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The anomaly of racial variance in female perpetrated spousal killing: a structural explanation

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THE ANOMALY OF RACIAL VARIANCE
IN FEMALE PERPETRATED SPOUSAL KILLING:
A STRUCTURAL EXPLANATION

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Research investigating the relationship of structural factors to homicide abounds in the literature. There is also extant research on female perpetrated intimate partner killings (IPK). However this literature for the most part has examined the phenomenon itself, or has disaggregated the rates by race, where it was discovered that there is a racial anomaly in intimate killings, Black females kill their partners at a higher rate than White females. This research sought to determine how structural factors function to differentially amplify this rate, using classic controls for homicide and adding measures for the presence of female kin, the presence of children not related to the male, and doing this in a race specific manner.

Using a sample of 234 MSA's, Supplementary Homicide Report data was utilized to create these race specific models, which were analyzed with Poisson regression.

Contrary to expectations, the presence of children was only found to have an effect on White spousal killings, and no effect in the other three models. Support was found for Sampson and Wilson's (1995) racial invariance hypothesis in that the most significant findings in the Black models related to the confluence of high density housing and dissimilarity measures. This 'spatial conflux' served to explain the anomalous findings in regard to the Gini coefficient, in Black IPK models as the Gini decreased, homicides went up. Contrary to other studies, female headed households, as well as other standard predictors of homicide were not found to be significant in relation to IPK.

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Central to the academic discipline of Sociology and Criminology is the theoretical and empirical analysis of the causes and correlates of homicidal behavior. One line of inquiry within this body of literature specifically examines the social phenomenon of Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH)[1]. Extant literature documents a significant gap in the rate of intimate partner homicide across the demographic and social structural dimensions of race and gender. Specifically rates of Black intimate partner homicide are nearly 4 times as high as White and Hispanic rates. Previous research has established that these differences primarily result from the disproportionate rate of Black female perpetrated intimate partner homicide. The literature however has not provided a consistent theoretical and empirical explanation for this phenomenon.

My study begins to fill this gap in the literature by examining the racial disparity in female intimate partner homicide. Specifically, this dissertation research adds to the literature by testing how gender based explanatory models of intimate partner homicide are differentially moderated by race.

THE SEX RATIO OF INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE: THE RACIAL ANOMALY

This study addresses the question of racial disparity in the relative proportion of women to men that are perpetrators of lethal violence in the context of intimate relations. This question of "who kills whom" in intimate partner homicide initially was raised by Daly and Wilson (1988). Although murder is typically a "man's game," both as victim and offender, within intimate heterosexual relationships an anomaly appears, particularly in the United States, in the form of a substantial proportion of female involvement. For example, Wilson and Daly (1992), in a study of domestic killings in Detroit found the

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[1] Throughout this document, the terms intimate partner homicide, partner killing, spousal homicide and lethal violence within intimate relationships will be used to represent the same event.

ratio of females to males involved as the killer to be exceptionally high, with women approaching or even exceeding parity with men. This sex ratio of killing (SROK) appears to be somewhat unique to the United States, even compared to other industrialized nations. However, Wilson and Daly's (1992) research and a later study by Gauthier and Bankston (2004) indicate that much of this cross-national disparity may be a consequence of the contribution of Black females to this form of homicide, but these researchers did not pursue this question specifically. In other words, there clearly seems to be something about the social-historical experience of Blacks in America that has altered the universal tendency of males, by far, to be the killer and not the victim in domestic cases of lethal violence. The purpose of the present study is to explore racial differences in the SROK and develop a structural explanation of these differences. Building on previous research, this study will propose a race-specific structural theory of sex variation in the relative rates of intimate partner homicides, and will test the derived propositions utilizing race-specific data.

Heuristically, the present study draws heavily on Black's (1983) work on "crime as social control." Although homicide is often viewed as a method of social control more typical of traditional and tribal societies, Black argues that many of the homicides that involve family members in modern societies may be viewed as a form of social control where the offenders view themselves as the wronged party and are exercising a moral prerogative. Black creates a four-fold typology that describes the availability of the 'law' to each member of the dispute and illustrates that in circumstances where the law is viewed as relatively unavailable to the parties (either due to social class differences between parties or reluctance of the legal system to get involved) persons may resort to 'self-help' social control. With the continuance of the family as a largely 'stateless' place,

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it would follow that homicide often can be seen as a form of social control by persons in intimate relationships in the absence of other state sanctioned recourses. With respect to the present research problem, we are particularly interested in those factors operating specifically or more intensely in the contexts of Black domestic-intimate relationships that would amplify the tendency of Black females, relative to Black males, to engage in lethal self-help social control.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

First, a predictive theory of the racially specific structural components on the sex distribution of intimate partner killers was developed. This was based on a review of theory and research on homicide generally and domestic homicide specifically. As noted, the objective was to theoretically specify why Black females exhibit exorbitant rates of involvement in lethal intimate violence, relative to Whites and Hispanics in the United States.

Second, the models were tested using race-specific aggregate level data for cities with a population of 100,000 or more and at least a population of 5000 Blacks. Results of these models were compared across White and Black racial and ethnic groups. Other racial and ethnic categories were not included in the analysis due to lack of race specific data in the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). The race-specific victim offender homicide data were obtained from the Uniform Crime Report and the Supplementary Homicide Report for the years 1996 – 2004. Measures of independent variables were drawn from 2000 U.S. Census data and other sources providing relevant aggregate level information for the units of analysis. The primary statistical procedure used was Poisson regression due the low frequency of cases in this form of homicide. Following this, the results and their implications were discussed as well as direction for future research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: TOWARD A STRUCTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXCESSIVE BLACK SEX RATIO OF SPOUSAL/INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE

THE QUESTION OF MOTIVATION IN HOMICIDE

Homicide may be seen as the ultimate in self-help social control (Black, 1983). This concept of self-help is observed as occurring most often in stateless places, those loci of interaction where there is a lack of bureaucratic or state involvement. These places can range from poverty ridden inner cities, where apathy on the part of law enforcement may render them stateless, to the intimate setting of the family, a place that the government has been loath to enter until fairly recently. Within the confines of what has been often described as a "stateless place" one could hardly wonder that those within this relationship can find themselves in situations in which lethal response is perceived as not just the only solution but also perhaps the most equitable choice available. This concept of self-help seems most apropos to the idea of SROK, as the reasons that women kill in intimate situations are far different from men.

Sociologists have long examined the predictors of homicide, with most seeing the phenomena as simply the terminal or most extreme point on a continuum of violence. This idea of a continuum is useful in understanding homicide, however, the question remains as to whether that which terminates in stranger or acquaintance homicide and that which ends in the murder of an intimate partner are the same continuums. Various theories have been put forth as to why violent acts occur and why some escalate to the point of murder. Structural factors that will be discussed include inequality and relative deprivation, poverty, unemployment and under-employment. The effects of segregation and isolation (Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996; Shihadeh and Ousey, 1998), the idea of an "age curve" and neighborhood disorganization have also been investigated for their influences

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on adult homicide but there is a sparse literature in criminology in regard to intimate partner killing and these factors. Let us first examine individual motivations discussed in relation to homicide before we look at the action from a sociological vantage point.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL INFLUENCES OF SPOUSAL KILLING: SEX DIFFERENCES IN MOTIVATIONS

Although this study is structural in nature and its purpose is not to explain individual conduct, it is nevertheless necessary and sensitizing to identify the different reasons that men and women tend to kill each other in domestic settings. In order to identify structural level determinants, it is imperative that these differences in motivations be specified in order to develop an understanding of what structural contexts may amplify the tendency of these motivations to be realized in behavior.

Homicide is the killing of another person, and can be broken down into coarse categories of killing for criminal purposes or in retribution for an action or inaction. Overarching, monolithic explanations of homicide are not possible, or at least are problematic, due primarily to differences in victim-offender relationships. Let us first examine the two classifications of homicide that have been developed. "Primary" homicides occur in interpersonal confrontations typically between persons who know each other whereas "non-primary" homicides are those which occur during the commission of other criminal offenses (Bankston, 1988; Parker and Smith, 1979).

Primary homicides are those which serve some expressive function, which seek to redress some slight, real or imagined, that requires a response that reaches a lethal tenor. Conversely, non-primary homicides are almost entirely instrumental in nature, undertaken either purposively for the sake of material gain or as the byproduct of another criminal act. As put forth by Bankston (1988) the differences in the types of homicide raises the question of whether the same types of theoretical considerations and models are

adequate for examining these acts. The homicides that are of interest for the purposes of the current study are primary in nature and non-primary instances will be excluded.

The differences between these two types of homicide suggest that their genesis of may also be somewhat divergent. The motivations that lead to a primary homicide would potentially contain an element of personalization that would by definition be lacking in the occurrence of non-primary homicide. As discussed by Black (1983) many of the acts labeled as criminal in modern society have an element of self-help that can be seen as an anachronistic return to a society with scant or scarce law, at least in the sense of social control imposed by governmental involvement (Black, 1983). Much like earlier tribal societies, intentional homicide for the most part is undertaken as a result of conduct that is viewed by the perpetrator as deviant (Black, 1983, p.36). Extension of this to the area of family is but a short step, as by the very nature of the family all relationships are intimate.

