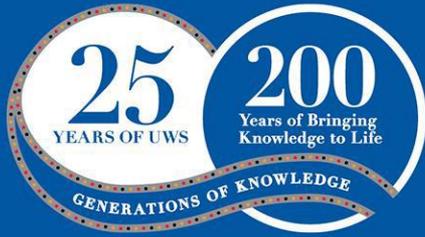


# Development of a stalking risk identification tool for use by police

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Massachusetts  
USA

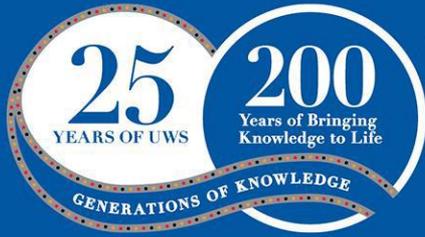
Email: [karl.roberts@uws.edu.au](mailto:karl.roberts@uws.edu.au)



# Overview



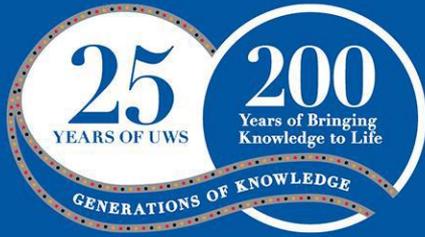
- Development of a stalking risk tool for use by police
- Overview of stalking
- Existing stalking threat assessment tools
- Development process risk assessment tool



# What is stalking?

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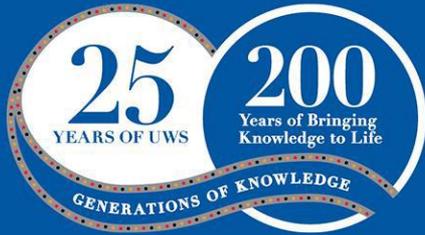
- "stalking is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear."
- NIJ Model Code for States



# Facts about stalking

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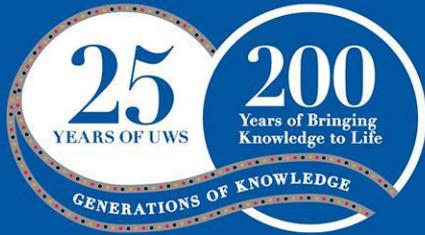
- **Relatively common**
  - **1 in 6 women (16.2%)** and **1 in 19 men (5.2%)** reported being a victim of stalking in their lifetime
- **Association with violence**
  - 25 – 35 % of cases involve physical violence
  - 2% of stalking cases involve serious violence
  - 76% of female homicide victims had been stalked prior to homicide



# The Problem



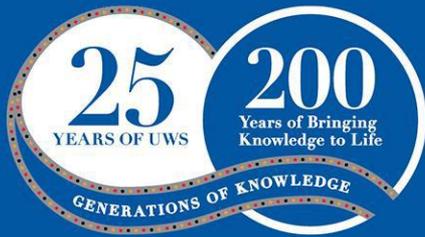
- Stalking is associated with violence
- Rapid identification of stalking cases that pose most risk would be very useful for police in violence prevention
- But
  - no risk identification tools specifically for stalking violence that could be easily operationalized by police



# Existing risk tools

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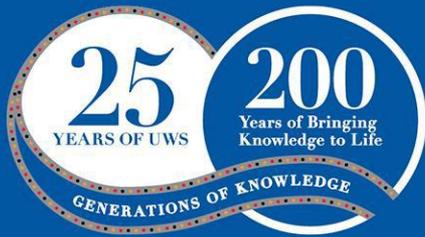
- There are many violence risk assessment tools
  - Spousal Risk Assessment Guide (SARA)
  - Violence Risk Assessment Guide (VRAG)
  - Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R)
  - The Classification of Violence Risk (COVR)
  - Danger Assessment - [dangerassessment.org](http://dangerassessment.org)
  - Mosaic - [mosaicmethod.com](http://mosaicmethod.com)
- But not specific for stalking violence assessment and focus particularly upon
  - Abuser and victim are known to each other
  - History of domestic violence



