WOMEN AS VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF HOMICIDE:

A TEST OF THREE THEORIES OF WOMEN'S CRIMINALITY

A DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by

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To the women whose stories get lost in the aggregation.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, women have committed fewer crimes than men. However, based on Uniform Crime Report (UCR) statistics (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1972), arrests of women increased greatly during the late 1960s. Such increases led some criminologists to link women's offending to changes in their statuses and roles brought about by the contemporary women's movement (Adler 1975; Simon 1976). For example, Adler presented a masculinity thesis and Simon an opportunity thesis that postulated such links. As I proceed, I will refer to these theses as liberation perspectives. One alternate, and more recent perspective, economic marginalization, has linked women's rising crime rates to the feminization of poverty (Steffensmeier 1980). In sum, theories of women's criminality posit a connection between women's structural positions in society and their criminal behavior.

Are theories that predict a causal nexus between women's structural position and women's offending correct? Is women's involvement in crime related to their social status and roles in society? Is women's offending more like men's offending where women and men are situated more similarly? Do theories of female criminality explain some types of crime better than others? If structural features of a society are related to female criminality, are these same features also related to women's victimization? These are the types of questions that I attempt to answer with this research.
Specifically, the purpose of this thesis is to address the relative merits of three theories of female offending: the opportunity, masculinity, and economic marginality theses. I also examine whether these theories apply to female victimization. In particular, I assess the linkages among aspects of the structural status of women and different types of a particular crime: homicide. To begin, I provide a more detailed discussion of the theories under consideration.

The Masculinity Thesis

In 1975, Adler proposed a masculinity thesis in her book *Sisters in Crime*. She argued that the women's movement encouraged and allowed women to take on male roles such as doctor, carpenter, and executive (Adler 1975: 14). Furthermore, women were expected to take on masculine behaviors including drinking, fighting and male criminal activities such as fraud, mugging, and murder (Adler 1975: 14 & 95). Thus, Adler maintained that "...there is every reason to anticipate that, as egalitarian forces expand, so too, will the crime rate of the female..." (Adler 1975: 94). Moreover, Adler anticipated that the types of crime women commit would become more similar to those of men. In other words, as women in the United States took on male roles and masculine gender identities, they would commit more "male criminal activities" such as crimes against the person including homicide.

The Opportunity Thesis

The opportunity thesis proposed by Simon (1976) also indicated that there might be a connection between gains in equality for women and rises in female crime. Simon presented evidence of the expanding employment of women and their expanding arrest rates to demonstrate a connection between women's opportunities outside the home and their criminal activity (Simon, 1976). She reasoned that until the women's movement, women's criminal activity was limited by traditional gender roles that kept them out of public life. As a result of
the women's movement, more females gained the opportunity to work outside of their homes. This, according to Simon, increased women's opportunities to take part in criminal activity (Simon, 1976:40).

However, Simon believed that the effect of expanding opportunities would differ by type of crime. She predicted that women's participation in property offenses, such as larceny, fraud, and embezzlement, would be greater with expanded opportunities. By contrast, women would be less involved in homicide, because women's expanded opportunities would result in a decline in women's offending against those who they are most likely to kill, their intimate partners (Simon 1976: 40). Therefore, Simon's opportunity thesis actually predicts that when women's economic opportunities are greater, women's involvement in homicide will be lower. Note that this is in contrast to the expectation from Adler's liberation perspective that predicted higher homicide offending by women where their opportunities are greater.

**Economic Marginalization**

The third perspective on female crime is Steffensmeier's economic marginalization thesis (Steffensmeier 1980). Noting that increases in female crime seem to be limited to crimes traditionally committed by females such as larceny and prostitution, Steffensmeier proposed that increases in female crime are not due to women's liberation. Rather, he believed that increases in women's crime are due to increases in poverty among women. The argument is that poor women increase their criminal activity as a way to provide for themselves and their dependents.

Interestingly, Steffensmeier did not propose a link between female poverty and homicide. To the contrary, Steffensmeier and Streifel (1993) noted that homicide among women is not increasing and they did not expect it to do so. However, drawing on the economic marginalization thesis, it seems plausible that women's homicide offending would be
related to their marginal economic status. For example, if women in poverty are heavily involved in property crime, they may also be involved in the felony-related killings that occur during commission of those crimes. That is, we may expect that the rate of female homicide offending in the context of other crimes will be higher where women's poverty is greater.

**Extending theories of female offending to female homicide victimization**

As noted, the above perspectives do not make specific predictions about women's victimization, in general, or homicide victimization in particular. However, I argue that all three theories have implications for homicide victimization.

Recall that Adler's masculinity thesis predicts that violent offending by women should be greater when women take on "male roles" and "masculine" gender identities. Extrapolating from the masculinization thesis, it seems likely that women's homicide victimization would also be greater where larger numbers of women abandon female type sex roles. This would be true if engaging in more male-typed roles increases the likelihood that women will become entangled in more violent incidents which, in turn, result in their deaths. For example, women may be more likely to participate in activities such as going to bars or staying out late. Such night time activities provide fertile settings for crime and violence that may result in greater victimization of women. Furthermore, to the extent that women behave in a more typically male fashion, they may be more likely not to "back down" in arguments. Thus, as with the types of situated transactions that lead to the homicide of males, disputes involving females may also escalate in ways that cause women's deaths (Luckenbill 1977; Felson and Steadman 1983).

Turning to the opportunity thesis, Simon argues that as women's economic status improves, homicide offending by women will decrease since they will be able to free themselves from abusive relationships -- the most usual contexts in which women kill. Simon
does not say how such opportunities will affect female homicide victimization. Applying her logic though, it seems likely that women's homicide victimization by intimates would also be reduced in the contexts of less abuse. After all, abuse in relationships is more likely to result in the death of a woman than a death by a woman (Browne and Williams 1989). Higher socioeconomic status would mean fewer killings of women at the hands of their significant others. Thus, it is likely that total female homicide victimization rates would be lower when women's socioeconomic position is better because abusive relationships result in a large number of homicides involving women as victims (Jurik and Winn 1990; Smith and Brewer 1992; Wilson and Daly 1992). At the same time, however, women's greater participation in public contexts such as work might increase the likelihood of homicide victimization in those contexts, (i.e., felony and stranger murders).

Alternatively, and consistent with Steffensmeier's economic marginalization thesis, it might be expected that greater levels of poverty among women might be related to higher rates of female victimization. Poor women are likely to live in economically depressed areas that are typically more violence ridden. Also, poor women may be likely to become involved in other activities with a high risk for lethal violence such as drug sales, prostitution and theft. Finally levels of homicide victimization may be greater for poor women as they are more vulnerable to intimate partners on whom they depend. Such patterns would be consistent with research showing that poverty and economic inequality are correlates of criminal violence including homicide (Bailey 1984; Messner and Tardiff 1986; Williams 1984).

In sum, although liberation and economic marginalization perspectives were set forth to explain increases in female criminal offending, they have implications for rates of female homicide offending and victimization. Based on Adler's (1975) arguments, the masculinity thesis suggests that greater socio-economic status for women will be associated with higher
female homicide perpetration and victimization. In contrast, according to opportunity theory
(Simon 1976), opportunity for women should result in lower total female homicide perpetration
and victimization. Lastly, drawing on the economic marginalization thesis, greater levels of
female poverty should result in higher rates of female homicide offending and victimization for
women. Although the above explanations of female criminality are plausible, their empirical
merits have not yet been examined fully. For example, researchers have not often examined
the independent effects of measures of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic
marginalization perspectives on female crime.

The purpose of this study is to test the relative merits of these three theories of female
crime with 1980 and 1990 homicide data. In the analysis to follow, I examine how factors
associated with each perspective are linked to total female homicide offending and
victimization rates and to six subtypes of homicide: intimate homicide, family homicide,
stranger homicide, acquaintance homicide, murder growing out of arguments, and homicide
associated with other crimes. In so doing, I further our understanding of: 1) the causes of
female crime, 2) the impact of women's socioeconomic status on their involvement in crime,
and 3) the extent to which patterns of female homicide offending and victimization are
supportive of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspectives for two time
periods (1980 and 1990) following the birth of the modern day women's movement.¹

Research Outline

To examine the merits of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality
perspectives, I use data from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) for the years
1980 and 1990. The SHR contains information about homicides in the U.S. including sex of

¹Modern in contrast to the women's movement of the early 1900s in which women fought for and earned the right to vote.
the victim and offender, the victim-offender relationship, and the circumstance leading up to the homicide. For this analysis, I construct homicide rates from the SHR data for cities with populations of 100,000 or more in 1980 and 1990.

First, I present a descriptive analysis of female offending and victimization in 1980 and 1990 for total female homicide rates and the six subtypes noted above. Second, I present the results of multivariate analyses exploring models of female-perpetrated homicide and female homicide victimization for both years. In the initial models, I consider total female rates. In subsequent models, I examine the six subtypes of homicide as noted above.

The discussion proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I review the literature that has attempted to test theories of female offending, and the literature that examines homicide offending and victimization among women. In Chapter 3, I provide a more elaborate discussion of the data, variables, and analytical methods that I use to test the theories of female crime. I present my findings in Chapters 4 through 7. Specifically, in Chapter 4, I present a descriptive analysis of female offending and victimization in 1980 and 1990 for total female homicide rates and the six subtypes noted above. I examine the models for female-perpetrated homicide in Chapter 5, and in Chapter 6, I examine the models for female homicide victimization. In both cases, I first consider the models of total offending and then models for the six subtypes of homicide. Then, I present my assessment of the relative merits of the theories for explaining the different types of homicide that I examined. Finally, in Chapter 7, I present my conclusions and suggestions for future research.
Chapter II

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

In this work, I examine the merits of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspectives for explaining female-perpetrated homicide and female homicide victimization. Thus, two general bodies of literature are relevant: tests of the three contemporary theories of women's offending, and examinations of female homicide offending and victimization. I discuss these general bodies of work in turn.

Examining Theories of Women's Criminal Offending

Early attempts to examine the possibility of a connection between women's social position and women's criminality were mostly trend analyses (Crites 1976; Norland and Shover 1977; Simon 1976; Smart 1979; Steffensmeier 1978, 1980; Steffensmeier and Cobb 1981; Steffensmeier, Steffensmeier and Rosenthal 1979). Scholars examined trends in arrest rates and found increases in arrests among women during the late 1960s and early 1970s. These studies were seen as supporting the liberation perspectives in that women's crime was increasing during a period when the women's movement was expected to have had its greatest impact (Crites 1976; Norland & Shover 1977; Smart 1979; Steffensmeier 1980; Steffensmeier and Cobb, 1981). Others argued that these trend studies did not actually support emancipation theories because increases in arrests among women began before the advent of the modern day women's movement (Steffensmeier 1978, 1980). Moreover, such studies did not provide a test of the key supposition of theories of female crime. They did not
test whether changes in women's offending are a consequence of changes in women's behaviors or opportunities brought about by the women's movement. Nor, did these early studies consider the possibility, as suggested by the economic marginality thesis, that women's economic status could have grown worse during the time periods examined thus fostering increases in women's offending.

**Multivariate Analyses of Women's Criminal Offending**

More recent considerations of women's offending have involved sophisticated multivariate data analytic techniques. My search of the literature revealed five studies that examine the linkages among levels of female offending and characteristics of women's statuses and women's roles. However, none of these studies simultaneously addresses all three theories of women's offending proposed by Adler, Simon, and Steffensmeier.

Fox and Hartnagel (1979) used multiple regression to examine the relationship between female familial roles (fertility rates\(^1\)), extra-familial roles (labor force participation and postsecondary degrees) and female offending. Female offending was measured with two dependent variables: total female convictions and female theft convictions. Fox and Hartnagel (1979) found that as fertility rates decrease and women's labor force participation and post secondary education increases, convictions of women also increase. They concluded that as women become less involved in familial roles and more involved in extrafamilial roles, they have more opportunities for crime, and crimes of theft in particular. This conclusion is in line with the opportunity thesis as postulated by Simon.

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\(^{1}\)The total fertility rate was measured as the expected number of births to a cohort of 1,000 women who survive through the childbearing years if current age-specific fertility rates were to continue throughout this time.
Box and Hale (1983, 1984) attempted to test four competing explanations for changes in female criminality. In their 1983 study, Box and Hale examined the number of women convicted of indictable\(^2\) offenses, property offenses, and violent offenses in England and Wales each year from 1951 to 1979. In their 1984 study, female conviction rates for the same years were further disaggregated into the following crimes: assault, burglary, robbery, theft, shoplifting, theft from employers, fraud, and handling stolen goods. In both studies, Box and Hale tested the same set of hypotheses.

First, they examined whether female offending increases as women gain more equal structural opportunities. Equal structural opportunities were measured with the following indicators: (1) fertility, (2) number of female undergraduates and graduates, (3) female labor force participation, and (4) number of unmarried women. Second, Box and Hale hypothesized that women's poor economic status was related to females' criminal offending. The number of females registered as unemployed in England and Wales was the indicator of women's poor economic status. Third, Box and Hale tested the possibility that official statistics may reflect changes in the processing of female offenders, or more particularly, a reduction in chivalry shown towards female offenders. As a proxy for a reduction in chivalry, Box and Hale included a variable assessing annual changes in the sex composition of the police force. They believed that a more equal sex composition reflected a recognition of demands for sex equality that would translate into more equal treatment of male and female offenders. Last, Box and Hale (1983, 1984) examined whether general social conditions,

\(^2\)According to Box and Hale (1984) an indictable offense in England and Wales includes murder, manslaughter, assault, rape, illegal intercourse with a child under 16 years of age, burglary, robbery, theft, handling of stolen goods, arson, fraud and forgery.
not particular to women, affected female levels of crime. They included measures of male convictions as controls for factors that may explain both male and female criminal offending.

In their 1983 study, Box and Hale found that male conviction rates, percent of the police force that was female, and the number of women registered as unemployed were related positively to female conviction rates for overall crime, violent crime, and property offenses. The finding for unemployment lends support to an economic marginalization explanation of women's offending. Higher female unemployment is related to increased offending by women. Thus, Box and Hale's (1983) findings contrast with Fox and Hartnagel's conclusion supporting the opportunity thesis.

Interestingly, when Box and Hale (1984) further disaggregated data on conviction rates of women in England and Wales for their 1984 study, they found some support for the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspectives. Female unemployment, an indicator of economic marginality, was positively associated with all crimes except theft from employers. Furthermore, a greater number of single women and lower fertility rates, were related to a greater number of convictions for assaults and handling stolen goods among women. Lower fertility rates were also related to burglary. These findings support the masculinity thesis if we are to view women being single and having fewer children as indicators of women's freedom from traditional female gender roles. Last, Box and Hale's 1984 work demonstrates support for the opportunity thesis for work-related crime among women. Greater female labor force participation was associated with higher theft from employers.

69 countries on the percentage of arrests that were female, their results fail to show support for any of the female crime theories. Instead, Steffensmeier et al. (1989) found that their measure of the formalization of social control (the number of years Interpol data had been collected in a country), and a measure of the opportunities for female-based consumer crimes (the numbers of radios per capita) were the best predictors of women's arrests. Gender equality (percent of university students that were female) and economic marginality (occupational sex segregation\(^3\)) were both found to be poor predictors of the female percentage of arrests. Thus, cross-culturally, at least, Steffensmeier et al. (1989) provide no support for the three female crime theories.

More recently, Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) used time series analysis to test three explanations for women's criminal offending: gender equality, female economic marginality, and formalization of social control. They employed UCR arrest data for the U.S. for the years 1960 to 1985 for property crimes\(^4\) to construct their dependent variable. Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) did not find support for emancipation theories. None of the four indicators of gender equality were related significantly to the female percentage of arrests for property offending. These include 1) percent of women in the labor force relative to the percent of men in the labor force, 2) proportion of college students who were female; 3) fertility rates; and 4) divorce rates\(^5\). Nor did Steffensmeier and Streifel find support for the

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\(^3\)Occupational sex segregation was measured as the number of working women who would have to change jobs in order for men and women to be equally distributed across occupations.

