



Conference Program & Book of Abstracts

**Addressing Filicide: Inaugural
International Conference for
Cross National Dialogue**

Thursday 30 – Friday 31 May 2013

Monash Prato Centre



MONASH University

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Program Overview

Wednesday 29 May

Guided Walking Tour of Old Prato

5:30 – 7:00pm

Meeting Point: Monash Prato Centre

Thursday 30 May

9:30 – 10:00am – Registration and morning tea

10:00 – 5:30pm – Conference sessions

5:30 – 7:00pm – Conference Reception

Venue: Prato Centre Terrace

Friday 31 May

9:30 – 10:00am – Registration and morning tea

10:00 – 4:30pm – Conference session

4:30 – 5:00pm – Discussion and close of conference

Welcome

Welcome to the Inaugural Addressing Filicide: For Cross National Dialogue Conference, co-sponsored by Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences and Faculty of Arts.

It is with pleasure that we welcome you at the Monash Centre, Palazzo Vaj, in the beautiful medieval city of Prato.

The conference will address a socio-legal problem still unresolved today: the killing of a child by their parent or equivalent person. The conference will initiate cross national and inter-professional dialogues between researchers (from services and academia), policy leaders and developers, (governmental and non-governmental) and professionals from legal, court, child protection, child and family welfare, health and mental health services to identify and develop key local and global themes and will work towards a coordinated agenda for overcoming the various facets of the problem.

The Inaugural Addressing Filicide: For Cross National Dialogue Conference will, we are sure, be stimulating and instructive for those who attend, and will also produce published outputs of lasting value and influence.



Professor Thea Brown
Department of Social Work
Monash University



Dr Danielle Tyson
Department of Criminology
School of Political and Social Enquiry
Monash University

Time	Program Wednesday 29 May 2013	
5:30 – 7:00pm	Guided Walking tour of Old Historic Prato	
Time	Program Thursday 30 May 2013	
9:30– 10:00am	<i>Registration and morning tea</i>	
10:00 – 10:30am	Opening Plenary Session: Welcome and Keynote Address – Julia Stroud (Salon Grollo)	
10:30 – 12:00am	<p>Panel/Concurrent Sessions – National Picture Speakers: Dominique Bourget and Pierre Gagné Clinical and research experience with filicide: 20 years later Speakers: Thea Brown and Danielle Tyson Filicide in the context of separation and divorce, Victoria, Australia 2000 – 2010 Speaker: Roberto Rodriguez Manriques Incidence of filicide: Statistical and Qualitative analysis of the circumstances of filicide in Chile, 2010-2012</p>	No concurrent sessions
12:00 – 1:00pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:00 – 2:00pm	Keynote address by Myrna Dawson	
2:00 – 3:30pm	<p>Concurrent Sessions – Death Review Committees Speaker: Marian Brandon Contrasting reviews of child death with the review of maltreatment related deaths: the example of family involvement Speaker: Helen Buckley Developing effective recommendations from child death reviews Speaker: Sharon Vincent Using Child Death Review (CDR) data to inform prevention of abuse and neglect related deaths</p>	<p>Concurrent Sessions – Legal and media responses to filicide Speakers: Yvonne Jewkes and Maggie Wykes When ‘doting dads’ turn bad (not mad): differences in media reporting of male and female perpetrators of filicide Speaker: Heather Douglas Filicide: Bad fathers or mad mothers?</p>
3:30 – 4:00pm	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	
4:00 – 5:30pm	<p>Concurrent Sessions – Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Speakers: Emma Buxton and Anna Butler Trends and issues in filicide deaths: A review of all NSW filicide deaths in a context of domestic violence (1 July 2000 – 30 June 2009) Speaker: Debbie Kirkwood Filicide in the context of parental separation Speaker: Gwen Hunnicutt Filicide and military involvement in North Carolina, 2000-2005</p>	<p>Concurrent Sessions – Familicide and Filicide-Suicide Speakers: Frans Koenraadt and Marieke Liem Fatal revenge in the family Speaker: Carolyn Johnson The relevance of long term antecedents in assessing risk of familicide-suicide following separation Speakers: Christine Harrison and Ravi Thiara Exploring filicide-homicide-suicide as a form of domestic violence in the UK – extending the knowledge base.</p>
5:30 – 7:00pm	Welcome Reception – Prato Centre Terrace	

