

Suicide in the Victorian Popular Press:
England, 1837-1901



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Introduction

Among the black catalogue of human offences, there is not, indeed, any that more powerfully affects the mind, that more outrages all the feelings of the heart, than the crime of suicide. Our laws have branded it with infamy, and the industry which is exerted by surviving relatives to conceal its perpetration evinces that the shame which is attached to it is of that foul and contagious character, that even the innocent consider themselves affected by its malignity.¹

In the Victorian era, as today, suicide was a hotly-debated concept; its literary, medical, legal, artistic and press representations all differed dramatically as did its perception amongst the public. For a social ‘taboo’ which was often concealed by families, friends and institutions, it was examined, sensationalised and discussed to a surprising degree. This dissertation seeks to explore the representation of suicide in the popular press of Victorian England, a much neglected area of historiography on suicide and its cultural reception.

Gates claims that by 1800, England had become known as the European centre of suicide – ‘a land of black, dark Novembers, dripping with mists of self-destruction.’ Proof was to be found in the ‘earnest melancholy’ of English poets such as Byron and the perception of England as susceptible to such romantic affectations and weakness of character.² There were, of course, boundless arguments and defences against this myth but what is clear is that in England during the Victorian period, there had developed a concern for the increase in suicide rates, and a widespread condemnation of the principle of giving up on life and lacking willpower, which was such an important characteristic of the era.

Several philosophers and physicians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries posited that civilizing processes such as industrialization, with its corresponding rise in ambitions and education, was responsible for the increase in insanity perceived in the period.³ In contrast, Kevin Breault argues that historical scholarship from the time actually demonstrated that suicide was *not* more prevalent in urban areas, so there were clearly two different schools of thought on this position even at the time.⁴ Olive Anderson suggests that the picture was far more complex and that the ‘unnatural’ character of both suicide and industrialization provided merely an analogy for understanding what was a perceived increase in suicide at the time.⁵

¹ F. Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide* (London, 1840), p. 36.

² B. T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* (Princeton, 1988), p. 23.

³ H. I. Kushner, ‘Suicide, Gender, and the Fear of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Medical and Social Thought’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), p. 461.

⁴ K. Breault, ‘Review of V. Bailey, *This Rash Act: Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City*’, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Jul., 1999), p. 243

⁵ O. Anderson, ‘Did Suicide Increase with Industrialization in Victorian England?’, *Past & Present*, No. 86 (Feb., 1980), pp. 170-171.

Suicide was legally viewed as a criminal act until the Suicide Act of 1961⁶ meaning that throughout the period in question, it was treated as both a crime and a moral aberration by many. Nevertheless, the Victorian period did witness many positive changes to the treatment of those with mental illness, more acutely obvious since it was a period defined by vastly changing medicine and science. The horrific social and medical treatment of the “insane” in the middle ages was fast becoming a part of English history in which to be ashamed.⁷ The medical literature of the Victorian period was defined by its emphasis on the pathological nature of suicides. James Cowles Prichard was one of the first to write a medical treatise on insanity which was influential in the Victorian period, having published his work in 1835. He was one of the first to suggest the concept of “moral insanity”, a specific form of mental illness which impairs the ability to think clearly.⁸ This was one of the discourses contributing to the growing verdicts of ‘temporary insanity’ decided upon by coroners and juries. Forbes Winslow followed with a medical treatise called *The Anatomy of Suicide* in 1840. Winslow’s work is extremely paradoxical, offering a great deal of insight and sensitivity with regards to the complex reasons leading to suicide and yet condemning its moral corruption. This was typical of the vast majority of suicide literature at the time – offering various sympathetic explanations for its occurrence including physical disease of the brain, yet suggesting that the deceased was acting against the interests of both God and man, implying that they still had power over the choices they made.⁹

The dominant historiography on Victorian suicide and, indeed, those texts which have informed this dissertation the most heavily are Victor Bailey’s *Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City*, Barbara Gates’s *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* and Olive Anderson’s *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Victor Bailey provides a strong micro-history from a set of inquests from Kingston-upon-Hull, the only complete set remaining from the Victorian period;¹⁰ he aims to place the individual experience of suicide into a social context, including that of the life-cycle of the time. Gates looks broadly at several themes of suicide representation including otherness, gender and sensation, and establishes various arguments about the discourse she feels was prevalent at the time. Anderson takes a rather Durkheimian approach, basing her first chapter on statistics, followed by experiences, attitudes and restraints. The popular press has only been sporadically and briefly examined in these texts, with no solid conclusions made about its reporting on suicide. As a key daily or weekly feature in the lives of most Victorians, it is surprising that there has been no extended study as yet on the reporting of suicides – and more generally crime – in newspapers.

⁶ Legislation Gov UK, ‘Suicide Act 1961’ <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/9-10/60>> 13 March 2011 and P. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996), p. 70.

⁷ See, for example, J. B. Spence, ‘An Address on the Insane and Their Treatment’, *The British Medical Journal*, (Jan 20., 1900), pp. 129-134.

⁸ J. C. Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (London, 1835), p. 13.

⁹ Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide*.

¹⁰ V. Bailey, “*This Rash Act*”: *Suicide Across the Life Cycle in the Victorian City* (Stanford, 1998), p. 5.

The sources used in this research were stumbled upon somewhat unintentionally whilst searching newspaper archives for discourses on lunacy. After further research on these reports, the realisation was that these are a rich set of sources which have not been fully explored. Since newspapers were one of the only media outlets at the time, we can gain a unique insight into Victorian values and gauge the kind of discourse on suicide to which the masses were being exposed. Another particularly interesting reason for looking at suicide reports is uncovering the contrast between Victorian respectability and the crude sensationalism of both fiction and newspapers at the time. As Anne Baltz Rodrick articulates, '[there was] a feeling not only of disgust at the capacity of men and women to wound and maim themselves in horrible ways, but also of dismay that these horrors formed an inseparable part of the foundation upon which a preening Victorian respectability had built itself.'¹¹ Moreover, suicide is a way into learning more about broader Victorian attitudes such as those towards death, poverty, illness, gender relations, and the family.

The aim of this piece of work is to look at the *perceived* nature, attitudes toward, causes of and patterns of suicide. What this research is interested in is the social perception of suicide which has been overlooked in much historiography. One advantage of using newspaper reports is that they were much more manageable in the time scale of this piece of work than reading through detailed inquests; secondly, unlike inquests, newspaper reports mention the court trials of those who had attempted suicide unsuccessfully, which have not been utilised by historians or sociologists.

This dissertation will look at two London newspapers; the *Standard* and *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, in 1850 and 1900. These dates have been chosen because they are representative yet still manageable; by looking at these two years single years, five decades apart, it is possible to observe the changes which may or may not have occurred over time. The specific newspapers have been chosen based on their mass readership and their differing political and moral stances: the *Standard* epitomizes a conservative readership while *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* was decidedly Liberal in its outlook, and appealed to a more wide-ranging spectrum of society, including the working classes. This was especially true after the 1855 abolition of the stamp duty, which allowed an increasing proportion of the working- and lower-middle classes to buy such newspapers. Grant claims that at one point, *Lloyd's* had the largest newspaper circulation in the world with 500,000 papers sold weekly.¹² Nevertheless, both wrote for and aimed for circulation within a respectable readership. This study did face some technical difficulties in gathering the samples for each newspaper; unfortunately, due to the nature of digitizing old newspapers, many were illegible and were unable to be used. Some were also irrelevant, talking about such things as "political suicide" and were disregarded. However, as many as

¹¹ A. B. Rodrick, "'Only a Newspaper Metaphor': Crime Reports, Class Conflict, and Social Criticism in Two Victorian Newspapers', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), p. 14.

¹² The British Library, 'Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper'

<<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/publicationByLocation.do>> 12 February 2011.

were legible and relevant for each newspaper were collected for both 1850 and 1900; 459 articles were examined overall.

The first chapter of this dissertation will look at the act of suicide. Specifically, it will look at what the newspapers described as the causes of suicide and how these correlate with other opinions from the period. It will also summarise the patterns in method choice and what we may be able to learn from this. The second chapter will look at the sensational narrative employed in the newspaper reports to describe suicides and the social context accompanying it, in the hope of suggesting possible reasons such sensationalism was so common. It will also look at the changes in such language and attitudes over time. The last chapter will be concerned with moral and social attitudes generally toward suicide, and what moral and social elements we can trace through newspaper reports over half a century. This dissertation does not claim to answer all of the questions it raises but rather to suggest future lines of enquiry.

I

The Act Itself: Causes, Methods and Statistics

Pat Jalland argues that the causes for suicide at the time were seen as either a result of mental illness, or a rational decision in consequence of an individual's socio-economic situation.¹³ However, this over-simplification needs reviewing due to the myriad of causes cited by both coroners' inquests and those who had attempted suicide and failed. "Socio-economic" is a categorization which does not necessarily encompass every case. The causes of suicide as cited in the papers examined were so vast it would be impossible to categorize them all, especially since one reason might fall under several categories. Rodrick posits that crime reports could be separated into two categories (at least in the *Northern Star*, which her study examines) – "crimes of passion" and "crimes of destitution", with suicide falling into the latter category.¹⁴ Indeed, it often did, but arguably suicides could also be described as crimes of passion and various others. Furthermore, in many cases the cause of suicide was not known or not reported. Some of the most common examples of causes which were reported, however, are: mental illness, physical illness, money worries, love disappointments, illegitimate pregnancies, fear of punishment (usually in consequence of committing a crime), unemployment, domestic abuse, family problems, grief, quarrels, and social embarrassment. Indeed, Reverend James Gurnhill neatly summarises this in his examination of causes:

It may be... that his sin had found him out, and he feared to face the consequences. It may be that some vicious habit had undermined the supports of life, and disturbed his mental equilibrium. Or it may be that he found the conditions of his existence so trying and severe through poverty or misfortune, infidelity or disease, that he could bear the burthen no longer; so he issued his own "Exeat," and sought to escape from his misery by a voluntary act of self-destruction.¹⁵

These do not sound too dissimilar to reasons one might choose to take their life today, but clearly Victorian context is vital in understanding the nuances of these reasons as they would have applied in the period. It is not possible to look at all of these causes in detail – in fact, to even look at one in detail would require an entire historical monograph, but we can trace the general tone of the period and consider the socio-economic events which may have had an impact on those individuals who took their lives as a result of circumstantial factors (where speculated in the reports). Even in 1850 it was perceived that the suicide rate was increasing; indeed, one report's headline references 'the mania for suicide'.¹⁶ Whether this was actually fact or merely a perception as a result of the increasing

¹³ P. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 71.

¹⁴ Rodrick, "'Only a Newspaper Metaphor'", p. 4

¹⁵ J. Gurnhill, *The Morals of Suicide* (London, 1900), p. 6.

