

**A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTIMATE
PARTNER STALKING: CURRENT ISSUES FOR RISK AND
INTERVENTION**

By

Caroline Flowers

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for the degree of Doctor of Psychology (DPsych) in Forensic Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

Due to the diverse motives and characteristics of stalking perpetrators, stalking behaviour is challenging to identify, address and manage. This thesis intends to drive change and reform forensic practice in the identification and clinical management of intimate partner stalking perpetrators. This thesis provides an original contribution to the literature by seeking to address the following aims:

- 1) To explore whether intimate partner stalking perpetrators possess similar or different characteristics to intimate partner violent perpetrators.
- 2) To develop an explanatory framework for understanding intimate partner stalking behaviour to inform treatment needs and intervention pathways. Greater understanding of the characteristics of this group will ensure appropriate intervention pathways are identified at the early stages of sentencing.
- 3) To provide recommendations for forensic practice and policy by identifying what practitioners need to know to work effectively with this population.

This thesis contributes three original empirical chapters consisting of a structured review exploring the characteristics associated with intimate partner stalking perpetrators, a qualitative study exploring the experiences of the pathway to stalking behaviour from the perspective of the perpetrator, and a qualitative study exploring practitioners' professional perceptions and experiences of working with this group. The thesis identifies that perpetrators are not a homogenous group. Whilst they possess some characteristics similar to intimate partner violent perpetrators, some characteristics are unique to intimate partner stalking perpetrators. The findings illustrate there are likely to be subtypes of perpetrators, requiring a bespoke approach to intervention. The thesis highlights what revisions are required to forensic practice for practitioners to work effectively with this group, concluding that a multi-agency approach is critical to identifying and managing perpetrators.

Keywords: Intimate partner stalking, qualitative approach, intervention, characteristics.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

This introductory chapter sets the scene for the thesis. The chapter presents the rationale for the thesis, and the implications for theory, policy and forensic practice are discussed. The conceptual framework and epistemological position are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the structure, content and research focus of the chapters within the thesis. Appendix B presents the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and reflective summary which narrates key reflections on the interplay between researcher and practitioner in the development of this thesis.

Throughout, references are made to psychological concepts and terminology. Key terms are presented in bold and italics on the first occasion they are referred to within the body of the thesis. A glossary of key terms is provided in Appendix A. The acronym IPS is used throughout to reflect intimate partner stalking. This approach encompasses individuals alleged, suspected or known to have conducted stalking behaviour (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2008a).

Issues pertaining to the definition of intimate partner violence (IPV) and stalking¹ are outlined in chapter one, so for brevity will not be presented here. Specific consideration has been given to the language adopted to describe IPS perpetrators within the thesis. It is the intention of this thesis to avoid the use of ‘offender’ labels, reflecting the findings of this thesis. That is, men fear the stigma of this label and state such language is a barrier to disclosure and addressing stalking behaviour. Indeed, it is argued that stigmatising labels are often used within everyday forensic practice by practitioners without full consideration of the impact (Willis, 2018). It is suggested that references such as ‘offender’ fuses the offending behaviour into the individual’s identity, thus becoming a barrier to rehabilitation attempts (Inzlicht, Tullett, Legault, & Kang, 2011).

¹ A common definition from a clinical perspective which underpins stalking risk assessment is ‘unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them’ (Kropp, et al., 2008a, p.1).

Consequently, the language adopted throughout is reflective of this philosophy through the use of ‘perpetrator’ as opposed to ‘stalkers’. This approach fits with the *desistance* literature and the shift from negative labelling based on previous behaviour and the consequences that labelling may bring (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna, 2012).

Rationale for the thesis

The empirical literature on the clinical management of stalking perpetrators is limited and remains in the early stages of informing forensic practice. This is in stark contrast to what is known about approaches to intervention for other offence types, such as sexual, violent and IPV offending. Commonly, the criminal justice response to IPS is to consider it under the remit of IPV (Melton, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). For individuals receiving a custodial or community sentence, interventions designed to address stalking behaviour is limited (Birch, Ireland, & Ninaus, 2018). In the absence of intervention directly targeting stalking behaviour, interventions designed to address IPV offending are being considered for perpetrators of IPS (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

Indeed, currently in the United Kingdom across Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), men who have engaged in IPS towards a current or former partner are often referred for assessment and considered for intervention on an offending behaviour programme designed for IPV perpetrators (L, Jonah, personal communication, September 2015). Consequently, perpetrators of IPS are included in IPV interventions alongside those who have committed IPV offences who have not engaged in stalking behaviour. Nonetheless, this forensic practice lacks evidence-base. This area is further explored in chapter one, which provides a detailed critical review of the clinical management of stalking perpetrators.

The rationale for this thesis emanated from my experiences and observations as a forensic practitioner working directly with men convicted of IPV offences in a custodial setting. I am a HCPC Registered Forensic Psychologist employed HMPPS, and it is through this role I developed a specialist interest in IPV and stalking behaviour. Throughout this period, I developed experience of risk assessment, intervention and management of IPV perpetrators.

My professional interest in stalking began early in my career in 2009 when I worked with a high-profile stalking case on the Healthy Relationships Programme (HRP). HRP is a high intensity *cognitive-behavioural intervention* designed to target the criminogenic needs (i.e. the dynamic/changeable *risk factors* that can be targeted through intervention) of men who have a history of IPV offending. Working with this client stimulated self-directed reading to develop my knowledge on stalking behaviour. As a forensic practitioner working with this population, I aligned myself with *attachment theory* (Bowlby, 1988), and the work of Dutton (1998) to explain IPV perpetration. Indeed, as I became more curious to understand the origins of stalking behaviour, an attachment framework and the work of Meloy (1996) captured my interest as a coherent theoretical account of stalking. Working with this client stimulated professional debates and conflicting professional judgements as to whether IPV intervention addressed the criminogenic needs of IPS perpetrators. From my own background reading and reflective practice, I questioned whether there were gaps in current forensic practices pertinent to this population.

This lack of understanding, coupled with the anecdotal practice of selecting men with a history of IPS to IPV intervention, warrants further exploration. Consequently, the intention of this thesis is to address this gap in forensic practice with the following aims:

- 1) To drive change and reform forensic practice for professionals in community and custodial settings in the identification, risk assessment, intervention, and management of IPS perpetrators.
- 2) To explore whether IPS perpetrators possess the same characteristics as IPV perpetrators, and to what extent these characteristics are deemed to be homogenous (i.e. similar across the two groups) and which appear to be heterogenous (i.e. predominant for IPS perpetrators).
- 3) To develop an explanatory framework for understanding IPS to inform potential treatment needs and intervention pathways. Greater understanding will ensure perpetrators are identified and selected for appropriate intervention pathways to address their risk and need at the early stages of sentencing.

- 4) To provide recommendations for forensic practice and policy by identifying what practitioners need to know about this population in order to inform approaches to risk assessment, intervention and case management.

As a research-practitioner employed by HMPPS, I am able to access this population and network with professionals across HMPPS and multiple agencies to address the above aims. My view as a forensic practitioner is that there remain gaps in understanding the profile of IPS perpetrators; specifically, the treatment needs of this group and whether these can be addressed on IPV interventions. Through the process of reflective practice, my position as a research-practitioner within my specialist area has facilitated the development of this thesis. Nonetheless, I recognise my professional experience brings an element of bias to the thesis. To address this, I have reflected on how my stance may have influenced the research process and indeed the approaches I have adopted to applying the findings to forensic practice.

Methodological approach

Consideration is now given to the methodological approach underpinning the thesis. To provide context to the independent studies, focus is firstly given to providing an overview of qualitative methods and application of this approach to this thesis.

Qualitative methods

Within the field of forensic psychology, qualitative research has value in exploring the complex interpersonal and organisational dynamics that occur in forensic settings, thus facilitating understanding of unexplored areas that have the potential to inform forensic practice (Sheldon, Davies, & Howells, 2011). Qualitative methods focus on meaning, exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences, their interactions in their social world, and how they attribute meaning to a phenomenon (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindal, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Significantly, the role of the researcher is deemed central to the process of qualitative methods (Parker, 1994). Qualitative research aims to “describe and possibly explain events, but never to predict” (Willig, 2001, p.9). Qualitative data offers the researcher an opportunity to elicit “Richness and holism, with strong potential for revealing complexity” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Historically research within

forensic environments has adopted a *positivist* philosophical standpoint. Such an approach adopts the perspective that reality is known and emphasises objectivity (Sheldon et al., 2011). Qualitative research incorporates a range of *epistemological* standpoints which predominantly focus on obtaining an understanding of human experience with emphasis on subjectivity, interpretation and meaning (Silverman, 2013). Thus, qualitative methodology has the potential to generate in-depth information (Robson, 2002), providing valuable insight into a research area. Within qualitative research validity and reliability are addressed through quality standards implemented by the researcher (Yardley, 2000).

Research design

This thesis adopts a mixed-methods ('within-methods') qualitative research design and structured review method. Whilst these are separate elements within the thesis, through implementing a qualitative method triangulation design, this approach provides a robust, comprehensive and rich understanding of the subject area. A within-method triangulation approach implies that multiple complementary methods within a given single paradigm are used in data collection and analysis (Denzin, 1978). Within qualitative research, triangulation is the process of utilising multiple methods of data to obtain a robust understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Whilst there are five distinct categories of triangulation in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the research design in this thesis utilises two approaches to triangulation. It combines both method triangulation, whereby more than one method of data collection is employed, and data source triangulation, which collects data from different types of participants at different timeframes in the research process. Consequently, this approach brings a broader insight on the phenomenon being explored (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014).

The research design employs more than one type of triangulation method. Method and data source triangulation have been adopted to generate a rich understanding and to enhance insight into the profile of IPS perpetrators. This approach draws on data from three areas: the empirical literature to date, IPS perpetrators, and practitioners how work with them, to elicit a detailed understanding of IPS. It generates qualitative data from two distinct sources: the merging of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012)

and thematic analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2013), and interview data from IPS perpetrators and focus group methodology from professionals who work with them.

Thesis structure and overview

The thesis comprises of six chapters:

Introduction to the thesis: This introductory chapter sets the scene for the thesis, presenting the rationale and implications for theory, and forensic practice, and methodological approach.

Chapter One: This chapter presents the relevant background literature. Consideration is given to the stalking and IPV literature. This approach contextualises the independent research studies presented in the thesis within the relevant literature. Issues pertaining to definition and prevalence are discussed, along with the wider historical legal debates which have been influential in revisions to the legal definition of stalking. Theoretical explanations of stalking are explored, and approaches to clinical management.

Chapter Two: Within this chapter, the structured review is presented. This review aims to systematically identify and present a comprehensive narrative synthesis of the characteristics of IPS perpetrators. The review seeks to inform intervention pathways for this group by investigating whether IPV interventions designed to address IPV are likely to target the criminogenic needs of IPS perpetrators. The review identifies, describes and evaluates the research to date, highlighting that whilst IPS perpetrators possess some similar characteristics, some characteristics are unique to IPS perpetrators. The findings illustrate there are likely to be subtypes of IPS perpetrators, requiring a bespoke approach to intervention. The chapter concludes by outlining the limitations and discusses how the review has sought to enhance academic understanding, and influence recommendations useful for intervention policy, future research and application to forensic practice.

Chapter Three: This chapter presents the first qualitative study. The chapter provides a unique contribution to the stalking literature by capturing the nature and complexity of the experiences of the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator. In doing so, the

author provides the first known qualitative attempt to form a picture of the cognitions of IPS perpetrators. The findings are presented in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks which seek to explain stalking perpetration. The analysis provides a greater understanding of this group, demonstrating how hearing the perspective of the perpetrator has value in informing theory and intervention. The implications for forensic practice, policy and research are outlined.

Chapter Four: In this chapter, the second qualitative study is presented. This study adopts an exploratory focus by employing a focus group methodology to provide insight into professional perceptions and experiences of practitioners who work with perpetrators of IPS on IPV interventions. The study focuses on a unique and unexplored area; examining the perceptions of practitioners alongside the experiences of perpetrators of IPS. The study builds on the stalking perception literature, expanding this into the arena of intervention. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented, and links made to the wider literature. Implications for forensic practice, policy and future research are discussed, and recommendations made to influence how forensic practice need to change to effectively work with this group.

Chapter Five: This chapter presents a synthesis of the overall findings from the three studies presented in the thesis. It assimilates the key findings and an explanatory framework for understanding IPS is proposed. Recommendations for how the practical application of the findings can further advance understanding of IPS are presented. The findings highlight the importance of adopting a multi-agency approach to addressing and managing this group. The overarching messages within this thesis have strong implications for international policymakers and informing guidance on intervention approaches. The author highlights the original contribution of the thesis, illustrating how the methodological approach employed provides a unique understanding of IPS from three distinct areas: the empirical literature to date, perpetrators of IPS, and practitioners, to provide a rich understanding of an under-explored subject area. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and overall limitations are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter builds on the introductory chapter by presenting the relevant background literature. To understand intimate partner stalking (IPS), it is necessary to consider the general stalking and intimate partner violence (IPV) literature. This approach contextualises the independent research studies presented in the thesis within the relevant literature. It is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a robust critical review of all the literature pertaining to IPV and stalking, but rather to selectively illuminate the key debates and relevant literature.

The chapter begins by outlining key definitions employed within the thesis. To provide context, the issue of prevalence of IPV and stalking are discussed. The chapter goes on to present the complexities of definition and the wider historical legal debates which have been influential in revisions to the legal definition of stalking. Theoretical explanations of stalking are then explored. Consideration is subsequently given to the clinical management of stalking perpetrators. In doing so, the author presents an overview of the IPV interventions which were available at the time of undertaking this thesis across Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in the United Kingdom, to highlight interventions considered for IPS perpetrators.

Stalking and intimate partner violence: The issue of definition

Stalking and IPV are two criminal behaviours that come to the attention of the criminal justice system (Melton, 2012). IPV has been recognised as a major societal issue attracting increasing political and academic interest from a range of disciplines (Bloomfield & Dixon, 2015). It is one of the most common categories of interpersonal violence internationally (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). Similarly, the phenomenon of stalking has received increased attention and has been the subject of evolving legislation, research and political interest over the last thirty years (Melton, 2007a; Norris, Huss, & Palarea, 2011).

Defining intimate partner violence (IPV)

The term IPV is often used synonymously with ‘domestic abuse’ or ‘domestic violence’ within the academic literature. Several terms are used interchangeably within the international literature pertaining to IPV². Historically, there has been international debate and a lack of consensus on what behaviours constitute IPV. Subsequently, the lack of a clear definition impacts on consistent terminology employed to describe the complexity of the behaviour within the academic literature and forensic practice (Archer, 2000; Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011).

The current legal definition is based on the terminology pertaining to domestic violence and abuse. Under this definition, IPV is defined as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional. (Strickland & Allen, 2018, p.5).

Intimate partner violence is generally defined as any behaviour within a current intimate relationship or ex-relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. The definition employed by the World Health Organisation (2010) is: “Behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours” (p. 11). This inclusive definition seeks to encompass physical, psychological and sexual abuse. It also captures a range of terminology to describe the ‘intimate partner’ (i.e. legally married, separated, divorced, common-law, dating partner, and other types of intimate partner such as extra-marital affairs). The focus of the thesis is the behaviours perpetrated by males against their current or previous female romantic partners in a current or former relationship. For

² The terms include: ‘domestic violence’, ‘domestic abuse’, ‘intimate partner violence’, ‘intimate partner abuse’, ‘spousal assault’, ‘spousal abuse’, ‘wife assault’, ‘wife abuse’, ‘wife battering’, ‘wife beating’, ‘courtship violence’, ‘dating violence’, ‘partner abuse’, ‘partner violence’, ‘violence against women’, ‘marital violence’, ‘marital abuse’, ‘spousal violence’, and ‘intra-family violence’.

this reason, the definition adopted within the thesis is IPV as this definition encompasses the physical, sexual violence, psychological aggression (including coercive acts) and stalking behaviour by a current or former partner.

Defining stalking behaviour

Historically, the legal, academic and clinical definition of stalking has been the subject of ongoing debate. Stalking has been explored internationally from a diverse range of disciplines. Within each discipline, there is inconsistency in how different disciplines from criminology, psychiatry, psychology, clinical practitioners, legal professionals, policy makers and legal academics define stalking (Fox, Nobles, & Fisher, 2011). This remains a crucial unresolved issue (Owens, 2016).

The terms ‘stalking’ and ‘harassment’ have been used interchangeably and the meanings have caused misunderstanding generally across a range of areas, and particularly so within the legislation (Taylor-Dunn, Bowen, & Gilchrist, 2018). It is suggested that stalking and harassment are not separate behaviours but are patterns of interconnected behaviour conducted by perpetrators which is driven by diverse motivations and functions (James & MacKenzie, 2018). A key distinction between stalking and harassment relates to the fear experienced as a result of victimisation, along with a pattern of behaviour (Dixon & Bowen, 2012). Indeed, Purcell, Pathé, and Mullen, (2004) suggest there is a two-week threshold which marks the point at which harassment turns to a more destructive and persistent pattern of behaviour which becomes stalking. Whilst ‘obsession’ is assumed to be a key factor underpinning and driving stalking behaviour, the function of this is yet to be empirically tested (Birch, Ireland, & Ninaus, 2018; Dixon & Bowen, 2012).

Clinical definitions of stalking

There are several clinical definitions across the literature, each sharing three key features: a pattern of repetitive, unwanted pursuit, harassment or following, a credible explicit or perceived threat, and the experience of fear by the victim (Logan & Walker 2017; Miller, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2004; Sheridan & Roberts, 2011; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

A common definition within the risk assessment literature is: “Unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them”. (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2008a, p.1).

Defining intimate partner stalking

It is acknowledged that there remains a lack of clarity as to a suitable clinical definition of stalking which captures stalking behaviour within the context of a current or former intimate relationship. Across the academic literature, there are an array of terms used to describe IPS³. Four commonly cited terms are ‘obsessional following’ (Meloy, 1998; Meloy & Gothard, 1995); ‘obsessional relational intrusion’ (Spitzberg, Cupach, & Ciceraro, 2010; Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999); ‘obsessional harassment’ (Rosenfeld, 2000); and the ‘rejected stalker’ (Mullen, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999). Whilst these terms capture the essence of stalking in the context of a relationship, the term ‘intimate relationship’ describes both marital and non-marital type romantic relationships (Palarea, Zona, Lane, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1999).

Furthermore, it is recognised stalking within the context of an intimate relationship can occur throughout all stages of the relationship; towards a current intimate partner when the relationship is intact and towards a former intimate partner following the breakdown of the relationship (McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, & Senkans, 2017; Norris et al., 2011). Senkans, McEwan, and Ogloff (2017) refer to post-relationship stalking (PRS) to distinguish between IPV during a relationship and stalking behaviour which occurs following relationship dissolution.

With this in mind, the term ‘IPS’ will be employed throughout the thesis to describe an individual who has engaged in stalking behaviour towards a current intimate partner or ex-partner at any stage in the relationship history.

³ These include: ‘Simple obsessional stalker’, ‘domestic stalker’, ‘relational stalking’, ‘partner stalker’, ‘prior intimate’, ‘ex-intimate stalker’, ‘prior sexual intimate’, ‘postseparation relationship pursuit’ and ‘ex-partner harasser’.

Consequences of stalking

Stalking is described as a widespread social phenomenon which has serious psychological impact on victims (Kropp, Hart, Lyon, & Storey, 2011). It is a crime which instils intimidation and psychological fear (Sheridan, Blaauw, & Davies, 2003). Mullen, Pathé, and Purcell (2009) describe stalking as ‘emotional rape’ and ‘psychological terrorism’ to portray the overwhelming sense of fear, omnipresence, and psychological impact of this type of offence. Stalking is not a single event, and in contrast to other crimes, victims experience multiple stalking episodes (Sheridan, et al., 2003).

Victim studies, employing various methodologies and definitions, highlight the emotional trauma and fear experienced by victims (Lacey, McPherson, Samuel, Powell Sears, & Head, 2013; Taylor-Dunn, Bowen, & Gilchrist, 2017; Thomas, Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2008). In some cases, the behaviour escalates in frequency and severity, culminating in sexual violence, physical violence and homicide (McFarlane et al., 2002; Sheridan & Roberts, 2011).

The prevalence of intimate partner violence and stalking

In the United Kingdom, statistics indicate that one in four women, and one in six men will become a victim of IPV (Home Office, 2010). On average two women are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner each week (Home Office, 2010; Women’s Aid, 2018). These figures are supported by academic research indicating a link between IPV and homicide (Dobash, Dobash, & Medina-Ariza, 2001; McFarlane, Campbell, & Watson, 2002; Monckton Smith, Szymanska, & Haile, 2017; Wilson & Daly, 1992).

Studies on stalking victimisation, utilising varying methodologies and definitions, suggest stalking is a common crime (Logan, Shannon, & Cole, 2007; Sheridan & Roberts, 2011). International studies indicate between one in four to one in six individuals will become a victim of stalking (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) conducted the first national population study of a mixed gender sample

from the United States. The outcome of the survey identified a lifetime prevalence of 8% for women and 2% for men.

In the United Kingdom, research suggests one in five women will experience stalking, with lifetime prevalence rates fluctuating between 12% and 32% for women, and between 4% and 17% among men (Weller, Hope, & Sheridan, 2013). Official statistics from The British Crime Survey (BCS) in England and Wales (2013) indicates there are 1.3 million victims of stalking per year, with 8% of women and 6% of men. This is somewhat lower to the figure provided by Budd, Mattinson, and Myhill, (2000) which indicated a figure of 16% of women and 7% of men were stalked. A more recent figure from The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that 20.9% of women and 9.9% of men have experienced stalking since the age of 16, with 4.9% of women and 2.4% of men reported experiencing stalking (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

The challenges of accessing prevalence rates

IPV has historically been viewed as a ‘sensitive’ and ‘hidden crime’, with many incidents going unreported (Dobash & Dobash, 1984). Whilst there is greater social awareness of IPV, there continues to be challenges capturing a clear picture on prevalence. The broad definition of ‘domestic violence’ is employed within the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Consequently, the figures capture a range of victims and offences falling under the umbrella of domestic violence (i.e. intrafamilial violence and honour-based violence). Estimates are dependent on accurate police reporting and victim disclosure (Strickland, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Similarly, it is difficult to capture a clear estimation of the prevalence of stalking due to varying definitions and methodologies employed (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

A USA study by Breiding et al. (2014) revealed higher rates of 15.2% for women and 5.7% for men, with a UK study highlighting 20.9% for women and 9.9% for men (Office for National Statistics, 2017). These increasing rates are likely to be reflective of evolving research, revisions to the stalking legislation, and increased social awareness.

The challenges of capturing accurate prevalence rates parallels attempts to estimate the prevalence of IPV. This is also hampered by the lack of a clear definition, which likely

reflects the discrepancies found across the studies. Whilst the CSEW captures crimes not reported or recorded by the police, the methodology used brings limitations. Crucially, the figures capture the percentages of victims experiencing stalking, as opposed to the number of incidents experienced. Hence, this approach does not capture repeated victimisation. The survey also employs the legal definition of ‘domestic violence’, thus capturing crimes perpetrated not only by a former or current partner but those classified as ‘other’ family member. Additionally, victims may be unclear what constitutes stalking behaviour and may be influenced by societal myths and stereotypes (McKeon, McEwan, & Luebbers, 2015). The survey may not capture victims involved in severe violent relationships or ongoing victimisation due to fear of disclosure.

Whilst it is recognised both genders can become victims of IPV and stalking, there are notable gender differences identified in the prevalence rates. It is feasible that estimates may reflect cultural bias. Compared to men, women are less likely to be charged with a stalking offence or instil fear in a victim, despite conducting behaviours that are classified as meeting the legal definition of stalking (Meloy & Boyd, 2003; Wigman, 2009). In contrast, research suggests stalking behaviour is a gendered phenomenon. As such, the antecedents, motives and behaviours underpinning stalking are contextually different for men and women (Senkans, et al., 2017).

The legal response to stalking: Key debates

The term ‘stalking’ traditionally described the hunting activities of animals (Mullen et al., 2009). The term originated from the United States in the late 1980s to describe ‘star stalkers’ who were fans obsessively pursuing celebrities (Lowney & Best, 1995). Historically, stalking has been described as ‘the crime of the nineties’ (Sheridan & Davies, 2001). It is considered a new crime compared to other types of crime such as burglary and homicide, and in western countries has only been recognised as a crime within the past 30 years (Brady & Nobles, 2017).

Several influential cases provided the catalyst for stalking becoming a criminal offence in the United States (Anderson, 1993; Davis, 2001; Gilligan, 1992; Perez, 1993). This legislation emanated in response to several consistent failings of victims due to a lack of

legislation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). These cases included the high-profile celebrity case of the television actress Rebecca Schaeffer, who was stalked and murdered by a fan on the 18th July 1989, and the cases of four Californian women stalked by former partners (Guy, 1993; Montesino, 1992). This reaction swiftly resulted in the emergence of anti-stalking laws across the United States, which infiltrated to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and numerous other European countries (Purcell, et al., 2004; Dennison, & Thomson, 2005; Korkodeilou, 2017). At this time, media messages portrayed a sensationalist understanding of stalking, and one which described stalking perpetrators as strangers, with no prior relationship with the victim. Consequently, stalking began to receive academic interest in the late 1990s. The early research originated from the field of psychiatry. These early studies focused on psychiatric case studies of *erotomania* and sexual harassment (Harmon, Rosner, & Owens, 1995; Meloy, 1992; Kurt, 1995; Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Mullen & Pathé, 1994).

Since 1990, anti-stalking laws have encountered numerous revisions internationally (Owens, 2016). From a legal perspective, historically the introduction of anti-stalking laws and legislating stalking has faced challenges, with significant international differences in the legal perspectives and development of anti-stalking legislation.

The Legal response to stalking in the United Kingdom

Prior to the enactment of anti-stalking laws, stalking was not categorised as a specific type of offence. This resulted in perpetrators avoiding detection, unless their behaviour escalated to physical harm, resulting in prosecutions and convictions for other offences. For example, telecommunications offences, malicious communication, public nuisance provisions or IPV offences (Gowland, 2013; Purcell, et al., 2004).

In 1997, the landmark case of *Regina v. Burstow*, and campaigning by victim groups was pivotal in the implementation of legislation to protect victims. A significant factor in this case related to the issue of defining stalking, the intent of the perpetrator, and a failure in recognising victim impact (Lawson-Cruttenden & Hussain 1996). The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 was the first legislation in the United Kingdom to view stalking as a criminal offence (McEwan, Pathé, & Ogloff, 2011). Although the Protection from

Harassment Act 1997 was a significant move forward, there were pitfalls in its ability to effectively address the complex issue of stalking behaviour. A critical debate centred around the issue of what constituted stalking behaviour and a clear definition of stalking. Stalking encompasses a diverse range of behaviours, ranging from behaviours which outwardly appear legal, to life-threatening. For instance, telephone calls, contact through social media, unwanted approaches, loitering, property damage, threats, and violence (McEwan, et al., 2018). Such behaviours could be classified as ‘normal’ courtship behaviours or behavioural responses following a relationship breakdown (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Many of these behaviours may appear harmless acts which are considered legal and appropriate, such as sending flowers and gifts, making telephone calls, sending emails, letters, gifts or texts, frequently passing by or calling unexpectedly at the home or workplace (Fox, et al., 2011). Underpinning the revisions to the anti-stalking laws have been the complexities and blurred boundaries between what behaviours are considered legal and illegal behaviours, and defining what behaviours constitute stalking (Purcell, et al., 2004).

Despite this legislation, it was argued a specific stalking offence was warranted (Woodhouse & Strickland, 2016), as victims were not adequately protected and perpetrators were evading prosecution (Purcell, et al., 2004; Gowland, 2013). The high-profile case of Clare Bernal in September 2005 further compounded this view. Clare Bernal was a 22-year-old woman who was tragically stalked by a former partner and murdered. It is reported that, at the time of the murder, her former partner was on bail after being found guilty of harassing Ms Bernal (Gowland, 2013).

Fifteen years on from the introduction of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, on 25 November 2012, stalking was recognised as a specific criminal offence in England and Wales, with the enactment of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. This was outlined as: “Stalking (section 2A) which is pursuing a course of conduct which amounts to harassment and which also amounts to stalking, and stalking (section 4A) involving fear or violence or serious alarm or distress” (Strickland, 2018, p.3). This legislation attempted to address the weaknesses of the Protection from Harassment Act, by making explicit reference to stalking behaviour (Gowland, 2013).

The identification and prosecution of stalking perpetrators

Despite the emergence of stalking legislation across several western countries, the true prevalence rates are not reflected within the official data indicating a ‘dark figure’ of stalking, and subsequent arrests and convictions (Brady & Nobles, 2017).

According to the Ministry of Justice between 2012 and 2015, 1,975 people were prosecuted under the ‘stalking law’ (S2A PHA Offences (Stalking with fear/alarm/distress); S4A PHA Offences (Stalking involving fear of violence); S4A PHA Offences (Stalking involving serious alarm or distress) the amendments to the Protection from Harassment law and 1273 were convicted. Notably, despite revisions to the stalking legislation, Home Office statistics indicate a reduction in conviction rates from 2016 to 2017. Conviction rates dropped by 2% between 2016 and 2017, with 806 stalkers receiving a sentence, and 258 (32%) given suspended sentences (Suzy Lamplugh Trust⁴, personal communication, 2018).

The Suzy Lamplugh trust suggests these discrepancies continue to indicate that insufficient work is being done to protect stalking victims. Home Office statistics from the CSEW show that of the 10,214 stalking allegations made in England and Wales in the financial year to 2018, only 1,822 resulted in a suspect being charged. This indicates that whilst the number of stalking offences has trebled since 2014, prosecution rates have decreased. It is likely that the increase in recorded stalking offences is due to improvements in police recording and the use of the stalking offence (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, personal communication, 2018). On the 6th January 2017, the Ministry of Justice announced that the maximum custodial sentence for stalking was to be doubled to ten years (Ministry of Justice, 6th January 2017).

In summary, the prevalence of stalking is difficult to determine, and despite revisions to the stalking legislation, the emerging message is that despite higher prevalence rates for

⁴ Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the national personal safety charity. Suzy Lamplugh Trust was launched in 1986 by Paul and Diana Lamplugh after their estate agent daughter Suzy disappeared after she went to meet an unknown client. The charity aims to reduce the risk of violence and aggression through campaigning, education and support (Suzy Lamplugh Website, accessed 2nd March 2018).

stalking, the rate of prosecutions and convictions across England and Wales remains low. Having explored stalking and IPV from a legal perspective, consideration is now given to the clinical management of this group. With this in mind, focus is given to considering the theoretical explanations of stalking and approaches to intervention. In doing so, the rationale for the thesis is outlined and placed within the context of existing literature.

Theoretical explanations of stalking

Theories are conceptual structures which seek to understand a problem and explain the existence and persistence of a phenomenon (Ward, 2014). Theoretical explanations of offending behaviour provide a clear evidence base and underpinning rationale to guide forensic practice in risk assessment, intervention and inform policy. Hence, theoretical frameworks of stalking behaviour provides a conceptual model to understand the function of stalking perpetration and informs the potential criminogenic needs of this population. In the absence of a comprehensive theory to explain stalking behaviour, this leaves a gap in informing the development of intervention approaches for stalking perpetrators.

Stalking behaviour is a complex, heterogeneous phenomenon, with varying motivations and perpetrator characteristics (Pinals, 2007). Whilst a full critique of the various theoretical explanations of stalking is beyond the scope of the thesis, consideration is given to the theoretical models which are present in the existing literature which seek to explain stalking perpetration and stalking victimisation. It is clear from the evidence-base that there is a lack of consensus in understanding and explaining stalking perpetration (Meloy, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). As research emerges, theoretical models which seek to explain stalking behaviour are developing (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012). Several stalking theories have been proposed over the years, each informed by a range of theoretical perspectives drawn from the diverse disciplines of law, sociology, criminology, and psychology to offer explanatory frameworks for conceptualising stalking behaviour (Cupach & Spitzberg 2014; Ravensburg & Miller 2003; Spitzberg & Cupach 2007; White, Kowalski, Lyndon, & Valentine, 2000).

Theories of stalking include: psychodynamic perspective (Meloy, 1998); attachment theory (Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Kienlen, Birmingham, Solberg, O'Regan, & Meloy,

1997; Meloy, 1992; Patton, Nobles & Fox, 2010; Tonin, 2004); evolutionary perspective (Duntley & Buss, 2012); coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007); social learning theory (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011); routine activity theory (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002; Reys, Henson, & Fisher, 2011); self-control theory (Fox, Gover, & Kaukinen, 2009); relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg 2014); self-regulation theory (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004); control balance theory (Tittle, 2018; Nobles & Fox, 2013), and an integrative developmental model of stalking (White & Kowalski, 1998). The above theoretical explanations each seek to explain stalking behaviour in differing ways; attachment styles, gene selection, sociocultural influences, power and control, and patriarchy (Birch, et al., 2018). It should be noted that several theories have also been proposed to explain IPV. Indeed with the exception of relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014) and the integrative developmental model of stalking (White & Kowalski, 1998), the above theoretical models originate from theoretical explanations of IPV, which have been applied to understanding both IPV and stalking behaviour. An overview of the above theoretical frameworks is now presented. It should be noted the principles of each theory can also be applied to understand both IPV and stalking behaviour.

The most established theories have applied existing theoretical frameworks to explain stalking behaviour which occur at the intrapersonal level (i.e., evolutionary, psychodynamic and attachment models). Whilst each of these models focuses on individual experiences, attitudinal factors, motivations and characteristics, they also recognise the interplay between developmental factors and social interactions. The most widely acknowledged theoretical model draws on *attachment theory* (Bowlby, 1969) to explain stalking behaviour. This model proposes that the development of insecure attachment in childhood can be applied to adult romantic attachment, resulting in relationship instability and problematic relationship styles. From a psychodynamic perspective it is proposed that stalking behaviour emerges from a combination of personality characteristics (i.e., pathological narcissism) and attitudinal factors, with rage being the key underpinning emotion driving the behaviour (Meloy, 1998). Under this model, it is postulated that attachment deficits foster relationship styles which are based on emotional dependency, extreme sexual attraction, obsessive thinking, emotional instability, possessiveness, and jealousy. In response to relationship problems, McCann (2001) describes how perpetrators resort to coercive control as an

attempt to control their environment. In contrast, an evolutionary perspective postulates how hunting is a basic human instinct, seeing the pursuit of women evolving from within-gender competition to solve mating problems (Duntley & Buss, 2002). Alternatively, relational goal pursuit (RGP) theory proposes an interactionist theory which seeks to provide a theoretical lens for describing how the desire for relationship pursuit becomes excessive and obsessive. RGP theory is underpinned by the principles of self-regulation theory (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004) which adopts a social psychological perspective to explain the obsessive behaviour underpinning stalking behaviour. The theory suggests that individuals regulate their behaviour to achieve their goals. Hence, RGP theory adopts the premise that life goals (i.e., for status or relationships) represents positive outcomes, and are interlinked with the desire for happiness and self-worth (i.e., higher order goals). When the relational goal becomes blocked, the pursuit of the goal becomes priority, intensifying the desire to attain the relationship as opposed to abandoning the goal due to fear of failure. When faced with rejection and the recognition that attainment of a primary life goal cannot be fulfilled, this creates a negative emotional reaction, which triggers thinking styles characterised by rumination and rationalisation. Faced with the prospect that their goal remains unsatisfied, this generates a cycle of negative emotional response which drives persistent pursuit and stalking behaviour (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

Several theoretical models seek to explain both stalking perpetration and stalking victimisation. Social learning theory suggests stalking behaviour and stalking victimisation is a learned phenomenon. This theory proposes observing and modelling unhealthy adult relationships during childhood, associating with peers who hold pro-stalking attitudes, along with wider societal influences, cultural scripts and myths on perceptions of relationships, plays a central role in stalking perpetration (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011). Alternatively, coercive control theory proposes an explanation for stalking behaviour which is rooted in the IPV literature. Coercive control is a term developed by Stark (2009) to explain how perpetrators use a pattern of behaviour and tactics to dominate a partner through violence, isolation, intimidation and subordination. This theory suggests that stalking is the result of male-dominance and the need for a sense of entitlement to control a partner, with stalking perpetration seen as a further method to maintain dominance and control. A further theory is control balance theory (Tittle, 2018; Nobles & Fox, 2013), which is based on the premise that individuals exert control over various domains of their lives (i.e., work, relationships,

and performance). It is suggested individuals live their lives in either a state of control surplus, control equilibrium, or control deficit. It is the perception of control imbalance (i.e., control deficit) which triggers stalking perpetration, whereby in response to life events or rejection, this culminates in attempts by the individual to regain control. Similarly, stalking victimisation is explained on the basis of control imbalance, and the notion that a victim may inadvertently appear attractive to a stalking perpetrator if they present as weak, submissive or vulnerable as a result of a control deficit. Routine activity theory (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002) and self-control theory (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004) both provide a theoretical explanation of stalking behaviour which centres on victimisation, and why specific individuals become at increased risk of victimisation.

Whilst the above single faceted theoretical frameworks provide value in understanding stalking perpetration and victimisation, the integrative developmental model of stalking proposed by White and Kowalski (1998) provides a multi-factorial approach to understanding stalking behaviour. This model postulates that stalking behaviour is the result of an interaction between biological, environmental, and psychological factors. The model has parallels to the nested ecological model of IPV, which provides an integrated framework to explain how IPV can be explained by the interaction and interplay of multiple factors; personal, situational and sociocultural factors between an individual and their social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dutton, 1985; Heise 1998). This model of IPV is outlined in further detail later in this chapter. Like the nested ecological model of IPV, White and Kowalski's (1998) integrative developmental model of stalking seeks to provide an integrative framework which draws on the principles of existing theoretical perspectives to explain how stalking behaviour can be explained by the interaction and interplay of personal, situational and sociocultural factors. Consequently, this model proposes stalking is a gendered phenomenon, and the way in which stalking behaviour manifests will be different for men and women.

In summary, the above theoretical models for explaining stalking behaviour provide partial but also complementary explanations. Nonetheless, limited studies have empirically tested these theories (Nobles & Fox, 2013), and each has limitations. Whilst RGP theory has sought to provide a detailed original explanation of stalking behaviour, it is noted that most theories demonstrate limited scope to fully explain stalking behaviour in-depth and have

been modified through applying existing theoretical models to explain stalking behaviour. Hence, it is likely that a combination of the above factors across the theoretical models is likely to explain the occurrence and maintenance of stalking behaviour. Consideration is now given to the classification of stalking behaviour, and how these typologies have further sought to explain the heterogeneity of stalking perpetrators.

Classifying stalking behaviour

One approach to reducing the heterogeneity of perpetrators is to break them down into descriptive classifications. Classification develops an understanding of a psychological phenomenon and is central to developing theoretical explanations (Knight & Prentky, 1990). Throughout the empirical literature, researchers have endeavoured to categorise different criminal acts (i.e. specific criminal behaviours) into different offence types (i.e., IPV or arson) and classify these into clusters of homogenous groups based on characteristics, motivations and behaviour. Typologies have been applied to several offence types. For example, sexual offending (Finkelhor, 1984; Knight & Prentky, 1990), violent offending (Henderson, 1982), arson (Canter & Fritzon 1998), and IPV offending (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994).

Whilst a full critique of the typology literature is beyond the scope of this thesis, to provide context to the independent studies, consideration is now given to presenting an overview of the typology literature. Within this section, the typologies which guide clinicians working with perpetrators of IPS are critically evaluated. In doing so, similarities and differences are drawn between those who engage in IPS and IPV. From a review of this literature, it is evident that IPV typologies and stalking typologies closely overlap in their constructs.

Stalking typologies

Since the emergence of stalking legislation in the 1990s, several typologies have been developed in an attempt to classify stalking behaviour to aid the clinical management of this population. There are numerous widely cited and influential stalking typologies which have been proposed based on the psychological characteristics of the perpetrator, underpinning

motivations, and stalker-victim relationship (Holmes, 2001; Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006; Mullen, et al., 1999; Sheridan & Boon, 2002; Wright, et al., 1996; Zona, Sharma & Lane, 1993). Consideration is given to those typologies which are considered the most influential and widely known stalking typologies developed to date: Zona et al. stalker-victim types, Mullen, et al. (1999) five stalker typology system, and the RECON stalker typology (Mohandie et al., 2006).

The earliest typology of stalking behaviour dates back to Zona et al. (1993), which was the first to systematically study the role of violence in stalking perpetration. Under this typology stalking perpetrators are classified in three broad categories: simple obsessional, love obsessional, and erotomanics. For the simple obsessional group, the victim and perpetrator are previously known to each other, and have had an established intimate or non-intimate relationship. This was found to be the largest category, comprising men with a history of personality disorder and substance misuse. The stalking behaviour was motivated by rejection or retaliation against perceived injustices from across the domains of relationships, work or other areas of life. Within the love obsessional group, the victim and perpetrator are strangers. This category comprises perpetrators who presented with a mental disorder and who misinterpreted contact or interaction as an affirmation of a relationship. The final category is erotomania, where there is no prior relationship between the victim and perpetrator, but the perpetrator possesses a delusional belief that the victim is passionately in love with them.

An alternative typology was later proposed by Mohandie et al. (2006), who developed the RECON (relationship and context-based) typology of stalking perpetration. This classification system distinguishes stalking perpetrators into four groups on the basis of the prior relationship between perpetrator and victim, and the context in which stalking behaviour takes place. Further divisions are then given based on two broad categories (i.e., Type I where there is evidence of a previous relationship between the victim and perpetrator, which is then further categorised into those who have had an intimate relationship and those deemed co-workers, friends or acquaintances, and Type II where there is no prior relationship, or limited contact between perpetrator and victim such as stranger or public figure).

The most commonly used and recognised classification system is Mullen, et al. (1999) five stalker typology system. This typology is typically cited within the academic literature and has been applied within clinical practice across different settings (MacKenzie et al., 2009; McEwan, Mullen, & MacKenzie, 2009). It is the underpinning framework for the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP) clinical assessment tool⁵ (MacKenzie et al., 2009). Within this classification system, five different stalking subtypes have been identified based on different underpinning motives, personality traits, and relationship with the victim. Typologies include (1) The rejected stalker (i.e., this subtype engages in stalking behaviour towards a former partner in response to rejection and relationship breakdown, period of separation or termination of the relationship, and is driven by a combination of a desire for reconciliation and revenge). (2) The intimacy seeker (i.e., this subtype does not have a prior relationship history with the victim but desire a relationship and pursue the victim out of the belief the victim is their true love). (3) The incompetent suitor (i.e., this subtype pursues victims who are strangers or acquaintances with stalking behaviour emerging in the context of loneliness or lust). The behaviour is often motivated by the desire to establish contact with the hope that this will develop into a friendship or sexual relationship. (4) The restful stalker (i.e., this subtype captures those perpetrators where the stalking behaviour emerges in response to feeling exposed to perceived injustice or humiliation). The behaviour is triggered by the desire for revenge. (5) The predatory stalker (i.e., this subtype is motivated by sexual interests, with potential victims being strangers).

Whilst the typology literature has value in informing risk assessment and intervention, the literature is continuing to evolve, and a standardised typology has yet to be developed. Nonetheless, there are several common concepts underpinning the typologies; victim-perpetrator relationship, motive and nature of the behaviour. Embedding these concepts into a robust typology system is challenging due to the issue of definition, coupled with the presenting complexities of this group and diversity of victim groups. As more studies on stalking have emerged and theories developed, this has highlighted stalking perpetrators are not a homogenous group, with variations in the individual motivations, life histories, demographic backgrounds, and psychological characteristics (Davis & Chipman, 1997;

⁵ The SRP is a structured professional judgement tool designed to assist clinicians assess and manage stalking recidivism, and predict violence perpetration (Mackenzie, James, McEwan, Mullen, & Ogloff, 2010).

Mullen et al., 2009; Pathé, 2017; Pinals, 2007; Nijdam-Jones, Rosenfeld, Gerbrandij, Quick, & Galietta, 2018).

It is noteworthy that the early research on stalking typologies was drawn predominantly from forensic or clinical samples presenting with major mental illness and personality disorder (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Indeed, the Mullen et al. (1999) typology system was developed from a population undergoing forensic mental health treatment. Consequently, sampling is not illustrative of the broad spectrum of cases, and is drawn from small sample sizes across limited countries (Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2000). As such, the application to IPS remains speculative and may not account for the diversity found in this subtype. For example, there may be subtypes who do not present with major mental illness or personality disorder, or indeed subtypes who may not have come to the attention of the criminal justice system. Consequently, those who engage in stalking behaviour may fit into more than one typology with multiple and fluctuating drivers underpinning the behaviour (Mohandie, et al., 2006).

Classification systems are central to building theoretical understanding and guiding intervention. Nonetheless, it is recognised that when seeking to explain IPS it could be argued that it is somewhat speculative. Consequently, IPV typologies may provide a useful insight into this group as there may be overlapping constructs and parallels between IPV offending and IPS which the existing stalking typologies do not account for. Indeed, the emerging empirical literature indicates a significant connection between IPS and IPV offending (Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Logan, 2010).

Several typologies have been developed to identify groups of IPV perpetrators (Wangmann 2011). Two influential models are Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart's Developmental Model of Batterer Subtypes (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994), and Dutton's (1995) Borderline Personality Organization (BPO). Both these models consider the role of attachment theory, early childhood experiences, genetic factors, family and peer experiences, and psychological characteristics in how these factors may increase susceptibility to committing IPV. These typologies have been theoretically and empirically identified, highlighting that IPV perpetrators are not a homogenous group (Dixon & Browne, 2003; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). The Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994)

typology of IPV is most widely used within forensic practice, and proposes three subtypes: Family only (least severe partner violence, limited violence outside of the home, low criminal behaviour, limited psychopathology); borderline-dysphoric (moderate to severe partner violence, some violence outside of the home, psychological distress with borderline personality features and substance abuse problems); and generally violent-antisocial (moderate to severe partner violence, high extra-familial violence and criminal behaviour, antisocial personality features and substance abuse problems). A fourth subtype was included following empirical validation: Low-level antisocial (less violence, but more antisocial personality features) (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2003).

In summary, the development of a robust typology of IPS would illuminate insight into how and why perpetrators engage in stalking behaviour. Furthermore, it has the potential to bring significant benefits not only for the field of academia, and legal professionals, but would also bring value for the clinical management of this group and enhance approaches to risk management. With this in mind, focus is now given to the clinical management of this group and current intervention approaches for IPS perpetrators in the United Kingdom.

The clinical management of stalking perpetrators

Practitioners across various agencies are required to evaluate the risks posed by stalking perpetrators (Foellmi, Rosenfeld, & Galietta, 2016). A detailed critical review of the history of risk assessment and the risk assessment of stalking perpetrators is beyond the remit of this thesis. However, to provide context, the following section provides a brief overview of current approaches to risk assessment.

Approaches to risk assessment

For interventions to be effective they must target the factors known to be linked to offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2007) has been influential in guiding perpetrator assessment and intervention, significantly shaping approaches to the clinical management of sexual, violent and IPV offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). The model states intervention

should be directed by empirical findings and based on three principles shown to be effective in reducing recidivism based on assessment of risk, need and responsivity, to enhance and strengthen effective interventions (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; 2010).

In line with the Risk-Need-Responsivity model, consideration for intervention should be based on an assessment of further risk of stalking behaviour including risk of threat or physical violence (Purcell & McEwan, 2018). Central to effective management is a robust assessment of the static and dynamic risk factors that played a role in the offence pathway. This ensures that treatment needs are identified and can be targeted in intervention via an appropriate intervention pathway, and that post-treatment recommendations can be made regarding future risk management (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

The most effective risk assessment tools are those which are designed to assess factors known to be associated with offending for specific offence types (Singh, Grann, & Fazel, 2011). Given the diverse nature of stalking behaviour, the risk factors associated with different stalking outcomes are not adequately captured by broader violence risk assessment (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2002). To address this, two evidence-based stalking risk assessment tools have been developed; the Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM; Kropp et al., 2008a) and the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP; MacKenzie et al., 2009). The SRP and SAM are structured professional judgement tools designed to assist clinicians assess and manage stalking recidivism, and predict violence perpetration (McEwan et al. 2018). Both can be used by practitioners to aid decision making and prioritise cases for intervention (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

Approaches to intervention

Approaches to intervention have been considered from the disciplines of forensic psychiatry and psychology and remain in the early stages of informing practice on the clinical management of men with a history of stalking behaviour. In contrast to other offence types, there is a paucity of research which has been influential in guiding intervention for those with a history of stalking behaviour. This is in stark contrast to what is known about approaches to intervention for men convicted of sexual, violent and IPV offending (Purcell & McEwan, 2018). Within forensic practice and across the empirical literature, there is

doubt as to the effectiveness and form of methods and approaches used to intervene with this population (Boon & Sheridan, 2002; MacKenzie & James, 2011; Meloy, 1997; Sheridan & Davies, 2001).

