techniques and experienced trauma symptoms. The existing research suggests that victimization from the unwanted pursuit might be alleviated to some extent with the presence of social support (Bell et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2012). On the contrary to the previous research, this study found that there was positive association between the use of coping strategies and the trauma symptoms. Although a significant association was found, the findings were in the opposite direction as predicted. As other research indicated, the correlational nature of the data might have produced this finding (Nguyen et al., 2012). Those who have more negative symptoms might use more coping strategies. This does not mean that coping is causing more negative symptoms. Rather, individuals with greater trauma symptoms tend to seek out more social support and coping strategies in order to manage their victimization. As Liang et al. (2005) asserted, the severity of victimization predicts a greater likelihood of help-seeking behaviors from victims.

Consistent with the preceding research, Hypothesis 6, which predicted a positive relationship between the perceived social support and frequency of coping strategies did find a significant result. As existing research asserts, social support is highly pursued in response to unwanted pursuit victimization (Amar, 2006; Amar & Alexy, 2010; Blaauw

et al., 2002; Brewster, 2001; Budd & Mattinson, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007; Thoits, 1986; Yoshihama, 2002). Social support is considered as beneficial coping sources for victims (Dutton & Spitzberg, 2007; Thoits, 1986) as it may lessen the negative symptoms (see Bippus, 2001; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Cohen et al., 2000; Goldsmith, 2004; Jones & Burleson, 2003; Okun, & Lockwood, 2003; Uchino et al., 1996). Previous research found a positive relationship between social support and coping (Holahan et al., 1997; Lakey & Heller, 1988; Manne & Zautra, 1989). Victims who received emotional support from their close networks tend to manage and cope more effectively with the victimization (Cutrona, 1996; Nurius et al., 2011). Hence, victims who perceive high levels of support from their allies are more likely to use more coping techniques.

Hypothesis 5 assumed that use of coping strategies mediated the relationship between frequency of unwanted pursuit experiences and trauma symptoms; Hypothesis 7 further suggested that perceived social support would moderate the associations between unwanted pursuit and coping and coping and trauma symptoms. Hayes' conditional process model (2013) that uses a regression-based approach was employed to further explore the relationships among variables. The paths between unwanted pursuit and coping and coping and symptoms were statistically significant. The data also supported the assumptions that there was an indirect effect between unwanted pursuit and trauma symptoms through coping. However, perceived social support did not moderate this indirect effect. This is somewhat contrary to previous research, which argues that victims who notice support from their close networks engage in more active coping methods

(Buhi et al., 2009; Liang et al., 2005; Valentiner et al., 1996). It should also be noted that although coping techniques was a significant mediator, its association with victimization symptoms was in the opposite direction than hypothesized. The issue will be discussed further in the limitation section later.

Lastly, Research Question 2 asked whether the aforementioned relationships in Hypotheses 5 and 7 vary when using specific coping strategies (i.e., functional or dysfunctional). The question was answered by examining the same PROCESS model (Hayes, 2013) by assessing separate sets of coping strategies. The models for both functional and dysfunctional coping largely resembled the general coping model. A few differences emerged, however. The link between perceived social support and trauma symptoms was significant and positive for functional coping but not significant in the general and dysfunctional model. Hence, as the other findings would suggest, victims are likely soliciting social support when they are experiencing more symptoms; and it seems they are engaging in this social support in the context of functional coping rather than dysfunctional coping. Also in the functional model, the mediating effect at low levels of support was not significant. In other words, functional coping did not mediate the association between experiencing ORI and trauma symptoms. It was predicted that the indirect effects would be weaker at low levels of support, and this appears consistent with that prediction. Yet, the varying strengths of the indirect effects at low, average, and high levels of support did not reach significance (i.e., no moderating effect of support). Future research using longitudinal designs might be better able to detect moderating effects of social support.