¹⁶ 'The Mania for Suicide', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, July 7, 1850; Issue 398.

availability of newspapers to more people, and a simultaneous increase in the reports on suicide, is difficult to ascertain. This is exacerbated by the fact that statistics on suicide were not sufficiently collected until some years later; it was not until 1856 that suicide statistics were first accumulated regularly by the Home Office.¹⁷

One of the first circumstantial factors leading to suicide which may give us an understanding of life in the period was illegitimate pregnancy. To fall pregnant outside of wedlock was a major cause of social embarrassment and shame with which many women could not cope; just as often, there was a realisation that they were financially and emotionally unable to support the child and had no access to state support.¹⁸ The most frequent occurrence was not suicide during pregnancy but suicide and infanticide once the child was born. In 1850, Elizabeth Heaton, a 22 year old weaver, drowned herself and her child after spending half of her 'last penny in the world' on milk for the child. The child's father had moved away to avoid paying child maintenance, and Heaton had been described as 'low spirited and desponding' of late as a result of her circumstances.¹⁹ Elizabeth Higgins, the wife of a wheelwright, attempted to end her life in the same way along with her three children. She described being frequently beaten by her husband, who earned 27s. per week, spending 20s. on himself and leaving her only 7s. to look after the children and household.²⁰ Described by Rodrick as 'crimes of destitution', it is interesting to note that these kinds of suicides were particularly common in 1850 but not so much in 1900.

Another very common cause of suicide was poverty, the fear of poverty or unemployment. Such reports can provide a fascinating insight into the socio-economic circumstances of the time. For example, Elizabeth Joyce, a 52 year old shop-keeper, attempted suicide in 1900 in consequence of money worries. She explained that as a result of the war, prices had risen and she could not afford to buy in more stock; for that reason she deemed her business to be failing.²¹ Despite this particular case, it was again more frequent for poverty or unemployment to be suggested as a cause for suicide in 1850 than it was in 1900. This points to two possibilities: firstly that people were in general less acutely affected by poverty and money worries than they were in 1850; secondly that even if poverty was a significant factor in a suicide, it was put down to general insanity and mental health problems by 1900.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 10.

¹⁸ A. R. Higginbotham, "'Sin of the Age': Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Spring, 1989), pp. 321-322.

¹⁹ 'Melancholy Case of Suicide and Murder', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, October 13, 1850; Issue 412 and 'Murder and Suicide at Leigh in Lancashire', the *Standard* (London, England), Thursday, October 10, 1850; Issue 8163.

²⁰ 'Police: Marylebone', the *Standard* (London, England), Thursday, February 21, 1850; Issue 7965.

²¹ 'Police intelligence: Worship-street', the *Standard* (London, England), Tuesday, May 29, 1900, Issue 23688, p. 9.

Indeed, even when a suicide appeared to be due to circumstantial factors like poverty, in many cases a verdict of “mental derangement” or “temporary insanity” was returned. The most frequent assumption was that anyone who took their life was not able to think clearly and under the influence of mental derangement. This verdict was even more prevalent among middle and upper class suicides, since it was largely unclear why they would wish to take their lives when they appeared to be in fortunate circumstances (although, one contemporary theorized that in these cases where the cause could not be ascertained, it was largely due to secret gambling which had dwindled away their finances²²). The descriptions of the supposed mental illness of the suicides largely reflected the medical literature of the period. For example, frequently used phrases and understandings of types of mental illnesses included a desponding state of mind, excited behaviour, monomania, being low spirited, delirium tremens, brain fever, and sometimes simply insanity.

It is clear from the reports that physical illness was also often an overwhelming factor in many suicides – pain control was simply not as sophisticated as it is today and it was unbearable for some, including complaints which could be treated and managed today. One example is a triple strangulated hernia which caused such great pain and suffering to William Adams, 66, that he committed suicide by slicing his abdomen open and was discovered with his entrails protruding in a water closet in Marylebone workhouse infirmary.²³ In another case, James John Roberts, a 46 year old gardener, hung his 14-year-old daughter and then himself because he felt the paralysis and epilepsy they both suffered from was too debilitating to live with.²⁴ Other physical ailments that triggered suicide included post-flu malaise and depression, fear of an impending operation, headache pain, and even a speech impediment. These are perhaps so surprising to a modern observer because these cases may have been avoided with the medical treatment available in the twenty-first century.

Many historians of Victorian suicide, especially Barbara Gates, hint at a ‘universal wish not to live’ towards the end of the nineteenth century.²⁵ We can only speculate why this was, as with any social phenomenon, but it is worth examining some of the possibilities. The causes specified by the newspaper reports are largely the same as those in 1850, but in 1900 there tended to be elaborate and tragic causes cited. This may reflect an increasing interest in medical psychiatry and psychology, a changing style of reporting in the newspapers and also a generally changing social atmosphere. Gates contends that the mass apathy she cites was due to the fact that ‘[men] felt out of control, powerless against the force of their own inventions – runaway science, runaway technology, runaway

²² J. Grant, *Sketches in London* (London, 1838), pp. 360-384.

²³ ‘Determined Suicide’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, September 29, 1850; Issue 410.

²⁴ *The Standard* (London, England), Tuesday, March 27, 1900; p. 8; Issue 23634.

²⁵ See Gates, Chapter VIII, ‘Century’s End: “The Coming Universal Wish Not to Live”’, *Victorian Suicide*, pp. 151-167.

urbanism.’²⁶ A further possibility is that Queen Victoria’s melancholy following Albert’s death impacted on the mood of the nation. She entered a permanent period of mourning, wore black for the remainder of her life and became reclusive, so it is possible that this lowered national morale.²⁷ Other influences may have included the increasing secularism in British society, the lack of a strong male role models due to the absence of a male monarch, and dwindling colonialism. Economically, the “long depression” spanning the 1870s to 1890s²⁸ and the “second industrial revolution” credited as lasting from 1871 to 1914²⁹ would support Gates’s thesis of a feeling of a lack of control. Lastly, generally demoralising events such as the two Boer wars in 1880-1 and 1899-1902 may have contributed to a collective low mood.

The method by which many Victorians chose to commit suicide was, and is, a fascinating detail. Even today, people are interested in *how* one chooses to rid oneself of life – perhaps out of morbid curiosity or perhaps to try and determine the level of psychological disturbance the deceased was experiencing. Either way, in the period on which this dissertation is focusing, it was certainly an important detail in newspaper articles and even tended to be a gender-specific variable. It was also region-specific; Victor Bailey’s examination of inquests from 1837-1899 in Hull show different trends to this examination of London.³⁰ In London in 1850, drowning was statistically the most popular method reported between both *Lloyd’s* and the *Standard*; hanging was a close second (see Appendix 1). In terms of sex, however, in both papers hanging was actually the most popular method for men followed by shooting, and drowning followed by poison for women (see Appendix 2). The sheer amount of women who drowned themselves, or attempted to (statistics include both unsuccessful and successful attempts) resulted in drowning appearing to be the most popular method statistically, when actually it was only the fourth most popular method for men, behind hanging, shooting, and throat-cutting. By 1900, there was the opposite problem in the *Standard*: shooting was such a frequently reported occurrence for men that it was the most popular method statistically, accounting for 45 per cent of all reported cases, despite the fact that no women had shot themselves (see Appendix 3). Whilst shooting was the most popular overall, if we include both sexes, drowning was the most popular method between them. It was the most popular method in *Lloyd’s* overall, while shooting came third. In terms of sex-specific methods in the *Standard*, drowning was still the most popular for women, followed by poison; shooting was the most popular for men, also followed by poison (see Appendix 4). In *Lloyd’s*, however, the most popular method for each sex was the same overall, but the second method for both sexes was throat-cutting. What causes this difference in types of cases

²⁶ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, p. 151.

²⁷ G. St. Aubyn, *Queen Victoria: A Portrait* (London, 1991), p. 343.

²⁸ For conceptualisation of the long depression, see H. Rosenberg, ‘Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2 (1943), pp. 58-73.

²⁹ J. Hull, ‘The Second Industrial Revolution: The History of a Concept’, *Storia Della Storiografia*, Issue 36 (1999), pp. 81-9.

³⁰ V. Bailey, “*This Rash Act*”, p. 141.

reported between both newspapers? It could well be down to differences in readership – perhaps the lower classes absorbed by *Lloyd's* could empathise more with those who cut their throats and so on.

The reason for looking at methods in such detail³¹ is firstly to show how each newspaper reported different proportions of cases: the most striking is arguably the percentage of suicides by shooting that the *Standard* reported in 1900. Why was there such a focus on these types of suicide? It may have been because they were concurrent with the types of cases that would appeal to the largely middle-class readership of the *Standard*. Indeed, many of the shooting cases were committed by disillusioned or 'insane' middle-class men; soldiers were very often the majority of these reported cases. There is no doubt that there was simultaneously a great increase in the availability of firearms, especially since many soldiers had returned with their weapons from the Boer War, but shooting was only the third most cited method in *Lloyd's*, so there must have been a specific craving for such cases in the *Standard's* readership.

The second reason for looking at methods is to show the differences in preference by men and women since they arguably reflect dominant gender roles at the time. It is interesting to note that in 1850 across both papers and in 1900 in the *Standard*, women chose typically "passive" methods such as drowning and poison – methods which tend to leave the responsibility up to the water and the poison to take effect, rather than the women having to assertively act. Jumping was also another popular method among women in 1850 – again we could analyse this in the same way. Something else to consider is that these suicides tended to be quite public, almost as if before taking their lives, these women wanted to confirm their existences and resulting miseries to society. Frequently, women would even poison themselves in a public place such as in a coffee shop, or would be discovered to be suffering from the effects of poison whilst walking through the streets. Often, these kinds of methods could be interpreted as a cry for help or a yearning for attention – drowning especially was seen as an act committed by some women in the hope of a nearby police constable noticing and summoning help and rescue. Men, on the other hand, tended to use quick and assertive methods such as hanging and shooting which would display their dominance – men also tended to be more successful at committing suicide throughout the nineteenth century (see Appendix 5)³² especially because of the methods they chose, and perhaps because they were more confident and certain in their actions than women. Of course, there are exceptions whereby individual men and women do not follow these generic patterns. Despite the regional differences in method between Bailey's Hull inquests and these London newspaper reports, the sex-specific methods still followed the same overwhelming pattern of what we

³¹ Unfortunately, since age and occupation were only sporadically reported, it would not be useful to investigate method-related patterns according to these variables. Furthermore, they are more suited to longitudinal studies such as Bailey's study on the life cycle.

³² Bailey, "*This Rash Act*", p. 65.

might call female passivity and male assertiveness.³³ On the whole, something very striking about the suicides examined is that so many took place in public while today, it tends to be a more private act. This could be assumed to be down to the fact that in the Victorian period, life tended to be lived more publicly within the community, and death followed the same pattern.

