

Breaking Up is Hard To Do: Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors Following the Dissolution of a Romantic Relationship

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This study investigated the prevalence and predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors among college students. Participants ($n = 282$) had experienced the termination of a meaningful romantic relationship. Two questionnaires were administered. One assessed unwanted pursuit behaviors that were perpetrated by individuals who had *not* initiated the relationship breakup (breakup sufferers; $n = 120$); the other assessed individuals who *had* initiated the relationship breakup (relationship dissolvers; $n = 162$). Results indicated that most breakup sufferers had engaged in at least one act of unwanted pursuit (i.e., unwanted phone calls, unwanted in-person conversations) after the breakup. Breakup sufferers were more likely than relationship dissolvers to perceive a positive impact from their unwanted pursuit behavior. Partner-specific attachment experiences and love styles emerged as significant predictors of unwanted pursuit behavior perpetration, according to both victims and perpetrators of unwanted pursuit. However, only victims of unwanted pursuit revealed an association between levels of relationship violence and unwanted pursuit behavior perpetration. Victims also reported that their unwanted pursuit was related to a lack of friendship between themselves and their ex-partners. In contrast, there was a positive association between feelings of friendship and unwanted pursuit for perpetrators. The implications of these findings and their application to the stalking literature are discussed.

Unwanted pursuit behaviors (UPB), broadly defined, include activities that constitute ongoing and unwanted pursuit of a romantic relationship between individuals who are not currently involved in a consensual romantic relationship with each other. Theoretically, UPBs are thought to be most likely to occur at two different points in the developmental trajectory of a romantic relationship (i.e., prior to obtaining a consensual romantic relationship and after a consensual relationship has been terminated). Unwanted pursuit behaviors that occur prior

to a consensual relationship can be conducted by strangers or acquaintances to the victim. UPBs that occur after the breakup of a romantic relationship are, by definition, perpetrated by individuals who previously had a consensual romantic relationship with the victim.

Unwanted pursuit behaviors are expected to vary in severity (e.g., from a hang-up call to threatening behavior and stalking). They are also expected to vary in frequency and in impact. In fact, a priori, it is expected that some unwanted pursuit behaviors will be viewed as having a positive impact. For example, they may serve as precursors to a consensual romantic relationship, they may function to restore a romantic relationship in which a breakup has occurred, or they may help move a relationship that has been romantic back to a platonic relationship. Psychologically, these behaviors may also help some individuals resolve their feelings of loss and grief after an important romantic relationship has ended.

Unwanted pursuit behaviors are conceptually similar to obsessive relational intrusion (ORI) behaviors as described by Cupach and Spitzberg (1998). ORIs were defined as repeated and unwanted pursuit and invasion of one's sense of physical and symbolic privacy by another person, either stranger or acquaintance, who desires and/or presumes an intimate relationship with the victim. ORIs typically constitute a violation of the victim's privacy and right to autonomy. Like unwanted pursuit behaviors, obsessive relational intrusion acts are thought to vary in severity from frequent calls for a date, to surreptitious observation, stalking, and/or assault (Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999). Also similarly, the most severe end of the ORI continuum was defined as repeated acts of serious unwanted pursuit that are perceived as threatening and cause the victim to fear for her or his safety (i.e., intimate relationship stalking).

Cupach and Spitzberg (1998) did not as clearly articulate the other end of the ORI continuum. In passing, they suggested that it might be erroneous to assume that milder activities such as unwanted phone calls and unwanted letters/notes comprise this pole, because even these relatively "mild" forms of intrusion can result in annoyance, fear, stress, depression, and anxiety on the part of the victim. Consistent with this line of reasoning, it may not be the severity of a specific act that is engaged in that is important, but rather the impact that the act has on the victim. Consequently, it is currently proposed that the other end of the unwanted pursuit behavior continuum is comprised of any unwanted pursuit behaviors that occur out of the victim's awareness. Next are unwanted pursuit behaviors that are noticed but perceived as non-threatening and non-coercive by the victim. The furthest end of the UPB continuum would be unwanted pursuit behaviors that have positive impact on the recipient (e.g., they helped ex-partners to reunite).

Although unwanted pursuit behaviors can occur both at the beginning and after the end of a romantic relationship, focusing on UPBs that occur after an intimate relationship has terminated seems particularly important because of the potential for two quite different outcomes for the perpetrator:

1. relationship reconciliation, or
2. stalking.

Consequently, it is proposed that researching the occurrence, frequency, and perceived impact of the full range of unwanted pursuit behaviors that occur postrelationship dissolution will be important. This research is likely to facilitate our understanding of potential relationship repair mechanisms, while also aiding prevention and intervention efforts for coercive relationship intrusive behaviors such as stalking.

Since literature on stalking and unwanted pursuit is still relatively new, there are few studies that compare reports obtained by individuals who are perpetrators of unwanted pursuit behaviors with reports obtained by individuals who are victims of unwanted pursuit behaviors (as an exception, see Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker, 1997). These comparisons will be important because previous research on related topics (e.g., relationship violence) substantiates that rates of negative relationship behaviors vary by informant (Kaufman, Jones, Stieglitz, Vitulano, & Mannarino, 1994). For example, social desirability may explain the low rates of stalking reported by perpetrators in comparison to rates reported by victims (Fremouw et al., 1997). To further our understanding of unwanted pursuit behaviors, the current study was designed to obtain reports from both victims and perpetrators of unwanted pursuit behaviors. Specifically, individuals who may have been pursued by an ex-partner after they had initiated the breakup of their romantic relationship (relationship dissolvers) were compared with reports from individuals who may have pursued an ex-partner after they had been broken-up with (breakup sufferers).

