Introduction

The Phenomenon of Serial Murder

Multiple homicide is undoubtedly one of the most terrifying and fascinating phenomena of modern-day crime. It is also one of the most sensationalized areas of research within the fields of criminology, psychology, and sociology. Getting down to the “real facts” of a case rather than getting caught up in the inevitable media barrage has become a task difficult for even the most stringent, reputable researchers. The problems are many and interrelated. Philip Jenkins (1994), in his book Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide, provides a scholarly examination of how serial killing has been dealt with by the media, law enforcement personnel, and the public. His findings are consistent with the present author’s: Much of what we know, or claim to know, about serial murder is based on misinformation and myth construction. As a result of the sensational nature of this form of murder, the aura surrounding it has assumed a life of its own as it filters throughout both the public and private sectors of society.

In the summer of 1981 the present author relocated to the Atlanta, Georgia, area. Coincidentally, Wayne Williams, a young African American male believed to be one of the nation’s more prolific serial killers, was arrested at that time in the same area. This case brought to the forefront the fact that not all serial killers are white, nor are the victims. Technology, specifically hair-fiber evidence, became a critical factor in convicting Williams, and forensic science became prominent in explaining why such evidence ultimately played a key role in linking Williams to the crimes. Over 20 homicides were attributed to Williams, most of them children, although he was
actually convicted of murdering just two of his victims. The horror and fascination of this case focused media attention on Atlanta both during the homicides and after Williams’s capture. Within the next 3 years several more accounts of serial murder appeared in newspapers around the country. The American public had been invaded by a new criminal type, the serial murderer. Lurking in our communities, preying upon hapless victims, serial murderers had suddenly emerged from the criminal underground—perhaps a product of the Vietnam War or possibly a by-product of technology and the moral decay of our society. In the past, most citizens simply assumed serial killers must be insane. No one knew for sure. But as the cases of serial murder increased, as did the body counts, the ever-growing reality of multiple murders began to intrude on public awareness. Something had to be done to stem the tide of homicides with no apparent motive.

In 1984 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI: 1984a, 1984b; Ninetieth Congress, 1984) appeared before the U.S. Senate to seek funding for the development of a program specifically targeting violent criminals. According to news accounts of the hearing, as many as 5,000 people per year were believed to be killed by serial murderers. Indeed, the numbers used to describe the victims in all categories of violent crime were shocking and incredible. The public and public officials alike were horrified, and funding was procured for the program. For the next several years the incidence of serial murder was considered by the public to be pervasive in our society, though in fact this was far from the truth. No one knew how many serial killers actually existed at any one time, but it was clear that the number of victims killed by such offenders did not even begin to approach 5,000. Where that inflated figure first originated is still a mystery. Perhaps a piece of information exchanged during an interview between the media and law enforcement personnel had been misinterpreted. In any event, the number appeared and immediately sparked media attention. What is important is not who started the rumors but that they were so quickly disseminated without ever being verified.

Such forms of disinformation are not new or uncommon. For example, when marijuana came into public view during the 1940s, a film, Reeler Madness, was distributed, depicting the powerfully destructive forces of the illegal substance. Clean, upstanding young men and women, on experiencing the effects of just one reefer, were transformed into raving, sex-crazed lunatics. Though amusing to us now, such exaggeration is disturbing in light of the film’s original purpose and effects.

Much of the proliferation of disinformation is a result of public pressure to know more about a specific subject. In some respects, a symbiotic relationship has developed among law enforcement personnel, the media, and the public that serves, in fact, to encourage disinformation in regard to certain types of issues. Realizing this, some researchers, such as Phillip Jenkins, the present author, and others, began questioning the actual extent of serial murder. We do not question that serial murder occurs, but to what quantifiable and qualitative extent. This is the role of the social scientist: to objectively examine phenomena to determine their origin, nature, and impact on society.
The apparent increase in the modern serial, or multiple, murder has incited interest among social scientists in several areas. Researchers have begun to explore the social, psychological, and biological makeup of the offenders in order to establish accurate profiles. In spite of their efforts, during the 1980s the body of knowledge about serial murders remained small compared to the number of unanswered questions—especially concerning the extent of the phenomenon. In more recent years law enforcement personnel and academicians have come closer to understanding the dynamics of serial killing and its etiology, or causation.

The pure sensationalism and horror of serial murder has also spawned a plethora of novels about such murders, and the figure of the cold-blooded and senseless serial killer has been exploited by the media: for example, in television documentaries and prime-time shows—such as those that depicted California’s Hillside Strangler case and the infamous Ted Bundy (The Deliberate Stranger)—and in various box office thrillers. Because of the wide publicity given to serial murderers, a stereotype of this type of killer has formed in the mind of American society. The offender is thought of as a ruthless, blood-thirsty sex monster who lives a Jekyll-and-Hyde existence—probably next door to you. Increasingly, crime novels and movies have focused on multiple-homicide offenders. Consider the steady proliferation of multiple-homicide films, noted by Main (1997), in which serial killing is the primary agenda (see Table 1.1).

Although the list shown in Table 1.1 is not exhaustive, it is representative of each decade. It does not include films involving mass murder (the killing of a number of people all at one time) or horror films depicting vampires and murderous zombies, but only films portraying real people murdering other people. Notice the explosion of serial-murder themes during the 1990s. At least half of those never made it to theaters but went straight to home-video release. In the privacy of one’s home, viewers are bombarded with graphic killings, mutilations, and sexual torture. Clearly, this cinematic emphasis has added credibility to the notion of high body counts at the hands of ubiquitous serial-killer monsters.

### Table 1.1 Increase in Films with Serial Killing, 1920s–1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of Serial-Murder Theme Films</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>150+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SERIAL MURDER: FACT AND FICTION**
In his 1987 book *The Red Dragon*, Harris gave a fictional account of a serial killer who took great pleasure in annihilating entire families. Later his work was made into the movie *Manhunter*, an engrossing drama of psychopathology, blood, and carnage. At that time Hollywood was only beginning to realize the huge market for multiple-murder movies. Some years later, the next book by Tom Harris and the derivative movie, both titled *Silence of the Lambs*, caught the American imagination. By 2001, movies such as *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, the *Scream* trilogy, *Along Came a Spider*, *Hannibal*, and *The Bone Collector* continued to exploit the public’s fascination with serial murder without yielding much insight about the offender. Filmmakers, unable to adequately navigate the minds of serial offenders, resorted to technology and special effects to draw in viewers, as seen in the film *The Cell*. Other films, such as *Seven*, a dark, disturbing movie, attempted to offer some understanding of the murdering mind but confused viewers with the concepts of psychopathy, psychosis, and murder. By late 2003, a remake of the classic horror film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* appeared in theaters just a few weeks before the confession and conviction of the Green River Killer, Gary Leon Ridgway, in the murders of 48 young women (see Profile 1.3). Serial-murder movies are now rivaled by a plethora of television serials such as *CSI*, *Profiler*, *Forensic Files*, and *Cold Case Files*. Viewers now have access, from the comfort of their homes and theaters, to examine the minds and crimes of violent predators.

Novelists such as Easton Ellis, with his exploration of psychopathy, narcissism, sadism, and murder in *American Psycho* (later made into a movie by the same name), and Carr, author of the acclaimed serial-murder thriller *The Alienist*, clearly indicate that writers are familiarizing themselves with the topic of serial murder and have begun to inject some insightful and historical perspectives into their narratives. The fictional accounts of serial killing, however, often fail to surpass the horror described in nonfictional accounts of serial murder by writers such as Ann Rule, a former acquaintance of the serial killer Ted Bundy; Bundy was executed in January 1989. Besides her work on Bundy (*The Stranger Beside Me*, 1980), she has written about Randy Woodfield (*The I-5 Killer*, 1984), Jerry Brudos (*Lust Killer*, 1983), and Harvey Carnigan (*The Want-Ad Killer*, 1988).

Throughout the 1990s, dozens of novels and nonfiction accounts of multiple homicide were published for the entertainment and sometimes enlightenment of the general public. Amid this proliferation, female serial killers were given increased attention in true-crime accounts of “black widows” (women who, for various reasons, kill their husbands, then remarry only to carry out the cycle of homicide again and again); nurses who kill their elderly, young, or otherwise helpless patients; mothers who murder their children; females who assist men in serial killing; and a few women who have stalked and murdered men.

Researchers who have been examining the phenomenon of serial murder to promote greater understanding—and, they hope, develop intervention strategies—have also been busy. Case study analysis of serial murder has begun to provide researchers with insightful information, however tenuous. For ex-
ample, Elliot Leyton (1986a) in his book *Hunting Humans* provides in-depth examinations of the lives and minds of a few contemporary U.S. serial killers and their relationships with their victims. In *Mass Murder: The Growing Menace* (1985) and *Overkill* (1994), Jack Levin and James Fox assess some of the dynamics of serial and mass murder. Ronald Holmes and James DeBurger, in their work *Serial Murder* (1988), formulate typologies based on material gathered from interviews with serial murderers. Holmes’s second work, *Profiling Violent Crimes* (1990), has become a useful tool in the investigation of serial murder. Steve Egger’s work *Serial Murder: An Elusive Phenomenon* (1990) and his *The Killers among Us* (2001) underscore several critical problems encountered by researchers and law enforcement investigators of serial murder. Robert Keppel, a law enforcement officer who has investigated several cases of serial killing, published his observations in *Serial Murder: Future Implications for Police Investigations* (1989). Jenkins (1994) has examined societal forces such as law enforcement, the media, and public interest, which have acted as catalysts in the emergence of the serial-murder phenomenon as a social construct. Also in recent years, a number of documentaries, such as CNN’s *Murder by Number*, have critically examined the extent and impact of serial murder. In 1994, British television produced an award-winning documentary *To Kill and Kill Again* (Optomen Television, 1994). As a result of the case of Jeffrey Dahmer and other cases, serial murder began to be explored not merely as an act, but as a process. In 1996, several books examining serial murder, including *Serial Murderers and Their Victims*, 1st edition, were placed on the compact disc *Mind of a Killer*. This “serial-murder library” allowed researchers, students, and law enforcement personnel to access a vast amount of information, including biographies, photographs, and the investigative tools used to track serial killers. By 2001, other scholarly documentaries including *Understanding Murder* (the Learning Channel) aired on television and sought to examine the roles of psychology and biology in serial murder.

Many other people associated with research on serial murder have also contributed to the body of knowledge on the subject. For instance, Harold Smith, past editor of *Criminal Justice International* at the University of Chicago, has collected data on transnational serial killers—that is, killers whose victims are from different countries. Philip Jenkins, at Pennsylvania State University, has explored the social environments of serial murderers, whereas Candice Skrapec, a forensic psychologist in the Department of Criminology, California State University, Fresno, has gathered data on the psychogenic status of serial offenders. Al Carlisle, a psychologist at the Utah State Prison and Provo Canyon Boys School, has explored dissociative states and other forces that may affect the mind of a serial killer. David Canter of Liverpool, England, has organized an investigative psychology program that, among other things, emphasizes the geographic profiling of crimes and offenders. D. Kim Rossmo, formerly of the Vancouver Police Department, in his 1995 dissertation made a substantial contribution to the field of forensics through his geographic profiling of serial murderers. Now a senior researcher at Texas Tech University, he is considered to be one of the top geographic
profilers in the world. Increasingly, both academicians and law enforcement personnel are becoming involved in the study and exploration of violent serial crime.

