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Adolescent versus Adult Stalking: A Brief Review

Karl Roberts¹, Marina Tolou-Shams^{1,2,3}, and Kaila Madera²

¹Western Sydney University, School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Sydney Australia

²Bradley Hasbro Children's Research Center, Rhode Island Hospital ³The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

Abstract

This practice update considers adolescent stalking. Adolescent stalking is an area of research that deserves further study given findings from the adult stalking literature that suggest significant public health and legal consequences associated with these behaviors. However, very little is known about this phenomenon, its potential differentiation from adolescent dating violence and/or bullying and directions to take for future research. A comprehensive review across 5 scientific databases yielded a total of 9 peer-reviewed manuscripts incorporating varying sample sizes and adolescent populations. A synthesis of existing research suggests that adolescent stalking exists at levels at least as high as that documented among adults but appears to have some notable differences (e.g., behavioral patterns, risk factors) from stalking behaviors among adults. To date, there exists no published representative population-based study of adolescent stalking behaviors and its health and legal consequences. Future research is needed to determine accurate prevalence statistics and to differentiate characteristics and public health impact of adolescent stalking from dating violence and/or bullying.

Introduction

Despite research demonstrating that adult stalking is a significant social problem (Black et al, 2011) causing significant health and economic problems for its victims (Diette, Goldsmith, Hamilton, Darity, & McFarland, 2013; Iverson et al., 2012; Logan & Walker, 2006, Fleming et al, 2012; Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009) relatively little is known about stalking of adolescents. We therefore conducted a review of existing, peer-reviewed, published studies on adolescent stalking to begin to inform the field about distinctions between adolescent and adult stalking and to move the field forward with respect to future research in this area. For the purposes of this paper we were interested in stalking in which adolescents were the victim, we labeled this *adolescent stalking* to differentiate it from adult stalking – stalking where the victim was an adult. We begin our review by defining stalking and adolescence before summarizing what is known about adult stalking. We then describe the methodology used in our review and explore literature on adolescent stalking. We

Contact Information: Karl Roberts, Ph.D., Western Sydney University, James Ruse Drive, Parramatta NSW 2150, Australia, +61 2 9852 5222; karl.roberts@westernsydney.edu.au. Marina Tolou-Shams, Ph.D., and Kaila Madera, B.A.: Bradley/Hasbro Children's Research Center, One Hoppin Street, Suite 204, Providence RI 02903; Phone (401) 444-8539; Fax (401) 444-4645; mtoloushams@lifespan.org.

conclude by contrasting findings on adult and adolescent stalking, discuss the implications of findings for forensic practice and suggest ideas for further research.

Definitions of Stalking and Adolescence—Stalking can be defined as a course of conduct consisting of unwanted attention directed by one individual towards another that induces fear in the victim (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000). In the stalking literature, ‘adulthood’ has generally been defined according to various legal definitions and so an adult stalker is generally anyone aged eighteen years or over (Mullen, et al., 2000) ‘Adolescence’ is typically described by three stages (early, mid, late) that are generally considered to start with the onset of puberty and to end at adulthood (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Researchers on childhood aggression have tended to identify twelve years as the cut-off age that separates childhood from adolescence (Leitz & Theriot, 2005) and so following them, for our review adolescence is defined from ages 13–17 years.

Adult Stalking Literature

Rates of Adult Stalking—In the United States among adults the annual rate of stalking victimization has remained relatively stable at between 1.4 to 1.5% (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998; Baum et al, 2009; Black et al, 2011; Catalano, 2012) of the adult population. These figures are similar to the annual prevalence rates of victimization for violent victimization for adults aged between 18 to 34 in the United States, 1.6% (ages 18 to 24), 1.5% (ages 25 to 34) and are less than the rate of property crime victimization which was 9% for 2013 and 8% for 2014 (Truman and Langton, 2015). It appears females are more likely to be victimized than males (annual prevalence of 4.3% compared to 1.3% for males; Black et al., 2011). Lifetime prevalence rates from the United States show that 1 in 6 adult women (16.7%) and 1 in 19 adult men (5.2%) report being a victim of stalking (Black et al, 2011). Stalking victimization has also been shown to be an important predictor of interpersonal physical violence with between 25 – 46% of cases involving some form of violence against the victim, approximately 2% of stalking cases result in serious violent assaults such as rape and homicide and as many as three quarters of female homicide victims are stalked by the assailant prior to their deaths (Spitzberg, 2002; Dressling et al, 2006; McFarlane & St. Lawrence, 1999; Meloy, 1998).