In the absence of research advancing intervention, there are no clear guidelines to inform practitioners on intervention pathways (Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2000). As such, intervention approaches are driven by ‘best practice’ about what is currently known about this group (Purcell & McEwan, 2018). These guidelines come from the clinical work and publications of ‘experts’ in the field, or alternatively intervention approaches from other forensic and clinical populations; specifically, the management of IPV perpetrators (Kropp, et al., 2002; MacKenzie & James, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2000; Rosenfeld, Fava, & Galietta, 2009; Westrup, 1998).

Several approaches to intervention have been documented in the literature, ranging from psychoeducational work aimed at providing awareness of stalking behaviour, psychiatric approaches through the administration of pharmacological treatments, to psychological interventions which adopt cognitive-behavioural or *psychodynamic* approaches. MacKenzie and James (2011) highlight that in some cases, providing psychoeducational work on the impact and illegal nature may cease stalking behaviour in the early stages. However, it is argued most cases require robust psychiatric and psychological approaches to address the persistent and recurrent nature of stalking behaviour. With this in mind, focus is now given to those perpetrators who encounter the criminal justice system and the issues of identification, prosecution, and approaches to intervention for IPS perpetrators.

The identification and prosecution of stalkers: Implications for forensic practice

The emergence and subsequent revisions to the anti-stalking legislation has seen more stalking perpetrators coming to the attention of the criminal justice system and mental health services. In response, this has seen attempts to prevent, identify, and intervene with individuals with a history of stalking behaviour (Kropp, et al., 2011). Indeed, The Home Office Consultation on Stalking (2011) saw the emergence of the National Stalking Clinic in 2012, which aims to provide a specialist service for assessment, consultancy and intervention for stalking perpetrators.

Given the issues outlined earlier in the chapter regarding legislation and the identification of stalking behaviour, obtaining an accurate figure for men who have engaged in stalking behaviour towards a current or former partner is challenging. Those within a custodial setting may not have been charged for a stalking offence, but an offence following escalation of the behaviour to physical violence or homicide (Miller, 2012). Consequently, it is argued that the current stalking legislation does not yet appear to be filtering into forensic practice, raising important implications for the clinical management of individuals who have engaged in stalking behaviour who come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

Intimate partner stalking: Current forensic practice

As discussed in the introductory chapter, commonly, the criminal justice response to IPS is to consider it under the remit of IPV (Melton, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). For individuals receiving a custodial or community sentence, interventions designed to address stalking behaviour is limited (Birch et al., 2018). In the absence of an intervention directly targeting stalking behaviour, interventions designed to target the risk and needs of men convicted of IPV offences are being applied to men with a history of stalking behaviour (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

Indeed, currently in the United Kingdom (UK) men who have engaged in IPS towards a current or former partner across Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are often referred for assessment and intervention on an offending behaviour programme which targets the risk factors for IPV (L. Jonah, personal communication, September 2015). Consequently, men with a history of IPS are included in IPV interventions alongside those who have committed IPV offences who have not engaged in stalking behaviour.

Interventions for IPV perpetrators: An overview

Given that current forensic practice in the UK is to consider IPS under the umbrella of IPV, focus is now given to providing an overview of interventions that this group are likely to access. A critical review of IPV interventions is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, this sets the scene for understanding the wider debates regarding the

overarching aims and rationale of the thesis. In exploring these interventions consideration is given to underpinning theoretical explanations of IPV.

The IPV interventions across HMPPS are delivered across both community and custodial settings (L. Jonah, personal communication, September 2015). They adopt a cognitive-behavioural approach and are delivered in a group format (Bowen, 2011). The interventions are accredited by the *Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice panel (CSAAP)* (Bloomfield & Dixon, 2015), and are designed to address the criminogenic needs of IPV perpetrators (identified following an extensive literature review). Table 1 presents an overview of the IPV interventions across HMPPS, outlining each intervention and corresponding treatment targets. This information sets the scene for placing the later independent studies within the thesis into context.

Table 1

Interventions for IPV Offending across HMPPS

Intervention	Intensity	Treatment Targets
Healthy Relationships Programme (HRP) - Adult male perpetrators - Aims: Eliminate IPV against a female partner, including family violence. - In treatment explore cultural issues and life factors to understand factors that led to violence. - Develop skills to manage relationships and stop violence	High	- Motivational enhancement, awareness and education - Thinking skills – thoughts linked to abuse - Emotional management - Social skills - Parenting - Relapse prevention and risk management - Understanding healthy relationships
Kaizen - Unified approach: focus on needs of participants rather than offence type - Inclusive and responsive approach	High	- Positive relationships - Managing life's problems: - Healthy thinking - Healthy sexual interests - Sense of purpose
Building Better Relationships Programme (BBR) - Adult male perpetrators - Delivered across prison and probation areas - Holistic approach to treatment	Moderate to high	- Awareness and development of thinking - Emotional Awareness & Self-Management - Understanding relationships - Lifestyle - Self-awareness - Motivation, engagement and protective factors

Note: At the time of undertaking this research HRP was delivered across HMPPS. In 2017, HRP was replaced by Kaizen and BBR.

The effectiveness of IPV interventions at reducing recidivism has demonstrated significant but small effects, and inconsistent findings (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004; Haggard, Freij, Danielsson, Wenander, & Langstrom, 2017). Subsequently, IPV interventions underwent revision (Bloomfield & Dixon, 2015), and moved away from the influences of the *feminist model* and the *power and control hypothesis* to explain IPV. This perspective places the role of patriarchal attitudes as a central risk factor for IPV.

A criticism of this approach to IPV intervention was these interventions rejected the principles of the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model (Andrew et al., 1990) through seeking solely to educate perpetrators on patriarchy to explain IPV, and excluded other factors (Walton, Ramsay, Cunningham, & Henfrey, 2017). As the academic literature expanded, it became evident that multi-factorial approaches were pertinent to the explanation of IPV (Dutton, 1995, 2006; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004) with greater emphasis placed on a gender inclusive perspective of IPV, which considers a broader interaction of factors (Bell & Naugle, 2008; Dixon & Graham-Kevan, 2011; Dutton & Corvo, 2006; Hamel, 2009).

One influential multi-factorial approach was proposed by Dutton (1995, 2006); The nested-ecological framework theory (see figure 1). This model provides an integrated framework to explain how IPV can be explained by the interaction and interplay of multiple factors; personal, situational and sociocultural factors between an individual and their social environment (Bowen, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Heise 1998). The model proposes that to fully address the complexity of IPV, consideration should be given to how each plays a role in perpetuating violence and how all these factors should be addressed through intervention.

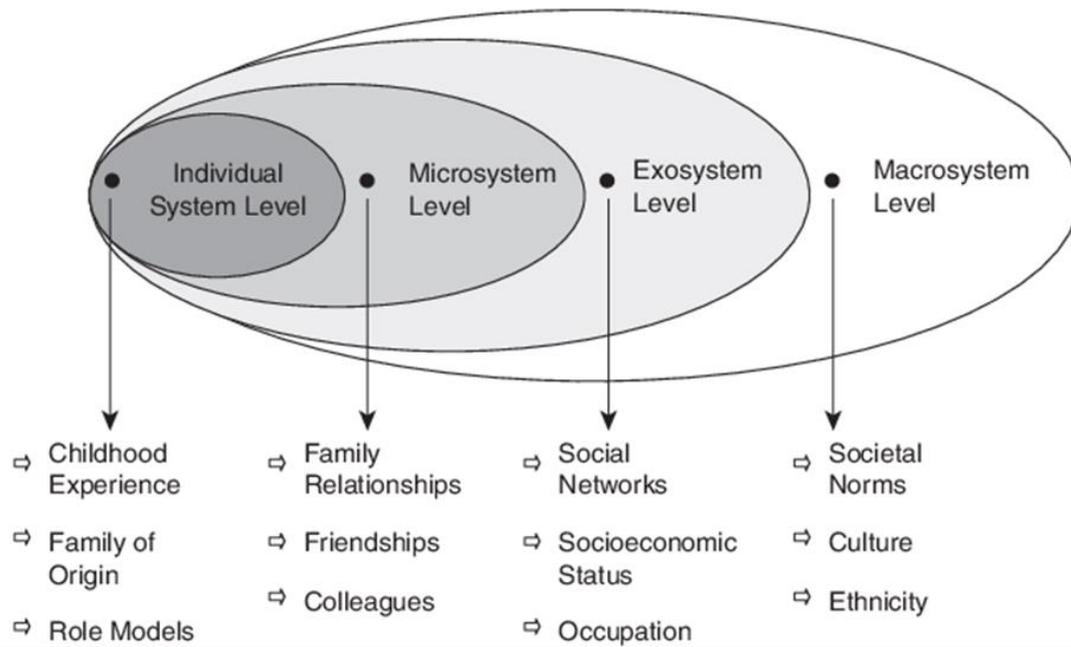


Figure 1: Nested ecological model (Adapted from NOMS, BBR Theory Manual, 2015)

More recently, the *General Aggression Model* (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) has sought to explain IPV perpetration (DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011). The GAM underpins one of the cognitive-behavioural IPV intervention in the UK; BBR. This intervention was introduced across HMPPS in 2013 in response to the theoretical debate outlined above. BBR targets the needs of moderate to high risk adult males with a history of IPV both in a community and custodial setting and is underpinned by the nested-ecological framework theory (NOMS, BBR Theory Manual, 2015).

The theoretical underpinnings of this intervention suggest that IPV is driven by the complex interaction between biological, psychological, social and contextual factors (Dutton & Corvo, 2006). As such, IPV perpetrators are not a homogenous group and will have their own distinct treatment needs, which will be unique for each individual (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This perspective supports the IPV typology literature (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2000). Under this premise, men with a history of IPS are likely to have different treatment needs to those who have committed IPV offences.

However, there is a growing body of research to suggest men who have committed IPV offences are not different to other groups of men who commit violent offences (Felson &

Lane, 2010). Under this hypothesis, IPS perpetrators will present with the same treatment needs as IPV perpetrators and other offence types.

In November 2016, Intervention Services implemented a new intervention; Kaizen. This intervention is designed to meet the criminogenic needs of adult males who are high or very high risk with convictions for sexual offences, generally violent offences, or IPV offences (Walton et al., 2017). In 2017, Kaizen was rolled out across HMPPS and replaced HRP in custodial settings.

In light of the above changes, current intervention pathways for IPV perpetrators who engage in stalking behaviour will be considered for BBR or Kaizen dependent upon risk and need. Nonetheless, this current forensic practice and anecdotal approach to intervention assumes IPS perpetrators share the same criminogenic needs as IPV perpetrators or other offence types. Given that effectiveness of IPV interventions is debatable (Bullock, Sarre, Tarling, & Wilkinson, 2010), coupled with a lack of clarity on intervention approaches for men with a history of IPS, it is questionable as to what extent current IPV interventions can target the needs of this group.

Issues for forensic practice and academic research: Gaps in understanding intimate partner stalking

Practitioners responsible for the risk assessment and intervention of IPS perpetrators encounter several ethical and clinical issues relating to the identification, risk assessment, and intervention pathways for this group. Within my own forensic practice, several debates and forensic questions underpinned my decision making and are applicable to wider forensic practice and practitioners who work with IPS perpetrators. These critical interconnected debates are now explored and are structured to reflect my experiences as a practitioner and the broader relevance to the field.

Identifying stalking behaviour

Practitioners responsible for risk assessment and intervention of men who have committed an IPV offence will encounter men with a history of IPV who do not stalk, and

men who have committed IPS. As aforementioned, despite revisions to the stalking legislation, men with a history of IPS are not often charged for a stalking offence, rather an offence linked to physical and/or sexual violence or homicide (Miller, 2012). Within my own forensic practice, it was evident that an increasing number of men convicted of an offence related to IPV had displayed stalking type behaviours in their offence pathway but did not have a conviction. This creates challenges for practitioners in identifying stalking behaviour, and ultimately the identification of stalking behaviour becomes a matter of subjectivity and reliance on self-disclosure or clear reporting of stalking behaviour with police and court documents. The implications are that stalking behaviours can be missed as a central factor in the offence pathway by practitioners, an issue highlighted by Fox et al. (2011). Consequently, forensic practitioners face challenges in identifying this group, highlighting that the stalking legislation does not yet appear to be filtering into the practices of practitioners responsible for the clinical management of this group.

This raises several questions for the wider forensic field: 1) How and to what extent are forensic practitioners identifying stalking behaviour? 2) What are the wider implications if stalking behaviour is not identified nor addressed? and 3) What changes are needed to reform stalking legislation to address these concerns? Should cases go undetected, and the drivers/motivations for stalking behaviour go unaddressed, the implications of this practice can be fatal. The high-profile cases and legal implications discussed earlier in the chapter highlight the importance of reforming forensic practice, so that there are specialist services and informed intervention provisions to provide a more robust approach to the clinical management IPS perpetrators.

Exploring the connection between IPV and IPS: Implications for interventions

In cases where IPS is identified in the offence pathway, forensic practitioners have to make ethically defensible decisions regarding intervention. Without clarification on viable intervention pathways for this group, it remains problematic for practitioners to accurately assess and offer intervention for this group. Consequently, practitioners are likely to continue to consider IPV interventions or offer suggestions on intervention pathways based largely on their clinical judgement and which is not underpinned by an evidence base.

Critical questions that underpin practitioners' clinical management of this group centre on the debate as to whether stalking behaviour towards a current or former partner should be regarded as a variant or continuation of IPV (Logan & Walker, 2009) or a separate form of abusive behaviour and distinct type of offending (Hall, Walters, & Basile, 2012). Given the current forensic practice across HMPPS considers men with a history IPS perpetrators for IPV interventions, this practice adopts the premise that stalking behaviour is conceptualised as a continuation and extension of IPV and forms the cycle of IPV that continues following the dissolution of the relationship (Douglas & Dutton, 2001).

There is a lack of clarity on the characteristics and risk factors for IPS and whether these are the same or different to men convicted of IPV offending who do not stalk. Following on from the above debate, it is argued that the behaviours and characteristics underpinning coercive control and stalking behaviour share similarities, in that those who use coercive control are likely to engage in surveillance tactics (Stark, 2009). Indeed, in March 2013, the Home Office extended the definition of IPV to include the concept of coercive control, leading to coercive control being legislated in 2015. With this in mind, questions remain unaddressed for forensic practitioners as to what extent does stalking behaviour fit under the umbrella of coercive control and how do current IPV interventions address this behaviour?

Furthermore, whilst cognitive characteristics have been extensively explored in other offence types (Beech, Fisher, & Ward, 2005; Gilchrist, 2009; Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Polaschek & Ward, 2002; Ward & Keenan, 1999), the cognitive characteristics of IPS perpetrators remains an unexplored area. Consequently, this leaves gaps in understanding this group, particular given the knowledge of cognitive characteristics of specific offending groups are valuable in assisting the development of formulation models and informing criminogenic needs which can be targeted through the development and delivery of intervention (Ward, 2000).

Implications for intervention pathways

Understanding more about what forensic practitioners need to know about this group would provide valuable knowledge in understanding and adapting existing IPV interventions or developing new interventions to address IPS. In line with the Risk-Need-Responsivity

model, insight into the characteristics of IPS perpetrators as outlined above would inform how these can be targeted in intervention via an appropriate intervention pathway and aid post intervention recommendations to assist with case management (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

As discussed, practitioners lack understanding of what methods and approaches would be effective for working with this group. The current IPV interventions across HMPPS adopt a cognitive-behavioural approach. These interventions use a range of techniques to target the factors deemed to play a role in the offending behaviour. These include: (1) A strengths-based approaches to intervention which draws on the *Good Lives Model* (GLM; Ward & Brown, 2004) from the literature on working with men convicted of sexual offending; (2) The principles of solution focused therapy (i.e., greater emphasis is placed on solutions rather than problems) (Lee, Sebold, & Uken, 2003); and (3) Interventions employ Narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) which examines an individual's relationship with a "problem identity" or set of problems that are experienced as dominating important aspects of their life (NOMS, BBR Theory Manual, 2015).

What is known to date is that a CBT approach is deemed applicable for this group (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2009). Indeed, whilst it is recognised that perpetrators of stalking are not a homogenous group there is an assumption that the internal drivers underpinning stalking behaviour apply to all cases and typologies regardless of the presence of a mental disorder (Badcock, 2002). It is suggested a CBT approach which draws on re-evaluating distorted cognitions and developing alternative responses is suitable for this group. The only published empirical research to date investigated the efficacy of intervention adopted Dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) (Rosenfeld et al., 2007). The rationale for employing DBT was based on the literature to date highlighting the high prevalence of personality disorder in stalking cases coupled with evidence that DBT had demonstrated successful outcomes with other offending populations. Whilst the authors of this study presented a range of limitations, the findings support preliminary value in adopting this approach for those individuals with a history of stalking behaviour (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

As such, forensic practitioners have some evidence-base to support a CBT approach which underpins the IPV interventions. Nonetheless, there remains a lack of clarity on what

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER STALKING

the characteristics and risk factors are for this group and how they can be address on current IPV interventions or whether an alternative pathway should be considered.

CHAPTER TWO:
**IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH INTIMATE
PARTNER STALKING: A MIXED METHODS STRUCTURED REVIEW AND
NARRATIVE SYNTHESIS**

Abstract

Background: The empirical research on the clinical management of intimate partner stalking perpetrators remains in the early stages of informing forensic practice. This study presents the first known structured review which seeks to inform intervention pathways for this group by investigating whether interventions designed for intimate partner violence perpetrators are likely to target the criminogenic needs of this group. The aims of the review were: (1) To explore what characteristics are associated with intimate partner stalking; and, (2) To establish what characteristics differentiate between intimate partner stalking perpetrators and men who have committed intimate partner violence offences. The absence of reviews focusing specifically on intimate partner stalking behaviour leaves a gap in the development of evidence-based intervention which the current review aims to address. The findings of the review seek to enhance academic understanding, and influence recommendations useful for intervention policy decision-making and application to forensic practice.

Method: The review utilised a systematic review and narrative synthesis approach of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines. Electronic literature searches across several databases (e.g. PsychINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, Applied social science index, and Criminal justice abstracts) were conducted, covering the years 1989 to February 2018. In May 2018, additional hand-searches were undertaken, and ‘expert’ opinion sought for additional studies to ensure saturation of the literature was obtained to address the review question. Studies were selected in line with predetermined inclusion/exclusion criteria. Data pertaining to the studies were extracted and tabulated, with studies assessed for methodological quality.

Results: The search strategy identified a total of 2,674 papers in total. Twenty-two studies met the inclusion criteria and were selected for the review. The included studies were of moderate to high quality; ranging from 39% and 85% on quality appraisal. All studies

employed an observational research design; eighteen quantitative, two qualitative, and two mixed methods design studies were included. Thematic analysis was conducted, and a narrative synthesis identified the following overarching themes which were present and connected the studies: (1) Perpetrator demographics; (2) Relationship history and dynamics; (3) Background factors; and (4) Nature of stalking.

Conclusion: Intimate partner stalking perpetrators presented with some similar characteristics to intimate partner violence perpetrators (i.e. presence of personality disorder, substance misuse, history of abuse, prior criminal history, and problems with employment), with some characteristics (i.e. age, type of personality disorder, high levels of psychological violence, and behavioural patterns) deemed more prevalent to intimate partner stalking perpetrators. The findings illustrate there are likely to be subtypes of intimate partner stalking perpetrators, requiring a bespoke approach to intervention. Limitations are presented and recommendations made for future research. The wider implications for forensic practice in informing interventions are discussed.

Keywords: Intimate partner stalking, characteristics, structured review, mixed methods, narrative synthesis.

Introduction

In the last thirty years the phenomenon of stalking⁶ has attracted not only increasing academic and clinical attention, but also considerable police and political interest (Norris, Huss, & Palarea, 2011; Melton, 2012). International studies indicate one in four to one in six individuals will become a victim (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Despite more perpetrators encountering the criminal justice system and mental health services following the emergence of anti-stalking legislation across most western countries, the empirical literature on the clinical management of intimate partner stalking (IPS) perpetrators is limited and remains in the early stages of informing forensic practice. This is in stark contrast to what is known about approaches to intervention for other offence types, such as men convicted of sexual, violent and intimate partner violence (IPV) offences (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

The characteristics of individuals who engage in stalking behaviour are diverse, presenting with different motivations, psychopathology, and risk profiles (Nijdam-Jones, Rosenfeld, Gerbrandij, Quick, & Galietta, 2018; Pathé, 2017). This presenting complexity brings challenges in the identification, risk assessment, intervention and management of IPS perpetrators. Internationally an evidenced-based intervention for stalking perpetrators has yet to be developed (Kamphuis & Emmelamp, 2000; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2009). For individuals receiving a custodial/community sentence, interventions designed to address stalking behaviour is lacking (Birch, Ireland, & Ninaus, 2018). Consequently, there remains a dearth of knowledge on how to intervene and prevent stalking (MacKenzie & James, 2011) and a lack of clarity on what methods and approaches should be adopted to address stalking behaviour (MacKenzie & James, 2011; Sheridan & Davies, 2010).

⁶ Historically, the legal, academic and clinical definition of stalking has been the subject of ongoing debate. Over the years, stalking has been explored internationally from a diverse range of disciplines (Fox, Nobles, & Fisher, 2011). A common definition within the risk assessment literature is *'unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them'* (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2008a, p.1).

Commonly, the criminal justice response to IPS is to consider it under the remit of IPV (Melton, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Currently in the United Kingdom, in the absence of an intervention directly targeting stalking behaviour, IPS perpetrators across Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are considered for IPV interventions (L. Jonah, personal communication, September 2015). This anecdotal approach assumes men who have engaged in IPS share the same characteristics and criminogenic needs as those who have committed IPV offences. This forensic practice adopts the premise that IPS is conceptualised as a continuation and extension of IPV, forming the cycle of IPV that continues following the dissolution of the relationship (DeKeserdy, 2011; Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Logan & Walker, 2009). Whilst the emerging literature indicates a connection between stalking and IPV this is an area of ongoing debate.

This review is deemed both valuable and timely to support the development of interventions to address the specific needs of individuals who engage in stalking behaviour; meeting a topic of high public and ministerial importance. Such knowledge is essential in adapting and tailoring existing IPV interventions or developing new interventions which could prevent the risk of future IPS. In line with the Risk-Need-Responsivity model, insight into the characteristics of IPS perpetrators would inform how these can be targeted in intervention via an appropriate intervention pathway (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

Consequently, the findings from this review seek to guide forensic practice and assist practitioners in managing this group. This will enhance forensic practice, particularly given that a fundamental task for forensic practitioners is to assess risk and inform intervention approaches (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2002; McEwan, Pathé, & Ogloff, 2011; Foellmi, Rosenfeld, & Galiotta, 2016). Thus, obtaining academic and professional clarity on the characteristics specific to IPS perpetrators will inform potential insight into treatment needs that can be targeted through intervention. Additionally, it will equip practitioners with guidance to assist in informed decision-making regarding intervention planning and pathways for this group.

A review which focuses specifically on IPS has significant value for both the field of academia and international policy makers informing on intervention. International studies suggest between a quarter and half of stalking perpetrators continue to engage in further

stalking behaviour towards the same or a new victim (Foellmi, et al.,2016; McEwan, Daffern, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2017; McEwan & Strand, 2013). What is known about this group, is that IPS perpetrators have been identified as having higher recidivism rates compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators (Eke, Hilton, Meloy, Mohandie, & Williams, 2011; Malsch, de Keijser, & Debets, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003), and present as the most persistent and potentially dangerous subtype (Mullen, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999). Given the risks posed by IPS perpetrators, coupled with the recognition this group are deemed to be one of the largest categories of stalking perpetrators (Logan, Shannon, & Cole, 2007; Spitzberg, & Cupach, 2007), there is considerable merit in obtaining clarity on the characteristics of this group and how best to intervene with this population. Indeed, it is estimated that 45% of stalking cases occur following the dissolution of a relationship (Spitzberg, Cupach, & Ciceraro, 2010).

This review aims to establish what is known about the characteristics of IPS perpetrators and seeks to compare the findings to the extant literature on IPV perpetrators. This approach allows conclusions to be drawn as to which characteristics are deemed to be homogenous (i.e. similar to men who have committed IPV offences) and which appear to be heterogeneous (i.e. different and more predominant for IPS perpetrators). To date, there are no known reviews exploring this area.

Aims

The aims of the review are:

- 1) To systematically identify the demographic characteristics, clinical characteristics, offence characteristics and protective factors which are specific for IPS perpetrators.
- 2) To establish whether the characteristics of IPS perpetrators are similar or different to IPV perpetrators.
- 3) To inform intervention pathways for this group.

Review question

The study aims to answer the following review question: What are the characteristics of men who have engaged in IPS?

Method

Protocol registration⁷

The review protocol was registered with the PROSPERO International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews on the 17th August 2018 (registration number: CRD42018088871).

Review method design

A primary purpose of a systematic review is to retrieve, evaluate and synthesise existing research evidence on an area of interest (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Systematic reviews are regarded as a robust method for presenting an objective review of the research on a subject area with a view to informing evidence-based practice and policy (Rodgers et al., 2009). The benefits of a systematic review method, as opposed to a standard literature review, is the transparent and methodological approach which can be replicated.

The current review utilised a mixed methods systematic review process and narrative synthesis approach of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies. Mixed methods reviews seek to capture the diversity of studies on a subject area by integrating the findings of quantitative and qualitative studies within a systematic review to maximise the findings to inform policy and practice (Harden & Thomas, 2010; Briggs 2014). This approach provides a richer understanding of the characteristics of IPS perpetrators, generating more robust conclusions.

To identify relevant studies, a search of both quantitative and qualitative studies was conducted in accordance with the general principles recommended by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination. The review was guided by the PRISMA-P (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-Analysis Protocols) 2015 checklist (Moher et al., 2015), in combination with the approach to systematic reviews recommended by Petticrew and Roberts (2006).

⁷ The review protocol can be accessed via the PROSPERO website at <http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/>.

The qualitative and quantitative studies were reviewed separately and assimilated by providing a narrative synthesis of the emergent themes from across the studies. To analyse the findings, the review adopted a narrative synthesis approach using tabulation and thematic analysis (Popay et al., 2006). Narrative synthesis is “an approach to the systematic review and synthesis of findings from multiple sources and relies primarily on the use of words and text to summarize and explain the findings of the synthesis” (Popay et al., 2006, p. 5). In the case of this review, through adopting a textual approach, narrative synthesis provides both a summary of the knowledge-base and a rigorous evaluation of studies, thereby providing a robust interpretative synthesis of the characteristics of IPS perpetrators.

Literature search - Existing Reviews

The review was performed as per the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2015). Preliminary checks were undertaken to identify whether any previous reviews had been completed on this subject area⁸. No reviews were identified replicating the aims of this review.

Prior to designing the structured review protocol and conducting electronic searches, a scoping exercise was conducted. This sought to establish the need for the current review and informed the development of the research question and search terms to be incorporated into the search strategy. Searches were conducted over several timeframes corresponding to the review author’s capacity to complete the review. The initial scoping searches were conducted on the 5th September 2016 (at the stage of planning the thesis) and again on the 30th January 2018 (at the point near to commencement of the review). This search employed the following search terms: ‘intimate partner’ OR ‘partner*’ AND ‘stalking’ OR ‘harass’ AND ‘risk factor’, AND ‘protective factor’.

A scoping exercise did not identify any systematic reviews which focused specifically on the characteristics of IPS perpetrators. Nonetheless, two relevant papers were identified; Douglas and Dutton (2001) and Logan (2010). Whilst both provided a valuable contribution

⁸ The Cochrane Database, PROSPERO and the Campbell Collaboration were searched for registered systematic reviews to identify whether any existing reviews had been conducted which addressed the aims of this review.

to the literature, the authors presented a narrative literature review which did not report systematic methods. Two papers were identified which provided a meta-analysis on stalking violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Rosenfeld, 2004). One systematic review focused on adolescent stalking behaviour (Roberts, Tolou-Shams, & Madera, 2016). These papers did not focus specifically on individuals with a history of IPS and incorporated various subtypes of stalking perpetrators in the samples. Additional checks were undertaken through contact with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). No existing systematic reviews had been conducted or planned which focused on this group. One systematic review was ongoing, investigating the motivations for stalking perpetration in intimate and non-intimate relationships (G. Derefaka, personal communication, September 2017). On speaking to the author, there was no overlap between the reviews. Hence, there is a gap in the existing literature and a robust review which focuses specifically on IPS has not been undertaken to date; which the current review seeks to address.

Current review

Literature search: Search strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was conducted in relation to the review question and which guided the selection of search terms. A set of key words were identified and used to search the literature (see below). The search strategy comprised of the following stages:

1. Development of search terms
2. A comprehensive systematic search of five electronic databases: PsychINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, Applied social science index, and Criminal justice abstracts.
3. Screening of the titles and abstracts for relevance, and the removal of duplicate papers.
4. Application of a screening and selection tool via inclusion and exclusion criteria.
5. Hand-searching of reference lists for each paper that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
6. Personal correspondence with experts.
7. Grey literature search.
8. Quality appraisal.

Following a series of scoping searches, precise search terms were produced to develop an optimal search strategy:

Intimate partner: (Partner OR Spous* OR intimate* OR domestic* OR marital* OR romantic* OR civil* OR husband OR boyfriend OR date* OR dating* OR current partner OR prior* OR former* OR ex-intimate* OR couple OR romantic relationship* OR failed romantic relationship*)

AND

Risk factors: (Risk* OR criminogenic need* OR predict* OR static* OR dynamic* OR characteristics OR pathway OR correlate OR factor* OR offender characteristics OR indicator* OR recidiv* OR variable* OR correlate* OR experiences). Note: Experiences was incorporated to capture the behaviours/experiences described within qualitative literature.

OR

Protective factors: (Protect* OR desistance OR strength OR buffer OR risk moderator).

AND

Stalking behaviour: (Stalk* OR harass* OR pursuit* OR fixat* OR obsess* OR psychosexual obsession OR approach behavior? OR cyberstalk* OR cyber-stalk OR technology facilitated stalk* OR cyber harass* OR omnipresence OR surveillance OR unwanted attention OR predatory pursuit* OR erotomania OR intrusive behavior?r OR intrusive harassment OR simple obsessional stalk* OR rejected stalk* OR relational stalk* OR prior sexual intimate stalk* OR ex-partner harass*).

Study selection (inclusion and exclusion criteria)

A structured review protocol was designed to address the review question. The protocol was developed in line with a modification of the PICO tool (population,

interventions/comparisons, outcome); Wildridge & Bell, 2002; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The protocol employed an additional element of study design (i.e. PICOS), to capture the diversity of studies and widen the search to capture both quantitative studies and qualitative methods which traditionally do not use control groups. Table 2 presents a summary of the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Appendix C presents the full structured review protocol.

Table 2*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria (PICOs)*

Concept	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	<p>Male IPV perpetrators (aged 16 years and over) at time of stalking behaviour.</p> <p>Any nationality, ethnicity and level of cognitive functioning</p> <p>No restrictions on type of setting - samples taken from both forensic, clinical settings in community and custody, police.</p> <p><i>*Note: Mixed gender samples will be included when author specifies number of females in the sample and when >90% of sample are male.</i></p> <p>Mixed subtypes of stalking perpetrators included if authors give breakdown specific to IPS for conclusions to be drawn.</p>	<p>Males under the age of 16.</p> <p>Predominantly female samples</p> <p>Predominantly same-sex relationship samples</p> <p>Study does not include perpetrators with stalking behaviour</p> <p><i>*Note: Samples with mixed subtypes of stalker excluded if authors do not provide breakdown specific to IPS.</i></p>
Interventions	<p>Risk factors, clinical, offence or demographic characteristics</p> <p>Factors predicting stalking recidivism</p> <p>Protective factors</p>	<p>No examination of risk factors / characteristics, factors predicting stalking behaviour/recidivism</p>
Comparators	<p>Studies eligible for inclusion whether or not they included a comparator group. Rationale is that this mixed methods review aims to capture all studies designs that report on risk factors and characteristics from a range of samples some of which may not include studies with a comparator.</p>	<p>Studies eligible for inclusion whether or not they included a comparator group. Rationale is that this mixed methods review aims to capture all studies designs that report on risk factors and characteristics from a range of samples some of which may not include studies with a comparator.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Stalking behaviour</p> <p>Stalking recidivism/reoffending</p> <p>Stalking behaviour measured on self-report and/or official measures</p> <p>Perpetrator and victim self-report</p> <p>Paper must refer to a definition of stalking.</p>	<p>No evidence of stalking behaviour</p> <p>Paper does not refer to definition of stalking</p>
Study Design	<p>In line with the mixed methods review, all study designs considered to incorporate a wide range of study designs, including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.</p> <p>Note: Victim retrospective designs included if focus of study is on perceptions of perpetrator characteristics</p>	<p>Reviews, policy documents, commentaries, editorials, discussion/opinion papers</p> <p>Data reported in a purely descriptive manner without analysis</p> <p>Studies which focus on victims' experiences or student samples exploration of stalking behaviour.</p>

	The presence of a control group was not stipulated.	*Note: Victim retrospective designs reporting solely on impact of stalking behaviour in victim will be excluded.
Additional Criteria	Written in English. Year of publication 1989 – 2018	Written in other languages Book chapters, editorials, literature reviews, narratives and opinion papers

Data extraction

A comprehensive literature search utilising five electronic databases was conducted between the 14th and 15th February 2018: PsycINFO, Web of Science, MEDLINE, Pubmed, Scopus and Criminal Justice Abstracts. These databases were selected based on their coverage and quality of social science literature and were regarded as being the most relevant to the subject of the review (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007; Taylor, Wylie, Dempster, & Donnelly, 2007). MEDLINE was included to capture potential psychiatric studies. An initial search was conducted in PsycINFO on the 14th February to pilot the search terms. The search terms were revised until a satisfactory balance was obtained between sensitivity and specificity (Dundar & Fleeman, 2014). The search in PsycINFO was repeated on the 15th February 2018 to capture current studies. All citations retrieved from the database search were imported into RefWorks.

In total, the database searches generated a total of 2,658 hits (2,226 from PsychINFO, 88 from Web of Science, 24 from Scopus, 308 from Criminal Justice Abstracts, and 12 from Applied social science index). A total of 162 duplicates were removed. Titles and abstracts for 2,496 articles were reviewed to screen for relevant studies. Studies unrelated to the review question were removed. This process resulted in the exclusion of 2,449 studies. The remaining 47 papers were subjected to a full paper screening. This stage encompassed a more detailed screening of the full content against the inclusion/exclusion criteria, which resulted in the exclusion of a further 36 studies. Consequently, 11 studies were identified for inclusion from the database search.

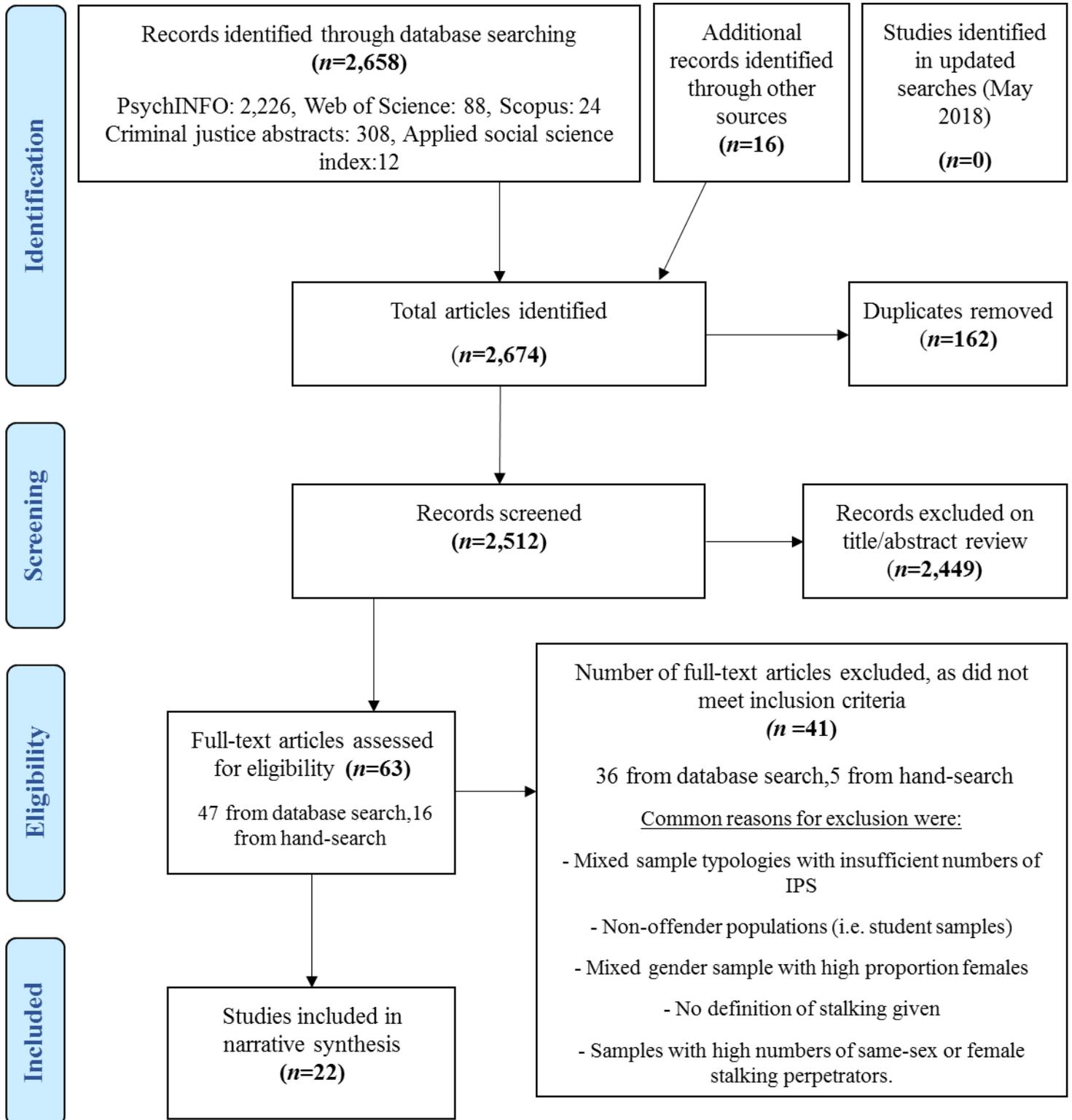
To widen the search area and limit potential effects of publication bias additional searches were undertaken. These included hand-searching of reference lists for each retrieved paper, personal email correspondence with experts in the field, and a search of grey literature. Out of four emails from experts, three responses were obtained, with no new papers identified.

These additional searches generated a further 16 studies. Five papers were excluded. A final search was conducted using google scholar search engine on the 31st May 2018. No additional papers were identified.

Overall, following the above search strategy, a total of 22 studies (11 papers from database searching, and 11 from hand-searching) were included in the review and subjected to quality assessment. Each study was given a reference number (i.e. study 1) for easy identification on the tabulation of extracted data. Figure 2 shows the PRISMA flowchart of the study selection process. The 41 full text excluded studies can be viewed in Appendix D.



Figure 2: PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram



Quality assessment of studies

The twenty-two studies that remained after the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria were assessed for methodological quality by the review author. Formal quality appraisal was undertaken, providing a positive impact on the reliability of results and conclusions of literature reviews (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). To prevent bias, studies were not selected based on quality during the search process (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

In line with the mixed methods studies included within the review, researcher-generated quality assessment forms were devised which aimed to appraise and attribute scores against specific criteria to each of the studies. Due to the heterogeneity of the included studies, studies were quality assessed using either a checklist designed for quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods studies⁹.

Studies which met the inclusion criteria were assessed for methodological quality with the purpose of ‘weighting’ the findings. To provide differentiation between studies, numerical scores were assigned to each study based on several criteria on the quality assessment tool. Individual items assessed within the checklist covered the broad areas of background, methodology, analysis, and interpretation and conclusions. The questions within the checklists enabled the reviewer to evaluate each study within each of these categories which considered key areas relating to the background literature, aims and rationale for the study, research design, sampling, data collection, appropriateness and robustness of analysis,

⁹ For the eighteen quantitative papers, quality was assessed using a modification of the Downs and Black (1998) checklist, a well-validated appraisal tool with high inter-rater reliability approved for use in systematic reviews (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009; Shuster, 2011). The resulting tool comprised of twenty-three questions to determine rigour, credibility and relevance of the study. The questions enabled the reviewer to evaluate the study by addressing the aim, methodology, design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, ethical issues findings and the value of the research. For the two qualitative papers, quality appraisal was guided by the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. A total of 18 items were included in the qualitative checklist. Individual items assessed within the checklist covered broader areas of sample study design, data collection and analysis and study findings. Mixed methods studies were assessed using a modification from the above two quality assessments to account for critical items relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research designs.

ethical issues, discussion of limitations, overall value of the research, and clarity on transparency of reporting. Studies were ranked depending on their adherence to the quality checklist, with higher scores reflecting a high-quality assessment outcome.

Overall study quality scores (for each of the items on the quality assessment forms) pertinent to each separate study was scored on a three-point Likert scale as follows: Criterion fully met (score of two), criterion partially met (score of one), and criterion not met/unclear (score of zero). This approach allowed for an overall quality score for each individual study to be calculated. Items were omitted if they were deemed not applicable due to the study design, or if there was unclear or insufficient information that could not be interpreted by the author. The overall quality score for each paper was calculated by summing all the scores together. For quantitative studies the maximum score attainable was 46, 36 for qualitative papers, and mixed-methods papers 44, if no items were omitted. The overall score for each paper was calculated and recorded, with higher scores reflecting a higher quality paper.

Once total quality scores had been calculated for each study, scores were converted into percentages (given the differences in scores attainable) to enable a clear comparison of quality between studies. This approach was adopted given the different number of items within the quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods checklists, and some items may not have been applicable due to the study design. Each study was categorised a rating of 'high quality' (score of 100-70%), 'moderate quality' (score of 69-30%) and 'low quality' (scores of 0-29%). Studies with typically higher scores were more likely to fully or partially meet the criteria within the majority of areas on the checklist. For example, for the highest scoring overall study [4] there was detailed reference to background literature which placed the study into context, clear aims, an appropriate study design/method to answer the research question, the use of a combination of robust data collection tools, the recruitment process was fully outlined, analysis was well executed and limitations outlined, with clear implications for forensic practice. Whereas, moderate quality papers typically either partially or fully meet the criteria, and in some studies criteria were either unmet or unclear. For example, the highest scoring moderate paper of 65% [17], scored higher on background to the study, methodology, analysis and interpretation and conclusions, whereas, the lowest scoring moderate paper of 39% [6], partially met the criteria on background to the study, partially met the criteria for methodology (i.e., there were limitations with approach to

sampling and recruitment, a lack of transparency regarding questions asked within the surveys, and limited reporting of research design and methods), there was a lack of clarity and transparency on the qualitative analysis provided, with the study partially meeting the criteria for interpretation and conclusions. A sample of studies were subjected to inter-rater reliability by one of the supervisory team. Any discrepancies were discussed, and overall agreement reached through exploration of the papers.

Data extraction and synthesis

The chosen method to present, summarise and synthesise the studies was a modified narrative synthesis approach, using the conceptual framework developed by the ESRC Methods Programme on conducting narrative synthesis (Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews; Popay et al., 2006). This approach was adopted due to the diversity of the aims and methodology of the included papers. It is noted that narrative synthesis is particularly relevant for reviews with a high number of observational study designs (Popay et al., 2006), as in the case of this review. Consequently, a narrative synthesis of the key findings of the studies are presented to address the review question. The narrative synthesis incorporated three stages: (1) Developing a preliminary synthesis, (2) Exploration of relationships in the data, and (3) Assessing the robustness of the synthesis.

Tabulation

All studies eligible for inclusion were tabulated. The process of tabulation involved all relevant data pertaining to each study being methodically extracted and presenting a textual description of the key information in a clear and concise format (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). All 22 studies were given a reference number for easy identification throughout the review. The information was presented within a summary table explaining the individual characteristics and findings of the included studies (see Table 3).

