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RELATIONAL DISTANCE AND HOMICIDE: THE ROLE OF THE STRANGER*

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I. INTRODUCTION

When the actions of one individual cause the death of another, a homicide has occurred. While that initial statement is simple, homicide is a multi-faceted act involving numerous possible causes and circumstances. As Nettler suggests, there are many routes that lead to culpable killing.[1] Given the diverse nature of the acts described as homicide, it is little wonder that theoretical writing on the subject as a whole has been spartan.[2]

The first step in explaining any phenomenon is adequate classification of the groups of acts sought to be understood.[3] In the case of homicide, a number of strategies have been tried in classifying those acts that result in death.[4] Some authors have concentrated on causes of homicide, including psychological imbalance (mental ill-

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[1] G. NETTLER, KILLING ONE ANOTHER (1982).

[2] *See, e.g.*, B. JERATH, P. LARSON & J. LEWIS, HOMICIDE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OVER 4500 ITEMS (1982)(Of the 4570 items included, only five come under the heading of "theory" specifically.).

[3] G. NETTLER, EXPLAINING CRIME (3d ed. 1984).

[4] Some researchers have been concerned with structural issues relating to homicide and have been less concerned with classification. *See, e.g.*, Gastil, *Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence*, 36 AM. SOC. REV. 412 (1971); Krahn, Hartnagel & Gartrell, *Income Inequality and Levels of Homicide: An Analysis of Urban Neighborhoods*, 24 CRIMINOLOGY 269 (1986); D. Luckenbill & D. Doyle, Cultural and Structural Explanations of Violence: The Role of Interpersonal Conflict and Disputations (unpublished manu-

ness, psychiatric disorders),[5] motivations (political, religious, sexual, self-defense, conflict)[6] and methods (poison, shooting, beating).[7] By far the most common tactic has been to study the socio-demographic characteristics of victims and offenders, most notably age and gender.[8]

One common link occurs in much of the writing on homicide: no matter which classification scheme is followed, authors consistently consider the relationship between the victim and the offender to be of paramount importance.[9] Many authors attempt to illuminate some specific aspect of homicide in terms of the relationship of victims to offenders.[10] Such focus on interpersonal relationships treats the act of homicide as a social event.

Social relationships of the individuals involved can be conceptualized in terms of their social distance from one another. Different social relationships imply "distance" between the actors in terms of intimate knowledge of one another. Love relationships are the closest in intimacy. Other family relationships are somewhat less intimate, and strangers share no intimacy. This Article suggests that a categorization of homicides in terms of social distance categories will lead to a better understanding of homicide.

In his research on homicide in Philadelphia, Wolfgang examined relational categories.[11] Other studies followed suit.[12] Do-

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script)(presented to the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Atlanta 1986).

[5] *See, e.g.*, Langevin, Paitch, Orchard, Handy & Russon, *Diagnosis of Killers Seen for Psychiatic Assessment*, 66 ACTA PSYCHIATRICA SCANDINAVICA 216 (1982).

[6] *See, e.g.*, Felson & Steadman, *Situational Factors Leading to Criminal Violence*, 21 CRIMINOLOGY 59 (1983); Luckenbill, *Criminal Homicide as a Situated Transaction*, 25 SOC. PROBLEMS 176 (1977).

[7] *See, e.g.*, D. MULVIHILL, M. TUMIN & L. CURTIS, CRIMES OF VIOLENCE 234 (1969); M. WOLFGANG, PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE 79-96 (1958).

[8] M. RIEDEL, M. ZAHN & L. FELSON MOCK, THE NATURE AND PATTERNS OF AMERICAN HOMICIDE (1985); Zahn, *The Female Homicide Victim*, 13 CRIMINOLOGY 400 (1975); A. Browne & R. Flewelling, Women as Victims or Perpetrators of Homicide (unpublished manuscript)(presented to the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Atlanta 1986).

[9] M. RIEDEL, M. ZAHN & L. FELSON MOCK, *supra* note 8; M. WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7; Gillis, *Domesticity, Divorce and Deadly Quarrels: An Exploration of Integration-Regulation and Homicide*, in CRITIQUE AND EXPLANATION: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF GWYNNE NETTLER 133-48 (T. Hartnagel & R. Silverman eds. 1986); Palmer & Humphrey, *Familial and Other Relationships in Homicide in North Carolina*, 3 J. FAM. ISSUES 301 (1982).

[10] *See, e.g.*, Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9; Silverman & Mukherjee, *Intimate Homicide: An Analysis of Violent Social Relationships*, 5 BEHAV. SCI. & L. 37 (1987); Straus, *Victims and Aggressors in Marital Violence*, 23 AM. BEHAV. SCI 681 (1980).

[11] M WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7.

[12] *See, e.g.*, H. LUNDSGAARDE, MURDER IN SPACE CITY (1977); Barnard, Vera, Vera & Newman, *Till Death Do Us Part: A Study of Spouse Murder*, 10 BULL. AM. ACAD. PSYCHIATRY & L. 271 (1982); Browne, *Assault and Homicide at Home: When Battered Women Kill*, 3 AD-

mestic, family, and other close relationships that lead to homicide have dominated the literature in the field. "People vary in the degree to which they participate in one another's lives. This defines their intimacy, or relational distance. . . ."[13] People react differently to the same stimuli depending on relational distance. As Gillis points out, "injuries or insults that could be considered minor if inflicted by a stranger may elicit outrage if perpetrated by a loved one. In the latter case there has been a violation of trust and the gap between expected and actual behavior is wider."[14] The attachment described by social distance categories can be well utilized in attempting to explain homicide and a number of aspects of personal crime events.[15]

Surprisingly, relationships which are more distant, particularly killings by strangers, have been neglected in the research literature until recently. Neglect of strangers is equally apparent in general sociological literature. Simmel was one of the few early sociological theorists to pay attention to the stranger as an important component of urban life.[16] In more contemporary literature, Goffman[17] and Lofland[18] are among the few writers to address the subject. Despite the neglect, strangers are a real and persistent aspect of urban living. The circumstances of city life force city dwellers to rely on people with whom they share virtually no intimacy to provide a variety of services. It is somewhat paradoxical that strangers have also become a source of apprehension in the city. They are seen as potential threats or potential perpetrators of crime. Fear of strangers is fear of the unknown, and it has even led some to change their daily routine dramatically.

In contrast, "[i]t is a criminological cliche. . ." that one is more likely to be killed by a loved one than by a stranger.[19] Homicide in the context of the emotionally charged atmosphere of an intimate relationship is easily understood on the basis of the relationship

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VANCES IN APPLIED SOC. PSYCHOLOGY 57 (1986); Gillis, *supra* note 9; Silverman and Mukherjee, *supra* note 10; Showalter, Bonnie & Roddy, *The Spousal Homicide Syndrome*, 3 INT'L J. L. & PSYCHIATRY 117 (1980); Wolfgang, *Family Violence and Criminal Behavior*, 4 BULL. AM. ACAD. PSYCHIATRY & L. 316 (1976); Zimring, Mukherjee & Van Winkle, *Intimate Homicide: A Study of Intersexual Homicide in Chicago*, 50 U. CHI. L. REV. 910 (1983); A. Browne and R. Flewelling, *supra* note 8.

[13] D. BLACK, THE BEHAVIOR OF LAW 40 (1976).

[14] Gillis, *supra* note 9, at 142.

[15] *See id.*; Silverman & Mukherjee, *supra* note 10.

[16] *See* G. SIMMEL, THE SOCIOLOGY OF GEORG SIMMEL (K. Wolff ed. 1964).

[17] E. GOFFMAN, BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC PLACES (1963).

[18] L. LOFLAND, A WORLD OF STRANGERS: ORDER AND ACTION IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE (1973). *See also* Yi Fu Tuan, *Strangers and Strangeness*, 76 GEOGRAPHICAL REV. 10 (1986).

[19] Zimring, Mukherjee & Van Winkle, *supra* note 12, at 910.

alone. Homicide perpetrated by strangers, on the other hand, is viewed as a threat resulting from a general degeneration of society.

Because relational distance is so important in defining the homicide situation, it should also be a powerful predictor of elements associated with homicide. This reseach predicts that stranger homicide will have quite distinct patterns from homicides within more intimate relationships. These patterns may change over time with, for example, changing family patterns. Most prominently, patterns involving gender relationships, age, means of commission of the act, and location should vary with relational distance.

II. EXAMINATION OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. TRENDS

The frequency of stranger homicide in society is of concern to the population. People perceive a rise in street crime in many urban areas and have, as a result, changed their living habits. In the case of homicide, the question becomes whether there has been an increase in the proportion of homicides committed by strangers in recent years.

One of the few studies to address this issue directly concludes that murders between individuals with "secondary relationships" and between strangers increased much more rapidly than murders involving individuals sharing "primary" relationships in Canada between 1961 and 1974.[20] In the Gillis study, strangers and other secondary groups were considered as one category.[21] Given the arguments above, an examination of strangers as a separate category would likely be fruitful.

Earlier studies which have dealt with strangers tend to have done so at only one point in time. These studies report that stranger involvement varies between 12% and 22% of the reported homicides, depending on the time and place of the study undertaken. A sample of the available data and studies done show that strangers were involved in 21% of the homicides in Manhattan,[22] 22% in North Carolina,[23] 20% in Boston,[24] and 12% in Philadel-

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[20] Gillis, *supra* note 9, at 143. "Primary" relationships are those which involve domestic, family relationships, while "secondary" relationships are those which involve non-family relationships.

[21] Gillis, *supra* note 9.

[22] Messner & Tardiff, *The Social Ecology of Urban Homicide: An Application of the "Routine Activities" Approach*, 23 CRIMINOLOGY 241, 251 (1985).

[23] Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9.

[24] Rizzo, *Murder in Boston: Killers and Their Victims*, 26 INT'L J. OFFENDER THERAPY & COMP. CRIME 36 (1982).

phia.[25] A survey of seventeen cities in 1969 revealed that strangers were involved in an average of 16% of the homicides.[26] A study of Chicago showed strangers involved in 16% of the homicides precipitated by assault.[27]

Research that has examined trends suggest a rise in stranger homicide.[28] Given these results, an examination of Canadian trends within relational categories should reveal a rise in homicides committed by more distant relationships and a corresponding decline in homicides committed within closer relationships.[29]

B. GENDER

In most societies, males are the perpetrators in the majority of homicides.[30] When females kill, they most often kill within the family. Nettler indicates that while men tend to kill more often, the sex ratio in homicides varies by culture.[31] Females are both victim and offender in homicides less often than males.[32] In Chicago, from 1965 to 1981, females were victims in 19% of the 12,872 cases and were offenders in 12% of the cases (the sex of the offender in 12% of these cases was unknown).[33] In Philadelphia from 1948 to 1952, females were victims in 24% of the cases and perpetrators 18% of the time.[34] In the seventeen city survey, females were 21% of the victims and 20% of the offenders.[35] Women are far more likely to be killed by a man than by a woman,[36] and men are overwhelmingly more likely to be killed by other men.[37]

Few studies have identified and examined relational distance as it refers to gender relationships. In North Carolina, Palmer and

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[25] M. WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7.

