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PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE IN CHICAGO

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All cases in which a charge of criminal homicide was filed in Chicago in 1965 were examined in a replication of Wolfgang's *Patterns in Criminal Homicide*. Nonwhite males between 15 and 39 years of age were the victims or offenders more frequently than any other age-race-sex category. It was found that 37.9 per cent of the cases were victim-precipitated and nonwhite males were most likely to precipitate their own deaths.

Although there has always been extensive popular and scientific interest in criminal homicide, scientific knowledge about this phenomenon is limited. Many studies of criminal homicide have been conducted;¹ one of the most comprehensive of these is reported in Wolfgang's *Patterns in Criminal Homicide*. Conducting his research in Philadelphia, Wolfgang analyzed the criminal homicides, involving 588 victims and 621 offenders, recorded in that city in the years 1948 through 1952. Focusing on such factors as the presence of alcohol, the weapon used, the location and time of the homicide, the previous victim-offender relationship, and victim-precipitated homicides with controls for the age, race, and sex of both the victim and the offender, Wolfgang conducted a study quite extensive in nature.² Consequently, a replication would appear to have potential value.³ The point is not one of questioning Wolfgang's research; rather, the patterns in criminal homicide observed in Philadelphia cannot be assumed to exist in other cities until this research is replicated

in other metropolitan areas.⁴ The question to which this analysis is directed is: Will the results obtained in Philadelphia be found in another metropolitan city in the United States, such as Chicago?

After description of the procedures and methods employed, the results of the investigation of patterns in criminal homicide in Chicago are presented. Although some references to Wolfgang's findings are made, a detailed comparison of patterns in criminal homicide in Chicago and Philadelphia is deferred to a later paper.

METHODOLOGY

Chicago was selected as an appropriate city in which to conduct a replication of Wolfgang's study. Accessibility to the relevant data as well as Chicago's reputation as the "murder capital" of the United States were two of the reasons for this selection. As the third largest city in the country, the size of Chicago's population was also a consideration.

The data were gathered with the cooperation of the Homicide Division of the Chicago Police Department.⁵ All cases in which a charge of

¹For an extensive bibliography see WOLFGANG, *PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE* 341 (1958); see also BENSING & SCHROEDER, *HOMICIDE IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY* (1960); BOHANNAN, *AFRICAN HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE* (1960); Gold, *Suicide, Homicide, and the Socialization of Aggression*, 63 *AM. J. SOC.* 651 (1958); PALMER, *A STUDY OF MURDER* (1960); Pettigrew & Spier, *The Ecological Structure of Negro Homicide*, 67 *AM. J. SOC.* 621 (1962); Svalastoga, *Homicide and Social Contact in Denmark*, 62 *AM. J. SOC.* 37 (1956); WEST, *MURDER FOLLOWED BY SUICIDE* (1966).

²WOLFGANG, *supra*.

³Mack has indicated the value of replication in sociological research. Mack, *The Need for Replication Research in Sociology*, 16 *AM. SOC. REV.* 93 (1951).

⁴A partial replication of Wolfgang's analysis in Houston, Texas has been reported. Pokorny, *A Comparison of Homicides in Two Cities*, 56 *J. CRIM. L., C. & P. S.* 479 (1965); cf. Pokorny, *Human Violence: A Comparison of Homicide, Aggravated Assault, Suicide, and Attempted Suicide*, 56 *J. CRIM. L., C. & P. S.* 488 (1965).

⁵The authors wish to express their appreciation to the officials of the Chicago Police Department for their cooperation, and particularly the special assistance of Michael Spiotto, Deputy Chief of Detectives, Crimes Against Persons.

criminal homicide was filed in the urban area of Chicago in the one-year period from January 1, 1965, through December 31, 1965, were examined.⁶ According to police records there were 395 cases of criminal homicide, involving 395 victims and 429 offenders, in Chicago during 1965. Information regarding 394 of the victims and 415 of the offenders was recorded by the investigating detectives on the police department's Murder Analysis Sheet; this study is based on these cases.⁷ The available information includes the age, race, and sex of the victim and the offender(s); the month, day, time, and location of the offense; the weapon used; the "motive" underlying the homicidal act; the elapsed time between the offense and the death of the victim; the victim-offender relationship prior to the offense; the time elapsed before the offender was taken into custody; the agents making the arrest; and, the involvement of intoxicants in the homicidal situation. There is also a space on the Murder Analysis Sheet for the detectives to record a "brief statement of the facts" regarding the actions leading to the offense; this description provided the basis for the determination of whether or not the offense could be considered as victim-precipitated.