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Table 3*Tabulation of Extracted Data: Summary of Study Characteristics**(Key: **D** refers to studies retrieved through database search, and **H** refers to studies retrieved through hand-searching)*

Study ID	Title of study	Authors, Date, Country of study	Sample and setting	Research design and data source	Aim(s) and focus of study	Definition of stalking in paper	Results	Study strengths and limitations Including overall quality assessment score
1 D	The dangerous nature of intimate relationship stalking: Threats, violence and associated risk factors	Palarea, et al. (1999) Published, USA	Forensic setting Offender sample (n=223) Police data: Compared 223 intimates and non-intimate stalking cases managed by police dept. Comparator group: Intimate relationship cases (n=135) and non-intimate cases (n=88)	Quantitative: Observational study Data collection method: Revised Zona profile – Threat Management research questionnaire (Zona et al. 1993) Procedure: Data taken from pre-existing police database Form of analysis: multiple regression	To investigate the link between the presence of an intimate relationship and dangerousness level of stalking perpetration.	“The wilful, malicious, and repeated following or harassing of another person, which includes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for his or her safety or the safety of his or her immediate family” (California legislature, 1990, Zona et al.,1998).	Significant relationship between the perpetrator’s intimate versus non-intimate status and violence committed against persons and property. The relationship was positively influenced by the suspects’ level of proximity to the victim and threats towards property but NOT influenced by criminal, psychiatric, IPV history. Overall, intimate partner stalkers used more dangerous stalking behaviours.	<u>Strengths</u> : Clear aims and study design. Large sample size from a forensic sample. Use of comparator group. Multiple sources of data. <u>Limitations</u> : Reports on sample but demographics limited. Selection bias - non-intimate cases could be overrepresented by high profile cases as threat management unit responsible for investigating celebrity stalking cases against persons. Study quality score: 70% Study quality category: High

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2 D	A pattern of violence: Analyzing the relationship between intimate partner violence and stalking.	Norris, Huss, & Palarea (2011) Published, USA	Offender sample Forensic setting (n=120) IPV perpetrators self-referred (28%) or court-referred (62.6%) for IPV treatment <i>Comparator group:</i> To examine differences between IPV who engaged in stalking-related behaviours and those who do not.	Quantitative: Observational study Data collection method: Interview & psychometrics Measures: Risk Assessment Inventory for Stalking (RAIS), MCMI, Beck Depression Inventory, & multidimensional Anger Inventory (self-report measures) Form of analysis: Chi-square analysis ANOVAs	Examined the levels of severity between stalking-related behaviours and IPV, and differences between IPV perpetrators who exhibited stalking-related behaviours and those who did not.	“An intentional pattern of repeated behaviors toward a person or persons that are unwanted, and result in fear, or that a reasonable person (or jury) would view as fearful or threatening” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007)	A significant relationship between stalking-related behaviour and IPV was found, with more severe stalking related to higher levels of IPV and more extreme psychopathology. Interesting results concerning the role of high psychological abuse in stalkers, suggesting that psychological intimidation is indicative of an IPV perpetrator prone to stalking against an intimate partner as compared to other, more direct forms of violence.	<u>Strengths:</u> Forensic sample of male only IPV perpetrators. Provides insight into profile of IPS. Clear aims and hypotheses. Reports stalking behaviours and differences between IPV perpetrators who engage in stalking-related behaviours and those who do not. Author’s reports on study limitations. <u>Limitations:</u> Measures are self-report. Potential for bias as participants currently in treatment. Participants may have misrepresented their stalking behaviour, or IPV, or drug and alcohol behaviour. Focus of study was self-reported behaviour and may not have been charged with stalking. May not be a pattern of behaviour. Lack of generalisability - IPV
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								treatment program at one public hospital not ethnically diverse. Whilst comparator group used, no control group used as participants not selected randomly. Sample not representative, as they are court-ordered IPV perpetrators.
								Study quality score: 63% Study quality category: Moderate
3 H	An empirical analysis of stalking as a risk factor in domestic violence	Palarea (2005) USA, PhD Thesis	Offender sample Forensic community sample (n=85) IPV perpetrators (self-referred or court ordered) to a community IPV treatment program	Quantitative: Observational study Survey Self-report measures: Risk Assessment Inventory for Stalking (RAIS). Conflict Tactics Scale-2. Form of analysis: Factor analysis	To assess for stalking and abuse within participants intimate relationships.	Author refers to stalking legislation and The California law which defines stalking as the willful, malicious, and repeated following or harassing of another person, which includes a credible threat with the intent to place that	Motives for stalking behaviours varied. Revealed a three-factor typology. The findings suggest that rather than considering stalking and IPV as different constructs, stalking behaviours may be better conceptualized as an extension of the physical and psychological abuse against the partner, with more severe forms of stalking	<u>Strengths:</u> Focus on IPS and assesses stalking behaviours only within a clinical sample of IPV perpetrator sample. Variables selected have previously been identified as risk factors in stalking literature. Clear aims and focus of research with robust methodology. <u>Limitations:</u> Sample size limits robustness. Population reflective

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						person in reasonable fear for his or her safety or the safety of his or her immediate family (California Penal Code § 646.9).	being used by more severe IPV perpetrators.	of more low-level IPV perpetrators, as the majority of sample was either referred through probation or self-referred. Results may not generalize to more violent IPV populations in prison settings. Self-report data – open to bias, inaccurate reporting, social desirability. Reliance on collateral information limitations of accuracy reporting and reporting information. Measurement of variables may be impacted by participants not understanding the questions on the various measures. No comparator group.
4 H	Re-assessing the link between stalking and	McEwan et al. (2017)	Offender sample	Quantitative: Observational study	To explore the nature and link between IPV and stalking.	The use of the term <i>stalking</i> should be used	History of previous IPV identified in 39 cases (33.1% sample). Factors	Study quality score: 75% Study quality category: High <u>Strengths:</u> Aimed to be first study to estimate prevalence of previous IPV in

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intimate partner abuse	Australia published	Specialist forensic/clinical setting (n=115) Ex-intimate stalkers who had stalked 118 separate victims. Recruited from specialist forensic clinic from clients referred for stalking behaviour to a community based mental health service.	Data collection method: History of IPV established from self-report and police records (Interview, questionnaire/existing case file data). Data from case records/database taken from participants and police records of family violence incidents and offender accounts. Interview: Each participant engaged interview with psychologist / psychiatrist Form of analysis: Univariate analysis, multivariate modelling, binary logistic regression.	To identify demographic, clinical and behavioural variables that differentiated between ex-intimate stalkers who had and had not engaged in prior IPA against the stalking victim.	to describe unwanted intrusions that occur after a relationship has ended, when one party has clearly indicated their desire for it to be over and is attempting to cease contact.	associated with IPV during prior relationship were: Criminal history, prior physical violence to other victims, diagnosis PD, sharing children – significant association IPV during prior relationship. The combination of a history of violence toward other people and sharing children with the victim effectively discriminated between stalkers who did and did not engage in prior IPV.	sample of directly assessed ex-intimate stalkers using a combination of formal police records and offender accounts. Authors clearly define variable definitions (i.e. stalking, prior IPA, offending, stalking behaviour, mental disorder). Paper provides robust summary of relevant literature and places research into context with clear aims and rationale and methodology. <u>Limitations:</u> Study likely underestimates IPV and particularly psychological abuse. Given selective nature of sample may be over-estimating the occurrence of IPV. Reliant on how police record information and nature of IPV. Issues with generalisability: high forensic sample – would same findings be identified in community
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								samples and other countries. No comparator group used.
								Study quality score: 85% Study quality category: High
5 D	Stalker profiles with and without protective orders: Reoffending or criminal justice processing?	Logan et al. (2002) USA, published	Perpetrator sample Forensic setting (n=346) charged with stalking crime.	Quantitative: Observational study Data collection methods: Existing database. Form of analysis: Chi-Square	To examine characteristics associated with stalkers with and without a protective order history. Further aim to explore what extent protective orders were associated with other criminal offending patterns for stalkers.	“Engaging in an intentional course of conduct (meaning two or more acts evidencing a continuity of purpose) that (1) Is directed at a specific person or persons, (2) Seriously alarms, annoys, intimidates or harasses the person or persons, (3) Serves no legitimate purpose (Kentucky Criminal Law Manual)	Two in three stalkers had a protective order either before or after their stalking charge, supporting an association of stalking with IPV. 53% of the stalkers had a prior misdemeanour or felony conviction. Stalkers with a more extensive history of protective orders were also more involved in the criminal justice system. Protective orders should be viewed as indicators of likely increased violence and other offending patterns. Outcome - stalking is a variant or	<u>Strengths:</u> Rationale based on the argument that criminal behaviour patterns for stalking perpetrators had received insufficient attention, with little research comparing characteristics of stalkers with and without histories of pre-existing protective orders and criminal offenses after the stalking charge. Reports clearly on limitations. <u>Limitations:</u> Reports on those charged with stalking but a charge of stalking is rarely or not always or consistently applied to all cases. Issues relating to generalisability: Data

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						extension of domestic violence.	collected from public agency records in one USA state. Limited by what is recorded. Data set lacked in-depth demographic information. Records may not have been consistent or complete. Errors in recording and entering the information may have occurred. Although findings imply a relationship between stalking and prior IPV the number of participants who had stalked an intimate partner is unknown. Whilst comparator group used, did not analyse stalking but protection orders so not applicable. Unclear data analysis approach.
6 H	The Abuse of Technology	Woodlock (2017)	Victim sample (n=46) Women who had	Qualitative Observational study (on-line survey)	Explores the use of technology to facilitate	“Stalking encompasses a pattern of repeated,	Technology used to create a sense of omnipresence, and to isolate, punish, <u>Strengths</u> : Explores under-researched area. Multiple methods approach,

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in Domestic Violence and Stalking	Australia, published	experienced IPS Community setting	Note: Paper reports on one study taken from larger project	stalking and other forms of abuse. To identify how victims report perpetrators have used technology to stalk them.	intrusive behaviors – such as following, harassing and threatening – that cause fear in victims (Logan & Walker, 2009).	and humiliate victims. Perpetrators also threatened to share sexualized content online. Findings confirm that mobile technologies are used by perpetrators to stalk and harass women.	appropriate design to explore subject area. <u>Limitations:</u> Small sample size and recruitment method may have resulted in selection bias. Sample not culturally representative. Retrospective design – may not recall information accurately. Examples of questions in survey not provided. Limited reporting of research design/methods. Lacking transparency and validity measures for qualitative analysis. Limited detail provided of overall analysis. Study quality score: 39% Study quality category: Moderate
		Convenience sampling	Two elements Survey with advocates and victims. Included in review as authors separate out findings				
			Measures: No standardised measure of stalking behaviour.				
			Form of analysis: NVivo/thematic analysis				

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7 H	Power and control dynamics in pre-stalking and stalking situations	Brewster (2003) <i>Note: Brewster has two papers in this review (see study 8)</i> USA, published	Victim sample (n=187) stalked by former partner Community setting Convenience sample	Mixed methods Observational study Exploratory study Retrospective Qualitative – semi-structured interview to explore experiences of victims Content analysis Forms of analysis: Regression models (two linear and one logistic) were used to assess the strength and statistical significance of the variables.	Examines the role of power and control in stalking situations and in the prior relationship between stalker and victim. Reports variables regarding victims' perceptions of motivation or stalking, triggers for physical and sexual violence, stalking behaviours perpetrated and threats made.	Author refers to “emotional distress, fear of bodily harm, actual bodily harm or the belief that the stalker intended any of these effects” but lack of clear definition	A greater number of victims reported social and physical control than psychological, financial, and sexual control during the prior relationship. Psychological control during stalking campaign was reported by nearly all victims. Fewer than half of the victims reported physical assault during the stalking, and just over a quarter reported financially controlling behaviours. Authors suggest that stalking is extension of the abuse of power and control begins within the relationship.	<u>Strengths:</u> Provides insight into power and control pre-stalking and stalking situations. Outlines data collection methods clearly. <u>Limitations:</u> Methodological limitations with retrospective accounts. Research design lacks detail and clarity. The link with stalking is sparse with greater focus given to IPV and psychological abuse. The literature presented makes a strong case about power and control in relationships but not about stalking. Lacks detail on how the analysis was conducted and the themes developed. Qualitative component lacks robustness. Study quality score: 61% Study quality category: Moderate
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8 D	Stalking by former intimates: Verbal threats and other predictors of physical violence	Brewster (2000) USA, published	Victim sample Community setting Self-report victim data (n=187) of ex-intimate partner stalkers	Quantitative Observational study Method of data collection: Semi-structured interviews and questionnaire. Semi structured interviews employed to elicit experiences. Focus was on former relationships with their stalkers and the nature of their stalking experiences. Demographic data gathered through questionnaire.	Investigated the prevalence of previous IPV. Also assessed the correlates of violence within stalking situations and to assess the relationship between verbal threats and physical violence toward former intimate stalking victims.	A pattern of behaviours toward another person with the intent to cause "substantial emotional distress" or "reasonable fear of bodily harm" (see e.g., PA Code Section 18: 2709, rev. 1994).	There is a link between verbal threats and subsequent violence. Drug and alcohol abuse were also statistically significant, but only in predicting physical injury during stalking. Outcome: Threats of violence are better predictors of violence during stalking than is a past history of violence.	<u>Strengths:</u> Explores under-researched area - the relationship between threats and violence. Highlights important role that verbal threats play in predicting physical violence against stalking victims. <u>Limitations:</u> Retrospective accounts. Author acknowledge only some limitations. Small sample size, sampling approach. Rationale for methods of analysis unclear. Study quality score: 43% Study quality category: Moderate
9 D	Predicting the occurrence of stalking in relationships characterised by domestic violence	Melton (2007a) <i>Note: Melton has two papers in this review (see study 19)</i> USA,	Victim sample (n=178) Community setting Victims where cases had contact with	Quantitative Observational study Data collection: Interviews, survey & case file data. Retrospective design	To investigate what factors predict occurrence of stalking in relationships with IPV history.	"The wilful, repeated, and malicious following, harassing, or threatening of another person"	Factors which predicted stalking were: victim not in a relationship with abuser, abuser had alcohol or drug problems, controlling behaviour.	<u>Strengths:</u> Insight into demographics particularly relationship status which is often not captured (from victim perspective). Study explores clear area and robust study design.

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		Published	criminal justice system	Measures – stalking measures collated using stalking behaviour checklist (Coleman, 1997)	Explore stalking in the context IPV to understand predictors of stalking to determine appropriate response to the problem.			<p><u>Limitations:</u> Unsure at which point victim had contact with CJS. Retrospective design – only uses victim perceptions of events. Sample only those who report stalking and IPV – may be differences between those who do not report and have police contact. Response rate unknown. Respondents may not be representative of all women whose cases go through CJS. Sample self-selected.</p> <p>Study quality score: 75% Study quality category: High</p>
10 H	Risk factors for stalking violence, persistence, and recurrence	McEwan et al. (2017) Australia, Published	Perpetrator sample Forensic setting (n=157 individuals but 143 male) Ex-intimate sample (n=90)	Quantitative study Observational study Retrospective design (both outcomes of stalking violence, persistence and recurrence) and predictors had	Investigates risk factors associated with stalking violence, persistence and recurrence. Seeks to contribute to	“The presence of a stalking charge under the <i>Crimes Act (1958)</i> for Victoria or evidence of multiple unwanted intrusions on the victim persisting	Diverse risk factors associated with different stalking outcomes. Violence more likely to occur with ex-intimate, explicit threats or property damage. Strong relationship between prior IPV (physical) and	<p><u>Strengths:</u> First study to examine risk factors for different stalking outcomes in the same sample. Clear aims and study design and recruitment process. Clear discussion and presentation of</p>

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			<p><i>Note: Mixed gender and typology (91% male, 55% intimate partner stalkers) Included in study as authors give breakdown specific to intimate partner stalkers.</i></p> <p>Participants referred to a stalking clinic</p>	<p>occurred at time of data collection)</p> <p>Data collection methods: Interview, psychometric assessment, and supplementary case file data.</p> <p>Form of analysis: univariate analyses. Mann-Whitney U tests used to determine relationships with stalking duration</p>	<p>the literature on risk factors for stalking violence, persistence and recurrence by elucidating associations between various clinical, demographic, offending and stalking-related characteristics.</p>	<p>for more than two weeks (Purcell, Pathe, & Mullen, 2004).</p>	<p>stalking violence. Results confirm physical IPV should be taken seriously as unique risk factor when managing ex-intimate stalking cases.</p>	<p>findings in context to research.</p> <p><u>Limitations:</u> Small sample size when sample broken down into subtypes. Retrospective design – impossible to determine whether risk factors have a truly predictive relationship with the outcome or merely co-occurring. Both outcomes (stalking violence, persistence and recurrence) and predictors had already occurred at the time of data collection) – Relationships between risk factors are associative rather than causal. Sample unlikely to include most serious stalking cases that result in imprisonment</p> <p>Study quality score: 80% Study quality category: High</p>
11	The role of stalking in	Tjaden & Thoennes	Victim sample (n=1,785)	Quantitative	(1) To investigate the	“A course of conduct directed	Results confirm previous research	<u>Strengths:</u> Much needed empirical data

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D	domestic violence crime reports generated by the Colorado Springs police department	(2000). USA, published	Police setting Case file review of domestic violence crime reports from USA Police Department during a nine-month period Mixed gender sample but authors conduct separate analyses for male and female victims Convenience sampling	Observational study Forms of analysis: Series of bivariate analyses, logistic regression in which several independent variables representing characteristics of the victim and suspect were regressed against the dependent variable.	prevalence of stalking in domestic violence reports, (2) To explore the risk factors associated with domestic violence stalking, (3) To elicit how often intimate partner stalkers are charged with stalking	at a specific person that involves repeated visual or physical proximity, non-consensual communication, or oral, written or implied threats, or a combination thereof, that would cause a reasonable person to fear bodily injury of death, with repeated meaning on two or more occasions” (National Criminal Justice Association, 1993)	that found a link between stalking and violence in intimate relationships. 1 in 6 (16.5%) suspect stalked the victim. Most perpetrators were former rather than current intimates. Reports of stalking allegations were significantly less likely to mention physical abuse or victim injury in the presenting condition to involve households with children, or to involve victims and suspects who were using alcohol at the time of the report. Police almost never charged domestic violence stalking suspects with stalking, instead charging them with harassment or violation of a restraining order.	on the prevalence of stalking in domestic violence crime reports, risk factors associated with IPS, and police responses to reports of IPS. Results provided a benchmark for future research. Appropriate study design and large scale. <u>Limitations:</u> Lacks generalisability - Crime reports in one jurisdiction. Of note 32% of population employed by military bases. Limited background literature given but this is an old paper. Coincides with introduction of first stalking laws in America. Study quality score: 74% Study quality category: High
12 D	Approach and	McEwan et al. (2012)	Offender sample	Quantitative Observational study	To identify variables associated	“A pattern of unwanted intrusions by	In non-ex-intimate stalkers, approach was associated with	<u>Strengths:</u> Reports first detailed examination of

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escalation in stalking	Australia, published	Community/ Forensic sample (n= 211) (n=71 for ex-intimate sample) IPV sample cohort of cases referred to a specialist clinic Mixed stalking sample BUT author separates out and reports on IPS subtype (rejected). <i>Comparator group used:</i> Stalking sample separated into those who were former sexual intimates and those who were not.	Method of data collection: Interview, collection of demographic, historical data and psychometric instruments Form of analysis: Chi-square analysis and odds ratios Effect side also calculated	with approach and escalation amongst ex-intimates and non-ex-intimate stalkers and to compare the latter with the results of the public figure stalking.	one person into the life of another in a manner which would cause a reasonable person anxiety or fear”	psychosis and intimacy motivation seeking. The same applied to escalation only more strongly. No associations with approach or escalation was found in ex-intimate cases.	approach and escalation behaviours in a ‘general’ stalking sample. Used structured assessment and data collection procedures – method not present in other clinical studies of stalkers. Gives clear definitions of variables explored. The use of a comparator group enables conclusions to be drawn which differentiate between the characteristics that distinguish between intimate partner stalkers and other stalking cases. <u>Limitations:</u> Small sample size when broken down into subgroup of typology. Potential for mental illness to be overrepresented in sample due to where sample derived from (clinic for forensic mental health services). Study quality score: 78%
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13 H	The intersection of stalking and the severity of intimate partner abuse	Brady & Hayes (2018) USA, Published	Victim sample Community setting (<i>n</i> =464) Data from women's health risk study. Sample of abused and non-abused women from hospitals and clinics and intimate partner homicide victims from proxy interviews and official records Collected data on experiences with IPV, including firearms use, substance abuse, and experiences of stalking.	Quantitative Quasi-experimental design Data collection methods: face-to-face interviews and questionnaire. Measure/tool – Harassment in abusive relationships: (HARASS; Sheridan, 1992) Form of analysis Univariate and bivariate analysis conducted to examine associations and threatening behaviour across severity of groups. Chi-square & descriptive statistics	To examine the link between stalking and the severity of intimate partner abuse while controlling for previously identified risk factors of intimate partner homicide.	“Repeated course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear” (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2007).	Victims of life threatening abuse by an intimate partner were significantly more likely to experience stalking than victims of non-lethal abuse, (b) after controlling for key risk factors stalking increased the risk of life threatening abuse, (c) threats to kill the victim if she left was the only significant stalking-related behaviour that increased the risk for life threatening abuse, (d) An offender's prior record and a higher number of previous abusive incidents increased the risk of life-threatening abuse.	Study quality category: High <u>Strengths:</u> Study expands literature by exploring intersection of stalking and severity of IPV by examining which types of stalking and threatening behaviours increase life-threatening abuse. <u>Limitations:</u> Sample – one large urban city – clinical sample women. Limited generalisability – findings may differ in other cities/areas/countries – and from nonclinical samples. Small number of homicide cases. Does not describe pilot. Study did not examine exhaustive lists of stalking and risk factors. Study quality score: 74% Study quality category: High
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14 D	Intimate partner violence and stalking behavior: Exploration of patterns and correlates in a sample of acutely battered	Mechanic, et al. (2000) USA, Published	Victim sample Community setting (<i>n</i> =114) victims recruited from battered women from shelters, agencies, and from the community	Quantitative: Observational study (survey/interview) Measures - Stalking Behaviour Checklist (SBC: Coleman, 1997). The Standardised Battering Interview & Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory—Abbreviated Version (PMWI) & Revised Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS-2). Form of analysis: Regression analyses	To provide descriptive data on stalking in a sample of acutely battered women and to assess the inter-relationship between constructs of emotional abuse, physical violence, and stalking in battered women.	"Stalking is the name given to the combination of activities that batterers do to keep the connection between themselves and their partners from being severed" (Walker & Meloy, 1998).	Violent and harassing stalking behaviours occur with alarming frequency among physically battered women, both while they are in the relationship and after they leave their abusive partners. Emotional and psychological abuse emerged as strong predictors of within- and post-relationship stalking.	<u>Strengths</u> : Outlines study aims & hypothesis clearly. Modest sample size – uses robust measures. Outline recruitment process clearly and inclusion and exclusion criteria. <u>Limitations</u> : Unable to document the type, number, and frequency of stalking behaviours. Retrospective victim perspective. Lack of clarity on research design leaving reader to infer. Limited exploration of limitations in paper. Study quality score: 61% Study quality category: Moderate
15 D	Batterers stalking patterns	Burgess, Harner, Baker, Hartman, & Lole (2001) USA, Published	Perpetrator sample (<i>n</i> =149) Forensic setting Follow up study to Burgess et al. 1997	Mixed methods: Observational study (Exploratory study) Method of data collection: questionnaire	Explores relationship between battering, stalking and self-report measures on aggression and abusiveness.	"Stalking behaviour define as involving indirect noncontact acts designed to place the person in reasonable fear of bodily	Behaviours clustered into two factors: Ambivalent contact pattern and predatory contact pattern. Most frequently reported partner abuse (47%) was pushing or slapping, (7%)	<u>Strengths</u> : Describes recruitment process. Describes insight into demographics. Sample size appropriate. <u>Limitations</u> : Small paragraph of study reports on qualitative

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			Sample IPV convicted perpetrators ordered to complete a treatment programme as a requirement of their probation	Measures: Modified version of Wright et al. (1996) Stalking Incident Checklist. Form of analysis Factor analysis – on psychometrics Qualitative data – no method described		injury or an intent to cause substantial emotional distress”	reported more severe abuse, including kicking, biting, choking, and threatening their partner. The presence of alcohol (36%) or drugs (4%) was less frequently reported.	data but there is no specific method and form of analysis described. Convenience sample – volunteered to self-report stalking behaviour. Although authors noted that not all participants reported conducting stalking behaviours, they did not provide further information on how many participants actually conducted stalking behaviours. Authors unclear about the participants’ relationship status prior to and during the assessment period. Qualitative data – no method described but appears to be the reporting of results of open-ended questions. Study quality score: 48% Study quality category: Moderate
16 H	Stalking behaviors within	Burgess, et al. (1997)	Perpetrator sample (n=120)	Quantitative Observational study	To explore what the differences, if	“The 1993 Michigan Felony Stalking	(n=36) reported stalking, 84, (70% did not). Several	<u>Strengths</u> : Reports measure used. First study on a clinical

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domestic violence.	USA, Published	Separated into groups based on whether or not reported stalking Police/community sample Participants recruited from two sources: a court-referred batterers program and a jail Comparator group: Compares domestic batters by whether or not they admit to stalking Convenience sample	Exploratory study Method of recruitment: Archival police incident reports to identify persons arrested for stalking/domestic violence. Data collection method: survey Measures: Stalking checklist developed and published for profiling (Wright et al 1996) for self-report use with domestic violence perpetrators Form of analysis: Pearson correlation	any, between domestic violence cases that have a stalking component and those that do not and to explore if there are patterns of stalking behaviours.	law defines stalking as a wilful course of conduct that would, or actually could cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed or molested”	perpetrator variables that positively correlated with a self-report of stalking, including a prior history of stalking others, a history of assault, alcohol abuse, and living alone. Identified several variables that differentiated stalking from non-stalking cases: prior surveillance the incident occurring in an open/public place, less perception of victim provocation, the victim being strangled or choked, and a prior history of stalking. Perpetrators tended to live alone, were less likely to be married, not living with children, and used more alcohol than non-stalkers with a history of prior stalking offenses and of	and criminal sample of known IPV perpetrators. Authors went beyond descriptions of population, providing more in-depth statistical analyses and theoretical models for domestic violence stalking cases. This is the only paper which makes reference to cognitive mechanisms. The use of a comparator group enables conclusions to be drawn which differentiate between the characteristics that distinguish between intimate partner stalkers and IPV perpetrators. <u>Limitations:</u> Participants were recruited from two sources: (the authors did not note how many participants came from each group). Convenience sample: recruited prior to court case, potential impact on
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							being abused themselves. Three stalking grouping identified: one in which discrediting was the key, a second revolving around love turning to hate, and a third with violent confrontation with the ex-partner.	lack of responsibility taking, disclosure and social desirability. Limited sample size. Study quality score: 57% Study quality category: Moderate
17 D	Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide	McFarlane et al. (1999) USA, Published	Victim sample (n=208) Forensic/clinical setting Evaluation of police records. 141 femicide and 65 attempted femicide incidents Retrospective sample	Quantitative: Observational study Method of data collection: survey/interview & psychometrics Measures: 18 item stalking inventory and personal interviews with proxy informants and victims. Used the first 6 items developed by Tjaden & Thoennes (1998) violence and threats of violence against women survey. Twelve items included from Sheridan (1998)	Investigated the incidence of serious violence to determine risk factors for actual and attempted intimate partner femicide. To determine frequency and type of stalking that preceded attempted and actual femicide	“Repeated (e.g. two or more) occasions of visual or physical proximity, non-consensual communication, or verbal, written or implied threats that would cause fear in a reasonable person” (National Violence against Women Survey)	A statistically significant association existed between intimate partner physical assault and stalking for femicide victims as well as attempted femicide victims. Stalking is revealed to be a correlate of lethal and near lethal violence against women, coupled with physical assault and is significantly associated with murder and attempted murder. Stalking should be considered a risk factor for femicide.	<u>Strengths:</u> Included data from different cities in USA. First project to specifically isolate cases that resulted in the homicide or attempted homicide of female intimate partners and assess the role of stalking and domestic violence preceding the death/attempt. Robust measures employed. Clear methodology and study design. <u>Limitations:</u> Inclusion criteria for intimate partner relationships – authors do not report

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				HARASS instrument. Form of analysis Chi-square tests				if any same sex were in the sample, but assumption made that sample did not. Forensic nature of sample represents the extreme end of serious violence. Generalisability – USA study. Study quality score: 65% Study quality category: Moderate
18 D	Violence and the prior victim-stalker relationship	Sheridan & Davis (2001) UK, Published	Victim focus Self-report (<i>n</i> = 87) 49% of sample (47 victims) were ex partners of the victim. Community setting Convenience sample of cohort of stalking victims who had contacted the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.	Quantitative Observational study Descriptive study – questionnaire Retrospective design Form of analysis: Chi-Square	To compare the frequency of violent acts perpetrated by ex-intimate, acquaintance and stranger stalkers	Refers to Protection from Harassment Act, 1997 and ‘persistent and unwanted attention’s	Ex-intimates were most aggressive and most intrusive and most likely to threaten and assault third parties as well as the principal victim. Conclusion: Being stalked carries a high risk of violence. Across relational subtypes 40% of respondents had experienced physical assault, including attempted murder, sexual assault or a combination of these acts. Incidents of physical assaults carried out by the	<u>Strengths:</u> Findings replicated previous investigations based on both stalker case files and victim accounts. <u>Limitations:</u> Sample self-referred and contacted charity – sample unlikely to represent all levels of stalking experience. UK population – generalisation. Presence of possible confounding variables. Small sample size. Response rate unknown (estimated at 90%).

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			Mixed typology but included as author separates out the characteristics specific to IPS.				stalkers was found to be 45% for ex-intimates.	Questionnaire not validated and unclear if piloted. Questionnaire completed without access to researcher. Study quality score: 54% Study quality category: Moderate
19 H	Stalking in the Context of Intimate Partner Abuse: In the victims' words	Melton (2007b) Published, USA	Victim focus (n=21) Community setting Method of data collection: Interviews Note: part of a larger study on IPV and the criminal justice system response. Convenience sampling Reports on victim impact (not focus of review) included as	Qualitative Explores stalking in the context of intimate partner abuse (IPA)	Examined victims' perceived motivations for perpetrators who stalked in the context of intimate partner abuse.	"The wilful, repeated, and malicious following, harassing, or threatening of another person" (Coleman, 1997; Meloy, 1996; Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).	Control and anger were often perceived motivations for stalking. Victims also commonly felt that stalking was used to scare them and/or get them to re-establish the relationship.	<u>Strengths:</u> Highlights need for education and public awareness. Clear research focus aims and methodology and rationale. Value qualitative methodology provides information about the context of stalking to help identify areas for future research <u>Limitations</u> Small sample size - unclear whether findings may represent broader trends. Form of analysis not described nor issues relating to reflexivity. Study quality score: 61%

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			paper separates out findings.					Study quality category: Moderate
20 H	Post-Relationship Stalking: The Experience of Victims With and Without History of Partner Abuse	Ferreira & Matos (2013) Portugal, Published	Victim sample Community setting (n=107) Sample women stalked by ex-intimates Comparator group used: Victims with and without a prior history of IPV. Convenience sample	Quantitative: Observational study Retrospective cohort design Data collection method: On-line survey Measures: Partner violence inventory – Part B Version 3; Machado et al 2006 & The Stalking Behaviour Inventory – Version 2 (SBI-2; Grangeia et al 2008) Form of analysis: Parametric tests	To explore the experience of victims and analyse the differences between post-relationship stalking victims with and without history of partner abuse.	“A pattern of persistent harassment behaviours that can be materialised in several types of communicating to, contacting, chasing and monitoring a person” (Grangeia and Matos 2010, p. 124).	Victims who were targets of past violence suffered a more serious post-relationship stalking campaign. Majority of participants reported they had been targets of violence during the former relationship with the stalker. 85% reported experiencing abuse during the prior relationship.	<u>Strengths:</u> Analyses a side of the post-relationship stalking that has been neglected: the experience of women that were victims of this type of violence without having any history of abuse during their prior relationship. Clear aims, methodology and appropriate research design. The use of a comparator group enables conclusions to be drawn which differentiate between the characteristics specific to IPS. <u>Limitations:</u> Convenience sample – limits generalisability. Unable to ascertain the response rate. Small sample size. Retrospective design =- taking only the victims’ point of view. However,

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								victimisation experiences are typically salient in individuals' lives. Consequently, it is suggested memory failure is potentially reduced (i.e., Blumstein et al., 1986; Piquero et al., 2003).
								Study quality score: 70% Study quality category: High
21 H	Intimate partner stalking and femicide: Urgent implications for women's safety	McFarlane et al. (2002) USA, Published	Victim sample (n=821) Sample victims of attempted or actual femicide. 263 femicides and 174 attempted femicides. Data part of a multi-city study to determine the risk factors of actual and attempted intimate	Quantitative: Case control study Data collection methods: Interviews and Stalking and Threatening Behaviours Inventory. Form of analysis: Logistic regressions	Investigated the incidence of serious violence in retrospective relationship. Reports on the associations between IPS, threatening behaviors, and femicide in violent intimate relationships compared with an abused cohort. Also examine the extent to which specific	"A pattern of persistent harassment behaviours that can be materialised in several types of communicating to, contacting, chasing and monitoring a person" (Grangeia & Matos, 2010. p.124)	Victims who were targets of past violence suffered a more serious post relationship stalking campaign. Women who reported the perpetrator followed or spied on them were more than twice as likely to become attempted/actual femicide victims. Conclusions are that certain stalking and threatening behaviours are strong risk factors for lethality.	<u>Strengths</u> : One of the only controlled studies of the relative risk for femicide or attempted femicide and the first to examine the associations with specific stalking behaviours. Longitudinal study across ten cities between 1994 and 2000. <u>Limitations</u> : Forensic nature of sample represents the extreme end of serious violence. Exclusion of women

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			partner femicide		stalking and threatening behaviors are a potential risk factor for femicide.			not in large urban area.
			Control group					Study quality score: 61% Study quality category: Moderate
22 H	The tactical face of stalking	Nicastro et al. (2000) USA, Published	Victim sample (n=55) Retrospective sample of stalking victims case files from Domestic Violence Unit Forensic setting	Quantitative Observational study Data collection methods: Archive/case file data Form of analysis: Analyses of variance and t- tests	To examine the demographic and case profile of stalkers, to explore the relational profile of stalking cases.	“An ongoing course of conduct in which a person behaviourally intrudes upon another’s life in a manner perceived to be threatening” (Meloy, 1998).	A history of violence was reported in the majority of case files and the presence of restraining order had a strong correlation with victimisation. 76% reported a history of IPV.	<u>Strengths:</u> Descriptive research to explore the issue. Addresses clear issue with appropriate study design. <u>Limitation:</u> Fails to comment on limitations. Outcomes measure – unclear. Methodology unclear. Lack of coherence among case files, making it difficult or impossible to recover the times or sequences of stalking incidents, suspect behaviours. Study quality score: 52% Study quality category: Moderate

Thematic synthesis

A thematic synthesis¹⁰ of the included studies was conducted using the principles of thematic analysis (Harden & Thomas, 2010; Popay et al., 2006) to analyse and report on the characteristics associated with IPS perpetrators. For this review, thematic analysis adopted a deductive approach, categorising data under themes rather than creating new conceptual frameworks. The objective of this thematic synthesis was to identify the key differences and similarities across all studies and develop recurring analytical themes through a descriptive synthesis by categorising findings that were conceptually similar. This approach identified relationships between these groupings based on the empirical evidence relevant to the review question (Harden & Thomas, 2010). Popay et al. (2006) highlight the methodological issues relating to a lack of transparency of the process of thematic synthesis. To address this issue, the process relating to how the analysis was conducted is outlined below.

Process of thematic synthesis

The first stage involved familiarisation with the studies. This was critical given the number of studies included in the review. This was achieved through the preliminary synthesis and extracting relevant data onto the table of extracted data/study characteristics. A summary of each study was also conducted. Points of interest were noted and links between studies mapped onto flipcharts.

The second stage involved the identification of key areas of similarity between the studies. This allowed for studies to be further organised onto a more detailed table which captured key findings. This involved organising the data into 'descriptive' categories, which were then further interpreted to generate 'analytical' themes and the final themes in the later stages of analysis. Obtaining the 'descriptive' categories was achieved by generating preliminary codes from the study findings and producing a coding framework to represent potential themes. The codes were formulated by identifying the main and recurrent themes

¹⁰ 'Thematic synthesis' draws on the principles of thematic analysis and identifies the recurring themes from multiple studies, interprets and explains these themes, and draws conclusions in systematic reviews (Petticrew & Roberts, 2005; Popay et al., 2006). Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, organise and report patterns within dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

(pertinent to the review question) across the studies. In the first instance, the data was organised into preliminary 'descriptive themes' which were classified into one of the following categories: (1) Demographics; (2) Clinical characteristics; (3) Motivational factors; (4) Offending history; (5) Stalking characteristics; and (6) Protective factors. Each study was reviewed again with key information from each study being extracted under each preliminary 'descriptive' theme.

The third stage involved reviewing the data and grouping the preliminary 'descriptive' themes using visual methods to construct the relationships between the studies. The final stage involved defining and re-naming the initial 'descriptive' themes through a process of deeper interpretation in order to generate 'analytical' themes and the overall final themes. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring themes in relation to the review question. The final themes explained the specific characteristics associated with IPS perpetrators. Throughout the process, the reviewer recorded analytical notes.

Results

Study characteristics

Twenty-two studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. The variation in populations, study design and analysis employed in the studies precluded the use of meta-analytic techniques. As such, the research designs of the included studies are firstly described, followed by a qualitative synthesis of the findings. Nine studies reported on perpetrator samples [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16], and thirteen on victim samples [6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22]. Two studies [7, 8] used the same data set, reporting separate results. Twenty-one studies were published articles. One study was deemed grey literature in the format of PhD thesis [3]. The studies were published between 1997 and 2018. Sixteen studies originated from the United States, four from Australia, one from Portugal, and one from the United Kingdom. All studies which met the inclusion criteria were included in the review regardless of methodological quality.

Study design

All studies employed an observational research design; eighteen quantitative (descriptive statistics alongside statistical techniques to explore relationships among variable such as Pearson correlation, multiple regression, logistic regression, factor analysis and statistical techniques to compare groups such as T-test, Chi-square analysis, ANOVAs, Mann-Whitney U tests) [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22]; two qualitative (thematic analysis/no specified form of analysis), [6,19]; and two mixed method studies (content analysis alongside regression models, factor analysis alongside no specified form of qualitative analysis) [7, 15].

A comparison group was used in five studies [1, 2, 12, 16, 20]. Comparator groups were either: non-intimate stalking compared to IPS [1, 12]; IPV perpetrators who engaged in stalking behaviours and those that did not [2, 16], and stalking victims with and without a history of IPV [20]. One study exploring femicide, used a control group comprising women who had not reported IPV within the year prior to attempted or actual femicide [21]. Data

was obtained from official archive case file records, standardised tools/psychometrics/surveys or interview methods, or a combination of these methods.

Setting and samples

The sample settings from where participants were recruited varied. Ten studies were selected from community samples [6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21]; three from a specialist stalking intervention facility [4, 10, 12]; four from a community or custodial forensic intervention facility [2, 3, 15, 16]; and three from police settings [1, 11, 22]. No studies selected participants from psychiatric hospital settings. Convenience sampling was the typical sampling strategy employed. Sample sizes varied depending on the research design. Sample sizes reporting on perpetrators ranged from 36 to 1,785. The synthesis of the samples directly reporting on perpetrators comprised of 3,015 IPS perpetrators. Whilst this collective sample appears substantial, it is noted that a large proportion of the sample comes from one study [11 $n=1,785$]. Sample sizes reporting on victim perceptions ranged from 21 to 464. The overall sample size for victims was 1,427.

Measures to assess stalking behaviour

All studies provided a definition of stalking (see Table 3). The definition employed was dependent on the publication year, country of origin and type of psychometric measure used.

A range of psychometrics were used as an outcome measure for stalking perpetration. Ten studies employed self-report surveys/psychometrics to measure stalking [1, 2, 3, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20]. These comprised: *The Revised Zona profile - Threat management research questionnaire* [1]; *Risk Assessment Inventory for Stalking (RAIS)* [2, 3]; *Stalking Behaviour Checklist* [9, 14]; *Harassment in abusive relationships: A self-report scale (HARASS)* [13]; Modified *Stalking Incident Checklist* [15, 16]; Modified Violence and Threats of Violence Against Women in America Survey incorporating twelve items from the Sheridan (1998) HARASS instrument to form the overall 18-item survey [17], and *Stalking Behaviour Inventory – Version 2 (SBI-2)* [20]. Study designs using qualitative approaches employed interviews and questionnaire measures but did not report on their validation or reliability [6, 7, 19].

Quality appraisal

All 22 studies were assessed for methodological quality. No study was excluded based on the outcome of the quality appraisal. Studies varied in overall quality. Using the quality checklists devised for the review, studies achieved quality scores ranging between 39% and 85%. Eight studies were considered 'high quality' (70% or over), 14 moderate, with no papers deemed as low quality. Table 4 displays the results of the quality assessment for each of the 22 studies and quality category assigned. Of note, studies which scored the highest were more recent quantitative papers from Australia from the specialist stalking clinic [4, 10, 12].

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Table 4*Quality appraisal table of included studies*

Study number	Author(s)	Title	Study quality score	Study quality category
1	Palarea, Zona, Lane, and Langhinrichsen-Rohlings (1999)	The dangerous nature of intimate relationship stalking: Threats, violence and associated risk factors	70%	High
2	Norris, Huss, and Palarea (2011)	A pattern of violence: Analyzing the relationship between intimate partner violence and stalking	63%	Moderate
3	Palarea (2005)	An empirical analysis of stalking as a risk factor in domestic violence	75%	High
4	McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, and Senkans (2017)	Reassessing the link between stalking and intimate partner abuse	85%	High
5	Logan, Nigoff, Walker, and Jordan (2002)	Stalker profiles with and without protective orders: Reoffending or criminal justice processing?	61%	Moderate
6	Woodlock (2017)	The Abuse of Technology in Domestic Violence and Stalking	39%	Moderate
7	Brewster (2003)	Power and control dynamics in pre-stalking and stalking situations	61%	Moderate
8	Brewster (200)	Stalking by former intimates: Verbal threats and other predictors of physical violence	43%	Moderate
9	Melton (2007)	Predicting the occurrence of stalking in relationships characterised by domestic violence	75%	High
10	McEwan, Daffern, MacKenzie and Ogloff (2017)	Risk factors for stalking violence, persistence, and recurrence	80%	High
11	Tjaden and Thoennes (2000)	The role of stalking in domestic violence crime reports generated by the Colorado Springs police department	74%	High
12	McEwan, MacKenzie, Mullen, and James (2012)	Approach and escalation in stalking	78%	High
13	Brady and Hayes (2018)	The intersection of stalking and the severity of intimate partner abuse	74%	High

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14	Mechanic, Weaver and Resick (2000)	Intimate partner violence and stalking behavior: Exploration of patterns and correlates in a sample of acutely battered	61%	Moderate
15	Burgess, Harner, Baker, Hartman, and Lole (2001)	Batterers stalking patterns	48%	Moderate
16	Burgess, Baker, Greening, Hartman, Burgess, Douglas, and Halloran (1997)	Stalking behaviors within domestic violence	57%	Moderate
17	McFarlane, Campbell & Wilt, Sachs, Ulrich, and Xu (1999)	Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide	65%	Moderate
18	Sherdian and Davies (2001)	Violence and the prior victim-stalker relationship	54%	Moderate
19	Melton (2007)	Stalking in the Context of intimate partner abuse: In the victims' words	61%	Moderate
20	Ferreira and Matos (2013)	Post-Relationship Stalking: The Experience of Victims With and Without History of Partner Abuse	70%	High
21	McFarlane, Campbell and Watson, (2002)	IPS and Femicide: Urgent Implications for Women's Safety	61%	Moderate
22	Nicasto, Cousins and Spitzberg (2000)	The tactical face of stalking	52%	Moderate

Descriptive data synthesis

A narrative synthesis of the data was undertaken, employing an interpretative approach to infer meaning and understanding of the studies (Popay et al., 2006). The findings are grouped into characteristics specific to IPS. The narrative synthesis describes the patterns and differences in the data. The synthesis of the 22 studies provides an overview of the research which seeks to illuminate insight into the profile of IPS perpetrators. The characteristics are reported as ‘themes’ and are outlined below to aid understanding of the results. The narrative synthesis led to the identification of the following overarching themes which were present and connected the studies: (1) Perpetrator demographics; (2) Relationship history and dynamics; (3) Perpetrator background factors; and (4) Nature of stalking. Each of the overarching and subordinate themes are discussed in turn¹¹.

Table 5

Overarching themes and associated subthemes

Theme Number	Overarching theme	Subtheme
1	Perpetrator demographics	1a) Age 1b) Educational attainment and employment status 1c) Race/ethnicity
2	Relationship history and dynamics	2a) Victim-perpetrator relationship 2b) Prior history of intimate partner violence
3	Perpetrator background factors	3a) Psychological and clinical characteristics 3b) History of substance misuse 3c) Past criminal history
4	Nature of stalking	4a) Onset of stalking: Motivation and triggers 4b) Pursuit tactics 4c) Persistence and duration 4d) Threats and escalation

¹¹ When comparator groups were employed, the results pertinent to these studies are commented on. When there is no comparator group, wider comparisons are made between the review findings and the general literature and this is presented in the discussion section only for brevity.

Findings: Themes within the literature**Theme 1: Perpetrator demographics**

This theme captures the demographic characteristics associated with the profile of IPS, reporting on the socio-economic factors of age, educational level/employment status and race/ethnicity. Most studies centred specifically on age as a demographic factor, with limited studies reporting educational attainment, employment status and ethnicity. All the studies reported demographic variables to some extent, depending on the research design and study aims. Whilst the studies focusing on victim accounts did report on victim demographics, consideration is given here only to perpetrator demographics.

1a) Age.

Twelve studies reported age at the time of stalking perpetration [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 22]. Most studies reported a mean age for the sample. Across studies, the age ranged between 17 and 80 years, with the mean age of 34.3 years.

1b) Educational attainment and employment status.

This theme reflects the educational level and employment status at the time of stalking perpetration. Seven studies reported on this factor [2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 15]. A range of 7-20 years ($M = 12.1$) of education was reported [1], with between 50% and 77% graduating from high school [2, 8] or secondary school [3], 22.6% achieving 2+ years of college education [2] and 11.9% completing post-secondary education [3]. Between 61% and 84% [4, 15] were classed as employed or studying at the time of stalking perpetration, with 43% being employed in blue collar positions, 26% in white collar positions, 22.5% were unemployed and 5% were incarcerated [8]. Stalking allegations were notably more prevalent if the perpetrator was unemployed versus employed (22.3 vs. 16.9%) [11].

1c) Race/Ethnicity.

This theme reflects one of the socio-economic factors underpinning the general definition of demographics. Seven studies reported ethnicity [2, 3, 5, 8, 15, 16, 20]. Like other demographic factors this variable was not the primary focus of the study, with the authors reporting this within their samples. A high proportion of stalking perpetrators were reported as Caucasian [2, 3, 5, 15, 16] with a range of 61% and 95% (M = 79.7%).

Summary: Demographic factors suggest that IPS perpetrators are more likely to be Caucasian. Regarding educational attainment most achieved high school or higher, with unemployment being a more robust characteristic. All studies included demographic variables as descriptors, with no study focusing on demographic factors as predictors to investigate how the relationship between age, race/ethnicity and educational attainment and employment were related to stalking recidivism. The overall quality scores across studies ranged from 43% to 75%.

Theme 2: Relationship history and dynamics

This theme reflects the relationship history of IPS perpetrators. Two subthemes underpin this theme; (1) Victim-perpetrator relationship; and (2) Prior history of intimate partner violence.

2a) Victim-perpetrator relationship.

This subordinate theme represents the relationship status at the onset of the stalking behaviour. The prior relationship history between victim and perpetrator are reported in 12 studies [2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22]. Eleven studies indicate that the stalking campaign began by a current partner while the relationship was intact [2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 22], with between 21% [11] and 80.9% victims reporting this [9].

Perpetrators classified as married at the time of the stalking campaign ranged from 8% to 63.6%. Engaging in a live-in relationship with the victim ranged from 5.8% to 62.3%, with 62.3% reporting they lived in the same residence. Perpetrators classified as former partners

fell into the categories of ‘divorced’ or ‘separated’ at the time of the stalking campaign, with 43% of victims reporting that stalking by an intimate partner began after the relationship ended [11]. Perpetrators who were divorced ranged from 4.9% to 47.3%, separated 10% to 31.1%, with stalking allegations notably more prevalent if the victim and suspected perpetrator were former rather than current intimates [11, 15]. The length of former relationships varied between 4 months to 300 months [20]. Perpetrators reported being in a relationship an average of 5.2 years before the first stalking incident [16]. Two studies reported perpetrators were classified as having multiple relationships; 1.7% were classified as single and dating several people [2], with 9% of victims having had an adulterous relationship [20]. In cases which escalated to severe violence, 64% of femicide victims and 66% of attempted femicide were committed by a current partner, with 36% of femicide victims and 34% of attempted femicide were committed by a former partner [17].

Studies utilising a comparator group were reported in two studies [9, 11]. Compared to IPV perpetrators who do not stalk, the victim-perpetrator relationship was found to be a considerable factor. That is, those no longer in a relationship were more likely to experience more severe stalking, with 47.6% of victims reported this intensified following the breakdown of the relationship [9]. Women who were separated were at greatest risk of stalking, with 36% of victims reporting stalking occurred both before and after the relationship had ended [11].

Summary: Whilst there is an indication IPS perpetrators are less likely to be in a relationship at the onset of the stalking campaign, stalking behaviour is also reported to begin when the relationship is intact. This theme is supported by five high quality studies and seven moderate quality studies, indicating strong evidence for this theme.

2b) Prior history of intimate partner violence.

This subordinate theme describes whether a previous history of IPV during the relationship preceded stalking behaviour. Most studies investigated the prevalence and extent of prior IPV in samples of perpetrators and victims using self-report measures or official case file data. Fourteen studies report on the presence of prior IPV; eleven from

stalking victims [6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21] and three from perpetrator samples [2, 3, 4].

Victims reported the presence of prior IPV ranged from 39% to 85% [6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 18]. Physical abuse ranged between 39% and 62%, psychological abuse 53% to 82% [6, 7, 14] and sexual abuse 8.6% to 82% [6, 8], financial abuse 37% [6], and 5% reporting perpetrators used weapons [11]. In contrast, perpetrator samples reported a previous history of IPV ranging from 24% and 62% [2, 3, 4], with 20% reporting possessing weapons in the home [15]. One study found no relationship between stalking behaviour and previous IPV [1]. Additionally, 69% of stalking victims acknowledged perpetrating physical and/or psychological abuse during the relationship, indicating a level of bidirectionality of IPV [20].

