

From the Gender Paradox to Suicide as Culturally Scripted: Theory and Research

Silvia Sara Canetto, Ph.D.
Colorado State University, USA



Observatoire National du Suicide
Ministère de la Santé, Paris, France, Mai 2024



In dominant suicidology
suicide
is often thought as having
universal explanations

In dominant suicidology
women's and men's suicidality
is often conceived as opposite
in patterns
and in explanations

Suicide is a cultural act

**Suicide is often gendered
but in culturally-specific ways**

When I entered the field...

Suicides were **attempted** and **failed**
or **completed** and **successful**

**Women
failed**

**Men were
successful**

Language of Suicide (Canetto, 1992; 2015)

With regards to nomenclature, **suicidal acts that resulted in the person's death will be referred to as "fatal" or "lethal" suicide acts—rather than "completed" or "successful" suicides**, as they are often called in the North American literature. Suicidal acts that did not result in the person's death will be referred to as "nonlethal" or "nonfatal" suicidal acts—in lieu of the terms "attempted suicide" and "parasuicide" commonly used in the North American and British literature, respectively **[A] disadvantage of the traditional nomenclature is that it defines as successful a suicidal act in which the person dies** (Canetto, 1992, p. 81)

"Calling a suicide "completed" or "successful" implies that killing oneself (a suicidal behavior outcome less common in women in the United States and Canada) is a success and a sign of strength and determination, and that surviving a suicidal act (an outcome more common in women in the United States and Canada) is a sign of weakness and indecisiveness, and a failure. Ultimately, terms such as "attempted" suicide make it difficult to take seriously nonfatal suicidal behavior. They also make it difficult to think about surviving a suicidal act as a more formidable, more courageous, and more successful behavior, from the point of view of coping, than killing oneself" (Canetto, 2015a, p. 3).

Crisis' Current Language Guidelines

Stigmatizing Language	Neutral Language
to commit / complete suicide	to die by suicide; to end his/her life
a successful suicide / attempt	a fatal suicide attempt
an unsuccessful suicide	a non-fatal suicide attempt
a failed attempt	a non-fatal suicide attempt
suicide victims / cases	those who died by suicide

It was believed that women “failed” at suicide
because they are too...

Weak

Vain

Cowardly

Unimaginative

Simple-minded

Passive

Dull

...to kill themselves

“The acts of firing a gun, plunging a knife, or kicking a chair
away may be all the more difficult for a woman
because of her lesser strength”

Gender and Suicide in the Elderly

Silvia Sara Canetto, PhD
Colorado State University

ABSTRACT: Gender is one of the most important predictors of suicide in the elderly. In North America, older women are less likely to be suicidal than older men. So far, suicidologists have either ignored gender differences or have focused on the presumed causes of older men's suicidal behavior. In this paper, the focus is on older women's low rates of suicidal mortality. On the basis of a review of the literature, several hypotheses are suggested. One is that gender differences in suicide mortality reflect differences in coping. Another hypothesis is that gender differences are influenced by gender norms of suicidal behavior. Directions for prevention are proposed.

“The acts of firing a gun, plunging a knife, or kicking a chair away may be all the more difficult for a woman because of her lesser strength” ?

”No particular physical fitness is required to pull a trigger. In fact, men are most dangerous to themselves after age 75, when they are most . . . frail.” (Canetto, 1992, p. 82)

Women are too passive, dull, simple-minded, unimaginative, compliant, and cowardly to kill themselves?

Is killing oneself a sign of imagination and courage?

“It is interesting to note that the characteristics women display are pejoratively labeled, even when they are associated with survival, and . . . [that the] characteristics men display are positively labeled, even when they lead to self-destruction.” (Canetto, 1992, p. 84)

It was assumed that...

suicide is male problem, and a masculine act;

and that

women are protected from suicide;
that suicide is not 'natural' to women.

It was believed that women and men are suicidal for completely different reasons

That women's suicides are
emotional, impulsive, manipulative acts
in response to **trivial relationship problems**; and

that men's suicides are
deliberate decisions
in response to **serious social or economic adversities**.

“She Died for Love and He for Glory”



Thomas Rowlandson. *She Died for Love and He for Glory*. 1810. Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. San Marino, California.

OMEGA, Vol. 26(1) 1-17, 1992-93

192-93

SHE DIED FOR LOVE AND HE FOR GLORY: GENDER MYTHS OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR*

SILVIA SARA CANETTO

Colorado State University, Fort Collins

ABSTRACT

Epidemiological studies have long reported that, in North America, patterns of suicidal behavior differ by gender: women “attempt” suicide; men “complete” suicide. Theories of suicidal behavior also differ according to gender. Traditionally, women are said to be suicidal for love; men, for pride and performance. Are these gender differences “real?” Are women’s attempts “failed” suicides? Do suicidal men “succeed” when they kill themselves? Is women’s self-definition dependent on love? Is men’s dependent on performance? Evidence currently available does not support traditional theories of gender and suicidal behavior. As culturally shared assumptions, however, traditional theories may influence the suicidal choices of women and men, as well as the assumptions and research methods of suicidologists.

“She Died for Love and He for Glory”

Gender Myths of Suicidal Behavior (1992-1993)

A suicidal woman is an abandoned, a pitiful woman;
without him she has no *raison d'être*.

A suicidal man is a fallen hero;
suicide is another way to demonstrate his heroism
and remain admirable and masculine.

Gender Myths of Suicidal Behavior

Dido's suicide *versus* Saul's suicide



**MEN ARE
FROM MARS,
*Women Are
from Venus***

A Practical Guide for
Improving Communication and
Getting What You Want in Your Relationships

JOHN GRAY, Ph.D.

Women and men were assumed to be natural opposites

- In interests, needs, emotions, motivations, behaviors? **NOT!**
- In suicide?
NOT!

The Gender Paradox in Suicide

Silvia Sara Canetto, PhD, and Isaac Sakinofsky, MD

In most Western countries females have higher rates of suicidal ideation and behavior than males, yet mortality from suicide is typically lower for females than for males. This article explores the gender paradox of suicidal behavior, examines its validity, and critically examines some of the explanations, concluding that the gender paradox of suicidal behavior is a real phenomenon and not a mere artifact of data collection. At the same time, the gender paradox in suicide is a more culture-bound phenomenon than has been traditionally assumed; cultural expectations about gender and suicidal behavior strongly determine its existence. Evidence from the United States and Canada suggests that the gender gap may be more prominent in communities where different suicidal behaviors are expected of females and males. These divergent expectations may affect the scenarios chosen by females and males, once suicide becomes a possibility, as well as the interpretations of those who are charged with determining whether a particular behavior is suicidal (e.g., coroners). The realization that cultural influences play an important role in the gender paradox of suicidal behaviors holds important implications for research and for public policy.

This article centers on a familiar but still puzzling paradox in the epidemiology of suicidal behavior. In most countries where the prevalence of suicidality has been studied, females have higher rates of suicidal ideation and behavior than males, yet mortality from suicide is typically lower for females than for males.¹ In this paper we explore the gender paradox of suicidal behavior, examine its validity, and critically examine some of the explanations that are based on empirical data. Most of the evidence for this article comes from studies conducted in industrialized Western countries, particularly in North America and Western Europe, as well as in New Zealand, the parts of the world where the gender paradox of suicidal behavior has been documented. We should be mindful that there are vast regions of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Eastern Europe that either

do not report statistics on suicide to the World Health Organization (WHO) or whose statistics may be more inaccurate than the norm.

NONFATAL SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

In most Western countries, females are overrepresented among those who report suicidal ideation (see Canetto & Lester, 1995b; Canetto, 1997b; for reviews). Females also tend to surpass males in rates of nonfatal suicidal behavior.² In the WHO/EURO study of clinically treated nonfatal suicidal acts, for example, the average person-based, female to male ratio was 1.5 : 1 (Schmidtke et al., 1994). These findings emerge also in other clinical studies (e.g., Bland, Newman, & Dyck, 1994; Hawton, Fagg, Simkin, & Mills, 1994; Kreitman, Buglass, Holding, Ken-

¹Silvia Sara Canetto is associate professor of Psychology at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA.

²Isaac Sakinofsky is professor of psychiatry and public health sciences at the University of Toronto, and head of the High Risk Consultation Clinic and Suicide Studies Program at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, Toronto, Canada.

Correspondence may be addressed to Silvia Sara Canetto, Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, 80523-1876, USA.

³This statement is based on morbidity and mortality studies conducted primarily in Western countries. We know little about the epidemiology of suicidal behaviors in a majority of countries of the world.

⁴In this article the term nonfatal suicidal behavior is used synonymously with what the literature may refer to as "attempted suicide," "distressive self-harm (self-poisoning or self-injury), or parasuicide."

The Gender Paradox in Suicide

- **The gender paradox in suicide idea was articulated in a 1998 SLTB article I co-authored with Sakinofsky. The article is now a “classic”--the third most cited in the history of the journal.**
- **In some countries women have significantly higher morbidity but lower mortality from suicidal behavior than men.**
- **This is a paradox because higher engagement in a life-threatening behavior is usually associated with higher morbidity and mortality by that behavior.**

From the Gender Paradox of Suicide to Cultural Scripts of Gender and Suicide

- The gender paradox of suicide is most parsimoniously explained by cultural factors.