[26] D. MULVIHILL, M. TUMIN & L. CURTIS, *supra* note 7, at 207.

[27] C. BLOCK, LETHAL VIOLENCE IN CHICAGO OVER SEVENTEEN YEARS: HOMICIDES KNOWN TO THE POLICE, 1965-1981 (1985).

[28] Gillis, *supra* note 9; Block, *Homicide in Chicago: A Nine Year Study (1965-1973)*, 66 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 496 (1975).

[29] *See* Zimring, Mukherjee & Van Winkle, *supra* note 12. Recent evidence from U.S. studies of violence suggest that victims know offenders in up to 50% of the incidents. Robberies are the most likely violent crime to be committed by strangers (75%), while homicides are the least likely (18%). U.S.A. Today, Jan. 19, 1986, at 3-A.

[30] G. NETTLER, *supra* note 1, at 15. *See also* M. WOLFGANG, STUDIES IN HOMICIDE (1967); Palmer, *Sex Differences in Criminal Homicide and Suicide in England and Wales and the United States*, 11 OMEGA 255 (1980-81).

[31] G. NETTLER, *supra* note 1, at 21.

[32] Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9, at 306.

[33] C. BLOCK, *supra* note 27, at 33.

[34] M. WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7, at 32.

[35] D. MULVIHILL, M. TUMIN & L. CURTIS, *supra* note 7, at 207.

[36] A. JONES, WOMEN WHO KILL (1980), *cited in* Browne, *supra* note 12, at 61.

[37] A. Browne and R. Flewelling, *supra* note 8, at 9.

Humphrey found that 46% of the female offenders murdered their husbands while only 9% of the male offenders killed their wives.[38] Conversely, 28% of the female victims were killed by their husbands, while only 6% of the male victims were killed by their wives.[39] Twenty-six percent of the males and 13% of the females were victims of strangers.[40] Although the specific proportions reported vary from study to study, the general finding is that males are involved in homicide, both as offenders and as victims, more often than females. When a female is involved in a homicide, both as an offender and as a victim, the homicide was most likely preceded by a domestic dispute.[41]

The consistent findings concerning female participation in homicide has generated some interesting hypotheses with regard to current and future involvement of women in this crime. In 1951, Veli Verkko formulated "laws" concerning gender and homicide.[42] His contention was that the rates of crimes committed by women against the person remained stable both across countries and within a single country over time.[43] Willbanks, however, found no support for Verkko's hypothesis.[44] Neither Willbanks nor Verkko, however, controlled relational distance in conducting their analyses. It is possible, therefore, that some relational types of homicide do remain stable while others fluctuate. Willbanks also considered and rejected a hypothesis developed by Adler that homicide rates for females should increase as females become more active in traditionally male roles.[45] In Willbanks' study, however, controls for relational type were not used.

According to the Adler hypothesis, it is possible that, as women become more liberated, they will be outside of domestic situations. Subsequently, the rate of homicide in domestic situations will decline. On the other hand, if such change also involves participation in different types of crime, then one would expect a rise in the pro-

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[38] Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9, at 304-05.

[39] *Id.* at 305-06.

[40] *Id.*

[41] *See, e.g.*, C. BLOCK, *supra* note 27, at 33; D. MULVIHILL, M. TUMIN & L. CURTIS, *supra* note 7, at 207; Akiyama, *Murder Victimization: A Statistical Analysis*, 50 F.B.I. L. ENFORCEMENT BULL. 8 (1981); Browne, *supra* note 12; Gillis, *supra* note 9; Straus, *supra* note 10; Wolfgang, *supra* note 12; Zimring, Mukherjee & Van Winkle, *supra* note 12.

[42] Verkko, *Static and Dynamic "Laws" and Homicide*, in STUDIES IN HOMICIDE 36 (M. Wolfgang ed. 1967), *cited in* Willbanks, *A Test of Verkko's Static and Dynamic "Laws" of Sex and Homicide*, 4 INT'L J. WOMEN'S STUD. 173 (1981).

[43] Willbanks, *supra* note 41.

[44] *Id.*

[45] F. ADLER, SISTERS IN CRIME (1975).

portion of stranger homicides by females. Relational categories fall-
ing between these extremes are less predictable.

In contrast to Adler's hypotheses, Messner and Tardiff devel-
oped hypotheses based on a routine activities approach.[46] Messner
and Tardiff suggest that demographic characteristics which are
likely to be associated with greater amounts of time spent in the
home are also associated with disproportionately high rates of homi-
cide in that location. Because women generally spend more time in
the home than do males, women are more likely to be murdered
there. People who spend more time away from home are more
likely to be involved with strangers. Hence, researchers "predict
that the probability of homicides involving different victim perpetra-
tor relationships (relatives, friends, strangers) will vary along with
the basic sociodemographic . . . characteristics. . . ."[47]

C. AGE

With regard to direct physical attack, "young males are . . . the
most dangerous human beings."[48] Many studies confirm the notion
that murder is a young person's act. Male and female victims and
offenders peak in their mid-twenties. Other research has found fur-
ther that offenders, on the average, tend to be slightly younger than
victims.[49]

Using the routine activities approach, Messner and Tardiff sug-
gested that, since the very young and the elderly spend more time at
home, these groups would likely be victims in family homicide situa-
tions more often than they are victims in homicides involving other
relational distances.[50] In fact, Messner and Tardiff found that the
young and the elderly were as likely to be killed by strangers as by
family members.[51] Kunkle and Humphrey suggest that one reason
elderly individuals have a low victimization rate is that they stay in
their homes.[52] Kunkle and Humphrey, however, also recognize that
homicide most often involves people who know each other. "[T]he
life-style of the aged does not insulate them from those most apt to

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46 Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22, at 243.

47 *Id.*

48 G. NETTLER, *supra* note 1, at 15.

49 *See, e.g.,* D. MULVIHILL, M. TUMIN & L. CURTIS, *supra* note 7; Akiyama, *supra* note
40; Gillis, *supra* note 9; Rizzo, *supra* note 24.

50 Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22.

51 *Id.*

52 Kunkle & Humphrey, *Murder of the Elderly: An Analysis of Increased Vulnerability,* 13
OMEGA 27 (1982-83), *citing* Dussich & Eichman, *The Elderly Victim: Vulnerability to the Crim-
inal Act,* in CRIME AND THE ELDERLY 94 (J. Goldsmith & S. Goldsmith eds. 1976).

murder them—their relatives, neighbors or friends."[53]

If these contentions are correct, one would expect to find low rates of stranger homicide where an elderly person is the victim. One study finds that stranger killings tend to be most often perpetrated by individuals who are younger than their victims, while "offenders who killed members of their own families tended to be older than those whose victims were outside their families."[54] Research suggests that stranger killings most often involve younger perpetrators.[55] Generally neglected, however, is the importance of relational distance as it refers to age of victims and offenders.

D. LOCATION

The location of the homicide is also important to an understanding of the dynamics of the event. While several studies explore location with regard to the homicide event, few control for relational distance. As research conducted by Messner and Tardiff shows, location varies with type of homicide.[56] Females are more likely to be in the home and are more likely to be victimized by relatives. Males are more likely to be victimized by strangers. The very young and the aged spend more time in the home and they are more likely to be victims of relatives. The latter point was made in the research of Kunkle and Humphrey;[57] but, as noted above, the proposition is at least partially rejected by the findings of the Messner and Tardiff study.[58]

Generalizing from these findings, one would expect to find that lifestyles which take individuals outside of their homes lead to homicides involving strangers. In other words, the greater the relational distance between victim and offender, the more likely that males are involved and that the event has taken place outside of the residence of the victim or offender.

E. MEANS OF OFFENSE COMMISSION

Does the means of committing offenses vary with the relational distance between victim and offender? Studies of domestic disputes have addressed this issue. For instance, Straus reported that husbands use a higher level of violence than their wives in violent inci-

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[53] *Id.* at 29.

[54] Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9, at 308.

[55] M. RIEDEL, M. ZAHN & L. FELSON MOCK, *supra* note 8, at 33.

[56] Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22.

[57] Kunkle & Humphrey, *supra* note 52, at 32.

[58] Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22.

dents.[59]   Wolfgang suggested that "more excessive degrees of violence during a stabbing or shooting occur in the home rather than outside the home. . . ."[60]   In the Philadelphia study, Wolfgang also reported that wives tend to stab, while husbands are more likely to shoot or beat their wives to death.[61]   Barnard, on the other hand, found no such relationship.[62]

Gillis is one of the few researchers who has put means of offense commission into a theoretical framework that speaks to relational distance.[63]   He found it difficult to distinguish social relationships on the basis of means of commission, but he did find it possible to make distinctions based on type of firearm used.[64]   In primary and domestic groups, rifles or shotguns are the most common weapons used, while, in more distant social groups, restricted weapons such as handguns, sawed-off rifles, and shotguns are the weapons of choice.[65]

Hence, weapons such as shotguns or rifles, which are used for hunting or sport and are found in the home, are more likely to be involved in incidents involving close social relationships. Easily concealed weapons, which are restricted by Canadian law, are more likely used when strangers are involved in homicide incidents.

III.   METHOD AND MEASUREMENT

This research uses twenty-two years of national data in Canada to examine the importance of relational distance for inter-gender homicide. This study includes analyses of age differences, location, and means of offense commission in reviewing the issues noted above. The role of the stranger in homicide will be highlighted throughout this analysis by contrasting it with the actions of more intimately related individuals.

Data for this study originated with the homicide project of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. The data was 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.[66]   In the cur-

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59 Straus, *supra* note 10.

60 Wolfgang, *supra* note 12, at 319.

61 M. WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7, at 213-15.

62 Barnard, Vera, Vera & Newman, *supra* note 12.

63 Gillis, *supra* note 9, at 142-43.

64 *Id.*

65 *Id.*

66 Name identification was omitted, as were certain data elements that are not routinely examined by Statistics Canada, such as time of occurrence.

rent study, all cases of homicide committed between 1961 and 1983 are included.

Use of the Statistics Canada data has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, more information is provided than could reasonably be collected by individual researchers. On the other hand, measurement categories used have been designed for purposes other than academic research and have not necessarily been guided by theory in their formulation. Finally, the Statistics Canada data uses the method of coding cases that is most appropriate to the purposes of that agency, even though it may not be optimal for particular research orientations.

