DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN UTAH

APPROVAL ANALYSIS

136005

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN NSW:

A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Christopher Devery

New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

PREFACE

In recent years a great deal of Government attention has been devoted to raising public awareness about the problem of domestic violence, to improving the prosecution and conviction rate of offenders and to extending the legal protection available to victims. On any objective assessment this effort has been very successful. Between 1982 and 1988 the number of persons appearing in Local Courts charged with assaulting women more than doubled. Over the same period, the conviction rate of offenders rose from 38% to 71%. Most encouraging of all, however, has been the success of the apprehended violence order as a form of pre-conviction protection for victims of domestic violence. Over the period from 1984 to 1987, the average annual increase in the number of women seeking apprehended violence orders exceeded 56%.

While the focus of Government attention was on improving the legal response to domestic violence, most of the Bureau's research surrounding it was naturally concerned with evaluating the Government's legal initiatives. The well-documented success of these initiatives has allowed the Bureau to turn its attention to other issues surrounding domestic violence; most notably the question of how it is distributed in the community and whether there are any social and or economic factors which underpin or exacerbate it. The first of these questions is important to decisions about how we allocate the scarce resources available for victim services. Both questions are of potential importance in the development of effective crime prevention strategies.

Analysis of spatial variation in reports of non-fatal domestic violence suggests that it is much more common in areas which are socially disadvantaged. This variation has sometimes been explained away by arguing that women who live in more affluent areas are more reluctant to report domestic violence to the police. On this account all women are equally at risk of domestic violence but some are more willing to report it. The present study sought to address this issue by comparing the distribution of domestic homicide with the distribution of reported non-fatal domestic violence. Domestic homicide is nearly always reported. If reporting bias accounts for the variation in reports of non-fatal violence one would expect significant differences between the spatial distribution of domestic homicide and that of reports of non-fatal domestic violence.

The results show a close correlation between domestic homicide and reported non-fatal domestic violence. They confirm the impression that, although domestic violence exists in all social strata, it is more prevalent in socially disadvantaged areas. These findings have important policy implications. Clearly, while all victims of domestic violence need protection and support, the areas of greatest need are in the Western and South Western suburbs of Sydney and the Western and North Western areas of country New South Wales. The results also suggest that the incidence of domestic violence may be linked, at least in part, to poverty and economic stress. Whether this is true and how such stresses might interact with male attitudes toward violence is a matter which deserves further individual level research.

Dr Don Weatherburn
Director

October 1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS cont.

1. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the large amount of research and comment that has been directed at the problem of domestic violence against women, little is known about the distribution of risk or the social characteristics of domestic violence in Australia.

The problem of variation in risk of domestic violence is a controversial one. Whereas the relationship between violent crime and social class is relatively well accepted among criminologists, in the domestic violence literature it is almost universally rejected. Many have argued that all women have an equal risk of domestic violence, independent of their social characteristics. In a comprehensive review of the domestic violence literature, Okun (1986, p. 45) has observed that the existence of socio-economic effects 'vies as one of the hottest disputes in the field'.

There are great difficulties that must be overcome when conducting research into the social and economic factors associated with domestic violence. There are very considerable social and cultural barriers mitigating against women reporting criminal violence suffered at the hands of male spouses. Whereas many empirical studies have found that women of low socio-economic status have a significantly higher risk of domestic violence, it is commonly asserted that these findings are artifacts of reporting bias. Higher status women, it is argued, are less likely to report domestic assault to the police. In the face of these criticisms of official statistics, it is difficult to come to any firm conclusions about the characteristics and distribution of domestic violence.

In order to throw some light on these issues this report examines a number of aspects of the debate. First, domestic violence as it will be understood in this report is defined. Second, the arguments underlying the theory that all women have equal risk of domestic violence are reviewed, and relevant empirical evidence is discussed. Third, we review the results of crime victim surveys, which are not subject to the same kinds of reporting bias argued to invalidate police statistics. Fourth, we examine regional patterns of domestic homicide in NSW, using 18 years of homicide data. For the purposes of examining domestic violence, domestic homicide has the advantage of being well reported. Fifth, regional patterns of domestic homicide are compared with patterns of socio-economic indicators derived from census data. Finally, regional patterns of domestic homicide are compared with patterns of reported domestic violence.

2. THE DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In this study domestic violence is considered to be criminal assault or homicide perpetrated by a spouse, or ex-spouse, on a partner, whether the relationship is de facto or marriage. There are indications that domestic violence perpetrated by men is of most concern to the community (NSW Domestic Violence Committee 1990) so this study is restricted to violence by men against female partners.

In criminology there is a fair degree of consistency in the definition of assault, derived from the legal codification of the act, but in the domestic violence literature a much broader definition of domestic violence is often found. For example, the recent *NSW Domestic Violence Strategic Plan* (NSW Domestic Violence Committee, 1990, p. 4) defines domestic violence as 'violence and abuse perpetrated upon a partner'. According to this document:

> The violence takes a number of forms which fall broadly into five categories of abuse:
> 1   physical assault
> 2   psychological, emotional and verbal abuse
> 3   sexual assault and abuse
> 4   financial or economic abuse
> 5   social abuse.

While it is obvious that these behaviours fall into the category of abuse, in this report we follow Browne (1987) who suggests that the term 'violence' should refer to physical force or aggression whereas 'abuse' may include both violent and non-violent interactions. It is important to distinguish between violence and other forms of abuse because the antecedents and consequences of violent abuse may be different from those of other forms of abuse, in spite of the existence of common elements (Straus 1990a).

In addition, this study focuses on domestic assault and homicide rather than on other forms of abuse because domestic violence bears most obviously on the criminal justice system. The necessity for law enforcement in instances of domestic violence is often stressed in the domestic violence literature: 'Appropriate police action in domestic violence crises, i.e. enforcement of the law, is central to the eradication of domestic violence' (NSW Domestic Violence Committee 1990, p. 16). On the other hand, the focus on violent behaviour in this report is not in any way meant to diminish the importance of other aspects of spouse abuse.

3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS: PROBLEMS IN RESEARCH

There are three major reasons why many researchers and commentators have been sceptical of the relationship between domestic violence and socio-economic status. They stem from (1) the theoretical perspective that has informed much research and comment on the problem of domestic violence, (2) the influence of public awareness campaigns which have stressed that domestic violence can affect all women, and (3) differing interpretations of the empirical research on domestic violence and socio-economic status.

3.1 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Feminist perspectives have been pre-eminent in bringing the problem of domestic violence to public attention. The feminist perspective has also forcefully pointed to the role of violence in maintaining power relations between spouses. Many feminist discussions of domestic violence have been informed by a theory which states that women in all social classes have equal risk of becoming victims of domestic violence. This conclusion is based on the argument that male domination is pervasive and violence is a tactic used by men to reinforce and sustain domination of their female partners (Hanmer and Maynard 1987). According to many who agree with this theory, other explanatory factors are mere distractions (McGregor 1990). As Hanmer and Maynard (1987, p. 11) put it:

> In understanding violence against women the concept of 'class' is simply not a significant factor in identifying either victim or offender. Nor is it relevant in explaining why this violence occurs. To put it bluntly, the realities of male violence and the sociological language of class seem entirely divergent.

These sorts of arguments posit a universal risk theory of domestic violence. Although most commonly directed at class based explanations of domestic violence, the universal risk argument obviously applies to all other social or psychological factors that might be argued to influence the risk of domestic violence. Some feminists have gone so far as to accuse those who speak of domestic violence in terms of factors other than power structures (such as deprivation, poverty, overcrowding, the stress of unemployment or racism) of presenting excuses and taking the side of men who beat up their spouses (Maguire 1988).

On the other hand, there appears to be no *a priori* inconsistency between the proposition that domestic violence is a tactic used to reinforce power structures in relationships, and the hypothesis that domestic violence is related to socio-economic status. Indeed, it seems improbable that a complex phenomenon like domestic abuse can be simply reduced to gender specific power relations, somehow insulated from and independent of other social structures and forces that bear on people. As Alder (1991) points out, men are responsible for much of the violence in our community, but not all men resort to violence, either toward other men or toward their female partners. A theory of

3

domestic violence must address the reasons why some men are violent and others are not. The theory of male domination is not, in itself, a sufficient explanation of domestic violence because it says nothing about why some men resort to violence and others do not.

When we turn to criminology, there is a long tradition of both theoretical and empirical research which has identified a link between social class and violence. Some theories have suggested the existence of a 'subculture of violence' among working class males (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). Other theories have emphasized the frustration stemming from the inability to realize socially defined goals (Merton 1967). Others have particularly emphasized the influence of value systems which are associated with higher rates of violence in working class communities (Cohen 1955). While all of these theories have their problems, Braithwaite (1979, p. 230) has pointed out that 'there has been an absolute dearth of counter-theories predicting that poverty and powerlessness do not encourage crime'.

