

In our database, one murder was precipitated by a violent quarrel over moonshine liquor.¹⁹³

Finally, one may note that Prohibition was certainly not the antidote to domestic violence, as the temperance movement had argued. Rates of wife murder in fact increased sharply during the part of our study that fell within the years when the sale or consumption of alcohol was prohibited in the United States (1920–1933).¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, despite Prohibition, liquor was easy to get in Chicago in the 1920's, as the bootleggers paid off law enforcement officials; one historian reports that “the quickest way to get a drink was simply to ask a policeman for directions to the nearest speakeasy.”¹⁹⁵ So the experiment was far from a controlled one.

I. MURDER–SUICIDES

A large proportion of the husbands who killed their wives in Chicago between 1910 and 1930 also committed suicide—34% of the total did so successfully and an additional 7% made a suicide attempt.¹⁹⁶ This tendency varied by race: fully 51% of white offenders either committed suicide (43%) or tried to do so (8%), while 22% of Black offenders did so (18% successfully, 4% unsuccessfully).¹⁹⁷

As noted above, suicide by the offender is a very common occurrence in spouse killings.¹⁹⁸ Adler found that 48% of the men (predominantly German) who killed their wives in Chicago between 1875 and 1910 also committed suicide, versus 8% of homicide offenders in general.¹⁹⁹ A more recent study of Chicago homicides found that spouses are five times as likely to be killed in homicide–suicides than in homicides per se, that ex–spouses are at the most risk, and that the typical victim is female.²⁰⁰ Similar results are reported for other cities. For example, in intimate homicide cases in San Francisco from

¹⁹³ Case No. 8458. Chicago Homicide Database, *supra* note 1.

¹⁹⁴ The rate of wife murder increased from .48 per 100,000 in 1920 to as high as 1.14 per 100,000 in 1924, and was .77 per 100,000 when the decade ended in 1930. *See supra* Part III.A. fig.2.

¹⁹⁵ SPINNEY, *supra* note 24, at 177.

¹⁹⁶ A total of 133 men committed suicide out of 391 cases, and 26 men made unsuccessful suicide attempts. Chicago Homicide Database, *supra* note 1.

¹⁹⁷ Out of 248 white offenders, 107 committed suicide at the time of the crime or immediately after, while 21 more tried to do so but failed. Twenty-six out of a total of 142 Black offenders committed suicide; an additional 5 made suicide attempts. *Id.*

¹⁹⁸ *See supra* note 16.

¹⁹⁹ Adler, *If We Can't Live in Peace*, *supra* note 16, at 3, 6.

²⁰⁰ Stack, *supra* note 16, at 445–46 tbl.1.

1995–96, forty–three percent of the murderers killed themselves after killing the woman.²⁰¹

The relationship between intimate homicide and suicide is very complex and not completely understood. First, this appears to be a male phenomenon; women rarely kill themselves after killing a spouse.²⁰² Indeed, as Jeffrey Adler's article in this symposium suggests, women are likely to have killed to defend themselves after a long history of abuse and frequently express relief rather than remorse after the killing.²⁰³ Adler attributes the high rate of murder–suicides among male German spouse–killers in late–nineteenth century Chicago to a combination of economic circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and family circumstances particular to that immigrant group in the changing Chicago economy and society of that period.²⁰⁴ But this theory cannot explain the similarly high rates of murder–suicide in the much more diverse group of husbands in our database, which took place decades later, or in the other, more recent studies discussed above. Many of the husbands who committed suicide after a wife murder in our database had Polish, Southern or Eastern European surnames.²⁰⁵ Italian and Irish husbands are also well represented in this group.²⁰⁶ Moreover, although the Black murder–suicide/attempt rate is much lower than that for non–Black husbands, twenty–two percent is still quite high, indicating that African Americans who killed their wives also committed suicide at much higher rates than perpetrators of other types of homicides.²⁰⁷ At most, one can analogize the types of strains these later groups were confronting to those of the earlier period, such as changes in the nature and expectations of marriage, fears of abandonment in an age of rising divorce rates and more independent women, and the like.

²⁰¹ Family Violence Project of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, *supra* note 5.

²⁰² See Adler, *I Loved Joe*, *supra* note 136, at 880; Adler, *If We Can't Live in Peace*, *supra* note 16, at 6.

²⁰³ See Adler, *I Loved Joe*, *supra* note 136, at 880.

²⁰⁴ See Adler, *If We Can't Live in Peace*, *supra* note 16, at 10, 15–18.

²⁰⁵ See, e.g., Case Nos. 4047, 4159, 4645 (attempt), 4984, 4993, 5586, 9023, 9565 (attempt). Chicago Homicide Database, *supra* note 1.

²⁰⁶ Case Nos. 4496 (attempt), 5680, 7593, and 9138 all appear to be Italian; Case Nos. 4654, 5507 (attempt), and 6061 have Irish surnames. *Id.*

²⁰⁷ Indeed, viewed as a rate per capita, the Black rate was higher than that in the non–Black community, due to the much higher overall rate of wife murder among Blacks. Including suicide attempts, average per capita rates of homicide–suicide by wife killers for the decade 1921–1930 were: for Blacks, 0.99 per 100,000 Black population per year; and for non–Blacks, 0.22 per 100,000 non–Black population per year.

Guilt is often mentioned as a possible explanation of suicides following upon the murder of an intimate partner; indeed, murder-suicide is much more common in other cultures with stronger cultural constraints upon interpersonal aggression than in the United States.²⁰⁸ In this respect, one may also speculate that African American husbands may in some instances have felt less guilty about killing their wives in what they perceived to be self-defense because African American women were more likely to fight back.²⁰⁹ Explanations based on guilt seem too simplistic, however, and fail to explain the vast disparity in rates of suicide among different types of homicide or, indeed, among different types of relationships in intimate homicide.²¹⁰

Others offer more sophisticated psychoanalytic theories of the murder-suicide phenomenon among wife killers, positing that the killer is in a state of extreme ambivalence, both hating and loving, while feeling intense dependence upon the object of his love; when that relationship is then threatened by jealousy or potential or actual separation, the enraged but impotent male strikes out at both his victim and himself.²¹¹ These explanations are consistent with the recent literature on the psychology of domestic violence offenders described above.²¹² As this literature describes, abusive husbands are pathologically dependent upon their wives and fear abandonment desperately—a combination that leads to rage.²¹³ When this dependent relationship is threatened by jealousy or the wife's attempt to assert herself and break free of the relationship in some way, the husband may strike out and in some cases destroy the very thing he feels he cannot live without. Unable to distinguish himself from that other person or to see his wife as an independent source of meaning and consciousness, he is left with no alternative to suicide.

J. MULTIPLE VICTIM CRIMES

In addition to offenders who committed suicide, a total of forty-eight other victims were either killed or wounded in connection with the wife murders included in our database. The couple's children (of-

²⁰⁸ See Stack, *supra* note 16, at 440–41, 449, and sources cited therein.

²⁰⁹ See *supra* text accompanying notes 136–37.

²¹⁰ Recent studies show, for example, that “[t]he structural relationship that increases the odds of homicide-suicide the most is that of ex-spouse/lover.” Stack, *supra* note 16, at 447.

²¹¹ See *id.* at 438–40, and sources cited therein.

²¹² See *supra* text accompanying notes 166–67.

²¹³ JACOBSON & GOTTMAN, *supra* note 135, at 38; see *supra* Part III.G.