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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

HOMICIDE AMONG BLACKS IN CANADA

by

FRANK EDEM AVAKAME

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

One of the enduring truisms of American criminological practice is that of the high correlation between being black and criminality. Explanations ranging from genetic deficiencies to economic deprivation have been advanced to account for the phenomenon. Implicit in these explanatory accounts has been the assumption that the American phenomenon is of universal significance. This thesis seeks to find out whether the dynamics of black homicide in Canada are the same as or different from what obtains in the United States. Of special importance to this research effort are the economic deprivation and culture of violence theories of homicide behavior.

Using a 1961-83 Canadian homicide data set generated by Statistics Canada, answers are sought for a number of questions. Important among these are the social and demographic characteristics of black homicide offenders in Canada, characteristics of their victims, circumstances under which they kill, and how these patterns differ from those of other racial groups. The purpose of all these is to ascertain whether differences exist between the American and Canadian homicide situations.

Results show that unlike what persists in the United States, the homicide behavior of blacks in Canada does not radically differ from that of whites and aboriginal peoples. The implications of this for homicide-related criminological theory and research are explored.

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This thesis marks the end of a turbulent two year study period. Various personalities have contributed immensely to the successful completion of this project. In the first place, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Leslie W. Kennedy who accepted to supervise the thesis without any reservations. My thanks also go to Drs. Bob Silverman and R. C. McLeod whose immense intellectual resources and critical insights proved invaluable at various stages of this project. To David Forde, whose computing skills made it possible for this project to get off the drawing board, I say a big thank you!.

Most important of all, my deepest gratitude goes to my parents, Gershon Kwasi Avakame (of blessed memory) and Irene Esinu Otsyina, whose limitless vision and heroic refusal to be prisoners of their circumstances have gotten me this far. This work shall remain a living monument in their memory.

This ackowledgement cannot end without the mention of my loving wife, Florence, who had to witness and share my frustrations during the most trying phases of the project. Her's is also a big thank you. All errors of judgement and fact, however, remain my sole responsibility.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Whatever the underlying factors, report Shin and associates, homicide is a major cause of death among American blacks and has been increasing steadily. In 1974, for instance, almost 11,000 of the 237,000 deaths of non-whites in the United States, the overwhelming majority of whom were black, were from homicide. More than 6% of black males [illegible] died during this year were victims of homicide a[illegible] over 2% of black females. The probability that a male black baby will die at some age from homicide is almost 5%. For black females the probability is one per hundred. The corresponding figures for white males and females are 0.5% and 0.2% respectively. Black males have a higher probability of dying from homicide than they do from a motor vehicle accident. Compared with homicide, infectious and parasitic diseases are of little menace to American blacks (Shin et al. 1977:399,405).

Twelve years later, the situation is no different. In 1986, there were an estimated 20,613 murders in the United States (U. S.). This represents an increase of 9% over the 1985 total. On the average, 9 out of every 100,000 U. S. inhabitants were murder victims in 1986. Supplemental data provided by contributing agencies recorded information for 19,257 of the estimated 20,613 murders that occured. Based on this information, 75% of the murder victims were males and 91% were persons 18 years of age and older. Forty-nine percent were aged 20-24 years. Considering victims for whom

race was known, an average of 53% were white, 44% were black, and the remainder were persons of other races. Data based on incidents involving one victim and one offender showed that 95% of the black murder victims were slain by black offenders and 88% of white victims were slain by white offenders (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States 1986:8-9).

Carolyn Block (1987:51-52), reporting results of an inquiry into patterns of Chicago homicide occurring between 1965 and 1981, indicates that homicides involving blacks either as victims or offenders account for almost 70% of the total. The white victimization rate per hundred thousand was 6 in 1970 and 8 in 1980 compared to 56 in 1970 and 49 in 1980 for blacks. Curiously enough, even among police officers, blacks are more likely than whites to be murdered. The situation has become so alarming that the United Stated Department of Health and Human Services has specifically targeted young black males between ages 15 and 24, who are at the highest risk, for homicide reduction programs (Hawkins 1985:83-86).

These patterns are no different from what Wolfgang (1958) found in his path-breaking analysis of almost 600 cases of Philadelphia homicide occurring between 1948 and 1952. He reported that 75% of the offenders were black while blacks constituted only 18% of the city's population. The black male offence rate of 41.7 per 100,000 was fifteen times that of white males. In addition black males 60-64

years old killed as frequently as white males in their early twenties. Similar patterns have been documented for Houston (Pokorny 1965; Lundsgaarde 1977), Detroit (Boudouris 1970), and Atlanta (Munford et al. 1976). On the whole, the variance in these patterns across the country appears to be minimal.

Given the consistently high rates of homicide among blacks in comparison with those of other racial groups in the United States one would have expected that more careful attention would have been paid to the temporal, spatial, and other dimensions of black homicide (Hawkins 1985:89). Most researchers who have studied black homicide have only been interested in black-white comparisons and have rarely examined the patterns within the black community itself. Consequently, the theoretical question of why black homicide rates are so high remains a matter of speculation (Hawkins 1985:89-90). Inferences are mainly drawn from results of analytic efforts that consider homicide as a monolithic phenomenon. As Block (1987) has pointed out, in the very real, sense the monolithic crime of homicide does not exist. There is no chance of developing prevention programs for homicide as a whole. Homicide figures cannot be very illuminating unless they are calculated for separate types of circumstances, and unless separate analyses are conducted for each combined age-gender-racial/ethnic group.

Sampson (1985:49) has pointed out that to the extent that individual level prevalence of offending among blacks

is overwhelming we should expect a positive relationship between percent black and aggregate crime rates across areas, due only to the effect of racial composition. This result is not explicable because high black offense rates, as compared to those of whites, will induce a high positive correlation between percent black and crime rates. What is crucial, however, continues Sampson, is that the aggregate correlation does not necessarily tell us anything about the contextual effects of race-specific offenses. The aggregate rate does not allow the separation of city racial composition from individual level effects of the race-specific offender. There exists the possibility, for instance, that black offence rates are correlated positively, unrelated or negatively correlated to percent black. Each of these results is consistent with a positive effect of percent black on aggregate crime rates. In the presence of large inter-group differences, aggregate rates obscure contextual and compositional effects (1985:80).

Hawkins (1985:95) points out that much as it can be said that homicide, like all other problems of the poor, can be remedied successfully only through major political and socioeconomic changes, this can only be a longer term goal, the accomplishment of which is very unlikely, at least, in the short run. If homicide prevention strategies cannot await the large-scale social reorganization that is implicit in the macro-social analysis and its remedial prescriptions, then it is important that various situational and individual

level correlates of homicide be intergrated with the macro-level aggregate analysis to yield more fruitful insights. The manner in which data are recorded present formidable problems for the deciphering of contextual effects. However, analysis of demographically disaggregated arrest rates presents a useful alternative to the analysis of contextual data.

The homicide situation among American blacks makes black people an interesting group for examination within other social contexts. This is what this study seeks to accomplish. Specifically it seeks to examine the homicidal behavior of blacks in Canada and the relevance of the theoretical and empirical insights derived from the American situation 3 for the Canadian phenomenon. To this end, research papers on the homicide situation in America are extensively reviewed as a prelude to analysis of the data. The study shall address the following questions:

- What are the social and demographic characteristics of black homicide offenders in Canada?
- What kinds of people do they kill?
- What are the circumstances under which they kill?
- What are the trends in the homicidal behavior of black offenders over the time span under consideration?
- What is the proportionate contribution of blacks to Canadian homicide statistics, compared with other racial groups?
- How do answers to these questions compare with the

existing research results on the homicide behaviour of blacks in the United States?

Excluding the introductory chapter, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first examines previous research on homicide in the United States. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section surveys the the existing literature on the dynamics of black homicide in the United States. The second section takes a look at the various ways in which the economic deprivation variable has been conceptualized and used in researh on homicide. The next section examines those studies which posit cultures of violence as the key explanatory variable. Part four then discusses the works of those researchers who are attempting to synthesize the economic deprivation and culture of violence theoretical perspectives in homicide research. The second chapter takes a look at the Canadian context in which black homicide (the subject of the thesis) is examined. The third chapter reports the source of the data and the results of the analysis. The final chapter discusses the the theoretical and empirical implications of the results and outlines some suggestions for further research.

II. RESEARCH ON HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES

A. DYNAMICS OF BLACK HOMICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES

Munford et al. (1976:60-71), analyzing homicide trends in Atlanta for the period 1961-62 and 1971-72 (743 cases in all) found out that in 1971-72, 66% of all black victims were killed in the home. The comparable figure for 1961-62 was 70%. Of these, 87% were killed by acquaintances. In 1971-72, 55% of blacks were killed in public as opposed to 16% of whites. Firearms were used in 48% of white homicides in 1961-62 and 74% in 1971-72 (for blacks it is 62% in 1961-62 and 74% in 1971-72). Black homicides occured more often at the weekend (Friday to Sunday) than during the rest of the week. This was true for both homicides occurring in the home and in public. This did not occur in the case of white homicide. Approximately 20% of white victims were killed by blacks while 0.2% of blacks were killed by whites. The assailants in inter-racial homicides were almost always strangers with the homicides most frequently occurring in public.

For each of the variables studied as indicators of socio-economic status - percent of families below the poverty line, percent of households with more than one person per room, percent of high school graduates twenty five years and older, total homicide rates were higher for census tracts with residents of lower socioeconomic status. The association between homicide rates and socioeconomic

status was most pronounced for cases in which the victim and assailant were relatives or acquaintances. For both races, stranger-stranger rates did not correlate with census tracts of low socioeconomic status.

While Munford et al.'s (1985) analyses were largely bivariate, Sampson (1985:60-71) provides results of multivariate analysis of race-specific homicide offense rates for the fifty-five largest cities (population greater than 250,000) of the United States in 1970. Results indicate that percent black does not have a significant effect on either black or white homicide offense rates. Moreover, even though its effect is insignificant, a comparison of the regression coefficients suggests that percent black has a stronger influence on white homicide offense rates than black rates although the logic of the culture of violence thesis suggests otherwise. Meanwhile, unemployment, income inequality, and poverty exerted significant influences on black homicide offense rates. When the race-specific offense rates were disaggregated by sex, percent black still failed to attain statistical significance while unemployment and income inequality were significantly related to both white and black male offense rates. An interesting finding that emerged was that the unemployment and income inequality variables showed a negative relationship with race-specific homicide offense rates while poverty showed positive effects.

In a subsequent paper, Sampson (1987) dismissed these rather 'unpopular' findings on the relationship between unemployment and homicide rates as an artifact of poor specification. Sampson suggested that joblessness exerts its influence on homicide rates through its impact on family disruption. Analytic efforts that specify the relationship as a direct one are, therefore, bound to run into difficulties.

In testing this hypothesis, he examined the race-specific rates of robbery and homicide for juveniles and adults in over 150 cities in the United States for the year 1980. His focus was on black homicide (1987:347). He re-emphasized the now familiar fact that race is one of the strongest predictors of social dislocation in the United States. Black communities are characterized by disproportionately high rates of drug addiction, welfare dependency, out-of-wedlock births, teenage pregnancies, and female-headed households. Black offenders account for approximately 61% of robbery rates and 55% of homicide arrests while representing only 11% of the general population (1987:348-349).

Despite the seriousness of these problems, he argued, theoretical and empirical analyses of urban black social dislocation, especially the extent to which criminal violence is linked to patterns of family structure are weak. Also the theoretical attention that has been focused on these issues has tended to ignore the role of black male

joblessness (1987:350). He cited evidence from Wilson and colleagues (Wilson 1978, 1984; Wilson & Neckerman 1985; Wilson & Aponte 1985) to argue that the increasing dislocations in black families can be tied to the increasing difficulty of finding a marriage partner with stable employment. There is sufficient evidence to the effect that income and occupational status are inversely related to marital instability. In brief, he concluded, an accumulating body of evidence suggests that the labour market marginality of black males and the accompanying economic hardships have profound negative implications for the black community, particularly for black women with children (1987:350-352).

