

form 9 July 2015
Accepted 17 July 2015
Available online 10 August 2015

gender
of accused are examined as well as differences in maternal and paternal "icides by the gender and age of the victim, the age and marital status of the accused, type of parental relationship, cause of death, motive, history of family violence, and clearance status. Results show that there are significant differences in "icides by mothers and fathers. Five possible emerging trends were identified: an increasing gender gap in accused, increasing presence of relationship breakdown, growing number of cases involving stepfathers and a prior history of family violence, and declines in accused who committed suicide. Implications of these trends for interventions and prevention are discussed and future research priorities highlighted.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The intentional killing of a child prompts reactions of shock and horror from most members of society, a situation that is greatly exacerbated when the accused is the child's father or mother. In Westernized societies, the majority of child homicide victims are killed

to as familicides ([Bourget](#)

can help shed light on the viability of these explanations in accounting for this form of murder (Silverman & Kennedy, 1988, p. 114).

The Current Study

Data Source and Sample

The primary data examined in this study were drawn from Statistics Canada's annual Homicide Survey that has collected information on homicide incidents, victims, and accused persons since 1961. Police departments across the country are mandated to complete a survey questionnaire

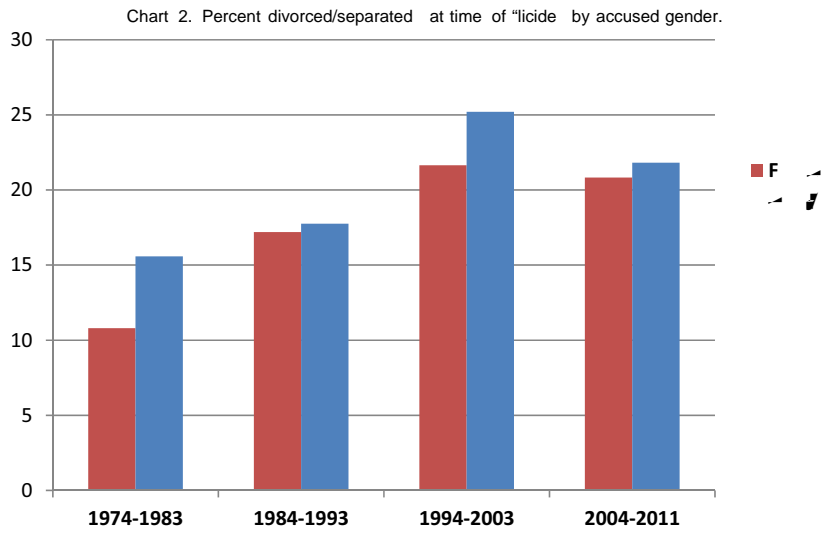


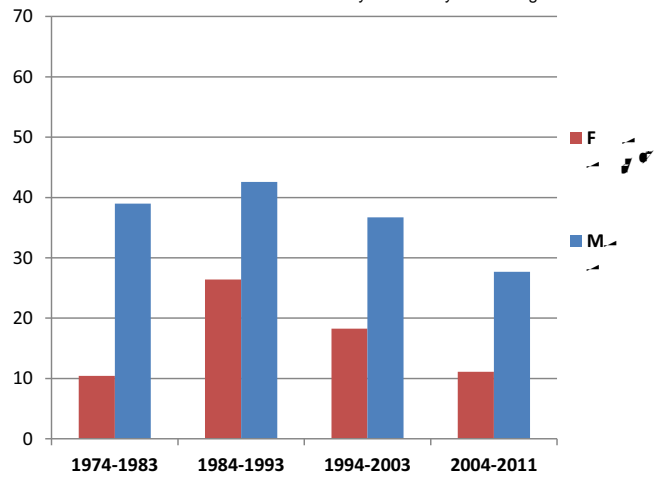
Table 2

Incident characteristics and case outcomes in "homicide" cases by gender of the accused, Canada, 1961...2011 (N = 1,612).

Total sample		Male accused		Female accused		df	χ^2
N	%	N	%	N	%		
1,612	100	919	57	693			

Chart 4. Percent "licides with history of family violence by accused gender.