Since extensive replication of a study requires use of the same operational definitions of concepts, an effort was made to employ Wolfgang's distinctions in this analysis.⁸ Wolfgang differentiates between homicide and criminal homicide, which includes the legal categories of first degree murder, second degree murder, voluntary manslaughter,

⁶ These, then, are cases defined by the police as involving criminal homicide and so reported to the F. B. I. One of the victims was killed while attempting a robbery; further, it is known that in a few instances the cases were adjudicated as justifiable homicide and two or three offenders were found to be insane. Information on adjudication was incomplete and did not permit a purging of such cases from the study. At the same time it should be noted that evidence regarding the extent of coverage of these data is not available; there may well have been some cases of criminal homicide in Chicago in 1965 which were not reported to the police. The potential errors in the "bookkeeping records" of an official agency such as the police are well known and need not be elaborated. These data are used in the absence of more adequate information, although the limitations of "crimes known to the police" are recognized.

⁷ Access to the more extensive file on each case was not granted; as a result, data comparable to that reported by Wolfgang on several variables, including previous criminal record and social status, were not obtained. There was no information regarding one victim. The fourteen missing offenders were unknown assailants.

⁸ Mack, *supra* note 3.

and involuntary manslaughter, and his analysis deals only with criminal homicide, as is the case here. Most of the variables utilized in this replication are comparable to those used in Wolfgang's study and are self-explanatory;⁹ however, the variable of race is handled somewhat differently in this investigation. Wolfgang reports his findings on the basis of a distinction between Negroes and whites with no mention of other nationality groups.¹⁰ In the analysis of Chicago's homicides it was found that 5.4 per cent of the victims and 6.9 per cent of the offenders were neither Negro nor Caucasian. A dichotomy of white and nonwhite is employed to avoid exclusion of those cases involving, among others, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. Other than the fact that different investigators conducted the replication, the only other major differences between the original study and this replication involve, first, the research setting—the size and composition of the populations in Chicago and Philadelphia differ—and, second, the years the studies were conducted. While Wolfgang analyzed criminal homicides which occurred from January 1, 1948, through December 31, 1952, a five-year period, the data presented in this paper cover a single and more recent year, 1965.

DISTRIBUTION OF CRIMINAL HOMICIDES BY RACE, SEX, AND AGE

The data provide overwhelming support for the conclusion, often reported, that criminal homicide

⁹ One variable which is not self-explanatory involves the distinction between victim-precipitated and non-victim-precipitated criminal homicides. In Wolfgang's study "the term *victim-precipitated* is applied to those criminal homicides in which the victim is a direct, positive precipitator in the crime. The role of the victim is characterized by his having been the first in the homicide drama to use physical force directed against his subsequent slayer." WOLFGANG, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 252. For the Chicago cases a criminal homicide was designated as victim-precipitated if it was apparent in the available information that the victim was the first to show and use a deadly weapon or in some way first resorted to violence and force in an altercation. In the event that the victim was committing a felony which necessitates force, such as robbery or rape, the case was automatically classified as a victim-precipitated homicide. Cases in which a prostitute or homosexual were killed by a sexual partner were not, however, considered to be victim-precipitated unless the records specifically showed that an initial act or display of physical force by the victim led to the altercation.

¹⁰ To calculate homicide rates Wolfgang used the U. S. Bureau of the Census, *U. S. Census of Population: 1950, Census Tract Statistics, III*, Chapter 42, 57 (1952). This source reports the population as either white or nonwhite, but Wolfgang converted this and used it as being either white or Negro. Cf. WOLFGANG, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 362.

is more common among nonwhites than whites. Of the victims 77.9 per cent were nonwhite, as were 78.6 per cent of the offenders, as may be seen in Table 1. The involvement of males in criminal homicide is also noteworthy; of the victims and offenders 73.6 per cent and 83.1 per cent, respectively, were males. More specifically, nonwhite males are involved, either as victims or offenders, in a disproportionately large number of cases. They comprised 56.6 per cent of all victims, while nonwhite females, white males, and white females constituted 21.3, 17.0, and 5.1 per cent, respectively, of the victims. Of the 415 offenders 63.8 per cent were nonwhite males; nonwhite females, white males, and white females contributed only 14.7, 19.3, and 2.2 per cent, respectively, of the offenders.

