

# Misogyny and Homicide of Women

*Jacquelyn Campbell, R.N., M.S.N.*  
*Instructor*  
*Community Health Department*  
*Wayne State University*  
*Detroit, Michigan*

**H**OMICIDE IS DEFINED as the "willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another."<sup>1(p237)</sup> In 1971 homicide was the leading cause of death for black women from 15 to 34 years of age and the third highest cause of death for white women from 15 to 29 years of age.<sup>2(pp8-11)</sup> In 1973 statistics listed homicide as the second leading cause of death for all women from 15 to 24 years of age.<sup>3(p195)</sup> Homicide must therefore be regarded as a major health problem of women, a problem that needs further study.

It can be viewed as a disease of society—and it needs to be analyzed in that context so that the direction that primary prevention should take can be identified. Herjanic and Meyer state: "The development of meaningful preventive measures depends on repeated epidemiological investigations to determine the changes in pattern of crime."<sup>1(p196)</sup> Homicide rates over time and associated demographical characteristics of the victim and perpetrator are

appropriate objects of evaluation in order to discover patterns and trends. The study on which this article is based used the police files of murdered women in Dayton, Ohio, a midwestern city of approximately 200,000 individuals, to examine in detail the patterns of homicide of women.

These patterns must be studied in conjunction with an analysis of their roots to provide a comprehensive model on which to base preventive measures. Highriter calls for nursing research studies to combine descriptive analysis of statistics with theory in order to advance community health nursing science.<sup>4</sup> Pilisak and Ober demonstrate the need to view violence in a public health perspective, to conduct "inquiry into the distribution of the malady within the total population and into the facts about the social system that correlate with this incidence."<sup>5(p389)</sup>

The missing element from most theories of violence is a thorough analysis of the role of misogyny (hatred of women). In 1977, of the 2,740 American female homicide victims, 2,447 of the perpetrators were men.<sup>6(p9)</sup> During the same year, of 8,565 men murdered, 1,780 of the offenders—only 21%—were women.<sup>6(p9)</sup> During the period January 1, 1968, through December 31, 1979, of a total of 873 homicides in Dayton, 192 of the victims were women. A total of 175 (91%) of the murderers of these women were male; 17 (9%) were female. In contrast, of the 681 men killed during that period, only 19% (127) of the perpetrators were women.

The predominance of men killing women over women killing men in both local and national statistics cannot be explained solely by attributing the male

predilection for violence to a biological tendency toward aggression, because of the fact that cultures exist in which there is virtually no homicide or other violence.<sup>7,8</sup> The possibility that misogyny is operating when men kill women needs to be considered and explored by scholars. Sills called for nursing research that examines "the relationships of sexism, racism, poverty, and other forms of deprivation to . . . health care."<sup>9(p206)</sup> Consequently this article examines the underlying causes of homicides of women in Dayton.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Steinmetz and Straus assert that "any social pattern as widespread and enduring as violence must have fundamental and enduring causes."<sup>10(p321)</sup> It is necessary to look at these causes when examining the aspect of violence in homicide of women. Biological, psychological, and sociological factors all need to be analyzed as part of the roots of violence. Although misogyny integrates all of these aspects, it has been absent from most theories regarding violence. Misogyny is a theoretical framework that needs to be considered in relationship to homicide of women. Misogyny derives from the patriarchal social system, which is an integral part of the social forces that Steinmetz and Straus state need to be understood, "because most aspects of violence, like most aspects of other human behavior, are the product of social forces interacting with basic human potential."<sup>11(p17)</sup>

Patriarchy can be defined as "any kind of group organization in which males hold dominant power and determine what part

females shall and shall not play, and in which capabilities assigned to women are relegated generally to the mystical and aesthetic and excluded from the practical and political realms."<sup>11(p79)</sup> Patriarchy has been the primary social form in recorded history, but growing archeological and anthropological evidence indicates that more equitable or matriarchal forms dominated society before recorded history. Violence, in terms of people killing each other, was virtually unknown.<sup>7,12</sup> These early cultural remnants show female deities sharing in power and in policymaking, and natural divisions of labor that were complementary and equally important, based partially (but not entirely) on sex.<sup>12,13</sup>

### Fear of women

The roots of the patriarchal societal organization probably can be most logically traced to men's fear of women in primitive times because of the unexplained mystery of reproduction.<sup>14</sup> Thousands of legends from all around the world indicate some crisis occurring when leadership was "wrested from the women, either by force or seduction or both" between 7500 BC and 1250 BC.<sup>15(p203)</sup> Early recorded history shows the efforts of men to overcome their fear by establishing a religious basis for the subjugation of women and depreciation of the woman's role.<sup>16</sup> Early Greek patriarchal formulations are based on the concepts of subjugation of nature and the linking of male "essential selves with a transcendent principle beyond nature which is pictured as intellectual and male."<sup>17(p13)</sup> Men eagerly accepted this paradigm, and the "first oppressor-oppressed relation, the foundation of all

other class and property relations," became entrenched.<sup>17(p3)</sup>

### Patriarchal nuclear family

The patriarchal formation was spread through religion, war, written history, and economics. Each subsequent sociological and economic development further divided the sexes and subjugated the female. Today every avenue of power is almost entirely controlled by men.<sup>18</sup> The male image of aggression is reflected in class and discrimination systems and attempts at controlling nature, wars, the arms race, ecological pollution, and widespread violence. Misogyny is embedded in patriarchy and is a basic part of the violence against women and nature in American society.