Family disruption stemming from male joblessness in black communities may, in turn, have important implications for explaining crime. Though inconclusive, there is some evidence that marital instability has a negative impact on juvenile delinquency. Also family and marital disruption may decrease social controls at the community level. Another potential consequence of family disruption for communities is attenuated social control. Two parent households provide increased supervision and guardianship not only for their own children and household property but also for community activities. If most delinquents have similar friends and commit delinquent acts in groups, the awareness and supervision of peer group and gang activity is not simply dependent on a child's family but on networks of social control. The single-parent family gives the community only

one parent to know and hence reduce the potential linkages which can be invoked for social control (1987:352-353).

Based on this theoretical discourse he hypothesized that variations in rates of black family disruption should be positively related to rates of black criminal offending. To the extent that the disruption of families is linked primarily to the social control of juveniles, the effect of family structure should be strongest for juveniles. Nevertheless, since family disruption is hypothesized to generally increase the opportunities for crime, and since disproportionate numbers of those who are divorced or separated in a population may be indicative of family instability, disorientations, and conflict in adult personal relationships, community family disruption should be expected to relate positively and significantly to adult criminality as well (1987:354).

He used as exogenous variables employed black males per 100 married women (computed as a Male Marriage Pool Index (MMPI)), the black median age, black per capita income, mean black welfare payment, dummy variables for northern and western regions, structural density, population size, and percent of the population that is black. Also included in the model was one endogenous variable - the percent of black households headed by females. The results of his OLS regression analysis indicated that the strongest predictor of black juvenile homicide is family disruption (0.41) followed by population size (0.22). For black adult

homicide, family disruption had a much weaker effect. Although the MMPI had no direct effect on black juvenile homicide it had a substantial indirect effect (-0.19) mediated by family disruption. Male joblessness also had a non-trivial indirect effect (-0.10) on black adult homicide mediated by family disruption. As with homicide, the effect of the male joblessness variable - MMPI was twice the magnitude of any other indirect effect. To assess the generality of his findings, Sampson applied the same logic and variables to white offense rates. He obtained identical results. The residuals of the black and white models were positively related, suggesting that there are common structural factors accounting for variations in criminal violence. The effects of male joblessness and family instability were independent of commonly cited alternative explanations - poverty, region, urbanization, age, and racial composition. These results, suggested Sampson, provide a possible solution to the mystery of why unemployment and economic deprivation have been shown to have weak and inconsistent effects on crime rates in past research. Having surveyed the research on the dynamics of black homicide and the controversy surrounding economic deprivation as an underlying factor, the discussion now turns to the review of studies that have examined the various dimensions of the relationship between economic deprivation and homicide.

B. ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AS A FACTOR IN HOMICIDE

On the whole, mainstream research efforts that have attempted to explain the high levels of homicide in the United States have advanced from two broad theoretical perspectives. These are the 'economic deprivation' perspective and the 'culture of violence' perspective. [1] The economic deprivation model embraces two related perspectives. In the first (eg. Merton 1957; Braithwaite 1979; Krahn et al. 1986; Blau and Blau 1982), it is argued that evaluating their position in relative terms some people are distressed by their relative economic disadvantage. This generates frustration which leads to crime. The second aspect seeks to account for high rates of crime in terms of absolute poverty. This perspective sees crime as arising out of the difficulties in meeting the economic needs of everyday life.

The research on the relationship between economic deprivation and crime can also be divided into three primary categories (Krohn 1976:304)

- studies examining the relationship between social class and crime,
- studies examining the influence of unemployment and/or income inequality on crime and/or deliquency,

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[1]By mainstream research I mean those analytic efforts that failed to distinguish between the homicidal behaviour of the various ethnic/racial groups but proceeded on the implicit assumption that homicide is a monolithic phenomenon and, for that matter, insights deriving from the total phenomenon can be used to pass judgement on the homicide behaviour of blacks.

- studies examining the effect of fluctuations of the business cycle on the crime rate.

In a review of previous research on the relationship between inequality and crime, Krohn (1976) concluded that the results are inconclusive partly because the data are drawn from different sources, and also because of the failure to agree on what inequality means. In another review of previous research on the common notion that economic inequality begets crime, Krahn et al. (1986) also came to the conclusion that there is no consensus on what exactly this means. For example, they noted, Braithwaite and Braithwaite (1980), and Krohn (1976) offer no interpretation of the relationship; Hansman and Quigley (1982) refer to economic frustration and relative poverty; MacDonald (1976) referred to a sense of injustice or resentment; La Free and Kick (1983) considered the relationship in terms of the possibility of zero-sum conflict among rival political and economic groups.

The majority of the most recent articles on economic deprivation as a factor in homicidal behavior in the United States use Messner (1982, 1983) as the point of reference. Messner (1982) examined the regional differences in the correlates of urban homicide rates. In this article he explored the possibility of significant regional differences in the nature of the association existing between the economic correlates of crime. He made a distinction between absolute deprivation: defined as the proportion of

population below a fixed standard of well being, and relative deprivation defined as the relative dispersion of incomes within a population.

Messner (1982:105) addressed as his principal question the issue of whether the homicide rate is more accurately predicted by measures of poverty corresponding to the relative deprivation measure or by measures reflecting absolute poverty. He used the FBI Uniform Crime Report for 1970 to extract homicide rates for a sample of 204 Standard Statistical Metropolitan Areas (SMSA). He also used as his dependent variable the rate of murder and non-negligent murder per 100,000 of population and used for his two principal independent variables a gini measure of family income inequality, and the proportion of people living below the United States Social Security Administration's poverty line. The gini measure is considered a common measure of dispersion that can be understood as the ratio of the average income difference between pairs of recipients in an SMSA to the average income. In order to minimize specification errors, he introduced three control variables into the model. These variables are reputed to have high correlations with the urban homicide rates. They are the proportion of the population that is black in an SMSA, a dummy variable score of 1 if the SMSA is in the former confederate south, the size of the population aged 15-29, the natural log of the total population size, and the natural log of population per square mile.

His ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results indicated a moderately positive association (0.44) between the gini coefficient of income inequality and the homicide rate. The absolute measure of poverty also exhibited a positive correlation (0.29) with the homicide rate. However, the magnitude of this coefficient was noticeably lower than that for the relative measure. The strongest associations reported were for the proportion of the population that is black (0.72) and the regional dummy variable for the south (0.61). Controlling for these, the gini variable ceased to attain statistical significance. The absolute measure of poverty showed a statistically significant but negative relationship with the homicide rate. These findings, for Messner, raise some perplexing questions, given the extensive theoretical work linking crime and economic deprivation.

In a related article, Messner (1983) examined the same issue using a sample of 347 American cities. The analysis was carried out for southern and non-southern cities respectively. Using the same independent variables in estimating the model, the association between income inequality and the homicide rate was almost identical for the two regional samples (r=0.30 and r=0.32). The associations for the absolute poverty measure did exhibit a higher magnitude for southern cities (r=0.70) than northern cities (r=0.13). These findings, for Messner, again raise doubts about the utility of the gini measure of income

inequality as a predictor of rates of criminal homicide. As a summary measure, Messner speculated, it may be that the gini measure is insensitive to the kinds of inequality most relevant for violent crimes.

Blau and Blau (1982) also investigated the effects of economic deprivation on violent crime. Their hypothesis on the relationship between economic inequality and violence derives from Blau's (1977) macro-sociological theory. They speculated that any specific form of inequality engenders pervasive conflict which finds expression in high incidence of criminal violence (1982:117).

Three concepts central to the theory from which their hypotheses are drawn are heterogeneity defined as the size distribution of a population along nominal lines such as race and ethnicity; inequality - defined by distribution based on a hierarchical ordering such as income differentials; and the extent to which two or more dimensions of social differences are correlated and consolidated with status distinctions. Their hypothesis states that socioeconomic inequalities which are associated with ascribed positions and thereby consolidating and reinforcing ethnic and class differences engender pervasive conflicts in a democracy. Pronounced ascriptive inequalities transform the experience of poverty, for many, into a hereditary permanent state of being one of the poor. This generates diffuse hostilities which are manifested in criminal violence.

The Blaus tested their hypothesis using 1970 data for SMSAs with a population of 250,000 (N=125). The source of the data for their independent variables was a one-in-a hundred public use sample for counties as defined by the United States Bureau of the Census. The homicide data was adapted from the UCR. The homicide rate was logarithmically transformed due to its skewed distribution. As in the Messner studies, the overall income inequality was measured by the gini index of family income concentration. The proportion of people in poverty was also based on the United States Social Security Administration-defined poverty line. Like Messner, the Blaus also used the proportion of the population that is black to evaluate subcultural explanations of criminal violence. They introduced a variable, racial inequality, to measure the average socioeconomic status differentials between blacks and whites. As an indicator of the level of social disorganization they used the proportion of people 14 years or older who are divorced or separated. They also controlled for population size on the assumption that as the size of the population increases opportunities for personal contact and conflict increases, and hence an increase in the likelihood of criminal violence. The Blaus, like Messner, found no support for the argument that poverty leads to homicide. However, in the Blaus' model inequality explained away much of the evidence supporting subcultural influences.

Bailey (1984) questioned the legitimacy of the assertion by Messner that the relationship between poverty, inequality, and criminal violence needs to to be reassessed. He suggested that it is Messner's findings which are rather in need of re-evaluation. Bailey could not see how Messner's findings alone can call into question the long line of research results confirming the relationship between poverty and other indicators of poor economic conditions, and criminal violence.

Bailey's biggest concern was with the legitimacy of Messner's units of analysis - SMSAs (1984:534). SMSAs, Bailey argued, are not anywhere near homogenous social entities with respect to crime and sociodemographic characteristics as Messner claimed. For example, for the 204 SMSAs Messner considered for 1970, the mean homicide rate was 7.10 per 100,000 of population. This compares with a rate of 10.0 for counties in the 100,000-250,000 population range, 14.7 for those between 250,000-500,000, 18.4 for those between 500,000 and one million, and 17.5 for cities over one million. This important variation, Bailey pointed out, is masked when rates are computed on the basis of the total number of murders in an SMSA or the population when the ratio of the city population to the SMSA population varies tremendously from one SMSA to the other.

Similarly, maintains Bailey, SMSAs are quite diverse sociodemographically. For the 204 SMSAs Messner considered for 1970, 9.8% of the total population was black, 9.8% was

below the poverty line, and the average Gini coefficient was 0.34. In contrast, in SMSAs having a city with a population of 100,000 or more, an average of 17.3% of the city population was black, 10.4% of the families were below the poverty line, and the average gini value was 0.38. On sheer mathematical grounds, Bailey concluded, there are no doubts that SMSAs cannot be units of observation in the computation and analysis of the relationship between crime rates and sociodemographic indices. Moreover, as Messner himself pointed out (1982:112), it is doubtful whether SMSAs provide the relevant frames of reference in the assessment of economic well-being and relative deprivation. However, when Bailey replicated Messner's analysis, using cities rather than SMSAs as the units of analysis, he also failed to find the expected relationship between income inequality and homicide rates. Nevertheless, the proportion of people below the poverty line showed a positive and significant relationship with homicide rates.

For Williams (1984), the equivocal findings on the relationship between poverty and homicide rates is due to a specification error of mistaking a non-linear relationship for a linear one. When the non-linearity is taken into account, the result should corroborate the view that economic deprivation leads to violent crime. In a critical review of Messner and the Blaus, Williams insisted on the use of SMSAs as units of analysis. For him, the argument that states and SMSAs are mere statistical aggregates can

equally apply to cities in that they are also delimited by arbitrary political boundaries. It has also been shown by Gibbs and Erickson (1976), Williams further argues, that cities having boundaries which do not embrace most of the SMSA population tend to have inflated official crime rates since non-city residents visit the cities and inflate crime statistics by getting involved both as victims and offenders. In the compilation of crime rates they are excluded from the population base which is used as the denominator. Cities may also have greater concentrations of poverty inside city limits and wealth outside these limits. If these conjectures are true, the size of cities ,like SMSAs are likely to bias estimated effects of poverty and inequality on the homicide rate (1984:184-225).