\(^4\)They include robbery, burglary, larceny-theft, forgery, fraud, embezzlement, and prostitution as well as property indexes as dependent variables.

\(^5\)While Steffensmeier and Streifel do not distinguish between the masculinity and opportunity theses, their measures of "female emancipation" seem to be more in line with the masculinity perspective. Labor force and college enrollment are measured in relative terms
economic marginalization theory. Their measures of economic marginalization included the 1) percent of families that were single parent female headed, 2) female unemployment rate relative to male rate, 3) illegitimacy rate, and 4) divorce rate. None of these factors had a significant influence on the female percentage of property offense arrests. Instead, Steffensmeier and Streifel concluded that any increases in the female share of offending during the period were mostly a function of trends in the formalization of social control\(^6\) which they measured as police per capita, and the percent of civilians among law enforcement workers.

In sum, analyses of the determinants of female arrest and conviction rates have provided some evidence of a link between women's social position and their involvement in crime. Despite the connection between women's structural positions, women's gender roles, and their roles in U.S. crime, the contributions of the above research are still unclear. Questions remain regarding the adequacy of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses. Aggregate-level multivariate studies could be improved in several ways.

First, each of the above studies focus on changes over time in crime rates among women for a nation as a whole (Box and Hale 1983, 1984; Fox and Hartnagel 1979; and thus permit an assessment of the claim that as men and women become more similar in roles and statuses, women's levels of crime will more closely resemble men's. Fertility and divorce are more difficult to interpret. Fertility may be viewed as an indicator of the masculinity thesis in that low fertility rates represent women's freedom from the traditional role of mother. Yet, low fertility rates do not, in and of themselves, tell us if women's roles are changing. It is also not clear what the divorce rate indicates since a high divorce rate could mean greater numbers of women freed of the role of wife. However, a high divorce rate could also reflect more economic hardship for single mothers as Smock's (1994) research indicates. Smock found that women fare far worse than men after divorce.

\(^6\)Formalization of social control is as not likely to be relevant for a study of homicide offending. Homicide offenders are more likely to be found and arrested than offenders who commit other types of crime. Thus, women who kill are less likely to be treated chivalrously (See page 14).
Steffensmeier et al. 1989; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1992). However, in the United States and across communities, both crime rates and women's statuses vary (Bailey and Peterson 1995). Our understanding of female crime would therefore be improved by focussing on the linkages among status characteristics and crime for smaller units than those used in existing studies.

Second, most of the above studies examine arrests (Steffensmeier, Allan, and Streifel 1989; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1992), convictions or indictments (Fox and Hartnagel 1979; Box and Hale 1983, 1984) rather than offending. Although there is no ideal measure of crime, these types of measures may seriously underestimate the level of offending for women for at least two reasons. One, much crime is never detected nor reported, so some offenders never make it into official arrest or conviction data. Two, as is suggested by the inclusion of a chivalry hypothesis in some of the multivariate examinations discussed above, women may avoid arrests, indictments and convictions because of chivalrous behavior by criminal justice workers (Box and Hale 1984; Steffensmeier et al, 1989, 1992, 1994). In fact, examinations that focus on convictions (Fox and Hartnagel 1979; Box and Hale 1983, 1984) may more accurately reflect characteristics used to determine guilt than actual measures of women's offending (Bickle and Peterson 1991; Curran 1983). In light of these problems, it seems important to assess theories of female crime with data that better reflect the level of crime commission.

Third, Box and Hale's (1983 and 1984) analyses demonstrate how findings may vary depending upon the crime examined. As they (1984) suggest, researchers should consider theoretically relevant crime categories rather than broad all inclusive categories when testing criminological theories. In existing research, the circumstances surrounding women's offending have not been explored fully. While rates may appear to remain stable or change,
we cannot be certain if the particularities of women's criminal behavior is changing within a specific offense or if they are continuing in the same fashion as in the past. For instance, a rise in women's offending against strangers at the same time as a decrease in women's offending against intimates may not be indicated in overall homicide rates which would show a stable rate in this case. Generally, national data and total rates do not allow for an assessment of variation within offense categories (Steffensmeier and Streifel, 1993).

Therefore, this examination of different types of female homicide circumstances and victim-offender relationships in smaller units provides a more complete test of the female crime theories.

Lastly, none of the above studies are set up to simultaneously test the relative merits of the economic marginalization, opportunity, and masculinization theses. Instead, Steffensmeier and his colleagues (1989, 1992) attempt to examine the economic marginality thesis directly but do not capture variables that simultaneously assess the role of masculinity and opportunity factors. Moreover, Box and Hale (1983, 1984) and Fox and Hartnagel (1979) do not set out to examine any of the three theses; they only do so coincidentally. Because the existing research does not include measures capturing all three theses, it is unclear which, if any, has merit in explaining female crime.

In brief, our understanding of the causes of female crime rates are limited because studies are few in number, analyses have not been focussed theoretically in terms of the opportunity, masculinity, and economic marginality perspectives, important local units have not been examined, and the measures of the dependent variable have not captured accurately levels of female crime and theoretically relevant crime categories.

In the analyses to follow, I attempt to address these shortcomings of previous analyses in several ways. First, the units of analysis for this examination are large U.S. cities
at two different time periods. In the U.S., street crime, including female crime, occurs disproportionately in large cities in metropolitan areas. For example of the 12,863,631 index crimes known to police in 1993, 81 percent (10,456,904) occurred in cities as opposed to rural or suburban areas (Maguire and Pastore 1995). Further, of the 11,329 homicides reported in the SHR for 1990, 60 percent of them occurred in cities with populations over 100,000. Of the 1,416 committed by women, 56 percent of them were committed in cities with populations over 100,000. Thus, large cities provide appropriate units for research on aggregate crime causation. Second, the focus of this research is on homicide. While offenders may avoid some detection in their commission of homicide, homicide has the highest reporting rate of any crime (Archer and Gartner 1984). Thus, the problems associated with arrest or conviction data such as reporting bias are avoided to a large extent. Also, focussing on the crime of homicide and using SHR data enables me to examine the differential impact of independent variables on different types of theoretically relevant homicide. Fourth, the models of female homicide examined here include measures of all three theories of women's offending -- masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality. As a result, questions of spuriousness are much less of a concern than in earlier analyses. Thus, this examination provides a more complete and accurate test of the existing theses concerning women's criminal involvement. Last, this study is unique in that I explore the ability of the existing crime theories to explain female victimization as well as female offending.

**Descriptive Analyses of Female Homicide**

There is a growing body of literature oriented to female homicide. Much is descriptive documenting the characteristics of female homicide offenders and victims, and the circumstances of female homicide. Researchers have constructed profiles of homicide
victims and/or offenders based on local police department data (Goetting 1988a, 1991; Mann 1990, 1993; McClain 1982, 1982-83; Weisheit 1984; Wolfgang 1958); medical examiner's records (Humphrey, Hudson and Cosgrove 1981; Zahn 1975); Supplementary Homicide Report data (Wilbanks 1983; Stout 1991); self-report data (Bunch et. al. 1983; Brownstein et. al. 1994; Weisheit 1984); and, World Health statistics (Wilbanks 1982). Some of these studies describe female homicides for a given community at one point in time (Mann 1987, 1990; Wolfgang 1958), while others examine changes over time in who and how women kill (Brownstein et al. 1994; Bunch, et. al. 1983; McClain 1982-83).

In general, descriptive studies show that the typical female homicide offender is young (25-29 years old closely followed by 30-34 years old) (Wolfgang 1958), black (Goetting 1988; Wolfgang 1958), undereducated and unemployed. She is also likely to live in an urban ghetto and to have few marketable skills (Goetting 1988; Mann 1993, 1987, 1990). Women are most likely to kill their sexual partners (male lover or spouse) as a result of an argument (Goetting 1988; Weisheit 1984; Wilbanks 1983; Wolfgang 1958), though, a few may kill their children (Weisheit 1984; Goetting 1988; Mann 1993).7

Similarly, studies of female victimization show that African-American women are more likely to be victims of homicide than are white women (McClain 1982; Wilbanks 1982; Wolfgang 1958; Zahn 1975), and young women (20 to 24 years of age) are more likely to be killed than women in other age groups (Wilbanks 1982; Wolfgang 1958). Furthermore, when women are murdered, it is more likely that they are killed by family members and

7The above profile is in contrast to that of male killers and killings which show that males are more likely to kill strangers and acquaintances than intimate partners. Though as with females, males are most likely to kill as the result of an argument (Wilbanks 1983). Still, males were twice as likely to be involved in felony killings than were females in 1980 (Wilbanks 1983).
acquaintances than by strangers (Browne 1987; Goetting 1991; Humphrey, Hudson and Cosgrove 1981; Stout 1991b; Wilbanks 1982; Wolfgang 1958; Zahn 1975). Last, research shows that the "typical" female victim is likely to be killed as a result of a domestic argument or jealousy (Wolfgang 1958; Zahn 1975).

Some studies have reported changes in the profile of offenders or victims and the character of female homicide over time. For example, McClain (1982-83) compared police and court records for black female offenders in Detroit, St Louis, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Houston and Los Angeles in 1975 with Wolfgang's 1958 Philadelphia data, and reported that women were killing non-partners more than in the past. Similarly, Bunch, et. al. (1983) questioned 90 women incarcerated for homicide in Florida prisons in 1980 and found that women more recently incarcerated were more likely to have killed strangers than those incarcerated in the past. These studies aside, the bulk of research on female killings reveal a pattern of women killing and being killed by their intimate partners that is consistent across place and across time (Goetting 1988, 1991 [Detroit: 1982-83]; Humphrey, Hudson and Cosgrove 1981 [North Carolina: 1972-76]; Mann 1990 [six cities: 1982]; McClain 1982 [Detroit, St. Louis, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Houston, Los Angeles: 1975]; Wolfgang 1958 [Philadelphia: 1948-52]).

Because these studies basically only describe the crimes, the perpetrator, or victim, they cannot inform us about the actual linkages among females' structural statuses and rates of homicide. However, they are suggestive of how women's social positions might be related to female killings.

First, with very few exceptions, the above studies provide little evidence that the character of male and female killings is converging. To the contrary, homicide by men and women continue to reflect women's and men's different gender roles (Jurik and Winn 1990). While men kill across a much broader spectrum of victims (Wilbanks 1983) and
circumstances (Wilbanks 1983), most female offenders kill their sexual partners (male lovers or spouses) as a result of an argument (Goetting 1988; Jurik and Winn 1990; Weisheit 1984; Wilbanks 1983; Wolfgang 1958). Thus, female homicide offending occurs most often within women's roles as wives and girlfriends. Similarly, descriptive studies make it clear that killings of females have not changed in such a way that females are now being killed in a manner that is more similar to males.

The finding of a lack of convergence in the circumstances of male and female homicide perpetration and victimization raises questions about the merits of Adler's masculinity thesis with its emphasis on women becoming more like men with regard to criminal behavior. Still, it is possible that changes in women's roles have influenced the likelihood of female involvement in stranger or felony homicide versus domestic killings. Such a pattern would be consistent with the masculinity perspective, but would not be evident from a descriptive analysis of homicide incidents.

In sum, previous research describing female killings has shed light on the sociodemographic characteristics of women who are offenders and victims of homicide and on the contexts in which such killings occur. However, these studies have not attempted to assess the degree of association between women's statuses and female homicide. As such, they shed little light on the determinants of female killings, or the merits of the theoretical perspectives posited by Adler, Simon, and Steffensmeier.

**Structural Determinants of Female Homicide Offending**

There is a small body of literature that has examined, more systematically, the structural causes of female homicide. However, even these works have not tested directly the perspectives that provide the theoretical focus of this investigation. Rather, studies have been grounded in feminist, routine activity, lifestyle, and general opportunity arguments. Thus
they shed light on the theories of concern here only to the degree that they include some relevant measures of female status. My review of the literature revealed only two studies examining the structural determinants of women's homicide offending.

Browne and Williams (1989), examined the effects of legal and extralegal resources on the likelihood of female-perpetrated intimate partner homicides. Using SHR data, they calculated sex-specific rates of partner homicide for U.S. states for the years 1976-79 and 1980-84. Browne and Williams (1989) found that the availability of resources for domestic violence victims is associated with a decline in the rates of female-perpetrated but not male-perpetrated intimate partner homicides.

While not specific to the three theories of interest in my analysis, this research lends support to the view that women are less likely to kill their significant others when their opportunities to extricate themselves from violent relationships is greater. However, the opportunities included in Browne and Williams' (1989) work, were not the labor force or educational opportunities discussed by Simon.

More closely related to this dissertation, Weisheit (1993) examined structural correlates of female homicide patterns in 1980 and 1981. Among the correlates considered was the Gender Equality Index. Created by Baron and Straus (1987), this index assesses the extent to which women have parity with men in economic, political, and legal spheres of life. Aggregating to the state level, Weisheit found that states with the highest degrees of gender equality had the lowest rates of female-perpetrated homicide. He noted that this finding is in contrast to the "convergence hypothesis" or the masculinity theory.

The studies by Browne and Williams (1989) and Weisheit (1993) are instructive. Weisheit's study demonstrates that structural conditions, including aspects of gender equality, are related to female homicide. However, contrary to what the masculinity thesis
predicts, gender equality is associated with lower, rather than higher, levels of female killing. Browne and Williams' study indicates that resources for women (opportunities) are important in reducing killings by females.

Although the above works shed light on the role of opportunity and gender equality in homicide, these analyses leave some questions unanswered. For example, states are the units of analyses for both studies. However, states may be poor units since female status and homicide may vary greatly within a state. Thus, with aggregate statistics may not reflect the variance in women's status and female homicide perpetration for any units (cities, metropolitan areas) within the state. Along different lines, neither Browne and Williams (1989) nor Weisheit (1993) included measures such as absolute female labor force participation or female poverty in their models. Such variables would more directly assess the opportunity and economic marginality theses as proposed by Simon and Steffensmeier, respectively. Also, the two studies consider only overall homicide offending rates for females. As such, they leave unaddressed the question of how resources and gender equality apply to different types of homicide. Finally, although Weisheit's study has direct applicability to the masculinity hypothesis, the fact that he uses an index of gender equality, raises the question of which aspects of equality have the most influence on female homicide rates.

**Structural Determinants of Female Homicide Victimization**

Studies of the structural determinants of female homicide victimization are slightly more common than studies of female-perpetrated homicide. I was able to locate four such structural level analyses of female homicide victimization (Bailey and Peterson 1995, Gartner 1990, Gartner, Baker and Pampel 1990, Gartner and McCarthy 1991).
Gartner and her colleagues (Gartner 1990, Gartner et al. 1990) investigated the relationship between a variety of sociodemographic variables and the gender gap in homicide victimization in 18 developing countries for the years 1950 to 1980. Victimization was measured in mean specific death rates for each sex in the Gartner 1980 study and as the difference between the percent of males and females killed in the Gartner et al 1990 study. In both studies, there are findings which are consistent with the economic marginalization and masculinity theories. In general, both studies show that in countries where divorce and illegitimacy rates are higher, the gender gap in homicide victimization is lower, with women being at greater risk. Taken together, higher rates of illegitimacy and divorce may reflect the economic marginality of single mothers.

Gartner et al. (1990) find a pattern of higher homicide victimization rates of women in countries where the female share of the labor force and the female share of the unmarried population is greater. They also show that less occupational segregation by sex puts women at a greater risk of homicide victimization. It seems that when women are more like men in terms of their levels of labor force participation and types of jobs, and when they avoid the traditional role of wife longer, the percentage of killings in which the victims are women is greater. Such patterns are consistent with the masculinity thesis.