Law enforcement officials have been dealing with serial murders for many, many years. By the 1990s, however, the nature and sophistication of investigation techniques had changed. Computer technology, especially the development of the Internet, expedited data collection and analysis. During the mid-1980s, the FBI established, at its Behavioral Science Unit in Quantico, Virginia (now referred to as the Investigative Support Unit), the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP). VICAP is designed to collect detailed information on homicides throughout the United States. Investigators such as former FBI agents Robert Ressler and John Douglas, who have interviewed several serial killers in the United States, have made considerable progress in understanding certain types of serial offenders. Ressler and colleagues published their findings in Sexual Homicide (1988). In addition, the U.S. government continues to develop programs such as the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) to focus specifically on repetitive offenders, including serial murderers.

**NUMBERS AND TYPES OF MASS MURDERS AND SERIAL KILLINGS IN THE UNITED STATES**

The number of murders in the United States fluctuated around 25,000 per year by the early 1990s. By that time, we had witnessed a 20-year period of murder and manslaughter rates increasing 300% while police clearance rates for these crimes had declined from 93% in 1962 to 74% in 1982 and to about 65% by 1995 (FBI, 1995). Homicide rates in the United States during this period appeared to be one of the highest of any Westernized nation. In recent years, however, we have seen a remarkable decline in violent crime. The last several years have seen fewer violent and property crimes. By 2003, areas of the United States were reporting 30-year lows in crime rates. The Center for Disease Control (2001) found that in 1997, of the 5,285 workplace deaths, 14% were homicides, far behind deaths caused by mining and agriculture accidents. By 2002 the number of murders in the United States had dropped to just over 14,000, with a 1.1% increase in 2003 (see Table 1.2) and almost equal numbers of white and black residents being victimized, even though blacks constitute only 13% of the U.S. population (see Table 1.3).

The drop in violent crimes, especially murder, is explained by several contributing factors. First, the U.S. economy, bolstered by new advances in technology, has been in a strong growth period for several years. Although an economic slowdown occurred after 2001 and was affected by the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center and subsequent war with Iraq, unemployment remained relatively low and job creation by 2004 was at a 4-year high. Second, the Victim’s Movement acted as a catalyst for many new legal
reforms. For example, Mike Reynolds, the father of Kimberly Reynolds, who was gunned down while leaving a restaurant in Fresno, California, became the father of Three Strikes laws along with many other laws requiring harsher punishments for repeat offenders. Some states, such as New York, have seen a dramatic increase in the number of police officers on duty. Some argue that violent offenders eventually “age out” because they become too old to commit violent crimes. For whatever reasons, most likely a combination of factors, crime has dropped dramatically and steadily. Behind the statistics is the reality that crime rates will inevitably rise again.

Though murder rates have been declining in general, it is clear from the data that certain types of homicides are occurring more frequently. Although Eitzen and Timmer (1985) report that the majority of murders result from domestic and community conflicts, they also suggest that perhaps as many as one-third of all murders are perpetrated by strangers (pp. 130–131). By 2004, the increased incidence of stranger homicides was clearly established. Because of a marked increase in stranger-to-stranger homicides, in some cities, such as Los Angeles, as many as 60% of all murders go without being prosecuted each year. The increasing number of serial murders is believed by some experts to account for some of these unsolved cases (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988, pp. 19–20). Ressler, Burgess, and Douglas (1988) have also documented a dramatic rise of stranger-to-stranger homicides, or murders with no apparent motive. According to their research, these murders represented 8.5% of all murders in 1976, 17.8% in 1981, 22.1% in 1984, and 22.5% in 1985 (p. 2).

Serial murders, however, are not the only type of killings attracting considerable public attention. Mass murders, in which several victims are killed within a few moments or hours, seem to be occurring with greater frequency. In this context, the term mass murder does not refer to institutional mass murder as ordered by dictators such as the now-captured Saddam Hussein but rather the individually motivated and carried out mass murders in the workplace or in private

### Table 1.2 United States Homicide Rates, 1987–2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Murders</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>20,096</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>24,703</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>24,536</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>21,597</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>18,209</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>15,522</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>15,586</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>15,980</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14,054</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

residences. The current frequency of mass murder in the United States has increased from approximately one case per month to approximately one case every 10 days (author’s files). Part of the increase can be attributed to how we define mass murder. Although mass murders were once considered to involve public displays of violence (post office attacks, for instance), we now must include frequent domestic mass murders (the killing of some or all of one’s family members). Some cases of mass murder involve offenders walking into shopping malls, restaurants, or government offices and randomly shooting bystanders—as in April 1990, when a man released only the day before from a psychiatric institution walked into a crowded shopping mall in Atlanta, Georgia, and began shooting everyone in his path. In other cases a troubled parent or sibling has annihilated entire families. In recent years there have also been several instances of assailants walking into elementary or secondary schools, or sometimes just standing by the playground, and randomly shooting children.

As mentioned, another type of mass murder includes the killing of family members. Based on the number of victims in each case, some domestic mass murders are viewed as mini-mass murders because relatively few victims (three to four) are killed.

When combining all mass murders, mini-mass murders, and attempted mass murders, the incidence of such murders is at an all-time high. This trend is opposite of the noticeable, steady decline of homicides in general in the United States. Although the reality is that the United States is experiencing relatively low homicide rates (the actual number of murders per 100,000 population), public perception, fueled by highly publicized mass murders, leads citizens to feel that murder is more common than ever (see Profile 1.1).

### MASS MURDERER CLASSIFICATIONS

Several mass murderer typologies developed by Holmes and Holmes (2000) at the University of Louisville are presented here, including three typologies
“Good wombs hath borne bad sons.”—Shakespeare

“They’re going to be put through Hell once we do this,” Eric Harris said of his parents. Indeed, it was Hell and immeasurable, unbearable sorrow, untold grief, and devastating repercussions that affected not only his parents, family, and friends but the United States as a nation, and will do so for many years to come.

On April 20, 1999 (or “Judgment Day” as the killers called it), Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, dressed in black trenchcoats and draped with 95 explosive devices and ammunition, walked through their high school in Columbine, Colorado, and gunned down 12 of their fellow students and a teacher. Their goal was to kill hundreds, but the bombs, left earlier throughout the school, failed them. Driven by revenge and hatred, the boys had plotted for a year to kill and injure as many as they could. Klebold said, “niggers, spics, Jews, gays, fucking whites, I hope we kill 250 of you.” Five secret videotapes the boys made prior to the massacre reveal the depths of their scorn and their plans to punish those who had dispossessed them—the athletes and socialites. The social climate in Columbine, like so many schools, can foster a culture that is cruel, elitist, and relentless in its deprecation of those who don’t fit into the “jock culture.” As one athlete confirmed: “Columbine is a clean, good place except for those rejects. Most kids didn’t want them there. They were into witchcraft. They were into voodoo dolls. Sure, we teased them. But what do you expect with kids who come to school with weird hairdos and horns on their hats? It’s not just jocks; the whole school’s disgusted with them. They’re a bunch of homos, grabbing each other’s private parts. If you want to get rid of someone, usually you tease ‘em. So the whole school would call them homos, and when they did something sick, we’d tell them, ‘You’re sick and that’s wrong.’ ” Harris and Klebold, rejected and alone, found each other and became friends. Their synergism became their catalyst for violence. Harris said, “People constantly make fun of my face, my hair, my shirts.” One parent whose son was killed said, “jocks could get away with anything. If they wanted to punch a kid in the mouth and walk away, they could. Had I known this, my son wouldn’t have been there.” About the school he said, “They did nothing to protect students from each other.” But others viewed the boys simply as “bad seeds,” angry and fueled by a thirst for notoriety, not loners who acted desperately to seek reprieve from their persecutors. If that were the case, then they might have taken their guns and pipe bombs to the locker room and aimed at anything wearing a sports uniform (Time, 1999, p. 42). Both Harris and Klebold were involved in school events and activities like other students, including attending the prom and participating in sports. But they did suffer humiliation and found support in each other. Their anger became generalized, and with distorted motives they sought not only retribution, but also celebrity status and infamy. They even contemplated which movie producer would be suitable to carry their torch, to immortalize their revolution: Steven Spielberg or Quentin Tarantino. Klebold said, “Directors will be fighting over this story.”

Surely there were “red flags,” harbingers of volatility, evidence of deep and abiding resentment, signs of callous and truncated emotion. The purpose of the secret tapes was to have the “last word” with their oppressors, their parents, and those paid (continued)
to theorize causation. On one tape Klebold blamed his extended family. He said, “You made me what I am. You added to the rage.” Blaming day care and the snobs attending school he said, “Being shy didn’t help. I’m going to kill you all. You’ve been giving us shit for years.” *Time* (1999) reported, “Klebold and Harris were completely soaked in violence: movies like *Reservoir Dogs* and gory video games they tailored to their imaginations. Harris liked to call himself ‘Reb,’ short for rebel. Klebold’s nickname was VoDKa (his favorite liquor, with the capital DK for his initials). On pipe bombs used in the massacre he wrote ‘VoDKa Vengeance.’ “

Klebold anticipated his parent’s thoughts, “If only we could have reached them sooner or found this tape.” Harris added, “If only we would have searched their room. If only we would have asked the right questions.” The boys left journals and websites and secret tapes, all that could have been found by a parent desperate to reconnect to their child. As clever as the boys wanted everyone to believe they were, they were not undetectable. At one point, Harris recalls how his mother watched him walk out of the house with a gun sticking out of his gym bag. She assumed it was his BB gun and asked no questions. Mr. Harris allegedly found a pipe bomb Eric had made and with him took it outside to detonate it. What’s more, a clerk from Green Mountain Guns had called the Harris home to say the clips that had been ordered had arrived. Mr. Harris said he didn’t order any clips and hung up. No questions asked. Eric said of this conversation, “If either one had asked just one question, we would’ve been fucked.” Klebold said, “We wouldn’t be able to do what we’re going to do.”

But what of the emotions and attitudes attending such virulent aspirations? It is difficult to fathom that a healthy relationship between child and parent could thrive under such concealment. Indeed, it does not.

Investigators insist that the parents were fooled like everyone else. Of the Klebolds they said, “They were not absentee parents. They are normal people who seem to care for their children and were involved in their life” (*Time*, 1999, p. 50). The Klebolds now realize they never knew their son. They search every interaction for clues to their son’s unhappiness. In one videotape Dylan thanked his parents for teaching him “self-awareness, self-reliance . . . I always appreciated that.” He said, “I’m sorry I have so much rage.”

Later, a parent of one of the victims committed suicide and two more teenagers from Columbine High School were shot and killed. The killer(s) remains unknown. The couple was found dead in the local sandwich shop where one of them worked. The sadness and weeping for their lost friends and continuing tragedy has turned to despair that the pain will never stop, that they are cursed—with no hope, no future, and destined to suffer.

from other authors. Their thorough classification of mass murderers identifies behavioral and psychological characteristics of these offenders:

1. **Family Slayer or Annihilator**—a person who kills his family and commits suicide.
2. **Murderer for Profit**—a person who kills in order to profit materially. Murderers for profit may kill their family or other groups of people such as coworkers or friends. In 2000, Joseph Kibwetere, leader of the Ugandan cult group Members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, murdered over 700 followers in order to avoid having to return money and possessions they had entrusted to him.

