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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Elizabeth Ann Duemig

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Forensic Insight on Predatory Behavior: Fantasy and Relational Paraphilic Attachments in Stalker Processing

by

Elizabeth A. Duemig

MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MEd, Florida Atlantic University, 2002

BA, Binghamton University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2020

Abstract

Despite the push to criminalize stalking, many of the actions that would legally fall under these provisions do not materialize into stalking-based arrests or convictions as stalking frequently becomes a lesser included offense under charges that escalate into violence. Insight into offender pathways related to predatory pursuit could serve to inform individuals faced with the forensic challenges of legal decision-making. The dynamics of stalking behavior include elements of fantasy and attachment. The objective of this study was to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasies and relational paraphilic attachment (RPA) in an offender's process of stalking preselected victims. The research question asked what drives the stalker to pursue a relationship with their victim, and how fantasies play into their process. Hickey's RPA theory served as the theoretical framework. A purposeful sample of 30 community-based convicted stalkers with sexual components to their crimes of conviction participated. Q methodology was used as a qualitative-quantitative integrated research approach. Data were collected through a Q sort activity on an internet-based software interface. Factor analysis enabled the examination of processing patterns across participant experiences. Eight principal components presented in the data analysis. The 2 highest loading factors were analyzed as latent concepts that emerged in the data. The data analysis and results demonstrated patterns in the participant stalking behavior that focused on a fantasy-driven process and an RPA-driven process. The resulting factor interpretations could inform victims and legal decision makers in their efforts to decipher the behavior presented to them leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

To the loving memory of my grandfather, Anthony J. Cutrone. He believed I would accomplish something beyond the boundaries that others placed on me, and he taught me to base my aspirations on the power of my dreams. He was an extraordinary man who modeled character and strength. His spirit is unforgettable.

And to the victims of violent crime; your voices are not silent.

Acknowledgments

I have been blessed to have remarkable individuals cross my path and support my efforts to reach this milestone. While so many have left their mark on my journey, there are several who need to be specifically acknowledged here. The combination of those mentioned in this tribute have helped to mold me into the person I am. I never expected this to be easy, but their support carried me through unforeseen and incredibly difficult circumstances. With their help, the process both weathered and strengthened me.

My parents, Joseph and Theresa Duemig instilled in me the understanding that all good things are a product of hard work and dedication. Their journey together has been illustrated through incredible highs and devastating lows. Your commitment to each other through the ups and downs demonstrated examples of perseverance and fortitude; qualities that transferred into my work ethic. My mother always told me to make lemonade out of life's lemons. This doctorate became nothing short of such an endeavor.

My dissertation committee had an all-star lineup that would likely humble anyone with insight of forensic populations and the study of criminal behavior. Dr. Wayne Wallace, Dr. Eric Hickey, and Dr. Christopher Bass represented the most exceptional team of advisors that I could have ever asked for. Dr. Wallace served as an incredible role model in his role as my Dissertation Chair. His professionalism, candor, and humor anchored me through the ups and downs of this research effort. He is a rock for those lucky enough to be within his personal and professional spheres of influence, and I feel lucky to be among them. The amount of respect and admiration I have for Dr. Hickey and his professional accomplishments simply cannot be put into words. His belief in my

ideas provided an esteemed sense of confidence in my ability to push forward into new territory. I will forever be indebted to the confidence and trust he placed in me to examine his theory. Dr. Bass's even-handed and unbiased reviews lent invaluable support to this process by reflecting that my ideas were displayed in a clear and practical manner. I am beyond grateful for the guidance and support given to me by this team of professionals.

My friends and colleagues became an integral part of this journey. Landon Rollins is truly one of the most courageous individuals I have ever met. Landon, you are a man of honor and you embody the greatest qualities of strength, character, and friendship. There are no words to accurately relay the amount of gratitude and appreciation I have for what you have done for me. Dr. Kelly Reed, my nonbiological sister at heart, represents the greatest symbol of love and sincerity that anyone could ever look for in a friend. She gave me the opportunity to experience a bond that I will forever cherish. And last but certainly not least, Dr. Laura Domasneanu-Miulescu became my Ph.D. partner in crime. Yes, she finished first, and not just because I tripped along the way. I was so proud of her, as she brings an incredible story to the table and her talents needs to be shared with the world. Our friendship is the greatest gift this academic journey produced. Just as we held each other's hands through the laughter and tears that came with our dissertations, I have faith we will continue to support and encourage each other through each new phase this wonderful life has in store for us.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Problem Statement

Stalking behavior can go unchecked as indicators of imminent threats of violence while becoming part of the dark figure of offending (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Logan & Walker, 2017). The dynamics of these predatory behaviors may include aspects of attachment, violence, and fantasy (Alshiban, 2017). Attachment has been examined as a predictive correlate of adult relational behavior (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). Offenders who share a stranger or acquaintance relationship with their victims tend to demonstrate high levels of stalking persistence as they become resentful and predatory as intimacy-seeking stalkers (Johnson & Thompson, 2016). Erotomanic delusions have emerged in the behavior patterns of these intimacy-seeking stalkers (Johnson & Thompson, 2016). Sexual fantasy can represent a desire for an intimate connection and can involve nonconsensual sexual expression, which could lead to predatory behavior (Hickey, 2016). A research gap exists concerning the study of the fantasy and attachment variables as correlates of perpetrated stalking behavior.

Spitzberg and Cupach's work provides a baseline for research related to stalking behaviors by clustering multifaceted stalking schemes (Spitzberg, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Recent studies have used these behavior clusters and extended the original scope of the groupings to include the aim of violence, which was linked but not explained in the original clusters (Viñas-Racionero, Raghavan, Soria-Verde, & Prat-Santaolaria, 2017). Dardis and Gidycz (2017) used theories and behavior patterns to explain hypothesized motives for stalking behaviors. They also indicated the need for

future research to expand this understanding by generating context and explicit purposes for the stalking actions (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017). Suggestions for future research have pointed to the need for advancing theory associated with attachments and these types of predators (Caman, Howner, Kristiansson, & Sturup, 2017). Additionally, recently published research on the dynamics of stalking persistence and predatory behavior has indicated the need for future investigations involving samples of convicted stalkers (Johnson & Thompson, 2016).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasies and relational paraphilic attachment (RPA) in an offender's process of stalking preselected victims. Stalking involves predatory behaviors that can materialize in nonviolent and violent forms. Some stalking activities, including the pursuit of sexual contact, can become triggered to escalation and pose an increased risk to the targeted stranger or acquaintance (Monckton-Smith, Szymanska, & Haile, 2017). Because offenders convicted of stalking crimes have likely demonstrated extreme examples of stalking behaviors, investigating the subjective processing and behavior patterns of convicted stalkers could provide insight into conduct that could escalate toward violence. A qualitative and quantitative integrated (QQI) inquiry on violent sexual fantasies and RPA as process variables of stalking could add to our understanding of this type of predatory behavior. The functional intention of this study was to examine these variables as possible indicators of imminent threats of violence toward targeted victims. Hickey's (2017) RPA theory was considered as a lens for examining this process within a

population of convicted stalking perpetrators whose crimes included sexual components. This study adds to the existing literature by addressing the expressed need for more studies on stalking behavior that involves convicted offenders and theory development. This study could also illuminate behavior patterns that demonstrate a possible causal relationship between aspects of fantasy and violence.

Significance

In this study, I explored the presence of RPAs and violent sexual fantasies within the processing patterns of stalking behavior. The participants of this study encompassed a purposeful forensic sample as they were sourced from a pool of convicted stalkers whose crimes required post-custody registration as a sex offender. This was a unique study because there is limited research concentrated on the sexual components involved when the predatory behavior reaches a level of criminality. Research focused on the established behavior patterns of convicted stalking offenders could bring relevance to possible discoveries within the data analysis. An inquiry with a population of convicted stalking offenders brings a level of practicality to the knowledge this study could generate.

A QQI study enabled the research data to demonstrate operant subjectivity within the stalking process, while also providing data that can be statistically analyzed. This approach could provide insight on patterns in the processes across individual respondents with substantially similar offenses. Additionally, causality between aspects of fantasy and acts of violence has not been established. This inquiry into stalking behavior focuses on the possible mediating effects of violent sexual fantasy and RPA on the stalking

outcome. Although this was not an exploration of a specific causal relationship, this investigative effort could provide a step toward that direction for future research. This research could expand the current understanding of predictor variables that lead to stalking behaviors of targeted victims. Probing whether a presumptive causal relationship is demonstrated within the subjective processing could add to academic understanding and begin to address parts of this research gap.

In effect, results of this study may lead to a better understanding of the driving forces behind stalking perpetration. This discovery could provide insight for law-enforcement-related efforts focused on public safety and domestic violence protocols. The information unearthed through this research could inform legal decision-makers on the process involved in stalking pursuit. This research could also be used in forensic settings to contextualize these predatory behaviors so appropriate decisions for sentencing and treatment can be made. Positive social change resulting from this study could therefore impact the safety of the community and the efforts made by law enforcement personnel to protect the victims of stalking perpetrators. Positive social change could also be framed in the augmented understanding of these behaviors for those who work with stalking offenders in the treatment context of forensic settings.

Background

To explore various elements of attachment and fantasy in the context of stalking behavior, I examined a breadth of peer-reviewed academic resources. Selected articles related to stalking and the overall concepts of fantasy and attachment helped to carve the direction of this study. Aspects related to the criminality of stalking conduct, fantasy

development, theoretical approaches, and methodological applications are relevant in understanding this research gap and the need for further investigative studies.

Viñas-Racionero et al. (2017) conducted a study whose purpose was rooted in policy discussions pioneering current efforts to define the criminality of stalking behavior in Spain's Organic Law. The authors performed a cluster analysis using the seminal research of stalking behavior, anchored in Spitzberg and Cupach's work, to find that intimacy-seeking stalker perpetration synchronized with violent stalking cases and confrontational aggression. The researchers stated the need for future research to discover core pathways that lead between stalking and violence.

In their research, Viñas-Racionero et al. (2017) sought to generate a descriptive study to assist in defining the criminalization standards of specific stalking behaviors. The purpose of this study was rooted in the current policy discussions in Spain that are pioneering efforts to explain what stalking behavior should be criminalized in Organic Law. The authors coded case file data to quantitatively assess variables of stalking cases against what researchers have established to be stalking strategies and violent behaviors. The data collection and cluster analysis highlighted support for criminalizing stalking.

One of the most relevant sections of Viñas-Racionero et al.'s (2017) article was in the literary review where the authors explained the seminal work by Spitzberg and Cupach, which established the six clusters of stalking behavior often referred to in stalking research studies. The authors then explained their addition of a seventh cluster to their research on stalking dynamics to incorporate the link between stalking and violence that other researchers had argued should be added.

This study by Viñas-Racionero et al. (2017) demonstrated relevance to this dissertation in two essential ways. First, the focus on the development of preliminary stalking laws in Spain showed a current case example of the push to define stalking behaviors in the realm of criminality. Second, the research approach provided me with ideas as to how to utilize information from case files, court transcripts, and legal documents. The authors' creation and use of a codebook of data items was also relevant for running a quantitative data analysis. Additionally, the cluster analysis provided insight as to how the risk factors and variables related to the criminality of stalking behavior could be assessed.

The criminality of stalking may be at an advanced step in U.S. case law, but this Spanish inquiry is still extremely relevant. At the heart of the relevance is the overlap in difficulty legislatures have had in creating hard definitions for stalking behaviors as the criminality has both implicit and explicit parameters. While the United States has taken advanced steps toward codifying this conduct into law, it varies at the state level and is often difficult to prosecute. A deep dive into the unique layered issues related to forensic applications of stalking within the criminal justice system will be discussed further in the literature review of Chapter 2. This dissertation aims to address aspects of this issue which makes the Viñas-Racionero et al. (2017) resource extremely valuable.

Fox and Tokunaga (2015) used a structural path model to synthesize variables related to attachment styles, relational investment, and post-breakup emotional distress that are exhibited by ex-partners through interpersonal electronic surveillance (IES). The authors applied an integration of attachment theory and interdependence theory as their

framework for discussing these variables and IES. Factor analysis and path coefficients were used to interpret the data of measured variables. The results demonstrated post-breakup outcome pathways for those categorized with anxious and avoidant attachment, as well as the relationship between surveillance and distress.

The structural model was a smart way to illustrate the synthesis of the variables along a behavioral pathway. By utilizing this model, Fox and Tokunaga (2015) demonstrated the synthesis between the integration of attachment theory and interdependence theory. The path model showed how the avoidant and anxious components of attachment theory interacted with the alternatives, and relational investment components of the interdependence theory. Summarily, this pointed toward the path of commitment, which led to distress and subsequent surveillance.

Fox and Tokunaga's (2015) study provided support for the investigative research direction of this dissertation. The authors stated that their study "supports previous literature indicating that attachment style is a key predictor of both offline and online relational behavior" (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015, p. 496). The researchers also extended this concept to relate attachment style to how someone both experiences and copes with a relationship dissolution. The authors suggested future research "explore how attachment and relational variables predict different motivations for online surveillance of ex-partners" (p. 496). Broadening this application to include aspects of attachment and violent sexual fantasy could increase understanding as to these types of motivations and even an extension into violence. Examining the subjective process utilized for stalking

behaviors, as I did with this study, could provide further understanding of offender pathways.

Johnson and Thompson (2016) look at attachment style and motivating factors related to stalking persistence. Two key factors of this study were relevant to framing the variables of this dissertation study. Johnson and Thompson (2016) touch on erotomanic delusions while stating the need for research involving convicted stalkers. The authors also identified their purpose in examining the deficit of theoretically driven research concerning stalking persistence. The authors demonstrated an example of theoretical application to stalking persistence and potential risk factors. The approach of this dissertation was Q methodology, which can be theory-driven, as Q methodology is "based on factor analysis, attempts in-depth explanations, and seeks to understand human complexity" (Laureate Education, 2013, p. 2013). Further, the data analysis of the Q-type of data collection would be exploratory factor analysis. This type of probe is positioned to "explore the underlying theoretical structure of the phenomenon" (Statistics Solutions, 2019, para. 1).

Johnson and Thompson (2016) collected data from a community sample of ex-intimate stalkers based on self-report. The study was exploratory, and the authors recommend future research that informs on the contextual and motivational factors of stalking. Some limitations exist concerning the generalizability of these results as the authors admit that the sample included those identified as ex-intimate stalkers but not criminally classified as such. This dissertation seeks data specifically from a forensically relevant sample of individuals with specific convictions listed as stalking-based offenses.

The sexual components related to the specific crimes of conviction for those in the sample further elevate the relevance and advanced application this research effort proposes.

Johnson and Thompson (2016) explicitly called for the need to investigate potential risk factors associated with stalking behaviors among a sample of convicted stalking offenders. Their study included personality disorder traits, adult attachment, and components of relational goal pursuit which provides for motive, rumination, and negative affect. These components emerged within this dissertation inquiry as this research delved into the stalking process and how fantasy and attachment engage stalking activities. This aligned interest and the framing of a theoretically driven research endeavor further made this article and approach applicable to the current project.

Genest and Mathieu (2014) examined attachment style and anger in the context of intimate partner violence (IPV). The study examined self-report questionnaires of 80 men who were participants in IPV therapy. Multiple regression was used to quantitatively analyze results and showed the avoidant attachment style to contribute most toward intimate partner violence initiated toward the male partner's spouse. The authors then recommended future IPV research further include personality disorders in examining the links between anger and attachment style. The authors reference Bowlby's seminal work to support the application of attachment theory and include references to work by Dutton, Golant, Shaver, Allison, and Bartholomew to support the theoretical application of attachment to the study.

While stalking is not a central component of this article, the focused correlation between attachment and anger in male perpetrators of violence is relevant to the focus of this dissertation inquiry. The research presented in this article connects dysfunctional attachment with emotion that becomes functionally inappropriate and leads to violence. The authors infer from their results that the purpose behind the emotional displays was "to obtain physical contact with the attachment figure" (Genest and Mathieu, 2014, p. 382). For this dissertation, I further explored the process of stalking behavior that has the potential to highlight patterns related to dysfunctional attachment and inappropriate behaviors.

Meloy (2018) used structural and object relations theory to examine the relationship between sexual desire, predatory and affective violence, and belief structures as driving forces of terroristic behaviors. Meloy applied the psychoanalytic angle of the theory to each of these components, spending a significant amount of time discussing compensatory fantasy and how that can translate into actionable and targeted violence. The author used dated and recent case examples for his analysis in which he incorporated aspects of personality structures in his explanation of how these variables interplay and lead to extreme acts of violence.

Meloy's (2018) article is useful in framing the associations between fantasy and predatory behavior. References to work by Declercq, Audenaert, Siegel, and Victoroff gave credibility to points made by Meloy as these authors are threaded within numerous studies that were reviewed concerning predatory and affective violence. The resource provides three case examples that represent examples of fantasy and predatory violence,

granted the variance of these examples is evident based on time and place. While Meloy's (2018) article is not explicitly focused on stalking, key aspects of fantasy and object relations are discussed.

Meloy (2018) used the object relations model to frame fantasy as a driving component of predatory or instrumental violence that becomes targeted at something representative of an unmet emotional need. Meloy links compensatory fantasy to emotional grievances related to a loss of love or control and suggests this could "function as an emotional accelerant for violence" (p. 75). The inquiry posed by this dissertation study aligns with this possible scenario and notions related to the theoretical framework selected for this dissertation.

Alshiban (2017) used research and theories to survey the etiology and pathways of predatory stalking. While Alshiban used a fictional character who engaged in predatory stalking behavior as a reference point in the article, the author engaged comparative examples with current inter-disciplinary research on actual stalkers. In this manner, the actions of a perpetrator engaging in obsessional pursuit is analyzed. The study uses an interdisciplinary approach to define expressed stalking behavior through the application of power and control concepts, object attachment theory, violent attachments, and deviant sexual fantasy as a motivating force.

Alshiban (2017) presented a survey of research on predatory stalking by incorporating relevant constructs of criminality and criminal behavior as explained by FBI agents John Douglas and Mark Olshaker. Research efforts of Meloy were also discussed in relating the portrayed actions of Fowles's fictional character Clegg to the

predatory stalking pathway. The survey format of Alshiban's work gives the audience the ability to view predatory behavior through the scaffolded development of current interdisciplinary research.

A key takeaway from Alshiban's (2017) work that applies to this dissertation's direction of study is the breakdown of how Meloy associates the stalking behavior of offenders as fueled by a fantasy. It is suggested that a stalker's fantasy is associated with the victim, which is then rejected, and in turn, fuels acts of revenge. The article mentions fantasy as a component of stalking behavior in numerous ways and then proposes associative links with object attachment theory and a discussion on violent attachments. No empirical research is expressed regarding the connection of fantasy to stalking behavior, which is the avenue I expanded on in this study. Through the Q methodology, I was able to investigate the stalking process through operant subjectivity. Insight from the data analysis expanded on how these elements actually work within the processing of those who commit criminal levels of predatory behavior.

Logan and Walker (2017) presented a multidimensional framework for stalking that includes dynamic and contextual factors. The offender-victim relationship is delineated according to ex-intimate and non-intimate relationships. The authors are inclusive of the stalking-related criminal codes, public safety, and policy implications. This research study finds footing in a similar position of significance as it aimed to both focus on a forensically-relevant population and to explore the complexity of relational attachment between the offender and victim.

Dardis, Strauss, and Gidycz (2018) examined stalking victimization and defined the unwanted pursuit behaviors (UPB) of former partners in the range of defined actions. These actions include stalking, persistent pursuit that is unsolicited and unwanted, and obsessive relational intrusion. The list of UPB items gathered in data collection was insightful regarding the range of behaviors that impact victims. The authors created an expanded understanding of behaviors that had impacts on victims. They collected data from victims and analyzed the results using the statistical analysis of variance, followed by factor analysis to generate a dominance analysis. The use of dominance analysis was a unique statistical technique that demonstrated variances among different variables. While the study by Dardis et al. looked at victim data, the intended focus of this dissertation is to flip the view from the victimization perspective to one demonstrating perpetrator data. In turn, the factor analysis for this dissertation applies to the person, rather than to the traits.

The measures used by Dardis et al. (2018) would not be appropriate for this inquiry, however, their data and results did highlight the sexual component that appeared to be threaded through the victim impact in both in-person and cyber elements of pursuit behavior. The authors also use the results and implications to underline the ambiguity of what constitutes *stalking* to be defined as criminal. They noted the need for future research "to examine the sequence of IPV and stalking" by supporting this with current research references indicating that pursuers do not grasp the discerning impact their actions have on their targets (Dardis et al., 2018, p. 10). This research effort proposes an effort to examine such a process and patterns within.

Caman et al. (2017) expressed the need to explore perpetrator, victim, and incident characteristics to understand intimate partner homicide perpetrators better. The methodology used to analyze criminal behavior was insightful. The authors used appropriate quantitative analysis in which a chi-square analysis fostered group comparisons, followed by multiple logistic regression to examine significant variables. Their comparative study included factors related to the perpetrator, victim, and crime scene. This was a unique approach as many research articles located have focused on either the perpetrator or victimization characteristics.

Caman et al. (2017) identified risk factors of perpetration to include estrangement, threats, and offender motives based on emotional needs. Also discussed was the need for theory advancement and that where the perpetrator is on the offender pathway can give context to the behavior. The aim of this dissertation research hits on these areas with the intent to collect data that provides insight into the context of the stalking behavior and the criminal pathway through the exploration of the fantasy and attachment variables. Additionally, the results of this study could advance the application of Hickey's RPA theory by giving context to the predatory behavior relative to the identified variables.

De Smet, Uzieblo, Loeys, Buysse, and Onraedt (2015) provided analysis based on the use of several different data collection instruments. Two of these instruments provided insight as to approaches for collecting data on the identified variables of stalking behavior. De Smet et al. (2015) used the Relational Pursuit-Pursuer Short Form (RP-PSF) for assessing UPB perpetration, and the Close Relationships Scale (ECR) to evaluate attachment style that the perpetrator had toward their relationship with their ex-

partners. This approach provided ideas regarding the context-specific statements that could be used to examine the offender process. Additionally, this article points to the need for "more studies that approach UPB perpetration from a multi-faceted perspective" (De Smet et al., 2015, p. 763).

McEwan, Daffern, MacKenzie, and Ogloff (2017) used logistic regression and odds ratios to examine and analyze stalking violence, persistence, and recurrence. They found that the ex-intimate status of the victim presented a higher probability for violence than stranger or acquaintance stalking while stalking recurrence was predicted by erotomanic delusions. Their results also demonstrated that delusional beliefs indicated higher tendencies toward stalking persistence. The authors express the need to extend research inquiries on this topic with imprisoned offenders as they would represent the most extreme examples of stalking perpetrators. In this dissertation, I sought to tap into a substantially similar data source as the one recommended, but with the removal of the in-custody situational context of the forensic setting.

This was a retrospective study of outcomes and predictors concerning the violence, persistence, and recurrence of stalking behaviors. Multivariate logistic regression models and exploratory analyses were conducted to provide predictive results for risk factors associated with each of the three stalking outcomes. Results were consistent with previous research and highlighted specific risk factors significantly associated with each stalking outcome.

This study incorporated erotomanic delusions as a potential risk factor for persistence and recurrence in stalkers. In the conclusion, the authors state that the study

provided “evidence of the specific role of delusions in prolonging stalking” and suggest a direct association between the stalking behavior of some offenders and severe mental disorders associated with “a psychosis involving erotomanic delusions” (p. 53-54). This evidence provided a potential jumping off point for this dissertation inquiry. Examining violent sexual fantasy and its predictive nature related to stalking behavior would further explore the construct referenced by McEwan et al. (2017) as erotomanic delusions. McEwan et al. (2017) noted the lack of representation of this specific population in their sample. My data collection efforts, focused on convicted stalkers whose crimes of conviction included sexual components, involved further exploration of this topic.

Dardis and Gidycz (2017) The authors examine variances of stalking behaviors of ex-intimate partners, expressed as intrusive UPB. Integrative path models were developed that demonstrated Intimate partner violence and UPB perpetration against the measures of attachment, emotional regulation, and self-control difficulties. Relational goal pursuit theory, coercive control theory, and attachment theory were then analyzed against the results.

Dardis and Gidycz’s (2017) choice to use a path model was an ingenious way to demonstrate the integrated theory approach while including several key measures associated with both UPB and IPV. The authors took time to explain three measures of relational goal pursuit and mentioned the seminal research of Cupach, Spitzberg, Bolingbroke, and Tellitocci to tell how the specific gauges of relational goal pursuit fit into the path model. They also discussed the correlates of UPB with attachment theory, relational goal pursuit theory, coercive control theory, and self-regulation theories.

Dardis and Gidycz (2017) noted in the limitations section that this study used the theories and behavior patterns to explain hypothesized motives for engaging in UPB's while indicating the need for future research to expand this understanding by generating context and explicit purposes for the stalking actions. The research gap presented by this relevant limitation opens the avenue for this dissertation inquiry into the sexual motivations and attachment context of stalking perpetrator behavior. Also, in this aspect, Hickey's RPA theory could apply as a missing contextual piece of the puzzle since it is the deviant extension of attachment theory. This could help explain the shift of behavior explained by attachment and coercive control theories toward crossing criminal lines of conduct with RPA.

Framework

Attachment theory, relational goal pursuit theory, object relations theory, and coercive control theory are examples of models presented in current research studies that focus on various forms of attachment and stalking behaviors (Alshiban, 2017; Dardis & Gidycz, 2017; De Smet et al., 2015; Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Johnson & Thompson, 2016). Introducing a theoretical application based on a deviant extension was insightful as to the criminality of this predatory behavior. Hickey's (2017) RPA theory expands on the tenants of attachment theory and the trauma-control model by incorporating a sexual component related to predatory behavior. Hickey (2016) framed a deviant desire for intimacy and connection through nonconsensual relationships or *relational paraphilic attachments*. RPA explores interactional paraphilia through insecure attachments, sexual fantasies, and a detached understanding of the reality of power and intimacy (Hickey,

2017). These dynamic behavioral components align with the identified variables of this study, RPA and violent sexual fantasy. The application of RPA as a theoretical framework generated an initial investigation as to whether and how this model might practically apply to stalking behavior.

