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WOMEN AS VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS OF HOMICIDE\*

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WOMEN AS VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS OF HOMICIDE  
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Homicide in our culture is predominantly a male phenomenon. As such, overall patterns of homicide may fail to reflect aspects of involvement which are unique to women. This study describes situational characteristics of women's involvement in criminal homicide, especially with regard to departures from the overall patterns. The analysis is based on 82,997 one-on-one criminal homicide events, as reported by the Uniform Crime Report's Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) for 1980 through 1984. Although the examination is limited to the situational variables provided in the SHR, several distinctive trends in women's involvement are identified. These trends are then examined in the light of previous research and current thinking on women's involvement in homicide.

#### INTRODUCTION

##### Women's Involvement in Homicide Events

Women in our culture are much less likely than men to be involved in a homicide, either as victim or as perpetrator. Furthermore, a woman's involvement in homicide is much more likely than a man's to occur within the context of a heterosexual adult relationship. Thus, overall "patterns" may fail to reflect aspects of homicide involvement that are unique to women. Despite the obvious implication that women's participation in interpersonal homicide may represent a qualitatively different type of act than such events involving men, few studies of homicide have focused specifically on women as the victims or perpetrators of homicide events, or on gender differences with regard to homicide. (See Daniel & Harris, 1982; Silverman & Mukherjee, in press; Totman, 1978; Wilbanks, 1982, 1983; and Zimring, Mukherjee, & Van Winkle, 1983 for exceptions.) The purpose of this report is to provide a statistical profile of

homicide events involving women as either victims or perpetrators, especially with regard to departures from the overall patterns, based on a complete, nationwide data set. As such, it may serve to verify patterns which have been observed by others in more detailed studies of community or opportunity samples, and provide a springboard for conducting further, more detailed studies of women's involvement in homicide with nationwide data.

Studies of homicide have predominantly been of three types:

1) Analyses based on national statistics, such as the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports data (UCR) on which this study is based (see for example Riedel & Zahn, 1985; Smith & Parker, 1980);

2) Localized studies of homicide, particularly city studies (e.g., R. Block, 1981; C. Block, 1985; Wilbanks, 1982, 1983; Wolfgang, 1958; and Zimring et al., 1983, in the United States; and Silverman & Mukherjee, in press, using Canadian data); and

3) Studies utilizing opportunity samples, particularly studies of individuals already incarcerated for criminal homicide (e.g., Chimbos, 1978; Totman, 1987; Suval & Brisson, 1974; Ward, Jackson, & Ward, 1979) or defendants undergoing psychiatric evaluations in order to determine competency to stand trial or sanity at the time of the event (e.g., Barnard, Vera, Vera, & Newman, 1982; Daniel & Harris, 1982).

Each of these sources of data have both strengths and weaknesses. Studies of particular locales allow for more thorough investigation of individual records and thus a more detailed level of analysis; they may also involve a longitudinal component in which cases are followed from arrest through disposition, thus providing valuable information about comparability of charges and sentencing. As Wilbanks (1983) has noted, the interpretation of findings from localized studies is made more difficult by the lack of comparable data from other jurisdictions, leading to an uncertainty about whether the findings

are representative of patterns of homicide in general, or are primarily representative of a particular locale. Studies based on opportunity samples offer even more flexibility for obtaining details on circumstances preceding the event, and on individual dynamics and motivations, at least as perceived by the perpetrators. These samples tend to be quite small, however, as well as being drawn from a select population, and thus they lack generalizability and are more prone to biases resulting from sample selection.

This study is based on case level nationwide data collected by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting office for the years 1980 through 1984. The extensive coverage--both geographically and over time--of the data contribute to a uniquely comprehensive and statistically reliable set of findings. The fact that both victim and offender information (including their relationship to each other) are provided for each case allows for an analysis of interpersonal context in homicide events previously not possible with nationwide data. (Only characteristics of offenders were available in the case level UCR data before 1976).

The findings presented here do not comprise a complete statistical abstract of the information available in the data concerning women's involvement in homicide. Rather, we have chosen to focus on the variables we believe provide the most meaningful and interesting comparisons. This report is based on initial analyses of the data, and no attempt is made at this point to systematically control certain variables while examining others, or to illustrate various interaction effects among the variables. Furthermore, the data lack details concerning any prior interactions between victims and assailants, as well as historical information on the individuals involved in these homicide events (e.g., history of substance abuse, prior criminal record, etc.), and thus we will refer to findings of more specific studies in offering some speculations about the meanings of patterns evident in the national data.

## Description of the Data Source

The data source for this study is the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR), released yearly by UCR. These data provide both victim and offender information, plus circumstance characteristics, for every homicide event reported by cooperating law enforcement agencies nationwide. Victim and offender information includes their respective age, sex, and race. Multiple victim or offender events are included in the data set. Situational variables include such information as relationship of victim to offender, weapon used, and circumstance (e.g., robbery, burglary, argument, etc.)

Although the SHR provides a uniquely comprehensive set of data for homicide research, it is not without its limitations or problems. As mentioned earlier, it does not contain personal information about the victim or offender, other than age, sex, race, and relationship, nor does it provide follow-up information or court outcomes of those arrested. Two additional factors which may compromise the quality of the SHR data are lack of complete coverage (i.e., failure of agencies to submit reports), and missing information within reported events. No attempt to compensate for these deficiencies is made in the present analysis, as the basic patterns reported are not radically affected by missing data. The extent of these problems is, however, described in detail by Williams and Flewelling (1986), as well as a strategy for adjusting homicide rates to compensate for missing data and non-reporting agencies.