An alternative viewpoint, Williams further noted, can be that the inequality-leading-to-homicide argument rests on the assumption that residents of these cities evaluate their positions in comparative terms and react violently. This argument becomes implausible when one considers the fact that the social context within which the evaluation is said to take place is not well defined. SMSAs, like cities, are rather large heterogenous entities. Regular patterns of interpersonal interaction between people who live in central cities and the residents of surbubs are unlikely. Given these considerations, Williams concluded, it is difficult to imagine how residents of cities become aware of the level of income inequalities within the city, and given the generally

higher rates of homicide in the central cities as compared to their suburbs, it is difficult to imagine how city-wide inequalities, assuming that residents are aware of them, translate into homicides concentrated in city centers (1984:285). For Williams, then, the distinction between city and SMSA in the calculation of homicide rates is a sterile one.

Correcting for the non-linearities in the economic deprivation variable, Williams found out that the log of the percent poor variable has a significant positive effect on the log of the homicide rate. However, unlike the Blaus, he found the gini variable statistically insignificant, with its magnitude reducing considerably (1984:288). Williams offers two possible explanations for his findings. Since the logs of the percent poor and gini variables are highly correlated (r=0.778), the effect of poverty is absorbed by the inequality variable. Secondly, since the coefficient representing the effect of regional location on the homicide rate is reduced significantly, in contrast with its behaviour in the Messner models, and is no longer statistically significant, there is the possibility of important interactions among regional location, poverty, and the homicide rate (1984:289).

Loftin and Parker (1985) view the inconsistencies in the findings concerning the relationship between economic deprivation and homicide as an artifact of flaws in the measurement of the income variable on which the

specification is based. For them, the measure of poverty contains errors which are confounded with the disturbance term in the models they estimate. The poverty measure used by the Blaus, Messner, Williams, and others is the percent of the population living below a poverty threshold as defined by the United States Social Security Administration. A number of sources of error in this definition of poverty can be outlined. In the first place, they pointed out, if we begin the theoretical definition of poverty as the inability of a person to purchase the necessities of life as Messner did (1982:103), it follows that the poverty line can only be a crude surrogate since it is based solely on income and does not reflect either geographic variation in cost of living or in resources other than income. Even if income is measured without error, the poverty line definition is hopelessly flawed as an operational definition of well-being since income is only one of the factors influencing one's ability to purchase a healthy life (1985:271-272).

Another problem of economic deprivation measures based on the level of income is that income measurements are largely inaccurate. The most significant source of error is underenumeration. For example, the United States Bureau of the Census estimated that in the 1970 census 2.5% of the population was missed. This margin of error is of considerable significance since underenumeration varies systematically with income so that the error is greatest among the poor. Moreover, blacks and southerners who are

disproportionately poor are more likely to be missed than other groups. For example, the Census Bureau's estimate for the undercoverage of black males is 10%, approaching 20% in some age groups.

All the above notwithstanding, respondents also routinely make errors in reporting their incomes. Research based on interviews with persons included in the 1960 census found rather large discrepancies in actual and reported income, the discrepancy being particularly large among the low income groups. It is, therefore not very much surprising the indices of income inequality based on such data produce inconsistent and inaccurate results.

Noting these flaws in previous research efforts, they re-estimated the effect of poverty on homicide rates using the infant mortality rate as an instrumental variable. It is especially well suited, they claim, because it is a firmly established correlate of poverty and is derived from a data collection system which is independent of and different from the census. On the theoretical side, they argued, epidemiological research has identified many factors influencing the risk of infant mortality that are closely tied to conditions at the lower end of social stratification scales. These include such factors as the number and timing of pre-natal medical examinations, type of delivery services, nutrition of mother and child, and the general health of the mother (1985:273). The second advantage they identified with the infant mortality rate is that it is

based on information derived from the vital registration system, a system which is relatively accurate and independent of the census. The statistics used in the calculation of the infant mortality rate are the number of deaths of infants under one year old and the average number of live births (1985:274). The rest of their model followed the outline specified by Messner (1982) and others after him. The dependent variable was the homicide rate. Also included in the model was the proportion of people under the poverty line. The sample was composed of the largest 49 cities in the United States in 1970.

As hypothesized, the poverty line variable was positively correlated with the murder rate and the infant mortality rate. Contrasting the OLS and instrumental variable estimates of the model, the OLS estimate of poverty was positive but not statistically significant, while the instrumental variable estimate was three times as large and clearly significant. In the instrumental variable model, the infant mortality rate replaced the proportion of people under the poverty line as the indicator of poverty. They went on to disaggregate the data according to victim-offender relationships. Results of the analyses for the separate homicide categories revealed a stronger effect of poverty in the instrumental variable estimates than the OLS estimates. Region did not attain statistical significance in any of the models.

Like the controversy surrounding the relationship between poverty, both absolute and relative, and violent crime, the nature of the relationship between unemployment and violent crime is yet to be agreed upon. For example, homicide and imprisonment were investigated in a study for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress (JEC). The report was entitled *Estimating the Social Costs of National Economic Policy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health and Criminal Aggression (JEC 1976).* The purpose of that study was to estimate the importance of changes in the economy, especially recession, on measures of social stress in the broad areas defined by the title. Data on various social indicators covering the period 1940 to 1974 were analyzed. The JEC 1976 showed that the unemployment rate, at a distributed lag over five years, was positively associated with the homicide and imprisonment rates, and with all other indices of social pathology. The analysis controlled for economic growth, possible influences of the second world war, inflation, and changes in the proportion of the population aged 16-29 years. It was assumed that the stressful effect of the recession would occur over several years as a result of permanent downward mobility, breakdown in families and other social ties, and pathological use of alcohol and other psychotropic substances that are likely to occur, as reactions to stress, among certain subgroups within the population. Another interpretation of the distributed lag relationship was that several years of

negative change in the unemployment rate had a cumulative effect on the homicide rate (Brenner & Swank 1986:22).

In a follow up study, JEC 1982, the principal report for homicide was generated by regressing the age adjusted national homicide rate on seven explanatory variables for the years 1951-1980. Five of these variables measured alcohol and drug use. The remaining two measured variations in the annual change in the real per capita disposable personal income and the ratio of the unemployment rate of males aged 16-24 years to the national unemployment rate. The results of this analysis largely corroborated conclusions drawn from the JEC 1976.

Cook and Zarkin (1986) questioned the accuracy of the JEC conclusions concerning the validity of the relationship between recession, unemployment, and the homicide rate. They expressed serious doubts about the procedures used in the specifications and concluded that it would be inappropriate to base economic policy on the information contained in the JEC reports or receive that information into the fold of conventional criminological wisdom. Brenner and Swank (1986) retorted by arguing that Cook and Zarkin's assertions were flawed by errors of fact, errors of interpretation, and inappropriate use of standard analytic methods.

For South and Cohen (1985) this kind of confusion is based on the inability to distinguish between the level and pace of change in unemployment. They set out to demonstrate that when analytic attention is given simultaneously to the

level of unemployment and the pace of change in unemployment, the historic relationship between the unemployment rate and crime becomes intelligible and more interpretable through conventional sociological theory (1985:326).

Popular wisdom, they noted, suggests that crime rates should rise when the economy contracts and unemployment increases. One of the best known theoretical formulations of this line of thought is Merton's (1938) strain theory of criminal behaviour. Implicit in Merton's formulation is the hypothesis that economic contraction blocks legitimate avenues for the attainment of approved cultural goals, generating, among other possible responses, the motivation to engage in various types of criminal behaviour (South & Cohen 1985:326).

On the other hand, the relationship between crime and the unemployment rate can be an inverse one. Cohen and associates (Cohen and Felson 1979a, 1979b; Cohen, Felson, and Land 1980) have offered an explanation focusing on the impact of high unemployment on routine activity patterns of the general population and, in turn, how changes in the routine activities affect the opportunities for predatory crime (South & Cohen 1985:327). A general proposition of the routine activity approach suggests that any increase in the concentration of activities outside those households which are composed of individuals related to each other by family ties would contribute to increases in the level of predatory

crime by exposing persons and/or property to greater risks of criminal victimization. An expanding economy may, therefore, contribute to rising crime rates in so far as this leads to a deconcentration of sustenance and leisure activities within family-based households.

South and Cohen (1985:330) have, therefore, argued that the level of unemployment, at best, is indicative of opportunities for criminal activity but cannot account for motivation to commit crime. This is because perceptions of economic hardship develop in a dynamic context. The unavailability of the means to achieve cultural goals generate discontent if they were available in a prior period. Prolonged unemployment, on the other hand, is unlikely to raise sharply the motivation or impulse to aggress, although it may result in other types of adaptation (1985:330). In short, they concluded, it is reasonable to suggest that in the aggregate, homicidal impulses and motives respond more to sharp deterioration in the economy than to static levels of economic activity. The direction of the empirical relationship between unemployment and homicide rates depends on whether the unemployment is conceptualized as a static or dynamic phenomenon.

Bringing data to bear on these hypotheses, they estimated dynamic OLS regression models for the period 1974 to 1979 for the United States. Their two critical independent variables - the level of unemployment and unemployment change were measured by civilian unemployment

rate, and unemployment in year(t) minus unemployment in year(t-1) respectively. Their socioeconomic data were taken from the Bureau of the Census (1975) and the Department of Commerce (various years). They controlled for the influence of persons of age 15-24 as a proportion of the total population; the availability of firearms by cumulating annually the number of firearms produced in, and imported into the United States; and finally, routine activity patterns operationalized as a household activity ratio calculated by adding the number of married-husband present-female labour force participants to the number of non-husband-wife households. Allowing for the possibility that the exogenous variables may take one or more years to affect the the homicide rate, a lagged endogenous variable was added to the right hand side of the equation (1985:330-332)

Results of their analysis showed that the level of unemployment (unemployment in year(t)) is significantly and negatively related to the homicide rate; suggesting that homicides increase when unemployment is low. On the other hand, the unemployment change variable was significantly and positively associated with the homicide rate (1985:336). The key to the interpretation of these results, they suggested, lies in the distinction between impulse and/or motivation, and opportunity as distinct factors affecting human behaviour. High rates of unemployment, they postulated, reduce homicide rates because they remove individuals from

transit locations where motivated offenders are apt to be present and capable guardians are apt to be absent. On the other hand, low rates of unemployment increase the spatial friction of persons thus bringing greater numbers of individuals into close proximity, increasing the number of personal contacts that can culminate into criminal violence. These assertions, however, do not seem to be consistent with the large body of research findings which locate a large number of homicides in the home. South and Cohen do not stand alone. Sampson (1985:71) also found a negative relationship between the level of unemployment and homicide rates.

While the various competing versions of the economic deprivation theory are still disputing the nature of the relationship between economic deprivation and the crime of homicide, other scholars have turned to the cultural milieu of the offences as the chief explanatory variable. While not debunking the economic deprivation thesis, these theorists argue that minority groups suffering residential and cultural isolation develop what has been termed 'cultures of violence' which condone violence and physical aggression as normative in social interation. In such cultural contexts, the normative acceptance of violence promotes the use of lethal force in interpersonal conflicts and disputations, leading to a high frequency of criminal homicide. It is to the examination of this viewpoint that the discussion now turns.

C. CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AS A FACTOR IN HOMICIDE

The systematic formulation of the subculture of violence thesis as a conceptual scheme for the explanation of criminal violence was first carried out by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967). It was formulated with specific reference to blacks in the United States. Essentially, it postulates that minority groups, like blacks in the United States, which suffer residential and cultural isolation from the rest of their communities normally constitute a subcultural area. These areas are usually characterized by poor housing, high population density, overcrowded home conditions, and most importantly, by a system of values that often condone violence and physical aggression, from child rearing processes to adult interpersonal relationships, that sometimes end in criminal slayings. To a lower degree, whites in the lower socioeconomic classes become part of this subculture of violence and participate in criminal homicide (Wolfgang 1967:19). Within this value system, violence is a lifestyle culturally transmitted and shared, a willingness to express disdain, disgruntlement, and other hostile negative feelings in personal interaction by physical force. Also the external expectations of aggression more readily activate internal physiological responses of excitement and the circle of violence circumscribes a situation containing the essential ingredients for assaultive crime (Wolfgang 1967:11-12).