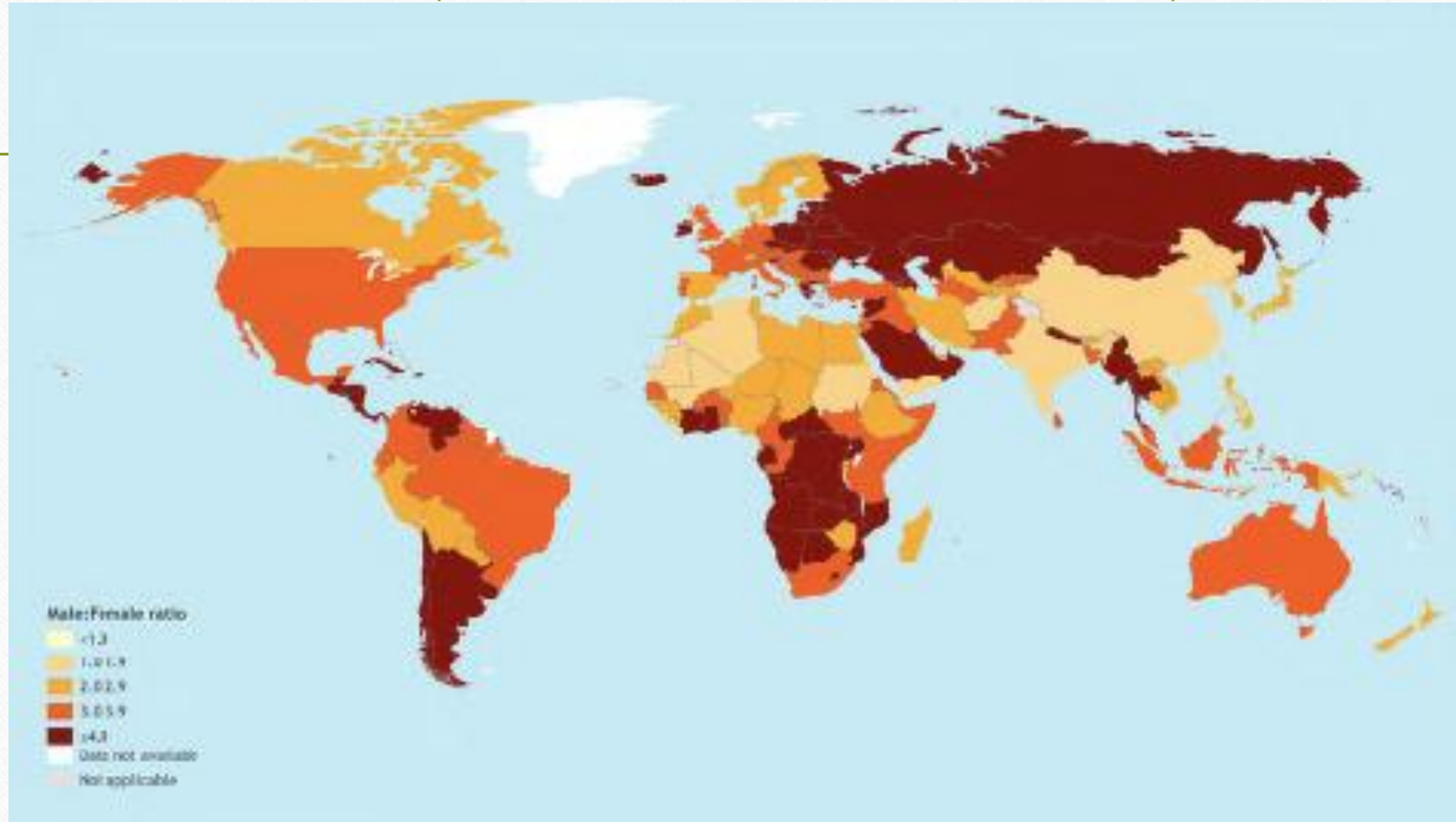
Suicide is culturally scripted!

- **The gender paradox of suicide is not universal.** There is significant diversity in male and female suicidality rates between and within countries, and by intersectionalities of age, sex and ethnicity.

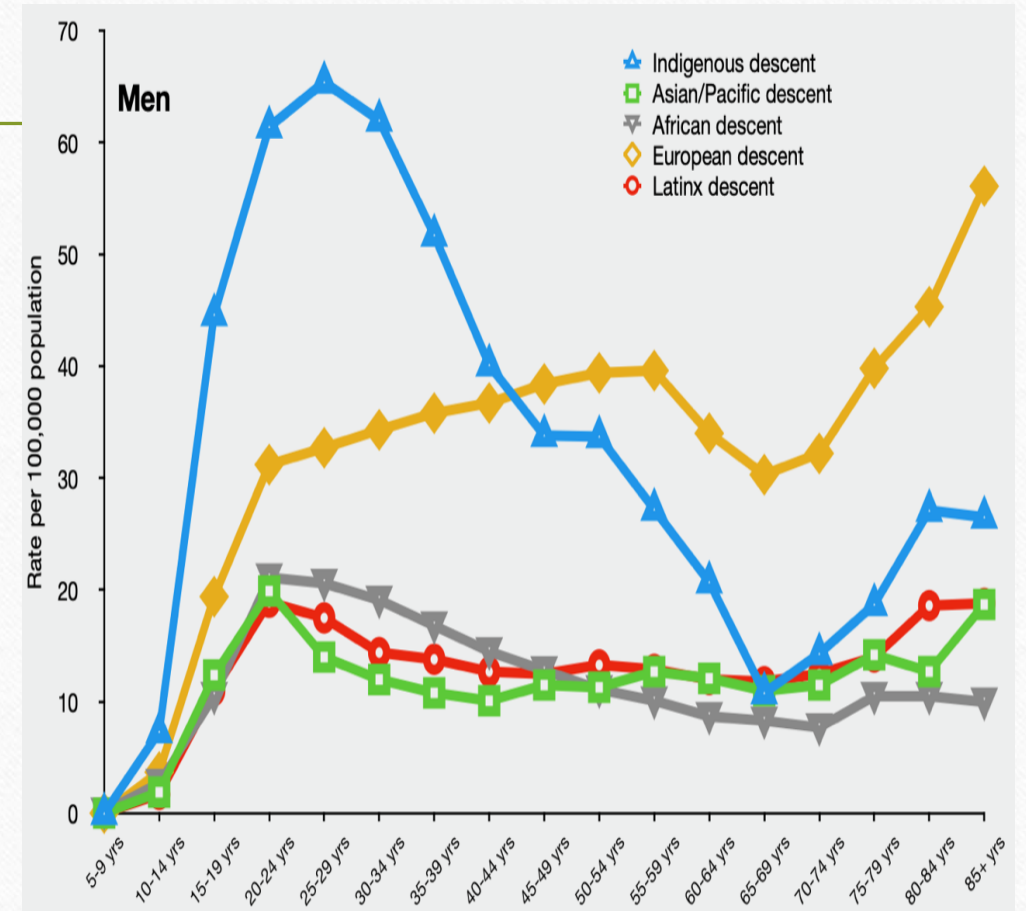
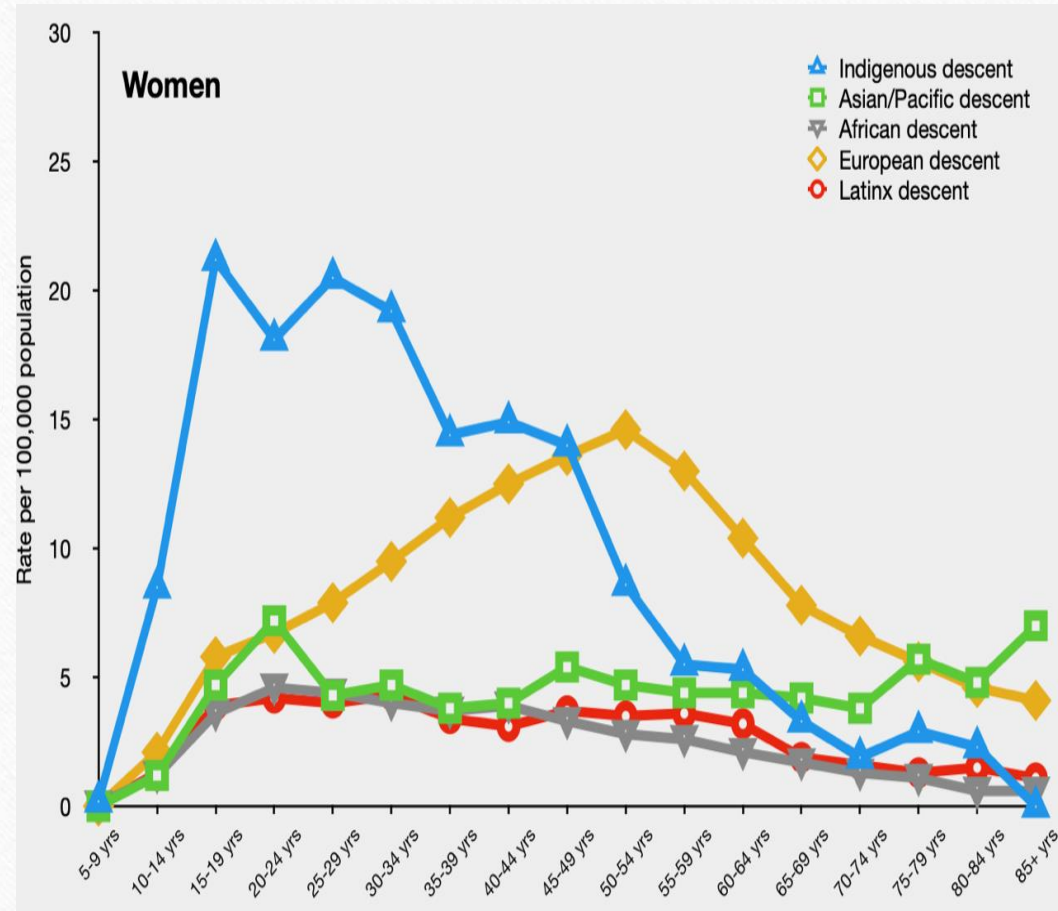
Suicidal behavior is culturally scripted!