It is evident in Table 1 that the involvement of nonwhites and males in criminal homicide in Chicago is not due merely to their numbers in the population. As shown in the last column of the table, for every hundred thousand nonwhites in the population 30 were victims of criminal homicide; the rate among nonwhites is nearly ten times that of whites.¹¹ Similarly, the "victim rate" among males is three times that of females, that is, males are victims in criminal homicides three times as often, proportionately, as are females. Taking both race and sex into account, one notes that nonwhite males had the highest rate per hundred thousand, 46.1. Although the rate for nonwhite females is only one-third that of nonwhite males, in comparison with white males and females, the nonwhite females also had a high rate, 16.0. In comparison, Wolfgang has reported that in Philadelphia the rates per hundred thousand for victims were: Negro males, 36.9; Negro females, 9.6; white males, 2.9; and, white females, 1.0.¹² In Chicago the rates for nonwhites are higher than the roughly comparable rates for Negroes in Philadelphia.

The rates calculated on the basis of the data pertaining to offenders reveals much the same picture. The rate among nonwhites is again approximately ten times that of whites. The "offender rates" for males and females are slightly more

¹¹ A linear extrapolation of the 1960 population to 1965, based on population changes which occurred in Chicago between 1950 and 1960, serves as the base for the calculation of these rates.

¹² Wolfgang also calculated rates per hundred thousand population for victims; he reported the following: Negro males, 36.9; Negro females, 9.6; white males, 2.9; and, white females, 1.0. WOLFGANG, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 33.

TABLE 1
RATES OF CRIMINAL HOMICIDE IN CHICAGO IN 1965 BY
RACE AND SEX OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

	Number of Cases	Per Cent	Rate per 100,000
VICTIMS			
<i>Race</i>			
nonwhite	307	77.9	30.4
white	87	22.1	3.5
<i>Sex</i>			
male	290	73.6	17.1
female	104	26.4	5.7
<i>Race and Sex</i>			
nonwhite male	223	56.6	46.1
nonwhite female	84	21.3	16.0
white male	67	17.0	5.5
white female	20	5.1	1.6
OFFENDERS			
<i>Race</i>			
nonwhite	326	78.6	32.3
white	89	21.4	3.6
<i>Sex</i>			
male	345	83.1	20.3
female	70	16.9	3.9
<i>Race and Sex</i>			
nonwhite male	265	63.8	54.8
nonwhite female	61	14.7	11.6
white male	80	19.3	6.6
white female	9	2.2	0.7

divergent than were the rates among victims by sex; males are offenders five times for every homicide perpetrated by a female. The involvement of nonwhite males is again seen to be extensive in the offender rates; some 55 of every hundred thousand nonwhite males in Chicago were apprehended for criminal homicide in 1965. The calculation of rates reveals an interesting point regarding the contribution of nonwhite females to the criminal homicides recorded in Chicago. In terms of percentages nonwhite females committed 14.7 per cent of the offenses and white males were the offenders in 19.3 per cent of the cases. The rates show, however, that according to their proportion in the population the involvement of nonwhite females in criminal homicide in Chicago is nearly twice that of white males; 11.6 of every hundred thousand nonwhite females were offenders in comparison with a rate of 6.6 per hundred thousand among white males. Finally, that less than one of every hundred thousand white females committed a criminal homicide offers a striking contrast to the other race-sex categories. Wolfgang's results

are similar, although the nonwhite rates are again higher than the rates for Negroes in Philadelphia.¹³

Age

While information on age was not recorded for four of the victims and ten of the offenders, the age distribution for the remaining 390 victims and 405 offenders indicates the extensive involvement of young people in criminal homicide. Of the victims 15.6 per cent were between 25 and 29 years of age, with the next highest concentrations of cases, 14.6 per cent and 14.1 per cent, occurring in the categories 30 to 34 and 35 to 39, respectively.¹⁴ Two hundred and twenty-two of the 390 victims were between 20 and 39 years of age, as were 234 of the 405 offenders. The modal category, 20 to 24 years of age, included 19.5 per cent of the offenders.¹⁵ Fourteen per cent of the offenders were 25 to 29 years of age and those between 35 and 39 comprised 13.3 per cent of the offenders. The youthfulness of the offenders is indicated by the fact that 52.3 per cent of the white and 44.5 per cent of the nonwhite offenders were between 15 and 29 years of age.

Taking a different age range, one notes that 77.8 per cent of the white and 68.9 per cent of the nonwhite female offenders were in their twenties or thirties, while only 55.8 per cent and 55.0 per cent, respectively, of the white and nonwhite male offenders were between 20 and 39 years of age. Further comparison reveals that 26.0 per cent of the white male offenders and only 15.9 per cent of the nonwhite male offenders are under 20 years of age. At the other extreme of the age range 18.2 per cent of the white male offenders and 29.1 per cent of the nonwhite male offenders are 40 or more years of age. The age ranges among white and nonwhite male offenders, then, are constricted at opposite ends.