Attribution of motive can be problematic, but two that appear with a degree of regularity are trivial altercations and victim precipitated. In those homicides that were the result of a trivial altercation (c.f. Wolfgang, 1958), the act was attributed to a relatively minor act or insult that escalated into a lethal confrontation. That this is somewhat unique to American homicide is germane to the topic of this study; "Altercations are not the leading variety of homicide in other cultures (Daly and Wilson, p.127)" Victim precipitated homicides are those where there was either an escalation of a trivial matter or attempted lethal violence was initiated by the person who eventually became the victim. "Regardless of which spouse ends up dead, the husband is usually the instigator of violence (Daly and Wilson, 1988, p.200)". Although these two types have been differentiated in prior studies, for the purposes of the present study, the two will be

treated as parts of the same continuum/motive, in that trivial altercations that escalate can be subsumed under the rubric of victim precipitated homicide. This statement is supported by Lundsgaarde's finding in his examination of Houston homicide data (1977). In this research the author had access to all information collected by the police in each case, and found time and again that even in cases in which the male was killed by the female, the male instigated the incident that resulted in his death.

In Homicide (1988) Daly and Wilson present a comprehensive examination of individual level motivations for killing, couching their argument in an evolutionary psychological framework. This framework examines homicide as a facet of human behavior that serves to enhance the fitness of particular organisms to succeed. As the authors state:

"The utility of a credible threat of violence has been mitigated and obscured in modern mass society because the state has assumed a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. But wherever that monopoly is relaxed-whether in an entire society or in a *neglected underclass* [italics added]-then the utility of that credible threat become apparent. (p. 128)"

Status competition is given as the genesis for male violence, with high status being seen as a contributing factor to fitness. This begs the questions of why for men as well as women is status not of concern? The answer to this question for Daly and Wilson (1988) is distilled into an essential difference in reproductive competition, that males of all species must compete for mates, but females are not faced with this dilemma. This concept is expressed as a "sex difference in fitness variance (p.137)".

Through exhaustive examination of anthropological data, the conclusion is reached that: *Intrasexual competition is far more violent among men than among women in every human society for which information exists* [italics in original] (p.161)." We will return to the idea of female status below. The concept of women as property is also

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introduced, that what is really at stake in relationships is control of access to reproductive rights, an idea that serves as what can be seen as another case of victim precipitated actions in the context of infidelity either by the male or female in intimate relations. Beginning with the question of who kills whom, the authors examine homicide cases from Detroit in 1972 to answer this question. There were 690 non-accidental homicides that year, of which 127 victims were related to their victims. Of these 127 victims, 80 were spouses; 44 men killed by their wives and 36 women killed by their husbands (p.19). As to the genesis of the incidents in spousal homicide "the leading substantive issue is invariably 'jealousy' (Daly and Wilson, 1988; Science)". This jealousy can be seen as a challenge to 'ownership' of the woman, either a question of her fidelity or her intention to leave the relationship, a violation of the male's status as 'master' of his domain (c.f. Daly and Wilson, 1988).

This concept of status is repeated in Lundsgaarde (1977), who discusses victim precipitated homicide in the context of a failure to meet status expectations within social relationships: "(1) the expectations that are either culturally defined as part of such a status or (2) those expectations created by mutual understandings between the two reciprocals (p.54)." These motivations lead us to the idea that to a certain extent, the motivations of men and women differ. Men kill to preserve their honor or status, and women do so as well, but due to differing cultural definitions of what that status encompasses, (c.f. Goode, 1971) the individual reasons given for the act are gendered in nature. Women typically kill male partners in response to physical violence after other avenues to escape have been exhausted, or to defend their children, whereas men are more likely to stalk and kill in response to infidelity, or some perceived threat to their manhood. In Canadian data analyzed by Daly and Wilson, 43% of homicides by

estranged husbands were attributed to jealousy, whereas only 2% of females received this attribution of motive (Daly and Wilson, 1988; Wilson and Daly, 1992). These findings serve to support the idea that the motivations for lethal violence are gendered in nature, that men kill for reasons related to jealousy and sex and women kill to defend themselves or their children.

Homicide research has focused on the relationship of the offender to the victim, the type of weapon used, and the circumstances preceding a specific event, to name a few. To date however, there has been limited examination of the structural factors that influence the racial differences in SROK. Many facets of society have been studied as they relate to homicide. Although we can assume, indeed demonstrate, that social factors play a part in these murders, how the exact mechanism functions has not been explained in depth. The purposes of this dissertation were two-fold. The first was to examine the historical conceptualization of homicide, the particular form of intimate partner homicide, and the spousal sex ratio of killing (SROK). The second was to extend the work of others (Black, 1983; Gautier and Bankston, 2004) to form a theory of how social and structural influences conflate to differentially amplify the motivations toward intimate partner homicide, specifically within the African American community.

MICRO TO MACRO

At this point in the discussion I feel it is necessary to explicitly state that this is a study of structural and group characteristics, not individual attributes. The motivations for homicide discussed above apply to members of groups, although the concentration of micro characteristics can have macro effects. The effects of the structural artifacts discussed are those which impact and influence groups of persons, not individuals, and no portion of this research should be interpreted as applying solely to the individual. The

effects of the independent variables included in my models are effects on communities, and are elements of those communities.

The unique contribution of this research to the field of homicide deals with the relative nature structural influences, specifically, what factors of Black family structure serve to differentially amplify the effects of structure on lethal violence within the context of intimate relationships for Black females relative to White females?

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND HOMICIDE

GENDER AND HOMICIDE

A further element to be considered is the gendered nature of homicide, that it is primarily the province of men. Eight-five percent of homicides in the United States are perpetrated by males (UCR, 1990) and this sex difference is most pronounced in the case of non-primary or instrumental homicide. However, primary or intimate homicide is also fundamentally a male phenomenon except in America (Gauthier and Bankston, 2004), where females approach equality, with 60 to 70 females who kill intimate partners for every 100 males that do so (Gautier and Bankston, 1997). This difference may also be noted in the contexts in which homicides take place.

The primary arena that women approach parity with men in is that of spousal killing (see for discussion Steffensmeir and Allen, 1996). The reasons that women kill differ, in that they do not demonstrate the same patterns one sees with men; we rarely if ever see murder suicides, stalking followed by murder, or family massacres perpetrated by women (Steffensmeir and Allen, 1996)

This would indicate that a major structural component of homicide, one that has been largely ignored, is that of sex. The disaggregating of homicide by sex produces items of interest that requires further analysis, one of the goals of the proposed research.

What is it about America that makes female perpetrated homicide more common than in other places? Also, why is a great deal of this is accounted for by their higher probability of being involved in intimate partner homicide?

RACE AND HOMICIDE

When examining the SROK, one is struck immediately by the fact that not only is this essentially an American phenomenon, but also one that is differentiated by the racial characteristics of those who utilize lethal self-help in domestic interactions. African American females are more likely than their White or Hispanic counterparts to be a spouse killer. Black homicide rates are high and Black females have a higher spousal killer rate than Whites or Latinos (Block, 1987, 1992; Brewer and Paulsen, 1999; Gautier and Bankston, 1997, 2004; Mercy and Saltzman, 1989; Wilson and Daly, 1992b). The idea that these effects function equilaterally is not supported by previous research. The SROK is much higher for Blacks than Hispanics, another minority who are over-represented in those measures that typically have been found to increase homicide both within and without intimate relationships (Gautier and Bankston, 2004). A point of interest in this discussion of the variability in participation rates in IPK is that of the racial invariance thesis, as articulated by Sampson and Wilson (1995).

The basic premise is that all things being equal, there would be no difference in the effect of structural components on members of different racial groups. However, the marker of race indicates the intersection of many effects that are allocated by race in this country. This intersection or concentration of effects serves to facilitate the differential exposure of members of different racial groups. The question of why this exists is also one that was addressed by the current research.

As discussed by Black (1983) the unavailability of law in modern society may not be a matter of policy, but can be seen as de facto in many circumstances. Those who occupy the lower status rungs in our society, the poor, homeless, Blacks, and those who are not legally married are constrained in their access to legal redress of grievances. The confluence of these characteristics contributes to the idea of the family as a "stateless" place.

The family as an institution has undergone numerous transformations as our society has changed over time. We have changed from a largely agricultural society, with a very public focus on the family, to an industrial nation who moved to cities and developed a sense of privacy that is quite different from that which originally existed in the United States (Cherlin, 1999). We have also seen the abolition of slavery, an event that enhanced the multicultural nature of our society by allowing Blacks to put their own unique imprimatur onto the fabric of the family. Although our forefathers believed that the family had a very public nature, one that was to be observed and directed by members of the community, even our earliest courts were reluctant to become involved in affairs between husband and wife. As we further developed the concept of privacy though both social and legal means we have seen a further abatement of the involvement of bureaucracy in relations between intimates. This changed somewhat in the 1970s when we began to see an increase in domestic violence legislation, a result of the increasing political power of women (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1981). However, even with the advent of laws designed to protect those within our most prevalent institution, law enforcement continues to be reluctant to become involved in the interaction between intimate partners unless requested by the parties involved or required by policy.

