

Book review

Routledge Handbook of Homicide Studies

Edited by Kyle A. Burgason and Matt DeLisi
Routledge Handbook of Homicide Studies,
Routledge,
2024
p. 873
ISBN 9781032505305
Review DOI
10.1108/JCP-05-2025-147

Empirical research on homicide has been growing in the past four decades. A review of the literature identified four unique but interrelated research activities, with the first two areas involves empirical studies relating to homicide in general (e.g. DeLisi and Butler, 2020; Minkler *et al.*, 2024) and offender typologies of those who perpetrated homicide in general (e.g. Pecino-Latorre *et al.*, 2020; Sea *et al.*, 2020). The third research area relates to more specific types of homicides, for instance, serial homicides (e.g. Chan *et al.*, 2015; Myers *et al.*, 2023), sexual homicides (e.g. Chan, 2019, 2024), mass homicides (e.g. Fox and Levin, 2022; Girgis *et al.*, 2023), spree homicides (e.g. Safarik and Ramsland, 2019; Shreesta *et al.*, 2023), parricides (e.g. Heide, 2013; Myers *et al.*, 2025) and filicides (e.g. Mariano *et al.*, 2014; Myers *et al.*, 2021). Finally, the fourth relates to studies advancing offender typologies of different kinds of homicide, such as serial murderers (e.g. Adjorlolo and Chan, 2017; Horning *et al.*, 2015) and sexual murderers (e.g. Chan *et al.*, 2024; Georgoulis *et al.*, 2024). The outcomes of these studies have contributed to enrich and broaden our understanding of homicide offenses. Burgason and DeLisi's new *Routledge Handbook of Homicide Studies* represents an invaluable contribution to take stock of the homicide literature that explores the prevalence, nature, trend and dynamic of homicide

offending from a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective.

1. Summary and evaluation of the book

This handbook is well-organized with five sections. Comprising a total of 37 chapters, this handbook adopts a combined theoretical- and practical-oriented approach in introducing readers to updated research and best practices in the study of homicides. Section 1 of the Handbook, with seven chapters, examines the current state of homicide from around the globe. These chapters explore the global trends in homicide from 1990 to 2020 (Chapter 2 by Santos and Testa), the population-level causes and consequences of homicide in Latin America and Caribbean (Chapter 3 by Escano), the nature of different types of extremist murder – e.g. ideologically motivated murder, bias murder, “lone actor” extremist murder (Chapter 4 by Gruenewald *et al.*), the growing trend of “true crime” in changing the discipline of criminal justice (Chapter 5 by Marquart and Belshaw), the theoretical and empirical understanding of homicide perpetrated by military veterans (Chapter 6 by Hazelwood and Logan), the homicidal ideation from a life course approach (Chapter 7 by Vaughn and Sarteschi) and the definitions, nature and sources in studying mass shootings (Chapter 8 by Schildkraut and Lankford).

In the following section with six chapters, the focus switches to specific types of homicide. Although the types of homicide discuss in this handbook are not comprehensive, it does include some of the major types. For instance, Lysova (Chapter 9) introduces the couple-based

ecological typology in studying intimate partner homicide (e.g. male- and female-perpetrated), Gerard and Khachatryan (Chapter 10) synthesize the recent literature on youth homicide offenders' characteristics and their risk factors and Zawisza (Chapter 11) writes about different types of homicide that are considered justified under specific circumstances (i.e. legal homicide) with examples such as the death penalty, physician-assisted suicide, stand your ground laws, officer use of deadly force and abortion. The next three types of homicide discussed are generally more sensationalized by the media, with Yaksic (Chapter 12) introducing readers to the current state of research in the study of serial murder. Beauregard and Chopin (Chapter 13) explore different types of extreme crime scene behaviors observed in sexual homicides (e.g. foreign object insertion, overkill, dismemberment, necrophilic behaviors and unusual behaviors); and finally, Welner *et al.* (Chapter 14) provide a case study of 19 cases of fetal abduction by maternal evisceration that happened in the USA between 1974 and 2017.