Gastil (1969), using Wolfgang and Ferracuti's formulations on subculture of violence, and Sutherland's theory of differential association, developed a theory of regional culture of violence, in which violence was conceptualised to mean lethal violence, to account for the disproportionately high incidence of crime occurring in the Southern United States. Using an index of Southernness, which assigned a score of thirty to the most purely Southern states and five to the least, he tested his theory using 1950 homicide data for the fifty states. He used seven control variables viz. percent black, percent aged 20-24, median income, urbanization, city size, number of physicians per 1000 population, and population size in the regression analyses of the data. He found a significant amount of the variance in crime rates related to "southernness". He suggested that future researchers should focus attention on factors that give rise to, and sustain this cultural trait, as well as others that account for high homicide rates but unrelated to southern subculture. In a related article Hackney (1968) made similar arguments in favour of the subculture of violence hypothesis.

Loftin and Hill (1974) questioned Gastil and Hackney's conclusions on methodological grounds. They argued that their estimates of the independent effects of regional subculture are based on poor measurement and biased in favour of their findings. For them, unless subculture is measured distinctly and independently of region, the

validity of the results will always be threatened by a large number of cultural variables that are systematically related to region. The socioeconomic variables used by Gastil and Hackney were also said to be poorly specified. Using the same data they computed what they called a 'structural poverty index'. Variables used in the computation of the index are infant mortality rates, percent of population aged 20-25 and older with less than five years of schooling, percent of population illiterate, percent of families with annual incomes less than $1,000, armed forces mental test failures, and percent of children living with one parent. They added a gini index as a measure of income inequality. Controlling for socioeconomic factors, they found no explanatory power associated with region. As suggestion for further research they advocated a clear specification of models that seek to move reseach towards more sophistication in this area.

Doerner (1978:49-56) challenging the tenability of the culture of violence hypothesis and using the arguments of Loftin and Hill (1974) as a point of reference argues that although Loftin and Hill convincingly damage Gastil's argument on the culture of violence, they fail to address adequately any of the theoretical questions raised by him. Doerner argues, for example, that in rejecting Wolfgang and Ferracuti's broader definition of violence in favour of lethal violence as worthy of subcultural analysis, Gastil failed to recognize that the subcultural perspective is not

so much a product of a normatively induced action as it is with the processes giving rise to the acceptance and implementation of these norms. Oddly enough, continues Doerner, Gastil's own statistical analysis undermines the use of the concept of lethal violence as the mark of his subcultural perspective. The high zero order correlation between state homicide rates and hospital beds per 1000 of population and with physicians per 1000 population may be interpreted as indicating that lethal violence is more a function of medical service deprivation than of cultural values. For Doerner, this interpretation is further bolstered by the negative correlations between the southerness index and the hospital variables. While Loftin and Hill gloss over these issues, continues Doerner, they succumb to a much graver logical error. Neither study provides data relevant to violent values while making inferences from ecological data. Using post facto logic Gastil starts with an effect of regional homicide rate differentials and proceeds to mould the historical causes of this effect. This amounts to a hopeless search for untestable causes of homicide rate differentials. Gastil also infers that he proves the adequacy of his causal scheme by empirically negating other possible causes. The Loftin and Hill examination amounts to an empirical refutation of Gastil's reasoning in this vein.

Gastil (1978:60-65) and, Loftin and Hill (1978:56-60) retorted by arguing that Doerner's critique misfired. Among

other things, Gastil replied to his critics by arguing that his thesis was not about regional residency. Many people now living in the North are still affected by southern traditions most specifically blacks in Northern ghettos. The index of southernness was an attempt to transcend this problem. Also, Gastil continued, his theoretical discussion (1971:414-416) points out that lethality may not stem directly from differences in values, his definition of culture does not emphasize norms and values. (No anthropologist will take this one seriously). It is when we look comparatively at the world, Gastil argued, and find out that poverty or another standard sociological variable is not the explanation of a difference in behaviour, and when we find a historical persistence in the difference that we look to a cultural explanation. Culture, then, must be seen as a residual category of explanation after social and biological explanations have been rejected. Statistical regression can seldom be expected to prove cultural causation since cultural differences cause a broad spectrum of behaviours to vary among groups. In any case, concluded Gastil, Doerner, like most social scientists, assumes that people have no traditions. The mass of information available in history, literature, anthropology, case studies, and daily experiences is not available to them.

Dixon and Lizzote (1987), picking up the debate from this point, argued that research designs aimed at evaluating the subculture of violence hypothesis should stop equating

it with membership of a regional group and develop a distinct measure of violent values. They moved in this direction by ascertaining the relationship between three hypothetically related phenomena - region, subculture of violence and gun ownership. They offered a model for predicting gun-ownership (as indicative of subcultural values favouring violence) which specified separately region and subcultural values. Using data from the 1976, 1980, and 1984 General Social Surveys of the National Opinion Research Council, they found no support for the existence of a subculture of violence. Violent values were uncorrelated with region when structural factors were controlled for. They reiterated the call for models that clearly differentiate between regional and structural factors. They further called for the formulation of theories that are capable of synchronizing both perspectives.

Baron and Strauss (1988), responding to the call for the development of indices of violence that are independent of region, constructed a composite index of violence. Variables included in this index include mass media preferences for materials depicting violence, government use of violence, and participation in socially approved violent activities eg. membership of the armed forces. Employing this an index of violence, and analyzing UCR 1980 homicide data for the fifty states, they found no support for the existence of a subculture of violence. They, therefore, concluded that southern region and cultural support for

violence do not have parallel effects on the homicide rate.

Messner (1983), analyzing homicide data at Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) level, and introducing confederate south as a dummy variable into the Loftin and Hill model, found support for the subculture of violence hypothesis. He also found an interaction between region and poverty. He proposed the use of what he called "naturally expressed preferences for art, literature, and leisure activities with predominantly violent themes" as an index for the measurement of violent subculture independent of region.

Much of the contemporary debate regarding the causal factors in the higher rates of homicide in the United States has concentrated on the validity, control, and alterations of independent variables. This carries the implicit assumption that the dependent variable, homicide, is a unidimensional phenomenon (Smith and Parker 1980:139). Some earlier research findings (Wolfgang 1958; Hepburn & Voss 1970; Curtis 1974) suggest that criminal homicide may differ depending on the victim-offender relationship. Using this insight, Smith and Parker (1979,1980) broadly categorized homicide into primary and non-primary. Primary homicides involve friends, families, and acquaintances, while non-primary homicides usually occur in the course of another crime e.g. robbery and rape. In this type of homicide, generally, offenders and victims have no prior relationship (1980:39). These two types of homicide, they argue, can be

conceptualized as having different origins. Primary homicides tend to occur within the context of inter-personal relationships with intimates and are often acts of passion. In contrast, the non-primary homicides are more instrumental, involving some degree of premeditation by the murderer and are less likely to be precipitated by the victim. This distinction, suggest Smith and Parker, could have implications for explaining homicides.

They obtained homicide data from the Uniform Crime Reports division of the FBI on 16,163 cases for 1973. They conducted a state level analysis using as their independent variables percent of the population non-white, percent of the population living in urban areas, percent of the population aged 20-24, number of hospital beds per of 1000 population, a gini measure of income inequality, and a modified version of Loftin and Hill's structural poverty index. Results of their analysis showed that economic deprivation, represented by the structural poverty index is a significant explanatory variable for primary homicides, while the converse was true for non-primary homicides. The only significant explanatory variable that emerged for non-primary homicides was the percent of the population living in urban areas.

Bankston et al. (1985) used the distinctions introduced by Parker and Smith to analyze homicide data within the state of Louisiana. Using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis they compared the determinants

of homicide in parishes/counties with French-Catholic heritage and counties with typical southern American heritage. They hypothesized that southern culture should be extending a greater influence over primary homicide rates since culture of violence may be expected to increase only those forms of violence which involve threats to self esteem of the offender. Unlike Parker and Smith (1980), they found percent of the population that is non-white to be a significant predictor of primary homicide. Despite the inconsistent results it has, at least, been demonstrated that homicide is not a unidimensional phenomenon.

Parker (1988) has suggested that these two perspectives - economic versus cultural - can complement rather than compete with each other. He explored several logical possibilities. In the first place, if violent subcultural norms are a factor causing poverty, and both are simultaneously analyzed, poverty will emerge as the dominant effect with subculture becoming an indirect cause of homicide. Models based on either of the two shall be misspecified. Economic deprivation could be a structural condition conducive to the learning of violent norms. Both could overlap as well, and yet have independent effects on homicide. The consequence of this will be contradictory research findings.

He, therefore, suggested that disaggregating homicide data into victim-offender relationships could considerably untangle the web between poverty, violent norms, and

homicide. Poverty and subcultural indicators should have different effects on different types of homicide:

- family-intimate homicide should be more closely related to economic deprivation than subcultural norms for reasons that deprivation aggression is most likely to be manifested against those closest at hand;
- primary non-intimate homicides are likely to occur in social settings in which subcultural norms are most likely to influence interaction. He cited evidence from social psychological research on small groups (Crosbie 1975; Schaeter 1951) to support this claim;
- homicides occurring during robberies should be more closely associated with economic deprivation factors because robbery is a crime which has clear economic motives;
- homicides which occur during such other crimes as rape, drug related crimes, and prison gang related crimes can be seen as relating subcultural norms in one degree or the other.

D. EFFORTS AT SYNTHESIS

Parker and associates (Parker 1988; Parker & Toth 1988; Parker & Colony 1987) have started work towards a synthesis of micro and macro social dimensions of homicide research. They have taken concepts that have proved useful in micro-level research tradition of family violence and developed macro-level indicators therefrom. This, they

argue, has advantages over the macro down to the micro level to the extent that the conceptual content on the macro social variable and the behaviour represented by the micro concept are subsumed by the macro level indicator. The macro level indicator may also contain other conceptual content, but the micro-social behaviour is certainly part of the macro-social phenomenon.

Their dependent variables are still homicide rates disaggregated by victim-offender relationships, although the disaggregation is at a finer level than that introduced earlier by Parker and Smith (1979), and Smith and Parker (1980). Primary homicides are disaggregated into four categories: family intimate - those occurring betwen spouses; family non-intimate - those occurring between family members who are not known to have an intimate social relationship; primary intimate - homicides occurring between intimate partners who are not legally married; and primary non-intimate - those occurring among friends and acquaintances who are not intimately related to one another. Several hypotheses have been suggested:
Family intimate (inter-spousal) homicide should be more closely related to economic deprivation measures than subcultural norms. The frustration-aggression thesis which largely informs the economic deprivation perspective suggests that those closest at hand are most likely to be victims of attacks in households suffering from economic stress. Straus' (1980) research on family violence amply

documents this fact. Primary non-intimate homicides (among friends and acquaintances) are likely to occur in relatively public social settings in which subcultural norms are most likely to exert the greatest influence on behaviour expectations. In such settings as drinking bars etc., individuals who are derogated in one way or the other, rather than shying away, are most likely to be up defending their honour to any lengths, not excluding homicide, if the cultural norms so dictate. Shying away from such a challenge will only attract sanctions in the form ridicule, ostracism, or both. If a subculture of violence does really exist in which violence is a normative response to certain situations, the social contexts in which the primary non-intimate homicides occur should make these acts particularly responsive to subcultural indicators. Homicides occurring during robberies should be more related to economic deprivation indicators since robbery is a crime with clear economic motives. Most often, the rationale behind robberies is the acquisition of an economic good. The victim may or may not be killed depending upon the circumstances. In instances in which the victim gets killed, the killing would be for the purpose of facilitating the crime. Other felony homicides under the category of rape, as well as drug and gang related homicides should be more closely related to subcultural indicators. The situation can be a bit tricky here if we consider the fact that those committing these crimes are most likely to come from the

lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Nevertheless, Parker has cited evidence from previous research to support this hypothesis viz. drugs (Becker 1953), gangs (Matza & Sykes 1961; Spagel 1964), rape (Brownmiller 1975; Smith & Bennet 1985). Parker concludes: "For these homicides, as is the case for primary non-intimate homicides, the offenders' perception of norms and expectations in certain social situations as well as conflict between the expectations of the offender and the victim, should be more clearly connected to homicide in urban areas (p. 11).