Some studies suggest that IPS is more highly associated with psychological abuse than physical violence [4, 17, 21]. These studies demonstrated a significant relationship between stalking behaviour and previous IPV, with more severe stalking related to higher levels of IPV. The strongest relationships were found to be between stalking behaviours, psychological abuse and sexual aggression [2]. Psychological abuse during the relationship was more common among those who engage in stalking behaviour post-separation [4]. Victims reported psychological abuse to be strongly associated with IPS, suggesting that prior psychological abuse better predicts stalking than prior physical abuse [14], and 31% reporting obsessive and controlling behaviour began early in the relationship [8].

Victims who reported stalking were significantly more likely to have had a protective order than victims who did not report being stalked [11]. Two in three perpetrators had a protective order either before or after their stalking charge, supporting an association between stalking and IPV. It was found that 32% had at least one previous domestic violence order, and 53% had a prior conviction [5].

Summary: The findings suggest that IPS co-occurs with physical, sexual and psychological forms of abuse. The presence of previous psychological violence may be a more robust factor than physical violence, with perpetrators breaching restrictions and supervision measures. No studies in the review reporting on this factor utilised comparator

groups. This theme is supported by six high quality studies and eight moderate quality studies, indicating strong evidence for this theme.

Theme 3: Perpetrator background factors

This theme brings together findings which reflect a range of perpetrator background factors that are pertinent to the profile of IPS perpetrators. There are three interlinked subthemes underpinning this theme; (1) Psychological and clinical characteristics, (2) History of substance abuse; and (3) Past criminal history.

3a) Psychological and clinical characteristics.

This theme brings together findings which reflect the personality pathology and clinical syndromes pertinent to the profile of IPS perpetrators. This includes *Axis I* and *Axis II* disorders. This factor occurred throughout eight of the identified papers [1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 15].

Axis I diagnosis (excluding psychotic disorder) was present in 40.5% of cases [12]. One in fifty were identified as having a psychotic illness (4). A history of physical or mental illness was reported by 12.1%. Victims reported perpetrators had a history of mental or physical illness in 9.5% of cases [9]. Personality disorder was identified in 50.7% of the sample [12]. Personality disorder diagnoses were significantly associated with previous IPV, with 69% meeting the criteria for a single personality disorder, and 21% meeting the criteria for two. The most common diagnosis was *antisocial personality disorder* (65%), *borderline* or *paranoid personality disorders* (both 20.7%) and *obsessive-compulsive personality disorder* (17.2%) [4].

One study [15] identified potential factors reflective of stressful/traumatic life incidents which could be deemed to be considered a trigger that played a role in histories of this group. Critical incidents ranged between 2.4% and 37.6%; with the most pertinent including parental divorce (37.6%), experience of major car accident (30.9%), victim of physical abuse after the age of 16 (27.9%), victim of physical abuse before the age of 16 (25.5%), victim of robbery (25.5%), witness to murder/beating (23%), and financial problems (22.4%).

One study reported on a comparator group [12] and found other subtypes of stalking perpetrators were significantly more likely to be suffering from psychotic illness compared to men who committed IPS [12].

Summary: There are common psychological and personality profiles specific to IPS. The presence of personality disorder is found to be common amongst both IPS and IPV perpetrators. This finding is not unique to stalking perpetrators and is found across many offence types. These findings indicate that personality disorders may serve as a risk factor for IPS. Like IPV perpetrators, the most common personality disorders were found to be antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder. These findings suggest that IPS perpetrators who had a history of prior IPV were likely to present with cluster B personality traits than those who only engaged in stalking behaviour. This theme is supported by six high quality studies and two moderate quality studies, indicating moderate evidence for this theme.

3c) History of substance misuse.

This theme captures how the role of alcohol and drug abuse is considered to play a role in the offence pathway of IPS. Substance misuse problems was a central factor underpinning the histories of IPS perpetrators, with this theme occurring across eleven papers. Four papers reported on the perspective of the victim [7, 8, 9, 13], and seven on perpetrator samples [1, 2, 3, 11, 12 15, 16].

At the time of stalking perpetration, victims reported the prevalence of substance misuse ranged between 53.5% (12) and 72% [7], with perpetrators reporting between 36% (15) and 37% [16]. The prevalence of drug use/dependence reported by perpetrators was 3.8% [15], with victims reporting higher figures, ranging from 51% (8) to 55% [7]. Significantly, substance misuse was statistically significant in predicting physical injury during stalking [8].

Two studies reported on a comparator group. Compared to IPV perpetrators who do not stalk, those who had engaged in IPS were more likely to have alcohol or drug problems [16, 19].

Summary: The findings suggest that substance misuse is a robust factor for IPS perpetrators. Substance misuse was identified across both perpetrator and victim samples, strengthening the reliability that substance misuse is a characteristic of IPS perpetration. Alcohol more so than drug abuse was a significant factor for IPS. This theme is supported by six high quality studies and four moderate quality studies indicating robust evidence for this theme.

3d) Past criminal history.

This theme encapsulates the non-partner past criminal histories of IPS perpetrators. This includes previous offending behaviour and history of supervision failures/breaches of violation orders. Five studies reported this factor [1, 3, 8, 13, 16]. Studies explored this variable through self-report measures from victims or perpetrators, and through accessing case file data.

All studies report a previous history of violence. Overall, rates of history of a prior arrest for violence against a person ranged from 78.6% and 79.3% [3, 13]. Victims of previous violence were distributed evenly across family members, friends/acquaintances and strangers [3]. Weapon use against non-partners was reported by 8% of perpetrators [3]. There were higher levels of non-partner crimes, with an average of 3.2 charges [3]. Violation of orders was found in 36% of cases [13].

Two studies reported on comparator groups [2, 16]. A previous criminal history was greater in IPS perpetrators compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators [2]. The highest correlation differentiating those who reported stalking and those who did not was whether that person had a history of stalking another victim [16].

Summary: There are limited studies which have explored a non-partner offending history and how this may play a role in the profile of IPS perpetrators. In studies where previous

offending behaviour has been explored, the findings indicate that IPS perpetrators are likely to have a criminal history which has included the use of violence and supervision violations. This theme is supported by three high quality studies and two moderate quality studies, indicating moderate support for this theme.

Theme 4: Nature of stalking

This theme represents the nature of stalking and the behavioural factors that play a role in the offence pathway which seeks to build a behavioural profile of this group. There are four subthemes: (1) Onset of stalking: Motivation and triggers; (2) Pursuit tactics; (3) Persistence and duration; and (4) Threats and escalation.

4a) Onset of stalking: Motivation and triggers.

This theme represents the factors underpinning the motivation for stalking to build a profile of the factors that explain the drivers for IPS stalking. Nine studies report on the motivational factors; five from victims [6, 7, 9, 19, 21] and three from perpetrators [3, 15, 16].

Motives included a range of ambivalent behaviours and emotions which included both non-malicious and malicious intent. Both victim studies and perpetrator studies identified similar motives including both non-malicious intent for the stalking behaviour. Non-malicious motives included; reconciliation [7,19], to show love/concern, clear up a misunderstanding/apologise [3 15 19], access to children [7]. Malicious motives included; to regain control [3, 16,19], revenge [3, 7], jealousy [7, 19], anger [19], to create a sense of omnipresence,¹² isolation, and to punish and humiliate [6]. Notably, perpetrators presented with less malicious motives, whereas victim consistently identified the presence of these motives to a great degree than perpetrator samples.

¹² The paper refers to the work of Stark (2012), stating how Stark describes stalking as “the most dramatic form of surveillance used in coercive control . . . [and] falls on a continuum with a range of surveillance tactics whose aim is to convey the abuser’s omnipotence and omnipresence.” (p. 25).

Victims' perceived common triggers for stalking were firstly, relationship breakdown, followed by jealousy and substance misuse [7]. The most common motivation attributed to the stalking behaviour was an attempt to seek contact and reconcile a relationship. The earlier part of the stalking pathway is reported to be driven by attempts to reconcile the relationship [7].

Comparing men who had committed IPV offences who reported stalking to those who did not, the role of fantasy was deemed to play a role in the stalking behaviour [16].

Summary: IPS appears to be driven by a combination of non-malicious and malicious motives. These include a desire to reconcile a relationship, love, need to communicate, desire for revenge, and attitudinal and emotional factors relating to jealousy and anger. As such these factors could be considered an underpinning characteristic of IPS perpetration. Both victim and perpetrator studies identified similar motives with both positive and negative motives underpinning stalking behaviour. The most common motivation attributed to the stalking behaviour was attempts to seek contact and reconcile a relationship. Overall, limited studies explored motivational factors and relationship status to establish how this may play a role in the profile of this group. This theme is supported by two high quality studies [3, 9] and six moderate quality studies [6, 7, 15,16, 19, 21], indicating moderate support for this theme.

4b) Pursuit tactics.

This subordinate theme captures the methods of pursuit employed by IPS perpetrators. Fourteen studies report on this factor [1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20]. This group employ a range of stalking tactics which can be categorised into; direct methods of unwanted communication, approach behaviours, technology-facilitated stalking, and proxy stalking¹³.

Direct methods of unwanted communication: Attempts to communicate with the victim during the stalking campaign was found to be common, with 83.1% engaging in this tactic

¹³ The term 'stalking by proxy' describes how the perpetrator enlists others, either knowingly or unwittingly, in stalking behaviour (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell 2009).

[12]. Multiple forms of communication were reported by 46.5% [10]. The most frequent self-reported behaviour was making unwanted phone calls/leaving unwanted messages/silent phone calls. This ranged between 4.2% to 69% from perpetrators. Sending gifts/flowers/items ranged between 24.2% to 40% [2, 3, 15]. Written communication/sending letters/cards ranged between 10.9% and 31% [2, 3, 10, 15], with 16% of victims reporting this [9]. Seeking information about the victim from others was reported by 18% [2, 3]. The frequency of phone calls/letters was found not be predictive of violence [8].

Approach behaviours: The most frequent self-reported approach behaviour was turning up unexpectedly at the victims' home, workplace or other public place, and ranged from 22% to 61.9% [2, 3, 13, 14]. Physical following ranged from 6% to 22.5% [3, 12]. Loitering, spying, watching ranged from 6.7% to 76% [9, 12, 13, 14], approaching the victim to talk ranged from 62% to 83% [12, 18], trespass on victims' property ranged from 2.9% to 79% [11, 12, 18], with 54% sitting outside victims' home [13]. IPS perpetrators were found to use significantly more physical approach behaviours in contacting victims than other subtypes of stalking perpetrators [1]. Spying, surveillance and physical following was highlighted as the most dangerous behaviours, with 76% of femicide and 85% of attempted femicide reporting at least one episode of stalking within 12 months of the violent incident [17], and 68% of attempted/actual femicides experienced stalking within 12 months of the incident [21]. More than half of the sample reported the perpetrator sitting in the car outside the victims' home or workplace and receiving unwanted telephone calls.

Technology-facilitated stalking: Two studies reported this tactic [6, 14]. Victims reported text messaging and telephoning was the most common method. A further tactic was the use of GPS mobile technology by downloading mobile applications to telephones or placing a GPS device in vehicles. Social media was commonly reported as a further tactic, with Facebook being typically cited by victims as a platform to facilitate stalking behaviour, both to obtain knowledge on the victim but also to publicly humiliate and punish. Victims described the sexualised nature of technology-facilitated stalking and how perpetrators maliciously posted or threatened to share sexual images and videos.

Proxy stalking: This tactic was identified in three studies [3, 6, 9], with ranges between 18% and 52.4%.

Studies with comparator groups, found that victims who reported previous IPV experienced a high number of different acts of stalking than those who did not [20]. Compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators, IPS perpetrators were found to be the most intrusive in their approach, engaging in proxy stalking, trespass and contacting the victim by phone or mail [18].

Summary: Overall, IPS perpetrators employ a variety of methods or patterns of behaviours in pursuit of the victim. The most common tactic appears to be unwanted communication and approach behaviours. This theme is supported by seven high quality studies [1, 3, 12, 11, 9, 30, 20] and seven moderate quality study [2, 6, 15, 18, 8, 14, 19], indicating strong evidence for this theme.

4c) Persistence and duration.

This theme captures the length of time IPS perpetrators engaged in stalking behaviour. Four studies reported on the theme [8, 12, 16 20]. Persistence refers to the duration of a single stalking episode and continued stalking of the same victim (McEwan, Mullen, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2009).

Stalking duration varied considerably across the studies; lasting between one day and persisting for 416 weeks [4]. Stalking occurred on average 4.8 months [16]. Perpetrators report being in a relationship an average of 5.2 years before the first stalking incident [16].

There was no difference in duration identified between men who engaged in IPS with or without a history of previous IPV against the victim [4]. In contrast, there were noteworthy differences in the duration of time victims reported being stalked when there was a history of IPV than victims who did not report a history of IPV (11.4% of victims reporting the stalking episode lasted less than 1 month, 24.8 % indicated durations between 1 and 6 months, 11.4% between 7 and 12 months, 18.1 % between 13 months and 2 years and, 34.3 % lasting more than 2 years). There were also notable differences between the groups with regard to the extent of stalking. Victims reporting a history of IPV stated they had been stalked for longer periods than those who did not report a previous history [20].

Summary: The existing research provides limited insight into the duration of stalking with wide variations identified. This theme is supported by two high quality studies [12, 20] and two moderate quality studies [8, 16] indicating modest support for this theme.

4d) Threats and escalation.

This theme captures the use of threatening communication and acts of physical harm towards either the primary victim or secondary target. Use of threats and escalation to violence was a central factor in stalking characteristics, with this theme occurring in eight papers [1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 18, 20].

Prior threats: Implied threats to the victim was found to be 19.8% [7, 8]; threats to release information harmful to the victim 12% [3]; direct threats of violence or harm to the victim ranged between 9% and 94% [3, 7, 8, 13, 14]; threats to use a weapon 1% [3]; threats to harm third parties ranged between 37.4% and 58% [18, 7]; threats to take the children away 17% [7]; threats of murder-suicide 18% [7]; threats of harm to self ranged between 28% and 30.2% [2, 3, 13, 14]. No threats were made by 27.3% [8].

Property offences: Destruction of victims' and new partners' property/cars ranged between 11% and 48.8% [13, 14].

Use of violence: This ranged between 3.5% and 89% [3, 13]. The discrepancy reflects the self-report by perpetrators that violence was uncommon, compared to victim accounts, which stated physical violence ranged between 45% and 89% [13, 18]. Violence was directed towards secondary victims in (6%) of cases; usually the new partner of a primary victim, but also close relatives, housemates and police [4]. Use of weapons ranged between 5% [11] and 39.6% when the stalking had escalated to attempted/actual homicide [21].

Homicide: Two studies explored stalking as a risk factor for homicide [17, 21]. Stalking appears to be a risk factor for lethal IPV. Findings suggest that the rates of stalking in intimate partner homicide victims ranged from 23.4% to 76%. In cases where stalking

escalated to attempted/actual homicide, 54.5% had previously threatened to kill the victim [21].

Compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators, IPS perpetrators were more likely to threaten or assault third parties and the principal victim [18]. They were twice as likely to threaten the victim (66.7%) compared to other subtypes (33.3%) and were more likely to commit violence against persons (76.2%) compared to other subtypes (23.8%). IPS perpetrators were also more likely to commit violence against property (75.7%) than other subgroups (24.3%). Cases in which a threat was made toward a person or property and followed by violence toward persons or property were three times as likely to occur in IPS cases (73.8%) than other subtypes (26.3%) [1]. Furthermore, 76.1% of IPS cases made threats with violence in 38% of cases, with 87% escalating from uttering threats to using violence [12].

Summary: The use of threats is widely cited as a characteristic of IPS, with evidence indicating that the presence of prior threats is a predictor of future violence. This group are more likely to use threats and commit acts of violence compared to other stalking subtypes, and more likely to act with violence if threats have been made. There is robust evidence to indicate a link between intimate partner homicide and stalking. This theme is supported by five high quality studies [1, 3, 9, 12, 20] and three moderate quality studies [7, 8, 18] indicating robust evidence for this theme.

Discussion

This review aimed to advance understanding of what is known about the characteristics of IPS perpetrators. The overall objective of the review was to inform whether IPV interventions have the potential to address the criminogenic needs of IPS perpetrators. Twenty-two studies were selected against the inclusion and exclusion criteria and are included in the review. The key findings are now discussed in relation to the wider literature, and in doing so comparisons are made to the existing IPV and general stalking literature.

The key findings – Evaluation and interpretation

Theme 1: Perpetrator demographics

This theme captures the demographic characteristics associated with IPS perpetrators. Overall, demographic factors specific to IPS suggest that this subtype is more likely to be Caucasian. They do not appear to have problems relating to educational attainment, but more commonly experience problems relating to employment.

Where there is commonality between IPS and IPV offending relates to problems with employment. The current review indicates that unemployment is a demographic characteristic for IPS. Similarly, unemployment is cited as a risk factor for IPV (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012), and severe/lethal IPV (Sonis & Langer, 2008; Tailieu & Brownridge, 2010). Comparisons between the current review findings and other subtypes of stalking perpetrators indicates that unemployment is consistently correlated with increased risk for stalking violence (James & Farnham, 2003; Meloy, 1998). These findings robustly support the wider literature which suggests unemployment is deemed a risk factor for criminality and general violence (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

A further area of commonality between IPS perpetrators and other stalking subtypes is age. The findings from the current review suggest the age range for IPS appears widely distributed between 17 and 80 years, with a mean age of 34.3. This finding is consistent with the general stalking literature, with the age of perpetrators spanning from teens to 70 years and above (Jordan, Logan, Walker, & Nigoff, 2003; Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001). In

contrast, age is consistently reported as a protective factor, with older age decreasing IPV perpetration (Capaldi et al., 2012). The literature exploring ethnicity has demonstrated inconclusive findings (Schwartz-Watts & Morgan, 1998).

All included studies provided demographic variables as descriptors. No study focused on demographic factors as predictors to investigate how the relationship between age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment and employment were related to stalking recidivism. With regard to the variable of ethnicity, it was observed that Caucasians were overrepresented in the samples. However, it is unclear whether the findings indicate that proportionately perpetrators matched the demographics of the area from where the sample was drawn. No studies utilised comparison groups. Consequently, no conclusive findings can be drawn on the relevance of the demographic profiles of IPS perpetrators. However, there appears to be stronger evidence for problems with unemployment as a characteristic for IPS. It is noteworthy that no study has explored the role of intelligence quotient (IQ) specifically with IPS perpetrators, an area which would benefit from further research. Nonetheless, MacKenzie, James, McEwan, Mullen, & Ogloff (2010) conducted the first study to investigate intelligence in stalking perpetrators. This study was excluded from the review on the basis of mixed gender and subtypes of perpetrators in the sample. The findings illustrated that verbal IQ was significantly lower than performance IQ in stalking perpetrators. The findings countered the previous literature which suggested stalking perpetrators present with average or above-average intelligence and possess superior cognitive abilities compared to the general offending population (Harmon, Rosner & Owens, 1995; Kienlen, Birmingham, Solberg, O'Regan, & Meloy, 1997; Meloy & Gothard, 1995; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002; Schwartz-Watts & Morgan, 1998). As such, research focusing specifically on the role of intelligence quotient (IQ) for IPS would have significant value in the design and delivery of intervention for this group. This would ensure that interventions are designed in line with the cognitive abilities of those who engage in intervention.

Theme 2: Relationship history and dynamics

The findings suggest that IPS co-occurs with physical, sexual and psychological forms of abuse. The presence of previous psychological violence may be a more robust factor than physical violence. There are mixed findings regarding the onset of the stalking campaign;

with some perpetrators engaging in stalking during the relationship, and others following the dissolution of the relationship.

Problems with intimate relationships is cited as risk factor for IPV (Kropp & Hart, 2015), with separation/threats to terminate the relationship considered a critical factor (Dutton & Kropp, 2000; Williams & Houghton, 2004). Femicide, particularly during the first year of separation, is also most likely to occur in the context of separation/termination of a relationship (Morgan & Gilchrist, 2010). Severe controlling behaviours and emotional abuse are strongly associated with IPV (Brownridge et al., 2013). Within the stalking literature, a prior intimate relationship is regarded as the most powerful predictive factor for stalking violence (Eke et al., 2011; Meloy, 2007).

Summary: The above findings indicate that perpetrators of IPS are not a homogenous group. They are likely to present with an array of individual factors that have the potential to trigger stalking behaviour when the relationship is intact and post-relationship. Whilst the review findings indicate a link between stalking and IPV, supporting the view that IPS should be regarded as a variant or extension of IPV, the findings are best interpreted with caution. Specifically, studies have utilised varying methodologies. Significantly, no studies utilised comparator groups and few studies have examined factors that may predict IPS. The studies span a range of countries and publication dates, resulting in different definitions of IPV and stalking that will have changed following legislation. As such, the findings may not be translatable directly to every relationship situation or country. Studies exploring relationships are susceptible to confounding variables; specifically, a lack of clarity on what definitions were employed to constitute relationship status and who the victims of stalking were. An interesting area worthy of further exploration would be to investigate relationship patterns of this group.

Theme 3: Perpetrator background factors

The empirical evidence to date suggests Cluster B personality disorder/traits (i.e. borderline, narcissistic and antisocial) and problems with substance misuse are a characteristic of IPS. This group are likely to have a criminal history which includes the use of non-partner violence and supervision violations.

These findings parallel the IPV literature with the above factors commonly identified in IPV perpetrators (Dutton & Kropp, 2000). This suggests IPS perpetrators possess some similar characteristics to those who commit IPV offences, specifically the borderline-dysphoric typology of IPV perpetrators (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). This subgroup of IPV perpetrators are considered to engage in moderate to severe physical, sexual and psychological abuse, have a history of extra-familial/criminal behaviour, and possess borderline traits. This group are more psychologically distressed, emotionally volatile and present with a previous history of substance use. This finding supports similarities in the profile of IPS and IPV, and the view of Douglas and Dutton (2001). Alcohol abuse is recognised as a critical risk factor for IPV (Capaldi et al., 2012; Corvo & Johnson, 2013). In contrast, drug use has not been widely explored as a risk factor for IPV (Capaldi et al., 2012).

Within the early stalking literature, Cluster B personality disorder/traits has been consistently linked with stalking behaviour (Meloy, 1998). A recent study by Nijdam-Jones et al. (2018) was excluded from the current review on the basis that it did not meet the inclusion criteria due to a mixed subgroup of stalking perpetrators ($n=137$, with 76.7% were classified as IPS perpetrators). The study found 72.3% met the criteria for a clinical diagnosis for an Axis I disorder (mood, anxiety, substance use, or psychotic disorder), and 49.6% for one or more personality disorders. In contrast to previous research, this study identified the presence of *schizoid* and paranoid personality disorder. It is argued that a limitation of research in this area has focused on Cluster B personality disorder (Mullen, et al., 1999; Rosenfeld, 2003), with little emphasis given to the possible presence of a wider range of personality disorders (Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018). It is argued that much of the earlier research has mixed stalking subtypes in the samples, and is based on archival reviews of forensic evaluations or police files, with samples referred for psychiatric assessment. Consequently, these samples may inflate psychopathology (Nijdam-Jones et al. 2018). As such this is an area which warrants further exploration.

Personality disorder is widely cited in the offender populations generally (Andrews & Bonta, 2006), and is found to be associated with an increased risk of offending, violence and violence recidivism (Otto & Douglas, 2011). Substance use has also been identified as a risk

factor for violence and recidivism in the general stalking literature (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Rosenfeld, 2003, 2004; James & Farnham, 2003).

IPS perpetrators are likely to have a criminal history, specifically linked to the use of violence and supervision violations. This parallels the existing IPV literature, suggesting an antisocial lifestyle is deemed a risk factor for IPV (Hilton, et al., 2004), along with a prior history of violence perpetrated against non-intimate family members (Hendy, Burns, Can & Scherer, 2012), and previous supervision violations (Kropp & Hart, 2015; Russell, 2012).

The findings parallel the general violence literature, suggesting an antisocial lifestyle and prior criminal history are risk factors for general violence (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Furthermore, within the general violence literature there is a strong link between childhood trauma, victimisation, general criminality and violence (Douglas, Hart, Webster & Belfrage, 2013). However, limited empirical literature has explored the role of trauma and life events in IPV offending and other subtypes of stalking perpetrators in order to make clear comparisons. Nonetheless, it is known that stress and experience of child abuse have been identified as risk factors for IPV (Capaldi et al., 2012), with general trauma symptoms being more prevalent for IPV perpetrators compared to a control group (Corvo & Johnson, 2013). Hence, there is a gap in understanding the role these factors play in IPS perpetration.

The general stalking literature has found mixed empirical evidence for the role of a prior criminal history. Some studies report a previous criminal history of prior arrest, convictions and violence is associated with an increased risk of stalking violence (Mullen, et al., 1999, Sheridan & Davies, 2001), whilst a meta-analysis by Rosenfeld (2004) found this was not a consistent finding.

Summary: The review findings suggest Cluster B personality disorder/traits, problems with substance misuse, a prior history of non-partner offending, and supervision violations, are likely characteristics of IPS perpetrators. Whilst this is a robust finding, with the use of some comparator groups, there are limitations in the study designs supporting this theme. Substance misuse has been identified across both perpetrator and victim samples, strengthening the reliability that substance misuse is a characteristic of IPS. Whilst this is a notable finding, gaps remain in understanding the role this plays in the life history of this

population. Questions remain as to the function served by substance use, and whether this is due to underlying dependency or a coping strategy in response to relationship breakdown. Alcohol misuse is more prevalent than drug misuse, and it is questionable as to whether this is a lifestyle issue, with greater access to alcohol than drugs, or preference. The inclusion of one study highlighting potential links with trauma, indicates that this is an area worthy of further exploration and could be a factor for this group.

Theme 4: Nature of stalking.

The findings suggest that IPS appears to be driven by a combination of non-malicious and malicious motives, with common pursuit methods being unwanted communication and approach tactics. Critical behavioural characteristics pertinent to this group are threats, following through on threats, and escalation to violence. There is robust evidence to indicate a link between intimate partner homicide and stalking. The duration of the stalking pattern ranges significantly between cases.

Motives included a range of ambivalent behaviours and emotions which included both non-malicious and malicious intent. Non-malicious motives centred on a desire for reconciliation, to show love/concern, clear up a misunderstanding/apologise, and to access children. Malicious motives included power and control, revenge, jealousy, and anger. Since completion of the review, further evidence by Nijdam-Jones et al. (2018) is in-keeping with these findings strengthening this finding further. As such, the above factors are likely to be characteristics of IPS perpetrators.

It is notable that the motives for IPS appear to be similar to those identified in the IPV literature. Common motivations for IPV perpetrators have been identified as: power/control, self-defence, communication difficulties, use of violence as an expression of negative emotion, retaliation, and jealousy (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, McCullars, & Misra, 2012). In contrast, different motives have been identified in other subtypes of stalking perpetrators, with common motivations including; a delusional belief in romantic destiny or a sadistic urge to torment the victim (Miller, 2012). Additionally, the motivations for adolescent stalking appears to differ somewhat from those seen in adults. Stalking by intimate partners was less frequent, whereas rejection generally was a motive (Howard, Qiu, & Boekeloo,

2003). What can be concluded from this comparison between groups is that the motives of IPS appear to parallel the motives of IPV perpetrators apart from the motive to 'show love'.

The length of time perpetrators of IPS engages in stalking behaviour varied across the studies; ranging between one day to 416 weeks. There was no difference in duration between IPS perpetrators with or without a history of previous IPV against the victim. Notably there are some similarities between the groups; in that the duration of IPV can range from infrequent/isolated acts to repeated incidents extending months, years or decades (Kropp & Hart, 2015). Patterns of repeated IPV evidenced by victim report or criminal charges/convictions has been identified as a risk factor for IPV recidivism (Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2004; Logan, Walker, Shannon, & Cole 2008; Russell, 2012). Within the general stalking literature, stalking patterns have been noted between 1 day and 26 years. The average duration ranges between 16 months (Mohandie et al., 2006) and 22 months Spitzberg and Cupach (2007). Across the stalking literature there is evidence to suggest that most stalking desists prior to 12 months (Mullen et al., 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Use of threats, property offences, and escalation to violence was a central factor in IPS perpetrators. The use of threats is widely cited as a characteristic of this group, with evidence indicating that the presence of prior threats is a predictor of future violence. They are more likely to use threats and violence compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators and more likely to act with violence if threats have been made. The findings from this review provide robust evidence to indicate a link between intimate partner homicide and stalking. A study by Monckton Smith, Szymanska, and Haile (2017) was excluded from the review on the basis that it did not meet the inclusion criteria due to a mixed sample of stalking subtypes ($n= 358$, 71% were IPS perpetrators; 51% intact relationships, 20% separated). This study strongly supports the findings of this theme, with stalking behaviour identified as present in 94% of cases.

The findings from the review parallels the IPV literature indicating strong evidence for this theme. Significantly, threats to kill is a risk factor for IPV (Dutton & Kropp, 2000). Within the general stalking literature, the use of threats has also been found to be a correlate of stalking violence (Rosenfeld, 2004). Threats are found to be a critical risk factor in the

wider offending literature (Warren, Mullen, & McEwan, 2014; Warren, Mullen, Thomas, Ogloff, & Burgess, 2008).

The use of technology as a method to facilitate stalking behaviour within this group is somewhat limited, indicating a gap in the understanding how this group are using technology to pursue victims. Research suggest this group are less likely to use cyberstalking methods compared to other subtypes of stalking perpetrators. It is hypothesised that this is due to the existing relationship and knowledge of the victim. Nonetheless, there is the view that this group may use technology as a method to ‘monitor’ a partner, or a tool to punish ex-partners (Petrocelli, 2005; Sheridan & Grant, 2007). Spence-Diehl (2003) suggests that qualitative research has the potential to illuminate insight into this area. This is an area which warrants further exploration, as it is noted there is a paucity of research in this area with no recent studies.

Implications for theory, policy and forensic practice

The findings of this review further inform the academic literature and have strong practical application for international policymakers and practitioners in informing guidance on intervention pathways for IPS perpetrators. With this in mind consideration is now given to outlining the key implications of this study, highlighting the importance of integrating theory and practice.

Implications for theory

The findings can be placed in the context of the nested ecological model (see chapter one), which provides an integrated framework to explain how IPV can be explained by the interaction and interplay of multiple factors; personal, situational and sociocultural factors between an individual and their social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dutton, 1985; Heise 1998). The findings indicate that the characteristics of IPS perpetrators fall across different levels of the nested ecological model, suggesting that no one single theory can adequately explain IPS. Figure 3 maps the findings of this review onto the levels of the nested ecological model.

Risk factors and characteristics associated with IPV:

Characteristics associated with IPS:

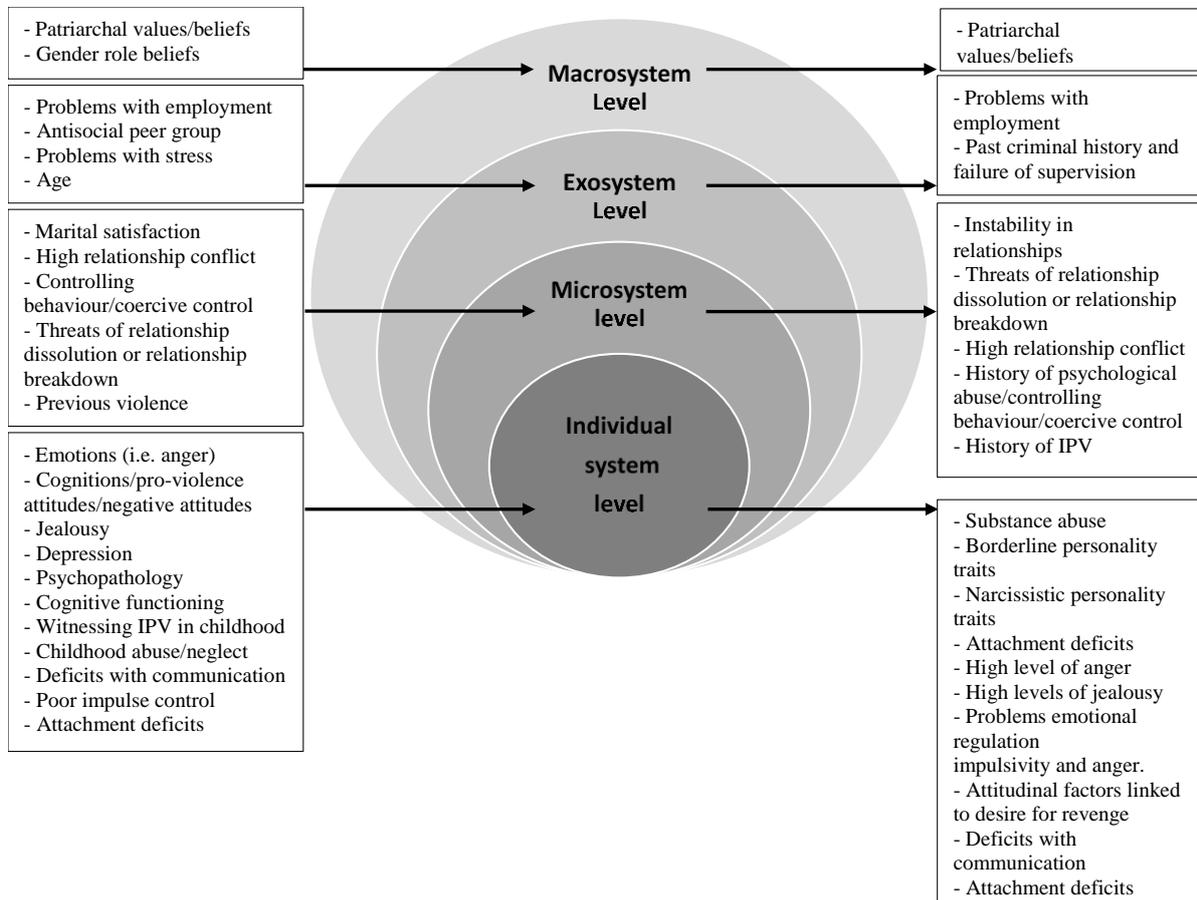


Figure 3: The nested ecological model: Risk factors and characteristics associated with IPV and IPS (Adapted from BBR Theory Manual, 2015).

These review findings have further illuminated the theoretical debate as to whether IPS should be conceptualised as a variant or continuation of IPV, or a distinct but related offence and the implications for intervention. The study has identified there are some characteristics of IPS perpetrators (i.e., presence of personality disorder, substance misuse, history of IPV, prior criminal history, and problems with employment) which are deemed to be homogenous (i.e. similar to IPV perpetrators) and some characteristics (i.e. age, type of personality disorder, high levels of psychological violence, and behavioural patterns) which are heterogeneous (i.e. they are deemed more prevalent to IPS perpetrators). Specifically, age

does not appear to be a protective factor, and there may be differences in the personality profiles of men who engage in stalking behaviour (Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018).

A key finding emerging from this review is that the literature suggests there are likely to be subtypes of IPS perpetrators. Consequently, the review illustrates the need to consider the heterogeneity of IPS perpetrators. This finding parallels the IPV typology literature and the view that IPV perpetrators are not a homogenous group (see chapter one; Dixon & Browne, 2003; Holtzworth-Munroe 2000; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). Indeed, Dutton and Kerry (1999) suggest IPS fits the borderline-dysphoric typology. This hypothesis suggests that men who engage in IPS are likely to present with the following characteristics: Behavioural factors (i.e. use moderate to severe partner violence, use some violence outside the home), personality characteristics (psychological distress with borderline personality traits and a substance use problems), and interpersonal characteristics (i.e. anxious attachment style and jealousy). Indeed, the findings of the current review do lend support for this hypothesis across some of these factors. To this end, the findings suggest there is merit in reviewing the current stalking typology research and considering how IPS can be explained both from the general stalking and IPV literature.

Consequently, there is value in understanding the heterogeneity of IPS perpetrators when considering intervention pathways. The findings of the review indicate there are potentially the following subtypes of IPS perpetrators:

- (1) Men with a history of IPV characterised by physical abuse who engage in stalking behaviour both when the relationship is intact and following the breakdown of the relationship.
- (2) Men with no history of sexual or physical violence, rather high levels of coercive control within the relationship, who engage in stalking behaviour following the breakdown of the relationship.
- (3) Men with a history of both physical violence and coercive control within the relationship, who engage in stalking behaviour following the breakdown of the relationship.

- (4) Men with no history IPV who stalk a former partner following the breakdown of a relationship.
- (5) Men with a history of both physical and/or psychological violence whose stalking behaviour escalates to sexual or physical violence/homicide.

Implications for intervention: Future directions

The findings show some promise for informing future directions in informing intervention pathways for this population and guiding professionals working with this group. It is intended that the characteristics identified in this review will assist practitioners in exploring key areas during risk assessment, aid robust case formulation and intervention planning. There would be considerable merit in practitioners recognising the individual risk and needs of each perpetrator in order to identify the factors that were central to the commissioning of the stalking behaviour, rather than assuming homogeneity of IPS perpetrators.

Whilst IPS perpetrators appear to share some commonalities with IPV perpetrators, indicating that IPV intervention may be beneficial for addressing some characteristics of this group, it is also evident this group may have distinct characteristics that need addressing through additional methods and techniques not currently employed on IPV interventions. Critically, IPS perpetrators may have a greater level of criminogenic need compared to IPV perpetrators, specifically relating to the possible presence of other type of personality disorder and characteristics which drive psychological violence.

No studies explored the role of obsession. Given the definition of stalking is underpinned by obsessive thinking, it is hypothesised that this should be regarded as a critical factor in stalking perpetration that current IPV interventions are not directly addressing.

The finding that IPS perpetrators are not a homogenous group has wider implications for policy makers and those designing interventions. Significantly, interventions specific to this group are not compatible with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to intervention. This has significant implications for the intervention pathway of each subtype of IPS outlined above.

For subtypes with a history of IPV characterised by physical abuse who engage in stalking perpetration both when the relationship is intact and following the breakdown of the relationship, IPV interventions may be appropriate. This group may benefit from the existing IPV interventions delivered across HMPPS. For those subtypes who have not engaged in physical or sexual violence but have a history of coercive control but go onto stalk a former partner, or those whose stalking behaviour escalates to violence/homicide, IPV interventions may require adaptation to target and address the factors that played a role in driving the persistence and destructive factors underpinning their stalking behaviour. This review supports the views expressed in previous literature (McEwan et al. 2017; Spitzberg et al., 2010). However, it is not possible to infer that IPV intervention will address all the needs of IPS perpetrators.

Nonetheless, intervention should be guided by the RNR principles in that interventions should be matched to an individual's level of risk, and criminogenic needs (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). With this in mind, and in light of the review findings, adopting a bespoke approach to intervention is warranted for this group. Significantly, there is likely to be merit in considering sequencing of interventions, particular given the findings suggest this group presents with characteristics linked to substance abuse and psychopathology, which may be deemed intervention interfering factors. Some individuals may require motivational interventions before engaging in more robust offence-focused work or alternative interventions.

An alternative intervention pathway for individuals with personality disorder may be the *Offender Personality Disorder Pathways Service*. This service was introduced in 2011 as a strategy to manage perpetrators who had committed offences who had personality disorder within the Health and Criminal Justice systems (NOMS, 2013). This pathway would provide intervention across a range of settings in HMPPS either in a custodial setting or community settings. This service is designed for high risk perpetrators with emotional, relationship and behavioural difficulties, and as such may be an amenable option for those subtypes who have a history of IPS and personality disorder.

Strengths and limitations of the review

The review has employed systematic methods to update and contribute to the existing and evolving stalking literature to synthesise evidence of the characteristics specific to IPS perpetrators. It is acknowledged the review is unlikely to present a complete representation, rather it is based on the available empirical literature to present an overview of what is known about the profile of this group. Consequently, the aims of the review have been met, with the findings seeking to inform intervention approaches for IPS perpetrators. The review also identifies gaps in the literature where future research is warranted.

Adopting a systematic approach limits bias in the search process and provides transparency in reporting the findings (Sayers, 2007). Thus, search terms were comprehensive, covering a range of terms and spellings. Search methods were robust, with the review author spending considerable time hand-searching and contacting experts. The quality assessment incorporated specific assessments to capture the diversity of study designs for quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies. Whilst it is acknowledged this variation brings challenges in drawing conclusions, this approach captures the diversity of study designs within the extant literature. Furthermore, the inclusion of both perpetrator and victim samples from a variety of settings provides a more representative overview.

Nonetheless, the review is not without limitations, influencing the strength of the conclusions drawn. Whilst a pre-defined inclusion/exclusion protocol seeks to reduce bias, this approach does not fully eliminate bias. Sources of bias relate to restricting searching to five electronic databases and excluding papers not written in English language. These restrictions may have omitted relevant papers. A further limitation relates to the quality assessments developed and the robustness of reviewing studies of different types. For example, consideration could have been given to using the quality checklist specific for mixed-methods reviews (i.e. Hawker, Payne, Kerr, Hardey, & Powell, 2002) due to the heterogeneity of paradigms and methods of studies included in the review. Due to time constraints, all studies were extracted by the review author, with only a sample subjected to inter-rater reliability, potentially impacting on the overall outcome of the quality assessments.

Strengths and weaknesses of the included studies

The studies varied in overall quality; attaining quality scores between 39% and 85%. Eight of the studies were 'high quality' (70% or over), and 14 'moderate quality' (69-30%); three studies were at the lower end [6, 8, 15]. As identified in the quality assessments, there were methodological limitations among the studies which require consideration.

Study design.

Given the diversity of study designs, there were distinct aims, methodology and analysis, which brings challenges in synthesising findings. No papers employed a randomised control design or other experimental designs. No longitudinal studies were found which would seek to ascertain direction of causality for risk factors.

Methodological design was restricted to observational studies with potential for high risk of bias and confounding variables. As such, the limitations of this research design are the inability to determine direction of causality and whether the characteristics have a predictive relationship with the outcome or are simply co-occurring. The studies employed several data collection techniques; case file data, psychometric/questionnaire methods and interview. To this end, the limitations of these methods apply to this review. All studies adopted a retrospective design from a convenience sample and were reliant on the quality of self-report from both perpetrators and victims. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, this method lends itself to bias in the direction of underreporting or the potential for exaggerated accounts. It is noted that false stalking reports have been identified in the research (Pathé, Mullen & Purcell, 1999). For perpetrators there is the potential for bias due to social desirability and concealing unhelpful emotions regarding their offending. This approach is also reliant upon participants being aware of and accurately describing their experiences. For studies using case file data, there is reliance on the accuracy and quality of retrospective clinical notes/police file data. Furthermore, the samples are not reflective of all levels of offending, with clinical samples predominantly including low-level and moderate-level perpetrators. There is a lack of samples from prison settings to reflect those convicted of serious stalking behaviour deemed high-level perpetrators.

A significant limitation was the lack of studies utilising a control/comparison group. Whilst five studies used a comparison group, only two studies employed a comparison group to differentiate IPV perpetrators who engaged in stalking behaviours and those that did not [2, 16]. The lack of comparison/control groups makes it unclear whether the themes and patterns identified were unique to IPS perpetrators. Furthermore, the small sample sizes in some studies indicates the results should be interpreted with caution and may not be generalisable.

Whilst all studies appeared to use appropriate research designs to address their research question and aims, several papers did not explicitly describe their research question, research design and methodology and failed to describe the rationale for their chosen methods. This left the reader inferring the design or specific outcomes measured from the write up of the method section or detailed research of the paper.

All the studies employing quantitative methods provided a description of how the analyses were conducted and employed appropriate statistical tests, with some studies providing greater detail than others. There was a lack of robust qualitative studies within the review. All studies adopting qualitative methods came from victim samples. All were deemed to be moderate quality, each lacking transparency in reporting and clarity on research design. The papers did not describe a justification on the theoretical underpinnings of the research, they lacked clarity on their methodological approach, and in some studies failed to state the method of analysis which significantly impacted on the quality of the research. No studies described the validity and reliability measures and failed to describe the process of analysis and development of themes or issues pertaining to reflexivity.

This review set out to overcome some of the difficulties in drawing conclusions from existing studies on one specific subtype of stalking perpetrator, by focusing on research specific to IPS perpetrators. However, it is noted that some of the included studies did include mixed typologies or female/mixed gender samples within the sample [10, 11, 12]. The rationale to include these studies was that the authors separated out of the findings across specific typologies.

Issue of definition and outcome measures.

It is noteworthy that whilst all studies provided a definition of stalking, the definitions of stalking across the studies varied. This is due to the diversity of publications across a twenty-year timespan and across different countries with different and changing legislation. Differences in the criminal justice system internationally bring with it challenges of generalising the findings to other countries. It is noteworthy there was an overrepresentation of studies from the USA. Consequently, due to cultural variables the results may not be representative of IPS perpetrators internationally. There is a need for more diverse studies from different countries. There were also a range of outcome measures used for both stalking and IPV, some of which are not standardised or validated. There is considerable variability in the theoretical models that underpin the conceptual frameworks of the included studies. For example, some adopted a feminist perspective, particularly those which draw on victim samples, which may impact on the overall findings.

In summary, there are limitations to the studies within this review, which impact on the overall findings. Nonetheless, the review has identified some key characteristics, which are reasonable to conclude are central to the profile of IPS perpetrators.

Implications for future research

Half the studies come from the last decade, demonstrating that the stalking literature is an evolving area. The review has identified gaps in the literature where further high-quality research is warranted in order to support and address the recommendations of this review and inform forensic practice. There is a lack of research which has enriched the stalking literature from the field of neuropsychology and new theoretical frameworks (i.e. implicit theories).

Whilst it is recognised there are challenges with developing robust research designs in the study of stalking perpetrators, research designs employing prospective longitudinal studies have the potential to further identify and validate the risk factors and characteristics of this group. Cohort studies can explore how risk factors and characteristics interact and relate to each other over time. Such designs would require robust planning through multiple

multidisciplinary agencies. However, identifying those perpetrators who come to the attention of the police for IPV and stalking early on and following this cohort overtime would provide useful data. This would illuminate insight into offending patterns to examine the predisposing antecedents and common features that underpin general offending behaviour.

This review originally attempted to establish and report on the protective factors of IPS perpetrators. Strikingly, there is no literature in this area resulting in a lack of understanding as to what prevents stalking behaviour and what are the protective factors for this group. Insight into this area has the capacity to feed into prevention and risk management and is an area which warrants urgent exploration. Whilst research is emerging, there is a dearth of research which has explored the factors linked to stalking persistence. Greater focus to this area would provide insight into strategies that encourage desistance (Bjorklund, Hakkanen-Nyholm, Sheridan, Roberts, & Tolvanen, 2010; James, et al., 2010). This is a challenging area to investigate and would require robust and creative research designs. Many of the reviewed studies involve single individuals rather than interplay between victim and perpetrator. Understanding how this behaviour emerges in the relationship and in response to relationship breakdown from both victim-perpetrator perspective would provide greater validity on the pathway to IPS.

The review has highlighted the need for greater variety of study designs to be employed to investigate the characteristics of this group. Much of the research to date is based on archival reviews of forensic evaluation or police files (Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018). There is a need for studies to be conducted in forensic settings and particularly qualitative studies which focus on the perspective of the perpetrator. A notable finding from the review was there were no qualitative studies which have investigated the characteristics from the perspective of the perpetrator, and no studies which have explored the role of obsession. This is a striking finding given obsession underpins the definition of stalking and is regarded as a critical factor in stalking perpetration. The value of adopting qualitative research to obtain insight into the context of stalking was highlighted in a recent study by Nijdam-Jones et al., (2018). This approach has the potential to illuminate the pathway to IPS, by eliciting understanding of the interplay between the underlying cognitions, emotional reactions, response to life situations, and perceptions of their victims using detailed narratives of men

who have committed such behaviour. A phenomenological approach would provide access to a 'sensitive' subject and give voice to the perpetrators to understand the function of their behaviour and experiences that cannot be accessed through other research methods.

