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# IOWA INMATES SENTENCED TO LIFE TERMS

A Survey of Class A Felons



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A Survey of Class A Felons

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SUMMARY

This report is intended for anyone seeking information on Iowa offenders convicted of Class A felonies, and sentenced to life in prison. It describes numerous characteristics of 186 "lifers" in Iowa's prison system, including sex, age, and race. The crimes leading to these convictions are also discussed, and much space is given to sentencing disparity. A chapter analyzing paroles and deaths of "lifers" since 1970 is also included, as well as an appendix containing additional statistical data. Some of the findings of the study follow:

- o The number of "lifers" committed to prison each year in Iowa reached a peak of 32 admissions in 1982, and declined in 1983 and 1984.
- o The majority (57.6%) of the "lifers" sampled are not poor risks for future violent crime, according to the Iowa Model of Risk Assessment.
- o Female murderers are less likely to receive life sentences than males who commit murder. Of all "lifers" paroled since 1970, the woman in this group spent the least amount of time in prison.
- o Since 1970, eighteen "lifers" have been paroled, following commutation of their life sentences. Time served prior to parole averaged 24.7 years (median).

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I. CRIMES PUNISHABLE BY LIFE IMPRISONMENT

The following are the criminal offenses for which life sentences are currently mandated in Iowa, taken from the 1981 Code of Iowa:

§707.2. "**Murder in the first degree.** A person commits murder in the first degree when he or she commits murder under any of the following circumstances:

1. The person willfully, deliberately, and with premeditation kills another person.

2. The person kills another person while participating in a forcible felony.

3. The person kills another person while escaping or attempting to escape from lawful custody.

4. The person intentionally kills a peace officer, correctional officer, public employee, or hostage while such person is imprisoned in a correctional institution under the jurisdiction of the department of social services, or in a city or county jail."

§709.2. "**Sexual abuse in the first degree.** A person commits sexual abuse in the first degree when in the course of committing sexual abuse the person causes another serious injury."

§710.2. "**Kidnapping in the first degree.** Kidnapping is kidnapping in the first degree when the person kidnapped, as a consequence of the kidnapping, suffers serious injury, or is intentionally subjected to torture or sexual abuse."

The following Code section allows the courts to try those who aid and abet the aforementioned crimes on Class A felonies:

§703.1. "**Aiding and abetting.** All persons concerned in the commission of a public offense, whether they directly commit the act constituting the offense or aid and abet its commission, shall be charged, tried and punished as principals. The guilt of a person who aids and abets the commission of a crime must be determined upon the facts which show the part he or she had in it, and does not depend upon the degree of another person's guilt."

Prior to 1981, however, judges could sentence offenders to life in prison for any one of eleven crimes, listed on the next page. It is unknown when these crimes were adopted into law, but they can be found in the Iowa criminal code as far back as 1927.

- a. Murder-1st degree;
- b. Murder-2nd degree;
- c. Rape
- d. Carnal Knowledge of an Imbecile;
- e. Kidnapping for Ransom;
- f. Burglary with Aggravation;
- g. Entering a Bank with Intent to Rob;
- h. Train Robbery;
- i. Placing Obstructions on Railways;
- j. Treason; and
- k. Perjury, in the trial of a capital crime.

## II. COMPOSITION OF "LIFER" POPULATION: SAMPLE OF 186 INMATES

This study began in July of 1983, in response to practitioners' questions about the "lifer" population. At that time, there were 203 prison inmates sentenced to life terms in Iowa's prison system. A few of these inmates were so new at the time that information about them was not available; after deleting these offenders, a sample of 186 inmates resulted. As of February 21, 1985, there were 222 prison inmates serving Iowa life sentences<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, this sample of 186 inmates represents 83.8% of the "lifer" population at this time.

Please note that "lifera" serving time in Iowa under interstate compact agreement are excluded from this study. However, we are including Iowa "lifera" currently serving their sentences in other states under compact agreement.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the typical "lifer" is serving a single sentence for Murder-1st degree. The second most common offense is Kidnapping-1st degree. Note that five inmates are serving life terms for Murder-2nd degree, and one inmate is serving a life term for Burglary with Aggravation, offenses no longer punishable by life imprisonment. It is also interesting to note that two "lifera" received additional life sentences while serving time on their first life terms.

<sup>1</sup>. Figure was obtained by comparing Board of Parole records with OBSCIS computer printout dated February 21, 1985. This was necessary in order to omit "lifera" not sentenced in Iowa.

Table 1.  
Sentencing Offenses of Inmates Serving Life Terms

Murder-1st degree	147	(79.0%)
Kidnapping-1st degree	28	(15.0%)
Murder-2nd degree	5	(2.7%)
Sexual Abuse-1st degree	5	(2.7%)
Burglary with Aggravation	1	(0.6%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

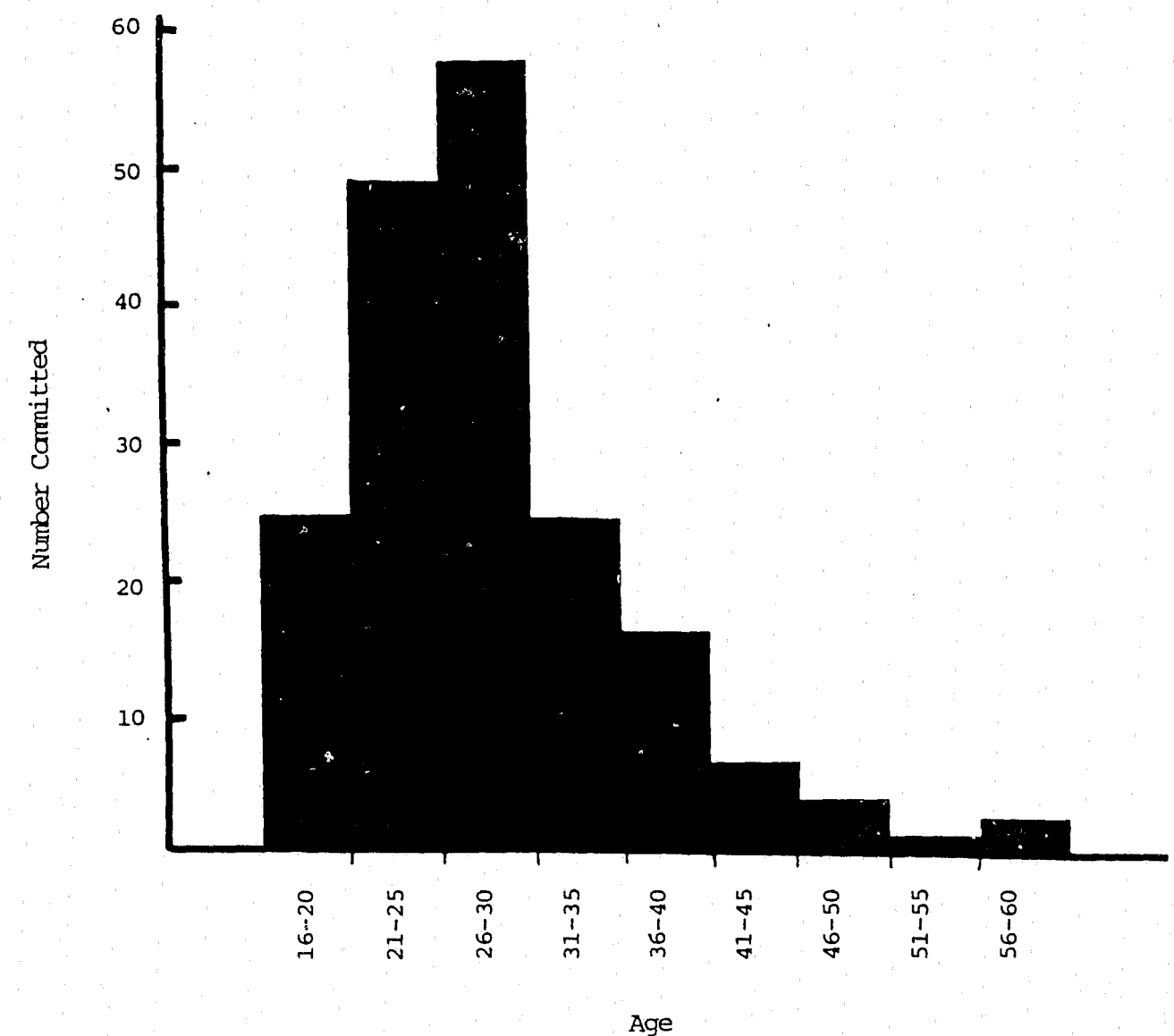
Table 2.  
Number of Life Sentences Served by Each "Lifer"