### Delineation of the Sample

The present analysis includes only a subpopulation of all events reported in the SHR. Of the 98,616 total homicide events reported in the period from 1980 through 1984, 1.3 percent were classified as negligence and another 4 percent as either citizen or police justifiable. These two categories have been excluded from this analysis.

A second sampling filter was defined on the basis of "situation," a term which describes whether the number of victims is single or multiple, and whether the number of offenders is single, multiple, or unknown. For this analysis, only single victim/single offender and single victim/unknown offender events are included. Conceptually, the intent of this selection strategy is to provide a population of only one-on-one homicide events. Since most single/unknown situations are likely to be one-on-one, they are included in the sample.

There are several reasons for limiting the analysis to one-on-one events. First, homicide events involving multiple victims or offenders are relatively rare (10.9 percent of all events, 1980-1984). There is also reason to suspect that they represent a distinctly different set of socio-cultural and situational dynamics. Empirical evidence indicates that one-on-one events do differ from multiple events on victim/offender characteristics as well as situational circumstances of the events (Block, 1985). Secondly, the data does not provide relationship information for all victims of multiple victim homicides. Even if such information were available, it becomes logistically difficult to characterize multiple victim or offender events on the basis of relationship.

After applying the above selection criterion to the 1980-1984 SHR data files, a sample of 82,997 homicide events is obtained. Unless otherwise indicated, all tables presented are based on this sample. One exception is the presentation of yearly trends of gender specific homicide, which has been extended to include data from 1976 to 1979. For these additional years of data,



the same sample selection criteria were used as for the 1980 to 1984 events. Table 1 provides a delineation of the subset of homicide events used in the present analysis, and the percentage of cases for which age and sex of victim or offender are missing.

### Empirical Findings

The following tables present descriptive profiles on key SHR variables for each of five categories of homicide events: all events, events involving men as victims, events involving women as victims, events involving men as offenders, and events involving women as offenders. The age criterion for inclusion in the categories for men and women is 18 years and older.

The variables upon which the profiles are based are relationship of victim to offender, circumstances of the event, weapon, sex of victim/offender, and race of victim/offender. Several of these variables have been consolidated into a small number of meaningful categories (see Appendix A). Ethnicity (i.e., Spanish origin designation) was not incorporated into the categories for race because it was not provided in the SHR before 1980, and after 1980 appears to be unreliably reported.<sup>1</sup>

#### Relationship

Breakdowns on relationship by sex of victim and offender are presented in Table 2. It is first important to note that women are, overall, much less likely to be involved in homicide than men, either as victim or offender. Within the subgroups, there are staggering differences as to how cases are distributed by relationship. Over half of all women victims are killed by their heterosexual partner, as opposed to only 12 percent for male victims. The same magnitude of disparity is true for male and female offenders. Men are much more likely to be involved in homicide outside the family, either with persons known to them, or with strangers. The number of female-perpetrated homicides against

strangers is exceedingly small, only 3.6 percent of all female perpetrated homicides. Overall, a stranger homicide is almost 24 times more likely to be committed by a man than a woman. The proportion of involvement in within family homicide, outside couple relationships, is about the same for men as for women. Finally, although homicides involving women are much more likely to be within couple relationships, overall there are still more male-perpetrated couple homicides than female.

#### Circumstance

With the exception of rape, there appears to be no overwhelming differences for circumstance profiles between male and female victimizations (see Table 3). Even though men are much more likely to be victims of persons outside the family, the majority of such events appear to be assault-related, rather than felony type homicides. Male victims are somewhat more likely to be victims of robbery-related homicides than are women; conversely, woman victims are more than twice as likely to be victims in a burglary-related homicide. In absolute numbers, there are more male victims than female victims in every circumstance type except rape.

More extreme differences in circumstance profiles are seen between female- and male-perpetrated homicides. Women perpetrators are less likely to commit felony type homicides and vice-related homicides, and more likely to commit assault-related and other non-felony homicides. The overall greater participation in homicide commission on the part of the men is highlighted in the male/female ratios, ranging from 4.5 for assault-related homicides to a staggering 27 for robbery homicides.

#### Weapon

Woman victims are somewhat less likely to be killed by handguns and other firearms than men, and more likely to be the victims of brute physical force (17 percent vs. 8 percent). Thirteen percent of woman victimizations fall in the

weapon category of "other or undetermined" (which includes techniques such as strangulation, asphyxiation, poisoning, and drowning), compared to about 4 percent for male victims.

A somewhat different pattern emerges in comparing male and female perpetrated homicides. Men and women relied equally on handguns, although men tended to use other types of guns proportionately more than women. Women used knives and cutting instruments 30 percent of the time, compared to 20 percent for men. Finally, just as women are about twice as likely to be victims of lethal attacks of physical force, woman perpetrators are only about half as likely to actually use blunt objects, hands, feet, etc. in the commission of a homicide.

#### Sex of Victim and Offender

Table 5 presents a breakdown of the sex of victim for male and female adult offenders. A table depicting sex of offender for male and woman adult victims is not provided, as the patterns so closely resemble each other. In Table 5, we see that when men kill, they kill other males 73 percent of the time. When women kill, the victim is even more likely to be male. This of course coincides with the fact that victims of woman-perpetrated homicides are so often a spouse or heterosexual partner. Woman killing woman events are relatively quite rare, accounting for only about 2.3 percent of all one-on-one homicides.

