

REPORT

ADDRESSING FILICIDE: THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, MONASH CENTRE, PRATO, ITALY, 14TH AND 15TH JUNE 2017

INTRODUCTION

This conference was the third in the series of bi-annual conferences held in 2013, 2015 and 2017 at the Monash Centre in Prato, Italy. The series has aimed at bringing together researchers, policy developers and program providers from many disciplines and different countries to support greater knowledge development in the sparsely researched area of filicide.

DELEGATES

Some 34 Delegates attended the conference; they came from England, Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Chile, Canada, Finland, Australia and Saudi Arabia. There were no delegates from the U.S.A. and South- East Asia as previously. Unfortunately, the conference dates clashed with those of the International Conference of Forensic Psychiatrists which has asked that in future we cooperate on dates to facilitate attendance for delegates at both conferences.

DOCUMENTARY TEAM

A documentary crew led by Conor Tiernan from TV3 Ireland attended the conference; they filmed many of the sessions and interviewed the speakers. They have promised to give the conference a copy of the documentary when it is finished. The documentary planned to focus most attention on filicide accompanied by the suicide of the perpetrator.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The program was structured to bring all delegates together on the evening preceding the delivery of papers with a walk around the historic town and dinner. The following day the conference began with welcome and keynote speakers, followed by a series of shorter papers until lunch. After lunch another keynote address was delivered and followed by shorter papers until the end of the day. That evening we held a welcome reception on the centre's terrace. The second day repeated the pattern with an opening keynote address, papers, lunch and another keynote paper again followed by further shorter papers and the final panel and discussion about future directions.

The program spaced the papers out more than in previous years and delegates commented favourably on this and the greater opportunities for discussion in sessions and in breaks.

CONFERENCE DIRECTIONS

The first key note speaker, Professor Dominique Bourget, pointed out that since our first conference, in 2013, research and publications on filicide, internationally, had increased considerably and as conference organisers we hope that the conference is accelerating such developments. At least one third of the delegates had been to the two previous conferences and the tentative themes in research design and in findings of the first conference were emerging with greater strength, detail and clarity as the conferences progressed. At the same time new directions were developing with new study areas and new complexities being revealed.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

There were five keynote speakers beginning with **Professor Dominique Bourget from the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre and Dr Pierre Gage from the University of Sherbrooke, followed by Dr Peter Jaffe from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, then Associate Professor Peter Sidebotham, University of Warwick, England, and finally Professor Myrna Dawson from the University of Guelph, Canada.** Professor Bourget and Dr. Gagne's papers are referred to in other sections of this report.

Professor Jaffe, a well-known figure in domestic violence research and action, spoke on the need to protect children in the context of domestic violence leading to filicide. Using the research from the domestic violence death review in Ontario he pointed to the complexity of risk factors and the fact that these risks were known to family, friends and professionals prior to the event. He suggested that research showed professionals were not sufficiently prepared for the potential of these risks culminating in filicide and that professionals across many service systems required especially tailored information.

The education of professionals has been raised now for some years. Bourget et al (2007) have raised it in their journal article; Cavanagh et al (2015) raised it in a paper at the last conference. It was raised several times during discussions of papers at this conference and is a topic that needs further consideration.

Professor Myrna Dawson, again well known for her work on filicide and domestic violence, presented the conclusions from her research on death review committees in terms of the use of their findings in achieving changes in service systems. Her review of the outputs of four countries' death review committees showed that these committees produce large numbers of recommendations. Her work analysed the recommendations and gathered them into groups and linked the recommendations to the relevant service sectors. Her conclusions suggested that more work was required to develop a picture of overall needed change.

Professor Peter Sidebotham presented the work of a team from the Universities of Warwick and East Anglia on a study of children in England who had been the subject of a serious case review having been either killed or seriously injured by a parents or parents. The team had undertaken several similar earlier studies. His work presented a framework of pathways to harm and detailed frameworks for intervention based on the typology of events categorised according to the type of harm inflicted and the type of perpetrator. His paper gave a detailed proscription of individual intervention for each type of event once risk was identified.

