School of Psychology

Stalking Among Domestically Violent Offenders: An Analysis of Police Records

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #HRE2017-0313.

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Abstract

Stalking entails a variety of different behaviours that are often viewed as innocuous when considered individually. As stalking is not a singular construct, the definitions of what constitutes stalking vary across academic and legal fields, and the recognition of stalking can be difficult. The constellation of behaviours that comprise stalking, however, often lead to serious and long lasting impacts on the victim even after the stalking has ceased, particularly in intimate/ex-intimate partner cases. Stalking is a type of coercive control, as the perpetrator attempts to monitor the victim's movements and interactions, typically with the aim of re-establishing or controlling an intimate relationship. It is therefore likely that stalking victims also experience a variety of other coercively controlling tactics, the combination of which puts the victim at high risk of serious harm. Since the influx of stalking research in 1990, studies have neglected to explore stalking in the context of other coercively controlling behaviours, and yielded inconsistent findings in areas such as stalking recidivism and correlates of stalking violence. It was therefore the overall aim of this thesis to closely examine stalking, other elements of coercive control, recidivism, and correlates of stalking violence in a sample of stalking victim-perpetrator dyads using a large police dataset.

The first study in this thesis investigated the associations between 12 independent variables and stalking violence severity using a sample of police incident report narratives (N = 369). The study built on existing literature by operationalising stalking violence as a heterogenous construct consisting of various degrees of severity, rather than a homogenous construct with no consideration of the differences in severity depending on the incident. It also incorporated previously unexplored variables, including the presence of issues relating to perpetrator-child contact and non-fatal strangulation. The results indicated that child contact, a history of domestic violence, separation, non-fatal strangulation, jealousy, previous injury, and the victim's belief about potential harm were significantly associated with severe stalking violence.

Study 2 investigated stalking and elements of coercive control, focusing on non-fatal strangulation. As non-fatal strangulation is a distinctive form of coercively controlling violence that often leaves no trace, yet is associated with a significantly increased risk of death, this study explored various facets of coercive control and the likelihood of having experienced non-fatal strangulation among a sample of stalking victim-perpetrator dyads. Using police reports (N= 9,884), the study revealed that jealousy, victim isolation, victim fear, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them, and general perception of the presence of coercive control were predictive of having experienced non-fatal strangulation.

Study 3 aimed to enhance understanding of coercively controlling elements among stalking victim-perpetrator dyads who have separated from an intimate relationship, and those who had not separated. Given that separation from an intimate relationship poses a decreased likelihood of physical abuse due to limits to proximity, stalking perpetrators often engage in a variety of other coercively controlling behaviours with the aim of finding alternative ways of exerting power over the victim. Given inconsistent results in previous literature regarding coercive control after separation, as well as the tendency to measure coercive control as a binary factor, the study aimed to expand on previous works by exploring a wide array of coercively controlling behaviours amongst stalking dyads who had separated, and those who had not. The results showed that separation from a stalking perpetrator is significantly correlated with increased reports of fear and issues with child contact, but it is also significantly correlated with decreased reports of excessive jealousy, victim isolation, and general perception of the presence of coercive control.

Finally, study 4 investigated stalking recidivism using different operational definitions of recidivism. As stalking is often defined differently among studies due to the variety of behaviours that constitute stalking, this study aimed to expand on the few previous works that have explored stalking recidivism by directly comparing stalking recidivism using four different definitions. The definitions ranged from narrow (i.e. a new stalking charge), to broad definitions (any new criminal charge). A survival analysis revealed that stalkers reoffend quickly, though the time to reoffending and characteristics predicting recidivism (age, prior history of crime, ethnicity) depend on the way that stalking recidivism is defined. These findings provided clarification about the inconsistencies found in previous studies on stalking recidivism, and highlighted the importance of a more standardised approach to defining stalking recidivism.

The combination of findings from these four studies provide insight into the variety of coercively controlling tactics that stalking victims experience, as well as the factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing coercive control and other forms of violence. The studies show that stalking offenders are not only persistent and reoffend quickly, but that they also employ a variety of intrusive techniques to exert power over their victim. These techniques may be physically violent, but more often perpetrators utilise techniques that leave no physical trace on the victim. This suggests the importance of moving away from the reliance of physical marks as indication of harm or risk, and moving towards accurate recognition of coercively controlling behaviours that may not leave physical injury, but nevertheless place the victim at high risk of serious physical and psychological damage.

Publications Included as Part of the Hybrid Thesis

The following list of publications are included as part of this thesis and are included in the Appendices.

Study 1 (Chapter 2; see Appendix A);

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2019). Risk factors for severe violence in intimate partner stalking situations: An analysis of police records. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence,* 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519847776

Study 2 (Chapter 3; see Appendix B);

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2019). Non-fatal strangulation in a sample of domestically violent stalkers: The importance of recognizing coercively controlling behaviours. *Criminal Justice and Behavior,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854819843973

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List of Additional Publications and Conference Presentations

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2019, July). *Non-fatal strangulation among stalkers: Recognizing coercive control*. Poster presented at the European Association of Psychology and Law Conference, Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2018, November). *Stalking and NFS*. Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

Sheridan, L., Pyszora, N., Cooper, B., & Bendlin, M. (2019). Problematic behaviours experienced by electorate and ministerial office staff: Results of and responses to a Western Australian survey. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management, 6,* 128-137. https://doi.org/10.1037/tam0000130

Sheridan, L. & Bendlin, M. (2017). *Network for surviving stalking: 2017 survey report*. Network for Surviving Stalking.

Sheridan, L. & Bendlin, M. (2017). *WA Police Security Survey 2017*. Report commissioned by Western Australia Police Force.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.1 What is Stalking?

Though stalking only began to receive attention from academics approximately 30 years ago when stalking first became an offence in California, stalking behaviours can be seen throughout the ages. It is not difficult to find historical references to stalking behaviours, from early mentions of the obsessive thoughts carried by Othello in Shakespeare's sonnets, to more recent portrayals of stalking in television shows/movies such as You, Twilight, Love Actually, and others. Such representations of stalking are not specific to television, however, and can also be found in songs such as Every Breath You Take – The Police, and Escape – Enrique Iglesias. Stalking is a criminal behaviour that has been historically portrayed as romantic, charming, and amorous (Lippman, 2018; McKeon et al., 2015; Nicol, 2006), yet the reality of being stalked is typically far from inducing feelings of excitement or romance within the victim. Stalking initially began to receive attention in news headlines for the disturbing and traumatic impact that it could cause a victim when the behaviours were perpetrated against high-profile celebrities.

Indeed, in early days, the term 'stalking was' typically used to refer to the invasive and meddlesome behaviours experienced by celebrities from their fans (Lowney & Best, 1995). In 1995, a man named Robert Dewey Hoskins repeatedly gained entrance into Madonna's house and left notes hand-written on a religious article. Hoskins professed his love for Madonna in this note and asked whether she would be his wife. Hoskins also infamously threatened that if Madonna did not marry him that night, he would "slice her throat from ear to ear". In 1988, Robert Bardo developed an obsession with actress Rebecca Schaeffer. He repeatedly attempted to contact the actress, and wrote mail to her often. After seeing the actress in a movie scene with another male in bed, Bardo began to write threatening letters to Schaeffer. Bardo found Schaeffer's home address, and after a brief conversation, he was asked not to come to her front door again. Rebecca Schaeffer was shot at her apartment door minutes later after Bardo once again rang the doorbell.

Stalking behaviours are not new, and both the media and pop culture have played a significant role in fuelling people's interest in this intrusive and potentially dangerous crime (Lippman, 2018). Nevertheless, it was arguably high profile cases such as these that eventually led to the development of anti-stalking laws, and acted as the catalyst for scientific

exploration of the crime. Since the influx of research, stalking has begun to be recognised for the perilous constellation of behaviours that it is (Meloy, 1998).

Since the rise of research in the area of stalking in the 1990's, academics have begun to formulate an understanding of the complex interaction of behaviours that constitute stalking, as well as an understanding of the different types of stalkers. In one of the first books exploring stalking from a scientific perspective, Meloy (1998) describes the various motivations that stalkers may have for pursuing a victim, and the different typologies of stalkers. A stalker seeking intimacy from a celebrity they have never met is quite different to one who feels resentful after their intimate partner has separated from their relationship. Aside from different typologies, stalkers also might display a variety of different behaviours when stalking. Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of recognising stalking is that the behaviours may seem innocuous in nature when viewed independently (De Smet et al., 2011; James & MacKenzie, 2017). Furthermore, many such behaviours are commonly experienced by the public, such as the unwanted contact following the cessation of a relationship. The definitions of stalking, issues in defining and recognising the behaviour, as well as prevalence, are described in depth below.

1.2 Definitions and Legal Factors

Stalking is difficult to define for a number of reasons. Firstly, stalking is not a singular "act", unlike many other criminal behaviours such as theft or property damage. Stalking comprises an amalgamation of behaviours that may include, but are not limited to, repeated and unwanted calls or messages, trespass, leaving unwanted gifts, threats, property and person violence (De Smet et al., 2011; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000). Secondly, many of these acts (such as leaving unwanted gifts, repeated contacts) may often be conceptualised by the victim and others as seemingly harmless when viewed individually (James & MacKenzie, 2017; Purcell et al., 2004). In order for stalking to be accurately recognised, it is important that these behaviours are understood as part of a whole, rather than individual acts. It is the combination and persistent occurrence of these different acts that comprise stalking (Ferreira et al., 2018; Fox et al., 2011). In situations of stalking, these behaviours are unwanted by the victim, and they are ongoing intrusions rather than one-off instances of harassment (Purcell et al., 2004). This links to the final consideration when defining stalking. Unlike typical crimes, stalking depends on the perception that the victim has regarding the behaviours (Purcell et al., 2004). Indeed, Mullen et al. (2000) describe that it is the victim's subjective experience of fear, intimidation, harassment, and perception of the stalking behaviours as unwanted, that is considered to be a key element to defining

stalking. This suggests that stalking is less about the intention of the perpetrator, and more about the experience of the victim.

1.2.1 Legal

The definitions of stalking differ across fields (e.g. legal field vs. academic field), however they also differ within the same fields. Since the initial criminalisation of stalking in California in 1990, it only took three more years before most states in the US had criminalised stalking. The proliferation of anti-stalking laws has since been evident internationally, with anti-stalking laws existing in Australia, and many European countries such as Germany, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Van der Aa, 2017). The specific definitions of what constitutes stalking depends on the country and the legislature. In the US, many states drafted their anti-stalking laws based on the initial stalking code founded in California, which states:

> Any person who willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or harasses another person and makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear or death or great bodily harm… is guilty of the crime of stalking (California Penal Code, 646.9(a)).

It was soon discovered that prosecution was compromised as proving "intent" to harass was profoundly difficult to prove, as those stalkers who stated that they were merely attempting to rekindle a relationship could not be prosecuted under the offence. As a result, many legislations do not require proof that the offender intended to cause fear or to harass, and instead focus is on the intent to commit the specific act that led to the victim feeling harassed or fearful (Mullen et al., 2000). The first Australian state to develop anti-stalking laws was Queensland, with the remaining states following suit. In Western Australia, section 338E of the *Western Australian Criminal Code Act 1913* states that stalking is defined as

> Pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person, or a third person, or, a person who pursues another person in a manner that could reasonably be expected to intimidate, and that does in fact intimidate, that person or a third person. (*Western Australia Criminal Code Act 1913*, 338E)

A harsher penalty is possible if the offender is proven to have had intent to intimidate, whereas a less harsh penalty is possible for those who are charged with stalking, but the intent to intimidate is not demonstrated. Interestingly, unlike most states in Australia and the US, Western Australia does not specify how many times the offender must commit an act

before it is classed as stalking. As a result, an offender may pursue a victim a single time, and still be charged with the offence.

1.2.2 Academic

Within academia, definitions of stalking are also varied. Generally, stalking tends to be defined as a repetitive, unwanted, and persistent patterns of intrusive behaviour towards a victim, which causes the victim fear, intimidation, distress, or disruption within their life (McEwan et al., 2009; Pinals, 2007). Academic definitions of stalking tend to be more measurable than those found in the legal context. Despite more quantified and specific definitions, there currently exists no standardised operationalisation of stalking. Studies have differed in how they define 'repeated' contacts, with some studies defining repeated as two or more occasions (Purcell et al., 2004; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2010), whilst other studies have specified that 'repeated' was considered only when the offender repeated an intrusive act ten or more times (Mullen et al., 1999; Galeazzi et al., 2005). Definitions have also ranged in terms of how long the behaviours must persist before they are classified as stalking. Mullen et al. (1999) and Hughes et al. (2007) defined stalking as occurring only when repeated intrusions persisted for at least four weeks, whereas other studies considered intrusions lasting two weeks or more to be indicative of stalking (Dressing et al., 2005; Purcell et al., 2005).

Like the amount of repetitions and time, perhaps one of the most inconsistent aspects of stalking definitions is the variable specification of which behaviours are classified as stalking, i.e. which behaviours are considered to be repeated intrusions. Given that stalking itself is a constellation of behaviours rather than a single behaviour, it is difficult to draw a line as to which behaviours fall under the category of stalking, and which do not. The inconsistency in what is considered to be stalking is demonstrated clearly among studies that have explored repeated stalking among offenders.

In the analysis of stalking recidivism (i.e. repeated stalking offending), researchers have taken to employing specific, though inconsistent, operational descriptions of a repeated stalking offence. For example, stalking recidivism was deemed by Rosenfeld (2003) to have occurred when a new harassment offence occurred. Eke et al. (2011) on the other hand, defined stalking recidivism as any new contact with the victim. Malsch et al. (2011) included stalking-related crimes as indicating reoffending of stalking, such as theft and property damage. Though these studies focus on recidivism, the varied definitions as to what constitutes a repetition of stalking evidently demonstrates differences in the way that stalking

is defined across academic works. Though it is understandably difficult to standardise legal and academic definitions of stalking, there is a clear need for more consistent measures and definitions of stalking within the field. Despite the significant progress made in understanding stalking since the influx of research in the 1990's, a number of issues continue to remain when attempting to identify and measure stalking.

1.3 Difficulties in Identifying and Measuring Stalking

One of the most pertinent problems evidenced across stalking literature is that stalking is often defined inconsistently across studies. The consequence of inconsistent definitions of stalking means that there is a marked difficulty in comparing results across studies and jurisdictions, and studies have indeed yielded mixed findings when analysing stalking and related factors (Eke et al., 2011; Malsch et al., 2011; McEwan et al., 2020; Rosenfeld, 2003). From a judicial standpoint, one of the difficulties in operationalising stalking is that many of the behaviours alone are not illegal – it is only when they are viewed in combination that they form a stalking offence. This is demonstrated in a study by Sheridan and Scott (2010), whereby the researchers utilised vignettes containing typical stalking behaviours such as leaving flowers, love letters, and silent phone calls, as well as more sinister behaviours such as threats and verbal aggression. It was found that participants relied strongly on visible aggression, such as physical violence and threats, in order for participants to identify the behaviours as stalking, which substantiates the notion that stalking may be missed if consisting primarily of the seemingly innocuous individual behaviours.

Similarly, behaviours that are illegal (e.g. trespass, threats) are often easily identified and prosecuted across jurisdictions, and therefore offenders may indeed be stalking their victim, but instead of being charged with stalking they are charged with a variety of singular acts that are easily identified and prosecuted (Fox et al., 2011). As exampled by Fox et al. (2011), an offender who threatens to kill a victim might be charged with harassment or assault, yet might also meet stalking criteria such as causing fear to the victim, intimidating, and intending to intimidate through intrusive contact. This is reinforced by Pearce and Easteal (1999), who found that police officers in Australia were unlikely to use the stalking law in stalking scenarios where the perpetrator was an ex-partner of the victim, as officers were far more likely to charge perpetrators with crimes such as assault, breaches of violence/restraining orders, or damage. When exploring the reasoning for the lack of utilisation of stalking law, officers generally indicated that evidentiary inadequacy and difficulty proving the elements necessary for a stalking prosecution were the primary reasons for utilising alternative charges to stalking. Whilst this study is dated, similar results have

been found in more recent explorations of stalking prosecution in Australia. Indeed, Weller et al. (2013) purported that police officers commonly assign insufficient evidence as the primary reason for the difficulty of progressing stalking charges, and that police officers were less likely to identify stalking when the victim and perpetrator were ex-intimate partners than if they were strangers. This may be at least partly due to the tendency for individuals to view stalking behaviours as something that is typically committed by strangers rather than those known to the victim (Cass, 2011; Hills & Taplin, 1998).

Given that stalking is a combination of behaviours (which individually may or may not be illegal), as well as the inconsistencies in defining stalking, it is perhaps not surprising that much of the general population and those in law enforcement often do not recognise the occurrence of stalking (Backes et al., 2020). An interesting finding that has been evident across a variety of populations is that the relationship between the victim and the stalker changes the likelihood that an individual will identify intrusions as being indicative of stalking (Weller et al., 2013). In a study by Scott et al. (2014), participants from Australia, the US, and the UK were presented with hypothetical stalking scenarios. It was found that participants were more likely to regard the behaviours as stalking, and more likely to determine that the behaviours necessitated police intervention and conviction, when the perpetrator and victim were strangers rather than an acquaintance or ex-partner. The results of this study are supported by numerous other research articles which have also found that members of the public are more likely to view behaviours as stalking, and warranting police attention, when the victim and perpetrator are strangers, rather than known to each other (i.e. acquaintances or ex-partners; Cass, 2011; Hills & Taplin, 1998; Phillips et al., 2004; Scott et al., 2010; Scott & Sheridan, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2003; Weller et al., 2013).

Similar results have been found when exploring police officer perceptions of stalking, whereby scenarios in which the victim and perpetrator were strangers yielded a higher likelihood that police officers would deem the perpetrating behaviours as indicative of stalking (Scott et al., 2013; Weller et al., 2013). Similarly, as mentioned above, Pearce and Easteal (1999) found that officers are less likely to charge offenders with stalking, and more likely to utilise related charges such as breach of orders and assault. Given that ex-partners are more likely to persist with stalking behaviours, more likely to use physical violence, and are associated with higher risk overall (McEwan et al., 2017; Sheridan & Davies, 2001), it is concerning that ex-partner behaviours are viewed as less indicative of stalking. Furthermore, such misconceptions could mean that victims are less likely to be encouraged in pursuing legal action by police, but also may be less likely to seek help in the first place. Indeed, this is

supported by Cass and Mallicoat (2015), who found that participants reported a lower likelihood to seek help from police if victims are ex-intimate, compared to strangers.

In order to help explain why stalking is often normalised in the general population as well as in law enforcement contexts, McKeon et al. (2015) explored stalking attitudes of community members and police officers. Three key attitudes emerged from the findings, which suggested that participants viewed stalking as a behaviour that was not serious, that stalking was often viewed as a behaviour that was romantic, and that victims were to blame for the experience of stalking behaviours. In explaining these patterns of results, Dennison (2007) proposes that stalking behaviours are often difficult to distinguish from behaviours that may be seen as typical. Following the cessation of a relationship, behaviours such as repeated phone calls and other attempts at rekindling romance are known to be quite common and accepted as part of being in love (Dennison & Stewart, 2006), and therefore this may elucidate why it is difficult to draw a clear line with regards to which behaviours constitute stalking, and which do not.

Stalking is a complex phenomenon. Stalking is difficult to define and identify due to a number of reasons, including 1) inconsistencies in definitions across legal and academic jurisdictions, 2) the multifaceted nature of stalking, 3) the difficulty in clear identification of which behaviours constitute stalking, 4) the seemingly innocuous nature of the some individual components of stalking behaviour, 5) the misconceptions of when a behaviour is considered to be stalking, and 6) the difficulties in demonstrating evidentiary support. Though research has come a long way in helping to understand this serious form of harassment, there is a clear need for further investigation of stalking in order to assist in a deeper understanding of the behaviour itself, how it should be defined, as well as improving community understanding of this common crime. In the absence of sufficient community and stakeholder understanding, and absence of adequate guidelines and training for identification, prevention, and management of stalking behaviour, stalking victimisation and harm may go unnoticed.

1.4 Prevalence

Since the increase of stalking research in the 1990's, studies have attempted to clarify the prevalence of stalking victimisation across a variety of countries. Given the differences in measures, populations, definitions of stalking used, it is unsurprising that prevalence rates vary across studies. In a recent national survey conducted in the US (Breiding et al., 2020), it was estimated that approximately 15.2% of women (approximately 18.3 million), and 5.7% of men (approximately 6.5 million) had experienced stalking at some point during their lives.

Upon investigation of stalking in the 12 months preceding the national survey, it was reported that approximately 4.2% of women (approximately 5.1 million), and 2.1% of men (approximately 2.1 million) had been the victim of stalking (Breiding et al., 2020). Additional survey findings revealed that of those who had reported being stalked, 53.8% of females were stalked before the age of 25, and 47.7% of males had been stalked before the age of 25. In this study, stalking was deemed to have occurred if the victim experienced multiple different or same stalking behaviours (these included unwanted contact such as emails, social media messages, being followed, or visited by the perpetrator at work, home, school, etc.), and if the victim felt fearful or believed they or others would be harmed due to the stalking. The most commonly reported stalking behaviours reported by victims included unwanted approach behaviours (61.7% of female victims, 47.7% of male victims), unwanted messages (55.3% of female victims, 56.7% of male victims), unwanted calls (54.5% of female victims, 58.2% of male victims), and being watched or spied on (49.7% of female victims, 32.2% of male victims). When investigating the relationship between victims and perpetrators, it was reported that females were commonly stalked by ex-intimates or current partners (60.8%), an acquaintance (24.9%), or a stranger (16.2%). Males were commonly stalked by ex-intimates or current partners (43.5%), an acquaintance (31.9%), or a stranger (20.0%).

These statistics are similar to those found across Europe, with studies reporting lifetime prevalence estimates typically ranging from 9%-19.5% (Dovelius et al., 2006; Matos et al., 2019). In Australia, Purcell et al. (2002) found that 23.4% of participants had reported being stalked at some point in their lifetime, with stalking being defined as the experience of repeated and fear-provoking unwanted behaviours. The researchers report that stalking prevalence appears to be on the rise as incidence of stalking had increased in the preceding 30 years. It is particularly important to therefore note that this study is dated, and that actual prevalence of stalking in Australia is likely to be higher. This is supported by the influx of social media and use of technology in the past two decades, and consequent increases in online harassment, cyberstalking, and use of online technology to access victims (Baum et al., 2009; Messing et al., 2020; Marcum et al., 2017; Reyns et al., 2012). Given the ease of accessing victims through online means, and the increase of social media use, it is suspected that prevalence rates of stalking are now higher than those reported by Purcell et al. (2002).

1.5 Stalking in Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Situations

Among acquaintances, strangers, and intimate partners, it is intimate/ex-intimate partners who are most at risk of being stalked (Breiding et al., 2020; James & Farnham, 2003; Resnick, 2007; Rosenfeld, 2004; McEwan et al., 2017; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Likewise,

experiences of stalking are particularly high among those relationships where domestic violence is/was present (Ferreira & Matos, 2013; Logan et al., 2007; Melton, 2004; Roberts, 2005). And yet, Logan and Walker (2009, p. 247) stated that intimate partner stalking is "one of the least clearly understood forms of intimate violence", indicating the need for continued investigation into this intrusive crime.

Studies that have explored intimate partner stalking have suggested that there is a higher rate of harassment and violence among stalking victim-perpetrator dyads who are intimate/ex-intimate partners, compared to those who are non-intimate partners (McEwan et al., 2017; Nicastro et al., 2000; Palarea et al., 1999; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Indeed, intimate and ex-intimate partner stalkers have a higher likelihood of committing high risk stalking behaviours towards the victim, including threatening the victim, damaging victim property, and assaulting the victim (McEwan et al., 2017; Rosenfeld, 2004; Sheridan et al., 2003; White et al., 2020). Furthermore, it has been found that when stalking behaviours are experienced in conjunction with current or prior intimate partner violence, compared to stalking with no prior relationship violence, negative mental health symptoms for the victim are at an increased likelihood of occurrence (Brewster, 2002). The impacts and risks associated with stalking will be discussed in more depth below. However, it is evident that although all stalking behaviours have the potential to yield deleterious impacts on the victim, it is intimate partner stalking victimisation that is associated with the highest risks and impact.

Intimate partner stalkers are the most likely to be aggressive, violent, intrusive, and most likely to also target third parties connected to the victim (Sheridan & Davies, 2001), yet many members of the public mistakenly believe that it is strangers who are most dangerous (Scott et al., 2014; Weller et al., 2013). It makes sense, however, that those victims who are in abusive relationships are more likely to experience stalking behaviours from the perpetrator, as stalking is often considered to be an extension of existing abuse (Logan et al., 2000). Discussions on stalking among intimate partners have dominated the stalking research field, and perhaps one of the most pertinent findings of such studies is that stalking and violence risk increases when the victim separates from the relationship (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007).

However it is important to note that many studies fail to differentiate between different types of violence (James & Farnham, 2003). It could therefore be suggested that physical violence may not increase following separation given that the perpetrator is limited in proximity to the victim, yet other forms of non-physical violence such as coercive control

tactics may in fact escalate in attempt to re-assert control over the victim, or to regain the relationship (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013). In addition to this, stalking among intimate partner dyads has been found to persist for longer periods of time than non-intimate stalking cases, with Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) reporting that intimate partner stalking lasts on average 2.2 years, and non-intimate stalking lasts for 1.1 years on average. The impacts and risk factors associated with stalking, particularly among intimate partners, will be discussed in detail below. Overall, the increased severity of stalking and stalking-related factors among those who are intimate/ex-intimate partners demonstrates not only the complexity of stalking itself, but also the importance of further research to inform specific, pragmatic, and evidence-informed interventions and recommendations for the management and identification of the crime.

1.6 Stalking Violence, Impact and Risks

Although stalking is often perceived by the general public as something that is not dangerous, and commonly underestimated in terms of potential for harm (Boehnlein, 2020; Phillips et al., 2004; Sheridan & Scott, 2010), stalking is known to have harmful and long lasting impacts on victims (Korkodeilou, 2017). Stalking victims may experience physical violence perpetrated by the offender, although stalking violence can also include verbal aggression, threats, and other forms of non-physical assault (James & Farnham, 2003). In this section, stalking violence, the impact of stalking on the victim, and the associated risks of increased stalking are discussed.

1.6.1 Stalking and Violence

When an individual is the victim of stalking, there is an increased risk that they will experience stalking-related violence from the perpetrator. Among the different types of stalking perpetrators, research has found that stalkers who are intimate/ex-intimate partners are at an increased likelihood of being violent towards their stalking victim, compared to stalkers who are strangers or acquaintances (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Farnham et al., 2000; Meloy, 2002; Mohandie et al., 2006; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). In addition to this, research has shown that stalking often precedes homicide (McFarlane, 1999). Though this does not mean that stalkers are at a high risk of killing their victim, it does demonstrate that a proportion of homicide victims had experienced stalking by the perpetrator (McFarlane, 1999). In a study of 141 femicides in the U.S, the researchers found that 76% of these cases were associated with stalking behaviour preceding the homicide. Additionally, 85% of cases

where femicide was attempted, but not completed, indicated stalking preceding the femicide attempt (McFarlane, 1999).

The actual prevalence of violence in stalking situations is difficult to determine, as studies often use varying samples and varying definitions of what constitutes violence, frequently failing to distinguish between physical and non-physical violence. According to Meloy (1998), the overall risk of experiencing violence in stalking situation ranges from 25-35%. Mullen et al. (1999) found similar rates, reporting that 36% of stalking perpetrators within their study had been physical violent towards the stalking victim at some point. In this study, the authors did not differentiate between different types of physical assault, and therefore stabbing and slapping were placed under the same "physical violence" category. Unsurprisingly, when Meloy et al. (2001) defined violence as aggressive and intentional acts aimed at either the victim or the victim's property, the prevalence of violence was found to be 60%, a rate that is notably higher than that reported by Mullen et al. (1999). Similarly, Meloy et al. (2001) failed to differentiate between the violent acts, and therefore the perpetrator banging the victim's car with their fist, and the perpetrator hitting the victim's face with his fist, were all classed under the same category of violence.

Although the relationship between stalking and violence is clear, the failure of previous studies to differentiate between severities and types of violence is problematic. Therefore accurate estimates of stalking violence are difficult to determine. Furthermore, this presents difficulties in comparing violence rates across contexts and samples. This is evidenced by the findings reported by Mohandie et al. (2006), in which the authors reported physical assault in 28%, and mass murder or homicide in 0.5%, of stalking cases within a police dataset. If these statistics are applied to those found by Breiding et al. (2020), it would result in an estimated 37,500 stalking homicides in a year, compared to actual approximations like those found by the FBI, which reported 15,696 homicides in 2016. Comparison of violence across stalking samples is therefore difficult. Furthermore, James and Farnham (2003) outlined that violence is not a homogenous construct, but one that varies in nature and severity. These differences have been found to be associated with different risk factors and impact (James & Farnham, 2003), highlighting the necessity to explore violence in stalking in more detail, with particular consideration of violence as a non-homogenous construct.

It is important to acknowledge that the prevalence and overall risk of experiencing serious violence in stalking situations is noted by Meloy (1998) as not being particularly high. Likewise, the risk of homicide among stalking victims is less than 2% (Meloy, 1998). Despite this, stalking has severe negative impacts on victim even when stalking violence is

not present, as the mere fear induced by the stalking, and anticipation of negative events such as violence, is enough to severely impact on the victims mental and physical health (Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Westrup et al., 1999).

1.6.2 Impact on Victim

There are a number of facets of stalking perpetration that lead to critical effects on the victim. Stalking has been described as a different type of crime to others, as it comprises a number of different behaviours that in combination constitute stalking. As a result, two different victims of stalking might have different stalking behaviours perpetrated against them, and consequently, very different experiences of stalking. In addition to this, the persistent and recurrent nature of stalking means that victims often suffer the effects of stalking for lengthy periods of time, and often long after the stalking has ceased (Davis et al., 2002; Dressing et al., 2005; Logan & Walker, 2010; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2005). Furthermore, intimate/ex-intimate stalking perpetrator relationships have been linked with increased stalking duration and diversity of stalking behaviours perpetrated against the victim (Matos et al., 2019).

Overall, stalking has the potential to cause significant disruptions in a victim's quality and pattern of life, and lead to high distress and negative impacts on mental health (Abrams & Robinson, 2002; Acquadro Maran & Varetto, 2018; Fleming et al., 2013; Galeazzi et al., 2009; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001; Krammer et al., 2007; Logan & Walker, 2010; Matos et al., 2019; Sheridan, 2001; Purcell et al., 2005; Villacampa & Pujols, 2019). In Korkodeilou's (2017) exploration of the psychosocial impacts of stalking, a variety of different impacts were reported by victims. These included: 1) disruptions and forced changes to everyday life situations, including having to change travel routes, cars, having to be escorted to their vehicles, carrying additional safety measures, and moving homes. 2) An experience in the reduction of social life, as well as a negative economic impact, which included reluctance to see family and friends due to fear of being followed, reduced participation in events, increased time off work and decreased performance at work. 3) Interpersonal and emotional impact, including deterioration of relationships with family, friends, children, neighbours, effects on quality of parenting, and difficulty in forming new friendships and relationships. 4) Other difficulties including nightmares, panic attacks, suicidal ideation, flashbacks, feelings of guilt, constant fear, powerlessness, despair, and loss of control. Therefore, the effects of stalking are suggested to be cumulative, whereby the

individual stalking acts are not nearly as deleterious as the continued accumulation of the effects of each incident over time (McMahon et al., 2020).

The comprehensive exploration of the impact of stalking on victims has resulted in a nuanced understanding of the plethora of negative effects that may occur as a result of persistent intrusive acts. These serious and long-lasting harms reveal the importance of a number of considerations, including recognising and assisting victims of stalking early in order to prevent and minimise these harms, as well as the importance of moving away from focusing primarily on physical stalking violence, or 'visible' harms, and identifying the severe psychological impacts on victims, so that appropriate support can be provided. Though stalking is often misconstrued as being a non-serious crime (Ameral et al., 2017; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014), the impacts detailed above provide insight into the chronic and severe consequences that stalking can have on a victim. Knowledge of such impacts has largely been the impetus of more detailed exploration of factors that are linked with an increased risk of stalking, and stalking-related harms.

1.6.3 Associated Risks of Increased Stalking and Stalking Violence

The ability to identify victims and offenders who are at a high risk of perpetrating or experiencing stalking is important for both prevention of the harmful crime, but also for the provision of resources and support for those who are currently, or have previously, experienced stalking. Research has attempted to develop an understanding of the different factors that may increase the risk that a victim will experience stalking and related stalking violence. The focus of such research has understandably been in the domestic context, largely due to the strong link between stalking and domestic violence, but also because intimate/ex-intimate partners are at the highest risk of harm (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Farnham et al., 2000; Meloy, 2002; Mohandie et al., 2006; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Whilst the identification of risk factors for stalking and stalking-related violence is not a new endeavour in the research, studies have yielded inconsistent findings across a number of different risk factors. In addition to this, there are also additional factors that warrant attention in the context of stalking risk, which have not yet been explored in depth.

Perhaps one of the most explored risk factors for stalking and stalking-related violence in the context of intimate and ex-intimate partner stalkers, is separation. Indeed, separation from the relationship has been linked to an increase in stalking and stalking-related violence in numerous studies (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007). Other risk factors have not yielded such consistent results, however. In a meta-

analysis conducted by Churcher and Nesca (2013), the researchers found that a prior criminal record, overt threats, and/or previous evidence of violence were associated with an increased risk of stalking-related violence. Likewise, McEwan et al. (2017) also supported this finding, with the analyses indicating that the presence of criminal history was associated with an increased likelihood of stalking recurrence. Interestingly, when exploring stalking and violence, James and Farnham (2003) found contrasting results as they indicated that it was the lack of criminal history that was associated with stalking violence. The authors suggest that this might be explained by stalking profiles, as offenders who commit serious crimes are likely to have a different personal profile to an offender who commits a minor crime.

Mental health of the perpetrator is another such factor that has received significant attention when attempting to understand the risk for increased stalking and stalking-related violence, yet the relationship between mental health and stalking violence continues to be debated. Meloy (2002) and Rosenfeld (2004) concluded there was no association between psychoses and stalking violence, but did find that personality disorders were predictive of increased risk of stalking violence. Friedman (2006) contended that individuals who have no mental disorder, but who abuse alcohol or drugs, are significantly more likely to engage in violent behaviour than those who do have a mental disorder. Contrastingly, other researchers have indicated that no relationship exists between mental illness and stalking violence (Roberts, 2005; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002), and that perhaps the presence of a mental disorder may indicate a lower likelihood of stalking violence (Eke et al., 2011). While stalkers may exhibit behaviours which often seem abnormal, obsessive, and may certainly be violent, it has been suggested that such behaviours are the representation of romantic failure and distorted perceptions of romance (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Therefore, mental pathology may not be underlying the root of obsessive relational intrusions.

Similarly, our understanding of the relationship between drugs and alcohol and stalking related violence is also incomplete. Though a number of studies have demonstrated a link between increased alcohol/drug consumption and an increased risk of stalking violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009), James and Farnham (2003) found no association between the two factors.

In addition to substance related predictors, other factors that have received some attention in stalking risk research include fear (Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012), suicidality (Meloy et al., 2012; McEwan et al., 2010), and jealousy (Roberts, 2005). Interestingly, despite often being used in domestic violence danger assessments, victim perceptions have received little attention in the exploration of stalking violence risk (Campbell, 2004). Although studies have

begun to explore the aforementioned factors in the context of stalking risk, there is a considerable shortage of literature on these topics in order to confidently understand their role in the prediction of stalking.