In Canada, as in the United States, the traditional way of "officially" counting homicides is to count victims. Between 1961 and 1983, there were 10,627 victims of homicide and "official" homicide rates were based on this number. The 10,627 victims were involved in 9642 homicide incidents. In the current study, the incident was used as the unit of analysis. Incident or event level data are most useful when examining trends. However, such data do present some problems when dealing with multiple offender and multiple victim cases. The solution in this study was to examine only one offender and one victim from each case.[67] This research used all incidents and the principal offender for analytic purposes. Victim/offender relationship has been coded in terms of the closest relationship between any offenders and victims in an incident. Hence, the data is biased slightly towards intimate relationships. Given the emphasis in this Article on relational distance and trends over time, incidence-based data best serve the purpose, since the most information is collected for the least cost in terms of data loss.

Most of the analysis of trends in this Article involves compari-

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[67] Previous researchers have confronted the problem of multiple offenders/victims in conducting homicide research. Some have decided on incidence level data and an analysis of one offender/one victim per homicide case. M. WOLFGANG, *supra* note 7, at 204; Gentleman & Whitmore, *Temporal Patterns in Twenty Years of Canadian Homicides*, 13 J. CAN. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS 262 (1986); Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9. Other researchers have created special data sets such as the Victim Level Data set produced for Illinois data. L. MILLER & C. BLOCK, ILLINOIS MURDER VICTIM DATA 1973-1981 (1985). Others have tried to resolve any issues involving multiple offenders and victims by dealing solely with cases involving only one victim and one offender. A. Browne & R. Flewelling, *supra* note 8. Use of this method would serve to eliminate 40% of the cases from this study.

No solution is perfect, as multiple offenders and victims in the data set can confound the analysis by presenting cases that bias the data due to sheer force of numbers. One arson with 48 victims and one offender distorts the analysis of homicide trends if victims are used as the units of analysis. On the other hand, if two offenders each have a social relationship with a victim, incidence level data will lose this information.

sons between relationship categories. The general focus of this Article will be on the proportional difference between relational categories as they change from year to year. As a result, there is no advantage to calculating rates for each year since the denominator for each relational group would be the same.[68] Therefore, with the exception of overall patterns of rates (see Figure 1, *infra*), trends are based on the raw numbers of homicide incidents occurring each year.

Relational distance is divided into four categories. The group with the highest level of intimacy is labelled spouse/lover. This grouping includes husbands, wives, estranged lovers, or those identified as being involved in a love triangle. This grouping is sometimes called "couples" and represents those relationships where there was most likely a "romantic involvement" and a large amount of intimate interaction. The second group consists of other family members such as parents, grandparents, nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts, and siblings. The more distant category of friends and acquaintances makes up the third category. Victims and offenders involved in business relationships, friendships, casual acquaintances, or other non-kinship relationships are included in the third category. The final category—strangers—includes those offenders who had no known relationship with the victim.

Age and gender are provided for both offenders and victims. For most of the analysis, age groups are divided into those under age 18, 18 to 25, 26 to 45, and over 45. The elderly, when mentioned specifically, have been defined as those sixty-five years of age and older.

Means of offense commission is examined as two variables—means and type of firearm. Means is grouped into shooting, stabbing, beating, and "other." The "other" category includes strangulation, suffocation, drowning, arson, and all other means of homicide.

For this study, location is the only real problem category. Location includes victim's home, suspect's home, other private place, institution, public place, and "other." It would be desirable to have a delineation of specific private and public locations. Nonetheless, even with the categories available, this research will provide initial tests of the hypotheses suggested above.

The major focus of this analysis is the explanatory power of relational distance for homicides in Canada. Because gender differences in the commission of homicide have proven so important in

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[68] C. BLOCK, *supra* note 27, at 18.

the past, each investigation is also controlled by gender relationship. Furthermore, for each of the variables investigated, relational distance and gender relationship have been analyzed over time. These results, however, are only reported when notable differences or patterns were observed.

IV. FINDINGS

A. TRENDS

Figure 1 shows the Canadian homicide rates for the years 1961 to 1983 for both victims and incidents. As would be expected, there are no dramatic differences between the patterns generated by the two measures. Homicide rates rose to a peak in 1975 (3.09 per 100,000) and then declined until 1980 when another upward trend began. The highest rate in the latter period was 2.74 per 100,000 in 1983.

Figure 2 reveals trends in Canadian homicide, taking into account relational distance. The proportion of stranger homicide rose gradually to a rather dramatic peak in 1980 (29%), followed by an equally dramatic decline in 1982 and 1983 (18%). The low year for stranger homicide was 1967 (15%). The average proportion of stranger involvement in homicide over the twenty-two years was 22%.

"Family" homicide remained relatively stable, while the proportion of spouse/lover homicide has been in steady decline since the 1960s, leveling out in the early 1980s. On the other hand, the proportion of homicides among "friends and acquaintances" has been rising persistently since the beginning of the measurement period.

B. GENDER

Homicide in Canada is characterized by high proportions of male offenders and victims, a pattern reported in previous research both in Canada and in other countries. Of note in Table 1 is the fairly high percentage (37.2%) of victims who are female and the low percentage (12.9%) of offenders who are female.

Men are about one and a half times more likely to kill other men than they are to kill women, while women are three times more likely to kill a man than another woman.[69] This result presents two

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[69] An interesting comparison can be made using U.S. data with regard to these ratios. Browne and Flewelling, using one-to-one homicide and 1980-84 data, report that in the United States men killed other men about 2.7 times more often than they killed women, while women killed men about 6 times more often than they killed other women. These figures were computed by the authors using data from A. Browne & R.
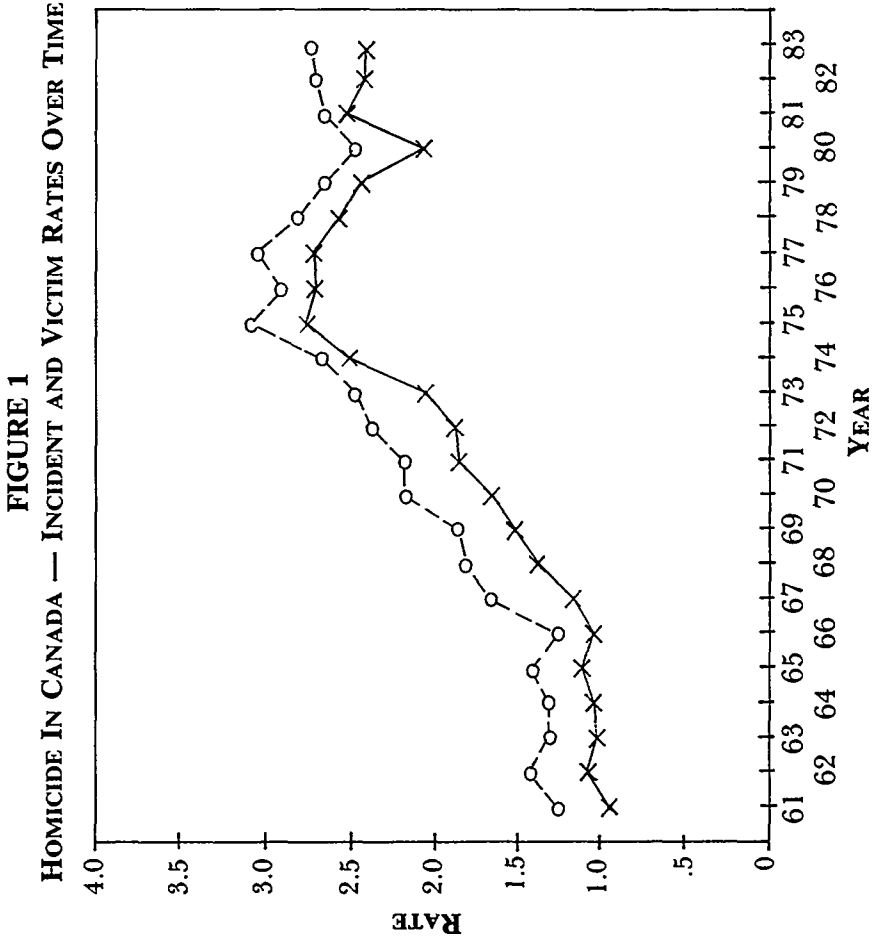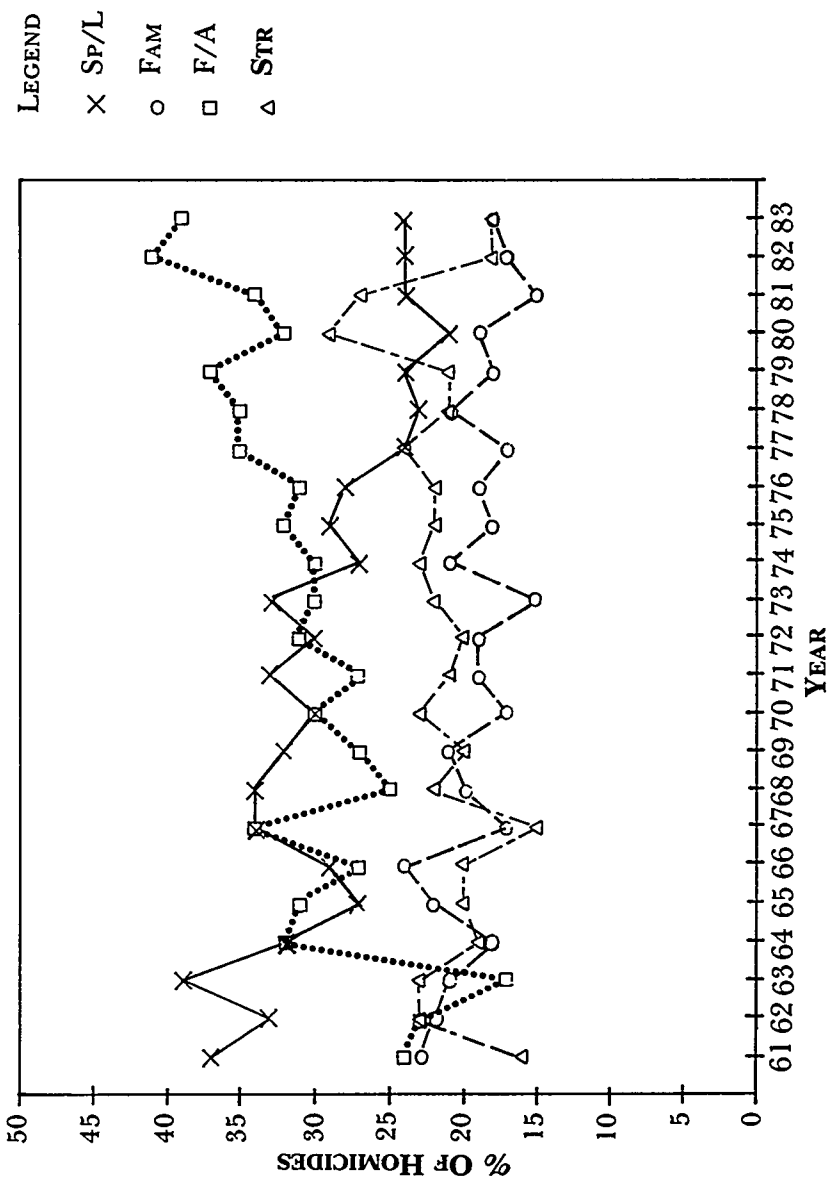
FIGURE 1
HOMICIDE IN CANADA — INCIDENT AND VICTIM RATES OVER TIME

FIGURE 2

RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME

LEGEND

× Sp/L

○ Fam

□ F/A

△ Str

TABLE 1
Sex of Offender by Sex of Victim

Sex of Victim	Sex of Offender		
	Male	Female	Total
Male	4376	800	5176
	(60.9%)	(75.5%)	(62.8%)
Female	2805	259	3063
	(39.1%)	(24.5%)	(37.2%)
Total	7181	1059	8240
	(87.1%)	(12.9%)	

issues. First, do the patterns of relationships between male and female victims and offenders hold when relational distance categories are considered? Second, do the gender patterns hold over time?