Male:female ratio of age standardized suicide rates, 2019

(Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2000-2019)

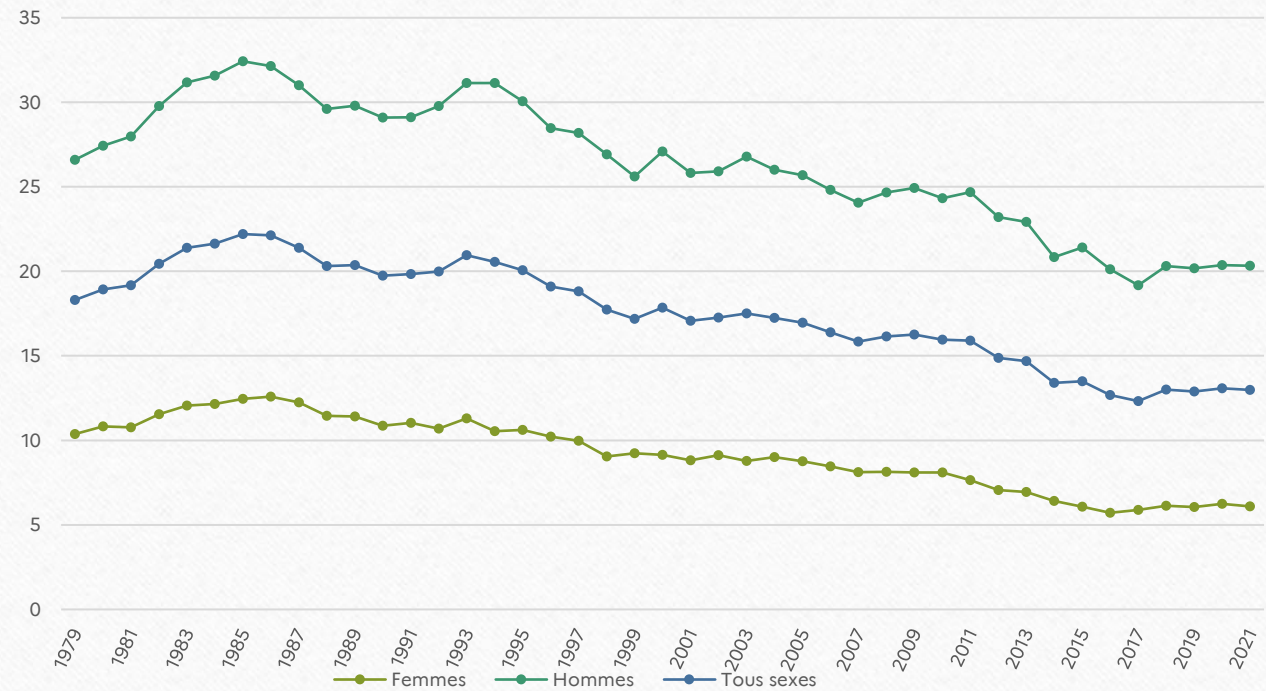


U.S. Women's and Men's Suicide Rates by Ethnicity and Age, 2010-2019



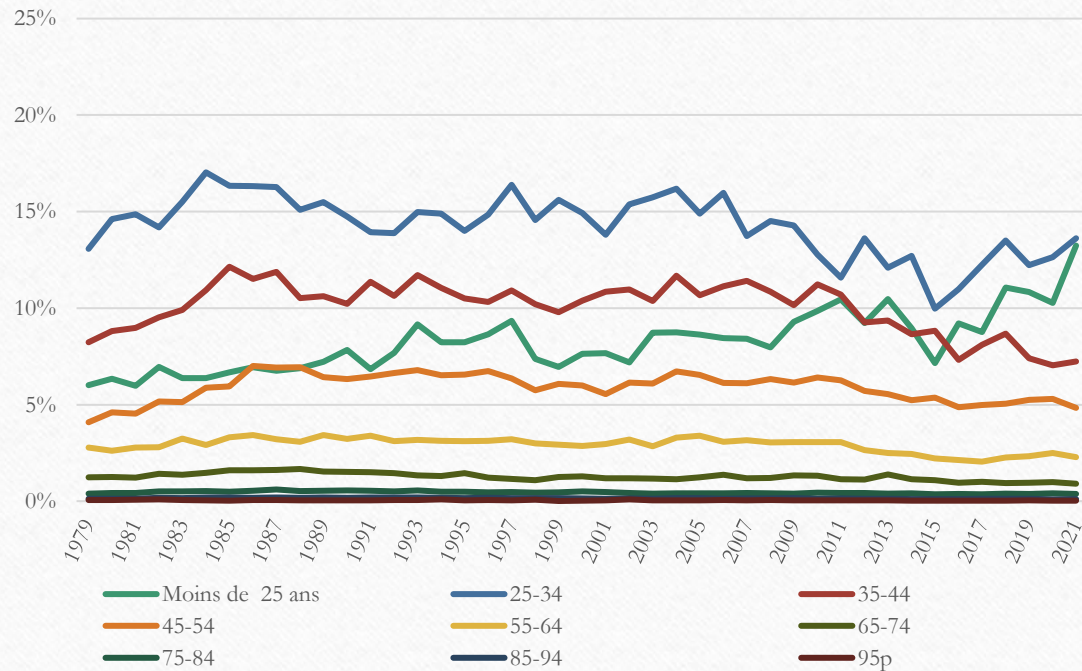
Women's and Men's Suicide Rates, France, 1979-2021

Graphique 1. Taux bruts de suicide selon le sexe – France entière, 1979 – 2021 (pour 100 000 habitants)