Because researchers are still arguing the parameters, definitions, and best nomenclature to use with this phenomenon, and the literature has only recently advanced from anecdotal to empirically descriptive (Spitzberg, Nicastro, & Cousins, 1998), few studies have been conducted to identify predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors. In regard to the most severe unwanted pursuit behavior (i.e., stalking), existing research highlights the importance of both individual (gender, presence of mental disturbance, violent tendencies) and relationship factors (history of relationship violence, history of consensual involvement). Relationship factors clearly take on increased importance when a consensual intimate relationship has previously existed. In fact, theorists have proposed that intimate relationship stalkers may be more motivated by their need to continue or reestablish their faltering relationship, rather than by their overall level of psychopathology (Dziegielewski & Roberts, 1995; Hendricks & Spillane, 1993).

Consistent with this supposition, Cupach and Spitzberg (1998) postulated that many types of unwanted pursuit behaviors directed toward a former intimate partner might be rooted in the darker aspects of the relationship, such as the need to control or manipulate one's partner. The available research supports their assertion. For example, Coleman (1997) recruited 141 female subjects from undergraduate psychology classes. Each was given a relationship questionnaire about the last person with whom they ended an intimate relationship. As hypothesized, Coleman found that victims reported an association between extreme unwanted pursuit behaviors, such as stalking, and a history of verbal and physical violence in the preexisting dating relationship. The association between a history of domestic violence and stalking in marital relationships has also been demonstrated empirically (Burgess et al., 1997).

The primary purpose of the current study was to determine the prevalence and predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors in the dating relationships of college students. Consistent with previous work, participating individuals in the current study were required to have been involved in an intimate relationship that had terminated, as this was expected to be a time when a larger number of unwanted pursuit behaviors would occur. In contrast to some previous work (e.g., Coleman, 1997), data were gathered from both male and female participants. Previous work with similar populations has indicated that men may be more likely to stalk than women (Fremouw et al., 1997). However, related research that has described the prevalence and predictors of relationship violence has found equivalent prevalence rates of dating violence perpetration in both men and women (e.g., Arias, Samios, & O'Leary,

1987). Studies of stalking and obsessive relational intrusion in college students also reported that males and females were not differentially victimized (Spitzberg et al., 1998). Moreover, although few gender differences in the prevalence of stalking behaviors were reported in the National Violence Against Women survey, women were found to be more afraid and distressed by these behaviors than men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Thus, the initial goal of this study was to describe and compare male and female rates of engagement in unwanted pursuit behaviors following the dissolution of an intimate relationship and their effect on the victim. A priori, men were expected to engage in more frequent and more severe acts of unwanted pursuit than were women, and women were expected to report more negative impact from these behaviors than men.

Second, data was collected from self-reported perpetrators and victims of unwanted pursuit by an ex-partner. Although these individuals were not reporting on the same relationships, comparisons were made in order to determine if there were differences in frequency, assessments of impact, and predictors as a function of the participant's role in the relationship breakup and in the unwanted pursuit. At the outset, it was hypothesized that victims would report significantly more acts of unwanted pursuit than would perpetrators. Victims were also expected to view the impact of these unwanted behaviors as more negative. It was further hypothesized that victims of unwanted pursuit would relate their pursuit more to their ex-partner's psychopathology, than to characteristics of themselves or their relationship. In contrast, it was expected that perpetrators of unwanted pursuit would ascribe their behavior more to characteristics of their failed relationship than to their own psychopathology or tendencies toward violence and jealousy.

Finally, three groups of variables were proposed as potential predictors of unwanted pursuit postrelationship dissolution. First, the nature of the attachment between the ex-partners was expected to predict the level of unwanted pursuit that would occur after the relationship had ended. Attachment refers to the ability to make emotional bonds with others (Bowlby, 1977). Variations on how many types of attachment disturbances exist have been noted in the literature, however, there is general agreement that there is an anxious insecure (i.e., seeks contact yet manifests anger and resentment about the separation) and an avoidant (i.e., refuses to acknowledge the attachment figure after a separation) attachment style. Attachment disturbances and degree of emotional engagement have been shown to relate to levels of distress postrelationship (Fine & Sacher, 1997; Simpson, 1990). Similar work conducted with marital batterers has demonstrated that an anxious and insecure and/or preoccupied attachment style is related to the perpetration of violence, jealousy, negative affect during conflict, following, surveillance, and separation behaviors (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Guerrero, 1998; Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchinson, 1997). While individual differences in attachment style are thought to be relatively stable, attachment styles are also thought to be somewhat relationship-specific. This is consistent with Bowlby's assertion, that in healthy individuals, attachment schema's are modified with experience (Berscheid, 1994). Thus, both an overall attachment style measure and a partner-specific attachment measure will be utilized as predictors of unwanted pursuit behavior in the current study.

Unwanted pursuit behaviors were also expected to relate to the degree of jealousy, abusiveness, and physical violence that had preexisted in the relationship. In general, jealousy has been shown to motivate individuals to engage in proximity-seeking behavior with their partners (Sharpsteen, 1995). Theoretically, pathological jealousy may predict the occurrence of continuous and unwanted proximity-seeking behaviors and intrusiveness (Dutton, van

Ginkel, & Landolt, 1996). Some have even described domestic violence as the “violence of jealousy” (White & Mullen, 1989). Furthermore, relationships that included control, violence, and abusiveness prior to their dissolution may be the most difficult and potentially risky from which to disentangle (Palarea, Zona, Lane, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1999). In keeping with this reasoning, some have suggested that there is a domestic violence subtype of stalker. These individuals may want to reestablish their romantic connection in order to maintain their control over their victim and as a continued expression of their ambivalent, jealous, love-hate relationship (Burgess et al., 1997; Dziegielewski & Roberts, 1995).