Other striking differences were noted among the victims. For example, 30 of the 39 victims who were under 20 years of age were nonwhite. One-third of the white male victims were 50 years of age or older, in contrast with only 16.3 per cent of the nonwhite male victims. Another finding, that 33.9

per cent of all white male victims are killed in robberies, offers a partial explanation for this gross difference.

There is considerable similarity in the ages of the offender and his victim; approximately one-half of the victims were slain by an offender categorized in the same or an adjacent age group. Those under 15 were more frequently slain by an older offender, since in many instances the victim was killed by a parent or older sibling. In a few cases the victim was a 13 or 14 year old boy slain by a boy only slightly older in a fight. On the other hand, victims over 50 years of age were often slain by a younger person; in a number of instances these criminal homicides occurred during the course of a robbery or as a result of a "transfer of intent."¹⁶ Yet, the victims who were under 15 or over 50 constitute a small proportion of the total number of victims. Specifically, 77.9 per cent of the 390 victims were between the ages of 15 and 49, as were 86.6 per cent of the 405 offenders for whom there was information on age. Of the victims between 20 and 49 years of age approximately half, 51.8 per cent, were slain by offenders categorized in the same or an adjacent age category.

Race and Sex

Although there apparently are few inter-racial homicides in Chicago, the cases which were recorded generally involved the slaying of a white by a nonwhite. Only 6.6 per cent of the criminal homicides in Chicago in 1965 were inter-racial; and, of these 80 per cent involved the killing of whites by nonwhites. (See Table 2.)

Criminal homicide between the sexes is more common and accounts for 39.6 per cent of the 379 criminal homicides for which there was information. Females were slain by males in 61.3 per cent of the 150 cases involving males and females. Seventy-four of these cases, or 49.3 per cent, involved the killing of a nonwhite female by a nonwhite male; in one-third of these homicides a nonwhite female killed a nonwhite male. White females were the victims of white males in 8.7 per cent of these cases, and in only 4 per cent were white males slain by white females. There were only

¹³ Calculated in a manner similar to the rates for victims, the rates for offenders in Philadelphia were: Negro males, 41.7; Negro females, 9.3; white males, 3.4; and, white females, 0.4. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ In this instance and in others which follow, a full presentation of the data in tabular form is not made but is available from the authors upon request.

¹⁵ Wolfgang reports that in Philadelphia the highest rate among offenders was observed among those 20 to 24 years of age. *Id.* at 66.

¹⁶ A criminal homicide was classified as involving "transfer of intent" whenever it was apparent that the victim was slain as a result of an altercation between other individuals. The victim was not directly involved in the conditions leading to the homicide, although he was present in the situation. For example, five persons were killed when a patron of a tavern was asked to leave by the management, only to return with a can of gasoline with which he set fire to the tavern.

seven cases in which both the race and sex of the victim and offender differed. Thus, criminal homicide between the sexes was more frequent than between whites and nonwhites.

METHOD OF INFLICTING DEATH

In the 394 cases of criminal homicide recorded in Chicago in 1965 shooting was the most prevalent means of inflicting death, as may be seen in Table 3. Of the victims 49.5 per cent were shot, 27.9 per cent were stabbed, 14.7 per cent were beaten, and 7.9 per cent were slain by other means, such as by fire or by being thrown from a building. Shooting was most frequently the means of inflicting death in each of the race-sex categories with the exception of white females, who were beaten in 40 per cent and shot in 30 per cent of the cases. There were, however, only twenty white female victims, or 5.1 per cent of the total number of victims. For male victims, stabbing was a more commonly used means of inflicting death than was beating, but the reverse obtained among female victims. To beat a man to death may be more difficult or it may be attempted less frequently.

These findings differ considerably from those reported by Wolfgang. In Philadelphia 38.8 per cent of the victims were stabbed, 33.0 per cent were shot, 21.8 per cent were beaten, and 6.4 per cent were killed by other methods. However, Negroes and whites differed greatly in the frequency with which victims were stabbed or shot—46.8 per cent of the Negro victims and only 17.4 per cent of the white victims were stabbed.¹⁷ The difference in the frequency of stabbing does not, however, appear to be explained by the proportions of Negro offenders in the two cities, although this method of inflicting death is more prevalent among Negroes. As noted earlier, nonwhites, most of whom were Negroes, were the offenders in 78.6 per cent of the cases in Chicago and Negroes were the offenders in 75 per cent of the homicides in Philadelphia. Pokorny reported that in Houston shooting accounted for 63.5 per cent of the deaths; Negroes were the offenders in 63 per cent of the homicides in Houston.¹⁸ The explanation for the differences among Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia is not known; the answer may lie in the differential availability of firearms in these cities or may reflect the different

¹⁷ *Id.* at 84.

