# The Interracial Nature of Violent Crimes: A Reexamination<sup>1</sup>

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> Several authors have recently challenged the conception that violent crimes in the United States are disproportionately intraracial. They have posited a special propensity for black offenders to seek out white victims because of black rage and have pointed to the desirable characteristics of white victims. In this paper, three models of the race of offender and victim are developed using aggregate national data on homicide (from the Uniform Crime Reports), rape, aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery (from the National Crime Surveys). Whatever measures are used, violent crimes are found to be intraracial to a far greater extent than statistically expected under these models. A structural explanation of these findings is presented.

Recent articles in the social science literature have raised questions concerning the degree to which violent crime in the United States is interracial rather than intraracial. At one time, this question appeared to be settled, at least for the violent crimes of rape (Amir 1971), homicide (Wolfgang 1961; Pokorny 1965) and assault (Pittman and Handy 1964). Amir (1971), using data from the official records of the Philadelphia police department (for 1958 through 1960), found that 93.2% of 646 rape events were intraracial (offenders and victims were from the same racial group), 3.2% involved black offenders and white victims, and 3.6% involved white offenders and black victims. Wolfgang's (1958, 1961) early studies of homicides in Philadelphia, which used police records for the five-year period from 1948 through 1952, found that 94% of the 588 criminal homicides during this period involved victims and offenders of the same race.<sup>2</sup> Pittman and Handy (1964) examined a 25% sample of 965

 $^2$  Pokorny's (1965) study of police homicide data from Houston, for the years 1958 through 1962, showed rates of intraracial homicides that were very similar to Wolfgang's.

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crimes classified by the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department as aggravated assaults for the year 1961; they found that, of 238 cases for which the races of victims and offenders were known, 96% involved individuals of the same race.

These results seem to indicate that violent crimes, at least these three major types, overwhelmingly involve offenders and victims of the same race. Recently, however, several researchers have suggested that the extent to which violent crimes are interracial has been underemphasized, partly owing to the improper interpretation of the available data (e.g., Wilbanks 1985; Chilton and Gavin 1985), partly because of a reluctance to broach this potentially sensitive topic (e.g., LaFree 1982; Wilbanks 1985), and partly because of an increase in the relative frequency of interracial crimes, especially those involving black offenders, during the recent past (e.g., Katz and Mazur 1979; LaFree 1982).

These articles demonstrate that, for a variety of violent crimes, the percentage involving black offenders and white victims (B-W crimes) is typically much greater than the percentage involving white offenders and black victims (W-B crimes). For example, this is true for all but one of the 24 studies of rape reviewed by LaFree (1982, table 1) and seven of eight studies reviewed by Katz and Mazur (1979, table 5).<sup>3</sup> This is also true of the National Crime Survey (NCS) victimization data for assaults, rape, and robbery examined by Wilbanks (1985). Further, Wilbanks (1985) and Chilton and Gavin (1985) have shown that, when violent crimes are examined, a much higher percentage of the victims of black offenders are white than the percentage of white offenders' victims that are black. That is, it appears that black offenders are seeking out white victims more than white offenders are seeking out black victims.

A number of hypotheses offer motivations that are specific to black offenders to explain these differences. Some suggest that these crimes (especially rape), which involve black offenders and white victims, are due to a large extent to racial hostility (e.g., Poussaint 1966; Hernton 1965; Cleaver 1968; Agopian, Chappel, and Geis 1974; LaFree 1982; Wilbanks 1985). Wilbanks suggests that this may be the case for violent crimes in general: "It may be that black assaulters are largely strangers who are expressing hostility towards whites in general. . . . Likewise it may be that Black rapists are expressing hostility towards whites as well as women through rape while white rapists are simply expressing hostility toward women" (1985, p. 125). Curtis states that the rape of white women by black men is "the penultimate way for a Black male to serve up revenge on his white male oppressor . . ." (1975, p. 78). A somewhat different psychological explanation involves the supposed special sexual

<sup>3</sup> Six of the studies in Katz and Mazur's table are included in LaFree's table.

attractiveness of white women for black males (e.g., Stember 1976; La-Free 1982). LaFree states that a "plausible explanation for the greater frequency of BW than WB rapes is that a white dominated sexual stratification system has enshrined the white female as a symbol of sexual attractiveness, freedom, and power" (1982, p. 325). All these explanations suggest that black offenders seek out white victims, that there is some sort of special, socially created drive on the part of black offenders to victimize whites, and that this motive is a general enough phenomenon to show up in aggregate data.