Finally, it was expected that the type of love style exhibited in the relationship would be a significant predictor of unwanted pursuit. Relationships have been shown to differ in their nature of the expression of love between partners (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998). In the current study, it was hypothesized that relationship breakups at risk for unwanted pursuit would have had higher levels of possessive and dependent love, more erotic love, higher levels of game-playing love, and lower levels of friendship love than relationship breakups not at risk.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 282 college students (43.6% male and 56.4% female) who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a large public midwestern university. All students participated in this study in partial fulfillment of a research requirement. Prior to the study, all participating students indicated that they had experienced the termination of an important intimate relationship. This relationship must have lasted at least one month to be eligible. The sample consisted of 162 individuals (39.5% males 60.5% and females) who reported that they had initiated the relationship breakup (i.e., relationship dissolvers). These students reported about themselves, their perspective of the relationship, and their ex-partner's behavior following the breakup. The remaining students ($n = 120$; 49.2% male and 50.8% female) indicated that they had been broken up with (i.e., breakup sufferers). These students reported on themselves, their perspective of their relationship, and their own behavior following the breakup. Relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers were not reporting on the same relationship. The gender difference in designation as a relationship dissolver or a breakup sufferer was not significant, $\chi^2 = 2.62, p > .10$.

Overall, the sample was predominantly Caucasian (91.8%). The remaining students were Asian American (3.5%), African American (1.4%), Hispanic (1.1%), Native American (.7%) and other (1.4%). There were no significant differences between relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers on this variable, $\chi^2 < 1$. The mean age at time of breakup was 18.6 years (18.6 years for relationship dissolvers; 18.5 years for breakup sufferers). The modal student was reporting on a relationship that had broken up within the past 12 months. The mean duration of the intimate relationship being reported on was 17.0 months ($SD = 14.9$ months, ranging from 2 to 72 months). Duration had a multi-modal distribution with peaks at 4, 6, 18, 24, and 36 months. The majority were dating relationships (95.4%) and 3.9% had been engaged. The two married individuals were dropped from all subsequent data analysis. Just over 5% of the sample indicated that they had lived together and 2.5% had a child with their ex-partner. More than 40% of the sample had broken up at least once previous to the breakup they were describing. Relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers were not found to differ significantly on any of the above demographic variables ($p > .10$).

Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Each consenting participant was then given a two-page questionnaire that consisted of 22 items. These items assessed demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), as well as relationship characteristics (e.g., the duration of the relationship, the extent of involvement, and how much time had elapsed since the breakup had occurred). Some open-ended questions about their perceptions of how and why the breakup occurred were also included. When participants had completed their responses to this packet, they were instructed to raise their hand. The research coordinator then came to collect the first packet. While picking it up, the coordinator glanced at the participant's response to question 5: "Who initiated the breakup?" A participant's response to this question was used to determine whether the person perceived him- or herself as the initiator or sufferer of the breakup process. Those who indicated that the breakup was mostly or completely initiated by their ex-partner were classified as "breakup sufferers." Those who answered that the breakup was mostly or completely initiated by themselves were classified as "relationship dissolvers." Separate second packets were given to relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers. The two packets were very similar. For example, each contained the following identical measures (Love Attitudes Scale, Conflict Tactics Scale, and the Attachment measure). All other measures in the packet, described below, differed in one way. In the relationship dissolvers' packet, participants were reporting on their ex-partner's behavior in the relationship; in the breakup sufferers' packet, participants reported on their own behavior. All participants were given 60 minutes to complete the self-report surveys. Only identification numbers were used to link information from packet 1 to packet 2. At the conclusion of the study, all participants were given a debriefing sheet that included a list of available mental health resources for their consideration.

MEASURES

Determining the Occurrence of Stalking and Pursuit Behaviors

Unwanted Pursuit Behavior Inventory. The Unwanted Pursuit Behavior Inventory (UPBI; Palarea & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1998) is a 26-item instrument that assesses the presence, frequency, impact, and motivations underlying a full range of unwanted pursuit behaviors. Items from the UPBI are shown in Table 1. A priori, mild acts were defined as items 1-13. Severe acts included items 14-26. All items on the UPBI were generated via a review of the empirical literature and an assessment of the behaviors engaged in by stalkers who had been investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit. The coefficient alpha for this scale in the current sample was .81. Relationship dissolvers filled out the UPBI about their victimization from their ex-partner. In contrast, breakup sufferers reported about their perpetration of unwanted pursuit behavior after their breakup. Unwanted pursuit behavior total scores were then created by summing the number of different acts endorsed by each individual.

A second total score was also created: the Unwanted Pursuit Behavior Severity Index. To compute this index, only unwanted pursuit behaviors that were reported to have a negative impact on the recipient were included. Negative impact UPBs were then weighted by reports of frequency. In addition, all the acts that were severe (items 14-26) were double-weighted. The coefficient alpha for the severity index was .82 in the current sample.

Predictors

Individual Attachment. Participants' general attachment style was measured with the 36-item measure entitled Experiences in Close Relationships (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Previous factor analysis had revealed that the measure is composed of two 18-item subscales, Avoidance and Anxiety. Both of these subscales have been shown to have good internal consistency; both subscales had coefficient alphas of .90 in the current sample. Relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers reported on their own anxious and avoidant attachment style in relationships. Breakup sufferers' attachment anxiety was expected to predict unwanted pursuit behavior perpetration, while relationship dissolvers' attachment avoidance was expected to predict pursuit victimization.

