



UWL REPOSITORY

repository.uwl.ac.uk

Is postvention research the 'poor relation' of suicidology?

Whitebrook, John ORCID logo ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1651-3671> (2025) Is postvention research the 'poor relation' of suicidology? In: 9th Suicide & Self-Harm Early and Mid-Career Researchers' Forum (EMCRF25), 02-03 Jun 2025, Glasgow, Scotland, UK. (Submitted)

This is the Presentation of the final output.

UWL repository link: <https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/13914/>

Alternative formats: If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact: open.research@uwl.ac.uk

Copyright:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy: If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us at open.research@uwl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Rights Retention Statement:

Is postvention research the 'poor relation' of suicidology?

John Whitebrook



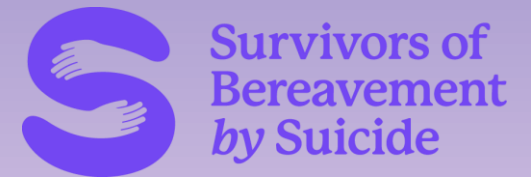
Alex Whitebrook

03-Feb-1991 ~ 01-May-2017



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON

9th Suicide & Self-Harm Early and Mid-Career Researchers' Forum (EMCRF25)



The Bereaved by Suicide – Who?



- ❑ Exposed¹:
 - Knew or identify with someone who dies by suicide.
- ❑ Affected¹:
 - Experience psychological distress as a result of a suicide.
- ❑ Bereaved¹:
 - Close personal relationship to someone who dies by suicide.
- ❑ Suicide Loss Survivor (SLS)²:
 - Term increasingly used for those who have experienced the suicide of a close family member, or a friend, and face persistent distress.
 - Differentiates from survivors of suicide attempts.

The Bereaved by Suicide – How Many?



- ❑ The annual, global suicide rate is minimally of the order of c. 700k^{3,4}.
- ❑ “*How Many People Are Exposed to Suicide? Not Six*”⁵:
 - Oft quoted number that 135 people are *exposed* per suicide.
 - Implies c. 94.5 million people are *exposed* per year.
- ❑ Other estimates put the *exposure* rate at 48 – 500 million per year with 60 people per suicide being *intimately affected*⁶:
 - Implies 42 million people *bereaved* by suicide per year.
 - Regardless of the literature source, it’s...

...A BIG NUMBER!

The Bereaved by Suicide – Postvention



□ Postvention

"We hear
benign c
health c
is preven
three pos
preventio
least, po
presents

Postvention is prevention — The case for suicide postvention

(Jordan, 2017⁹):

"...convincing empirical evidence that exposure to suicide increases the risk of subsequent suicide..."

"...substantial evidence base makes the compelling case that all suicide prevention programs need to include postvention services as a direct form of suicide prevention..."

rt after

ventions. A
e mental
ostvention
tion. Of the
rises –
f suicide at
m and thus
(72⁷)

The Bereaved by Suicide – Publications¹⁰



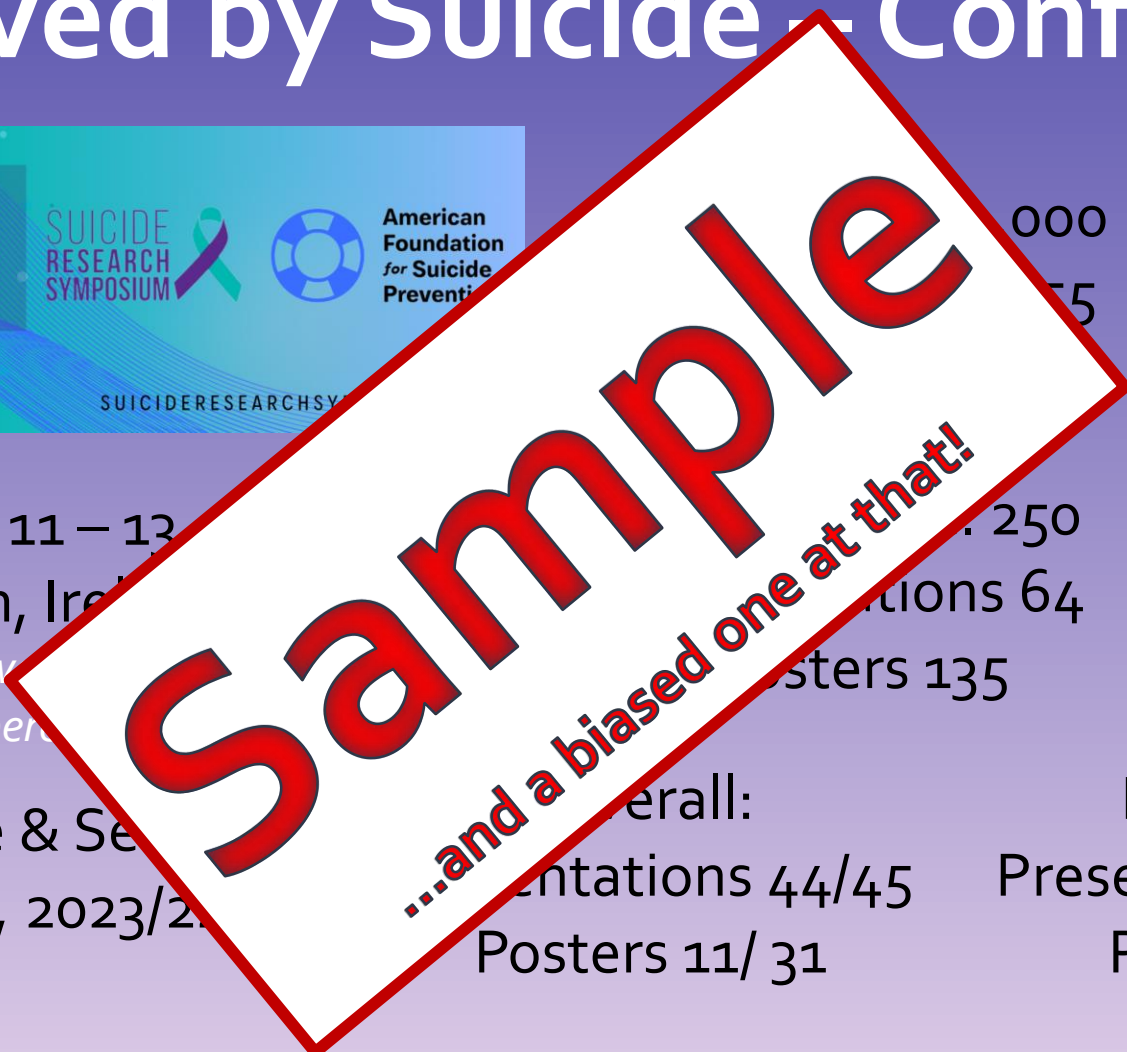
- ❑ Modest number of articles on postvention.
- ❑ Majority via two publications sponsored by organisations with remits covering SLS support and postvention research:
 - *Crisis, The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*
 - *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*
- ❑ Understanding of suicide bereavement and postvention could benefit from:
 - Development of consensual definitions.
 - Theory-driven research.
 - Involvement of SLS in the research process.