DEVELOPMENTS IN RESEARCH DESIGN

There was a trend towards the building, and repeated use, of large data bases of victims, families and perpetrators. While data sources have been difficult to access in relation to filicide due in part to poor record keeping on filicide deaths internationally (scanty and inconsistent detail, few national data bases, obstacles to and restricted access due to ethics requirements) researchers are now building longer term series of data, and larger amounts of data, with the consequent ability to develop stronger findings. Data is surfacing through researchers' special studies and committees tasked with focusing on family violence and family violence deaths. Problems remain with the inconsistencies in data collection within and between countries that make comparisons difficult. However, data bases covering periods of time are building in England, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, and Australia. The USA also publishes national statistics on filicide.

Another design trend was the change in categorising types of filicide deaths.

In the earliest studies, researchers like Resnick (Resnick, 1969, 1970) seeking patterns in the deaths established explanatory categories of deaths according to the motive of the perpetrator.

Over time these categories of motive have been expanded and given greater descriptive detail (Bourget, Grace and Whitehurst, 2007, De Bortoli and Nixon, 2017). However, using motive as a categorising factor has been challenged due in part to the difficulty in identifying motive (Mouzos and Rushworth, 2003).

At the conference type of perpetrator and type of event were presented as distinguishing categories. For example, Sidebotham's paper combined type of perpetrator with type of death and then set up intervention proposals for each category; Brown, Tyson and Fernandez Arias's paper used a combination of gender and parental role in a national twelve year study and Koenradt and Klier, Amon, Putkamen, Kernreiter and Weizmann-Herelius used perpetrator and type of death to look at neo-naticide deaths in various periods of time in the Netherlands and Austria. The paper presented by De Bertoli and Nixon (2017) used perpetrator type to see if there was any relationship between this and other factors like family structure and contexts for the homicide. They found no relationships.

HISTORY OF FILICIDE

Two papers, one from Stuart-Bennet and one from Frederick, pointed to the long history of filicide and Stuart-Bennet raised issues regarding the relationship between social conditions and culture and filicide and quasi filicide (baby farming or baby fostering deaths) in nineteenth century England and in former British colonies. This formed a link to papers given in the first two conferences (Rodriguez Manriquez, 2013, Yasumi, 2015) that showed how the incidence of and circumstances surrounding filicide varied within a country and between countries together with many commonalities. This reflects the theme expressed in the first conference (Koenradt, 2013) that filicide is universal but not uniform.

NEONATICIDE

Two papers on neo-naticide were presented from studies carried out by Sabine Amon and Claudia Klier and their colleagues, Putkonen, Kernreiter and Weizmann-Herelius. One paper looked at the impact of two interventions to reduce neo-naticide in Austria, the anonymous birth law and the hatch availability. The other paper compared perpetrators of single neo-naticide with the small number of serial perpetrators. The findings on both types of perpetrators looked in depth at these perpetrators and their findings were intriguing.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF MULTIPLE PERPETRATORS

Filicide has been viewed as usually being the responsibility of one person, one parent. While two parents acting together have been noted as perpetrators, it has been uncommon (Brown, Tyson and Fernandez Arias, 2014). However, Brown, Tyson and Fernandez Arias's paper on the Australian national study on filicide showed a more frequent involvement of two perpetrators, step-fathers and mothers, than previously identified. The researchers believed this might be due to the way the national data base acknowledged this possibility and so recorded it. Gagne (2017) in his keynote address also saw a more complex perpetrator picture and he ascribed agency to professionals whose intervention he saw as, on occasions, being harmful and leading to deaths. Widening the potential

perpetrators group might lead to seeing a greater complexity of perpetrator dynamics and might also lead to a more detailed study of the role of professionals in their interventions with the perpetrator and or the victim's family.

INTERVENTION AFTER A CHILD (OR CHILDRENS') DEATH

Intervention with family members after the child (or children's) death had not been raised previously, but several papers considered this. One was Wate's paper on how the English multi-disciplinary police teams (police, paediatrician and social worker) investigated the unexplained death of a child, how they undertook their investigation and decision making and how they dealt with the various members of the family in the short and long term.