### Childrearing patterns

The patriarchal social and economic system has resulted in childrearing patterns where the mother has primary responsibility, especially during the early years. The lack of early parenting by fathers results in identification with mothers by both sexes. By school age, however, the boys are identifying with male figures and are often being taught to disown and fear all the attributes learned previously that might be considered "feminine" within themselves and frequently overemphasize the "masculine" attributes.<sup>19</sup> This rejection and fear of "feminine" character-

---

*Misogyny is embedded in patriarchy and is a basic part of the violence against women and nature in American society.*

---

istics is also transferred to women in general as misogyny.<sup>19,20</sup>

The sociological conditioning of men and women that begins in the home and is continued by the patriarchal society's institutions further teaches and encourages the expression of misogyny. Boys are taught the "male"<sup>21-23</sup> roles of competitiveness, aggression, superiority over, and disdain for women. The school-aged boy is thought normal when he avoids girls and talks openly of hating them. The major mechanism being expressed here may be misogyny rather than repression of sexual longings, the traditional explanation. This hatred, conceived in the parenting arrangements and the male psyche and nurtured by socialization of males, is then repressed later by sexual necessity.

### Literature, history, and the media

Exposure to literature, history, and the media, conceived mainly by men, continues to reinforce misogyny and the sex role stereotypes.<sup>18</sup> Male historians have selectively interpreted facts to make the traditional roles seem like the natural order, have negated the accomplishments of women, and have diminished female historical works.<sup>12,18,24</sup> Women are systematically discouraged from all creative endeavors, and their literary and artistic works are often maligned by male critics.<sup>11</sup>

The media are replete with sexism in print and advertising.<sup>25</sup> Television's heroes are the perfect embodiment of the male image of aggression and virility complete with frequent acts of violence against women.<sup>26</sup> Exposure to violent television can result in increased expressions of aggression in free play and moral approval

of aggressive solutions to problems, especially in boys.<sup>27</sup> These outgrowths of the patriarchal system contribute to misogyny and its violent expression.

### Religion

The unconscious hatred of women is nurtured and legitimized by religion. The Christian tradition depicts women as sinful. Much religious training is done while children are young and impressionable and unable to distinguish between myth and history.

### Psychoanalytic theory

In modern society "psychoanalysis has become the chief tool, replacing patriarchal religion, for rationalizing and sanctifying the inferiority of women."<sup>28(p137)</sup> Psychoanalytic theory, starting with Freud, has strengthened misogyny by accepting the idea that women are naturally defective and postulating that any woman who rebels against a stereotyped role is mentally ill and needs to be cast out by society or "cured" by the patriarchal figure of the psychiatrist.<sup>24</sup> In the psychoanalytic tradition mothers are blamed for most psychiatric ills, and yet motherhood is the only acceptable role for women.<sup>11</sup> By basing female psychology on "penis envy," Freud and his followers bolster the idea that women are inferior and therefore worthy of contempt.<sup>18</sup> If little girls envy little boys, it is their eventual succession to the elevations of prestige and power that girls see occupied by men that is envied, not their biology.<sup>28</sup> Thus psychoanalytic theories and treatment have served men by legitimizing further the oppression of

women and contributed to male hatred of the female sex.

## MACHISMO

The most virulent effect of growing up as a male in patriarchal society is the form of the masculine ethic known as *machismo*. This concept has been written about from the perspectives of many different disciplines and has variously been called "compulsive masculinity" and "macho" in the literature.<sup>29,30</sup> The following definition of machismo has been derived from a review and synthesis of most of this literature: the male attitude and behavior arising from and supported by the patriarchal social structure, which exalts strength and power, demands competition with and superiority over other men, glorifies violence, emphasizes virility, despises gentleness and expressing any emotion except anger and rage, and rigidly defines women as property, sexual objects, and subjects of male domination. Misogyny is inherent in machismo. This doctrine is prevalent in most males in most patriarchal societies.

An extensive review of the literature surrounding violence, especially homicide, has shown that although seldom used as the central causative factor in theories of violence, machismo or a similar concept links violence theories from anthropology, sociology, criminology, psychology, and feminist viewpoints. For instance, Pad-

dock, an anthropologist, studied two small towns 10 miles apart in Mexico that had basically the same socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. One was virtually free of homicide while the other had a high homicide rate. One of the major differences Paddock found was that "machismo was all but absent" in the nonviolent community.<sup>31</sup> Whiting, another anthropologist, has also linked macho values to high rates of homicide and warfare in primitive societies.<sup>32</sup> The sociological subculture of violence theory was based on evidence better explained by a "subculture of masculinity," according to two separate reviews of the empirical research.<sup>33,34</sup> At least four separate psychological and criminological studies of murderers have noted a strong machismo ethic in the majority of subjects even while looking primarily for other characteristics.<sup>35-38</sup> Both Toch and Toby, in their studies of violent men, have found extensive machismo.<sup>39-40</sup> Men writing with a feminist awareness of the problems of patriarchal conditioning of men see the widespread prevalence of the macho ethic and warn of its violent, selfish, and otherwise destructive and misogynous nature.<sup>19,41,42</sup>

### An impossible model

Male self-esteem is based on the impossible model of invulnerability, perfect competence, fearlessness, virility, power, and always winning.<sup>40</sup> Oppression of women or other classes or races enhances the power of men. The extreme oppression insisted upon by those described as being macho is often enforced by violence and is associated with shakier self-esteem than that of the normal male.

---

*Misogyny is inherent in machismo.  
This doctrine is prevalent in most  
males in most patriarchal societies.*

---

## Powerlessness and violence

When males feel that they are becoming powerless, violence or the threat of violence often results.<sup>39,43</sup> Toby stated that "violence may be the most appropriate way to protect one's honor, to show courage or conceal fear, especially fear of revealing weakness."<sup>39(p22)</sup> In the lower social classes the male is more likely to turn to violence because he is more impotent economically and politically.<sup>43</sup> He is more likely to claim authority on the strength of sex rank alone because he is usually forced to share more economic power with women.<sup>18</sup> These factors are reflected in higher rates of homicide and violence among poor males and their increased acceptance and respect for extreme machismo. Although poor women are more powerless than poor men, they do not generally turn to violence. Therefore powerlessness cannot completely explain the differences between the rates of homicide and violence in the poor versus the middle class unless the concept of machismo is added.

