1. Researching Domestic Homicide

When I was growing up in England we talked about soccer with religious fervor, discussing the moves players made, the goals scored, different playing styles, players’ speed and vision, their intentions, and, in our more reflective moments, our overenmeshment in this game of beauty, joy, and sorrow. We played soccer ourselves and of course attempted to emulate those we adored. At some level the final score or result of the competition did not matter as much as the flair, the excitement, and the departure from dull routines. Even though we scrutinized league standings and memorized such essential facts as who had scored the most goals in a season, which team had spent the most money on players, and who had won a particular trophy, these ephemera were usually a means to enter into the raw, lived experience of the art of soccer.

It was not until I came to live in the United States that I realized just how much soccer lent itself to detailed quantification. I had never heard the game discussed in percentages before. I had never seen a time clock on my television screen, marking off the minutes until the final whistle. However, I became reconciled to this cultural difference in the way soccer was appreciated and explained by telling myself that the more detailed quantification in the United States is one way fans make “everyday empiricism sense” of soccer and other sports. On either side of the Atlantic, in our appreciation of soccer we employ what the sociologist C. Wright Mills once called “the everyday empiricism of common sense,” which is filled with the “assumptions and stereotypes of one or another particular society; for common sense determines what is seen and how it is to be explained.”

Although everyday empiricism is employed to appreciate and make some sense of soccer, an “abstracted empiricism” dominates sociological and criminological understandings of homicide in the United States. Mills refers to “abstracted empiricism” as that kind of reflection which leads only to the “microscopic or subhistorical level.” In his view, “What abstracted empiricists
call empirical 'data' represent a very abstracted view of everyday social worlds. They normally deal, for example, with an age-level of a sex-category of an income-bracket of middle-sized cities. Abstracted empiricism dominates American criminology and has limited the overall understanding of homicide in general, and of domestic homicide in particular. Amidst a plethora of causal models, regression analyses, controls for this supposedly "discrete" variable or that, criminologists lose sight of domestic homicide as a process. Rather, homicides are frozen onto the pages of a supplemental homicide report and then grafted onto some model or subjected to the latest statistical obscurity. Like packaged frozen vegetables that have long since lost touch with a field or the earth, homicide statistics and the data sets they become a part of are convenient but usually bereft of flavor. In short, the use of abstracted empiricism to understand homicide produces accounts and explanations that are about as far removed from social life and historical change as the dead bodies that generated those statistics in the first place.

Abstracted empiricism is generally ill suited to understanding the complex microprocesses and cultural dynamics of domestic homicide. Using abstracted empiricism, it is difficult to gain access to the interaction between human beings, their respective biographies, and their neighborhoods; it is also difficult to understand the broader social, economic, and political structures that affect and are in turn shaped by those microdynamics. In addition, the use of abstracted empiricism, even within the ranks of such empiricists, is fraught with difficulty if the variable "domestic homicide" is subject to multiple and conflicting social and legal definitions, at the same time as being susceptible to significant errors in reporting. The Uniform Crime Reports for 1994 informed us that there were 230 domestic homicides in Florida. Most police departments use the Florida statute on domestic violence to classify a homicide as a domestic homicide. Florida law defines "domestic violence" as "any assault, battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another who is or was residing in the same single dwelling unit." A "family or household member" refers to "spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they have been married or have resided together at any time." In classifying homicides that occurred in 1994, Florida police departments some-
times did not count child deaths stemming from abuse and neglect. Similarly, those persons who committed suicide after killing one or more family members were usually not included among the ranks of domestic-homicide victims. These omissions alone produce an underestimate of the number of domestic-violence fatalities.

Although the statutory definition of domestic violence excludes boyfriends and girlfriends who do not live together or have a child in common, these deaths (around 20 in Florida in 1994) have dynamics similar to the cases that formally meet the statutory definition. Consequently, I include such deaths as domestic homicides. Counting the boyfriend-girlfriend homicides together with all known child domestic deaths and the suicide victims gives a total of 319 domestic-homicide victims. I do not pretend that this working total is exhaustive. However, I do contend that it conveys an "everyday empirical reality" of domestic homicide that is more accurate than the official figure of 230 that became enshrined in supplementary homicide reports from Florida.

My analysis of domestic death is embedded in the constellations of daily routines and personal interactions between persons connected through networks of kinship, those who often combine their earnings, or those who survive from a common pool of resources. Although sexual intimacy is a central dynamic in many of the domestic homicides, and although it may appear that other family homicides are somehow traceable to or derivative of those sexual relationships, to focus only on sexual intimacy would be to deny the role of numerous other social forces. For example, it is difficult to explain the lethal conflicts between brothers as part of the sexual intimacy between men, or as somehow deriving from the sexual intimacy or lack thereof between their parents or caretakers.

In Chapters 2 through 6, I draw upon multiagency case files from the State of Florida to explore the microdynamics of intimate killing. Building upon an everyday empirical breakdown of who kills whom, and upon the essential demographic characteristics of perpetrators and victims, I move quickly into relationship histories, familial dynamics, neighborhood, subcultural and cultural phenomena, agency involvement, and a slew of other contextual materials. It is out of and through this pasteiche of narrative resources that I build patterns, observe the subtle making and operation of social structures, and identify the intricate workings of power.
Even though I am critical of what Ann Jones once called the “bone dry” research literature on homicide, it nevertheless affords many insights into domestic homicide. In what follows, I highlight the parts of this literature that are useful in understanding the character of domestic homicide. The research literature on “domestic homicide” essentially addresses murder or non-negligent manslaughter between intimate partners and family members. In most cases, “domestic” refers to those killings that occur within the confines of the family, whether the partners are married or not. The extant literature distinguishes between “intimate-partner homicide” and “family homicide.” In their analysis of domestic homicides in New York City, Wilt, Illman, and Brodyfield define an “intimate partner” as one who was the victim’s current or former spouse or lover. A perpetrator was a “family member” and consequently committed family homicide if he or she was the victim’s relative by blood or marriage. “Intimate-partner homicide” therefore specifically refers to the murder or non-negligent manslaughter of a person by her or his current or former intimate partner. For example, a husband who murders his wife commits intimate-partner homicide, as does the man who kills the woman he used to live intimately with but was not married to. The term “family homicide,” on the other hand, denotes the killing of someone by a victim’s relative by blood or marriage. For example, cases where a father kills his daughter, a grandfather murders a granddaughter, or a child murders his parents are all family homicides.