Research Question

RQ: What drives the stalker to pursue a relationship with their victim, and how do fantasies play into their process?

H_0: Violent sexual fantasy and relational paraphilic attachment do not work in concert during the process of stalking behavior.

H_1: Violent sexual fantasy and relational paraphilic attachment do work in concert during the process of stalking behavior.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was Q methodology, which is a QQI design. This differs from a mixed methods approach as the nature of this study did not involve separate and distinct qualitative and quantitative steps used for data collection. On the Continuum of Inquiry (see Appendix B), QQI falls within the overlap between descriptive, correlational, and cause-effect studies (Laureate Education, 2012, 2013). While QQI and mixed methods approaches fall in similar places on the continuum of inquiry, this QQI investigation incorporated quantitative data analysis to the qualitative data collection element.

This design was used as a constructivist approach to learning about behavior patterns of stalkers. This design enabled me to discover whether processing patterns

related to the research context could be identified in the subjective responses of the participants. I used Q sort for data collection and Q factor analysis for data analysis. A Q set was developed from a concourse (see Appendix C) that I created. This concourse consisted of statements depicting a representative range of possible opinions on RPA and violent sexual fantasy within the context of the stalking process. The Q set (see Appendix D) was selected as a representative sample of this concourse.

I provided the Q set to the sample of participants, known as the P set. During the Q sort, the P set arranged the Q set to reflect the operant subjectivity of each respondent. The final arrangement of the statements in the Q sort was the culmination of the data collection activity for each respondent in the P set. I then analyzed the data using Q factor analysis. The Q-type in exploratory factor analysis looks at factors calculated among persons, or respondents, rather than traits (Laureate Education, 2013; Statistics Solutions, 2019; Thomas & Watson, 2002). The Q sort represented the qualitative aspect of this inquiry, with the Q factor analysis functioning as the quantitative aspect of the QQI approach. Bryant, Chaar, and Schneider (2018) expressed that a strength of their study was based on the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative elements in their exploratory study. The QQI approach to this exploratory investigation therefore brought a level of complexity and depth to the research design and results.

Types and Sources of Data

The source of data for this study was a sample of convicted stalking offenders whose stalking convictions included offenses with sexual components. The target population for data collection was offenders who have been released from custody and

are living in community-based situations. The sample consisted of those whose stalking offense convictions specifically required them to register as sex offenders upon release from custody.

Q methodology does not require random sampling. Instead, the data can be sourced from a purposeful sample. Not all stalking offenders released from custody and into the community on probation or parole are required to register as sex offenders. However, if there was a sexual component to the behavior for which an offender was convicted as determined to be a sexually violent offense at trial, the individual could be required to register as a sex offender (Sex Offender Registration Program: Sexually Violent Offense, 2013). Therefore, offenders' being listed on the public sex offender registries specifically for stalking offenses indicates that the criminal behavior leading to their conviction included sexual elements. A participant pool consisting of individuals in this classification represent a purposeful sample for this research inquiry.

The sample was sourced from public sex offender registries in the United States. Public sex offender registries can be accessed for most states, as well as for five U.S. territories, and numerous federally funded Native American Tribes. Stalking laws in the United States, as with other assorted offenses with sexual components, fall within state jurisdictions. This leads to state-specific public registries for sex offenders. Some sex offender registries, such as individual state registries are open to public access. The federal sex offender registry, run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was not used to source data for this research study because access to this information is law enforcement-specific and part of the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services. Due to this

scenario, data sourcing for this research inquiry focused on one or more state public sex offender registries.

The State of Texas was an ideal choice to begin with for state registry selection. Its sex offender registry provides frequently updated information on offenders with their associated offenses which lists certain information for public access (Sex Offender Registration Program: Central Database; Public Information, 2019). Additionally, several different stalking offenses are listed within the registration coding of this public record of offenders, increasing the likelihood that a large enough sample size could be fielded from this specific public registry. Q sort used in Q methodology allows for smaller sample sizes due to the qualitative aspect of the data. Sample sizes for Q sort are suggested to be 30-40 respondents (Laureate Education, 2013). Completed publications using Q sort under a Q methodological design ranged from as few as 12 participants and greater than 70. With these considerations in mind, the ideal target for this research inquiry was to source between 15 and 30 respondents from the purposeful sample.

An additional benefit of using a data source from state-specific public registries was that doing so allowed me to minimize possible mitigating variables. Sourcing the sample from a state-specific registry limited the potential variances that could be represented in state-level criminal stalking codes. Legal statutes surrounding stalking offenses can differ marginally by state penal codes. Sourcing a sample of inmates who were incarcerated for a specific offense from one state-specific correctional population provides consistency in data collection. Because the offenders have been released from custody, this could field participation from individuals living in various geographic areas

in the United States, but the data source would come from the state-registry where the offense and conviction occurred.

The means of data collection was to administer the Q sort through an internet interface specifically designed for Q studies with the use of Q method software. The internet interface did not require the participant to have a flash drive or any special programs on the computer they used. Access to participate in the study was through an internet website. I provided the link address to the internet interface to potential participants in a mailed invitation letter. Each participation letter had a unique participation code, which both allowed the participant access to the study on the internet interface and provided anonymity throughout that process. Access to the study began with an informed consent screen after the participation code was entered by the participant. Access to the Q sort was not granted unless the participant acknowledged the informed consent. Once the participant entered the site, acknowledged the informed consent, and completed the Q sort activity, the participant selected the submit button and the data were captured for me to analyze.

Participation was confidential because participants were not asked for any identifying information during or after the data collection process. The data collection process was completely voluntary. Voluntariness was ensured through the procedures as the potential participants solicited with invitation letters had the option simply not to respond to the invitation by not seeking to access the Q sort internet interface website. Participants were not asked to enter any information other than the participation code. Participants also had the option to exit the site or close the browser at any time during the

informed consent screen, during the instruction page, or during the Q sort. Data were only captured from the completed Q sorts where the participants selected to submit it after completing the activity. There was no further step for the participant after they selected submit and there was no further contact with me for this inquiry.

Additionally, a blind measure was been built into this process to ensure for the confidentiality of each respondent's participation. The mail-based invitation letter had the link to the internet interface, along with a participation code. The participation code could be entered into the internet interface to provide anonymity. Although I had access to the public sex offender registry and was able to see those on the registry linked to stalking offenses, no record was made or kept linking participation codes with participants. The invitation letters were stuffed into envelopes and sealed before participant address labels were placed on the envelopes, ensuring that not even I was aware of which participant code was sent to which participant. The participation codes listed in the invitation letters were specific to this research study on the internet interface but I did not track which respondent was sent which participation code. This step of omitting a log of any links between participant codes and the invitations to those in the participant pool provided an additional element of both confidentiality and anonymity.

The main priority for this approach was to limit even minimal perceptions of coerciveness toward those who chose to participate. Q sort data collection studies have been completed in person with the researcher and participant, via the internet, or via video/avatar conferencing settings (Laureate Education, 2013). I selected the internet interface for data collection to intentionally limit interaction between the researcher and

the participants, to respect the privacy of the participants by creating minimal disruptions to the participants' daily routines and environment, and to respect the sensitivity of their status on the sex offender registry. Respect for the circumstances of the participants' forensic, social, and physical environment were weighed carefully and taken into consideration as a priority in selecting this approach for the data collection effort. Limiting data collection to a simple internet activity procedure generated a spirit of anonymity and volunteerism.

Data collection efforts reflecting similar situational constraints that were effectively navigated in recent prisoner research conducted by Saramago, Cardoso, and Leal (2019). Saramago et al. acquired recruitment and formal authorizations through "the Portuguese General Office of Prison Services and Social Rehabilitation, as well as the prison facility that housed the participants" and specifically noted that "American Psychological Association's standards on the ethical treatment of participants were followed" (p. 477-478). The researchers in this study sourced a population of convicted sex offenders for an exploratory study and collected data about the presence of sexual fantasy and pornography use through surveys and semi-structured interviews. The presence and potential influence of the female researcher as part of the data collection effort was noted as a source of limitation for the study's results. The researchers coded for the history of violent offenses based on official records of the participants criminal convictions and utilized prison records as a source of consultation to select participants that met the researcher's inclusion criteria based on sociodemographic and offense characteristics (Saramago et al., 2019).

In this dissertation, I sought to navigate data collection efforts in a similar manner out of respect for the participant population and ethical constraints relayed by the standards of the American Psychological Association, without the added component that the participants in this inquiry were not considered part of a vulnerable population. I attempted to further limit any coercive or influential measures by eliminating the presence of the researcher during data collection, administering only the Q set to the participants whereby the researcher influence of a semistructured interview would be avoided, and implementing the discussed internet-based procedure to minimize coerciveness and enable the voluntariness of participation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A research gap exists involving fantasy and attachment variables as correlates of stalking behavior. The focused purpose of this study was to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasies and RPA in an offender's process of stalking preselected victims. Contemporary researchers have focused on predatory pursuit behavior by building on the work of seminal researchers to better understand stalking and its relationship with various forms of attachment and violence (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017; McEwan et al., 2017; Tassy & Winstead, 2014; Viñas-Racionero et al., 2017). Erotomanic delusions emerging in the behavior patterns of intimacy-seeking stalkers brought the concept of fantasy into the research discussion of offense pathways for stalking (Johnson & Thompson, 2016; McEwan et al., 2017). Additionally, relational patterns and a sexualized context have materialized in modern research concerning attachment and fantasy development (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Monckton-Smith et al., 2017; Sachs, 2017). This literature review will highlight the movement of current research pertaining to these variables, their forensic conceptualization, and the development of theory surrounding these potential influencing elements of stalking.

The scope of this research endeavor and its associated literature review features the application of a new theoretical framework while focusing on the variables in the context of stalking behaviors within the victim-offender relationships. Current researchers have expressed the need for theory development pertaining to stalking. RPA theory was applied in order to investigate the stated variables and their role or emerging

patterns in an offender's processing that leads to stalking. To help formulate a more comprehensive understanding of behavior pathways related to predatory pursuit and the related violence perpetrated on stalking victims, this study focused on general offender processing, moving away from the common focus on the intimate-partner or ex-intimate partner relationship status between offenders and their victims.

An abundance of the current literature on this topic, particularly linking attachment to unwanted pursuit behavior, presents research findings that the investigators directed toward current or former intimate-partner populations (Dardis & Gidycz, 2017; Dardis et al., 2018; De Smet et al., 2015; Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Although the noted value of the findings in some of these references will be discussed in this literature review, the focus of this study was to assess the presence of the variables in the stalking process, without regard for the classification of stranger or intimate partner relationships. The need for greater attention to offenders as sources for data collection was also expressed in the sourced literature. The direction of this study is therefore further relevant to the examination of the stated research gap because of the concentration on behaviors patterns of convicted of stalking offenders with noted sexual elements to their crimes.

Background

The extent of the literature review process spanned approximately two years. Published literature from researchers who investigated fantasy, perpetrated violence, and paraphilic behavior brought stalking into view as a focus for this study. The evolution of this literature review progressed as a practical and relevant topic of interest when

alignment with real-world scenarios developed. The studies and information discovered through the literature review began to align with real-life circumstances that I was aware of as a professional in the field of law enforcement. The combined clarity of the sourced research and its alignment and practical application to real forensic populations created an awareness of attachment-based behavior and the relevancy of this psychological component to stalking. The totality of this process matured into an in-depth literature review in which the presented research gap emerged and was further investigated for source material.

The types of resources examined during the literature review ranged in scope to include peer-reviewed academic journals, government-based reports, psychological instruments of measure, and internet resources, as well as conference and residency intensive discussions. The breadth of the type of resources reviewed enabled various perspectives to be incorporated as the focus of the topic was narrowed. Some of the databases and search engines utilized during the process of the literature review included Sage Journals, PsychINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, PsychTESTS, Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print, LegalTrac, Google Scholar, and the Criminal Justice and Security Database. Key search terms and combinations of search terms used during the scope of the literature search included *stalk*, fantasy, paraphilia, attachment, violence,* and *relational patterns*. A detailed list of additional search terms can be found in Appendix A.

The application of Hickey's RPA theory presented an additional hurdle to the compilation of this literature review. Because RPA is a relatively new theory, there is

limited published research demonstrating current applications in which researchers have employed or discussed this theoretical framework. The pragmatic use of this model and its alignment with the concepts to this study could not be discounted purely due to the lack of current research inclusive of RPA. The potential for applying RPA to the predatory behavior and violent sexual fantasy of stalking offenders provided a canvas to make one of the initial applications of this theory in the research field.

As the dearth of resources on this theory provided a limiter on providing supporting research in this literature review, RPA will be explored based on its own tenets while being framed as a deviant extension of attachment theory. Conference-based presentations and personal discussions with the theory's author, along with published work by Hickey were used in sourcing information on this theory. Participation in a forensic psychology special topics residency, hosted by Hickey, on sex crimes and criminal paraphilia, provided access to a presentation on RPA and a functional understanding of this theoretical framework. Current literature concerning the variables in my study provided additional support to the understanding of how RPA could be applied to this project.

Evidence of the Problem

Early research on stalking by Cupach and Spitzberg presented obsessive relational intrusion (ORI) as a factor of persistence by an ex-intimate pursuer (Spitzberg, Cupach, Hannawa, & Crowley, 2014). According to Spitzberg et al. (2014), the pursuers engage in ORI despite their awareness that the victim does not want contact with them. Tassy and Winstead (2014) used this foundational concept to study the engagement of

unwanted pursuit based on attachment styles and relationship characteristics. The findings noted that relational investment predicted aggression while anxious attachment predicted pursuit (Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Their data also conveyed that 6.6% of the reported UPB pursuers acknowledged sexually coercing their victim, which was listed as an aggression item. Tassy and Winstead used the findings to help define the roles attachment and relationship context can play into UPB or stalking behavior.

Relevant dynamic and contextual factors were demonstrated in research by Dardis et al. (2018), who acknowledged a sexual component that was threaded through the victim impact in both in-person and cyber unwanted pursuit behavior of ex-intimates. This element resonates with Johnson and Thompson's (2016) study referencing erotomanic delusions as being possibly associated with attachment styles. Monckton-Smith et al. (2017) stated, "obsession and fixation (emotional state/psychology), surveillance, tracking, following (high risk markers) and escalation indicating presence of a trigger (triggers) are important characteristics. This categorization may also be more reflective of identifying a journey to homicide" (p. 8). Referencing these risks associated with the obsessional fixation of stalking behavior highlight the severity of what this behavior could lead to. The need for additional understanding of the behavior pathways of stalkers is both relevant and necessary.

Evidence of the problem is demonstrated by these presented researchers and their associated studies. At its core, this research study moves to build on the existing knowledge of criminal predatory pursuit. Attachment, relational context, sexual aggression, and fantasy have been linked to stalking. Coupling these elements with the

increased attention to the eroticized and sexualized aspects of pursuit behavior, lends itself to a study of the selected variables as possible predictors of stalking. An additional research step, examining whether violent sexual fantasy and the RPA of the pursuer present patterns in the offender processing, can add to the existing knowledge on the dynamics that may fuel this criminal conduct.

Variables and Related Concepts

The selected variables to be examined in this study are RPA and violent sexual fantasy within the stalking process. These variables will be operationalized through definition and context.

Stalking

The sourced research reflected a growing body of literature on stalking. The behavior discussed in the resources depict a range of behaviors involving a preoccupation with another. Some of these behaviors include UPB, ORI, eroticized delusions, and predatory aggression. Racine and Billick (2014) framed the *stalking* construct as, "a complex behavioral phenomenon that is unique in that it necessarily involves a prolonged dyadic relationship between both a perpetrator and a victim" (p. 250). Monckton-Smith et al. (2017) add to this definition by framing the emotional journey of stalking within a criminal framework that typically involves surveillance activities coupled with obsession and fixation. Stalking persistence, duration, and associated predatory aggression have been studied by researchers to provide insight as to the actions associated with stalking. The mindset and motivation of stalkers needs to be further investigated as those components may provide insight as to the intent or driving forces behind the obsessional

fixations that lead to these predatory pursuit behaviors. Aspects related to these elements and the complications with assigning criminality to stalking behaviors are relevant to the purpose of this investigation.

The dark figure and stalking statistics. Despite the push to criminalize stalking, many of the actions that would legally fall under these provisions do not materialize into stalking-based arrests or convictions. As noted in the initial problem statement, stalking is an offense that often finds presence in the *dark figure* of criminal behavior statistics. The dark figure represents the unknown prevalence of the actual perpetration of crime not reflected in arrest records and officially reported crime data. Criminal activity of a higher level committed with the inclusion of stalking behavior or as a culminating action after demonstrated stalking action often takes the place of a higher-level criminal offense, inadvertently hiding the prevalence of stalking in crime statistics. Marazziti, Falaschi, Lombardi, Mungai, and Dell'Osso (2015) note that the fuel for this severe aggressive behavior could be stalking and hence the need to a better understanding that categorizes this conduct as a social emergency.

The National Crime Victim Survey provides data that often falls victim to the dark figure of crime. This survey is administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and presents a clearer picture of actual victimization occurring annually that are often underreported in UCR crime data. According the survey's 2016 criminal victimization report, approximately 42% of violent victimizations in 2016 were not reported to police (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2017). That accounts for nearly half of the violent crime that was not reflected in official crime statistics, further amplifying the presence of

the dark figure. Additionally important to this research study is that stranger-based violence was reported at roughly 45%, with the 2016 survey statistics for criminal victimization reporting that twice as many violent victimizations (2.2 million) were stranger-based as opposed to a being committed by a family member (DOJ, 2017). Although this number is not specific to underreported stalking offenses alone, it is relevant as a plethora of research on the dynamics of stalking behavior focus on intimate partner relationships. The stranger-based victimization percentages highlight the importance of including these figures gathered from the 2016 criminal victimization results when focusing on research. This inclusive approach to this research effort provided a lens to look at stalker processing from both stranger-based and intimate-partner perspectives of offender-victim relationships.

Research has shown evidence of stalking being prevalent in some types of police reports, but the criminal charge for the stalking offense is often not applied with other charges (Brady & Nobles, 2017). This phenomenon has partly been attributed to a lack of understanding related to the nature and extent of predatory pursuit behavior on behalf of police officers, confusion about enforcement policies related to stalking, and a lack of clarity in understanding the criminal definition of stalking as an offense (Brady & Nobles, 2017). In their research on the dark figure associated with stalking, Brady and Nobles (2017) specifically address the need for research on offender pathways as a means of mitigating this chasm between stalking arrests and the actual victimization that is estimated.

In their executive summary report concerning the relationship between stalking and homicide, Monckton-Smith et al. (2017) highlight the need underestimation of true figures related to associative offenses related to personal violent crime. The researchers made key observations related to fixated and obsessed stalkers while cautioning that actions such as vexation should be recognized as an indicator of stalking behavior. A recommendation based on the observations made in the executive summary stated, "professionals should try to pursue all identifiable charges, including stalking or coercive control" (Monckton-Smith et al., 2017, p. 2).

A summary of the National Crime Victimization Survey of 2016 was presented by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Information in the summary noted that only about 42% of violent victimizations were actually reported to police (BJS, 2017). Reasoning for underreporting included ideas that the crime was too personal to relay or that the victim had the belief that the police could not help with the problem (BJS, 2017). Brady and Nobles (2017) echoed this last sentiment when discussing research focused on why stalking cases in particular were underreported to police. A study pertaining to motives behind reporting stalking cases to police pointed to the need for research that investigates associations between stalking behaviors and the nature of the victim-stalker relationship (Acquadro Maran & Varetto, 2017). This investigation of RPA and violent sexual fantasy as correlates in stalking processing aims to do just that. Augmenting the knowledge on the nature of the victim-stalker relationship can serve to inform victims and those charged with affecting arrests. This could ultimately lead to improvements in

reporting and arrest rates for legitimate stalking offenses, which in turn would begin to lessen the magnitude of the dark figure.

When stalking behavior turns criminal. Stalking conduct was first criminalized in the 1990s (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Racine & Billick, 2014). There has since been a progression in defining predatory pursuit behavior in the criminal context. This progression continues today, but with a lack of forensic congruity. Examples of various levels of criminality exist based on the different behavioral requirements for commission of the offense and the level of fear or distress required of the stalking victim (Brady & Nobles, 2017; van der Aa, 2018). The lack of consistency in what defines the criminality of stalking is reflected in the differences in state legal codes in the United States, as well as in those of participating member countries of the European Union (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Racine & Billick, 2014; Viñas-Racionero et al., 2017). Different perceptions on what defines the criminal level of stalking even exists among the EU Member States that have an obligation to comply with anti-stalking legislation under Article 34 of the Council of European Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (van der Aa, 2018).

The legal definition of stalking in the United States varies by jurisdictional legislation. In the State of Texas, the elements of the offense for stalking requires the actor to knowingly engage in a repeated scheme or conduct, that is directed at a specific victim or the targeted victim's family member (Stalking, 2013). The Texas Penal Code further notes that the conduct or scheme would be considered stalking if it resulted in the action or placed the victim in fear of bodily injury, death, or the destruction of another's

property (Stalking, 2013). The victim's reasonable perception of feeling harassed, annoyed, alarmed, abused, tormented, embarrassed, or offended is also included in the codified parameters (Stalking, 2013). Based on the circumstances surrounding the conduct, committing an offense against this statute carries a second- or third-degree felony penalty upon conviction (Stalking, 2013). As earlier referenced, if at trial the offense was considered to be a sexually violent offense, the conviction could further require the offender register as a sex offender (Sex Offender Registration Program: Sexually Violent Offense, 2013). Additionally, for the basis of requiring registration on the sex offender registry, an offender could be placed on the public list based on "substantially similar offense" from other states, which use comparable elements related to the penal code offense and requirements for sex offender registration (Determination Regarding Substantially Similar Elements of Offense, 2005).

Creating some gray area when it comes to the criminality of stalking behavior is that some people do not understand the context of how the behavior can generate fear or that the intent expressed behind the perpetrator's actions can formulate the elements of the offense. The excessive interest in developing intimacy and the generated actions that stem from those interests may form the basis of a stalking offense if the behavior itself is threatening enough (Farber, 2015). A benchmark court case that highlighted this level of threatening behavior was the 1976 case of *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*. The victim in this case, Tatiana Tarasoff was murdered by a man whose sexual and romantic relational pursuit was rejected. Case law that stemmed from this case created the Duty to Protect statute. While this case did not generate specific laws

related to the criminality of stalking, it began to bring legal attention to the dangers and escalating behaviors demonstrated by stalkers and those expressing violent fixations related to another party.

Victim fear and perpetrator intent. Psychological components are part of stalking behavior (Farber, 2015). Investigating psychological components of predatory pursuit behavior which has transitioned to a level of criminality has the potential to inform policy makers, law enforcement, and those working with forensic populations involving both victims and offenders. Such informing information on predatory pursuit could relate to *victim fear* and *perpetrator intent.* These two factors have been noted to be relevant constructs for deciphering the criminality and prosecutorial success concerning alleged stalking perpetration (Logan & Walker, 2017; Magyarics, Lynch, Golding, & Lippert, 2015).

Considering the stalker mindset can help frame an understanding of the perpetrator's intent. Logan and Walker's (2017) research listed motivation, justification, ability, and last resort thinking as the four aspects of the stalker mindset. The researchers linked motivation to a triggering event and justification to resentment, rejection, revenge, and blame. The capacity for the perpetrator to act on their threats and to whether they are concerned at all with possible consequences also factored into the mindset of the stalker. This investigation seeks to investigate if a sexual component related to attachment and fantasy could also predicate a stalkers intent.

Explicit threats. Victims and pursuers have demonstrated different interpretations of when the conduct and its perceived intentions transitions from casual

inappropriateness to stalking (Uhl, Rhyner, Terrance, & Plumm, 2017) The influence on these judgements are often two-pronged; they reflect the implicit versus explicit level of threat and the fear versus anger response of the victim (Logan & Walker, 2017; Uhl et al., 2017). Explicit threats are those manifested through physical objects or acts of harm. Implicit threats are more ambiguous such as following, and watching someone, but can no doubt still create a level of fear for the victim and reduce their sense of safety. These two types of threats are generated by the various acts of the perpetrator and they culminate to form the generalized fear of the victim.

Implicit threats. The implicit nature of stalking behavior is one of the issues that complicates how stalking is viewed as a crime (Logan & Walker, 2017). Implicit threats are no less relevant than threats in an explicit form, however, the ambiguousness of the level of threat generated from implicit threats such as tracking or watching someone, can be argued as subjective when considering legal definitions of a crime. Weighing a victim's perception of fear against the perpetrator's behavior is the manner in which to interpret implicit threats. Lynch & Logan (2015) state, "without specific training in stalking, law enforcement may have a difficult time differentiating stalking from ongoing occasional partner violence—particularly after a court intervention" (p. 1037). Judging the element of implicit threat further complicates legal proceedings for stalking offenses as it relates to members of juries as legal decision-makers. If it is difficult for police officers, then how does a lay person on a jury effectively do that?

The context behind the perpetrator's actions will then play a role in helping to define the criminality of the predatory pursuit behavior. Logan and Walker (2017)

discuss patterns of fear inducing behavior as a means of giving context to threats. Considering fear that would likely be felt by a reasonable person can give context to the stalking behaviors imposed by implicit threats. Conner-Smith, Henning, More, and Holdford (2011) state that "the context of victim fear is particularly important to understanding and assessing the reasonableness of the fear" (Logan & Walker, 2017, p. 211). The lay persons who would need to gauge the level of dangerousness posed in these threats would include the victim, the perpetrator, the law enforcement officer, and those working in forensic roles of the court system.

