At-Risk Populations for Homicide-Suicide

Nova Southeastern University

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At-Risk Populations for Homicide-Suicide
Guszkowski, Klinoff, Mahler, Lundell, Walker
Nova Southeastern University

Chelsey Mahler, M.S.
The Link Between Domestic Violence and Murder-Suicide

Karen N. Guszkowski, M.S.
The Risk of Homicide-Suicide for Families Involved with Family Court

Vera A. Klinoff, M.S.
Homicide-Suicide in Police Families

Laura Lundell, M.S.
Homicide-Suicide in the Elderly Population
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• Presentation of the problem, research question, methods and results

• Review at-risk groups

• Discussion of results and future directions
Introduction

• Research indicates that consortial homicide-suicides cluster in some states with four identified groups at risk:
  – couples with a history of domestic violence,
  – couples involved in family court,
  – law enforcement officer couples, and
  – elderly couples.
The Problem

• Current attention focused on mass murders who then commit suicide

• A more commonly occurring form of homicide-suicide (murder-suicide) is where the perpetrator and victim are in a relationship

• These events seem to cluster in some states, Florida often being one of the highest in frequency
Our Question

• What risk factors, or at-risk groups, can be identified from open source media that covered homicide-suicides?
Methods

• Electronic open source media
  - Broward, West Palm Beach, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Polk, Seminol, Citrus, Hernando, Collier, Dade, Miami-Dade, Munroe, Osceola, Orange, Bay, Volusia, Nassau, Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Flagler,

• Collected for the past 5 years (2011-2015)
  - Perpetrator characteristics
  - Victim characteristics
  - Relationship
  - Situational characteristics
Results

• Four major groups were identified in the Florida sample

  1. Couples with a history of domestic violence
  2. Couples involved in child custody disputes
  3. Couples where one or both parties are police officers
  4. Elderly couples where one or both parties are in the caregiver role
The Link between Domestic Violence and Homicide-Suicide

Developed and Presented by: Chelsey Mahler, M.S
Nova Southeastern University
Perpetrator Characteristics

• “Dependent-protective” role
  ➢ Power and control
  ➢ Jealousy
  ➢ Obsession
  ➢ Struggles with rejection and/or being left alone
  ➢ Lack of regard for partner’s life
  ➢ Difficulty existing without their partner

• Depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation are exhibited
Risk Factors within Domestic Violence

- Leaving the abuser or *threats of leaving* the abuser
- Stalking behavior
- Presence of a firearm in the home
- Having a child living in the home that is not the perpetrator’s biological child
Recommendations

- Crisis Intervention Plan
  Roberts & Roberts, 2005

- Risk assessment

- Develop a safety plan

- Interview children privately
Recommendations

✓ Urge emergency protective orders and/or restraining orders

✓ Confiscate firearms

✓ Employ specific interventions for batterers who are at risk
Roberts's Seven-Stage Crisis Intervention Model

1. Establish rapport and rapidly establish relationship
2. Plan and conduct crisis and biopsychosocial assessment (including lethality measures)
3. Identify dimensions of presenting problem(s) (including the “last straw” or crisis precipitants)
4. Explore feelings and emotions (including active listening and validation)
5. Generate and explore alternatives (untapped resources and coping skills)
6. Develop and formulate an action plan
7. Follow-up plan and agreement

Crisis resolution
The Risk of Homicide-Suicide for Families Involved with Family Court

Developed and Presented by: Karen N. Guszkowski, M.S
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What is Family Court?

- Family unit issues
  - Divorce
  - Parenting Rights
  - Child Custody
  - Child Support
  - Child Abuse
  - Child Neglect
How Family Court has Evolved

• Early 19\textsuperscript{th} Century
  ➢ Father = head of the home

• Late 19\textsuperscript{th} Century
  ➢ Mother = nurturing one

• Present Day
  ➢ Joint Custody

Grossman & Friedman, 2011
How Involvement is a Risk Factor

• Co-occurring recent estrangement or separation

“[The] prospect of losing his family through death apparently strikes the desperate familicidal father as no more disastrous than the prospect of losing them through desertion.” – Daly & Wilson (1988)
How Involvement is a Risk Factor

• Typologies
  ➢ Fatalistic
  ➢ Frustration

• Classification
  ➢ Intimate/Domestic Lethal Violence-Suicide
  ➢ Family Annihilation-Suicide
Homicide-Suicide in Law Enforcement Families

Developed and Presented by: Vera Klinoff, M.S
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Introduction

• Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) are at higher risk of committing H-S than civilians

  ➢ Work related factors
  ➢ Officer-involved domestic violence
  ➢ Mental health factors
Work-related factors

• Access to service-issued firearm
  ➢ Most common method of H-S (Flynn et al., 2009)

• Work-related stress

• Command presence
  ➢ Generalized aggressive responding (Griffin & Bernard, 2003)
  ➢ Elevated risk of IPV
Officer-Involved Domestic Violence (OIDV)

- Significantly higher intimate partner violence (IPV) than in civilian populations (Neidig et al., 1992; Ryan, 2000).

- IPV most salient precursor to H-S (Violanti, 2007; Violence Policy Center, 2008; Eliason, 2009).

- Lack of widespread statistics on OIDV
Mental Health Factors

• Substance abuse (Violanti, 2003)

• Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (West et al., 2008)

• Depression (Chen et al., 2008)

• Suicide (O’Hara and Violanti, 2009)
Our study

• 43 police-involved H-S cases

• June 2007-February 2014

• Identified through OIDV-related website
  ➢ Corroborated with other media sources

• Frequencies calculated for relevant characteristics
Descriptive findings

- Mean age of victims: 35.77 (range = 83; SD = 18.44)
- Mean age of perpetrators: 46.60 (range = 56; SD = 13.26)
- State of highest incidences: New York
- Ethnicity: Non-Hispanic, white origin
- Perpetrators males, victims females
- Relationship: married/recently divorced
- Primary weapon: service firearm
- Location of act: inside the home
- Type of department: local
- Motive: Divorce/estrangement
- History of previous separations
- No disciplinary history
- Rank level: patrol officer
- Employment status: employed
- Type of department: local
- Middle SES
- History presence of domestic violence
Discussion

• Risk factors consistent with civilians

• Domestic violence remains key predictor

• Preventive measures
  ➢ Domestic violence policies in police departments
  ➢ Behavioral health trainings
  ➢ Peer trainings
Homicide-Suicide in the Elderly Population

Developed by: Laura Lundell, M.S
Presented by: Chelsey Mahler M.S
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Population 65+ by Age: 1900-2050
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
Outdated View

- Suicide pacts
- Altruistic killing
- Mutual consent
- Mercy killing
What we know: Relationship Variables

• Long marriages where husband has dominant personality
• Husband as caregiver
• Wife with Alzheimer's or similar condition
• Health status of one or both is changing
• Pending separation (nursing home/assisted living facility)
What we know: Relationship Variables

- Social isolation
- Marital conflict
- Husband with depressed mood*
Future Directions

- Accurate classification
- Awareness
  - Family
  - Medical Professionals
  - Public
- Support
DISCUSSANT
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References


References