Section 3 of the Handbook, comprising nine chapters, focuses on the causes and correlates of homicide. The topics covered in these chapters include the study of serial murderers from the criminal career perspective (Chapter 15 by Campedelli and D'Orsogna), the prevalence and consequences of adverse childhood experiences on subsequent homicidal acts in life (Chapter 16 by Jones and Hoffmann), the empirical study of victim-offender overlap between homicide and non-homicide offenders (Chapter 17 by Butler and Beatty), the empirical analysis of neighborhood patterns of gang homicide in East Los Angeles (Chapter 18 by Valasik *et al.*) and the theoretical understanding of the relationship between immigration and homicide (Chapter 19 by Barranco and Shihadeh). The second part of this

section mainly explores the intra-characteristics of homicide offenders with how homicidal behaviors relate to self-control (Chapter 20 by Meldrum *et al.*), psychosis (Chapter 21 by Neilssen and Large), psychopathy (Chapter 22 by Ray and Kahn) and sexual sadism (Chapter 23 by DeLisi *et al.*).

In Part 4, Burgason and DeLisi organize chapters that discuss how the study of homicide can relate to the wider criminal justice system. This part consists of nine chapters, with Mears and Stafford examining different criminal justice policy efforts in preventing or responding to homicide (Chapter 24), Baglivio and Wolff focusing on juvenile homicide offenders by exploring differences between first-time offenders, offenders with minimal prior offending and chronic offenders (Chapter 25), Lawshe and Zimmerman synthesizing the literature on policing homicide in urban and rural areas (Chapter 26), Regoeczi *et al.* reviewing the trends and patterns in homicide clearances (Chapter 27) and Brookman and Pike discussing the contemporary investigative challenges of homicide investigations at the organizational level (Chapter 28). The next four chapters explore the four-dimension funnel model as an effective tool for analyzing the processing of homicides across different jurisdictions and over time (Chapter 29 by Liem), the various stages in the court system's processing of homicides in the USA (Chapter 30 by Mora and Pizarro), the trends of death in custody (i.e. prison homicide) in the USA (Chapter 31 by Long) and the different psychopathy profiles of condemned capital murderers in California (Chapter 32 by Peters *et al.*).

The final section of the Handbook comprises five chapters under the heading "Professional Observations." Heide first explores the offenders' current perception of accountability for their homicidal incident committed in their juvenile years (Chapter 33);

and followed by Dierenfeldt *et al.*, they examine the trends and challenges associated with the investigation of cold case homicides (Chapter 34). Kruse introduces readers to how a homicide is handled by a medical examiner or coroner's office (i.e. homicide death investigation; Chapter 35), and Ruelas writes about the various aspects of homicides (e.g. homicide clearance rates, media coverage of homicides and gang homicides) that occurred in the Los Angeles County in California (Chapter 36). In the final chapter (Chapter 37), DeLisi writes about the normal and pathological features regarding the developmental course, psychopathology and behavioral features of homicide offenders.

2. Unique value and contribution of the book

Overall, Burgason and DeLisi's large collection of reviews and empirical studies on homicide is a valuable contribution to a growing body of research at the intersection of multiple disciplines. It offers a broad array of insights into the current state of research and best practices in the study of homicide and homicide investigation. However, there are two small drawbacks with this text. First, the book could benefit from an additional focus on the trends and patterns of homicide across different countries or territories, given that most chapters are contributed by those coming from the Americas or Europe. Contributions from other regions (e.g. Asia, Africa and the Middle-East) are lacking, making it less "international." Second, although the Handbook is comprehensive in its scope, some types of homicide or homicide offenders (e.g. women and children who killed, honor killing, genocide and state-sponsored killing) that demand our attention are overlooked. Both suggestions are to be interpreted in a constructive light since it reflects the potential for another collection of studies in this area.

Leaving the minor blemishes to the side, the *Routledge Handbook of Homicide Studies* is accessible and easy to follow, providing interesting and simple narratives for budding academics and novices while offering serious knowledge to experienced researchers and seasoned practitioners. It clearly serves as an important marker of how far homicide research has come and where future research is required. This, in itself, makes the Handbook well worth picking up.

Heng Choon (Oliver) Chan

Heng Choon (Oliver) Chan is based at the Department of Social Policy, Sociology, and Criminology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.

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