TABLE 1. Percent of Breakup Relationship Dissolvers ($n = 160$) and Breakup Sufferers ($n = 120$) Experiencing or Perpetrating Pursuit Behaviors

Pursuit Behavior	Occurrence			Perceived Response		
	Relationship Dissolvers	Breakup Sufferers	χ^2	Relationship Dissolvers	Breakup Sufferers	χ^2
	%	%		% Neg	% Neg	
1. Unwanted Phone Message	25.0	55.0	26.2***	83.9	18.0	37.1***
2. Unwanted Letters/Gifts	18.8	44.2	21.2***	62.5	15.6	15.9***
3. Unwanted Phone Calls	36.3	77.5	47.0***	69.1	9.4	53.9***
4. Unwanted E-mail/Chat	0.0	2.5	4.0 ^{p = .08}	00.0	33.3	1.3*
5. In Person Conversation	30.6	73.3	50.0***	48.8	8.9	25.2***
6. In Person Gifts	13.1	30.0	12.0***	63.2	6.1	20.0***
7. Ask Friends About You	56.3	53.8	<1	60.0	42.2	3.1 ^{p = .08}
8. Family Contact	19.4	19.2	<1	70.0	16.7	10.9***
9. Show Up at Places	39.6	33.3	1.2	56.3	26.9	5.8*
10. Efforts to Run Into You	20.1	25.0	<1	64.0	0.0	16.0***
11. Home Visits	29.4	22.5	1.7	29.3	21.8	<1
12. School/Work Visits	20.8	13.3	2.6	36.7	0.0	6.4*
13. Wait Outside School	13.1	7.5	2.3	44.4	0.0	4.0*
14. Following	6.9	2.5	2.8 ^{p = .09}	-		
15. Making Vague Threats	8.8	.8	8.5**	-		
16. Threaten Info Release	1.9	2.5	<1	-		
17. Threaten to Harm Ex	1.3	0.0	1.5	-		
18. Threaten Pets/Family	1.9	0.8	<1	-		
19. Threaten With a Weapon	0.0	0.0	<1	-		
20. Release Harmful Info	1.9	0.8	<1	-		
21. Steal Items	3.1	0.0	3.8*	-		
22. Damage Property	3.1	0.8	1.7	-		
23. Harm Family/Pet	0.0	0.0	<1	-		
24. Injure	2.5	0.0	3.0 ^{p = .08}	-		
25. Kidnap/Hold Against Will	1.3	0.0	1.5	-		
26. Force Sex After Breakup	1.9	0.0	<1	-		
1. Physical Protection Sought	3.2	4.2	<1			
2. Sought Help From Police	1.3	0.0	1.5			
3. Current Contact Occurring	51.3	35.6	6.6**			
4. Mean # of UPB Acts	3.57	4.69	$F(1, 278) = 9.68**$			
5. Mean UPB Severity Index	3.88	1.73	$F(1, 274) = 8.89**$			

Note. Negative response was not assessed for the most severe pursuit behaviors.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Spouse-Specific Dependency. The spouse-specific dependency scale (SSDS; Rathus & O'Leary, 1997) is a 24-item measure that was designed to measure attachment in reference to a particular partner and relationship. The measure consists of three 8-item subscales. In the current study, the SSDS was adapted to address ex-partners rather than spouses. The three subscales represent anxious attachment, exclusive dependency, and emotional dependency. Relationship dissolvers reported on their ex-partners' dependency. Breakup sufferers reported on their own dependency. Coefficient alphas for the three subscales ranged from .84 to .89 in a college student sample.

Relationship Characteristics

Type of Love. The relationship-specific, 42-item, Love Attitudes Scale-Short Form (LAS; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998) was used to measure the degree to which several different types of love styles were present in the terminated relationship. The love styles, originally described by Lee (1973), that were included in the current study are: Eros (passionate love), Ludus (game-playing love), Storge (friendship love), and Mania (possessive, dependent love). Each style is assessed with 7 items. The alpha coefficients for the love styles ranged from .74 to .84, indicating reasonable internal consistency (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1990). Both relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers reported on the love styles that were present in their failed relationship.

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2). The CTS2 was used to assess the occurrence of physical and emotional abuse in the intimate relationship. Preliminary psychometric studies of the CTS2 have been conducted on college students. Internal consistency of the CTS2 scales was shown to range from .79 to .95 in this population (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). In the current sample, the coefficient alpha for the victimization items was .88. The coefficient alpha for the perpetration items was .78. Both relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers reported on their perpetration and victimization of psychological and physical abuse in their relationships. Consistent with previous research, individuals were assigned to categories based on the highest level of abuse reported. Thus, scores on the abuse indices were 0 (no abuse), 1 (psychological abuse only), 2 (at least one act of mild physical abuse), to 3 (at least one act of severe physical abuse).

Jealousy. Jealousy was assessed with the Interpersonal Jealousy Scale (IJS; Mathes, 1992; Mathes, Phillips, Skowran, & Dick, 1982; Mathes & Severa, 1981). This scale consists of 26 items that follow a hypothetical format. Relationship dissolvers reported on their ex-partners' jealousy. Breakup sufferers reported on their own experience of jealousy in the relationship. The coefficient alpha for this scale was .91 in the current sample.