Given that stalking is by nature a persistent pattern of intrusive contact, and that perpetrators are known to attempt to access the victim through third parties (Crossman et al., 2016; Harrison, 2008), it is surprising that research has neglected the analysis of child contact issues as a risk factor for stalking violence. In a study by Harrison (2008), female victims of intimate partner violence stated that they perceived a higher risk for abuse when there were government-appointed child custody arrangements and meetings, because this gave the perpetrator access to the victim. Indeed, Hardesty and Chung (2006) discuss the importance of recognition of risk of intimate partner violence when the victim and perpetrator are connected through ongoing custody and co-parenting legalities. With the opportunity to contact the victim through a means of using a mutual child as a method of access, it may be that child contact issues provide perpetrators with an ongoing avenue of continued harassment, as well as an ongoing connection to the victim that prevents true separation from the perpetrator.

In addition to this, a subsequent neglected risk factor in the context of stalking risk is the presence of a distinct form of violence known as non-fatal strangulation. Though domestic violence overall has been linked with an increased risk of experiencing stalking and stalking-related violence, particularly after separation (Campbell et al., 2007; Logan et al., 2008; McFarlane et al., 1999; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007), non-fatal strangulation warrants investigation in its own right due to this form of violence being driven by a motivation to coercively control and demonstrate power over the victim. Given that stalking itself has been proposed to be a form of coercive control (Brewster, 2003; Logan & Cole, 2011; Stark, 2013), the prior experience of this distinctive form of coercive violence may be an important risk factor for the experience of stalking violence.

Perpetrators who non-fatally strangle their victim typically do so with an intent to show the victim that their life can easily be taken away by the perpetrator, and consequently the perpetrator instils a sense of control over the victim (Glass et al., 2008). Non-fatal strangulation is particularly dangerous as it usually leaves no visible injury, and because the risk of homicide has been found to be approximately seven times higher for those victims who have experienced non-fatal strangulation (Glass et al., 2008; Messing et al., 2018). Though research has demonstrated variable results when exploring prior history of violence or a criminal record as a risk factor for stalking related violence, a history of this particularly

dangerous and unique method of violence may be indicative of an increased risk of stalking violence severity in a domestic context. Together, the combination of inconsistent findings across a number of variables, some of which have been explored in very few studies, as well as the lack of inclusion of child contact issues and prior non-fatal strangulation in assessing the risk of severe stalking violence, suggests that there exist significant gaps in the field of stalking literature.

1.7 Theoretical Perspectives to Understanding Stalking Behaviour

Whilst prevalence and typologies of stalking have been researched considerably since stalking became a point of focus in the academic field, there currently exists little research that has explored and discussed theoretical perspectives on stalking. This is particularly the case for stalking in the context of intimate partner violence. When stalking occurs in a domestic/intimate context, it is known that females are far more likely to be victims than males (Bjerregaard, 2000; Breiding et al., 2020). In a domestic/intimate context, the stalking perpetrator and victim are also known to each other. Various theories have attempted to explain the nature of stalking among intimate/ex-intimate partners. Feminist theory, for example, has been utilised as a framework in studies exploring stalking among intimate partners (Brewster, 2003; Reece, 2011). This theoretical framework suggests that the gender differences seen in victimisation and perpetration of stalking among intimate partners can be explained by patriarchy (Brewster, 2003). Likewise, these gender inequities and gender roles are also witnessed and reinforced in the context of intimate relationships and stalking, where males are dominant. Similarly, coercive control theory explains stalking as being the result of an attempt to exert power and control over the victim through the use of a variety of tactics that create a sense of entrapment (Stark, 2007). Given that stalking involves a combination of a variety of behaviours that are commonly utilised as a method of coercive control of the victim often to prevent separation or to re-gain a lost relationship (Davis et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007; Stark, 2013), it is imperative that stalking be comprehensively explored in the context of coercive control.

1.7.1 Coercive Control

Power, persuasion, and influence are factors that are found in all relationships. When an individual tells their partner “if you do not let me finish the cleaning for you, I will get upset”, it is demonstrating an example of influence and control. Similarly, if an individual says to their partner “if you text any of your friends without telling me, I will kill you”, influence and control is once again demonstrated. These are two very different examples, yet

they demonstrate how power and control can be present in healthy and unhealthy relationships. According to Stark (2007), coercion refers to the use of implicit and explicit threats in order to elicit a desired response from a victim. Control is the use of commands, exploitation, and deprivation with the intention of eliciting obedience and compliance from the victim, with unlikely retaliation (Brewster, 2003; Stark, 2007). When combined, the two create a sinister condition of "entrapment", indicating a feeling of being caught or trapped (Stark, 2007, p. 205).

In the context of an intimate relationship, power and coercive control might present itself in a variety of methods of abuse and manipulation. Whilst the victim may not have an awareness of the severity of the control that is being experienced as the abuse itself may be a slippery slope, the consequences of such abuse result in a variety of mental health problems such as posttraumatic stress, physical problems such as sleep disturbances, injury, and gastrointestinal issues, and problems that are linked to trauma (American Psychiatric Association, 2007; Dutton & Goodman, 2005). In order to understand coercion in stalking situations, Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control is firstly described.

Dutton and Goodman (2005) describe "setting the stage" as the first step of coercive control. This refers to some form of demonstration that the perpetrator has both the power and the willingness to coercively control the victim. A perpetrator might use one of four different methods described by Dutton and Goodman (2005) to set the stage. Firstly, the perpetrator might communicate to the victim that they can, and are willing to, punish the victim in some way or withhold rewards if the victim is not compliant to demands, which creates an expectancy for coercion. This gives coercion credibility as acts such as explicit statements and even injury may be used to demonstrate that negative consequences are delivered when threatened. Secondly, the perpetrator might exploit the victim's vulnerabilities (for example, illness, employment, finances, children) and use these to further coerce and control the victim. Dutton and Goodman (2005) also describe that a perpetrator might forge victim vulnerabilities by forcing the partner to cease working, to engage in illegal activities, and even to engage in shameful acts. The third method of setting the stage is to wear down the victim's resistance. This refers to the removal and dissipation of resources that would otherwise help the victim to resist coercive control, such as emotional support, having a place to stay, physical stamina, social networks, and access to family. Finally, the perpetrator might facilitate and exploit emotional attachment. Here, the perpetrator creates an emotional dependency and then exploits it. For example, the perpetrator might physically harm the victim, and then nurse and assist with the victim's injury.

According to the model, demands and threats form the cornerstone of coercion. A demand might be made explicitly or it might be an expectation held by the perpetrator, of which the victim is aware and understands. A demand becomes coercive when the associated threat is credible. Such credibility is often demonstrated by the "set stage", in which the perpetrator has already demonstrated credibility through prior abusive behaviour. Delivery of the threatened consequence, and even the mere belief/fear that the consequence might be delivered, will typically result in compliance from the victim (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Interestingly, Dutton and Goodman highlight that surveillance is an essential component of coercive control. The purpose of surveillance in coercive control is described to be for the evaluation of whether the victim has indeed complied with demands or whether they were non-compliant. Examples of such surveillance might include frequent phone calls (e.g. to check location of victim), checking the number of kilometres travelled between trips, checking whether the victim has spoken to others, etc. Furthermore, such surveillance tactics often also include third parties, such as children, friends and family, in order to help the perpetrator to extend their method of surveillance (Dutton & Goodman).

These surveillance methods are remarkably similar to those that are exhibited by stalkers, and indeed, may be classed as stalking behaviours. In conjunction with this, coercively controlling tactics often involve a variety of other behaviours that are commonly seen among stalking perpetrators, which will be discussed below. Formulating a clearer understanding of the relationship between coercive control and stalking might assist in developing a more enhanced understanding of these abusive behaviours.

1.7.2 Coercive Control and Stalking – An Underestimated Link

Utilisation of a coercive control model of abuse is helpful in explaining stalking and why we typically see significant psychological effects that persist long after the stalking has ceased. Coercive control is an umbrella term that can encompass a myriad of different elements which include, but are not limited to, stalking, threats, isolation from family and friends, using 3rd parties to access the victim, victim fear, perpetrator jealousy, etc. (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Myhill & Hohl, 2016; Stark, 2007). These other elements of coercive control are often referred to within stalking literature, and it is quite common to see that stalking victims also report that their stalker threatens them, isolates them from their family/friends, causes the victim fear, attempts to access and contact the victim through third parties etc. (Baum, 2011; Kamphuis et al., 2003; Palarea et al., 1999). Given that stalking itself is commonly an attempt at controlling a relationship by preventing the victim from

leaving, or by attempting to 'regain' a relationship that has ended, or to monitor and prevent the victim from engaging in activities undesired by the perpetrator, it is proposed that stalking is an element of coercive control (De Smet et al., 2011; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013). Indeed, previous studies have argued that stalking appears to be a coercively controlling behaviour (Brewster, 2003; Stark, 2013).

Stalkers use a variety of seemingly innocuous behaviours in order to attempt to prevent separation through repeated attempts at communication and surveillance. Coercively controlling tactics create a sense of omnipresence of the perpetrator, and stalking is one of the ways that a perpetrator might achieve this. Stalking victims often report feeling fear as they do not know when their stalker might contact them, or when they might turn up (Logan, 2019; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2013). Through acts of constant surveillance and repeated communications, stalkers create a sense of omnipresence. Victims feel that they are being watched, despite whether the perpetrator is actually watching or not. The mere anticipation and worry is enough to cause significant distress to the victim. Stalkers have also been known to engage in physical and verbal violence, including threats made towards the victim (James & Farnham, 2003; Palarea et al., 1999; Spitzberg, 2017). The use of intimidation and violent tactics such as these is noted by Dutton and Goodman (2005) as some of the methods that a perpetrator may use to 'set the stage' and create an expectation for negative outcomes should the victim not behave in the perpetrator's desired way. Indeed, Stark (2013) described intimidation as an essential element of coercion. Furthermore, when the stalker engages in repeated communications, intimidation tactics, and surveillance, the victim is likely to feel as though they are unable to seek help, because they are constantly being monitored. If the victim is fearful of seeking help, it is likely that they will feel isolated from family and friends, which further emphasises the coercive control that the stalker has over the victim. Stark (2013) describes isolation as an element necessary for control of the victim.

Stalkers therefore engage in a number of other coercively controlling tactics in attempt to gain power and control over their victims. There are a few reasons as to why this form of abuse is particularly dangerous, including a reluctance to seek help when it occurs. Ameral et al. (2017) found that the most commonly reported reasons for not seeking help among stalking victims, was because the victim perceived the behaviour to not be "that serious" (p. 15), because it was a private matter, because they did not want the perpetrator to get into trouble, because they felt ashamed, and because they talked to family or friends who were able to help. Though the generalisability of this data is limited due to the use of a college sample of victims, other studies have found similar results, whereby the seriousness

of the behaviour, victim fear, and recognition of stalking predicted seeking help (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014). Additionally, studies have also found that stalking victims often report that they feel helpless, hopeless, isolated, and fearful (Crossman et al., 2016; Korkodeilou, 2017), which would also indicate a reluctance to seek help from outside sources such as police.

Secondly, coercive control involves the use of a variety of tactics, many of which do not involve physical violence (Stark, 2007). This means that a coercively controlling offender may leave no visible marks on their victim. Hence, victims of coercive control may not be easily identified. Furthermore, police have reported in the literature that crimes such as stalking and other behaviours that leave no visible "trace" are difficult to prosecute (Brady & Nobles, 2017). Indeed, Stark (2007) highlights that the criminal justice system is often limited in their effectiveness because laws, criminal procedures, and prosecution rely on a violence model that is dependent on discrete instances of physical violence. Therefore, without a physical mark to demonstrate the harm that the victim is experiencing, the victim may not only be reluctant to seek help due to fears about being believed (Korkodeilou, 2014; Taylor-Dunn et al., 2018), but the prosecution of the offender and assistance from police may also be inadequate (Brady & Nobles, 2017; van der Aa & Groenen, 2010). Given the limitations of a criminal justice system that is based on a violence model, even the best trained officers are likely to be limited in what they can do. The strong reliance on physical violence poses serious problems for identifying, preventing, and helping victims of coercively controlling perpetrators. This emphasises a strong need for in-depth understanding, recognition, as well as assessment of coercively controlling tactics among intimate and ex-intimate partners, in order to identify red flags that indicate the victim is at high risk of harm.

Furthermore, coercively controlling tactics have been linked to an increased risk of homicide (Campbell et al., 2007; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Johnson et al., 2019; NSW Domestic Violence Review Team, 2015; Sheehan et al., 2015). Stalking is one such coercively controlling element that has been linked to an increased risk of homicide. In a study by Aldridge and Browne (2003), it was reported that 91% of abuse homicide-attempt victims had reported that they were being stalked by their offending partner. In accordance with this, Campbell et al. (2007) suggest that stalking may have more predictive utility for intimate partner homicide risk than violence. Finally, the abuse does not typically cease once the victim has separated from the perpetrator. In fact, studies show that separation from the perpetrator is linked to an increase in risk of harm because separation is perceived

by perpetrators as a failure to control the victim, or as threat to the amount of control they have over their victim (et al., 2003; Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Sheehan et al., 2015; Wilson, & Daly, 1993).

Despite the evident link between stalking and coercive control, the research exploring other elements of coercive control among stalkers is scarce. The necessity for further exploration of coercively controlling tactics among stalking offenders is warranted, not only due to the limited existing literature exploring these elements, but also because of the difficulty in identifying and prosecuting this sinister form of abuse.

1.7.3 The Difficulty of Separating- Continuance of Coercive Control and Stalking

Intimate partner abuse and violence that is experienced during a relationship has been known to continue following the cessation of a relationship for many victims (Hardesty & Chung, 2006; Hotton, 2001; Sabri et al., 2014; Senkans et al., 2017; Siddique, 2016; Walker & Meloy, 1998). Though there are numerous studies which have concluded that separation from an abusive partner is a strong risk factor for serious harm and even homicide (Johnson & Hotton, 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 2007; Dawson et al., 2009; Garcia et al., 2007; Sheehan et al., 2015) one of the common shortfalls of this research was the lack of temporal ordering. This gives rise to a difficulty in ascertaining whether violence or separation came first. Recently, Rezey (2020) addressed this limitation by controlling for temporal ordering, and conducted a study exploring the relationship between risk of intimate partner violence and separation from a relationship. In this study, it was found that females were at a significantly higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence following separation. Interestingly, it was also found that none of the included control variables (age, ethnicity, employment, education level, poverty status, location, presence of children, and living alone) mediated the risk of intimate partner violence following separation. This further emphasised the already evident relationship between separation and risk of harm by demonstrating the impact of separation in a methodologically sound study.

In the context of stalking, separation and risk has also been assessed, though the research is scarce. Nevertheless, the risk of stalking and stalking related harm has been shown to increase following separation (Logan et al., 2008; McFarlane et al., 1999; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007). Ornstein and Rickne (2013) explored stalking and violence after separation amongst intimate/ex-intimate partners. Findings revealed that stalking behaviours and violence were substantially more likely to occur after separation when there is evidence of control during the relationship. Similarly, when exploring coercive control following the

cessation of a relationship, research has found that tactics often continue after the relationship has ended (Broughton & Ford-Gilboe, 2017; Crossman et al., 2016). Given that stalking and coercive control tactics overall are attempts to gain power over the victim, often by attempting to make the victim return to the relationship or to minimise the likelihood of the victim engaging in a different relationship with another (Brownridge et al., 2008; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Zeoli et al., 2013), it makes sense that such attempts and tactics continue and often increase after separation from a relationship. Furthermore, this highlights why victims do not simply leave an abusive relationship and demonstrates the importance of changing the focus from the victim's failure or reluctance to leave, to the perpetrator who is refusing to let the victim leave. Whilst research is beginning to explore stalking and coercive control after separation, perhaps one of the most pertinent gaps currently existing in the literature is that research has often failed to differentiate between the different forms of violence when assessing associated risks in the context of stalking and coercive control. As mentioned earlier, violence is often classed under a single category (Stark, 2007). This may be one of the reasons for inconsistencies in findings across the research. For example, Broughton and Ford-Gilboe (2017) and Sharp-Jeffs et al. (2018) discussed that separation from coercively controlling relationships resulted in increased wellbeing for their participants. This highlights a need for further exploration of elements of coercive control and stalking following separation, paying particular attention to the kinds of tactics that are being included, as coercive control is not a single construct, and may involve both physical and non-physical forms of behaviour. As coercive control might be more immune to proximity issues, and consequently might be more easily inflicted, physical violence relies on physical proximity, and might therefore be less likely to occur following separation. This is unclear, and warrants further investigation.

In addition to this, understanding the different coercively controlling behaviours exhibited by stalkers might help to understand the difficulty of separating from such relationships, and therefore help to inform prevention and intervention strategies to help victims who are struggling to escape from an abusive relationship, or to sever communications from the perpetrator. One of the most discussed factors that appears to make separation from the perpetrator difficult, is the presence of ongoing child-related contact issues amongst intimate/ex-intimate couples. Victims in Crossman et al.'s (2016) study revealed that one of the most commonly reported behaviours of coercive control was perpetrators using the couple's children as a method of victim access. Similarly, other studies have found results whereby perpetrators have used children and custody related issues as a

way to access and continue to intrusively communicate with the victim (Douglas, 2018; Harrison, 2008), which suggests that children are used as a method to access the victim and continue hold on to a 'thread' that prevents complete severance from the victim.

The increased risk for harm during and after separation, as well as the limited information available about the presence of coercively controlling factors during and after a relationship, presents a strong argument for further research. Given the coercively controlling nature of many stalkers, victims are likely to be experiencing a range of other coercively controlling behaviours during the relationship, but also following separation from the perpetrator as coercive control is notorious for its incessant nature.

1.7.4 Recidivism

Stalking by nature is a repetitive form of intrusive behaviours aimed at a particular victim. The duration of stalking has found to be higher when the victim is an ex-intimate partner, whereas victims who are stalked by a stranger are typically stalked for a shorter period of time (McEwan et al., 2009). Given that stalking is often one of the tactics used to gain control over the victim (Brewster, 2003), it is perhaps not surprising that other coercively controlling strategies also tend to persist in intimate/ex-intimate situations, despite efforts to stop these. What is quite surprising, is that despite the undoubtedly persistent nature of stalking, there is little research that has explored stalking recidivism amongst stalking offenders. In addition to the scarcity of research on stalking recidivism, existing studies have produced results that are difficult to compare due to inconsistencies in the definitions used to operationalise stalking recidivism. In the first study to analyse stalking recidivism, Rosenfeld (2003) defined recidivism as "any indication of a second arrest or renewed harassment" (p. 255). In this study, Rosenfeld (2003) found that 49% of the stalking offenders had recidivated, with 80% of these reoffending within a year. Mohandie et al. (2006) utilised a much broader definition of recidivism, whereby recidivism was indicated if any known contact occurred between the stalking offender and victim, following the first legal intervention. This resulted in findings indicating that 60% of the offenders had recidivated.

More recently, Eke et al. (2011) defined recidivism in their study as any renewed contact with the victim from the initial stalking crime. Eke et al.'s (2011) findings revealed that 56% of offenders had recidivated, and half of these offenders did so within three months. Malsch et al. (2011) also assessed recidivism, though the authors defined recidivism as any renewed stalking conviction. Malsch et al. (2011) reported that 11% of the offenders had reoffended with a new stalking conviction, though the authors outlined that 24% of the

convicted stalkers had recidivated with a ‘related’ stalking crime, such as threats. Beyond these key studies exploring stalking recidivism, studies have reported on stalking offending recidivism, but no other studies have directly assessed stalking recidivism. Most recently, McEwan et al. (2020) explored two definitions of stalking recidivism, including any renewed stalking arrest, and any victim report against the offender. McEwan et al. (2020) found that over 50% of offenders had recidivated against the same victim when using a broader definition of stalking recidivism, and less than 30% recidivated when a more stringent definition was used.

The measurement of this inconsistently defined construct is evidently problematic. Given that stalking comprises a number of different behaviours, many of which are not illegal on their own, it is perhaps unsurprising that studies have defined stalking recidivism in different ways and consequently yielded different results. Part of the difficulty with assessing stalking recidivism lies with the challenging task of drawing the line at which a behaviour is no longer deemed to be a part of the original stalking act. Stalking is not a concretely defined crime, unlike burglary for example, so what kinds of behaviours or acts are eligible to be classed as stalking? For example, it can be easy to see how breaching a restraining order in order to continuously message the victim is an act indicating stalking reoffending. But what about something like property damage, threats, or trespassing? Without capturing the wide range of behaviours stalkers are likely engage in, we run the risk of overlooking stalking harassment and perhaps underestimating the severity and risk of the situation. At the same time, inclusion of a high number of common criminal acts such as property damage might lead to an overuse of stalking that makes it difficult to differentiate between general crime victims and those at higher risk of harm. Given the difficulty in reaching consensus about the legal and academic definitions of stalking described earlier, perhaps one of the first steps is to further explore the differences in these definitions, and the consequent differences that we are likely to see in stalking recidivism studies in order to improve understanding of reoffending, and aid the formulation of pragmatic recommendations for victims and law enforcement.

1.8 Difficulties for First Responders

Stark (2013) describes stalking as one of the tactics that comprise coercive control, but there are many other tactics, including isolating the victim, controlling the victim’s finances, demeaning the victim, regulating how the victim should dress, threatening the victim, etc. Whilst coercive control may involve the use of physical harm, many of the tactics are not visible unless directly witnessed, as they do not leave physical marks. Victims are also unlikely to come forward for a number of different reasons, including secondary

victimisation, whereby the victim might be degraded and humiliated due to public exposure of the abuse and what has been described as legal systems abuse (Douglas, 2018; Laing, 2017). Additionally, community attitudes may also hinder a victim's likelihood of coming forward, as Barwick et al. (2020) suggested that victims often report to the police only when immediate police intervention is deemed necessary, which is typically in situations where assault has occurred, or property has been damaged, or if the victim has been threatened. Typically, coercive behaviours are alluded to during such police interventions, often long after they actually began. Barwick et al. (2020) describe that victims have made comments such as "I couldn't leave the house before now" (p. 150), when explaining the delay for reporting coercively controlling behaviour. In conjunction with this, Stark (2012) noted the limitations of the criminal justice system in effectively assisting victims of domestic violence due to the laws and procedures being based on a violence model that relies on physical and visible evidence of harm. Despite this, research has shown that assessing elements of coercive control can help first responders to more accurately identify patterns of behaviour which indicate that a victim is at high risk of being harmed (Myhill & Hohl, 2016).

Whilst there are numerous reasons why it may be difficult to identify stalking and other non-physical acts of coercive control, the research has shown that police officers often do not identify stalking when it occurs (Backes et al., 2020; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In an investigation of 3,756 calls to police departments in the United States where the caller requested help with relation to stalking victimisation, only 66 of these resulted in the development of an incident report, and none of the calls resulted in arrest (Brady & Nobles, 2017). Despite these discouraging statistics, Brady et al. (2020) recently found that when police officers were able to clearly identify stalking behaviours from domestic violence complaints, the likelihood of the offender being arrested was high. Indeed, in this study the authors noted that out of the total domestic violence complaints that contained evidence of stalking (40.9%), 62% concluded with the offender being arrested for stalking. The results of these studies demonstrate the importance of providing first responders with education and training with regards to the nature and impact of stalking and related coercively controlling behaviours, in order to assist with more accurate identification of offenders/victims, and for the prevention and intervention of stalking-related harm.

Though laws and policies are undoubtedly difficult to change and to pass, rigorous research and evidence can create a foundation for the initial steps towards such change. Enhancing our understanding of coercive control, stalking, and risk, by using a continuously growing pool of research, current practices and procedures for the identification, assessment,

and intervention of victims at risk of harm may be improved. Bullock and Tilley (2009) describe this as evidence based policing (EBP), which is a process of conducting high quality research, and applying the findings to both tactical and strategic decisions made by police officers, in order to reduce/prevent crime more effectively, encourage scientifically supported procedures and discourage those that are demonstrated to be harmful or ineffective. From the standpoint of EBP, it is suggested that a sceptical and curious outlook be taken towards "traditional" knowledge and methods (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). Rather than simply accepting strategies that have withstood the test of time and passed down through generations, systematic analyses should be employed in order to critically analyse the efficacy of these strategies and practices. With evidence informed identification and assessment of coercively controlling tactics, including but not limited to stalking, victims may be directed and assisted to reconnect with supports, resources, opportunities, strength, and any other useful elements needed to work through overcoming their experience of coercive control. It may help both victims and first responders, healthcare workers, family, friends to be able to proactively respond to high risk situations, empower the victim, and treat the deleterious effects the victim experiences as a result of the coercive control

1.9 Rationale for this Research

Stalking is not a new topic in the literature, and studies have made significant progress in identifying and understanding the different types of stalkers, victims, prevalence of stalking, types of behaviours, and consequent impact of these behaviours on the victim. Though much more is now known about this multifaceted crime since the initial criminalisation of stalking in California in 1990, there remain gaps and inconsistencies in the literature that warrant further investigation of stalking and other facets of coercive control that are commonly exhibited by stalkers. The following reasons illustrate the rationale underpinning the studies contained in this thesis.

Whilst the relationship between stalking and violence has been demonstrated in the literature (Brewster, 2000; Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Farnham et al., 2000; Meloy, 2002; Meloy et al., 2001; Mohandie et al., 2006; Sheridan & Davies, 2001), the research has been constrained through the utilisation of violence definitions that do not capture varied severities of violence. As a result, studies have yielded inconsistent results surrounding the topic of stalking and risk of violence. Additionally, the exploration of stalking in the context of coercive control has been neglected. Though studies have continually indicated the presence of other coercively controlling behaviours when stalking is present (Baum, 2011; Kamphuis et al., 2003; Lynch et al., 2019; Palarea et al., 1999), very little is known about coercively

controlling behaviours among stalkers. Given the significant impact that stalking and other elements of coercive control may have, including risk of homicide, mental health problems that persist long after stalking/coercive control has ceased (Davis et al., 2002; Dressing et al., 2005; Logan & Walker, 2010; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2005), and damage that is arguably more harmful than isolated physical incidents (Crossman et al., 2016; Korkodeilou, 2017; McMahon et al., 2020), research exploring other elements of coercive control among stalkers is necessary. Indeed, factors such as child contact issues and non-fatal strangulation have received little attention in the stalking literature, yet these have been shown to increase risk for intimate partner abuse (Glass et al., 2008; Hardesty & Chung, 2006; Harrison, 2008; Messing et al., 2018). Additionally, the exploration of coercive control in the literature has often been limited due to operational definitions that do not capture the diversity of behaviours and tactics that are coercively controlling. Finally, although studies have shown an increase in risk of harm following separation from an intimate relationship (Logan et al., 2008; McFarlane et al., 1999; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013), little is known about coercively controlling behaviours during, and after a relationship with a stalking offender. Exploration of this often-neglected and non-physical form of violence is needed to further understand the risk of harm during and after a relationship.

Where studies have begun to explore repeated offending among stalkers, varied definitions have been used with regards to what elements constitute a repetition of stalking behaviour. As a result, it is difficult to understand stalking recidivism as studies have provided varied results that necessitate understanding of such differences. Inconsistencies in the research are also evident when discussing stalking violence. Indeed, studies have often categorised a myriad of varied behaviours under a single umbrella of ‘violence’, and consequently resulted in a variety of inconsistent findings.

It is anticipated that the combination of the studies found in this thesis will assist in clarifying the inconsistent results in a few ways – 1) by exploring stalking violence categorised into different levels of severity as opposed to classifying mild and severe violent behaviours into one category, 2) by exploring numerous elements of coercive control among stalking victim-perpetrator dyads, and 3) by improving understanding of the differences in results among the few studies that have explored stalking recidivism, through comparing and further analysing the different operational definitions of stalking recidivism, using a single large dataset.

Whilst the previous gaps and inconsistencies in the literature provide substantial support for further exploration of stalking and other related tactics of coercive control,

another important reason for conducting the studies seen in this thesis is because the results of these studies may assist in informing pragmatic and evidence-based assessment/identification/intervention strategies that might prevent and treat harm associated with stalking and other coercively controlling behaviours. As discussed above, victims of coercive control are likely to fear their perpetrator, and may be experiencing coercively controlling tactics that do not leave physical marks. Even methods like non-fatal strangulation often leave no bruises (Thomas et al., 2014). Additionally, victims may underestimate the severity of the abuse, or fail to recognise some behaviours as abusive (Ameral et al., 2017). As a result, it is imperative for first responders to be able to recognise 'red flags' that indicate a victim may be at risk of harm, without solely relying on visible injury or victim disclosure. The findings from the studies contained in this thesis may be utilised to inform first responders about the various factors that may suggest a victim is at high risk of harm, and potentially assist first responders in providing resources for victims.

The recommendations and findings of these studies can also be used to further train and inform police officers, health care workers, and victims about coercive control, stalking, and other behaviours that are likely to be evident in domestically violent relationships. Furthermore, first responders may be better informed about the persistence of such harmful behaviours even after the victim has separated from the perpetrator, and the importance of providing the victim with resources about where to seek help rather than only decreasing proximity to the perpetrator. Using an evidence based policing approach, the following studies may be utilised to inform pragmatic methods of identifying victims at risk of harm, and perpetrators at risk of harming. The results may assist officers and other first responders in knowing what to look for when identifying victims at risk of harm, regardless of the years of experience as a first responder.

Finally, Fox et al. (2011) noted that little is known about stalking from research studies that are not based on student samples. The studies contained in this thesis are conducted using a sample of WA Police records, and therefore will add to the existing literature on stalking that has previously over-relied on student samples. The dataset spans over 14 years, and contains thousands of incident reports that involved stalking behaviours. The nature of this dataset will allow for wider understanding and generalisation of results across populations that are not necessarily students. As outlined by Fox et al. (2011), there is a necessity for further research using populations that have received little attention (e.g. police-identified perpetrators/victims), in order to add to the existing literature that has primarily utilised young student samples.

The studies in this thesis aim to expand on the current understandings of stalking and related elements of coercive control, and yield findings that may be utilised to inform current police strategies for the identification of stalking perpetrators/victims and minimisation of harm, by answering the following research questions.

1) What risk factors are associated with different severities of stalking-related physical violence? (Study 1)
2) Are stalking victims who report presence of various elements of coercive control more likely to have also experienced the unique violence of non-fatal strangulation? (Study 2)
3) Which elements of coercive control are seen among stalking victim-perpetrator dyads who are separated, and those who are not separated? (Study 3)
4) How does the time to stalking recidivism and factors related to stalking recidivism change depending on the definition of recidivism employed? (Study 4)

Note: The following chapter has been published in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence.

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2019). Risk factors for severe violence in intimate partner stalking situations: An analysis of police records. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence,* 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519847776

Minor edits have been made to the present chapter to ensure consistency with the present thesis (e.g., Australian spelling, APA 7th referencing). The published article is presented in Appendix A.

Chapter 2 (Study 1): Risk Factors for Severe Violence in Intimate Partner Stalking Situations: An Analysis of Police Records

2.1 Introduction

Unsolicited love letters, numerous phone calls, unwanted gifts, continuous messages—these forms of intrusive behaviour can appear innocuous and are commonly experienced, often after the cessation of a relationship (De Smet et al., 2011). These seemingly harmless behaviours often do not constitute a crime when considered individually, but if repeated in a pattern, they can constitute stalking (James & MacKenzie, 2017).

In a recent report by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW; 2015), it was found that 1.1 million individuals between the ages of 16 and 59 had been stalked within a period of 1 year, with approximately 20% of these victims filing a stalking complaint to the police. Such large numbers of complaints, some of which may seem innocuous, make it difficult for police officers to ascertain level of risk within stalking incidents. As such, the intention of this research is to inform evidence-based policing practices, which are practices that are grounded in empirical research and used to inform scientifically supported procedures, and discourage ineffective procedures (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). As research has established a consistent positive relationship between stalking and intimate partner violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; McEwan et al., 2007; Miller, 2012; Norris et al., 2011; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007), the potential for violence toward victims of intimate partner stalking underlines the critical importance for law enforcement agents to be successful in identifying victims at high risk and intervene early using empirically supported practices.

2.1.1 Stalking and Violence

Precise rates of violence within stalking samples are difficult to ascertain due to inconsistency in definitions of both violence and stalking, as well as methodological considerations such as the measures employed. Mullen et al. (1999) found that 36% of the stalkers in their study ($N = 145$) had physically assaulted their victims. Mullen et al. (1999) defined physical assault in a very general sense, including pushing, slapping, stabbing, and rape within a single category. In contrast, Meloy et al., (2001) also looked at predicting risk factors for violence in a stalking sample ($N = 59$) and found the rate of violence to be 60%. Violence was defined as an aggressive and intentional act toward the victim or their property. This means that the category of physical violence did not differentiate between acts such as

hitting the victim's car with a fist and breaking the victim's jaw. Although this research highlighted some important relationships between violence and stalking, it can be argued that violence should not be measured as a homogenous construct.

James and Farnham (2003) suggested that violence is not a homogenous construct, as acts can differ in severity (e.g., slapping vs. stabbing). They examined whether associations of violence in a stalking sample were the same for both severe and less serious violence. Results revealed that minor and severe violence were associated with different variables, supporting the notion that violence should not be treated as a single category. There is clear variation in research parameters that adds to difficulty in understanding the true nature of violence within stalking cases; however, consensus lies in the importance of early identification of stalking victims at risk of serious violence.

Research on cases of homicide and stalking has found that stalking can precede fatal violence, with a U.S. study showing that 76% of femicides ($N = 141$) were associated with prior stalking (McFarlane et al., 1999). As the presence of violence in stalking has been well established in the literature, research has focused on identifying the risk factors for violence perpetration. One of the most consistent findings within the literature is that intimate/ex-intimate partners are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing stalking violence than those stalked by strangers, acquaintances, friends, or family members (Farnham et al., 2000; McEwan et al., 2007; Mohandie et al., 2006; Resnick, 2007; Sheridan & Davies, 2001).

2.1.2 Risk Factors for Stalking Violence

A meta-analysis of 25 data sets explored risk factors for violence in stalking cases (Churcher & Nesca, 2013). Overt threats of harm were associated with a higher risk of stalking-related violence, a finding that had also been produced by Rosenfeld (2004). Churcher and Nesca (2013) also found that the presence of a criminal record and/or previous violence were associated with a higher risk of stalking violence; however, these findings are contrasted by research which has reported no significant associations between criminal history and stalking violence risk (Rosenfeld, 2004; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002). In particular, James and Farnham (2003) found that the absence of a violent history was associated with serious violence among stalkers. These authors suggested this might be because those perpetrators who commit serious offences have very different personal profiles to those who commit minor offences.

Mental health also seems to have an equivocal association with violence risk among stalking perpetrators. Roberts (2005) found no significant relationship between mental health

and risk of violence, whereas Rosenfeld (2004) and Churcher and Nesca (2013) found the absence of psychosis and presence of personality disorder to be associated with risk of stalking violence. Rosenfeld (2004) speculated that this might be partially explained by the potential for psychotic stalkers to exhibit erotomanic delusions, and consequently be seeking romantic engagement rather than seeking to harm the victim. An important consideration when assessing mental health as a risk factor is the prior relationship between victim and perpetrator, as research shows that perpetrators who stalk strangers tend to have much higher rates of serious mental health problems, compared with ex-intimate partners who stalk a victim they were once in a relationship with (Farnham et al., 2000; Mohandie et al., 2006).

