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## R e s e a r c h R e p o r t

### *The Nature of Homicide: Trends and Changes*

*Proceedings of the 1996  
Meeting of the Homicide  
Research Working Group*

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# *The Nature of Homicide: Trends and Changes*

*Proceedings of the  
1996 Meeting of the Homicide  
Research Working Group*

*Santa Monica, California*

*Editors*

*Pamela K. Lattimore*

*Cynthia A. Nahabedian*



## Foreword

These are the proceedings of the 1996 annual meeting of the Homicide Research Working Group. The meeting was hosted by the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California from June 9 to June 12, 1996.

The *Proceedings* include nine sections that correspond closely with the areas of presentation and discussion outlined in the program agenda. Recorder's notes and discussion summaries, when made available, were included. A copy of the meeting agenda, and a list of program participants and active members are included in the appendices.

Thanks to all for your participation.

Pamela K. Lattimore  
Cynthia A. Nahabedian  
Editors





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**Section One:**  
**The Homicide Research Working Group**



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## **THE HOMICIDE RESEARCH WORKING GROUP: PAST AND PRESENT**

### **NOTES ON THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SANTA MONICA MEETING OF THE HOMICIDE RESEARCH WORKING GROUP**

**Organizer and Moderator:** Roland Chilton

**Participants:** Richard Block, Carolyn Rebecca Block, Chris Rasche, John Jarvis, Harold Rose, Pam Lattimore, and Derral Cheatwood

#### **Introduction:**

The first session of the 1996, Santa Monica meeting of the Homicide Research Working Group was devoted to a consideration of "The Homicide Research Working Group Past and Present." A panel of individuals who had been active in the group since its inception discussed the history of the group and their perception of the structure of our studies, and the session was opened to comments and questions from the general audience. It was a chance to look back at where we had come from and what we thought we had done, and to consider what we are now doing and where we may want to go. It was a review of the last five meetings of the Homicide Research Working Group and an open discussion of how we have changed and how we have stayed the same.

#### **The Goals of the Organization:**

It is impossible to consider the past, present or future of the Homicide Research Working Group without addressing its goals, because this is an organization whose sole purpose is set out in those goals. It has no other obligations (beyond annual membership dues), and no limits on, nor qualifications for, membership. As a consequence, these goals are paramount to understanding the evolution of the group, the ongoing concerns of the group, and the potential for the future. As developed initially by Richard and Becky Block and finalized by the participants at the Ann Arbor meeting, these goals are the following.

1. To forge links between research, epidemiology, and practical programs to reduce levels of mortality from violence.
2. To promote improved data quality and the linking of diverse homicide data sources.
3. To foster collaborative, interdisciplinary research on lethal and non-lethal violence.
4. To encourage more efficient sharing of techniques for measuring and analyzing homicide.
5. To create and maintain a communication network among those collecting, maintaining, and analyzing homicide data sets.
6. To generate a stronger working relationship among homicide researchers.

The history of the Homicide Research Working Group, then, begins with a frustration with other organizations being unable to meet these objectives.

### **History of the HRWG - Organization and Beginnings:**

The Homicide Research Working Group came about from an idea of Richard Block's. Attending the meetings of the American Society of Criminology, he realized that there were sessions on violence and on homicide which addressed theory, definition, and research, but that there was little integration or cross-disciplinary communication. As professionals and academics we were spending a great deal of time considering and talking about homicide, but very little time integrating what we knew or transmitting it to others. And homicide rates continued to go up. From this, he and Becky Block derived the idea of an interdisciplinary group dedicated to the study of homicide in an attempt to formulate workable policies that would help reduce the levels of lethal violence.

The first three significant activities following from this idea took place at the national meetings of the American Society of Criminology in 1991. First, the Blocks organized a plenary session dedicated to the work of Marvin Wolfgang. At that session, the current status of homicide research was evaluated, and an agenda for the future was considered. This plenary session set the tone for what we do. Panelists noted the need for more research in the tradition of detail Wolfgang established, and pointed out the need for links to other data sets and to other nations. And most fundamentally, they called for the development of an organized and integrated body of theory and research based on new theoretical approaches, new technologies, and the new methodologies which are available to us. The papers presented at this session were published in a special issue of the Journal of Criminal Justice, 1992 (Vol. 14).

Second, a session was held at the meetings to determine the level of interest in such a group. The response was a standing-room-only crowd of eighty people. The people there, and at a subsequent organizational meeting, decided to call the association the Homicide Research Working Group and to formulate a set of purposes to clarify what the group was about. This resulted in the statement of the central goals of the organization, and the policy that the only requirement for membership in the group was agreement with those goals.

Third, it was decided to hold a meeting during the summer to discuss all of these issues. With the cooperation of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, that first meeting was held in June of 1992, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. One of the fundamental goals of the organization was to increase communication, and these summer meetings were seen as a central activity by which we could place practitioners and academics from a variety of disciplines in one setting for an extended period of time. This has evolved into an emphasis on discussion among the members, and to accomplish this end it has remained a central policy of these meetings that there are no concurrent sessions. Everyone attends all the sessions, so that the discussion builds through the gathering.

As Chris Rasche pointed out, the structure of the meetings helps meet many of the goals. There have always been, as noted, no concurrent sessions. The material to be covered in

the meetings is sent to the participants beforehand, so that everyone has a chance to see what we are going to talk about. There is little formal leadership, with most decisions being made by a loosely organized Steering Committee or, by default and trust in their judgment, by Richard and Becky Block. Even physically we have been able to maintain seating arrangements where we all face each other. Through it all, the search is for ongoing discussion. The Homicide Research Working Group is, as Rasche said, an academic tribe.

At Ann Arbor there were 29 attendees from a body of 118 members in good standing. From the beginning there was agreement on the principles above and on a desire to foster dialogue which could result in real policy change. This desire has come around to a series of foci - what Roland Chilton called Tracks - that the discussions in the meetings continue to address. Each of the meetings was held at a location which had some unique characteristic of importance to the goals of the group, and each meeting had a central theme, topic, or focus around which we loosely arranged papers. In contrast to normal national meetings with themes which are most often celebrated in their breach, the Homicide Research Working Group seriously focused on its topic for the meeting and the topic was tailored to the site at which we met. Yet despite the changing topics, Chilton has identified five recurrent concerns in our work. Thus both these meeting sites and these track are important to understand the history of the group.

### **Meeting Sites: Where Have We Been?**

While the details covered in each meeting are beyond the scope of this limited history, the site of the meeting and the importance placed on access to unique features of that location is important for understanding what the group is trying to do. In each site the group gained firsthand access to specific data sets, considered with practitioners questions of linking data sets and the interdisciplinary nature of the data, and investigated issues of comparative data and the relationship of data to policy.

The first meeting, in 1992, was in Ann Arbor. The availability and support of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research allowed us to focus on available data sets and on possibilities for data linkage and development which we could not have seen in any other site. A number of issues developed during the meeting from this awareness: the need for better definitions of what we were dealing with; the question of what were useable approaches to these data; considerations of how to get information on what we thought we knew from our data to practitioners who could make use of it; and questions on the role of media in transmission of information and mis-information.

In 1993 the group held its second meeting in Quantico, Virginia, at the FBI National Academy. Here too, the emphasis was on the application of useable data sets to concrete policy settings. The Academy provided a rare opportunity to communicate with persons engaged in the daily application of data to solving homicides and in gathering data which can be widely used. Atlanta, in 1994, allowed the membership to address issues regarding data linkage. Through the cooperation of the Centers for Disease Control, the membership of the group increased their familiarity with health statistics and mortality data. Also,



through sessions with media experts and media practitioners, the group considered in very direct and immediate settings questions on the translation of what we do for general consumption.

In Ottawa in 1995, the Homicide Research Working Group discussed not just the data, but the problems related to gathering data in another country. There was also an intense focus on one problem and one project, the Violence Against Women Survey. Being in a setting outside the United States, an awareness for other ways of gathering, defining, and looking at data was fostered. And in 1996 the group was able to look at one of the major private agencies influencing policy at the Rand Corporation in Santa Monica. Again, the theme and attempt was to consider the range of data sources and their importance in formulating policy and theory, with an emphasis on practical applications of our work and an understanding of the contributions an organization such as Rand can make.

### **Tracks of the Workshops:**

In all of these sites a series of themes ran through the meetings. These tracks represent the recurrent concerns of the membership - the ideas we keep coming back to time and again. They therefore represent the consistent approaches we seem to be taking toward the goals of the organization. If so, then along with the goals they are central to understanding what we are about. Roland Chilton identified five such Tracks: Homicide Data - Important Sets; Characteristics of Victims and Offenders; Geographic Distribution and Area Characteristics; Crime Trends; and Specific Factors in Homicide.

1. In all of its meetings the group has examined important homicide data sets. At all five meetings we discussed characteristics of national sets, focusing on sets in the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data in Ann Arbor, the Uniform Crime Reports Supplemental Homicide Reports and the National Incident Based Reporting System at Quantico, the Vital Statistics and Centers for Disease Control data in Atlanta, and Canadian and other national data sets in Ottawa. We have also considered local sets of data based on event characteristics (lynching) and geographic location (city sets from Los Angeles, Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia).
2. In these national sets, and more significantly in local sets, members of the Homicide Research Working Group regularly investigated characteristics of victims and offenders in homicide. This concern has overlapped the emphasis on data sets, and has addressed questions on the definition of variables or characteristics, the comparability of data on victims and offenders, relationships between victims and offenders, the nature of specific types of homicide and victim/offender characteristics, and a multitude of related questions on the individuals involved in homicides.
3. At a different scale, there has also been a consistent interest in the geographic distribution of homicide and the characteristics of areas in which homicide is differentially distributed. This has ranged across the possibilities of size, from international comparative discussions, through considerations of the South and other regional variations in homicide levels, to increasingly sophisticated development of "hot spot area" mapping abilities at the

local city level.

4. As the track concerned with geographic distribution is fundamentally an interest in questions of homicide in the dimension of space, a concurrent track embodies an interest in homicide in time. This track has involved the investigation of homicide trends. Again, this interest varied in scale, looking at everything from homicide trends in the Netherlands and the United States, through changes across comparative U.S. cities, to detailed historical and longitudinal studies of select populations in select cities.

5. Finally, a fifth track concerned itself with specific factors believed to be major contributors to homicide. These factors vary, but in four of the five meetings the factor dealt with was drugs, and in the most recent three meetings has been guns. While the group has looked at everything from mental disorders and battered women to exposure to TV violence and country music, the two factors of guns and drugs dominate our concerns.

### **The Scale of the Question: Weighing What We Do for Theory and Policy.**

Cutting across all of these tracks and concerns with data and theory, however, is the fundamental issue of scale. We tend to be very lax about specification of what level of data, theory, and policy concerns we are dealing with. For years, one of the strongest advocates for considering the role of the environment in patterns of homicide has been Harold Rose. He insightfully points out that we have not adequately looked at the impact of scale on the outcome of our models, our tests of theory, or our recommendations for policy. As a consequence, he argues that in very few situations has our homicide research had an impact on the homicide phenomenon in any serious way.

Much of what we do, as evidenced in our concerns with international, national, and even state and city data sets, deals not with the homicide event or homicide as the average citizen or policy maker defines it, but in a much more accurate sense with homicide rates, aggregate numbers, or trends. As Rose says, our research does not "put a human face" on homicide. We can often fairly accurately predict homicide rates or numbers over time or for specific geographic localities. However, the general population has difficulty relating to this scale, because the homicide phenomenon they see daily in the media is a specific case with particular victims and offenders.

As a consequence, we must begin to clearly define the scale with which we are concerned. When this is done, we can then understand the limits of our theory, data, and policy recommendations. We are also then in a better position to consider the relationships among our data sets, and the possibilities for integration of our theories.

But even now, as John Jarvis pointed out, the Homicide Research Working Group does have the potential to be of use to the government for real policy considerations. The Ann Arbor, Atlanta, and Quantico meetings were all supported in large part by some agency of the United States government and the Ottawa meeting by the Canadians, so governmental policy makers are, to some degree, interested in what the group does. The U.S. and Canadian agencies which have had involvement or representation at the Homicide Research

Working Group in the past include the Canadian Department of Justice, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the Solicitor General Canada, the United States General Accounting Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Centers for Disease Control, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Housing and Urban Development, the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism, the National Center for Juvenile Justice, and the National Science Foundation. Additionally, a number of local and state police agencies, public health and coroner's offices, and criminal justice planning organizations have been involved from time to time.

These agencies find usefulness in the Homicide Research Working Group in the ideas and exchanges at the meetings, and in the proceedings which the National Institute of Justice produces each year. In part the group helps government personnel to avoid re-inventing the wheel, to find out who has studied what and how that information might be of use. The group has also started to function as a "translator," cutting across the languages which have tended to be specific to various agencies. As a result, the level of communication between public health and public safety, academics and practitioners, and media and researchers has begun to improve. Pursuing the goal of integrating data, as an example, has moved us toward combining criminal justice homicide data with firearms data and health statistics. The Homicide Research Working Group, acting as an objective organization, allows individuals to learn other languages for this sort of data sharing.

### **The Now and Future Group: Where Do We Go Next?**

It was Pam Lattimore who emphasized that if the Homicide Research Working Group does this job and has this potential, we need to consider where the group is going as an organization. Emerson said that an institution is merely the lengthened shadow of an individual, and if that is true then the Homicide Research Working Group is a classic example. The origin of the group and its continuance are primarily due to the activities of Richard and Becky Block. Without question, were those individuals to decline to do that work the group would have to either find another individual willing to make the same commitment, or it would have to restructure itself. And if it were to re-structure, then it would lose some of the distinctiveness which has allowed it to meet the goals it has set.

That is the central task for the group to consider for the future. In five years, will we be sitting in a panel with the same format? If so, what should we continue to consider? Do the five tracks we have followed comprehensively set out the concerns of the group, or do we need to think in directions we have not yet pursued? And if we are not in the same panels with the same formats in five years, then what effect will those changes in organization have on the goals of the group? In any case, what do we need to think of and what do we want to do in the future?

A variety of topics were addressed in the open discussion on the group's organization and future. It was pointed out that studies of homicide and violence have had an impact on policy in the past. The effects of research on domestic violence have had a direct and

observable impact, and have resulted in changes in the way police departments and prosecutors operate across the United States. On the other hand, part of the difficulty the group faces is a lack of understanding of the intricacies of policy making, and thus a limited understanding of how to get what we think we know enacted into policy. Since policy is a political enactment, what gets construed or constructed as reality by the powers involved becomes the key. As such, we return again to the influence of the media on shaping policy and our role in interacting with the media. As Harold Rose pointed out, returning to the issue of putting a human face on homicide.

Certainly, the old feeling that academics should not be talking to practitioners is changing. The Homicide Research Working Group has been a strong support group advocating that change among its members. As a consequence, the group needs to keep looking at theories of homicide with the intention, or hope, that these theories will also provide suggestions for the prevention or reduction of homicide. If we can find ways that we think homicide can actually be reduced, then we need to learn first, who to contact in order to get those ideas into the policy arena; second, how to convey those ideas in a form which will get them enacted through the political process; and third, how to convey those ideas and our data to the general public and to practitioners in order to make a difference in the world.

Given the original goals of the Homicide Research Working Group, that remains the future of the organization.



# **THE HOMICIDE RESEARCH WORKING GROUP'S FIRST FIVE YEARS: WHAT HAS BEEN DONE? WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

Roland Chilton, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

## **ABSTRACT**

This review of the published proceedings and programs for the first five annual meetings of the Homicide Research Working Group suggests that the work of the Group moves along five broad tracks. Some possibilities for additional work and future collaboration come to mind when the tracks are examined. Ideally, the possibilities discussed here, and others suggested by similar examinations of the Group's earlier work, will help HRWG members pursue one of the organization's major purposes.

## **TOPICS DISCUSSED AT EARLIER MEETINGS**

This review of topics, issues, and strategies discussed at earlier annual meetings of the Homicide Research Working group (HRWG) was undertaken on the premise that such a review would suggest fruitful research directions for members of the Group. To do this, earlier presentations were classified according to their central focus. Some focused on data, others on trends. Some focused on techniques while others concentrated on factors related to homicide. Presentations at the Ann Arbor meeting (1992), for example, focused on one of five broad topic areas. Some presentations at this first annual meeting of the Group focused on (1) important homicide data sets. Some focused on (2) the characteristics of victims and offenders or the relationships between victims and offenders. Other presentations focused on (3) the geographic distribution of homicide events or the characteristics of areas with high homicide rates. Still other presentations examined (4) urban and national homicide trends or discussed (5) specific factors that appear to be linked to homicide.

A similar review of the presentations made at the Quantico (1993) and Atlanta (1994) meetings suggests the same five broad topics. At all three meetings important issues arose in the discussions of these topics. Some of the issues discussed at the Ann Arbor meeting concerned the necessity of better definition; the identification of "usable" approaches to homicide reduction; ways of getting useful information to schools, clinics, and other organizations; and the role of television in the production and reduction of violence. An important issue raised at the Quantico meeting concerned the meaning and utility of a "public health approach" to violence reduction. Issues raised at the Atlanta meeting concerned the effectiveness of punitive sanctions in domestic violence and the role of employment in violence reduction. Strategies for short and long term violence reduction were debated at all three meetings. Participants at all three meeting struggled to identify strategies that might reduce violence.

Besides the five broad topics discussed at the first three meetings, presentations at the Ottawa (1995) and Santa Monica (1996) meetings focused on two additional topics--homicide prevention and theories of lethal violence. Since most of the presentations at the Ann Arbor, Quantico, and

Atlanta meetings involved implicit theories of lethal violence, and since several of the presentations at these meetings could have been described as prevention efforts, a set of five broad tracks can be used to discuss most earlier efforts. Figures 1 through 5 show these tracks. I have put the names of those speaking on specific topics in square brackets within each track. These names can be used to locate specific articles in the published proceedings of the annual meetings. The Ann Arbor, Quantico and Atlanta proceedings were edited by Block and Block (1993, 1994, and 1995). The Ottawa proceedings were edited by Riedel (forthcoming) while the Santa Monica proceedings, edited by Lattimore and Greenwood, appear in this volume.

## **THE FIVE TRACKS**

By reorganizing the five broad categories of presentations made at each annual meeting into a set of tracks, we can follow the treatment of specific topics from year to year. These tracks tell us that some topics have virtually disappeared while others have become more popular. Figure 1 shows the focus of some group members on important homicide data sets at each of the meetings from Ann Arbor through Santa Monica. It indicates, for example, that at the Santa Monica meeting there was very little discussion of major data sets. Figure 2 lists the presentations at each of the meetings focused on homicide victims, homicide offenders, and the relationships between victims and offenders. Figure 3 shows the presentations focused on reports of the geographic distribution of homicide events, victims or offenders and related events. Figure 4 lists a number of studies of crime trends that were discussed at the annual meetings. The track shown in Figure 5 is less focused than tracks one through four. It lists some specific factors frequently linked to homicide in some way. Two of the most frequently examined sets of relationships are the relationship between drug and alcohol use and homicide and the relationship between drug sales and homicide.

An examination of all five tracks provides the names of people who have worked on or who are working on specific topics and generally will indicate a growing or waning interest in a topic. The usefulness of organizing earlier presentations in this way is that such organization calls attention to what has been done and, in doing so, indicates what still needs to be done. Such an effort is consistent with the major purpose of the Homicide Research Working Group. The group was formed to encourage better working relationships among homicide researchers, to facilitate the sharing of data and research techniques, to promote improvements in data quality, and to foster collaborative, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research on homicide.

## **SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE EFFORTS--WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

Anyone looking at the tracks shown below and reviewing the related proceedings can decide what might be done next. Those who do so may or may not agree with the suggestions listed below. The following suggestions simply indicate areas that I think might contribute to continuity in homicide research. One idea for collaboration suggested by a review of presentations in Track One, and by the most recent HRWG discussion of existing data collection efforts, is the need for continued federal support of data collection efforts essential to much homicide research. This includes the need for continued support for all aspects of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

program but support for efforts to record offenses known to the police in particular. In addition, support is needed for efforts to collect data on people arrested for homicide. The Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) program, and the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) are important aspects of these national efforts.

Although there was little formal description of important data sets at the Santa Monica meeting, discussion at the end of the meeting suggested that the UCR program may be getting less cooperation than it has in the past. Moreover, a few participants expressed skepticism about the future of the National Incident Based Reporting System. These comments were combined with reports that some users were calling for changes in the NIBRS system. Others suggested that the worst thing that could happen to NIBRS would be another change in the program as it is struggling to expand. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of specific systems, it should be clear to everyone that if there are to be dependable, comparable, and national data for homicide researchers to work with in the future, it will be important for members of the group to encourage continued federal, state, and local support for the UCR programs.

Several of the presentations in Track One, as well as some in Tracks Two and Four, indicate the importance for homicide research of the cause of death reports produced as part of the national vital statistics program. These data sets are important supplements to the UCR figures on homicides coming to the attention of the police because they provide information on the characteristics of victims and provide another indication of the number of homicides reported for specific cities. Since this data is available for US cities, data collected as part of the vital statistics program should be made part of the several city data bases that now exist--Chicago, St. Louis, Atlanta, and San Antonio to name a few. This supplemental information would then be available to fill gaps in these data sets or alert those using the files to the possibility of under or over reporting.

Future efforts along Track Two will be heavily dependent on developments along Track One. Both local and national data sets will provide important information on the characteristics of victims, offenders, and the relationships of both. Therefore, data for specific cities should not only fold in the cause of death data but any Supplemental Homicide Report or National Incident Based Reporting data that is available. This would provide supplemental information on the characteristics of victims and offenders. It would be very useful if the researchers in charge of detailed data sets for specific cities worked together with those developing other local data sets to see to what extent their files are comparable or at least to explore questions that might be asked of each of the data sets. It would be interesting, for example, to see a comparison of the relationships of victims and offenders in the several city data sets. Such results could be compared with the relationships suggested by analysis of the SHR file and NIBRS data--ideally for some of the same cities.

In Track Three there are real possibilities for movement. The San Antonio data base will permit careful analysis of the impact of economic and social characteristics on homicide rates within the city. If these analyses are carried out using data for specific ethnic groups (black, white, and Hispanic) for both the independent and dependent variables, our knowledge of the importance of



social and economic factors for homicide rates would be greatly increased. Similar studies could probably be carried out for Chicago and St. Louis and possibly for Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Atlanta. If such studies were coordinated in a collaborative effort, the results would take on added importance. This is clearly an area in which the HRWG could contribute much to our understanding of homicide in urban areas for 1970, 1980, and 1990.

In Track Four, it appears that several independent analyses of homicide trends for central cities are being conducted. It would probably be useful for those in the HRWG who are looking at homicide offense trends, homicide victimization trends, and homicide offender trends for specific cities to work collaboratively in these efforts. At minimum, it would seem to be useful to establish an urban homicide trends subgroup in which those studying homicide trends at the city level exchange drafts of papers, data, and ideas over an email network. The next meeting of the HRWG should include, if possible, a coordinated presentation of the findings of those examining homicide trends at the city level.

Of the several specific factors shown as part of Track Five, a few appear repeatedly. One that appears frequently in HRWG meetings is an often undifferentiated discussion of the impact of drug use and drug commerce on homicide. In these discussions, little is said about the role of drug policy--especially current US drug policy. This may be because current US policies on drug use and drug sales are powerfully influenced by political ideology. This influence is so strong that government officials at all levels continue to insist that current policies cannot be reviewed. This situation may be eased a little as discussions of drugs as precipitating factors in homicide are expanded to include alcohol. One reasonable suggestion for those working in this area might be to ask them to try to separate pharmacological issues from commercial issues as precipitating factors in homicide. It would be even more useful if those working in this area at least considered the possibility that current drug policies are ineffective or counter productive.

Another topic that comes up regularly at HRWG meetings concerns the role of firearms in homicide events. Next year's meeting at the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Headquarters might be a good time to continue the discussion of the impact of easily available firearms on homicide levels and trends. Other specific factors that might be worthy of reexamination at future meetings are victim precipitation, exposure to television violence, and unemployment or underemployment. Simply presenting such a list indicates the extent to which the topics in the five tracks overlap. Work in Track Three would be useful in the examination of a number of specific factors sometimes linked to homicide.

Although not presented with separate lists of topics, the theory and prevention tracks suggest efforts worth attention in the future. The Santa Monica theory presentation was an important attempt to help members coming from different disciplines and perspectives see the commonalties in their approaches, commonalties that are sometimes concealed by disciplinary terminology. The discussion should have helped some members of the Group realize that they are indeed operating with some kind of theory--even it is simple and traditional deterrence theory.

In my view, we need to expand this discussion with a review of contemporary biological and psychological theories of lethal violence, distinguishing them from earlier approaches with the same or similar perspectives. I think it is important for all members to be self reflective in thinking about the theories implicit in their approaches to homicide and homicide reduction policies. It is essential that all of us consider the policy implications of our favorite theories and quasi-theories. This may be particularly important as the group supports or attempts to evaluate specific homicide prevention efforts. Implicitly or explicitly, prevention policies are based on some theory of homicide. As we are clearer about our theoretical perspectives, we will be more conscious of the reasons for our use of specific research techniques and our support of specific prevention efforts.

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**Figure 1. Track One: Presentations on Important Homicide Data Sets**

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**Ann Arbor Meeting (1992)**

**National Sets**

US - National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) [Jarvis]

Canada - Canadian Homicide Data Base [Wright]

**Local Sets - Los Angeles Gangs, Chicago, Baltimore, Philadelphia Data Sets**  
[Maxson; Block and Block; Cheatwood]

**Quantico Meeting (1993)**

**National Sets**

US - NIBRS [Jarvis], Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) [Brewer; Tennenbaum], Vital Statistics [Jenkins and Castillo], Uniform Crime Reports, Urban counties [Dawson; Rand]

Canada - Victim and Offender Data [Fedorowycz]

**Local Sets - Lynching [Corzine and Corzine], Organizing a Large Data Set [C.Block]**

**Atlanta Meeting (1994)**

**National Sets**

US - (NIBRS data sets distributed by Jarvis) NIBRS [Chilton; Snyder; Saltzman], Vital Statistics [Eckberg]

**Related Surveys (CDC Violence and Injury Surveillance) [Mercy; Saltzman; Potter]**

**Ottawa Meeting (1995)**

**National Sets**

US - NIBRS [Chilton],

Canada - Violence against Women Survey [Johnson]

**Local Sets - Chicago [C. Block]**

**Poster/Display Criminal Justice Archives (ICPSR) [Marz and Dunn]**

**Santa Monica Meeting (1996)**

**Poster/Display Only - Some discussion of data sets at session on projections [Jarvis]**

## **Figure 2. Presentations Stressing the Characteristics of Victims or Offenders**

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### **Ann Arbor Meeting (1992)**

Victims Only - Incidents, Vital Statistics [Campbell]

Both Victims & Offenders - Relationships [Bell and Jenkins; Kumar, Savitz, Turner]

### **Quantico Meeting (1993)**

Victims Only (Incidents, Vital Statistics) [Fingerhut]

Offenders Only (Arrests, Age and Sex) [Wilson and Daly; Rand]

Suicide and Homicide Combined [Corzine, Corzine and Whitt]

### **Atlanta Meeting (1994)**

Victims Only (Vital Statistics - Age) [Chen; Lee and Chen]

Women as Victims, Wives as Victims [Johnson; Wilson and Daly]

Both Victims & Offenders (Relationships) [Saltzman]

Family, Parents, Parolees [Heide; Lattimore, Visser, Linster]

### **Ottawa Meeting (1995)**

Victims Only - US, California [Florence; Abrahamse; A. Lee; E. Lee]

Families and Spouse as victims [Jarvis; Kennedy; Chilton]

Offenders Only - US, Florida, Men who Murder, Kids who Kill [Smith and Feiler; Heide]

Both - Youth, High School Students [Lockwood]

### **Santa Monica Meeting (1996)**

Victims Only - Parents as Victims [Heide; Weisman]

Parolees as Victims, Race & Ethnicity [Lattimore and Linster]

Both Victims & Offenders - Age, Race and Guns, Robber Characteristics [Erikson]

**Figure 3. Track Three: Presentations Focused on the Geographic Distribution of Homicide and the Characteristics of Areas with Unusual Homicide Rates**

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**Ann Arbor Meeting (1992)**

Chicago [C. Block]

**Quantico Meeting (1993)**

Milwaukee, Chicago, Cleveland, Peoria [Rose; McClain; Block and Block; Roncek; Moser]  
Mapless Mapping (Distribution of Serial Rape) [Reboussin; Warren and Hazelwood]

**Atlanta Meeting (1994)**

The South [Whitt, Corzine and Corzine]  
Geographic Distribution Replaced by studies  
of the Social Location of Violence (Work Place) [Erickson; Amandus; Castillo]

**Ottawa Meeting (1995)**

Elevated Stations as Hot Spots [R. Block and Davis]  
The South and West, by Occupation [Reaves and Nisbett]

**Santa Monica Meeting (1996)**

Geographic Distribution - Chicago Firearm Study (Proposal) [C. Block]

**Figure 4. Track Four: Presentations focused on Trends in Crime**

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**Ann Arbor Meeting (1992)**

St. Louis and the United States [Rosenfeld, Decker, and Kohfeld]

**Quantico Meeting (1992)**

Supplemental Homicide Reports (limited discussion) [Tennenbaum]

**Atlanta Meeting (1992)**

US (Arrests), Clearance Rates, [Blumstein; Reidel]

Chicago, Fifty Cities, Netherlands, [C. Block and Christakos; Chilton; Nijboer]

US (Historical Reconstruction) [Eckberg]

**Ottawa Meeting (1992)**

Clearance Rates, Firearm deaths, [Reidel; Chilton; Lee]

Intimate partner violence, City crime trends [Chilton; Gartner]

**Santa Monica Meeting (1992)**

Projected Trends, Youth Violence in California [Abrahamse]

Urban Trends, Ethnic Trends [Brewer; Rojek; Bradshaw, Cheatwood, & Johnson; Martinez]

Trends in Youth Violence [Lee and Chen; Blumstein and Cork; Fleweling]

Adult Trends [Rosenfeld; Lattimore; Blumstein; Chilton]

**Figure 5. Track Five: Presentations Focused on Specific Factors as Links to Homicide**

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**Ann Arbor Meeting (1992)**

Drugs and Drug Policy [Goldstein]

**Quantico Meeting (1993)**

Drugs and Drug Policy [Flewelling]

Victim Precipitation [Wolfgang; C. Block; Savitz, Kumar, and Turner]

Battered Women [Rasche]

**Atlanta Meeting (1994)**

Southern Culture [Whitt, Corzine and Corzine]

Inner Cities [Lockwood; Jenkins]

Guns [Roth]

Sanctions and Domestic Violence [Dobash and Dobash]

**Ottawa Meeting (1995)**

Drugs and Alcohol [Parker and Cartmill; Rojek]

Guns [Dittenhoffer, Hung and Falcon; Roth; Chilton]

Economic Conditions [Chen]

Country Music [Corzine and Corzine, Whitt]

**Santa Monica Meeting (1996)**

Firearms [Cook and Ludwig; C. Block and Christakos; Blackman; Decker,  
Rosenfeld and Jacobs; Vince; D. Kennedy; R. Block]

Homicide as Entertainment [R. Kennedy]

## **Section Two:**

### **Integrating Theories of Lethal Violence**





**THEORIZING ABOUT HOMICIDE:  
A PRESENTATION ON THEORIES EXPLAINING HOMICIDE AND OTHER CRIMES**

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**ABSTRACT**

Discussion of theories of homicide have been infrequent in HRWG meetings, perhaps because we are such a diverse disciplinary group. As an exercise in creating a common language for discourse and stimulating explicit discussion of theory, a schema for organizing theories of crime is presented, with brief narrative explanations of the major categories. This may help to serve as a springboard for discussion of theory.

**INTRODUCTION**

From the very first conference of the Homicide Research Working Group (HRWG) in Ann Arbor in 1992, Richard Block and a handful of others have worried about the relative lack of presentations on and discussion of theory at our meetings. Without question, all of our stimulating and delightful summer conferences have tended to focus on the sharing of mostly quantitative data or the latest research techniques. There have been the occasional forays into theoretical considerations, but even these have tended to be either the outgrowth of--or prelude to--discussions of datasets, methodological issues, policy implications or some other consideration in the study of homicide and other violent behavior.

Does this mean that theories of homicide cannot be discussed independent of their policy implications or their methods of testing? Or does it mean that we have been inadequately prepared to enter into a discussion of theory for its own sake? Why haven't we focused on theory more often?

While I would strongly advocate that theories of crime cannot, in fact, be considered for very long without giving consideration to their policy implications and methods for testing, I also have come to believe that part of the avoidance of theory at HRWG meetings is derived from our collective lack of a common framework within which to engage in a theoretical discussion. After all, one of the joys--and periodic frustrations--of HRWG meetings is that we are all drawn together from a number of disciplines which do not necessarily interact otherwise. Even those of us who are used to interacting fairly regularly, such as sociologists and psychologists, are keenly aware that when it comes to theorizing about human behavior we have developed some very different traditions and ideas. When we share a similar idea, we may label it differently or, vice versa, we may use the same terminology to mean different ideas--as in the use of the term "learning theory," which means different things to psychologists and sociologists. Just look at the laughter which erupted during our 1993 meeting at the FBI Academy when we all suddenly

realized that the public health people were using the term "surveillance" very differently from its everyday meaning among law enforcement people! If we cannot even talk about our techniques and technologies without becoming confused over conflicting language, no wonder we have hesitated to talk about theory!

The fact that the HRWG has continued to meet annually, grown in numbers and now prepares to launch its own scholarly journal might suggest that we simply do not NEED to discuss theory--after all, we do seem to be doing pretty well as it is. I suspect the frustration for the theorists among us comes from the belief that all social policy and all methods for scientifically testing the world are actually born out of theories about the way the world works. Those theories may remain implicit and unspoken, but that does not mean that they are not there. No matter how sophisticated the technologies or the methods themselves, in the end they all serve to test theories which are intended to explain the world or parts of it. No matter how popular or unpopular various social policies may be, they reflect underlying ideas about why people behave the way they do. All too often, in fact, theorists would warn us that social policies have been invoked without due consideration being given to their underlying theoretical assumptions (and, therefore, their implications). And, probably we all at one time or another have been awed by a sophisticated new testing technique, only to be left later wondering what it really proved. For those of us who are teachers, seeing the theoretical void in our otherwise eager students has become an occupational hazard. But our students' lives go on, and many of them eventually take up places in the real world of criminal justice practitioners. Most of them do those jobs everyday without thinking about the underlying theories of their policies or the theoretical implications of their practices. Why should our scholarly meetings be any different?

Perhaps the answer to that question is self-evident. It may be obvious that if we, as scholars, do not give consideration to theory then no one will. But, would that be so bad? I would argue that yes, in fact, it would be disastrous. "Theory" is just a fancy word for "explanation," and explanations are what we are all striving to do in one form or another. In the case of HRWG, we are striving to better understand--and perhaps prevent--lethal behaviors in society. How can we evaluate new technologies or methodologies if we do not hold them up against the measure of what they seek to help us explain? How can we really weigh the value of various social policies if we do not assess their theoretical implications? I would submit that the answer to these last two questions is that we cannot.

So how can we bring theories of homicide into the spotlight? Given the diversity of our disciplinary backgrounds and professional practices, it is problematic to assume that we are all even using the same terminology, much less to assume that we all share equal levels of knowledge about the same theoretical traditions. To simply select a theoretical tradition and try to discuss its merits for the study of homicide runs the risk of our disintegrating into a disciplinary Tower of Babel.

The idea for this presentation, therefore, came from the suggestion that it might help if we all had a common starting ground, and perhaps a shared language, for this enterprise. To that end, I am presenting here a schema for organizing and understanding theories of crime. Figure 1 presents a graphic portrayal of this schema. The narrative will provide a brief overview of each of the major schools of thought contained in the schema, their respective underlying assumptions about

the nature of people, their definition(s) of the cause(s) of crime (specifically homicide), and their inherent social policy implications.

I confess up front that the basic framework for the schema which I am presenting was originally borrowed (some 30 years ago) from George Vold's (1958) classic work on theoretical criminology, which has now been revised several times (Vold and Bernard, 1986). Over the years I have added, subtracted and made various revisions to Vold's basic schema as the body of knowledge demanded it. I make no claims for this schema's exhaustiveness or exclusiveness; in fact, the schema is dominated for the most part by theories of criminal behavior (as opposed to theories of social response to crime, for example). I am quite sure that its component parts or glaring omissions will either puzzle or infuriate people from various disciplines whose theoretical traditions contribute to the discipline we today call "criminology" or "criminal justice." But the intended value of such an exercise is to give us something which we can use as a springboard into a discussion of theory--and which we can revise, redesign or trash completely.

## **A SCHEMA FOR ORGANIZING THEORIES OF HOMICIDE**

### **Spiritistic Theories Versus Naturalistic Theories**

One of the difficulties in trying to get a handle on criminological theory is that humans have been trying to explain events such as homicide for a very long time. There is no dearth of explanations for catastrophic human behaviors, even if we limit ourselves to the most recent several hundred years. If we were to consider each proposed explanation for homicide in chronological order, we would soon find numerous instances of apparent redundancy, since theoretical ideas have often been proposed repeatedly, albeit in new forms. We would also find ourselves jumping back and forth between those theories which lend themselves to scientific testing and those which do not. It would be very confusing.

One of George Vold's valuable contributions to the effort to understand explanations for crime was his distinction between what he called "spiritistic" and "naturalistic" explanations (Vold, 1958). In brief, Vold asserted that causal explanations for any phenomena must be divided between those which permit scientific scrutiny because they are based on naturalistic assumptions and those theories which defy scientific scrutiny because they are based on supernatural assumptions. Spiritistic explanations rest on the belief that supernatural forces (such as gods, demons, cosmic forces, etc.) interact in the world and that earthly phenomenon/events are caused or affected by such supernatural interference. Thus, explanations for homicide have included the ancient belief in the "evil eye," which in various cultures meant that a human being had been infected by supernatural forces with the capacity to cast evil upon the world by looking at it; such a person had to be blinded (at least) or killed (at worst) to prevent such contamination from spreading, and no participant in such a culture would find such an explanation for murder at all peculiar. Least we think that such an explanation would be limited to the past or to primitive cultures somewhere else in the world, it is important to note that at least one blinding and one murder have taken place in the United States within the past decade in which the perpetrators offered this explanation for their behaviors. Whether we, as observers, accept that explanation or choose to impose another explanation (such as mental illness) on the perpetrator is not the

point here; the point is that some homicidal behavior by humans may be explained by themselves or others as the result of supernatural influences. We can scientifically test the mental stability of the explanation offerers, but we cannot test the validity of their claim of supernatural influence, since by definition supernatural forces resist scientific scrutiny.

By contrast, if the perpetrators put forth a claim of mental illness to account for their acts, it is entirely possible for us to scientifically scrutinize and test this claim. Even if our tools and techniques are less than perfect, we can attempt to prove or disprove those claims which are "naturalistic"--that is, which assume that things happen in the world because of the interactions and interrelationships between natural objects, events and ideas. Indeed, naturalistic approaches explicitly assume that things happen only because of such natural phenomenon and reject supernatural causes; they would assert that even if the natural cause of a phenomenon cannot be determined now because of the limited state of our technology, improved technologies will permit us to do so in time. Thus, a homicide perpetrator who claims to have acted because of the "evil eye" or "devil possession" would be viewed by a naturalist as possible mentally impaired or as deliberately fabricating a falsehood, conditions for which we can empirically test.

Despite the dominance of naturalistic explanations in modern life, it is important to remember that supernatural explanations for crime are still alive and well in the world, and there are many believers in even the most modern cultures. We can scientifically study why otherwise modern people choose to resort to supernatural explanations to account for current events, whether those explanations involve the "evil eye" or aliens from space; but we cannot definitively prove that homicides are caused by either the "evil eye" or space aliens as long as both of those forces are presumed to be supernatural. Thus, virtually all of modern criminological theories are naturalistic. And, accordingly, the lines in Figure 1 are shown connecting the title "Naturalistic Theories" to everything, while the title "Spiritistic Theories" is displayed but not connected to anything else on the chart.

### **Naturalistic Explanations: Classical, Positivist and Critical**

Vold (1958) was one of the first to suggest that the multitude of crime explanations within the realm of naturalism could be divided into at least three big categories. The divisions he proposed have endured rather well and are frequently referred to without attribution. Vold referred to these divisions as "schools of thought," meaning that what their contents had in common was a way of thinking, or key propositions, about a phenomenon regardless of the historical period in which they were proposed. I shall briefly summarize each of these major divisions and indicate further subdivisions within them in terms of such key propositions or ways of thinking.

#### **A. Classical Explanations**

The beginning of Classical Criminology is usually attributed to the work of Cesare Beccaria, whose 18th century essay *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) set forth recommendations for the reform of the Italian court system premised on assumptions about the nature of human beings. Beccaria argued that people were, by nature, inherently rational (capable of logical thought), intelligent (capable of creative thought), hedonistic (motivated by pain/pleasure) and self-

determining (free willed). Under these circumstances, Beccaria argued, all behavior can be seen as freely chosen based on assessments of the pain/pleasure or cost/benefits of the actions. Crime, therefore, is a product of choice, and to prevent or deter crime we need only to increase the pain/cost of an action to the point where it overwhelms its possible pleasure/benefits. However, we must not merely increase the pain/costs across the board or punish all crimes to the extreme; excessive punishments for lesser offenses merely increase the likelihood that people will creatively engage in greater crimes to cover their behavior, since no harsher punishment will befall them for the greater offense than will already befall them if they are caught for the lesser offense. Instead a careful calculus intended to "make the punishment fit the crime" will deter a person from committing the lesser offense in order to avoid the pain/costs which will follow. Of course, Beccaria noted that this really only works if the punishment is swift and certain, since even the severest punishment has no deterrent quality if it can be escaped.

The compelling logic of such an argument as this, coupled with its free-will assumptions, has made the Classical approach to explaining crime reappear with regularity over the last two hundred years, though it fell out of favor for a period of time in the 19th century for reasons which will be set forth below. In any case, in recent years modern versions have appeared in the form of: **deterrence theories** (see, for example: Zimring and Hawkins, 1973; Andenaes, 1974; or Gibbs, 1975); **rational choice theories** (for example: Piliavin, et al. 1986; Cornish and Clarke, 1986; and Harding, 1990); and **criminological economics** (for example: Becker, 1968; Sullivan, 1973; or Harris, 1970). All of these are more sophisticated than Beccaria's original formulation but which share the key proposition that much (though perhaps not all) human behavior reflects choices in action.

The clear social policy ramifications of the Classical school are that humans can be persuaded to change their behavior either by changing the consequences of that behavior or changing the decision-making process by which humans evaluate the consequences of their behavior. Either way, however, this approach to understanding criminal/homicidal behavior makes most such acts the responsibility of the individual committing them or the society which sets forth the consequences of such actions. Indeed, it is precisely the allure of individual responsibility which has probably helped to make Classical approaches so popular over time.

## **B. Positivistic Explanations**

The Classical school fell out of favor as a predominant explanation for crime in the 19th century precisely because of its underlying notion of free will. The doctrine of free will as a major descriptor of human beings began to be eroded in the 18th century as modern physical and medical science grew and discovered an increasing number of ways in which human beings were NOT self-determining. Thus, the discovery of germs and other micro-organisms which could not be seen by the naked eye but which could bring disease and mental impairment, had a profound impact on the way people thought about the world. **Positivistic** explanations for crime began to flourish, all of which had in common an assumption that human behavior was influenced, at least in part, by factors which were largely outside the control of any specific individual. Despite this common denominator, two distinct sub-schools of thought reflect differing ideas about the locus of the factors which might influence human behavior.

The first of these sub-schools, and chronologically the first of the positivistic approaches to crime, was what is often called **Individual Determinism**. Individual Determinism assumes that the factors which influence human behavior are largely located inside the individual, either in her physical/biological nature or in his mental/psychological processes. Thus Figure 1 shows that it is possible to classify four major theoretical subsets within Individual Determinism. The first of these, **Physical Type Theories**, reflects the early work of Cesare Lombroso, whose is credited with pioneering the biological approach (see Lombroso-Ferrero, 1972, c1911). Lombroso was a Darwinist who thought some criminals might literally be less well evolved than other people, a proposition which did not withstand scientific scrutiny. Furthermore, Physical Type Theories led to difficult social policy ramifications; after all, since evolutionary status presumably cannot be altered, there is little that can be done with such creatures except to confine them or eliminate them (Hooten, 1939). Following the atrocities of World War II, such ideas became an anathema.

Nonetheless, Beccaria's ideas gave rise to a flurry of efforts to find out how criminals might be physically different from non-criminals. These efforts eventually gave rise to various **Hereditary and Defectiveness Theories**, which presumed that criminality could either be inherited genetically (see Lange, 1930) or produced by biological/physical defects. Though some of the early theories were later debunked, such as the notion of "degenerative families" (Dugdale, 1877), some modern versions of biological theories are more scientifically credible and therefore highly provocative, such as the notion that aggression may result from some head trauma or that psychopathy may result from defects in the autonomic nervous response system (see Mednick and Christiansen, 1977; Mednick and Volavka, 1980). The question which remains for all of them is whether hereditary or spontaneous defects can be "cured," or do they lead to the same difficult question of what society does with incurably flawed dangerous persons? The idea that a person could be condemned on the basis of biological features over which they have no control is contrary to American principles of democratic freedom, so biological theories of crime have sometimes had a hard time getting receptive audiences in the U.S. (see: Jeffery, 1979; Marsh and Katz, 1985).

The same questions about social policy implications have also beset **Mental Deficiency Theories**, which were very popular at the beginning of this century and have also experienced periodic rises in popularity since then. Mental Deficiency Theories essentially asserted that criminality was the product of low intelligence (Goddard, 1914), an idea which received initial empirical support from the first I.Q. testing done in this country--until it was determined that the scale was being erroneously applied. Once that was corrected, I.Q. testing did not reveal much difference between criminals and regular citizens, an outcome which has been repeatedly found (Tulchin, 1972). More successful has been the various **Mental Illness Theories**, beginning with Sigmund Freud's pioneering work in psychoanalytic theory (see Redl and Toch, 1979) and leading up to the more recent behavioristic approaches. Such theories differ widely on their assumptions about how the human mind functions, but they have in common an attempt to explain human behavior in terms of mental functioning or malfunctioning. One advantage of Mental Illness Theories is that they hold out the prospect that the mental illness can be cured. This is a far happier prospect than the dimly fatalistic implications of Mental Deficiency Theories.

To repeat, all of the **Individual Deterministic Theories** share an assumption that it is something about the person himself or herself which causes them to behave criminally. By contrast, the second sub-school within Positivistic Criminology is **Social-Cultural Determinism**, in which it

is assumed that crime is not produced by flawed people but rather by a flawed society. Humans are seen as being primarily influenced by social or cultural factors which are, again, largely outside their control.

There was a brief flirtation in the first half of the century with what have come to be known as **Multi-Factor** or **Multi-Causal** theories of crime, which asserted that crime could only be understood by studying whole persons in their social contexts (see Healy, 1915; Glueck and Glueck, 1950); of course, if everything causes crime then nothing in particular does, so Multi-Factor approaches have limited explanatory value. Of much more importance in Social-Cultural Determinism are the American sociological theories of crime, especially since some had direct influences on social policy formation. **Social Structural Theories** asserted that there were aspects of the social structure itself which caused people to engage in crime. Certainly the most famous of these approaches is that of Robert Merton (1938), who is credited with initiating what has become known as **Strain Theory**, which asserts that the strain between learned aspirations and actual possible achievements causes crime. Cloward's and Ohlin's **Opportunity Theory** (1960), which asserted that some people become criminals because they are blocked out of the legitimate opportunity structure and therefore resort to alternatives such as crime, served as the basis of explicit social policy in the 1960s famous "War on Poverty." **Social Structural Theories** have been soundly criticized for focusing attention primarily on the lower classes, but essentially they are all saying that society gets the crime it structures for itself. The solution lies in dismantling such criminogenic social structures, or opening up the opportunities of the disenfranchised, which are admittedly difficult prescriptions to follow.

On the other hand, **Social Process Theories** asserted that it was not so much the social structure as it was the cultures and processes within those structures which best account for criminal behavior. Such theories began with the observation that criminal skills were being "transmitted" from one delinquent child to the next despite ethnic and other barriers (see Shaw and McKay, 1969). But it was Sutherland's famous theory of **Differential Association** (1947) which dominated criminological thinking in the mid-20th century. In short, Differential Association asserted that crime is learned in interaction with other people who are more oriented towards crime than conventional behavior, which meant that preventing crime required interfering with that learning process. Later theorists developed companion ideas, such as the idea that law-abiding values may be nullified by learned "**neutralization techniques**" (Sykes and Matza, 1957) that can exempt us from following the rules (such as, it is bad to steal but OK to take home hotel towels), or that people may be "**contained**" (Reckless, 1961) from engaging in crime (or not) by both inner constraints (self-concept) and outer constraints (external control systems). **Control Theory** (Hirschi, 1969) eventually turned the whole issue on its head by asserting that the problem was not to explain crime but rather to explain law-abiding behavior--in other words, why aren't we ALL criminals? The answer, according to Control Theory, lies in the bonds people form with each other and with the conventional social order, which keeps us in line. No bonds to conventionality, no control.

Meanwhile, another line of reasoning which had first come up at the turn of the century reached its flowering in the 1960s. **Symbolic Interactionism**, which arose from the work of George Herbert Mead (see Blumer, 1969), argued that people relate to each other most of the time using symbols (such as language). The meanings attached to those symbols has great importance,



including the fact that sometimes the labels we put on other people have "unintended consequences," such as driving them further into the arms of criminality. Edwin Lemert (1967) eventually argued that **Secondary Deviance** might result from people accepting the labels applied to them and living up to them, as when a child who is called a dummy proceeds to fail school. This notion ultimately led to **Labelling Theory** (see: Erikson, 1962; Becker, 1963), which asserted that the critical variable in understanding crime is understanding the social audience which evaluates some behavior as being criminal. Clearly some people are differentially seen as being criminal, but whether their actual behavior warrants that labelling may be suspect, according to this line of thought. The social policy implications of this whole approach, coming out of the 1960s as it did, are clear: stop labelling people as bad and they will stop acting criminally. Or, at the very least, assess our criminal justice system agencies to see whether they are applying criminal labels to everyone equally. Perhaps some people are behaving criminally because we expect them to do so. You may recall that stereotyping got its bad reputation during this period of history.

### C. Critical Criminology

From Labelling Theory it was not a far leap to conclude that the entire focus of criminology had been misplaced for the past two hundred years. It is true that theorizing from the time of Beccaria straight up to the Symbolic Interactionist theorists had focused on the question of "Why do human beings commit crime (homicide)?" The answers to that question had varied, from the personal choice of the Classical criminologists to the biological/psychological or social/cultural influences of the Positivists. Out of Labelling Theory, however, emerged a new line of reasoning, which many scholars refer to as **Critical Criminology**. According to this school of thought, humans behave the way they do for all the reasons we have mentioned up to this point, but the really important question is what causes their behaviors to be designated as crimes. In other words, why are some homicides designated as criminal while others are viewed as justified, or excused, or even mandatory (as in time of war)? The homicidal act remains the same, the outcome (a death) remains the same, but our interpretation of it and social response to it varies considerably depending on how WE label it. Therefore, if we want to understand crime we must study the criminal justice system first and foremost.

Within **Critical Criminology**, it is possible to see two distinct but related sub-schools of thought. **Conflict Theory**, which was first suggested by Sellin (1938) in the early 20th century, essentially sees crime as the product of whoever wins the power struggle over the labelling apparatus. Thus, when one nation conquers another and imposes its law over the conquered land, behaviors which might have been acceptable yesterday may become criminalized today. Therefore, it is important to understand the actions of norm creators, norm interpreters and norm enforcers than it is to understand norm breakers (Turk, 1969). The social implications of this approach are somewhat fatalistic: we will always have crime since someone will always be the loser in the power struggles in society, so the only real question is how to minimize it. By comparison, **Marxist Theory** takes this line of reasoning much farther but ends up with a potential for cure. Based on the work of Karl Marx, **Marxist Theory** asserts that crime is primarily the product of capitalist political economies, which tend to make everyone involved in them greedy and self-centered (see Marx, 1859; Bonger, 1916; Quinney, 1980; Greenberg, 1981). While there is little

hope to eliminate crime while capitalistic political economies survive, there is the theoretical possibility of a system-wide "cure" for crime if capitalism can be overthrown. The cure for crime is revolution, which is either a happy or a horrendous prospect depending on your point of view. Short of revolution, the best we can hope for is to understand the functioning of criminal justice agencies, in order to try to mitigate their oppression.

In sum, **Critical Criminology** in large part turns the focus away from attempting to explain just criminal behavior and towards understanding social responses to crime. Its social policy implications are perhaps the most far-reaching, in so far as Marxist Theory includes a prescription for revolution.

## CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this narrative, the intent of presenting this schema on explaining crime is to stimulate discussion within the HRWG about theories of homicide. This presentation is necessarily brief and does not do justice to any of the ideas it has covered. No doubt, important ideas have been left out altogether in the interest of brevity. Indeed, some of you may find this approach to organizing theories about crime more confusing than helpful.

But the point is to get us to start somewhere in the effort to discuss theory. This presentation is intended purely as a springboard into that discussion, or at least to help make implicit assumptions explicit in our conversations. Perhaps in time we can develop our own homicide definitions where those already in the field are inadequate, or to develop our own theories where the voids in the field are the greatest. At the very least, perhaps we can move the discussion of theory out of the implicit and into the explicit, even as we continue our discussion of homicide datasets, methodologies, technologies and social policy.

I look forward to your responses. You can contact me at the address above, or at 904-646-2758, or by e-mail at [crasche@unf.edu](mailto:crasche@unf.edu)

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## SPIRITISTIC THEORIES V. NATURALISTIC THEORIES

### CLASSICAL CRIMINOLOGY

Humans seen as rational, intelligent, hedonistic, and self determining. Behavior seen as freely chosen, based on assessment of cost/benefits, pains, or pleasures.

#### 1. ORIGINAL VERSION

- a. Cesare Beccaria
- b. Jeremy Bentham

#### 2. MODERN VERSIONS

- a. Rationality Theories (Rational Choice Theories)
- b. Deterrence Theories
- c. Criminological Economics

### POSITIVISTIC CRIMINOLOGY

Humans seen as biological and social creatures. Behavior seen largely a result of biological/psychological or social/cultural influences beyond an individual's control.

#### INDIVIDUAL DETERMINISM

Humans influenced most by biological or psychological factors.

#### 1. PHYSICAL TYPE THEORIES

- A. Criminal Anthropology - Lombroso
- B. Body Type Theories - Sheldon

#### 2. HEREDITARY AND DEFECTIVENESS THEORIES

- A. Hereditary "theories"
  1. Degenerate Families (Jukes/Kallikaks)
  2. Twin Studies
  3. Adoptee Studies
- B. Defectiveness Theories
  1. Chromosomal Abnormalities
  2. Hormonal Abnormalities
  3. Brain Wave Abnormalities
  4. Blood Sugar/Nutritional Abnormalities
  5. Autonomic Nervous System Response Abnormalities

#### 3. MENTAL DEFICIENCY THEORIES

- A. Feeble-mindedness Theories
- B. Modern IQ Theories

#### 4. MENTAL ILLNESS THEORIES

- A. Psychoanalytic Theory- Freud
- B. Reinforcement Theory- Skinner

#### SOCIAL/CULTURAL DETERMINISM

Humans influenced most by social or cultural factors.

#### 1. MULTI-FACTOR THEORIES

- A. Healy
- B. The Gluecks

#### 2. SOCIAL STRUCTURAL THEORIES

- A. Strain Theory
  1. Durkheim's "anomie"
  2. Merton's "means/goals"
- B. Subculture Theory
  1. Cohen's "delinquent subcultures"
  2. Miller's "focal concerns"

#### 3. SOCIAL PROCESS THEORIES

- A. The Chicago School - "cultural transmission"
- B. Differential Association - Sutherland
- C. Neutralization- Sykes & Matza
- D. Containment- Reckless
- E. Control Theory- Hirschi

#### 4. SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

- A. GH Mead- "the social self"
- B. Tannenbaum- "unintended consequences of labels"

#### 5. SECONDARY DEVIANCE- LEMERT

- D. Labeling Theory- Becker, Erickson, Kitsuse

### CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY

Humans behave for all the previously stated reasons. The real questions is NOT what causes specific behavior but rather what causes certain behaviors to be designated as crimes.

#### CONFLICT THEORY

Competing interest groups struggle for power; the winner gets to define the law and crime. Thus crime is defined by those in power.

#### MARXIST THEORY

Capitalist political economics make all people greedy; crime is a product of capitalist political economics.

#### 1. CULTURE CONFLICT

- A. Sellin- "culture conflict"
- B. Vold- "interest groups"

#### 2. POWER RELATIONSHIPS

- A. Weber- "property, power, prestige"
- B. Austin Turk- "Crime as a status"

#### 1. ORIGINAL VERSIONS

- A. Karl Marx- capitalism corrupts everyone; crime is one symptom of this
- B. Wm Bonger- a Marxist theory of crime

#### 2. MODERN VERSIONS

- A. Wm Chambliss
- B. Taylor, Walton, and Young- "the new criminology"
- C. Richard Quinney- "the social reality of crime"

## DISCUSSION<sup>1</sup>

Dick Block questioned the value of George Vold's classification scheme for the study and control of homicide. He suggested that we begin instead with a series of questions about the patterns and correlates of crime, such as those offered by John Braithwaite. Then we can examine the answers to these questions provided by alternative theoretical perspectives. Block also pointed out that the theories focus on offending and that they should be supplemented with perspectives on victimization.

Bob Fleweling described a tension between those who formulate and test theory and those who do interventions. Part of the problem is that most theories do not carry explicit instructions for application. In addition, even when present and reasonably clear, applications often are not politically feasible. Individual-level perspectives may be more promising in this respect simply because they tend to be more politically acceptable. Paula McClain suggested that, in fact, governments are limited in their capacity to implement individual-level theories, because governments cannot change the factors that these theories link with violence. She proposed that, in principle, governments have a larger role to play in the implementation of socio-cultural perspectives. McClain argued further that all theories carry political implications and that policy is driven more by world views than by theory. Nor are researchers immune from ideological influence. McClain maintained that if violence researchers do not use or produce politically pleasing theory, the research won't go anywhere.

Al Blumstein suggested that the implication that different theories of violence are counterposed is unfortunate. The combination of perspectives pushes research in productive directions, because each offers insights missing from the others.

Peter Greenwood said he did not find the classification scheme very helpful in moving research ahead.

Lyn Huff-Corzine asked how we might increase the "complexity" of the thinking of policymakers so that they would at least listen to researchers. Chris Rasche said she had used her theoretical scheme with local leaders who found it enlightening. Paula McClain reported that the new police chief in Richmond is adopting ideas from social scientists--even to the point of rejecting proposals for more personnel. She argued that possibilities exist to influence policymakers and get them to see alternatives to traditional approaches.

Jay Corzine suggested that homicide is the outcome of highly complex and perhaps indeterminate processes. Homicide, he noted, is not a "behavior." Everett Lee pointed to new developments in biology, quantum notions, and chaos theory that should be applied to the study of violence.

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<sup>1</sup>Recorder notes by Richard Rosenfeld.

Adam Weisman said he liked the classification scheme because it helped him organize clinical approaches in dealing with violent individuals. However, he described the social perspectives as “untouchable.”

Roland Chilton asked about the baseline against which theories of violence should be evaluated. He also liked the classification because it helps to clarify implicit assumptions about violence, making them more amenable to empirical investigation.

Leigh Bienen described crime as a category more like general notions such as “disease” or “sickness” than some specific entity. This poses significant challenges for theory development and testing.