Predatory stalking is a real-world problem when considering the challenge of defining a specific individual's behavior as *stalking* and labeling the conduct as criminal. A forensic psychologist would not necessarily be involved with analyzing the component of a stalking case file. As such, the information used in determining criminality of stalking offenses is often confusing and muddied interpretations of the perception of fear on the part of the victim can be lost in a court scenario. Spitzberg (2017) referenced a study by Tjaden and Theonnes (2000) which reported that the term *stalking* was minimally used in victim narratives where police reports outlined clear elements of stalking. This demonstrates the incongruity of the interpretations of behavior at just the victim and police level of interaction. Further complicating the issues are considerations of whether the perpetrator understand the level of fear their actions are implicitly generating, the perpetrators possibly malintent behind the actions, and then the opinions of lay jury members who are left to interpret these actions from an even more detached position.

In defining predatory behavior as a criminal stalking offense, the victim, law enforcer, and legal decision makers would all need to agree on their understanding of the danger implied from the implicit threat. This creates an incredibly complicated legal quest to pursue stalking convictions and one that is not often pursued in the courts. It is estimated that the amount of stalking victimization that is actually reported to law enforcement is between 250 and 500 times less than actual occurrences noted in a victimization survey (Spitzberg, 2016). This set of complicated issues related to the criminality of stalking and the effectiveness of bringing stalking perpetrators to justice highlights the need for extended research on the intent and driving forces behind predatory pursuit behavior.

Attachment

The concept of *attachment* represents patterns of developing interpersonal relationships. Attachment is grounded in relational behaviors associated with attachment theory. This model, initially developed by John Bowlby, promotes attachments as part of an operative systematic process that is influential over the course of an individual's lifetime (Levy & Johnson, 2018; Peters, 2019). With the empirical research applications and influences from work by Mary Ainsworth, Bowlby's theory was enhanced and established as a cornerstone of understanding relational behavior (Levy & Johnson, 2018; van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016). The contributions of Ainsworth's work on attachment theory should not avoid the inclusion of Blatz's security theory, as his constructs related to security and dependency were threaded throughout the work

applied by Ainsworth (van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016). Security and dependency, in its various forms create the basis of attachment styles.

Attachment styles reflect the internal needs-structure of an individual that was developed in infancy and childhood and persisted into adulthood. Attachment styles are usually considered to be stable over long periods of time but also susceptible to change according to environmental influences such as traumatic events or romantic influences (Levy & Johnson, 2018). The nurturing or dysfunctional aspects of their environment and relationship between a child and their caregiver formulate an individual's attachment style (Gains, 2015). The learned affective attachments from this period create an individual's internal working model of attachment and bonding (Gains, 2015). Attachment styles typically fall into 4 main categorical patterns including secure, avoidant, disorganized, and ambivalent.

Attachment styles frequently studied in stalking-related research are generally defined as having insecure, dependent, avoidant, and anxious attachments. Individuals that have developed these types of attachments are not generally well-adaptive to normal stimuli in their environment. Bowlby (1977) stated that "the many forms of emotional distress and personality disturbance, including anxiety, anger, depression, and emotional detachment" can stem from maladaptive attachment bonds that develop in unhealthy environments (p. 127). Bowlby frames these abnormal developments through insecure attachment styles and suggested these insecurities and abnormal personality developments are created between disturbances in the bond between a child and their

caregiver (Gains, 2015). These insecurities lead to problems with relational patterns into adulthood.

Relational patterns. Fox and Tokunaga (2015) linked attachment style as a predictor of relational behavior. They framed this association as a factor in comprehending the manner in which the perpetrator experiences the relationship and that this will also provide insight as to whether coping with a relationship's dissolution will be problematic (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). The association between attachment style and relational behavior could therefore lend itself as a predictor for stalking behavior.

An aspect of particular interest to this investigation concerns the development of Bowlby's work on *neurophysiological processes* in the context of attachment. The neurophysiological process, which Bowlby ultimately referred to as *selective attention* has been supported by more contemporary research indicating that adult pair bonds and child-parent attachment are similarly structured in the brain (Peters, 2019; Zeifman, 2018). Pair bonding and attachment are elements that reflect development in adult sexual pair bonds (Marazziti et al., 2015; Zeifman, 2018). Zeifman (2018) presented a process of pair bonding in the development of a romantic relationship with a stranger, in which she highlighted the stress and thrill comingling as the emotional attachment forms. The process includes neurophysiological elements that include changes in levels of cortisol and oxytocin as the initiating attachment and courtship behaviors develop the romantic interest between partners. The selective attention between the couple generates a romantic attachment and creates a pair bond.

But questions remain regarding what happens when this process does not occur mutually between the pair. Or what happens when one of the adults moves through this pair bonding process after directing selective attention to another adult who does not reciprocate their desire to build on the prospect of a relationship. Further, there could be a question as to what happens when one of the adults fixates on a stranger and develops an emotional sexual attachment in the form of a desired romantic relationship that the target is completely unaware of. Fantasy about the desired sexual bond could develop out of these one-sided relational attachments on behalf of the pursuer.

It seems logical that an individual who has developed an insecure, anxious, or avoidant attachment style could become either fixated, angry, or emotionally responsive to their one-sided or rejected romantic interests. These types of intersubjective disturbances could affect the pursuer's perception of their pair bond with their significant attachment figure. Additionally, vulnerabilities from disturbances during childhood attachment development could come into play related to the insecurity and narcissism (Bowlby, 1977; Gains, 2015).

A recent study confirmed a link between adverse childhood events and attachment to sexually abusive behavior in adulthood (Grady, Levenson, & Bolder, 2017). Jones (2018) references Bowlby's attachment theory and notes that "because the attachment map is developed before verbal language and narrative memory is formed, they therefore can only be expressed through enactment – transference – not verbally" (p.69). Considering this development, what would occur if the pursuer continued to engage mental rehearsal of the sexual fantasy and it combined with the emotional attachment

issues? What type of behavior could be expected from the pursuer toward their object of affection? This line of questioning frames the relevance of understanding relational fixation or rumination and attachment aspects of stalking behavior.

Relational rumination and insecure attachment emerged in academic discussions pertaining to stalking and associated violence (Senkans, McEwan, Skues, & Ogloff, 2016). A newly developed measurement tool, the Relational Rumination Questionnaire (RelRQ) was created to examine rumination on romantic relationships that led to maladaptive relational outcomes (Senkans et al., 2016). Insecure attachment, negative affect, and anger were correlated with rumination of romantic relationships (Senkans et al., 2016). This demonstration of an associated link between the romantic fixation and the attachment and emotions shows a relational aspect when stalking is an outcome.

With respect to this investigation, it needs to be acknowledged that the RelRQ was normed for intimate partner violence and stalking. Admittedly, the norming population used for the RelRQ veers from the population of non-intimate partner offenders that is the focus of this research. However, the constructs developed through the creation of the RelRQ are important to consider for understanding attachment and relational patterns in the context of an individual who fixated on the desire for a romantic relationship with a selected target.

Courtship disorders. Romantic attachments that extend toward a desired mating goal are grounded in courtship disorders. A courtship disorder, as a diagnosable classification, refers to a type of condition centered around “anomalous activity preferences” (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013, p. 685). These

preferences, such as voyeuristic and exhibitionistic activities, are expressions of warped perspectives on typical human courtship (APA, 2013). Courtship disorders can be framed from an evolutionary perspective. Seminal work on courtship disorders was conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s by researchers Beach, Money, and Freund (E. Hickey, personal communication, October 4, 2018; Money, 2003). The work conducted by Beach is relevant to this investigation and the development of RPAs.

The construct of courtship is based on the idea of *concupiscence sexuality*, which refers to inordinate sexual desires (Money, 2003). Concupiscence is grounded in the idea that sexuality develops out of opportunistic mating where procreation is the objective. Beach's work examined the courtship phase of animal mating (Money, 2003). Beach proposed that animal mating consists of a sequential pattern of proceptive behavior and explored a distinction between receptive and conceptive phases of courtship (Money, 2003). Recent research studies by Benelli, Romano, Messing, and Canale (2015) and Minekawa, Miyatake, Ishikawa, and Matsuo (2018) demonstrated aspects of the evolution of courtship behavior in fruit flies. Courtship behavior showed both aggression and adaptive conduct related to post-mating competition (Benelli et al., 2015; Minekawa et al., 2018). The researchers also observed that female receptivity was not always required in the mating process.

The context of this research with human sexuality relates to the sequential movement between the human flirtation phase of courtship and the mating phase. The receptive and conceptive phases consider the reception and acceptance of the flirtatious behavior. Mintah and Parlow (2018) referred to flirtatious perception as an element

involved in human courtship behavior. The flirtations indicate sexual interest and can be formulated explicitly or implicitly (Mintah & Parlow, 2018). The behavioral interest, investment, and progression of sexual interest forms the basis of what Beach expressed as animal courtship.

Money (1984) and Freund and Watson (1990) contended that the individual who engages in these courtship disorder-based activities are seeking to foster a fantasized relationship with the targeted person of interest (Hickey, 2016, 2017). The sexually deviant behavior becomes part of a nonconsensual sexual relationship that is initially formed through the fantasy of a relationship with the victim (Hickey, 2016, 2017). This process represents the formation of RPAs. The work by Mintah and Parlow regarding courtship was relevant to the development of the concourse used for this investigation.

Relational paraphilic attachment (independent variable). Paraphilic behaviors need to be explained in order to understand them in the context of relational attachments. Paraphilic behaviors range from benign solo- or partner-based interests to diagnosable mental disorders. Paraphilia, in all forms, are composed of etiology, fantasy, and behavior (E. Hickey, personal communication, October 4, 2018; Hickey, 2017). A paraphilia is not necessarily defined as criminal in nature. It should be recognized that there are a number of paraphilic disorders that do not push the limits of legality. So, the etiology, associated fantasies, and conduct related to a paraphilic disorder should not automaically be associated with a criminal connotation. However, paraphilic behaviors can fall within the forensic scope as they can employ criminally offensive behavior.

When these factors move into a nonconcentual realm, then the disorder shifts into a criminal paraphilia.

The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) presents a comprehensive categorical classification system that practitioners from clinicians to researchers can use as a guide for mental disorders. As an established reference tool for identifying mental health diagnoses through symptom classifications, the DSM-5 defines *paraphilia* as "any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners" (APA, 2013, p. 685). The sexual interests associated with paraphilia are often distinguished based on the individual's erotic targets and erotic activities (APA, 2013).

The DSM-5 noted a specific change to the chapter for paraphilic disorders from the one presented in the DSM-IV. The updated reference now acknowledges a distinction between paraphilia and a *paraphilic disorder* (APA, 2013). The distinction between the two constructs is explained in the introduction of the DSM-5's chapter on paraphilic disorders. The disorder is characterized as "a paraphilia that is currently causing distress or impairment to the individual or a paraphilia whose satisfaction has entailed personal harm, or risk of harm, to others" (APA, 2013, pp. 686-687). The application of paraphilic disorders that are rooted in relational attachments is the angle of this concept that is intended to be explored in this study.

The etiology of criminal paraphilia has been explained on a continuum that include psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, biological and interactional factors

(Hickey, 2017). These interactional factors can be anchored by desired relationships and the pursuit of these desires. The ensuing cognitive and behavioral undercurrents that stimulate these desires could be motivated by psychological factors and attachments.

Psychological factors relevant to RPAs include

- Intangible attachments: intimacy,
- Frustration,
- Fantasy: paraphilic courtship, and
- Psychopathy: control/power (Hickey, 2017).

A progression of behavior associated with RPAs will likely move from courtship disorders to preparatory paraphilia. Dependent upon the severity of the attachments and motivating fantasies, the conduct could also eventually transition from the preparatory classification into attack paraphilia.

The developing paraphilic fantasies involved in courtship disorders embody a perceived consensual relationship that the offender seeks to fulfill with the nonconsenting victim. This fantasy progression can strengthen the RPA, further driving the individual to connect intimately with the victim (Hickey, 2016, 2017). The escalating pursuit for an intimate connection can lead to more aggressive actions that are motivated by the intensifying desires for a relationship with the victim. Hickey (2016) describes this process as a shift from the *primary paraphilia*, or courtship disorder, to the *secondary paraphilia*. This swing in paraphilic behavior is where the level of criminality and potential harm to the victim increases.

Fantasy

Researchers have explored the construct of fantasy as a component of behavior in clinical, non-clinical, and forensic populations. Early research by Prentky et al. (1989) was key in setting a foundation for analyzing fantasy as a driving mechanism for criminal behavior. Their work focused on serial sexual homicide offenders and explored how the manifestation of fantasies could be an influential force for those with paraphilic tendencies. Developing fantasies were argued to form a script that gets rehearsed in the mind. Whether this mental rehearsal of the fantasy forms a pathway of tasks for criminal conduct cannot yet be shown due to the lack of research demonstrating a causal relationship between fantasy and behavior. This beginning work on fantasy-related offense pathways forms the basis of this dissertation study.

Attempts to define fantasy with criminal undertones developed in the early 1980's when Schlesinger and Kutash (1981) developed the Criminal Fantasy Technique. The measurement sought to predict dangerous criminal conduct by evoking fantasy expression from sexual offenders. The Criminal Fantasy Technique was created as a projective measure which the authors postured that antisocial conduct could be predicted through the expression of fantasy. The rationale was that fantasy indicated preparatory behavior. If the offenders presented fantasies indicating criminal intent during the projective test, then the authors claim they would likely turn to that behavior when unable to control their inner stress (Schlesinger & Kutash, 1981). The criminal fantasy technique was an early attempt to explore the construct of fantasy as variable to forecast criminal conduct through the behavior of past offenders.

While the format and presumptions of this test may not work in a contemporary environment, the intent behind this test laid the groundwork for viewing fantasy as a possible predictor of crime. Prentky et al. (1989) advanced this discussion by positing that fantasies could be intrusive and manifest in behavior. Deu and Edelmann (1997) also conducted early work concerning the association between fantasy and premeditated criminal conduct. The researchers explored the complexity of what they labeled as criminal fantasies of sex offenders, highlighting the associated tasks and impulsivity of their criminal conduct (Deu & Edelmann, 1997). The seminal work of these early researchers who explored fantasy as a function of crime has been expanded by contemporary research efforts to provide more insight as to violent fantasy, sexual fantasy, and violent sexual fantasy.

Fantasy and violence. While correlations have been shown, researchers have yet to demonstrate causation between fantasy and aggressive behavior. Despite the lack of causation yet to be shown in the resources, correlational studies and examinations of offense pathways have demonstrated associations between fantasy and violence. Stefanska, Carter, Higgs, Bishopp, & Beech, 2015) looked at offense pathways of non-serial sexual murderers. Their research identified two paths of motivation, which they labeled sadistic and angry. Research demonstrated that there was acknowledgment by offenders in the sadistic-motivation cohort that they fantasized about killing someone prior to committing their respective murders (Stefanska et al., 2015). The premeditation assumption that aligns with this suggest a link between violence and fantasy.

Interestingly, recent research studies have studied predatory aggression in other species to examine aggression and cognitive planning. Miller (2014) discused affective and predatory aggression and the higher-level planning associated with cognition. He referenced the link between that ability for higher level primate species to engage in plans that involve symbolism, and socialization, which could be aligned with the argument for correlating human fantasy and aggression. Miller referenced an analogy of the hunter and prey in this discussion. He focused on the interplay between preparatory stalking and predatory aggression in which the goal of an animal is to kill the prey for consumption as opposed to reasons grounded in hatred or revenge. The juxtaposition of human studies to other species is insightful for considering what triggers the differences in human predatory behavior and cognitive planning. This piggybacks off contemporary references to courtship research.

Sexual fantasy. Many people engage in sexual fantasies through their private thoughts, which will not necessarily transfer into overt behavioral acts that attempt to simulate the fantasy. Schlesinger (2003) quotes respected specialists and criminal investigators Hazelwood and Michaud noted that "sexual crimes begin as fantasy, but fortunately only a small minority of fantasies lead to sexual crimes" (p. 88). Relational frame theory has been applied to sexual fantasy as a means of delving into the process of how these specific fantasies emerge in someone (Stockwell & Moran, 2014). Rather than examining why fantasies occur, relational frame looks at how stimuli serve as a function of fantasy to evoke behaviors. Relational frame suggests that the sexual fantasy could translate into behavior through aspects of *derived relational responding* (Stockwell &

Moran, 2014). When an individual engages in sexual fantasy, scripts are run in their mind that can associate responses to certain stimuli. This would be the relational response that has been derived in the individual through the associations of the sexual fantasy.

This concept holds relevance for this investigation. When sexual fantasy is explored through derived relational responses, the *transformation of stimulus function* can indicate a behavioral change (Stockwell & Moran, 2014). Stimuli relationally linked by an individual to their sexual fantasies can transform as a functioning trigger to behavioral responses, whether that be verbal or physical. The stimuli associated with the sexual fantasy then turns into a functional element that reinforces or punishes to evoke a response. The relational frame creates a basis for understanding how the presence of sexual fantasy can move into a form of behavior influenced by the sexual components of the fantasies. This switches the generally private mode of exploring sexual fantasy into one that elicits changes in behavior.

The fostering of sexual fantasies and their range of development has been linked to an increase in permissive laws and social structures, particularly regarding pornographic media (Hooley, Butcher, Nock, & Mineka, 2017). Arguments have been made that the extension of these legal parameters could fuel fantasy development within a range of normal and abnormal behaviors (Hooley et al., 2017). The potential for this eroticized fantasy development to fuel criminal conduct is where this variable comes into play regarding RPAs and their patterns within an offender's processing.

Violent sexual fantasy (independent variable). As noted above, aggression and harm can be directed at a victim when the offender's paraphilic process induces the change from their primary to secondary paraphilia. This could mean that the behavior escalates to a higher level of dangerousness as the progression of the sexual fantasies drive the dominance of the paraphilia (Hickey, 2016); Hickey, 2017). If the transformation of stimulus function can trigger a behavioral response from stimuli of sexual fantasy, then logical deduction would presume that the same would be true for violent sexual fantasy.

Miller (2014) argues that many people have sexual fantasies and even violent sexual fantasies. The mere presence of the violent sexual fantasy can occur solely in a cognitive realm and have no further influence on an individual past their own private thoughts. The concern comes into play for the small cohort of the population who engages in these violent sexual fantasies and also has the desire and resolve to engage in this conduct in person (Miller, 2014). Comparative results between seminal research on sadistic sexual fantasies conducted in 1986 by Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglas, and McCormack and a study on sadistic sexual fantasies in 2003 by Gray, Watt, Hassan, and MacCulloch underscored the fact that many who engage in sadistic sexual fantasies do not actually have the intent or willingness to act on those thoughts. While the more recent study did find some parallels in the behavior indicators associated with sadistic sexual murderers and their fantasies, the mixed results caution researchers about jumping to conclusions when violent sexual fantasies are present.

The mixed results previously mentioned should not discount the potential predictive nature of violent sexual fantasy as a component of violent behavior and even stalking. In a discussion involving violent sexual fantasy, Miller (2014) stated, "At some point the individual begins to incorporate actual people he knows into his sexually murderous fantasies and begins to mentally rehearse more realistic scenarios for stalking, abducting, and torturing victims to death" (p. 13). McEwan et al. (2017) reference the associated sexual fantasies involved in stalking violence, persistence, and recurrence as *erotomanic delusions*. It is clear more focused research is needed to clarify correlations and the predictive aspects of violent sexual fantasy.

Elevating sexual fantasy to includes violence circles back to the question of fantasy as a predictor of crime. Violent sexual fantasy has been suggested as a potential influencing component of the offense pathway for stalking. Examining the subjective processing of stalking behavior by looking for patterns of violent sexual fantasy on RPAs could bring clarity to understanding how these elements fuel predatory pursuit behavior.

Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Framework

Integrated Theoretical Applications

Contemporary and seminal research on stalking behavior has involved several theoretical frameworks that have helped to frame aspects of this complex and layered behavior. Models often supporting stalking research have included attachment theory with a focus on different types of attachment styles that fit various categories of stalkers, coercive control theory, and relational goal pursuit theory. The culmination of research on stalking has developed through the application of these frameworks. For this

investigative study, each of these frameworks were considered relevant in the scaffolding of how the stalking behavior moves from inappropriate courtship behavior to unwanted pursuit, and then ultimately transitioning into the criminal level of stalking. Each of these models will be discussed in this sense in order to bring relevance to the RPA framework and the approach to explaining this deviant behavior.

Attachment theory. As referenced earlier, attachment theory was initially developed by John Bowlby. The theory moved through a series of progressive re-evaluations to become the version that is studied and applied to contemporary research. The theory transitioned from a psychoanalytic perspective to an evolutionary model, and matured to form the control systems framework (Peters, 2019). The constructs of attachment and the maladaptive attachment styles previously discussed fall under the umbrella of attachment theory.

Attachment theory is relevant to this study for two primary reasons. The construct of attachment serves as a base element of the RPA variable. Additionally, attachment theory has been considered as a lens from which to view the transferal of relational bonding the perpetrator thinks he has with his targeted victim. Considering that this study is focused on offender processing related to a fixation on pre-selected victims, the applications of attachment theory related to stalking cases becomes relevant.

Hoffmann and Meloy (2008) used attachment theory and object relations theory as a theoretical scope from which to research fixations coupled with grandiose fantasies. Their work focused on the examination of threats, stalking, and attacks on public figures who, as the victim, became transference objects of attachment (Hoffmann & Meloy,

2008). The attachment elements at play in this area of investigation brings context for stalking behavior directed at stranger or acquantaince-based victims. Additionally, this example aligns with the control systems framework of Bowlby's attachment theory that investigated behaviors related to interpersonal relationships.

Relational goal pursuit theory. Continued research by Spitzberg and Cupach has moved the research on stalking behavior forward and added to the existing knowledge related to ORI, particularly related to the constructs of pursuit and aggression. Through the development of their relational goal pursuit theory, Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) explained unwanted pursuit behavior as an escalating quest for a relationship that the pursuer views as both desirable and obtainable. Based on relational goal pursuit, the objective of the pursuer is to attain the sought-after relationship. Unwanted pursuit or stalking can hence result as a fueled form of behavior when the pursuer's relationship goal is obstructed by a disengaged partner of interest (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg et al., 2014).

Pertinent studies on stalking behavior reflected findings aligned with this model. Research conducted by Sheridan, Scott, and North (2014) focused on stalking and age and noted that in their investigation, the majority of older stalkers classified as intimacy seekers. The investigators inferred from their data that stalkers of this type and age were more often motivated by rejection or desire for intimacy as opposed to the motivators of envy or anger (Sheridan, Scott, & North, 2014). This discovery mirrors the increased fixation on achieving a relationship goal that RGP suggests may fuel the pursuer to continue in their chase.

In their study of factors associated with stalking persistence, Johnson and Thompson (2016) discuss key elements of relational goal pursuit as dynamics assessed in their investigation. An overview of relational goal pursuit was presented by the authors in their framing of what factors are embodied in pursuers who engage in relational stalking (Johnson & Thompson, 2016). The fundamentals of this theory include goal linking, rumination, self-efficacy, and negative affect (Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg et al., 2014). While Johnson and Thompson did not specifically measure these elements to test the theory, they did consider motivation, negative affect, and rumination for assessment in understanding duration and persistence of stalkers.

From a different angle, Tassy and Winstead (2014) underlined relational investment, attachment, and personality characteristics as foundations for rumination and emotional flooding experienced by the stalker. Correlational analyses regarding pursuit and aggression were conducted for types of attachment, types of jealousy, neuroticism, and relational constructs that included satisfaction, alternatives, investment, and commitment (Tassy & Winstead, 2014). The researchers used relational goal pursuit to link their findings on relational investment to the cognitive and emotional responses of the stalker. This connection was also applied to the stalker's rationalization for continuing their pursuit.

Through these distinct studies, relational patterns and stalking were examined based on age and motivation, attachment, motivational goals, rumination, negative affect, relational investment, and personality traits (Johnson & Thompson, 2016; Sheridan,

Scott, & North, 2014; Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Each investigation highlighted tenets of relational goal pursuit. The case studies presented demonstrate how the application of this theoretical model can highlight various components of stalking behavior. The key elements of goal motivation and rumination bring particular context to the pursuer's drive behind pursuit behavior. Adding the component of the pursuer's activity and target preferences directs the academic discussion to the framework of RPA.

Research Framework: Relational Paraphilic Attachment Theory

Tassy and Winstead (2014) reference Cupach and Spitzberg's relational goal pursuit to describe *relational stalking*. The investigators described this construct as, "an extreme form of normal courtship behavior when the desire for an intimate relationship is not reciprocated" (Tassy & Winstead, 2014, p. 883). This conceptualization of relational stalking and its accompanying abnormal courtship behavior presents aspects of RPA theory. The foundation for Hickey's RPA model lays in behavior that originates with courtship disorders.

An assumption of RPA theory is that these RPAs manifest out of sexual fantasies that are translated into behavior (Hickey, 2016). In fact, the DSM-5 suggests that the generally valid approach to appraising the depth of an individual's paraphilia involves a comparison of normal behavior to their presenting paraphilic sexual fantasies, behaviors, or urges (APA, 2013). Diagnostic criteria related to sexual fantasy that are listed for specific paraphilic disorders in the DSM-5 include:

- sexual arousal manifested by fantasies,

- the clinically significant impairment in social, occupational or other functioning caused by sexual fantasies,
- expressly focused intense sexually arousing fantasies, and
- marked distress or interpersonal difficulty caused by sexual fantasies (APA, 2013).

These measures are meant to gauge both the qualitative nature of the paraphilia and the negative consequences of the paraphilia (APA, 2013). In alignment with the new definitions in the DSM-5, when a combination of both the qualitative and consequential elements are demonstrated, the diagnosis shifts from paraphilia to a paraphilic disorder (APA, 2013). The paraphilic disorders listed in the diagnostic manual that include one or more of the above listed criteria include, voyeuristic disorder, exhibitionistic disorder, frotteuristic disorder, sexual masochism disorder, sexual sadism disorder, pedophilic disorder, fetishistic disorder, and transvestic disorder (APA, 2013). The prevalence of sexual fantasy manifestation as a construct in paraphilia and abnormal behavior is clear.