RESULTS

Prevalence of Pursuit Behaviors

The obtained results revealed that unwanted pursuit behaviors are common following the termination of college student's dating relationships. For example, 119 of 120 breakup sufferers (99.2%) indicated perpetrating at least one unwanted activity assessed by the Unwanted Pursuit Behavior Inventory. As presented in Table 1, the most frequently reported unwanted pursuit activities were engaging in unwanted phone calls (77.5%) and unsolicited in-person conversations (73.3%). Six of the breakup sufferers (5%) reported perpetrating at least one unwanted pursuit act that included following, threatening, and/or injuring their

ex-partner and/or their ex-partner's friends, pets, or family members. However, when only unwanted pursuit behaviors that were thought to result in a negative response from the ex-partner were considered, just 27.5% of breakup sufferers indicated engagement in unwanted pursuit behavior.

Contrary to expectation, there were no gender differences in the total Unwanted Pursuit Behavior scores of breakup sufferers ($F < 1$). Furthermore, item-analysis of the UPBI items revealed that there were few gender differences in breakup sufferers' endorsements of UPBI items. Specifically, males were more likely than females to indicate that they had made in-person contacts (32.2% versus 13.1%), such as unwanted home visits to their ex-partner, $\chi^2(1) = 6.27, p < .05$, and waiting for their ex-partner after school (males: 13.6% versus females: 1.6%), $\chi^2(1) = 6.14, p < .05$. In contrast, there was a trend for females to report leaving more unwanted phone messages than males, $\chi^2(1) = 2.67, p = .07$.

When considering the reports of relationship dissolvers, 88.9% reported that their ex-partner had engaged in at least one unwanted pursuit behavior. As shown in Table 1, the most common acts experienced were having your ex-partner show up at places unexpectedly (39.6%), receiving an unwanted phone call (36.3%) and having an ex-partner ask friends about you (56.3%).

Contrary to expectation, there were no gender differences in the mean number of unwanted pursuit behaviors experienced by relationship dissolvers, $t(155) = -1.16, p > .10$. Furthermore, chi-square analyses revealed only one significant gender difference in relationship dissolvers' reports of unwanted pursuit behavior experiences. Consistent with expectation, females (12.5%) were more likely than males (3.1%) to report that their ex-partner had threatened them, $\chi^2(1) = 4.23, p < .05$.

Overall, significant differences emerged in the occurrence reports of breakup sufferers compared to relationship dissolvers, as shown in Table 1. By self-report, breakup sufferers made significantly more unwanted phone calls, left more unwanted phone messages and hang-up calls, and dropped off more unwanted gifts and letters than relationship dissolvers indicated that they had experienced from their ex-partners. Breakup sufferers also indicated that they had more unwanted in-person conversations with their ex-partners and gave more in-person gifts than did relationship dissolvers. However, as the unwanted pursuit behaviors increased in severity, the reporting differences between groups changed. Specifically, there were trends for relationship dissolvers to report experiencing more threats, stolen items, following, and physical injury from their ex-partners than breakup sufferers admitted to perpetrating.

Relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers also differed in their reports of their response to the unwanted pursuit behavior. In general, as shown in Table 1, relationship dissolvers experienced contact by their ex-partner as substantially more negative than breakup sufferers perceived their contact to be. For example, 83.9% of the relationship dissolvers who were left an unwanted phone message indicated that their response was negative; whereas only 18.0% of breakup sufferers perceived their unwanted phone messages as having a negative impact. Likewise, 62.5% of relationship dissolvers indicated that receiving an unwanted letter or gift from their ex-partner was negative; while only 15.6% of the breakup sufferers reported that their gift giving elicited a negative response from their ex-partner. Some gender differences in impact ratings were not assessed because of the small sample size for many of these analyses.

For both groups, two different summary scores were derived from the UPBI. The UPBI total score was a count of the number of different unwanted pursuit behaviors that were reported. Contrary to hypothesis, breakup sufferers reported perpetrating more total UPBI

acts ($M = 4.69$) than relationship dissolvers reported experiencing ($M = 3.57$), $F(1, 278) = 9.68$, $p < .01$. The second summary score was a derived severity index that included only acts with a perceived negative response. These acts were then weighted by frequency of occurrence. Furthermore, UPBI acts 15-26 were double weighted to reflect the severity of the unwanted behavior being reported. When mean UPBI severity indices were compared between relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers, as anticipated, relationship dissolvers reported significantly more victimization ($M = 3.88$) than breakup sufferers reported perpetrating ($M = 1.73$), $F(1, 274) = 8.89$, $p < .01$. Correlations between the UPBI total score and the UPBI derived index were ascertained for relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers. For relationship dissolvers, the two victimization scores were very similar, $r = .79$, $p < .001$, $n = 156$. In contrast, breakup sufferers revealed a smaller correlation between the indices, $r = .26$, $p < .01$, $n = 120$.

Correlations Among the Predictors Variables.

For both relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers, the correlations among the predictor variables are shown in Table 2. For both relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers, generally low to moderate correlations were obtained between the predictor variables. Therefore, on the basis of theory and empirical data, three groups of predictor variables were retained for the regression analyses. The first group consisted of the four attachment measures. The second group included the four love types. The third group consisted of the level of violence measures and the jealousy scale.

