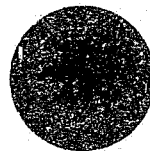


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RESOURCE AVAILABILITY FOR WOMEN AT RISK: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO  
RATES OF FEMALE-PERPETRATED PARTNER HOMICIDE

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RESOURCE AVAILABILITY FOR WOMEN AT RISK: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO  
RATES OF FEMALE-PERPETRATED PARTNER HOMICIDE

Until recently, few empirical studies had been done on patterns of women's involvement in homicide as distinct from male patterns, although in this country, homicide--and, indeed, violent crime in general--is predominantly a male phenomenon. Because of the small number of women involved in homicide as compared to men, overall patterns may mask dimensions of involvement unique to women. Thus, it is necessary to disaggregate homicide statistics if gender-specific characteristics are to be understood. Indeed, findings from recent small-sample and qualitative studies, as well as studies based on regional and national data, suggest important motivational and situational differences between men's and women's involvement in homicide events (e.g., Browne & Flewelling, 1986; Browne & Williams, 1987; Daniel & Harris, 1982; Silverman & Mukherjee, in press; Wilson & Daly, 1986). Separate consideration of male- and female-perpetrated homicide has been advocated by several researchers (Browne & Flewelling, 1986; Wilbanks, 1982, 1983). Incidence patterns, both in regard to sheer numbers and the differential proportions of family, acquaintance, and stranger homicides, denote significant differences in the nature of these events.

That female-perpetrated homicide is a fundamentally different sort of act is further supported by the variety of homicide studies which find that, when women kill, it is much more likely to be in self-defense than homicides perpetrated by men, and that women who kill male partners frequently do so in response to their partners' physical aggression and threat. Wolfgang (1958, 1967), in his landmark study of criminal homicide in Philadelphia, noted that 60% of the husbands killed by wives "perpetrated" their own death -- i.e., were

the first to use physical force, strike blows, or threaten with a weapon -- compared to only 9% (5 of 53) of wife victims. (These figures were based on "provocation recognized by the courts," and do not necessarily reflect the number of wives in the sample who had actually experienced physical abuse or threat from their husbands.) Similarly, in a study of all men and women arrested for homicide in Dade County, Florida during 1980, Wilbanks (1983) noted that the victims of female perpetrators were much more likely to have been the first to use force or threat, and thus to have precipitated the homicide event, than were the victims of male perpetrators. (See Silverman & Mukherjee, in press, and Wilson & Daly, 1986, for similar conclusions based on Canadian data.)

The association between male aggression and female homicide, or what Zimring, Mukherjee, & Van Winkle (1983) call the "female use of lethal counter-force," has also been documented in more specialized studies of homicide. For example, Chimbos (1978), studying interspousal homicides in Canada, reviewed available police records and found that nearly all of the women charged with the deaths of their mates had previously been assaulted by them.[1] Totman (1978), in a study of women incarcerated for homicide in California, noted that 93% of the women who had killed partners had experienced physical assault from them; 67% said 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 who had killed husbands had been physically abused by them prior to the lethal incident.[2] In line with the theory of self-defensive homicide, Silver & Kates (1979) have suggested that women kill primarily their male partners because it is their male partners from whom they are most at risk. (See also Barnard, Vera, Vera, & Newman, 1982; and Jones, 1980; for discussions of defensive spousal homicides by women.)

A disturbing factor in partner homicides is that women often make many attempts to obtain outside intervention, prior to the occurrence of a lethal incident. A study conducted during 1976 at the Women's Correctional Center in Chicago revealed that, of the 132 women incarcerated for murder or manslaughter, 40% had killed partners who repeatedly attacked them. All of the women who had killed abusive mates reported that they had called the police for help at least five times before taking lethal action, and many said the violence they endured became more, rather than less, severe after their attempts to gain assistance (Lindsey, 1978). A review of police records in Detroit and Kansas City lends support to the Chicago women's self-reports: In 90% of the cases of domestic homicide, police had responded at least once to a disturbance call at the home during the two year period prior to the fatal incident, and in over half (54%) of the cases, they had been called five or more times (Police Foundation, 1976; Sherman & Berk, 1984). Unfortunately, such responses were often not sufficient to prevent a recurrence of the violence.