This study reveals that uses of functional and dysfunctional coping strategies were positively associated with trauma symptoms unlike the preceding literature. Findings related to the mediating relationships were different from what Stress-Support Matching Hypothesis (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990) expects. According to the theory, the perceived support could have enhanced coping process and alleviated negative symptoms of individuals (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). These findings that countered the predictions could be explained in several ways. First, the support might not always be effective (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Thompson, 1995). Depending on individualized appraisal of the stressful situations, coping strategies may or may not buffer the stressful events. Also, there may be individual differences that may influence how victims appraise perceived social support and availability of coping techniques. For example, victims who have a high level of self-esteem and view their friends as supportive are more likely to view themselves as worthy of help, and disclose their victimization to their informal support system, seek support through a formal system, and engage in active coping (Liang et al., 2005; Nurius et al., 2011). Furthermore, as mentioned above, the positive association may be due to the correlational nature of the data collected in this project. Researchers found that individuals' desire to cope and seek support are influenced by the severity of the negative consequences resulted from victimization (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Valentiner et al., 1996). Individuals who are traumatized might have pursued a great deal of coping strategies in response to cope with the unwanted pursuit victimization.

Overall, much of findings from this project (e.g., sex differences in the use of

different coping techniques, the association between unwanted pursuit and traumatic symptomatology, the positive association between support and coping techniques) paralleled preceding research. Victims go through traumatic symptoms as they experience unwanted harassment and violence and the seriousness of victimization is alarming among college populations. The pervasiveness of unwanted pursuit experiences and its potential to become quite troubling and problematic for the victims. Matching with the previous studies, women are more likely to a wide arrange of coping techniques as they consider the victimization as more intimidating and think actively for resolving the victimization. As a result, victims adopt different ways to cope with the traumatic experiences. Moreover, victims tend to seek for social support when dealing with the victimization.

This study also sought to examine the mediating relationships between perceived social support and the use of coping techniques and other variables. The model and its analyses generally supported the assumptions. However, all of the paths in the models were positive. Unlike the predicted negative association between the frequency of using coping techniques and trauma symptoms, the model showed the opposite direction. It was expected that using more coping techniques would lessen the trauma symptoms. The data showed otherwise. This could be due to the seemingly paradoxical relationship between coping techniques and unwanted pursuit victimization. That is, as unwanted pursuit victimization increases, victims are more likely to adopt greater prevalence of coping strategies. Likewise, when victims experience more traumatic symptoms, they are more likely to utilize the coping techniques available for them. Victims with higher trauma

symptoms may intensify the use of coping techniques because they are in need of managing their symptoms (Bjorklund, Hakkanen-Nyholm, Sheridan, Roberts, & Tolvanen, 2010; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Valentiner et al., 1996). The positive associations of the model examined from this project suggest that victims with heightened traumatic symptoms are also using more coping strategies. This implies the complexity in identifying how coping techniques function over time. Although the correlational nature of the current data does not allow for such analysis, functional coping skills could be helpful for victims to deal with the negative consequences from the unwanted pursuit victimization in the long run (e.g., longitudinal analyses).

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

One of the weaknesses of this study is its cross-sectional nature. This study design precludes causal explanations of the role of perceived social support in coping with unwanted pursuit. Also, the effectiveness of perceived social support and coping strategies is difficult to assess. Victims attempt various types of responses as research finds no specific coping method as scientifically effective (Parisi & Spitzberg, 2013). This study, thus, incorporated functional and dysfunctional strategies separately in hopes of gaining clearer insights on which coping strategies are effective.

The current study found that unwanted pursuit is associated with more social support, more coping techniques, and more trauma symptoms. Nonetheless, the coping and perceived social support through coping were positively related to trauma symptoms quite significantly. Research on social support often finds such relationship, especially

with the correlational data. One might hastily assume that the results signify that the use of more coping techniques leads to experiencing more trauma symptoms. However, the result should be interpreted as individuals who are traumatized in a greater extent are more actively seeking for help and thus, they strive to manage their victimization via more coping strategies.

Moreover, response bias of victims could be an issue for this study. Inaccurate recall of victimization might lower the reported seriousness of the pursuit. The recollection of events may or may not be altered based on when these events occurred. While this study provided an estimate of the prevalence of unwanted pursuits within a given population (i.e., college students), it does not account for the recency of the reported experiences. Benoit and Benoit (1988) asserted that the reliability of reports of participants is questionable because data are mainly based on memory. Furthermore, since this study used a convenience sample, the sample may not be representative of all college students; researchers should not generalize findings to all college-aged victims and their unwanted pursuit experiences and should be cautious in their interpretations.