3. **Murderer for Sex**—a person with the primary goal to sexually torture, rape, and murder the victims; a comparatively rare typology. Richard Speck forced his way into a nurse’s residence and raped and tortured eight nurses to death (Levin & Fox, 1985).

4. **Pseudo-Commando**—a person with an obsession for guns and a fantasy for murder. James Huberty walked into a McDonald’s restaurant, shot 21 people to death, and wounded another 19 victims (Dietz, 1986).

5. **Set-and-Run Killer**—a person who plans an escape route following the killing aftermath. An example is the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, where 168 people, including 19 children, perished. Other set-and-run killers may use poisons or set fires.

6. **Psychotic Killer**—a person suffering from acute or chronic psychosis who is considered to be legally insane.

7. **Disgruntled Employee**—a person who seeks revenge for real or imagined wrongs at the hands of coworkers or employers. During the 1990s, several incidents of postal workers killing coworkers and supervisors spawned the phrase *going postal*.

8. **Disciple-Type Killer**—a person who commits murder at the behest of a charismatic leader such as Charles Manson.

9. **Ideological Mass Murderer**—a person, especially a cult leader, who is able to persuade others to kill themselves or each other, as in the cases of Jim Jones (Jonestown Massacre), Herff Applewhite (Heaven’s Gate), and David Koresh (Waco Massacre).

10. **Institutional Mass Murderer**—a person who commits mass murder as a crime of obedience when ordered to by his or her leader. This often is manifested in the form of genocide, “ethnic cleansing,” and religious bigotry as occurred in the Kosovo region, the Stalin farm collectivization, Armenian and Nazi Holocausts, and the Crusades (Hickey, 2000).

Although researchers have barely begun to collect data on such crimes, certain commonalities have emerged from their findings: The offenders are primarily white, male, and encompass a wide age range. Invariably, handguns, semiautomatic guns, and rifles are the weapons used to kill suddenly and swiftly.

Although victims are often intentionally selected by the killer (for example, a former boss, an ex-wife, or a friend), often other persons who happen to be in the area also become prey. Some offenders, simply frustrated by perceived injustices and inequities, lash out at groups of victims who bear no relationship to them. Table 1.4 gives a brief listing of modern-day mass murderers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Offender</th>
<th>Death Toll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Andrew Kehoe</td>
<td>Bombed a school—37 children, 8 adults dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Howard B. Unruh</td>
<td>Shot neighbors—13 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Jack G. Graham</td>
<td>Bombed a plane with his mother on it—44 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Richard F. Speck</td>
<td>Stabbed/strangled nurses—8 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Charles Whitman</td>
<td>Shot students and bystanders—16 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Robert B. Smith</td>
<td>Shot women in beauty salon—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Mark Essex</td>
<td>Shot police officers—9 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>James Ruppert</td>
<td>Shot family members—11 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Edward Allaway</td>
<td>Shot coworkers—7 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Fred W. Cowan</td>
<td>Shot coworkers—6 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Humberto de la Torre</td>
<td>Revenge arson against uncle—killed 25 in hotel blaze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>George Banks</td>
<td>Shot family and acquaintances—13 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>James O. Huberty</td>
<td>Shot patrons at McDonald's—21 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Sylvia Selgrist</td>
<td>Shot several in mall—2 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Patrick Sherrill</td>
<td>Shot coworkers—14 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>William B. Cruse</td>
<td>Shot persons at a mall—6 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Ronald G. Simmons</td>
<td>Shot family—16 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Richard Farley</td>
<td>Shot workers in a computer company—9 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>David Brown</td>
<td>Axed family—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Laurie Dann</td>
<td>Shot, poisoned many—1 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>N. Carolina</td>
<td>Michael C. Hayes</td>
<td>Shot neighbors—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Patrick Purdy</td>
<td>Shot several children on school yard—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>James E. Pough</td>
<td>Shot 13 in an auto loan company—8 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Julio Gonzalez</td>
<td>Set fire to a nightclub—87 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Thomas McIlvane</td>
<td>Shot 9 at post office—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Gang Lu</td>
<td>Shot 6 people at the University of Iowa—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>George Hennard</td>
<td>Shot 45 people in Luby's restaurant—23 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Eric Houston</td>
<td>Shot 14 at high school—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>David Koresh</td>
<td>Fire/shooting, murder/suicide pact—101 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Gian L. Ferri</td>
<td>Shot 14 at a law firm—8 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Colin Ferguson</td>
<td>Shot 25 in commuter train—6 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Jonathan Doody</td>
<td>Shot several in Buddhist temple—9 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Michael Vernon</td>
<td>Shot 8 in a store—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Offender</td>
<td>Death Toll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols</td>
<td>Bombed federal building in Oklahoma City—168 dead including children in day-care center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Joshua Jenkins</td>
<td>15-year-old allegedly beat/stabbed family—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Michael Carneal</td>
<td>14-year-old shot students—3 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>S. Carolina</td>
<td>Arthur Wise</td>
<td>Shot several workers in a parts plant—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Daniel Marsden</td>
<td>Shot two coworkers—wounded 4 and killed himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Arturo Torres</td>
<td>Shot ex-boss and 3 others—killed by police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Mitchell Johnson, Andrew Golden</td>
<td>13-year-old and 11-year-old shot students—5 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Matthew Beck</td>
<td>Shot 3 supervisors and president of Connecticut Lottery Corp., then killed himself—4 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Kip Kinkel</td>
<td>15-year-old shot 28 students—2 dead after killing his parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Mark Barton</td>
<td>Shot 22 at stock trading companies—9 dead after beating his wife and two children to death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Bryan Uyesugi</td>
<td>Shot and killed 7 coworkers at Xerox office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold</td>
<td>Two seniors at Columbine High School shot and killed 12 students, 1 teacher in deadliest school massacre in U.S. history. Killers committed suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Dexter Levingston</td>
<td>Mildly retarded man kills 4 relatives and a 12-year-old girl by shooting and stabbing them with machete and screwdriver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Richard Baumhammers</td>
<td>A former immigration lawyer, who hated non-whites, shot and killed 5 men in Pittsburgh: 1 Jew, 2 Asians, 1 African American, and 1 man of Indian descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Andrea Yates</td>
<td>Drowned her 5 children, one at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Salvador Tapia</td>
<td>Shot former coworkers at an auto parts factory—6 dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Marcus Wesson</td>
<td>Charged with shooting and killing his 9 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Troy Victorino and 3 Teens</td>
<td>Charged with beating 6 adults to death while they slept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike serial killers, the mass murderer appears to give little thought or concern to his or her inevitable capture or death. Some are killed by police during the attack, whereas others kill themselves once they have completed the massacre. In some cases offenders surrender to police and offer no resistance.
With the exception of those who murder their families, most appear to commit their crimes in public places. In cases in which families are murdered, the killer usually leaves ample evidence to lead to his or her arrest.

As stated earlier, some mass murders appear to be premeditated—as in the case of Charles Whitman, who fired on unsuspecting victims from the bell tower at the University of Texas at Austin. He carried a footlocker full of supplies, including food and ammunition, to the top of the tower in preparation for his attack. Conversely, some cases of multiple homicide may be sparked by what could be viewed as a trivial remark, simply a minor insult or provocation. However, in both cases those who engage in multiple homicide appear to do so in an effort to regain, even for a brief moment, a degree of control over their lives. To the observer, this motivation may not appear rational. To the killer, however, it may make perfect sense, given his or her psychological disorientation.

It would appear that not all mass murderers are motivated by similar circumstances, yet the final outcome is the same. Feelings of rejection, failure, and loss of autonomy create frustrations that inevitably overwhelm them, and they experience a need to strike back. And for many killers the best way to lash out against a cold, forbidding society is to destroy its children. Gunning down children in a schoolyard not only provides the needed sense of power and control but is also a way of wreaking vengeance where it hurts the community the most. According to a 2000 *New York Times* study of 100 “rampage” mass murders,* where 425 people were killed and 510 injured, the killers:

1. Often have serious mental health issues
2. Are not usually motivated by exposure to videos, movies, or television
3. Are not using alcohol or other drugs at the time of the attacks
4. Are often unemployed
5. Are sometimes female
6. Are not usually Satanists or racists
7. Are most often white males although a few are Asian or African American
8. Sometimes have college degrees or some years of college
9. Often have military experience
10. Give lots of pre-attack warning signals
11. Often carry semiautomatic weapons obtained legally
12. Often do not attempt escape
13. Half commit suicide or are killed by others
14. Most have a death wish (Fessenden, 2000)

White (2000), in her study of mass murderers, found that most offenders who kill in the workplace do not attempt suicide and do not force authorities

*These murders were generally not domestic, robbery, or gang related.
to kill them or try to evade arrest. These findings contradict the observations of Hickey (1997) and Holmes and Holmes (1992, 1994). This may be explained by noting that White, in her thorough examination of mass murderers, delineated various subcategories of mass murder, whereas other researchers examined it as a whole. It is the author's opinion that the single most salient factor in such rampage mass murders is mental disorder. Some mass murderers, so deeply depressed, become schizophrenic or psychotic. Others suffer with severe anxiety and personality disorders. These are not rational people at the time of the murders, even when their behaviors are calculated and decisive. Many of them are not legally insane but suffer from severe psychological dysfunctioning as a result of both chronic and acute stress (see Profile 1.2).

The social impact of mass murders tends to be restricted to the communities in which they occurred. Increased security at schools, office buildings, and shopping malls is the usual response, including improved social services to

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROFILE 1.2 Mark Barton, Portrait of a Mass Murderer, 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| He was a stock day trader at the All-Tech Investment Group in Atlanta, Georgia. On July 29, 1999 Barton armed himself with over 200 rounds of ammunition and with his Glock 9-mm and Colt .45 went to Momentum Securities, a brokerage firm. After some small talk he shot and killed four people. He then calmly drove over to All-Tech and killed five more people. As he left he was overheard saying, "I hope this won't ruin your trading day." Barton would later shoot himself in the head as police cornered him in Atlanta. He was angry over the loss of $100,000 in day trading in recent weeks. The money he was investing had been collected from a life insurance policy that he had taken out on his first wife, Debra, in 1993. Only a month after the policy was in force, Debra and her mother Eloise Spivey were found chopped to death with a hatchet. Police believed that Barton was the killer but lacked evidence to arrest him. Barton eventually was given $450,000 of the life insurance money, but by then he had already found his new wife, Leigh Ann, a woman with whom he was having an affair while still married to Debra. His new life, however, was far from peaceful. Barton, once suspected of molesting his daughter Mychelle as a small child, underwent a court-ordered evaluation. The psychologist noted during testing that Barton was capable of committing homicide. More insightful words would be hard to find. In one of his final notes he wrote, "I don't plan to live very much longer, just long enough to kill as many of the people that greedily sought my destruction."