Time	Program Friday 31 May 2013	
<i>9:30– 10:00am</i>	<i>Registration and welcome coffee</i>	
10:00 – 10:30am	Plenary - keynote address by Peter Jaffe	
10:30 – 12:00pm	Concurrent Sessions – National Picture Speaker: Paul Mazerolle, Li Eriksson, Richard Wortley and Holly Johnson Maternal and paternal filicide: Case studies from the Australian Homicide Project Speaker: John Devaney Still Vulnerable: The impact of early childhood experiences on adolescent suicide and accidental death Speakers: Sandra Flynn, Jenny Shaw and Kathryn M Abel Filicide and mental illness: a national case series	Concurrent Sessions – Death Review Committee II Speaker: Rosemary Sheehan Responding to child deaths: the work of the Victorian Child Death Review Committee Speaker: Margarita Frederico Lessons from Child Death Reviews Speakers: Kate Morris and Marian Brandon Family involvement in case reviews: Messages for policy and practice
<i>12:00 – 1:00pm</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:00 – 2:30pm	Concurrent Sessions – Maternal Filicide and Neonaticide Speaker: Michelle Oberman Neonaticide and access to abortion: Why the law doesn't matter Speakers: Salmi Razali, Maggie Kirkman and Jane Fisher Why I killed my baby: The story of maternal filicide in Malaysia Speaker: Ricardo De La Espriella Maternal filicide: Unimputable Filicide Women's Stories	Concurrent Sessions – Supporting families in the aftermath of filicide Speaker: Barbara Tudor and Debra Clothier Escaping victimhood Speaker: Una Butler Personal experiences and proposals for reform. Speaker: Benjamin White Häefele Prenatal substance abuse mother's attitude towards their addiction and their perspectives towards treatment in Mitchells Plan, South Africa Speaker: Caren Malherbe Parricide in South Africa: A criminological analysis and assessment of selected case studies
<i>2:30 – 3:00pm</i>	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	
3:00 – 4:30pm	Concurrent Sessions – Prevention and early intervention Speakers: Rebecca Gray, Tim Broady, Irene Gaffney and Pam Lewis Client motivation and intimate relationship status in men's behaviour change programs: Recurring themes from qualitative interviews Speaker: Sue Packer Challenges in recognising and preventing infant filicide – a case review exploring paediatric child protection and legal obstacles Speakers: Brian Littlechild Working with resistance parents in child protection: Recognising and responding to the risks of abuse and death	
4:30 - 5:00pm	Discussion and Future Directions (key speakers) and Close of Conference	

Keynote Speakers



Myrna Dawson

Dr. Myrna Dawson is a Canada Research Chair in Public Policy in Criminal Justice and an Associate Professor, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Guelph. Her research focuses on trends and patterns in violence as well as social and legal responses to violent victimization with particular emphasis on homicide. Funded by the Canadian Foundation of Innovation, she has established the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence at the University of Guelph. She is author of numerous reports and publications and co-author of *Violence Against Women in Canada: Research and Policy Perspectives*. In 2011, she was a Visiting Scholar at the Faculty of Law, University of Melbourne, and, in 2012, was awarded a TC Beirne School of Law Distinguished Visiting Fellowship, University of Queensland. During these visits, she continued to develop her research which examines intimacy, violence and the law in the international context. She is also a member of Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, Office of the Chief Coroner.



Peter Jaffe

Peter Jaffe is a psychologist and Professor in the Faculty of Education at Western University (London ON Canada) and the Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children. He is the Director Emeritus for the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, which is a children's mental health centre specializing in issues which bring children and families into the justice system in London, Ontario. He has co-authored ten books, 24 chapters and over 70 articles related to violence and abuse involving children, adults, families and the justice system. Many of his publications and professional presentations deal with domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence on children, and child custody and access disputes. He has presented workshops across the United States and Canada, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica and Europe to various groups including judges, lawyers, mental health professionals and educators. He is a founding member of Ontario's Chief Coroner's Domestic Violence Death Review. In 2009 he was named an Officer in the Order of Canada by the Governor General of Canada.

Dr Julia Stroud

Dr Julia Stroud is a social work academic and is Director of Social Work Studies at University of Brighton, where she has overall responsibility for undergraduate and postgraduate courses of qualifying social work education and for a range of continuing professional development courses, including the training of practitioners to fulfil duties under mental health legislation. She has a background in child protection and mental health practice. Dr Stroud has a long interest in child protection and child homicide from a research and practice perspective. She is concerned particularly with the association between child homicide (including filicide) and the perpetrator's psychosocial environment and psychological state. She has undertaken a major study in England of 68 individuals who killed, or attempted to kill a child, using pre-trial forensic psychiatric assessments as a source of data (*Stroud, J. 2008 A psychosocial analysis of child homicide. Critical Social Policy. 28(4): 482-505*). In the past, she has been involved in cross national studies of child protection systems in Europe and is currently investigating the use of a risk assessment framework for front line police officers making initial child protection visits where. She is also undertaking a qualitative study, funded by NIHR's School for Social Care Research, on the use of Community Treatment Orders in England under Mental Health Act 1983, from a service user and practitioner perspective.

Abstracts

Day One

Dominique Bourget, MD

Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, Canada

Coorthor Pierre Gagné, MD

Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada

Clinical and Research Experience with Filicide: 20 Years Later

Abstract

The presenters are two Canadian forensic psychiatrists who have worked extensively with filicide offenders, both mothers and fathers. In addition to sharing their clinical experience with selected complex cases of filicide, they will highlight through their presentation results from their own longitudinal coroners' studies on more than 175 cases of filicides over the past 20 years. Their data reveals that fathers were the offenders in more than 60% of the cases. Over 70% of these cases occurred in the context of the parent suffering from severe psychiatric illness, with depression prevailing over psychotic illness. The authors will also offer their perspective on prevention and future directions based on their clinical and research experience as well as their past experience as coroners within the province of Quebec.