Typically, substance abuse has been a well-established risk factor for stalking violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009; Mullen et al., 1999; Rosenfeld, 2004), although James and Farnham (2003) found no significant associations between substance abuse and serious stalking violence. Other risk factors that have been associated with stalking violence include separation (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Kienlen, 1998; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007; Walker & Meloy, 1998) and fear (Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012), although fear is a factor few studies have explored. Like fear, the association between suicidality and stalking violence has rarely been examined, although research has shown that stalkers have a higher rate of suicide than the general population (McEwan et al., 2010), and risk assessments commonly outline suicidal ideation as a "red flag" for serious violence (MacKenzie et al., 2009; Meloy et al., 2012). Victim's perceptions of risk have been explored in domestic violence and often used as an assessment of danger (Campbell, 2004). Jealousy is another factor that has been the focus of few studies, although Roberts (2005) found that perpetrator jealousy was a significant predictor of increased stalking violence. Jealousy has been associated with intimate partner violence (IPV)/domestic violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005), and is a well-established characteristic of stalkers (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Roberts, 2002; Silva et al., 2000). Although the research is beginning to shed light on the importance of such potential predictors in ascertaining risk of violence in stalking situations, the results are still somewhat inconsistent, and there remain potential risk factors that have not yet been explored (Churcher & Nesca, 2013).

One such factor is the contact that the perpetrator has with any children he or she may share with the victim. Harrison (2008) found that female victims of IPV felt there was a higher potential for abuse as a result of government- appointed contact arrangements, and consequently access to the victim. Research also shows that stalking behaviour and violence increase when the victim separates from the relationship (Melton, 2007). This increase in

potentially harmful behaviour could be the perpetrator's attempt to stop the victim from separating (Mahoney, 1991). If the relationship is not completely severed, due to access to the child, perhaps the perpetrator's need to control and harass the victim declines. The current study aims to explore this idea further and provides preliminary suggestions about the potential association between the presence of child contact issues such as family court order arrangements and violence severity in a sample of stalkers within the context of an intimate/ex-intimate relationship.

A second factor that remains unexplored is the presence of non-fatal strangulation as a potential risk factor for more severe violence in stalking situations. Strangulation is a type of violence that is quite distinct from most other violent acts, as it is a gendered form of violence and often leaves no visible injury (Messing et al., 2018; New Zealand Law Commission, 2016). It is believed to be a way of exerting power and control over the victim by showing how easy it is for the perpetrator to take away the victim's ability to breathe (Thomas et al., 2014). Indeed, risk of homicide is 7 times higher for victims who have previously experienced non-fatal strangulation than those who have not (Glass et al., 2008). A history of this unique form of violence may be an important consideration for a potential association with increased violence severity in intimate partner stalking situations. These unexplored factors, as well as the inconsistent conclusions regarding previously identified risk factors, suggest a need for further analysis and exploration, particularly where violence is not treated as a homogenous variable.

2.1.3 The Current Study

The current study aims to analyse whether previously identified risk factors, and the previously unexplored factors of child contact and non-fatal strangulation, are significantly associated with violence severity in a sample of intimate and ex-intimate partners where stalking was also recorded. The study also aims to provide evidence-based conclusions that may be utilised pragmatically by law enforcement agencies, employing a data set of records provided by the Western Australia Police Force. From the standpoint of evidence-based policing, it is anticipated that this work may provide police officers with strategies to identify which perpetrators should be flagged due to a potential for serious harm toward the victim, as a result of the systematic testing of potential risk factors within police incident reports. These scientifically driven and pragmatic recommendations may encourage officers to rely less on routine and personal experience and potentially aid early intervention and prevention of harm to victims of stalking.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Sample

The final sample for this study comprised 369 incident reports. A total of 30 cases were deleted from the data set. Cases were deleted either because the narrative description was too vague, for example, “assaulted” whereby severity could not be determined, or because the relationship between the victim and perpetrator was neither intimate nor ex-intimate. Intimate partners included partners who had a casual relationship, “on/off” relationships, a current intimate relationship, were living together, or were separated. The data set did not include any dyads that were family, acquaintance, or strangers. Consequently, the term “intimate partner” is used throughout this work, which refers to victim–perpetrator partners who were at the time the police report was created, or were at one point, intimate partners.

2.2.2 Data Set Procedures and Variables

The data set was obtained with the help and permission of Western Australia Police Force. The current data set comprises Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIRs), which are recorded accounts of disturbances in a domestic setting, completed by the officer attending. The reports in this data set are from August 18, 2013 (the date at which current FVIR recording procedures began) to August 25, 2017. Reports were only selected if stalking was identified as a present factor by the officer completing the report. According to Section 338E of the Western Australian Criminal Code, stalking behaviour is defined as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person. Within the FVIRs, there is an allocated area for officers to write detailed descriptions of the incident. To assess violence severity using these narratives, the researchers required a sample that contained an even distribution of violence severity incidents. As a result, 199 narratives were randomly chosen, which contained a majority of physically nonviolent reports, and 200 narratives were non-randomly chosen by the Western Australia Police Force research team to achieve more even severity groups. These were selected at random from a total pool of 13,768. The sample size was determined in collaboration with WAPol based on feasibility as redaction was conducted by a team member of WAPol and therefore required time and resources. The final sample size comprised 399 individually redacted narrative reports, whereby any identifying information was deleted from the narratives.

In addition to the free-narrative component of the FVIR reports, officers may indicate the presence/absence of 42 various factors relevant to the incident, as well as the date of the

incident, to formulate a detailed account of the incident and highlight pertinent factors relating to the event, victim, and perpetrator. These reports are completed using a combination of officer observation and questions, victim statements, perpetrator statements, and third party statements. As these factors are only present in FVIRs, and do not appear in reports produced in response to a case of stalking, it was deemed necessary to gather a sample of FV reports in which stalking was indicated, as the analysis would not be possible if a sample of stalking reports was utilised. The factors included in this analysis are prior FV, victim fear, victim belief that perpetrator will kill the victim, victim belief that perpetrator will injure the victim, victim belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves, offender drug use, offender alcohol use, offender-related mental health problems, separation, previous harm to victim, child contact issues, offender jealousy, threats, and victim non-fatal strangulation. Victim non-fatal strangulation and child contact are novel factors that have not been tested for associations with stalking violence in earlier works. The remaining factors have previously been seen in the literature, although it is evident that the findings about their relationship with stalking violence are somewhat inconsistent and in need of further investigation.

Missing data

The FVIR contains 42 items, 34 of which are mandatory fields that cannot be left blank (four of these are conditional and indicate periods of time), whereas the other eight items are completed optionally and may be left blank. The majority of the FVIR variables are categorical and can be completed by choosing “yes”—this factor was present, “no”—this factor was not present, or “unknown”—this is unknown/not asked/not relevant. This is not a typical categorical data set where multiple options are available (e.g., marriage status), but rather the categories merely indicate the presence of a variable (e.g., was a weapon used). Officers who complete the FVIRs do not read out each individual item to the victim or perpetrator in the form of an interview. Instead, the officer talks to the victim/perpetrator/other relevant parties at the scene to get an understanding of the event that has occurred and then proceeds to complete all necessary paperwork, including the FVIR. This means that the majority of officers will not complete each individual optional item in the FVIR as it is not practical, but will instead flag all the factors which were clearly present based on the narrative that was told to the officer by the perpetrator/victim/other relevant party or based on what the officer observed. Based on this information, the categorical items that are blank or indicated as “no” or “unknown” are not being treated as missing data, but

have instead been collapsed into one category—"unclear presence." Those categorical items that contain a "yes" are considered to fall under the category of "clearly present." Hence, categorical items on the FVIR have a binary outcome.

Justification for data selection

The current archival data set was chosen for a number of reasons. The use of an existing data set helps to eliminate common problems that are often seen in data collection, such as participant dropout, insufficient recruitment rates, difficulty in gaining access to relevant participants (e.g., a criminal population), and issues with anonymity. Stalking research often relies on sampling the general population, students, or self- reported victims of stalking. There are a small number of studies from the United States that have utilised police records to assess stalking behaviour (Churcher & Nesca, 2013). Palarea et al. (1999) retrieved files from the Los Angeles Police Department Threat Management Unit to assess stalking victim–offender pairs. Similarly, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) utilised FV crime reports from the Colorado Springs Police Department for the purpose of exploring stalking behaviour. Other studies have utilised a combination of resources, including court documents, police files, clinical interviews, psychometric testing, and hospital records (McEwan et al., 2009; Meloy & Boyd, 2003; Meloy et al., 2011; Mohandie et al., 2006). Although the majority of these studies are based on data from the United States, studies outside of the United States have utilised police records in the investigation of stalking as evidenced by a study conducted in Belgium, which coded police narratives to identify violence-related factors in stalking (Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009). More recently, research by McEwan et al. (2017) utilised police records and offender accounts to estimate prevalence of intimate partner abuse among a stalking sample in Australia. These studies have expanded current understanding of stalking by utilising forensic samples, moving beyond typical self-reports and student-based samples, and providing practical recommendations for law enforcement agencies, clinicians, and further research endeavours.

Coding

To analyse correlates of different levels of physical violence, the narratives were first coded numerically, based on the level of violence severity that was described in the incident report narrative. The coding procedure was based on the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996). The CTS2 is a well-validated measure of intimate partner violence, which will allow for reliable comparisons of violence across other studies that have utilised this measure. Violence severity was operationalised using the physical violence

subscale of the CTS2, into moderate or severe levels (see Figure 1). Additional items were included, as the CTS2 did not encompass all types of physical violence existing within the narratives. Those that were added are seen in italics in Figure 1. These additional items were coded into either moderate or severe categories based on the severity of the injury likely to be inflicted on the victim as a result of the violent behaviour.

Severity	Behaviour
Severe	Used a knife or gun on my partner
Severe	Punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt
Severe	Choked my partner
Severe	Slammed my partner against a wall
Severe	Beat up my partner
Severe	Burned or scalded my partner on purpose
Severe	Kicked my partner
Severe	*Drove a car at partner*
Severe	*Rammed vehicle with car while partner inside*
Severe	*Dragged partner on the floor*
Severe	*Bit partner*
Moderate	Threw something at my partner that could hurt
Moderate	Twisted my partner's arm or hair
Moderate	Pushed or shoved my partner
Moderate	Grabbed my partner
Moderate	Slapped my partner
Moderate	*Restrained partner*

Figure 1. CTS2 violence categories with additional items italicised

The coding process categorised violent incidents into “moderate” (1) or “severe” (2). Alternatively, those incidents that contained no mention of any violence, for example, if an offender breached a restraining order, were coded as “nonviolent” (0). These categories are mutually exclusive, and in cases where both severe and moderate violence occurred, the narrative was coded based on the behaviour of the highest severity. In cases where there was significant confusion about the actual event (e.g., offender and victim had contradicting stories with no evidence for either story), or if the narrative was too vague to accurately determine severity, no severity coding was assigned to that case. The coded levels of severity refer to violence against the victim only, and not the perpetrator or any third parties. A second researcher coded a small sample ($N = 20$) of the data set to check for interrater reliability, with all 20 reports matching the code given by the first researcher.

Variables

The outcome variable in this study is violence severity, whereby a score of “0” indicates a nonviolent incident, “1” indicates a moderately violent incident, and a score of “2” indicates a severely violent incident. Each score pertained only to physical violence. As the dependent variable for this research question is ordinal, an ordinal regression was deemed the most appropriate analysis to test for any significant correlations between the independent variables and violence severity (Liu, 2009). The binary independent variables analysed in this study included presence of prior domestic violence, victim fear, the victim’s belief that perpetrator will injure/kill them, the victim’s belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves, perpetrator problem drug use, perpetrator problem alcohol use, perpetrator mental health issues, separation, previous harm to victim, child contact, perpetrator jealousy, threats, and non-fatal strangulation.

2.3 Results

Table 1.1 displays a summary of the descriptive statistics. The majority of the sample incident reports did not report any physical violence (51.2%), whereas moderately violent incident reports comprised 14.1% of the total sample, and severely violent incident reports comprised 34.7% of the total sample. It is important to note that this distribution of severity is not representative of stalking incident reports in the context of domestic abuse, as 200 of the narratives were chosen systematically based on the presence of physical violence, to create a more even distribution among the severity categories. A large majority of the incident reports indicated that victims had previously been victims of other domestic violence incidents

(71.8%). The data show that most victims were frightened at the time of the domestic incident reported in the FVIR (74.3%). Many victims had experienced threats from the perpetrator, indicating intent to kill or hurt the victim (57.2%). Interestingly, although most victims experienced fear and previous threats, a large majority of victims did not believe that the perpetrator would kill the victim (81.0%) or that the perpetrator would kill themselves (94.3%). However, most victims did believe that the perpetrator would cause injury to the victim (55.8%), and 69.1% of victims had previously been injured by the perpetrator. The data showed that 24.9% of victims had experienced non-fatal strangulation by the perpetrator. The data also showed that 43.6% of perpetrators had experienced problems with drugs in the past year, and 29.5% of perpetrators experienced problems with alcohol in the past year. The data showed that 27.4% of victims indicated that the perpetrator had had mental health problems in the past year. The majority of incidents indicated that the perpetrator was excessively jealous (61.0%). Most victims were separated from the perpetrator (73.7%), and 20.9% of incidents indicated that child contact issues were present.

Table 1. 1 *Descriptive Statistics*

		N ($N = 369$)	Percentage (%)
Severity	Non Violent	189	51.2%
	Moderate	52	14.1%
	Severe	128	34.7%
Prior FV	Yes	265	71.8%
	No	104	28.2%
Fear	Yes	274	74.3%
	No	95	25.7%
Kill victim belief	Yes	70	19.0%
	No	299	81.0%
Kill self belief	Yes	21	5.7%
	No	348	94.3%
Injury belief	Yes	206	55.8%
	No	163	44.2%
Drugs	Yes	161	43.6%
	No	208	56.4%
Alcohol	Yes	109	29.5%
	No	260	70.5%
Mental health issue	Yes	101	27.4%
	No	268	72.6%
Separated	Yes	272	73.7%
	No	97	26.3%
Previously hurt victim	Yes	255	69.1%
	No	114	30.9%
Child contact	Yes	77	20.9%
	No	292	79.1%
Jealous	Yes	225	61.0%
	No	144	39.0%
Threats	Yes	211	57.2%
	No	158	42.8%
Strangulation	Yes	92	24.9%
	No	277	75.1%
Total		369	

2.3.1 Model Fit

The Pearson goodness-of-fit test, $\chi 2(572) = 570.62$, $p = .508$, and the deviance goodness-of-fit test, $\chi 2(572) = 492.40$, $p = .993$, both indicate that the model was a good fit to the data. The likelihood ratio test indicated that the final model was significantly better at predicting violence severity when compared with the intercept only model, $\chi 2(14) = 103.42$, $p < .001$.

2.3.2 Severity of Violence

Ordinal logistic regression was used to explore the presence and strength of any relationships between the independent variables and severity of violence. A summary of the ordinal regression results is found in Table 1.2. The odds of the FV incident containing a severe level of physical violence when the perpetrator had previously attempted to strangle the victim were 1.82 (95% confidence interval [CI] = [1.07, 3.08]) times higher than FV incidents where no previous strangulation attempts were made, an effect which is statistically significant, $\chi 2(1) = 4.91$, $p = .027$. The presence of jealousy was also associated with higher odds of severe physical violence, with an odds ratio of 1.88 (95% CI = [1.18, 3.02]), $\chi 2(1) = 6.94$, $p = .008$. When the victim believed that the perpetrator would injure them, the odds of severe physical violence were 2.03 times higher than if the victim did not hold such beliefs (95% CI = [1.20, 3.44]), $\chi 2(1) = 7.02$, $p = .008$. If the victim had previously been hurt by the perpetrator, the odds of severe violence were increased, with an odds ratio of 2.53 (95% CI = [1.42, 4.51]), $\chi 2(1) = 9.90$, $p = .002$.

Interestingly, the presence of a prior FV incident was associated with a 56% lower likelihood of experiencing severe violence, with an odds ratio of 0.44, (95% CI = [0.27, 0.74]), $\chi 2(1) = 9.72$, $p = .002$. If the victim and perpetrator were separated, the likelihood of severe violence was 54% lower than if the victim and perpetrator were together, with an odds ratio of 0.47 (95% CI = [0.28, 0.76]), $\chi 2(1) = 9.26$, $p = .002$. Finally, the presence of issues regarding the perpetrator having contact with children was associated with a 56% decrease in the likelihood of severe violence, with an odds ratio of 0.44 (95% CI = [0.24, 0.80]), $\chi 2(1) = 7.15$, $p = .008$. Victim fear, the victim's belief that the perpetrator might kill the victim or themselves, drugs, alcohol, mental health, and threats were not significantly associated with violence severity.

Table 1. 2 *Parameter Estimates, Significance Levels, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Independent Variables and Stalking Violence Severity*

						95% CI	
	Est	SE	Wald	Sig	OR	Lower	Upper
Prior FV	-.82	.26	9.72	.002	.44	.27	.74
Fear	-.31	.30	1.02	.313	.74	.41	1.34
Kill victim belief	.23	.30	.57	.450	1.26	.69	2.28
Kill self belief	-.90	.52	2.96	.085	.41	.15	1.13
Injury belief	.71	.27	7.02	.008	2.03	1.20	3.44
Drugs	-.08	.24	.11	.740	.93	.58	1.47
Alcohol	.35	.24	2.21	.137	1.42	.89	2.27
Mental health issue	-.12	.25	.21	.643	.89	.54	1.46
Separated	-.77	.25	9.26	.002	.47	.28	.76
Previously hurt victim	.93	.30	9.90	.002	2.53	1.42	4.51
Child contact	-.82	.31	7.15	.008	.44	.24	.80
Jealous	.63	.24	6.94	.008	1.88	1.18	3.02
Threats	.26	.26	1.03	.311	1.30	.78	2.17
Strangulation	.60	.27	4.91	.027	1.82	1.07	3.08

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; FV = family violence.

2.4 Discussion

The principal aim of this study was to identify factors associated with higher severity violence in a sample of domestically violent intimate and ex-intimate partners where stalking had also been recorded. A number of significant associations were identified.

A significant association was found between the presence of jealousy and physical violence in the stalking sample, a finding consistent with previous research on stalking violence risk factors (Roberts, 2005). This finding further supports jealousy as a risk factor, as it was not only associated with stalking violence in general, but our study shows that jealousy was significantly associated with higher severity of physical violence. The results also showed that the victim's belief that the perpetrator would cause them injury and previous physical harm to the victim by the perpetrator were associated with higher severity physical violence.

Our finding of a significant association between previous non-fatal strangulation/attempt at strangulation and violence severity provides support for the consideration of a new factor for violence risk assessment in stalking situations. Strangulation has been described as a form of violence that is separate from most other forms of violence, due to the gendered nature, the display of coercive control/power over the victim, and potential for lethality and serious long-term health risks (Glass et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2014). Due to the often repetitive experience of strangulation and likelihood of increasing aggression and injury perpetrated by the abuser, strangulation may be the final violent indicator before death (McClane et al., 2001). Strangulation is often difficult to identify as symptoms may not appear until days after the attack, making it particularly difficult to identify by police officers who attend domestic violence callouts (Strack et al., 2001). These results highlight the importance of early detection, training, and accurate identifications of strangulation attempts, as the results of this research suggest that such attempts are associated with severely violent behaviour.

What is interesting is that an absence of prior FV was significantly correlated with higher severity violence, a finding that is consistent with James and Farnham's (2003) study. The finding is inconsistent with other studies that have found a positive correlation (Brewster, 2000) or no association at all (Rosenfeld, 2004); however, it is important to note that these studies treated violence as a homogenous construct.

James and Farnham (2003) have offered a logical explanation for these findings, noting that the perpetrators of severe violence in their sample tended to be socially integrated and engaged in sudden and severe attacks, whereas perpetrators of mild violence were less

socially integrated and engaged in habitual and repeated acts of mild violence. This may be explained by Schlesinger (2002) who described catathymic aggression as violence that is motivated by strong emotion and obsessive preoccupation, whereby a perpetrator engages in a violent act toward the victim following an "incubation" period. This is particularly relevant in the context of stalkers as stalking perpetrators are often fixated on their victim, coercively controlling, persistent, and emotionally fueled (Mullen et al., 2009; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). However, it is also important to consider the fact that a history of violence or a criminal record fails to differentiate between multiple incidents of violence toward the same victim and multiple incidents of violence that are each associated with a different victim. Perhaps the significant association between prior victim injury and severe violence highlights the importance of examining prior violence to a specific victim when seeking to determine that same victim's risk of harm, rather than focusing on general prior violence which may not have been perpetrated against that same victim.

Contrary to earlier works that have suggested separation as a risk factor for stalking behaviour and violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Kienlen, 1998; Melton, 2007), separation correlated negatively with violence severity in the present study. As suggested by Mechanic et al. (2000), physical violence may be more difficult to perpetrate as a result of being separated from the victim; however, typical stalking behaviours such as messaging and harassment via phone calls/social media are quite easy to accomplish. Although this study did not explore individual stalking behaviours, doing so may increase our understanding of why separation may be negatively correlated with violence severity. Furthermore, this analysis did not look at each individual perpetrator–victim dyad longitudinally. As previously mentioned, Schlesinger's (2002) notion of catathymic aggression may help explain these findings. Schlesinger (2002) suggests that a serious act of violence may be the result of the perpetrator attempting to resolve intense emotional anguish and psychological pain, which may be the result of failed attempts to restore a relationship, as well as the reversal of power from the perpetrator, to the victim. The nature of this analysis may only be examining early incidents, the severity of which may not be entirely captured unless a longitudinal strategy is employed. A longitudinal analysis would help establish whether the perpetrator engages in more severe aggression after multiple failed attempts to restore a relationship, testing the notion of catathymic aggression in this context.

Child contact is a factor that has not been explored in the context of intimate partner violence in stalking situations. The results of the present study indicate that child contact is significantly and negatively associated with violence severity. Although this is a new finding

and in need of further investigation, this significant association may be the reflection of the perpetrator experiencing some level of control, potentially alleviating the drive to engage in further controlling and harmful behaviours, such as violence. Similar to the negative association of separation, it may be that the contact with the child is what is keeping the relationship from being severed, which may be where the true danger and risk lie if the separation and feeling of power loss lead to serious aggression toward the victim. This finding should be interpreted with caution; if a perpetrator begins to realise over time that a relationship may be severed by the victim regardless of child contact, a catathymic type of aggression is a potential risk, as was discussed in the context of separation (Schlesinger, 2002). Consequently, child contact should be explored longitudinally to observe potential changes over time, particularly when there is an extended period of romantic separation between the perpetrator and the victim.

Variables such as fear, kill victim belief, kill self-belief, drug/alcohol use, and mental health were shown to have no significant association with violence severity. Research shows that women's perception of danger in the context of intimate partner violence is often underestimated, which may explain why the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them and fear were not significantly associated with higher severity incidents (Campbell, 2004). Furthermore, research also shows that within the context of domestic violence, victims are often reluctant to disclose the true nature of the severity of the violence to law enforcement agents, which may explain why fear and the belief that the perpetrator will kill the victim were not significant factors (Wolf et al., 2003). Like violence, fear itself is not a homogenous construct and may vary from being mildly scared to petrified. Descriptive statistics show that 74.3% of the victims in this study were fearful, yet 81% did not have any beliefs that the perpetrator would kill them. This suggests that the levels of fear may vary widely within this sample, supporting the idea that fear should be explored further, but not as a homogenous construct. These results may be further explained by works exploring coercive control in the context of domestic violence. Indeed, research shows that victims of coercively controlling perpetrators are often very fearful of the threats and other coercively controlling tactics used by the perpetrators rather than fear of the physical violence itself (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). This may help explain why fear was prevalent, but not significantly correlated with physical severity. The victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves was also not correlated with violence, although this variable relies on the report of the victim, which may not be aligned with the true ideation of the perpetrator. Research on mental health and substance abuse presents mixed conclusions regarding their relationship with stalking violence, and the

results of this study reflect the research that has previously identified no significant relationship between these factors (James & Farnham, 2003; Roberts, 2005).

Our understanding of stalking behaviour and the recognition of the seriousness of such offences are gradually increasing, as evidenced by changes in legislation and criminalisation of stalking behaviour. Police and justice records highlight the large amount of stalking-related incidents that officers are presented with, and the research has consistently demonstrated the potential harm that may occur with persistent and often violent stalking behaviours. The connections between a criminal, their victim, environment, actions, and personal factors cannot be simplified to a controlled laboratory setting. Consequently, the use of a data set that is created as the crime occurs in its natural environment, such as the data set utilised in this study, has the advantage of being employed to develop practical applications that will be useful to those professionals who work in the field. Canter (1996) posed the argument that naturalistic data were much more useful to a relevant practitioner who works with that kind of information on a daily basis, than tightly controlled laboratory data. Although there exist inconsistencies in the research regarding risk factors for stalking behaviour and violence, the current study helps to build upon existing literature on such risks and presents new factors for consideration, which have shown associations with serious violence among intimate and ex-intimate partners of stalkers. Finally, the nature of the police incident report sample means that the data may not be representative of stalking perpetrators and victims overall as these are likely to be biased towards more severe incidents that have been deemed to require police assistance.

2.4.1 Limitations

This research has some limitations. First, the data set consists of variables that are binary, which may silence the true effects of some variables. Factors such as mental health and fear may contain subcategories (e.g., disorder types) or may lie on a continuum (level of fear). Furthermore, the context in which the violence occurs, such as the motivation for the violence, was not explored in this study. It is recommended that further research be conducted with the expansion of these factors and inclusion of wider contextual variables. Second, the design of the study presents limitations upon the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Stalking research has shown that timing is an important factor in determining risk; however, the associations (both significant and nonsignificant) in this research must therefore be interpreted with caution as we cannot see the effects over time. The nature of the recording process is also important to consider. Although it is not practical for officers to ask

each victim a battery of questions upon arrival, it also means that the presence of various factors may go unnoticed, be missed, or simply not discussed by the victim and officer. The completion of the FVIR forms also involves some level of personal judgment and perception from the officers, and although officers are trained to recognise and respond to a variety of potential incidents where police presence is needed, officers are not specifically trained in stalking risk assessment.

2.4.2 Conclusion

The results of this study may be utilised pragmatically by officers to indicate which victims might benefit from being flagged, based on the presence of prior harm, absence of prior FV, separation, belief of future injury, perpetrator jealousy, child contact issues, and non-fatal strangulation. Although the findings of this work cannot be translated into a risk assessment as such, they may assist first responders in being able to recognise which victim/ perpetrator variables are indicative of a higher likelihood of severe violence. As a result, police resources may be utilised more effectively through the recognition of "red flag" indicators and may consequently prevent harm to victims. It also provides a starting point for further research into child contact, strangulation, and jealousy, as potential variables that might indicate the increase or decrease of risk for intimate partner violence in stalking samples. Future studies should further explore child contact and non-fatal strangulation in the context of stalking and domestic violence and consider adopting a longitudinal design to see the effects of these factors over time.

Note: The following chapter has been published in Criminal Justice and Behavior.

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Minor edits have been made to the present chapter to ensure consistency with the present thesis (e.g., Australian spelling, APA 7th referencing). The published article is presented in Appendix B.

Chapter 3 (Study 2): Non-fatal Strangulation in a Sample of Domestically Violent Stalkers: The Importance of Recognising Coercively Controlling Behaviours

3.1 Introduction

Strangulation in the context of domestic violence is an issue that has received increasing attention from scholars and law enforcement agencies over the last decade, though the existing research is not substantial (Armstrong & Strack, 2016; Pritchard et al., 2017; Strack et al., 2001). Studies have highlighted the importance of identifying victims of strangulation in intimate relationships due to the associated risk of long term negative health effects, as well as the increased likelihood of fatality (Pritchard et al., 2017). The act of strangulation itself is a way to exert power and control over the victim (Thomas et al., 2014). Such attempts to coercively control the victim are also exhibited by stalking perpetrators (Stark, 2013). Given that various dangerous coercively controlling behaviours are commonly seen in perpetrators who stalk their victims, it is interesting that non-fatal strangulation has not yet been explored in this population.

3.1.1 Non-fatal Strangulation

Strangulation is a type of mechanical asphyxia, in which the person is unable to breathe or where vascular occlusion occurs due to compression on the neck. Strangulation can result in numerous injuries varying in severity based on the force exerted, duration of restricted breathing or vascular occlusion, and the methods used (Funk & Schuppel, 2003; Iserson, 1984; Sauko & Knight, 2016). A mere four pounds of pressure are required to occlude the jugular vein, and 5-11 pounds of pressure are required for the occlusion of the carotid artery (Harle, 2017). The victim may lose consciousness after only 10-15 seconds, and death may occur within 3-5 minutes. This dangerous form of violence is gendered, with males typically being the perpetrators of the violence and females being the victims (Nemeth et al., 2012; Pritchard et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2014). The expanding research base on strangulation was initiated by a study of 300 non-fatal strangulation victims, conducted by Strack et al. (2001), which highlighted that 89% of the total sample had been victims of domestic violence. The findings indicated a strong connection between strangulation and domestic violence, precipitating further research into completed strangulation (resulting in death) and non-fatal strangulation (where the attack does not result in death). Furthermore, the authors suggested that the detection of strangulation is difficult, as half of the cases exhibited no visible injuries from the attack. It is perhaps because of this difficulty in detecting strangulation injuries, compared to other domestically violent injuries such as

bruising and lacerations from being hit, that non-fatal strangulation began to be empirically investigated only recently.

Wilbur et al. (2001) were the first to specifically explore strangulation within a domestic violence context. In this work, 68% of a sample of domestic violence victims (N = 62) reported experiencing non-fatal strangulation. Many of these victims had experienced multiple such attempts, with the average number reported as 5.3 (Wilbur et al., 2001). Research has since expanded the findings of Strack et al. (2001) and Wilbur et al. (2001), with a number of studies reporting a high prevalence of strangulation in domestic violence situations (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2014; Glass et al., 2008; Hawley et al., 2001; Joshi et al., 2012; Mcquown et al., 2016; Messing et al., 2018; Pritchard et al., 2018; Shields et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2001; Sorenson et al., 2014; Sutherland et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2014). The prevalence of non-fatal strangulation varies across studies, with rates ranging from 3-68%, depending on the nature of the sample, although research that relies on police reports tends to report lower prevalence (11.5%) of non-fatal strangulation, as described by Pritchard et al. (2018).

Strangulation is a painful experience (Turkel, 2010), and may cause immediate symptoms such as loss of consciousness and loss of sphincter control, however symptoms may appear days and even weeks afterwards, including bruises, brain injury, bleeding, stroke, difficulty swallowing, memory loss, and internal injuries that may result in death (Armstrong & Strack, 2016, Joshi et al., 2012; Scannel et al., 2017; Wilbur et al., 2001). The seriousness of non-fatal strangulation in the context of domestic violence has been further supported by studies that have shown a link between experiencing non-fatal strangulation during a domestically violent relationship, and an increased likelihood of intimate partner homicide (Campbell et al., 2007; Glass et al., 2008).

In a case-control study, Glass et al. (2008) explored non-fatal strangulation among homicide victims, attempted homicide victims, and abused controls. The study showed that the odds of homicide were seven times higher for victims who had previously been strangled by their abusive partner compared to victims who had not experienced non-fatal strangulation. Furthermore, the odds of attempted homicide were almost seven times higher if the victim had been strangled during the domestically violent relationship, compared to victims who had not been previously strangled (Glass et al., 2008). These findings show that victims of non-fatal strangulation are essentially treading on the edge of homicide, which is consistent with Wilbur et al.'s (2001) conclusion that non-fatal strangulation typically occurs towards the latter stages of a violent relationships. Indeed, it is the lack of visible injuries in

the majority of cases, as well as the high risk of fatality that makes non-fatal strangulation different to other forms of violence (Strack et al., 2001; Wilbur et al., 2001). Given that research has consistently demonstrated the occurrence of non-fatal strangulation in the context of domestic violence (see references above), and indicated that non-fatal strangulation is a significant risk factor for serious injury and homicide (Campbell et al., 2007; Glass et al., 2008; McFarlane et al., 1999; Strack et al., 2001), it is imperative that early warning behaviours and 'red flag' indicators are identified by adequately trained responders (i.e., police officers, ambulance officers), so that non-fatal strangulation is recognised even when physical injury is not visible.

3.1.2 Coercive Control

As already noted, non-fatal strangulation differs from other forms of violence in that it often leaves no physical signs of the attack, but it also differs from other forms of violence in the way that it is used to coercively control the victim (Thomas et al., 2014). Thomas et al. (2014) described coercive control as more than just a tactic, arguing that coercion and control provide information on the motive of the attack, and define the context of the intimate relationship. Coercion is the attempt to elicit or eliminate a desired response from the victim through the use of threats (both implicit and explicit) or force (Stark, 2007). Control on the other hand, is defined as "structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolising vital resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulating a partner's behaviour, limiting her options, and depriving her of supports needing to exercise independent judgements" (Stark, 2007, p. 229). Together, coercive control forms a condition of 'entrapment' (Stark, 2007, p. 205).

The current study utilises Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control, which suggest that coercive control is multifaceted, and involves behaviours such as isolation, intimidation, excessive monitoring, and threats. The model suggests that a coercively controlling perpetrator begins with sending the victim a message, which can be achieved through creating an expectation of negative consequences in the victim, exploiting their vulnerabilities, wearing down resistance, and by facilitating dependency. The perpetrator then monitors the victim and their activities to ensure compliance with any demands made (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Finally, the perpetrator instigates a negative consequence towards the victim (such as non-fatal strangulation) as a result of a previous threat, in order to make future threats credible and to ensure that such acts are effective in asserting compliance (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). In a case of non-fatal strangulation,

restricting blood flow and ability to breathe with relatively little force shows the victim the ease with which the perpetrator can take their breath away, giving credibility to future threats (Nemeth et al., 2012; Pritchard et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2014).

As coercive control aims to demonstrate a position of power, it is not surprising that coercive control often involves the use of death threats (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; New Zealand Law Commission, 2016; Stark, 2012). Indeed, more than half of the non-fatal strangulation victims interviewed in Thomas et al.'s (2014) study stated that death threats were a common feature of the controlling partner's behaviour. This is further supported by Wilbur et al.'s (2001) study, which showed that 87% of women who experienced strangulation were also experiencing death threats. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), this creates an expectancy for negative outcomes, which is made even more believable when the perpetrator has strangled the victim. By creating the expectancy for serious negative outcomes, it is likely that the perpetrator has created a significant fear of death and future harm within the victim (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2013). Indeed, a study by Stansfield and Williams (2018) found a link between death threats and ongoing non-fatal strangulation in a sample of intimately violent offenders.

The current study expands on the limited prior works that have explored coercive control in intimate partner settings by including a range of coercively controlling behaviours within a single study. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), another coercively controlling behaviour that is often seen in intimate relationships is isolation of the victim from friends and family. This is often done with the intention to exploit the victim's vulnerabilities and limit opportunities for the victim to seek help, which further assists in coercively controlling the victim (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark 2012b; Tahna et al., 2010). Research by Thomas et al., (2014) supported Dutton and Goodman's (2005) notion that isolation is indeed a form of coercive control, with the majority of victims stating that the perpetrator would often forbid the victim from leaving the house and would constantly monitor the victim to ensure compliance with demands. Finally, morbid jealousy, which is a hypersensitive form of normal jealousy resulting in strong and emotional and behavioural reactions, has also been used as a trigger for coercive force by domestically violent offenders (Nemeth et al., 2012). It is often seen in conjunction with isolating the victim socially to prevent them from communicating with family and other men/women, as well as threatening the victim when the perpetrator's fear of infidelity triggers the morbid jealousy (Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; Nemeth et al., 2012; Nicolaidis et al., 2003). Although this is not specifically mentioned in Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model, morbid jealousy has been deemed as

important in understanding coercive control as it may be a trigger for behaviours such as limiting the victim's freedom through constant monitoring and isolation, in order to prevent infidelity and consequently prevent victim from leaving (Easton & Shackelford, 2009; Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; Nemeth et al., 2012). Given the similarity between coercively controlling behaviours and stalking, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of these coercive control tactics are utilised by stalkers.