Common to the theories of violence mentioned above is the idea that the direct effects of social class are moderated by value systems. For example, the subculture of violence thesis claims that working class groups have value systems in which violence is legitimated. The emphasis on values stemming from such theories has been reflected in some recent work on domestic violence. These studies have hypothesized a link between domestic violence and values that legitimate other forms of violence in society (Gelles 1987, Segal 1990). Gelles (1987, p. 9) puts it bluntly: 'To reduce violence in our homes, we must reduce violence in our society'. The fact that domestic violence occurs in the context of a wider set of values which legitimate violence to a greater or lesser degree makes it difficult to argue for an absolute logical or practical separation between the analysis of domestic violence and violence in general.

Key questions that require research include the social construction of masculinities, that is, the processes whereby violence is or is not incorporated into varying definitions of what it is to be masculine. If there is some truth in the various subcultural theories it is likely that social class is indirectly implicated in this process, with the value systems of men in different levels of the class system being more or less liable to legitimate violence. Also, it is possible that social class has more direct effects on the risk of domestic violence through the effects of stress (Straus 1990b). Stress is likely to be greatest among those groups who are subject to the effects of unemployment, poverty and lack of control of resources. People in such situations may be more likely to resort to violence in response to such stress. Obviously, these types of explanation are not mutually exclusive and it is probable that both sets of forces work to increase the possibility of violent behaviour in various household situations.

That social class is related to violence has been generally well accepted. There is a large empirical literature that has supported the relationship (Braithwaite 1981). Most feminist writers have not questioned this finding, but rather question the applicability of social class as an explanatory factor in domestic violence. For example, Zoomer (1983) has argued that violence by men against women should be understood as a specific phenomenon which cannot be explained by general aggression theories. We should be wary, though, of theories which imply that social class is related to violence only outside the walls of the household, and that once inside a different set of factors takes over. Whatever theoretical view is taken, ultimately it is necessary to bring empirical evidence to bear on the question.

3.2 PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Publications emanating from domestic violence awareness campaigns have gone to great lengths to stress that all women are at risk of domestic violence. For example, the NSW Domestic Violence Committee (undated) pamphlet *Domestic violence: we can do something about it*, states that:

> This violence happens to all kinds of women: wives, girl-friends, mothers and daughters. It happens to women of all ages and from all countries, rich and poor.

Schwartz (1988) has observed that there has been a tremendous effort in the past decade to beat down the myth that women in the lower classes are the only victims of domestic violence. It has been essential that this myth be eliminated, so that all women are aware that abusive behaviour of partners should not be tolerated and that such behaviour should be reported. Nevertheless, there is a difference between conducting a public education campaign and coming to a scientific understanding of domestic violence. For the purposes of understanding the nature and extent of domestic violence, and assessing the social factors that contribute to risk, statements to the effect that domestic violence is found in all strata of society, while true, may present only an incomplete picture of the relevant facts.

3.3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

A majority of empirical research has found that there is a relationship between social class and the risk of domestic violence. As Schwartz (1988, p. 375) comments, 'it is very difficult to read all of the major reviews of the literature and come to any conclusion except that there is a relationship between measurable socio-economic status indicators and chances of [domestic] victimization'. This conclusion is echoed by Segal (1990, p. 245) who, commenting on the notion that social class has nothing to do with domestic violence, concludes that 'to put it bluntly every conceivable source of evidence we possess on the realities of male violence suggests the opposite'.

However, it is often pointed out that there are real problems with many of the data sets employed in domestic violence research. Women from lower status groups are argued to report more domestic victimizations than do women from high status groups (Okun 1986, O'Donnell and Saville 1982, Schwartz 1988). Most of the data used to study domestic violence have been collected by the police, or gathered from the clients of refuges or other agencies, and it is entirely possible that working class women are more likely to figure in such data. If this is the case, apparent relationships between social class and domestic violence may be caused by the greater visibility of domestic violence in lower socio-economic status households.

3.3.1 Studies of reporting behaviour
Empirically, then, arguments proposing that domestic violence is unrelated to social class rely crucially on the assertion that women of higher status are less likely to report their victimizations than lower status women. It must be pointed out that there has been very little empirical research conducted into the problem of class effects in reporting domestic violence, so claims that reporting bias is so pervasive as to invalidate official

domestic violence statistics are largely speculative in nature. While claims of very profound reporting bias in domestic violence are commonly made, they appear to rest more on the possibility of such bias rather than on a body of research that demonstrates its existence and extent.

Recent empirical research conducted overseas has not supported the existence of reporting bias on a large scale. Johnson (1990), for example, surveyed 426 women who attended a refuge and asked whether they had called the police in response to domestic violence. A log linear analysis of the data indicated that among this sample there was no relationship between the women's demographic, economic and situational characteristics and the decision to call the police. However, Johnson's sample was derived from women who attended a refuge. Such samples may differ in quite important ways from women who are victims of domestic violence but do not seek intervention (Straus 1990a, Okun 1986). For example, Straus (1990a) suggests that samples of women who attend refuges may include disproportionate numbers of cases of severe violence and cases of severe violence may be more likely to be reported to police. This possibility is borne out by the relatively high rate of reporting to the police (45%) in Johnson's sample. Also, samples drawn from refuges may contain more women from low socio-economic status backgrounds than the population of battered women. This makes problematic the generalization from such samples to the broader class of domestic violence that is unreported. Nevertheless, Johnson's study did include women with a range of incomes, employment status and occupations and did not find an association between those factors and reporting to the police.

Another study by Kantor and Straus (1990) used data based on a representative sample of 6,002 households in 1985 to examine the question of reporting to the police. They found that the most important determinant of reporting was the seriousness of the violence. However, even in the case of serious violence only 14.4% of instances revealed by the survey had been reported to the police. Kantor and Straus found no statistically significant association between race, income, employment status, urban-rural location or drinking at the time of violence and reporting to the police.

It should be pointed out that there are problems with the Kantor and Straus study. Even with a sample of 6,002 families, the sample size is marginal for the examination of these questions, because reporting is uncommon. Overall, only 6.2% of cases of domestic violence uncovered by the survey were reported to the police. Thus even though the survey uncovered a very high rate of violence by husbands against wives (116 per 1,000 couples, Straus 1990c) the numbers of cases reported to the police available for analysis were small. However, some of their results, while below the bounds of statistical significance, are suggestive. For example, the study indicates that women from poor households reported a larger proportion of less serious assaults to the police than women from households with higher incomes. On the other hand, women from households with higher incomes reported a larger proportion of more serious assaults than women from households with lower incomes.

These results suggest that if there is a relationship between socio-economic status and reporting, the overall effect is neither as large nor as simple as has been suggested. Both Johnson (1990) and Kantor and Straus (1990) found that the most important determinant of reporting domestic violence victimizations was the severity of the assault. Although the research by Johnson and Kantor and Straus is not conclusive, the findings are consistent with a body of research which has examined the factors associated with the

decision to call the police in response to crime victimization. This research also indicates that crime seriousness is a more important determinant of the decision to report to the police than income, race, education or other factors (Gove, Hughes and Geerken 1985).

In summary, therefore, this research indicates that official statistics of reported domestic violence are not as problematic as has been suggested. Even if domestic violence is massively under-reported, the fact that there is no evidence for a very strong bias in reporting suggests that we can have some confidence that official statistics can be used to indicate relative differences in rates of domestic violence. This is particularly the case where differences in rates are large. The studies of reporting behaviour suggest that the relationship between domestic violence and social class which is apparent in official statistics is not an artifact of differential reporting.

3.3.2 Random sample survey studies of domestic violence incidence

The studies reviewed above suggest that official statistics may not be subject to the very severe biases which have been argued to invalidate their use for the investigation of domestic violence and socio-economic status. An alternative strategy is to turn to data that are not generated by the criminal justice system, that is, to employ data that are not subject to the potential biases of differential reporting to the police or variations in police behaviour or recording practice.

There are two large representative sample surveys that will be considered here. The first is the US National Crime Survey and the second is the US National Family Violence Survey and Resurvey which were conducted in 1975 and 1985, respectively.

Wolf Harlow (1991) has brought together nine years of data from the US National Crime Survey to provide a detailed picture of violence against women between 1979 and 1987. The US National Crime Survey sample size has ranged between 49,000 and 62,000 households with from 100,000 to 137,000 individuals interviewed from those households (Wolf Harlow 1991).

The two US National Family Violence Surveys have interviewed a total of 8,145 families. Straus (1990d) suggests that this number may be more than the combined number of cases in all other research on family violence so far.