Professor Thea Brown, Dr. Danielle Tyson & Ms Paula Fernandez Arias

Monash University, Australia

Filicide: a Ten Year Retrospective Study

Abstract

Perspectives on filicide vary from country to country. In Australia recent research has linked filicide with parental separation and media reports have linked it with post separation parenting disputes in family courts. However, international literature links filicide with other factors that appear to vary according to the type of perpetrator and victim studied, such as mental illness, especially depression, family role, domestic violence, gender, drug abuse, life stresses and cultural context.

This paper presents an Australian study using Coroner's files from Victoria, the second most populous of the Australian states, covering all filicide victims in a ten year period, 2000 to 2009 inclusive. The study investigated the factors associated with the filicides and the help families sought at the time, with the aim of developing potential intervention prior to the act. The study found that in fact parental separation was strongly associated with filicide in all of the three major perpetrator groups – biological mothers, biological fathers and step-fathers. While biological mothers and fathers were equally responsible, male family members predominated once step fathers were added in. Depression was strongly associated with filicide regardless of perpetrator group. However, other factors varied according to the perpetrator and the victim groups. Families had usually sought help, but with little success. Their point of seeking assistance was mostly the family doctor, a professional with little expertise in addressing what was a relatively rare problem in their work. Future service planning is needed but it will require considerable inter-professional and inter-organisational education and co-ordination. It is possible that the media could be involved in this.

Roberto Rodríguez Manríquez

Fiscalía Nacional, Chile

Filicide in Chile. Incidence statistics and analysis of reports by deaths of children and adolescents by their parents between the years 2010-2012.

Abstract

The study describes and analyses the statistical incidence of filicide in Chile, compared the frequency of cases since the year 2010-2012 observing various descriptive variables associated with the facts and qualitatively explores the circumstances of the crimes culminated in the death of children by their parents. It made a relational and contextual analysis associated to filicide according to the categories of Resnick (1969) and psychosocial factors that distinguish the neonaticide and filicide in our country.

Dr Marian Brandon,
University of East Anglia

Dr Peter Sidebotham,
Warwick University

Associate Professor Kate Morris
University of Nottingham

Contrasting Reviews of all Child Death with the Review of Maltreatment Related Deaths: the Example of Family Involvement.

Abstract

In some countries and states all child deaths and maltreatment related fatalities are reviewed together while in other areas they are reviewed separately or in parallel. In England the two processes operate in parallel. The review of all child deaths is still in its early years of implementation (since 2008). By contrast, maltreatment related child death reviews (and in some cases the review of serious injury cases) is very well established. The key objectives of both processes are to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, although the maltreatment reviews focus additionally on learning about professional practice. There are mechanisms for capturing national as well as local learning from maltreatment related reviews in England, and since 2001 the Government has commissioned national analyses of these locally held reviews at least every two years. There is, as yet, no comparable collation or dissemination of learning from all child death reviews. This paper considers the way that learning can inform the process of reviews drawing, not least, on the national analyses of over 1,000 maltreatment related reviews (undertaken by the same research team since 2003). The paper focuses in particular on family participation in the review process. It contrasts the complex and difficult experience of family participation in the well-established maltreatment related reviews with the somewhat less problematized, and more routine experience of family participation in the newer all child death review system. The paper offers ideas about ways in which the two processes and the learning from the two processes (especially about family participation) can be brought together.

Dr. Helen Buckley, Sharon Vincent

School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Organisation: University of Wolverhampton

Developing effective recommendations from child death reviews

Abstract

The volume of recommendations in child death review reports has caused disquiet in recent years particularly as their repetitive nature challenges the effectiveness of reviews as tools for change. Recent efforts to address this problem have included a re-structuring of recommendations to reflect a more ecological approach to reviews, with an emphasis on learning as a desired outcome. This paper demonstrates the modifications that have been made to the process of making recommendations in Irish child death reviews. It will also illustrate how the review process can promote learning by elaborating on the type of practice that may have made a difference to the case. The paper will draw largely from the evolving practices of the National Review Panel in Ireland, but will also be informed by a research study commissioned by the Department of Children and conducted by the author and a colleague. The study is examining the recommendations of five major reports on inter-familial abuse, ascertaining the degree to which they have been implemented, and developing a typology of recommendations to inform the terms of reference of future inquiries.

Sharon Vincent

Centre for Health and Social Care Improvement, University of Wolverhampton, UK

Using Child Death Review (CDR) data to inform prevention of abuse and neglect related deaths

Abstract

Objective: Based on findings from a study which compared and contrasted CDR processes in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, England and Wales this paper outlines how CDR data can be used to inform prevention of abuse and neglect related deaths.

Method: Case studies comprising analysis of documents including national, state and local child homicide and fatality statistics, annual reports and other documents from CDR teams; semi-structured interviews with key informants; and observation of CDR team meetings were undertaken in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, England and Wales.