## EVIDENCE OF MISOGYNY: GYNOCIDE

Homicide of women can be viewed within the context of other violent practices directed against women. Men use various mechanisms to generate fear in women and thereby ensure the continuation of the patriarchy and their continued domination.<sup>44</sup> Homicide of women is only one such practice. Dworkin defines gynocide as "the systematic crippling and/or killing of women by men."<sup>45(p16)</sup> Practices of gynocide can be considered as evidence

of general misogyny and can be traced throughout history. There are no examples of correspondingly serious and lethal victimizations of men by women.

## Witchburning

Witchburning, the slaughter of women who did not conform to the stereotyped role of the subservient medieval woman, is the earliest well-documented form of gynocide in history. "Tens of thousands of female peasant lay healers and midwives were burned as witches" in Europe from the 1500s to the 1700s.<sup>46(pxxi)</sup>

## Suttee

Another form of gynocide occurred during the same period in India. The practice of *suttee*, or the inclusion of the widow in the male's funeral pyre, was firmly based on the belief that the wife was responsible for her husband's death, if not in this life, then in her previous lives. The practice included the man's many wives and concubines. Because men tried to marry child brides and concubines were also included in *suttee*, the practice exterminated many thousands of women. The widows were often drugged or coerced. Even if not forced, the women realized that their alternatives were to either sell themselves into prostitution or throw themselves on the mercy of their husband's relatives for a life of servitude and starvation. *Suttee* still occasionally occurs today, and the Indian beliefs about the expendable nature of the female sex continue to persist. The modern gynocide in India consists in insisting that men eat before women so that females often go hungry, in the starving of undesirable female babies, and in

the killing of wives and daughters for "public embarrassment," especially "habitual disobedience," and for having illegitimate babies.<sup>24,47(pp155,156)</sup>

### Footbinding

Another historical pattern of female destruction is the Chinese practice of foot-binding. No Chinese woman was considered attractive to males unless her feet were tiny stumps that had been stunted by years of excruciatingly painful binding during childhood. She may not have been killed, but she was, in effect, crippled. She was made into the ultimate example of total dependency on her husband or father, unable to move more than a few steps without assistance.<sup>24</sup>

### Gynecology

The medical practice of gynecology was and is a form of gynocide in Western society. It started with the late nineteenth century procedures of clitoridectomy, oophrectomy, and hysterectomy, used to cure female masturbation, insanity, deviation from the "proper" female role, overactive sexual appetite, and rebellion against husband or father. Gynecological gynocide continued through the "theft of childbirth" from women so that the event became a ritual in which the woman was reduced to a semi-helpless state, strapped into a position anatomically detrimental to delivery of a child but convenient to the physician, who became the star of the birth process. It has continued in the loss of life and reproductive capacity and mutilation of women being caused by superfluous hysterectomies, the Dalkon shield, diethylstilbestrol (DES), unnecessarily mutilating

breast cancer surgeries, the originally poorly tested birth-control pill, and the coercive sterilization of poor women—all at the hands of predominantly male physicians.<sup>46</sup> Today's gynocide and misogyny may be more subtle, but the damage still occurs.

### Female circumcision

Today, in other cultures, gynocidal practices occur that are even more horrifying. The most extreme example is the genital mutilation practiced in much of east, west, and central Africa and parts of the Middle East. It can take the form of removal of the tip of the clitoris or excision of all of the external genitalia except the labia majora. It may be accompanied by infibulation, which refers to closure of the wound, except for a small opening for urination and menstrual blood, by sewing with catgut or by using thorns. This is often done in villages, without anesthesia, with razor blades, although it is also performed by physicians in modern hospitals. Rough estimates indicate that 25 to 30 million young girls are victimized by this brutal practice every year, because men in these cultures require the procedure before they will marry a woman. It denies the woman even mild sexual pleasure and leaves her sexual activity completely under patriarchal control because the husband can have her opened and refibulated at will. These operations are practiced in areas where the status of women is lowest.<sup>24,48</sup>

These same cultures reinforce male dominance with other forms of violence against women. Wives can be killed with little negative sanction for failure to obey their husbands.<sup>49</sup> In the Islamic culture:

If an Arab woman commits adultery, either her husband, her father or even her brother will kill her, because she has brought disgrace upon both her husband's family and her own family. The killing of the woman is called "the honor debt." Her dead body will restore honor to the family name.<sup>50(p100)</sup>

In Algeria if a bride is not proved to be a virgin on the wedding night, she will be killed by her father or brothers.<sup>51</sup> A Saudi Arabian princess was executed (along with her lover) by her grandfather for committing adultery in 1977, although her husband had left her.<sup>52</sup> An anonymous prominent Saudi woman interviewed in respect to that case concluded that the princess was made into an example because she tried to publicly revolt against the prescribed, completely subjugated role of women in that culture.<sup>52</sup>

These violent practices against women keep them subordinate through instilling realistic fear. Cultures that positively sanction such gynocide have also been linked with high general rates of homicide.<sup>53</sup> Machismo, misogyny, and violence are apparently tolerated and even encouraged in such cultures.