¹⁸ Pokorny, *A Comparison of Homicides in Two Cities*, *supra* note 4, at 480-81.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL HOMICIDES BY RACE AND SEX OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

Victims	Offenders					
	Total	Non-white male	Non-white female	White male	White female	Unknown
Nonwhite male	223	162	50	3	1	7
Nonwhite female	84	74	8	1	0	1
White male	67	14	1	40	6	6
White female	20	4	1	13	1	1
Total	394	254	60	57	8	15

TABLE 3

METHOD OF INFLICTING DEATH BY RACE AND SEX OF VICTIM

Method	Total	Nonwhite Male	Nonwhite Female	White Male	White Female
Stabbing	27.9	30.0	22.6	28.4	25.0
Shooting	49.5	53.8	44.0	47.7	30.0
Beating	14.7	9.0	22.6	16.4	40.0
Other	7.9	7.2	10.8	7.5	5.0
Total	100.0% (394)	100.0% (223)	100.0% (84)	100.0% (67)	100.0% (20)

time periods in which the analyses were conducted—Philadelphia, 1948-1952; Houston, 1958-1961; and Chicago, 1965. It is possible, though improbable, that residents of these cities differ in their adherence to the "tradition" of carrying knives.

TEMPORAL PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE

The hypothesis has often been proposed that there is a relationship between the occurrence of homicide and the warmer months of the year.¹⁹ Accordingly, the summer months should have the highest frequency of criminal homicides, the spring and fall should have the second highest frequencies but should be relatively equal to one another, and the winter months should have the lowest number of cases. The data do not support this hypothesis. During the winter months, December, January, and February, 24.4 per cent of the victims were killed. The percentage of victims slain in the spring months, March, April, and May, was almost identical, 24.1 per cent;

¹⁹ WOLFGANG, *op. cit.* *supra* note 1, at 96ff.

however, 29.7 per cent of the victims were killed during the summer months, June, July, and August. During the fall months, September, October, and November, 21.8 per cent of the victims were slain. That the summer months had the highest percentage of criminal homicides might be taken as partial support for the hypothesis, but the winter and spring months were relatively equal in the occurrence of homicide, a finding contrary to the hypothesis.

The observed seasonal variations thus do not support the hypothesis that criminal homicides are more frequent in the warmer months; because of continued interest in temporal patterns, the distribution of homicides by month is examined. August had the highest number of criminal homicides, followed by April, July, and December. Proponents of the hypothesis might argue that although April is not nearly as warm a month as July or August, it is the first month of relative warmth after the winter months and, by contrast, might be defined as a "warm" month. The frequency of criminal homicides in December might be explained, not by the "warm weather hypothesis," but rather by the fact that December contains two major holidays often celebrated by rather heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages.²⁰ In any event the hypothesis that the frequency of criminal homicide increases in warmer weather is not substantiated by the data. Partial support is found in that the summer months had the highest number of criminal homicides and August was the single month with the greatest frequency of criminal homicide; but, the fact that the winter and spring months were relatively equal in the frequency of homicide and the high individual frequencies in April and December suggest rejection of the hypothesis. The data indicate a general trend along the lines of the hypothesis, but no more.

There does not appear to be a seasonal pattern, or seasonal variation of any consequence, in the criminal homicides recorded in Chicago in 1965, a conclusion also reported by Wolfgang.²¹ This may perhaps best be taken as support for the general proposition that criminal homicide is related to the tempo of social life, which in turn presumably varies with climactic conditions. Since the studies

²⁰ The use of alcoholic beverages and its relation to the homicidal act is discussed in a subsequent section; at this point let it suffice to note that intoxicants were involved in slightly more than half of the criminal homicides recorded in Chicago.

²¹ *Id.* at 98ff.

in Philadelphia and Chicago reach a similar conclusion, it would appear to be time to discard the "warm weather" hypothesis.

