Stalking Behaviours Presented by Ex-intimate Stalkers: A Victim's Perspective

Author Note

Abstract

Stalking can be defined as a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviours by one person to another. These behaviours may take the form of communicative intrusion, third-party contact and physical or sexual assault. The individual stalking behaviours experienced by victims have been found to differ in every case, specifically dependent on their stalker-victim relationship. Recent tragedies have shown that the police force generally underestimates the risk of ex-intimate stalking and harassment behaviours. This study aims to identify patterns of stalking behaviours from a victim's perspective, specifically, whether there are any patterns of behaviour among the ex-intimate stalkers, in comparison to acquaintance or stranger stalkers. Information from the accounts of individuals who had reported unwanted experiences as a result of one of three stalker-victim relationships (ex-intimate, acquaintance or stranger) was extracted from the National Stalking Helpline database. Analyses were conducted on a sample of 1626 victims' reports. One-way ANOVA and multiple logistic regressions were conducted to establish any common patterns of behaviour among the subgroups of stalkers and to ascertain which behaviours increased the odds of being categorised as an ex-intimate stalker. Results indicated that ex-intimate stalkers presented considerably more behaviours than acquaintance or stranger stalkers; some of which included third-party contact, criminal damage, physical and sexual assault. Results also indicated that ex-intimate stalkers presented more severe behaviours than the other subgroups. The majority of stalking behaviours were found to produce a statistically significant predictive contribution to being classed as an ex-intimate stalker. The findings in this study highlight that common misconception surrounding ex-intimate stalking still exists at every level of the Criminal Justice System. Results and implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Stalking, domestic violence, prevention, violence, harassment.

Introduction

2016, a 19-year-old woman complained five times to police that her ex-partner was stalking her before he killed her by cutting her throat. The 19-year-old was fined for wasting police time. She was not called back after her last complaint, and received a letter a few days later stating the case was closed. 2017, a 23-year-old woman was stabbed 75 times by her ex-partner as she sat in her car. After the breakup, he began stalking her and conducted a campaign of abuse on social media. She was encouraged by her parents to file a complaint to the police but, since her ex-partner had no criminal record, the victim was said to block him on social media and report further abuse. In both cases, the risk of violence was considered low by the police before the murders.

Definition and Prevalence

Stalking was initially used to describe the intrusive behaviours of individuals towards celebrity figures (Lowney & Best, 1995). The term was soon adopted for unwanted activities and behaviours exhibited from one individual to another, and the acknowledgement of stalking as a criminal offence emerged after the recognition of equal rights for women and the prosecution for domestic violence (James & MacKenzie, 2018). Although our understanding has increased in the last two decades, stalking remains an unusual offence as its occurrence is not solely defined by the activities of the perpetrator, but also by the reaction of the victim (James & MacKenzie, 2018). The victim's fear changes the perception of the perpetrator's behaviours from appropriate, to distressing, fearful and criminal. But these feelings of fear are subjective to the victim, which makes stalking difficult for law enforcement to understand and has continued to create problems when attempting to define stalking within legislation.

Although not strictly defined by law, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 in England and Wales describes stalking as "persistent, unwanted contact, motivated by a fixation or obsession" (Metropolitan Police Service, 2018). Stalking behaviour involves two or more incidents which the perpetrator knows, or ought to know, will cause another to feel distressed, alarmed or fear that violence will be used against them (Metropolitan Police Service, 2018). This definition was developed when stalking became a criminal offence in the UK in 2012. In 2015, the British Crime Survey recorded a life-time stalking prevalence of 15% and found that 43% of female victims and 28.7% of male victims have been stalked by their ex-partner (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Due to the high prevalence of ex-intimate stalkers, there have been many attempts to understand whether there is a link between domestic violence during the relationship, and stalking once the relationship has ended. However, this link is poorly understood as many studies conflate the two behaviours and treat them as one in the same thing (Douglas & Dutton, 2001; McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, & Senkans, 2017). It is therefore difficult to ascertain whether domestic violence leads to stalking, or whether stalking is invariably preceded by domestic violence (Senkans, McEwan & Ogloff, 2017). Although our understanding of domestic violence has progressed over the years, the same cannot be said for stalking. This may contribute to our misunderstanding of the relationship between the two crimes and such misapprehension may be due to a lack of understanding of what constitutes stalking behaviours by law enforcement. Further, there appears to be a lack of knowledge among victims and the general public in establishing a definition of stalking. In order to develop our awareness of stalking as a criminal offence, further research is necessary to understand this phenomenon.

