Intimate Partner Homicide

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INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE

by

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B.A. December 2002, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculties of
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MASTER OF ARTS

APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE

Karitta A. Page
Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University, 2007
Director: Dr. Garland White

Using data collected from the Chicago Women’s Health Risk Study (Block 2000), this study looked at female perpetrated intimate partner homicide. The purpose of this study was to identify what factors, if any, differentiate between abused women who kill versus abused women who do not kill their intimate partners. Through conducting this study, several factors such as substance abuse, support networks and severe violence were compared between abused women who kill their intimate partner versus those who were abused women but did not kill. It was found that severe abuse, substance abuse by the abuser and the abused person were highly correlated with homicide.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

According to Umberson, Anderson, Glick, and Shapiro (1998), national surveys indicate that at least twenty-eight percent of couples experience physical violence at some point in their relationship and sixteen percent of couples experience violence in a given year. Domestic violence is one of many pervasive social issues that affect our nation. Every year thousands of people are in situations where domestic violence occurs. According to Rennison (2003), there were about 700,000 nonfatal domestic violence victimizations estimated by the National Crime Victimization Survey in 2001. In the past, domestic violence was seen as a private problem within the family. However, as more was publicized about its devastating effects, it gradually became understood as a severe and widespread social problem.

Domestic violence can take many forms such as verbal abuse, simple assaults, broken bones or even the most lethal form, homicide. Although domestic violence may never cease completely, efforts to control the violence may
serve to reduce the volume of abuse. Continued study of
the nature of domestic abuse and risk factors associated
with this problem, hopefully, will yield more strategies
that will act to reduce the prevalence and severity of
domestic violence.

Historically, research on homicide in the context of
domestic violence has primarily focused on the lethal
violence of men with little attention to the circumstances
and dynamics that characterize homicides perpetrated by
women (Jurik and Winn 1990:227). Some research has shown
that there are motivational differences in male and female
perpetrated homicides. Therefore, it is important to
address the issue of female perpetrated homicide.

Many recent studies have focused on male perpetrators
of homicide and non-domestic homicide. However, much less
attention has been given to female violent offenders,
especially the abused women who kill their domestic
partners. The purpose of this study is to differentiate
between abused women who kill and abused women who do not
kill. This study will compare results from the Chicago
Study of abused women (Block 2000) with Browne’s (1987)
qualitative study of females who have killed their
partners. The Chicago sample differs from Browne’s in that
her sample was comprised from several states while this
particular study focuses on high-risk women from one particular state. It must also be noted that the area in Chicago had high rates of intimate homicides. In a sense, the current study attempts to replicate Browne. Furthermore, the current study is an attempt to build on Angela Browne's groundbreaking research. This study will utilize more current data gathered in one major metropolitan area. Unlike Browne, this study is limited to one area in Chicago.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study will compare women who kill their abusers in intimate relationships with abused women who do not kill. Building on Browne's (1987) earlier qualitative work in this area, the two groups will be examined by using quantitative analyses. This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part concerns general information on the incidence of domestic violence and domestic homicide. Next, research about the offenders and victims of domestic violence is reviewed. Next, theoretical frameworks addressing battered women who kill are discussed. Lastly, findings from Browne's (1987) research and similar studies are examined.

Domestic violence is a malicious and multidimensional issue. Early studies on violent crime have paid less attention to incidents that occur inside the home. Some scholars have attributed this lack of attention to the "curtain rule," meaning that incidents that occurred inside of the home remained there. As a result, domestic violence issues were extremely hard to study. However, during the 1970's and 1980's, domestic violence issues were more readily acknowledged although the public continued to view
it as rare and confined to a few mentally ill individuals (Straus 1992). As a result, much of the early scholarly attention attributed the roots of domestic violence to either biological or psychological causes. Therefore, domestic violence was not viewed as a social problem until relatively recently. Increased attention towards domestic violence can be attributed to the feminist movement. According to Maiconis and Gerber (2004), the feminist perspective argues that society is patriarchal and the use of violence by men against their intimate partner has been condoned by social institutions for generations. The historical lack of scholarship on domestic violence was seen as a result of three factors, the lack of awareness, general acceptance, and denial (Gelles 1985). Domestic violence was not a topic of discourse in the past; therefore, not many knew that it existed. Also, in the past it was considered acceptable for a man to beat his wife. Lastly, women refused to disclose the abuse in fear that more abuse would come if the issue were discussed.

INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 1980 and again in 1986, national surveys reported that about 25 percent of individuals involved in romantic relationships had experienced at least one domestic assault
during their lifetimes (Straus and Gelles 1986). More recently, according to estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey, there were approximately 700,000 nonfatal violent victimizations committed by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends of the victims during 2001 (Rennison 2003). Researchers have consistently found several factors related to domestic violence: a family history of violence, low socioeconomic status, social and structural stress, social isolation, low community embeddedness, low self-concept, personality problems and psychopathy (Gelles 1985).