Conclusion

The findings illuminate understanding of what is known about the characteristics of IPS perpetrators. The findings highlight that there are some characteristics of IPS (i.e. presence of personality disorder, substance misuse, history of IPV, prior criminal history, problems with employment) which are deemed to be homogenous (i.e. similar to IPV perpetrators), and some characteristics (i.e. age, type of personality disorder, high levels of psychological violence, behavioural patterns) which are heterogeneous in that they are deemed more prevalent to IPS perpetrators. These findings indicate there may be subtypes of IPS perpetrators, and intervention may need to be tailored accordingly. This review demonstrates that whilst the review has provided insight into the characteristics of this group, there are methodological limitations indicating that the overall findings remain tentative due to study design and range of quality levels of the included studies. These limitations highlight the need for ongoing research to fully understand the similarities and differences between perpetrators of IPS and IPV. As highlighted by the current review, qualitative research which focuses on the perspective of the perpetrator is sparse and hearing the voice of perpetrators will aid insight into this population. Building the evidence-base to include a range of study designs will further provide insight into this group and inform intervention approaches.

CHAPTER THREE

“YOU WANT TO CATCH THE BIGGEST THING GOING IN THE OCEAN, SO IT’S SORT OF LIKE A LITTLE CHASE’: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF MALES WHO ENGAGE IN INTIMATE PARTNER STALKING USING INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Abstract

Background/purpose: This study employs a qualitative phenomenological exploration of the ‘lived’ experiences of intimate partner stalking (IPS) perpetrators serving a custodial sentence for an offence related to intimate partner violence (IPV). The purpose of this study is to capture the nature and complexity of the experiences of the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator. The study seeks to provide a unique understanding of how perpetrators attribute meaning to their behaviour, illuminating the underpinning cognitive characteristics and emotions that play a role in their behaviour.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven men with a history of IPS behaviour. The resultant transcripts were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Findings: Five superordinate themes reflecting participants’ experiences were identified: (1) ‘The quest for attention and affection creating connection’; (2) ‘Conflicted identity and extremes of self’; (3) ‘My life, a film set’; (4) ‘Game-playing: ‘One step ahead’, and (5) ‘Severed connections, changing the game-play’. The findings are presented in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks which seek to explain stalking perpetration.

Conclusion: The analysis provides a greater understanding of men who have engaged in IPS behaviour, demonstrating how hearing the perspective of the perpetrator has value in informing theory and intervention. The study has provided valuable insight into the cognitive characteristics of this population and a rich understanding of the profile of men who have engaged in IPS behaviour. The implications for forensic practice, policy and research are outlined.

Keywords: Intimate partner stalking, qualitative, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), cognitive characteristics, stalking behaviour

Introduction

The offence of stalking¹⁴ is considered a relatively new crime compared to other types of crime (Brady & Nobles, 2017), seeing the emergence of the first anti-stalking laws in the United Kingdom in 1997 (McEwan, Pathé, & Ogloff, 2011). Stalking has been described as ‘emotional rape’ and ‘psychological terrorism’ reflecting the overwhelming sense of fear, omnipresence and psychological impact experienced by victims (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2001). International studies indicate one in four to one in six individuals will become a victim (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This may be an underestimation, with the view that true prevalence rates are not reflected within the official data indicating a “dark figure” of stalking perpetrators, and subsequent arrests and convictions (Brady & Nobles, 2017). In some cases, perpetrators evade detection until stalking behaviour escalates to physical and/or sexual violence or homicide (Miller, 2012).

Individuals who commit stalking behaviour are not a homogenous group, presenting with different psychopathology and clinical characteristics, risk profiles and motivations (Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2009). With this presenting complexity bringing challenges in the identification, risk assessment, and clinical management of this group (Pathé, 2017; Nijdam-Jones, Rosenfeld, Gerbrandij, Quick, & Galietta, 2018). As the stalking research has evolved, several theoretical models have been developed to explain stalking (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012). Theoretical explanations provide a clear evidence base to guide forensic practice in informing approaches to risk assessment and intervention (Fletcher, Gelles, Loseke, & Cavanaugh, 2005). Influential theories of stalking include: evolutionary perspective (Duntley & Buss, 2012); psychodynamic perspective (Meloy, 1998); attachment theory (Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Kienlen, Birmingham, Solberg, O’Regan, & Meloy, 1997; Meloy, 1992; Patton, Nobles, & Fox, 2010; Tonin, 2004); coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman 2005; Stark 2007); and relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg 2004). These theoretical models seek to explain stalking

¹⁴ Historically, the legal, academic and clinical definition of stalking has been the subject of ongoing debate. Remarkably, there remains no universally agreed definition of stalking (Owens, 2016). A common definition from a clinical perspective which underpins stalking risk assessment is ‘unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them’ (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2008a, p.1).

in differing ways; attachment deficits, biological factors/gene selection, and power and control (Birch, Ireland, & Ninaus, 2018). Notably, limited studies have empirically tested these theories (Nobles & Fox, 2013), and as such there is a lack of consensus explaining stalking perpetration (Meloy, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

Extensive research has been conducted to develop an understanding of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012; Foran & O’Leary, 2008; Stith, Green, Smith, & Ward, 2008). In comparison, less focus has been given to perpetrators of IPS, and consequently there remains gaps in understanding the characteristics of this subtype of stalking perpetrator (see chapter two; structured review).

The Office for National Statistics (2017) indicates 54% of reported stalking offences occurred within the context of IPV. IPS is considered the most common subtype of stalking perpetrators (Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006; Spitzberg, & Cupach, 2007). This subtype is regarded the most persistent and dangerous (Mullen, Purcell, & Stuart 1999), with a higher risk of severe and lethal violence (James & Farnham, 2003; Meloy, 2002; Rosenfeld, 2004). They are also likely to continue to pursue victims following legal deterrents (Mohandie et al., 2006). A challenge specific to this group is that many behaviours could be classified as ‘normal’ courtship behaviours following a relationship breakdown (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Whilst the emerging literature indicates a connection between stalking and IPV, this relationship is not clearly understood, with evidence that stalking behaviour can occur both when the relationship is intact and post-relationship (Senkans, McEwan, & Ogloff, 2017; Douglas & Dutton, 2001).

One area for consideration are the gaps in knowledge base for this group. Research to date focuses on victim and perpetrator samples employing retrospective observational study designs; with data obtained from official archive case files, police records, psychometrics, surveys or interview methods (Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018). No qualitative studies have explored the characteristics of IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator, nor have studies been conducted in prison settings (see chapter two; structured review).

A further area for consideration is understanding the cognitive characteristics (i.e., schemas or ‘implicit’ theories) of IPS perpetrators. Implicit theories are offence-related

schemas or cognitive scripts that individuals form which underpins offending behaviour. They exemplify the cognitive distortions used by individuals to negotiate their environment (Pornari, Dixon, & Humphreys, 2013; Ward, 2000). In response to life experiences, individuals develop belief systems of expectations related to the self, others and the world, which impacts on thinking, behaviours and interpretation of accounts of why situations occur (Gilchrist, 2009; Ward, 2000). This is an area worthy of further exploration given that antisocial thinking patterns and attitudes have been identified as critical dynamic risk factors for violence and recidivism (Craig, Browne, Stringer, & Beech, 2005; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Wong & Gordon, 2006). Furthermore, research exploring perpetrators' implicit theories and cognitive characteristics are valuable in assisting the development of formulation models and informing criminogenic needs which can be targeted through the development and delivery of intervention (Ward, 2000).

Remarkably, there is a paucity of research exploring the cognitive characteristics of stalking perpetrators and the role of obsession and fixation. This is striking given obsession underpins the definition of stalking and is deemed a critical factor in stalking perpetration. Consequently, the function of obsession in the cognitions of perpetrators is yet to be empirically tested (Birch et al., 2018; Dixon & Bowen, 2012). In contrast, cognitive characteristics have been extensively explored in the literature on sexual offending (Beech, Fisher, & Ward, 2005; Polaschek & Ward, 2002), violent offending (Polaschek & Gannon, 2004), and IPV perpetrators (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon, 2016; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). The following implicit theories (IT) were identified in IPV perpetrators: 'Entitlement', 'Women' role in violence', 'Real man', 'Out of control', 'Uncontrollability', 'External factors responsible', 'Dangerous world', 'Rejection/abandonment' 'Women as objects', 'Nature of harm', 'Desire for control', and 'Grievance/vengeance' (See Appendix A glossary). Nonetheless, research exploring the cognitive characteristics of IPS perpetrators remains an unexplored area. Due to the heterogeneity of stalking perpetrators, there is likely to be considerable variation in the offence-supportive cognitions that IPS possess.

The current study seeks to explore IPS through the eyes of the perpetrator using a phenomenological approach to capture the ‘voice’, experiences and perceptions of men who have engaged in IPS. The findings are intended to inform insight into intervention pathways for IPS perpetrators. Building on the findings of the structured review (see chapter two), there is a dearth of high-quality qualitative research exploring IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator. The value of adopting qualitative research to obtain insight into stalking was highlighted by Nijdam-Jones et al. (2018). Qualitative methods focus on meaning and explore how individuals make sense of their experiences, their interactions in their social world, and how they attribute meaning to a phenomenon (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindal, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Qualitative methods provide access to a ‘sensitive’ subject and give voice to the perpetrators to understand the function of their behaviour and experiences that cannot be accessed through other research methods (Robson, 2002). In the field of forensic psychology, qualitative methods have the scope to facilitate the understanding of complex unexplored issues that have the potential to inform forensic practice. A phenomenological approach is suitable for this underdeveloped area as it seeks to enhance understanding of phenomenon that are challenging to study (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003).

This study utilises interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is an inductive qualitative method which seeks to understand individuals’ experiences and how they make sense of the world (Smith, Harré, & Van Langenhove, 1995). This contrasts with other qualitative methods, such as grounded theory, which seeks to discover an explanatory account of social and psychological processes in the data, with the aim of constructing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The central assumption of IPA is that participants are experts in their own lives (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). As such the researcher obtains detailed insight into the participant’s experiences, underlying thoughts and feelings and accesses an insider perspective (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Reid, et al., 2005). IPA draws on two philosophical and epistemological standpoints; *phenomenology* and *hermeneutics*. This approach suggests that the meaning individuals’ attributes to events are solely accessible through an interpretative process by accessing the individual’s cognitive inner world (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). IPA employs ‘double hermeneutics’ which is described as the process in which “the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants’ trying to make

sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 51). During analysis the researcher enters the analytical process, thereby interpretation during the analytical process is guided by their expertise (Reid et al., 2005). This idiographic approach allows for a flexible, rich and detailed insight into participants’ psychological world, thereby providing an insightful exploration of participant’s sense of self, cognitions, motivations, and feelings underpinning their experiences.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis has been applied to a wide-range of psychological inquiry (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012), growing in popularity as a methodological framework in qualitative psychology (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Historically, IPA has been a popular method within applied social, health and clinical psychology (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Howes, Benton, & Edwards 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA forensic studies have the potential to enhance existing research by accessing individuals experience in an understudied area, providing insight into phenomenon which quantitative methods cannot access (Koch, 1998). IPA studies are expanding into the field of forensic psychology (Blagden, Winder, Thorne, & Gregson, 2011; Winder & Gough, 2010; Lievesley, Winder, Norman, & Banyard, 2018; Meek, 2007; Nulty, Winder, & Lopresti, 2019; Tew, Bennett, & Dixon, 2016; Murphy & Winder, 2016).

A qualitative approach utilising IPA, therefore, has the potential to illuminate the pathway to IPS, by understanding the antecedents, relationship patterns, underlying cognitions¹⁵, emotional reactions and perceptions of their victims using detailed narratives of the men who have engaged in IPS.

Research aims

The primary aim of the study is to obtain insight into the experiences and personal meaning perpetrators of IPS attribute to their stalking behaviour and experiences of the stalking pathway (Smith et al., 2012). This approach seeks to illuminate the triggers,

¹⁵ The definition of ‘cognition’ in this study is drawn from Beck’s (1964) explanation of schemas. Under this definition schemas are the cognitive structures which assess, screen and encode incoming stimuli. They are the structures comprising patterns of beliefs and attitudes which provide a framework for interpreting and negotiating the interpersonal and social environment.

emotions and cognitive characteristics underpinning stalking behaviour and stalking violence; thus, providing insight into the psychological characteristics which can be targeted through intervention. The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What personal meaning do men who have engaged in IPS attribute to their stalking behaviour?
2. How do men with a history of IPS experience their relationships?
3. What are the cognitive characteristics that underpin the pathway to IPS?

Method

Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) National Research Committee (NRC) on the 15th December 2016, and Nottingham Trent University College Research Ethics Committee. The research proposal was reviewed by the Course Director and supervision team. The research was conducted in line with the British Psychological Society's (2014) code of human research ethics and the Health and Care Professions Council's (2012) standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Recruitment

Participation was voluntary. Participants were recruited between February and August 2017. Based on practicalities, potential participants were identified by a prison-based gatekeeper. Those meeting the criterion for the study were sent a letter and background information sheet. Thirteen participants were contacted, with seven returning an expression of interest slip. To assist in recruitment, access was given to the Offender Assessment System (OASys) database within the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to clarify participants met the inclusion criteria.

Informed consent is an essential requirement to participate in psychological research (British Psychological Society, 2014). Participants were serving a custodial sentence at the time of data collection, and as such were deemed a 'vulnerable participant group' (British Psychological Society, 2014, p.31). The research was conducted in line with the Code of Human Research Ethics¹⁶. A consent pack (including background information sheet and consent form) was distributed to all potential participants. The researcher met with

¹⁶ "In accordance with the Principle of Respect for the Autonomy and Dignity of Persons and the Code of Ethics and Conduct, psychologists should ensure that participants from vulnerable populations "are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose and anticipated outcomes of any research participation, so that they may give consent to the extent that their capabilities allow. Methods that maximise the understanding and ability to consent of such vulnerable persons to give informed consent should be used whenever possible" (British Psychological Society 2014, p.31).

participants in a private room to discuss participation. Full informed consent was obtained, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions, and were made aware of how information would be used and limits of confidentiality. All participants signed a consent form. Participants were informed they could withdraw from the study and were provided with instructions on how to contact the researcher. Participants were informed of the measures to take should they wish to withdraw their data. It was specified that once data had been transcribed, the data could not be withdrawn, with the caveat that any personal quotes would be removed from the research report. No participants withdrew consent.

Sampling

Interpretative phenomenological analysis adopts a purposive sampling approach (Smith et al., 2009), ensuring participants are recruited for whom research questions are relevant. Smith et al. (2012) advocates utilising small sample sizes, stating:

“As the approach has matured, as more studies are published, as researchers become more experienced, sample sizes are typically coming down. This is because the primary concern of IPA is with a detailed account of individual experience. The issue is quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomenon, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases” (Smith et al., 2012 p.51).

It is argued smaller sample sizes allow for greater depth of understanding as opposed to generating a theory generalisable to the whole population (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). It is suggested between six and eight participants are generally deemed appropriate for doctorate IPA studies (Turpin et al., 1997). The final sample size of seven participants was deemed sufficient to explore similarities and differences between cases and thus appropriate for IPA methodology (Smith et al., 2012).

Participants

Seven male participants serving a custodial sentence for an offence related to IPV formed the sample. Participants met the following inclusion criteria: A history of IPV (i.e., conviction, police call-outs, self-reported) and evidence of self-reported or a conviction for stalking or a stalking-related offence such as harassment and breaches of supervision orders,

or campaigns of harassment exceeding the two-week threshold outlined by Purcell, Pathé, and Mullen (2002) against a former or current partner.

Table 6 presents an overview of key information pertaining to participants. No participants had a conviction for stalking. Three had a conviction for harassment. All self-reported engaging in stalking behaviour in the offence pathway which culminated in an act of physical and/or sexual violence against the victim, with one committing lethal violence. All had breached supervision/harassment orders. All participants were held in HM Prison and came from several prison security categories; one from a category A prison and six from a category C prisons, across four separate prisons in the United Kingdom. Participants were white British, with an age range of 26-58. The sample comprised two life-sentenced prisoners, three indeterminate sentences for public protection prisoners, and two determinate sentenced prisoners.

Level of responsibility taking, and completion of intervention were not exhaustive exclusion/inclusion criterion. None of the participants were in denial. Six participants had completed a high intensity cognitive-behavioural intervention; The Healthy Relationships Programme¹⁷. One participant was engaging in intervention at the time of interview. Due to the research design specific details/file information pertaining to participants was not required as the focus was on obtaining participants experiences rather than verifying information within the collateral.

¹⁷ The Healthy Relationships Programme is a high intensity cognitive-behavioural intervention designed to target the criminogenic needs of men who have a history of IPV offending across community and custodial settings. In the absence of an intervention directly targeting stalking behaviour, perpetrators of IPS are considered for IPV interventions. This is the approach adopted within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) (L, Jonah, personal communication, September 2015).

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER STALKING

Table 6*Participants demographics and offence details*

Participant Number	Index offence (IPV)	Previous IPV offending	Number of victims	Employed	Non-stalking relationship at time of stalking campaign	Relationship to victim
1	False Imprisonment, Threats to Kill, Rape, Attempted Murder	Yes Issued with harassment order	2	Yes	Yes	Former partner
2	Sexual assault	Yes Breached bail	1	No	Yes	Two partners with live in relationship – former partner
3	Attempted murder	Yes Breached restraining order Harassment offence	2	Yes	Yes	First victim work colleague. Self-reports sexual relationship. Second victim former partner
4	Wounding and other acts endangering life	No Breached restraining order	1	No	No	Former partner
5	Rape (partner) Harassment & Affray	Yes Breached restraining order	1	No	Yes	Former partner
6	Sexual assault on female	Yes Breached restraining order Harassment	1	No	Yes	Former partner
7	Murder	Yes – On bail	1	Yes	Yes	Former partner

Data collection

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews are deemed appropriate methods to generate IPA data as they facilitate rich and detailed narrative accounts of participants' experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). This was the chosen method of data collection for this study as opposed to focus groups. Whilst a focus group method can have value in studies with men who have committed offences, it is argued these are best suited to studies which do not require personal disclosure (Lee, Fu, & Fleming, 2005). Utilising focus groups with such a sample within a prison setting brings a range of ethical and practical risks. Most significantly, bringing a group of men together to discuss the details of their offences and relationships with victims out of the confines of a treatment setting is unsafe. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, a focus group method has the potential to result in collusion and the creation of dangerous dynamics within the group and risk to a sole researcher. As such, a focus group method is not an appropriate method for this study. In contrast, individual interviews offer the scope to elicit in-depth understanding and encourage personal disclosure by exploring individual experiences and reflections on behaviour, motivation, emotions, and thoughts underpinning their IPS behaviour. A semi-structured interview schedule¹⁸ was designed as a framework for the interview, providing a flexible data collection tool to capture the psychological/social worlds of participants (See Appendix E). A pilot interview was conducted involving one participant, whose datum was included in the study. Questions were refined following the pilot interview.

Interview method/procedure

Interviews were conducted in private prison interview rooms, lasting between 55 minutes and 3 hours (Mean: 2 hours 18 minutes). Participants were debriefed, outlining details of follow-up contact and sources of support. Interviews were recorded using an audio-tape recorder. Participants were encouraged to tell their stories (Waldram, 2007) of the pathway to their stalking behaviour in their own words. To facilitate a comfortable interaction,

¹⁸ The interview schedule comprised of open-ended questions in line with the approach of IPA (Smith, 1995), focusing on the following broad areas: (1) Relationship history and response to relationship breakdown and life problems, (2) Stalking behaviour and offence, and (3) Views on the 'label' of a stalker and intervention experience.

rapport was first built by encouraging participants to ‘tell their story’ where they felt appropriate. This set the scene, enabling participants to provide a detailed account of their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Smith et al., 2012).

Consistent with IPA methodology, the interview schedule was used as a guide and prompt, which did not dictate the direction of the interview, but rather encouraged the ‘discovery’ of participants’ experience by employing a non-directive empathic style. Participants were encouraged to describe their experiences in a way which was meaningful to them, achieved by being responsive to their individual needs. Participants were provided with stimulus material in the form of a visual timeline, presented on a flip chart to act as a prompt to narrate the pathway to IPS. This proved useful for participants as they chose to tell their stories as a chronological narrative of their pathway and key events relevant to their experience. All participants told their stories their own way with the researcher interjecting with open questions to prompt and encourage reflection (i.e., “If you were looking in now and winding time back what kind of person would we see? What were you saying to yourself at the time when you did that? Tell me why you wanted revenge?).

Data analysis

Transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were analysed within a qualitative framework according to the principles of IPA (Smith et al., 2012). IPA was the chosen method as opposed to discursive analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Discursive analysis is an approach which focuses on patterns of meaning within text and how meaning is constructed through the use of language. Central to this is how it is suggested that individuals construct accounts and a version of reality of their psychological and social worlds, and how psychological phenomenon such as motivations and intentions are portrayed in talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The purpose of this study does not seek to explore the discourse (i.e., excuses or justifications) to understand how IPS perpetrators seek to explain their behaviour. Rather, the study aimed to elicit an in-depth understanding of the experiences, cognitions, emotions, and motivations of the pathway to their stalking behaviour, and how they attribute meaning to their behaviour. Hence, IPA was the chosen method. IPA is not a prescriptive approach, rather it provides flexible guidelines that can be adapted to address the needs of the researcher (Smith &

Osborn, 2008). Analysis was inductive and developed iteratively through a series of stages to identify patterns of meaning (i.e. themes) in the data.

In the first instance the themes were identified for each case, followed by the entire dataset. The data were prepared in line with Smith et al. (2012) transcription guidelines. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed in the order they were conducted. Interviews were transcribed in full by typing out the dialogue verbatim. All transcripts were anonymised, with individual participants referred to as P1. etc, with personal identifiers omitted. Transcription employed a primarily secretarial style transcription, with some elements of the Jefferson-style transcription (Jefferson, 2004); such as pauses and emotional reactions (i.e., laughter or sighs etc). The language, grammar and words of participants were not modified. As the process of analysis seeks to interpret the content of participants' accounts, focus was given to capturing the semantic content within the transcription (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Transcripts were structured to allow for notes to be made during analysis, and were page and line numbered to denote relevant extracts.

Analysis adopted a case by case in-depth analysis of each transcript separately followed by an integration of cases. The process of analysis comprised of the following stages: Stage one (reading and re-reading): Transcripts were repeatedly read, noting initial responses and observations in the left-hand margin. Stage two (initial noting): Transcripts were re-read focusing on the semantic content, which aimed to transform the initial notes into specific themes/phrases which reflected the deeper meaning and experiences of participants. Stage three (developing emergent themes): This process consisted of reducing, structuring and making connections between the data to identify, develop and organise emergent themes. Stage four (searching for connections across emergent themes): This stage focused on searching for connections across themes to identify and cluster preliminary themes. Clusters were given a label which captured the nature of the themes. Stage five (moving to the next case): A table was produced presenting each superordinate and subordinate theme.

When the first case was saturated, the next transcript was analysed. Due to the iterative nature of IPA, the process of analysis required constant reflection and re-examination of the transcripts and themes. Within this cyclical process themes were modified, omitted or added. Themes were consistently checked against the transcripts to ensure they were grounded in

the data and were representative of participants' accounts. Themes were omitted which were not strongly supported by the data. A summary table of superordinate and subordinate themes was constructed for each participant. The final stage of analysis involved comparing themes across cases to consider the interrelationship to explore similarities and differences between participants. A master table of themes was produced outlining all superordinate and subordinate themes across participants.

Each stage of analysis was discussed with the supervisor; thereby acting as an independent audit (Smith, 2008). Throughout a research journal was used to maintain a reflective stance by capturing the development of the themes (Silverman, 2013).

Following analysis additional literature reviews were conducted to establish underpinning psychological theory which could be applied to the research findings. This approach was conducted in line with Smith et al., (2012).

Reliability and validity

Qualitative research has historically been subject to criticism (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Whilst a strength of IPA is its ability to obtain insight into understudied research areas, as a method is not without its limitations and critique. These criticisms focus on the role of language, a lack of standardisation, or being overly descriptive rather than interpretative (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Despite these criticisms, it is noteworthy that an increasing number of studies have been published which have contributed to gaps in knowledge in understudied areas across many disciplines. A further criticism is whether IPA can capture experiences and meanings, or whether this is purely opinion. It has been argued that it is questionable as to whether researchers' interpretations are hindered by barriers with communication, specifically the ability of participants to clearly articulate the richness of their experiences, thoughts and feelings (Willig, 2001). A further critique, as with other phenomenological methods, is that IPA seeks to obtain understanding of the lived experiences, but fails to identify explanations which underpin the factors from past situations and the role of socio-cultural factors (Willig, 2001). In response to this, Smith et al. (2012) argues that the cultural and social aspect of the experiences are obtained through the process of hermeneutics and adopting an idiographic approach. Furthermore, IPA seeks to capture

the subtleties from the perspective of what has been said but crucially what has not been said, in order to elicit meaning through the researcher making sense of what has been portrayed in the 'story telling process'. As such, IPA seeks to engage with the individual's sense-making of experience through the language they use (Eatough & Smith, 2006).

Giorgi (2008) critiqued the theoretical underpinnings of IPA as a method on the basis that its procedures do not meet the scientific criteria of research, particularly with regards to the criterion of replicability. A counter argument by Smith et al. (2012) is that replicability is not the focus of qualitative methods and there are clear methodological distinctions. Whilst quantitative methods aim to test hypotheses and generate facts, IPA methodology focuses on eliciting meaning and 'giving voice' to participants to capture experiences. Brocki and Wearden (2006) concur with this position, arguing that if studies are methodologically rigorous and transparent about their philosophical underpinnings they are of value.

A limitation of qualitative research is failing to provide detail on the research process and analysis of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). To address this, frameworks for conducting high standard qualitative research were developed (Braun & Clarke; 2006; 2013; Yardley, 2000; Smith et al., 2012). In keeping with the recommendations made by Smith et al., (2012) throughout the research process measures were implemented to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. This was achieved by adopting Yardley's evaluative criteria (Yardley, 2000). Yardley provides a flexible checklist for evaluating and assessing the quality of qualitative psychological research. In line with this guidance this research employed the four principles of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, coherence and transparency, and impact and importance. To this end, reflexivity is central to a qualitative method, providing transparency of engagement with the research process.

Reflexivity

What I bring to this study as a Registered Forensic Psychologist is breadth of experience in working therapeutically with men who have committed IPV offences, enabling the integration of forensic practice and research. I am employed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and recognise that the dual role of research-practitioner will influence the findings of the study. It is acknowledged how the subjective role the researcher brings preconceptions and expectations based on previous forensic knowledge and experience as a

practitioner. This was particularly pertinent in this study given my specialist interest in IPV and forensic experience working with this population. This is considered a strength of the study, facilitating the exploration of a sensitive subject area to encourage and access participants experience, evident by the richness of the data obtained. Through supervision and reflective practice, I have implemented measures to limit potential bias and encourage objectivity. As a research-practitioner I was drawn to the inductive nature of qualitative research and IPA, as it allows for the focus on exploring the complexity of experience through adopting 'how', 'what' and 'why' research questions as opposed to the approach of quantitative studies. IPA aligns with my personal epistemological stance and complements my role as a research-practitioner, and the aim of 'giving voice' to the experiences of this group through undertaking professional interviewing and ensuring sufficient interpretation of their narratives in the analysis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith et al., 2012).

Analysis and discussion

Five superordinate themes reflecting participants experiences were identified from the in-depth qualitative analysis of the interview data: ‘The quest for attention and affection creating connection’; ‘Conflicted identity and extremes of self’, ‘My life, a film set’, ‘Gameplaying: ‘One step ahead’, and ‘Severed connections, changing the gameplay’. A notable feature within the collective narratives across all superordinate themes was the abundance of powerful metaphorical expressions used by participants when describing their experiences. The themes are interlinked and reflect a narrative progression through the pathway of stalking perpetration culminating in violence. Reference is made to the wider psychological literature throughout. The superordinate themes were salient in the accounts and experiences of all participants, with a varying degree of similarity and divergence of each subordinate themes within each individual narrative. Throughout the write-up participants are referred to as P1. etc. Themes are supported by verbatim extracts.

Table 7

Superordinate and subordinate themes

Theme Number	Superordinate Theme	Subordinate themes
1.	The quest for attention and affection creating connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The thrill of the chase: ‘Proving you can get a partner is like a drug’ - Obsessive desires: ‘I know I was obsessed with her’
2.	Conflicted identity and extremes of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portraying the ideal self to the world: ‘I will be successful I won’t be beat’ - Saying one thing, doing another: ‘It was like a tug of war’ - Life has gone off script: ‘It was a cocktail of little things’
3.	My life, a film set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exaggerated perspective – recounting the script - She went off script – mixed messages and broken rules
4.	Gameplaying: ‘One step ahead’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge is power: ‘I knew where she was on day-to-day basis’ - Desire to win: ‘A battle of wills and I was winning’
5.	Severed connections, changing the gameplay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spiralling emotions: ‘In one of those snowdomes going around in circles’ - Restoring pride and elevating the self: ‘A red rag to a bull’

Superordinate theme 1: The quest for attention and affection creating connection

This salient theme encapsulates how participants articulated a narrative of seeking affection and attention in pursuit of a connection. This plays out in one of several stages of relationship development; the initial attraction phase and relationship pursuit, within the relationship, or attempts to maintain a connection following the dissolution of the relationship. A strikingly unique finding encompasses how six participants described complex relationship dynamics. Negotiating these relationship dynamics were the catalyst for stalking behaviour. A second element of this superordinate theme captures participants' experiences of fantasy, obsessive love, possessiveness and infatuation. Whilst there were some variations in how this played out for participants, there were similarities in how this manifested in the subordinate themes.

1a) Subordinate theme: The thrill of the chase: 'Proving you can get a partner is like a drug'

This subordinate theme captures how participants described craving affection and attention. This follows two intertwined pathways; seeking a connection, bringing the highs of pursuing a new relationship; and secondly, it encapsulates the desire to pursue following relationship dissolution.

As this theme suggests, there was a sense that participants' accounts portrayed a sense of relishing in the attention and affection received from pursuing connections. Throughout participants' narratives they use strong descriptive words; 'buzz', 'challenge', 'work at it', 'within your power,' and 'satisfaction,' suggesting pursuit brought excitement, a sense of adventure and something to be attained. This theme is echoed powerfully in the 'story telling' process of participant one:

I did start seeing someone else ... someone who showed me lots of affection ... I enjoy that ... but maybe I need to look into why you are giving me affection sometimes rather than just letting me get involved in a relationship with someone I don't really want

to be with ... it was a buzz, it was like being a naughty boy getting his wicked way ... [P1, 309-313].

His use of language 'you are giving me' and 'just letting me' implies a passive element, whereby he views the woman to be playing an active role in the pursuit, from which he is powerless to have autonomy. He later portrays his experiences as a chase and a desire for love:

It's wanting to be accepted when you are not accepted and wanting the unacceptable ... knowing you can achieve them little goals is like a drug to do things, in the end it's something you don't really want but you end up going down a wild path ... so you only want to catch a stickleback and you catch it, and then suddenly you want to catch a pike, and then you want to catch a whale, and then you want to catch the biggest thing going in the ocean. So, it's sort of like a little chase ... you just want love at the end of the day ... and then because she don't want me no more I want her so I will try and get her ... it's like let's prove what I can achieve [P1, 585-608].

At a hermeneutic level, his use of metaphors appears to represent the underpinning belief that if a male is patient, he will obtain the object of his desires. There is the underpinning assumption that someone is better than nobody. Within participants' narratives, there was a sense that participants articulated a narrative portraying what they were getting out of the relationship (i.e., attention, affection, a home, employment, and financial gain) rather than what they were giving.

As participants told their stories and reflected on their experiences of relationships, it became clear they shared a common theme; that of complex relationship dynamics. This is, as the previous extracts from participant one highlights, the 'chase' and seeking relationships resonates throughout all participants' narratives. This is exemplified in the following extracts:

I got into that one [relationship with second victim] before that one had properly finished [P1, 317]; I was with two women at the same time so it's complicated [P2, 13]; I think that I should also mention that I was married at the time, but I had been on my own

... [P3, 12-15]; I sort of met someone else [P5, 313]; So I have gone up to my friends and having a party and having a one-night stand [P6, 62-62]; The relationship I had with the deceased, my victim, erm she wasn't ... I was married at the time to another woman ... There is another woman in this [a third partner] [P7, 3-4/166].

In pursuit of connections, participants described complex relationship dynamics: pursuing new connections and infidelity, one-night stands, multiple relationships, double lives, or overlapping relationships. It is noteworthy that victims were not the partner they regarded as their primary relationship. At a hermeneutic level, participants' narratives conveyed a powerful sense that connections avoided the potential pain of perceived abandonment. Ultimately there was a sense that within the pathway to stalking behaviour, participants idealised the victim, or rather idealised what the victim represented in his life.

1b) Subordinate theme: Obsessive desires: 'I know that I was obsessed with her'

This subordinate theme captures the most prominent element of the theme echoed by all participants. It represents the experiences of fantasy and obsessive love which becomes all-encompassing. The collective narratives initially portray a 'Romeo and Juliet' type love story, whereby participants talked of instant attraction and infatuation, with underpinning thoughts of eternal togetherness and saviour like qualities. Underpinning the collective narrative was an element of a fantasy of what the relationship with the victim represented and striving for a perfect relationship. Reflecting on the pathway to stalking behaviour, participants described experiencing an instant attachment with the victim. Participants' use of language throughout the story telling process is peppered with powerful metaphors and gestures of an everlasting bond. This is exemplified in the following extracts:

I know that I was obsessed with her ... because I didn't want to let go, and I thought she was mine ... no one else is having her and that's obsessed, I was obsessed with her [P5, 210-213].

With her it was like a light bulb as there was nothing that I had felt that instant attraction to somebody [P3, 541-542] ... It was a case of just wanting to be near her and wanting to be around her, wanting to know what she was doing, who she was with and it

became all-encompassing to the stage where I virtually wanted to know everything about her life in a sense even by just driving up and seeing if they were in the house and if the cars were there and then driving away [P3,159-167].

I loved her from day one, from a teenager ... I just wanted to be with her [P2, 158-170]; I couldn't imagine life without her [P4, 120]; She meant everything to me ... I did want it to be forever, my world [P6, 162].

At a hermeneutic level, participants' narratives and the use of metaphors signifies the strength of their obsession. There is a sense of overwhelming dependence underpinning their collective narratives, with any act of rejection perceived as a temporary hold up, intensifying the desire for connection. It is noteworthy that participants sought to explain the desire for contact as similar to addiction, in that they conceptualised how through every form of contact there was a payoff, feeding the desire to continue the pursuit. The above extracts powerfully encapsulate the narratives of participants and the sense that obtaining any form of contact only brought with it fleeting satisfaction, following which the cycle resumed.

Drawing from the literature of the psychopathology of love, romantic love is a universal human experience (Jankowiak & Fischer 1992), providing positive rewarding experiences of passion, intimacy and companionship (Gable & Impett, 2012; Love & Holder, 2016). Unreciprocated love brings negative experiences when faced with rejection, conflict and abandonment. It is proposed that romantic love and drug addiction share survival activation systems in the brain which explain the role of obsession (Frascella, Potenza, Brown, & Childress, 2010), and parallels with addictive characteristics of obsessive thinking, craving, distortions of reality, emotional dependence, risk-taking, and loss of self-control (Griffin-Shelley 1991).

In summary, this superordinate theme reflects how participants articulated a narrative of how they sought affection and attention in pursuit of connection, capturing the underpinning cognitive characteristics of fantasy and obsessive thinking. The cognitive characteristics can be explained to some extent by the IPV implicit theory (IT) literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). The following IT's appear to be present in the cognitions of perpetrators of IPS: 'Womens' role in violence', 'Women as objects', 'Entitlement' and

‘Obsession and fantasy’. Underpinning participants’ narratives, there is an indication of the presence of underlying narcissistic vulnerability/personality traits¹⁹.

The findings underpinning this theme supports the attachment (Meloy, 1998), social learning theory (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011), and evolutionary/sociobiological (Duntley & Buss, 2012) theoretical models of stalking perpetration. From a hermeneutic level, participants’ accounts are explained by attachment deficits (Meloy, 1992) and a desire for closeness and hypersensitivity to rejection, with relationship styles which appear to be based on extreme sexual attraction, obsessive thinking, possessiveness and dependency (Meloy, 1998). There are strong gender role and relationship scripts emerging within the collective narratives, along with expectations of the roles of men and women in relationships. There is a sense that participants hold underlying social scripts that in the face of rejection if you try hard and persist then love will conquer all. The findings can also be placed in the context of relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014) to explain how the desire for relationship pursuit becomes excessive and obsessive. From a hermeneutic level, these findings can be explained by the strong desire to achieve the goal of attaining the relationship and how this brings higher order goals of self-worth and a perceived sense of overall happiness.

Nonetheless, the above theories alone do not adequately explain this theme. Fisher’s (1998) neurobiological model of love²⁰ and the work of Meloy and Fisher (2005) provides an important context for the findings of the present study. The authors explain stalking from a neurobiological perspective on the psychology of ‘romantic love’, and postulate that the attachment system becomes activated in response to various stages of rejection in the stalking pathway. The initial lust and attraction phase are characterised by desire and craving the other, with the underpinning motivation to achieve sexual gratification. Fisher (2004)

¹⁹ Individuals with narcissistic traits present with a strong sense of self-importance and entitlement a desire for admiration, superiority and hypersensitivity to criticism, a compulsion to be the centre of attention and are interpersonally exploitative and lack empathy, and possess unrealistic fantasises over achievement, power, intelligence and romance (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002).

²⁰ Fisher’s neurobiological model of love and attraction (1998) describes the underlying neural mechanisms associated with romantic love. Psychological studies suggest romantic love is associated with a separate collection of emotions, motivations and behaviours (Liebowitz, 1983). This model describes three emotion-motivation systems for romantic love: lust, attraction, and attachment.

describes how adversity and rejection strengthens the desire, referred to as the Romeo and Juliet effect or ‘frustration-attraction’, leading to emotional dependence, intrusive and obsessive thinking, intense sexual desire and possessiveness.

From a hermeneutic level, the lust and attraction phase are captured in the narratives of participants. This reflects the experiences of an ‘instant attraction’ and ‘lust’ in the early stages of relationship development, whereby participants’ experience becoming all-consumed by the prospect of a relationship, and enjoying the attention received. Participants appear goal-orientated and strongly motivated to win in the early stages of the relationship. There is a sense that the ‘thrill of the chase’ parallels the ‘lust’ phase, and in doing so he recaptures this through his search for other relationships or the ‘on/off nature’ and excitement of relationships.

In this model, the final stage of love sees the activation of the attachment system, which is characterized by feelings of security and emotional connection. Noteworthy, participants described complex relationship dynamics, with a primary attachment to another partner. From a hermeneutic level this brings into question whether participants had truly experienced romantic attachment and the emotional union, security and comfort underpinning such a relationship. From the narratives, it appears that for participants in this study they are stuck in the lust and attraction phase of a relationship. The pathway to stalking behaviour and violence suggests they may not build a long-term attachment to the victim, as they already have an attachment to another.

Superordinate theme 2: Conflicted identity and extremes of self

This theme stems from the way in which participants portrayed how they presented themselves to the outside world, how they experienced struggles with the persona desired, and an inability to integrate aspirations and expectations of the self. In response to life problems, unfolding relationship dynamics and imminent relationship breakdown, participants expressed becoming more conflicted and uncertain. Within the collective narratives there was a sense of considerable internal cognitive tension on recognising they are not living up to their personal standards, and crucially that their partner was not meeting

these expectations. A striking element of this theme is a sense of ambivalence towards the partner; seeing love turn to hate.

2a) Subordinate theme: Portraying the ideal self to the world: ‘I will be successful I won’t be beat’

One distinct theme within the collective narratives was the sense that participants viewed the self at extremes; the self as powerful or powerless, winning or losing, successful or a failure, in control or out of control. There is no equilibrium. A striking factor underpinning the theme is a fragile sense of self. There is a sense of a ‘Walter Mitty’ type character; whereby participants articulated a narrative of a heroic, successful and powerful self, which was portrayed to the world. There are strong expectations linked to identity and the role of ‘a man’, with narratives interspersed with the view of self as ‘the supporter’, ‘hero’ and ‘rescuer’.

As participants told their stories, they conceptualised how the desire for status and success was a key factor in how they wanted the world to view them, but also how they viewed themselves. Whilst this theme was salient in the narratives of all participants, it was particularly striking within the narrative of participant seven:

I always needed to be seen as successful ... it was materialist things it was all about fast cars and things like that ... status was paramount. As I reflect back, I was clearly attempting to portray someone successful. I felt I needed to succeed in life [P7,165-166].

Within his narrative he talked of using social media to present a persona of someone who was successful to the outside world. Reflecting on his experience, he pinpointed the underpinning origins of the desire for success – the fear of failure; a theme which resonates powerfully throughout all the participants’ narratives.

This theme is also strongly exemplified in the extract by participant four, who spoke of experiencing a shifting identity and conflicted self, following a significant life event. His experiences of debilitating illness impacted on his sense of self and identity. Like other participants, he spoke of experiencing feelings of resentment and the exposure of the

questioning self. Similar to other participants experiences, his account portrayed how a life changing event eroded his successful self, leaving a shell of a man with the loss of a positive social identity. This is exemplified in the following extract:

We had lived life to the full we had a very healthy love life ... I had created the life for her, I gave her the opportunity, I had the financial power in them days when we first got together [P4, 102-108].

From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense that as he reflects back on his relationship, he centres on what he viewed as a fundamental element of his role as a man in the relationship and the internal conflict this brought when he experienced a shifting identity in response to relationship breakdown and life problems. Through the collective narratives, participants spoke of experiencing similar setbacks in life (i.e., physical illness, depression, and relationship problems). From a hermeneutic level, their accounts describe problems with coping, in which they struggled to hide the true self. Significantly, participants articulated a narrative which placed status and esteem as critical to the self, and when this was threatened or eroded, this impacted on their sense of self.

2b) Subordinate theme: Saying one thing, doing another: 'It was like a tug of war'

Underpinning the narratives of all participants was the sense of personal inconsistency, dissonance and contradiction between what participants said, wanted and desired, and the reality of their behaviours. There was a sense of incoherence with two aspects of the self being at odds with one another. As the theme suggests, participants expressed wanting to be a kind and loving partner, yet their behaviours were at odds with this, as they spoke of engaging in physical and psychological violence. This incoherence between the two selves, paved the way to a cycle of negative emotions and behaviours, subsequently resulting in their goal being pushed further away. That is, the very thing participants were striving to keep hold of, their relationship.

As participants told their stories, this theme was particularly salient within the narratives of all participants. Participants reflected on the contradictions of their desires to be a loving supportive partner and the reality of how their relationship had been entwined within a

backdrop of psychological and in some cases physical abuse. This theme is exemplified in the following extracts:

I was shouting ... nasty things name calling Don't speak to me like that you slut ... every name I could think of I would say it [P2, 45-47].

I admitted that I had pushed her I won't deny that, I had probably slapped her ... Of course, I don't want to keep on having to get my hands on her ... I am supposed to be protecting her I am supposed to be loving her I supposed to be showing her family that I care about her not having to slap her ... I used to push the blame to her, and it wasn't her it was me ... [P5,148-164].

The above extracts powerfully encapsulate the narratives of all participants. A striking feature in the narrative of participant five is the use of the repeated phrase 'I am supposed to be', highlighting the flux he experienced and exposure of the contradictory self. Indeed, the contradictory self was prominent for all participants as they reflected on how this played out in their relationship, stalking perpetration, abusive and violent behaviour. Within this dissonance, there is an element of hypocrisy, as they strive to be one thing, but this is inconsistent with their personal standards. At a hermeneutic level, narratives reflect the cycle of violence characterised by IPV (Walker, 1989). Crucially this cycle builds from the perpetrators unexpressed anger and unresolved conflict which culminates for most participants in some form of psychological and physical violence.

2c) Subordinate theme: Life has gone off script: 'It was a cocktail of little things'

This theme stems from the perception that life is either in control or out of control. Whilst the way in which this unfolded for participants played out in different ways, common features related to struggles coping with relationship dynamics and the radiating impact on other areas of their lives. Significantly, a theme of loss appeared to underpin this; whether that be loss of a relationship, employment and stability or loss of identity and status when the true self was exposed. This mirrors the view of Mullen et al. (1999) who suggests loss is often combined with high levels of frustration, jealousy, anger, vindictiveness and sadness.

Some participants, spoke of a history of substance misuse, either drugs, prescription drugs or alcohol. In contrast, participants three, four and seven appeared to employ different coping tactics. For these participants there was a sense that the desire for revenge and stain on their character replaced the need to cope in other ways. The pathway for their stalking ended in severe use of physical violence and for one participant homicide.

Within the narratives there was a collective sense of putting on a mask to the outside world. Participants described underpinning anxiety and self-loathing and being trapped in a cycle of self-hate which was projected onto victims. This theme is exemplified in the extract by participant one, who reflected on what the camera would have observed looking back in time:

I was taking the tablets, drinking more ... not working when I would be normally working to cover up my emotions to escape ... and just really taking more of these co-codamol tablets, so it was a little cocktail of things [183-18]. We would see a character who was a scared person within himself ... I hid it well [176-181]. My life was in a disaster state ... I think it had gone past the point of really caring and then its I want to be with her, no I don't want to be with herit was something I didn't know how to cope with [P1, 486-494].

For participant three, four and seven, there was a sense of feeling backed into a corner. Participant seven struggled to negotiate multiple relationships, whereby in response, he became more controlling. His actions were exposing his true self, and this paved the way for what he describes as a cycle of psychological and physical abuse prior to homicide. The following extract illustrates the sequence this played in the stalking violence pathway:

When I realised that the net was closing in a little bit of panic stepped in ... I am going to have to watch what I put on Facebook ... I liked the fact that she wanted to be in a relationship with me, but I didn't want it to be fully exclusive ... so I started putting conditions on the relationship ... [P7, 278-284].

This superordinate theme supports the IPV implicit theory literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012) with implicit theories of 'Real man', 'Out of control', 'Uncontrollability' and 'External factors responsible'. In the present study, this reflects the

view that stalking behaviour was out of participants' control, in that external factors (i.e., loneliness, substances, other women, or illness) were responsible and played a central role in the pathway.

From a hermeneutic level this can be explained by the shame-aggression perspective (Elison, Garofalo, & Velotti, 2014; Velotti, Elison, & Garofalo, 2014). The experiences of participants can be explained by overwhelming negative emotions underpinning shame (i.e., feeling hurt, inferior, embarrassment and humiliation), leading to devaluation of the self. As a protective strategy, participants appear to view the victim as malevolent; and love turns to hate, whereby they project the self-hatred onto their victim, believing the victim is responsible for their suffering. This perspective seeks to explain the pathway to IPS and stalking violence from an evolutionary and psychobiological model. That is, the personal devaluation, social threat or threat to status is triggered which threatens the universal need to belong, which in turn elevates a negative emotional response (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; DeWall & Bushman, 2011; Weisfeld & Dillon, 2012). Feelings of shame emerge in response to perceptions of social exclusion (Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2009) culminating in emotional discomfort and anger which motivates aggression (Davey, Day, & Howells, 2005). Consequently, the pathway to stalking can be explained by a psychobiological chain linking shame to anger and aggression.

The findings underpinning this superordinate theme can also be placed in the context of control balance theory (Nobles & Fox, 2013; Tittle, 2018), relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014), and coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007). From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense that achievement of goals (i.e., status and relationships) provide attainment of higher order goals of happiness and self-worth. Consequently, it is interpreted that when life was going well, participants held the perception of a high level of control in their lives. In response to life problems and rejection, they attempt to regain control over various domains of their lives (i.e. work, relationships, and status), this impacts on the sense of self and attempts to regain control. In response to control deficits the men in this study can be seen to exercise control, culminating in coercive control and attempts to maintain dominance, and an act of IPV.

Superordinate theme 3: My life, a film set

This superordinate theme represents how participants told their story and how they recaptured experiencing their worlds. There is an overwhelming sense that participants portrayed themselves as a detached observer watching a play, with intermittent sets focusing in on critical scenes. It is notable that participants recounted the pathway in significant detail; like reading the script of a film set and reliving part of the scene. Underpinning this theme are the cognitive characteristics that play a role in the pathway to stalking, and significantly participants perceptions of the role of the victim. Participants talk of experiencing ‘mixed messages’, which from a hermeneutic level represents distortions of reality. There is a sense that, just as participants view the self at extremes, their underpinning cognitions are exaggerated and extreme. In discussing their experiences, a central feature which resonated through participants’ narratives was the view that no one was listening to their perspective and side of the story.

