

SERIAL KILLERS

Thanks in part to a fascination with anything that is “serial,” whether it be murder, rape, arson, or robbery, there has been a tendency to focus a good deal of attention on the timing of different types of multiple murder. Thus, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) distinguishes between spree killers who take the lives of several victims over a short period of time without a cooling-off period and serial killers who murder a number of people over weeks, months, or years, but in between their attacks live relatively normal lives.¹ In 2008, for example, Nicholas T. Sheley, then 28, went on a killing spree across two states, beating as many as eight people to death over a period of several days in an effort to get money to buy crack. Sheley’s victims ranged from a child to a 93-year-old man. At the time of these incidents, Sheley already had a long criminal history of robbery, drugs, and weapons convictions and had spent time in prison. Sheley is doing life in prison in Illinois for six of the murders and faces two additional homicide charges in Missouri.

Unfortunately, the distinction between spree and serial killing can easily break down. For example, over the course of 2 weeks in 1997, Andrew Cunanan killed two victims in Minnesota, then drove to Illinois, where he killed another person, and then on to New Jersey, where he killed his fourth victim. While evading apprehension, and on the FBI’s 10 Most Wanted List, Cunanan was labeled a spree killer. He then disappeared from sight, although citizens far and wide called the FBI claiming to have spotted the fugitive, hoping for a cash reward. Two months later, the elusive killer turned up in Miami, where he shot to death fashion designer Gianni Versace. Cunanan’s revised body count—five victims—was accumulated over a period of months, not days, and with a rather lengthy cooling-off period between the fourth and fifth murders. Should he be regarded as a spree killer or a serial murderer? Does it really matter all that much?

In 1990, Danny Rolling brutally murdered five college students in Gainesville, Florida, at three different crime scenes over a 72-hour period and thus appeared to be a spree killer. It turns out that Rolling had slaughtered a family of three in Shreveport, Louisiana, 8 months before his Gainesville attacks, making Rolling a serial killer. Again, does it really matter? Rigidly focusing on the timing of attacks, although interesting, is far less important to our understanding of multiple homicide than attempting to assess the killer’s motivation.

Recently discovered serial killer Todd Kohlhepp, 45, kidnapped and kept a woman chained in a shipping container on his South Carolina property for months in 2016 after he lured the woman and her boyfriend to his home under the ruse of hiring them to clean for him. Kohlhepp murdered the boyfriend immediately in front of the woman. When police traced the last of her cell phone pings to

Kohlhepp's property, they heard her banging on the walls of the storage shed. After rescuing the distraught woman, the police searched the property and turned up two more bodies that appeared to have been killed months earlier. The authorities thought they were dealing with a serial killer, but Kohlhepp then confessed to an unsolved mass murder of four at a motorcycle shop in 2003. Kohlhepp, a successful real estate agent, avoided the death penalty by pleading guilty to seven murders. But if he's linked to the other murders under investigation, including a triple homicide and bank robbery in 2003, he may not be able to avoid the death penalty after all. Is Kohlhepp a mass killer, a serial killer, or a hybrid of both?

Another issue related to defining serial murder surrounds the minimum victim threshold. Several years ago, the FBI broadened its long-standing definition (assailants who killed at least three victims) to include repeat killers with just two victims to their name, claiming that it would be helpful in conducting homicide investigations.² Some criminologists who research the topic of serial murder have followed the FBI lead, whereas others have maintained thresholds of three or even four. In an effort to identify the optimal threshold based on empirical data, Fridel and Fox found that offenders with two victims differed significantly in terms of motive, partnership, and crime scene behaviors from their more prolific counterparts. Whereas law enforcement may find it useful to operate with a different definition for law enforcement purposes of investigative work, maintaining a somewhat higher threshold appears to be better for distinguishing this particularly deadly breed of killers from a large pool of two-timers and serial murder wannabes who stop killing or are apprehended before accumulating more victims.³

A commonly held view concerning repeat murderers, perhaps because of the widespread fascination associated with their crimes, is that they are always driven to kill by sexual urges, and indeed many of them are. Still, at least some appear to be motivated by material gain, and their homicides tend to be more instrumental than expressive. They rob, burglarize, steal cars, and often kill their victims not for some emotional or sexual release but primarily to acquire money and possessions. Murder is just a means of covering up their tracks.

For example, over a 3-week time span in October 2002, the D.C. Snipers—John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo—gunned down 10 strangers, all chosen randomly, from a “sniper's nest” situated in the trunk of their blue Chevy sedan. During this entire period, aside from eating and sleeping, their time was apparently consumed by planning, executing, escaping, and hiding from the police. Muhammad was executed in November 2009. His teenaged accomplice, Malvo, was not eligible for the death penalty because of this age and is serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. Malvo recently confessed that he and his murderous mentor were also responsible for an additional four killings, three of which were committed in the course of armed robberies. The motive for the D.C. area killings was profit: The killers attempted to extort \$10 million from the authorities in exchange for a “cease fire.”

Besides the spree–serial distinction, it is also valuable to distinguish full-time from part-time repeat killers. The D.C. Snipers devoted their full attention to selecting appropriate locations, killing victims, communicating with the police, and hiding out. For most serial killers, however, murder is a part-time hobby, thus the notion of “cooling off.” They typically return to their normal activities (e.g., holding a job, attending classes, playing with their children) after each murder. But during these dormant times, they often plan their next murder, putting hundreds of miles on their cars as they troll and surveil potential victims, reliving their past murders with pictures and souvenirs, or even returning to bodies yet undiscovered.

Given the role that murder occupies in their actions and thoughts, serial killers typically can recall even the smallest details of their crimes, even years after being captured.

THE MANY FORMS OF SERIAL KILLING

There is a multitude of different motives that provoke serial killers and help them to justify their actions. Some, such as Marybeth Tinning discussed in Chapter 4, have slain a series of children to satisfy a pathological need for attention and sympathy. As described later in Chapter 12, some serial killings have occurred in the context of cult activity. A charismatic cult leader such as Charles Manson or Adolfo de Jesús Constanzo inspires his followers to commit homicides, often ritualistic or excessively brutal in nature, both to achieve some political or spiritual goal and to nourish the leader's excessive need to be in charge. A few serial killers are driven not by a charismatic cult figure but by the commandments of delusional forces that place them on a relentless mission of murder. Still other serial killings are expeditious cover-ups. Railway Killer Ángel Maturino Reséndiz, for example, was charged in 1999 with killing nine people in Texas, Kentucky, and Illinois, all near railroad tracks, in the process of robbery and burglary, primarily to eliminate potential witnesses.

By far, however, the most common form of serial murder surrounds the killer's quest to satisfy his own sadistic urges or excessive need for control. He exploits his victims as a means of satisfying personal, and often sexual, desires.⁴ Interviews with serial killers reveal that some experience psychological relief after killings, rather than guilt and disgust. Although serial murder has been loosely described as "motiveless," there is indeed one motive—to satisfy an intense appetite for sadism, power, and control. Many serial murderers kill not for love, money, or revenge but just for the fun of it—because it makes them feel good.

We tend to overlook certain serial killers, even with large body counts, simply because their motives seem mundane. Most media attention and public fascination are focused on sexual sadists. Far less attention is given to mothers who kill their children, nurses who poison their patients, or armed robbers who repeatedly take the lives of their victims to eliminate all witnesses. Although most definitions of serial murder do include women who kill their family members for insurance money and the murders committed by medical professionals, many scholars ignore those series of murders committed as part of a criminal enterprise related to gangs, drugs, or organized crime.

Because of the massive publicity devoted to such crimes as the grisly slayings of at least 17 males by cannibalistic necrophile Jeffrey Dahmer, the term *serial murder* has become part of everyday vocabulary. Serial killers such as David Berkowitz (Son of Sam), Kenneth Bianchi (the Hillside Strangler), and Theodore (better known as Ted) Bundy are featured in prime-time TV docudramas and mass-market paperbacks, no longer just in obscure detective magazines. Serial murder is a profitable industry. Stretching the limits of decency, moreover, serial killers have, as described earlier, clearly become a fixture in our popular culture, featured on trading cards and in comic books as well as on T-shirts and in games. Further glamorizing and romanticizing their crimes, journalists and true crime writers often assign colorful monikers to their murderous activities (see Table 7.1). Curiously, most people can easily name nine serial killers, yet not so many can identify the nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Table 7.1 Selected Serial Killer Monikers

Killer(s)	Moniker
Charles Albright	The Eyeball Killer
Richard Angelo	The Angel of Death
David Berkowitz	The Son of Sam
Paul Bernardo & Karla Homolka	The Ken and Barbie Killers
Kenneth Bianchi & Angelo Buono	The Hillside Stranglers
Ian Brady & Myra Hindley	The Moors Murderers
Jerry Brudos	The Shoe-Fetish Slayer
Ted Bundy	The Lady Killer
David Carpenter	The Trailside Killer
Richard Chase	The Vampire of Sacramento
Andrei Chikatilo	The Rostov Ripper
Douglas Clark	The Sunset Strip Slayer
John Norman Collins	The Coed Murderer
Adolfo de Jesús Constanzo	The Godfather of Matamoros
Dean Corll	The Candy Man
Juan Corona	The Machete Murderer
Jeffrey Dahmer	The Milwaukee Monster
Albert DeSalvo	The Boston Strangler
Nannie Doss	The Giggling Granny
Larry Eyler	The Interstate Killer
Albert Fish	The Cannibal
Lonnie David Franklin Jr.	The Grim Sleeper
John Wayne Gacy	The Killer Clown
Carlton Gary	The Stocking Strangler
Ed Gein	The Ghoul of Wisconsin
Vaughn Greenwood	The Skid Row Slasher
John George Haigh	The Acid Bath Murderer
Keith Jespersen	The Happy Face Killer
Theodore Kaczynski	The Unabomber