#### Race of Victim and Offender

Tables 6 and 7 refer to breakdowns of victims' and offenders' race by sex of victim and offender. The most prominent information to be gleaned from these tables is the relatively higher likelihood of woman victims to be white relative to male victims. This pattern completely reverses itself for offenders. Sixty percent of woman victims are white, compared to 50 percent for adult male victims. Again, 50 percent of adult male offenders are white, while the percentage of female adult offenders drops to 38 percent. This pattern becomes

somewhat more in focus if we observe that about 20 percent of all black perpetrated homicides are by women, compared to only about 12 percent for white perpetrated homicides. Furthermore, because women predominately kill men rather than other women, it is not surprising that the racial composition of female victims is different than the racial composition of female offenders.

Much more could be said about this interaction occurring between status as victim or offender, race, and sex. However, the complexity of breaking down this interaction, especially if relationship is to be brought into the analysis, is beyond the intent of this report. (Carolyn Block [1985] provides a somewhat more detailed analysis of these relationships. See also Darrell Hawkins' [1986] discussion of "Black and White Homicide Differentials.")

#### Trends Over Time in Relationship Profiles

The data examined so far have all been based on a combined five year period. Although it is often ill-advised to read meaning into single year fluctuations over time, especially when the dependent variable is of low frequency, definitive trends observed over a multi-year period can be very informative. The preceding results indicate that the most pronounced differences in homicides involving men versus women occur with regard to the relationship of victim to offender. Thus, homicide events broken down by relationship present an interesting and meaningful place to start in examining whether or not changes in patterns of women's involvement are occurring over time.

Figures 1 through 4 present the counts of couple, family, known, and stranger homicides, over the years 1976 to 1984, for each of the four subgroups identified in this report. Many of the homicide types show fairly stable counts throughout the period. The trend of male victimizations by persons known to the victim, depicted on Figure 1, reflects the trend in the overall homicide rate over this period: noticeably higher rates in 1979, 1980, and 1981, followed by

a slow decline thereafter. Alarming, for both women and men, the number of stranger victimizations has remained high or even continued to rise in the years since 1981. The most dramatic trend observed in these figures applies to homicides perpetrated by women on their heterosexual partners. Contrary to most other trends, this category of homicide has shown a fairly steady and relatively sharp decline since 1979.<sup>2</sup> More will be said about this pattern in the next section.

### Discussion

In homicides involving women and men for the years of 1980 through 1984, the most noticeable gender differences are seen on the relationship variable. Women are much more at risk of homicide victimization from a male partner than from other family members, or from all other categories of relationship outside of the partnership combined, whereas men are much more likely to be killed by acquaintances or strangers. In a similar pattern, women are much more likely to kill their male partners than to kill other family members, acquaintances, or strangers; whereas men kill strangers as often as wives, and are the most likely to kill their acquaintances.

It has often been reported that a substantial proportion of the nation's homicides occur within the family (e.g., Wolfgang, 1958; Wilbanks, 1982, 1983; Zimring et al., 1983). National data confirm these findings. For example, from 1980 to 1984, nearly one-third of the nation's homicide victims were related to their assailants; 18,172 murders in that year were of family members. Of family homicides, a spouse killing a spouse is by far the most frequent type. Almost two-thirds of the intrafamily homicides, or the deaths of over 11,000 people, were between partners. Of these, the majority of victims were women: sixty percent (6,516) were wives killed by husbands, forty percent (4,757) were

husbands killed by wives.

Homicides between partners--the highest category for both victimization by and perpetration of homicide for women--fall primarily into the assault-related category. This category consists primarily of homicides preceded by some type of argument. Since the SHR data does not give us information on individuals' histories prior to the homicide events, we can only speculate on the precipitating interpersonal dynamics in homicide events which may help explain the observed gender differences.

One thesis is that women kill primarily their male partners because it is their male partners from whom they are the most at risk (c.f., Silver & Kates, 1979). In his early study of criminal homicide in Philadelphia, Marvin Wolfgang (1967) noted that 60% of the husbands killed by wives "precipitated" their own death--i.e., were the first to use physical force, strike blows, or threaten with a weapon, compared to only 5% of the wife victims. (These figures were based on "provocation recognized by the courts," and would not necessarily reflect the number of wives who had actually experienced physical abuse or threat from their spouse victims.) Similarly, William Wilbanks, in his study of all men and women arrested for homicide in Dade County, Florida for the year of 1980, found that the victims of female perpetrators were much more likely to have been the first to use physical force or threat, and thus to have precipitated the lethal assault, than were victims of male offenders (Wilbanks, 1983).