Gartner et al. (1990), however discovered one pattern that may be contrary to the masculinity thesis. In countries where a larger proportion of the college student population is female, the gender gap in homicide is greater. Women are killed comparably less often when they are more equal to men in numbers attending college. If going to college is viewed as taking on nontraditional roles and becoming more similar to men, then it appears that women are less likely to be killed when they are more like men.
Gartner and McCarthy (1991) considered women's victimization in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada for the years 1921 to 1988. They found that women in the labor force were overrepresented among homicide victims before the 1970s. However, after 1969, employed women had a lower than expected risk of homicide as compared with the overall female population. Such a finding may reflect that greater female employment (opportunity), associated with the women's movement may have increased women's ability to extricate themselves from domestic violence and hence homicide by intimates.

Most recently, Bailey and Peterson (1995) examined female homicide victimization across 138 U.S. cities for 1980. They tested the relationship between female homicide victimization rates and various indicators of the absolute and relative (to men) socioeconomic status of women. In contrast to the opportunity thesis, Bailey and Peterson found that higher socioeconomic status of women, as measured by the percent of women with a college education and the percent of women in managerial, professional or administrative occupations, was not associated significantly with homicide victimization for women. Neither was the unemployment rate for women. Thus, Bailey and Peterson's findings for overall homicide rates also do not appear to be in line with the economic marginality thesis either.

Bailey and Peterson's (1995) examination of female victimization is notable in that they disaggregated their dependent variable so as to examine the most common types of female killings: felony murders, murders by intimates, murders by acquaintances and murders by strangers. This is an important step because based on the masculinity, opportunity, and economic theories, one would expect the impact of female roles and statuses to vary by type of homicide. For instance, following the opportunity thesis, greater opportunity might not protect females from homicide by strangers, while it should protect
them from homicide by intimate partners. Thus, more complete analyses of homicide victimization should include examinations of different types of homicide.

Interestingly, Bailey and Peterson (1995) found that where women and men are more similar in terms of professional occupational status, women are at a greater risk of being killed by acquaintances. This finding suggests support for Adler's masculinization thesis: where women are more similar to men, their victimization will be greater. However, in contrast to the masculinity thesis, Bailey and Peterson found that where there were higher levels of gender inequality in income (measured as the male-female difference in median income), women are at a greater risk of being killed by acquaintances and in argument situations. One of Bailey and Peterson's findings is consistent with the economic marginality perspective. They found that the rate of women killed by their husbands is greater where the female excess in unemployment is greater. This finding may be supportive of Steffensmeier's economic marginality theses because women's unemployment is poor in relation to men's. However, this relative measure of unemployment may not accurately reflect women's absolute economic marginality. In general, for some forms of female homicide, Bailey and Peterson's (1995) findings demonstrate support for Adler's and Steffensmeier's claims. But none of their research suggest support for Simon's Opportunity thesis.

Overall, the literature on the structural determinants of women's homicide victimization is an important contribution to the literature on female crime. However, the studies do not allow us to draw definitive conclusions about the merits of theories regarding women's victimization as extrapolated from Adler, Simon, and Steffensmeier.

In part, the inability to draw conclusions about the theses is due to the fact that the researchers did not set out to address these perspectives. Consequently, none of the works includes the full array of variables necessary to address these theories and evaluate their
merits. Bailey and Peterson (1995) come the closest in that they consider aspects of gender inequality appropriate to assess the masculinity and economic marginality theses; and aspects of women's absolute status necessary for addressing the opportunity thesis. However, they do not include a measure of women's absolute unemployment or female headed households, variables argued by Steffensmeier (1995) to be important indicators of female marginality. Moreover, their analysis is confined to 1980. Thus it is unclear to what extent their findings hold in more recent time periods. The Gartner (1990) and Gartner et al. (1990) studies also include variables relevant to the masculinity and opportunity theses. However, the dependent variable in each of these studies is the male-female gap in homicide. Thus, it is unclear to what degree these variables predict the absolute levels of female homicide. In addition, the works examine cross-national patterns and may not apply to rates for U.S. cities. Finally, Gartner and McCarthy's (1991) findings for Canada also may not be generalizable to the U.S.

Summary

To summarize, two general bodies of literature are relevant to a test of the masculinity, opportunity and economic marginalization theories of homicides involving females. On the one hand, there are studies that have tested these theories directly but not with a focus on homicide. On the other hand, there are those studies that consider women's homicide offending and victimization, but do not directly test the three female crime theories.

The present examination of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses draws on these two bodies of literature in an attempt to present a more comprehensive analysis of the merits of the three perspectives for understanding female homicide. First, unlike previous research that is limited to examining one theory of female offending or those that fail to distinguish between the masculinity and opportunity theses, all three theories of female offending are tested in a single model. Second, these tests are conducted for both
female offending and female victimization. As indicated, very little attention has been given to the sources of female homicide offending in the United States. And, studies of homicide victimization have not examined the most recent time periods. Third, Supplementary Homicide Report data are employed here. These data permit me to examine different types of homicide offending and victimization in which women are involved, and therefore to assess whether the impact of masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality variables varies for homicides that occur in some contexts versus others. Fourth, women's status characteristics are considered for two different time periods, 1980 and 1990, and across U.S. cities. These time periods are relevant to an examination of the opportunity and masculinity theses because an underlying assumption of these perspectives is that the women's movement is a source of heightened levels of female crime. By examining 1980 and 1990, we should be able to assess immediate and more distant effects of improvements in women's social position stemming from the feminist movement. In the following chapter, I describe the data and research procedures that are used in this examination of the theories of female criminality.
Chapter III
DATA AND METHODS

Drawing upon the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspectives, this analysis examines the relationship between: (1) rates of female homicide offending and victimization for total and for different types of female homicide, and (2) measures of the absolute and relative (to men) status of women in large U.S. cities for 1980 and 1990. The data are from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports and the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Censuses. Below, I describe the units, provide the rationale for time periods chosen, define the variables and measures, and explain the approach to the analysis.

Units of Analysis

The units for this analysis are cities with a population of over 100,000. Large cities were chosen for a variety of reasons. First, female homicides (especially offenses) are a relatively small proportion of all homicides (15% in 1980 and 11.4% in 1990), with the majority of such killings occurring in larger rather than smaller communities. Thus, it is only in larger cities that there would be an adequate number of homicides involving females to make statistical analyses possible. Second, within SMSAs, homicides occur more commonly in cities (Peterson and Krivo 1993). Third, Blalock (1982) argues that units should be as homogeneous as possible. Thus, cities are expressly selected over SMSAs, states, and counties because cities are more likely to be homogeneous than larger units that are likely to include diverse sections ranging from rural areas to metropolitan areas (Peterson and Krivo 1993). Fourth, although larger cities have higher female homicide rates than smaller areas,
there is substantial variation in levels of female homicide across cities. For example, in 1990, female homicide offending rates ranged from a high of 8.53 per 100,000 females in Jackson, Mississippi to a low of 0 per 100,000 females in a handful of places and 1990 female homicide victimization also varied from a high of 14.88 in San Bernardino, California to a low of 0 in various places. Similarly, there is substantial variation in the absolute and relative status of females across large cities in the U.S. To provide a couple of examples, for 1990 the percentage of women in the labor force varied from a minimum of 46.67 percent in Laredo, Texas to 73.84 percent in Alexandria, Virginia; while the percent of professionals who were female varied from 39.36 percent in Thousand Oaks, California to 64.36 percent in Gary, Indiana. In short, because homicide rates and demographic variables of interest vary by city, these units provide an excellent opportunity for investigating correlates of crime (Bailey and Peterson 1995).

For this analysis, the sample of cities includes 131 cities with a 1980 population of 100,000 or more persons, and 179 of the 192 cities with a 1990 population of 100,000 or more. The large cities not included in this study (39 for 1980 and 13 for 1990) were excluded because of problems of missing data for the female homicide variables or because data were unavailable for one or more of the theoretical variables.1 (See discussion below.)

**Time Periods**

The research examines the years 1980 and 1990 for two important reasons. First, if the perspectives have merit, this should be most evident in periods following the height of the

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1 Data on the median income of Blacks for Pasadena, Texas and Livonia, Michigan were not available because the black population was less than 1,000 persons in 1990 in these two cities. Thus, the *U.S. Bureau of Census County and City Data Book* does not include the figures. The 39 cities not included in 1980 were excluded because the female poverty figures were not available in the *U.S. Bureau of Census 1980 Detailed Population Characteristics.*
modern women's movement and its concomitant impact on the status of women. The year 1980 represents a period that followed closely on the heels of the "women's movement" of the 1970s. Examining 1990 permits me to assess whether the patterns hold for the most recent time period for which data are available in a period more distant from the height of the women's movement. Second, 1980 and 1990 were chosen because of the availability of 1980 and 1990 census data on women's status and for control variable purposes. It would have been useful to examine a baseline period prior to the women's movement (e.g., 1970). Unfortunately, this was not possible because until 1976, the required homicide data were not available.

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables for this analysis are rates of overall and different types of female homicide offending and victimization. Data on homicide necessary to construct these rates are drawn from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR). The SHR program is a voluntary program in which law enforcement agencies report monthly to the FBI information about homicide incidents that occur in their jurisdictions. The information provided includes demographic data (e.g., age, sex, and race of the victims and the offenders). Police agencies also report information on the relationship between the victim and the offender and the circumstances for the homicide. The inclusion of demographic, circumstance, and relationship data makes it possible to distinguish female from male homicides, and to differentiate types of killing.

While homicides are more likely to be reported than other types of crime, two types of missing homicide data problems should be noted here. First, missing data may occur if police agencies fail to report some or all incidents that are known to them. Second, even when
incidents are reported, there may be missing information on the characteristics of offenders and victims or the relationships and circumstances of the killings.

Regarding the first problem, compared to Uniform Crime Report's (UCR) homicide data, SHR data are slightly less complete. For example, for 1980, the UCR reported that 4,964 women were victims of murder or non-negligent manslaughter (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1981). This compares to 4,942 female victims of murder and non-negligent manslaughter reported in the SHR data. Note, however, that female victimization figures for the two sources are correlated extremely highly (r > .99). Thus, the slight underreporting does not provide a serious validity threat for the analyses to follow. More problematic is the fact that a number of cities with populations over 100,000 did not report SHR data for 1990 and that some data are missing.\(^2\) Non-reporting raises some questions about the generalizability of the findings.

Operationally, rates of total and different types of female homicide are considered. In estimating 1980 and 1990 rates, incidents of murder and non-negligent manslaughter are aggregated to the city level, and average rates per 100,000 females are computed for 1979-1981 and 1989-1991, respectively. Three year averages were used to avoid year-to-year fluctuations and thus provide for more stable rates of killing.\(^3\) In other words, average homicide rates were determined as follows:

\[
\text{Homicide rate} = \frac{[(N/P) \times 100,000]}{3}
\]

\(^2\)The state of Florida did not report data for the years 1989 to 1991, thus nine Florida cities with populations of over 100,000 are excluded. Data were also not reported for Chattanooga, Tennessee and Santa Clarita, California for the years 1989-1991.

\(^3\)1990 rates for South Bend, Indiana, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Davenport, Iowa, and Des Moines, Iowa were averaged for two years only. This is because 1990 data for South Bend and Minneapolis were unavailable and 1991 data were unavailable for Davenport and Des Moines Iowa.
Where \( N = \) number of homicides of interest and \( P = \) population of interest

Scholars have discussed whether it is more appropriate to use absolute rates for the female crime(s) being examined or to use female-relative-to-male crime rates when testing emancipation type theories of women's criminality (Box and Hale 1983; Steffensmeier 1980; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1993). Adler's emancipation thesis predicts that offending by women and men will converge. Thus, the relative ratio of men's and women's offending rates would appear to be a relevant dependent variable. However, Box and Hale (1983) point out that the use of relative rates for the dependent variable:

assumes that whilst females are becoming emancipated, and consequently more criminal, men are not experiencing changing social and economic circumstances which increase their rate of crime (Box and Hale 1983: 38).

They suggest the use of absolute levels and changes in levels of female rates as dependent variables, and the inclusion of male rates as "surrogate measures" for factors which affect both male and female levels of crime such as economic downturns.

Absolute rates are used here to avoid the problems pointed out by Box and Hale (1983), and for two additional reasons. First, the opportunity and economic marginality theories do not predict convergence between women's and men's homicide offending and victimization rates. Thus, using absolute rates permits me to appropriately test all three theories concurrently. Second, using absolute rates of female offending and victimization permits the results of this study to be compared with earlier aggregate-level analyses of female homicide.

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Assessing overall rates will inform us whether the independent variables have an impact on female homicide. However as indicated, I am also interested in the impact of female status variables on different types of female homicide. As Maxfield notes, because "different causal processes underlie different types of homicide, it is important to examine homicide types separately in testing theoretical propositions" (Maxfield 1989: 672).

Thus, in addition to overall homicide rates, separate average homicide offending and victimization rates are computed for six types of homicides: 1) murders involving strangers, 2) killings of intimate partners and spouses\(^5\), 3) killings of family members not including spouses, 4) acquaintance killings, 5) deaths growing out of arguments, and 6) felony-related homicides.\(^6\) In each case, the numerator for calculating the rate is the total number of homicides in each category. (For all measures of female homicide, the denominator for the rate is the total number of females in the city.) The above sub-types of homicide were chosen because they are common types of female homicide and they are relevant for theoretical consideration of one or more of the three theories of female crime.

Lone victim/offender killings are chosen to minimize problems in categorizing killings according to the relationship between the offender and the victim. In SHR data, the coding of the victim-offender relationship is based only on the relationship between the first offender and the first victim. Overall, limiting the analysis to single-offender, single-victim cases does not pose a serious threat to the external validity of the findings. Multiple offender killings are

\(^5\)Including common-law spouses and ex-spouses.

\(^6\)An extension of the economic marginality thesis predicts that women's homicide will increase, in part, because women will become involved in activities with a high risk for lethal violence including crime-related activities like drug use and sales. Thus, felony homicide here includes homicide which occurs in the context of the following: rape, robbery, larceny, burglary, auto theft, arson, prostitution, other sex offenses, narcotics laws, gambling, other felonies, suspected felonies, and brawls under drugs or alcohol.
relatively rare (Peterson and Krivo 1993), and only three percent of homicides involve more than a single victim (Fox and Pierce, 1984).

**Independent Variables**

The general model of female homicide examined in this study represents the hypothesis that female homicide rates are a function of variables representing the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspectives. The reader should note, however, that the theoretical variables are expected to have a differential influence on different types of female homicide. These specific expectations are discussed below and the expected directions of effects are presented in Table 3.1. What follows here is a discussion of the rationale and operationalization of the various independent variables.

Independent variables include measures of women's absolute and relative (to men) status. These data were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census Reports for 1980 and 1990.

Because both the masculinity and opportunity theses view the women's movement as a source of female offending behavior, previous researchers have combined the two into one thesis referred to as the emancipation or liberation perspective. A close reading of these two theories, however, reveals a fundamental difference between them. The masculinity thesis predicts that women will become more masculine or take on male role identities. Thus, Adler expected women's offending to approximate men's offending in terms of levels and types of crime as women adopted male roles and behaviors. On the other hand, Simon does not view women's criminality as stemming from changes in women's gender behavior. Rather, her view is that the women's movement would help to expand structural opportunities for women. Greater opportunities for women in the public realm, then, were expected to be reflected in higher levels of property crimes, but not homicide for such structural changes in women's
positions would eliminate the motivation for homicide. Due to this fundamental difference
between the masculinity and opportunity theses, the two are not combined into a single
liberation or emancipation thesis in this analysis. Rather, separate variables representing each
perspective are constructed for this analysis.

Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) note that developing aggregate level indicators of
the liberation and marginality theories of female crime is a "formidable task" (Steffensmeier
and Streifel 1992: 84). First, status of women is an elusive concept for which
operationalizations have not been determined. In particular, no single indicator reflects well
and unambiguously, the status of women relevant for any perspective on crime. Some
common indicators of female status such as divorce are ambiguous in their meanings for
women. Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) note that divorce could reflect female autonomy vis
a vis freedom from traditional female gender roles on the one hand. However, divorce could
mean greater financial burden for women especially if they become single custodial-parents
(Steffensmeier and Streifel 1992). Because of the difficulty of identifying single measures that
capture women's status, following Steffensmeier and Streifel, this study employs multiple
indicators of women's status for each theory under consideration.

Another difficulty is the scarcity of data over time. Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992)
note two additional problems that occur when one is considering changes in female status and
women's criminality. They note that it is difficult to find continuous measures of women's
status over time. And they note that women's status may vary little over time. For example,
Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) find that the male-to-female ratio for median income level
held constant from 1960 to 1982, and rises only slightly in 1991. These concerns are not as
problematic for the present study since the research involves examining cross sectional data for
cities for two distinct time periods rather than continuous time periods. As the examples above
indicate (see page 28), in each time period, there is substantial variation in the status of women across the units. Thus, measures used here do provide variation and at the same time, represent women's status.

**Indicators of the Masculinity Thesis**

Recall that Adler's masculinity thesis predicted that violent offending (and by the same token, female victimization) by women should be greater when women take on "male roles" and "masculine" gender identities. Thus, the masculinity thesis will be supported if total and subtypes of female homicide offending and victimization rates are found to be directly related to women's status vis a vis men's status. In other words, rates of total and subtypes of women's homicide offending and victimization examined here are expected to be greater in cities where more women take on non-traditional gender roles. Although it would be preferable to have more direct measures of group level male roles and masculine gender identities among women, it is difficult to construct aggregate measures reflecting women's non-traditional gender roles. There are no data that would permit the construction of such identity and non-traditional gender role factors at the aggregate city level. Instead, following Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992), I use measures of female's social and economic status relative to male's status to represent women's approximation of men's status in U.S. society.

In particular, the analysis includes relative measures of labor force participation, educational attainment, and occupational status. Operationally, for each city, the first two variables are measured as the difference between the percentage of men and women in the labor force, and the difference between the percentage of men and women with four or more years of college. Women's occupational status relative to men's is operationalized as the percentage of professionals, administrators, and managers who are women.
In cities where women's status is more similar to men's status, the percent professionals who are women will be higher and the male-female differentials in labor force participation and education will be lower. Thus, as Table 3.1 indicates, the relationship between total and subtypes of female killings and the percent of professionals who are female is expected by the masculinity thesis to be positive. However, the relationship between the male-female differential in education and labor force participation and the different types of homicide are expected to be negative.

**Indicators of the Opportunity Thesis**

Simon's thesis proposes that as women gain occupational and educational opportunities, their offending will increase for some crimes and decrease for others. In particular, she expects that women's homicide offending (and victimization) will decrease as women will have the ability to leave abusive partners. Women's absolute levels of labor force participation and educational attainment commonly are regarded as measures of women's opportunities and independence in examinations of emancipation theories of female crime (Bailey and Peterson 1995; Box and Hale 1983, 1984; Fox and Hartnagel 1979; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1992). These same measures are employed here. Women's labor force participation is measured as the percent of women in the labor force and female educational attainment is operationalized as the percentage of women 25 years or older who have completed four or more years of college.

In line with the view that women are often killed by or kill partners who abuse them, it is expected that women's labor force participation and educational attainment will be related negatively to general rates of female homicide offending and victimization, and to female homicides involving intimates and arguments. Opportunity for women could also help them avoid homicide of and by other family members. By contrast, since greater labor force
participation and educational participation will bring women into more contact with strangers, indicators of the opportunity thesis, are expected to be related positively to felony-related and stranger homicides involving women. It is unclear, however, how opportunity should affect acquaintance murder by and against women. It could be that opportunity will provide options enabling women to avoid acquaintance murder in the form of safer housing in less crime-ridden neighborhoods. Or, opportunities may increase acquaintance killings simply as a function of women gaining more acquaintances as they come into contact with greater numbers of persons outside the traditional domestic sphere of women.

Indicators of the Economic Marginality Thesis

Finally, to test the economic marginalization thesis, four measures are used including: (1) the percent of females in poverty, (2) the percent of families that are female-headed, (3) the female unemployment rate, and (4) the divorce rate. The percent of females in poverty is an important measure which more directly captures Steffensmeier's concept of female economic marginality than measures previously used. Female-headed households have been argued by Steffensmeier and Streifel (1992) and by Gartner et al. (1990) to be indicative of women's poor economic standing. And indeed, research shows that female-headed families have high poverty rates (Steinbock, 1995). Thus, the percent of households that are single-parent female-headed is employed here as an indicator of women's economic marginality. The female-male differential in the unemployment rate has been used in previous research as an indicator of women's inequality (Bailey and Peterson 1995; Steffensmeier and Streifel 1980).

\footnote{Unfortunately, census data for the percent of females in poverty were unavailable for 43 of the cities over 100,000 population in 1980. For Boise City, Idaho; Omaha, Nebraska; and Anchorage, Alaska, state percentages were used as proxies for city rates. For Kansas City, Kansas, the Kansas City standard metropolitan statistical area female poverty rate was used as a proxy for the city rate.}
Here, absolute unemployment rates among females is used because it appears to better represent Steffensmeier's argument that women's poverty affects their criminal activity.

Relative (to men) measures of female unemployment may be capturing changes in men's rather than women's economic status. Also, because the dependent variable here is not a relative (to men) measure of female crime, absolute rates are a more appropriate measure of women's unemployment. Last, although Steffensmeier and Streifel (1980) note that divorce may be indicative of women's ability to free themselves from traditional female gender roles or from abusive relationships (i.e., opportunity), the divorce rate is used here and by Steffensmeier and Streifel as a measure of women's economic marginality. While theoretically, divorce may appear to represent women's liberation, Holden and Smock (1991) and Smock (1994) found that women's economic welfare is worsened significantly after a divorce. Based on Steffensmeier's arguments, all four measures of female economic marginality are expected to be related positively to general female homicide offending and victimization rates, and to the six subtypes of female homicide.

**Control Variables**

In addition to the above explanatory variables, the models of female homicide that I examine include controls for several factors found in previous studies to be associated with homicide rates including: (1) population size logged because of skew, (2) percentage of the population that is black, (3) a dichotomous variable for South (1) versus non-South (0) geographical location* (4) a measure of general income inequality--the Gini Index, and (5) a measure of racial income inequality--the gap between white and black family income. (See, 

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*Cities in the South include Washington D.C. and those in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

In addition to the above control variables, following Box and Hale (1983, 1984), parallel male homicide offending and victimization rates will be employed as control variables in respective models of female homicide offending and victimization. These measures are "surrogates" for factors which affect both male and female levels of crime such as economic downturns (Box and Hale 1983, 1984, Fox and Hartnagel 1979). The male control variables are model specific. For example, the male rate used in the model of female intimate killing is the male intimate killing rate.

**General Model**

My overall models of female homicide (offending or victimization) includes eight explanatory variables and six control variables. First, three measures of female status relative to male status are used to assess the masculinity thesis. Second, two measures of the absolute status of females are employed as indicators of the opportunity thesis. Third, the economic marginality thesis is measured with four indicators of female economic hardship. Fourth, six control variables are included in the analysis because they have been found to be related to homicide rates in previous research. And last, parallel rates of male homicide are used as surrogates for factors which affect homicide in general.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the above theories will proceed through several stages. First, I provide a comparative descriptive analysis (profile) of homicides involving women in the two time periods. This analysis sheds light on the overall trends in female offending/victimization and women's status. Second, I present bivariate analyses of the relationships among the variables. Following these descriptions, multivariate analyses are presented. Models of total offending
for 1980 and 1990 are followed by analyses of the six sub-types of homicide (intimate, family, stranger, acquaintance, argument, and felony-related) for female-perpetrated homicide. Last, models for total and the six subtypes of female homicide victimization are presented.

The basic methods used to analyze the net relationship between the dependent and independent variables for female-perpetrated homicide are Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS) and Estimated Generalized Least Squares regression (EGLS). With aggregate level analyses such as these, heteroskedasticity is likely. In other words, it is probable that the variance of the error disturbance terms will not hold constant across observations where the dependent variable or other variables are measured at the aggregate level (Kaufman, 1996). In cases of heteroskedasticity, EGLS is preferable to OLS because the latter may result in bias, inefficiency and/or inconsistency with respect to the coefficients and/or standard errors (Kaufman, 1996).

Plotting squared residuals against the independent variables, dependent variables, and sample size (female population) indicated that heteroskedasticity may be present in the region (south), population variables (population logged), and female population variables. Thus, I used the Breusch-Pagan test to test for the existence of heteroskedasticity for these variables in each model. Where heteroskedasticity was indicated by the Breusch-Pagan test, the heteroskedasticity specified was then used to weight the EGLS regression in order to correct for heteroskedasticity. Where heteroskedasticity was not found, OLS regression was used since it is preferable when heteroskedasticity is not present.

A few of the bivariate correlations suggested that multicollinearity might exist. In regression analysis, the problem of multicollinearity may arise when there is a strong correlation between two or more independent variables (Gordon 1968). Multicollinearity makes it difficult to separate the effect of the independent variables from each other. In order
to check for the problem of multicollinearity, collinearity was diagnosed using condition numbers and variance-decomposition proportions (See Belsley et al. 1980). For the 1990 models, all condition numbers were below .50 which indicates no serious collinearity problems (Belsley et al. 1980). However for the 1980 models, the condition numbers and variance-decomposition proportions indicated a collinearity problem between the population measure (population logged) and the measure of general income inequality. Multicollinearity was not a problem in the full sample of 170 cities before the reduction to 131 cities because of the missing poverty information (see footnote 7, page 37). I use the 131 city sample with the multicollinearity problems for three reasons. First, the inclusion of the female poverty variable is an important addition to an examination of the economic marginality thesis. Second, for a more equal comparison of the merits of the three theories between the 1980 and 1990 time periods, the reduced sample for 1980 is used. Third, the multicollinearity is not likely to be problematic because the multicollinearity is between control variables and not theoretical variables. Still, the 1980 models should be interpreted with caution.

**Summary**

This study uniquely contributes to the study of crime by examining the patterns of female homicide offenses and victimization, and evaluating the relative importance of three theories about women's criminal behavior. This examination is particularly important because unlike previous research that is limited to examining one theory of female offending or those that combine the masculinization and opportunity theses, the relative merits of the three theories of female offending are tested here. Additionally, SHR data are employed which allow examination of different types of homicides, and consequently a more thorough test of the scope or application of the three theories.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
<th>OPERATIONALIZATION</th>
<th>EXPECTED DIRECTION FOR HOMICIDE TYPES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculinity</strong></td>
<td>Differential in the percentage of males and females 16 years or older who are in the labor force</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex difference in labor force</td>
<td>Male-female differential in completion of 4 or more years college education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual differences in college education</td>
<td>Percentage of employed persons 16 years and over in managerial and professional occupations who are females.</td>
<td>+  +  +  +  +  +  +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunity</strong></td>
<td>Percent of women 16 years or older who are in the labor force</td>
<td>-  -  -  0  +  -  +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent females in labor force</td>
<td>Percentage of women 25 years of age and over who have completed four or more years of college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent females with college education</td>
<td>Percentage of women 25 years of age and over who have completed four or more years of college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Marginality</strong></td>
<td>Percent of households that are female headed</td>
<td>+  +  +  +  +  +  +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed</td>
<td>Female unemployment rate</td>
<td>+  +  +  +  +  +  +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female unemployment</td>
<td>Divorce rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>Percent of female population below the poverty level</td>
<td>+  +  +  +  +  +  +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Operationalizations of independent variables for the total and subtype homicide victimization and perpetration models and expected relationships for predictor variables representing the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses.  
0 = no direction predicted.
Chapter IV

FEMALE OFFENDER AND VICTIM PROFILES

Following the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses, female homicide offending and victimization are expected to be related to women's status. Descriptive statistics do not inform us about the causal linkages among women's structural status and homicide. However, comparisons of women's status and female homicide patterns may provide preliminary evidence suggestive of the merits of one or more of the theories of female crime. I begin this chapter, by describing the patterns of homicide involving women as offenders and victims for 1980 and 1990. Then, I compare women's status in each time period. Lastly, I present bivariate correlations between predictor variables and female homicide rates.

As previously noted, data were acquired from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports and the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Censuses. Frequencies were obtained for female homicide offenders and female homicide victims for the years 1979 to 1981 and 1989 to 1991 from the SHR. Average female homicide perpetration and victimization rates were calculated per 100,000 females for cities with populations over 100,000.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homicide Type</th>
<th>1980 Female-Perpetrated Homicides</th>
<th>1990 Female-Perpetrated Homicides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Who Was Killed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimates&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintances&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circumstance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony-related</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Female Perpetrated</strong></td>
<td>3119</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Percentage Distribution and Mean Rates per 100,000 Females for Female-Perpetrated Homicide for 1980 and 1990 Samples by Relationship and Circumstance.

**Patterns of Female Perpetrated Homicide**

Table 4.1 presents the percentages and rates for female-perpetrated homicide by relationship and circumstance for the 1980 and 1990 samples. The data reveal that patterns of victim-offender relationships for female perpetrated homicides are similar for 1980 and 1990. These patterns are also consistent with previous research (Goetting 1988; Weisheit 1984; Wilbanks 1983; Wolfgang 1958). Women in the sample cities with populations over 100,000 killed 3,119 people between 1979 and 1981 for an average rate of 3.56 killings per

<sup>1</sup>Includes husband, common-law husband, ex-husbands and boyfriends.

<sup>2</sup>Includes those coded as acquaintances, neighbors, employers, employees and other known.
100,000 women. This represents 15 percent of all killings in which the sex of the offender was known in the 1980 sample. Starting with relationships, in 1980, women were most likely to kill intimate partners including husbands (47%), followed by acquaintances (28%), family members excluding husbands (13%), strangers (6%), and others/unknown (6%).

Although women killed fewer people in 1990 than in 1980, who they killed were similar in the two time periods. Between 1989 and 1991, women killed 2,147 people for an average rate of 2.01 killings per 100,000 women or 11.4 percent of all killings in which the sex of the offender was known. This downward shift in the number and percentage of killings by females may be tied to changes in women's statuses as suggested by the theoretical perspectives that provide the backdrop for this work. However, it is also noteworthy that homicide rates overall were down in 1990 compared to 1980 (10.2 per 100,000 persons and 9.4 per 100,000 persons, respectively according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (1994)). Thus, the drop in female killings may reflect more general factors tied to crime such as changes in the distribution of the population.

Table 4.1 reveals that in 1990, women continued to kill those closest to them. Women were most likely to kill their intimate partners (41%), followed by acquaintances (31%), family members (19%), and strangers (5%). These descriptive findings parallel those of previous studies which show that when women kill, they tend to kill their sexual partners (Rodriguez and Henderson 1995, Wilbanks 1983). However, a smaller percentage of those killed by women were intimates in 1990 (41%) than in 1980 (47%). Perhaps, as suggested by Simon's opportunity thesis, women had more opportunity to escape abusive relationships

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3Recall from Chapter Three that 39 cities with a population over 100,000 persons were not included in this sample because of the unavailability of the poverty variable in those cities. The total number of homicides perpetrated by women if the full sample of 170 cities were included is 3,210 for a rate of 3.04 killings per 100,000 women.
without killing their partners in 1990 than in 1980. While the percentage of intimate partners killed by women decreased between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of family members killed by women increased during this time period. However, the percentage increase in family killings may be an artifact of fewer intimate killings by women since the absolute number of family members killed by women did not differ greatly between 1980 (377) and 1990 (399).