Categorisation of Stalkers

Diverse attempts have been made to categorise the different patterns of stalking behaviour, each focusing on different aspects of the crime. Zona, Sharma and Lane's (1993) approach is based upon the stalker-victim relationship, mental-health-related labels (e.g. features of mental illness or diagnoses of mental illness) and stalker motivation (e.g. reasserting power over a former partner or the quest for a new relationship). Mullen, Pathé, Purcell and Stuart (1999) place emphasis on the stalker's mental illness features, the motive behind their actions and stalker-victim relationship, whereas Sheridan and Boon (2002) focus solely on the past relationship and motivation. However, combining such characteristics when classifying stalkers is believed to complicate research, resulting in stalkers falling into multiple categories or failing to be classified at all (Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006). Mohandie et al. (2006) proposed a typology defined by the stalker-victim *relationship* (intimate, acquaintance, celebrity or stranger) and the *context* (public or private) in which the stalking takes place. This approach makes categorising easier as it avoids unnecessary inferences and other dynamic factors that may change during the course of stalking (Mohandie et al., 2006). The model was validated on 1,005 stalkers and found 50% to be classified in the intimate category, 13% as acquaintances and 10% as strangers. Using the same categories, Spitzberg (2002) in a meta-analysis of 40 studies, reported that 49% of stalking was perpetrated by ex-intimates, 22.5% by acquaintances and 18% by strangers. The nature of the stalker-victim relationship is believed to be an important factor in predicting future risk of stalking (Sheridan & Boon, 2002) and is a factor which should be given the most attention in future research.

Stalker-victim Relationship

Most research on stalker-victim relationships has found that ex-intimates are the largest subgroup of stalkers, in comparison to acquaintance or stranger (Sheridan & Davies, 2001;

Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Some research estimates that 80% of stalking involves a prior or current intimate relationship (Coleman, 1997) and the main reason for this being the correlation between stalking and abuse within the prior intimate relationship (Leukefel & Walker, 2000). The National Violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) found that 81% of women who were stalked by a current or former partner were also physically assaulted by that partner in the relationship and 31% were sexually assaulted. These findings are pivotal in understanding the relationship between domestic violence and stalking, as it is evident that those who have been abused in the prior relationship are at greater risk of being stalked by that same partner. Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) provide important evidence to show that ex-intimate stalkers are unique in their approach and are a serious risk to their victims, especially those who have been abusive in the prior relationship.

Stalking Behaviours among Ex-intimates

The range of behaviours exhibited by ex-intimate stalkers is an area of research which has had little attention. There is substantial evidence to suggest that having shared a prior intimate relationship with their stalker, victims are at a higher risk of physical violence throughout the course of stalking (Mullen et al., 1999; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002). Harmon, Rosner and Owens (1998) reviewed the cases of 175 stalkers and found that intimate perpetrators represented 49% of those who exhibited violent behaviour, compared to 25% in the acquaintance and 7% in the no prior relationship group. Mullen et al. (1999) conducted a clinical study on 145 stalkers to understand which behaviours, motivations and psychopathology were associated with each subgroup of stalkers. They found that rejected stalkers, predominantly ex-partners, comprised the largest subgroup (30%) and displayed the widest range of behaviours. Furthermore, threats and physical assaults were predominant among ex-intimates.

Mullen, Pathé and Purcell (2000) found that ex-intimate stalkers exhibit the widest range of behaviours and that they were the most likely group to assault their victim. Similarly, Farnham, James and Cantrell (2000) examined serious violence among a sample of 50 stalking cases. Serious violence occurred in 70% of cases involving a former sexual intimate, in comparison to 27% of cases where stalkers were strangers or acquaintances. A recent study by Chan and Sheridan (2019), on a sample of 2496 university students in Hong Kong, found similar results. The potential escalation of ex-intimate stalking behaviours is evident from the varying behaviours found and highlight why they pose the greatest risk of violence to their victims. By understanding how their behaviours escalate and by identifying which behaviours are predictive of ex-intimate stalkers, interventions could be put in place before threats or assaults can occur.