Single Life Sentence	157	(84.4%)
Multiple Life Sentences, one crime	27	(14.5%)
Multiple Life Sentences, two crimes	2	(1.1%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

The next three charts summarize the demographic make-up of the sample. As illustrated in Figure 3, the age of inmates in the sample, at the time of commitment to prison, ranged from 16 to 60 years. The median age was 27. The current age of this sample ranges from 19 to 71 years, with a median age of 34.

Table 4 indicates that only 5% of the "lififers" studied were women. Between the time of data collection and the writing of this report, a female "lifer" won her appeal in court, and was re-sentenced to a term of twenty-five years for Murder-2nd degree. Nevertheless, she is included throughout the remainder of this

Fig. 3. Offenders Serving Life Sentences:  
Age at Commitment



study. There are only ten females in the total "lifer" population of 222 at this time.

Table 4.  
Sex of Inmates Serving Life Sentences

Males	176	(94.6%)
Females	10	(5.4%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

Are there a disparate number of minorities in the "lifer" population? According to 1980 census information provided by the Iowa Office for Planning and Programming, American Indians make up 0.2% of Iowa's population, and individuals of hispanic origin comprise 0.9% of all state citizens. When these facts are compared with Table 5, American Indians and Hispanics do not appear to be over-represented in the "lifer" population.

The census figures for blacks are another matter. The Office for Planning and Programming reports only 1.4% blacks in Iowa's population, yet over 22% of all "lififers" on which race data were collected were black. However, the Iowa Uniform Crime Reports for the years 1981 and 1982 indicate that 25% to 29% of the murderers arrested in that period were black<sup>1</sup>. Considering this, the large percentage of black "lififers" appears to be a result of the high percentage of blacks committing murder.

1. Iowa Uniform Crime Reports: 1981-1982, page 29.

Table 5.  
Race or Ethnic Group of Inmates Serving Life Terms

White, non-Hispanic	117	(74.5%)
Black, non-Hispanic	35	(22.3%)
Hispanic	4	(2.6%)
American Indian	1	(0.6%)
Total	<u>157</u>	(100.0%)

29 Missing Cases

Table 6.  
Violence Risk of Inmates Serving Life Sentences

Very Poor	25	(13.4%)
Poor	54	(29.0%)
Good	29	(15.6%)
Very Good	55	(29.6%)
Excellent	23	(12.4%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

Total Poor Violence Risks 79 (42.4%)

Total Good to Excellent Risks 107 (57.6%)

Table 6 illustrates one of the most important findings in this study: a majority of inmates serving Iowa life sentences are low risks for future violent crime. These risk assessments were completed using the 1981 model of the Iowa risk assessment system. According to Daryl Fischer, who developed the Iowa model, this risk assessment system is approximately 85% accurate in predicting future violent behavior of an offender upon release from prison.

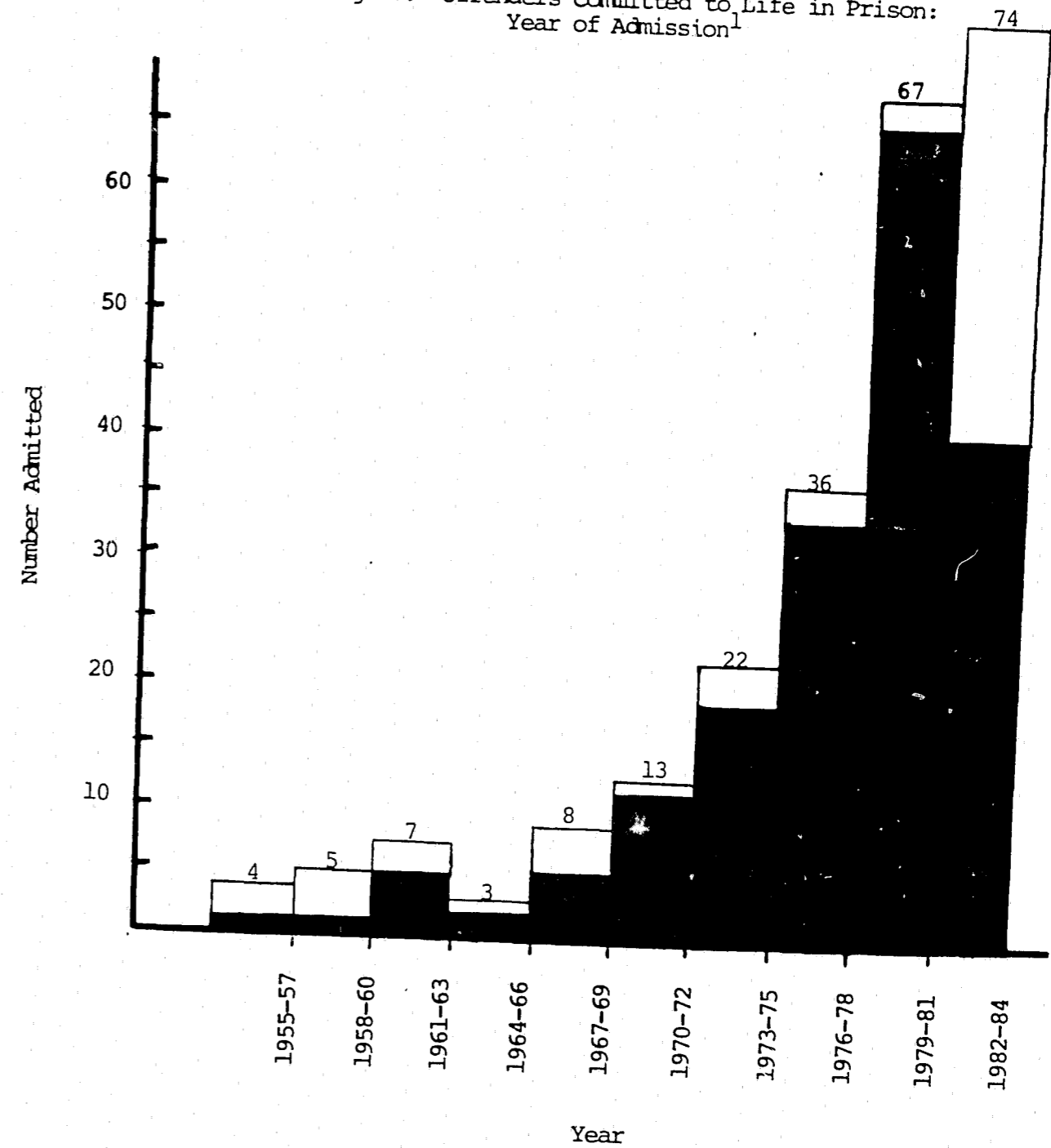
A recent Bureau of Justice Statistics report, Returning to Prison, indicates that, nationwide, "The lowest [recidivism] rate is for illicit drugs, followed by homicide, forgery/fraud/embezzlement, and sexual assault."<sup>1</sup> For the state of Iowa, this report lists a recidivism rate of 0% (nil) for parolees released in 1980, who had been incarcerated for homicide, and a rate of 16.7% for those convicted of sexual assault<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, given the low recidivism rates for murderers and rapists, the high percentage of low risk "lifers" in this study is not surprising.