## **Section Three:**

### **Youth Violence Trends**





# THE COMING WAVE OF VIOLENCE IN CALIFORNIA

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RAND

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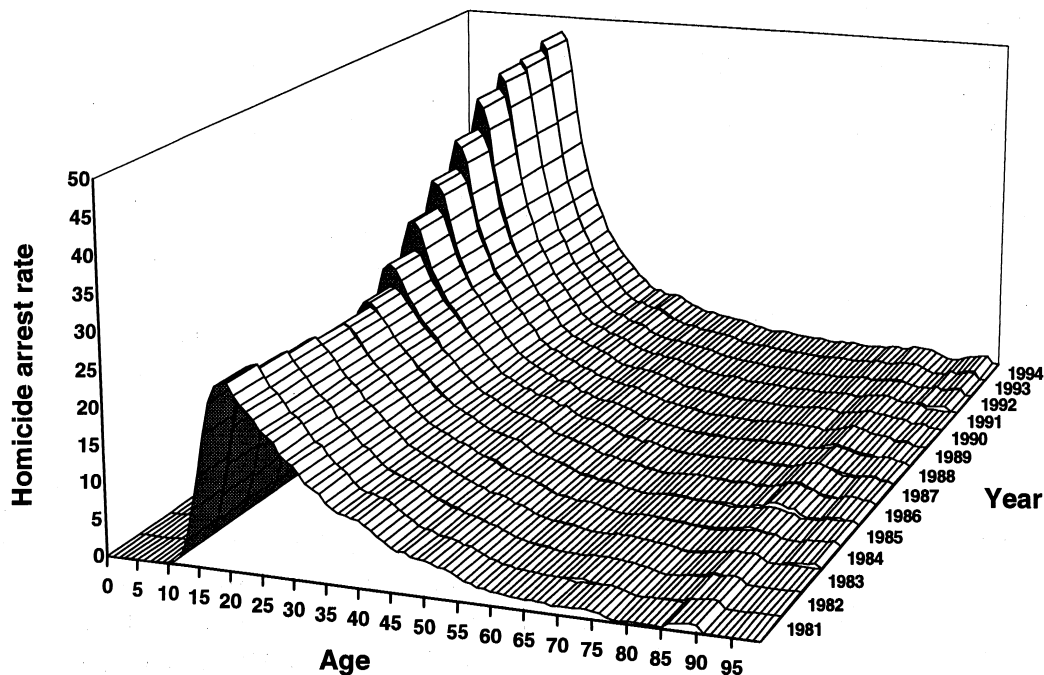
This paper projects homicide arrest rates in California through the year 2021. It suggests that for the next five years or so we will not see a great surge in such arrests, but neither will we see a great drop. After the year 2000 or so, the arrest rate may rise, and it may even rise a lot, but whatever happens depends critically on the future behavior of today's children, and those born after them.

## PROJECTIONS OF HOMICIDE ARRESTS

### Causes for alarm

Figure 1 shows smoothed estimates of the California homicide arrest rate for the years 1981 through 1994 by single year of age.

**Figure 1--Homicide Arrest Rates by Age and Year**

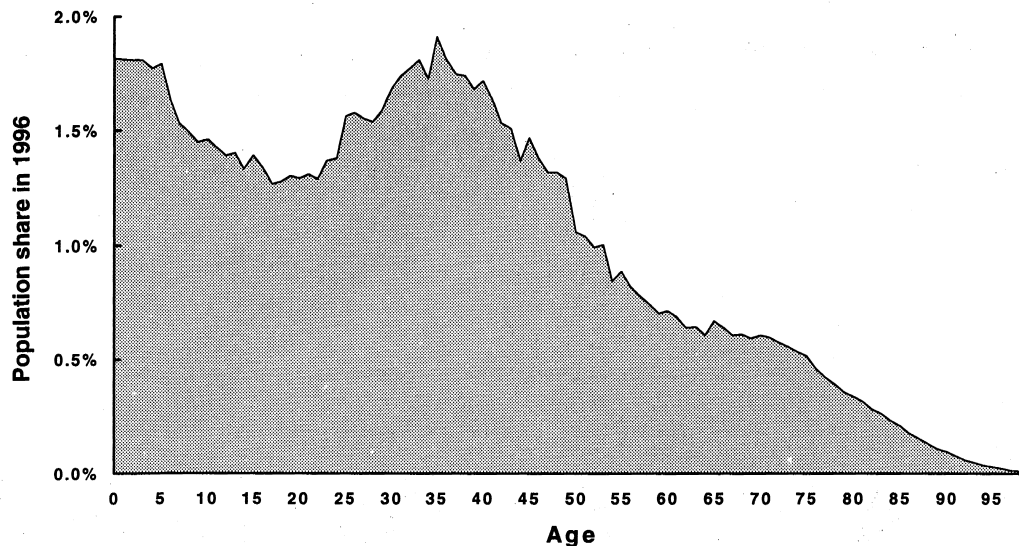


Each annual slice shows a familiar pattern: the arrest rate is essentially zero until about age 12, when it begins to rise sharply through the teen age years. It peaks around age 20, give or take a couple of years, and thereafter decays steadily for the rest of life.

Figure 1 also shows a striking increase in homicide arrest rate for young people, that is people between the age of 15 and 24, which began about 1986 and continued until about 1991. The rate continued to rise after 1991, but not as quickly as during the prior four or five years, and it is unclear if in the future it will continue to rise slowly, resume the early pattern of a sharp increase, or begin to drop.

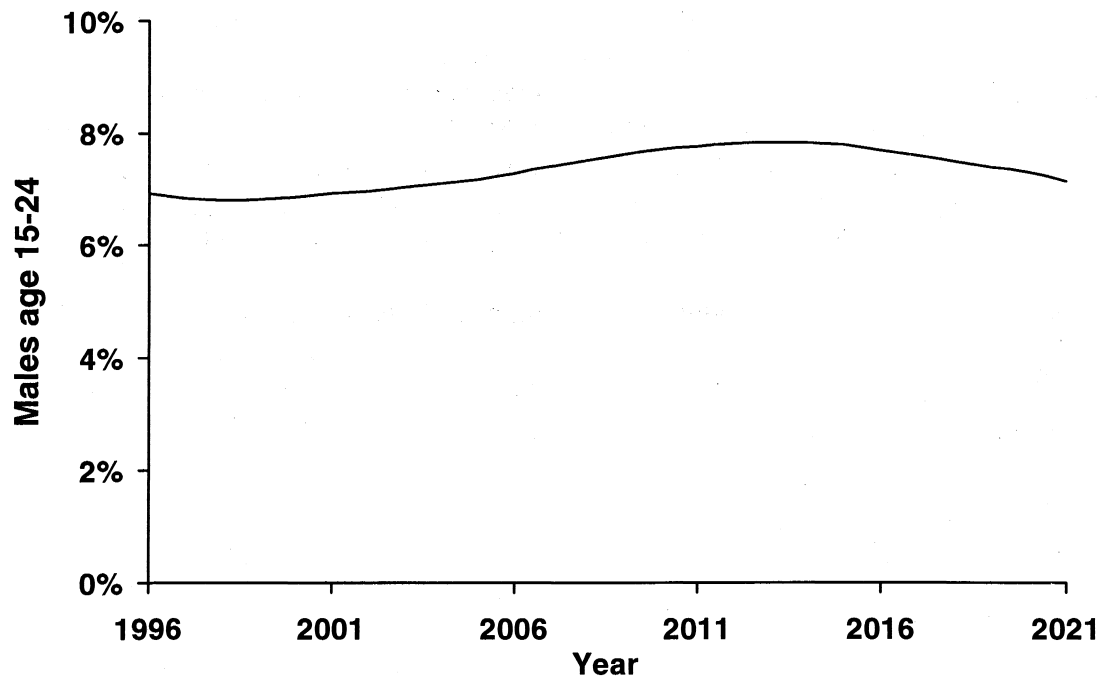
The rise in homicide arrest rate seen Figure 1 may be alarming because the number persons in the age group showing the greatest rise will increase in the near future. Figure 2 shows the age distribution of California's current population. Currently, those with the highest arrest rates, persons aged 15 to 24 sit in a population valley between two peaks: an older population of "baby boomers" and a younger population consisting of the boomer's children and the children of the many immigrants who have been attracted to California in the recent decade. In another decade or so, these younger children will enter the arrest-prime ages. What will then happen to the overall homicide rate?

**Figure 2--Age Distribution in 1996**



While the prospect of a huge wave of violent teenagers is alarming, it should be pointed out that although tomorrow's population will indeed have more young people, it will also have more people of other ages too. We will not see a sharp increase in the *relative* numbers of young people. To illustrate this claim, Figure 3 shows that the fraction of the total population that will be *males* between the ages of 15 and 24 will only rise by about a percentage point over a base rate of about seven percent in the next decade or two (we consider males because they have the highest arrest rates, and thus, a sharp increase in their relative numbers could cause a sharp increase in arrests).

**Figure 3--Population Share of Males age 15-24**



### **What lies in store?**

Using a file that describes almost every homicide arrest in California between 1981 and 1994, and population projections created by the State of California, we have estimated future arrest rates for every birth-cohort represented within California's population between 1995 and 2021. Future rates for cohorts born in 1976 or earlier are estimated by fitting that part of their current rates seen in the homicide file to a curve shaped like the age specific homicide rates shown in Figure 1. Cohorts are defined by year of birth, race/ethnicity, and sex. The procedure is analogous to the way demographers project fertility.

People born after 1976 are currently too young to indicate how violent they will become by merely looking at current homicide statistics. Future rates for these cohorts are estimated by projecting the latest age specific arrest rates into the future, assuming different rates of growth of the arrest rates.

To estimate the rate of change in arrest rates, we consider the race-adjusted homicide arrest rates for males age 15-20 shown in Figure 4. During the 1990's, this rate grew about 1% per year. Ignoring 1990, the rate grew 3% per year. Finally, to provide at least some basis for hypothesizing a fall in the rates, we fit the data from 1988 through 1994 with an inverted parabola to rationalize a possible "bend" in the data, and extrapolate a drop of about 1% per year. These considerations suggest three different assumptions:

1. *Nominal assumption:* arrest rates will increase 1% per year
2. *Pessimistic assumption:* arrest rates will increase 3% per year
3. *Optimistic assumption:* arrest rates will decrease 1% per year

Although these assumptions are highly speculative and only barely supported by the data, the pessimistic and optimistic assumptions represent plausible upper and lower bounds for long-term rates of change. It is true that between 1962 and 1980 the California homicide (victimization) rate rose about 7% a year, but it plunged dramatically between 1980 and 1982, and from 1982 through 1994 it has increased at an unsteady rate of about 1.3% per year. It seems unlikely that California could sustain an annual rise much greater than 3% for the next 25 years.

As Figure 4 shows the projected homicide rates under the three assumptions (the dotted lines represent 1% and 0% growth rates). In 2021 under the nominal assumption the homicide rate will be about 28% higher than in 1994. Under the optimistic assumptions the rates the rate in 2021 will stand about 14% below the 1994 rate. Under pessimistic assumptions the rates will nearly double.

**Figure 4--Arrest rate trends**

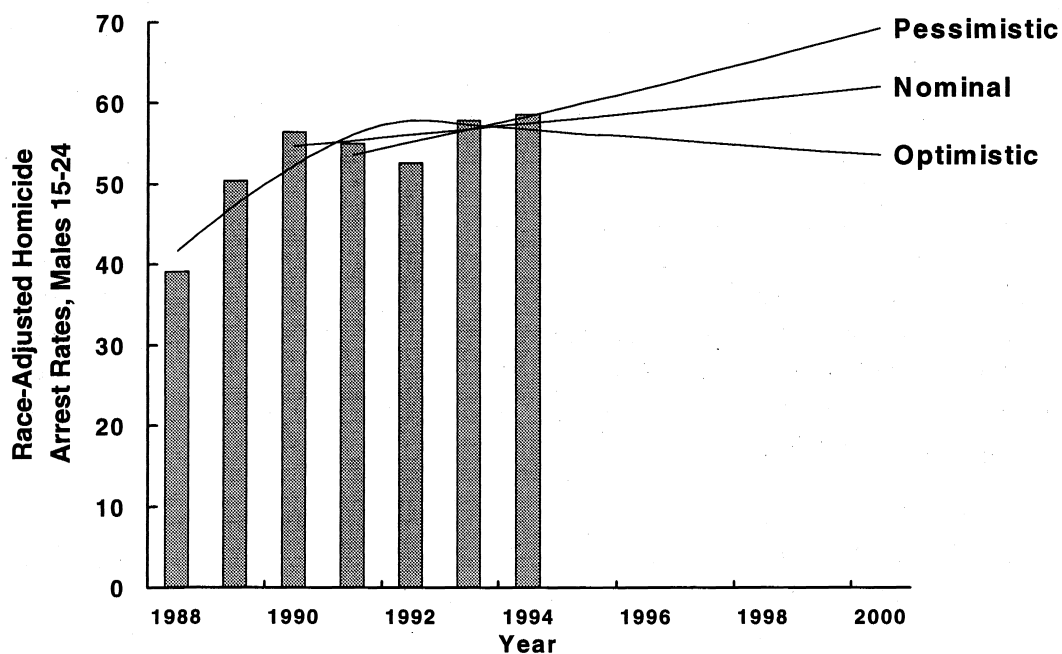
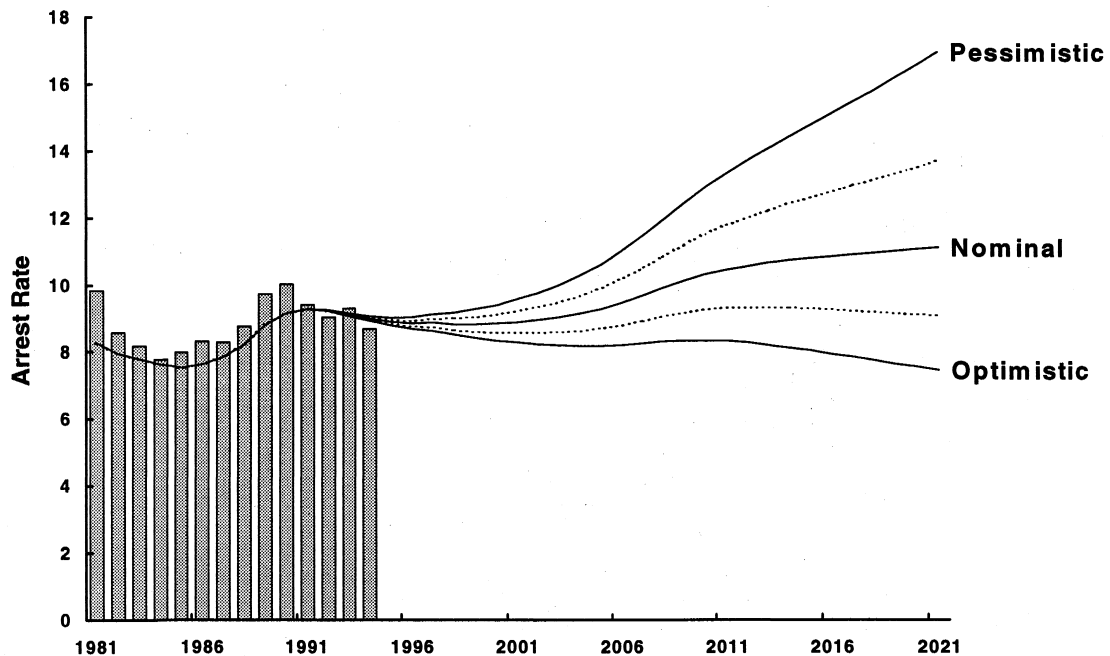


Figure 5 shows the California homicide arrest rates projected to the year 2010 under these three assumptions (the dotted lines show intermediate values). It shows that we can expect little change, on average for the next five to seven years no matter which of the assumptions we adopt. In fact, even under the pessimistic assumptions the arrest rate will remain below the all-time high observed in 1991 until about 2005. After 2005, which is about the time when today's young children begin to reach their years of high risk of homicide arrest, under the pessimistic assumption the rate may begin to climb, and in the year 2021 it could be about twice as high as it

is today. However, under less pessimistic assumptions the rate could remain at about the level we suffer today.

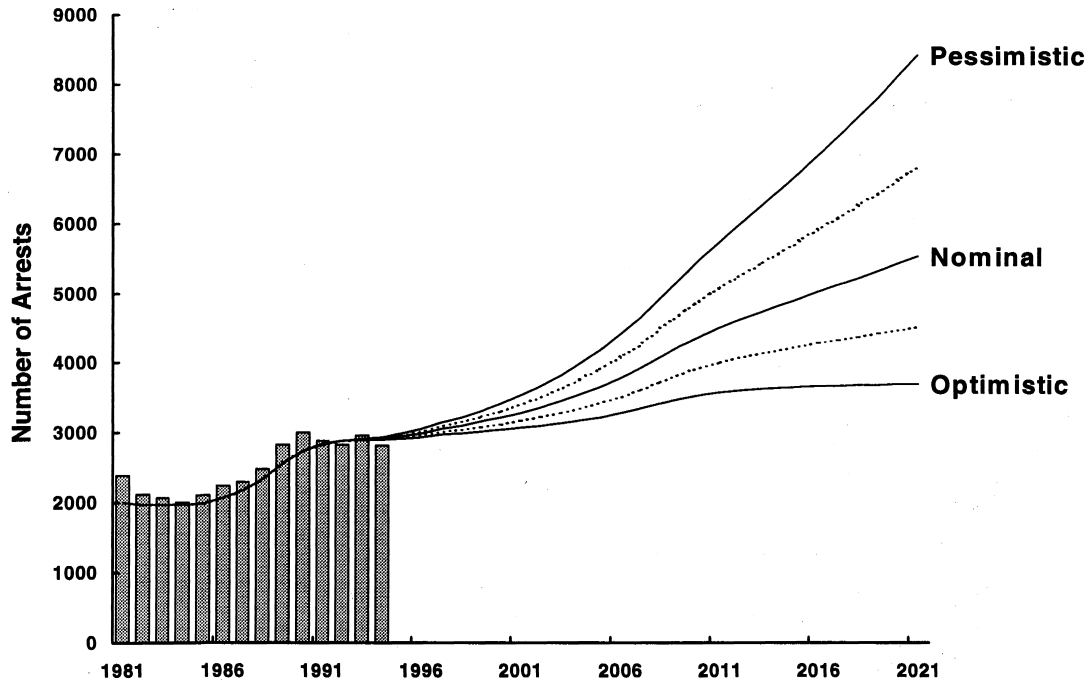
**Figure 5—Projected homicide arrest rates**



Criminal justice and other agencies must plan on the basis of numbers, not rates, and so Figure 6 reports the projected *number* of homicide arrests, rather than the arrest rate, under the three assumptions. Under the nominal assumption, the number of homicide arrests in 2021 will be about double that of 1994; under the pessimistic assumptions, about triple; under the optimistic assumption, police may make about 30% more homicide arrests in 2021 than they made in 1994.

It is important to note that demographic changes are relatively slow and smooth, while actual homicide arrest rates can vary sharply from one year to the next. The methodology here predicts none of this year-to-year variation, but by examining how well the projections fit already observed rates from 1981 through 1994, it can be inferred that typically actual rates can differ from the projected rates by up to 15%, and even more in exceptional years.

**Figure 6--Projected Homicide Arrests**



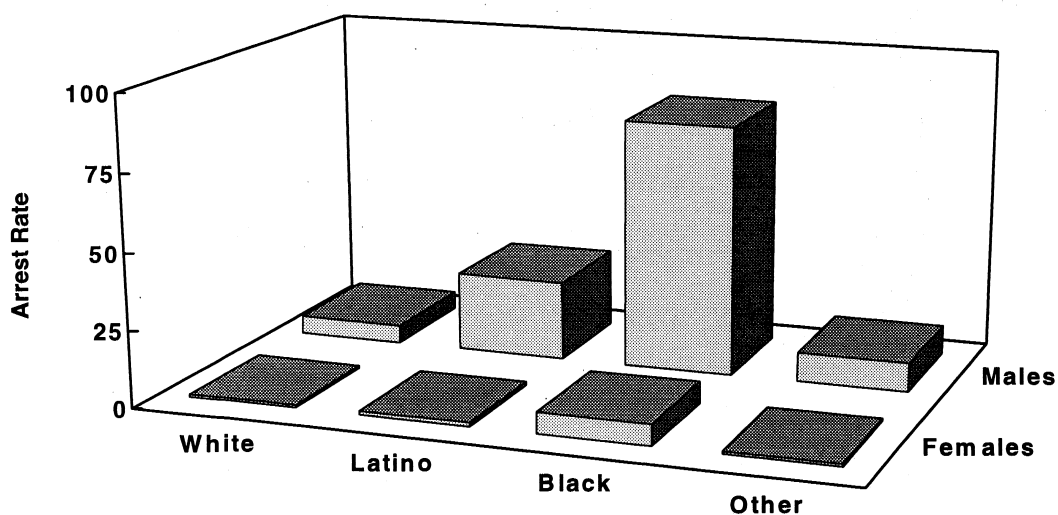
## **HOW THESE PROJECTIONS WERE CALCULATED**

### **Projections by eight demographic cohorts**

The approach rests on a simple principle: the number of persons age 18 (say) arrested in the year 2001 (say) is just the number of persons age 18 alive in the year 2001 times the arrest rate of persons age 18 the year 2000. So, all we do is project the population, project the arrest rates, and multiply by age to any particular year, then add up all the arrests by age.

Everyone knows, of course, that arrest rates vary sharply by sex and race/ethnicity, a fact demonstrated in Figure 7, which shows the 1994 homicide arrest rates in California by sex and by four race/ethnicity categories: non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics and everybody else. So our calculations involve eight sets of projections, one for each of these groups. In for any particular year, our estimate of the total number of arrests is the sum of the number of persons arrested at each age (from age 1 to age 100) for eight groups. It's the sum of 800 numbers in all. Of course, for persons below the age of 10 the number of arrests is essentially zero, and for persons older than, say, 60 the number is very small. But it is really easier to estimate arrest rates for all ages and add them up than to decide exactly where in the age spectrum to truncate the calculations.

**Figure 7—Projections made for eight demographic groups**



A California governmental agency provided population estimates<sup>1</sup> by these eight sex and race/ethnicity groups, by single year of age, through the year 2041. Since much depends, especially in California, on assumptions about immigration and emigration, these projects are almost certain to be wrong, and the further into the future we look, the more wrong they are likely to be. Nevertheless, they are made by professional demographers using the most defensible assumptions, and it is easier to defend their use than to invent something else.

Future arrest rates were estimated using the California homicide file<sup>2</sup> for the years 1981 through 1994 (the latest available at this time).

As we saw in Figure 1, arrest rates rise sharply by age starting at about age 12. They peak around age 19, and fall steadily after that. Persons born before 1980 were at least 15 years old in 1994, old enough to provide some evidence of the history and future of their age-specific homicide arrest rates. Persons born after 1980 provide very little evidence in our data of what their future homicide arrest rates will be, their future rates are extrapolated from current rates on the basis of assumptions about growth rates. These assumptions are, of course, absolutely critical for future, and we have little hard evidence upon which to base them.

<sup>1</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, *Projected Total Population of California Counties: 1990 to 2040, Report 93 P-3*, Sacramento, CA, May 1993.

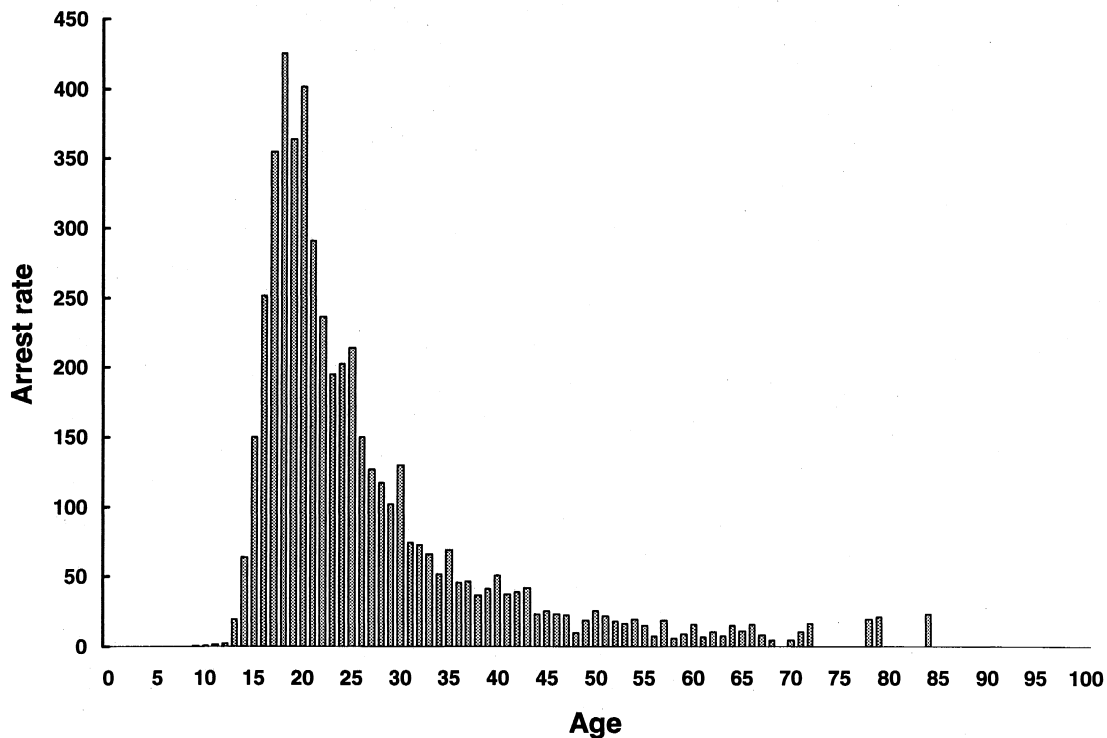
<sup>2</sup> State of California, Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, *California Homicide File, 1981-1994*.



### Future homicide arrest rates for persons born before 1980

If we were privileged to observe a single birth cohort, say all black males born in 1965, for a full century, and if each year we counted the number alive during the year and the number of homicide arrests and computed the age-specific homicide arrest rate, this succession of rates would form a graph shaped like that of Figure 8. That is, the rate would be zero until about age twelve. For the next eight to ten years it would rise rapidly, it would peak out at about age twenty, and then fall steadily for the rest of the cohort's existence. Figure 8 plots age specific homicide arrest rates for the years 1981 through 1994 for all black males; each bar represents many cohorts, seen at different years.

**Figure 8--Typical arrest rates by age**



Age specific arrest rates in like those shown in Figure 8 are uneven, and not very stable for small populations. To estimate a more generic relationship between age and arrest rate, we fit each of the eight distributions of the homicide arrest rate versus age with a smooth curve. The curve is a mixture of two logit functions that relate the arrest rate to a second-order polynomial of age. One logit fits the rise in arrest rate from age zero to about age twenty, and the other logit fits the decay in the arrest from about age twenty and older. Figure 9 shows the fit of this curve to the bar graph shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 9--Double logit curve fit to the arrest rate**

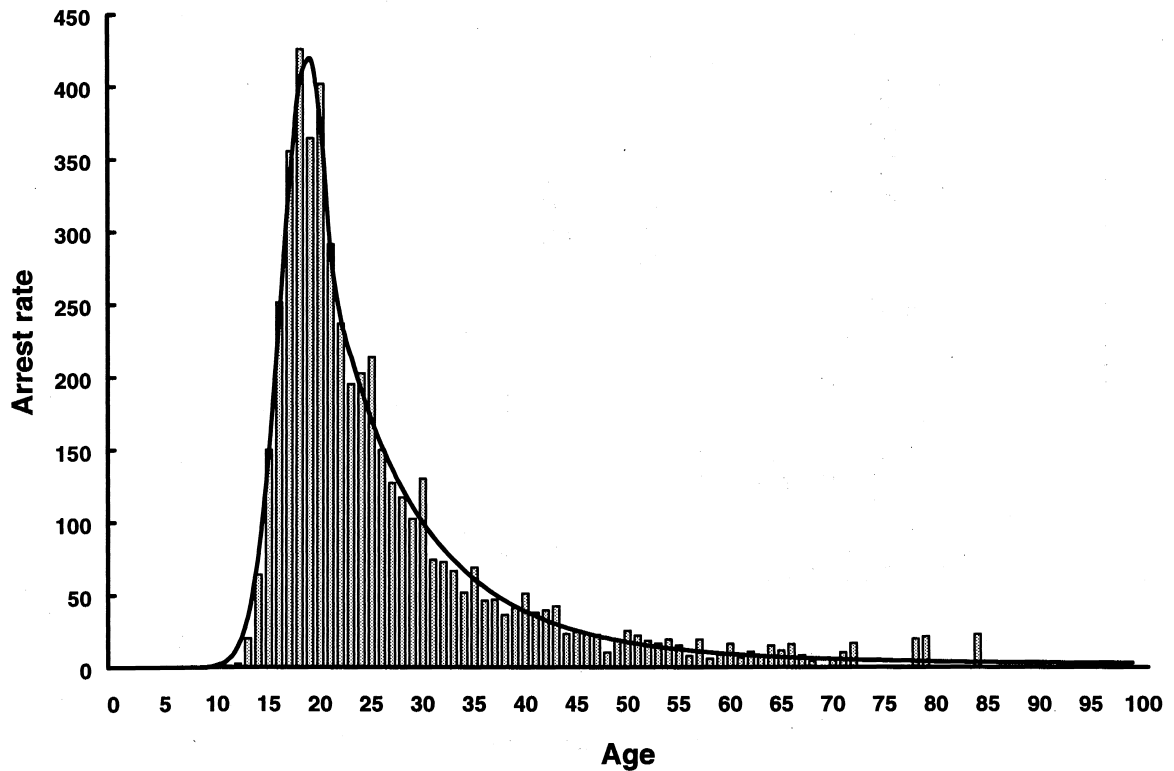
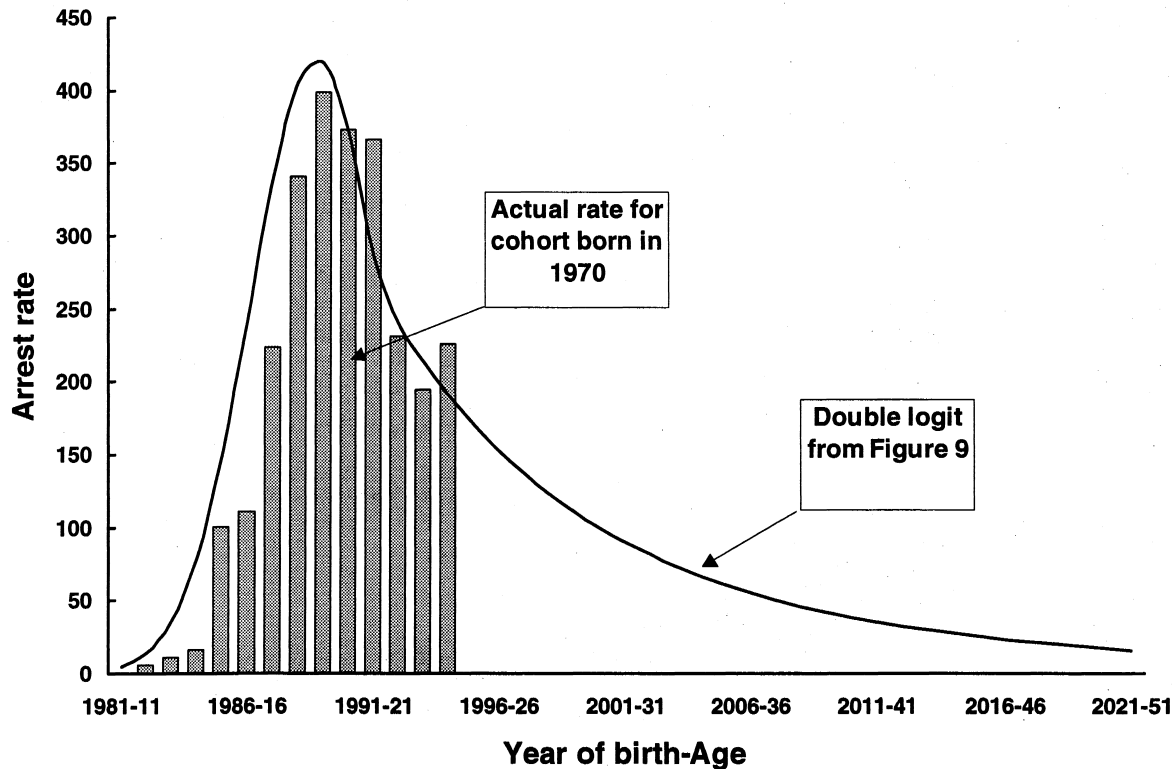


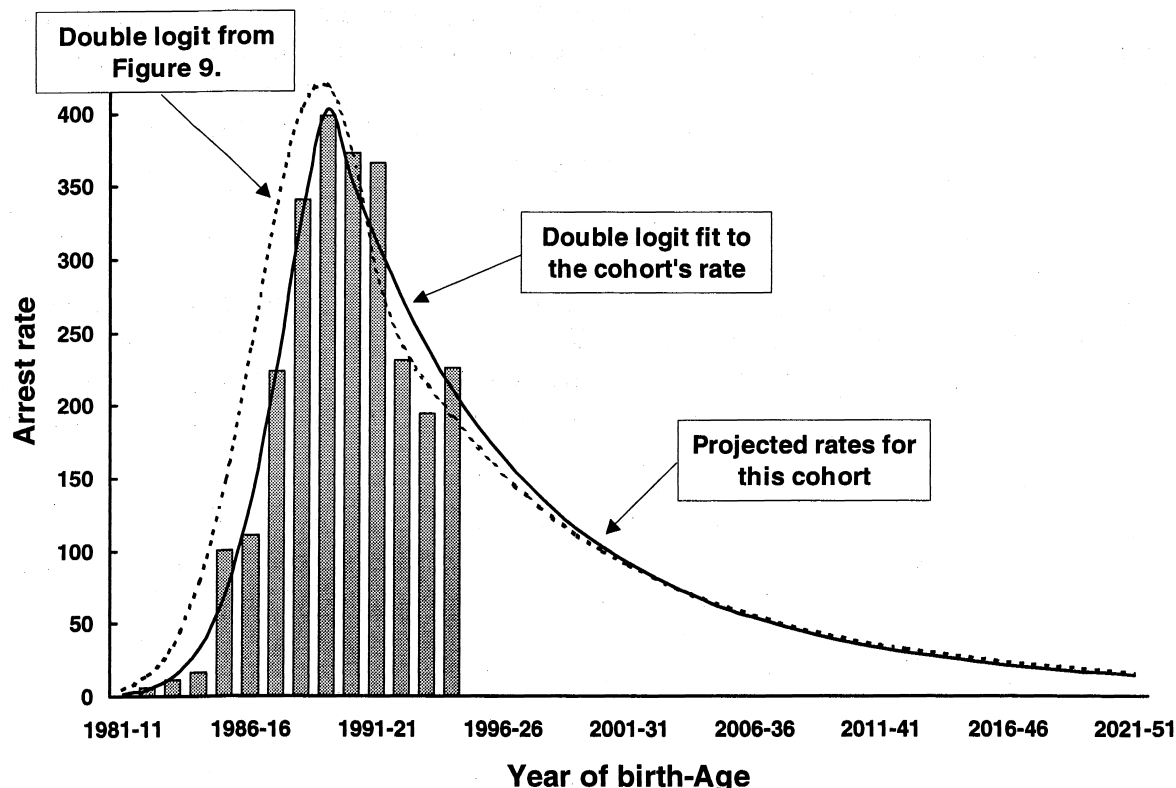
Figure 10 shows how the actual arrest rates for a 1970 birth cohort compares to the double-logit curve shown above. The teen-age rise in the arrest rate for this 1970 cohort appears to have occurred little later than usual, because the actual rates seem to be “right-shifted” with respect to the smooth curve. To estimate the future arrest rates for this cohort, we estimate a similar double-logit that attempts to fit the actual rate of the cohort for those ages for which we have data, and then attempts to fit the smooth rate shown in Figure 8 for those ages for which we don’t have data Figure 10 shows these fits.

**Figure 10--1970 birth cohort compared to age distribution curve**



The solid line in Figure 11 is a double logit that fits the 1970 birth cohort displayed in Figure 10. It's what we use to project the homicide arrest rate of this cohort forward. Notice it falls a little above the rate for all cohorts combined. Apparently, this cohort will be a little more violent in its late twenties than the "average" cohort, maybe because it got a late start. If we had just used average rates for this cohort, we might underestimate the contribution to the overall arrest rate that this cohort would have made.

**Figure 11--Cohort fit**



### Arrest rates for cohorts born after 1980

As already discussed, persons born after 1980 will show few arrests before 1994, the last year for which we have available data, so we cannot use the technique described above to estimate future offending. For all these cohorts, we assume their arrest rates will have the same shape as the smooth curve that fits the overall arrest rates for that demographic group (e.g., the curve seen in Figure 9), but that these rates will grow (or shrink) at some constant annual rate. This crude approach will not reflect any complicated changes, such as the possibility that some cohort might begin offending much earlier than usual, but tail off more quickly, but we have no evidence in these data to make any assumptions about such changes. Indeed, we have only a little evidence to support one growth rate or another, as we discussed earlier.

## A FINAL REMARK AND CONCLUSIONS

### What about homicide *victims*?

From 1981 through 1994, California saw about 1.8 homicide victims for every homicide arrest, so the short answer is that we'll see about 80% more homicide victims than we see arrests. There are, however, many complications that make it difficult to be more precise or more certain. For example, young people are more likely than older people to commit crimes in groups, so as

homicide arrests become more and more concentrated among young people, we might expect that the actual number of homicide victims would not rise as fast as the number of persons arrested for homicide. More obviously, the relationship between the number of homicide victims and the number of homicide arrests depends on the fraction of homicides cleared by an arrest, and the clearance rate appears to be falling in some places. Because of these difficulties, we leave the estimation of homicide victimization trends to another day.

## **Conclusion**

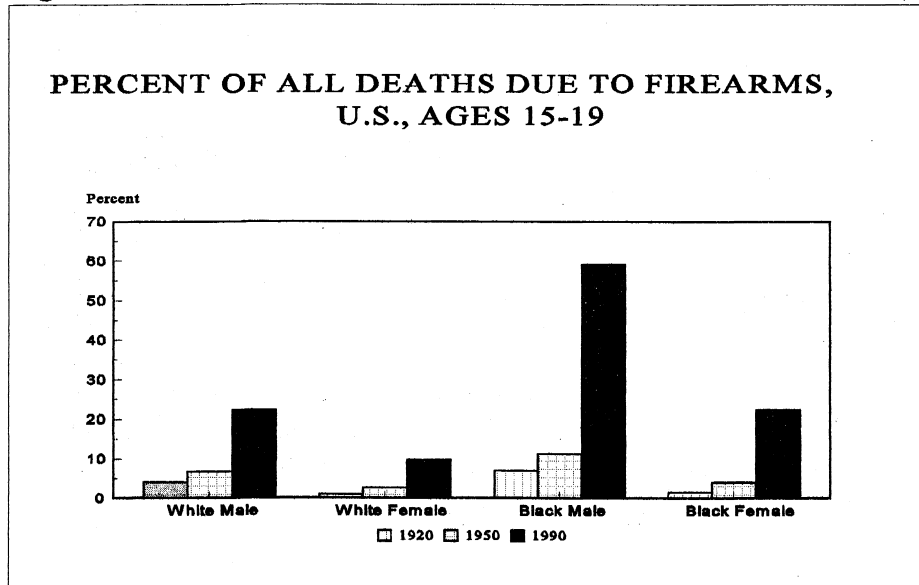
Extrapolations from existing data suggest we will see no great wave of homicides in California in the next five years. In the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we may see a mild or sharp increase, depending critically on how today's children, and children yet to be born, behave when they reach their late teens and early twenties. By 2021, the homicide rate could be double what it is today.

A doubling of the homicide rate by 2021 may constitute a wave, but even under the pessimistic assumption, the rate may not exceed that experienced in 1990 until about 2003. The leading edge of the offenders who might push the rate upwards after 2003 are just eight years old as of this writing; the rest are younger. How these children are shaped by today's world will determine much of what lies in store.

# FIREARMS IN THE HOMICIDES AND SUICIDES OF YOUTHS

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**Figure 1**

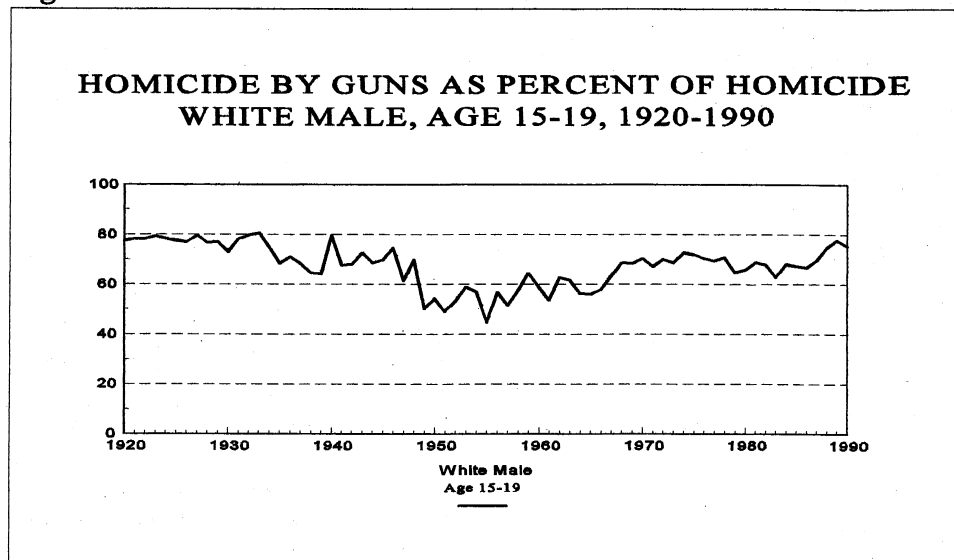


Firearm related death rates in the U.S. Rose during the Great Depression, fell during and after World War II, but have since risen. The 1990 rate for ages 15-19 was twice that in the 1950s. In 1920, firearm related deaths accounted for less than 10 percent of deaths from all causes for whites and blacks. Beginning in the 1950s, there were small increases in the share of firearm

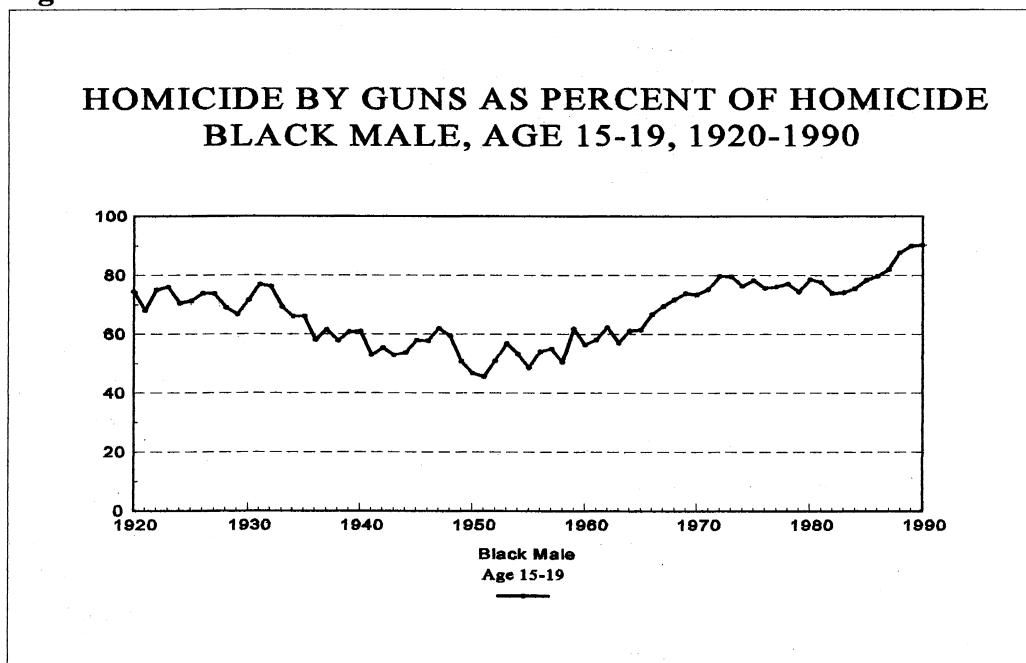
related deaths. In 1990, 40 years after 1950, this proportion shot up, especially for black males. Figure 1 displays this change over time.

In 1990, homicide claimed more than 50 percent of all deaths among black males aged 15-19. Firearm related homicides per 100,000 U.S.

**Figure 2**



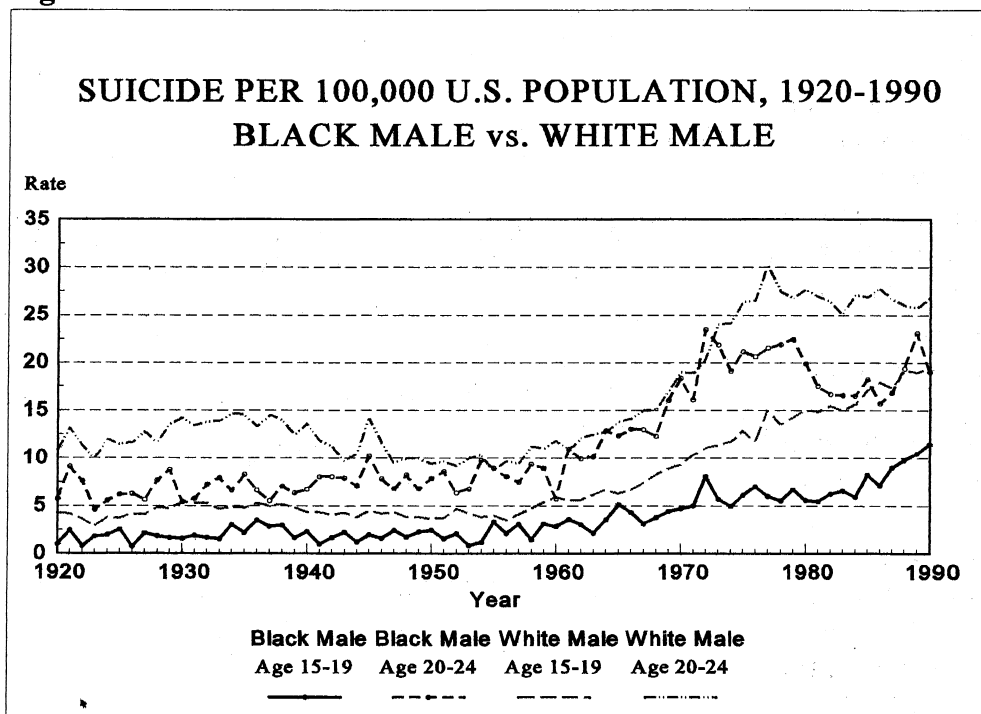
**Figure 3**



population in the same year reached historical highs, and peaked in 1990. For older Americans these rates declined after their peak years in the 1970s. Among juveniles, more and more are killed by firearms, especially

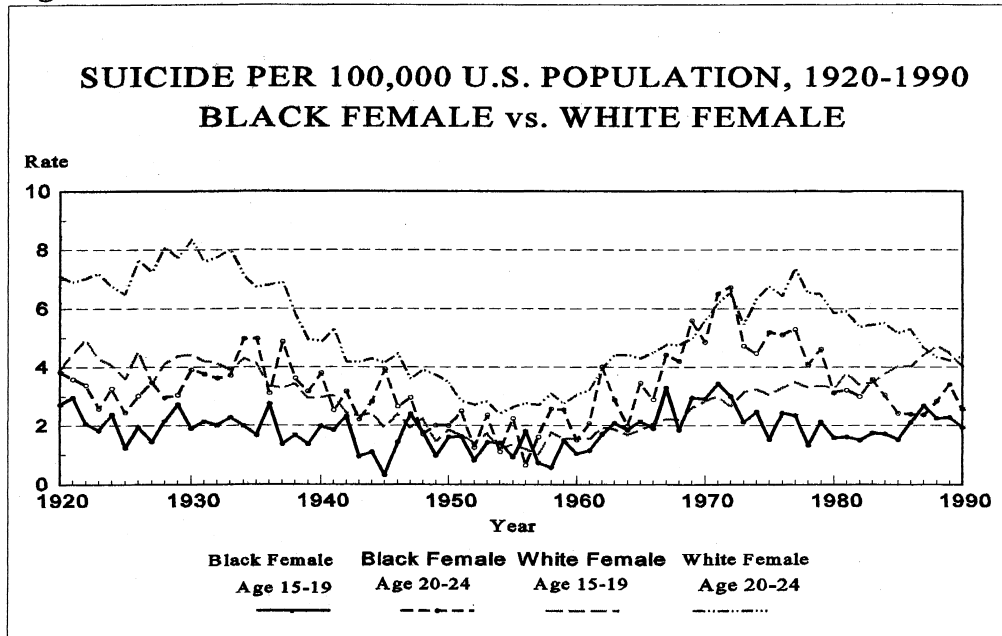
males aged 15-19. Firearm related homicide rates are twice as high as those in the 1920s, and three times as high as those in the 1950s. This is true for white males and females, and black males aged 15-19. For black females in this age group the increase is not clear. The percent of firearm related homicides remains relatively constant for white males in this age-group over time. For black males in this age-group the increase starts in the late 1960s and peaks in 1990. These are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

**Figure 4**



Youth suicide shows another

**Figure 5**

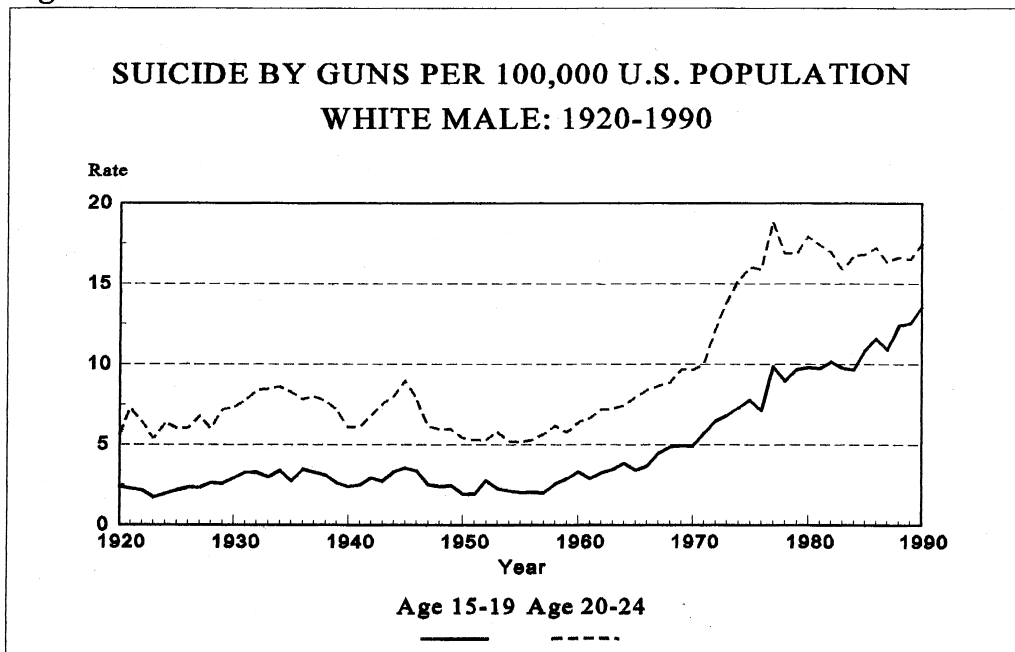


picture. In 1990 suicide rates for white males reached an historical high, especially for white males aged 10-19. The 1990 suicide rate is almost four times higher than those in the 1950s for ages 15-19. Almost 70 percent of all suicides in this age-group are

firearm related. For age-group 10-14, the suicide rate is not that high, but almost all such deaths are firearm related. Young black males used to have low suicide rates, compared to young white males, but are now catching up. These are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

In youth suicide, there is an increasing rate of firearm related actions. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the trend of firearm related youth suicide among white male aged 15-24 is upward. For white males aged 20-24,

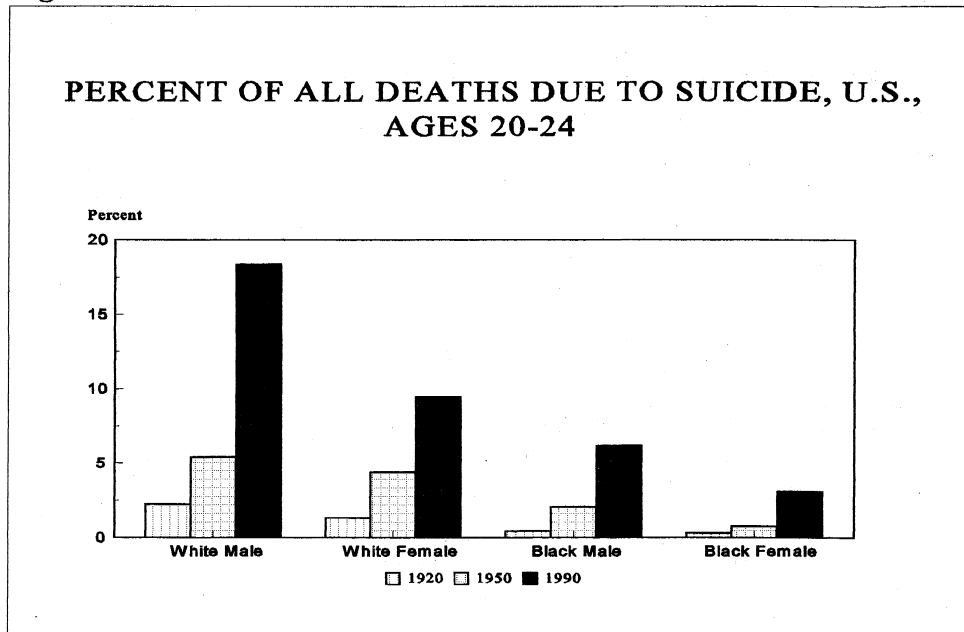
**Figure 6**





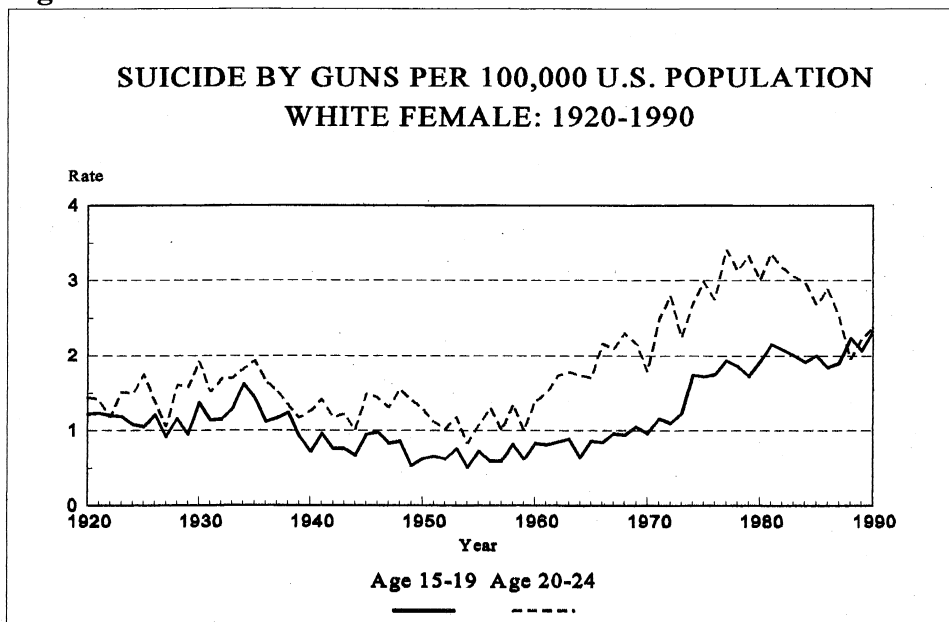
firearm related suicides reached a peak in the late 1970s, and remained about the same until 1990. For white male aged 15-19 there has been a steady increase since the late 1960s. Firearm related suicides for this age-group reached an historical high in 1990. This situation is shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 7**



In 1920, suicide accounted for less than 5 percent of all deaths among white males aged 20-24. That share was around 5 percent in 1950. But, in 1990, more than 20 percent of all deaths in this age-group was from suicide. A close look at Figures 6 and 7 indicates that firearms played an important role in youth suicide, especially among white males. Probably firearms provide a convenient way to effectively commit suicide.

**Figure 8**



For white females aged 15-19, there is also an increasing trend in firearm related suicides. This trend started in the 1970s, but for white females aged 20-24, firearm related suicide rates have declined since the early 1980s. Unfortunately, this is not true for white females aged 15-19. In 1990, the firearm

related suicide rate for white female aged 15-19 is almost the same as that for ages 20-24, as shown in Figure 8. It is too early to conclude that, according to causal model, firearms cause youth suicide nor is it correct to say that firearms cause the currently rising trend of youth suicide. These graphs indicate that the role of firearms in youth suicide used to be limited and, to some extent, constant. Only recently, have firearm related youth suicide rates increased steadily, which means the role of firearm becomes more and more noticeable.

**Note:** Data for graphs come from U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, series, and from U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, P-25*, series.



# **EXPLORING THE RECENT SURGE IN YOUTH HOMICIDE RATES: GEOGRAPHIC VARIATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper reflects work in progress on a study of patterns and trends in youth homicides in the United States since 1980. The results reported here provide a preliminary assessment of how recent trends in youth homicide victimization rates vary by state. These findings also demonstrate the application of a model-based approach to quantifying characteristics of such trends. The data indicate that although many states did experience an increase in youth homicide rates beginning around 1984, the magnitude of the increase varies substantially. Further analyses will focus on exploring and describing these variations for both states and metropolitan areas, and on identifying sociodemographic, economic and public policy variables that are associated with these differences.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Starting in the mid 1980's, the United States has experienced a sharp and dramatic increase in rates of youth homicide deaths and youth-perpetrated homicides. Nationally, between 1984 and 1992, the rate of youth (ages 15-19) homicide victimizations has more than doubled and the rate for young adult victimizations increased by approximately 70%. In comparison, rates for other age groups have been relatively flat. The surge in youth homicides is a significant public health concern. In deed, both in comparison to other countries and in light of the substantial increase in recent years, we are experiencing what can reasonably be considered as an "epidemic" of lethal violence perpetrated by and against youth.

The magnitude and pervasiveness of these recent increases in youth homicides rates signify a significant and alarming social phenomenon that warrants a thorough exploration. A number of hypotheses to explain increasing trends in youth violence have been proposed. These include an increasing availability, carrying, and lethality of firearms, greater levels of street-level drug trafficking, an increasing prevalence of graphic and glamorized violence in the media, an increasing prevalence of broken and single-parent households, and a diminishing sense of economic prosperity, opportunity, and quality of life among the urban underclass. Most likely, the historic confluence of several or all of these factors underlies the recent surge and current high levels of youth homicide.

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<sup>1</sup>This study is supported by funding from the National Institute of Justice, grant 95-IJ-CX-0114.

Although the overall increase has received considerable attention, few detailed analyses of the trends have been conducted. The purposes of this study are to determine whether particular types of homicide are primarily responsible for the recent increases in the youth homicide rate and to examine how recent trends in youth homicides vary geographically within the United States. An analysis of how social, economic, and demographic characteristics of states and metropolitan areas are related to the timing and magnitude of the recent increases in the youth homicide rate may help to suggest possible etiologic factors underlying this phenomenon. In this paper, preliminary descriptive analyses of state-level trends in victimization rates are described.