Results: CDR can identify themes and trends across cases. While official homicide figures have been criticised for underestimating the true incidence of abuse and neglect related deaths CDR data enables the identification of abuse and neglect related factors in a number of deaths that would officially be classified as accidental, or where there may not necessarily have been intent on the part of parents or caregivers. CDR, therefore, has the potential to inform the prevention of all deaths involving elements of abuse or neglect including homicides, unsafe sleeping deaths, and deaths related to inadequate parental supervision as well as deaths where abuse and neglect featured in the history of a case but did not necessarily impact on the child's death.

Conclusion: CDR teams sometimes struggle to demonstrate their prevention initiatives are making a difference in terms of reduced numbers of deaths but data from CDR has undoubtedly contributed to knowledge of abuse and neglect and successfully informed prevention initiatives.

Yvonne Jewkes

University of Leicester

Maggie Wykes

University of Sheffield

When 'doting dads' turn bad (not mad): differences in media reporting of male and female perpetrators of filicide

Abstract

Much academic work exists on women who kill their children (e.g. Wilczynski, 1997; Motz, 2008) including some that addresses the way such crimes are represented in the media (e.g. Wellton 1992). There is also some (though much less) scholarship concerning men who kill their (or their partner's) children (e.g. Gregory 2011). However little research to date has addressed the way in which the news media report men who commit filicide (Jewkes, 2011; Brown and Tyson, forthcoming). The limited scholarship that exists in this field tends to touch on news about men who commit filicide, while discussing more generally issues of domestic violence and familial abuse (Wykes 1998). This paper addresses this omission by offering a comparative, international analysis of the textual and visual representations in news media of father/father figures who kill their children. It considers how news deals with crimes where the key expectations of paternity – to provide for, protect and empower – are transgressed. Employing a thematic analysis of stories from several Anglophone countries, it assesses whether the moral tone of reportage varies between countries and cultures; how media in different countries understand and portray the often complex mental health issues underpinning these cases; whether and/or in what ways reporting of male filicide offenders differs from coverage of females; and what the implications might be of such coverage, both for our knowledge of paternal filicide but also, more broadly, for our understanding of masculinity, gender expectations, roles and relations, and familial violence as it is globally reported and reproduced.

Heather Douglas

The University of Queensland, Australia

Bad fathers and mad mothers?

Abstract

Drawing on Jenny Morgan's work that demonstrates the importance of context in understanding criminal offending, this paper examines Australian cases involving filicide that have been reported since 2000. This review includes analysis of a number of cases reported in the supreme courts, courts of appeal and in the mental health courts in each Australian jurisdiction. Each case examined involves the killing of a child by a biological parent. The case review demonstrates that filicides take place in a range of contexts including extended child abuse and in circumstances where domestic violence has been identified as a concern. Most filicide cases reviewed were carried out by fathers and resulted in manslaughter, rather than murder convictions, and often low penalties. Another significant group of cases have been dealt with via the mental health courts leading to treatment orders. In this group there are many more mothers than fathers represented. In most of the filicide cases reviewed, weapons were not used, with defendants using methods such as punching and suffocation. While the cases reviewed suggest that child protection authorities have rarely been alerted to concerns prior to the filicide, authorities such as the Family Court and police, through domestic violence interventions, were often apparently aware of difficulties in the child's environment prior to the death. This latter finding may suggest that better preventive (child protection) strategies could be introduced via domestic violence and Family Court processes.

Ms Anna Butler & Ms Emma Buxton (Co-authors)

Domestic Violence Death Review Team, Department of Attorney General and Justice

Trends and Issues in Filicide Deaths: A Review of all NSW Filicide Deaths in a Context of Domestic Violence (1 July 2000 – 30 June 2009)

Abstract

Between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2009, there were 66 filicides in the state of NSW, Australia. The overwhelming majority of these deaths (51 deaths or 77.27% of all filicides) occurred in a context of domestic violence. In many cases, the children were not direct victims of domestic violence prior to their death, but there was a history of violence, separation or active child custody issues between the parents. The DVDRT has collected and will present extensive information around risk factors and service contact for each death occurring as a consequence of filicide, focusing on those which have occurred in a context of domestic violence. Information regarding the demographics (including gender, age, ATSI status and metropolitan/regional residency) of each perpetrator and deceased are analysed by the DVDRT for each filicide death which occurs in a domestic violence context. Furthermore, the high prevalence of perpetrator suicide and high number of multiple fatality events (where the perpetrator kills multiple children and/or child(ren) and their intimate partner), will be evaluated. Qualitative analyses of specific filicide cases will also be included where appropriate.

This analysis has enabled the DVDRT to identify patterns and trends in filicide deaths. This provides further insight into the circumstances which surround filicide, including perpetrator outcomes through the criminal justice system and coronial outcomes. Such insight can influence public policy and service responses around domestic and family violence in terms of child protection and policing strategies. This study also identifies interesting future avenues for research and development.