Sexual attachments are explored in fantasy and through behavior (Hickey, 2017). Hickey (2017) explained that sexual attachments to the victim are often formed as a product of the behavior in which sexual predators engage. The development of both paraphilic and sexual attachments has been linked to childhood trauma. Sachs (2017) discussed sexualized attachment behavior in the context of relational trauma. Through this relational association, Sachs linked the clinical symptoms of mental disorders, such as forms of paraphilia, to sexualized attachment behavior. For understanding this developmental process, it is proposed that the severity of the early trauma manifests into

an intensity level, through which the individual engages the attachment figure (Sachs, 2017). This type of attachment behavior can be seen in intimacy-seeking stalkers.

Intimacy-seeking stalkers demonstrate aspects of sexual attachment to their targeted victims with variance in intensity level. Viñas-Racionero et al. (2017) discussed intimacy-seeking stalkers and coercive behavior. They state, "the relationship of intimacy, coercion, and violence suggests a pattern of thwarted intimacy that leads to feelings of shame and/or humiliation, which could concurrently develop into physical violence" (Viñas-Racionero et al., 2017, p. 576). The added aspects of coercive behavior and violence would shift the general sexualized attachment into the form of a criminal paraphilia.

The sexual component linked by Sachs (2017) to attachment behavior aligns with Hickey's (2016) suggestion that RPA occurs in alignment with either *preparatory* or *attack paraphilia*. Adding a sexual component to the correlation between attachment style and relational behavior could create the scenario for one to engage in preparatory or attack paraphilia. If an individual is maladjusted and experiences a trigger related to the desired relationship could the presence of violent sexual fantasy motivate that person to engage in predatory pursuit of their target? Sachs (2017) notes that an individual's sexualized attachment behavior and a high dependency on their attachment figure to meet their needs, will demonstrate a distinct difference "between a person who is inappropriately flirtatious and a person whose behavior when distressed is a clinical symptom of a mental disorder (e.g., pedophilia)" (p. 330). In juxtaposition, Hickey

(2016) proposes that when the offender assails his victim, the essence of the attack registers from the control fantasy.

Hickey discussed the application of RPA as a model for understanding predatory behavior. Hickey (2017) explains paraphilic stalking in terms of an offender who is stimulated by deviant sexual acts and imagery. Examples presented of those who would likely engage in paraphilic stalking included voyeurs, pedophiles, rapists, and lust killers (Hickey, 2017). Relational and sexualized attachments, as previously discussed, would likely be a factor in these acts. The level of predatory pursuit could help to frame if and how RPA becomes a factor for these voyeurs, pedophiles, and rapists. Sexual fantasy is mentioned in the description of RPA as a component that needs to be examined further, particularly in cases of stalking stranger-based victims (Hickey, 2016). This investigation seeks to delve into these elements and use RPA as a lens to better understand if and how the variables work in conjunction to stimulate stalking behavior.

Justification of Methods and Design

When discussing future research, Tassy and Winstead (2014) stated, "understanding the risk factors and the thoughts and feelings of pursuers can help both victims and potential victims" (p. 194). The push for more research on stalking intent was echoed by Magyarics et al. (2015) as they investigated the impact of frequency of behavior and type of contact on court judgements involving a criminal stalking case. As discussed earlier, and reaffirmed by Spitzberg (2016), the legal parameters of enforcing stalking offenses can be blurred with confusion in the courts and by those charged with making legal decisions. Judges and jurors assigned to criminal stalking cases need to

assess the behavior of a defendant that can be both complex and sometimes difficult to interpret through legal codes. Conducting this study could provide insight to this area of investigative need, which highlights a critical justification for the method and design of this study.

Through their investigation with mock jurors, the Magyarics et al. (2015) looked at two factors that affected potential jurors' perceptions and consequent judgments on stalking trials. They looked at how impactful the stalking contact was on the victim's level of fear and what types of intent the defendant's (stalker's) demonstrated when instigating the contact. The authors examined both in-person and cyber-related contacts and inferred from their results that the level of fear of the victim and the stalker's intent were key factors in steering verdict decisions for mock court proceedings (Magyriacs et al., 2015). This study attempts to delve into understanding components that serve as driving mechanisms for stalking behavior. Broadening our understanding of the intent and forces behind conduct that involves predatory pursuit could help to better define stalker intent for judges and jurors. The relevancy of this study could hence provide insightful data on perpetrator intent, which could ultimately inform and heighten the ability of prosecutorial and defense teams to effectively present a clearer picture of the behavior being judged in court.

Further, while there are numerous victim studies that dig into the victim experience and victim perspective on stalking, researchers have highlighted the need to investigate stalking from the perpetrator's angle (Johnson & Thompson, 2016; McEwan et al., 2017). The rates of prosecuting and incarcerating defendants for stalking offenses

has been seen to be marginal related to the number of incidents estimating to occur (Brady & Nobles, 2017; Spitzberg, 2016). Logan and Walker (2017) reference the difficulty presented for prosecutions in some states due to the requirement of stalker intent included in the legal statutes. The method and design of this study focused only on a population of stalking offenders, not victims, and examine the context in past behavior that could drive the intent of their stalking behaviors.

In contrast, it is important to note that cautionary dissent was voiced regarding research focused solely on stalking offenders as a source for data collection. A valid critique of employing this focus references how studies considering only stalking offenders becomes void of the perspectives of victims, which may not portray the most clear and accurate results. "Victim fear is also often a part of the legal definition of stalking. Using data only from pursuers does not permit us to ask about victim's level of fear" (Tassy & Winstead, 2014, p. 194). This is a valid argument that has been considered by the researcher.

The benefit of conducting this study with solely offenders is not intended to minimize or discount the impact to the victim, nor to ignore the victim's experience or level of fear. This study is not designed to ignore the factor of victim fear, but rather investigate an angle behind stalker intent. The targeted use of stalking offenders in this study is directed toward increasing knowledge concerning the mechanisms at work in stalking behavior. The hope is that the results of this study will provide valuable information that could help to better define these types of behaviors in forensic settings and for legal decision-makers.

Implications and Social Change

This study's results could lead to important implications for social change. The potential impact of this study could have direct implications for ensuring public safety, preventing and controlling crime, and/or ensuring the fair and impartial administration of criminal justice in the United States. This research, centered in the discipline of forensic psychology, offers an opportunity to expand on the knowledge of dynamic factors associated with specific forms of criminal behavior. Developing our understanding of these components could provide insight into offender pathways. This could, in turn, enlighten and inform those who work in forensic settings as to predictive triggers and elements of escalating behavior.

The highlights of the potential for positive social change relate to the impact this study could have on the safety of the community and the efforts made by law enforcement personnel to protect the victims of perpetrators. Positive social change could be framed in the augmented understanding of stalking behaviors for those who work with these offenders in forensic settings. The psychological aspects driving these stalking behaviors are what could highlight the range of effects of social change. Some of this range focuses on increasing knowledge that could contextualize these criminal behaviors for treatment and sentencing decisions. Additionally, information generated from the results of this study have the potential to inform legal decision-makers such as judges and juries on the process involved in stalking pursuit.

The data collected and analyzed in this study may also provide valuable insight for educating law enforcement personnel on behavior patterns associated with predatory

stalking that is not currently part of domestic violence training. Future course work and training for first responders would not just be limited to offenders convicted of stalking offenses, despite the fact that this specific offense would be one of the main criterion for determining the participants of the study. As previously discussed, stalking is often a lesser and included offense to enhanced criminal charges such as aggravated assaults and homicide. Social change coming in the form of education related to patterns of stalking offenses could bring awareness to field officers and investigators if they are to observe an escalation of behaviors investigated in this study. This research, in turn, could lead to advances in law enforcement-related efforts directed toward predatory violence and the maintenance of public safety.

The results generated from this study could have implications for social change by affecting the ability for workers in the helping professions, legal system, enforcement, and corrections to better understand the dynamics of stalking behavior. In Spitzberg's (2016) discussion of stalking policy implications, he notes the need for information to support law enforcement-focused interview and case screening protocols, legislation, and the appropriate application of resources. The study could enhance our understanding of the dynamic factors of stalking and the typologies of the offenders. Related outcomes to these advances could make us more successful with intervention, treatment strategies, and evidence-based management of forensic populations demonstrating predatory pursuit behavior (Ostermeyer, Friedman, Sorrentino, & Booth, 2016; Racine & Billick, 2014).

An additional aspect of positive social change aims at ethical research practices for working with offenders as participants. Brewer-Smyth (2008) brought up the notion

that the children of offenders can be viewed as beneficiaries if an offender participates in research that could inform treatment and rehabilitation. This benefit was framed with the idea that the potential advances made toward rehabilitation efforts could lower the risk levels for the dependents of offenders to perpetuate the cycle of violence (Brewer-Smyth, 2008). The dependents of the offender participants could therefore be considered as a targeted population regarding the implications of social change. From this perspective, positive social change could take the form of a benefit to the children of both the offenders and the victims of their offenses.

Discussion and Conclusions

Stalking is a criminal offense that requires a legal judgement based on victim fear and perpetrator intent. The legal arena can be confusing for those tasked with making judgements in these areas. Research on stalking offender pathways is needed that will bring relevant data on stalking behavior to help inform the legal decision makers and those charged with upholding and enforcing the law.

The variables examined in this investigation are RPAs and violent sexual fantasy. RPA as a construct was framed through the context of attachment, attachment styles, relational patterns, and courtship disorders. When courtship disorders shift toward an individual's desire for nonconsensual sexual relationships, the results are RPAs (Hickey, 2016). Violent sexual fantasy was framed through the context of fantasy, fantasy and violence, and sexual violence. Research studies mentioned that the mental rehearsal of sexually-based fantasies and the desire to fulfill them can expand into the yearning for

sexually deviant relationships. As these desires intensify, the RPA the offender has toward the nonconsenting victim will also intensify (Hickey, 2016, 2017).

This investigation hence seeks to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasy and RPAs in stalker processing. The context of this study drew on the behavior of convicted stalking offenders who had sexual components to their crimes of conviction. Since relational attachments and the deviant sexual fantasies that nurture them are the basis for understanding Hickey's RPA theory, the research effort used this framework as an application for both creating the concourse and contextualizing the results of the data analysis.

Increasing research efforts, such as this investigation, could continue to develop our understanding of the functional factors and symptoms associated with stalking and paraphilic disorders. Examining this behavior at the criminal-level directs this study toward addressing several criminal justice and public safety reasearch areas deemed critical by the DOJ. An investigation that examines dynamic factors related to the criminality of stalking could impact law enforcement's ability to reduce and prevent aspects of violent crime while enhancing investigations and prosecutions that include stalking behavior. Through this effect, my study also has the potential to lessen the ongoing impact on stalking victims. Investigations such as this inquiry have the potential to inform policy and legal decision makers in forensic settings on conduct associated with stalking.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Insight into offender pathways related to predatory pursuit could serve to inform individuals facing the forensic challenges of deciphering the criminal elements of stalking. In this study, I considered fantasies that take the form of violent sexual encounters and whether they serve to drive an offender's relational attachments to a victim in a non-consensual manner. The objective was to investigate patterns in the offender process that may indicate if the presence of violent sexual fantasy could serve as a mediating factor on RPA to promote stalking. Data collection efforts focused on convicted offenders whose criminal stalking charges included sexual elements to their actions. I generated a range of statements dedicated as a Q set and administered it to participants. The participants completed a Q sort, which provided data, based on how the Q set was sorted, that I then analyzed. In this chapter, I discuss sampling, recruitment, and data collection procedures. The QQI research design used a Q factor analysis to operationalize the contextualized variables. Data management planning was reviewed along with ethical considerations related to the selected population.

Research Design and Rationale

A QQI design using Q methodology incorporated a Q sort as a means of data collection with a Q factorial design for analysis. With the aim to discover patterns across individuals based on subjective stalking behavior, Q methodology provides an appropriate vessel for investigation. The underpinnings of Q methodology include abductive reasoning, interbehavioral psychological events, subjectivity, and operant

behavior coupled with subjectivity and factor analysis (Laureate Education, 2013). By employing Q methodology, I had the opportunity to engage the topic from both conceptual and scientific angles.

Q methodology began with the work of William Stephenson in 1953 in which he posited that scientific inquiry can be used to understand subjectivity when analyzed between individuals as opposed to between the variables (Laureate Education, 2013; Thomas & Watson, 2002). The process of Q methodology is scientifically grounded and begins with abductive reasoning by the researcher. Through abductive reasoning, the researcher can use human intuition aligned with observations and theory to develop the research hypothesis. Q methodology then proposes the use of *operant subjectivity* to discover how the participant gives meaning to the items in context, versus the items serving as a stimulus for the participant by the meaning built into them (Laureate Education, 2013; Thomas & Watson, 2002). As noted by Thomas and Watson (2002), a Q study design allowed for both induction and abduction in terms of discovering patterns among the participant responses to the data collection.

Stephenson formed this conceptual approach on his understanding of B. F. Skinner's (1953) concept of operant behavior, and Kantor's (1965) concept of interbehavioral psychology to ground the expression he referenced as operant subjectivity. He argued that the individual learns consequences based on past events in their lives and that the interconnectedness of events that generate these learned consequences could be the reasoning for behavior choices as opposed to the reaction to a stimulus. This concept of operant subjectivity, in turn, gives the researcher a means to

look at how interrelated items fit into a scheme of events to influence the participant's actions. By using a sorting technique that is then analyzed, a researcher can discover whether patterns exist in this process among others who have learned similar consequences.

An inquiry with a population of convicted stalking offenders brings a level of practicality to the knowledge this study could generate. Trends in this direction are reflected in contemporary research. Work by McEwan, Shea, Daffern, MacKenzie, Ogloff, and Mullen (2018) examined the stalking risk profile through the use of a sample of adult stalkers whose behavior was cause for concern from a social service agency. Most participants in this study were referred from probation services related to stalking convictions. Nijdam-Jones, Rosenfeld, Gerbrandij, Quick, and Galietta (2018) used stalking offenders in a community-based sample as a lens to examine correlates of stalking behavior and psychopathology. The offenders in Nijdam-Jones et al.'s study were on probation for stalking and harassment-based convictions. The previously noted work by Saramago et al. (2019) demonstrated efforts to collect data from incarcerated offenders that can enhance our understanding of the dynamics behind violent sexual motivations. The need for greater attention to offenders as sources for data collection was expressed in the sourced literature. The research approach for my study, which included both qualitative and quantitative aspects, was therefore intended to increase knowledge concerning the predictive nature of the offense pathway within this suggested population of participants.

Methodology

Population and Sampling Frame

The intent of this study's design was to explore patterns and processes by using a Q sort and Q factor analysis. The population of this study was framed around a theoretical or target population of convicted stalkers, the population whose human points of view are sought. The accessible population, that is, the portion of the target population that I was able to gain access to, was stalking offenders released from correctional custody and into community-based situations. Released offenders who are part of the accessible population were filtered into a cohort of offenders who were listed on public sex offender registries, specifically for stalking offenses. The sampling frame (i.e., the group within the accessible population that the participant sample was drawn from) for this study was convicted offenders, released from custody, who were listed on public sex offender registries for stalking offenses.

Q methodology using Q sort and Q factor analysis does not require a large sample size. This is a comparative difference between Q and R methodology, which is a more traditional research method. Since the Q sort enables the researcher to look for patterns in processes, its qualitative nature is giving the researcher the opportunity to look at the participant's subjectivity in operation. The operant subjectivity aspect of the research design lends to the suggestion that researchers average 30-40 participants for an effective study. This average is based on the concern that too many participants could create a qualitative design where distinctions could get muddied and too many complexities could surface. Prior Q sort research efforts have used sample sizes as small as 12 participants

(Laureate Education, 2013). With these parameters in mind, I determined a goal of 15-30 participants as a targeted and appropriate sample for this investigation. The total number of participants in my sample for this study was 30.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

After approval for the research study was attained from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), I proceeded with recruitment of participants. Identifying the offenders of the target population and the location of their current community-based housing situations was done through public access of a public sex offender registry. Some state-specific public sex offender registries enable members of the public to create an account and access a downloadable zipfile that contains offender registration information. This information contains coded offenses and mailing addresses for the offenders.

Recruitment efforts toward offenders on the registry who met this investigation's participant criteria were made through a mailed recruitment letter. I sent the invitation letters to the addresses listed for the associated stalking offenders on the public registry. The recruitment letter invited the potential respondent to participate in the research study and included a link to the website where the Q sort was accessible by any computer or tablet that has general internet access. No special programs, downloads, or flash drives were required for download in order for the respondents to access the site and participate in the study. The invitation letter included a participation code that gave the respondent access to this specific study and allowed the respondent to participate in the study under a cover of anonymity. To provide an additional level of anonymity, I stuffed and sealed the invitation letters to participants in envelopes prior to affixing mailing address labels

from the participant pool on the envelopes. This step ensured that I did not know or have the ability to track which participation code was sent to which potential participant, building in an additional level of anonymity.

Once a participant accessed the Q sort interface and entered the participation code, they were directed to an informed consent screen. Researcher and university contact information were provided to the participants on this screen. The information on the informed consent paperwork explained confidentiality, autonomy, and the participant's right to not participate. Participants were not able to enter the study and complete the Q sort without first acknowledging the informed consent. After acknowledging the informed consent, the participant was given directions on how to complete the Q sort activity. It was expected that the activity would only take 5-10 minutes to complete, but the participant had an unlimited time for the Q sort. Once the participant completed the Q sort and selected the submit button, the data were logged. At that point, the participant was finished with their part in the study and directed to close the screen. There were no additional steps the participant needed to complete for the study, nor did I make attempts to contact the participant.

Participation in this study from the initial contact made through recruitment was voluntary. Voluntariness was built into the recruitment process as the potential participants had no obligation to respond or connect to the internet interface link provided to them in the invitation letter. Participants had the ability at any time to choose to not begin the study, stop the activity, close the browser, or end the study at any time. No data were logged from a participant who began the Q sort and chose to end the study or close

the browser before submitting their activity. To encourage voluntariness of participation and minimize any perception of coerciveness, potential participants who did not agree to informed consent, or chose at any time not to complete or continue with the Q sort, was instructed that there would be no consequences to this choice and that they could simply stop the activity and close the internet browser.

An additional note of consideration was directed at the education level of the participants. As the recruitment targeted formerly incarcerated offenders, it was logical to consider that participants could have spent considerable time in custodial forensic settings. The cyclical and adverse lifestyles of many in the prison system may have caused limitations on the education levels of offenders. Kasule (2013) presented research on the readability and language issues that can arise during informed consent procedures. With this consideration in mind, I aimed to maintain the informed consent and any other forms accessible to participants at moderate reading level.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Instrumentation. The Q sort was used for data collection related to the stated variables of RPA and violent sexual fantasy. The Q sort is a two-step activity in which the participants sort a set of statements into a frame that culminates in a depiction of their subjective processes related to the content of the investigation. The Q sort begins with a concourse, which is a set of statements ranging along the continuum of possible statements on the subject of investigation. In this inquiry, the concourse I developed consisted of a range of statements that demonstrate aspects of fantasy and attachment

within the context of stalking. The range of constructed statements included content related to violent sexual fantasy and RPA.

Once the concourse was created, I chose a Q set from the concourse. The Q set is a manageable set of statements selected as a sample to represent the concourse in a total of approximately 60 statements. The Q set is the number of items (or statements) that will be used in the Q sort. Although the number of the items in the Q set may vary according to the associated study, the recommendation of using 60 statements is grounded in the statistical stability and reliability that this number provides (Kerlinger, 1986).

I used various sources to create the concourse. Some of the resources included statements or parts of questions from various data collection instruments, concepts related to RPA, concepts related to fantasy, and collaborative consultation with Hickey on the theory-driven components (personal communication, February 2020). Some of the resources considered when developing the concourse included the *DSM-5*, Sexual Dream Experience Questionnaire (SDEQ), Fantasy Engagement Scale (FES), Relational Rumination Questionnaire (RelRQ), Stalking-like Behavior Scale (SBS), Inappropriate Courtship Behaviors Scale (ICBS), Violent Sexual Interest Questionnaire (VSIQ), Courting Behavior Scale (CBS), Relational Pursuit-Pursuer Short Form (RP-PSF), and the ECR (Chen et al., 2015; De Smet, Loeys, & Buysse, 2013; Larue, Schmidt, Imhoff, Eggers, Schönbrodt, & Banse, 2014; McEwan, Daffern, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2017; Mintah & Parlow, 2018; Plante, Reysen, Groves, Roberts, Gerbasi, 2017; Senkans et al., 2016; Stokes et al., 2007; Ybarra, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Mitchell, 2017).

Operationalization of variables. Q sort was the data collection activity that provides a vehicle for operationalizing the variables. The Q sort is a two-step activity conducted when the participants in the sample (the P set) sort the items in the Q set. The Q set can be thought of as a deck of cards. Each card in the deck has one statement on it. All of the statements in the deck of cards collectively form the Q set. Therefore, the deck of cards consists of a collection of items (statements) that make up the Q set. The statements in the Q set were sourced from the concourse. The Q set, as a whole, becomes a representative sample of the concourse.

When a participant begins the Q sort, all of the cards in the deck (Q set) are presented. The participants have two tasks to complete in the Q sort. The participant will first sort the cards into piles, and then sort the piles into an order that best represents their experience of processing for past stalking behaviors. In the first step, the participant goes through each card and observes the statement. The statements represent aspects of fantasy and attachment that could have factored into the context of the participant's stalking behaviors. The participant has the option to place each card into one of three piles. This step will be a *forced sort*.

In a Q sort activity, the researcher has the discretion to allow the participant to engage in a *free sort* or a forced sort. In a free sort, the participant would have the option to sort the deck of cards into their own determined number of piles. This could mean that one participant sorts the deck of card statements into two piles, while another sorts them into seven piles based on the subjective meaning that the participant gives to the pile sorting. The researcher decided to use a forced sort of three piles for this investigation.

The forced sort condition provided easier instructions to follow while also allowing for a normal statistical distribution for data analysis (Thomas & Watson, 2002). The forced sort condition of the three piles are delineated based on if the statement was part of their process, if the statement was not part of their process, or if the statement falls more in the neutral zone where it may have or may not have been part of the participant's subjective experience.

The internet interface that was used for the Q sort moves the cards into three piles according to the participant's sorting decisions. As each card is moved to one of the three piles, it will be removed from the frame. Once the participant has successfully placed all of the cards in the deck into the three piles, they move onto the second task in the Q sort. The three piles then appear at the top of the screen and will be labeled accordingly. A frame then appears below the three sorted piles which show an empty set of placeholders, one for each of cards in the deck.

The placeholders present a multi-layered pyramid in which the participant can drag the cards from the piles into the placeholders. This is the second step of the Q sort in which the participant essentially ranks the cards in each pile. The participant can move the cards around to show how the statements fit into their processing. Sections of the placeholders indicate what part of the process pyramid the participant should move cards to that have statements which were the most influential or least influential in how the stalking process worked in their personal experience. The participant can drag the cards from the sorted piles into the placeholders, replace statements they have already set, and continue to manipulate the position of the cards until they feel the sort best reflects their

process. When the participant is finished with the sort, they click the "submit" button and the Q sort will be completed. The sorting process of the statements operationalizes the variables as it enables the participant to show their subjective experience in operation.

While the population of participants are expected to have been convicted of the outcome variable, the data collected from the Q sort could indicate that a participant does not perceive their behaviors as inappropriate or non-consensual. Items threaded in Q set could provide insight as to the RPAs of the participants toward their victims and the presence and influence of violent sexual fantasies on their behaviors. Patterns in the offender processing could emerge through the operationalized format of the Q sort. This will be examined in the data analysis. But the constructivist approach that is engaged by the Q sort highlights the processes of qualitative research. This step in the research process is reflexive and researcher-generated, while also allowing for an inductive and systematic method of generating a data set.

Data Analysis Plan

Data cleaning and coding. Information gathered during the data collection phase was entered into the Q methodology software used in conjunction with the Q sort internet interface. The collection and maintenance of data is not expected to be represented in an identifiable form during the data collection and analysis phases. Data collected through the Q sort was coded to align simply with the number of the participant who completed the activity. The confidentiality of participants' personally identifiable information was preserved through the protection of anonymity. Data obtained from the Q sort had no identifying information as the Q sort was only entered through an anonymous

participation code. This was done to protect the identity of the participant while linking the data sourced from the purposeful sample. No research or statistical analysis used or presented in the research findings or final dissertation will reveal the personally identifiable information related to population pool.

Q data analysis. A review of the research questions will be followed by a detailed explanation of how the exploratory factor analysis will be applied to this study. The stated research question for this study is as follows:

RQ: What drives the stalker to pursue a relationship with their victim, and how do fantasies play into their process?

H_0: Violent sexual fantasy and relational paraphilic attachment do not work in concert during the process of stalking behavior.

H_1: Violent sexual fantasy and relational paraphilic attachment do work in concert during the process of stalking behavior.

The intended approach to data collection includes the administration of a Q sort to participants through an internet interface. The Q sort was presented to community-based offenders convicted of stalking offenses with sexual-based elements. The participants completed a Q sort with the Q set, which demonstrated operant subjectivity, a qualitative element of the research design. Based on how the participants arranged the Q set in the Q sort activity, the researcher was able to employ Q factor analysis, a quantitative research element, for statistical analysis of the collected data. The QQI analysis enabled the researcher to see if patterns emerged among participants in their subjective processing.

According to Thomas and Watson (2002) the Q study data analysis enables the researcher to see if some of the statements interact, as proposed by Stephenson. The data analysis would use a correlation matrix based on the number of participants. This would mean that *N* = the number of participants. Shared variances among the Q sorts were then analyzed to see if patterns emerge.

Similarities in factor loading across individuals showed if patterns exist in their subjective processing. The main difference between using R methodology and Q methodology for data analysis is that the analysis occurs across the individual participants as opposed to being measured across traits. This is the manner in which the Q-type of factor analysis differs from the R-type of factor analysis aims to measure. If the alternate was hypothesis is correct, patterns would have emerged through the data. This would demonstrate where participants load on the same or similar factor.