Despite the limitations, this study allows researchers to take multiple approaches to understand the unwanted pursuit and fills the gap to explain unanswered research questions. As this field of research is still under-investigated and has been studied in a descriptive manner (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014), the current project tried to grapple with the complexity of coping mechanisms and effectiveness of perceived social support in dealing with the unwanted pursuit victimization. Moreover, Logan and Walker (2010) suggested that future research should keep investigating how social support and coping

function differently in various populations. In general, unwanted pursuit victimization research, especially on social support and coping, are studied with clinical samples. Recently, college-aged victims and their numbers are on the rise. Thus, the attempts to understand the impacts of perceived social support and coping on traumatization in college populations was another contribution to the existing research.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The findings of the current research signal the importance of perceived social support to the victims of unwanted pursuit. When victims suffer from unwanted pursuit, they usually turn into individuals whom they can trust in, especially family members and friends. When the victims' close networks acknowledge the importance of giving emotional and tactical supports to victims, they will be able to manage their unwanted pursuit experience. Moreover, knowing what they have someone whom they can turn to, victims will be able to search for what are the most ideal solutions for them to overcome the situation. It would be even better if both victims and supporters know what the unwanted pursuit experience entails and seek recommendations in managing the challenges associated with it. Typically, coping seems to be the one-way process. That is when victims are in need for coping, they seek what they need, research available options for them, and choose and utilize the most suitable coping resources. Social support works in the similar way. Instead of close networks intervening in the latter part of the coping process, victims might be able to achieve faster coping process and experience fewer negative symptoms if their social support networks are accessed as early as possible. In essence, the coping process could be expedited if victims and their social support network

members manage their unwanted pursuit experience together. Thus, it is suggested that victims and supporters take part in some seminars that they are able to learn about unwanted pursuit and participate in small group talking where they can share and learn more about their experience.

For victims who are not used to talking about their victimization, it is recommended that they start with taking a small step such as communicating in a safe and comfortable environment. An intervention may be brief, such as providing a victim with information to restrict their private information. The intervention could be extended to a community level where victims are introduced and working with officials whom can offer counseling and resources to victims and their close networks. Close networks and legal counsels should recognize that all victims do not seek support or engage in coping process in the same way. Informal and formal supporters should be aware of various methods of outreach to inform and educate victims about available resources and suggest victims actively engaging in coping in which they could utilize their support network. This encouragement may enhance existing as well as develop new coping techniques. Nevertheless, not every educational program could be helpful for victims. The most important thing is to find what could be best for victims to cope with the unwanted pursuit experiences by communicating with one another and working together to overcome the victimization.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Because a limited amount of research has examined the influence of social support on unwanted pursuit victimization, accumulating knowledge about unwanted

pursuit would help researchers explain and predict the phenomenon (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). The current study and its findings add informative insights to the existing research and can augment future researchers to involve in research in unwanted pursuit. The prevalence of adopting different coping techniques implies that a wide arrange of coping strategies are used by victims to manage the victimization. Also, perceived social support and coping were found to be significant mediators, and the use of functional coping indicated the significant relationship between the perceived social support to the trauma symptoms. It is noteworthy that all associations were positive among related variables. From this finding, the issues in applying coping and perceived social support to health and wellbeing were highlighted. Results from the current study emphasizes the need for tailored research with specific hypotheses and research questions that focus on the process. Still, the attempts to explore the effects of perceived social support and coping on symptoms regarding unwanted pursuit victimization is meaningful.

Although it is challenging when it comes to feasibility, research on unwanted pursuit needs more sequential and longitudinal studies (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Longitudinal study designs will be more helpful for understanding sequential effects of coping and social support (Bjoorklund et al., 2010). Because young adults might experience unwanted pursuit at different stages in their lives, this would help us understand the unwanted pursuit victimization and perpetration that occurs at different points in life. Moreover, social support research asserts that coping has an on-going interaction with the problem individuals are coping with. Hence, future research needs to conduct a longitudinal research with multiple observations. In order to further assess

victims' coping process and the perceived effectiveness and the ramifications of unwanted pursuit, it is recommended to design and conduct research that can hear narratives of victims.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER

The University of Texas at Austin

Unwanted Pursuit

Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

Unwanted pursuit is the recurrent and unsolicited pursuit from a pursuer which results violation of physical and mental privacy of an individual. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of unwanted relationship pursuit among college students. For this research study, participants will be completing a series of questionnaires. Participating in this study will take no longer than 30 minutes. Volunteers must be 18 years old or older and have experienced unwanted pursuit at least two weeks to participate in this research study. If applicable, extra credit will be provided for participation. If you would like to receive credits but do not want to participate in this study, please talk to your instructor about completing the alternative assignment. The alternative assignment should be equivalent in time and effort that would be needed to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will be anonymous (i.e., there will be no way to link your responses to you personally).