### Rape

Rape is an example of violence against women that is prevalent in all patriarchal cultures. Brownmiller has documented the history of rape as an expression of hatred toward women and "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear."<sup>54(p5)</sup> Studies of rape and rapists have concluded that it is a crime of violence rather than of passion and that machismo attitudes and ambivalence toward women are found in the

---

*Cultures that positively sanction such gynocide have also been linked with high general rates of homicide. Machismo, misogyny, and violence are apparently tolerated and even encouraged in such cultures.*

---

majority of rapists.<sup>55,56</sup> Rape takes many forms, including incest, marital rape, and the sexual abuse of clients by male psychotherapists, none of which are prosecuted criminally except in rare cases.<sup>54</sup>

### Wife abuse

Wife abuse is another gynocidal practice that is just beginning to be documented and fully examined. The patriarchal system that defines women as property of their spouses allows wife beating as an extension of that philosophy. Martin, Davidson, and the Dobashes have delineated the history of wife abuse as a lawful privilege of the husband until the late 1800s and as an unofficially sanctioned practice today.<sup>58-60</sup> The basic hatred of women that underlies this violence is brought out in the attitude of most wife beaters—that is, that she deserved it.<sup>61</sup> Intent, sadistic mutilation, the importance of male dominance as the main causative issue, and machismo attitudes in abusers have been documented by abuse researchers.<sup>60,62,63</sup> Wife abusers are generally men who feel powerless in some way and need to physically dominate their wives.<sup>58</sup> They exemplify the shaky male self-esteem that needs to be reinforced by oppression of others and the male hatred of female characteristics.



## HOMICIDE AS A GYNOCIDAL PRACTICE

### Obsession with purity

Daly has identified several characteristics of gynocidal practices that tend to obscure the horror and misogyny of the crimes and allow men to escape full culpability.<sup>24(pp131-133)</sup> There is an obsession with the purity of the victims with each of these practices.<sup>24</sup> Jealousy as a manifestation of the male need for sexual control of his property is a form of obsession with purity that often leads to wife abuse and murder of wives, girlfriends, and former wives.<sup>64</sup> Homicide of young, virginal white women was found to generate much more publicity than other murders of women in Dayton, with frequent mention made of details of the undress of the victims.<sup>65,66</sup> Conversely, when the victim was sexually experienced, mention of this appeared frequently in the police files, but the community expressed little interest in the case, and the media generated little demand for the arrest of the killer.<sup>67</sup>

### Erasure of responsibility

The second major characteristic is an "erasure of responsibility for the atrocities," which can take the form of blaming cultural tradition, as with the practices of African genital mutilation and Chinese footbinding, or perpetuating myths that surround the practice and subtly blame the victim.<sup>24(p132),62</sup> Myths about victims of rape wanting to be violated or being able to fend off their attackers if they tried hard enough make it seem as though women are to blame for the crime.<sup>54</sup> The myth of female masochism and the traditions and

cultural norms of husbands' hitting wives make wife abusers seem less guilty.<sup>62</sup> Myths associated with homicide of women also include female masochism and the ideas that men who kill women are psychotic or drunk, which makes them somehow less responsible for their crimes. Actual psychiatric pathology in criminal populations is estimated at only 18%, and the rates of violence for those patients labeled "criminally insane" is "not remarkably different" from the normal population.<sup>68</sup> Alcohol may neurobiologically reduce some of the normal inhibitions against violence, but "drunken deportment is situationally variable and essentially a learned affair" and can provide an "excuse in advance" for violence.<sup>69(pp114-116)</sup>

### The problem with research

The final linking characteristic of gynocidal practices is that so-called "objective" research into each of the practices has lessened their impact by failing to question "the basic cultural assumptions which make the atrocious ritual possible and plausible" such as misogyny and female oppression.<sup>24(p131)</sup> Such research also fails to link the practice with the other similar instances of violence against women and tends in various ways to excuse the men.

### Rape

For instance, Amir found a 19% rate of "victim precipitation" in his study of rapes in Philadelphia.<sup>70(p250)</sup> The concept of victim precipitation was originally defined as when the "victim is the first to use physical force, show and/or use a weapon or strike a blow."<sup>71(p2)</sup> However, Amir clas-

sified all women who had a "bad reputation," were known as promiscuous, admitted having sex before with the offender, were not a virgin if younger than 18 years old, or had been raped before and did not prosecute as having precipitated their abuse.<sup>70(p267)</sup> In this way he has absolved close to one fifth of the rapists that he studied. Moreover, he has furthered the myths that substantial numbers of rape victims invite this atrocity.

### *Wife abuse*

Most wife abuse literature has also obscured the fact that coercive control of their wives is the main purpose of abusive men.<sup>60,62,72</sup> History provides extensive precedent for wife beaters, and the institutions of patriarchal society implicitly support the abusers rather than the abused.<sup>61</sup> Recent research into violence in the family has led one of the authors to create another mechanism to excuse a gynocidal practice that is already beginning to be reflected in other wife abuse literature.<sup>76</sup> Steinmetz has concluded that husband abuse may be as prevalent and serious as wife abuse.<sup>73</sup> However, she has used data that blur the differences between using all forms of violence, predominantly minor, and the kind of repetitive, frequent, prolonged, minimally provoked, serious assault that can involve sexual mutilation and other forms of sadism that most experts define as actual wife abuse.<sup>60,62,72</sup> Although a few wives undoubtedly beat their husbands, and some couples are equally assaultive toward each other, this kind of beating is reserved almost exclusively for women.<sup>72</sup> When family violence is examined in depth, the evidence

supports the contention of the Dobashes: "Violence in the family is not randomly distributed among family members, but is disproportionately directed at females."<sup>60(p433)</sup> Except for the feminists, the experts on wife abuse fail to stress the misogyny suggested by the facts.

Research on homicide of women has also failed to connect the crime with other gynocidal practices and has served to minimize the realities, thus lessening the culpability of men. The literature generally has paid scant attention to homicide of women.<sup>74</sup> Theories of violence have been based on research carried out mainly by men using male subjects. This obscures the sex differences in aggression.<sup>75</sup> Crimes committed by women constitute less than 16% of the total, and violent acts are an even lower proportion.<sup>75</sup> Warren states: "This low contribution to the crime rate of a part of the population constituting more than 50% of the total remains the most consistent, significant and unexplained fact in criminology."<sup>75(p145)</sup> Machismo and misogyny in males may at least partially explain this disparity.