Victim and perpetrator characteristics—Females are more likely to be victims than males, with the highest rate of victimization occurring for young adults aged between 18 and 24 years (Baum, et al., 2009). Compared to men, women are more likely to be stalked by a former intimate partner (Black et al, 2011). The risk of stalking victimization appears greatest for undergraduate students, individuals who live alone, those who live in rented accommodation and those who have a criminal history and/or suffer from mental health problems (Baum, et al., 2009; Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker, 1997; Logan, Leukefeld, & Walker, 2000). Very rarely do adults stalk children or those in early adolescence with the vast majority of adult stalkers focusing their attentions upon other adults (Baum, et al., 2009). However there is a distinct lack of research on adults who stalk children or adolescents.

Adult stalkers are most likely to be aged between of 18–20 years and be male, coming from all social classes and ethnic groups (Baum, et al., 2009). There have been several attempts to produce typologies of stalkers (Harmon, Rosner, & Owens, 1995; Mullen, Pathe, Purcell, & Stuart, 1999; Zona, Sharma, & Lane, 1993; Monhandie et al, 2006). No generally accepted classification has yet emerged however most have similar characteristics to that proposed by Mullen and colleagues (1999). Mullen et al proposed a multi-axial classification that describes stalking in terms of the motivation and psychological needs it served for the stalker. The first axis refers to the stalker’s motivation, the second the prior relationship with the victim, and the third whether the stalker was psychotic or non-psychotic. Five subtypes were identified. The *Rejected stalker* who has had a prior relationship with the victim and responds to its unwelcome end by stalking the victim, motivated by a mixture of revenge and a need for reconciliation. The *Intimacy Seeker* who stalks someone they have little, if any, relationship with in the mistaken belief that they are loved, or will be loved, by the victim. The *Incompetent suitor* is an individual with intellectual limitations, lacking appropriate social skills, who stalks in pursuit of a partner. The *Resentful* stalker who responds to a perceived insult or injury by actions aimed at causing fear to exact revenge and vindication. The *Predatory* stalker who uses stalking in pursuit of their desires for sexual gratification and control where stalking is a rehearsal for their violent sexual fantasies and a partial satisfaction of voyeuristic and sadistic desires.

Relationships between stalker and victim—Victims of adult stalking are more likely to know their stalker and to have had a prior relationship with them than to be stalked by a stranger, indeed only 9% of victims report that their stalker was unknown to them (Baum, et al., 2009; Catalano, 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The most likely pre-existing relationship between stalker and victim is that they were in a romantic relationship (Baum, et al., 2009; Mullen, et al., 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). It is also noteworthy that stalkers who were former romantic partners are more likely to have stalked the victim whilst the relationship was ongoing and be violent towards the victim as part of their stalking behavior (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Pursuit tactics—Adult stalkers use a wide range of pursuit tactics including sending unwanted communications to victims through email, letter, and other social media, unwanted telephone contact, following, loitering outside a victim’s home or workplace, threats and sometimes, physical or sexual violence (Nicastro, Cousins, & Spitzberg, 2000). Unwanted communications appear to be the most common tactic employed by adult stalkers followed by spying on the victim and showing up at places frequented by the victim (Baum et al, 2009).

