The Role of Fantasy in Mass and Serial Murder

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how violent fantasizing influences the behavior of a brutal sub-class of murderers—mass and serial killers. Specifically, fantasy gives the perpetrator a profane catharsis due to his or her inability to cope with reality. The researcher identified, four common fantasy scripts: (Revenge Fantasy; Sexual, Sadistic and Misogynistic Fantasy; Suicidal-Homicidal Ideation; and Search for Validation through Infamy and Media Attention Fantasy) that more or less, play into the motivations and actions of mass and serial killers. Thus, it is important to understand why and how the killer moves from an all-consuming imaginative space to actually harming others. The methodology used for this research was "ethnographic content analysis" and, to a lesser extent, empirical phenomenology and semiotics. Source materials that were analyzed included: artifacts generated by the offenders prior to commission of their crimes (e.g., diaries, manifestos, blogs, drawings, photographs, and videotapes); official findings of governmental review panels; other public documents; survivor, witness or family accounts; news reports; and work conducted previously by other academics. This dissertation is particularly novel, in that the role of fantasy has not received much critical analysis with respect to mass murder. Likewise, the researcher's examination of current theory on the ontogenesis of moral dysfunction led to an original interpretation in the works of criminologists, Eric Hickey and Lonnie Athens. From a synthesis of Hickey's trauma-control theory and Athens' esoteric constructs of "self" and "other" a more cohesive understanding of the homicidal personality emerged. Essentially, the researcher

argues that the intersection of early derailing influences and pervasive life losses result in a fragmented concept of self, which the now deeply unstable individual seeks to validate through violent fantasy and homicidal acts. It is further proposed that these findings may lead to future inquiry into: methods for early intervention and diversion of an at-risk population; and where the foregoing is impractical, better methods of detecting, mitigating the harm caused by and quickly apprehending these particularly violent offenders.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, James B. Murray and Beverly A. Murray, for their unwavering love and support. You have taught me the importance and value of an education, instilled in me the inspiration to set high goals and given me the confidence to achieve them.

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Introduction

This doctoral dissertation examines how mass and serial murderers—through their imagination—plan, justify, rehearse and perfect their killings, along with the imagined public response thereto. This process is typically lengthy. Contrary to the popular stereotype of mass or serial killers as impulsive lunatics, these individuals are quite sane in the legal sense. Undoubtedly, these killers suffer from some sort of psychological or emotional imbalance, but the killer's deliberate and ruthless calculation reveals an average to high average ability to plan and imagine a desired outcome and act thereon. Moreover, the killer's mental preparation also serves as an emotional safety valve, as these offenders derive feelings of "catharsis or arousal" from their deliberation and imagination.

This work focuses on the origins of the deviant thought patterns (fantasy scripts) and pathological behavior exhibited by mass and serial killers and provides a novel hypothesis to explain such dysfunction. Specifically, four common fantasy scripts are explored: 1) Revenge Fantasy; 2) Sexual, Sadistic and Misogynistic Fantasy; 3) Suicidal-homicidal Fantasy; and 4) Search for Validation through Infamy and Media Attention Fantasy. All of these scripts, more or less, play into the emotional disposition and actions of mass and serial killers. The killer's disposition is expressed through the chosen fantasy themes woven into the fantasy script: vengeful targeting of specific victims; murder by proxy; reclaiming masculinity, pride and power; an escape or temporary refuge; attention-seeking/reaction seeking—the drive for infamy. The theme, like the

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script within which it is developed, is dictated by the loss or losses that are the catalyst triggering the fantasy process.

It is these real or perceived losses in the killer's life—loss of a relationship, loss of employment or money, loss of residence or place, and a general perceived loss of control over, or perceived sense of being unjustly wronged in, one's life etc., that ignite a desire to harm those persons (or proxy victims) who the killer blames for his failures. Although the potential mass or serial killer may reside meekly for years on the fringes of family, work and social circles, in reality theses individuals are deeply troubled and dangerous people. Therefore, it is important to understand why and how the killer moves from an imaginative space to actually causing severe and brutal harm to others.

This pattern of loss begins early in the mass killer's life with multiple, chronic destabilizing events (i.e., unstable home life, death of a parent(s), divorce of parents, corporal punishments, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and severe alcoholism or drug abuse by caregivers, etc.). Although these chronic stressors or traumas may cement a "predisposition to mass murder," in one's character, no single factor alone can be pointed to as the cause. Many people experience childhood losses or traumas and survive to be productive members of society, not murderers. For a very small minority of individuals, though, the effect of repeated and unabated trauma leads to the formation of several facilitators— dysfunctions that become incorporated into the killer's personality. Often, these facilitating factors coexist with psychological disorders, personality disorders or physical illnesses that only compound the strain for the individual (Hickey, 2010).

As a result, normal psychosocial development is interrupted beginning in childhood and continuing well into adulthood (or young adulthood).

The study of mass and serial killers—particularly their four common fantasy scripts and related themes—has valuable implications for criminology. Such research explains the heretofore-ignored connection between fantasy, self-concept and behavior. In conjunction with understanding current theories of violent crime (and re-interpreting those theories based upon actual rigorous case studies of offenders) I propose that critical behavioral markers in fantasy cycle patterns can be elicited from case studies.

Defining Murder (Mass, Serial and Spree)

Unlike the term "murder," the term "mass murder" does not have a single consistent or formal legal definition. For instance, the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines "murder" which includes non-negligent manslaughter as the willful killing of one human being by another. It is difficult to get exact statistics on the prevalence of mass and serial homicide. "Mass killings" or "massacres" are usually defined in academic literature as the killing of four or more victims, by a lone assailant (or a few assailants), usually in a single location, or in several locations in close proximity; the incident only lasts from a few minutes up to several hours (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 8; Fox & Levin, 2005; Holmes & Holmes, 2001). As for "serial murder," the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit's (BSU) definition requires a minimum of three victims, whom the perpetrator may kill "over a period or months or years" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 17). There can be substantial lapses of time (i.e., a cooling off period)

between homicides; and during this time, the killer may maintain the appearance of a more or less ordinary, unassuming life (Fox & Levin, 2005). Thus, the main differences between "serial killing" and "mass killing" lies in the temporal and spatial "relatedness" of the criminal conduct, whereby "relatedness" means how each kind of killer goes about targeting and assaulting victims.

An additional point of clarification is needed here concerning the "spree killer" and "terroristic murders". First the "spree killer" may be confused with a "serial killer;" however, spree killing is a more, spontaneous and frenzied criminal act (Fox & Levin 2005, p. 17; Hickey, 2010, p. 21). The killer launches a chaotic rampage over a matter of days or weeks, wherein most of the activity involves "executing his crimes and evading [imminent capture by] the police" (Fox & Levin 2005, p. 17; Hickey, 2010, p. 21). Spree killers were excluded from this research project, because there is limited analysis on the etiology for such crimes. Technically, while terrorist attacks such as 9/11 and the Oklahoma City Bombings are "mass killings" or "massacres," such events are ideologically or politically motivated attempts at dismantling governmental or economic functioning. Terrorism (i.e., criminal acts of mass violence) also is purposefully left out of this work. The focus of this research is on the antisocial individual—someone who by himself or with a few associates exacts "homicidal revenge" on carefully selected targets, where such killing fulfills a personal need for the killer (see, for example, Dietz, 1986; Levin and Fox, 1985).

Table 1 displays the fundamental differences between mass, serial, and spree murder.

Table 1

Defining Multiple Murder

No legal definition	Minimum # murder victims	Time span	Murder locations
Mass Murder	4*	Minutes to hours	Single to several
Serial Murder	3**	Months to years	Multiple
Spree Murder	2***	Days to weeks	Multiple

Note: *Data from Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 8; Fox & Levin, 2005; Holmes & Holmes, 2001. **Data from Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009; Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 17. ***Date from Fox & Levin 2005, p. 17; Hickey, 2010, p. 21.

Statistical Data on Murder and Multiple Murders

In 2009, 15,241 persons were murdered nationwide, which is a 7.3 percent decrease from the 2008 estimate, a 9.0 percent decrease from the 2005 figure. There were 5.0 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2009, an 8.1 percent decrease from the 2008 rate (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). It should be noted, however, that the FBI statistics do not have any separate classification or statistics for incidents of "mass murder" or "serial murder," nor is there a legal distinction. Whether a perpetrator murders 1 or 10 people, it is for legal definitional purposes counted and categorized as 10 individual counts of murder. The terms mass, serial and spree killers has for the most part been created by academics, researchers and the media for categorization and descriptive purposes. Thus, it is not surprising that it would be difficult to accumulate any reliable international

data on these types of murders. Currently with terroristic murder, ethnic cleansing and civil unrest in various regions of the world, along with no existing legal classifications or even cohesion among academics, researchers or the criminal justice system as to concrete definitions for mass, serial and spree murder—accurate statistics world wide are currently unobtainable. I propose that society does not have any sort of fix on the prevalence of these crimes.

The following statistical data is a composite of leading academics, researchers and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2009 estimates, for these types of crimes Nationally. Using these resources mass murder appears to be a typology of crime that is proportionately on the rise. It is estimated that since 1976, mass killings have occurred at a rate slightly more than 2 every 30 days (Duwe, 2007, p. 16; Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 159). The average number of victims killed per incident is 5.2, making the annual number of mass murder victims, approximately 125 to 140 (Duwe, 2007, p. 17). Recently, statistical evidence indicates that, "mass murders are actually occurring with greater frequency" (Hickey, 2010, p. 9). Eric Hickey (2010) reports that mass murder in the United States now occurs with a frequency of 3 cases every 30 days, raising the death toll to, approximately 187 (p. 9). These figures do not, however, account for the number of victims who are injured during a mass murderer's rampage. Neither does the figure account for so-called inchoate mass killings, where the perpetrator's intent to commit mass slaughter is evident from the circumstances and other evidence, but the death toll simply fell short of the preferred definition to classify an attack as a mass killing.

This escalation in mass murder has a precedent in historical data. Researchers have identified a spike in mass killing incidents during economic downturns (Duwe, 2007, p. 19). This pattern begins with the 1929 stock market crash, during the Depression years (primarily the late 1920s to the late 1930s), and during the "stagflation" period of the 1970s (Duwe, 2007, p. 19). Potentially, and regrettably, given the current U.S. recession, one could expect a pattern of escalating violence to continue.

As for serial murder, researchers estimate that anywhere from 35 to 100 or more serial killers are active in the U.S. each year (Hickey, 2010, p. 278). The total number of victims murdered each year by serial killers is estimated between 120 to180 (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 34). However, determining the number of victims is actually more problematic than accounting for mass murder victims. The full extent of the serial murderer's crimes can only be extrapolated from cases in which the perpetrator is convicted; or where there are no charges brought against the suspected perpetrator, the toll of victims can include only those cases that can be linked with some certainty—including by admission of a perpetrator already incarcerated for other murders (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 32). Such admissions should be viewed with skepticism, though. There is always the possibility that the killer's psychopathic and grandiose nature leads him to make attention-getting false claims (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 32).

Moreover, it is suspected that "as many as 60% of murder cases go without being prosecuted each year," because—for one reason or another—the murder is off the radar of the police and coroners, or prosecutors lack sufficient evidence to

support charges or indictment and a resulting conviction (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 219; Hickey, 2010, p. 9). When considering "unaccounted for missing persons, unidentified dead and misidentified dead," data "suggests that there may be hundreds of uncounted serial murder victims each year in the United States" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 219). Thus, these figures could underestimate or overestimate the actual extent of carnage (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 32).

Main Issue or Problems in Early Intervention and Mitigation

Currently, the response to dealing with these violent perpetrators is reactionary. There is little opportunity, or legal justification, supporting a more proactive approach. For instance, law enforcement's role in investigating crimes and apprehending perpetrators is by nature mostly reactionary. Serial killers tend to be particularly stealthy at avoiding detection. Mass killers simply may be labeled a misfit or "odd duck" but by all accounts appears to be law-abiding. Additionally, there is the problem of "investigatory linkage blindness" (i.e., in the initial stages of an investigation, law enforcement or other public agencies fail to communicate across jurisdictional or subject matter lines) in an effort to co-operatively identify and eliminate threats to public safety.

Moreover, there is little institutional effort promoting early intervention. Even so, such intervention needs to come from figures outside of government or law enforcement. Individuals such as family members, educators, medical professionals and workplace supervisors are better situated to recognize and report someone who appears to be emotionally disturbed and dangerous. Too often, though, family members, educators, mental health professionals and

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workplace managers either miss the signs and symptoms of violent dysfunction in an individual, or may be reluctant to act. Put another way, Vossekuil et al., found that complacency is an unfortunate status. Nonetheless, the clues pointing to a violent, severely emotionally or psychologically disturbed individual are nearly always visible; and therefore, do require serious scrutiny. Legal means to step in to a situation—such as through a guardianship or mental health commitment proceeding—can be timely and burdensome, though. Furthermore, private citizens, who are not as insulated from lawsuits as judicial or police officers, may be dis-incentivized to act, because of the threat of being sued for negligence, malpractice, defamation or the like.

The findings of the official panel appointed by Virginia Governor, Tim Kaine, following the massacre by Seung Hui Cho at Virginia Tech University revealed the sorts of issues raised above. The panel report implied that "linkage blindness" and lack of awareness or immobilization on the family's part prevented the early elimination of Cho as a threat. The panel noted, for instance, that the University's Office of Judicial Affairs, Police Department and Cook Counseling Center failed to exchange information about the mental instability, criminal conduct and involuntary commitment of Cho in the year before his shooting rampage. The University offices blamed this failure on an inaccurate belief that state and Federal health care privacy laws prevented their inter-office communications about Seung Hui Cho (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 2). In addition, the panel found that University offices failed to communicate their concerns to Cho's family (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 3). One can speculate that the

family may have had some success in intervention—such as seeking judicial appointment as Cho's permanent guardians and mandating more long-term mental health treatment. However, the family had little success at meaningful intervention and diversion up to the time of Cho's mass killing.

Limitations, Assumption, Gaps in Research

Research into the causes of mass murder is a nascent area of study (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 450). "Criminological research into the causes of," this type of "multiple murder is truly in its infancy" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 450). "Little more that two decades has passed since the first scholarly publications addressing this phenomenon appeared" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 450). Most of the explanations for homicide are not theories specific to this crime (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19). Instead, such theories are either "general expositions on the cause of crimes ranging from shoplifting and drug use to rape and murder" or inquiries into the origins of the antisocial personality (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19). This approach is insufficient, given that very different behaviors will be rooted in very different motives. In the case of property crimes, white-collar crimes and some lesser violent crimes, the motive is one of material gain (or at least aversion to material want). Thus, theories rooted in socioeconomics or social justice does not adequately explain such brutal and/or repetitive violent crimes as mass and serial killings.

Although a significant body of research into the homicidal personality focuses on early childhood development, there is no longitudinal study to reflect statistically the outcome over time of early developmental difficulties. Such work

is necessary, given that most mass and serial killers do not commit their crimes until well into their adulthood—except for the younger school shooter. What needs further clarification, though, is the ontogenesis of developmental dysfunction. The individual's behavior during those years between childhood and a criminal adulthood (or young adulthood) must be taken into account, in order to better identify critical behavioral markers.

Lastly, "[c]riminology is a "soft science." There are no certainties, theorems or algorithms that tell us when or where violent murders will occur. There are only likelihoods and observations supported by facts about dysfunctional human behavior (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19). And as Fox and Levin observe, there is some skepticism among criminologists who view the study of mass and serial killers as more of a "pop culture" pursuit, rather than a topic of serious academic inquiry (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19). Thus the study of this sub-set of homicides continues to be exploratory, rather than explanatory.

Purpose of this Study

This project, seeks to remedy two identifiable deficits in the current body of research on mass and serial murder. Currently, there are attempts to apply too broadly various theories to explain the genesis of mass and serial murder. First, nearly all researchers readily acknowledge that these crimes are rare, yet the most brutal forms of homicide. Second, research on mass and serial murder has often lacked a theoretical construct uniquely fitting to these types of multiple murders. A comparison and contrast of several cases of mass and serial murder will show how these overlapping influences are precursors to especially violent homicides.

The objective in doing so will bring to light heretofore ignored or misunderstood connections that explain the mass and serial murderer's moral bankruptcy and social dysfunction.

Overview of the Dissertation

The first part of this dissertation explores the conceptual framework from which this project evolved. The goal of this dissertation was to "move beyond . . . the framework of a monolithic explanation and toward an amalgam of . . . theories" that explain incidents of mass and serial homicide (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). The purpose, at a theoretical level, was to compare, contrast and synthesize to the extent possible the varied explanations for the genesis of mass and serial murder. Most notably, this theoretical criticism looks at Hickey's Trauma-Control Model in conjunction with the implications of Athens' constructs of "the self," as derived from his Violentization Theory (i.e., phantom others/phantom communities, the self as soliloquy and dramatic self-change). Other theories were evaluated and rejected as described below.

Structural and process theories were touched upon, but were found largely inapplicable. Given the macro-social and institutional focus to structural and process theories, their connection with the particular subject matter was simply too attenuated. Similarly, biological, psychiatric and neurological theories were considered. But, again, these theories were rejected for a lack of sufficiently valid scientific research. Fantasy is quintessentially intrinsic to the actor; and therefore, the most suited theories are ones, which focus on the individual, the individual's experiences and influences thereon.

Methodological approach. The methodology for this research consists of "ethnographic content analysis," as will be explained more fully in the "Methods" chapter. Data collection and analysis included both documentary and anecdotal evidence. The source materials included artifacts generated by the offenders prior to commission of their crimes (i.e., diaries, manifestos, blogs, drawings, photographs, and videotapes), official findings of governmental review panels, public documents generated by government investigators, witness or family accounts, news reports, and work conducted by other academics. Such work required the researcher to be engrossed in an extensive qualitative data study. The purpose was aimed at uncovering the "relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances" in order to develop a more complete picture of this sub-set of violent offenders (Altheide, 1996, p. 16; citing Berg, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Basically, this research was an exercise in "emergence." New ideas (and a synthesis of existing ideas) were formed by engaging in continual discovery, constant comparison and fluid interpretation. The aim in doing so is to shed further light on accepted theories, scripts, themes and frames of reference (Plummer, 2001). The researcher employed these methods specifically to bring to light a comprehensive understanding of the role fantasy plays in serial and mass murder.