Dr Deborah Kirkwood

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Filicide in the context of parental separation

Abstract

There have been several high profile cases of fathers who kill their children in the context of parental separation in Victoria, Australia, over recent years. The media have described the deaths of the children as ‘inexplicable’. As a State-wide Domestic Violence organization, DVRCV set out to explore the role of intimate partner violence in filicide. DVRCV produced a discussion paper, ‘Just Say Goodbye’, Parents who Kill their Children in the Context of Separation, which highlights the significance of separation in many filicides and the centrality of intimate partner violence. It argues that examining the nature of the relationship between the parents in such cases may be more important for understanding motives than the nature of the relationship between the child victim and the perpetrator. Drawing on a review of international studies, national data on filicide and case examples, this paper explores gender differences in filicide perpetrators, particularly those which occur in the context of separation. It highlights the links between separation, family violence and risks to children’s safety.

Gwen Hunnicutt

Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies, USA

Filicide and Military Involvement in North Carolina, 2000-2005

Abstract

This paper explores the link between filicide and military involvement. Recently, a handful of studies uncovered a connection between military families and child homicide and maltreatment (Gibbs, et al, 2007; Rentz, et al, 2007; Herman-Giddens and Vitaglione, 2005). Herman-Giddens et al (2005) found that child homicide victims in North Carolina are twice as likely to be from a military than a non-military family. Gibbs, et al (2007), found that the rate of child maltreatment within Army families of enlisted soldiers was 42% greater during times of deployment than during periods of non-deployment. Rentz, et al (2007) found that child abuse and neglect among military families in Texas doubled since troop deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan began in 2002.

This current study seeks to build on this small body of research on violence against children and military involvement, honing in on filicide in particular. The homicide data in this study comes from the North Carolina State Medical Examiner's office and includes children between the ages of 0 and 17. The data span a six year period, 2000-2005 - a period of heightened militarization in the U.S. The central aims of this study are to explore associations with filicide and military involvement and to consider how these cases are patterned according to age of victim, place, and other key social characteristics. An explanatory framework is offered that considers the culture of violence perpetuated by militarized institutions and the social conditions that may place military service families at elevated risks of violence.

Dr Carolyn Harris Johnson

University of Warwick

The Relevance of Long Term Antecedents in Assessing Risk of Familicide-Suicide Following Separation

Abstract

Familicide-suicide following separation is under researched and poorly understood. Findings from previous research are inconclusive about risk factors and perpetrator motivation. This presentation explores the relevance of long-term antecedents in cases of familicide that occurred in Western Australia. A conceptualisation of the offence is proposed based on attachment theory, the neurobiology of trauma and the possible subconscious motivation of perpetrators, which may prove helpful in assessing risk of familicide-suicide in Family Court cases. The research showed there are warning signs to familicide that are often not picked up by decision makers. Suggestions are made for changes to practice that may be helpful in identifying and responding to high-risk cases in a way that enhances safety.

Dr Christine Harrison – Principal author
Centre for the Study of Safety and Wellbeing

Dr Ravi Thiara – Co-author

Exploring filicide-homicide-suicide as a form of domestic violence in the UK – extending the knowledge base.

Abstract

This paper evaluates the early stages of research in the UK about filicide-homicide-suicide. It is informed by research in other countries and illustrates how significant international perspectives are to researching and theorising filicide. The relationship between domestic violence and homicides of women is well recognised; in the UK over 50% of women murder victims are killed by a partner/ex-partner. In some cases, the male perpetrator also kills himself, and the majority of homicide-suicide cases are the murder of a female partner followed by a man's own suicide. A more extreme form of domestic homicide and filicide has emerged, which may be increasing in some industrialised countries. Here, children in a family and female partners are murdered before the perpetrator kills himself. Termed familicide, family annihilation, or family wipe out, these offences are very rarely committed by women and the most significant risk factor is a prior history of male partner violence. In the UK, although we now have a stronger picture about child deaths caused by maltreatment, focussed studies of child homicide and filicide are few and this remains under-researched. Studies of filicide-homicide-suicide have been conducted elsewhere (by Harris Johnson in Australia, for example), but are non-existent in the UK.

The paper explores what is known about filicide-homicide-suicide, and defines the need to extend knowledge and theory perspectives relating to homicide and filicide, and the relationship between child homicide and gender violence. This will provide a stronger evidence-base to inform policy and practice developments in investigating and preventing filicide and adult homicide in the UK.

Abstracts

Day Two

Paul Mazerolle¹, Li Eriksson¹, Richard Wortley², Holly Johnson³

¹ Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University

² Jill Dando Institute for Security and Crime Science, University College London

³ Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa

Maternal and paternal filicide: Case studies from the Australian Homicide Project

Abstract

The literature suggests that maternal and paternal filicide may be associated with different motives and situational contexts. The current study uses data from the Australian Homicide Project to examine whether and how maternal and paternal filicide differ. The Australian Homicide Project provides a unique opportunity to explore these issues. The data was collected between 2010 and 2013 through interviews with individuals convicted of murder or manslaughter across a number of states and territories in Australia. These interviews provide detailed information on the developmental background of the perpetrators themselves, as well as motives and situational contexts of the homicide incidents. The current study uses a case study approach to explore these issues.