Although behaviours may start as innocent and non-threatening, violent behaviour is inevitable in almost half of all cases involving an ex-intimate partner (Harmon et al., 1998). It is important to establish which stalking behaviours are initially presented, as those who have physically assaulted their victim have more than likely threatened them previously and, prior to that, used less severe behaviours (Mullen et al., 2000). If the range of behaviours that occur among ex-intimate stalkers across multiple cases were understood, prevention and intervention strategies could be implemented at an earlier stage. Furthermore, our understanding could be enhanced by taking into consideration the victim's perspective.

The Victim's Perspective

Identifying key stalking behaviours from the victim's perspective is an approach which has had little attention, yet holds extreme value in understanding the crime of stalking. There has been continued difficulty in defining and classifying stalking, in that the term itself does not apply to one individual act or group of actions. Rather, it embraces a combination of activities

which can range across incidents (Sheridan & Davies, 2001). This has made it difficult to understand what constitutes stalking, but highlights the importance of understanding the crime from the victim's perspective to gain additional information surrounding the individual situation. A victim's account provides a perspective that is not available through official records or from interviewing the perpetrators (Hall, 1998). Sheridan, Gillet and Davies (2000) presented a sample of the general population, who were considered to be potential victims of stalking, with a list of 40 intrusive behaviours and were asked to select those which they considered to be "exemplars of stalking behaviours". They found the sample agreed on what constitutes stalking for half of the stalking behaviours. Although beneficial in recognising common stalking behaviours, Sheridan et al. (2000) focus on the general population instead of victims of stalking. In contrast, Sheridan and colleagues (Chan & Sheridan, 2020; Sheridan & Davies, 2001) conducted surveys on self-defined victims of stalking who were able to provide in-depth information surrounding their situation. The authors developed a better understanding of the course of stalking from a different perspective and provide a rich amount of knowledge that is difficult to obtain. However, Sheridan and colleague's work are some of the few papers which delve into the victim's perspective and highlight the need for research into this specific field of study. The lack of research investigating the victim's perspective may be due to insufficient data on victims of stalking or the victim's reluctance to come forward. In order to build a better understanding of stalking, we must gain knowledge from the perpetrators as well as the victims.

The current study builds on this body of research by identifying patterns of stalking behaviours from a victim's perspective, specifically, whether there are any patterns of behaviour among the ex-intimate stalkers, in comparison to acquaintance or stranger stalkers. It aims to ascertain whether the subgroups of stalkers are identifiable by the behaviours experienced by the

victim. To fully understand stalking and to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies, the victim's point of view should also be studied and understood.

Methods

Sample

The sample in this study consisted of N = 2761 victim accounts of stalking, who had voluntarily contacted the National Stalking Helpline between October 2015 and February 2019 in the United Kingdom. Information for each victim was extracted from a de-identified database and victims were selected based on their stalker-victim relationship. This was to ensure all victims who were categorised under ex-intimate, acquaintance or stranger subgroups were extracted from the database. The sample was reduced to $n = 1626$ after the data was cleaned from an account which did not provide any information of stalking behaviours.

The subgroups of stalking extracted were ex-intimates ($n=904$, 55.6%), acquaintances ($n=496$, 30.5%) and strangers $(n=226$, 13.9%). The gender and age of the stalkers and the gender of the victims from all 1,626 cases were analysed. The majority of victims were female ($n=1330$, 81.8%) and the majority of stalkers were male ($n=1197$, 73.6%). The victims' ages were not available and the age of only 434 stalkers were reported by victims. For the stalkers where ages were available, 26-35 years old was the most common age category of stalkers ($n=121$, 27.88%), closely followed by 36-45 years old ($n=104$, 23.96%) and 45-55 years old ($n=92$, 21.20%)

The National Stalking Helpline Database

The National Stalking Helpline database contains information from any victim who has made contact in regards to their concerns of stalking, past or present. When contacting the helpline, victims provide information of their situation, such as: their age, gender, stalker-victim relationship, as well as a brief description of their situation and the stalking behaviours

experienced. This information is stored under an individual profile with a unique identification number and victims can be searched within the database by any of the demographic information initially provided. It should be noted that many profiles are incomplete and do not contain all possible information, due to victims refraining from sharing all personal details. The researcher volunteered at the National Stalking Helpline and received permission to access and extract data from their database for research purposes. Individual data was extracted for each victim which included: their gender, stalker-victim relationship, the age and gender of their perpetrator and the already identified stalking behaviours they had experienced.