Please direct any questions to:

Julia Jihye Kim, Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Communication Studies

Moody College of Communication

The University of Texas at Austin

juliajkim@utexas.edu

APPENDIX B: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

The University of Texas at Austin
Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Unwanted Pursuit: Perceived Social Support and Its Impacts on Coping

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to participate, it is important that you read the following information so that you are aware of what you will be asked to do.

Investigator: Jihye Kim, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Communication Studies, the University of Texas at Austin

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the unwanted relationship pursuit and impacts of social support among college students. Unwanted pursuit is the recurrent and unsolicited pursuit from a pursuer which results violation of physical and mental privacy of an individual. This study will involve approximately 200 participants completing a web-based, self-report survey. There will be an announcement for research participation opportunities for students. In general, recruitment will take place through the subject pool and the information will be also available on the department website.

Description of the Study: This study involves completing several self-report surveys. First, demographic questions (e.g., sex, age, ethnicity, class standings) will be asked. Also, you will be asked to indicate your unwanted relationship pursuit experiences. Moreover, you will be asked to rate your perceived social support. Furthermore, you will be indicating your ways to deal with stressful situations and coping mechanisms. The completion of this survey will take no longer than 30 minutes. You must be 18 years or older to participate. For confidentiality purposes, this web-based survey will not allow you to go back to the previously asked questions. As a precaution to protect your privacy, ensure that you are located in a private setting and that you close your browser window and shut down your computer after survey completion.

Risk or Discomforts: When responding to the questions, you may reflect on potentially sensitive areas of your experiences and your beliefs about the nature of relationships with others. If you are uncomfortable with any part of this survey, you may choose not to respond without penalty (i.e., this will not affect your grade in a class or your relationship with your instructor). If you are a UT student and find that the questions in this survey cause you to reflect on a specific situation that is troubling for you, contact Counseling and Mental Health Center at The University of Texas at Austin at (512) 471-3515.

Benefits of the Study: By participating in the study, a more comprehensive perspective of social network involvement among college students will be uncovered. Personally, you may benefit from the study by increasing your understanding of your communication behaviors and coping patterns. However, there are no direct benefits for this study.

Confidentiality: Your privacy will be protected to the extent allowable by law. Your name will not be linked to your responses in this survey at any time. Moreover, your questionnaire responses will be kept anonymous and only the experimenter(s) of this study will have access to the information collected. Data will be protected by only downloaded on the investigator's password protected personal computer. The data itself when downloaded will not contain any identifiable information unique to you. Once data is collected, the online survey link will be closed and deactivated by the investigator and it will be downloaded to her own computer. Once the data is analyzed, raw data will be kept only for research purposes.

Compensation: You may or may not receive extra credit from your instructor for completing this questionnaire; it is at the discretion of your instructor. An alternative assignment that equivalent to the participation on the study will be also available by your instructor if you do not wish to take this study to receive extra credits.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with The University of Texas at Austin. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, please contact the following investigators.

Jihye Kim, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Communication Studies
The University of Texas at Austin
juliajkim@utexas.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish—the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas Austin at (512) 471-8871 or via email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Please take your time in completing this survey, while answering questions honestly. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Please choose one of the following options:

☐ I understand my rights as a participant, and I agree to participate in this survey.

☐ I decline to participate in this survey.

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHICS

Instruction: Please answer the following questions by filling in the blank and/or selecting the appropriate responses.

1. What is your sex? _____ Male _____ Female

2. What is your age? (Please indicate numerically, e.g., 19, 20, etc.) _____

3. What is your current standing in college?

_____ Freshman

_____ Junior

_____ 5th year or beyond

_____ Sophomore

_____ Senior

_____ Other (please specify):

4. What is your ethnicity?

_____ African American/Black

_____ Pacific Islander

_____ Asian American

_____ European American/White

_____ Mexican American/Latino(a)/Hispanic

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Native American

5. What is your current relational status?

_____ Single

_____ Engaged

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ In a relationship

_____ Married

[UNWANTED PURSUIT SCREEN]

6. Have you experienced unwanted pursuit behaviors at least two weeks? Unwanted pursuit is the recurrent and unsolicited pursuit from a pursuer which results violation of physical and mental privacy of an individual.