John Devaney¹, Lisa Bunting², Gavin Davidson¹, David Hayes¹, Anne Lazenbatt^{1,2} and Trevor Spratt¹

¹ School of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

² NSPCC, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Still Vulnerable: The Impact of Early Childhood Experiences on Adolescent Suicide and Accidental Death

Abstract

The word filicide derives from the Latin words *filius* meaning "son" or *filia* meaning "daughter" and the suffix *-cide* meaning to kill, murder, or cause death. However, in general usage it often refers to the deliberate act of a parent killing their child. Suicide is not usually considered within filicide research as it does not involve an act by another individual, even where the death has been caused by the experience of adversity in childhood.

In Northern Ireland a formal review must always be undertaken when a child dies, **including** death by suicide, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor. In this paper the authors explore whether including reviews of children who die by suicide within the study of filicide can help inform our understanding of why some children die, and how systems and processes could be developed to provide better support to these vulnerable children. Drawing upon research undertaken on the formal reviews into the deaths by suicide of eight children where abuse or neglect was believed to be a contributory factor, the authors explore how the experience of multiple adversity in childhood increases children's vulnerabilities and risk to dying by suicide in either childhood or as young adults. The research challenges our understanding of how we conceptualise the role of the child protection system and child death reviews.

Sandra Flynn,¹Jenny Shaw,²Kathryn M Abel

¹Centre for Mental Health and Risk, University of Manchester, UK

²Centre for Women's Mental Health, University of Manchester, UK

Filicide and Mental Illness: a national case series

Abstract

Background: On average there are between 20-30 incidents of filicide and five filicide-suicides in England and Wales per year. This population based study aims to provide a detailed, contemporary description of filicide perpetrators and to assess whether or not they were receiving care from mental health services at the time of the offence.

Method: A 10-year consecutive case series of people convicted of filicide and filicide-suicide in England and Wales (1997-2006). Socio-demographic and clinical data were collected from psychiatric reports prepared for trial. For those in contact with services, detailed clinical information was obtained from mental health teams.

Results: 6144 people were convicted of homicide, 297 were filicides, and 51 cases were filicide-suicide. 195 (66%) perpetrators were fathers. Mothers were more likely than fathers to have a history of mental disorder (66% v 27%) and symptoms at the time of the offence (53% v 23%), most often affective disorder. 17% of mothers had schizophrenia or other delusional disorders. Overall 8% had schizophrenia. 37% were mentally ill at the time of the offence. 20% had previously been in contact with mental health services, 12% within a year of the offence.

Conclusion: Filicide remains rare and our data suggest that, in the majority of cases, mental illness is not a feature of filicide. However, young mothers and parents with severe mental illness, especially affective disorder, require careful monitoring by mental health and other support services. Further research on mental disorder, domestic violence and child abuse may improve our understanding of filicide.

Associate Professor Rosemary Sheehan

Monash University, Australia

Responding to child deaths: the work of the Victorian Child Death Review Committee

Abstract

The Victorian Child Death Review Committee was established in 1995 as a multi-disciplinary Ministerial Advisory Committee to review the death of children who were either currently child protection clients or who had been known to the statutory child protection system. The Committee is to provide advice about each child death as well as insights into what are the surrounding patterns and issues. Key to this role is examining the contribution of the services sectors to the protection of children and the routine practices that are in place to respond to children and vulnerability. The Committee serves an important purpose in informing government policy about services systems functioning and policy, as well as advice about what changes and refinements are necessary to make shared responsibility for child protection an operational reality.

Margarita Frederico

La Trobe University

Lessons from Child Death Reviews

Abstract

This presentation will identify the process of group analysis of child death reviews and discuss the findings from two group analysis. In the first group analysis reviews were analysed where neglect was present although not the cause of death. The impact of the findings from this analysis is discussed. The second group analysis reported upon is analysis of reviews where there was presence of family violence, mental health and substance abuse. The implications for the different service sectors are discussed. The presentation will highlight the importance of group analysis of child death reviews and the lessons which can be learnt from the analysis which have the potential to influence ongoing practice.

Kate Morris

University of Nottingham

Marian Brandon

University of East Anglia

Family Involvement in Case Reviews: Messages for Policy and Practice

Abstract

In the UK case review guidance for cases where a child has died as a result of abuse or neglect (including filicide) places an expectation on the review process to involve families, but experience to date indicates that this is an area that poses difficult practice challenges. This paper will draw on a recent study, funded by BASPCAN that explored the experiences of families and professionals when involving families in case reviews. The findings are situated in the broader messages coming from the UK biennial reviews of review reports. The study examined the policy and practice approaches currently adopted towards the involvement family members and also uniquely captured the voices of family members who have participated in reviews.

The study was able to produce practice guidance (published by BASPCAN) as part of the research report. Clear messages emerged for professionals, but also important insights about the experiences of families and their understandings of events surrounding the death or serious injury of the child. The report recommends that assumptions cannot be made about the principles of participation or the processes of participation in this complex and difficult area, and careful guidance and practice is required for participation to be supported and appropriate. The report also points to the value of family involvement and the responsibilities placed upon professionals to develop highly skilled and responsive practices.

This paper will raise some of the challenging questions that emerge when family involvement in this context of risk and protection is promoted. Issues of culpability, responsibility and legitimacy infuse professional responses to this practice development. There is evidence of expectations about learning becoming conflated with expectations about reparation and resolution. The paper will conclude by suggesting ways forward in this complex area of policy and practice.