Total Stalking Scale

There are 27 potential stalking behaviours listed in the database for an advisor to select when creating a new victim profile, depending on whether the victim has experienced such behaviours. All 27 behaviours can be selected if necessary, or none at all if they do not apply to the victim's account. However, a single behaviour cannot be selected more than once. These behaviours are: watching, spying, loitering, phone calls, emails, text messages, letters, following, social networking sites (contact via social media), visit house/work, in/through workplace, gifts, third-party contact, vexatious complaints, threats, revenge porn, harassment, hacking technology, tracking device, threaten suicide, break-in, criminal damage, physical assault, sexual assault, death threats, stalking behaviours unclear and other. For the purpose of this research, 'stalking behaviours unclear' and 'other' were removed from any victim account as there was no further information provided surrounding the specific behaviours that must be present for these items to be selected. The behaviours 'watching', 'spying' and 'loitering' were merged as the majority of accounts that presented one of these three behaviours, also presented the other two. After these modifications, 22 behaviours remained. A Total Stalking Scale was created in order to identify

how many behaviours were presented by each subgroup of stalkers and to identify the amount of times each behaviour was presented by each subgroup.

Analyses

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the three sub-groups of stalkers (ex-intimate, acquaintance and stranger). The aim was to compare the variance of behaviours present among the three sub-groups and to identify whether any patterns of behaviours could be established.

Logistic regression was also conducted to identify the best predicting behaviours among the three sub-groups. Because stalking behaviours are dichotomous, a logistic function is much more suitable and allows for the calculation of an odds ratio. This is the ratio of the odds of an event occurring in one group compared to another. This analysis produces further information on the difference between the three sub-groups under study.

Results

Frequencies of Behaviours

The frequencies of the Total Stalking Scale were conducted for each subgroup to identify the total amount of times each behaviour was presented by each subgroup of stalkers and the total amount of behaviours presented by each subgroup of stalkers (see Table 1). Results showed that ex-intimate stalkers presented considerably more behaviours than acquaintance or stranger.

Table 2 shows that ex-intimate stalkers presented more stalking behaviours in comparison to acquaintance and stranger. For example, 66 ex-intimate stalkers presented three behaviours, 232 ex-intimate stalkers presented five behaviours and two ex-intimate stalkers presented 16 behaviours to their victim. They were the only subgroup to present more than 11 behaviours.

ANOVA

A one-way between subject's ANOVA was conducted to compare the variance of behaviours within the three subgroups (ex-intimate, acquaintance and stranger). There was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(2,1625) = 384.96$, $p < .001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference of behaviours between all three subgroups (see Table 3).

To determine which subgroup was significantly different, a one-sample t-test for ex-intimates, acquaintance and stranger groups was conducted. Three tests were conducted, to compare each subgroup to the other two. The one-sample t-tests revealed that all three subgroups were statistically different, ex-intimate: $t(1625) = 45.11$, $p = .000$, acquaintance: $t(1625) = 26.71$, $p = .000$ and stranger: $t(1625) = 16.19$, $p = .000$. These results suggest that there is a variance of behaviours between the three subgroups, particularly between ex-intimates and strangers.

Logistic Regression

A logistic regression was conducted to determine whether stalking behaviours can predict the stalker being an ex-intimate (1) or an acquaintance or stranger (0). All of the predictor variables in the logistic regressions were binary and coded as either present (1) or absent (0). Multicollinearity was checked for all variables included in the analysis. The Cox and Snell R Square was .399 and the Nagelkerke R Square was .535 indicating that there is a variability between 39% and 53% of whether a stalker is ex-intimate or acquaintance/stranger. The correct classification of cases overall was 83.5% and it was better for the ex-intimate cases (87.6%) than the acquaintance or stranger (78.3%).