While both the US National Crime Survey and the US National Family Violence Survey have their own methodological problems (Okun 1986, Straus 1990c), it is clear that they provide the best empirical evidence thus far on the incidence and character of domestic assaults. According to the US National Crime Survey, rates of domestic violence among women living in families with low incomes were some 262% higher than those among women living in families with high incomes (Wolf Harlow 1991). The US National Family Violence survey found that the domestic assault rate of women living in families with low incomes was 368% higher than that of women in families with high incomes (Straus 1990b).

These results point to the existence of large class differences in the risk of domestic violence, and are not subject to the reporting biases supposed to invalidate class comparisons made on the basis of official statistics. Indeed, Sparks (1981) has argued that the US Crime Victim Survey is likely to be biased in the opposite direction to official statistics. That is, the methodology is likely to uncover more victimizations

suffered by affluent, better educated respondents. If this is the case, then the results of large representative sample surveys like the US Crime Victim Survey and the US National Family Violence Survey give firm support for the relationship between domestic violence and social class that is apparent in official statistics.

Unfortunately, there have been no large scale representative sample studies of domestic violence in NSW or Australia. Also, crime victim surveys in NSW (ABS 1986, 1990) have had relatively small sample sizes and do not contain data about occupation or income. It is not possible, therefore, to make inferences about the effect of socio-economic status on domestic violence victimization or reporting in Australia from these sources.

3.4 SUMMARY

The preceding sections indicate that the universal risk hypothesis cannot be regarded as established. There are theoretical reasons for believing that there should be a relationship between violence in general and socio-economic status. Thus far, it appears that no convincing reasons have been advanced to convince us that the causes of violence outside the home are independent of the causes of violence in the home. This means that our understanding of domestic violence is likely to be enriched by considering it in its broader social context, rather than simply in terms of gender specific interpersonal power struggles. On the empirical side, there does not seem to be evidence for a strong class bias in reporting domestic violence to the police. Even though studies of reporting of domestic violence have their problems, the relationship between domestic violence and socio-economic status which is apparent in official statistics has been confirmed by the results of victim surveys.

4. DOMESTIC HOMICIDE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Whereas official crime statistics are often regarded with suspicion due to the problem of reporting biases, it is generally accepted that official homicide statistics are far less prone to reporting and recording errors (Wolfgang 1970, Cantor and Cohen 1980). For these reasons, homicide is considered the most accurately reported crime for comparative purposes (Land, McCall and Cohen 1990). Domestic homicides are, therefore, one type of domestic violence which is likely to be relatively accurately recorded in official statistics.

As noted above, domestic homicides are defined in this study as the killing of a woman by her spouse or ex-spouse, whether separated or divorced. In each case the category of spouse includes both married and de facto partners. This definition of domestic homicide was chosen to reflect as closely as possible our definition of domestic violence, that is, the criminal assault of women by their spouses.

Although domestic homicide is well reported, it represents the extreme end of the scale of domestic violence. We should, therefore, be somewhat wary of generalizing from the characteristics of domestic homicides to the population of women who are the victims of less serious forms of domestic violence. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that there is no relationship between non-fatal and fatal domestic violence. In her study of homicide, Wallace (1986) found that in NSW there was a known history of domestic violence in almost 50% of cases of domestic homicide. Since domestic violence is under-reported, it is safe to assume that this figure is very much a lower bound, and a high proportion of domestic killings are the culmination of a history of domestic violence. That is, in many cases of domestic homicide it is probable that violence had occurred prior to the fatal incident, but that this violence was not reported to the police. On the other hand, it is obvious that domestic homicide does not necessarily involve prior violence. Homicide may be the consequence of the first and only episode of violent assault between spouses.

It has been argued that homicide and assault are essentially similar behaviours that differ in terms of outcome rather than process (Harries 1989). To put it another way, we might consider many homicides to be fatal assaults. Overseas research has found that homicides share many of the socio-economic, temporal, racial, age and gender characteristics of assaults (Harries 1989). The difference between a fatal and a non-fatal episode of domestic violence may be entirely due to the presence of a dangerous weapon such as a gun, or to an unfortunate combination of circumstances, rather than to a conscious and planned decision to commit a homicide. Domestic and other family homicides may be particularly likely to be increased by gun availability. Lester (1990) has suggested that firearm availability has more impact on homicides involving family and friends as victims rather than stranger killings because the presence of a firearm has more impact on impulsive assaultive behaviour. The similarities between assault and homicide mean that it is reasonable to assume that homicide rates will be associated with assault rates at the regional level.

5. HYPOTHESES AND VARIABLES EXAMINED

5.1 HYPOTHESES

In this report domestic homicide statistics are used to examine the validity of the universal risk hypothesis. If, as some feminists have argued, domestic violence is caused by gender determined inequalities and all other explanatory factors are irrelevant, then we would expect the domestic homicide rate to be relatively uniform across regions such as Statistical Divisions and Statistical Subdivisions that vary in their social and economic characteristics.

The analysis proceeds in three sections. In the first section we examine the regional pattern of domestic homicide in NSW. In this section the overall variability of domestic homicide rates is described and the sensitivity of the rankings of regions to cases with small numbers of homicides is discussed. In the second section domestic homicide rates for NSW regions are correlated with a number of indicators of socio-economic status. In the third section domestic homicide rates are compared with rates of reported domestic violence to assess the concordance between fatal and non-fatal forms of domestic violence.

5.2 HOMICIDE DATA

Domestic homicide data were extracted from a data set collected by the Bureau which contains information on all recorded homicides in NSW between 1968 and 1986. These data were the subject of two earlier reports by the Bureau (Wallace 1986, Bonney 1987). Domestic homicides as defined here are not as common as sometimes thought. Between 1968 and 1986, 1,894 people in NSW were victims of homicide. Of these, 301 were women killed by their spouses or ex-spouses. Women killed by their spouses or ex-spouses therefore constituted 15.9% of homicide victims in NSW during this period. Such domestic homicides accounted for some 44.2% of all female homicide victims.[1] In addition to domestic homicide rates, the number and rate per 100,000 population of all other homicides was calculated for each region.

Previous research in the Bureau on regional offending compared Local Court proven offender rates with a range of socio-economic data using Local Government Areas as the units of analysis (Devery 1991). However, the relative rarity of domestic homicide means that it is inappropriate to use Local Government Areas (LGAs) as units of analysis for domestic homicides. A number of the 176 mainland LGAs in NSW have recorded no domestic homicides, while many others have recorded very small numbers. Rates calculated from such small numbers will be poor indicators of the relative risk of homicide across LGAs because very small differences in numbers of homicides may produce large differences in rates.

To avoid this problem, numbers of domestic homicides were aggregated for the 14 Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs) in the Sydney Statistical Division, and the 11 Statistical Divisions (SDs) in the rest of the State, giving 25 regions in all. Locations of homicides

were determined from the postcode of the location of the homicide. Where this datum was missing, the location was determined from the area of residence of the victim. Locations were coded in this way because location of the homicide was the field with the fewest missing values. Examination of the three fields containing postcode information indicated that in the majority of cases of domestic homicide the location of the homicide, the residence of victim and the residence of the offender fell in the same or adjacent postcodes. It was not possible to ascertain the location of the homicide for two cases.

Even when 18 years of homicide data are used, some Statistical Divisions and Subdivisions have recorded very few domestic homicides. This means that domestic homicide rates for such areas may be unreliable. There were nine regions with less than ten domestic homicides in the 18 year period. The possible influence of these small numbers is discussed in the appropriate sections.

Homicide rates per 100,000 population were calculated from the estimated residential population of each region at the 1976 census, that is, from the population of each area in the middle of the time period of the homicide series.[2] The categories of homicide examined here are domestic homicide and all other homicides.

5.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

In this study seven indicators of socio-economic status were derived from the ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing:

Rich individuals: The percentage of individuals aged 15 or over with incomes greater than $30,000 per annum.

Poor families: The percentage of families earning less than $9,000 per annum.

Single parent families: Single parent families as a percentage of families.

Labourers: The percentage of the employed labour force employed as labourers or plant and machine operators.

Unemployment: Unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force. (Note that the labour force is defined as persons aged 15 or over who are either working or looking for work.)

No qualifications: The percentage of persons aged 15 or over with no post secondary qualifications.

University degree: The percentage of persons aged 15 or over with university degrees.

These variables indicate variation in income, education and employment status. As Braithwaite (1979) has observed, in criminology class has commonly been operationalized

in terms of income, occupation, education and employment status. The percentage of single parent families was also included because it is an indicator that is particularly associated with poverty and marginalization (Horvath, Harrison and Dowling 1989, Winchester 1990).