3a) Subordinate theme: Exaggerated perspective – recounting the script

This theme stems from the way in which participants told and recounted their script. In the ‘story telling process’ it became apparent that participants cognitive processes were exaggerated with extremes of thinking. As participants reflected on life events, experiences are exaggerated and filtered through the whole world. There is a sense that participants perceived they were under a microscope with the whole world looking in on him, with any flaw in their character being magnified and exposed for all to see. It is striking that participants accounts are highly interspersed with the pronoun “I” “I” “I”. It is notable how in the story telling process participants went into the ins and outs of “I did this” and “she did this”, suddenly fast forwarding to a highly pertinent point, reflecting on relationship breakdown, an act of vengeance or violence. From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense that his inner speech and inner voice are self-centred. It is like he is ruminating out loud with no sense of reality and a frantic thought process with ruminating monologue. There is a distinct lack of emotion evident within participants’ narratives. Little things are big things and they are overanalysing, and their thinking is not grounded in social norms, with a distinct lack of perspective taking.

3b) Subordinate theme: She went off script – Mixed messages and broken rules

This theme conceptualises how participants makes sense of their actions and pursuit of the victim, and in doing so how they seek to protect their sense of self as not fundamentally bad. Crucially the theme focuses on participants perceptions of the role of the victim. There is a sense that participants perceived the victim as an actress in their play. Whilst this theme was evident in the narratives of all participants, the way in which this played out was different across cases. Participants one, two, three and five consistently made references to perceiving ‘mixed signals’ or ‘messages’ from victims. Whereas within the narratives of participants four, six and seven, focus was given to the role the victim played.

As the following extracts suggest, there is a sense that participants portrayed themselves as the questioning self, in that they are believing what they want to believe and are misreading the signs to accomplish their goals. The following extracts powerfully encapsulate the narratives of all participants:

I was getting mixed messages from her ...now and again ...I would get a little text ... she would tell me that she did love me and a couple of days later, I hate you, I don't want you. So, I was getting a lot of mixed signals off her ... does she love me, or does she hate me? Why is she telling me all these different things, that didn't make sense to me, so I was thinking whether I am coming or am I am going, what is going on? [P5, 231-217].

Similarly, the narrative of participant two illustrates how there is a sense that he attempted to separate himself from his behaviour. He portrays that drugs impacted on his thinking and by doing so he dissociates himself from his thoughts and actions. This is exemplified in the following extract:

I didn't see it as harassment, because I was taking drugs, to me I wasn't doing anything wrong so even though the police said stay away, I didn't stay away I was writing letters constantly daily I mean I posted them and then I sent birthday cards [50] ... [P2, 5-6].

From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense of participants being a trickster character, in that participants were the ones mixing up the messages or even actively choosing to ignore the signs and reframe them to suit their needs. This finding supports Cupach, Spitzberg, and Carson (2000), who suggest stalking perpetrators misinterpret rejecting behaviours as encouragement by the victim and fail to understand the negative impact of their behaviour.

This superordinate theme supports the IPV implicit theory literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). From a hermeneutic level, the following IT's appear to be present in the cognitions of IPS perpetrators: 'Women' role in violence', 'Rejection/abandonment' and 'Entitlement'. At a hermeneutic level, the cognitive characteristics associated specifically to entitlement indicates the presence of undertones of narcissistic vulnerability. Narcissistic presentation includes defence mechanisms such as denial, minimisation, projection and splitting. In response to shame splitting results in a pathological drive for power and perfection (Meloy & Gothard, 1995).

This theme can be explained by relational goal pursuit theory (RGP, Cupach & Spitzberg 2014). This theory suggests stalking is the result of failures in self-regulation coupled with cognitive distortions, which drives persistent pursuit and stalking perpetration. When faced with rejection, losing face, and recognition of not fulfilling the primary goal of the relationship with the victim, this triggers a negative emotional reaction, and rumination that their goal is not satisfied. This perpetuates a negative emotional response, and a sense of possessiveness, desperation, and increased attraction and obsessive thinking. This leaves the individual focusing on the belief that achieving their goal of intimacy with the victim will increase self-worth and happiness (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014), creating a sense of dependency²¹ on the victim.

Superordinate theme 4: Gameplaying: 'One step ahead'

This superordinate theme captures how participants depict their stalking behaviour as gameplaying within the 'story telling' process. Within the collective narratives there is a

²¹ Dependency is defined as the perception that only a particular person or relationship can satisfy the individual's needs, thus relying solely on that specific source for fulfilment (Attridge, Berscheid, & Sprecher, 1998).

sense of the need that participants desired control over others and their environment. The theme takes two interlinked directions. Firstly, the subordinate theme 'Knowledge is power: 'I knew where she was on a day-to-day basis' stems from the need for participants to attain knowledge of their victims and the methods employed to facilitate this. Secondly, the subordinate theme 'Desire to win: 'A battle of wills and I was winning' captures the extremes of thinking and behaviour and the striking need for control.

4a) Subordinate theme: Knowledge is power: 'I knew where she was on a day-to-day basis'

One clear theme within all participants' narratives was the need to attain knowledge of the victim and the tactics used. Participants expressed how having a desire for knowledge, and obtaining knowledge gave power to be used against the victim. This begins in the relationship and plays out during the formation of the relationship and relationship dissolution. Strikingly, participants described the need to control the ending of the relationship. This theme resonates throughout the narratives of participants, seeing the questioning self emerge. The following extracts powerfully encapsulate the narratives of participants:

So I started to question what is going on ... why do I need to know, it's a control issue its about even though I am not actually in the relationship I have got no need at any point to know what somebody is doing in that sense, within a relationship, but this is not a relationship its finished its over, why do I need to know, but I wanted to know, its knowledge ... [P3, 835-838].

Similarly, participant four reflected on how he had a strong desire to obtain information on his partner in response to his suspicions and his quest for answers. Like participant seven, he used technology to monitor and later track his partner in the relationship and following the breakdown which gave him control over all aspects of her life:

I set up an excel file on the phone where I could sift and prioritised what numbers had been called ... I wanted to know how much, there was far too much information to go through, I just wanted to make it easier [P4.192-204].

The following extract from participant seven illustrates the development of this pathway; beginning in the initial attraction stages by obtaining knowledge from social media as he pursued the relationship, through to mind games and emotional abuse within the relationship, and finally the pathway to stalking violence using social media and his interactions with the police to elicit information. The pathway to stalking and violence is set and is captured in the following extract:

It to me was a type of investigating tool on the status of the relationship ... My insecurities were fuelling my desire to check up ... if it was to end at least I could possibly have some dignity as a reason in case anyone asked. Engaging in these behaviours was certainly a way of me thinking I was in control ... Was I doing it to calm myself? I believe it was about power ... because knowledge is power. Knowledge from being or trying to be one step ahead ... Part of my bail conditions were not to go to the house ... the police rang me up ... I will never forget what he said. He goes she is moving on with her life she is going back to work (DING) ... So, I was like alright ... she was murdered on X [P7, 506-515].

Throughout his narrative, he likens Facebook to an ‘investigating tool’ which from a hermeneutic level is portrayed as a covert method of investigation whereby he secretly gathers information. He portrays how knowledge brings power, relief and answers, and the ultimate level of control. Within the relationship he talks of using psychological violence as a way of getting attention. In the pathway to homicide there is a sense that he is piecing together the jigsaw to assist in his plan for revenge and has gathered information from various sources to monitor the victim.

4b) Subordinate theme: Desire to win: ‘A battle of wills and I was winning’

This subordinate theme reflects the collective narratives of all participants. The language participants used is reflective of gameplaying; ‘a battle’, ‘the winner’s position’, ‘winning’, ‘losing’, ‘who has the control’, ‘shifts in control’ and the ‘buzz’, ‘satisfaction and challenge of winning’, and ‘game changer’. There is a sense that the victim is on a yoyo with participants casting the victim out and reeling her back in to meet their needs. This begins

with psychological violence within the relationship. There is a sense of wilful dominance which becomes a conquest; a game where they are seen to be winning or losing. At the final realisation of rejection, the need for control shifts to a different pattern and motive. It takes a sadistic nature and there is a sense that participants' inner voice enables them to plot and plan. Legal sanctions are not a deterrent. There is a sense of cleverness and cunningness within participants' narratives.

In discussing their experiences on the pathway to their stalking behaviour, the concept of power and control resonated throughout all the participants' narratives. In the story telling process there was a sense that the desire to win brought positive feelings and self-esteem from their perception of having control. The following extracts strongly captures the narratives of the participants:

I was thinking in my head I still had the power and I am in control of this by trying to show her I am not interested so that would make her more interested ... so in my head I am probably thinking yeah I will show her ... it will probably make her work as hard to get me back ... I was still trying to put a brave face on that I wasn't interested and I didn't care so she will want me more than I want her ... its making me feel good isn't it because I am thinking I have got the control [P5, 478-495].

As much as I don't want to say that, I don't like it, erm its more of a power thing ... it becomes a game and it becomes quite manipulative at times where you are manipulating things to get what you want to get that acceptance ... as much as I don't like to say (...) and I don't think it's even fully right, its controlling ... [P1, 576-585].

Within the above extracts, a striking aspect is how participants articulate a narrative of how power and control are explanations for their behaviour. A striking aspect underpinning participants' narratives is that the goal is to reconcile, but the way in which reconciliation is achieved is through bringing an element of the thrill of the chase and gameplaying. From a hermeneutic level there is a sense that there is an element of sadistic game playing with the ultimate goal being to elevate his sense of self and bring about positive feelings to mask insecurities. There is a paradox, in that participants' behaviour creates exactly what they fear the most, losing their partner. There is a strong compulsion to win, to avoid humiliation,

ridicule, or perceived loss of power and the need to affirm the dominant winner's position. Enhancing self-esteem brings a positive effect, increased pleasure satisfaction and excitement.

Central to this theme is how participants responded to legal sanctions and the gameplaying that manifests with professionals when legal sanctions are imposed. Participants described continuing their behaviours despite continued police warnings, and sanctions from the courts. Legal sanctions were not effective in ceasing behaviour and legal interventions were not an effective deterrent. This following extract encapsulates the narratives of participants:

You need to stay away from the area, but I stood there texting her going oh yeah whatever and the CID woman said what are you doing, I said texting her, she said haven't you been listening? ... so, I started writing letters and started posting them and I got done for breach of bail three times erm I was told you got told not to text her or ring her. I said I didn't I said I sent letters, I said you said don't ring or text which I didn't ... she said alright don't ring her, don't text and don't send letters but then her birthday came up so I sent fifty cards and sent her some flowers ... so the police came again for breach of bail ... [P2,71-85].

Within participants narratives there is a sense that participants portrayed themselves as a trickster character, whereby they used their wit to accomplish their goals. In doing so, they do not worry about breaking or disobeying rules and undermining authority to achieve this. This mirrors the earlier stages of the relationship and the need for attention captured in superordinate theme 1: 'The quest for attention and affection creating connection'. At a hermeneutic level, participants' accounts demonstrate a sense of narcissistic entitlement to the victim. A strong sense of entitlement to the victim is cited as typically underpinning stalking perpetration (Storey, Hart, Meloy, & Reavis, 2009). There is the view that features of narcissistic personality disorder, specifically egocentricity and a grandiose sense of self are characteristics of stalking perpetrators. Nonetheless, rather than being generalised traits they manifest and become problematic within particular contexts and reflect the justifications for stalking behaviour (i.e. beliefs of feeling they have a right to be heard, to be given an explanation, to be treated with respect, or to redress injustice). Thus, stalking

behaviour emerges when these underpinning beliefs become activated and the needs of the victim are disregarded (MacKenzie & James, 2011).

This superordinate theme supports the IPV implicit theory literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). The IT's of 'Win or lose' appears to be present in the cognitions of IPS perpetrators. Specific to IPS is the implicit theory of 'Knowledge is power' which was identified in the narratives of participants. This implicit theory explains how individuals see knowledge as a powerful tool to navigate situations and enable them to monitor and stay one step ahead. There is a sense that knowledge brings power, which enables participants to save face and restore pride and self-esteem.

This theme can be explained by coercive control theory. Stark (2009) suggests individuals who use coercive control are likely to use surveillance tactics as a behavioural strategy. Stark suggests that the presence of coercive control is nine times more effective in predicting homicide than previous violence and use of threats. Of note, the fixated and obsessive nature of coercive control parallels the fixated and obsessive nature of stalking (Monckton Smith, Szymanska, & Haile, 2017). The psychology of motivation also seeks to explain this finding. This theoretical explanation suggests that the dopaminergic reward system is activated by a motivation to win (Breiter, Aharon, Kahneman, Dale, & Shizgal 2001). Of note, within the narratives of participants, six men self-disclosed a history of psychological abuse. Therefore, the findings support the previous literature highlighting that some studies suggest IPS is more highly associated with psychological abuse (McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, & Senkans, 2017).

Superordinate theme 5: 'Severed connections, changing the gameplay'

This salient theme represents the emotional tipping point and the subsequent pathway to seek to reconcile or diminish and destroy the victim. The theme takes two interlinked directions. Firstly, the theme reflects the emotional response to facing rejection and unrequited love. Secondly, the theme conceptualises how, when faced with the reality of rejection, participants experienced an emotional tipping point and extreme behavioural response, paving the way for destructive and violent behaviour. This pathway starts with attempts to reconcile by making contact. When this fails, this escalates to gameplaying, and sexual or physical violence. A striking aspect of this theme was the ambivalence and

paradox within participants' accounts, and how focus shifted from pursuit to revenge and the desire to reconcile. Whilst there were some variations across participants in how this played out in the offence pathway, there were striking similarities in how this manifested in the subordinate themes.

5a) Subordinate theme: Spiralling emotions: 'In one of those snowdomes going around in circles'

This theme conceptualises the rejected and emotional self, encapsulating how participants experienced struggling with rejection, abandonment and loneliness. This extreme emotional response was the catalyst for violence perpetration later in the offence pathway.

Reflecting on the pathway to their stalking behaviour, a central feature in the experiences of participants which resonates throughout all the participants' narratives was the feeling of rejection. The following extracts exemplify the experiences of participants when faced with rejection seeing the emergence of the emotional and questioning self:

She wasn't there, desertion at the worst possible time [P4, 290-291]; I thought nobody wants me sod it [P6, 206]; Obviously, it hurt me ... I was thinking what the fuck ... am I not good enough for you [P5, 394].

One striking feature underpinning participants' narratives, was the sense of emotional pain recounting these experiences. As the theme suggests, participant six used a metaphorical image of a snowdome to describe the magnitude of his emotional response. Strikingly through the collective narratives, participants' spoke of spiralling emotions and how feelings of love rapidly turned to hate:

I hated her ... I was thinking why has she done this to me ... [P5, 407-409]. I felt I hated her, and that's how I felt [P1, 222]. I think I kind of hated her [P2, 56].

In response to rejection there is a sense that through participants' behaviour the aim was to reconnect or stabilise the equilibrium in order to soothe the emotional pain of rejection. It

is at this point that participants expressed believing the relationship could be saved, despite their behaviour. This is exemplified in the following extracts:

I still suffered that feeling that I could somehow sort of re-establish it so for me one of the issues that I suppose is going on is that it is understanding when end means end ... [P3, 768-769]. At the time I honestly believed that we could sort it out. I was naïve ... [P4,120].

5b) Subordinate theme: Restoring pride and elevating the self: 'A red rag to a bull'

This theme represents the pathway from pursuit to revenge and the tipping point to violence and/or extreme levels of sadistic stalking. This theme stems from how participants described responding to rejection coupled with feelings of betrayal or humiliation, leaving the true self exposed.

Throughout participants' narratives was a sense of retribution for perceived wrongdoing driven by public exposure, ostracism, and humiliation. With participants shifting emotions and when love turns to hate, any connection was perceived to be better than none. This fuelled a desire to repay harm with harm. This is exemplified in the following extracts:

My original one was just to humiliate her ... because that is what she had done to me erm it was that simple. [P4. 252-255]. She made a formal complaint to the police ... that was just like a red rag to a bull ... I was then referred down to the inpatient service facility ... I just sat there and stewed ... I just thought I need to get her back and try and sort things out ... [P3, 585-597]. ...so basically, I had backed myself into a corner ...I knew the outcomes erm as soon as the police became involved with the second victim, I knew I had ended up walking myself into a trap [P3, 877-888].

Whilst the tipping point is rejection, there is a sense that it goes deeper than this. The tipping point is exposure and a total perception of ostracism and feeling that the whole world is looking in. From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense that this is viewed as the ultimate betrayal, which is the catalyst for the process of dehumanisation in order to overcome shame. As love turns to hate, participants need to keep the object of their hate close so that they can

restore their sense of self. Within the collective narratives, there is a sense of wilful dominance and it is becoming a conquest, a game where participants view the self as winning or losing.

This theme can be explained by theories of aggression and violence and the role of self-conscious emotions (i.e., embarrassment, shame, humiliation) which are deemed significant drivers for violence (Walker & Knauer, 2011). Klein (1991) suggests:

“Humiliation is what one feels when one is ridiculed, scorned, held in contempt, or otherwise disparaged for what one is rather than what one does. People believe they deserve their shame; they do not believe they deserve their humiliation” (p. 117). Lazare (1987) postulates the presence of others heightens the feeling of humiliation and sense of injustice. This is worthy of consideration from a police perspective when considering deterrents and approaches to intervention and risk management.

This superordinate theme supports the IPV implicit theory literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). The following IT's appear to be present in the cognitions of IPS perpetrators: ‘Dangerous world’ and ‘Grievance/revenge’.

A loss of status and threats to self-esteem were central to the stalking pathway and appeared to lead to cognitions underpinned by a desire for control and need to win which culminated in acts of violence. Participants described using psychological and physical violence as a means of revenge. Within the participants’ narratives, there was a sense that events in the pathway from stalking to stalking violence had initiated a *catathymic reaction* (Meloy, 2000; Schlesinger, 2007). That is, the act of revenge provided relief from emotional and psychological turmoil (Schlesinger, 2007). Anger and rage, coupled with resentment, were noteworthy antecedents in the offence pathway of all participants. The emotions of anger and hate appeared to underpin their experiences. It was evident that the feeling of hate was channelled externally towards the victim and others within their social network. Nonetheless, in some participants’ experiences they expressed how this hatred turned inwards and played out with self-loathing. All participants were able to trace this emotional response back to an event which they struggled to cope with which was centred around loss; either loss of a relationship, rejection or loss of status and esteem. It is noteworthy that social

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rejection and exposure of the true self was the catalyst for violence perpetration. In all cases, this created a sense of internal conflict, coupled with an intense negative affect of anger, hate, resentment and fear (of failure) which was inflicted upon the victim.

Conclusion

The analysis revealed five superordinate themes: ‘The quest for attention and affection creating connection’; ‘Conflicted identity and extremes of self’, ‘My life, a film set’, ‘Gameplaying: ‘One step ahead’, and ‘Severed connections, changing the gameplay’. The analysis provides insight into the experiences of IPS perpetrators. In doing so the study provides insight into the underpinning cognitive characteristics present in the pathway to IPS; how he views himself, others and the world, thus illuminating insight into underpinning implicit theories.

Contributions of the study: Implications for theory, policy and forensic practice

The findings indicate that the pathway to stalking behaviour and stalking violence is complex and is underpinned by a multitude of interacting cognitions, emotions and situational factors, which cannot fully be explained by single factor theories of stalking. Some elements of attachment theory (Davis et al., 2000; Kienlen et al., 1997; Meloy, 1992; Patton et al., 2010; Tonin, 2004), evolutionary theory (Duntley & Buss, 2012), relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg 2014), control balance theory (Nobles & Fox, 2013; Tittle, 2018), and coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark 2007) explain the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the participants in this study.

Whilst the findings can be placed to some extent by the above single faceted theoretical frameworks, it is likely that IPS can be explained as an interaction between biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Hence, both the integrative developmental model of stalking (White & Kowalski, 1998) and the nested-ecological framework theory of IPV (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986) have value in explaining the pathway to IPS. At an intrapersonal level, participants’ accounts can be explained by attachment theory (Meloy, 1992) with relationship styles based on extreme sexual attraction, obsessive thinking, possessiveness and dependency (Meloy, 1998) and a neurobiological model of love and attraction (Meloy & Fisher, 2005) which seeks to explain the underlying biological basis for IPS in response to activation of the attachment system. An evolutionary perspective (Duntley & Buss, 2012) seeks to explain the underpinning function of the complex relationship

dynamics and possessive relationship styles. At a socio-cultural level, there are strong gender roles and relationship scripts emerging within the collective narratives, along with expectations of the roles of men and women in relationships. There is a sense that there are underlying social scripts that in the face of rejection if you try hard and persist then love will conquer all. At a situational level the findings can also be placed in the context of control balance theory (Nobles & Fox, 2013; Tittle, 2018), relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014), and coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007). From a hermeneutic level, there is a sense that achievement of goals (i.e., status and relationships) provide attainment of higher order goals of happiness and self-worth. Consequently, it is interpreted that when life was going well, participants held the perception of a high level of control in their lives. In response to life problems and rejection, participants attempted to regain control over various domains of their lives (i.e. work, relationships, and status), impacting on self-esteem and attempts to regain control. In response to control deficits the men in this study can be seen to exercise control, culminating in coercive control and attempts to maintain male dominance through acts of psychological and/or physical violence during the relationship.

The implications of this study for theory and intervention are twofold. Firstly, the findings have strong implications for international policymakers and informing guidance on intervention approaches for IPS perpetrators. Secondly, the findings offer valuable insight into the cognitive characteristics of IPS, reflecting potential treatment need areas which are also likely to act as barriers to the clinical management of this group.

The study has implications for academic theory which warrants integration into approaches to the clinical management of IPS perpetrators. Firstly, the study further illuminates the debate as to whether IPS is a continuum of IPV or a distinct but related offence. The literature to date suggests the connection is not clearly understood, with evidence that stalking behaviour can occur both when the relationship is intact and post-relationship (Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Senkans, et al., 2017). Indeed, five participants described a pattern of psychological violence during the relationship and four had a prior history of IPV, supporting the view that both psychological and physical violence plays a strong role in the offence pathway. Consequently, this study supports the further link between the aetiology of IPV offending and IPS which is emphasised in the empirical

literature (see chapter two) and lends support for the view that IPS is a distinct but related offence.

Secondly, an IPA method has provided insight into the cognitive characteristics of this group, representing what is known to be the first qualitative attempt to form a picture of the cognitions of IPS perpetrators. This approach and subsequent findings has implications for the clinical management of this group. Participants' accounts suggest there are some similarities in the cognitive characteristics of IPS perpetrators and men who commit IPV offences. The implicit theories identified in this study have the potential to be transformed into treatment needs (Dempsey & Day, 2010). As such, both the implicit theories and wider findings of this study can be applied to informing the design of interventions and understanding how treatment needs identified in this group map onto existing IPV interventions. There appears to be deficits which can be targeted by intervention across several domains: attitudinal factors/cognitions (i.e., implicit theories, obsessive thinking, rumination, vengeful thinking), personality factors (i.e., attachment styles, relationship dynamics, identity, desire for status, fear of failure, communication, poor problem solving, relationship breakdown, fluctuating ambivalent emotions of love, hate, anger, rage and jealousy, game-playing and a desire to win) and lifestyle factors (i.e., managing life problems and substance abuse).

Given practitioners across various agencies are tasked with evaluating the risks posed by stalking perpetrators (Foellmi, Rosenfeld, & Galietta, 2016), the findings of this study further illuminate approaches to risk assessment and case formulation. Noticeably, participants described the pathway to stalking and violence perpetration in considerable detail in this study, highlighting the value of adopting a collaborative and compassion focused approach (Gilbert, 2009) and giving a voice to perpetrators. Indeed, Westrup (1998) suggests conducting a *functional analysis* of the stalking behaviour. As such, there may be merit in incorporating a functional analysis into the assessment process for this group. Additionally, there is value in considering utilising a specialist stalking risk assessment²², as

²² The Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM; Kropp et al. 2008a) or the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP; MacKenzie et al., 2009). Both the SRP and SAM are structured professional judgement tools designed to assist clinicians assess and manage stalking recidivism, and predict violence perpetration (McEwan, Shea, Daffern, MacKenzie, Ogloff, & Mullen, 2018).

opposed to routinely utilising the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (Kropp & Hart, 2015) to assist in decision making and inform intervention (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

When considering intervention for this group, policy makers and professionals who design interventions should be mindful that this group holds implicit theories which may act as a barrier to the development of a positive and supportive therapeutic alliance. Furthermore, professionals will need to be astute to how this may manifest in interactions and potential for *offence paralleling behaviour*. Additionally, the accounts of participants highlighted undertones of narcissistic personality traits, and as such there may be cases which require consideration for a personality disorder intervention.

Strengths and limitations of the current study

The current study has contributed to the existing literature by further developing forensic understanding of the lived experiences of IPS perpetrators, and the factors that play a role in the pathway to stalking and stalking violence. The study has achieved its aims through focusing on an under-researched area by employing a qualitative approach with a sample of perpetrators within a forensic setting. The findings provide valuable knowledge which can inform the content of future intervention. The study employed strong reliability and validity measures, with analysis taking a significant period of time, with the researcher concluding that the data had reached a level of saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).

Due to the qualitative methodology adopted, the study is reliant on self-report and the scope for bias. Adopting qualitative methods with offending populations has faced criticism with a sense there is an unwillingness to hear the ‘voices’ of perpetrators due to the justifications they use to construct their personal stories (Crank & King, 2007). Nevertheless, Burnett and Maruna (2004) suggest that exploring how perpetrators make sense of their life events and ‘tell their stories’ provides insight into criminal careers, deviance and the process of change. McAdams (2001) and Waldram (2008) promote the value of utilising personal narratives and how these experiences are constructed to create meaningful realities. This study did not seek to establish the reality and truth in the narratives of perpetrators of IPS, but rather hear their voice and experience of the pathway to stalking and violence perpetration. From a forensic practitioner perspective, a striking feature within the narratives

of participants was the level of insight and detail provided by participants and a willingness to reflect and tell their stories. This finding is in stark contrast to what is often experienced in risk assessment and intervention settings. As such, this is deemed a strength of this study, with this finding having strong implications for approaches to interviewing within police and custodial settings.

Despite the theoretical and applied contributions of this study, it is not without limitations, and conclusions must be drawn with caution. In-keeping with IPA studies, the study utilised a small sample of seven participants, an appropriate sample size for IPA studies (Brocki & Wearden, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). Nonetheless, restrictions on the generalisability of the findings must be acknowledged. Whilst this is not a limitation, this qualitative approach does not seek to generalise the findings or identify or measure an independently existing singular reality. The sample was purposively selected from several prison settings, and whilst this is a strength of the sampling strategy, it is acknowledged the sample represents perpetrators with a higher level of risk, whereby cases had escalated to violence. Despite the author seeking to obtain a sample from a community setting to seek areas of convergence and divergence within the sample, due to recruitment challenges and accessing participants, this was not feasible. Consequently, the generalisability of the study is limited by context in which the study took place, and it cannot be concluded that all IPS perpetrators would construct meanings of their experiences in a similar way to participants in this study.

Future research

The study has provided insight into the specific emotions (i.e., hate, humiliation, and shame) and cognitive characteristics (i.e., implicit theories) within the narratives of IPS perpetrators whose behaviour had escalated to stalking violence. Nonetheless, it is unclear whether these factors would be similar or different to perpetrators who did not escalate to violence. Therefore, future research should build on and replicate a similar research design with a sample of IPS perpetrators who are serving a community sentence for a stalking conviction. This would unpack whether the themes identified in this study are specific to IPS perpetrators where stalking behaviour has escalated to physical violence. This would determine whether the themes from this study are unique to this group. Given the lack of

studies exploring desistance and the role of protective factors, qualitative studies focusing on this area warrant exploration.

In summary, IPA has allowed for an exploration into the experience of the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator. The study provides a unique contribution to the stalking literature by presenting the first known phenomenological approach to develop a rich understanding of the profile of men who have engaged in IPS. Participants in this study described engaging in stalking-related behaviours during the relationship and following the breakdown of the relationship in an attempt to reconcile or seek revenge, with evidence of psychological and physical violence during the relationship in most cases. Whilst the study provides support for existing theories of stalking and the typology of the rejected stalker (Mullen et al., 1999), the findings highlight that the pathway to IPS is complex and multifaceted. The findings highlight that there are several critical cognitive characteristics that underpin IPS, which warrant further exploration. The research has the potential to inform intervention approaches and has strong application to forensic practice.

CHAPTER FOUR:
**‘UNCHARTERED WATERS’: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF
PRACTITIONERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON THE CLINICAL MANAGEMENT OF
INTIMATE PARTNER STALKING PERPETRATORS**

Abstract

Background: This qualitative study adopts an exploratory focus by obtaining professional perceptions and experiences of practitioners who work with perpetrators of intimate partner stalking (IPS) on interventions designed for intimate partner violent (IPV) perpetrators in the United Kingdom.

Method: The study employs a focus group methodology; building on the stalking perception literature and expanding this into the arena of forensic practice and intervention. To date, there has been no known research that has explored the perceptions of practitioners who work with this group. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by obtaining insight into the experiences and perspectives of frontline practitioners responsible for the clinical management of this population. Developing this knowledge provides understanding as to what revisions may be required to drive change and reform forensic practice for professionals in community and custodial settings in the identification, intervention and management of this group. The research also focuses on a unique and unexplored area; examining the perceptions of practitioners alongside the experiences of perpetrators of IPS.

Findings: Three dominant themes were derived from a thematic analysis of practitioners’ narratives from the focus groups: (1) Unchartered waters; (2) Negotiating his story; and (3) Therapeutic struggles. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented, and links made to the wider literature.

Conclusion: The findings illustrate how the focus group environment has provided a catalyst for understanding the practitioners’ perspective and uncovering a wealth of knowledge for informing change. The findings have provided strong implications and recommendations for theory, policy and practice to influence how practices need to change to effectively work with IPS perpetrators.

Keywords: Intimate partner stalking, intervention, qualitative, thematic analysis, focus group, practitioners, perceptions

Introduction

Stalking and intimate partner violence (IPV) are two crimes increasingly coming to the attention of the criminal justice system (Melton, 2012). Whilst the empirical literature indicates a connection between intimate partner stalking (IPS) and IPV, this link is not fully understood (Coleman, 1997; Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Logan, 2010; Gerbrandij, Rosenfeld, Nijdam-Jones, & Galietta, 2018). Historically, the definition of stalking has been the subject of ongoing debate, and remains a crucial unresolved issue (Owens, 2016). The terms 'stalking' and 'harassment' are often used interchangeably with the meanings causing misunderstanding. Indeed, stalking and harassment are not separate behaviours, but patterns of interconnected behaviours driven by diverse motivations and functions (James & MacKenzie, 2018). A key distinction between stalking and harassment relates to the fear experienced as a result of victimisation, along with a pattern of behaviour (Dixon & Bowen, 2012). A common stalking definition from a clinical perspective which underpins stalking risk assessment is 'unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them' (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2008a, p.1).

It is suggested there is a lack of awareness of stalking behaviour generally, and what behaviours constitute stalking, spanning from the general public, to victims, perpetrators and professionals in the criminal justice system (Kamphuis et al. 2005; Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001; Tjaden, 2009; Jagessar & Sheridan, 2004). An early Home Office Study highlighted a lack of understanding and inconsistent implementation of the stalking legislation by criminal justice system professionals (Harris, 2000). Some seventeen years later, similar findings were highlighted by a joint inspection of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (2017). This report highlighted how the police and Crown Prosecution Service struggled to differentiate between harassment and stalking. A consistent finding demonstrated that stalking was not accurately identified with inaccurate police recording. Due to a lack of understanding it was recognised there were consistent failings in charging perpetrators with stalking (Farrell, Weisburd, & Wyckoff, 2000; Melton, 2012). Consequently, opportunities were missed to charge perpetrators with a stalking offence. Significantly, the police and prosecutors focused on a single event/stalking situation, a practice which seriously failed to reflect the pattern of

behaviour and severity and escalation of offending. The absence of a definitive and consistent legal definition was cited as a significant contributory factor in the low number of recorded crimes and prosecutions. Underpinning this was the varying interpretations and perceptions of stalking behaviour by frontline police officers and prosecutors.

The radiating impact of these issues on forensic practice is that stalking becomes a 'hidden crime', which may not come to light until stalking behaviour escalates to violence or homicide (Miller, 2012). Consequently, in some cases, stalking may not be identified as a central component in the lead up to an offence (Fox, Nobles, & Fisher, 2011). This has significant impact for practitioners working with perpetrators in criminal justice settings, as historically IPS perpetrators have infrequently received a conviction for stalking, rather they have been charged with offences such as rape, assault or murder. This has serious implications for risk assessment and intervention, leaving practitioners to deal with the aftermath of identifying and addressing stalking behaviour.

In the absence of research advancing intervention, there are no clear guidelines to inform practitioners on intervention pathways (Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2000). As such, intervention approaches are driven by 'best practice' about what is currently known about this group (Purcell & McEwan, 2018). Whilst stalking is now a criminal offence, in cases of IPS, commonly the criminal justice response is to consider it under the remit of IPV (Melton, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In the absence of an intervention directly targeting stalking behaviour, perpetrators of IPS are considered for IPV interventions. Consequently, there is doubt as to the effectiveness and form of methods and approaches used to intervene with this population (Boon & Sheridan, 2001; MacKenzie & James, 2011; Mullen et al., 2000, Sheridan & Davies, 2010). This is the approach adopted within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) (L, Jonah, personal communication, September 2015). Interventions for IPV perpetrators are delivered across both custodial and community settings (Day, Chung, O'Leary, & Carson, 2009). These interventions are designed to address the criminogenic needs of IPV perpetrators. They adopt a cognitive-behavioural approach, and are delivered in a group format (Bowen, 2011). At the time of undertaking this

research, HMPPS delivered two IPV interventions: The Healthy Relationships Programme and Building Better Relationships (BBR)²³, with Kaizen²⁴ being rolled out (see chapter one).

The current research

Academic interest in eliciting the perceptions of practitioners on approaches to clinical management is deemed valuable for forensic practice in assisting understanding and knowledge for working with offending populations. Studies eliciting expert and professional opinion on a specific phenomenon are a valuable source of data (Tonelli, 1999), particularly when there is a lack of data and knowledge on a subject area (Goulet, Jacques, & Pigeon, 2009). In the field of forensic psychology, this approach has provided knowledge in under-researched areas when seeking to elicit professionals' experiences, perceptions and attitudes on a specific subject area (Blagden, Winder, Gregson, & Thorne, 2013; Day, Carson, Newton & Hobbs, 2014; Lievesley, Elliott, Winder, & Norman, 2014; To et al. 2014). Strikingly, there is a lack of research exploring practitioners' perspectives of IPV interventions, specifically how they relate to subgroups of perpetrators such as those men who have engaged in stalking behaviour. This is an area which would uncover valuable insight into the factors that increase effectiveness of interventions, along with understanding the role of therapeutic relationships and environment (Bowen, 2010).

A growing body of research has focused on the study of perceptions of stalking in response to the challenges of defining and legislating stalking behaviour (Sheridan, Scott, & Campbell, 2019). Within the stalking perception literature, research has focused on

²³ The Building Better Relationships Programme (BBR) was introduced in 2013. This moderate intensity programme for IPV offenders is delivered in a community and custodial setting. The programme is underpinned by the nested-ecological framework theory. This model provides an integrated framework to explain how IPV can be explained by the interaction and interplay of multiple factors; personal, situational and sociocultural factors between an individual and their social environment (Bowen, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986).

²⁴ Kaizen is not specialised for a distinct offence typology. It is grounded in a biopsychosocial model of change building on the Good Loves Model and principles of Risk-Need-Responsivity. The programme is 'New Me' orientated with a focus on building on strengths and developing skills (Walton, Ramsay, Cunningham, & Henfrey, 2017).

establishing attitudes and perceptions of stalking, spanning across university samples, community samples and police professionals (Dennison, 2007; Dennison & Thomson, 2002; Duff & Scott, 2013; Hills & Taplin, 1998; Kamphuis et al., 2005; Phillips, Quirk, Rosenfeld, & O'Connor, 2004; Sheridan, Gillett, Davies, Blaauw, & Patel, 2003; Scott & Sheridan, 2011; Scott, Rajakaruna, & Sheridan, 2014; Sheridan, Scott, & Campbell, 2019; Sheridan, Scott, & Nixon, 2016; Weller, Hope, & Sheridan, 2013). This research has highlighted there is frequently a discrepancy between the perceptions held by the samples explored and the reality of what is known about stalking behaviour. For example, whilst research suggests that IPS perpetrators present as the most persistent and potentially dangerous subtype (James & Farnham, 2003; Mullen, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999; Sheridan & Davies, 2001), in contrast perception research has identified that stalking behaviour is portrayed as being more serious if this is committed by a stranger (Hills & Taplin, 1998; Phillips et al., 2004; Scott, Lloyd, & Gavin, 2010; Scott & Sheridan, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2003).

The research to date which has investigated perceptions of stalking has predominantly employed quantitative research designs using questionnaires and hypothetical stalking vignettes. Whilst these methods are deemed valuable research tools, uncovering critical understanding of the societal myths held on stalking perpetrators, which have strong implications for how police respond, there are also limitations. A central debate around this method relates to the criticism they fail to reflect 'real world' phenomena and lack validity. To this end, it is imperative that research identifies and addresses what misperception are held across a range of samples drawn from the general public, and police, but also crucially from professionals who come into contact with stalking perpetrators across the criminal justice system. The benefits of adopting qualitative methods has the potential to provide in-depth understanding of these issues.

Nonetheless, there is no known research which has explored these issues from the perspective of practitioners who work with IPS perpetrators. Given the academic, clinical and legal complexities of understanding IPS, it is postulated that these challenges will radiate to practitioners responsible for risk assessment, intervention and case management of this group. Indeed, Fletcher (2011) conducted a retrospective study which captured case histories of individuals convicted of stalking from probation staff within a custodial and community setting. The findings indicated that there was a gap in professional understanding and knowledge of stalking behaviour and the stalking legislation. A critical finding was that

despite training, report writers failed to acknowledge previous offending histories or behaviour, indicating that evidence was not reaching the courts, impacting on appropriate sentencing. Subsequently this raised concerns that victims were not adequately protected.

Aims and objectives

This exploratory study aims to obtain professional perceptions and experiences of practitioners who work with IPS perpetrators on IPV interventions. The study seeks to build on the stalking perception literature and expand this into the arena of clinical management of this group. To date, there has been no known research that has explored the perceptions of practitioners responsible for the clinical management of IPS perpetrators. Whilst it is recognised that quantitative methodology, in-particular the use of vignettes, has been particularly useful in investigating perceptions across a range of samples, it is noted that there is a dearth of qualitative methods employed to explore perceptions. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by obtaining insight into the perceptions, experiences and perspectives of professionals through employing a focus group method. Obtaining professional opinion on the challenges and complexities of working with this client group from those who have regular contact with this group is a valuable source of data. This is the primary aim of this research. A secondary aim is to examine the perceptions of practitioners alongside the experiences of perpetrators of IPS (see chapter three). The inclusion of both perspectives generates rich, comprehensive and informative findings, and is a valuable way to inform forensic practice, national policy and intervention approaches of this group.

Not only does this study contribute to academic insight into this area, the timing of this study provides an evidence-base to inform approaches to intervention and highlight where there are gaps in knowledge and expertise of practitioners. It is recognised that given the exploratory nature of the research, practitioners and perpetrators would offer practical suggestions to address the subject area. The research aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are practitioners' views and perceptions on current forensic practices and approaches to intervention for IPS perpetrators?
- 2) What issues and challenges do practitioners experience working with this group?

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER STALKING

- 3) What are the similarities and differences between how practitioners and perpetrators view these issues?

Method

Research design

This qualitative research adopts an exploratory focus by employing a focus group methodology to enhance the existing stalking literature; by being the first known study to explore practitioners' perceptions and experiences of working with IPS perpetrators. Qualitative methods focus on meaning and explore how individuals make sense of their experiences, their interactions in their social world, and how they attribute meaning to a phenomenon (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindal, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Given the paucity of literature in this area, and exploratory nature of the research, qualitative methods were deemed a useful approach to obtain information held by professionals. This methodology enables a rich in-depth exploration of the knowledge and views from the perspective of practitioners; along with insight into the challenges and nature of interactions between practitioners and perpetrators of IPS.

Ethics

The research received ethical approval from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) National Research Committee and Nottingham Trent University College Research Ethics Committee. The research was conducted in line with the British Psychological Society's (2014) code of human research ethics and the Health and Care Professions Council's (2012) standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Due to practicalities, participants were informed about the research prior to their attendance at the venue, with all participants given a participant information sheet. On the day of the focus groups, prior to data collection, the researcher provided a PowerPoint presentation revisiting the aims of the research, covering what participation would entail, and reviewed the issue of consent.

Recruitment and participants

Forty-five practitioners were recruited using an opportunistic and purposive sampling strategy (Robson, 2002). The participant group comprised treatment managers, psychologists and intervention facilitators who are involved in the clinical management of IPV perpetrators

across HMPPS; specifically, the Building Better Relationships (BBR) Programme from either a custodial or community setting. Some participants were also involved in, or had awareness of, the Healthy Relationships Programme (HRP) and Kaizen. Each participant had a different breadth of experience of working with IPV perpetrators, ranging from between one year to over ten years. Gender demographics were not captured as this was not the focus of the study.

Data collection

Focus groups were held on the 19th October 2017 at Newbold Revel Prison Service College. This formed part of a Professional Practice Forum for staff involved in the delivery of IPV interventions across HMPPS. On arrival at the venue participants were assigned to one of four focus groups. This was achieved by the random allocation of a number (i.e., one, two, three or four) representative of the focus group they would attend. Moderators from different professional backgrounds delivered the focus groups under the instructions of the lead researcher prior to the start of the focus groups. Moderators included Interventions Service staff, the researcher's supervisor, and Head of Public Protection Officer specialising in stalking. This comprised providing moderators with a debrief on the aims of the research, running through the research materials and instructions on how to facilitate the focus group. Each focus group was guided by two moderators, with one moderator guiding discussion, and one scribing themes and points of discussion onto flip charts. In addition, two professionals from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust²⁵ who were delivering a presentation at the forum observed. Four separate focus groups ran simultaneously with approximately eleven participants and lasted one hour. Due to the environment, one focus group was held in a smaller room (with the lead researcher) and three focus groups took place in one large conference room. Focus groups were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and points of discussion were scribed onto flip charts.

²⁵ Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the national personal safety charity. Suzy Lamplugh Trust was launched in 1986 by Paul and Diana Lamplugh after their estate agent daughter Suzy disappeared after she went to meet an unknown client. The charity aims to reduce the risk of violence and aggression through campaigning, education and support (Suzy Lamplugh Website, accessed 2nd March 2018).

Guidance on focus group sample sizes vary in the literature (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Some studies have utilised two to three participants, whilst others have included up to twelve participants (Morgan, 1997). Krueger (2015) advocates the use of small focus groups, comprising of three or four participants, when participants have specialist knowledge. Due to practicalities, the focus groups within this research were deemed to be on the large side.

Data was obtained through pre-prepared stimulus materials (see Appendix F). The focus group materials were utilised as a prompt to explore the areas relevant to the research question. Participants were encouraged to express their views and discuss their experiences from a reflective position in their own words. The format of the focus group discussions followed a ‘funnel structure’, consisting of two parts; each being closely interrelated. The focus groups began by moderators encouraging participants to explore and consider a set of pre-prepared questions²⁶. This was less structured to elicit participants perspectives and explore how practitioners conceptualised IPS. A brainstorming technique was employed to stimulate discussion and generate debate and interaction. Moderators encouraged discussion around the questions and guided the group to explore these areas, interjecting to explore responses in greater detail. The second stage involved each group exploring two preliminary themes from study one. These detailed the voices and experiences of perpetrators, by presenting the title of each superordinate theme, with several corresponding quotes. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the themes and extracts and consider how, if at all, this shaped alternative views.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis as a method to identify, analyse and report patterns (i.e., themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013). This method provides a detailed and rich account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) suggest themes can be identified via an inductive (bottom-up) or theoretical analysis (top

²⁶ For example, what would you view as stalking behaviour? How would you identify stalking behaviour? What sort of issues do you feel perpetrators have that we could address on programmes? To what extent do you feel interventions address the treatment needs of IPS and what other treatment pathways are you considering? What challenges do you experience?.

down) approach. As the current research aimed to explore practitioners' experiences and views, analysis adopted an inductive exploratory approach, rather than a deductive approach driven by specific questions and predetermined ideas. An advantage of an inductive approach is that it captures the uniqueness of the data as it is open to participants' experiences, rather than adopting a predetermined view on the subject area driven the existing theory, evidence-base, and researcher's theoretical interest and knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In line with the essentialist/realist approach to data analysis, themes were identified at a semantic level as opposed to latent level. This approach to analysis seeks to capture the explicit meaning of the data, and what participants say and the interpretation of this for research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

'Saliency analysis' (Buetow, 2010) was also integrated into the process of thematic analysis to identify the most prominent themes across the dataset. Some approaches to thematic analysis seek to generate themes relating to recurrence of codes in a data set, whereas saliency analysis seeks to capture the most salient themes. The research also encouraged practitioners to use the focus group forum to provide recommendations which could inform changes to forensic practice. Due to the nature of the research, it was deemed important to focus on the significance and importance of a theme and how this stood out from the data, thus capturing the unique factors, professional experiences and perceptions of practitioners.

Focus groups were transcribed by the author. All potential identifiers were removed. Orthographic transcription was used; focusing on the content of what was explored rather than how it was said (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Due to the location of the focus groups, on occasion it was difficult to capture all the voices and interactions verbatim. As such, an 'intelligent verbatim style' was employed, whereby the content of the focus groups was transcribed onto a word document with specific editing (i.e., filtering muffled background noise, grammatical issues and repetition) to create an easy to read transcript. The focus group data was compared against the scribed data to ensure points of discussion relating to the research question were captured. The transcripts were structured to allow notes to be made during the process of analysis. Data analysis followed the techniques outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994); involving transcription, familiarisation with the data through repeated re-reading and noting areas of interest, and data reduction (coding). The data was organised

systematically, and themes were identified and reviewed. Data saturation was reached when no new themes or additional findings were found in the data (Francis et al., 2010).

Reliability and validity

Obtaining reliability and validity in qualitative research is challenging (Noble & Smith 2015). This research design focused on obtaining in-depth understanding of the subject area from a specific professional group, as opposed to seeking to obtain generalisability. Several verification strategies were employed to enhance the validity and reliability in line with those recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). Throughout the stages of the research process a reflective journal was kept; strengthening credibility and capturing the analytical journey. Research questions were aligned with the chosen research method, data collection and analysis process (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Credibility checks of the codes and themes were undertaken with the supervisory team, thereby increasing transparency and providing evidence supporting the development of overall themes. To evidence to the reader how the author derived the themes, quotes supporting the themes are provided in the results section (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Reflexivity

Through the process of reflexivity, understanding the role of the researcher within the research process is crucial in considering how this shapes the findings (Yardley, 2000). Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which the researchers' own experiences, values, knowledge, interests, and identities have shaped the research (Robson, 2002). It is acknowledged that my assumptions as a research-practitioner and previous clinical experience working in the role of participants in this study will have in some way guided the focus group materials and interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, this previous experience is deemed a strength of the research.

Analysis and discussion

Three dominant themes were derived from a thematic analysis of practitioners' narratives from the focus groups: (1) Uncharted waters, (2) Negotiating his story, and (3) Therapeutic struggles (see Table 8). Within each superordinate theme, several subordinate themes were identified. Some aspects of the above themes interrelate and overlap and are not discrete concepts of participants' perspectives, opinions and perceptions. Each theme was highly salient across the dataset. The themes presented are supported by samples of extracts from the focus groups. Figure 4 presents a thematic map of the themes. Each of the superordinate and subordinate theme are discussed in turn.