Just prior to the mass murder in Atlanta, Mark Barton, 44, murdered his second wife, Leigh Ann, 27, his son, Matthew, 12, and daughter Mychelle, 8. Barton would later write on his suicide note that his sweetheart (Mychelle) and buddy (Matthew) died "with little pain." Each of the children died from hammer blows to the head while they slept, then were placed underwater in the bathtub to be sure they were dead. He wrapped sheets and towels around each of the three bodies to only allow their faces to show and placed a teddy bear on Mychelle and a video game on Matthew.
better identify potentially dangerous individuals. However, the track record in predicting criminal behavior thus far has been dismal. Recognizing potential mass murderers is usually a matter of hindsight; we are quick to attach motivating factors and personality defects to offenders once they have vented themselves on their victims. The fact remains, however, that mass murders, in relation to other crimes—even other forms of homicide—are relatively rare, and they appear to occur as randomly as serial killings do.

Differences among Mass, Serial, and Spree Murderers

In both mass and serial murder cases, victims die as the offender momentarily gains control of his or her life by controlling others. But the differences between these two types of offenders far outweigh the similarities. First, mass murderers are generally apprehended or killed by police, commit suicide, or turn themselves in to authorities. Serial killers, by contrast, usually make special efforts to elude detection. Indeed, they may continue to kill for weeks, months, and often years before they are found and stopped—if they are found at all. In the case of the California Zodiac Killer, the homicides appeared to have stopped, but an offender was never apprehended for those crimes. Perhaps the offender was incarcerated for only one murder and never linked to the others, or perhaps he or she was imprisoned for other crimes. Or the Zodiac Killer may have just decided to stop killing or to move to a new location and kill under a new *modus operandi*, or method of committing the crime. The killer may even have become immobilized because of an accident or an illness or may have died without his or her story ever being told. Speculation exists that the Zodiac Killer has stalked victims in the New York City area. The Zodiac case is only one example of unsolved serial murders, many of which will never be solved.

Second, although both types of killers evoke fear and anxiety in the community, the reaction to a mass murder will be much more focused and locally limited than that to serial killing. People generally perceive the mass killer as one suffering from mental illnesses. This immediately creates a “they versus us” dichotomy in which “they” are different from “us” because of mental problems. We can somehow accept the fact that a few people go “crazy” sometimes and start shooting others. However, it is more disconcerting to learn that some of the “nicest” people one meets lead Jekyll-and-Hyde lives: a student by day, a killer of coeds by night; a caring, attentive nurse who secretly murders sick children, the handicapped, or the elderly; a building contractor and politician who enjoys sexually torturing and killing young men and burying them under his home. When we discover that people exist who are not considered to be insane or crazy but who enjoy killing others for “recreation,” this indeed gives new meaning to the word “stranger.” Although the mass murderer is viewed as a deranged soul, a product of a stressful environment who is just going to “explode” now and then (but of course somewhere else), the serial murderer is seen as much more sinister and is more capable of producing fear.

The third difference is that the mass murderer kills groups of people at once, whereas the serial killer individualizes his or her murders. The serial
killer continues to hurt and murder victims, whereas the mass murderer makes his or her “final statement” in or about life through the medium of abrupt and final violence. We rarely, if ever, hear of a mass murderer who has the opportunity to enact a second mass murder or to become a serial killer. Similarly, we rarely, if ever, hear of a serial killer who also enacts a mass murder.

The mass murderer and the serial killer are quantitatively and qualitatively different, and disagreement continues about their characteristics just as it does about the types of mass and serial offenders that appear to have emerged in recent years. Researchers have distinguished spree murders from mass and serial murder as being three or more victims killed by a single perpetrator within a period of hours or days in different locations. They often act in a frenzy, make little effort to avoid detection, and kill in several sequences. Offenders may kill more than one victim in one location and travel to another location. There appears to be no cooling-off period even though the murders occur at different places (Greswell & Hollin, 1994).

These murders, sometimes called cluster killings, tend to last a few days, weeks, or even months. In 1997, Andrew Cunanan, a 27-year-old from San Diego, California, went on a four-state killing spree that culminated in the murder of fashion designer Gianni Versace in Florida. Cunanan feared that he might be infected with the AIDS virus and vowed revenge on whomever was responsible. Some of the five men he murdered were gay and some were not. Upon killing them with guns, knives, and blunt objects, Cunanan would steal cars and money from his victims. He continued to kill as he journeyed southeastward toward his final murder and suicide. White (2000) thoroughly examined the differences among mass, serial, and spree murders and summarized the differences as shown in Table 1.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mass</th>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Spree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder is means of control over life</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually arrested or killed at crime scene</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often commits suicide after the crime</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eludes arrest and detection</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to travel and seek out victims</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evokes long-term media/public attention</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kills individuals</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kills several in short period of time</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murders viewed as single incident</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum number of victims agreed upon by researchers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murderer is usually white male</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated primarily by material gain or revenge</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims usually female</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms are the common choice of weapon</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kills in spontaneous rage</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: White, 2000
Perhaps the single most critical stumbling block that today stands in the way of understanding serial murder is the disagreement among researchers and law enforcement personnel about how to define the phenomenon.

DEFINING HOMICIDE, MURDER, AND SERIAL MURDER

The reader should be clear about how we define the taking of a person’s life. Each state has very specific criteria for defining murder. In California, for example, to receive a death sentence an offender must be “death eligible,” which means that the person must have committed a homicide, specifically murder. All homicides are not illegal, however. In some cases, such as self-defense or when the state holds an execution, the killings are viewed as homicides, and are not considered illegal killings. The author of the death certificate of a man executed in California noted the cause of death as being a homicide, for example. Indeed, a murder requires an illegal taking of another’s life. From a judicial point of view the most serious of murders are those that are capital cases. Such cases may qualify a person, if convicted, for a death sentence. However, most persons convicted of first-degree murder find their way into lengthy prison terms rather than a death sentence. First-degree murder usually includes felony murder, or murder committed while in the course of committing another felony, such as killing someone while robbing a bank. Other forms of first-degree murder may involve poisoning, lying in wait, torture, use of explosives, and in some states, such as California, using armor-piercing bullets or doing a “drive-by” killing.

Usually for a sentence of death the offender must have willfully, deliberately, and with premeditation murdered another with special circumstances. These special or aggravating circumstances in first-degree murder may include a prior murder by the offender; multiple murders; killing of a peace officer, witness, prosecutor, or judge; lying in wait; torture with intent to kill; murder due to race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality; felony murder; and use of poison. Even when an offender does receive a death sentence, the likelihood of actually being executed is minimal. In California the average length of time for an appeals process to be completed is 14 years and 9 months. Most of the condemned in California die of natural causes or commit suicide.

Serial murder, one of those special circumstance categories, draws a lot of media attention. In February, 1989, the Associated Press released a story about a serial killer who preyed on prostitutes in the same area of Los Angeles that harbored the Southside Slayer.* He was believed to have killed at least 12 women, all with a small handgun. The news story referred to the victims as “strawberries”—young women who sold sex for drugs. Farther north, the

Offender believed to be black and to have enjoyed mutilating his young female victims.
Green River Task Force in Seattle, Washington, continued to investigate a series of murders of at least 48 young women over a 21-year span (see Profile 1.3). When the corpses of boys and young men began appearing along the banks of the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta, Georgia, during the early 1980s, police became convinced a serial killer was at work in the area.

The preceding cases are typical of murders one might envision when characterizing victims of serial killers. The media quickly and eagerly focus attention on serial killings because they appear to be so bizarre and extraordinary. They engender the kind of headlines that sell newspapers: “The Atlanta Child Killer,” “The Stocking Strangler,” “The Hillside Strangler,” “The Sunday Morning Slasher,” “The Boston Strangler,” ad infinitum. The media focus not only on how many victims were killed but also on how they died. Thus they feed morbid curiosity and at the same time create a stereotype of the typical serial killer: Ted Bundy, Ed Kemper, Albert Desalvo, and a host of other young, white males attacking unsuspecting women who are powerless to defend themselves from the savage sexual attacks and degradations by these monsters.

Egger’s (1984) global definition of serial murder attempts to create parameters for the behavior:

Serial murder occurs when one or more individuals . . . commits a second murder and/or subsequent murder; is relationshipless (victim and attacker are strangers); occurs at a different time and has no connection to the initial (and subsequent) murder; and is frequently committed in a different geographic location. Further, the motive is generally not for material gain but is usually a compulsive act specifically for gratification based on fantasies. The key element is that the series of murders do not share in the events surrounding one another. Victims share in common characteristics of what are perceived to be prestigeless, powerless, and/or lower socioeconomic groups (that is, vagrants, prostitutes, migrant workers, homosexuals, missing children, and single and often elderly women) (p. 351).

But is this definition too restrictive? For those in law enforcement, serial killing generally means the sexual attack and murder of young women, men, and children by a male who follows a pattern, either physical or psychological. However, this definition fails to include many offenders and victims. Consider the BTK Strangler (BTK meaning bind, torture, and kill) serial killer of the mid 1970s who killed all of his victims in a 3.5 mile radius in Wichita, Kansas. He first killed a family and then went on to kill young women. This change in victim selection seems at odds with general characteristics of serial killers. The BTK Strangler was never found but resurfaced in 2004 and disclosed evidence that he had continued killing into the 1980s. Like the Zodiac Killer, the BTK enjoys taunting police and has been acting with impunity for 30 years. The fact that Robert Beattie, a lawyer, was writing a book on the BTK Strangler when the killer suddenly resurfaced, further supports the notion of this killer’s need for recognition. Another example took place in 1988 in Sacramento, California, where several bodies of older or handicapped adults
PROFILE 1.3  Gary Leon Ridgway, the Green River Killer, 1982–1998

In 2001, a 52-year-old truck painter was arrested in connection with the murders of seven prostitutes, drug addicts, and young female runaways in the Seattle, Washington, area. All of his victims, except for three women in their 30s, were between 15 and 26 years of age. DNA and microscopic paint particles linked him to most of the murders. Police also suspected him for the murders of over 40 more street women. Most of the killings, know as the Green River Murders, occurred in the mid-1980s as bodies began surfacing along the Green River near Seattle suburbs. In 2003, Ridgway negotiated an agreement with the district attorney’s office to confess to 42 of those murders as well as 6 other murders not tied to the Green River killings. In exchange for his confession he escaped the death penalty and received life in prison with no chance for parole. This ended one of the longest murder investigations ever conducted in the United States. Gary Ridgway, with 48 victims, now holds the record for the most serial-murder convictions in the history of the United States.

Ridgway did not travel around the nation in search of victims but chose them mostly from the area in which he lived. In retrospect, there were many clues that pointed to Ridgway as a suspect. In 1980, a prostitute accused him of choking her but the police let him go. In 1982, he was field interviewed by Port of Seattle police while in a parked car with prostitute Kelli McGinness, 18. McGinness disappeared in June 1983. That same year he pled guilty to solicitation of an undercover policewoman posing as a prostitute. In 1983 Ridgway became the prime suspect in the disappearance of Marie Malvar, who was last seen fighting with him in his truck. By 1984, Ridgway became the primary Green River Killer suspect but, professing his innocence, he passed a polygraph in 1985. Although semen samples had been collected from Ridgway, they were only used to determine blood types and not for identification of a specific person. Circumstantial evidence and inconclusive physical evidence kept investigators from trying Ridgway for fear that he would be acquitted. With the introduction of viable DNA evidence and a desire to avoid a trial, Ridgway decided, like so many other serial killers, to negotiate a deal that would spare his life. He led investigators on dozens of searches that yielded four more sets of remains.