Recent investigations document that in the United States, women are more likely to be assaulted, more likely to be injured, more likely to be raped, and more likely to be killed by a male partner than by any other type of assailant (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1983; Langan & Innes, 1986; Lentzner & De Berry, 1980; Russell, 1982). For example, in analyzing all one-on-one cases of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter in the United States for the years of 1980-1984 involving person at least 18 years of age, Browne & Flewelling (1986) found that over half (52%) of women homicide victims were killed by their male partners. Yet, although in this country women's greatest risk of assault is from a male partner, it is precisely this type of assault from which the legal system has traditionally offered women the least protection. Until the late 1970's, in most states, assaults against wives were placed comfortably within the ranks of

misdeemeanor offenses and could not be charged on a criminal level, even when the same actions would have been considered a criminal offense if perpetrated against a stranger or an acquaintance instead of a wife.

In most of these same jurisdictions, police could not arrest on a misdemeanor charge unless they had witnessed a part of the action, yet virtually no other legal recourse was available. Wives could usually not obtain a restraining order against a violent husband unless they were willing to file for divorce at the same time; orders of protection were typically not available on an emergency basis and often carried no provisions for enforcement or penalties for violation; and, in some states, a single assault by a husband was not considered sufficient grounds for a divorce action, anyway. Marital rape exemptions excluded the sexual assault of women by their husbands from criminal statutes; and, until the mid-1970's, women who eventually killed their mates to protect themselves from harm or death found the traditional plea of self-defense unavailable for their situation. Such a legal structure thus implicitly extended its protection to the perpetrators, rather than the victims, of wife assault; leaving abused women to either attempt escape on their own without protection, or live with and adapt to the violent behavior.

It has only been since the mid 1970's that legal and extra-legal resources became available to offer protection specifically to threatened or assaulted wives. The first facilities to house women victims of a partner's violence were established from 1974 to 1976. (See Schechter, 1982, for a comprehensive discussion of the battered women's movement and resultant social change.) By 1982, the number of shelters in the United States was estimated at between 300 and 700, although such facilities were often full and were not readily available to either rural or minority women. (Schechter [1982] notes that by 1981, the five New York City shelters were forced to turn away 85 out of every 100 women seeking refuge, due to inadequate space [p. 12].) Other resources such as

emergency crisis lines, counseling services, support groups, and victim advocacy for court proceedings also became available during the late 1970's. Grassroots organizers and activists continued to educate their communities and legislators about the realities of violence against women, and media and other presentations began to heighten public awareness that assault of wives was a pervasive and serious problem in American society, rather than an atypical or trivial occurrence.

By 1980, 47 states had passed some form of domestic violence legislation (see Kalmuss & Straus, 1983). This legislation included the strengthening of protection/restraining orders, provisions for charging wife assault on a criminal level and for warrantless arrest given probable cause, mandatory arrest policies, and court-mandated treatment for perpetrators of violence against wives. As Schechter (1982) notes, the emphasis of this legislation was on enforcing the rights of victims, increasing victims' legal options, and protecting victims and those near them from further assault (p. 159). Although there remain many serious problems in implementation, this new wave of legislation gives a message to perpetrators that wife assault is a serious offense, and offers victims the potential of legal alternatives to living with danger.

In her study of women charged in the death or serious injury of abusive mates, Browne (1987) found that they often endured years of assault and threat while looking for alternatives or solutions, and only killed at the point at which they felt hopelessly trapped in a desperate situation from which they could see no practical avenues of escape. All had sought other alternatives to the violence; almost all had sought police intervention, some had contacted an attorney or a legal aid service, many had attempted to leave their partners but had been even more seriously threatened or attacked in retaliation. A few had actually been separated or divorced from their mates for up to two years before

the final incident, yet were still experiencing life-threatening violence and harassment.

Most of these women had no prior history of violent or even illegal behavior, yet their attempts to survive with an increasingly assaultive and threatening mate -- and their inability to find resources that would mitigate the danger -- eventually led to an act of violence on their part as well. (C.f. Totman, who found that a major contributing factor to female-perpetrated homicides in her sample was a perceived lack of alternatives to an "overwhelming and entrapping life situation" on the part of the women; and noted that, as attempts to seek intervention 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" [1978, p. 92].)

