

is out of the question do not divorce with great enough frequency to account for the trend. Furthermore, the question of changing the difficulty or ease of obtaining a divorce is only an indirect (perhaps invalid) indicator of an individuals' attitude toward divorce. An individual could, with perfect consistency, believe that divorces should be difficult to obtain and that it is an acceptable and necessary means of ending an unsatisfactory relationship as a "last resort." This contradiction between aggregate and individual phenomena, and the unjustified attribution of particular motivations to individuals runs throughout the book.

This is essentially a demographic study with all the strengths and weaknesses of demographic analysis of aggregate trends. The strength is revealed in the first chapter where the historical trends are documented and illustrated with helpful visual aids. However, except for the final chapter comparing the differences between blacks and whites, all the other trends are based on aggregate data that fail to take into consideration important ethnic, social class, regional, or religious differences. When Cherlin attempts to explain the trends he resorts to either global concepts such as the process of "modernization" or industrialization (which he fails to define, much less elaborate), or attributes the trends to mass social-psychological consequences of historical events such as the Great Depression or World War II. Despite these drawbacks, Cherlin does offer relevant evidence on a number of important issues in the literature, has abandoned the notion of "the family" (even if he retains other portions of this normative view), and spares the reader the moral weight of the decay/social pathology view of current family relations as well as the *Dr. Pangloss* position that "this is the best of all possible worlds."

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Mary Lorenz Dietz, *Killing For Profit*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983, 230 pp., \$22.95 (cloth).

Killing For Profit focuses on the social organization of felony homicide. Growing out of eight months of field work with the Detroit Police Department in 1974, Dietz brings one very close to a firsthand account of the social dynamics of felony homicide. Using police files and homicide accounts of defendants, witnesses, intended victims, and victims who did not immediately die, Dietz manages to bring a well deserved sense of horror to a subject where horror is too often lost in statistical analyses.

The book is organized into three parts. In part one Dietz offers an overview of felony homicide research, a theoretical perspective, and a methodological note on her study. Part two focuses on three kinds of felony homicides: robbery, execution, and sex killings. Part three employs an interactionist framework to explore the patterns in homicide encounters.

Chapter one is a good summary of research that has used an interactionist approach to understand criminal violence. These qualitative studies challenge many assumptions once held about homicide and produce three important findings. First, all interactionist research notes a general absence of pathology in the people who engage in homicide violence. Dietz (vi) describes how her own thinking changed during her research: "I have moved from the idea that people who engage in violence are mentally ill and out of control to the belief that they are for the most part no different from everyone else, apart from their willingness to kill." Second, the depersonalization of victims is found in many felony homicides. Third, felony homicides are increasingly multiperson encounters, which suggests the importance of understanding the interactional aspects of these deadly encounters.

Chapter two focuses on socialization towards violence. As Dietz points out, the use of violence requires both physical and mental training, and the social nature of the mental training is a primary focus of the book. Although Dietz discusses the norms of street violence, she gives inadequate attention to the

socialization processes of violent subcultures which she merely mentions in passing. Instead, Dietz emphasizes how the violent self-images allow rationalizations of defense, glorification, or doing a public service to be used for violence. But while most criminals have a violent self-image, many do not incorporate the "killer" role into their self-concept. Dietz (29) points out, "persons in sex or robbery homicide groups may be forced to deal with a permanent identity that they did not plan for carefully nor consider fully." It is mainly in contract killings and executions that one finds the "Killer" identity most applicable.

Dietz suggests most violent encounters share a four-stage sequence: initiating confrontation, decision-negotiation, action, and control. In addition to these four stages, what distinguishes felony homicide is the prior planning stage and the post-crime activities absent from interpersonal violence. Although an individual in sex or robbery homicides may not have accepted the killer role in the planning stage, there is often some consideration of the possibility of murder.

What is disconcerting about the dynamics of felony homicide encounters is that there is little predictability from the viewpoint of the victim. While negotiations do occur throughout the encounters, Dietz (162) stresses, "the reality of perceptions and motives attributed to the various participants are contingent upon the particular situation." What is clear, at least from the viewpoint of the criminals, is that their utmost objective is to maintain control and predictability in a situation marked by high excitability and anxiety. Not ironically, victims who fail to show fear in criminal encounters are considered foolish and unpredictable, often increasing the likelihood of their murder. But, as many homicide perpetrators indicate, even bargaining or cooperation does not secure one's life.

It is in part two where the strength of Dietz's study is found. Much of chapter four, "Robbery Homicide: Your Money and Your Life," is based on interviews with the members of several robbery groups. One informant, David, describes how little planning went into his groups robberies:

Most of the stuff we did was no planning to it. Just spur of the moment stuff. . . . Like we didn't talk much before we did

some of those crimes. Lots of times I didn't need the money. It was more like a habit. Like crime is like an addiction, like heroin. (56)

David describes how he acts mean during the initiating stage of the robbery and then friendly depending on how the victim responds. After establishing control of the encounter, robbery group members Henry, Ricardo, and David all report that reassurance and a kind of rapport with the victim gives the victim a false sense of security, allowing them to carry out their crimes more easily and often producing information about valuables otherwise missed.