The stateless nature of the family, coupled with lower social status of the participants places it in either the first or second pattern discussed by Black (1993) of the situational dynamics and structural constraints that make self-help more likely.

In the first pattern, the social status of both victim and offender is low, a placement on the social ladder that makes access to law relatively unlikely for each, a situation that makes self-help the only viable solution. The second pattern is that in which the offender has higher status than the victim, again with self-help as the most viable option. This second pattern at first blush would seem to contradict the idea of an increase in SROK but we must remember the conditions under which women resort to lethal violence, in response to abuse or threats to children (see also Peterson, 1999). These conditions or patterns are exacerbated within the family if that family is Black, and relative to White families, will serve to increase the likelihood of Black female perpetrated homicide.

BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SPOUSAL HOMICIDE: A PREDICTIVE MODEL

Black families may very well be impacted differently by structural factors that exist in America. The legacy of slavery, the impact of concentrated disadvantage, extended/extensive prolonged poverty, and the lack of suitable marriage partners are but a few that can be understood as unique to the American Black experience (Cherlin, 1999). Granted there are measurement issues with the first but the other factors can be quantified using commonly accepted measures, which will be discussed further below.

The historical legacy of slavery and its impact on the Black family has been discussed in various forms, in many disciplines. One common theme is the effect of family dissolution on the power dynamic of males and females with women gaining the upper hand in this. This is continued in modern society with the higher status of the females in the Black community.

MARRIAGE MARKET

The literature is replete with examples of the disproportionate representation of Blacks in disadvantaged situations, whether this is measured in terms of segregation, access to jobs, public services, etc. Another factor that comes into play is disadvantage in the marriage market. Factors that influence one's "marketability" include employment, whether current or potential to secure it, education level, and legal status. These three factors function in a confounding manner, in that they are interrelated. Unemployment for Black males is higher (citation) thus the value of males is reduced. Black males are less likely than Whites or Black females to attend college or complete high school (citation) another factor that reduces their value in the market. With 1 in 13 Black males either in jail or with a criminal record, not only is their value reduced, their chances of improving their situation through successful employment are further hindered by this as well as their

reduced educational attainment. The importance of these factors in regard to the likelihood of intimate lethal violence is supported by previous research (c.f. Wilson and Daly, 1992)

PRESENCE OF EXTENDED MATRILINEAL KIN

This combined with other features unique to the Black community may inform the question as to why there is a differential amplification of the potential for utilization of lethal violence within the Black community. Others have put forth ideas that the matriarchal structure of the Black family serves to buttress the empowerment of females over males and thus increase the chance that there will be a lethal outcome to confrontation, in favor of the female (see Daly and Wilson, 1992; Gautier and Bankston, 1997; 2004 for example). Being located within a kin matrix can serve as support for the implementation of lethal violence (Cooney, 1998) through the mechanism of support for action and could further explain the higher SROK that has been observed with the Black community, given that this kin matrix is more likely to be matrilineal in nature. Other structural constraints on access to legal recourse can serve to exacerbate the stateless nature of the family and will be discussed below. The features unique to Black families will increase the chances that Black females will be the offender in intimate partner homicide relative to White females.

TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP

One interesting characteristic that is repeatedly found in prior research is the high number of common-law or cohabitation relationships that are represented in discussions of intimate homicide. Daly and Wilson (1988) cite several studies that found this; 35% of cases in Miami in 1980 (Wilbanks, 1984); 46% of cases between 1926 and 1968 in Detroit (Bourdouris, 1971): Lundsgaarde (1977) also mentions this in passing, 31% in

1969 in Houston, although this was not the specific focus of his research. The ratio of homicides in common-law versus "churched" unions in Canada from 1974 through 1983 is striking as well, 8 times higher for male offenders and almost thirty times higher for female offenders in common-law as opposed to married relationships (Daly and Wilson, 1988). The high number of common-law cases is interesting in that these types of relationships are more likely for the poor and Black, which leads to the expectation that Black females will be more likely than White females to commit homicide against intimate partners.

PRESENCE OF CHILDREN

As noted above, one of the primary individual level motivations for female lethal action is defense of children. The presence of children within the home is an obvious requirement for the occurrence of child abuse, since no children equals no targets for abuse. Although the number of children has been found to influence the likelihood of abuse, with less than 4 having little or no effect, and 5 or more reducing the chances of abuse (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1981) these numbers refer to children who are products of the current relationship. This effect is reversed in the case of non-consanguine children, where a large number of intimate partner homicides occur in households that include children from other unions (c.f. Daly and Wilson, 1988; Lundsgaarde, 1977) and the presence of these children increase the chances that the men will abuse them and will kill the mother. However, given the foregoing discussion, the greater likelihood that Black households will include children who are not related by blood to the male present may result in a *higher* level of involvement in intimate partner homicide for Black females in relation to White females.

DIVORCE AND HOMICIDE

Blacks are more likely than Whites, Hispanics or Asians to be separated or divorced (Bumpass and Sweet, 1989; Bumpass et al. 1989). Blacks have lower marriage rates, and more instances of separation without divorce, factors which can lead to a family model that mimics the effect of divorce without the formal aspect of it. The presence of divorced women in a neighborhood or census tract has been used as a measure of community or family disorganization, one which can also be used to develop a measure of the number of children present in a household not linked by blood with the male present, a condition that has been found to increase the chances of abuse or lethal violence for males, but not females.

INEQUALITY AND REALTIVE DEPRIVATION

One of the major findings in research on adult homicide has been the positive influence of inequality and relative deprivation in homicide rates (Bailey, 1984; Blau and Blau, 1982). This finding has been supported more for Blacks than Whites (Peterson and Krivo, 1993; Harer and Steffensmeier, 1992). That inequality and relative deprivation plays a part in adult homicide may seem somewhat obvious, in that many if not all major sociological theories of crime in some way revolve around or at least include some idea that inequality in either status or access or materiel leads to violence and homicide is just the terminal point on the continuum. These concepts are related to another factor of interest, poverty. The influences of poverty and inequality have been examined by Messner (1982), Williams (1984) and Rosenfeld (1986) and others with support found for the influence of both poverty and inequality on homicide rates, with differing effects by race and social class.

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POVERTY

Poverty in and of itself has not been shown to have a significant influence on homicide rates (Peterson and Krivo, 1993) but as a component of the fabric of deprivation it certainly plays a part in all of the factors under discussion. With respect to the question at hand, the presence of poverty may enhance the power of females due to their disproportionate reception of public assistance e.g. through Temporary Aid to Needy Families (Gautier and Bankston, 2004). Poverty is also reflected in the presences of female-headed households, which by definition empowers females.

Again, given the disproportionate presence of female-headed households, this may serve to increase Black female partner killing.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and underemployment have also been found to have an influence on violent crime (Shihadeh and Ousey, 1998). This has primarily found in more developed societies, suggesting a link between frustration and inequality (Rosenfeld and Messner, 1991). The effects of poverty are not evenly distributed in the population, no more than poverty itself is. There are those communities in which poverty is concentrated in America, many of which are Black, can be seen as an example of what at first blush would seem a contradiction, that unemployment empowers women. This empowerment takes the form of influencing mate selection, in that women are less likely than men to choose a mate who is unemployed (Cherlin, 2004).

With Black males making up a substantial portion of the un- and underemployed, (Census, 2000) women's choices of mates are reduced, and if a mate is not contributing in a meaningful manner financially his "usefulness" is reduced as is his power in the relationship (Cherlin, 2004). This lack of power can be seen as a form of status

frustration, due to an inconsistency between the ascriptive status of males and their achieved status Lundsgaarde, 1977). This may increase male violence towards females in the context of the Black family structure, which could place them in a position to become the victims of retaliatory lethal response. (Wilson and Daly, 1988).

SEGREGATION AND ISOLATION

Segregation and social isolation have been found to increase the potential for adult homicide, although this has a stronger bearing on stranger and acquaintance homicide (Peterson and Krivo, 1993) than intra-family violence. One way of examining the effect of segregation and social isolation has been to utilize an 'index of dissimilarity' to measure the differences in units of analysis. This was improved by Shihadeh and Flynn (1996) with the use of a measure of spatial isolation that taps the unique characteristics of isolation. Specifically, isolation exists when the "degree of potential contact" between racial and ethnic groups is low (Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996, 1329). Their findings indicate that as isolation increases so do rates of Black homicide, more so than Whites.