One clear difference in the statistics between 1850 and 1900 is that the average age of both male and female cases increases slightly (see Appendix 6), implying that the average age of those who attempted or committed suicide was increasing. Interestingly, in both years, the *Standard* tends to report the cases of younger men and women than *Lloyd's* – this is surprising because with the *Standard's* more conservative outlook, it would have made sense for that newspaper to report older, middle-class cases (reflecting its readership) rather than those of younger people, largely made up of destitute young women in 1850.

³³ Bailey, “*This Rash Act*”, p. 141.

II

The Language of Sensationalism

The body presented an appalling [sic] spectacle. It is supposed he placed the pistol immediately under his chin, as not a vestige of the face was left, an eye being found in one part of the room, his nose and upper lip in another, his brains and pieces of skull scattered in all directions.³⁴

This extract from a suicide report in *The Times* in 1838 is indicative of the tendency of Victorian newspapers and periodicals, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, to sensationalize crime and include graphic details that we would consider disrespectful and unnecessary in the twenty-first century. The *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* credits the broadsides and chapbooks of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the development of the ‘language of sensation’ that the popular press would later exploit as its own. Indeed, Sunday newspapers such as *Lloyd’s* and *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* would use sensational crime reports to attract a mass readership. Although such reports attracted heavy criticism for being perhaps too shocking and overt, even more “respectable” and Conservative papers such as the *Standard* were guilty of resorting to sensationalism for the sake of bringing in a wider audience.³⁵ Such sensationalism by its nature often included in depth medical analysis of the crime scene, the body of the suicide and the circumstances surrounding his or her death, details which were mostly taken from the inquest.

One of the most powerful sensational reports of suicide from 1850 relates the story of Henri Stephan, a 38 year old horn player in the Her Majesty’s Theatre, who jumped from the Duke of York’s column on one May morning. His body was described as:

horribly bruised in every part, his legs, arms, and several ribs being broken, his brains scattered upon the ground, and the blood tinging, not only the pavement, but even some portions of the basement of the column. His bones in two or three places protruded through his clothing.³⁶

This description was typical of the sensationalism featured in both the *Standard* and *Lloyd’s*. This particular case was the most extensively reported suicide of the year, with 339 lines being dedicated to it between both papers. There was no reason to be particularly interested in this case in terms of Stephan’s social status – he was a foreign gentleman, believed to be of Italian birth, who was only

³⁴ ‘Dreadful Suicide’, *The Times*, Friday, March 30, 1838; p. 7; Issue 16689; Col B.

³⁵ L. Brake and M. Demoor (eds.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism* (London, 2009), pp. 152-3.

³⁶ ‘Suicide from the Duke of York’s Column – This Day’, the *Standard* (London, England), Tuesday, May 14, 1850; Issue 8035 and ‘The Suicide from the York Column: Coroner’s Inquest’, the *Standard* (London, England), Thursday, May 16, 1850; Issue 8037.

officially identified in the report on the coroner's inquest. He earned a healthy salary but there was no reason to assume he was especially 'upper class' or distinguished; nor did he appear to be in unfortunate circumstances or facing the prospect of unemployment since he had just signed a contract with the theatre for several seasons. Fairly typical reasons were attributed to the act – recent weakness of mind and a 'peculiarly eccentric disposition' for the last few weeks. In other words, there was nothing to make this an extraordinary case; there was no interesting back-story with which to empathise or condemn, no one to blame, no scandal, no failed love affair. The only note-worthy factors in this case are the very public nature of the suicide and the amount of graphic detail the reports could relate. Even in less public suicides and in cases where less was known, newspaper reports made a concerted effort to include rather sanguine details. One 13 line article from 1850 explained that an unidentified young woman had jumped from Blackfriars Bridge, and 'striking with great violence against one of the buttresses, dashed in her skull and rebounded upon the causeway... after groaning heavily once or twice she expired.'³⁷ Why was this sensationalism so popular? Olive Anderson argues that along with murder, suicide remained a staple of popular entertainment as it had been in preceding centuries when the main forms of communication were street ballads and broadsides.³⁸ Society loved a 'good suicide' or murder, which often became the source of gossip, rumours and speculation. Indeed, it did usually aid the impact of the story if there were enthralling circumstances to gossip about, but in this case mystery and gore were quite enough. One writer observed in 1870 that 'there is always something agreeable to us in the misfortunes of our neighbours. It would certainly seem as though a record of their vices is eminently pleasing.'³⁹ Even seemingly pointless details were recorded in newspaper articles for the sake of helping the reader to imagine the story in the most vivid way possible. The day, the time and the place (even which room in one's home) the act was committed were commonly specified, along with miscellaneous details such as how one was hung and what equipment was used; even in some cases the colour of the handkerchief used for strangulation. For example, J. Becket, a thirteen year old boy, was said to have committed suicide:

On Sunday night or Monday morning, in one of the cells of the Manchester Borough gaol, by hanging himself with a portion of his hammock girth, fastened to the gas-pipe for lighting his cell which projects about half a foot from the wall.⁴⁰

At this point the article was finished; readers had presumably been given all the information they needed for their interest to be satisfied.

³⁷ 'Suicide', the *Standard* (London, England), Tuesday, November 12, 1850; Issue 8191.

³⁸ Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 214.

³⁹ 'Our Novels, the Sensation School', *Temple Bar* 29 (1870), p. 424 cited in Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, December 8, 1850; Issue 420.

Simultaneously there was an explosion of sensationalist fiction. Philip Allingham attributes this to various factors, including an increasing number of readers, the abolition of the stamp duty on newspapers in 1855, public education and significantly, tabloid journalism.⁴¹ Laurel Brake points out that crime fiction in particular became especially popular with working-class and lower middle-class readers.⁴² It seems that in the middle of the Victorian period, sensationalism was increasing concurrently both in newspapers and in fictional literature, perhaps to cater for the increasing number of literate people who would be drawn in by its escapist nature. Much sensationalist literature seemed to be aimed at the middle classes – reiterated by the *Standard* and *Lloyd's* which both covered that social strata – but also those who were literate among the working classes. However, in 1850 the working classes did not have a great deal of access to papers such as the *Standard* and *Lloyd's* – it was not until the abolition of the stamp duty that many could afford to read them (particularly *Lloyd's*, the price of which was reduced to a penny⁴³). Until then, broadsides functioned as a replacement, and covered mainly sensational news stories such as suicides in the scandalous fashion the working-class audience tended to appreciate. Rodrick considers the amount of scientific detail in many papers, especially those aimed at the working-classes, to be indicative firstly of the scientific advancement of the period and the growth in medical education and common knowledge, and secondly of the will of the working-classes to better themselves.⁴⁴ This may be so but firstly as Lucy Brown explains, ‘a small provincial paper credited its readers with a reading ability to understand a complex argument in appropriate language.’⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is clear that such scientific terms, especially those extracted from post-mortem reports, contained sensational and gory details which all classes relished whether they understood the minutiae of the language or not. Indeed, Gates argues that ‘customers for every London newspaper craved knowledge of the particulars’ of acts like suicide, and that they wanted ‘detailed descriptions of the fall [or other method] and attempted explanations for such bitter desperation.’⁴⁶

It was not just in the newspapers that it is possible to observe such sensational descriptions of suicide. Indeed, retired police constable Edward Owen elaborated in a memoir on a suicide he discovered whilst on duty in Hyde Park:

It was a man - there was no doubt at all now - the usual position, flat on the back, arms and legs extended, revolver clutched in hand. Bending over him, I could perceive a

⁴¹ P. V. Allingham, ‘The Victorian Sensation Novel, 1860-1880 – “preaching to the nerves instead of the judgement”’ <<http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/sensation.html>> 24 April 2011.

⁴² Brake and Demoor, *Dictionary*, p. 152.

⁴³ The British Library, ‘Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper’ <<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/publicationByLocation.do>> 12 February 2011.

⁴⁴ Rodrick, “‘Only a Newspaper Metaphor’”, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁵ L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (New York, 1985), p. 100.

⁴⁶ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, p. 39.

fearful wound in his forehead, and his whole frame was quivering like an aspen leaf - evidently the bullet had not yet quite completed its fatal work.⁴⁷

Throughout his narrative, Owen uses several familiar phrases to recount the suicides he had seen in Hyde Park – he described ‘determined suicides’, a ‘frightful gash’ in the throat of one body, and ‘some poor wretch putting a tragic end to his existence’⁴⁸ – exactly the kind of vocabulary frequented in the newspaper reports. It is difficult to know whether newspaper reports influenced this kind of vocabulary or whether, as Gates argues, ‘each paper reflected the language and mores of its readers when presenting its details’⁴⁹ but it is clear to see that there was a similar discourse which permeated throughout society.

By 1900, however, the descriptions in newspapers had become more clinical and less gruesome – the most noticeable change being that there was much less description of the corpse. Instead of elaborating on the state of the corpse, it would often state in a very matter-of-fact and clinical manner the way in which one had committed suicide; for example, one article reported that Private Scott had ‘taken a loaded rifle and tied a loop to the trigger with a bootlace, and placing the muzzle to his mouth, put his foot on the loop and blew away the whole of the back of his head.’⁵⁰ This was fairly typical of the articles of 1900. There was more of a focus on relating the practical details of the method chosen, and there was more information about the story behind the suicide and what might have caused it. It is as though by the end of the century, these reports (and the readers) were more interested in finding out about the person in life rather than in death. However these reports, different in content though they were, did contain some sensational elements. It was much more common in 1900 to quote witnesses, family members or friends of the deceased. Suicide notes were also frequently related and there seemed to be a romanticization of suicide in both notes written by the deceased and in the subsequent newspaper articles. For example, Harry Duplock, a 25 year old whose occupation was not stated, wrote ‘I wish to part this life with little trouble, but don’t want my friends to know’, ‘I put the candle of life out because life here is not worth living’, and poignantly, ‘I have gone to pluck the flowers in another earth’.⁵¹ It is possible to observe a greater number of suicides attributed to failed love affairs and romantic disillusionment in 1900 than in 1850, epitomized by the case of Alice Emily Richards, a 16 year old who drowned herself on one June evening. She was

⁴⁷ E. Owen, *Hyde Park, Select Narratives, Annual Event, etc, during twenty years’ Police Service in Hyde Park* (London, 1906), pp. 36-7.

⁴⁸ E. Owen, *Hyde Park, Select Narratives, Annual Event, etc, during twenty years’ Police Service in Hyde Park* (London, 1906), pp. 36-7.

⁴⁹ Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, p. 39.

⁵⁰ ‘Suicide of a Ladysmith Defender’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, October 28, 1900; Issue 3023.