Domestic violence is a social problem that can have devastating effects. According to Rennison (2003), intimate partner homicides accounted for eleven percent of all murders among males and females in 1999. In a recent study by Rennison (2001), data were collected from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the Uniform Crime Reporting System. Rennison (2001) studied intimate partner violence (lethal and non-lethal) according to categories of demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status and household income. According to Rennison’s study, females were more likely than males to be victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, women were also more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners. Women
ages 35-49 were murdered by their intimate partners at a higher rate than any other age category. In addition, women who were separated from their partners experienced intimate partner violence at a higher rate than any other category.

PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As mentioned above, according to Browne (1993), men are the primary perpetrators of violence in intimate relationships, especially when the violence involves physical aggression with the intent to cause physical harm, sexual aggression, forcible restraints, and threats to kill or harm. International data show that at least one out of every three women have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime (UNIFEM 2004; United Nations Development Fund For Women). Their current or former partners inflict much of this abuse. Male perpetrators are usually motivated by a high need for control, which triggers violent episodes to enhance personal control (Swatt and He 2006).

Although the majority of domestic violence assaults involve female victims, men can also be victims of domestic violence. According to Rennison (2001), there were 691,710 nonfatal violent victimizations committed by current or
former spouses, boyfriend or girlfriends during 2001. Most of the victims were females; however females perpetrated approximately 15 percent of these victimizations against male partners. Male perpetrated violence on females is more often repeated and more likely to result in death or injury than female to male violence (Tilley and Brackley 2004:157).

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Research shows that women are more likely than men to be victims of domestic violence. According to Browne (1993), violence between intimate partners is especially acute for women due to the coercion they face from male intimates and the corresponding impunity with which men can perpetrate violence against their mates. The United States Department of Justice estimated that one million females were victims of domestic violence in 1995 (Locke and Richman 1999). Domestic violence is likely to cause psychological stress, emotional stress and physical injury to women. According to Serran and Firestone (2003), statistics from Canada in 2000 suggested that women were three times more likely than men to be injured by spousal violence, more than twice as likely to report being beaten and five times more likely to report being choked.
According to Zahn (2003), women are substantially more likely than men to be murdered by their intimate partner. However, the declines in intimate partner homicides mask this important issue to some extent. According to Rennison (2003), intimate partners were responsible for the death of approximately thirteen hundred female homicide victims and approximately four hundred male homicide victims in the United States in 2000. Also, while there seems to be a steady decline in female perpetrated homicide, male perpetrated homicide has been increasing slightly over the years. Additionally, women are more likely to receive serious physical injury as a result of violence by men.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT WOMEN’S ABILITY TO LEAVE

The question commonly asked is why do women stay with their abusive partners? Attempts to explain violence against women often focus on gender inequality. This inequality can affect a victim’s ability to leave an abusive situation. According to the feminist perspective, society is patriarchal and women are at a disadvantage as a group (Macionis and Gerber 2004:338). With this in mind, women may remain in violent intimate relationships for several reasons including economic factors, lack of
available resources, educational status, and financial stability.

Others argue that the lower status accorded women is due to social, cultural and economic conditions of the past, which placed women at a disadvantage. This general cultural view of women was based on what Simone de Beavoir (1952) characterized as the otherness of women. Here, women are seen as objects by men. According to Ogle, Mauer-Kalkim and Bernard (1995), woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man, not with reference to her.

According to O’Keefe (1997), the concept of learned helplessness has also been used to explain why some battered women might have difficulty leaving an abusive relationship or taking other alternative actions to improve their situation. Learned helplessness refers to the passivity some abused women express when they feel that they cannot prevent or escape the abusive situation. The experience of learned helplessness may reflect inadequate social, legal and economic support, lack of police responsiveness, or a realistic appraisal that leaving a batterer will result in life threatening harm to herself, her family or children (O’Keefe 1997). Likewise, Websdale
(1999) stated that women experience an increased risk of lethal violence when they leave an intimate relationship.

Some women may remain in the abusive relationship as a result of the heightened attention and passion that arises after an abusive attack. This sparks the idea of the cycle of violence. According to Walker (1979), the cycle of violence has various phases, the tension phase which is the phase where tension builds from "real life events," the explosion phase where the battering usually occurs and the honeymoon phase where loving and contrition is apparent.

Also, many women remain in abusive situations in order to retain financial stability or security. This is especially true if children are involved. In addition, women have traditionally been underrepresented in the workforce; the abusive male may be the sole or primary breadwinner in the household. In such situations, an abused woman may choose to endure the violence in order to retain economic support and shelter for herself and her children. This economic inequality is clearly reflected in the fact that domestic violence is the number one cause of homelessness among women and children (O'Keefe 1997).