Impact of Adult Stalking—As well as the risk of injury due to physical violence, the experience of stalking victimization is associated with a range of psychological problems such as anxiety, anger, social dysfunction, flashbacks, problems with intimacy and severe depression (Diette, Goldsmith, Hamilton, Darity, & McFarland, 2013; Iverson et al., 2012; Logan & Walker, 2006, Fleming et al, 2012) and a range of somatic problems such as sleep disturbance, digestive problems, and heart problems (Logan & Walker, 2006). Stalking also

results in severe economic losses due to time away from work or school, subsequent loss of income, job or educational opportunities (Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009).

Methods

Review Methodology

We undertook a systematic review of the research literature on adolescent stalking. Central to this was the identification of appropriate inclusion criteria to specify the characteristics of the literature to be reviewed and to distinguish relevant works. Our review was designed to be international in scope, although only to include literature published in English. We included only empirical articles published in peer-reviewed journals in order to provide some initial measure of quality assurance. Multiple electronic databases were searched for this review: Google Scholar, PubMed, PsychInfo, PsychArticles, Proquest: Proquest Central, Emerald, EBSCO and Sage. We also searched the references sections of all papers identified in our searches to identify further relevant articles.

Definition of stalking—For the purposes of our review it was important to have a clear definition of stalking to differentiate articles that focused on stalking from others. Our definition accorded with the research literature and the Model Stalking Code (National Centre for Victims of Crime, 2007). Stalking was defined as a course of conduct (two or more separate acts) of unwanted attention directed by one individual towards another that induced fear in the victim (Mullen, Pathe, & Purcell, 2000). Based on information presented in the article, if it was not clear if the behaviour described met our aforementioned definition of stalking, the article was not included in the review.

Search terms and process—Strict search terms were developed through discussion among the authors and following a series of scoping searches to assess each term's sensitivity. The terms used for the various searches (in addition to 'stalking') were, 'adolescence' (e.g., 'adolescence and stalking'), 'youth,' 'young people,' 'juveniles,' and 'children.' In addition, because of the potential that some literature on adolescent stalking may be located within the bullying and dating violence literatures (McCann, 2001), we created additional search terms, 'adolescent bullying AND stalking,' and 'adolescent dating violence AND stalking.'

Our searches yielded 264 articles. After reviewing the abstracts, 32 manuscripts were identified and reviewed in their entirety for relevance according to our criteria. Of these, only thirteen studies met our criteria in that they referred explicitly to adolescents within our age range (13–17 years) and included a focus on stalking consistent with our definition. Of these articles (listed in Table 1), three (Leitz & Theriot, 2005; Ravensburg & Miller, 2003; Theriot, 2008) were literature reviews so we rejected these from further consideration as we wished to focus upon empirical findings. Of the remaining ten papers, six presented the results of empirical studies and four were case studies drawn from clinical forensic practice. Of the six empirical studies: 1) Haugaard and Seri (2004) surveyed undergraduate students on self-reported perpetration and experiences of stalking following a romantic relationship; 2–4) Purcell, Moller, Flower and Mullen (2009), Purcell, Flower and Mullen (2009) and Purcell, Pathe and Mullen (2010) explored consecutive cases from a juvenile court to

identify those where stalking was involved; 5) Stokes, Newton and Kaur (2007) explored romantic behaviour of 25 adolescents with Autism spectrum disorder; and 6) Fisher et al (2014) carried out a self-report survey of stalking experiences among a large sample of high school students. Further detailed examination of these papers led to: 1) the exclusion of the paper by Purcell, Flower and Mullen (2009) from this review as it was a summary of data represented elsewhere in Purcell et al (2009; 2010) and 2) the exclusion of Stokes et al (2007) as their definition of stalking was not consistent with ours; this resulted in 4 of the 6 empirical articles remaining for inclusion. The four clinical forensic practice studies included: 1) Evans and Meloy (2011); 2) McCann (1998); 3) McCann (2000) and 4) Vaidya et al (2005). After considering the content of these papers, McCann (1998) was removed from the analysis because the three case studies it is based upon were included in a later paper (McCann, 2000). Thus, a total of 7 articles (4 empirical and 3 clinical forensic practice) formed the basis of our review.