⁵¹ ‘Yesterday’s Inquests: Gone to Pluck Flowers in Another Earth’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, June 3, 1900; Issue 3002.

discovered with a photograph in her bodice 'placed just over her heart'. The photograph was of a man she had been seeing for the last nine weeks, but who had recently parted ways with her.⁵²

While the line-count of suicide reports in the *Standard* stayed almost the same, the line-count in *Lloyd's* decreased from 38 lines in 1850 to 25 lines in 1900 (see Appendix 7), implying that suicides seem to have become less interesting to the Victorian public at this time, perhaps because due to their increasing incidences they were no longer seen as quite as extraordinary or exciting. The newspapers would have been provided with the same amount of information on the suicides as they had been in 1850, if not more due to the development of communication, yet they wrote less. However, there were still minor, irrelevant and simply visual details stated in 1900, such as the hand in which the deceased was clasping his revolver. We might interpret this as proof that readers did still want enough detail to realistically imagine the scene of the suicide, but did not relish the sanguine quite as much as they had in 1850.

⁵² 'Tottenham Love Tragedy', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, July 1, 1900; Issue 3006.

III

Moral and Social Perceptions

Quite simply, looking at newspaper reports on suicide can help us to gauge the social and moral attitudes towards it. Even in cases where it was acknowledged that the deceased or the prisoner who had attempted suicide was in a difficult position, suicide was never condoned. One example is that of Mary Pitt, the wife of an abusive umbrella-maker. She described her miserable existence to the alderman, and the report related that:

Alderman Carden said he could not wonder at her disinclination to return home; but with regard to the attempt upon her life, that was a very heinous offence; she had no more right to take away her own life than she had to take that of the worthy alderman's.⁵³

Throughout the Victorian period, suicide as reported in newspapers was mostly considered 'a rash act'. Whether the press of the time reflected or influenced society or a combination of the two, it suggests that many people had the same opinion (the description 'a rash act' was not specific just to London newspapers but was frequented around the country). The phrase is referenced in a wide range of contemporary literature whether medical, fictional or sensational. It implies that the act was "silly", melodramatic, impulsive and influenced by temporary emotional upset. Rarely was it any of these things – something striking about the cases studied in this dissertation is the desperate situations with which people were trying to cope. It was clear to see why many had attempted to take their lives and how very thought through it was, how some had been planned for a long time and how some had been labouring under mental distress for extended periods of time – their emotional imbalance was very rarely temporary. The phrase 'a rash act', whilst also being a flippant and disrespectful remark, almost seems to have been employed for the same sort of reason as the burial procedures in place before 1823 (banning suicides from being buried in consecrated ground and having a stake driven through the heart) – deterrence. In an era when the average individual was well-known in their local community and concerned with their reputation, being denigrated in the local press was best avoided, even in death. By 1900, however, the phrase 'rash act' was largely absent. It did occasionally appear but it was certainly not present in the majority of cases as in 1850. Its absence was not due to completely changed opinions on suicide because as we will see, views were still tendentious on the topic of suicide.

Simon Cordery states that 'to be respectable was the same as appearing respectable; it was a matter of conforming in dress and outward behaviour to certain standards.'⁵⁴ According to Mike Huggins, these

⁵³ 'Attempted Suicide through Brutality', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, September 1, 1850; Issue 406.

standards included ‘good citizenship, temperance, and firm commitment to the values of hearth and home.’⁵⁵ If we take this as a basic definition for Victorian respectability, it is unsurprising that those who had attempted suicide came under scrutiny and that their respectability was questioned. Suicide is arguably an act which would go against good citizenship, and especially the values of hearth and home. Respectability as it applied in the Victorian period was largely a middle-class construction and was dominant by the 1840s, maintaining its influence until the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ In both the *Standard* and *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* in 1850 in particular, respectability was of enormous importance when it came to reporting the trials of those who had attempted suicide. The word almost always appeared in such trials, especially in the case of women; this can be explained by the fact that women belonged to the realm of the private sphere, in which family values were cultivated – they acted as ‘gatekeepers, regulating family activities in a context of fear of local disapproval which determined the mores by which families lived in the middle-class neighbourhood.’ As a result, they were regarded as those responsible for constructing and maintaining respectability,⁵⁷ so it is unsurprising that they were subject to its judgement more often than men. While it was mostly a middle-class construction, it still permeated throughout both the working classes and upper classes, becoming a moral code by which to live. Reports of the trials of those who had attempted suicide often began with a description of the prisoner, detailing their appearance and connections. For example, one may have been ‘respectable looking’, a ‘lady of high respectability’, ‘respectably connected’ or have ‘respectable friends’. It was also occasionally used to describe a successful suicide, demonstrated particularly well by this case:

The circumstance is rendered more painful from the fact that the unfortunate girl was respectably connected... [she] possessed an amiable disposition, and up to the time of this lamentable occurrence had borne the most irreproachable character.⁵⁸

Bodies of suicides which had not yet been identified were sometimes also judged by respectability, for example the corpse would sometimes be described as ‘respectably dressed’. By 1900, however, this discourse was much less prevalent. It is possible that respectability was defined in a different way by this time, and it could no longer be applied in circumstances where some were desperate enough to end their lives. There was certainly an irony about the fact that in 1850, many who were described as ‘respectable’ had committed an act which was considered the opposite of respectable behaviour.

⁵⁴ S. Cordery, ‘Friendly Societies and the Discourse of Respectability in Britain, 1825-1875’, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), p. 37.

⁵⁵ M. J. Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Spring, 2000), p. 586.

⁵⁶ Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures?’, p. 586.

⁵⁷ Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures?’, p. 587-588

⁵⁸ ‘Suicide and Supposed Child Murder’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (London, England), Sunday, October 27, 1850; Issue 414.

Suicide reports are also useful for understanding what might elicit a sympathetic reaction from both the courts and the newspapers. Indeed, the direction of sympathies and the content may allude to a specific readership demographic for each newspaper. This said, both sympathy and condemnation were very inconsistent in terms of the cases they applied to. For example, Edmund Francis Hunt was a plasterer who drowned himself and his two year old daughter. Infanticide was heavily admonished in both newspapers in 1850 and 1900, even when the case was tragic, as with a single mother living in a destitute condition. However, Hunt's wife had been convicted of shop-lifting on several occasions and Hunt 'in consequence has undergone much mental suffering.' Last time his wife was caught shoplifting, 'he declared that if ever she so disgraced him again he should be induced to destroy himself.' He was referred to both as an 'unfortunate man' and a 'poor fellow', vocabulary which was very rarely used to describe those who had committed infanticide.⁵⁹ Relatively speaking, it is interesting to note that a shoplifting wife seemed to be a more valid reason to commit suicide and infanticide than destitution, grief, illness or insanity. In contrast, 19 year old Ellen Dawson took poison and tried to drown herself as a result of rape and pregnancy, and yet she received no clear sympathy or acknowledgement in the same newspaper (the *Standard*) other than that she was 'evidently in a state of considerable suffering'.⁶⁰ This seems to suggest that gender biases were present. There was relatively little difference in reporting irrespective of the class of the deceased. One clear variation, however, was that in some cases where the deceased was well-known or especially distinguished, articles on the suicide would often start with 'it is our painful duty to report'. For example, a military officer known as Lieutenant Noble hung himself in 1850 and whilst his suicide was described as a 'rash act' by the report, it was also lamented as a 'sad event' and the article started by declaring that 'it is our painful duty to record the death of Lieutenant Noble',⁶¹ a linguistic privilege which was not afforded to anyone but the most prominent figures.

Despite the degree of sensationalism elaborated upon in the previous chapter, suicide was still something concealed by families and those close to the suicide – even by coroners and juries who did not want the suicide's family to suffer stigma or material losses as a result of a suicide verdict. Anderson in particular argues that 'paradoxically, as suicide became statistically more common, it also began to seem a much more unfamiliar, untoward, and embarrassing affair.'⁶² She does not suggest a reason for this and again, this is something which would require further research, but one possibility is that the more common a "negative" social phenomenon such as suicide becomes, the greater the desire to be dissociated with it. It was common for those on trial for attempted suicide to deny that they had ever committed such a crime in the hope of avoiding legal punishment or the social

⁵⁹ 'Suicide and Infanticide' the *Standard* (London, England), Thursday, February 07, 1850; Issue 7953.

⁶⁰ 'Police Intelligence of Saturday: Marlborough Street', the *Standard* (London, England), Monday, July 29, 1850; Issue 8100.

⁶¹ 'Suicide of a Military Officer in Paisley', the *Standard* (London, England), Wednesday, March 06, 1850; Issue 7976.

⁶² Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 422.

stigma associated with attempting suicide. One example is the case of Sarah Evans, a young seamstress, who was accused of having taken poison as a result of destitution. She appeared in court with her partner and denied the charges, accusing the witness of making false allegations against her.⁶³ The act was still seen in as deeply shameful in 1900, despite the progress made in psychiatry and in the medical and social treatment of those suffering from mental illness. Reverend James Gurnhill suggests that the suicide:

failed in the hour of trial – he deserted his post of duty – and even our grief for his death is covered by the darker pall of shame for the way in which it was brought about. His name must never more be mentioned, except with bated breath and averted eye. He must be as one who never was, and for whom it would have been better had he never been born.⁶⁴

Problems for families were in the more specific verdicts. A *felo de se* verdict would have inflicted material losses on the family of the suicide, particularly if the deceased was the breadwinner. This, however, was not very common in the Victorian period as a result of the desire to avoid such tragic consequences for families. Nevertheless a verdict of ‘temporary insanity’ or ‘mental derangement’, the most common verdicts throughout the period, brought problems of their own. The family could suffer social stigma as a result of the widespread assumption that insanity was hereditary.⁶⁵ Certainly, in examining the causes of a suicide, the coroner would often investigate the family history of the suicide to determine whether any other members of his or her family had brought about their own death and if so, it would be used as a determining factor in the suicide. Most people seemed to be aware of this, presumably from reading about it in newspaper reports. It so bothered John Chaplin, a 45 year old retired merchant, that before his suicide he wrote a letter to a friend begging not to be labelled insane at the inquest on his death.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, this was just seen to reiterate his insanity and the verdict was confirmed despite his pleas.

One way of placing a suicide in to its social context was by situating it in its geographical location. As previously mentioned, lives tended to be lived more publicly in the Victorian period than they are today, and as a result the news of death travelled fast. Many reports started with the reaction of locals to a suicide – for example, ‘the neighbourhood of the quays was thrown into a state of considerable and painful excitement’ at the suicide of Prussian captain Heinrich Lange,⁶⁷ and ‘the frequenters of Kensington Gardens were thrown into a state of great consternation’ at the suicide of an unidentified

⁶³ ‘Police: Guildhall’, the *Standard* (London, England), Tuesday, November 26, 1850, Issue 8203.

⁶⁴ J. Gurnhill, *The Morals of Suicide* (London, 1900), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁵ Unknown author, ‘“Unsound Mind” Verdicts on Suicide’, the *British Medical Journal* (Oct. 22, 1892), pp. 909-910.