Relational distance has a major impact on the pattern of homicide for male and female victims and offenders as well (Table 2). In spouse/lover relationships, males are four times more likely to com-

TABLE 2
Relational Distance by Sex of the Offender and Sex of the Victim

Relational Distance	Sex of Victim		Sex of Offender	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Spouse/lover	632	1651	1843	440
	(12.2%)	(53.9%)	(25.7%)	(41.5%)
Other family	1050	482	1147	386
	(20.3%)	(15.7%)	(16.0%)	(36.4%)
Friend/acquaintance	2171	467	2469	169
	(41.9%)	(15.2%)	(34.4%)	(15.9%)
Stranger	1323	464	1722	65
	(25.6%)	(15.2%)	(24.0%)	(6.1%)
Total	5176	3064	7181	1060

mit murder than are females. In stranger relationships, this ratio increases to twenty-six times. The male/female ratio is about three to one in the case of "family" relationships and fifteen to one for friends and acquaintances. Men are only about one-third as likely as women to be victims of homicide in intimate relationships, but men are three times more likely to be murdered by a stranger and almost five times as likely to be killed by a friend/acquaintance. In general,

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Flewelling, *supra* note 8, Table 5. When one-to-one homicides and 1979-83 Canadian data is used, men killed men 1.4 times more often than they killed women and women killed men 3.4 times more often than they killed women.

the more distant social relationships involve higher proportions of males as both offenders and victims.

Figures 3 and 4 reveal trends in relational distance by the gender of the victim. It is evident that, while female victims are most often killed by spouses or lovers, there is a marked downward trend in this pattern over the years from a high of approximately 70% in 1961 to a low of approximately 45% in the early 1980s (Figure 3). There is no clear trend in any of the other types of homicide to make up for this decline, with family, friend/acquaintance, and stranger homicide going up over time at about the same rate. Stranger homicide involving female victims increased four-fold in twenty-five years, from a low of only about 5% to over 20% in 1981.

The pattern for male victims (Figure 4) is quite different, even though there is a similar pattern of decline in spouse/lover homicide for this group over time. The greatest growth takes place in friend and acquaintance-based murder which nearly doubles over the twenty-five year period. Stranger homicide does not have the same growth, as it stayed fairly steady at approximately 25% of all murders of male victims, except during the late 1970s.

When inter-gender homicide is examined for relational distance effects over time, very different patterns emerge. The proportion of homicides in which males kill females in spouse/lover relationships dropped from a high of about 75% in 1961 to under 50% in 1980 (Figure 5). There is no clear distinction in the other relationships to explain this drop, other than the fact that the number of homicides involving all the other relationships have increased.

In situations in which females kill males (Figure 6), spouse/lover homicide is the most frequent categorization, although the figures drop from a peak in the mid-1960s to a proportion only slightly higher than the 50% of female-male homicides recorded in 1961. The upward trend in these data seems to result from the relative frequency in which friends and acquaintances are murdered in later, as opposed to earlier, years. Strangers are rarely the target in this form of homicide.

In situations in which men kill other men, the danger is to friends and acquaintances (Figure 7). While stranger homicide is relatively constant over time, there is a marked growth in the number of friend and acquaintance killings.[70]

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[70] Results of female-female homicide are not shown because of the small number of cases—257 for the entire period—involved.

FIGURE 3

RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME
FOR FEMALE VICTIMS

LEGEND

× Sp/L
○ Fam
□ F/A
△ Str
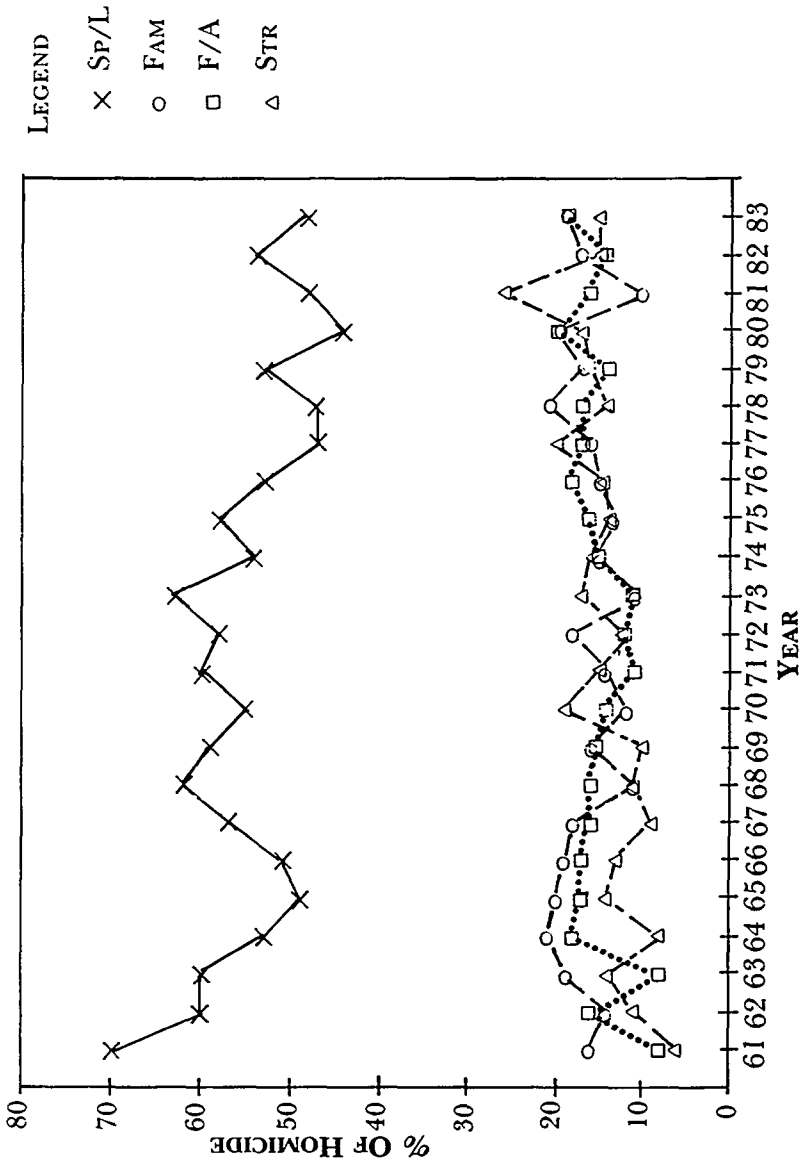
FIGURE 4

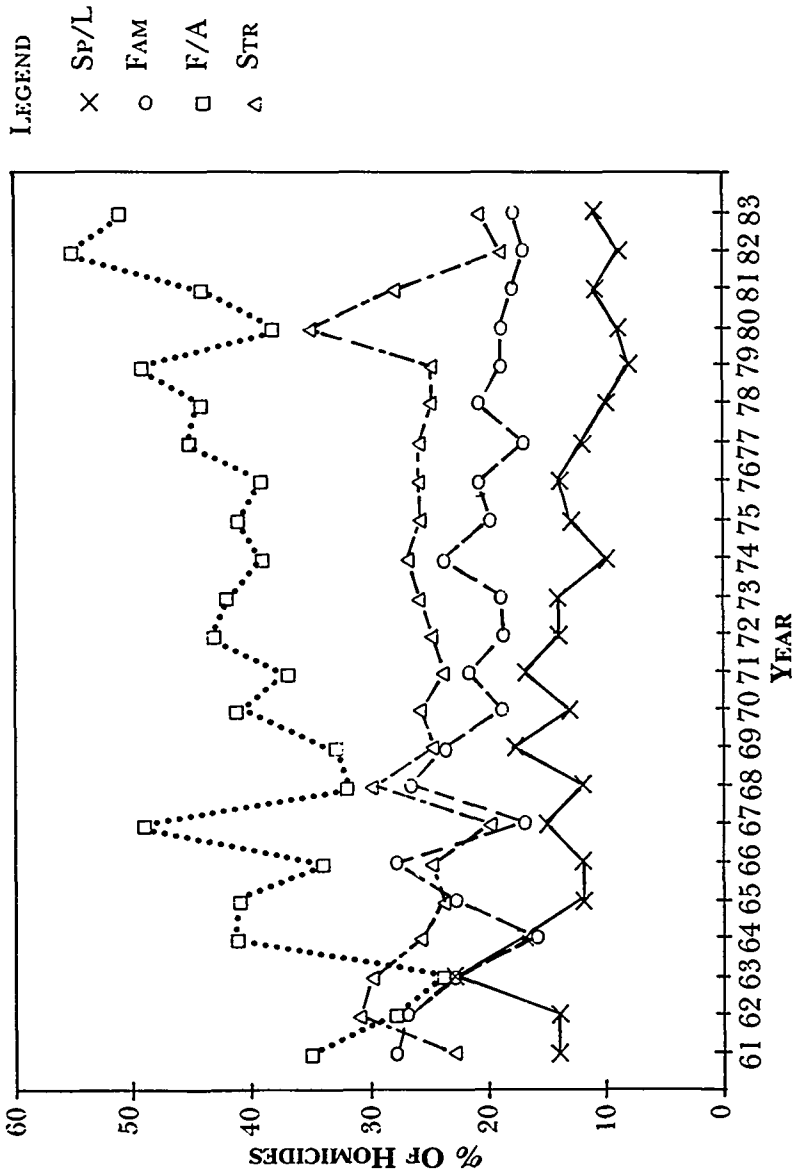RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME
FOR MALE VICTIMS