Killer(s)	Moniker
Patrick Kearney	The Trash Bag Murderer
Edmund Kemper III	The Coed Killer
Bobby Joe Long	The Classified Ad Rapist
Pedro Lopez	The Monster of the Andes
George Metesky	The Mad Bomber
Ivan Milat	The Backpack Killer
John Allen Muhammad & Lee Boyd Malvo	The D.C. Snipers
Dennis Rader	The BTK Strangler
Richard Ramirez	The Night Stalker
Melvin David Rees	The Sex Beast
Gary Leon Ridgway	The Green River Killer
Danny Rolling	The Gainesville Ripper
Arthur Shawcross	The Genesee River Killer
Harold Shipman	Doctor Death
Anthony Sowell	The Cleveland Strangler
Timothy William Spencer	The Southside Slayer
Peter Sutcliffe	The Yorkshire Rapist
Carl Eugene Watts	The Sunday Morning Slasher
Wayne Williams	The Atlanta Child Murderer
Randall Woodfield	The I-5 Killer

The most prolific serial killers tend to be organized psychologically. They methodically stalk their victims for the best opportunity to strike so as not to be seen, and they smartly dump the bodies far away so as not to leave any clues. The discovery of a body in a dump site does not provide investigators with the crime scene where most of the forensic evidence—hairs, blood, fibers, semen—is located. In a sense, becoming a serial killer is a process of self-selection. A confused assailant who kills in a frenzied way cannot successfully plan, execute, and cover up the crime. The most dangerous, cunning murderers are a great challenge for law enforcement authorities. Notwithstanding advances in forensics, computerized offender tracking, and even behavioral profiling, when these crimes are solved, luck generally plays a significant role.

It may not be completely fair to law enforcement to characterize these apprehensions as lucky, because they still involve the police doing their job. Although killers like Theodore Bundy and Gary Heidnik may have been caught in routine traffic stops and Berkowitz was linked to the Son of Sam killings as a

result of a parking ticket he received near one of the crime scenes, these obviously involved important police activities—even if not requiring tremendous technical skill—and highlight the significance of a police presence in our society.

There is also some evidence that the most organized killers can begin to deteriorate over time. Bundy began his killing career with a duffle bag filled with weapons, disguises, and tools and had several ruses he used to lure women (e.g., his arm was in a sling and he needed help loading something into his car). By the time he committed the Chi Omega sorority house murders at Florida State University, however, Bundy used a log he found at the crime scene as his murder weapon and left bite marks on his victim's body. Apparently, Bundy's transformation was from a highly organized to a quite disorganized killer.

The notion that serial killers subconsciously wish to be caught and for this purpose carelessly leave telltale clues at crime scenes or act impetuously and recklessly may hold in detective novels but has little validity when applied to most real cases. When spree/serial killer Andrew Cunanan traveled from the Midwest to the East in a series of stolen cars, killing his first four victims along the way, many law enforcement experts speculated that his incautious actions, such as using his victims' cell phones, indicated a latent desire to be apprehended. Despite this wishful thinking on the part of investigators, Cunanan remained hidden in plain sight before surfacing in Miami to kill again. Even as the police cornered him on a Miami houseboat, Cunanan still controlled when, where, and how the killing spree would end. On July 23, 1997, as police and media helicopters circled above him, the 27-year-old killer took his own life rather than be taken alive. Perhaps it was a death wish, but clearly not an arrest wish.

DECEIVING APPEARANCES

Several myths have long existed about serial killers, whereas other legends are rather recent in origin.⁵ One of the oldest misconceptions is that of the serial murderer as a human monster, derived from and reinforced by Hollywood creations such as Jason in the movie *Friday the 13th*. In one thriller after another, screenwriters have portrayed serial killers as glassy-eyed lunatics whose entire existence is centered on satisfying their compulsion for human destruction.

Actually, it would be somewhat comforting if the Hollywood image were at all accurate. If serial killers indeed looked like crazed maniacs and acted in a patently bizarre fashion, they would be easily identified and avoided on sight. Unfortunately, in very many respects, most serial killers are extraordinarily ordinary, and, as such, extremely dangerous.

Quite opposite to the Hollywood thriller stereotype, a more modern characterization describes these killers as unusually handsome and charming, perhaps generalizing from one of the most celebrated cases of modern times, that of Theodore Bundy, who murdered dozens of women from Washington State to Florida and was indeed a “lady killer,” in more ways than one. During his trial, a number of female admirers came to court, their hair styled to look like some of Bundy's victims, and sat gazing at the “dreamy” defendant. Similarly, Richard Ramirez, the so-called Night Stalker of Los Angeles, also was sought after by numerous adoring women during his trial. They attended his trial dressed all in black as an expression of support and devotion. In 1996, while locked away in a California prison, Ramirez married one of his adoring fans.

Several other serial killers, including Randall Woodfield, Ángel Maturino Reséndiz, Henry Louis Wallace, and Arthur Shawcross, found love and marriage

after being convicted and imprisoned for vicious crimes. A few states—California, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Washington—allow for conjugal visits from spouses. Bundy managed to become a father while in prison (semen was somehow smuggled out of the prison), and his then-wife had a daughter in 1982.

Aspiring to marry a convicted and imprisoned serial killer may say much more about the mental health of the bride-to-be than the charm of the killer himself. Marrying someone in prison is one way an insecure woman can be assured that her man is not cheating on her (at least with other women). He may be behind bars but not in the bars looking for a good time. She always knows where he is, even at 3 a.m. Women who are attracted to men who have committed atrocious crimes, referred to as hybristophiles, may suffer from their own mental health issues and seek attention as the wife or girlfriend of a notorious murderer.

It is tempting to focus only on the defects of killer groupies (e.g., their lack of self-esteem and their bad judgment) to explain their attraction to serial killers. Some of them find a mission in their relationship. They must attract the attention of the world and tell everyone that their man is innocent, that he is only a victim of injustice and not a vicious criminal. Still other women may feel special because their man shared his most personal and intimate thoughts. Only she sees his gentler side.

Aside from the needs of killer groupies, however, what deserves to be acknowledged as well is society's complicity in making these murderers into appealing celebrities. In some cases, serial killers have received more national publicity than many rock stars or rap artists. Moreover, most serial killers are extremely manipulative. They know exactly how to lure vulnerable women into a relationship, just as they understood how to lure their poor victims into a position of total vulnerability in order to take their lives.

It would be wrong, however, to characterize all, or even most, serial killers as charming, charismatic, and attractive. Some are, by conventional standards, decidedly undesirable in appearance, and still others suffer from intense shyness. Interestingly, shyness has been identified as a factor that may protect against delinquency, apparently as a trait that limits the number of peer contacts. However, shyness—and particularly shyness with women—is a characteristic that appears in many case histories of male serial killers.

For some serial killers, in fact, murder can be their only strategy for seeking sexual gratification and even “enjoying” the “company” of others. Leonard Lake, a middle-aged recluse who lived in the woods just east of San Francisco, was painfully aware of his limitations when he outlined on videotape, with chilling calmness and clarity, his motives for abducting women. Preparing to build an elaborate underground bunker in which to imprison young women as sex slaves, Lake described in logical, although patently selfish, terms why he felt the need to proceed with what he called “Operation Miranda”:

I am a realist. I am 38 years old, a bit chubby, with not much hair, and I'm losing what I have. I am not particularly attractive to women—or I should say particularly attracting to women. And all the traditional magnets—the money, the position/power—I don't have. And yet I am still very sexually active, and I am still very much attracted to a particular type of woman who almost by definition is totally uninterested in me.

Dirty old man, pervert, I'm attracted to young women, sometimes even as young as 12, although to be fair certainly 18–22 is pretty much an

ideal range as far as my interests go. I like very slim women, very pretty of course, petite, small breasted, long hair, if I am allowed. And, such a woman, by virtue of her youth, her attractiveness, her desirability to certainly the majority of mankind, simply has better options. There is no particular reason why such a woman should be interested in me.

But there is more to it than that. It is difficult to explain my personality in 25 words or less, but I am in fact a loner, I enjoy the peace, the quiet, the solitude, I enjoy being by myself. And while all my relationships with women in the past have been sexually successful, socially they have almost always been a failure. I've gone through two divorces, innumerable women, 50–55, I forget exactly the count, I counted recently. I'm afraid the bottom line statement is the simple fact that I'm a sexist slob.

I enjoy using women, and of course women aren't particularly interested in being used. I certainly enjoy sex. I certainly enjoy the dominance of climbing on a woman and using her body. But I'm not particularly interested in the id, the ego, all the things that a man should be interested in to complement a woman's needs. Now I can fake these emotions, and I can fake them very well. In the past, I've been very successful at attracting fairly interesting and attractive women simply because I did fake fairly well an interest in their needs and their requirements. So momentarily I had what I wanted and they thought they had what they wanted. But in the long term I don't want to bother.

What I want is an off-the-shelf sex partner. I want to be able to use a woman whenever and however I want. And when I'm tired or satiated or bored or not interested, I simply want to put her away, lock her up in a little room to get her out of my sight, out of my life, and thus avoid what heretofore has always been the obligation to entertain or amuse or satisfy a particular woman or girlfriend's whims of emotional whatever.