A number of questions have been addressed in the literature cited above. Are interracial crimes (B-W and W-B) more common than intraracial crimes (B-B and W-W)? Are B-W crimes more common than W-B crimes? Have the rates of B-W and W-B crimes changed over time? This paper addresses the first two questions in a somewhat modified form. For example, the proportion of interracial versus intraracial violent crimes and the proportions of B-W and W-B violent crimes are examined in relation to the proportions expected on the basis of the number of blacks and whites in the population of the United States and in the population of offenders. The results show that the relative sizes of the populations of blacks and whites in the United States and in the offender population, by themselves, would lead to both a greater percentage of B-W than W-B crimes and a greater percentage of black offenders' victims who are white than white offenders' victims who are black. Further, the rates of interracial violent crimes, B-W and W-B, are all lower than those statistically expected given a model in which offenders randomly victimize individuals from the population of the entire nation, and, as a corollary, more black offender-black victim (B-B) crimes and white offender-white victim (W-W) crimes occur than statistically expected.

### POPULATION DISTRIBUTIONS AND STRUCTURAL THEORY

Peter Blau (1977) has summarized some of the differences in population distributions on group interactions. The effects of differences in the relative size of groups on their differential rates and amount of group interaction are most clearly seen when there are two groups. For example, if one of the groups in such a dichotomy is smaller than the other, the proportion of the smaller group's members that intermarry with members of the larger group is an inverse function of group size, as is the average amount of time spent in intergroup associations. To illustrate, assume that there are 10% blacks and 90% whites in a population of 1,000; then, if there are 10 black-white marriages, 10% [ =  $(10/100) \times 100$ ] of the blacks would be intermarried, while only 1.1% [ =  $(10/900) \times 100$ ] of the whites would be intermarried. Again, if individual blacks spent 10% of their time

interacting with individual white friends, then whites would spend only 1.1% of their time interacting with black friends. This results, not from some greater psychological motivation of blacks to marry or interact with whites, but from the relative numbers of blacks and whites in this population. As Blau points out, "All minority groups, singly or in combination, are more involved in intergroup relations with a group constituting a majority than the majority group is with them . . . the larger the difference in size between two groups, the greater is the discrepancy in the areas of intergroup associations between them" (1977, pp. 22–23). This is the result of the relative number of individuals in each group.

Although violent crimes (homicide, assault, robbery, and rape) that involve blacks and whites require interaction between individuals from these two groups, they are not symmetrical acts such as marriages, in which both interactants can be said to be married; that is, not both interactants are said to be rapists or murderers. Thus, for these criminal acts, there is not a deterministic inverse relationship between the proportion of B-W and W-B crimes. There are, however, such relationships in the proportion of time members of one race spend alone with members of the other race-the proportion of blacks dating whites versus whites dating blacks, and so on. Personal victimizations often involve nonstrangers: 38% of assaults and 40% of rapes, according to the 1981 NCS, were committed against nonstrangers, as well as 79% of homicides, according to the 1983 Uniform Crime Report. Further, these crimes must always involve contact. Thus, there are structural pressures based on the relative numbers of blacks and whites in the United States that, in the absence of other forces, would lead us to expect a higher proportion of black crimes to be committed against whites than white crimes to be committed against blacks. These and other insights are used in my investigation of these types of victim-offender dyads.

### ANALYSIS OF RAPE VICTIMIZATIONS

The issues surrounding the interracial nature of rape and the relative frequency of B-W and W-B rapes have received more attention in the literature than they have in research on all other violent crimes combined. For this reason, my methods of analysis are demonstrated for this crime and are later used for homicide, aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery. First, I construct a  $2 \times 2$  cross tabulation of rape incidents by race of offender (white or black) and race of victim (white or black) and review how a number of authors have interpreted data on the racial composition of victims and offenders. Second, I demonstrate how such findings may be generated in the absence of any statistical association between race of victims and offenders. Next, I show that, in spite of the

greater proportion of B-W than W-B crimes, the frequencies of both B-W and W-B crimes are far less than expected given the marginal distributions of both offenders and victims by race. Finally, I compare the proportions of B-W and W-B rapes after taking their expected frequencies into account.

# Some Past Interpretations

Table 1 is based on rapes reported to National Crimes Survey (NCS) interviewers during 1973-82 (U.S. Department of Justice 1985a). The first row within each cell of the table shows the total number of rapes reported to NCS interviewers that are in that cell of the table; the second row is the percentage of rapes in that row that fall in that cell; the third is the percentage of rapes in that column that fall in that cell; and the fourth is the percentage of rapes in the total table that fall in that cell.

