

<b>Institution: Heriot-Watt University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 4 Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience</b>
<b>Title of case study: Improving police investigation procedures, informing legislation and improving support for victims of Stalking</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Some 77% of victims wait until they have had more than 100 incidents of unwanted behaviour before they tell anyone about it. More than 1.2 million women and 900,000 men are stalked in the UK every year (British Crime Survey.) The research investigated the characteristics of stalkers and has: (i) changed police practice in UK police forces in investigating cases of alleged stalking offences through supporting the adoption of the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Harassment (DASH) threat assessment checklist within every police station in England and Wales; (ii) informed public policy debate and the introduction of anti-stalking legislation and raising public awareness of the nature and dangers of stalking behaviour.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This programme of research started in 1999 at University of Leicester and then at Heriot-Watt between 2007 and 2012 to examine stalking, defined as "behaviour in which one individual repeatedly inflicts unwanted intrusions on another". Initially the work looked at the prevalence of stalking before moving on to the characteristics and to ways in which stalking behaviour might be effectively identified and policed. The key researcher is Dr Lorraine Sheridan, who was employed at Heriot-Watt as a Senior Research Fellow where she worked with a network of UK and international research collaborators, including Bjorkland in Finland and Roberts in Australia.</p> <p>Initial important insights were obtained from the first quantitative assessment of the prevalence of stalking in the UK, which demonstrated that many assumptions about the behaviour held by professionals and the public are false. For example: celebrity stalking is very rare in comparison to other cases; many offenders are not ex-partners of victims; stalking may end in violence or murder. Further developments of the research used analyses of case records to identify offender, victim and situation characteristics that predict the duration and outcome of stalking behaviour. Other strands gained insights into psychological ill-effects on victims, and the roles of gender stereotypes and the just world hypothesis in shaping public and professional attitudes towards risks of, and responsibility for, stalking behaviour.</p> <p>Sheridan's research at Heriot-Watt actively pursued several of these themes. She and her colleagues demonstrated that the duration and outcome of stalking episodes are predicted by characteristics of both the victim and the stalker, and by the nature of any previous relationship between them. Victim fear was shown to be an important predictor of the severity of stalker behaviour, indicating that victims are able to assess the level of threat from a stalker accurately. Fear was found to be greater in female than in male victims, and to mediate the relationship between victim gender and the severity of stalker violence [4]. These findings fed into the development of a set of key questions about reports of stalking that were shown to predict the severity of stalker violence and were disseminated to the criminal justice research community [6]. Further research into perception of stalking behaviour and attribution of responsibility showed that lay participants are over-influenced by information about stalker gender and physical violence [1], and about a previous relationship with the victim [5], when assessing the severity of a case. This last factor also influenced police officers' judgments, a result with implications for police training [5]. Studies in Finland [3] provided cross-national comparisons of the incidence and nature of stalking, and evidence about victims' styles of coping with implications for devising effective forms of support.</p> <p>The quality of the research carried out at Heriot-Watt is demonstrated by its level of international recognition. The six papers cited are published in journals with impact factors ranging from 1.28 to</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

1.71, all of which are above the median for their category (using a 'Psychology' category where more than one category is possible). All these journals have editorial boards based entirely or almost entirely outside the UK. Of the 15 citations of these papers to date, 13 are by first authors working outside the UK.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] Sheridan, L, Scott, AJ (2010) Perceptions of harm: Verbal Versus Physical Abuse In Stalking Scenarios. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 37(4), 400-416.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0093854809359743>

[2] North, A; Sheridan, L Death, Attractiveness, Moral Conduct, And Attitudes To Public Figures. *Journal of Death and Dying* Vol. 60, No. 4, 2009, p. 351-363.

[3] Bjorklund, K, Hakkanen-Nyholm, H, Sheridan L, Roberts, K (2010) Coping With Stalking Among University Students. *Violence and Victims*, 25(3), 395-408. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.25.3.395>

[4] Sheridan, L; Lyndon, AE (2012) The Influence Of Prior Relationship, Gender, And Fear On The Consequences Of Stalking Victimization. *Sex Roles*, 66(5-6), 340-350.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9889-9>

[5] Weller, M, Hope, L, Sheridan, L (2013) Police And Public Perceptions Of Stalking: The Role Of Prior Victim-Offender Relationship. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2), 320-339.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260512454718>

[6] Sheridan, L; Roberts, K (2011) Key Questions To Consider In Stalking Cases. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 29(2), 255-270. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/bsl.966>

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

More than 1.2 million women and 900,000 men are stalked in the UK every year (British Crime Survey.) 77% of victims wait until they have had more than 100 incidents of unwanted behaviour before they tell anyone about it. The research described above has directly informed practice in active investigations of psychosexual crime, case management and intervention strategies employed by law enforcement and private sector threat assessment professionals in many countries and anti-stalking public information campaigns run by law enforcement agencies and charities.

Impact on police investigation practice.

The research derived a typology of stalkers, based on several thousand cases, and recommendations for case management of the threat that these pose. Prior to Sheridan's research, police and threat assessment professionals had no evidence on which to base case management strategies. This led to a second stage of the work in which Sheridan, using a database of existing cases, defined a set of nine offender behaviours that predict with 99% accuracy the likelihood that an episode of stalking will escalate into violence against the victim (including murder). These were incorporated into the development of the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) checklist, published in 2009 and adopted as a screening instrument by all police forces in England and Wales in 2010. Consequently, all these forces now administer DASH when a report of stalking is received. This check for the presence of the nine behaviours identified in the research, and yields a single-digit index of threat to the victim that determines subsequent police strategy in dealing with a report. Sheridan also verified the effectiveness of these case management strategies through an analysis of case evidence. This research has helped police catch people and has changed the way they deal with this crime.

