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The Dark Side of Relationship Pursuit: From Attraction to Obsession and Stalking

Brian H. Spitzberg, William R. Cupach

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Authors William R. Cupach and Brian H. Spitzberg synthesize the expanding multidisciplinary base of knowledge about obsessive relational intrusion (ORI) and stalking, presenting a comprehensive scholarly consideration of these behaviors. Their inclusive approach is reflected in the breadth of research represented, including social, clinical and forensic psychology, psychiatry, counseling, communication, criminal justice, law enforcement, sociology, social work, threat assessment and management, and family studies. The work also draws upon the multidisciplinary scholarship on social and personal relationships.

The chapters in this volume:
*provide historical and definitional frames for studying unwanted relationship pursuit, and consider the role of such sources as the media, law, and social science research in shaping the contemporary multifaceted and multifarious conceptualizations of stalking;
*elaborate the authors' assumption that much unwanted relationship pursuit owes to complications inherent in the processes of constructing and dismantling relationships, examine the factors that conspire to create slippage between two persons' conceptions of their "shared" relationship, and explore the cultural practices associated with relationship dissolution that tend to reinforce persistence in unwanted pursuit;
*chart the topography of unwanted pursuit, offering a unique and comprehensive synthesis of relevant research bearing on several issues, and a review of the temporal stages and characteristics of stalking;
*consider promising theories and variables for explaining the occurrence of unwanted pursuit; and
*discuss the issues pertinent to threat assessment, managing unwanted pursuit and offering a comprehensive typology of victim consequences of pursuit.

The volume concludes with thoughts about "correcting courtship." Drawing on the interpersonal competence literature, Cupach and Spitzberg speculate on ways in which enhancing relationship management skills could help diminish the incidence and debilitating consequences of ORI and stalking.

With this work, the authors provide a clearer picture of the current state of knowledge about stalking, and in so doing, identify productive paths for scholarly inquiry and ultimately bolster the effectiveness of prevention and intervention efforts. The volume is destined to promote and publicize the multidisciplinary nature of stalking research such that cross-fertilization of interested fields might yield new and better insights. It will be required reading for the cross-disciplinary community of academics and professionals who are committed to understanding and responding to unwanted relationship pursuit and stalking.

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