Professor Michelle Oberman

Santa Clara University School of Law, USA

Neonaticide and Access to Abortion: Why the Law Doesn't Matter

Abstract

An extraordinary number of filicide cases occur within the first twenty-four hours of a child's birth. In medical circles, these cases are termed "neonaticides," and the patterns surrounding these cases in the U.S. are remarkably consistent.

After a brief overview of the patterns surrounding neonaticide cases in the US, I turn to the puzzle of neonaticide's persistence in the U.S., given access to legal abortion. In this paper, I address the connection between abortion and neonaticide by drawing upon my extensive qualitative and quantitative work on neonaticide. This data suggests a surprising lack of connection between abortion's availability and the actions of girls and women who kill their newborns.

U.S. women who commit neonaticide typically are passive; they respond to pregnancy with a combination of denial, fantasy and terror. When asked about abortion following their convictions, their responses reveal ambivalence about abortion's morality. More importantly, they reflect an internal struggle between their desire for a baby and their belief that having a baby is impossible under their current circumstances. In this sense, their responses do not reveal callousness about the life of their foetus or newborn. Instead, they reflect a set of motives that are similar to factors that shape neonaticide among women throughout the world. I explore this final point by comparing a neonaticide case from El Salvador, where abortion is legal under all circumstances, with a case from the United States.

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Why I killed my baby; The Story of Maternal Filicide in Malaysia

Abstract

There is little research on women's experience of filicide in Malaysia, despite its prevalence and plethora of responses from public. We conducted several in-depth interviews with the women who had committed the act of filicide in order to understand the meaning of filicide and to explore the various circumstances and reasons for committing the act. We used narrative approach to listen to their stories of why they took the life of their own child, to understand their experiences of filicide according to their own frames of meaning and to explore circumstances surrounding their behaviour. Invaluable narrative themes of how filicidal women from different backgrounds and social circumstances make the act coherently to self and to others were discussed. Women's accounts reveal the complex personal and social contexts within which filicide events must be comprehended. Results of this research will assist multidisciplinary professionals to increase their insights into women's filicide experiences.

Ricardo de la Espriella

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UNIMPUTABLE FILICIDE WOMEN'S STORIES

Abstract

It presents the stories of eight filicidal women who were unimputable due to mental illness, the stories are analysed, looking for common characteristics. Methods: qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews of filicidal women from unimputables' program of the Ministry of Social Protection in Colombia. Discourse analysis was performed using grounded theory as a framework. Results: this sample was characterized by adult age (mean 26,5 yo), low level education, dependence on a masculine figure, devaluation of the feminine role, history of childhood abuse, and death or absence of one or both parents. Two multiple filicide cases are shown, and one case of neonaticide; child characteristics vary from wanted to unwanted pregnancies, and from only child to children with siblings.

This is the only filicide case series study in Colombia addressing the perpetrator's point of view.

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Barbara Tudor, Debra Clothier, Clifford Grimason

Escaping Victimhood

Abstract

Escaping Victimhood was founded by criminal justice professionals, who found they had a common concern about the wide-ranging and unmet problems of victims.

To be the primary or secondary victim of a serious crime, particularly murder or manslaughter, is terrible in itself. But for many people the awful event is just the start of the difficulties. The effects commonly include debilitating health problems, sleeplessness, family breakdown, inability to work, and poverty. The impact of trauma can mean that many people are living as if the crime just happened, even many years later, and their lives are put on hold.

Families of murder victims can feel isolated and stigmatised within their communities. Many will "self-medicate" with alcohol and drugs. The financial costs can also be immense.

Escaping Victimhood has piloted an experiential programme which comprises a residential workshop and a follow up day for around 12 participants at a time, which aims to provide participants with the skills to make the changes they want to their lives and stop the feelings of being 'stuck'.

Having evaluated the workshops (through robust feedback from participants and by independent research) we have found them to be successful in beginning to meet the needs of victims of serious crime.

Benjamin White Haefele

Prenatal Substance abuse mother's attitude towards their addiction and their perspectives towards treatment in Mitchells Plain, South Africa

Abstract

South Africa has one of the highest incidences of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) with the greatest prevalence in the Western Cape. Mitchells Plain in the Western Cape is an area with the highest drug related crime figures reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) of all the provinces in South Africa the past ten years. Conceived as a "model township" by the Apartheid Government, Mitchells Plain was built during the 1970's to provide housing for victims of forced removal due to the implementation of the Group Areas Act. Today the area is known for its gang activities, gang wars and drug trafficking. This study was undertaken in Mitchells Plain, Western Cape, among **17 mothers addicted to substances ranging from Methamphetamine, Heroin to alcohol.**

The aim of the research was to determine the social environment of the substance addicted mothers, the type of substance they used during pregnancy, the pregnancy itself and potential complications, the birth, the attitude of the mothers towards their addiction, **their attitude towards the damaging impact of their addiction on the foetus** and their perspectives towards treatment.