Predicting Relationship Dissolvers' Reports of Pursuit Behavior Victimization

Three separate regression analyses were conducted with data obtained from relationship dissolvers. In the first regression analysis, the attachment measures were used to predict total unwanted pursuit behavior victimization scores. In the second analysis, the love styles

TABLE 2. Correlations Among the Predictor Variables for Relationship Dissolvers and Breakup Sufferers

Variables	Relationship Dissolvers ($n = 160$)					Breakup Sufferers ($n = 120$)				
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
—	.46*	.49*	-.14	.04	.26*	-.17	-.11	.14	.19	.42*
.30*	—	.38*	-.14	.09	.12	-.04	.01	.10	.23*	.41*
.16	.25*	—	.11	-.10	.32*	-.18*	.04	.11	.24*	.61*
.11	.29*	.51*	—	.09	-.07	.05	.50*	.12	.10	-.07
.23	.38*	-.15	.08	—	-.22*	.15	.31*	.10	.05	-.06
-.06	-.19	-.00	.04	-.16	—	-.17	-.26	-.07	-.03	.22*
.01	.06	-.30*	-.24	.20	-.00	—	.04	-.06	-.17	-.30
.26*	.53*	.34*	.21	.34*	-.13	.10	—	.26*	.25*	.07
.12	.31*	.07	.17	.16	.03	.01	.10	—	.58*	.12
.19	.34*	.19	.17	.19	.06	-.14	.21	.67*	—	.34*
.32*	.41*	.59*	.53*	.18	.02	-.22	.42	.11	.18	—

Note. *Denotes correlations that are significant at the $p < .01$ level. N 's vary slightly across analyses due to missing data. Correlations for Relationship Dissolvers ($n = 160$) are above the diagonal and correlations for Breakup Sufferers ($n = 120$) are below the diagonal.

were used to predict UPBI total victimization scores. In the third analysis, the relationship violence victimization and perpetration indices and the jealousy measure were used to predict UPBI total victimization scores. In all three regression analyses, all predictors were entered simultaneously into the regression equation.

As shown in Table 3, as hypothesized, the attachment measures significantly predicted the total number of unwanted pursuit behaviors experienced, $F(4, 150) = 5.98, p < .001$, accounting for 14% of the variance. Specifically, more pursuit behaviors were experienced by dissolvers who described their ex-partner as insecurely and anxiously attached in the relationship, $\beta = .28, t(1, 150) = 3.11, p < .01$.

In the second analysis, type of love style also significantly predicted UPBI total scores, $F(4, 153) = 2.69, p < .05$. Seven percent of score variance was accounted for in this analysis. In particular, relationship dissolvers who experienced higher levels of unwanted pursuit were more likely to describe their relationships as characterized by a possessive and dependent love, $\beta = .18, t(1, 153) = 2.09, p < .05$. Lack of friendship love in the relationship was also significantly related to levels of unwanted pursuit, $\beta = -.19, t(1, 153) = -2.42, p < .05$.

In the third regression analysis, jealousy and abusiveness were also shown to be significant predictors of unwanted pursuit, after the relationship had ended, $F(3, 150) = 23.45, p < .001$. All three variables (i.e., dissolver's level of abuse victimization, dissolver's level of abuse perpetration, and reports of ex-partner's jealousy) were retained as independent predictors.

Predicting Breakup Sufferers' Reports of Pursuit Behavior Perpetration

Three same analyses were conducted with self-reports of perpetration obtained from breakup sufferers. As shown in Table 4, as hypothesized, the attachment measures significantly predicted the total number of unwanted pursuit behaviors perpetrated, $F(4, 113) = 2.93$,

TABLE 3. Summary of Regression Analyses to Predict Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors Experienced by Relationship Dissolvers ($N = 160$)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	<i>t</i>	R	R ²	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors									
Ex's Narrow Focus	.00	.04	.02	<1					
Ex's Support Seek	.00	.04	.12	1.41					
Ex's Insecure Attach	.12	.04	.28	3.11**					
Dissolver's Avoidance	.00	.01	.04	<1					
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors					.26	.07	2.69	4,153	
Passionate Love	.00	.05	-.05	<1					
Game-Playing Love	.00	.05	-.02	<1					
Friendship Love	.00	.04	-.19	-2.42*					
Possessive Love	.00	.05	.18	2.09*					
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors					.56	.32	23.45	3,150	***
Perpetration Level	.70	.28	.21	2.46*					
Victimization Level	.83	.28	.26	2.95**					
Jealousy	.00	.01	.28	3.86***					

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4. Summary of Regression Analyses to Predict Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors Perpetrated by Breakup Sufferers ($N = 120$)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	R	R ²	F	df	Sig.
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors					.09			
Narrow Focus	.00	.04	.06	<1				
Support Seek	.00	.04	.23	2.39*				
Insecure/Anx	.00	.04	.15	1.40				
ECR-Anxiety	.00	.02	.06	<1				
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors				.37	.14	4.04	4,103	
Passionate	-.10	.05	-.20	-2.00*				
Game-playing	.00	.05	-.09	<1				
Friendship	.00	.04	.18	1.94*				
Possessive	.16	.05	.31	3.18**				
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors				.16	.03	1.01	3,110	$p = .39$
Perpetration	-.26	.41	-.08	<1				
Victimization	.45	.36	.17	1.27				
Jealousy	.00	.01	.09	<1				

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

$p < .05$. As a whole, these variables accounted for 9% of the variance in UBPI total scores. Specifically, more unwanted pursuit behaviors were perpetrated by breakup sufferers who described themselves as high on the nurturance-and-support-seeking subscale of the SSDS, $\beta = .23$, $t(1, 113) = 2.39$, $p < .05$.

In the second analysis, types of love style were also significant predictors of UPBI total scores, $F(4, 103) = 4.04$, $p < .05$. Fourteen percent of score variance was accounted for by the four love style predictors. In particular, breakup sufferers who perpetrated unwanted pursuit characterized their ex-relationships as high in possessive and dependent love [$\beta = .31$, $t(1, 103) = 3.18$, $p < .01$] and low in sexual passion [$\beta = -.20$, $t(1, 103) = -2.00$, $p < .05$]. Contrary to expectation, high levels of friendship love was a predictor of unwanted pursuit for breakup sufferers, $\beta = .18$, $t(1, 103) = 1.94$, $p < .05$.