The above factors function together to reduce access to formal controls, reduce the status of Black males as well as their 'value' thus serving to intensify the sub-cultural characteristics of the Black underclass family. This intensification may lead to an increased potential for Black females to be disproportionately represented as perpetrators of intimate partner homicide relative to White females.

DISTURBANCES

REGION

Peterson and Krivo (1993) found that family homicide rates were higher in the South than other regions, a factor that has been attributed to a "Southern Culture of

Violence", a finding that permeates much homicide research. This finding is contradicted, or at least framed differently in the research of Bailey (1984) who found that there were confounding factors at work in this axiom. Blau and Blau (1982) also failed to find support for the Southern culture of violence, other structural conditions were found to account for the differences noted in rates of violence. The current work does not seek to debate the efficacy or validity of the southern culture of violence thesis, but will include region due to its support as a factor in the SROK in earlier research (see Gauthier and Bankston, 2004, for example). For the purposes of this research, South will be the 11 Confederate states and border states (Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Texas, Virginia and Florida).

AGE

It has been noted by researchers (c.f. Steffensmeir et al, 1989) that there is an "age-curve of crime" specifically, that members of a particularly birth cohort are more likely to engage in crime, and that there are somewhat unique positions on this age curve that relate to specific types of crime. Although this measure would appear to be extemporaneous to the proposed research, is has been demonstrated in prior research that there is some utility in that female age has been found to be a better predictor than male age, whether she is the victim or the killer (Daly and Wilson, 1988). However, for the purposes of this study, age will not be included in the models due to the paucity of data on age of parties involved in the specific relationships of interest.

RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

Neighborhood disorganization, or lack of stability, is often used in crime research as an indicator of the larger rubric of social disorganization. Social disorganization has

been repeatedly demonstrated to have a positive influence on both violent and non-violent crime (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Bursik and Webb, 1982; Stark, 1987).

Two common measures used are the number of divorced women and the number of single parent households in the unit of analysis as a proxy for disorganization. Single mothers have been found to be under more stress (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1981).

It is possible that this measure functions differently in regard to intimate partner homicide, in that the stability of neighborhoods, or the continued residence in a community, may serve to inflate the potential for lethal violence for Black females relative to White females due to the existence of kin networks.

If these in fact are legitimate sources of lethal violence, the differences in perpetrator and victim should be no different for stranger versus intimate adults if these are in truth simply different manifestations of the same phenomenon. Although sociologists have investigated the relationship between many structural factors and homicide, the disaggregation of homicide occurrences have primarily been along lines of race and sex, with less attention paid to the differences in the target of the homicide.

FAMILY AND THE LAW

As discussed above, the family is in general a stateless place. However there are a few places the law does get involved, two of which are important for the proposed study, property division and the presence of mandatory arrest laws for violent spouses. We have seen reforms in divorce laws and the easing of requirements for divorce following California's passage of 'no-fault' laws in the 1970's. (Dee, 2001; Freed and Foster, 1979, 1981) Scant research has included the connections of these changes to the incidence and character of domestic violence, although there is reason to think that these changes could affect the rates of intimate partner homicide (Gauthier and Bankston, 2004). Previous

analysis has demonstrated that female perpetrated intimate partner homicide declines

when couples are living apart, (Wilson and Daly, 1992) given the conditions under which

females kill this stands to reason. Drawing upon both social disorganization and routine

activities theories as discussed above, the following relationships are proposed.

SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

Gautier and Bankston (2004) found that of those homicides that contribute to the

SROK, the SROK for Whites was 30, and for Blacks was 92. In other words, for

intimate partner homicide occurrences in White couples the female was the offender in

30 instances for every 100 male instances, and in Black couples the female was the

offender in 92 instances for every 100 male perpetrated occurrences. What is it about the

Black community that would explain this extraordinary difference in rates? We address

this question by examining the differences in effects of what may be taken as the

"standard" predictors of homicide coupled with the structure of the family. These

measures included deprivation, employment status of victims, the percent Black

unemployed, presence of children, nature of the relationship and social isolation

measures. The nature of the relationships included married and cohabitation (considered

de facto unions). Social isolation measures function as determining the level of access to

mechanisms of formal social control as well as inequality and relative deprivation. As

discussed above, the likelihood of abusive actions by males toward nonconsanguine

children is higher than towards children that are products of the current relationship. Due

to higher divorce rate and common-law relationships in the Black community, the higher

probability of these children being present should increase the potential for violence

within the relationship. As stated previously, the units of analysis for this study are

MSA's.

The predictive model developed in the foregoing discussion includes the

following propositions:

H1: The ratio of employed females to males, and education disparity between

females and males, will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of

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female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H2: The higher proportion of cohabitating relationships will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H3: The presence of children within the household that are not related by blood to the male in the household will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H4: The proportion of female headed households with adult female relatives within the household will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H5: The divorce rate will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H6: The measures of inequality will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

H7: The measures of segregation and isolation will increase the explained variance in the Black rate of female perpetrated intimate homicide relative to White female perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

DATA AND METHODS

UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis for the proposed study will be metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) (N=234) in the United States that contain 100,000 or more residents. Using 2000 as a midpoint for this time period, measures of city characteristics used in the analyses will be taken from the Summary Tape Files (STF), the five percent Public Use Micro Samples (PUMS 5%) and the published volumes of the census of the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000). Utilizing MSAs with larger populations allows for inclusion of ethnic enclaves that may not be present in smaller population concentrations. MSAs included in this study must meet two: (1) they must have a population of 100,000 or greater, (2) they must have a population of at least 5000 Blacks. The measure of the Black population as those who responded to "Black" on the census. White is operationalized as those who responded to "White" on the census. These stipulations resulted in a sample size of 234 MSAs.

MSAs as opposed to cities were used as the unit of analysis largely due to the geography utilized in the SHR data, the most consistently accurate indicator of place of offence in these data is the originating agency code (ORI) which allowed the best assignment of homicides to place of occurrence. Theses indicators are consistent across the PUMS data, the SHR data and the census data, allowing for the best allocation of characteristics associated with the different independent variables.

DATA SOURCES

All data for this study were taken from the 2000 5% Public Use Micro-Sample (PUMS) provided by the United States Census Bureau utilizing data gathered for the 2000 decennial census. This tabulation was utilized due to its inclusion of all variables of

interest regarding families and geography. All homicide data were taken from the

Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation,

a sub-set of data from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). This particular tabulation was

used due to the inclusion of the relationship of victim to offender crucial for the particular

area of interest. Although there are known limitations and problems with these data, no

better national data source currently extant allows examination of the victim offender

relationship. Measures of segregation, specifically the dissimilarity indices were obtained

through the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The dependent variable, race-specific domestic killing rates, were derived by the

formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of race/sex specific killings}}{\text{Number of race/specific households}} \text{ x } 100{,}000$$

The number of race/sex-specific intimate partner killings was derived using data from the

FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) for

the years 1996 – 2004, with 2000 as the mid-point. Intimate partner killings are those

where the victim and perpetrator were married, cohabiting (i.e. de facto unions /

common-law), dating, or divorced couples of the opposite sex.

These killings are modeled separately with married, cohabitating or divorced pairs

coded as Intimate Partner Killings (IPK) and dating pairs coded as Boyfriend Killings

(BFK). To specify race and ethnic effects, only couples of the same race and ethnicity

will be used. The dependant variables were constructed using the pooled homicide count

across the years 1996 – 2004 to reduce the influences of random year-to-year fluctuations

(see Sampson, 1987). The liabilities incurred when using pooled data of this sort are acknowledged, but the low frequency and instability of homicide generally, and of this category particularly, require that this be done to obtain a meaningful rate for these units of analysis (see Gautier and Bankston, 2004). Sex specific averages instead of ratios will be used due to the difficulty of interpretation of changes in ratios as changes in either the numerator or denominator could mask actual shifts.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Marriage market indicators were derived by using the race-specific ratio of employed females to the employed males (BEMPRA/WEMPRA), as well as race and sex-specific education attainment rates (B/WEDURA). The educational attainment rates were calculated as the ratio of females to males over the age of 18 with less than a high school diploma. Data for these variables came from the 2000 US Census, DOJ reports and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports.

The household characteristics variables were calculated utilizing household level values taken from the US Census 2000 figures and the PUMS 5% data. These measures include the percent of households that are female-headed (B/WFHHR), the percent of households with children present under the age of 18 (BLK/WHTKIDR), the percent of households that are female-headed with female kin over the age of 18 present (B/WFRELA), and the percent female-headed households with unmarried partners present (B/WFUMP).

CONTROL VARIABLES

Race-specific Divorce (BL/WHDIVR) rates were calculated using data taken from the US Census and the PUMS 5% sample. Current Population Surveys and are the percent of females that are divorced. Segregation (DISS), was measured by using the

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index of dissimilarity, a measure of unevenness and was calculated for Blacks and Whites. This index indicates the percentage of a specific racial group who would have to change census tracts to achieve a uniform distribution of race/ethnicity in a given city. This measure ranges from 0 to 100 where 0 indicates no changes are required and 100 that all must change (Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996:1335).