Research questions. This dissertation offers a novel angle of inquiry and proposes a renewed interpretation of current theories to explain the ontogenesis of moral dysfunction as a root cause of mass or serial homicide. Specifically, it is

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proposed that a synthesis of Hickey's *trauma-control theory* and Athens' esoteric

constructs of "self" and "other" offer a more cohesive understanding of the

homicidal personality. The intersection of early derailing influences and

pervasive life losses result in a fragmented concept of self, which the now deeply

unstable individual seeks to validate through violent fantasy and homicidal acts.

   In pursuing this work, several key questions are posed: What is the role of

fantasy and how does fantasy dysfunctionally evolve for mass and serial killers?

Are there specific patterns in sexual fantasy that are peculiar to serial killers

versus mass killers? How does the suicidal person's violent fantasy process

compare in nature and context to the mass killer's violent fantasy? Finally, why

do mass killers seek validation through infamy and media attention? The

analysis, arguments, and findings supporting these four points of inquiry are

elucidated in the following four sub-sections.

The Mass Killers Revenge Fantasy

   The main inquiry about the revenge fantasy focuses on the source of the

killer's anger and why he blames his chosen victims. These perpetrators are

deeply disturbed, having "a long history of real and perceived frustration and

failure, concomitant with a diminishing ability to cope" (Fox and Levin, 1998, p.

438). The individual becomes increasingly isolated and lacking normal social

bonds. When faced with some real or imagined affront to his self-image, the

killer first copes by withdrawing into a fantasy world. Over time, the angry

rumination and delight at vengeance feeds upon itself and escalates in the killer's

mind.

A constellation of stressors, along with a "blameful mind-set" are precipitants to revenge murders (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439). "[T]he perpetrator's objective is to punish all those whom he holds responsible, directly or indirectly, for his life's failures (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 167). Angry rumination is central to alleviating pain or filling some of the void in the perpetrator's life—temporarily giving him/her a diversion. The "second world" of fantasy becomes a more forgiving and comfortable place for the killer, an escape where he can re-gain control of his identity.

For example, a killer whose identity is tied to his job or material wealth and who loses that anchor, may target victims in the workplace or financial institutions. In some cases, financial ruin is a motivating factor in family annihilation, where the killer altruistically (in the killers mind) "saves" his family from hardship. Other mass killers fantasize about getting even with specific acquaintances. For instance, retribution for bullying, or reclaiming a sense of pride and masculinity due to bullying, are often motives in school shootings. Retribution may be directed at proxy victims, strangers unknown to the killer. For instance, the outcast with a failed romantic life, or loner with strong misogynistic tendencies, may target women. A perpetrator with a grievance against the government of some other institution may target individuals representative of the entity that brought about the imagined injustice— government workers, financial services employees or bankers or the like. These victims become scapegoats for the killer's feelings of anger, rejection, indignation

and worthlessness. Of course, there can be "some degree of overlap" here with the mass murder targeting victims in multiple settings (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 19).

Sadistic, sexually deviant and misogynistic fantasies in serial and mass killers. A subset of serial killers (and some mass killers) fixate and act on sadistic sexual fantasies, or otherwise engage in conduct that is beyond the outer limits of normal human sexual behavior. Psychosexual deviancy was a prime motivator for notorious serial killers (e.g., Ted Bundy, Gary Ridgeway, Jeffery Dahmer). In one instance, psychosexual issues were known to be a motivating factor for the "hybrid" mass killer Richard Speck.

As for psychosexual issues exhibited by mass killers, their fantasy themes tend to revolve around obsessively misogynistic beliefs or anger over rejection by women, rather than pathological sadism. For instance, George Hennard exhibited an almost delusional hatred of women in general, and George Sodini killed representative female victims because of his admittedly abject failures with dating and intimacy.

Sadistic serial killers tend to have particularly detailed and elaborate fantasies—"scripts of violence," rich with themes of abuse, control and dominance (Skrapec, 1996). Killing is a means of sexual arousal and gratification for this offender. He is a sexual psychopath motivated by themes of absolute power over another human being. The few mass killers who have a sexual motivation for their crimes likewise derive pleasure from fantasies of sexual violence, control and domination (Proulx et al., 2007).

The mass killer, though, is more likely to have generalized feelings of undue superiority over, or unrealistic anger or hatred toward, representative female victims. Sexual sadism, deviancy and sexual gratification from violence are not the primary motivations for the mass killer. There is an element of selfish, misplaced anger and blame in this killer's fantasy (i.e. "Women are worthless," or "If I can't have intimacy then I will deny it for them (women) and those who care about them").

Suicidal-homicidal ideation in mass killer's. Suicide (murder-suicide) is an element in roughly 50% of all mass killings. However, most suicidal persons never attempt to harm, or actually harm, anyone else (Fox & Levin, 1998). Suicidal individuals—who tend to suffer from major depression accompanied by or pervasive stressors—see themselves as worthless and blame themselves for their perceived failures in life (Fox & Levin, 1998). Their aggression is "intro-punitive;" that is, they turn their anger inward (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439; Henry & Short, 1954).

By contrast, the suicidal mass killer never sees himself as at fault. The mass killer externalizes his anger and disappointment, blaming others for the killer's own real or perceived losses (Fox & Levin, 1998; Henry & Short 1954). This individual is "extra-punitive."

Just as the planning (fantasy) stage of suicide is temporarily an emotional regulator or an escape from reality for an individual suffering from mental health issues, so is the planning (fantasy) stage cathartic for the of mass murderer. Fantasies of one's own death serve as a temporary emotional regulator for the

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suicidal individual. But, ultimately this fantasy rehearsal propels the person towards actualizing suicide. Similarly, fantasies of committing murder-suicide are an emotional regulator for the mass killer. Psychologists and psychiatrists can identify such lethal combinations, provided that the potentially suicidal mass killer is in therapy. A statistical model shows that when thoughts of anger and revenge are outwardly expressed concomitantly with depression and suicidal ideation, there is a significant likelihood that the perpetrator will harm himself and others unless swift intervention is taken (Selby et al. 2007).

The mass killer's search for validation through infamy and media attention. When a killer's fantasy script involves self-aggrandizing or attention-seeking themes, a primary motivator is pleasure derived from imagined infamy. The killer constructs a fantasy image, which he perversely seeks to validate through attention-getting violence. He imagines himself as a folk-hero or anti-hero, in order to get back at a society deserving of his wrath. The killer (mostly) delights in thinking about public shock, horror and negative judgment for him and his crimes, although he may intellectually acknowledge that he should feel guilt and remorse for the pain and devastation his family will experience. This fantasy script also typically involves an obsession with the media's portrayal of events and whether the murders will be reported extensively in the media. Here one sees a significant element of narcissism created to mask the killer's true feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Infamy—finally getting attention, even negative attention—validates a dissonant, fragmented false identity, which others failed to acknowledge.

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Conclusion and Projects Significant Contribution to the Literature

This project uses the key theories from leading criminologists, but specifically, the direction taken examines an angle previously not fully explored—the role of fantasy in mass and serial killing. All-consuming for the killer, his distorted perceptions become ingrained. Each type of fantasy script is distinct and is shaped in the context of the particular offender's: destabilizing life events, real or perceived losses and interpretation of the four common fantasy themes. The determinant here, of course, also comes from the killer's peculiar interpretation of—and means chosen—to validate an unrealistic fragmented concept of self. The resulting dissonance prompts the killer's retreat into a fantasy world and ultimately acts thereon. It is further proposed that these findings may lead to future inquiry into: 1) methods for early intervention and diversion of an at-risk population; and 2) where the foregoing is impractical, better methods of detecting, mitigating the harm caused by and quickly apprehending these particularly violent offenders.

Chapter 2

Theories on the Genesis of Mass and Serial Homicide

Scholars have looked to biological, psychological, and sociological variables in an attempt to explain the motivation and causation for mass and serial killing. "Most of the criminological explanations of homicide are not theories specific to homicide" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19). These theories are general expositions on the cause of crimes ranging from shoplifting and drug use to rape and murder" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19).

It is believed that the answer to "what causes violence and aggression?" lies in a combination of variables experienced in "the development of the individual from birth to adulthood," (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 11). Serial and mass murderers, "like all human beings, are the product of their heredity, their upbringing, and the choices they make throughout development" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 11). "In addition to these factors, individuals have the ability to choose to engage in certain behaviors" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 11). By examining the life experiences, biological, psychological and environmental factors presented in the case studies of violent murderers, it is possible to form a better understanding of the motivations and causes underlying brutal criminal conduct.

However, the study of these types of murders continues to be exploratory, rather than explanatory. Moreover, "[c]riminology is a "soft" science; there are no certainties, but only likelihoods" and observations supported by facts (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 19).

This project examines the possible linkages between general theories of criminology and an understanding of two distinct and particularly brutal forms of violence. These theories will then be considered and compared for their relevancy in explaining the motives and causes underlying both mass homicide and serial homicide.

When analyzing the theories of homicide it must be emphasized that there is no single identifiable cause or factor that leads to the development of a serial or mass killer. Rather, there are a multitude of factors that contribute to their development. The most significant factor is the killer's personal decision in choosing to pursue their crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).

Unlike the term "murder," the terms "serial murder" and "mass murder" do not have a consistent, formal legal definition, however for the purpose of this research we will apply the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) definitions for both serial and mass murder. The FBI defines serial murder as a minimum of three victims, whom the perpetrator may kill over a period or months or years (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 8). There can be long time lapses (i.e., a cooling off period) between homicides; and during this time, the killer may maintain a more or less ordinary, unassuming life (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 17).

Mass killings or massacres according to the FBI's definition, are the killing of four or more victims, by a lone assailant (or a few assailants), usually in a single location, or in several locations in close proximity; the incident lasts anywhere from a few minutes up to several hours (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p.

8). Thus, the main difference between serial and mass killing is the "cooling off period" or time laps between homicides.

   The number of murders in the United States is currently estimated at about 15,241 annually (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). It is believed that mass murder in the United States occurs with a frequency of 3 cases every 30 days (Hickey, 2010, p. 9). The average number of victims killed per incident is 5.2, making the annual number of mass murder victims, approximately 187 (Duwe, 2007, p. 17). Serial murder is estimated to comprise only 1% of all the murders in the United States annually (Hickey, 2010) but the heinous nature of such crimes, when discovered, gets significant publicity.

Biological Causes of Violence

   Research on biological or biochemical basis for aggressive behavior is still in its infancy (Hickey, 2010, p. 55). Today, however, there is tremendous focus on seeking connections between violent behavior and brain chemistry, genetics, hormones, diet, medications and environmental toxins (Hickey, 2010, p. 55). Some researchers contend it may be probable that certain individuals are predestined by nature toward violence, regardless of positive environmental influences (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21). However, biochemical factors alone cannot explain violent behavior; and it is unlikely that social influences in shaping behavior will be completely discounted. When viewed as one part of a multi-variate analysis, biochemical factors "seem, however, to increasingly provide greater insights" into criminal behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 55).

Chemical Effects on the Brain

Hall, Bernat, and Patrick, (2007) have found that aggressive individuals have cognitive difficulty in processing and identifying inappropriate behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 55). Many of the subjects displayed antisocial personality traits and were "prone to substance abuse"—the latter coming into question as both a cause and effect of violent predisposition (Hickey, 2010, p. 55).

Additionally, "[p]sychiatric drugs widely prescribed today to treat depression and attention deficit disorder (ADD)," which aid millions of patients in leading productive lives, are suspected of having a disinhibitory or paradoxical effect on some mass killers (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21).

For instance, several mass shooters were on various psychotropic drugs such as, Ritalin, Prozac and Luvox at the time of their assaults (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21). At the time of the Standard Graveure shootings in 1989, Joseph Wesbecker was on disability leave and taking psychotropic medications (Fox & Levin, 2005). Kip Kinkel, a 14-year-old boy from Springfield, Oregon, was taking both Ritalin and Prozac, "when he killed his parents" and then went to his high school where he killed two students and left 22 others wounded (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21). Dillon Klebold (17-years-old)—was taking Luvox and undergoing treatment for an anxiety disorder when he and Eric Harris (18-years-old) killed 15 people, including themselves and injured 23 at Columbine (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 123; Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008; Hickey, 2010, p. 10).

There are several possibilities to consider here, for which there is scant evidence: whether the medication was ineffective to counteract the thoughts and

acts of an individual spiraling towards destructiveness; whether the medication had a disinhibitory, facilitating effect prompting violent thoughts and behavior; or whether the medication might have had some ameliorative effect, though being too little too late. The problem with attributing chemical causality to mass homicide is that most of these school shooters displayed classic symptoms of attentional deficit, and mood or anxiety disorders. Thus, their course of psychiatric treatment would be indicated by medical standards and associated with favorable outcomes.

Hormonal imbalances. Naturally occurring hormones are another area of interest in the exploration of possible chemical precursors to violence. High levels of the male sex hormone testosterone have been associated with "belligerent behavior" (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 62). Testosterone has been linked to violent crime, as it is often found at higher levels in physically aggressive males. But exactly how testosterone makes a person more likely to be aggressive has yet to be proven. Moreover, not everyone with above-normal or high levels of testosterone engages in violence or criminal conduct (Hickey, 2010, p. 55). Therefore, this biomarker alone offers insufficient clues to the roots of violent behavior.

Other hormones, such as cortisol, are also being investigated for linkages to aggression. Low cortisol levels are associated with " fearlessness and lack of anxiety." In individuals with normal cortisol levels, there is an appropriate level of inhibition. But with significant cortisol deficiencies, there is less of an (or no) inhibitory behavioral mechanism (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 62).

In a four-year longitudinal study of antisocial boys, researchers at the University of Chicago Medical School" identified a possible biological connection to violent behavior (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21; McBurnett, Lahey, Rauthouz, & Loeber, 2000, pp. 21-27). Specifically, those "boys with histories of starting fights, steeling, carrying weapons, and engaging in forced sexual acts show[ed] lower-than-expected levels of the stress hormone cortisol . . . in their saliva" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21; McBurnett et al., 2000). These boys all were the subject of higher reported rates of misconduct and were identified by their peers as the meanest in their class" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 21; McBurnett et al. 2000).

Additionally, low levels of serotonin (a neurochemical implicated in depression and other anxiety disorders) have been linked with increased impulsiveness and aggression (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 62). Studies suggest that increasing serotonin levels in animals affects brain functioning and actually lowers aggressive behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 56). But evidence involving human patients—where individuals are treated with various psychotropic drugs— indicates the possibility of a paradoxical effect, as described above.

Genetics. Since the 1960s, considerable attention has been given to genetic studies "attempting to link an abnormal number of Y chromosomes (XYY) in men to violent behavior" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 22; Hickey, 2010, p. 54). This extra chromosome is often referred to as the "super male chromosome" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 22; Hickey, 2010, p. 54). Serial killer Richard Speck who in 1966 committed a brutal sexually motivated mass killing of eight

student nurses in their Chicago dormitory, was an XYY male (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008). This fact was widely reported in the media at the time and touted as the reason Speck was prone to extreme violence. But even today, research in this area is still inconclusive (Hickey, 2010, p. 54). It is actually more likely that the "physical characteristics caused by this [genetic] abnormality" negatively influence one's socialization (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 22). The condition can grossly alter a man's physical features, sometimes to the extent that positive social interaction becomes difficult for the individual, due to his difference in appearance (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008).

 Despite the lack of conclusive evidence derived from chromosomal studies, they are important. It has been proven statistically that males commit more violent crimes and are more prone to violence than women (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008). Given this fact, it is more plausible that chromosomal differences between men and women do influence social behavior. This is a thorny area for researchers, as any theories of biological essentialism do not address the significance of a gendered socialization process (i.e., socially-approved behavior and roles for each gender). The argument pointing to genetic causes of violence remains "premature" (Hickey, 2010, p. 55).

Effects of diets and environmental conditions with biological chemistry. Research now supports a variety of biochemical factors, "such as allergies, environmental conditions and diet," that may be connected to criminal behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 54). There also seems to be a connection to low blood sugar and a functioning of the brain that correlates "to antisocial behavior, including

homicide and habitual violence" (Hickey, 2010, p. 54; Hill & Sargent, 1943; Podolsky, 1964; Virkkunen, 1886). And newer research is exploring ecosystem contaminants, "such as copper and lead, food additives such as artificial dyes and colors, and radiation from artificial lighting, television sets, and computer screens—that may negatively influence behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 54; Ott, 1984).

There are several proposed natural means to regulate mood and behavior. Ketogenic or "elimination diets," have been shown to reduce "hyperactivity-related symptoms" and violent outbursts (Hickey, 2010, p. 54). The theory is that consumption of dietary fatty acids has a regulatory effect on brain chemistry. Similarly, nutritional research supports a connection between low blood sugar and a functioning of the brain that correlates "to antisocial behavior, including homicide and habitual violence" (Hickey, 2010, p. 54; Hill & Sargent, 1943; Podolsky, 1964; Virkkunen, 1886). Here, too, dietary adjustments or supplementation with vitamins and minerals is advocated to reduce anti-social behavior.

Notwithstanding the importance of exploring these hypotheses, nothing concerning any of the aforementioned hypotheses clearly points to a biological cause for violent behavior. Moreover, these representative studies have been criticized for methodological flaws in sampling, sample controls, and the difficulty in isolating the multiple factors that can impact behavior. Scientists have brought to light the intricate balance of biological, social and psychological factors that influence behavior (Benton, 2007, pp. 752-774; Hickey, 2010, p. 54).

Psychological Causes of Violence

Neurobiological research focuses on three distinct categories of cognitive dysfunction: mental illness, mental disorders and neurological disorders and questions how these dysfunctions might cause violent, aggressive symptoms. While still nascent, this area of research is growing in importance (Hickey, 2010, p. 56).

Mental illness versus mental disorders. Mental illness is a "degenerative state that may possibly be slowed or cured with appropriate medical and psychiatric intervention (Hickey, 2010, p. 61). There is an "organic" component to mental illness. Examples of mental illness include schizophrenia or other diseases that affect cognition, mood and occupational function.

By contrast, mental disorders are "states of mind that are neither degenerative nor curable" (Hickey, 2010, p. 61). Mental disorders are dysfunctions in mood and thought patterns, which "may remain constant or simply controlled by medication" (Hickey, 2010, p. 61). Examples of mental disorders include depression, neuroticism and (some forms of) paranoia. Neuroticism, or anxiety disorder, is a less severe mental disorder. The condition can be correlated with various personality disorders (discussed infra) (Hickey, 1997). Paranoia is the unrealistic belief that one is being endangered, threatened or plotted against. Paranoia can be symptomatic of many neuropsychiatric illnesses, mental disorders or biological conditions, including: schizophrenia, senility and seizures or brain damage, respectively (Lewis, 1998).