### **Victim precipitation**

Homicide of women by men is also legitimized by an emphasis on the statistics that show wives killing husbands approximately as often as the opposite. When authors like Langley and Levy conclude, "When it comes to spouse killing, there is true equality between the sexes," they are making generalizations without looking closely at the data.<sup>76(p6)</sup> Curtis found in his national survey of 17 major cities that victim precipitation in homicide and

assault was "considerably more likely" among "males of both races" than females.<sup>77(p84)</sup>

Yet Curtis negates the impact of these data when he refers to victim precipitation as follows: "Husbands, in particular, may give their wives a push . . .," making the precipitation sound minor.<sup>78(p58)</sup> The analysis of the Dayton data used the original strict definition of victim precipitation, as do most studies of homicide. In Dayton victim precipitation was always actual, showing a weapon or striking a blow (punching or slapping), and usually the

blows were repeated. None of the offenders, male or female, was provoked to murder by "a push." The overall precipitation rate was 7.7% (5) for female victims compared with 60.5% (26) of the male victims. For females and males in intimate relationships, the percentages were 7.1% (2) of women who were first to use force and were subsequently killed versus 79.3% (23) of the men. Table 1 illustrates this difference and also compares other circumstances surrounding the intrasex homicides between intimately related men and women (husband-wife, girlfriend-boy-

**Table 1.** Homicides of men and women in intimate relationships in Dayton, Ohio (1975-1979)

	Males killed by females		Females killed by males	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Victim</i>	29	100	28	100
Intoxicated	15	51.7	4	14.3
History of violence	17	58.6	3	10.7
History of abuse of partner	23	79.3	2	7.1
<i>Offender</i>				
Intoxicated	9	31.0	10	35.7
History of violence	9	31.0	19	67.9
Used excessive violence	5	17.3	17	60.7
History of abuse	0	0	18	64.3
<i>Relationship</i>				
Husband-wife	22	75.9	12	42.9
Boyfriend-girlfriend	3	10.3	5	17.9
Estranged husband- wife or boyfriend- girlfriend	4	13.8	11	39.2
<i>Reasons</i>				
Victim precipitation	23	79.3	2	7.1
Male jealousy	10	34.5	18	64.3
Female jealousy	2	6.9	0	0
Male dominance	8	17.8	5	17.9
Psychosis in offender	4	13.8	5	17.9
Previous police calls to home for family violence	15	51.7	15	53.6

friend, or estranged same) in Dayton, Ohio, from 1975 through 1979.

### Comparing histories of abuse

The comparisons of history of abuse by the victim and perpetrator in the intimate relationship category shown in Table 1 are also significant. Male victims had beaten their spouse in the past in 23 (79.3%), of the cases. Female victims had been at least equally violent toward the spouse prior to the homicide in only two (7.1%) of these cases. Eighteen (64.3%) of the male killers had beaten the woman involved, but none of the cases concerning female killers indicated prior husband abuse. More indication of prior abuse stems from the records of police calls to the home for family violence within the past 2 years in more than half the cases.

Because the prevalence of prior husband abuse is so low, it seems likely that most of the calls were because of wife abuse, although some of them could have been for violence with other people in or outside of the family. Police records of violent crime and witness reports of previous acts of violence revealed that 67.9% of the men killing women and 58.6% of male victims had histories of violence, indicating that violent men resided in most of these homes.

The police had visited 11 of the 57 homes for "family trouble," assault, or other violence more than 3 times, and the police were called to one home 13 times and to another 12 times for these incidents. These 11 extremely violent households had also been involved in numerous other police dispatches; one had been visited a total of 56 times by the police in the 2

years prior to the homicide. These families were obviously well known to the police. It seems reasonable to assume that a criminal justice system more effective against violent men, especially wife abusers, might have been able to prevent at least some of the homicides.

### Intoxication and machismo

Men, either as victims or perpetrators, were also far more likely to be intoxicated than the women involved. Rather than as an excuse for violence, intoxication is best viewed as partially an indication of machismo ethic in which "drunken violence is the last line of defense" of a threatened male's masculinity.<sup>79(p28)</sup> However, alcohol's contribution to violence in the lessening of inhibitions can also be seen in the female offenders.

### Jealousy

Jealousy is apparent as a large portion of the reason given for homicide of wives or girlfriends by their husbands or lovers. When male jealousy is cited as a reason for wives' killing husbands, this was the precipitating factor that began the wife abuse incident that terminated in the abuser's death. Male jealousy is also cited as a frequent cause of wife beating and is actually most logically and parsimoniously viewed within the context of a husband's or boyfriend's effort to maintain control over "his woman."<sup>60,62,64</sup> Because women are considered the possession of men in patriarchy, real or imagined sexual infidelity is the gravest threat to male dominance. The wife abuse literature suggests that most of the female sexual infidelity is

imagined and, even if not, should not be considered as justification for violence.<sup>60,62</sup>

An important aspect of the jealousy cases in Dayton were the eight female victims who had left or divorced the man or had threatened to do so. In all but one of these cases there was also a history of wife abuse. These data strongly support the idea that abused women are being realistic when they cite being afraid of retaliation as a reason for staying in an abusive relationship.<sup>62</sup> In wife abuse literature this reason has traditionally been given little credence; instead the myth of female masochism has often been used to explain battered wives' staying.<sup>62(p15)</sup> Other male dominance issues such as the woman's refusing to get more wine, refusing sex, or refusing to give the man money began the altercation that accounted for 22.8% of these killings. The concept that women should be subordinate to their men can be seen as a lethal premise for some men and women.