Such an arrangement, of course, is not only blatantly sexist, but highly illegal. There's no doubt about it. It violates all of the human rights and blah blah, blah blah blah. To spare posterity my concept of other people's morality, I'm explaining my morality—what I feel, what I want. And as of this moment I am going to try to get it.

With the help of his buddy Charles Ng, Lake constructed a holding cell inside a bunker next to his home in which he kept a steady supply of slaves. He used them as long as they were appealing and satisfying, and then violently discarded them as human trash. Surely, Lake could have hired prostitutes to fulfill his sexual needs and housekeepers to perform the other assorted chores. But there was much more to his fantasy: ownership. He sought to possess total power over his victims as if they were indeed his slaves. Leonard Lake committed suicide by taking a cyanide pill as soon as he was apprehended by police, and Charles Ng, whose shoplifting brought him and his partner to the attention of police, was convicted of 12 murders and is currently on death row in California. His trial was one of the most expensive in history.

Although Leonard Lake was as intelligent as he was self-absorbed, it is also part of the modern mythology that serial killers are typically brilliant—like the Hannibal Lecter character from Thomas Harris's novel, *The Silence of the Lambs*. Although some serial killers, such as Lawrence Sigmund Bittaker and Edmund Kemper, have genius-level IQs, many others clearly have sub-par intelligence.

Based on data drawn from the Homicide Investigation and Tracking System (HTS) database in Washington State, Godwin determined that only 16% of the 107 serial murderers he studied had attended college and only 4% graduated with a bachelor's degree. The majority were employed in blue-collar jobs working for other people.⁶ Using a much larger database, Aamodt found that roughly 15% of serial killers attended at least some college. Although partially a result of a large amount of missing data on educational attainment, Aamodt reported that as many as 43% of serial killers had no academic degree at all, not even a high school diploma.⁷

Regardless of social class, IQ, or level of education, most serial killers—at least those who successfully remain at large for long time periods—typically possess a certain degree of cunning, criminal *savoir faire* needed to accumulate a significant body count. Many of them are exceptionally skillful in their presentation of self, so much so that they appear beyond suspicion and thus are difficult to apprehend. But many of them just target the most vulnerable and only have to offer drugs or money to trap a victim. They are hardly engaging in complicated art thefts or bank heists. Like terrorists, they mostly go after soft targets.

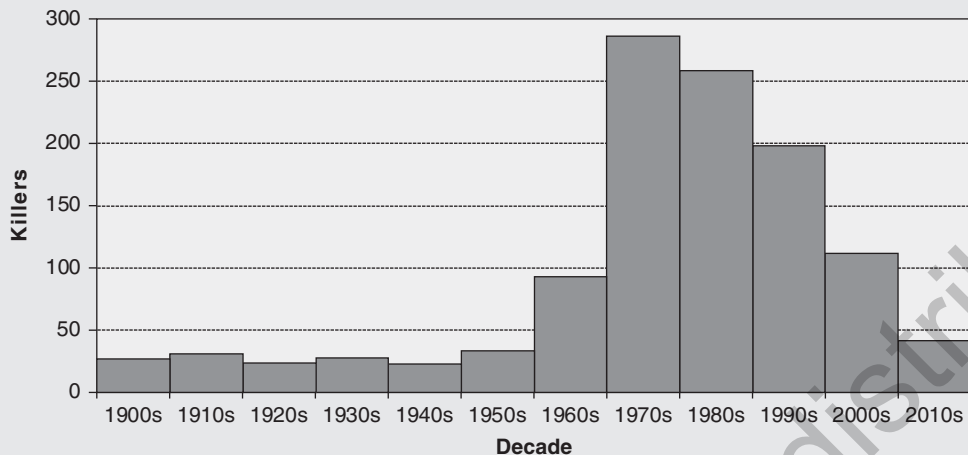
PREVALENCE AND TRENDS

It is difficult to gauge the full extent of serial murder. Because of complexities in linking murders committed by the same perpetrator but at different times and often different locations, no precise estimate of the prevalence of serial killers is even possible. Early estimates of serial murder suggested there was an emerging epidemic with hundreds of active killers and thousands of victims killed every year, but this was largely media hype and hysteria.⁸ Although a large percentage of all killers featured in TV dramas, news magazine programs, and true crime books commit serial murder, most research places the death toll linked to known serial killers at about 1% of all murders in the United States, a couple hundred victims per year at most. However, there is also research that suggests there may be many more overlooked victims of serial killers. Some proportion of missing persons and unidentified dead are likely serial homicide victims, as well as deaths that are misclassified as natural deaths (as in the case of a medical murderer or deaths wrongly classified as sudden infant death syndrome [SIDS]). Additionally, some missing persons are never reported as missing by anyone. These “missing missing,” including runaways, prostitutes, homeless persons, and drug addicts, are particularly vulnerable to serial killers. Including these typically undercounted victim pools could easily double or triple the known annual serial murder death toll.⁹

Notwithstanding these limitations in measuring the prevalence of serial murder, the best available source of information pertaining to serial killers and their victims is the Radford University/Florida Gulf Coast University Serial Killer Database (hereafter called the Radford/FGCU database).¹⁰ The Radford/FGCU database includes information of offender demographics, childhood life events, family variables, education, military history, substance use, locations and dates of murders and other crimes, motives, types of victims, weapons, and sentencing outcomes on nearly 5,000 repeat killers (with at least two kills) and 14,000 victims from around the globe and dating as far back as the 15th century.

Rather than include all cases contained in the Radford/FGCU database, we focus on the most deadly serial predators—those who killed at least four victims.

Figure 7.1 Serial Killers by Decade of First Murder



In addition, given the questionable reliability of data from cases outside the United States, we limit the analysis to those who stalked victims in the United States.

Figure 7.1 displays counts of serial killers operating in the United States whose first killing took place between 1900 and 2016 (members of serial killer teams are each counted as separate offenders). As shown, there were relatively few known cases during the first half of the twentieth century. The pattern emerging during the past few decades is radically different, however. The number of known serial killers grew rapidly from the 1960s into the 1980s. Following the 1970s peak, the number of cases declined somewhat in the 1980s, 1990s, and since 2000.

Although rapid growth into the 1970s and 1980s clearly suggests significant shifts in the prevalence of serial murder, these results are vulnerable, at least in part, to alternative explanations related to changes in data accessibility and quality of record keeping. As interest in serial murder increased, so did the likelihood that case histories would be published in some fashion. Additionally, as law enforcement became better equipped to identify linkages between victims slain by the same killer or killers, the detection of serial crimes and criminals became more likely. To some extent, therefore, the surge in serial murder may have been at least partially an artifact of increased reporting and improved detection. Notwithstanding these concerns, the trend in serial killings into the 1980s is quite consistent with a more general rise in violent crime, including homicide, in the United States as well as an increase in population size.

As the incidence and public awareness of serial murder grew through the 1980s, so did the sense of fear and panic. However, in recent decades the number of serial murderers has tapered off. Aside from mirroring the overall drop in homicide discussed in Chapter 2, a number of factors have contributed specifically to the decline in serial murder victimization, including the Amber Alert system, sex offender registries, GPS tracking, better insurance fraud detection, hospital death surveillance systems, DNA analysis, reduced prevalence of hitchhiking and broken-down cars on the road, and fewer free-range kids and more hovering parents.¹¹ These changes and technologies may also mean that some would-be serial offenders never killed anyone or killed only a few victims before being

apprehended. Books such as Gavin de Becker's *The Gift of Fear* and the constant inundation of murder shows may have contributed to the decline by making people hypervigilant and less likely to take risks. Easy online access to hardcore pornography may also have given the sexually violent an alternative to acting out their fantasies on real victims.

Even though many technological advances have shielded potential victims from the clutches of serial killers, in certain ways technology may also make us more vulnerable. For example, social media such as Facebook and internet-based services such as Craigslist have been a boon for predators trolling online for victims. The convenience of online shopping also brings potential assailants to the homes of possible victims when packages are delivered. For example, using his part-time job at UPS to access records, 30-year-old Jason Thomas Scott murdered five women in Maryland, including two cases in which he killed both mother and daughter.

Whatever the reasons for the decline over the past couple of decades, the problem of serial murder remains a difficult and perplexing one for law enforcement and, of course, for the citizens concerned for their personal safety. Even with fewer than a dozen serial killers per year captured by the police plus an unknown number of others undetected or on the loose, the fear and suffering provoked by serial murderers is extraordinary, warranting an attempt to understand who these offenders are and why they kill.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SERIAL KILLERS

Much of what comprises “common knowledge” about serial killers is based on case studies of the most unusual and bizarre crimes as well as fictional accounts in books and film. For the longest time, there was little in the way of hard data on large numbers of cases to provide a reality check on the many widely held assumptions about the characteristics of serial killers, their crimes, and their victims. In recent years, however, several criminologists have assembled data sets on serial murder specifically to provide perspective. As mentioned, the most complete resource is the Radford/FGCU database.

In addition to focusing only on serial killers operating in the United States, for whom the data are more complete and reliable, we also limit our analysis to cases from the past several decades for the very same reason. Details on cases occurring long ago are rather difficult to obtain. Thus, the offender and victim characteristics to be provided in the tables to follow involve cases in the United States from the 1970s forward in which the assailant is confirmed to have murdered at least four victims spread over some period of time. Following these criteria, the Radford/FGCU database for the years 1970 through 2016 contains 897 offenders who were responsible for more than 4,600 killings (some of which are linked to two or more offenders acting as accomplices).