Although serial killers are often depicted in popular media as suffering from

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mental disorders, "most serial killers do not suffer from profound mental disorders" (Fox & Levin, 1998). However, some serial killers may experience dissociation (splitting), psychosis, neurosis and paranoia, these episodes typically are transient and involve some sort of "break with reality during which the killer may exhibit dangerous or violent behavior" (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 456). Notwithstanding, serial killers "are neither delusional nor confused. These individuals understand the "difference between right and wrong, and know the nature and quality of their criminal" conduct, as frequently exhibited by their efforts to avoid detection (Fox and Levin, 1998, p. 419). In short, the serial killer, far from being legally insane, is cold and calculating, as exhibited by the repetitive brutality and efforts to avoid detection.

On the other hand, most mass killers do have a history of mental illness or mental disorders (Hickey, 2010). In a study done by Souza (2002), she found that "the most likely diagnosis of mass murderers prior to their killings were schizophrenia (paranoid type), bipolar, and/or severe depression" (Hickey, 2010, p. 59). Mass murderers frequently have a history of childhood trauma and violent behavior, but most do not have any significant history of institutionalization" (Hickey, 2010, p. 59; Souza, 2002). Moreover, most mass killers were found to have had endured the stress of several stressful major life events that precipitated the murders (Hickey, 2010, p. 59; Souza, 2002, pp. 36-37).

Personality disorders. Personality disorders are conditions distinct from mental illness or mental disorders. Personality disorders are a defect of character or way of relating in the world, rather than a mood disorder (Fox & Levin, 1998,

p. 420). "Personality disorders are insidious," and difficult to detect (Castle &
Hensley, 2002, p. 457; Wishnie, 1977). The key feature of several personality
disorders is an individual's lack of empathy for others, as seen in the extremes of
malignant narcissism and sociopathy—and therein lies the danger for others.

Individuals with personality disorders typically do not show any overt
symptoms (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 457). The condition usually presents
simply as an element of one's character (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 457;
Wishnie, 1977).

According to most criminologists, the vast majority of serial killers are
psychopaths or sociopaths. "The term psychopath is used interchangeably with
the term sociopath" (Hickey, 2005, p. 75). Sociopaths exhibit shallow or
inappropriate emotions, often masked initially by superficial charm, self-
centeredness, pathological lying and ease in manipulating and they lack any sense
of remorse, guilt or empathy toward others (Castle & Hensley, 2002). The
sociopath is a shell of a person who is incapable of accepting responsibility for his
or her actions (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 458). Moreover, the psychopath's
lifestyle is "parasitic." He or she is prone to boredom and impulsivity; has poor
behavioral controls; lacks long-term personal or career goals; and exhibits a
pattern of irresponsibility, juvenile delinquency, promiscuous sexual behavior,
unstable, short-term marriages, and criminal versatility (Castle & Hensley, 2002,
p. 458).

A note on terminology is needed for clarification. The DSM IV (Diagnostic
and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition), the preeminent

diagnostic tool for psychiatrists and psychologists, has replaced the terms

"psychopath" or "sociopath" with the term "antisocial personality disorder"

(Castle & Hensley, 2002). For purposes of this paper, the non-technical terms

psychopath or sociopath will be used interchangeably. Additionally, it should be

noted there are proposed sweeping changes to the updated DSM V (Diagnostic

and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition). Several personality

disorders will be entirely removed from the latest edition and diagnostic criteria or

methodologies will be revised.

Although most serial killers are psychopaths, or at least exhibit psychopathic

characteristics, the majority of criminal psychopaths actually are nonviolent

(Hickey, 2010, p. 75). In fact, "the majority of criminal psychopaths operate as

white-collar criminals," such as the American stock broker Bernie Madoff. He

carried off the largest Ponzi scheme in history by defrauding thousands of

investors out of billions of dollars (Hickey, 2020, p. 75). "Diagnosed psychopaths

make up only 10% of the criminal population" (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p.

61).

When this pathology is observed in serial killers, their condition tends to

reflect a higher degree of anger, hostility, frustration, low self-esteem, and

feelings of inadequacy as compared with other sociopaths (Hickey, 2010). It is

further suspected that many serial killers "possess powerful psychological

facilitators for neutralizing their guilt" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 421). They are

able to compartmentalize "their attitudes towards people" (Fox & Levin, 1998,

421). Human beings either are: 1) "those they care about and treat with decency,"

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or 2) "those with whom they have no relationship and therefore can victimize with total disregard for their feelings of remorse" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 421). Often, the psychopath chooses his victims from transient or disposed populations—prostitutes, drug users, hitch hikers—and in some cases, abducted children. The violent psychopath is careful to choose his victims well outside of his own circle of acquaintances (Fox & Levin, 1998).

Neurological impairment. Because physical abuse is a "common theme in the childhoods of serial killers," many "scientists are concerned about the role of brain injury in subsequent violent behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 54). It is established "that severe head traumas" particularly affecting the limbic region of the brain can cause disastrous "effects on behavior, such as inducing violent outbursts, learning disabilities, and epilepsy (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 110).

Several serial killers were known to have suffered extensive head traumas (Fox & Levin, 2005). The two best-known cases involved Henry Lee Lucas (convicted of 10 murders) who reportedly was incessantly "beaten by his mother with pieces of lumber and broom handles" and Bobby Joe Long (convicted of 9 murders) suffered three massive blows to his head when he fell off a swing at age five and was knocked unconscious, a concussion at age six when he fell off a bike, followed by a fall from a horse a few months later (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 111; Hickey, 2010). While head trauma alone is not a direct cause of violent behavior, the correlation and impact cannot be entirely ruled out (Hickey, 2010, p. 54).

The situation for mass killers is slightly different, in that head trauma is a less likely explanation for their behavior. In rare cases, though, some underlying brain dysfunctions may be the precipitant for mass murder (Fox & Levin, 1998). These biological factors could include head traumas, epilepsy, and tumors. However, it is "unclear as to the extent brain dysfunctions are connected to incidents of mass murder" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441). Mass murder is a "crime that tends to be methodical rather than [spontaneously] episodic" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441).

Structural / Cultural Theories of Homicide

There are three main sub-theories to this approach to understanding crime: Socioeconomic theory, Disorganization theory, and Strain theory. These theories explore societal deficiencies rather than the predilection or shortcomings of individuals (Brookman, 2005). Structural theories address the social conditions that might induce a person to commit crimes (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003). But this approach ignores the questions of free agency and choice in individual behavior.

Socioeconomic theory. The impact of economic deprivation on crime may be viewed from two perspectives: "absolute" or "relative" deprivation (Brookman, 2005, p. 102). Absolute deprivation examines extreme poverty in which basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing are not met. Relative deprivation looks at income inequality (and implicitly, resource inequality) based on racial and ethnic differences (Brookman, 2005). Intense desperation in the pursuit of basic life needs can lead people to choose criminal means to survive. But most theorists contend "it is poverty relative to observed wealth," not abject poverty, which

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motivates crime (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 65). Some "offenders—as a result of their racial, ethnic, or subcultural standing—are blocked in various ways, or perceive themselves as being blocked, from achieving the "American Dream" (Hickey, 2010, p. 87). Other offenders, particularly white-collar criminals, are simply motivated by greed. In either case, the pursuit of financial or material success via a life of crime becomes an accepted option (Hickey, 2010). This rationale, however, better explains property or economic crimes and some forms of violent crimes, other than serial or mass killing.

A few exceptions where socioeconomic structural theories might apply are with female serial killers. Although women account for only 14.2% of serial killers, approximately 26% of these perpetrators are motivated to kill their husbands or significant others for financial gain (Hickey, 2010, p. 267).

There are even fewer instances where mass killers kill for financial gain. But, one notable exception involved day trader Mark Barton. There was considerable circumstantial evidence linking him to the 1993 murders of his first wife and her mother (Fox & Levin, 2005; Ramsland, 2005). Barton collected a substantial sum of money from his wife's life insurance policy, freeing him financially and literally to be with his mistress (Ramsland, 2005). She later became Barton's second wife—who he killed before killing nine others in a rampage at the offices of two Atlanta, Georgia, investment brokerage companies (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010). Assuming Barton was responsible for the 1993 murders of his first wife and stepmother, it appears to be a crime motivated by financial gain. By contrast, financial distress was at the root of Barton's 1999 rampage.

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Rarely is financial gain a motivator for mass murder. This particular crime is one of disillusion and revenge, as reflected in the killer's distorted psychological, emotional and social functioning.

Social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory also looks to factors external to the individual to explain the genesis of crime. The principle of social disorganization theory is that "rapid social change" in a community weakens "social controls" and thereby leads to an increase in crime (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 69). The particular factors important to social disorganization theory are: the degree of economic deprivation (relative or absolute) within a community, population heterogeneity and the degree of transience or mobility of a community's residents (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 29). Accordingly, crime will occur in neighborhoods riddled with both infrastructural and social decay and little social cohesion.

An example of social disorganization in action would be former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's "broken window policy." The city focused on ridding neighborhoods of signs of decay such as broken windows, graffiti tags, etc. and had police step up enforcement of crimes like loitering. Giuliani's approach to cleaning up neighborhoods and proactive policing worked over time to reverse lawlessness and disorder, although his methods were criticized by civil rights activists for heavy-handedness (Bernstein, 2010).

Social disorganization theory is essentially an ecological theory to explain the genesis of crime and a blueprint to help authorities understand ways to stem criminal conduct within communities. While this theory may explain the

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common existence of extreme violence and homicide in particular locations—mainly socially broken and impoverished areas—it fails to explain "murder committed by middle- and upper-class offenders," such as the typical mass or serial killers (Fox, Levin, &Quinet, 2005, p. 24).

 Strain theory. Strain theory has a two-fold approach. The first approach is structural, in that researchers examine how general social phenomena and organization influence individual behavior. For example, the structural strain theorist looks to inherent social inequality to explain how social bias might influence a person's negative perception about his or her means and opportunities. The second approach is more or less inductive, examining the unique stressors and life experiences that motivate individuals to commit crimes.

 For example, the economic and tax policies of the U.S. government over the past 25 years or more—which encouraged heavily leveraged individual consumption coupled with regressive tax policies and declining real wages for workers—are at least partially responsible for the widening "income gap between the haves and the have-nots," "resulting in a shrinking middle class" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 27). In simpler terms, the "American Dream" of upward social mobility—going to college, landing a decent-paying job and affording a single-family home in a safe neighborhood is increasingly elusive for a significant percentage of Americans.

 According to sociologist, Robert K. Merton, extreme frustration, distress, and strain caused by the dissonance between an individual's abject reality and his or her ingrained cultural values of upward mobility will build. When a person's

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aspirations are blocked by systemic or societal factors and individual deficits, it is not surprising that some may, as Merton puts it, "innovate." Criminal conduct for financial gain becomes an accepted means to an end (Merton, 1938). For individuals with an education and somewhat higher socioeconomic status, some forms of crime motivated by financial achievement or attainment might include white-collar crimes and fraud. But for individuals "lacking education and economic resources—street crime such as gang activity, "drug dealing, property offenses, and violence" maybe their form of innovation (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 28).

Robert Agnew's recent adaptation, general strain theory (GST), criminal violence results from strain and from unregulated emotional responses directed inwardly, such as "frustration, anger, disappointment, fear," or untreated psychological conditions such as severe depression "that originates in destructive social ties" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 26). Agnew lists four basic types of experiences that can induce strain: "a) the presence of negative stimuli (e.g., child abuse, peer rejection, school failure, or physical punishment); b) the removal of positive stimuli (e.g. death of a loved one, parents' divorce, or residential mobility); c) perception of inequality (e.g., peers who make more money or get better grades because they have "connections"); d) failure to achieve desired goals (e.g., missing out on success because of a lack of educational opportunities)" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 32). The critical connection is that between frustration (strain) and the impetus for aggression.

Agnew contends that these factors apply, more significantly than economic deprivation, in assessing the roots of violent crime (Agnew, 1992). And all four are common denominators repeatedly identified in case studies of mass killers. Integral to GST theory and its application to mass killers is that this type of strain must, "be accompanied by the emotion of anger and by the inability to cope with or adapt to that anger in order to generate sufficient motivations for committing crime" (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 67). Additionally, the killer must see violence as a viable "solution to the experience of strain" (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 67).

For mass and serial killers lack of status, thwarted aspirations and social exclusion may spur feelings of "deprivation and frustration" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 29). Mass killers often commit massacres at their places of employment over "disputes" related to "a firing, lay off, warning or losing out on a promotion or reward" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 134). A recent example of this is the work place shooting that took place at the University of Alabama, in Huntsville. On February 12th 2010, Dr. Amy Bishop (45-years-old), killed three professors and wounded three others during the course of a standard Biology Department faculty meeting (Dewan, Saul, & Zezima, *The New York Times*, February 21, 2010; Reeves & Bluestein, *The Boston Globe*, February 16, 2010). Evidence suggests that Bishop was enraged at members of the Biology Department over a tenure denial. Whether this frustration leads to "murder— depends at least to some extent on an individual's standards of comparison" in terms of financial or occupational prestige (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 30).

Social Process Theory

   Social process theory is an umbrella term for three related, yet distinct, models: Social Learning, Neutralization, Control, and Labeling. Generally, theorists ascribing to one or more of these schools of thought view "criminal behavior as a function of a socialization process" (Hickey, 2010, p. 89). Crime is a response to learned "socio-psychological interactions by the offender with institutions and social organizations" (Hickey, 2010, p. 89). Examples of such negative interactions or influences are: "peer pressure, family problems, poor school performance, legal entanglements," employment issues, etc. (Hickey, 2010, p. 89). Most social process theorists acknowledge significant influence of socio-psychological bonds, observing "that anyone regardless of race or socioeconomic status has a potential for criminal behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 89).

   Social learning theory. Social learning theory suggests that "people's experiences" along with their "perceptions and beliefs," form their knowledge, habits, and actions (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 59). In other words, people learn by modeling the behavior of others.

   Social learning theory examines an individual's past experience—paying particular attention to their childhood developmental years—in search of clues to explain "aggressive behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 90). The central theme of this theory is the connection between childhood victimization, (which may not necessarily include observing violent acts perpetrated onto someone else) and the child's future criminal behavior (Hickey 2010).

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Differential association theory and differential reinforcement. Edwin H. Sutherland (1947) proposed a differential association theory that asserts that the strongest, most critical influences are experienced during adolescence. This theory states that an individual learns criminal behavior through "(a) techniques of committing crimes and (b) motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes" that go against law-abiding actions (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 664). According to Sutherland, the teenager's patterns of behavior and outlook are set by imitating the examples of others in the "most intimate" social circles, such as "peers, family, and friends" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 30). Today, many researchers acknowledge a greater variety of influential sources, including intimate associations with peers, family, and friends as well as reach to other groups, gangs, the media, television, video games, etc. (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 34).

Ronald L. Akers and Robert Burgess expanded Sutherland's differential association theory in the late 1960s. According to this theory, "Deviant behavior can be expected to the extent that it has been differentially reinforced over alternative behavior...and is defined as desirable or justified" (Akers, 2000 p. 206). In his article, The Application of Learning Theory to Serial Murder, Robert Hale (1993) combines frustration theory with Akers' concepts of differential association and deviancy. Hale sees the learning of violent behavior as being reinforced through rewards and punishments (Hale, 1993). Hale points out that most children experience both rewarding/uplifting and punishing/humiliating experiences growing up (Hale, 1993). Typically, children who have experienced

rewards (i.e., positive reinforcement in response to their choices or behaviors) are able to discriminate between positive and negative stimuli; and therefore, the children more or less accurately anticipate the possibility of reward versus punishment. Most children, then, learn to choose behavior that produces the reward (Castle & Hensley, 2002).

By contrast though, violent criminals go through a different process during childhood. Having lived through so few rewarding experiences, the damaged child—unlike a normally adjusted person—cannot distinguish between a rewarding versus a non-rewarding outcome (Castle & Hensley, 2002; Hale, 1993).

Put another way, the inaccurate assessments of reward versus punishment learned during childhood become defectively conditioned responses (Castle & Hensley, 2002). The result is an individual with a frustrated anticipatory response, as the individual cannot correctly filter signals of reward or punishment (Castle & Hensley, 2002).

Some killers may release frustration and aggression on the originally punitive individuals (i.e., family or other close associates). In a series of prison interviews conducted with a serial killer, researchers Holmes and Holmes (2010) found that the subject's history indicated early learning deficiencies, including frustrated anticipatory reward/punishment signaling. Additionally, the killer recounted traumas early in life, having been a victim of a verbally and emotionally abusive father (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 67). He further admitted to particularly negative feelings toward his mother, because he blamed her for failing to

intervene (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 67). He acknowledged that "[h]is future victims all physically reminded him of his mother" (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 67). For some killers, these early traumas become "repressed and later [are] released on others" (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 67).

Not all violence can be attributed to transference. Hale contends, "transference occurs only if killers recognize and internalize the [early childhood] humiliation as a motive for the murders" (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 462). Thus, some victims may symbolize some value for the killer, not all victims resemble someone from the killer's past" (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 462).

"Learned social aggression" may be a slow developmental process. As Hickey surmises, "in some cases [the deviancy] may not manifest itself for several years" (Hickey, 2010, p. 90). This evidence of delayed manifestation is seen in the mass killer. When the killer becomes psychologically overburdened, he or she will act aggressively and will take revenge for early experiences on readily available victims. Seung-Hui Cho, 23, the senior at Virginia Tech University who killed 32 people, injured 17 others, and then committed suicide may have been motivated by misplaced anger. Research indicates that Cho's enemies might not have been college students at Virginia Tech, but rather childhood bullies who tormented him years prior (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1240). The college students, however, were easily assessable and may have served as stand-in victims to release his rage (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1240).

Neutralization theory. In their studies on "delinquent youths becoming criminals," Sykes and Matza (1957) built upon Sutherland's differential

association theory, by looking at neutralization techniques that criminals use to justify their behavior (Hickey, 2010). Sykes and Matza maintain that much juvenile delinquency is based upon justification (Alverez & Bachman, 2003). Neutralization theory holds that people learn the values, attitudes, and techniques of criminal behavior through an "oppositional subculture," which is "a system of values that represents an inversion of the values held by respectable, law-abiding society" (Agnew, 1994, p. 555; Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 664).