Table 4.1 also reports the circumstances leading to female-perpetrated homicides. Arguments were the most common circumstance leading to homicide by women in 1980 and 1990. Argument-related homicides made up 61.9 percent of female perpetrated homicides in 1980 for an average rate of 2.27 per 100,000 women. In 1990, argument-related homicides by women, made up 59.7 percent of female-perpetrated homicides for an average rate of 1.17 per 100,000 women. While a larger percentage of female-perpetrated homicides were felony-related in 1990 (10.8%) than in 1980 (7.3%), felony rates remained low at .26 and .28 per 100,000 women in 1990 and 1980, respectively.

In sum, Table 4.1 indicates that the number and rate of female-perpetrated homicides were lower in 1990 than in 1980. This decline in homicides over the period could be linked to changes in women's statuses as suggested by masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theories. However, it is also true that overall levels of homicide declined between 1980 and 1990. For example, UCR data show that there were 23,040 homicides in 1980 for a rate of 10.2 per 100,000 total population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). By 1990, the total number of killings reflected a rate of 9.4 per 100,000 persons. This decline in overall homicides suggests that the lower rate of female killing may be linked to

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4 The FBI codes homicides into 25 circumstances categories. This analysis examines felony-related and argument-related killings because these are most common and most relevant to the three female crime theories.
general societal trends rather than to changes in female status. This possibility is further reinforced by the fact that the distribution of female homicides across types of relationships and circumstances were quite similar for 1980 and 1990, and also compared to earlier decades as reflected in previous research (Wilbanks 1983, Wolfgang 1958).

Two patterns evident in Table 4.1, however, may support the opportunity or economic marginality theories for explaining female homicide offending. First, although the killing of intimates remained the most common type of female perpetrated homicide, there was a six percentage point decrease in such killings over the period. The rate of such killings declined from 1.78 per 100,000 females in the 1980 sample to .90 per 100,000 females in the 1990 sample. As indicated, this decrease may reflect predictions by the opportunity thesis that women are less likely to kill when their opportunities are greater. Second, while arguments were the context for a similar proportion of female killings in 1980 (62%) and 1990 (60%), the rate of such killings was quite a bit lower in 1990 (1.17) than in 1980 (2.27). This shift, too, could reflect greater opportunities or better economic circumstances for women and thus support for the opportunity thesis. Or, the decline might be related to a downward shift in poverty among women as suggested by Steffensmeier's economic marginality thesis. I will return to these issues later in this chapter when I discuss bivariate associations, and in the chapters to follow.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homicide Type</th>
<th>1980 Female Victimization</th>
<th>1990 Female Victimization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship (Who Killed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimates(^5)</td>
<td>1626</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintances(^6)</td>
<td>1139</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circumstance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony Related</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>1313</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Female Victims</strong></td>
<td>3940</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Percentage Distribution and Mean Rates per 100,000 Females for Female Homicide Victimization by Relationship and Circumstance for 1980 and 1990 samples.

**Patterns of Female Homicide Victimization**

Table 4.2 presents the percentage distribution and rates for female homicide victimization by relationship and circumstance for the 1980 and 1990 samples. As with female-perpetrated homicide, female homicide victimization decreased between 1980 and 1990. Between 1979 and 1981, 3,940 women were killed in the sample cities compared to 3,741 between 1989 and 1991. In both periods, women made up approximately 19 percent of all homicide victims, a finding that is consistent with previous descriptive research (Benekos 1995; Kuhl 1985; Wilbanks 1982). While women were more likely to be victims of

\(^5\)Includes wives, common-law wives, ex-wives and girlfriends.

\(^6\)Includes acquaintances, neighbors, employers, employees, and other known.
homicide than offenders in both 1980 and 1990, the distribution across types of relationships for female victimization follows the same general patterns as female offending.

Female victims were most likely to be killed by intimate partners, followed by acquaintances, family members other than husbands, and strangers in 1980 and 1990. For 1980, 41 percent of female victims were killed by their intimate partners, 29 percent were killed by acquaintances, 11 percent were killed by family members (excluding husbands) and 10 percent were killed by strangers. For 1990, the distribution of female homicide victimization across types of relationships was similar to that noted above for 1980. Women were most likely to be killed by their intimate partners (37.9%), followed by acquaintances (30.2%), family members (13.2%), and strangers (10.4%).

The data on the circumstances of victimization shows that women were more likely to be killed in the context of an argument than in the context of another crime. In 1980, arguments were the circumstance for 51 percent of homicide victimizations of women and 16 percent of females were killed in the context of a felony-related homicide. In 1990, 47 percent of female victims were killed as the result of an argument while 15 percent of female victims were killed in a felony-related homicide. Again, as with female homicide offending, the remainder were killed in unknown or other circumstances.

Although the proportion of cases involving specific types of female homicide victimizations was similar in 1980 and 1990, the actual rate of total and the most common types of female killings were slightly different in the two time periods. In general, rates were higher in 1980 than 1990. The average overall rate was 4.65 per 100,000 females in 1980 compared to 3.50 in 1990, a difference of 16.3 percent. Most notably, among the different types of female victimization, rates of females killed by intimates was 2.08 in 1980 and 1.50 in 1990. Women were killed by acquaintances at a rate of 1.38 per 100,000 females in 1980.
compared to 1.07 in 1990. Regarding the circumstances in which females were killed, the rate of argument related killings was 2.37 per 100,000 in 1980, and 1.57 in 1990. Felony-related homicide victimization rates were .72 per 100,000 women in 1980 and .73 in 1990. For the most part, like female homicide perpetration rates, the differences we see in the rates of homicide types for 1980 and 1990 are small.

However, these differences in overall and different types of homicide rates for the two time periods may reflect differences in women’s socioeconomic statuses during the period. For example, consistent with the opportunity thesis, the lower rate of females killed by intimate partners in 1990 may reflect women's greater opportunity to avoid victimization because of their increased participation in the work force and educational institutions as suggested by Simon's opportunity thesis. Or, the slight increase in felony-related homicide victimization among women could be a reflection of women's economic marginality in terms of living conditions and involvement in crimes and drugs as suggested by an extension of Steffensmeier. An initial assessment of the merits of such claims should be evident in the data on the bivariate associations between killing rates and measures capturing the theoretical perspectives. Such data are presented in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 to follow. First though, I present the comparative patterns for 1980 and 1990 for the female status variables assessing the effects of the masculinity, opportunity and economic marginality theories of female crime.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1980 Mean</th>
<th>1980 S.D.</th>
<th>1990 Mean</th>
<th>1990 S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log population</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (0/1)</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General income inequality</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-black income inequality ($1,000's)</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculinity Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Professionals Female</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>49.64</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex difference in labor force</td>
<td>21.59</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>16.32</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex difference in college educ</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunity Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent females in labor force</td>
<td>52.19</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>58.85</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent females 4 yrs college</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>13.32</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Marginality Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent families female headed</td>
<td>20.54</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female unemployment</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female poverty</td>
<td>17.42</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>17.18</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>11.69</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>10.22</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Means and Standard Deviations for Predictor Variables for the 1980 and 1990 samples.

**Patterns of Explanatory Variables**

Table 4.3 reports the means and standard deviations for women's absolute and relative (to men's) status and for the control variables for 1980 and 1990. Beginning with the masculinity variables, an average of 44 percent of professionals were women in 1980.
compared to 50 percent by 1990. Relatively speaking, 16.32 percent more men than women were in the labor force in 1990 compared to 21.59 percent more men than women in 1980. Thus, women appear to have made gains relative to men in labor force participation and in professional occupational status over the period. The relative status of men and women in educational attainment was, however, roughly equivalent in 1980 and 1990. And to the extent that there was change, women lost ground relative to men. On average, 2.24 percent more men than women completed four or more years of college in 1980. In 1990, this gap between male and female college attainment grew slightly to an average of 2.61 percent.

Two opportunity variables are considered in this analysis: percent of women in the labor force and percent of women 16 years or older who have attained four or more years of college. The data in Table 4.3 show that in terms of both measures, women's absolute status improved by 1990 over 1980. Specifically, an average of 58.85 percent of women were in the labor force in 1990 compared to 52.19 percent in 1980. Further, on average, 7.92 percent of women had at least four years of college in 1980 compared with 13.32 percent in 1990.

Finally, measures intended to indicate women's marginal economic status (female-headed families, female unemployment, female poverty, and the divorce rate) suggest that women were not worse off in 1990 than 1980. Indeed, the contrary is evident. For instance, in 1980 on average, 20.54 percent of families were headed by females and 11.69 percent of the population was divorced as compared to 14.48 percent female-headed families and a divorce rate of 10.22 percent in 1990. There was little difference in the status of women in terms of unemployment and poverty in 1980 and 1990. The mean female unemployment rate was 7.04 in 1980 and 6.98 in 1990. The mean percentage of females in poverty was 17.42 in 1980 and 17.18 in 1990.
In brief, the data on women's status indicate that overall, women were more similar to men in 1990 than in 1980. Women increased their labor force participation and professional status relative to men between 1980 and 1990. By 1990, women and men were approximately equal in terms of the percent of professionals who were male and female. Women gained on men in labor force participation by 1990 though there was still a difference of 16 percent higher participation by men. Women were not widely different from men in terms of educational attainment in either 1980 or 1990, but the gap widened slightly in 1990. Women also evidenced improvements in their opportunities as measured in absolute labor force participation and rates of college attainment between 1980 and 1990. Lastly, women were not more economically marginal in 1990 than in 1980. Instead, for the female unemployment rate, female poverty, and the divorce rate, there was little change between 1980 and 1990. There was a much larger change in the percent of households headed by females between the two time periods. But the shift was toward fewer female-headed households suggesting less economic marginality of females.

To summarize, female homicide perpetration and victimization rates were lower in 1990 than in 1980. And, there appears to have been some shifts in the status of females both absolutely and relative to males over this period. The nature of the shifts are in the direction of more similarity between males and females in social and economic status, greater educational and economic opportunity for women, and a reduction in the economic marginality of women. The question remains as to whether the corresponding levels of homicide for 1980 and 1990 are linked systematically to the levels of female social and economic status during these two periods.
Table 4.4: Zero-Order Correlations for Variables in 1980.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Perpetration 1. Total</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intimate</td>
<td>0.873 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Family</td>
<td>0.549 0.251 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Acquaintance</td>
<td>0.860 0.628 0.247 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stranger</td>
<td>0.519 0.376 0.253 0.393 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Felony</td>
<td>0.555 0.524 0.418 0.604 0.390 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Argument</td>
<td>0.518 0.872 0.388 0.784 0.066 0.533 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide Victimization 8. Total</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intimate</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.804 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Family</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.413 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Acquaintance</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.812 0.436 0.486 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Stranger</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.558 0.398 0.208 0.315 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Felony</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.695 0.457 0.404 0.678 0.477 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Argument</td>
<td>~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0.815 0.315 0.351 0.720 0.379 0.455 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity Variables 15. Percent Professionals Female</td>
<td>0.415 0.359 0.317 0.403 0.229 0.314 0.328 0.379 0.276 0.182 0.379 0.166 0.240 0.297 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Sex difference in labor force</td>
<td>-0.227 0.171 0.017 0.346 0.326 0.083 0.179 0.171 0.048 0.039 0.229 0.505 0.065 0.081 0.324 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Sex difference in college educ</td>
<td>-0.348 0.181 0.176 0.206 0.167 0.077 0.195 0.326 0.270 0.201 0.270 0.184 0.110 0.315 0.528 0.348 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Variables 18. Percent females in labor force</td>
<td>-0.329 0.287 0.200 0.239 0.165 0.126 0.280 0.299 0.178 0.201 0.300 0.132 0.227 0.228 0.426 0.176 0.268 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Percent female 6 yrs college</td>
<td>-0.316 0.227 0.150 0.155 0.309 0.030 0.205 0.335 0.190 0.194 0.206 0.019 0.173 0.519 0.498 0.335 0.162 0.641 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Marginality Variables 20. Percent female headed</td>
<td>0.526 0.439 0.232 0.561 0.548 0.238 0.509 0.550 0.329 0.252 0.593 0.313 0.424 0.454 0.708 0.187 0.384 0.593 0.577 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Female unemployment rate</td>
<td>0.521 0.440 0.233 0.474 0.266 0.231 0.591 0.461 0.309 0.264 0.465 0.202 0.320 0.416 0.565 0.126 0.351 0.686 0.641 0.783 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Female poverty</td>
<td>0.541 0.412 0.305 0.520 0.506 0.301 0.433 0.492 0.268 0.277 0.541 0.245 0.352 0.382 0.574 0.190 0.419 0.747 0.482 0.776 0.768 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Divorce</td>
<td>0.228 0.252 0.074 0.175 0.054 0.184 0.216 0.169 0.179 0.106 0.130 0.640 0.993 0.123 0.025 0.328 0.093 0.064 0.078 0.107 0.077 0.022 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Variables 24. Log population</td>
<td>0.252 0.133 0.234 0.193 0.241 0.131 0.226 0.326 0.161 0.256 0.280 0.210 0.249 0.283 0.054 0.099 0.115 0.100 0.005 0.195 0.194 0.277 0.016 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Percent black population</td>
<td>0.648 0.531 0.232 0.633 0.438 0.296 0.609 0.619 0.420 0.270 0.616 0.400 0.479 0.590 0.621 0.333 0.354 0.355 0.239 0.802 0.592 0.559 0.543 0.223 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. South (P=1)</td>
<td>0.365 0.336 0.164 0.353 0.172 0.287 0.368 0.272 0.220 0.028 0.276 0.186 0.258 0.221 0.071 0.022 0.021 0.044 0.137 0.151 0.037 0.193 0.031 0.076 0.288 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. General income inequality</td>
<td>0.517 0.509 0.262 0.451 0.456 0.356 0.433 0.479 0.298 0.231 0.477 0.296 0.308 0.379 0.217 0.293 0.324 0.456 0.450 0.550 0.596 0.663 0.104 0.388 0.522 0.318 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. W-B income inequality</td>
<td>0.179 0.165 0.067 0.134 0.262 0.227 0.151 0.140 0.089 0.037 0.140 0.316 0.167 0.068 0.056 0.450 0.079 0.097 0.434 0.029 0.177 0.116 0.062 0.191 0.533 0.313 0.458 1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Male Control</td>
<td>0.797 0.524 0.641 0.735 0.553 0.488 0.732 0.845 0.631 0.530 0.780 0.516 0.621 0.760 0.459 0.217 0.318 0.369 0.246 0.656 0.538 0.589 0.120 0.399 0.729 0.305 0.556 0.152 1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Zero-Order Correlations for Variables in 1990.
Zero-Order Correlations

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 present zero-order correlation matrices for the dependent, independent, and control variables for 1980 and 1990, respectively. Beginning with 1980 (Table 4.4), the variables that have the strongest association with female homicide offending are more general causal factors including percent black population and the male rate. Looking at the correlations for the theoretical variables for homicide offending, the direction of the associations between the homicide and masculinity variables (percent professionals who are female, sex difference in labor force participation, sex difference in college education) are mostly consistent with expectations. The percent of professionals who are female has the strongest association with female acquaintance killings, while the relationship between the sex difference in college education and stranger killings is the weakest.

The correlations of the homicide variables with the opportunity variables (percent women in the labor force and percent women with college education) show the expected negative pattern in every case. However, the strength of each association is slight to moderate. The strongest relationship is between female labor force participation and family killings ($r = -.248$). The weakest relationship is for college attainment and felony-related killings ($r = -.042$)

Among the three types of theoretical variables, the economic marginality factors (percent female-headed, female unemployment, female poverty, and divorce) have more consistently stronger associations with killings by females in 1980 than either the masculinity or opportunity variables. Also, for these four factors, the directions of the associations are in the predicted direction. Four of seven correlations for female-headed families, one out of seven for female unemployment, and five of the seven for the divorce rate and female poverty are moderately strong.
In general at the bivariate level, the percent of females who are professionals is associated moderately with most types of killings by females in 1980 as expected by the masculinity thesis. However, female-perpetrated homicides are linked more closely to the four economic marginality indicators than to either opportunity or masculinity.