Determining the precise number of victims killed by these offenders is, unfortunately, next to impossible. Often, the full extent of their murder tolls can only be suspected, and the documented cases for which they are convicted or linked with a high degree of certainty may understate the extent of carnage. On the other hand, some offenders, grandiose in their self-image as killing machines, exaggerate their victim tallies as they boast to the press and even the police about how powerful and superior they are.

As shown in the top of Table 7.2, the 897 serial murderers fitting the stated criteria were implicated, on average, in 6.77 killings each over a span of nearly

five years, with the 842 male assailants slightly deadlier than the 55 females (6.82 and 6.04 killings, respectively). Of course, the most notorious serial killers (e.g., Theodore Bundy, Gary Ridgway, and John Wayne Gacy, to name a few) can be linked to dozens of murders over much longer time frames. Since 1970 about 35% of serial killers had four victims, another 21% had five victims, and 12% had six victims. The remaining third had seven or more victims.¹²

In addition to these known serial killers, a number of unsolved cases across the nation continue to baffle investigators. Furthermore, despite recent advances

Table 7.2 Characteristics of Serial Killers, 1970–2016

Offender Characteristic	Offender Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Number of cases	842	55	897
Average victim count	6.82	6.04	6.77
Average career length (yrs)	4.9	4.3	4.9
Killing rate (victims/yr)	5.3	5.6	5.3
Offender age at first kill			
Under 20	15.9%	9.1%	15.5%
20–29	51.7%	50.9%	51.7%
30–39	23.8%	27.3%	24.0%
40–49	7.2%	5.5%	7.1%
50+	1.3%	7.3%	1.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average age	27.3	29.1	27.4
Offender race/ethnicity			
White	48.9%	72.7%	50.4%
Black	41.1%	18.2%	39.7%
Hispanic	8.0%	5.5%	7.8%
Asian	1.2%	3.6%	1.3%
Other	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Type of motive			
Profit	35.0%	40.0%	35.3%
Pleasure	44.0%	32.7%	43.3%

Offender Characteristic	Offender Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Anger	12.3%	7.3%	12.0%
Other	8.8%	20.0%	9.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Scope of killing			
National	16.4%	14.5%	16.3%
Regional	12.7%	9.1%	12.5%
Local	70.9%	76.4%	71.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

in technology and communication, law enforcement officials may still be unaware of the presence of many other serial killers. The unsolved or open cases and the undetected cases, taken together, could account for hundreds of additional victims.

Table 7.2 features information on the demographic and other key characteristics of serial killers, indicating that certain widely held beliefs about these assailants are not completely accurate. Overall, 93.9% of serial killers are male. The disproportionate involvement of males in serial homicide in part reflects, of course, their greater numbers in murder rates, generally. However, according to these statistics, the gender ratio among serial killers is slightly more pronounced than the 90% for murder overall, a finding that is consistent with the prevailing view among most researchers that almost all serial killers are men.

Even when the serial murders committed by women are heinous, cruel, and sexually predatory, the tendency is still to portray them as victims. Karla Homolka fully and willingly participated with her husband in the brutal rapes and murders of three girls, one of whom was her own younger sister, to satisfy her own sexual fantasies. Gwendolyn Graham and Catherine Wood, convicted of killing five elderly people in a nursing home (and suspected of as many as 10 deaths in total), used their murders as foreplay, sneaking away afterward into vacant rooms to have sex and discuss fondly their victims' dying moments. Aileen Wuornos, a Florida prostitute who murdered seven men, told the jurors during her trial that she hoped their daughters would be raped.

Dozens of women have murdered children, stepchildren, husbands, and parents for the benefit of collecting on their life insurance. Given the reluctance to label the most brutal female killers as serial predators, profiles of the female serial killers may be off the mark. Much more weight appears to be given to a female killer's past history of child and domestic abuse, portraying her as a victim, as mentally ill, and as not responsible for her actions.¹³ Nevertheless, criminologists are beginning to recognize the existence of a female sexual predator. Women, like men, can develop deviant psychosexual needs. Women can only begin to achieve equality with men if their predatory, violent, and murderous behavior is acknowledged as a product of their free will to kill and be punished accordingly.

In terms of age, 51.7% of serial murderers started killing in their 20s and another 24.0% started in their 30s, with an average age of onset at about 27. Of course, most have killing careers that last years, and the average age at mid-career is 30 years old. It is not very common for a teenager to have acquired an insatiable taste for murder. It is equally uncommon for such a youthful offender to have developed the level of skill and cunning needed to carry out a prolonged career of killing without being caught after one or two murders or attempted murders. Typically, the toxic ingredients that create a serial killer take time to ferment.

Table 7.2 also shows that 50.4% of serial killers are white, less than the proportion of the population that is white and non-Hispanic (61.3%). The proportion of serial killers who are black (39.7%) is three times greater than their 13% representation in the general population but still below the substantial share (slightly more than half) of all homicides committed by blacks. However, at least historically, the involvement of black serial killers may have been understated. The percentage of serial killers who are black has increased with each successive decade, exceeding 50% among those who began killing since 2000 and nearing convergence with homicide in general.

Why were black serial killers overlooked for so long? In part, it was the serial killer stereotype, promulgated back in the 1980s by the FBI, of the white, middle-aged male with above-average intelligence. In addition, racism contributed to the greater media coverage of cases with white victims and a hesitancy to use the terms *monster* and *animal* when referring to black offenders. Moreover, serial killings of black victims, especially those who are impoverished and marginalized politically, are less likely to be connected, prioritized for investigation, and subsequently solved.

The delayed identification and apprehension of two recently captured serial murderers illustrate how the victims' race may play a role in how aggressively law enforcement responds. In both cases, moreover, many of the murdered women, living on the margins of society, were never reported as missing by anyone—examples of Quinet's "missing missing."

It took 25 years for Lonnie David Franklin Jr., a 57-year-old black male, to be arrested as the "Grim Sleeper" killer. Franklin's apprehension in July 2010 apparently closed the book on the unsolved murders of 10 black residents of Los Angeles. However, Franklin may not have been sleeping at all. Recently, the LAPD released 160 photos of unidentified women found in Franklin's possessions. Since the release of the photos, at least 20 women have been identified and are alive, but more than 100 of the photos have yet to be identified and may be additional victims of Franklin. Franklin was convicted of killing nine women, linked to at least 25 murders, and sentenced to death in 2016.

In October 2009, 51-year-old Anthony Sowell, also a black man, was convicted of 11 counts of murder after 10 bodies of black women and one human skull were discovered buried in the yard of his Cleveland, Ohio, home. Sowell was able to evade detection and arrest for years, despite the noticeable stench coming from the decaying remains. In addition to the 11 known victims, Sowell is also being investigated for several other missing person and unsolved homicides cases. Whatever the full extent of his crimes, Sowell remains on Ohio's death row.

Many other black serial killers, including Lorenzo Gilyard, John Floyd Thomas, and Chester Turner, were able to stay under the radar for lengthy periods of time because of the type of victims they targeted. The media focus far more attention on murdered or missing white females, which in turn impacts the level of pressure placed on the police to find the person responsible. This phenomenon, known as "the missing white woman syndrome," can certainly be seen in the

extensive media coverage and law enforcement resources cases like Laci Peterson, Elizabeth Smart, Lauren Spierer, and Caylee Anthony received.¹⁴

The typical serial killer is someone like Hillside Strangler Kenneth Bianchi, who, along with his cousin Angelo Buono, raped, tortured, and murdered 10 young women in the Los Angeles area in the late 1970s. The Hillside Strangler moniker is quite telling. Although 40% of serial killers use a gun, that percentage is much lower than the 65% for murderers generally. When serial killers do employ guns, they often only use them initially for coercion and intimidation but then prefer a more hands-on method for the actual murder. Too easy, too clean, and much too distant, a gun would only rob the serial killer of his greatest pleasure: exalting in his victim's suffering.

Serial killers will often change their modus operandi (MO), or method of killing. They may change methods over time because they improve their techniques. Dennis Rader, the BTK Strangler, started out trying to strangle victims with leather shoe ties, but they broke so he then switched to stronger strangulation methods. Serial killers may also change their MO in response to actions taken by the victim or the presence of others nearby. Whereas they may prefer to strangle, a highly resistant victim could force them to use a firearm or another, more practical method. The serial killers may also change the MO in response to police investigations and media release of case details so as to make their crimes appear unconnected to one another. However, although they may alter their MO, the serial killers rarely change their signature—their personal sexual fantasies embedded into the crime scene. They may have a compulsion to display bodies in elaborate poses, insert foreign objects into the bodies, or cut, bite, or dismember the body. Analysis of U.S. serial killers active since 1970 finds 40% of serial killers raped their victims, 15% tortured their victims, and 4% engaged in cannibalism or necrophilia.¹⁵

It is well known that some serial killers keep totems, or souvenirs from their crimes. Joel Rifkin, for example, who in 1993 confessed to murdering 17 prostitutes in New York, kept his victims' underwear, shoes, sweaters, cosmetics, and jewelry in his bedroom. Jeffrey Dahmer, who was killed by a prison inmate in 1994, proudly displayed pictures of his victims on the walls of his apartment and kept body parts in his refrigerator. Missouri's Robert Berdella, a 40-year-old man who held captive six male sex slaves, had a particularly rich collection of souvenirs, including two human skulls and over 200 photographs of his victims in a variety of degrading poses before and after death, and with various vegetables inserted into their body cavities. He also chronicled his "human experiments" in a detailed diary of his tortures. But these cases may reflect the activities of a subset and a more Hollywood version of serial killers, as analysis of the Radford/FGCU data finds that only about 9% of serial killers kept some sort of memento.