Research on more specialized samples also suggests that many homicides between partners are preceded by a history of violent acts and/or threats. Peter Chimbos (1978), in his study of spousal homicides in Canada, reported that the lethal act was usually the endpoint in an ongoing series of conflicts or assaults.<sup>3</sup> Fifty-three percent of Chimbos' respondents reported prior threats to kill on the part of either the victim or the offender, and 70% reported prior

physical violence in the relationship. In a review of available police records, Chimbos noted that nearly all of the women charged with the deaths of their mates had previously been physically assaulted by them. Jane Totman (1978), studying women homicide offenders serving time in a California prison for the killing of their mates, reported that the usual homicide situation tended to be triggered by an immediate crisis following a long-term problem or struggle with the victim (c.f., Suval & Brisson, 1974). In Totman's study, ninety-three percent of the women who had killed partners reported being physically abused by them, and 67% said that the homicide was in defense of themselves or a child. Similarly, in a pre-trial study of women charged with homicide in Missouri, Daniel and Harris (1982) found that 75% of the women charged with the death of their husbands had been physically abused by them prior to the lethal incident.<sup>4</sup> They observe that the eventual victims posed a substantial threat to the lives of the perpetrators and conclude that wife beating constitutes a major contributing factor in interspousal homicide.

Further documentation of a history of violence preceding spousal homicide is found in research conducted with prison samples which suggests that, in many cases, there have been numerous requests for intervention prior to the homicide event. For example, a review of homicide records in Detroit and Kansas City revealed that, in 85% to 90% of the cases, police had been called to the home at least once during the two years before the homicide occurred, and in over half (54%) of the cases, they had been called five or more times (Police Foundation, 1976; Sherman & Berk, 1984). Similar percentages were reported in a 1977 survey of women serving prison sentences in the Women's Correctional Center in Chigcao for the deaths of their mates (Lindsey, 1978).

The premise that a substantial proportion of female-perpetrated homicide against partners constitutes reactive violence by women to threat or assault-- or what Zimring et al. (1983) call the "female use of lethal counterforce"--is

supported not only by the high proportion of women's victimization at the hands of male partners and female-perpetrated homicide against their male partners, but also by the low percentage of homicides perpetrated by women outside of the couple relationship. Women, accounting for less than 20 percent of the perpetration of all homicides committed, seem generally unlikely to take the initiative in perpetrating a lethal act against another. (E.g., the frequently reported finding that female homicide offenders are more likely to act alone than male offenders may be in part because many of these women take their defense into their own hands only when no one else is there to intervene and they are left alone with overwhelming threat or violence.) Zimring et al., (1983) suggest that cultural and psychological factors related to the perceptions of women's roles in our society may in fact act as restraints on the perpetration of lethal acts by--and possibly against--women.

In analyzing the national data, women perpetrators were slightly less likely to use a gun than male perpetrators, although they were somewhat more likely to use knives. Male homicide offenders were much more likely to use physical force, however, than were female perpetrators. More male victims than female victims were killed with a firearm: For the years of 1980-1984, only 49% of women victims were killed with guns, compared to 66% of male victims. Women were far more likely than male victims to be killed through the use of brute force: Seventeen percent were killed with a blunt object, hands, or feet, and 13% died of other means, including strangulation and asphyxiation. (For some of these 13%, the method of homicide was undetermined.)

These findings confirm those of research on more localized or non-random samples. In his 1958 study of homicides in Philadelphia, of which 100 were homicides between partners, Wolfgang reported that beating with a blunt instrument or with their fists, rather than the use of a weapon, was the primary method used when a woman was killed by a man. Women were more likely to stab



their male victims--62% used a knife or other household instrument, whereas only 20% used guns. Wolfgang, in an analysis of the available information, also reported that women perpetrators employed fewer acts of violence during homicide events, whereas men were more likely to employ five or more acts of severe violence in the killing of their mates. More recent studies suggest a higher use of firearms by women perpetrators than did the Wolfgang study. For instance, Willbanks, in his study of all homicides for which there were arrests in Dade County, Florida during the year of 1980, reports that guns were used by 75% of the men and 60% of the women. Over a quarter (26%) of the women in Willbanks' sample used knives as the homicide weapon, compared to 13% of the men. (These figures are based on all killings, not just those occurring between partners.)

Investigating the use of brute force, Block's (1985) study of homicides in Chicago over a seventeen-year period (1965-1981) again shows that female homicide victims are killed with a firearm less often and are killed with physical force more often than male homicide victims (p. 37). Block speculates that, because women are generally less physically strong than males, they may be more likely to be killed by an attack that would only injure a stronger person. Similarly, Zimring et al. (1983), in analyzing records on all intersexual homicides in Chicago during 1981, report that physical force was used in three out of ten killings perpetrated by males against females, and conclude that the "greater physical strength of most males suggests that lethal weapons are a necessary condition for women killing men (p. 922)."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most dramatic finding in the national data is the definitive decrease in the number of spousal homicides perpetrated by females since 1979, accompanied by stability in the rate of women killing strangers or other family members, and a slight decrease in the rate of women killing acquaintances. This finding runs counter to concerns voiced by Freda Adler (1975) and others that

the women's liberation movement might result in an increase in lethal violence by women. (See also Zimring et al., 1983, p. 925, in which they raise the question of how changes in the definitions of women's roles might affect "psychological" limits on the use of lethal force against a partner.) For instance, Wilbanks (1982) speculated that, as the women's movement led women out of the home, they might then "release their aggression" increasingly on non-family members (pp. 170, 171; c.f., Simon, 1975, p. 4). However, there is very little evidence either in homicide or other criminological data to suggest that women in general "release their aggression" in acts of extreme violence. Rather, national trends in the rates of homicides committed by women over the last several years would suggest that, as the range of alternatives for women widens and they are more able to move away from troubled or threatening situations, they perpetrate correspondingly fewer homicides.