Another factor that may affect a woman's choice to remain in an abusive relationship is lack of available social support resources. According to Hamilton and
Sutterfield (1997), abused women develop feelings of guilt and shame, which combined with aggressive behavior the abusive partner exhibits will lead to further psychological, emotional and physical isolation from support networks. Presently, there are many domestic violence resources such as shelters, hotlines, and counseling agencies, although many would argue that there are still too few. The availability of these resources is a relatively new phenomenon. According to Dungan, Nagan, and Rosenfield (1999), the availability of domestic violence resources contributes largely to the reduction in intimate partner homicide rates, especially reducing the rate at which women kill their male partners.

According to Hamilton and Sutterfield (1997:46):

the battered woman’s financial and emotional dependence on the abuser, traditional societal views that emphasize the importance of marriage to women’s identity, and the insufficiency of existing legal and societal remedies to end domestic violence combine to explain battered women’s difficulties in safely escaping domestic violence.

Clearly, women’s’ choices concerning their relationship with an abusive male may be influenced by a complex combination of factors.
STUDIES OF FEMALE PERPETRATED INTIMATE HOMICIDE

Several researchers have examined willful killings within the context of an intimate partnership (Websdale 1999:4). Much of this research focuses on demographics and other factors that may influence intimate partner homicides. According to Websdale (1999), intimate partner homicide is profoundly a gendered affair. He explains that men, usually the perpetrators, typically kill because of ongoing abuse, while women generally kill in self-defense (Websdale 1999:25). Studies of female perpetrated homicide have shown that women who commit homicides are likely to have suffered more severe abuse than those who do not kill their abuser.

In order to understand intimate partner homicide, it is necessary to acknowledge Angela Browne’s 1987 book, When Battered Women Kill. Browne provides groundbreaking research on battered women by analyzing those women who kill and those who are abused and do not kill. The purpose of her exploratory study was to examine severely abusive relationships and the perception of the women involved in these situations (Browne 1986). Angela Browne (1987) compared 42 battered women who were charged with killing their partners with 205 battered women who had not, in order to determine risk factors for intimate homicide.
Browne's qualitative study involved in depth interviews. According to Browne (1987) effort was made to understand more about the relationships of abused women who kill their husbands, and to identify the dynamics that lead up to the commission of a homicide. The 42 women in the homicide group were from over fifteen states and some were awaiting trial at the time of the interview. The 205 women who represented the non-homicide group came from a six state region including both rural and urban areas. There were few differences found between the two groups of women, instead the differences were found among the partners of these women. The abusive partners who were killed were more likely to have forced the women into sexual acts, been heavily intoxicated, severely abusive, threatened to kill, and were more frequently abusive. The women in the homicide group received abuse in many different forms. Bruises, cuts, black eyes, concussions, broken bones, miscarriages and permanent injuries such as damage to joints, partial loss of hearing or vision, and scars from burns, bites or knife wounds are some of the ill-treatments the women endured (Browne 1987:69). Clearly, the women who killed their abusers sustained an extensive amount of serious injuries.
Relationship length and type may also be an important factor when studying intimate partner homicide. Riedel and Best’s (1998) study of intimate partner homicide focused on three relationship types: spouses, common-law relationships, and boyfriends or girlfriends. They found that both male and female victims in each relationship category were killed at home; however, married and common-law couples had the highest rates of at home killings. Browne (1986) reported that eighty percent of the women in both the homicide and non-homicide group were married to their abusers. Since intimate homicides are normally committed within the boundaries of the home, it is reasonable to say that relationship length and type would be critical factors. Generally, persons in a longer relationship will live in the same household and will probably be married or in a common law marriage.

Similarly, Browne and Williams’s (1993) study analyzed criminally negligent homicide trends from 1976 to 1987. They examined patterns of homicide by gender and relationship type for the twelve-year period. However, the focus is on comparison rates between couples in marital and nonmarital relationships. The data on lethal violence were taken from the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as a part
of its Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR). The data set included 38,648 homicides that were perpetrated by intimate partners. Sixty-one percent of the victims were women, thirty-nine percent were men, and this pattern did not vary across relationship types. Approximately seventy-three percent of these lethal victimizations involved formally married, ex-married, or common-law married couples while twenty-seven percent involved unmarried couples. Within the marital category, formally married spouses killed eighty percent of their counterparts; fifteen percent of the victims were killed by common-law partners and five percent by ex-spouses. This suggests that couples are more likely to experience intimate partner homicide when in a longer relationship like a marriage or common law marriage.