If participants load to a similar factor as another, then they have sorted the statements similarly. This shows patterns among their subjective experiences. While the results are not be generalizable, the potential emerging patterns could be insightful as to the process used by stalkers and of the variables themselves. The patterns could provide indicators of factors that predicate escalating harm or violence as well as possibly illuminating indicators of a causal relationship between fantasy and violence.

Data Management Planning

This study was feasible to conduct and complete. I had the ability to engage this study from a sensible and levelheaded position. Data collection remained anonymous and secure. Data collected in hard copy format, such as from the downloadable data from

the Q sort interface, will be maintained and stored securely by the researcher in a locked storage/file cabinet. Digital data will be managed, processed, and stored in a secure environment, protected by password, firewall, and surge protection. Digital data will be saved and secured on two external hard drives. A master copy and a supplemental working copy were kept in separate places. The master copy was updated weekly, or more frequently, if large amounts of data were entered, adjusted, or analyzed.

The researcher will act as the steward of the data storage and protection during the data lifecycle. It was not expected that there would be any contractors, subcontractors, and/or consultants who will be granted access to the restricted data. The researcher will follow the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) guidelines suggested for social science data preparation and archiving. Close attention was be given to important metadata elements. The final disposition of data is expected to be deposited with ICPSR.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher has considered the critical essential components of employing the ethical standards, particularly related to research involving participants whose standing on the sex offender registry may be sensitive in nature. The ethical framework of *principlism* has been considered by the researcher, as it considers beneficence, maleficence, and justice principles, while focusing on autonomy as a key aspect of understanding between the researcher and the participant (Spencer, 2017). The procedures adopted for this study have been specifically catered toward this participant pool with the understanding that the participants will likely be the most forthcoming

when layers of privacy and discretion are employed. The protections of anonymity and voluntariness, along with the removal of the researcher from the data collection procedures account for these layers of privacy and discretion.

Minimal risk in research falls under the beneficence principle. In their discussion of the evolution of ethical standards, Kalmbach and Lyons Jr. (2003) reflect on the intention behind the beneficence principle. The authors assert that the intent of beneficence "was to provide a synthesis of two complementary expressions: (i) do no harm, and (ii) maximize potential benefits while minimizing possible risk or harm" (p. 677). Kalmbach and Lyons Jr. (2003) framed this ethical principle with an angle toward work with prison populations. They noted that the reality of the moral learning curve and awareness of beneficence with prison populations necessitates the exposing of the person to risk (Kalmbach & Lyons Jr., 2003). The key is to find a balance from the learned experiences of the past research conducted with prison populations and the meaningful consideration of benefits and risks that could affect the targeted participants of the current study. By choosing to solicit participation from offenders who have been released from the correctional system and completely removed from the forensic setting, the research effort was still able to tap into the valuable insight that this participant population could provide while finding a situation where the risks of harm were minimized.

The individuals selected from the sampling frame were not considered part of a vulnerable population. The sampling frame encompasses a group of potential participants who are sourced from public access data and living in the community. Those in custody, are considered vulnerable subjects, in part due to the fact that they are a

captive stable source of data, and in part due to the historical examples of atrocities inflicted on imprisoned individuals without obtaining their informed consent (Goodwin, 2016; Spencer 2017). With this consideration noted, Spencer (2017) makes a solid argument that while there needs to be considerable protections for vulnerable subjects, particularly prisoners, care also needs to be taken to ensure that these populations are not marginalized further and their voices silenced due to over-protections that limit their ability to effectively chose to participate in research efforts. Studies note that prisoner populations are overprotected and understudied (Cislo & Trestman, 2013; Spencer, 2017). Shifting the sampling frame to former prisoners who are no longer in the potentially coercive forensic setting will provide an opportunity for those subjective voices to be demonstrated through their participation.

As noted in the research, offender participants are needed to bring relevance to the study of predatory behavior and stalking research. Ethical considerations made for this study resulted in a change of intent for the researcher to both use incarcerated offenders and to personally administer the data collection tool to the selected participants. The redirected approach for the use of the internet interface for data collection effort in intended to put ethical considerations at the forefront of this inquiry. Title 45, Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) discusses a notable consideration that is recognized by the researcher that "the IRBs are charged with ensuring that the magnitude of risk posed to prisoners is no greater than the level of risk a non-prisoner would be willing to assume (§46.46.305 [d][3])" (Kalmbach & Lyons Jr., 2003, p.682). This is also discussed by Brewer-Smyth (2008) who comments that inmates can present a

captive audience due to their circumstances. Roberts and Indermaur (2008) echo this sentiment by noting that the fact that the prison population is a captive audience frames the concerns regarding these individuals as vulnerable.

An additional consideration for risks to this population can also be unearthed by considering the motivations of prisoners to participate or not participate in a research study (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008). An array of instrumental and affective elements is perceived to play into these motivating decisions of prisoner participants (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008). A shift to included participants who are offenders released from custody removes some of these motivations or affective elements that could deter an offender who would otherwise choose to participate.

A focus on outweighing benefits also minimizes the potential risks. One example of a benefit to conducting offender research was mentioned the need for this type of investigation to understand and learn how to reduce high-risk behaviors for future violence (Brewer-Smyth, 2008). The argument is made that this will both benefit the offenders who have perpetrated violence by providing information to advance understanding and rehabilitation and extends the benefit to the children of the offenders who are at an increased risk for perpetrating the cycle of high-risk behaviors associated with crime" (Brewer-Smyth, 2008, p.120).

An example of an exploratory study conducted with a similar type of population was referenced previously by Johnson and Thompson (2016). In their study, the authors focused exclusively on stalking behaviors related to ex-intimate partners and explicitly called for the need to investigate potential risk factors associated with stalking behaviors

among a sample of convicted stalking offenders. The study included personality disorder traits, adult attachment, and components of relational goal pursuit which provides for motive, rumination, and negative affect. The suggested need for future research noted by these authors fall in line with this intended inquiry.

Additionally, the successful use of offenders as research participants under ethical approaches is supported by examples of contemporary international studies. Charles et al. (2014) discussed prisoner research in the United Kingdom after an appraisal of research applications to the National Research Ethics Service . The authors stated, "rigorous ethical oversight and the shift in the prevailing attitude towards the risks and benefits of participation suggest that it may be time for research to be more accessible to prisoners in line with the principle of equivalence in prison healthcare" (Charles et al., 2014, p. 246). The study by Saramago et al. (2019) was conducted within Portuguese prison facilities with the use of convicted sex offenders as participants. Further, Cislo and Trestman (2013) looked at challenges and solutions for U.S.-based research in correctional settings. The authors highlighted the fact that the prison population in the United States is understudied and classify this as a significant problem The authors recognize the need for ethical standards that are in place through the Code of Federal Regulations while recognizing that meaningful research can be conducted in correctional institutions when there is an understanding of organizational structure related to prison and research logistics, recognition of diverse missions, research collaborations, and stakeholder discussions. This study incorporated the use of these very types of

participants while mitigating the pitfalls and potential coercive nature of utilizing a correctional forensic setting.

Summary

This investigation considered fantasies that take the form of violent sexual encounters and whether they serve to drive an offender's relational attachments to a victim in a nonconsensual manner. Data collection efforts involved stalking offenders with sexual components to their criminal convictions, who have been released from custody and into the community. Ethical considerations placed importance on confidentiality, autonomy, and voluntariness when developing the procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. A Q sort on an internet interface was used for data collection. A Q-type of exploratory factor analysis was used to assess if patterns were present for violent sexual fantasy and RPA in the process of stalking. The data collection and data analysis provided a QQI approach to this research investigation. The results of the data analysis had the potential to indicate if a possible causal relationship exists between the variables.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasies and RPA in an offender's process of stalking preselected victims. With this purpose in mind, I examined these variables as possible indicators of imminent threats of violence toward targeted victims. The research question asked what drives the stalker to pursue a relationship with their victim, and how do fantasies play into their process. By employing Q methodology, I was able to examine whether RPAs and fantasies played into the predatory process of convicted stalking offenders. This chapter will describe the research and data collection process and how I examined if the presence of these variables were presented in the data and whether they worked in concert across participant-generated results.

Setting

The organizational conditions of the study included the completion of a data collection activity on an internet interface called Q Method Software. I mailed invitation letters to individuals in the participant pool using the residential addresses listed on public access sex offender registries. Whether individuals chose to accept the invitation and access the study on the internet was at each respondent's discretion. Because of these factors, I did not have control of the physical setting for respondents. The invitation letter welcomed participation in the study and provided information to access the study setting on a computer website. Respondents from the purposeful sample were

therefore able to access the internet within the comfort of their own home environment or, if they chose, on a public access computer.

The data collection portion of the study that involved respondents was conducted entirely without researcher intervention or even the presence of the researcher. The respondents were allowed complete control of the physical setting with respect to time and place. It is unknown whether respondents were in quiet or loud physical settings when they completed their Q sorts. It is also unknown whether there were any distractions within that chosen environment that could have affected the responses and hence the interpretation of study results.

The virtual setting for data collection occurred on an internet website. Respondents accessed the study through either private or public internet access and by locating the website link referenced in the invitation letter. It is unknown whether the respondents used personal or public computers or personal or public internet access for participation. Participants were not required to download any type of software, drives, or flash players to access the study or to participate.

The internet interface enabled the participant to enter the Q sort activity for this doctoral study with a specific URL and confidential participation code, both of which were provided on the invitation letter. This URL brought the participant directly to the virtual setting on the Q Method Software website. Participants were not required to search for this study on the Q Method Software website as the link provided on the invitation letter directed respondents directly to this specific study's data collection access point. Upon entering the virtual setting, respondents encountered a verification

screen that included the title of the study. Participants then provided their participation code which, in turn, gave them access to the informed consent, directions, and Q sort data collection activity.

There was no place for the respondents to identify themselves within the virtual setting. Informed consent was presented within the virtual setting as the first screen after a participation code was entered. Access to the Q sort activity was only given to participants after they acknowledged and accepted the informed consent. Participants were reminded within the virtual setting that if at any time they chose to discontinue their participation that they had the ability to close the browser and their responses would not be submitted.

Directional buttons within the virtual setting moved respondents through the informed consent screens and Q sort. Respondents had access to a help button on each part of the Q sort which provided the Q sort directions again when prompted. I did not incorporate time restrictions on the activity, but a running clock was on the screen showing the time used as a respondent engaged in the Q sort. The running clock was a feature of the virtual setting that I had no control over. A submit button gave respondents the ability to submit their completed Q sort. After a respondent submitted a Q sort, they received a thank you message for their participation and subsequently exited from the virtual setting. The virtual setting provided direct results to me upon a respondent's choice to submit a completed Q sort. No follow-up questions or follow-up actions were incorporated into this study's data collection.

Demographics

Participant demographics and characteristics relevant to the study aligned with the criteria used to establish the participation pool. The target population for this study were convicted stalkers who had sexual components to their crimes of conviction. Demographic questions were not incorporated into the actual data collection activity. As the respondents did not identify themselves within the virtual data collection setting, I worked under the assumption that the respondents representing the sample were individuals sourced from the participant pool who were sent invitation letters.

Four primary characteristics defined the participant demographics. The characteristics of the sample were adults convicted of stalking offenses who were not in confinement during the time of data collection. Additionally, the offenses considered for participation were those that had a sexual component to the conviction. No juveniles were recruited for participation. Gender was not specified in the selection process. Participation invitations were predominantly sent to males because this demographic represented a majority of the participation pool. Research invitations were sent to females who met the research criteria but there were substantially fewer females than males identified in the participant pool. The gender breakdown of the actual respondents in the sample is unknown.

Participants belonged to an offender population. The sample included only individuals convicted of a stalking offense. The convicted offenders were identified as those not in confinement during my data collection phase. I defined this characteristic as community-based offenders. Offenses associated with the convictions of those in the

community-based offender population narrowed the participant pool. Stalking-based offense convictions provided a practical source of participants within the forensic population who have demonstrated stalking behavior in the past.

The stalking-based offense characteristic required some elasticity regarding its definition for a participant criterion. As noted in the literature review, stalking offenses are not written uniformly across state penal codes. This is not unique to statutes criminalizing stalking behavior. This is something that occurs with many offense definitions that cross jurisdictional boundaries. The language used in an established state statute could be different from those in another state that essentially define the same conceptual offense. Statutes within state penal codes often become labeled as *substantially similar offenses* to codified criminal behavior in other states. This characteristic does not necessarily mean that an offense in one state should be viewed as identical to a corresponding offense in another state. Rather, a substantially similar offense implies that the elements of the corresponding offenses from the different areas of jurisdiction are remarkably similar and could be considered similar types of criminal behavior.

Stalking-based offenses identified as the conviction offense for participants included crimes listed with *stalking* in the title of their offense. In addition, the participation pool included offenses identified as substantially similar offenses to these crimes. The specific codes that represented the stalking conviction characteristic for this study's participation pool included the following:

- Texas Penal Code §42.072(b) Required to register as condition of parole for violation of "stalking;"
- Texas Penal Code §25.072(e) Required to register as a condition of parole for violation of "repeated violation of certain court orders or conditions of bond in family violence, sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking case;"
- Arkansas Code §5-27-306 Internet stalking of a child;
- Georgia Code § 16-5-90 Stalking;
- Iowa Code §708-11, Stalking;
- Arizona Revised Statutes §13-2923 with revised statute §13-118, Stalking with sexual motivation.

This list of stalking and substantially similar offenses is not inclusive of all related offenses. The presented list merely represents offenses of conviction represented in the participation pool. The specific conviction offense breakdown for the actual respondents in the sample is unknown.

Not all stalking offenses list sexual elements to the crime, nor do all stalking convictions have a sexual aspect to the crime. The research criteria incorporated a sexual component to the offense due to the nature of the variables examined in this study. The sexual component of the offense conviction was identified through public record access of state sex offender registries. I identified criminal convictions of participants that related to stalking offenses on state public record sex offender registries. The publicly accessed registries provided the offense of conviction that placed an individual on the sex offender registry. I did not investigate or access criminal histories and backgrounds of

offenders. Information used to identify the participation pool was only based on the sex offender registry data at the time of data collection. The public access sex offender registries served as the source of contact information for the those meeting all the characteristics of the research criteria. The sample was sourced from this participation pool.

The sex offender registries were accessed over the internet. Accessed registries represented states in the contiguous United States. Not all state registries were accessed during the recruitment effort. Each state presents guidelines for public access to the sex offender registries. Most states present parameters for public use and restrict the use of any of the registries if access has criminal intent to harm, injure, harass, or stalk individuals or family members of individuals listed on the registries. No criminal intent or intent of harm or harassment was part of this research effort. I did not send any additional invitations, reminders, or follow-up mailings to anyone in the participation pool after the single initial invitation letter.

Some state registries present additional restrictions regarding commercial use of the lists. For example, the sex offender registry for the State of Arizona has a compliance notice regarding public use of the information. As a measure of precaution, I contacted the Arizona Department of Public Safety Sex Offender Compliance Unit for clarification prior to accessing the Arizona sex offender registry. A member of the unit contacted me over email stating that the research intentions behind this effort were not a violation of the commercial use element, and I was granted permission to access that state's registry. Some state registry access sites articulate prohibitions such as using the registries to

generate mailing or phone lists. I was prudent not to access any registry that had such precautions regarding mailings or more restrictive public access guidelines.

Some individuals in the participant pool were listed on accessed state registries for offenses that occurred in a different state. For this reason, some individuals met the criteria for being in the participation pool even though I may not have accessed the state registry of their residence. Additionally, an individual on an accessed registry may have been listed with the offense of conviction coded with another state's substantially similar stalking offense. For example, some individuals on the sex offender registry from the great State of Texas were coded *SSO* for a substantially similar offense to Internet stalking of a child, Arkansas Code § 5-27-306. Hence the participant pool included individuals from many parts of the country due to the dynamics of stalking statutes and associated sexual components of these crimes.

Many individuals who met the criteria on the public record sex offender registries had a state-based corrections agency listed for address information. These individuals were not sent participant invitations. It is unknown if the individuals in those cases were incarcerated for the listed registry offense, a violation of that offense, or for a new or different offense. I determined that those listed with correctional agency addresses did not meet the target population criteria due to a confinement assumption at the time of the data collection.

As the research study focused on the specified research criteria to define characteristics of the participant pool, I did not ascertain past criminal histories of those in the participant pool. In an effort to maintain confidentiality and anonymity in the

virtual setting, I limited data collection to only the Q sort data. Information pertaining to race, age, educational background, and socioeconomic status of each respondent is unknown. The researcher acknowledges that future studies could benefit from adding demographic-based questions to this type of study. Such information could provide insight on descriptive statistics related to the sample.

The researcher acknowledges an existing possibility that someone other than an intended recipient intercepted the publicly mailed invitation letter and accessed the study through the participation code printed on the invitation letter. If this scenario occurred, the intercepting respondent may not be defined by the research criteria. Q sort data collected from such a respondent could cause a skew or error in the results. This defined possibility of error is based on chance and actual occurrences are unknown by the researcher. With this acknowledgement, the researcher assumed sample demographics rested on the research criteria met by those who were sent invitation letters.

Data Collection

The sample consisted of 30 participants. The 30 respondents received an invitation letter to participate in the study and subsequently completed and submitted the Q sort on the internet interface. It is possible that other individuals recruited with invitation letters could have participated in the study and closed the internet browser prior to submitting their Q sort. No data were collected from any partially completed Q sorts. The 30 completed respondent submissions served as the source of the data used for analysis against the research question.

Each of the 30 adults in the sample responded to a mailed invitation letter recruiting them as research participants. The researcher prepared the invitation letters in #10 privacy envelopes with computer-printed address labels. The researcher mailed the recruitment letters through the US Postal Service's regular mail. Mailed letters included an introduction of the study and welcomed the respondent's participation. Instructions for participation directed respondents to a URL on the internet that brought respondents to the Q Method Software entry page for this research study.

A prompt at the study's access page asked respondents for a participation code. Each invitation letter provided a random and confidential participation code. After entering a participation code, respondents arrived in the study's virtual setting. Upon entry to the study, the initial screen presented participants with the informed consent form. The consent form presented included Walden University's IRB approval number for this study (05-21-20-0666916). Acceptance of the informed consent enabled respondents to access the data collection activity. When respondents accepted the informed consent directions for the Q sort appeared on the screen and directed them to the data collection activity.

The Q sort data collection activity resembled a card game with two steps. Each step used the Q set. The Q set, a representative sample of the concourse, included 60 statements. The first step brought participants to a screen with the Q set placed out on cards. Each card presented one statement of the Q set, collectively creating a deck of 60 cards. In addition to an individual statement, each card also had three choices on the bottom. The three choices took the visual form of a thumbs-up icon, a thumbs-down

icon, and an image of a question mark inside a circle. When participants hovered the mouse over the respective images, the software showed they represented *most like their experience*, *not like their experience*, and *neutral*.

Participants reviewed each card and selected one of the three choices for that card's statement. The choice selections essentially worked to sort the deck of cards into three piles. Once the respondent clicked on a sorting choice, the Q Method Software removed the card from the screen and shifted that card into the respective pile. When the respondent finished selecting a sorting choice for every card in the Q set, the second step of the data collection activity appeared on the screen.

The software presented participants with a new screen, showing three piles at the top and an empty grid below the piles. The piles were the sorted cards of the Q set based on the choices made by the participant in the first step. The grid below the sorted piles had 60 spaces presented in the form of a flattened pyramid or bell curve. Participants began with the pile of the statements that were most like their experience. They dragged each card into a space on the grid to show where they felt that statement fit into their subjective experience. Participants were instructed to consider the right side of the grid as representing the most like their experience, the center of the grid represented neutral statements, and the grid's left side to be least like their experience. Respondents moved through the piles of sorted cards until no cards remained in the piles and all statements appeared in a spot on the grid. Participants had the option to move cards and adjust the position of statements after placing them on the grid. When a respondent felt satisfied the

grid reflected their experience, they submitted their Q sort. A thank you message from the researcher ended the data collection activity following each Q sort submission.

Each respondent completed one Q sort. The Q sort software enables participants to re-enter the study and complete the activity more than once. Participants were not directed to do this, but had a respondent decided to enter the study and completed any additional Q sorts, the individual's responses would have been logged as additional responses under the same participation code. Data would then have been factored according to that participant's total repeated responses, not as an additional participant. This type of event would not have skewed the overall study to make it look like there were additional participants and would have only adjusted that respondent's data. No participants logged in repeatedly to use this flexible quality of the Q sort software.

Recording Data

Participation codes are not required for data collection with Q Method Software. The researcher chose to incorporate the participation code option into the study setting since at the time of data collection, the Q Method Software did not have the capability of limiting access based on IP addresses. Through the study management feature of the Q Method Software, the researcher generated 497 random participation codes over the course of the data collection phase. While the option is presented in the software's study management, the researcher did not choose to connect participation codes to any information such as names, or addresses. The participation codes hence remained random and confidential both in the participation invitation mailing process and within the data collection software.

The only tracking of the participation codes was to monitor which codes were used for completed responses and if any of the participants logged in to complete more than one grid. Since these codes were not connected to any personal identification, the researcher was unaware of who the respondents were. The used codes were only tracked as they allowed for sets of response data to be associated with unique participants.

Data were recorded based on participant responses to the statements in the Q set. Each respondent in the sample submitted a completed grid. The response from each participant became a set of responses identified with the confidential participation code used for access to the virtual setting. When the respondent arranged the statements on the grid, they subjectively chose a placement selection for each statement. The placement selection for each statement was assigned a number based on its location on the grid. The placement numbers ranged from 1 to 60, with column numbers in the distribution structure assigned numbers -6 to 6 based on the column distance from the grid's center or mean. The overall placement numbers and their associated statements presented the statement arrangement that was subjective to that respondent.

Data were also recorded for each statement relevant to the variance of its positional placement on the grid across the sample. Information collected was hence recorded based on how statements were placed and positioned across participant submissions. How each respondent placed the set of statements provided numerical and conceptual insight as to their subjective behavior and thought processes. The placement positions recorded in the sorted statement arrangements provides for both the qualitative

and quantitative aspects of the data analysis. Data recording reflects the QQI approach of Q methodology.

Variations in Planned Data Collection

There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. The only adjustment made by the researcher involved the expanded invitation effort toward the participant pool. The researcher began with the public access sex offender registry from the State of Texas. It was unknown at the time if the initial invitation effort would generate the desired number of 30 respondents without needing to expand the effort to those meeting research criteria on other state registries. This step was anticipated as a possibility by the researcher and not a variation of the intended plan for data collection. But the invitation effort for those meeting the research criteria did expand beyond the initial examined registry.

Unusual Circumstances

An unusual circumstance encountered in data collection was the unexpectedly large number of returned invitation letters addressed to potential participants. Care was taken by the researcher not to send invitation letters to those without complete addresses in the public access state sex offender registries. Care was also taken avoid the inclusion of offenders listed with associated correctional facility addresses as this would imply these individuals were either incarcerated for a different or new offense, and that they would then be considered part of a vulnerable population. Regardless of these precautionary steps taken by the researcher to avoid sending invitations to individuals

who would likely be unable to participate, a large amount of invitations letters were returned as unopened mail.

The public access state records make note of the fact that the accuracy of the addresses cannot be guaranteed. As it was expected that there would be some returned mail due to possible incorrect or undeliverable mail, the researcher obtained a post office box for the safe and secure return of any such mail return. A surprisingly large number of mailed research invitations were returned. The mailing returns included numerous post office markings including "not deliverable as addressed," "attempted-not known," "insufficient address," "no mail receptable," "no such number," and "vacant." All returned envelopes were marked with a post office stamps stating, "unable to forward."

Although some mailing returns were expected, I was surprised at the large number of sex offenders that were not actually living at the addresses that were listed on the state registries. While there could have been data entry mistakes made when the information was entered into the state registries, the researcher only used mail merge features of the database information. This means the address errors were not created during data collection by the researcher, since the address information of potential participants was not altered or retyped from the information provided on the public access registry information. The registries used were downloaded within the current timeframe related to the proposal and data collection stages of the researcher's study. This should have yielded predominantly current residence locations, yet so many listed were not known to be at the registered address. This unexpected scenario occurring during data collection is an alarming circumstance related to this forensic population.

An additional unexpected aspect of data collection occurred when reviewing the time utilized by participants to complete the study. In the study invitation sent to potential participants, the researcher anticipated that the total time needed to complete both steps of the activity would be approximately ten minutes. This estimated time was a total that the researcher presented as a gauge for participants to complete the final sorting step of the grid arrangement and the final submission. While the actual data collection activity did not have a time restriction associated with its completion, the Q method software interface did present a tracked time for each participant as they worked through the activity and completed the sort. As estimated, many of the participants completed the activity in a timeframe relatively close to the estimated time.

The median time used by participants to complete the activity was eight minutes and 35 seconds. The mean time of all participants was one hour, 53 minutes and 22 seconds. The mean was skewed by three outliers in which the participants used much more time than most respondents. Two of the participants took over 2 hours to complete the Q sort. A drastic outlier existed in the overall participation times as one of the participants who submitted a completed grid took 47 hours, 45 minutes, and 29 seconds to complete the activity.

Although there was no time limit set up for the completion of the activity, this outlier was intriguing to the researcher, particularly since this data collection activity focused on fixations and related behavior. A limitation to this study is that I did not build in a follow-up component to the Q sort data collection activity. This is an optional component that has been used in research studies that have used Q methodology. Given

unexpected aspects of the results, such as this unique outlier related to participation time, it may be beneficial and enlightening for future research that employs Q methodology to incorporate a follow-up component between the researcher and participant.

Data Analysis

The Q sort utilized a qualitative approach to retrieving information about each participant's subjective processing. The data on the subjective processing was depicted through the lens of stalking-based concepts and conceptual statements related to the fantasy and relational attachment variables. The Q set had 60 total statements. These statements were reviewed in Chapter 3 as the Q set, which was a representative set of the researcher-generated concourse. As the 30 participants completed the card arrangements on the grid, they moved the cards around to reflect how the concepts on the card statements played into their personal experience. To accomplish the Q sort, the cards were first sorted into three piles and then arranged subjectively onto a Q grid with 60 placeholders. Using the results of this qualitative data collection effort, the researcher employed exploratory factor analysis to generate the QQI data analysis.