## METHODS

Homicide data were obtained from the FBI's Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data files for 1980 through 1992. Annual age-specific population estimates for states were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. For these preliminary analysis, only the total youth (ages 15 to 19) homicide victimization rates for states were examined. The victimization rate was defined as the number of homicide victims aged 15 through 19 per 100,000 population in the same age range. For the purpose of these preliminary analyses, no adjustments were made for either non-reporting or missing values. Subsequent analyses will adjust for these influences, and will focus on perpetration as well as victimization, examine various categories of homicide in addition to the total age-specific rates, and be conducted for metropolitan statistical areas as well as states.

For both conceptual and analytic purposes, it is important that characteristics useful in describing recent trends in the homicide rate be defined. Two characteristics that are of particular interest are the magnitude of the increase in homicide rates since their low point in the early to mid 1980's and the timing of when the increase began. There are several options for how these characteristics could be defined. The approach taken here was to identify a simple mathematical model that appears to fit the trend. The model that was selected is one that estimates the homicide rate as a quadratic function of year; i.e., the rate for any given year is estimated as a linear combination of year, year squared, and a constant. This particular model was chosen because it generates a smooth curve with one inflection point, and thus is generally consistent with the actual trend in the youth homicide rate that the nation has experienced since 1980. For each state, model-estimated values of the homicide rate over time were then used to define trend characteristics such as the year of onset in the increase and the proportionate increase in the rate since the estimated date of onset.

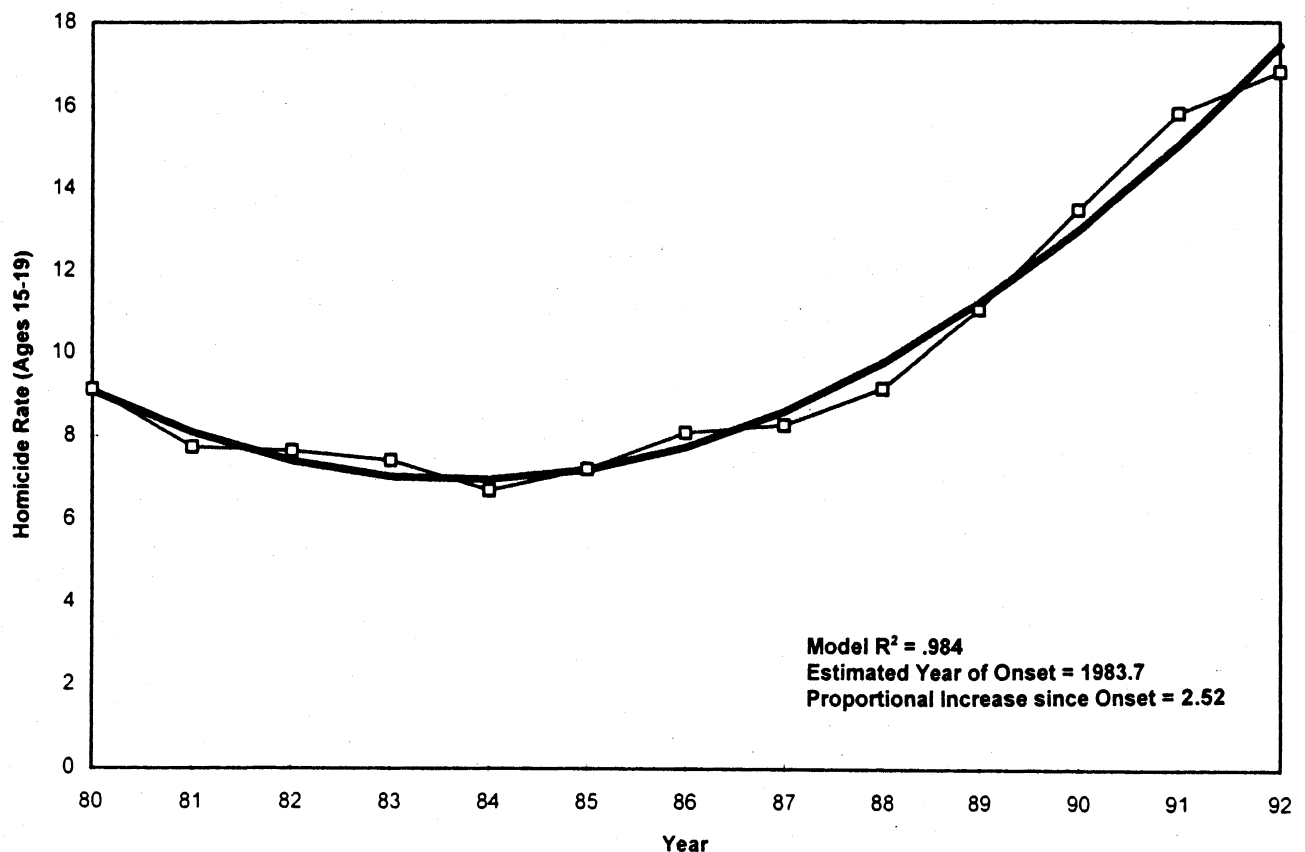
## RESULTS

The youth homicide victimization rate in the United States for years 1980 through 1992 are displayed in Figure 1. The model-estimated trend in the rate is shown with the solid bold-face curve superimposed on the plot. Note that for the United States as a whole, the quadratic model fits the data very closely, with a model  $R^2$  of .984. Also of note is the slight decline in the rate in the early 1980's, followed by an increasing rate thereafter. The lowest value occurred in 1984, and indeed the model-estimated year of onset in the increase (i.e., the deflection point in the

curve) is 1983.7. The rate in 1992 was approximately 2.5 times greater than what it was at it's lowest point, which translates to a 150% increase.

Youth homicide victimization rates for every state were also computed. However, the trends in the 20 states with fewer than 10 homicides per year were erratic and provided poor fits to the quadratic model. Models for two other states did not conform to the expected shape of the curve and one state was not included because of significant non-reporting in some years. Washington, D.C. exhibited extraordinarily high values in both the absolute values of its youth homicide victimization rate and its rate of increase, and thus was also not included in the following statistics. For the remaining 27 states, the mean  $R^2$  value for the fit of the quadratic model was .735.

**FIGURE 1. UNITED STATES YOUTH HOMICIDE VICTIM RATE: 1980-1992**



The mean estimated year of onset in the increase was 1983.6, and varied from 1978.2 to 1987.7. However, for most states, this value fell between 1983 and 1985.

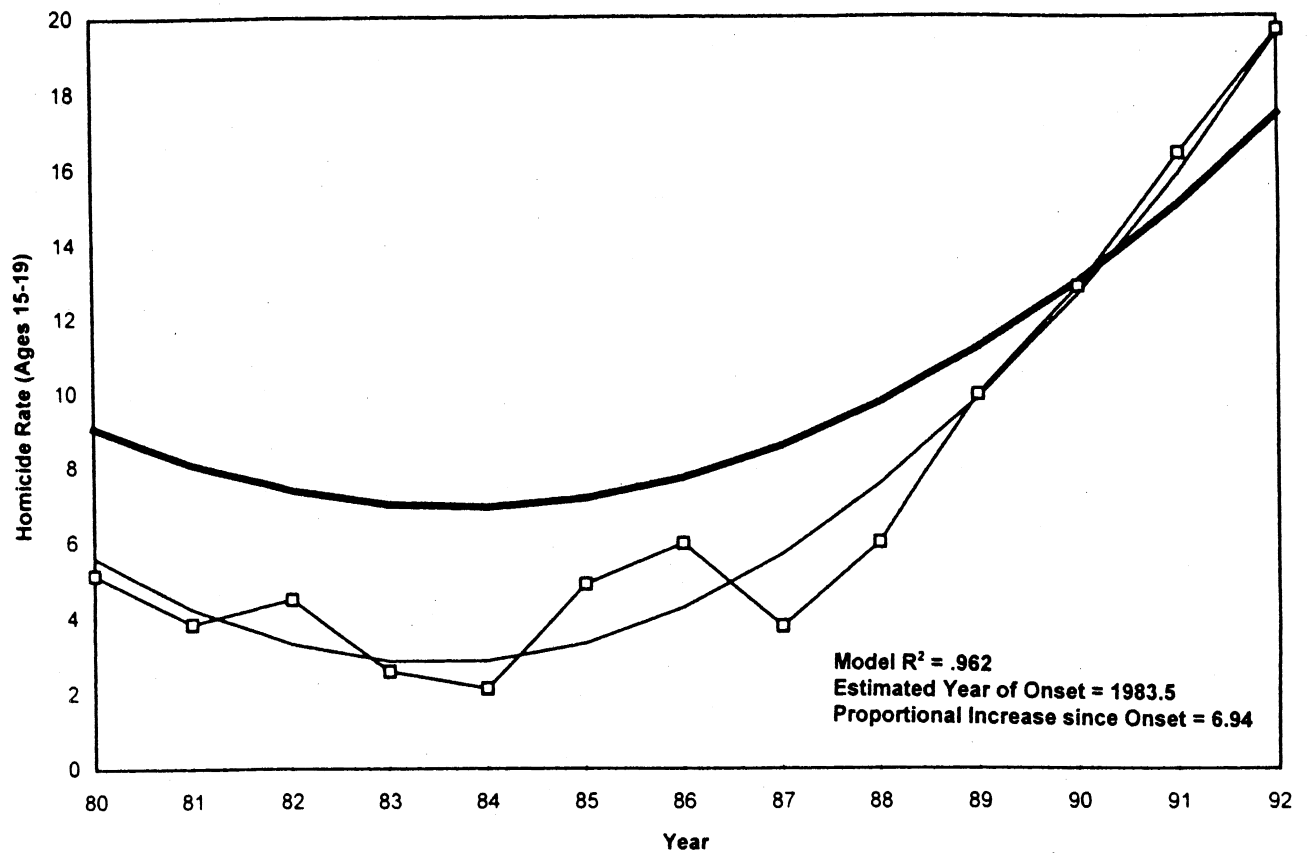
The average proportionate increase between the low point on the trend line and 1992 was 3.0, somewhat higher than the value of 2.52 obtained for the entire nation. There was substantial variation across states in the proportionate increase in the rate. These values ranged from 1.4 to 6.9. Every state included in these analyses did, however, experience some increase in their youth homicide victimization rate. Examples of a high increase state (Arkansas) and a low increase state (New Jersey) are plotted in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. The model-generated national trend is again superimposed on these plots, along with a second curve indicating the state-specific model.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

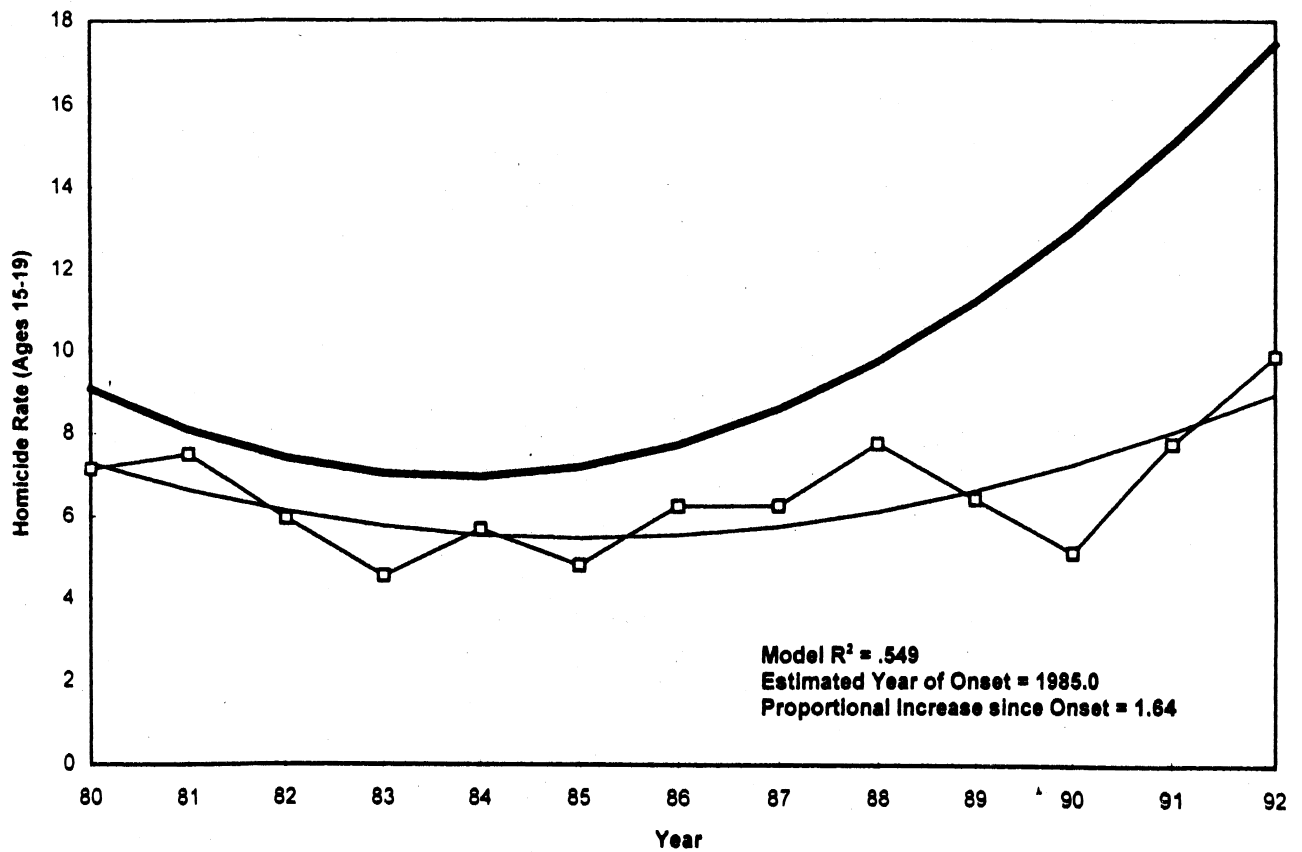
The results to date demonstrate that although all of the states included in the study have experienced an increase in the youth homicide victimization rate since the mid 1980's, there is considerable variability across states in the magnitude of this increase. It also appears that states are similar with respect to when the increasing trend began, with most states experiencing onset of the increase sometime between 1983 and 1985. This interpretation is made with some caution, as the determination of when a trend actually begins is difficult and open to various alternative definitions. Nevertheless, the evidence seems to support the hypothesis that the factors that underlie the increasing national trends in youth homicide rates are pervasive across the states and that their collective influence began to become manifest at approximately the same time throughout the nation. At the same time, however, it is clear that some states have been much more heavily impacted than others. Further analyses will attempt to identify characteristics of states and metropolitan areas that may have served to either exacerbate or protect against the influences responsible for these disturbing trends.

The results to date also cast some doubts on the utility of using a quadratic function of time to model state-specific trends in the youth homicide rate. The  $R^2$  values indicative of the model fit were for many states not particularly high, and close examination of the plots revealed that model-derived estimates of the year of onset and the proportionate increase since onset did not appear to accurately reflect the actual data. The primary purpose of the modeling procedure was to develop meaningful and objective measures of important trend characteristics such as year of onset. Clearly, additional effort will be required for developing such measures.

**FIGURE 2. ARKANSAS YOUTH HOMICIDE VICTIM RATES: 1980-1992**



**FIGURE 3. NEW JERSEY YOUTH HOMICIDE VICTIM RATE: 1980-1992**







## **MINNEAPOLIS YOUTH HOMICIDE STUDY**

Beth Ansari, Mpls Dept of Health and Family Support, 250 S. 4th St, Minneapolis, MN 55415  
Douglas Kress, Mpls Dept of Health and Family Support, 250 S. 4th St, Minneapolis, MN 55415

Violence is the number one public health issue facing Minneapolis youth. In response to a directive by Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support began working to reduce the number of young people involved in violence. The first step in this project has been a study of young people between the ages of 12 and 24. The study was designed to produce recommendations for intervention strategies and direction for further research.

### **RESEARCH**

The research focused only on the cases the Minneapolis Police Department considered "CLOSED". The cases were closed when the police department had charged one or more individuals with the crime. The study was designed as a descriptive analysis of persons and factors involved in homicides involving young people.

Decisions on information to be gathered were made in consultation with the study's community advisory board. Information from the police files was abstracted onto data forms by a Health Department team. All files were re-read by one of the study coordinators, and data forms were reviewed for accuracy and consistency. In addition to the main data abstraction, a one-page narrative summary was compiled for each case. Based on the recommendations of the community advisors, a brief "vignette" for public distribution was further developed for each case.

### **ACTIVITIES**

Data from the research was presented to the community in two community forums. The first forum pulled together a variety of community members including: family members of victims, students, former gang members, parents, public officials, community activists, school personnel, business representatives, and university researchers. This forum was designed to allow the participants maximum opportunity to examine the data and brainstorm for future City and Community actions to prevent youth homicides. At this forum the community members repeatedly stressed the need to address the many factors that lead to violence affecting youth. The recommendations from the forum fell into eight general categories:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1) Education   | 5) Economic Assistance, Economic Development and Jobs |
| 2) Police      | 6) Media  |
| 3) Youth       | 7) Public Policy                                      |
| 4) Communities | 8) Research.  |

The second community meeting occurred in April 1996. This meeting brought together individuals in each of the eight focus areas to define specific projects that could be undertaken to affect youth homicide. The role of the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support is to facilitate the community in their efforts and coordinate the activities as they occur. Some of the specific projects the community has undertaken include:

- **Communities Work Group** has held 2 gun collection events in high violence incidents communities and has collected 27 guns and has hosted 2 community meeting where the community has had the opportunity to voice their opinion on the violence in their community.
- **Youth Work Group**
  - ◆ assisted in the implementation of a youth hotline for young people to call for activities in Minneapolis.
  - ◆ Assisted with 2 talent show cases in high incident communities for youth. The winners will perform at an all city Youth Power Jam
  - ◆ Created a network of youth workers
- **Media Work Group**
  - ◆ planning meetings with media executive to collaborate on violence prevention activities
  - ◆ Developed a plan for PSAs targeting both youth and parents on violence and not accepting violence
- **Research Work Group**
  - ◆ Conducting focus groups with young African American males on gun access
- **Education Work Group**
  - ◆ Working with the Minneapolis Public Schools to develop a plan for fall implementation of pilot violence prevention programs in selected schools.
- **Police Work Group**
  - ◆ Assist the Police Athletic League develop a fall sports program to help inner-city youth have access to sports and build positive relationships with the Police Department.
- **Public Policy Work Group**
  - ◆ Addressing the issue of youth having access to alcohol through initiative through liquor stores and possible sting operations
  - ◆ Convening key player is the area of adolescent chemical dependency to identify possible collaborations to find holdings/housing for chemically altered youth who are picked-up by police or referrals from schools.
- **Economic Development and Jobs Work Group**
  - ◆ Working with the Minneapolis Summer Youth Employment Program to increase the number of youth employed of the summer months.

Through the coordinated efforts of people from a broad spectrum of backgrounds the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support along with other City department and Officials believe we can have a positive impact on the youth in our community.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **SESSION: YOUTH VIOLENCE**

Presenters: Everett Lee, Allan Abrahamse, Al Blumstein, Jiafang Chen, and Bob Flewelling  
Recorder: Kathleen M. Heide, University of South Florida

Discussion initially focused on statistical techniques and modeling, and the need for a sociological explanation. The data showed an increase in firearms coinciding with an increase in juvenile homicides. Bob Flewelling indicated that he intends to include non-SMAs in future analyses.

Malcolm Klein challenged Al Blumstein regarding the advent of crack cocaine as a viable explanation for the increase in juvenile homicide beginning in 1985. Klein maintained that 1985 was too early to posit a drug infusion. He stated that the Chicago and Los Angeles data suggest that the homicide increase was gang-related and sparked by turf battles. These data also indicate that the mean age of crack dealers at arrest was age 20. Therefore, Klein argued the crack explanation was at most a partial explanation, which unfortunately had become a basis for making policy decisions.

Al Blumstein replied that he intends to disaggregate the data. He pointed out that 1985 was the beginning of the change, but not the big change. The real change occurred in the later 1980s. His focus has been on arrest data for homicide and drugs. Blumstein argued that crack markets, rather than drugs per se, were behind the violence. He explained that the diffusion hypothesis referred to youths acquiring guns and extended beyond crack dealing. It would account for increases in turf-related homicides by gangs and increased violence by whites because of the increase in youths arming themselves in response to fear of violence in their neighborhoods occasioned by drug-dealing.

Subsequent discussion focused on what forces fueled the epidemic in youth violence. It was noted that gun acquisition and gang formation increased in the early 1990s in response to fear, and that violence was concentrated in certain areas of the city. These trends suggested a need to focus again on macro-level economic indicators.

The question was raised why the narrow band of 15 to 19 year olds were more susceptible to guns and drugs. Several explanations were offered. This group is a tighter group that interacts more. Violence is a common response among young males regarding dispute resolution. Accordingly, the influx of guns via the diffusion process has made violence more lethal among male adolescents. Other factors that appeared related included whether kids were in school or employed. The data suggest that truancy increased during the last 10 years. In addition, the overall unemployment rate in certain areas and the marginalization of certain groups in the population might also be contributing factors.

The group agreed that violence has become epidemic and commonplace in the culture. Entertainment is both a reflection and possible contributor to the escalation in violence. Analysis needs to focus on both the micro and macro levels.



## **Section Four:**

### **Is the Nature of Homicide Changing: What is Happening to Adult Homicide?**



# **CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN AND THE DECLINE IN INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper describes the decline in intimate partner homicide and speculates about some of its causes. Using a rich data set for St. Louis, I then compare intimate partner homicides with other forms of homicide along several dimensions, including victim age and race, alcohol and drug involvement, firearm use, location of the event, the presence of witnesses, and the level and type of victim involvement in the events leading to her or his death. Finally, I propose that some of the broad social changes involving marriage and family that have contributed to the decline in intimate partner homicide may be deeply implicated in the dramatic rise in youth violence over the last ten years.

## **DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?**

In a fascinating recent article the demographer Linda Waite poses the question "Does Marriage Matter?" Waite's answer is that it matters a great deal with respect to all manner of more or less desirable outcomes, including health, wealth, and sexual satisfaction (Waite, 1995). She considers mortality in her discussion of the pros and cons of marriage, but not homicide. With respect to homicide between intimate partners, the answer to Waite's question appears to be yes...and less. The decline in marriage rates has contributed to a corresponding decline in rates of intimate partner homicide. However, the nature of intimate partner homicide also has changed, reflecting changes in both marital and nonmarital relationships.

## **DECLINING MARRIAGE RATES AND CHANGE IN INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE**

Intimate partner homicide has been declining in the United States for over 20 years, especially among African Americans. Among women between 18 and 34 years-old, the rate of intimate partner homicide victimization decreased 16% between 1976 and 1992. The decrease in the victimization of black women in this age group was 41% (Fox, 1994). The decline in homicide among intimates also is apparent in data from selected cities. The rate of intimate partner homicide in Chicago dropped by nearly 50% between 1970 and 1993 (Block and Christakos, 1995). St. Louis homicide data, which have closely tracked the ups and downs in the national homicide rate over the past 30 years (Rosenfeld, Decker, and Kohfeld, 1993), show a pronounced drop in intimate partner homicide for black women since 1970, and decreases for black men and white women and men since 1980 (see Table 1).



**Table 1. St. Louis Intimate-Partner Homicide Rates by Sex, Race, and Marital Status of Victim, 1970-1990<sup>1</sup>**

|                             | 1970  | 1980  | 1990 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| <b>Total Intimate</b>       |       |       |      |
| <b>Partner</b>              |       |       |      |
| Black Male                  | 11.78 | 12.16 | 8.66 |
| Black Female                | 10.69 | 8.77  | 5.58 |
| White Male                  | 1.40  | 2.44  | 0.52 |
| White Female                | 1.32  | 2.75  | 1.51 |
| <b>Marital Intimate</b>     |       |       |      |
| <b>Partner</b>              |       |       |      |
| Black Male                  | 7.33  | 3.74  | 2.77 |
| Black Female                | 8.59  | 2.37  | 1.52 |
| White Male                  | 1.24  | 1.33  | 0.26 |
| White Female                | 1.20  | 1.72  | 1.29 |
| <b>Non-Marital Intimate</b> |       |       |      |
| <b>Partner</b>              |       |       |      |
| Black Male                  | 4.45  | 8.42  | 5.89 |
| Black Female                | 2.10  | 6.40  | 4.06 |
| White Male                  | 0.16  | 1.11  | 0.26 |
| White Female                | 0.12  | 1.03  | 0.22 |

Much of the decline in intimate partner homicide is a function of change in the rate of marriage within the age groups at highest risk for homicide victimization and offending. Over the past quarter of a century a marked increase has occurred in the fraction of the young adult population that has never married. For example, in 1970 55% of American men between 20 and 24 years-old had never married. This fraction increased to 80% in 1992. Just 19% of 25-29 year-old men were never married in 1970; by 1992, that fraction had risen to 49%. The comparable proportions of never-married women are smaller in each instance, but the increases in these proportions over time are just as great (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1995, pp. 107-111, Tables III-1, III-2).

As with the national-level pattern, the reduction in intimate partner homicide in St. Louis coincides with a decrease in marriage rates, particularly among black St. Louis residents. Black

<sup>1</sup> Five-year average rate (1968-72, 1978-82, 1988-92) per 100,000 persons age 14 and over (1970), 15 and over (1980, 1990). Source: St. Louis Homicide Project; U.S. Bureau of the Census.

women were the victims of 41 marital homicides during the period 1968-1972. In contrast, just six marital homicides were recorded for black women between 1988 and 1992. Roughly 30% of this decline can be attributed to the falling rate of marriage and increasing rate of separation and divorce among black women. A substantial decline also occurred in the number of black male victims of spousal homicide over the 20-year period, and about 31% of this drop is accounted for by the changing marital status of black men (calculations available from author by request).

**Table 2. St. Louis Homicide Incidents by Victim-Offender Relationship and Sex of Victim: 1968-72, 1978-82, 1988-92 (Percents)<sup>2</sup>**

|                     | 1968-72 |       | 1978-82 |       | 1988-92 |       |
|---------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|                     | Female  | Male  | Female  | Male  | Female  | Male  |
| <b>Family</b>       | 11.3    | 6.6   | 12.3    | 6.1   | 14.4    | 7.5   |
| <b>Intimate</b>     |         |       |         |       |         |       |
| <b>Partner</b>      | 43.6    | 9.2   | 38.4    | 6.7   | 23.2    | 4.5   |
| <b>Marital</b>      | 35.9    | 6.1   | 14.5    | 2.4   | 9.6     | 1.5   |
| <b>Non-Marital</b>  | 7.7     | 3.1   | 23.9    | 4.3   | 13.6    | 3.0   |
| <b>Acquaintance</b> | 28.9    | 54.5  | 37.7    | 69.4  | 41.6    | 60.8  |
| <b>Stranger</b>     | 16.2    | 29.7  | 11.6    | 17.7  | 20.8    | 27.2  |
| <b>Total</b>        | 100.0   | 100.0 | 100.0   | 100.0 | 100.0   | 100.0 |
| <b>(n)</b>          | (142)   | (589) | (138)   | (736) | (125)   | (602) |

In 1970, 16% of all homicides in St. Louis involved intimate partners; by 1990 the fraction had dropped to 8%. Intimate partner homicide was the predominant form of homicide victimization among women in St. Louis two decades ago, accounting for more than 40% of all female homicide victims. In recent years, however, women are more likely to be killed by non-intimate acquaintances, and almost as likely to be killed by strangers, as by their intimate partners (see Table 2). Marital relationships once dominated these events among both blacks and whites in St. Louis. Now they are dominated by non-marital relationships. Twenty years ago, over 80% of the female victims of intimate partner homicide were killed by their husbands. Now, 40% are killed by their husbands and the others by nonmarital intimate partners.

<sup>2</sup> "Family" includes parent, child, sibling, and other relatives. "Marital" includes married, separated-divorced, and common-law. "Non-Marital" includes boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, girlfriend, and ex-girlfriend. "Acquaintance" includes non-intimate friends and other acquaintances. Cases with unknown victim-offender relationship are excluded. Source: St. Louis Homicide Project.

## COMPARING INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDES WITH OTHER FORMS OF HOMICIDE

Intimate partner homicides diverge in some important respects from homicides with different victim-offender relationships (see Tables 3a and 3b). Marital and nonmarital intimate partner homicides also differ from one another. In many ways, nonmarital intimate partner homicides look more like those involving victims and offenders who are non-intimate acquaintances or strangers. For example, the victims of spousal homicide are older than the victims of nonmarital homicide. Compared with other types of homicide, whites are the victims of intimate partner homicide in disproportionate numbers, but only in the marital category.

Significant sex differences exist with respect to gun use in intimate partner homicide. Men are much more likely than women to kill their partners, marital and nonmarital, with a gun. Men also are more likely than women to be the victims in alcohol-related marital homicide. Perhaps the most important sex difference to emerge in the St. Louis data on intimate partner homicide, however, concerns the degree and nature of the victim's involvement in the events leading up to her or his death. In over half of intimate partner homicides with male victims, the victim precipitated the conflict in which the killing occurred. Only 12.5% of the events with female victims were victim precipitated (see Table 4).

Drawing on von Hentig's insight that in many violent crimes "the victim shapes and molds the criminal" and "assumes the role of a determinant," Wolfgang (1958) introduced the concept of victim precipitation into the study of homicide. Two examples from the St. Louis data, both involving male victims, illustrate how victims become "determinants" in intimate partner homicide. In one case the victim accused the suspect

of cheating on him. They argued, then fought. The suspect said the victim slapped and pushed her and tried to choke her. The suspect claimed that the victim was the first to grab the gun and that he said repeatedly that he would kill her. The victim and suspect fought over the gun, and the suspect gained control of it. When the victim advanced on the suspect again, she said she shot him. The suspect then dialed 911 and waited for the police.

In the other case the suspect and victim had been arguing and fighting the day before, and the suspect's daughter took the suspect to her (the daughter's) house.

When the suspect returned, the victim was angry that she had been gone all night and the argument resumed. The suspect said that when she left the victim followed. She said the victim threw bricks at her and cut her on the elbow, and she was 'tired of that shit.' The suspect stabbed the victim and fled on foot to a nearby apartment. Neighbors directed the police to her location. Both the victim and the suspect were intoxicated at the time of the incident.

Table 3a. Selected Characteristics of St. Louis Homicide Incidents by Victim-Offender Relationship: Female Victims, N = 425 (Percents)

|                               | Intimate Partner |         |          |           |          |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
|                               | Family           | Marital | Non-Mar. | Acquaint. | Stranger |
| Female Offender               | 33.3             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 11.6      | 4.6      |
| Victim Age                    |                  |         |          |           |          |
| Under 15                      | 55.6             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 8.4       | 15.7     |
| 15-24                         | 6.3              | 15.7    | 39.2     | 32.5      | 21.4     |
| 25-34                         | 9.5              | 31.4    | 39.2     | 25.3      | 20.0     |
| 35-44                         | 4.8              | 23.5    | 14.9     | 9.6       | 10.0     |
| 45-54                         | 6.3              | 7.8     | 5.4      | 6.6       | 7.1      |
| 55-64                         | 4.8              | 9.8     | 0.0      | 4.8       | 8.6      |
| Over 64                       | 12.7             | 11.8    | 1.4      | 12.7      | 17.1     |
| Median                        | 10.0             | 36.0    | 26.3     | 27.4      | 31.3     |
| Black Victim                  | 76.2             | 52.9    | 85.1     | 76.6      | 51.4     |
| Gun-Related                   | 26.2             | 73.5    | 64.8     | 50.9      | 56.5     |
| Alcohol-Related <sup>ns</sup> | 19.0             | 24.5    | 39.1     | 29.8      | 23.9     |
| Drug-Related                  | 11.1             | 9.8     | 12.3     | 32.3      | 18.8     |
| Location                      |                  |         |          |           |          |
| Residence                     | 86.4             | 75.0    | 76.1     | 65.0      | 42.4     |
| Workplace                     | 6.8              | 6.3     | 7.5      | 2.8       | 8.5      |
| Automobile                    | 0.0              | 6.3     | 3.0      | 7.0       | 3.4      |
| Street                        | 6.8              | 12.5    | 13.4     | 25.2      | 45.8     |
| Witness <sup>ns</sup>         | 26.8             | 40.4    | 41.2     | 35.3      | 44.1     |
| (n)                           | (63)             | (51)    | (74)     | (167)     | (70)     |

**Table 3b. Selected Characteristics of St. Louis Homicide Incidents by Victim-Offender Relationship: Male Victims, N = 2,114 (Percents)<sup>3</sup>**

|                        | Intimate Partner |         |          |           |          |
|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
|                        | Family           | Marital | Non-Mar. | Acquaint. | Stranger |
| <b>Female Offender</b> | 12.7             | 100.0   | 98.6     | 3.8       | 1.4      |
| <b>Victim Age</b>      |                  |         |          |           |          |
| Under 15               | 14.0             | 0.0     | 0.0      | 2.1       | 1.1      |
| 15-24                  | 25.9             | 1.8     | 16.7     | 39.3      | 34.3     |
| 25-34                  | 21.0             | 23.6    | 30.6     | 34.8      | 30.1     |
| 35-44                  | 17.5             | 30.9    | 26.4     | 13.3      | 15.0     |
| 45-54                  | 8.4              | 14.5    | 12.5     | 5.2       | 6.2      |
| 55-64                  | 6.3              | 16.4    | 8.3      | 3.0       | 6.2      |
| Over 64                | 7.0              | 12.7    | 5.6      | 2.5       | 7.1      |
| Median Age             | 29.2             | 40.0    | 35.5     | 26.3      | 29.3     |
| <b>Black Victim</b>    | 85.3             | 76.4    | 90.3     | 90.2      | 74.4     |
| <b>Gun-Related</b>     | 55.6             | 54.5    | 50.7     | 79.9      | 80.0     |
| <b>Alcohol-Related</b> | 32.8             | 67.3    | 33.8     | 31.5      | 28.5     |
| <b>Drug-Related</b>    | 9.9              | 1.8     | 14.1     | 32.8      | 19.7     |
| <b>Location</b>        |                  |         |          |           |          |
| Residence              | 72.2             | 88.5    | 80.6     | 37.7      | 18.3     |
| Workplace              | 0.8              | 0.0     | 7.5      | 6.9       | 15.5     |
| Automobile             | 4.8              | 1.9     | 4.5      | 7.4       | 12.0     |
| Street                 | 22.2             | 9.6     | 7.5      | 48.0      | 54.2     |
| <b>Witness</b>         | 50.0             | 28.3    | 36.1     | 56.8      | 68.0     |
| <b>(n)</b>             | (143)            | (55)    | (72)     | (1390)    | (454)    |

<sup>3</sup> Data are for the period 1978-1994. "Family" includes parent, child, sibling, and other relatives. "Marital" includes married, separated-divorced, and common-law. "Non-Marital" includes boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, girlfriend, and ex-girlfriend. "Acquaintance" includes non-intimate friends and other acquaintances. Cases with unknown victim-offender relationship are excluded. All percentage differences are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  (evaluated by chi-square), except where indicated 'ns'. Source: St. Louis Homicide Project.

**Table 4. Victim Involvement in St. Louis Intimate-Partner Homicides by Sex of Victim (Percents)<sup>4</sup>**

|                     | Male          | Female        |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| None                | 18.8          | 26.4          |
| Prior Conflict      | 29.4          | 61.1          |
| Victim Precipitated | 51.8          | 12.5          |
| Total<br>(N)        | 100.0<br>(85) | 100.0<br>(72) |

## IMPLICATIONS

This study raises several questions for further research on violence between intimate partners. It should be emphasized that the findings reported here are restricted to lethal violence between intimate partners; whether the same patterns hold for nonlethal violence remains an open question. In addition, although it seems reasonably certain that some of the decline in intimate partner homicide can be attributed to changes in the marital composition of the population, the factors responsible for the decline in the rate of spousal homicide (i.e., the number of marital homicides divided by the number of ever-married persons), remain to be determined. It is especially important to examine the role played by more aggressive police response to domestic violence episodes and by the growth in facilities and services for battered women.

Subsequent research also should explore changes in the composition of the population of persons who marry. Although the decline in marriage during the last several decades has been widespread, it has not been random (Lichter 1995). As marriage rates decrease, those who do marry are more economically advantaged and perhaps less prone to serious violence. In other words, a selection process may be at work that drives down the rate of spousal homicide. Also, changing cultural attitudes, increasing economic opportunities for women, and stagnating earnings of young men have resulted in more "porous" marital relationships. As opportunities to

<sup>4</sup> Cases drawn from 205 homicide records for the period 1980-1993. Forty-eight cases provided no basis for reliable coding and were excluded. One hundred fifty-seven (76.6%) of the cases retained in the analysis. "None": No evidence in record of prior conflict. "Prior Conflict": Evidence in record of past violent or non-violent conflict between victim and offender. "Victim Precipitated": Victim initiated the conflict that led to her or his death. Source: St. Louis Homicide Project.

leave unsatisfying -- or threatening -- relationships have increased, the necessity for violent escape has lessened.

Divorce has always functioned as a nonviolent means of terminating threatening relationships. This is not simply one of its latent consequences; it was a significant and very explicit purpose behind the relaxation of legal restrictions over divorce in 19th century Europe (Gillis, 1996). Gillis found a compelling correspondence between the rise of divorce and separation in 19th century France and a decline in domestic homicide. What divorce provided as a safety valve in an earlier period, the declining rate of marriage may be accomplishing today. Among the reasons offered for the current "retreat from marriage" (Lichter, 1995), one merits greater attention from researchers than it has received: the protection of women from threatening and dangerous relationships with men.

Many of the same forces may help to explain the decline in nonmarital intimate homicides. Nonmarital cohabiting relationships do not last very long (about half end within one-to-two years), and many of the partners evidently do not view the relationships as permanent (Levitan, Belous, and Gallo 1988, p. 34). Roughly six-in-ten cohabiting relationships lead to marriage; however, the marriages resulting from cohabitation are more likely than others to end in divorce (Cherlin 1992, pp. 14-15). Cohabiting relationships reflect and reinforce an "individualistic ethic" that, according to Cherlin, "makes people more likely to dissolve a union -- whether marital or not -- if they find it personally unfulfilling" (Cherlin 1992, pp. 15-16).

The declines in intimate partner homicide documented in this research raise the question of the displacement of victims and offenders, particularly females, to other victim-offender categories in homicide. Consistent with evidence from other research (Steffensmeier 1993), I find little indication of the displacement of female offenders from intimate partner homicides to other

**Table 5. St. Louis Homicide Rates by Race and Sex of Victim, 1970-1990<sup>5</sup>**

|                     | 1970 | 1980  | 1990  |
|---------------------|------|-------|-------|
| <b>Black Male</b>   | 97.3 | 169.5 | 163.4 |
| <b>Black Female</b> | 17.0 | 19.8  | 22.7  |
| <b>White Male</b>   | 25.4 | 27.6  | 20.3  |
| <b>White Female</b> | 4.7  | 6.7   | 6.5   |

<sup>5</sup> Five-year average rate (1968-72, 1978-82, 1988-92) per 100,000 population. Source: St. Louis Homicide Project

types of homicide. Levels of female homicide victimization have remained roughly constant over the last 20-25 years (see Table 5; cf. Smith and Kuchta 1995). Although there is some evidence of an increase in victimization among black women, it does not compare with that observed among black men -- especially young black men.

This raises the disturbing possibility -- in what in other respects is some very good news about homicide -- of a more indirect kind of displacement. Many of the same factors that are associated with the decline in intimate partner homicide may have contributed to the recent increase in youth homicide in the United States. Conditions that make it difficult for men and women to form and sustain intimate relationships, including unemployment, stagnant incomes, and shrinking family support services, also increase the likelihood that children and adolescents will grow up lacking the nurturing, support, and supervision necessary for the prevention of crime and violence. The policy challenge is to foster a social climate in which intimate relationships flourish and children are cared for, without reproducing traditional family relationships that threaten the rights and safety of women.

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## VIOLENCE IN U.S. CITIES: HOMICIDE TRENDS IN EIGHT U.S. CITIES

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### ABSTRACT

Policymakers and the media have focused recently on dramatic declines in homicides in some major U.S. cities, including, for example, the 31% decline in New York City's homicide rate between 1990 and 1994. These declines have been attributed to a variety of factors--some of which are more amenable to policy than others. For example, actions by government agencies to "clean up" the streets are viewed as possible sources for these declines, while other hypotheses focus on changes in population characteristics, notably (short-term) declines in the number of young males currently on America's streets. While attention has focused on those cities that have recently witnessed dramatic declines in homicide, these declines are by no means ubiquitous. In many cities, the number of homicides has remained at previous levels or has increased. This paper discusses several research projects currently being undertaken by the National Institute of Justice to identify and examine factors associated with recent changes in homicide rates. Specific attention is given to providing an overview to one study designed to examine local factors hypothesized to be linked closely with homicide.

### INTRODUCTION

The Homicide Trends Project is being undertaken by the National Institute of Justice as a multi-pronged approach to refining our understanding of the dynamics of homicide and violence in U.S. Cities as these relate to social, demographic and policy changes. The first project entails intensive study in a small number of cities for which we will gather extant data, go on site to interview key policy makers and others, and collect records-based data from local sources. Initially, this study will address eight cities, seven of which exhibit clear and significant increasing or decreasing homicide rates over the past several years and an eighth which has exhibited little change. Subsequently, we may add to the list of cities to be intensively studied. A separate study will analyze homicide trends in the 77 largest U.S. cities using data from extant sources. Another study, currently in the planning stages, will conduct micro-level spatial and temporal analyses of homicide patterns in the eight cities.

The focus of the investigations is to look at changes in local factors and how these changes appear to be associated with changes in homicide trends. Data are being gathered to address hypotheses that relate changes in homicide rates to changes in four areas of inquiry: (1) criminal justice system factors, (2) micro-level factors, (3) macro-level factors, and (4) the deconstruction of homicide trends. The *criminal justice system factors* include law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and corrections. Thus, for example, one hypothesis to be tested in the criminal justice system area is that changes in police deployment practices have reduced the level of violence and, therefore, the number of homicides. The *micro-level factors* focus on guns, drugs, and gangs (for example, an increase in gang activity has led to an increase in homicides). The *macro-*

*level factors* include economics; demographics; social, public and health services; education; community and community groups; and media (for example, a decline in family stability has led to an increase in homicides, particularly by and of juveniles). The last area of inquiry will involve an analytic deconstruction of homicides within each city to determine if there have been meaningful changes in who is being killed. The underlying structural hypotheses for the first three areas of inquiry are summarized in the table below.

| <b>Structural Hypotheses<br/>relating changes in city-level homicide rates to changes in the following factors</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Criminal Justice System</b>   | <b>Micro-Level Factors</b>                         | <b>Macro-Level Factors</b>                          |
| Policing practices   | Gangs & gang activity                              | Family structure & stability                        |
| Task forces ( interagency, multi-jurisdictional)   | Availability & lethality of handguns/other weapons | Economic conditions                                 |
| Actual & perceived likelihood or severity of punishment  | Drug market stability                              | Demographic changes                                 |
| Incapacitation of a large number of young, crime-prone males   | Extent & type of drug use                          | System responses or resources (e.g., EMS, shelters) |
|  |  | Prevention programs                                 |

Questions relevant to these areas will be asked of key policy makers and figures in each city. Interviews will be conducted with the following individuals or agencies: US Attorney, DEA, ATF, FBI, Police Chief, police homicide unit, police gang unit, police drug unit, sheriff, probation office supervisor, prosecutor, public defender, chief judge, mayor and/or city manager, school board representative, high school principal(s), social services, public health services, community group(s), newspaper city desk (or other media).

## **SITE SELECTION**

Cities were selected for in-depth study based on their size and the strength of their homicide rate trends over the past decade (1985 - 1994). The eight cities selected for study have (a) populations over 200,000; (b) homicides above the median annual homicide number (58.8) and homicide rates above the median homicide rate per 100,000 (15.8) for the time period 1985-1994; and (c) the "strongest trends" of specific types in their homicide rates over the 1985-1994 time period. Trends were categorized as follows: decreasing linear, decreasing quadratic, increasing linear, increasing quadratic, and no change. (Linear trends are self explanatory. Quadratic trends are one type of trend that allows values to "change direction." Specifically, decreasing quadratic trends increase and then decrease and, thus, are the type of homicide trend that has received the most attention recently. Increasing quadratic trends decrease and then

increase; only one eligible city exhibited this pattern.) Linear and quadratic models were estimated for each city. Within each category, we selected the two cities with the strongest trend (for example, the steepest slopes for the linear trends). We also selected one city for which homicide rates had remained essentially constant over this ten-year period (smallest mean absolute deviation). The cities selected are shown below.

| <b>Trend<br/>(1985-1994 homicide rates)</b> | <b>City 1</b> | <b>City 2</b>  |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Decreasing linear                           | Detroit       | Tampa          |
| Decreasing quadratic                        | Atlanta       | Washington, DC |
| Increasing linear                           | New Orleans   | Richmond, VA   |
| Increasing quadratic                        | Indianapolis  | *              |
| No change                                   | Miami         | **             |

\* Only one eligible city exhibited this pattern. \*\* Only one city selected with this pattern.

## **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

Pilot testing of the interview instruments was completed in May in two cities. (Pilot cities are Cleveland, OH, and Kansas City, MO.) Visits to the eight cities are then scheduled to begin the week of June 3 and conclude in late July. Draft reports are expected to be complete by September 1996, with a final report expected in November 1996. The reports will include a separate report on the relationship of homicide trends to each of the three sets of factors (criminal justice system, micro-level, and macro-level), on the deconstruction of the homicide data, and a final report on all findings.

## **DECONSTRUCTION OF CITY-LEVEL HOMICIDE TRENDS**

In preparation for the site visits, we are analyzing the nature of homicides committed in each of the cities. We are examining trends for specific groups for the years 1980 to 1994. We are specifically looking at trends associated with victims' (a) age; (b) gender; (c) race/ethnicity; and (d) victim-offender relationship. We are also looking at type of weapon. Finally, we are looking at characteristics of the offender, when the offender is known.



## URBAN ARREST TRENDS FOR ADULT MEN AND WOMEN: 1960-1993

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### ABSTRACT

When homicide arrest trends for adult men and women (30 or older) are examined, we find little indication of convergence in the rates. The male and female rates sometimes move in different directions. Counts and rates by gender *and* race for these cities show additional divergence and underscore the impact of black men on urban arrest trends. Estimates of the impact of possible changes in race- and gender-specific arrest rates suggest that substantial reductions in long term violence rates in US cities will require substantial reductions in black and Hispanic homicide rates. This and the long term trends in homicide arrests by gender and race support a cautious approach to the interpretation of short term decreases in homicide.

### HOMICIDE ARREST TRENDS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Homicide arrest rates for young men in urban areas are very high, frequently reaching 200 to 300 per 100,000 for some categories of young men. These high rates of homicide arrest for young men should not cause us to overlook the impact of older men and women on total homicide arrest rates. For this discussion, only persons thirty years of age or older are classified as adults. Using this definition to examine homicide arrest rates in selected cities indicates the extent to which homicide occurs in what might be called adult populations. Figure 1 shows adult homicide arrest *counts and rates* for men and women for Philadelphia and Chicago--two of the largest cities in the United States. The patterns on the left side of Figure 1 suggest that in Philadelphia the *number* of adult women arrested for homicide decreased from 1975 without appreciable change in the number of adult men arrested for homicide. The *number* of arrests of men fluctuated after 1976 but remained at about the same level. Looking at the adult arrest *rates* for homicide in Philadelphia, Figure 1 suggests that the rate fell for adult women but was little changed for adult men.

Looking at the right side of Figure 1, we see that in Chicago both male and female rates were relatively constant from 1975 to 1985, before falling slightly from 1985 to 1993. In both Philadelphia and Chicago, the adult male homicide arrest rate remains over four times as large as the rate for women. In both cities the 1993 adult male arrest rate is about 20 per 100,000 adult men in the population. In both cities the male and female rates fluctuated, increased and then decreased a little. The most important difference for these cities was the decrease in the arrest rate for adult women in Philadelphia.

Figure 2 presents the same patterns for Atlanta and Baltimore--two cities with majority black populations. There appears to have been a slight decrease in the number of adult men arrested for homicide in Atlanta, with clearer decrease in the number of adult women arrested for homicide. The decrease in the homicide arrest rate for women (bottom left) is much sharper than

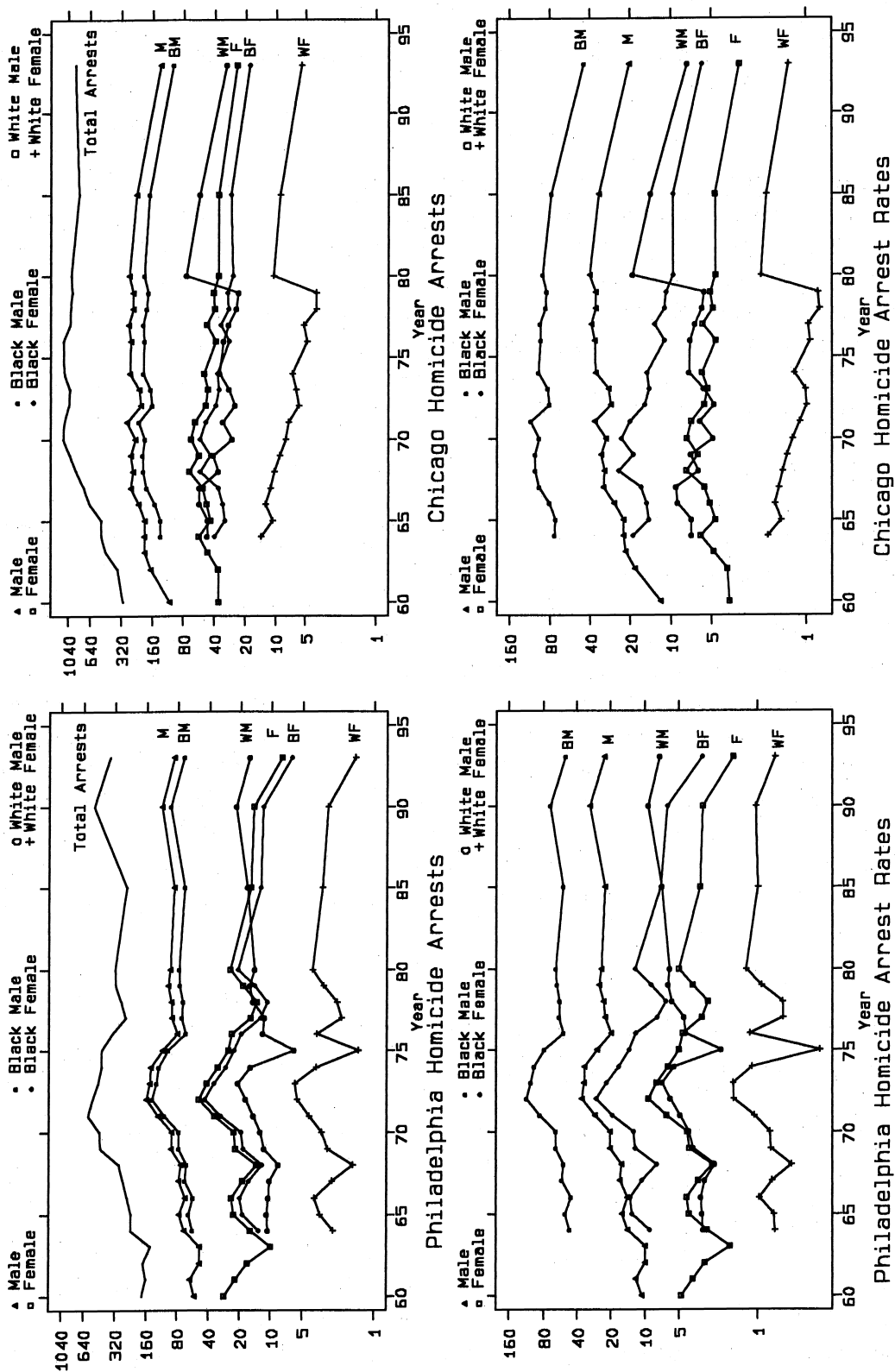


Figure 1. Homicide Arrest Counts and Rates for Men and Women at Least Thirty Years Old for Philadelphia and Chicago.

the decrease in the same rate for men. For Baltimore, there was little change in either the number or rate of men arrested for homicide. The numbers of arrests and the rates of arrest of adult women in Baltimore fluctuate from 1975 but increase from 1980 to 1993. In contrast to Philadelphia and Chicago, the adult male arrest rate for Baltimore increased from about 20 per 100,000 in 1960 to about 40 in Baltimore. The same rate increased from about 20 in 1960 Atlanta to about 80. The adult homicide arrest rate for women in Baltimore starts at less than 5 per 100,000 and ends at slightly more than 5 in 1993. The same rate for Atlanta starts at about 10 and ends at slightly more than 5.

Shifting to cities with very large Hispanic populations, Figure 3 presents the patterns for adult male and female homicide arrest rates for San Antonio and Los Angeles. Although the counts fluctuate, there was little or no decrease in the *number* of adult men or women arrested for homicide in San Antonio from 1965 to 1993. However, both male and female arrest *rates* decreased for San Antonio from about 1975. For Los Angeles, we see a similar pattern, little or no change in the *number* of adult men or women arrested for homicide but an increase (1975 to 1985) followed by a decrease (1985 to 1993) in the homicide arrest rates for both men and women. In San Antonio, the male arrest *rates* fluctuate around 20 per 100,000 for the first half of the 1960-1993 period and then drop to about 10 per 100,000 during the last half of this period. In Los Angeles, the adult male homicide arrest rate remains at or above 20 per 100,000 for most of the period. Homicide arrest *rates* for adult women in both San Antonio and Los Angeles usually remain below five per 100,000.

#### DISAGGREGATING BY RACE

To illustrate the utility of disaggregation by race and gender, Figures 1 through 3 go beyond the trends for men and women and show the trends in estimated arrest counts and rates for four categories of arrested adults--black men, white men, black women, and white women. The patterns for both counts and rates indicate that the arrest trends for homicide in these cities are influenced most by the arrest of black men. Black male arrest counts in Philadelphia (Figure 1) closely parallel male arrest counts. In addition, black female arrest counts parallel female arrest counts. In both Philadelphia and Chicago a similar pattern emerges. The charts on the bottom half of Figure 1 indicate that the directions of the adult male homicide arrest rates in Philadelphia and Chicago are controlled by the black, male homicide arrest rates in these cities. Similarly, the directions of the adult female arrest rates are controlled by the black female homicide arrest rates.

In Philadelphia, white male homicide arrest counts and rates *increased* as black male rates remained stable or increased only slightly. However, the sharp increases in white homicide arrest rates for Chicago from 1979 to 1980 are undoubtedly the result of a change in procedures for classifying arrestees by race rather than a reflection of substantive changes in white arrest counts or rates. Adjusting for this artifactual change suggests that white arrest rates were falling more sharply in Chicago than black arrest rates.

The numbers of black men arrested in Atlanta and Baltimore are very close to the total numbers of men arrested in both cities. The situation is the same for the numbers of women in both cities.



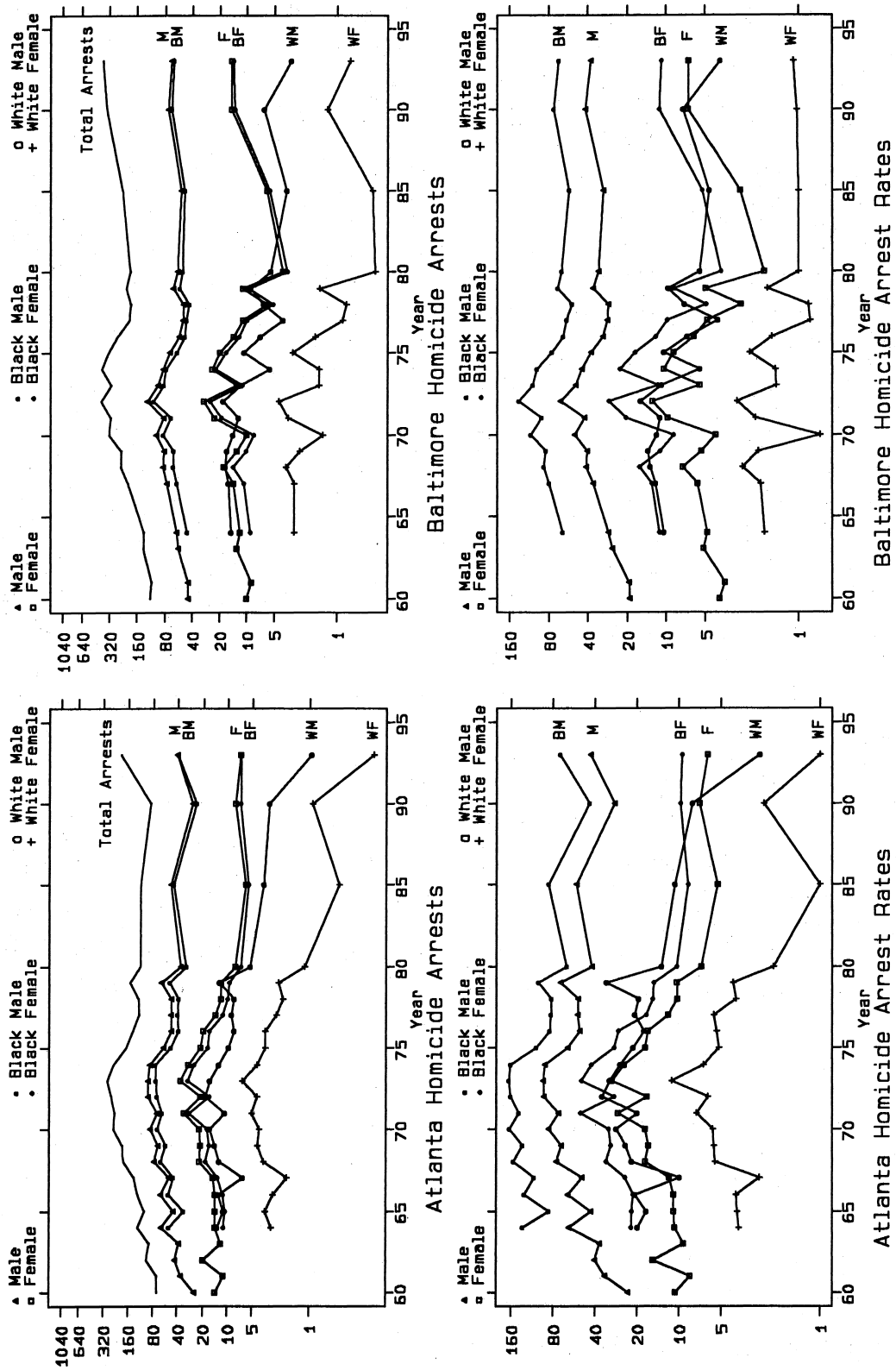
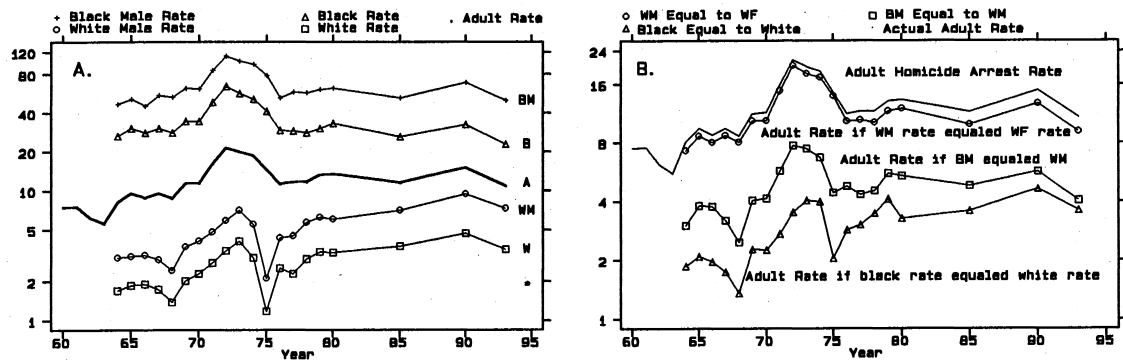


Figure 2. Homicide Arrest Counts and Rates for Men and Women at Least Thirty Years Old for Atlanta and Baltimore.