⁶⁶ ‘Inquests’, the *Standard* (London, England), Wednesday, September 05, 1900; Issue 23773.

⁶⁷ ‘Suicide of a Prussian Captain at Bristol’, the *Standard* (London, England), Monday, July 08, 1850; Issue 8082.

foreign gentleman.⁶⁸ The most frequent reactions attributed to the local population were distress and excitement. The consideration of the local reaction shows a general concern for the implications of an individual action on a collective group. In the twenty-first century, news reports on an act like suicide would be concerned with those close to the deceased, rather than the reactions of an extended social circle such as the local community. The inclusion of these reactions also reflects a generally Victorian tendency to be concerned about one's reputation and what others thought. The sections in which suicide reports appeared can also give us an idea of the context in which they were perceived. In 1850, suicide reports were largely in their own sections, with an appropriately sensationalist headline. This particularly applied in *Lloyd's*; in the *Standard* it was also interspersed under the "police intelligence" section, reiterating suicide's status as a legal and social crime. By 1900, however, when the suicide reports were not in their own self-titled sections, in *Lloyd's* they would be reported under "town and country talk", and in the *Standard* under "provinces", showing the status of a suicide as a piece of news or gossip situated within its broad social context. Other sections in the *Standard* under which suicides were reported in 1900 were still "police intelligence" thereby confirming its status as a crime half a century later, and also "inquests", detailing in a more clinical manner the results of post-mortems.

⁶⁸'Determined Suicide of a Foreign Gentleman in Kensington Gardens', the *Standard*, Wednesday, August 21, 1850; Issue 8120.

Conclusion

Day after day, the newspapers report such cases [of suicide]; and, if people who read them are too careless to draw the proper lesson from such reports, means ought to be taken to teach it to them.⁶⁹

Chapter one has detailed the various statistics collected in this research in an attempt to provide a picture of the methods, causes and patterns observed in the newspapers studied. It has hopefully given a sense of how social and medical contexts combined to create an amalgamation of the complex factors involved in understanding suicide cases. Chapter two has then situated this within the sensational discourse and vocabulary frequented by the reports, aiming to show the kind of details craved by the masses and the potential reasons for this. The final chapter has proceeded to conceptualise this in broader terms, giving an idea of the moral and social perceptions and implications of suicide and the way in which it was reported. Throughout this dissertation, two of the main aims have been to compare and contrast the years 1850 and 1900 to detect whether there were any changes in reporting over time and if so, why; and also to compare the differences in reporting between *Lloyd's* and the *Standard* to see if their readership is reflected in their style and content.

It has been shown that there were conspicuous patterns to the methods chosen according to sex, and the methods reported in each newspaper based on what their readership could empathise with or condemn. It has also been shown that methods chosen changed over time, due to circumstantial factors such as an increase in the availability of firearms and the social context influencing why people chose to take their lives. The sheer sensationalism of the period and the appetite for gruesome details has also been elucidated – this was particularly the case in newspapers but it also applied elsewhere in society and other forms of literature. Lastly, it has been made clear that there were many different opinions on suicide and ways of conceptualising it. The study of suicide can help us to understand wider value systems and approaches to life.

Overall, there were differences between the two newspapers in their reporting. The demographics of the cases reported in each were quite different, perhaps alluding to the readership but often in an unexpected or unclear way. Similarly, there were some striking differences between reports in 1850 and 1900, although they were not as different as had originally been expected; I had originally predicted a vast change in the reports considering the span of half a century. The manifestation of sensationalism had changed, but it was still present and relished. Society clearly craved the same ‘neighbourly misfortune’ as it had done earlier in the century.

⁶⁹ W. F. Wade, ‘On the Prevention of Suicide’, *The British Medical Journal* (Oct. 4, 1879), p. 533.

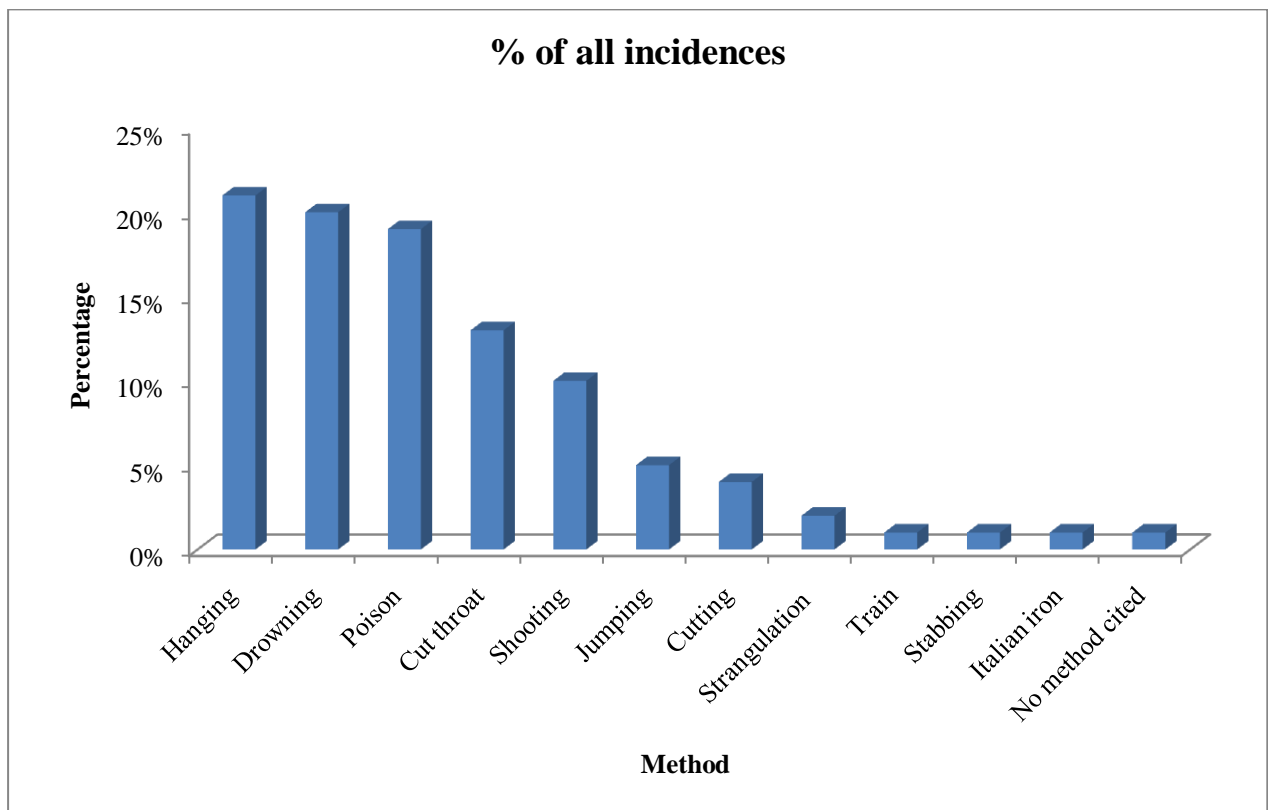
Appendices

Appendix 1:

1850 Lloyd's

Method	Number of incidences	% of all incidences
Hanging	21	21%
Drowning	20	20%
Poison	19	19%
Cut throat	13	13%
Shooting	10	10%
Jumping	5	5%
Cutting	4	4%
Strangulation	2	2%
Train	1	1%
Stabbing	1	1%
Italian iron	1	1%
No method cited	1	1%
Total	98	

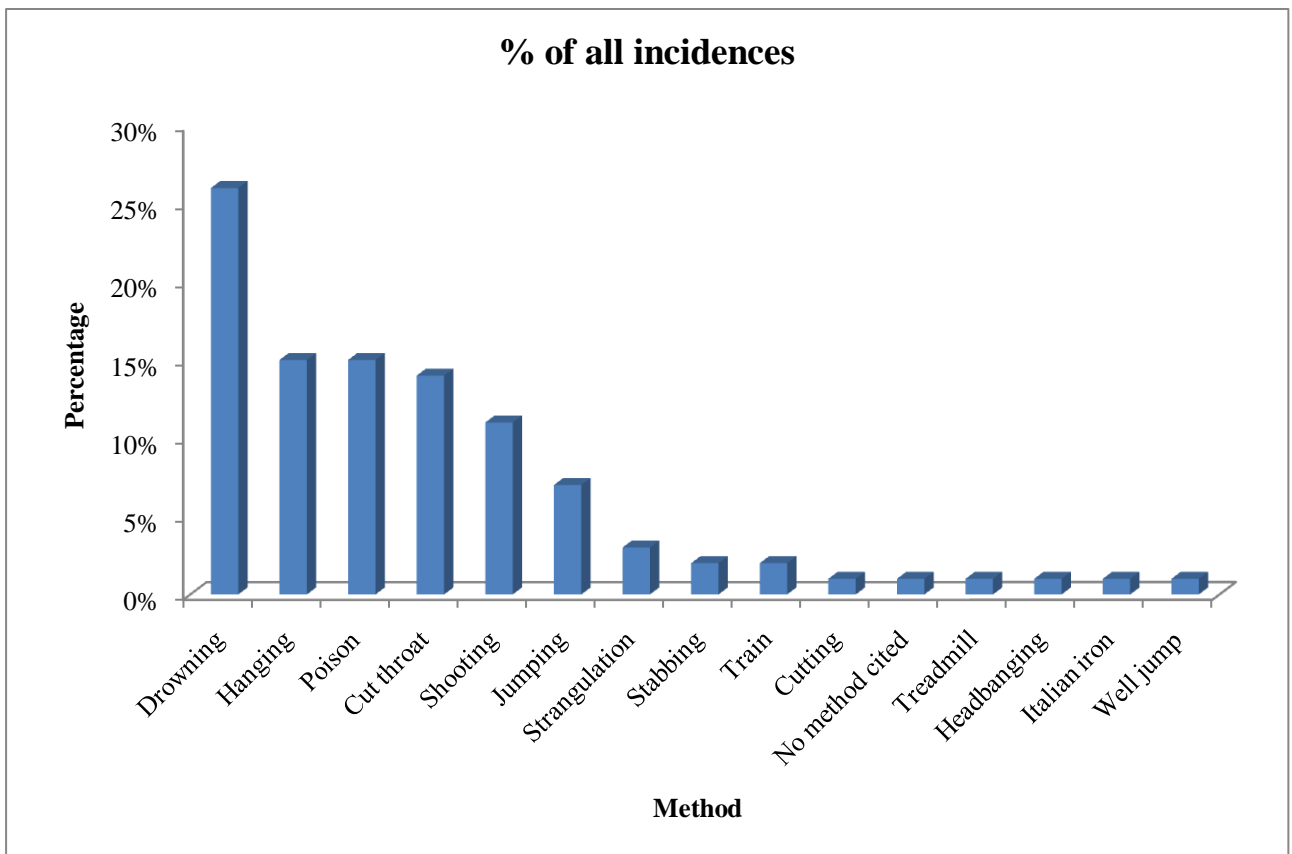
NB: in three cases more than one method was used and these have been looked at as separate incidents. These statistics are based on 95 articles. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.



