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Intimate Partner Femicide Timeline

Dr Jane Monckton Smith

The Problem: Intimate Partner Femicide

- Men predominate as both perpetrators and victims of homicide globally (90% and 80% respectively)
- Except in the IPH category where: women predominate as victims (70%) (UNODC 2013)
- Femicide has been identified globally as a leading cause of premature death for women (Brennan 2016)
- Between 2009 and 2015 936 women were killed, 598 were killed by an intimate partner (Brennan 2016)
- Global homicide numbers have decreased, femicide has increased
- Not isolated incidents (Brennan 2016)
- Predictable (Adams 2010)

The problem: IPF and Domestic Abuse

- Significant relationship between Domestic Abuse and IPF
- Where there is control, violence (even low level) and a separation after living together, there is a 900% increase in the potential for homicide (Stark, 2009)
- Presence of DA, coercive control or stalking found in over 90% of cases (Monckton Smith *et al* 2017)

What we know

1. **Clusters** of risk markers are more helpful than numbers of markers
2. **Motivation** is more helpful than actions
3. **Patterns** are more helpful than incidents

DHRs and chronologies

- Chaired a number of DHRs
- Revealed the importance of chronologies
- Revealed the consistency with which they are repeated
- Temporal sequencing has an established place in homicide studies

Temporal sequencing

The later stages in the sequences are
preceded by the earlier stages
(Stanton 2006)

Focus for the research

Develop knowledge around *escalating* risk for
use on the frontline

- 575 cases of homicide of women
- 372 IPF
- Twenty cases with detailed data

- Five more stages emerged from the analysis
- Drawing from coercive control discourse

Eight Stages

1. Pre relationship history: criminal record, allegations
2. Early relationship behaviours: early commitment
3. Relationship behaviours: risk markers
4. Potential homicide trigger: separation, ill health, financial problems, threats or rumours
5. Escalation – frequency, seriousness, stalking, persistence
6. Change in thinking –
7. Planning – buying weapons, grave digging, manipulate meetings, letters, organize papers
8. Homicide – homicide/suicide, confession, missing person, denial, accident, multiple victims

Clare Bernal 2005



Alice Ruggles 2016



Stage 1:pre r/ship: Warning Signs

- The person has a history of stalking or domestic abuse (with or without an arrest record)
 - The person is controlling
 - The person has previous arrests for violence,
 - Inability to accept challenge
 - Thin skinned and confrontational
- **Dhillon:** History of stalking previous girlfriends
 - **Peche:** History of coercive control

Stage 2: Early Relationship: warning signs

- Early cohabitation
- Early pregnancy
- Early declarations of love using possessive language (you're mine, together forever etc)
- Pushes for early commitment
- Possessive at early stage
- Jealous at early stage
- Resist attempts to slow down or end the relationship
- Dhillon: had not even met Alice before he was pushing her to commitment and to describing him as her boyfriend
- Peche: became obsessive very quickly. Early declarations of love and seeking commitment from Clare

Stage 3:R/ship: warning signs

- Coercive control
- Stalking
- Violence (even low level pushing and shoving)
- Sexual aggression
- Possessiveness
- Jealousy
- Threats to suicide or kill
- Isolation of victim from family and friends
- Enforces routines on victim or family
- Threats to pets or children
- Quick temper and thin skin
- Drug or alcohol problems (not causal but can exacerbate)
- Depression (not causal but can exacerbate)
- Dhillon: controlling of Alice's time and friendships
- Very possessive – everywhere together
- Jealous – did not like her talking to other men
- Isolated from her friends very quickly
- Suicide threats
- Peche: Similar to Alice

Stage 4: trigger warning signs

- Separation
- Threat of separation
- Imagines a separation (constant accusations of an affair for example)
- Bankruptcy or financial ruin
- Physical health deteriorates in offender or victim
- Mental health deteriorates in offender or victim
- Redundancy, retirement
- Event which prompts retaliation or revenge on victim
- Dhillon: Separation – Alice ended the relationship and he would not accept that.
- Texting Alice's parents with reasons why they should not split
- Begging, threats
- Stalking
- Peche: separation, threats, stalking, escalation, breaches,

Stage 5: escalation warning signs

- Concerning behaviours become more frequent
- Concerning behaviours become more serious or severe
- Stalking (even low level)
- Threats to kill or suicide
- May use language like 'I won't let you leave', 'I cant live without you', 'if I can't have you no-one can'
- **Dhillon: Escalated stalking :**
- **Hacked facebook account**
- **Tracking software on Alice's phone**
- **Hanging around outside her home**
- **Leaving gifts and messages**
- **Peche: following, texting, threats, violence, if I can't have you...**

Stage 6: change in thinking - warning signs

- Last attempts at reconciliation (take a holiday, begging, crying, temper, force and violence, threats)
- Stalking
- Victim does not respond to threats, or cannot respond
- There is a new relationship for victim
- Financial or reputation ruin is imminent or irreversible
- Mental or Physical health deterioration is irreversible
- Status irretrievably diminished
- **Dhillon: Alice would not go back to him**
- **Another man on the scene**
- **Ignoring Police warnings**
- **Peche: Clare would not go back, ignoring police warnings**

Stage 7: planning warning signs

- Stalking
- Change in usual behaviour
- Possible withdrawal
- Increased menace
- May tell people of plans, or may continue to make threats
- Internet searches
- Gathering of weapons or other tools to incapacitate the victim, or dispose of them
- Suicide threats
- Isolate children
- (Where revenge is a motivator may be more rigid in plans)
- **Dhillon: Taking photos of the back of the house**
- **Watching the house and movements of the occupants**
- **Pech: travelled to purchase a gun and to train to use it**

Stage 8: homicide characteristics

- Clear homicide with confession
- Homicide with suicide of offender
- Homicide made to look like suicide
- Homicide made to look like 'mercy killing'
- Homicide made to look like accident
- Homicide made to look like misadventure or natural causes
- Stage missing person
- Children targeted for homicide
- Children collateral damage
- Children witness homicide
- Victim blaming – claiming self defence or provocation
- **Dhillon: broke in to Alice home, denied involvement**
- **Peche: shot Clare at her place of work then shot himself.**

Observations

- Travel through the stages is not inevitable (we saw interventions at stage 7)
- Where the early stages 1-2 are positively identified there is much higher likelihood that attempts at separation later on in the relationship will be met with resistance.
- Where there is progression through stages 3-5 there is much higher likelihood that separation may be very difficult, impossible, or even dangerous. (Challenging disputes may produce fatal violence where violence is an issue).
- Where there is progression to stages 5-7 there is much higher likelihood that there may be an attempt on the victim's life

Level up campaign

- To encourage ethical and accurate reporting of domestic homicide
- Myths can be dangerous to victims and our assessment of risk
- Victim blaming protects perpetrators
- Causes significant trauma to families and victim's children

Meeting with IPSO

- Campaign to be a priority next year
- Build an evidence base of dissatisfaction
- Public consultation on the editor's code
- Collecting research data to support the ethical standards