Results

Rates of adolescent stalking

Only one of the studies, Fisher et al (2014), provided a population based assessment of adolescent stalking rates using a representative sample. They found that for the previous 12 months, 16.5% of their sample reported having been stalked, 5.3% reported having stalked someone and 2.8% reported both stalking someone and being stalked. Three of the studies presented data that may be used to obtain a rough estimation of the prevalence of adolescent stalking (Haugaard & Seri, 2004; Purcell, Moller, Flower, & Mullen, 2009). Purcell et al (2009) examined the characteristics of cases heard in an Australian juvenile court over a twenty-three month period (1st January 2004 to 30th November 2006) and identified 299 cases of adolescent stalking during that period, representing 34% of all the cases heard in the court. Haugaard and Seri (2004) examining experiences after the breakup of a romantic relationship reported that 21% of their sample of undergraduate students (ages ranged from 17–51 years old; mean age of 20 years) self-reported experiencing stalking.

Victims and perpetrator characteristics

Sex—The majority of adolescent stalking victims appear to be female and the majority of perpetrators male. Fisher et al (2014) found that 18.8% of females in their sample reported that they had been victims of stalking compared with 13.9% of the males whilst 6.5% of their sample who reported perpetrating stalking were male compared to 4.2% female. Purcell et al (2009) found that 69% of their victims were female and 64% of perpetrators were male, whilst Haugaard and Seri reported 22% females and 15% of males in their sample experienced stalking and 7 % of their female and 11% of their male samples reported initiating intrusive contact (stalking behaviour) towards another. Purcell et al (2009) found the majority (57%) of the adolescent stalking cases involved same gender stalking and Purcell, Pathe and Mullen (2010) found that females were more likely to stalk same gender victims than males.

Age of victim—Adolescents are most likely to stalk other adolescents.. Purcell and colleagues (2009) and Haugaard and Seri (2004) show no evidence of adolescents targeting

adults or children. However there is some evidence drawn from case studies that adolescents do stalk adults. In McCann's (2000) sample of case studies he found that half the stalkers (7 cases) targeted similar age peers whilst the rest (6 cases) targeted adults. Vaidya et al (2005) also found that the female stalker they examined targeted an adult care worker. Perhaps because McCann and Vaidya et al's research involved clinical forensic stalking cases their findings may not be representative of the general characteristics of adolescent stalking. Indeed it is possible that the relative rarity of adult stalking by adolescents may lead to it being considered more serious and deserving of court and forensic clinical attention compared to stalking by an adolescent of other adolescents. It is not possible to verify this suggestion from the research examined but it is an intriguing idea for further research.

Other demographics—Adolescent stalkers do not appear to differ from non-stalkers across a range of demographic variables. Haugaard and Seri (2004) compared those who self-reported initiating intrusive (stalking) behavior with those who did not across a range of lifestyle, family and personal characteristics such as family income, religiosity, family closeness, parental strictness, high school grade point average, number and quality of friendships, frequency of dating behavior, prior sexual experiences. They found no significant differences between these two groups. Purcell, Pathe and Mullen (2010) compared male and female stalker characteristics drawn from their court file data. They found no differences in the mean ages of male and female stalkers.

Adolescent Stalker Typologies—The research reviewed suggested several adolescent stalker typologies. McCann (2000) classified adolescent perpetrators based upon his 13 clinical forensic cases. This consisted of three stalker types, *erotomaniac* - individuals who developed a strong delusional belief that they are loved by their target and pursue the target as a result; *love obsessional* - individuals who develop a similar delusional belief of being loved by their target but in contrast to erotomaniac stalkers their delusions are associated with other psychotic symptoms; and *simple obsessional* - individuals who stalk following the breakup of a romantic relationship and are driven by anger and a desire for revenge. Evans and Melloy (2011), on the basis of their clinical forensic work and a detailed review of two cases of stalking suggested two types of adolescent stalker, the *Socially Awkward* who simply desires a relationship but lacks the social skills to achieve this and the *Angry/Disgruntled* stalker who has had a previous relationship with the target, is fueled by anger and a need for revenge. Purcell et al (2009) in their larger study of stalking court cases found evidence of similar stalker types. They classed 22% of their sample as *Retaliating Stalkers* who were retaliating for some perceived wrong against them by the victim; 22% were classed as *Rejected Stalkers* who had been rejected by a former romantic partner; 20% were classed as *Disorganized and Disturbed Stalkers* that consisted of a group of unhappy, angry and delinquent youth who seemed to be at war with their environment; 5% consisted of *Predatory Stalkers*; 2% were classed as *Intimacy Seeking Stalkers*. A little over a quarter (28%) of the cases reviewed were classed as extensions of bullying that had generally commenced in school. The larger adolescent sample size upon which this typology is based perhaps makes these findings somewhat more representative than those derived from the case studies, yet caution needs still to be applied when evaluating these findings. There are questions about the representativeness of these data as this study only considered court