Frederico's paper presented the findings of research on children who had survived the death of a sibling killed by a parent. The paper looked at programs designed to address the needs of such children and presented the cases of two surviving children who took different views of having an ongoing relationship with their parents after the death of their sibling.

At the second conference in 2015 Una Butler, a mother who survived the deaths of her two children killed by her husband who then killed himself, gave a paper on the events leading up to the deaths, particularly on the role of the mental health service, the impact of the deaths on her and the reforms she sought from the government to prevent further filicides. At this conference Frank Mullane, also a surviving family member of filicide, spoke of the value of Domestic Homicide Reviews and their role in preventing domestic violence and filicide. Frank Mullane's, Peter Sidebotham's and Russell Wate's papers covered the involvement of families after the event. At the first conference Helen Buckley (2013) had given a paper on death review committees and discussed the involvement of surviving family members in the process of investigation and recommendations.

SENTENCING FOLLOWING A CONVICTION

None of the previous conferences have covered sentencing but Tyson and Dawson's paper compared the sentencing of perpetrators in Canada and Australia to determine if there were any gender biases. This latter work is not yet finished and while no obvious biases are evident it may be that more subtle patterns emerge as the research concludes.

Roberto Rodríguez Manríquez presented a paper describing the court judgements of 16 filicide cases in Chile between 2012-2014. His preliminary findings show that, in Chile, the very high conviction rates and the lengthy sentences given are in line with the generalised outrage generated by these cases further reinforcing that cultural aspects are highly prevalent in all aspects of filicide events.

MISSING CHILDREN

At the past conferences, it has been noted that children may be killed by a parent and their deaths may be successfully concealed because the child's birth is not recorded, a doctor does not recognise that the child's death is due to the deliberate act of a parent or parent equivalent, the child disappears and the disappearance is not related to the parent or possibly not ever known (Packer, 2013).

Cultures and communities with unrecorded disappearances of children have not been discussed previously but Spratt's paper presented his experiences in Togo (Spratt, 2017) regarding the disappearance of disabled and female children and shed light on the complex tensions in filicide research.

INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF FACTORS SURROUNDING FILICIDE

Past conferences have identified factors surrounding filicide and these have been consistent across cultures, with the role of different factors being a little different from one country to another. These factors have been identified as the age of the children, illness or disability of children, past domestic violence from the perpetrator, mental illness of the perpetrator, past child abuse from the perpetrator, substance abuse of perpetrator, poor access to services, and poor engagement with services. Past criminal history emerged at the 2015 conference in a paper presented by Pritchard and again at this conference in a paper from Brown, Tyson and Fernandez Arias. Variations in these factors according to the type of perpetrator emerged more clearly at this conference probably due to better data bases as evidenced in the papers of Sidebotham, Brown, Tyson and Fernandez Arias, and Amon, Klier, Putkonen, Kernreiter and Weizmann-Herelius.

A NEW DIRECTION IN RESEARCH

A paper presented by Paula Fernandez Arias suggested new directions in research. This paper suggested the study of social network responses as a way of examining how individual choices can lead to a filicide event. Conversely, thinking of these choices as points for early intervention may lead to new and improved prevention strategies.

INTERVENTION

Many of the papers dealt directly or indirectly with research on intervention and more work on intervention is taking place but more needs to be done. Intervention has been held back by the poor knowledge base on filicide, but the knowledge base has improved and is better able to support policies, programs and research on intervention. Some of the presentations that touched on intervention did so broadly referring mostly to service systems change. Two papers, one from Klier et al and one from Brown et al, referred to programs to address filicide and another from Sidebotham developed an extensive intervention framework for individual perpetrators according to type of perpetrator and event.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE SERIES

The final session of the conference considered how the conference should be managed in the future. There was consideration of new locations and a committee including Sabine Amon, Dominique Bourget, Thea Brown, Myrna Dawson, Peter Jaffe, Claudia Klier, Danielle Tyson, and Paula Fernandez Arias was proposed to plan for 2019.