Women, accounting for only 14% of all one-on-one homicides committed by persons 15 year of age and older during the years of 1980-1984, seem generally unlikely to take the initiative in perpetrating a lethal act against another. Given alternatives to living with danger and threat, it seems likely that they will utilize those alternatives, rather than resorting to violent action. In an earlier study of United States homicides (analyzing all one-on-one cases of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter involving men and women over the age of 17), the most startling finding was that homicides by women of their male Partners had decreased by over 25% from 1979 to 1984 (Browne & Flewelling, 1986). This recent, sharp decline in the numbers of female-perpetrated spousal homicides may in part reflect the improvement in the alternatives available for women who find themselves in troubled and/or assaultive relationships, as increasing social and legal supports serve to offer choices other than remaining in a cycle of physical and emotional risk. Given women's generally low level of violent assaultive acts, the establishment of effective legal and extra-legal resources should act to offset some of the killings that occur in desperation.

Extending the prior analysis, Browne & Williams (1987) employed a percent change measure for rates of partner homicide in 1980-1984, compared to the rates for 1976-1979, and noted a tremendous amount of state to state variation. In 72% of the fifty states, female-perpetrated homicides against both spousal and common-law partners had declined from late 1970's levels, while in 55% of the states, homicides of ex-spouses had declined. In contrast, only 50% of the states showed a decrease in male-perpetrated spousal homicides -- with the rate of such homicides increasing in half of the fifty states over 1976-1979 levels, although 68% showed a decrease in male-perpetrated common-law homicides. However, in 72% of the states, homicides by men against their ex-spouses were increasing. General patterns of lethality accounted for some of the change in the rates of spousal homicide, but left most of the variance unaccounted for.

Given the amount of variation between states, and the proportion of the variance unexplained by overall patterns of homicide perpetration, it is imperative to investigate other factors affecting the rates of male- and female-perpetrated homicide differentially by region. The current study attempts to address the gap in gender-specific homicide information by focusing on women as the perpetrators of homicide, based on the comprehensive national data set used in the earlier studies (Browne & Flewelling, 1986; Browne & Williams, 1987). In light of the evidence for homicide as defensive violence by women, and the state-to-state variation in these rates, we then explore the potential relationship between the rates of female-perpetrated partner homicide for the years of 1980-1984 and the presence or absence of alternative resources for women at risk.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data, Rates, and Indicators

The homicide data analyzed were obtained from the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR), collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a part of its Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. Reporting police agencies, using separate forms designed specifically for detailed information on homicide incidents, file monthly reports about this type of lethal violence. These reports are included along with the conventional "crimes known to the police" data on index offenses (e.g., rape, robbery, burglary, etc.). Unlike these data, however, detailed information from the SHR is not published in the FBI's annual issue of Crime in the United States. The complete SHR files can be acquired directly from the FBI, although public use computer files of homicide rates for states, metropolitan areas, and cities have been created and will be distributed by the National Institute of Justice. Those files also include numerous variables pertaining to the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of these units. The entire data set is referred to as the Comparative Homicide File (CHF).

Homicide is subdivided into three categories: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, and justifiable homicide. This research focuses exclusively on murder and nonnegligent manslaughter because it represents the most common form, constituting 94.4% of all known incidents in the United States during 1980-1984. Hereafter, the term homicide will be used to denote incidents of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter.

Sample of Incidents. Among these incidents of homicide, the sample is restricted to one-on-one cases, which is consistent with our substantive focus on partner homicide (meaning those incidents involving spouses, ex-spouses, common law partners, and girl and boyfriends). Apart from this substantive concern, concentrating on incidents of one-on-one homicide is important because

previous descriptive analyses of homicide have shown that the age, sex, and race-ethnic composition, as well as the situational circumstances, of incidents involving multiple offenders and/or victims tend to be different from one-on-one events (e.g., Block, 1985). The implication is that the causal forces that produce such incidents can be substantially different. Hence, these two kinds of incidents should be analyzed separately until the crucial points of similarity and difference are clearly identified. In addition, incidents involving multiple offenders and/or victims are relatively infrequent, representing about 11% of all known homicides in the United States during 1980-1984.