As shown in Table 4, 17 variables: (1) watch/spy/loiter; (2) phone calls; (2) emails; (4) text messages; (5) letters; (6) visit house/work; (7) third-party contact; (8) threats; (9) revenge porn; (10) harassment; (11) hacking technology; (12) tracking device; (13) threaten suicide; (14)

break-in; (15) criminal damage; (16) physical assault and (17) sexual assault made a statistically significant predictive contribution. This means that for stalkers categorised as an ex-intimate, the odds of them watching, spying or loitering around their victim were 1.63 times the odds of them not watching, spying or loitering. Contacting their victim by phone calls, emails, text messages or letters increased the odds of being classed as an ex-intimate by 1.88; 2.04; 2.28 and 2.46 respectively. The odds of an ex-intimate visiting their victim's house/work were 2.45 times the odds of them not presenting this behaviour. Making third-party contact, threats and posting revenge porn increased the odds of being classed as an ex-intimate by 2.63, 2.49 and 11.56 respectively. The odds of an ex-intimate harassing their victim were 1.87 times the odds of them not harassing their victim. The odds of an ex-intimate hacking their victim's technology or using a tracking device were 2.21 and 3.99 times the odds of them not. The odds of an ex-intimate threating suicide were 8.34 times the odds of them not. Breaking into their victim's home or causing criminal damage increased the odds of being classed as an ex-intimate by 2.96 and 5.78 respectively. Finally, physically and sexually assaulting their victim increased the odds of being categorised as an ex-intimate by 7.52 and 5.04 respectively. In contrast, using social networking sites or giving gifts decreased the odds of being categorised as an ex-intimate stalker.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

Overview of Results

The aim of the present study was to identify patterns of stalking behaviours from a victim's perspective, specifically those presented by ex-intimate stalkers in comparison to acquaintance or stranger stalkers. The research also aimed to identify whether subgroups of stalkers were identifiable by the behaviours they presented and what these patterns of behaviours tell us about subgroups of stalkers. Results revealed that the vast majority of perpetrators within

the sample were male, ex-intimate stalkers whose victims were predominantly female. These findings are consistent with previous literature and highlight that ex-intimate stalkers are the most prevalent group of stalkers (Sheridan & Davies, 2001; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Results also show a significant difference in stalking behaviours between the three subgroups of stalkers, the largest difference being between ex-intimate and stranger stalkers. Additionally, 17 out of the potential 22 behaviours, including physical and sexual assault, were found to be predictive of ex-intimate stalkers. Thus, the results indicate that ex-intimate stalkers present the widest range of behaviours and are more likely to act violently towards their victim. These results have several implications, ranging from a general understanding of stalking, to the allocation of resources by first respondents and professionals, to effective prevention programs.

Implications

The significant difference in behaviours among the three subgroups provides strong evidence to suggest different stalker-victim relationships present varying behaviours. These findings could be extremely useful for professionals, such as the police, the National Stalking Helpline and other victim support services, when faced with stalking cases. If professionals are aware the behaviours presented by a perpetrator differ depending on the stalker-victim relationship, they may be better able to understand that stalking behaviours are not one size fits all. The stalker-victim relationship should be used to guide decisions and assess the risk.

Perception of Risk. Analyses revealed that ex-intimate stalkers present a wider array of stalking behaviours, as well as more stalking behaviours and are more violent in their approach. For example, one third of ex-intimate stalkers in our sample threatened their victim and one fourth physically assaulted their victim. On the contrary, stranger stalkers were found to present the fewest number of behaviours and were the least physically violent subgroup. These findings

highlight the stalker-victim relationship is a good predictor of the level of contact and level of severity of the stalking behaviours.

These results are in stark contrast with the fear associated with ex-intimates versus stranger stalkers. Many studies have found that participants are more likely to believe that a behaviour constitutes stalking and requires police intervention when the perpetrator is a stranger (Scott & Sheridan, 2010). The behaviours have therefore been reported earlier, which prevents escalation to threats or physical violence. This fear of stranger stalkers could explain why less behaviours are being found for this subgroup of stalkers. In contrast, victims of ex-intimate stalkers may have minimised the risk due to the nature of the relationship, which allowed for the escalation to violence. Furthermore, victims of ex-intimate stalkers are more aware and therefore, once they report a stalking situation, they report a more extensive list of behaviours when contacting the helpline. On the other side, victims of stranger stalkers are less likely to notice the behaviours exhibited by their perpetrator if they are unaware that stalking is taking place (if non-intrusive).