Prior felony convictions are a major factor in risk assessment. Approximately 71% of the "lifers" sampled had no prior convictions for forcible felonies, and nearly 55% had never been convicted of a non-forcible felony. Of those with prior forcible felony convictions, 19.7% had one prior conviction, and 9% had been previously convicted of two to four forcible felonies.

Board of Parole records indicate that about 80% of Iowa's parolees have substance abuse problems. Of the "lifers" studied, nearly 50% did not have drug or alcohol abuse histories. Approximately 35% of the sample were primarily alcoholics, and the remaining 15% were abusers of other drugs. It is interesting to note that 68% of those with serious drug abuse histories had prior arrest records.

1. Returning to Prison, page 3.  
 2. Ibid.

Fig. 7. Offenders Committed to Life in Prison:  
 Year of Admission<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Data prior to 1975 may not be complete.

Black areas indicate admission data for sample.

Numbers indicate actual commitments for life.

Source; OBSCIS; Board of Parole

Figure 7, on the preceding page, shows the number of "lifers" committed to prison each year since 1955; admission years of the sample are shaded in black. The median year of commitment for the sample is 1979. While the graph depicts the dramatic increase in offenders receiving life terms, these admissions have recently declined. Additional information is included in the appendix.

The status of "lifers" at the time of admission to prison is summarized in Table 8. Over 86% of this sample were admitted to prison due to new court convictions. Others who were admitted on life terms were also revoked from prior probations, paroles, or appeal bonds; these revocations comprise 8.1% of all "lifers" studied. Of the remaining offenders, 3.8% were already serving sentences in Iowa's prisons, and another 1.6% were on escape from penal institutions at the time they committed the crimes which led to their life terms.

Table 8.  
Admission Type of Inmates Serving Life Sentences

New Court Commitment	161	(86.5%)
In Prison on Non-Life Term	7	(3.8%)
Parole Violator	7	(3.8%)
Probation Violator	6	(3.2%)
On Escape from Prison	3	(1.6%)
Appeal Bond Violator	2	(1.1%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

Table 9 provides additional data on the situations leading to convictions for Class A felonies. One woman serving a term for Kidnapping-1st degree was actually involved in a homicide; her accomplices each received two life terms for Kidnapping and Murder. The remaining offenders convicted of Kidnapping-1st degree also raped their victims. Of those convicted of Sexual Abuse-1st degree, one situation involved a kidnapping/rape, two offenses were burglary/rapes, and one crime was solely a rape. The individual serving a term for Burglary with Aggravation also raped the occupant of the home he entered.

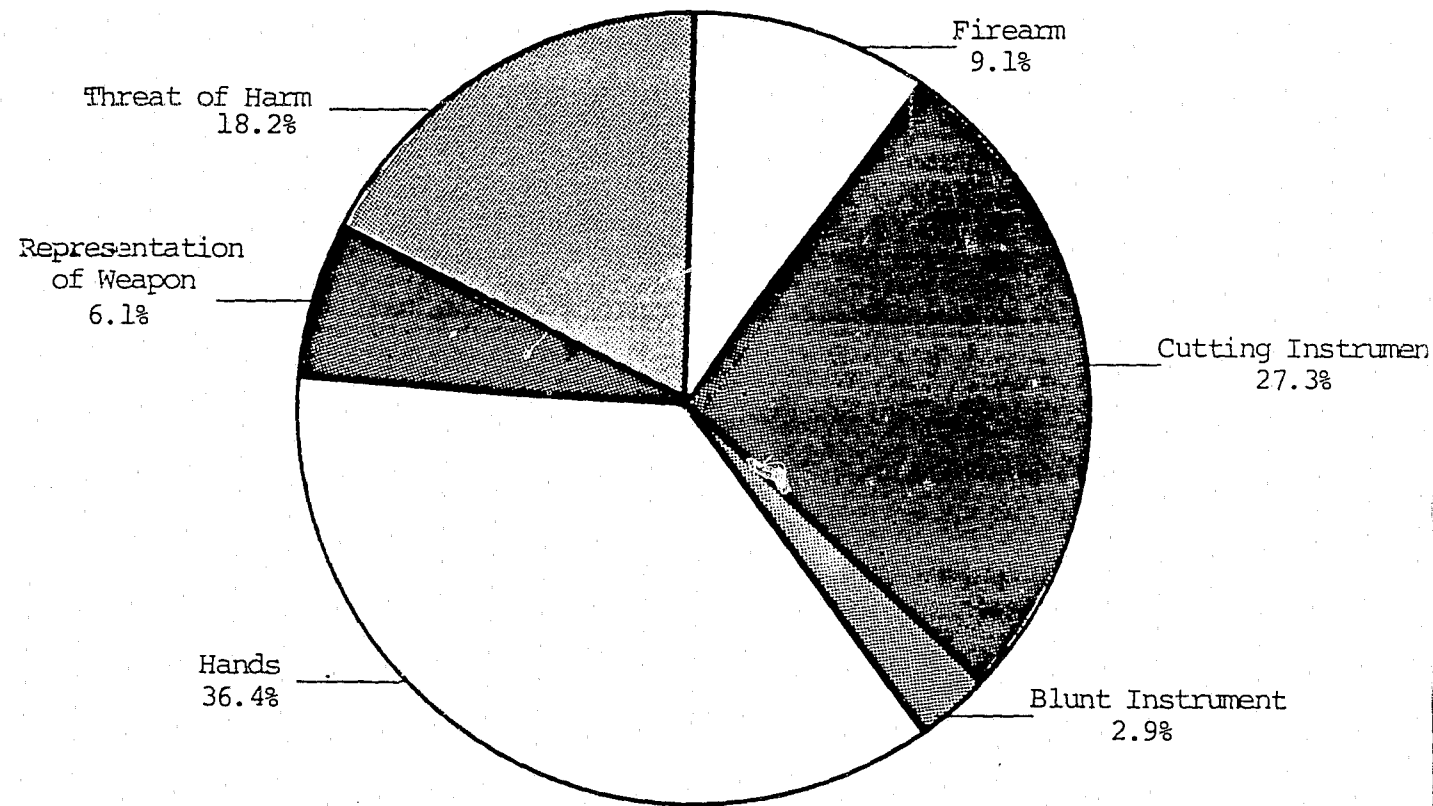
Table 9.  
Offense Situations of Inmates Serving Life Sentences

Homicides	153	(82.2%)
Kidnapping and Rape	29	(15.6%)
Rape During Burglary	3	(1.6%)
Rape	1	(0.6%)
Total	<u>186</u>	(100.0%)

The graph on the following page summarizes the weapons used by the 33 rapists serving life terms. It is interesting to note that, in the majority (61.0%) of these offenses, no weapons were used, other than physical force, the threat of physical force, or the threat to use weapons the offenders did not possess. Weapons used in the murders in this study are summarized on page 24.