Sykes and Matza (1957) argue that most criminals are not continuously involved in crime (Hickey, 2010). They drift from one behavior to another, sometimes deviant, sometimes conventional (Hickey, 2010). Sykes and Matza further state that juvenile criminals—at least in-part—are "committed to the dominant social order in that he frequently exhibits guilt or shame when he violates its" rules (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 666). Therefore, the juvenile uses enabling excuses to drift in and out of criminal activity.

Under Sykes and Matza's theory, the five neutralization techniques include: (1) Denial of responsibility (it was not my fault); (2) Denial of injury (no harm was done); (3) Denial of victim (they had it coming); (4) Condemnation of the condemners (society is to blame); and 5) Appeal to higher loyalties (I did it for them) (Hickey, 2010, pp. 91-92; Sykes & Matza, 1957, pp. 667-669). Robert Agnew (1994) found these techniques similarly to be used by violent criminals to justify murder (Alverez & Bachman, 2003).

Serial and mass murderers often justify their acts by denying the victim (they had it coming) (Alverez & Bachman, 2003; Hickey, 2010). A serial killer might

say 'no one will miss her, she was a no good prostitute, drug addict or run-a-way youth.' The serial killer is "viewing innocent people as 'worthless and expendable'" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 68).

A school shooter might convince himself that killing kids who bullied him or popular kids who ignored him is justifiable. The workplace killer will believe it is reasonable to slay one's boss and other employees for being "unjustly" disciplined or fired. Some serial killers and mass killers condemn all women and justify killing them, simply because the perpetrator himself feels a lack of acceptance by females. The family annihilator appeals to a higher authority ("I did it for their own good") to prevent social embarrassment or financial suffering.

Many serial killers are known to "dehumanize the victim" before "inflicting harm" (Hickey, 2010, p. 92). Dehumanization is a psychological process that places the victim in a "subhuman category" that effectively permits killing without guilt (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 68). They deliberately limit personal knowledge of their victims, such as the victim's name, identity or feelings, as it is easier psychologically to think of them as an object and not another human being (Hickey, 2010, p. 92).

Some killers use this tactic so effectively that they can deny any involvement or knowledge of their crimes. John Wayne Gacy, who killed 33 young males in Chicago, said he had no idea how 27 bodies got into the crawlspace under his home (Hickey, 2010, p. 93). When asked about his crimes of serial murder, Ted Bundy, who is linked to having killed 30 women during the mid 1970s, always

spoke in the third person; he postured as if he was an authority on the subject, but took no responsibility himself.

The neutralization theory has stirred considerable debate. Its veracity is built on the assertion that the murderer neutralized his moral beliefs before acting violently; and therefore, it is difficult to verify (Hickey, 2010). Many researchers suggest that "serial offenders who rationalize their behavior" likely do it "after the fact, that the deaths have already occurred" (Hickey, 2010, p. 94). Current research has failed to provide empirical evidence by which to confirm the neutralization theory with any sense of conviction (Hickey, 2010, p. 94).

With mass killers, the picture is slightly different. Archival document analysis has uncovered a substantial amount of evidential artifacts left behind by these killers—suicide notes, blogs, manifestos and videos. This evidence indicates some ongoing internal dialogue well before any physical act is committed; in this case, the records seem to bolster the killer's justification and confidence, which is an element of the neutralization theory.

Social control theory. Social control theory assumes deviance is natural, and instead questions why individuals conform (Duwe, 2007, p. 62). Social control theory, in regard to its application to understanding homicide, assumes that "murder will occur in the absence of restraint or control against it" (Alverez & Bachman, 2003, p. 57). However, fear of capital punishment or long prison sentences, alone, are not sufficient to persuade universal abstinence from violent behaviors and homicide (Hickey, 2010). Thus, the theory suggests that a healthy and constructive involvement in the socialization process helps to produce an

individual's self-control; thereby minimizing the proclivity to engage in deviant behavior.

Reckless (1967) claimed that youths may become "isolated or insulated from criminal influences through" a "containment" process that induces "a positive self-image; ego strength; high frustration tolerance; goal orientation, a sense of belongingness; consistent moral front; reinforcement of norms, goals and values; effective supervision; discipline; and meaningful social" roles (Hickey 2010, p. 94).

Travis Hirschi (1969) "originally developed control theory to explain delinquency, but he expanded the theory and it can be applied to homicide" as well (Alverez & Bachman, 2003, p. 58). "Hirschi (1969) introduced four elements of social bonds that" pertain to all "social classes—attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief" (Hickey, 2010, p. 94). He argued that, "many people refrain from" committing deviant behaviors like homicide, out of fear of "losing their relationships with significant others—family, friends, and peers" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 35). A solid social bond to these valued people helps an individual develop a sense of consciousness and consideration for others, along with a "general acceptance of social norms" (Hickey, 2010, p. 94).

The biographies of many serial killers document the lack a real sense of "commitment to conventional values" (Hickey, 2010, p. 94). Many serial killers have histories of prior crimes such as theft, robbery and assaults. Moreover, serial killers do not have close or meaningful relationships with their families or peers and "remain distant and isolated" (Hickey, 2010, p. 94). Ted Bundy expressed

"concerns over being illegitimate" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 101). And it has been suggested that Jeffrey Dahmer experienced some familial abuse (Fox and Levin, 2005, p. 101).

With a few exceptions, most mass killers, interestingly, do not have much or any criminal history prior to their massacres. For the most part these killers abide the laws; and in fact nearly all of them purchase their firearms for their massacres legally. The difficulty for most mass killers lies in the fact that they are typically social misfits, losers and loners with very few social ties or positive interactions with others. Many mass killers have difficulty maintaining employment, bounce from job to job, and, overall, are considered under-achieving failures by themselves and by others. Thus, their connection with varied social groups is not a strong enough bond to deter them from violent revenge.

Labeling Theory

Howard S. Becker created the framework for labeling theory (also known as social reaction theory). His book "Outsiders," (1963) examines deviancy from a sociological perspective. Becker argues that deviance is actually defined and created by social groups who establish basic rules for appropriate and acceptable conduct (Becker, 1963). An individual who exhibits behavior outside the group's mores or etiquette will be labeled an outsider (Becker, 1963). Labeling theorists consider the original deviant act by an individual to be the "primary deviance"(Hickey, 2010, p. 95; Lemert, 1951, pp. 75-76). "Secondary deviance" is said to be any subsequent transgressions that result from the stigmatizing effects on the individual so labeled "other." Over time, such derision may give

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rise to feelings of anger, resentment, hostility and low self-esteem (Hickey, 2010, p. 95). As a result, there becomes some permanency to rejection or exclusion from membership in the dominant social group.

It is important to note that, in the context of labeling theory, "deviance is not [measured by] a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'" (Hickey, 2010, p. 96). Thus, the "outsider" label may be applied to a person for something as trivial as they are disorganized or messy, or for something as morally reprehensible as rape and murder. Labeling theory does not examine the moral culpability of social outcasts rather labeling theory examines the process of how social judgments are made by a dominant group.

Sociologist Erving Goffman expanded on the social construct of "outcasts" in his study of the effects of social rejection in his work "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity" (1963). Goffman's focus was on understanding the meaning and experience an individual endures by being categorized as different or "other," not necessarily the various acts or transgressions, which might result in one receiving that label (Goffman, 1963). Put another way, Goffman is concerned with the stigmatizing effect on the individual by being labeled "other." He or she becomes a "spoiled identity"—disqualified from full social acceptance by their difference (Goffman, 1963). Goffman's work particularly focused on how this stigma affects those institutionalized in prison or psychiatric hospitals.

Austrian-American historian and sociologist Frank Tannebaum examined how labeling theory informed the field of criminology. He viewed labeling theory as "the process of [society's categorizing or] making a criminal" (1938). By a formalistic "tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; it can stimulate, emphasize and evoke the unacceptable behavior that is censured (Tannebaum, 1938). For example, once a youth is deemed a particularly undesirable caste of "other" (i.e., delinquent or criminal offender) by the judicial system, that youth's world will never be the same (Tannebaum, 1938). Tannebaum believes that the shortcomings of the legal process itself may play a greater role in the making of the criminal, and perpetuating or exacerbating undesirable individual behavior than any other experience.

Lemert (1951, pp. 75-76) and Schur (1972, p. 21) took this idea further, studying individuals who were branded with various negative labels (e.g., "former mental patient, ex-convict, delinquent, stupid, and slut."). What emerged from the study of these various outcast groups was the "psychological damage" that followed from such stigmatization (Hickey, 2010, p. 95). Hickey, while not known as social reaction theorist, did accept some of the model's insights. He observes that, "the types of labels, their visibility, and the manner in which they are applied, including their intensity, duration, and frequency—as well as the individual's ability to cope with the process of labeling"—all have an influence on just how far an offender will go criminally (Hickey, 2010, p. 95).

Stigmatizing labels are most often applied to minorities and the poor. Yet there is some applicability to understanding the mass and serial killers' social position. Although these individuals typically are Caucasian or white and have a low- to middle class socioeconomic background, this fact does not dismiss labeling theory as causation for mass or serial murder (Hickey, 2010, p. 96). It is conceivable that harmful labels produced to discriminate between the "rich and poor, white and nonwhite, the powerful and the powerless" have affected some mass and serial murderers alike (Hickey, 2010 p.96). It is unlikely however, that all serial and mass killers destroy human life due to these types of labels. However, "labeling can create psychological disparities between individuals regardless of their race or socioeconomic standing" (Hickey, 2010, p. 96).

Serial killer Ted Bundy had an "increasingly frantic desire," throughout his life, to fit in with the social elite (Leyton, 2003, p. 102). Bundy who was raised in a lower-middle-class home, was "humiliated" by the menial labor his stepfather had to do (Leyton, 2003). "During adolescence Bundy stole cars and luxury goods" to create the appearance of having money (Leyton, 2003, p. 102). As an adult Bundy sought to marry a socialite whom he had met in college. He would also present himself as an attorney, although he had dropped out of law school after only one year's completion (Leyton, 2003, p. 102). Ultimately, his sham could not be maintained. It is believed that Bundy's selection of upper-middle-class female victims, in some way, may have temporarily connected him to the upper-class lifestyle. Additionally, most of his victims were very similar in

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appearance to the woman that broke up with him in college and they were from the higher socioeconomic class from which he could not gain acceptance.

Stress and anxiety are the psychological effects of labeling, which in turn feed the need to right the wrongs and restore balance. Thus, "labeling theory is not concerned with the origins of" a serial killer's behavior (Hickey 2010, p. 96). It instead focuses on the killer's stigmatized status resulting from experiencing traumatic events, "extreme criticism, and painful humiliation during their formative years" (Hickey 2010, p. 96).

Labeling is paramount in further shaping a mass killer's distorted view of society, even though their primary deviance does not usually stem from criminal behavior. The majority of mass murders do not have prior criminal records—rather they are typically socially inept misfits—who gain primary deviancy labels at school, work or while attending social events in general. Due to their poor social skills, low self-esteem and lack of accomplishments; they are often tagged a loser, oddball or loner. For the mass killer, already riddled with inadequacies and self-doubt—the stigmatizing label of misfit or loser brings more humiliation, rejection, failure, and loss, which usually propels them into further isolation and loneliness. The lack of pro social support groups—such as family and friends greatly diminishes the mass killers ability to cope while under the weight of debilitating labels (Fox & Levin, 2005). Over time, a self-fulfilling prophecy plays out. They internalize their label; their losses begin to out weight their hopes; they become frustrated, angry, and resentful to the point of deadly rage.

Where labeling theory potentially falls short, is that it lacks empirical evidence to definitively link causality (Schur, 1971). Additionally, the theory provides little explanation as to how individuals become primary deviants. Rather it explores how societal forces may interact with an already deviant individual and propels them further into a life of crime or violent killing.

Criticism of social process theories. A contemporary scholar, Lonnie Athens, takes issue with many of the assumptions and conclusions to social process theories. Athens suggests that criminals are trained and conditioned to be violent through a process he calls violentization. "According to this theory, offenders experience their own brutalization early in life and are coached into belligerence by others" (Fox, Levin and Quinet, 2008, p. 34). "They learn to use violence," to stop the abuse, "gain respect and frighten others who feel similarly" (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2008, p. 35).

Violentization Theory

Lonnie Athens, a lesser-known criminology scholar presents a "violentization" theory to explain the creation of dangerous violent criminals. Although his theories are not necessarily mainstream, Athens' work merits further study because of its several salient points helpful in filling in the cracks within standard extreme-violence causal theories. Athens "provides an interesting way of re-framing traditional questions about violence as a process" (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 750).

The violentization process. Athens argues that brutal mass violence is the consequence of a four-stage "violent socialization" process: brutalization,

belligerency / defiance, violent performance / dominance engagement and virulency (Athens, 1989, p. 25). According to this theory, these four stages represent critical developmental markers for homicidal personalities.

During stage one, brutalization, the victim may experience: 1) violent subjugation—either coercive until submission; or retaliative, thus excessive and on going beyond the point of submission; 2) personal horrification—the individual witnesses the violent subjugation of someone close; 3) violent coaching—one or more persons instructs the individual that violence is "the way out"(Athens, 1989). Stage two involves belligerency during which the victim (desperate to stop the brutalization he or she has endured; and having had violent behavior modeled so thoroughly) resolves to use violence him or herself, if provoked (Athens, 1989). This is the initial step in the victim-aggressor transformation. At stage three, the victim now exhibits violent performances and dominance engagement. He or she no longer is a "victim," having begun actively fulfilling the resolution to use violence in some form (Athens, 1998). By the time an individual reaches the fourth stage, virulency he or she has gone from being a defenseless victim of brutalization to being an agent of ruthless aggression. In short, violentization is the consequence of "coarse and cruel treatment" by others onto an impressionable subject, thereby leaving a "lasting and dramatic impact" on the individual (Athens, 1989, p. 27).

Athens further contends that if "we interrogate the biographies of violent persons with sufficient care, the traces of [his violentization theory] will be made evident" (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 755). Athens postulates that anyone who endures

and progresses through the violentization process will become a dangerous violent criminal (Athens, 1989). This evolution happens, regardless of social class, race, sex, age and level of intelligence, so long as the subject's degree of mental and physical competency is sufficient for him or her to engage in criminal conduct (Athens, 1989).

This formalistic and universal axiom has its critics. For instance, theorist Ian O'Donnell, who studied Athens as part of a 2003 work—A New Paradigm for Understanding Violence? *Testing the Limits of Lonnie Athens's Theory*—observes that some people may murder due to a violentization process, but that Athens' discussion of motivation is oversimplified and unduly rigid. O'Donnell counters that some individuals murder due to "obedience to a higher authority" (such as military authority), "conformity to a social role," (such as gang membership), purely for "pleasure," (as in the case of a lust murderer) or for any multitude of highly-complex, entangled and subjective reasons (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 767). Notwithstanding, O'Donnell urges academics to re-examine Athens' theories and to engage in a broader debate as to the "relevance of a social problem" of violent crime "that is sometimes written off as intractable" (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 767).

The violentization process and the time period required to turn a hapless victim into a ruthless aggressor are variable. Athens states that the violentization "process may be stretched out over many years or may be compressed into a short period of a few years" (Athens, 1989, p. 83). He further notes that there is a theoretical possibility that the entire process could be completed in a few months, producing what may be called a cataclysmic experience" (Athens, 1989, p.83).

Thus, Athens helps explain the (typically) long process of derailment, which, for many mass killers, lasts well into their 30s or 40s. These theories also explain how a shorter derailment process is possible—particularly in the case of younger school shooters.

This is not to say that all mass and serial killers have completed the violentization process before killing. Other more mainstream theories would call into question the necessary length of time and sequence required of a derailment process. Whether or not all mass and serial killers have passed through Athens' stages and retain these traits may not ever be known definitively unless their biographical facts are thoroughly investigated.

Again, getting at an objective truth is difficult. Athens' research relied on oral histories. He conducted over 100 interviews with violent offenders. And certainly these first-person histories were recounted to Athens through the killers' distorted perceptions.

In other cases, it is not possible to glean first-person accounts from the perpetrators. Where the killer is deceased, getting at the truth from the subjective accounts of family and friends can be complex at best. Typically, initial media reports of a recent mass or serial killings will make the perpetrator seem average and unremarkable. In other cases, those who seem to know the killer well report being stunned that he or she would be capable of horrendous crimes. But once the media has gathered more facts about the killer's past and when details of a final law enforcement investigation are released, a much different picture may emerge.

Athens general theories of self and violentization. The violentization

process theory—as refined through Athens' more general theories of the self, the

social act, social interaction and community—helps to explain the genesis of

violent, multiple murder. Three of Athens' concepts are intertwined here:

phantom others / phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and dramatic self-

change. Key to Athens' theories is the premise that "violent actors act violently

not because they are mentally ill, come from violent subcultures, are brain

damaged or have low self-esteem, but because they have different phantom

communities from the rest of us" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 84). Mass and serial killers

"attach different, violent meanings to their social experiences" as elucidated by

Athens' general social theories (Rhodes, 1999, p. 83).

Athens' general theories of self support the "interpretations violent actors

make of situations during which they commit violent acts" (O'Donnell, 2003, p.

753). He theorizes that all individuals are in conversations with "phantom

others," which he defines as "our past significant social experiences" (Athens,

1997, p. 130). These "voices" stay in our thoughts and go wherever we go; lying

"far beneath our normal level of conscious awareness" (Athens, 1997, p. 139;

Rhodes, 1999, p. 83). Together these "voices" of past experiences form a

"phantom community," an amalgam of past social experiences. It is from this

phantom labyrinth that a killer generates "hidden sources of emotions" such as"

fear, anger and hate" that are ascribed to and become a "sounding board," for the

killers among us to make "sense of varied social experiences" (Rhodes, 1999, p.

83 & 275). It is this phantom community—not some generalized sense of

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otherness—through which violent criminals find justification for their acts (Athens, 1999).

Related to this concept of phantom self / phantom community is Athens' concept of the self as soliloquy. According to Athens, "the self should be viewed as a fluid process that must be seen as coming from stability of the 'other' with whom we soliloquize and the 'other' must account for both conformity and individuality" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 274). It is from this soliloquy with phantom communities (ourselves) that we build our own "self-portraits" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276). Our past social experiences (i.e., phantom selves) shape our perceptions. If our phantom community is fragmented—that is, there is dissonant internal dialogue—then formation of the self is not completed or clear. This dissonance causes one to become a riddle to [him or herself], having a contradictory, divided self (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276).