In this study all index of dissimilarity values are a White-Black measures. The index of dissimilarity is calculated as:

$$\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left| \frac{b_i}{B} - \frac{w_i}{W} \right|$$

Where

b_i = the Black population of the ith area, e.g. census tract
B = the total Black population of the large geographic entity for which the index of dissimilarity is being calculated.
w_i = the White population of the ith area
W = the total White population of the large geographic entity for which the index of dissimilarity is being calculated.

Race specific Gini coefficients (B/WGINI) were obtained as a measure of income disparity, and included in the models as a control variable. The Gini coefficient measures the disparity in income distribution, and ranges in value from 0 to 1, with lower values indicating a more even distribution of income, and higher values indicating a more disparate or uneven distribution. In this study this measure is the intra-race level of income disparity, not inter-race, and this is between households, not individuals.

Housing density (DENRATE) was calculated as the percent of households within an MSA that were in buildings that were multi-unit structures with 5 or more apartments. Region (REGION) was included as well to take into account the documented southern predilection for homicide, with the eleven states of the Confederacy coded as 1 and all

others 0. Race Specific Residential stability (B/WMOB), was measured as the percent of persons 18 and older that were living in the same residence for five years, and was taken from the US Census 2000 and PUMS 5% data.

ANALYSES

Race specific models were constructed, which resulted in four separate models for analysis. These are race and relationship type specific, i.e. Black married, Black cohabitating and dating, White married, and White cohabitating and dating. Although most macro level studies of homicide have utilized standard regression models such as (OLS) ordinary least squares, the data collected for this study are of a nature that precludes this. These models were analyzed utilizing Poisson regression to take into account the relative rarity of the event under investigation. Multicollinearity was tested for utilizing OLS regression and examining the VIF values. In cases where the VIF is greater than 5.0, there is cause for concern regarding multicollinearity (Hoffam 2004; Neter, et al 1996). For the Black models the highest variance inflation value was 3.114 (female male unemployment ratio) and in the White models was 2.071 (Gini coefficient).

RESULTS

As the first step in my analysis I examined the descriptives for the MSAs in the

sample, which are reported in Table 1. As can be seen from the table, there are several

points of diversion based on race. The table presents the means and standard deviations

for each variable as well as the t-test results from a paired samples test of the Black and

White models.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Variables in the Analysis

	Black Model		White Model		
Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-test
Intimate killings	0.19	0.43	0.26	.045	-2.50*
Intimate killing rate	0.25	0.61	.007	0.09	6.94**
Boyfriend killings	0.31	0.69	0.15	0.24	-3.92**
Boyfriend killing rate	0.42	0.84	.006	0.05	6.94**
Education ratio	1.03	0.26	1.03	0.10	0.23
Employment ratio	1.09	0.20	0.84	0.07	-17.38**
Unmarried partner rate	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.01	2.18*
Household with kids rate	0.57	0.05	0.51	0.01	7.99**
Fem. headed HH kin rate	0.27	0.08	0.24	0.06	-4.65
Female header HH rate	0.53	0.03	0.51	0.01	7.99**
Percent divorced	0.13	0.03	0.11	0.01	-13.70**
Gini index	0.47	0.04	0.43	0.02	-10.89**
Mobility	0.55	0.11	0.45	0.05	-13.76**
Density	.107		.055		
Dissimilarity index	56.58		11.81		
Region	0.43		0.50		

* p<.o5 **p<.01

One of the first items that one notices in the table is that the mean Black intimate

partner killing rate is nearly 4 times higher than the White rate. Another is that the mean

boyfriend killing rates are 14 times higher. These figures alone would suggest that there

perhaps is a different dynamic at work in these incidents.

The absolute number of killings is somewhat higher for Whites, an artifact most probably of the racial distribution of the population, although the disparity is not what one would expect given the proportion of the total population that is White.

The education ratio is the same for Blacks and Whites, and indicates that female versus male educational attainment is in favor of the females; with a ratio that is greater than 1. The mean value of the measure of employment disparity is slightly higher for Blacks, indicating that there are more Black females working than White females. This is perhaps an artifact of historic sex differences in employment, that Black females have been in the work force in greater proportions than White females, although in more menial trades (see Cherlin). The unmarried partner rates are barely higher in Whites, contrary to most literature on the subject of cohabitation, although this may reflect racial differences in defining cohabitating versus dating, as well as validity issues related to this measure that will be discussed in detail below. The mean values of the rates of female-headed households with children present are quite similar for Blacks and Whites. This similarity of mean values of the rates of female-headed households, and rates of female-headed households with female kin present are also very similar. It is also noted that the rates of percent divorced in the sample are also similar, although slightly higher for Blacks. The mean Gini coefficient values for the sample are close as well, again slightly higher for Black females than Whites. These mean values are on par with national indices from 2000, which were 0.46. The measure of population mobility was 10 percent higher for Blacks, indicating that ten percent more of the population had moved within the last 5 years. The mean density rate expresses a high rate of multi-unit buildings within each MSA, with the ratio being greater than 1 to 1.

POISSON REGRESSION MODELS

In the first of the two following tables I present the results of Poisson regression models predicting Black and White intimate partner killings. The first two columns of the table list the parameter estimates and standard errors for the independent variables that pertain to Black intimate partner killings and the third and fourth columns are those values for the White intimate killings.

Table 2 Poisson Regression Models Predicting Intimate Partner Killing for
              Blacks and Whites

Variable	Blacks		Whites	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Female/Male Employment ratio	1.35	1.64	-1.95	1.94
Female/Male Education ratio	-.268	1.00	-1.0	1.61
Cohabitation	-23.69	24.30	-35.05	30.04
Presence of kids	-.791	4.25	11.36**	4.31
Female relatives	.984	2.56	-.410	2.53
Divorce rate	12.93	8.14	13.38	10.44
Gini coef.	-12.71*	5.64	8.71	7.38
Housing density	5.38**	1.85	5.71*	2.61
Female headed HH	22.17	14.75	-29.93	19.64
Movers within 5 years	-1.56	1.68	2.70	3.48
Dissimilarity index	.042*	.019	.017	.012
South	.855*	.376	-.107	.339
Constant	-12.68	8.40	4.04	9.69
Pseudo R2	.2075		.1355	
N	234		234	

* $p<.05$ **$p<.01$

The first thing that can be gleaned from the above table is that there are racial differences in the variables that are demonstrated to be significant. In the Black model, four of the six control variables are found to be significant components of the IPK model.

The income disparity measure, the Gini coefficient, was significant at the .05 level for Blacks. The housing density measure, which is the percent of houses in an MSA

that are in multi-unit structures with 5 or more units was significant at the .01 level. The dissimilarity index, in this case a White/Black segregation measure, was significant for the Black model at the .05 level. Location (South/non-South) was also significant in the Black model. None of the independent predictors were found to be significant in the Black model, although one (the presence of children) was in the White model, which is somewhat interesting in and of itself. Nevertheless the results of the Black model form initial support for the idea that the predictors of intimate partner homicide vary by race.

The finding of the Black model of IPK indicate that as segregation decreases, so will intimate partner homicide, as is the case for housing density. The Gini coefficient is negatively related, an anomalous finding in light of previous research, indicating that a reduction in income disparity will result in an increase in the IPK. This particular item will be discussed in greater below. In the White model of IPK the presence of children under the age of eighteen was found to be significant at the .01 level, and the measure of household density was also significant. In contrast to the Black IPK model, only one of the six control variables, housing density, was significant.

Although one must take care in interpreting the pseudo R2 values in Poisson models in that they are not describing the same 'fit' as they do in OLS models, the differences between the Black and White models of IPK (.2209 v. .0957), is interesting in it can be taken as a measure of the 'better' relative predictive power of the measures for Black intimate partner killing versus White IPK. It must be noted however that even in the context of Poisson models, these values perhaps indicate that the models are under-specified.

The White model follows this direction in regard to the housing density measure, but the relationship of the presence of children within the home has a positive

relationship with IPK, suggesting that as the percent of households that are female-headed with children present decreases, so will White intimate partner homicide.

The following Table follows the format of Table 2, and reports the results of the boyfriend killing model by race.

Table 3. Poisson Regression Models Predicting Boyfriend Killing for
                    Blacks and Whites

	Blacks		Whites	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Variable				
Female/Male				
Employment ratio	1.04	1.28	-1.84	2.78
Female/Male				
Education ratio	-.181	.792	.382	2.04
Cohabitation	-.985	18.68	9.36	40.07
Presence of kids	-5.19	3.20	8.45	5.73
Female relatives	.576	1.94	1.08	3.28
Divorce rate	3.02	6.41	6.88	13.26
Gini coef.	-10.35*	4.33	4.96	9.69
Housing density	2.97*	1.44	6.07	3.34
Female headed HH	21.36	11.66	-17.94	26.43
Movers within 5 years	-1.39	1.37	3.00	4.36
Dissimilarity index	.047**	.015	.009	.016
South	.374	.296	-.527	.464
Constant	-9.166	6.44	-1.49	13.10
Pseudo R2	.2209		.0957	
N	234		234	

* p <.05 ** p<.01

The results presented in this table differ somewhat from the model presented previously, in that location dropped out of the model for Black boyfriend killing and that no predictors were found to be significant for White boyfriend killings. As mentioned above, this is itself an interesting result, again suggesting that the structural context conducive to IPK and boyfriend killings differ by race. Also, in the model as well the Gini coefficient direction is opposed to the expected direction, it is again negative.