The Bereaved by Suicide - Conferences



November 11 – 13
 Dublin, Ireland
 "...especially with
 on suicide bereavement"

7/8th Suicide & Sorrow
 EMCRF, 2023/24



...and a biased one at that!

...overall:
 Presentations 44/45
 Posters 11/ 31

000
 75
 Bereavement focus:
 Presentations 2* (1.3%)
 Posters 2 (1.4%)

250
 Presentations 64
 Posters 135

Suicide focus:
 Presentations 9 (14.1%)
 Posters 15* (11.1%)

Bereavement focus:
 Presentations 3*/2 (6.8/4.4%)
 Posters 0/1* (0/3.2%)

Based on program review – directional not absolute (*Whitebrook involvement!)

The Bereaved by Suicide – Research Asks



- ❑ Keep doing what you're doing and facilitate lower rates!
- ❑ Look for ways to integrate postvention research into your programs:
 - SLS often interviewed (autopsies) to help determine suicide drivers – opportunity to learn about their lived experience as SLS
 - Always be aware that '*postvention is prevention*'
- ❑ Research often focussed on stigma and/or support needs (incl. mine!):
 - Ask SLS what they want to understand more about
 - More focus on post-traumatic growth and positivity?
- ❑ More collaboration with charities e.g. SoBS, HUGG in Ireland (UCC)
- ❑ Do more (some?) research into the impact of bereavement by suicide!

Thank You



John Whitebrook

john.whitebrook@research.uwl.ac.uk

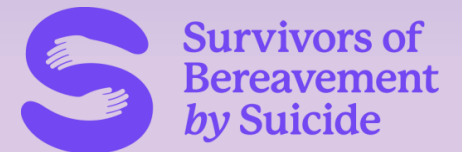
john.whitebrook@uksobs.org

• X (Twitter): @JohnWhitebrook

• Discord: johnwhitebrook

<https://netecr.org/2022/03/13/john-whitebrook/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/john-whitebrook-864bo4/>



References 1 of 2:

1. Cerel, J., McIntosh, J. L., Neimeyer, R. A., Maple, M., & Marshall, D. (2014). The continuum of survivorship: Definitional issues in the aftermath of suicide. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior, 44*(6), 591-600. doi:10.1111/sltb.12093
2. Levi-Belz, Y., & Birnbaum, S. (2022). Depression and suicide ideation among suicide-loss survivors: a six-year longitudinal study. *International journal of environmental research and public health, 19*(24), 16561. doi:10.3390/ijerph192416561
3. World Health Organization. (2021). *Suicide worldwide in 2019: Global health estimates*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.
4. Ilic, M., & Ilic, I. (2022). Worldwide suicide mortality trends (2000-2019): A joinpoint regression analysis. *World journal of psychiatry, 12*(8), 1044. doi:10.5498/wjpv12.i8.1044
5. Cerel, J., Brown, M. M., Maple, M., Singleton, M., Van de Venne, J., Moore, M., & Flaherty, C. (2019). How many people are exposed to suicide? Not six. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 49*(2), 529-534. doi:10.1111/sltb.12450
6. Pitman, A., Osborn, D., King, M., & Erlangsen, A. (2014). Effects of suicide bereavement on mental health and suicide risk. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 1*(1), 86-94. doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70224-X
7. Shneidman, E. S. (1972). Foreword. In A. Cain (Ed.), *Survivors of suicide*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas.

References 2 of 2:

8. Leenaars, A. A. (2010). Lives and Deaths: Biographical Notes on Selections from the Works of Edwin S. Shneidman. *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior*, 40(5), 476-491. doi: 10.1521/suli.2010.40.5.476
9. Jordan, J. R. (2017). Postvention is prevention—The case for suicide postvention. *Death studies*, 41(10), 614-621. doi:10.1080/07481187.2017.1335544
10. Andriessen, K. (2014). Suicide bereavement and postvention in major suicidology journals: lessons learned for the future of postvention. *Crisis*, 35, 338–348. doi:10.1027/0227-5910/a000269