**Figure 4. Estimated and Actual Adult Homicide Arrest Rates For Philadelphia.**

counts to construct a set of estimated black homicide arrest counts. These estimated counts of the number of black persons arrested are added to the number of white persons arrested for homicide and to the number of persons of other races who are arrested for homicide to create a new estimated total arrest count for Philadelphia. This estimated total arrest count is used with Philadelphia's total population count to compute a new overall homicide arrest rate for the city. When this is done, we find that, on average, the total homicide arrest rate would be about [one-third/one-fourth] of the average of the actual rate. Similar procedures were used to compute the other two estimated rates.

Figure 4a shows the adult homicide arrest rate for Philadelphia (Adult Rate), the black and white adult homicide arrest rates, and the black male and white male adult homicide arrest rates. Clearly, the highest homicide arrest rates in Philadelphia are the rates for people classified as black and black male. Figure 4b compares three estimated rates with the actual rate for Philadelphia. It suggests that reducing the white male rate to the level of the white female rate would reduce the overall homicide arrest rate by about nine percent on average. Reducing the black male rate to the level of the white male rate would have a more dramatic impact, reducing the total arrest rate by 63 percent on average. However, reducing the adult black rate of homicide arrests to the level of the adult white rate would have an even more dramatic impact on overall homicide arrest rates for the city. If this could be done, the city's overall homicide arrest rate would have been less than four per 100,000 for most of the years involved. Since 1975, this rate had an average value of 12 per 100,000.

## DISCUSSION

Examining adult homicide arrest trends from 1960 through 1993 by gender is informative. It suggests that these rates fluctuated over time and that for some cities adult homicide arrest rates may have decreased slightly from 1980 to 1993. However, disaggregating the adult arrest counts in these cities by both race and gender provides additional information. These procedures indicate that the trend of the male arrest count is greatly influenced by changes in the black male arrest count--in four of the cities discussed here. In some cities, the black male adult arrest count is a virtual shadow of the male arrest count. Similarly, the black female adult arrest count follows the

adult female arrest count. Such results suggest that substantial reductions in lethal violence in US cities will require substantial reductions in black homicide rates. In the six to eight cities with large Hispanic populations, it will require comparable reductions in Hispanic homicide rates.

The importance of these findings lies in their implications for theories and policies based on the use of grossly aggregated data. Clearly the male and female trends do not always move in the same direction. It should be equally clear that analysis and interpretations of homicide offense and arrest trends can not be based on short term changes. It is important to disaggregate the data and to take the long view. It is too easy to be lulled into thinking that we know why the rates increased or decreased over a period of two or three years--only to realize later that the long term patterns remain to confound us.

Considering these findings, it would appear to be a serious mistake to interpret recent short term decreases in the general homicide rate as an indication that deterrence or incapacitation is working. To be sure, a certain number of homicides in the non-prison community are prevented by the incarceration of about one million people in the US at any given time. However, the interpretation of recent decreases as a result of the incapacitating impact of incarceration must be based on more than an analysis of overall rates. Such analyses should take into account the extent to which the increases in the prison population have been affected by the incarceration of black and white arrestees. It is important to examine and compare increases in black incarceration rates with increases in white incarceration rates. If homicide arrests of white adults fluctuated and decreased while black homicide arrest rates remained constant or increased, it might be inaccurate to suggest that the increased use of incarceration had an incapacitating impact on overall homicide rates. Incarcerating more black offenders will not incapacitate white offenders--nor will incarcerating white offenders incapacitate black offenders.

For example, the increases in homicide in many cities from 1985 to 1992 may have been the result of an increased interest in crack cocaine combined with a shift in drug policy that made cocaine more expensive and therefore more profitable to distribute. One might suggest that as the popularity of the drug waned and the enforcement policies that contributed to its increasing profitability changed, homicides declined. This explanation is at least as plausible as the suggestion that increased incarceration produced a decrease in adult homicide.

Whatever the value of either of these theories as an explanation of the most recent short term trend, they do not deal with the long term differences in homicide arrest rates. To reduce overall homicide rates to 1950s' levels, it will be necessary to reduce the homicide offense rates for black persons in central cities to something approximating the white rate. This will not be easy. Social, political, and economic institutions are slow to change. Without full participation of black people in the economic, social, and political life of their cities, without major changes in procedures for providing education, work, social status, and a sense of hope for all residents, there is probably little chance that black homicide rates will approximate white homicide rates. It is probably recognition of widespread resistance to change in the US that makes short term analyses and short term policy so attractive.

# HOMICIDE AND ITS DETERMINANTS

Jiafang Chen

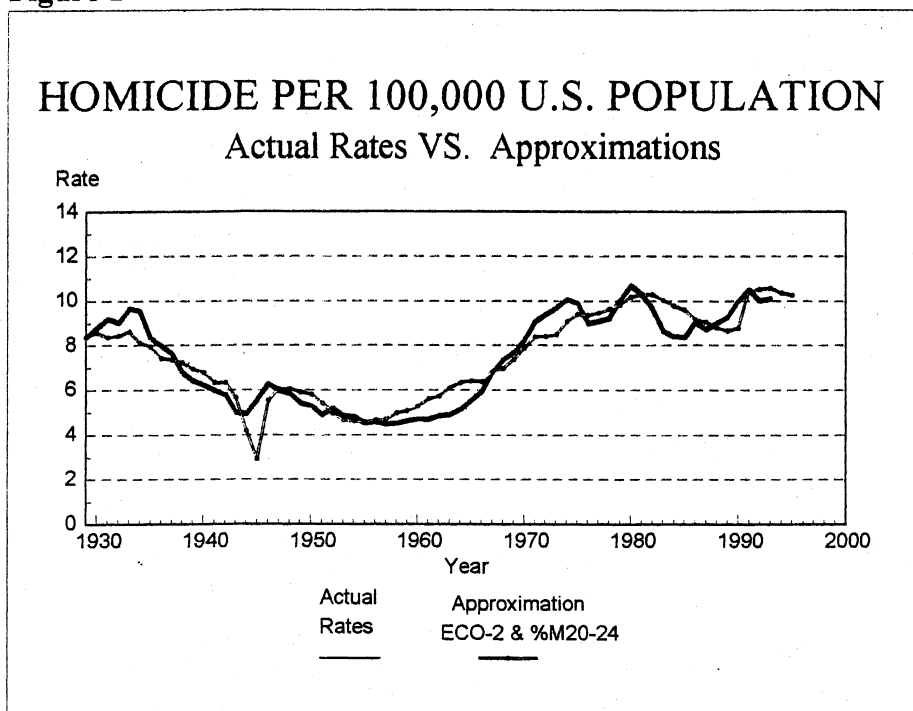
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Last year in Ottawa, two major factors were identified for ups and downs of homicide rates in the United States in the last 60 odd years. A short review of these two major determinants is necessary before we starting this short paper. The two major determinants are: 1. ECO-2, which is a calculated economic indicator. ECO-2 is services as a proportion of personal consumption expenditures. The main components of service are housing, transportation, and medical expenditures. These expenditures directly affect our daily living and they cannot be postponed or avoided. When economy is not good, this indicator increases, and vice versa. 2. %M20-24, which is an age related population factor. %M20-24 is male population aged 20-24 as percent of total population. Since many homicides are committed by young males, an increase in the proportion of young males is more likely to inflate homicide rate, and vice versa.

Figure 1



Searching for major determinants of homicide at the macro level increases our understanding of this aspect of human behavior. If the determinants are appropriate, they can be used to predict, future homicide rates. It follows that if the determinants are not relevant, the prediction will fail. One way to examine this is to compare the actual homicide rates with the predicted rates. This study will follow this logic by

using identified determinants compare the predicted numbers and rates with the actual ones.

Figure 1 shows the result of this comparison. In the 1995 Ottawa meeting, it is found that these two determinants combined, ECO-2 and %M20-24, have a very high correlation with homicide

rates from 1929 to 1990. Therefore, homicide rates after 1990 can be fairly well approximated. One of the determinants, ECO-2, is calculated by using the information from *Survey of Current Business* (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, series). The latest ECO-2 that can be calculated is for 1995. Another determinant, %M20-24, is calculated by using information from *Current Population Reports, P-25* series (Bureau of the Census, series). The %M20-24 can be extended to 2050, but, for this study, the calculation stops at the year 2000.

From Figure 1, we can see that the result of the approximation is very close to the actual rates provided in Vital Statistics. The differences between the actual rates and the approximated rates are less than 1 per 100,000 in 1991, 1992, and 1993. When actual and approximated numbers are compared, using the actual numbers as 100, the biggest difference is around 5 percent, while the smallest is about 1 percent. These rates, numbers and the differences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

ACTUAL AND APPROXIMATED HOMICIDE NUMBERS & RATES  
U.S. 1991-1995

|      | (1)            | (2)                  | (3)        | (4)               | (5)                     | (6)                     |
|------|----------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Year | Actual<br>Rate | Rate<br>Approximated | Difference | Actual<br>Numbers | Numbers<br>Approximated | Percent<br>Difference   |
|      |                |                      | (1) - (2)  |                   |                         | [(4) - (5)] / (4) * 100 |
| 1991 | 10.50          | 10.46                | 0.04       | 26,513            | 26,378                  | 0.51                    |
| 1992 | 10.00          | 10.52                | 0.52       | 25,488            | 26,819                  | 5.22                    |
| 1993 | 10.10          | 10.57                | 0.47       | 26,009            | 27,263                  | 4.82                    |
| 1994 |                | 10.36                |            |                   | 27,010                  |                         |
| 1995 |                | 10.25                |            |                   | 26,939                  |                         |

Note: Actual rates and numbers from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* series.

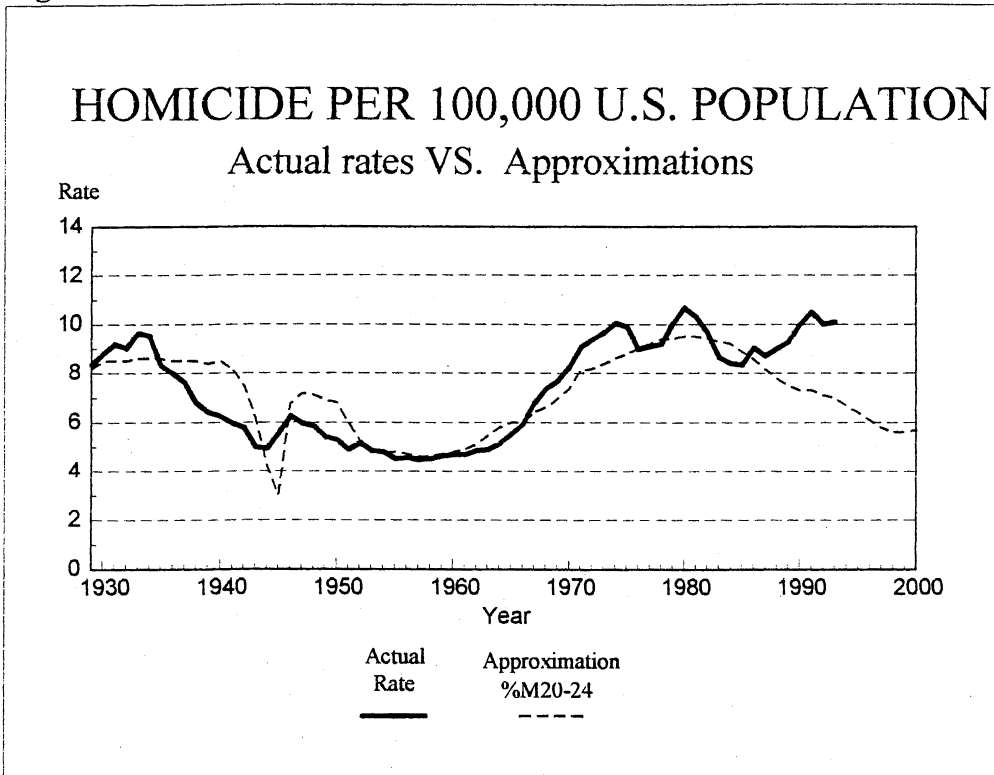
According to this approximation, we expect similar homicide rates in 1994 and 1995. Total numbers of homicide will be less than that in 1993. We will follow this trend in the years to come.

A question is generalized from the application of the two determinants: if these two determinants together have an impact on homicidal behavior, how much impact comes from %M20-24, and how much from ECO-2? At this moment, we cannot answer this question because we have not yet finished the study. However, a look at the following Figures suggest that it is possible to answer the question as we go. Let's take a look at approximations in which only one determinant is included.

A comparison of the actual homicide rates with the approximation of one determinant, %M20-24, is shown in Figure 2. In this Figure, we can see that this determinant does have impact on homicide rates, but, occasionally, the approximations will fall beyond the actual rates. In late 1930s and early 1940s, the approximations are higher than actual rates. Some of the differences

are more than 1 per 100,000. Remember, that World War II is a special period of time in the history. Starting from the 1950s, the approximations follow the actual rates closely and most of the yearly differences are around 1 per 100,000 until the late 1980s. Then the actual rates and the approximations fall apart. This is an indication that one determinant cannot fully explain the ups and downs of homicide rates in the U.S.. Something else is needed for a better explanation. This can be seen in Figure 2. Another suggestion emerging from this Figure is that the age structure of the population alone indicates that homicide rates will go down, until the year 2000 if other factors hold constant. Let's check the impact of the other determinant, ECO-2 on the homicide

**Figure 2**



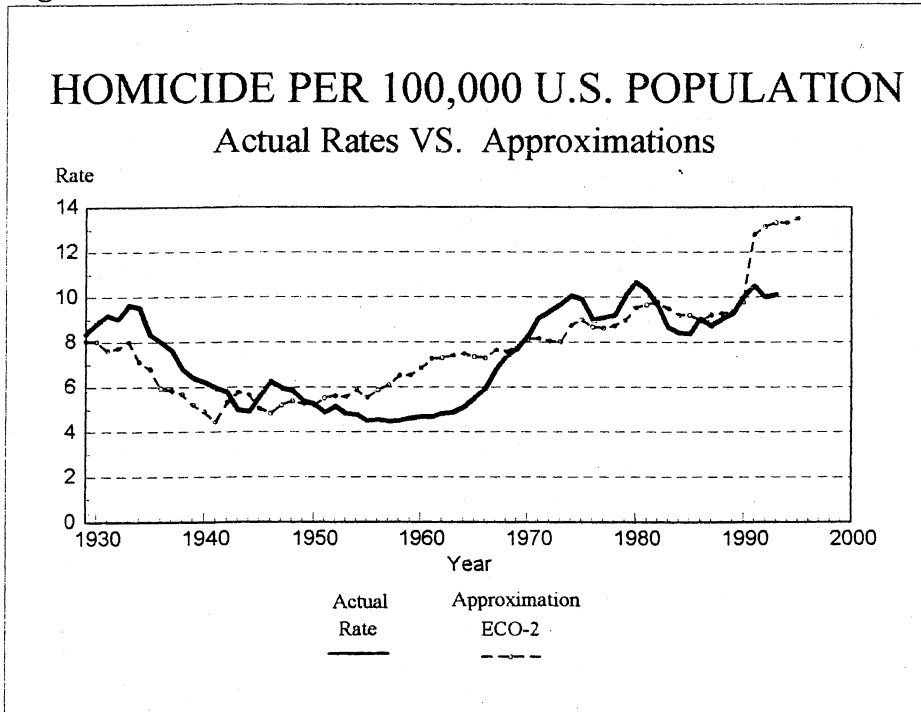
rates after 1990 by using the same method.

Actual and approximated homicide rates, using the determinant ECO-2 alone, are shown in Figure 3. Again, we see the estimated homicide rates fluctuated around the actual homicide rates, yet in a different way. Comparing Figure 2 with Figure 3, something

attract our attention. In Figure 2, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, by using %M20-24 alone, we over-estimated homicide rates, which appear higher than actual homicide rates. But in Figure 3, during the same period, by using ECO-2 alone, we under-estimated homicide rates, which appear below actual homicide rates. Recall in Figure 1, by using both determinants--%M20-24 and ECO-2, the differences between the estimated homicide rates and the actual rates are smaller than those obtained by using only one. The clue from these graphs is that, it is possible that when one determinant inflates the homicide rate while the other will depress the rate, and actual rates will fall in between.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the %M20-24 approximations are almost exactly the same as the actual rates in Figure 2. On the other hand, the ECO-2 approximations are more than 1 per 100,000 higher than actual rates. Figures 2 and 3 suggest that during this period of time, homicide rates are basically affected by the %M20-24 factor. The economic situation in terms of

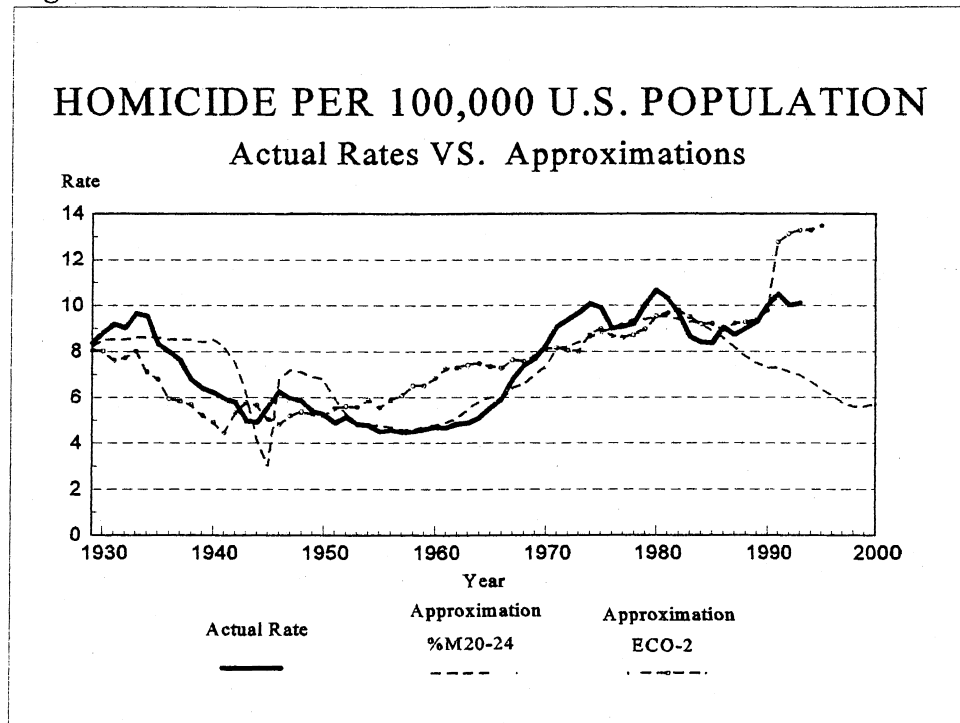
**Figure 3**



the average expenditures per capita in America is not inspiring at all during that period. Recall this period of time, several things happened simultaneously. Such as: civil rights movement, women's liberation movement, involvement in the Vietnam War, and anti-war movements, a generation of baby boomers getting into their rebellion state in their live, and

creating their own culture, etc.. It is possible that economically related frustration and stress are channeled out through all these changes. These types of changes played the role of "safety valve" for that time being. Yet, it is difficult for us to quantify the culture at that time. We can recall the history and assume that this is probably why homicide rates did not go up with the ECO-2 impact.

**Figure 4**



After 1990, as we can see from Figure 3, the economic situation in terms of average

expenditures of ordinary Americans is not good at all. This determinant alone is supposed to inflate the homicide rates in the U.S. as we can see from the Figure 3 in which approximated rates are higher than actual rates.

What is an explanation for the fact that actual homicide rates are lower than the approximations made by using ECO-2 alone? If we combine Figure 2 with Figure 3, and put the two approximations together with actual homicide rates, the potential explanation appears to be there. Using %M20-24 alone, the approximated homicide rates indicate declines after the year 1990. On the other hand, using ECO-2 alone, the approximated rates are supposed to go up after 1990. When these two major determinants interact each other, the actual homicide rates fall somewhere in between. The result of the interaction, by using both %M20-24 and ECO-2 in approximations, is very close to the actual homicide rates in the U.S., as shown in Figure 1.

This comparison perhaps indicates that in the near future, say to the year 2000, approximations using the %M20-24 alone indicate a decline. Unfortunately, economics situation can hardly be predicted. If in the next few years, the economic situation in terms of income per capita and the ECO-2 situation will be improved, then, a decline of homicide rates will be expected. On the other hand, if such economic situations will not be improved, similar homicide rates to the early 1990s are expected. These approximations and actual rates comparison will be checked closely.

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**Note:** Data in this study come from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* series, annual *Vital Statistics of the United States Series*, from U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, P-25*, series, and from U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Survey of Current Business* series.





## **Section Five:**

### **City Studies of Homicide in the South and Southwest**



**MURDER IN SPACE CITY RE-EXAMINED:  
HOUSTON HOMICIDE TWENTY YEARS LATER**

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**BACKGROUND**

Houston, Texas has a long-standing distinction as one of the most violent cities of the United States. In 1969, the homicide rate stood at 23.3 per 100,000 population, compared to a rate of 7.2 nationally. Twenty-five years later, in 1990, those rates were 33.4 and 10.1 respectively, still leaving Houston with a murder rate three times greater than that experienced across the country. At face value, this is surprising, given the city's relative prosperity during the past three decades and its notable role as a center for advanced science, technology and medicine.

Understanding the cultural dynamics, both social and legal, of this phenomenon deserved and was given examination in the past (Lundsgaarde 1977). For the era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a respected and highly-publicized social scientific study shed light on the above-cited seeming cultural contradiction of a city that is simultaneously one of the most sophisticated and barbaric in the industrialized world. Henry P. Lundsgaarde, in his 1977 publication, *Murder in Space City*, provided a serious, well-documented account of all Houston criminal homicide cases for the year 1969, along with an analysis of the peculiar laws and cultural traditions that permitted more than half the offenders to escape punishment. In the tradition of Wolfgang (1958), he paid particular attention to victim-offender relationships and to theoretical concepts such as "victim-precipitated homicides." Quite similar to Wolfgang's findings regarding homicide in Philadelphia, Lundsgaarde found that killings in Houston were most frequently the result of altercations or disputes over relatively trivial matters, involved killers and victims who knew each other, were nearly always intraracial, were often victim-precipitated and usually occurred in the home or in a bar.

Beyond these similarities to Wolfgang's early work, Lundsgaarde's most important original findings were those regarding the formal sanctioning of homicide offenders. He found that the proportion of killers who escaped any form of legal penalty was 61% when they killed relatives, 53% for friends or associates, and 36% for strangers. The majority of cases were dismissed without trial on such bases as defense of person or property. The "clearance" or legal settlement rate was high at 91%. Grand jury members tended to be upper-middle class, middle-aged, Anglo-Saxon, male, professionals or businessmen.

These people tended to be particularly tolerant about assaults and killings between intimates among the poor and the black. Among Lundsgaarde's conclusions was that "frontier" aspects of the Texas penal code and the local culture supported the use of killing as a solution to certain social conflicts. This included allowing a person to retaliate rather than flee from an attack. Also, while the killing of a wife and her lover by the husband if he caught her in the act of adultery was tolerated, a wife killing her husband and his lover was not.

## **THE PRESENT STUDY**

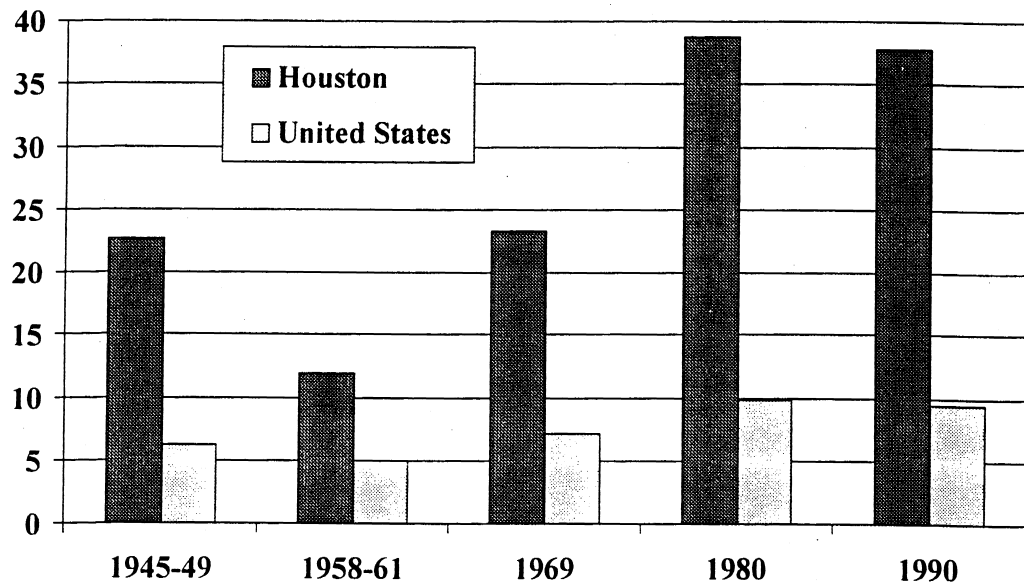
A number of factors since Lundsgaarde's comprehensive analysis of Houston homicide lead to the present interest in a replication and enhancement of his work. These factors include: 1) the city experienced a severe economic downturn during the late 1970's and much of the 1980's, 2) whereas the city's minority population in the 1960s was primarily African American, it is now comprised of large proportions of Hispanic and Asian residents as well, 3) the demographic (particularly racial) makeup of the city's police force is now more diverse, 4) presently, illegal drugs are a major dynamic in American violence as both situational and motivational factors in many homicides and 5) anti-drug laws enacted since the 1970s may alter the traditional criminal justice response to homicide, where drug possession or sale is a factor. Given the economic, political and demographic variations within Houston over the past twenty-five years, one may appropriately ask whether the cultural dynamics which appear to have so strongly influenced formal and informal responses to homicide in 1969 remain intact -- or have they likewise become less predictable. The proposed project is primarily intended to answer this question.

A secondary, yet major, part of the present research is to sort and chart the profile of Houston homicide for the past decade; to be modeled after the homicide information now being kept for other major US cities, including Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Phoenix. Specifically, this means simultaneously examining the intersection of age, sex, race, victim-offender relationship, circumstance and geographic location of these crimes, as well as the role of weapons and drugs in their occurrence. This will enable us to see homicide patterns and trends for Houston and to compare them to other cities. While the basic "homicide facts" already exist within the files of most police jurisdictions, including Houston, they are not compiled and analyzed in the level of detail just described. Such information will be useful to not only law enforcement officials, but also to academicians and policy-makers.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

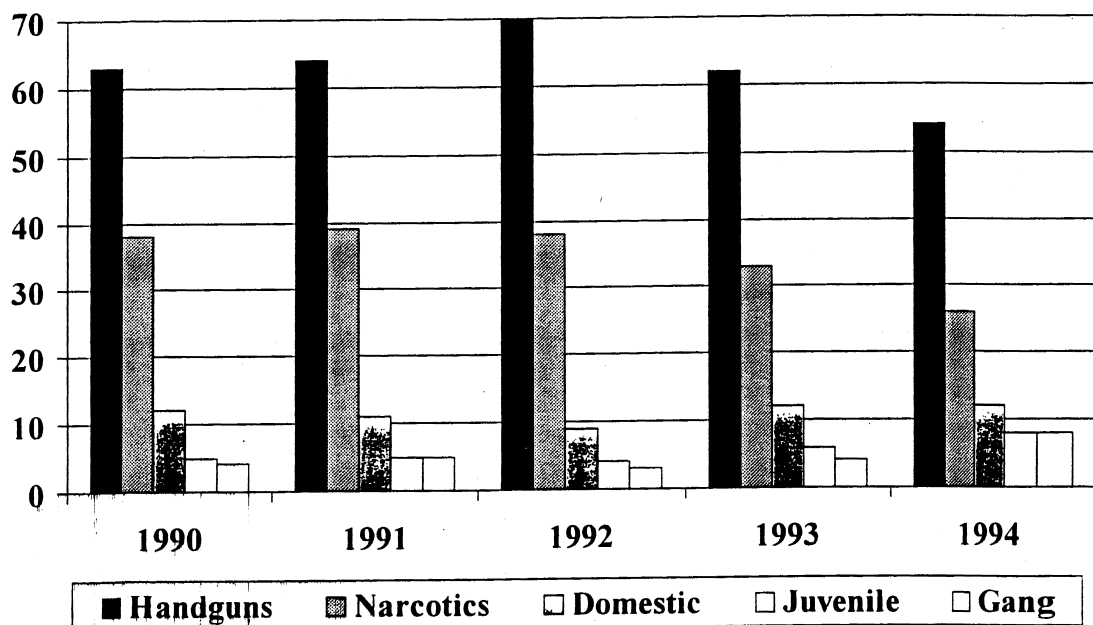
Some general findings from the preliminary inspection of 1984-1994 homicide data for Houston are shown in Figures 1-4. Data from Houston Police Department murder logs as well as national data from the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* indicate a few noteworthy trends. As earlier stated, Houston's overall homicide rate has been roughly three times the national rate for the past fifty years, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**  
**Homicide Rates Over Time For Houston and the USA.**



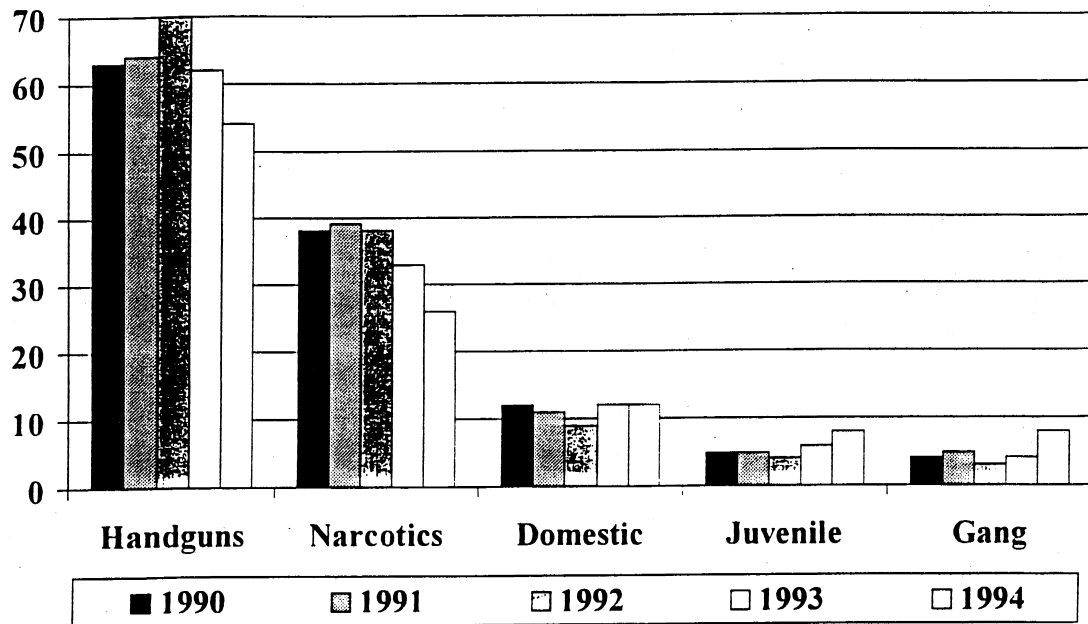
Figures 2 and 3 provide some initial indication of changes during the most recent five-year period, along a number of critical dimensions of contemporary homicide. Namely, the proportion of homicides committed with handguns has decreased from 63 percent to 54 percent during the 1990-94 time period. Narcotics-related incidents have likewise decreased, from 38 to 26 percent of total cases. Both of these findings will receive closer scrutiny as this project proceeds. Not unlike findings in other selected US cities, the rate of domestic homicide incidents has remained relatively flat, at 12 percent. Also as would be expected from national data, the percentage of all homicide incidents involving juvenile suspects and the percentage of all homicides classified as gang-related have each increased sizably, accounting respectively for 8 percent of the total.

**Figure 2.**  
**Five Year Trend of Homicide Types (By Year).**



**Figure 3.**

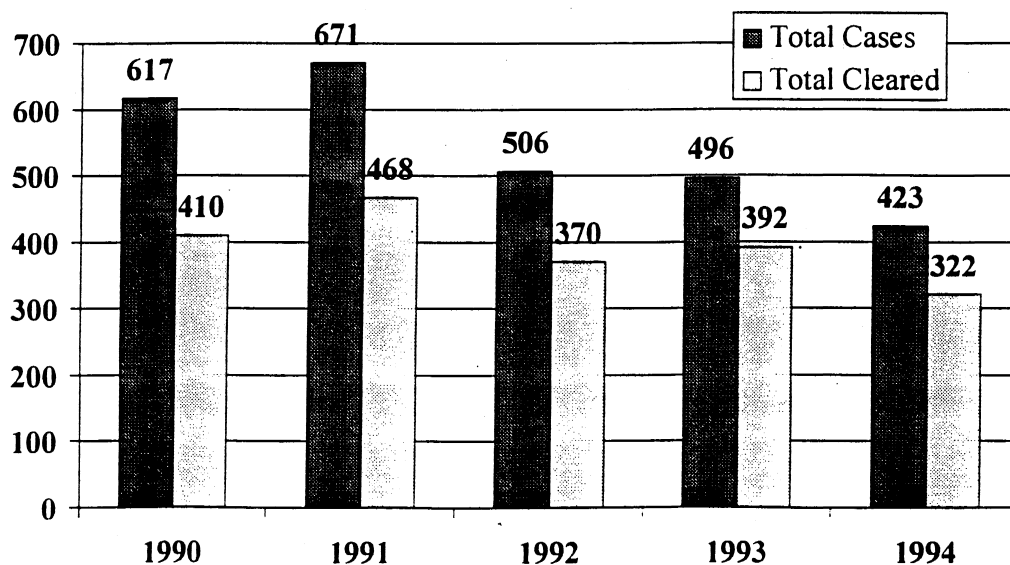
**Five Year Trend of Homicide Types (By Type).**



Finally, as shown in Figure 4, a range of roughly 65-80 percent of all homicide cases were cleared by arrest in this most recent five-year period. This range seems somewhat narrow, considering the 36 percent fluctuation (671 cases in 1991 versus 423 in 1994) in the actual number of homicides each year.

**Figure 4.**

**Five Year Trend of Total Homicides Known and Cleared.**



Each of the very preliminary findings just cited illustrates the numerous avenues to be taken as this research proceeds. The expectation is that the sociocultural dynamics of urban homicide risk and the criminal justice role in the disposition of lethal violence will ultimately be better understood via our planned investigation.

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# **CHANGING HOMICIDE PATTERNS**

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## **Abstract**

Homicide is examined over a thirty year period using Uniform Crime Reports and police data from Atlanta, Georgia. Depending on what variables are selected, homicide can portray the image of stability or dramatic change. The U.S. has traditionally lead all other countries in the world in homicide rates. During the past three decades homicide in the U.S. has become less of a domestic, expressive, criminal event but somewhat more of a casual acquaintance, non-domestic, and instrumental criminal occurrence. Both homicide victims and offenders are becoming younger and more crime prone. Drug involvement, particularly cocaine has altered the nature and the motives commonly associated with homicide.

## **Introduction**

Until recently, homicide research was relegated to the area of heavily descriptive analysis with little or no theory, and limited to time frames that rarely extended beyond one year. However, more recent research has begun to focus on the changing nature of homicide over time and variable rates of homicide in different cities. As discussed by Block (1985) and Zahn and Sagi (1989), homicide is a complex phenomenon that often entails multiple criminal acts such as a robbery, rape, or drug transactions that goes "sour" and the unintended outcome is a homicide. While the term "innocent victim" has been used in the literature, it is becoming increasingly evident that there is a marked similarity of homicide perpetrators with homicide victims. The naive notion of a homicide perpetrator planning to murder a specific victim is not how a typical homicide event unfolds. It appears that the homicide victim often plays a key role in escalating an encounter into a homicide event. Finally, there is increasing evidence that the characteristics of a typical homicide event some twenty or thirty years ago may no longer be relevant to the homicide events of today. Rojek and Williams (1993) argued that while the overall homicide rate has in fact shown very little change for over three decades the characteristics of homicide events may be changing. With the advent of cocaine or "crack" in the mid 1980s, homicide has become tightly interconnected with drug trafficking and drug use (Parker, 1995).

## **Cross-cultural Comparisons of Homicide Rates**

Homicide seems to be a uniquely American phenomenon that is extraordinarily rare in other parts of the world. Figure 1 gives the homicide rate per 100,000 for a select list of countries. The United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest homicide rate of all industrialized and non-industrialized nations in the world. In the United States the homicide rate has hovered around 10 per 100,000 population which is four or five times greater than most European countries. Because of the social upheaval in Russia and other former Eastern-block countries, the homicide rate has increased dramatically in Russia, Romania and Poland but as shown in Figure 1, even these countries not do have homicide rates that exist in the United States.

Further, while some countries have experienced a recent surge in homicide, Russia being the most notable example, the homicide rate in the United States has been stable and high for several decades. Thus, homicide has a particularly American flavor that has become one of the distinguishing elements of social problems in the United States. Even when compared to highly capitalistic countries like Germany or the United Kingdom, which also exhibit a marked degree of social inequality like the United States, no country can approach the homicide rate manifested in the United States for the past century.

### **Homicide Clearance Rates**

One of the most notable changes in homicide in the United States over the past forty years has been the dramatic decline in the homicide clearance rate. Traditionally, homicide cases were nearly always solved because homicide tended to be a domestic, nonstranger event, that facilitated a high clearance rate. As shown in Figure 2, in the decade of the 1950s, more than 90 percent of homicide cases were solved. A cursory examination of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports dating back to the 1930s suggests that an unsolved homicide was a rare event. However, as seen in Figure 2, homicide clearance rates began to fall in the 1960s and have continued to plummet to the present time. For the first time in 1966 the clearance rate dropped from the mid ninetieth percentile to 89 percent. In 1974 the homicide clearance rate dropped into the seventieth percentiles and in 1989 it dropped further into the sixtieth percentile. Currently the homicide clearance rate is 64 percent representing a drop of thirty percentage points in forty years. How much lower the homicide clearance rate will drop is unknown but it does represent a significant change in the nature of homicide and suggests that the relationship between victim and offender is changing and the circumstances associated with homicide are somehow different.

While the clearance rates shown in Figure 2 show a remarkable decline, some variables associated with homicide reveal no change. For example, in Figure 3 the percent of homicide victims who are male (%MaleVic), percent of male homicide offenders (%MaleOff), percent of homicide victims who are African-American (%BlackVic) and percent of homicide offenders who are African American (%BlackOff) are plotted for the past twenty-five years. There has been a slight increase in the percent of male offenders from 85 percent in 1970 to 90 percent in 1995. Similarly, the percent of homicide victims who were male has remained constant at around 80 percent. The percent of victims who are African-American has hovered around 50 percent. Finally, the percent of offenders who are African-American has remained around 55 percent. It should be noted that the data in Figure 3 were plotted using an exponential fit. This enhances the ability to view overall trends but may distort the data point for any one particular year. Thus, the results from Figure 3 show that the race and sex component in homicide has remained stable for the past thirty years as has the overall homicide rate.

The homicide rate per 100,000 population was also plotted in Figure 3 from 1970 to 1995. As seen in Figure 3 the homicide rate has remained essentially unchanged. In 1980 the homicide rate peaked at 10.2 per 100,000 and in 1984 it declined to 7.9 but for most of the twenty-five-year time span it has remained around nine per 100,000. Thus, the results from Figure 3 suggest remarkable stability in terms of the homicide rate and the percent victims and offenders who were male or African-American. Whatever the reason for the dramatic decline in

the clearance rate it does not seem to be attributable to race or sex of the victims or the offenders.

Figure 4 plots the victim-offender relationship from 1963 to 1995 predicated on four categories of victim-offender relationships. Domestic homicide includes husband, wife, mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and other family member. Acquaintance homicide includes friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, neighbor, and acquaintance. As seen in Figure 4, the percent of U.S. homicides that are domestic and acquaintance have been declining steadily since 1963. In 1963 more than thirty percent of homicides were domestic but by 1995 this has declined to approximately 10 percent. Similarly, more than 50 percent of homicides were acquaintance homicides in 1963 but this has also declined to slightly over 30 percent. Stranger homicides have hovered around 15 percent during the three-decade period shown in Figure 4. Conversely, those victim-offender relationships that are classified as unknown have risen dramatically since 1963. In 1963 20 percent of murder circumstances by relationship were unknown but in 1995 this has risen to 40 percent. Figure 4 is influenced by the clearance rates discussed in Figure 2. That is, homicide is becoming progressively less a domestic phenomenon and more of a violent encounter between casual acquaintances or an altercation resulting from some form of an argument or a misunderstanding outside of the home. While the data are not readily available, it is strongly suggested that drug trafficking, particularly crack cocaine, has become one of the primary factors associated with homicide.

Figure 5 mirrors the findings from Figure 4 and classifies homicide into family homicide (FamilyHom), felony homicide (FelonyHom), and what UCR terms a romantic triangle or lovers' quarrels (LoverQuar). Both family homicide and lovers' quarrels have decline steadily since the mid 1960s. On the other hand, felony homicides (rape, robbery, burglary, arson, narcotic drug laws and larceny-theft) have increased since 1965. Again this suggests that homicide is moving out of a domestic setting into the street. The Y-2 axis of Figure 5 corresponds to the age of homicide offenders and homicide victims since 1965. As shown in Figure 5, the average age of a homicide victim in 1965 was approximately 35 years of age but this has declined to slightly less than 30 years of age. Similarly, the average age of the homicide offender was 33 in 1965 and this has also declined steadily to the current age of 27. Thus, Figure 5 shows that homicide is becoming less of a domestic phenomenon and increasingly becoming a felony homicide that occurs outside of the home. Secondly, the age of the homicide victim and offender is becoming increasingly younger with the vast majority of current victims and offenders considered young adults. While juveniles are becoming increasingly involved in homicide cases as victims and offenders, it is important to recognize that a disproportionate amount of homicide victims and offenders are not teenagers but adults.

#### **Prior Criminal Histories of Homicide Victims and Offenders: Atlanta Data**

It has become popular in common parlance to speak of a homicide offender as a hardened criminal and to consider the homicide victim as "the innocent victim." While homicide is becoming less and less a domestic crime, stranger homicide is not increasing. As was shown in Figure 4, "unknown" homicide has increased dramatically in the past thirty years. In most instances, unknown homicides take place between acquaintances but the crime is not cleared. The image of an "innocent" person becoming a homicide victim at the hands of a complete stranger

misrepresents the nature of a typical homicide. In Figure 6, the criminal histories of homicide victims and offenders in Atlanta from 1966 to 1970 were tabulated. Approximately one-third of the homicide offenders had no prior arrest record and two-thirds had one of more prior arrests. Of those with a prior arrest record, the range of arrests varied from one to a maximum of 44 arrests. Nearly 20 percent of the homicide offenders had ten or more arrests. Thus, the image of a typical homicide offender in Atlanta in the period of 1966 to 1970 was one who most likely had several arrests and most of these arrests were for assaultive behavior, robbery, and burglary.

Figure 6 also shows that not all of the homicide victims had crime-free backgrounds. Some 60 percent did not have a prior record but 40 percent did, and the number of arrests ranged from one to a maximum of 49 arrests. As was the case with homicide offenders, homicide victims who had prior records were arrested primarily for assaultive behavior, burglary and robbery. Thus, both parties involved in a homicide event tended to be prior offenders, and in many instances their criminal histories suggested that these individuals were highly involved in criminal activities. Homicide seems to represent a climax to an escalating involvement with criminal activity.

Figure 7 examines the criminal histories of homicide victims and offenders in Atlanta, twenty-five years later, during the period of 1990 to 1994. A slightly higher proportion of the 1990-94 homicide offenders have prior arrests than was seen in the 1966-70 time frame. As seen in Figure 7 only 30 percent of homicide offenders had no prior arrests while 70 percent had at least one arrest. It is interesting to note that the maximum number of arrests shown in Figure 7 for the 1990-94 offending group is 26 whereas for the 1966-70 homicide offending group shown in Figure 6 it was 44 prior arrests. The apparent reason for the decline in the maximum number is most likely a product of the declining age of the homicide offender. While the average age for a homicide offender in the late 1960s was 32 years of age, the average age for current homicide offenders is 27. Thus, the at-risk period is considerably shorter and the homicide offenders are being arrested at an earlier age with somewhat fewer prior arrests.

Similarly, Figure 7 shows that homicide victims in Atlanta tended to be more involved in criminal activity in the 1990s than in the late 1960s. In Figure 6, some 40 percent of the homicide victims had a prior record but in the 1990s slightly more than 50 percent of the homicide victims had criminal records. The maximum number of arrests seen in Figure 7 for homicide victims is 27 and this is considerably lower than the maximum number of arrests of 49 for homicide victims in seen in Figure 6. Again, the decline in the ages of homicide victims from ages 35 to 30 will truncate the at-risk period for homicide victims. What Figures 6 and 7 suggest is that both homicide victims and offenders tend to be involved in criminal activity and there appears to be an increasingly higher degree of criminal involvement of criminal for both victims and offenders over the past twenty-five years.

What is even more revealing than having a prior history of arrest, is to examine the type of offense that homicide victims and offenders were apprehended for in the two time periods. Figure 8 shows a breakdown of prior arrests into drug offenses and non-drug offenses for those homicide offenders and victims who had a prior record. Figure 8 shows that in the 1966-70 time frame, 20 percent of homicide offenders and 14.5 percent of homicide victims had prior drug arrests.

Hence, the vast majority of homicide offenders and victims appeared not to be involved in drug-related activity. In those instances where there was a drug arrest, it tended to be for the sale or possession of marijuana or involvement with heroin.

Figure 9 shows the percentage of prior drug arrests for homicide victims and offenders in Atlanta for the 1990-94 time span. Precisely half of the homicide offenders and 44.8 percent of the homicide victims had prior drug arrests. Invariably, the drug violation was the possession or sale of cocaine. Although the police records in Atlanta have not been systematically examined, it appears that cocaine arrests suddenly appear in the mid 1980s and prior to the early to mid 1980s cocaine arrests are virtually nonexistent. Some arrests for marijuana are still found in the 1990-94 homicide offender and victim group, but the percentages are quite low. Arrests for heroin are almost completely unknown during the 1990-94 time span. While one might be tempted to conclude that a higher percentage of present-day homicide offenders and victims are far more involved in cocaine than were homicide offenders and victims of a few years ago, the complicating factor is the emergence of zero-tolerance for cocaine. Cocaine, particularly crack cocaine, is seen as the epitome of criminal drug involvement and arrests for cocaine possession are extraordinarily high. It might be the case that the nature of drug use by homicide victims and offenders may not have changed as much as the behavior of law enforcement officials in arresting and prosecuting cocaine users. Whatever the explanation, Figures 8 and 9 show that drug arrests, particularly for cocaine, are being far more commonplace for the 1990-94 homicide offenders and victims than in the late 1960s.

Figure 10 is a further elaboration of the findings found in Figures 8 and 9. Homicide motives were categorized into five common themes that were found in Atlanta homicide police reports during the two study periods. As shown in Figure 10, homicide in 1966 was almost entirely the product of two forms of confrontation. Police would classify a homicide as the result of a "senseless argument" if there seemed to be no history of violence between the two parties and the only apparent precipitating cause was something of a spontaneous violent eruption between the homicide victim and the offender. Many of these cases entailed uncontrollable rage, a lover's quarrel, or a violent argument often fueled by alcohol intoxication. On the other hand, homicides that were the result of what the police recorded as an "argument" were situations that had a history of violent confrontations or arguments that had some rational basis to them such as the collection of a debt or a simmering feud between two individuals. As seen in Figure 10, relatively few homicide motives were classified as "unknown" in 1966. With homicide clearance rates in excess of 90 percent, the police were able to identify the offender and determine the motive for the homicide. Only 3 percent of the 1966 homicides were attributable to a robbery (percentage too small to be shown in Figure 10). Finally, in not a single instance were drugs perceived by the police to be directly related to a homicide in 1966. The image of a homicide in 1966 was that of a confrontation between nonstrangers, in a domestic setting, and primarily an expressive act lacking premeditation.

The motives listed by law enforcement officials in Atlanta in 1995 reveal a significantly different picture. As seen in Figure 10, the category of "senseless argument" and "argument" have declined while the homicide motives listed as "unknown," "robbery," and "drugs" has increased dramatically. Homicide in 1995 seems to be more of an instrumental act than in 1966.

However, these motives are recorded by the investigating officer and often tend to be based on a preliminary assessment of the homicide event. If an adjustment could be made to these homicide motives using the investigative results from the medical examiner's office, drugs would play a far more prominent role. Tests for cocaine or alcohol are positive in at least 60 percent of autopsies conducted on homicide victims. The inference is that a comparable proportion of homicide offenders were also under the influence of alcohol or cocaine. However, homicide motives are routinely determined from the brief narrative recorded the time of the preliminary police investigation.

Figure 11 shows homicide rates in the United States by age, race and gender. Homicide rates vary significantly by age. For infants under the age of one, homicide is relatively high and then declines for older children. The rates increase sharply for teenagers, remain high during the young adult years and then decline. Finally, there is a slight upswing for persons 75 and older. Gender also plays a role in the study of homicide. Men are much more at risk of being the victim of homicide than women. However, race seems to play the most dramatic role in predicting who will be a homicide offender. African-American males have homicide rates that far exceed those of white males. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the homicide rate for an African-American who is in the 25 to 29 age group is 144 per 100,000 while for a white male in the same age group it is 16 per 100,000. Similarly, for an African-American female, the homicide rate for females in the 25 to 29 age group was 26 per 100,000 while for white females it was 4 per 100,000. As shown in Figure 11, the homicide rate for the African-American male dwarfs the homicide rates for the other groups.

However, the data reported in Figure 11 is static and does not reveal changes over time. Table 1 gives the age-adjusted homicide rates by race and gender at six points in time for the past fifty years. For white males, the homicide rates have increased over the past three decades from 4.0 per 100,000 to 10.2 per 100,000 in 1989-91. Similarly, the homicide rates for white females, while considerably lower, have also increased in the past three decades. For both black males and females, the peak homicide rates were in 1969-71 and have declined since that time. Table 1 suggests that the gap between black and white homicide rates is decreasing and there may be a discernable increase in the risk of homicide for whites rather than for blacks.

### Conclusions

Homicide is not a static phenomenon but seems to be changing in terms of clearance rates, motives, the degree of prior criminal involvement of victims and offenders, the age of victim and offender, and the gap between black and white homicide rates. While medical examiners' reports are incomplete on the issue of drugs, there does appear to be a strong relationship between the advent of cocaine and homicide involvement since the mid 1980s. On the other hand, homicide rates themselves seem to be a constant in terms of the percent of victims and offenders based on race and gender. Homicide seems to be becoming more of an instrumental crime, based on drug trafficking, debt settlement and financial transactions. Conversely, homicide circumstances three decades ago reflected an overwhelmingly expressive nature of rage and spontaneous violence in a domestic setting typifying a homicide event. Clearly, homicide needs to be examined from a longitudinal perspective in order to understand the dynamic forces at work precipitating such a

**violent encounter.**

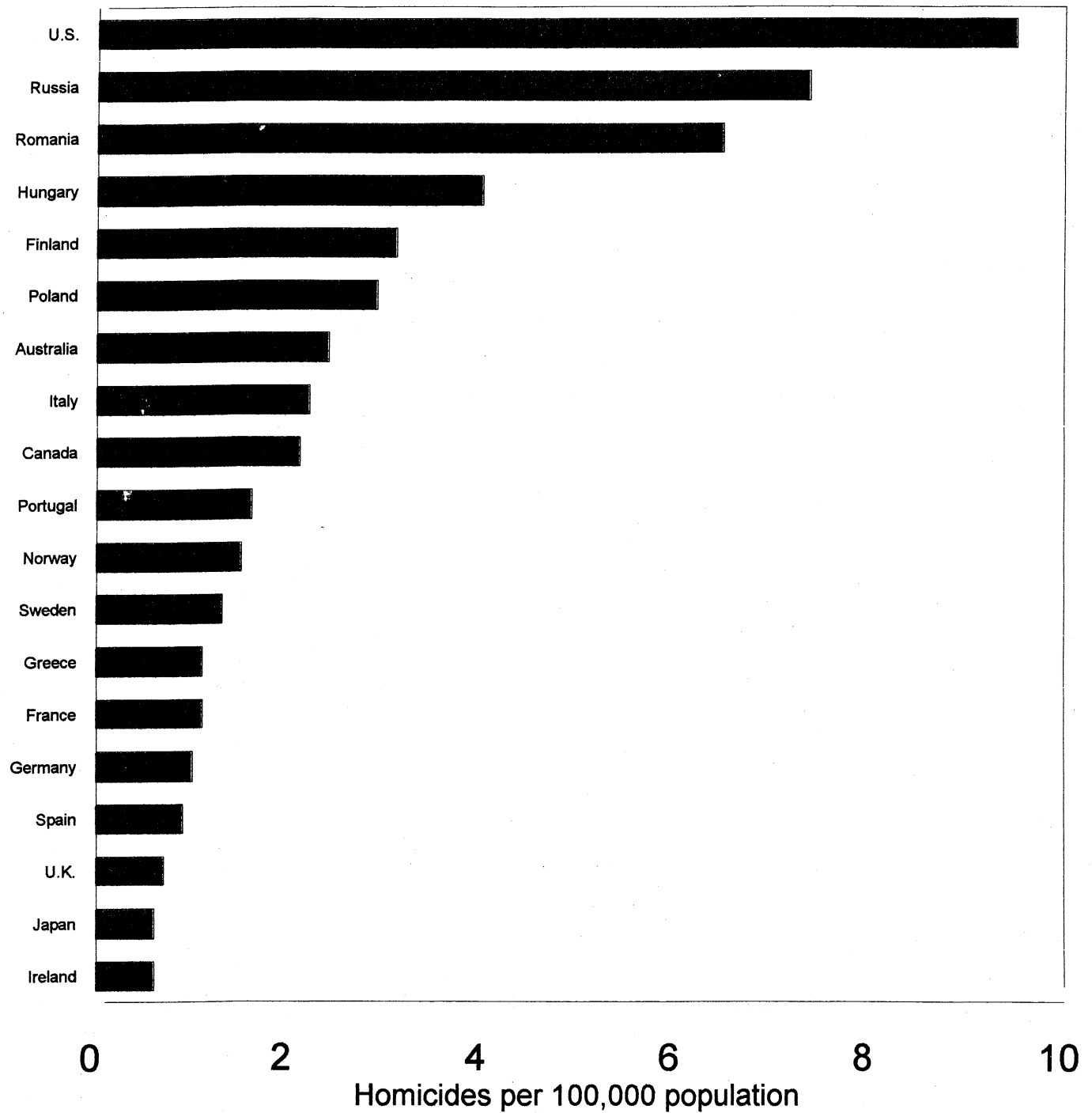


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Figure 1

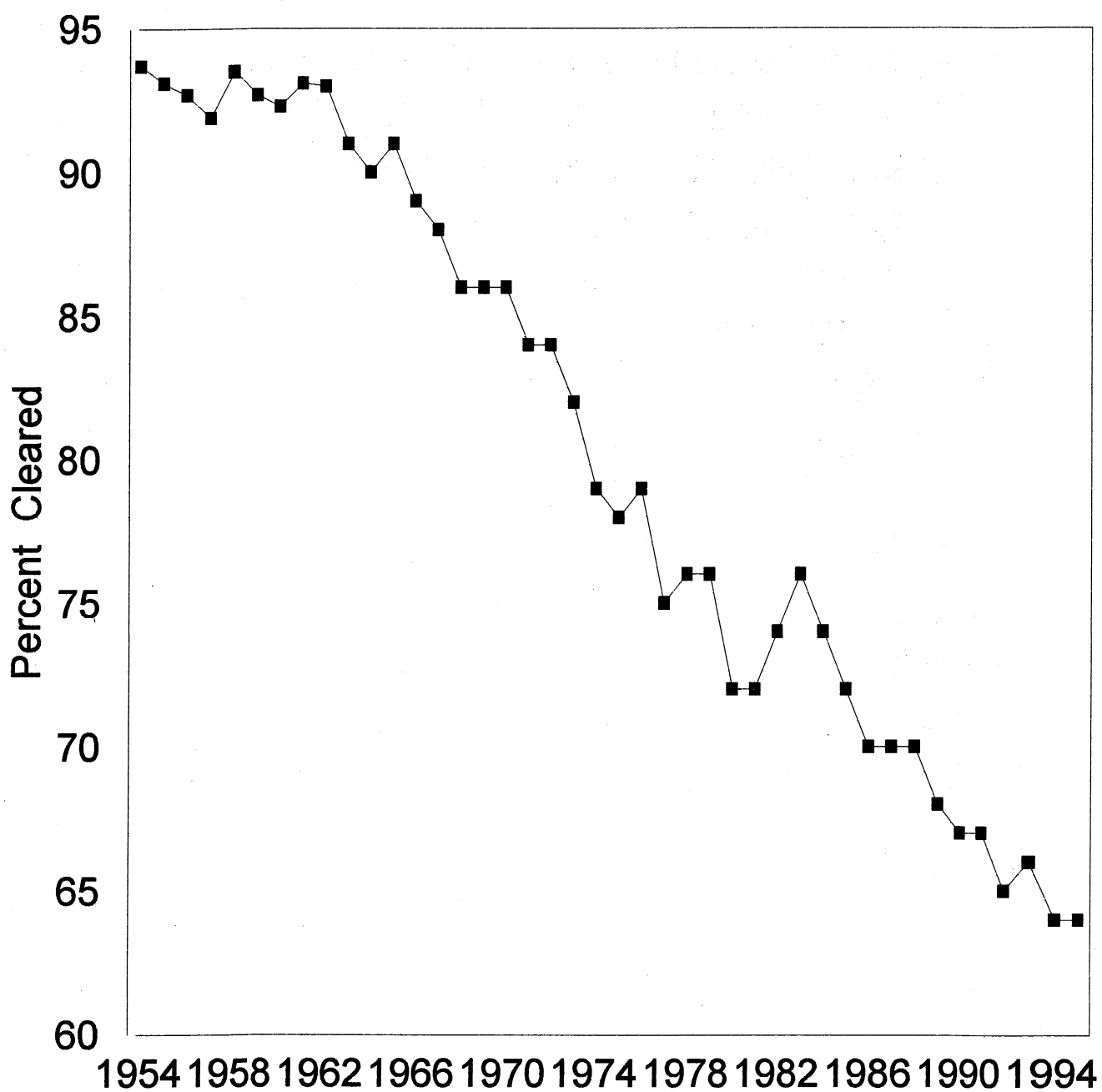
## Homicide Rates for Selected Countries