_____ Yes _____ No

If you answered 'YES' to the question above, please answer the following items.

7. Did this unwanted pursuit occur in a manner that you personally felt was threatening, or placed you in fear of your safety, or the safety of your family, friends, pets, or property?

_____ Yes _____ No

8. Did this unwanted pursuit occur: (respond on the following scale)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Almost completely online, cyberspace, or through electronic media (e.g., Facebook, email, cell phone, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Almost completely in “real space” or face-to-face (e.g., following you, showing up in places, trespassing or invading your physical space, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Both online and face-to-face	1	2	3	4	5

9. During this time of unwanted pursuit, did this person ever physically assault you (e.g., slap, kick, hit, strangle, restrain, etc.)?

_____ Yes _____ No

10. What is the sex of the person who pursued you?

_____ Male _____ Female _____ Others: (specify)_____

11. How well do/did you know the pursuer?

_____ Not at all _____ A little _____ Fairly well _____ Very well

12. What type of relationship do/did you have?

_____ Strangers _____ Romantic partners _____ Close friends

_____ Acquaintances _____ Family members

_____ Others: (specify)_____

13. How long did the unwanted pursuit experience last? (specify):_____

APPENDIX D: OBSESSIVE RELATIONAL INTRUSION (ORI; CUPACH & SPITZBERG, 2004)

Instructions: I am interested in discovering different things people do in response to unwanted pursuit. Think of your unwanted pursuit experience that lasted at least two weeks and the pursuer. In some instances, you may have to report on your suspicion rather than certainty (e.g., someone who calls you and hangs up immediately might be a random caller, rather than someone with whom you have been acquainted). To what extent have you ever experienced any of the following behaviors? Respond on the following scale:

Read each item carefully and choose the appropriate response for every item:

0 = Never

1 = Once

2 = Rarely (i.e., 2 to 4 times)

3 = Sometimes (i.e., 5 to 9 times)

4 = Frequently (i.e., more than 10 times)

Behaviors	How often it happened				
	Never	Once	Rarely	Sometimes	All the Time
1. Called and argued with you	0	1	2	3	4
2. Would call and hang up without answering	0	1	2	3	4
3. Told others you two were more intimate than you currently were	0	1	2	3	4
4. Spied on you	0	1	2	3	4
5. Threatened you with physical harm	0	1	2	3	4
6. Made vague warnings that bad things would happen to you	0	1	2	3	4
7. Accused you of “sleeping around”	0	1	2	3	4
8. Exposed him- or herself to you	0	1	2	3	4
9. Increased contact with your family members to stay involved	0	1	2	3	4
10. Called a radio station and devoted song requests to you	0	1	2	3	4
11. Showed up before or after your work	0	1	2	3	4
12. Cluttered your e-mail with frequent messages	0	1	2	3	4

13. Drove by your house or work	0	1	2	3	4
14. Engaged in excessive self-disclosure	0	1	2	3	4
15. Performed large favors for you without your request or permission					
16. Constantly asked for another chance	0	1	2	3	4
17. Waited in a car near where you were	0	1	2	3	4
18. Accused you of somehow being unfaithful	0	1	2	3	4
19. Made exaggerated claims of his/her affection for you	0	1	2	3	4
20. Watched or stared at you from a distance	0	1	2	3	4
21. Complained to you about how you ruined her/ his life	0	1	2	3	4
22. Followed you while you were carrying on a walking conversation	0	1	2	3	4
23. Asked you if you were seeing someone	0	1	2	3	4
24. Waited outside your place	0	1	2	3	4
25. Used third parties to 'spy' or keep tabs on you	0	1	2	3	4
26. Sent you offensive photographs	0	1	2	3	4
27. Made obscene phone calls to you	0	1	2	3	4
28. Sent you unwanted cards or letters	0	1	2	3	4
29. Recorded conversations with you without your knowledge	0	1	2	3	4
30. Warned that bad things would or might happen	0	1	2	3	4
31. Left notes on your car windshield					
32. Told you to stop doing certain things					
33. Gossiped or bragged about your relationship to others	0	1	2	3	4
34. Went through your private things when in your room	0	1	2	3	4