3.1.3 Coercive Control in Stalking Situations

Stalking is defined as a behaviour in which a person repeatedly contacts, follows, or intrudes on a victim, leading to the victim feeling fear or distress as a result of the repetitive intrusions (McEwan et al., 2009). The relationship between stalking and domestic violence is well established in the literature (Davis et al., 2000; Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009; Logan et al., 2000; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007; Norris et al., 2011; Roberts, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Woodlock, 2017), with intimate or ex intimate partners being at a significantly higher risk of experiencing stalking than family, strangers, or acquaintances (James & Farnham, 2003; Resnick, 2007; Rosenfeld, 2004; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). In a study by Tjaden and Thoennes (1998), it was reported that 80% of stalking victims who reported being stalked by their partner were also physically assaulted by the same partner.

Violence in stalking situations often involves minor to moderate physical attacks such as punching and kicking (McEwan et al., 2009; Mullen et al., 2000), however in some cases it can involve serious acts of violence, and even homicide (James & Farnham, 2003; McFarlane et al., 1999; McFarlane et al., 2002). Stalking may encompass a number of different behaviours, including sending unwanted gifts, repeated communications, loitering, constant surveillance (Purcell et al., 2010). These behaviours are often used as a form of coercive control, in which the perpetrator prevents physical separation from the victim, creating a sense of omnipresence (Stark, 2013). The constant surveillance makes it difficult for the victim to seek help or engage with support systems, particularly when the stalking offender has threatened the victim with death; it also ensures a sense of intimidation and fear within the victim (Stark, 2013). Like strangulation, stalking behaviour can be used as a form of coercive control (Davis et al., 2000). The current study focuses on a population of intimately violent perpetrators who have engaged in stalking of the victim. This is because stalkers are likely to exhibit other coercively controlling behaviours, which may assist researchers in

understanding how such behaviours link with the highly dangerous experience of non-fatal strangulation.

Given the minimal force needed to strangle a victim, and the lack of visible or photographable injuries in the majority of cases, perpetrators use this form of violence as they know they are not likely to get caught (Farr, 2002). This means that police officers and medical personnel need adequate training to notice any signs of strangulation. Furthermore, first responders need to be aware of the behaviours that are related to such serious forms of violence, as the physical evidence is not reliable. As such, prevention strategies of serious harm to victims of non-fatal strangulation may be significantly improved if there is a lower reliance on identification of visible injury, and more attention is paid to the presence of other coercively controlling behaviours that may pose a 'red flag' for potentially serious and permanent injury to the victim. The findings may also assist in forming recommendations that may be useful for first responders in recognising victims and perpetrators of this potentially lethal form of violence, with the intention of identifying those at high risk of serious harm and permanent injury, even death.

3.1.4 The Current Study

In summary, coercive control is multifaceted and comprises a number of different behavioural and psychological factors, such as threats, isolation, morbid jealousy, victim fear, expectancy for negative outcomes, and non-fatal strangulation. The current study aims to expand on prior work such as Stansfield and Williams (2018) by including a wide range of variables to capture the multifaceted behaviour of coercive control. Given that non-fatal strangulation has a high risk of serious injury and death, the aim of this research is to explore the link between victims having experienced non-fatal strangulation, and the presence of other coercively controlling behaviours among perpetrators. The study focuses on domestically violent reports where stalking was indicated, as the presence of other coercively controlling behaviours is often seen among this population (Davis et al., 2001; Stark, 2013). Specifically, it is hypothesised that the presence of jealousy, isolation, threats, victim beliefs that perpetrator will kill them (expectancy for negative outcomes), victim fear, and victim/police identification of the presence of coercive control will be related to a higher likelihood of having experienced non-fatal strangulation.

3.2 Method

The study is based on a dataset provided by the Western Australia Police Force. The dataset consists of Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIRs) that were collected from

18/08/2013 (the date at which current FVIR recording procedures began) to 24/08/2017 across Perth, Western Australia.

3.2.1 Sample

In order to explore non-fatal strangulation within a sample of stalkers, the dataset comprises domestically violent incident reports that indicated the presence of stalking behaviour by the perpetrator, towards the victim, at the time of the reported incident. According to section 338E of the Western Australian Criminal Code, stalking behaviour is defined as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person. Over the four year period covered, a total of 13,768 FVIRs with an indication of stalking behaviour were documented. The sample was reduced to 9,884 incident reports after deletion of multiple reports pertaining to matching offender-victim dyads. The final dataset contained 8,954 different perpetrators, including five cases where no perpetrator ID was recorded due to the lack of sufficient personal information available to identify a particular person as an offender. Of the final sample of 9,884 reports, 6,157 (62.3%) reported the perpetrator as being a male, and 3,539 (35.8%) reported the perpetrator as being a female, with 188 (1.9%) reports containing no identification of gender.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Police officers in the Western Australia Police Force complete a FVIR when called to a domestic disturbance. These reports are completed using a combination of observation, victim statements, perpetrator statements, and third party statements. The FVIRs consist of information relating to the incident itself (e.g., if weapons were used), information relating to the victim (e.g., was victim frightened), information relating to the perpetrator (e.g., was the perpetrator under the influence of alcohol), and information on the date and time of the incident. As coercive control is still developing conceptually and there is no standard approach to operationalisation (Hardesty et al., 2015), we have decided to utilise Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control to theoretically inform the chosen variables for the study. The variables from the FVIR that are used in this analysis indicate whether the officer or victim believed that the perpetrator was coercively controlling the victim (coercive control), whether the victim was frightened at the time (fear), whether the victim held the belief that the perpetrator would kill them (kill victim belief), whether the perpetrator was excessively jealous (jealousy), whether the victim was isolated from friends and family (isolation), whether the perpetrator had threatened to kill or hurt the victim (threats), and finally, whether the perpetrator had ever attempted to strangle the victim (non-fatal

strangulation). Each of these variables is a dichotomous variable, indicating whether the factor was recorded in each case.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

Multicollinearity among the variables was assessed using the Phi-coefficient. All correlations were below .6 and not deemed problematic given that some level of correlation is expected among the theoretically bound independent variables (Berry & Feldman, 1985). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the presence of each independent variable in cases where the victim reported non-fatal strangulation, and cases where the victim did not report non-fatal strangulation. These frequencies were summarised as percentages. A binomial logistic regression was used to examine associations between non-fatal strangulation and coercive control, jealousy, threats, kill victim belief, isolation, and fear. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.

Missing data

The FVIR reports used by Western Australia Police Force contain a number of variables which help to describe the nature of the incident, the victim, and the perpetrator. Though most fields are mandatory and require a response of Y = present, N = not present, or U = unknown or not asked, officers do not read out each variable to the victim in the style of an interview as this is not practical. Instead, FVIRs are completed based on a mixture of questions asked by the officer, narratives provided by the victim, perpetrator and/or other witnesses, as well as police officer observations. This means that some variables may be left blank as there may be no clear indication of presence of a variable based on narratives, police observations, or police questions. As a result, the dataset was collapsed into “clear presence” of a variable, in which officers clearly indicated a “Y” response, and “unclear presence” of a variable, in which officers either indicated “N”, “U”, or left the field blank.

3.3 Results

A total of 9,884 stalking FVIRs were analyzed, with 16.6% (N = 1,638) indicating that the victim had experienced non-fatal strangulation. A descriptive summary of the frequencies of reported presence of jealousy, coercive control, isolation, victim fear, threats, victim belief that the perpetrator will kill them and perpetrator gender among victims who had and had not experienced non-fatal strangulation can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2. 1 *Descriptive Summary for the Sample (N =9,884) and Prevalence of Non-Fatal Strangulation*

	All (*N* = 9,884)		NFS = yes (*N* = 1,638)		NFS = no (*N* = 8,246)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Perpetrator Gender						
Male	6157	62.3	1008	61.5	5149	62.4
Female	3539	35.8	601	36.7	2938	35.6
Coercive Control						
Yes	4304	43.5	1208	73.7	3096	37.5
No	5580	56.5	430	26.3	5150	62.5
Jealousy						
Yes	4956	50.1	1235	75.4	3721	45.1
No	4928	49.9	403	24.6	4525	54.9
Threats						
Yes	4771	48.3	1327	81.0	3444	41.6
No	5113	51.7	311	19.0	4802	58.2
Isolation						
Yes	1363	13.8	372	22.7	991	12.0
No	8521	86.2	1266	77.3	7255	88.0
Fear						
Yes	6777	68.6	1428	87.2	5439	64.9
No	3107	31.4	210	12.8	2897	35.1
Kill victim belief						
Yes	1461	14.8	587	35.8	874	10.6
No	8423	85.2	1051	64.2	7372	89.4

3.3.1 Binomial Logistic Regression

A binomial logistic regression was conducted to ascertain the effects of reported coercive control, victim isolation, perpetrator jealousy, victim fear, victim beliefs, and threats towards victims on the likelihood of reporting having experienced non-fatal strangulation, controlling for gender. The model was found to be significant, $\chi^2(7) = 1577.30$, $p < .001$. The model explained 25.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in non-fatal strangulation, and correctly classified 84.0% of cases. The results of the binomial regression revealed that each of the six independent variables were statistically significant (see Table 2.2). Gender was also significantly related to non-fatal strangulation with female perpetrators being associated with a higher likelihood of non-fatal strangulation, although the odds were only marginally higher (odds ratio [OR] = 1.18, 95% CI = [1.04, 1.33], $p = .010$). The odds of victims reporting non-fatal strangulation were 2.32 times greater when the perpetrator was coercively controlling (95% Confidence Interval [CI] = [2.00, 2.68], $p < .001$), compared to when perpetrators were not coercively controlling. The likelihood of reporting non-fatal strangulation was also higher when the perpetrator was excessively jealous (OR = 1.80, 95% CI = [1.55, 2.09], $p < .001$), compared to cases where excessive jealousy was not indicated. When comparing victims who had experienced threats from the perpetrator to victims who had not, results showed that reports of non-fatal strangulation were 3.37 times more likely when threats towards the victim were indicated (95% CI = [2.92, 3.89], $p < .001$). Reports of non-fatal strangulation were 1.34 times more likely when the victim had been isolated from friends and family, compared to when victims were not isolated (95% CI = [1.15, 1.56], $p < .001$). Finally, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them (OR = 2.00, 95% CI = [1.74, 2.30], $p < .001$), as well as victim fear (OR = 1.71, 95% CI = [1.45, 2.03], $p < .001$), were associated with significantly higher likelihood of reporting non-fatal strangulation.

Table 2. 2 *Logistic Regression Predicting Non-Fatal Strangulation (N = 9,884)*

						95% CI	
	Est	SE	Wald	p-value	OR	Lower	Upper
Perpetrator Gender	.16	.06	6.69	.010	1.18	1.04	1.33
Coercive Control	.84	.08	125.60	<.001	2.32	2.00	2.68
Jealousy	.59	.08	59.73	<.001	1.80	1.55	2.09
Threats	1.21	.07	274.45	<.001	3.37	2.92	3.89
Isolation	.29	.08	14.51	<.001	1.34	1.15	1.56
Fear	.54	.09	39.35	<.001	1.71	1.45	2.03
Kill victim belief	.70	.07	95.92	<.001	2.00	1.74	2.30

3.4 Discussion

Using a police dataset consisting of 9,884 domestic incidents where stalking behaviour was indicated, the current study found that the victim reported previous non-fatal strangulation in 16.6% of these incidents (N = 1,638), a figure similar to other research based on police data (Pritchard et al., 2018). The prevalence of non-fatal strangulation among intimate partners varies within the research, often depending on the nature of the sample. A meta-analysis by Sorenson et al. (2014) specifically explored non-fatal strangulation among intimate partners, and found that the lifetime prevalence of non-fatal strangulation was between 3.0 and 9.7%. However, the prevalence of non-fatal strangulation tends to be much higher, around 68%, when the sample consists of women who have survived intimate partner violence (Messing et al., 2018; Wilbur, 2001). Research relying on police identification of non-fatal strangulation report much lower (11.5%) rates of non-fatal strangulation (Pritchard et al., 2018). As the sample in the current study is not restricted to individuals who have survived intimate partner violence, but rather domestic incidents in general, it was expected that the rate of non-fatal strangulation would be lower. Given that the sample in the current study includes only domestic incidents where stalking was also recorded, the higher rate of strangulation compared to Pritchard et al.'s (2018) study may be due to the overlap of coercive control in stalking behaviour, and strangulation attacks. Consequently, it is possible that the sample in this study are more coercively controlling in nature compared to samples that are not restricted to stalking situations.

In line with the conclusions of Pritchard et al., (2018), the generally low prevalence of non-fatal strangulation seen in the current study and in Pritchard et al.'s (2018) research suggests that police officers may be overlooking incidents of strangulation among intimate partners. Given that visible injury is only seen in approximately half of strangulation cases, it seems plausible that officers may not be correctly identifying all non-fatal strangulation attacks. As the non-fatal strangulation data of this study was often collected by asking the victim verbatim whether they had experienced non-fatal strangulation, it may be that the victim did not always understand the question, or perhaps was reluctant to disclose such information to the officer at the scene due to the coercively controlling nature of strangulation perpetrators, with victims likely to be fearful and potentially experiencing threats from the perpetrator (Armstrong & Strack, 2016; Davis et al., 2000; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Nemeth et al., 2012; Stark, 2013; Thomas et al., 2014). Indeed, interviews with strangulation survivors indicated that victims felt a sense of betrayal by their intimate

partners, which resulted in the victim feeling they could not trust people in general, and consequently developing a pervasive fear throughout their daily lives (Vella et al., 2017).

Though little research has explored coercively controlling behaviours and non-fatal strangulation in conjunction, studies suggest that non-fatal strangulation is related to coercively controlling behaviours (Thomas et al., 2014). The results of this research support this notion, with incidents of non-fatal strangulation being more likely to occur when the victim reported the perpetrator as coercively controlling, compared to victims who did not report coercive control. Dutton and Goodman (2005) explained that coercive control is not necessarily a single and distinct construct, but rather a subset of potential behaviours that may entail the overall experience of coercive control. In order to understand coercive control with more rigor, excessive jealousy, threats of death, victim fear, victim isolation, and victim belief that perpetrator will kill them, were also explored in this analysis. Each of the six variables were significantly associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing non-fatal strangulation, indicating that coercive controlling behaviours are related to non-fatal strangulation. The highest likelihood of non-fatal strangulation was associated with presence of death threats towards the victim, with threatened victims being more than three times more likely to experience non-fatal strangulation in their intimate relationship. The association of these coercively controlling behaviours with non-fatal strangulation is consistent with findings from the few studies that have explored coercive control in strangulation cases (Thomas et al., 2014). This finding suggests that perpetrators who non-fatally strangle their victims also tend to exhibit coercively controlling behaviours, and supports the notion that the strangulation attack is a display of power over the victim and a method of conveying the seriousness of threats. Understanding the behaviour and motivation of those who strangle victims may help in accurate identification of high risk cases, with less reliance on visible injury.

As there currently exists no literature exploring non-fatal strangulation and coercive control in a sample of stalking situations, this is the first study to highlight the prevalence of non-fatal strangulation in a police dataset of domestically violent stalking situations. Prior works suggest that stalking is a form of coercive control, whereby the omnipresence of the perpetrator can result in difficulty seeking external support, particularly when stalking is accompanied with threats of death if attempts are made to make contact with supports (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). The current study shows that non-fatal strangulation was reported in 16.6% of incidents where stalking was also reported, a figure that is higher than percentages from previous research that has explored this distinctive form of violence in a

general sample of intimate partner violence records (Pritchard et al., 2018). It also shows that aspects of coercive control often seen in stalking situations such as death threats, isolation, jealousy, victim fear, and victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them, are significantly associated with an increased likelihood of having experienced the coercively controlling act of non-fatal strangulation. These conclusions further emphasise the necessity of appropriately trained officers who are able to recognise coercively controlling partners, as victims often may not exhibit visible injury, and may be reluctant to disclose information about non-fatal strangulation experiences due to fear and the controlling nature of the perpetrator.

3.4.1 Limitations

The current study recognises a number of limitations. Firstly, the conclusions are not generalisable to all victims of non-fatal strangulation as the sample consists of domestic incidents in which stalking was indicated. It is also likely that the sample contains false negatives of non-fatal strangulation due to the difficulty in detecting non-fatal strangulation for reasons such as lack of visible injury, and because not all victims of non-fatal strangulation call the police. The true prevalence of non-fatal strangulation in this dataset is therefore likely to be higher than what is reported. Furthermore, the reported prevalence does not represent the prevalence of non-fatal strangulation in cases of intimate partner violence, as the dataset is limited to stalking situations. However, the study does provide useful information about police-identified and/or victim reported non-fatal strangulation in domestic incidents where stalking was also indicated. As the completion of the FVIRs does not involve reading out each individual component verbatim, it may be that some behaviours related to the perpetrator, victim, or incident, may be missed.

3.4.2 Conclusions

Non-fatal strangulation has been described as walking on the edge of homicide (Strack & Gwinn, 2011), and is known to have severe effects on both the physical and mental health of the victim (Glass et al., 2008). The results of this research study show that victims are often threatened with death, isolated from social supports, and are fearful, which suggests that victims are unlikely to disclose attacks of non-fatal strangulation due to the coercively controlling nature of the perpetrator. As a result, first responders should not rely on victim disclosure, but rather, be able to recognise a victim who is involved with a coercively controlling partner, and take appropriate action to provide any available assistance to the victim at significant risk of non-fatal strangulation without waiting for an active confirmation of this violent act. These victims should be flagged and monitored by police officers, as

stalking and isolation may prevent the victim from being able to access appropriate resources. The recognition and elimination of this distinctive and dangerous form of violence may improve, and save lives of numerous victims. It is important to note that although training is important, without adequate laws in place, police officers are limited in their ability to help victims and charge offenders. The current study highlighted the extent of coercively controlling behaviours seen in cases of non-fatal strangulation. Indeed, the current study provides support for the multifaceted nature of coercive control, in line with Dutton and Goodman's (2005) theory.

Coercive control was recognised as a specific criminal offence in England and Wales in 2015, and psychological abuse has been recognised as a criminal offence in France since 2010 (McMahon & McGorrery, 2016). However, in parts of Australia and the U.S., coercively controlling behaviours have not been criminalised. Although no discrete law against coercive controlling behaviours exists in Western Australia, non-fatal strangulation is acknowledged as a distinct criminal offence in Queensland and New Zealand, separate from other forms of assault. Given that current domestic violence laws in Australia and the U.S. target discrete and usually physical assaults, police interventions aimed to assist victims who are oppressed by coercively controlling partners are very limited. Introduction of relevant legislation making non-fatal strangulation and other coercively controlling behaviours a criminal offence would be a step towards acknowledging the seriousness of these acts, and would perhaps encourage victims to seek help and feel protected with the knowledge that the perpetrator may be held accountable.

Chapter 4 (Study 3): Stalking and Other Elements of Coercive Control Among Separated and Non-Separated Victim-Perpetrator Dyads

4.1 Introduction

Perpetrators of stalking have been known to target strangers, acquaintances, and public figures. The most likely victim of stalking, however, is an ex-intimate partner (e.g. Breiding et al., 2020; McEwan et al., 2017; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Stalking is markedly different from other types of criminal behaviour due to the often innocuous nature of individual stalking behaviours, the persistent nature of stalking, and finally, due to stalking encompassing a number of behaviours rather than a specific and singular crime (Ferreira et al., 2018; James & MacKenzie, 2017; Owens, 2016). The ongoing, unwanted, and often increasingly severe and intimidating behaviours can result in serious psychological as well as physical harm to the victim (Korkodeilou, 2017; Matos et al., 2019). Despite the disturbing relationship, the prevalence of serious physical violence in stalking situations appears to be low, and non-physical methods of abuse like coercive control may be more likely to occur. Research has however tended to focus more on the physical risks of stalking, despite evidence to show that non-physical abuse such as coercive control has equally lasting and severe negative effects on the victim's mental health (Stark & Hester, 2019). To understand the risks that stalking victims are faced with, it is important to delve beyond the less common physical acts of violence, and explore the more common, yet equally damaging coercively controlling abuse that is perpetrated by those who stalk.

Stalking is remarkable for its variety of incessant behaviours that often continue long after the cessation of a relationship. This repetitive and persistent group of behaviours are conducted with the aim of asserting some level of control over the victim and/or relationship. Consequently, stalking itself is considered to be an element of coercive control, and a variety of other controlling behaviours are frequently evident in stalking situations. Therefore, the importance of understanding coercive control among stalkers is clear.

4.1.1 Coercive Control and Stalking

Thomas et al. (2014) describe coercive control as an attempt to elicit a desired response and obedience from a victim through the utilisation of threats and other strategies. Though a universally agreed upon definition of coercive control does not exist, researchers posit that coercive control encompasses a myriad of behaviours and strategies that seek to exert power over a victim (Hamberger et al., 2017). Indeed, Dutton (1992) explained that the impact of such psychological abuse endures beyond visible symptoms like anxiety, as it

problematically transforms the survivor's thinking and perception, including their view of violence, of the self and their view of others. As such, the enduring nature of coercive control is sometimes considered as equally or more harmful to a victim than 'short-lived' crimes (Crossman et al., 2016; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996; Stark & Hester, 2019) and has been described as being comparable to torture, suggesting the importance of recognising, preventing, and criminalising the behaviour (McMahon & McGorrery, 2016). Coercive control is a phenomenon that is often very difficult to observe. The prevalence of coercive control is difficult to determine, and studies show considerable variations in rates depending on the way that coercive control is defined, ranging from 12.1%-43% (Augustyn et al., 2019; Black et al., 2011; Carney & Barner, 2012; Coker et al., 2002).

Dutton and Goodman (2005) suggest that coercive control is a multifaceted approach of asserting dominance over a victim. The authors suggest that perpetrators create an expectation of negative events for the victim by facilitating dependency on the perpetrator and exploiting the victim's vulnerabilities. Next, the perpetrator keeps regular surveillance on the victim in order to ensure that the victim is complying with the perpetrator's demands. This is demonstrated often in stalking situations, where perpetrators will monitor their victims in order to check what they are doing, where they are going, and who they are speaking to. Negative consequences, such as punishments, are instigated towards the victim when demands are not met, or not met to the perpetrators' standards. This is often seen in the form of threats/intimidation made by stalking perpetrators towards the victim. Furthermore, the perpetrator wears down the resistance of the victim by limiting resources that would otherwise facilitate resistance and independence, such as social/emotional supports. Victims are often isolated from their friends and family (Myhill & Hohl, 2019; Stark, 2007), and often such isolation tactics occur alongside a perpetrator's morbid jealousy and fear of infidelity (Nemeth et al., 2012). Indeed, such hypersensitive forms of jealousy often act as triggers for increased surveillance of the victim, and further isolation from others (Easton & Shackelford, 2009; Gage & Hutchinson, 2006). Perpetrators often create a sense of omnipresence through constant surveillance of the victim and other stalking behaviours, which makes it increasingly more difficult for the victim to reach out to supports and seek help (Stark, 2013). Obsessive stalking behaviours are often seen as one of the methods employed by perpetrators as a way of retaining control of an existing relationship, and perhaps more so, to *re-claim* control of the relationship and the victim after the cessation of a relationship (Harris, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2004).

Victims are typically left feeling both helpless and fearful. This state of fear and arousal could also help explain the difficulty that victims face in leaving relationships where coercive control is present. As research has shown, the separation from a relationship is seemingly only a portion of the battle that a victim faces, as it is known that control tactics, harassment and ongoing intrusive behaviours often continue after the victim has parted from the perpetrator (Crossman et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2000; Elizabeth, 2017; Humphreys & Thiara, 2003; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013).

4.1.2 Separation

Acts of coercive control, including stalking tactics, are typically conducted with the aim of exerting power over the victim, and preventing the severance of a relationship. This endeavor for power has been known to continue even *after* the cessation of a relationship as a way of attempting to make the victim return to the relationship, or to simply prevent the victim from being able to engage in another relationship (Brownridge et al., 2008; Lammers et al., 2005; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Zeoli et al., 2013). Despite evidence for continued attempts at coercive control, some studies suggest that victims are less isolated and more supported following separation from a coercively controlling relationship, leading to increased wellbeing (Broughton & Ford-Gilboe, 2017; Sharp-Jeffs et al., 2018). Though the risk of violence after separation is not a new topic in research, many studies have failed to differentiate between the different types of violence (Stark, 2007), and the research exploring coercive control before/after a relationship remains limited and inconsistent.

Little is known about coercively controlling tactics that are not physically violent within the context of intimate relationships, and following separation from an intimate relationship. In a study by Crossman et al. (2016), victims reported a variety of coercively controlling behaviours such as isolation, threats, fear, and unwanted contact both before separation from the controlling relationship, but also after separation. The most commonly reported component behaviour of coercive control was using the couples' children to gain access to the victim. This is consistent with other studies that have also found evidence of perpetrators using children to access the victim (e.g. custody arrangements), and it is therefore suggested as an opportunity for perpetrators to minimise separation and continue the abuse of the victim (Douglas, 2018; Harrison, 2008). The loss of opportunity to engage in previously utilised methods of coercive control means that perpetrators will often expand their repertoire of coercive control tactics following separation from a relationship (Douglas, 2018).

The research on non-physical coercively controlling tactics during and after an intimate relationship is limited and in need of further exploration. Furthermore, no studies have directly compared coercive control factors among separated and non-separated victim-perpetrator dyads in the context of stalking. We include a variety of factors, which in combination, help constitute a more thorough operationalisation of coercive control. Among these is child contact, which has received little attention in the coercive control and stalking literature.

4.1.3 The Current Study

Research has shown that stalking victimisation is associated with an increased risk of physical and non-physical violence, particularly among intimate/ex-intimate partners. Given that the lack of access to the victim following separation from an intimate relationship poses a decreased likelihood of physically violent acts, stalking perpetrators often engage in coercively controlling tactics to try to exert power over the victim and to impede separation. The research exploring coercive control before and after separation is limited, though some evidence suggests that increased separation from a coercively controlling perpetrator is related to increased psychological wellbeing and connection to supports (Broughton & Ford-Gilboe, 2017), whilst other research shows increased fear and continuance of coercively controlling tactics following separation (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Zeoli et al., 2013). The current study aims to expand on previous works that have explored coercive control among intimate/ex-intimate partners, and to increase the limited understanding of coercive control during and after an intimate relationship. This study utilises a large sample of family violence incident police reports where stalking was indicated, as stalkers are known to exhibit a variety of coercively controlling tactics towards victims. There are many elements to coercive control, and though it is difficult to operationalise concretely, we have included a combination of variables that constitute coercive control to enhance understanding of this construct as a whole and its individual elements. Given the gendered nature of coercive control, we have included gender as a control variable in this study. This study therefore explores the presence of factors indicating coercive control (reported coercive control, victim fear, victim isolation, victim's belief they will be killed by the perpetrator, child contact issues, and perpetrator jealousy) among romantically separated and non-separated stalker-victim dyads.

4.2 Method

The study is based on a dataset provided by the Western Australia Police Force (WAPol). The dataset consists of Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIRs) that were collected from 18/08/2013 (the date at which current FVIR recording procedures began) to 24/08/2017 across Western Australia.

4.2.1 Sample

The sample in this study comprises a diverse range of perpetrators and victims, the inclusion of which was not restricted by age, gender, or ethnicity. The original sample of domestically violent incident reports contained a total of 13,768 reports, each of which indicated that the perpetrator exhibited stalking behaviour towards the victim. This was measured using a binary stalking variable whereby "Y" indicated presence of stalking. The Western Australian Criminal Code defines stalking as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate (Section 338E). In order to avoid repeat dyads from appearing in the dataset, cases where multiple reports were assigned to a specific victim-perpetrator dyad were deleted, leaving a total of 9,884 reports. Only the most recent report was retained in the dataset as these contain updated information about the incident and perpetrator/victim factors. A further 1,289 reports were removed from the dataset as they were missing information about the gender of either the victim, the perpetrator, or both. For the purpose of investigating the presence of various components of coercive control among separated and non-separated dyads, a final sample of 8,595 FVIRs was analyzed.

4.2.2 Dataset Procedures

FVIRs are created by police officers following attendance of a domestic disturbance. These reports contain information relating to the victim, the perpetrator, and the domestic disturbance itself. The dataset was deidentified by the WAPol, leaving only a unique identification number for each perpetrator and each victim. These unique identification numbers allowed the researchers to determine which dyads were connected to multiple reports.

The FVIRs contained numerical information about the length of time since separation at the time of the report. The length of time was recorded using a numerical figure, and specification of a time category (e.g. hours, days, weeks, months, years). For the purpose of the analysis, reports that recorded <24 hours were rounded to one day. The separation length of time was then converted to months.

Variables

The variables chosen for analysis in this study were informed by Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control. To date, a standard approach to operationalising coercive control does not exist (Hardesty et al., 2015), hence the variables included in this analysis were based on prior research and a theoretical understanding of the components of coercive control. The independent variable in this study is a binary variable indicating the presence or absence of relational separation between the victim perpetrator dyad. The gender of the victim and perpetrator is also included as a control variable. This control variable was coded into four categories for the purpose of analysis: female victim/male perpetrator, male victim/female perpetrator, female victim/female perpetrator, and male victim/male perpetrator. Dyads with missing gender information were not included in the analysis.

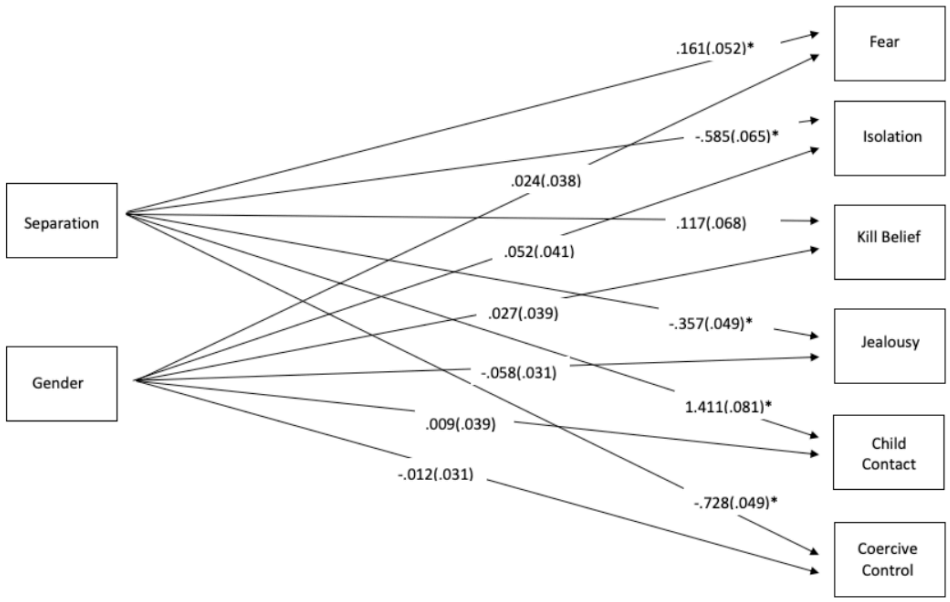
Six dichotomous outcome variables were included in this study, which indicated the presence or absence of each variable at the time of the incident report. These included: issues with child contact, morbid jealousy on behalf of the perpetrator, a coercively controlling nature of the perpetrator, victim fear, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them, and victim isolation from support networks.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

To test for multicollinearity among the variables, tetrachoric correlations were calculated. Correlations among the variables were all below .85, and therefore the removal of variables was not deemed necessary (Kline, 2005). In order to explore the effect of separation on the likelihood of reported child contact issues, jealousy, fear, isolation, coercive control and victim beliefs, a path model was tested using Mplus version 8 software (see Figure 1; Muthen & Muthen, 2019).

In addition to the analysis of the effects of separation, a Cox Proportional Hazards model (i.e. survival analysis) was conducted for each of the six outcome variables to determine how long after separation these reports are being recorded. This analysis indicates the amount of time until an 'event' occurs, accounting for variance in observation periods and cases where the event did not occur (Berwick et al., 2004). The percentages of victims reporting the presence of the six outcome variables in separated and non-separated dyads are reported.

Figure 1



Note. * $p < .01$

4.3 Results

In the final dataset ($N = 8,595$) 72.8% of reports indicated that the victim and perpetrator were separated at the time of the report ($N = 6,255$). 88.5% of the reports indicated the presence of at least one of the six elements of coercive control included in this study ($N = 7,606$). The mean time since separation for those dyads which were separated was 10.64 months and ranged from one day to 358.62 months (SD = 21.31, median = 4). 27.2% of perpetrator dyads did not indicate that they were separated at the time of the report ($N =$ 2,340). The sample included 1,071 (12.46%) male victims and 7,524 (87.54%) female victims. There were 5,419 (63.04%) recorded male perpetrators and 3,176 (36.95%) female perpetrators. For a summary of descriptive statistics, including frequencies of victim/perpetrator dyads, please see Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1 *Descriptive Statistics of Reported Coercive Control, Jealousy, Isolation, Kill Belief, Child Contact, and Fear Among Separated and Non-Separated Dyads*

	All (N = 8595)		Separated (N = 6255)		Non-Separated (N = 2340)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Dyad Genders						
V = Female P = Male	4781	55.6	3489	55.8	1292	55.2
V = Female P = Female	2743	31.9	2012	32.2	731	31.2
V = Male P = Female	433	5.0	312	5.0	121	5.2
V = Male P = Male	638	7.4	442	7.1	196	8.4
Fear						
Yes	6032	70.2	4448	71.1	1584	67.7
No	2563	29.8	1807	28.9	756	32.3
Kill Belief						
Yes	1359	15.8	1015	16.2	344	14.7
No	7236	84.2	5240	83.8	1996	85.3
Isolation						
Yes	1193	13.9	739	11.8	454	19.4
No	7402	86.1	5516	88.2	1886	80.6
Child Contact						
Yes	1869	21.7	1677	26.8	192	8.2
No	6726	78.3	4578	73.2	2148	91.8
Coercive Control						
Yes	3805	44.3	2463	39.4	1342	57.4
No	4790	55.7	3792	60.6	998	42.6
Jealousy						
Yes	4387	51.0	3042	48.6	1345	57.5
No	4208	49.0	3213	51.4	995	42.5

4.3.1 Path Analysis

A path analysis of the multivariate model was analyzed to determine the effects of separation on reported coercive control, victim isolation, perpetrator jealousy, victim fear, victim beliefs, and child contact issues. The results indicate that separation among victim perpetrator dyads was able to predict various reported outcomes, after controlling for the effects of gender.

The results of the analysis revealed that separation between the victim-perpetrator dyad was able to significantly predict victim fear, isolation, child contact issues, jealousy and coercive control, after controlling for gender (see Table 3.2). Separation did not significantly predict the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them.

The likelihood of fear being reported within a FVIR, as indicated by the odds ratio (OR) was 1.18 times more likely when the victim was separated from the perpetrator (95% Confidence Interval [CI] = [1.06, 1.30], $p = .004$). The presence of separation between the dyad was also significantly related to reported isolation from supports, as experienced by the victim, with separated dyads reports being 44% less likely to indicate feelings of isolation (odds ratio [OR] = .56, 95% CI = [.49, .63], $p < .001$). The odds of the victim reporting that they were experiencing issues with child contact were 4.1 times higher if the victim-perpetrator dyad was separated (OR = 4.10, 95% CI = [3.50, 4.80], $p < .001$), compared to dyads who were not separated at the time of the report. The likelihood of reporting that the perpetrator was coercively controlling was 52% less likely among those dyads that were separated, than those dyads who were still together (OR = .48, 95% CI = [.44, .53], $p < .001$). Finally, the odds of jealousy being reported was 30% less likely when the victim-perpetrator dyad were separated rather than apart, a finding which was also statistically significant (OR = .70, 95% CI = [.64, .77], $p < .001$). The genders within the victim-perpetrator dyad were not significant predictors of any of the six components of coercive control measured in this study.