Most of the criminal homicides in Chicago occurred on a weekend, with Saturday having the highest frequency of cases. Excluding the 13 cases for which there was no information regarding the exact date of the offense, 59.6 per cent of the recorded criminal homicides occurred on the weekend days of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. More criminal homicides, 26.2 per cent, were committed on Saturday than on any other single day, followed in decreasing frequency by Sunday, Friday, and Monday. Interestingly, there are differences between whites and nonwhites as well as between males and females with respect to the day of the week in which homicides are most frequent. Nonwhites were more frequently slain on a Saturday and whites were more frequently killed on a Sunday. The percentage of white males and females slain on Monday is higher than the comparable figures among nonwhites. Females are more frequently killed on Friday; since this is often payday, the frequency of such cases may be a consequence of domestic quarrels regarding money, although this is speculation.

The hours during which criminal homicide occurred with the greatest frequency were between 8:00 p.m. and midnight, although these data are limited by the fact that there was insufficient information regarding 43 cases. Of the remaining homicides 36.2 per cent occurred in this four-hour span. Among the nonwhite males 40.3 per cent of the victims were slain during these hours, as were 38.9 per cent of the white males. Again, the pattern of criminal homicide for white female victims differs from that of the other race-sex categories. They were most frequently killed between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. with the 8:00 p.m. to midnight span showing a considerably smaller frequency. The discrepancy observed in this particular category should not be emphasized too strongly, because the number of white female victims is small.

LOCATION OF THE CRIMINAL OFFENSE

More criminal homicides occurred in the home than in any other single location. In fact the home was the most prevalent scene of the homicidal act in every race-sex category. There was no difference between nonwhites and whites in the location of the offense, but there was a marked difference between males and females. Only 37.6 per cent of

the male victims were slain in the home; however, 61.5 per cent of the females were killed in the home.²² This difference may be due in part to the fact that males, more than females, spend more of their leisure time outside the home engaging in such activities as card playing and drinking. Another possible explanation may be suggested. A factor related to the location of the criminal offense is the victim-offender relationship prior to the criminal homicide. As will be discussed in a subsequent section, females were more frequently slain by a close friend or member of the family while males were more frequently killed by an acquaintance or a stranger. Because women are frequently killed by someone with whom they are familiar, it is more likely that they would be at home than is the likelihood that a male would be killed in the home by a stranger or a casual acquaintance.

Shooting was the most frequent method of inflicting death for those offenses which occurred in the home. Because the number of cases in which whites were killed in the home is too limited to be analyzed by means of inflicting death, the following analysis is restricted to the nonwhites who were slain at home. Of these nonwhite victims, 47.1 per cent were slain by the use of a gun. This is somewhat surprising in the light of the fact that the home would provide easy access to a knife. In comparing nonwhite males and females who were killed in the home, it is apparent that shooting was the most prevalent means of inflicting death for both; however, males were stabbed more often than they were beaten, while the reverse was found among the females.

INTOXICANTS IN THE HOMICIDAL SITUATION

Of the 370 cases for which there was adequate information, intoxicants were present, according to police records, in 53.5 per cent of the homicidal scenes.²³ More relevant is the fact that while intoxicants were present in 58.2 per cent of the cases involving female victims, they were present in only 51.8 per cent of the cases involving male victims. The word "only" is used because it might seem reasonable to expect more males to be the

victims of homicides with intoxicants present in the homicidal situation. However, males were killed by casual acquaintances and strangers more frequently than were females; this could indicate that many male victims were not on a "drinking basis" with the offenders. Further, males were more frequently victims of a robbery than were females, and males were more likely than females to be killed in commercial places other than a tavern.

Intoxicants were present in 55.6 per cent of the cases involving nonwhite victims and in 46.3 per cent of the cases involving white victims. The percentage of cases in which alcoholic beverages were present differed according to the race-sex category of the victim: nonwhite male, 53.6 per cent; white male, 46.0 per cent; nonwhite female, 60.8 per cent; and, white female, 47.4 per cent. Although the percentage of cases in which intoxicants were present was higher in Philadelphia, Wolfgang reported similar findings. He observed that there was little difference in the presence of alcohol between men and women of the same race, but there was a considerable difference in Philadelphia between whites and Negroes of the same sex.²⁴ Perhaps the best explanation for the difference between whites and nonwhites lies in cultural variations. An indication of this possibility is that of the 37 victims slain in a taproom in Chicago, 31 were nonwhite.

MOTIVE UNDERLYING THE HOMICIDAL ATTACK

This analysis is based on the "motives" assigned by the investigating detectives; that the police did not indicate a motive in 28 cases suggests the difficulties involved in attributing motives. The remaining cases indicate that there are differences in alleged motive between nonwhites and whites and between males and females in criminal homicide. While an altercation over liquor, money,²⁵ or a "trivial matter" such as an insult or curse was the motive allegedly underlying the death of 20.0 per cent of the white victims, these "motives" were involved in the deaths of 42.0 per cent of the nonwhite victims. White males were more

²² These percentages are similar to those reported by Wolfgang, who found that 45.9 per cent and 68.3 per cent of the males and females, respectively, were killed in the home. *Id.* at 123.