5.4 REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As an indicator of regional rates of reported domestic violence, the rate per 100,000 population of appearances before the Local Courts for Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) was calculated from 1987 and 1988 Local Court statistics. Regionalization was based on the area of residence of offender. A full discussion of ADVOs can be found in the Bureau report by Stubbs and Powell (1989).[3]

5.5 INTERNAL UNIFORMITY OF REGIONS

It is unlikely that the risk of homicide or the socio-economic characteristics of the regions employed here are uniform. Within each region there will be considerable variation in socio-economic status and violent crime rates. However, the relative rarity of domestic homicide makes it necessary to use large regions in order to generate reliable rates. This means that the data presented here refer to aggregate homicide rates and socio-economic status. Readers should keep this in mind when examining the data analyzed in the following sections.

5.6 ANALYSIS METHODS

A non-parametric measure (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient) of the association between homicide rates and the socio-economic indicators was employed to avoid problems associated with skewed distributions. The rank correlation coefficient quantifies the concordance in the rank ordering of regions, ranked on two separate variables. The values of the coefficient (ρ) can range between -1 and 1. A negative value of ρ indicates that cases which rank high on one variable tend to rank low on the other. Positive values of ρ indicate a tendency for cases which rank high on one variable to also rank high on the other (Conover 1980).

6. RESULTS

6.1 METHOD OF EFFECTING DEATH IN DOMESTIC HOMICIDE

An examination of the method of effecting death for the 301 domestic homicides reported here gives strong support for the existence of a relationship between domestic assault and domestic homicide. The largest single category was shot (41.9%); followed by stabbed or slashed; bashed with fists and feet only; strangled or smothered; battered with handy object; and hit with axe, hammer or similar instrument. In all, these six methods accounted for 87.7% of domestic homicides. A further 4.7% of deaths involved various combinations of the methods mentioned above. Thus some 92.4% of domestic homicides between 1968 and 1986 involved various combinations of the methods closely associated with assaultive violence. The remainder included categories such as poisoned; drowned; failure to get medical attention; hit by car; pushed from window, car or cliff; neglect; scalded; burned and unknown. Appendix 1 contains full details of the method used to effect death for the 301 domestic homicides reported here.

6.2 DOMESTIC HOMICIDE IN 25 REGIONS IN NSW

The NSW 18 year rate of domestic homicide of 6.07 per 100,000 population represents an annual rate of only 0.34 per 100,000 population. However, as Table 1 indicates, there is considerable variation in rates of domestic homicide in the 25 rural Statistical Divisions and urban Statistical Subdivisions in NSW. A feature of Table 1 is the prominence of the North Western and Far West Statistical Divisions and the Inner Sydney Statistical Subdivision in the ranking. Hornsby–Ku-ring-gai and St. George-Sutherland SSDs have the lowest domestic homicide rates.

The variation in domestic homicide rates across these 25 regions is quite large. In fact, the 18 year rate of domestic homicide in the North Western Statistical Division was seven times that of the St. George-Sutherland Statistical Subdivision. On the basis of this evidence we must accept that there is considerable regional variation in rates of fatal domestic violence in NSW. This result does not lend support to the universal risk hypothesis which predicts a relatively even distribution of risk of domestic violence.

Since the numbers of domestic homicides recorded in some regions are very low it is possible that rates calculated on these small numbers will be somewhat unreliable. However, the overall rankings of the regions on domestic homicides are quite similar to the rankings of the regions according to the rates of all other homicides. Exceptions are Outer South Western Sydney which ranks 23 for the domestic homicide rate and 11 for the rate of all other homicides, Murray which ranks 22 for domestic homicide and 5 for all other homicides, Far West which ranks 2 for domestic homicide and 21 for all other homicides, and Gosford-Wyong which ranks 8 for domestic homicide and 20 for other homicides. In spite of these differences, there is an overall concordance between domestic homicide rates and rates for all other homicides ($\rho = +0.50$, $p < 0.05$). Some of the difference between the rankings according to the two homicide categories may be due to the unreliability of rates in those areas which have recorded small numbers of

Table 1: Homicides in NSW regions in the years 1968 to 1986
Regions ranked in decreasing order of domestic homicide rate

Statistical Division (SD) or Subdivision (SSD)		Number of homicides		Rate of homicides per 100,000 population	
Code	Name	Domestic	Other	Domestic	Other
NW	North Western (SD)	16	50	15.58	48.69
FW	Far West (SD)	4	7	11.94	20.90
IS	Inner Sydney (SSD)	32	283	11.45	101.23
BB	Blacktown-Baulkham Hills (SSD)	27	102	11.05	41.75
RT	Richmond Tweed (SD)	12	38	11.04	34.97
MU	Murrumbidgee (SD)	15	49	10.71	34.98
FL	Fairfield-Liverpool (SSD)	19	98	8.96	46.20
GW	Gosford-Wyong (SSD)	11	27	8.78	21.54
OW	Outer Western Sydney (SSD)	13	53	8.16	33.25
CW	Central West (SD)	11	48	6.79	29.63
IL	Illawarra (SD)	17	66	6.00	23.29
ES	Eastern Suburbs (SSD)	14	70	5.70	28.52
IW	Inner Western Sydney (SSD)	9	57	5.63	35.67
SE	South Eastern (SD)	7	33	5.36	25.28
MW	Manly-Warringah (SSD)	10	37	4.62	17.09
NO	Northern (SD)	8	41	4.59	23.53
MN	Mid-North Coast (SD)	6	36	4.17	24.99
LN	Lower Northern Sydney (SSD)	11	47	4.09	17.49
CB	Canterbury-Bankstown (SSD)	12	67	4.04	22.57
HU	Hunter (SD)	17	109	3.85	24.69
CS	Central Western Sydney (SSD)	10	83	3.72	30.90
MR	Murray (SD)	3	37	3.15	38.91
OS	Outer South Western Sydney (SSD)	2	26	2.37	30.84
HK	Hornsby–Ku-ring-gai (SSD)	5	24	2.35	11.29
SG	St George-Sutherland (SSD)	8	43	2.16	11.61
	Unknown	2	62		
	NSW	301	1593	6.07	30.87

Rates per 100,000 population were calculated using population data from the 1976 census.

domestic homicide. The correlation between domestic homicide rates and other homicides when the nine regions with less than ten domestic homicides are excluded is even larger ($\rho = +0.75$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, there is a significant tendency of areas which rank high in terms of domestic homicide to also have a high ranking in terms of other forms of homicide. This suggests that even though rates are quite small in some areas the overall patterns are robust.

The overall pattern of regional rates of domestic homicide described in Table 1 is also similar to regional patterns of Local Court proven offender rates described in a recent Bureau report on disadvantage and crime (Devery 1991). This report found that LGAs in the North Western and Far West Statistical Divisions had the highest Local Court proven offender rates for violent offences. The rank correlation between the domestic homicide rate and the rate for all appearances for offences against the person in 1987 and 1988 across the 25 regions was +0.53 ($p < 0.01$), increasing to +0.64 ($p < 0.01$) when the nine regions with low numbers of domestic homicides are excluded.

The preceding analysis indicates that there is a marked regional variation in rates of domestic homicides in NSW. The overall pattern of domestic homicide rates is similar to that of other homicide rates, and of Local Court appearances for offences against the person. The concordance of the domestic homicide rate, other homicide rate and appearance rate for offences against the person suggests that the regional pattern of domestic homicide rates is not rendered unreliable by the small numbers of homicides that have been recorded in some regions. Although correlations increase when the nine regions with small numbers are excluded, the correlation coefficients calculated from all 25 cases are well within the bounds of statistical significance. These correlations also indicate a relationship between the incidence of other forms of violence in a region and the domestic homicide rate.

6.3 DOMESTIC HOMICIDE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN NSW REGIONS

Having established that domestic homicide rates exhibit considerable regional variation we proceed to the examination of the concordance between domestic homicide rates and socio-economic status. There is considerable regional variation in socio-economic status in NSW at the LGA level (Devery 1991) and at the level of the 25 regions considered here much of this variation is still evident.[4]

Table 2 contains the rank correlation coefficients for the domestic homicide rate, the rate of all other homicides and the indicators of socio-economic status.

Table 2: Correlations between homicide rates and socio-economic indicators measured in 25 NSW regions

	Spearman's rank correlation coefficients	
Socio-economic indicator	Domestic homicide rate	Other homicide rate
Rich individuals	-0.30	-0.34
University degree	-0.22	-0.24
No qualifications	0.35	0.40
Poor families	0.49	0.40
Single parent families	0.56	0.59
Unemployment	0.51	0.29
Labourers	0.39	0.30

The homicide rates are the numbers of homicides in the years 1968 to 1986 per 100,000 population in 1976. The socio-economic indicators are as defined on p.11, measured from 1986 census data.

Correlations greater than ± 0.40 are significant at the 0.05 level of significance (two-tailed test).