Intimate-Partner Homicide

There is an extensive research literature on willful killings within sexual relationships. A small portion of it locates such killing within a broader framework of patriarchal relations. However, the bulk of the literature documents longitudinal trends in incidence and provides detailed demographic information on perpetrators and victims. This is an important literature, as it provides insights into the social distribution of intimate killing, particularly the sex, race, and socioeconomic backgrounds of participants. It also offers statistics on age, the use of weapons, alcohol and drug use, and past histories of threatened or attempted suicides on the part of those involved. Some data sets contain a certain amount of information on indicators of a prior history of domestic violence within the family, or a record of any protective orders served on perpetrators that might suggest a history of domestic abuse. However, it is often difficult to know for sure if cases of intimate killing are preceded by domestic violence. At times police do not log their calls to domestic-violence incidents. Recent research suggests that roughly half of intimate-partner violence is reported to the police.

Finally, large data sets on intimate killing also provide access to the criminal backgrounds of perpetrators and victims, enabling researchers to trace links between prior acts of criminal violence and intimate homicide. In what follows, I highlight some of the main features of the extant research on intimate-partner homicide. Much of this literature draws upon official records, police supplemental homicide reports, and Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data published by the FBI. As such, it is limited when it comes to exploring the fine details of individual cases, or some of the idiosyncrasies of relationship conflicts that do not lend themselves easily to quantification.

Trends

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in the United States during the years from 1976 through 1996, intimate-partner murder fell from 2,959 (1976) to 1,809 (1996). Spousal murder, the largest subcomponent of intimate-partner murder declined 52 percent during this period. The number of U.S. women murdered by intimates fell from 1,600 in 1976 to 1,232 in 1996. Over the same years, the number of men murdered by intimates decreased from 1,357 to 516. This overall decline in intimate murder is most marked in the African-American community. The per capita rate of intimate murders among blacks was 11 times that among whites in 1976, but only 4 times the rate among whites in 1996. The sharpest decreases occurred among black male victims. The BJS report specifically notes:

In 1976 the per capita rate of intimate murder of black men was nearly 19 times higher than that of white men. The rate among black females that year was seven times higher than the rate among white females. In 1996 the black male rate was eight times that of white males, and the black female rate was three times higher than the white female rate.

The Chicago Homicide Data Set contains extensive police data from more than 22,000 homicides in the city between 1965 and 1993. The police determined that 2,556 persons were killed in intimate-partner homicides during this period. Of these, 1,271 were women murdered by a male partner and 1,227 were men murdered by a female partner. Fifty-eight of the homicides occurred in domestic gay relationships.
Age  In general, younger rather than older persons are more likely to be the victims and perpetrators of intimate homicide. In their analysis of FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports from 1976 to 1985, Mercy and Saltzman identified 16,595 spousal homicides. They found that the frequency of this crime increased as the age differential between the partners increased. Daly and Wilson note that "marriages with exceptionally high age disparities . . . have homicide rates four times as high as that prevailing in marriages with the most common gap, namely those in which the husband is about 2 years older." The age distribution is fractured by race or ethnicity and by gender. Block and Christakos report African-American men aged 35 to 39 are the most frequent victims of intimate-partner homicide, with a rate of 18 per 100,000 per year. Among women, African Americans aged 30 to 34 are the most victimized group, with 11 being killed by intimate partners per 100,000 per year. The risk for white and Latino women in all age ranges is much lower than for blacks.

Race and Ethnicity  African Americans are heavily overrepresented among all homicide victims. Indeed, homicide is the leading cause of death among black women under 44 and among young black men. The same is true for intimate-partner homicides. Block and Christakos remark that in 1990 the intimate-partner homicide rate in Chicago was 5.7 per 100,000 for African Americans, compared with rates of 1.1 for Latinos and 0.4 for whites. In their longitudinal analysis of spousal homicide, Mercy and Saltzman found similar differentials by race. Among blacks, the rate of spousal homicide was 8.4 times higher than among whites.

Spousal homicides among blacks decreased between 1976 and 1985. However, as Stark and Flicker caution, this apparent decline may merely reflect the fact that black partners increasingly define themselves as unmarried. Additionally, these researchers point out that the seemingly high rates of black domestic homicide may have more to do with the lowly social class position of blacks than with race. Their argument is consistent with a number of other studies that argue that socioeconomic status (SES) rather than racial differences offers a better explanation for variations in homicide rates across states and between cities. For example, in his study of 222 intraracial homicides in Atlanta, Centerwall used the number of persons per room in residences as a proxy for SES. He concluded that once SES was controlled blacks were no more likely than whites to commit domestic homicide. In a later study of 349 intraracial homicides in New Orleans, Centerwall found similar results. He concludes:

First in Atlanta, and now in New Orleans, six fold differences between blacks and whites in rates of intraracial domestic homicide are entirely accounted for by differences in SES between the respective black and white populations. There remain no significant residual differences in homicide rate that require recourse to cultural explanations.

One of the possible mechanisms at work in producing higher rates of violent crime in the African-American community is the differential response of police and health professionals. Stark and Flicker suggest that police take crime less seriously in black residential areas and are more willing to tolerate and contain it until it spills over into wealthier white neighborhoods. This means that intrafamilial disturbances will not be policed in the same way as they would in white communities, thereby allowing the disputes to escalate unchecked toward lethal violence. Stark observes:

Injuries to black women from domestic assaults are dutifully treated in the emergency room, but protocols for spouse abuse are rarely introduced or followed in inner-city hospitals. Similarly, although police may be frequently called to intervene in domestic disputes among black couples, effective protection for the woman is rarely provided. . . . If inadequate police protection leads to a domestic homicide, the problem is not race, but racial bias.

Recent research suggests that black women are more likely to report their intimate victimization to police than are women of other races, with two-thirds of them contacting law enforcement officers. This contrasts with victimized white women, approximately half of whom notified police. Among surveyed women, 90 percent of all victims of domestic violence reported that officers responded to their call, usually arriving at the scene within 10 minutes.

In her investigation of domestic homicides in six U.S. cities, Mann found that in 57 percent of the cases where women killed the deaths resulted from one pistol shot or a single stab wound. She suggests that a significant number of victims might have lived had they received better medical help. Since Mann found the majority of these homicides took place in minority (particularly black) neighborhoods with histories of poor public services, she suggests the deaths may have resulted from assaults that became homicides rather than from actions designed to kill.

