WHERE PARRICIDE MEETS ELDERCIDE: AN ANALYSIS OF CHILD TO PARENT/GRANDPARENT HOMICIDES IN THE UK

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BACKGROUND

• Homicide relatively rare in UK but increasing
  • 2016 – 571 (up by 57)
  • 2017 – 613 (up 42)
• Circumstances vary significantly by gender
  • Young men kill other young men, often acquaintances or strangers, mix of public spaces and victim home
  • Women killed by men in own home and almost always history of violence
    • Stalking or other forms of DV in 94% cases (Monkton-Smith et al, 2017)
CONCEPTUALISING HOMICIDE

- Divide homicides into sub-categories by either age or relationship:
  - Child homicide (infanticide or child homicide)
  - Domestic homicide (where V&P in intimate or familial relationship) – focus on young people
  - Intimate-partner homicide – focus on young people
  - Parricide (child killing parent) – neglected area of research
  - Matricide (child killing mother) – very few studies
  - Eldercide (victim is classed as ‘old’ or ‘elderly’) – infancy but growing

- while each term and field of inquiry is useful, the obvious overlaps between the different categories of homicide complicate research and potentially obscure important findings (Benbow et al, 2018).
WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT AGE AND CRIME

England and Wales

England and Wales
VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER PEOPLE

Risk might be lower than other groups but is not low

64,871 social services/safeguarding enquiries involving victim 65+ in 2015-16

- 60% female
- Most common abuse was physical followed by psychological

Only EA study in UK estimated 220,000 victims of abuse each year (O’Keeffe et al, 2007)

Yon et al (2017) systematic review estimates at least 1 in 6 older people experience abuse each year – equivalent in England and Wales to more than 2 million people aged 60+ each year
ELDERLY VICTIMS OF FATAL VIOLENCE

- Neglected area of research
- USA data provides mixed results “eldercide”
  - Group 1: mostly men killed by strangers during robbery – ‘eldercide’
  - Group 2: more women or equal men/women and most likely to be known to victim/family member - \textit{domestic homicide’}
- Parricide
  - Majority focus on young victims/offenders. Holt (2017) reports women most at risk in later life whereas men most at risk in 50s

No specific homicide/domestic homicide research on older victims in UK
The Study

Research questions:

- What is the extent and nature of homicides involving a victim aged 60 and over in the UK?
- Is homicide of older people different to younger people?
- How do these findings compare with ‘eldercide’ literature?

Mixed-methods:

- Freedom of Information requests to 46 police forces
- Full response...after some haggling!
- 514 cases between 2010-2015
## Key Findings

### Domestic Homicides
- 221 homicides (43% total sample)
- Equates to 44 homicides per year, meaning around **1 in 4 domestic homicides involving victim 60+**
- 67% victims female; 81% perpetrators male
- Gender differences (relationship, method of killing)

### Parricides
- Almost equal chance of IPV (n=102) and parricide (n=97)
- 59% victims female
- Most victims 60-79 (n=66)
- 82% perpetrators male
- 94% perpetrators aged under 60
- 40% cases involved stabbing – gender differences
- V&P ‘white’ but higher number of Asian victims compared to intimate-partner homicide sample
IMPLICATIONS

1. Risk might be lower in older age but is not low (1 in 4 IPVs involves older victim)
2. Almost equal numbers of IPV and parricide
3. Rapidly aging population means numbers likely to increase
4. Need to revisit conceptual understandings of interpersonal violence
5. Develop more inclusive methodologies
6. Practice and policy developments – risk assessments
FURTHER RESEARCH

• Not clear how many of these were ‘mercy’ killings, although most involved killing via stabbing, beating or blunt force trauma

• Interesting that women mainly killed other women (mothers) – need to know more about circumstances

• Existing DHRs do not reflect the parricide/IPV split – need to know more about victim and offender background