They derived explanatory variables from current major theoretical perspectives in homicide research. Indicators derived from the macro-structural prespective include low income and infant mortality rates as indicators of absolute poverty and gini index of income inequality as a measure or relative deprivation. From the subculture of violence perspective they utilized the percent of the population that is black and a dummy variable for states which belong to the former confederate South.

Indicators derived from the domestic violence perspective include the unemployment rate, rate of female labour force participation, and a measure of marital instability consisting of the number of divorces registered in a year divided by the number of new marriages registered in that same year. Each of these indicators represent variables which have been found to be important in micro-social research on the family The marital instability

ratio, for instance, is seen as an indicator of marital conflict and instability. As control variables they use population density, the proportion of population aged 20-34 years, and the proportion of households occupying single family dwellings (Parker & Toth 1988:8-10).

The hypothesis that subcultural indicators should be more closely related to homicides occurring in public settings has its premise in social psychological research on the dynamics of small group behaviour. Several theories attempt to explain conforming behaviour in small groups (Crosbie 1975:430). Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison processes, for instance, posits that individuals have a psychological drive to establish social support for their standards and beliefs. This leads to a drive to change standards, beliefs, and actions in accordance with those of others as a means of establishing and maintaining social identity.

An extremely important variable is the degree of consensus or unanimity in the group (Crosbie 1975:438). The greater the consensus among the group members over a given standard or belief, the more likely a potentially dissenting group member is to conform. Another group variable that seems to influence the level of conformity is the degree of homogeneity among members of the group. The more similar the members of the group, the more the likelihood of conforming behaviour on the part of members (Crosbie 1975:440). These propositions have been confirmed by other studies on

conformity behaviour (Asch 1957; Miligram 1963; Deutsch & Gerard 1955; Schaeter 1951). Deutsch and Gerard (1955:475) found out that even when normative social influences are removed more conformity is induced even by the simple presence of the group. It seems reasonable to conclude, they advocated, that even if people are not normatively influenced directly, the mere presence of others exerts a silent normative influence in the sense that the judgements/expectations of others are taken to be a more or less trustworthy source of information about the objective reality with which one is confronted. This further buttresses the hypothesis that family intimate homicides, because they occur in the privacy of the home, must suffer from a comparatively lower influence of normative pressures.

Preliminary results obtained from the analysis of homicide data based on these classifications and hypotheses show that poverty, both absolute and relative, is an important predictor of homicide rates. Its effect is almost invariant across the various homicide sub-types. The predictive value of variables derived from the subcultural perspective remains equivocal. Family intimate and family non-intimate homicides show a substantial overlap in significant predictors, perhaps a pointer to the fact that family homicide is more of a unified phenomenon.

An interesting finding that has emerged is that the unemployment rate and marital instability are not significant predictors of non-family homicide. These raise

problems of interpretation. Sampson's (1985;1987) work on racially disaggregated homicide data suggests that this finding is an artifact of improper level of analysis. He (1987:364) provided evidence to show that failure to specify the rather complex relationship between structural variables is what is responsible for the understatement of the relevance of the unemployment and economic deprivation variables to the explanation of black criminality. The results of his analysis shows that the influence of unemployment on crime rates is not a direct one. It exerts its influence through marital instability. While male joblessness has little or no independent effect on crime, it has the strongest overall effect on family disruption which in turn is of strong predictive value in understanding violence. This finding was invariant across racial categories. Although Parker and associates have not drawn a distinction between black and white homicide their analyses provide useful insights which can serve as starting point for efforts aimed at deciphering the dynamics of black homicide.

III. THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

Crime, like any other social phenomenon, is largely shaped by the social context in which it takes place. Violent crime rates in Canada are lower than they are in the United States and there is evidence that the disparity is increasing (Hagan 1985:141). Hagan reports that in the United States, for example, about half of all homicides involve the use of handguns while in Canada it is only about ten percent (Hagan 1985:141-142). This is reflective of the differences in gun-control policies in the two countries. While the United States is very permissive with guns, Canada has strict gun control regulations in force. Citing Friedland (1981:1) Hagan further reports some graphic differences. In 1971, there were fewer than 60 homicides committed with handguns in all of Canada. Metropolitan Toronto, with more than two million persons, had only four handgun homicides that year. In contrast, in 1979 alone, handguns were used in almost 900 killings in New York city, 300 in metropolitan Detroit, and 75 in metropolitan Boston. The six New England states had over 200 handgun homicides while the four maritime provinces of Canada did not have a single handgun homicide in the same year.

Historically, significant differences are suspected to have emerged from the history of settlement and patterns of inter-ethnic conflict. Hagan (1985:144), citing Quinney (1970), points out that on the American frontier local authorities were free to develop their own law enforcement

policies or to ignore the problem altogether. On the other hand, Kennedy et al. (1988:7) report that Canada adopted a strong federalist position on law making leading to federal crime legislation and the establishment of a national police force to maintain law and order throughout the country. Added to this, they further noted, is the lack of sustained racial conflict between blacks and whites in Canada. Although racial tensions occured between the native populations and whites in Western Canada, the establishment of rural reservations populated by natives alone has served to mitigate this to a very large extent. Another factor, they further point out, is the commitment to a welfare state at the national level. As welfare programs are often instituted and regulated by the federal government regional and ethnic differences are of a lesser degree than they are in the United States, a country in which social services are largely operated by private enterprises.

With respect to the black populations in both countries, there are also significant differences in their history of settlement and current socioeconomic characteristics (Owen 1977; Ogbu 1988; McAdoo 1988; Bolaria & Li 1988). The sheer size of the black populations in both countries and, for that matter, the proportion of black people in the respective populations are important contextual factors.

Examining the impact of structural factors on regional homicide trends over time in Canada, using data from the

Statistics Canada's national homicide statistics (1961-1983), Kennedy et. al (1988) found out that:

- The apparent preponderance of homicide in western Canada as compared with the East is explained by lower changes in unemployment levels and higher changes in the proportion of people in the lowest income quintile. These effects were strengthened in situations of high population change and, further, by high divorce rates for 1961-66 (1988:11).
- For 1967-71, the results remained the same except that the impact of the divorce rates became negligible (1988:12).
- For 1972-76, a reverse pattern emerged. Lower changes in unemployment rates combined with lower changes in the number of people in the bottom quintile of the income distribution scale explain higher eastern homicide rates. The impact of unemployment was further enhanced with the addition of the the variable measuring population change. Divorce rates had little impact on these results (1988:12).
- For 1977-81, lower changes in unemployment and greater changes in the proportions of the population in the lowest income quintile explain higher levels of western Canadian homicide. The explanatory power of the unemployment variable disappeared with the introduction of the population change variable. Decreases in the divorce rates from East to West combine with higher

> levels of change in unemployment to explain higher levels of homicide in the West (1988:13).

On the whole, the structural variables - unemployment rates and income inequality consistently emerged as significant explanatory variables. A consistent regional pattern of violent crime did not emerge. The impact of marital instability was not unequivocal.

Silverman and Kennedy (1987) examined the relational distance between homicide victims and offenders as a factor in homicides occurring between 1961 and 1983. Among other things, their analysis showed that homicides caused by friends and acquaintaces were on the ascendancy while the proportion of intimate homicides dropped dramatically during the period. The rate of spouse/lover homicide was relatively stable, even though the proportion was on the decline, while the rates for other forms of homicide were on the increase. Their analysis also revealed that 3% of Canadian homicides during the period under consideration were committed by females while 37% of the homicide victims were female. While the percentage of female offenders was similar to what obtains in the United States the percentage of female Canadian victims was significantly higher. On the whole, men appeared to be killing women somewhat more often in stranger homicides, while the proportion of female victims of spouse/lover situations declined. The proportion of spouse/lover situations in which females killed males remained reasonably stable while the proportion of stranger

events rose slightly. Spouses and lovers showed a tendency of killing within their own age groups while offenders involved in family relationships tended to kill younger people, with the exception of the 45+ year group who mostly killed their age mates.

Shooting emerged as the most common means of offence commission regardless of the relational distance when males were involved as offenders. Women tended to kill most often by stabbing. Women were most likely to kill or to be killed in the victims' home especially in the case of friends and acquaintances. Although men tended to kill as frequently in the home, they recorded more homicide offences outside the home than females. Despite these insights in to the Canadian homicide situation, their analysis did not extend to the racial factor (1987:304-308).

One clear factor that has emerged from the review is that poverty, in whatever form, is an important correlate of homicide. Even studies that emphasize the cultural milieu acknowledge the importance of unfavourable economic conditions. The data to be used used for the study does not have the socioeconomic variables to test the arguments noted earlier in the review. However, as Hawkins (1986) has pointed out the overwhelming concern with multivariate analyses has led researchers to ignore the immediate situational correlates of black homicide. This study has the objective of filling this void.

To recapitulate, the following study seeks to find out the social and demographic characteristics of black homicide offenders in Canada, characteristics of their victims and the circumstances under which they are killed, the proportionate contribution of blacks to Canadian homicide statistics, and the similarities and differences between the Canadian and American situations.

IV. DATA AND FINDINGS

Data for the study are taken from Statistics Canada's national homicide statistics (1961-1983). The data were supplied to Statistics Canada by Canadian Police Departments by means of the Homicide Return. The data tape included detailed incident-based information on victims and offenders (Silverman & Kennedy 1987:280-281). Apart from this the data are disaggregated by ethnic origin for both victims and offenders. The categories available are caucasian, negroid, mongoloid, Canadian Indian, Eskimo, and Metis. There are also variables on age, sex, kind of implements used for the crime, circumstances under which the offense took place and the relational distances between the victims and offenders.

Following Silverman et al. (1987), and Kennedy & associates (1988), the relational distance between victims and offenders has been recoded as spouse/lover, other family, other relation, and stranger. The precipitating circumstances have been recoded as anger, argument, crime (theft), crime (sex), mental illness, and other. Means of commission of offense is recoded as shooting, stabbing, beating, and other. Age is recoded as less than 18, 18-25, 26-44, 45-64, and 65+. [2]

The total number of black offenders in the data set over the twenty-year span is one hundred and thirty five.

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[2]The original data provided by the Centre of Justice Statistics of Statistics Canada contains very detailed categorizations of the above. For details of the categories that have been collapsed into the above see Silverman & Kennedy 1987:282.

This number includes multiple offenders. The analysis will only be limited to single offenders since there is evidence that multiple offender/victim cases exert influences different from single-incident cases (Browne & Flewelling 1986, cited in Silverman and Kennedy 1987:281) This cuts the available number of cases to one hundred and sixteen

As Block (1987:1-3) has observed, homicide is not one crime but many. As a result, answering such seemingly simple questions as the extent of involvement of certain racial/ethnic, gender, or age groups is a complex undertaking. The involvement differs from assault homicide, robbery homicide, burglary homicide, to rape homicide. Any conclusions about the race/ethnicity, gender, or age of homicide offenders and victims - especially conclusions about patterns of change over time must be specific for each homicide circumstance.

A. FINDINGS

Between 1961 and 1983, there were 135 black homicide offenders in Canada. Of these 116 had one victim each. The ensuing analysis is based on these one-to-one cases since there is evidence that multiple victim-offender cases generate distortions which merit a different kind of analysis. In order to keep the discussions of black offenders in perspective, the patterns of homicide among blacks will be compared with that of whites at each level. [3]

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[3]

Preliminary analysis indicates that when blacks kill, the majority of their victims are either black or white rather than Natives, for example. Nearly half of all the victims (47.4%) were white, 50% were black and the remaining 2.6% were Canadian Indian.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF BLACK OFFENDERS:

AGE

Within the target population of black offenders, 5.2% were under 18 years of age, 25% ranged between 18 and 25 years, 56% were between 26 and 45 years, 12.9% were between 46 and 64 while while 19% were over 65 years of age (See

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[3](cont'd) Pertinent to the validity of these results is the certainty of the association between the variables in question. A suitable statistical test designed for such purposes is Pearson chi-square which is based on a comparison between the frequencies that are observed in the cells of the cross-classification table and those that we would expect to observe if the null hypothesis of no independence were true. A number of preconditions underlie this test:

1. The variables in the cross-classification must be nominal.
2. In 2x2 tables the expected frequencies should be greater than or equal to 5 in all cells.
3. In larger tables, the expected frequencies should be greater than or equal to 5 in at least 75% of the cells with expected frequencies in the remaining cells greater than or equal to one.