Rate Calculation. The incidents of homicide used in rate calculations for this study cover the 1980-1984 period; meaning the rates are calculated for the entire time frame, not individual years. This procedure was used to reduce the influence of random aberrations in year-to-year estimates, in addition to the possible unreliability of rates based on low frequencies. The descriptive data in the SHR about such homicide incidents, coupled with identifiers for the geographic location in which they occurred (i.e., the state), allow the calculation of male- and female-perpetrated rates of partner homicide. These rates are based on state populations of men and women age 15 or older, since younger persons are less likely to be coupled and therefore at risk for partner homicide. However, the calculation of such rates is complicated by two problems with the SHR.

First, reporting agencies occasionally fail to submit monthly SHR forms to the UCR office. This nonreporting can range from a partial year of coverage to a total absence of SHR data for a given year (e.g., Chicago in 1984, or Houston in 1982). The result is that rates calculated from SHR data will be underestimated in areas with nonreporting. Fortunately, the UCR office monitors monthly nonreporting and provides adjusted counts (i.e., "estimated totals") of

homicide victims in Crime in the United States. Therefore, the extent to which the number of victims in the SHR underestimates the total number of victims in the UCR can be estimated for any given year. In the current study, a weighting procedure was devised for rate calculations that compensates for nonreporting in the SHR. (For a full discussion, see Williams & Flewelling, in press.)

Second, among the homicide incidents reported, information on offender characteristics -- and thus the victim/offender relationship -- is often missing. Such missing data can result in the underestimation of partner homicide rates and in biased parameter estimates of theoretical models. This problem can be addressed by using an adjustment procedure that incorporates such missing data into the rate calculations.

The general strategy of this adjustment procedure is to extrapolate the characteristics (e.g., relationship) of the known cases to those with missing information. Within this general strategy, the adjustments are determined and applied separately on the basis of the nature of the precipitating event. For example, felony events with missing victim/offender relationships are classified according to the distribution of felony events with known relationship. This refinement of the general strategy, therefore, takes advantage of what is known about precipitating events of incidents with missing information on victim/offender relationship, yielding more accurate estimates of family, acquaintance, and stranger homicide rates. (See also William & Flewelling, in Press, for procedure.)

Using these weighting and adjustment procedures, rates of partner homicide were calculated as follows:

$$\text{Specific homicide rate} = [(I/P) \times 100,000]/5,$$

where I = the total number of weighted and adjusted incidents of one-on-one homicide of a specific type (e.g., incidents involving women killing their partners)

and P = the total male or female population of the state, depending upon whether the male- or female-perpetrated rate is being calculated.

The division by five indicates that the rates are calculated over the 1980-1984 period and then expressed on a per-year basis. States were used as units of analysis, since the variables of interest -- e.g., domestic violence legislation -- were state level variables.

#### Description of Measures

Two indexes, one legal and one extra-legal, were created as measures of resources available to women at risk from male partners: a Domestic Violence Legislation Index, and a Resources for Abused Women Index.

Components of the Domestic Violence Legislation Index were as follows:

- Statutes providing for civil injunction relief for victims of abuse;
- Statutes providing temporary injunction relief during a divorce, separation, or custody proceeding;
- Statutes defining the physical abuse of a family or household member as a criminal offense;
- Statutes permitting warrantless arrest based on probable cause in domestic violence cases;
- Statutes requiring data collection and reporting of family violence by agencies that serve these families; and
- Statutes providing funds for family violence shelters or establishing standards of shelter operation.

Each of the legal indicators was scored so that the presence of a statute in a state as of 1980 resulted in that state gaining a point on the Domestic Violence Legislation Index. Indicators were scored 1 = yes and 0 = no, and summed for a total score by state. Thus, the range of possible scores ranged from 0 (no domestic violence legislation) to 6 (the presence of all the statutes in the index [c.f. Sugarman & Straus, 1988]).

The Resources for Abused Women Index was composed of two variables:

- Number of shelters for battered women in a state per 100,000 women; and
- Wife-abuse services for battered women (other than shelters) per 100,000 women.

Services included counseling services, crisis aid, legal aid, support groups, educational programs, and victim advocacy. (See Back, Blun, Nakhnikian, & Stark, 1980; and Center for Women's Policy Studies, 1980, for sources; as cited in Kalmuss & Straus, 1983.) These variables were scored as a count of the number of shelters and other wife abuse services in place in each state as of 1980 per 100,000 women. The two resources variables are highly correlated ( $r=.81$ ); therefore they were combined into a single index. All variables (i.e., the partner homicide rate and the two indexes) were logarithmically transformed to correct for skewness.