The third regression analysis found no relationship between level of violence perpetrated, level of violence experienced, self-reports of jealousy, and levels of unwanted pursuit behavior perpetration.

Predicting Breakup Sufferers' Unwanted Pursuit Behavior Severity Index

Because of the relatively low correlation ($r = .26$) between UPB total scores and UPB severity index scores for breakup sufferers, both scores were retained for data analysis. Thus, the same three regression analyses were conducted a second time with the UPB severity perpetration index as the dependent measure. Once again, all predictors were entered simultaneously into the regression equation.

As shown in Table 5, and as hypothesized, the attachment measures were also significant predictors of the UPB severity perpetration indices, $F(4, 113) = 4.16$, $p < .01$. As a whole, these four variables accounted for 13% of the variance in severity perpetration scores. Specifically, frequent unwanted pursuit behaviors with negative impact were perpetrated by breakup sufferers who were high on the SSDS nurturance-and-support-seeking subscale and who described themselves as anxious and insecurely attached to the relationship. UPB severity perpetration indices were also predicted by the ECR attachment anxiety subscale, $\beta = -.28$, $t(1, 113) = -2.64$, $p < .01$.

In the second analysis, type of love style also significantly predicted UPBI severity indices, $F(4, 103) = 3.83, p < .01$. Thirteen percent of score variance was accounted for in this analysis. Significant predictors of severe perpetration included a possessive and dependent love style [$\beta = .31, t(1, 103) = 3.82, p < .01$] and the absence of a passionate love style [$\beta = -.29, t(1,103) = -2.92, p < .01$]. Consistent with hypothesis, in the third regression analysis, level of violence perpetrated, level of violence experienced, and jealousy did not emerge as significant predictors of the unwanted pursuit behavior severity index for breakup sufferers.

All the above reported analyses were rerun with gender as a predictor variable. Gender did not emerge as a significant predictor in any of the analyses.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that unwanted pursuit behaviors are common after the termination of college students' dating relationships, as 99% of breakup sufferers indicated that they had engaged in at least one act of unwanted pursuit behavior. According to breakup sufferers, the most common pursuit behaviors they engaged in were unwanted phone messages, phone calls, and unwanted in-person conversations with their ex-partner. According to relationship dissolvers, the most common behaviors they experienced from their ex-partners were unwanted phone calls and having their ex-partner ask friends about them.

Prevalence data from this study provides additional support for the notion that unwanted pursuit behaviors fall along a continuum of typicality and severity as has been described by Coleman (1997), Cupach and Spitzberg (1998), and others. Assessing for the full continuum of unwanted pursuit behaviors, as is common in Guttman-like scales, may help to gauge the difficulty of the breakup, as well as to identify individuals who may be at risk for intimate relationship stalking.

TABLE 5. Summary of Regression Analyses to Predict Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors Perpetrated by Breakup Sufferers ($N = 120$)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	<i>t</i>	R	R ²	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Predicted: Total # Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors					.36	.13	4.16	4,113	
Narrow Focus	.00	.06	.05	<1					
Support Seek	.12	.06	.20	2.04*					
Insecure/Anx	.15	.05	.30	2.94**					
ECR - Anxiety	.00	.02	-.28	-2.64**					
Predicted: Unwanted Pursuit Severity Index					.36	.13	3.83	4,103	**
Passionate	-.22	.08	-.29	-2.92**					
Game-playing	.00	.08	-.06	<1					
Friendship	.00	.06	-.05	<1					
Possessive	.25	.08	.31	3.82**					
Predicted: Unwanted Pursuit Severity Index					.16	.03	<1	3,110	$p = .42$
Perpetration	.00	.50	.01	<1					
Victimization	.00	.57	.02	<1					
Jealousy	.00	.01	.15	1.58					

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

It was hypothesized that the frequency of unwanted pursuit behaviors would differ as a function of gender. However, consistent with data reported by Cupach and Spitzberg (1998), only a few gender differences in rates of pursuit behaviors were obtained in this sample. The obtained differences suggest that women may be more likely to leave unwanted phone messages, whereas men may be more likely to seek in-person contact with their ex-partners. Gender also did not emerge as a predictor in any of the regression equations, suggesting few gender-specific associations for unwanted pursuit. As a whole, these results suggest that unwanted pursuit behaviors may occur in a relatively gender-neutral manner. These findings are consistent with dating violence prevalence studies conducted with college students (e.g., Arias et al., 1987). It is also possible, however, that there may be gender-specific motivations underlying similar behavior (e.g., men may be more likely to continue pursuing in order to intimidate and control; women may be more likely to continue pursuing in order to cope with depression and fear of loss). There may also be some gender-specific risk factors for particular acts of violent and/or for dangerous pursuit behavior, which has been found in the dating violence literature (e.g., Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992). Moreover, some acts with similar descriptions may evoke quite different responses from men and women. Further research will be needed to examine these hypotheses.

As expected, reports of the frequency of unwanted pursuit behaviors did differ on the basis of informant (i.e., breakup sufferer or relationship dissolver). Breakup sufferers reported engaging in milder types of unwanted pursuit behaviors, such as leaving unwanted phone messages and/or hang-up calls than relationship dissolvers reported receiving after their breakups. One interpretation of these findings might be that breakup sufferers were disclosing information about their actions, about which relationship dissolvers were unaware (e.g., the dissolvers didn't know that the hang-up message was from their ex-partner). It is also possible that these behaviors may have been more salient, and consequently more memorable, for the breakup sufferer. Finally, if the behavior had a positive response by the receiver, it might not have been coded as an "unwanted" pursuit behavior by relationship dissolvers and thus may not have been reported.