With the exception of the age variables which have been categorized in a manner that can be said to be ordinal, all the other variables used in the analysis are nominal and thus satisfy the first precondition. However, because of the small number of incidents involving black offenders, the second and third preconditions are frequently violated in the cross-classifications. A remedial measure would have been to collapse the analytic categories but since there are no justifiable theoretical reasons to do so, this option is not pursued. As a result chi-square statistics for the cross-classifications are not reported.

Table 1). Among white offenders (n=4600) 6.9% were aged under 18, 28.7% ranged between 18 and 25 years, 46.8% aged 26-45, and 3.3% were 65 years and above. While this is consistent with the general pattern that can be found among Canadian homicide offenders (Silverman & Kennedy 1987), it contrasts somewhat with what obtains among American homicide offenders. The significant finding here is that among Canadians, regardless of racial origin, the highest risk of victimization and offending lies within the 26 to 45 age group. Maxfield (1989:684), citing data from U. S. Department of Justice (1986), reports that the risk of violent crime in the United States is highest for the 16-19 age group.

GENDER

While it has been observed all over the world that males are more dangerous than females, support for this among Canadian blacks is virtually overwhelming. As Table 2 shows, 93% of the black offenders were males while 6.9% were females. While the pattern among white offenders is not radically different, some minor differences can be noted. Among the whites, 88.5% were males as opposed to 11.5% of females. There were no female offenders under 18 and over 45 years for blacks. The number of female offenders was unevenly distributed as 3.5% of the 18 to 25 age cohort and 10.8% of the 26 - 45 age cohort respectively. The age distribution of the white females, nonetheless, was more

TABLE 1

GENDER OF SUSPECT BY AGE OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS					WHITES				
	<18	18-25	26-45	46-64	65+	<18	18-25	26-45	45-64	65+
MALE	6	28	58	15	1	298	1188	1863	571	151
	(100%)	(96.6%)	(81.2%)	(100%)	(100%)	(94.3%)	(90.1%)	(86.5%)	(86.8%)	(98.1%)
FEMALE	0	1	7	0	0	18	130	291	87	3
	(0%)	(3.4%)	(10.8%)	(0%)	(0%)	(5.7%)	(9.9%)	(13.5%)	(13.2%)	(1.9%)
COLUMN TOTAL	6	29	65	15	1	316	1318	2154	658	154
	(5.2%)	(25.0%)	(56.0%)	(12.9%)	(0.9%)	(6.9%)	(28.7%)	(46.8%)	(14.3%)	(3.3%)
				n = 116 (100%)				n = 4600 (100%)		

TABLE 2

GENDER OF VICTIM BY GENDER OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS			WHITES		
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
MALE	47	7		2205	412	
	(43.5%)	(87.5%)		(54.2%)	(77.9%)	
FEMALE	61	1		1866	117	
	(56.5%)	(12.5%)		(45.8%)	(22.1%)	
COLUMN TOTALS	108	8	= 116	4071	529	= 4600
	(93.1%)	(6.9%)	(100%)	(88.5%)	(11.5%)	(100%)

widespread. Female suspects constituted 5.7% of the under 18 age cohort, 9.9% of the 18 - 25 group, 13.5% of the 26 - 45 group, 13.2% of the 46 - 64 cohort , and only 1.9% of the above 65 age group. Curiously enough, females constituted 53.4% of the victims of black offenders, with males constituting the remaining 46.6%.

MARITAL STATUS

Thirty three percent of the black suspects were married, 10.4% separated, 2.6% divorced, while 37.4% were single. Disaggregating marital status by gender, we find out that 32.7% of male suspects were married as opposed to 37.5% of females. Thirty nine percent of the males were single as opposed to 12.5% of the females. It appears single males and married females have a higher propensity towards the killing of other human beings (See Table 3). It would have been interesting at this point to disaggregate marital status by gender in order to examine the circumstances under which these specific categories of people kill. Unfortunately, data limitations do not allow this. Nevertheless, we can speculate about these trends. Research into family violence suggests that when females kill they do so most probably in response to attacks from their male lovers/spouses. It is therefore not surprising if some these female actions result in the death of their male partners. Contrary to the proposition that marital instability is an important factor

TABLE 3

MARITAL STATUS OF SUSPECT BY GENDER OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS		WHITES	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married	35 (32.7%)	3 (37.5%)	1187 (29.7%)	278 (52.9%)
Separated	11 (10.3%)	1 (12.5%)	362 (9.1%)	36 (6.8%)
Widowed	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	50 (1.3%)	8 (1.5%)
Divorced	3 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	131 (3.3%)	22 (4.2%)
Common Law	5 (47%)	1 (12.5%)	168 (4.2%)	32 (6.1%)
Single	42 (39.3%)	1 (12.5%)	1789 (44.7%)	79 (15.0%)
Married-c.l.	--	--	44 (1.1%)	19 (3.6%)
Separated-c.l.	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	60 (1.5%)	19 (3.6%)
Widowed-c.l.	1 (0%)	0 (12.5%)	9 (0.2%)	2 (0.4%)
Divorced-c.l.	--	--	61 (1.5%)	20 (3.8%)
Single-c.l.	9 (8.4%)	19 (12.5%)	138 (3.5%)	11 (2.1%)
COLUMN TOTALS	107 (93.0%)	8 (7.0%)	3999 (88.4%)	526 (11.6%)
	n = 115 (100%)		n = 4525 (100%)	

Number of missing obs = 1

Number of missing obs. = 75

in the generation of homicidal tendencies, especially among blacks (Sampson 1987), only 2.8% of the black male suspects were divorcees. This represents the total percentage of divorcees within the black offender population. Perhaps those who got out of their marriages did so before the situation deteriorated to the point of killing one another.

This pattern does not differ radically from that exhibited by white offenders. Of these, 32.4% were married, 8.8% were separated, 3.4% were divorced, while a whopping 41.3% were single. About 30% of the white male offenders were married as opposed to 52.9% of females. On the other hand, 44.7% of males as opposed to 15.0% of females were single. Like black offenders, white single males and married females display a higher propensity towards the commission of homicides. Even among whites, only 3.4% were divorced (3.3% of females as opposed to 4.2% of males). On the whole, the notion that young unmarried males are more dangerous human beings is not supported here as they do not seem to be any more dangerous than their married counterparts, considering the fact that there is only a seven percentage point difference between the two categories of offenders.

C. VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS:

When blacks kill, they are slightly more likely to kill females (See Table 4). Of all the people who fell victim to black offenders, 53.4% were female as opposed to 46.6% of males. Of the people victimized by black males, 56.5% were

TABLE 4

GENDER OF VICTIM BY GENDER OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS		WHITES	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
MALE	47	7	2205	412
	(43.5%)	(87.5%)	(54.2%)	(77.9%)
FEMALE	61	1	1866	117
	(56.5%)	(12.5%)	(45.8%)	(22.1%)
COLUMN TOTALS	108	8 = 116	4071	529 = 4600
	(93.1%)	(6.9%) = (100%)	(88.5%)	(11.5%)=(100%)

female as opposed to 43.5% of males. If we contrast this with the victims of female offenders, a different pattern emerges. Eighty-seven and a half percent of the victims of black females were males as opposed to 12.5% who were female. Comparing this pattern of victimization with that of white offenders, we find that 45.8% of the victims of white males were female as opposed 54.2% of males. On the contrary, 77.9% of victims of white females were male as opposed to 22.1% who were female. For black victims below age 45, the proportion of females within each age-cohort is higher than that of males. As shown in Table 5, within the under 18 age category, 61.5% of the victims were female as opposed to 38.5% males. For those victims within the 18 to 25 age category, the percentage difference narrows considerably to about two percentage points (51.4% of females as compared to 48.8% for males). The gap widens again for those within the 26-45 age category. In this instance, female victims registered 64.4% in contrast with male victims who accounted for 35.3%. There were no female victims aged 65 and above.

This pattern contrasts remarkably with the gender and age distributions of victims of white offenders. In total, 59.6% of these victims were male as opposed to 43.1% who were female. Disaggregating this by age, 12.9% were under 18, 19% between 18 and 25, 39.1% between 45 and 64, and finally, 7.7% were above 65 years. This represents a more even distribution than what was exhibited in the choice of

TABLE 5

GENDER OF VICTIM BY AGE OF VICTIM

	BLACKS					WHITES				
	<18	18-25	26-45	46-64	65+	<18	18-25	26-45	46-64	65+
MALE	5	18	16	11	4	296	484	1041	593	203
	(38.5%)	(48.6%)	(35.6%)	(64.7%)	(100%)	(49.9%)	(55.4%)	(57.8%)	(60.6%)	(57.0%)
FEMALE	8	19	29	6	0	297	389	759	385	753
	(61.5%)	(51.4%)	(64.4%)	(35.3%)	(0%)	(50.1%)	(44.6%)	(42.2%)	(39.4%)	(43.0%)
COLUMN TOTALS	13	37	45	17	4	593	873	1800	978	356
	(11.2%)	(31.9%)	(38.8%)	(14.7%)	(3.4%)	(12.9%)	(19.0%)	(39.1%)	(21.3%)	(7.7%)
	n = 116 (100%)						n = 4600 (100%)			

victims by black offenders.

Unlike what obtains among people victimized by blacks, the under 18 age group of white victims registered equal percentages for males and females (50.1% and 49.9% respectively). The percentage difference widens until age 64. Within the 18-25 age cohort, 55.4% of the victims were males as opposed to 44.6% of females. Among those victims aged 26 to 45, 57.8% were males while 42.2% were females. Those aged between 45 and 64 registered the largest percentage difference between males and females (60.6% males and 39.4% females). The conclusion one can draw from these patterns is that there appears to be a systematic difference, as far as age and gender are concerned, in the selection of victims by black and white offenders. Most worthy of note is the fact that in the United States, the Center for Disease Control has designated young black males aged 18-25 as an endangered species and has targeted them for special homicide reduction programs. This situation appears to be non-existent among Canadian blacks. Among Canadians, black females and white males stand the greatest risk of victimization by homicide offenders. Moreover, within the Canadian context, the high risk age group among blacks and whites is not the 18 to 25 cohort. It is rather the 26-45 age group which stands the greatest risk of victimization.

We find here two remarkable contrasts with the patterns of homicide victimization among Americans. Perhaps, the high

rate of homicide victimization of the 18-25 age group in the United States is the result of the widespread incidence of youth gangs fighting among themselves for the control of zones of distribution of narcotics, "turfs" in gang-parlance. The gang culture is predominantly a youth culture and so those within the 18-25 age group, especially young black males may be most vulnerable to it. If we combine this proposition with the fact of high school dropout rates for black youths, and the fact that there is a strong correlation between dropping out of school and juvenile delinquency, we have a fairly strong case. Street gangs and the associated gang-warfare is now beginning to rear its ugly head on to the Canadian scene. Time will tell if the trends of homicide victimization will follow that of present day America as the gangs come of age.

That black Canadian females stand a high risk of victimization is most probably an indication of the low status accorded them within the black community. Considering the fact that the majority of Canadian blacks are post World War II immigrants, it is possible they are still carrying the patriarchal patterns of family organization prevalent in their places of social origin - mostly Africa and the Caribbean. In these parts of the world the feminist movement and issues of women's emancipation have not taken as much hold as they have in countries like Canada and the United States. Although the status of women among Canadian whites is still less than desirable, the dominant pattern among

peoples in the economically less advanced parts of the world is one in which women are still confined to the home, economically dependent, and virtually considered property of their male spouses. Under such circumstances, they can be disposed of at will without much cognitive dissonance or social sanctions. Within the context of the official Canadian policy of multiculturalism which encourages groups of immigrants to keep their cultural traits, the above conjectures gain more weight.