Table 4. Summary of Expectations and Findings: Poisson Models

Expectations	Findings
1. that disparity in educational attainment and employment rates would increase the explained variance in IPK	Not supported – the measures were not significant in any model
2. that increased rates of cohabitation would increase the explained variance in IPK	Not supported, non-significant in all models
3. the presence of children in female headed households would increase the explained variance in IPK	Partially supported – was significant in White models of IPK
4. that the presence of adult female kin in female headed households would increase the explained variance in IPK	Not supported, non-significant in all models
5. that the divorce rate would increase the explained variance in IPK	Not supported, non-significant in all models
6. that measures of inequality would increase the explained variance in IPK	Partially supported: The Gini coefficient was significant in the Black models of both IPK and boyfriend killing
7. that measures of segregation would increase the explained variance in IPK	Partially supported: the index of dissimilarity was significant in Black models of both IPK and boyfriend killing

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of structural factors on intimate partner homicide. This was undertaken in an effort to explain the racial disparity in the SROK as discussed by Gautier and Bankston (1997,2004) and Wilson and Daly (1992). Although few of the predictors included in the models demonstrated significance in relation to intimate killings, the differences between the race specific models lends itself to the idea that there are different mechanisms at work in Black and White perpetrated intimate homicides. It is clear that there are important artifacts missing from the data that I have used to model this act. That there is an effect of segregation on homicide is an accepted idea in criminological research, a simple examination of the cross-tabulations of intimate killings indicate that there may be a threshold effect, in that as the index of dissimilarity reaches a certain point the potential for IPK increases, in the case of the data examined in this study that point appears to be about 60. This simple observation was supported in a race specific way in the models, in that it was significant for the Black models.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS IN INTIMATE PARTNER KILLING MODELS

In addition to the presence of children in the White intimate partner killings, the housing density measure was also significant in the White model, as well rising to a level of significance in both Black models. As described above, the density measure was calculated as the percentage of multi-unit dwelling with 5 or more units. In the White model, the density coefficient was positive, indicating that as housing density increases, so does White IPK, which is not unexpected as this measure has been found to be significant in prior research on homicide, as well as in earlier research on intimate partner homicides. This was the only other measure that was significant in the White model.

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In the Black model, the Gini measure, housing density, the dissimilarity index, and region were significant. The Gini coefficient, a measure of income disparity, was included as a measure of inequality. The value ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating complete equality and 1 indicating only one household has all the money.

In the models in this study one must remember that the Gini was calculated as race specific, not as a between race measure. In the Black IPK model this measure was significant, but the direction of the coefficient is negative, which is counter to expectations and extant female homicide studies (see Steffensmeir and Haynie (2000) for discussion). The negative value of the Gini coefficient carries over to the Black boyfriend killing model as well.

Housing density was significant in both IPK models, and operates in the expected direction, that as density increases so does intimate partner homicide. This also is expected in that female headed households are more likely to be on the lower end of the economic spectrum, which leads to an increased potential for living in multi-unit dwelling, and may hint at a concentration effect when coupled with the unexpected negative relationship of the Gini measure.

The dissimilarity index measure was also significant in the Black IPK model, but not in the White one. The dissimilarity index as previously defined in a measure of segregation which measure the distribution of a population across a geographic area, in this study it is a White – Black index, with the higher number indicating the a higher level of segregation, and the value itself indicting the percentage of the White population would have to move to produce an even distribution of Whites and Blacks. Region was also found to be significant in the Black model, with a positive relationship with being in

the South. This relationship is consistent with previous findings in homicide research and was in the expected direction.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS IN BOYFRIEND KILLING MODELS

For the White BFK model, there were no significant predictors of the event. This could be taken to mean that due to the rarity of the event there is simply no structural predictors that could do so. Another potential view is that the model lacks the proper measures, or that some of the validity questions mentioned above have some merit. Yet another potential interpretation is that the idea that structural dynamics function in a different manner across race categories, and that different racial and ethnic groups are in fact the recipients of a differentially motivated amplification of those structural factors the increase the potential of lethal violence within intimate relationships.

For the Black boyfriend killing model, three of the four controls that were significant in the IPK models were significant. These were the Gini coefficient, housing density and the dissimilarity index. Again the direction for the Gini coefficient was counter to expectations and previous research. It indicates that a decrease in income inequality would result in an increase in BFK, which led me to create several interaction terms, which are discussed below. Housing density displays the expected direction, and indicates that as density increases, so to do Black boyfriend killings. The dissimilarity index also meets expectations, as segregation increases so does BFK. The persistence of these density and dissimilarity measures, coupled with the negative value of the Gini coefficient in both Black models led to the creation and testing of several interaction terms, which are discussed below.

NON-SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS IN THE INTIMATE PARTNER MODELS

As shown in Table 4 above, the measures for disparity in educational attainment and employment disparity were found to be non-significant for all models. As discussed previously, the education measure was the ratio of females to males who had finished high school, and the employment measure was the ratio of employed females to males. These two measures are essentially marriage market indicators, and were included to attempt to measure the idea that as the 'value' of the male decreased, the potential for lethal response by the female in his life would be increased. Conversely, the measure could also be taken to reflect the increased options available to females that would reduce their dependence on males. Thus in turn reducing the males exposure to potential lethality; as discussed above, women rarely 'hunt' their prey, in most instances out of sight is truly out of mind.

This lack of significance was somewhat surprising if one subscribes the idea that education increases the options for those who posses it. I had expected that as the disparity increased, as females were more educated than males, that IPKs and BFKs would increase due to the reduced 'value' of the male, in terms of a marriage market, and this would function in the same way for employment disparity. Or these could function in the opposite direction, that as education and employment disparity increased the opportunities for women would also increase and allow them to avoid less than advantageous relationships and thus serve to reduce IPK and BFK incidents. Another factor that may be interacting with employment is type of job; prior research has demonstrated that the type of job has an effect on the potential for abuse, a previously mentioned catalyst for homicide in an intimate relationship (see Cherlin (1992); Straus et al (1981). In fact in all models these measures failed to reach any level of significance,

however, the direction of the coefficients differ by race, in the White models employment is negative, and in the Black models it is positive. Education disparity is less straightforward, in the IPK models its direction is negative for both Black and White models, but in boyfriend killing models it is negative for Blacks and positive for Whites. It would appear to be that the dynamic is operating differently, but with no significant values for either of these measures there can be no definitive statements in this regard. Education disparity also comes into play in dating behavior, as we choose to date those who are more like us than not, and a disparity in education serves to limit the dating pool, another feature that would function to reduce the exposure of potential victims.

The lack of significance for the rate of unmarried partners present is also somewhat surprising given what has been demonstrated in other literature. It has been established that cohabitating relationships are more likely to be violent than married ones (see Black,(1983); Daly, Wiseman and Wilson, (1997); Straus et al. (1981). Given that the prime reasons that women kill are defense of self and defense of children as previously discussed, it was expected that a higher level of cohabitating relationships would lead to a higher incidences of intimate killings. In both Black and White IPK models that coefficient is in the same direction, but differs in the boyfriend models, it is negative for Blacks and positive for Whites, again raising the question about a different dynamic in action.

The presence of adult female kin, those related to the female householder, was also non-significant in all models. These results are contrary to expectations derived from social network literature, it was expected that the presence of a female support network would have an effect on both forms of intimate killing that were investigated in this study. Social support networks can function in one of two primary ways in regard to

those in the network, either supportive or not. This support, or lack thereof, can perhaps

serve to shape the nature of a relationship. For example if your social network supports

the idea that abuse in a relationship is the norm, your reaction to abuse may be muted. If

the social network that you belong to is less accepting of abuse, and supportive of

whatever level of reaction may be required, up to and including a lethal response, your

potential to engage in this type of behavior may be amplified. These views, either

accepting or not, can also serve to influence whether a relationship is sustained or ended,

again as discussed above, serving to remove the potential victim in the latter case, thus

reducing the over all IPK incidents. There is also a degree of racial difference in these

coefficients, in that for the IPK model, the direction for Blacks is negative and for Whites

is positive.

The divorce rate was also non-significant in predicting any of the outcomes of

interest. The failure to find that this measure was a significant predictor of IPK or BFK

perhaps reflects the racial differences in marriage rates as well as the increase in the

phenomena to the point that it may no longer serve as a significant measure of social

disorganization.