While the number of women killing male partners has decreased since 1979, the number of men killing wives has remained about the same. Although the study was small, and based on a non-random sample, it is intriguing to note the more qualitative findings of Barnard et al. (1982) in this regard.<sup>6</sup> The Barnard et al. study, looking at both male and female perpetrators of homicide, found different factors to be operational in the killing of wives by husbands and husbands by wives. For men, the precipitating event was usually some form of perceived rejection by the partner. Barnard et al. note that a walkout or a threat of separation were especially provoking, and were taken by the men to represent "intolerable desertion, rejection, and abandonment." In killing their women partners, men in this group believed that they were reacting to a previous offense against them (e.g., leaving) on the part of their wives.

Barnard et al. found that the reason most often given by the men as precipitating the homicide was "their inability to accept what they perceived to be a rejection of them or their role of dominance over their eventual victim." Fifty-seven percent of the men were in fact living separately from their wives at the time that they killed them. In contrast, for females, the triggering event to the killing of their mates was usually a physical attack or threat by their partners. Seventy-three percent of the female perpetrators of spousal homicide reported having been battered by their partners, and saw the primary problem in their relationships as verbal and physical violence by their mates, as well as substance abuse by their spouses. Only 9% of the women perpetrators of spousal homicide were separated from their mates at the time that the homicides occurred.

In her study of women who had killed their mates in California, Totman (1978) reported that a major contributing factor to these homicides was a perceived lack of viable alternatives to an "overwhelming and entrapping life situation" on the part of the women. Women tried a series of alternatives prior to the the lethal incident. Nearly one-third left their partners at least temporarily. Others said they wanted to leave but were afraid to, because of the partners' threatened retaliation. One woman attempted suicide as a way out. Totman observes that, as these alternatives failed, the "situation seemed to become even more limited in its possibilities for modification; more than ever a "trap" from which there was no escape (pp. 92, 10)." Browne (1986; 1987) has made similar observations in a study comparing women in abusive relationships who were charged with the death or serious injury of their mates with women from abusive relationships in which no lethal incidents occurred. Homicides by battered women tended to occur at a point of desperation, when the women felt hopelessly caught in a potentially life-threatening situation without hope for either a safe escape or improvement. Most of the women in the homicide

group had no history of violent, or even illegal, behavior; yet in these cases, the women's attempts to survive with an increasingly violent and threatening mate eventually resulted in an act of violence on their part as well.

The recent, sharp decline in the numbers of women killing male partners may in part reflect an improvement in the alternatives available for women who find themselves in troubled and/or assaultive relationships. Yet this decrease in spousal homicides by women is not matched by a corresponding decrease in such homicides by men. It may be that more women are now leaving threatening men; but that men, perceiving such separations as desertion and rejection, are pursuing them and killing them for leaving. (C.f. Silverman & Mukherjee [in press], where they find in a study of three cities in Western Canada that 100% of homicides between separated/divorced couples were male perpetrated.) Such a scenario would remind us of the danger in assuming that simply leaving an assaultive partner (at least when that partner is male) will end the violence. For example, the reference by Zimring et al. [1983] to divorce as an "accessible alternative" to "the chronic violent interactions that can escalate into killing" [p. 924] is called into question by studies which indicate that a physically abused woman is sometimes at even greater risk after separation from her partner than before.

If a significant portion of spousal homicides by women are in fact perpetrated in reaction to the levels of threat and violence coming in, an improvement in alternatives for threatened women should continue to reduce the number of these killings that take place in desperation. However, the evidence on homicides by males perpetrated during periods of separation underscores the need for effective measures of protection for women partners--both within marriage relationships and after their termination--as a step toward reducing the rates of inter-gender homicide in this country.

## NOTES

1. A dramatic, steady increase in number of Spanish origin victims and offenders reported in the SHR from 1980 to 1984 is probably a reflection of the lag time for law enforcement agencies to begin reliably recording this variable.
2. It could be hypothesized that the drop in this category of homicide is due to an increasing propensity of law enforcement agencies to classify these events as justifiable (and thus they would not be included in the figures). However, a separate analysis of justifiable homicides revealed the numbers of female perpetrated justifiable homicides against a male partner to be much too low to account for the drop. In fact, even this category of homicide has shown a strong decrease from 1980 to 1984.
3. Chimbos' (1978) study was conducted post-adjudication with men and women convicted of a crime in the killing of their spouses. Most respondents were serving time in a penal institution at the time of the interview, or had served time prior to the interview.
4. This sample consisted of all women who were referred to a large State Hospital in Missouri during a five-year period (1974-1979) for psychiatric evaluation in relationship to charges of homicide. Thus the sample excludes women charged with homicide but not referred for evaluation, and women for whom homicide charges were dropped due to mitigating circumstances.
5. Zimring et al. (1983) analyzed all homicide cases reported to the Chicago Police Department during 1981 that involved a victim and a known or suspected offender of the opposite sex; or 17% of homicides reported to the police.
6. All respondents in this study were interviewed as a part of psychiatric evaluations requested by legal counsel and/or required by the courts, either to determine their competency to stand trial or their legal sanity at the time of the alleged crime; obviously a very non-random sample. However, all but one male defendant in the sample were judged competent to stand trial at the time they were evaluated.

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APPENDIX A  
Composition of Collapsed Variable Categories

I Relationship

Couple: Spouse, common-law spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend.

Family: Parent, child, sibling, stepparent, stepchild, in-law, other family.