35. Left you written messages in or at your residence	0	1	2	3	4
36. Tried to argue with you in public places	0	1	2	3	4
37. Called at all times of the day or night to check on you	0	1	2	3	4
38. Knocked on your window when not expected	0	1	2	3	4
39. Used profanity and obscene names in reference to you	0	1	2	3	4
40. Sent you unwanted gifts	0	1	2	3	4
41. Argued with you about your relationship with other people	0	1	2	3	4
42. Made things up about your past relationship	0	1	2	3	4
43. Sent you threatening notes, letters, or messages	0	1	2	3	4
44. Refused to take hints that s/he wasn't welcome	0	1	2	3	4
45. Showed up before or after your classes	0	1	2	3	4
46. Left frequent messages on your answering machine	0	1	2	3	4
47. Took photographs of you without your previous knowledge	0	1	2	3	4
48. Claimed to still be in an intimate relationship with you	0	1	2	3	4
49. Inappropriately touched you in an intimate way	0	1	2	3	4
50. Spread false rumors or gossip about you to your friends	0	1	2	3	4
51. Described acts of sex to you	0	1	2	3	4
52. Waited around near your conversation with another person	0	1	2	3	4
53. Constantly apologized for past wrongs done	0	1	2	3	4
54. Visited you at work	0	1	2	3	4
55. Checked up on you through mutual acquaintances	0	1	2	3	4
56. Followed you from place to place					

57. Called you while you were working	0	1	2	3	4
58. Mailed or left gifts you had previously given him/her	0	1	2	3	4
59. Physically shoved, slapped, or hit you	0	1	2	3	4
60. Joined you uninvited while conversing with others	0	1	2	3	4
61. Forced you to engage in sexual behavior against your will	0	1	2	3	4
62. Damaged or destroyed property or possessions of yours	0	1	2	3	4
63. Broke into your home or apartment	0	1	2	3	4

[Open-ended question items]

Can you think of any relational intrusion behaviors you have experienced that are NOT on the above list? If so, please list them and rate them according to the 0-4 scale:

0 = Never

1 = Once

2 = Rarely (i.e., 2 to 4 times)

3 = Sometimes (i.e., 5 to 9 times)

4 = Frequently (i.e., more than 10 times)

Behaviors	How often it happened				
	Never	Once	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
64.	0	1	2	3	4
65.	0	1	2	3	4

**APPENDIX E: MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (MSPSS;
ZIMET, DAHLEM, ZIMET & FARLEY, 1988)**

Instructions: Think about your current unwanted pursuit experience. Then recall your social networks (e.g., friends, significant others, family members) who are there for you. Read each statement carefully and indicate how you feel about each statement by choosing your response based on the scale below.

1 = Very Strongly Disagree

2 = Strongly Disagree

3 = Mildly Disagree

4 = Neutral

5 = Mildly Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

7 = Very Strongly Agree

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My family really tries to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My friends really try to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX F: COPE (CARVER, SCHEIER, & WEINTRAUB, 1989)

Instructions: This questionnaire asks you to indicate what you actually do and feel when you experience unwanted pursuit. What are your coping techniques towards your unwanted pursuit experiences? Then respond to each of the following items by choosing ONE response for each. Choose your answers thoughtfully and make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, so choose the most accurate answer for YOU—not what you think “most people” would say or do. Indicate what YOU usually do when YOU experience unwanted pursuit.

- 1 = I usually don't do this at all (Never)
 2 = I usually do this a little bit (Sometimes)
 3 = I usually do this a medium amount (Often)
 4 = I usually do this a lot (Always)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
[POSITIVE REINTERPRETATION]				
I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.	1	2	3	4
I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	1	2	3	4
I look for something good in what is happening.	1	2	3	4
I learn something from the experience.	1	2	3	4
[MENTAL DISENGAGEMENT]				
I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.	1	2	3	4
I daydream about things other than this.	1	2	3	4
I sleep more than usual.	1	2	3	4
I go to movies or watch TV, to think about it less.	1	2	3	4
[VENTING EMOTIONS]				
I get upset and let my emotions out.	1	2	3	4
I get upset and am really aware of it.	1	2	3	4
I let my feelings out.	1	2	3	4
I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot.	1	2	3	4

[INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT]				
I try to get advice from someone about what to do.	1	2	3	4
I talk to someone to find out more about the situation.	1	2	3	4
I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.	1	2	3	4
I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did.				
[ACTIVE COPING]				
I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.	1	2	3	4
I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem.	1	2	3	4
I take direct action to get around the problem.	1	2	3	4
I do what has to be done, one step at a time.	1	2	3	4
[DENIAL]				
I say to myself “this isn’t real.”	1	2	3	4
I refuse to believe that it has happened.	1	2	3	4
I pretend that it hasn’t really happened.	1	2	3	4
I act as though it hasn’t even happened.	1	2	3	4
[RELIGIOUS COPING]				
I put my trust in God.	1	2	3	4
I seek God’s help.	1	2	3	4
I try to find comfort in my religion.	1	2	3	4
I pray more than usual.	1	2	3	4
[HUMOR]				
I laugh about the situation.	1	2	3	4
I make jokes about it.	1	2	3	4
I kid around about it.	1	2	3	4
I make fun of the situation.	1	2	3	4
[BEHAVIORAL DISENGAGEMENT]				
I admit to myself that I can’t deal with it and quit trying.	1	2	3	4

I just give up trying to reach my goal.	1	2	3	4
I give up the attempt to get what I want.	1	2	3	4
I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem.	1	2	3	4
[RESTRAINT]				
I restrain myself from doing anything too quickly.	1	2	3	4
I hold off doing anything about it until the situation permits.	1	2	3	4
I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon.	1	2	3	4
I force myself to wait for the right time to do something.	1	2	3	4
[EMOTIONAL SUPPORT]				
I discuss my feelings with someone.	1	2	3	4
I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives.	1	2	3	4
I get sympathy and understanding from someone.	1	2	3	4
I talk to someone about how I feel.	1	2	3	4
[SUBSTANCE]				
I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better.	1	2	3	4
I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol or taking drugs.	1	2	3	4
I drink alcohol or take drugs, in order to think about it less.	1	2	3	4
I use alcohol or drugs to help me get through it.	1	2	3	4
[ACCEPTANCE]				
I get used to the idea that it happened.	1	2	3	4
I accept that this has happened and that it can't be changed.	1	2	3	4
I accept the reality of the fact that it happened.	1	2	3	4
I learn to live with it.	1	2	3	4
[SUPPRESSION]				
I keep myself from getting distracted	1	2	3	4

by other thoughts or activities.				
I focus on dealing with this problem, and if necessary, let other things slide a little.	1	2	3	4
I try hard to prevent other things from interfering with my efforts at dealing with this.	1	2	3	4
I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this.	1	2	3	4
[PLANNING]				
I make a plan of action.	1	2	3	4
I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.	1	2	3	4
I think about how I might best handle the problem.	1	2	3	4
I think hard about what steps to take.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX G: SYMPTOMS (BRIEF VERSION) (SPITZBERG, 2011)

Instructions: People vary considerably in their experiences of unwanted events in their life. Referring to your current unwanted pursuit experience, I would like to know to what extent you experienced any of the following *as a direct result of your experience with this pursuer.*

As a result of the unwanted pursuit, I experienced...	Never	Once	2~3 Times	4~5 Times	6~10 Times	Plus 10 Times
[TRAUMA SYMPTOMS]						
1. Behavioral symptoms (e.g., having to change my daily routine, job, schedule, exercise habits or gym, place of worship, eating habits, hobbies, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Economic symptoms (e.g., loss of income, job or career, time spent on managing this situation, expenditure of money on security or legal actions, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Mental symptoms (e.g., trouble remembering things or concentrating, difficulty making decisions, mind going “blank,” thinking unkind or critical things about others, heightened alertness to your surroundings, not understanding what others say, thinking pessimistically about everything, heightened awareness of yourself as an object, blaming yourself for things, obsessing about things, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Emotional symptoms (e.g., crying easily, feeling depressed, sad, jealous, angry, frustrated, helpless, anxious, afraid, loss of interest in sex, loneliness, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Anxiety symptoms (e.g., panic attacks, feeling tense, paranoia, or general fear of others, shyness, nightmares, distrust of others, a sense of lack of control over my life, lack of confidence in myself, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Social symptoms (e.g., being overly critical of others, putting myself down in front of others, expressing unjustified anger or rage at others, overreacting to what others say or do, displaying unjustified jealousy or possessiveness toward others, shutting yourself off from others, avoiding social situations, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Spiritual symptoms (e.g., loss faith in society, the police and law enforcement, religion, family, friends, or family relationships, actual romantic partner, career or job, coworkers, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Self-destructive symptoms (e.g., thoughts about ending my life, making plans to end my life, actually attempting to end my life, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6

☺ Thank you for your participation!

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