FIGURE 5

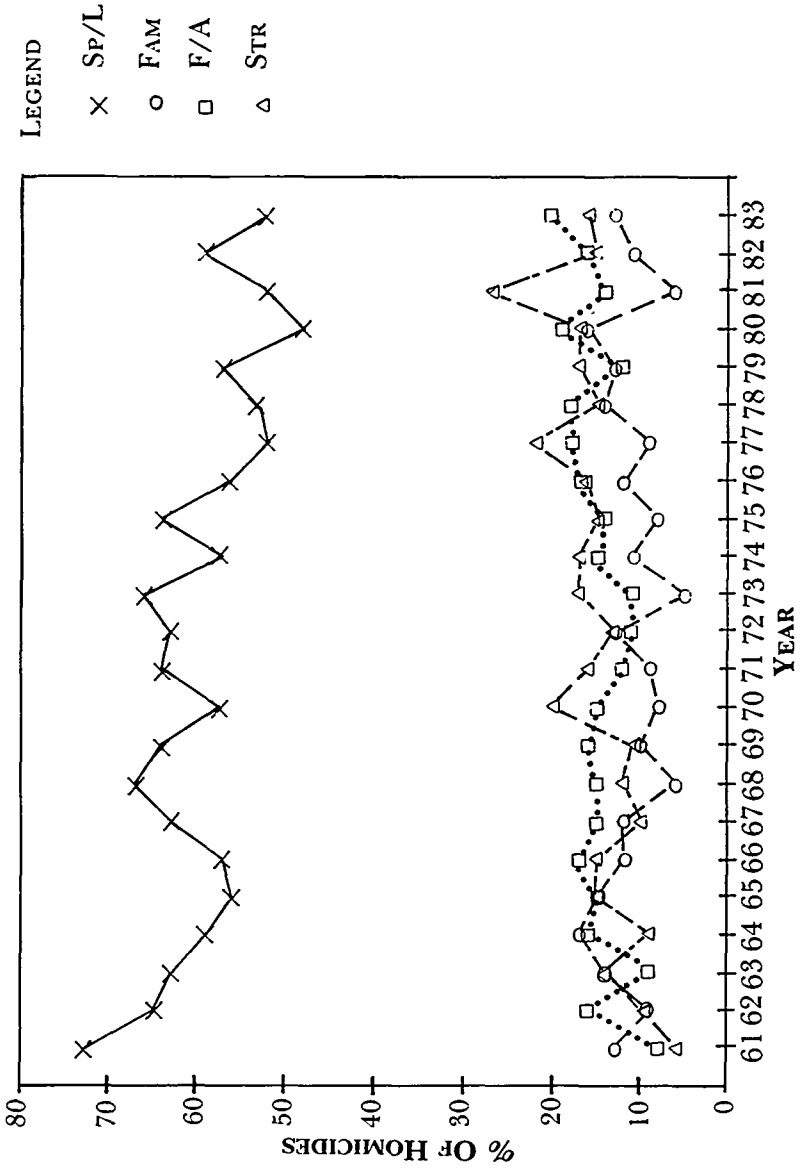RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME
FOR MALES KILLING FEMALES

FIGURE 6

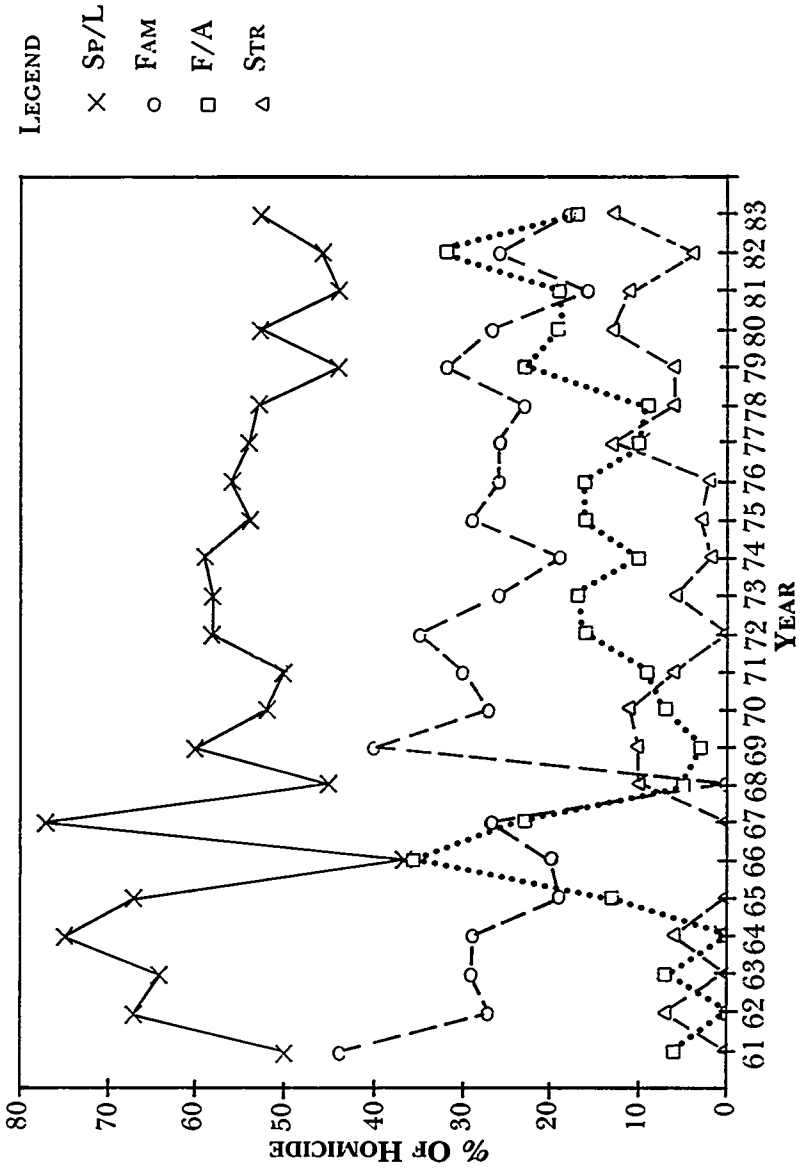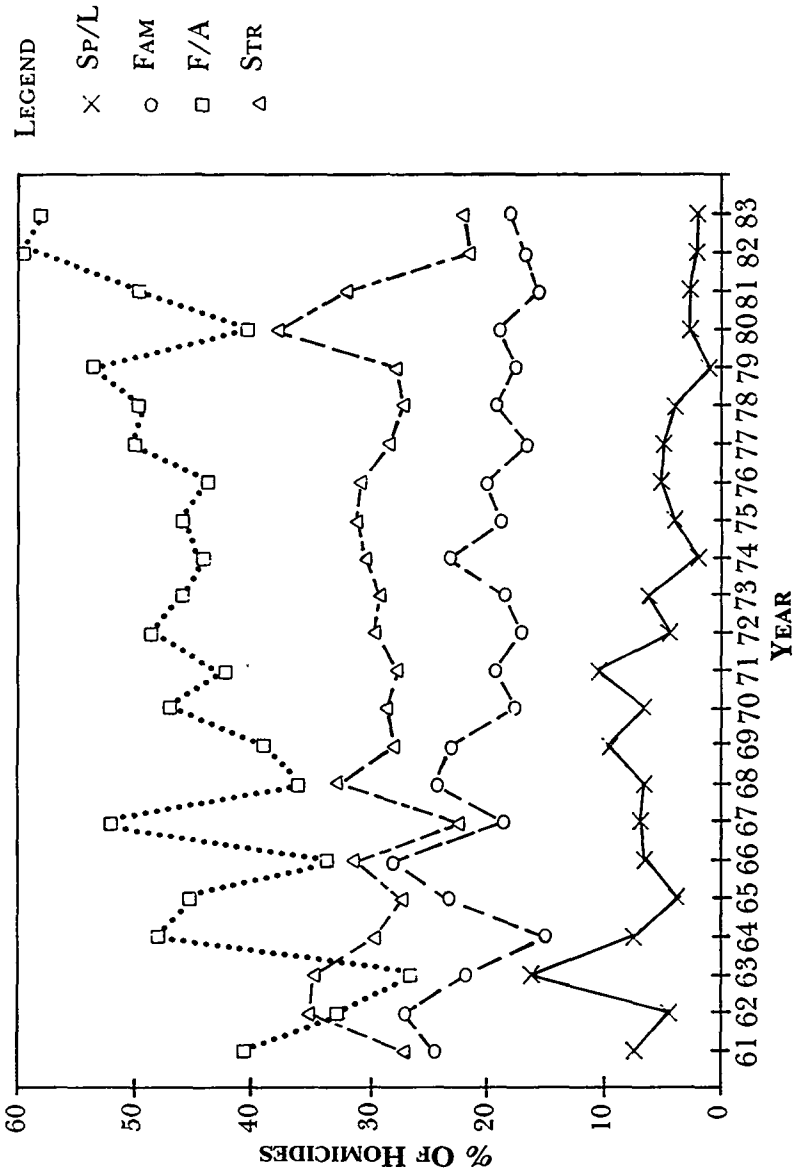RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME
FEMALES KILLING MALES

LEGEND

× Sp/L
○ FAM
□ F/A
△ STR

FIGURE 7

RELATIONAL DISTANCE IN HOMICIDE OVER TIME:
MALES KILLING MALES

C.   AGE

Forty-five percent of the offenders fall in the 26 to 45 age group and another 32% fall into the 18 to 25 age group (Table 3). The very young and the middle-aged and beyond are not Canada's killers. Twenty percent of their victims are age 18 to 25, 39% are age 26 to 45, and 28% are over 45. With slight variations, individuals are most likely to kill others in their own age groups. Those under 18 years of age kill almost equally in the under-18 and the over-45 age groups. Almost 60% of the victims of offenders over 45 years of age are also over 45.

Table 3 shows that for spouse/lover homicide, there is a tendency for individuals to murder others in their own age group (e.g., 72.2% of the offenders age 26 to 45 murdered individuals who were in the same age category). This pattern appears, as well, with those homicides involving friends and acquaintances. In those cases where other family members are murdered, there are two groups that are most vulnerable: those under age 18 and those over age 45. Of particular note are those cases where individuals from age 26 to 45 kill other family members under age 18 (47.8%). The data on strangers are quite different from that indicated by the other groups. Specifically, a surprising number of young people victimize individuals over 45 (47.6%).