#### WOMEN AS PERPETRATORS OF HOMICIDE

In any discussion of women's involvement in homicide, it is important to place the discussion within the context of total homicide statistics for the United States. Women in our culture are much less likely to be involved in homicide than are men, either as perpetrators or as victims. As noted in Table 1, for the years of 1980-1984, women perpetrated only 14% of all homicides

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

committed by individuals age 15 or older; with a total of 76,048 (or a per year average of 15,210) homicides perpetrated by men and 12,503 (or a per year average of 2,501) perpetrated by women. Men are disproportionately involved in the perpetration of homicide regardless of type, committing 62% of the homicides occurring between intimate partners and 92% of the killings of all other types of victims. This gives a homicide rate of 18.1 for male perpetration for all types of homicide, compared to 2.7 for females, and a rate of 2.5 for the perpetration of partner homicide, compared to 1.4 for females.

When women do become involved in homicide perpetration, they are much more likely to kill a male partner than all other categories of persons combined. Over half--51%--of homicides committed by women from 1980-1984 were of male partners, with the rates of female perpetration against male partners and against all others nearly equal: 1.4 vs. 1.3, respectively. In contrast, men are much more likely to perpetrate homicides against individuals outside the partner relationship: 14% of the homicides committed by men in 1980-1984 were against female partners, and 86% against others. Even with this difference, it should be noted that the rate of male-perpetrated homicide against intimate partners (2.5) is still nearly double the rate for female-perpetrated homicides of male partners (1.4).

In summary, then, men are overwhelmingly represented as the perpetrators of homicide in the United States; having the highest percentages and the highest rates of homicide, regardless of type. Women are much more minimally involved in homicide perpetration, but when they do become involved, are more likely to perpetrate a homicide against a male partner than all other types of persons. Given that the killing of partners is the predominant pattern for homicides committed by women, and the significant sex difference in this pattern compared to patterns of male perpetration, it is important to investigate potential factors that both motivate, and that may serve to offset, the commission of partner homicides by women. In the next section, we investigate the rates of female- and male-perpetrated partner homicide and the scores for the two indices of non-violent alternatives by state, and explore the way in which the relationships between these variables have bearing on the female-perpetrated partner homicide rate.



## RESULTS

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for male- and female-perpetrated

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

partner homicide, as well as for the Domestic Violence Legislation and Resources for Abused Women Indices. As the table demonstrates, there is great variation across the fifty states in both the rates of male and female homicide perpetration, and in scores on the measures of non-violent alternatives for women at risk from male partners.

The question of interest to the present study is the nature of the relationship between these variables in terms of this state to state variation. E.g., to what extent is female-perpetrated partner homicide a function of severe male aggression -- i.e., we would expect the male-perpetrated homicide rate to be highly associated with the rate of women killing male partners; and to what extent are options available to abused women for protection and support associated with state level rates of women killing male partners -- i.e., given the literature on self-defensive homicides by women, we would expect the female-perpetrated homicide rate to be lower in those states in which a higher level of legislative and other resources are present.

Table 3 presents a correlation matrix of partner homicide by sex of the

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

perpetrator, the Domestic Violence Legislation Index, and the Resources for Abused Women Index. As predicted, rates of female-perpetrated homicide are highly associated with male homicide rates, correlated at the .87 level

( $p < .001$ ). Most importantly, the rates of female-perpetrated partner homicide and both indicators of non-violent alternatives do in fact show significant negative correlations, with the rates of female-perpetrated homicide lower in those states in which domestic violence legislation ( $r = -.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and other resources for abused women ( $r = -.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are available.

Looking at the rates of male-perpetrated partner homicide, the association with domestic violence legislation and other resources for abused women is not as strong. Although both correlations are in the direction we would expect, only the inverse relationship with resources for abused women achieves significance ( $r = -.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Surprisingly, even though domestic violence legislation is designed to protect women from a partner's violence, the presence of such legislation is not significantly associated with the rates of male-perpetrated partner homicide ( $r = -.22$ ). Similarly, the index of other resources for abused women, although significantly correlated with lower rates of homicide perpetration against partners for both women and men, is more strongly correlated with female-perpetrated than with male-perpetrated homicides. Finally, it is interesting to note that the two indices, although highly conceptually related, are correlated at only the .20 level, and thus are tapping quite different dimensions of alternatives for women.