# Some Stalking Specific Risk Tools

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- Stalking Assessment Management (Kropp et al, 2008);
- Stalking Risk Profile (Mullen et a, 2009I)
  
- but...
  - Need stalker present and require clinical interview
    - What do we do if the stalker is not available or unknown?
  - Need psychological or psychiatric expertise
  - Often time consuming
  - Some tools are based on *opinion* and are *not* empirically valid



# Development of the tool



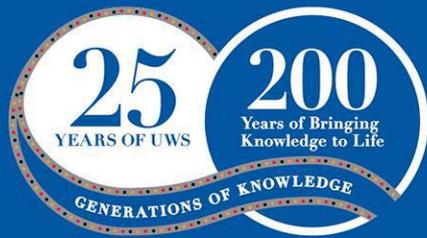
- Need for empirically valid risk tool
  - i.e. need evidence to show tool actually is useful
- 4 phases
  - Phase 1
    - Understand policing context
    - Interviews with police about what would be most useful
  - Phase 2
    - Identification of risk factors
      - Which stalking behaviours are associated with violence
  - Phase 3
    - Does the risk tool predict violence and serious violence using police data?
  - Phase 4
    - Is the checklist usable operationally by police?



# Phase 1

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- For police a useful stalking risk tools would
  - Allow risk to be identified on basis of information likely to be available or easily discoverable
  - Quick and easy to use ideally at time of first report
  - not require the stalker to be present and can be used when stalker is unknown
  - Checklist ‘tickbox’ would design preferable
  - Operationally usable in the context of policing given other time constraints
    - ‘... it will need to fit on one side of A4.’ ACPO lead on stalking and harassment



# Phase 2: identification of items



- Analysed accounts from 13,000 male and female victims of stalking
- Victims completed detailed on-line questionnaire,
  - asked about their experiences
- Classified victims into violent/non-violent experiences
- Identified 52 items from victim accounts that police likely to have access to
- Multiple regression analysis
  - Identified 11 items most predictive of stalking violence



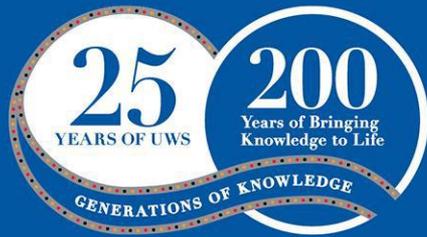
### Risk Identification for 'Domestic' Stalking and Harassment Cases

This risk identification can be used in ALL cases of stalking and harassment. It should be completed by professionals if there are two or more incidents of stalking and harassment (reported or unreported) and/or if the victim is extremely frightened. These questions direct you to specific areas that will give you an indication of the victim(s) risk of future violence/harm. Most the behaviours will be about coercive control. Do not think it is any less serious if there has been no physical violence. The more 'yes' answers you have, the higher the risk that the suspect could physically attack the victim at any time.

Please ensure that you write the additional notes about the context of what is going on and link the risk identification responses to a risk management/safety plan.

THE CONTEXT AND DETAIL OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IS VERY IMPORTANT. THESE ARE ALL RISK FACTORS OF SERIOUS HARM. TICK THE RELEVANT BOX AND ADD COMMENT WHERE NECESSARY TO EXPAND <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Name of Victim:		Date form completed:	
Name of Abuser:		Date of Birth:	
Name of Professional:		Yes	No
Reference number:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Is the victim very frightened?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Has (Insert name of abuser(s) ..... ) engaged in harassment on previous occasions(s)? (this victim and/or other victims)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Has (Insert name of abuser(s).....) ever destroyed or vandalised the victim's property?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does (name of abuser(s).....) visit the victim at work, home, etc., more than three times per week?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Has (.....) loitered around the victim's home, workplace etc?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Has (.....) made any threats of physical or sexual violence in the current harassment incident?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Has (.....) harassed any third party since the harassment began? (e.g. friends, family, children, colleagues, partners or neighbours of the victim)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Has (.....) acted out violently towards people within the current stalking incident?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Has (.....) persuaded other people to help him/her? (wittingly or unwittingly)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Is (.....) known to be abusing drugs and/or alcohol?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Is (.....) known to have been violent in the past? (This could be physical or psychological. Intelligence or reported)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