Lest one becomes too heavily oriented towards cultural explanations, it is important to point out that there is a systematic relationship between visible minority status and low socioeconomic status. Issues of women's liberation have little meaning in a context of marginalized social and economic status. Blacks are mostly a marginalized group in terms labour market participation and income distribution. Even if the low status of women is not a cultural vestige of their places of origin, it is most likely to develop in a situation of poverty and low socioeconomic status. Perhaps, the phenomenon of high homicide victimization among black Canadian females is the result of a complex interplay of both factors. While we are not able to test these hypotheses in specific terms, they may help us to explain trends in the data.

For whites, homicide is largely an intra-racial phenomenon. As Table 6 shows, almost 95% of the victims of white offenders were white, 0.7% were black, 0.3% were of

TABLE 6

RACE OF VICTIM BY RACE OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS		WHITES	
Whites	54	(47.4%)	4220	(94.9%)
Blacks	57	(50.0%)	29	(0.7%)
Mongoloid	--	--	15	(0.3%)
Cdn-Indian	3	(2.6%)	151	(3.4%)
Metis	--	--	31	(0.7%)
COLUMN TOTALS	114	(100%)	4446	(100%)

(Number of missing obs. = 2) (Number of missing obs. = 154)

Asian origins with the remaining 3.4% having Canadian-Indian origins. On the other hand, homicide for blacks is as much intraracial as it is inter-racial. Of the people victimized by black offenders, 47.4% were white, 50% were black and the remaining 2.6% were of Canadian-Indian origin. This pattern is very consistent with what Wilbanks (1985:121-122) found in his analysis of data from the 1981 U. S. Victimization Survey. He reports that violent crime among white offenders in the United States appears to be strongly intra-racial while that of black offenders is largely inter-racial. His analyses show that black offenders choose white victims in 63% of robberies, 51.8% of assaults, and 58.6% of rapes. In contrast, white offenders chose black victims in 8.3% of robberies, 2.7% of assaults and 5.5% of rapes.

Considering the age-distribution of the people victimized by blacks, 11.2% were under 18, 31.9% were between 18 and 25, 28.8% ranged between 26 and 45, 14.7% were between 46 and 64, while only 3,4% were above 65 years of age. One would have expected that those in the 26-45 age cohort, the active reproductive ages, should be more prone to the murder of children. However, 33.3% of those under 18 were killed by people within the same age category while only 11.4% of these people were killed by those in the 26-45 age cohort.(See Table 7) With this finding one might be right in asserting that the problem of child infanticide has not assumed alarming proportions among Canadian blacks. Very frightening, however, is the fact that 33.3% of those under

TABLE 7

AGE OF VICTIM BY AGE OF SUSPECT

	BLACKS					WHITES				
	<18	18-25	26-45	46-64	65+	<18	18-25	26-45	46-64	65+
<18	2	4	7	0	0	101	223	245	21	3
	(33.3%)	(13.8%)	(10.8%)	(0%)	(0%)	(32.0%)	(16.9%)	(11.4%)	(3.2%)	(1.9%)
18-25	0	13	20	3	1	49	432	362	27	3
	(0%)	(44.8%)	(30.8%)	(20.0%)	(100%)	(15.5%)	(32.8%)	(16.8%)	(4.1%)	(1.9%)
26-45	1	7	29	8	0	68	372	1109	292	22
	(16.7%)	(24.1%)	(44.6%)	(53.3%)	(0%)	(21.5%)	(28.2%)	(51.5%)	(34.8%)	(14.3%)
46-64	2	4	7	4	0	63	206	329	319	61
	(33.3%)	(13.8%)	(10.8%)	(26.7%)	(0%)	(19.9%)	(15.6%)	(15.3%)	(48.5%)	(39.6%)
65+	1	1	2	0	0	35	85	109	62	65
	(16.7%)	(3.4%)	(3.1%)	(0%)	(0%)	(11.1%)	(6.4%)	(5.1%)	(9.4%)	(42.0%)
COLUMN TOTALS	6	29	65	15	1	316	1318	2154	658	156
	(5.2%)	(25.0%)	(56.0%)	(12.9%)	(0.9%)	(6.9%)	(28.7%)	(46.8%)	(14.3%)	(3.3%)
					n = 116 (100%)					n = 4600 (100%)

18 were killed by their age mates.

When we consider the age distribution of people killed by white assailants, 12.9% were under 18, 19.0% were 18 and 25, 39.1% were between 26-45, 21.3% were between 45 and 64, while only 7.7% were above 65 years of age. Even among whites, the expectation that children under 18 should fall victim most frequently to those between 26 and 45 years has not materialized. Thirty-two percent of victims under 18 were killed by offenders within the same age category. On the other hand, only 11.4% of the children were killed by those in their active reproductive years. While these patterns do not seem to differ among blacks and whites, the most striking similarity is that within both racial groups, people are most likely to fall victim to assailants who share the same age characteristics. It is not readily apparent why nearly a third of children were killed by children but not people who should be parenting them. This, I believe, is a very frightening issue that calls for immediate remedial attention.

D. WEAPONS

When blacks kill, they are most likely to stab their victims. (See Table 8) Almost 36% of them stabbed, 34.2% used firearms, 17.5% beat their victims to death, while 12.3% used such other means as strangulation, suffocation etc.. If the victim is black, then he/she is most likely to have been stabbed to death. On the other hand, if the victim

TABLE 8

MEANS OF OFFENSE COMMISSION BY RACE OF VICTIM

	BLACKS			WHITES				
	Whites	Blacks	Cdn-Indian	Caucasian	Whites	Blacks	Cdn-Indian	Metis
Shooting	18 (33.3%)	18 (31.6%)	3 (100.0%)	1747 (41.3%)	15 (51.7%)	5 (33.3%)	48 (31.8%)	12 (38.7%)
Beating	14 (25.9%)	6 (10.5%)	0 (0%)	782 (18.6%)	6 (20.7%)	6 (40.0%)	50 (33.1%)	8 (25.8%)
Stabbing	14 (25.9%)	27 (47.4%)	0 (0%)	985 (23.3%)	6 (20.7%)	3 (20.0%)	32 (21.2%)	6 (19.4%)
Other	8 (14.8%)	6 (10.5%)	0 (0%)	687 (16.4%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (6.7%)	21 (13.9%)	5 (16.1%)
COLUMN TOTALS	54 (47.4%)	57 (50.0%)	3 (2.6%) n = 114 (100%)	4201 (94.9%)	29 (0.7%)	15 (0.3%)	151 (3.4%) n = 4427 (100%)	31 (0.7%)

Number of missing obs. = 2

Number of missing obs. = 173

is white then firearms are most likely to have been the means of offense commission. Of those victims who were shot by blacks, 33.3% were white while 31.6% were black. On the other hand, only 25.9% of the white victims were stabbed as opposed to 47.4% of blacks. Also, 25.9% of whites as opposed to 10.5% of blacks were beaten to death.

With what means do the white offenders accomplish their acts?. They used firearms twice as much as sharp edged implements. This is evident in the fact that 41.3% shot their victims as opposed to 23.3% who stabbed. Beating is the next most common means of offense commission among whites. Almost 20% of them beat their victims to death, while 16.2% used such other means as strangulation and suffocation. Of the white victims killed by whites, 41.3% were shot as opposed to 31.7% of blacks. However, 23.4% of whites victimized by whites were stabbed as opposed to 20.7% of blacks.

Evident from these patterns is a racial selectivity in the type of weapons used and of victims. With both racial groups, offenders show a higher tendency for stabbing victims who share the same ethnic/racial characteristics. On the hand, when blacks are killing whites, they are most likely to use a firearm. In the same vein whites are most likely to use firearms when killing blacks.

A plausible explanation of the racial selectivity in the type of weapon used can be attempted. In order to kill someone successfully with a dagger or any other sharp edged

instrument, the person must be within a close striking range. On the other hand, firearms will do a good job if the victim is a considerable distance away. The degree of social interaction among people of the same ethnic origin is likely to be higher than otherwise. It is therefore not surprising that this pattern of racial selectivity in the choice of weapons has emerged.

E. CIRCUMSTANCES

What are the circumstances under which blacks kill?. (See Table 9). Of the homicides committed by blacks, 40.5% occured during an argument while about 32.2% of the homicides were committed under circumstances of anger. Only 7.8% of the homicides occured in association with thefts and sex-related incidents. When angry, the most probable means of offense commission, for blacks, is a firearm. Nearly one half (45.9%) of the homicides committed by blacks under circumstances of anger were by means of a firearm. This contrasts sharply with the crimes committed during arguments (25.5%) and thefts (22.2%). Firearms were not used in any of the sex-related homicides committed by blacks. When blacks kill during an argument, they most probably did this by stabbing their victims. Nearly 47% of the crimes committed by blacks during arguments were accomplished through stabbing. This contrasts with 27% of stabbings under circumstances of anger. We notice here a reverse pattern of what obtains when firearms are the means of offense

TABLE 9

MEANS OF OFFENSE COMMISSION BY CIRCUMSTANCE

	BLACKS							WHITES						
	Ang.	Argu.	Crime (Theft)	Crime (Sex)	Other	Mental Illness	Unk.	Ang.	Argu.	Crime (Theft)	Crime (Sex)	Other	Mental Illness	Unk.
Shooting	17 (45.9%)	12 (25.5%)	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)	4 (50.0%)	1 (20%)	3 (42.9%)	694 (51.5%)	562 (37.6%)	76 (28.3%)	7 (3.6%)	219 (55.2%)	169 (35.1%)	161 (40.7%)
Beating	7 (18.9%)	7 (14.9%)	3 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (20%)	2 (28.6%)	252 (18.7%)	305 (20.4%)	79 (29.4%)	54 (27.7%)	43 (10.8%)	79 (16.4%)	81 (20.5%)
Stabbing	10 (27.0%)	22 (46.8%)	3 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (40%)	1 (14.3%)	247 (18.3%)	447 (31.9%)	78 (29.0%)	43 (22.1%)	47 (11.8%)	99 (20.6%)	80 (20.2%)
Other	3 (8.1%)	6 (12.8%)	1 (11.1%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (12.5%)	1 20.0%)	1 (14.3%)	155 (11.5%)	151 (10.1%)	36 (13.4%)	91 (46.7%)	88 (22.2%)	134 (27.9%)	74 (18.7%)
COLUMN TOTAL	37 (31.9%)	47 (40.5%)	9 (7.8%)	3 (2.6%)	8 (6.9%)	5 (4.3%)	7 (6.0%)	1348 (29.4%)	1495 (32.6%)	269 (5.9%)	195 (4.3%)	397 (8.7%)	481 (10.5%)	396 (8.6%)
	n = 116 (100%)							n = 4581 (100%)						

Number of missing observations = 19

commission.

When we compare the circumstances under which blacks kill with that of whites, the patterns are not very different. Like their black counterparts, white offenders are most likely to use firearms when they are angry. Of the white-committed homicides, the trigger was pulled for nearly half (51.5%) of the homicides committed during circumstances of anger, while only about a third (37.6%) of the homicides committed during arguments were thus accomplished. On the contrary, stabbing accounted for 18.3% of the anger-precipitated homicides as opposed to 31.9% of the argument precipitated killings, 29.0% of theft-related, and 22.1% of the sexcrime related homicides.

Like black offenders, whites most often beat or stab their victims to death when the homicide is theft crime related. Of the robbery homicides committed by whites, 28.3% were by means of shooting, 29.4% were by means of beating, and 29.0% were committed by means of stabbing. Beating to death as a means of offense commission accounts for 20.4% of homicides committed by whites during arguments, 29.4% of sex-crime related killings, and 18.7% of killing precipitated by anger. It is perhaps significant to note that unlike black offenders who did not beat anybody to death during sex-related incidents, 29.4% of white-committed theft-crimes and 27.7% of sex-related killings were accomplished through beating. Also significant is the fact that theft-related homicides were evenly distributed among

shooting, beating, and stabbing.

It is perhaps significant to note at this point that despite the high restrictions placed on the use of firearms in this country, they were used nearly as frequently as knives which are commonly available. This suggests that firearms, because of their ease of use, represent an important component of the crime of homicide. This an indication that the unusually high incidence of homicide in the United States is related to the easy access to firearms.