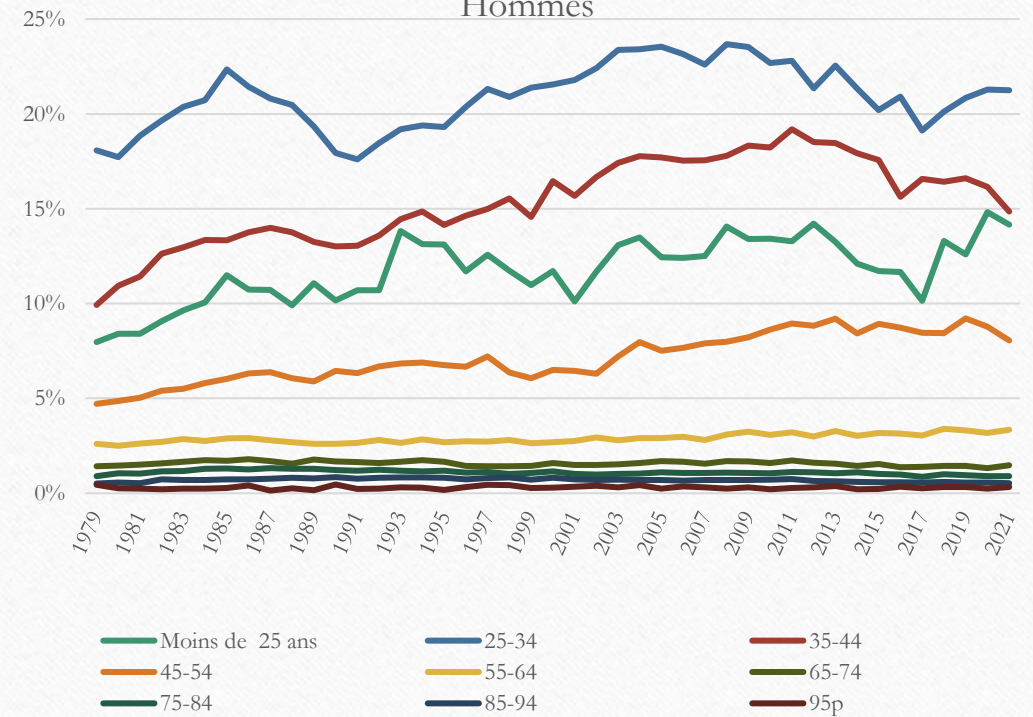


Women's and Men's Suicide Rates by Age, France 1979-2021

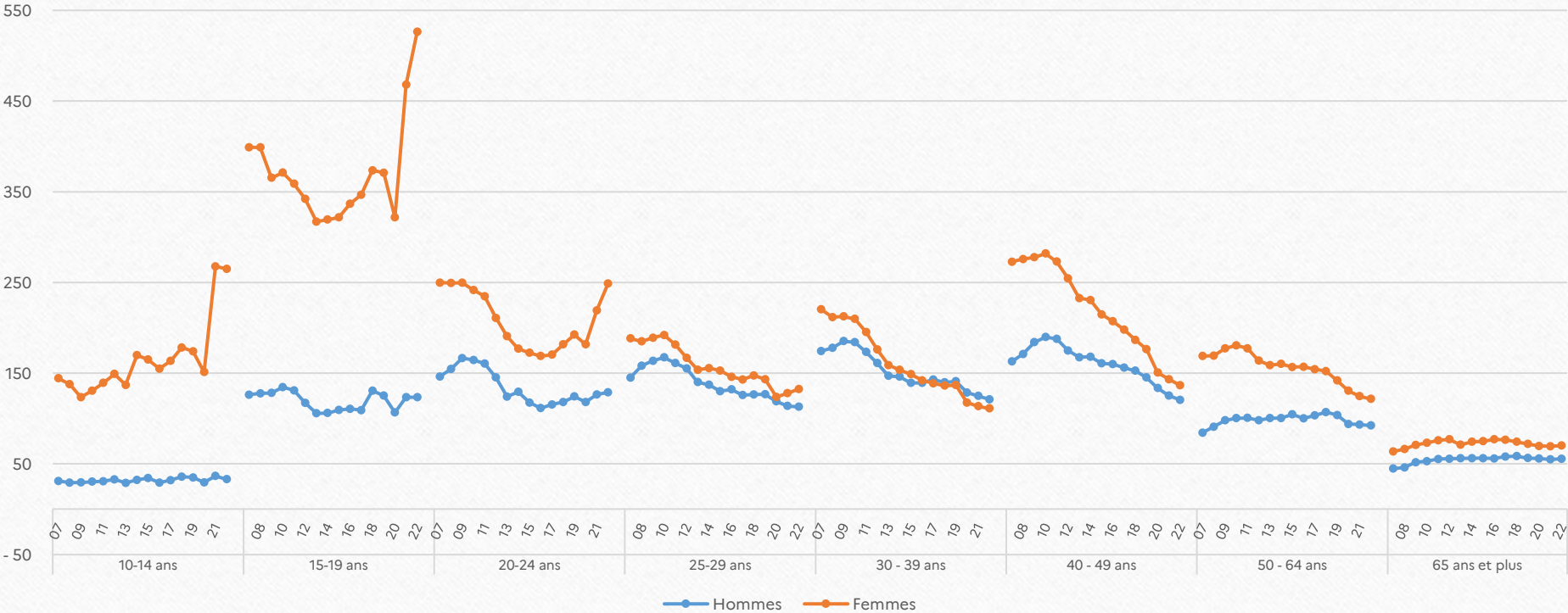
Femmes



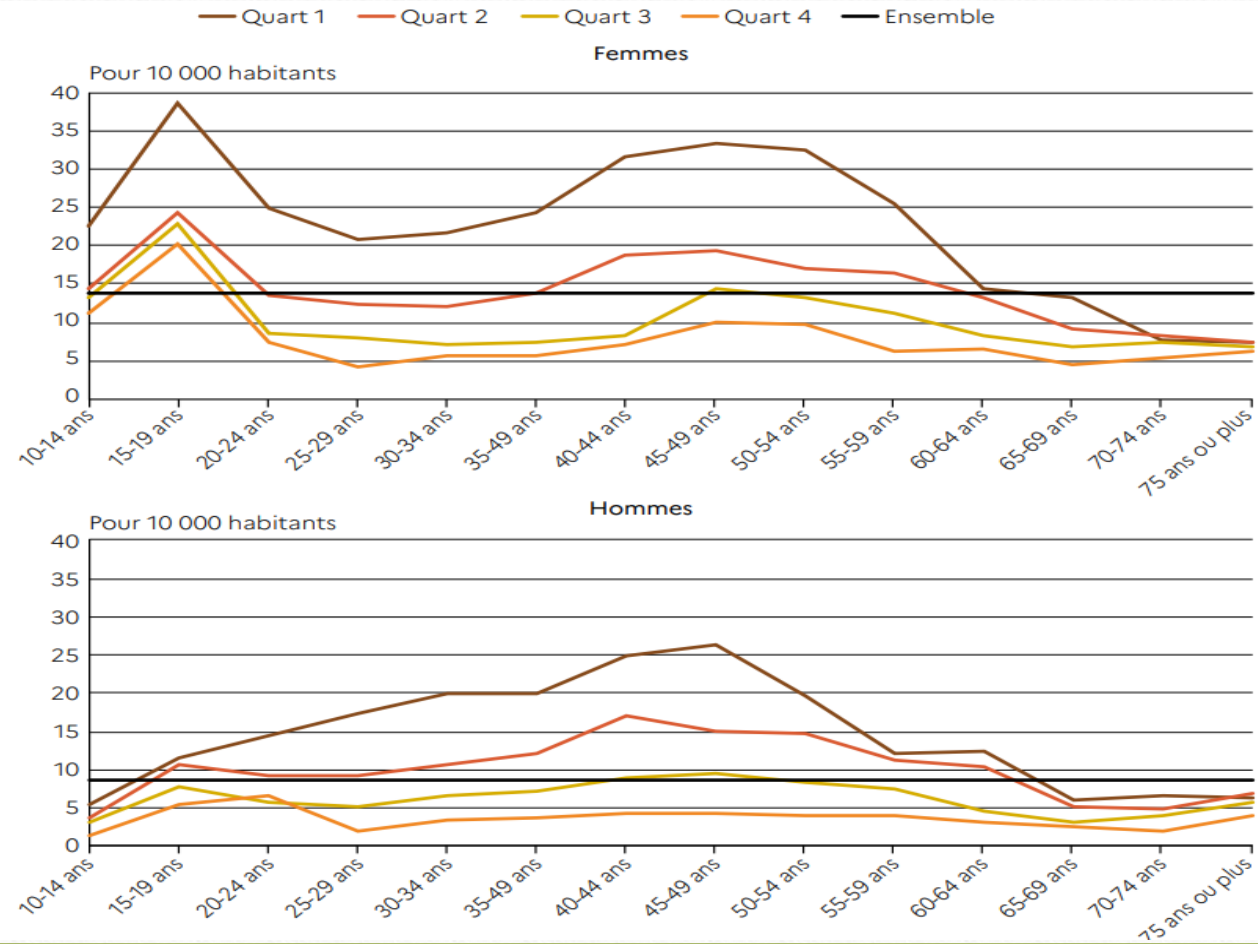
Hommes



Women's and Men's Nonfatal Suicidal Behavior, France, 2007-2022



Women's & Men's Nonfatal Suicidal Behavior by Age, France, 2015-2017



**What is a
Cultural
Script
of Suicidal
Behavior?
(Canetto,
1997a/b,
2008, 2017).**

In each culture there are unique and specific conditions when suicidal behavior is relatively permissible and even expected.

A suicide script features the scenario of the suicidal act, including the suicidal person, the method, the emotions and motives expressed by or attributed to the suicidal individual, the precipitants of the suicidal act, the outcome of the suicidal act, and the response of others to the suicidal act.

Suicide scripts organize, provide significance, and influence the frequency and dynamics of individual suicides. Individuals draw upon these scripts in choosing their course of action and in giving their action some public legitimacy.

Meanings of Gender and Suicidal Behavior during Adolescence

Silvia Sara Canetto, PhD

In the United States, gender differences in suicidal behavior seem to emerge during adolescence, when females are more likely to engage in suicidal behavior, but are less likely to be a result of suicidal ideation than males. These gender patterns of suicidal behavior cannot be set in stone, suggesting cultural influences. This essay reviews the findings of the research on cultural meanings of gender and suicidal behavior. Studies suggest that U.S. adolescents perceive suicidal behavior as more "feminine" and possess than killing oneself. Persons who are suicidal in response to a relationship problem are considered more "feminine" than persons who become suicidal in response to achievement failure. Males are more critical and vindictive of suicidal persons than females especially when the suicidal person is a male. These beliefs may play a role in decisions about suicidal behavior and kinds of suicidal behavior are chosen, and under what conditions. Cultural narratives of gender and suicidal behavior may be particularly salient for adolescents because adolescents are in the process of defining their identity and of taking cultural messages about "appropriate" gender behavior more seriously and more fully than adults. The implications of the findings from the research on cultural meanings of gender and suicidal behavior for prevention programs are outlined.

CHAPTER SIX

Gender and Suicidal Behavior Theories and Evidence

Silvia Sara Canetto, Ph.D.

In 1979, for Francis Collins published an article in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* in which he argued that humans are capable of a limited range of ideas, some devices, people tend to use a limited range of ideas repeatedly. "The meanings of our minds are not as broad as they seem," Collins wrote in writing in the *American Psychologist*, extended Collins's argument about research, "particularly in questions in which theoretical and methodological traditions are strong and in which most published conclusions are not based on empirical research." The solution, according to Wicker, is to adopt a more open-minded approach to research, one that is not bound by established conceptual frameworks. These essays include examining hidden meanings in dominant theories and considering familiar questions in unfamiliar contexts.

Before the research on gender and suicidal behavior has reached enough theoretical and methodological maturity that it may benefit from a critical analysis of its conceptual frameworks. Consistent with Wicker's (1980) recommendations, in this chapter I review the predominant theories of gender and suicidal behavior. I examine the

Cultural Scripts of Suicidal Behavior Theory (Canetto, 1997a/b, 2008; 2017)

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

Men and Masculinities

Women and Suicidal Behavior: A Cultural Analysis

Silvia Sara Canetto, PhD
Colorado State University

Suicide: Why Are Older Men So Vulnerable?

Silvia Sara Canetto¹

Abstract
Globally, older adults have higher suicide rates than other age groups. However, it is predominantly men who die of suicide in late adulthood, with variability by culture. In the United States, European-descent men are overrepresented among suicide decedents. In this article, theories and evidence about aging, adversity, individual dispositions, and cultural influences were evaluated for their potential to explain the suicide vulnerability of European-descent older men. Aging, adversity were not found to account for these men's suicide proneness. European-descent older men are exposed to less severe aging adversities than older women or ethnic-minority men—though they may be more impacted by them. Rigidity in coping and in sense of self, consistent with hegemonic-masculinity scripts, emerged as individual-level clues. The implications of aging and the masculinity-of-suicide scripts may be cultural influences. This analysis shows how consideration of masculinities and suicide scripts expands our understanding of older men's suicide as well as, likely, our tools for its prevention.

Keywords
older adult men, suicide, rigidity, masculinity-of-suicide scripts, indigenous-of-aging suicide script

In some cultures, the suicide scripts (e.g., methods) are very gendered, and in the specific ways women and men are gendered in that culture.

In other cultures, suicide scripts are less gendered (e.g., the suicide context may be gendered but not the suicide method).

Canetto, S. S. (1997a). Gender and suicidal behavior: Theories and evidence. In R. W. Maris, M. M. Silverman, & S. S. Canetto (Eds.), *Review of suicidology* (pp. 138-167). New York: Guilford.

Canetto, S. S. (1997b). Meanings of gender and suicidal behavior during adolescence. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 27, 339-351.

Canetto, S. S. (2008). Women and suicidal behavior: A cultural analysis. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 78, 259-266.

Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: Why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 49-70 .