There were trends, however, for these reporting differences to reverse as the reported behaviors became more serious. In general, breakup sufferers were less likely than relationship dissolvers to report severe pursuit behaviors (e.g., following, threatening, injuring the ex-partner). These findings are likely to reflect social desirability concerns on the part of perpetrators (Fremouw et al., 1997).

Relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers also differed in their assessment of the impact of the unwanted pursuit behaviors. In general, breakup sufferers indicated more positive impact for the pursuit behaviors that they perpetrated than relationship dissolvers reported experiencing. This suggests that perpetrators may be unaware of the negative effects of their postbreakup pursuit behavior, which would make it harder for them to self-correct their behavior. However, caution is recommended when interpreting these findings, as this study utilized relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers from different relationships. Future research is needed that will replicate these findings with relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers who are reporting on the same failed relationship.

Furthermore, a surprising number of both relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers indicated a positive response to the unwanted pursuit behavior. If unwanted pursuit behaviors occur frequently at the end of intimate relationships and if these behaviors sometimes have positive consequences for the pursuer (e.g., they are received positively or they restart the relationship), then it is likely to be more difficult to prevent many types of unwanted pursuit and to determine when unwanted pursuit clearly warrants intervention. Furthermore, identification of potential stalkers will be particularly

difficult if only perpetrators' perspectives of their unwanted pursuit behaviors are available for consideration, as these individuals may be most likely to minimize the severity and impact of their unwanted pursuit behaviors.

In the current study, relationship dissolvers' and breakup sufferers' reports of attachment style, love types, jealousy, and abusiveness were used to predict pursuit behavior total scores. Separate models were constructed for relationship dissolvers and breakup sufferers. For relationship dissolvers, total UPBI victimization scores were predicted by their perceptions that their ex-partner was jealous and physically abusive. These variables accounted for 32% of the variance in total scores. Unwanted pursuit behavior total scores were also significantly predicted by reports of an ex-partner who was anxiously and insecurely attached in the relationship. Finally, relationships that ended with unwanted pursuit behaviors were more likely to be characterized as low in friendship love and high in possessive-dependent love, according to relationship dissolvers.

By comparison, breakup sufferers revealed no predictive relationships between the level of physical violence in the relationship, their jealousy, and their UPB total perpetration scores. Instead, they related higher levels of unwanted pursuit behaviors to high levels of nurturance and support-seeking behaviors in the relationship and more friendship love. High levels of possessive, dependent love and low levels of passionate love also emerged as predictors of total UPB perpetration scores for breakup sufferers. These findings support the contention that some breakup sufferers may perceive their unwanted pursuit behaviors as legitimate efforts to restore their intimate relationship, continue to seek nurturance and support from their ex-partner, or as an attempt to maintain a friendship with their ex-partner after the love affair has ended.

A second set of regression analyses was conducted to determine predictors of the unwanted pursuit behavior perpetration severity index, as the two summary scores were found to be only moderately correlated for breakup sufferers. The UPBI severity index included only unwanted pursuit behaviors that were judged by the perpetrator to have had a negative impact on the receiver. The included negative impact UPBI items were then weighted by their frequency of occurrence and their item-type severity. A priori, this index was designed to be more closely related to behaviors which could be considered stalking (i.e., repeated, fear inducing, unwanted). For breakup sufferers, partner-specific dependency and attachment emerged as significant predictors of the UPBI perpetration severity index. Breakup sufferers engaging in UPB perpetration were more insecurely and anxiously attached to their ex-partner. They also reported engaging in more nurturance and support seeking. UPB severity indices were also predicted by higher levels of possessive and dependent love. These results suggest that those who lack the skills to successfully meet their relationship needs while they are dating, may also lack the skills to endure relationship termination successfully. Prevention of unwanted pursuit behavior and intimate relationship stalking may be enhanced by helping individuals form more secure attachments, with less dependent and possessive love between dating partners. Prevention and intervention efforts may also be enhanced by furthering our understanding of the role of friendship in the production of unwanted pursuit behaviors, as breakup sufferers indicated more unwanted pursuit in relationships that had been characterized as high in friendship, while relationship dissolvers indicated lower levels of friendship were associated with experiencing unwanted pursuit from their ex-partner.

Several limitations to this study should be noted. First, the sample was drawn exclusively from college students. Care should be used when generalizing these findings to samples who have chosen not to attend college. Second, relationship reports were obtained retrospectively. Different results may be obtained with prospective studies on the dissolution

of dating relationships. Also, the nature of these relationships might be further clarified by considering unwanted pursuit behaviors that occur before, during, and after the intimate relationship. Third, this sample was predominantly Caucasian. Further research will be needed to determine the extent to which the obtained results hold for other ethnic and/or socioeconomic groups. Finally, these results apply primarily to individuals whose dating relationships have terminated. The predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors after the termination of a marital relationship may be different.

Overall, however, these results support the importance of considering a range of unwanted pursuit behaviors that may lead to and include stalking. The findings also support the importance of obtaining reports from multiple sources. Both perpetrators and victims in this study indicated that attachment processes and love styles are important predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors, but the role of psychological and physical abuse in the production of unwanted pursuit behaviors deserves further edification. Furthermore, understanding how friendship works after the dissolution of a consensual romantic relationship may be important. It seems likely, however, that identification of these predictors of unwanted pursuit behaviors may facilitate efforts to intervene when breaking up is hard to do.

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