

Family Homicide: A Comparison of Rural and Urban Communities in California

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Abstract : This study compares the differences in social dynamics between rural and urban areas in California to explain homicides involving family members. It is hypothesized that rural homicides are better explained by social isolation and lack of intervention resources, whereas urban homicides are attributed to social disadvantage factors. Several critical social dynamics including social isolation, social disadvantages, acculturation, and intervention resources were entered in a hierarchical linear model (HLM) to examine whether county-level factors affect how each specific dynamic performs at the ZIP code level, a proxy measure for communities. Homicide data are from the Supplementary Homicide Report for all 58 counties in California from 1997 to 1999. Predictors at both the county and ZIP code levels are derived from the 2000 US census. Preliminary results from a HLM analysis show that social isolation is a significant but moderate predictor to explain rural family homicide and various social disadvantage factors are significant factors accounting for urban family homicide. Acculturation has little impact. Rurality and urbanity appear to interact with various social dynamics in explaining family homicide. The implications for prevention at both the county and community level as well as directions for future study on the differences between rural and urban locales are explored in the paper.

Keywords : communities, family, HLM, homicide, rural, urban

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