The Green River Killer turned out to be, on the surface, a rather unexceptionable person. Born in Utah in 1949 to Tommy Newton and Mary Rita Steinman, Ridgway graduated from high school in 1969 after being held back two grades. He joined the Navy in 1969 and was honorably discharged in 1971. His first marriage in 1970 ended in divorce in 1972. His second marriage in 1973 lasted until 1981, just one year before he would embark in his murderous career. His son Matthew was born to his second wife in 1975. He married for the third time in 1988 and legally separated in 2002. His third wife said they had a happy marriage and that he was a reliable, regular employee at the same job for 32 years.

Ridgway was a sociable man who liked to drink beer, read his Bible at work, hunt, fish, and work in his yard. He was considered by others to be meticulous, overbearing at times, but friendly. He was always careful not to talk about himself. He liked to go on vacations with his third wife and travel in their RV. He liked to proselytize to convert fellow workers to Christianity. First a Baptist and later a Pentecostal, Ridgway enjoyed doing missionary work to spread the Word of God. He
watched religious television programs that often brought him to tears. But Ridgway nurtured a dark side that included over 20 years of soliciting prostitutes. As a teen he often was the one who was getting into trouble at school and his grades were barely passing. He lived in a home dominated by his mother. He frequently watched as his father submitted to emotional and physical abuse from his mother. He became estranged from his father. He tried to hire on as a police officer but was rejected. He enjoyed telling sex-related jokes and passing on tips on how to approach streetwalkers. He found himself sexually attracted to his mother. He often sexually harassed female coworkers where he worked as a painter. As a young adult he developed an attraction to prostitutes and was extremely concerned about his physical appearance. He also had a temper and in 1982 choked his second wife. Ridgway harbored immense rage toward women that he eventually unleashed upon prostitutes.

Within 2 years after the first Green River murders began, an unsigned letter appeared that was poorly written and had most words running together. It began, “whatyoueedtonoaboutthegreenriverman.” The next line read, “dontthrowaway” and typed at the bottom was “callmefred.” The FBI profiler, at the time, was confident that the letter was not authentic. Unfortunately the analysis was wrong and 19 years later Ridgway discussed “his roadmap to his murders” letter during his confession. It was sent to throw off investigators and was the only written communication that he ever made during his nearly 21-year killing career. The letter made reference to necrophilia and fingernail clippings taken from some of his victims. Some of the letter was true but the clues given were misread by authorities and media. Near the bottom of the letter is the line, “Oe-hatkindofmanthis,” or “What kind of man is this?”

Ridgway picked up many of his victims along Highway 99 south of Seattle. The Sea Tac Strip, as it was known in the 1980s, was heavily trafficked by prostitutes. Ridgway said he strangled many of the women, mainly runaways and prostitutes, during sex, and that he left some bodies in “clusters.” He noted that he quite enjoyed choking his victims and that killing prostitutes was a “career.” He said he enjoyed driving by the sites afterward, thinking about what he had done. Sometimes he stopped to have sex with the bodies.

The following are excerpts of Ridgway’s confession to authorities:

I killed most of them in my house near Military Road, and I killed a lot of them in my truck, not far from where I picked them up... I killed some of them outside. I remember leaving each woman’s body in the place where she was found... In most cases when I killed these women I did not know their names. Most of the time I killed them the first time I met them and I do not have a good memory of their faces. I killed so many women I have a hard time keeping them straight... I picked prostitutes as my victims because I hate most prostitutes and I did not want to pay them for sex. I also picked prostitutes as victims because they were easy to pick up without being noticed. I knew they would not be reported missing right away and might never be reported missing. I picked prostitutes because I thought I could kill as many of them as I wanted without getting

(continued)
CHAPTER ONE

were exhumed from the backyard of a house where they were supposed to have been living. Investigators discovered that the victims had been killed for their social security checks. It was apparent that the killer had premeditated the murders, had selected the victims, and had killed at least six over a period of several months. Most law enforcement agencies would naturally classify this case as a serial killing—except for the fact that the killer was female. Because of rather narrow definitions of serial killing, females are generally not classified as serial killers even though they meet the requirements for such a label. One explanation may simply be that we rarely, if ever, hear of a female “Jack the Ripper.” Women who kill serially generally use poisons to dispose of their victims and are not associated with the sexual attacks, tortures, and violence of their male counterparts.

Although many offenders actually fall into the serial-killer classification, they are excluded because they fail to meet law enforcement definitions or media-generated stereotypes of brutal, blood-thirsty monsters. The “angels of death” who work in hospitals and kill patients, or nursing-home staff who kill the elderly, or the “black widows” who kill their family and relatives also meet the general criteria for serial killing except for the stereotypic element of violence. These men and women do not slash and torture their victims nor do they sexually attack them; they are the quiet killers. They are also the kinds of people who could be married, hold steady jobs, or simply be the nice man or woman who lives next door. They are rare among serial killers, just as serial murders are rare compared with other types of homicide.

To include all types of serial killers, the definition of serial murder must clearly be as broad as possible. For instance, Hickey (1986), by simply includ-
ing all offenders who through premeditation killed three or more victims over a period of days, weeks, months, or years, was able to identify several women as serial killers. However, there exists such confusion in defining serial killing that findings can also easily be distorted. In addition, current research presents some narrow operational definitions of serial murder without any documented assurances that the focus does not exclude pertinent data. To suggest, for example, that all victims of serial murder are strangers, that the killers operate primarily in pairs, or that they do not kill for financial gain is derived more from speculation than verifiable evidence, given the current state of serial-murder research.

In essence, serial murderers should include any offenders, male or female, who kill over time. Most researchers agree that serial killers have a minimum of three to four victims. Usually there is a pattern in their killing that can be associated with the types of victims selected or the method or motives for the killing. This includes murderers who, on a repeated basis, kill within the confines of their own home, such as a woman who poisons several husbands, children, or elderly people in order to collect insurance. In addition, serial murderers include those men and women who operate within the confines of a city or a state or even travel through several states as they seek out victims. Consequently, some victims have a personal relationship with their killers and others do not, and some victims are killed for pleasure and some merely for gain. Of greatest importance from a research perspective is the linkage of common factors among the victims—for example, as Egger (1985) observed, the “victims' place or status within their immediate surroundings” (p. 3). Commonality among those murdered may include several factors, any of which can prove heuristic in better understanding victimization.

**TYPOLOGIES OF MURDER**

Much of our information and misinformation about criminal offenders is based on taxonomies, or classification systems. Megargee and Bohn (1979) noted that researchers usually created typologies based on the criminal offense. This invariably became problematic because often the offense comprised one or more subgroups. Researchers then examined repetitive crime patterns, which in turn created new complexities and problems. Megargee and Bohn further noted that, depending on the authority one chooses to read, one will find between 2 and 11 different types of murderers (pp. 29–32).

Although serial murder is believed to represent a relatively small portion of all homicides in the United States, already researchers have begun the difficult task of classifying serial killers. Consequently, various typologies of serial killers and patterns of homicides have emerged. Not surprisingly, some of these typologies and patterns conflict with one another. Some are descriptions of causation,
whereas others are diagnostic in nature. In addition, some researchers focus pri-
marily on individual case studies of serial killers, whereas others create group tax-
onomies that accommodate several kinds of murderers.

Wille (1974) identified 10 different types of murderers covering a broad
range of bio-socio-psychological categories:

1. Depressive
2. Psychotic
3. Afflicted with organic brain disorder
4. Psychopathic
5. Passive aggressive
6. Alcoholic
7. Hysterical
8. Juvenile (a child is the killer)
9. Mentally retarded
10. Sex killers

Lee (1988) also created a variety of labels to differentiate killers according
to motive, including:

1. Profit
2. Passion
3. Hatred
4. Power or domination
5. Revenge
6. Opportunism
7. Fear
8. Contract killing
9. Desperation
10. Compassion
11. Ritual

Even before American society became aware, in the early 1980s, of serial
murder as anything more than an anomaly, researchers had begun to classify
multiple killers and assign particular characteristics and labels to them.
Guttmacher (1973) described sadistic serial murderers as those who derive
sexual gratification from killing and who often establish a pattern, such as the
manner in which they kill or the types of victims they select, such as prosti-
tutes, children, or the elderly. Motivated by fantasies, the offender appears to
derive pleasure from dehumanizing his or her victims. Lunde (1976) recog-
nized and noted distinctions between the mass killer and the serial killer, no-
tably that the mass killer appears to suffer from psychosis and should be
considered insane. In contrast, he found little evidence of mental illness among
serial killers. Danto (1982) noted that most serial murderers might be described as obsessive-compulsive because they normally kill according to a particular style and pattern.

Researchers have been attempting to create profiles of the “typical” serial killer from the rapidly accumulating statistics on offenders and victims in the United States. The most stereotypic of all serial murderers are those who in some way are involved sexually with their victims. It is this type of killer who generates such public interest and alarm. Stories of young women being abducted, raped, tortured, and strangled appear more and more frequently in the newspapers.

**SEXUAL HOMICIDES, PARAPHILIA, AND OTHER SEXUAL BEHAVIORS**

Most serial killers known widely to the public have usually been involved sexually with their victims. This may include rape, sodomy, and an array of sexual tortures and deviations. Indeed it is a shared belief among most law enforcement officials and many clinicians that most serial murders are sexual in nature (Lunde, 1976; Ressler, 1985, 1988; Revitch, 1965). There have been serial killings that appear to have no sexual connotations; however, not all sex murders overtly express sexual needs. In other words, some serial killing that may appear to be motivated by factors such as financial gain or cult-related goals may actually have sexual motives. In one instance a multiple murderer who had been killing patients for financial gain later admitted she also became aroused watching her victims die.

Some researchers differentiate sex murderers from lust murderers. The sex murderer kills often out of fear and a desire to silence his victim, whereas the lust murderer appears to harbor deep-seated fantasies. This certainly does not exclude the possibility that some rapists may also premeditate their killings and experience deep-seated fantasies. For killers such as Albert Desalvo, the Boston Strangler, rapes are only a continuation of progressive sexual fantasies and behaviors that finally lead to murder. Revitch and Schlesinger (1981) noted that women, although less frequently than men, also are capable of developing homicidal fantasies and becoming involved in sadistic murders and mass killings.

In recent years researchers have continued to note differences between rape murders and lust killings (Prentky, Burgess, & Carter, 1986; Ressler, 1985; Scully & Marolla, 1985). Special agents from the FBI examined a sample of 36 sexual murderers, 29 of whom were convicted of killing several victims. Specifically they were interested in the general characteristics of sexual murderers across the United States. They explored the dynamics of offenders’ sexual fantasies, sadistic behaviors, and rape and mutilation murders. These investigators noted several deviant sexual behaviors practiced before, during, or after the victim has been killed. The act of rape, whether it be the actual physical act or a symbolic rape during which an object is inserted into the
vagina, was found to be common among serial killers in this study. For some offenders the act of rape served as only one form of sexual assault; they engaged in a variety of mutilations, sexual perversions, and desecrations of the victim’s corpse (Ressler et al., 1988, pp. 33–44).

Of course, sexual deviations have influenced our perceptions and definitions of those who kill. “Sex maniac” becomes the layperson’s term for anyone capable of performing acts of sexual perversion on his or her victims. Each of the categories listed next describes a type of sexual behavior engaged in by one or more serial killers in this study, behavior that was believed to be in some way linked to the killings. In some cases the offenders as children were subjected to one or more of these sexual activities. In each case the sexual abuse was deeply traumatizing. The list is not exhaustive nor does it imply cause and effect. What is important to understand is how these categories of sexual behavior influence the typecasting of offenders.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 1994), many of the terms listed describe various forms of paraphilia.* Common almost exclusively to males, paraphilia involves sexual arousal through deviant or bizarre images or activities. The DSM-IV identifies such repetitive sexual activities as paraphilia once a pattern has been established linked to a timeframe of at least 6 months. Multiple paraphilia are also commonly found in one person but usually one paraphilia becomes dominant until replaced by another. For example, a pedophile, or someone who is sexually attracted to children, may also succumb to fetishes, such as being aroused by a child’s hair, rubber gloves, or self-administered enemas. Most psychosexual disorders are a result of an aberrant fantasy system fueled by traumatic childhood and adolescent experiences. Many of the offenders in this study fit into the extreme end of the paraphilic continuum because they engage in erotophonophilia, or lust/sexual murder. This involves the acting out of sadistic behaviors in the course of brutally torturing and murdering their victims.

Fantasies can be reinforced by powerful sex drives that, in turn, facilitate some unusual behaviors. During World War II, England was decimated by repeated German bombing attacks. Always lingering was the fear of poison-gas attack. Today, one has only to read the personal advertisements in British newspapers to see some of the long-term results—gas-mask fetishes are common. People seek partners interested in sexual activity using gas masks and rubberized raincoats (Dietz, 1994). Purcell (2000), in her insightful research on paraphilia, examines the etiology and development of paraphilic behavior through case study analysis. The following discussion of sexual behaviors is not intended to be exhaustive but rather specific to serial offenders in this research of 399 offenders. Fantasy is a key component in facilitating most of these behaviors.

*According to Money and Werlas (1982) a paraphilia is an erotosexual condition involving an obsessive dependence on an unusual stimulus, physical or fantasy, in order to achieve or maintain sexual arousal and/or orgasm. The DSM-IV also adds that such a condition covers a timeframe of at least 6 months.
1. **Animal Torture**—stabbing or chopping animals to death, especially cats, and dissecting them. One offender admitted killing several puppies in order to relive the experience of killing his first child victim. Persons who become multiple-homicide offenders have often reported being cruel to animals when they were children. Certainly there are serial killers who do not harm animals or express a morbid interest in animal viscera. In children, such behavior may be explained as part of a DSM-IV conduct disorder that involves repetitive, persistent patterns of violating societal norms or the basic rights of others. Several serial killers as children had exhibited conduct disorders, manifest in animal torture or evisceration of dead or dying animals. These offenders were also found to exhibit aggression toward other people, destruction of property (fire-setting, vandalism), or theft.

2. **Anthropophagy**—eating the victim’s flesh or slicing off parts of flesh from the body. Several of the offenders included in the present study practiced this form of cannibalism. Some are known to have eaten the breasts of victims, another cooked portions of his victim’s thighs in casseroles, whereas another delighted in a main diet of children (see Profile 1.4).

3. **Autoeroticism**—sexual arousal and gratification through self-stimulation.
   The most common form involves masturbation to pornography, fantasies, or images. Other forms of autoeroticism include erotic and aqua-erotic asphyxiation. Erotic asphyxiation or “scarfing” involves using devices or material such as scarves, ropes, and plastic bags to cut off one’s oxygen supply to the brain in order to enhance sexual gratification. Several hundred deaths each year can be attributed to erotic hanging. Often the person cross-dresses, uses pornography, and masturbates to his fantasies while slowly hanging himself. Generally the same elements apply to aqua-erotic asphyxiation except that the paraphilic uses partial drowning to induce increased sexual excitation. A few serial offenders have reported engaging in a variety of autoerotic activities.

4. **Coprophilia**—an interest in feces whereby the offender may receive some sexual gratification from touching or eating excrement and/or urine. Although rare among serial killers, at least one is known to have eaten his own excrement.

5. **Exhibitionism**—deliberate exposing of one’s genitals (usually male) to an unsuspecting stranger. According to the DSM-IV, such behavior must be recurring over at least a 6-month period to be considered paraphilia.
   The exposure, followed by masturbation, serves to reinforce the behavior and in turn the behavior is repeated. Exhibitionism provides the offender with a momentary sense of power and control. Exhibitionists who are caught often express sincere embarrassment and remorse for their crimes but on release quickly recidivate. Exhibitionists generally are not considered to be dangerous offenders. However, some of these paraphiliacs have escalated to more serious crimes, including rape and homicide.
6. **Fetishisms**—finding sexual gratification by substituting objects for the sexual partner. In one case a person (although not a serial killer) had been breaking into several homes in a city in Georgia. A voyeur, this person also enjoyed collecting women’s underwear, and on his arrest police discovered over 400 pairs of women’s underwear in his possession.

In October of 1988 in Riverside, California, a man known as the “panty bandit” was arrested after a series of robberies. During the course of his robberies this man would often order the female clerks to remove their underwear and then would engage in sexual acts in front of his captive audience.

Serial killers have also been known to engage in a variety of fetishes. Some offenders have been known to remove the breasts of their victims.

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**PROFILE 1.4 Armin Meiwes, the German Cannibal, 2001**

In 2003, Armin Meiwes, 42, a homosexual German computer expert living in an historic manor house in Rotenburg, Germany, was charged with killing and eating the flesh of another homosexual man he met through an Internet chat room. Meiwes claimed that the victim, Bernd Juergen Brandes, 43, a microchip engineer from Berlin, had, in 2001, volunteered to participate—fully aware that he would ultimately be killed and eaten. Meiwes had posted a message: “seeking well-built man, 18–30 years old, for slaughter.” A few months later, Brandes replied: “I offer myself to you and will let you dine from my live body. Not butchery, dining!!” When Meiwes’s home was searched about 15 lbs. of human flesh was found shrink-wrapped in his refrigerator. The rest he had barbequed in his garden over a 9-month period in 2001. Meiwes admitted that before Brandes was killed the two cannibals cut off Brandes’s testicles and penis, then cooked and ate them. Meiwes then stabbed his willing victim to death.

On his website, Meiwes acknowledged his fantasy in seeking young men for “slaughter and consumption” and received over 400 responses to his request. On one occasion a man visited Meiwes and allowed himself to be wrapped naked in cellophane. Meiwes then marked off certain parts of his body to be butchered and frozen for later consumption. When the man realized that the paraphilic fantasy was about to become a reality, he begged Meiwes to let him go. Frustrated, Meiwes freed the man and returned to the Internet in search of more serious participants. Three other homosexual men were also permitted to leave and one man was rejected outright because he was “too fatty.” At his trial Meiwes reveled as he explained his fantasies and said that he looked forward to doing it again because he wanted someone to become part of him. He explained that he had fantasies of cannibalism often between the ages of 8 and 12. These fantasies involved eating his schoolmates and were enhanced by watching horror movies. He argued that his fantasies were never sexual where cannibalism was concerned. Meiwes is charged with murder “for sexual satisfaction” and “disturbing the peace of the dead” by carving up the corpse, and could receive up to 15 years for the killing. The defense hopes to prove a lesser charge of “killing on demand,” which carries a maximum 5-year jail sentence. There are no laws against cannibalism in Germany.
for later use; another saved sex organs by placing them in containers; and yet another removed the skin of his victims, out of which he fashioned articles of clothing, ornaments, and even purses. Others have saved victims’ teeth or hair as part of their “souvenir fetish.” In one case the offender enjoyed decapitating his victims. Later, after shampooing their hair and applying makeup, including lipstick, he would have sex with the heads, sometimes while showering. A final example is the offender who cut off the foot of at least one of his victims. He kept the foot in his refrigerator so he could dress it up in red spiked heels for his personal gratification.

7. **Gerontophilia**—seeking out elderly persons of the opposite sex for sexual purposes. Those serial killers who seek out elderly persons are often believed to harbor hatred toward them. Some of these offenders reported sexual gratification from raping elderly women, some of whom have been in their 80s and 90s. One offender raped and killed several elderly tenants of an apartment complex, whereas another, referred to as the Boston Strangler, sought out elderly widows who lived alone.

8. **Klismaphilia**—sexual arousal through the administration of enemas. A klismaphiliac will substitute enemas for genital intercourse. While some enjoy receiving the enemas, others prefer to administer enemas to others. Sometimes children become the unsuspecting victims of klismaphiliacs who use enemas as a form of sexual abuse.

9. **Infibulation**—self-torture. Involves piercing one’s own nipples, labia, clitoris, scrotum, or penis with sharp objects such as needles, pins, and rings. Albert Fish, a man who murdered children, cannibalized them, and wrote letters to victims’ families telling them how much he enjoyed eating their children, was an infibulator who derived sexual gratification by jabbing sewing needles into his scrotum and penis. After his execution an autopsy revealed nearly two dozen needles in his genitals.

10. **Lust Murder**—murdering sadistically and brutally, including the mutilation of body parts, especially the genitalia. One offender who chopped off the penis of a young boy with a pair of wire cutters still expresses a strong desire to mutilate sexual organs. Another would sometimes shoot his victims in the head while they performed oral sex, and another enjoyed crushing his victims’ nipples with pliers and mutilating their breasts. Others have torn off the nipples of their victims with their teeth. On several occasions offenders have completely dismembered their victims’ bodies, then tossed the parts onto highways or into wooded areas, shallow graves, or sometimes left them for animals to consume. One offender was discovered with several pounds of body parts stashed in his refrigerator. A few offenders drank the blood of their victims. Sex murderers may perform similar acts but often are more spontaneous and react more out of fear of detection than lust murderers do.

11. **Necrophilia**—having sexual relations with dead bodies. This form of deviation is common among offenders who are involved sexually with
their victims. Generally, necrophilia is thought to be practiced only by males, but Gallagher (1987) notes that in 1983, a California woman confessed to having sex with dead people. This woman, a mortuary employee, said she would often climb into coffins to have sex with the corpse or drive corpses in a hearse up to the mountains where her “love making” would not be disturbed. Apparently she had been sexually “involved” with at least 40 corpses. In another case of serial killing, the offender had sex with the corpse of a child, then placed her body under his bed so that he could repeat the experience. Several occurrences of necrophilia have been recorded among serial killers. As mentioned, one offender decapitated his victims and, while showering, had sex with the heads. Another offender robbed graves to have sex with the corpses and, as he noted, to have someone for company. In some cases the necrophile wants not only to have sex with a corpse but also to keep them nearby, such as in a closet or under the bed.