Source: United Nations, 1993 Demographic Yearbook

Figure 2

## U.S. Homicide Clearance Rates



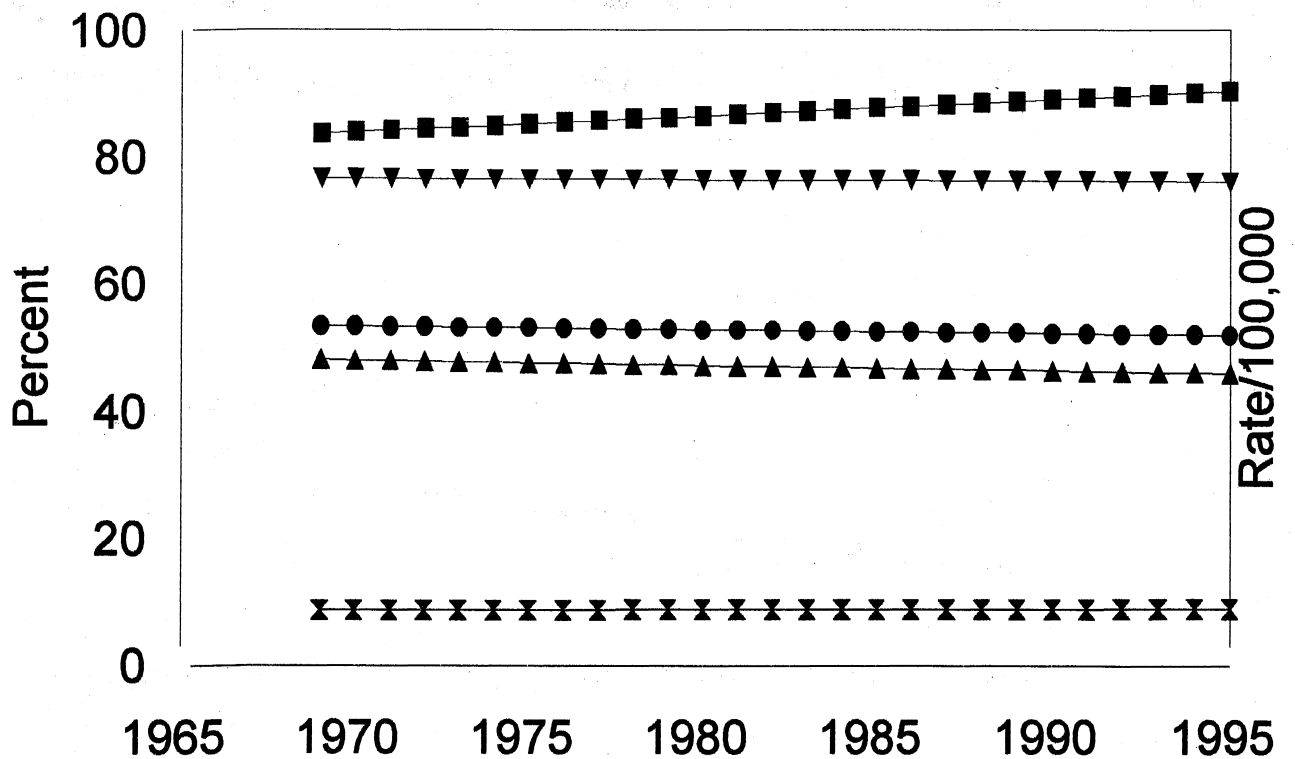
Source: Uniform Crime Reports

■ Year

Figure 3

## U.S. Homicide: Victims & Offenders

%Male, %Black, Homicide Rate



Exponential Fit

▼ %MaleVic

▲ %BlackVic

● %BlackOff

■ %MaleOff

× HomicideRate

Figure 4

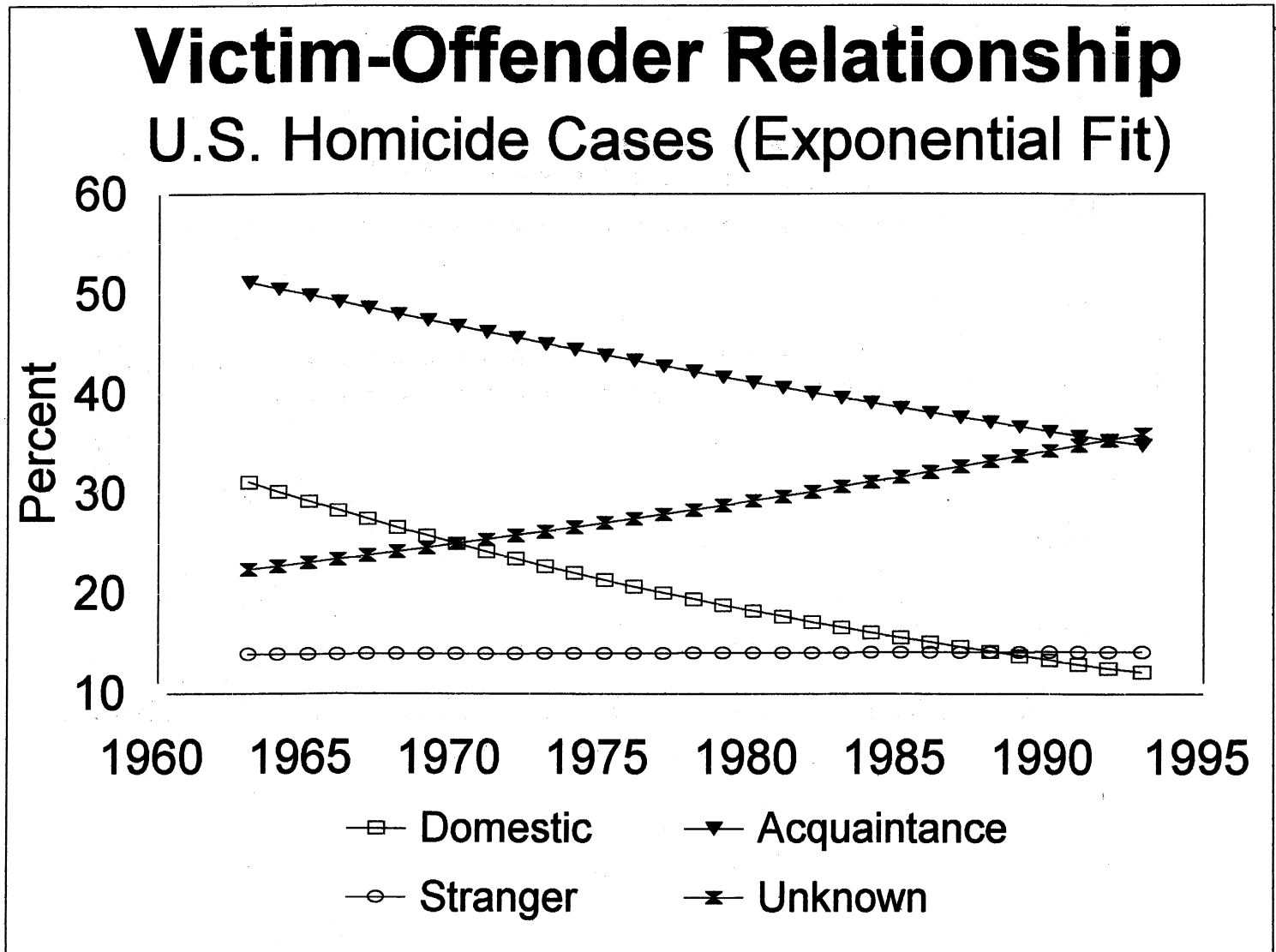
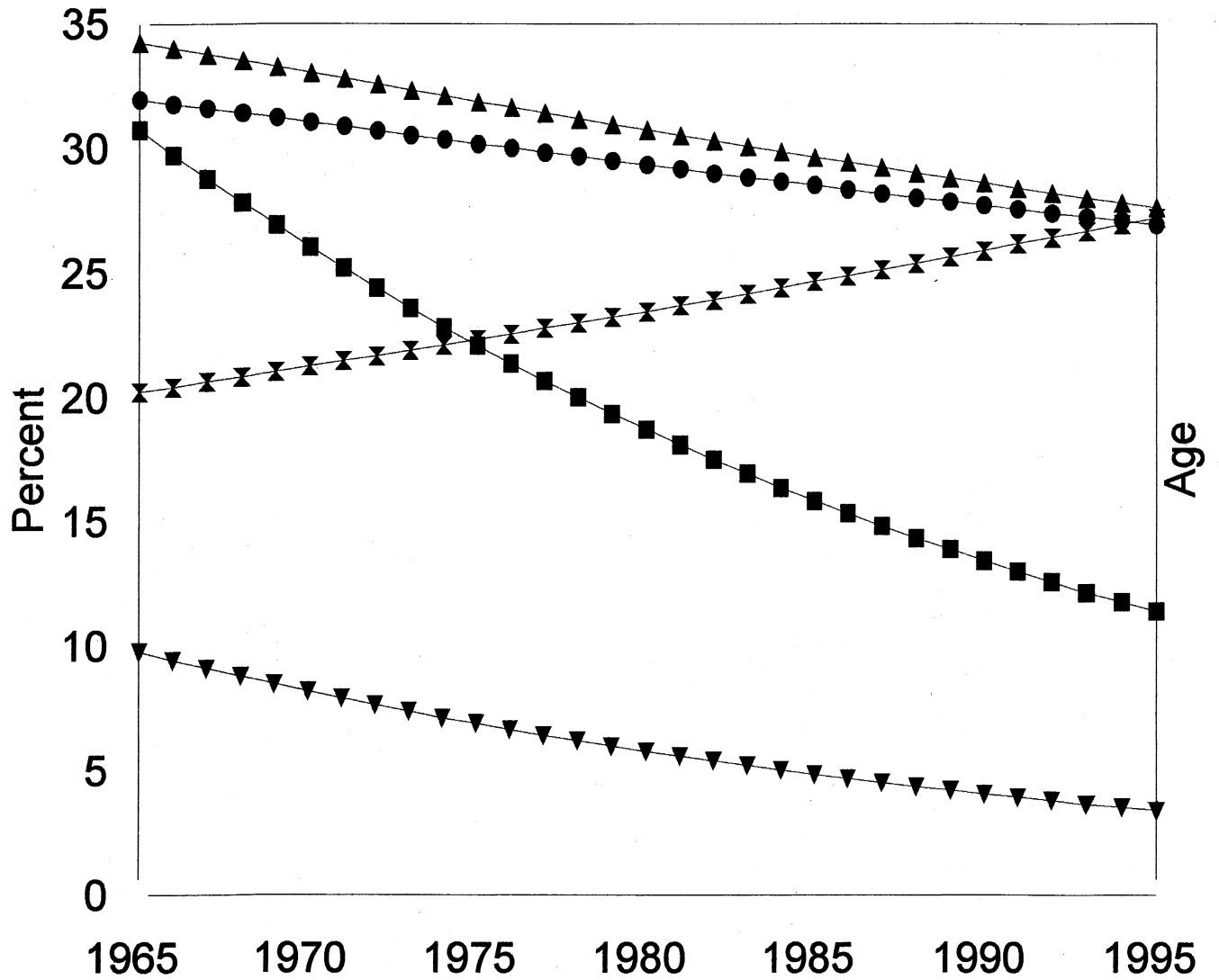


Figure 5

# Homicide Characteristics

Victim/Offender Ages--Homicide Type



Exponential Fit

■ FamilyHom    × FelonyHom    ▼ LoverQuar  
● AgeHomOff    ▲ AgeHomVic

Figure 6

## Homicide Victims & Offenders: 1966-70

### Prior Criminal Records: Atlanta

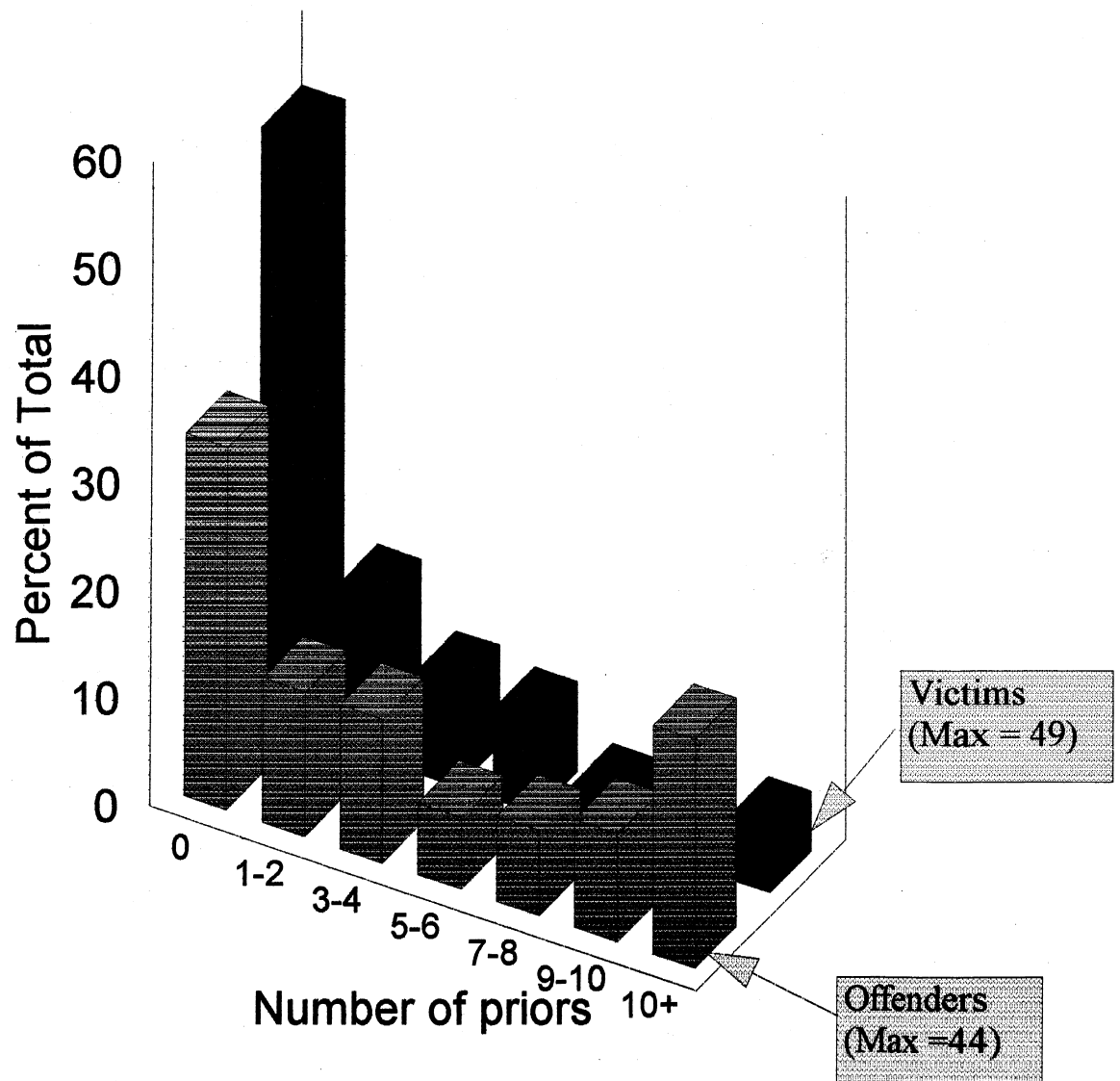


Figure 7

## Homicide Victims & Offenders: 1990-94 Prior Criminal Records

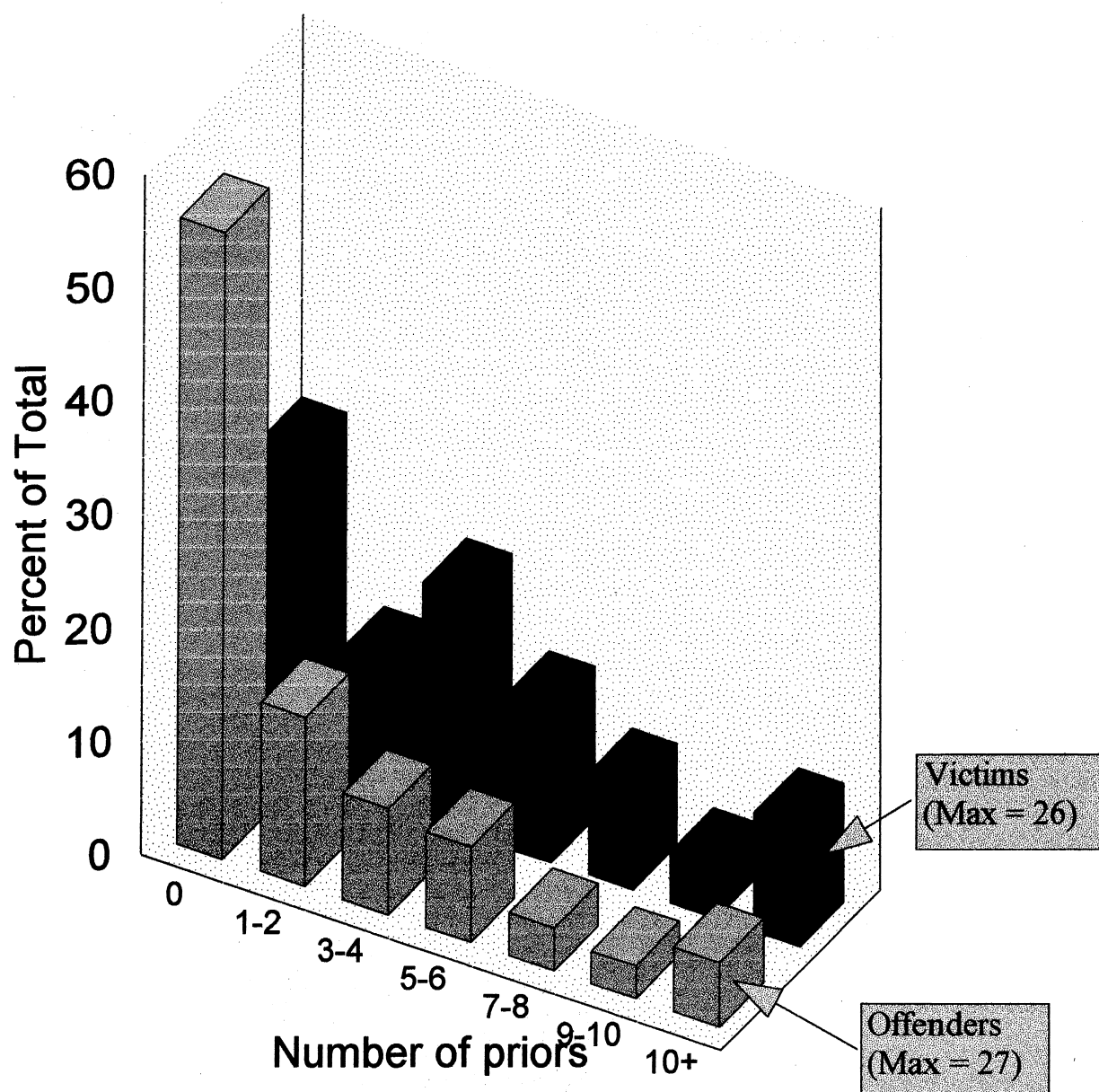




Figure 8

## 1966-70 Homicide Victims & Offenders Prior Drug Offenses

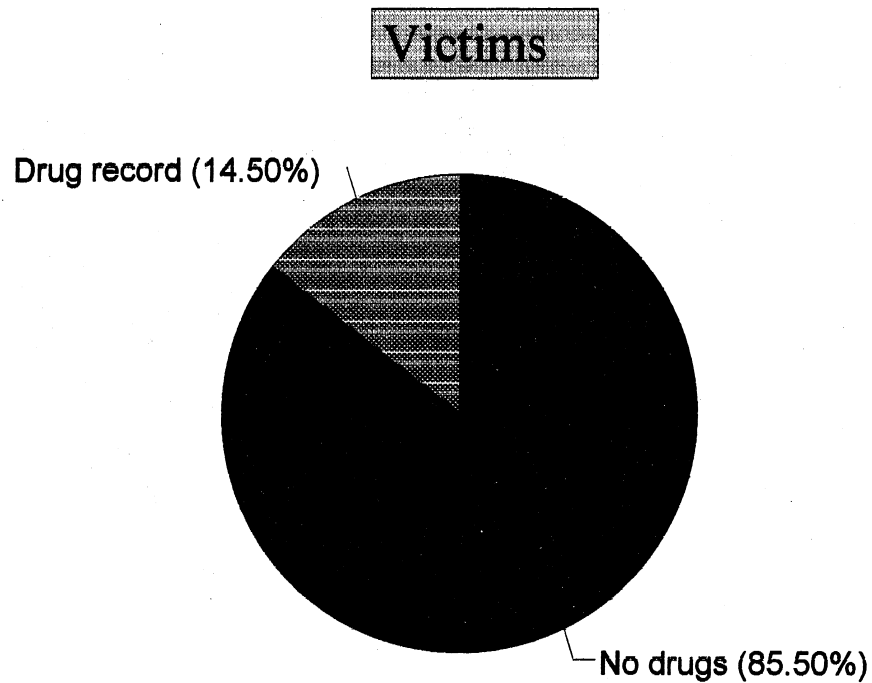
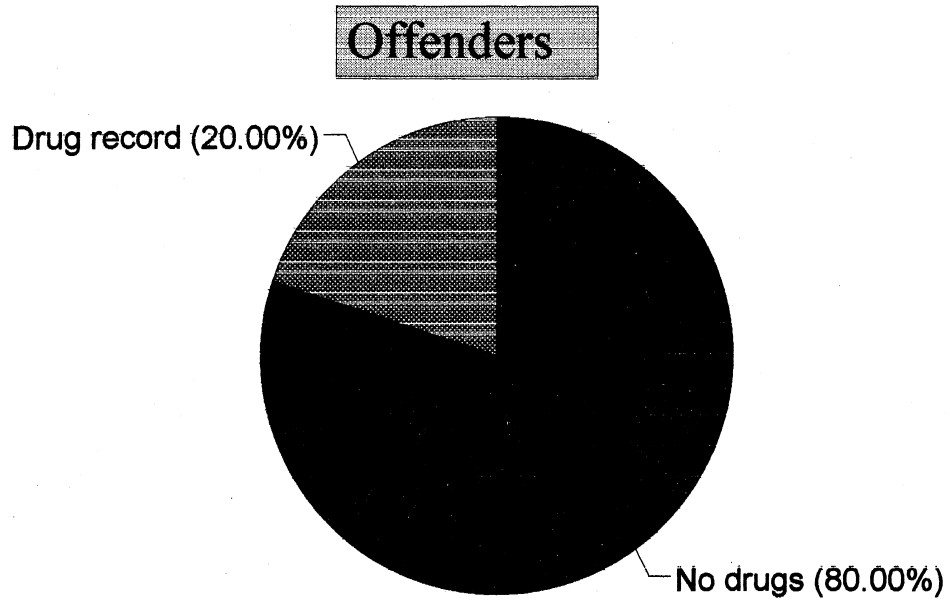
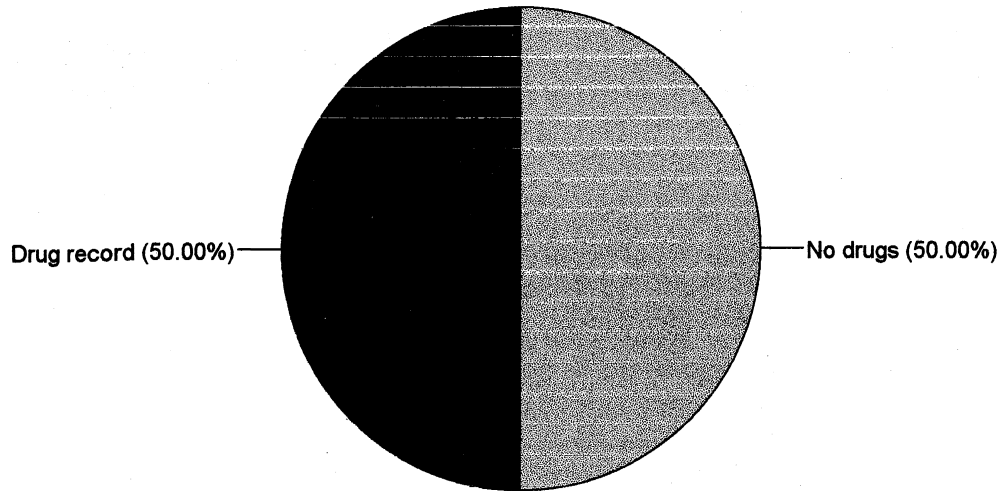


Figure 9

# 1990-94 Homicide Victims & Offenders

## Prior Drug Offenses

Offenders



Victims

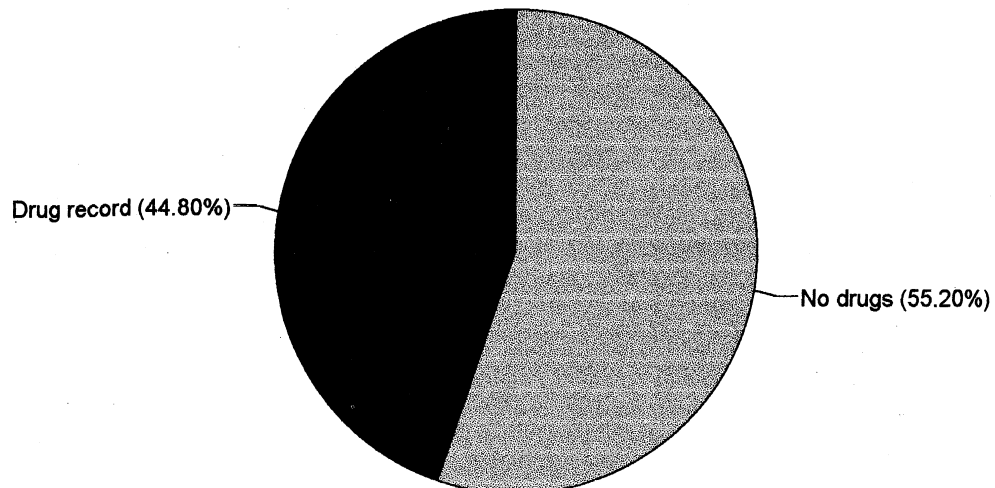


Figure 10

## 1966/1995 Homicide Motives City of Atlanta

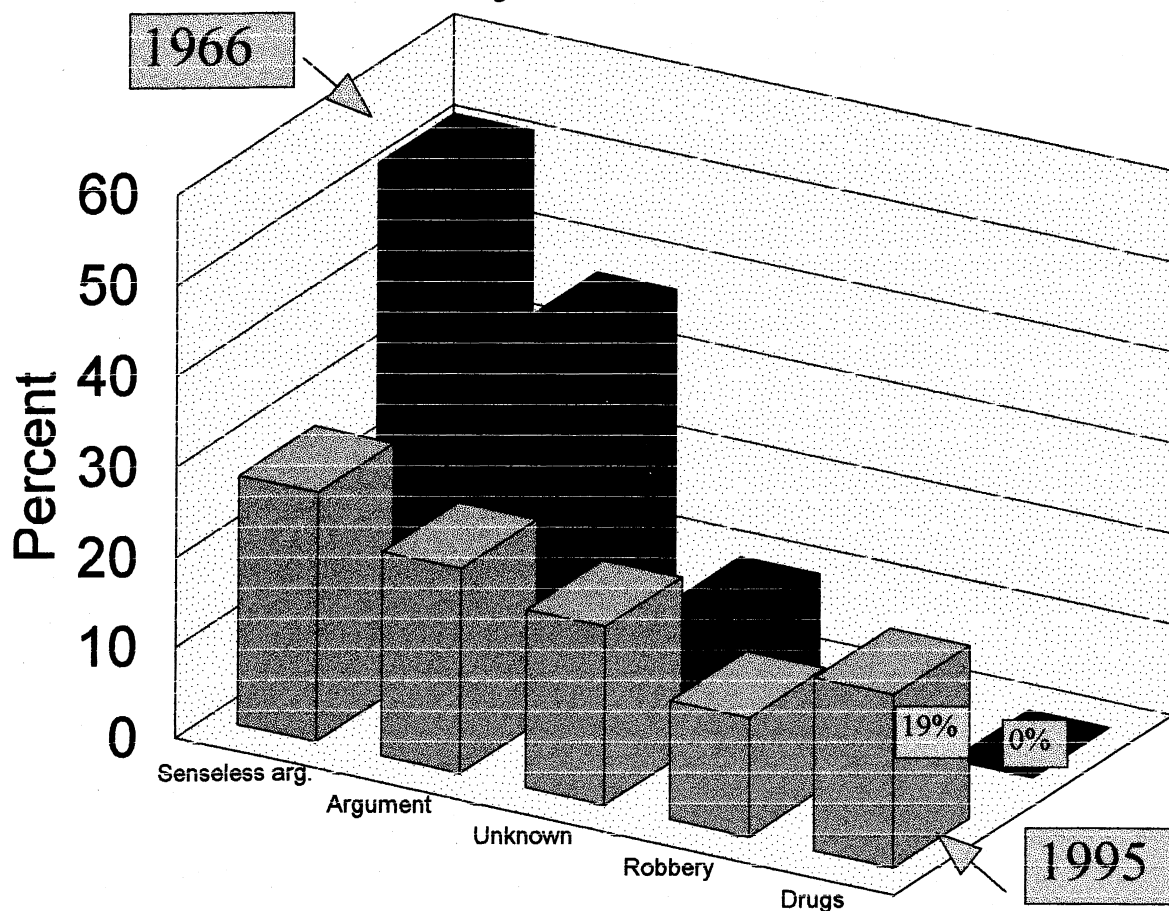
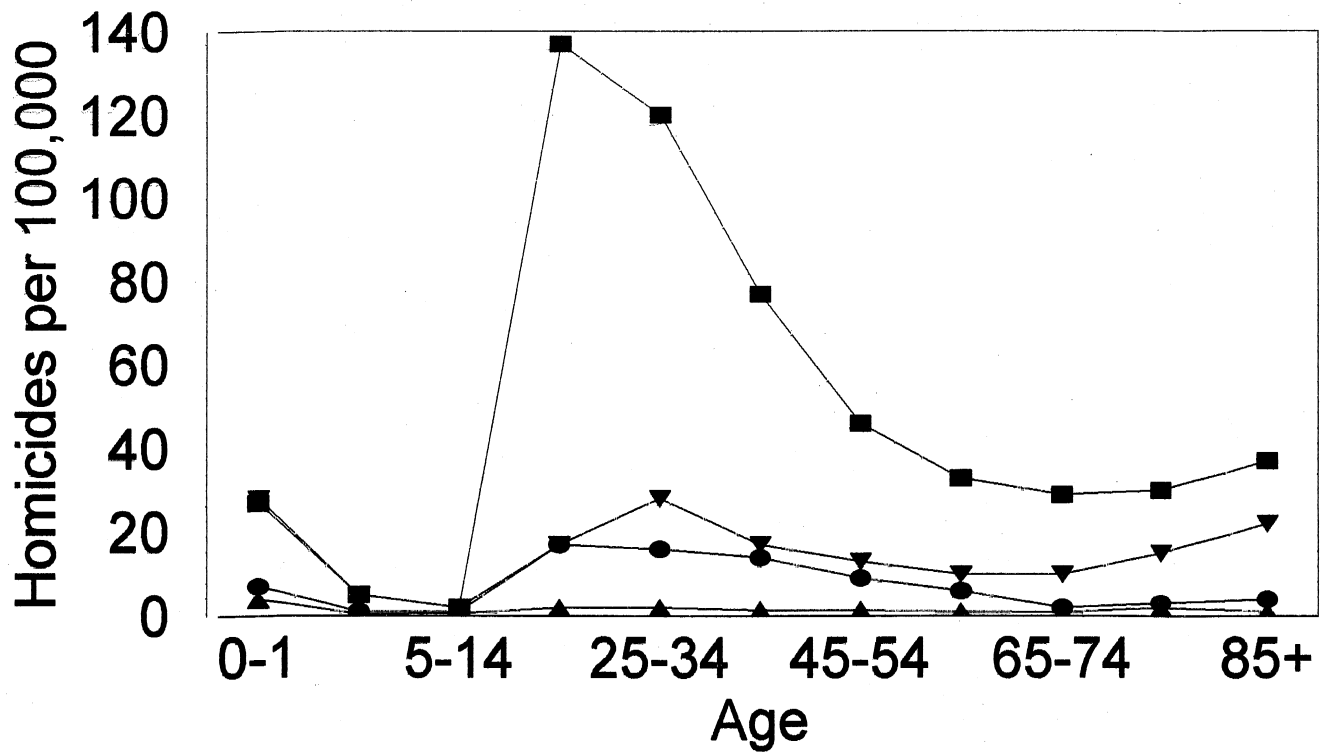


Figure 11

## Homicide Rates by Age, Race & Gender



Source: National  
Center for Health  
Statistics

■ Black Male      ● White Male  
▼ Black Female    ▲ White Female

Table 1  
Age-Adjusted Homicide Rates by Race and  
Gender, 1940-1990

---

| Year    | Total | White |        | Nonwhite |        |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|----------|--------|
|         |       | Male  | Female | Male     | Female |
| 1939-41 | 6.4   | 5.1   | 1.4    | 57.4     | 13.0   |
| 1949-51 | 5.3   | 4.1   | 1.4    | 46.6     | 11.6   |
| 1959-61 | 5.2   | 4.0   | 1.5    | 41.6     | 10.9   |
| 1969-71 | 9.2   | 7.5   | 2.2    | 74.6     | 14.5   |
| 1979-81 | 10.5  | 10.5  | 3.1    | 59.4     | 12.1   |
| 1989-91 | 10.2  | 8.8   | 2.8    | 53.7     | 11.3   |

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Source: National Center for Health Statistics

# **AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF LETHAL VIOLENCE IN SAN ANTONIO**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

San Antonio, Texas, offers an opportunity to examine Mexican-American homicide rates in a geographical and historical context. Homicide mortality data on all deaths in Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas, during the years 1935-1984 were coded for demographic characteristics and causes of death, yielding approximately 4,500 homicide victims. Mexican-American male homicide rates were consistently intermediate between those of Anglo and black males, and homicide in the Hispanic population was the driving component in San Antonio's male homicide rate being 1.5 to 3 times higher than the national rate. In all ethnic groups, firearms accounted for the most homicide deaths, with significant increases occurring after 1960. The spatial analysis indicates high and stable concentrations of homicide in poorer Hispanic and Black areas of the city over time.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

With some exceptions, much of our understanding of murder at smaller levels of scale in the United States derives from studies of large industrial cities with significant black populations (see Rose & McClain 1990). A few scholars have focused on Southern non-industrial cities or on rural areas with small black populations, but these remain the rarer cases. Historical studies of non-industrial urban areas with small black populations, however, are practically nonexistent. Moreover, largely because of this we have tended to use "minority" and "Black" in ways which confuse the issues surrounding Hispanics as a minority and Hispanic homicide.

This is an important omission if we are attempting to try to understand homicide over increasingly longer periods of time. Indeed, if we can "trust" police data back to around 1950, and mortality data to around 1930, then we are beginning to examine data over such a time period that the distinction between "longitudinal" and "historical" analysis begins to blur. Historically, looking at unique development of a subject - in this case a city - is key to a genuine understanding of why changes occur over time.

San Antonio, Texas, offers an opportunity to develop some initial ideas about Mexican-American homicide rates in historical perspective in comparison with rates for African-American and non-Hispanic white (Anglo) persons. The existence of the necessary historical data for a community where the numbers of each ethnic group are quite large creates the possibility of testing hypotheses developed for other ethnic groups against the Hispanic experience, and to

speculate on the universality of these ideas. This report is a preliminary step toward that goal. Our limited purpose is to describe and analyze trends in homicide mortality among Mexican-American, "Anglo-American," and African-American males in San Antonio from 1935 to 1984, examining both historical and geographic patterns.

### **GENERAL MORTALITY AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICANS:**

Several investigators have shown consistent differences in mortality levels from different diseases among Mexican origin and other white males (Block 1993; Centers for Disease Control 1986; Rosenwaike 1991; Shai & Rosenwaike 1988, 1991; Smith et al. 1986). For example, the former have higher death rates from chronic liver disease and infectious and parasitic diseases but lower rates from ischemic heart disease and lung cancer. Some of the most striking differences, however, lie in external causes of death, especially homicide among males. Bradshaw and Frisbie (1985) showed that if age specific homicide rates of Mexican origin males in Texas in 1980 had been reduced to the level of those of Anglo males, their life expectancy at birth would have been increased by nearly a full year. If that had been the case, life expectancy of Mexican origin males would have exceeded that of Anglo males by about a half year, rather than being lower by about the same amount. In a related study Bradshaw and Frisbie (1992) reported that 76 percent and 23 percent of homicides in Mexican origin males and females, respectively, would not have occurred in 1979-81 in Texas if these populations had had the same homicide rates as Anglos. Comparable figures have not been computed for 1990, but the crude homicide death rate shows a three-fold excess of mortality among Mexican origin males over other white males. The difference between comparable rates for females was much smaller. Standardization for age composition would change these relationships only slightly. While we can know nothing from death certificates about the perpetrators of the homicides, it is obvious that the Mexican origin population in Texas has been exposed to unusual risks.

There are no national data on homicide mortality for the Mexican origin or other Hispanic populations, though origin data are now collected in 48 states. Mortality data have been published for 5 reporting states (including Texas) for the period around 1980. These data confirm the patterns observed at the state level. Standardized homicide death rates show approximately a six-fold excess of mortality among Mexican origin males over non-Hispanic white males and about a two-fold excess for females. These data, however, provide us with no knowledge of trends in Mexican-American homicides or of patterns in those homicides.

### **SAMPLE, DATA, AND METHODS:**

The source of the homicide mortality data is original death certificates for persons who died in Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas, during the years 1935-1984. All death records for those years in the files of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District were made available to this project. Excluding a few duplicate certificates, there were a total of about 284,500 valid death records, of which approximately 4,500 were for homicide victims. Broadly then, homicide represents about 1.6% of all deaths during that time. These data have been coded systematically for both demographic characteristics and causes of death and, to our knowledge, are the only

sources for detailed study of mortality of persons of Mexican origin over such a long period of time.

In the long run for the study of homicide, the distinction between "of Mexican origin" and "Hispanic" will be significant, although our state of knowledge at the present makes it inadvisable to make the distinction. It is quite possible that lumping Hispanics together may hide rate and pattern differences derived from the very different historical and cultural backgrounds and current social arrangements of Mexican versus Puerto Rican versus Cuban versus other-Hispanic groups. As a consequence, features of Hispanic homicides in Chicago may differ significantly from those in San Antonio, Los Angeles, or Miami. Considering Hispanic so broadly may be aggregating, and therefore hiding, very important differences between these sub-cultures.

Coding of specific causes of death was carried out by trained nosologists employing a single disease classification (ICD9) for all years. The data from the Metropolitan Health District include all deaths that occurred in San Antonio from 1935 to 1984. Prior to 1966, deaths that occurred within Bexar County, but outside the San Antonio city limits, were registered in other jurisdictions in the county. Because nearly all hospitals and other health care facilities were located in San Antonio, the majority of deaths to Bexar County residents living outside the city limits are also included in our file. Given the fact that timely and well equipped emergency transportation is relatively recent, we assume that the number of homicide deaths occurring outside San Antonio may be underrepresented for earlier years in our data base; however, there is no way to estimate such an underrepresentation if it exists. Nevertheless, homicide rates for these years are probably understated to some extent.

Age-sex-ethnicity specific homicide death rates by means of assault were computed for 10-year periods centered on census years. For example, homicide death rates were computed for 1935-44 by dividing deaths in those years by the census population of 1940. The means of assault chosen were firearms (ICD9 code E965), cutting and piercing instruments (code E966), and other means (residual of codes E960-E969). While the entire range of causes of death, including any means of homicidal assault, is available in our data set, these three categories were chosen for comparability with published cause detail in the United States vital statistics. Furthermore, death certificate data often do not contain extensive detail about weapons used in an assault, such as would be found in a medical examiner's report. This is particularly true for earlier years, when terms such as "gunshot" or "firearms" rather than "handgun" or "hunting rifle" would have been more accurate.

In this paper attention is focused on the male population among whom about seven-eighths of the murders occurred; homicide among females will be addressed in later research. The ethnic groups to be considered are Hispanic (almost exclusively of Mexican origin), black (African-American), and non-Hispanic white (also called Anglo).

Age specific rates were directly standardized using the 1980 United States population as the standard. A direct age standardized rate is a weighted average of the age specific rates, the weights being the age specific populations of the standard. That is, the age specific rates were



multiplied by the respective age specific 1980 populations of the United States, the products ("expected deaths") were then summed, and the sum divided by the total 1980 U.S. population. For comparative purposes standardized homicide rates were also computed for United States white and black males for 1940 through 1980.

# **GENERAL TRENDS: SAN ANTONIO IN NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Homicide rates among San Antonio's males throughout 1935-84, were 1.6 times to over three times higher than those among United States males. These excesses were attributable to high rates among Mexican origin and black males; rates for white males in general were lower than those in the United States. Homicide in the Hispanic population was the driving component, especially after 1960. As a percentage of all male homicides, those among Mexican-American increased from about 50 percent in 1935-44 to 67 percent in 1975-84. Their share of the male population over this time increased from 34 percent to 43 percent of all males.

**TABLE 1**  
**AGE STANDARDIZED HOMICIDE DEATH RATES FOR MALES, BY**  
**ETHNICITY--UNITED STATES AND SAN ANTONIO: 1940-80**

| Total                     | United States | San Antonio | Ratio: SA/US |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1940                      | 9.9           | 17.6        | 1.78         |
| 1950                      | 8.3           | 19.0        | 2.29         |
| 1960                      | 7.9           | 12.7        | 1.61         |
| 1970                      | 9.2           | 24.7        | 2.68         |
| 1980                      | 10.7          | 33.5        | 3.13         |
| <b>Mexican-American</b>   |               |             |              |
| 1940                      | n.a.          | 30.7        | --           |
| 1950                      | n.a.          | 27.4        | --           |
| 1960                      | n.a.          | 20.3        | --           |
| 1970                      | n.a.          | 41.0        | --           |
| 1980                      |               | 55.6        | --           |
| <b>Non-Hispanic White</b> |               |             |              |
| 1940                      | 5.4           | 8.7         | 1.61         |
| 1950                      | 3.9           | 7.1         | 1.82         |
| 1960                      | 3.9           | 5.6         | 1.44         |
| 1970                      | 9.2           | 8.7         | 0.95         |
| 1980                      | 9.3           | 12.3        | 1.32         |
| <b>African-American</b>   |               |             |              |
| 1940                      | 55.5          | 57.6        | 1.04         |
| 1950                      | 47.8          | 57.7        | 1.21         |
| 1960                      | 40.8          | 40.7        | 1.00         |
| 1970                      | 57.8          | 80.0        | 1.38         |
| 1980                      | 53.1          | 68.1        | 1.28         |

Homicide patterns observed for the 1970s and 1980s existed as far back as the 1930s. Mexican-American male homicide rates were consistently intermediate between those of Anglo

and black males, ranging from 3.5 times those of Anglo males in 1940 to 4.5 times by 1980. Nevertheless, black male homicide rates, with the exception of the period around 1970, were twice those of Mexican-American males.

The temporal trends in homicide rates in Bexar County tended to be similar to those in the United States. That is, as in the national population, rates declined from 1940 to 1960 and then rose from a low point in 1960 to a peak in 1980. Nationally from 1940-80, homicide death rates among males increased by only 8 percent; however, during the same period, rates in Bexar County increased by over 90 percent. Furthermore, homicide rates among San Antonio's males throughout 1935-84, were consistently higher than those among United States males by 1.8 times in 1940 to 3.1 times in 1980. Since the rates in Table 1 are standardized for age, the differences between local and national rates cannot be attributed to the more youthful San Antonio age composition, and therefore, must result from greater overall risk or greater risk in the component populations.

#### **WEAPON OF CHOICE - HOMICIDE RATES BY MEANS OF ASSAULT:**

The percent distribution of homicides by age by means of assault did not differ appreciably either among the ethnic groups or over time. Table 2 shows the distributions of deaths by firearms, cutting and piercing instruments, and all other means for all groups combined over the entire study period.

In all ethnic groups firearms accounted for most homicide deaths. Among all males combined, as well as separately, the overall increase in homicide rates between 1940 and 1980 can be attributed to the increase in use of guns. There was essentially no trend in rates of homicide with cutting and piercing instruments or other means, with the exception of an upturn in the use of knives or similar weapons by Hispanic men between 1970 and 1980, which is reflected in the trend for total males. Firearms homicide rates among black males were highest in all decades, in most cases more than double those of Hispanic males. The most striking increases in gun-related homicides occurred in the latter two groups between 1960 and 1970. Indeed, changing patterns in the use of guns is one of the more startling trends in the data even though there were interesting variations in use for whites, Hispanics, and blacks.

Within the white population, men aged 35-44 had the highest firearms death rates in the period from 1935 to 1964, while Hispanic and black males between the ages of 25 and 34 experienced the highest rate among San Antonio's minorities. Young blacks in this time period enjoyed a rare respite from gunshot deaths, with their rate declining sixty-two percent (from 42.48 to 16.09). All three social groups, across all three age categories, suffered from significant increases in the firearms death rate after 1964. But again the highest rates occurred among older men, although the rates among fifteen to twenty-four year olds were hardly trivial for Hispanics and blacks.

**TABLE 2**  
**AGE STANDARDIZED HOMICIDE DEATH RATES BY MEANS**  
**OF ASSAULT, FOR MALES BY ETHNICITY--BEXAR COUNTY: 1940-1980**

| <b>RATES</b>                 | <b>1940</b> | <b>1950</b> | <b>1960</b> | <b>1970</b> | <b>1980</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Male</b>            |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 17.6        | 19.0        | 12.7        | 24.7        | 33.4        |
| Firearms                     | 10.2        | 10.9        | 8.2         | 18.8        | 22.1        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 4.5         | 5.9         | 2.9         | 4.0         | 8.1         |
| Other means                  | 2.8         | 2.1         | 1.6         | 1.9         | 3.2         |
| <b>Hispanic Male</b>         |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 30.8        | 27.4        | 20.3        | 41.0        | 55.6        |
| Firearms                     | 16.6        | 15.5        | 13.5        | 31.4        | 36.1        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 10.7        | 9.4         | 5.0         | 7.2         | 15.0        |
| Other means                  | 3.5         | 2.5         | 1.9         | 2.4         | 4.5         |
| <b>African-American Male</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 57.6        | 57.7        | 40.7        | 80.0        | 68.1        |
| Firearms                     | 37.0        | 30.4        | 25.5        | 62.7        | 50.7        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 13.2        | 22.6        | 12.1        | 13.9        | 13.0        |
| Other means                  | 7.4         | 4.8         | 3.0         | 3.3         | 4.4         |
| <b>Non-Hispanic Male</b>     |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 8.7         | 7.1         | 5.6         | 8.7         | 12.3        |
| Firearms                     | 5.3         | 4.6         | 3.5         | 6.2         | 7.9         |
| Cutting & piercing           | 1.1         | 0.8         | 0.8         | 1.0         | 2.3         |
| Other means                  | 2.2         | 1.6         | 1.3         | 1.4         | 2.1         |
| <b>PERCENT DISTRIBUTION</b>  |             |             |             |             |             |
| <b>Total Male</b>            |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Firearms                     | 58.1        | 57.6        | 64.7        | 76.2        | 66.1        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 25.8        | 31.1        | 22.6        | 16.3        | 24.3        |
| Other means                  | 16.0        | 11.3        | 12.7        | 7.5         | 9.6         |
| <b>Hispanic Male</b>         |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Firearms                     | 53.9        | 56.6        | 66.4        | 76.6        | 64.9        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 34.7        | 34.4        | 24.4        | 17.7        | 27.0        |
| Other means                  | 11.5        | 9.0         | 9.1         | 5.8         | 8.1         |
| <b>African-American Male</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Firearms                     | 64.2        | 52.7        | 62.7        | 78.5        | 74.5        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 22.9        | 39.1        | 29.9        | 17.4        | 19.0        |
| Other means                  | 12.9        | 8.2         | 7.4         | 4.1         | 6.4         |
| <b>Non-Hispanic Male</b>     |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total homicide               | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Firearms                     | 61.5        | 65.2        | 63.2        | 71.8        | 63.9        |
| Cutting & piercing           | 12.8        | 11.5        | 13.6        | 12.0        | 18.7        |
| Other Means                  | 25.7        | 23.3        | 23.2        | 16.1        | 17.4        |

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF ETHNIC HOMICIDE IN SAN ANTONIO:

Socially, San Antonio is a divided city. Local topography, social prejudices, and differential economic development have combined to create four "natural" areas. The predominately white north side has been the most dynamic growth area of the city, attracting the bulk of the commercial and residential development since World War II. Hispanic San Antonians occupy the city's West side, which has always been the poorest section of town. From the 1930s until the 1960s, this area contained one of the worst slums in urban America. Blacks have dominated the East side. The density there did not generate the same level of horrendous living conditions as existed in the Hispanic West side, and the serendipitous presence of a powerful black politician in the twenties and thirties enabled East-siders to obtain a surprisingly large amount of infrastructure support prior to World War II. Conditions have worsened on the East side since the war, but have never degenerated to quite the level of the Hispanic slums. Working class whites generally dominated the South side, an area of small and marginal businesses mixed with government institutions (such as two military bases and the state mental hospital), and the city's sewerage and utility plants.

The spatial distribution of homicide in San Antonio mirrors this social geography.

### SEE APPENDIX A: HOMICIDE MAPS

MAP 1: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1935-44

MAP 2: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1955-64

MAP 3: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1975-84

As these maps indicate, the incidence of homicide in San Antonio throughout the entire period of this study was not randomly distributed. Instead, homicide incidents predictably concentrated in San Antonio's two major minority (ethnic/racial) areas, the East and West sides. A calculation of the homicide rate per 1,000 households reinforces this conclusion:

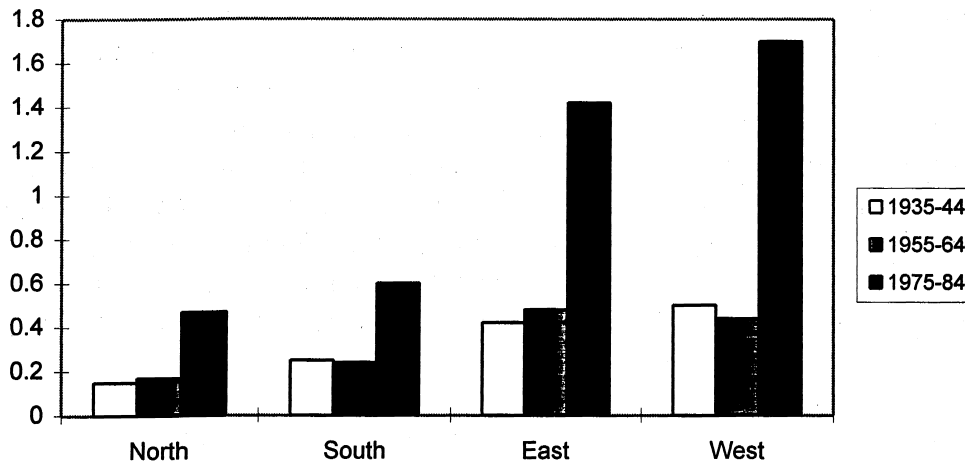
**TABLE 3**  
**HOMICIDES PER 1,000 HOUSEHOLDS BY REGION OF THE CITY-**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, 1935 TO 1984**

| Region       | 1935-44      | 1955-64      | 1975-84      |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Westside     | 0.505        | 0.446        | 1.692        |
| Eastside     | 0.432        | 0.478        | 1.411        |
| Southside    | 0.228        | 0.222        | 0.593        |
| Northside    | 0.140        | 0.158        | 0.466        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>0.320</b> | <b>0.308</b> | <b>0.950</b> |

The West and East sides of San Antonio typically had household rates which were two to four times those of the North and South sides. A graph of these data portrays these concentrations even more dramatically:

**Graph 1**

**Average Annual Homicides per 1,000 Households,  
by Neighborhood Regions, 1935-1985**



Furthermore, within those two areas, the incidence pattern again was not random. There were two areas on the West side and one on the East side where a preponderance of homicides occurred. What is interesting about the patterns which the maps reveal is that the concentrations of homicides are so stable over the entire fifty year period. Indeed, the West side concentrations for 1935 to 1944 established a kind of seed bed where a majority of Westside homicides would "crop up" in all future years.

These findings imply that, while current efforts to explain homicides in terms of epidemics may tell us something significant about short term patterns, there is also something endemic to homicide patterns. Whether homicide behaves in an epidemic fashion or not, there does seem to be not just a spatial, but also an historical dimension to long term trends in homicide. Specific areas within San Antonio have historically accounted for a sizable portion of the city's total homicides.

This preliminary research does not as yet explain the distinctive specific concentrations of homicides on the East and West sides. But it does suggest some possibly interesting distinctions in the more general geography of homicide among Hispanics and Blacks. Both groups display distinctive patterns in the location of their homicides. Prior to 1955, both Blacks and Hispanics tended to die in public places. After 1955, Blacks died more often within or close to their residences; Hispanics continued to die in bars, lounges, and small grocery/bars (called ice houses in San Antonio) at some distance from their homes. These patterns may simply be an artifact of the data we have been able to compile to date rather than any real difference in the location of homicide incidents among Blacks and Hispanics.

## CONCLUSIONS:

This research reconfirms the stability of homicide patterns over time and space. As such, it recalls the oldest traditions of Chicago-school Sociology. On the other hand, it suggests that there are cultural patterns which are significant, even in the face of similar economic conditions, in explaining differing homicide patterns in specific populations. The study of San Antonio also points up the importance of seemingly "random" events which are relevant to correlates of homicide rates. In the case of San Antonio, this was a talented black politician who had an impact on the enfranchisement of the African-American population during the 1920's and 1930's. Only more thorough historical studies of specific places can disclose these sorts of factors.

Finally, perhaps one geographic item stands out in defying our conventional wisdom on homicide. The absence of significant homicides in the center city of San Antonio is so incongruous with most homicide studies of large cities that it remains the most intriguing unanswered question from this analysis.

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**APPENDIX A:**

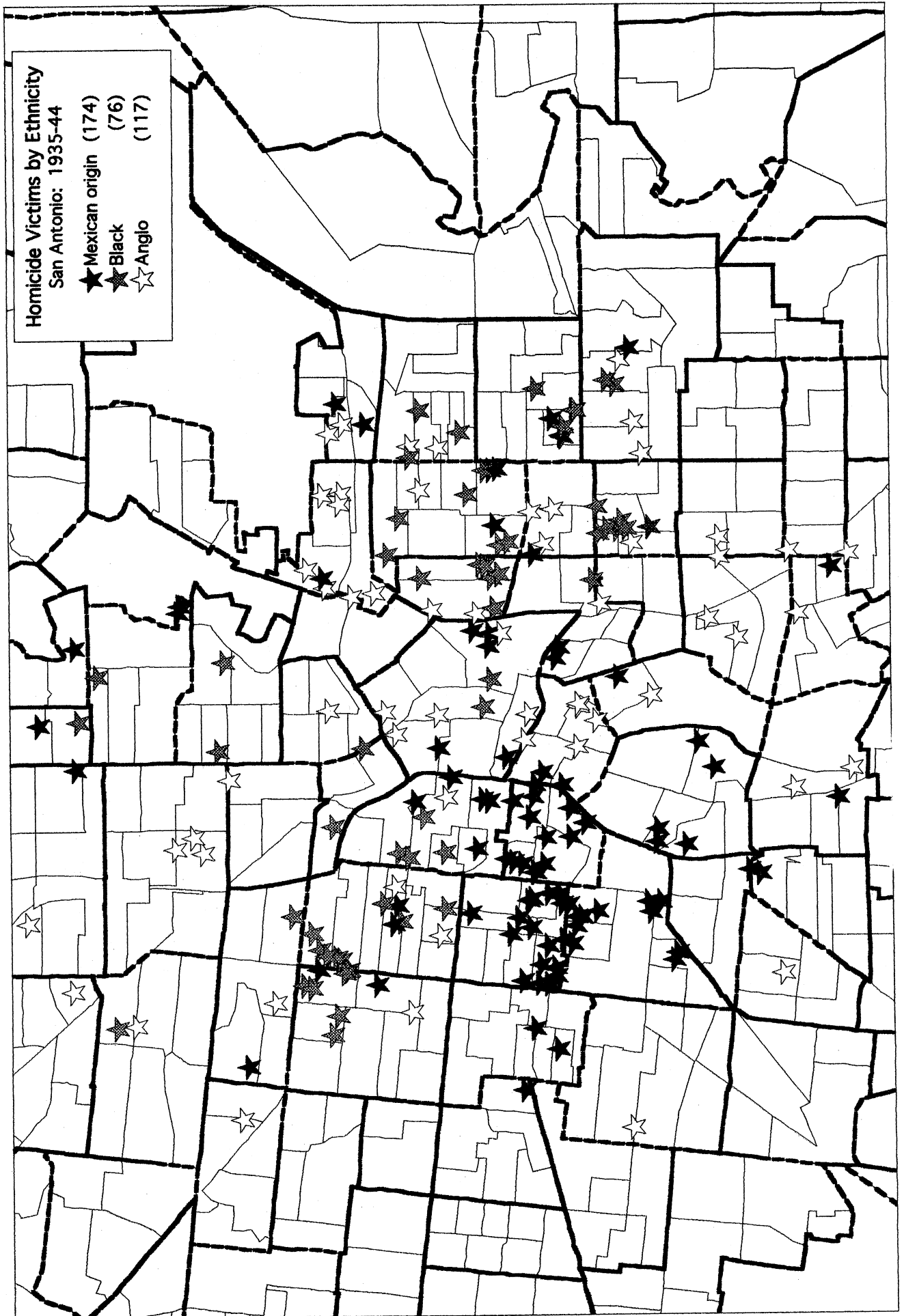
**MAPS OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, 1935-1984**

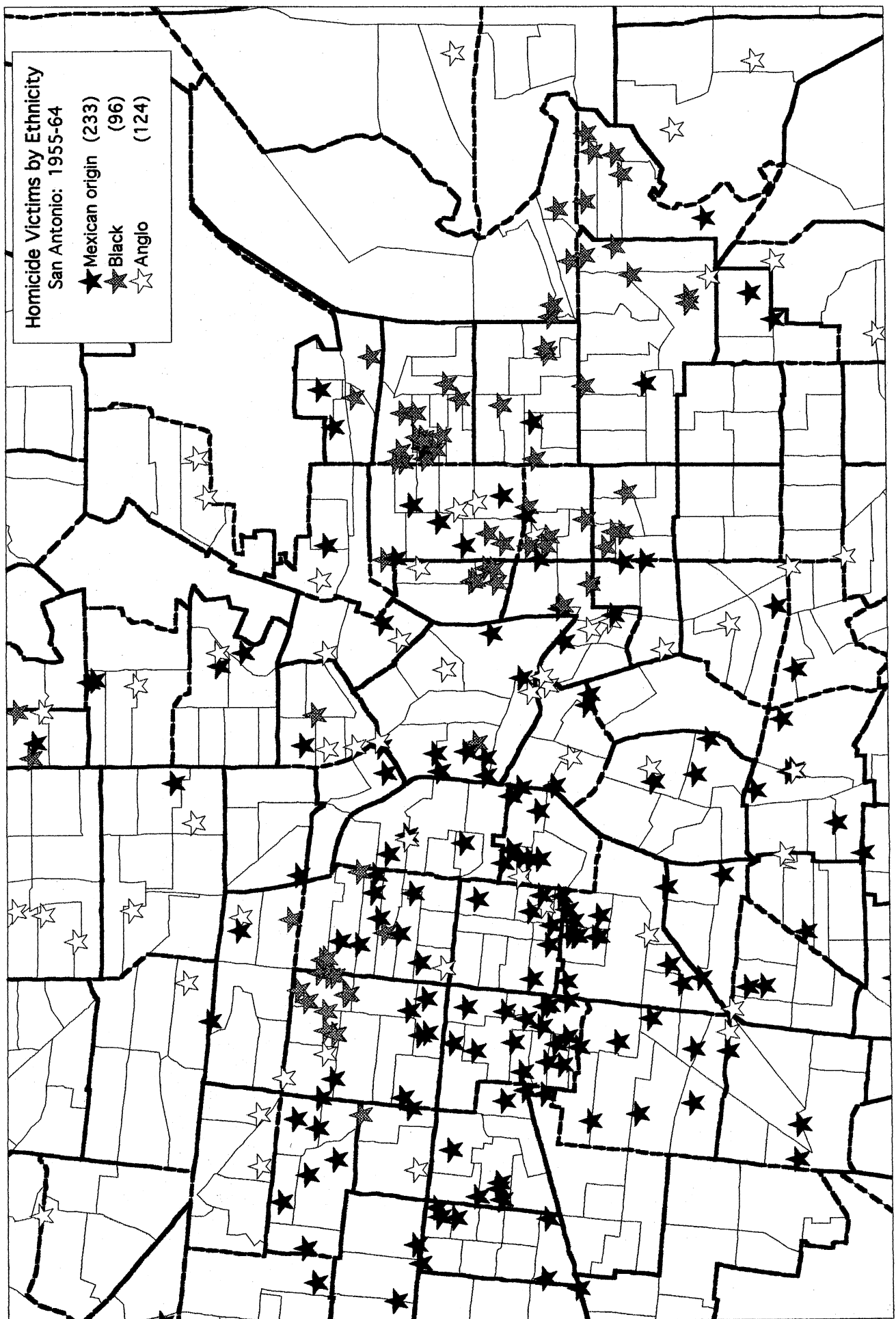
**MAP 1: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1935-44**

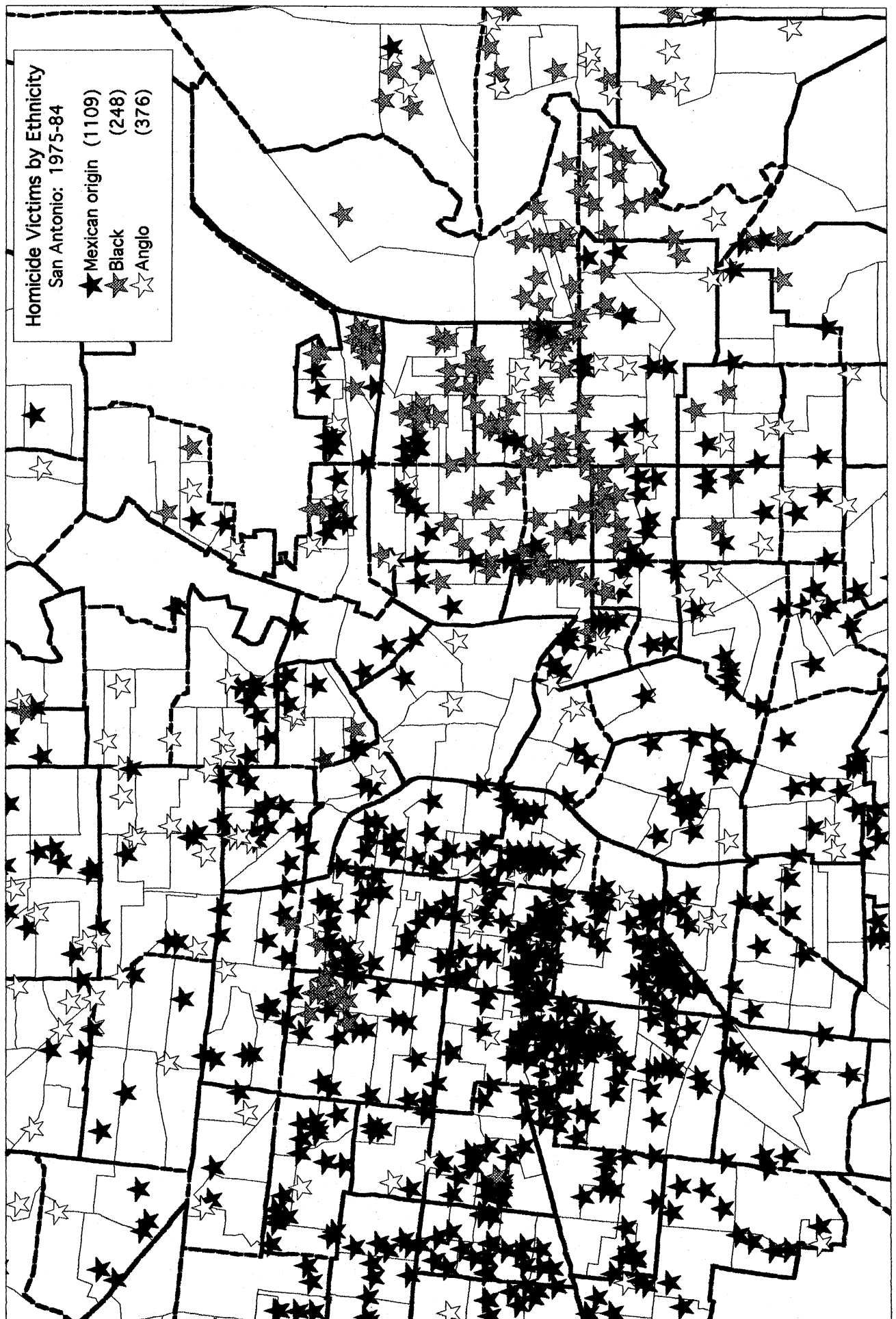
**MAP 2: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1955-64**

**MAP 3: HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY ETHNICITY, 1975-84**









# **EXAMINING ETHNIC DISTINCTIONS IN VICTIM-OFFENDER HOMICIDES: THE CASE OF MIAMI IN THE 1990s**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A neglected feature of most macro-and micro-level analyses of homicide is ethnic distinction among victims and offenders. Previous research has largely ignored the Latino population despite the large numbers of Latinos in most urban areas of the United States. This paper examines the relationship between Latino victims and offenders, along with whites (Anglos) and Blacks, other individual attributes and homicide event characteristics. Results show that incorporating ethnic identification by incorporating a Latino category, extends our understanding of urban homicides.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Research on racial variation and micro level homicide has typically focused on Anglo and Black killings. Ignoring the Latino population bypasses a large and important segment of American society (Moore and Pinderhughes, 1993). With an increasingly diverse population in many major cities (e.g. Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City) and amidst a growing immigrant population- notable among them is Miami, Florida- it is important to understand how ethnicity is related to violent crime. This paper attempts to do so by using police records from the city of Miami, Florida from 1990 to 1994. Our goal is to extend our knowledge of Latino killings, relative to other ethnic groups, and to examine the circumstances surrounding those killings after a period of transformation in a unique urban American city.