Known: Neighbor, acquaintance, employee, employer, friend, homosexual relationship, other known to victim.

II Circumstance

Other felony: Larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, suspected felony.

Assault related: Lover's triangle, child killed by babysitter, alcoholic brawl, narcotic brawl, argument over money, other argument.

Vice related: Prostitution and commercial vice, other sex offenses, narcotics laws, gambling.

Other non-felony: Gangland, juvenile gangs, institutional killings, sniper attacks, other non-felony types.

III Weapon

Other gun: Rifle, shotgun, other type of gun.

Other, undetermined: Poison defenestration, explosives, fire, narcotics and drugs, drowning, strangulation, asphyxiation, other, unknown.



Table 1

Age and Sex of Victims and Offenders for all One-on-one Homicides<sup>1</sup> in the U.S., time periods 1976-1979 and 1980-1984.

	1976-1979		1980-1984	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Age and Sex of Victim:</b>				
Male 18 and over	44421	70.4	58680	70.7
Female 18 and over	12981	20.6	17149	20.7
Male under 18	2990	4.7	3586	4.3
Female under 18	1731	2.7	2059	2.7
Age/Sex Unknown	946	1.5	1523	1.8
<b>Age and Sex of Offender:</b>				
Male 18 and over	34835	55.2	45200	54.5
Female 18 and over	7710	12.2	8648	10.4
Male under 18	2519	4.0	2650	3.2
Female under 18	368	0.6	407	0.5
Age/Sex Unknown	17637	28.0	26092	31.4
<hr/>				
Total	63069		82997	

<sup>1</sup>Homicides by negligence, and justifiable homicides, are excluded.

Table 2

Relationship of Victim to Offender By Sex of Adult Victim and Offender, 1980-1984.1  
 (Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

Relationship Type:	All Events	Sex of Victim:			Sex of Offender:		
		Male	Female	M/F	Male	Female	M/F
Couple	11468 19.9	4757 11.9	6516 51.8	.73	6577 15.9	4601 54.6	1.42
Family	6704 11.6	3908 9.7	1023 8.1	3.82	4771 11.5	1161 13.8	4.10
Known	28024 48.7	22379 55.8	3444 27.4	6.49	22773 55.1	2359 28.0	9.65
Stranger	11403 19.8	9087 22.6	1599 12.7	5.68	7220 17.5	306 3.6	23.59
Total	57599	40131	12582	3.18	41341	8427	4.90
(% Missing)	30.6	31.6	26.6		8.5	2.6	

1All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

Table 3

Circumstance Category of Event by Sex of Adult Victim and Offender, 1980-1984.<sup>1</sup>  
 (Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

Circumstance Category:	All Events	Sex of Victim:			Sex of Offender:		
		Male	Female	M/F	Male	Female	M/F
Rape	864 1.0	64 0.1	652 3.8	.10	438 1.0	27 0.3	16.20
Robbery	7029 8.5	5722 9.8	1108 6.5	5.16	2734 6.0	101 1.2	27.06
Burglary	1058 1.3	614 1.0	402 2.3	1.52	470 1.0	49 0.6	9.59
Other Felony	5205 6.3	3387 5.8	1128 6.6	3.00	1377 3.0	176 2.0	7.82
Assault Related	37958 45.7	29018 49.5	7216 42.1	4.02	27780 61.5	6131 70.9	4.53
Vice Related	2080 2.5	1667 2.8	274 1.6	6.08	1146 2.5	57 0.7	20.10
Other Non Felony	12361 14.9	6972 11.9	2923 17.0	2.38	7395 16.4	1668 19.3	4.43
Undetermined	16442 19.8	11236 19.1	3446 20.1	3.26	2863 8.5	439 5.1	6.52
Total N:	82997	58680	17149	3.42	45200	6848	5.22

<sup>1</sup>All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

Table 4

Weapon Used By Sex of Adult Victim and Offender, 1980-1984.1  
 (Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

Weapon type:	All Events	Sex of Victim:			Sex of Offender:		
		Male	Female	M/F	Male	Female	M/F
Handgun	37005 44.6	28943 49.3	6043 35.2	4.78	20515 45.4	3990 46.1	5.14
Other Gun	12991 15.7	9852 16.8	2294 13.4	4.29	7918 17.5	1019 11.8	7.77
Knife, Cutting Instrument	17644 21.3	12855 21.9	3686 21.5	3.48	9422 20.8	2644 30.6	3.56
Blunt Object, Hands, Feet	9637 11.6	4864 8.3	2901 16.9	1.67	5517 12.2	552 6.4	9.99
Other, Undetermined	5720 6.9	2166 3.7	2225 13.0	.97	1828 4.0	443 5.1	4.12
Total N:	82997	58680	17149	3.42	45200	8648	5.22

<sup>1</sup>All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

Table 5

## Sex of Victim By Sex of Adult Offender, 1980-1984.1

(Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

Sex of Victim:	<u>All Events</u>	Sex of Offender:		
		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>M/F</u>
Male	63388 76.5	33076 73.2	7408 85.7	4.46
Female	19510 23.5	12115 26.8	1238 14.3	9.78
Total N:	82898	44891	8648	5.19
(% Missing)	0.1	0.7	0.0	

<sup>1</sup>All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

Table 6

Race of Victim By Sex of Adult Victim and Offender, 1980-1984.  
 (Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

