

Suicide Cultures Reimagining Suicide Research

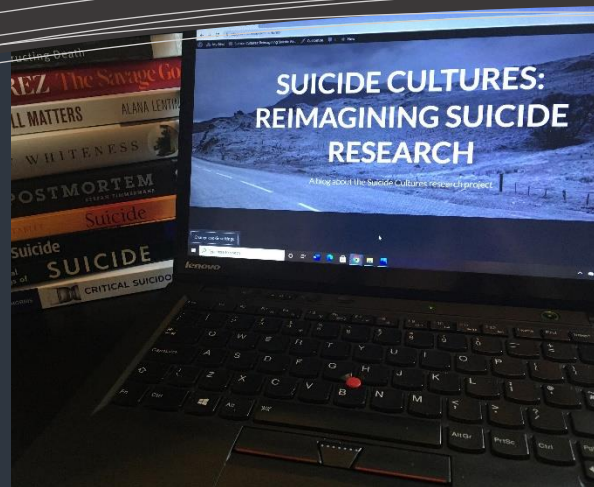
The Suicide Cultures project is a Wellcome Trust funded project which is using multiple innovative, qualitative methods to research meanings and practices of suicide across diverse communities and regions of Scotland.

You can join our mailing list by sending an email to:

suicidecultures@ed.ac.uk

Suicide Cultures is a multidisciplinary research project, with researchers who have backgrounds in sociology, geography, anthropology, gender studies and critical psychology.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/suicide-cultures/people>



February 2022

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Updates Suicide Cultures: Reimagining Suicide Research

We were joined in July 2021 by new Research Fellows: Joe Anderson, Rebecca Helman and Sarah Huque. Since starting, the team have been hard at work on a number of projects:

- Critical literature reviews of existing research about suicide;
- Developing and preparing all the research documents we need for fieldwork and submitting this for ethical review;
- Analysing Fatal Accident Inquiry reports relating to suicides in Scottish prisons;
- Meeting people from across Scotland who work in suicide prevention or related areas.

Emily Yue, the Suicide Cultures PhD researcher successfully completed her 1st year review, and is now waiting for ethical approval to get going with her own fieldwork for her PhD study. Emily will be holding interviews with people who are second generation migrants (e.g. people

whose parents were not born in the UK), and who have experience with suicide.

Emily has also published two papers – ‘Migrant Suicide: A Case for Intersectional Suicide Research’ in the Journal Of Ethics In Mental Health, Open Volume(11), 10; and “Who is the migrant in “Migrant Suicide?” ” in Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research (<https://kohljournal.press/migrant-suicide>). Both are open access and give a flavour of the important issues she will be exploring further with her PhD study.

In November and December we hosted our first Visiting Scholar – Dr Sigita Doblyte, from the University of Oviedo, Spain. Sigita worked on a theoretical paper exploring sociological ways of thinking about the very high rates of suicide in Lithuania. Sigita presented a work in progress seminar and will hopefully publish her paper in due course!

A reminder that you can follow us on Twitter for more regular updates: @suicidecultures

Suicide Cultures Seminar Series

2021 saw us launching our Suicide Cultures Seminar Series, hosted and organised by Emily Yue, with vital administrative support from Asia Podgorska. The series seeks to create a space to showcase and learn from multiple perspectives on suicide, inviting people with experience of suicide bereavement, people who live with suicide, and people who research it critically.

Last year Kelly Stewart introduced her PhD project about suicide running in families; Christopher Dowrick spoke on the role of poetry in General Practice for patients who want to continue living; and Anna Mueller and Seth Abrutyn shared their latest research on suicide prevention in schools in Colorado.

This month, Fiona Malpass and Jennifer White opened up their conversation on the Critical Suicide Studies Statement of Ethics to our audience, resulting in a heartwarming participatory event.

Forthcoming seminars:

Feb Hazel Marzetti "Am I Alive?": understanding LGBT+ youth suicide'

March: Saartje Tack 'Destabilising the positionality of the living in approaches to suicide'

April: Anisur Rahman Kahn 'Male Suicide in Bangladesh'



Over the last several months, the SC team have engaged in a variety of events, as a way of both training and networking in anticipation of beginning data collection later in 2022. In this section, we provide a snapshot of some of these events.

Various team members have attended monthly meetings of the **National Rural Mental Health Forum**. These seminars provide insight into the challenges of mental health provision in rural settings (including sessions where these challenges are raised to attending government officials), as well as a forum for those currently innovating on the frontlines to describe their activities. For example, the August meeting included a presentation from the **Species on the Edge** project about the integration of health and wellbeing into conservation efforts, including combatting rural isolation. At the September meeting, one of the presentations was a detailed exploration of the needs of youth within Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Action Plan, and the launch of the Youth Advisory Group.

The SC Research Fellows participated in several of the **National Suicide Prevention Strategy Public Engagement Events**, for both the national and local levels. These events sought public input into the Strategy and provided space for the public to raise key concerns and priorities. It also gave the SC team a chance to

Building networks and community in suicide research and practice

hear the public's voice and consider the differences and synergies between the scales at which people think about suicide (local, national).