Input and Data

After collecting data through the QMethod Software internet interface, the raw data from the 30 Q sorts was exported from the interface. The data were then imported into KenQ Analysis Desktop Edition (KADE) software version 1.2.0 (Banasick, 2019). KADE was used to run the data analysis. The researcher followed the general stages of statistical procedures for Q methodology data analysis. Brown (2004) described these

three sequential steps as “correlation, factor analysis, and the computation of factor scores” (p. 5).

Correlation

A correlation matrix of the participants was generated from the raw data. Participants were labeled by the researcher as Participant A-AD to represent the identities of the 30 confidential participants. The researcher used KADE to generate a correlation matrix across the participants’ Q sorts using Pearson’s *r* coefficients. An image of the correlation matrix can be found in Appendix E. The creation of this correlation matrix initiated the factoring process (Brown, 2004).

Factor Analysis: Factors and Rotation

The basic idea behind factor analysis is to reduce large amounts of data from a complex dataset into a more focused set of data for ease of interpretation. Principal components analysis with a Varimax rotation was then applied to the correlation matrix. The KADE software offers several common options for the factor analysis including Centroid Factors and Principal Components. As noted in resources on Q methodology the choice between these and other factor analysis methods leads to minimal differences between the generated factor structures (Brown, 2004; McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The researcher selected Principal Components for factor analysis. Through this application, eight principal components, or *factors*, were identified through the raw results. These factors essentially demonstrate underlying concepts or themes that presented in the dataset through the correlation matrix. These eight extracted factors gave the researcher a starting point from which to analyze how Q sorts were weighing or loading onto the

factors. A matrix showing the eight extracted factors from this study can be found in Table 1.

Factor rotation provided the researcher the ability to reduce the still large amount of data and focus the factor loading for meaningful interpretation. The procedure called the Varimax rotation attempts to "maximize the dispersion of factor loadings within the factors," so that commonalities can be identified (Searle, Hare, Davies, & Morgan, 2018, p. 73). This method of clarifying the factor structures is a type of orthogonal rotation (Brown, 2004). Rotating the extracted factors can hence present a more meaningful pattern shown through heavy factor loading. Before running the analysis with the Varimax rotation, the researcher needed to decide how many of the eight extracted factors were the most appropriate to rotate.

Several different methods can be used by the researcher for deciding how many of the extracted factors to select for rotation. Eigenvalues are a statistical measure that demonstrate the variance demonstrated through each extracted factor. Although eigenvalues are found in R methodology and often calculated and reported in data analysis for Q methodology, it is not always used in deciding factors for rotation unless the value rises above 1 (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). A combination of extracted factors that add up to over 70% variance can be an indicator for the researcher to choose a number of factors to rotate and to disregard the rest.

One additional method is to use a scree plot of the variance represented across the extracted factors. Scree plots display a downward curve representing how each additional factor adds to the cumulative variance found in the extracted factors. The part

of the scree plot that shows a flattening out of the curve, referred to as the elbow of the curve, can give the researcher an idea of where the additional factors will begin to add less meaning to the underlying concepts. The researcher opted to use the scree plot in this study. The elbow indicated two factors for rotation. As will be described in the data results and factor arrays, these two rotated factors ended up aligning conceptually with the variables discussed in the literature review. Factor 1 showed characteristics of a fantasy-driven process, and Factor 2 showed characteristics of an RPA-driven process.

Computation of Factor Scores

Loadings and factor arrays. The factor loadings provide the data analysis results for interpretation. The loadings onto each factor will show a range of 1.00 to -1.00. Loadings closer to 1.00 show high loading, indicating agreement and loadings closer to -1.00 indicate disagreement. These loadings work as correlation coefficients (Brown, 2004). Once the researcher was able to see the factor loadings on the two factors selected for rotation, then commonalities and differences between them became visible. Factor loadings for the rotated factors are presented in Table 2.

The results of the factor loadings are presented in *factor arrays*. A factor array presents distinguishing statements related to the underlying construct. Consensus statements indicate statements that may be important among the factor constructs as well. The factor arrays are created by averaging the statement factor scores from the participant Q sorts with high loading on a factor. These arrays create as a composite of the underlying constructs of the factor. The factor array for each rotated factor can be

envisioned as a newly generated Q sort, that depicts the concept associated with that factor. The factor interpretation can be done based on the factor array.

Z-scores. Z-scores were calculated so that the researcher could examine the raw scores as standard scores that are comparable. This assisted the researcher in analyzing the factor loadings to identify possible processing patterns. A z-score represents the probability of a measure occurring. The *z* represents the standard score. To calculate a z-score, the mean of the sample is subtracted from the observed score, and that result is then divided by the standard deviation of the sample. Z-scores were calculated for each statement according to the placement selections made for each statement across participants. This z-score calculation provided a scale from which to rank the statements of the Q set based on how the factor loadings. These z-scores are important to the Q sort data analysis because they allow the researcher the ability to compare outcomes across distributions.

Comparing outcomes across distributions can be illuminated in the data by using z-scores because the z-score provides a relative statistical context across performances, or in this case, Q sorts. In his explanation of z-scores, Salkind (2017) notes, "when these raw scores are represented as standard scores, then they are directly comparable to one another in terms of their relative location in their respective distributions" (p. 206). The z-score results from the data analysis allowed the researcher to compare the distributions across the underlying concepts that presented in the higher loading factors.

Results

Due to the nature of the QQI approach, the qualitative and quantitative elements of the data analysis results become integrated. The analysis and interpretation of the results will be presented in the order of how the researcher moved through the data analysis. The principal components that were extracted from the data, the rotated factor loadings, and the factor arrays will be discussed as quantitative results that were then interpreted as underlying concepts that aligned with fantasy and RPA variables.

Demographics

No statistical information was gathered during data collection to analyze the demographics of the sample. The research criteria included adults who were community-based offenders, whose crimes of convictions included stalking offenses. The participants were identified through public access sex offender registries due to sexual components related to their stalking convictions. Gender and age data are unknown.

Extracting Principal Components

Extracted factors from the 30 Q sorts produced a total of eight factors that showed eigenvalues > 1.00. The variance explained by these eight extracted factors totaled 62%. Table 1 demonstrates the unrotated factor matrix of the extracted principal components for each participant. Participants, coded as consecutive letters of the alphabet, are listed on the y-axis. Totals at the bottom of the table show the eigenvalues, percentage of explained variance, and cumulative percentage of explained variance.

Table 1

Unrotated Factor Matrix of 8 Extracted Principal Components

Participant	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
A	0.46	-0.27	0.06	-0.02	0.37	0.02	-0.37	0.32
B	0.20	0.32	0.26	0.22	-0.44	0.32	-0.30	-0.18
C	0.55	0.36	0.14	0.22	0.16	-0.16	0.00	-0.24
D	0.66	0.02	0.20	-0.07	0.22	-0.14	-0.13	-0.21
E	0.33	0.11	0.23	0.39	-0.34	-0.38	-0.28	0.18
F	0.54	0.06	-0.21	0.19	0.45	0.04	-0.34	0.03
G	0.18	0.58	-0.06	-0.21	0.10	-0.28	0.38	-0.18
H	0.61	0.41	-0.16	0.18	0.01	0.23	-0.05	0.08
I	0.47	0.35	-0.32	0.24	-0.13	0.28	0.00	-0.35
J	0.12	0.19	-0.30	0.41	0.00	-0.11	0.51	0.23
K	0.42	0.12	-0.51	-0.06	0.07	0.24	0.13	-0.18
L	0.37	0.05	0.48	-0.27	-0.31	0.22	0.32	0.03
M	0.51	0.25	-0.32	-0.29	0.11	0.07	-0.19	0.06
N	0.29	-0.55	0.00	-0.04	-0.20	0.33	-0.04	-0.07
O	-0.07	0.50	0.01	0.12	0.15	-0.04	0.14	0.37
P	-0.17	0.08	0.15	-0.32	0.17	0.46	0.14	0.54
Q	-0.01	-0.44	-0.05	0.46	0.01	-0.05	0.32	-0.13
R	0.73	0.15	0.30	-0.22	-0.01	0.08	0.19	0.00
S	0.68	-0.32	0.08	0.16	-0.13	0.15	-0.03	0.08
T	0.62	0.12	0.48	0.06	-0.20	0.01	0.25	0.20
U	0.60	0.14	-0.08	-0.08	-0.10	-0.11	-0.21	0.31
V	0.73	-0.14	-0.16	-0.03	-0.29	-0.04	-0.06	0.11
W	0.52	-0.24	-0.35	-0.21	-0.04	-0.29	0.20	0.31
X	0.56	-0.29	-0.03	-0.38	0.15	-0.07	0.23	-0.28
Y	0.20	-0.19	0.32	0.24	0.47	0.45	0.19	-0.14
Z	0.09	-0.21	-0.42	0.46	-0.09	0.27	0.20	0.22
AA	0.42	-0.14	0.34	0.20	0.42	-0.24	0.10	-0.05
AB	0.45	-0.39	-0.17	-0.16	-0.04	-0.02	-0.04	-0.07
AC	0.03	-0.20	0.28	0.37	0.12	-0.12	0.03	0.11
AD	0.38	-0.34	-0.13	-0.07	-0.25	-0.32	0.13	-0.05
Eigenvalues	6.15	2.54	2.07	1.83	1.61	1.52	1.49	1.38
% Explained Variance	21.00	8.00	7.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Cumulative % Explained Variance	21.00	29.00	36.00	42.00	47.00	52.00	57.00	62.00

Note. The total variance explained based on the 8 underlying factors totals 62%. Generated using Kade v.1.2.0 software.

In Coogan and Herrington's (2011) reference to factor loading specific to Q methodology, the authors stated that "generally the higher the number of factors extracted from a study the lower the number of participants who will significantly load on these factors" (p. 27). The first four extracted factors loaded higher than the final four factors. A scree plot (see Figure 1) was generated to assist the researcher in identifying if the analysis should include a rotation with a two-factor, three-factor, or four-factor solution. The elbow of the curve indicated a two-factor solution was the most appropriate direction for the researcher to take since that is where the curve levels off. The two-factor solution was selected for the Varimax rotation.

Figure 1. The scree plot indicates two strong factors for rotation based on the location of the elbow of the curve. As the curve bends to flatten out, less of the percentage of variance is incorporated in each additional underlying factor.

The two-factor solution was appropriately aligned with the design of the study. According to Rahn (2012b), an "important metric to keep in mind is the total amount of variability of the original variables explained by each factor solution" (para. 9). The total amount of variability of the original variables explained by the two-factor solution was 29%. Additionally, every factor analysis should have an equal number of factors as variables (Rahn, 2012b). The two-factor solution matches the number of variables I selected for this study. The factor solution selected is also considered reasonable if the representative concept of the factors can be named and theoretically makes sense to the researcher (Rahn, 2012b). Upon inspection of the factor characteristics and distinguishing statements, the first factor indicated a fantasy-driven process and the second factor indicated an RPA-driven process.

Table 2 shows the factor loadings for the two-factor solution with Varimax rotation. The factor loadings presented on the table essentially represent correlation coefficients that show the extent of commonality between the participant Q sort and the factor array (Brown, 1980). The consensus within numerous sources indicated a high-loading cut-off between .40 and .50. The researcher selected a cut-off of >.48. The loadings presenting higher than this number are shown in boldface on the table.

Table 2

Factor Loadings for Two-Factor Solution With Varimax Rotation

Participant	Factor 1 Fantasy-driven process	Factor 2 RPA-driven process
A	0.28	0.46
B	0.33	-0.18
C	**0.66**	-0.04
D	**0.59**	0.30
E	0.34	0.06
F	**0.50**	0.20
G	0.44	-0.42
H	**0.73**	-0.07
I	**0.58**	-0.08
J	0.20	-0.11
K	0.42	0.10
L	0.35	0.14
M	**0.57**	0.03
N	-0.01	**0.62**
O	0.18	-0.47
P	-0.11	-0.15
Q	-0.22	0.38
R	**0.71**	0.21
S	0.44	**0.61**
T	**0.61**	0.19
U	**0.59**	0.17
V	**0.58**	0.47
W	0.34	0.46
X	0.35	**0.52**
Y	0.08	0.26
Z	-0.02	0.22
AA	0.30	0.32
AB	0.21	**0.56**
AC	-0.07	0.19
AD	0.17	**0.48**

Note. Factor loadings > .48 are in boldface. Factor 1 interpreted as Fantasy-Driven Process; Factor 2 interpreted as RPA-Driven Process. Generated using Kade v.1.2.0 software.

Ten Q sorts loaded high onto Factor 1, and 5 Q sorts loaded high onto Factor 2. These respective Q sorts demonstrate shared subjectivity among the other participants loading high within the respective factors. Hence, the results of the rotated factors on Table 2 demonstrate subjective agreements and disagreements across participants as they relate to each of the underlying factor concepts. For example, subjective agreements on the Factor 1 variable was similarly shared by 10 of the 30 participants. Negative correlation coefficients observed to be loaded onto the rotated factors of the table indicate that those participants have an opposing viewpoint on that variable. This point in the data analysis is where Q methodology requires a diversion from moving into general factor interpretation, as would be done using R methodology (Brown, 1980). In Q methodology, factor interpretations will occur, but after an examination of statement factor scores.

Factor Scores, Factor Arrays, and Interpretation

Factor scores demonstrate what statements are pronounced on the factor arrays. Factor scores for the statements represent the placement on the Q grid. This placement also indicates how participants assigned their subjective agreement or disagreement for the concepts represented in the statement. The factor scores for this study ranged from -6 to 6. Figure 2 displays the Q grid used for this study and displays factor scores. Factor scores were assigned for each statement in a Q sort based on placement on the Q grids by the participants. The Q sorts that load highly on rotated factors are then averaged or weighted to generate factor arrays (Kuipers, Nieboer, & Cramm, 2020). The factor arrays can then be examined based on patterns of distinguishing and consensus

statements for Q method factor interpretation. In this study, the factor score correlations between Factor 1 and Factor 2 was 0.48. Based on general coefficient interpretation, the size of this correlation demonstrates a moderate relationship between the factors.

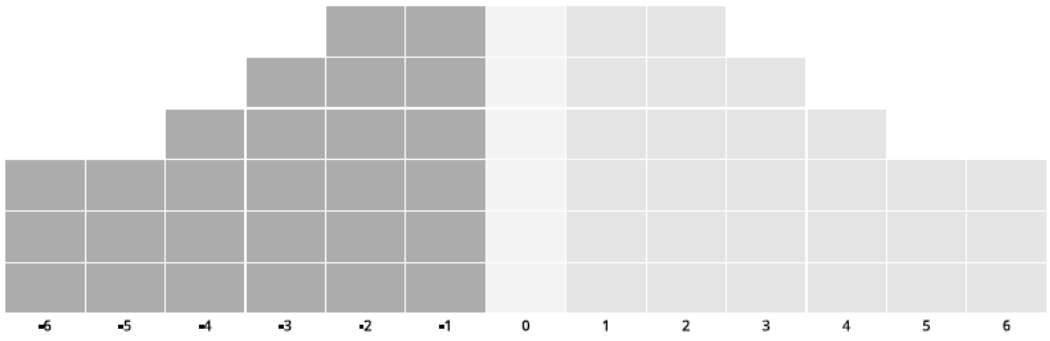

Figure 2. Q Grid showing factor scores. Participants were directed to place statements that were most like their experience on the right side of the grid. Statements placed in the far-most right column would be assigned a factor score of 6. Statements unlike the participant's experience were placed on the left side and neutral statements were directed toward the middle. Factor scores ranged from -6 to 6. Each statement placed in a placeholder in the column was assigned the respective column's factor score for the participant's Q sort.

Factor arrays presented in the results of this data analysis were placed on tables that demonstrated statements ranks, consensus and distinguishing statements, and comparative factor loadings. The results of the factor arrays for this study have been included in multiple formats. The factor array for Factor 1, showing the breakdown of important statements based on weighted factor scores, can be found in Appendix G. The factor array Factor 2 is located Appendix H.

KADE was used to generate a composite factor visualization of each of the two factor arrays. This was done to visually demonstrate the construct characteristics for each

factor according to the weighted factor scores. These factor composites, one for each rotated factor, visually show which statements were important based on the pattern of shared participant perspectives. The composites can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. They demonstrate the same information as the factor arrays in Appendix G and H, but they present the information in the form of a newly generated Q sort. Each composite represents shared participant perspectives on the two variables. Factor interpretation stemmed from examining the factor arrays and the factor visualizations.

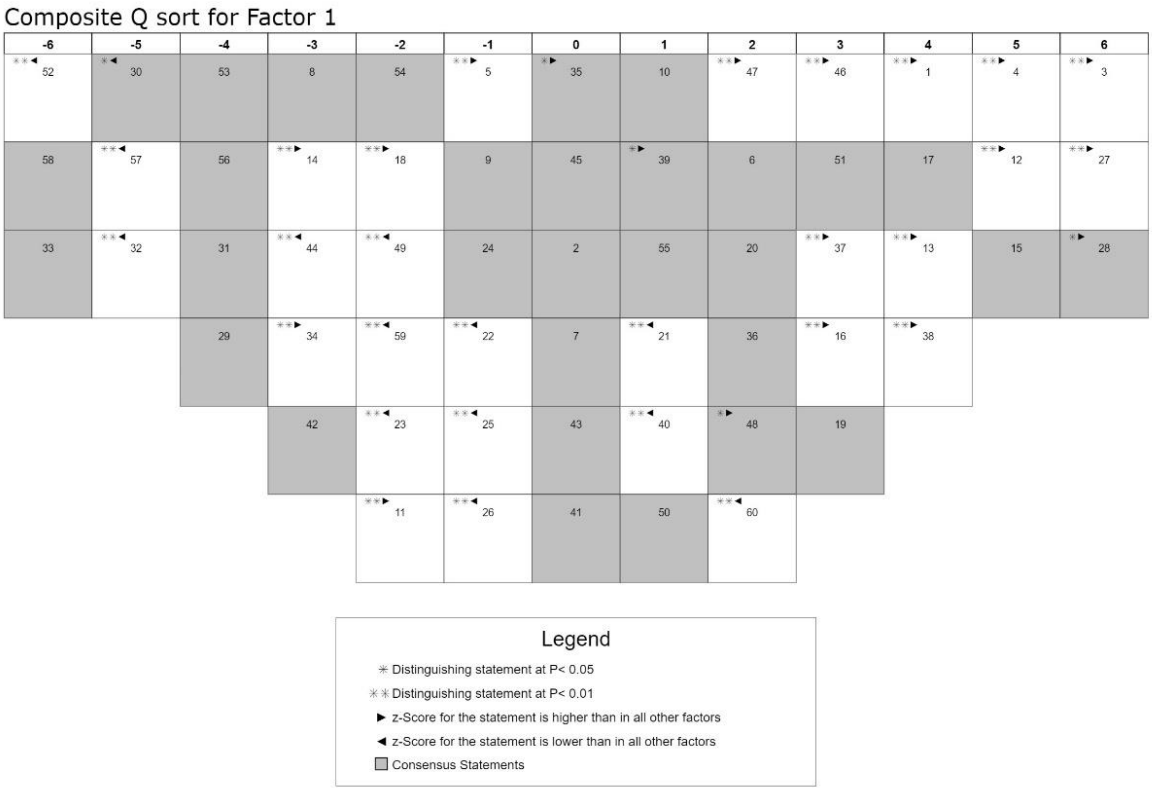

Figure 3. Factor Visualization for Factor 1: Fantasy-Driven Process. Image created using Kade v.1.2.0 software.

Factor array for Factor 1. The Factor 1 array presented the relative ranking of statements that gave information about shared viewpoints among participants. The highest-ranking statements for Factor 1 were

- Statement #3: I fantasize about being in a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest;
- Statement #27: It sexually arouses me to fantasize about a person and me having consensual sexual intercourse together; and
- Statement #28: My sexual fantasies have only included consensual encounters.

Some of the positive statements that ranked higher in the Factor 1 array than in other arrays were

- Statement #17: Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life;
- Statement #23: I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around; and
- Statement #40: In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted.

Some of the negative statements that ranked lower in the Factor 1 array than in other arrays were

- Statement #4: Sexual dreams can make me excited;
- Statement #12: People appearing in my dreams are always whom I like; and

- Statement #15: I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try.

The lowest-ranking statements in the Factor 1 array were

- Statement #52: In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I persistently pursued them in a way that could be perceived as threatening;
- Statement #58: I threatened to hurt a person of interest or myself if they did not pay attention to me; and
- Statement #33: It sexually arouses me to fantasize about inflicting pain or humiliating a person against their will.

Based on this array, the researcher interpreted the characteristics of these weighted statements as representative of the fantasy variable. The researcher acknowledged that violence was not presenting as heavily as expected, but the focus of the shared viewpoints on this factor were highlighting aspects of fantasy, nonetheless. The aspect related to violence in sexual fantasies will be addressed in further discussion pertaining to the research question and hypothesis. For purposes of factor interpretation, the researcher described the underlying construct presenting in this factor as a *fantasy-driven process*.

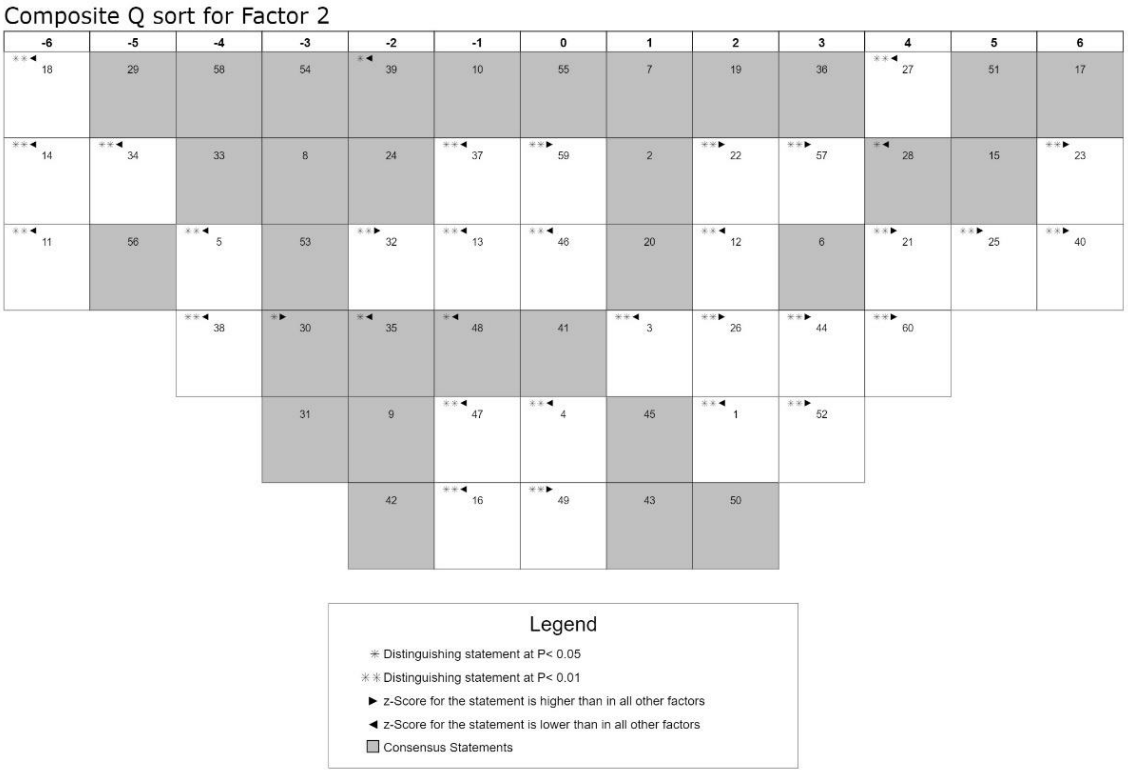

Figure 4. Factor Visualization for Factor 2: RPA-Driven Process. Image created using Kade v.1.2.0 software.

Factor array for Factor 2. The Factor 2 array presented the relative ranking of statements that gave information about shared viewpoints among participants. The highest-ranking statements for Factor 2 were

- Statement #17: Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life;
- Statement #23: I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around; and

- Statement #40: In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted.

Some of the positive statements that ranked higher in the Factor 2 array than in other arrays were

- Statement #51: I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner;
- Statement #15: I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try; and
- Statement #25: Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing.

Some of the negative statements that ranked lower in the Factor 2 array than in other arrays were

- Statement #55: In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I repeatedly ignored laws or social norms, was impulsive, disregarded my own or others safety, was aggressive, or ignored my other responsibilities. I experienced this but I had good reason to act the way I did.;
- Statement #46: I tried to get a person of interest's attention by making romantic gestures like buying them unnecessary gifts; and
- Statement #41: My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments.

The lowest-ranking statements in the Factor 2 array were

- Statement #18: I have never tried to act on any sexual fantasies I have had;
- Statement #14: I only have sexual fantasies about strangers, not anyone I have actually met; and
- Statement #11: I have never had sexual fantasies about a person I was romantically or sexually interested in.

Based on this array, the researcher interpreted the characteristics of these weighted statements as representative of the RPA variable. The researcher described the underlying construct presenting in this factor as an *RPA-driven process*.

Statement Ranks and Z-scores

Appendix F shows the results of the rank statement totals and corresponding z-scores for the two factors chosen for rotation. The table presented in Appendix F lists the statement numbers of the corresponding Q sort statements. Each statement number then shows the z-score and rank of where each statement placed, based on the two factors. Positive z-scores represent a location in the distribution to the right of the mean. Negative z-scores indicate a location in the distribution to the left of the mean. A z-score above ±1.65 falls in a location at the extreme ends of the distribution (5% or less). Extreme z-scores indicate a small chance of occurrence as compared to other scores (Salkind, 2017).