Clearly, the disproportionately high number of intimate-partner homi-
cides among African Americans cannot be explained by innate black tendencies toward violence or homicidal behavior. If this were the case one would expect to find much higher rates of homicide in general, and domestic homicide in particular, in predominantly black cultures in Africa, and this is not so. Moreover, if differential rates of domestic homicide are not attributable solely to factors such as SES, then it is likely that the legacy of slavery, oppression, and discrimination plays an important part.

Sex Block and Christakos find that the risk of intimate homicide is roughly the same for men and women in Chicago over the years 1965 to 1993. Among Latinos and non-Latino whites the risk is significantly higher for women than men. For example, looking at Latino-on-Latino intimate homicides for 1965–93, they report that 82 men killed their female partners, compared with only 25 women who killed their male partners. For white-on-white killings from 1965 to 1993, 220 men killed women, compared with only 69 women killing men. However, among non-Latino African Americans the risk of being killed by an intimate was higher for men than women. Specifically, among black-on-black intimate-partner homicides, 871 men killed women, compared with 1,077 women who killed men.

The Chicago Homicide Data Set also reveals that the patterns of intimate-partner killing vary by the type of relationship (married, cohabiting) between the partners. This variation is also fractured by race or ethnicity and by the sex of the victim. In Chicago, non-Latino whites were killed most frequently by a spouse, whereas non-Latino African Americans were killed more frequently by a girlfriend or boyfriend. Block and Christakos also found that although black male and female victims died in somewhat equal numbers, the latter were more likely to be killed by an estranged partner.

In the United States between 1976 and 1985, interspousal killings accounted for an estimated 18,417 fatalities. Wives represented 10,529 victims and husbands 7,888. Using U.S. homicide data, Wilson and Daly note that “for every 100 men who killed their wives, about 75 wives killed their husbands.” The investigators use the term “Sex Ratio of Killing” (SROK) to refer to the “homicides perpetrated by women per 100 perpetrated by men.” These sex ratios are peculiar to the United States. In Australia, Canada, Denmark, England and Wales, Scotland, India, and other societies the proportion of female killers is much lower. However, as Moore and Tennenbaum argue, rather than asking why the U.S. SROK of 75 is so high compared with that of other countries, a more important and central question is why the SROK is so much higher for African Americans. According to these researchers, the high black SROK drives up the total SROK for the entire country. Moore and Tennenbaum note, “Excluding blacks from our analysis reduces the total SROK for the US to 48.” With this figure, the adjusted, non-black SROK for the United States comes much closer to that in New South Wales (31 for 1968–86), Canada (31 for 1974–83), and Scotland (40 for 1979–87).

Even though the extant research usefully documents the SROK by race and ethnicity, it offers very tentative explanations for racial and ethnic disparities. Some studies imply that cultural factors may be at least part of the explanation for race differentials in the commission of certain forms of domestic homicide. Block and Christakos suggest that the higher rates of suicide among Latino men after killing their female partners may be a manifestation of higher levels of guilt. They observe that “much research suggests that the low victimization risk for Latino women is due to a strong cultural sanction against male use of force against women. . . Trespassing against such a sanction may result in enough guilt to produce high suicide proportions for Latino males.” In her analysis of 12 studies of black female homicide offenders, Coramae Mann argues that the disproportionate involvement of African-American women in homicide cannot be solely attributed “to either institutional racism or defects in the social structure.” In his comparison of 12 cases of homicide-suicide with 24 cases of domestic homicide in Albuquerque, New Mexico, between 1978 and 1987, Rosenbaum observes that although only 2 percent of the population was black, fully 33 percent of the perpetrators in the domestic-homicide group was black. He goes on to suggest that “[p]erhaps the high number of women among the black perpetrators (five of eight) reflects the patriarchal aspect of black society, in which women are both dominant and aggressive.”

Other researchers, however, stop well short of describing gender relations in the African-American community as patriarchal. Wilson and Daly hypothesize that the high numbers of black women who kill their intimate partners might be attributable to the social empowerment of black women vis-à-vis black men. Noting that many poorer urban black women are part of matri-lineal kinship systems and that their residence patterns are often maritalocal, Wilson and Daly contend that black women may be in a better position to retaliate against black men. In contrast, they point out that relatively few Latino women kill Latino men and that Latino culture is strongly patrilineal.
and patrilocal. Applying this logic to other countries, they indicate that in some strongly patrilineal and patrilocal East Indian and African cultures husbands are rarely killed by wives.\textsuperscript{46} They conclude with this suggestion:

[Ci]rcumstances which in effect devalue the social and economic worth of husbands provoke both male coercion and female defense, and . . . the combination of such circumstances with matrilocal residential patterns and a high incidence of step-relationships has much relevance to the high spousal SROK in Chicago and to the ethnic group differences therein.\textsuperscript{47}

bell hooks clarifies the difference between matrilocity and matrilineality on the one hand, and matriarchy on the other.\textsuperscript{48} Over time, she sees black women as having been a more acutely oppressed group than black men. Citing historical evidence, hooks argues that the stereotype of the African-American matriarch arose during slavery and has endured to this day. However, the imagery is misleading precisely because it ignores the double oppression of race and gender. Notions of a black matriarchy confuse the centrality of black women in families and their important role in raising children with power and domination. As hooks sees it, “[T]he independent role black women were obliged to play both in the labor force and in the family was automatically perceived as unladylike.”\textsuperscript{49} This led many whites to think “black women were masculinized, castrating, ball-busters.”\textsuperscript{50} With this stereotype of African-American women in mind, it might be tempting for some criminologists to explain higher rates of black female intimate-partner homicide through black women’s aggressiveness rather than the differential oppression they have endured. Indeed, one might make sense of African-American women’s differentially high reports of interpersonal victimization\textsuperscript{51} as being but one more aspect of their historical oppression as women.