Scott, Nixon and Sheridan (2013) examined the influence of prior relationship on perceptions and found that police officers were more likely to believe that behaviours constitute stalking and required police intervention if the stalker was a stranger. This could suggest that stranger stalking cases are taken more seriously by authorities which stops the escalation due to earlier interventions. The fear associated with stranger stalkers leads to increased attention being placed on them, despite the national surveys and research which states that ex-intimate stalkers pose the greatest risk to their victims (Mullen et al., 1999; Office for National Statistics, 2016; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The results presented in this study place further emphasis on the need for professionals to turn their attention to ex-intimate stalkers.

Awareness must be raised surrounding the risk associated with ex-intimate stalkers, their prevalence of violence and that reporting and intervening at an earlier stage is crucial in order to prevent violent behaviours from occurring.

Use of resources. Increasing public awareness surrounding the dangers of stalking is a crucial step forward in tackling its escalating prevalence and enhancing our understanding of the crime. Results in this study show that third-party contact and visit house/work both increased the odds of being an ex-intimate stalker and were presented by 57% (third-party contact) and 55% (visit house/work) of ex-intimate stalkers. These results are consistent with those of Sheridan and Davies (2001) who found that 53% of ex-intimates within their sample threatened third-parties of the victim and 79% trespassed on the victim's property. Such findings indicate the importance of recognising that the victim is not the only target of the stalker's actions, and awareness of stalking behaviours should not only be available to the potential victims, but also to third-parties who are likely to be targeted. Support and advice could be offered to better equip them for potential situations and therefore prevent future stalking behaviours from occurring. Such resources and services could be considered by the police and all victim support services when communicating with the victim in order to increase awareness and understanding.

Despite the widespread nature of stalking, it is hugely underreported to law enforcement for reasons such as fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, thinking the incident was not important enough, or the belief that police would be unwilling to help (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Awareness and availability of information for victims would enhance their understanding of which behaviours constitute stalking, identify the early behaviours presented by perpetrators and report such incidents to the police. Results in the current study show how the behaviours

escalate over the course of stalking, indicating the importance of recognising this progression over time in order to intervene at an early stage.

Additionally, victims of ex-intimate stalkers may be more inclined to minimise their fear, which leads to underreporting and an escalation in severity (Viñas-Racionero, Raghavan, Soria-Verde & Prat-Santaolaria, 2017). Such underreporting may be due to protecting a former partner, refusing to accentuate the behaviours in the hope they will stop, or the belief that their ex-partner will not harm them. As such, the victims do not consider the behaviour to be dangerous and only come forward once they have escalated to violence or more intrusive behaviours. This explanation indicates the need for better awareness and a general understanding of what constitutes stalking to ensure victims can identify stalking behaviours and report them at the earliest possible stage.

Effective prevention. The findings from this study could be beneficial to those who are the first respondents to a stalking case, to determine the danger of the situation and the best intervention methods to use. Logistic regressions indicated which behaviours presented by a perpetrator increase the odds of being an ex-intimate stalker. This is useful to first respondents as it allows them to quickly identify the behaviours presented, predict whether the stalker is an ex-intimate, acquaintance or stranger (if this is not known already) and decide upon an appropriate course of action. For example, if an ex-intimate stalker has been identified and has presented a number of predictive behaviours such as: phone calls, third-party contact, visit house/work and criminal damage, it can be predicted that the risk of the stalker presenting violent behaviours is higher, based on our knowledge of violence presented by ex-intimate stalkers (Farnham et al., 2000; Harmon et al., 1998). With this information, attempts could be made to prevent victims

from future harm; intervention methods would be beneficial in order to reduce the risk of physical assault and other violent behaviours from occurring.