Fig.10: WEAPON USE IN  
NON-MURDER OFFENSES



TOTAL N: 33

### III. CHARACTERISTICS OF MURDERS RESULTING IN LIFE SENTENCES

The Iowa Uniform Crime Reports use the following variables in describing homicides:

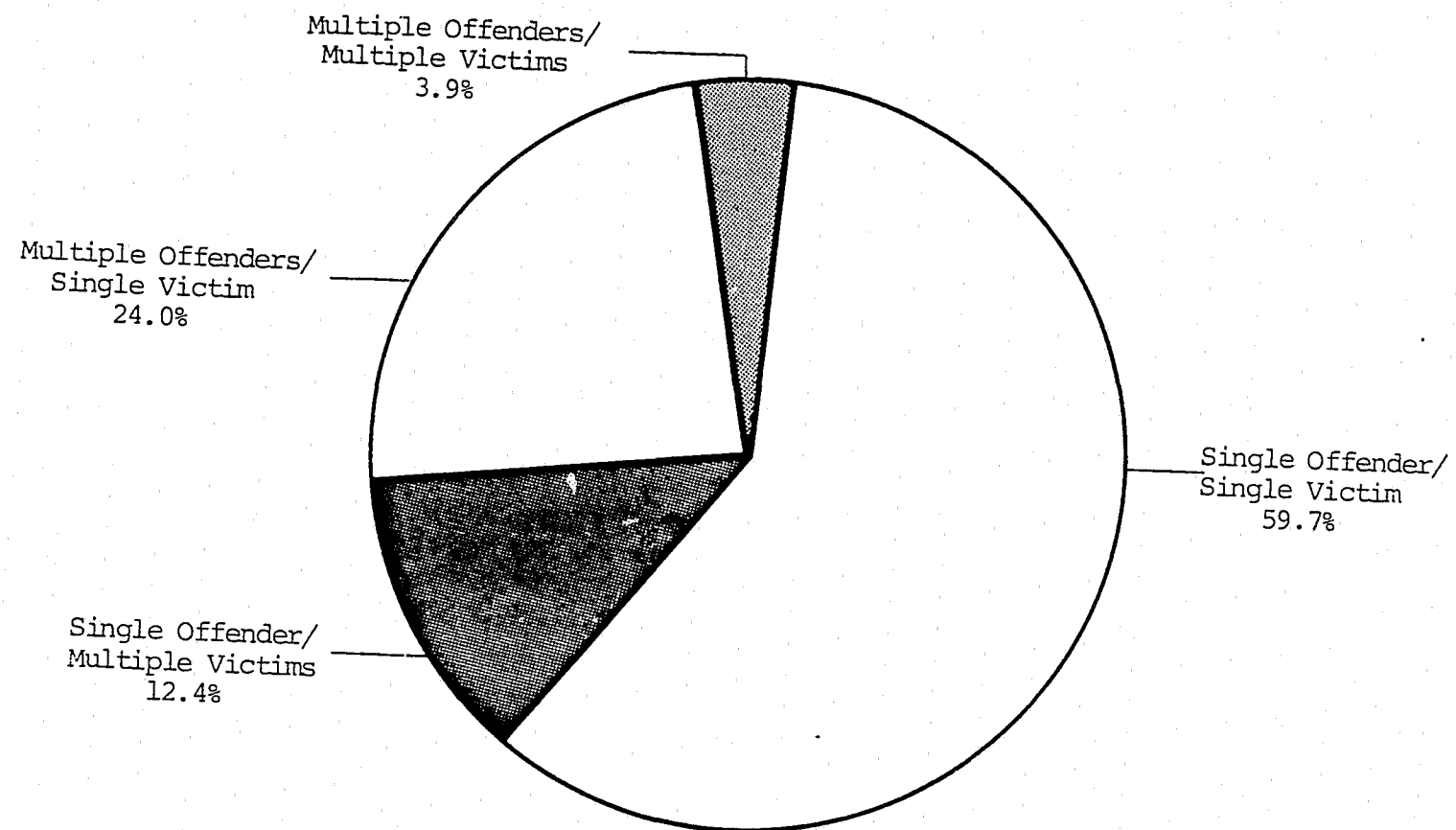
- the total number of victims murdered in the incident, and the number of murderers;
- the type of weapon used in the murder;
- the circumstances, or motive, of the murder; and
- the social relationship between the victim(s) and the offender(s), if any.

These reporting guidelines were adopted for studying the crimes of the 153 murderers in the sample of "lifers". One will note that the data which follow report only 129 cases, instead of 153. This is due to the fact that several inmates in the sample were each others' accomplices. To avoid the multiple reporting of a single incident, the 129 different homicides are described.

Figure 11 summarizes the number of victims and the number of murderers involved in each homicide studied. Most of the murders (83.7%) involved only one victim. The most victims murdered at any one time was six. In addition, the majority of murderers in these homicides acted alone, even when more than one individual was murdered. While the number of multiple offenders averaged three, a total of fourteen gang members were once indicted for the murder of a fellow member.

As is apparent in Figure 12, the most frequently used murder weapons were firearms. Cutting instruments, such as knives, were the second most commonly-used weapons. Other deaths were the