²³ The value of this analysis is limited because highly pertinent information is missing, namely, data regarding the use of intoxicants when criminal homicide did not ensue. These data are presented for purposes of comparison with Wolfgang's findings.

²⁴ Wolfgang reports the following percentages according to the race-sex category of the victim: Negro male, 70.1 per cent; white male, 50.0 per cent; Negro female, 66.7 per cent; and, white female, 44.2 per cent. *Id.* at 136.

²⁵ The term "money" as used here refers to altercations over money owed to the individual in the form of rent, wages, borrowed money, or the sharing of the family income between husband and wife. Reference is not made to robbery or burglary.

frequently the victims of robbery than were persons in any other race-sex category; in fact, 33.9 per cent of the white male victims were killed in robberies. In contrast, nonwhite males were more frequently the victims of gang fights than were white males. A higher proportion of the female victims were slain as a result of a domestic quarrel than were males.

VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP PRIOR TO THE CRIMINAL HOMICIDE

A large proportion of the victims were slain by a member of the family or a close friend; victims so slain accounted for 47.4 per cent of all victims for whom data were available.²⁶ This is particularly true of females; 68.7 and 78.9 per cent, respectively, of the nonwhite and white females were killed by a member of the family or a close friend. Those victims who were slain by a casual acquaintance constitute 32.7 per cent of the victims. Taken together, the categories, member of the family or close friend and casual acquaintance, include 96.1 per cent of the female victims. Approximately one-fifth of the victims were killed by persons who were strangers to them; while few of the females were killed by strangers, 20.2 per cent of the nonwhite male and 45.2 per cent of the white male victims were killed by strangers. This difference between the nonwhite and white male victims appears to be due to the large number of white males, twenty-one, who were slain in robberies.

There were 77 criminal homicides in which the victim and offender were married to one another. A single location accounts for nearly all of the husband-wife criminal homicides—93 per cent of these slayings occurred in the home. In nearly half of these cases the victim was killed by the use of a gun. Not surprising is the finding that males were seldom beaten to death by their wives, but were shot or stabbed. Although shooting and stabbing were the most frequent means of inflicting death upon female victims, beatings accounted for nearly half (four of nine) of the white female and one-fifth of the nonwhite female homicides committed by spouses.

VICTIM-PRECIPITATED CRIMINAL HOMICIDE

One of the most provocative points in Wolfgang's analysis of criminal homicide in Philadelphia concerned the role of the victim. Wolfgang

²⁶ In Philadelphia 53.5 per cent of the cases involved the killing of a member of one's family or a close friend. *Id.* at 209.

reported that 25.5 per cent of the cases he analyzed were victim-precipitated. Unfortunately, in Chicago the information describing the events leading to the criminal homicide, the basis for the determination of whether or not the offense could be considered as victim-precipitated, was sufficiently extensive in only 311 cases. In the other 83 cases the description was either vague or non-existent. Of the 311 cases 118 or 37.9 per cent were victim-precipitated. The victim in 80.5 per cent of these cases was a nonwhite male.²⁷ As may be seen in Table 4, slightly more than half of the nonwhite males precipitated their own deaths in comparison with one-fifth of the white male victims. The percentage of nonwhite females whose actions led to their death is almost the same as among white males, but in only 6.7 per cent of the homicides involving white female victims were the offenses victim-precipitated.²⁸ Analyzing Wolfgang's data in the same manner one finds that of the nonwhite male victims in Philadelphia, 33.5 per cent precipitated their deaths in contrast with 25.4 per cent of the white males, 8.3 per cent of the Negro females, and 2.3 per cent of the white females.

Several points noted earlier may be relevant here. Nonwhites were more frequently slain in situations in which intoxicants were present and nonwhite males were more frequently the victims in gang fights than were white males. On the other hand, one-third of the white male victims were killed in robberies. These findings appear to be relevant to any effort to explain why the nonwhite male precipitates his own death more often than persons in the other race-sex categories.