Apparently, the severity of violence is crucial in understanding why females kill their abusive partners. O'Keefe (1997) compared battered women incarcerated for the murder or serious wounding of their abusers with battered women incarcerated for other offenses. The homicide/assault group included 50 inmates convicted of murder, attempted murder, and assault with a deadly weapon. The comparison group was 26 inmates convicted of crimes including possession, forgery, and other less aggressive offenses. O'Keefe (1997) found that battered women who
killed or seriously assaulted their partners tended to be older, to have been in the relationship longer, and experienced more frequent, severe beatings and longer duration of violence. These women were also more likely to believe that their lives were in danger, to have been threatened with weapons, to have experienced forced sexual coercion and to have sustained more injuries. According to O’Keefe (1997), the battered women in the homicide group also had fewer social supports. Overall, the battered women who kill or seriously assault their partners were more likely to have experienced a high frequency and severity of violence. Again, Browne’s findings supports O’Keefe’s research in that the women who killed their partner were on average older than the non-homicide group and that there was more severe violence experienced by women in the homicide group.

It is also important to understand the impact available resources can have on domestic violence homicides. Several studies show that battered women do reach out for help. Hamilton and Sutterfield (1997) compared domestic violence histories of two groups: women incarcerated for murdering their abusers and women receiving services from battered women’s shelters. The study involved 49 women: twenty were convicted of homicide
and twenty-nine had received assistance from a battered women’s shelter. The prison sample showed that police assistance, intervention by mental health professionals, family members and community resources were not at all helpful in alleviating abusive situations. Browne (1987) explained that in eighty-five percent of domestic homicides, police had been called prior to the lethal incident. Additionally, in the Browne (1987) sample, the women who were incarcerated for killing their abuser had called for police help at least five times.

It is also extremely important to compare these battered women in prison with battered women in society to get a better understanding of what factors drive some women to kill. In doing so, Roberts (1996) examined a group of incarcerated women and community sample of battered women. The prison sample consisted of 105 individuals from Edna Mahon Correctional Institution for women in Clinton, New Jersey. The community sample was comprised of 55 women from battered women shelters in New Jersey and 50 women identified as battered women by the New Jersey police Department. Roberts (1996) examined the extent to which forced sex acts, threats to kill spouses or close relatives, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide attempts were reported by these women. It was found that women who
killed their abusive partners were more likely than the non-homicidal group to have received medical treatment for injuries, experienced intense death threats, and been forced to have sexual intercourse. In sum, the homicide group experienced more aggressive and brutal treatment than the non-homicide group. Again, there is a higher severity of abuse experienced by the women who actually kill.

Substance abuse has also been found to be a factor related to intimate partner homicide. The abused women may use drugs and alcohol to cope with the violence. The substance abuse may also influence their decision to kill their partner. The same is true for males; men may use alcohol and drugs to justify their deviant behavior.

Blount, Silverman, Sellers and Seese (1994) interviewed incarcerated women with extensive abuse histories and women in shelters with abuse histories. They found that alcohol and drug abuse were more prevalent among the homicide group. Browne’s interview research also revealed that alcohol and drug use were more prevalent among the partners of the women, and the abused women themselves in the homicide group.

Assault frequency is another key factor when addressing intimate partner homicide. Websdale (1999) studied the deaths of 78 Florida women, 67 of which
involved intimate killings. Websdale found that the majority of the women had a history of being abused before their deaths. Furthermore, Browne’s (1987), study also revealed that forty percent of the women in the homicide group stated that they were being abused more than once a week. They also reported that their abuse escalated over time.

From the review of the literature, several factors have been stated to explain why abused women kill their partner. Stemming from Browne’s work, these factors were substance abuse, severity of abuse, frequency of abuse, lack of resources, forced sexual coercion, and relationship type and length. The consistency of findings in the empirical research literature has made it possible to develop a theoretical framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

It is difficult to apply a theory to female perpetrated homicide; however, there are a few theoretical frameworks that attempt to explain these phenomena. According to Browne and Williams (1993), “the omission of gender from the analysis of lethal violence threatens the tenability of any theoretical explanation.” It has been suggested that analyzing women’s involvement in crime will
not produce any new information about this type of violence.

Learned helplessness and the self-defense theory are two important perspectives to consider in any study of intimate partner homicide. The learned helplessness framework posits that because of repeated verbal, physical and sexual abuse, combined with unsuccessful attempts to escape, battered women may experience reduced self-confidence and a form of psychological paralysis that prevents them from recognizing resources that may become available. In many ways, a victim of repeated attacks may learn over time that there is no escape and nothing she does will stop the violence. This framework may be used to explain why women may stay in abusive relationships and why it may take them so long to fight back. However, the self-defense theory can be used to explain why the women kill.