1850 Standard

Method	Number of incidences	% of all incidences
Drowning	40	26%
Hanging	24	15%
Poison	23	15%
Cut throat	21	14%
Shooting	17	11%
Jumping	11	7%
Strangulation	5	3%
Stabbing	3	2%
Train	3	2%
Cutting	2	1%
No method cited	2	1%
Treadmill	1	1%
Headbanging	1	1%
Italian iron	1	1%
Well jump	1	1%
Total	155	

NB: in five cases more than one method was used and these have been looked at as separate incidents. These statistics are based on 150 articles. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.

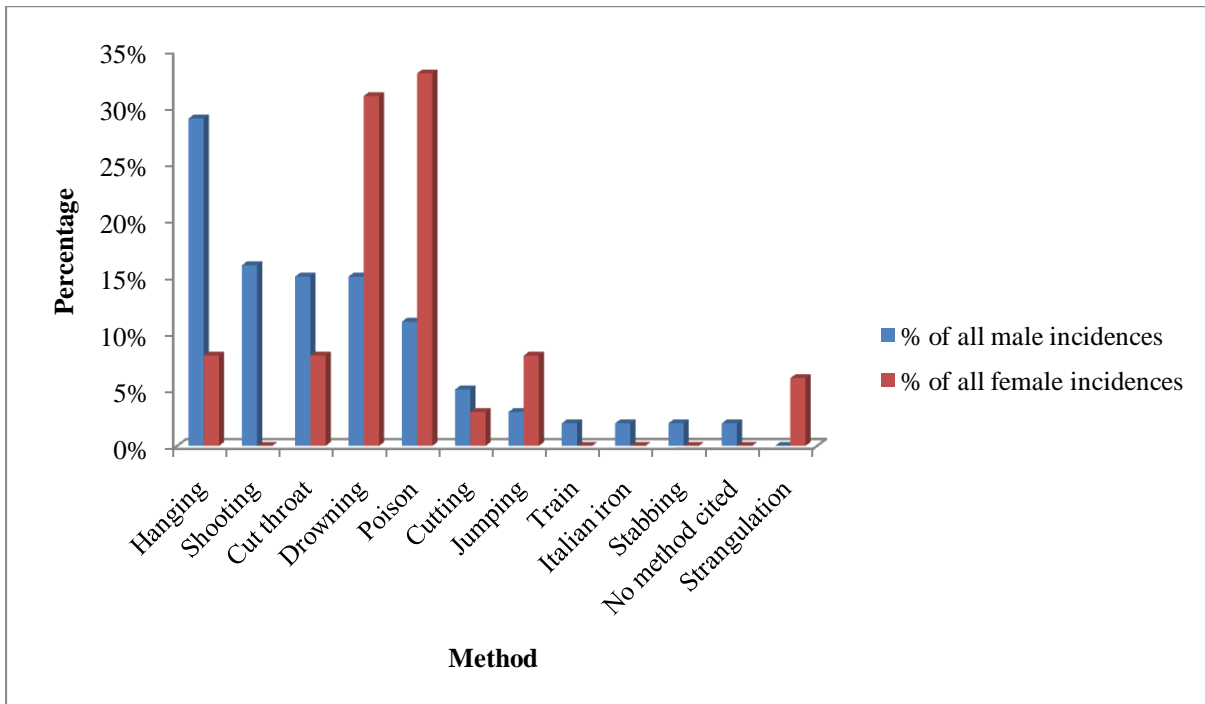


Appendix 2

1850 Lloyd's

Method	Number of male incidences	% of all male incidences	Number of female incidences	% of all female incidences
Hanging	18	29%	3	8%
Shooting	10	16%	0	0%
Cut throat	9	15%	4	8%
Drowning	9	15%	11	31%
Poison	7	11%	12	33%
Cutting	3	5%	1	3%
Jumping	2	3%	3	8%
Train	1	2%	0	0%
Italian iron	1	2%	0	0%
Stabbing	1	2%	0	0%
No method cited	1	2%	0	0%
Strangulation	0	0%	2	6%
Total	62		36	

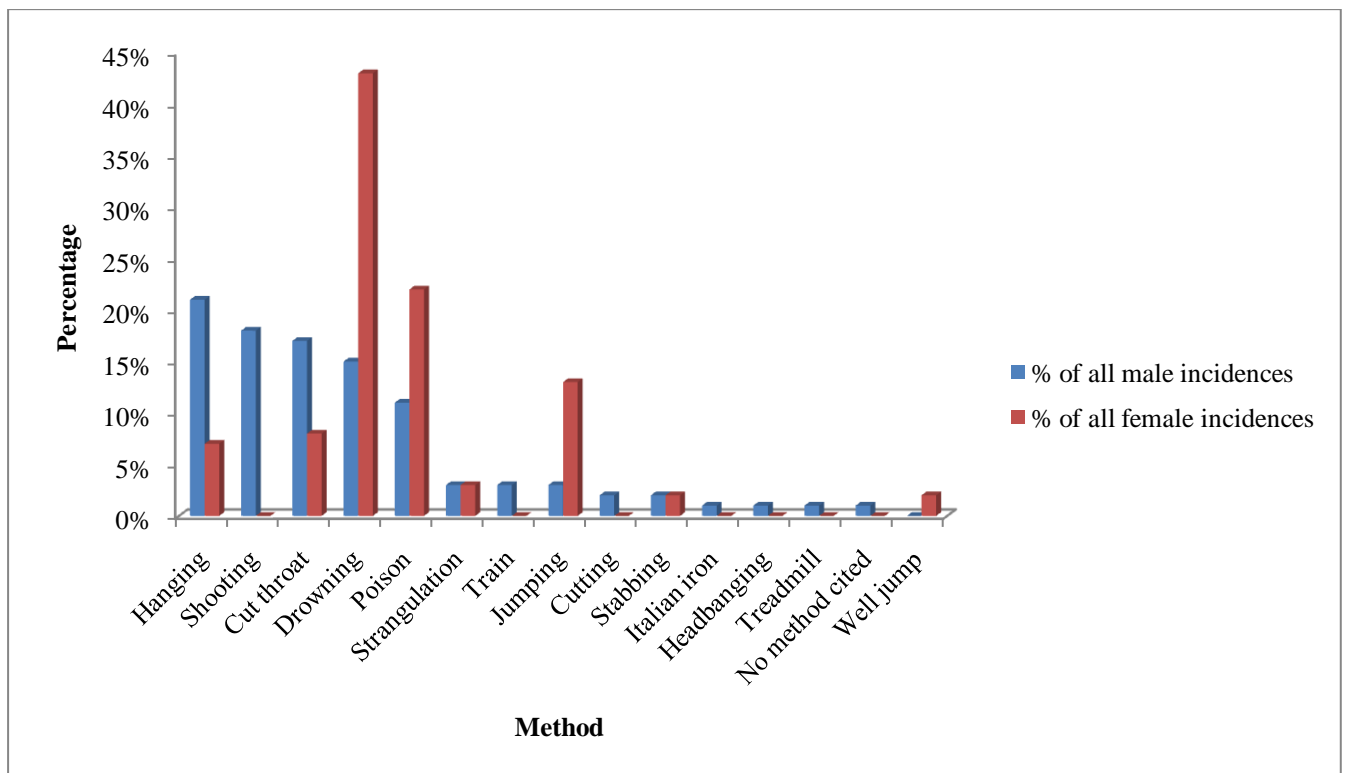
NB: This is based on 60 men and 35 women. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.



1850 Standard

Method	Number of male incidences	% of all male incidences	Number of female incidences	% of all female incidences
Hanging	20	21%	4	7%
Shooting	17	18%	0	0%
Cut throat	16	17%	5	8%
Drowning	14	15%	26	43%
Poison	10	11%	13	22%
Strangulation	3	3%	2	3%
Train	3	3%	0	0%
Jumping	3	3%	8	13%
Cutting	2	2%	0	0%
Stabbing	2	2%	1	2%
Italian iron	1	1%	0	0%
Headbanging	1	1%	0	0%
Treadmill	1	1%	0	0%
No method cited	1	1%	0	0%
Well jump	0	0%	1	2%
Total	94		60	

NB: This is based on 92 men and 58 women. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.

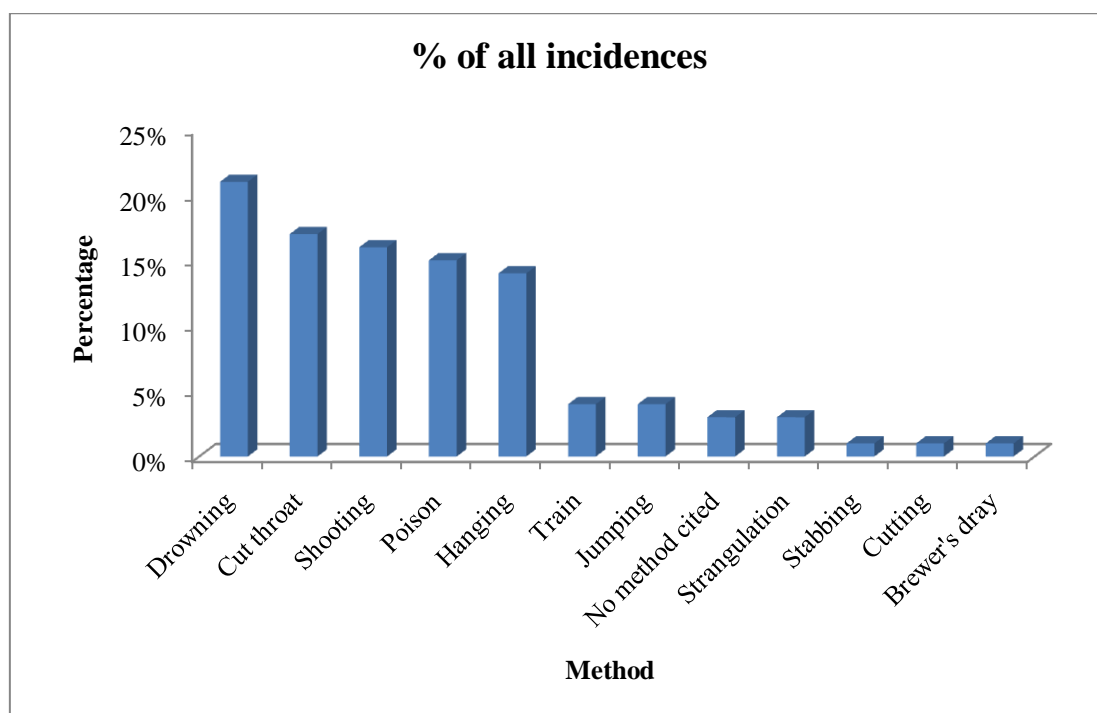


Appendix 3

1900 Lloyd's

Method	Number of incidences	% of all incidences
Drowning	28	21%
Cut throat	23	17%
Shooting	23	16%
Poison	20	15%
Hanging	19	14%
Train	5	4%
Jumping	5	4%
No method cited	4	3%
Strangulation	4	3%
Stabbing	2	1%
Cutting	1	1%
Brewer's dray	1	1%
Total	135	