**Evidence on
on Cultural Scripts of Suicide?**

- Linehan, M. M. (1973). Suicide and attempted suicide: Study of perceived sex differences. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 37, 31-34.
- Healey, C. (1979). Women and suicide in New Guinea. *Social Analysis*, 2, 89-107.
- Counts, D. A. (1980). Fighting back is not the way: Suicide and the women of Kaliai. *American Ethnologist*, 7, 332-351.
- Johnson P. L. (1981). When dying is better than living: Female suicide among the Gainj of Papua New Guinea. *Ethnology*, 20, 325-335.
- Brown, M. F. (1986). Power, gender, and the social meaning of Aguaruna suicide. *Man*, 21, 311-328.
- Rubinstein, D.H. (1987). Cultural patterns and contagion: Epidemic suicide among Micronesian youth. In A.B. Robillard & A. Marsella (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in mental health: Research in the Pacific Islands* (pp. 127-148). Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute.
- White, H., & Stillion, J. M. (1988). Sex differences in attitudes toward suicide: Do males stigmatize males? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 12, 357-366.
- Andriolo, K. R. (1998). Gender and the cultural construction of good and bad suicides. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 28, 37-49.
- Marecek, J. (1998). Culture, gender, and suicidal behavior in Sri Lanka. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 28, 69-81.
- Canetto, S. S., and Lester, D. (2002). Love and achievement motives in women's and men's suicide notes. *Journal of Psychology*, 136, 573-576.
- Dahlen, E. R., & Canetto, S. S. (2002). The role of gender and suicide precipitant in attitudes toward nonfatal suicidal behavior. *Death Studies*, 26, 99-116.
- Meng, L. (2002). Rebellion and revenge: The meaning of suicide of women in rural China. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 11, 300-309.
- Cato, J. E., & Canetto, S. S. (2003). Attitudes and beliefs about suicidal behavior when coming out is the precipitant of the suicidal behavior. *Sex Roles*, 49, 497-505.
- Dabbagh, N. T. (2004). Narrative expressions of despair under occupation. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 11, 201-220.
- Joe, S., Romer, D., & Jamieson, P. E. (2007). Suicide acceptability is related to suicide planning in U.S. adolescents and young adults. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior*, 37, 165-178
- Billaud J. (2012). Suicidal performances: Voicing discontent in a girls' dormitory in Cambodia. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 19, 264-285.
- Widger, T. (2012). Suffering, frustration, and anger: Class, gender and history in Sri Lankan suicide stories. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 36, 225-244.
- Eisenwort, B., Till, B., Hinterbuchinger, B., & Niederkerenthal, A. (2014). Sociable, mentally disturbed women and angry, rejected men: Cultural scripts for the suicidal behavior of women and men in the Austrian print media. *Sex Roles*, 71, 246-260.
- Lee, H. J. (2014). Fearless love, death for dignity: Female suicide and gendered subjectivity in rural North China. *The China Journal*, 71, 1324-9347/2014/7101-0002
- Rasool, I. A., & Payton J. L. (2014). Tongues of fire: Women's suicide and self-injury by burns in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. *The Sociological Review*, 62, 237-254.
- Kleiman, E.M. (2015). Suicide acceptability as a mechanism of suicide clustering in a nationally representative sample of adolescents. *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 59, 17-20.
- Lund, E.M., Nadorff, M. R., Winer, E. S., Seader, K. (2016) Is suicide an option?: The impact of disability on suicide acceptability in the context of depression, suicidality, and demographic factors. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 189, 25-35.
- Winterrowd, E., Canetto, S. S., & Benoit, K. (2017). Permissive beliefs and attitudes about older adult suicide: a suicide enabling script? *Aging & Mental Health*, 21, 173-181.
- Pepper, C. M. (2017). Suicide in the Mountain West region of the United States. *Crisis*, 38, 344-350.
- Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: Why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 49-70
- Phillips, A., & Luth, E. A. (2018). Beliefs about suicide acceptability in the United States: How do they affect suicide mortality? *Journal of Gerontology B*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbx153>
- Abrutyn, S., Mueller, A. S., & Osborne, M. (2019). Rekeying cultural scripts for youth suicide: How social networks facilitate suicide diffusion and suicide clusters following exposure to suicide. *Society and Mental Health*. 10(2), 112-135.
- Canetto, S. S., Entilli, L., Cerbo, I., & Cipolletta, S. (2023). Suicide scripts in Italian newspapers: Women's suicide as a symptom of their psychological problems and men's suicide as a symptom of social problems. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 44, 398-405.
- Canetto, S. S., Menger-Ogle, A., & Subba, U. K. (2023). Studying scripts of women's and men's suicide in Nepal: Qualitative method development and findings. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(11):6032.

Permissive beliefs and attitudes about older adult suicide: a suicide enabling script?

Erin Winterrowd^{a*}, Silvia Sara Canetto^b and Kathrin Benoit^c

^aDepartment of Psychology, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh, WI, USA; ^bDepartment of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA; ^cDepartment of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

(Received 23 July 2015; accepted 11 September 2015)

Objectives: In the United States, suicide rates are highest among European American older adults. This phenomenon calls attention to cultural factors, specifically, the suicide beliefs and attitudes of European Americans. Beliefs and attitudes matter in the vulnerability to suicide. As predicted by cultural scripts of suicide theory, suicide is most likely among individuals and in communities where it is expected and is most acceptable. This study examined beliefs about the precipitants of, and protectors against older adult suicide, as well as suicide attitudes, in a predominantly European American community.

Design and Methods: Two hundred and fifty-five older adults (86% European American) and 281 younger adults (81% European American) indicated what they thought were the most likely older adult suicide precipitants and protectors, and their opinion about older adult suicide, depending on precipitant.

Results: Health problems were the most endorsed older adult suicide precipitants. Suicide precipitated by health problems was also rated most positively (e.g., rational, courageous). Older adults, persons with more education, and persons who did not identify with a religion expressed the most favorable attitudes about older adult suicide, across suicide precipitants. Men viewed older adult suicide as more admissible, and women, with more sympathy. Perceived suicide protectors included religiosity among older adults, and supportive relationships among younger adults.

Conclusions: The belief, in this study's predominantly European American community, that older adult suicide is triggered by health problems, together with favorable attitudes about older adult suicide, suggest an enabling older adult suicide script, with implications for suicide risk and prevention.

Keywords: suicide beliefs; suicide attitudes; older adults; physical illness; cultural scripts of suicide

Research Trends

Suicide in the Mountain West Region of the United States

Carolyn M. Pepper

Department of Psychology, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY, USA

Abstract. *Background:* The Mountain West region of the United States consistently reports the highest rates of suicide in the country. This pattern could reflect a regional culture-of-suicide script in support of suicide that implicitly influences individual's behavior. *Aims:* The primary aim of this study was to investigate whether suicide rates are elevated in the Mountain West across a wide range of demographic groups, thereby supporting a regional cultural script. *Method:* Suicide rates in the Mountain West between 1999 and 2014 were compared to the rest of the country across a wide range of demographic categories and levels of population density using the Center for Disease Control Multiple Causes of Death dataset published on the WONDER online database. *Results:* Suicide rates are elevated in the Mountain West for men and women, all racial groups, all age groups, and at every level of population density compared to the rest of the country. *Limitations:* Missing and suppressed data, the use of coroner reports, and the arbitrary nature of state and regional boundaries are all discussed as possible limitations to this study. *Conclusion:* These findings support a broad culture-of-suicide script that is pervasive in this region across demographic groups and all levels of population density.

Keywords: suicide, rural, Mountain West, cultural script

Original Article

Beliefs About Suicide Acceptability in the United States: How Do They Affect Suicide Mortality?

Julie A. Phillips, PhD¹ and Elizabeth A. Luth, PhD²

¹Department of Sociology/Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick; ²Department of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine, New York, NY.

Address correspondence to: Julie A. Phillips, PhD, Department of Sociology/Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 26 Nichol Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. E-mail: jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu

Received: May 27, 2017; Editorial Decision Date: October 27, 2017

Decision Editor: J. Jill Sutor, PhD

Abstract

Objectives: Societies develop cultural scripts to understand suicide and define conditions under which the act is acceptable. Prior empirical work suggests that such attitudes are important in understanding some forms of suicidal behavior among adolescents and high-risk populations. This study examines whether expressions of suicide acceptability under different circumstances are predictive of subsequent death by suicide in the general U.S. adult population and whether the effects differ over the life course.

Method: The study uses 1978–2010 General Social Survey data linked to the National Death Index through 2014 ($n = 31,838$). Cox survival models identify risk factors for suicide mortality, including attitudinal and cohort effects.

Results: Expressions of suicide acceptability are predictive of subsequent death by suicide—in some cases associated with a twofold increase in risk. Attitudes elevate the suicide hazard among older (>55 years) adults but not among younger (ages 33–54) adults. Fully-adjusted models reveal that the effects of attitudes toward suicide acceptability on suicide mortality are strongest for social circumstances (family dishonor; bankruptcy).

Discussion: Results point to the role of cultural factors and social attitudes in suicide. There may be utility in measuring attitudes in assessments of suicide risk.

Keywords: Attitudes and beliefs, Cohort, Life course, Suicide

Research Trends

Suicidal as Normal – A Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Script?

Silvia Sara Canetto¹*, Paolo Antonelli², Anna Cicchetti³, Davide Dettore³, and Dorian A. Lamis³

¹Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

²Health Sciences Department, School of Psychology, University of Florence, Italy

³Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA, USA

Abstract. *Background:* Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth are more likely to report suicidal thoughts and/or behavior (STB) than heterosexual youth. The elevated suicidality of LGB youth is not fully accounted for by sexual-minority stress, according to a meta-analysis. A less-tested explanation is that suicidal ideation is an expected idiom of LGB youth distress. This explanation is consistent with suicide script theory and evidence that suicidal behavior is most likely when it is relatively acceptable. *Aims:* Building on suicide script theory and evidence, two studies were designed: one of LGB youth attitudes toward suicidal behavior, and the other of LGB youth attitudes toward suicidal behavior. *Method:* Surveys of LGB and heterosexual youth (total $N = 300$; $N_{\text{gay}} = 20$; 51% female) were conducted. *Results:* LGB youth were more accepting of and more likely to report suicidal thoughts and/or behavior than heterosexual youth. They also viewed suicidal individuals as more emotionally adjusted. *Limitations:* Attitudes were not examined by sexual-minority subgroups. *Conclusion:* LGB youth's understanding attitudes may translate into less judgmental behavior toward suicidal peers, but also into normalizing suicidality as a way to express distress and cope with life problems. There may be utility in evaluating LGB youth suicide attitudes in suicide prevention initiatives.