Turning to the bivariate correlations of the female status and control variables with female homicide perpetration for 1990 in Table 4.5, it is clear that there is little difference in the patterns of correlation for 1980 and 1990. In all cases, the coefficients are slight to moderate and except for divorce, the factors that seem to be most predictive of female perpetrated homicide are more general causal factors like the percent black population and male rates. This suggests that causes of female-perpetrated homicide were stable over the period and not strongly related to female status variables.

However, two of the masculinity variables, the sex difference in labor force participation and the sex difference in college attainment, may better explain female homicide offending in 1990 than in 1980. In contrast to the correlations for 1980, the masculinity variables are correlated more strongly with homicide, and the coefficients are always in the predicted direction. Among the masculinity variables, the relationship between percent professionals who are women and total killings was the strongest in 1990 as it was in 1980. The weakest relationship for 1990 is between the sex difference in labor force participation and family homicides. The correlations between variables representing the opportunity thesis and types of female-perpetrated homicides show the same pattern for 1990 as for 1980. In 1990, three of the indicators of economic marginality (female-headed households, female poverty and female unemployment) appear to better explain female-perpetrated homicide than they did in 1980. However, compared to 1980, divorce is related less strongly to homicide in 1990.
Turning to victimization, the zero-order correlations in Table 4.4 and 4.5 suggest that the three female crime theories may, in fact, be better for explaining female homicide victimization than female-perpetrated homicide. Correlations between the theoretical variables and female victimization are consistently stronger and more often in the predicted direction for female victimization than for female offending. Still, there is little difference in the patterns of correlations between the theoretical variables and female victimization rates for 1980 and 1990. As with female-perpetrated homicides, this suggests that the causes of female homicide victimization are also fairly stable over time. Variables representing both the masculinity and opportunity theses are related somewhat weakly to female homicide victimization in both 1980 and 1990, though for the most part, the effects are in the predicted direction and hence, provide some support for the masculinity and opportunity theses. The strongest relationship is between percent of professionals who are females and acquaintance killings in 1980 \( (r = .454) \). The weakest relationship is for the association between the sex difference in college education and intimate killings in 1980 \( (r = -003) \). As with female perpetration, the economic marginality variables have more consistently strong associations with female homicide victimization than the opportunity or masculinity variables in 1980 and 1990. Four of the seven correlations for female-headed families and homicide are moderately strong in 1980 and 1990 while five of seven coefficients for divorce are moderately strong in 1980 but slightly less related in 1990. Two of seven correlations for female unemployment are moderately strong in 1980 while this increased to five of seven for 1990. The correlations between female poverty and female homicide victimization are moderately strong in five of seven correlations for both 1980 and 1990.

In sum, at the bivariate level, the percent of professionals who are women is associated moderately with female homicide victimization in 1980 and 1990. However,
female victimization is most closely linked to the four indicators of economic marginality (female-headed households, the female unemployment rate, female poverty, and divorce) in 1980 and three indicators of economic marginality (female-headed families, female poverty, and female unemployment) in 1990. So, based on the bivariate results, economic marginality appears to be a more important underlying cause of homicides involving females. However, the bivariate correlations fail to control for other city characteristics that influence female homicide victimization and perpetration rates. And, the data in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 suggest that the more general factors in the models such as percent Black and the male control variables may better explain female homicide victimization and perpetration in both time periods. More sophisticated statistical analyses are needed to more accurately test the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses. I present the results of multivariate analyses in the next two chapters.
Chapter V
MULTIVARIATE RESULTS FOR MODELS OF
FEMALE HOMICIDE OFFENDING IN 1980 AND 1990

The Estimated Generalized Least Squares (EGLS) results\(^1\) for the determinants of female homicide offending are presented in Tables 5.1 (1980) and 5.2 (1990). In addition to total rates, I examine six different types of homicide: killings of intimates, acquaintances, family members, strangers, and killings in the context of arguments and other felonies. This allows me to test whether different theories explain some types of female homicides better than others.

Findings for 1980 Female Offending

I first examine the total rates of female offending. Beginning with the control variables, Table 5.1 reveals that for 1980 the female homicide perpetration rate is associated significantly and positively with the size of the black population and the male homicide rate. In other words, cities with large black populations and higher male-perpetrated homicide rates tend to have significantly higher rates of female-perpetrated homicide. The association between black population and female offending is consistent with the findings of the general homicide literature. The significance of the male homicide rate indicates that, in part, female

\(^1\)OLS regressions was used for the model for intimate offending for 1980 since OLS is preferable to EGLS when heetersonskedasticity is not present. See methods section in Chapter 3.
homicide offending stems from general, though unspecified, social conditions and not exclusively female characteristics. The remaining control variables (population size, region, income inequality, and the white-black income gap) have a chance-only association with female-perpetrated homicide.

The regression results show little support for the masculinity and opportunity theses. The masculinity perspective argues that women's homicide offending will be greatest where women are more similar to men in roles and statuses. However, Table 5.1 reveals that none of the three measures of women's status relative to men's is related significantly to women's total homicide perpetration. In short, my results provide no evidence for the argument that where women's social statuses are more similar to men, women are more likely to have a higher overall homicide rate.

The opportunity thesis asserts that women's homicide offending will be lower where women's status is higher. However, none of the measures of women's absolute status is significantly related to women's total homicide perpetration. Thus, the data for 1980 also do not support the opportunity theory.

The economic marginality perspective suggests that when women's economic position is worse, women's rates of killing will be higher. Thus, we would expect (1) the percent of households that are female headed, (2) the percent of females living in poverty, (3) the female unemployment rate, and (4) the divorce rate all to be related positively to overall female homicide offending. However, none of the indicators of economic marginality is related significantly to the total female homicide perpetration rate.

In sum then, my analysis of 1980 data for total female homicide perpetration reveals no support for the masculinity, opportunity, or economic marginality perspectives. These theories do not improve upon general theories of homicide offending for explaining overall
female homicide perpetration. Women's total killing rate is not higher in communities where women are more similar to men in educational, labor force participation, or occupational status as expected by the masculinity theory. Likewise, in opposition to the opportunity thesis, female homicide offending is not significantly lower where women's opportunities are greater. Last, indicators of women's economic marginality are not related significantly to women's total homicide perpetration. Instead, the percent of the population that is black and the total male homicide offending rate are the significant predictors of total female-perpetrated homicides in 1980. Thus, women's total homicide offending rate may best be explained by general social conditions that affect women's and men's offending and not sex-specific causes.

It is possible that consideration of overall rates of female homicide offending masks the importance of theoretical variables for particular types of homicide. To assess the impact of female status variables on different types of homicide by women, I examine models of female killings of intimates, acquaintances, family members, strangers, and female killings in the context of arguments and the commission of other felonies. These are the most common types of female-perpetrated homicides, and they are also the kinds of killings that are most relevant to the theories being assessed here (see Chapter 3).

As with overall homicide rates, most indicators for each theoretical model have little influence on specific types of homicide. Neither of the opportunity variables (percent of females in the labor force and percent of females with a college education) has a significant influence on any type of homicide by women; and only one of the masculinity coefficients, the sex difference in labor force participation, influences killings. Moreover, the relationship between family killings and the sex difference in labor force participation is not in the predicted direction. In other words, the lower the labor force participation of women in
relation to men, the more likely women are to be involved in killings of family members. While this does not support the masculinity argument that women's rates will be higher where women are more like men, it may make sense if we see family killing as related to women's traditional roles as family caretakers. Women in the paid labor force are still likely to have much contact with family members. Hence, women, who enter the workforce, do not lose their opportunity to kill family members.

Economic marginality factors are related significantly to intimate, acquaintance, family, and stranger homicide. In particular, higher levels of female poverty are associated with higher levels of females killing intimates (b = .068). In addition, the divorce rate is related to women's killing of acquaintances (b = .119) and strangers (b = .022). In other words, in cities where divorce rates were higher in 1980, homicide offending against acquaintances and strangers by women was greater.

Additionally, in two cases, the economic variables are significant but not in the predicted direction. First, in cities where the percent of female headed households is greater, the female rate of killing intimate partners is lower. It may be that the number of female-headed families also is correlated with the number of women without intimate partners. Thus, this relationship may reflect fewer opportunities for homicides against intimate partners in cities where female-headed households are more common. Second, female unemployment is related negatively to females killing family members. The reason for this is unclear. We would expect on the one hand that female unemployment would be an indicator of women's economic marginality and thus related to stress, frustration, and in the end, crime. On the other hand, female unemployment should also bring women into greater contact with their family members, thus increasing female killings of family members. Thus, interpretation of this finding is difficult. Since poverty and female headed families are controlled, perhaps this
relationship is capturing the number of single women living on their own, and therefore, with fewer opportunities for family interaction and in turn, family homicide.

Consistent with Steffensmeier's arguments, economic marginality factors appear to be more important determinants of female homicide than either masculinity or opportunity variables. But the findings raise additional questions. First, only some types of female killings are affected by women's poor status. Where greater numbers of women are economically marginal as indicated by the percent of females below the poverty level, killings rates of intimates by women is higher. Thus this indicator of the economic marginality thesis is important for explaining the most common type of female homicide perpetration: women's killing of intimate partners. While Steffensmeier regards a high divorce rate as reflecting women's economic marginality, analyses of general homicide have considered divorce as reflecting social disorganization. Thus it may not be surprising that divorce is associated with the homicides that are also most common among male offenders including stranger and acquaintance homicides (see footnote 7 on page 17.) Following Steffensmeier, I interpret the positive association between divorce and acquaintance, stranger, and felony homicide as indicative of women's economic marginality. However, because divorce has been interpreted in alternative ways, caution in viewing divorce in this way is warranted.

Finally, the factors that have the most consistent influence on homicide by females are percent black in the population and the male homicide rate. For each type of homicide, the male rate contributes positively and significantly to female rates. The size of the black population is related significantly to females killing intimates and acquaintances, during arguments, and in the commission of other felonies. South is the only other control variable related to female offending in 1980. In the case of stranger killings, cities in the South have
higher killings by women. In contrast, being in the South is related negatively to intimate killings by females. This could reflect more traditional female gender roles among women in the South, making them less likely to strike out against their intimates. More generally, though these findings suggest that some of the social conditions producing female homicide in 1980 were the same conditions producing homicides in general.

**Findings for 1990 Female Offending**

Perhaps the negligible findings for the theoretical variables for 1980 stem from the fact that the full impact of the women's movement had not yet been felt. Thus, I explore whether the theoretical variables have a strong impact for 1990, a time period more distant from the height of the modern women's movement. Table 5.2 presents the results of the regression of total female-perpetrated homicide rates and the subtypes for 1990 on the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality variables. As noted in Chapter 4, women's rates of homicide offending were lower in 1990 than in 1980. It appears however, that the theoretical variables are better predictors of such homicides in 1990 than in 1980.

Beginning with total homicide offending, cities in the South have higher rates of female-perpetrated homicide than cities not in the South. As in 1980, the male homicide rate also is related significantly and positively to the female homicide rate (b = .100). The other controls in the model do not play a significant role in explaining total female-perpetrated homicides for 1990.

The results in Table 5.2 show that total female homicides are influenced by variables drawn from both the masculinity and economic marginality perspectives. First, sex differences in labor force participation are related significantly and negatively to the total female-perpetrated homicide rate (b = -.066) for 1990 as the masculinity thesis predicts. In other words, in cities where the difference between women's and men's labor force
participation are greater (favoring men), women's homicide perpetration rates are lower. This finding is supportive of the masculinity perspective which predicts that women's offending will be greater (i.e., converge with men's) when there is greater similarity between the sexes in social positions and roles.

The 1990 results also lend some support to Steffensmeier's economic marginality thesis. Recall that this perspective predicts that women's homicide offending should be higher where women are economically marginal. Two indicators of economic marginality (female unemployment and divorce) are important determinants of total female perpetrated homicides in 1990. In cities with higher divorce rates (b = .123) and higher female unemployment (b = .190), women's total rates of killing are higher.

There is no evidence that opportunity theory helps to explain homicide offending among women for 1990. The coefficients for the opportunity variables (percent of females in the labor force and the percent of females with a college education) are not significant. Thus, hypotheses drawn from Simon's perspective on female crime are not supported in the total homicide offending model for 1990.

To further examine the merits of the three theories of female crime, I also examine types of female homicide for 1990. In contrast to 1980, variables from each of the theoretical perspectives influence at least some types of female homicides for 1990. Consistent with masculinity theory, in cities where the sex difference in labor force participation is higher, intimate (b = -.043) and argument-related homicides by females (b = -.062) are significantly lower. This finding lends support to the masculinity thesis which predicts that female homicide offending would be higher where men and women are more alike in their roles and statuses. Similarly, in accordance with the opportunity theory, the greater the number of women with a college education, the lower the rate at which women
kill their intimate partners \( (b = -0.034) \) and kill in argument-related contexts \( (b = -0.039) \). In other words, as predicted by Simon (1976), women are able to escape their intimate relationships without having to result to killing their partners (in the context of an argument) when they have greater educational opportunity. Last, several economic marginality factors also influence various types of female-perpetrated homicides. Higher levels of unemployment and divorce are associated with higher intimate, acquaintance, and argument related killings \( (b = 0.019) \); divorce is also associated with felony-related killings by women. Finally, female poverty is related significantly to family \( (b = 0.027) \) and felony-related killings by females \( (b = 0.021) \).

In brief, the evidence for 1990 suggests that the impact of "changes" in women's positions associated with the women's movement may have been felt by 1990 for some types (intimate and argument related) of female homicide. Still, it is women's economic marginality, rather than their gains in "masculine" positions or opportunities, that is related more consistently to women's homicide offending. Moreover, the role of economic marginality appears to be rather uniform across types of crime. In only one case (stranger killings) is there a non-significant effect of all the marginality variables.

While some aspect of women's economic deprivation yields higher levels of most types of female homicide, the same aspects of economic disadvantage are not involved in all types of female perpetrated killings. Rather, different combinations of economic marginality factors affect different types of killing. As noted, intimate, acquaintance and argument-related killings are affected by female unemployment and divorce. Female poverty and divorce are significant predictors of felony-related homicide offenses. And, female poverty alone affects family killings. The reasons for these differential patterns are unclear.
However, it makes sense that poverty (a direct economic indicator) might influence felony killings if women in poverty are heavily involved in property and other crimes for survival. Likewise, that female poverty is related to family killings may indicate that women living below the poverty level have or see few alternatives for dealing with family pressures associated with poverty, in turn, homicide offending by women would be greater where women's poverty is greater. It may also make sense that the divorce rate would have a strong influence on killings of intimates by women. Divorce may be an indicator of conflict between intimates. This conflict may not necessarily end with divorce especially if children are involved. If so, divorce is not serving as a measure of economic deprivation, but rather as a measure of conflict between women and their partners or former partners. The fact that divorce is also related to women's killing in the context of an argument further supports this line of reasoning. On the other hand, divorce also influences felony killings which could be reflective of women's economic marginality as suggested by Steffensmeier and Streifel's inclusion of divorce in their 1980 model of female offending. Lastly, that female unemployment is related to the most common types of female killing (intimate, acquaintance, argument) makes sense from an economic marginality perspective if unemployed women are likely to have high levels of stress and frustration that gets reflected in conflict and violence, including homicide.