A few serial killers feed their need to feel important and powerful by taunting the police and making the headlines. The self-named Zodiac Killer, who killed at least five people during the 1960s and 1970s in the San Francisco Bay area, sent several cryptic notes to newspapers. These notes contained a code that has never been broken, and the Zodiac case remains unsolved.

During the 1970s, a serial killer in Wichita, Kansas, phoned a local newspaper reporter directing him to a section of the public library where he located a letter claiming credit for the recent massacre of a local family. In his letter, the killer wrote: "The code words for me will be . . . Bind them, Torture them, Kill them." He signed the letter "BTK Strangler," for bind, torture, and kill. From that point on, the BTK moniker was commonly used by newspaper reporters in their

articles about the killer's string of seven murders. In January 1978, BTK sent a poem to a reporter at the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, in which he wrote about a victim he had slain a year earlier. In February of the same year, BTK wrote a letter to a Wichita television station complaining about the lack of publicity he had received for his murders. "How many do I have to kill," BTK asked, "before I get my name in the paper or some national attention?" In addition, the killer compared his crimes with those of Jack the Ripper, Son of Sam, and the Hillside Strangler.

It was believed that BTK's killing spree had ended in 1991. Then, after more than 13 years, BTK surfaced once again to terrorize the Wichita community. In March 2004, he sent a letter to the Wichita newspaper in which he claimed credit for the unsolved death of Vicki Wegerle, who was killed in September 1986. As evidence of his complicity, BTK enclosed with his letter a photocopy of Wegerle's driver's license and photographs of her body.

BTK was again communicating with the police and the media. The killer's sudden reemergence indicated that he was feeling insecure about being out of the spotlight. He apparently hadn't taken anyone's life in several years and wasn't getting much attention from the public. When later asked about his hiatus, BTK said that he was too busy with his children's activities to have time for killing.

BTK turned out to be 59-year-old Dennis Rader, a church council president, former Cub Scout leader, and compliance officer who had terrorized the city of Wichita over three decades. Among the items that Rader sent to the media was a floppy disk, which, unknown to the killer, contained an electronic imprint that could be traced back to its source—a computer in the Christ Lutheran Church where he had served as president of the congregation. After learning that Rader had access to the church computer, police were able to gain access to Rader's daughter's DNA from Pap smear results performed at the local university clinic and link the DNA specimen to some of her father's crime scenes.

Because the state of Kansas had no death penalty at the time that Rader committed his crimes, he was able to escape execution. But on June 28, 2005, BTK was given the most severe sentence possible under Kansas law—10 consecutive life terms with no possibility of parole for 175 years.

Serial killers are often described as nomads, who roam from city to city, state to state preying on unsuspecting victims whom they encounter in their travels. Of course, pinpointing the geographic area in which serial killers operate can be somewhat challenging. They can have separate abduction, murder, and body dumping sites.¹⁶ In addition, bodies dumped in one place, such as a river, can eventually be discovered somewhere far away. To complicate matters even further, a victim may be abducted and killed far from home (e.g., a prostitute who travels across the country), and the killer may live far from a kill site or dump site.

Notwithstanding the stereotypical drifter, most serial killers are fairly local in their pursuit of victims. Many have jobs, families, and various other responsibilities that would make it difficult to wander far and wide. In his analysis of U.S. male serial killers from 1975 to 2004, Hickey found that only 28% committed murders in more than one state, whereas 61% killed in a relatively limited area, and 11% murdered their victims all in the same location (e.g., their home or workplace). Female serial killers, according to Hickey's data, were even less likely to be nomadic.¹⁷

Our analysis of Radford/FGCU data revealed similar results. As shown in Table 7.2, 71.2% of serial killers are local, another 12.5% are regional, and only 16.3% are national serial killers. The location of serial killers by state typically mirrors the state populations; that is, larger states have more serial killers, and sparsely populated states have fewer. New Hampshire is frequently absent from

lists of places trolled by serial killers, but recent developments in an unsolved string of murders have changed that. In January 2017, a Pennsylvania man known as Bob Evans, who had died several years earlier, was implicated in the murders of four people whose bodies were discovered stashed in barrels in a park in Allentown, New Hampshire. Evans was somewhat of a chameleon, having used different aliases over the years. Besides linking him to the crimes, DNA analysis determined that Evans was the biological father of one of the four New Hampshire victims. As a final oddity surrounding the case, months later, DNA revealed Bob Evans's real name was Terry Peder Rasmussen.

VICTIMS OF SERIAL MURDER

Table 7.3 presents characteristics of victims slain by U.S. serial killers operating since 1970. As shown, nearly half (45.6%) of the victims are 20 to 39 years of age, most are white (64.1%), and, surprising to many students of serial murder, the primary method is gunshot (40.9%) followed by strangulation (28.4%).

One of the most striking dissimilarities between serial murder and criminal homicide generally is the nature of the offender–victim relationship. Unlike single-victim murder, which commonly arises from some dispute between partners, family members, or friends, serial murder is typically a stranger-perpetrated crime.¹⁸ Specifically, as shown in Table 7.3, 64.2% of serial murder victims were

Table 7.3 Characteristics Victims of Serial Killers, 1970–2016

Victim Characteristic	Victim Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Number of cases	1,953	2,647	4,600
Victim age			
Under 5	4.5%	2.0%	3.0%
5–19	18.6%	24.0%	21.8%
20–29	25.6%	30.0%	28.2%
30–39	17.1%	17.5%	17.3%
40–49	10.9%	9.6%	10.1%
50–59	8.8%	5.2%	6.7%
60+	14.5%	11.8%	12.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Victim race/ethnicity			
White	59.7%	67.2%	64.1%
Black	26.6%	25.4%	25.9%

(Continued)

Table 7.3 (Continued)

Victim Characteristic	Victim Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Hispanic	10.3%	5.5%	7.5%
Asian	3.2%	1.4%	2.1%
Other	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Method by which killed			
Bludgeoned	5.8%	8.8%	7.5%
Poisoning	6.7%	3.3%	4.8%
Gunshot	57.2%	27.9%	40.9%
Stabbed	11.4%	14.5%	13.1%
Strangled	14.0%	39.9%	28.4%
Smothered	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%
Other	2.2%	3.2%	2.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Relationship to offender			
Family	5.1%	5.0%	5.0%
Acquaintance	42.6%	22.3%	30.8%
Strangers	52.4%	72.8%	64.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

strangers to their offender. To some extent, the abundance of stranger victims reflects the predatory patterns of these killers as well as the greater ease with which stranger attackers can escape apprehension and, therefore, be free to amass a large tally of kills.

The gender characteristics of serial killer victims are quite different from those of homicide victims generally, as were described in Chapter 2. Given the strong sexual element in the motivations of many male serial murderers, their victims tend to be female—fully 67%. Despite the greater number of females slain, moreover, some serial killers are gay or bisexual and purposely target male victims for rape and murder.

Although some serial killers have targeted coeds, they are much more likely to prey on particularly vulnerable individuals—runaways, prostitutes, homeless people, or patients in nursing homes and hospitals. Serial killers rarely choose professional athletes, bodybuilders, or National Rifle Association (NRA)

conventioners as their victims. Some research in serial murder has suggested that the victim actually has a symbolic value for the killer; for example, Ted Bundy may have selected women who physically resembled a girlfriend who had dumped him. The problem with this line of reasoning is that so many of the women in high schools and colleges in the 1970s looked like his victims. It was popular to wear long, straight hair parted down the middle. Rather than a Norman Bates-like complex regarding their mothers or their girlfriends, serial killers more likely choose women in general because of their heterosexuality and the inability of most of them to defend themselves.

The marginality of prostitutes, drug addicts, and runaways gives the killer a special advantage. It may take considerable time for someone to report her as missing and even longer to recognize that a woman has become a victim of homicide. By the time the police locate a body, they are typically left with skeletal remains—no DNA, fingerprints, fiber, or hair from the killer. Indeed, they are lucky to be able to identify the victim, let alone the killer. In November 2003, Gary Leon Ridgway, the Green River Killer, in a plea bargain to avoid the death penalty, admitted to killing more than 49 prostitutes in the Seattle area over a 16-year period. In his statement, Ridgway said he targeted prostitutes “because I thought I could kill as many as I wanted without getting caught.” According to the serial killer, “they were easy to pick up without being noticed” and “they would not be reported missing right away, and might never be reported missing.” Most serial killers who prey on prostitutes do so because they are accessible and easier to dehumanize. Still, some repeat killers clearly hate women and especially detest prostitutes. Both Green River Killer Gary Leon Ridgway and John Eric Armstrong, for example, claimed to have loathed prostitutes. By choosing a vulnerable, transient victim pool, they expected their crimes would go unnoticed and, at the same time, would exact revenge against the gender that had rejected them in the past. When Robert Charles Brown, 52, was apprehended by the state of Colorado in 2006, he claimed his murders were triggered by his disgust for women and their lack of morality. Brown likely murdered as many as 48 women across nine states and two countries beginning when he was a 17-year-old medic in the U.S. Army stationed in Korea. He was successful for so long because, like many other serial killers, he had a lot of different jobs over the years that required travel; basically he was always a drifter. The son of a sheriff’s deputy, Brown was characterized as a handsome, bright loner. One of his favorite pastimes was to wear a Halloween mask, with which he delighted in scaring women and children outside their homes. Ironically, Brown was born on Halloween in 1952.