The failure of these measures, education, employment, cohabitation, the presence

of female kin and the divorce rate to be significant predictors of intimate partner killings

could have several sources. That the data utilized for this study are reliable is accepted, it

is all official data that can be accessed by any researcher with an interest in them, and

they are all generally accepted as reliable, with certain caveats. The questions that arise

regard their validity. Do they accurately measure what they purport to measure?

Also, do they measure what I think they measure in the context of this study? That there

is an attainment disparity in education for females and males is well documented. That

this is even more pronounced in the Black community is documented as well (US Census, 2000).

If one examines the correlation matrices, you see that in bivariate correlations, education disparity was significant for three of the four models, both Black models and the White IPK model. In each case this disappeared in the models. Perhaps the threshold (age 18) was set too low for these particular measures, although in homicide data 18 is a prime age of offending. Another possible reason for the lack of significance could be the population itself. It may be that those who participate in this type of killing posses the characteristics measured to such an extent that it is not a significant predictor due to saturation.

Cohabitation is problematic for a number of reasons, one being the definition of the term, another being the effect of this situation on other factors affecting the population in the study. It may very well be that some who answered the census were unsure about what cohabitation means, or that they themselves do not define the situation as such for various reasons. There is also the question of who is the householder. As noted in a special housing report from the census bureau, due to the sharing of activities and responsibilities in unmarried partner households there is some variation in regard to who is designated as head of household on census forms, thus perhaps confounding the use of this measure to truly represent the number of female headed household with males present. There are also regional effects as to the concentration of unmarried partners and which partner is labeled as head of household. The other factors that may be affected concern public assistance. Due in part to the conservative bent of those who make policy, if a mother is receiving aid in some form or another, she cannot have a man living with

her that is not her husband. This can lead to an underreporting of this phenomenon, not divided so much by racial identity, but economic situation.

AN ANOMALOUS FINDING

In the case of one measure, the findings are somewhat anomalous. In every instance but this one, measures found to be significant predictors for White models was also found to be significant in White models. This anomalous finding is that of a significant predictive value for the presence of children in the female headed household. In the White model of intimate partner killing, the presence of children related to the head of the household was significant and the coefficient was positive, whereas in the Black models it was non-significant and negative.

This difference may have several interpretations. It could be picking up that White households in general tend to have almost half as many children, (CDC) so the number of children in White female households would tend to be less, which would serve to reduce the potential for domestic violence by reducing the number of targets available. The extension of this idea leads to the potential that due to the larger number of children, Black female headed households would tend to have a higher number of children present. Extending this further leads to the threshold effect discussed in domestic violence literature. Specifically, prior research has found that the presence of up to four children increases the potential for domestic violence, an effect which diminishes when the number of children exceeds this number (see Straus et al (1981) for discussion).

 Let us now return to the anomalous findings, which will be discussed in a model specific fashion.

Table 5. Black IPK Model Interaction Terms

Variable	Mean	SD	Coef.	SE
DENDISS	56.68	11.81	5.38**	1.85
GINIDEN	.050	.026	-8.08	67.70
GINIDISS	26.56	6.56	-.08	.485
GDENDISS	2.87	1.88	.04	0.275
Pseudo R2			.2075	
N				234

**p<.01

The first term was the product of density and dissimilarity (DENDISS), the

second Gini and density (GINIDEN), the third was Gini and dissimilarity (GINIDISS),

and a fourth that combined all three (GDENDISS). These were included in the Black

intimate partner killing model one at a time, and led to an interesting outcome. The

results for all interaction terms except the density-dissimilarity were non-significant.

However, when the density-dissimilarity term was included, density was excluded from

the model due to collinearity and the interaction term was significant. This leads me to

believe that there is a confluence effect in this model which would explain the negative

effects of the Gini coefficient. The income disparity measure would logically function in

the opposite direction if the population were located in a highly-segregated high density

area. The measure would function contrary to prior research and expectations due to an

intersection or confluence of those who occupy the lower end of the economic

continuum. The high concentration of these characteristics will serve to practically ensure

a reduction in income disparity. This finding is an echo of Stark's (1987) concept of

deviant places – that the structural characteristics of an area influence the nature of life in

that area, not the moral fiber of those who reside in that area. It also may demonstrate

support for Wilson's (1987)

sub-culture of violence thesis. This finding of the concentration effect is perhaps the most interesting of this study. I say this because in conjunction with the negative direction of the Gini coefficient the findings demonstrate that there is a difference in the impact of structural components on Blacks, and that much of this may be due to the concentration of disadvantage in metropolitan areas.

If this "spatial conflux" effect holds true in future studies of female perpetrated intimate homicide, as it has in studies of male homicide, it could be an important component for modeling this particular type of lethal violence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

That there is a race difference in the effect of structural predictors of intimate partner homicide is supported by the findings of this study. This race difference in amplification of intimate partner killing is supportive of Sampson and Wilson's (1995) racial invariance hypothesis in that the spatial conflux of high density housing and a low income population mirror their ideas. The future direction of this particular vein of inquiry will encompass a variety of modifications to the research model. First the unit of analysis will be reduced in size, in an effort to disentangle the effects of the dissimilarity/density term. Reducing the size of the geography used as the unit of analysis will increase the sample size and help to determine if the effects noted in this research is strictly an urban phenomenon, which it may very well be as the measures that are present are essentially measures of the urban to rural scale.

Although there will be educational and employment disparity in less urban areas, the lack of spatial concentration should function to reduce the incidence of intimate parent killing (for a metro-nonmetro discussion of homicide see Lee et al; 2003).

The construction of better measures of cohabitation, ones that address the issues of validity that were discussed previously is also recommended. The extension of the model over time is also part of the future for this research, to examine if changes in opportunities for females over time can explain the overall decrease in this phenomenon. To my knowledge this is the first study to examine this model of intimate partner homicide on a national level, and serves as the genesis of what promises to be an interesting research agenda.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Rarely has female intimate partner homicide been examined in terms of structural characteristics in a systematic way. This study sought to extend the research to this level, to accord these particular types of homicide the same type of modeling that is applied to male homicide. This is a departure from prior studies in several ways. Most studies of female perpetrated homicides have either been limited to a state level, or include various measures that have never been applied to male homicide models, or are examining general (non-relationship specific) homicides. Even this study can be said to be in a somewhat similar vein in that to my knowledge there has been no male homicide research that has included measures of the presence of children or sex-specific related support networks. These measures were included because theoretically they have influence on the specific motivations for female killing. That they failed to be significant I believe is more a function of the validity of the measures than an insufficiently robust theoretical framework. To summarize what has gone before, almost none of the independent variables included in the models utilized were significant in predicting either intimate partner killing or boyfriend killing for Blacks or Whites, whereas in research on non-specific female perpetrated homicide typical finding are that these measures are significant (for example and discussion see Steffensmeir and Haynie, 2000). Female headed households, male and female unemployment, residential instability, all these have been found to be important explanatory measures in general homicide models.

The one exception in the independent measures was the presence of children in the White IPK model. This finding tends to bolster the idea that there are differing dynamics at work in Black and White IPK. The only other measures with any predictive significance were those included in the models as controls, and these were primarily

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concentrated in the Black models. Again, these measures have been repeatedly supported in studies of general homicide models for males and females, both Black and White, yet seem to have no explanatory power in intimate models. The measure of income disparity presented as having the opposite direction of expectations, however with the inclusion of an interaction term this begins to make sense. This interaction term indicates that there is a spatial conflux effect of density and segregation in the models which explains the idea that as income become less disparate intimate killing go up. If the poor population is concentrated, income will be fairly similar. The lack of findings in terms of the independent variables does offer some support for the idea of differing motivations for homicides among females, as well as illustrating that there are structural characteristics that have not yet been included. The difference in significant measures between races tends to support the overarching idea of this study, that there are in fact differing effects of the same measures by racial group. Through the use of aggregate methods, I have been able to test structural theory ideas, consistent with macro level perspectives, and avoid the pitfalls associated with micro level attempts to study an event that has a genesis in structural dynamics. The policy implications of this research suggest that a reduction in those measures that have been demonstrated to have a significant effect on intimate partner homicides could have far-reaching consequences.