For mass or serial killers it is the distorted subconscious dialogue with their phantom community that forms their inaccurate perceptions of themselves and society. Ultimately, the killer's self concept is at odds with their understanding of individuality and social conformity.

Athens' concept of dramatic self-change focuses specifically on this fragmentation or dissonance in the killer's concept of self and other. Dramatic self-change is a result of a person undergoing a social experiential process that has five distinct stages: (1) fragmentation, (2) provisional unity, (3) praxis, (4) consolidation, and (5) social segregation (Athens, 1995, p. 573). Dramatic self-change is not instantaneous, but occurs over time until the old self disappears and

a new composite replaces the old image (Athens, 1995). In the case of violent

offenders, the new self is not a better one. The five-stage process of dramatic

self-change and its relationship to the violentization process are outlined below:

Fragmentation. Fragmentation occurs when "people's selves" experience a

"traumatizing social experience that is so utterly foreign to them that they cannot"

absorb it (Athens, 1995, p. 573). The experience is earth shattering because what

they previously thought to be true about their world is negated, thus propelling

them into "utter shock and disbelief and, finally, total disarray" (Athens, 1995, p.

573; Marris 1975, pp. 7-25). Examples of this experience could be extrapolated

from Athens' theories on brutalization, which he said leave victims psychically

wounded. Violent subjugation—generates emotions of "rage" in a victim. This

rage is sometimes expressed during childhood by some serial killers who exhibit

"maladaptive behaviors such as, torturing animals; enuresis, or chronic bed-

wetting; and fire-setting" (Hickey, 2010, p. 97). Personal horrification—deepens

a sense of "powerlessness," whereby the individual seeks refuge in an inner world

of thoughts and emotion, becoming deeply introverted over time, so as to lose any

meaningful sense of connection and empathy. For the mass killer, this trait

eventually manifests into a progressive inability to interact positively with the

social world. Lastly, violent coaching—"adds humiliation" to an already

diminished sense of value (Rhodes, 1999, p. 126).

Similarly, Hickey's trauma-control model, offers insight into the "destabilizing

event(s)" (i.e., fragmentation) "that occur in the lives of serial" and mass

homicide offenders (Hickey. 2010, p. 107). Hickey categorizes these events as

pre-dispositional factors (i.e., having an unstable home life, experiencing the death of one or both parents, being subject to harsh physical punishment, enduring physical or sexual abuse, having a caregiver who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted, or experiencing other negative events etc. (Hickey, 2010). When an individual cannot assimilate socially and has a defective internal reference (i.e., phantom community) point to guide them, then "conflicting thoughts and emotions" will overwhelm the individual. He or she will reach a point of complete helplessness, vulnerability and internal division (Athens, 1995 p. 574).

    Creation of the provisional self. In light of the deficient or brutal personal experiences endured, the individual is left ill equipped to engage in normal social relations. To compensate, this wounded subject develops a provisional self (Athens, 1995 p. 575). Then, the individual desperately seeks out people with similar experiences (successfully or unsuccessfully) in an attempt to form a temporary, "unified" self (Athens, 1995 p. 575). This was evident in the union of two lost souls, sort-of-speak, for the Columbine shooters (Eric and Dylan), as they could relate to each other's misery and they were really all each other had socially. Seung Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter found no such friend to commiserate and unite with, but he admired their rebellion and shared similar experiences as that of the Columbine boys.

    Praxis. For the individual's temporary self to progress into a more lasting self, the temporary self must successfully endure social experiences similar to those that fractured the previous self (Athens, 1995). When there are negative

connotations, praxis corresponds roughly to the belligerency and violence /

dominance engagement of Athens' violentization process. If one firmly resolves

to and consciously acts out in domineering, brutal ways, then the temporary self

passes the test, so to speak

Having successfully passed through a negative praxis, the individual moves

ever closer to solidifying a defective concept of self—and concomitantly moving

one step closer to becoming a ruthless aggressor. For others, though, the thought

of rebuilding a concept of self is too daunting and depression will overtake them.

In this case, the self remains permanently shattered, disorganized and fractured.

Athens believes that if the latter happens for a "prolonged" period, "any further

significant developments in [the individual] selves' evolution" will be halted and

potentially result in severe psychiatric issues (Athens, 1995, p. 578).

Consolidation and segregation. The fourth stage, consolidation, takes into

account the crossroads of praxis. If the individual's temporary self becomes

solidified, then the new self will be recognized and thus reaffirmed by society.

This possibility leads to further individual transformation. According to Athens,

"people with highly reprobative selves on the horizon may well conclude that it is

far better to be known for something bad than not to be known for anything at all

(Athens, 1995 p. 579). This stage corresponds to virulency, the final stage of

Athens' "violentization" process. As Athens observes, some people "will all too

gladly embrace their "malevolent" selves" (Athens, 1995 p. 579). Once the new

unified self is solidified, the individual will move to the segregation phase. He or

she migrates to new social groups, where their new self is a comfortable fit.

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On the other hand, if the individual's temporary self remains shattered, fractured and disorganized, then no positive social recognition is received. The end result will be social obscurity. In other words, the individual with a fractured self does not move through consolidation and segregation phases; and correspondingly he or she does not complete the virulency phase of the violentization process.

Mass killers in Athens dramatic change theory. Many mass killers desperately try to fit into society and their immediate social groups, be it school or work. Some search for an individuality that will bring them favorable attention from their peers. But with the inability of achieving a solid sense of who they are—other than the label of misfit or looser—many mass killers give up on conventional means of recognition. Thus, over time, extremely violent offenders develop what Athens calls a "barbaric individualism." The killer is in fact antagonistic to society, the attitude that eventually emerges.

This behavior was exhibited by Seung Hui Cho, (23-years-old), the Virginia Tech shooter. He saw himself as invisible to his peers and society, yet he was incapable of—and made little attempt to—fit in. In class, Cho would sometimes sign his name and identify himself as "question mark" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 42). Often, Cho would show up in class wearing "reflector" sunglasses and a "hat pulled down to obscure his face" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 42). His attempt at disguise was nothing but a passive-aggressive form of antagonism, a way to draw more attention to himself as a misfit. It is this duality of conformity and individuality that the mass killer

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cannot achieve and they simply cannot deny nor escape their fragmented identity and relentless self-talk with their phantom community, which creates a sustained internal crisis.

The artifacts (blogs, essays, manifestos and videotapes) left by some mass killers prior to their massacres confirm aspects of Athens' theory. These mass killers speak in very tangible terms of their incompleteness, their inability to cope, their unsatisfactory social experiences and self-aggrandizement meant to mask their true image of themselves as a misfit or looser.

For instance, the Columbine shooter Eric Harris ponders his complete lack of any real self-identity: "I always try to be different, but I always end up copying someone else. I try to be a mixture of different things and styles but when I step out of myself I end up looking like others or others THINK I am copying" (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site). At the same time, his journal writing espouses his false sense of superiority, "no one is worthy of shit unless I say they are, I feel like GOD and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me. I already know that I am higher than almost anyone in the fucking welt in terms of universal intelligence and where we stand in the universe compared to the rest of the UNIV" (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site)

The killers' narratives attest that both conformity and individuality are unachievable, and there is, a recognition of oneself as being incomplete or enigmatic. This process did not happen overnight—some document well their many attempts to reinvent themselves in-order to fit in. When multiple attempts

have failed to build a unified self, this then plays out further in full detail as they muster up a final provisional self under the un-relentless strain of a socially obscure life that's no longer worth living.

Many mass killers will plod along with their injured and splintered un-unified self for years until the last final blow shatters them completely. Their final provisional self, that they have enough will to create, will sustain them temporarily while plotting their revenge and infamy. During this time period of planning a massacre, the "self" may actually feel more unified than ever before in their lives. Like Cho, their new phantom others may even be derived from previous read about experiences of infamous mass killers that have gone before them. There could be a kinship developed with other mass killers defiant acts, especially if it appears that they have suffered similarly to them. This then becomes their new soliloquy up until the bitter end.

Trauma Control Model

Eric W. Hickey's trauma-control model (1996) is the most comprehensive theory to date to explain the causes of violent criminal conduct. Hickey's work grew out of earlier theories such as Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning model as well as Burgess' motivational model, which was the focus of a 1986 FBI Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) study, the first comprehensive effort by a law enforcement agency to attempt to develop a model criminal profile through analyzing the history, background and characteristics of violent offenders (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). Both the classical conditioning model and the motivational model drew from a narrow sub-class of criminals, the lust murderer, with

particular psychosexual predilections not necessarily implicated in other forms of violent criminal conduct (Proulx, Beauregard, Cusson, & Nicole, 2007, P. 15). Although Hickey, too, initially focused on the sadistic lust murder, his more recent work has considered the applicability of trauma control theory to a broader class of offenders.

Briefly, the classical conditioning model is a model of learning through patterned responses. It involves the association of a neutral stimulus with another stimulus of some significance. Through conditioning, over time, an involuntary response to the previously neutral stimulus will develop, even without the presence of the primary stimulus. This theory was later applied to the motivational model.

The motivational model, looks at five critical factors (ineffective social environment, formation events, patterned responses, feedback filtering, and harming self and others) wherein these five elements acting together form a feedback loop to perpetuate and escalate sadistic fantasies and acts (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 87). Essentially, Burgess and the FBI's BSU posit that serial killers are the product of dysfunctional environments and traumatizing early life experiences, which if unabated will disrupt the individual's psychosocial development. The result of this derailment is the killer's social isolation; deviant fantasies, rape, torture, sexual violence, intense or exclusive autoeroticism and fetishism; maladjusted personality traits (oppositional-defiance and aggression; low self-esteem; narcissism; lack of empathy and paranoia expressed as

pathological feelings of injustice and desire for vengeance) (Proulx et al. 2007 p. 94).

Hickey's trauma-control model, while informed by the motivational model, offers greater insight into pre-dispositional factors that lead to violent criminal behavior. Hickey sees early and pervasive destabilizing formative events (i.e., traumatizations) as very significant for these offenders (Hickey, 2010, p. 107). Examples of such pre-dispositional factors include (i.e., having an unstable home life, experiencing the death of one or both parents, being subject to harsh physical punishment, enduring physical or sexual abuse, having a caregiver who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted, or experiencing other negative events etc.) which occur early in an offender's life and form an unrelenting pattern (Hickey, 2010).

No one single factor, however, is dispositive. As Hickey observed, "millions of U.S. citizens experience one or more of these" traumatic events as children and never become criminals or murderers (Hickey, 2010, p. 107). Sadistic or mass killers are nurtured through the "combined effects of various traumatizations" over extended time periods, rather it is the unabated social, physical or psychological turmoil that is "greater than any single" trauma or multiple traumas suffered acutely (Hickey, 2010, p. 108).

Moreover, these pre-dispositional factors may arise in an environment where one or more household members (including the potential mass killer) are burdened with a psychological or mental disorder, personality disorder or physical illnesses. For instance, common personality traits of mass killers are extreme,

pathological feelings of "inadequacy, self-doubt, and worthlessness" (Hickey, 2010, p. 10). To compensate for these deficits many mass and serial killers will exhibit an arrogant, superior demeanor, the hallmarks of narcissism or antisocial personality; or an inappropriate sense of entitlement, injustice or vengeance, the facets of a paranoid personality.

Such conditions only compound the strain (Hickey, 2010). The cyclical nature of the trauma results in a broken individual. He or she experiences a complete inability to connect with others and suffers total disillusionment and hopelessness. Respite comes in the form of an inward retreat to assuage a damaged psyche.

These individuals "do not cope constructively with the early traumas(s) and subsequently, perceive themselves and their surroundings in a distorted manner" (Hickey, 2010, p. 108-109). During childhood—and often progressing into young adulthood—"a process of dissociation may occur" (Hickey, 2010, pp. 108-109). "Fantasy and daydreaming" that dissociative states produce becomes a substitute "for the social relationships that the, [potential mass killer] has difficulty cultivating," (Shon & Milovanovic, 2006, p. 81). Fantasy interacts in such a way in the development process, so as to continually increase distorted thought patterns and perception in magnitude over time.

By adulthood, these distorted thinking patterns are ingrained. Then, in the presence of some precipitant event or events, fantasy pushes the perpetrator over the edge to committing mass murder. Just what the catalyst may be varies, but inevitably it is related to some perceived loss and the killer's thoughts of revenge or retribution in the face of that loss.

Conclusion

Biological and biochemical research are still in their infancy in terms of a direct connection to aggressive behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 55). Researchers are investigating several areas where there is evidence of biochemical links to violence and aggression: the biochemical affects of substance abuse; the possibility of paradoxical effects some patients may have in response to psychotropics; hormonal (testosterone and cortisol) and neurotransmitter dysfunction; and genetic, metabolic, environmental and dietary deficiencies.

Neupsychological research focuses on four distinct categories of cognitive dysfunction: mental illness, mental disorders, personality disorders and neurological disorders. When considering the role of mental dysfunction in criminal behavior, there are two main areas of interest, mental (mood) disorders and personality disorders. Neurological factors are also considered as a likely precipitant of aggressive or violent behavior. These conditions include head traumas, epilepsy, and tumors. However, it is unclear as to the neurological brain dysfunctions play in mass or serial killings.

According to most criminologists, the vast majority of serial killers are psychopaths or sociopaths. These killers are not mentally ill; they "are neither delusional nor confused, they understand the difference between right and wrong, and know the nature and quality of their criminal" conduct (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 419). On the other hand, most mass killers do have a history of mental illness such as schizophrenia (paranoid type) or mental (mood) disorder such as bipolar depression or major depression," but most do not have any significant history of

institutionalization" (Hickey, 2010, p. 59; Souza, 2002).

Neurological impairment is of some concern because physical abuse is a "common theme in the childhoods of serial killers," "that severe head traumas" and resulting brain injury can cause disastrous "effects on behavior, such as inducing violent outbursts, learning disabilities, and epilepsy. However, suspected head trauma alone does not account for the pathology exhibited by most violent killers.

Structural theories explore societal deficiencies, rather than the individual's predilection or shortcomings that lead to criminal conduct. Simply put, structural theories address social conditions that might induce a person to commit crimes, including homicide. There are three main sub-theories to this approach to understanding homicide: Socioeconomic theory, Disorganization theory, and Strain theory. The first two of these theories look to economic factors (absolute or relative deprivation), ingrained or culturally shared beliefs about success and social mobility and rapid community change without concomitant social controls. The latter, Strain theory, is utilized in two ways: to explain how general social phenomena and organization influence individual behavior; and to explain how unique stressors and background may lead a person to satisfy his personal needs by committing crimes.

Social process theory is an umbrella term for several related behavioral models: Social Learning, Neutralization, Control, and Labeling. Generally, theorists ascribing to one or more of these schools of thought, view criminal behavior as response to learned socio-psychological interactions. Those

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interactions may be with: public institutions (i.e., early encounters with and labeling by the criminal justice system; or deviant family and peer groups, wherein anti-social behavior is modeled and adopted, or where inappropriate responses to the reward/punishment dichotomy are learned). Essentially, social learning theories suggest that "people's experiences" along with their "perceptions and beliefs," will form the basis of their knowledge, habits, desires and actions.

Violentization" theory, proposed by Lonnie Athens, represents a recent addition to the examination of the motives for crime, especially the genesis of mass and serial killing. According to this theory, four stages represent critical developmental markers for homicidal personalities. The vast majority of violent killers identified through primary research transitioned through the four-stage socialization process: brutalization; belligerency / defiance; violent performance / dominance engagement; and virulency. In short, violentization is the consequence of sustained "coarse and cruel treatment" by others onto an impressionable subject, thereby turning the individual from a hapless young victim into to a ruthless opportunist.

The final theory, Hickey's trauma control model is the seminal theory to explain the genesis of mass and serial killing. Hickey's trauma-control model, while informed by and substantially similar to Burgess' motivational model, offers greater insight into pre-dispositional factors that lead to violent criminal behavior. Hickey sees early and pervasive destabilizing formative events (i.e., traumatizations) as very significant markers in the lives of offenders (Hickey,

2010, p. 107). Examples of such pre-dispositional factors include (i.e., having an

unstable home life, experiencing the death of one or both parents, being subject to

harsh physical punishment, enduring physical or sexual abuse, having a caregiver

who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted, or experiencing other negative events

etc.) which occur early in an offender's life and form an unrelenting pattern

(Hickey, 2010).

It must be emphasized that there is no single identifiable cause or factor that

leads to the development of a serial or mass killer. Rather, there are a multitude

of factors that contribute to their development. The most significant factor is the

killer's personal decision in choosing to pursue their crimes (Federal Bureau of

Investigation, 2009).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The goal of this dissertation is to "move beyond . . . the framework of a monolithic explanation and toward an amalgam of . . . theories" that explain incidents of mass and serial homicide (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). Although many "empirical studies" (see, for example, Sherman & Burke, 1984) engage in debate that pits one theory against another, "not all theories of crime are mutually exclusive" or in "direct opposition" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). In fact, integrated theories (such as Elliott, Ageton, & Cantor, 1979; Tittle, 1995) that stress the additive effect of a sequence of theoretical discourse (notable examples include Athens, 1992; Linsky & Straus, 1986; Smelser, 1962) "have a respectable, if not lengthy, history" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). In this vein, this project will consider the causes of violent criminal behavior from various scholarly perspectives. The context for this inquiry focuses on intersecting circumstances (psychological, emotional, physical and situational), which lead some offenders to be consumed by obsessive fantasies propelling the offender to commit acts of large-scale violence.

This project employs a combination of several existing criminological theories for the purpose of fleshing out and comparing predispositional factors that lead to fantasy development in both mass and serial killers. Primarily, Hickey's *Trauma Control Model* and Athens *Violentization Process Theory*. Process theories were used to explore the role of pre-dispositional factors in criminal behavior. Then, drawing from three of Athens' intertwining theoretical concepts: "phantom others

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/ phantom communities," "self as soliloquy," and "dramatic self-change" this research explores how "traumatization" (using Hickey's terminology) or "fragmenting" (borrowing from Athens' lexicon) results in a fractured identity formation process. The fractured identity (i.e., derailed identity-formation and psychosocial development) is a characteristic shared by all of the killers in this study. It is my contention that certain pre-dispositional factors result in the killer having a pathologically fragmented identity, which is the catalyst for fantasy progression.

It is vital to identify theses pre-dispositional markers. Through extensive fieldwork (described below) the researcher came to understand the significance of pre-dispositional behavioral markers, and observed the deviant fantasy process and behavioral cycles that influence violence and aggression. Through identification (and further research into interventionist techniques), the objective would be to avert or mitigate the threat posed by extremely violent offenders.