Table 3. 2 *Logistic Regressions Predicting Fear, Isolation, Coercive Control, Kill Belief, Jealousy, Child Contact (N = 8,595)*

				95% CI	
	Est	SE	*p*-value	Lower	Upper
Fear					
Separation	1.18	.06	.004	1.06	1.30
Gender	1.02	.04	.531	.95	1.10
Kill Belief					
Separation	1.12	.08	.102	.98	1.28
Gender	1.03	.04	.485	.95	1.11
Isolation					
Separation	.56	.04	.000	.49	.63
Gender	1.05	.04	.213	.97	1.14
Child Contact					
Separation	4.10	.33	.000	3.50	4.80
Gender	1.01	.04	.822	.94	1.09
Coercive Control					
Separation	.48	.02	.000	.44	.53
Gender	.99	.03	.697	.93	1.05
Jealousy					
Separation	.70	.03	.000	.64	.77
Gender	.94	.03	.055	.89	1.00

4.3.2 Survival Analysis

Using a subsample of the FVIRs which indicated they were separated at the time of the report, a survival analysis was conducted to investigate the timing of the reporting of coercive control, victim isolation, perpetrator jealousy, victim fear, victim beliefs, and child contact issues following separation.

The analysis showed that the median time at which victim fear was reported was within 3.0 months of being separated (SD = 20.6). Similarly, the median time at which victim isolation was reported was 3.0 months (SD = 16.46). The victim's beliefs that the perpetrator will kill them was reported at a median time of 3.9 months (SD = 27.0). Perpetrator jealousy was reported at a median time of 3.0 months (SD = 18.9), and coercive control was also reported at a median time of 3.0 months (SD = 19.2). Finally, issues with child contact were reported at a median time of 9.0 months (SD = 24.6).

4.4 Discussion

This study, which is the first study that has analyzed numerous coercive control factors in the context of stalking within a single analysis of police records, has resulted in a number of interesting findings. In this dataset, which includes incident reports collected over a total of four years, it was found that most (88.5%) of the reports indicated the presence of at least one element of coercive control other than stalking. This is a rate that far exceeds the 40% reported in Augustyn et al. (2019). Given that coercive control was measured using an amalgamation of six variables in our study, it is perhaps not surprising that the reported rate is higher than that of Augustyn et al. (2019), whereby coercive control was measured dichotomously within a college sample. Given that the sample used in this study comprises victim-perpetrator dyads who indicated presence of stalking and made police contact, we expected to find a high prevalence of coercive control elements. Interestingly, our study revealed a high number of same-sex couples within the sample. Though limited research exists exploring stalking and coercive control among same-sex intimate partners, research exists to suggest that stalking, coercive control, and intimate partner violence is more prevalent among same sex couples compared to heterosexual couples (Chen et al., 2020; Walters et al., 2012). West (2002) suggests that homophobic control might be used as a method of additional abuse to isolate the victim in same-sex couples (e.g. threats to reveal victim's sexual orientation).

Despite the already high percentage of incidents reporting at least one other element of coercive control (other than stalking), it is suspected that this is an underestimation of the true prevalence of coercively controlling behaviours experienced in this sample. A coercively controlling perpetrator can create a sense of powerlessness and fear in the victim, making the victim less likely to seek help or supports (Stark, 2007). Perpetrators often use threats to instill fear in the victim, and therefore it is anticipated that many victims will not disclose the true nature of the incident, or of the coercively controlling tactics that they may be experiencing, when police make contact with victims. Indeed, Bendlin and Sheridan (2019) outline the importance of first responders being able to recognise coercive control in domestic situations without relying on physical evidence of abuse or on victim disclosure, given the likelihood that such information is not being disclosed due to fear and sense of omnipresence of a controlling perpetrator. In addition to this, our study found that only 79.4% of the incident reports indicated that the perpetrator was coercively controlling, despite the fact that all reports indicated presence of stalking, and 88.5% of reports indicated presence of at least one other element related to coercive control. Though a number of reasons could explain why we see a discrepancy between presence of different elements of coercive control and failure to acknowledge coercive control presence (including inadequacies in first responders in recognising coercive control, victim non-disclosure likely due to fear, inadequate knowledge of what constitutes coercive control, failure of the first responder to ask, or perhaps a combination of some/all of these), this suggests that a dichotomous measurement of coercive control is unlikely to capture the most accurate representation of this complex variable.

When delving further into the investigation of the individual elements comprising coercive control among separated and non-separated dyads it became apparent that separation from a relationship was related to only some aspects of coercive control. Our results indicated that incident reports from separated dyads were significantly more likely to indicate that the victim was fearful, compared to reports from those dyads who were not separated from their partner. This is consistent with literature that has shown an increase in fear after separation from a coercively controlling relationship (Crossman et al., 2016), as well as research indicating marked fear and distress with increased stalking behaviour, particularly following the cessation of a relationship (Elizabeth, 2017; Fleming et al., 2012). As stalking is often a behaviour seen after a relationship ends, it seems unsurprising that fear is significantly associated with separation. However, given the research suggests that psychological abuse such as coercive control instills greater amounts of fear than physical abuse (Mechanic et al.,

2000; Stark & Hester, 2019), and that psychological abuse can often escalate after separation in an attempt to regain/control the relationship despite proximity issues (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013), it makes sense that fear is reported more often among those that are separated. However, we cannot discount the possibility that those who are not separated are simply too afraid to disclose the fear they feel, for fear of negative consequences elicited by the perpetrator.

Alongside fear, issues with child contact were also significantly more likely to be reported among separated dyads, compared to non-separated dyads. This is an expected finding, and is consistent with research indicating that children are often used as a mechanism for access to the victim (Crossman et al., 2016; Katz et al., 2019; Toews & Bermea, 2015). Given that the perpetrator is likely to be looking for other methods of control and abuse of the victim following separation from the relationship (and therefore decreased proximity to victim), perpetrators often attempt to use the victim's efforts at settlement and closure of the relationship through litigation as an opportunity to continue perpetration. Though engagement with the legal system ultimately aims to protect the victim, it can also inadvertently lead to continued and renewed strategies for victimisation, a phenomenon that has been described as 'procedural stalking' (Neilson, 2004, p. 419). Interestingly, this element of coercive control was reported at a median time of approximately nine months, a time frame that is far later than that of the remaining elements of coercive control, which may be a testament to the ongoing and lengthy nature of custody/legal disputes. Evidently litigation is often a necessary component to complete separation and settlement of the relationship, and therefore it is important to recognise the opportunities that this might present to the perpetrator for continued abuse of the victim and understand how coercive control may manifest even after the cessation of a relationship. Improved understanding and recognition of this complex and persistent pattern of abuse can assist in prevention of further abuse, as well as improved development and access to protective resources and supports for the victim.

Interestingly, dyads that were separated were significantly less likely to report isolation, perpetrator jealousy, and general perception of coercive control. It seems intuitive to conclude that victims who have separated from a coercively controlling relationship are more able and likely to access supports such as family and friends, given that they are no longer in the same proximity to the perpetrator as they were during the relationship. Sharp-Jeffs et al. (2018) provide results that further support our findings, indicating that separation from a coercively controlling relationship was correlated with an increased 'space for action',

whereby victims were more connected to trusted networks such as family and friends after leaving a coercively controlling relationship.

Like isolation, perpetrator jealousy was significantly less likely to be reported among separated dyads. Jealousy is closely linked to possessiveness and entitlement, often resulting in attempts to limit the victim's autonomy (Wilson et al., 2001). Given the separation between victim and perpetrator, it is possible that the perpetrator has fewer avenues and opportunities to express obsessive jealousy to the victim. Jealousy often involves behaviours that rely on victim proximity (such as inspecting phones, smelling clothes, reading diaries, damaging victim clothing, monitoring times left and returned, etc.; Stark, 2007), and therefore perpetrators may have far fewer opportunities to express jealous ideation and behaviours towards the victim. Given the escalation in likelihood to report issues with child contact and fear when dyads are separated, jealousy is likely to still be present. Though perhaps experienced to a lesser extent due to actual decrease in jealousy, it may also be that the perpetrator continues to feel excessive jealousy, however it is simply not witnessed by the victim to the same extent as it was when they were still in the relationship.

Reports that the perpetrator was coercively controlling were also significantly less likely among those who were separated. This needs to be interpreted with caution as the descriptive results suggest that there were many incident reports that did not report presence of coercive control, yet had stalking and other elements of coercive control indicated. In the context of reduced isolation, reduced reports of coercive control appear congruent as the victim is likely to feel a decreased sense of entrapment. In light of this, victims appear to feel more autonomous and free, despite continued experience of fear. Sharp-Jeffs et al. (2018) concluded in their qualitative interview analysis that many victims of coercive control do indeed continue to battle elements of coercive control following separation from a relationship, yet feel an increased sense of freedom as a result of leaving the relationship. Coercive control is a construct that is complex and difficult to operationalise (Stark, 2007). Coercive control itself has also been described as having negative influence on the way the victim views violence, themselves, and others (Dutton, 1992, Stark, 2012). The combination of defining difficulties and psychological effects of the victim suggests that there is a possibility that coercive control may not be recognised easily, particularly when the amount or intensity of the coercively controlling behaviour has decreased from what was previously experienced. Indeed, Lynch et al., (2019) suggested that coercive control may be viewed as an occurrence in intimate partner violence situations that is not particularly dangerous as it was rated as the least dangerous of five different risk factors. Further investigation is needed

to determine how victims and first responders understand and perceive coercive control, to provide further explanation of these findings.

Through the inclusion of multiple elements of coercive control, the results of this study provide valuable information that enhances our understanding of the relationship between coercive control and separation from a relationship. When coercive control is disseminated into parts, rather than measured as a single homogenous variable, it is evident that the presence of these elements differs depending on relationship status. As reported fear and issues with child contact were more likely to be seen among dyads who were separated, jealousy, isolation, and general perception of coercive control were less likely to be reported among those who were separated. The simultaneous increase and decrease in reported coercive control variables demonstrates the importance of operationalising coercive control in a way that encompasses the various components of this complex phenomenon rather than mistakably grouping all elements into one. The research on coercive control pre and post separation is limited, particularly in the context of high risk offenders such as stalkers, who are likely to exhibit a number of other coercively controlling behaviours. Lynch et al. (2019) reported that coercive control was not significantly related to separation, however in this study coercive control was defined as including behaviours such as control, jealousy, and humiliation. Similarly, Augustyn et al. (2019) measured coercive control using only a singular binary variable. Though these studies provide essential groundwork for the understanding of coercive control, our study results support the need for further investigation of coercive control using an operational definition that more accurately captures the entirety of this non-homogenous construct. The increase in child contact issues and fear, and the decrease in jealousy, isolation, and general perception of coercive control reports may potentially explain some inconsistencies in research on coercive control, whereby coercive control may appear to increase in some situations, yet decrease in others.

The findings discussed should be interpreted in the context of various limitations. Firstly, though numerous elements were included to more comprehensively understand coercive control, each of the coercive control elements in this study were binary variables. This limits the depth of the data, and therefore we are limited in the conclusions that can be derived. Furthermore, though the operationalisation of coercive control included a number of theory-driven elements, these elements do not equate to a complete measurement of coercive control. Nevertheless, this study provides important foundational results that should be further explored through the inclusion of continuous variables (e.g. level of fear) and other relevant variables related to coercive control (e.g. financial control) in order to better

understand the nature and relationship between levels of the elements of coercive control and separation. It is also recommended that future studies explore understanding that victims, perpetrators, and relevant authorities have about coercive control and behaviours that constitute coercive control, in order to help explain reporting disparities. Secondly, the sample is limited to dyads who have made contact with police, and where stalking was indicated. Though this provides important information about stalking offenders and related behaviours during and after a relationship, the conclusions should be interpreted with caution when generalising to coercively controlling offenders. Though stalking is indeed a behaviour that is related to coercive control, stalkers themselves are not entirely representative of coercively controlling offenders in general. Future studies should expand outside of a stalking sample and explore elements of coercive control among a more diverse population of offenders. Finally, future research should explore the changes in coercively controlling behaviour before and after separation in order to more accurately understand changes in coercive control across time and context.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the current study presents novel information that helps in understanding coercive control in more depth through the inclusion of several elements of coercion within a single analysis. Coercive control is not comprised of a single behaviour, but instead, it involves the use of numerous tactics that aim to instill a sense of fear, entrapment and powerlessness in the victim in order to increase compliance to the perpetrators demands (Stark, 2007). Our results indicate that despite the apparent improvements in some areas of coercive control following separation from a relationship (isolation, jealousy, general perception of coercive control experience), coercive control continues even after the relationship has ceased. In addition to revealing the varied presence of different aspects of coercive control during and after a relationship, the results of this study highlight the necessity to investigate coercive control not as a single construct, but as the complex amalgamation of numerous elements that it is. In addition to demonstrating the importance of more representative operationalisation of the construct, the findings provide important contributions to the development of future protective measures, supports and resources, that may help in raising awareness of coercive control in order to ameliorate and prevent the effects of this persistent form of abuse. Having a more comprehensive understanding of the various elements of coercive control, and that many of these continue after separation from the perpetrator, will help first responders to know what to look for, ask appropriate questions, provide important advice, and identify those at risk. This is especially important in the context of coercive control because this type of abuse does not always

involve physically violent behaviours that leave visible marks, and the victim may be too fearful to disclose important information without prompt. The paucity of research in this area indicates a strong need for further assessment of coercive control among intimate/ex-intimate partner dyads using comprehensive definitions of coercive control, with the aim of developing specific and pragmatic tools for assessment, prevention, and protection against coercive control and the consequent psychological damage. Without further research exploring the numerous elements of coercive control, their impact, and their severity, progress towards resource development and allocation is likely to be hindered.

Chapter 5 (Study 4): Stalking Recidivism: A Comparison of Operational Definitions

5.1 Introduction

The development of legislation and government policies recognising stalking as a criminal behaviour has resulted in a trend of institutional changes and protections for victims of this persistent form of harassment. Following the first jurisdiction to criminalise stalking in 1990 (California Penal Code, Section 646.9), numerous other states and countries have followed suit, including Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Japan, and various European Union member states (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007; van der Aa, 2018). Alongside these important criminal justice advances, the research on stalking has grown considerably, highlighting the severity of psychopathologies experienced by victims of stalking, offender characteristics, and risk factors (e.g. Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Davis et al., 2002; Korkodeilou, 2017; McEwan et al., 2017; McEwan et al., 2011; Meloy et al., 2011; Miller, 2012; Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012). Research on the recidivism of stalking offenders is still in its infancy. This is due to various factors, including difficulties in defining and recognising stalking as a crime, and obstacles to prosecuting and convicting stalking offenders. This research focuses on further exploring varied operational definitions of stalking recidivism, and understanding reoffending within a stalker population.

Although legal definitions of stalking vary across jurisdictions, the majority specify that stalking is a behaviour that is persistent, repetitive, and unwanted (De Fazio, 2009; McEwan et al., 2012). Some legal definitions also specify victim fear or intimidation as a necessary component of the stalking behaviour, including stalking laws in Australia and most states in the USA (modelled by the Californian Penal Code 646.9; Brady & Nobles, 2017; Leiter, 2007). Despite the commonalities seen across legal definitions of stalking, a universal and standardised definition of this intrusive behaviour does not exist. The complexity and difficulty of defining stalking is partially due to the nature of the behaviour. Unlike crimes that refer to a single clear behaviour, such as burglary or homicide, stalking is a combination of various behaviours (Fox et al., 2011). Furthermore, the behaviours that constitute stalking are often innocuous when viewed in isolation, and may be difficult to recognise as criminal stalking as they are often an amplification of typical contact behaviours rather than clear breaches of legal conduct (Ogilvie, 2000). For example, it may be difficult to ascertain when phone calls, messages, and gifts are indicative of a stalking offence. Furthermore, given that stalking comprises a number of different behaviours, it is not uncommon for offenders to be

prosecuted for the presence of clear individual offences that are seen within stalking, such as threats, damage, or assault, as opposed to being prosecuted for stalking (Fox et al., 2011).

Irrespective of the issues related to legally defining stalking behaviour, the frequency of stalking charges appears to be increasing as jurisdictional recognition of this crime also increases. In a recent report by the UK Home Office, figures show that the number of recorded stalking offences in England and Wales tripled in recent years, with 2,882 recorded stalking offences in 2014-2015, climbing to 10,214 in 2017/2018. Despite initiatives and rapid development of necessary legislation across countries, the efficacy of these remains somewhat questionable when looking at conviction rates for stalking.

Of the 10,214 reported offences of stalking in England and Wales in 2017/2018, only 1,822 resulted in a conviction. Research from other jurisdictions supports these figures, with overall findings suggesting that conviction rates for stalking offences are low (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Jordan et al., 2003). Indeed, Tjaden and Thoennes (2002) found that one of every six domestic violence reports in a USA sample contained evidence of stalking (N = 1,785), and yet only one of these 1,785 reports led to a conviction of a stalking offence. Also in the USA, research by Jordan et al. (2003) suggests that overall conviction rates for a stalking offence are around 19.9%. To gain further understanding into these rates, Lynch and Logan (2015) investigated police-reported barriers to charging stalking. It was found that a lack of evidence was the most commonly reported primary barrier, with 77.8% of officers who had not previously made a stalking charge, and 69.9% of officers who had made a stalking charge, reporting this as the primary difficulty for conviction. Issues such as the difficulty of defining and identifying stalking as a criminal behaviour, as well as problems in conviction of the crime, make assessment of stalking recidivism complicated.

5.1.1 Stalking Recidivism Literature

Criminal recidivism has been extensively researched in various criminal populations, including sex offenders (Mann et al., 2010), domestically violent offenders (Babcock et al., 2004; Sartin et al., 2006) and mentally ill offenders (Bonta et al., 2014; Skeem et al., 2011). Considering the relative infancy of stalking as a crime, it is perhaps not surprising that research on stalking recidivism is sparse. Nevertheless, the existing literature does appear to show high rates of stalker recidivism, though these rates vary across studies (McEwan et al., 2019; Malsch et al., 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003). The first study exploring repeated offending among stalkers concluded that 49% of perpetrators reoffended (N = 93), with 80% of these offending within one year of the first offence (Rosenfeld, 2003). At the time of the study, the

relevant jurisdiction did not have a specific stalking law, hence stalking cases were ascertained by charges of harassment or criminal contempt (Rosenfeld, 2003). This means that stalking recidivism was defined as "any indication of a second arrest or renewed harassment … following the first recorded stalking- related arrest" (p. 255). Rosenfeld found that age of the offender, prior intimate relationship, prior violence, personality disorder and delusional disorder predicted stalking recidivism. Though a noteworthy study, it is important to acknowledge that the study consisted entirely of a sample of offenders who had been arrested. Given the known difficulty in prosecuting stalking and harassment related offences, it is possible that different findings may be seen in a wider range of stalking offenders.

Expanding on Rosenfeld's (2003) findings, Malsch et al. (2011) investigated recidivism in convicted stalkers, specifically exploring which types of crime the offenders committed after their stalking conviction. The findings reflected those of Rosenfeld (2003), with 53% of 709 stalkers reoffending. Half of these offenders committed a new stalking crime within the first seven months of the index crime (Malsch et al., 2011). Interestingly, Malsch et al. (2011) found that 11% of the stalkers specifically reoffended with a stalking crime, although 58% of the total crimes committed after the first stalking conviction did not seem related to stalking (e.g. drug crimes), and 24% of these new crimes could be related to stalking (e.g. threats, property destruction). In this study, recidivism was defined as any new conviction, including "stalking related" convictions such as property damage. These results demonstrate the diverse nature of crimes and behaviours that may constitute stalking, which is further supported by prior works that have demonstrated the various crimes that stalkers commit in combination with stalking (Davis et al., 2002; Malsch et al., 2009).

Eke et al. (2011) explored four categories of recidivism among stalkers ($N = 78$). In this study, recidivism was operationalised as any reported contact with the same victim. The index crime was defined as any offence that led to the first police involvement, which consequently led to a request for threat assessment. This means that the index crime was not necessarily the first stalking incident. Eke et al. (2011) found that 56% of offenders reoffended with stalking related crimes, with a mean time at risk of 11 months. The study also found that the most common first post-index crime was a violation of conditional release. It was reported that overall recidivism was associated with younger perpetrator age, prior failure on conditional release, presence of criminal history, and presence of a mental health diagnosis, though the significance of the predictors varied depending on the type of recidivism. Similarly, Mohandie et al. (2006) found that 60% of offenders recidivated when recidivism was broadly defined as any new contact with the same victim. Foellmi et al.

(2016) on the other hand, found that 35% of stalkers reoffended with a stalking crime when stalking recidivism was defined broadly as any new stalking charge, harassment charge, protection order violation, or any behaviour that reflected stalking. More recently, McEwan et al. (2019) used a broad definition of stalking, which included any police report of contact from the stalker by the same or a different victim. McEwan et al. (2019) found that 52.86% (N = 37) of offenders recidivated during the follow up period (mean = 2.63 years). Though the recidivism rates appear to be generally high, these vary depending on the study, and the definition of stalking recidivism employed by the study. Among these studies, a number of different predictors were analysed. Though there are known predictors of stalking risk (Foellmi et al., 2016), there are evidently inconsistent findings with regards to the predictors of stalking recidivism (Eke et al., 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003).

Given that stalking is not a single well defined construct, but rather an amalgamation of various acts, it is not surprising that measurement of stalking recidivism is problematic. Malsch et al. (2011) found that most of the crimes committed after a stalking conviction were likely related to stalking, including property damage, crimes against the legal order, threats, and unlawfully entering the home. This suggests that stalkers do not necessarily specialise in a specific stalking act, but rather, have a broad scope of behaviours that they use to further harass their victim. Given the persistent and repetitive nature of stalking, it is perhaps unsurprising that stalkers regularly change the tactics and behaviours used to target the victim, resulting in multiple crimes committed at the time of stalking (Malsch et al., 2009). Indeed, it was suggested by Malsch et al. (2011) that after a stalking conviction, perpetrators may actually broaden their methods of harassment and look for alternative ways of accessing and intruding on the victim. Similarly, Sheridan (2001) found that stalking behaviours were more extreme after police intervention for approximately 20% of stalking victims.

Non-specialisation of crime is not only evident in stalking offenders, but also amongst other types of offenders. Indeed, Hilton and Eke (2016) concluded that intimate partner violence offenders typically do not specialise in violent offences, with 65% of the offender sample in their study having been charged with a non-violent pre-index crime. Piquero et al. (2012) review of criminal career trajectories suggested that although specialisation of crimes does occur, versatility and non-specialisation is the norm. As suggested by Malsch et al. (2011), it may be some that stalkers initially commit stalking crimes, but then become more versatile in the way they attempt to intrude on one particular victim. It is likely that other stalkers will be generally antisocial offenders for whom stalking is just one more crime they engage in. Still others may be stalking specialists. All crimes have an impact and as such it is

important to consider how recidivism is defined in stalking research, particularly because stalking is a multifaceted behaviour. It is not yet clear what proportion of stalking offenders are specialists versus non-specialists.

The research on stalking recidivism is both sparse and difficult to make comparisons within due to differences in defining stalking and reoffending, as well methodological differences. The importance of exploring recidivism among stalkers is further highlighted by research showing the persistent and repetitive nature of the behaviour. One third of the perpetrators in Malsch et al.'s (2011) work had breached one or more restraining orders. The repeated violation of restraining and protective orders among stalking offenders has been found in numerous studies (Logan et al., 2007; Mechanic et al., 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2002). It therefore appears that protective orders are not effective in preventing repeated harassing behaviour among stalking offenders, indicating the importance of further exploration of reoffending behaviour among this population.

5.1.2 The Current Study

The current study aims to extend the existing research on stalking in a number of ways. Few studies have directly explored reoffending among stalking perpetrators. These studies employ different methodologies, different operational definitions of recidivism, and were conducted in different jurisdictions. The current study aims to contribute to the literature by utilising a single large police sample to compare rates of and time to recidivism using varied definitions of stalking recidivism. Furthermore, the current study does not restrict the sample to offenders who have been convicted of stalking, as stalking is a crime that is difficult to prosecute due to insufficient evidence, withdrawal of complaints, and insufficient recognition of behaviours as stalking behaviours (Backes et al., 2020; Baum et al., 2009; Lynch & Logan, 2015; Weller et al., 2013). Consequently, the current research includes a sample of offenders who have been identified as stalking offenders, and does not restrict the data to successful convictions. The dataset contains a large number of offenders, spans 14 years, and is based on police records rather than victim self-reports. The aim of this study is to compare recidivism and predictors of recidivism using four different models. Three of these models will define stalking recidivism as 1) a new stalking charge, 2) stalking or any new harassment charge, 3) stalking, harassment, and other potentially stalking-related charges, and the fourth model will explore all charges.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Sample

The final sample covers 404 individuals (male = 382, female = 22) identified as stalking offenders in Western Australia between 01/01/2003 and 30/07/2017. The dataset originally contained 1,035 reports, however, only the reports containing an offender identification number were retained. There are a number of reasons why an offender identification number may not appear in a stalking charge report, including insufficient evidence to identify the perpetrator, or if the victim chooses to drop their complaint. An offender identification number is a unique number that allows all historical and future incidents relating to that individual to be connected. The absence of an identification number means that no relevant information about subsequent charges could be determined, and consequently, these cases were dropped ($N = 552$). Of the remaining 483 stalking charge reports, a further 79 incident reports were deleted as they were offences repeated more than once by the same perpetrator. Repeated stalking offences were removed as each stalking offence appears as a new incident report.

5.2.2 Dataset Procedures

The dataset was obtained with the help and permission of the Western Australia (WA) Police Force. According to section 338E of the Western Australia Criminal Code, stalking behaviour is defined as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person. The dataset used in this study contains information about the perpetrator, the victim, and the incident that resulted in a charge of stalking. The WA Police Force also provided us with a full list of other charges that were linked to the offender identification numbers that appeared in the final dataset, as well as the dates that these charges occurred. The final dataset allowed for the investigation of reoffending following the initial stalking charge for the selected offenders. All data was deidentified by the WA Police Force and all relevant perpetrator information was connected using the unique identification number.

Observation period

The observation period for this study is defined as the time between the first reported date that a stalking incident occurred, and the date of data extraction, which was 24/08/2017. Consequently, the observation period varied across individual offenders, depending on when they were first reported for stalking. The index date from which the time to recidivism was calculated is defined as the date when the first stalking offence occurred rather than the date at which the first stalking offence was officially recorded. The earliest stalking offence in the final dataset of 404 offenders occurred on 01/01/2003. The final stalking offence in the

dataset occurred on 03/07/2017. Consequently, the observation period ranged from 764 weeks to 7 weeks. The average observation period for the offenders included in this dataset was 160 weeks (SD = 102.85).

Variables

The selection of predictor variables included in the current study was informed by the few prior works that have explored recidivism in stalking (Eke et al., 2011; Malsch et al., 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003). The chosen predictors were also limited to the information that was available in the stalking charge data provided by the WA Police Force. A total of four predictors were selected: age of the perpetrator, gender, ethnicity, and presence of prior criminal history. Age was recorded as the age of the perpetrator at the time of the occurrence of the first stalking offence. Gender was recorded as a dichotomous variable indicating either a male (0) or female (1) perpetrator. Due to insufficient numbers across some of the recorded ethnic categories, perpetrators were categorised into one of three categories that captured the various specific ethnicities recorded. These were: Caucasian, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and Other. The presence of prior criminal history (including juvenile history) was coded dichotomously, with 1 indicating the presence of a prior recorded criminal charge linked to the offender ID, and 0 indicating no recorded history. Due to an inadequate number of female offenders, gender was not included as a predictor in the binomial logistic regression and survival analysis due to insufficient statistical power and likelihood of bias.

In order to compare predictors of recidivism and time to recidivism using varied definitions of stalking, four separate definitions were used to create four individual models. Recidivism was coded dichotomously for each of the four models, with 1 indicating the occurrence of recidivism, and 0 indicating no recidivism. If recidivism was recorded as present, the date of the crime was also recorded. In the first model (Model 1), stalking recidivism was defined as any new stalking charge following the index date of the first stalking charge. Stalking recidivism in the second model was defined as any harassment charge following the first stalking charge (Model 2), for example, breach of VRO, stalking, improper use of carriage device such as using text messaging in an offensive way. The third model defined stalking recidivism more broadly, including any charge that may not directly include stalking behaviour (Model 3), but is nonetheless linked to stalking as it was perpetrated against the same victim. Examples include property damage, assault, theft (Malsch et al., 2011). The final model of recidivism included any new charge following the first index charge of stalking (Model 4).

The number of weeks to recidivism was calculated from the date of the first recorded index charge of stalking, to the date of the first recorded re-offence for each of the four models. Many offenders were charged with more than one crime within a single incident, therefore the presence of a post index crime was only recorded if it occurred at least one day after the first reported stalking offence.

5.2.3 Analysis

To assess the effects of age, ethnicity, and prior criminal history on the likelihood of reoffending, as defined by each model, a binomial logistic regression was used. The time to reoffend was analysed using Cox Proportional Hazards models, or 'survival analysis' (Allison, 1995). This analysis is typically used to ascertain the time until an 'event' happens, accounting for different observation times as well as cases where the 'event' did not occur (Allison, 1995). It provides a Hazard Ratio (HR), which indicates the change in risk of an event occurring (i.e. "survival"), associated with an increase in the predictor variable. In this study, we used a survival analysis to explore the effects of age, ethnicity and prior history on the time taken for perpetrators to reoffend, and compared this across the four models. We tested three assumptions for the Cox Proportional Hazards model, which were proportional hazards, linear relationships with covariates, and noninfluential observations. The assumption of proportional hazards was tested statistically and graphically, and results indicated that this assumption was not violated for any of the four models. Finally, an inspection of scatterplots of deviance residuals against time indicated no influential observations for each of the four models, suggesting all assumptions had been met.

Each of the four models within this study operationalised recidivism differently, ranging from a restricted definition of new stalking charges only (Model 1), and progressing to more broad definitions where harassment charges were included (Model 2), where any stalking-related charge was included (Model 3), and a model where any new charge was considered as recidivism (Model 4). These definitions have been informed by the definitions adopted by previous studies on stalking recidivism (Eke et al., 2011; Malsch et al., 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003). The frequencies of offenders who reoffended within the observation period were calculated for each operational definition of recidivism.

5.3 Results

The final sample included 382 males (94.6%) and 22 females (5.4%), with an average age of 35.6 years (SD = 10.9) at the time of the stalking offence. Six of these were under the age of 18. The sample comprised 267 Caucasian offenders (66.1%), 54 Aboriginal/Torres

Strait Islander offenders (13.4%), 18 offenders who were classified as “other” ethnicities (4.5%), and 65 offenders where no ethnicity was recorded (16.1%). Of the total sample, 299 offenders (74.0%) were recorded to have a prior criminal offence on their record.

The results showed that 35 offenders (8.7%) reoffended in Model 1 and the survival analysis indicated that 50% of those who reoffended in Model 1 did so within nine weeks (SD = 46.67). In model 2, where 153 offenders (37.9%) reoffended, the median length of time to recidivism in Model 2 was 10 weeks (SD = 57.36). For the 165 offenders (40.8%) who reoffended in Model 3, the median time to recidivism was 10 weeks (SD = 56.65). Finally, for the 219 offenders (54.2%) who reoffended in Model 4, the median time to recidivism was 13 weeks (SD = 48.39). These varied median times show that although offenders recidivate quickly, the time to recidivism does vary depending on what is classified as a “re-offence”.

The 404 offenders were charged with a collective total of 8320 crimes. These were inclusive of any crime before the initial stalking charge, and up until the time of data extraction. The most common type of crime was the breach of a restraint order with a total of 3290 violations, accounting for 39.5% of the total recorded charges. The highest proportion of offenders among the most frequent crimes included stalking (100%), and breach of restraint order (64.9%) A summary of these descriptive statistics is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1 *Ten Most Frequent Crimes Among Stalking Offenders*

Charge	Number of Charges N(%)	Proportion of Offenders N(%)
Breach of Restraint Order	3290(39.5)	262(64.9)
Drugs (Possess)	628(7.5)	155(38.3)
Stalking	567(6.8)	404(100)
Breach of Bail	523(6.3)	109(27.0)
Domestic Assault	331(4.0)	137(33.9)
Damage (Property)	325(3.9)	126(31.2)
Stealing	312(3.8)	97(24.0)
Threatening Behaviour	249(3.0)	121(30.0)
Non-Domestic Assault	197(2.4)	95(23.5)
Weapons (Possess)	167(2.0)	73(18.0)
Total	8320(100)	404(100)

5.3.1 Binomial Logistic Regression

The four models were analysed using a binomial logistic regression to explore predictors of recidivism. Models 2, 3 and 4 were found to be statistically significant explaining between 6.4% and 11.5% of variance, and correctly classifying between 59.0% and 64.7% of cases (see Table 4.2). Though the Nagelkerke square are small for the models, this is expected given the inclusion of few risk factors. Model 1 (stalking only recidivism) was not statistically significant, though it cannot be ruled out that this may be due to a smaller sample size than the remaining models.

Table 4. 2 *Model Significance Statistics for Binomial Logistic Regression*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Overall % Explained	91.3	61.8	59.0	64.7
Sig.	.555	.002	.000	.001
Nagelkerke R2	.022	.064	.079	.115
Hosmer and Lemeshow	.704	.686	.925	.542

The results of the binomial regression seen in Table 4.3 show that Model 1, where recidivism was only coded when a second stalking offence was reported for the offender, did not contain any significant predictors of recidivism.

In Model 2, where recidivism was coded if any new stalking offence or harassment offence was reported following the index crime, the results show that a prior criminal history is a highly influential variable. This is indicated by the significantly increased likelihood of recidivism when the presence of criminal history was coded (odds ratio [OR] = 2.39, 95% CI = [1.42, 4.05], $p < .01$).

Model 3, where recidivism was defined as any stalking, harassment, and other crimes related to stalking occurring after the index date, revealed that only criminal history was a significant predictor of recidivism. In this model, the presence of prior criminal history was associated with a 2.52 times greater risk of recidivism (OR = 2.52, 95% CI = [1.51, 4.25], $p < .01$).

Finally, Model 4, in which recidivism was coded where any new crime occurred following the index date, showed that age and prior criminal history were significant predictors of recidivism, as seen in Model 3. The results in Model 4 indicate that increased age was associated with a lower risk of recidivism (OR = .98, 95% CI = [.96, .99], $p = .01$), and prior criminal history was associated with a significantly higher likelihood of recidivism (OR = 2.75, 95% CI = [1.69, 4.46], $p < .01$). Caution should be taken when interpreting this relationship given the confidence intervals. In summary, prior criminal history was associated with increased likelihood of recidivism in Models 2, 3, and 4, whereas age was associated with a lower likelihood of recidivism in Models 3 and 4. Ethnicity was non-significant in each of the four models.

Table 4. 3 *Logistic Regression for each Model Predicting Recidivism*

	Model 1 ExpB(95%CI) (y=35) (n=367)	*p*	Model 2 ExpB(95%CI) (y=153) (n=248)	*p*	Model 3 ExpB(95%CI) (y=165) (n=237)	*p*	Model 4 ExpB(95%CI) (y=219) (n=183)	*p*
Age	1.00(.97, 1.03)	.95	1.00(.98, 1.02)	.93	.99(.98, 1.01)	.12	.98(.96, .99)	.01
Ethnicity		.99		.19		.17		.20
1	1.18(.43, 3.24)	.75	1.19(.66, 2.14)	.56	1.07(.60, 1.91)	.82	.98(.55, 1.74)	.94
2	1.10(.29, 4.18)	.89	.95(.44, 2.07)	.90	1.24(.58, 2.67)	.58	1.39(.63, 3.09)	.42
3	00(.0, .0)	.99	.24(.05, 1.17)	.08	.21(.04, 1.00)	.05	.36(.11, 1.18)	.09
Prior Criminal History	1.33(.55, 3.21)	.52	2.39(1.42, 4.05)	.00	2.52(1.51, 4.25)	.00	2.75(1.69, 4.46)	.00

Note. y = recidivism occurred, n = recidivism did not occur; Ethnicity 1 = Caucasian, 2 = Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 3 = Other

5.3.2 Survival Analysis

The survival analysis summary of results is presented in Table 4.4. Model 1 did not contain any significant predictors of time to recidivism. In Model 2, the presence of prior criminal charges was associated with a significant increase in hazard for recidivism (HR = 2.26, CI = [1.46, 3.49], $p < .01$), suggesting that a prior criminal history is associated with a significantly faster time until a second offence occurs. Model 3 also found that criminal history was associated with a significant increase in hazard for time to recidivism (HR = 2.26, CI = [1.46, 3.49], $p < .01$). Finally, Model 4 indicated that prior criminal history was associated with a significant increase in hazard (HR = 2.31, CI = [1.60, 3.34], $p < .01$). Ethnicity and age were not significant predictors in any of the four models.