In addition to their lack of a prior relationship with their assailants, serial murder victims also tend to share one important trait—their vulnerability. Although virtually anyone can be targeted, serial killers tend to prefer vulnerable victims, and this victim preference reflects the relative ease with which the offenders can abduct and slay certain targets. Pedophile Wesley Allen Dodd of Washington State encountered little difficulty in snatching children from parks and other public spaces. Arthur Shawcross made a habit of trolling Rochester’s red-light district, not needing even an ounce of force to find sex workers willing to enter his web of control.

Like the serial killers who prey on them, at least through the decade of the 1990s, victims also tended to be white. Given the increasing detection of black serial killers and the intraracial nature of homicide, blacks are more likely than ever to be targeted. The age range of victims is quite broad, reflecting the disparate classes of favored victims. Perhaps most widely known are those serial killers who target prostitutes in their 20s and 30s. But some serial killers have targeted infants,

as in the case of Texas nurse Genevieve Jones, while others such as Orville Majors of Indiana, have targeted primarily elderly hospital patients.

KILLING TOGETHER

Like Kenneth Bianchi and his favorite cousin and killing partner, Angelo Buono, many serial killers have accomplices. Nearly one-third of the male killers and about half of female killers in the Radford/FGCU database operated in teams of two or more (although this figure is naturally elevated because of the multiple counting of those who are part of a team).¹⁹ The most common male serial killing team is comprised of two or three males, whereas when a woman is part of a team she is typically operating with a male. These male–female partnerships make up a small proportion (4%) of all teams. It is the two or more males working together that can create unimaginable horror. The folie à deux effect, otherwise known as the madness of two, suggests that one psychotic person can create psychosis in another. Although in many cases of folie à deux, two people may just think there are people living in the trees in their yard or they may begin planning against alien invasions, for serial killer teams, the notion is more about sadistic murder than sheer madness. They encourage each other to do the wrong thing and are more likely to torture their victims than are their counterparts who operate alone. For Lawrence Bittaker and Roy Norris, for instance, killing was a team sport. They called it the “birthday game,” seeking to kill teenage girls of different ages (13, 14, 15, etc.), like trophies. Bittaker and Norris preferred blondes and tortured them in their specially equipped van, which they called “Murder Mac.” The pair tape-recorded the torture sessions so they could relive them later in their spare time. Chapter 12 on cults suggests that shared madness can transfer from one charismatic leader to hundreds, even thousands of people.

Serial killer teams sometimes involve family members—spouses such as Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo, cousins like Bianchi and Buono, and father–son pairs like the Kallingers. Joseph Kallinger, dubbed the “The Shoemaker,” recruited his 13-year-old son, Michael, in a series of brutal home invasion robberies, sexual assaults, and murders. Joseph, who had experienced horrible abuse as a child and was beaten by his adoptive parents, had a long history of sexual assaults, arsons, and mental illness before he became a father. The father and son team brutalized a number of victims in several different families across three states, and three of the victims died as a result. The earlier death of one of his other sons was also later linked to Joseph. A cobbler by trade and diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, Joseph Kallinger was convicted and died in prison years later. Because his son was thought to have been under the control of his violent and twisted parent, Michael was held in a juvenile facility until he turned 21 and was then released.

Some of the more fascinating partnerships include men and women. Ray, 76, and Faye Copeland, 69, looking like the couple in the famous *American Gothic* painting, were the oldest couple ever sentenced to death in the United States. Ray had a long cross-country history of scams, swindles, and cons and by 1986 decided that the best way to silence the drifters and hitchhikers he had recruited to write bad checks for his cattle purchases was to kill them. Five men were killed by the Copelands before their apprehension in 1989. Faye was thought to have been a victim of her domineering husband. But when the jury saw the quilt she had made from the dead men’s clothing, she also was convicted and sentenced to death. Ray died in prison in Missouri before he could be executed, while Faye, after suffering a stroke, was paroled to a nursing home, where she died a year later.

Although the Copelands' motive was financial, the most common male–female teams have a sexual motive. Doug Clark, the so-called Los Angeles Sunset Strip Killer, did the murdering and decapitating, while his girlfriend, Carol Bundy (no relation to Theodore), assisted. She even prepared the severed heads of victims for him to use as sex objects in the shower. She would do anything for her guy and for the sake of their love.

BEYOND U.S. BORDERS

It is hard to deny that the vast majority of ultra-notorious serial killers—the ones who have become household names (at least in American households)—are from the United States. Serial killers like Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer are as famous as the Hollywood actors who played them in films. Despite our focus here on patterns of serial murder in the United States, there are certainly many major cases occurring elsewhere around the globe. They simply do not receive the same level of attention in the media, at least not the American media.

Known as the Werewolf of Russia, former police officer Mikhail Popkov, 52, was convicted of 22 murders but recently admitted to killing more than 80 people. If true, Popkov's tally of victims would be third to Colombia's Luis Garavito (138 victims) and Pedro López (110 victims). Active for at least 20 years, Popkov, while in uniform, was able to lure often intoxicated victims into his police car, purportedly for rides home.²⁰ Although most of his victims were women leaving nightclubs and restaurants, Popkov thought of them all as prostitutes and claimed he was trying to cleanse the street of sex workers. Another Russian serial killer, Alexander Pichushkin, 43, who was called the Chessboard Killer, murdered at least 49 mostly homeless men and women from the 1990s until he was caught in 2006. His goal was to kill 64 people, one for each square on the chessboard.

Like the ploy used by John Wayne Gacy in Des Plaines, Illinois, Colombian Luis Garavito was able to attract and control young boys by offering them employment. Beginning in 1992, young males ranging in age from 6 to 16, many of them homeless street kids, were disappearing without a trace. But with the country steeped in political unrest, rather few of the disappearances resulted in missing person reports. After mass graves were discovered in 1999, an investigation led the authorities to Garavito's doorstep. Garavito was definitively linked to as many as 138 victims, but may have raped, mutilated, and killed more than 300. Nicknamed "The Beast," Garavito was convicted and sentenced to 1,853 years in prison.

A very different fate became of Pedro López, another Colombian citizen, who killed women and girls in the 1970s in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Although convicted of 100 murders in Ecuador, he was released from prison and deported to his home country. In 1998, after a few years in a psychiatric facility, López was released on good behavior. As of this writing, his whereabouts are unknown.

Justice came swiftly for China's Yang Xinhai after he confessed to 67 murders and an additional 23 rapes from 1999 until 2003. Following his release from prison on an attempted rape conviction, Yang was dumped by his new girlfriend when she learned about his past. At that point, Yang turned from rape to murder. Breaking into the homes of unsuspecting families, he viciously bludgeoned his victims with axes, shovels, and hammers. Yang was convicted on murder charges on February 1, 2004, and was executed 2 weeks later.

South Africa's most prolific serial killer, Moses Sithole, was convicted of committing 38 murders in less than a 2-year time span, although he claimed to have actually killed twice that number. Released from prison in 1994 after serving

several years on a rape conviction, Sithole began killing almost immediately. His access to victims came easily through his job at an agency designed to fight child abuse. He abducted women who came to interview for positions at the children's homes, and then beat, raped, and strangled them. He then scrawled the word *bitch* on their dead bodies before dumping them. Sithole was captured in 1995 and sentenced to a total of 2,410 years for the 38 murders and 40 additional rapes.

Using the full range of cases in the Radford/FGCU database (i.e., all repeat killers since the 15th century from around the globe), Aamodt found that over half the world's serial killers were located in the United States. In part, this is a function of population size. The United States is nearly three times the population of Japan and two times the population size of Russia, but it has 30 times the serial killers of Japan and 39 times the serial killers of Russia. Moreover, despite exceptionally large populations in India and China, Aamodt reports only 63 known Indian serial killers and 41 from China. However, rarely do serial killer scholars recruit translators for the world's non-English newspapers, and thus language barriers may explain the lack of information about serial killers in some parts of the world. It may also be possible that cultural differences make it less likely that serial killers in some other parts of the world will be featured and glorified in the mass media.

There are certainly other reasons why there is a disproportionate number of known serial killers in the United States. These include better law enforcement investigation techniques, better crime reporting by law enforcement, better reporting by media and the sheer number of media outlets, freedom of the press, and the freedom to move from one place to another (mobility). If bad childhoods play a role in the development of serial killers, there is no evidence that U.S. parenting is worse than parenting in China, Russia, or India.

THE MURDERING MIND

Many people assume that anyone who kills for fun, pleasure, or sport must be psychotic and out of touch with reality. Indeed, some serial killers have been driven by severe mental illness, such as Herbert Mullin of Santa Cruz, California, who killed 13 people in a span of 4 months in order to avert an earthquake—or at least that's what the voices told him.²¹

However, based on his analysis of more than 100 offenders, Godwin found little evidence that serial killers suffer from profound mental disorders. Only 28% of the murderers in his sample had a history of receiving any kind of treatment for mental illness; even fewer (20%) had a history of being treated for alcoholism or drug abuse. Most serial murderers are not insane in a legal sense or psychotic in a medical sense. Although they know right from wrong, know exactly what they are doing, and can control their desire to kill, they typically choose not to do so. Even the serial killers who remember childhood abuse, experience hallucinations, and “discover” multiple personalities at trial time may be suffering from mental disorders manufactured to support an attempted insanity plea as a last resort.

Psychologically, most serial killers are sociopaths (or antisocial personality types), a condition that was discussed in Chapter 3. They possess a disorder of character rather than of the mind, involving a lack of conscience and feelings of remorse, an inability to feel empathy for others, pathological lying, a manipulative style, impulsivity, and a total concern for maximizing their own pleasures in life.²² Other people are seen merely as tools for fulfilling their own needs and desires,

no matter how perverse or reprehensible. The serial killer is more bad than mad—simply put, he is evil.