Several authors (e.g., LaFree 1982; Katz and Mazur 1979) have noted that black offender-white victim rapes are more likely than white offender-black victim rapes. The data in table 1 support that assertion, since B-W rapes make up 20.23% of the total rapes, whereas W-B rapes are quite rare: 1.50% of the rapes. Other authors have focused on the column percentages, which show the percentage of white (or black) of-

	RACE OF (	Offender	
RACE OF VICTIM	White	Black	TOTALS
White:			
Frequency	698	229	927
Row%	75.30	24.70	(81.89)
Column%	97.62	54.92	
Total%	61.66	20.23	
Black:			
Frequency	17	188	205
Row%	8.29	91.71	(18.11)
Column%	2.38	45.08	
Total%	1.50	16.61	
Totals	715	417	1,132
	(63.16)	(36.84)	

TABLE 1

Race of Victim by Race of Offender for Rapes Reported to NCS Interviewers (1973–82)\*

SOURCE.-U.S. Department of Justice (1985a), table 8.

NOTE.—Statistical measures:  $\chi^2 = 323.92$ ; Benini's index of attraction = .87; odds ratio = 33.71, Yule's Q = .94. Expected cell frequencies:  $f_{11} = 585.52$ ;  $f_{12} = 341.48$ ;  $f_{21} = 129.48$ ;  $f_{22} = 75.52$ . \* Weighted frequencies.

fenders' victims who are of each race; these are labeled the "offender perspective." Consistent with the findings of Wilbanks (1985) and Chilton and Gavin (1985), from the offender perspective, black offenders rape white victims in over one-half of the incidents (54.92%), while white offenders rape black victims in only 2.38% of the incidents. These data, presented in this way, dramatically portray the interracial nature of rape and, more specifically, the greater relative frequency of black involvement. As noted above, this has led some authors to suggest individuallevel interpretations that stress conflict, black rage, and the special desirability of white women for black males.

Later, I demonstrate that, for the data in table 1, rapes are actually more intraracial than one would expect statistically, that is, blacks (or whites) are more likely to be the victims of other blacks (or whites) than one would expect given the marginal distributions of blacks and whites in both the victim and offender marginals and that both B-W and W-B rapes are less likely than expected. First, however, I show how results similar to those in table 1 can occur even in the absence of a relationship between the race of victims and offenders.

## Standardization on U.S. Population

Table 2 was constructed under the assumption that the proportions of black and white offenders and victims are the same as the proportions of blacks (.1136) and whites (.8864) in the total population of the United States (i.e., the population of blacks and whites, excluding others) and that, as in table 1, there is a total of 1132 rapes.<sup>4</sup> Obviously,  $\chi^2$  for such a table is zero, as are most conceivable measures of relationship.

Here, B-W and W-B crimes occur with the same frequency (10.07%) of the total rapes). Consistent with Blau's (1977) formulation, however, rates of interaction with the other group are relatively greater for the minority group. That is, from the offender perspective, white offenders choose black victims in only 11.36% of the incidents, whereas black offenders choose white victims in 88.64\% of the incidents. Thus, from the offender perspective, rape is interracial for blacks but not for whites. These large differences, as seen from the perspectives of black offenders and white offenders, come from a table in which there is no relationship

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> I constructed table 2 by assuming that blacks constituted 11.36% of both victims and offenders and whites constituted 88.64% of both the victims and offenders. These figures are based on the population sizes of blacks and whites, excluding others, in the U.S. population who were 12 and over. Thus, the upper-left-hand cell should contain (.8864  $\times$  .8864  $\times$  100 =) 78.57% of 1,132 cases.

	RACE OF O	FFENDER	
RACE OF VICTIM	White	Black	TOTALS
White:			
Frequency	889.41	113.99	1,003.40
Row%	88.64	11.36	(88.64)
Column%	88.64	88.64	
Total%	78.57	10.07	
Black:			
Frequency	113.99	14.61	128.60
Row%	88.64	11.36	(11.36)
Column%	11.36	11.36	
Total%	10.07	1.29	
Totals	1,003.40	128.60	1,132.00
	(88.04)	(11.30)	

TABLE 2

EXPECTED CELL FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES: WHEN CELL FREQUENCIES ARE BASED ONLY ON THE PERCENTAGES OF BLACKS AND WHITES IN THE UNITED STATES

between the race of victims and offenders; however, this table does not explain the greater frequency of B-W than W-B crime found in table 1.