Aspects of Measurement

The use of factor analysis provides a measurement model for unmeasured variables (Rahn, 2012a). The results of the data analysis demonstrate statistical information concerning average reliability coefficients, composite reliability, and

standard error. Table 3 shows the results for the factor characteristics associated with establishing reliability. Content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity aligned with the research process and factor interpretation as it related to the research hypothesis.

Table 3

Factor Characteristics

	Factor 1 Fantasy-driven process	Factor 2 RPA-driven process
Number of defining variables	10	5
Average reliability coefficient	0.8	0.8
Composite reliability	0.976	0.952
Standard error of factor z-scores	0.155	0.219

Reliability. Reliability represents the consistency of measurement. Reliability coefficients should be positive so that they show a direct relationship and be as large as possible between the .00 and ±1.00 in order to interpret reliability. Both factors showed .08 average reliability coefficients at 0.8, indicating high reliability. Composite reliability is used to test the internal consistency of the variables. Typically, composite reliability should be greater than 0.7 in order to demonstrate internal consistency and represent only one construct within the pattern of scoring. The APA Dictionary of Psychology highlights the latency of the construct in its listed definition of composite reliability (n.d.). As demonstrated by the table, this was achieved for both the fantasy-driven and RPA-driven process variables with high composite reliability. Reliability is also demonstrated through low error.

Validity. Content validity was established during the development of the concourse and the Q set. Dr. Hickey, an expert in the subject matter and theoretical

framework of this study, reviewed the concourse and Q set after researcher development in order to ensure that the statements truly reflected the constructs. Criterion validity was addressed by using modified statements or test items found on content-related test instruments or reference books. This assisted the researcher in creating statements for the Q set that were criterion-oriented and sourced from already valid measures associated with assessing stalking, fantasy, violence, paraphilic disorders, and relational attachments. Construct validity associated with the psychological concepts is established in the following sections as the researcher correlates the set of scores with the research hypothesis.

The Research Question

The research question asked, "What drives the stalker to pursue a relationship with their victim, and how do fantasies play into their process?" The factor analysis showed that a fantasy-driven process explains 21% of the explained variance and an RPA-driven process explained 8% of the variance. Consensus statements among the two rotated factors can be identified on the factor visualizations and the factor arrays. The consensus statements ranked positively and highest between both the fantasy-driven process and the RPA-driven process were

- Statement #15: I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try;
- Statement #17: Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life;

- Statement 19: I have done things in my pursuit of a relationship or sexual interest(s) that have led to extended fantasies about those things that I had done;
- Statement 36: I feel like my sexual fantasies have driven my behavior choices at times; and
- Statement 6: Fantasizing about this makes me more creative.

These consensus statements between the fantasy-driven and RPA-driven processes indicate that the stalking process could be driven by the coexistence of sexual fantasy and RPAs.

The Research Hypothesis

Based on the research question, the research hypothesis stated that violent sexual fantasy and RPA work in concert during the process of stalking behavior. The data analysis indicates that the hypothesis was both correct and incorrect. The data analysis indicated that the research hypothesis should be rejected based on the fact that the violence aspect of the sexual fantasy variable did not load highly on the rotated factors. As one of the defined variables was *violent sexual fantasy*, the researcher determined that the results dictated a rejection of the research hypothesis. However, the fantasy-driven process did represent the highest amount of explained variance. The factor array demonstrated that the underlying construct focused on consensual and non-violent aspects of sexual fantasy. Sexual fantasy was still an important variable, even representing the highest amount of explained variance. But the predicted violence characteristic was not indicated as a prevalent quality of this variable.

The research hypothesis did appear to accurately posit that the variables, absent the violent attribute, worked in concert in stalking behavior. The correlation coefficient of factor scores between the fantasy-driven process and the RPA-driven process showed a moderate relationship between the two rotated factors. The consensus statements indicated that the high-loading factors do work in concert in the stalking process. The z-scores lend additional understanding to hypothesis testing. Z-scores are relevant in understanding the idea of making inferences. Salkind (2019) states, "if, through the test of the research hypothesis, we find that the likelihood of an event that occurred is somewhat extreme, then the research hypothesis is a more attractive explanation than is the null" (p. 216). The three highest ranking statements of the highest loading factor (fantasy-driven process) all had z-scores higher than 1.65, which are considered extreme. Statement #3 had a z-score of 2.24, Statement #27 had a z-score of 2.18, and Statement 28 had a z-score of 1.93.

Summary

The results demonstrate two variables presented with high loadings in the factor analysis. After review of the factor arrays and the statement rankings, the underlying concepts were interpreted as a fantasy-driven process and a RPA-driven process. The research question was answered through the Q methodology approach as the underlying concepts aligned with the considered variables. Consensus statements in the high-loading factors provided insight as to the possibility that the variables work in concert during the process of stalking. Based on these results, had the fantasy variable been originally

defined without the violence quality, the researcher would have failed to accept the null hypothesis.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of violent sexual fantasies and RPAs in an offender's process of stalking preselected victims. The functional intention of the study was to examine these variables as possible indicators of imminent threats of violence toward targeted victims. Through a QQI approach, I conducted a Q sort to gather data from community-based convicted stalking offenders with a sexual component to their crimes of conviction. The data analysis and results demonstrated patterns in the participant stalking behavior that focused on a fantasy-driven process and an RPA-driven process.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings extended the knowledge in the discipline of forensic psychology. The findings confirm and expand on the groundwork done by previous researchers mentioned in the literature review. Johnson and Thompson (2016) explicitly stated the need to investigate potential risk factors associated with stalking behaviors among a sample of convicted stalking offenders. This study accomplished this task. Additionally, the convicted stalking offenders who made up the sample were not considered part of a vulnerable population. This meant that I did not place the offenders in a potentially coercive environment because each participant had community-based status at the time of data collection and their recruitment stemmed from only one single contact attempt, sourced from public access state sex offender registries.

Johnson and Thompson (2016) looked at attachment style and motivating factors related to stalking persistence, whereas Dardis and Gidycz (2017) noted the need for future research to expand understanding of behavior patterns by generating context and explicit purposes for the stalking actions. This study broadened our understanding of behavior patterns behind stalking actions. The processing patterns that emerged in the two high-loading factors gave context to the motivating factors behind the behavior. High-loading statements in the factor arrays indicated motivations included the belief that the stalker's person of interest would come around (Statement #23), motivations sourced from overwhelming desires and urges that disrupted the stalker's normal routines (Statement #40), and motivations stemming from ideas they wanted to try that were generated in their sexual fantasies (Statement #15).

Fox and Tokunaga (2015) linked attachment style as a predictor of relational behavior. They framed this association as a factor in comprehending the manner in which the perpetrator experiences the relationship and also whether coping with a relationship's dissolution will be problematic (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). The findings in this study confirmed this suggestion. The factor array for the RPA-driven process (Factor 2) demonstrated high-ranking statements focused on unhealthy coping related to the unwelcomed pursuit of a relationship with their person of interest. Disruptive behavior related to the stalker's own routines was admitted in the highest-ranking statements of this factor. In fact, four of the six highest-ranking statements in this factor array focused on relational behavior and/or attachment. These four statements were as follows:

- Statement #23: I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around;
- Statement #40: In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted;
- Statement #51: I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner; and
- Statement #25: Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing.

Prentky et al. (1989) posited that fantasies could be intrusive and manifest in behavior. Deu and Edelmann (1997) also conducted early work concerning the association between fantasy and premeditated criminal conduct in which they noted the complexity and impulsivity of criminal conduct. More recently McEwan et al. (2017) concluded that their study provided "evidence of the specific role of delusions in prolonging stalking" and suggest a direct association between the stalking behavior of some offenders and severe mental disorders associated with "a psychosis involving erotomanic delusions" (p. 53-54). Although I did not attempt to address psychosis in this dissertation, I did examine violent sexual fantasy along with its possible predictive nature as a driving force of stalking behavior. And the factor interpretation developed from the fantasy-driven process factor (Factor 1) would likely give context to this idea of an erotomanic delusion.

The synthesis of these notions, presented by early and contemporary researchers, suggest that intrusive fantasies could influence the manifestation, premeditation, and prolonging of criminal behavior. This study's findings contribute to this decades-long pursuit of understanding fantasy and its interplay with antisocial behavior. The fantasy-driven process factor (Factor 1) demonstrated the strongest emerging pattern across participants. Ten participant Q sorts loaded on this factor after the Varimax rotation. This means that one-third of all the participants shared subjective viewpoints on this latent construct. The factor interpretation that was developed from the factor array during data analysis highlighted the highest-ranking statements of this factor. Elements of manifestation, premeditation, and prolonged behavior run through the combination of these highest-ranking statements.

Context of the Theoretical Framework

The findings of this study were partially analyzed in the Results section in which factor interpretation was generated from the context of the factor arrays and statement rankings. In review, the two highest loading factors were selected as a two-factor solution and rotated in the data analysis. The rotation assisted in generating a more concise understanding of how the factor characteristics and weighted statement loadings provided weight to the underlying constructs of those two factors. As the factor interpretation developed, the latent concepts of the two factors became defined as fantasy-driven and RPA driven process variables. RPA theory serves much like the rotation step in the data analysis, but from a theoretical perspective.

Dimensionally, the rotation of the factors turns the angle of the axes so that the factors can be viewed without overlap. This provides a clearer and more precise view of complex data by reducing it into a view that highlights the strongest information. RPA theory worked as a theoretical framework for this study in a similar fashion. The application of this framework assisted in fine-tuning the focus of stalking as a behavior product of coinciding complex elements. The framework provided not only a means from which to theoretically connect the variables to the behavior, but also a way to actually define and describe the variables that were examined in this study.

Many research studies in the past, several of which are cited in the literature, have examined stalking related to forms of attachment. But RPA theory provided a more specific framework for investigating psychological aspects of predatory behavior. In describing his theory, Hickey (2017) wrote, "the paraphilic seeks connection with others. These nonconsensual sexual relationships or *relational paraphilic attachments* (RPA) are borne in fantasy and explored in sexually deviant behaviors" (p. 196). Contextually, I can see these concepts reflected in both factor arrays and the factor interpretations.

The high-ranking statements in the Factor 1 array clearly demonstrated that the participants developed relationship ideas in their fantasies. Elements in the statements included the idea of getting into a romantic or sexual relationship with their person of interest, the reconstruction and/or expansion of daily life in their fantasies, and disruptive pursuit behaviors involving tasks or gestures that the participants acknowledged were unwanted. The high-ranking statements in the Factor 2 array highlighted pursuit behavior while also acknowledging that sexual fantasies about the participant's person of

interest has given them ideas of things to try. These high-ranking statements presented elements of relational attachments and paraphilic qualities through their characteristics involving relational and sexual fixations mixed with disruptive behavior.

RPA theory aligned with concepts in my study. As a theory, RPA framed a theoretical understanding of how the variables fit into in the complex behavior of stalking. The theory positioned itself as an appropriate application for an investigation in forensic psychology as it expanded on other attachment and courtship-based theories to include elements of deviant behavior. The contextual alignment with the data analysis results supports the credibility and practical application of this theory to real world offender populations.

Limitations

Limitations to generalizability arose from execution of this study. The lack of demographic data for the sample provides limitations related to descriptive statistics as well as associated inferences or recommendations that could have developed out of this study. For example, the processing patterns among male stalkers could present differently than patterns in females. Recruitment from the participant pool included males and females who met the research criteria, but how many and which of the respondents fell into each gender classification is unknown. Gender classifications could have enabled me to analyze whether the groups of male and female respondents had unique patterns of processing from the other gender group. Additionally, the fantasy and RPA variables could have presented differently among the gender classifications. Not

having a breakdown of this demographic information per respondent prevented this avenue of data analysis and interpretation.

Another limitation pertains to generalizing results to a group of offenders. The researcher acknowledges that participants needed a combination of computer skills and a level of intelligence that provided them the ability to access the study and complete the Q sort. The capacity to complete the study should not discount the thought process and patterns of individuals without this combination of skills that may have prevented them from submitting a completed Q sort. These qualities likely implied that the respondents were younger offenders and those with higher than average intelligence. As this study examined processing patterns, this limitation could have an effect on the generalizability of results toward offenders without the skills to complete the Q sort.

As expected, this study had a low response rate to recruitment efforts. The researcher expected that there existed a great likelihood that some who received the invitation letter would not want to participate. The researcher made a prudent effort to present potential participants with information on the voluntariness, autonomy, and confidentiality structured into the study's design. The researcher expected that due to the sensitive nature of both the topic of study and the situational circumstances of the participants being on the sex offender registries, that some who received the invitation would be hesitant to participate. The participation codes were randomly generated by the software program to provide participants access to the study without the need to identify themselves.

The researcher did not link any identifying information to the random participation codes, but the researcher would find it understandable if participants were hesitant to believe their participation codes were not linked to some form of their identity. The Q Method software is set up with an option for generic access to the study, but this option only works without the capability to limit internet protocol (IP) address to one respondent. Because of this, the researcher opted to incorporate the participation codes to mask participant identities and control access to the study's virtual setting. Consequently, the extra effort put into protecting aspects of autonomy and confidentiality created a possible limitation on participation.

Recommendations

The researcher suggests expanded research on both of the variables defined in this study as well as increased research efforts focusing on the application of RPA theory. This study was one of the first direct application of RPA as a theoretical framework. The application worked as a lens from which to examine these variables and modes of predatory behavior. The results highlighted the strength of the fantasy-driven process in stalking behavior. A number of highly negative loading statements in this predominant factor indicated that the participants did not view their process as involving elements of intrusive or unwanted behavior. This was an interesting observation in the factor array as the participants were convicted of the specific offense behavior that were represented in the statements. The strength of the loading for the fantasy-driven process factor, and the denial of non-consensual conduct, suggests future research could examine how different

types of fantasies play into other types of criminal behavior outside the scope of stalking, such as sexual assault or intimate partner-related violence.

The internet interface used for data collection had benefits of limiting the researcher's involvement and influence on the participants' abilities to respond freely and honestly in the activity. While some may have been apprehensive about participating, responses still came in. The researcher found this encouraging for the future application of Q methodology through virtual application, particularly related to studies that propose recruiting past offenders or other participants that may belong to a disenfranchised group in society. Alternatively, the format of this Q method approach could provide investigative psychologists a new path for examining complex issues presenting in individuals confined to forensic settings. While the violence element of sexual fantasies were not prevalent in these results it would be interesting for future research to expand on this study to incorporate offenders that had demonstrated violent element in their conviction behavior.

As mentioned, the researcher recommends future research of this nature include questions relaying demographic information for the sample. The lack of this data presented a limitation for this study. Future research could include a similar type of study where the same Q set was administered to a set of male offenders fitting the criteria and another to a set of female offenders fitting the criteria so that the perspectives and influences of fantasy and RPAs would reflect if these variables possibly work in concert differently within gender cohorts.

Implications

The researcher found the Q methodology and Q sort applied to this research endeavor to be eye-opening. In the planning stages of the research proposal, the QQI approach presented a unique means of examining patterns in stalker processing while enabling the fantasy and relational attachment variables to ground the focus of the Q set. The proposal to use a Q sort for data collection intrigued the researcher as this method provided for integrating qualitative and quantitative aspects of data collection and analysis. The constructs of this approach aligned appropriately to the research study and research question, lending the researcher confidence in its use. The actual application of the Q sort generated not only valuable information but was also unexpectedly insightful beyond the focus of the research question.

Each respondent's Q sort submission projected a visual display of their mental processing. Prior to the start of the study, the researcher had awareness of how the data collection occurred in a Q sort and expected results that would allow reflection about the research question. What was unexpected to the researcher was the visual effectiveness presented when physically looking at the completed grid arrangements of respondent submissions. Observation of the completed grids were noteworthy on its own merit without the researcher even touching data analysis. It was remarkable to visually see a respondent's thought process physically placed out through the Q set statements.

The completed grids were incredibly interesting to review. While each participant's grid differed from the others, the grid visually showed where they placed the bulk of fantasy and relational attachment statements. It was clear from looking at the

process placed out on the grid when a respondent was influenced by more violent types of sexual fantasies whereas others showed preferences toward consensual and non-violent encounters. It was fascinating for the researcher to be able to visually see patterns by looking at the product of the Q sort. Without any researcher interference during the arrangement of statements on the grid, the participants were able to communicate their behavior processes regarding the variables.

The researcher respected the participants' situational circumstances related to having a prior criminal conviction and subsequent placement on the sex offender registry. The mailed invitation, internet-based data collection procedure, and confidential participation codes intended to collectively minimize, if not eliminate, potential harms for participants related to public awareness of these aspects of their situations. Furthermore, the internet-based activity intended to eliminate personal interaction between the researcher and the participants. Limiting researcher-participant interaction had the purpose of minimizing the perception or feeling of coercion, as well as for respondents to feel able to answer freely and honestly. Participation in this study was meant to be voluntary, confidential, and free of any type of coercive action.

This research design and the implementation of the virtual research setting for the Q sort honored these components of voluntariness, confidentiality, and autonomy. A strength of the design was the fact that there was no researcher involvement during the Q sort. The absence of the researcher during the research activity eliminated researcher influence during the actual data collection. Participants engaged in the activity without needing to manipulate and express sensitive ideas in front of a stranger. With the

minimized effect of researcher presence, the participants had the freedom to express themselves through the veiled comfort provided from the virtual environment. Allowing the participants to have that sense of autonomy in the distance-based environment while manipulating information about sensitive topics provided a venue for honest and reflective Q sort responses.

The Q sort's virtual research setting created through the internet interface also presented positive implications for research. Studies employing Q methodology do not require a virtual setting. However, implications from this study demonstrate that using an internet interface for the application of this methodology could be particularly beneficial for future studies that focus on other sensitive subject matters. Additionally, researchers looking to recruit participants from stigmatized populations may benefit from the autonomy and openness provided by the combination of this setting and methodology.

The Q sort also provided multiple avenues for data analysis. Not only does the Q sort allow for factor analysis to examine if patterns exist across the participants' processes, but the variables can be examined through z-scores. The z-scores assisted in providing more insight for hypothesis testing. generated by their coordinating statements represented in the Q set. Data analysis on the Q sort provided for numerous levels of assessment including statement factor scores, factor characteristics, a correlation matrix, rank statement totals, distinguishing statements, and consensus statements. This methodology allows for multi-dimensional data analysis. Future research studies that seek to examine complex and multi-dimensional issues could benefit from exploring the use of Q sort in the research design.

Positive Social Change

This research study could positively impact social change on an individual level for victims and for offenders. An intended benefit of this study was to better understand high-risk behaviors and potentially identify and reduce these behaviors that could lead to future violence. This study could benefit victims of stalking behavior. The factor interpretations could provide insight to victims for identifying patterns of expressed and unwanted sexual fantasy or relational pursuit behavior directed toward them. This study could benefit future offenders if advancing our understanding of stalking behaviors leads to developments in offender programs and rehabilitation efforts.

Positive social change related to this study could also be reflected within the criminal justice system. A benefit of this study could be that legal decision makers better understand how to apply behaviors to laws. Legal decision makers the results of this study could help include those tasked with enforcing and interpreting the law. Police officers face decisions in the field pertaining to whether elements of stalking crimes are strong enough for an arrest just as criminal district and federal attorneys face decisions on what legal cases to move forward to trial. Jury members face weighing a judgement on criminal conduct against often confusing and difficult legal statutes related to stalking that tend to be somewhat subjective in most jurisdictions. The results of this study do not solve any of those problems. But the results do provide insight directly from convicted stalking offenders about patterns in how some of them moved through their stalking processes. The resulting factor interpretations for the fantasy-driven process and RPA-

driven process could assist these legal decision makers in their respective roles as they work to decipher the behavior presented to them.

An additional yet not out of reach implication for positive social change involves the application to policy and legal statutes. Sex offender registries are not the only type of state lists maintained on dangerous behavior. For example, the State of Minnesota has a predatory offender registry in addition to their state sex offender registry. Minnesota Statute § 609.108 (2005) provides for mandatory increased sentences for certain patterned and predatory sex offenders. No prior conviction is required but the *factfinder* needs to determine that the offender is a danger to public safety. The factor interpretations could help those working with these types of laws and registries to better understand the offender pathways of stalkers. With the ability to better identify patterns of stalking behavior, they could then use that understanding in the articulation and application of their work.

Conclusion

The introduction to this study recognized stalking as an offense often found in the dark figure of criminal behavior statistics. Providing context that stalking often becomes a lesser and included offense with other elements of criminal conduct highlights discrepancies with how often predatory behavior occurs. Further complications exist regarding jurisdictional and subjective interpretations of stalking behavior. This study sought to better understand this behavior by investigating the offender pathways of stalkers from a psychological perspective. Violent sexual fantasies and RPA were investigated as possible driving variables of the stalking conduct. The processing

patterns that emerged in the results indicated that the stalking process could be driven by elements of sexual fantasy and RPAs. This study adds to the field of forensic psychology as it informs on the driving forces at work in the behavior processing of convicted stalking offenders.

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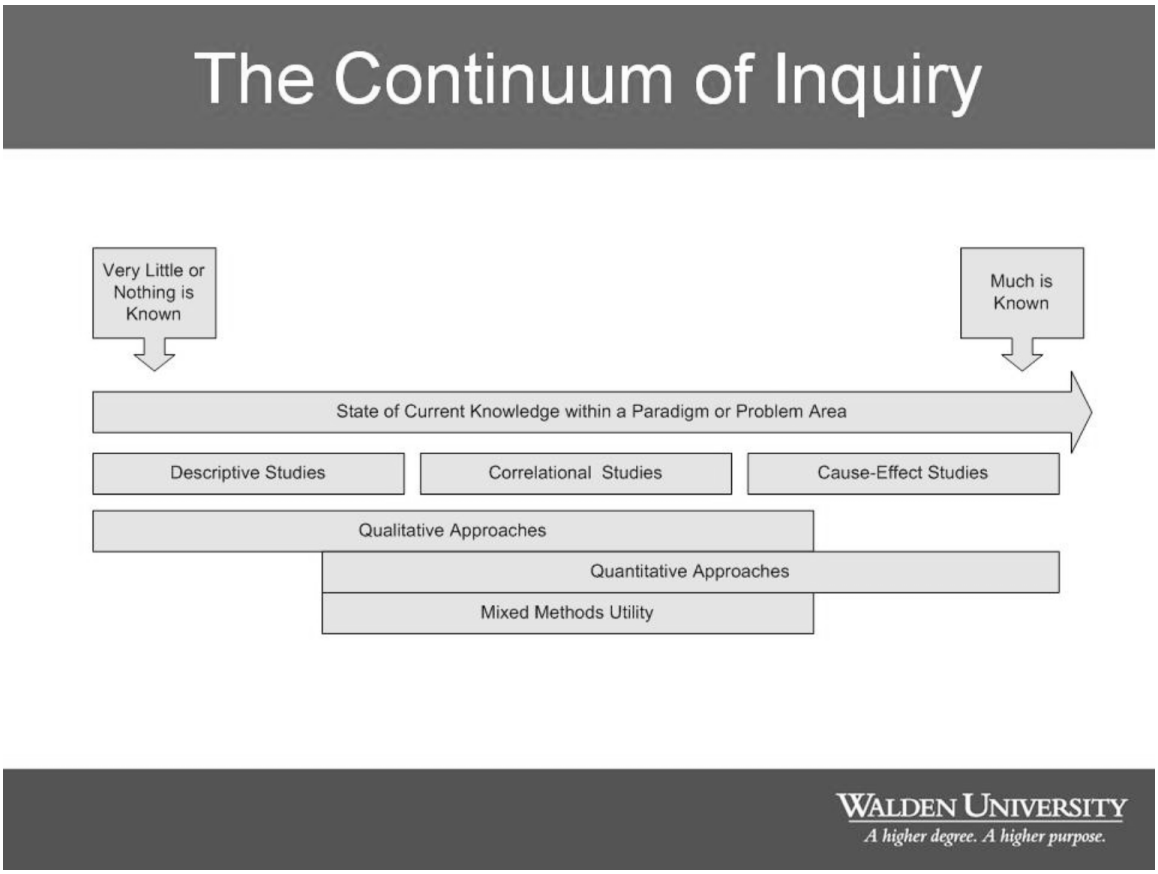
Appendix A: Key Search Terms

Key search terms and combinations of search terms used during the scope of the literature search included:

- Stalk* (to include stalk, stalking, stalker, stalked)
- Fantasy
- Paraphilia or Paraphil*
- Attachment
- Violence or Violen*
- Aggression
- Interpersonal relations
- Interpersonal violence
- Sexualized attachment
- Criminology
- Sexual deviance
- Stalk and Unwanted pursuit
- Stalk* *and* Perpetrators *or* Offenders
- Stalk* *and* Violen*
- Stalk* *and* laws
- Attachment *and* Paraphil* *and* relation*
- Attachment and Stalk* and Sexual motivation
- Object relational pursuit (ORI)
- Relational Pursuit-Pursuer

Appendix B: Continuum of Inquiry



Appendix C: Concourse

Instrument Code Key

(DSM-V) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

(FES) Fantasy Engagement Scale

(ICBS) Inappropriate Courtship Behaviors Scale

(RelRQ) Relational Rumination Questionnaire

(SBS) Stalking-like Behavior Scale

(SDEQ) Sexual Dream Experience Questionnaire

(VSIQ) Violent Sexual Interest Questionnaire

Researcher-Generated Concourse with Associated Instrument Codes

	Statement	Instrument Code
1	Thoughts about how to find a partner plague my mind	RelRQ
2	I think about how to find a romantic relationship to avoid ending up alone	RelRQ
3	I keep on wondering why my friends have romantic relationship and I don't	RelRQ
4	Thoughts about why I am not in a relationship pop into my head without me wanted them to	RelRQ
5	I think of strategies to get into a romantic relationship over and over again	RelRQ
6	I fantasize about being in a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest	
7	Sexual dreams can make me excited	SDEQ
8	Fantasizing about this has helped me become a better person	FES
9	Fantasizing about this has had a positive effect on my life	FES
10	Fantasizing about this makes me more creative	FES
11	Fantasizing about this helps me express myself	FES
12	My fantasies about this have been the source of a lot of problems in my life	FES
13	Important people in my life have told me that my fantasizing about this is problematic	FES
14	My fantasies about this have interfered with my relationships	FES
15	My interest in this fantasy has caused problems with me and my family	FES
16	I will expect to have sexual dreams	SDEQ