Table 8

Superordinate and subordinate themes

Theme Number	Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
1.	Uncharted waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncovering stalking - A different focus - Misperceptions and shifting views - Scratching the surface
2.	Negotiating his story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responding to his script - Time to tell their story
3.	Therapeutic struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overcoming barriers - A new direction

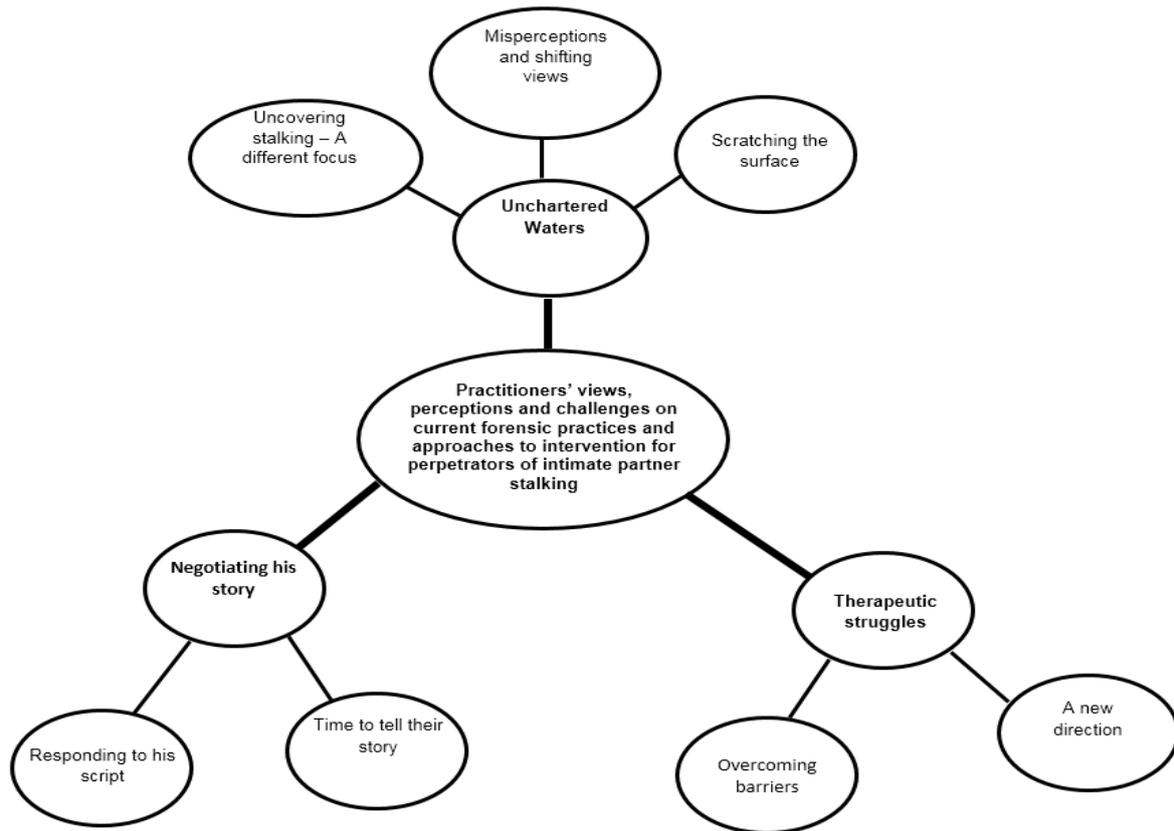


Figure 4: Thematic map themes

Superordinate theme 1: Uncharted waters

The superordinate theme 'Uncharted waters' takes two interlinked directions. Firstly, the subordinate theme 'Uncovering stalking: A different focus' was based around how practitioners experience difficulties negotiating the complexities of the stalking legislation, and that without a conviction for a stalking offence, the focus during intervention is on addressing the violent conviction and IPV. Secondly, the subordinate theme 'Misperceptions and shifting views' captures practitioners changing perceptions of a 'stereotypical profile' and what they deemed to be the treatment needs of this group. The third subordinate theme 'Scratching the surface' is based around the view that practitioners know there are stalking risks to address, but lack understanding, guidance and clarity on works with this population.

1a) Subordinate theme: Uncovering stalking - A different focus

This subordinate theme relates to the difficulties and challenges practitioners experience due to the complexities and loopholes associated with defining and understanding the stalking legislation. Secondly, it captures how focus is given in assessment and intervention to IPV.

Practitioners expressed confidence in recognising what constituted stalking behaviour. Nonetheless, participants experienced frustrations regarding not understanding the stalking legislation and having a clear ‘workable’ definition of stalking. The following extracts from both practitioner and perpetrator illustrates this uncertainty, highlighting the need for greater clarity on adopting a definition of stalking in forensic practice:

A challenge is not understanding the complexities of the legislation, stalking and harassment where do they fit in terms of one another? [Focus group 1]. This parallels the view of one perpetrator: Harassment is ... trying to contact her and stuff like that ...I don't think it's the same (...) stalking is predatory ... harass is someone you know, and stalking is a stranger... [P5, 561-563].

There was the view that the identification of stalking behaviour was dependent upon individual professional experience, and the information available to the practitioner pertaining to the case. Practitioners stated stalking behaviour is identified in practice by either a stalking conviction, albeit infrequent, case file data, exploration of a case, or perpetrator self-disclosure. This finding is consistent with the view of Mackenzie and James (2011) who suggest practitioners need to recognise stalking behaviour in the offence pathway, identify psychological deficits, treatment needs and responsivity factors to inform appropriate treatment planning.

A fundamental concern for practitioners was the feeling they lacked understanding of the true extent of the stalking behaviour in cases, and that stalking behaviour is likely to be missed if practitioners are not astute to subtle and sinister behaviours. This is exemplified in the following extract:

Unless there is a conviction, they don't tell you ... If they have that mind-set they might not know or recognise it's stalking [Focus group 1].

There was consensus that practitioners would not be looking for stalking behaviour, as they were working with clients who had a current or historical IPV offence, rather than a stalking conviction. As such focus was given to acts of physical or sexual violence:

If you look at all of their offences they were convicted for the assaults ...but if you look one of them had a tracker device on her car, okay he got done for assault, but there was nothing there about a conviction for stalking behaviour [Focus group 4].

This finding fits with the literature suggesting perpetrators are infrequently prosecuted under the stalking legislation, rather other offences such as assault (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2004). Advancements in the stalking literature do not appear to be filtering into forensic practice, causing barriers for practitioners in understanding and exploring stalking behaviour. Indeed, Harris (2000) stresses the importance of practitioners being astute to working on the premise that perpetrators have co-morbidity with other offending behaviours.

The wider implications are that practitioners are focusing on the IPV offence and are solely considering interventions applicable for this offence type. This finding is not unexpected given that participants are involved in IPV interventions. Alternative intervention pathways highlighted by practitioners included post-treatment relationship counselling or referrals to the National Stalking Clinic, but those were rarely considered.

1b) Subordinate theme: Misperceptions and shifting views

The subordinate theme 'Misperceptions and shifting views' is explored through two directions: (1) The changing perceptions regarding the profile of IPS perpetrators, and (2) Perceptions of associated treatment needs. The theme is based around the drastic shift in views from practitioners' initial perspectives and the changing perceptions on hearing the voice and experiences of perpetrators themselves.

Initially practitioners described a professional stereotypical profile of an individual who was "creepy" and "socially inadequate with limited experience of relationships". There was also the description of a "traditional stalker" who was "in bushes looking out at people".

Underpinning this was the supposition of romantic idealisation regarding relationship pursuit, driven by attempts to re-establish a relationship. The explanations given for stalking behaviour were not necessarily mutually exclusive, that is, practitioners used more than one explanation to attribute motive to stalking behaviour. Participants explanations and perceptions fitted the typology of the ‘rejected stalker’; someone who will not let go following the dissolution of a relationship, with the stalking behaviour driven by a combination of the desire for reconciliation and revenge (Mullen, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999).

On hearing the experiences of perpetrators, professional opinion shifted to a profile which was more complex and multifaceted. This is exemplified in the following extract:

Initially I was thinking sad, lonely, desperate, but now it looks also narcissistic and very high self-esteem as well, he just wants somebody. [Focus group 1].

The focus group forum generated a thought-provoking debate regarding the issue of treatment needs, with drastically shifting perceptions on hearing the voice of perpetrators. It was noteworthy that initially participants opinions predominantly paralleled the treatment needs of men convicted of IPV offences. Underpinning this was the assumption that IPS was part of a cycle of IPV, with a strong focus on how attachment, intimacy, relationship dissolution, low-self-esteem and identity issues were perceived treatment targets for intervention. It was suggested that perpetrators would benefit from understanding how to form and sustain relationships and that attachment deficits play a key role in stalking, and that more focus should be given to exploring attachment styles and skills to manage this. However, practitioners lacked theoretical knowledge on how it plays a role and how this should be addressed:

When you read the literature on stalking, high risk stalkers ... everybody says there are major issues with personality. I am not sure how does BBR address that? How does it treat attachment? [Focus group 4].

Practitioners highlighted focus should be given to “letting go” in a relationship. This parallels the view of perpetrators who stressed the importance of having the opportunity to

explore, understand and develop coping strategies to manage the breakdown of a relationship. This is illustrated in the following extract:

The need to let go, and draw a line under it and move forward because ultimately it can only ever spiral out of control and in the wrong way and its potentially life threatening ... people need to focus on the endings and make sure they are processed properly [P3, 989-899].

Emotional regulation and deficits in coping were highlighted as significant treatment targets by both perpetrators and practitioners. Practitioners identified emotions of fear, anger and jealousy as key emotions underpinning stalking behaviour; paralleling the emotions explored on IPV interventions. There was no acknowledgement of emotions such as love, excitement, rage, hate, humiliation, embarrassment, and the role of anxiety or depression, which was identified by perpetrators as central to their offending. Additionally, deficits in social skills, significantly a lack of perspective taking, were deemed likely treatment targets: This is captured in the following extracts:

Victim empathy work is needed, so getting them to recognise that this is harmful on the victim and children might be of value and how distressing it might be to get fifty phone calls a day when they are trying to get on with their own life ... [Focus group 1]. This view mirrors the views of perpetrators and is exemplified in the following extract: Look at all the potential pitfalls and problems those actions caused, and look in depth at them and the mind games ... how specifically with stalking ... for example posting that birthday present and birthday cards things like that, silent phone calls are obvious stuff, but all the little what appear to be more incidental things need to be looked at in more detail ...[P3, 922-926].

The view that focusing on perspective taking in treatment would be of value is at odds with the general literature which suggests the role of empathy in the reduction of recidivism is limited (Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015; Tangney, Stuewig, & Martinez, 2014). The stalking literature suggests a common barrier is that the perpetrator presents with a strong sense of betrayal by the victim. Consequently, focusing on victim empathy may be unhelpful

as it serves to strengthen the cognitive factors underpinning stalking behaviour (Purcell & McEwan, 2018).

Both practitioners and perpetrators are of the view that addressing interpersonal skills is warranted. This finding supports the views of ‘experts’ in the field who support the inclusion of developing social skills in this group (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2002; Mullen, Pathé, & Purcell, 2001; Purcell & McEwan, 2018). Mullen et al. (2001) state stalking perpetrators generally display deficits in developing and maintaining relationships, deficits in social cues, and present as difficult and hypersensitive. However, there is no empirical literature to support the assertion that this is central to the profile of this group of stalking perpetrators.

There was a strong focus on power and control as a treatment need due to the perception that IPS was driven by the need to gain control at the point of relationship dissolution. Both perpetrators and practitioner expressed how attitudes are entrenched and that existing interventions do not address this.

Listening to the voice and experiences of perpetrators was a catalyst for shifting perceptions which changed practitioners’ views on the profile of this group and potential treatment needs. Practitioners were surprised with the finding of complex relationship dynamics, and how this disclosure was at odds with their perceptions. The following extract captures the reactions of practitioners:

That is interesting to me as when you think of someone who is obsessed you think of all that energy is going into one person and it isn’t, and that probably the most fascinating thing to me ... The focus has changed in my head a bit because its not so much about the victim its about something else ...It says that its not about the person at all, it could be anybody and it’s about the individual and what they were enjoying. [Focus group 1].

The role of obsession and fixation created conflicting perspectives. This is illustrated in the extract below:

I am interested in the unconsciousness that underpins some of the behaviour and the addictive behaviour that forms part of the cycle ... a good number of drug addicts say

they don't want to inject again but they do ...I am curious about linking it to addiction, is it that they feel a compulsion, or is it they feel they have a lack of control or is it a way of not taking responsibility? [Focus group 2].

Practitioners expressed a lack of confidence in both recognising and managing fixation and obsession. They questioned how far stalking could be explained through the addiction model with differing opinions; that there were parallels between compulsion, drug addiction and a cycle of behaviour, and alternatively that such an explanation diminished responsibility taking.

1c) Subordinate theme: Scratching the surface

This subordinate theme reflects how participants changing perceptions have implications for forensic practice. On hearing the perspective and experience of perpetrators, practitioners suggested they knew there were stalking risks to address, but lacked understanding as to what these were, which impacted on decision making and exploration. Underpinning this was the recognition there were clinical and academic gaps in understanding stalking behaviour and a lack of guidance and clarity on how to use existing IPV interventions effectively with this group.

There was consensus by both perpetrator and practitioner that the role of fantasy, fixation and obsession was not addressed. When perpetrators were discussing their experiences, the theme of obsession resonated strongly within the narratives of all participants. Reflecting on their experiences of engaging in intervention they reflected how this had not been addressed. This is exemplified in the following extract:

It's all going to be left you haven't covered it ... because it is just a continuous game isn't it? [P5, 583].

The implications are that perpetrators are completing IPV interventions with no understanding of how this played a role in the offence pathway, coupled with a lack of strategies to manage risk. From the perspective of perpetrators, they are openly stating that IPV interventions fail to address their risk and needs. This finding links to practitioners

stating their current practice adopts an approach of ‘making risk and need fit’ and a ‘tick box’, with perpetrators being shoehorned into treatment pathways due to a lack of options and guidance. This is illustrated in the extract below:

It doesn’t matter how risky you are, you are on BBR regardless ... I really need some materials here because I have convicted stalkers coming to me that don’t fit in anywhere but need work ... we are not capturing the stalking bit of it at all. [Focus group 1].

Superordinate theme 2: Negotiating his story

There were two subordinate themes associated with the theme ‘Negotiating his story’. The first subordinate theme, ‘Responding to his script’ portrays the way in which practitioners experienced perpetrators disclosing their accounts, and the challenges and frustrations this brings due to the perception of a high level of *cognitive distortions* within their accounts. The second theme, ‘Time to tell their story’ relates to the shifting views of practitioners regarding the approach adopted to working with this group.

2a) Subordinate theme: Responding to his script

A concern and challenge for practitioners lay in the perceived character and presentation of this group. Participants described how in their practice they experienced this population as presenting with high levels of cognitive distortions which presented as a barrier to developing a therapeutic relationship, and overall clinical management.

The finding that stalking perpetrators generally present with high levels of cognitive distortions and seek to deny, rationalise, minimise and excuse their behaviour is evidenced in the wider literature (Mullen et al., 2001; Purcell & McEwan, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2000). This presentation is likely to be challenging for inexperienced practitioners, evoking negative reactions and impacting on therapeutic alliance (Mullen et al., 2001).

Practitioners spoke of the challenges in how perpetrators portray their accounts and the discrepancies between victim and official accounts. This is exemplified in the following extract:

There is a real authenticity that scares me, when I am assessing people ... I have all the information from the victims But speaking to this person for an hour and it's a real uncomfortable feeling in me that he is so authentic, and his version of events is so authentic that I have to re-read the stuff to believe what happened. [Focus group 1].

Practitioners experienced cognitive dissonance between their experiences of this group and their response to hearing the voice of the perpetrator. Reflecting on the theme 'My life, a film set' (see chapter three), practitioners reflected on the extent of cognitive distortions, victim blaming and the narratives and scripts of the perpetrator, and implications for working therapeutically with this group. There was a disconnection between what was being said by perpetrators, and what was being heard, in that practitioners perceived they were listening to his perspective and story; however, were producing a different narrative.

Practitioners reflected that on hearing the voice and experiences of the men, they had presented detailed insight into their experiences of the pathway to their stalking behaviour, which was at odds with their experience. This is exemplified in the following extract:

Their accounts are coming across as honest and we don't always get that, and it would make it easier if they were. [Focus group 4].

There was debate as to whether this was due to the nature of the interviews for the purpose of research, or the approach adopted by the researcher to build rapport and encourage the perspective and experience of the individual.

Practitioners reflected on their experiences of how the perpetrator tells his story within the context of risk assessment and intervention. This generated an interesting debate regarding the role of scripts and how the experience of the author's interviews had been different to practitioners' experiences. This is illustrated by the following extract:

I can't remember what I was thinking, but if he is recounting it like this, this tells a different story and in assessment and group they are following a script. [Focus group 4].

Practitioners reflected that in their experiences there are high levels of justifying and blaming and that perpetrators often present with strong emotions and underpinning resentment and guilt, and using self-protective strategies to prevent themselves from being judged. Despite the view that practitioners expressed there was a degree of openness which demonstrated their accounts portrayed a good level of insight on exploring the narratives of perpetrators, there was also an element of not wishing to hear the accounts given. An element of *confirmation bias* may underpin the perceptions of practitioners. If this is the case, the way in which practitioners view IPS perpetrators may influence their approach to working with the client and how they interpret information pertaining to the case.

2b) Subordinate theme: Time to tell their story

This theme relates to the shifting views of practitioners regarding the approach adopted to working with IPS perpetrators. On hearing the voice and perspective of the men, practitioners shared parallel views with the perpetrators. Both expressed the importance of a collaborative approach to completing a case formulation and breaking down the offence pathway to identify what was driving the stalking behaviour. Indeed, Westrup (1998) suggests conducting a functional analysis of the stalking behaviour.

Interestingly, both practitioner and perpetrator expressed the importance of considering the perpetrator-victim relationship dynamic. Practitioners recognised that the relationship dynamic was significant and that in some relationships victims maintained contact with the perpetrator creating problems for clinical management. Whilst this dynamic was highlighted by perpetrators, this was from a different angle, and from this perspective, the perpetrator took any form of contact as encouragement. Practitioners reflected on the importance of understanding the relationship dynamic. This is illustrated in the following extract:

We need to consider the relationship dynamic and the function of the relationship because you will then know why he is pursuing that type of behaviour ... The information is from victims and that is why the whole thing is terrifying, but if you look at it from his point of view its about something completely different. [Focus group 3].

Superordinate theme 3: Therapeutic struggles

Two subordinate themes were associated with the theme 'therapeutic struggles'. The first subordinate theme 'Overcoming barriers' captures the challenges practitioners experience developing a therapeutic alliance with perpetrators, and the difficulties overcoming the social stigma of this offence. Secondly the theme captures the impact on the professional and personal self. The second subordinate theme 'A new direction' captures participants shifting perceptions after hearing the voice of the perpetrator, and the value of adopting a collaborative approach to establishing therapeutic alliance.

3a) Subordinate theme one: Overcoming barriers

Practitioners collective experiences reflected a sense of hypersensitivity working with IPS perpetrators. This emanates from gaps in knowledge and guidance on what works with this group, perceptions of personal responsibility for managing risk, and impact on the professional and personal self. Both practitioners and perpetrators spoke of strong barriers and stigma relating to the label of a 'stalker'. Perpetrators expressed there was a social stigma attached to this type of offending, bringing tensions of accepting this label, impacting on the sense of self, and subsequent presentation to professionals. This is captured by the following extracts highlighting the view of the perpetrator and practitioner:

I would say it's the worst type of offending because its psychological offending rather than so much physical ... It's horrible, it's a nasty person sometimes it's a desperate person that is too scared to ask for help ... It says its someone who is trying to get something which aren't welcome it's not good. [P1, 623-624].

It is at odds to the way the criminal justice service views offending which shamefully says violent offending is worse and that physical harm is worse than psychological harm. [Focus group 2].

The men described how the label of a 'stalker' has negative connotations and parallels to animal hunting. The label of stalking brings with it a strong emotional response and feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. This mirrors perpetrators' experiences in the pathway to

their stalking behaviour and perceptions of self. As such this is likely to act as barrier to developing therapeutic alliance. This is reflected by the following excerpts from perpetrators:

The word stalking to me feels like an attempt to refer to my actions as animalistic. The predator stalking its prey on the hunt. A lot of references when describing criminalistics behaviour has been taken from terminology from other crude areas of life. I guess the word resonates because it has a negative impact [P7]. Another stated “When they were sentencing me, they read my charges out and they said stalking ... I was embarrassed. Rape, but stalking, they made out like I am a predator ..., I am not a predator and hunting her down stalking is where you are following someone and looking out from wherever coming out of bushes ... stalking is like from a nature programme hunting her down watching her every move, watching for an opportunity” [P5, 544-555].

This finding is consistent with the suggestion that as a subgroup of perpetrators, this group have been demonised, with professionals adopting some of the stereotypical prejudices shared by society (Mullen et al., 2001). This was evident in this study. Both practitioners and perpetrators held the view that perpetrators fit certain stereotypical images which make them distinct from the “normal” population of perpetrators. Therefore, it is hypothesised that in the offending stages the perpetrator views himself as different, and when he encounters the criminal justice system this perception is perpetuated, which manifests within his presentation to professionals.

Throughout the empirical literature, perpetrators are referred to as ‘stalkers’. For the men in this study there was a strong sense that this label was embarrassing and was a clear barrier to exploring their behaviour. They did not wish to be viewed as a ‘stalker’, nor did they wish others to view them in this way. This finding is consistent with Paternoster and Bushway’s (2009) theory of desistance which stresses the role of identity and human agency in moving away from criminal behaviour. Consequently, in forensic practice there is value in avoiding using this label due to the negative connotations, rather referring to ‘stalking type behaviours’, ‘following or checking behaviours’, ‘men convicted of IPS’ or ‘individuals with a history of stalking behaviour’. This recommendation fits with the argument that the label ‘offender’ fuses the offending behaviour into an individual’s identity, becoming a barrier to

rehabilitation attempts (Inzlicht, Tullett, & Gutsell 2011). This approach fits with the desistance literature and the shift from negative labelling based on previous behaviour and the consequences that labelling may bring (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna, 2012).

A further area underpinning this theme relates to how participants described a strong emotional response driven by fear and anxiety of working with this group, particularly in the community. Practitioners expressed responsibility for protecting victims or indeed ‘making him worse’, which emanated from a lack guidance on intervention pathways, coupled with a lack of professional understanding and confidence. Crucially practitioners recognised these barriers prevented them from fully exploring the offence pathway. This is captured in the extract below:

We don't know what works, whether its BBR or anything. What is good and what is not needs to be known. Another practitioner responded: With new facilitators, they think I don't want to go deeper, because I won't know what to do, and its like we don't want to go their because otherwise we don't know what we are going to get and we don't have time... and its like we don't want to open up a can of worms ... there is fear and anxiety about working with a group that you know have obsessive tendencies ... especially in the community. [Focus group 2].

There was the perception that perpetrators presented differently to other offence types. Nonetheless, the above tensions and challenges are evident across other client groups. Practitioners in this study had experience of working with men with IPV offences, who present with similar therapeutic barriers.

One significant barrier centred on the tension between the need for a professional relationship with the client whilst negotiating the impact on the self both personally and professionally. Practitioners expressed the importance of being astute to offence paralleling behaviour and the risk they could become the subject of the stalking behaviour. This is not an unreasonable perception. Within the stalking literature, risk to professionals is recognised as a barrier to effective intervention (Rosenfeld, 2000). Studies indicate that stalking of professionals by clients is a significant issue within mental health and forensic practice (Purcell, Powell, & Mullen, 2005; Wooster, Farnham, & James, 2013). This finding is

supported in the wider stalking literature, suggesting that working therapeutically with this group can evoke disproportionate fear in professionals regardless of experience (Mullen et al., 2006).

Practitioners discussed the stresses and tensions of engaging this group in the process of change and a need to ensure they had the skills and knowledge required to work effectively. It is crucial that further support is given to practitioners to understand the therapeutic struggles they experience as their perceptions are likely to influence the way in which they interact and respond to perpetrators, impacting on rehabilitative strategies and risk management. Holdsworth, Bowen, Brown, and Howat (2014) highlight the importance of understanding how practitioners and perpetrators perceive their stalking behaviour. As such successful engagement is underpinned by therapeutic alliance and the need for both perpetrators and practitioners to have positive perceptions about intervention.

3b) Subordinate theme: A new direction

The subordinate theme encapsulates how practitioners recognised the value of adopting a different focus and approach to exploring stalking behaviour on hearing the voice of perpetrators. Furthermore, it reflects the significance given by practitioners to bring about change in forensic practice to assist them in working effectively with this group.

Practitioners acknowledged that the research design and approach adopted by the researcher had allowed the men to present their perspective. Consequently, practitioners recognised the benefit of establishing a collaborative and compassion-focused approach to build therapeutic alliance. From this, debate unfolded regarding the advantages gained through one-to-one exploration. This is exemplified in the following extract:

Stalking, its seen as one of those things that is taboo so, daring to open up about that is very difficult, in a one-to-one but not in a group. [Focus group 2].

Current IPV interventions are designed as a group format (Bowen, 2011). Group work has the benefit of being cost and resource effective and it also encourages positive peer influence (Daniels & Murphy, 1997). Nonetheless, there are limitations linked to group process;

collusion, behavioural problems, and differences in readiness to change, and a rigid delivery approach to addressing treatment needs (Murphy & Eckhardt, 2005). Individual interventions have the advantage of tailoring intervention to target treatment needs and responsivity issues thereby increasing clients' engagement (Murphy & Meis, 2008).

Practitioners debated what approaches would encourage disclosure. There was the view that recognising the obsessive nature and addictive role of stalking would assist in developing openness. This is exemplified in the following extract:

How do we make it safe to talk about stalking behaviour ... it's doing something that's taboo and not accepted in society ... if you viewed it as some sort of addiction then they will feel safe in that environment, because it is addictive type behaviour ... stalking might come up but it won't get touched because its another step we have got to take ...another hurdle. [Focus group 3].

Consequently, it is evident that a strong therapeutic relationship is critical. Within the wider psychological literature, the relationship between client and professional is cited as a vital factor in establishing effective intervention, and indeed it underpins the risk and need model (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The messages emerging suggest that to work effectively with this group it is imperative that practitioners understand the function of the stalking behaviour and overcome the therapeutic struggles to build therapeutic alliance. Considering that a driver for IPS is the need for connection (see chapter three), this brings into question the importance of the client-practitioner relationship. This requires practitioners to have the essential knowledge and skillset to work therapeutically with this population.

Conclusion

This qualitative research is the first known study to explore and provide insight into practitioners' professional perceptions and experiences of working with IPS perpetrators to establish their views on intervention and the clinical management of this group. Thematic analysis of the focus group data identified three overarching themes; (1) Unchartered waters, (2) Negotiating his story, and (3) Therapeutic struggles. The findings illustrate how the focus group environment has provided a catalyst for understanding the practitioners' perspective and uncovering a wealth of knowledge for informing change. The findings have provided strong implications and recommendations for theory, policy and practice to influence how practices need to change to effectively work with this group.

Contribution and implications of the study

The study identified several areas pertinent to informing policy and forensic practice. This research suggests that the academic, clinical and legal complexities of understanding IPS radiates to practitioners who work with this group. The findings uncovered a detailed understanding of the challenges and difficulties practitioners experience negotiating the complexities of the stalking legislation, and how a lack of a clear definition of stalking played out in their practices and radiated to perpetrators. This finding suggests that while legal and academic insight into stalking is developing, this is not being filtered through to forensic practice. It is crucial that practitioners can identify stalking behaviour to allow for robust assessment and inform intervention pathways.

The findings have clear implications for intervention, highlighting the challenges practitioners face working with this group. Practitioners held preconceived perceptions and stereotypes of this group, which changed on hearing the voice and experiences of perpetrators. This finding highlights a training need to address common misperceptions surrounding stalking perpetration and treatment needs of this group. Specifically, understanding the role of professional attitudes and perceptions is vital given there is a link between the attitudes and perceptions individuals hold and how they will behave and respond to perpetrators they work with (Sheridan & Davies, 2000; Sheridan, Davies, & Boon, 2001).

Critically the findings illustrate the importance of a strong therapeutic alliance. A robust observation of the study was that the perpetrators demonstrated a high level of insight into their behaviour and through their narratives there was a sense of wanting to tell their story (see chapter three). Despite this, there was uncertainty about how to unpick and explore stalking behaviour. This study highlights the importance of the process of training staff in specific interviewing techniques. It is vital that if professionals are to work effectively with this group, men are given an opportunity to tell their story. Such a collaborative and compassion-focused approach has the potential for men to feel they are being listened to, enhancing motivation to change. It is imperative that forums are provided for practitioners to develop their skillset and knowledge and seek specialist guidance on cases to enable them to work effectively with this group. Significantly, consideration should be given to how practitioners refer to this group. The findings support the need to avoid using the label of 'stalker' due to negative connotations and adopt language accordingly. This approach fits with the desistance literature and the shift from negative labelling based on previous behaviour and the consequences that labelling may bring (McNeill, et al., 2012). Given the sense of anxiety of working with this group, practitioners involved in the clinical management of this group may require additional guidance to manage feelings of anxiety about being stalked and forums to maintain wellbeing.

Due to the nature of the study, practitioners were not encouraged to make links to the theoretical models of stalking behaviour. Nonetheless, through the process analysis and interpretation it is noted that practitioners were more aligned to attachment theory (Davis et al., 2000; Kienlen et al., 1997; Meloy, 1992; Patton et al., 2010; Tonin, 2004) as a way to explain the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the participants in this study. This is not surprising given practitioners work on IPV interventions, and it is likely that due to the recognised lack of knowledge held by practitioners this accounts for a lack of emphasis on other theoretical models.

In summary, the findings of this study have significant value in informing approaches to working with this group. The study outlines that revisions should be made as to how practitioners work with this group during existing IPV interventions and also wider forensic practice.

Limitations

This new area of research has provided insight into the perspectives of practitioners working with IPS perpetrators, which has the potential to inform theory, policy and forensic practice. Nonetheless, the study is not without limitations. There are limitations of employing a focus group methodology. The most significant limitation pertinent to this study relates to the large number of participants who took part in the focus groups and an inability, due to practical resources, to facilitate smaller groups. As Krueger (2015) suggests larger numbers of participants increase the likelihood of group dynamics and the challenges of moderating the focus groups. Three of the focus groups were conducted in a large conference room, potentially impacting on discussions. Furthermore, on occasion transcription was difficult due to the composition of the groups and environment where the focus groups took place.

A further limitation is that of selection bias, in that practitioners worked specifically on the BBR across HMPPS. Whilst this study captured participants from community and custodial settings, and those involved in Kaizen or historically HRP, the conclusions drawn may not be representative of the whole HMPPS staff population involved in intervention of this group. Indeed, the findings may not be representative of other professional groups (i.e., mental health practitioners or psychiatrists) who work with this population across other UK intervention settings or internationally.

Furthermore, it is noted that whilst the sample comprised of professionals involved in the delivery and management of IPV interventions across HMPPS, the moderators who facilitated the focus groups, although most were affiliated with HMPPS, composed of different agency representatives (i.e., staff from Interventions Services responsible for the development of interventions, public protection, and the researcher's supervisor). As such, it is recognised that whilst the researcher provided a clear briefing as to the role and remit of the research, those moderating are likely to bring their own understanding and influences on the discussions. Nonetheless, it is the researcher's view that the experience of those moderating the focus groups was sufficient to provide a robust exploration of the material and subject area.

There is also the potential limitation of respondent bias, given the sample were practitioners (Rubin, 2000). However, it is the author's view that practitioners expressed a strong desire to report their experiences and openly discussed where there were gaps in their professional knowledge base. Furthermore, practitioners were open to review their perspectives on hearing the voice and experience of perpetrators. Moreover, unexpectedly the views of practitioners mirrored the perceptions of perpetrators. Due to practicalities, the final themes were not verified with the practitioners, and it is possible that the themes identified would not reflect similar research if this was to incorporate other professional groups. Additionally, despite rigorous measures being employed to ensure analysis was of optimal quality and accuracy (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), it cannot be concluded with certainty that the themes identified have not been influenced by the author's bias as a practitioner and as such influenced the themes derived.

Recommendations for future research

An interesting focus would be to conduct a longitudinal study which captures the potential impact and influences of this study. A mixed-methods approach would be valuable. Employing a *Delphi technique* (Keeney, Hasson & McKenna, 2011) to capture the views through a survey method of practitioners across multiple agencies from HMPPS and the National Health Service and conducting focus groups following the implementation of the recommendations from this study, to evaluate and contrast the findings.

Summary

The findings from this exploratory study illustrates how the focus group environment provided an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on the challenges they experience with regard to working with this group. It is acknowledged that working with this population is a challenging and complex area, with a lack of clarity on intervention approaches for this group. Nonetheless, practitioners were keen to raise awareness of their experiences and are passionate about seeing change. As such, it is vital that these research findings become integrated into forensic practice to bring about change.

During the focus groups practitioners were encouraged to reflect on what suggestions they would offer which in their view would seek to bring about change to allow them to work more effectively with IPS perpetrators. Table 9 provides an overview of the key recommendations which practitioners considered crucial for informing future forensic practice, policy and research. These recommendations ranged from a desire to have a greater understanding of the stalking legislation, a desire to move away from labelling and the use of terms such as 'stalker' within practice, training events and forums to provide knowledge on risk factors and intervention guidance, greater support for those working with IPS, and more research to inform approaches to the clinical management of IPS. It is recognised that most of these recommendations are feasible, and indeed are currently being implemented into forensic practice across HMPPS in response to the findings of this research. Nonetheless, whilst there is a desire to achieve a workable clinical definition of stalking behaviour into forensic practice, it is recognised that this brings specific challenges due to the complexities surrounding definition (see chapter one). Consequently, the way in which this is achieved will require consideration from those practitioners involved in addressing and implementing the recommendations for working more effectively with IPS (see chapter five). One potential way to address this would be through consistency in implementing the clinical definition of stalking outlined in the stalking risk assessment tools; the Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM; Kropp et al., 2008a) or the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP; MacKenzie et al., 2009).

The research has uncovered a new area and has provided a platform from which changes can be made to the identification and clinical management of this group, and for future research to evolve and expand. It is anticipated that these findings will contribute to a more robust and informed approach in the identification and intervention of IPS perpetrators.

Table 9*Recommendations and implications for practice, research and policy*

Recommendations and implications for practice, research and policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A consistent workable clinical definition of stalking behaviour which is implemented into materials to work with perpetrators - Avoid labelling and use of 'stalker' - Training/workshops on the stalking legislation - Ongoing research to identify the specific risk factors for stalking perpetration and how these risk factors can be addressed on intervention - Further research on the role of fixation and obsession - Practical training events which focus on wellbeing and provide staff with information and strategies to manage anxiety and fear about working with perpetrators; particularly to keep safe from becoming a stalking victim - To consider supplementing Kaizen/BBR with individual work and incorporating materials which focuses on educating perpetrators about stalking behaviour, what this looks like, the taboo nature of the offence and how to explore this. The development of any materials would have to be evidence-based and linked to existing theory and evaluated. - To provide training/workshops to equip practitioners with strategies and techniques to interview perpetrators and enhance therapeutic alliance to break down barriers. Within this focus should be given to understanding the complexities of this group. - Building modules on awareness and education of stalking behaviour into the existing interventions and making it common practice that stalking behaviour is explored and discussed in assessment and intervention - National forums for sharing information and best practice and accessing 'expert' knowledge to assist in informing cases. - The development of guidance manuals to incorporate research on stalking and knowledge

CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings from the three studies presented in this thesis, and discusses the impact, influence and contribution to the stalking literature and recommended application for forensic practice and policy. The purpose of this thesis was to develop an explanatory framework for understanding IPS perpetrators. This has been obtained through synthesising the findings from the structured review and findings on the experiences of perpetrators (see chapters two and three) and exploring practitioners' perceptions on the clinical management of IPS. Consequently, the thesis has provided an original contribution to the stalking literature by advancing current knowledge on the characteristics of IPS perpetrators; thus, informing potential treatment need areas and offered insight into feasible intervention pathways. Additionally, through obtaining understanding of the experiences and perceptions of practitioners who work with IPS, this has elicited insight into what changes need to be made to reform forensic practice and work more effectively with IPS perpetrators. Consideration is given to the key overarching themes to emerge from the thesis, the wider implications, and recommendations for how the practical application of the findings can further advance understanding of this group. The limitations are discussed, and suggestions made for where further research is warranted.

The aims of the thesis were:

- 1) To drive change and reform forensic practice for professionals in community and custodial settings in the identification, risk assessment, intervention and management of perpetrators of IPS.
- 2) To explore whether IPS perpetrators share the same characteristics as IPV perpetrators, and consider which characteristics are deemed to be homogenous (i.e., similar across the two groups) and which appear to be heterogenous (i.e., different and more predominant for those who engage in IPS).
- 3) To provide an explanatory framework for understanding IPS behaviour; thus, ensuring that appropriate intervention pathways are identified at the early stages of sentencing.

- 4) To provide recommendations for forensic practice and policy by identifying what practitioners need to know about IPS perpetrators in order to inform approaches to assessment, intervention and case management.

The studies within this thesis comprised of the following chapters to further inform the clinical management and intervention approaches for this group:

Chapter two presented a structured review and narrative synthesis of the characteristics associated with perpetrators of IPS. The findings illustrated that IPS perpetrators presented with some similar characteristics to IPV perpetrators, with some characteristics deemed more prevalent to IPS perpetrators. The chapter concluded there are likely to be subtypes of IPS perpetrators, requiring a bespoke approach to intervention. The first qualitative study is presented in chapter three, which provided a unique contribution to the stalking literature by capturing the nature and complexity of the experiences of the pathway to IPS from the perspective of the perpetrator. The study provided an understanding of the cognitions of IPS perpetrators and highlighted how obtaining the perspective of the perpetrator has value in informing theory and intervention. The second qualitative study is presented in chapter four, which explores professional perceptions and experiences of practitioners who work with this group on IPV interventions. The study builds on the stalking perception literature, expanding this into the arena of intervention, illuminating what needs to change in forensic practice for practitioners to work effectively with this population.

Consideration is now given to how the findings of this thesis have practical application for forensic practice across a range of settings. This chapter is presented to illustrate how the key findings seek to inform recommendations, and in doing so reflects the journey of the perpetrator through the criminal justice system.

It is the intention of this thesis to provide recommendations pertinent to international practice, and to inform professionals who are responsible for the clinical management of IPS perpetrators. As outlined in chapter one, IPV is one of the most common categories of interpersonal violence internationally (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006), with international studies indicating between one in four to one in six individuals will become a victim of stalking (Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2009; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Hence, the author recognises the international relevance of the thesis, and as such the value in generating international discussion and collaboration. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that attaining this vision will be challenging given the ambiguity internationally over the definition of stalking and IPV, and differences in legislation, coupled with potential discrepancies across countries in the clinical management of both IPV and stalking perpetrations. Whilst the chapter is written for consideration of international relevance, specific recommendations are made for practitioners across HMPPS and Interventions Services to illustrate where the findings are currently being applied to forensic practice, and how these have the potential to illuminate forensic practice internationally.

Future directions: A multi-agency approach

To effectively identify, address, and manage IPS perpetrators there is a critical need for a joint up approach from multiple agencies who come into contact with perpetrators throughout the criminal justice system (i.e., from Home Office policy makers through to victim charities, police, courts, mental health professionals and HMPPS professionals). There is also considerable benefit with networking and drawing from international research and experts in the field to inform approaches to risk assessment, intervention and management of this group. Without this multi-agency working the current isolated forensic practices will remain, resulting in perpetrators not being identified, and attempts at interventions failing to address the needs of this group.

Developing networks and collaborating with partners in the Multi-agency Stalking Intervention Programme (MASIP)²⁷ will bring a holistic approach to assessing risk, obtain a robust understanding of the characteristics and drivers for stalking behaviour, and build on the evidence-base to inform desistance of stalking behaviour. A collaborative approach from the police, courts, National Health Service, Interventions Services and practitioners in

²⁷ Suzy Lamplugh Trust is pioneering a project will see the UK's leading personal safety and stalking charity develop and test perpetrator interventions in conjunction with partners including Cheshire Constabulary, Hampshire Constabulary, the Metropolitan Police Service, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, and North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (Suzy Lamplugh Trust Website).

HMPPS would improve responses to stalking across the criminal justice system. This would provide the overall benefit of enhancing the clinical management of stalking perpetrators, and the development and evaluation of interventions which will guide and inform future research.

Professionals across the criminal justice system would benefit from integrating the findings of this thesis into their working practice to safeguard victims and address the behaviour of perpetrators. Chapter four illustrated the importance of policymakers considering the need for greater provision to develop and evaluate interventions for this group and develop strategies to ensure clarity on the stalking legislation filters down to professionals who are responsible for the clinical management of IPS perpetrators. The thesis highlights that despite changes to the stalking legislation, there continues to be a lack of clarity on understanding stalking behaviour and challenges in identifying perpetrators. The wider implications of this for forensic practice is that perpetrators are not identified and are not receiving intervention to address their behaviour. Consequently, if stalking behaviour is missed, perpetrators are at risk of future stalking behaviour, with agencies putting future victims at risk.

Specific implications for HMPPS

Historically, HMPPS has appeared to work in isolation, and raising awareness of stalking behaviour through strategies is only just coming to fruition. As such, it is recommended HMPPS continue to build forums for professionals to access a 'specialist expert' consultancy service. This strategy would provide guidance on cases, and to further expand a multi-agency approach to improve responses to enhance the clinical management of IPS perpetrators across the criminal justice system. In-line with the findings of this thesis, a current initiative across HMPPS is the formation of a hub of practitioners from Psychological Services and Interventions Services to provide such a consultancy service.

Issues for legislation: Recommendations for policy makers

The findings from chapter four uncovered a detailed understanding of the challenges and difficulties practitioners experience working with IPS perpetrators. A central theme related

to the challenges of negotiating the complexities of the stalking legislation, coupled with a lack of conviction for a stalking-related offence, and ambiguity over the definition of stalking, played out in their practices and radiated to perpetrators. This finding suggests that while legal and academic insight into stalking is developing, this is not being filtered through to forensic practice. It is crucial that practitioners can identify stalking behaviour to aid decision making regarding assessment and intervention pathways. The findings of the thesis illustrate the need for ongoing consultancy between the agencies who come into contact with IPS perpetrators and government agencies responsible for legislation. This will ensure that key stalking legislation is disseminated, and critically that issues which are impacting on forensic practice are communicated.

Implications for victim groups

The thesis has significant implications for victim groups, particularly with regard to informing content on stalking awareness workshops and policy. Dissemination to victim groups will advance understanding of IPS perpetrators and provide robust and informed guidance for victims. The development of the explanatory framework for IPS has the potential to inform indicators useful for victim groups and guidance on measures to reduce the risk of stalking victimisation by a current or former partner. Nonetheless, the author recognises the need to approach dissemination of the key findings of this thesis to victim groups sensitivity and negotiate the wider needs of victims. During the development of this thesis the author has collaborated with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. Hence the wider dissemination and application of the overall findings of the thesis will be fully considered.

Implications for police and courts

The thesis has provided further understanding of IPS perpetrators which are significant for how police and courts respond to this group. Firstly, the findings have highlighted there are subtypes of IPS perpetrators. As such, the pathway to stalking behaviour and possible escalation to future physical violence and/or homicide will play out differently for each individual. It is critical to raise awareness amongst professionals in police and court settings regarding the diverse nature of this group. Focus should be given to highlighting the

importance of not taking the case at face value but being astute to twists in how risk may manifest and escalate.

To safeguard victims, it is critical to ensure police and the courts are mindful that IPS perpetrators may engage in stalking behaviour during the early formation of a relationship and when the relationship is intact (Burgess et al., 1997; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2000; Sinclair & Frieze, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) as well as following the dissolution of the relationship. Crucially, chapter three highlighted how complex relationship dynamics play out in this group. Consequently, it is critical that professionals across the criminal justice system recognise the function and role of stalking behaviour across the relationship span to address the misperception that stalking only occurs post relationship, and that the victim is not always the perpetrator's primary relationship.

Whilst it is recognised the police utilise specialist assessment tools such as the Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment²⁸ (SASH; McEwan, Strand, MacKenzie, & James, 2017) there is value in considering how the findings of this thesis could further inform or complement IPS cases. There would be merit in developing a checklist/screening tool based on the explanatory framework presented in this thesis, to reflect the characteristics specific to IPS perpetrators, to be used to identify the subtype of IPS perpetrator and inform where risk is imminent and may escalate to risk of physical harm.

Secondly, chapter three illustrated how 'gameplaying' and a 'desire to win' were central in the pathway to stalking behaviour, which subsequently played out in response to legal sanctions. Indeed, perpetrators continued their behaviours despite continued police warnings, civil injunctions and sanctions from the courts. This parallels the literature identified in the structured review (see chapter two). For example, the structured review identified that a history of supervision failures and breaches of violation orders was present in the histories of some IPS perpetrators across the literature. It is recommended that consideration is given to this presentation, and how perpetrators are likely to respond under such circumstances both

²⁸ The SASH is a short evidence-based triage assessment designed to aid decision making for professionals to appropriately identify, prioritise and respond to cases of stalking and harassment (Hehemann, van Nobelen, Brandt, & McEwan, 2017).

in informing risk approaches to safeguard victims in addition to undertaking specific interviewing techniques with perpetrators.

Implications for understanding IPS behaviour

The findings have further illuminated the theoretical debate as to whether IPS should be conceptualised as a variant or continuation of IPV, or a distinct but related offence and the wider implications for intervention. Synthesising the findings from the thesis provides an explanatory framework for understanding the characteristics associated with IPS behaviour. Figure 5 presents a diagram format of the explanatory framework outlining the pathway to IPS perpetration in light of the overall findings of this thesis.

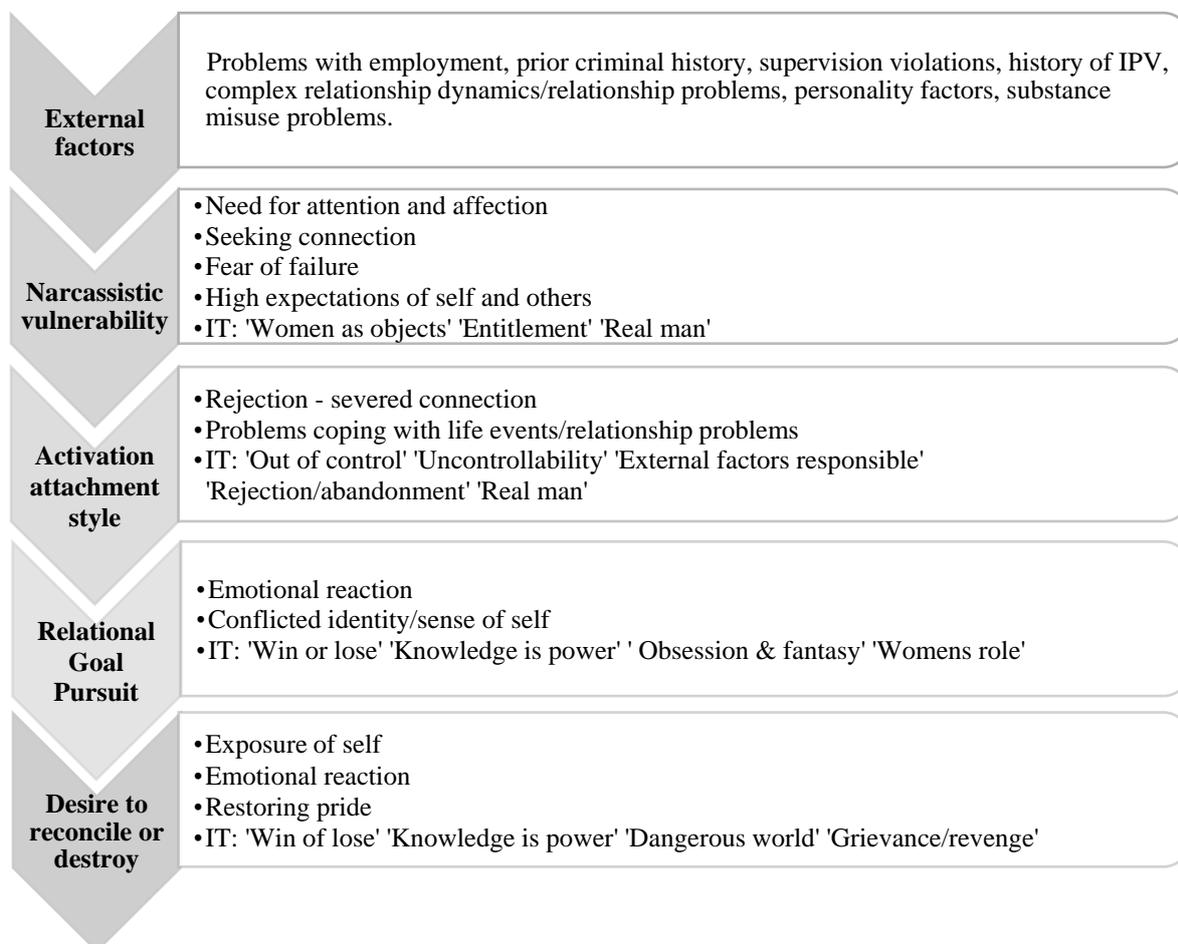


Figure 5: Explanatory framework to understand the pathway to IPS perpetration

The findings from chapter two and three indicate that this group are likely to possess a range of external and internal characteristics as follows:

Perpetrator characteristics: Age does not appear to be a protective factor for this group, with stalking perpetration spanning across a diverse age range. Whilst problems with employment was identified in this group, educational attainment was not a characteristic.