The coefficients in Table 2 indicate a consistent relationship between socio-economic status indicators and domestic homicide rates. As predicted, domestic homicide rates have significant positive correlations with indicators of low socio-economic status. Unemployment, the percentage of families earning less than $9,000 and the percentage of single parent families are significantly related to high domestic homicide rates. That is, areas which have scores indicating low socio-economic status tend to have experienced high rates of domestic homicide over the period 1968-86.
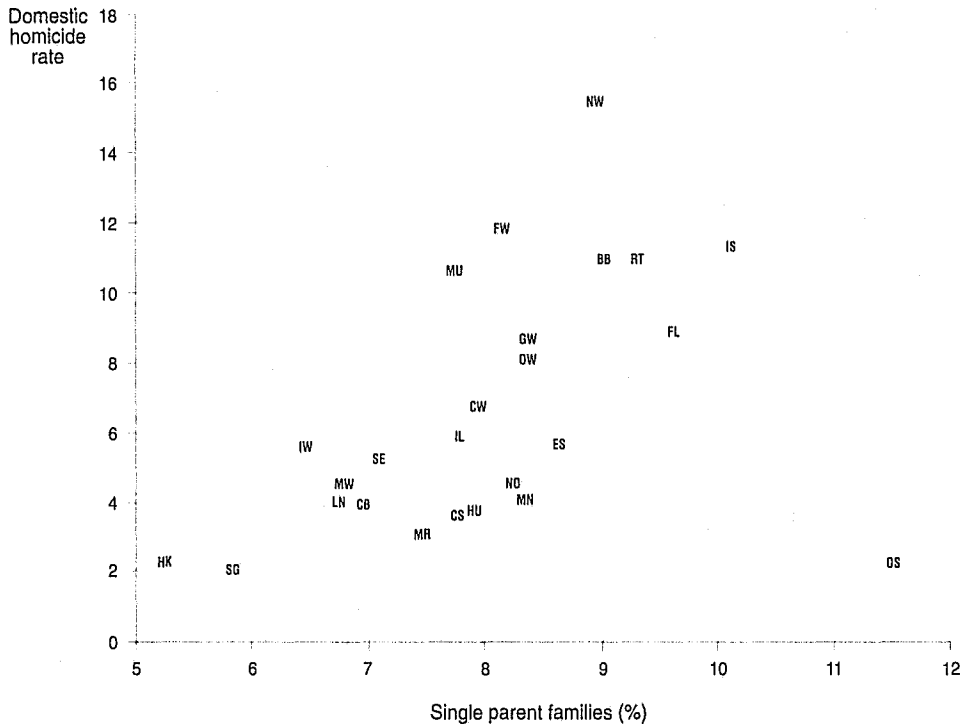
On the other hand, the indicators of high socio-economic status, the percentage of individuals earning more than $30,000 and the percentage with university degrees are not significantly correlated with domestic homicide rates, although the signs indicate that the relationship is in the predicted direction. Gordon (1967) has argued that indicators which sample the lower tail of the distribution of any index of socio-economic status will be more likely to be associated with offending than measures of central tendency or measures which sample the upper tail. This is because such indicators are more likely to be sensitive to the numbers of people in the highest risk groups for offending, those with the very lowest socio-economic status. For example, a Statistical Subdivision such as Inner Sydney has relatively high numbers of persons with university degrees and high incomes, a result of the gentrification process (Horvath, Harrison and Dowling 1989) and high numbers of persons who are disadvantaged. This Subdivision also has a relatively high rate of domestic homicide. Obviously in this case indicators of low socio-economic status are more sensitive to the variation in risk than indicators which measure the other tail of the socio-economic status distribution.

The regions with small numbers of domestic homicides in the 18 year period could have had substantially different rates had their actual numbers of homicides been reduced or increased by only one or two homicides in 18 years. To test the sensitivity of the correlation coefficients to the low numbers of cases of domestic homicide in some regions the analysis was repeated, excluding the nine regions where less than ten domestic homicides were recorded. The smaller sample size reduced the power of the test of significance, but there was still significant correlation between domestic homicide and the indicators of socio-economic status that were significant when all 25 cases were included. This indicates that the relationships between socio-economic status and domestic homicide reported in Table 2 are not overly sensitive to the low numbers of domestic homicides in some regions.

As a further test of the validity of the results the analysis was repeated using only 10 years' homicide data from the period 1976-1986, and socio-economic status indicators from the 1981 census. This analysis therefore used socio-economic status indicators that refer to conditions that prevailed in the middle of the reference period, rather than at the end of the reference period. Although there was consequently a smaller number of cases available for analysis, statistically significant relationships between domestic homicide and socio-economic status indicators were found. These relationships were stable when regions with small numbers of homicides were excluded.

The three socio-economic variables with significant correlations in Table 2 are the percentage of single parent families, the percentage unemployed and the percentage of poor families. The relationships are shown graphically in Figures 1, 2 and 3. Each region plotted in the figures is identified using the code given for each SD and SSD in Table 1 on p.14.

Figure 1: Domestic homicide rate and single parent families in 25 NSW regions

Domestic homicide rate (vertical axis, 0 to 18)

Single parent families (%) (horizontal axis, 5 to 12)

Scatter plot data points:
- NW at approximately (8.3, 15.5)
- FW at approximately (8.1, 11.5)
- IS at approximately (10.5, 11.3)
- BB at approximately (9, 11)
- RT at approximately (9.4, 11)
- MU at approximately (7.8, 10.7)
- GW at approximately (8.6, 8.6)
- OW at approximately (8.6, 8.3)
- FL at approximately (10, 8.6)
- CW at approximately (8.1, 6.8)
- IL at approximately (8.1, 6)
- IW at approximately (6.8, 5.7)
- ES at approximately (9, 5.7)
- SE at approximately (7.1, 5.2)
- MW at approximately (7, 4.5)
- NO at approximately (8.6, 4.5)
- LN at approximately (6.9, 4.2)
- CB at approximately (7.1, 4.2)
- CS at approximately (8, 3.8)
- HU at approximately (8.2, 3.8)
- MN at approximately (8.7, 4)
- MR at approximately (7.6, 3.2)
- HK at approximately (5.5, 2)
- SG at approximately (6.1, 2)
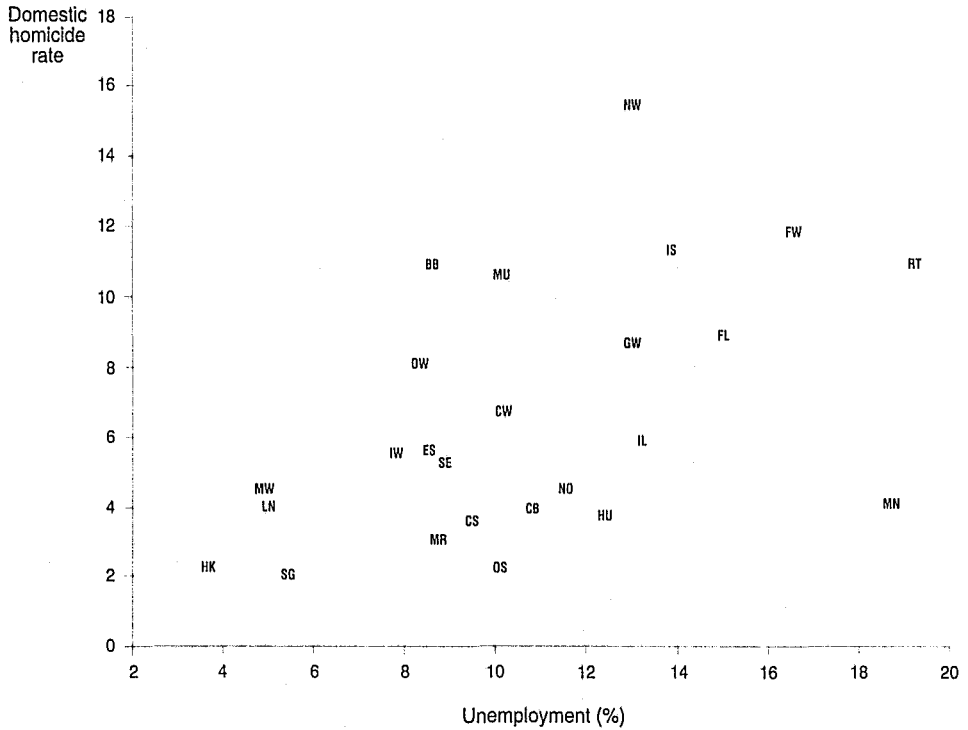- OS at approximately (11.5, 2)

Note: The domestic homicide rate is the number of homicides in the years 1968 to 1986 per 100,000 population in 1976. Single parent families is as defined on p.11, measured from 1986 census data.