Two members of our team were invited to give a presentation about the Suicide Cultures project at the **Tayside Suicide Prevention Event "Suicide Prevention is Everybody's Business"** on 23 November 2021. The event explored the evolving and diverse suicide prevention and research landscape in Tayside, with presentations from **NHS Tayside**, the **National Suicide Prevention Leadership Team**, **Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action**, and **Penumbra Angus**. The SC team presented findings from the pilot work, plans for the next steps and longer term future of the project, and facilitated breakout group discussions.

The SC Research Fellows also produced and led a small methods workshop as a form of knowledge exchange and training, focusing on the methodologies we will use during data collection – ethnography, photo voice, and walking & mapping interviews.

Finally, recent **SC Advisory Group** meetings have helped us to have productive, supportive, and challenging discussions with experienced social scientists within Critical Suicide Studies about starting fieldwork, in preparation for the next stages of the project.



This month our publication spotlight is a paper led by sociologist Anisur Rahman Khan, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Suicide Cultures Research Fellow Rebecca Helman was a co-author on the paper.

Publication Spotlight: Masculinity and Men's Suicide Attempts in Bangladesh

This paper presents findings from a qualitative interview study with 17 men (between the ages of 18 and 55) who attempted suicide in the Jhenaidah district in southwestern Bangladesh, one of the most suicide-prone areas in the country. This research is part of a larger study entitled "Men's Suicidal Behaviours and Masculinity in Bangladesh", run by Dr. Anisur Rahman Khan.

The paper explores how men's suicide attempts relate to social and cultural ideas about masculinity in Bangladesh. Participants described how financial provision, protection, being hardworking, having and

showing off material possessions, maintaining dominance, control and power over their families, and sexual prowess are key elements of being a "real man". However, men also described struggling to live up to these social and cultural ideals. Men narrated how the failure to fulfil these ideals resulted in despair, shame, and loss of respect, which, in some instances prompted them to take their own lives.

Khan et al. argue that men's "failures" need to be considered in the context of unemployment and economic instability, as well as the continued dominance of patriarchal versions of masculinity.

In line with critical approaches to suicide, this article proposes suicide be seen as more than an individual mental health problem, advocating for a social and cultural approach to suicide and suicide prevention. As the authors demonstrate, this means paying close attention to the social and cultural contexts in which men live, attempt and die by suicide.

Anisur Rahman Khan will present on 'The social and cultural context of male suicide in Bangladesh' as part of the Suicide Cultures Seminar Series on the 28th of April 2022.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0030222820966239>

Critical Suicide Studies: Between Methodology and Ethics

A special issue of *Health: an interdisciplinary journal* addressing methodological and ethical issues in critical suicide studies, was published in January 2022.

This exciting collection of papers includes papers on Indigenous knowledge and ethical knowledge production in suicide studies; reflections on how assumptions about suicide and self-harm shape research in clinical and community settings; and a range of critical interventions which – in different ways – sought to challenge suicide researchers of all kinds to reflect deeply on the ethical challenges and limits of different methodological approaches to researching suicide.

The link to the editorial for the journal special issue is here:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/13634593211061638>

Suicide in/as Politics Update

Suicide in/as Politics is a sibling project to Suicide Cultures, funded by the Leverhulme Trust 2020-2023

The Suicide in/as Politics Project has now completed initial analyses of all UK suicide prevention policies in action between 2009-2019, and work continues on analysis of parliamentary debates which reference 'suicide' over the same time period.

Our first paper has been published, sharing some initial findings from the policy analysis: **Marzetti, H., Oaten, A., Chandler, A., Jordan, A. (2022) 'Self-inflicted. Deliberate. Death-intentioned. A critical policy analysis of UK suicide prevention policies 2009-2019'** *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 21(1), 4-14.

More updates at the study blog site:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/suicide-in-as-politics/>



Suicide Cultures Mailing List

The Mailing List is a great way of staying up to date with the Suicide Cultures project.

To join, simply email suicidecultures@ed.ac.uk

Fatal Accident Inquiries

Our first package of qualitative research has focused on analysing reviews conducted following the death of someone by suicide while in the Scottish Prison Service (SPS). These Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (FAI) reports are written by sheriffs and consider a range of evidence in assessing why someone took their life, including eye witness statements from police officers, health professionals who were involved in their care, and events that are deemed relevant to the individual's death. Our project wants to understand suicide cultures across Scotland and the prison represents one such culture.

We hope that this work may shed light on the complex, socially situated, and often paradoxical nature of suicide. Many people who take their lives in prison have expressed hopes about their release, made plans for the future, and appear to be psychologically healthy by all professional assessments. Yet, these reports also give clues as to what life for them was like before prison. Many of the reports highlight difficult backgrounds, as well as other forms of structural inequality that may have made life 'unliveable' both outside and inside the prison.

The process of reading and analysing this data has given us insights into how knowledge about suicide is created within a very specific institutional context (the prison system) in dialogue with doctors, police officers, psychiatrists, prison administrations, and the court system – each of which have lives and relevance beyond prison. Judge's interpretations of motivations for suicide often relate to wider discourses of suicide, including the notion that suicide is primarily a problem of mental illness located within the individual. We are developing publications using this data as we begin to explore how suicide is conceptualised and responded to within Scotland more generally.

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