## **RESEARCH SETTING**

The city involved in this study, Miami, Florida, is among the nation's largest and most diverse areas, with almost two million people residing in the greater metropolitan area. It enjoys national, even international recognition, for its weather, natural disasters, riots, waves of refugees, intergroup strife, and even a popular media image shaped by a television series (Grenier and Perez, 1996). Without a doubt, Miami is a unique and diverse urban area.

Consider that in 1980 Anglos constituted almost half of the metropolitan population. By the end of the decade, after a period of "white flight" Latinos, primarily Cubans, were by far the largest group (61%). This ethnic transformation was not entirely the result of natural population growth. Instead, it represents the cumulation of several distinct waves of refugees fleeing Cuba (Pedraza, 1996). As but one example, the number of Cubans was considerably increased by the 1980

Marinel boatlift which brought 125,000 people to the United States, most of whom settled in the greater Miami area in a very short time span (See Grenier and Perez 1996, p. 362; Portes and Stepick, 1993). Ten years later, the city of Miami had the second highest proportion of foreign-born residents in any U.S. city.<sup>1</sup>

## DATA SOURCES

Data for this analysis were drawn from the Homicide Investigations Unit of the City of Miami Police Department. Records were transcribed from materials gathered manually from two sources: Homicide Unit logs and detectives supplemental reports in the homicide files. Special attention was paid to the written descriptions of each homicide. These "homicide narratives" provided case details and allowed a closer examination of the circumstances regarding each killing (see Decker, p. 1993).

This study focuses attention to 673 killings reported for 1990 through 1994<sup>2</sup>. For the purposes of this study, I decided to organize the data by victim characteristics, in particular, the victims ethnicity (Anglo, Black, Latino), and linked other information including offenders' and events characteristics to each homicide setting. The case files were copied in Miami, shipped to Delaware, coded and read by two research assistants, and reviewed by the principal investigator.

I direct your attention to a couple of points. Recall that Miami is a primarily Latin and largely immigrant city. However, major group differences occur relative to population size. Anglos comprise ten percent of the population of Miami in 1990 but over eight percent of all killings. Similarly, although the city is predominately Latino - almost sixty three percent of the total size- Latinos comprise over 35 percent of all homicides in Miami. In contrast, Blacks are overrepresented twice their population size (56%:27%). Of all ethnic groups, Anglos are much more in line with their group size, Latins (primarily Cuban) are *underrepresented* in killings. Clearly, examining ethnicity extends our knowledge of homicides.

Also, although the overwhelming majority of all homicides cleared with an arrest are intraethnic (82%), including the ethnicity category and the unknown category further adds to our understandings of victim/offender ethnicity.

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<sup>1</sup>First, was Hialeah, a working-class suburb of Miami--70 percent of its population was foreign-born, at least in 1990 (Grenier and Perez 1996).

<sup>2</sup>A handful of cases were excluded, for example, when a victim was killed by a police officer while on duty or when the victims and/or offenders ethnicity was not Anglo, Latino or Black.

First, the modal category for all homicide events is Black on Black (n=275), over half of all cleared cases and 42 percent of all cases including those unsolved. Consider again the unique immigrant Latin characteristics associated with Cuban Miami. A great deal of media attention has focused on this area and the association of immigrants, especially Latinos, with drugs and violence appears to be a common perception (Grenier and Perez, 1996). The reality of homicide in Miami is that most killings, at least those solved, occur between nonLatinos.

**TABLE 1. VICTIM AND OFFENDER ETHNICITY.**

| N                  |       |       |       |         |        |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|
| Row %              |       |       |       |         |        |
| Column %           |       |       |       |         |        |
| Total %            |       |       |       |         |        |
| OFFENDER-ETHNICITY |       |       |       |         |        |
| VICTIM-ETHNICITY   | White | Black | Latin | Unknown | Totals |
| White              | 10    | 28    | 3     | 15      | 56     |
|                    | 17.9% | 50%   | 5.4%  | 26.8%   | 8.4%   |
|                    | 41.7% | 8.1%  | 1.9%  | 10.6%   |        |
|                    | 1.5%  | 4.2%  | .4%   | 2.2%    |        |
| Black              | 5     | 275   | 9     | 88      | 377    |
|                    | 1.3%  | 72.9% | 2.4%  | 23.3%   | 56.4%  |
|                    | 20.8% | 79.5% | 5.8%  | 62%     |        |
|                    | .7%   | 41.2% | 1.3%  | 13.2%   |        |
| Latin              | 9     | 43    | 144   | 39      | 235    |
|                    | 3.8%  | 18.3% | 61.3% | 16.6%   | 35.2%  |
|                    | 37.5% | 12.4% | 92.3% | 27.5%   |        |
|                    | 1.3%  | 6.4%  | 21.6% | 5.8%    |        |
| Column Total       | 24    | 346   | 156   | 142     | 668    |
|                    | 3.6%  | 51.8% | 23.4% | 21.3%   | 100%   |

Another interesting finding is that Blacks who kill whites account for *half* of all white killings, whereas white on white killings comprise only 18 percent of that category. This finding is contrary to most research on the intraracial nature of crime but is not unique for Miami. Recall that Wilbanks discovered similar 1980 findings. Although some studies suggest that Blacks are more likely to be involved in white killings than are whites in killing Blacks because of proportional size differences, few have explored this dimension, net of Latinos (Decker, 1993).

Latino on Latino killings are the second largest modal category (n=144) and account for the majority of Latino victim homicides (61% solved: 74% unsolved), at least during the 1990s. Again, contrary to expectations, Latino assailant/victim killings were the most underrepresented of all group homicides in Miami.

In cases where suspect information is unknown, most (62%) involve Black victims. However, Latinos and Anglos also have a large number with unknown information. For example, 27% of all Anglo killings are not solved although a small percentage of Latino killings (17%) are also unsolved.<sup>3</sup>

Other information is included such as homicide circumstances, offenders gender, age number of suspects and type of weapon used. Because of page constraints this information will be referred to in the conclusions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In sum, extending ethnic distinctions in homicide was consequential. Variation occurred among Anglo, Black and Latino homicide victims as evident in the number and size of group killings. Regarding homicide proportions, relative to city population size, large disparities existed among both Black and Latino victims with few similarities between the two largest groups in Miami. Black victims were overrepresented in most categories including homicide circumstances, had a higher percentage of intergroup killings and were more likely to be killed by Black males, young offenders, multiple suspects and with guns. Contrary to predictions, Latinos were killed at a rate half their population size. Granted, they were as likely to be killed by family-intimates and by personal contact as Blacks, and most were also assailed by other Latinos, especially Latino males. However, relative to Anglos and Blacks, they were just as likely to be killed by a teenager as a fifty year old, or even older, offender and, in fact, were most likely to be killed by an adult as the offender's age increased onward from the mid-thirties. Last, Anglos were the only group consistently killed at a rate in proportion to their population size. Although they were more likely to be victims of intergroup homicide in the 1990s, this is not surprising given their small city population size. Recall this finding was already highlighted, for earlier years, by Wilbanks (1984). These are the findings that shape ethnic homicide distinction for Miami, Florida in the 1990s.

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<sup>3</sup>Note that, the number of cases vary across all tables, including the unknown category, because only available data are presented. For example, witnesses could provide information on the circumstances surrounding types of homicide, especially in the case of another robbery or other felony, but not be able to identify the offender, much less provide his/her ethnicity. For example, the offender might have been in a car, robbed and shot the victim, but not be identifiable from a distance. Or, just as commonly, if a killing occurred at night, offender information, especially ethnicity, would be obscured.

Finally, there are other significant differences. Compared to other immigrant groups in general, and Latinos specifically, Cubans were the most welcomed and heavily subsidized group in American history (Portes and Stepick, 1993). Clearly, we have not been able to examine the various waves of Cuban refugees, the class dynamics associated with each group, the extent to which they were subsidized by the Federal Government, how they created ethnic niches, and, in turn, if and how this was linked to crime. Other scholars should explore this topic.



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## **Data Exchange: City Studies of Homicide in the South & Southwest**

**Recorder Margaret A. Zahn**

The question and comment session began with a question about dissimilarity in levels of homicide in areas and whether this was based on numbers or rates. A question was also asked if the continuity in homicide rates in areas of the city represented a lack of economic development for Hispanics in the areas. The respondent said that the fact that Hispanics remain living in geographic areas over time does not mean lack of economic development since Hispanic families are very strong and may not want to move out of areas, so stability in areas may not be economically related.

Comments were made regarding what arrest records show, in particular, it was said that these are not a measure of seriousness but simply the volume of activity. One person also questioned if increasing arrests might be related to changes in record keeping during this period of time. This was acknowledged as a good point, but the impact of changes in record keeping is not known.

Richard Block suggested that as the proportion of known offenders has declined any findings regarding comparison of offender's prior arrest records may be affected. Along these lines John Jarvis indicated handling unknown offenders analytically is a continuing issue and it is especially problematic to include unknowns in comparisons with other homicide offenders. Further discussions on problem with police records indicated that information in police records remains an issue. As an example, detectives are thorough in detail and their records have this detail but it does not necessarily get reported to the UCR, and it also isn't in the original police arrest report. Care in determining which police record one is using, i.e., original arrest report, detective records or UCR, remain a concern.

Along similar lines, Al Blumstein questioned whether the decline in handgun deaths in Houston was related to different police practices or data keeping especially since there is such a significant drop in gun deaths (from 63% to 54%). Brewer and Edison answered that they will look into this possibility for it is possible that a death is categorized as being by an unknown method rather than by gun if they don't know what kind of gun it was. This could affect findings.

Peter Greenwood queried whether the researches presented their findings to police departments? Two responded, yes they had given data to them, and it was noted that in Atlanta, some police are very interested in what researchers are doing

A question was also asked regarding "How do you code Hispanic?" Ramiro Martinez said that in Miami most detectives are Cuban and distinguish individual characteristics by neighborhood characteristics. In Miami "Hispanics" are called Latins while whites are called American. In San Antonio the term is Hispanic, not Latin. The basis for Categorization of persons into Hispanic or Latin groups remains problematic in homicide research.

Susan Sorenson then asked if the researchers had looked at new immigrants. She suggested there is concern that we attribute differences to ethnicity when it's due to migration or

immigration. All researchers acknowledged the importance of this comment but none had addressed migration specifically in their research.

Finally, one participant wanted to know if the hurricane had affected homicide in Miami? Professor Martinez answered with a clear “no”, the most recent hurricane did not hit Miami but affected other areas.

**Section Six:**  
**Research and Practitioners Efforts to Influence Social Policy**  
**in Violence Prevention**



## **INJURY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

**Billie Weiss  
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services**

Diligence and communication have made it possible to move policy in the public health area in Los Angeles County, bringing issues to the forefront, and providing data so that decision makers can implement regulations that will protect children, as well as adults. Efforts to intervene in unsafe situations require the involvement of multiple data sources as well as multiple agency coordination.

One issue in which a difference has been made is in the nature of child drownings. The nature of child drownings was for a young child, one to five years of age, to drown in a backyard swimming pool. Through the use of the Child Death Review Committee, the Sheriff of Los Angeles County was impressed with the number of suspicious deaths involving child drownings and began to investigate them as caretaker homicides. Once attention was drawn to these drownings, the County Board of Supervisors were lobbied to adopt a pool ordinance to make backyard pools less accessible to unsupervised children. After a decade, an ordinance was passed to create barrier fences around all new pools to be constructed. It was the efforts of both public and private groups that drove the change process to make things safer for children.

A second issue involves the number of children who are killed by firearms. Five major gun manufacturers operate in the city of Los Angeles. Many of the weapons made here are of the "Saturday Night Special" variety- cheap and poorly made. When dealers within the city were required to have a permanent location, a business license and one million dollars of liability insurance, manufacturing emphasis shifted to surrounding areas within Los Angeles County. Forty manufacturers operating in Los Angeles County were discovered. A concerted effort has been made to involve multiple agencies and municipalities to develop ordinances to insure that manufacturers are responsible for what they distribute. Family courts and health officials have provided data to influence politicians to require business licenses and to ban the sale of junk guns. West Hollywood became the first city to ban the sale of junk guns after pro bono legal assistance was offered to represent the city if it was later sued by gun manufacturers.

Appropriate public safety policy can be effected by bringing together all groups, public and private, with an interest in the issue, and providing decision makers with adequate data and support to overcome political influences.



## **GANG TATTOO REMOVAL PROGRAM: OPERATION FRESH START OF CHICAGO**

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Operation Fresh Start of Chicago provides laser-based medical treatments to remove gang-related tattoos from individuals wanting to leave gang membership. From January, 1996, through May, 1996, over 500 individuals have had tattoos removed, and over 1000 individuals were on the waiting list. The procedure is relatively safe and simple, taking only a few minutes, and leaves no scarring. Because the tattoo-removal process requires several treatments over several months, the opportunity exists to survey the patients at each visit to measure how the tattoo removal is reducing their risk of a violence-related injury. This evaluation is in progress.

A gang-related tattoo, as it represents gang membership, signals an individual at high risk for violence-related injury or death. The tattoo itself can even be an independent risk factor as it identifies an individual to rival gang members and becomes a catalyst of conflict. As the person becomes older, he or she finds that the tattoo can also reduce employability and decrease self-esteem. It is hypothesized that removing gang-related tattoos can increase employment opportunities, improve self-esteem, and reduce the risk of violence-related injuries.

Community grants and donations were obtained to purchase the laser equipment. Sinai Family Health Centers of Chicago provided the site. Several physicians donate time to perform the procedure. The program charges \$25 for the procedure, or clients can turn in a gun to the Chicago Police Department for free treatments. In addition to the laser treatment, clients can meet with social workers and receive referrals from a growing list of community resources.

## **RISE HIGH PROJECTS: VIOLENCE PREVENTION MESSAGES**

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Rise High Projects was founded in 1993 to develop images and messages promoting violence prevention using a public health model. Since its inception, several different posters have been developed and media campaigns expressing violence prevention messages on billboards and bus signs have been produced in over 25 U.S. cities. The campaigns have garnered strong and positive receptions, while establishing community coalitions dedicated to violence prevention programs in several cities. A recent project has been the completion of a brochure designed by young adult inmates at a county jail which describes the health risks of carrying a gun. Much of the brochure contains vignettes of personal experience. Evaluations with focus groups of high school students found the brochure to be highly acceptable. Many stated that they learned new information which would make them less likely to acquire a gun.





## RECORDER'S REPORT

*Did you test for the sensitivity of results for the age of the children?*

Greenwood: This was a small study that involved a review of existing literature, and that literature didn't have much information about the best time to intervene.

*What does the leadership program look like?*

Carole Oaken: One awardee is a woman who live in a suburban area full of gangs. She used her award to organize the community to intervene. Everybody in the community became active. The community now looks much better, and they have a one-on-one relationship with the city council.

Greenwood: They give money to people who are already active in the community. \$25,000 can make a big difference to them.

*How are leadership programs evaluated.*

Greenwood: Outcomes of the leadership program are being evaluated. We're just trying to understand *what* they do.

*What did you find out about swimming pools?*

Weiss: We did find a few intentional drownings, but not in swimming pools. We asked for legislation to require a fence between the house and the pool, because that's the route most drownings happen. But only for *new* pools.

*What kind of research proposals did the Wellness Foundation fund?*

Greenwood: RAND had nothing to do with the decisions of what things to fund, so we don't know much about what has been funded. There's one study about liquor store locations and violence, and another about the availability of firearms.

Sorenson: We studied non-fatal firearm injuries by trying to link paramedic data to emergency room data. We found that very hard to do, because there are so many different jurisdictions. We've also studied homicide rates for immigrant groups.

Maxson: We are doing a study of high-risk gang kids in San Diego.

*What is being done about SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome)?*

Weiss: All SIDS are referred to the Child Death Review board, and there are far fewer real cases of SIDS than "apparent" ones.

Richard Block: Same thing is true in Chicago.

Weiss: It's really useful to have people from different areas look at the data in the same room.

*What is the linkage between the paramedics and other institutions?*

Sorenson: Very difficult because there is no common linkage information. We found similar numbers, but don't really know if they refer to the same set of cases.

*What are the links between community groups and the courts and other systems?*

Weiss: Family Court records are very useful, and we sometimes get access to them. Our access to the health system data is good, and have been quite successful in getting to see the criminal justice data we need. The Los Angeles Violence Prevention Coalition has been working to link all these different data systems.

Greenwood: Big name pro-bono lawyers have often helped.

Weiss: Several cities passed legislation to ban the sale of "Saturday night specials" because they can get free legal advice if they are sued.

*Are local cities being successful in courts with respect to gun control laws?*

Weiss: The laws are being challenged, but they are not really gun control laws. They prohibit a certain class of guns on the basis of safety consideration; these are guns that cannot be imported because they aren't safe.

## **Section Seven:**

### **New and Very Recent Research**



## Victimization of Offenders: Death of Youthful Parolees

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### ABSTRACT

Mortality data were gathered from California Vital Statistics for more than 4,000 youth paroled by the California Youth Authority during the 1980's. These youth represent random samples from two cohorts--those paroled between July 1, 1981 and June 30, 1982 (81-82 sample) and those paroled between July 1, 1986 and June 30, 1987 (86-87 sample). The subjects were between 19 and 20 years of age, on average, at the time of release. The death certificate records included all deaths recorded in California during the period prior to December 31, 1992. Exposure periods (time at risk of death), thus, were about 11 years and 6 years for the two samples, respectively.

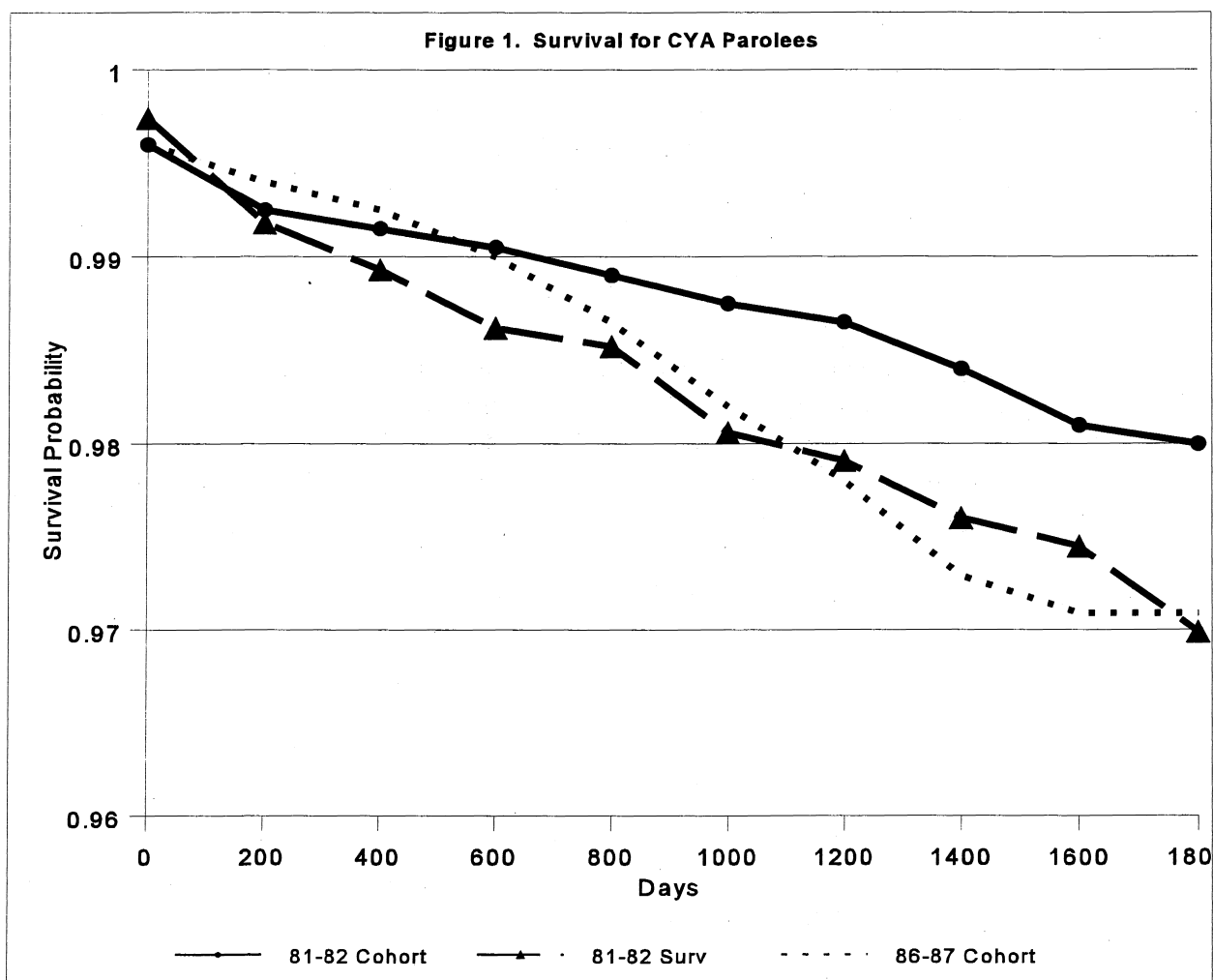
Known deaths for the two cohorts totaled 177 for the 3,995 male offenders in the two samples (4.4%). These deaths included 106 for the 1,998 males in the 81-82 sample and 71 for the 1,997 males in the 86-87 sample. Table 1 shows the causes of death by cohort. As can be seen, homicide was the prevailing cause for both samples--accounting for 65% (46 of 71) and 48% (51 of 106) of the deaths among the 81-82 and 86-87 samples, respectively. Of particular note is the fact that the number of deaths due to homicide are roughly equal for the two samples while the number of deaths due to other causes are roughly proportional to the exposure periods for the two samples.

**Table 1. Causes of Death for 81-82 and 86-87 CYA Parolee Samples**

| Cause of Death | 81-82 Sample | 86-87 Sample |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Homicide       | 51           | 46           |
| Suicide        | 9            | 4            |
| Auto Accident  | 19           | 10           |
| Drugs          | 9            | 4            |
| Other*         | 18           | 7            |
| Total          | 106          | 71           |

\* Includes for 81-82 and 86-87, respectively 3 and 1 due to legal intervention and 4 and 1 from AIDS.

The results shown in Table 1 suggest a possible period effect--namely, that the period between



1986 and 1992 was more dangerous, as measured by likelihood of being murdered, for young criminals than the six-year period between 1981 and 1987. We examined this hypothesis by examining the five-year mortality for three groups: The 81-82 sample, the 86-87 sample, and a third group that included those released in 1981-1982 who survived at least five years. These results are shown in Figure 1. Shown are the life table survival curves for these three cohorts. As can be seen, depletion of the sample over time due to death is most similar for the 86-87 sample and the 81-82 survivors--the exposure period here is the same for both groups. On average the 81-82 survivors are about five years older than the 86-87 sample during this period. The survival curves differ significantly as measured by the Wilcoxon test statistic (8.059, which has a p-value of 0.0178).

Note that other analyses suggest higher death rates for those from LA, blacks (versus whites or hispanics), and those who were involved in violent acts while incarcerated. Higher death rates were not associated with a violent arrest record or with evidence of gang involvement. When examining five-year mortality, there appear to be interactions between race and geographic

region. Namely, among those from LA, blacks have higher mortality than non-blacks. Among blacks, those from LA have higher mortality than those from outside of LA. Among non-blacks, there was little difference in mortality and region (LA versus non-LA), and among those from outside LA there was little difference between blacks and non-blacks.





Work in Progress  
The United Nations International Study on Firearms Regulation  
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In reaction to the increasing availability, use, and harm caused by illegal firearms throughout the world, The United Nations Division on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has begun a survey of civilian ownership, regulation, illegal use, and trafficking of handguns and long guns. The study is being conducted through the Secretary General of the U.N. with funding from Japan and coordination by Canada. The Division along with a group of expert consultants has completed development of the survey. With the cooperation of the governments of Fifty countries representing all areas of the world, the survey is currently in the field and is being completed by knowledgeable national consultants.

Based on its mandate, the project is purely descriptive and policy neutral and is only designed for information gathering. The objectives of the research are:

1. Describe the status of firearms and firearms regulation in individual countries;
2. Describe the nature and extent of firearms smuggling and trafficking in countries, and the measures taken to combat the problem;
3. Present basic firearms statistics, including those related to homicide and other crimes, suicides, and accidents; and;
4. Determine the feasibility of collecting and disseminating such information of a regular basis.

The very extensive survey (36 pages plus inserts) requests both quantitative and qualitative information. Among the questions are specific details of firearms regulations and licensing requirements, specific prohibitions on ownership, specific evidence of illegal trafficking, statistics on firearms related crimes, suicides and accidents, governmental and non-governmental programs to reduce injury from firearms, and specific incidents that resulted in renewed concern about firearms regulation (e.g. a mass murder).

Along with the survey, UNICRI (The United Nations Inter-regional Crime and Justice Research Institute), will compile and summarize previously collected international comparative information. As a representative of UNICRI, I am responsible for this macro-comparison of available data.

The data collected and the methods used for collection will be open to all concerned parties. The results of the survey along with regional and inter-regional comparisons will be summarized at a conference to be held in Vienna in December 1996.

For further details of the survey contact:

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# ROBBERS WHO INJURE AND THOSE WHO DO NOT

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## ABSTRACT

The findings in this paper are based on a survey of 310 armed robbers surveyed in 20 prisons in three states--Maryland, Washington and Texas--in 1995. Those robbers who injured their victims in the robbery for which they are serving time are separated in the analysis from those who did not, revealing important differences between the two groups. Differences include the findings that the amount of money available is even of greater importance to the violent robbers than it is to the non-violent robbers, and violent robbers choose different types of places to rob. The violent robber is also less concerned about the presence of armed or unarmed guards or the number of clerks, customers or other people present than is the non-violent robber.

## BACKGROUND

Talking to robbers for their ideas on robbery prevention can be found in the early research from the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute (WBSI) carried out in the 1970s (Crow & Bull, 1975).<sup>1</sup> That research, directed by Dr. W. J. Crow, which I coordinated, was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Law Enforcement and Assistance Administration (LEAA). For the study, 7-Elevens were used as experimental and control sites to test out what were then new ideas in crime deterrence, and the ideas came from police, social scientists and ex-robbers.

The rationale of the experiment was based on the need to make the target (stores) less attractive by reducing the cash and maximizing the take/risk ratio; that is, to make the amount of money available small and the relative risk high. Components of the program to harden the target included:

- ♦ controlling cash
- ♦ altering escape routes
- ♦ increasing lighting and visibility
- ♦ training employees in not resisting.

The purpose of the original research was to test out new techniques to prevent robbery and violence. Intervention measures were implemented in 60 experimental stores, which were closely matched, on a stratified random basis, with 60 control stores. The measures were tested through a classic experimental design in a field setting. It was, and remains, the only such large-scale experiment on the subject. The experiment resulted in a 30% reduction in robberies in

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<sup>1</sup>Crow, Wayman J. & Bull, James L. 1975. *Robbery Deterrence: An Applied Behavioral Science Demonstration*. Western Behavioral Sciences Institute. La Jolla, CA.

experimental stores, over control stores, during the experimental period. The results supported the concept that robbers do in fact select their targets, and that physical and behavioral changes at the site can significantly reduce robberies. What remained to be seen was whether the results of the experiment could be applied successfully, on a large scale, over time. The program was subsequently implemented in 7-Eleven stores nationwide in 1976. After twelve years, from 1974 to 1986, robberies in 7-Elevens had decreased by nearly 65% (Crow, Erickson & Scott, 1987).<sup>2</sup> The concept of the program was adopted in 1987 by the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) for use in convenience stores nationwide.

## RELATED STUDIES

Historically, a classic study of robbers was that of Floyd Feeney, conducted in 1973, for which he interviewed 113 robbers.<sup>3</sup> He served as a consultant on the WBSI study to guide the experiment. Some other studies of robbers include that of Dermot Walsh (1986) who interviewed 45 burglars and 69 robbers who were incarcerated and then compared the two groups.<sup>4</sup> In a study in West Germany (Rehm & Servay, 1986), 259 convicted bank robbers were interviewed to analyze the factors motivating robbery, the obstacles the robbers perceive when planning a robbery and the influences of those obstacles on the robber's decisionmaking.<sup>5</sup> In Canada, in-depth interviews were held with 20 career criminal armed robbers (Normandeau & Lanicault, 1983).<sup>6</sup> Other case-studies have been done of career criminals, but few large-scale studies have been conducted.

Both Walsh and Feeney offer their rationale for interviewing robbers. Walsh (1986) says: "Because offenders are the source of the crime, it would seem absurd not to avail oneself of their versions of what they were doing and why." Feeney (1986) adds:

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<sup>2</sup>Crow, Wayman J., Erickson, Rosemary J. and Scott, Lloyd. September, 1987. "Set Your Sights". *Security Management*. Vol 31, No. 9 & data provided by The Southland Corporation.

<sup>3</sup>Feeney, Floyd. 1986. "Robbers as Decision-Makers." *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. (Ed. Derek B. Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke). Springer-Verlag: New York. pp. 53-71.

<sup>4</sup>Walsh, Dermot. 1986. "Victim Selection Procedures Among Economic Criminals: The Rational Choice Perspective." *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. (Ed. Derek B. Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke). Springer-Verlag: New York. pp. 39-52.

<sup>5</sup>Rehm, &. & Servay, W. 1986. *Bank Robbery From the Perspective of the Bank Robber*. West Germany.

<sup>6</sup>Normandeau, A. & Lanicault, R. January, 1983. "Career of a Robber". *Canadian Journal of Criminology*. Vol 25, No. 1: 33-46.

*Detailed discussions with offenders about their crimes and their methods of thinking and operation have already had considerable payoff in recent years . . . This kind of work is in its infancy, however, and there is a great deal more to be learned. The greatest payoffs are likely to come from increased attention to the strategic decisions made by offenders and the learning process involved--the decision to rob, to continue robbing, and to desist from robbing. . . The offender has a whole thought process and belief system that ultimately lead to some kind of conclusion. . . Robbers know a lot about themselves and about robberies that no one else knows . . . if headway is ever to be made in dealing with crime, we must access the information that offenders have and use it for prevention and control.*

Walsh (1986) notes that the problem of interviewing captive robbers is that they may be unrepresentative, and there may be recall problems, reticence, distortion, and deceit, but he argues that the general gain accruing from letting offenders tell their own story is far outweighed by any possible distortions in some of their reporting. The study reported upon here is based on that rationale.

## **STUDY DESIGN**

The current study was conducted in order to update what robbers look for when they consider robbing a place (Erickson, 1996).<sup>7</sup> For the study, 310 incarcerated armed robbers were surveyed. The sample consisted of male armed robbers incarcerated within the past two years. The study was carried out in 20 prisons in three states--Maryland, Texas and Washington. The sample consisted of 78 prisoners in Washington in 7 prisons; 125 prisoners in Maryland in 5 prisons; and 107 in Texas in 8 prisons, for a total of 310 prisoners. The sample was self-selecting in that they had to agree to participate, but the robbers are similar to state prisoners nationwide on sociodemographic characteristics. The range of robbers was represented, from street muggers to bank robbers, and including commercial and home robbers.

The data collection was carried out during a two month time period from May 10, 1995 to July 18, 1995. The survey consisted of a paper and pencil questionnaire, with 40 questions, which took the inmates about one-half hour to fill out. It was designed to measure psychological, sociological and structural characteristics, as shown below:

### **1) Psychological characteristics**

- motives
- judgment
- perceptions of opportunity
- alcohol and narcotic involvement
- the decisionmaking process
- the possibility of getting caught
- knowledge of sentencing

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<sup>7</sup>Erickson, Rosemary J. *Armed Robbers and their Crimes*. 1996. Athena Research Corporation: Seattle, WA. The study was funded by The Southland Corporation and Athena Research Corporation.

## 2) *Sociological characteristics*

- education
- marital status
- race
- age
- employment
- prior criminal history
- prior conviction record

## 3) *Structural characteristics*

- site characteristics
- proximity to offender's residence
- multiple clerks
- cameras
- alarms
- expected take
- video (CCTV)
- bullet-resistant barriers (BRB)
- guards (armed & unarmed)
- hours of closing
- partners
- guns
- weapon use
- history of violence
- information on victims
- information on incidents
- reason for robbery
- reason for getting caught

Data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A standard Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare differences in the means between, or among, groups. For cross-tabs, the Pearson Chi-Square test of statistical significance was used.<sup>8</sup> For this paper, additional analyses were conducted and are reported here which compare robbers who injured with those who did not. The results are discussed below.

## FINDINGS

To separate those robbers who injured from those who did not, questions were asked regarding whether they had killed or injured anyone in the last robbery they committed for which they are serving time. Sixty of the 310 (19%) said they had killed or injured someone. This analysis compares the 60 who had injured or killed someone with the 250 who had not. For reporting purposes, the former are designated as *violent* (N=60) and the latter as *non-violent* (N=250). This question does not determine whether they had *ever* injured or killed someone, just whether they killed or injured someone in the robbery for which they are serving time.

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<sup>8</sup>Statistical significance is reported as: \*sig < .05; \*\* sig <.01; \*\*\* sig <.001.

## Characteristics of Robbers

On the sociodemographic characteristics, there was no difference between the non-violent and violent robbers. They did not differ statistically on age, race, education or marital status, as shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF ROBBERS  
PERCENTAGE RESPONDING**

|                       | Non-Violent | Violent | Total Sample |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>            |             |         |              |
| 17-20                 | 12          | 17      | 13           |
| 21-25                 | 28          | 38      | 30           |
| 26-30                 | 24          | 17      | 23           |
| Over 30               | 36          | 28      | 34           |
| Total                 | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Race</b>           |             |         |              |
| White                 | 26          | 31      | 27           |
| Black                 | 58          | 49      | 56           |
| Other                 | 16          | 20      | 17           |
| Total                 | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Education</b>      |             |         |              |
| Elementary            | 47          | 51      | 48           |
| High School           | 33          | 22      | 31           |
| Some College          | 20          | 27      | 21           |
| Total                 | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Marital Status</b> |             |         |              |
| Single                | 71          | 72      | 71           |
| Married               | 19          | 17      | 19           |
| Div. or Wid.          | 10          | 11      | 10           |
| Total                 | 100         | 100     | 100          |

No significant differences between groups.

With the trend in society toward a younger, more violent robber, one may have expected a difference by age, but there was not a difference. With the disproportionate number of blacks in the criminal justice system, one might have expected the blacks to be more violent, but they were not. Neither were the violent robbers less educated or single as might be expected. The total sample reflects those characteristics, but there is not a difference on those characteristics between the violent and the non-violent robber.



## Characteristics of Robberies

As shown in Table 2, there were no significant differences between non\violent and violent robbers on the number of robberies they had committed or how far they lived from the site. About one-third of the sample had committed only one robbery, while another third had committed over 5. Forty percent of the robbers lived less than 2 miles from the site, and the remainder lived two miles or more from the site. The violent robbers were significantly more likely, however, to say that they were professional, when asked if they consider themselves amateur or professional robbers. There was also a small, but statistically significant, difference between the non\violent and violent robbers on whether they were high on drugs or alcohol during the crime for which they are serving time. Violent robbers were more likely to say they were high on drugs or alcohol, than were the non\violent robbers.

The greatest difference between the violent and non\violent robbers shown in Table 2, however, is whether there were other people present during the crime for which they are serving time. The violent robbers were significantly *more* likely to say that there were other people present when they committed their crime. They were also asked: "Who would you prefer to be on duty--male or female?" The violent robbers were significantly more likely to say they "don't care" who is on duty. In fact, three fourths of them said they didn't care.

The non\violent robbers were slightly more likely to prefer that females be on duty. The violent robbers were also more likely to say it "doesn't matter" if someone is in the store playing video games. When asked how many people they would take on with a partner and a gun, the average for the non\violent robbers was 11, but was 14 for the violent offenders. The violent offenders do not appear to be deterred by the presence of additional people.

## Sentencing

One of the most surprising findings from the total sample was that 83% of the robbers did not think they would be caught, shown in Table 3. Non\violent and violent robbers do *not* differ in their perception. Overall, the robbers also did not know what their sentences would be, with 80% saying they did not know, but the violent robbers were significantly more likely than the non\violent robbers to know what their sentence would be. The violent robbers were not as likely as the non\violent robbers to say that it was longer than they expected. In other words, the violent robbers were more likely than the non\violent robbers to know what their sentences would be and not be longer than they expected, but they committed the crime with injury in spite of it. The violent robbers were no more likely to have served time before than were the non\violent robbers, with almost half of both groups having served time before.

**TABLE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF ROBBERIES  
PERCENTAGE RESPONDING**

|   | Non-Violent | Violent | Total Sample |
|---|-------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>No. of Robberies</b>                     |             |         |              |
| 1   | 34          | 18      | 31           |
| 2   | 14          | 14      | 14           |
| 3-5   | 20          | 20      | 20           |
| Over 5                                      | 32          | 48      | 35           |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Were you high on drugs or alcohol?*</b>  |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 52          | 67      | 55           |
| No  | 48          | 33      | 45           |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>How far did you live from the site?</b>  |             |         |              |
| Less than 2 mi.                             | 41          | 36      | 40           |
| 2 mi. or more                               | 59          | 64      | 60           |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Were other people present?***</b>        |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 41          | 65      | 46           |
| No  | 59          | 35      | 54           |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Amateur or Professional?*</b>            |             |         |              |
| Amateur                                     | 74          | 58      | 71           |
| Professional                                | 25          | 38      | 28           |
| Borderline                                  | 1           | 4       | 1            |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Who would you prefer to be on duty?*</b> |             |         |              |
| Male  | 11          | 5       | 10           |
| Female                                      | 25          | 12      | 22           |
| Don't Care                                  | 54          | 76      | 59           |
| Don't Know                                  | 10          | 7       | 9            |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Rob with customers playing video?***</b> |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 29          | 28      | 29           |
| No  | 39          | 20      | 35           |
| Doesn't Matter                              | 32          | 52      | 36           |
| Total                                       | 100         | 100     | 100          |

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

When asked "What has ever kept you from robbing," the violent robbers were more likely to say "nothing" has ever kept them from it, whereas the non-violent robbers were more likely to say that personal reasons, such as family and friends had kept them from it. Of the non-violent robbers, 42% compared to 28% of the violent robbers, named personal reasons.

**TABLE 3: SENTENCING  
PERCENTAGE RESPONDING**

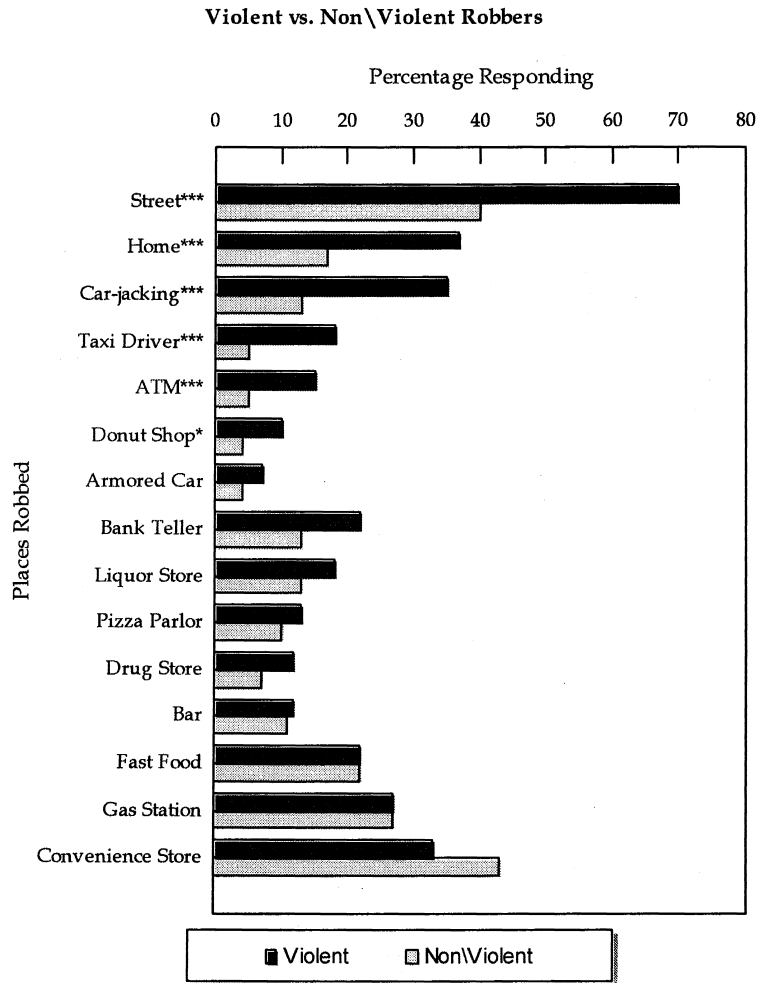
|   | Non-Violent | Violent | Total Sample |
|---|-------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Did you think you'd be caught?</b>               |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 17          | 20      | 17           |
| No  | 83          | 80      | 83           |
| Total   | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Did you know what your sentence would be?***</b> |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 16          | 36      | 20           |
| No  | 84          | 64      | 80           |
| Total   | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Was it longer than you expected?***</b>          |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 60          | 35      | 55           |
| No  | 40          | 65      | 45           |
| Total   | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>What has ever kept you from robbing?*</b>        |             |         |              |
| Personal Reasons                                    | 42          | 28      | 40           |
| Afraid  | 19          | 19      | 19           |
| Target  | 29          | 30      | 29           |
| Nothing   | 10          | 23      | 12           |
| Total   | 100         | 100     | 100          |
| <b>Have you ever served time before?</b>            |             |         |              |
| Yes   | 47          | 49      | 48           |
| No  | 53          | 51      | 52           |
| Total   | 100         | 100     | 100          |

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Places They Have Robbed

There were a number of significant differences between the violent and non-violent robbers in the type of places they had robbed, as shown on Exhibit 1. Violent robbers were significantly more

## Exhibit 1 Places Robbed



likely than non-violent robbers to rob taxi drivers, ATMs, carjacking, home robberies and street robberies. These types of robberies are known to be violent, and it is the violent robbers who in fact say they have done these robberies. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1994), commercial robberies are not as violent as other robberies, reporting that 16% of violent victimizations which occurred while the victim was working resulted in physical injuries, while 31% of violence, while not at work, resulted in injury.<sup>9</sup> Zimring and Zuehl's 1986 Chicago study of homicides also showed that home robberies were twice as deadly as commercial robberies (36% for home vs 18% for commercial.)<sup>10</sup>

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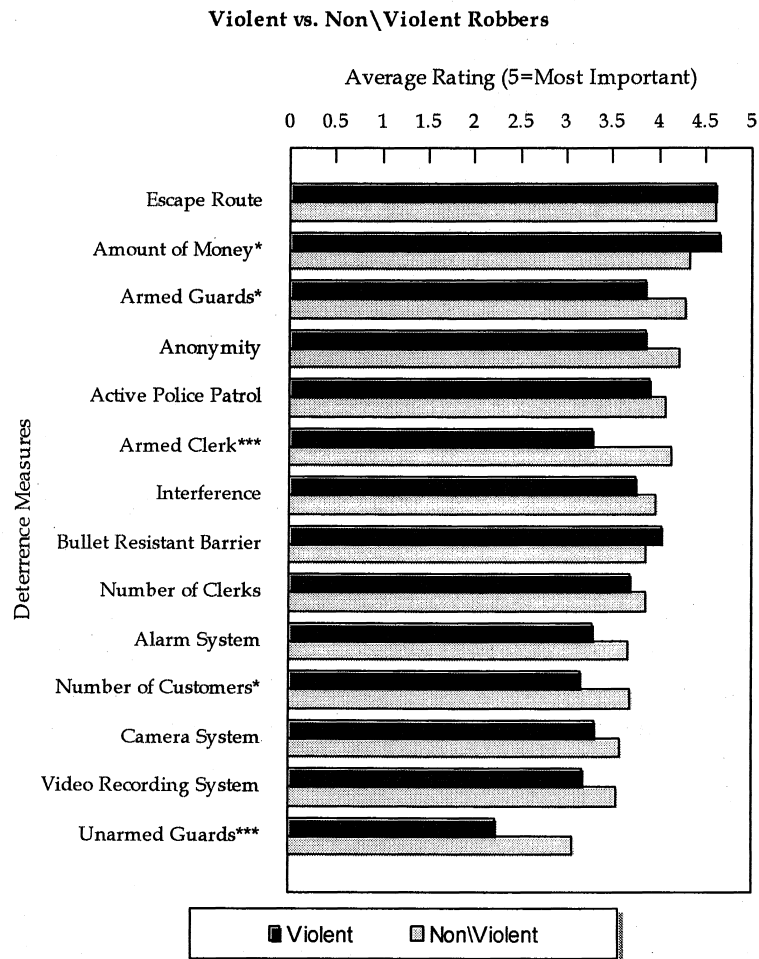
<sup>9</sup>U. S. Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. July, 1994. *Violence and Theft in the Workplace*.

<sup>10</sup>Zimring, F. E. & Zuehl, J. 1986. "Victim Injury and Death in Urban Robbery: A Chicago Study". *The Journal of Legal Studies*. XV(1), 1-39.

## Deterrence Measures

The robbers were asked: "What would be important to you if you were to rob a convenience store?" For the total sample, escape route and amount of money were the top considerations, in that order, followed by armed guards. Exhibit 2 shows the results for the violent and non-violent robbers. Money was the *most* important consideration for the violent robber, and it was significantly more important to the violent robber than to the non-violent robber. The second most important factor to the violent robber was escape route, and in this he did not differ from the non-violent robber. The third most important consideration for the violent robber was bullet-resistant barriers, which were actually *less* important to the non-violent robber. On every other variable, the violent robber considered the measure less important than did the non-violent robber. For example, the violent robber was significantly less likely than the non-violent robber to consider armed guards, unarmed guards, armed clerks or the number of customers to be important when planning to rob.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Target Attractiveness**



These robbers said that they know, for example, that the mom and pop groceries may have a gun under the counter, the people are more likely to resist because they are the owners, and it is their

money, but there is probably a lot of money available. So the robbers know the risk is greater than at the chain stores, but the take is also higher. Because of a finding of more violence in banks when there were guards on duty, the use of guards by financial institutions has decreased to less than 8% according to one study (Baumer & Carrington, 1986).<sup>11</sup> These findings suggest that it is probably the more violent type of robber that is willing to take on the mom and pop groceries and banks.

## CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

These findings tell us that if the money is reduced, the chances of being robbed by a violent robber are reduced because he is significantly more concerned about money than the non-violent offender. Amount of money is more important to the violent robber than to the non-violent robber, so places with more money may be attracting a more violent type of robber. The violent robber is also significantly less concerned about the deterrence measures of unarmed guards, armed guards, armed clerks, or the number of customers or people present. They were also more likely to have committed robberies with other people present and say they don't care who is on duty. Because the violent robber is less concerned about armed guards, armed clerks and other people, then it is probably the more violent robber that is willing to take on places with those characteristics, as long as the take is worth the risk.

The fact that the violent robber is more likely to be high on drugs or alcohol could either embolden him to commit the crime in the first place against seemingly difficult odds and/or lead to his proclivity toward violence once he is committing the crime. There also appears to be more bravado on the part of the violent robbers in their view of sentencing. The violent robbers did the crime in spite of being more likely to know what their sentence would be, and the sentence was not longer than they expected, as compared to the less violent robbers. The violent robbers were also significantly more likely to say "nothing" had ever kept them from committing a robbery. In short, the violent robbers are greater risk-takers than the non-violent robbers. If the money is there, or even if they believe it is there, the violent robbers are willing to take higher risks, including facing armed clerks, armed guards and multiple people, and they are apparently willing to injure or kill if necessary.

In some as yet unpublished research, as well as anecdotal evidence, there is indication that there may be more likely to be injury in a robbery when there are two clerks on duty than when there is one, just as there was more injury in bank robberies when there was an armed guard on duty. It was thought that this was because the clerks or bank guards were more likely to offer resistance, but this new evidence may suggest that it is actually the more violent robber that takes on those locations with multiple people, armed clerks or guards and that these robbers are more willing to injure the victims. In a take/risk analysis, this study confirms the importance of reducing the take as the most important deterrence measure against the violent robber, but the question remaining is whether increasing the risk through the particular measures of guards and more clerks might actually increase the risk of injury to the victim..

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<sup>11</sup>Baumer, T. L. & Carrington, M. D. 1986. *The Robbery of Financial Institutions: Brief Summary*. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Justice, U. S. Department of Justice.

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## CHANGING PATTERNS OF HOMICIDE AND SOCIAL POLICY

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We have recently begun an 18 month study supported by the National Institute of Justice which is designed to accomplish three objectives:

1. To understand how the volume and type of homicide have changed since 1980 in three American cities;
2. To determine neighborhood level correlates of homicide victimization and offending, with special emphasis on explanations of changes in types of homicide;
3. To provide preliminary assessments through interviews with local officials and data collected from local sources, on the impacts of policing, welfare, education and recreational policies on homicide levels and types in these three cities.

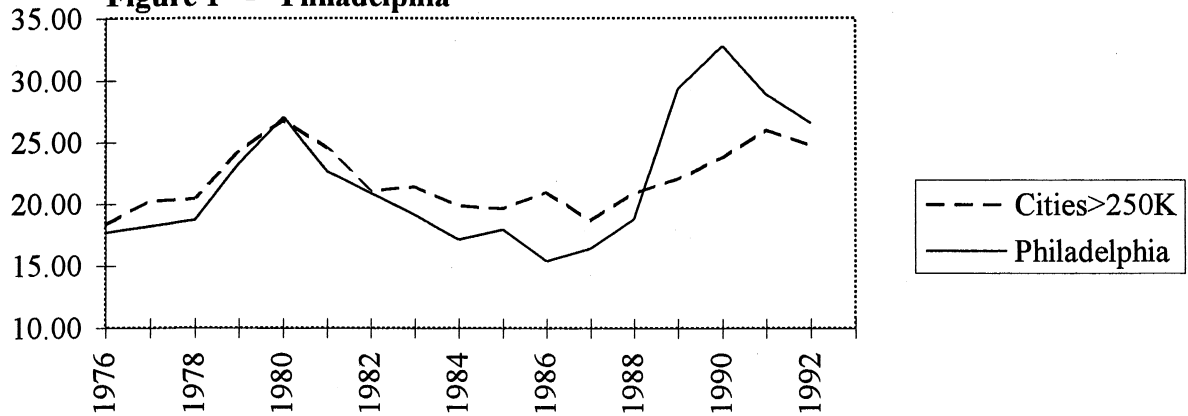
Data are being collected on all homicide cases for 1980 through 1994 from police departments in Philadelphia and St. Louis. Data collection is proposed for Phoenix. For St. Louis, previously collected data is being contributed by the St. Louis Homicide Project for 1960-1994. These sites were part of a previous research effort (Reidel and Zahn, 1985) where information was gathered on homicides occurring in 1978 in eight cities across the United States. The present study updates case level information and broadens the etiological scope to include neighborhood and city level measures of the context surrounding urban lethal violence. Sites were selected for geographic diversity and given variation in the level of homicide victimization experienced over the 15 year time frame. Homicide victimization rates for these three cities are displayed in Figures 1-3. The trend for Philadelphia is most consistent with the rate for urban areas nationally, while Phoenix and St. Louis present patterns of change that are below and above the city rate respectively.

For all three cities, data collection will record information on victim and offender characteristics, geographic information, method of assault and data on drug/alcohol use by the participants. In addition, the coding guide contains 31 values to depict victim-offender relationship and 21 codes

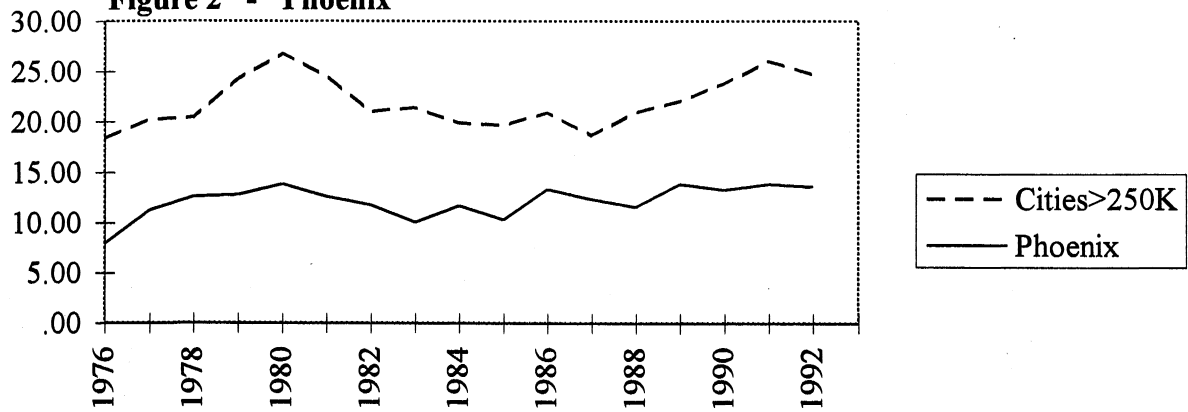


## HOMICIDE VICTIMIZATION RATES, 1976-1992

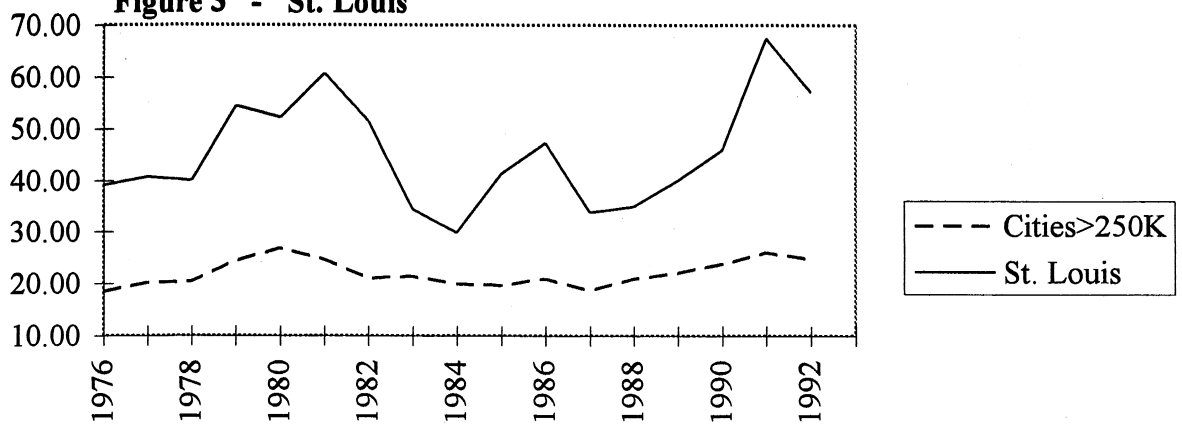
**Figure 1 - Philadelphia**



**Figure 2 - Phoenix**



**Figure 3 - St. Louis**



Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports: Supplemental Homicide Reports, 1976-1992

to record circumstances surrounding the lethal event. Once complete, the study will analyze information for over 10,000 homicides in these cities.