The research found that all of them used the substances during the pregnancy and is aware of the dangers associated with pregnancy and substance abuse. Although they are still addicted to substances, they feel that pregnant women who use substances should take responsibility for damaging the foetus and go for treatment.

Caren Malherbe

University of South Africa (Unisa)

Parricide in South Africa: A criminological analysis and assessment of selected cases studies

Abstract

During the past ten years there have been various newspaper reports in South Africa on children who murdered/allegedly murdered their parents. The murder of the Lotter parents in 2008 for example created enormous media interest in South Africa. Boots and Heide (2006: 419) refer to parricide as the killing of a parent by a "child" regardless of the child's age". The children in this study were under the age of 24 when they committed the crimes. In the South African context it is custom that grandparents often take over the roles of the mother/father figure in the absence of the parents. Therefore, the term "parricide" can also be defined as the killing of the primary caregiver.

The aim of this study is primarily on the characteristics of the perpetrator and to analyse the motives behind these crimes. The research also focuses on the relationship between family members, family dysfunctional elements as well as external factors that contribute to these crimes.

A total of 24 cases were selected in the electronic media as well as newspaper articles. Each of these cases represents a parricide event involving one or more victim and/or offender. Data collection includes interviews with professional officials involved in cases of parricide, court dockets, criminologists' evaluation reports and newspaper articles. This study is research in progress. Preliminary results will be presented at the conference.

Rebecca Gray, Tim Broady, Irene Gaffney and Pam Lewis

Client motivation and intimate relationship status in men's behaviour change programs: Recurring themes from qualitative interviews.

Abstract

Recent research in Australia has examined factors associated with filicide in order to more accurately instigate points of intervention. These factors include parental separation/divorce, depression in the perpetrator, and domestic violence. Therefore, services that facilitate men's behaviour change programs provide one such point of intervention. Relationships Australia (NSW) offer Taking Responsibility: an 18 week program that addresses men's use of violence and abuse in their intimate relationships, through group work and individual support. Fundamental to this program is the whole family's safety, which is managed through initial screening, ongoing contact and access to additional therapeutic services. Program evaluation has revealed that men's change factors are influenced by varying levels of motivation, both at intake and throughout. These accounts have also indicated that the relationship status with their partner negatively affects their level of motivation, which in turn has the potential to affect their investment in the program. However, female participants (both current and former partners) have expressed ambivalence towards their continuing relationships. As such, these interviews provide insights into the role that intimate relationship status has on men's motivation to change. In this presentation we reflect on the practitioners' role in facilitating client safety and preventing harm to children, in light of these dynamics.

Dr Sue Packer AM FRACP

Australian Capital Territory Health Directorate, ACT Australia

Challenges in recognising and preventing infant filicide- a case review exploring paediatric, child protection and legal obstacles.

Abstract

This paper discusses two families referred to me, both with histories of infants suffering recurrent apparent life threatening episodes (ALTE's) and infant deaths, all accepted by the coroner as being due to SIDS or "natural causes". When both families were brought to my attention, I considered there were a number of similar, concerning features- namely,

- All episodes had occurred in the presence of the same person in each family- namely the mother.
- Children had died in both families at the time I became involved
- Both families showed evidence of poor maternal-infant interaction.
- Both mothers had themselves experienced major childhood abuse and domestic violence.
- The role of the mothers' partners was significant.

It was difficult initially to persuade child protection authorities to act on reports from me and other treating paediatricians as there were medical explanations for the deaths.

Subsequently, major problems arose in attempting court action to ensure the surviving children's safety. A significant factor here was the inconsistent weight given to expert evidence.

Another infant in Family 1 died subsequent to the failed court action, and an unrelated infant, who had subsequently lived with this mother, sustained serious physical injuries.

My paper will present the chronology of both families related to the deaths.

I will discuss what I learned in attempting to work with both families and challenges of involving services appropriately.

The paper will then be open for questions and discussion.

Professor Brian Littlechild PhD, BA, MA, CQSW, RSW, FRSA, FHEA, AUH,
University of Hertfordshire, UK

Working with resistant parents in child protection: Recognising and responding to the risks of abuse and death

Abstract

Parental aggression, resistance and avoidance can pose significant risks to workers and children as a result of the power/control dynamics deployed by a small but very challenging number of families in child protection work. These behaviours can mean that it is very difficult to address the parents' abusing behaviour, and the effective safeguarding of the child from abuse, and sometimes death. Such resistant behaviours from abusers can include threats, abuse, and physical violence. Child protection workers and their supervisors have often found great difficulty in dealing with these issues of parents' use of power and control strategies in abusive families (Littlechild, 2005).

This paper will examine the causes of, and effective responses to, such behaviour from abusing parents, who have in the research been shown to be at risk of killing their children. This will include examination of the empirical research by the author, and a review of the other research evidence in the field in England, including the findings from individual child abuse death inquiries/Serious Case Reviews- independent reports into cases of child fatality or serious injury where the children were known to child protection agencies- that are illustrative of a number of different forms of aggression and avoidance.

The paper will propose key areas that can be employed in practice, and agency policies and supervision, providing a focus for risk assessment and risk management processes, and a means of reviewing progress (or otherwise) with such parents.

Notes

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