**Necrofetishism** is having a fetish for dead bodies. Some offenders actually enjoy keeping cadavers in their homes. In one case police found six decomposing corpses in the bedroom of one offender. Another offender liked to share his bed with various corpses, some of which had been decapitated. Jeffrey Dahmer was one of the most prolific necrophiles in the modern U.S. annals of crime.

Necrophilia can be described as typologies or as a process, depending on interpretation. Some necrophiles use fantasy to experience sex with a corpse. Some prostitutes cater to paraphiliacs and for the right price will ice themselves down, dust on white powder, and lay motionless with eyes closed in a casket, while her “john” acts out his fantasies. Other necrophiles seek out real corpses from funeral parlors, cemeteries, morgues, and hospitals. Serial killers such as Dennis Nilsen and Ed Gein both fulfilled some of their fantasies by grave robbing. Similar to these forms of behavior is pygmalionism, or the sexual involvement of a person with dolls or mannequins. Both pygmalionists and necrophiles avoid rejection by having sex with inanimate objects (dolls) or corpses. In both forms of behavior the paraphiliac exercises total control over his environment. The paraphiliac can do whatever he or she wants with the object or body and then dispose of it. Finally, a few necrophiles will kill people in order to use their corpse for sexual gratification. These three types of necrophilia may also be viewed as escalation in fantasy fulfillment. Both Nilsen and Gein eventually went on to kill people in order to sexually abuse the corpses.

12. **Pedophilia**—having a sexual preference for children. A 16-year-old boy who had been arrested for sexual assault on children admitted to me, the present author, that his favorite places to pick up children were the toy centers in department stores. Knowing that some parents are willing to leave their small children to look at toys while they go shopping for a few minutes, he easily found victims. He would simply select
the youngest or most vulnerable-looking children and take them to the
washrooms, where he would molest them.

It was not uncommon for this young man to find three or four victims
in one evening. Although most pedophiles have no intention of violence
toward their victims, some serial killers destroy their victims as a way of
destroying the evidence against them. One serial killer who sexually as-
aulted several young boys admitted he killed them to cover up his sexual
misconduct. Some serial killers have themselves as children been victim-
ized by pedophiles and later, as adults, act out on children in the same
manner in which they were abused. Pedophiles range in aggressiveness
from very passive to extremely violent, depending on their fantasy devel-
opment and orientation. Three major pedophile organizations today are:
North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), a group pri-
marily comprised of homosexuals who prefer sex with young boys, which
is well organized, with offices in several major cities such as New York
(headquarters); the Rene Guyon Society, also nationally organized, whose
motto is “Sex Before Eight or Else It’s Too Late”; and the Childhood
Sensuality Circle (CSC) of San Diego, California. These groups provide
support for members as well as promoting legislation to provide their
organizations with greater freedoms.

13. **Pederasty**—adults having anal intercourse with children (anal intercourse
in general is called sodomy). This is a common act among serial killers
who target children as victims. In some cases various “instruments” have
been used to sodomize the child, including baseball bats shaped in the
form of a penis.

14. **Pornography and Obscene Material**—using sexually explicit literature
and photographs. Even among serial killers pornography tends to be used
only by certain types of offenders. However, trying to determine how
much and to what degree pornography affects an offender is nearly im-
possible to measure. Some offenders admit to occasional or frequent use
of pornography, sometimes violent material involving bondage and the
torture of women and children. The advent of our computer era and the
Internet has provided fertile ground for the production and distribution of
pornography and obscene material such as “kiddie porn” or pictures sex-
ually exploiting children.

15. **Pyromania**—intentional setting of fires on more than one occasion by a
person experiencing tension or affective arousal. These persons often
report a fascination with or curiosity about fire-setting. Offenders express
feelings of gratification or relief when watching fires in progress and the
individual or community response fires often command. Some adult of-
fenders the author has spoken with find the sound of emergency-response
vehicles coming to the scene of the fire to be exhilarating. Occasionally,
pyromaniacs report sexual gratification (e.g., masturbation) in setting or
watching fire scenes, but the role of sexuality in fire-setting does not ap-
pear as the primary reason for such behavior. In children, pyromania is
often explained as a DSM-IV conduct disorder, which also requires other criteria, such as aggression toward people or animals and deceitfulness or theft. Fire-setting by children may be a response to severe stressors in the family, such as child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and family violence.

Children sometimes report fires as being magical or that they feel better when they set fires. Children who are chronic fire-setters often report that such behavior provides a sense of control. Some serial murderers as children were fire-setters. However, as they age, serial offenders tend to cease fire-setting behaviors in favor of more controlling, focused acts of violence.

16. **Rape**—having forced sexual intercourse with another person. This appears to be the most common of all sexual behaviors among serial killers in this study. Often the rapes involve beatings and torture. One offender enjoyed taking his victims out into the desert, where he would lash them to the front of his car, tear off their clothing, rape them, and then strangle them to death. Some serial killers are paraphilic rapists who are driven more by specific fantasies of rape and domination than the terror experienced by the victim. For example, the offender may desire the victim to wear specific clothing or repeat certain words while being attacked.

17. **Sadomasochism**—inflicting mental/physical pain on others (sadism) or oneself (masochism). Although masochism is not particularly common among serial killers, one offender over the years had inserted dozens of needles into his genital area, occasionally burned himself, and eagerly anticipated the experience of his own execution.

18. **Scatophilia**—sexual gratification through the making of obscene phone calls. While callers seem to vary in their levels of sexual references, tone of voice, and desire to shock or frighten, the offender is often conditioning himself through masturbation to fantasies of control over his victims. Offenders calling the same victims repeatedly are engaging in stalking behavior, which has, in a few cases, led to violent confrontations.

19. **Scoptophilia (Voyeurism)**—receiving sexual gratification by peeping through windows and so forth to watch people. Several offenders in this study had at one time or another peeped through windows. One offender explained how he first began as a voyeur, then graduated to raping women, and finally practiced necrophilia. The connection between voyeurism and homicide is not automatic. Most “peeping Toms” never progress past this deviant stage, whereas some may later attempt rape or other violent sexual behaviors.

One subcategory of voyeurism is **mixoscopy** or **triolism**, or the sexual arousal from seeing oneself in sexual scenes. This includes taking photographs of nude victims, which sometimes include the offender. A few sexual predators whose crimes have escalated to serial murder have utilized equipment such as ceiling mirrors, video cameras, and cameras with self-developing film. Triolism can also involve sexual gratification by sharing a sexual partner with another person, allowing the triolist to become
the observer. Sometimes serial killers who work in groups have engaged in triolistic behaviors. One offender took snapshots of his nude victims, then enlarged the photographs and mounted them on his bedroom walls. Another offender took photographs of victims performing oral sex on his partner. Still other offenders used tape recorders to reproduce the screams and terror of dying victims as they were sexually mutilated. Offenders (both male and female) have admitted to watching while another offender raped or sodomized a victim. One female offender voluntarily watched while her male counterpart raped a child.

20. **Torture**—resorting to a large variety of sadistic acts, including burning victims’ breasts, dismembering living victims, placing victims in water and electrocuting them, and touching bare electrical wires to victims’ arms, face, breasts, or genitals. Often those who engage in these acts will also be involved in other “lust murder” behaviors.

**Serial Murder Typologies**

Creating sexual taxonomies to categorize serial killers represents one of several ways by which offenders have been classified by researchers. For some investigators, the sexual nature of the crime may be viewed as a subtype of one or more general taxonomies. In certain serial killings the sexual attack is an integral part of the murder, both psychologically and physiologically, for the offender. For other offenders the sexual attack may represent the best way to degrade, subjugate, and ultimately destroy their victim, but has little connection to the actual motive(s) for the killing (see Profile 1.5).

Holmes and DeBurger (1988, pp. 55–60) have characterized four types of serial murderers and examined the motives reported to have influenced the offenders. The formation of these typologies is based on specific assumptions about the phenomenon of serial killers. These assumptions include the belief that such crimes are nearly always psychogenic, meaning that such behavior is usually stimulated not by insanity or economic circumstances but by “behavioral rewards and penalties.” The “patterns of learning” are in some way related to “significant others” who in some way reinforce homicidal behavior. A second assumption involves an “intrinsic locus of motives,” whereby motives are explained as something only the offender can appreciate because they exist entirely in his or her own mind. Most “normal” people have great difficulty in fathoming why someone would want to kill other people. However, in the mind of the killer the motivations are often very meaningful. In a final assumption, Holmes and DeBurger explain that the reward for killing is generally psychological even though some killers may benefit materially from their crimes. According to these “core characteristics” Holmes and DeBurger (1988) identify the following four types of serial killers:

1. **Visionary Type**—such murderers kill in response to the commands of voices or visions usually emanating from the forces of good or evil. These offenders are often believed to be suffering from some form of psychosis.
2. **Mission-Oriented Type**—these offenders believe it is their mission in life to rid the community or society of certain groups of people. Some killers may target the elderly, whereas others may seek out prostitutes, children, or a particular racial/ethnic group.

3. **Hedonistic Type**—offenders in this category are usually stereotyped as “thrill seekers,” those who derive some form of satisfaction from the murders. Holmes and DeBurger also identified subcategories in this typology, including those who kill for “creature comforts” or “pleasure of life.” This would include individuals such as Dorothea Montalvo Puente of
Sacramento, California, who was arrested in November 1988 for allegedly poisoning to death at least seven destitute elderly victims in order to cash their social security checks. Another subcategory Holmes and DeBurger refer to is “lust murderers,” which includes offenders who become sexually involved with the victims and often perform postmortem mutilations.

4. Power/Control-Oriented Type—in this typology Holmes and DeBurger contend that the primary source of pleasure is not sexual, but the killer’s ability to control and exert power over his helpless victim. Some offenders enjoy watching their victims cower, cringe, and beg for mercy. In one case an offender killed his young victims only after he had been able to break their will to survive. Once the victim had acquiesced, the offender would complete his task and slaughter him or her.

These general classifications of serial killers are useful in organizing existing data. Such motivational taxonomies help us to understand why certain offenders take the lives of their victims. Levin and Fox (1985) have also constructed types of serial murders including sexual or sadistic killings that appear to mirror Holmes and DeBurger’s subcategory of “lust murders.” Another typology similar to Holmes and DeBurger’s hedonistic subtypes is described by Levin and Fox as murders of expediency or for profit (1985, pp. 99–105). Their third typology identifies “family slayings” as a major category of murder. This type does not appear to be particularly consistent with their prior two categories, which are constructed from motivational dynamics.

Although family killers could be motivated by sadism or expediency, with few exceptions they are generally blood related to their victims and kill them all in a relatively short period of time. However, the noting of this inconsistency should not be viewed as a criticism of Levin and Fox’s work.* Instead we are obliged to recognize the need for other typologies that may not be constructed solely on the basis of apparent motivations.

