Change in Homicide over Time – Implications for policy and law

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Outline

- Incidence of homicide in Scotland over time
- Different types of homicide and their change over time
- Implications for policy and law
Taking homicide research forward

- Argument for disaggregation – Homicide is not unidimensional

- Hidden trends in data over time
  - Have all types of homicide decreased?
  - Different types
  - Different patterns
  - Different prevention strategies
Data

- Homicide data: the Scottish Homicide Database (SHD)
  - From 2000 to 2015

- Total of $n=1344$ cases
  - 1978 offenders

- Only cases identified as ‘murders’ by Police Scotland

- Variables related to the victim, offender and the incident
Homicide Typology

• **Stabbing** (31.9%)
  - Sharp instrument; male offender and victim; known or acquaintances; motivated by fight/argument; Inside/private; improvised; alcohol/drugs

• **No-Weapon Bludgeoning** (27.3%)
  - No weapon/ blunt instrument; male offender and victim; known or acquaintances (family members); motivated by fight/argument; Inside/private; improvised; alcohol/drugs

• **Rivalry** (24.8%)
  - Rivals; feud or faction rivalry; public place; young male offenders and victims; alcohol/drugs; sharp weapon/ firearms; weapon brought to scene

• **Femicide** (16.0%)
  - Domestic homicide; Male offender, female victim; intimate partners; inside/private; motivated by fight/argument/domestic dispute; sharp instrument
Percent change in homicide types over time (index: 2000-2003=100)
Relative change in homicide types over time (2000 – 2015)

- Stabbing: Stable over time
- No Weapon-Bludgeoning: Stable over time
- Rivalry: Relative decrease of 21.3%
- Femicide: Relative increase of 21.0%
- The decrease appears to be driven by the Rivalry type
- Femicide has not decreased nearly as much
Conclusion

- There are different types of homicide, demonstrating different trends over time.

- Although there has been an absolute decrease in all types of homicide, some types have increased in relative terms.

- While lethal public violence involving sharp instruments has decreased dramatically over time, lethal domestic violence has not decreased by nearly as much.
Implications for Policy and Law

• While not conclusive, certain policy interventions seem to have had an effect on public lethal violence
  – VRU
  – Homicide as a public health problem

• Need stronger policy focus on domestic homicide
  – As well as homicide occurring indoors

• Homicide is very mundane
  – Rarely planned
  – Impulsive
  – Alcohol or drugs
  – Escalating fights between acquaintances

• Implications of provocation, self-defence and culpability
Thank you!

- Questions?

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