Table 4. 4 *Survival Analysis for Each Model Predicting Time to Recidivism*

	Model 1 ExpB(95%CI) (y=35) (n=367)	p	Model 2 ExpB(95%CI) (y=153) (n=248)	p	Model 3 ExpB(95%CI) (y=165) (n=237)	p	Model 4 ExpB(95%CI) (y=219) (n=183)	p
Age	1.00(.97, 1.03)	.99	1.00(.99, 1.02)	.81	1.00(.98, 1.01)	.80	.99(.98, 1.00)	.07
Ethnicity		.99		.23		.22		.24
1	1.17(.45, 3.08)	.75	1.14(.72, 1.80)	.58	1.07(.69, 1.67)	.76	1.03(.70, 1.51)	.88
2	1.09(.31, 3.88)	.90	.96(.52, 1.77)	.90	1.12(.67, 2.06)	.57	1.19(.73, 1.92)	.48
3	00(.0, .0)	.97	.28(.07, 1.20)	.09	.25(.06, 1.08)	.06	.45(.17, 1.15)	.09
Prior Criminal History	1.33(.57, 3.10)	.50	2.22(1.39, 3.39)	.00	2.26(1.46, 3.49)	.00	2.31(1.60, 3.34)	.00

Note. y = recidivism occurred, n = recidivism did not occur

5.4 Discussion

This study of police records revealed a number of interesting findings about recidivism among stalkers. Overall, it was found that many stalkers did reoffend, and they reoffended quickly. However, the rates and time to recidivism varied depending on the operational definition of stalking recidivism. When stalking recidivism was defined as a new stalking charge, 8.7% of offenders reoffended within the observation period, with a median reoffending time of nine weeks. When stalking recidivism was classified as any new stalking or harassment charge, 38.2% of offenders reoffended within the observation period, with a median reoffending time of 10 weeks. The most general definition of stalking recidivism, any stalking-related charge, produced a reoffending rate of 40.8%, with a median time of 10 weeks until re-offence. Finally, when looking at any new crime committed by the offenders, the overall recidivism rate was 54.5%, with a median reoffending time of 13 weeks. These rates are similar, though slightly lower, to the findings of previous studies that defined stalking recidivism as inclusive of harassment and other related charges such as threats, in which recidivism rates ranged from 49-56% (Eke et al., 2011; Rosenfeld, 2003). Malsch et al. (2011) found that 11% of the convicted stalkers specifically recidivated with a stalking crime, a rate that is similar to the 8.7% of offenders who were reported to have a renewed stalking charge. Prior research has also found that stalking recidivism occurred the fastest when compared to other recidivism (e.g., violent recidivism; Malsch et al., 2011). Consistent with these findings, the fastest time to recidivism in the present study was observed when recidivism was defined as a new stalking charge.

The present study found that many stalkers reoffend, and they reoffend quickly. The nature of the crime is not homogenous, as various acts entail a stalking related offence. The present study shows that when stalking recidivism is operationalised to capture various stalking-related crimes, the time to recidivism is lengthened. This finding may have been influenced by the naturally occurring differences in group sizes within the four models, however we cannot rule out the possibility that such differences in recidivism time may be seen due to the operational definition of recidivism. The current study shows that a breach of a restraining order was by far the most common crime committed by the sample, and it is known that stalkers typically offend against an ex-partner following the cessation of a relationship (Mechanic et al., 2000; Meloy, 2002; Sheridan & Davies, 2001a). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that recidivism defined as a new stalking charge, or any new harassment charge (such as breach of restraining order, using carriage service to harass), is seen as occurring faster than when the stalking recidivism definition is also inclusive of other related crimes such as

assault and threats. Once a stalking charge is made (often concurrently with a restraining order against the offender), it is easier to monitor whether an offender breaches a protection order by contacting the victim (e.g., text message or a phone call), and it may be easier to charge an offender with a renewed stalking charge on the basis of intrusive communications. When stalking recidivism encapsulates a wider range of crimes such as assault and threats and wider range of perpetrators, the median time to recidivism is longer, and is perhaps at least partially due to the ease of identifying and proceeding against a breach of restraining order offence, compared to being reported for other stalking related crimes such as trespass, or assault. Give the larger sample in this model, the time to recidivism may be at least partially a reflection of the size of the sample. This hypothesis is however speculative, and in need of further research to more confidently understand potential reasons for these differences.

The fast time to recidivism in all four models further supports the notion that stalkers are obsessive and persistent in nature. This is reflected in the high proportion of breaches of restraining and protective orders seen within the sample. Indeed, the fast time to stalking recidivism compared to general recidivism may be explained by the nature of stalking itself. Given that stalking is a persistent form of intimidation, it makes sense that stalking recidivism occurs faster than unrelated, separate crimes. The summary of crimes committed also supports the conclusion presented by Malsch et al. (2011), Eke and Hilton (2016), and
Piquero et al. (2012), suggesting that stalkers do not specialise in one crime, and that versatility/non-specialisation of crime is common. This presents an interesting avenue for future research, as it may suggest that stalkers who reoffend with a specific stalking crime reoffend faster than stalkers who are more generalised in their criminal behaviours. Furthermore, prior studies show that stalkers are often coercive and controlling in nature (Bendlin & Sheridan, 2019), which may explain why actions made by the victim and the police to separate the offender from the victim are often followed by a variety of crimes that represent stalking. These crimes may be fuelled by the agitation of being separated from the victim and by losing a sense of control over the victim (De Smet et al.,2011; Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013), a hypothesis that is supported by Sheridan (2001) who found that severity of stalking behaviours increased after police intervention. It is therefore unsurprising to see the range of crimes that stalkers are charged for, however this also demonstrates the importance of looking beyond renewed stalking and harassment charges, and recognising the various other crimes committed by stalking offenders that are related to stalking itself.

This study also explored predictors of stalking recidivism that have yielded mixed findings in previous research, including age, ethnicity, and a prior history of criminality.

Rosenfeld (2003) found that younger age predicted stalking reoffending, whereas Eke et al. (2011) found that age did not predict stalking reoffending, but it did predict other recidivism, such as violent crimes. Our results suggest that the age of offenders who have been reported for stalking only predicts presence of reoffending when recidivism encapsulates a wide range of charges, a finding that is consistent with that of Eke et al. (2011). The age-crime curve posits that adolescents and young adults are more likely than other age groups to engage in offending and delinquent behaviour (Farrington et al., 2008). Previous work has suggested that the age of onset may be higher for stalkers than for other types of crime (Nobles et al., 2009) and that older stalkers can be as dangerous as younger stalkers (Sheridan et al., 2014). This may explain why age was not significant in our first three stalking recidivism models but was significant in our general recidivism model.

The predictive utility of prior criminal history is noteworthy. Prior history was not a significant predictor of renewed stalking charges, though it was able to predict stalking recidivism in models two, three, and four, defined by stalking and harassment charges, any charges related to stalking, and all new crimes respectively. Prior criminal history has been a consistent predictor of recidivism in non-stalking populations (Phillips et al., 2005), though stalking research has yielded mixed findings to date. Whilst Rosenfeld (2003) found that criminal history was not a predictor of stalking recidivism when stalking was defined as a renewed harassment crime, Eke et al. (2011) found that prior criminal history predicted overall recidivism but not stalking recidivism when stalking included related charges. The findings of the current work suggest that prior history is useful in predicting recidivism when it is not restricted to the renewal of a stalking offence, but rather, when the operationalised stalking recidivism variable captures a wider range of stalking related crimes. These inconsistencies in the research with regards to criminal history as a predictor of stalking recidivism might be further clarified by breaking down criminal history into a less generalised variable, such as domestically violent history vs non-domestically violent history.

Though this research shows interesting findings about recidivism, it is important to note that many of the offenders did not reoffend. Police records however, almost certainly do not contain every actual re-offence. Aside from insufficient evidence to make a charge, there are also numerous reasons why stalking crimes often go unreported (Buhi et al., 2009). Studies have shown that victims are less likely to report stalking behaviour if the perpetrator is known to them, and due to fear that the victim may not be taken seriously (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014), and the controlling nature of stalkers also often leaves victims reluctant and fearful of

contacting police and disclosing crimes (Bendlin & Sheridan, 2019). The interpretation of non-recidivating stalkers should therefore be conducted with caution.

The current work is the first to directly compare recidivism among stalking offenders, using four different operational definitions of recidivism. The sample of police records in this study was not restricted to offenders who have been convicted, focusing instead on individuals who have been identified as stalking offenders. The arguably high rate and fast time to recidivism across each of the operational definitions support the obsessive nature of stalking offenders, adding to the existing literature. The novel comparison of recidivism definitions reveals the importance of considering how stalking recidivism is defined in future studies. The demonstrated differences in time to recidivism, predictors of recidivism, and overall rates of recidivism based on the operational definition illustrate one potential reason for the mixed nature of findings in the stalking research field. The predictive utility of prior history, and the wide array of crimes committed by the stalking sample suggest it is important to consider crimes other than stalking and harassment charges when looking at stalking recidivism to more accurately capture the nature of the offending behaviour. This is particularly pertinent for stalking recidivism research, suggesting that stalking recidivism should not be restricted to repeated stalking charges/convictions, however it also applies to more general studies on stalking, as stalkers tend to engage in a wide range of criminal offences.

Given the differences in the significance of predictors, time to recidivism, and prevalence of recidivism across the four models in this study, future studies should take into consideration the various definitions that may be employed when assessing stalking recidivism, as inconsistency in operationalising recidivism across studies makes it difficult to amalgamate findings. The current research demonstrates the differences in results that can be yielded from a single sample, depending on how we define stalking recidivism, and this is of particular importance given that stalking is often a collection of different criminal behaviours. This research also helps to inform practices for first responders, magistrates, and corrections officers, as it demonstrates that stalkers do indeed engage in a variety of offences that are linked to stalking their victim. The aforementioned bodies need to be aware that despite differences in research findings, many stalkers reoffend and they reoffend quickly. Often, this is despite the presence of police restraining orders. When assessing stalking offenders, it is important to take into consideration the array of criminal behaviours that they may engage in, and particularly, be aware that orders of restraint are not often adhered to. Consideration should therefore be taken to protect victims by limiting opportunity for the perpetrator to access and contact the victim.

5.4.1 Limitations

Though the current study contains a modest sample size, it is important to note that most stalking cases are not reported to the police, and consequently, not charged. Often, severe stalking incidents are reported under more concretely defined charges, such as grievous bodily harm, rather than a stalking charge, which entails a number of behaviours. Furthermore, more than half of the reports were not included due to an absence of an identified offender. The current sample therefore might not be capturing an accurate representation of stalkers as the reports without an offender ID could possibly be representative of a different cohort of stalkers. The recidivism rate may also be somewhat underestimated given that many stalking crimes are not reported. However, once an offender is recorded and identified (usually with measures such as protective orders in place), it seems logical that they are more likely to be caught as offenders typically harass the same victim. The predictors utilised in the analysis were restricted to variables available in the police reports. Consequently, future research should expand the current findings by incorporating a wider range of predictive variables. The current study did not differentiate any stalker-victim relationships such as ex-intimate and stranger. The present findings may be further expanded in future studies through the inclusion of this variable. Nor did the present work separate recidivism relating to new victims versus the same victim. Distinguishing between these two outcomes is an important issue (see MacKenzie et al., 2009) that should be explored by future work that has both recidivism and risk assessment as its primary foci.

Chapter 6: General Discussion

Since the initial criminalisation of stalking in California in 1990, researchers have attempted to improve understanding of this multifaceted crime. Stalking is a combination of various behaviours, some of which may independently seem innocuous (e.g. sending unwanted gifts or unsolicited love letters, making phone calls to the victim or sending messages; De Smet et al., 2011) whilst others may be more obviously harmful (e.g. threats, property damage, isolating the victim from family and friends; Malsch et al., 2011; Spitzberg, 2017). It is the combination of these behaviours, as well as their repetitive nature, that constitutes stalking.

Stalking is said to be a form of coercive control (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Stark, 2013), and therefore stalking offenders are also known to engage in a variety of other coercively controlling behaviours in addition to stalking, particularly when the victim is an intimate or ex-intimate partner (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Stark, 2013). Research has repeatedly demonstrated the dangers of stalking and coercive control, with studies showing links between stalking, coercive control, and deleterious effects that include serious violence and even homicide, PTSD, sleep issues, intense fear, and numerous other psychological effects that continue long after the stalking and coercively controlling methods have ceased (Campbell et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2002; Dressing et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2019; Logan & Walker, 2010; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2005; Sheehan et al., 2015). Given these negative effects and potential harms faced by the victims, researchers have endeavoured to explore this complex criminal behaviour in order to gain a better understanding of the victims, the offenders, the nature of the crime, and the associated risks. Though significant progress has been made since the influx of research in the 1990's, there remain numerous areas for further investigation.

Perhaps one of the earliest and most researched elements of stalking is the investigation of associated danger. Therefore, research exploring the link between stalking and violence is not sparse. Like stalking, however, violence is not a homogenous construct (James & Farnham, 2003). While research has focused heavily on highlighting the link between stalking and violence, studies have neglected to separate the different severities of violence. As noted by James and Farnham (2003), many prior studies have categorised polarising incidents such as a mild push, and a kick to the face as the same thing that falls under a general category of 'violence'. In addition to this, studies have tended to focus on physical violence, as the criminal justice system typically relies on visible evidence of harm (e.g. bruises) for prosecution (Stark, 2007). Given that stalking offenders often engage in

behaviours that do not leave visible injury, which are argued to often be more harmful when experienced repeatedly than if the victim were to experience an isolated physical attack (Crossman et al., 2016; Korkodeilou, 2017; McMahon et al., 2020), the lack of distinction between physical/non-physical violence and the emphasis on researching physically violent acts has resulted in a significant gap in the literature.

Similarly, there is a paucity of research exploring stalking in the context of other coercively controlling behaviours. Given that stalking of intimate and ex-intimate partners is often motivated by attempting to regain control of the victim/relationship or to prevent the victim from forming new relationships (De Smet et al., 2011; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2013), neglecting to explore stalking in the context of other coercively controlling behaviours is likely to result in an incomplete understanding of this multifaceted crime. Finally, whilst a few studies have specifically attempted to assess how quickly stalkers reoffend, as well as the risks associated with reoffending, these existing studies have utilised a variety of different definitions as to what constitutes a stalking reoffence (Eke et al., 2011; Malsch et al., 2011; Mohandie et al., 2006; Rosenfeld, 2003). Given the persistent and continued nature of stalking, and the widely ranging conclusions about stalking recidivism, further investigation is needed in order to understand the differences in results depending on the recidivism definition employed.

The aims of this thesis were to expand current understanding of stalking and related coercively controlling behaviours by exploring various severities of stalking violence and related risk factors, numerous elements of coercive control, including before and after separation from a relationship, and the differing operational definitions of recidivism and consequent differences in recidivism time and associated factors. By addressing these gaps in the research and allowing for an expanded understanding of what is already known about stalking and coercive control, it is anticipated that the conclusions from these studies may assist in informing current practices for identification of stalking victims/offenders, prevention of stalking related harms, and allocation of resources that may assist victims and first responders in recognising signs of stalking and coercive control.

The results of this thesis demonstrate the importance of categorising violence into levels of severity, as previous research has yielded mixed findings with regards to the factors that are associated with increased risk of violence. The thesis results suggested that perpetrator jealousy, the victim's own belief that the perpetrator would cause them injury, as well as indications of previous physical harm towards the victim were associated with violence that was higher in severity (see Chapter 2, study 1). Interestingly, the results also

revealed that it was the absence of prior domestic violence charges that was significantly correlated with a higher severity of violence incidents. While this was inconsistent with studies that explored violence as a homogenous construct (Brewster, 2000; Rosenfeld, 2004), the relationship between absence of prior domestic violence charges and higher risk of violence was also found in James and Farnham's (2003) study, where the authors deconstructed violence into varied levels of seriousness. As noted by James and Farnham (2003), a simple explanation for these results may be that perpetrators who engage in repeated, yet mild attacks of violence tend to be less socially integrated (e.g., unemployed), more socially marginalised, and less inhibited, and therefore tend to have a history of domestic violence. On the other hand, those engaging in more serious violence tended to be better integrated socially and had no history of domestic violence charges, yet they engaged in more serious and less habitual attacks. It may also be that those without a police contact history feel that they are not being as closely monitored compared to those who have repeated police contacts, and may therefore engage in more serious acts.

Overall, this demonstrates the importance of exploring violence severities, rather than violence as a homogenous construct. In addition to this, the results also indicated that separation was associated with lower violence severity, a finding that appears to be inconsistent with previous research indicating an increased risk of harm upon separation (Logan et al., 2008; Mechanic et al., 2000; Melton, 2007). However, when disseminating violence into physical and non-physical, it makes sense that serious physical violence is more difficult to perpetrate without close proximity to the victim (Mechanic et al., 2000), and therefore the stalker might instead be relying on behaviours such as repeated communications instead. This consequently demonstrates the need for exploration of related behaviours (i.e. other coercively controlling behaviours) beyond physical violence, particularly before and after separation, which was explored in study 3 (Chapter 4).

Interestingly, the results also indicated that child contact, a factor that has not been explored in the context of stalking violence, was significantly associated with decreased severity. These findings suggest that a victim is at a lower risk of harm when child contact issues are present as the victim-perpetrator dyad is likely to be separated. Nevertheless, it appears that the presence of shared children provides the perpetrator with a 'tie' that cannot be completely severed, hence access to the victim is likely, and therefore it may be easier to continue harassing the victim (Hardesty & Chung, 2006; Harrison, 2008). Additionally, previous non-fatal strangulation or an attempt at non-fatal strangulation was also associated with higher violence severity. Previous presence of non-fatal strangulation, a distinctive form

of violence that often leaves no visible mark and is typically utilised to display power over the victim, is known to be linked with increasing aggression, injury, and homicide (Glass et al., 2007; McClane et al., 2001; Thomas et al., 2014). These findings not only emphasised the importance of exploring violence as a heterogenous construct, but also highlighted important risk factors that have previously lacked exploration in the stalking field. These findings also demonstrate the link between different elements of coercive control among stalkers, and suggest the need for further exploration of these behaviours.

The results from this thesis show that stalking victims are at a higher risk of experiencing the coercively controlling, potentially lethal and unique form of violence known as non-fatal strangulation when other elements of coercive control were also present. Specifically, the presence of excessive perpetrator jealousy, victim isolation from supports, victim fear, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them, and the perception of the presence of coercive control were all significantly associated with a higher likelihood of having experienced non-fatal strangulation (see Chapter 3, study 2). Whilst a high prevalence of non-fatal strangulation in intimate partner violence has been identified in previous studies (Messing et al., 2018; Wilbur et al., 2001), non-fatal strangulation has received little attention in the context of stalking, and no study has assessed non-fatal strangulation alongside a variety of other coercively controlling variables amongst stalkers. The prevalence rates of non-fatal strangulation vary widely in the research (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2014; Glass et al., 2008; Messing et al., 2018; Pritchard et al., 2018) and this often depends on the sample utilised (e.g. intimate partners, women in domestic violence shelters, incident reports). Given that the findings from this chapter indicated that non-fatal strangulation was more likely to have occurred at some point if other elements of coercive control were also indicated, suggests stalking victims are at an increased risk of serious harm.

Non-fatal strangulation has been described by Strack and Gwinn (2011) as walking on the edge of homicide. Not only is this unique form of violence difficult to identify since typically there are no visible injuries (Glass et al., 2008), but the controlling nature of the crime and the likely presence of other facets of coercive control mean that victims may be reluctant to disclose such abuse for fear of repercussions. Given the increased risk of serious harm, lethality, and long-lasting psychological effects, it is imperative for first responders to know what to look for in order to more accurately identify victims at risk, without depending purely on the presence of physical injury or victim disclosure.

While separation between the stalking victim-perpetrator dyad was negatively correlated with physical violence severity in study 3 (Chapter 4), the exploration of coercive

control among separated and non-separated dyads revealed that numerous facets of coercion were positively correlated with separation. Indeed, separation was associated with an increased likelihood of victim fear and issues with child contact. Contrastingly, separation was also associated with a decreased likelihood of reported perpetrator jealousy, victim isolation, and general perception of the presence of coercive control. By including a wide array of variables that constitute coercive control, these findings revealed that some coercive control elements may continue and perhaps increase after separating from the perpetrator, while others appear to be more likely to occur whilst still in the relationship. This therefore demonstrates the importance of exploring coercive control with consideration of the various elements of coercion, rather than treating coercive control as a homogenous construct. These results provide clarification as to why some studies have yielded mixed findings about coercive control, as it is likely that studies might be missing the different associations and effects if the elements of coercive control are all grouped into a single category. Additionally, this may help explain the varied results that studies have reported about separation and risk of harm among stalkers. As indicated by these results, it is suggested that while physical violence may decrease following separation (perhaps due to proximity issues), other non-physical abuse may continue or increase following separation. It makes sense that after cessation of a relationship it may be more difficult to physically assault the victim, and the victim is likely to be reconnecting with supports like family and friends, consequently leading to the victim feeling less isolated, less perpetrator jealousy, and less control. However, the findings also reveal that victims are more fearful when separated and experience more child contact issues, which may be due to the fear of not know what the perpetrator will do next (Logan, 2019; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2013), and understandably may experience ongoing contacts regarding legal factors such as custody and visitation of mutual children, which itself may be providing the perpetrator with an ongoing gateway to the victim and their children.

Finally, the findings of this thesis reveal that stalkers are persistent in nature and reoffend quickly, though it is evident that not all stalkers reoffend (see Chapter 5, study 4). While previous studies have utilised varied definitions of stalking recidivism when investigating reoffending, the results of this thesis reveal that the speed at which stalking offenders reoffend, as well as the characteristics that predict reoffending, depend on the way stalking recidivism is defined. Given that stalking itself is not a homogenous act, stalking recidivism definitions have ranged from specific (such as any renewed harassment; Rosenfeld, 2004), to more broad definitions that include harassment and any stalking related

crimes such as property damage (Malsch et al., 2011). Using a large sample and an observation period spanning 14 years, the results of this thesis showed that defining stalking recidivism as any renewed stalking charge yielded the fastest recidivism rate and low overall reoffending rate, whereas defining stalking recidivism as renewed stalking, harassment, and related charges (such as property damage) yielded a similar yet slower recidivism rate, and a high reoffending rate. Similarly, the results showed that age and prior criminal history were predictive of recidivism when recidivism was defined more broadly, providing a potential reason for mixed results in prior research, but also suggesting the need for a further in-depth investigation of the predictors.

As breach of restraining order was the most common crime committed by the perpetrators in this sample, it is unsurprising that renewed stalking or harassment charges yield faster recidivism rates compared to the rates seen when recidivism is inclusive of related offences such as assault and threats. Whilst the reasons for this are yet to be explored in depth, it may be that the ease with which it is possible to identify a breached restraining order compared to prosecuting the offender for property damage, assault, or threats, may be at least partially an influence on the slower recidivism time when recidivism included related offences. In addition to this, the results showed that stalking offenders engage in a wide variety of crimes, suggesting that versatility and non-specialisation of criminal behaviour is common among stalkers, a finding that is consistent with prior research (Hilton & Eke, 2016; Piquero et al., 2012). The findings also highlight that criminal behaviours related to stalking do indeed continue even when action has been taken to separate the victim and perpetrator though means such as restraint orders. Indeed, this supports the notion that stalkers are coercively controlling in nature, and that separation, or perhaps “loss of control” over the victim may lead to alternative ways of attempting to regain control of the victim or relationship (De Smet et al., 2011; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013). This is supported by Sheridan (2001), who reported that stalking severity increased following police intervention. Whilst this does not suggest that police should not intervene, it does present important considerations about the need for support, awareness, and monitoring for any continued harassment even after the dyad has been separated or police have intervened. The wide range of crimes committed by the offenders suggests the importance of recognising crimes that are related to stalking, but may independently appear tangential.

In summary, the findings of this thesis reveal that the risk of experiencing higher severity violence is increased with presence of perpetrator jealousy, victim beliefs about harm, child contact issues, previous non-fatal strangulation, prior victim abuse, as well as the

absence of criminal history. It was also found that victims were at an increased likelihood of having experienced non-fatal strangulation or an attempt at non-fatal strangulation when other coercively controlling elements were present, including perpetrator jealousy, victim isolation, victim fear, victim beliefs, and perception of the presence of coercive control. Upon exploring coercive control in stalking victim-perpetrator dyads who were separated and those who were not, it was found that separation was associated with increased likelihood of fear and child contact, but decreased likelihood of excessive jealousy, victim isolation, and general perception of the presence of coercive control. Finally, when exploring stalking recidivism, it is evident that the varied definitions employed to operationalise stalking reoffending can yield differences in recidivism rates, as well as differences in predictor significance. Together, these findings highlight the complex nature of stalking and other related facets of coercive control. The findings also demonstrate the importance of moving away from reliance on visible acts of crime that leave photographable marks, and moving towards an increased awareness and accurate identification of victims who are within a condition of coercive entrapment, and consequently at high risk of harm even if separated from the perpetrator.

6.1 Unique Contributions

The studies in this thesis offer a number of unique contributions to the existing literature that assist in understanding stalking and related coercively controlling factors. Study 1 expanded on the current literature base by exploring stalking violence not as a homogenous construct, but as a heterogenous construct consisting of varied severity attacks. Additionally, the study also explored numerous factors that have previously been shown to relate to violence risk, as well as two unique factors that had not yet been explored in the context of stalking violence. These were non-fatal strangulation and child contact issues.

Study 2 focused on exploring various elements of coercive control among stalkers, which indicated an increased likelihood of experiencing the dangerous act of non-fatal strangulation. Whilst the seriousness and presence of non-fatal strangulation has been demonstrated in domestic violence situations, this study uniquely contributed to the literature by being the first to explore non-fatal strangulation in conjunction with a variety of other coercive control elements simultaneous within a stalking population. The study yielded novel findings about the associations between non-fatal strangulation and other facets of coercive control among stalkers. The exploration of coercive control among stalkers is very limited, and given the demonstration of numerous coercively controlling tactics among stalking offenders, further research of coercive control amongst this population is necessary.

Similarly, study 3 explored numerous elements of coercive control within separated and non-separated stalking victim-perpetrator dyads. Research on coercive control before and after separation is limited, and studies that do exist have yielded inconsistent results as they typically assess coercive control as a homogenous construct. Through the inclusion of multiple elements of coercive control, the study was able to clarify that elements such as fear and child contact issues were more likely to be reported among separated dyads, whereas perpetrator jealousy, victim isolation, and general perception of coercive control were more likely to be reported among dyads that were not separated. These results shed light on the mixed findings on coercive control to date, demonstrating that it is necessary to include the various facets that comprise coercive control in order to understand control among stalkers, as the individual components yield different effects.

Finally, the fourth study explored recidivism in stalking, an area that has received little attention with few studies analysing stalking recidivism directly. This study aimed not to replicate the few existing papers, but rather, to contribute to an understanding of the varied results that previous studies have yielded due to variations in the way they defined stalking recidivism. Therefore, study 4 contributed uniquely to the research field by being the first study to use a single large dataset in order to measure recidivism using four different operational definitions, and disseminating the resulting variations in recidivism rates.

6.2 Implications of the Current Research

6.2.1 For understanding stalking

Perhaps one of the most pertinent theoretical implications of the current research is the expanded understanding of the complex amalgamation of behaviours and other elements involved in stalking offending. Stalking has typically been explored in the context of intimate partner violence, yet the recognition of stalking as a form of coercive control has been neglected. Through exploring stalking not only in the context of intimate partner violence, but also in the context of related coercively controlling behaviours, the current research offers a more comprehensive understanding of stalking perpetration and highlights the combination of potentially harmful behaviours likely to be experienced by victims of stalking, which typically lead to long term psychological effects even after the abuse has ceased (Davis et al., 2002; Dressing et al., 2005; Logan & Walker, 2010; Pathe & Mullen, 1997; Purcell et al., 2005). While there are variations in what constitutes stalking behaviour, the results of this thesis are helpful in identifying stalking offending. By recognising stalking as a form of

coercive control, stalking may be more easily and accurately identified with the awareness of other typically co-occurring factors of coercive control.

6.2.2 For risk assessment

Though the research included in this thesis did not specifically evaluate a risk assessment for stalking and coercive control victimisation, the findings from the results in this thesis can be utilised to inform the assessment of stalking and coercive control risk. Factors associated with stalking violence, non-fatal strangulation, as well as the elements of coercive control more likely to be experienced before and after separation from a relationship provide important indications of 'red flags' indicative of harm. These should be taken into consideration by first responders and those assessing the risk of harm that the victim may be exposed to.

If relying on the presence of physical injury and visible marks of abuse, victims at significant risk of harm may not be identified, and therefore not be given an opportunity for protection. It is consequently important to be aware of high harm behaviours and indicators that have been shown to occur in stalking situations, which are also known to increase the likelihood of serious harm to the victim. Recognition of such factors is also important even after the victim has separated from the perpetrator, and therefore risk should continue to be assessed even after cessation of a relationship. Consideration of the elements of coercive control and the predictors of severe violence and recidivism of stalking, as well as the non-specialisation of crime and fast time to reoffending found in this thesis, can provide a foundational understanding of the variables that should be actively attended to in order to formulate a comprehensive understanding of risk of harm. As it is unlikely that victims will openly and spontaneously disclose presence of coercively controlling behaviour (whether that be because of a lack of awareness or because of the fear of consequences), risk assessment that considers the presence of coercively controlling elements often not visible to the naked eye might help risk assessors to ask relevant questions, and identify signs that might otherwise be missed.

6.2.3 For first responders, victims

While police officers in WA are trained to respond to a variety of domestic incidents, they are not specifically trained in stalking or coercive control risk assessment. Likewise, previous research has indicated repeatedly that victims may minimise the severity and associated risk of such behaviours (Ameral et al., 2017; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014), and might not have an awareness of what constitutes stalking and coercive control. Therefore, the

findings of the studies included in this thesis may assist first responders and victims in being aware of what constitutes stalking and coercive control, but also in increasing understanding of the signs of these harmful behaviours. Earlier and more accurate identification of stalking and coercive control may result in better prevention of physical and psychological abuse, and the consequent physical and psychological injury. Such early identification might be facilitated through the provision of education and training about stalking and other coercively controlling behaviours, with a particular focus on recognition of the nature and impact of these behaviours.

6.2.4 For enhancing evidence based policing practices

Evidence based policing is the process of applying research findings to inform and improve strategic and tactical police procedures, with the aim of more effectively and efficiently reducing crime (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). The findings of the studies found in this thesis may be used by police officers to assist in identifying victims at risk of harm, and in identifying stalking offending. Incident report variables can be structured in a way that makes it easier for police officers to identify combinations of variables that indicate high risk of harm, and consequent allocation of resources and assistance, as opposed to viewing each of the variables found in the incident report as individual and 'stand-alone' factors. While this does not constitute a risk assessment per se, the awareness of elements indicating stalking and coercive control may help in more accurate identification of a crime that is often missed as it commonly involves behaviours that leave no physical trace. Regular training on the identification of stalking should also be implemented, potentially with the use of case examples to demonstrate the wide range of behaviours that might constitute stalking, and other coercively controlling behaviours.

6.2.5 For future policy

Police officers are crucial for the identification and protection of victims of stalking and coercive control. Despite best efforts, however, police officers are often limited in what they can do to assist victims, particularly when it comes to prosecution of offenders as the criminal justice system adopts a violence model whereby prosecution is increasingly difficult without the presence of visible injury (Stark, 2007; Weller et al., 2013). Therefore, the presence of research such as that found in this thesis, may have implications for the development and passing of future policies and criminalisation of acts that go beyond physical injury, and cause arguably more psychological harm than isolated physical incidents (Crossman et al., 2016). The effects of coercive control and stalking have been clearly

identified in the literature (Acquadro Maran & Varetto, 2018; Fleming et al., 2013; Galeazzi et al., 2009; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001; Korkodeilou, 2017; Krammer et al., 2007; Logan & Walker, 2010; Matos et al., 2019; Sheridan, 2001), and the studies in this thesis assist in demonstrating the complex and co-occurring nature of various coercively controlling behaviours among stalking-victim dyads that span over long periods of time and persist even after separation from a relationship. It is hoped that these findings will assist in informing future policies for the protection of victims and prosecution of coercively controlling offenders, similar to the criminalisation of coercive control that has already come to fruition in other countries such as England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland.

6.3 Strengths of the Current Research

In addition to the numerous aforementioned unique contributions to the research field, the current thesis contains a number of strengths. The dataset that was utilised in this thesis was retrieved from WAPol, and comprised a large number of incident reports. Specifically, the dataset included 13,769 individual stalking-related incident reports, and 1,036 stalking charge reports. This large dataset exceeds that of many stalking and coercive control studies, and is therefore able to provide more generalisable and accurate results. In addition to the large sample size, the dataset spanned across 14 years. Though the range of observation time varied for each offender, the long span of observation overall allowed for the important investigation of repetition of offences, as well as the timing of these offences. Though stalking and related offences tend to happen shortly after separation from a victim, the studies in this thesis revealed that stalking can continue for years. In addition to this, the dataset included all previous charges of identified offenders. This allowed for a comprehensive investigation into crimes committed by offenders which are related to stalking, and might therefore provide further insight into predicting stalking, understanding the various criminal behaviours that might represent stalking, as well as reoffending following a stalking offence. The utilisation of a police dataset consisting of incident reports is another important strength of this thesis, as Fox et al. (2011) described that one of the key shortfalls of stalking literature is that a large amount of studies rely on college samples. Therefore, there is a shortage of stalking and coercive control research that derive conclusions based on non-student samples.

Beyond the utilisation of a large police dataset spanning years, the current thesis has also comprehensively explored and analysed numerous elements of coercive control, an aspect of research that has been neglected, particularly in the stalking field. Though it is difficult to concretely define coercive control, the inclusion of multiple theoretically informed variables comprising coercive control has allowed for a clearer understanding of

previously mixed findings, and provided a strong foundation for future work on coercive control.

6.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results of this thesis should be interpreted with the consideration of some limitations. Firstly, the dataset comprises variables that are primarily binary. Some of the factors that were measured in this thesis, such as mental health and fear, are more likely to lie on a continuum rather than being accurately represented as a binary factor. Nevertheless, these studies provide an important foundation upon which future studies may further build and expand on by exploring each of the binary variables in more depth. Secondly, the nature of the dataset does not allow for exploration of effects and changes in these effects through time. The associations found in this thesis, e.g. associations between stalking violence severity and factors such as jealousy, threats, etc. may therefore change at different time points in/after the relationship.

Another limitation that is important to consider is the nature of the dataset. Although many strengths have been identified in using a police dataset, it must also be acknowledged that the nature of the recording process means that it is not pragmatic for officers to systematically ask each victim about each of the variables found in the incident reports. This means that it is possible that factors have been missed, or simply not discussed by the victim and police officer, and therefore not indicated in the incident report. Whilst officers are indeed trained to recognise and respond to a wide variety of incidents and factors relating to domestic violence, officers do not receive specific training with regards to recognising stalking or coercive control risk.

