

# The Relative Gender Gap in Suicide: Societal Integration, the Culture of Suicide, and Period Effects in 20 Developed Countries, 1955–1994

Phillips Cutright

*Indiana University*

and

Robert M. Fernquist

*Central Missouri State University*

Previous research on Australian, Canadian, and U.S. trends in the ratio of male to female suicide rates (the relative gender gap) has concluded that changes in female rates are the principal cause of change in the ratio. Pampel's (1998) analysis of longitudinal cross-national data asserts that an unmeasured construct labeled "institutional adjustment" and his measure of the "national political context" are important predictors of trends in female suicide and the accompanying trends in the relative gender gap. Tests of Pampel's measure of national political context failed to find its expected impact on trends in male or female suicide rates or the relative gender gap. However, the period effects attributed by Pampel to the "institutional adjustment" process were evident, even after controlling societal integration and the culture of suicide. Still, Durkheimian indicators of societal integration, national cultures of suicide, and residualized lagged (1938) dependent variables explained most of the variation in 1955–1994 male and female suicide rates and the relative gender gap. © 2001 Academic Press

Over a century ago Morselli (1882, p. 196) and Durkheim (1897/1951, pp. 176–198 and 263–267) observed that male suicide rates exceeded those of females in European nations. The gender gap in European suicide rates persisted through the 20th century (Dublin, 1963; Sainsbury, 1986, 1972; Pampel, 1998).

We acknowledge the support of Central Missouri State University. We also thank J. Scott Long for statistical advice; Steven Stack and Rodney Stark for information about and data from the World Values Survey; and Alex Durig, Melissa Milkie, Katie Rosier, and Diane Schaefer for research assistance. We also thank anonymous referees for helpful criticisms.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Phillips Cutright, Rte. 1, Box 243-C, Saluda, NC 28773. E-mail: [cutright@saluda.tds.net](mailto:cutright@saluda.tds.net) or [fernquist@cmsu1.cmsu.edu](mailto:fernquist@cmsu1.cmsu.edu).

The gender gap exists in developed countries outside Europe as well (Fernquist and Cutright, 1998; Pampel, 1998). Girard (1993) observed that sociologists had done little more than simply report that male rates surpassed those of females year after year. His study of suicide rates in 49 countries for the years 1976–1980 applied a life-cycle approach to role identities and kinship institutions that were, in turn, affected by the level of economic development. He reported higher male than female suicide rates in nearly all countries—the exceptions being a few less developed Asian populations. Of the 55 nations studied by Canetto and Lester (1995, Table 3.1) only two, China and Papua, New Guinea, reported higher female than male rates in the mid-1980s. We follow Pampel in restricting analysis to more developed countries because their vital statistics are reliable and they share a similar pattern in the male/female suicide ratio.

Despite recent efforts (e.g., Pampel, 1998) to explain trends in the ratio of male to female suicide—the relative gender gap indicator—we believe that trends in male and female suicide rates should be studied separately before examining the trend in the resulting ratio of male to female suicide. To date virtually all efforts to understand trends in the relative gender gap have focused attention on changes in female rates. But changes in male rates can also impact this measure of the gender gap. Past research has also ignored the possibility that different predictors may have large effects only on male rates, while other predictors may effect only female rates. To understand how income inequality, for example, has a positive impact on the relative gender gap it is necessary to know its separate effects on male and female rates. We follow procedures to allow such a detailed study of each of our predictors.

We examine the possibility that predictors related to cross-national variation in the gender gap are different from predictors of male and female suicide rates. We test Pampel's (1998) hypotheses that national differences in "collectivism" and "institutional adjustment" explain post-World War II trends in the gender ratio in developed countries. We also test for differences in the impact of predictors of the gender gap between the early (1955–1974) and later (1975–1994) periods because institutional adjustment theorists assert that the relationship of certain independent predictors with suicide rates and the gender ratio differ between these two periods.

We first develop a model for age-standardized male and female suicide rates based on Durkheim's theory of societal integration and then add two measures of the culture of suicide—a direct measure of cultural disapproval of suicide around 1980 and then a proxy for the normative order regarding suicide in 1938. The errors of prediction using these predictors of 1955–1994 male and female suicide rates and the gender ratio are then used to test Pampel's major hypotheses. If measures of societal integration and the culture of suicide predict gender-specific suicide rates, we should then be able to identify predictors that have a positive or negative impact on the gender ratio via their impact on male and female suicide rates. The errors of prediction that remain can then be used to test whether the pattern of effects over time from institutional adjustment and collectivist national

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات