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First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago,
1875-1920 (review)

Eric C. Schneider

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century working-class movements that appropriated property rights rhetoric to demand racial segregation and challenge other liberal interventions.

D. Bradford Hunt
Roosevelt University

First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875–1920. By Jeffrey S. Adler (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2006) 367 pp. \$35.00

Why do men kill? In his study of 5,645 homicides reported in Chicago between 1875 and 1920, Adler analyzes homicide patterns that begin to answer that question. Adler cites Elias' concept of the "civilizing process" that most historians use to explain the long-term decline in homicide in Europe and the United States, except that something surprising happened.¹ As Adler shows, the sources of homicide changed in ways that the civilizing process predicts, but the homicide rate increased in Chicago.

Adler divides his analysis into two periods, 1875–1890 and 1890–1920. The first period was dominated by a male, working-class culture that produced alcohol-induced violence directed against male acquaintances, usually in a public setting. Drunken brawls far surpassed the next two categories, domestic violence and robbery, as the cause of homicide.

In the second period, domestic violence became the leading cause of homicide. Adler links this shift to marriage formation and changing definitions of masculinity that followed from the growth of an industrial economy. Chicago underwent a demographic transition from a setting with large numbers of young, single men in the 1870s to one with nearly equal gender ratios characterized by family formation by the turn of the century. The marriage market absorbed men at the same time that rapid industrialization forced them to succumb to factory discipline. Men defined their masculinity not through public challenges in front of drunken peers but by providing for a family through their labor. It followed that murder shifted in location, victim, and age of perpetrator: Older men, faced with industrial de-skilling and thus denied middle class norms of respectability, slaughtered their families as their households teetered on collapse.

Women also murdered more during this period. Whereas men killed their children and sometimes themselves after murdering their wives, women directed most of their violence against their spouses. Frequently the victims of domestic violence, these women argued successfully that homicide was a form of self-defense.

Different ethnic groups experienced different levels of violence.

1 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. I. The History of Manners* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); *II. State Formation and Civilization* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

African Americans had a homicide rate seven times that of the city average, and Italians had a rate five times the average. Both groups were disproportionately young, male, and single. Public brawls accounted for much of the homicide, most of it intragroup. As gender ratios came into balance, domestic violence became more prominent, although it took different forms with each group. African Americans resembled whites in their homicidal practices; Italians rarely killed women, focusing their violence on male relatives, usually in defense of family honor. Both groups relied on personal or familial retribution, which was reinforced by police unwillingness to investigate intragroup violence.

Eventually, Chicagoans defined deviance more strictly, reflecting the civilizing impulse but also raising the homicide rate. Infanticide and abortion both became subject to legal intervention, and efforts to control the public streets produced vehicular homicide charges. A homicide rate of 2.25 per 100,000 in 1875 became 9.7 in 1920 as new categories of homicide were introduced. The robbery-homicide became a new cause for alarm, the rate surging after 1890. Primarily a young man's crime that targeted older, wealthier residents and crossed racial lines, robbery homicides accounted for the sharp increase in Chicago's homicide rate between 1890 and 1920. So much for the civilizing process.

The questions that emerge on the first page of the book are, Why did Chicago have a homicide rate higher than that of any American city outside of the South? And why did that rate increase, even when taking into account the introduction of new definitions of homicide? The processes that Adler discusses were at work in other cities, but they produced different results in Chicago. Clearly, place mattered, though in a way that remains unspecified.

Adler supports his argument not only with an analysis of the modal locations of homicides but also with evidence taken from witnesses, statements left by murderers, and newspaper and police reports. Although the claim of a man who said he loved his wife so much that he had to kill her is suspicious, Adler offers a supple reading of murderers' statements about their motivations that reveals the larger cultural forces behind the statistical patterns of homicide. Each chapter is introduced by a case study, and Adler weaves together his qualitative and quantitative evidence to produce a compelling and well-written analysis that deserves a wide audience.

Eric C. Schneider
University of Pennsylvania

The Democratic Party Heads North, 1877–1962. By Alan Ware (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006) 281 pp. \$70.00 cloth \$24.99 paper

Ware has written an ambiguous book that seeks to revise the conventional wisdom about the competitiveness of American political parties