Walker's (1979) Battered Women Syndrome was first introduced as an explanation for females' involvement in intimate homicides. She applied the concept of learned helplessness to the syndrome for further understanding of this social phenomenon. The concept of learned helplessness posits that a battered woman will over time develop a belief of being helpless, which in turn will limit her ability to leave an abusive situation because she
feels that she can do nothing to prevent the harmful actions. In short, the learned helplessness framework accounts for the passive behavior that some battered women may display when placed in a situation beyond their control. This theory can be challenged by the fact that some of these "passive" women strike back with lethal violence.

Most of the research concerning female perpetrated homicides uses the self-defense theory to explain why women resort to homicidal behavior. According to Serran and Firestone (2003), current studies situate female initiated intimate homicides in the context of their histories of abuse within the family, and as acts of self-defense, because their lives were in danger. According to Angela Browne (1987), female perpetrated homicides are a result of women’s inability to protect themselves from their male counterpart’s aggressive behaviors. Therefore, we can say that women kill in response to an attack on them. From this viewpoint, the self-defense theory has been adopted in order to further understand why women kill their intimate partners. These women are responding as victims of violence who kill to protect themselves from death at the hands of their partner (Serran and Firestone, 2003).
As the literature review demonstrates, a number of factors appear important in understanding an abused woman who kills her abuser. From a review of the research, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study:

H1: Abused women who kill experience more severe abuse than those who do not kill.

H2: Abused women who kill are more likely to lack support networks or resources than abused women who do not kill.

H3: Abused women who kill are more likely to be substance abusers than abused women who do not kill.

H4: Partners of abused women who kill are more likely to be substance abusers than the partners of abused women who do not kill.

H5: Abused women who kill are more likely to have been in the abusive relationship longer than abused women who do not kill.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

DATA AND SAMPLE

This chapter details the methodology used to investigate why some abused women kill and others do not. The data for this study comes from the Inter-Unviersity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) entitled Chicago Women’s Health Risk Study (Block 2000). Data collected from the years 1995-1998 are used in comparing abused women whose victimization resulted in fatal outcomes and those without fatal outcomes. The Chicago Women’s Health Risk Study uses a quasi-experimental design of 705 women who sought treatment, whether it was for abuse or not, at one of four medical sites serving population areas that had high rates of intimate partner homicides. Out of the sample, 497 respondents comprised the abused women group. The lethal sample consisted of 87 total homicides. Of the 87 homicides, 57 were female murder victims, 28 were female offenders, and 2 were same sex cases. The homicide data was collected in Chicago over a two-year period that involved at least one woman over the age of seventeen. The ages of the women in the sample ranged from 18 and older. Proxy respondents were utilized
in gathering information for the homicide sample. These were two to three people per case who were knowledgeable and credible sources of information about the couple and their relationship, and information compiled from official public records, such as court records, witness statements and newspaper accounts (Block 2000). If the woman was the offender, attempts were made to contact her.

These women were randomly selected at the point of service sought at one of four medical centers in Chicago. These women were given screening test to see if they had been victims of intimate partner abuse within the past year. The screening questionnaire was used based on the Intimate Violence Screening tool. The women who answered yes, (n=497), to being victims of intimate partner abuse comprised the abused women group. The data was then collected using face to face interviews during 1997-1998. Interviewers then compiled a daily calendar history, including details of abuse for the women in the previous year. This was a twelve month retrospective calendar history of violence in the women's lives. Questionnaires were also utilized in order to gather the necessary data relevant to this study. The abused women were derived from the clinical sample.
Data was then collected on each intimate partner homicide occurring in Chicago from 1995-1996. Interviewers conducted personal interviews with proxy respondents. Attempts were made to contact the women homicide offenders. Questionnaires were also used after the interviews in order to gather the appropriate data. Out of a total of 87 cases, 28 were female perpetrated intimate partner homicides.

VARIABLES

All cases analyzed in this study only include female victims who were abused by an intimate partner. Ninety-eight percent of the abusers were male. The dependent variable for this study is partner violence (violence produced by the women's domestic partners) coded as lethal or non-lethal. Lethal violence includes cases in which resulted in female perpetrated homicide. Non-lethal violence includes cases in which the women victims did not kill their abusers.

There are several central independent variables for this study: substance abuse of the respondent and their partners, severity of violence, availability of resources, and relationship length. Severity of abuse was measured by using incident characteristics, which comprised of the
perpetrator's action such as: incidence severity, use of object, slapped, punched beaten, threatened, or forced sexual coercion. Substance abuse will be measured by the respondents' use of drugs and or alcohol along with whether this was occurring at time of incident. Length of relationship will be measured by length of time respondent has been with the abusive partner. Type of relationship will be defined as current or formerly married or current or former boyfriend. Lastly, resources will be assessed by whether the respondent had available finances and friends to help support them. The questions that were asked to the non-homicide group were reflective of the year 1997-1998. The homicide group questions were in reference to the year prior to death and the homicide data were gathered from the years 1995-1996. Operational definitions are presented in Table 1.

ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

SPSS will be used to analyze the data for this research. Cross-tabular analysis will be used to examine the basic relationships between the independent and dependent variables. This will allow for the control of relevant variables while testing the significance and strength of the statistical associations.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Table 1 contains the operational definitions of the variables comprising severity of violence, social and economic support or resources, and alcohol and substance abuse. The non-homicide group responses were gathered from the year 1997-1998 and the homicide group responses pertained to the year prior to death and the homicide data were collected from the year 1995-1996.
Table 1. Operational Definitions

Severity of Violence

Gun use - intimate partner threaten the respondent with a gun
Sexual Activity - intimate partner forced respondents into sexual coercion
Hit - intimate partner hit respondent
Throw - intimate partner throw object at respondent
Push - intimate partner push respondent
Slap - intimate partner slapped respondent
Kick - intimate partner kick respondent
Object - intimate partner hit respondent with an object
Beat - intimate partner beat respondent repeatedly
Knife - intimate partner threatened respondent with a knife

Social and Economic Support or Resources

Friend - having someone there in the abused victims time of need
Finances - whether the respondent had financial difficulties
Standby - having someone to stand by the victims
Decision - having someone to support or help respondent with making the right decision

Substance Abuse
Alcohol (respondent) - respondent ever had an alcohol problem
Alcohol-Current (respondent) - was alcohol a current problem
Drugs (respondent) - did respondent ever have a problem with drugs
Drugs- Current (respondent) - was drug use a current problem for the respondent
Alcohol (partner) - partner ever have problem with alcohol
Drug use (partner) - partner ever have drug use problem
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study examined data from the Chicago Women's Health Risk Study (Block 2000). The population of case studies is from the years 1995-98. Cross-tabular analysis was used to examine the bivariate relationship highlighted by the hypotheses. The findings are organized by hypothesis. Throughout the analysis two groups of abused women are compared, homicide offenders and non-offenders.

HYPOTHESIS #1

Hypothesis #1 states: Abused women who kill experience more severe abuse than those who do not kill. Table 2 presents the analysis of data to test the hypothesis that abused women who kill do so because of more severe abuse than those who do not kill. Several types of assault on the women are compared for the women who kill versus the women who did not kill. I used several different variables to indicate the severity of abuse. Both the use of weapons as well as physical violence without weapons are considered here. Only one variable showed a significant difference between the percentage of non-offenders and offenders. My analysis of the history of
Table 2. Comparison of Abusive Actions Used Against Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n= 497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity of abuse</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slap</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrown</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assaults with objects supported the hypothesis in that the difference between the history of the offenders and non-offenders was statistically significant (p=.024). When comparing the two groups on the indicating variable, abuse accompanied by a gun, I found that the majority of non-offenders had also been threatened with a gun. Even though there was no statistically significant difference the results were in opposite direction as hypothesized. Again, there was no significant difference between the two groups when assessing the variable of forcible sex. The comparison variable of women in the offender group with the others shows that being threatened with hitting was not statistically significant. Experiencing having an object thrown at the respondents also did not significantly discriminate between the two groups. Out of the homicide group 58.3% stated that they had an object thrown at them, while 47.4% of the non-homicide group stated that they had an object thrown at them. This percentage shows a difference between the two groups in the expected direction. Three additional variables (push, slap and or kick) were not significant; however 69.2% of the offenders stated that they were kicked and slapped by their intimate partners, while 66.1% of the non-offenders were slapped and 56.8% of the non-offenders were kicked by their partners.
The analysis of the variable, comparing the group concerning whether the partners beat the respondents repeatedly showed no statistical significance between the two comparison groups, however, 53.8% of offenders stated that their intimate partner repeatedly beat them whereas 44.7% of the non-offenders reported repeated abuse. The abuser’s threats with a knife were not significantly more prevalent among the offender group. Nevertheless, this variable was interesting because approximately 39% of the homicide offenders had reported being threatened with a knife compared to 27.7% of the non-homicide group.

In order to clarify the effects of weapon use, a summary index of abuse with a weapon was created. Table 3 is reflective of this significance. The index combined overall weapon use whether it was with an object, knife or gun (WEAPNCMB). This variable did show a significant difference (p= .042) when comparing the two groups. This finding suggests that women who kill do experience more severe forms of abuse, lending support to hypothesis 1.