cases, which may differ in important ways from cases not reaching the judicial system. For example, cases that reach the court may be regarded as more serious or posing a greater risk to the victim than other cases.

Prior Relationship Characteristics

Adolescent stalking perpetrators are most likely to be known to the victim prior to the start of the stalking (Fisher et al, 2014). Purcell et al, (2009) found that the perpetrator and victim were known to each other in 98% of the cases they explored; this was echoed by all of the case studies reviewed. The majority of perpetrators in Purcell et al (2009) and Fisher et al (2014) were prior (non-romantic) acquaintances of the victim. Purcell et al (2009) found that the majority (24%) were a current or former school peer of the victim, acquaintances of the family or a peer (23%), former romantic partner (21%), estranged friends (15%) and neighbors (14%). Only McCann (2000) found evidence for adolescent stalking by strangers; however, this was a minority of cases (3 of 13 cases).

Purcell et al (2010) found differences in the targets of male and female adolescent stalkers such that male stalkers were more likely to pursue ex-intimate partners, whilst females were more likely to target estranged friends. They also found that for males the most common motive for stalking was rejection by the victim, followed by bullying and disorganised and disturbed stalking. Stalking by females was most commonly an extension of bullying, followed by retaliation and disorganised and disturbed stalking.

Stalking and pursuit tactics

Fisher et al (2014) found that the majority (89%) of their adolescent stalking victims experienced unwanted communications such as telephone calls, emails, contact via social networking sites. About half of stalking victims experienced an individual showing up at various places when not wanted and 37% experienced being spied on including the use of GPS equipment. Data collected from perpetrators of stalking suggest that the majority (65%) reported showing up at places, 62% sent unwanted communications and 56% followed or spied on the victim. They also found that males who reported stalking were more likely than females to report showing up at places (73% compared to 55%). Males used slightly more stalking tactics on average than females 1.95 verse 1.69. There were no other gender differences in tactics used. Other studies reviewed supported a similar pattern of results with respect to pursuit tactics [i.e., Evans and Melloy (2011), Haugaard and Seri (2004) McCann, (2000) Purcell et al (2009) Vaidya et al., (2005)]. Three quarters of Purcell et al.'s (2009) sample received threats, 54% were victims of physical assaults and 2% of cases resulted in serious sexual assaults.

Impact of adolescent stalking

Using court victim impact statements, Purcell et al. (2009) explored the impact of adolescent stalking upon victims. Victims reported pervasive anxiety and fear and negative impacts upon their education including an inability to concentrate or work in class and absenteeism from school. Of the 299 adolescent stalking cases, 32 identified that adolescents experienced severe depression and suicidal ideation, with one victim requiring psychiatric hospitalization. Parents of victims also reported that they too suffered from fear and anxiety

as a result of their child's victimization. Parents of 14 victims reported on the economic impact of stalking; these parents indicated that they removed their children from school and educated them at home at their own personal expense. Similarly in all of the case studies we reviewed all authors commented upon the negative emotional impact of stalking upon the victims.