Between 1976 and 1996, 20,311 men were victims of intimate murder (62 percent killed by wives, 4 percent by former wives, and 34 percent by nonmarital partners such as girlfriends). In the same period, 31,260 women died at the hands of intimates (approximately 64 percent killed by husbands, 5 percent by former husbands, and 32 percent by nonmarital partners such as boyfriends). While the overall rate of intimate-partner murder has declined the SROK has also declined, meaning that women are increasingly more likely than men to be the victims of intimate murder.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Dynamics} Marvin Wolfgang’s classic study of 588 homicides in Philadelphia reveals that in the case of intimate-partner homicide the killing of men differs substantially from the killing of women.\textsuperscript{53} In the 47 cases in which wives killed husbands, Wolfgang concludes that 28 of the men had precipitated their own deaths by striking the woman or showing and using a deadly weapon. This compares with only nine of a hundred wife killings that Wolfgang deems “victim precipitated.” Overall, in 38 of the 47 cases where wives killed husbands Wolfgang finds the men had “strongly provoked” the act.

Barnard and his colleagues interviewed 34 persons (11 women and 23 men) accused of intimate-partner homicide and awaiting trial in the courts of north central Florida between 1970 and 1980.\textsuperscript{54} They prepared in-depth case studies of the context of the killings to render a psychiatric assessment of the ability of the offenders to stand trial. Eight of the 11 women reported having been battered by the spouse-victim they later killed. In contrast, only 5 of the 23 men reported being the victims of violence perpetrated by the wives they later killed.\textsuperscript{55} In the killings done by men, Barnard and his associates found that “sex role threat” was the most important reason given for committing homicide. Whereas women feared men’s potential to use violence against them, men did not feel that their lives were in immediate danger. Rather, they reported being upset by the victim’s threat to leave the relationship, or by a demand by the victims that they perceived as transcending the parameters of assigned female sex roles.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Killing the Competition} As intimate relationships change, new partners can arrive on the scene. Sometimes they compete with old partners for the affections of their newfound lovers. At times these competitions, nearly always between men, end in lethal violence. As such, these so called love-triangle killings between competitors for the same person can be seen as deriving from the conflict between sexual intimates, and particularly from the tension surrounding women leaving one partner and developing a love interest elsewhere. In some of these cases the term \textit{love triangle} can be misleading and inaccurate since it implies that women are still in love with former battersers, when in fact they have new lovers. Wilson and Daly’s analysis of social conflict homicides among unrelated persons in Detroit reveals that conflicts involving sexual jealousy figure prominently.\textsuperscript{57} Among such killings by men, these “jealousy conflicts” (20 cases) rank behind only “retaliation for previous verbal or physical
abuse" (26 cases) and "escalated showing off disputes" (75 cases). In their classic and often-cited study, *Homicide*, Wilson and Daly remark that “[s]exual jealousy and rivalry have been prominent in virtually every study of homicide motives."99 Indeed, these authors coined the phrase "killing the competition" to refer to how men eliminate each other because of their common interests in women, a violent phenomenon that appears to be universal.

Kenneth Polk’s research into patterns of male killing in Australia identifies 12 cases, out of a sample of 102 involving sexual bonds, in which “the violence of the male reached out to the sexual rival of the male.”61 In discussing a typical case of sexual jealousy and the killing of a love triangle antagonist, Polk points out that “there are often clear warnings of the lethal violence to come. The woman, his possession, was not just slipping out from under his control, but even worse she was taking up with a new sexual partner.”62 Even though Polk emphasizes that the most frequent target of the abusive man’s rage is his estranged lover, he also comments, “In a common variant of this scenario of jealousy, the action shifts to encompass the male competition in the sexual triangle.”63

**Family Homicide**

**Parricide** The killing of parents by their children is a form of domestic homicide that has received scant attention in the extant literature.64 Kathleen Heide identifies three types of persons who kill their parents: severely abused children, severely mentally ill children, and dangerously antisocial children. The “severely abused child” is most frequently encountered among the ranks of those who commit parricide, according to Mones, more than 90 percent of youths who commit parricide have been abused by their parents.65 Such killers typically endure one or more forms of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or they witness some combination of these abusive episodes within their families.66 Much less often, individuals who kill parent(s) are mentally ill to the point that they qualify as psychotic. Heide describes these persons as follows: “Psychotic individuals have lost contact with reality. Their personalities are typically severely disorganized, their perceptions are distorted, and their communications are often disjointed. Their behavior may be inappropriate to the setting and characterized by repetitive, purposeless actions. . . . They may experience hallucinations . . . and bizarre delusions.”68 Finally, Heide mentions the dangerously antisocial child, nowadays referred to as someone with a conduct disorder or antisocial personality disorder. These individuals do not suffer from delusions and hallucinations. Among the ranks of such offenders we may see those who kill their parents for personal gain.

**Fratricide and Sororicide** Ewing finds that sibling killings are about as common as parricides.69 Most are committed by males, and over 80 percent of the victims and perpetrators are adults. These forms of family homicide, like intimate-partner killings, are often preceded by a long history of domestic rivalry and unresolved conflicts. As in other kinds of domestic homicide, the precipitating event takes place in a context of long-standing antagonism that is often exacerbated before the killing by a change in one of the sibling’s circumstances. Ewing puts it as follows:

In many adult sibling homicides, perpetrators are dealing not only with unresolved childhood conflicts and the stress of living with a brother or sister but often trying to cope with a variety of other problems in living. Indeed, in many cases, these other stressors—such as unemployment, divorce, substance abuse, and illness—have forced the perpetrator into a situation of being financially dependent on parents and/or the sibling who is eventually killed.70

**The Domestic Killing of Children** Martin and Besharov observe that the number of child abuse deaths nationally fell from about 3,000 in 1975 to about 1,200 in 1988.71 Using death certificate data, McClain and colleagues estimate the annual number of child deaths from abuse and neglect between 1979 and 1988 to range from 949 to 2,022 for ages up to 17 years.72 According to Ewing, in 1995 there were 1,215 documented child fatalities in the United States caused by child abuse, neglect, or both.73 However, these estimates typically do not include those girls and boys killed in homicide-suicides and familicides that are not counted as abuse fatalities.

**Perpetrators of Child Homicide** Ann Goetting reports that the typical person arrested for the domestic killing of children is a locally born, Protestant black man or woman in his or her middle twenties who is married and residing with the family. “He or she is undereducated, unemployed, and has an arrest record. The parent-child relationship is severed in a rage of impatience and anger at a private residence as a result of beating or shaking.”74 As members of a racial
minority, these perpetrators tend to be marginalized and deeply disadvantaged. Although they possessed highly developed “street smarts,” these men and women lacked knowledge of the rudiments of successful parenting.