# Standardization on U.S. and Offender Populations

A more realistic model for examining the relative frequency of B-W and W-B rape involves constructing a table that takes into account the proportionately greater number of black than white offenders identified by the victims of rape. According to the reports of victims (the column marginals for table 1), blacks constitute 36.84% and whites 63.16% of rape offenders. If it is assumed that these offenders have no tendency to victimize members of their own race, then 88.64% of the victims should be white and 11.36% should be black. Table 3 presents results from a baseline model that was standardized to reflect these marginals.<sup>5</sup> It represents a situation in which there is no tendency for either black or white offenders to attack victims on the basis of race, whether that propensity is based on hatred of the other group, hatred of one's own group, geographical proximity, or any other factor. This null model takes into considera-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Table 3 was created using the following marginals: .6316 and .3684 for the columns and .8864 and .1136 for the rows. These marginals were then multiplied to obtain the expected proportions for each cell. E.g., the expected proportion of cases for the B-W cell is  $(.3684 \times .8864 =) .3265$ .

#### TABLE 3

EXPECTED CELL FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES: WHEN CELL FREQUENCIES ARE
Based on the Percentages of Blacks and Whites in the United States and
THEIR PERCENTAGES IN THE OFFENDER POPULATION (Baseline Model)

	RACE OF (	)ffender	
RACE OF VICTIM	White	Black	TOTALS
White:			
Frequency	633.75	369.65	1,003.40
Row%	63.16	36.84	(88.64)
Column%	88.64	88.64	
Total%	55.99	32.65	
Black:			
Frequency	81.22	47.37	128.60
Row%	63.16	36.84	(11.36)
Column%	11.36	11.36	
Total%	7.17	4.19	
Totals	715.00	417.00	1,132.00
	(63.16)	(36.84)	

SOURCES.—Tables 1 and 2.

NOTE.—The total percentages of rapes observed for each cell are: W-W = 61.66; B-W = 20.23; W-B = 1.50; and B-B = 16.61.

tion only the relative numbers of blacks and whites in the population of the United States and their relative numbers among offenders.

An examination of table 3 is enlightening: (1) the percentage of B-W rapes greatly exceeds the percentage of W-B rapes (32.65% vs. 7.17%); (2) as in table 2, from the offender perspective, black offenders select white victims in 88.64% of the incidents, while white offenders select black victims in only 11.36% of the incidents; and (3) the percentage of intraracial rape is 60.17 [ = (633.75 + 47.37)/1132]. All this is drawn from a table in which  $\chi^2$  is zero, and thus the race of victims and offenders is statistically independent.

These analyses of tables in which there is no relationship between the race of victims and offenders demonstrate how such tables may be misinterpreted as supporting individual-level theories based on, for example, a special motivation on the part of blacks to seek out white victims. In actuality, tables 2 and 3 demonstrate the effects of the differential sizes of these two groups in both the victim and offender categories. There are marginal effects in these simulated tables, but no first-order interactions (i.e., the odds ratio is zero). The various row, column, and total percentages in these tables reflect only differences in marginal distributions—marginal effects.

If the results from the baseline model (table 3) are compared with the

observed rape data in table 1, rape is seen as less of an out-group phenomenon than expected under the baseline model.<sup>6</sup> For example, from the offender's perspective, 88.64% of black offenders' victims are expected to be white, but the observed percentage is only 54.92; 11.36% of white offenders' victims are expected to be black, but only 2.38% are black. Similarly, 32.65% of all rapes are expected to be B-W rapes, but only 20.23% are, and 7.17% are expected to be W-B rapes, but the observed percentage is only 1.50. Finally, only 60.16% of all rapes are expected to be intraracial (55.98 + 4.18), but 78.27% are intraracial (61.66 + 16.61). Thus, rape is far more intraracial than the baseline model predicts.

## Measures of Salience for B-W and W-B Crimes

The question of whether B-W or W-B rapes are relatively more frequent in comparison with their expected values is more difficult to answer. Comparing the raw differences in percentages  $(P_o - P_e)$  may not be appropriate when the expected cell percentages differ by large amounts. Therefore, a measure similar to Blau's measure of salience is used (Blau et al. 1982). Blau and associates, using interracial marriage as an example, divide the observed percentage of out-group associations (marriages) by the expected percentage of out-group associations and subtract this number from one;<sup>7</sup> this standardizes the resulting measure by the percentage expected. This measure of salience is positive if the parameter (race) is salient in producing in-group versus out-group contacts, for example, if blacks and whites combined have more in-group marriage than expected.