F. LOCATION OF OFFENSE AND RELATIONSHIP TO SUSPECT

Over half of all the homicides committed by blacks were in the victims' home. This location accounted for 53% of the total number of the incidents involving black offenders. About 16% of the homicides occurred at the work place, 14.2% in the suspects' home, 12.4% in public settings and 4.4% in cars. (See Table 10).

The most frequent victims in their own homes were common-law relatives. Nearly 85% of these were killed in their own homes. Closely following are family members, 75% of who fell in their own homes. The highest percentage of victimization in the suspects' home occured for extended family relations. Sixty percent of victims in this relational category were killed at this location.

Not unexpectedly, the percentage of non-domestic relatives killed in public settings is greater than that of immediate family and kinship relations. While 22% of

TABLE 10

ACTUAL LOCATION OF OFFENSE BY RELATIONSHIP TO SUSPECT

	BLACKS					WHITES				
	Immediate Family	Extended Family	Common Law	Friends/ Acq.	Crime	Immediate Family	Extended Family	Common Law	Friends/ Acq.	Crime
Victim's Home	24 (75%)	1 (20%)	11 (84.6%)	18 (36.0%)	6 (46.2%)	1138 (82.8%)	94 (61.4%)	346 (84.8%)	633 (31.6%)	169 (35.5%)
Suspect's Home	4 (12.5%)	3 (60.0%)	2 (15.4%)	7 (14.0%)	0 (0%)	52 (3.8%)	25 (16.3%)	20 (4.9%)	317 (15.8%)	40 (8.4%)
Workplace	2 (6.3%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0%)	12 (24.0%)	3 (23.1%)	78 (5.7%)	20 (13.1%)	16 (3.9%)	391 (19.5%)	103 (21.6%)
Prov. Penal Instn	-	-	-	-	-	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.2%)	0 (0%)
Fed. Penal Inst.	-	-	-	-	-	0 (0%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	23 (1.1%)	1 (0.2%)
Mental Inst.	-	-	-	-	-	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (0.6%)	0 (0%)
Public Place	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (22.0%)	2 (15.4%)	67 (4.9%)	11 (7.2%)	20 (4.9%)	513 (25.6%)	126 (26.5%)
Other (i.e. car)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4.0%)	2 (15.4%)	40 (2.9%)	2 (1.3%)	6 (1.5%)	108 (5.4%)	37 (7.8%)
COLUMN TOTAL	32 (28.3%)	5 (4.4%)	13 (11.5%)	50 (44.2%)	13 (11.5%)	1375 (31.1%)	153 (3.5%)	408 (9.2%)	2003 (45.4%)	476 (10.0%)
	n = 113 (100%)						n = 4415 (100%)			

Number of missing observations = 3

Number of missing observations = 185

friends/acquaintances and 15.4% of non-domestic criminal relatives were killed at the public places, only 3.1% of immediate family members died at this location. There emerges a systematic variation in victims' relationship to suspects and location of offense. The closer the inter-personal relationship between the victim and the offender, the higher is the likelihood of the death taking place in such intimate settings as the home. On the other hand, the greater the relational distance, the higher the proportion of homicides taking place in public places. This proposition is further bolstered by the observation that 4% and 15.4% of friends/acquaintances and partners-in-crime respectively took place in cars as opposed to 3.1% of immediate family and none of extended family members and common law relations who died at this location.

With the exception of the distribution of victimization of extended family relations according to location, the patterns of homicide among white victims and offenders are not radically different from that described for blacks. For white offenders, 82.8% of their victims within the immediate family and 84.8% of common-law relations fell within the victims' home. In addition, 61.4% of extended family relations fell at the same location. When compared with the more distant relational categories (friends/acquaintances and criminal relatives), a pattern of decreasing incidence with increasing relational distance emerges for homicides which took place in the victims' home.

Nearly equal proportions of extended family relatives (16.3%) and friends/acquaintances (15.8%) fell in the assailants' home. This is followed by 8.4% of partners-in-crime. Immediate family and common law relatives suffered low rates of victimization in the suspects' home (3.8% and 4.9% respectively).

G. CIRCUMSTANCE BY RELATIONAL DISTANCE

As Table 11 shows, within black families, the majority of the homicides (45%) were committed during arguments. The converse is rather true for extended family relations. They are most likely to be killed because they have made the assailant angry. Forty percent of extended family relatives died under circumstances of anger. For people in common-law relationships, homicide is most likely to occur during an argument (53.8%).

Those relational distances which facilitate close personal interaction between assailant and victim have arguments as the most common precipitating circumstance (45.5% of immediate family and 53.8% of common law relations). One would have expected that arguments should get translated into anger before a homicide occurs. However, we have extended family members falling victim to homicide more frequently under circumstances of anger. A question that merits consideration is why arguments are the most frequent precipitating circumstance among blacks?. Perhaps, a more fundamental question is whether anger and arguments

TABLE 11

CIRCUMSTANCE BY RELATIONAL DISTANCE

	BLACKS					WHITES				
	Immediate Family	Extended Family	Common Law	Friends/ Acq.	Crime	Immediate Family	Extended Family	Common Law	Friends/ Acq.	Crime
Anger	11 (33.3%)	2 (40%)	6 (46.2%)	18 (34.6%)	0 (0%)	425 (30%)	62 (38.3%)	157 (37.3%)	704 (33.6%)	0 (0%)
Argument	15 (45.5%)	1 (20.0%)	7 (53.8%)	24 (46.2%)	0 (0%)	450 (31.8%)	48 (29.6%)	197 (46.8%)	800 (38.2%)	2 (0.4%)
Crime(theft)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (69.2%)	4 (0.3%)	6 (3.7%)	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	259 (51.2%)
Crime(sex)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (0.1%)	6 (3.7%)	2 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	188 (37.2%)
Mental Illness	3 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	299 (21.1%)	18 (11.1%)	7 (1.7%)	158 (7.5%)	0 (0%)
Other	4 (12.2%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	8 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	237 (16.7%)	12 (13.6%)	57 (13.6%)	432 (20.7%)	57 (11.3%)
COLUMN TOTAL	33 (28.4%)	5 (4.3%)	13 (11.2%)	52 (44.8%)	13 (11.2%)	1417 (30.8%)	162 (3.5%)	421 (9.2%)	2094 (45.5%)	506 (11.0%)
	n = 116 (100%)								n = 4600 (100%)	

Number of missing observations = 3

Number of missing observations = 185

represent distinct dimensions in the genesis of homicide. Although we do not know exactly what the police mean by anger and argument and why they classify them separately, it is interesting to note that they vary fairly systematically with relational distance and race. Perhaps this is pointer to a difference in mode and pattern of conflict management.

A somewhat different picture emerges when we take into focus the patterns exhibited by whites. Unlike the situation among blacks, anger and arguments precipitated nearly equal percentages of homicide within the immediate family. Despite the fact that anger led to more of the slayings of extended family members (38.3%) as compared to arguments (29.6%), the percentage difference fell from 20% (among blacks) to 9% (for whites). There were no remarkable differences within the other relational categories. Having looked at results of the analysis, the most conspicuous finding is that the patterns of homicide offence and victimization are not radically different for both blacks and whites. The next chapter discusses this finding and outlines its theoretical and empirical implications.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite some slight differences in the proportions of incidents within the various analytical categories, both racial groups appear uniform in the patterns and mode of homicide victimization. In spite of the fact that it is not conclusive, the weight of the evidence in favour of different patterns of homicide victimization among Canadian blacks and whites is fairly negligible. Considering the main propositions of the culture of violence thesis, the patterns and mode of homicide victimization among blacks and whites should be different, considering the fact that blacks are not within the mainstream of Canadian society. This throws the relevance of the thesis for Canadian blacks into some amount of doubt. It does not seem to be very much applicable to the Canadian situation.

This should not come as a surprise considering the fact that Canadian blacks have a history and present circumstances which are radically different from that of their American counterparts. For the most part Canadian blacks are post second world war immigrants (Bolaria and Li 1987). As a result inter-racial tensions between black and whites, even if existent, are in no way comparable to what prevails in the United States. Moreover it is doubtful if blacks in Canada form an identifiable and forceful group with social and political claims on the wider society.

Perhaps a recent debate between Lenton (1989) and Hagan (1989) on the genesis of homicide rate differentials between

the United States and Canada might be informative at this point. Hagan (1984), in explaining the Canadian-American differences in homicide rates, ascribes explanatory power to the historical differences in the patterns of European settlement. He contends that two sets of historical factors are especially significant. In the first place, Lenton points out, Hagan locates the cause of the difference in the violent nature of the settlement of the American frontier as opposed to to the relatively orderly and state controlled nature of the settlement of the Canadian frontier. These historical events led to the crystallization of different patterns of normative behavior. Thus the 'Wild West' shaped the negative attitudes towards law and order in America while the more harmonious development of the Canadian frontier led to the crystallization of a more orderly pattern of conflict management. A second, but relatively minor, reason is Canada's political and social ties to elitist traditions of Britain.

Lenton finds it difficult to accept the assertion that events that took place more than a hundred years ago hold major explanatory power for today's patterns of violent behavior. Lenton therefore joins an increasing body of opinion which locates the genesis of violent and criminal behavior in poor and unfavorable economic conditions rather than in patterns of normative behavior which, in themselves can be located in prevailing social and economic conditions. Perhaps, the rather limited results of this study lend

further credence to Lenton's critique of culture-based explanations of criminal behavior in general and homicide in particular.

This study generates more questions than answers. We did not find enough evidence to conclude that patterns of homicide are different among blacks and whites. Can we conclude that the most probable common underlying factor in the genesis of homicide, poverty, has identical effects on both blacks and whites in Canada? Admittedly, the data used in the study are not comprehensive. Also, the statistical analysis employed in this study is not very strong. More comprehensive data would have enabled us decipher the separate effects of poverty on both racial groups.

Considering the importance of economic factors in the study of homicide, the study would have been more complete if the full complement of socioeconomic variables (income, education, employment status) were available . Despite the fact that these variables are in the data set, half or more of the cases on each of them are missing. This rendered them unusable. The examination of the interrelationships between economic, circumstancial, and demographic variables in a time series framework would have helped us specify the exact nature of the influence of each combination of factors on homicide behaviour. A similar analysis for blacks and whites in the U. S. would have revealed the exact nature of the differences and similarities between the Canadian and American situations.

Furthermore, perhaps the use of the whole of Canada as one unit of analysis and the long time span (1961-83) has had a confounding effect on the results. A key issue in the research on homicide has been the selection of the appropriate geographical unit of analysis. Countries, regions, provinces, states, SMSAs, cities, neighborhoods, blocks, have all been used. There is not yet a consensus on the most appropriate unit of analysis. In Canada, Kennedy et. al. (forthcoming) have noted the important differentials that exist in homicide rates across provinces, SMSAs, cities, etc., and have emphasized the point that the selection of the appropriate unit of analysis may have important influences on the conclusions that are drawn about the effects of culture or economic inequality in the study of homicide. While their observation is valid, the critical challenge that faces us all as researchers on homicide, and for which they have not provided a definitive answer, is the exact geographical unit that can enable us to decipher correctly the social psychological relationships between homicide and its generative causes from aggregate level data.

Clearly needed is intensive qualitative research to complement the macro-level and quantitative analysis which now predominates homicide research. This should take the form of participant observation of life among the poor in their own residential neighbourhoods. Important variables of study should include patterns and structure of family

organization, patterns of conflict management, attitides towards violent behaviour in everyday life, types of weapons used in conflict management, normative acceptance or otherwise of the use of these weapons, precipitating circumstances of violence, and the involvement of alcohol and narcotics in the precipitation of violent crime. These studies should be conducted across time and space. Similar studies should be designed for affluent neighbourhoods in order to determine those factors which peculiar to the poor. Admittedly, such a research design will call for the use of tremendous amounts of human and material resources. That does not, however, diminish the fact that they are badly needed to clarify the assumptions and conclusions of macro-level research. At the end of the day, it is these processes that generate the crime statistics analyzed at the macro-level. It is hoped that the challenges raised by this study will be confronted by future generations of researchers in their quest for a better understanding of the dynamics underlying the crime of homicide.

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