Race of Victim:	All Events	Sex of Victim:			Sex of Offender:		
		Male	Female	M/F	Male	Female	M/F
White	43713 53.2	29551 50.8	10291 60.3	2.87	24198 53.9	3361 38.9	7.19
Black	37025 45.1	27691 47.6	6443 37.7	4.29	19935 44.4	5162 59.8	3.86
Other	1375 1.7	923 1.6	338 2.0	2.73	758 1.7	107 1.2	7.08
Total N:	82113	58165	17072	3.40	44891	8630	5.20
(% Missing)	1.1	0.9	0.4		0.7	0.2	

1All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

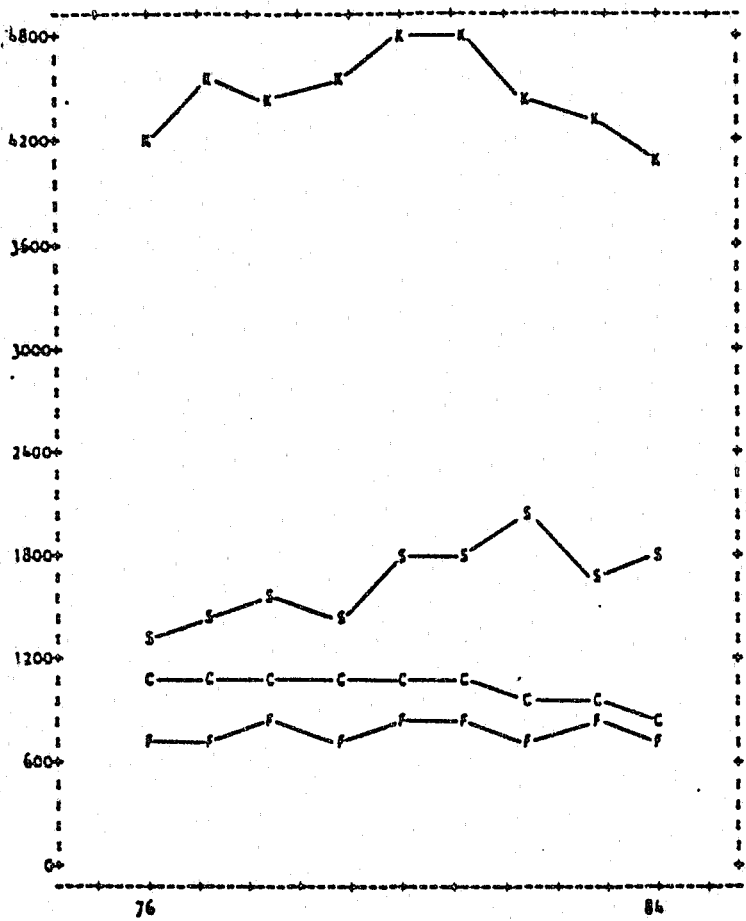
Table 7

Race of Offender by Sex of Adult Victim and Offender, 1980-1984.  
 (Figures Reported are N and Column Percent; M/F is the Male to Female Ratio)

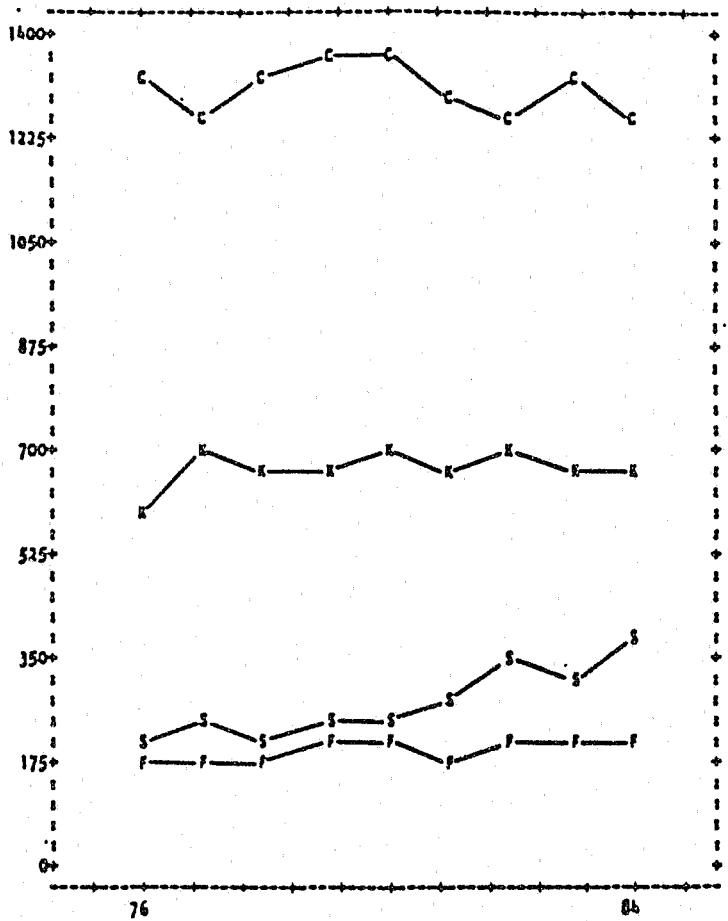
Race of Offender:	All Events	Sex of Victim:			Sex of Offender:		
		Male	Female	M/F	Male	Female	M/F
White	28074 48.5	18671 46.2	6766 54.3	2.75	22688 50.6	3302 38.3	6.87
Black	28875 49.9	21147 52.3	5477 44.0	3.86	21458 47.8	5199 60.3	4.12
Other	928 1.6	634 1.6	207 1.7	3.06	722 1.6	122 1.4	5.91
Total N:	57877	40452	12450	3.24	44868	8623	5.20
(% Missing)	30.3	31.1	27.4		0.7	0.3	

1All one-on-one homicides in the United States, excluding homicides by negligence and justifiable homicides.