Analogous coefficients can be calculated for both black and white offenders based on the proportion of out-group offenses observed (table 1) and those expected under the baseline model (table 2); for example, for black offenders salience is .380 [1 - (20.23/32.65)], for white offenders salience is .791 [= 1 - (1.50/7.17)], and overall salience (for blacks and whites combined) is .454  $\{= 1 - [(20.23 + 1.50)/(32.65 + 7.17)]\}$ . These coefficients (.380 for black offenders, .791 for white offenders, and .454 overall) may be interpreted as follows: B-W rape occurs 38.0% less often than expected under the baseline model, W-B rape occurs 79.1% less

<sup>7</sup> This index is intimately related to the standardization of  $(P_o - P_e)$  by the expected percentage, i.e.,  $(P_o - P_e)/P_e$ . Salience as measured by this procedure is  $-(P_o - P_e)/P_e$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This baseline model, as well as the one used to generate the expected frequencies in table 2, assumes that blacks and whites are spread homogeneously throughout society. In actuality, black populations are concentrated in the urban centers. This model further assumes that the percentages of black and white offenders remain constant throughout society. This issue is addressed in the discussion section, but here the expected values for the proportions of B-B, W-W, B-W, and W-B crimes in the entire nation are generated on the basis of population figures for the entire nation.

often, and, for both groups combined, interracial or out-group rape occurs 45.4% less often.

# Traditional Model of Statistical Independence

I now go back to the data in table 1 and conduct a more traditional analysis. For this table,  $\chi^2$  is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 324$ ; df = 1; P < .001), which indicates a significant relationship between race of offender and race of victim. This relationship results, however, not because of an excess of interracial rapes but because intraracial rapes occur more frequently than expected given the proportions of black and white offenders and victims. For example, the observed frequencies of interracial rapes (B-W and W-B) are each 112.48 less than expected. Thus, interracial rape occurs less frequently than expected given the observed number of black and white victims and offenders.

The discrepancies between the observed and expected frequencies for B-W and W-B crimes must be equal in this  $2 \times 2$  table, as is indicated by its single degree of freedom. As soon as the discrepancy for a single cell is determined, those for all other cells are determined, since the sum of the discrepancies must equal zero for each row and column in the table. Because the discrepancies for each cell must be the same in terms of absolute value, any comparison of the relative salience of B-W and W-B crime is not appropriate for this model. However, overall salience is .478 [= 1 - (17 + 229)/(129.48 + 341.48)] under this model of statistical independence.

A variety of other summary measures of relationship for this table point to the same conclusion. For example, intraracial rapes occur 19.87% more often than statistically expected.<sup>8</sup> The Benini coefficient of attraction (the ratio of the discrepancy between the observed and expected frequencies divided by the maximum possible such discrepancy, given the marginals) is .87 (Benini 1901; Jones 1985).<sup>9</sup> This indicates a

<sup>9</sup> The difference between the observed and expected frequencies for, say, the upperleft-hand cell is 112.48, while the maximum possible discrepancy, given the column and row marginals for that cell, is 129.48 (i.e., the column marginal, 715, minus the expected frequency, 585.52). Thus, the Benini coefficient of attraction equals 112.48/ (715 - 585.52). The coefficient is positive in tables that have larger than expected numbers of cases in the diagonal. It assumes the same value for both diagonal cells in a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The observed number of intraracial rapes is 886 (= 698 + 188), whereas the expected number is 661.04 (= 585.52 + 75.52). Thus,  $[(886/1132) \times 100 = ] 78.27\%$  of the rapes are intraracial, whereas the expected percentage is only  $[(661.04/1132) \times 100 = ] 58.40$ . There were (78.27 - 58.40 =) 19.87% more intraracial rapes in the total population than expected on the basis of the marginals.

very strong association between race of offenders and victims: the association is 87% of its maximum possible value. A problem with the Benini coefficient of attraction is that, being a  $\chi^2$ -based measure of relationship for a 2 × 2 table (see n. 8), it is influenced by the marginal distributions of cases. The odds ratio, however, is not affected by changes in the marginal distributions of cases (Reynolds 1977, p. 37; Blalock 1979, p. 315). The odds ratio for table 1 is 33.71; this indicates that the odds of a black offender raping a black victim rather than a white victim are 33.71 times as great as the odds of a white offender raping a black victim rather than a white victim. A final index of association, which is also not affected by changes in the marginal distribution of cases, is Yule's Q; Yule's Q for table 1 is .94.<sup>10</sup> These indices show a strong tendency for the victims of rape to be victimized by someone of their own race.