Fig.11: MURDER SITUATIONS

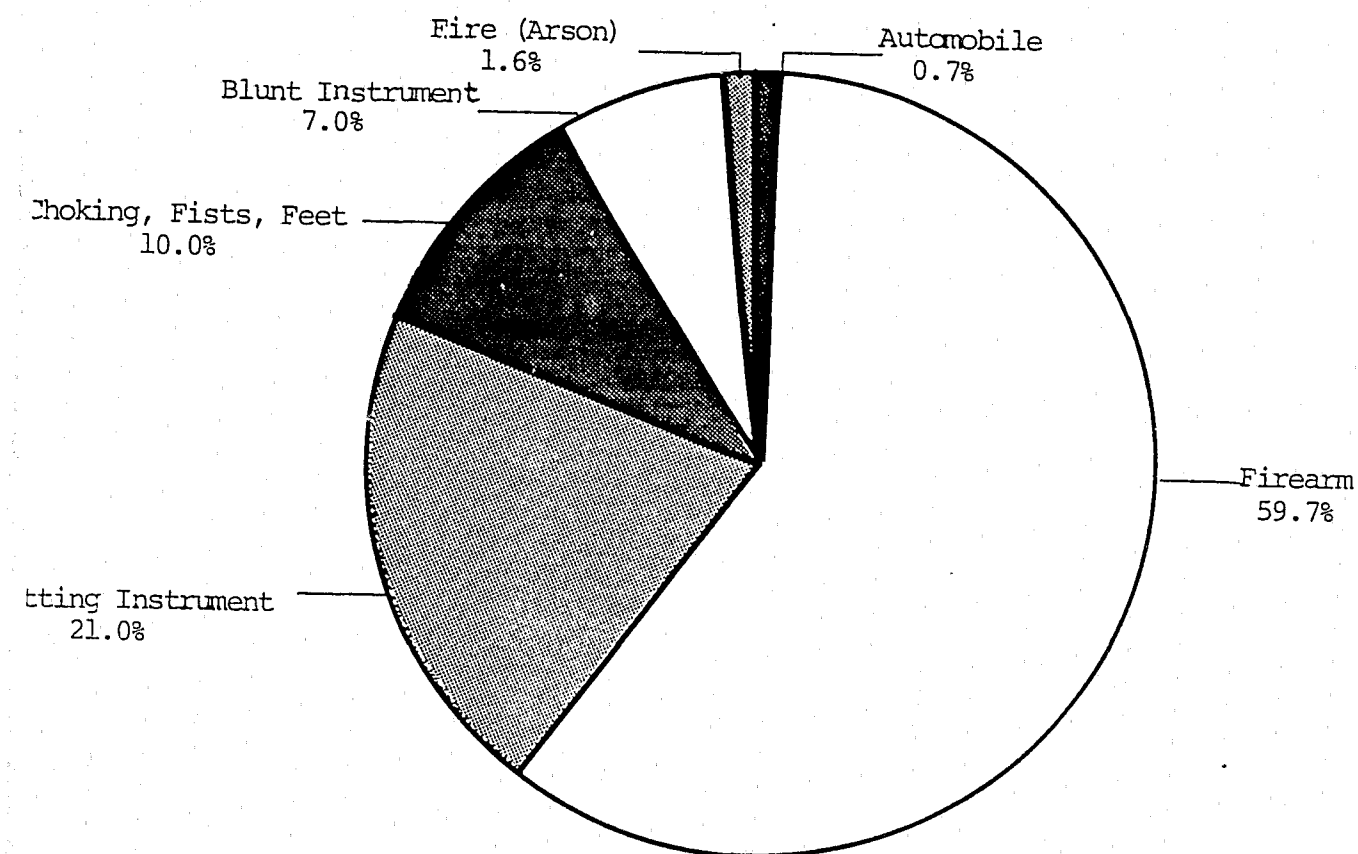


TOTAL N: 129

Maximum N of Murderers: 14  
 Maximum N of Victims: 6

Total murderers acting alone: 93 (72.1%)  
 Total Murderers with accomplice(s): 36 (27.9%)

Fig.12: WEAPON USE IN MURDERS RESULTING IN LIFE SENTENCES



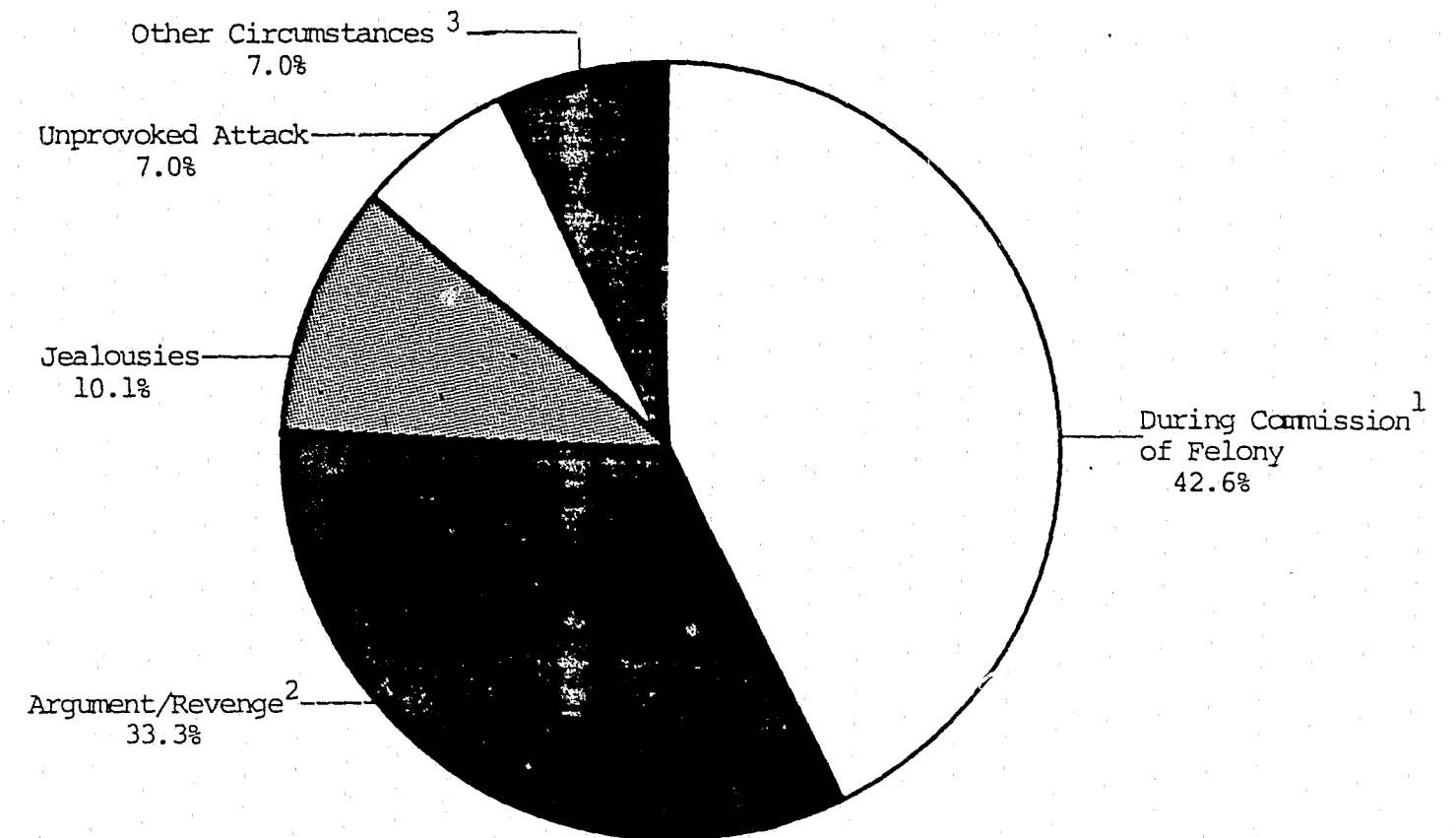
Total N: 129

result of strangulation or beating. In seven percent of the murders, blunt instruments were used, such as clubs and bricks. A few victims died in fires, or were run over with motor vehicles.

The circumstances of each murder are summarized in Figure 13. The most frequent incident involved a murder during the commission of a felony, such as robbery or rape. The second most frequent circumstance was the homicide committed during arguments, or as revenge. Love triangles and jealousies accounted for 10% of the circumstances. Other circumstances involved child abuse, attempted suicide, and contract murders. In 7% of the cases, the murder appeared to have been unprovoked, and without motive.

Finally, Figure 14, on page 26, summarizes the relationship between the murder victims and their killers. In the majority (63.6%) of the homicides, the murderer was at least acquainted with the victim. Only 31% of the murderers were strangers to their victims. Since 1979, the number of victims and offenders who were strangers fell 29%, while those who were acquainted with their murderers increased 66%.