In Figure 8, the breakdown is by age group of stranger homicide presented by the gender relationship of the victim and suspect. It is clear in this figure that in both male-male and female-male homicides, there is greater likelihood for victims to be over age 45. When female victims (both male-female and female-female) are considered, the age distribution is more evenly spread, with a considerable number (approximately 25%) of male-female victims under age 18.

Spouse/lover relationships for age groups contrast dramatically with the pattern of stranger homicides (see Figure 9). The most likely victim in all cases but a female-female homicide are 26 to 45 year olds. For family homicide (Figure 10), most of the victims are under age 18. The one exception to this rule is the important male-male category. It is especially noteworthy that women so frequently kill children family members. In contrast, in male-male murders, there is little differentiation according to the age of family member victims.

TABLE 3
AGE OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS
BY RELATIONAL DISTANCE

Age of Victim	Age of Offender			
	<18	18-25	26-45	46+
Stranger				
<18	39	93	72	11
	(18.9%)	(11.1%)	(10.9%)	(13.6%)
18-25	27	185	127	13
	(13.1%)	(22.0%)	(19.2%)	(16.0%)
26-45	42	248	234	28
	(20.4%)	(29.5%)	(35.5%)	(34.6%)
46+	98	314	227	29
	(47.6%)	(37.4%)	(34.4%)	(35.8%)
Total	206	840	660	81
Spouse/Lover				
<18	4	26	8	1
	(16.0%)	(7.4%)	(0.6%)	(0.2%)
18-25	9	218	224	10
	(36.0%)	(62.5%)	(17.2%)	(1.6%)
26-45	7	96	938	204
	(28.0%)	(27.5%)	(72.2%)	(33.4%)
46+	5	9	129	395
	(20.0)%	(2.6%)	(9.9%)	(64.8%)
Total	25	349	1299	610
Other Family				
<18	85	219	291	24
	(35.7%)	(40.1%)	(47.8%)	(17.1%)
18-25	22	86	48	25
	(9.2%)	(15.8%)	(7.9%)	(17.9%)
26-45	65	105	121	39
	(27.3%)	(19.2%)	(19.9%)	(27.9%)
46+	66	136	149	52
	(27.7%)	(24.9%)	(24.5%)	(37.1%)
Total	238	546	609	140
Friends and Acquaintances				
<18	81	92	34	6
	(34.8%)	(9.9%)	(2.9%)	(2.0%)
18-25	61	355	264	16
	(26.2%)	(38.0%)	(22.5%)	(5.4%)
26-45	46	322	590	100
	(19.7%)	(34.5%)	(50.3%)	(33.6%)
46+	45	165	285	176
	(19.3%)	(17.7%)	(24.3%)	(59.1%)
Total	233	934	1173	298

For friends and acquaintances, when women kill women, the victims are most likely to be under age 18 or age 26 to 45; differences between the categories, however, are not dramatic (see Figure 11). When men kill men, the victims are most often age 26 to 45. When women kill men, 26 to 45 and over-46 age group are equally likely to be victims. When men kill women, age categories are not well differentiated except that men are less likely to kill in the youngest age group.

FIGURE 8

OFFENDER VICTIM GENDER RELATION BY AGE
OF VICTIM FOR STRANGER HOMICIDE
CANADA 1961-83
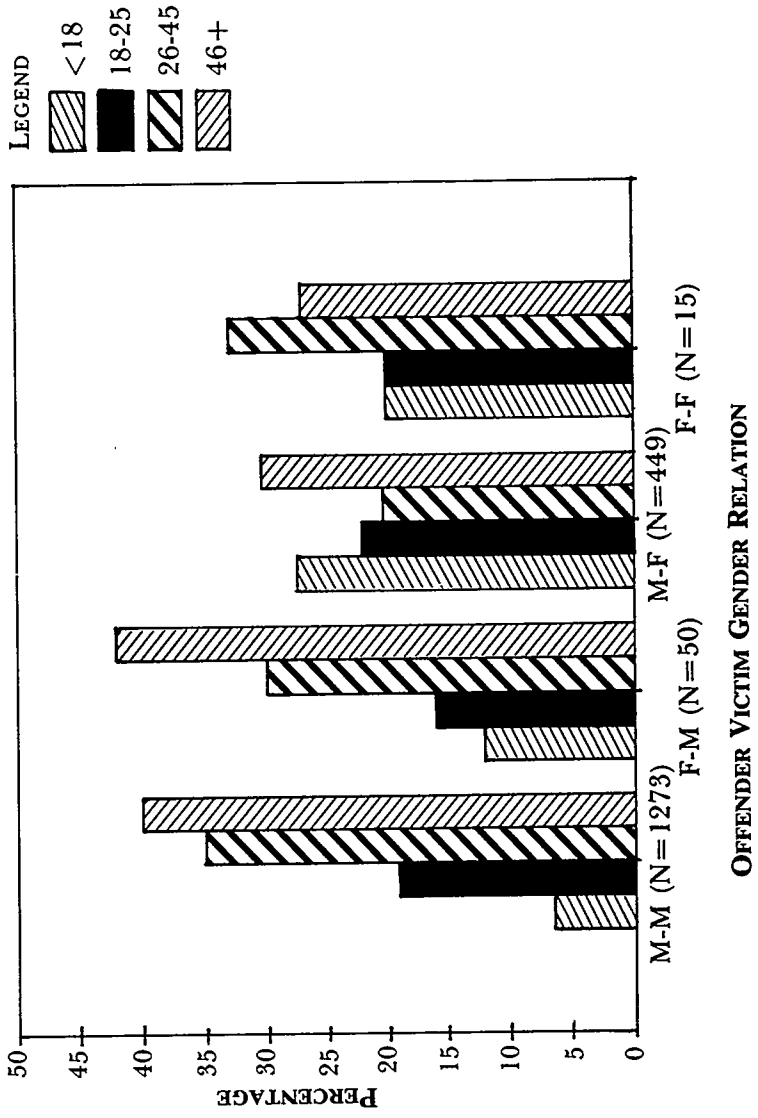
FIGURE 9

OFFENDER VICTIM GENDER RELATION BY AGE
OF VICTIM FOR SPOUSE/LOVER HOMICIDE
CANADA 1961-83
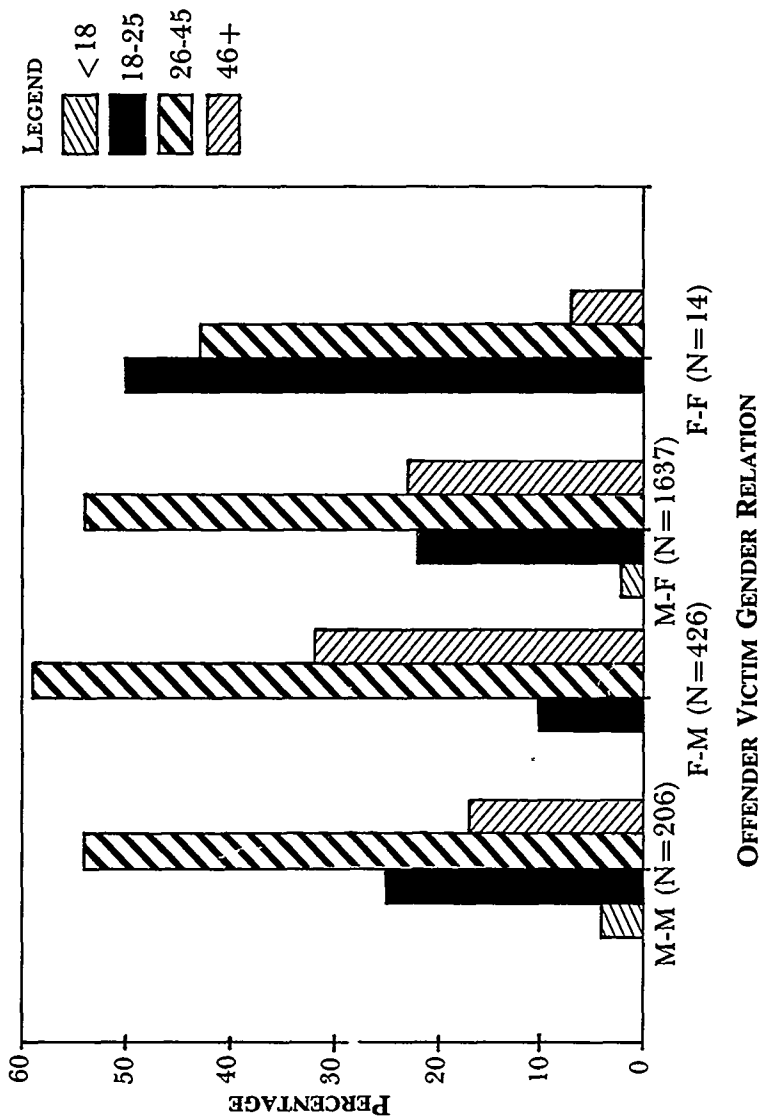
FIGURE 10