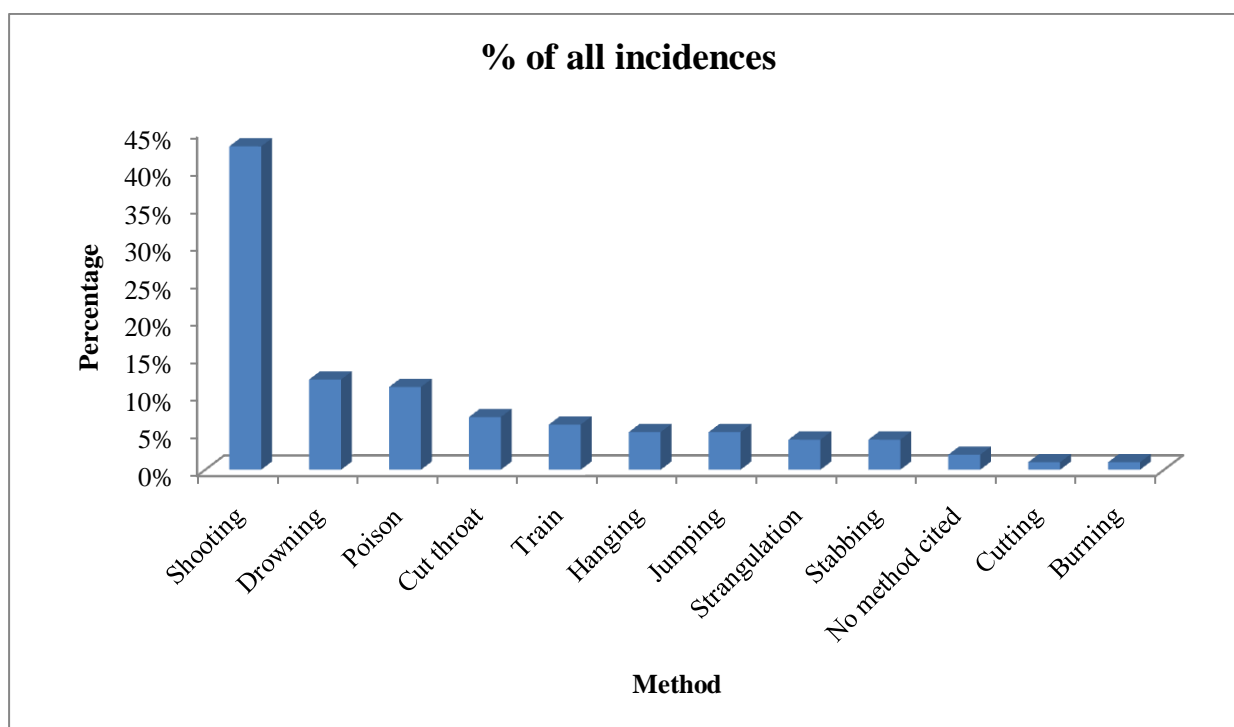
NB: These statistics are based on 135 articles. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.



1900 Standard

Method	Number of incidences	% of all incidences
Shooting	36	43%
Drowning	10	12%
Poison	9	11%
Cut throat	6	7%
Train	5	6%
Hanging	4	5%
Jumping	4	5%
Strangulation	3	4%
Stabbing	3	4%
No method cited	2	2%
Cutting	1	1%
Burning	1	1%
Total	84	

NB: in one case more than one method was used and these have been looked at as separate incidents. These statistics are based on 83 articles. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.

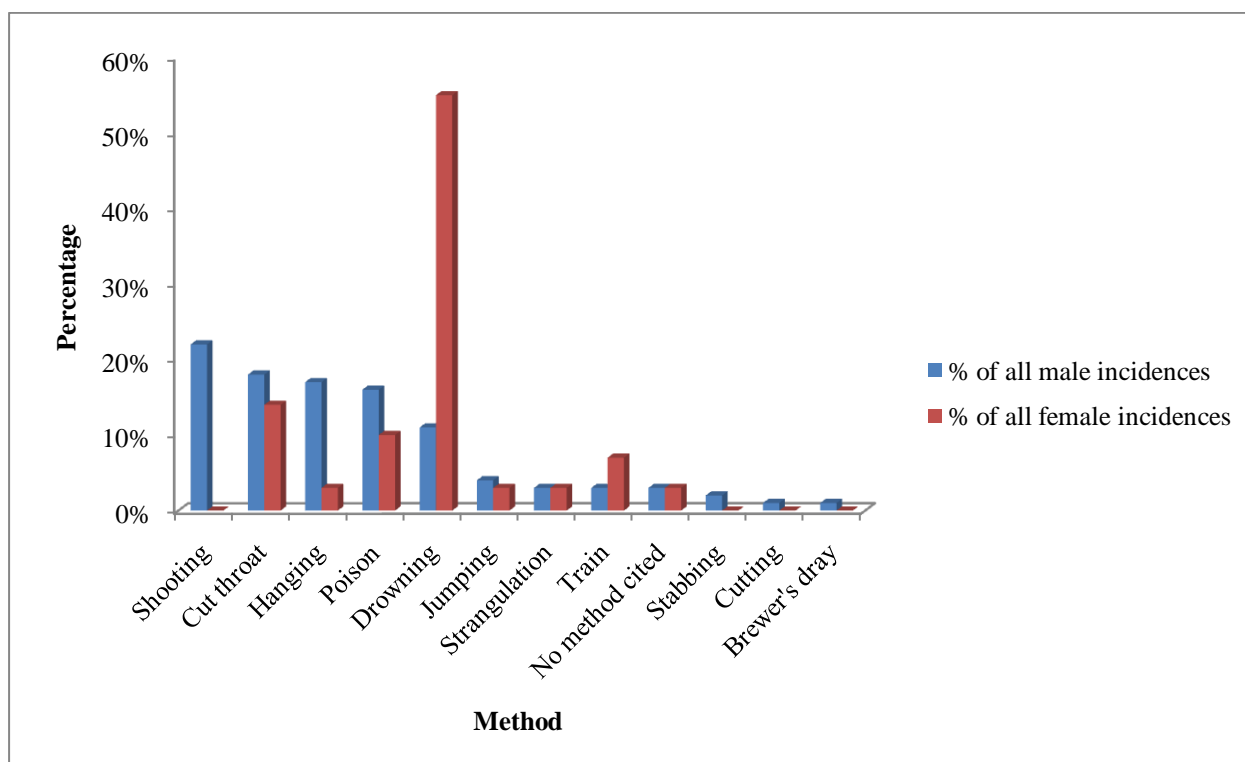


Appendix 4:

1900 Lloyd's

Method	Number of male incidences	% of all male incidences	Number of female incidences	% of all female incidences
Shooting	23	22%	0	0%
Cut throat	19	18%	4	14%
Hanging	18	17%	1	3%
Poison	17	16%	3	10%
Drowning	12	11%	16	55%
Jumping	4	4%	1	3%
Strangulation	3	3%	1	3%
Train	3	3%	2	7%
No method cited	3	3%	1	3%
Stabbing	2	2%	0	0%
Cutting	1	1%	0	0%
Brewer's dray	1	1%	0	0%
Total	106		29	

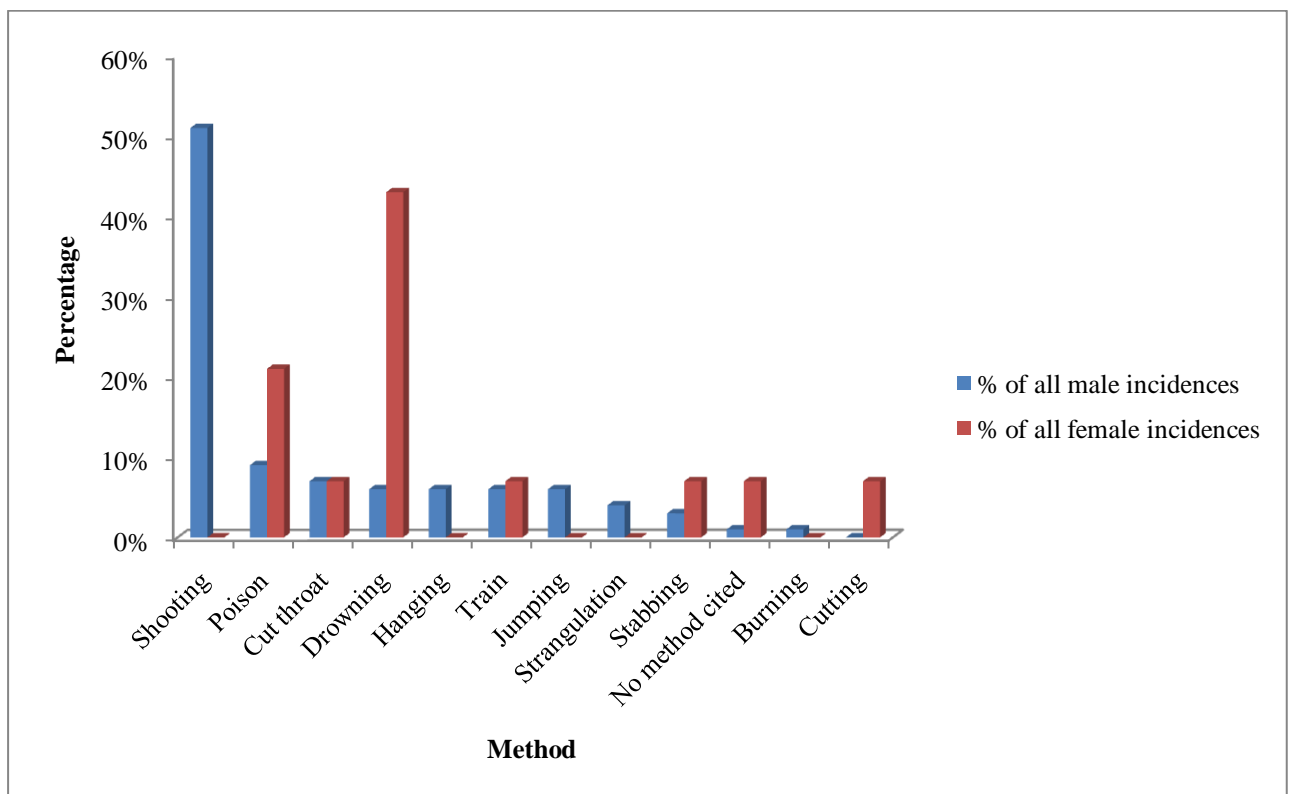
NB: This is based on 106 men and 29 women. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.