In an attempt to differentiate the thought processes and actions of multiple age groups of offenders, as well as differentiate among the typologies of homicide, this project explores the varied fantasy process for mass and serial killers. (see, for example, Dietz, 1986; Levin & Fox, 1985). Furthermore, this project focuses "on the accumulation of [those] factors that ultimately lead to a slaughter as well as on the accumulation of factors that might have prevented the murders from occurring in the first place" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). This examination is in an effort to raise heretofore ignored or misunderstood connections in these particularly gruesome homicides (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228).

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Empirical Phenomenology

When "conducting psychological research into the minds of [mass] and serial killers" the researcher must be able to "interpret social and psychological settings" (Hickey, 2010, p. 353). This work must be done "without prejudice or bias," in what are undoubtedly disturbing factual and psychological explorations (Hickey, 2010, p. 353). The role of the researcher is to systematically dissect the portrait that the killer has painted of "himself and his world" (p. 50; Hickey, 2010, p. 353; citing Skrapec, 2001). To this end, the most appropriate method of inquiry is empirical phenomenology (Skrapec, 2001).

The axiom by Kluckhohn and Murray (1953) is at the heart of understanding the criminal and criminal behavior, because "[e]very man is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like not other man" (p. 53; Hickey, 2010, p. 354). Curiosity, abhorrence and fear motivate examining these most extreme social deviants. One's thought and behavior always "has context and subjective meaning" (Hickey, 2010, p. 354). Thus, "[i]n understanding . . . [what] repeated acts of killing mean" to the offender, it is necessary first to inquire about "the motive forces that drive [such] behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 354). Accordingly, this project had to "identify the principles that organized" the killer's feelings, perceptions, thinking and finally his or her behavior (Hickey, 2010, p. 354; citing Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953, p. 55). My research, like that of noted criminologist's rests on "understanding the stories or narratives of the offenders," even if in reality such stories or narratives are nothing but falsehoods and fantasies (Hickey, 2010, p. 354).

Ethnographic Content Analysis

The structure to this research also employed a method that David Altheide, in his book "Qualitative Media Analysis," calls *"ethnographic content analysis"* (1996, p. 2). The goal of this type of research, as with empirical phenomenology, is "to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning and process" (Altheide, 1996, p. 42). Here "the researcher seeks to understand [both normal and deviant] types, characteristics, and organizational aspects" as derived from documentary and anecdotal evidence (Altheide, 1996, p. 42). Such artifacts are valuable as intrinsic and subjectively representational "social products" (Altheide, 1996, p. 42). The research process, therefore, requires "extensive reading, sorting, and searching through materials; comparing within categories, coding and adding key words and concepts; and then writing minisummaries" to be built upon by the researchers own interpretations and novel contribution to the field of knowledge (Altheide, 1996, p.43). This type of qualitative approach requires the researcher to immerse oneself in the subject matter. In order to do so, "progressive theoretical sampling" was employed and the evidence of this study was selected based on its relevance as understood through standard and emerging theories on violent crime (Altheide, 196, p. 33).

For this research the primary source for data collection was a detailed examination of *"documents"*. As used herein, a document means "any symbolic representation that can be recorded" or collected for examination (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). As for analytical methods applied to this research project, I followed an integrated and conceptually informed technique for "locating . . . retrieving, and

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analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning" (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). Although this methodology controls for objectivity, it must be noted, that to some degree, "the meaning and significance of all documents" is subject to informed interpretation from the researcher's perspective and purpose (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). For purposes of this project, I analyzed thousands of pages of documentary evidence, until I was satisfied by a more than sufficient degree of confidence in the findings and conclusions derived there from.

Ethnographic content analysis also involves semiotics. By enlisting an array of materials, my intention was to unravel the originator's (i.e., whether the originator was the killer, a family member, a surviving victim or witness, official investigator or investigative panel) meaning, "assumptions, motives, and intended consequences" implicit in their works (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). With respect to understanding a semiotic approach, Altheide (1996, p. 8), cites researchers Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994), who describes the objective of semiotics as "to place the [originator's] writing . . . into alternative contexts or fields, or to recode the text." Adequate and constantly evolving criticism, therefore, should enable researchers to penetrate: the originator's intent and the zeitgeist within which the document was created; to strip away lies and stylistic obfuscations, and to discover the deeper or "real" meaning of this primary-source evidence (p. 468). "Writing displays reality" as viewed by the originator, and writing is often "a means to an end"—quite literally in the case of mass killers (Plummer, 2001, p. 169). Reality, as expressed in these research documents a range of emotion

behind the texts—neutral and dispassionate, observations, angry or rageful tirades, humorous or ironic musings and morose, self-pitying obsessions.

Ethnographic content analysis is especially suited for this project because archival data is often the only or main source to obtain a clearer understanding of these criminals and their motivations (Delisi & Scherer, 2006). Put another way, the suitability of this approach is a product of the nature of the crime: mass killers tend to commit suicide or are killed by responding patrol officers or tactical teams. With respect to those surviving mass killers, they are considered extremely dangerous offenders, often held on death row or solitary confinement units, and many prison officials exercise their discretion to deny access for interviews with these offenders. Thus, the best sources of information for this project came from documents generated by the offenders prior to commission of their crimes (i.e., diaries, manifestos, blogs, emails, drawings, photographs, and videotapes), official findings of governmental review panels, public documents generated by government investigators, witness or family accounts, news reports, and work conducted by other academics.

The *"context"* or the circumstances surrounding the creation of these documents is important. Temporal proximity to the incident must be taken into account when unraveling the originator's meaning, "assumptions, motives, and intended consequences" by creating the material (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). Some of the best evidence is generated by the killer's prior to commission of a massacre. These works are a self-incriminating record, from which can be inferred the killer's state of mind during the years, months, weeks and days leading up to the

crime. This roadmap details the killer's social isolation, psychological break from reality, downward spiral into fantasy and ultimately into destructiveness. With respect to those documents generated post-massacre (i.e., by investigators, government inquiry panels, witnesses, news reports or other researchers), this evidence provides a more neutral perspective. Much of the material typically offers a chronological factual account of the incident, observations about the character and behavior of the perpetrator and an independent expert psychological profile of the perpetrator. Thus, timing and perspective, essentially create the context for assessment of the evidence.

Additionally, important to this analysis was the *"process"* from which these documents were created (Altheide, 1996, p. 9). In other words, *"process"* considers whether the document was a primary source—such as copies of diaries, manifestos, school writing assignments, attempted literary works, blogs, pictures, drawings or videotapes created by the killer; or whether the document was a secondary source-- such as the report of a government investigative panel, legal documents, news reports or prior research works. In other words, *"process"* scrutinizes who, how and why an originator develops a document.

By taking into account both the *context* and *process* that shapes an originator's message, a clearer understanding will emerge for the recipient of that message. This is what Altheide (1996) calls the *"emergence"* of the connotation, which thereby substantiates the document's significance through on-going comparison and investigation of the data (p. 10). This methodology requires first moving backwards (by using source documents) to get at the conditions and emotions

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surrounding the killer at various times in his or her life and then moving forward

from those key events (Plummer, 2001, p. 165). Emergence is an inductive

process that is oriented toward continual discovery and constant comparison of

"relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances" (Altheide,

1996, p. 16; Berg, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Moreover, this analytical

method is reflexive (Plummer, 2001). Each piece of scholarly criticism and

aggregation of the collected data informs the next understanding. The purpose in

doing so is to shed further light on accepted themes, frames and theories and

axioms—and to introduce new ones.

Two terms raised in the foregoing, but not yet defined, are *"themes"* and

"frames." As used herein, *"themes"* means, a recurring typical theses that runs

through a series of documents relating to an incident (Altheide, 1996, p. 31).

"*Frames*" focus "on what will be discussed about an incident and how it will (and

will not) be considered (Altheide, 1996, p. 31). For instance, "actual words and

direct messages of documents" reflect "certain themes, which in turn are made

cohesive and have meaning because of the chosen broad frame (Altheide, 1996, p.

31). Themes, then, are created in reference to the adoption of particular frames

(Altheide, 1996, p. 31) "general definitions or interpreted frames" of reference

(Altheide, 1996, p. 30). There can be more than one theme derived from a

particular frame, whether the theme is addressed by the same or different,

originators (Altheide, 1996, p. 31). A, final note on terminology, most writings

will refer to a "theme" (aka, point of view), although some sources will use the

term "angles." These two terms are not exactly the same, as "angle" actually

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refers to a sub-part or specific concept derived from a theme; however, some authors understand the terms to be interchangeable (Altheide, 1996, pp. 30-31).

With regard to primary sources, many mass killers do leave written, electronic, photographic or videographic records in the days, weeks, months or at times years prior to committing their massacre. Some killers such as the Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold kept multiple and detailed diaries filled with personal reflections, poems, maps of the school layout, violent rants, hit lists of people to kill and violent drawings. These records left by the Columbine shooters amounted to several hundred pages of evidence. Additionally, the boys posted similar data in electronic format on blogs/websites, and they created five videotapes shortly before the assault. Other killers will produce a manifesto just prior to the massacre and post it online, or leave a letter (especially in the case of planned murder-suicides like familicide) as a way to justify their actions. Copycat shooters, like Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech Shooter, are compelled to replicate prior mass murders. In Cho's case, he was obsessed with the Columbine event, so much so that Cho's writings revealed his intent to outdo the bloodshed at Columbine (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1238). Cho had grandiose aspirations of infamy. He created meticulous videotapes, photos of himself and a manifesto, which he mailed to NBC News shortly after beginning his killing spree (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1238).

Such documentation allowed me to be submerged into the macabre and disturbing world of the mass killer. "A diary is the document of life *par excellence*, chronicling as it does the immediately contemporaneous flow of

public and private events that are significant to the diarist" (Plummer, 2001, p. 48). Each entry of the diary, each picture or video they produce of themselves is a way to proclaim, "I am here, and it is exactly now" (Plummer, 2001, p. 48). Consequently, I was able to elicit various themes about the killer's personality, predisposition, motive, and conduct. What emerged from this amalgam of data was an in-depth understanding, and theoretical construction of, the mass killer. His or her records reveal important facts about: the killer's developmental progression, the perception of meaning (or lack thereof) perceived in the killers' lives and the catalysts that drove them to kill.

Documentation by the killer is an intentional and purposeful endeavor. Plummer (2001) stresses the 'contemporary' nature of the killer's documentation; it is not just locked "into a particular moment in time: [themes] do not emerge 'all at once' as reflections on the past, but day by day" in an attempt "to record their ever-changing present" (p. 48). This fact suggests that the frame work from which the killer writes is dynamic—but certainly not in a sense of a positive evolution of personal insight and moral development. In fact, it is quite the opposite.

Much of the killer's work begs a visceral and highly negative response, reflective of his or her mental and emotional state. This emotional maelstrom is easily captured in photographs and videos, because the suggestive "power and the pervasiveness of the" visual record is unmatched (Plummer, 2001, p. 59). Most of us keep personal photographs to remind us of loved ones or in remembrance of life's joyous milestones. Not so for the killer. His visual record allows him to

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indulge in—and to convey to others—a self-aggrandizing account of rage, brutality, disaffection and the sadistic exercised power over others. As director of his or her own visual works, part of this attraction "is the desire not only to record oneself," but also "to present that view of the self back to the self after" production (Sherman, 1998, pp. 257-258).

In studying a visual record, I used both semiology and psychoanalytical tools. This allowed for a critical examination of the processes *"signification,"* or as Plummer (2001) puts it—how signs and meanings are produced—and the relation between the photographic image and reality" (p. 61, cf. Barthes, 1984; Burgin, 1982; Sontag, 1979). Imagery most certainly "enhance life stories" in ways that the written word cannot (Plummer, 2001, p. 61). Much emotional insight can be grasped quickly and intuitively by reviewing visual work, especially videography. These records permit analysis of significant components to non-verbal communication: appearance, tone of voice, facial expressions and demeanor of the killer. In addition, the camera lens puts the viewer in the killer's place; it is like seeing with his eyes, eliciting meaning from what the killer focuses on in the foreground, background and location of the recordings. Video, thus, gives the researcher a valuable tool in determining the context.

Data Collection

Information for this study was gathered in two ways: 1) Case studies/profiles provided by other researchers, media accounts, review panel summaries or governmental sources on multiple murderer cases were compiled; and 2) Original or primary documents such as copies of diaries, manifestos, blogs, pictures,

videotapes that were created by the original subject of study were additionally gathered (primarily through the internet). Integral to this project was the use and value of archival research of "human documents" or "account[s] of individual experiences which revealed the individual's actions as a human agent and as a participant in human life" (Plummer, 1979, p. 29). Therefore, case studies sharpened an understanding of why the incident of (mass or serial murder) happened and what might become important to future research on interventionist techniques.

Mass killers frequently use media materials (i.e., video recordings, Web blogs and handwritten journals, etc.) to record their plans. The killers not only map out the logistics of the assault, but also they use their records as a platform to vent their frustrations, to project real or imagined personal failings onto others and to offer some self-righteous justification for their crime. In doing so, the killer unwittingly paints a portrait revealing their true, maladjusted nature. Creating video's and journals of their vengeful plans appears to give these perpetrators a sense of power and control, and justification while fantasizing their revenge.

An analysis of the personal documents of multiple murderers offered substantial insight into the minds of these killers. The goal of this form of *"ethnographic content analysis"* was to develop inferences from voices of the past within the text (Weber, 1990). In some aspects, researching from these primary written sources was actually better than an in-person interview. The texts were created in private which allowed the individual that created the documents to be open, vent or display their true inner thoughts without the possibility of self-

censorship. In a sense the researcher may be onto data that is as true of a representation of an individual as anyone can get. I found that these types of documents for instance (a diary, manifesto, blog or self made videotape) in a sense to be a cathartic discussion with the subjects self. It was often but not always intended for others to view.

On the other-hand some of these artifacts were created for shock value or theatrics—especially if the killer exhibits any attention-seeking tendencies and an interests in infamy. In that case, the killer's records were viewed as both his private ranting but also as a tool to further media-seeking attention. Some killers clearly were motivated by the thought of leaving a horrific lasting impression on the world.

Data Analysis

This project completely lent itself to the methodological approach of *"ethnographic content analysis"*. Exemplary case studies and archival data once collected were sorted to expose or create new insights. A coding system was employed in analyzing these documents, taking detailed notes and/or tagging key data that met certain defined criteria. Those key words, indicia or inferences drawn there from are described as follows: *(i.e., indications of stress—in marriage/relationship, school, work, financial), frustration, anger, hate, violence, depression, loneliness, isolation, desperation, medical issues, medication, institutionalized, social misfit, loser, loner, identity, low self-esteem, inflated/superior ego, bullying, childhood abuse, revenge, plotting/planning to kill, weapon purchases, practice/rehearsal, suicidal thoughts, violent fantasies,*

deviant (and often grossly misogynistic) sexual fantasies or engagement in

sexually sadistic behavior and infamy fantasies). These indicia of distress,

maladjustment, traumatization and violence were placed into categories to assist

in identifying relationships among constructs identified in the text. Specific

techniques such creating information arrays, matrices and flow charts and

tabulating frequency of key identifiers were employed.

Caution was used when analyzing and interpreting this archival content data

in-order to minimize researcher bias and the tendency to simply confirm the

researcher's preconceived notions. The goal was to understand the "humanistic

coefficient" which means, "getting at the ways in which [these] subjects of the

social life construct and make sense of their particular world—their definitions of

the situation, their first level constructs" (Plummer, 2001, p. 38). This analytical

approach forced the researcher to move beyond initial impressions, in order to

improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings.

The goal of categorization was to help the researcher in identifying certain

critical patterns. Specifically, important to this dissertation was identifying

themes that gave insight into: 1) Predispositional factors during the killer's

childhood and on into adulthood; 2) Traumatic precipitants prior or in close

proximity to the commission of their crime; and 3) Clues about the nature, content

and emotional and psychological influence of the killer's fantasy world.

To assist in this theoretical exploration, both pre-dispositional factors and the

fantasy formation action (such as the role of obsessive, deviant sexual fantasy,

fetishism or paraphilias) were analyzed and compared with the pre-dispositional

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factors and fantasy formation action common to various forms of mass murder (such as family annihilations, workplace, public and school massacres, etc.). This connection was important because, as previously mentioned, the existing literature on these types of killings often has neglected to differentiate the underpinnings to each form of homicide.

This project employed a combination of several existing criminological theories for the purpose of fleshing out and comparing predispositional factors that lead to fantasy development in both mass and serial killers. Once again, primarily Hickey's *Trauma Control Model* and Athens' *Violentization Process Theory* were used in concert to explore predispositional factors. Then three of Athens' ideas which intertwine: phantom others / phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and dramatic self-change were used to explore the fractured identity formation of these killers and its impact on fantasy progression.

Researchers Prior Work Experience

The researcher has substantial prior work experience as a Surveillance Officer for the Maricopa County Adult Probation—Sex Offender Unit, Phoenix, Arizona. In this position, the researcher developed an expertise in dealing with an especially violent serial sex offender population. Additionally, as a contributing team member, the researcher developed a novel program for the monitoring and rehabilitation of transferred youth sex offenders. On two occasions, she was interviewed by BBC radio and BBC news as part of a comparative study on approaches to monitoring a population of offenders known for high rates of recidivism. The BBC's focus was on the success and novelty of Maricopa

County's "lifetime probation" program for serial sex offenders. In 2002, the researcher was recognized by her peers and Probation Department Chiefs as the "Surveillance Officer of the Year, 2002" for her outstanding accomplishments in changing the life course and promoting pro-social activities for many transferred youth probationers.

Conclusion

The methodology for this research consisted of *"ethnographic content analysis"*. The research method was influenced to some degree by empirical phenomenology and semiotics, to the extent those schools of thought bear upon ethnographic content analysis. The main objective behind this method is "to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning and process" (Altheide, 1996, p. 42). Data collection and analysis included documentary and anecdotal evidence. Sources included materials generated by the offenders prior to commission of their crimes (i.e., diaries, manifestos, blogs, emails, drawings, photographs, and videotapes), official findings of governmental review panels, public documents generated by government investigators, witness or family accounts, news reports, and work conducted by other academics.