Each of the analyses in this section points to the same conclusion: the rates of interracial rapes (B-W plus W-B) and of B-W and W-B rapes are less than expected, and rates of intraracial rapes (B-B plus W-W) and B-B and W-W rapes are greater than expected. What needs to be explained is why both white and black offenders assail victims of their own race more often than statistically expected.

## ANALYZING OTHER VIOLENT CRIMES

Data on the race of victim by race of offender are available in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCRs) for criminal homicide. These data are drawn from crimes known to the police that involve a single victim and offender and for which the sex of both the victim and the offender are known (FBI 1984). The UCRs do not contain data broken down by race of victim and race of offender for any other crimes; however, the National Crime Surveys (NCSs) collect these data yearly for aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery. Each year, these surveys sample some 60,000 households, containing approximately 130,000 individuals. A series of questions are asked that are designed to elicit whether individuals (or households) have been the victims of crime. If they have, additional questions are used to identify the race, sex, and approximate age of the offender. Data are therefore available that can be used to cross-classify the race of victims by the race of offenders, that is, the victim-perceived race of the offender. Each year, there are enough cases involving victims and offenders of each race to allow an analysis of aggravated assaults, simple assaults, and robberies. There are too few cases of rape to allow an

 $<sup>2 \</sup>times 2$  table, where it is equivalent to phi adjusted for its maximum attainable value: phi/phi-max.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Yule's Q is an exact function of the odds ratio in 2  $\times$  2 tables (Reynolds 1977, p. 39).

analysis of that crime for a single year. The analyses conducted below are based on data for single offenders, where the race of the offender and the race of the victim are known. The NCS data have been weighted to reflect the population of the nation as a whole (U.S. Department of Justice 1985*b*, table 45).

The interracial versus intraracial nature of other violent crimes, as well as the relative frequency of W-B and B-W crimes, can be analyzed in the same way as rape (table 1). When this analysis is conducted and the relative frequencies of B-W and W-B crimes are compared, or when crime is viewed from the offender perspective, one might again be led to explain the results using a black rage or conflict type of explanation.

Table 4 shows that for each type of violent crime the percentage of B-W crimes exceeds the percentage of W-B crimes: B-W crimes range from a high of 36.29% of all robberies to a low of 5.42% of all homicides, while W-B crimes range from 2.30% for aggravated assaults to a low of 1.17% for simple assaults. From the offender's perspective, black offenders assail white victims rather than black victims in a much greater percentage of the incidents than white offenders assail black victims rather than white victims. For example, in cases of robbery, black offenders assail white victims in 64.31% of the incidents and black victims in only 35.69%; white offenders assail black victims in only 3.86% of the incidents and assail white victims in the remaining 96.14%.

If, however, the marginal distributions of blacks and whites are again taken into account, a different picture emerges. The results in table 5 are based on the same type of baseline model used for rape, that is, the one used to produce table 3; table 5 takes into consideration the relative

			OFFENDER	Perspective
Crime	Percentage* B-W	Percentage† W-B	Black Offender,‡ White Victim	White Offender,§ Black Victim
Rape	20.23	1.50	54.92	2.34
Homicide	5.42	2.24	10.74	4.53
Aggravated assault .	12.60	2.30	42.99	3.25
Simple assault	10.72	1.17	56.12	1.45
Robbery	36.29	1.68	64.31	3.86

**TABLE 4** 

SUMMARY MEASURES OF B-W, W-B, AND OFFENDER PERSPECTIVE PERCENTAGES FOR FIVE VIOLENT CRIMES

\* Percentage of all crimes of this type involving black offenders and white victims.

<sup>†</sup> Percentage of all crimes of this type involving white offenders and black victims.

‡ Percentage of black offenders' victims for this type of crime who are white.
§ Percentage of white offenders' victims for this type of crime who are black.

proportions of blacks and whites in the U.S. population and the proportions of blacks and whites in the offender population for each violent crime. The proportions of black and white offenders are based on victims' reports for all crimes except homicide; the proportions for homicide are based on police records. This procedure provides expected proportions of B-W, W-B, B-B, and W-W crimes that are based on the observed differences in the proportions of black and white offenders for each crime and that assumes no tendency for offenders of either race to assail victims on the basis of race. These expected values are then compared with observed values.