Comparing adolescent and adult stalking

Rates of stalking—Due to the limited number of studies and the lack of studies that have focused upon population level analyses of prevalence it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about rates of adolescent stalking. On the basis of the data currently available it appears that the rates of adolescent stalking may possibly be greater than those of adult stalking (Fisher et al, 2014; Haugaard & Seri, 2004; Purcell, et al., 2009). For example Fisher et al (2014) found an annual rate of adolescent stalking victimization of 16.5% and as compared to 1.5% for adults (Catalano, 2012). Unlike adult stalking there are presently no data for the lifetime risk of stalking for adolescents, but if the prevalence rates identified by Fisher and colleagues (2014) are accurate this would mean that the risk for adolescents is considerably higher than that for adults.

Victim and perpetrator characteristics—As is the case for adults, across a range of demographic characteristics, adolescent stalkers do not appear to differ from non-stalkers. In common with adults, the majority of adolescent stalking victims appear to be female and the perpetrators male. This may be indicative that the phenomenon of stalking for both adults and adolescents is not related to broad demographic characteristics. Same gender stalking appears to be more prevalent in adolescent stalking than for adults, but the reasons for this are unclear. This may reflect the stage of psychosexual development of adolescent stalkers with individuals during adolescence tending to associate more in single gender groups than adults perhaps providing greater risk of attracting the attention of an acquaintance who might be moved to stalk the victim (Moshman, 2011). Adolescents seem most likely to target other adolescents although there was some evidence of adolescents targeting adults and no evidence for targeting children. Evidence for adolescents stalking of adults was found only within the clinical forensic case studies considered, perhaps indicating that, this might be judged as more serious and be more likely to result in clinical interventions as compared to stalking other adolescents.

Stalker typology—The typologies of adolescent stalking in the literature have some similarities with each other and with adult stalking typologies. Like adult stalking, motives include features of romantic rejection, anger and resentment, a need for a relationship and psychological disorganization. Thus, adolescent stalking may in part be serving similar psychological needs for perpetrators as adult stalking, but there are also notable differences. In contrast to adults, adolescent stalking includes a significant number of cases that are an extension of bullying that began in school. McCann (2001) has noted similarities between stalking and bullying with cases that involve more than one incident of threat, harassment, or intimidation; a perpetrator who engenders fear in the victim; and the victim's awareness that they are being threatened (McCann, 2001). However McCann also notes that there are important differences between bullying and stalking in particular bullying can be perpetrated

by a group rather than an individual. Indeed, Purcell et al's (2009) data reflects the involvement of others in bullying-related stalking; bullying is motivated by a need to dominate the victim whereas stalking isn't necessarily concerned with achieving this. Intimidation of the victim was most prevalent in the bullying sub-group identified by Purcell et al (2009) and attempts to exclude the victim from a peer group appear not to be associated with stalking. The overlap between bullying and stalking in adolescents requires careful consideration and further research.

Prior relationship characteristics—In contrast to adults, adolescents are less likely to be stalked by a former romantic partner and more likely to be stalked by an acquaintance. Intimacy-seeking stalkers also appear to be the smallest group of adolescent stalkers (Purcell et al, 2009). These differences could reflect a combination of routine activities, differences in age related life opportunities and behavioral maturity between adolescents and adults. In terms of routine activity, adolescents may be more likely to be exposed to larger numbers of other individuals than adults and they are also more likely to encounter those with whom they have no or minimal relationships thus increasing the potential of stalking by such individuals. Adolescents are less developmentally mature and less adept at creating closer, intimate romantic relationships for sufficient periods of time resulting in multiple, brief romantic relationships, across adolescence rather than single long term relationships (Moshman, 2011). In addition, regarding life opportunities, because adolescents are by definition younger than adults, they are less likely to have had the same opportunities to develop long standing close romantic relationships. Additionally, adolescence is a time of significant emotional and behavioral dysregulation that typically resolves as adolescents emerge into adulthood (Moshman, 2011); thus, even when brief romantic relationships end they can be emotionally devastating, psychiatrically distressing and threatening for adolescents in ways that may not occur for adults. This may drive some individuals to stalk those with whom they had brief relationships; however, victims may not describe the brief relationship as a serious romance (i.e. regarding the stalker as an acquaintance rather than someone with whom they had some degree of intimacy). In making these speculations, some caution is in order. The limited number of studies and the nature of the data considered might engender biases. For example, Purcell et al (2009) finding of a low number of cases of stalking related to intimacy seeking may reflect their use of court data. In order for cases to appear in court they have to be judged as serious enough to warrant court attention. Potentially intimacy seeking among adolescents may not have been considered serious enough to warrant court intervention thus lowering the observed incidence of this type of stalking.