# Phase 3: Testing the Risk Tool Using Police Data

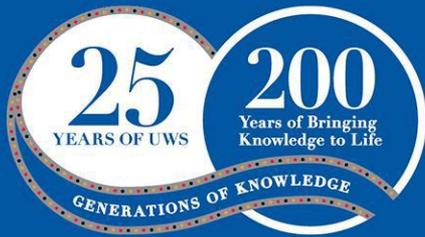


## Why test it?

- To ensure reliability
  - Do similar cases produce similar ratings of risk?
- To ensure validity
  - Does the tool capture the core features of what we understand to be 'stalking'?
  - Does the tool identify cases of stalking that resulted in violence and serious violence ?

# Phase 3: Testing the

## Risk Tool Using Police Data

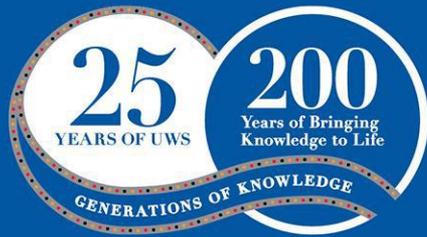


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Explored 'solved' stalking cases from two UK police forces

- Cheshire Police 43 cases
- London Metropolitan Police 10 cases –serious violence ie homicide and attempted homicide

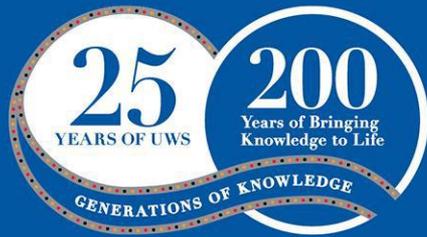




## Phase 3

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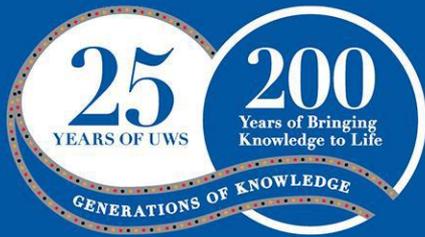
- Case assessment using the risk tool by two police officers (trained on the use of the tool ) working independently
- *Separate* clinical violence risk assessment was completed by a Forensic Psychologists for each case



# Phase 3

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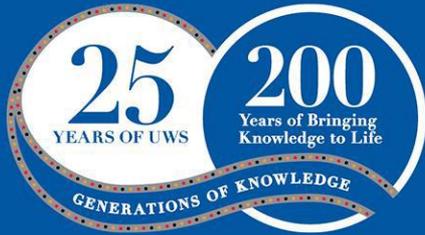
- Results
  - Agreement between two police officer assessments
  - The checklist results matched the clinical risk assessment
  - differentiated between low, medium and high risk cases (0.9 correlation between forensic assessment (*high/moderate or low risk*) and checklist results.
  - Good agreement between actual and predicted violence outcomes



# Phase 4



- Police operational usability
  - 6 UK police forces
  - Used over 12 months
  - Ease of use
  - Level of use
    - i.e. most appropriate user – central risk unit verse front line police
- Results
  - Positive feedback, usability and risk id
  - Best used at level above front line/beat officers
    - i.e. specialist public protection units with trained risk assessors



# Implementation

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- UK wide implementation (ACPO best practice in stalking risk assessment policy)
- Used by all UK police forces to assess stalking risk
- Importantly the checklist is part of a much wider stalking threat management approach
- Now piloting in USA – just collecting data in Minnesota
- Keen to test in Australia if anyone is interested?



# Conclusions



- A need was identified for a risk tool
- Evidence and empirical validation vital
  - How do we know that it works?
- Vital to involve police at all stages
  - Needs to be aware of operational constraints and challenges ‘fit on an A4 sheet’, simple to use.