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APPENDIX A: MSAS IN THE ANALYSES

Anniston AL
Birmingham AL
Decatur AL
Dothan AL
Florence AL
Gadsden AL
Huntsville AL
Mobile AL
Montgomery AL
Tuscaloosa AL
Anchorage AK
Phoenix-Mesa AZ
Tucson AZ
Little Rock-North Little Rock AR
Fort Smith AR-OK
Bakersfield CA
Fresno CA
Los Angeles-Long Beach CA
Merced CA
Modesto CA
Oakland CA
Orange County CA
Riverside-San Bernadino CA
Sacramento CA
Salinas CA
San Diego CA
San Francisco CA
San Jose CA
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc CA
Santa Rosa CA
Stockton-Lodi CA
Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa CA
Ventura CA
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville CA
Colorado Springs CO
Denver CO
Bridgeport CT
Danbury CT
Hartford CT
New Haven-Meriden CT
Stamford-Norwalk CT
Waterbury CT
Dover DE
Wilmington-Newark DE
Evansville-Henderson IN-KY
Des Moines IO

Daytona FL
Fort Lauderdale FL
Fort Meyers-Cape Coral FL
Fort Pierce-Port Saint Lucie FL
Fort Walton Beach FL
Gainesville FL
Jacksonville FL
Lakeland-Winter Haven FL
Melbourne-Titusville-Palm Bay FL
Miami FL
Naples FL
Ocala FL
Orlando FL
Panama City FL
Pensacola FL
Punta Gorda FL
Sarasota-Bradenton FL
Tallahassee FL
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater FL
West Palm Beach-Boca Raton FL
Albany GA
Athens GA
Atlanta GA
Macon GA
Savannah GA
Columbus GA-AL
Augusta-Aiken GA-SC
Honolulu HI
Bloomington-Normal IL
Champaign-Urbana IL
Chicago IL
Decatur IL
Kankakee IL
Peoria-Pekin IL
Rockford IL
Springfield IL
Elkhart-Goshen IN
Fort Wayne IN
Gary IN
Indianapolis IN
Kokomo IN
Muncie IN
South Bend IN
Terre Haute IN
Jersey City NJ
Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon NJ

Waterloo-Cedar Falls IO
Davenport-Moline-Rock Island IO-IL
Topeka KS
Wichita KS
Lexington KY
Louisville KY-IN
Alexandria LA
Baton Rouge LA
Houma LA
Lafayette LA
Lake Charles LA
Monroe LA
New Orleans LA
Shreveport-Bossier City LA
Baltimore MD
Hagerstown MD
Brockton MA
Springfield MA
Worcester MA-CT
Boston MA-NH
Lawrence MA-NH
Lowell MA-NH
Ann Arbor MI
Benton Harbor MI
Detroit MI
Flint MI
Grand Rapids-Muskegon-Holland MI
Jackson MI
Kalamazoo-Battle Creek MI
Lansing-East Lansing MI
Saginaw-Bay City-Midland MI
Minneapolis-St. Paul MN-WI
Biloxi-Gulfport-Pascagoula MS
Jackson MS
Columbia MO
Springfield MO
St. Louis MO-IL
Kansas City MO-KS
Lincoln NE
Omaha NE-IO
Reno NV
Las Vegas NV-AZ
Atlantic-Cape May NJ
Bergen-Passaic NJ
Sharon PA
Williamsport PA
York PA
Philadelphia PA-NJ

Monmouth-Ocean NJ
Newark NJ
Trenton NJ
Vineland-Millville-Bridgeton NJ
Albuquerque NM
Albany-Schenectady-Troy NY
Binghamton NY
Buffalo-Niagara Fall NY
Dutchess County NY
Nassau-Suffolk NY
New York NY
Rochester NY
Syracuse NY
Utica-Rome NY
Newburgh NY-PA
Asheville NC
Fayetteville NC
Goldsboro NC
Greensboro-Win Salem-Hi Point NC
Greenville NC
Hickory-Morganton NC
Jacksonville NC
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill NC
Rocky Mount NC
Wilmington NC
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill NCSC
Akron OH
Canton-Massillon OH
Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria OH
Columbus OH
Dayton-Springfield OH
Toledo OH
Cincinnati OH-KY-IN
Oklahoma City OK
Tulsa OK
Portland-Vancouver OR-WA
Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton PA
Erie PA
Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle PA
Johnstown PA
Lancaster PA
Pittsburgh PA
Reading PA
Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazelton PA
Galveston-Texas City TX
Houston TX
Killeen-Temple TX
Longview-Marshall TX

Providence-Fall River-Warwick RI
Charleston-North Charleston SC
Columbia SC
Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson SC
Myrtle Beach SC
Sumter SC
Jackson TN
Knoxville TN
Nashville TN
Memphis TN-AR-MS
Chattanooga TN-GA
Clarksville-Hopkinsville TN-KY
Johnson City-Kingsport-Bristol TN-VA
Abilene TX

Amarillo TX
Austin-San Marcos TX
Beaumont-Port Authur TX
Brazoria TX
Bryan-College Station TX
Corpus Christi TX
Dallas TX
El Paso TX
Fort Worth-Arlington TX

Lubbock TX
Odessa-Midland TX
San Antonio TX
Tyler TX
Waco TX
Wichita Falls TX
Salt Lake City-Ogden UT
Charlottesville VA
Danville VA
Lynchburg VA
Richmond-Petersburg VA
Roanoke VA
Virginia West VA
Norfolk-VA Beach-Newport News
VA-NC
Bremerton WA
Seattle-Bellevue-Everett WA
Spokane WA
Tacoma WA
Janesville-Beloit WI
Kenosha WI
Madison WI
Milwaukee-Waukesha WI
Racine WI

APPENDIX B: CORRELATIONS

Table A-1. Correlation Matrix for Black Model

	IPK	BFK	Employ	Educ	Cohabit	Kids	Kin	Div	Gini	Density	FemHH	MOB	Diss	South
IPK	1													
BFK	.652**	1												
Employ	211**	.239**	1											
Educ	.096	.094	.210**	1										
Cohabit	-.070	-.046	-.022	-.276**	1									
Kids	-.157*	.197*	-.149*	-.042	.206**	1								
Kin	.155*	.162*	-.036	.044	.013	-.162*	1							
Div	.013	.044	-.085	.091	-.038	-.169**	-.173**	1						
Gini	.008	.023	.441**	-.146*	.023	-.093	-.190**	.081	1					
Density	.135**	.170**	-.025	.033	-.033	-.107	.130*	.061	-.130*	1				
Fem HH	.241**	.251**	.768**	.235**	-.059	-.188**	.117	-.023	.343**	-.055	1			
MOB	-.135*	-.170**	-.043	.010	-.085	.132*	-.163*	-.024	.009	-.147*	-.065	1		
Diss	.266**	.321**	.539**	.126	.000	-.123	.053	-.060	.352**	.177	.427**	-.069	1	
South	.138*	.029	.131*	.187**	-.059	-.170**	.239**	-.053	-.003	-.109	.309**	.111	-.153*	1

IPK: intimate partner killing; BFK: boyfriend killing; Employ: female-male employment ratio; Educ: female-male education ratio; Cohabit: unmarried partner rate; Kids: presence of children in female-headed households; Kin: presence of female kin; Div: divorce rate; Gini: income disparity; Density: housing density; FemHH: female headed households; MOB: mobility; Diss: dissimilarity index; South: region.

Table A-2. Correlation Matrix for White Model

	IPK	BFK	Employ	Educ	Cohabit	Kids	Kin	Div	Gini	Density	FemHH	MOB	Diss	South
IPK	1													

	IPK	BFK	Employ	Educ	Cohabit	Kids	Kin	Div	Gini	Density	Fem HH	MOB	Diss	South
BFK	.691**	1												
Employ	-.182**	-.116	1											
Educ	-.098	-.064	-.046	1										
Cohabit	-.056	.107	.186**	-.266**	1									
Kids	.161*	.126	-.059	.041	-.140*	1								
Kin	.138*	.145*	-.237**	.187**	-.247**	.495**	1							
Div	.068	.084	-.133*	-.025	.360**	-.059	-.202**	1						
Gini	.167*	.125	-.259**	.131*	-.213**	-.406**	-.010	-.090	1					
Density	.294**	.344**	.021	-.143*	.174**	-.277**	-.077	.014	.464**	1				
Fem HH	-.214**	-.190**	.099	.356**	-.150*	-.183**	.056	-.040	.212**	-.181**	1			
MOB	.170**	.132*	-.165*	-.230**	.147*	-.138*	-.413**	.412**	.175*	.219**	-.311**	1		
Diss	.044	.019	.003	.069	-.107	-.135*	.071	-.233**	.148*	.117	.259**	-.308**	1	
South	.039	-.147*	-.249**	.057	-.403**	-.192**	-.114	.134*	.290**	-.109	-.007	.325**	-.153*	1

IPK: intimate partner killing; BFK: boyfriend killing; Employ: female-male employment ratio; Educ: female-male education ratio;
Cohabit: unmarried partner rate; Kids: presence of children in female-headed households; Kin: presence of female kin; Div: divorce rate;
Gini: income disparity; Density: housing density; FemHH: female headed households; MOB: mobility; Diss: dissimilarity index South: region.

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VITA

Mark Melder was born in New Orleans Louisiana, and grew up in Natchitoches Louisiana, the child of doctors Trent and Ellis Melder. He graduated from Natchitoches Central High School in 1984, joined the Marine Corps in 1986 and was honorably discharged in 1990. He graduated from Northwestern State University in 1995 with a Bachelor's degree in sociology. He entered the graduate program at Louisiana State University in 1996, and earned his master's degree in 2000. He continued in the program, and while finishing his dissertation was hired in a tenure track position at Northwestern State University.