The current thesis utilises a dataset where stalking has been indicated. Therefore, the generalisability of the conclusions formulated in these studies is somewhat limited to a stalking context. Generalisation of these findings to coercively controlling offenders overall should consequently be done so with caution. Finally, the nature of coercive control and likely reluctance to disclose experiences of coercively controlling behaviours, and the difficulty of identifying behaviours that do not leave marks on the body, means that some of the factors measured in this thesis may have been under-reported. Whilst it is a difficult task to know the true prevalence of coercive control and stalking, it is likely that the actual behaviours are higher than what has been reported in the incident reports.

The current thesis provides additional insight into the coercive control and stalking literature. However, there remain a number of areas that warrant further investigation in future studies. Firstly, future works should expand on the current findings by utilising a

longitudinal design and exploring factors related to stalking and coercive control over time. This may be particularly pertinent for the exploration of stalking behaviours and coercive control during a relationship, as well as during and after the separation of a relationship as studies have suggested that risk of harm changes with time (Melton, 2007; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). Additionally, future works should delve deeper into the understanding of factors such as fear and mental health, by exploring these factors as continuous variables rather than binary variables. Likewise, coercive control has been explored as an amalgamation of various facets, however a standardised definition of coercive control does not currently exist, and future works may seek to investigate additional relevant elements that were not included in this these. Furthermore, given that coercive control is often seen in cases of domestic violence, and is not exclusive to stalking situations, future works should seek to explore the elements of coercive control investigated in this thesis in other situations such as intimate partner violence. In order to expand current understandings of recidivism, it is perhaps impractical to advise that future works should adopt a standardised definition of stalking recidivism, however increased awareness of the variance in definitions and the consequent results yielded may allow for more insightful conclusions about recidivism rates among stalkers. As the thesis focused on comparing various operational definitions of stalking recidivism, few predictors were incorporated. Future works might expand on the current findings by conducting research that incorporates a wider variety of recidivism predictors.

It is recommended that future studies focus more specifically on assessing current and novel protocols for the assessment, identification, and intervention of victims' stalking and coercive control. Whilst this thesis provides a foundation to the 'red flags' that might indicate a victim is at risk of harm, the next step is to create evidence based strategies for first responders to assist with the identification and assistance of victims of stalking and coercive control, and to evaluate the efficacy of these. In addition to this, future works should investigate which resources and strategies are the most helpful in preventing and treating stalking and coercive control related harm. However, without the assistance of the criminal justice system and laws to prosecute crimes like coercive control, police officers may be limited in what they can do. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings from this thesis may 1) help to identify and assist victims of stalking and coercive control, and 2) contribute to the foundational knowledge needed for the development and the passing of laws that move away from a physical violence model, and towards recognition of the deleterious, long-lasting impact that coercively controlling behaviours such as stalking may have on a victim.

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Appendix A

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Risk Factors for Severe Violence in Intimate Partner Stalking Situations: An Analysis of Police Records

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Abstract

Stalkers can be violent, and empirical studies have sought to identify factors associated with violence perpetrated by the stalker. Most of these works view physical violence as a homogeneous construct and do not differentiate between moderate and severe violence. The present study aims to identify correlates of nonviolent, moderate, and severe physical violence within an archival sample of 369 domestically violent police incident reports, where stalking behavior was indicated. The incident reports utilized in this study occurred between 2013 and 2017, among intimate or ex-intimate partners. The present study explored 12 independent variables that have yielded mixed findings in previous stalking violence literature, as well as two previously untested factors of nonfatal strangulation and child contact. The police records were coded for severity of physical violence using the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale and analyzed using a logistic regression. The regression analysis revealed significant independent associations between the outcome variable of severe physical violence and child contact, history of domestic violence, separation, nonfatal strangulation, jealousy, previous injury, and victim belief of potential harm. These results may help produce pragmatic

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recommendations for law enforcement agencies and other relevant bodies who seek to identify victims at risk of severe violence, increasing the potential for early intervention and prevention of physical harm. The awareness of factors that are shown to be related to serious physical violence may assist first responders in recognizing which victims may be at risk of serious harm, as well as effectively allocating any appropriate resources to reduce and prevent harm.

Keywords
stalking, intimate partner violence, risk factors

Unsolicited love letters, numerous phone calls, unwanted gifts, continuous messages—these forms of intrusive behavior can appear innocuous and are commonly experienced, often after the cessation of a relationship (De Smet, Buysse, & Brondeel, 2011). These seemingly harmless behaviors often do not constitute a crime when considered individually, but if repeated in a pattern, they can constitute stalking (James & MacKenzie, 2017).

In a recent report by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW; 2015), it was found that 1.1 million individuals between the ages of 16 and 59 had been stalked within a period of 1 year, with approximately 20% of these victims filing a stalking complaint to the police. Such large numbers of complaints, some of which may seem innocuous, make it difficult for police officers to ascertain level of risk within stalking incidents. As such, the intention of this research is to inform evidence-based policing practices, which are practices that are grounded in empirical research and used to inform scientifically supported procedures, and discourage ineffective procedures (Bullock & Tilley, 2009). As research has established a consistent positive relationship between stalking and intimate partner violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; McEwan, Mullen, & Purcell, 2007; Miller, 2012; Norris, Huss, & Palarea, 2011; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007), the potential for violence toward victims of intimate partner stalking underlines the critical importance for law enforcement agents to be successful in identifying victims at high risk and intervene early using empirically supported practices.

Stalking and Violence

Precise rates of violence within stalking samples are difficult to ascertain due to inconsistency in definitions of both violence and stalking, as well as methodological considerations such as the measures employed. Mullen, Pathe, Purcell,

and Stuart (1999) found that 36% of the stalkers in their study (n = 145) had physically assaulted their victims. Mullen et al. (1999) defined physical assault in a very general sense, including pushing, slapping, stabbing, and rape within a single category. In contrast, Meloy, Davis, and Lovette (2001) also looked at predicting risk factors for violence in a stalking sample (n = 59) and found the rate of violence to be 60%. Violence was defined as an aggressive and intentional act toward the victim or their property. This means that the category of physical violence did not differentiate between acts such as hitting the victim's car with a fist and breaking the victim's jaw. Although this research highlighted some important relationships between violence and stalking, it can be argued that violence should not be measured as a homogeneous construct.

James and Farnham (2003) suggested that violence is not a homogeneous construct, as acts can differ in severity (e.g., slapping vs. stabbing). They examined whether associations of violence in a stalking sample were the same for both severe and less serious violence. Results revealed that minor and severe violence were associated with different variables, supporting the notion that violence should not be treated as a single category. There is clear variation in research parameters that adds to difficulty in understanding the true nature of violence within stalking cases; however, consensus lies in the importance of early identification of stalking victims at risk of serious violence.

Research on cases of homicide and stalking has found that stalking can precede fatal violence, with a U.S. study showing that 76% of femicides (n = 141) were associated with prior stalking (McFarlane et al., 1999). As the presence of violence in stalking has been well established in the literature, research has focused on identifying the risk factors for violence perpetration. One of the most consistent findings within the literature is that intimate/ex-intimate partners are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing stalking violence than those stalked by strangers, acquaintances, friends, or family members (Farnham, James, & Cantrell, 2000; McEwan et al., 2007; Mohandie, Meloy, McGowan, & Williams, 2006; Resnick, 2007; Sheridan & Davies, 2001).

Risk Factors for Stalking Violence

A meta-analysis of 25 data sets explored risk factors for violence in stalking cases (Churcher & Nesca, 2013). Overt threats of harm were associated with a higher risk of stalking-related violence, a finding that had also been produced by Rosenfeld (2004). Churcher and Nesca (2013) also found that the presence of a criminal record and/or previous violence were associated with a higher risk of stalking violence; however, these findings are contrasted by research which has reported no significant associations between criminal history and stalking violence risk (Rosenfeld, 2004; Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002).

In particular, James and Farnham (2003) found that the absence of a violent history was associated with serious violence among stalkers. These authors suggested this might be because those perpetrators who commit serious offenses have very different personal profiles to those who commit minor offenses.

Mental health also seems to have an equivocal association with violence risk among stalking perpetrators. Roberts (2005) found no significant relationship between mental health and risk of violence, whereas Rosenfeld (2004) and Churcher and Nesca (2013) found the absence of psychosis and presence of personality disorder to be associated with risk of stalking violence. Rosenfeld (2004) speculated that this might be partially explained by the potential for psychotic stalkers to exhibit erotomanic delusions, and consequently be seeking romantic engagement rather than seeking to harm the victim. An important consideration when assessing mental health as a risk factor is the prior relationship between victim and perpetrator, as research shows that perpetrators who stalk strangers tend to have much higher rates of serious mental health problems, compared with ex-intimate partners who stalk a victim they were once in a relationship with (Farnham et al., 2000; Mohandie et al., 2006).

Typically, substance abuse has been a well-established risk factor for stalking violence (Churcher & Nesca, 2013; Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009; Mullen et al., 1999; Rosenfeld, 2004), although James and Farnham (2003) found no significant associations between substance abuse and serious stalking violence. Other risk factors that have been associated with stalking violence include separation (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Kienlen, 1998; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2000; Melton, 2007; Walker & Meloy, 1998) and fear (Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012), although fear is a factor few studies have explored. Like fear, the association between suicidality and stalking violence has rarely been examined, although research has shown that stalkers have a higher rate of suicide than the general population (McEwan, Mullen, & MacKenzie, 2010), and risk assessments commonly outline suicidal ideation as a "red flag" for serious violence (MacKenzie et al., 2009; Meloy, Hoffman, Guldimann, & James, 2012). Victim's perceptions of risk have been explored in domestic violence and often used as an assessment of danger (Campbell, 2004). Jealousy is another factor that has been the focus of few studies, although Roberts (2005) found that perpetrator jealousy was a significant predictor of increased stalking violence. Jealousy has been associated with family violence (FV)/domestic violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005), and is a well-established characteristic of stalkers (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling, 2000; Roberts, 2002; Silva, Derecho, Leong, & Ferrari, 2000). Although the research is beginning to shed light on

the importance of such potential predictors in ascertaining risk of violence in stalking situations, the results are still somewhat inconsistent, and there remain potential risk factors that have not yet been explored (Churcher & Nesca, 2013).

One such factor is the contact that the perpetrator has with any children he or she may share with the victim. Harrison (2008) found that female victims of FV felt there was a higher potential for abuse as a result of government-appointed contact arrangements, and consequently access to the victim. Research also shows that stalking behavior and violence increase when the victim separates from the relationship (Melton, 2007). This increase in potentially harmful behavior could be the perpetrator's attempt to stop the victim from separating (Mahoney, 1991). If the relationship is not completely severed, due to access to the child, perhaps the perpetrator's need to control and harass the victim declines. The current study aims to explore this idea further and provides preliminary suggestions about the potential association between child contact and violence severity in a sample of stalkers within the context of an intimate/ex-intimate relationship.

A second factor that remains unexplored is the presence of nonfatal strangulation as a potential risk factor for more severe violence in stalking situations. Strangulation is a type of violence that is quite distinct from most other violent acts, as it is a gendered form of violence and often leaves no visible injury (Messing, Patch, Wilson, Kelen, & Campbell, 2018; New Zealand Law Commission, 2016). It is believed to be a way of exerting power and control over the victim by showing how easy it is for the perpetrator to take away the victim's ability to breathe (Thomas, Joshi, & Sorenson, 2014). Indeed, risk of homicide is 7 times higher for victims who have previously experienced nonfatal strangulation than those who have not (Glass et al., 2008). A history of this unique form of violence may be an important consideration for a potential association with increased violence severity in intimate partner stalking situations. These unexplored factors, as well as the inconsistent conclusions regarding previously identified risk factors, suggest a need for further analysis and exploration, particularly where violence is not treated as a homogeneous variable.

The Current Study

The current study aims to analyze whether previously identified risk factors, and the previously unexplored factors of child contact and nonfatal strangulation, are significantly associated with violence severity in a sample of intimate and ex-intimate partners where stalking was also recorded. The study also aims to provide evidence-based conclusions that may be utilized pragmatically by

law enforcement agencies, employing a data set of records provided by the Western Australia Police Force. From the standpoint of evidence-based policing, it is anticipated that this work may provide police officers with strategies to identify which perpetrators should be flagged due to a potential for serious harm toward the victim, as a result of the systematic testing of potential risk factors within police incident reports. These scientifically driven and pragmatic recommendations may encourage officers to rely less on routine and personal experience and potentially aid early intervention and prevention of harm to victims of stalking.

Method

Sample

The final sample for this study comprised 369 incident reports. A total of 30 cases were deleted from the data set. Cases were deleted either because the narrative description was too vague, for example, "assaulted," whereby severity could not be determined, or because the relationship between the victim and perpetrator was neither intimate nor ex-intimate. Intimate partners included partners who had a casual relationship, "on/off" relationships, a current intimate relationship, were living together, or were separated. The data set did not include any dyads that were family, acquaintance, or strangers. Consequently, the term "intimate partner" is used throughout this work, which refers to victim–perpetrator partners who were at the time the police report was created, or were at one point, intimate partners.

Data Set Procedures and Variables

The data set was obtained with the help and permission of Western Australia Police Force. The current data set comprises Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIRs), which are recorded accounts of disturbances in a domestic setting, completed by the officer attending. The reports in this data set are from August 18, 2013 (the date at which current FVIR recording procedures began) to August 25, 2017. Reports were only selected if stalking was identified as a present factor by the officer completing the report. According to Section 338E of the Western Australian Criminal Code, stalking behavior is defined as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person. Within the FVIRs, there is an allocated area for officers to write detailed descriptions of the incident. To assess violence severity using these narratives, the researchers required a sample that contained an even distribution of violence. As a result, 199 narratives were randomly chosen, which contained

a majority of physically nonviolent reports, and 200 narratives were individually chosen by the Western Australia Police Force research team to achieve more even severity groups. A member of the Western Australia Police Force research team individually redacted a total of 399 narrative reports.

In addition to the free-narrative component of the FVIR reports, officers may indicate the presence/absence of 42 various factors relevant to the incident, as well as the date of the incident, to formulate a detailed account of the incident and highlight pertinent factors relating to the event, victim, and perpetrator. As these factors are only present in FVIRs, and do not appear in reports produced in response to a case of stalking, it was deemed necessary to gather a sample of FV reports in which stalking was indicated, as the analysis would not be possible if a sample of stalking reports was utilized. The factors included in this analysis are prior FV, victim fear, victim belief that perpetrator will kill the victim, victim belief that perpetrator will injure the victim, victim belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves, offender drug use, offender alcohol use, offender-related mental health problems, separation, previous harm to victim, child contact issues, offender jealousy, threats, and victim nonfatal strangulation. Victim nonfatal strangulation and child contact are novel factors that have not been tested for associations with stalking violence in earlier works. The remaining factors have previously been seen in the literature, although it is evident that the findings about their relationship with stalking violence are somewhat inconsistent and in need of further investigation.

Missing data. The FVIR contains 42 items, 34 of which are mandatory fields that cannot be left blank (four of these are conditional and indicate periods of time), whereas the other eight items are completed optionally and may be left blank. The majority of the FVIR variables are categorical and can be completed by choosing "yes"—this factor was present, "no"—this factor was not present, or "unknown"—this is unknown/not asked/not relevant. This is not a typical categorical data set where multiple options are available (e.g., marriage status), but rather the categories merely indicate the presence of a variable (e.g., was a weapon used). Officers who complete the FVIRs do not read out each individual item to the victim or perpetrator in the form of an interview. Instead, the officer talks to the victim/perpetrator/other relevant parties at the scene to get an understanding of the event that has occurred and then proceeds to complete all necessary paperwork, including the FVIR. This means that the majority of officers will not complete each individual optional item in the FVIR as it is not practical, but will instead flag all the factors which were clearly present based on the narrative that was told to the officer by the perpetrator/victim/other relevant party or based on what the officer observed.

Based on this information, the categorical items that are blank or indicated as "no" or "unknown" are not being treated as missing data, but have instead been collapsed into one category—"unclear presence." Those categorical items that contain a "yes" are considered to fall under the category of "clearly present." Hence, categorical items on the FVIR have a binary outcome.

Justification for data selection. The current archival data set was chosen for a number of reasons. The use of an existing data set helps to eliminate common problems that are often seen in data collection, such as participant dropout, insufficient recruitment rates, difficulty in gaining access to relevant participants (e.g., a criminal population), and issues with anonymity. Stalking research often relies on sampling the general population, students, or self-reported victims of stalking. There are a small number of studies from the United States that have utilized police records to assess stalking behavior (Churcher & Nesca, 2013). Palarea, Zona, Lane, and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1999) retrieved files from the Los Angeles Police Department Threat Management Unit to assess stalking victim–offender pairs. Similarly, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) utilized FV crime reports from the Colorado Springs Police Department for the purpose of exploring stalking behavior. Other studies have utilized a combination of resources, including court documents, police files, clinical interviews, psychometric testing, and hospital records (McEwan, Mullen, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2009; Meloy & Boyd, 2003; Meloy, Mohandie, & Green, 2011; Mohandie et al., 2006). Although the majority of these studies are based on data from the United States, studies outside of the United States have utilized police records in the investigation of stalking as evidenced by a study conducted in Belgium, which coded police narratives to identify violence-related factors in stalking (Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009). More recently, research by McEwan, Shea, Nazarewicz, and Senkans (2017) utilized police records and offender accounts to estimate prevalence of intimate partner abuse among a stalking sample in Australia. These studies have expanded current understanding of stalking by utilizing forensic samples, moving beyond typical self-reports and student-based samples, and providing practical recommendations for law enforcement agencies, clinicians, and further research endeavors.

Coding. To analyze correlates of different levels of physical violence, the narratives were first coded numerically, based on the level of violence severity that was described in the incident report narrative. The coding procedure was based on the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS2 is a well-validated measure of intimate partner violence, which will allow for reliable comparisons of violence

Severity	Behavior
Severe	Used a knife or gun on my partner
Severe	Punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt
Severe	Choked my partner
Severe	Slammed my partner against a wall
Severe	Beat up my partner
Severe	Burned or scalded my partner on purpose
Severe	Kicked my partner
Severe	*Drove a car at partner*
Severe	*Rammed vehicle with car while partner inside*
Severe	*Dragged partner on the floor*
Severe	*Bit partner*
Moderate	Threw something at my partner that could hurt
Moderate	Twisted my partner's arm or hair
Moderate	Pushed or shoved my partner
Moderate	Grabbed my partner
Moderate	Slapped my partner
Moderate	*Restrained partner*

Figure 1. CTS2 violence categories with additional items italicized.
Note. CTS2= Revised Conflict Tactics Scale.

across other studies that have utilized this measure. Violence severity was operationalized using the physical violence subscale of the CTS2, into moderate or severe levels (see Figure 1). Additional items were included, as the CTS2 did not encompass all types of physical violence existing within the narratives. Those that were added are seen in italics in Figure 1. These additional items were coded into either moderate or severe categories based on the severity of the injury likely to be inflicted on the victim as a result of the violent behavior. Figure 1 outlines the coding categories.

The coding process categorized violent incidents into "moderate" (1) or "severe" (2). Alternatively, those incidents that contained no mention of any violence, for example, if an offender breached a restraining order, were coded as "nonviolent" (0). These categories are mutually exclusive, and in cases where both severe and moderate violence occurred, the narrative was coded based on the behavior of the highest severity. In cases where there was significant confusion about the actual event (e.g., offender and victim had contradicting stories with no evidence for either story), or if the narrative was too vague to accurately determine severity, no severity coding was assigned to that case. The coded levels of severity refer to violence against the victim

only, and not the perpetrator or any third parties. A second researcher coded a small sample ($n = 20$) of the data set to check for interrater reliability, with all 20 reports matching the code given by the first researcher.

Variables. The outcome variable in this study is violence severity, whereby a score of "0" indicates a *nonviolent incident*, "1" indicates a *moderately violent incident*, and a score of "2" indicates a *severely violent incident*. Each score pertained only to physical violence. As the dependent variable for this research question is ordinal, an ordinal regression was deemed the most appropriate analysis to test for any significant correlations between the independent variables and violence severity (Liu, 2009). The binary independent variables analyzed in this study included presence of prior domestic violence, victim fear, the victim's belief that perpetrator will injure/kill them, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves, perpetrator problem drug use, perpetrator problem alcohol use, perpetrator mental health issues, separation, previous harm to victim, child contact, perpetrator jealousy, threats, and nonfatal strangulation.

Results

Table 1 displays a summary of the descriptive statistics. The majority of the sample incident reports did not report any physical violence (51.2%), whereas moderately violent incident reports comprised 14.1% of the total sample, and severely violent incident reports comprised 34.7% of the total sample. It is important to note that this distribution of severity is not representative of stalking incident reports in the context of domestic abuse, as 200 of the narratives were chosen systematically based on the presence of physical violence, to create a more even distribution among the severity categories. A large majority of the incident reports indicated that victims had previously been victims of other domestic violence incidents (71.8%). The data show that most victims were frightened at the time of the domestic incident reported in the FVIR (74.3%). Many victims had experienced threats from the perpetrator, indicating intent to kill or hurt the victim (57.2%). Interestingly, although most victims experienced fear and previous threats, a large majority of victims did not believe that the perpetrator would kill the victim (81.0%) or that the perpetrator would kill themselves (94.3%). However, most victims did believe that the perpetrator would cause injury to the victim (55.8%), and 69.1% of victims had previously been injured by the perpetrator. The data showed that 24.9% of victims had experienced nonfatal strangulation by the perpetrator. The data also showed that 43.6% of perpetrators had experienced problems with drugs in the past year, and 29.5% of perpetrators experienced

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

		n (*N* = 369)	%
Severity	Nonviolent	189	51.2
	Moderate	52	14.1
	Severe	128	34.7
Prior FV	Yes	265	71.8
	No	104	28.2
Fear	Yes	274	74.3
	No	95	25.7
Kill victim belief	Yes	70	19.0
	No	299	81.0
Kill self-belief	Yes	21	5.7
	No	348	94.3
Injury belief	Yes	206	55.8
	No	163	44.2
Drugs	Yes	161	43.6
	No	208	56.4
Alcohol	Yes	109	29.5
	No	260	70.5
Mental health issue	Yes	101	27.4
	No	268	72.6
Separated	Yes	272	73.7
	No	97	26.3
Previously hurt victim	Yes	255	69.1
	No	114	30.9
	Yes	77	20.9
Child contact	No	292	79.1
	Yes	225	61.0
Jealous	No	144	39.0
	Yes	211	57.2
Threats	No	158	42.8
	Yes	92	24.9
Strangulation	No	277	75.1
Total		369	

Note. FV = family violence.

problems with alcohol in the past year. The data showed that 27.4% of victims indicated that the perpetrator had had mental health problems in the past year. The majority of incidents indicated that the perpetrator was excessively

Table 2. Parameter Estimates, Significance Levels, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Independent Variables and Stalking Violence Severity.

						95% CI	
	Est.	*SE*	Wald	Sig.	OR	Lower	Upper
Prior FV	−.82	0.26	9.72	.002	0.44	0.27	0.74
Fear	−.31	0.30	1.02	.313	0.74	0.41	1.34
Kill victim belief	.23	0.30	0.57	.450	1.26	0.69	2.28
Kill self-belief	−.90	0.52	2.96	.085	0.41	0.15	1.13
Injury belief	.71	0.27	7.02	.008	2.03	1.20	3.44
Drugs	−.08	0.24	0.11	.740	0.93	0.58	1.47
Alcohol	.35	0.24	2.21	.137	1.42	0.89	2.27
Mental health issue	−.12	0.25	0.21	.643	0.89	0.54	1.46
Separated	−.77	0.25	9.26	.002	0.47	0.28	0.76
Previously hurt victim	.93	0.30	9.90	.002	2.53	1.42	4.51
Child contact	−.82	0.31	7.15	.008	0.44	0.24	0.80
Jealous	.63	0.24	6.94	.008	1.88	1.18	3.02
Threats	.26	0.26	1.03	.311	1.30	0.78	2.17
Strangulation	.60	0.27	4.91	.027	1.82	1.07	3.08

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; FV = family violence.

jealous (61.0%). Most victims were separated from the perpetrator (73.7%), and 20.9% of incidents indicated that child contact issues were present.

Model Fit

The Pearson goodness-of-fit test, $\chi^2(572) = 570.62$, $p = .508$, and the deviance goodness-of-fit test, $\chi^2(572) = 492.40$, $p = .993$, both indicate that the model was a good fit to the data. The likelihood ratio test indicated that the final model was significantly better at predicting violence severity when compared with the intercept only model, $\chi^2(14) = 103.42$, $p < .001$.

Severity of Violence

Ordinal logistic regression was used to explore the presence and strength of any relationships between the independent variables and severity of violence. A summary of the ordinal regression results is found in Table 2. The odds of the FV incident containing a severe level of physical violence when the perpetrator had previously attempted to strangle the victim were 1.82 (95% confidence interval [CI] = [1.07, 3.08]) times higher than FV incidents where no

previous strangulation attempts were made, an effect which is statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.91$, $p = .027$. The presence of excessive jealousy was also associated with higher odds of severe physical violence, with an odds ratio of 1.88 (95% CI = [1.18, 3.02]), $\chi^2(1) = 6.94$, $p = .008$. When the victim believed that the perpetrator would injure them, the odds of severe physical violence were 2.03 times higher than if the victim did not hold such beliefs (95% CI = [1.20, 3.44]), $\chi^2(1) = 7.02$, $p = .008$. If the victim had previously been hurt by the perpetrator, the odds of severe violence were increased, with an odds ratio of 2.53 (95% CI = [1.42, 4.51]), $\chi^2(1) = 9.90$, $p = .002$. Interestingly, the presence of a prior FV incident was associated with a 56% lower likelihood of experiencing severe violence, with an odds ratio of 0.44, (95% CI = [0.27, 0.74]), $\chi^2(1) = 9.72$, $p = .002$. If the victim and perpetrator were separated, the likelihood of severe violence was 54% lower than if the victim and perpetrator were together, with an odds ratio of 0.47 (95% CI = [0.28, 0.76]), $\chi^2(1) = 9.26$, $p = .002$. Finally, the presence of issues regarding the perpetrator having contact with children was associated with a 56% decrease in the likelihood of severe violence, with an odds ratio of 0.44 (95% CI = [0.24, 0.80]), $\chi^2(1) = 7.15$, $p = .008$. Victim fear, the victim's belief that the perpetrator might kill the victim or themselves, drugs, alcohol, mental health, and threats were not significantly associated with violence severity.

Discussion

The principal aim of this study was to identify factors associated with higher severity violence in a sample of domestically violent intimate and ex-intimate partners where stalking had also been recorded. A number of significant associations were identified.

A significant association was found between the presence of jealousy and physical violence in the stalking sample, a finding consistent with previous research on stalking violence risk factors (Roberts, 2005). This finding further supports jealousy as a risk factor, as it was not only associated with stalking violence in general, but our study shows that jealousy was significantly associated with higher severity of physical violence. The results also showed that the victim's belief that the perpetrator would cause them injury and previous physical harm to the victim by the perpetrator were associated with higher severity physical violence. What is interesting is that an absence of prior FV was significantly correlated with higher severity violence, a finding that is consistent with James and Farnham's (2003) study. The finding is inconsistent with other studies that have found a positive correlation (Brewster, 2000) or no association at all (Rosenfeld, 2004); however, it is important to note that these studies treated violence as a homogeneous construct.

James and Farnham (2003) have offered a logical explanation for these findings, noting that the perpetrators of severe violence in their sample tended to be socially integrated and engaged in sudden and severe attacks, whereas perpetrators of mild violence were less socially integrated and engaged in habitual and repeated acts of mild violence. This may be explained by Schlesinger (2002) who described catathymic aggression as violence that is motivated by strong emotion and obsessive preoccupation, whereby a perpetrator engages in a violent act toward the victim following an "incubation" period. This is particularly relevant in the context of stalkers as stalking perpetrators are often fixated on their victim, coercively controlling, persistent, and emotionally fueled (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2009; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). However, it is also important to consider the fact that a history of violence or a criminal record fails to differentiate between multiple incidents of violence toward the same victim and multiple incidents of violence that are each associated with a different victim. Perhaps the significant association between prior victim injury and severe violence highlights the importance of examining prior violence to a specific victim when seeking to determine that same victim's risk of harm, rather than focusing on general prior violence which may not have been perpetrated against that same victim.

Contrary to earlier works that have suggested separation as a risk factor for stalking behavior and violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Kienlen, 1998; Melton, 2007), separation correlated negatively with violence severity in the present study. As suggested by Mechanic et al. (2000), physical violence may be more difficult to perpetrate as a result of being separated from the victim; however, typical stalking behaviors such as messaging and harassment via phone calls/social media are quite easy to accomplish. Although this study did not explore individual stalking behaviors, doing so may increase our understanding of why separation may be negatively correlated with violence severity. Furthermore, this analysis did not look at each individual perpetrator–victim dyad longitudinally. As previously mentioned, Schlesinger's (2002) notion of catathymic aggression may help explain these findings. Schlesinger (2002) suggests that a serious act of violence may be the result of the perpetrator attempting to resolve intense emotional anguish and psychological pain, which may be the result of failed attempts to restore a relationship, as well as the reversal of power from the perpetrator, to the victim. The nature of this analysis may only be examining early incidents, the severity of which may not be entirely captured unless a longitudinal strategy is employed. A longitudinal analysis would help establish whether the perpetrator engages in more severe aggression after multiple failed attempts to restore a relationship, testing the notion of catathymic aggression in this context.

Child contact is a factor that has not been explored in the context of intimate partner violence in stalking situations. The results of the present study indicate that child contact is significantly and negatively associated with violence severity. Although this is a new finding and in need of further investigation, this significant association may be the reflection of the perpetrator experiencing some level of control, potentially alleviating the drive to engage in further controlling and harmful behaviors, such as violence. Similar to the negative association of separation, it may be that the contact with the child is what is keeping the relationship from being severed, which may be where the true danger and risk lie if the separation and feeling of power loss lead to serious aggression toward the victim. This finding should be interpreted with caution; if a perpetrator begins to realize over time that a relationship may be severed by the victim regardless of child contact, a catathymic type of aggression is a potential risk, as was discussed in the context of separation (Schlesinger, 2002). Consequently, child contact should be explored longitudinally to observe potential changes over time, particularly when there is an extended period of romantic separation between the perpetrator and the victim.

Our finding of a significant association between previous nonfatal strangulation/attempt at strangulation and violence severity provides support for the consideration of a new factor for violence risk assessment in stalking situations. Strangulation has been described as a form of violence that is separate from most other forms of violence, due to the gendered nature, the display of coercive control/power over the victim, and potential for lethality and serious long-term health risks (Glass et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2014). Due to the often repetitive experience of strangulation and likelihood of increasing aggression and injury perpetrated by the abuser, strangulation may be the final violent indicator before death (McClane, Strack, & Hawley, 2001). Strangulation is often difficult to identify as symptoms may not appear until days after the attack, making it particularly difficult to identify by police officers who attend domestic violence callouts (Strack, McClane, & Hawley, 2001). These results highlight the importance of early detection, training, and accurate identifications of strangulation attempts, as the results of this research suggest that such attempts are associated with severely violent behavior.

Variables such as fear, kill victim belief, kill self-belief, drug/alcohol use, and mental health were shown to have no significant association with violence severity. Research shows that women's perception of danger in the context of intimate partner violence is often underestimated, which may explain why the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them and fear were not significantly associated with higher severity incidents (Campbell, 2004). Furthermore, research also shows that within the context of domestic violence, victims are often reluctant to disclose the true nature of the

severity of the violence to law enforcement agents, which may explain why fear and the belief that the perpetrator will kill the victim were not significant factors (Wolf, Ly, Hobart, & Kernic, 2003). Like violence, fear itself is not a homogeneous construct and may vary from being mildly scared to petrified. Descriptive statistics show that 74.3% of the victims in this study were fearful, yet 81% did not have any beliefs that the perpetrator would kill them. This suggests that the levels of fear may vary widely within this sample, supporting the idea that fear should be explored further, but not as a homogeneous construct. These results may be further explained by works exploring coercive control in the context of domestic violence. Indeed, research shows that victims of coercively controlling perpetrators are often very fearful of the threats and other coercively controlling tactics used by the perpetrators rather than fear of the physical violence itself (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). This may help explain why fear was prevalent, but not significantly correlated with physical severity. The victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill themselves was also not correlated with violence, although this variable relies on the report of the victim, which may not be aligned with the true ideation of the perpetrator. Research on mental health and substance abuse presents mixed conclusions regarding their relationship with stalking violence, and the results of this study reflect the research that has previously identified no significant relationship between these factors (James & Farnham, 2003; Roberts, 2005).

Our understanding of stalking behavior and the recognition of the seriousness of such offenses are gradually increasing, as evidenced by changes in legislation and criminalization of stalking behavior. Police and justice records highlight the large amount of stalking-related incidents that officers are presented with, and the research has consistently demonstrated the potential harm that may occur with persistent and often violent stalking behaviors. The connections between a criminal, their victim, environment, actions, and personal factors cannot be simplified to a controlled laboratory setting. Consequently, the use of a data set that is created as the crime occurs in its natural environment, such as the data set utilized in this study, has the advantage of being employed to develop practical applications that will be useful to those professionals who work in the field. Canter (1996) posed the argument that naturalistic data were much more useful to a relevant practitioner who works with that kind of information on a daily basis, than tightly controlled laboratory data. Although there exist inconsistencies in the research regarding risk factors for stalking behavior and violence, the current study helps to build upon existing literature on such risks and presents new factors for consideration, which have shown associations with serious violence among intimate and ex-intimate partners of stalkers.

Limitations

This research has some limitations. First, the data set consists of variables that are binary, which may silence the true effects of some variables. Factors such as mental health and fear may contain subcategories (e.g., disorder types) or may lie on a continuum (level of fear). Furthermore, the context in which the violence occurs, such as the motivation for the violence, was not explored in this study. It is recommended that further research be conducted with the expansion of these factors and inclusion of wider contextual variables. Second, the design of the study presents limitations upon the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Stalking research has shown that timing is an important factor in determining risk; however, the associations (both significant and nonsignificant) in this research must therefore be interpreted with caution as we cannot see the effects over time. The nature of the recording process is also important to consider. Although it is not practical for officers to ask each victim a battery of questions upon arrival, it also means that the presence of various factors may go unnoticed, be missed, or simply not discussed by the victim and officer. The completion of the FVIR forms also involves some level of personal judgment and perception from the officers, and although officers are trained to recognize and respond to a variety of potential incidents where police presence is needed, officers are not specifically trained in stalking risk assessment.

Conclusion

The results of this study may be utilized pragmatically by officers to indicate which victims might benefit from being flagged, based on the presence of prior harm, absence of prior FV, separation, belief of future injury, perpetrator jealousy, child contact issues, and nonfatal strangulation. Although the findings of this work cannot be translated into a risk assessment as such, they may assist first responders in being able to recognize which victim/perpetrator variables are indicative of a higher likelihood of severe violence. As a result, police resources may be utilized more effectively through the recognition of "red flag" indicators and may consequently prevent harm to victims. It also provides a starting point for further research into child contact, strangulation, and jealousy, as potential risk indicators for intimate partner violence in stalking samples. Future studies should further explore child contact and nonfatal strangulation in the context of stalking and domestic violence and consider adopting a longitudinal design to see the effects of these factors over time.