Data was collected via a progressive theoretical sampling, which consisted of on-going comparison of and investigation into the data. Such work required the researcher to be engrossed in an extensive qualitative data study. The purpose was aimed at uncovering the "relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances" (Altheide, 1996, p. 16; citing Berg, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Basically, the researcher utilized an inductive methodology

known as "emergence," which is oriented toward continual discovery and constant comparison. Emergence, similarly, may be thought of as a reflexive process—in that, each piece of scholarly criticism and the aggregation of collected evidentiary data informs the next understanding (Plummer, 2001). The purpose in doing so is to shed further light on accepted themes, frames and theories and axioms—and to introduce new ones.

The researcher employed these methods specifically to bring to light a comprehensive understanding of the role fantasy plays in serial and mass murder. The research focuses on the genesis of these crimes in the context of current leading theories of criminology (most notably Hickey's *Trauma-Control Model*) and argues for a closer look at the impact of Athens' *Violentization Theory*. By applying theory to case study and to the analysis of primary source documents (the killer's own records, blogs, videos, etc.), this project has unearthed critical behavior markers and fantasy cycle patterns. These markers should play a role in future research into interventionist techniques.

Chapter 4

The Mass Killer's Imagined Revenge Fantasies

This chapter examines the role of fantasy—and the factors which fuel a mass killer's revenge fantasy—in the planning and execution of mass homicide. Mass killings are not spontaneous events. Pre-dispositional factors, facilitators and precipitant events coalesce in the killer's life in such a way, so that he or she is able to get even with their victims for any multitude of real or imagined slights. Mass killers yearn to have a cataclysmic "final say," and they intentionally choose abrupt and devastatingly violent methods to make a statement, however distorted, about life (Hickey, 2010).

Mass killers—through their imagination—plan, justify and perfect their homicidal revenge, along with the imagined response to his/her killings. This psychological rehearsal is typically a long-term, calculated process—contrary to popular imagery, which portrays mass killers as impulsive lunatics or raving madmen. To be sure, hindsight reveals these individuals have a long history of significant social and psychological maladjustment. But anecdotal evidence from survivors indicates how— even in the midst of pandemonium many mass killers remain calm, cool and collected.

A majority of mass killers have clear-cut motives—commonly revenge. Revenge fantasies play a key role for mass killers' motivations and ultimate actions. And it is the mass killer's perceived losses that fuel the fantasy. This process of thoughtful calculation, mentally rehearsed preparation and imagined

outcomes, produces methodical killers. They are completely aware of what they are doing, by distinguishing "friend" from "foe" while carrying out mass murder.

Definition of Terms and Demographic Profile

"Mass murder," according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) definition, which will be used for the purpose of this paper, is the killing of four or more victims, by a lone assailant (or a few assailants), usually in a single location and lasting anywhere from a few minutes up to several hours (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 8; Fox & Levin, 2005; Holmes & Holmes, 2001). Terrorist attacks such as 9/11 and the Oklahoma City Bombings are purposely left out of consideration, because such attacks are ideologically or politically motivated attempts at dismantling governmental or economic functioning. The focus of this research (and the implication of the cited definition) is on the antisocial individual—someone who alone or with a few associates exacts "homicidal revenge" on carefully selected targets in the workplace or other public venues such as shopping malls, restaurants and schools (see, for example, Dietz, 1986; Levin & Fox, 1985) or on family members.

As previously discussed in the introduction of this dissertation statistics show a spike in mass killing incidents during economic downturns. This trend is evident beginning with the 1929 stock market crash, during the Depression years (primarily the late 1920s to the late 1930s), and during the "stagflation" period of the 1970s (Duwe, 2007, p. 19). Potentially and regrettably given the current U.S. recession, one could expect this trend to continue.   Furthermore, personal losses *(i.e., unemployment or under-employment, home foreclosures, small business*

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losses, bankruptcies, familial discord and a general perceived loss of control over or perceived sense of being unjustly wronged in one's life) are exacerbated for many people during economic downturns. This conflation of circumstance and predisposition (the latter being examined more fully in this paper) is especially evident in workplace killings and familicides.

What, then, is the demographic profile of the typical mass killer? The majority of mass killers are male 93.8%, often middle aged (40.3% are over the age of 30) and are Caucasian or white 61.7% (Fox & Levin, 2005, pp. 160-161). Statistics make these individuals appear to be an unremarkable "everyman" on the surface; but a closer examination of the individual and of individual cases reveals substantial and pervasive functional disturbances. Many perpetrators have difficulty maintaining steady employment or have other significant impairment in social and occupational functioning (Hickey, 2010; Levin & Madfis, 2009). Moreover, these killers tend to exhibit a pattern of aberrant social behaviors (Depue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). They hold paranoid views of themselves and society; and they have a history of mood or personality disorders or mental illness, for which they often refuse treatment (Depue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). These individuals enjoy, to some extent, satisfying their paranoia by killing "with massive physical force" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 407). Many killers also have prior military experience, extensive weapons training, or are avid gun collectors or enthusiasts (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010).

The Role of Fantasy

"Fantasy" is a concept distinct from "imagination," although both are volitional thought processes that play into the mass killer's behavior. Fantasy weaves "unrealistic" (fantastic) imagined images with fictive scenes and narratives (communications, story lines) to produce a highly emotionally tinged (sometimes erotic) outcome. Imagination weaves together scenes and narratives involving real people, events or places (e.g., the workplace) to produce the mental fulfillment of inflicting hurt or injury (usually not erotic). This analytic distinction is made to highlight certain important differences in nomenclature, but in actuality, these concepts become blurred for the deviant actor.

As Fox and Levin observe, "[m]ost mass killers are quite deliberate, not spontaneous," (2005, p. 163). The killer has imagined, mentally rehearsed and fantasized about plans for the massacre over and over again (Hickey, 2010). "The more specific and focused the element of revenge, the more likely that an outburst is planed and methodical rather than spontaneous and random" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.438). Victims are chosen because of what they supposedly "have done, or what they represent," to the killer (Fox & Levin, 1998, pp. 437-438). The more explicit "the targets of revenge, the less likely it is that the killer's" anger or delusions stem from severe "mental illness" such as schizophrenia (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.438). The image and common belief that mass killers are out-of-control crazed killers is actually the exception to the rule (Fox & Levin, 1998).

The mass killer immerses himself into a negative second world, which overtakes his everyday life. As Schutz and Luckmann (1973, p. 21) observed

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about the normal role of fantasy and imagination, most individuals "experience life in terms of a primary world that contains and is clearly distinguished from such secondary "other worldly" enclaves, dreams and fantasies." For mass killers absorbed in producing videos of themselves, writing a blog or a manifesto of their life's revenge, this secondary world of fantasy becomes a primary place of existence. The killer surrounds himself with all the tools that will aid in an incessant replay of his fantasies.

The mass killer's journaling, planning or blogging behavior is similar to the trophy accumulation behavior engaged in by many serial killers. For serial killers, the souvenir, from the actual killing site or victim, acts as a material connection to their crimes and allows the killer to re-live the crime, re-experiencing the "high" of killing and reinforcing further killing. For mass killers, who typically carry out a one-time massacre, the creation of a concrete personal record permits rehearsing and imagining the "high" of killing prior to the commission of any act.

A mass killer is usually motivated by a "revenge fantasy," including details of who the victims will be, when, where and exactly how the fantasy will be carried out. The revenge fantasy is central to alleviating or filling some of the void in the perpetrator's life—temporarily giving him/her a diversion away from their real and perceived isolation, hopelessness, inadequacies and failures. The "second world" of fantasy becomes a more forgiving and comfortable place for the killer, an escape. Furthermore, the fantasized rehearsal of revenge gives them purpose, courage and justification.

Rational dissonance is one characteristic that separates mass and serial killers from those in society "who don't act on their aggressive fantasies" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 93). For many mass killers and serial killers, as documented by some of their self made videos, blogs and manifestos), it is this "rich, detailed, and elaborate" fantasy world that is the impetus for them to disregard both law and moral convention" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 93). For both the serial and mass killer, their dissonant fantasy world aids them in normalizing and rationalizing the crimes that will be committed against their victims and against society.

Additionally, serial and mass killers share several common traits of emotional dysfunction: "frustration, anger, hostility, feelings of inadequacy, and low self-esteem" (Hickey, 2010, p. 80). These traits are usually well concealed by serial killers, where they present a disarming facade in order to lure their victims in one-by-one over periods of time. Mass killers, by contrast, often are readily identifiable as disgruntled social misfits. They commonly display anger problems such as a loss of temper, impulsivity or engaging in harassment or terroristic threatening of others (Depue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Additionally, they may be non-compliant with authority figures or have disciplinary problems (Depue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007).

Contributory Factors to Mass Murder

There are several important pre-dispositional factors that can help explain "the genesis of mass murder" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1227). Hickey's trauma-control model (2010) offers some insight into the formation of pre-dispositional factors for those offenders capable of mass homicide. Briefly, this theory states

that offenders are influenced by factors (chronic stressors or strains) that inevitably lead them to kill. "It is unlikely, however, that any one factor is directly responsible for homicidal behavior" (Hickey, 2010, p. 106). There may be a "predisposition for violent behavior" but no single factor has been useful in identifying who may be prone to mass violence (Hickey, 2010, p. 106). It is clear, though, that "an event or series of events, or traumas" is a requisite catalyst (Hickey, 2010).

The mass murderer suffers from "a long history of real and perceived frustration and failure, concomitant with a diminishing ability to cope" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 438). This pattern begins early in life and continues well into adulthood (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 438). These strains "lead to social isolation," and along with the resulting "lack of pro-social support systems," further isolates the individual (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1227). Such circumstances, in time, allow a "short-term negative event (acute strain), be it real or imagined," to become overwhelming (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1227).

The trauma-control model offers insight into the **"**destabilizing event(s) (i.e., traumatizations) that occur in the lives of these offenders," (Hickey. 2010, p. 107). Hickey lists examples of these pre-dispositional factors *(i.e., having an unstable home life, experiencing the death of one or both parents, being subject to harsh physical punishment, enduring physical or sexual abuse, having a caregiver who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted, or experiencing other negative events* etc.) which occur early in an offender's life and form an unrelenting pattern (Hickey, 2010).

It must be stated that "millions of U.S. citizens experience one or more of these" traumatic events as children or young adults and never become criminals or murderers (Hickey, 2010, p. 107). "It is the combined effects of various traumatizations" over extended time periods that is "greater than any single" or multiple traumas suffered acutely (Hickey, 2010, p. 108). Moreover, these pre-dispositional factors may arise in an environment where one or more household members (including the potential mass killer) are burdened with a psychological or mental disorder, personality disorder or physical illnesses. Such conditions only compound the strain (Hickey, 2010).

Trauma then becomes cyclical, continuously feeding on itself, worsening over time. The individual is broken, experiencing a complete inability to connect with others and suffering total disillusionment and hopelessness; he then searches via deviant means to feed his damaged psyche.

Common characteristics of mass killers are extreme, pathological feelings of "inadequacy, self-doubt, and worthlessness" (Hickey, 2010, p. 10). Too compensate for these personality deficits many mass killers will espouse an over-abundance of arrogance, entitlement and superiority. These individuals "do not cope constructively with the early traumas(s) and subsequently, perceive themselves and their surroundings in a distorted manner" (Hickey, 2010, pp. 108-109). During childhood—and often progressing into young adulthood—"a process of dissociation may occur" (Hickey, 2010, pp. 108-109). "Fantasy and daydreaming" that dissociative states produce becomes a substitute "for the social relationships that the, [potential mass killer] has difficulty cultivating," (Shon &

Milovanovic, 2006, p. 81). Fantasy interacts in such a way in the development process, so as to continually increase distorted thought patterns and perception in magnitude over time.

In adulthood, fantasy becomes all consuming, and distorted thinking patterns ingrained. Then, in the presence of some precipitant event or events, fantasy pushes the perpetrator over the edge to committing mass murder. Just what the catalyst may be varies, but inevitably it is related to some perceived loss and the killer's thoughts of revenge or retribution in the face of that loss.

It is important to note that a type of "episodic" mass killing does not fit the model examined here (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441). In rare cases, some underlying biological factors or medical disorders may be the precipitant for mass murder (Fox & Levin, 1998). This fact is especially true "in instances where the usual pre-dispositional factors and [facilitators] are missing" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441). These biological factors could include head traumas, epilepsy, and tumors. However, it is "unclear as to the extent biological catalysts are connected to incidents of mass murder" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441). It is a "crime that tends to be methodical rather than episodic" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p.441).

Perceived Losses that Fuel the Fantasy and the Motivation for a Particular Form of Mass Killing

As previously observed, "the most frequent motivation for mass murder is revenge—the desire to get even for perceived mistreatment at the hands of others. "In all forms of revenge-motivated mass murder, the perpetrator's objective is to punish all those whom he holds responsible, directly or indirectly, for his life's

failures and disappointments" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 167). Some mass killers imagine seeking revenge for real or imagined wrongs at the hands of coworkers or employers (Hickey, 2010, p.13). Other mass killers might fantasize about taking revenge on their families, whom they blame for all of their own problems (feelings of failure, rejection, loss, etc.). Still others target a particular class of victims: women who will not date them, schoolmates who may have taunted them, or representative figures of an unjust government or society in general. The potential killer needs to strike back at these targets in such a way that he will destroy them (Hickey, 2010, p. 17).

Perceived losses, stemming from a collection of stressors or pre-dispositional factors, along with a "blameful mind-set" are precipitants for the killing (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439). It is the "loss or threat of a loss, which from the killer's point of view is catastrophic" and thus the ultimate precipitant or trigger for mass homicide (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 440). Also, perceived losses dictate just whom the killer's vengeance will be taken out on. There can be "some degree of overlap" here (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 19). For example, a killer who is angered at his employer and his family may fantasize and attempt to annihilate both. Losses are the piece of the puzzle that feeds the mass killer's anger, rage, frustration, fear, discontentment, helplessness and hopelessness. Losses compounded over time, ignite and fuel the killer's revenge fantasies.

Loss of money/loss of job. Mass murderers, compared to murderers generally, are more likely to be male 93.8% vs. 88.6% (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 161). This is particularly true in terms of workplace violence incidents, because males—more

so than females—continue to define themselves in terms of their occupational role (i.e., "what they do" defines "who they are"), (Fox & Levin, 2005, p.170). Therefore, men "tend to suffer more psychologically from unemployment" and financial loss (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 170). "Workplace avengers, those who open fire on their boss and/or coworkers, have typically gone from job to job and have never achieved the promotions, wage increases and other recognition to which they feel entitled," (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1230).

In the case of a mass killing at work, the precipitant is usually the aggressor's loss of a job; the loss of large amounts of money, as in stock market losses; or humiliation from being disciplined or reprimanded (Levin & Fox, 1985; Levin & Madfis, 2009; Madfis & Arford, 2008). Examples of workplace violence can be found across the occupational spectrum. A few notable cases are surveyed below:

Joseph Wesbecker (47-years-old) a printing tradesman, had put in decades of service to Standard Gravure of Louisville, Kentucky (Ramsland, 2005, p.96). Wesbecker could not abide the perceived lack of "respect" the company had shown him. He believed that "the company was destroying him," and so he vowed, "to get them first" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 190).

Wesbecker had a long history of pre-dispositional factors that played out continuously over his entire life. His father died when he was a toddler; his grandfather died three years later (Fox & Levin, 2005). He moved a lot while growing up and at one point spent eight months in an orphanage (Fox & Levin, 2005). Wesbecker "was a terrible student" and dropped out of high school (Fox & Levin, 2005). As an adult, he went through two divorces and had no

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meaningful connections with family, coworkers or friends (Fox & Levin, 2005).

His progressive isolation and lack of resources for "emotional support" further

facilitated his path to mayhem (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 441). These compounding

factors over time drove him deeper and deeper into "depression and paranoia"

(Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 190). All he had left was his work. And when that was

taken away, it was the final catastrophic blow that he could not endure.

On the evening of September 14, 1989, after he had expressed months of

threats towards his company, Wesbecker carried out a 20-minute bloody rampage

at the printing company (Duwe, 2007; Fox & Levin, 2005). At the time of the

shootings, Wesbecker was on disability leave and taking psychotropic

medications (Fox & Levin, 2005). He killed eight (including himself) and

wounded twelve (Duwe, 2007).

On December 26, 2000, Michael McDermott (42-years-old), an office worker

at Edgewater Technology in Wakefield, Massachusetts, killed seven of his fellow

employees in the finance and payroll department at Edgewater (Fox & Levin,

2005). McDermott went on this shooting rampage after learning that the payroll

department received and implemented a garnishment order and that his wages

would be reduced to pay taxes owed to the IRS (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003; Fox

and Levin, 2005). He expressed bitterness about the company's "complicity"

with the government-mandated wage garnishments, thereby reducing his take

home pay. McDermott specifically blamed employees in finance and payroll for

his financial difficulties (Fox & Levin, 2005).

On July 29, 1999, day trader Mark Barton (44-years-old) killed his wife and two children at his home before shooting to death nine people and injuring twelve in the day-trading facilities at two Atlanta, Georgia, investment brokerage companies (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010). Barton went on this shooting spree after losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single day (Fox & Levin, 2005). He described the brokerage firms in his journal as "destroying" him (Mendoza, 2002).

It was no accident that Barton selected the two day-trading companies for his attack. These places were where he failed financially (Fox & Levin, 2005). As Barton wrote in his suicide note, *"I don't plan to live very much longer. Just long enough to kill as many of the people that greedily sought my destruction"* (Shootings in Atlanta, New York Times, July 31,1999). Barton did not just spontaneously decide to go on his deadly rampage; the reflection of Barton's note and his precision in selecting targets indicates premeditation brought about by recent financial losses.

Barton is an interesting case study. There is considerable evidence that his murder string may have actually started 6 years earlier, when he was a suspect in the death of his first wife and her mother (Fox & Levin, 2005; Ramsland, 2005). Barton collected a substantial sum of money from his wife's life insurance policy and then became free to be with his mistress (Ramsland, 2005). She later became Barton's second wife—who he killed 6 years after their marriage (Fox & Levin, 2005).

Contrary to the typical workplace mass killing profile, a recent and noteworthy shooting at the University of Alabama, in Huntsville was perpetrated by a female professor. On February 12th 2010, Dr. Amy Bishop (45-years-old), married and a mother of four, killed three professors and wounded three others during the course of a standard Biology Department faculty meeting with a dozen or so faculty members in attendance (Dewan, Saul, & Zezima, *The New York Times*, February 21, 2010; Reeves and Bluestein, The Boston Globe, February 16, 2010). According to statements by survivors, Dr. Bishop stood up and began shooting those closest to her, in succession, with a 9-millimeter handgun (Dewan et al. *The New York Times*, February 21, 2010; Bartlett & Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 18, 2010).