Figure 1 demonstrates that the incidence of domestic homicide tends to be greater in areas which have higher proportions of single parent families. It is important to note that this does not imply that women in single parent families are the primary victims of domestic homicide. Rather, the proportion of single parent families is a sensitive indicator of the existence of socially and economically marginalized communities within each region. At the 1986 census, single parent families constituted only 5 per cent of all families, but represented over 21 per cent of families with income less than $12,000 (Winchester 1990).

The most obvious outlier in Figure 1 is the Outer South Western Sydney SSD (code OS). This region has a high percentage of single parent families, but a low domestic homicide rate. However, most of the urban development in this region has occurred in the 1980s. Therefore the proportion of single parent families in this region, as measured in the 1986 census, may not be a reliable measure of this indicator over the period coinciding with the homicide series. On the other hand the low domestic homicide rate in the Outer South Western Sydney SSD may be due to random variation.
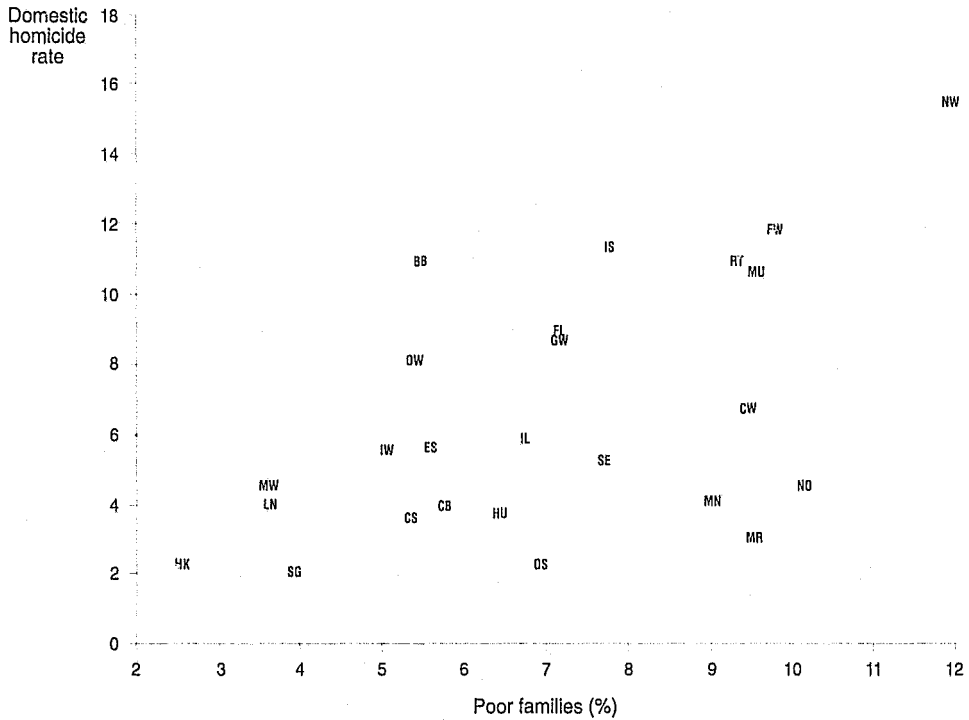
Figure 2: Domestic homicide rate and unemployment in 25 NSW regions

Note: The domestic homicide rate is the number of homicides in the years 1968 to 1986 per 100,000 population in 1976. Unemployment is as defined on p.11, measured from 1986 census data.

Figure 2 shows that, in general, regions with high unemployment have experienced higher rates of domestic homicide. An exception is the Mid-North Coast SD (code MN) which has a very high unemployment rate, but which has experienced a relatively low rate of domestic homicide. A similar pattern was observed for LGAs on the North Coast in the Bureau report on disadvantage and crime (Devery 1991). That report suggested that the social meaning of unemployment may be different in this region, which contains relatively high proportions of long-term unemployed who may not be disadvantaged in the same way as many unemployed in other regions. Except for this region, the relationship between domestic homicide rates and unemployment is relatively strong. On the other hand, the Mid-North Coast SD (code MN) is not as severe an

Figure 3: Domestic homicide rate and poor families in 25 NSW regions

Note: The domestic homicide rate is the number of homicides in the years 1968 to 1986 per 100,000 population in 1976. Poor families is as defined on p. 11, measured from 1986 census data.
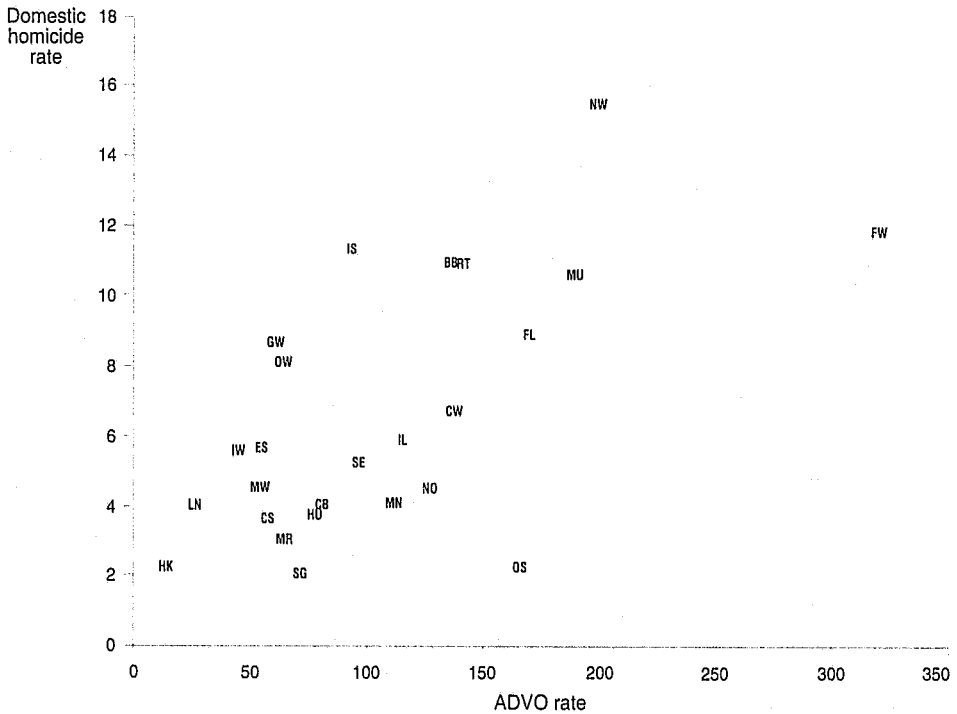
outlier on Figure 3 which shows the relationship between domestic homicide and the percentage of families earning less than $9,000.

Figure 3 indicates that there is also a relationship between the proportion of families earning less than $9,000 and the domestic homicide rate. Examination of Figure 3 shows that some rural regions have a relatively high proportion of poor families but low to moderate rates of domestic homicide. Examples are the Murray SD (code MR), the Mid-North Coast SD (code MN) and the Northern SD (code NO). Murray only recorded 3 domestic homicides and therefore the rate for this region may not be reliable. Also, the proportion of poor families in such areas may be increased by the inclusion of farming families who were asset rich but income poor at the time of the census.

6.4 DOMESTIC HOMICIDE AND NON-FATAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It appears that there is good reason to conclude that fatal domestic violence rates are higher in lower socio-economic status regions. In section 4 it was argued that in many respects homicide and assault are similar acts, differing in outcome rather than substance. If reporting biases for less serious forms of domestic violence are not large, then we would expect regional rates of reported domestic violence to be correlated with rates of domestic homicide. In this section we compare regional rates of domestic homicide with rates of reported domestic violence. A positive correlation between fatal domestic violence, which we have argued is not subject to large reporting biases, and reported domestic violence, would indicate that variation in reported domestic violence cannot simply be explained away by reporting effects. That is, a correlation between regional rates of domestic homicide and reported domestic violence would suggest that reported domestic violence does indicate the underlying 'true' rate of domestic violence.

Figure 4: Domestic homicide rate and Apprehended Domestic Violence Order rate in 25 NSW regions

Note: The domestic homicide rate is the number of homicides in the years 1968 to 1986 per 100,000 population in 1976. The Apprehended Domestic Violence Order rate is the number of Local Court appearances, by persons seeking Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, in 1987 and 1988, per 100,000 population in 1986.

Figure 4 shows that regions with high rates of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders tend to have high rates of domestic homicide. The rank correlation coefficient for this relationship is +0.55 ($p < 0.01$). Exclusion of the nine regions which have recorded less than ten domestic homicides increases this coefficient to +0.71 ($p < 0.01$).