Sheridan is one of only two academics in the UK accredited by the Association of Chief Police

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Officers (ACPO) to work with police forces throughout the UK as a Behavioural Investigative Analyst (or offender profiler). ACPO commissions profiling work based solely on research findings (and particularly those of the profiler him/herself), and the written reports of profilers are subject to on-going reviews by ACPO for their research-led integrity and utility in case management. Some of Sheridan's work of this nature has involved interventions in major cases based directly on the DASH, although the greater portion of this has involved other personality-based approaches to major cases of stalking and/or psychosexual obsession. The work has involved advising on primarily threat assessment, interview strategies, and offender detection. Sheridan has worked on approximately two dozen such cases, which have been supplemented by less formal ad hoc advice on numerous cases.

Legislation and Public Awareness

Sheridan was consulted during the formulation of Scotland's anti-stalking legislation and in June 2010 Stalking became a named crime and a criminal offence enshrined within the Criminal Justice & Licensing (Scotland) Bill. It received Royal Assent in August 2010 and on 13th December came into force as statute law. Ann Moulds from Action Scotland Against Stalking told the UK Parliamentary Inquiry in 2012 that prior to the introduction of stalking laws the behaviour was dealt with under Breach of the Peace legislation and the police estimated there were 70 such prosecutions in the 10 year period up to 2010. The force had produced operational guidelines on domestic violence which now incorporated new procedures to deal with the stalking laws which were introduced in 2010. Figures from Scotland show that convictions for Stalking offences went from 3 in 2010/11 to 53 in 2011/12.

Sheridan's work was among research cited by a UK Parliamentary inquiry in 2012, which referenced the 11 risk factors developed by Drs Lorraine Sheridan and Karl Roberts, "Internationally recognized experts in stalking", incorporated into and operationalised by Laura Richards in the DASH. (Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Stalking Law Reform: Main Findings and Recommendations, February 2012. See references to research on pp 17, 30. <http://www.protectionagainststalking.org/InquiryReportFinal.pdf>)

This report recommended the introduction of legislation in England and Wales to make stalking a specific offence. This recommendation was subsequently adopted by the Government, with stalking and stalking involving a fear of violence becoming named crimes in November 2012.

Sheridan has also been involved closely with several anti-stalking charities (Network for Surviving Stalking, Protection against Stalking, Suzy Lamplugh Trust) in advising victims, and has contributed extensively to public awareness campaigns run by these charities (often in conjunction with ACPO and political leaders). Her work has been used by charities to demonstrate the range and extent of stalking in the UK, and provides evidence of the need for support services. As the Manager of the National Stalking Helpline on behalf of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust stated *"Research, such as that undertaken by Dr Sheridan at Heriot-Watt University is vital to ensure a picture of stalking is built up which can be used to inform service provision, policy formation and treatment to prevent reoffending. When seeking funding for the National Stalking Helpline, it is important to demonstrate the need for the service. Dr Sheridan's work assists us in being able to demonstrate that need and is therefore an important factor in the continuation of the service"*.

She also advised the Network for Surviving Stalking on the establishment of a training academy, launched in March 2011 and funded by the Government. <http://www.nss.org.uk/2011/03/home-secretary-backs-launch-of-new-stalking-training-academy/> The National Stalking Training Academy provides specialised training to agencies, organisations and individuals who deal with or have a duty of care to those who are either affected by, or are at risk from stalking. Alongside the NSS, the academy aims to provide support to victims, potential victims and others affected by stalking & harassment throughout the UK, to raise awareness of the subject and to provide information about stalking & harassment to professionals, relevant agencies and the public. It is used by The Police, Housing Providers, Universities & Colleges, Schools, Security and Close Protection, The CPS and other organisations working with potential victims of stalking.

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Advice to these charities has been based on research findings that defined the effects of stalking, the predictors of severity of stalking behaviour, and the characteristics of mistaken public beliefs about the occurrence and causes of stalking. The campaigns have aimed to publicise the practical implications of the DASH for those who are experiencing stalking, and Sheridan has been the academic media contact for the ensuing publicity campaigns, appearing in various television, radio, and print outlets offering advice to the public on alleviating stalking (e.g., BBC News webpages).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] **Helpline Manager, Suzy Lamplugh Trust** will confirm the value of the research carried out by Sheridan, especially when seeking funding for the National Stalking Helpline, it is important to demonstrate the need for the service as it helps demonstrate the need and is therefore an important factor in the continuation of the service.

[2] **Information Manager, Criminal Law Team, Scottish Government** will describe the process for the legislation becoming law and how this legislation was part of the Criminal Justice and Licensing Scotland Act in June 2010. The stalking element was introduced by a stage 2 amendment from and MSP, based on working that had been developed through Action Scotland Against Stalking, which had been informed by Sheridan's work.

[3] **Statistics Manager, Criminal Law Team, Scottish Government** Statistics on convictions since the Scottish Legislation came into effect

[4] **Ex-Chief Executive Protection against Stalking** will describe the process of the DASH development, and how the work carried out by Sheridan was incorporated into the checklist

[5] **Sponsoring MSP for inclusion of Stalking as a criminal offence enshrined within the Criminal Justice & Licensing (Scotland) Bill**