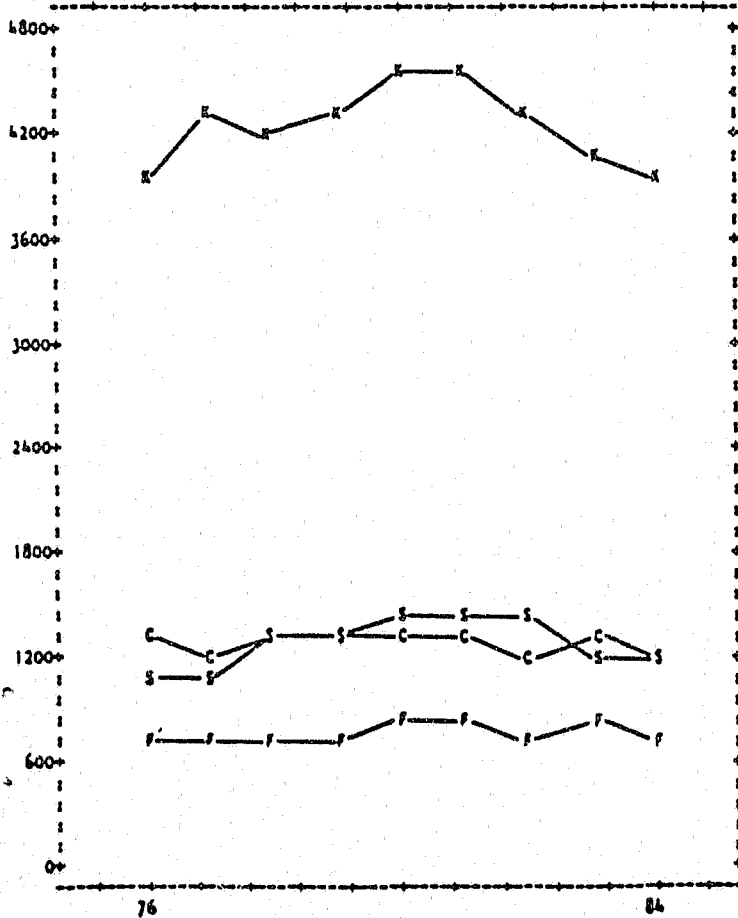
NUMBER OF MALE VICTIMS, 1976 - 1984



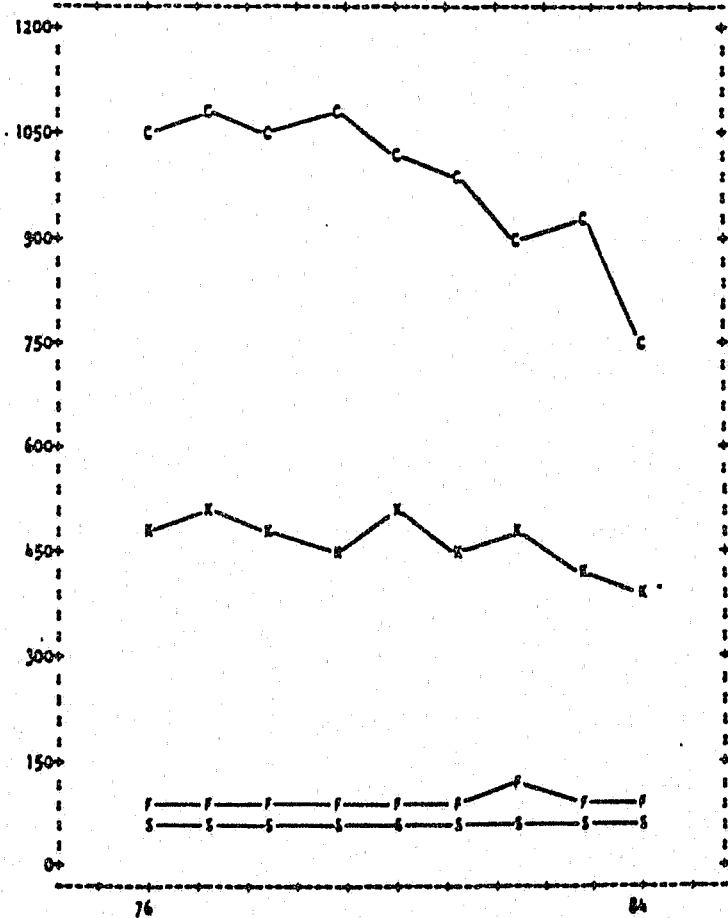
NUMBER OF FEMALE VICTIMS, 1976 - 1984



NUMBER OF MALE OFFENDERS, 1976 - 1984



NUMBER OF FEMALE OFFENDERS, 1976 - 1984



Figures 1 through 4. Number of Adult Homicide Victims and Offenders, By Gender and Relationship, 1976 to 1984.  
 Symbols: C - Couple F - Other Family  
 S - Stranger K - Acquaintance