Many of the accounts offered by homicide participants are gruesome. The impersonality and instrumentality of the killing is shocking. In chapter five, the reader finds out just how cheap life is in Detroit where "contracts" generally range from \$200 to \$5,000, although professional hit men may command up to \$10,000. Unlike robbery homicides, executions are usually very well planned and, execution of the victim is the primary goal.

Ricardo, an experienced hit man with "the black mafia" summed up the attitude towards contract killings in Detroit:

A person don't think nothin' about killin' somebody here in this city. . . . If a person has money he can get off any kind of offense. . . . In the course of a week, every two weeks, we had two or three people. Like if they say O.K. \$10,000 for John Doe. Like most of the time they'd give the people half the money and like after you'd bring back some of the jewelry or something of a certain individual or something to let them know you took care of this business, like then you get the other half but me, like I was getting mine right up front. (93-4)

Apart from the general attitude that contracts were easy money, one is struck by the cold matter of factness of these executioners. Dietz notes even acquaintance with the victim will seldom interfere with the hired killer's job. In one case Henry discusses how he and two accomplices contract to kill two

women and a man he knew. When the scene is complicated by the presence of a woman and small child not included in the contract, Henry and his accomplices think nothing of carrying out the contracted killings, as well as killing the third woman. It is strangely ironic to hear Henry explain that he was going to buy his son's baby some needed things with the contract money.

In chapter six, Dietz (113) notes a similarity between sex-related homicides and other forms of felony homicide in that "a similar type of impersonal, predatory and self-seeking behavior is involved." Homicides where sex is the primary motive are much rarer than the other types of homicides discussed. Dietz (114) claims that only ten to twenty such cases occur per year in Detroit. Dietz (117) indicates that the primary rationalization for the murder is "future defensive." "The murder is a solution to avoid getting caught for the sex crimes."

Of course sexual assault is often found in other types of homicide, such as robbery and contract executions. But in these cases the victims are usually killed for reasons unrelated to the sexual activity. Sexual assault becomes part of the encounter but only as a result of situational aspects or, in the case of revenge killings, as a part of a degradation ceremony. Needless to say the accounts and descriptions of the sex murders in this chapter are troubling.

Although *Killing For Profit* has much to recommend it, the final chapters of analysis and summary contain serious weaknesses. Chapter seven, "Patterns in Felony Homicides," offers little more than a descriptive list of "patterns of interaction among criminal group members and between killer groups and their victims"(162). Dietz discusses victim patterns of interaction under headings such as begging, stoicism, bribery, bargaining, cooperation, screaming, challenge, manipulation (escape), physical attack, and denial. The conduct patterns of the killer group are discussed under the headings of pronouncements, commands, verification of victim, declaration of intent, reassurance, swearing, shouting, threats, and violence, among others. Yet, apart from providing a partial list of possible interactions for actors in the felony homicide encounter, Dietz (162)

comes to this disappointing conclusion: "While recognizing that the crime and situational similarities create some common patterns, we do not imply that the homicide encounter is predictable." As noted earlier it is precisely because of the dynamic character of these interactions that predictability is difficult if not impossible. The real finding is not that patterns of interaction are important to understand, but that outcomes cannot be predicted on the basis of any given pattern of interaction.

Chapter eight, "Killer Identities and Career Contingencies," offers a very general discussion of how different killer identities are developed. Dietz discusses the "incidental," the "hot," and the "cool" killer identities, and several ways individuals can learn the killer role. However, for professional or career killers it is not how they learn their role which separates them from the robber or sexual criminal but rather the fact that it is the power, uniqueness, and, ultimately, the glorification of killing that marks them as professional killers. One might say that they are individuals who like and take pride in their work.

In the last chapter Dietz offers a good summary of her findings and suggests questions future research might pose. Ultimately, it is the findings of Dietz's study which are disappointing: little if any new insight is gained into interactional aspects of felony homicides. The depersonalized, instrumental, and group-based nature of felony homicide encounters are well known, particularly in the literature Dietz reviews. While one might presume there is a need to understand the interactional aspects of felony homicides, after reading *Killing For Profit* one is inclined to ask why, given the absence of predictability in those encounters. Dietz does a good job describing some consistent interaction patterns, but admits predictability is all but impossible.

Although some descriptive statistics are offered, the advantage of Dietz's study is the verbatim accounts of the participants. While specialists in the areas of crime and violence will not find anything new in Dietz's book, it can be recommended as a very readable book written in layman's terms.

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