Fig.13: CIRCUMSTANCES OF MURDERS  
RESULTING IN LIFE SENTENCES



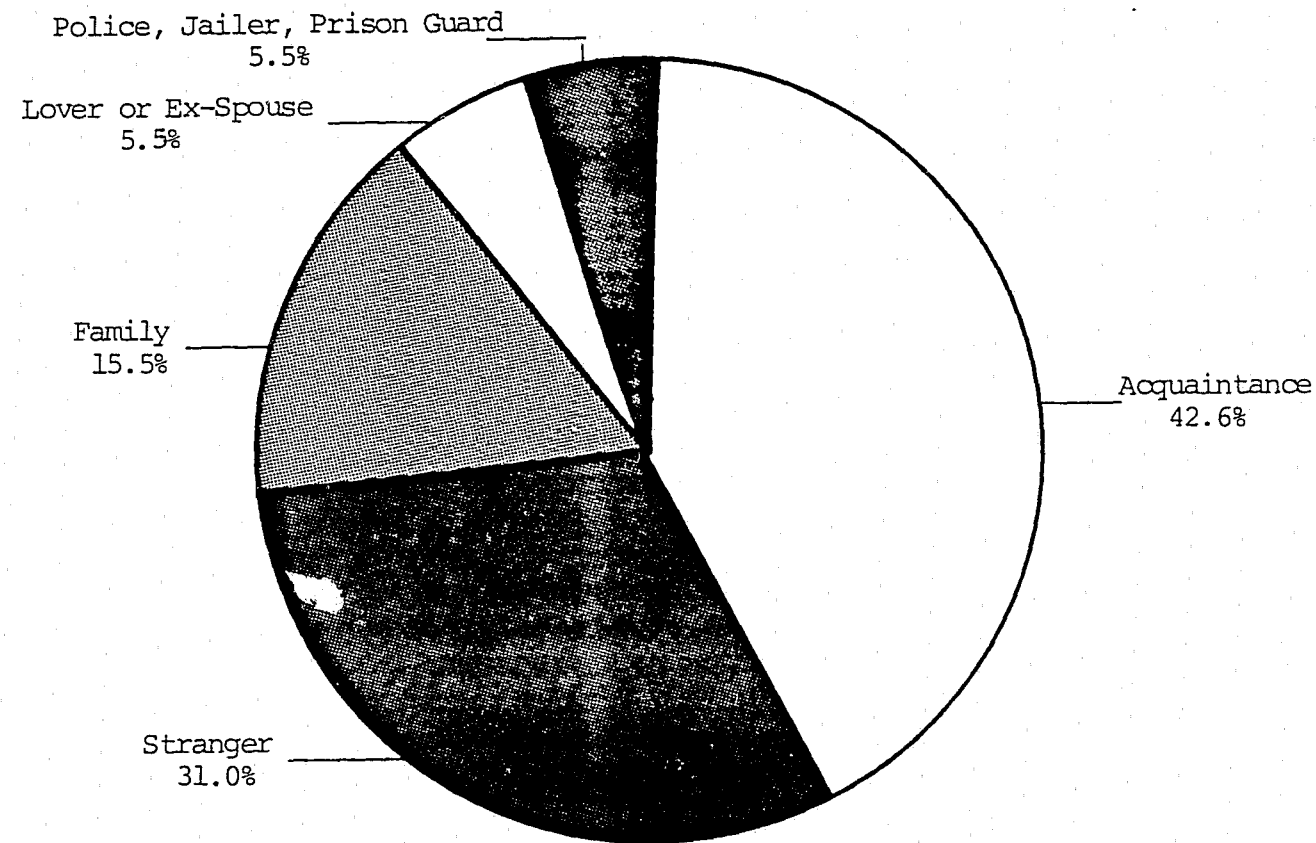
TOTAL N: 129

<sup>1</sup> Felonies include 24 robberies, 18 rapes, 5 burglaries, 2 kidnappings, 2 vehicle thefts, two escapes, 1 arson, 1 terrorism.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 6 barroom brawls, 5 murders involving drugs/drug dealing.

<sup>3</sup> Includes 4 murders-for-hire, 3 deaths as a result of child abuse, and 2 deaths in which the murderer attempted suicide simultaneously.

Fig.14: RELATIONSHIP OF MURDER VICTIM TO OFFENDER



TOTAL N: 129

Murderer(s) known to victim	82 (63.6%)
Murderer(s) not known to victim	47 (36.4%)

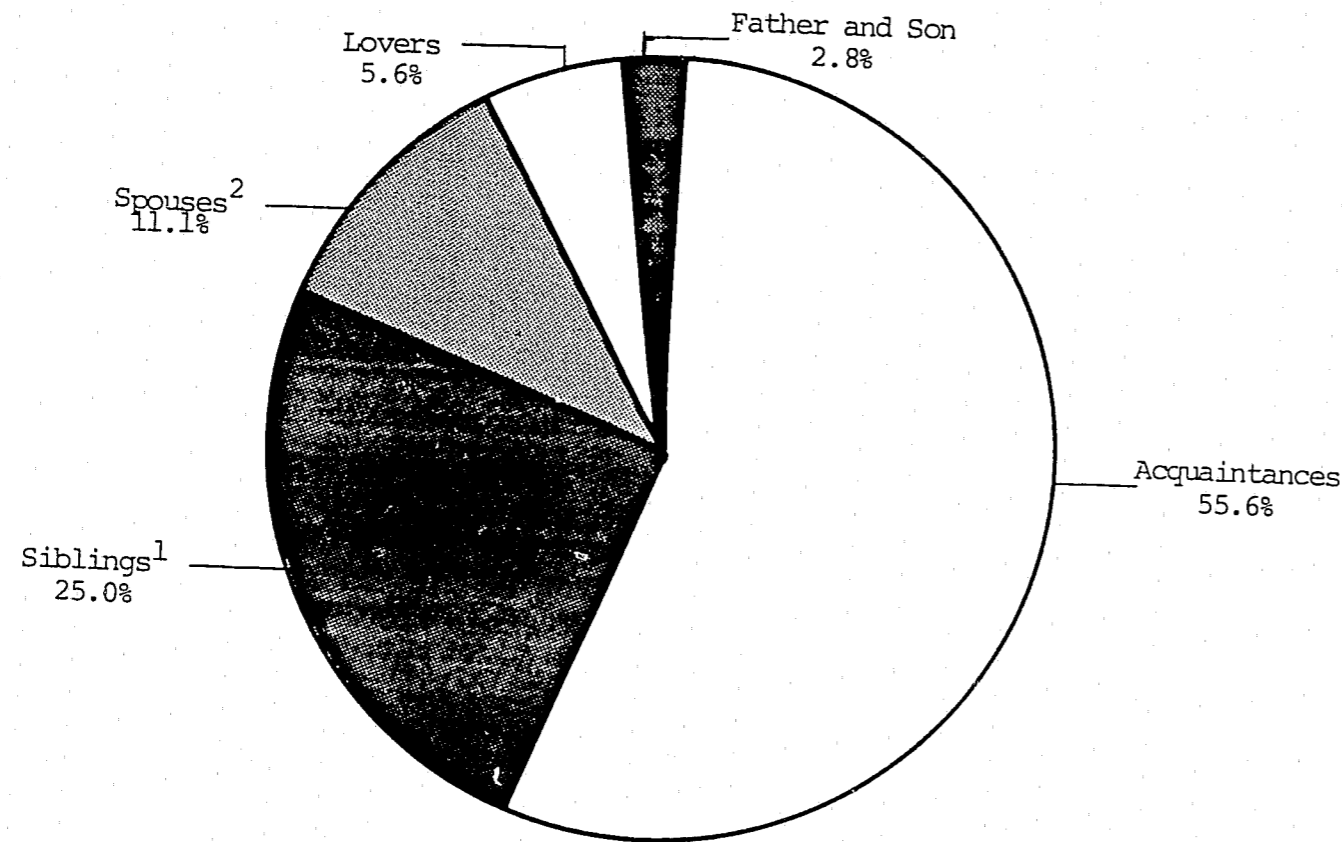
#### IV. MURDER ACCOMPLICES

Thirty-six (28%) of the murders in this study were committed by two or more individuals in collaboration with each other. This chapter provides additional data on these offenders.

As noted previously, 63.6% of all murder victims were acquainted with their killers. Figure 15, on the following page, examines the relationships among the murderers. It is interesting to note that 25% of the crimes involved siblings as murder accomplices. In 11% of the murders, husbands and wives were indicted together, and two other circumstances involved conspirators in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. One incident involved a father and his two sons as murder accomplices. The majority of the murder accomplices, however, were acquaintances. These relationships ranged from the closeness of gang members, to the business relationship of those people who hired assassins to commit murder for them.

Iowa law permits those who aid and abet murders to be convicted of Class A felonies. Table 16, on page 29, analyzes the frequency of life convictions for those who aided and abetted the principal murderers in this study. Before this analysis could be done, it was necessary to review the minutes of testimony of all thirty-six murders in the study that involved two or more murderers, and determine whether the accomplices in each crime were equally involved, or if there were principal murderers accompanied by those who aided in the killing. All parties implicated in

Fig. 15: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MURDER ACCOMPLICES



TOTAL N: 36

<sup>1</sup>In two of the murders, the siblings were accompanied by additional, unrelated accomplices.