17	I feel lucky to have sexual dreams	SDEQ
18	I am passionate about having sexual dreams	SDEQ
19	I feel pity after waking up from a sexual dream because I find that it was just a dream	SDEQ
20	After waking up from a sexual dream, I try to continue it in imagination	SDEQ
21	I will feel very angry when I am wakened up from a sexual dream	SDEQ
22	I have never had sexual fantasies about a person I was romantically or sexually interested in	
23	People appearing in my dreams are always whom I like	SDEQ
24	People appearing in my sexual dreams are always familiar to me	SDEQ
25	I only have sexual fantasies about strangers, not anyone I have actually met	
26	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try	
27	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try that I have then attempted in person	
28	Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life	SDEQ
29	I have never tried to act on any sexual fantasies I have had	
30	I have done things in my pursuit of a relationship or sexual interest(s) that have led to extended fantasies about those things that I had done	
31	I feel guilty and ashamed about having sexual dreams	SDEQ
32	I feel upset about having sexual dreams	SDEQ
33	There are circumstances of hugging and kissing in my sexual dreams	SDEQ
34	The sexual partner in my dreams is usually my lover	SDEQ
35	The place in my sexual dreams is always familiar to me	SDEQ
36	I dreamed about meeting my ex-lover once in my sexual dream	SDEQ
37	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have fantasized about them recognizing me as the successful, powerful, special, person who is their ideal love	DSM-V, Narcissistic
38	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt frustrated that I was not treated with the respect I deserved	DSM-V, Narcissistic
39	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt myself go back and forth between being really happy and really unhappy with my person of interest or the relationship potential	DSM-V, Borderline
40	I think over and over again about how to re-establish the relationship with my ex-partner	RelRQ
41	I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around	
42	I tried to talk to a person of interest when it seemed they did not want me to	SBS
43	Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing	RelRQ
44	I wish I could stop thinking about my ex-partner(s), but I can't	RelRQ
45	In response to the stress of unfulfilled romantic or sexual interests, I found myself unable to adjust back to my normal routines	DSM-V – Adjustment disorders
46	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about a person and me having consensual sexual intercourse together	VSIQ
47	My sexual fantasies have only included consensual encounters	

48	My sexual fantasies have included both consensual and non-consensual encounters	
49	My sexual fantasies have included mostly non-consensual interactions with my person of interest	DSM-V, Paraphilic
50	There was a sexual maltreatment once in my dreams	SDEQ
51	My sexual fantasies sometimes include violence	
52	My sexual fantasies usually include rough or violent acts	
53	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about inflicting pain or humiliating a person against their will	VSIQ
54	It sexually arouses me to fantasize to be humiliated or inflicted pain on by a person at my own demand	VSIQ
55	I often sexually maltreat others in my dreams	SDEQ
56	I am often sexually maltreated in my dreams	SDEQ
57	I dreamed about animals once in my sexual dreams	SDEQ
58	My sexual dreams always go along with violence	SDEQ
59	I dreamed about being raped once in my sexual dreams	SDEQ
60	Sometimes in my sexual dreams, I sex in public places, such as theater, square, and so on	SDEQ
61	My sexual fantasies usually come first and then I try to find a way to meet someone	
62	I feel like my sexual fantasies have driven my behavior choices at times	
63	I feel like my behavior or interactions with others comes first and that leads to my sexual fantasies	
64	I usually need a real-life experience with someone I am interested in to have a sexual fantasy	
65	There was no sexual contact with a person of interest that I pursued a relationship with	
66	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted	DSM-V, Paraphilic
67	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments	DSM-V, Paraphilic
68	I am afraid of having sexual dreams, for example, afraid of losing control in my real life	SDEQ
69	I sometimes hope to immerse myself in a sexual dream and never wake up	SDEQ
70	I followed someone or spied on someone without them knowing	SBS
71	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by trying to contact them repeatedly	SBS
72	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by making romantic gestures like buying them unnecessary gifts	SBS
73	I imagine my partner cheating on me even though I don't want to	RelRQ
74	Nagging doubts about my partner's faithfulness pop up in my mind	RelRQ
75	Thoughts about my partner cheating on me stress me out	RelRQ
76	I get caught up in imagining scenarios in which my partner would cheat on me	RelRQ
77	The thought of my partner sleeping with someone else crosses my mind	RelRQ
78	I go over and over the reasons why my relationship(s) with my ex-partner(s) ended	RelRQ
79	I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner	RelRQ

80	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I persistently pursued them in a way that could be perceived as threatening	ICBS
81	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I made threats	
82	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I made comments or gestures they thought were inappropriate	ICBS
83	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I repeatedly ignored laws or social norms, was impulsive, disregarded my own or others safety, was aggressive, or ignored my other responsibilities	
84	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I stole or damaged their property	ICBS
85	When I damaged a person of interest's belongings out of frustration, I chose something that they loved to damage	SBS
86	I threatened to hurt a person of interest or myself if they did not pay attention to me	SBS
87	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt irritable or had difficulty controlling my anger as a reaction to feeling or fear that they were going to abandon me	DSM-V, Borderline
88	In my attempts to pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest, I have noticed the intensity and frequency of my fantasies, urges, and/or behaviors seemed much more intense or different than my past sexual interests	DSM-V, Paraphilic
89	I was sexually aroused while inflicting pain or humiliating someone against their will	VSIQ
90	I was sexually aroused while inflicting pain or humiliating a consenting person	VSIQ
91	I was sexually aroused while being humiliated or by having pain inflicted on me at my own demand	VSIQ
92	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I engaged in violent behavior	

Appendix D: Q Set

Q Set With Corresponding Statement Numbers Used in Factor Analysis

Statement Number	Statement
1	I think about how to find a romantic relationship to avoid ending up alone
2	I think of strategies to get into a romantic relationship over and over again
3	I fantasize about being in a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest
4	Sexual dreams can make me excited
5	Fantasizing about this has had a positive effect on my life
6	Fantasizing about this makes me more creative
7	Fantasizing about this helps me express myself
8	My fantasies about this have been the source of a lot of problems in my life
9	Important people in my life have told me that my fantasizing about this is problematic
10	My fantasies about this have interfered with my relationships
11	I have never had sexual fantasies about a person I was romantically or sexually interested in
12	People appearing in my dreams are always whom I like
13	People appearing in my sexual dreams are always familiar to me
14	I only have sexual fantasies about strangers, not anyone I have actually met
15	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try
16	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try that I have then attempted in person
17	Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life
18	I have never tried to act on any sexual fantasies I have had
19	I have done things in my pursuit of a relationship or sexual interest(s) that have led to extended fantasies about those things that I had done
20	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have fantasized about them recognizing me as the successful, powerful, special, person who is their ideal love
21	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt frustrated that I was not treated with the respect I deserved
22	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt myself go back and forth between being really happy

	and really unhappy with my person of interest or the relationship potential
23	I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around
24	I tried to talk to a person of interest when it seemed they did not want me to
25	Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing
26	In response to the stress of unfulfilled romantic or sexual interests, I found myself unable to adjust back to my normal routines
27	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about a person and me having consensual sexual intercourse together
28	My sexual fantasies have only included consensual encounters
29	My sexual fantasies have included mostly non-consensual interactions with my person of interest
30	There was a sexual maltreatment once in my dreams
31	My sexual fantasies sometimes include violence
32	My sexual fantasies usually include rough or violent acts
33	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about inflicting pain or humiliating a person against their will
34	It sexually arouses me to fantasize to be humiliated or inflicted pain on by a person at my own demand
35	My sexual fantasies usually come first and then I try to find a way to meet someone
36	I feel like my sexual fantasies have driven my behavior choices at times
37	I feel like my behavior or interactions with others comes first and that leads to my sexual fantasies.
38	I usually need a real-life experience with someone I am interested in to have a sexual fantasy.
39	There was no sexual contact with a person of interest that I pursued a relationship with.
40	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted
41	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments
42	I am afraid of having sexual dreams, for example, afraid of losing control in my real life
43	I sometimes hope to immerse myself in a sexual dream and never wake up
44	I followed someone or spied on someone without them knowing
45	I tried to get a person of interest’s attention by trying to contact them repeatedly

46	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by making romantic gestures like buying them unnecessary gifts
47	Nagging doubts about my partner's faithfulness pop up in my mind
48	Thoughts about my partner cheating on me stress me out
49	I get caught up in imagining scenarios in which my partner would cheat on me
50	I go over and over the reasons why my relationship(s) with my ex-partner(s) ended
51	I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner
52	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I persistently pursued them in a way that could be perceived as threatening
53	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I made threats
54	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I made comments or gestures they thought were inappropriate
55	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I repeatedly ignored laws or social norms, was impulsive, disregarded my own or others safety, was aggressive, or ignored my other responsibilities. I experienced this but I had good reason to act the way I did.
56	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I stole or damaged their property
57	When I damaged a person of interest's belongings out of frustration, I chose something that they loved to damage
58	I threatened to hurt a person of interest or myself if they did not pay attention to me
59	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt irritable or had difficulty controlling my anger as a reaction to feeling or fear that they were going to abandon me
60	In my attempts to pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest, I have noticed the intensity and frequency of my fantasies, urges, and/or behaviors seemed much more intense or different than my past sexual interests

Appendix E: Correlation Matrix of the Participants

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD
A	100	-4	16	30	20	41	-20	15	-1	-5	10	0	19	20	-2	2	-3	29	36	15	37	30	26	31	26	-2	25	20	4	9
B	-4	100	15	16	25	2	-3	28	32	-10	3	24	11	2	14	-6	-6	19	13	20	7	15	-25	-22	5	-7	-2	6	-5	11
C	16	15	100	35	28	40	25	33	36	10	32	14	20	-21	3	-21	-3	45	26	45	32	29	4	22	18	-11	19	8	15	12
D	30	16	35	100	18	41	26	35	22	-14	10	29	37	20	3	-25	-12	46	36	31	28	34	26	41	16	-1	45	30	17	19
E	20	25	28	18	100	10	2	17	8	13	-7	5	3	5	3	-27	3	16	19	36	31	32	9	-11	-6	-5	14	4	11	12
F	41	2	40	41	10	100	-3	39	36	4	25	-8	44	1	2	-1	6	22	26	15	31	27	16	17	10	9	30	27	5	14
G	-20	-3	25	26	2	-3	100	20	28	17	25	15	24	1	21	-3	-16	22	-17	12	17	-1	16	13	-12	9	9	-10	-4	-10
H	15	28	33	35	17	39	20	100	52	16	28	18	43	-4	20	-9	3	21	38	35	38	38	24	15	11	20	21	13	-12	-1
I	-1	32	36	22	8	36	28	52	100	21	33	13	31	9	-7	-18	3	21	28	14	26	28	9	18	-1	20	3	12	-10	-6
J	-5	-10	10	-14	13	4	17	16	21	100	25	-5	0	-10	14	-4	14	5	-2	14	13	6	11	-4	1	26	11	-3	5	7
K	10	3	32	10	-7	25	15	28	33	25	100	-9	35	16	0	-6	-5	29	13	5	25	39	19	27	20	-18	9	23	-9	22
L	0	24	14	29	5	-8	15	18	13	-5	-9	100	14	17	-4	20	2	43	21	53	18	17	11	23	11	-12	9	30	2	13
M	19	11	20	37	3	44	24	43	31	0	35	14	100	11	11	5	-22	28	13	13	29	31	33	16	6	-3	8	17	12	22
N	20	2	-21	20	5	1	-21	-4	9	-10	16	17	11	100	-33	-4	15	16	34	10	14	32	12	25	19	18	8	17	12	18
O	-2	14	3	3	3	2	21	20	-7	14	0	-4	11	-33	100	18	2	3	-15	2	-10	-10	-3	-24	-5	-2	-2	-27	-8	-2
P	2	-6	-21	-25	-27	-1	-3	-9	-18	-4	-6	20	5	-4	18	100	-11	-2	-13	3	0	-12	-10	-11	9	-7	-13	-3	-3	-20
Q	-3	-6	-3	-12	3	6	-16	-14	3	14	-5	2	-22	15	2	-11	100	-21	16	-8	-17	5	3	9	16	-7	17	15	15	20
R	29	19	45	46	16	22	22	36	21	5	29	43	28	16	3	-2	-21	100	45	68	35	49	30	46	25	-10	32	9	-13	24
S	36	13	26	36	19	26	-17	38	28	-2	13	21	13	34	-15	-13	16	45	100	47	36	56	36	40	16	23	30	35	8	20
T	15	20	45	31	36	15	12	35	14	14	5	53	13	10	2	3	-8	68	47	100	33	40	19	27	16	-1	28	14	19	17
U	37	7	32	28	31	31	17	38	26	13	25	18	29	14	32	-10	-17	35	36	33	100	49	32	23	-14	-3	14	17	5	4
V	30	15	29	34	32	27	-1	38	28	6	39	17	31	32	-10	-12	5	49	56	40	49	100	45	42	-4	11	17	27	-6	39
W	26	-25	4	26	9	16	16	24	9	11	19	11	33	12	-3	-10	3	30	36	19	32	45	100	30	-7	24	17	45	-5	38
X	31	-22	22	41	-11	17	13	15	18	1	27	16	16	25	-24	-11	9	46	40	27	23	42	30	100	11	-11	24	31	-15	30
Y	26	5	18	16	-6	10	-12	11	-1	1	20	9	19	19	-5	9	16	25	16	16	-14	-4	-7	11	100	8	32	7	15	-8
Z	-2	-7	-11	-1	-5	9	-15	20	-1	26	9	-12	16	-2	-2	-7	17	-10	23	-1	-3	11	24	-11	8	100	-6	3	7	4
AA	25	-2	19	45	14	30	9	21	3	11	-18	9	8	8	-2	-13	17	32	30	28	14	17	17	24	32	-6	100	13	10	14
AB	20	6	8	30	4	27	-10	13	12	-3	21	23	30	17	-27	-3	15	9	35	14	17	27	45	31	7	3	13	100	5	37
AC	4	-5	15	17	11	5	-4	-12	-10	5	-9	2	-9	12	-8	3	15	-13	8	19	5	-6	-5	-15	15	7	10	5	100	6
AD	9	11	12	19	12	14	-10	-1	-6	7	22	-9	22	18	-2	-20	20	24	20	17	4	39	38	30	-8	4	14	37	6	100

Appendix F: Statement Factor Z-Scores with Corresponding Ranks

Statement Number	Factor 1 (Fantasy-Driven Process)		Factor 2 (RPA-Driven Process)	
	Z-score	Rank	Z-score	Rank
1	1.33	7	0.4	20
2	0.08	30	0.38	23
3	2.24	1	0.31	25
4	1.77	4	0.18	32
5	-0.22	34	-1.48	53
6	0.56	17	0.87	13
7	0.07	31	0.39	22
8	-0.68	46	-0.85	47
9	-0.31	35	-0.7	44
10	0.3	22	0.15	34
11	-0.64	45	-2.27	60
12	1.37	5	0.58	18
13	1.15	9	-0.11	36
14	-0.7	47	-2.11	59
15	1.35	6	1.32	5
16	0.74	14	-0.23	39
17	1.27	8	1.79	1
18	-0.53	40	-1.76	58
19	0.73	15	0.68	16
20	0.54	18	0.36	24
21	0.19	25	1.15	9
22	-0.47	38	0.67	17
23	-0.63	44	1.64	2
24	-0.35	36	-0.31	41
25	-0.47	37	1.32	6
26	-0.51	39	0.46	19
27	2.18	2	1.31	7
28	1.93	3	1.28	8
29	-1.35	54	-1.56	55
30	-1.44	55	-0.91	49
31	-1.33	53	-0.94	50
32	-1.51	57	-0.39	42
33	-1.76	60	-1.37	52
34	-0.78	49	-1.6	56
35	0.14	28	-0.55	43
36	0.52	19	1.01	11

(table continues)

Statement Number	Factor 1 (Fantasy-Driven Process)		Factor 2 (RPA-Driven Process)	
	Z-score	Rank	Z-score	Rank
37	0.79	13	0.03	35
38	0.99	10	-1.49	54
39	0.25	23	-0.29	40
40	0.19	26	1.45	3
41	-0.21	33	0.19	31
42	-1.02	50	-0.73	45
43	-0.08	32	0.26	27
44	-0.73	48	0.7	14
45	0.11	29	0.29	26
46	0.98	11	0.19	30
47	0.73	16	-0.19	38
48	0.44	20	-0.14	37
49	-0.54	42	0.16	33
50	0.15	27	0.4	21
51	0.87	12	1.34	4
52	-1.56	58	0.68	15
53	-1.16	51	-0.86	48
54	-0.53	41	-0.78	46
55	0.24	24	0.26	28
56	-1.21	52	-1.63	57
57	-1.5	56	0.99	12
58	-1.7	59	-1.19	51
59	-0.61	43	0.24	29
60	0.31	21	1.02	10

Note. Positive z-scores represent a location in the distribution to the right of the mean. Negative z-scores indicate a location in the distribution to the left of the mean. A z-score above ±1.65 falls in a location at the extreme ends of the distribution (5% of less) indicating a small chance of occurrence as compared to other scores (Salkind, 2017).

Appendix G: Factor Array for Factor 1 (Fantasy-Driven Process)

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 1	Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	Factor 2
3	I fantasize about being in a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest	6	D*	1
27	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about a person and me having consensual sexual intercourse together	6	D*	4
28	My sexual fantasies have only included consensual encounters	6	D	4
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher in Factor 1 Array than in Other Factor Arrays			
4	Sexual dreams can make me excited	5	D*	0
12	People appearing in my dreams are always whom I like	5	D*	2
15	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try	5	C*	5
1	I think about how to find a romantic relationship to avoid ending up alone	4	D*	2
13	People appearing in my sexual dreams are always familiar to me	4	D*	-1
38	I usually need a real-life experience with someone I am interested in to have a sexual fantasy.	4	D*	-4
46	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by making romantic gestures like buying them unnecessary gifts	3	D*	0
37	I feel like my behavior or interactions with others comes first and that leads to my sexual fantasies.	3	D*	-1
16	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try that I have then attempted in person	3	D*	-1
19	I have done things in my pursuit of a relationship or sexual interest(s) that have led to extended fantasies about those things that I had done	3	C*	2
47	Nagging doubts about my partner's faithfulness pop up in my mind	2	D*	-1
20	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have fantasized about them recognizing me as the successful, powerful, special, person who is their ideal love	2	C*	1
48	Thoughts about my partner cheating on me stress me out	2	D	-1

(table continues)

	Positive Statements Ranked Higher in Factor 1 Array than in Other Factor Arrays	Factor 1	Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	Factor 2
10	My fantasies about this have interfered with my relationships	1	C*	-1
39	There was no sexual contact with a person of interest that I pursued a relationship with	1	D	-2
55	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I repeatedly ignored laws or social norms, was impulsive, disregarded my own or others safety, was aggressive, or ignored my other responsibilities. I experienced this but I had good reason to act the way I did	1	C*	0
35	My sexual fantasies usually come first and then I try to find a way to meet someone	0	D	-2
41	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments	0	C*	0
	Negative Statements Ranked Lower in Factor 1 Array than in Other Factor Arrays			
45	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by trying to contact them repeatedly	0	C*	1
2	I think of strategies to get into a romantic relationship over and over again	0	C*	1
7	Fantasizing about this helps me express myself	0	C*	1
43	I sometimes hope to immerse myself in a sexual dream and never wake up	0	C*	1
41	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments	0	C*	0
25	Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing	-1	D*	5
22	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt myself go back and forth between being really happy and really unhappy with my person of interest or the relationship potential	-1	D*	2
26	In response to the stress of unfulfilled romantic or sexual interests, I found myself unable to adjust back to my normal routines	-1	D*	2
49	I get caught up in imagining scenarios in which my partner would cheat on me	-2	D*	0
59	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt irritable or had difficulty controlling my anger as a reaction to feeling or fear that they were going to abandon me	-2	D*	0

(table continues)

	Negative Statements Ranked Lower in Factor 1 Array than in Other Factor Arrays	Factor 1	Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	Factor 2
23	I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around	-2	D*	6
8	My fantasies about this have been the source of a lot of problems in my life	-3	C*	-3
44	I followed someone or spied on someone without them knowing	-3	D*	3
42	I am afraid of having sexual dreams, for example, afraid of losing control in my real life	-3	C*	-2
53	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I made threats	-4	C*	-3
31	My sexual fantasies sometimes include violence	-4	C*	-3
30	There was a sexual maltreatment once in my dreams	-5	D	-3
57	When I damaged a person of interest's belongings out of frustration, I chose something that they loved to damage	-5	D*	3
32	My sexual fantasies usually include rough or violent acts	-5	D*	-2
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
52	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I persistently pursued them in a way that could be perceived as threatening	-6	D*	3
58	I threatened to hurt a person of interest or myself if they did not pay attention to me	-6	C*	-4
33	It sexually arouses me to fantasize about inflicting pain or humiliating a person against their will	-6	C*	-4

Note. * Distinguishing statements significance threshold $p < 0.05$

Appendix H: Factor Array for Factor 2 (RPA-Driven Process)

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 2	Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	Factor 1
17	Sexual dreams can reconstruct the scene in my daily life	6	C*	4
23	I knew someone did not want my romantic gifts/continued gestures, but I continued to do them because I thought they would come around	6	D*	-2
40	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have gotten so focused on my desires and urges that my normal routines are disrupted	6	D*	1
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher in Factor 2 Array than in Other Factor Arrays			
51	I think about how I should have prevented the break-up with an ex-partner	5	C*	3
15	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try	5	C*	5
25	Thoughts about my ex-partner(s) distract me from other things I should be doing	5	D*	-1
21	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt frustrated that I was not treated with the respect I deserved	4	D*	1
60	In my attempts to pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with my person of interest, I have noticed the intensity and frequency of my fantasies, urges, and/or behaviors seemed much more intense or different than my past sexual interests	4	D*	2
36	I feel like my sexual fantasies have driven my behavior choices at times	3	C*	2
57	When I damaged a person of interest's belongings out of frustration, I chose something that they loved to damage	3	D*	-5
6	Fantasizing about this makes me more creative	3	C*	2
44	I followed someone or spied on someone without them knowing	3	D*	-3
52	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with a person of interest I persistently pursued them in a way that could be perceived as threatening	3	D*	-6

(table continues)

			Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	
Positive Statements Ranked Higher in Factor 2 Array than in Other Factor Arrays		Factor 1		Factor 2
22	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt myself go back and forth between being really happy and really unhappy with my person of interest or the relationship potential	2	D*	-1
26	In response to the stress of unfulfilled romantic or sexual interests, I found myself unable to adjust back to my normal routines	2	D*	-1
50	I go over and over the reasons why my relationship(s) with my ex-partner(s) ended	2	C*	1
7	Fantasizing about this helps me express myself	1	C*	0
2	I think of strategies to get into a romantic relationship over and over again	1	C*	0
45	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by trying to contact them repeatedly	1	C*	0
43	I sometimes hope to immerse myself in a sexual dream and never wake up	1	C*	0
59	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I have felt irritable or had difficulty controlling my anger as a reaction to feeling or fear that they were going to abandon me	0	D*	-2
41	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments	0	C*	0
49	I get caught up in imagining scenarios in which my partner would cheat on me	0	D*	-2
Negative Statements Ranked Lower in Factor 2 Array than in Other Factor Arrays				
55	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest, I repeatedly ignored laws or social norms, was impulsive, disregarded my own or others safety, was aggressive, or ignored my other responsibilities. I experienced this but I had good reason to act the way I did	0	C*	1
46	I tried to get a person of interest's attention by making romantic gestures like buying them unnecessary gifts	0	D*	3
41	My manifested sexual fantasies or urges have created problems or continued disruptions in my social or work environments	0	C*	0
4	Sexual dreams can make me excited	0	D*	5
10	My fantasies about this have interfered with my relationships	-1	C*	1

(table continues)

	Negative Statements Ranked Lower in Factor 2 Array than in Other Factor Arrays	Factor 1	Consensus and Distinguishing Statements	Factor 2
37	I feel like my behavior or interactions with others comes first and that leads to my sexual fantasies.	-1	D*	3
13	People appearing in my sexual dreams are always familiar to me	-1	D*	4
48	Thoughts about my partner cheating on me stress me out	-1	D	2
47	Nagging doubts about my partner's faithfulness pop up in my mind	-1	D*	2
16	I have had sexual fantasies about my person of interest that have given me ideas of things I would like to try that I have then attempted in person	-1	D*	3
39	There was no sexual contact with a person of interest that I pursued a relationship with	-2	D	1
24	I tried to talk to a person of interest when it seemed they did not want me to	-2	C*	-1
35	My sexual fantasies usually come first and then I try to find a way to meet someone	-2	D	0
9	Important people in my life have told me that my fantasizing about this is problematic	-2	C*	-1
54	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I made comments or gestures they thought were inappropriate	-3	C*	-2
8	My fantasies about this have been the source of a lot of problems in my life	-3	C*	-3
5	Fantasizing about this has had a positive effect on my life	-4	D*	-1
38	I usually need a real-life experience with someone I am interested in to have a sexual fantasy.	-4	D*	4
29	My sexual fantasies have included mostly non-consensual interactions with my person of interest	-5	C*	-4
34	It sexually arouses me to fantasize to be humiliated or inflicted pain on by a person at my own demand	-5	D*	-3
56	In my attempts to pursue a romantic relationship with my person of interest I stole or damaged their property	-5	C*	-4
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
18	I have never tried to act on any sexual fantasies I have had	-6	D*	-2
14	I only have sexual fantasies about strangers, not anyone I have actually met	-6	D*	-3
11	I have never had sexual fantasies about a person I was romantically or sexually interested in	-6	D*	-2

Note. * Distinguishing statements significance threshold $p < 0.05$