OFFENDER VICTIM GENDER RELATION BY AGE
OF VICTIM FOR FAMILY HOMICIDE
CANADA 1961-83

LEGEND

<18
18-25
26-45
46+

FIGURE 11

**OFFENDER VICTIM GENDER RELATION BY AGE OF VICTIM
FOR FRIEND/ACQUAINTANCE HOMICIDE
CANADA 1961-83**

About 8% (N=732) of the incidents involve victims over 65 years old. Eleven percent of these incidents involve spouse/lover situations; 17% are family related; 37% of the elderly are k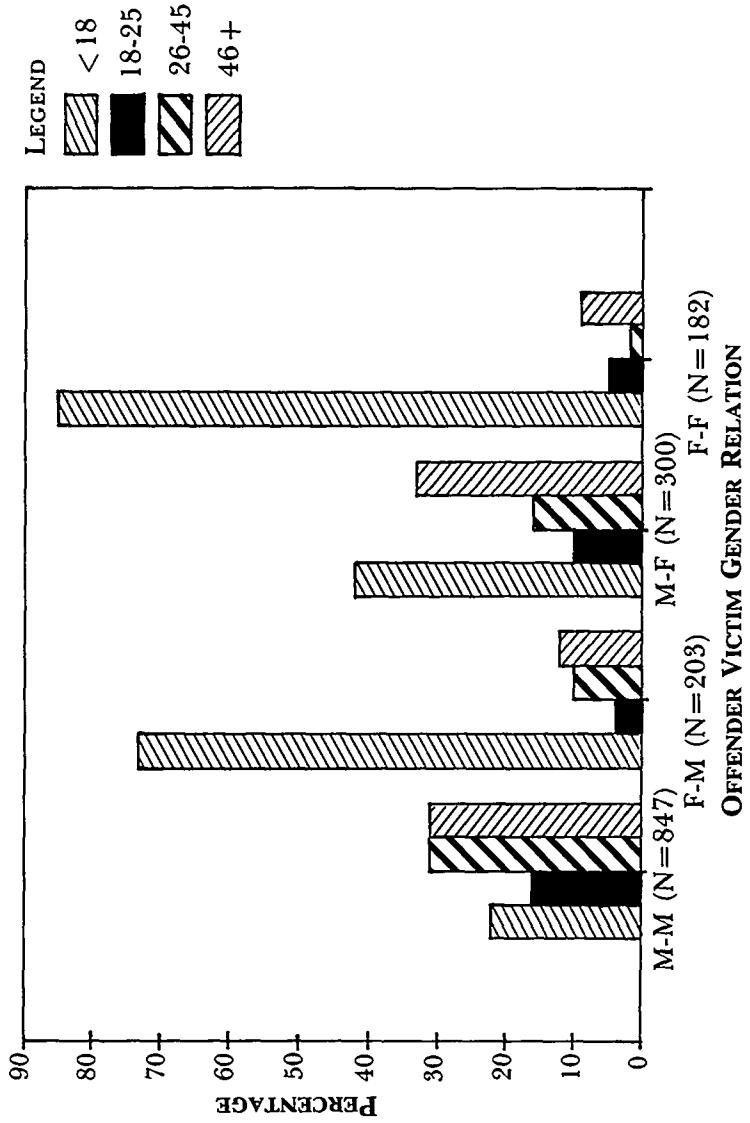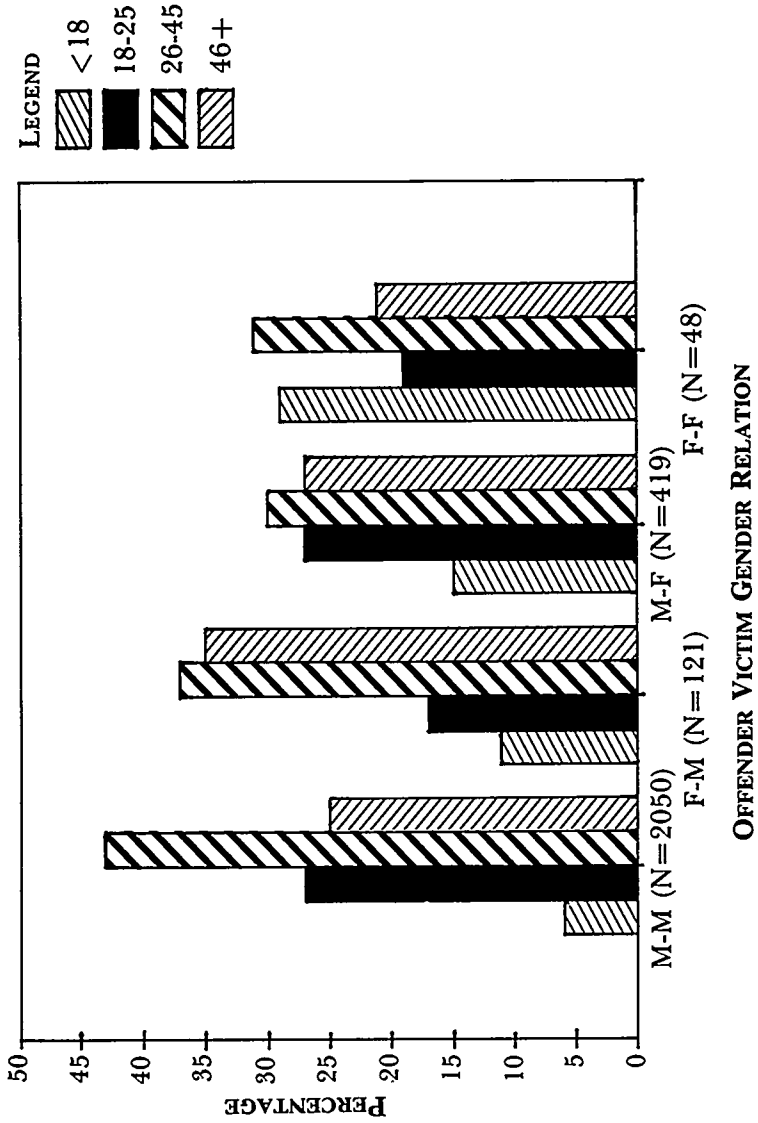illed by friends/acquaintances; and 37% are killed by strangers, with 30% of those during the commission of another crime.

D. MEANS OF OFFENSE COMMISSION

In all cases, males are more likely to kill males by shooting than by any other means (Table 4). For all groups other than family, females are more likely to kill males by stabbing. Men are most likely to kill their spouses or lovers and other female family members by shooting them. Female strangers are killed most often by other means, such as strangulation, suffocation, and drowning. Women kill their own friends and lovers most often by stabbing, while using other means on strangers and family.

There have been some changes in these patterns over time. In recent years, men have become less likely to shoot their victims (>50% in 1964 and 30% in 1981) and more likely to use stabbing or beating. Women are about half as likely to shoot their victim in the 1980s as they were in the 1960s and about twice as likely to stab them.

These findings concur with changes in the patterns of relational distance and homicide. In recent years, men kill their spouses less frequently than they kill others, and male-female homicides now occur more frequently by means of shooting. Beating and stabbing are more common methods than is shooting in murders occurring between male acquaintances and friends. This pattern is the same for male strangers. A different trend can be detected in female homicide patterns. Even with the relative decline in spouse/lover homicides, in which stabbing is frequently used, female homicide has increased over time and is more likely to involve stabbing than other methods.

When a firearm is used, the most likely weapon is a rifle (47%), followed by handguns (27%), and shotguns (18%). Almost 80% of the spouse/lovers are killed with either rifles ·or shotguns. Eighty-eight percent of the "family" relationships are dispatched in a similar way. In the friends/acquaintances group, the proportion of those killed with such long guns is reduced to 70%. It is only in stranger homicide in Canada that handguns are the most popular weapon (42%); 37% of stranger homicides involved rifles.[71]

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[71] Although there have been some significant shifts in the actual proportions of the particular type of weapon used over the years, the essential patterns described for the

TABLE 4
OFFENDER-VICTIM GENDER RELATIONSHIP
BY MEANS BY RELATIONAL DISTANCE

	Male-Male	Male-Female	Female-Male	Female-Female
Strangers				
Shooting	481	61	7	2
	(37.8%)	(13.7%)	(14.0%)	(13.3%)
Beating	373	97	7	2
	(29.3%)	(21.8%)	(14.0%)	(13.3%)
Stabbing	252	110	25	4
	(19.8%)	(24.7%)	(50.0%)	(26.7%)
Other	165	177	11	7
	(13.0%)	(39.8%)	(22.0%)	(46.7%)
Total	1271	445	50	15
Spouse/lovers				
Shooting	124	741	167	2
	(60.2%)	(45.5%)	(39.2%)	(14.3%)
Beating	27	360	25	2
	(13.1%)	(22.1%)	(5.9%)	(14.3%)
Stabbing	47	284	218	6
	(22.8%)	(17.4%)	(51.2%)	(42.9%)
Other	8	243	16	4
	(3.9%)	(14.9%)	(3.8%)	(28.6%)
Total	206	1628	426	14
Other Family				
Shooting	431	117	29	14
	(50.9%)	(39.1%)	(14.7%)	(7.8%)
Beating	192	89	49	43
	(22.7%)	(29.8%)	(24.9%)	(23.9%)
Stabbing	159	33	33	29
	(18.8%)	(11.0%)	(16.8%)	(16.1%)
Other	65	60	86	94
	(7.7%)	(20.1%)	(43.7%)	(52.2%)
Total	847	299	197	180
Friends and Acquaintances				
Shooting	799	117	31	5
	(39.1%)	(28.2%)	(25.6%)	(10.4%)
Beating	579	90	19	13
	(28.3%)	(21.7%)	(15.7%)	(27.1%)
Stabbing	484	103	58	18
	(23.7%)	(24.8%)	(47.9%)	(37.5%)
Other	181	105	13	12
	(8.9%)	(25.3%)	(10.7%)	(25.0%)
Total	2043	415	121	48

relational distance groups remained relatively stable during the 22 years of the study. Rifles and shotguns are the most popular firearms in all groups except strangers; strangers use handguns in 64% of all homicides they commit. However, the number of such

These findings for relationship categories hold almost without variation when males are the killers. Female killers rarely use firearms, and, when they do, handguns are the most rare, with a total of thirty-three cases over twenty-two years. The small number of cases involved makes it impossible to determine if there has been a temporal change in these patterns.

E. LOCATION

Data in Table 5 indicate that when victimization is examined for strangers, men are most likely to kill other men in a public place. But, when men kill women or women kill men, the most likely venue is the victim's home.[72]   In contrast, the probability that women will kill their spouse or male lover in the victim's home is equal to the probability that men will kill their spouse or female lover in the victim's home. There is an even greater likelihood that this pattern will appear with other family members. Friends and acquaintances are more likely to be killed in private spaces, but men kill other men in public places about one-third of the time.

TABLE 5
OFFENDER/VICTIM GENDER RELATION BY
LOCATION OF MURDER BY RELATIONAL DISTANCE

	Male-Male	Male-Female	Female-Male	Female-Female
Strangers				
Victim's home	300	158	17	4
	(24.7%)	(37.6%)	(38.6%)	(28.6%)
Suspect's home	79	31	7	0
	(6.5%)	(7.4%)	(15.9%)	(0.0%)
Other private	263	70	7	7
	(21.6%)	(16.7%)	(15.9%)	(50.0%)
Institution	12	2	0	0
	(1.0%)	(0.4%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Public Place	458	105	10	3
	(37.7%)	(25.0%)	(22.7%)	(21.4%)
Other (e.g. car)	103	54	3	0
	(8.5%)	(12.9%)	(6.8%)	(0.0%)
Total	1215	420	44	14

cases in the analysis over time has become rather small and little can be inferred from this large proportion.

[72] The drawing of conclusions in these categories should be done with caution in light of the small numbers of cases in the female victim and offender categories for strangers.

TABLE 5 (cont.)