The results, summarized in table 5, show that for all five crimes, the percentage of B-W and W-B crimes observed is less than that expected under the baseline model. For example, the expected percentage of B-W homicide incidents is 44.74, but the observed percentage is only 5.42. For homicides involving white offenders and black victims, the expected percentage is 5.63, but the observed is 2.24. For the crime of robbery, in which white victims might be presumed to be more attractive targets (in terms of potential "take"), the expected percentage of B-W robberies under the baseline model (50.02) greatly exceeds the observed (36.29).

The relative frequencies of B-W and W-B violent crimes, which have been standardized for their expected values, can be compared by examining the salience coefficients for black and white offenders in table 5. Criminal homicide for black offenders is more an in-group phenomenon than for white offenders, that is, for black offenders B-W homicide occurs 87.8% less often than expected, while for white offenders W-B homicide occurs 60.2% less often than expected. For each of the other four violent crimes, however, race is more salient for white than for black offenders.

In table 6, the traditional model of statistical independence for 2  $\times$  2 contingency tables is used to examine the data for these violent crimes. Expected percentages of B-W and W-B incidents are calculated, as well as a variety of summary measures of relationship based on the crossclassification of race of victim by race of offender for the observed data. Again, there is substantially less B-W and W-B crime than statistically expected. For example, the expected percentage of B-W homicides is 26.60, while the observed is 5.42; the expected percentage of W-B homicides is 23.42, while the observed is 2.24. As before, however, the discrepancies between observed and expected percentages must be equal in this model, so that comparisons of the percentages of W-B and B-W crimes relative to their expected percentages for white and black offenders are not appropriate when using this model. For each of these violent crimes, the observed percentage of interracial incidents is less than that expected under the commonly used model of statistical independence for  $2 \times 2$  tables, that is, the overall salience coefficients are positive. Fur-

	BLACK-'	WHITE*		WHITE-]	Black†		OVFPALI.
CRIME	Observed	Expected	SALIENCE	Observed	Expected	SALIENCE	SALIENCE
Rape	20.23	32.65	.380	1.50	7.17	.791	.454
Homicide	5.42	44.74	.878	2.24	5.63	.602	.848
Aggravated assault	12.60	25.98	.515	2.30	8.03	.714	.562
Simple assault	10.72	16.93	.367	1.17	9.19	.873	.545
Robbery	36.29	50.02	.274	1.68	4.95	.661	.309

PERCENTAGES OF B-W AND W-B VIOLENT CRIMES OBSERVED AND THOSE EXPECTED UNDER THE BASELINE MODEL AND MEASURES OF **TABLE 5** 

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	BLACK-	WHITE*	WHITE-	BLACK <sup>†</sup>	RENINI	Onns	OVERALL
CRIME	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	COEFFICIENT	RATIO	SALIENCE
Rape	20.23	30.17	1.50	11.44	.87	33.71	.478
Homicide	5.42	26.60	2.24	23.42	06.	175.10	.847
Aggravated assault	12.60	23.74	2.30	13.44	.83	39.43	.599
Simple assault	10.72	17.28	1.17	7.73	.85	53.24	.525
Robbery	36.29	44.11	1.68	9.51	.82	13.84	.292

**TABLE 6** 

SUMMARY MEASURES OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN RACE OF OFFENDERS AND VICTIMS FOR FIVE VIOLENT CRIMES

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ther, Benini's coefficient of attraction is greater than .80 for all these crimes, that is, the association between race of victim and race of offender is over 80% of its maximum possible value given the marginal distributions. Finally, the odds ratios, which are not affected by changes in the marginal distributions, range from a high of 175.10 for homicide to a low of 13.84 for robbery.

When either the baseline model or the traditional model of statistical independence is used, the results are consistent across each of the five violent crimes. In each case, violent crimes are intraracial to a far greater extent than expected, and both B-W and W-B crimes occur less frequently than expected.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Typically, a substantial percentage of a black offender's crimes are committed against white victims, except in the case of homicide (see table 5). Such findings, however, do not necessarily reflect a special motivation on the part of blacks to seek out white victims. Further, I find that assaults involving black offenders and white victims are much more common than those involving white offenders and black victims. These results, based on aggregate data for the entire nation, can be explained by the population distribution of blacks and whites in the United States and by the overrepresentation of blacks among offenders.