While the correlations reported in Table 3 are consistent with arguments made earlier in the paper, they do not show the effect of the three independent variables of interest controlling for one another. Given the high correlation between male and female rates of the perpetration of partner homicide, it may be that significant effects of domestic violence legislation and other resources will not hold when the rate of male perpetration of severe violence is controlled. Table 4 presents estimates of the effects of male-perpetrated

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

partner homicide, the Domestic Violence Legislation Index, and the Resources for Abused Women Index on female-perpetrated partner homicide for the fifty states. As is apparent, all three variables have independent significant effects on the perpetration of partner homicides by women. The largest effect is from the male perpetration rate ( $\beta = .75$ ). However, when controlling for the rate of male perpetration, both the presence of domestic violence legislation ( $\beta = -.15$ ) and the presence of other resources for abused women ( $\beta = -.18$ ) have significant, negative, effects on the rates of partner homicide by women.

#### DISCUSSION

Earlier work by Browne & Williams (1987) documented state by state variations in percent change measures of the rates for male- and female-perpetrated partner homicide in the United States, when comparing the years 1976-1979 and 1980-1984. Although general patterns of lethality accounted for some of the change in these rates, much of the variance was left unexplained. Further, changes in the rate of female-perpetrated homicides against partners did not vary with, and in fact were often the inverse of, changes in the male-to-female partner homicide rates. As earlier discussed, literature on homicide suggests that, for women, the triggering event in the killing of their mates is often the physical attack or threat of attack by their partners. Thus we hypothesized that an important place to begin an investigation of this state-to-state variation and the differences in patterns of female-perpetrated homicide from those of male perpetration was with an investigation of legal and other resources pertaining to the assault of women by intimate partners.

The sharp decline in the numbers of women killing male partners beginning in 1979 lent further support to this contention: The years just prior to 1979

saw the establishment of shelters to house physically threatened women, increased public awareness of the incidence and seriousness of woman assault by male partners, the beginnings of new legal policies and mandates for the protection of women victims, and the implementation of sanctions against physically abusive mates. Given the low rate of lethal violence perpetrated by women in general, and the fact that the majority of their lethal violence is perpetrated against male partners, it seemed probable that the presence of non-violent alternatives to living in danger would mitigate against more violent responses.

In the current study, the association between the presence of domestic violence legislation and other resources for battered women, and a lessening in the rate of female-perpetrated partner homicide, was documented. As expected, rates of female-perpetrated homicide against male partners were highly associated with lethal male aggression. Rates of female-perpetrated partner homicide were significantly lower in states having higher scores on both the Domestic Violence Legislation and the Resources for Abused Women indices; this effect remained significant even when the rate of male-perpetrated partner homicide was controlled for. Finally, the Domestic Violence Legislation Index and the Resources for Abused Women Index, although conceptually related, were not significantly correlated, thus having independent negative effects on the perpetration of partner homicide by women.

Several caveats should be mentioned in discussing the effect of alternative resources in inhibiting lethality. With these data, we cannot trace a direct path between the perpetration or nonperpetration of a homicide and the presence of a non-violent alternative: availability of the alternative is, of course, a primary and necessary condition. However, given availability, there are other conditions that must be fulfilled for a resource to have a positive effect:

- (a) awareness -- the individuals for whom the resource is intended must know of its availability;
- (b) accessibility -- the resource must be practically accessible to the population for whom it is intended;
- (c) utilization (mobilization) -- individuals must utilize the resource;
- (d) responsiveness -- the resource must be responsive to those who attempt utilize it; and
- (e) effectiveness -- the response must be effective in meeting the needs of those who utilize it.

In the current study, we do not have information about how aware physically abused women or their partners are of domestic violence legislation or services in their area; about the way in which legislative directives are actually implemented, or the distribution and accessibility of other resources to battered women and their intimates; about the responsiveness of the criminal justice system and support services to those women who attempt to utilize them; or about the effectiveness -- in terms of positive results -- of legislative policies and other resources to mitigate the problem of violence. Future investigations should be designed to assess these dimensions.