Serial killers have often been characterized as suffering from low self-esteem. Although some killers are undoubtedly motivated by feelings of inadequacy, the relationship between low self-esteem and violence has little empirical support. Rather, anecdotal evidence suggests that many serial killers (including the medical murderers described in Chapter 8) may suffer from narcissism or “self-love.” They have a very inflated sense of themselves and demand that the rest of the world recognize their greatness. They have a godlike complex and believe that the society’s rules simply do not apply to them.²³ Whereas therapy and medication can help and even cure attention-deficit disorders, depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorders, personality disorders are fairly intransigent. People suffering from antisocial, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders often fail to acknowledge that they even have a problem. Confronting the nurse who is murdering her patients, the Munchausen mom drawing attention to herself, or the boss who thrives on the misery and humiliation he causes in his employees rarely results in a confession or any insights about their behavior.

As noted, for many serial killers, murder makes them feel superior and feel good about themselves, as though they have actually achieved something important. Robert Berdella’s collection of souvenirs served several important purposes. First, for a man who had otherwise led an unremarkable life, his treasures made him feel accomplished. They represented the one and only way in which he had ever distinguished himself “as a real pro.” More important, the souvenirs became tangible reminders of the “good times” Berdella had spent with his “playmates.” With the aid of his photographs, he could still get pleasure, even between captives, from reminiscing, daydreaming, fantasizing, and masturbating. In fact, serial killers have lasting memories as well as incredibly vivid and elaborate fantasies. Through murder and mayhem, they literally chase their dreams.²⁴

Even though serial killers tend to be sociopaths, totally lacking in concern for their victims, some actually do have a conscience and the capacity for remorse but are able to neutralize or negate their feelings of guilt. There is a powerful psychological process—known as dehumanization—that allows many serial killers to slaughter scores of innocent people by viewing them as worthless and, therefore, expendable. By targeting marginalized groups—prostitutes, the homeless, runaways—they can rationalize (if they need to for their own sense of emotional comfort) that they are doing something good for society . . . or at least nothing that bad.

Jeffrey Dahmer actually viewed his crimes as a sign of love and affection. He told Tracy Edwards, his final victim, who managed to escape and led the police to Dahmer’s apartment of horrors, that if he played his cards right, he, too, could give his heart to Jeff. He meant it literally of course, but, according to Edwards, he said it in an affectionate, not a threatening, manner. In a strange turn of events, Edwards, once the hero who helped catch Dahmer, was charged in relation to a drowning death in 2011.

Many serial killers skillfully compartmentalize the world into two groups—those whom they care about and everyone else. Kenneth Bianchi, for example, could be kind and loving to his wife and child as well as his mother and friends, yet be vicious and cruel to those he considered expendable. He and his cousin started with prostitutes, choosing victims for whom they had very little concern. Later, when comfortable with killing, he branched out to middle-class, more respectable targets. Angelo Buono died in prison of a heart attack in 2002, while Bianchi, having been denied parole multiple times, resides at Walla Walla State Penitentiary in Washington, awaiting his next hearing, which is not scheduled until 2025.

According to Stephen Giannangelo, serial killers are also eased into their murderous avocation by the clumsiness and impulsivity of their first kill.²⁵ He likens the first murder to the sexually inexperienced teenager who fumbles in the backseat of a car as he attempts to have sex with his date. For a serial killer, what might begin as a rape or an assault is transformed, in the excitement of the moment, into an act of homicide. Almost inadvertently, the killer crosses the threshold separating fantasy from fact. Whatever shame he may feel for having committed a serious offense is completely overshadowed by the “rush” that he acquires from finally discovering what he needs.

In addition to sociopathy, another critical ingredient to the profile of many serial killers is a strong tendency toward sexual sadism. More generally, these men have a craving for power and control. They tie up their victims in order to watch them squirm and torture their victims to hear them scream. They rape, sodomize, degrade, bludgeon, and mutilate their victims in order to feel powerful, dominant, and superior. One of Lawrence Bittaker’s victims pleaded, “Please, if you’re going to kill me, tell me so that I can pray first.” Bittaker was exhilarated by his victim’s begging. He assured her that she would not die and then slammed an ice pick in her ear. He just loved the control.

The sexual sadist derives intense pleasure through the pain, suffering, and humiliation of another person. In a pure sense, sexual sadists enjoy the act of inflicting pain on another, a nonconsenting victim. Yet the pleasure may also flow from the result—the screams and degradation of the recipient—rather than from just the act itself. Sexual sadists can also relish vicariously when another person (an accomplice or even an actor in a film) causes a victim to suffer. Thus, not only can a pair or team of serial killers enjoy personal satisfaction from raping and torturing a victim, but also their feeling of superiority can be enhanced by the power of the partnership.

The essence of the sadistic drive lies in the desire to achieve total domination and mastery over another person. From this point of view, the pleasure derived from killing depends, at least in part, on the sadist’s role in having caused the victim to suffer. An alternative argument holds that the sexual or psychological pleasure that a sadistic killer derives from the act of torturing his victim may be more a result of observing the victim’s agony than from the actual infliction of pain. This hypothesis appears to be supported by experimental research in which aggressive sex offenders become sexually aroused when shown simulated scenes of men inflicting pain on women.²⁶

This begs the question, however, of whether the arousal stems from observing the victim’s suffering or from identifying vicariously with the aggressor. Regardless of whether the critical component is the stimulus (the direct infliction of pain) or the response (the victim’s suffering itself), the fundamental objective in the actions of the sadistic serial killer is to achieve complete mastery over his victims. In other words, humiliation, enslavement, and terror are vehicles for attaining total domination over another human being.

Power and control may be critical themes in the character of serial murderers, yet these traits are also common in many successful people in the worlds of business, politics, and even academics. The willingness to win at all costs, no matter who is hurt in the process, may insulate many winning individuals from looking back at those they exploit along the road to success. A vital difference between serial killers and those who backstab only figuratively may be access to legitimate opportunity.

At the same time, the sadistic sexual fantasies of the serial killer may also reflect his search for power. It appears that many serial murderers, from an early age, become absorbed deeply in a rich fantasy life involving images of sex and

violence. As they mature into adolescence, their fantasies become more and more consuming, increasing in their power as internal drive mechanisms that motivate them to cross the line into murderous behavior.

Robert Prentky and his colleagues compared the nature and prevalence of sexual fantasy between groups of sexually motivated serial killers and single-victim murderers also with sexual motivation to their crimes. Self-report interview data showed the serial murderers were more apt to describe a strong and intrusive fantasy life involving violent themes and paraphilias.²⁷

Paraphilias—unusual sexual attractions or practices—are common among sexually motivated serial killers. Rather than just a relatively harmless fetish (e.g., an attraction to nonhuman objects such as feces or shoes), some serial killers exhibit far more serious passions, including cannibalism, pedophilia, necrophilia, and, especially, erotophonophilia (i.e., becoming sexually aroused from mutilation and murder, or at least fantasizing about it).

The BTK Strangler, Dennis Rader, admitted to investigators that his attraction to violence and death began early in life. He recalled that at the age of 8 he would get aroused watching his grandmother kill chickens by strangling them with a leather shoestring. He also admitted to shoplifting issues of *True Detective* magazine as a kid. Rader had rich fantasies involving images of bondage and sexual violence. Even in high school, he wasn't sexually excited about girls unless he imagined tying them up.

Courts rarely view paraphilias as being beyond the perpetrator's control or a legitimate excuse for murder. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer's plea of insanity based on his necrophiliac and cannibalistic desires was rejected at his Wisconsin trial.

Not all children who fantasize about sadistic forms of violence grow up to be serial killers. The fact that most serial murderers do not initiate their murder sprees until well into their adult years indicates the important role of adult experiences—failures in relationships and at work—in the making of a serial killer. Many individuals who have suffered profoundly as children grow into healthy and nonviolent adults. They benefit later from positive experiences with peers, romantic partners, and coworkers who give them the support and encouragement that they lacked when they were young.

This was unfortunately not true of Danny Rolling, who turned to murder at the age of 36, killing three in his hometown of Shreveport, Louisiana, and five more in Gainesville, Florida. Not only had Rolling been the victim of an abusive parent, but also his adjustment and personal problems continued through adolescence into early adulthood. A brief marriage ended in divorce, his adult relationship with his parents continued to be severely strained, and he couldn't manage to hold a job. Instead, he drifted first from job to job, next from state to state, then from prison to prison, and finally from murder to murder.

Amazingly, given the abuse and horror in many of their childhoods, serial killers rarely kill themselves. Their own suffering is not internalized but rather externalized—they blame others. Occasionally, a serial killer will attempt suicide. Gary Heidnik, for example, tried to take his own life 13 times, and murdering nurse Charles Cullen also had multiple suicide attempts throughout his life. How can someone who is so skilled at killing others be so inadequate at killing himself? Clearly, the answer is that neither Heidnik nor Cullen truly wanted to die.

Herbert Baumeister, an exception to the rule, committed suicide in 1996, but only after the discovery of thousands of bone and teeth fragments on his family's estate in Westfield, Indiana. Although only 8 of Baumeister's victims were positively identified, the fragments were of at least 11 bodies. A father, husband, and businessman, he may have also been the so-called I-70 Killer who operated

during the late 1980s, as work often took Baumeister from Indiana to Ohio over this highway. Baumeister's victims were gay men whom he had picked up in bars in Indianapolis. This case is also an example of how serial killers can remain undetected and uninvestigated for so long when their victim pool is a marginalized group. It is unlikely that Baumeister's murderous career would have been as lengthy had he elected to slay college students or other middle-class victims.