In their study of 14 cases of fatal child abuse and neglect, Hicks and Gaughan identify fathers as perpetrators in 4 cases and mothers’ boyfriends in another 4. Using a much larger sample of 104 cases, Schloesser, Pierpont, and Poertner identify 34 male perpetrators (56.7 percent of known perpetrators) of child fatalities, most of whom were fathers, stepfathers, or boyfriends, and 22 mothers (36.7 percent of known perpetrators) who killed their children. The researchers were not able to identify a perpetrator in 44 of the 104 cases.

Age

In their description of the interagency review of 637 deaths of children aged 12 or under in Orange County, California, between 1989 and 1991, Gellert and his collaborators report that 72 percent of the boys and girls who died unattended or in questionable circumstances were less than 2 years of age. Of those deaths definitely attributed to homicide, 72 percent involved children under the age of 4. Indeed, in a majority of the homicides the victims were less than 2 years old. In Copeland’s study of 62 child abuse fatalities investigated by medical examiners in Dade County, Florida, between 1956 and 1982, 45.6 percent of the victims were under the age of 1, 33.8 percent were aged 1 to 2 years, and 11.8 percent were from 2 to 3 years old. These findings are consistent with other research showing that younger abused children are at greater risk of severe injury and homicide.

Gellert and his colleagues found that, in their sample, the majority of the children killed were boys. Their proportion for all age categories was 58 percent, with the ratio varying little by age (53 percent to 59 percent). However, when these researchers examined child homicides and child abuse deaths there was no significant difference in the sex ratios of decedents. Such a finding of sex symmetry echoes a number of other studies.

Race and Ethnicity

A number of investigations show that some racial and ethnic groups exhibit higher rates of child abuse and neglect deaths than others. In their study of 437 deaths of children younger than 15 in Cook County, Illinois, between 1977 and 1982 that resulted from either homicide or unexplained causes, Christoffel, Anzinger, and Merrill showed that violent death rates for black children far outstripped those for whites. They comment, “[T]he ratio of black to white homicide rates ranged from a low of 1.0 (for 10 and 11 year old boys in Chicago) to a high of 10.4 (for 3 and 4 year old girls in Chicago), with values between 2 and 5.5 for most subgroups.” Since parents were responsible for the majority of deaths among children under 5 years old, the investigation by Christoffel and her associates points to a disproportionate number of domestic child homicides in the black community. A number of other studies reach similar conclusions.

Ann Goetting points out that although African Americans made up 63 percent of Detroit’s population in 1980, they constituted 90.5 percent of child homicide victims in 1982 and 67 percent in 1983. Abel’s findings regarding 62 child homicides in Erie County, New York, between 1972 and 1984 are similar to those of Christoffel, Anzinger, and Merrill and of Goetting in highlighting the disproportionately high rates of child homicide among African Americans. Specifically, Abel comments, “For black children 4 years of age and younger, the homicide rate was especially high (17.9 per 100,000) compared with white children (1.63 per 100,000).” Sorensen, Richardson, and Peterson studied the cases of 246 children (newborn to 14 years old) who were murdered in Los Angeles between 1980 and 1989. They conclude that non-Hispanic white children are at the lowest risk of death due to homicide, followed by Hispanic and then black youngsters: “Black children (both those 4 years and younger and those aged 5 to 14 years) are at an extremely high risk of homicide. Black male and female children are at 13.75- and 5.42-fold greater risk of homicide, respectively, than their non-Hispanic white peers.”

In their study of 267 child abuse or neglect deaths in Texas over the years 1975 to 1977, Anderson and her collaborators noted only one overrepresentation of black homicide victims, but also noted that Mexican-American children were significantly more likely than Anglo and black children to die from medical neglect. Indeed, 46.5 percent of Mexican-American child homicide deaths stemmed from medical neglect, compared to only 18.5 percent and 21.1 percent for Anglos and blacks, respectively.

Even though these various studies document the disproportionate domestic killing of minority (particularly African-American) children, very few actually explain racial or ethnic differentials in child homicide. A number of researchers have pointed to the folly of drawing conclusions from the high rates of African-American child homicides without controlling for factors such as social class or socioeconomic status. For example, Kunz and Bahr note that “African-American children were 35% of the victims of child homicide, even though African Americans comprised only 12% of the population.” However,
the authors also remark that "comparisons by race do not mean much without controlling for socioeconomic status."89 Using Ohio Vital Statistics records and U.S. Census data to analyze 574 childhood homicides in that state between 1974 and 1984, Muscat concludes that, although child homicide rates are significantly higher in the black community, the differentials "tend to fade when SES is taken into consideration."90

Multiple Domestic Killings
Household homicides in which more than one person dies involve various permutations and combinations of victims, among them intimate partners, competitors or love triangle antagonists, family members (including children), and the perpetrators themselves. As such, these killings combine many of the features of intimate-partner, love triangle, and family homicides. However, multiple domestic killings also have a number of unique characteristics that warrant mention.

Homicide-Suicide This form of domestic killing involves the death of one or more persons followed soon after by the suicide of the perpetrator. It is usually men who kill their wives and former wives, lovers and former lovers. In their study of homicide-suicide in North Carolina over the years 1972 through 1977, Palmer and Humphrey found few women among the perpetrators. Out of 90 homicide-suicides during this period, only 6 percent were committed by women.91 Wolfgang's Philadelphia study found that out of 24 cases of homicide-suicide, only 8 percent were committed by women.92 It should be borne in mind that woman battering is a significant antecedent to homicide-suicide committed by men. For example, Marzuk, Tardiff, and Hirsch note that "[w]hile some murder-suicides occur shortly after the onset of 'malignant jealousy,' more often there has been a chronically chaotic relationship fraught with jealous suspicions, verbal abuse, and sub-lethal violence."93

Sherry Currens and her associates examined homicide-suicide occurring in Kentucky from 1985 to 1990.94 These researchers defined a homicide-suicide cluster as one or more willful killings with the subsequent suicide of the perpetrator. The 67 homicide-suicide clusters accounted for 6 percent of all homicides during the period studied. Perhaps most significantly, 65 of the 67 perpetrators (97 percent) were men, and 58 of the 80 homicide victims (73 percent) were women. In 64 homicide-suicide clusters (96 percent of the total), the homicide victim and perpetrator knew each other. Again very significantly, in 47 of the 67 clusters (70 percent) the perpetrator was either a current husband (37 clusters), boyfriend (7 clusters), or a former husband (3 clusters) of the victim. Currens and her fellow researchers found that many homicide-suicides are preceded by a history of woman abuse. They observe that "the typical perpetrator is a man married [to] or living with a woman in a relationship marked by physical abuse."95