Results from the logistic regressions found that threats, physical assault and sexual assault all increase the odds of being an ex-intimate stalker. These findings contribute to the notion that victims of ex-intimate stalkers are at greater risk of violence, highlighting the importance of enhancing our understanding of the link between domestic violence and stalking (Mullen et al., 1999; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002). Stalking and domestic violence have been found to be highly correlated and research suggests that coercive control, which can be defined as "an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim", and stalking are often simultaneously present (Norris, Huss & Palarea, 2011; Stark, 2009). Due to coercive control gaining scientific, political and criminal justice recognition as a pattern of behaviour which characterises domestic abuse, its relationship with stalking is more scrutinized (Stark, 2009). The obsessive nature of coercive control, prevalent in perpetrators of domestic violence, is identical to the fixation and obsession associated with stalking. This also creates significant confusion and raises questions as to why the two crimes do not receive equal amounts of attention, nor are they given the same recognition in terms of severity. The legislation in England and Wales uses the offence of coercive control to criminalise concerning or dangerous behaviours that occur within a relationship (Serious Crime Act, 2015). In this regard, it is interesting to note that the number of convicted perpetrators of coercive control is greater than the convicted perpetrators of stalking (Office for National Statistics, 2016), yet the defining behaviours of the two crimes are similar. It could therefore be questioned why coercive control is not identified within stalking cases if they are believed to be so similar in nature and, if this was the case, whether this would lead to an

increase in stalking convictions. The violent behaviours presented by ex-intimate stalkers

indicate that further investigation into this correlation would aid in clarifying and understanding

coercive control and stalking; resulting in stalking being recognised as a severe crime.

It is important to understand the history of domestic violence within the prior relationship

of ex-intimate victims. As the first respondent to a case involving an ex-intimate stalker,

professionals are required to understand the circumstances of the prior relationship and obtain

any information surrounding a history of domestic violence. If the victim confirms they have

experienced abuse in a prior relationship, together with the correlation between domestic

violence and stalking, the first respondent will be aware of the heightened risk of violence for the

victim. As such, this creates greater awareness of cases which require intervention sooner.

Limitations

This study has its limitations. The first is the use of a sample of non-convicted stalkers. The

sample analysed had not yet been convicted and imprisoned for stalking offences, but instead are

perpetrators of stalking acts as described by their victims. Furthermore, there is no analysis of

confounding variables such as prior convictions or mental illness, which could impact the

severity of stalking. However, our results show that severe behaviours, such as sexual and

physical violence, were committed by our sample. The majority of the sample would be placed at

the lower end of the stalking spectrum with a small group who presented behaviours that are

similar to convicted stalkers. Consequently, the results from this study might differ to convicted

stalkers to some extent and need to be replicated in a sample of convicted stalkers.

A second limitation of this study is the analyses of self-reports, as the accounts in this

study were provided by self-referred victims of stalking, which may suggest that they represent a

more motivated group of victims. The sample is therefore unlikely to account for the wider

population of stalking victims. As mentioned above, the use of the victims' perspective holds

extreme value in understanding stalking. However, this also limits the generalization of the

results as their accounts are limited to their individual experience of the incident. Self-reports do

not provide insight into the motivations behind the perpetrator's actions, and limited our

understanding of the situation to what the victims have reported. It is therefore important to

consider that information available was limited to some extent and to understand that it may not

provide a complete understanding of the course and nature of stalking. Future research should

focus on replicating our findings on official data, such as police reports or court reports.

Furthermore, information on stalkers' motivations should also be included in future design.

Future Directions and Conclusions

Overall, findings from this study are consistent with previous literature which shows that

ex-intimate victims are more at risk of violent behaviours, despite the misconception that

stranger stalkers evoke greater fear and present an increased risk of violence (Farnham et al.,

2000; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Ex-intimates were also found to present a wider range of

behaviours which indicates a greater emphasis should be placed on ex-intimate stalkers as they

represent the most dangerous subgroup. Although findings in this study stemmed from a victim's

perspective, which somehow limited the scope, they may be beneficial in assisting first

respondents in their ability to recognize which behaviours are indicative of a higher likelihood of

severe violence. As such, first respondents should identify whether domestic violence was

present in the prior relationship and, in conjunction, victims of domestic violence should be

noted as they are at higher risk of future violence. In combination with the perpetrator's

perspective and confounding variables, these findings could assist the development of a

measurement of stalking severity. As such, professionals need a greater awareness of the risks

associated with stalking behaviours of ex-intimates, especially those who have been domestically violent in their prior relationships.

The findings in this study highlight that common misconceptions surrounding ex-intimate stalking still exist at every level of the Criminal Justice System. There is undoubtedly a need for further research in order to understand the dynamic behind stalking, considering that the outcomes of such offences are based on many uniquely intricate variables. Professionals may benefit further from having a better understanding of the correlation between domestic violence and stalking, as this can reduce the potential harm faced by those most at risk, whilst allowing for preventative measures to be implemented before perpetrators can inflict further violence. It is crucial that future research investigates similarities between stalking and coercive control, as this will enhance our understanding of such a chronic and complex crime that is stalking.