The FBI, through extensive application of profiling techniques, has identified the characteristics of “organized” and “disorganized” murders (Ressler et al., 1988). Using information gathered at the scene of the crime and examining the nature of the crime itself, agents constructed profiles of the offenders, which in turn were categorized as “organized” or “disorganized.” For example, an organized murderer is often profiled as having good intelligence and being socially competent, whereas the disorganized offender is viewed as being of average intelligence and socially immature. Similarly, some crime investigators often find that organized offenders plan their murders, target strangers, and demand victims to be submissive, whereas disorganized killers may know their victims, inflict sudden violence on them, and spontaneously carry out their killings (Ressler et al., 1988, pp. 121–123).

*In the data set constructed by Levin and Fox, 33 cases are identified involving 42 offenders, including those who had been involved in simultaneous incidents of murder and cases of serial killing. Little differentiation is noted between simultaneous and serial murder.
More specifically, organized killers profiled as lust murderers (an offender sexually involved with his victim) by the FBI possess many of the following personal characteristics:

1. Highly intelligent
2. High birth-order status
3. Masculine image
4. Charismatic
5. Socially capable
6. Sexually capable
7. Occupationally mobile
8. Lives with partner
9. Geographically mobile
10. Experienced harsh discipline
11. Controlled emotions during crime
12. High interest in media response to crime
13. Model inmate

The organized lust killer also exhibits fairly predictable behaviors after the crime, including a return to the crime scene, a need to volunteer information, enjoying being friendly with police, expecting to be interrogated by investigators, sometimes moving the victim’s body to a new location, or exposing the body to draw attention to the crime. The disorganized offender is characterized as follows:

1. Below-average intelligence
2. Low birth-order status
3. Socially immature
4. Seldom dates
5. High school dropout
6. Father often under- or unemployed
7. Lives alone
8. Has secret hiding places
9. Nocturnal
10. Lives/works near crime scene
11. Engages in unskilled work
12. Significant behavioral changes
13. Low interest in media attention
14. Limited alcohol consumption
15. High anxiety during crime
According to the FBI, the disorganized lust killer also exhibits a variety of predictable behaviors following a murder, including returning to the crime scene, possibly attending the funeral or burial of victim, keeping a diary, changing employment, becoming religious, experiencing changes in personality, and submitting personal advertisements in newspapers regarding his victims (FBI, 1985). Although such profiles have proven helpful in understanding offender behavior, we have only begun to delve inside the minds of serial murderers. Indeed, many of the behaviors listed give us clues about the psychological mind-sets of offenders. To understand such offenders can help to curb their behavior both through efforts of law enforcement and most importantly by addressing the etiological roots of the crimes.

In the quest to comprehend why serial murderers treat the lives of others so callously, research usually focuses on the perceived overt motivations of the offenders. Did they kill for money? Thrills? Were they focusing on hatred, revenge, sexual pleasures, or other likely motivations? We erroneously assume that if we stare long and intently enough at a perceived motivation for homicidal behavior we will be able to comprehend the dynamics of its etiology. What we must not forget is that the amount of research to date in the area of multiple homicide is limited. Recognizing this handicap, researchers, whether they are involved with the technical forensics of a case or responsible for classifying or typing offenders, must be willing to explore other factors that may contribute to motivations or to the construction of typologies. To say a serial killer murdered as a result of greed, hatred, or fantasy may easily obscure other important variables. For example, the types of victims or the methods used to kill may point to other reasons why the murders occurred.

Figure 1.1 illustrates just one of the many possible combinations of factors that may assist researchers in the construction of typologies. Because we have only begun to explore serial murder in an organized manner, we may find that matching variables may generate new ways of conceptualizing offenders’ behavior or victimization patterns. In Figure 1.1, each cell refers to victims and methods of killing victims. Ted Bundy, for example, sought out young,
attractive females whom he bludgeoned and tortured to death. He was partic-
icularly specific in both victim selection and method of killing. David Bullock
of New York was suspected in 1982 of killing at least six victims, including a
prostitute, his roommate, and several strangers, by shooting each one. In this
case the killer sought out a variety of victims but used a specific method to
kill them. In the case of Richard Cottingham, also known as “The Ripper,”
the killer hunted prostitutes in New Jersey and New York. Even though he
went after specific targets, he varied his methods of killing. Finally, Herbert
Mullin, of California, is believed to have killed 13 victims, including campers,
hitchhikers, friends, and people in their homes, using a variety of methods.
Why is it that some offenders have no specific victims as targets whereas oth-
ers are extremely particular in whom they choose to murder? And why do
some offenders always follow a ritualistic pattern of killing but others use dif-
ferent methods of killing their victims?

Some serial killers such as Ted Bundy always go hunting for their victims
and, once they find a suitable person, kill and dispose of the body in remote
areas. Conversely, some serial killers wait at home for their victims to walk
into their traps, similar to the spider awaiting the fly. In some cases the victims
are killed and buried on the offender’s property. John Wayne Gacy is believed
to have killed 33 young males, most of whom became buried trophies under
the offender’s home. In other cases offenders advertise in the newspapers for
offers of employment, marriage, and so on, waiting for unsuspecting victims
to ring their doorbell. Each of these modus operandi may be useful in gener-
ating particular typologies of serial killers.

Hickey (1986), in noting specific variations in the degree of mobility ex-
ercised by offenders, has delineated three distinct groups of offenders: (1) trav-
eling serial killers, who often cover many thousands of miles each year,
murdering victims in several states as they go; (2) local serial killers, who never
leave the state in which they start killing in order to find additional victims
(Wayne Williams, for example, operated in several different law enforcement
jurisdictions in and around Atlanta, Georgia, but never had a need to move
elsewhere); and (3) serial killers who never leave their homes or places of em-
ployment, whose victims already reside in the same physical structure or are
lured each time to the same location. These “place-specific” killers include
nurses (male and female), housewives, offenders who are self-employed, and
other individuals or accomplices who prefer to stay at home rather than go
out hunting for victims.

Each new typology raises the issues of motivation and etiology. We may
find sometimes that typologies overlap one another or that one generates more
explanations and understanding than do others. For the present, researchers
continue to examine the phenomenon of serial killing from a multitude of
perspectives. Different perspectives will continue to generate a variety of ty-
pologies and operational definitions of serial murder. Which typologies seem
the most appropriate depends on who is applying them. What is important to
remember is that the limited research done so far on serial murder leaves con-
siderable room for new ideas.
The data for the present study were gathered through biographical case study analysis of serial murderers and their victims. Given the 200-year timeframe of this study and general limited accessibility of many offenders, the present author was able to interview several serial killers as well as use the retrospective case approach to examine cases. This form of analysis is commonly employed in examining the lives of serial killers. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) have convincingly argued, there are systematic methods in conducting qualitative research that may point toward theoretical explanations for social behavior. Their notion of “grounded” theory as a methodology includes what they refer to in their work as constant comparisons. By examining different groups or individuals experiencing the same process, we learn to identify structural uniformities. Grounded theory stresses a systematic, qualitative field method for research. The present study is based on cases of serial murder within the specified time-frame of 1800–2004. The cases were identified through as many avenues as possible, including interviews, newspapers, journals, bibliographies, biographies, computer searches of social science abstracts, and of course, the data set from the first edition of this book, until the process became repetitive or redundant and new information ceased to be found.

Unfortunately, one can never be sure of the precise moment that data collection should be halted. Depending on one’s range of definitions for serial murder, one technically could include in one’s research killings committed by individuals who work as enforcers within the realm of organized crime, political and/or religious terrorists who kill repeatedly, and members of street gangs. One might also include those who repeatedly tamper with food and medicinal products, bringing death to persons who ingest them; those who practice euthanasia; or—based on a certain ideological perspective—those who carry out abortions in clinics. From a historical perspective one might also include the gunslingers of the Old West who frequently killed in order to promote themselves and their lifestyles.

Although each of these typologies and perspectives might be worth attention, this study excluded them from its overall operational definition of serial murder. Instead, only cases appearing in a text or a news report in which an offender had been charged with killing three or more individuals over a period of days, weeks, months, or years, were included. In addition, patterns of conduct and victim-offender relationships were examined to determine offenders’ motivations for homicide.

A few exceptional cases were also included in which offenders were reported to have killed only two victims but were suspect in other slayings or in which evidence indicated their intent to kill others. To justify inclusion, the homicides had to be deliberate, premeditated acts whereby the offender selected his or her own victims and acted under his or her own volition. Often a distinct pattern emerged in the method of killing or in the apparent motives for the murders. Usually the murders were to some degree motivated by sex, money, vengeance, hatred, or an unidentifiable impulse to kill. Each case was
analyzed for specific data, including the timeframe and the geographic locations of the criminal behavior, the number of victims, the relationship of victim to offender, age and gender of particular victims, and the degree of victim facilitation (responsibility of the victim for his or her own death). Critics of this research point out the impossibility of identifying all serial murderers, thereby leaving open to question the accuracy of general profiles constructed in this study. Indeed, we can never know for sure the actual number of serial killers, but given their notoriety the chances of society not being alerted to them are few. In addition, each time this study is replicated with similar results more strength is added to the constructed profiles. As Dr. John R. Fuller, a noted criminologist, observes, one of the greatest strengths of this research is the cases themselves. Each case, properly investigated, can provide a treasure trove of information that helps researchers and investigators understand the minds and behaviors of serial killers.

This fourth edition of *Serial Murderers and Their Victims* provides more scientific analysis of offender behavior and updated coverage of serial-murder cases. Spanning the timeframe between 1800 and 2004, the data represent the approximate number of victims of 64 female offenders and 367 male offenders in the United States. These offenders total 431 serial killers and represent 367 cases (some cases were team killers and had more than one offender). They are responsible for a minimum of 2,760 homicides and a maximum of 4,340 homicides. This victim range is specified because a few serial murderers killed so many people that only close approximations of the actual number can be ascertained. Difficulty occurs in accurately determining the number of victims of serial murderers, especially when one is dealing with a few offenders who have allegedly killed over a hundred people. Indeed, the majority of these particular cases occurred in the 19th century, when recordkeeping was not as accurate or efficient as it is today. Often data sources are not consistent in reporting figures for these “super” serial killers. In addition, some of the data on victims may have been exaggerated because of the sensational nature of the crimes. Consequently, the killers in these cases were excluded from our study as were the killers in unsolved cases of homicide in which serial murder was suspect. Although the data do not represent an exhaustive study of serial murderers, they do form one of the largest and most varied assortments of multiple killers ever studied. (The total number of serial murders will, in all probability, never be known.) The fourth edition of this text offers much more insight into serial murder from a global perspective. A new chapter has been added that examines serial murder in Japan and South Africa. Several other notable cases from Canada and Germany are included as well as an examination of the Green River Killer, Gary Leon Ridgway. Also, new sections have been added examining homosexual serial killers, African American offenders including the D.C. Snipers, Muhammad and Malvo, as well as information on the “Body Farm” in Tennessee. More discussion is presented linking the
DSM-IV and the need for more research into neurobiology and its role in violent behavior. Finally, current 2004 updates are provided for tables and charts.

In tandem with the increasing number of serial-murder typologies is the expanding literature that attempts to sort out and explain why such a phenomenon occurs with such regularity. The next two chapters will examine a plethora of literature, including medical, biological, psychological, sociological, structural, philosophical, religious, and environmental perspectives.