HYPOTHESIS #2

Hypothesis #2 states: Abused women who kill are more likely to lack support networks or resources than abused women who do not kill. Table 4 presents data to test the
Table 3. Comparison of Weapon Use against Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Weapons Used</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P = .042
Table 4. Comparison of Sources of Support Between Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Resources</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standby</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
hypothesis that abused women who kill are more likely to lack support networks or resources which may allow them to escape an abusive relationship. There was a significant difference between offenders and the non-offenders. While statistically significant, the comparisons were in the opposite direction hypothesized. This variable had a significance of (finances, p=0.000) which suggests that the offenders were financially stable. This variable concerning having someone to be there for the victim (standby) was also significant (p=0.038) and in the opposite direction as hypothesized. This means that offenders claimed more social support than their non-killing counterparts. A significance of (decision, p=0.002), when comparing the offenders with the non-offenders indicates that the offenders were more likely to have someone who was willing to support their decisions. The results of this analysis suggest that the support networks for offenders were more stable as the non-offender group thus not supporting the original hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS #3

Abused women who kill are more likely to be substance abusers than abused women who do not kill. Table 5 presents data to test the hypothesis that abused women who
kill are more likely to be substance abusers than abused women who do not kill. All of these comparisons were statistically significant. They all indicated that offenders who killed their partner were more likely to have alcohol and drug problems and to have a current problem with alcohol and drugs but, were less likely to receive treatment for their problem than the non-offender group. This supports the validity of hypothesis 3. This is not suggesting that non-offenders do not have substance abuse problems, but it is more likely to be a problem for women who kill their abuser.

HYPOTHESIS #4

Hypothesis #4 states: Partners of abused women who kill are more likely to be substance abusers than abused women who do not kill. Table 6 presents hypothesis 4 which focused on the partners of abused women. Those who kill are more likely to have partners who are substance abusers. The cross-tabular analysis of these two variables, drug use and alcohol use, showed significant differences between the homicide and non-homicide groups. The relationship was statistically significant for drug use (p=0.032) and the variable concerning alcohol use yielded a percentage difference with the offenders reporting that 61.5% had
Table 5. Comparison of Substance Abuse Problems Between Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Abuse</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (Ever a Problem)</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (Current Problem)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs (Ever a Problem)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs (Current Problem)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Comparison of Substance Abuse of Partners Between Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Abuse</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drugs (Ever a Problem)</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (Ever a Problem)</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
partners who had alcohol problems and 49.9% of the non-offenders reporting that their partners had problems with alcohol use. The offenders’ partners were more likely to have problems with alcohol and drug use than the partners of the non-offenders.

HYPOTHESIS #5

Hypothesis #5 states: Abused women who kill are more likely to have been in the abusive relationship longer than abused women who do not kill. Table 7 presents data to test the hypothesis that abused women who kill are more likely to have been in the abusive relationship longer than the abused women who do not kill. This variable comparison showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, the results were in the expected direction and significant when looking at type of relationships as shown in table 8.
Table 7. Comparison of Length of Relationship Between the Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length Of Relationship</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years or less</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 years</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Comparison of Relationship Type Between Abused Women Who Do Not Kill (non-homicide n=497) and Abused Women Who Kill (homicide n=28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>% homicide</th>
<th>% non-homicide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband/Common Law (ex's included)</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/Ex-boyfriend</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P=0.001
CHAPTER V
REVIEW OF THE RESULTS

According to Umberson et al. (1998), national surveys indicate that at least twenty-eight percent of couples experience physical violence at some point in their relationship and sixteen percent of couples experience violence in a given year. Domestic violence is a devastating problem that plagues societies all over the world. Every year thousands of people are in situations where domestic violence occurs. In the past, domestic violence was a sheltered issue. However, as the gruesome effects were unveiled, domestic violence gradually became understood as a relentless and significant social problem.

According to Moracco, Runyan and Butts (1999), intimate partners are the perpetrators of more than 3000 homicides every year. This statistic shows the devastating effects that intimate partner homicide has on our nation.

The major goal of this study was to compare abused women who kill their abused partners with abused women who do not kill. Angela Browne's book, *When Battered Women Kill*, provided the intellectual background of this study. This study attempted to replicate Browne's (1987) research on battered women. Browne's sample was comprised from six
states while this study was comprised from one metropolitan area in Chicago. Both studies looked at situational characteristics. Browne (1987) found a major difference between the two comparison groups and that was the partners of the women. In her study, the men from the homicide group used drugs more frequently, became intoxicated more often, assaulted more frequently and exerted more severe violence. The present study found similar trends. The women in the homicide group experienced more severe violence than the comparison group. Also, the women and men in the homicide group were more likely to be substance abusers. Although both studies found similar trends, there were differences between the two studies.

The present study examined the relationship of the respondents with substance abuse, severity of violence, economic resources and support networks and length and type of relationship. Several of these hypotheses were supported.