Steven Stack reports that the odds of a suicide following a homicide rise significantly if the victim is or was in an intimate relationship with the perpetrator.96 Analyzing 16,245 homicides (including 265 homicide-suicides) in Chicago, and controlling for sociodemographic variables, Stack concludes that if the victim is the former spouse or lover of the perpetrator, then the risk of suicide is 12.68 times higher than it is for nonintimate homicides.97 Suicide risk is also higher if perpetrators kill their own child (10.28), their current spouse (8.0), their current girlfriend or boyfriend (6.11), or a friend (1.88). The risk of suicide declines as the socially prescribed intensity of the bond between the perpetrator and victim diminishes. Drawing upon the work of qualitative researchers, Stack identifies the relationship between perpetrators and victims as "frustrated, chaotic," and "marked by jealousy and ambivalence." Also present is a feeling on the part of the perpetrator that one cannot live with the other person but cannot live without them either. A separation or threatened separation arouses anger and depression at the same time. The act of homicide overcomes a sense of helplessness. However, the associated depression and guilt over the loss of one's love object result in suicide.98

Numerous other studies examine the role of psychological factors as precursors to homicide-suicide.99 Although these studies were conducted at different times and used different data sources, often in different countries, there seems to be some agreement as to the importance of such factors as depression, manic depression, and morbid jealousy as antecedents of these fatalities.

Suicide Pacts and Mercy Killing A number of authors allude to the role of the serious and usually chronic illness of the victim, perpetrator, or both as a motive in these forms of domestic homicide.100 Usually the elderly male partner, who may himself be in ill health, kills the ailing woman with a gun and
then commits suicide. The motive for the homicide is allegedly to end her suffering. The killer's suicide is attributed to the loss of his love object, the prospect of impending helplessness, and, more rarely, guilt. Cavan points out that the impending loss of one of the partners in an intimate relationship can be too much for the remaining partner to contemplate—"[T]he loss of the relationship wrecks so large a part of the life-organization of each that an adjustment seems impossible." This is one reason suicide pacts are found almost exclusively among those in intimate relationships. However, these pacts and so-called mercy killings are not as simple as they might at first appear. In Chapter 2, I introduce information that suggests a more cautious interpretation. Rather than accepting that one partner kills the other out of kindness, I explore the possibility that some of these acts constitute murder and may have been preceded by abuse.

**Familicide** Daniel Cohen's richly textured historical analysis of family killing in the early American Republic identifies acute psychosis, depression, and delusional jealousy as being at the heart of the contemporary psychiatric explanations of these relatively rare atrocities. However, Cohen is careful to indicate that although many persons must have suffered from these emotional problems few took the lives of their entire families. He argues for an examination of familialicide not only through the emotional constitution of the perpetrator, but by reference to the shifting social and cultural milieu within which he or she acted. Cohen notes the significance during the early Republic of geographical mobility, economic opportunity, the "revolution against patriarchal authority," and the role of changing religious beliefs as cultural frames of reference against which to make sense of the behavior of those who killed their families.

Analyses of modern-day familialicides emphasize the manner in which socio-economic pressures and perpetrators' concerns about their social standing compound or supersede psychiatric problems as the primary cause of these tragedies. Charles Ewing observes that it is almost always men who kill their entire families. He suggests that they do so not just as the culmination of increasing attempts to control their female partners. Rather, Ewing notes, "[T]he typical family killer is more likely to have been concerned about losing control over more than just his wife or family. His concern is more often with losing control over all aspects of his life, or at least those that he most values. He is a man who, in his own eyes, is, or is about to become, a failure."  

**Interrelated Antecedents to Intimate-Partner Homicide**

The research literature on domestic killings identifies a number of interconnected precursors to lethal violence. These antecedents include escalating domestic violence and the increasing entrapment of battered women; the separation, estrangement, or divorce of the parties; obsessive possessiveness or morbid jealousy shown by the abusive partner; threats to commit intimate-partner homicide, suicide, or both; priority agency involvement, particularly with the police; the issuance of protective or restraining orders against one of the parties, nearly always the man; depression on the part of the abuser; and a prior criminal history of violent behavior on the part of the abusive man.

Dobash and her colleagues nicely summarize these antecedents:

Men often kill wives after lengthy periods of prolonged physical violence accompanied by other forms of abuse and coercion; the roles in such cases are seldom if ever reversed. Men perpetrate familialidal massacres, killing spouse and children together; women do not. Men commonly hunt down and kill wives who have left them; women hardly ever behave similarly. Men kill wives as part of planned murder-suicides; analogous acts by women are almost unheard of. Men kill in response to revelations of visibly infidelity; women almost never respond similarly, though their mates are more often adulterous. The evidence is overwhelming that a large proportion of the spouse-killing perpetrated by wives, but almost none of those perpetrated by husbands, are acts of self-defense.

**Prior History of Domestic Violence**  The role of some antecedents has been documented more substantially than others. An escalating history of domestic violence seems to be widely recognized as the most important of these, although its greater prevalence has not been clearly spelled out empirically. Stark and Flitschcraft argue that most spousal, intersexual, and child homicides have at their root a history of woman battering. Partner abuse usually escalates before the fatal incident, and the degree of "entrapment" rises. Increasing entrapment is usually evidenced by physical and sexual abuse alongside rigid control of women's movements, sociability, money, food, working life, and sexual activities. According to Stark and Flitschcraft, it is this rising level of entrapment that is the most significant risk factor for gendered homicide.
In Goetting’s analysis of 84 men and women arrested for killing their spouses in Detroit, she stresses that the marital homicide experience differs significantly by gender: For the homicidal husband the act is nearly always offensive; for the wife it is usually defensive. This supports the popular contention that marital homicide, regardless of who inflicts the fatal blow, typically is a reflection of wife abuse.\(^{115}\)

Research on women who kill their intimate partners demonstrates how the majority are driven to such violence as a final act of self-preservation.\(^{116}\) Like that of a number of previous investigators, Ann Goetting’s research (on intimate-partner homicide in Detroit) captures the qualitative differences between male- and female-perpetrated intimate killing. In discussing the 46 men arrested for killing their mates in Detroit during 1982 and 1983, she observes that the typical perpetrator is an undereducated, unemployed father with an arrest record, whose final act in a series of heated arguments or confrontations with his slightly younger current or former wife or girlfriend culminated in an offensive gunshot.\(^{117}\)