A second aspect of the project places the homicide event within a neighborhood context and characterizes these areas according to social structural dimensions. Wilson (1987) has powerfully argued that concentrated areas of urban poverty exacerbate social problems. As industry and jobs migrate out of areas, an "urban underclass" develops, suffering from isolation and exclusion from middle class society which perpetuates anger, frustration and boredom. Attending this, it is hypothesized, are increases in homicides of all types, especially robbery-related, drug-related and those between friends.

In keeping with Wilson's theoretical premises, the project incorporates spatial models for the cities using mapping software to reference economic and social characteristics of neighborhoods. Geographic coding will match the location of the homicide and location of victim and offender residence to variables associated with resource deprivation and social disintegration of these areas. Indices of poverty, racial diversity, inequality and measures of family disruption and residential mobility will characterize neighborhoods using 1980 and 1990 census tract information for each site.

The third goal of the project uses interviews and other data on police, welfare, education and recreation programming at each site to develop a city level description of these local services for the time frame under study. These public service functions were chosen as they are especially important areas of support for youthful residents of a city. As the national homicide rate for young men aged 15 to 19 increased 154% from 1985 to 1991 (Centers for Disease Control, 1994), this aspect of the project will examine how public support for youthful populations in an area may influence patterns of violence among this group.

Information gained from interviews with selected personnel and analyses of resource allocation in each public policy area will be used to address whether differences in programming and allocation bear any relationship to changes in the amount or type of homicide experienced by these cities. Qualitative attempts will link these data to analyses of homicide at the neighborhood level.

This project represents an advance in the study of lethal violence in a number of ways. First, use of original police records to characterize circumstances surrounding the homicide and relationship between victim and offender contributes to the growing body of city level studies, all of which overcome measurement problems associated with FBI Supplemental Homicide Report data (e.g., Decker, 1993). The present study will be able to conceptualize type of homicide (i.e. drug-related, domestic, robbery murder) at a level of detail which facilitates comparisons with other city level research incorporating these data collection procedures.

Second, the research is driven by theoretical premises that may be important to developing meaningful approaches to prevention. The longitudinal design enables an examination of how changes in neighborhoods are related to variation in the nature and frequency of this most serious

social problem. As community-based approaches to formal social control become increasingly important (see for example Fagan, 1987; Murphy, 1992; Moore, 1992), how changing crime patterns reflect objective conditions of living at the neighborhood level may be important toward developing responsive policy.

Finally, this study represents an advance methodologically. The importance of studies linking levels of analysis has been suggested by various authors (e.g., Braithwaite, 1993; Sampson, 1993). Taken separately, each component of the study provides important insight into the patterning of homicide events, how local conditions of life may be connected to these patterns, and whether information regarding urban public services holds etiological relevance. But the primary strength of the design lies in the ability to demonstrate linkages between these layers of analysis, providing a more holistic view of the forces underlying urban lethal violence.

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## **DISCUSSION DATA EXCHANGE: NEW & VERY RECENT RESEARCH**

### **VICTIMIZATION OF OFFENDERS: DEATHS OF YOUTH PAROLEES**

Discussion focused on the disparity between decedents who were paroled between July 1, 1981 to June 30, 1982 and those released between July 1, 1986 and June 30, 1987. Overall, the latter release period was associated with more serious outcomes, e.g., a statistically lower age at the first arrest, more time in crime, number of previous arrests, number of prior parole violations, general delinquency, illicit drug use, offense type, violence, infraction rate, gang involvement, the time served in prison, and other factors. Violence appears to drive the homicides for both release periods.

Some participants suggested that this juvenile sample excluded children whom they sent to adult court due to the crime severity. Pamela Lattimore, the Principal Investigator, said that because they derived this sample from the eighties, this exclusion may not have been in effect. They released these parolees based on their involvement of less severe crimes than the inmates whom they did not release.

### **THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL STUDY ON FIREARM REGULATION**

Participants asked who would actually collect data from individual countries. Some participants remained skeptical about accurately determining firearm regulatory code versus the actual adherence to these laws. They suggested that a local resident would likely know the nuances in administering the law. Richard Block responded that official government agencies would provide statistics and nongovernmental consultants would provide incite concerning the actual adherence to these codes.

One participant commented that unlike prior wars, there were more high-powered weapons as a residual of recent conflicts.

Survey findings are expected for release during the summer of 1997.

### **ROBBERY OFFENDERS WHO INJURE & THOSE WHO DO NOT**

Although crime has diminished at convenience stores, where the robber risks facing an owner with a gun, crime at shopping malls appears to have increased. Possibly, this suggests that robbers have shifted from the Seven Eleven store location to the mall parking lot.

It appears that armed robbers choose guns over other weapon types. One participant asked how victims can avoid injury. From the survey responses, it seemed that the victim should cooperate because the robber was more likely to injure the victim under circumstances where the robber was not in control. Once the robber had decided to commit a crime, then, most reported that they would do whatever was necessary to succeed. In fact, convicted robbers said that surveillance cameras were not a deterrent. They said that they considered whether law enforcement would

apprehend them during the crime.

In response to the survey question about getting caught, 83% of the robbers said that they did not think that law enforcement would catch them. One participant asked whether this question meant during their criminal careers, or for one event. The Principal Investigator stated that it was for the last crime for which they imprisoned the robber; and, robbers acknowledged that the more crimes committed, the more likelihood of arrest.

## **CHANGING PATTERNS OF HOMICIDE & SOCIAL POLICY**

One participant cautioned that policymakers cannot be credible concerning the impact of their programs either due to vested interests or proximity to the program. Policymakers' accounts would not necessarily be reliable or valid; however, they could discuss how they carry out policy, who are the key players, and the role of the media. Also, policymakers' conclusions may lack validity for their interest in program continuation or their actual tenure with the program. Instead, they could obtain verifiable measures, e.g., the number of fights, graffiti, apart from the policymakers. The law enforcement and public defenders could also provide these tangible measures. Policy manuals and annual reports would supplement program history.

They would code relationships as 31 categories. Participants asked whether stalking activities where the individuals did not know each other would be categorized. Margaret Zahn indicated that, although this was not a specific code, the narrative would describe these relationships.

One participant suggested that it might be worthwhile to determine whether reduced funding levels contributed to the escalation of the drug war in 1985, or whether the enforcement of drug laws was associated with an increase in crime.

**Section Eight:**  
**Firearms and Homicide: Measuring the Problem and**  
**Designing Solutions**



## **FIREARM AVAILABILITY AND FIREARM HOMICIDE IN CHICAGO: A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Carolyn Rebecca Block, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority  
Antigone Christakos, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

### **ABSTRACT**

The Chicago Homicide Dataset has been called a unique national resource. Until it is actually used, however, such a resource is only *potentially* valuable. This Work in Progress describes a new project that will relate homicides to earlier escalations of firearm availability at the neighborhood level. Because no perfect measure of firearm availability exists, we intend to link several indicators from diverse public health and public safety sources. The main purpose of the project is not academic research, but to attempt to produce a measure of firearm availability that will be useful for predicting lethal violence for small areas of the city. Such an indicator might support potentially life-saving interventions before an escalation of violence, instead of merely explaining it afterwards.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **Background: The Chicago Homicide Dataset**

Many reviews of the public health approach to violence begin by pointing out the necessity of "reliable sources of data" (Earls, 1994; Flewelling, 1994). Though medical and public health data contain vital information on victims, criminal justice datasets are the best source for information on details of the homicide, including the situation, the weapon, and the offender. This vast source of information for the development of public health policies regarding violence has so far been underutilized. One of the best examples is the Chicago Homicide Dataset, one of the largest and most detailed datasets on violence ever collected in the United States.

The Chicago Homicide Dataset contains information on every homicide in police records from 1965 to 1994 -- over 100 variables and nearly 23,000 homicides. Unburdened by many of the limitations inherent in statistics such as the Supplementary Homicide Reports of the UCR, it is organized so that questions about victims, offenders, or incidents (and inter-relationships between them) can be answered. For example, it is possible to conduct an analysis of the risk of death and the risk of becoming an offender for a specific type of homicide (such as street gang-related, spousal, or instrumental) committed with a specific weapon, for specific racial/ethnic, age, and gender groups, and within specific neighborhoods, and to follow these patterns for almost 30 years (Block and Christakos, 1995a, 1995b). So far, however, few have mined the Dataset's full potential as a basis for public health policy development and prevention strategies.

#### **The 1990s Escalation**

As in other large United States cities, the sharp escalation of Chicago homicides in the 1990s was due specifically to an increase in the risk of victimization of young people aged 15 to 24 (figure 1), and in homicides attributed to offenders aged 15 to 24 (figure 2). The victimization risk of



people older than 25 or younger than 15 did not change, or even dropped somewhat. In addition, the sharp increase in total homicides occurred *only* in homicides committed with a firearm; the trend in homicides committed with other weapons was stable or declining. A specific kind of firearm - high caliber semi- or fully-automatics - accounted for much of the 1990s escalation of homicides of young adults (figure 3).

For teenage or young adult offenders aged 15 to 24 who were found to have committed a homicide, the number of homicides committed with a high caliber semi- or fully-automatic firearm jumped from only about 30 in 1987 to about 275 in 1994. Though homicides committed with a .38 caliber weapon (mostly .38 revolvers) surged in 1990, they dropped sharply from 1991 to 1994. This suggests that weapons with greater "firepower" were being substituted for the .38s. If this is true, it has obvious implications for looking at firearm availability as a driving factor in the increase of lethal violence.

### **Goals of the Firearm Availability Project**

To be effective, intervention programs need to respond to the specific situation in each neighborhood, based on an awareness of the particular problems, such as firearm availability, in the neighborhood. Since we know that the recent and extremely rapid acceleration of homicide apparently occurred only in firearm homicides in specific neighborhoods (Block and Christakos, 1995b), the next step towards reducing levels of lethal violence is to examine firearm homicides within the context of evolving situations in specific community areas in Chicago. This project, therefore, calls on the considerable detail in the newly-archived Chicago Homicide Dataset to analyze "Community Crime Careers," looking specifically at the role of firearms in the escalation (or decline) of specific types of homicide in specific neighborhoods. Of all the possible analyses that could be done with the Chicago Homicide Dataset, this, we think, is the single most important from the point of view of potentially saving lives. Not only would it lay the groundwork for effective intervention programs in Chicago, but it would also demonstrate to cities nationwide the life-saving potential of community-level problem identification and problem solving vis-a-vis firearm homicides.

The plan of the project is to integrate the homicide data with an address-based measure of firearm availability, by type of firearm. Currently there is little or no information available on firearm use and firearm availability at the address level. However, several indicators do exist, each of which measures a different aspect of the phenomenon and poses a different problem in data collection and validation. The project will collect and validate that data, link the data with the homicide dataset, and use both resources in concert to describe and explain the escalation of homicide levels in Chicago neighborhoods. This will cover the years for which the data indicators of firearm availability are available. For comparison and linking of the firearm availability data with current homicide data, homicide data for 1995 are being added to the Chicago Homicide Dataset.

Because many of the most important homicide trends and patterns have to do with homicides committed with high caliber or semi-automatic weapons, we cannot develop effective interventions and prevention strategies without information on firearm availability by specific type of firearm. Further, since early analysis indicates that the recent and extremely rapid acceleration of

homicide occurred only in firearm homicides in specific neighborhoods, it is vital to link firearm data to homicide data *at the neighborhood level*.

There is no single indicator of firearm availability at the address level. However, earlier analysis of city-level trends in firearm confiscations indicates that increases in homicides followed an increase in confiscations by one or two months (Block and Block, 1981; Block and Mata, 1993). Anecdotal evidence from street-level violence prevention workers suggests that a spurt of serious violence may be preceded by the purchase of multiple weapons legally through a dealer. Finally, firearm trauma, injuries and suicides have been used as an indicator of the availability of weapon (see Block and Block, 1981 for a review). Currently, none of this information is available at a level that can be mapped by address, and thus linked to homicide occurrences. However, it would be very feasible to collect and validate indicators of firearm availability information from several sources, each of which would contribute a unique perspective to the total picture. We therefore plan to collect data on firearm availability from several sources, each of which measures a slightly different perspective of "firearm availability" and contains different inherent drawbacks and advantages, specifically firearm confiscations data from the Chicago Police Department; data on purchases of multiple weapons from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and data on firearm trauma from the Cook County Trauma Registry. Though each dataset has limitations, in combination they could become a powerful indicator of changes in firearm availability at the specific community level. This project will combine these indices of firearm availability and use them together, benefitting from the advantages of each.

## SUMMARY

To develop effective interventions and prevention strategies for lethal violence, we must go beyond general trends and rates. This Work in Progress is analyzing the relationship between firearm homicides and firearm availability, at the neighborhood level and by specific type of firearm. It will collect and validate information on firearm availability from a variety of sources, on specific types of firearm and specific caliber of weapon, at the address level. It will then link a composite indicator built from these components to the Chicago Homicide Dataset, relating firearm availability to firearm deaths in specific neighborhoods and using both resources in concert to describe and explain the escalation of homicide levels in Chicago neighborhoods.

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Figure 1

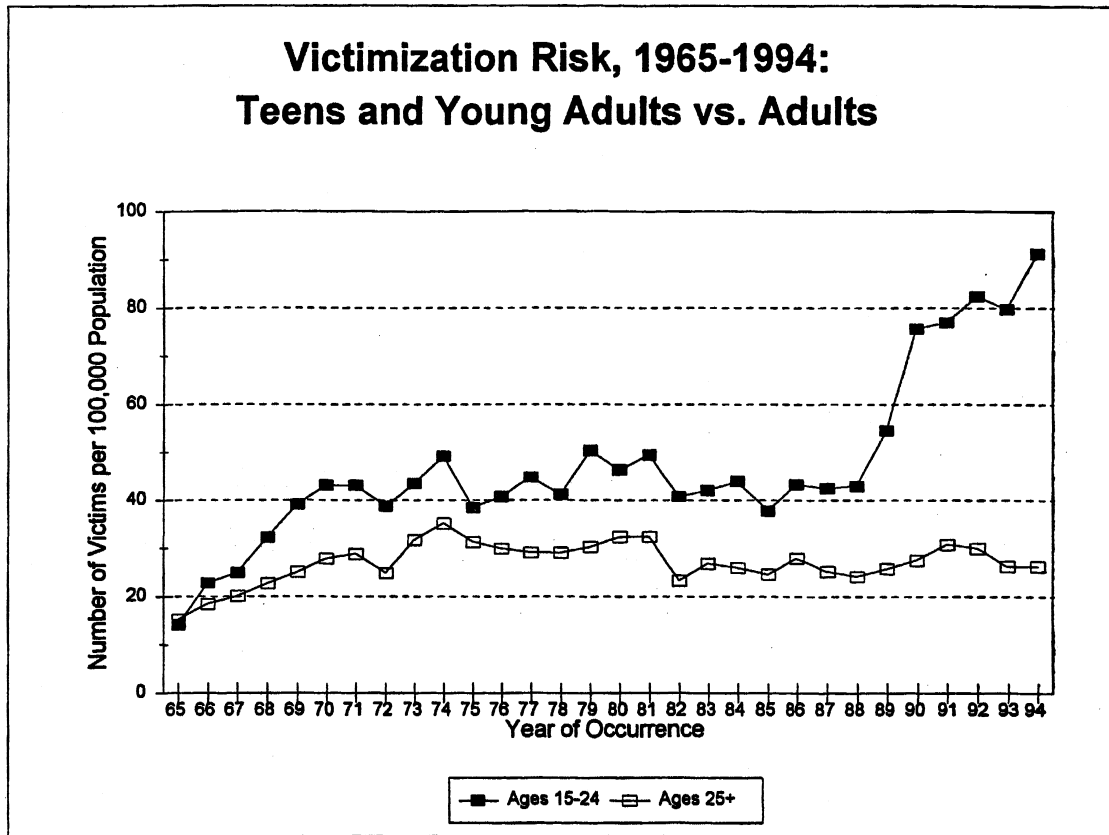


Figure 2

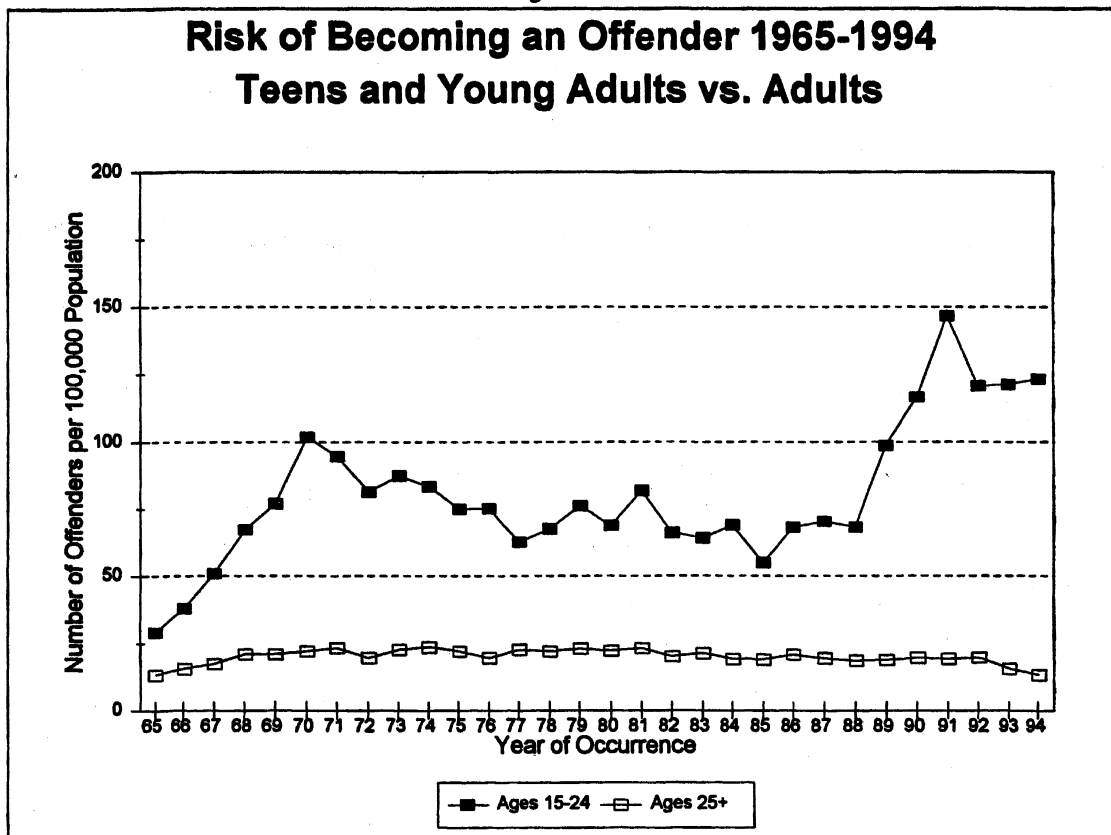
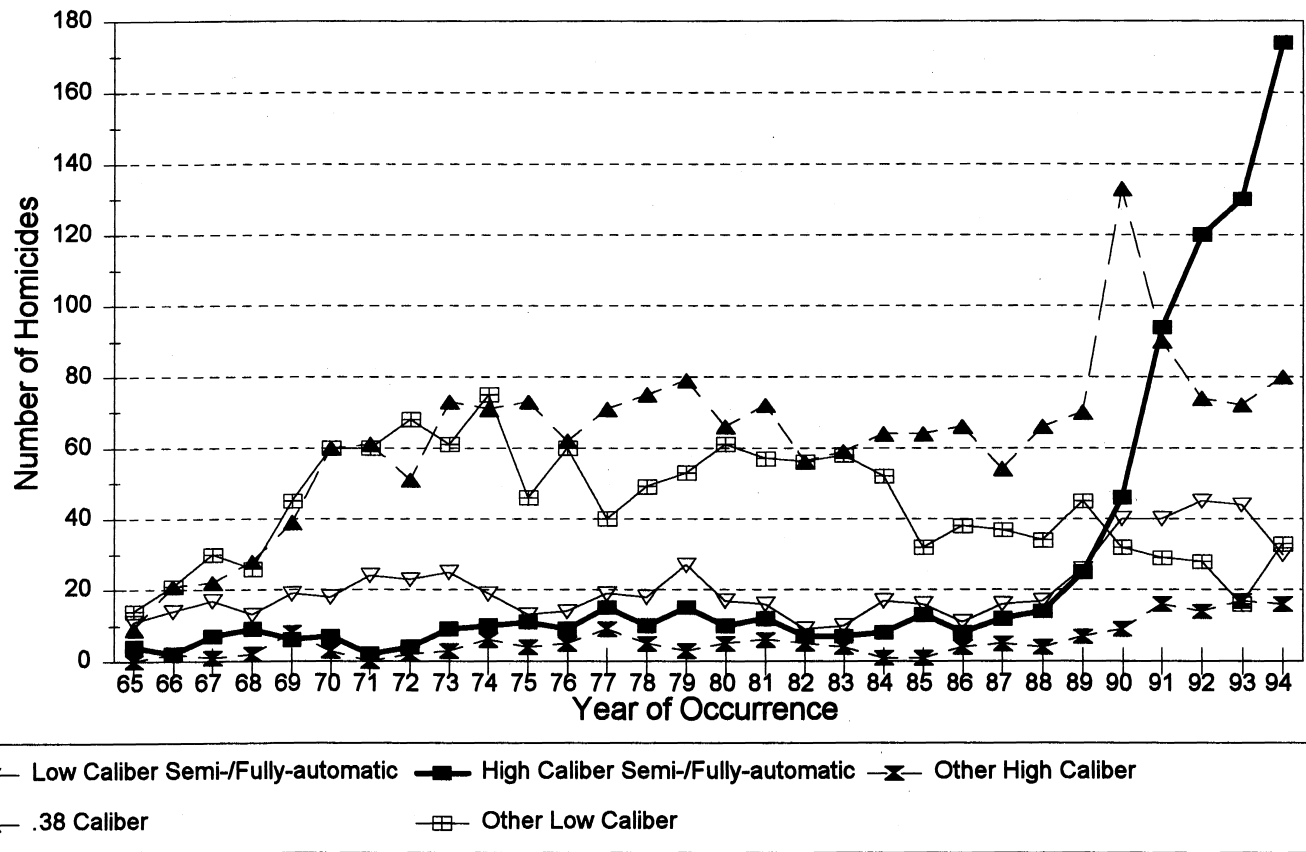


Figure 3

## Caliber of Firearms Used to Kill Victims Aged 15-24, Chicago: 1965-1994



## **THE EPIDEMIOLOGY OF FIREARMS AND HOMICIDE: THE NEED FOR BASIC SCIENCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Public health professionals have called for the use of epidemiologic methods to study violence, particularly firearm-related homicide. This literature review uses epidemiology texts to evaluate, using the three medical journals publishing most extensively on the topic, the extent to which such research has complied with epidemiologic methodology. Most of the studies and reports surveyed failed in at least one way to observe basic standards of the science of epidemiology.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Compared to other developed countries, the United States has an endemic problem of violence, especially homicide -- epidemic for segments of the population, particularly adolescent and young adult minority males. (Rosenberg and Mercy, 1991:4) Public health professionals have called for epidemiologic methods to be applied to studying the problem, with emphasis on the role of firearms, since epidemiologic methods readily apply to endemic problems. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:190) Descriptive epidemiology and analytical epidemiology, with its more sophisticated statistical models, have been successful in describing the burden of disease, identifying risk factors and high risk groups, suggesting causal factors, and evaluating the efficacy of various therapeutic and preventive modalities, with both infectious and non-infectious diseases. The purpose of this review is to evaluate how the basic scientific principles of epidemiology have been used to date in published studies by public health professionals.

### **METHODS AND DATA SOURCES**

Three epidemiology texts (Mausner and Kramer, 1985; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994; Rothman, 1986), supplemented by a 1994 issue of *Epidemiologic Reviews* dedicated to "Applications of the Case-Control Method," were used to assess how epidemiology can be applied to the study of homicide, particularly firearm-related homicide. To evaluate how epidemiology could and has been applied to the study of firearm homicide, the major medical journals concerned with violence as a public health issue were reviewed: the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), and *Pediatrics*.

### **APPLYING THE EPIDEMIOLOGIC PARADIGM TO THE STUDY OF FIREARMS AND VIOLENCE**

Treating homicide as a disease, and firearms as an etiologic agent or as a vector of disease, requires making certain adjustments to the epidemiologic paradigm. For example, it is not immediately apparent how the concepts of an incubation or induction period and dose-response

(Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994: 40, 265) fit in an epidemiologic approach to violence and firearms. "The main objective of epidemiologic analysis is to estimate the magnitude of effect (i.e., the difference in incidence rates) as a function of exposure status." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:330) For tobacco, epidemiologists discuss risks in terms of exposure levels and induction periods. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:188-190; Rothman, 1986: 12, 59, 327-328) With firearms and homicide, risk may decline as duration of exposure increases. (Kleck, 1991: chs. 2 and 5, 56-57, 210-222, 265, 311-312; Wright, Rossi and Daly, 1983:ch. 6, 87-89)

### **Ecological Fallacies**

Beware of the ecological fallacy. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:12,18,333) The fact that firearms and homicide are both more prevalent in the U.S. than in most European countries frequently leads to the simplistic assumption of a causal relationship between the two facts (Fingerhut and Kleinman, 1990), an obvious example of the possible fallacy (Kellermann, 1993:13), ignoring individual exposures and outcomes. In fact, that comparison ignores the fact that there is wide fluctuation in firearms ownership in European countries -- ranging from about 2% of households in the Netherlands, to about 25% in France, and just over 30% in Norway -- although the countries have similar rates of homicide. (Killias, 1990; Rosenberg and Mercy, 1991:34) The case-fatality rates for violent crimes are not higher in the United States than in most other foreign countries, to the extent data on homicide and other violent crimes are comparable. The percentage of American violent crimes which are recorded as homicides is on a par with, or slightly lower than, most other developed countries. (FBI, 1994; Kalish, 1988; Interpol, n.d.)

### **Agents as Cause, Preventive, and Susceptibilities of Hosts**

The same agent may be a hazard or a protectant, a cause or preventive, of a disease or of different diseases, depending in part upon the susceptibilities of particular hosts. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:267-269; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:37; Rothman, 1986:11, 52) "Harmful exposures often supply benefits that may offset the harm; the loss of these benefits, and other costs, must be weighed against the benefit of reducing the disease burden, while addressing the interests of a diverse public." (Rothman, 1993) Epidemiology could study which individuals may be immunized from violence with firearms, and why the vast majority of individuals exposed to firearms are simply unaffected. The route of exposure to infectious agents is known to affect human response. Similarly, the route of exposure to firearms may affect the host's response; firearms may be a factorial or opportunistic pathogen -- something which is only pathogenic when other factors are present and is otherwise harmless -- a possibility thus far ignored in epidemiologic studies of firearms and violence. Criminologists have found that the manner of introduction to firearms -- by family versus by peers -- may affect whether a teenager is less or more likely to engage in violent behavior. (Lizotte and Tesoriero, 1991) To date, public health research has not attempted to determine which groups, or types of individuals, may be made more or less susceptible to homicide or non-lethal violence due to the presence of a firearm. Studies could suggest factors which might justify discouraging or, to the extent constitutional (Halbrook, 1984; Cramer, 1994), disqualifying persons for firearms ownership; it is untested whether current qualifying and disqualifying characteristics are scientifically defensible.

Firearms may prevent crime when used protectively, acting as an immunogenic factor, similar to a vaccine. To date, no public health efforts to measure the protective value of firearms has been published in the three periodicals reviewed, although its necessity has been recognized. (Kellermann and Reay, 1986:1559) In addition to individual immunogenic benefits, the firearms-related equivalent of the epidemiologic concept of herd immunity (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:49) could provide possible general deterrence. Like widespread vaccination, done to protect both the individual and the community despite occasional adverse outcomes to individuals, widespread gun ownership in a particular area might discourage residential burglaries because of criminals' uncertainty as to which houses have guns and which do not. (Kleck, 1991:130-141) Nothing in epidemiologic studies of violence considered the application of this epidemiologic concept.

Epidemiologic studies help to demonstrate the susceptibility or immunity of different segments of the population to morbidity and mortality from particular causes, particularly noting demographic characteristics: age, race, sex, socio-economic status, etc. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:150; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:3) The goal of epidemiology is to discover groups in the population with "high rates of disease, and with low, so that causes of disease and of freedom from disease can be postulated." (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:5) Unfortunately, almost no public health studies looking at firearms-related homicide have explored the demographics of apparent immunity to the disease. Textbook epidemiology notes that despite the controversy of studying disease by race, differences in frequency and severity among racial groups may be too great to ignore. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:125) Yet, in a widely-publicized report, the CDC (1994b) failed to report homicide rates and trends related to ethnicity, even though the homicide rate for black males aged 15-24 is about five times greater (ten times for firearm-related homicide) and was increasing twice as fast as for whites. (Kochanek and Hudson, 1995:28, 30, 57; FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 1994:283-287; Fingerhut, 1993; Snyder and Sickmund, 1995:25, 56-57, 106) And one of the most widely cited public health studies (Sloan *et al.*, 1988) compared homicide in Seattle and Vancouver. The two cities have been described as similar, with a "comparable ... ethnic makeup" (Cotton, 1992:1172), even though Seattle had proportionately 30 times as many blacks, who accounted for about 30% of the city's homicide victims. The homicide rates for the two cities' non-Hispanic whites did not differ significantly. (Sloan *et al.*, 1988:1257, 1260) Properly performed epidemiologic studies of firearms and homicide would emphasize the necessity of addressing the problems of young inner-city blacks (Sheley, McGee and Wright, 1992; Fingerhut, 1993) and Hispanics (Sterling-Scott *et al.*, 1993; Fingerhut, Jones and Makuc, 1994), where exposure to guns is comparatively low. (Kleck, 1991:56-57)

### **Data Collection on Exposure, Morbidity, and Mortality**

Sound epidemiologic research requires as accurate and complete exposure, morbidity, and mortality data as possible. The painstaking accumulation of data is essential to epidemiologic study in general (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:287; Taubes, 1995), and for firearms in particular. (Annest *et al.*, 1995; Teret, Wintemute and Beilenson, 1992) Currently, very little is known about the involvement of firearms and other weapons in homicide, beyond such data as race, sex, and age of suspected offenders and victims, limited information on the motivating factor for the killings and the numbers of victims and offenders, and whether the firearm involved was a rifle,



shotgun, handgun, or other weapon. Similarly, knives are simply in a category including cutting and stabbing objects. (FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 1994:13-22, 283-187) Almost nothing is known about non-lethal injuries, whether treated in an emergency-room or elsewhere -- or not treated professionally at all. (Kleck, 1991:43-44; Kleck and Gertz, 1995; Jagger and Dietz, 1986) With one partial exception for fatalities (Hargarten *et al.*, 1996), virtually nothing is known about the action-types of firearms involved in crime or other gun-related violence, much less about makes, models, calibers, mode of acquisition, etc. Efforts to improve data collection for morbidity, while desirable, promise limited success. "In their focus on individuals as patients, practicing physicians are likely to be relatively unconcerned with their role in contributing to a community-wide network of information about diseases." (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:78) Physicians "tend to treat the injuries symptomatically and rarely probe for the underlying cause of injury." (Sterling-Scott *et al.*, 1993:666) Asking emergency-room personnel for more information may be especially problematic when it involves items with which they may be unfamiliar, such as firearms and ballistics. One report suggests clinical accuracy for trauma specialists viewing gunshot wounds at less than 50%. (Randall, 1993)

The health or disease status of an individual results from the association and interaction of the host, the agent (here, guns), and the environment. In classic infectious disease epidemiology, changes in any of the triad can result in health changes. Changes regarding the possible agent over time are therefore important. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:37; Rothman, 1986:23) Changes in the degree and nature of exposures (e.g., change in firearm prevalence and type) as well as in the degree and nature of outcomes (e.g., incidence of shootings, case fatality rates) must be studied. Public health studies more often make assumptions than measurements, such as the assertion that a "new factor is the increased availability and lethality of firearms." (Tardiff *et al.*, 1994:43) In fact, there has been no recent demonstrated increase in firearms availability. (Kleck, 1991:51-52; Cook, 1993; Smith and Smith, 1995) The widespread, general transition -- by police, civilians, and criminals alike -- from .38 cal. and .357 Magnum revolvers, to 9mm. pistols, involves a shift to ammunition which is generally midway between the .38 and the .357 Magnum. (Marshall and Sanow, 1992:212) And most shootings involve small numbers of rounds per firearm (Police Academy Firearms and Tactics Section, 1994:9), and small numbers of entry wounds (Webster *et al.*, 1992; Hutson, Anglin and Pratts, 1994; Ordog *et al.*, 1994), and there is thus no credible evidence yet that changes in ammunition-feeding mechanism or capacity are yet a factor in the amount or severity of violence. Viewing firearms as a possible agent, neither the availability nor lethality of the agent has increased in recent decades.

With cross-sectional or cohort studies relying upon surveys, there are some problems to be recognized. Surveys may measure both the risk factor of gun ownership and the disease of homicide at the same time, making it difficult to establish the temporal sequence of events needed for drawing causal inferences. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:177) Community studies looking at particular gun laws have yet to measure actual gun ownership levels which might be related to legislative efforts to curtail access to firearms. (Sloan *et al.*, 1988) Efforts to measure levels of gun ownership for these studies using surveys may suffer from the problem of underreporting, particularly since threatening or embarrassing activities tend to be underreported. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:61-62; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:242-243) To the extent that efforts to

stigmatize firearms ownership are successful (Webster and Wilson, 1994:621; Senturia, Christoffel and Donovan, 1994:474; Dolins and Christoffel, 1994:647-649; Christoffel, 1991), survey research could become decreasingly reliable. "If subjects cannot be correctly categorized, a cohort study is not feasible." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:205)

Not only must the data be accurate, but they must be accepted as both accurate and accurately analyzed. "One way of assuring the integrity of the data has not been violated is to have a group of epidemiologists or biostatisticians not involved in the trial conduct an audit of the data." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:168) Keeping survey research and other data secret breeds suspicion about the accuracy of the data collection or analysis. Arthur Kellermann -- perhaps the most widely published and referenced medical researcher studying guns and violence -- has refused to release data from a case-control homicide study (Kellermann et al., 1993) to outside observers. (Kates et al., 1995:590) Similarly, Sloan (Sloan *et al.*, 1988) refused a request to calculate a summary odds ratio stratified by race (Centerwall, 1991:1246), and criminologists complained that reanalysis of data used in a study of Washington, D.C. (Loftin *et al.*, 1991) was impossible due to a refusal of the authors to release it. (Kleck, Britt and Bordua, 1993)

### **Research Protocols, and Community Trials**

Epidemiology requires advance establishment of research protocols conforming to known biological and other factors. With the entry of epidemiologists into research on firearm-related homicide and other criminal violence, an obvious source for the equivalent to biologic knowledge would be criminologists and criminological studies. (Wright, Rossi and Daly, 1983; Kleck, 1991; Nettler, 1982; Daly and Wilson, 1988) Medical researchers have only minimally used the findings from sociology and criminology. Since police officers rarely solicit information on protective measures taken by residents against burglars, police burglary reports cannot provide data on the frequency with which any or particular protective actions were taken. Similarly, firearms tracing data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (BATF) were never intended to provide statistical information on types or sources of firearms, and traces are too rarely and non-randomly attempted to allow any useful analyses. (Bea, 1992:65; Zimring, 1976) By failing to comprehend basic criminological information, both police reports (Kellermann *et al.*, 1995) and BATF tracing data (AMA Council on Scientific Affairs, 1992:3068) have been used as if insights were possible.

Family variables -- family size, birth order, where raised, family in which formative years are spent, death or divorce -- are important to understanding health and violence. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:133-135, 144, 150) With few exceptions (Senturia, Christoffel and Donovan, 1994), family relationships have rarely been used in either cohort or case-control studies. Epidemiologic studies should start to use such information, and information on IQ, history of abuse or learning disabilities, juvenile and other criminal or drug record (Kates *et al.*, 1995:581-82, 587-589), drug-trafficking, and other factors associated with family background and relations.

Community trials of public health intervention are often required to understand their impact on populations. Once a risk factor is identified, intervention trials allow epidemiologists to see if the "modification of such factors in patients is followed by reduction in the amount of disease."

(Mausner and Kramer, 1985:155) Community trials of changes in gun laws or their enforcement would be the endorsed (Wright, Rossi and Daly, 1983:ch. 13) equivalent, where selection of communities for trial is dependent partly upon government. In a community trial, communities similar in as many respects as possible are chosen, with intervention in only one, measuring changes of disease before to after the intervention. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:180)

"The communities should be similar in as many respects as possible. Their size (populations) should be comparable, as should their economics, the ethnicities of their populations, and so on. If any important factor is dissimilar between the two communities, it is possible that any differences in outcome between the communities could be attributed to that factor and not to the intervention." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:182; Mausner and Kramer, 1985:125-127) The comparison (Sloan *et al.*, 1988) of one Canadian (Vancouver) and one American (Seattle) community failed to measure the influence of any other possible factors affecting the cities' homicide rates, merely noting a few similarities. The most widely-cited public health study of a gun law compared a city (Washington, D.C.) not to another city, even though there was one nearby (Baltimore), but to its surrounding suburbs. (Loftin *et al.*, 1991) The result was comparing a predominantly black city with a shrinking population to predominantly white suburbs with burgeoning population. (Kleck, Britt and Bordua, 1993)

Epidemiologic community trials require advance written protocols including the procedures for including or excluding subjects, and the procedures for analyzing the results. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:158-160) There are clearly formulated hypotheses, including how compliance is to be measured (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:195-196), since measuring the effectiveness of a treatment requires assurance that the treatment is being received. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:164) The intervention is then presumed effective only if plausible and alternative explanations are lacking. (Rothman, 1986:9,18) The study of the District of Columbia's prospective handgun ban began with the hypothesis that a gradual reduction in the number of lawfully-owned handguns would lead to gradual reductions in handgun-related homicide and suicide. The reported sharp immediate drop in homicide and suicide was taken as evidence of effectiveness despite with the protocol. (Loftin *et al.* 1991) In addition, numerous alternative hypotheses were possible and ignored. (Kleck, Britt and Bordua, 1993)

### **Case-Control Studies**

Case-control studies are an efficient way to study relatively rare diseases, testing more than one risk factor for a given outcome from the same set of data. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:163; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994: 227) Case-control studies produce odds ratios -- close approximations of risk ratios for rare events such as homicide. (Rothman, 1986:168) A major advantage of case-control studies, over cohort studies, is the ability to test factors with smaller numbers of subjects. The correspondent risk is that case-control studies are more susceptible to bias than are cohort studies (Austin *et al.*, 1994:65-66), and errors in measuring exposure to various potential risk factors are a major threat. (Thompson, 1994:45) For the most part, case-control studies best serve as a way to find possible factors, with clinical trials needed to determine whether those factors are causal. Public health studies emphasize that the same approach pointing

to firearms as a risk factor for homicide previously pointed toward tobacco as a health risk; such assertions fail to note that case-control studies have also found coffee and nasal sprays to be risk factors for ailments which later studies acquitted them of causing.

Case-control studies compare the subjects with a particular condition -- such as homicide victim -- with controls who are in some ways similar but lack that particular adverse condition. Normally, case-control studies are best when subjects reflect well the population living in the area, and matching controls with the cases may be useful. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:160) Using matched controls, as has been done with the most prominent such study on firearms and homicide (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993), can mean choosing a non-representative sample of the population. This limits confounding but also limits generalizing results (Rothman, 1986:110); one achieves comparability of cases but loses representativeness and "the ability to generalize the finding to the general population." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:247) If the homicide sample of cases included a disproportionate sample of the subpopulation of career criminals and/or drug traffickers, and that subpopulation has disproportionate levels of gun ownership, a spurious association might have been found which would have emphasized the goal of disarming career criminals and drug traffickers, a non-controversial gun control strategy. Not yet tried with firearms would be two controls, one matched and one from the general population. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:166)

The selection of controls, and of surrogates for the cases, is especially problematic. Two of the biggest threats of case-control studies are non-participation and selection bias. There is a tendency for less healthy controls to refuse to participate than the healthier controls eventually found. (Austin *et al.*, 1994:69) This might mean potential controls with more of the interpersonal and social problems associated with a greater likelihood of homicide victimization would be more apt to refuse an interview. In the leading case-control study of homicide, it would appear that about 30% of the initially-chosen potential controls refused to participate and others had to be chosen in their stead. (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993:1085) In addition, socially unacceptable practices may be reported more by surrogates -- necessary to speak for deceased controls, as in a homicide study -- than controls. (Austin *et al.*, 1994:67) To the extent firearms ownership is perceived as socially unacceptable, it -- along with drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, etc. -- may be underreported by controls but more willingly admitted for the cases by their surrogates. The problem of recall bias from self-reporting is especially important where the relative risks established are modest. (Austin *et al.*, 1994:70) While the same problems from controls' refusal to participate and recall bias would also apply to other risk factors measured in that study -- for example, drinking and drug habits, and domestic violence -- the crude odds ratios were greater for some of those factors (from 7 to 20) compared to the modest odds ratio found for firearms ownership (1.6)(Kellermann *et al.*, 1993:1088), where relative risk or odds ratios are deemed particularly informative if 3.0 or stronger (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:200; Taubes, 1995).

At most, case-control studies to date on firearms can only suggest that firearms might increase the risk, relatively slightly compared to other factors, to a limited and unrepresentative sample of the population. A prominent case-control homicide study (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993) had cases and controls from an unrepresentative sample of the adult populations of three metropolitan areas. That study also shows the potential problem of bias in selection of cases for study. All non-

household homicides -- over three-fourths of the homicides in the jurisdictions studied -- were excluded on the grounds the study was testing firearms as a risk factor only for household homicide. Even if that exclusion did not bias the selection, an unreported number of household homicides of children under age 13 were excluded, and only 71% of the remaining adolescent and adult homicides -- one-sixth of all reported homicides -- resulted in matched pairs being used for the adjusted odds ratios for which the study is most widely cited. (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993:1085-1086, 1089; Kates *et al.*, 1995:585n., 590)

A case-control study is especially subject to problems with data collection. "[I]nformation supplied by an informant may be biased. At the time of the study, the disease has already been diagnosed in the cases. As a result, patients or the informant for the patient may have a different recall of past events than informants for controls have." (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:165) This is particularly problematic if the misclassification is differential, with exaggerated recollection from the cases and denial from the controls. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:86; Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:242; Rothman, 1986:69; Austin *et al.*, 1994:69-70) Textbook examples would include cirrhosis patients or their informants overstating, and controls understating, alcohol use. (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:242)

If the survey data are inaccurate, the results may be meaningless; "statistical techniques cannot make up for errors in...data collection." (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:247) Errors in measuring exposure are a major threat in case-control studies. (Thompson, 1994:45) And such errors are especially likely in measuring socially unacceptable behavior or activities with in-person interviews (Correa *et al.*, 1994:21-22), as was the case in the leading case-control study of homicide (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993). In that study, only minor levels of misclassification on exposure to firearms would completely eliminate the statistical significance of differences between cases and controls; if only 11 controls out of 388 (about 3%) erroneously denied household firearm ownership, the crude odds ratio would be below the level of statistical significance. With women reporting household gun ownership 10-15 percentage points lower than men (Kleck, 1991:56, 455-460; Kates *et al.*, 1995:594; DMI, 1978:1348, 1357, 1364, 1382), the controls could easily have included 20-40 households inaccurately reporting no firearm in the home. If persons with criminal records -- for whom firearm possession is often proscribed -- were disproportionately involved as both cases and controls, as is possible, false denials of gun ownership by male controls may also have been excessive. (Kates *et al.*, 1995:594) The statistical difference in gun ownership levels, and the basis for conclusions even limited to the at-risk population studied, may not exist.

The authors mistakenly assumed respondents would be honest regarding firearms ownership based upon a poorly-designed and -conducted small-scale survey. Recent handgun registrants' households were questioned to see if they would acknowledge having a handgun in the home. The authors concluded from only one denial that firearms owners would answer a question of gun ownership honestly. (Kellermann *et al.*, 1990) The survey was aimed only at 75 recent registrants, and was unable, for a variety of reasons, to interview 40 of them, with three additional respondents denying present gun ownership but acknowledging there had been a gun in the household in the past. More extensively and successfully conducted, the survey would merely

have shown that persons willing to acknowledge handgun ownership to strangers who work for the government will also acknowledge it to strangers who do survey research. More extensive surveys have found considerable reason to expect false denials of gun ownership by owners and undermined any belief that registration is an effective way to determine gun ownership levels. (Kleck, 1991:App. 2; Bordua *et al.*, 1979:Section V)

### **Temporality and Causality**

While most possible causal links are relative, one is absolute: "[The model of causation] ...prohibits causes from occurring after effects." (Rothman, 1986:15) While case-control studies are in many ways as good as cohort studies, however, they are weaker in establishing temporality, since whether the exposure preceded the disease is clouded. (Austin *et al.*, 1994:65-66) For epidemiologic studies of firearms, it is not enough that gun ownership precede homicide; the issue would be whether the cause of gun ownership -- specific fear of homicide or other crime (Kellermann *et al.*, 1993) -- preceded acquisition, or whether the gun ownership preexisted the condition. In cross-sectional studies, the question might be whether increases in gun ownership levels, or adoption of restrictive gun laws, preceded, or were in response to, the increase in homicide or other violence. Criminological studies suggest the latter. (Kleck, 1991:28-34, 187, 198-200; Loftin *et al.*, 1993) Epidemiologic studies have yet to measure changes in gun ownership levels, or scientifically to determine temporal relationships.

### **Conclusions from Research**

"Only those conclusions of the study that are directly supported by the evidence reported should be given,...indicating whether additional study is required before the information should be given in clinical settings." (JAMA, 1994:21) To the extent epidemiologic studies fail to follow this guideline, readers should ask: "What are the authors' conclusions (do they differ from what the numbers say)?" (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:280) Public health studies generally go from finding an association to endorsing policies, with or without calls for additional research. A study of firearms-related deaths in Milwaukee concluded that the disproportionate involvement of inexpensive, short-barreled .25-caliber handguns warranted a legislative attack, such as curtailing their manufacture under factoring criteria used to prevent their importation. (Hargarten *et al.*, 1996:45) The disproportionate involvement, however, was 13% of handgun-related deaths -- 14% if unknown calibers were excluded -- compared to 11% of handguns manufactured over a 20-year period. A more recent five-year time frame would have found them to constitute the 13% of manufactured handguns. (Thurman, 1994:102-103) However, the authors acknowledged there were no data indicating the proportion .25s constitute of handguns owned in Milwaukee, although such predominantly self-defense guns are more common in cities, especially among low-income households and those owning exclusively for protection, than nationwide.

Textbook epidemiology has the epidemiologist applying "criteria of causality to the research before recommending clinical or public health actions" (Lilienfeld and Stolley, 1994:263) but public health studies (Fingerhut and Kleinman, 1990; Kellermann *et al.*, 1993; McGinnis and Foege, 1993; Senturia, Christoffel and Donovan, 1994; Sloan *et al.*, 1988; Tardiff *et al.*, 1994;

Webster and Wilson, 1994) have gone well beyond any actual data analyzed to recommend a wide array of policies to be espoused either by physicians counseling patients or legislators confronting the problem of violence. Even if firearms were a cause of lethal violence, no recommendations are automatic, any more than identifying the HIV virus made clear how to treat AIDS or which public policies should limit its spread. Identifying or creating medically-accepted treatments which are also acceptable to the population, as well as evaluating their efficacy and adverse side effects, would normally precede such policy recommendations. (Mausner and Kramer, 1985:228-229) The recognition that non-fatal protective uses of guns would have to be known before a cost-benefit analysis could be made (Kellermann and Reay, 1986) has not prevented numerous public health studies going well beyond modest research findings to recommendations for legislation restricting firearms access, or modifying firearm design, in a wide variety of ways never tested by epidemiologists, regardless of the current feasibility of such testing.

## CONCLUSION

Although it is by no means universally accepted, Rothman noted that leaving policymaking to persons other than epidemiologists "has the advantage of not putting scientists in the awkward position of being advocates for a particular theory...history shows that skepticism is preferable in science." (Rothman, 1986:20) He went on to state: "Making good health policy is complicated. It involves weighing individual rights, liberties, and economic issues along with epidemiologic findings." (Rothman, 1993) Most of the literature reviewed has failed seriously to consider the issues raised by Rothman, which can create problems in getting research widely accepted, particularly when the persons conducting various studies have created a suspicion of bias by apparent advocacy (Cotton, 1992), by refusal to share study methods or data, or by reaching conclusions and espousing policies which go beyond the standards officially acceptable to respected medical journals. It could be that someday, using proper epidemiologic techniques, public health professionals could add to the understanding of the relationship of guns and violence. The need for basic epidemiologic research in keeping with the tenets of the profession should precede policy recommendations in a controversial area.

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## **DISARMING THE CRIMINAL: ATF'S STRATEGIC AND SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO FOCUSED AND TARGETED ENFORCEMENT**

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In the last four decades, law enforcement has experienced sweeping changes in the type of criminal acts committed and an escalation of the level of violence utilized to further illegal purposes. In 1960, American citizens identified crime as one of the Nation's most serious domestic problems. Regrettably, this trend continues in 1996; only now Americans specify violent criminal acts with firearms as one of the country's most serious domestic problems.

Although there have been measurable decreases in certain violent crime categories, assaults and homicides involving juveniles are rising at epidemic rates. In addition, foreboding indicators of a possible crime surge in the United States are looming ominously on the horizon of the next century.

Over this same period of time, law enforcement at all levels has learned much from its past actions and experiences. The days of random enforcement and shotgun approaches to crime problems are over. Police agencies now employ a strategic planning process to address crime problems with pre-determined timetables and objectives.

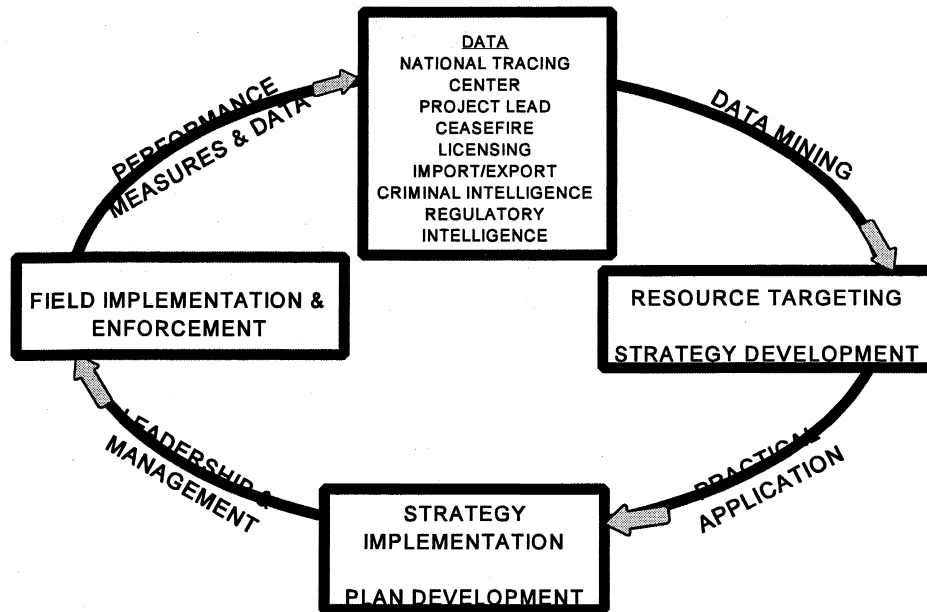
The following is a brief outline of the particulars of a strategy the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) developed to apprehend and incarcerate the Nation's most prolific violent offenders while preventing criminals access to illegally trafficked firearms.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In the same manner in which private corporations diagnose production problems, ATF believed it could examine crime problems and devise an overall strategy as well as methods that could effectively and efficiently apprehend violators and prevent future occurrences.

The product of this endeavor produced ATF's Firearms Enforcement Division Program Evolution Cycle.

## ATF - FIREARMS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION PROGRAM EVOLUTION CYCLE



Therefore, the overall strategy as well as the implementation would be determined by research on crime gun data. In order to further this objective, ATF formed a partnership with the academic community to enlist the assistance of subject experts in research, statistical analyses, probability, artificial intelligence, and computer technology.

Since ATF is the largest collector and possessor of data concerning firearms used in criminal acts in the United States, the needed information to be researched was readily available. The process employed to extract the necessary data from ATF's data warehouse for research and investigative purposes was data mining. Utilizing this technique, the extracted information was used to form predictions, identify relationships between data base records, and segment data.

The data mining process was divided into three steps:

- STEP 1      Information was compartmentalized in various data bases and integrated for research purposes.
- STEP 2      The integrated data was transmitted for examination by the academic researchers in order to uncover specific problems and indicators that identify violators and schemes.
- STEP 3      Tools were developed to transmit data to field investigators identifying violators,

their methods of operation, and associates.

The evolution cycle is important to achieving an enforcement objective. It provides a constant procedure for focusing resources on specifically identified individuals. Enforcement programs fail because they are too broad, under funded, or not allowed sufficient time to succeed. ATF's Program Evolution Cycle identifies what the crime problem is in order that available resources can be directed to impact upon it. The cycle also gleans critical information for identifying and targeting specific criminals. Because it is continuous, the cycle also has the flexibility to shift as criminals alter their activities.

## **FIREARMS ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The development of ATF's Firearms Enforcement Strategy has taken years to perfect due to its researched-based foundations. However, because of improved data collection methods and an ongoing research program, alterations can now be made relatively quickly.

The first report in the program of research, "Protecting America: The Effectiveness of the Armed Career Criminal Statute," was completed by ATF in March 1992. This study analyzed the impact of Armed Career Criminal legislation and the Bureau's enforcement methods of that law on decreasing violent crime. The "Protecting America" report drew on a sample of criminal offenders who were involved in firearms-related crimes in 10 major American cities. The data supplied by the ATF study group was consistent with other Government and academic research. The study found that since career criminals commit a disproportional amount of crime, investigative targeting of violent armed career criminals will have an impact on violent crime. In addition, the study also found that illegal and unregulated firearms trafficking often negates the intended effect of Federal, State, and local firearms laws and can add significantly to the frequency of violent crime by increasing the availability of firearms to the hands of criminals.

In September 1995, ATF's Firearms Enforcement Division formed a partnership with Northeastern University, Center for Criminal Justice Policy Research, to study national firearms trafficking patterns found within the Bureau's data warehouse at the National Tracing Center (NTC). This partnership resulted in the first in a series of research to be conducted by Northeastern University titled, "The Identification of Patterns in Firearms Trafficking: Implications For Focused Enforcement Strategy." This report revealed patterns of illegal firearms trafficking on a national basis, which directly related to the commission of violent crimes. The report also provided ATF with its initial indicators to employ in its development of an investigative tool to assist field operations.

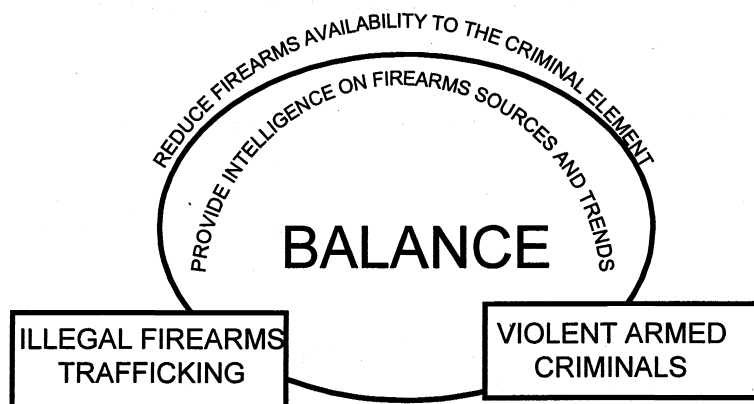
From this endeavor, a subsequent two-pronged firearms strategy was developed:

1. Limit the accessibility of illegally trafficked firearms to criminals.
2. Apprehend and incarcerate the Nation's most violent armed offenders.



This approach hits both ends of the violent crime gun spectrum that are symbiotic to each other. The investigation and arrest of armed violent offenders will produce the identification of illegal traffickers through examination of the firearms they possess.

### **ATF'S FIREARMS ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY**



Eliminating the flow of firearms to violent criminals will reduce the armed violent crime rate as well as violent crime overall. Preliminary indications in beta test sites, where enforcement efforts were concentrated in a precise area, substantiate this conclusion. This will be the subject of one of the series of future studies.

### **NATIONAL TECHNIQUES TO SUPPORT FIELD OPERATIONS**

In order to enable ATF field special agents and participating officers from State and local law enforcement agencies to focus their efforts at targeting identified individuals, Project LEAD was developed. Project LEAD (Phase I) is a Windows-based computer software program that performs as an automated link analysis information system. It analyzes data maintained in various ATF data warehouses at the Bureau's National Tracing Center. This data includes firearms dealer and purchaser information from all initiated traces on firearms recovered in a crime by law enforcement and firearms information related to the multiple purchase of handguns by individuals from federally licensed firearms dealers.

### **PROJECT LEAD DEVELOPMENT AND DEPLOYMENT**

In 1993, the NTC initiated the development of a computerized system that could analyze traced crime gun information to proactively identify illegal firearms trafficking. The goal was to utilize the existing firearms data bases at the NTC to identify suspected illegal firearms traffickers, straw purchasers, corrupt Federal firearms licensees, and individuals or conspiring groups that may be using false information, aliases, and/or counterfeit Federal firearms licenses in order to obtain or divert firearms to the criminal element.

## **PROJECT LEAD DATA**

- 1. Crime guns recovered and traced by the NTC (includes the purchaser's name).**
- 2. Multiple sales of firearms reported by FFLs.**
- 3. Names of individuals in possession of crime guns .**
- 4. Names of individuals associated with recovery of crime guns. For example, if a firearm is recovered from a vehicle, all the individuals in the vehicle at the time of the recovery are then associated with that crime gun.**
- 5. Recovery locations of crime guns.**
- 6. Suspect Guns: Firearms purchased by an individual who is a suspected firearms trafficker or strawpurchaser, or firearms being sold illegally by an FFL. The description of a firearm can be placed in the Suspect Gun Database by an ATF agent. If that gun is recovered anywhere in the US and is traced by the NTC, the agent who entered the gun will automatically be notified of the recovery.**

In 1994, ATF's Firearms Enforcement Division invited Northeastern University to assist in developing models for identifying sources of illegal firearms trafficking. Part of their research task was to uncover indicators of trafficking patterns or schemes to provide support to ATF's focused firearms strategy. As indicators are identified or refined, they are incorporated directly into the Project LEAD Analysis System. For example, one indicator developed and presently being utilized is "time to crime" of firearms traces to a federally licensed dealer as a potential indicator of illegal trafficking.

Project LEAD (Phase I) is currently field-level operational in all of ATF's Criminal Enforcement field divisions and will soon be in every field office. As previously stated, additional research is ongoing, and it is anticipated that a second report from Northeastern University as well as a Project LEAD (Phase II) will be completed in December 1996. The completion of the Project LEAD will conclude after a third phase due in 1998.