Keywords: lesbian/gay/bisexual, suicide attitudes, cultural scripts of suicide, suicidal, youth

According to a meta-analysis of mostly United States (US) studies (Marshall et al., 2011), lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth are more likely to report suicidal thoughts and/or behavior (STB) than heterosexual youth (in high-income countries, youth is typically defined as ages 15–24). An explanation is that STB is a response to the stigma, discrimination, and victimization that sexual minorities experience in heterocentric cultures and communities (Meyer, 2003). Coming to terms with one's stigmatized sexual-minority status has been speculated to be one such suicidogenic experience. Another experience believed to contribute to LGB youth suicidality is disclosing one's orientation and the negative consequences that frequently follow that disclosure. Evidence on the role of minority stress in LGB youth suicidality is, however, inconclusive. A meta-analysis of predominantly US studies of correlates of STB among sexual- and gender-minority youth found that the effect sizes for stigma/discrimination and/or interpersonal stressors, such as parental rejection, were small (Hatchel, Polanin, & Espelage, 2015). In some ways, Hatchel and colleagues' findings are surprising. LGB youth encounter stressful experiences that not only have negative impacts on many of them but likely also challenge their sense of the livability and value of their life. In other ways, these findings are not surprising. STB is not consistently most common in groups

who experience the worst adversities, including stigma and discrimination. For example, among US older adults, suicide rates are highest among European-descent men, and lowest among African-descent women.

Another explanation is that suicidality has become a recognized and even an expected idiom of LGB youth distress; and that suicidality is written in the script of what it means to be a sexual minority – as a rite of passage and an expression of identity and belonging. The normalizing of LGB youth suicidality has been attributed to the assiduous media reporting of LGB youth suicidality, and the dominance of struggle, suffering, and vulnerability themes in LGB youth experience narratives (Bohan, Russell, & Montgomery, 2002; Cover, 2016; Russell, Bohan, & Lilly, 2000; Savin-Williams, 2005; Waidzunas, 2012). This explanation is consistent with suicide script theory, that is, the idea that suicidal behavior is most likely when it is relatively acceptable and even expected, for certain persons, given particular circumstances (Canetto, 1997). It is also consistent with the idea that suicide differs through social networks, via modeling – especially among persons for whom the model is relevant, horizontally (someone like oneself) or vertically (an admired person) (Lake & Gould, 2014).

One way to evaluate the role of suicide normalization in STB is via an examination of the relationship between sui-

Sociable, Mentally Disturbed Women and Angry, Rejected Men: Cultural Scripts for the Suicidal Behavior of Women and Men in the Austrian Print Media

Brigitte Eisenwort¹, Benedikt Tili¹, Barbara Hirtlerbuchinger¹, Thomas Niederkrotenthaler¹

© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2014

Abstract. This paper analyzed gender-specific reporting differences in Austrian newspapers on suicidal behavior related to portrayals of and language about suicidal motives in order to shed light on cultural scripts that may both reflect and shape gender stereotypes in a country where conservative gender-role models dominate. A total of 126 Austrian print-media reports on female suicidal behavior were compared to 381 reports on male suicidal behavior. The linguistic text analysis program LIWC was used to compare the use of language indicators of emotions, assess text complexity and detect indicators of social processes in the stories.

Mental illness as a motive for suicide was more prevalent in reports on women's suicidal behavior and was often portrayed in a stigmatizing manner. Consistent with Austria's prevalent conceptions of gender-role functions, stories about female suicidal behavior contained more words indicating sociability and more references to other persons, and motives for female suicide were often linked to family situations. Words indicating anger were more prevalent in articles on male behavior, and male suicidal behavior was contextualized as stemming from breakups and spousal rejection. Articles on female suicide contained more tentative wording, and the language used to portray women's suicidal behavior was more complex. These findings are consistent with a script that conforms to sociable, mentally disturbed women and angry, rejected men. This script reflects sexist cultural attitudes relevant to public education efforts.

B. Eisenwort (✉) · B. Hirtlerbuchinger
Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Competence Center for Psychosomatics, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Research Trends

Suicide Scripts in Italian Newspapers

Women's Suicide as a Symptom of Personal Problems and Men's Suicide as a Symptom of Social Problems

Silvia Sara Canetto¹*, Lorenza Entilli²*, Ilaria Cerbo³, and Sabrina Cipoletta²*

¹Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA
²Department of General Psychology, University of Padua, Italy

Abstract. *Background:* There is substantial variability, by culture, in suicide rates, and also in suicide beliefs and attitudes. Suicide beliefs and attitudes predict actual suicidality. They also are elements of cultural scripts of suicide. Most suicide-script research has been conducted in Anglophone countries. *Aims:* This study investigates women's and men's suicide scripts in Italy. *Methods:* Italy's suicide scripts, including beliefs about what causes suicide, were explored via analyses of newspaper stories ($N = 353$) of women's and men's suicides. *Results:* Italian newspapers mostly featured men's suicide stories, consistent with Italian men's higher suicide mortality. Women's suicide was narrated as an unexpected act signaling personal (e.g., emotional and private-relationship) problems. By contrast, men's suicide was framed as understandable response to serious public-life/social adversities (e.g., an economic downturn), and as a death of legitimate despair. *Limitations:* Social media suicide stories (not included in this analysis) may be more prevalent in Italy, as in several countries with higher male suicide mortality. Female suicide is psychologized and considered irrational while male suicide is viewed as a symptom of serious public-life/social problems, and therefore as deserving respect and empathy. The preference for social explanations of male suicide, together with the empathic attitudes, may contribute to male suicide being relatively more permissible and less stigmatized, and therefore also to men's higher suicide mortality. **Keywords:** suicide scripts, gender, culture, newspaper stories, qualitative analyses

Suicide is a cultural act. There is substantial variability in suicide rates by country (World Health Organization, 2015). In some countries, women and men have similar suicide rates and in others, very different rates. Furthermore, in some countries, suicide is most common among young adult women and in others, among older adult men. Suicide methods vary by sex in some countries but not in others. Finally, there is variability, by culture, in the reasons for suicide. In some countries, suicidal behavior is thought to have different causes for women and men while in other countries, suicide explanations mainly vary by social class (Canetto, 2021).

Cultural Scripts Theory and Evidence

Suicide-scripts theory provides a framework and a method for studying suicide from a cultural perspective. It builds on evidence that in different cultures there are unique situations when suicidal behavior is expected from specific people, using specific methods, and with specific social consequences. Suicide scripts are about the suicidal act scenario – including

Keywords: Print media · Suicide · Suicidal behavior · Gender · Content analysis · Linguistics · Social constructivism · Austria

Introduction

In many Western societies, including Austria, there are gender differences in suicidal behavior; females are overrepresented in nonfatal suicidal behavior, and males are overrepresented in fatal suicidal behavior—a discrepancy that warrants public-health attention (Hawton 2000; World Health Organization 2001). Canetto and Sakinofsky (1995) called this phenomenon the gender paradox of suicidal behavior.

Most researchers have argued for a cultural perspective to explain gender differences because the gender paradox is not consistent within or across all countries (Canetto 2008). Cross-cultural data support the view that there are collective, implicit beliefs about the meaning and permissibility of suicidal behavior in any given culture, i.e., the so-called cultural scripts of suicide. Cultural scripts consist of attitudes, evaluations and assumptions that are widely known and shared among people within a given speech community (Goddard 2005). In the present study, our basic research question was how gender-specific differences in cultural scripts are reflected in the language used in Austrian newspaper portrayals of suicidal behavior of women and men. With this research question, we aimed at shedding light on prevalent gender stereotypes and aspects of sexism in a country where conservative gender-role models dominate. The linguistic text analysis program LIWC was used to compare the use of

Research Trends

Suicide Scripts in Italian Newspapers

Women's Suicide as a Symptom of Personal Problems and Men's Suicide as a Symptom of Social Problems

Silvia Sara Canetto¹*, Lorenza Entilli²*, Ilaria Cerbo³, and Sabrina Cipoletta²*

¹Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA
²Department of General Psychology, University of Padua, Italy

Abstract. *Background:* There is substantial variability, by culture, in suicide rates, and also in suicide beliefs and attitudes. Suicide beliefs and attitudes predict actual suicidality. They also are elements of cultural scripts of suicide. Most suicide-script research has been conducted in Anglophone countries. *Aims:* This study investigates women's and men's suicide scripts in Italy. *Methods:* Italy's suicide scripts, including beliefs about what causes suicide, were explored via analyses of newspaper stories ($N = 353$) of women's and men's suicides. *Results:* Italian newspapers mostly featured men's suicide stories, consistent with Italian men's higher suicide mortality. Women's suicide was narrated as an unexpected act signaling personal (e.g., emotional and private-relationship) problems. By contrast, men's suicide was framed as understandable response to serious public-life/social adversities (e.g., an economic downturn), and as a death of legitimate despair. *Limitations:* Social media suicide stories (not included in this analysis) may be more prevalent in Italy, as in several countries with higher male suicide mortality. Female suicide is psychologized and considered irrational while male suicide is viewed as a symptom of serious public-life/social problems, and therefore as deserving respect and empathy. The preference for social explanations of male suicide, together with the empathic attitudes, may contribute to male suicide being relatively more permissible and less stigmatized, and therefore also to men's higher suicide mortality. **Keywords:** suicide scripts, gender, culture, newspaper stories, qualitative analyses

who is the suicidal person, the suicide method, the emotions and motives expressed by or attributed to the suicidal individual, the precipitant and outcome (nonfatal vs. fatal) of the suicidal act, and the social responses to it. Suicide scripts are also about the meanings of the suicidal act – including beliefs about the causes of suicidal behavior and attitudes about its acceptability. According to theory, suicide scripts organize, provide significance, and influence the frequency and dynamics of individual suicides. Persons implicitly draw upon their culture's scripts in choosing their course of action and in giving their suicidal behavior public legitimacy (Canetto, 1997).