This study focused on several patterns of intimate partner homicide suggested in Angela Browne's book. The results supported the hypothesis that women victims of severe violence are more likely to kill their abusive partners. Similarly, Browne's findings (1986) stated that battering was more frequent in the homicide group as well
as more severe. Therefore, severe abuse seems to precede the killings by the homicide offenders. Although the findings were mixed, a general pattern can be seen in the results. Among the violent acts most likely to inflict serious injury (kick, beat, knife, gun), the homicide group reported greater victimization. This suggests that while all women in the study experience some level of abuse, the women who killed their abusers had been at greatest risk of injury.

The results of my study suggested that the women who killed had more resources than the women who did not kill. Perhaps in some cases women became more embolden through support networks. Also, networks may help them define the location of their problems in the relationship. Hamilton and Sutterfield (1997) found that battered women do reach out to formal and informal help seeking sources for assistance. All of the homicide offenders stated that they were financially stable and 91.3% stated that they felt that they had someone who would standby them in their time of need. According to Ferraro and Johnson (1983), external definitions of violence play an important factor in whether the abused woman will leave her abuser. This means that as the violence becomes more visible it allows for others to define what is happening and initiate an awareness of
danger. Sullivan and Rumptz (1994) stated that women who have financial resources have more options when dealing with abusive men such as private attorneys, residence or have cars of their own. When applying the theoretical frameworks, we can assume that the homicide offenders resorted to the self defense theory as a method of escape, while the non-homicide women supported the notion of learned helplessness.

The results are consistent with the numerous studies of intimate partner violence when substance abuse is involved. Alcohol and drug use was a major factor when assessing intimate partner homicide. The members of the homicide group were more likely to indicate that alcohol was a problem for them and their partners. Similarly, Browne’s study (1987), found that alcohol was more prevalent among the partners of the women in the homicide group. This study also found that substance abuse seemed to be a problem for the offenders as well.

The hypothesis regarding the length of the relationship was not supported. There was no difference between the homicide group and the non-homicide group. However, I also examined relationship type as well. This analysis showed that husband and common law relationship types were more likely to end up in female perpetrated
intimate partner homicide than other relationships. This suggests that these relationships carry a level of commitment, both personal and legal, beyond that found in a dating relationship. Battered women who are married to their abusers may face more barriers to leaving the relationship. They may feel more trapped economically and emotionally. Due to these barriers, a woman may remain in the relationship while the level of violence escalates.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Studying intimate partner homicide is an important topic because this is an ongoing issue in society. Intimate partner violence is a severe issue and in order to reduce the rate at which it happens, it needs to be understood. This study adds to current literature by building on earlier interview research conducted by Browne (1987). This should in turn allow for the comparison over time of the dependent and independent variables to see if any change has taken place.

From the analysis it may be assumed that females may perpetrate intimate partner killings for a variety of reasons. The offenders reported that they had the support networks available to them. This can be explained that the support networks could have been elevating the devastating
effects of the abuser, thus creating an extreme disgust for the abuser by his partner. Offenders reported that they were susceptible to severe abuse; thus causing more severe injuries and pain. This in turn could lead the women to escape a situation that is severe; therefore, they would kill in order to escape.

It can also be assumed that substance abuse should be addressed when dealing with battered women. There are several important steps that can be utilized to alter and alleviate the issue of domestic violence and substance abuse. Early substance abuse therapy for both partners can aid in reducing the devastating effects. Early intervention, especially when violence escalates due to the fact that most of the offenders killed due to more severe abuse. Counseling which focuses the abuses partner on positive escapes rather than negative ones. Here is when the support networks can aid in reducing the effects of blaming. Substance abuse clinics should focus on battered women and their partners due to the high incidence of intoxicated batterers and victims.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main limitation on this study was the small sample size of homicide offenders. Therefore, it was extremely
difficult to accurately compare the data. Incidents of female perpetrated homicide are lower in respect to male homicide; therefore, most of the research focuses on male offenders and women victims. Another limitation concerns the complications of the data analysis. There were fifteen different data sets. Many of the variables carried different names across the sets. In order to obtain the necessary variables, all of the data sets had to be downloaded and sorted through in order that the two groups, homicide and non-homicide, variable labels were the same. It was also required to utilize the codebook in locating the definitions of different variable labels.

The location of this study may have also been a limitation because there is no diversity within the respondents. The women selected were all from one location in Chicago. Another limitation was the use of proxy respondents. These people may not have been credible in that they may not have accurately told the truth and they may have been bias depending on which person they knew, the respondent or the victim. Lastly, the time frame when the questions were asked to each group was different. The homicide data were collected from the year 1995-1996 and the non-homicide group data were collected from the year 1997-1998.
One recommendation for this study is that length of relationship should be looked at in greater detail to see whether there is a direct correlation between intimate partner homicide and relationship length. Future studies should also try and focus on larger sample size, a sample that is nationally representative and there should be face to face interviews.
REFERENCES


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