<sup>2</sup>In three of the murders, the husband and wife were accompanied by additional, unrelated accomplices.

murder-for-hire were considered to be equally involved in the offense; in such cases, although there is a clear assassin, the murder would not have occurred without the direction of those who hired the killer. Using these guidelines, it was found that twenty-five of the thirty-six murders involving more than one murderer were perpetrated by principal murderers aided by one or more individuals. Table 16 shows that 48% of the abettors received life sentences, while 52% received lesser sentences, or were not charged.

Also apparent from the chart is that 24% of the principal murderers aided by accomplices were either acquitted, or received lesser sentences. These six cases, along with two cases in which offenders who were equally involved in the murder, yet received unequal sentences, are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Table 16.  
Homicides Committed by Multiple Offenders:  
Dispositions of Accomplices

<b>Offenders Equally Involved:</b>		
All Offenders Sentenced to Life	9	81.8%
Unequally Sentenced	2	18.2%
<b>Total, Offenders Equally Involved:</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Principals With Aides:</b>		
All Offenders Sentenced to Life	6	24.0%
Principals Sentenced to Life, and Aides Treated Less Harshly	13	52.0%
Aides Sentenced to Life, and Principals Treated Less Harshly	6	24.0%
<b>Total, Principals With Aides:</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## V. THE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF MURDER ACCOMPLICES

Below are the eight cases which were found to contain disparity in the sentencing of murder accomplices. The following functions of the criminal justice process were found to contribute to the disparate treatment of murder accomplices:

- a. jury verdicts;
- b. plea bargaining; and
- c. overturned convictions, usually due to technicalities.

Some of the cases are similar, and have been grouped under a single heading. The facts are taken from the court minutes of testimony; in some cases, additional sources were consulted. Due to the use of confidential information in compiling these descriptions, the names of all parties involved have been changed.

### A. Leniency Towards Women

There is ample evidence of a pervasive attitude in our society that women are generally incapable of murder. The Iowa Uniform Crime Reports: 1981-1982 indicate that about 13% of the arrested murderers in that period were women<sup>1</sup>. However, according to recent data from OBSCIS, only 4% of the 183 murderers currently serving life terms are women. The following two cases present murders in which the female offender's participation was equal to that of the male offender, yet the female was eventually found guilty of a lesser offense. Other instances of the lenient

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1. Iowa Uniform Crime Reports: 1981-1982, page 28.

treatment of women in the criminal justice system are found in Sections "D" and "E" of this chapter.

The two siblings were often partners in crime, and both had extensive arrest records beginning as juveniles. One evening, as they were burglarizing an apartment, they found a victim at home. They immediately bound and gagged him, and stabbed him to death. The jury found the brother guilty of Murder-1st degree. The sister was found guilty of Murder-2nd degree, and was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. Nothing in their files indicate that the woman played a lesser role in the incident than her brother.

Martha was fed up with her husband, who often beat her. According to her own testimony, she conspired with her brother, Walter, to kill Martha's husband. They decided that Walter would pose as a burglar, and shoot the spouse in bed. Martha gave Walter money with which to buy a gun and bullets. The plan was carried out successfully, and the husband was killed.

The siblings were both originally sentenced to life in prison for the murder, after being found guilty by a jury. Later, the sister won her appeal in court, and her sentence was reduced to a term of twenty-five years for Murder-2nd degree.

B. Jury Misunderstandings?

Four prisoners escaped from prison together, stealing one car after another to confuse their pursuers. Two of them committed a robbery in which a man was killed. Before the victim died, he identified Hank as one of the robbers. A witness to the crime identified Hank and Randy as the robbers, and further stated that Randy was the one who shot the victim. Another witness claimed that Randy and Gary had been the robbers.

Randy is serving two consecutive twenty-five year terms for Robbery With Aggravation. He was the robber who allegedly murdered the victim. What happened? In the primary interview comments, one of the Board of Parole members indicates that Randy was found guilty of Murder-1st degree, but adds that, due to a mistake of the jury, he was found guilty of Robbery with Aggravation. Elsewhere in Randy's criminal file, a correctional psychologist indicates that the jury signed the wrong papers, so that, technically, a life conviction did not occur.

What happened to the others? Randy's accomplices, Hank and Gary, were both found guilty of Murder-1st degree. Notice, however, that no mention has yet been made of the fourth inmate who had escaped with the perpetrators of this crime. This individual was also convicted of a life sentence, and served eight years in prison before he won his appeal, on the basis that no one could place him at the scene of the crime.

Another incident runs as follows. Three men plotted to rob an old man in his home. Ken knocked on the door, while Gene and Stan hid on either side of the doorway, out of sight. When the victim answered the knock, Gene and Stan jumped him, and forced their way inside. There was a struggle with the old man, and Gene allegedly stabbed the victim to death. These facts were presented by a friend of Gene's, who claims that Gene admitted committing the murder, and told him the entire story.

Gene was found not guilty by the jury at his trial, despite the evidence against him. According to Des Moines Register news articles following the trial, the foreman of the jury indicated that, while most of the jurors felt that Gene was a participant in the incident, they could not agree that he was the one who did the stabbing. The judge at the trial had instructed the jurors that they must find that either Gene was the murderer, or that he was innocent; he could not be found guilty of a Class A felony based on aiding in the murder.

Meanwhile, Ken is serving a life sentence for aiding and abetting the murder. Stan entered into a plea-bargain agreement, and was sentenced to twenty-five years for Burglary-1st degree.

C. "I'll Just Wait in the Car"

Under Iowa law, those who aid a murderer are just as guilty of the crime as the person who does the killing. For this reason, only two cases in which accomplices drove getaway cars are officially included in this section, and they are included solely because the apparent murderer failed to receive a life sentence. However, a brief discussion of other cases in which accomplices drove cars will serve as an excellent example of inconsistencies in murder convictions for those who aid homicides.

There were seven accomplices identified in this study who participated in homicides either by driving vehicles or waiting in vehicles. One of these drivers was not prosecuted for murder, because he agreed to testify against the actual murderers. Three of the drivers were sentenced to prison terms for lesser offenses; one pled guilty to manslaughter, another pled guilty to Murder-2nd degree, and the third was found guilty by a jury of Murder-2nd degree. The remaining three drivers were sentenced to life in prison. The cases of two of these latter individuals are outlined below.

Ellen and Carlos were lovers and criminal partners. During one of their crimes, Ellen sat in the getaway car while Carlos went to rob a friend. Carlos shot the man at the door, killing him. Ellen and Carlos both received life sentences. However, Carlos was acquitted on appeal, because the judge failed to instruct the jury properly. Ellen is still serving her life term.

In the second case, five men decided to commit a robbery. According to all of their statements, there was some discussion among them that there were to be no witnesses. Tony stayed in the car while the other four entered the building. Mack and Jerry had guns, and killed three of the victims. They also wounded several other witnesses. Tim grabbed the money. Steve went along with the other three, but left the scene when the shooting began, and ran back to the car.

Mack, one of the principal murderers, received three life sentences. Tim, who remained at the scene throughout the killings, also received three life sentences. The other gunman, Jerry, is currently on parole from his Murder-2nd degree sentence. Tony, who had remained in the car, is also on parole at this time; he had been convicted of Murder-2nd degree. Steve, who had panicked and fled to the car, is currently serving three life sentences.