### Excessive violence

Four of the intimate male-female relationship killings of women had elements of particular cruelty and sadism, such as the man's handcuffing the woman before shooting her or his keeping the woman a prisoner for 6 months as he slowly beat her to death. In 17 (60.9%) cases the man used excessive violence (shooting or stabbing more than once or beating to death). In five of the same cases there was evidence of premeditation. It is theorized that a single shot or punch or stab can be delivered in a momentary loss of control during an argument, without there being an intent to kill, but that excessive violence indi-

cates more determination on the part of the perpetrator that the victim die.<sup>80(p506)</sup>

Excessive violence and sadism used against women seem to also indicate misogyny. In comparison, excessive violence was used by only 17.3% of the wives or girlfriends who killed, and sadism and premeditation by none.

### SUMMARY OF DAYTON HOMICIDES

A close analysis of data on homicide between intimately related men and women in Dayton, Ohio, revealed that despite the rough parity in numbers of male and female victims, which parallels national figures, the circumstances surrounding the cases are very different according to sex. Previously violent, abusive, intoxicated men motivated by issues of male control of women are most likely to be involved both as victims and perpetrators. Similarly, a study conducted in Kansas City and Detroit found that in 66 of 90 family-conflict homicides, the male was defining the female as an object of personal property and acting on that basis.<sup>81(p24)</sup> In stark contrast, in the Dayton sample, only three women killed their boyfriend, husband, or estranged boyfriend or husband without a history of having been battered by that man if not responding to violent precipitation. This is not to say that the women solved the problem of abuse in a healthy manner or that they did not act with violence, but it does point out the element of desperation and self-defense in their crime and the misogyny of the men that they killed. Most previous research has failed to indicate the magnitude of these differences.

Wife abuse is a strong linking characteristic between homicide of women and other gynocidal practices. In the wider examination of all the homicide of women by men in Dayton from 1975 through 1979, other justification for the concept of homicide as gynocide is apparent. A total of nine women, or 30% of the females killed by nonrelated males, were raped or otherwise sexually abused, as well as murdered. This can be considered the most violent of rapes, the most misogynous of murders. Male dominance issues accounted for 10% of homicides of women killed by men of no relation, while the remaining largest cause was robbery (33.3%). However, in over half of the robbery cases, \$30 or less was obtained. Elements of sadism, machismo, and misogyny could be detected in those incidents, as much as or more than a desire for money. Men used excessive violence in 70% of the murders of women by nonrelated males, and the victim precipitated her own death by force in only one case.

There were two matricides committed by men in Dayton during the years of the study. The extensive review of literature on homicide revealed no instances of this practice being committed by women. The percentage of homicides in both national and local statistics of any women killing each other is also consistently low. In Dayton only 1.4% of the homicides between 1968 and 1979 involved two females, and the rates of such killings did not vary significantly from year to year. The 63% proportion of men killing each other can be partially explained by the machismo ethic, while the 20.5% segment of the total homicides of men killing

women needs to be seen as predominantly gynocide. The gynocidal practices of homicide of women, rape, wife abuse, and male psychotherapy and medicine all work together in this culture to remind women that they are vulnerable. In other cultures

---

*Men usually do not consciously use gynocidal practices to maintain dominance. Many of the violent practices used against women are part of tradition and culture.*

---

homicide of women and other gynocidal practices are used with less negative sanction than in ours and, consequently the misogyny is more overt and the oppression of the women much more complete.

Men do not sit down together and *plot* how to keep women oppressed. They usually do not consciously use gynocidal practices to maintain dominance. Many of the violent practices used against women are part of tradition and culture, but that men can insist on their wives' being infibulated, for example, indicates sadism, pleasure with the status quo of dominance, and misogyny. When a man murders a woman or beats her, he is often reacting to a perception of threat to that dominance. In those situations of stress, anxiety, and resulting rage he strikes out blindly. He is not consciously thinking about maintenance of the patriarchy, but the effect of maintaining subjugation of a particular woman still exists, and the lesson is learned by other women hearing about it. When men are prevented from demonstrating dominance in their occupations or

in their economic status, they are likely to insist on it with women and react violently if they perceive less than total submission.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR NURSING

The population most at risk for homicide of women has been shown to be battered wives. A total of 27.7% of the female homicide victims in Dayton were abused women, the largest group. Their husbands are also in danger. As Walker states: "As we begin to see more battered women, we also realize the high probability that as the violence escalates, they will eventually be killed by or kill their men."<sup>62(p53)</sup> The second largest group of female victims of homicide in Dayton was rape victims. The majority of women killed in Dayton from 1975 through 1979 were murdered by men who had a history of violence and jealousy. Male dominance issues accounted for a significant proportion of their motives to kill. Fifty-nine percent of these men used excessive violence when they killed; the matricides and rape-murders also strongly suggest misogyny. To prevent homicide of women, work needs to be undertaken to change the nature of a society that produces batterers, rapists, and other violent men who subscribe to the machismo ethic.

### A preventive role

The study of homicide is unusual in nursing, yet nursing centers on promoting life and health. Evidence from peaceful cultures shows that with the right conditions, entire societies can be mainly coop-

erative, life supporting, and completely nonviolent. Nurses need to work at discovering these conditions and creating them in terms of primary prevention. Every life is precious, and each time a life is taken by violence an unnecessary death has occurred. The conditions that allow and promote violence in our society can be considered as producing disease and death and therefore within the realm of nursing to correct. Nurses can work within many contexts to prevent homicide from occurring at the societal, community, and individual level.

### Abolishing the patriarchy

To combat violence the patriarchal societal structure must be abolished. This is, of course, a long-term goal, but more than half the world's population is female, and by joining together women can accomplish the task. Great progress has already been made. As Morgan says:

We know that serious lasting change does not come overnight, or simply, or without enormous pain and diligent examination and tireless, undramatic, every-day-a-bit-more-one-step-at-a-time work. We know that such change seems to move in cycles . . . and we also know that those cycles are not merely going around in circles. They are rather, an upward spiral, so that each time we reevaluate a position or place we've been before, we do so from a new perspective.<sup>14(p14)</sup>

Nursing must work to foster the attitudes that support life.