Given the decline in female-perpetrated homicide from 1979 to 1984, it would also be informative to conduct time series analyses to investigate the relationship between the implementation of legislative policies in particular states and the trends for male- and female-perpetrated homicides. This is of particular importance in light of the finding that, in at least half of the fifty states, the rates of male-perpetrated partner homicide increased during the first half of the 1980's over 1976-1979 levels, despite legislation intended to protect women from assaultive and lethal violence by their mates. The fact that, in 72% of the states, the rate of men killing ex-wives also increased calls into question the common assumption that simply leaving an assaultive mate will end the violence. (E.g., 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]. Studies of men who have killed their partners suggest that the precipitating event is frequently some form of perceived rejection. An investigation by Barnard et al. (1982) found that a mate's leaving or the threat of separation were especially provoking; in killing their wives, these men reported that they were reacting to a previous offense against them (e.g., leaving) on the part of their wives.[3]

It may be that more women are now separating from threatening or assaultive men; but that men, perceiving such separations as desertion and rejection, are pursuing them and killing them for leaving. (See, for example, Silverman & Mukherjee's [in press] study of homicides in three Canadian cities, in which they found that 100% of the homicides between separated and/or divorced couples were male perpetrated.) A distressing finding in this study is that the presence of domestic violence legislation in a state had no significant effect on the rates of male-perpetrated partner homicide. Further investigations should thus be done on intervening variables -- e.g., implementation -- as well as on the actual effectiveness of present negative sanctions in deterring the perpetration or the recurrence of violence by men against female partners.

## NOTES

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. All respondents in this study were interviewed as a part of psychiatric evaluation 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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Table 1. Incidents of Partner and Other Homicide by Sex of Perpetrator, Age 15 or Older, in the United States: 1980-84.<sup>1</sup>

Sex of Perpetrator	Type of Homicide		Totals
	Partner	Other	
Male:			
N	10521	65527	76048
Col %	62.1	91.5	85.9
Row %	13.8	86.2	--
Rate	2.5	15.6	18.1
Female:			
N	6408	6095	12503
Col %	37.9	8.5	14.1
Row %	51.3	48.7	--
Rate	1.4	1.3	2.7
Totals:			
N	16929	71622	88551
Row %	19.1	80.9	--
Rate	1.9	8.2	10.1

1. Partner homicide includes incidents involving spouses, ex-spouses, common law spouses, and girl/boy friends.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Partner Homicide by Sex of the Perpetrator, Age 15 or Older, for the 50 American States: 1980-84.

Descriptive Statistics	Male Perpetrated Homicide	Female Perpetrated Homicide	Domestic Violence Legislation Index	Resources for Abused Women Index
Minimum <sup>a</sup>	.42	0.00	0.00	.34
Maximum <sup>b</sup>	4.85	3.43	6.00	9.53
Mean	2.25	1.22	3.00	1.76
Standard Deviation	1.13	.90	1.71	1.63

- a. Male rate = Vermont; female rate = South Dakota; Domestic Violence Legislation Index = Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, South Dakota; Resources for Abused Women Index = Arkansas.
- b. Male rate = Nevada; female rate = Mississippi; Domestic Violence Legislation Index = Nebraska, New York, Oregon; Resources for Abused Women Index = Alaska.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Partner Homicide by Sex of Perpetrator, Domestic Violence Legislation Index, and Resources for Abused Women Index for 50 American States.<sup>1</sup>

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Male Perpetrated Homicide			
(2) Female Perpetrated Homicide	.87**		
(3) Domestic Violence Legislation	-.22	-.36*	
(4) Resources for Abused Women	-.47**	-.57**	.20

<sup>1</sup>All variables are logarithmically transformed (base 10).

\* $p \leq .01$ , one tailed test of statistical significance.

\*\* $p \leq .001$ , one tailed test of statistical significance.

Table 4. OLS Estimates of the Effects of Male Perpetrated Partner Homicide, the Domestic Violence Legislation Index, and the Resources for Abused Women Index on Female Perpetrated Partner Homicide for 50 American States.<sup>1</sup>

Independent Variables <sup>a</sup>	Beta	b	se	t-value	p
Male Perpetrated Homicide	.75	.82	.08	10.09	.00
Domestic Violence Legislation	-.15	-.11	.05	-2.28	.03
Resources for Abused Women	-.18	-.10	.04	-2.50	.02

<sup>1</sup>All variables are logarithmically transformed (base 10).

<sup>a</sup>Constant = -.01,  $R^2 = .81$ .