Finally, a number of the control variables are important contributors to all types of female homicide. Most notably, the male rate has a positive and significant impact on each type of female homicide. This suggests that in 1990, as in 1980, some of the social conditions producing female homicide were the conditions producing homicides in general. In addition, cities located in the South have higher rates of intimate, argument, and felony killing by women and general income inequality contributes to stranger killings.
Summary

In summary, the analyses of female homicide perpetration reveals that for both 1980 and 1990, total and specific types of female homicide offending were, in part, a function of general social conditions that influence all homicides. Still, the structural sources of female homicide in 1990 included factors reflecting each of the three theories posited as explaining female crime. However, economic marginality of women rather than women's liberation (whether measured in masculinity or opportunity terms) has the most consistent influence on such killings. In contrast to 1990, with few exceptions, there is little support for any of the female crime theories in 1980. Rather, the keys to whether women killed in 1980 were the size of the black population and the male rate of homicide. As with 1990, though, the occasional exception to this involved economic marginality (divorce and female poverty) rather than masculinity or opportunity variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>Felony</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>-1.37</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-1.07</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.012</td>
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Significance at alpha = 0.05, one-tailed test.
Significance at alpha = 0.005, two-tailed test.

Table 5.1: Regression of Female Homicide Perpetration for 1980 on Control, Masculinity, Opportunity and Economic Marginallity Variables (n=131).
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<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Intimate</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Felony</th>
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<td>Log population</td>
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<td>0.010</td>
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<td>0.006</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<td>0.059*</td>
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<td>Sex difference in labor force</td>
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<td>.036</td>
<td>-0.043**</td>
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<td>-0.020</td>
<td>0.016</td>
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<td>Percent Professionals Female</td>
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<td>Percent females in labor force</td>
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<td>0.005</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.013</td>
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<td>Divorce</td>
<td>0.123*</td>
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<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.036**</td>
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<td>.635</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>.382</td>
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*Significance at alpha = .01, one-tailed test
**Significance at alpha = .05, one-tailed test
***Significance at alpha = .05, two-tailed test

Table 5.2: Regression of Female Homicide Perpetration for 1990 on Control, Masculinity, Opportunity and Economic Marginality Variables (n=179).
Chapter VI

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS FOR MODELS OF

FEMALE HOMICIDE VICTIMIZATION IN 1980 AND 1990

The results in Chapter 5 suggest that the economic marginality theory may be the best of the three female crime theories for explaining female homicide perpetration. Importantly too, results indicate that general conditions that affect overall homicide offending rates are related more consistently to female homicide participation than female-specific factors. To determine if these same patterns hold for killing of females, I regressed female homicide victimization rates on variables representing the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theories.

The regression results for the determinants of female homicide victimization are presented in Tables 6.1 (1980) and 6.2 (1990). As with female homicide perpetration, total rates are examined in addition to killings of women by intimates, acquaintances, family members (excluding husbands), and strangers, and female victimization in the contexts of arguments and felonies.

Findings for 1980 Female Homicide Victimization

I first examine the total rates for female homicide victimization for 1980. Consistent with the earlier findings, the regression results presented in Table 6.1 show no support for the masculinity and opportunity perspectives with regard to total female homicide victimization. Following, the masculinity perspective, we would expect that women's homicide
victimization would be greatest where larger numbers of women adopt male gender roles. Yet, measures of women's positions and statuses relative to men in labor force participation, college educational attainment, and professional status are not related significantly to female homicide victimization at the city level.

Following Simon's opportunity thesis leads to the expectation that women's total homicide victimization rates should be lower where women have greater opportunities to escape relationships that might otherwise end in their deaths. Thus, women's homicide victimization rates should be lower in cities where the percent of women in the labor force and with a college degree is higher. This is not the case for total female homicide victimization in 1980. Rates of total homicide victimization are not related significantly to indicators of the opportunity theory.

The economic marginality perspective posits that where women's economic position is worse, women's overall level of homicide victimization will be higher. Table 6.1 reveals that when measured as the percent of households that are female-headed, the female unemployment rate, or the percent of women in poverty, economic marginality is not a significant predictor of female homicide victimization. However, one indicator of female marginality, divorce, is related significantly and positively to the killing of women. In cities where divorce rates are higher, women's overall homicide victimization rates are also higher.

Finally, two control variables, the male homicide victimization rates and population size (logged) are related significantly to total female homicide victimization rates. As was the case with homicide perpetrated by women, the significance of the male victimization rate indicates that female homicide victimization is related, in part, to general social conditions that affect both male and female victimization. The measure of population is related significantly to female homicide victimization. However, the relationship is negative,
opposite to that predicted and to the relationship at the bivariate level. Female homicide victimization rates are higher in smaller cities. This negative relationship should be interpreted with caution due to the multicollinearity between general income inequality and population logged. (See multicollinearity discussion in Chapter 3.)

In sum then, my analysis of the 1980 female victimization data shows no support for the masculinity and opportunity perspectives, but limited support for the economic marginality perspective. Contrary to masculinity theory, women's homicide victimization is not higher in cities where women are more similar to men in labor force participation or in educational, or professional status. Further, women's homicide victimization is not lower where women's economic and educational opportunities are greater as expected by the opportunity perspective. There is evidence that women's economic marginality is related to women's homicide victimization. However, divorce, the least direct measure of economic marginality is the factor that is associated significantly with general levels of homicide victimization of women. And as indicated earlier, there are competing explanations of the meaning of divorce in crime rates.

As was the case with female homicide perpetration, theoretical variables may be better at predicting some types of homicide victimization than others. Thus, to assess the impact of female status variables on different types of female homicide victimization, I examine models of killings of females by their intimates, acquaintances, family members, strangers, and female victimization in the context of arguments and during the commission of other felonies. Again, these are the most common types of female homicide victimization and they are most relevant to the theories being assessed here.

Consistent with the findings for overall victimization, economic marginality factors are related significantly to five (intimate, acquaintance, family, stranger and felony-related
homicides) of the six types of female homicide victimization. In particular, the divorce rate is related to women's homicide victimization by intimates, acquaintances, family members, and in the commission of other felonies. In cities where divorce rates were higher in 1980, women's deaths at the hands of their intimates, acquaintances and family members are greater. In addition, female headed households have a significant and positive association with levels of female homicide victimization by strangers ($b = .031$).

In contrast to the findings for the total female victimization rate, there is some support for the opportunity and masculinity theses for female homicide victimization. Recall that based on the opportunity thesis, educational and labor force opportunities should provide women with the means to escape victimization by their intimates. Educational, but not labor force participation, has this impact for 1980. In cities where larger percentages of women had completed four years or more of college, fewer women were killed by their intimate partners.

Turning to the masculinity thesis, masculinity variables (the sex difference in labor force, the sex difference in college education, and the percent of professionals who are female) are important for two types of female victimization. However, the relationships are not always in the predicted direction. Whereas the masculinity thesis leads us to expect increases in women's offending when women are more similar to men in roles and statuses, here the results show that where women's and men's labor force participation is more different, family homicide victimization rates of women are higher. In other words, in cities where women's status is more similar to men's, their homicide victimization at the hands of family members is lower. Similarly, where there are greater differences between the proportion of women and men with a college education, killings of women by acquaintances is greater. In contrast, and as predicted by the opportunity thesis, where women are more
like men in professional status, killing of women by acquaintances is greater. Thus, for 1980 the findings are mixed with regard to whether the masculinity thesis may be extended to female victimization. Convergence with men in labor force and educational opportunities, does not increase women's likelihood of being victims of homicide. However, in cities where a greater percent of professionals are female, women are more likely to be killed by acquaintances.

Finally, the factor that most consistently influences female homicide victimization is the male victimization rate. For each type of homicide victimization, the male rate contributes positively and significantly to the female rate. The size of the city population (logged) also is related to female victimization by intimates, acquaintances, during arguments, and in the context of other felonies. However the relationship between the population variable and these types of homicide are negative. Again, caution is warranted in interpreting these relationships due to the multicollinearity between general income inequality and the population variable as noted in Chapter 3.

It is also noteworthy that argument-related killings of females is not related to any of the theoretical variables. Rather this type of homicide is affected by the male rate and percent black. White-black income equality also is related significantly to felony victimization. In cities where the gap between white and black income is greater, the rates of female felony homicide victimization are greater. Also, cities in the South have lower female felony victimization rates. Overall then, for 1980, some types of female homicide rates are affected by the theoretical variables. But, consistent with the findings for female homicide offending, the male homicide rate has the most consistent influence on the killing of females.
Findings for 1990 Female Victimization

Because the full impact of changes brought about by the women's movement as predicted by liberation theories may not have been immediate, I also examined the structural sources of female homicide victimization for a post-1980 period, i.e., 1990. Table 6.2 presents the results of the regression of total female homicide victimization rates and types of female victimization for 1990 on masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality variables. For the most part, the theoretical variables do not appear to be better predictors of homicide victimization for this later period.

Beginning with total female homicide victimization, the male victimization rate is the only control variable that is related significantly to the female homicide rate ($b = .190$). In part, then, the female homicide victimization stems from general social conditions.

Further, the regression results for total female homicide victimization show some support for the masculinity thesis and no support for the opportunity thesis. Table 6.2 reveals that the sex difference in college education is related significantly to total female victimization rates. In cities where the sex difference in college education is higher, women's victimization rates are significantly lower. This finding lends support to the masculinity thesis argument that women's victimization will be greater where women are engaged in more male-type roles.

The 1990 results also show that divorce is related significantly to total female victimization rates. In cities with higher divorce rates, women's total homicide victimization is higher ($b = .97$). This finding is consistent with Steffensmeier's economic marginality perspective. In contrast to the patterns for masculinity and economic marginality, none of the measures of women's opportunity is related significantly to women's total homicide victimization.
Finally, I examine types of female homicide victimization for 1990. The results for this later time period, overlap with the 1980 results in some ways, but also reveal important differences. Starting with the similarities, the following are noteworthy. First, as in all preceding models, the factor with the most consistent influence on female victimizations for 1990 is the male rate. Second, as with 1980, some theoretical variables are unrelated to any type of female homicide. For 1980, the unrelated variables were female labor force participation, female unemployment and female poverty. Here they include: female labor force participation (an opportunity factor), the sex difference in labor force participation and percent of professionals who are female (masculinity variables), female-headed families and female unemployment (economic marginality factors). At the same time, as before, at least one measure of each type of theoretical variable is related significantly to some type of female homicide. The similarities basically end there, however, for none of the theoretical variables exhibits the same pattern of relationships across the crime victimization categories for both 1980 and 1990.

Here, the sex difference in college education is related to four types of female victimization in the predicted direction compared to one for 1980. Moreover in contrast to the previous year, the direction of the effect of this variable is in line with the masculinity thesis: women’s homicide victimization is greater where larger numbers of women adopt "male type" sex roles. Specifically, in cities where women are more similar to men with regard to college attainment more women are killed by their intimate partners, acquaintances, family members and during arguments.

Female homicide victimization by acquaintances is the only type of female killing in which one of the opportunity variables is significant. In cities where larger percentages of women have completed at least four years of college, fewer women were killed by
acquaintances ($b = -.052$). (In the previous analysis this variable was related significantly only to intimate killings.) Earlier I noted that it is unclear how opportunity should affect female homicide victimization by acquaintances. On the one hand, opportunities may increase acquaintance killings simply as a function of women gaining more acquaintances as they come into contact with greater numbers of persons outside the traditional domestic sphere of women. On the other hand, opportunities could provide options enabling women to avoid acquaintance murder, e.g., by making it possible for them to purchase/rent safer housing in less crime-ridden neighborhoods. The results in Table 6.2 reflect the latter possibility.

Last, in accordance with the economic marginality perspective, the higher the divorce rate in cities, the higher the level of female homicide victimization by intimates and acquaintances and in the context of other felonies. The divorce rate is not related to family, stranger, or argument-related killings. The only other economic marginality factor that affects female homicide victimization rates is female poverty which has a negative rather than positive association with acquaintance killings. This finding is difficult to explain because following the economic marginality thesis, I expect that women in poverty will be more likely to become involved with acquaintances who are involved in activities with a high risk for lethal violence such as drug sales which could increase their deaths at the hands of acquaintances.

Summary

In summary, the analyses of female homicide victimization reveals that for both 1980 and 1990, total and specific types of female homicide victimization were, in part a function of general social conditions that influence all homicide victimization. The most consistent predictor of female homicide victimization rates was the parallel male victimization rate in
1980 and 1990. At the same time, the structural sources of female homicide victimization included factors reflecting each of the three theories of female crime in 1980 and in 1990. However, economic marginality of women in the form of divorce had the most consistent effect in 1980. While still a factor in 1990 for three types of victimization, divorce was not the most common predictor in 1990. Instead, four out of six types of female homicide victimization were related significantly to the sex difference in college education for 1990.
<table>
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<td>-0.212***</td>
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<td>-0.125***</td>
<td>0.067</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent black population</td>
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<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.012</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (0/1)</td>
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<td>0.405</td>
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<td>6.358</td>
<td>6.315</td>
<td>4.163</td>
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<td>3.592</td>
<td>-12.4</td>
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<td>White-black income inequality</td>
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<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<td>Parallel Male Rate</td>
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<td>0.348*</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.083***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.012</td>
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<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.126***</td>
<td>0.060</td>
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<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.067*</td>
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<td>0.014</td>
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<td>Opportunity Variables</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent females w/college educ.</td>
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<td>0.081</td>
<td>-0.086**</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.045</td>
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<td>Percent female headed</td>
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<td>0.098*</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.060**</td>
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<td>4.536</td>
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<td>0.631</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.784</td>
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Significance at alpha = .01, one-tailed test
"Significance at alpha = .05, one tailed test
""Significance at alpha = .01, two tailed test
"""Significance at alpha = .05, two tailed test

Table 6.1: Regression of Female Homicide Victimization for 1980 on Control, Masculinity, Opportunity and Economic Marginality Variables (n = 131).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Intimate</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Felony</th>
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<tr>
<td>Log population</td>
<td>-.047</td>
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<td>.090</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.081**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent black population</td>
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<td>.012</td>
<td>.016**</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>South (0/1)</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.070</td>
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<td>-.096</td>
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<td>General income inequality</td>
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<td>2.111</td>
<td>2.616</td>
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<td>White-black income inequality</td>
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<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>Parallel Male Rate</td>
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<td>.014</td>
<td>.304*</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.204*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex difference in labor force</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<td>Sex difference in college educ</td>
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<td>.057</td>
<td>-.134*</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>-.098**</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>-.037**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Professionals Female</td>
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<td>-.004</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.028</td>
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<td>.024</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.007</td>
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<td>Percent females w/college educ.</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-.052**</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>-.008</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent female headed</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.038</td>
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<td>Female unemployment</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>-.037</td>
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<td>.052</td>
<td>-.029</td>
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<td>Female poverty</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.035</td>
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<td>.025</td>
<td>-.056***</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>.097**</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.089**</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.074**</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.015</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>4.239</td>
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<td>3.015</td>
<td>-1.116</td>
<td>2.812</td>
<td>-.596</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.637</td>
<td>.420</td>
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*Significance at alpha = .01, one-tailed test
**Significance at alpha = .05, one-tailed test
***Significance at alpha = .05, two-tailed test

Table 6.2: Regression of Female Homicide Victimization for 1990 on Control, Masculinity, Opportunity and Economic Marginality Variables (n=179).
Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

This research assesses the merits of three competing explanations for women’s homicide offending and victimization. Adler’s masculinity thesis argues that the women's movement encouraged women to take on male roles that subsequently increased women's offending. In contrast, Simon's opportunity thesis asserts that the women's movement helped to decrease women's homicide perpetration by providing opportunities (e.g., economic independence) to avoid such crime. Steffensmeier's economic marginality perspective did not link increases in women's offending to changes brought about by the women's movement. Instead, Steffensmeier proposed that women's crime was related to female poverty. Women were believed to increase their offending as a way of supporting themselves and their families.