Using national data, similar to those used to support the idea that black offenders show a propensity to seek out white victims (Chilton and Gavin 1985; Wilbanks 1985), I show that the amount of both B-W and W-B crime is less than statistically expected given either the marginal distributions of blacks and whites in the offender and victim populations (the traditional model of statistical independence) or the distribution of blacks and whites in the United States and the distribution of blacks and whites in the offender population (the baseline model). This suggests that the task of those interested in the intraracial versus interracial nature of violent crimes at the national level is to explain why violent crimes tend to be more intraracial than expected. A number of hypotheses might be suggested: for example, the threat and reality of more severe punishment for blacks when whites, rather than other blacks, are the victims (Collins 1975; LaFree 1980; Wolfgang and Riedel 1975), or blacks may be less likely to report crimes when they are the victims of whites (Katz and Mazur 1979; Ennis 1967).

I suggest, however, that the primary explanation is structural, involving the physical and social segregation of blacks and whites in the United States. Segregation leads to lower rates of B-W and W-B contact than expected given the numbers of blacks and whites in the nation as a whole.

For example, if blacks and whites were randomly distributed throughout the nation, the probability of a black interacting with a white would be .865, while probability of a white interacting with a black would be .112.<sup>11</sup> Thus, if blacks and whites were distributed homogeneously throughout the nation, and interactions were random, blacks would be 7.72 (= .865/.112) times more likely to interact with whites than whites would be to interact with blacks.

The situation is rather different if the effects of segregation are taken into account. For example, Massey and Mullan (1984) computed the probabilities of whites' interacting with blacks and blacks with whites for seven SMSAs. They examined the proportions of blacks and whites living in each of the census tracts of the SMSAs and on that basis computed the probabilities of contact within each tract. These probabilities were weighted and combined to determine the probabilities for each SMSA. Thus, the probabilities (at the census-tract level) of whites' contact with blacks and blacks' contact with whites could be assessed. When these probabilities were combined for all seven SMSAs, blacks had a .57 probability of interaction with a white, while whites had a .03 probability of interacting with blacks. Blacks were 19 (= .57/.03) times more likely to interact with a white than whites were to interact with a black under a model of random interactions within census tracts.<sup>12</sup>

Such low rates of expected interaction resulting from physical segregation within SMSAs would lead to lower expected rates of B-W and W-B crimes than those predicted on the basis of population estimates for the entire nation. It should be noted that crime rates are typically much higher in these sorts of SMSAs than for the nation as a whole. Thus, the 19:1 ratio (for census tracts in these SMSAs) versus 7.72:1 ratio (for the entire U.S. population) of the probability of a black interacting with a white to a white interacting with a black would lead to a relatively large proportion of B-W crimes in comparison with W-B crimes. This is true even when these proportions are standardized for their expected values, if they are standardized on the basis of the proportions of blacks and whites in the entire population of the United States. These are the same patterns found in my analyses.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> These two figures are the proportions of whites and blacks (aged 12 and over) according to the NCS (U.S. Department of Justice 1985*b*, table 6). The remaining (.023) population was classified as "other" (mainly those of Native American and Asian ancestry).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The seven SMSAs are Denver, El Paso, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco–Oakland, and Tucson. The data are for 1970; Anglos and Hispanics have been combined into the category "white" to parallel more nearly the NCS classification scheme. The data are from Massey and Mullan (1984, table 4) and represent the average probability of an A interacting with a B for random interactions occurring within the census tract of residence.

Future studies might examine the salience of race for black offenders and for white offenders, as well as the overall salience in smaller geographical areas, where the population distribution of blacks and whites is more homogeneous. Even here, the appropriate unit of analysis is not easy to establish, since within census tracts the distribution of blacks and whites is not homogeneous: residential, work, school, and other forms of segregation are typical. These are the structural factors that I believe are primarily responsible for the relatively high rates of in-group violence for both blacks and whites.

Neither the analyses nor discussions above are meant to deny that in some instances blacks do murder whites out of rage or that a particular black man rapes a white woman because she is a symbol of sexual attractiveness. Similar factors (with rage and attractiveness directed toward blacks) may play a part in W-B crimes as well. To assert that such instances are the rule, however, based on the fact that the number of B-W crimes exceeds the number of W-B crimes or because the proportion of black offenders' victims who are white exceeds the proportion of white offenders' victims who are black, is inappropriate. The proportion of blacks and whites in the population must first be taken into account, and then a number of alternative explanations must be examined.

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