This figure demonstrates the tendency of regions with high appearance rates for ADVOs to have high rates of domestic homicide. There are some areas which vary a little from the general pattern. Outer South Western Sydney (code OS), for example, appears to have a domestic homicide rate that is less than would be expected from its relatively high ADVO rate. It may be that domestic violence is particularly well reported in the Outer South Western Sydney area. However, the Outer South Western Sydney SSD has a rate of non-domestic homicides that is about what would be expected on the basis of its socio-economic status. It is possible that the small rate of domestic homicide in the Outer South Western Sydney SSD is due to chance, and that over time domestic homicide rates in the Outer South Western Sydney SSD will gradually approach the expected figure. Also, using population data from the 1986 census to rate ADVO data from 1987 and 1988 will tend to result in larger rates for those areas like Outer South Western Sydney which have experienced very rapid population growth since the 1986 census. However, these effects are small compared with the influence of variations in offence numbers. In spite of this outlying case, regions with high rates of reported domestic violence tend to have high rates of domestic homicide.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The analysis in the previous sections suggests that there is considerable regional variation in domestic homicide. This regional variation is associated with regional variation in socio-economic status, with low status areas tending to have high rates of domestic homicide. Finally, there is a positive relationship between domestic homicide rates and rates of reported domestic violence.

It is reasonable to conclude that the risk of domestic homicide is not evenly distributed in NSW. Women who live in areas of low socio-economic status have a risk of domestic homicide that is up to seven times greater than that of women in higher status regions.

The various pieces of evidence presented here make a consistent and compelling case that there is a relationship between domestic violence and class. Research has failed to demonstrate a strong and consistent class bias in reporting domestic violence to the police. Victim surveys have found that lower status women are much more likely to be the victims of domestic violence. Domestic homicide rates are higher in low status areas. Finally, there is a significant and positive concordance between regional rates of domestic homicide and rates of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders.

7.2 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OBSERVATIONS

The fact that there is a relationship at a regional level between factors such as social status and rates of domestic violence does not, by itself, justify the conclusion that low social status families are more likely to experience domestic violence. However, at the individual level there is evidence that a relationship between socio-economic status and domestic homicide exists. Wallace (1986), in her study of homicide, noted that very few domestic homicide offenders came from higher status occupations. Also, Wallace found that unemployment was very high among domestic homicide offenders. Whether the relationship that we have observed between single parent families and domestic homicide at the regional level also exists at the individual level remains uncertain. The proportion of single parent families may just be an indicator of the existence of communities at risk, many of the members of which are not members of single parent families. Further individual level studies would be required to determine whether this is the case.

7.3 LEAVING THE RELATIONSHIP

Wallace (1986) suggested that the relationship between occupational status and domestic homicide may be due to working class women finding it more difficult to leave a violent relationship. That is, working class women stay and endure assaults longer because they are more economically dependent on their spouses. This may increase the

likelihood that they will eventually become the victims of domestic homicide. Wallace also noted that there is some evidence that violence is more severe and more frequent in lower status families. Again, these factors may result in an increased possibility of homicide victimization of lower status women.

If it is the case that lower status women are much less likely to leave a violent spouse, then the observed pattern of domestic homicide may be due to the greater exposure of lower status women to violence, some of which might have fatal consequences. That is, all men may have an equal tendency to violence, as argued by feminist theory, but higher status women may be more able to extract themselves from risky situations. This would tend to result in a higher rate of domestic homicide being recorded in lower status regions.

There are some problems with this line of argument, however. Analysis of divorce and separation rates across the 25 regions in this study shows that indeed the proportion of divorced people tended to be lower in lower status areas.[5] Separation rates, however, tended to be higher in lower status areas.[6] This suggests that at the regional level divorce is more common in higher status areas, whereas separation is more common in lower status regions. When considered together, it appears that there is no consistent overall tendency for higher status areas to have higher proportions of divorced/separated individuals.

7.4 CONTINUATION AND ESCALATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The argument that lower status women are less likely to leave violent spouses, and are thus more likely eventually to be killed by their husbands also rests on the inevitability of continuation and escalation of violence. Pagelow (1981, p. 45) claims that 'one of the few things about which almost all researchers agree is that batterings escalate in frequency and intensity over time'. Feld and Straus (1990) comment that this conclusion has been based on studies of women who were clients of shelters or other treatment groups. Such groups may contain a large number of women who were subject to escalation of family violence. Women who experience violence that subsides may tend to be invisible to such studies.

However, the very low rate of domestic homicide would suggest that escalation and continuation is not inevitable. Reviews of research by Fagan (1989), and original research reported by Feld and Straus (1990) suggest that in fact there are high rates of desistance, even for husbands who had frequently used severe violence. Such a pattern of desistance has been observed for a range of criminal behaviour. The upshot of this is that it is not at all clear that to stay in a violent relationship is to be condemned to an inevitable pattern of continuing and escalating violence. This does not mean that women who are the victims of violence should be encouraged to stay with their violent spouses. It does mean that the question of escalation and continuation is more complex than is often assumed. Desistance reduces the potential of this argument to account for status variations in domestic homicide. In any event, those who want to explain away the pattern of domestic homicide by arguing that low status women are less likely to leave violent relationships will need to reconcile this thesis with the evidence that divorce and separation rates are poorly related to social class.

7.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

Considered together, the results also suggest a relationship between violence in the community and domestic violence. Domestic violence rates covary with rates of other violent crime and with the correlates of violent crime. There are a number of reasons why we might expect to see an association between violence in the family and violence in the community. A review of studies of men who are violent toward their spouses by Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) found that men who are criminally violent towards their wives exhibit risk factors that were very similar to those who were criminally violent outside the family situation. They were more likely to have lower occupational status, lower income and lower educational attainment than non-violent comparison groups. They were also more likely to have been exposed to violent behaviour as children and to be more generally violent to children and non-family members than comparison group males.

A common theme in criminology and in the family violence literature has been the relationship between experiencing violence in the family and later anti-social behaviour (Hotaling, Straus and Lincon 1990). Such a relationship is supported by social learning theory, which suggests that aggressive behaviour is learned either through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others (Bandura 1973). Hotaling, Straus and Lincon (1990) found that children who experience violence in the home through observation of parents or direct experience are more likely to be violent in their relationships outside the home. They are also more likely to commit property crimes than children from non-violent households. Also, men in families in which women and children are assaulted are five times more likely to have assaulted a non-family person than are men in non-assaultive families. Other evidence discussed by Monahan and Klassen (1982) suggests that many aspects of the family environment have been related to violent behaviour, both within the family and in the community.

Segal (1990) has suggested that in a culture where the idea of masculinity is constructed around dominance, social power and control over others it is perhaps not surprising that subordinated men may be more likely to resort to violence as the only power available to them. The power granted by patriarchal values, according to Segal, means that for subordinated men the family may be the only sphere where it is possible to express these kinds of social values.

7.6 CONCLUSION

These considerations do not invalidate the feminist theory that domestic violence is an expression of unequal power relations. Nor do they show that higher status men do not use violence. However, they suggest that versions of this theory which attempt to preclude analysis of the effect of other factors on the risk of violence need to be re-examined. It is certainly possible that in higher status relationships non-violent forms of abuse are employed to reinforce unequal power structures. It has been suggested that higher status men have access to social and economic resources which may provide them with the means to organize their domestic lives in ways which bring sorrow and despair to their wives or children but which do not involve resort to criminal violence (Segal 1990). Universal risk hypotheses may veil such relationships between socio-economic status and the type and severity of abuse.

We should not turn our backs on evidence that certain women in the community are much more likely to suffer domestic violence than others. To do so is to deny that the effects of economic and social marginalization, resulting from poverty, unemployment and discrimination, contribute to the risk of domestic violence. Once we recognize that these factors contribute to the risk of domestic violence it is possible to put in place policies that will be of assistance to those most at risk. These women are also likely to be those who are most in need of specific assistance and protection due to their lack of resources. They are therefore doubly at risk compared with more affluent women.

To understand the nature of domestic violence we need to go beyond the simple equation of masculinity equals violence and understand the ways in which socio-economic status and gender interact in the context of social structures which legitimate and reproduce violence in Australian society.

NOTES

[1] In previous research published by the Bureau it was stated that domestic homicides constituted almost one quarter of homicides in NSW (Wallace 1986, p. 83). This widely cited figure was calculated by excluding all cases where the relationship between the victim and offender was unknown, that is, unsolved cases were excluded. Since it is likely that compared with stranger killings relatively few spouse homicides remain unsolved, the effect of this counting rule is to inflate the proportion of domestic homicides. Also, this figure included cases where women killed their male spouses. Although Wallace made it clear that she was referring to spouse killings, the figure has frequently been quoted in a context that may suggest that killings of women by male spouses constituted 25% of all homicides.

[2] To test the effect of the choice of population base on homicide rates, rates of domestic homicide were determined using 1976 and 1986 populations. The rankings of regions on the two rates were very similar (Spearman's rank correlation $\rho=0.96$, $p < 0.0001$). This means that the choice of population base will have very little effect on the results of comparisons of homicide rates and socio-economic variables.