Relationship history and dynamics: A prior criminal history characterised by violence and supervision violations is a characteristic. Whilst a prior history of IPV is a characteristic this is not across all cases. Nonetheless, psychological violence is a strong factor. Perpetrators' experiences indicate a deep-rooted need for attention and affection, acceptance and interpersonal connection, and a history of complex relationship dynamics.

Perpetrator background factors: Typical personality profiles of this group are the presence of Cluster B personality disorder/traits, particularly narcissistic traits. The presence of Axis 1 disorders; specifically, substance misuse problems are evident. Perpetrators' experiences suggest there are deficits in attachment with underpinning sensitivity to rejection and a pattern of relationship breakdown. Perpetrators present with a strong masculine identity and need for status with deficits in coping. Perpetrators present with a conflicted identity and fragile sense of self. There is poor emotional regulation, with emotions of anger, rage, jealousy, love, lust, sadness, fear (of rejection), depression, rage, hate, humiliation, embarrassment and shame playing a role in the offending pathway. There are underpinning cognitive characteristics (i.e. implicit theories) of: 'Win or lose', 'Obsession-fantasy', 'Entitlement', 'Women's role in violence', 'Real man', 'Out of control'/'uncontrollability', 'External factors responsible', 'Dangerous world', 'Rejection/abandonment' and 'Grievance/vengeance'.

Nature of stalking: Perpetrators' experiences suggest a trigger for stalking behaviour appears to be loss (i.e., of a relationship, status, job, identity, or liberty). Stalking behaviour is driven by a combination of non-malicious and malicious motives; specifically, a desire to reconcile a relationship, love, need to communicate, and desire for revenge. Behavioural profile includes: Attempts at unwanted communication, observing or following the victim, and threatening behaviour, higher propensity for physical assault and to use a weapon with

potential for risk of attempted or actual homicide, and gameplaying (includes victim and others such as police). Rule-breaking (interventions are not a deterrent) with gameplaying manifesting when the behaviour is exposed.

Integrating the findings from chapter two and three suggests IPS perpetrators are not a homogenous group, with several subtypes: (1) Men with a history of IPV characterised by physical abuse who engage in stalking behaviour both when the relationship is intact and following the breakdown of the relationship; (2) Men with no history of sexual or physical violence, rather high levels of coercive control within the relationship, who engage in stalking behaviour following relationship breakdown; (3) Men with a history of both physical violence and coercive control within the relationship, who engage in stalking behaviour following the breakdown of the relationship; (4) Men with no history of IPV who stalk a former partner following the breakdown of a relationship; and (5) Men with a history of both physical and/or psychological violence whose stalking behaviour escalates to sexual or physical violence/homicide.

Consequently, the thesis illustrates the need to consider the heterogeneity of IPS perpetrators. Additionally, the findings support the further link between IPV offending and IPS and lends support for the view that IPS is a distinct but related offence. The overall findings of this thesis indicate that the pathway to IPS is complex and is underpinned by a multitude of interacting cognitions, emotions and situational factors, which cannot fully be explained by single factor theories of stalking perpetration. Some elements of attachment theory (Davis et al., 2000; Kienlen et al., 1997; Meloy, 1992; Patton et al., 2010; Tonin, 2004), evolutionary theory (Duntley & Buss, 2012), relational goal pursuit theory (RGP; Cupach & Spitzberg 2014), control balance theory (Nobles & Fox, 2013; Tittle, 2018), and coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark 2007) explain the pathway to IPS.

Whilst the findings can be explained to some extent by these single faceted theoretical frameworks, it is likely that IPS can be explained as an interaction between biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Hence, both the integrative developmental model of stalking (White & Kowalski, 1998) and the nested ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; 1986; Dutton, 1985; Heise 1998) have value in explaining the pathway to IPS. At an intrapersonal level, IPS perpetrators are likely to present with relationship styles underpinned

by extreme sexual attraction, obsessive thinking, possessiveness and dependency (Meloy, 1998). The findings from chapter three lend support for the view that IPS can be explained by attachment theory (Meloy, 1992), and a neurobiological model of love and attraction (Meloy & Fisher, 2005), which seeks to explain the underlying biological basis for IPS in response to activation of the attachment system. An evolutionary perspective (Duntley & Buss, 2012) seeks to explain the underpinning function of the complex relationship dynamics and possessive relationship styles. Chapter three also illustrated that at a socio-cultural level, there are strong gender role and relationship scripts emerging within the collective narratives, along with expectations of the roles of men and women in relationships. There is a sense that IPS perpetrators possess underlying social scripts which emerge in the face of rejection, based on the assumption 'if you try hard and persist then love will conquer all'. At a situational level (i.e., factors that would potentially increase the likelihood of occurrence of stalking behaviour), the findings from chapter two and three can also be placed in the context of control balance theory (Nobles & Fox, 2013; Tittle, 2018), relational goal pursuit theory (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2014), and coercive control theory (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007).

The overall findings of this thesis suggest IPS perpetrators are not a homogenous group and there are likely to be subtypes of IPS perpetrators. Whilst the findings of this thesis lend support for the typologies of stalking behaviour outlined in chapter one (i.e., Zona et al. (1993) simple obsessional group, Mohandie et al. (2006) RECON typology, and Mullen et al. (1999) rejected stalker within the five stalker typology system, the background histories of IPS perpetrators suggests that there is a bigger picture emerging with regards to the relationship histories of this group. The findings from chapter two (see structured review) and chapter three indicate that men who engage in IPS are likely to have a past history of IPV which takes the form of either psychological, physical or sexual violence. In addition, they also present with complex relationship dynamics, and can engage in IPS when the relationship is intact or following the breakdown of the relationship. Consequently, the findings can also be placed within the context of Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) typology of IPV and the borderline-dysphoric category. This group of IPV perpetrators present with moderate to severe partner violence, some violence outside of the home, psychological distress with borderline personality features and substance abuse problems.

The application of the above explanatory framework for IPS has illuminated understanding as to how these characteristics have the potential to be transformed into treatment needs (Dempsey & Day, 2010). Consequently, there appears to be deficits which can be targeted by intervention across several domains: attitudinal factors/cognitions (i.e. implicit theories, obsessive thinking, rumination, vengeful thinking), personality factors (i.e. attachment styles, relationship dynamics, identity, desire for status, fear of failure, communication, poor problem solving, relationship breakdown, fluctuating ambivalent emotions of love, hate, anger, rage and jealousy, game-playing and a desire to win) and lifestyle factors (i.e., managing life problems and substance abuse). Indeed, chapter two highlighted areas of similarity between IPS and IPV perpetrators and how the findings can be placed in the context of the nested ecological model (see chapter two). Nonetheless, the overall findings of the thesis illustrate the need to consider the heterogeneity of perpetrators of IPS.

Implications for clinical management: Issues for approaches to risk assessment and intervention

Given practitioners across various agencies are tasked with evaluating the risks posed by stalking perpetrators (Foellmi, Rosenfeld, & Galietta, 2016), the findings have implications for approaches to risk assessment, case formulation and intervention. The findings highlight that researchers and forensic professionals need to develop their knowledge base of the treatment needs of this group, and how they overlap with men who have committed IPV offences, and indeed the general offending population. The findings indicate that an improved understanding of IPS behaviour would result in greater identification of the behaviour, confidence in targeting the criminogenic needs of this group, and will guide clear decision making on intervention pathways.

Implications for assessment

The findings of this thesis have considerable value for forensic practitioners in reforming approaches to assessment, with regards to the methods employed to engage perpetrators, and

revising the systems and processes for assessing this group. Adopting a robust approach to streamlining the assessment of perpetrators would have merit.

Issues specific to presentation and engagement

The findings from chapter four illustrate the challenges practitioners face and what needs to change to assist practitioners to work more effectively with intimate partner stalking perpetrators. Overall, the findings have illuminated greater understanding of how this group may present to professionals. The findings suggest that the first step to achieving engagement with IPS perpetrators is to amend the language used by practitioners referring to this group. Crucially, the findings support the need to avoid using the label of ‘stalker’ due to negative connotations and adopt language accordingly (see chapter four). This approach fits with the desistance literature and the shift from negative labelling based on previous behaviour and the consequences that labelling may bring (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna, 2012).

The findings from chapter three provide understanding of how men who engage in IPS present and engage with professionals. A notable finding is how IPS perpetrators described the pathway to stalking and violence perpetration in considerable detail in this study. This finding highlights the value of adopting a collaborative approach and giving a voice to perpetrators to build therapeutic alliance. A critical factor for consideration is how ‘Gameplaying’ and a ‘Desire to win’ (see chapter three) is likely to manifest in the client-professional relationship, and in response to supervision measures in a custodial or community setting. Indeed, chapter four highlighted there were tensions amongst practitioners with working with this client group which were barriers to developing a therapeutic relationship. Some of these struggles emanated from personal feelings and stereotypes rather than being underpinned by theoretical evidence.

The findings from chapter four highlight that it is imperative that forums are provided for practitioners to develop their skillset and knowledge and seek specialist guidance on cases. Central to this is the provision to provide professionals with guidance on managing feelings of anxiety about being stalked. This approach will provide practitioners with key information and measures that are known to reduce the risk of stalking victimisation along with guidance

on how to respond in the event that this occurs. Furthermore, forums for supervision to maintain resilience and foster compassion-satisfaction in working with this group would be worthwhile.

A theme which resonated through the experiences of IPS perpetrators was the perception that nobody was listening. Consequently, an approach to interviewing which incorporates motivational interviewing techniques (Rollnick & Miller, 1995) would be beneficial with this group. Practitioners should be mindful of personality interfering factors; specifically, narcissistic personality traits and developing awareness and strategies to manage this. As such, the findings of the thesis illustrate the importance of training practitioners in specific interviewing techniques in developing a collaborative approach to working with this group. It is vital that if professionals are to work effectively with this group, they are given an opportunity to tell their story; thus, opening up the dialogue for understanding the pathway from his perspective.

Implications for the assessment process

The findings across the thesis illustrate that there are likely to be subtypes of IPS perpetrators. As such, revising and streamlining the process of assessment of this group would provide a cost-effective means to ensure that perpetrators are identified to inform decision making on appropriate intervention pathways.

It is proposed that the development of a structured screening tool based on the explanatory framework of IPS outlined above be routinely administered throughout the criminal justice system, in custody and the community to identify men with a history of IPS. Such a tool would assist practitioners in effectively identifying perpetrators, and aid decision making in appropriate assessment and intervention. Crucially, the implementation of this model would consider allocating resources to those cases which require more in-depth assessment and would unpack the issue of sequencing intervention for those perpetrators with a greater level of criminogenic need.

The findings illustrate the merit in incorporating a functional analysis into the assessment process for this group as suggested by Westrup (1998). Additionally, there is value in

considering utilising a specialist stalking risk assessment, as opposed to routinely utilising the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (Kropp & Hart, 2015) to assist in decision making and inform intervention (Purcell & McEwan, 2018). Nonetheless, based on practicalities and lack of resources, it is recognised that such an approach may not be feasible for every case. Hence, the development of a screening tool outlined above would address this issue.

Specific implications for HMPPS.

Currently across HMPPS this approach is not standard practice, and the provision of a stalking risk assessment is rarely used and is based on the experience of the practitioner. Nonetheless, the use of such tools alongside established case formulation approaches will guide clinical decision making, particularly in terms of intensity of intervention and supervision that may be warranted and can be updated at various stages of case management.

Issues for intervention pathways

The explanatory framework for IPS behaviour has provided clarity on appropriate intervention pathways for this group, the extent to which existing IPV interventions are able to address the needs of this group, and what revisions need to be made or circumstances which may merit consideration of alternative pathways. The findings indicate that like IPV offending, IPS perpetrators are not a homogenous group and as such are not compatible with a “one-size-fits-all” approach to intervention. Indeed, they may have a greater level of criminogenic need compared to IPV perpetrators.

The findings indicate that current forensic practice of considering perpetrators of IPS for IPV interventions across HMPPS in community and custodial settings are likely to address some of the treatment needs of IPS perpetrators. Indeed, they may have a greater level of criminogenic need related to cognitive characteristics compared to IPV perpetrators. Strikingly, there is consensus between professionals and perpetrators that current IPV interventions do not adequately address the cognitive characteristics which are deemed central to driving the stalking behaviour. Specifically; the implicit theories of ‘Obsession-fantasy’, ‘Win or lose’, ‘Gameplaying’ and ‘Need for revenge’ (see chapter four).

The findings illustrate that a more bespoke intervention approach based on the characteristics of the specific perpetrator subtype would be more amenable to addressing risk and need. The implementation of a robust assessment process coupled with the outcome of the screening tool for IPS perpetrators (as outlined above) would provide guidance for practitioners on the most appropriate intervention pathway for the specific individual.

For those subtypes of IPS perpetrators where IPV intervention was deemed a suitable intervention pathway, there would be considerable benefit in adapting specific areas of current programmes to address the treatment needs of this group. The inclusion of psychoeducational work on awareness of stalking behaviour should be incorporated into existing IPV group interventions. A bespoke one-to-one tailored approach should be considered alongside existing IPV interventions dependent on the risk and need of each perpetrator. For instance, subtypes of stalking perpetrators with a history of physical/sexual IPV may have different treatment needs to subtypes who do not have a history of physical IPV but coercive control, or indeed those subtypes who have no history of IPV but go onto stalk a former partner at the end of a relationship (McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, & Senkans, 2017; McEwan, Mullen, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2009; Spitzberg, Cupach, & Ciceraro, 2010).

Chapter four highlighted there is debate as to whether intervention should be delivered as a group or individual format. There is limited research to inform either approach, however, research investigating outcome measures comparing the effectiveness of group vs. individual approaches for men convicted of sexual offences identified no significant difference (Ware, Mann, & Wakeling, 2009). Whilst this approach has not been widely explored within the stalking literature, Mullen et al. (2009) advocate intervention approaches for stalking perpetrators should adopt an individual focus and group work avoided. The rationale for this is based on the premise that this population have the capacity to establish networks, present with high levels of collusion thereby sustaining problematic behaviour.

Given that the findings of this thesis highlighted that personality disorder and substance misuse are key characteristics of this group (see chapter two structured review), consideration of how these factors may be deemed treatment-interfering, in addition to the sequencing of interventions, is worthy of exploration. Consideration of the role that these factors played in the onset and maintenance of stalking behaviour would be of value. For

those subtypes identified with critical personality factors, this would be deemed treatment interfering, and consideration should be given to an alternative treatment pathway which would address personality issues.

An alternative intervention pathway for individuals with personality disorder may be the Offender Personality Disorder Pathways Service. This service was introduced in 2011 as a strategy to manage perpetrators who had committed offences who had personality disorder within the Health and Criminal Justice systems (NOMS, 2013). This pathway would provide intervention across a range of settings in HMPPS either in a custodial setting (i.e., on Democratic Therapeutic Communities, Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs), or a PIPE in a community setting. This service is designed for high risk perpetrators with emotional, relationship and behavioural difficulties and as such may be an amenable option for those subtypes who have a history of IPS and personality disorder.

A further consideration relates to perpetrators with a history of substance misuse. As with personality factors, the presence of substance misuse may indicate the need to consider the sequencing of interventions. Some perpetrators may require pre-treatment motivational interventions before engaging in more robust offence-focused work.

The findings illustrate that current forensic practice needs to change with urgency with more resources given to understanding the needs of this group and how practitioners can work with them effectively. The field needs to take a leap and have a clear vision and strategy to address these issues and address the significant gaps in the arena of intervention approaches for this group that the thesis has highlighted.

Specific implications for HMPPS.

As a consequence of the findings from this thesis, several initiatives are underway across HMPPS to address the findings of this thesis: (1) In collaboration with Interventions Services, the author is designing a bespoke one-to-one intervention package for IPV interventions, (2) The development of a guidance manual for practitioners working with IPS perpetrators, (3) The development of an E-learning module for staff across HMPPS, and (4)

The development of a screening tool to identify and IPS perpetrators which seeks to inform intervention pathways.

Critical appraisal of the thesis

Whilst this thesis has contributed to the stalking literature and has significant impact in influencing and informing forensic practice and policy, a number of factors must be taken into consideration when applying and interpreting the overall findings. Specific limitations have been identified within each chapter, as such they apply to the overall thesis.

In summary, the conclusions drawn are limited by the specific nature of the sample (i.e., adult male perpetrators). Whilst chapter two (see structured review) provided an overview of the literature from a range of samples and settings, chapter three provided insight into a specific subgroup of perpetrators; those who have served a custodial sentence for an offence related to IPV and had completed or was currently engaging in an intervention for IPV perpetrators. As such, the generalisability is limited by the context in which the study took place and it cannot be concluded that all subtypes and perpetrators would construct meanings of their experiences in a similar way. Similarly, in chapter four, practitioners were predominantly drawn from HMPPS, and it is acknowledged that the findings may not be generalisable to other settings. A further limitation is that the views and experiences expressed by practitioners may not be representative of those practitioners across all treatment facilities.

Future directions: Recommendations for further research

This thesis has provided a unique contribution to the stalking literature and has identified additional research questions, and areas where further research is warranted. It was notable within the structured review (see chapter two) that there is a lack of studies emanating from a range of countries and the UK. Generally, studies utilised observational research designs, with scant research employing high quality qualitative designs; hence the rationale for the research within this thesis.

Whilst it is recognised there are challenges with developing robust research designs in the study of stalking behaviour, research designs employing prospective longitudinal studies have the potential to further identify and validate the characteristics of this group. For instance, cohort studies can explore how risk factors and characteristics interact and relate to each other over time. Such designs would require robust planning through multiple multidisciplinary agencies. Identifying those who perpetrators who come to the attention of the police for IPV and stalking early on and following this cohort overtime would provide useful data. This would provide insight into offending patterns to examine the predisposing antecedents and common features that underpin general offending behaviour. Additionally, the selection of perpetrator samples across the relationship span are critical to further understanding men who engage in IPS behaviour. The findings from chapter three further illustrate how stalking behaviour occurs within the context of complex relationship dynamics indicating that stalking behaviour does not solely occur post relationship. Indeed, it plays out in the courtship phase of relationship development, during the relationship and post separation. To assist with such a project, it is recommended that data be collected by Interventions Services on those men convicted of a stalking offence and conduct a longitudinal study across multiple agencies. For example, capturing those who engage in intervention along with reconviction data. Consideration should also be given to collecting the same data from the community so that different perpetrator samples can be compared. This will be particularly valuable for exploring the predictive validity of stalking risk assessments. Strikingly, little is known about the desistance process for this group. Insight into this area has the capacity to feed into prevention and risk management and is an area which warrants urgent exploration.

Conclusion

The thesis has provided an original contribution to the existing stalking literature through employing a qualitative exploration of IPS. In doing so, the thesis has advanced knowledge on the characteristics of IPS and highlighted current issues for the clinical management of this population. The development of an explanatory framework to understand IPS perpetration has illuminated understanding of the treatment needs of IPS, and provided insight into feasible intervention pathways. The thesis has provided support for the view that IPS perpetrators are not a homogenous group and there are likely to subtypes of IPS with

distinct needs which will require a bespoke approach to intervention and clinical management. Through adopting a qualitative method to explore the perceptions and experiences of practitioners who work with IPS perpetrators on interventions designed for IPV perpetrators, the findings have offered valuable insight into the challenges practitioners face, and highlighted recommendations to inform approaches to assessment, intervention and case management. It is anticipated that the findings of this thesis may serve as a platform to enhance the clinical management of IPS and provide a foundation to build on future research. Through the dissemination and ongoing strategies which are currently being implemented, the value of adopting a multi-agency approach is crucial to drive change and reform forensic practice for professionals across the criminal justice system and safeguard future victims.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Antisocial personality disorder: Individuals may present with a rigid view of the world as hostile and ‘dog eat dog’ place where survival is only achieved through exploiting others. They struggle with perspective taking and are dismissive of close attachments and view relationships along a continuum of dominance and submission.

Attachment theory: Attachment theory is a well-developed theory of early development which focuses on the formation of early relationships, and the implications of how these relationships are formed for later childhood and adult functioning. Attachment theory proposes that disturbances in attachment formation in childhood can be applied to adult romantic attachment by an inability to manage relationship problems. It is proposed there are four key attachment styles based around the concept of view of self and view of others.

Axis 1 and Axis 2 disorder: Axis I disorder includes clinical conditions that are psychological in nature, Axis II includes personality and developmental disorders.

Borderline personality disorder: This PD is characterised by emotional dysregulation, unstable mood and interpersonal relationships, self-image and behaviours.

Catathymia: This refers to trauma or conflict that has been present in an individual for many months or years becomes fused with intense levels of negative emotion (Schlesinger, 2007).

Coercive control: Coercive control is a term developed by Stark (2009) to explain how perpetrators use a pattern of behaviour and tactics to dominate a partner through violence, isolation, intimidation and subordination. Coercive control is underpinned by a Feminist perspective. It proposes that coercive control is a gendered social phenomenon, with women the victims and men almost exclusively the perpetrators. Coercive behaviour is defined as “an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim” (Home Office, 2013). Coercive control describes a pattern of attempted control over all areas of a partner’s life, with the perpetrator aiming to remove the victim’s independence and diminish their sense of self (Dutton &

Goodman, 2005). The coercion is enforced using threats, intimidation, exploitation, deprivation, isolation and emotional/psychological abuse (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996; Stark, 2010). Stark (2007) suggests the motives underpinning IPS include a desire to control a partner, jealousy, fear of abandonment, and a feeling of entitlement to control a partner to maintain gender inequality.

Cognitive-behavioural approach: Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a collaborative psychotherapeutic approach. The underlying principle of CBT is the notion that mental disorders and problematic behaviour are maintained by cognitive factors. CBT aims to address unhelpful cognitions and behaviours. Engaging in CBT encourages individuals to identify the dysfunctional thinking and behavioural patterns, replacing them with helpful and adaptive ones. The premise of CBT is that it is how the individual perceives an event which influences their emotional reaction and behavioural response. Through the process of therapy, the individual develops healthy alternative beliefs and practices applying these. CBT advocates that early life experiences shape the beliefs (i.e. core beliefs) we hold about ourselves, others and the world.

Cognitive distortions: In the offender intervention literature, Abel, Gore, Holland, Camp Becker, & Rathner (1989) describe the concept of cognitive distortion in sex offenders as: ‘An individual’s internal processes, including the justifications, perceptions and judgments used by the sex offender to rationalize his child molestation behaviour[which] appear to allow the offender to justify his ongoing sexual abuse of children without the anxiety, guilt and loss of self-esteem that would usually result from an individual committing behaviours contrary to the norms of society’ (Maruna & Mann, 2006, P. 115).

Confirmation bias: Confirmation bias occurs when individuals hold predetermined beliefs which leads them to search for evidence to support their perspective, and disregard alternative evidence which may refute their belief once a conclusion has been reached (Nickerson, 1998; Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001).

Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice panel: The Correctional Services Accreditation Panel helps the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS to develop and implement high quality offender behaviour programmes and promotes excellence in programme design.

Its main work is to use an evidence-based approach to accredit programmes designed to reduce re-offending (Maguire, Grubin, Lösel & Raynor, 2010).

Delphi Technique: The Delphi technique is a survey method which employs a structured research process, which utilises a series of questionnaire rounds which aims to achieve consensus of opinion about a complex problem or phenomenon (Keeney, Hasson & McKenna, 2011).

Demographic Therapeutic communities (DTC): The DTC is an environment that promotes group living and aims to reduce reoffending in individuals who have self-management, interpersonal, affective and cognitive deficits.

Desistance: The process by which individuals stop offending.

Dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT): DBT is based on cognitive behavioural therapy and has successfully been applied to a wide-range of populations, including male offenders in a variety of treatment settings and forensic settings for violent and personality disordered populations (McCann, Ball, & Ivanoff, 2000; Berzins & Trestman, 2004).

Epistemology: The way in which a particular type of knowledge works: what counts as valid reasoning or evidence in different areas of expertise or knowledge.

Erotomania: A delusion in which a person believes that another person is in love with them.

Feminist model of intimate partner violence: This approach conceptualises IPV as a problem of men's violence towards women which is rooted in gender and power inequality in opposite-sex relationships underpinned by societal rules and patriarchal beliefs that encourage male dominance (Dutton, 2006; Ali & Naylor, 2013). The underlying assumption of this perspective is that IPV is the result of underlying sociocultural messages which promote the patriarchal organisation of society and specific gender roles whereby men are seen to dominate and control women and the family (Dobash & Dobash 1979).

Functional analysis: Originating from behavioural psychology, functional analysis, is the application of the laws of operant and respondent conditioning to establish the relationships between stimuli and responses. It is a tool which utilises a set of procedures which attempts to identify important variables that develop and maintain behaviour. Functional analysis seeks to identify treatment needs that can be targeted through intervention.

General Aggression Model: The GAM is a biological-socio-cognitive model that integrates a range of theories aiming to comprehensively explain the use, and non-use, of violence and aggression. The model incorporates biological and personality factors in addition to the role of arousal, affect and cognition from childhood to present-day (DeWall et al., 2011; NOMS BBR Theory Manual, 2015).

Good Lives Model (GLM; Ward & Brown, 2004): The GLM of offender rehabilitation is a strength-based approach which seeks to give men who have engaged in offending behaviour the capabilities to secure primary human goods in socially acceptable and personally meaningful way. This model proposes that humans are by nature active, goal-seeking beings who are consistently engaged in the process of constructing a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.

Harassment in abusive relationships (HARASS; Sheridan, 1992): A self-reporting tool designed to measure extent and nature of stalking, threatening and controlling behaviours.

Hermeneutics: The theory and practice of interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013) developed by Edmund Husserl in the 1890s.

Idiographic approach: An approach to knowledge production which is based on the specific and the individual (e.g. case study methods), rather than the shared and generalisable (e.g. quantitative survey methods) (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Implicit theories of IPV: The following implicit theories of IPV offending have been identified in the literature (Gilchrist, 2009; Weldon, 2016):

Implicit Theory	Definition
Women as objects	This IT relates to possessing a patriarchal view of society, specifically that women are objects whose primary goal is to serve and satisfy men.
Entitlement	This IT asserts that some individuals perceive themselves to be superior to others and as such they should have superior rights and status.
Real man	The perception that violence is a means of demonstrating masculinity both within and out with intimate partner relationships, resulting in the social construct as to what constitutes a “real man” and that this needs to be upheld and violence is a means of achieving this.
Out of control/Uncontrollability	This IT suggests that people have a lack of control over their destinies and are at the mercy of malevolent and unpredictable forces. There is the view that the world is uncontrollable and unchangeable. This IT suggests that external factors are responsible for the violence which are perceived to be out with the control by the individual. It encapsulates the idea that there is a lack of choice, lack of escape and often coincides with the feeling of being the victim.
Nature of harm	This IT is representative of the extreme minimisation, and often complete denial, of the severity of the violence or assault. It also refers to the notion that there are degrees of harm and a spectrum of abuse.
Rejection/abandonment	This IT is in reference to the perception that woman are deceitful and unknowable and therefore can hurt men. There is a fear of being rejected or abandoned by females often developed at a young age. Consequently, participants may feel violence is necessary to “put females into place”.
Desire for control	This IT relates to the need for control over intimate relationships and a desire to maintain control.
Women’s role	This IT suggests that women are to blame for the violence/sexual assault because of their behaviour. Due to feelings of emasculation. The perceived by the participants to be emasculating violence is described as an inevitable consequence of the female’s provocative behaviour
Dangerous world	This IT suggests the world is perilous and dominated by people who are negative, abusing and self-promoting. Given the nature of the world it is important to defend oneself by retaliating and gaining dominance over others. Perpetrators of IPV will possess the view that others will act in a rejecting manner thereby promoting their own inherently selfish interests.

Grievance/revenge	This IT encapsulates the perception that violence is an appropriate means to resolve an actual or perceived insult.
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Labelling theory: Labelling theory suggests that individuals come to identify and behave in ways that reflect how others label them. It originates from the field of sociology and crime, and postulates that treating someone as a criminal can foster deviant behaviour.

Narrative therapy: Narrative therapy holds the assumption that individuals are expert in their own lives. This approach to therapy places emphasis on the stories we develop and carry throughout our lives. It is argued that in response to life experiences and situations this influences how we view ourselves and the world.

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder: This PD is characterised by excessive self-control, a preoccupation with order and rules and unwavering conviction in their moral and professional standards.

Offence paralleling behaviour: Offence paralleling behaviour (OPB) is defined as “Any form of offence related behavioural (or fantasised behaviour) pattern that emerges at any point before or after an offence. It does not have to result in an offence but resemble the sequence of behaviours leading up to the offence” (Daffern, Jones, Howells, Shine, Mikton & Tunbridge, 2007).

Offender Personality Disorder Pathway: This service is co-commissioned and managed by NHS England and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The pathway helps to identify, assess, risk manage and treat male and female offenders with personality disorder in prisons, secure hospitals and the community. The pathway aims to reduce levels of re-offending; improve psychological health and wellbeing; and improve skills, confidence and attitudes of staff working with individuals who have personality disorder (NOMS, 2013).

Paranoid personality disorder: This PD is characterised by mistrust and suspiciousness of others with a tendency to hold grudges. They are often guarded interpersonally.

Phenomenology: An influential philosophy in qualitative research which focuses on understanding individuals' subjective experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013),

Power and control hypothesis: This approach conceptualises IPV as a problem of men's violence towards women which is rooted in gender and power inequality in opposite-sex relationships underpinned by societal rules and patriarchal beliefs that encourage male dominance (Dutton, 2006; Ali & Naylor, 2013). The underlying assumption of this perspective is that IPV is the result of underlying sociocultural messages which promote the patriarchal organisation of society and specific gender roles whereby men are seen to dominate and control women and the family (Dobash & Dobash 1979; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Positivist: Positivism is an approach to research which argues that only observable, measurable data should be the subject of study.

Protective factor: A factor that interacts with risk factors to reduce the individual's risk (Rogers, 2000).

Recidivism: Recidivism is the return to stalking behaviours after a period of cessation.

Risk factors: Within the general forensic literature, a risk factor is defined as an attribute, behaviour, a personality trait or exposure to some environmental, contextual, interpersonal or otherwise external hazard that lead to increased or greater risk. Risk factors are divided into static and dynamic risk factors (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996; Andrews and Bonta, 1994). Risk factors are categorised into either static or dynamic risk factors. Static risk factors relate to the historical offender characteristics that are predictive of reoffending which are not amenable to change (i.e. gender, age and previous convictions). Dynamic risk factors, also referred to as criminogenic needs, are the characteristics of an offender which can be changed and are the factors that are targeted during treatment (i.e. cognitions and behaviours) (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Risk Assessment Inventory for Stalking (RAIS; Palarea, Scalora, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1999). This is a self-report survey assessing for several different aspects of stalking behaviours.

Social learning theory: Social learning theory proposes that intimate partner violence is the result of observing inappropriate modelling of adult relationships during childhood and witnessing abuse during childhood/media influences. The theory suggests perpetrators find the abuse rewarding in some way and that abuse is reinforced as a result of victim compliance and submission (Bandura, 1977; Black, Sussman, & Unger, 2010).

Stalking Behaviour Checklist: The SBC (Coleman, 1997) is a 25-item inventory assessing a variety of unwanted harassing and pursuit-oriented behaviours. Each item is rated on a 6-point frequency scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (once a day or more). On our version of the SBC, participants were asked to rate each item by focusing on unwanted contact during the past 6 months by their (most recent) abusive partner. The original version of the SBC inquired about any former dating partner's use of these tactics following the breakup of a romantic relationship.

Stalking Incident Checklist: This is self-report checklist divided into three parts. Part I provides demographic characteristic of victim and offender, including nature of relationship and life events. Part II includes data on stalking characteristic behaviours. Part III includes data on stalking scene information including location, presence of weapons, forensic findings, and other crimes committed by the perpetrator.

Stalking Behaviour Inventory – Version 2: The SBI-2 is a 36-items instrument, assessing different stalking behaviours, namely ‘Courtship & Approach’ behaviours (11 items), reflecting communication and/or contact efforts performed to express affection or other feelings; ‘Harassment & Invasion’ behaviours (10 items), which represent efforts in obtaining information on the victim and involve the violation of the victim’s property and/or individuality; ‘Threats & Violence’ (14 items), corresponding to acts carried out to influence the victim’s behaviour or to cause real damage (Grangeia & Matos 2012). The last item (36th) comprise “other behaviours” and was not analysed. Each item is rated on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from “never” (0) to “more than five times” (Ferreira & Matos, 2013).

The Revised Zona profile - Threat management research questionnaire (Zona et al., 1993; Zona & Palarea, 1997). This tool was developed by these authors exclusively for purpose of the Los Angeles Police Department Threat Management Unit to assist the police with investigating cases. The Zona Profile is a 13-page document that assesses for a variety of variables, including demographic information on the victim and suspect, victim and suspect relationship, contact behaviours, threat and damage behaviours, information gathering on the victim, law enforcement interventions, and suspect mental health, criminal, and violence histories.

Appendix C

Structured Review Protocol: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Title of the review: Identifying the characteristics associated with intimate partner stalking:
A mixed methods structured review and narrative synthesis.

Aims:

- To systematically identify the demographic characteristics, clinical characteristics, offence characteristics and protective factors which are specific for IPS perpetrators.
- To establish whether the characteristics of IPS perpetrators are similar or different to IPV perpetrators.
- To identify and inform intervention pathways for this group.

Review question:

- What are the characteristics of men who have engaged in IPS?

Inclusion criteria

- **Population:** The structured review is interested in identifying the risk factors, demographic and clinical characteristics, and protective factors of male intimate partner stalkers. The population for inclusion in the review will be male offenders (aged 16 and above). Studies which include mixed gender samples will be included when the author specifies the number of females in the sample and when >90% of sample are male. Studies with mixed subtypes of stalking perpetrators will be included if the author gives a breakdown specific to IPS for conclusions to be drawn.

Rationale: The inclusion criterion of ‘male’ is the focus of the research sample. Intimate partner violence and stalking is not limited to adult-age populations. Research into the developmental risk factors associate with adult intimate partner violence indicates the phenomenon is not confined to adult relationships and adolescent intimate partner violence is increasingly common (Jackson, 1999). This

inclusion criteria are in line with the current definition of intimate partner violence (Home Office, 2013) as outlined in the introductory chapter: “*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over*”. The definition of adult stalking perpetrator within the stalking literature is an individual above the age of 18 years (Mullen, Pathe, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999). However, research has identified the prevalence of stalking during adolescence (Evans & Meloy, 2001; McCann, 1998; Purcell, Flower & Mullen, 2009; Roberts, Tolou-Shams & Madera 2016). For the above reasons, employing an age criterion of 16 and above is deemed appropriate given that the legal age for marriage in the United Kingdom is 16 years, and is considered the age whereby early relationships are forming. The inclusion criterion of ‘male’ perpetrator in a heterosexual relationship is the focus of the research sample. The focus of this review is on identifying risk factors and characteristics which can be addressed by interventions for adult male offenders within male/female relationships.

- **History of stalking behaviour:** All participants within the sample population will be male offenders where there is a documented history of stalking type behaviour (either a conviction for stalking/harassment or self-reported history of stalking behaviour within the context of a relationship). The following definitions will be employed:

Several definitions of stalking exist, but most of these definitions share several key elements, including the occurrence of repetitive, unwanted contact that is perceived by the victim as intrusive and/or threatening. The definition employed within this review must capture the essence of the following definition: “*An unwanted and repeated communication, contact, or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of others known to them*” (Kropp, Hart, & Lyon, 2002). Only studies in which the author provides a definition of stalking will be included.

Definition of intimate partner violence: The focus of this review is the behaviours perpetrated by males against their current or previous female romantic partners, and for this reason the definition adopted in this review is ‘intimate partner violence’. The following definition of intimate partner violence will be employed as this captures

the violence and aggressive acts perpetrated towards romantic partners and incorporates stalking behaviour: *“The use of violent and aggressive acts towards romantic partners (e.g. wives, girlfriends, civil partners, husbands, boyfriends). In this context: “Violence” means “Actual, attempted or threatened harm to a person or persons. Threats of harm must be clear and unambiguous rather than vague statements of hostility. Violence is behaviour which obviously is likely to cause harm to another person or persons. Behaviour which would be fear-inducing to the average person may be counted as violence (e.g. stalking)” (Webster, Douglas, Eaves & Hart, 1997).*

Rationale: Extensive research has been conducted on intimate partner violence highlighting that this population of offenders are not a homogenous group. Intimate partner violence is underreported and there are a high number of assaults on a partner prior to conviction. Additionally, stalking is often a hidden crime, and may not come to light until the perpetrator’s behaviour escalates to physical and/or sexual violence or homicide (Miller, 2012). As such, this approach ensures all perpetrators with a history of intimate partner stalking are included.

- Samples of participants will include any nationality, ethnicity and level of cognitive functioning.

Rationale: This inclusion criteria will provide a more coherent overview of the literature to date and capture a full range of demographic characteristics.

- **Setting:** There will be no restrictions by the type of setting where populations are drawn. Studies will include participant samples taken from forensic and clinical settings (i.e. prison settings, community settings, other forensic setting such as secure units, National Health Service (NHS), Psychiatric settings).

Rationale: The aim of this review is to provide insight into the risk factors and characteristics of intimate partner stalking perpetrators which will inform intervention approaches. The inclusion of participants from a range of settings will capture a comprehensive review of the literature from both disciplines of psychology

and psychiatry. For example, there are practitioners within the National Stalking Clinic (NSC) (which is an NHS specialist service providing assessment and consultation for those who have engaged in stalking behaviour and stalking victims), and police departments who work closely with perpetrators.

- **Language restrictions:** International studies will be included in the review providing they are published in English language.

Rationale: The review aims to be international in scope. This will ensure studies are included from a range of countries to produce a robust and comprehensive review of the literature that will be applicable to a range of countries. All studies will be written in English language as there will be no resource to translate studies obtained which are reported in other languages.

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- **Information sources:** A variety of information sources will be included from both articles published in peer-review journals and unpublished research. This will include multiple sources; electronic databases, contact with study authors, and searching of grey literature.

Rationale: There is a significant amount of research which is not published. The rationale for the inclusion of both published peer review research and unpublished research is ensure that all relevant research is identified to produce a comprehensive review and to reduce the impact of ‘publication bias’. Identifying a range of relevant empirical research on the subject area is crucial to ensure that an unbiased and balanced overview of the research is obtained (Müller, Briel, D’Amario, Kleijnen, Marusic, Wager, & Bassler (2013). Lipsey & Wilson (2001) argue that accepted practice should be rigorous research syntheses to include both published and unpublished research. Systematic reviews which only include published studies will lead to an inflated view of the literature and the potential for incomplete conclusions to be drawn. By including unpublished literature this will capture studies whereby the researcher has not sought to publish the research as this was not their objective, the studies that have been rejected by journal editors, and those whereby the outcome of the research may have influenced the decision to publish.

Grey literature/other sources: To extend the scope of the review and reduce the impact of ‘publication bias’, contact will be made directly with ‘experts’ and known researchers in the field to establish if there are any additional or unpublished research of relevance for inclusion in the review. This will include a search of publications listed under their name. Contact will also be made with HMPPS Research Team, National Specialist Leads from Interventions Services, Treatment Managers of intimate partner violence programmes, and other Prison and Probation stakeholders to further search for unpublished research. This approach is considered necessary to seek for unpublished research which may have been undertaken as part by HMPPS staff in their forensic practice. A timeframe for a cut-off point of one month will be employed to obtain studies for potential inclusion. To ensure literature saturation, the reference lists of the retrieved papers and previous systematic reviews/literature reviews will also be scanned to identify potential additional papers not captured through the searching of databases. Hand-searching of personal files, articles/books held by the researcher will also be conducted.

- **Publication date restriction:** All identified studies published from 1989 to near completion of the review will be included.

Rationale: Research on stalking did not exist prior to 1990 (Zona, Palarea and Lane, 1998). This date has been selected as published research began to emerge following the enactment of the first of the ‘anti-stalking’ legislation in the late 1980s in California, United States, (California Penal Code, S646.9), which was subsequently introduced in jurisdictions across the United States, which infiltrated to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and numerous other European countries (Dennis Thomson, 2005; Purcell, Pathé, & Mullen, 2004; Dennison, 2007; McEwan, Mullen & MacKenzie (2007).

- **Study designs:** Study designs employing both quantitative, qualitative research and mixed methods designs will be included, with a prerequisite that only recognised research designs will be included.

Rationale: This approach captures a broad range of findings and data pertinent to the research question. Research methodology in the forensic population is varied and is unlikely to include randomised controlled trials. Studies exploring risk factors, offender characteristics and protective factors are likely to include the following study designs: Longitudinal studies (i.e. prospective cohort studies which have recruited a cohort of individuals before the outcome has occurred and following them over a period of time) and retrospective cohort designs/studies which include observational studies, and cross-sectional studies such as surveys where data is analysed after the outcome has emerged). Cohort studies are also useful for identifying protective factors. Case file data will be considered.

Only qualitative research which focuses on perpetrators and/or victims subjective experiences of the characteristics of perpetrators will be included, to capture a rich and in-depth understanding. The inclusion of qualitative research in systematic reviews is considered pertinent by Thomas, Harden, Oakley, Oliver, Sutcliffe, Rees, Brunton, Kavanagh (2004). To meet inclusion, it will utilise a recognised qualitative analysis methodology. The value of including victim accounts is that this approach is considered to include a wealth and range of data (Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Mullen et al. (2000) state that stalking victims are ‘the most reliable source of information about intimidation, threats and violence’ (p.214).

- **Outcomes:** For this structured review stalking type behaviour will be the outcome and will meet the definition of stalking (as discussed above). Studies included will identify any form of method of stalking behaviour employed by the perpetrator (i.e. following/pursuit behaviours, harassment, threats, property damage, cyberstalking). It is also noted that within the literature, authors may have referred to stalkers differently; i.e. stalkers, obsessional followers, obsessional harassers, or erotomanics.

This review will search for primary research studies that assess the effect of a variable (risk or protective factor) on stalking behaviour (the outcome). All studies must focus on and demonstrate a relationship between; (a) one or more risk factor (static or dynamic) and the occurrence of stalking behaviour, and/or (if studies exist) (b) one or more protective factors for intimate partner stalkers.

Rationale: This structured review will focus on research studies that identify either risk factors, characteristics or protective factors for intimate partner stalkers (the outcome measure). The studies included in the review will capture those where one or more of the above have been identified and a stalking outcome. The following definitions will be employed:

Risk factor: Within the general forensic literature, a risk factor is defined as an attribute, behaviour, a personality trait or exposure to some environmental, contextual, interpersonal or otherwise external hazard that lead to increased or greater risk. Risk factors are divided into static and dynamic risk factors (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996; Andrews and Bonta, 1994). Risk factors are categorised into either static or dynamic risk factors. Static risk factors relate to the historical offender characteristics that are predictive of reoffending which are not amenable to change (i.e. gender, age and previous convictions). Dynamic risk factors, also referred to as criminogenic needs, are the characteristics of an offender which can be changed and are the factors that are targeted during treatment (i.e. cognitions and behaviours) (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Protective factor: A factor that interacts with risk factors to reduce the individuals risk (Rogers, 2000).

Perpetrator/offender characteristics: This will include both demographic, clinical characteristics, and offence characteristics of intimate partner stalkers. Demographic characteristics will be defined as characteristics relating to age, race, socio-economic status, educational level, employment, relationship status etc. Clinical characteristics will capture the psychological and psychopathological factors. Offence characteristics will capture behavioural patterns; stalking persistence and recurrence, and tactics/methods of pursuit.

Exclusion criteria

- **Population:** Samples with the population of interest below the age of 16 will be excluded.

- **Rationale:** The aim of the review is to identify risk factors and characteristics which can be addressed by interventions for adult male offenders. Adolescence begins with onset of puberty and follows three stages to the transition to adulthood (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Within the literature on childhood aggression, 12 years is the age that separates childhood and adolescence (Leitz & Theriot, 2005). The systematic review on adolescent stalking adopted a definition of adolescence between the ages of 13 and 17 years (Roberts, Tolou-Shams & Madera, 2016). Therefore, it seems pertinent that having a cut off 16 years will capture a wider age range and will consider whether there may be a developmental aspect applicable for intimate partner stalkers. For example, whether the risk factors for teenagers and early adult males may be different than men above the age of 30 years.

- Studies based predominately on same sex or female perpetrator samples will be excluded. Studies with a mixed gender sample pool/same sex relationships will only be considered in studies where there are only small numbers in the population sample and inclusion is unlikely to have statistical significance. The threshold of above 90% of male perpetrators against a female victim must be present in the sample pool.

Rationale: The inclusion criterion of 'male' perpetrator in a heterosexual relationship is the focus of the research sample. The focus of the review is on identifying risk factors and characteristics which can be addressed by interventions for adult male offenders within male/female relationships. There may be specific risk factors that are relevant for female stalking perpetration and same sex relationships.

- **Outcome:** Studies which focus specifically on intimate partner violence (with no exploration of intimate partner stalking) or studies which explore risk factors and protective factors for other stalking typologies (i.e. non-partner stalkers).

Rationale: The focus of the review is on identifying risk factors and characteristics specifically for intimate partner stalkers. If it is unclear whether the behaviour

described in the study meets the definition of stalking as above, the article will not be included in the review. The focus on this review is solely intimate partner stalkers, therefore, studies which combines/mixes samples, with no evidence that the typologies have been separated within the analysis, will be excluded as the inclusion of a range of stalking perpetrators/typologies will skew the findings.

- **Language limitations:** Studies will be excluded if they are not printed in English language.

Rationale: The researcher has no resources to translate the findings of papers written in other languages.

- **Study design:** Narratives, literature reviews (which do not employ systematic methods), commentaries, policy documents and editorials will be omitted. Studies will also be omitted if they are reported in a descriptive manner without analysis, or studies that do not explore the presence of risk or protective factors, or characteristics of intimate partner stalkers. Retrospective studies which focus predominantly on victim perspectives relating to the impact of victimisation and do not report on offender characteristics will be excluded.

- **Rationale:** Victim perspectives reporting on victimisation is not the focus of the review.

- Studies which focus specifically on 'non-offender' populations will be excluded.

- **Rationale:** The aim of the review is to establish perpetrator risk factors and characteristics. Student and community samples have the potential to be biased and there are no measures to establish a clear risk factor.