Women, for their part, do not always kill men in self-defense. In examining instances where women killed their male partners, Polk and Ransom note that in 6 of the 7 cases… the woman was protecting herself from the violence of the male. That violence in all cases was extensive, and had continued for some time. . . . The one case where a woman killed for reasons other than responding to her partner’s violence involved a woman who used homicide as the method for discarding her current partner in order to take up a relationship with another male.\(^{118}\)

**Obsessive Possessiveness and Morbid Jealousy** In their cross-cultural analysis of homicide, Daly and Wilson attribute marital violence in general to men’s attempts to regulate women, especially their reproductive capacities.\(^{119}\) Citing Manfred Guttmancher’s 1955 analysis of 31 persons (24 men and 7 women) in Baltimore who had killed their spouses, they conclude that “81 percent of the 31 spousal homicides were motivated by sexual proprietariness.”\(^{120}\) According to Daly and Wilson, spousal murder, whether committed by men or women, is steeped in “male sexual proprietariness.”\(^{121}\) The role of this factor has been identified in diverse cultural settings, including India, Uganda, the former Belgian Congo, and Samoa.\(^{122}\) Eastal specifically identifies what she calls “obsessive” or “pathological” jealousy, in which the perpetrator sees his partner as an integral part of himself. Consequently, any actual or threatened separation of the woman is a threat to the abuser’s identity. Eastal traces this characteristic of some intimate relationships to “a society where women have been long regarded as the property or possessions of men.”\(^{123}\) Some studies attach more importance to excessive jealousy than do others.\(^{124}\) Stack highlights the paranoid beliefs of perpetrators that their partners are being unfaithful to them. He describes “morbid jealousy” as a “delusion,” or a mistaken belief, that one’s sexual partner has been sexually unfaithful.\(^{125}\)

**Escaping: Separation, Estrangement, Divorce** The extant research literature shows that women experience an increased risk of lethal violence when they leave intimate relationships with men.\(^{126}\) Wilson and Daly’s analysis of inter-spousal homicide from summary data in Canada (1974–90), New South Wales (1968–86), and Chicago (1965–90) reveals that wives experienced a “substantially elevated” risk of lethal victimization when estranged from and no longer living with their husbands.\(^{127}\) These researchers comment that among married, cohabiting Canadian spouses between 1974 and 1983 “a man was almost four times as likely to kill his wife as to be killed by her; among estranged couples, he was more than nine times as likely to kill her as she him.”\(^{128}\) According to Wilson and Daly the significantly increased risk was not due to an escalation of the violence that was already present in these marital relationships. Rather, they point out that batterers warned their wives that if they left they would be killed: they then followed through on those threats.\(^{129}\)

Eastal also reports that the suicide of the perpetrator of intimate-partner homicide is more likely if the parties were separated before the killing, although she contends that the length of the separation does not seem to be important.\(^{130}\) For Eastal, in cases of homicide-suicide it is the inability of the offender to conceive of himself as an entity separate from his partner that propels him toward killing.

**Prior Threats to Kill** As mentioned above, Wilson and Daly emphasize that batterers tell their partners they will kill them if they attempt to leave the rela-
tionship. However, threats to kill are integral parts of many abusive relationships, most of which do not end in homicide. According to the BJS, 7 of 10 women who reported being the victims of intimate violence stated that they were physically attacked; for the others, the attack was attempted or threatened. Among this remaining group, 31 percent reported that the offenders threatened to kill them. Other researchers anecdotally report that abusive men threaten the lives of the women they end up killing.

Prior Agency Contacts State offices such as social services and the police have often had dealings with one or more family members before a household killing. Citing research in Detroit and Kansas City, Angela Browne observes that in 85 to 90 percent of domestic homicides "police had been called to the home at least once during the two years before the incident, and in half (54 percent) of the cases, they had been called five or more times." Referencing research conducted on women incarcerated for killing their abusers, Browne notes that "all the women who had killed abusive mates reported that they called for police help at least five times before taking the life of the man." For Stark and Fittocht, the health, justice, and social service response to battering often ends up reinforcing women's entrapment, thereby increasing the chances of a fatality.

For many studies of domestic homicide, the data on the prior role of police and the courts are sketchy. Part of the reason is that official reports of homicide do not always include information on prior criminal justice interventions. In addition, even if police agencies do come to the scene of domestic disturbances before a homicide, officers do not always enter the call into the official record. Easteal, for example, found formal evidence of earlier police calls to a residence, existing restraining orders, or a pending assault charge in only 18.2 percent of 770 cases.

Prior Criminal Histories Research reveals that many men who use sublethal and lethal violence against women have prior arrests and convictions for violent offenses. One might expect that perpetrators of intimate-partner homicide, like perpetrators of domestic violence in general, have records of committing violent acts against others, and not just their partners. Fagan, Stewart, and Hansen, using a national sample of battered women, show that more than half of the batterers had a history of nondomestic violence. Of these men, more than 80 percent had been arrested at least once for such assaults. Investigating the backgrounds of 644 male batterers arrested in Quincy, Massachusetts, Klein reports that 43 percent had criminal histories. Among those arrested batterers, he notes that nearly two-thirds had committed crimes against males as well as females and that, on average, they had committed 4.5 prior crimes against persons.

Block and Christakos find that male perpetrators of intimate-partner homicide are more likely than their female counterparts to have arrest histories. In the Chicago data set they observe that 40 percent of male perpetrators had previous arrests for a violent offense, compared with only 18 percent of female perpetrators. The BJS report on intimate violence reaches similar conclusions. It records that among those jailed for intimate violence fully 78 percent had a conviction history, although not necessarily for acts of domestic violence. Of those jailed for intimate violence, 40 percent were then under the supervision of the criminal justice system, with roughly 20 percent on probation, 9 percent governed by the terms of an active restraining order, and just under 10 percent on either parole, pretrial release, or some other condition.