[3] Recent legislative changes have replaced the ADVO with the Apprehended Violence Order (AVO). Under these changes many people not previously eligible for such protection can apply for an order. These changes do not affect the data reported here.

[4] The correlation matrix between the socio-economic variables used in this report can be found in Appendix 2. The coefficients indicate an overall concordance between the individual indicators of socio-economic status.

[5] The rank correlation between the percentage divorced and the percentage of poor families was - 0.33.

[6] The rank correlation between the percentage separated and percentage of poor families was +0.53.

REFERENCES

ABS (1986) *Victims of Crime, Australia, 1983,* Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ABS (1990) *Crime and Safety Survey, NSW,* Sydney, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Alder, C. (1991) 'Explaining Violence: socioeconomics and masculinity', in D. Chappell, P. Grabosky and H. Strang (eds) *Australian Violence: Contemporary Perspectives,* Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology.

Bandura, A. (1973) *Aggression: a Social Learning Analysis,* Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.

Bonney, R. (1987) *Homicide II,* Sydney, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Braithwaite, J. (1979) *Inequality, Crime and Public Policy,* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Braithwaite, J. (1981) 'The Myth of Social Class and Criminality Re-considered', *American Sociological Review,* 46, pp. 36-57.

Browne, A. (1987) *When Battered Women Kill,* New York, The Free Press.

Cantor, D. and Cohen, L. (1980) 'Comparing Measures of Homicide Trends: Methodological and Substantive Differences in the Vital Statistics and Uniform Crime Report Series 1933-1975', *Social Science Research,* 9, pp. 121-145.

Cohen, A. (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang,* New York, The Free Press.

Conover, W. (1980) *Practical Nonparametric Statistics,* New York, John Wiley and Sons.

Devery, C. (1991) *Disadvantage and Crime in NSW,* Sydney, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Fagan, G. (1989) 'Cessation of Family Violence: Deterrence and Dissuasion', in L. Ohlin and M. Tonry (eds) *Family Violence: Crime and Justice, A Review of Research Vol 11,* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Feld, S. and Straus, M. (1990) 'Escalation and Desistance from Wife Assault in Marriage', in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families,* New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Gelles, R. (1987) *Family Violence,* Newberry Park, Sage.

Gordon, R. (1967) 'Issues in the Ecological Study of Delinquency', *American Sociological Review,* 32, pp. 927-944.

Gove, W., Hughes, M. and Geerken, M. (1985) 'Are Uniform Crime Reports a Valid Indicator of the Index Crimes: An Affirmative Answer with Minor Qualifications', *Criminology,* 23, pp. 451-501.

Hanmer, J. and Maynard, M. (1987) 'Introduction: violence and gender stratification', in J. Hanmer and M. Maynard (eds) *Domestic Violence and Social Control,* London, Macmillan.

Harries, K. (1989) 'Homicide and Assault: A Comparative Analysis of Attributes in Dallas Neighbourhoods, 1981-1986', *Professional Geographer,* 41, pp. 29-38.

Hotaling, G. and Sugarman, D. (1986) 'An Analysis of Risk Markers in Husband to Wife Violence: The Current State of Knowledge', *Violence and Victims,* 1, pp. 101-124.

Hotaling G., Straus, M. and Lincon, A. (1990) 'Intrafamily Violence and Crime and Violence Outside the Family', in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families,* New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Horvath, R., Harrison, G. and Dowling, R. (1989) *Sydney: A Social Atlas,* Sydney, Sydney University Press.

Johnson, I. (1990) 'A Loglinear Analysis of Abused Wives' Decisions to Call the Police in Domestic-Violence Disputes', *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 18, pp. 147-159.

Kantor, C. and Straus, M. (1990) 'Response of Victims and the Police to Assaults on Wives', in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Land, K., McCall, P. and Cohen, L. (1990) 'Structural Covariates of Homicide Rates: Are There any Invariances across Time and Social Space?', *American Journal of Sociology*, 95, pp. 922-963.

Lester D. (1990) 'The Relationship Between Firearm Availability and Primary and Secondary Murder', *Psychological Reports*, 67, p.490.

McGregor, H. (1990) 'Domestic Violence: Alcohol and Other Distractions - a Grassroots Perspective', in J. Vernon (ed) *Alcohol and Crime*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology.

Maguire, S. (1988) 'Sorry Love - Violence against Women in the Home and the State Response', *Critical Social Policy*, 23, pp. 32-40.

Merton, R. (1967) *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York, The Free Press.

Monahan, J. and Klassen, D. (1982) 'Situational Approaches to Understanding and Predicting Individual Violent Behaviour', in M. Wolfgang and N. Weiner (eds) *Criminal Violence*, Beverley Hills, Sage.

NSW Domestic Violence Committee (1990) *NSW Domestic Violence Strategic Plan*, Sydney, Women's Co-ordination Unit.

O'Donnell, C. and Saville, H. (1982) 'Domestic violence and sex and class inequality', in C. O'Donnell and J. Craney (eds) *Family Violence in Australia*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire.

Okun, L. (1986) *Woman Abuse: Facts Replacing Myths*, Albany, State University of New York Press.

Pagelow, M. (1981) *Woman Battering: Victims and Their Experiences*, Beverley Hills, Sage.

Segal, L. (1990) *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, London, Virago.

Schwartz, M. (1988) 'Ain't got no class: Universal risk theories of battering', *Contemporary Crises*, 12, pp. 373-392.

Sparks, R. (1981) 'Surveys of Victimization - An Optimistic Assessment' in M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds) *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Straus, M. (1990a) 'Injury and Frequency of Assault and the 'Representative Sample Fallacy' in Measuring Wife Beating and Child Abuse' in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Straus M. (1990b) 'Social Stress and Marital Violence in a National Sample of American Families' in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Straus, M. (1990c) 'How Violent are American Families? Estimates from the National Family Violence Resurvey and Other Studies', in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Straus, M. (1990d) 'The National Family Violence Surveys', in M. Straus and R. Gelles (eds) *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptions to Violence in 8,145 Families*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Stubbs, J. and Powell, D. (1989) *Domestic Violence: Impact of Legal Reform in NSW*, Sydney, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Wallace, A. (1986) *Homicide: the Social Reality*, Sydney, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Winchester, H. (1990) 'Women and children last: the poverty and marginalization of one-parent families', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, N.S. 15, pp. 70-86.

Wolfgang, M. (1970) 'Sociological Analyses of Criminal Homicide', in B. Cohen (ed) *Crime in America: Perspectives on Criminal and Delinquent Behaviour*, Isasca, F. E. Peacock.

Wolfgang, M. and Ferracuti, F. (1967) *The Subculture of Violence: Towards an Integrated Theory in Criminology*, London, Tavistock Publications.

Wolf Harlow, C. (1991) *Female Victims of Violent Crime*, Washington, US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Zoomer, O. (1983) 'On the Social Causes and Function of Violence Against Women', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 27, pp. 173-183.

APPENDIX 1: METHOD USED TO EFFECT DEATH FOR DOMESTIC HOMICIDES IN NSW, 1968 TO 1986

Method used to effect death	Domestic homicides	
	Number	%
Shot	126	41.9
Stabbed or slashed	50	16.6
Bashed with fists and feet only	37	12.3
Strangled or smothered	26	8.6
Battered with handy object	16	5.3
Hit with axe, hammer etc.	9	3.0
Strangled/smothered and bashed with fists and feet	5	1.7
Poisoned	4	1.3
Drowned	3	1.0
Unknown	3	1.0
Failure to get medical attention	2	0.7
Bomb blast	2	0.7
Pushed out of window, car, off cliff	2	0.7
Strangled/smothered and stabbed/slashed	2	0.7
Bashed with fists/feet and stabbed/slashed	2	0.7
Stabbed/slashed and hit with axe/hammer or similar	2	0.7
Burned	1	0.3
Neglect	1	0.3
Administer a drug overdose	1	0.3
Hit by car	1	0.3
Scalded	1	0.3
Battered with handy object and stabbed/slashed	1	0.3
Punched/pushed and/or fell	1	0.3
Strangled/smothered, shot and drowned	1	0.3
Shot and bashed with handy object	1	0.3
Lack of clarity about method	1	0.3
Total	**301**	**100**

APPENDIX 2: RANK CORRELATION MATRIX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES

Socio-economic variables	Rich individuals	University degree	No qualifications	Poor families	Single parent families	Unemployment	Labourers
Rich individuals	1.00	0.79	-0.82	-0.71	-0.36	-0.75	-0.63
University degree		1.00	-0.83	-0.58	-0.35	-0.62	-0.69
No qualifications			1.00	0.81	0.38	0.67	0.69
Poor families				1.00	0.46	0.73	0.60
Single parent families					1.00	0.60	0.40
Unemployment						1.00	0.83
Labourers							1.00