Stalking and pursuit tactics—The stalking tactics used by adolescent stalkers are broadly similar to those of adult stalkers with use of unwanted communication methods being most common. Adolescent stalking appears to be associated with a greater degree of threatening behaviour and actual violence than adult stalking. However as Purcell et al (2009) note the extent to which this is specific to stalking or reflects an age-crime related effect is unknown and deserving of further research. It is important to note that in the case of Purcell and colleagues' (2009) sample and the forensic case studies the rates of violence reported could be a consequence of case type. It may be that those that involve violence are

precisely those most likely to end up in court and/or result in clinical forensic interventions. Interestingly the stalking pursuit tactics identified in the older literature (prior to 2005) reflect the dates of the research as they were carried out at a time when social media and other forms of communication such as Twitter, Skype, Snapchat and Facebook and GPS monitoring equipment did not exist; hence they do not appear as stalking methods. One might expect that adolescents would be more likely to make use of new technology than adults and so may be more prone to using social media for stalking, but this remains to be studied.

Impact of stalking—Our review has found that adolescent stalking has similar negative impacts upon the psychological, physical and economic wellbeing of its victims as adult stalking victims. Given that these negative outcomes occur at a critical phase of psychosocial development, it is possible that victimization may lead to even more serious long-term effects extending into adulthood. Indeed there are data demonstrating that negative events during childhood and adolescence predict negative health outcomes during adulthood (Graeber et al, 2013). Studies of the long-term effects of stalking victimization for adolescents have not been carried out and we argue that there is a need for such research. Ultimately the rates of victimization and potential damage to victims leads us to regard adolescent stalking as a serious societal problem inflicting as much if not more social damage as adult stalking suggesting the need for focused research in this area.

Discussion

Our review found a dearth of research on adolescent stalking with only seven peer-reviewed empirical studies identified. The reasons for this dearth of research are not clear. It may be in part because adolescent stalking has been confounded with adolescent bullying research with stalking behaviours, such as pursuit of a target, seen as part of bullying rather than a separate behavioral construct (McCann, 2000). Certainly there has been a much greater research focus upon adolescent bullying than stalking behaviors.

Difficulties in obtaining research informed consent may be another reason for the paucity of research. In most jurisdictions, additional written consent for participation in research with adolescent participants must be obtained from a parent or guardian. In the United States federal regulations classify adolescents as members of a vulnerable population requiring special protections. Required parental or legal guardian consent is seen as an important safeguard in research with children under the assumption that parents will make decisions in the best interests of their child (Department of Health & Human Services, 2005). This can present some logistical difficulties for surveys and other work with adolescent participants, particularly if adolescents are fearful of or uncomfortable about disclosing to their parents details about romantic relationships or challenging friendships. Yet, such barriers are not insurmountable. For example in the study by Fisher et al (2014) they engaged closely with parents, sending out a detailed consent letter that described the study, its methods and gave examples of survey items.

Another possibility is that the lack of research on adolescent stalking may be evidence that it is not seen as a serious problem. Our review perhaps challenges this in identifying rates of

adolescent stalking that are at least similar, if not higher than those for adults. Adolescents utilize similar stalking tactics to adults and victims appear to suffer similar physical, psychological and economic problems to adults. Furthermore, adolescent stalking victims may be at greater risk of violence and poorer emotional, psychological and health outcomes than adults.