Alcohol, Drugs, or Both The use of alcohol correlates highly with the commission of sublethal domestic violence. The BJS report points out that more than half of both prison and jail inmates incarcerated for intimate violence admitted to using alcohol, drugs, or both when they committed their offenses. However, correlation is not proof of causation, and researchers have not identified the precise role of alcohol, drug use, or both in either sublethal or lethal violence involving intimate partners. Most studies of intimate-partner homicide report alcohol use before or at the time of the fatality to be a much more significant correlate than drug use. Easteal notes that over 50 percent of those who killed intimate partners in the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria between 1988 and 1990 used alcohol during the fatal episode. Block and Christakos report that alcohol was more likely to be involved in the Chicago intimate-partner homicides in which women killed men, an effect especially pronounced among Latinos. Easteal also points out that the effects of alcohol differ by race. She found that Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have been drinking at the time they killed their intimate partners.

Interrelated Antecedents to Child Homicide

There is a dearth of information about the interrelated antecedents to the killing of girls and boys in the home. Apart from the demographic characteristics of the key social actors involved in child homicides, the three antecedents that
emerge from the literature are a history of child abuse, prior agency involvement with the family, and a history of adult domestic violence in the family.

Prior History of Child Abuse  Sabotta and Davis estimate that boys and girls reported to the child abuse registry in Washington State during the years 1973 to 1986 were almost 20 times more likely than those not reported to die from homicide. Wilczynski analyzed 48 child homicides brought to the attention of the director of public prosecutions in England and Wales in 1984. The children were killed by parents or parent substitutes. In half of the 48 cases the perpetrator had previously used violence against the child. Two-thirds of male perpetrators had previously used violence, as against only one-third of females. The severity of prior violence also differed by the sex of the offender. It was nearly always men who committed the "severe" acts, with only one woman engaging in such violence before killing her child.

Prior Agency Contact  Research shows that child protection agencies have had prior involvement with a quarter to a half of children who die from abuse and neglect. Wilczynski found that two-thirds of the 48 perpetrators of child homicide in England and Wales had previous dealings with various agencies; the level of contact was similar for men and women. Not surprisingly, perhaps, perpetrators of neonaticide who killed their children within 24 hours after birth had the lowest levels of contact with agencies.

The Role of Parental or Caretaker Domestic Violence  A number of studies point to the connection between adult domestic violence and child abuse. The research of Bowker, Arbitell, and McFerron indicates that "[c]hildren of battered wives are very likely to be battered by their fathers. The severity of the wife beating is predictive of the severity of child abuse. Husband-dominance is also a predictor of child abuse." These authors also suggest that paternal and maternal child abuse are "cut from a rather different cloth." Likewise, Stark and Flitcraft's research found that, of the 116 mothers of children referred to the Yale–New Haven Hospital for suspicion of abuse, neglect, or both from July 1977 to June 1978, "fifty-two (45 percent) had a history that put them at risk for battering and another six (5 percent) had a history of marital conflict, though it was impossible to tell from their trauma history or other medical information whether they had been abused."

From their own investigations and the work of others, Stark and Flitcraft conclude that "woman battering . . . is a major context for child abuse" and that "child abuse in these relationships represents the extension of ongoing violence and is an intermediary point in an unfolding history of battering." Both studies caution readers that it is difficult to know precisely the nature and extent either of woman battering or of child abuse or neglect. In addition, Stark and Flitcraft point to one of the methodological problems with exploring the connection between woman battering and child abuse: "Like the child abuse literature in general, the files of the hospital . . . were silent about domestic violence and the children's records rarely mentioned the man's violence. Instead, emphasis was placed on the mother's failure to fulfill her feminine role."

There is practically nothing written on the connection between adult domestic violence and child homicide. Although the literature on both topics is substantial, there is a dire need to explore the connections between the two at both empirical and theoretical levels. Some studies hint at a link, but the connections are implicit and remain largely undeveloped. For example, the important research by Southall and his colleagues on 39 cases of apparently life-threatening events in children's lives identifies 17 cases where boys and girls were either physically or sexually abused by fathers or male relatives and 5 clear-cut cases of mothers reporting prior domestic violence at the hands of husbands. These "abuse antecedents" are neither discussed in the article nor proposed as one possible context for exploring apparently life-threatening events.

Conclusion

I have highlighted some of the themes in the extant research on domestic homicide. The evidence shows that intimate-partner homicide is a profoundly gendered affair. Not only do men commit the bulk of these offenses, they do so for different reasons than women who kill their intimate partners. Men typically kill as part of an ongoing pattern of abuse directed at women; women nearly always kill in self-defense. The gendering of domestic homicide forms one of the principal organizational axes for Chapters 2 through 6. Indeed, one of the contributions of Understanding Domestic Homicide is its use of rich multiagency archival material to explore the microdynamics of this gendered killing.

It is also apparent from the literature that intimate-partner killing differs
according to race and ethnicity. African Americans commit a disproportionately high number of such homicides, although the precise reasons for this remain somewhat obscure. Black women are much more likely to kill black male intimate partners than white or Latino women are to kill their partners. Although it might be tempting to explain this by the presence of a matriarchy in the African-American community, a more accurate understanding is likely to lie in the higher levels of entrapment found among black women as compared to white and Latino women. I return to this central issue in the case study narratives and in closing Chapter 7.

Family homicides involve persons related by blood or marriage. They take a number of different forms, including parricide, fratricide, sororicide, and the killing of children. In all these forms, men constitute the majority of the perpetrators. As with homicide in general, family homicides are more likely among racial minorities and the poor. According to the research, it also appears that they are preceded by an ongoing dispute between the parties or by a somewhat stressful change in living arrangements. However, the dynamics of family homicides differ from those of intimate-partner killings insofar as it is not the norm that one family member feels he or she has proprietary rights over the other in the way that a typically male partner may feel he exerts control over his female intimate partner.

In multiple domestic killings such as homicide-suicides, "mercy killings" and suicide pacts, and familicides, the offender typically assumes the roles of perpetrator and, later, victim. Usually the male perpetrator kills his partner, or his children, or both, and then takes his own life. Sometimes he takes the life of male sexual competitors as well. These killings share a number of themes with the killing of individual partners, or children, or both. However, multiple domestic killings are sufficiently distinctive to warrant separate archival analysis (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Since intimate-partner homicides constitute such an important component of adult domestic killings, I have briefly reviewed the research into the interrelated antecedents to such deaths. These precursors include a history of domestic violence, which often results in the increasing entrapment of women; the separation, estrangement, or divorce of the parties; obsessive possessiveness and morbid jealousy by the abusive partner; threats to commit intimate-partner homicide; prior agency involvement, including police and courts; depression; the criminal history of perpetrators; and the use of alcohol, or drugs, or both. I have noted that the extant research delves into such interre-