The findings here contribute to our understanding of the merits of the three perspectives, and in general, to the literature on women’s homicide offending and victimization in four ways. First, unlike previous research that relies on variables drawn from only one or another theory of female offending, this study tests the three theories simultaneously, and thereby, avoids spurious results due to the omission of other important etiological factors. Second, although liberation and economic marginalization perspectives were set forth to explain increases in female criminal offending generally, I extend this analysis to examine their applicability to female victimization. Third, I consider women's
status characteristics for two different time periods which allows me to assess immediate and more distant effects of characteristics of women's social position in the period following the contemporary women's movement. Fourth, by using Supplementary Homicide Report data, I am able to examine different types of homicide offending and victimization in which women are involved, and therefore to examine whether the impact of masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality variables differ for homicides that occur in some contexts versus others. In particular, I assess the linkage between: (1) measures of women's absolute and relative (to men) status in large U.S. cities, and (2) rates of female homicide offending and victimization for both total female homicide, and for different types of female homicide including killings by intimates, acquaintances, family members, strangers, and killings in the context of arguments, and other felonies. In this chapter, I review the main findings of this research and compare the patterns that emerge. In doing so, I return to the provocative questions laid out at the start of this discussion.

First, are theories that predict a causal nexus between women's structural position and female criminality correct? More specifically, is women's involvement in crime related specifically to their statuses and roles in society? The answer to these questions is both yes and no. The findings consistently show that in part, but only in part, various indicators of women's structural position are related to the levels of women's involvement in homicide net of the impact of a variety of other social forces. Thus, theories that suggest a causal link between women's status and roles and their criminal involvement are at least partially correct. However, the results of this analysis do not lead to the conclusion that any of the three theories is the one best explanation of female homicide. Factors indicative of the role of economic marginality were more commonly found to be related to female homicide offending and victimization than factors related to either the masculinity or the opportunity
perspectives. But even economic marginality was not a factor in all types of killings. For example, no economic marginality factor emerged as a significant predictor of homicides in the context of arguments and other felonies for perpetration and victimization in 1980, female perpetrated homicides against strangers in 1990, and female homicide victimization by family members, strangers, and in the context of arguments in 1990. In addition, the evidence suggests that economic marginality plays a more important role in the perpetration of homicide by women than in their victimization.

Perhaps the most important challenge to these sex-specific theories as best explanations of female homicide is the fact that the characteristic that seems to have the most influence on female killings is the comparable male rate of killing. This was true for all types of homicide, whether considering offending or victimization, and whether examining data for 1980 or 1990. The strong and consistent pattern for the male rate suggests that female homicides do not stem largely from conditions unique to females. Rather, they are a function of the same general social conditions that produce male killings.

The research above does not address thoroughly the issue of whether women's offending is more like men's offending where women's structural situation is more similar to men's. That is, the research does not present a comparison of the sources of male versus female homicide. However, the masculinity variables (sex differences in college attainment, labor force participation, and occupational status) in the analysis measure women's social status relative to men's. In most cases, the patterns of findings for these variables do not suggest support for the view that where more women are engaged in "masculine" activities that their overall levels of homicide are higher (i.e., more similar to men's). Nor is there much evidence that greater "masculinization" for women is associated with significantly higher levels of involvement in felony or stranger homicides (killings that more typically
have involved males). Apparently, then, the levels and types of women's homicide offending and victimization are not contingent mainly on their status relative to males. Regardless of the male-female gap in education, labor force participation, and professional status, women tend to kill at levels much lower than men, and to kill and be killed as women typically always have been: in the context of arguments, and by and against people known to them.

Another question posed was whether female homicide offending and victimization are determined by the same structural sources. The research reported here suggests that the answer to this question is a qualified "no." The no must be qualified because there is some overlap in the factors that influence offending and victimization: population size, percent black, region, the parallel male rate, sex differences in labor force, sex differences in college education, percent of women with a college education, female unemployment, female poverty and divorce. Note though that many of the common variables are not drawn from the theories of female crime. Rather, several are control factors commonly found to influence general homicides.

Regarding the theoretical variables, different factors or combinations of factors affect female homicide perpetration and victimization. Indeed there is variation in which types of theoretical factors (masculinity, opportunity, or economic marginality) influence offending and victimization, as well as differences in which indicators of a given perspective influence these types of homicide. Some of the latter patterns raise interesting questions. For example, while the masculinity theory explains both offending and victimization for the 1990 data, female perpetrated homicide rates (for total, intimate, and argument-related) are related only to the sex difference in the labor force, whereas female homicide victimization rates (for total, intimate, acquaintance, family and argument-related) are related only to the sex difference in college education. Similarly, divorce is the economic marginality variable
most likely to be linked to victimization, while additional indicators of economic marginality (female unemployment and female poverty) indicate support for perpetration (particularly in 1990). These types of patterns lead to questions such as: 1.) Why is female perpetrated homicide related to one aspect of women’s status relative to men’s while female homicide victimization is related to another? 2.) Why is female homicide perpetration responsive to a greater number of economic marginality variables than to female homicide victimization?

It is not clear why sex differences in labor force participation are linked to female homicide perpetration and sex differences in college education are related to female homicide victimization. This pattern may be an indication that the current measures of Adler’s thesis are not adequate. In particular, the sex difference in labor force participation may not capture well women’s adaptation of male roles. Because women tend to be segregated into particular jobs (Faludi 1991), the negative relationship shown here between female perpetrated homicide and the sex difference in labor force participation may reflect higher rates of killing by women in cities where there are more women in low paying dead-end jobs. The percent of professionals who are women captures this possibility better. However, even in cases where women are managers, they tend to be segregated into female dominated jobs (Reskin and Ross, 1992). And thus, may not be in the types of positions that would foster female commission of homicide as predicted by the masculinity thesis.

Logically, it would seem that the sex difference in education better captures women’s adaptation of male behaviors and roles as conceptualized by Adler. Thus, the fact that this variable is related to female homicide victimization but not female perpetrated homicide remains a puzzle. Since being in low paying dead end jobs, and low levels of management would not reflect masculine positions then these factors would not affect female homicide victimization according to the masculinity thesis.
An alternative interpretation of the link between the sex difference in college education and killings by females seems plausible when one considers types of killings. The significant associations are for total, intimate, and argument-related female homicide perpetration. I speculate that this is because men's greater size and strength makes it more likely that women are victims than offenders in male-female confrontations that end in homicide (Bailey and Peterson 1995). Thus, following the masculinity thesis, it is not surprising that women's victimization rates are related to the sex difference in college education in 1990 while their perpetration rates are not. In other words, women's "masculine" behaviors may have resulted in women "backing down" less often. In the end, however, because of size and strength differences between women and men, in confrontations with men, it appears that women are more likely to be victims of homicide than offenders.

Still another possibility of the relationship between total, intimate, acquaintance, family and argument-related female homicide victimization and the sex difference in college education is "male backlash." Feminists argue that when women declare their independence or are seen as challenging men for power and authority, men may strike out violently against them (Russell 1975) as a means of putting women back "in their place." This viewpoint finds support in research showing that much of the worst violence that battered women experience occurs after they have separated from or divorced their intimate partners (Browne and Williams 1993).

Just as the differential patterns for the masculinity variables require explanation so too does the differential role of the economic marginality variables. Recall that divorce is the only economic marginality variable that has a significant influence on victimization, but a number of marginality factors affect offending. I assert that this pattern may mean that in a context where other economic measures are included, divorce may not be reflecting economic
marginality. Divorce is most likely capturing social disorganization, a general explanation for homicide rather than women's economic marginality. Interestingly, a more general answer to why more aspects of economic marginality explain female perpetration but not female victimization may be drawn from Simon's opportunity thesis. Economic marginality limits women's options to deal with stress or to escape violent relationships. Thus, women turn to violence as a way to escape abusive partners or other stressful situations. The types of homicide that are related to economic marginality support this line of reasoning. I find that economic marginality variables (not including divorce) are related to homicides other than stranger homicide for 1990 and to intimate and family homicides for 1980. These seem to me to be the types of female homicide that may reflect women's frustration and hopelessness regarding less lethal options for dealing with abuse. Thus, we see women killing those they know in cities where women's economic marginality, and thus frustration and hopelessness, is greater.

A final question posed at the outset of this dissertation was whether theories of female crime explain some types of crime better than others. The research evidence suggests an affirmative answer to this question. First, there is a great deal of variation in the amount of variance explained for different types of homicide committed by women. Excluding total homicides, the $R^2$ values range from a low of .306 for female perpetrated homicide against family members in 1990 to a high of .676 for argument homicides also in 1990. The comparable range for types of victimization are .211 and .784 respectively for killings of females by family members in 1990 and killings in the context of an argument in 1980.

It is also clear that the theoretical factors are more likely to influence some types of homicide than others. Perhaps the most notable example is the lack of support for the masculinity theory in the models for stranger and felony homicide. This is particularly
interesting since the masculinity thesis predicts that women’s and men’s offending will converge as their social status converges. Thus it would seem that masculinity variables would help explain types of homicide that are believed to be most masculine such as stranger and felony homicide (Wilson 1981). Why is it then that these particular types of killing were least likely to be related to indicators of the masculinity thesis? One possible answer is a non-substantive one. These two types of crime are the least common among women. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 indicate that stranger and felony homicides make up a small percentage of all female homicide victimization and perpetration. Thus, there are actually few cases in these models making significant results less likely. A possible substantive explanation, at least in the case of homicide victimization, is “male backlash.” See the discussion above regarding the significant relationship between the sex difference in college education and female homicide.

Besides providing answers to questions that are stated early on in this work, some additional patterns are worthy of comment. I find that the variables representing the opportunity theory are not, for the most part, related to female homicide victimization or perpetration. However, when women’s opportunity is related to female homicide, it is in the form of educational attainment. The question that I have here is why does the percent of women in the labor force have no effect in either year while college education does? I postulate that this may be because education is linked to women having greater expectations for themselves as noted by Ferree and Hess (1994). Because of these greater expectations brought about by education, women may be more willing or able to leave abusive relationships. This explanation seems likely when we note that in the few cases in which opportunity is supported, it is for intimate, acquaintance and argument-related homicides. One other possible explanation is that labor force participation for women may not be a good
measure of women's opportunities. Gains in labor force participation may not actually indicate greater opportunity but more work for women who still remain the primary caretakers of children (Hochschild 1989). Furthermore, labor force participation for women is likely to mean working in traditional "female jobs" with low wages (Faludi 1991, Reskin and Padavic 1994).

The above conclusions are general, applying to female homicides for both 1980 and 1990. However, there are some interesting differences across the two time periods. First, there is stronger support for the economic marginality thesis for 1990 as compared to 1980. In other words, more indicators of economic marginality are related to female perpetrated homicide in 1990 than in 1980. Second, I find support for the masculinity theory across several types of female homicide victimization for 1990 while I find little support for the masculinity perspective for 1980. What accounts for these differences?

First, while descriptive data do not indicate that women's rates of economic marginality were greater in 1990 than in 1980 (see Table 4.3), I speculate that economic variables had a stronger impact in the later period because they may have reflected in part, higher expectations of women or their greater feelings of hopelessness in 1990 than in 1980 making the lived experience of marginality worse in 1990. This is easy to believe if we consider that the average amount that a divorced man paid in child support fell about 25 percent from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s (Faludi 1991). Or, if we consider that one third of the Reagan budget cuts between 1980 and 1990 were to programs that predominately serve women (Faludi 1991). It is likely under such conditions that the lived experience of economic marginality for women was relatively worse in 1990 as compared to 1980. If by 1990, being economically marginal for females meant a deeper kind of deprivation than in 1980 (in terms of money income and in terms of noncash benefits such as food stamps,
Medicaid, and public housing), it would not be surprising that the resulting frustration might result in higher levels of homicide in that year.

One answer to the question of why does the masculinity perspective explain female victimization in 1990 but not in 1980 is that the feminist movement had made more of a mark in the way of greater "masculine behavior" among women by 1990. In the ten years between 1980 and 1990, more women may have rejected stereotypical female gender roles. The education measure for 1980 may have included a larger number of women who did not go to college for long-term careers. In contrast, in 1990 the sex difference in education may better indicate an abandonment of women's stereotypical gender roles as Adler predicted. Further, it may be that the context of college education itself was different between the 1980s and the 1990s leading to the possibility that the measure has different meanings for 1990 and 1980.

Along these same lines, "male backlash," as noted above, is likely to explain the difference between 1980 and 1990. The increase in the mean percentage of women with four years of college between 1980 and 1990 (see Table 4.3), along with status improvements in other areas of women's lives may have been threatening to men, who in turn responded with violence.

**Future Research**

The patterns that I have discussed above introduce a number of possibilities for future research. First, in future analyses, researchers should work toward more conceptual clarity. Hopefully, such clarity would lead to models testing liberation and economic marginality perspectives with measures for each theory. In my models, clarity about the strength of support for each theory is made difficult by the use of different measures all tied to aspects of women's labor force participation (i.e., female unemployment, the percent of females in the labor force, and the sex difference in the labor force).
Along these same lines, for the masculinity thesis, future research should more directly measure male roles and masculine gender identities among women. A measure of the sex difference in different types of jobs is one possibility. Here, one aspect of economic marginality is measured as the percent of women in poverty. This represents improvement over previous research that has no direct income-based measure of economic marginality. Still, it may be fruitful to consider additional resource measures such as levels and types of social welfare benefits.

In future research, an examination of the merits of the opportunity, masculinity, and economic marginality theses for explaining homicide among different groups of females would be instructive. It may be that the liberation theories may be poorer predictors of female victimization for African American women, who historically have been more likely than white women to have worked in the paid labor force. I also contend that it is likely that the liberation theories better explain victimization and perpetration by young women who have grown up after changes brought about by the women’s movement. Assessment of this hypothesized relationship would further our understanding of the scope of application of the various theories of female crime.

The liberation theories predict changes in women’s offending behavior as the result of “changes” brought about by the women’s movement. For my analysis, it is not clear that the variables measuring the opportunity theory and the masculinity theory capture changes brought by the women’s movement because the SHR data do not permit an examination of female homicide perpetration and victimization at a point prior to the women’s movement for comparison with the 1980 and 1990 models. In future studies, scholars should include data comparing pre-"liberation" periods (e.g., 1960 or 1970) with post-"liberation" periods (e.g.
1980 and 1990). Also, more traditional types of time series analyses may help to shed light on how changes in women's statuses affect changes in women's homicide rates.

Research that looks to the feminist movement to explain women's involvement in crime, such as those testing liberation theories, should also seek to assess the role of "male backlash" especially for female victimization. As I note above, it may be that where women declare their independence or are seen as challenging men for power and authority, they may be greeted with male violence (Faludi 1991; Russell 1975). It is difficult to envision such an analysis at the aggregate level (the question is how to operationalize "male backlash"). However, individual-level analyses may yield fruitful results that might help in the interpretation of aggregate findings.

My results also demonstrate the importance of considering different types of offending within broad categories of crime such as homicide. Consistent with what researchers have noted (Box and Hale 1984; Maxfield 1989), the present findings demonstrate how the effects of theoretical variables can be masked in total rates. Thus, there is a need for more information about the context of crimes, such as victim-offender relationship and circumstance for an examination of the merits of the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality theses. It is also important to look at crimes such as larceny and prostitution and see how, or if, women's involvement varies with indicators of female marginality in particular. With the development of the National Based Incident Reporting System (NIBRS), this may become possible at the aggregate level.

Lastly, while an examination of structural level determinants of female homicide perpetration and victimization is important, it would also be valuable to determine how well the masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality perspective explain female homicide at a more individual level. The NIBRS data will allow just such an examination because with
NIBRS, scholars will be able to focus on incidents or individuals per se within different contexts. Finally, at the individual level it may be easier to develop and measure male roles and masculine gender identities among women as needed to test the masculinity thesis. Rather than an aggregate level measure of the differences between women and men as I use here, individual level analyses should allow for more direct measures of women's sex role identities.

I look forward to contributing to research along the lines noted here. In the meantime though, I feel confident in concluding that there are links between women's statuses and roles and their involvement as offenders and victims of homicide. However, these links are not as consistent nor as strong as sex-specific perspectives of female crime imply. And indeed, masculinity, opportunity, and economic marginality variables play a lesser role in female killings than other general sources of crime that are captured in the male rate of killing.
References