Future Directions

Research—There is a need for substantial further research to allow a deeper understanding of adolescent stalking. This research should include an attempt to provide other estimates of the rates of adolescent stalking through population-based studies. Research also needs to further develop typologies of adolescent stalkers using representative samples drawn from the wider community as much of the current work has been based upon forensic case studies. The overreliance on forensic samples may present a misleading account of adolescent stalking, perhaps suggesting that it is more violent and less likely to be related to a desire for a relationship than adult stalking. Research needs also to explore the short and long term health effects of victimization especially given that victimization occurs at a key developmental stage. Research exploring the overlap between bullying and stalking in adolescents is also needed. It is unknown at present the extent to which stalking is used as a tool in bullying by adolescents and whether this is an important public health distinction for screening and intervention. The potential links between routine activities and stalking behaviour are also worthy of further exploration. Predictions from routine activity theory appear to be applicable to adolescent stalking but a more nuanced view of how an adolescent's day to day activities may serve to increase or decrease risk of victimization may help inform prevention initiatives.

Finally, the role of social media in understanding adolescent stalking is imperative. None of the articles we reviewed measured this potential method of stalking behaviours. A body of research has recently developed in the area of cyberbullying that has informed adolescent and family-based interventions to reduce violence and other poor public health outcomes associated with bullying through cyberspace. Given adolescent's use of social media as a way of communicating with those whom they have close interpersonal relationships as well as those they may not know at all (e.g., through online dating), understanding what constitutes stalking behaviors for adolescents via social media is of importance in operationalizing the term "stalking" for adolescents. Future research should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measurement of adolescents' perceptions of traditionally-defined stalking behaviors and cyber bullying behaviors to distinguish how stalking may be occurring over social media and may/may not be distinguished from these other behaviors.

Clinical Practice—Taken together these findings are perhaps evidence that efforts need to be made at school and community level to acknowledge the existence of adolescent stalking and to educate individuals about its characteristics, effects and methods of mitigation. Certainly those working with adolescents need to be aware of the reality of stalking in this age group and be prepared to act appropriately when individuals disclose victimization. There appears to be a strong focus on programs to challenge bullying in schools but practitioners also need to be aware that although bullies may use stalking tactics adolescent

stalking is not simply bullying but forms a distinct category of behaviour in its own right with a distinctive etiology and motivation. It is also important that mental health practitioners give consideration to treatment programs for victims who may not only suffer similar problems to adults but may experience significant developmental challenges. Similarly treatment programs for perpetrators need to be considered. From a law enforcement perspective officers need to be aware that adolescent stalking is relatively common and appears to present a strong risk of violence and be prepared to take action akin to the processes in place for adult stalking when presented with adolescent victims or offenders. Ultimately, our review suggests that lessons learned from the adult literature may be appropriate to guide prevention and intervention development for adolescents provided that such interventions incorporate developmentally appropriate models, consider the complex ecodevelopmental context of adolescent lives and are rigorously empirically tested for relevant adolescent outcomes.

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Table 1

Summary of adolescent stalking literature (N=12 publications)

Article Type	Number of Articles	Authors	Methodology and number of participants/cases	* = Included in review
Review of the literature	3	Leitz and Theriot (2005) Ravensburg and Miller (2003) Theriot (2008)	n/a n/a n/a	
Empirical study	6	Haugaard and Seri (2004) Purcell, Moller, Flower and Mullen (2009) Purcell, Flower and Mullen (2009) Purcell, Pathe and Mullen (2010) Fisher et al (2014) Stokes et al (2007)	Survey of students exploring self-reported stalking perpetration and victimization; 52 cases of stalking Examination of 299 consecutive Juvenile court records of cases related to adolescent stalking Examination of 299 consecutive Juvenile court records of cases related to adolescent stalking Examination of 299 consecutive Juvenile court records of cases related to adolescent stalking State based survey of stalking experiences of 18013 high school students Reports on romantic behaviour of 25 adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder	* * * *
Case study	4	Evans and Meloy (2011) McCann (1998) McCann (2000) Vaidya et al, 2005	2 cases clinical practice 3 cases clinical practice 13 cases clinical practice 1 case clinical practice	* * *

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