The data indicate that the age of the victim is unrelated to the victim's role in criminal homicide, that is, the proportions of cases in the three age categories are relatively equal for victim-precipitated criminal homicides. That beating is infrequently the method of inflicting death in victim-precipitated homicides is presumably related to the fact that women are usually the victims of

²⁷ Victim-precipitated criminal homicides in Philadelphia involved male victims to a greater extent than in Chicago. In Philadelphia in 94 per cent of these cases the victims were male. Negro and white females constituted only 5.3 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively of the victims of victim-precipitated homicides while Negro and white males comprised 74.0 per cent and 20.0 per cent, respectively. *Id.* at 256. In Chicago, by contrast, nearly twice as many female victims were involved in victim-precipitated criminal homicides, comprising 11 per cent of these cases.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

beatings, but only 13 victim-precipitated homicides involved females. The difference in the use of knives and guns is not large, nor does the location of the offense, treated in terms of the home and other settings, appear to be associated with the occurrence of victim-precipitated homicides.

There is a difference, however, in the relationship between the victim and the offender prior to the criminal act. Victim-precipitated homicides were found to a greater degree in the cases involving close friends or members of a family and to a lesser extent between casual acquaintances and strangers. Ten of the 12 cases in which the relationship between the victim and offender was not known were victim-precipitated.

Another difference of interest was found in the presence of alcoholic beverages. In the 164 cases in which intoxicants were present, 43.9 per cent were victim-precipitated, in comparison with only 31.3 per cent of the 134 cases in which intoxicants were not present. Thus, intoxicants were more frequently present than absent in victim-precipitated homicides. This finding is not surprising because intoxicants were present in 53.6 per cent of the cases involving a nonwhite male victim and slightly more than half of the nonwhite male victims precipitated their own deaths.

SUMMARY

Examination of the data on criminal homicides recorded by the Chicago police in 1965 reveals certain patterns in criminal homicide, many of which are similar to those reported by Wolfgang. Nonwhite males were the victims or offenders more frequently than any other race-sex category. Most of the victims and offenders were between 15 and 49 years of age. Inter-racial homicide occurred infrequently, although homicide between the sexes comprised two-fifths of the recorded cases. The victim was often slain by an offender within ten years of his or her own age with two exceptions—the very young were often slain by older offenders while older persons were frequently killed by younger offenders.

A gun was most frequently the weapon used to inflict death for all victims except white females, who, in the few cases in which they were victims, were more often beaten to death. It was in the method of inflicting death that the data differed considerably from Wolfgang's findings; in Philadelphia stabbing rather than shooting was the most prevalent means of inflicting death. The difference is not due to the proportion of offenders

TABLE 4
VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH VICTIM-PRECIPITATED
CRIMINAL HOMICIDES

	Total Number of Cases	Victim- Precipitated	
		Number	Per Cent
<i>Race and Sex of Victim</i>			
Nonwhite male	185	95	51.4
Nonwhite female	61	12	19.7
White male	50	10	20.0
White female	15	1	6.7
Total	311	118	37.9
<i>Age of Victim</i>			
Under 25	72	27	37.5
25-44	164	65	39.6
Over 44	73	26	35.6
<i>Method Employed</i>			
Stabbing	83	39	47.0
Shooting	156	67	42.9
Beating	44	9	20.5
Other	26	3	11.5
Unknown	2	0	—
<i>Location of Offense</i>			
Home	133	53	39.8
Not home	171	65	38.0
Unknown	7	0	—
<i>Relationship</i>			
Family or friend	140	59	42.1
Casual acquaintance	94	26	27.7
Stranger	65	23	35.4
Unknown	12	10	83.3
<i>Intoxicants Present</i>			
Present in situation	164	72	43.9
Not present in situation	134	42	31.3
Unknown	13	4	30.8

who were nonwhite. Although more than one-third of the homicides occurred between 8:00 p.m. and midnight and were also concentrated in the weekend, there does not appear to be a seasonal pattern or seasonal variation of any consequence. The home was the most common location of the criminal offense in every race-sex category. Intoxicants were present in slightly more than one-half of the situations in which a homicide took place.

The motives underlying the homicides appeared to the investigating detectives to involve trivial matters in many cases, particularly those involving nonwhites. One-third of the white male victims were robbery victims. Nearly one-half of the victims were killed by a member of the family or a close friend.

Although the information used to determine whether or not the offense could be considered as victim-precipitated was inadequate in 83 cases, 37.9 per cent of the remaining 311 cases were so classified. Slightly more than one-half of the nonwhite males precipitated their own deaths, in comparison with one-fifth of the white male victims. The percentage of nonwhite females

whose actions led to their death is almost the same as among white males, but in only 6.7 per cent of the homicides involving white female victims were the offenses victim-precipitated. Thus, the proportions of nonwhite male, nonwhite female, and white female victims whose cases could be classified as victim-precipitated were higher in Chicago than in Philadelphia.