### Legislation

Specific measures already being considered by elected officials can be brought to

the attention of the public, shaped into bills, and passed into laws by a concerted effort of nurses spearheading public campaigns. Laws to eliminate violence and sexism from television, mental health promotion appropriations, laws to strengthen prosecution of rapists, and wife-abuse protection measures—none of these will eradicate violence in and of itself, but taken together they will promote life and health.

### Community efforts

On the community level, nurses need to work to change parenting arrangements and work against using physical punishment (which research has linked to adult violence) in disciplining children at home and in schools. This can be accomplished by supporting and teaching childbirth education classes, parenting classes, and family-living classes in high school and by conducting public education programs to explain the importance of fathers taking an equal part in infant care and the detrimental effects of physical punishment.

### Therapy for abusers

Nurses can create and support wife-abuse shelters. Nurses are also a necessary addition to the staffs of such shelters to provide holistic health care to the women and children staying there. Nurses in emergency rooms, physicians' offices, community mental health centers, and health departments need to start diligently looking for and asking about abuse so that these women who are so gravely at risk of being killed can be identified. Once found, these women need to be helped with their multiple health problems, but, more

important, intensively counseled by nurses as to the serious dangers involved with abuse and what can be done.

Marital counseling should be looked upon as a final alternative instead of the treatment of choice.<sup>60</sup> The abuser is the one who needs therapy, and the woman should be supported emotionally, financially, and legally in leaving him, at least until he receives therapy. He can be considered as having a serious, potentially lethal disease that can be transmitted to others. The carriers of such diseases are isolated and given treatment until they are well. The criminal justice system has the potential to at least isolate these men, although treatment in such settings is unlikely without massive reform. The treatment for violence, machismo, and misogyny is as yet unknown, although unlearning of patriarchal formulations and acceptance of feminine characteristics does seem possible with supportive therapy.<sup>19</sup> Nursing should support treatment centers for abusive men where they could receive such therapy after being committed there by law, so that the woman could stay in the home and be protected from further harm.

### Women's groups and nurses

The basic unit for health promotion and prevention of homicide of females is the individual woman. A mutual teaching process between groups of women and nurses is needed to instruct women of the nature of their oppression and the strengths that they have and those they need to develop. Nurses can learn from the women more about the nature of the problems that they face and the different



cultural prescriptions that tend to keep them subordinate and therefore potentially abused. Most important, these groups will support the bonding and mutual self-awareness and support process between women that are needed for unity and power and concerted action.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps this all seems removed from homicide, but the violence inherent in patriarchy supports the violence in individuals who kill. All people have the potential

for violence. Everything that shapes the characteristics of females—biology, learning, identification with the mother figure, promotion of empathy, emphasis on nurturance, ability to express positive emotions, and societal prescriptions of nonaggression—helps make women generally nonviolent except when “backed up against the wall.” The parenting arrangements, socialization forces, and patriarchal structures that foster the development of machismo, misogyny, and violence in men, which in turn lead to homicide of women and other gynocidal practices need to be changed.

## REFERENCES

- Herjanic M, Meyer D: Notes on epidemiology of homicide in an urban area. *Forensic Sci* 8:235-245, 1976.
- Martin L: *Health Care of Women*. Philadelphia, JB Lippincott Co, 1978.
- Kreps J: *Social Indicators*. Washington DC, US Government Printing Office, 1977.
- Highriter M: The status of community health nursing. *Nurs Res* 26:183-191, 1977.
- Pilisak M, Ober L: Torture and genocide as public health problems. *Am J Orthopsychiatry* 46:388-392, 1976.
- Webster WH: *Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington DC, US Department of Justice, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978.
- Fromm E: *The Anatomy of Human Destruction*. New York, Fawcett Crest Books, 1973.
- Montagu A (ed): *Learning Non-Aggression*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Sills G: Research in the field of psychiatric nursing 1952-1977. *Nurs Res* 26:201-206, 1977.
- Steinmetz S, Straus M (eds): *Violence in the Family*. New York, Harper & Row, 1974.
- Rich A: *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York, WW Norton, 1979.
- Leavitt R: *Peaceable Primates and Gentle People: Anthropological Approaches to Women's Studies*. New York, Harper & Row, 1975.
- Cade T: On the issue of roles, in Cade T (ed): *The Black Woman*. New York, New American Library, 1970, pp 101-112.
- Morgan R: *Going Too Far*. New York, Vintage Books, 1978.
- Robinson P et al: A historical and clinical essay for black women in the cities, in Cade T (ed): *The Black Woman*. New York, New American Library, 1970, pp 198-210.
- Daly M: *Beyond God the Father*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1973.
- Ruether RR: *New Woman, New Earth*. New York, The Seabury Press, 1975.
- Millett K: *Sexual Politics*. Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Co, 1970.
- Goldberg H: *The New Male*. New York, William Morrow & Co, 1979.
- Miller JB: *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1976.
- Chapman J, Gates M (eds): *The Victimization of Women*. Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage Publications, 1978.
- Rickel A, Grant L: Sex role stereotypes in the mass media and schools: Five consistent themes. *Int J Wom Stud* 2:164-179, 1979.
- Hartley R: Sex-role pressures and the socialization of the male child, in Pleck J, Sawyer J (eds): *Men and Masculinity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1974, pp 7-12.
- Daly M: *Gyn/Ecology*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1978.
- Pingree S: A scale for sexism. *J Commun* 26:193-200, 1976.
- Gerbner B et al: Cultural indicators: Violence profile #9. *J Commun* 28:196-207, 1978.
- Thomas MH: Desensitization to portrayals of real-