I will note in this section that since the National Tracing Center traces firearms for 26 foreign countries, Project LEAD extracts will be developed with cooperating foreign law enforcement. The same technique that ATF currently employs for domestic firearms crimes can be replicated for international use as well.

|   |            |
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| Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms  |            |
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| Project LEAD - [Dealer/Weapon Query]  |   |
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## **PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND EVALUATION**

Just as in the private sector, success or failure follows the implementation phase and make no doubt that success is the name of the game. However, unlike the private sector, the success of field implementation is also another facet of ATF's evolution cycle that allows it to continue and improve.

As ATF's field offices perform their enforcement mission, data from that activity is entered into the Bureau's data warehouse for analysis, (e.g. seized weapons, etc.). This keeps the data base current and does not allow for stagnation. This also serves to continually examine the various methods the criminal element utilizes to circumvent enforcement detection and apprehension. It is well known that criminals converse in and out of prison to examine methods that have been successful and why others have failed. By maintaining a perpetual cycle, ATF can detect trends, patterns, and schemes at early stages and appropriately either alter the strategy or plan if necessary, or simply inform field implementors.

The gauge for success in the private sector is the amount of goods or services a company sells. In the law enforcement arena, it is a reduction in crime. As indicated by the two previously cited ATF studies, we believe that by incarcerating armed career criminals and stemming the flow of illegally trafficked firearms, we can decrease the occurrence of violent crime in America. At the present time, the Firearms Enforcement Division and Strategic Planning Office are examining a firearms trafficking performance measure:

### **Proposed FY-97 Firearms Trafficking Performance Measure**

Average number of firearms trafficked by an illegal trafficker in 1 year (x) the number of years an illegal trafficker is sentenced (in other words, number of firearms which will not be trafficked while the trafficker is incarcerated)(x) the average cost of a firearms-related crime (-) the cost of incarceration over the length of sentence (=) the total cost savings to the public in firearms-related crime costs avoided.

### **"Beneficial Financial Impact"**

This performance measure is designed to show the program's beneficial financial impact to the public as required by the Government Performance Results Act.

During this next year, ATF will be evaluating and testing this measurement gauge. In addition, we will be asking outside experts for their input and suggestions. A portion of the second Northeastern Study will examine our performance and evaluation methods.

It is too early at this juncture to fully evaluate the cost benefits and what exact effects this strategy will have on violent crime committed with firearms. Studies currently in progress as

well as internal reporting mechanisms will answer those questions and provide the necessary data for proper evaluation.

However, we believe our methodology is sound, and preliminary results are very encouraging. It goes without mentioning that the availability of resources in implementing the strategy will bear heavily on the extent of results achieved in each location. Utilizing a strategic and scientific approach toward disarming criminals, ATF is also looking toward developing preventative measures as well as a greater understanding of the illegal firearms market in the United States.

## **INVESTIGATIVE RESULTS**

In November 1995, ATF's Integrated Violence Impact Strategy (IVIS) implementation memorandum was transmitted to all field managers. This set in motion the Bureau's firearms strategy. Accompanying this memorandum was a series of training seminars across the country instructing field personnel in the use of Project LEAD. In April of this year, the first quarterly reports were submitted by the field special agents in charge documenting progress. As preliminary as these statistics are, they show an increase of 15 percent in firearms trafficking cases and a significant number of firearms interdicted prior to street sale.

Another indicator of the strategy's success is an examination of the investigative techniques being employed. The Firearms Trafficking Program Manager has observed an increase in the formation of trafficking task forces, electronic intercepts, and investigations involving interstate movement of firearms.

## **CONCLUSION**

For the last 3 years, ATF's Firearms Enforcement Division has been developing a strategy for addressing violent crime by the use of firearms in the United States. Although, I believe the creation of the aforementioned evolution cycle and investigative tools, such as Project LEAD, provide a mechanism for not only addressing firearms-related criminal acts, but the full spectrum of patterned crime. Law enforcement practices are many times inefficient and ineffective because as like a bad medical practice, the symptom of disease and not the disease itself is treated.

Law enforcement strategies must be researched, based on specific collected information that can identify the cause of the crime problem. Once this is completed, an appropriate strategy can be formulated to make an impact and determine necessary resources. In addition, investigative tools can be created in order to focus resources on specifically identified targets. It is important to note here that providing these tools for field investigators to utilize is a key component to the overall success of the strategy. Obviously, these aides produce valuable leads as in the case of Project LEAD, which literally identifies suspects by name. But more importantly, such tools make field investigators, the implementors, an integral part of the entire strategy with a true stake in its success.

I would be truly remiss if I did not also mention the importance of the partnership with the academic community on this project. Law enforcement must continue to avail themselves of their resources and assistance. The relationship that had formed with the staff at Northeastern University and other academics involved in this endeavor had been a cornerstone to its success. The uniqueness to this relationship had been in the ability of both academics and law enforcement practitioners to learn from each other.

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Simoudis, Evangelos. *Data Mining Technology*, International Business Machines Corporation.



## PEDIATRIC FIREARM MORTALITY RATES IN CHICAGO

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### ABSTRACT

Between 1980 and 1994 pediatric (age 0 to 19) firearm deaths in Chicago increased from 116 to 247, a two-fold increase in fourteen years (Table 1, Chicago Department of Public Health; Illinois Department of Public Health, 1995). The number of deaths remained relatively stable between 1980 and 1987 but from 1987 to 1994 they increased dramatically (nearly three-fold). The largest one-year increase occurred between 1989 to 1990. From 1992 to 1994, Chicago firearm deaths rose an average of 8.3% per year. The firearm death rate for children 0-19 years was 12.0/100,000 in 1980 and 30.5/100,000 in 1994. The annual death rate has increased more than two-fold since 1989.

**TABLE 1. PEDIATRIC FIREARM MORTALITY, CHICAGO RESIDENTS AGE 0-19 YEARS, 1980-1994 (N=2,136)**

| Year    | 80  | 81  | 82   | 83  | 84  | 85 | 86 | 87  | 88  | 89  | 90  | 91  | 92  | 93  | 94   |
|---------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Number  | 116 | 116 | 101  | 87  | 105 | 87 | 99 | 87  | 105 | 134 | 212 | 194 | 213 | 233 | 247  |
| %Change | NA  | 0   | -13  | -13 | 21  | 17 | 14 | -12 | 20  | 28  | 58  | -8  | 10  | 9   | 6    |
| Rate*   | 12  | 12  | 10.5 | 9   | 11  | 9  | 10 | 9   | 11  | 14  | 26  | 24  | 26  | 29  | 30.5 |

\*Rate per 100,000 population.

### TRENDS

Deaths during this 15-year reporting period fell into two natural groupings--1980 to 1989 and 1989 to 1994. More deaths occurred between 1990 to 1994 (1,099, 51.5%), than the deaths during the prior ten-year period (1980 to 1989; 1,037, 48.5%). In fact, the average deaths were lower between 1980-89 than between 1990 and 1994. In the 1980s, deaths fluctuated at an average of 104 deaths per year; in effect, there was not any noticeable trend. The 1990s depicted a rising linear trend at an increase of eleven deaths per year; among blacks this trend increased at eight deaths per year.

Older teens have been particularly affected by firearms. In 1980, 104 (37%) of the 281 15-19 year-old adolescents who died in Chicago had been shot. In 1994, 306 teens, 15-19 years old,



died in Chicago from all causes; 216 (70.5%) were caused by firearms. No other pediatric age group experienced gun trauma as the predominant cause of death. Every year the firearm death rate for 15-19-year-old teens has exceeded the rate for all children. These adolescents accounted for between 83% and 93% of the pediatric firearm deaths each year from 1980 to 1994. The firearm death rate for 15-19-year-old Chicagoans decreased slightly in the early 1980s then tripled in just three years, from 27.5/100,000 in 1987 to 95.5/100,000 in 1990. In 1994 it reached 105.5/100,000. Because the overwhelming majority of the deaths were in this age group, fluctuations in the overall pediatric firearm mortality rate are attributed to this group of adolescents.

The number of male deaths surpassed female deaths in all years. The rate-based relative risk for males 0-19 (compared to females) rose from a 7.9:1 ratio in 1980 to 12.4:1 in 1994. The 1994 male childhood firearm mortality rate was 55.6/100,000 and the rate for female youth was 4.5/100,000. This sex-related disparity and the change over time was more marked among those 15-19 years old; in 1980 the male:female ratio was 9.4:1 and in 1994 it was 23:1.

African-Americans have predominated among pediatric firearm fatalities. Black youth firearm mortality almost doubled in 1990 from the prior year. The black deaths rose from 83 to 162. In 1994 the black deaths reached 195. The firearm mortality rate for young black Chicagoans exceeded the rates for both Hispanics and whites in all years (no data available for Hispanic ethnicity prior to 1989). Within each race/ethnicity group, males were much more likely to die from a gunshot wound than were females.

The relative risk (RR) for firearm mortality in 1994 was calculated with white males serving as the reference group (white male RR=1.0) within each age cohort. Black males were 20.1 times more likely than white males to die from gunfire. Hispanic males' relative risk was 8.3 times greater than white males. White and Hispanic females had a relative risk lower than the risk experienced by white males. The 15-19-year-old males had risk ratios similar to the entire 0-19 age group. In fact, black males were 17.9 times more likely to die of gunfire than white males; Hispanic males were 7.6 times as likely to die. Girls 15-19 years old had lower risk ratios than the entire 0-19 age group of females, in keeping with the increasing predominance of male firearm fatalities among older adolescents.

## **SUMMARY**

Since 1980, Chicago has experienced an increase in the number and rate of pediatric firearm deaths. All age groups are affected but older adolescents are driving the trend. The most common cause of death for Chicago teens 15-19 years old in the 1990s was a gunshot wound. Most fatalities resulted from the intentional use of a firearm.

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Chicago Department of Public Health, Vital Record tapes, 1995.

Illinois Department of Public Health, 1980 and 1990 Census Population tapes.



## **PRIOR NONFATAL FIREARMS INJURIES IN DETAINEES OF A LARGE URBAN JAIL**

John P. May, MD, Central Detention Facility Health Services, 1901 D St., SE,  
Washington, DC 20003

A survey of 582 randomly selected detainees entering the Cook County Department of Corrections during the summer of 1994 found that 26% had previously sustained at least one gunshot wound. The circumstances of these injuries were different from those commonly described with homicide in that most were shot by strangers, not during arguments, and not in environments of alcohol or drugs. Factors common to those with prior firearm injuries included witnessing a shooting at an early age, gang-related tattoos, previous sexually transmitted diseases, easy access to a semiautomatic weapon, and prior incarceration. Understanding these factors can lead to interventions reducing firearm injuries.

(Complete study: May JP, Ferguson MG, Ferguson R, Cronin K. Prior nonfatal firearm injuries in detainees of a large urban jail. J of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved 1995; 6:162-175.)

## **PHYSICIAN COUNSELING REGARDING FIREARM RISKS**

John P. May, MD, Central Detention Facility Health Services, 1901 D St., SE,  
Washington, DC 20003

Recognizing that firearm-related deaths, whether homicide, suicide, or unintentional events, are a leading cause death for many age groups of United States citizens, physicians are encouraged to educate their patients about the risks of firearms. A simple mnemonic has been developed (J of Am Med Assn 1995; 273(22):1739) that prompts several questions physicians might ask patients to assess the risk of a firearm injury:

- G** - Is there a **G**un in your home?
- U** - Are you around **U**users of alcohol or other drugs?
- N** - Do you feel a **N**eed to protect yourself?
- S** - Do any of these **S**ituations apply: Seen or been involved in acts of violence?  
Sadness or mental illness? School-aged children at home?

This mnemonic is also available in a colorful brochure (HELP Network of Concerned Professionals, The Children's Memorial Medical Center, 2300 Children's Plaza #88, Chicago, Illinois 60614, 312-880-3826).

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## **FIREARMS AND HOMICIDE, PART ONE**

### **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

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Several participants raised issues about the measurement of the distribution of firearms and defensive gun use. The limitations of survey research to examine these behaviors were noted. In response to Jens Ludwig's presentation on the Cook and Ludwig study of defensive gun use, one participant questioned the degree to which DFU incidents comprise legally defined crimes. The inclination to report false positives as a strategic response to the politics of gun control, for example, by NRA members, would be another threat to the validity of the findings. Finally, it was suggested that Paul Blackman's review of firearms research did not take into account that complex issues oftentimes do not lend themselves to the textbook application of epidemiological methods.

**Panel Discussion following the Panel on "Designing Solutions"**  
**with Presenters Scott Decker, David Kennedy and Joe Vince**  
prepared by Chris Rasche

**Question to Scott:** Does the 98% consent for searches for weapons in St. Louis represent really consensual? Do you think these people really understand the 4th Amendment?

**Response by Scott:** The modal category is parents who request the search--but we are studying this and talking to the ACLU.

**Question to David:** Are some of the seizures due to display?

**Response by David:** There does not seem to be a lot of display when the police are around!

**Question to Joe:** Is the ATF cost analysis really accurate? Not all illegally purchased guns will be used for crime.

**Response by Joe:** But when violent crime went down in one city, gun availability was the only factor they could find to account for it.

**Question to Scott:** How do the requests for searches get made?

**Response by Scott:** The people just call in.

**Response by Rick:** The ATF formula raises the question of the impact of replacement of gun traffickers who are taken off the streets. We need to ask kids where they got their guns, where they would go to get a gun if they could not get it there, and if not in the second location, then where would they go?

**Response by Joe:** The problem with modern law enforcement programs is that removal of traffickers does NOT constitute "holding the hill" because the "enemy" comes back as soon as the "army" moves on.

**Comment by David:** There is very little illegal trafficking interdiction going on.

**Comment from Reneau Kennedy:** One important thing in this discussion is the concept of "kids"--David used the definition of 17 to 21, but in Massachusetts a "kid" is only up to age 16. How old the "kids" are is important to politicians, etc.

**Response by David:** Some strict legislation only applies to persons under 16 years of age.

**Question from Jay Corzine:** There are two issues here. First, how long does replacement of traffickers take? Second, how many traffickers are there in any given jurisdiction? A sting operation may be more successful precisely at the transition point after one trafficker is taken away.

**Response by Joe:** Approximately 50% of all firearms captured in the U.S. this year will be traced now with our new capabilities.

**Response by David:** Some kids don't know how to get guns at all, or only know one supplied--understanding the network is very important.

**Response by Joe:** In a study by Glen Pierce, 98% of federal licensees are OK but 2% cause real problems. The firearms industry is now being very cooperative.

**Response by David:** The Pierce study found that 50% of all traces came back to one dealer!

**Question from Roland Chilton:** Did Boston and St. Louis studies affect the number of homicides in those areas? What about the impact of the ATF study?

**Response by Scott and David:** These studies are too young to know yet.

**Response by Joe:** The ATF study definitely showed an impact on crime in general and homicide in particular.





## **Section Nine:**

### **Parricide: Adults Who Kill their Parents**



# **DANGEROUSLY ANTISOCIAL KIDS WHO KILL THEIR PARENTS: TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PHENOMENON**

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University of South Florida

Three types of youths who kill parents have been identified in the professional literature: the severely abused child, the severely mentally ill child, and the dangerously antisocial child. This paper focuses on the offender and offense criteria needed to diagnose a parricide offender as dangerously antisocial. Differences between a conduct-disordered severely abused child and a dangerously antisocial child are addressed. Cases that cut across categories are highlighted to suggest the need for a fourth category of "other children who kill parents." The implications of correct classification of parricide offenders in terms of treatment prognosis and risk to society are discussed.

## **TYPES OF PARRICIDE OFFENDERS**

Adolescent parricide offenders (APOs) are typically presented in the popular and professional literature as prosocial youths in fear of their lives, often killing to protect themselves or others from death or serious physical injury or to end the chronic abuse they and other family members suffer (Blais, 1985; Rosenthal, 1985; Prendergast, 1986; Kleiman, 1988; Mones, 1991; Walker, 1989; Toufexis, 1992; Heide 1992, in press). In these cases, an extensive history of abuse is often easily corroborated by interviews with relatives, neighbors, and friends. These youths increasingly come to perceive that their physical well-being is threatened or their psychological survival is at stake. They kill in response to terror or in desperation. From their perspective, there is no way out other than murder.

This type, which I call the severely abused child, is only one of three types of parricide offenders identified to date (Heide, 1992). Youths who fit this pattern are typically diagnosed after the homicide as suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/ or Depression. However, both diagnoses typically predate the killings. PTSD is a disorder that affects some individuals who have been subjected to events where their lives or those of others have been severely threatened. Individuals with this diagnosis reexperience the traumatic event, and numb themselves and avoid thoughts, feelings, and activities associated with the trauma. They have a heightened state of arousal and may react quickly to events that signify a threat to them based on their past history. Adolescent parricide offenders often experience several symptoms of depression prior to the killing. These include sadness, feelings of hopelessness, suicidal ideation, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, and loss of interest in pleasurable activities (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Other types of children who kill parents include the severely mentally ill child and the dangerously antisocial child (Heide, 1992). Severely mentally ill children who murder their parents are psychotic or otherwise gravely mentally ill. They typically have a long-established psychiatric history. The killing of the parent is an underlying product of the mental illness. For

example, a psychotic individual might hear Satan commanding him to kill his mother as a sacrificial offering and believe as well that his action is a necessary and moral one.

Dangerously antisocial youths kill their parents for selfish, instrumental reasons. The term dangerously antisocial child here refers to individuals whom professionals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries called "psychopathic" or "sociopathic" personalities, respectively. The two terms, which have become essentially synonymous in the public mind, have been replaced in the professional literature with two more precise terms -- conduct disorder or antisocial personality disorder -- depending on the age of the individual and the presence of specific criteria. Individuals who are diagnosed as having conduct disorders or antisocial personalities, unlike those who are psychotic, are oriented in time and space, and are free of delusions and hallucinations (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

### **Incidence and Offender Age**

Approximately 300 parents are killed each year in the United States by their offspring (Heide, 1986). The overwhelming majority of children who kill fathers, mothers, and stepparents in the U.S. are over 18 years of age (Heide, 1992).

Empirical studies and clinical case reports indicate that adults who kill their parents often have documented histories of psychopathology (Heide, 1992; Weisman, 1996). Although abuse might have existed in the home as the adult child was growing up, it is not typically the driving force behind the parricide. Adults typically have more choices and resources and are more mature than juveniles. If the home situation is intolerable, a healthy adult can leave. When an adult resorts to murdering a parent, he or she is likely to be severely mentally ill or psychopathic.

In contrast, when adolescents kill their mothers and fathers, severe mental illness is typically ruled out. The question frequently becomes the one litigated in the Menendez case: Was the adolescent a severely abused child or was he or she "a psychopath"? (Heide, 1995). The severely abused child is the most frequently encountered type among adolescent parricide offenders and is the focus of my book, Why Kids Kill Parents: Child Abuse and Adolescent Homicide (1992). This paper concentrates on the dangerously antisocial child.

### **DIAGNOSING THE DANGEROUSLY ANTISOCIAL CHILD**

Accurate identification of dangerously antisocial youths is vital. If these youths are misdiagnosed, they may have the opportunity, as well as the underlying character structure, to kill again (Heide, 1992; in press).

Criminal justice personnel and mental health professionals need to address two questions in this regard. The first concerns the offender; the second focuses on the offense. A qualified mental health professional with expertise in juvenile homicide should evaluate the youth to determine if he or she meets the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder. This diagnosis is typically the forerunner of antisocial personality disorder, a diagnosis which requires that the offender be 18 years of age or older (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Heide 1992).

## **The (Conduct-Disordered) Dangerously Antisocial Child**

In addition to making this determination, the mental health professional needs to address the second question: What propelled the homicide? If the youth meets the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder and killed the parent to further his or her selfish ends, then the youth would appropriately be classified as a dangerously antisocial parricide offender. I classified two brothers who stabbed and bludgeoned to death their mother, father, and remaining sibling as dangerously antisocial. The boys were not psychotic and there was no evidence of any significant childhood maltreatment. Both boys had extensive histories of antisocial behavior and alcohol abuse. In addition, previous mental health reports revealed that they were both hospitalized for threatening to kill their mother. Both boys had physically assaulted their father, and had told mental health professionals, as well as some friends, that they were going to kill their parents. The brothers had a history of involvement with an antisocial group known for endorsing a hate-filled ideology, engaging in violent tactics, and propagating anarchy. It appeared that the parents were killed when they were trying to set some limits with their sons and were pursuing appropriate channels to hospitalize them.

## **The Conduct-Disordered Severely Abused Child**

The mere diagnosis of conduct disorder does not rule out that the youth could be a severely abused child who killed to end the abuse. As discussed in Why Kids Kill Parents, children who have been abused or neglected may adopt an antisocial way of responding to life as a means of psychic, if not physical, survival. Engaging in antisocial behavior can help youths to focus their attention away from problems at home that are too difficult to handle. Accordingly, it is important to look closely at what motivated the conduct-disordered youth to kill: Was he or she trying to end the abuse or escape from it? Or was he or she killing to get something desired, such as more freedom or access to their parents' money or car? The answer to these questions will allow the clinician to determine whether the youth is a conduct-disordered severely abused child or a dangerously antisocial child.

## **WHEN CASES CUT ACROSS CATEGORIES**

Adolescent parricide offenders, as the above discussion indicates, are not always "pure types." In two recent cases in which I was involved, the youths did not fit any of the three types. One of these youths met the criteria for conduct disorder. The other did not have a history of behavioral acting-out but indicated unusual interest in violent themes. Both youths engaged in parricidal acts under rather extreme circumstances. These cases suggest that adding a fourth category to the typology to reflect youths who kill parents under more unusual circumstances might be warranted.

## **A Case of Bottled-Up Rage**

One of these cases involved "Chris," a conduct-disordered youth who attempted to kill a parent for reasons reactive to abuse. There was some evidence that Chris had been physically abused, but it did not appear to be extensive. There appeared to be extensive overt sexual abuse of

Chris's sister during her early adolescence and some covert sexual abuse of her during her later adolescence. Chris did not meet the criteria for a severely abused child because the abuse was not ongoing at the time of the homicide.

On the day of the homicide, Chris and some of his friends had decided to steal a car and to run away. After a few aborted attempts, the boys realized that none of them had the requisite skill or nerve to do it, and went back to Chris' father's house. Chris's father and his fiancée had gone to bed by the time the boys arrived. While the youths were sitting in the living room, the idea to take Chris's father's car came to them. Accordingly, Chris entered his father's bedroom several times while his father and his fiancée were sleeping in an attempt to get the car keys without confronting his father. The fourth time Chris opened the bedroom door, he opened fire on his father and his fiancée as they slept in bed.

Chris had difficulty recalling the homicidal event. He remembered right before the shooting one of his friends suggesting that he kill his father and his fiancée and take the keys. Chris remembered protesting and his friend saying "remember what he did to your sister." At that point, Chris apparently kicked in the door and began shooting. His rendition of events suggested that he was in a dissociative state.

My clinical assessment of Chris and review of extensive case materials led me to conclude that the homicidal behavior in this case was not the direct result of the youth's desire to achieve some selfish, instrumental end. Rather, it appeared that comments made by the friend shortly before the shooting unleashed the hatred and rage that this adolescent had been carrying for years as a result of believing that his father had sexually abused his sister. In this respect, the frenzied shooting appeared to be reactive to the abuse, rather than an act deliberately conceived to get the keys to the car.

### **A Case of Brotherly Allegiance**

When two or more siblings are involved in the killing of their parents, each youth must be assessed in addition to the motivational dynamics behind the murders. In a case in which two teenage brothers killed their parents, "Tom" and "Donny," I evaluated the younger one. The murders were particularly ghoulish. After shooting both parents, the brothers hid their bodies in the house. During the next few days the boys went about their "normal activities." These included partying, visiting friends, shopping, and going to school.

My clinical assessment of Donny, as well as interviews with several teachers, and review of case materials did not suggest a significant history of abuse, and there was no evidence of psychopathology. My evaluation and review of case materials suggested that Donny was strongly influenced by Tom and wanted to be like him.

Donny told police and me that he did not want to kill his parents. He insisted that the idea was his older brother's and that he was pressured into it. Donny related that his brother reassured him that killing their parents was acceptable and that everything would be alright.

I was unable to evaluate Tom because of an apparent conflict of interest between the brothers. There were data to suggest that the older brother might have met the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder. In addition, the killing appeared to fit the dynamics operative in those cases in which dangerously antisocial children kill their parents. Review of the police records as well as Donny's statements suggested that Tom wanted their parents dead so he could have more freedom. Several of Tom's friends related to police that Tom did not like his parents and became increasingly fascinated with guns, gangs, violence, and prison. Tom allegedly talked about killing his parents to a few friends.

Donny did not meet the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder at the time of the evaluation. Thus, unlike Tom, he did not appear to fit the profile of the dangerously antisocial child. However, Donny still showed some disturbing signs. His drawings occasionally depicted violent themes. In addition, he was strongly bonded to his brother and he enjoyed "gangsta rap" music. If unchecked, there is a strong possibility that this boy could become more antisocial and more dangerous.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

These cases indicate that correct categorization of adolescent parricide offenders is often complex because the clinician must focus on both the offender and on the motivational dynamics behind his or her crime. When two siblings are involved, the individuals and the motivational dynamics in particular must be carefully analyzed because they may differ.

Appropriate diagnosis of the youth has important ramifications for determining effective intervention strategies. The course of treatment and the likelihood of successful reintegration into society will vary depending on the diagnosis. The prognosis for youths who are clinically depressed or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder is typically better than for youths who are psychotic or conduct-disordered (Heide, 1992). Many clinicians are understandably pessimistic about working with "psychopathic" youth. However, not all conduct-disordered kids are alike. Some conduct-disordered youth may represent more of a risk to society than others.

Ascertaining the driving force behind the homicides is critically important. It sheds light on the offender's way of coping with life events and has significant implications for intervention. A conduct-disordered severely abused child poses less of a risk to society than a dangerously antisocial child and is probably more amenable to treatment. Similarly, a conduct-disordered youth who kills a parent due to unbridled rage is more reachable than one who intentionally kills to further his or her ends. In short, the dangerously antisocial child is at the end of the continuum -- he is both antisocial and dangerous.

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## **PARRICIDE AND ATTEMPTED PARRICIDE: FORENSIC DATA AND PSYCHOLEGAL RESULTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In a clinical archive study, sixty-eight cases involving the murder or attempted murder of at least one parent, primarily from Southern California, referred for forensic evaluations are described. Demographic, diagnostic, crime scene, psycholegal opinions, and legal outcome data are presented. Results indicate a thirty-four percent success rate among defendants who utilize an insanity defense. Significant differences were found between parricide and attempted parricide in terms of prior psychiatric and violent criminal histories. Profile characteristics and typologies are presented. The findings are compared to studies involving parricide and legal strategies involving similar cases.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parricide, the killing of one's father or mother by an offspring, was considered to be a cultural taboo which historically occurred only in bizarre and isolated instances. In recent years, however, the popular media's focus on high publicity cases has given the impression that parricide is increasing. Despite such a magnification, published crime data indicate this form of domestic violence occurs in small frequency. United States governmental data (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1994) indicate between 1977 and 1994, parricide accounted for less than 2% of all homicide cases, or the equivalent of 300 deaths annually. In a review of parricide data from the FBI, Heide (1993) indicated over 75% of the cases involve adult perpetrators. The rate of matricides (as a percentage of all murders) ranged between 0.6 and 0.8%. Similarly, the rate of patricides varied between 0.7 and 1.1%. There has been no published governmental data regarding the incidence of single-offender-multiple-victim ("double parricide") or attempted parricide cases. Available European data indicate parricides account for 3-5% of annual homicides (d'Orban and O'Conner, 1989). Crime statistics from California are similar to national data. Between 0.9-1.1% of all homicides and approximately 1.5% of serious assaults involve parents (California Department of Justice, 1972, 1973, 1992).

In a study which examined the FBI database regarding parricide rates and criminal street violence between 1977 and 1988, parricide rates correlated negatively ( $r = -0.59$ ) with the rate of violent crime and the increased availability of handguns (Young, 1993). Such stability of parricide rates suggests this form of intrafamilial violence may be distinctly different and should be examined separately (Megargee, 1982).

Despite the relatively small incidence of parricide and attempted parricides, forensic mental health professionals are appointed by the justice system to address a number of psycholegal questions (e.g., insanity, competency, diminished capacity, criminal responsibility) in far greater proportions than other murder or aggravated assault cases. In addition, forensic experts and mental health professionals have begun to recognize unique characteristics among adult and juvenile parricide defendants with respect to their premorbid characteristics, circumstances surrounding the instant offense, and ultimate disposition. Research has only begun to explore the premorbid features of adult perpetrators and psycholegal implications of such cases.

## Literature Review

The literature on parricide may be found in three areas: literary analyses of works containing real or symbolic parricidal themes, clinical reports of small groups of prison or forensic hospital patients, and single case studies. Most clinical studies have examined either youthful or adult perpetrators, victim-offender gender differences, or captive psychiatric populations. Empirical research has been limited to single subject cases studies (McKnight *et al.*, 1966; Sadoff, 1971; Mass *et al.*, 1984; Chaimberlain, 1986; Lispon, 1986; Mouridsen and Tolstrup, 1988) and small cohort studies (Green, 1981; Campion *et al.*, 1985; Cravens *et al.*, 1985; d'Orban *et al.*, 1989; Singhal and Dutta, 1992).

Extant studies on juvenile samples suggest that the criminal act is a response to long-standing child abuse (Heide, 1993; Dutton and Yamini, 1995). Heide (1995) stated, that "the severely abused child is the most frequently encountered type among adolescent parricide offenders." Case histories often reveal an abusive parent, typically the father or step-father, coupled with a depressed and suicidal male perpetrator. In addition, the adolescent samples have often come from middle- or upper-middle-class background and are between 16 and 18 years-old (Mones, 1991). Heide (1995) acknowledged adolescent parricide offenders also include the severely mentally ill and dangerously antisocial, but in smaller frequencies compared to severely abused children.

Newhill (1991) described adult samples as falling within similar subgroups described by Heide (1993, 1995), although with different distributions. In contrast with Heide's analyses, adult perpetrators who kill their parents in retaliation for physical or mental brutality are relatively rare. More often than not, adult perpetrators have a history of severe mental illness with little or no history of parental abuse. In reviewing the literature, male perpetrators kill their mothers more often than fathers, with daughters almost exclusively choosing their mother as the victim (Newhill, 1991; Meloy, 1992). Double parricides are almost exclusively the domain of sons. Meloy (1992) portrays the adult perpetrator as a paranoid schizophrenic who is embroiled in a hostile-dependent relationship with the victim. This has been described as "catathymic homicide," with chronic emotional tension caused by traumatic experiences, projection of responsibility for the internal tension state onto the external situation, and the perception of violence as the only way out of the situation (Tucker and Cornwall, 1977; Meloy, 1992). The criminal act is perpetrated in a sudden rush of emotional tensions, with little premeditation or deliberation, and thus often leads to judicial verdict of insanity, involuntary manslaughter or

simple assault. The second most frequent subgroup involves adults killing their parents for sociopathic reasons such as monetary gain (e.g., insurance benefits). This dangerously antisocial child has only recently been brought to the forefront by both researchers and the media. In such cases, there is no mental illness or impairment present. Any abuse history presented is uncorrelated with the offense. The adult perpetrator is in a situation where the parent is dependent upon them for support (e.g., elder abuse). No study to date has attempted to profile, in detail, the circumstances or patterns involving parricide attempts in adults.

## **Legal Review**

Legal review articles have covered parricide in terms of criminal responsibility and self-defense claims (Van Sambeek, 1986; Blodgett, 1987; Moreno, 1989; Smith, 1992; James, 1994). Articles dwell heavily upon publicly available juvenile cases, which address the “battered child syndrome,” where the child killed in some combination of fear, revenge, or self-defense. This has created the view of raising a defense strategy of “justified homicide,” analogous to the self-defense claim inherent in cases where a battered woman kills. Here, prior abuse is used as a mitigating factor by which to reduce the charge. This again points to an involuntary manslaughter as opposed to a first- or second-degree murder conviction. This defense strategy has been successful, principally in juvenile cases, and has been attempted in non-confrontational situations, when the victim is sleeping or passive at the time of the killing. In contrast to minors, the defense of an adult perpetrator rests upon the mental condition prior to and at the time of the offense. Either insanity is raised or the defendant’s mental condition is used as a mitigating factor to modify the sentence (e.g., hospitalization). For adult cases, the abuse or self-defense claim has been used as an “exotic” or uncommon strategy and, to date, has a poor acquittal rate.

In sum, although the discussion of parricide has recently been accelerated by the popular media, the empirical work has been limited to small captive populations and limited governmental data. The published legal treatments of parricide cases have tended to focus on juvenile cases and self-defense claims. The clinical literature regarding parricide cases and resulting legal implications are limited because: (1) cases exist where neither arrests nor charges are made, (2) cases are not reported to the press unless they rise to the appellate level or involve public figures, and (3) a majority of the cases are resolved through the plea bargaining process with little or no forensic evaluations. Because many cases remain unknown, one is left relying on sensational or biased cases with which to discern parricide. Forensic researchers have attempted to develop profile descriptions of various criminal subtypes. No studies, to date, have gone beyond the premorbid characteristics and crime scene data, to investigate the forensic opinions and psycholegal dispositions. Additionally, as a subgroup of parricide, cases of attempted parricide have been virtually ignored in the literature, despite the observation that in many of the parricide case studies, mention is made of prior violent attacks upon the victim. Developing a large data set of parricide and attempted parricide cases, which includes premorbid, crime scene, and legal treatments, would expand and enhance the limited knowledge base.

The current study represents an effort to add to the paucity of literature on the psycholegal implications of parricide and attempted cases, and serves to provide a more extensive empirical

description of factors which influence the dispositions of such cases. An archival design permits analysis of the perpetrators' life history, including pre-offense, crime scene, and legal record data. This study reflects an examination of sixty-eight cases in which an offspring was charged with the murder or attempted murder of at least one parental figure, and was referred to a forensic examiner for an evaluation within the trial process. A discussion of the patterns and profile characteristics follows.

## **METHODS**

### **Design**

The present clinical archive study is based on sixty-eight parricide and parricide attempt cases occurring between 1978 and 1995, evaluated by a forensic psychologist (A.W.) or board-certified psychiatrists (K.S., W.V.). The evaluations involved a variety of forensic issues, including criminal responsibility, insanity, competency to stand trial, and pre-sentencing mitigation matters. Cases were drawn primarily from Southern California, where the examiners are members of the Superior Court expert witness panel. Five cases consisted of males under the age of 18 at the time of the instant offense, with two tried as juveniles.

Parricide was defined as the murder of a father, mother, step-father, step-mother, adoptive parent, or both parents. The definition of attempted parricide was an aggravated assault on the parental figure(s), where the victim(s) survived through immediate medical care, witness intervention, or sheer luck. This condition was included in the sample because in each case, the offense was carried out with the specific intent to kill the victim(s).

Archival data was initially drawn from the examiner's case file and forensic reports. This included other forensic examiners' reports, hospital records and arrest reports. Following the review, additional information was sought in court files, death records, and telephone interviews with defense counsel.

Data was collected and coded by the senior author and four trained undergraduates. Each sample file consisted of information regarding demographic, historical, crime scene, and legal proceeding information (See Appendix). Variables were based upon previous literature on parricide, family violence, and psycholegal disposition.

## **RESULTS**

The two offense type groups (parricide, attempted parricide) will be presented separately. Due to the relatively small size of the parricide (N=49) and attempted parricide collection (N=19), any comparisons may be viewed as preliminary. A very small subgroup of adolescent parricide perpetrators (N=5) is available for comparison purposes.

## **Attempted Parricide**

This collection consists of 16 males and 3 females from Los Angeles and Orange County, who were evaluated by forensic experts following an aggravated assault of their parent(s) between 1984 and 1995. The average age of the group was 30.42 (SD=10.17; Md=30), with a range from 19 to 56. Forty-seven percent were Caucasian, 32% African-American, 5% Hispanic and 16% other. Sixty-three percent of the group were never married. Available records indicated that 52% had a positive family history of mental health treatment.

In terms of premorbid characteristics, the parricide attempt group were significantly more disturbed than the general population. Seventy-nine percent had a prior inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, with a mode number of 2-3 times (60%). Prior diagnoses typically fell within the psychotic classification (e.g., paranoid schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder), with over 50% having some type of substance use disorder underlying the primary diagnosis. Prior drug use consisted primarily of alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine. In terms of prior criminal history, 74% had known prior criminal convictions, with 64% of this group being convicted of violent crimes (e.g., murder, rape, assault).

In the period preceding the instant offense, 63% of the subjects were living with the victim(s), 36% had no history of employment, and 63% were unemployed. Fifty-eight percent had made prior threats of violence towards the victim(s) and 37% had actually assaulted the victim(s).

The victim collection consisted of 12 biological mothers and 8 biological fathers. One case involved both parents. The victim's average age was 59 (SD=12.97; Md=57) with a range from 40 to 84. Fathers were older (Md=63) than mothers (Md=51). An equal number of victims were married or previously married (divorced, widowed), with one mother never married. The victim was assaulted at home (89%), with witnesses present or nearby (79%). In terms of methods, 58% involved use of a knife, 16% used a firearm, 16% involved primarily strangling, and 11% involved primarily beating the victim. One case involved an combination of strangling, poisoning and arson. Drug use was infrequent with 26% being intoxicated, typically with alcohol or cocaine.

The motive for the aggravated assault was consistent with the subjects' premorbid mental condition. Sixty-six percent were acting on delusions, involving the victim. The remaining cases involved fiduciary issues, quarrel or a robbery. Following the event, 52% of the subjects did absolutely nothing but loiter around the crime scene, 36% either fled or were combative towards self/others at the scene, and 2 individuals called the police for medical assistance. When police arrived, 63% were unresisting in giving a confession of guilt, blaming no one, and only 21% actively attempted to conceal guilt.

In terms of the legal proceedings, 13 subjects were charged with attempted murder, 1 with voluntary attempted manslaughter, and 5 with aggravated assault. Competency to stand trial was raised in 95% of the cases, with half (n=8) being found incompetent and sent to a psychiatric hospital. Competency restoration treatment averaged 12 months (SD=6.82; Md=12), with a

range from 3 to over 21 months. Of these cases, only one case was unrestorable to competency and placed on conservatorship in the county of origin.

Regarding the defense council strategy, 78% of the cases considered the insanity defense within the range of evaluation questions. The remaining cases utilized a diminished intent defense. The forensic experts diagnosed a majority of subjects as psychotic (84%), with 11% a substance use disorder, and 5% an affective disorder. For the remaining 18 cases (one placed on conservatorship), 9 subjects were ultimately found guilty, 8 were found not guilty by reason of insanity, and one subject was acquitted.

### **Parricide**

This collection consists of 44 males and 5 females from Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties, with two additional cases from Oklahoma City and Fort Lauderdale, who were all evaluated by forensic experts following the homicide of their parent(s) between 1978 and 1995. The average age of the group was 28.49 (SD=9.97, Md=25), with a range from 16 to 54. Fifty-five percent were Caucasian, 24% African-American, 8% Hispanic, and 12% other. Eighty percent of the group were never married. Available records indicated that 45% had a positive family history of mental health treatment and 49% had a family history of drug abuse or dependence.

In terms of premorbid characteristics, the parricide group was split as to prior mental health treatment, mental illness severity, and criminality. Forty-nine percent had a prior inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, with a mode number of 4-6 times (33%), and another 33% having over 7 hospitalizations. Prior diagnoses of those who received inpatient treatment fell within the psychotic classification (83%) with 50% having some type of substance use disorder underlying the primary diagnosis. In contrast, 51% of the parricide group had no prior inpatient treatment and 31% had never been diagnosed with a mental disorder. Prior drug use consisted primarily of alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, and hallucinogens (e.g., LSD). In terms of prior criminal history, 47% had known prior criminal convictions, with 65% of this group being convicted of violent crimes. The remaining 53% had no prior criminal history.

In the period preceding the instant offense, 80% of parricide perpetrators were living with the victim(s), 27% had no history of employment or were currently unemployed. Thirty-five percent had made prior threats of violence towards the victim(s) and 22% had actually assaulted the victim(s).

The victim collection consisted of 29 biological mothers, 2 nonbiological (i.e., half, foster, adopted) mothers, 21 biological fathers, and 3 nonbiological fathers. Six cases involved both parents. The victim's average age was 58.46 (SD=12.60; Md=59) with a range from 32 to 83. Mothers were slightly older (Md=60) than fathers (Md=58). More of the victims were married (65%), than previously married (27%) or never married (4%). The homicide occurred at home (92%), with witnesses more often than not present (59%). In terms of methods, 41% involved the use of a knife, 31% used a firearm, and 27% involved primarily beating. One case involved

suffocating the victim with a pillow. Drug use was very infrequent with 12% being intoxicated, typically with alcohol.

The motive for the homicides broke down into two primary groups: delusions (43%) and a quarrel or monetary gain (40%). The remaining reasons involved robbery (11%), rage (4%), and defending one's mother from the violent stepfather (2%). Following the event, 24% of the subjects did absolutely nothing, 43% fled the scene, 20% were combative towards self/others at the scene, and 6 individuals called the police for medical assistance. When police arrived, 65% were unresisting in giving a confession of guilt, 80% blaming no one, and 27% actively attempted to conceal guilt.

In terms of the legal proceedings, 48 subjects were charged with at least one count of murder and one with voluntary manslaughter. In 22% of the cases the murder charge was coupled with special circumstances, indicating the potential of the death penalty. In most of these cases, the special circumstance was dropped either by judge, jury, or within the plea bargaining process. Competency to stand trial was raised in 55% of the cases, with 37% (n=10) being found incompetent and sent to a forensic psychiatric hospital. Competency restoration treatment averaged 17.71 months (SD=12.97, Md=15) with a range between 2 and 36 months. Of these cases, two cases were unrestorable to competency and placed on conservatorship.

Regarding the defense council strategy, 68% of the remaining cases considered an insanity defense within the range of evaluation questions. In 13% of the cases, forensic experts were asked to consider an "exotic" defense. This involves allegations of prior abuse or neglect associated with the instant offense being used as a mitigating factor or complete defense. The remaining cases utilized a diminished capacity or intent defense. Experts diagnosed a slight majority of cases as psychotic (55%), 23% with an affective disorder, 14% a personality disorder, and 8% a substance use disorder. For the 44 completed cases (two placed on conservatorship), 30 subjects were found guilty, 13 were found not guilty by reason of insanity, and one subject was acquitted. At present 3 cases are still pending.

### **Adolescent Parricide Subsample**

In this collection, only 5 male subjects fell under the age of 18. They were a mixed racial group, single, with positive family histories involving crime and drug use. None of the group had an inpatient psychiatric history and 2 were treated for either attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or depression. Prior drug use consisted of alcohol or cannabis. Only one youth had a violent juvenile criminal history, involving assault with a firearm, which led to a brief detention.

At the time of the offense, 80% of the subjects were living with the victim. None had made a prior threat or assault upon the victim. The victim population consisted of 2 biological mothers, 1 biological father, and 2 step-fathers. The homicide occurred at the victim's home. Three cases involved a handgun, one used a knife, and one beat the victim. Only one perpetrator was intoxicated on alcohol and cannabis. In four cases, the motive involved a quarrel with the parent, one case involved the minor protecting his mother from his abusive step-father. In response to



the homicide, the youths were evenly split, either doing nothing, fleeing or calling for medical assistance. When police arrived, most of the minors were unresisting in confessing and accepting blame.

In the legal proceedings, all five minors were charged with murder. Three of the youths were tried as adults. Competency to stand trial was never raised by court officers. Defense strategies fell evenly within insanity, diminished intent, and exotic groups. Experts diagnosed 3 minors as depressed and 2 as having a substance abuse disorder. Of the 5 cases, 4 were found guilty (3 voluntary manslaughter; one second-degree murder) and one was acquitted.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study point out clearly that parricide and parricide attempt cases are not homogenous in terms of premorbid characteristics, crime scene data, or legal outcomes. The parricidal data suggest that cases fall primarily into one of two groups: severe mentally ill and antisocial offenders. The frequency of victimized offenders, frequently found among adolescent studies (e.g., Heide, 1995) was extremely rare among this collection. It should be noted, however, that this group consisted primarily of adults. Consistent with the adolescent parricide literature, the very small adolescent subsample consisted primarily of dangerously antisocial and severely abused males.

There were no significant differences between the parricide and parricide attempt groups' average age, gender, racial composition, marital status, education, employment background, military history, and pre-offense living situation. There was also no difference regarding their family history of psychiatric treatment, criminality, or drug abuse. The parricide and attempted parricide groups did differ significantly in their prior criminal and psychiatric history. Compared to the parricide group, in a majority of cases, there was a strong tendency for parricide subjects to have no prior criminal history in comparison to the attempted parricide group. In addition, half of the parricide group had never been involved in the legal system, compared to 18% of the attempted parricide group. In a similar distribution pattern, approximately half of the parricide subjects had no prior history of mental illness or treatment. In contrast, approximately 80% of parricide attempt subjects had a history of inpatient hospitalizations with a similar number carrying severe mentally ill diagnoses.

In terms of crime scene data, the two gender groups differed significantly in their choice of victim. Male perpetrators were more likely to offend against their mother or both parents and female perpetrators only chose their mother. When elderly victims (age > 65) were excluded, there was no significant difference. In comparison to a review of 1977-1986 FBI data (Heide, 1993), children killed their father more than their mother (67% compared to 33%). The absence of females who killed their father, found in 9% of Heide's sample, points out the caution that should be used in the interpretation of results.

Group differences were found in terms of witnesses present, methods used, and subjects' behavior following the offense. Witnesses, aside from the victim, were absent in the majority of

parricide cases, while in over 75% of the parricide attempt cases, witnesses aside from the victim, were present or nearby to stop the potential homicide. In terms of methods, parricide subjects used firearms, knives, and bare hands in similar proportions, while attempted parricide subjects primarily used knives. After the offense, parricide subjects were significantly more likely to flee the scene, while more parricide attempt perpetrators simply stood around until police and medical authorities arrived.

In terms of judicial proceedings, 3 cases were dropped due to trial incompetence. Of those cases remaining, in 70% percent of the cases an insanity defense was considered. Of the 18 parricide attempts and 44 parricide cases completed, there was a 34% success rate (8/18 parricide attempt; 13/44 parricide). This insanity success rate is substantially higher than published national rates, which occur in fewer than 1 in every 2000 felony cases (Appelbaum and Gutheil, 1991). In examining the post-trial disposition of cases and ethnicity of the perpetrator, Caucasian defendants were much more likely to be sentenced to psychiatric hospitals than African-Americans. Forty-five percent of Caucasian and African-American subjects were sentenced to prison, while 71 and 8 percent, respectively, were sentenced to a psychiatric hospital. This unusually significant distribution may be an artifact of the limited sample, or may be indicative of a racial bias among defense attorneys in using the insanity defense. This question remains unanswered, based upon the collection, and merits additional sampling across the United States.

According to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report Coding Guide, the following variables have been tabulated for statistical purposes: Victim/offender relationship, age, race, ethnic origin, and sex of victim/offender, weapon used, and circumstances. It is noted, however, that because the circumstance is coded based upon police reports, there is no coding available for a severe mental disturbance (perhaps coded as "Other arguments"). Beyond this set of variables, no study to date has examined the wider range of issues inherent in parricide, including family background, prior convictions, and legal proceedings. This study has attempted to begin to fill this gap of knowledge.

An important question regards whether the current study collection is representative of cases in Los Angeles and Orange County. Data provided by Rand Corporation<sup>1</sup>, of known cases between 1987 and 1994, indicates that there were 87 cases in Los Angeles and 15 cases in Orange County. In the current collection there were 24 cases from Los Angeles and 6 cases from Orange County, during the same period, amounting to 28 and 40 percent representation, respectively. In examining the victim ethnicity from the California-wide sample, 41% were Caucasian, 35% African-American, 16% Hispanic, and 8% other. In the current collection, 52% were Caucasian, 32%, African-American, 8% Hispanic, and 8% other. In terms of weapons, California-wide, 35% used a firearm, 37% used a knife or club, and 28% used other means. In the collection, an equal percentage (33%) involved a firearm, knife, or other means. Thus, there is some evidence supporting to view that this collection is a small but representative sample. Of course, the addition of more subjects to the sample will only enhance the representation.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Allan F. Abrahamse, Ph.D., for raising this important issue and providing California data summary.

There are several limitations to this study. Due to the retrospective archival nature of the study, variables studied were limited by the available sample. There were a small number of female and adolescent subjects, parricide attempt cases, and number of forensic examiners sampled. However, with a database in place to analyze similar cases, such limitations can be addressed in future updates. Sampling only three forensic examiners may have limited the range of information or given a biased range of opinions. However, many of the cases led to additional forensic evaluations for which to gather information. In addition, much of the data was objective as opposed to subjectively-based, which reduced potential misinterpretation. Because there was no control within the evaluation process, some cases were done with the understanding of attorney-client confidentiality privilege, while others were nonconfidential according to statutes within the evidence code. Most evaluations were carried out in a jail environment, others occurred in hospitals and private offices. No control or comparison (e.g., murder) group was provided, and comparisons were limited to attempted versus completed parricides. Despite such limitations, the study was the first to focus on the characteristics of a large sample of parricidal cases, a wide variety of pre-event, crime scene, and legal proceeding variables. This represents the first step towards developing comparison studies and integrating databases from other geographic areas utilizing a retrospective archival format.

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## APPENDIX: ARCHIVE DATA LIST

### Background History

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Sex  | Age at time of offense              |
| Ethnicity                                  | Country of Origin                   |
| Religion                                   | Marital Status                      |
| Siblings, Sibling Order                    | Education                           |
| Family History of Criminality,             |                                     |
| Substance Abuse and Mental Illness         | Military Experience                 |
| Psychiatric History (Inpatient/Outpatient) | Prior Psychiatric Diagnoses         |
| Substance Abuse History                    | Juvenile and Adult Criminal History |
| Living Situation Prior to Instant Offense  | Employment History                  |
| Prior Assaults or Threats toward Victim(s) |                                     |

### Crime Scene Data

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Date of Instant Offense                         | Victim(s) Relationship  |
| Victim(s) Age(s), Marital Status, Other Victims | Location of Instant Offense   |
| Witnesses                                       | Method(s)   |
| Substance Use/Presence                          | Motive  |
| Behavior of Defendant Following Instant Offense | Statements to Police Officials<br>(confessions, blaming, concealment) |

**Legal Proceedings**

Arrangement Charges

Other Charges

Fitness Issues (juvenile cases)

Competency Issues

Forensic Examiner Diagnoses

Special Circumstances (Death

Penalty Consideration)

Guilt Phase Trial Defense(s)

Guilt Phase Trial Verdict

Guilty Charge(s)



## Appendices





**Appendix I: Homicide Research Working Group 1996  
Conference Agenda  
June 9-12, 1996 RAND Corporation  
Santa Monica, California**

Sunday, June 9:

- 7:00 Reception
- 8:00 Panel: Homicide Research Working Group Past and Present  
Participants: Roland Chilton, Pam Lattimore, John Jarvis, Richard Block, Becky Block, Harold Rose, & Chris Rasche  
Recorder: Derral Cheatwood

Monday, June 10:

- 8:00-8:30 Time for discussion, and viewing posters and displays (Coffee, juice and rolls)  
Hosted by RAND
- 8:30-8:45 Welcome to Southern California and RAND  
Peter Greenwood & Allan Abrahamse
- 8:45-9:00 Introduction of Participants
- 9:00-10:20 Criminal Justice Programs to Respond to Youth Violence  
Moderator: Cheryl Maxson  
Recorder: Lois Mock  
Participants: Michael Genelin (LA County District Attorneys Office)  
Gerald Ivory (LA County Dept of Probation)  
Lt Hampton Cantrell (Inglewood Police Dept)
- 10:20-10:30 Coffee Break
- 10:30-12:00 Integrating Theories of Lethal Violence  
Presenter: Chris Rasche  
Recorder: Rick Rosenfeld  
Discussants: Bob Flewelling, Richard Block, & Paul McClain
- 12:00-1:40 HRWG Business Meeting Over Lunch

- 1:45-3:15      Youth Violence Trends  
 Organizer:      Bob Flewelling  
 Recorder:      Kathleen Heide  
 Participants:    Everett Lee & Jiafang Chen, Allan Abrahamse, Al Blumstein & Daniel Cork, Jiafang Chen, & Bob Flewelling  
 Presentations: Juveniles as Homicide Victims and Offenders: The Role of Firearms (Lee & Chen)  
                     The Coming Wave of Youth Violence in California (Abrahamse)  
                     Gun Availability and Youth Death Rates (Blumstein & Cork)  
                     The Role of Firearms in Youth Homicide and Suicide (Chen)  
                     Exploring the Recent Surge in Youth Homicide Rates: Geographic Variations (Flewelling)
- 3:15-3:30      Coffee Break
- 3:30-4:10      Initiatives of the National Consortium on Violence Research (NCOVR)  
 Presenter:      Al Blumstein
- 4:15-5:30      Poster/ Display/ Demonstration Session  
 Organizer:      Becky Block  
 Coordinator:    Allan Abrahamse  
 Participants:    Chris Dunn & Kaye Marz (ICPSR) Printed Materials, Violence CD-ROM for sale, on-line demo of Violence CD-ROM and ICPSR Web Page.  
                     Joe Vince & Gerald Nunziato (ATF) on-line demo of Project LEAD  
                     Ken Powell (CDC/ Nat'l Center for Injury Prevention & Control)  
                     Lois Mock (NIJ) Recent Violence Research and Interventions  
                     Al Blumstein (NCOVR) brochures on display table  
                     Stuart Hersch (demo on "Kids and Guns" presentation)  
                     Orest Fedorowczyk (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics)  
                     Rick Florence (FBI/ UCR)  
                     John May (HELP Network & Violence Prevention materials)  
                     Allan Abrahamse & Carol Oken (RAND)  
                     Barbara Pearce (Chicago Pediatric Firearms Mortality Rates 1980-1994)  
                     Beth Ansari & Douglass Kress (Minneapolis Dept of Health & Family Support)

Tuesday, June 11:

- 8:00-8:30      Time for discussion, and viewing posters and displays (Coffee, juice and rolls)  
 Hosted by RAND

- 8:30-10:30    Is the Nature of Homicide Changing: What's Happening to Adult Homicide?  
 Moderator:    Becky Block  
 Recorder:     Everett Lee  
 Participants:   Rick Rosenfeld, Pam Lattimore, Al Blumstein, & Roland Chilton  
 Presentations: Declining Domesticity and Women as Victims and  
                     Offenders (Rosenfeld)  
                     Violence in U.S. Cities: Homicide Trends in Eight U.S.  
                     Cities (Lattimore)  
                     Incapacitation and the Drop in Adult Homicide Rates (Blumstein)  
                     Urban Arrest Trends for Adult Men and Women: 1960-1993  
                     (Chilton)
- 10:30-10:45    Break
- 10:45-12:15    Data Exchange: City Studies of Homicide in the South & Southwest  
 Recorder:     Margaret Zahn  
 Participants:   Victoria Brewer, William Edison, Dean Rojek, Ben Bradshaw,  
                     Derral Cheatwood, David R Johnson, & Ramiro Martinez  
 Presentations: *Murder in Space* City Re-examined: Houston Homicide Twenty  
                     Years Later (Brewer & Edison)  
                     Changing Patterns of Homicide in Atlanta (Rojek)  
                     An Historical Geographical Study of Lethal Violence in San  
                     Antonio (1934-1984) (Bradshaw, Cheatwood & Johnson)  
                     Race/Ethnicity of Victims & Offenders: Homicides, The Case of  
                     Miami (Martinez)
- 12:15-2:00     Lunch on your own (Committee Meetings)
- 2:00-3:15       Research and Practitioners Efforts to Influence Social Policy in Violence  
 Prevention  
 Recorder:     Allan Abrahamse  
 Participants:   Cheryl Maxson (Organizer with Local Police & Action Groups)  
                     Susan Sorenson (UCLA Dept of Public Health)  
                     Billie Weiss (Injury and Violence Prevention Programs- LAC Dept  
                     of Health Services)  
                     Peter Greenwood (The California Wellness Initiative)
- 3:15-3:30       Break
- 3:30-5:00       Malcolm Klein: Tutorial on Evaluating Interventions

- 5:45-6:45 Reception (Lowe's Hotel)  
Sponsored by Sage Publishing  
Host: Terry Hendrix
- 7:00-10:00 Dinner at RAND  
When Fact Meets Fiction: Homicide as Entertainment  
Moderator: Reneau Kennedy  
Participants: Lee Goldberg (President of the Mystery Writers of America)  
Michael Connelly (Author of the Poet & Black Echo [an Edgar Award Winner])  
Paul Bishop (LA detective by day & mystery writer by night [Twice Dead])  
Carl Eastlake (Screenwriter & producer of the Equalizer & the Burning Zone)  
Lorraine Despres (Screenwriter who wrote the script for Who Killed JR)  
Clifton Campbell (Producer for Miami Vice & Executive Producer of Maloney)  
Bob Craez (Screenwriter for Quincy & author of Sunset Express)  
Kim Moses (Executive Producer of the Profiler)

Wednesday, June 12:

- 8:00-8:30 Time for discussion, and viewing posters and displays (Coffee, juice and rolls)  
Hosted by RAND
- 8:30-9:45 Data Exchange: New and Very Recent Research  
Recorder: Barbara Pearce  
Participants: Pam Lattimore & Richard Linster, Richard Block, Rosemary Erickson, Marge Zahn & Katie Jamieson  
Presentations: Victimization of Offenders: Deaths of Youth Parolees (Lattimore & Linster)  
The United Nations International Study on Firearm Regulation (Block)  
Robbery Offenders Who Injure and Those Who Do Not (Erickson)  
Changing Patterns of Homicide and Social Policy (Zahn & Jamieson)

- 9:45-10:50    Firearms and Homicide in Two Parts  
                   Part One: Measuring the Problem  
                   Moderator:    Lois Mock  
                   Recorder:     Cheryl Maxson  
                   Participants: Phil Cook & Jens Ludwig, Becky Block & Antigone Christokos,  
    Paul Blackman  
                   Presentations: You Got Me, How Many Defensive Gun Uses Per Year? (Cook &  
    Ludwig)  
    Firearms Availability and Firearms Homicide in Chicago (Block &  
    Christakos)  
    The Epidemiologic Study of Firearms and Homicide: The Need for  
    Basic Science (Blackman)
- 10:50-11:00    Coffee Break
- 11:00-12:30    Firearms and Homicide in Two Parts  
                   Part Two: Designing Solutions  
                   Moderator:    Lois Mock  
                   Recorder:     Chris Rasche  
                   Participants: Scott Decker & Richard Rosenfeld & Bruce Jacobs, Joe Vince,  
    David Kennedy  
                   Presentations: Consent to Search & Seize: An Evaluation of the St Louis Firearm  
    Suppression Project (Decker, Rosenfeld & Jacobs)  
    The Data Collection/ Implementation Cycle and Project LEAD  
    (Vince)  
    Youth Gun Violence in Boston: Gun Markets, Serious Youth  
    Offenders, and a Use Reduction Strategy (Kennedy)
- 12:30-2:00     Follow-up Business Meeting Over Lunch
- 2:00-2:45       Parricide: Adults Who Kill Their Parents  
                   Recorder:     Reneau Kennedy  
                   Participants: Kathleen Heide, Adam Weisman  
                   Presentations: Dangerously Antisocial Kids who Kill Their Parents: Understanding  
    the Phenomena Better (Heide)  
    Parricide & Attempted Parricide: Forensic Data-Psychological  
    Results (Weisman)
- 2:45-3:00       Break
- 3:15-4:30       John Jarvis: Tutorial on the Art and Science of Projecting Crime Trends
- 7:00              Let's End the Meeting with a Dinner Together



## Appendix II: Participants in the Santa Monica Meeting

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