Evidence is growing on the role of suicide scripts in actual suicidality (i.e., suicidal ideation and/or behavior, nonfatal and fatal), e.g., Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2007; Kleiman, 2015; Phillips & Luth, 2020; Stein et al., 1998). For example, a longitudinal study found that suicide acceptability predicted subsequent suicide in the US general population – in some cases, by a twofold increase (Phillips & Luth, 2020). Most suicide-scripts research has been conducted in Anglophone countries.

Milestones

Dead by His Own Decision

Bruno Bettelheim: 1903-1990

Throughout his long life, Bruno Bettelheim was a fighter. Gruff, outspoken, argumentative, stubborn, he was ready to do battle with just about anybody about anything. World famous for his innovative treatment of autistic children, he once declared that most "expert advice" about children is "nonsense." A lifelong liberal, he denounced the radicals of the 1960s as neo-Nazis. A former concentration-camp prisoner, he provoked outrage by writing that Europe's Jews had not done enough to resist the Holocaust. Bettelheim's argument: "All people, Jews or gentiles, who dare not defend themselves when they know they are in the right, who submit to punishment not because of what they have done but because of who they are, are already dead by their own decision."

Born in Vienna in 1903, Bettelheim had just completed his doctorate in psychology and his studies with Sigmund Freud, when Nazi Germany marched into Austria. Bettelheim was beaten and hauled off to spend a year in the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald. Released in 1939, he went to the U.S. and found work teaching first at Rockford College, then at the University of Chicago.

Bettelheim said later he had survived the concentration camps partly by studying and analyzing other prisoners. He saw that the guards systematically tried to break down the prisoners' identity, their sense of value and meaning. He was one of the very first to describe that process in a widely reprinted article, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations" (1943). No less important, he got the idea that he could treat supposedly incurable autistic children by reversing the Buchenwald pro-



Nightmares, despite a most rewarding life

cess, taking intensive care of them and restoring their sense of themselves. "As an educator and therapist of severely disturbed children," he wrote in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), his prizewinning study of fairy tales, "my main task was to restore meaning to their lives."

The University of Chicago's Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, which Bettelheim headed from 1944 to 1972, gave him a chance to put his theories into prac-

tice. Taking in 30 or more children, he kept them in what he called a "therapeutic milieu," with counselors treating them around the clock rather than during limited visits. He claimed that more than 85% of his patients achieved "full return to participation in life."

Bettelheim wrote prolifically and passionately about his school and his theories: *Love Is Not Enough* (1950), *Truants from Life* (1955), *The Empty Fortress* (1967). But a number of critics charged that his claims of cures were exaggerated. They also attacked some of his theories, notably his guilt-inducing accusation that childhood schizophrenia could often be blamed on "schizophrenic mothers." Relenting somewhat, Bettelheim declared in *A Good Enough Parent* (1987), "There are no perfect parents and no perfect children, but every parent can be good enough."

Bettelheim had written extensively about the concentration camps in *The Informed Heart* (1960), but he could not get over the experience. "He told me that once you were in a camp, you could never escape the cruelty," said a colleague, Rudolph Ekstein. In *Surviving, and Other Essays* (1979), Bettelheim asked a painful question: "What of the horrible nightmares about the camps which every so often awaken me today, 35 years later, despite a most rewarding life . . . ?"

And life seemed less rewarding lately. Bettelheim was greatly afflicted by the death in 1984 of his wife of 43 years, Gertrud. In 1987 he suffered a stroke that impaired his ability to write. Six weeks ago, he moved out of his comfortable beach-front apartment in Santa Monica, Calif., and into a retirement home outside Washington, which he apparently found unsatisfactory. Last week, at 86, the healer of sick children decided that his struggles had gone on long enough. He took some pills, then pulled a plastic bag over his head and lay quiet until he died. —By Otto Friedrich.

Reported by Georgin Harbison/New York

In *Time* magazine Bettelheim's Suicide Was Narrated As the Powerful Decision of a Powerful Man

Throughout his long life, Bruno Bettelheim was a **fighter** [italics/bold added]. Gruff, outspoken, argumentative, stubborn he was **ready to do battle with just about anybody about anything**.... Last week, at 86, **the healer of sick children decided that his struggle had gone on long enough** [italics/bold added]. He took some pills, then pulled a plastic bag over his head and lay quiet until he died.

Canetto, S. S. (1997). Gender and suicidal behavior: Theories and evidence. In R. W. Maris, M. M. Silverman, & S. S. Canetto (Eds.), *Review of suicidology* (pp. 138-167). New York: Guilford.



Thompson's Suicide: The Macho Choice of a Macho Man? A Successful Suicide?

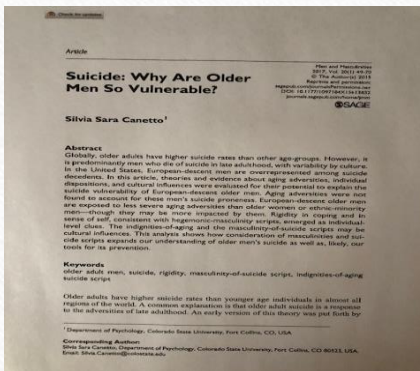
He was going to go out on his own
terms on his own time”

“He was going to go out with a
bang”

“He made this choice”

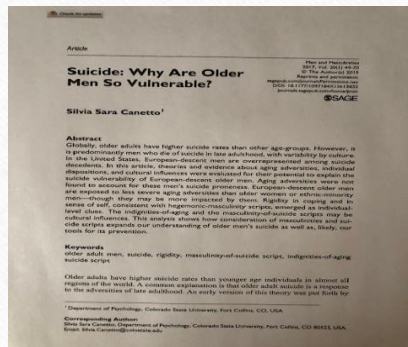
“He died ... as he planned... with
a single, courageous ...gunshot”

Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: Why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 49-70



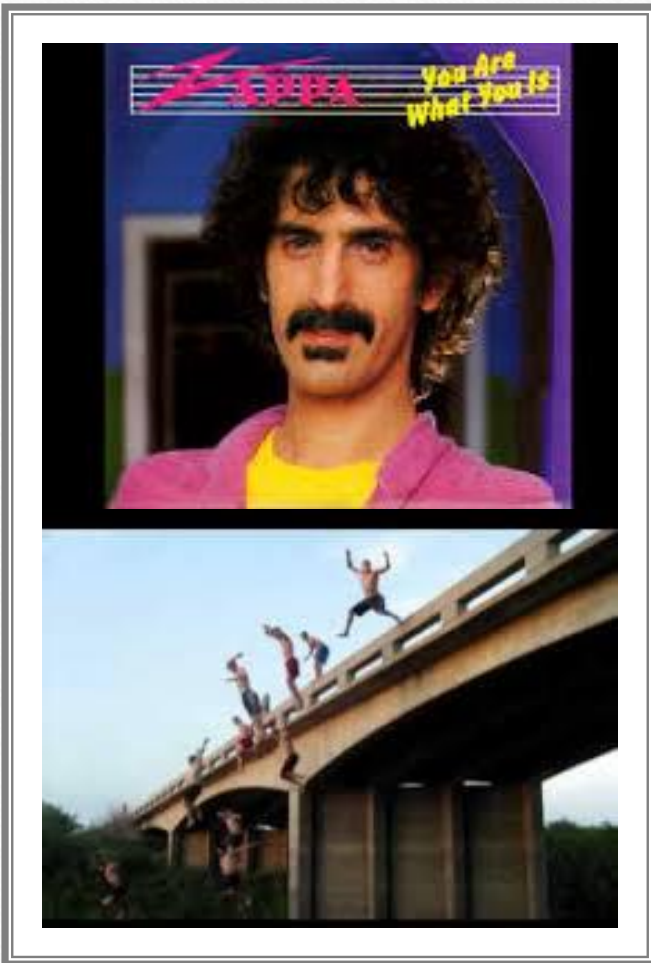
or a Failed Cry for Help?

- “It wasn’t that pretty. He killed himself while talking on the phone with his wife, Anita. In the house.”
- “Not so honorable.”
- “You are supposed to go out behind the woodshed, face the existential solitude and let your survivors find you later.”



Rolling Stone Magazine, 2005

Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: Why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 49-70



Suicide Chump (Frank Zappa)

You say there ain't no use in livin'
It's all a waste of time
'N you wanna throw your life away, well
People that's just fine
Go ahead on 'n get it over with then
Find you a bridge 'n take a jump
Just make sure you do it right the first time
'Cause nothin's worse than a suicide chump

**New Developments
of My Suicide Scripts**

Theory and Research

Expanded social context and social justice lenses

Women's Protest-Suicide Script (Canetto 2015, Canetto & Rezaeian, 2020)

- **A recurrent suicide script among women in Muslim-majority communities and countries is of suicide as rebellion and protest against the injustices, the oppression and violence women experience in their family and community.**

Canetto, S. S. (2015). Suicidal behavior among Muslim women: Patterns, pathways, meanings, and prevention. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 6, 447-458.

Canetto S. S., & Rezaeian, M. (2020). Protest suicide among Muslim women: Human rights perspectives. In M. E. Button & I. Marsh (Eds.), *Suicide and social justice: New perspectives on the politics of suicide and suicide prevention* (pp. 102-121). New York: Routledge.

Private life/family relationship factors in men's suicide

Doing less family work increases suicide risk for men (Chen et al., 2021)

Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology
https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-021-02095-9

ORIGINAL PAPER



Caregiving as suicide-prevention: an ecological 20-country study of the association between men's family carework, unemployment, and suicide

Ying-Yeh Chen^{1,2} · Ziyi Cai³ · Qingsong Chang⁴ · Silvia Sara Canetto⁵ · Paul S. F. Yip^{3,6}

Received: 3 August 2020 / Accepted: 7 April 2021
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2021

Abstract

Purpose Suicide rates are generally higher in men than in women. Men's higher suicide mortality is often attributed to public-life adversities, such as unemployment. Building on the theory that men's suicide vulnerability is also related to their private-life behaviors, particularly men's low engagement in family carework, this ecological study explored the association between men's family carework, unemployment, and suicide.