- life aggression as a function of exposure to television violence. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 35:450-458, 1977.
28. Firestone S: *The Dialectic of Sex*. New York, William Morrow & Co, 1970.
  29. Gibbons DC: *Delinquent Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1970.
  30. Weimer JM: The mother, the macho and the state. *Intl J Wom Stud* 1:73-82, 1978.
  31. Paddock J: Values in an antiviolen community. *Humanitas* 11:183-194, 1976.
  32. Whiting B: Sex identity conflict and physical violence: A comparative study. *Am Anthropol* 67:123-140, December 1965.
  33. Erlanger HS: The empirical status of the subculture of violence thesis. *Social Problems* 22:280-292, 1974.
  34. Hepburn J: Subcultures, violence and the subculture of violence: An old rut or a new road? *Criminology* 9:87-98, 1971.
  35. Bach-Y-Rita G: Episodic dyscontrol: A study of 130 violent patients. *Am J Psychiatry* 127:1473-1478, 1971.
  36. Gillies H: Homicide in the west of Scotland. *Br J Psychol* 28:105-127, 1976.
  37. Maletzky BM: The episodic dyscontrol syndrome. *Dis Nerv Syst* 34:178-185, 1973.
  38. Ruotolo AK: Neurotic pride and homicide. *Am J Psychoanal* 35:1-18, 1975.
  39. Toch H: *Violent Men*. Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co, 1969.
  40. Toby J: Violence and the masculine ideal: Some qualitative data. *Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci* 364:19-28, 1966.
  41. Fasteau M: *The Male Machine*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1974.
  42. Pleck JH, Sawyer J: *Men and Masculinity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1974.
  43. May R: *Power and Innocence*. New York, WW Norton, 1972.
  44. Frankfort E: *Vaginal Politics*. New York, Bantam Books, 1972.
  45. Dworkin A: *Our Blood*. New York, Harper & Row, 1974.
  46. Dreifus C (ed): *Seizing Our Bodies*. New York, Vintage Books, 1977.
  47. Driver E: Interaction and criminal homicide in India. *Social Forces* 60:153-158, 1971.
  48. Hosken FP: Female circumcision in Africa. *Victimology: Int J* 2:487-498, 1978.
  49. Malik MOA, Salvi O: A profile of homicide in the Sudan. *Forensic Sci* 7:141-150, 1976.
  50. Mallik SK, McCandless BR: A study of catharsis of aggression. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 4:591-596, 1966.
  51. Russell DE, Van de Ven N (eds): *Crimes Against Women*. Millbrae, Calif: Les Femmes, 1976.
  52. Public Broadcasting System. Death of a princess. May 12, 1980.
  53. Mushanga T: Wife victimization in east and central Africa. *Victimology: Int J* 2:479-485, 1978.
  54. Brownmiller S: *Against Our Will*. New York, Bantam Books, 1975.
  55. Cohen M et al: The psychology of rapists, in Chappeu D (ed): *Forcible Rape*. New York, Columbia Press, 1977.
  56. Groth AN: Rape: Power, anger and sexuality. *Am J Psychiatry* 134:1239-1243, 1977.
  57. Schram D: Rape, in Chapman J. Gates M (eds): *The Victimization of Women*. Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage Publications, 1978.
  58. Martin D: *Battered Wives*. San Francisco, Glide Publications, 1976.
  59. Davidson T: Wifebeating: A recurring phenomenon throughout history, in Roy M (ed): *Battered Women*. New York, Van Nostrand Co, 1977.
  60. Dobash RE, Dobash R: *Violence Against Wives*. New York, The Free Press, 1979.
  61. O'Brien JE: Violence in divorce-prone families. *J Marriage and Family* 33:692-698, 1971.
  62. Walker L: *The Battered Woman*. New York, Harper & Row, 1979.
  63. Stark E: Medicine and patriarchal violence: The social construction of a "private" event. *Int J Health Services* 9:461-493, 1979.
  64. Renvoice J: *Web of Violence*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
  65. *Dayton Daily News*. September 10, 1977.
  66. *Dayton Journal Herald*. September 10, 1977.
  67. City of Dayton Department of Homicide Police Files.
  68. Mesnikoff AM, Lauterbach CG: The association of violent dangerous behavior with psychiatric disorders: A review of the research literature. *J Psychiatry Law* 3:415-445, 1975.
  69. Gelles R: Violence toward children in the United States. *Am J Orthopsychiatry* 48:580-592, 1978.
  70. Amir M: *Patterns in Forcible Rape*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1971.
  71. Wolfgang M: Victim-precipitated criminal homicide. *J Criminal Law, Criminology Police Sci* 48:1-11, 1957.
  72. Gayford JJ: The aetiology of repeated serious physical assaults by husbands on wives. *Med Sci Law* 19:19-24, 1979.
  73. Steinmetz SK: The battered-husband syndrome. *Victimology: Int J* 2:499-509, 1977-1978.
  74. Lercher M: Black women and homicide, in Rose H (ed): *Lethal Aspects of Urban Violence*. Lexington, Mass, Lexington Books, 1979.
  75. Warren M: The female offender, in Toch H (ed):

- Psychology of Crime*. New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1979.
76. Langley R, Levy R: *Wife Beating: The Silent Crisis*. New York, EP Dutton, 1977.
  77. Curtis L: *Criminal Violence*. Lexington, Mass, DC Heath and Co, 1975.
  78. Curtis L: *Violence, Race and Culture*. Lexington, Mass, DC Heath and Co, 1975.
  79. Tolson A: *The Limits of Masculinity*. New York, Harper & Row, 1977.
  80. Voss H, Hepburn J: Patterns of criminal homicide in Chicago. *J Criminal Law, Criminology Police Sci* 59:499-508, 1968.
  81. Gates M: Introduction, in Chapman J, Gates M (eds): *Victimization of Women*. Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage Publications, 1978.