D. The Vengeful Brothers.

A man lay injured in a hospital bed, the victim of a stabbing. While police were investigating the incident at the hospital, the stabbing victim received a visit from one of his sons, Ray. A detective testified that he overheard Ray tell his father, "Don't worry, I'll get the man."

Later, the three brothers, Ray, Jim, and Ben, along with two unidentified women, arrived at the home of the man who had stabbed



the brothers' father. Their search for him proved fruitless, and they were preparing to leave, when one of the women saw the man in an alley near the house. Jim, Ben, and one of the women chased the victim through the alley, while Ray drove the car around, trying to cut him off. Jim had a gun. During the chase, Ben fell behind, and it was Jim and one of the women who caught up to the victim. The woman pinned the man to the ground, and beat him, shouting, "Shoot him, shoot him". Jim fired the gun, killing the man. Witnesses at the scene of the shooting said that only Jim and the woman were present.

The one individual who was involved the least in this incident, Ben, received a life term for Murder-1st degree. Ray, who vowed revenge and drove the car, received an eight-year prison term for Manslaughter, which was cut short by a parole. The gunman, Jim, was sentenced to twenty-five years for Murder-2nd degree; Jim is also on parole at this time. The woman who pinned the victim to the ground remains nameless, and free.

#### E. The Murder-for-hire.

Four murders in this study involved one party hiring another to commit a murder. In three of the offenses, all of the participants received life sentences for their involvement. The following case is a different matter. The description of the crime is derived almost solely from Alice's testimony.

Carol and Alice were best friends. When Alice was having marriage

problems, Carol stepped in to help her friend. Over coffee one day, Alice told Carol that she wished her husband would drop dead. Carol replied that her husband, Bob, knew someone who could fulfill that desire, for a fee. Alice thought the matter over, and decided to pay for the murder of her husband. She gave the money to Bob and Carol, who made the arrangements. Alice's husband was murdered.

The assassin was found not guilty by the jury at his trial, despite Carol's testimony against him. Alice became a witness for the prosecution, and testified against Bob and Carol in their trials. Bob and Carol were both convicted of Murder-1st degree and sentenced to life terms. Through a plea-bargain arrangement, Alice was sentenced to a five-year prison term for Conspiracy. Her sentence was reduced for good behavior, and she subsequently served out the short term.

## VI. PAROLES AND DEATHS OF "LIFERS": 1970--1984

In March, 1985, Board of Parole records pertaining to commutation recommendations were examined in order to discover the number of parolees originally sentenced to life imprisonment. Table 17, on the next page, summarizes the eighteen "lifeters" paroled since 1970. Time served of these inmates ranged from 10.6 to 45.7 years, with a median of 24.7 years. It is interesting to note that the one female in this group (#13), served less time than the males who were released. In addition, three (16.7%) of the inmates paroled since 1970 violated their paroles, and were returned to prison.

It was possible to determine age at the time of parole for thirteen of these cases. Age at parole for this sample ranged from 43 to 86 years, with a median age of 57 years.

How many "lifeters" die in prison? After combing Board of Parole records, we tentatively conclude that, since 1970, eight "lifeters" have died in prison. This conclusion is tentative, because we cannot verify completeness of the data. Table 18, on page 40, lists these eight known deaths. It is interesting to note that at least three of these inmates were murdered. Age at death ranged from 23 to 67 years, with a median age of 43 years.

Table 17.  
Paroles of Inmates Sentenced to Life Terms: 1970--1984

<u>Crime</u>	<u>Date Admitted</u>	<u>Commutation Date</u>	<u>By</u>	<u>Date Paroled</u>	<u>Time Served</u>
1. Murder	2/3/51	9/69	Hughes	5/5/70	19.2 Yrs.
2. Murder-2nd	12/23/30	4/70	Hughes	9/23/70	39.7 Yrs.
3. Enter Bank to Rob	2/16/49	3/71	Ray	5/5/71	22.2 Yrs.
4. Murder-1st	5/19/26	4/71	Ray	9/9/71	45.2 Yrs.
5. Rape	12/26/42	9/71	Ray	10/19/71	28.8 Yrs.
6. Rape	1/21/37	9/71	Ray	12/6/71	33.9 Yrs.
7. Murder	6/29/56	9/73	Ray	3/12/74	17.8 Yrs.
8. Murder-1st	10/4/28	2/74	Ray	6/18/74	45.7 Yrs.
9. Murder-1st	4/1/53	5/74	Ray	8/30/74	21.3 Yrs.
Parole was revoked in 1975, because inmate absconded placement. Parole was again granted on 8/22/83.					
10. Murder-1st	1/28/52	1/76	Ray	3/25/77	25.2 Yrs.
11. Murder-1st	8/26/33	1/78	Ray	6/29/78	44.8 Yrs.
Parole was revoked in 1978, for a new Willful Injury offense. Inmate later expired his sentence on 10/26/82.					
12. Murder-2nd	9/6/52	Unk.	Ray	6/30/78	25.8 Yrs.
13. Murder-1st	10/22/69	10/79	Ray	5/30/80	10.6 Yrs.
14. Murder-1st	2/15/56	10/79	Ray	6/6/80	24.2 Yrs.
15. Murder-1st	5/4/62	10/79	Ray	6/20/80	18.2 Yrs.
16. Murder-1st	4/21/59	10/79	Ray	7/25/80	21.2 Yrs.
17. Murder-1st	10/9/53	10/79	Ray	9/22/80	27.0 Yrs.
18. Murder-1st	9/12/58	10/79	Ray	6/19/81	22.8 Yrs.
Parole was revoked in 1982, due to a conviction for Lascivious Acts with a Child. Inmate was granted a second trial for this crime, and was found not guilty. Inmate remains incarcerated as of this date.					

Table 18.  
Deaths of Inmates Serving Life Sentences: 1970--1984

<u>Crime</u>	<u>Date Admitted</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>	<u>Cause</u>
1. Murder-1st	10/8/54	early 1970's	Natural
2. Murder-1st Originally sentenced to death, to life imprisonment 12/24/60.	2/27/60	11/4/74 Governor Loveless commuted sentence	Murdered
3. Murder-1st (3 cts.)	1/30/73	2/27/77	Murdered
4. Murder-2nd	3/29/75	4/10/78	Unknown
5. Murder-1st (3 cts.)	9/6/68	10/23/80	Murdered
6. Murder-1st	10/9/73	1/27/82	Natural
7. Murder-1st	10/25/75	5/25/83	Natural
8. Murder-1st Sentence was commuted	6/8/61 10/9/79, by Governor Ray.	8/4/84	Natural

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APPENDIX

"LIFER" POPULATIONS IN IOWA'S PRISON SYSTEM

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lifers</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>% Total Population</u>
6/30/73	57	1,451	3.9%
6/30/74	55	1,518	3.6%
6/30/76	74	1,912	3.9%
6/30/80	111	2,405	4.6%
6/30/81	133	2,610	4.6%
6/30/82	141	2,774	5.1%
6/30/83	162	2,814	5.8%
6/30/84	178	2,780	6.4%

"LIFER" ADMISSIONS BY YEAR: 1975--1984

<u>Year</u>	<u>Admissions</u>	<u>Reported Homicides</u>
1975	10	71
1976	12	67
1977	11	67
1978	13	74
1979	18	65
1980	19	63
1981	30	76
1982	32	67
1983	23	68
1984	19	Not available

Prepared by the Statistical Analysis Center.  
Data obtained from OBSCIS.

Source: OBSCIS, Board of Parole. Number of reported homicides were taken from the Iowa Uniform Crime Reports.

Iowa Inmates

IOWA INMATES SENTENCED TO LIFE TERMS:  
A SURVEY OF CLASS A FELONS

**END**