

Online appendix to "Extent, trends, and perpetrators of prostitution-related homicide in the United States" by Brewer, Dudek, Potterat, Muth, Roberts, and Woodhouse (2006, Journal of Forensic Sciences, 51)

This appendix describes analyses of three historical homicide data sets with respect to the extent and perpetrators of prostitute homicide.

Methods

Seven California Counties, 1850-1900

McKanna (1, 2) compiled data on all homicides between 1850 and 1900 in seven California counties (Calaveras, Sacramento, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Tuolumne) recorded in such historical documents as coroner's inquest reports, criminal case files, and newspaper articles. These data include information on victim characteristics (including occupation, with prostitution as one possibility), perpetrator characteristics, and limited information about the incident and relationship between victim and perpetrator.

Chicago, 1870-1930

Bienen (3, 4) assembled data on all homicides in Chicago between 1870 and 1930 found in police records. These data include information on victim characteristics (including occupation, with "prostitute/street walker" as one possibility), perpetrator characteristics, and limited information about the incident and relationship between victim and perpetrator.

National Media Sample

In our search of media and related sources that we conducted for the main study, we identified 6 prostitute homicides that occurred before 1900.

Results*Extent*

The proportion of female homicide victims who were prostitutes was likely at least as high, and perhaps much higher, in the 1800s than in the late 1900s (Table A1). There is substantial uncertainty in these estimates because both the California and Chicago data sets have large amounts of missing data on the victim-offender relationship and circumstances of the homicide. None of the prostitute homicides in the California or Chicago data sets were among the prostitute homicides in this era found in the media sample.

TABLE A1. *Percentage of female homicide victims who were prostitutes.*

Sample	% of female victims who were prostitutes
7 California counties, 1850-1900	7.2 (7/97)*
Chicago, 1870-1930	1.0 (14/1,394)†

*If based on only those female victims whose occupation is known ($n = 66$), this percentage is 10.6%.

†If based on only those female victims whose occupation is known ($n = 69$), this percentage is 20.3%.

Perpetrators

The historical data sets suggest a profile of perpetrators that is roughly similar to that we observed for more contemporary data sets. In the California data, 3 (43%) of the 7 prostitute homicides were perpetrated by husbands or male roommates; the remaining 4 were committed by male "friends" or "strangers" during a quarrel. The Chicago data include 14 prostitute homicides. Perpetrators (all working alone) included one client, one prostitute woman, 2 boyfriends, and 10 men whose relationship to the victim was unknown. The available information on the latter 10 homicides suggests perpetrators were not boyfriends/husbands, and most death circumstances and offender characteristics were consistent with perpetrators who were clients. There were data on the victim-perpetrator relationship for 2 of the 8 19th century prostitute homicides in the media sample: one perpetrator was a client and the other was the victim's pimp/common-law husband.

Discussion

The extent of prostitute homicide in the U.S. in the 1800s appears similar to, and possibly higher than, that observed in recent decades. Perpetrators' role relationships with their victims also appear to approximate those of modern perpetrators. If the extent of prostitute homicide was greater in the 1800s, it could be due to a possibly higher prevalence of prostitute women in that era (5). In any event, anecdotal reports indicate that client violence toward prostitutes was common then in the U.S. and Europe (6-8).

References

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