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Appendix B

Published Article

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2019). Non-fatal strangulation in a sample of domestically violent stalkers: The importance of recognizing coercively controlling behaviours. *Criminal Justice and Behavior,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854819843973

NONFATAL STRANGULATION IN A SAMPLE OF DOMESTICALLY VIOLENT STALKERS

The Importance of Recognizing Coercively Controlling Behaviors

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Strangulation is different to other types of physical violence as it often leaves no visible injuries and is frequently motivated by coercive control. Few studies have explored nonfatal strangulation and coercive control, and no studies have explored these factors within a sample of stalkers. Given that stalking perpetrators exhibit many of the coercively controlling behaviors related to nonfatal strangulation, the current study explored nonfatal strangulation and other coercively controlling behaviors in a stalking sample. A police dataset of 9,884 cases of domestic violence that involved stalking was analyzed. Results revealed that coercive control and related behaviors of excessive jealousy, victim isolation, victim fear, and victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them were associated with higher likelihood of having experienced nonfatal strangulation. These results may help first responders to identify victims at risk of nonfatal strangulation and suggest a need for nonfatal strangulation to be a criminal offense.

Keywords: nonfatal strangulation; coercive control; stalking; police

Strangulation in the context of domestic violence is an issue that has received increasing attention from scholars and law enforcement agencies over the last decade, though the existing research is not substantial (Armstrong & Strack, 2016; Pritchard, Reckdenwald, & Nordham, 2017; Strack, McClane, & Hawley, 2001). Studies have highlighted the importance of identifying victims of strangulation in intimate relationships due to the associated risk of long-term negative health effects, as well as the increased likelihood of fatality (Pritchard et al., 2017). The act of strangulation itself is a way to exert power and control over the victim (Thomas, Joshi, & Sorenson, 2014). Such attempts to coercively control the victim are also exhibited by stalking perpetrators (Stark, 2013). Given that various dangerous coercively

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controlling behaviors are commonly seen in perpetrators who stalk their victims, it is interesting that nonfatal strangulation has not yet been explored in this population.

NONFATAL STRANGULATION

Strangulation is a type of mechanical asphyxia, in which the person is unable to breathe or where vascular occlusion occurs due to compression on the neck. Strangulation can result in numerous injuries varying in severity based on the force exerted, duration of restricted breathing or vascular occlusion, and the methods used (Funk & Schuppel, 2003; Iserson, 1984; Saukko & Knight, 2016). A mere four pounds of pressure are required to occlude the jugular vein, and 5 to 11 pounds of pressure are required for the occlusion of the carotid artery (Harle, 2017). The victim may lose consciousness after only 10 to 15 seconds, and death may occur within 3 to 5 minutes. This dangerous form of violence is gendered, with males typically being the perpetrators of the violence and females being the victims (Nemeth, Bonomi, Lee, & Ludwin, 2012; Pritchard et al., 2017; Sorenson, Joshi, & Sivitz, 2014). The expanding research base on strangulation was initiated by a study of 300 nonfatal strangulation victims, conducted by Strack et al. (2001), which highlighted that 89% of the total sample had been victims of domestic violence. The findings indicated a strong connection between strangulation and domestic violence, precipitating further research into completed strangulation (resulting in death) and nonfatal strangulation (where the attack does not result in death). Furthermore, the authors suggested that the detection of strangulation is difficult, as half of the cases exhibited no visible injuries from the attack. It is perhaps because of this difficulty in detecting strangulation injuries, compared with other domestically violent injuries such as bruising and lacerations from being hit, that nonfatal strangulation began to be empirically investigated only recently.

Wilbur et al. (2001) were the first to specifically explore strangulation within a domestic violence context. In this work, 68% of a sample of domestic violence victims (n = 62) reported experiencing nonfatal strangulation. Many of these victims had experienced multiple such attempts, with the average number reported as 5.3 (Wilbur et al., 2001). Research has since expanded the findings of Strack et al. (2001) and Wilbur et al. (2001), with a number of studies reporting a high prevalence of strangulation in domestic violence situations (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2014; Glass et al., 2008; Hawley, McClane, & Strack, 2001; Joshi, Thomas, & Sorenson, 2012; Mcquown et al., 2016; Messing, Thomas, Ward-Lasher, & Brewer, 2018; Pritchard, Reckdenwald, Nordham, & Holton, 2018; Shields, Corey, Weakley-Jones, & Stewart, 2010; Smith, Mills, & Taliaferro, 2001; Sorenson et al., 2014; Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2002; Thomas et al., 2014). The prevalence of nonfatal strangulation varies across studies, with rates ranging from 3% to 68%, depending on the nature of the sample, although research that relies on police reports tends to report lower prevalence (11.5%) of nonfatal strangulation, as described by Pritchard et al. (2018).

Strangulation is a painful experience (Turkel, 2010) and may cause immediate symptoms such as loss of consciousness and loss of sphincter control; however, symptoms may appear days and even weeks afterwards, including bruises, brain injury, bleeding, stroke, difficulty swallowing, memory loss, and internal injuries that may result in death (Armstrong & Strack, 2016; Joshi et al., 2012; Scannell, MacDonald, & Foster, 2017; Wilbur et al., 2001). The seriousness of nonfatal strangulation in the context of domestic

violence has been further supported by studies that have shown a link between experiencing nonfatal strangulation during a domestically violent relationship and an increased likelihood of intimate partner homicide (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007; Glass et al., 2008).

In a case-control study, Glass et al. (2008) explored nonfatal strangulation among homicide victims, attempted homicide victims, and abused controls. The study showed that the odds of homicide were seven times higher for victims who had previously been strangled by their abusive partner compared to victims who had not experienced nonfatal strangulation. Furthermore, the odds of attempted homicide were almost seven times higher if the victim had been strangled during the domestically violent relationship, compared to victims who had not been previously strangled (Glass et al., 2008). These findings show that victims of nonfatal strangulation are essentially treading on the edge of homicide, which is consistent with Wilbur et al.'s (2001) conclusion that nonfatal strangulation typically occurs toward the latter stages of a violent relationships. Indeed, it is the lack of visible injuries in the majority of cases, as well as the high risk of fatality that makes nonfatal strangulation different to other forms of violence (Strack et al., 2001; Wilbur et al., 2001). Given that research has consistently demonstrated the occurrence of nonfatal strangulation in the context of domestic violence (see references above), and indicated that nonfatal strangulation is a significant risk factor for serious injury and homicide (Campbell et al., 2007; Glass et al., 2008; McFarlane et al., 1999; Strack et al., 2001), it is imperative that early warning behaviors and "red flag" indicators are identified by adequately trained responders (i.e., police officers, ambulance officers), so that nonfatal strangulation is recognized even when physical injury is not visible.

COERCIVE CONTROL

As already noted, nonfatal strangulation differs from other forms of violence in that it often leaves no physical signs of the attack, but it also differs from other forms of violence in the way that it is used to coercively control the victim (Thomas et al., 2014). Thomas et al. (2014) described coercive control as more than just a tactic, arguing that coercion and control provide information on the motive of the attack, and define the context of the intimate relationship. Coercion is the attempt to elicit or eliminate a desired response from the victim through the use of threats (both implicit and explicit) or force (Stark, 2007). On the contrary, control is defined as "structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolizing vital resources, dictating preferred choices, microregulating a partner's behavior, limiting her options, and depriving her of supports needing to exercise independent judgements" (Stark, 2007, p. 229). Together, coercive control forms a condition of "entrapment" (Stark, 2007, p. 205).

The current study utilizes Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control, which suggests that coercive control is multifaceted and involves behaviors such as isolation, intimidation, excessive monitoring, and threats. The model suggests that a coercively controlling perpetrator begins with sending the victim a message, which can be achieved through creating an expectation of negative consequences in the victim, exploiting their vulnerabilities, wearing down resistance, and by facilitating dependency. The perpetrator then monitors the victim and their activities to ensure compliance with any demands made (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Finally, a negative consequence is instigated toward the victim

(such as nonfatal strangulation) as a result of a previous threat to give credibility to future coercive control and to ensure that such acts are effective in asserting compliance (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). In a case of nonfatal strangulation, restricting blood flow and ability to breathe with relatively little force shows the victim the ease with which the perpetrator can take their breath away, giving credibility to future threats (Nemeth et al., 2012; Pritchard et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2014).

As coercive control aims to demonstrate a position of power, it is not surprising that coercive control often involves the use of death threats (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; New Zealand Law Commission, 2016; Stark, 2012). Indeed, more than half of the nonfatal strangulation victims interviewed in Thomas et al.'s (2014) study stated that death threats were a common feature of the controlling partner's behavior. This is further supported by Wilbur et al.'s (2001) study, which showed that 87% of women who experienced strangulation were also experiencing death threats. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), this creates an expectancy for negative outcomes, which is made even more believable when the perpetrator has strangled the victim. By creating the expectancy for serious negative outcomes, it is likely that the perpetrator has created a significant fear of death and future harm within the victim (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2013). Indeed, a study by Stansfield and Williams (2018) found a link between death threats and ongoing nonfatal strangulation in a sample of intimately violent offenders.

The current study expands on the limited prior works that have explored coercive control in intimate partner settings by including a range of coercively controlling behaviors within a single study. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), another coercively controlling behavior that is often seen in intimate relationships is isolation of the victim from friends and family. This is often done with the intention to exploit the victim's vulnerabilities and limit opportunities for the victim to seek help, which further assists in coercively controlling the victim (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2012; Tanha, Beck, Figueredo, & Raghavan, 2010). Research by Thomas et al. (2014) supported Dutton and Goodman's (2005) notion that isolation is indeed a form of coercive control, with the majority of victims stating that the perpetrator would often forbid the victim from leaving the house and would constantly monitor the victim to ensure compliance with demands. Finally, morbid jealousy, which is a more severe and hypersensitive form of normal jealousy, has also been used as a trigger for coercive force by domestically violent offenders (Nemeth et al., 2012). It is often seen in conjunction with isolating the victim socially to prevent them from communicating with family and other men/women, as well as threatening the victim when the perpetrator's fear of infidelity triggers the morbid jealousy (Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; Nemeth et al., 2012; Nicolaidis et al., 2003). Although this is not specifically mentioned in Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model, morbid jealousy has been deemed as important in understanding coercive control as it may be a trigger for behaviors such as limiting the victim's freedom through constant monitoring and isolation, to prevent infidelity and consequently prevent victim from leaving (Easton & Shackelford, 2009; Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; Nemeth et al., 2012).

COERCIVE CONTROL IN STALKING SITUATIONS

Stalking is defined as a behavior in which a person repeatedly contacts, follows, or intrudes on a victim, leading to the victim feeling fear or distress as a result of the repetitive

intrusions (McEwan, Mullen, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2009). The relationship between stalking and domestic violence is well established in the literature (Davis, Ace, & Andra, 2000; Douglas & Dutton, 2001; Groenen & Vervaeke, 2009; Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2000; Melton, 2007; Norris, Huss, & Palarea, 2011; Roberts, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Woodlock, 2017), with intimate or ex-intimate partners being at a significantly higher risk of experiencing stalking than family, strangers, or acquaintances (James & Farnham, 2003; Resnick, 2007; Rosenfeld, 2004; Sheridan & Davies, 2001). In a study by Tjaden and Thoennes (1998), it was reported that 80% of stalking victims who reported being stalked by their partner were also physically assaulted by the same partner.

Violence in stalking situations often involves minor to moderate physical attacks such as punching and kicking (McEwan et al., 2009; Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000); however, in some cases, it can involve serious acts of violence and even homicide (James & Farnham, 2003; McFarlane, Campbell, & Watson, 2002; McFarlane et al., 1999). Stalking may encompass a number of different behaviors, including sending unwanted gifts, repeated communications, loitering, and constant surveillance (Purcell, Pathe, & Mullen, 2010). These behaviors are often used as a form of coercive control, in which the perpetrator prevents physical separation from the victim, creating a sense of omnipresence (Stark, 2013). The constant surveillance makes it difficult for the victim to seek help or engage with support systems, particularly when the stalking offender has threatened the victim with death; it also ensures a sense of intimidation and fear within the victim (Stark, 2013). Like strangulation, stalking behavior can be used as a form of coercive control (Davis et al., 2000). The current study focuses on a population of intimately violent perpetrators who have engaged in stalking of the victim. This is because stalkers are likely to exhibit other coercively controlling behaviors, which may assist researchers in understanding how such behaviors link with the highly dangerous experience of nonfatal strangulation.

Given the minimal force needed to strangle a victim, and the lack of visible or photographable injuries in the majority of cases, perpetrators use this form of violence as they know they are not likely to get caught (Farr, 2002). This means that police officers and medical personnel need adequate training to notice any signs of strangulation. Furthermore, first responders need to be aware of the behaviors that are related to such serious forms of violence, as the physical evidence is not reliable. As such, prevention strategies of serious harm to victims of nonfatal strangulation may be significantly improved if there is a lower reliance on identification of visible injury, and more attention is paid to the presence of other coercively controlling behaviors that may pose a "red flag" for potentially serious and permanent injury to the victim. The findings may also assist in forming recommendations that may be useful for first responders in recognizing victims and perpetrators of this potentially lethal form of violence, with the intention of identifying those at high risk of serious harm and permanent injury, even death.

THE CURRENT STUDY

In summary, coercive control is multifaceted and comprises a number of different behavioral and psychological factors, such as threats, isolation, morbid jealousy, victim fear, expectancy for negative outcomes, and nonfatal strangulation. The current study aims to expand on prior work such as Stansfield and Williams (2018) by including a wide range of

variables to capture the multifaceted behavior of coercive control. Given that nonfatal strangulation has a high risk of serious injury and death, the aim of this research is to explore the link between victims having experienced nonfatal strangulation and the presence of other coercively controlling behaviors among perpetrators. The study focuses on domestically violent reports where stalking was indicated, as the presence of other coercively controlling behaviors is often seen among this population (Davis et al., 2000; Stark, 2013). Specifically, it is hypothesized that the presence of jealousy, isolation, threats, victim beliefs that perpetrator will kill them (expectancy for negative outcomes), victim fear, and victim/police identification of the presence of coercive control will be related to a higher likelihood of having experienced nonfatal strangulation.

METHOD

The study is based on a dataset provided by the Western Australia Police Force. The dataset consists of Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIRs) that were collected from August 18, 2013 (the date at which current FVIR recording procedures began) to August 24, 2017 across Perth, Western Australia.

SAMPLE

To explore nonfatal strangulation within a sample of stalkers, the dataset comprises domestically violent incident reports that indicated the presence of stalking behavior by the perpetrator, toward the victim, at the time of the reported incident. According to section 338E of the Western Australian Criminal Code, stalking behavior is defined as pursuing another person with the intent to intimidate that person. Over the 4-year period covered, a total of 13,768 FVIRs with an indication of stalking behavior were documented. The sample was reduced to 9,884 incident reports after deletion of multiple reports pertaining to matching offender–victim dyads. The final dataset contained 8,954 different perpetrators, including five cases where no perpetrator ID was recorded due to the lack of sufficient personal information available to identify a particular person as an offender. Of the final sample of 9,884 reports, 6,157 (62.3%) reported the perpetrator as being a male and 3,539 (35.8%) reported the perpetrator as being a female, with 188 (1.9%) reports containing no identification of gender.

DATA COLLECTION

Police officers in the Western Australia Police Force complete an FVIR when called to a domestic disturbance. These reports are completed using a combination of observation, victim statements, perpetrator statements, and third-party statements. The FVIRs consist of information relating to the incident itself (e.g., if weapons were used), information relating to the victim (e.g., was victim frightened), information relating to the perpetrator (e.g., was the perpetrator under the influence of alcohol), and information on the date and time of the incident. As coercive control is still developing conceptually and there is no standard approach to operationalization (Hardesty et al., 2015), we have decided to utilize Dutton and Goodman's (2005) model of coercive control to theoretically inform the chosen variables for the study. The variables from the FVIR that are used in this analysis indicate whether the officer or victim believed that the perpetrator was coercively controlling the

victim (coercive control), whether the victim was frightened at the time (fear), whether the victim held the belief that the perpetrator would kill them (kill victim belief), whether the perpetrator was excessively jealous (jealousy), whether the victim was isolated from friends and family (isolation), whether the perpetrator had threatened to kill or hurt the victim (threats), and finally, whether the perpetrator had ever attempted to strangle the victim (nonfatal strangulation). Each of these variables is a dichotomous variable, indicating whether the factor was recorded in each case.

DATA ANALYSIS

Multicollinearity among the variables was assessed using the phi coefficient. All correlations were below .6 and not deemed problematic given that some level of correlation is expected among the theoretically bound independent variables (Berry & Feldman, 1985). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the presence of each independent variable in cases where the victim reported nonfatal strangulation and cases where the victim did not report nonfatal strangulation. These frequencies were summarized as percentages. A binomial logistic regression was used to examine associations between nonfatal strangulation and coercive control, jealousy, threats, kill victim belief, isolation, and fear. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.

MISSING DATA

The FVIR reports used by Western Australia Police Force contain a number of variables which help to describe the nature of the incident, the victim, and the perpetrator. Although most fields are mandatory and require a response of Y = present, N = not present, or U = unknown or not asked, officers do not read out each variable to the victim in the style of an interview as this is not practical. Instead, FVIRs are completed based on a mixture of questions asked by the officer and narratives provided by the victim, perpetrator, and/or other witnesses, as well as police officer observations. This means that some variables may be left blank as there may be no clear indication of presence of a variable based on narratives, police observations, or police questions. As a result, the dataset was collapsed into "clear presence" of a variable, in which officers clearly indicated a "Y" response, and "unclear presence" of a variable, in which officers either indicated "N," "U," or left the field blank.

RESULTS

A total of 9,884 stalking FVIRs were analyzed, with 16.6% (n = 1,638) indicating that the victim had experienced nonfatal strangulation. A descriptive summary of the frequencies of reported presence of jealousy, coercive control, isolation, victim fear, threats, victim belief that the perpetrator will kill them, and perpetrator gender among victims who had and had not experienced nonfatal strangulation can be seen in Table 1.

BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION

A binomial logistic regression was conducted to ascertain the effects of reported coercive control, victim isolation, perpetrator jealousy, victim fear, victim beliefs, and threats toward victims on the likelihood of reporting having experienced nonfatal strangulation,

TABLE 1 Descriptive Summary for the Sample (*N* = 9,884) and Prevalence of NFS

	All (*N* = 9,884)		NFS = yes (*n* = 1,638)		NFS = no (*n* = 8,246)	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Perpetrator gender						
Male	6,157	62.3	1,008	61.5	5,149	62.4
Female	3,539	35.8	601	36.7	2,938	35.6
Coercive control						
Yes	4,304	43.5	1,208	73.7	3,096	37.5
No	5,580	56.5	430	26.3	5,150	62.5
Jealousy						
Yes	4,956	50.1	1,235	75.4	3,721	45.1
No	4,928	49.9	403	24.6	4,525	54.9
Threats						
Yes	4,771	48.3	1,327	81.0	3,444	41.6
No	5,113	51.7	311	19.0	4,802	58.2
Isolation						
Yes	1,363	13.8	372	22.7	991	12.0
No	8,521	86.2	1,266	77.3	7,255	88.0
Fear						
Yes	6,777	68.6	1,428	87.2	5,439	64.9
No	3,107	31.4	210	12.8	2,897	35.1
Kill victim belief						
Yes	1,461	14.8	587	35.8	874	10.6
No	8,423	85.2	1,051	64.2	7,372	89.4

Note. NFS = nonfatal strangulation.

controlling for gender. The model was found to be significant, $\chi^2(7) = 1577.30$, $p < .001$. The model explained 25.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in nonfatal strangulation and correctly classified 84.0% of cases. The results of the binomial regression revealed that each of the six independent variables were statistically significant (see Table 2). Gender was also significantly related to nonfatal strangulation with female perpetrators being associated with a higher likelihood of nonfatal strangulation, although the odds were only marginally higher (odds ratio [OR] = 1.18, 95% confidence interval [CI] = [1.04, 1.33], $p = .010$). The odds of victims reporting nonfatal strangulation were 2.32 times greater when the perpetrator was coercively controlling (95% CI = [2.00, 2.68], $p < .001$), compared to when perpetrators were not coercively controlling. The likelihood of reporting nonfatal strangulation was also higher when the perpetrator was excessively jealous (OR = 1.80, 95% CI = [1.55, 2.09], $p < .001$), compared to cases where excessive jealousy was not indicated. When comparing victims who had experienced threats from the perpetrator to victims who had not, results showed that reports of nonfatal strangulation were 3.37 times more likely when threats toward the victim were indicated (95% CI = [2.92, 3.89], $p < .001$). Reports of nonfatal strangulation were 1.34 times more likely when the victim had been isolated from friends and family, compared to when victims were not isolated (95% CI = [1.15, 1.56], $p < .001$). Finally, the victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them (OR = 2.00, 95% CI = [1.74, 2.30], $p < .001$), as well as victim fear (OR = 1.71, 95% CI = [1.45, 2.03], $p < .001$), was associated with significantly higher likelihood of reporting nonfatal strangulation.

TABLE 2: Logistic Regression Predicting Nonfatal Strangulation (*N* = 9,884)

						95% CI	
Variable	Est.	*SE*	Wald	*p* value	OR	LL	UL
Perpetrator gender	0.16	.06	6.69	.010	1.18	1.04	1.33
Coercive control	0.84	.08	125.60	<.001	2.32	2.00	2.68
Jealousy	0.59	.08	59.73	<.001	1.80	1.55	2.09
Threats	1.21	.07	274.45	<.001	3.37	2.92	3.89
Isolation	0.29	.08	14.51	<.001	1.34	1.15	1.56
Fear	0.54	.09	39.35	<.001	1.71	1.45	2.03
Kill victim belief	0.70	.07	95.92	<.001	2.00	1.74	2.30

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

DISCUSSION

Using a police dataset consisting of 9,884 domestic incidents where stalking behavior was indicated, the current study found that the victim reported previous nonfatal strangulation in 16.6% of these incidents (n = 1,638), a figure similar to other research based on police data (Pritchard et al., 2018). The prevalence of nonfatal strangulation among intimate partners varies within the research, often depending on the nature of the sample. A meta-analysis by Sorenson et al. (2014) specifically explored nonfatal strangulation among intimate partners and found that the lifetime prevalence of nonfatal strangulation was between 3.0% and 9.7%. However, the prevalence of nonfatal strangulation tends to be much higher, around 68%, when the sample consists of women who have survived intimate partner violence (Messing et al., 2018; Wilbur et al., 2001). Research relying on police identification of nonfatal strangulation reports much lower (11.5%) rates of nonfatal strangulation (Pritchard et al., 2018). As the sample in the current study is not restricted to individuals who have survived intimate partner violence, but rather domestic incidents in general, it was expected that the rate of nonfatal strangulation would be lower. Given that the sample in the current study includes only domestic incidents where stalking was also recorded, the higher rate of strangulation compared with Pritchard et al.'s (2018) study may be due to the overlap of coercive control in stalking behavior and strangulation attacks. Consequently, it is possible that the sample in this study are more coercively controlling in nature compared with samples that are not restricted to stalking situations.

In line with the conclusions of Pritchard et al. (2018), the generally low prevalence of nonfatal strangulation seen in the current study and in Pritchard et al.'s (2018) research suggests that police officers may be overlooking incidents of strangulation among intimate partners. Given that visible injury is only seen in approximately half of strangulation cases, it seems plausible that officers may not be correctly identifying all nonfatal strangulation attacks. As the nonfatal strangulation data of this study were often collected by asking the victim verbatim whether they had experienced nonfatal strangulation, it may be that the victim did not always understand the question or perhaps was reluctant to disclose such information to the officer at the scene due to the coercively controlling nature of strangulation perpetrators, with victims likely to be fearful and potentially experiencing threats from the perpetrator (Armstrong & Strack, 2016; Davis et al., 2000; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Nemeth et al., 2012; Stark, 2013; Thomas et al.,

2014). Indeed, interviews with strangulation survivors indicated that victims felt a sense of betrayal by their intimate partners, which resulted in the victim feeling they could not trust people in general and consequently developing a pervasive fear throughout their daily lives (Vella, Miller, Lambert, & Morgan, 2017).

Although little research has explored coercively controlling behaviors and nonfatal strangulation in conjunction, studies suggest that nonfatal strangulation is related to coercively controlling behaviors (Thomas et al., 2014). The results of this research support this notion, with incidents of nonfatal strangulation being more likely to occur when the victim reported the perpetrator as coercively controlling, compared to victims who did not report coercive control. Dutton and Goodman (2005) explained that coercive control is not necessarily a single and distinct construct, but rather a subset of potential behaviors that may entail the overall experience of coercive control. To understand coercive control with more rigor, excessive jealousy, threats of death, victim fear, victim isolation, and victim belief that perpetrator will kill them were also explored in this analysis. Each of the six variables were significantly associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing nonfatal strangulation, indicating that coercive controlling behaviors are related to nonfatal strangulation. The highest likelihood of nonfatal strangulation was associated with the presence of death threats toward the victim, with threatened victims being more than three times more likely to experience nonfatal strangulation in their intimate relationship. The association of these coercively controlling behaviors with nonfatal strangulation is consistent with findings from the few studies that have explored coercive control in strangulation cases (Thomas et al., 2014). This finding suggests that perpetrators who nonfatally strangle their victims also tend to exhibit coercively controlling behaviors and supports the notion that the strangulation attack is a display of power over the victim. Understanding the behavior and motivation of those who strangle victims may help in accurate identification of high-risk cases, with less reliance on visible injury.

As there currently exists no literature exploring nonfatal strangulation and coercive control in a sample of stalking situations, this is the first study to highlight the prevalence of nonfatal strangulation in a police dataset of domestically violent stalking situations. Prior works suggest that stalking is a form of coercive control, whereby the omnipresence of the perpetrator can result in difficulty seeking external support, particularly when stalking is accompanied with threats of death if attempts are made to make contact with supports (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). The current study shows that nonfatal strangulation was reported in 16.6% of incidents where stalking was also reported, a figure that is higher than percentages from previous research that has explored this distinctive form of violence in a general sample of intimate partner violence records (Pritchard et al., 2018). It also shows that aspects of coercive control often seen in stalking situations such as death threats, isolation, jealousy, victim fear, and victim's belief that the perpetrator will kill them are significantly associated with an increased likelihood of having experienced the coercively controlling act of nonfatal strangulation. These conclusions further emphasize the necessity of appropriately trained officers who are able to recognize coercively controlling partners, as victims often may not exhibit visible injury and may be reluctant to disclose information about nonfatal strangulation experiences due to fear and the controlling nature of the perpetrator.

LIMITATIONS

The current study recognizes a number of limitations. First, the conclusions are not generalizable to all victims of nonfatal strangulation as the sample consists of domestic incidents in which stalking was indicated. It is also likely that the sample contains false negatives of nonfatal strangulation due to the difficulty in detecting nonfatal strangulation for reasons such as lack of visible injury and because not all victims of nonfatal strangulation call the police. The true prevalence of nonfatal strangulation in this dataset is therefore likely to be higher than what is reported. Furthermore, the reported prevalence does not represent the prevalence of nonfatal strangulation in cases of intimate partner violence, as the dataset is limited to stalking situations. However, the study does provide useful information about police-identified and/or victim-reported nonfatal strangulation in domestic incidents where stalking was also indicated. As the completion of the FVIRs does not involve reading out each individual component verbatim, it may be that some behaviors related to the perpetrator, victim, or incident may be missed.

CONCLUSION

Nonfatal strangulation has been described as walking on the edge of homicide (Strack & Gwinn, 2011) and is known to have severe effects on both the physical and mental health of the victim (Glass et al., 2008). The results of this research study show that victims are often threatened with death, isolated from social supports, and are fearful, which suggests that victims are unlikely to disclose attacks of nonfatal strangulation due to the coercively controlling nature of the perpetrator. As a result, first responders should not rely on victim disclosure, but rather be able to recognize a victim who is involved with a coercively controlling partner and take appropriate action to provide any available assistance to the victim at significant risk of nonfatal strangulation without waiting for an active confirmation of this violent act. These victims should be flagged and monitored by police officers, as stalking and isolation may prevent the victim from being able to access appropriate resources. The recognition and elimination of this distinctive and dangerous form of violence may improve and save lives of numerous victims. It is important to note that although training is important, without adequate laws in place, police officers are limited in their ability to help victims and charge offenders. The current study highlighted the extent of coercively controlling behaviors seen in cases of nonfatal strangulation. Indeed, the current study provides support for the multifaceted nature of coercive control, in line with Dutton and Goodman's (2005) theory.

Coercive control was recognized as a specific criminal offense in England and Wales in 2015, and psychological abuse has been recognized as a criminal offense in France since 2010 (McMahon & McGorrery, 2016). However, in parts of Australia and the U.S., coercively controlling behaviors have not been criminalized. Although no discrete law against coercive controlling behaviors exists in Western Australia, nonfatal strangulation is acknowledged as a distinct criminal offense in Queensland and New Zealand, separate from other forms of assault. Given that current domestic violence laws in Australia and the United States target discrete and usually physical assaults, police interventions aimed to assist victims who are oppressed by coercively controlling partners are very limited. Introduction of relevant legislation making nonfatal strangulation and other coercively controlling behaviors a criminal offense would be a

step toward acknowledging the seriousness of these acts and would perhaps encourage victims to seek help and feel protected with the knowledge that the perpetrator may be held accountable.

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Martyna Bendlin completed her Bachelor of Psychology (Hons.) at Curtin University. Martyna is currently a PhD student at Curtin University, working under the supervision of Dr. Sheridan.

Lorraine Sheridan is a forensic psychologist and a senior lecturer in the School of Psychology at Curtin University, Western Australia. She has been researching and publishing on stalking since 1997 and provides input on the assessment and management of stalking cases to the police, public figures, and government agencies.

Appendix C

Acceptance of Publication

Bendlin, M., Sheridan, L., & Johnson, A. (2020). Stalking recidivism: A comparison of operational definitions. *In press.*

02-Nov-2020

Dear Ms. Martyna Bendlin,

Your manuscript "Stalking Recidivism: A Comparison of Operational Definitions" has been accepted for publication in Journal of Interpersonal Violence.

In order for SAGE to proceed with publication of your article, you must complete a Contributor Form.

You should review and complete the form online at the journal's SAGE Track site. The following link will take you there directly.

Appendix D

Ethics Approval Document for Research Project

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE

DIRECTOR POLICY & LEGISLATION
WESTRALIA SQUARE
LEVEL 14
141 ST GEORGES TCE, PERTH
WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6000
TELEPHONE : (08) 6229 1539

Ms Martyna Bendlin
School of Psychology & Speech Pathology
Curtin University
Bentley Campus
GPO Box U1987
PERTH WA 6845

Dear Ms Bendlin

Identification of high risk stalking offenders

Thank you for your application to conduct research with the Western Australia Police. Your application to undertake research to identify high risk stalking offenders has been approved by the WA Police with the following conditions:

Conditions of approval of your research project

- The research is carried out as described in the approved research application, and in accordance with the ethics submission approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. Any significant deviation from the approved methodology, scheduling and/or risk mitigation strategies, may require an amended application to be submitted to the WA Police Research Governance Project team.
- A signed and witnessed copy of the WA Police Code of Conduct for Research is sent to the Research Governance Project team for our records prior to the commencement of the research.
- All information and data provided for or collected by this research must be secured at all times, including:
    - The data must be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researchers directly involved in the project.
    - Identifying information should be stored securely and separately from other relevant data fields.
    - The data must only be used for the purpose of this research project.
    - Research materials such as consent forms are not to be left in an unattended vehicle or in a location where unauthorised access could be made.
- The public release of any report based on the research is subject to approval in accordance with the conditions specified in the WA Police Code of Conduct for Research.

Appendix E

Ethics Approval Document for Research Project

Curtin University

Office of Research and Development

GPO Box U1987
Perth Western Australia 6845

Telephone +61 8 9266 7863
Facsimile +61 8 9266 3793
Web research.curtin.edu.au

29-May-2017

Name: Lorraine Sheridan
Department/School: School of Psychology and Speech Pathology
Email: Lorraine.Sheridan@curtin.edu.au

Dear Lorraine Sheridan

RE: Ethics Office approval
Approval number: HRE2017-0313

Thank you for submitting your application to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project **A stalking "Power Few"?**.

Your application was reviewed through the Curtin University Negligible risk review process.

The review outcome is: **Approved**.

Your proposal meets the requirements described in the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.

Approval is granted for a period of one year from **29-May-2017** to **28-May-2018**. Continuation of approval will be granted on an annual basis following submission of an annual report.

Personnel authorised to work on this project:

Name	Role
Sheridan, Lorraine	
Bendlin, Martyna	

Approved documents:

Document

Standard conditions of approval

1. Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal
2. Report in a timely manner anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
   - proposed changes to the approved proposal or conduct of the study
   - unanticipated problems that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project

Appendix F

Ethics Approval Document for Research Project

Curtin University

Research Office at Curtin

GPO Box U1987
Perth Western Australia 6845

Telephone +61 8 9266 7863
Facsimile +61 8 9266 3793
Web research.curtin.edu.au

19-Nov-2018

Name: Lorraine Sheridan
Department/School: School of Psychology
Email: Lorraine.Sheridan@curtin.edu.au

Dear Lorraine Sheridan

RE: Amendment approval
Approval number: HRE2017-0313

Thank you for submitting an amendment request to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project **A stalking "Power Few"?**.

Your amendment request has been reviewed and the review outcome is: **Approved**

The amendment approval number is HRE2017-0313-03 approved on 19-Nov-2018.

The following amendments were approved:

Rather than focusing on the power few, the research will seek to identify the characteristics of the perpetrator, the victim, and the domestically violent incident/situation, which may be associated with higher risk of harm and violence severity.

Rather than using the Crime Harm Index, we will use Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1996). We will also conduct an extra analysis (Survival Analysis) to determine the timeframe between charges.

Any special conditions noted in the original approval letter still apply.

Standard conditions of approval

1. Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal
2. Report in a timely manner anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
   - proposed changes to the approved proposal or conduct of the study
   - unanticipated problems that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project
   - major deviations from the approved proposal and/or regulatory guidelines
   - serious adverse events
3. Amendments to the proposal must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Office before they are implemented (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate an immediate risk to participants)
4. An annual progress report must be submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and a completion report submitted on completion of the project
5. Personnel working on this project must be adequately qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or supervised

Appendix G

Statement of Author Contributions

School of Psychology

Curtin University
GPO Box U1987
Perth, Western Australia, 6845

To whom it may concern,

I, Martyna Bendlin was the major contributor to the conceptualisation, coordination, and implementation of my PhD project, *Stalking among domestically violent offenders: An analysis of police records* which resulted in the following publication:

Bendlin, M., Sheridan, L., & Kane, R. T. (2018). Risk factors for severe violence in intimate partner stalking situations: An analysis of police records. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*

I am the lead author and it was primarily my responsibility to conceptualise, collect and analyse the data, and draft and edit the present paper, which is included in my PhD thesis.

Martyna Bendlin_____

I, as a Co-Author, endorse that this level of contribution by the candidate indicated above is appropriate. As a Co-Author, I contributed to the development of the research, statistical analyses, and interpretation of the data.

Lorraine Sheridan _____

School of Psychology

Curtin University
GPO Box U1987
Perth, Western Australia, 6845

To whom it may concern,

I, Martyna Bendlin, was the major contributor to the conceptualisation, coordination, and implementation of my PhD project, *Stalking among domestically violent offenders: An analysis of police records* which resulted in the following publication:

Bendlin, M., & Sheridan, L. (2018). Nonfatal strangulation in a sample of domestically violent stalkers: The importance of recognizing coercively controlling behaviors. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *46*(11).

I am the lead author and it was primarily my responsibility to conceptualise, collect and analyse the data, and draft and edit the present paper, which is included in my PhD thesis.

Martyna Bendlin_____

I, as a Co-Author, endorse that this level of contribution by the candidate indicated above is appropriate. As a Co-Author, I contributed to the development of the research, statistical analyses, and interpretation of the data.

Lorraine Sheridan _____

Appendix H

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