1900 Standard

Method	Number of male incidences	% of all male incidences	Number of female incidences	% of all female incidences
Shooting	36	51%	0	0%
Poison	6	9%	3	21%
Cut throat	5	7%	1	7%
Drowning	4	6%	6	43%
Hanging	4	6%	0	0%
Train	4	6%	1	7%
Jumping	4	6%	0	0%
Strangulation	3	4%	0	0%
Stabbing	2	3%	1	7%
No method cited	1	1%	1	7%
Burning	1	1%	0	0%
Cutting	0	0%	1	7%
Total	70		14	

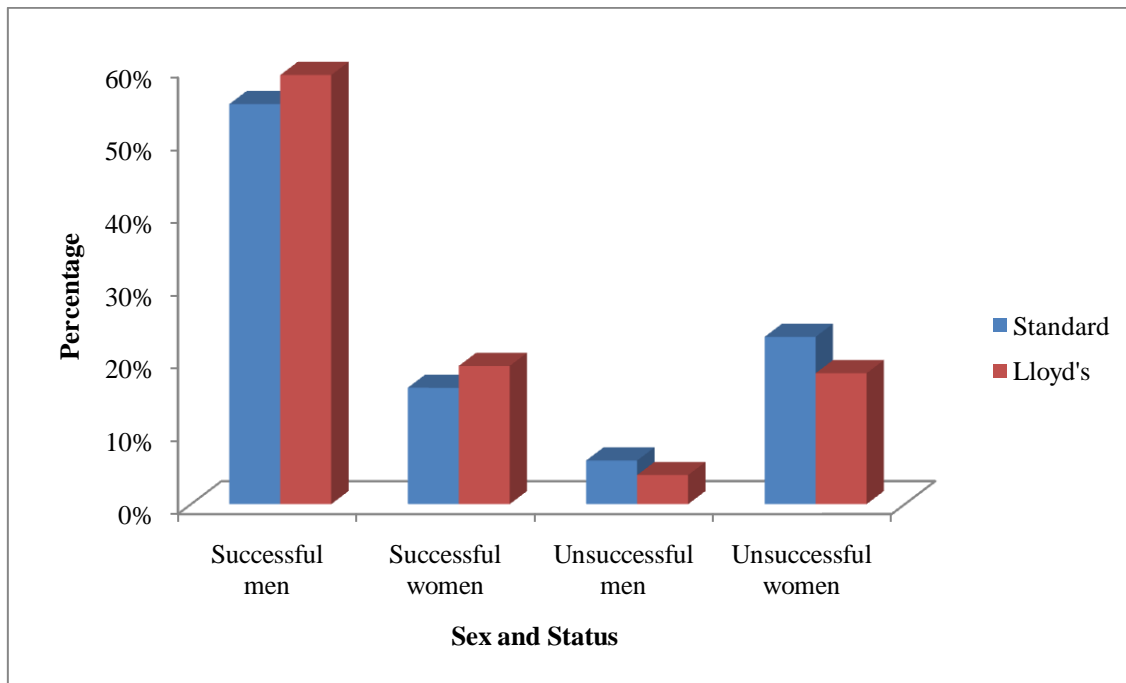
NB: This is based on 69 men and 14 women. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer.



Appendix 5

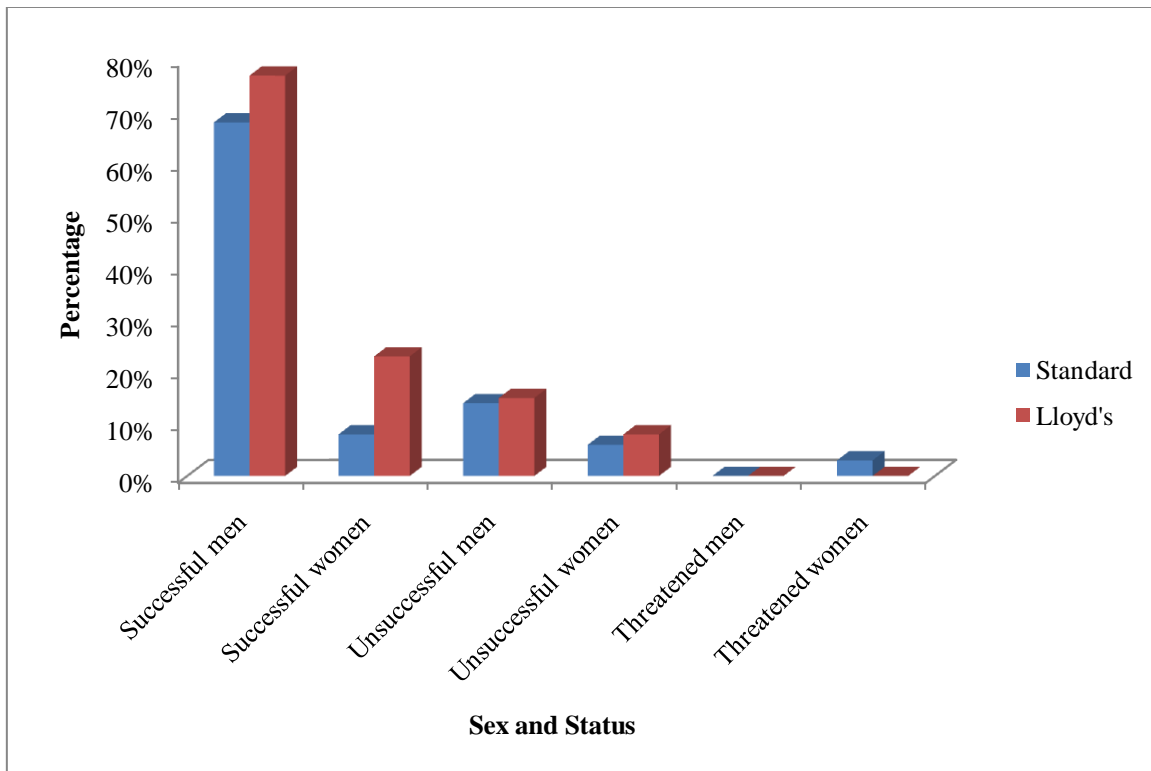
Status per sex of suicides in 1850:

	Standard	Lloyd's
Successful men	55%	59%
Successful women	16%	19%
Unsuccessful men	6%	4%
Unsuccessful women	23%	18%



Status per sex of suicides in 1900:

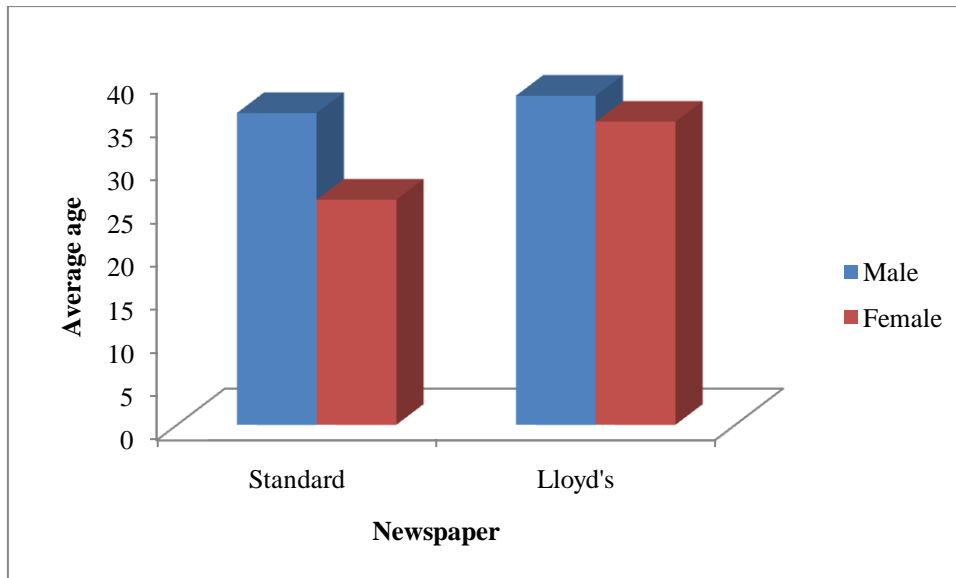
	Standard	Lloyd's
Successful men	68%	77%
Successful women	8%	23%
Unsuccessful men	14%	15%
Unsuccessful women	6%	8%
Threatened men	0%	0%
Threatened women	3%	0%



Appendix 6:

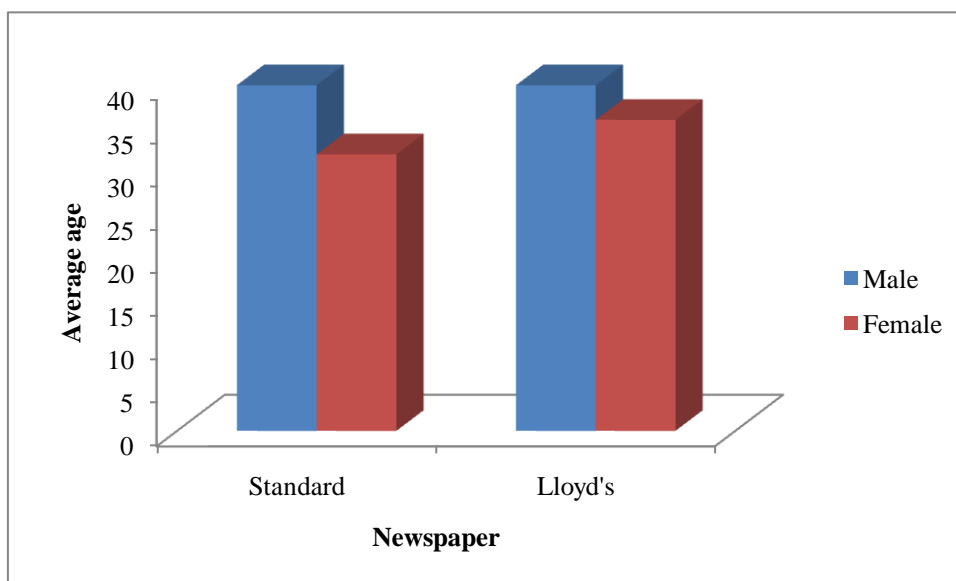
Average age in 1850:

	Standard	Lloyd's
Male	36	38
Female	26	35



Average age in 1900:

	Standard	Lloyd's
Male	40	40
Female	32	36



Appendix 7:

Average number of lines per article in 1850:

	Average number of lines per article
Standard	30
Lloyd's	38

Average number of lines per article in 1900:

	Average number of lines per article
Standard	31
Lloyd's	25

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