	Male-Male	Male-Female	Female-Male	Female-Female
Spouse/Lovers				
Victim's home	71	1215	317	8
	(35.3%)	(76.7%)	(77.9%)	(42.9%)
Suspect's home	33	69	28	4
	(16.4%)	(4.4%)	(6.9%)	(28.6%)
Other private	51	120	44	1
	(25.4%)	(7.6%)	(10.8%)	(7.1%)
Institution	0	0	0	0
	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Public places	34	124	10	3
	(16.9%)	(7.8%)	(2.5%)	(21.4%)
Other (e.g. car)	12	56	8	(0.0%)
	(6.0%)	(3.5%)	(2.0%)	0
Total	201	1584	407	14
Other Family				
Victim's home	513	236	152	142
	(64.7%)	(81.4%)	(79.2%)	(81.6%)
Suspect's home	86	17	14	6
	(10.8%)	(5.9%)	(7.3%)	(3.4%)
Other private	103	18	12	13
	(13.0%)	(6.2%)	(6.3%)	(7.5%)
Institution	1	0	0	0
	(0.1%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Public place	61	15	9	5
	(7.7%)	(5.2%)	(4.7%)	(2.9%)
Other (e.g. car)	29	4	5	8
	(3.7%)	(1.4%)	(2.6%)	(4.6%)
Total	793	290	192	174
Friends and Acquaintances				
Victim's Home	512	165	41	20
	(26.6%)	(41.9%)	(35.7%)	(44.4%)
Suspect's Home	314	59	27	8
	(16.3%)	(15.0%)	(23.5%)	(17.8%)
Other private	443	69	31	8
	(23.0%)	(17.5%)	(27.0%)	(17.8%)
Institution	63	5	0	2
	(3.3%)	(1.3%)	(0.0%)	(4.4%)
Public place	484	62	15	7
	(25.1%)	(15.7%)	(13.0%)	(15.6%)
Other (e.g. car)	110	34	1	0
	(5.7%)	. (8.6%)	(0.9%)	(0.0%)
Total	1926	394	115	45

Elderly individuals are killed in their own homes 71% of the time. Fifteen percent of the incidents occur in another private place, and 8% of the occurences are in public places. When family members are involved, the homicide occurs in the victim's residence more than 90% of the time; when friends and acquaintances are the offenders, the proportion of events in the victim's home drops to

66%. Most of the homicides involving strangers also involve the commiting of additional crime. Of the situations in which the elderly are victims of a crime preceding the homicide, 70% of the homicides take place in their own home. Another 16% of the homicides take place in "other private places."

V. Discussion and Conclusions

The homicide rate in Canada peaked in 1975, fell until 1980, and has risen somewhat since that time.[73] The recent rise in the homicide rate seems to have resulted from a rising proportion of homicides involving more distant, rather than intimate, relationships. The proportion of intimate homicides has dropped dramatically in the twenty-two year period examined, while homicides perpetrated by friends/acquaintances and strangers have risen. Stranger homicides have not gone up as dramatically as in the closer friends/relatives category.

Rates of homicide in Canada are relatively low when compared with such rates in the United States. More homicides in both Canada and the United States are caused by strangers and friends/acquaintances than in the past, and the rates of homicide involving more distant relations have clearly risen during the observed period. Hence, the conclusions reached by Gillis and by Block are confirmed using a longer time period and more narrow relationship categories.[74]

This research has sought to describe trends in homicide rates in general and to examine the specific contribution of relational distance to those rates. The interesting changes revealed require some causal explanation. While this task is for future research, some relevant directions which that research might take exist.

The rate of spouse/lover homicide is relatively stable, even though the proportion has been falling; the rates of the other forms of homicide, however, are rising. It would be worthwhile to investigate these phenomena as a concomitant of trends in violent crime in general. It is possible that such trends in homicide rates merely reflect trends in all crimes and that a decline in fatal domestic violence is related to a movement in non-fatal domestic violence during the observed period. On the other hand, it is equally possible that the rising rates of more distant relationships between the offender and the victim reflect a real rise in this type of violence. Further, re-

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[73] This statement includes data up to 1985, even though data up to only 1983 is shown. Full 1984 and 1985 data sets were not available for analysis.

[74] Block, *supra* note 28; Gillis, *supra* note 9.

searchers should consider the effects of structural changes in Canadian society such as the changing economic situation and the liberalization of divorce laws, as possible contributing factors.

Female offenders commit 13% of Canadian homicides, and are victims in 37% of the homicides. The percentage of female offenders is similar to that found in U.S. studies, but the percentage of female victims is significantly higher.[75] This finding is surprising and is worthy of future study through comparative research on homicide in the two countries. On the other hand, as in the U.S., males in Canada are both victims and offenders in most homicides. These data reflect the situations in other countries as well.

The proportions of both male and female offenders and victims in relational distance categories is startlingly similar to those found by Palmer and Humphrey in North Carolina.[76] This study, however, has gone beyond that early research by examining all homicides for Canada over twenty-two years, controlling for both gender relationships and relational distance.

Verkko predicted stable rates of female crimes against the person across countries and over time.[77] For female victims, the data indicate a decline in spouse/lover homicide over time and some stability in other relational categories when proportions, rather than rates, are considered. Rates of spouse/lover homicide were relatively stable while the other categories rose slightly. When female offenders were considered, there was a good deal of yearly variation in proportions by relationship category. It would seem premature, however, to conclude from this that there is support for the Verkko hypothesis given female crime rates in the context of relational categories.

There has not been the dramatic rise in stranger homicide in recent years when females kill males that one might predict if women were becoming more involved in crime. Men do seem to be killing women somewhat more often in stranger homicides, and the proportion of female victims of males in spouse/lover situations is declining. The proportion of spouse/lover situations in which females kill males has remained reasonably stable while the proportion of stranger events has risen slightly. The overall decline in domestic homicides offers some support for the Adler hypothesis that women are now less vulnerable to domestic homicide because

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[75] M. RIEDEL, M. ZAHN & L. FELSON MOCK, *supra* note 8, at 18; A. Browne & R. Flewelling, *supra* note 8.

[76] Palmer & Humphrey, *supra* note 9.

[77] Willbanks, *supra* note 41.

they are more likely to be working outside of the home.[78] The trends in stranger homicide involving women are less conclusive, however. Any future research in this direction should include relational distance as an independent variable.

With regard to age, the findings tend to be consistent with previous research, but this study has provided some insights by putting age in a relational distance context. Spouse/lovers tend to kill within their own age groups, with the exception being those under 18 who kill those age 18 to 25. Because people generally couple with others in the same age groups as themselves, this finding is not surprising. Offenders involved in "family" relationships tend to have young victims, with the exception of the over-45 group who kill within their own age group. Often, these young victims are children killed by their parents. Adult associations, such as friendships and business relationships, are often made within similar age groups as people reach the same levels of maturity in their personal and business lives; this may explain why friends/acquaintances kill within their own age group. In the case of strangers, younger offenders tend to kill older victims. This finding is consistent with the notion that stranger homicides often involve forms of crime, such as robbery, besides the homicide. It is persons under age twenty-five who are most often the perpetrators of violent crimes.

Messner and Tardiff suggest that, given the assumptions of the routine activities approach, one would expect to find more younger victims in "family" homicides than in other forms of homicide.[79] The data here confirm their hypothesis and show that the situation is most apparent when females are the perpetrators of the events. Females are much more likely than males to kill younger victims for all relational distance categories except spouse/lover, where younger victims play a minor part. The routine activities approach is useful in explaining these findings for the "family" category, but this approach does not provide an explanation for the killing of friends/acquaintances or strangers by women.

Messner and Tardiff also initially predicted that since the elderly spend more time in the home, they should most often be the victims of family homicide.[80] The data here, however, show greater proportions of events involving friends/acquaintances and strangers than events involving family situations. Most of the events do take place in the victim's home, thus giving support to one part of the

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[78] F. ADLER, *supra* note 44.

[79] Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22.

[80] *Id.* at 243-44.

Messner and Tardiff hypothesis and offering further evidence for their findings concerning attacks by strangers. One important difference in the studies is that while Messner and Tardiff combined the elderly and the young victim categories, these categories were separated in this study and were shown to be different from each other, especially with regard to the involvement of strangers as offenders.

Age relationships vary substantially by relational distance and by gender relationship. This finding alters some of the earlier assumptions about age relationships. Perhaps future research should be cognizant of both relational distance and gender relationships in discussing homicide.

Shooting is the most common means of offense commission regardless of relational distance when men commit homicide, with the exception of the killing of female strangers in which "other" is the most prevalent means. For men killing men, the closer the relationship, the more likely guns will be utilized. For women killers, shooting is never the most popular means of offense commission. Women tend to stab their victims or use some "other" means such as suffocation or drowning. It would seem, then, that in the case of means of offense commission, gender relationships have more explanatory power than do relational categories.

In most Canadian homicides, rifles and shotguns were the firearms used. It is only when men kill strangers of either gender that handguns are the firearm of choice. To some extent, such data confirm Gillis' observation concerning more distant relationships and restricted weapons.[81] This finding should also be expected since handguns are the likely tools of those involved in crimes other than homicide.

These findings contrast dramatically with the Chicago findings discussed by Block.[82] The data, however, are really not comparable because the Block analysis included race. This Article does not deal with race be use the differences in Canadian racial composition do not require such an analysis.[83]

When women kill or are killed, the likely location of the event, regardless of the relational difference, is the victim's home, especially in cases of more intimate relationships and less so in cases of

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[81] Gillis, *supra* note 9.

[82] Block, *supra* note 28.

[83] Race is a major independent study in many of the U.S. studies concerning homicide. This Article has not dealt with race. The racial situation in Canada is not comparable to that in the U.S., and an entirely different orientation would have been necessary. Essentially, a complete project is needed just to deal with race.

friends/acquaintances and strangers. Males are most likely to kill males in the victim's home. In the case of strangers, however, the location is most likely a public place. Even though the victim's home is the most likely place for men to kill other men in general, men are much more likely to commit homicide outside of the home than are women. The data offer some support for Messner and Tardiff's routine activities hypothesis discussed above.[84] Females are victims more often in the home, but they are also offenders more often in the victim's home. The finding does, however, vary by relational distance: relationships which are more distant are more likely to involve homicide outside of the victim's home. Stranger homicides also take place in the least intimate locations.

The elderly are victimized in their own home more than in other places. But, they are most often victimized by strangers committing other crimes and by friends/acquaintances rather than by family members. This rather intriguing finding is worthy of further investigation.

For virtually the entire analysis, relational distance has proven to be an invaluable concept. The case of stranger homicide provides an excellent example of the way in which aggregate data can be misleading with regard to patterns. In the case of homicide, the relationships involving strangers were often different from all other categories; in some cases, such as with the use of guns, it was only strangers for whom differentiation was found. Although this analysis is descriptive, it has shown the utility of the relational distance concept and the special features of stranger homicide with regard to a number of variables.

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[84] *See* Messner & Tardiff, *supra* note 22.