EXPLANATIONS FOR SERIAL MURDER

Isolating those factors that encourage someone to kill repeatedly has been the focus of a large body of research dating back many years. The ingredients in the metaphorical toxic soup include a combination of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors that simmer inside the developing individual for decades until they boil over in the form of relentless and hideous brutality.

Whenever the case of an infamous serial killer is uncovered, be it a cannibalistic sadist or a not-so-merciful mercy killer, journalists and behavioral scientists alike tend to search for clues deep within the killer's biography that might explain his or her seemingly senseless or excessively brutal murders. Many writers, for example, have emphasized Theodore Bundy's concerns over having been born "illegitimate," and biographers of Hillside Strangler Kenneth Bianchi capitalized on his having been an adopted child.

Biological Factors

Researchers are not of one mind, however, in explaining what produces the psyche of the serial murderer. Some stress genetic or biological factors in accounting for such defects as sociopathy. Moffitt and Henry suggest, for example, that damage to the right hemisphere of the brain may be responsible for losses of "social sensibilities," including lack of empathy and difficulties with bonding.²⁸ Some neurologists and psychiatrists have suggested that many killers—especially killers who commit senseless acts of brutality—have incurred severe injury to the limbic region of the brain as a result of profound or repeated head trauma, generally during childhood. Dorothy Otnow Lewis and colleagues, for example, examined 15 murderers on Florida's death row and found that all showed signs of neurological irregularities.²⁹

Recent research finds that a significant proportion of multiple murderers may have various neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and head injury.³⁰ Obviously, most people with some form of autism never harm anyone, and some studies suggest people with autism are less likely to be aggressive or violent. However, a condition that has been called "criminal autistic psychopathy" reflects a particularly virulent form of Asperger's syndrome.³¹ Several serial killers, including Danny Rolling and Andrei Chikatilo, had suffered significant head injuries as children (and sometimes additional head injuries as adults), and a number of serial killers had possible or probable autism, including Jeffrey Dahmer, Robert Berdella, and Keith Jespersion. For a few killers, there were indications of both autism and head injury.

Significant scientific progress has been made regarding the possible links between various neurobiological factors and violent behavior. A 2017 study of the development and current state of scientific knowledge about possible biological factors as pathways to serial murder has identified a number of different risk factors, including head trauma, brain damage and dysfunction, serotonin/adrenaline

dysfunction, ASD, various childhood illnesses, in utero exposure to toxins, and birth complications.³² Of course, none of these factors are present in the histories of all or even most serial killers. It is likely that these biologically based risk factors become associated with violence only in certain social contexts when combined with other psychological and social predisposers.

There is compelling reason to believe that traumatic brain injuries resulting from severe head trauma can potentially have dire effects on behavior, including violent outbursts, learning disabilities, and epilepsy. Henry Lee Lucas was reportedly beaten by his mother with lumber and broom handles. He later claimed to have experienced frequent dizzy spells and blackouts. Bobby Joe Long, who was convicted of a total of nine counts of murder, also appears to have endured several severe head injuries. In three different episodes, at the age of 5 or 6, Long fell off a swing, from a horse, and off his bicycle, suffering repeated brain concussions in the process.

There are important possible causal order problems with theories that connect brain damage and violent behavior. If the individual is a thrill seeker and engages in dangerous pastimes (e.g., reckless driving), then the same set of personality traits may also lead to head injuries. In the presence of other negative social contexts (e.g., physical and sexual abuse, substance use and abuse), the same thrill-seeking need may act as a predisposing factor to violence. Thus, in some cases, head injuries may be a result of aggressive and violent behavior rather than their cause.

Childhood Factors

While considerable attention has been paid to biological and neurological factors, other investigators point instead to early childhood experiences and repeated psychological trauma during development, such as insufficient bonding of the child to his parents as well as physical and psychological abuse. Children who are abused, neglected, or abandoned tend to grow into needy adults who have difficulty bonding with others, a so-called attachment disorder. Lacking control over their own lives as children, many remain insecure as they mature, continuing to possess an intense need to control their social environment. From an early age, they are unable to trust others and instead learn to manipulate people in order to fulfill their needs.

There is a long tradition of research on the childhood correlates of homicidal proneness. For example, John Macdonald long ago hypothesized a triad of symptoms—bed-wetting, fire setting, and cruelty to animals—which he viewed as reactions to parental rejection, neglect, or brutality.³³ Although the so-called Macdonald's triad was later refuted in controlled studies, and bed-wetting and fire setting appear to have no causal link with future violent behavior, the connection between animal cruelty and subsequent violent behavior remains a continuing focus of investigation.

A number of studies in the years since Macdonald's work have purported to support the hypothesis that violent individuals are also abusive toward animals.³⁴ For example, Kellert and Felthous found significantly more childhood animal cruelty among aggressive criminals than among either nonaggressive criminals or noncriminals.³⁵ Moreover, tracking the criminal records of 153 animal abusers compared with 153 nonabusers, sociologist Arnold Arluke and colleagues determined that the animal abusers were five times more likely to commit acts of human violence, including murder, rape, and assault.³⁶

As described in the case studies of Steven Egger's *The Killers Among Us*, serial murderers don't just abuse animals but also torture and dissect them.³⁷ Egger's description of serial killer Jerry Marcus notes how the killer set pregnant cats on fire

and poured hot water on hungry dogs and, after these sadistic acts, felt exhilarated and proud. Jeffrey Dahmer started his killing spree on neighborhood pets when he was a child. He had a pet cemetery and a long history of animal decapitation and vivisection. It appears that much more attention should be given to those who abuse animals, as there is ample evidence that in many cases, the “animals” just get bigger.

People of any age who derive pleasure from the suffering of living creatures may come to have a long future of child abuse, partner violence, rape, or murder. Of course, countless youngsters experiment with abusing animals, including birds, reptiles, and rodents, yet outgrow their morbid fascination to become decent, well-adjusted adults. Serial killers are qualitatively different, however. As children, they may have tortured dogs and cats—animals that are loved by others as pets—in a hands-on sadistic manner, long before shifting to human prey.³⁸

It is often suggested that because of deep-rooted problems stemming from childhood, serial killers suffer from a profound sense of powerlessness, which they compensate for through extreme forms of aggression to exert control over others. But many people who suffer from a feeling of powerlessness go on to help others avoid this experience and work as volunteers, advocates, and philanthropists. The biographies of many serial killers reveal significant physical and psychological trauma at an early age. Based on in-depth interviews with 36 incarcerated murderers, Ressler and his colleagues found evidence of psychological abuse (e.g., public humiliation) in 23 cases and physical trauma in 13 cases.³⁹ Eric Hickey reported that among a group of 62 male serial killers, 48% had been rejected as children by a parent or some other important person in their lives.⁴⁰ Of course, these same types of experiences can be found in the biographies of many “normal” people as well. More specifically, although useful for characterizing the backgrounds of serial killers, the findings presented by Ressler and Hickey lack a comparison group drawn from nonoffending populations for which the same definitions of trauma have been applied.

Although many serial killers do have horrific childhoods, they are also very manipulative and may exploit the “child abuse syndrome” to their own advantage in an effort to receive a sympathetic ear. As a sociopath, the serial killer is a particularly convincing and accomplished liar. As a professional trained to be supportive and empathic, his psychiatrist may be easily conned. The case histories of such malingerers as Kenneth Bianchi and Arthur Shawcross, both serial killers who fooled mental health professionals with fabricated tales of child abuse, remind us to be skeptical about the self-serving testimony of accused killers eager to escape legal responsibility for their crimes.

As a related matter, more than a few serial killers—from David Berkowitz to Joel Rifkin—were raised by adoptive parents. In the “adopted child syndrome,” an individual displaces his anger for birth parents onto adoptive parents as well as other authority figures. According to Kirschner, the syndrome is often expressed, early in life, in “provocative antisocial behavior” including fire setting, truancy, promiscuity, pathological lying, and stealing.⁴¹

The apparent overrepresentation of adoption in the biographies of serial killers has been exploited by those who are looking for simple explanations for heinous and senseless crimes. In reality, the way in which this link operates has not been completely explained. That is, possible triggering mechanisms might include the effects of rejection by birth parents, maternal deprivation during the critical first few months of life, poor prenatal care by the birth mother, or genetic deficiencies passed on from one or both biological parents.

It is often said that “hindsight is 20/20.” This is definitely true in terms of explaining serial murder. Following the apprehension of a serial killer, we generally

hear mixed reports that “he seemed like a nice guy, but there was something about him that wasn’t quite right.” Of course, there is something about most people that “isn’t quite right.” However, when such a person is exposed to be a serial murderer, we tend to focus on the red flags in his character and biography that were ignored. Even the stench emanating from Jeffrey Dahmer’s apartment, which he explained to the neighbors as the odor of spoiled meat inside his broken freezer, was unexceptional until after the fact.

The methodological problems of predicting violence in advance are well known. For a category of violence as rare as serial murder, the low base rate and consequent false-positive dilemma are overwhelming. Simply put, there are thousands of white males in their late 20s or 30s who are sadistic, thirst for power, lack strong internal controls, tortured animals as children, and were adopted or abused, but the vast majority of them will never kill anyone. Although we might be able, after the fact, to explain why someone became a serial killer, we cannot predict in advance who will become one in the future. The best we can usually do is retrospective postdiction, looking back and seeing how all the risk factors come together.⁴²

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