

- **primary homicide** A murder involving a family member, friend, or acquaintance.
- **expressive crime** A criminal offense that results from acts of interpersonal hostility, such as jealousy, revenge, romantic triangles, and quarrels.
- **nonprimary homicide** A murder that involves a victim and an offender who have no prior relationship and that usually occurs during the course of another crime, such as robbery.
- **instrumental crime** A goal-directed offense that involves some degree of planning by the offender and little or no precipitation by the victim.

- **exposure-reduction theory** A theory of intimate homicide that claims that a decline in domesticity, accompanied by an improvement in the economic status of women and a growth in domestic violence resources, explains observed decreases in intimate-partner homicide.
- **sibling offense** An offense or incident that culminates in homicide. The offense or incident may be a crime, such as robbery, or an incident with a less stringent criminal definition, such as a lovers' quarrel involving assault or battery.
- **victim precipitation** A contribution made by the victim to the criminal event, especially one that led to its initiation.

friends and strangers than by their family members, and very few women (relative to men) are murderers. However, when a male is killed by a female, the offender is most likely to be his spouse.<sup>15</sup> Other researchers have emphasized qualitative differences in the pattern of homicide within the victim-offender relationship. Figure 10-4 shows the relationship between killers and their victims.

### The Victim-Offender Relationship

The work of **Robert Nash Parker** and Dwayne Smith represented the first systematic research that focused on differentiating homicide according to the victim-offender relationship.<sup>16</sup> Their work used two classifications of homicide: primary and nonprimary. **Primary homicides** are the most frequent and involve family members, friends, and acquaintances, and they are usually characterized as **expressive crimes** because they often result from interpersonal hostility, based on jealousy, revenge, romantic triangles, and minor disagreements.<sup>17</sup>

**Nonprimary homicides** involve victims and offenders who have no prior relationship and usually occur in the course of another crime such as robbery; these are referred to as **instrumental crimes** because they involve some degree of premeditation by the offender and are less likely to be precipitated by the victim. The difference between expressive and instrumental motives for homicide continues to be important in criminological research, and we will return to this shortly.

Further attention to the heterogeneous nature of homicide is found in the work of K. R. Williams and R. L. Flewelling, who disaggregated homicide rates according to two criteria: (1) the nature of the circumstances surrounding the homicide, which included whether there was some indicator of a fight or argument precipitating the homicide, and (2) the victim-offender relationship, distinguishing between victims and offenders who were family members, acquaintances, or strangers.<sup>18</sup> By comparing how factors like poverty and population size have different effects on different types of homicide, Williams and Flewelling found that some factors are more important in explaining certain forms of homicide. Poverty is a stronger predictor of family homicide, population size is more important in explaining stranger homicide, and both the victim-offender relationship and the context of the homicide (for example, the end result of a robbery) are crucial factors in explaining patterns of homicide.

Beginning in the 1980s, the intimate-partner homicide rate began to decline, a decline that has continued to the present day. Using homicide data from a sample of 29 large cities in the United States from 1976 to 1992, Laura Dugan, Daniel S. Nagin, and Richard Rosenfeld offered an **exposure-reduction theory** of intimate-partner homicide.<sup>19</sup> These researchers examined the ability of the "decline in domesticity, improved economic status of women, and growth in domestic violence resources" to explain decreases in intimate-partner homicide in urban areas.<sup>20</sup> Analysis of the data did support the major hypotheses offered by Dugan, Nagin, and Rosenfeld—as resources supporting a nonviolent exit from a violent relationship increase, rates of intimate-partner homicide decrease. Read more about intimate-partner violence at **Library Extra 10-2**.

### Sibling Offenses

Not all homicide offenders intend to kill their victims. This may be the case when the incident begins as a robbery motivated by instrumental ends, such as getting money. An argument may also precede a homicide, but this circumstance is expressive rather than instrumental because "the dominant motivation is the violence itself," even if lethal violence is not planned in advance.<sup>21</sup> The importance of instigating incidents is explored in research by Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard Block.<sup>22</sup> The Blocks use the term **sibling offense** to refer to the incident that begins the homicide. A sibling offense may be a crime, such as robbery, or another incident, such as a lover's quarrel. It is crucial to take these sibling offenses into account because they help explain why some robberies end in murder and others do not. The Blocks developed an elaborate typology of homicide to illustrate how an understanding of the patterns of nonlethal violence can assist in the prevention of lethal violence. For example, there are a great many incidents of street gang violence, most of which do not end in death, and understanding those nonlethal incidents can assist in preventing homicides.<sup>23</sup>

### Victim Precipitation

The concept of **victim precipitation** focuses on the characteristics of victims that may have precipitated their