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Table 1.

Total amount of times each behaviour was presented by the subgroups of stalkers

Behaviours	Amount of behaviours presented by stalkers		
	Ex-intimate	Acquaintance	Stranger
Text messages	617	184	39
Phone calls	585	175	40
Visit house/work	517	152	53
Third-party contact	499	140	32
Social networking sites	431	254	88
Emails	408	122	41
Watch/spy/loiter	318	97	66
Threats	296	79	14
Following	257	100	87
Letters	172	57	15
Vexatious complaints	161	61	8
Physical assault	171	23	5
Threaten suicide	139	13	3
Criminal damage	138	19	5
Harassment	116	42	14
Gifts	115	52	15
Break-in	82	11	2
Death threats	76	22	2
Hacking technology	55	12	6
In/through work	53	20	8
Sexual assault	39	8	1
Revenge porn	39	9	0
Tracking device	37	3	5

Table 2.

Total number of behaviours presented by each subgroup of stalkers

Number of behaviours	Number of stalkers presenting X number of behaviours		
	Ex-intimate	Acquaintance	Stranger
1	3	91	68
2	38	120	75
3	66	93	44
4	100	74	18
5	232	42	7
6	188	35	9
7	99	19	3
8	70	7	0
9	50	11	2
10	22	2	0
11	19	1	0
12	8	0	0
13	3	0	0
14	3	0	0
15	1	0	0
16	2	0	0

Table 3.
One-way between subject's ANOVA

	Mean (SD)				
	Ex-intimate (*n*= 904)	Acquaintance (*n*= 496)	Stranger (*n*= 226)	t	*N*
Number of Stalking Behaviours	5.89 (2.22)	3.34 (2.05)	2.44 (1.53)	73.78***	1626

*** p < .001

Table 4.
Logistic regression of stalking behaviours for ex-intimate and acquaintance/stranger stalkers

Items	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP (B)	
						Lower	Upper
Merge-watch/spy/loiter**	0.49	0.17	8.712	0.003	1.63	1.18	2.26
Phone calls***	0.63	0.15	17.563	0.00	1.88	1.40	2.53
Emails***	0.71	0.15	22.641	0.00	2.04	1.52	2.74
Text message***	1.22	0.15	63.352	0.00	3.38	2.51	4.57
Letters***	0.90	0.21	19.179	0.00	2.46	1.65	3.69
Following	0.08	0.17	0.246	0.62	1.09	0.78	1.51
Social networking sites	-0.14	0.14	0.966	0.33	0.87	0.66	1.15
Visit house/work***	0.90	0.14	38.616	0.00	2.45	1.85	3.27
In/through work	0.25	0.32	0.615	0.43	1.28	0.69	2.40
Gifts	-0.07	0.23	0.121	0.73	0.93	0.60	1.44
Third-party contact***	0.97	0.15	44.96	0.00	2.64	1.99	3.50
Vexatious complaints	0.37	0.20	3.32	0.01	1.45	0.97	2.15
Threats***	0.91	0.17	29.87	0.00	2.49	1.80	3.46
Revenge porn***	2.45	0.45	29.76	0.00	11.56	4.80	27.86
Harassment**	0.63	0.23	7.43	0.006	1.87	1.19	2.93
Hacking technology**	0.80	0.36	5.03	0.03	2.22	1.11	4.45
Tracking device**	1.39	0.47	8.65	0.003	3.99	1.59	10.05
Threaten suicide***	2.12	0.31	46.49	0.00	8.35	4.54	15.36
Break-in**	1.09	0.38	8.24	0.004	2.97	1.41	6.23
Criminal damage***	1.75	0.29	37.30	0.00	5.78	3.29	10.15
Physical assault***	2.02	0.26	59.20	0.00	7.53	4.50	12.59
Sexual assault***	1.62	0.47	11.86	0.00	5.04	2.01	12.67
Death threats	0.38	0.33	1.37	0.24	1.47	0.77	2.79
Constant	-2.91	0.18	249.19	0.00	0.05		

** p < .05 *** p < .001