CHILD VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE

Children account for 10–20 per cent of all homicide victims in Australia, the United Kingdom, and North America. The most vulnerable time has been found to be the first year of life and, in particular, the first day of life. Unlike other forms of homicide where men are by far the most likely perpetrators, studies show that women are just as likely as men to commit child homicide. Using these findings, Alder and Polk arrange their investigations along the dual lines of gender and position inside or outside of the family. They ask who are the most likely killers of infants – mothers or fathers? Who are the most likely killers of adolescents – family or outsiders? They also consider patterns in suicide-homicides. In considering the implications of their findings for theoretical understandings of child homicide, they point out that context interacts significantly with the structures, understandings and experiences of gender, parenthood and childhood. This compelling study draws on Australian case studies and includes comparative statistics from the United Kingdom and North America. It will be useful to a wide interdisciplinary readership of scholars and students.

Christine Alder is Associate Professor in Criminology and Ken Polk is Professor of Criminology at the University of Melbourne. Their previous publications include Christine Alder’s edited book with Rob White, Police and Young People in Australia (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Ken Polk’s When Men Kill (Cambridge University Press, 1994).
CHILD VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE

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