Methods Family-carework data for twenty Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries were obtained from the OECD Family Database. Sex-specific age-standardized suicide rates came from the Global Burden of Disease dataset. The association between men's engagement in family carework and suicide rates by sex was estimated, with OECD's unemployment-benefits index and United-Nations' Human Development-Index (HDI) evaluated as controls. The moderation of men's carework on the unemployment-suicide relationship was also assessed.

Results Overall and sex-specific suicide rates were lower in countries where men reported more family carework. In these countries, higher unemployment rates were not associated with higher male suicide rates. In countries where men reported less family carework, higher unemployment was associated with higher male suicide rates, independent of country's HDI. Unemployment benefits were not associated with suicide rates. Men's family carework moderated the association between unemployment and suicide rates.

Conclusion This study's findings that higher levels of men's family carework were associated with lower suicide mortality, especially among men and under high-unemployment conditions, point to the suicide-protective potential of men's family carework. They are consistent with evidence that where gender equality is greater, men's and women's well-being, health, and longevity are greater.

Keywords Suicide · Men · Family carework · Unemployment · Human Development Index · Gender equality

✉ Silvia Sara Canetto
silvia.canetto@colostate.edu

✉ Paul S. F. Yip
sfyip@hku.hk

¹ Taipei City Psychiatric Centre, Taipei City Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan

² Department of Public Health, Institute of Public Health, National Yang-Ming University, Taipei, Taiwan

³ Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong

⁴ School of Sociology and Anthropology, Xiamen University, Xiamen, China

⁵ Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

⁶ Hong Kong Jockey Club Center for Suicide Research and Prevention, University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong

Published online: 05 May 2021

Springer

Ms.
MORE THAN A MAGAZINE, A MOVEMENT

We are the
Ms. Ms.STUDIOS Supermajority Ed Fund

DONATE

News & Opinion

Politics

Health

Culture

Ms. Studios

Women &

Explore by Topic

GLOBAL, HEALTH, JUSTICE & LAW, MONEY & JOBS, NATIONAL

By Assuming More Family Caregiving Responsibilities, Men May Reduce Their Suicide Vulnerability

1/26/2022 by SILVIA SARA CANETTO

By adding family care work to their family financial-provider contributions, men could diversify their sources of meaning and purpose and their social capital—therefore likely boosting their suicide protection.



A study suggests one new way to reduce men's high suicide mortality: family care work. (Creative Commons / Pxhere)

Public life/socioeconomic factors in women's suicide


Lower female labor-force participation increases suicide risk for women (Chen et al., 2023)

ARCHIVES OF SUICIDE RESEARCH
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2024.2337182>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

Female Labor-Force Participation as Suicide Prevention: A Population Study in Taiwan

Ying-Yeh Chen , Ted C. T. Fong , Paul S. F. Yip , and Silvia Sara Canetto 

ABSTRACT

Objective: Female labor-force participation (FLFP) has been theorized as contributing to higher suicide rates, including among women. Evidence on this relationship, however, has been mixed. This study explored the association between FLFP and suicide in an understudied context, Taiwan, and across 40-years.

Methods: Annual national labor-participation rates for women ages 25–64, and female and male suicide-rates, for 1980–2020, were obtained from Taiwan's Department of Statistics. The associations between FLFP rates and sex/age-stratified suicide-rates, and between FLFP rates and male-to-female suicide-rates ratios were assessed via time-series regression-analyses, accounting for autoregressive effects.

Results: Higher FLFP rates were associated with lower female suicide-rates ($\beta = -0.06$, 95% CI (Credibility Interval) = $[-0.19, -0.01]$) in the adjusted model. This association held in the age-stratified analyses. Associations for FLFP and lower male suicide-rates were observed in the ≥ 45 age-groups. FLFP rates were significantly and positively associated with widening male-to-female suicide-rates ratios in the adjusted model ($\beta = 0.24$, 95% CI = $[0.03, 0.59]$).

Conclusion: This study's findings suggest that FLFP protects women from suicide, and point to the potential value of FLFP as a way of preventing suicide. In Taiwan, employed women carry a double-load of paid and family unpaid care-work. Child care-work is still done by mothers, often with grandmothers' support. Therefore, this study's findings contribute to evidence that doing both paid work and unpaid family care-work has more benefits than costs, including in terms of suicide-protection. Men's disengagement from family care-work may contribute to their high suicide rates, despite their substantial labor-force participation.

KEYWORDS

Female labor force participation; male-female suicide-rates ratio; suicide; suicide prevention

HIGHLIGHTS

- Female labor-force participation (FLFP) has been theorized to increase suicide.
- Over time higher FLFP was associated with lower suicide, particularly in women.
- Higher FLFP was associated with widening male-to-female suicide-rate ratios.

INTRODUCTION

Female labor-force participation (FLFP) has long been theorized as relevant to suicide. A dominant idea (e.g., Dublin, 1963; Durkheim, 1893/1933, 1897/1951; Gibbs & Martin,

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2024.2337182>.

© 2024 International Academy for Suicide Research

**Impact of
Cultural
Script
Theory and
Research
on Suicide
Prevention**

Suicide script theory and research make visible the cultural nature of suicide.

They bring attention to overlooked, modifiable (cultural) risk and protective factors that can be critical in suicide prevention.

Some Directions for Suicide Prevention Suggested by Suicide Scripts Theory and Evidence

Suicide prevention programs might benefit from including:

Assessment of beliefs about the meanings and permissibility of different suicidal behaviors, for different people.

Education about potentially enabling suicide scripts
(e.g., to be honorable a man should “do suicide right the first time”).

Selected References

- Canetto, S. S. (1992). Gender and suicide in the elderly. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 22, 80-97.
- Canetto, S. S. (1992-1993). She died for love and he for glory: Gender myths of suicidal behavior. *Omega*, 26, 1-17.
- Canetto, S. S. (1994). Gender issues in the treatment of suicidal individuals. *Death Studies*, 18, 513-527.
- Canetto, S. S. (1997a). Gender and suicidal behavior: Theories and evidence. In R. W. Maris, M. M. Silverman, & S. S. Canetto (Eds.), *Review of suicidology* (pp. 138-167). Guilford.
- Canetto, S. S. (1997b). Meanings of gender and suicidal behavior during adolescence. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 27, 339-351.
- Canetto, S. S. (2008). Women and suicidal behavior: A cultural analysis. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 78, 259-266.
- Canetto, S. S. (2015a). Suicidal ideation and behaviors in girls and women in the United States and Canada: Cultural and intersectional perspectives. In D. A. Lamis & N. J. Kaslow (Eds.), *Advancing the science of suicidal behavior: Understanding and intervention* (pp. 215-236). Nova Science.
- Canetto, S. S. (2015b). Suicidal behavior among Muslim women: Patterns, pathways, meanings, and prevention. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 6, 447-458.
- Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: Why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities*, 20, 49-70.
- Canetto, S. S. (2019). If physician-assisted suicide is the modern woman's last powerful choice, why are White women its leading advocates and main users? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 50, 39-50.
- Canetto, S. S., Antonelli, P., Ciccotti, A., Dettore, D., & Lamis, D. A. (2021). Suicidal as normal: A lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth script? *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 42, 292-300
- Canetto, S. S., & Chen, J. (2020). Women and suicidal behavior: Paradigm-shift lessons from China. In F. Cheung & D. Halpern (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of the international psychology of women* (pp. 497-513). Cambridge University Press.
- Canetto, S. S., & Cleary, A. (2012). Men, masculinities and suicidal behaviour. *Social Science & Medicine*, 74, 461-465.
- Canetto, S. S., & Lester, D. (Eds.) (1995). *Women and suicidal behavior*. Springer.
- Canetto, S. S., & Lester, D. (1998). Gender, culture and suicidal behavior. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35, 163-191.
- Canetto, S. S., & Lester, D. (2002). Love and achievement motives in women's and men's suicide notes. *Journal of Psychology*, 136, 573-576.
- Canetto, S. S., & Rezaeian, M. (2020). Protest suicide among Muslim women: A human rights perspective. In M. E. Button & I. Marsh (Eds.), *Suicide and social justice: New perspectives on the politics of suicide and suicide prevention* (pp. 102-121). Routledge.
- Canetto, S. S., & Sakinofsky, I. (1998). The gender paradox in suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 28, 1-23.
- Canetto, S. S., Tatum, P. T., & Slater, M. D. (2017). Suicide stories in U.S. media: Rare and focused on the young. In T. Niederkrotenthaler & S. Stack (Eds.), *Media and suicide: International perspectives on research, theory, and policy* (pp. 27-39). Transaction.
- Cato, J. E., & Canetto, S. S. (2003). Attitudes and beliefs about suicidal behavior when coming out is the precipitant of the suicidal behavior. *Sex Roles*, 49 (9/10), 497-505.
- Chen, Y.-Y., Cai, Z. Y., Chang, Q., Canetto, S. S., & Yip, P. S. F. (2021). Caregiving as suicide prevention: An ecological 20-country study of men's family carework, unemployment, and suicide. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 56, 2185-2198.
- Chen, Y.-Y., Fong, T. C. T., Yip, P. S. F., & Canetto, S. S. (2024). Female labor participation as suicide prevention? A population study in Taiwan. *Archives of Suicide Research*. DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2024.2337182
- Winterrowd, E., Canetto, S. S., & Benoit, K. (2017). Permissive beliefs and attitudes about older adult suicide: A suicide enabling script? *Aging & Mental Health*, 21, 173-181.

**For information about this presentation,
you can contact:**

Silvia Sara Canetto, Ph.D., Professor
Department of Psychology
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA
silvia.canetto@colostate.edu