Chart 5. Percent "licides cleared by suicide by accused gender.



the risk of maternal "licide. This latter explanation is only partially supported by [Hunnicutt \(2007\)](#) who demonstrated that absolute female economic status was positively associated with infant and child homicide in urban, but not rural areas. Further examination of these and other explanations are required and, in particular, the urban/rural dimension as highlighted by [Hunnicutt \(2007\)](#) should be part of these investigations. Recall that results above showed that the proportion of male accused compared to female accused was much greater in the Prairie provinces and the Territories. These regions of the country have high rural populations. Regardless of the source of the growing gender gap, its existence underscores repeated calls for research on paternal "licides that could contribute to our understanding of these events, and how they differ (or not) from maternal "licides.

Increasing proportion of accused experiencing relationship breakdown. Almost 70% of "licide accused were married at the time of the incident; however, an examination of patterns over time demonstrated that the proportion of accused divorced, separated or widowed has increased in recent years. For male accused, this marital category increased from 16...18% to 22...25% and, for female accused, from 11% to 21...22%. It could be that the proportion of men and women in this relationship category has increased in the general population thereby increasing the numbers at risk. Peaks in the divorce rate in Canada occurred in 1968 and 1985 following changes in divorce legislation, but have remain stable since the late 1990s. These patterns capture the termination of legal marriages only, however, and not that of common-law unions which have been on the rise ([Milan, Keown, & Urquijo, 2011](#)). As such, it is difficult to accurately assess whether or not this "nding re"ects an actual increase in "licidal perpetrators or a function of an increase in those at risk.

Alternatively, it may be that "licides are increasingly occurring as a result of marital breakdown and, particularly, separation and estrangement that often involve custody and access disputes. This explanation is supported by the results of the current study as well as research that "licidal fathers are more often motivated by revenge and/or jealousy. Further,

types of homicide, although it remains more frequent for male than female accused. Examining patterns over time, the likelihood of an accused committing suicide following the homicide appears to be decreasing, similar to trends elsewhere (Sturup & Granath, 2014). Some historical research on infanticides suggests that homicide-suicides may have been declining for some time

process of getting a divorce. •Violent partners have often been shown to use access to children or legal custody proceedings to control or punish their former partners (Harrison, 2008; Radford, Hester, Humphries, & Wood"eld, 1997).

With respect to the findings of the Ontario DVDRC regarding the role played by sexual jealousy, cases reviewed showed that •sexual jealousy or suspected infidelity can also be connected to an abusive father who questions the paternity of his child and can increase the risk of harm to both the adult victim and children (Jaffe et al., 2013, p. 24). For example, in their 2004 report, the Ontario DVDRC reported on nine cases involving 11 fatalities. Eight of the nine cases involved male perpetrators and, of those, four involved child custody and access disputes, two ending in the deaths of the children by their fathers retaliating against their former female partners by killing their children (p. 24). The latter two cases involved criminal and family court proceedings involving criminal charges and conflict over access to children. In their 2005 report, the committee described one case that involved the attempted homicide of a child by the father who was targeting his estranged spouse by attempting to kill their child after which he subsequently committed suicide (p. 27).

Keeping these illustrative real-life examples in mind, three of the "ve emerging trends noted above are pertinent to developing appropriate interventions in such cases: (1) "icides perpetrated by divorced/separated/widowed accused; (2) the rise in "icides by stepparents; and (3) increasing evidence of a history of domestic violence, particularly by fathers. The accompanying declines in suicide suggest that "icides today may be less about mental illness and more about control and manipulation of reproduction, at least those perpetrated by fathers (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Further research on these trends and the various explanations for them may identify new areas of intervention and prevention in these cases.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Tina Hotton, Wendy Regoeczi, Sarah Cahill, and Janice Hicks for their assistance and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics for preparing the data used in the analysis.

References

- Adelson, L. (1961). Slaughter of the innocents: A study of forty-six homicides in which the victims were children. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 264, 1345...1349.
- Boll, C., Leppin, J.,

Mariano, T. Y., Chan, Choon, Oliver, H., & Myers, W. C. (2014). [Toward a more holistic understanding of "licide: A multidisciplinary analysis of 32 years](#)