Evidence suggests that Bishop was enraged at members of the Biology Department over a tenure denial. She had lost her final appeal for tenure and was beginning her last semester teaching per university policy (Dewan et al. *The New York Times*, February 21, 2010; Reeves & Bluestein, *The Boston Globe*, February 16, 2010). According to colleagues at the University of Alabama and at Harvard University, where Bishop was a post-doctoral researcher, she had a long history of erratic behavior. Bishop believed that, her self-perceived talents as a scholar were not adequately recognized by her peers (Bartlett & Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 16, 2010). Several of Bishop's previous colleagues articulated numerous concerns about her. One colleague espoused that Bishop repeatedly went on episodic, outlandish tangents . . . *"left field kind of stuff"* during faculty meetings (Bartlett & Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*,

February 16, 2010). She was additionally, portrayed by her colleagues as being *"strange," "crazy," "did things that weren't normal"* and she was *"out of touch with reality,"* (Bartlett & Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 16, 2010).

Bishop—like Barton—was exposed as having a violent past. In 1986, Bishop was responsible for the shooting death of her younger brother after a family argument. Bishop (21-years-old at the time) was not charged with a crime—even though she fired the gun three times, in one instance directly aiming towards her bother and fatally hitting him once. She then fled the family's home before being apprehended and brought into police headquarters for questioning. The incident was simply ruled an accidental shooting at the time (Dewan et al., *New York Times*, February 21, 2010).

The rampage at the University of Alabama has since prompted, Massachusetts officials to re-open an investigation into the prior shooting. Bishop now faces several felony charges in Massachusetts, while also awaiting trial in Alabama. In mid-June, the Norfolk County, Massachusetts District Attorney filed charges including, "assault with a dangerous weapon, carrying a dangerous weapon and unlawful possession of ammunition" (Goodnough, *New York Times*, June 16, 2010). The prosecutor based his decision on questionable handling of the original investigation by the local police and discrepancies in reports submitted to the prosecutor's office by an independent Massachusetts State Police detective (Goodnough, *New York Times*, June 16, 2010). Subsequently, on July 14th 2010, the Norfolk County grand jury indicted Bishop for first-degree murder concerning

her brother's death. (Bartlett & Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 17, 2010; Reeves & Bluestein, *The Boston Globe,* July 16, 2010).

   Loss of a relationship/loneliness. The loss of a relationship, as in a separation or divorce, or an abject sense of loneliness from never quite fitting in socially, is another facilitator for mass killing. This type of perceived loss is typical among the family annihilator. Familicide makes up the largest sub-category of mass killing, comprising 28% of such homicides, yet it tends to get the least amount of media attention (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 162). "The family annihilator is someone who feels "alone, anomic, and helpless," the killer launches a campaign of violence typically against those who share his home" (Holmes & Holmes, 2001, p.85).

   These killers—typically the male head of the household (Duwe, 2004; Fox & Levin, 2005; Gosselin, 2000)—commit familicide as a way to "restore control over the fate of their family" (Levin & Madfits, 2009, p. 1230; Ramsland, 2005). "Control" usually involves one of "two distinct motives" (Levin & Madfits, 2009, p. 1230). Some family annihilators want to punish one or more family members (Fox & Levin, 2005). Usually, the killer strikes out against a spouse—who the killer blames for all of his or her personal misery or lack of fulfillment (Levin & Madfits, 2009). This kind of revenge often involves eliminating the children too, because they reap the spouse's love and attention (Fox & Levin, 1998; Levin & Madfits, 2009). Murdering the children, literally and symbolically, is a way to levy total destruction onto the estranged spouse.

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Ronald Gene Simmons (47-years-old) is a classic example of a mass killer who sought to punish those closest to him for real or imagined transgressions. Simmons committed one of the largest familicides in U.S. history when he brutally straggled, bludgeoned, and shot fourteen family members as they arrived at his home for a Christmas gathering (Duwe, 2007, p. 126; Ramsland, 2005). Simmons killed his family, to "avenge rejection by his wife and his older daughter with whom he had had an incestuous relationship" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 22). After murdering his entire family, Simmons also went on to gun down several people at a number of former workplace locations (Duwe, 2007, p. 126; Ramsland, 2005).

Other family annihilators are motivated by a distorted sense of altruism. These killers perceive some impending catastrophe (financial or personal loss) as "a fate worse than death for their loved ones" (Holmes & Holmes, 2001; Palermo & Ross, 1999; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1230). And therefore, the killer dictates an escape—as he determines appropriate—from some fateful misfortune. Another noteworthy, decades-old familicide fits this type. In 1971, the incident itself—and the level of brutality reported at the time—was unheard of. Moreover, the killer, John List (46-years-old) managed to elude capture for nearly twenty years. Police eventually tracked him down in 1991. List, a seemingly mild-mannered accountant, shot to death his ailing mother, his wife and their three children (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003).

List is the classic "altruistic" mass killer. He left behind a letter complaining about his increasing burdens and financial debts and about how his wife and

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daughter were supposedly turning away from God (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003).

List cited these strains to justify the murders, which in his letter he freely admitted

to committing. He argued that murdering his family was for their own good, so

that they would be safe and at peace in heaven (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003).

Loneliness, though not the loss of any particular love relationship, compelled

George Sodini (48-years-old) to murder on August 5th 2009. Sodini walked into

an LA Fitness Center that he frequented near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and

opened fire on a women's aerobics class. Sodini killed four people, including

himself and badly injured nine other people (CNN.com/crime, August, 5th 2009).

Prior to Sodini committing these offenses, over a nine-month period he

chronicled his feelings of rejection by women and his deep-seated sexual

frustration. On a website registered in Sodini's name, he wrote *"Who knows why?*

I am not ugly or too weird. No sex since July 1990 either (I was 29)," he writes.

"Last time I slept all night with a girlfriend it was 1982. Girls and women don't

even give me a second look ANYWHERE." About his problems with women, he

wrote: *"Women just don't like me. There are 30 million desirable women in the*

US (my estimate) and I cannot find one." (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog

Full Text Source).

Loss due to the perception of a restrictive state. In a few instances, mass

killers harbor revenge fantasies directed at someone or some place that represents

what the killer views as an oppressive government or state. These crimes are not

necessarily classified as terrorism. For purposes of this paper, crimes of terrorism

involve participation in an organization (sometimes a state-sponsored

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organization) that advocates and uses mass violence for ideological or political ends (Fox & Levin, 1998). Where some lone assailant is concerned, the motivation commonly is his own irrational anger or delusional beliefs pertaining to some personal or financial situation. Often this type of mass killing revenge will be enacted after losing a bitter legal battle with some aspect of the government or the "legal system" in general (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 219).

An example of this type of government directed revenge is the case of John T. Miller (50-years-old). Miller was angered with the Watkins Glen, New York, county government, which he believed had required him to pay unjust amounts of child support for the past 20 years. On October 15th 1992, Miller shot to death four county workers before killing himself. Miller targeted these county employees (all women) because he believed they were responsible for collecting child support money (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 217) and administering the county's child support system. Miller's final words, just before killing himself were: "*These people have ruined my life. I can't get a job or a wife because I owe so much child support*" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 218). The women Miller killed represented to him the system that he thought was wrongful and the root cause for all of his personal problems.

Andrew Joseph Stack III (53-years-old) was another killer who vehemently held an irrational belief that the government was wrongful and unjust towards him. (CNN: Special Investigations Unit, April 18, 2010). On February 18th 2010, Stack made an unsuccessful attempt at mass homicide. His target was the Internal Revenue Service office in the Echelon office complex in Austin, Texas. The

building housed other state and federal agencies and, therefore, made a perfect target for a killer with a grievance against the "system" (KXAN News Staff, Feb. 18, 2010). At 9:56 AM local time, Stack crashed his Piper Dakota airplane into the building, killing himself and one Internal Revenue Service manager and injuring 13 others (Brick, *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2010; KXAN News Staff, Feb. 18, 2010).

On the morning of the crash, Stack posted a 3000 word suicide note on his website. The note ominously alluded to the plan Stack would set into motion later that morning: *"I saw it written once that the definition of insanity is repeating the same process over and over and expecting the outcome to suddenly be different. I am finally ready to stop this insanity. Well, Mr. Big Brother IRS man, let's try something different; take my pound of flesh and sleep well."* (FOXNews.com, Feb. 18, 2010). Stack's rant continued with a general excoriation of social institutions. He expressed "disgust with the tax system, the legal system, the corrupt Catholic Church, the bankers, big business, government bailouts and the emergence of police state attitudes and actions in the aftermath of 9/11" (Baldwin, February 19, 2010). Following the assault, news reports surfaced with details about Stack's troubled personal life. He was an unemployed software engineer and was nearly out of money. Moreover, he was entangled in a legal battle with the IRS over a long-standing tax dispute and was having marital problems (FOXNews.com, Feb. 18, 2010).

The (IRS), was most likely a symbolic target for Stack. Both the agency itself and the physical branch office building represented the root of all his problems

and pain. With all of his distain for many branches of government he primarily funneled his anger towards the (IRS). Perhaps while embroiled in his 20 year battle with the (IRS) Stack saw himself as a "loan wolf (extremist)" and the more he was going it on his own in protest, the more his own belief system intensified (Levin, in CNN: Special Investigations Unit, April 18, 2010). Evidenced by both his final actions and his final words, Stacks revenge fantasy might have included himself in the role of the common man, engaged in a high stakes game on an unlevel playing field, forced to both compete and loose, yet willing to take his own life (along with others) to "light the fuse" to an uprising for the people—a real "folk hero" of sorts (Levin, in CNN: Special Investigations Unit, April 18, 2010).

In both cases, these men felt an inordinate sense of deprivation at the hands of the "system." They viewed it with much skepticism and paranoia. Government, according to their belief, is a corrupt influence on society. And the effects of unjust regulation could be measured in terms of the perceived encroachment on their individual freedom, or in terms of their personal financial ruin. As life's problems seemingly became insurmountable, both killers' chose to strike out at this symbol of their demise (and indirectly, at victims operating within that symbol).

Loss of options: A cold forbidding world. For some mass killers, the cumulative effect of stressors combined with anxious, hostile and paranoid personality traits leads to their unraveling, even without any particular or extreme precipitant provocation. This type of killer is completely unable to cope and

endures an unyielding sense of hopelessness. They are looking for a solution to exit from a society perceived as cold and forbidding.

One of the earliest campus shootings was perpetrated by Charles Whitman (25-years-old) in August of 1966. He was angry, bitter and perceived that all his options had run out. Whitman, a former University of Texas student, arrived on campus the day of the shooting using the pretense of delivering something to a professor" (Ramsland, 2005, p. 29). This provided him with a "close parking space" so that he could more easily transport his arsenal of weapons and ammunition contained in a footlocker to the top of the University clock tower (Ramsland, 2005, p. 29). Whitman was a former Marine Corps. sharp shooter, who methodically planned his assault. He brought with him survival gear and had devised a method to barricade the tower door, in order to evade capture. This preparation allowed him to hold the campus under siege for 96 minutes before police intervened (Ramsland, 2005, p. 31).

Perched on top of the clock tower, Whitman's sharp shooter skills enabled him to terrorize and murder people across a "four-block" radius (Ramsland, 2005, p. 30). He managed to kill 14 students and critically wound 30 others (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 240; Ramsland, 2005, p. 31). And that was not the full count of his victims. Whitman's rampage began earlier in the day before he arrived on campus. He first killed his mother in her house, then his wife in their apartment, then he headed for the University.

On the surface Whitman seemed to many as "nice," "dependable," "uncomplicated," and "normal"—an "all-American" guy (Fox & Levin, 2005, p.

240; Ramsland, 2005, p. 32). In reality, he was a very disturbed man (Fox & Levin, 2005). He had suffered years of physical abuse from his father. Whitman managed to escape the abuse when he turned 18 and left home to join the Marines. During this time things seemed to be going well for him: in 1962, he married; secured a military scholarship and he began taking classes at UT (Ramsland, 2005). But Whitman did not do well, "uncharacteristically," in college and got called back into the Marine Corps (Ramsland, 2005, p. 33). During his enlistment, he ran into disciplinary issues for aggressive behavior and other petty crimes (Ramsland, 2005). Eventually, Whitman was honorably discharged in 1964 and re-enrolled in school. "He began taking amphetamines" to give him the energy to balance a full course load and full-time work (Ramsland, 2005, p. 32). Again, things did not go well for Whitman, and he dropped out of college in 1966, in-spite of earning all A's during his final semester of attendance (Fox & Levin, 2005; Ramsland, 2005). Like his father, Whitman too was violent and physically abusive (Fox & Levin, 2005). On several occasions he assaulted his wife, and not long before committing the massacre, Whitman asked her for a divorce (Ramsland, 2005). He supposedly told her "that the stresses of life were becoming overwhelming" (Ramsland, 2005, p. 32).

At his wife's urging, Whitman briefly saw a psychiatrist (Ramsland, 2005). During therapy he confided that, *"he thought he might snap"*(Ramsland, 2005, p. 33). Whitman even described in detail for his doctor a fantasy of climbing the 307-foot clock tower on the University campus and "shooting people" (Ramsland,

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2005, p. 33). Besides the confidential musings to his therapist, there is proof that

Whitman engaged in violent fantasizing for some time. Whitman kept a diary,

and as early as 1964 (two years prior to the massacre) he wrote about feeling like

he might explode (Ramsland, 2005, p. 32). He additionally told "several friends

that he had ideas about shooting people from the Texas tower" (Ramsland, 2005,

p. 32). Whitman never returned to counseling, and just over four months later he

brought about this fantasy.

Loss of place or residence. The most lethal school shooting in the United

States' history (and indeed, around-the-world) took place on April 16, 2007, when

Seung Hui Cho (23-years-old), a senior at Virginia Tech University, killed 32

people, injured 17 others, and then committed suicide (Virginia Tech Review

Panel, 2007). According to his family members, Seung-Hui Cho was "quiet,"

"reserved," and struggling "to fit in" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1234). Cho, a

senior at Virginia Tech, was due to graduate in early May (Levin & Madfis,

2009). He had not yet secured employment, or managed to adapt to other

pressures of early adulthood (Levin & Madfis, 2009). And Cho now faced an

impending eviction of sorts from his contained life on the University campus

(Levin & Madfis, 2009).

Cho had a long history as a social outcast, never quite making a place for

himself among his peers. "Cho's middle and high school classmates described

him as" "difficult to know," "in a world of his own," and "dramatically

uncommunicative" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1234). It was not until well into his

teens that Cho was diagnosed with selective mutism, "a type of anxiety disorder

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that is characterized by a consistent failure to speak in specific social situations where there is an expectation of speaking" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 35). When diagnosed and treated at this late stage in a person's development it is rarely successfully counteracted (This World Documentary, Virginia Tech Massacre). And as expected, Cho's inability to fit in was exacerbated throughout his teens. "In his senior year of high school, neither his name nor his photograph appeared anywhere in the graduating class yearbook" (Cho & Gardner, 2007, p. 1; Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1234).

"Even for many well-adapted college students, graduation represents a difficult transition; it means being forced to leave campus and fend for one's self as an independent adult" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1236). "For a student like Cho," who had documented psychological and emotional difficulties and was socially isolated, leaving the Virginia Tech campus could have been the final, cataclysmic event (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1236). His departure would thrust him into an unforgiving world, for which he was ill adapted to cope. This milestone event, although certainly not sufficient on its own, is substantial evidence when evaluated alongside the other pre-dispositional and facilitating factors in Cho's background (Levin & Madfis, 2009).

James Huberty's (41-years-old) dismal life's story began to unravel further with the loss of his job as a welder in Canton, Ohio (Levin & Madfis, 2009). Huberty decided to move his family to San Ysidro, California. He believed that this suburb outside of San Diego, promised better job opportunities, and he easily found work as a security guard (Levin & Madfis, 2009). But Huberty "was very

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quickly fired" from that job (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1233). "Now, thousands of miles from his extended family and friends" in Ohio, Huberty found himself isolated, displaced and without a support network (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1233). Exactly one week after Huberty lost the security guard job, he walked into a local McDonald's and "shot to death 21 customers, most of whom were Latino children," and "wounded 19" others with a semiautomatic rifle (Chester, 1993; Hickey, 2010, p. 12; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1234).

Sources have acknowledged that Huberty, besides losing his job as a welder, endured other stressors while living in Ohio (Levin & Madfis, 2009). For instance, he had a lengthy mental health history. Huberty suffered from extreme depression and associated paranoid delusions "for most of his adult life" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 248). Despite what appears to be sufficient precipitant events, Huberty never sought to kill anyone in Canton, Ohio (Levin & Madfis, 2009). Huberty was a long-time resident of Canton, along with his wife and other relatives and friends. This network likely provided enough support to keep him from acting out violently—a safeguard, which he (and his victims) didn't have in California.

The Planning Stage: Elaborate Preparation

As discussed, pre-dispositional factors combined with some acute precipitant strain thrust the mass killer into initiating a planning (fantasy) stage. The killer fantasizes about mass homicide as a solution to regain control (whether that "control" means retribution for *lost pride*, *loss of residence*, *loss of employment*, *loss of a marriage*, *loss of power over a situation or others*, or *reclaiming one's*

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masculinity). The planning (fantasy) process is the way the killer ensures his

violent desires can become reality (Levin & Madfis, 2009). The culmination of

this fantasy is an unleashing of immediate and massive destruction on his chosen

targets in the home, workplace, school or other public venues where victims are

"closely packed together" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1227).

   Artifacts that fuel the fantasy and preparation. Mass killers frequently use

media materials *(i.e., video recordings, Web blogs and hand-written journals,*

etc.) to record their plans. The killers not only map out the logistics of the assault,

but also they use their records as a platform to vent their frustrations, to project

real or imagined personal failings onto others and to offer some self-righteous

justification for their crime. In doing so, the killer unwittingly paints a portrait

revealing their true, maladjusted nature.

   April 20th, 1999, the 'Columbine Killers,' Eric Harris (18-years-old) and

Dillon Klebold (17-years-old) "dressed in black trench coats and draped with 95

explosive devices and ammunition, walked through their high school in Littleton,

Colorado," and killed 15 people, including themselves and injured 23 (Alvarez &

Bachman, 2003, p. 123; Hickey, 2010, p. 10). In the five videotape diaries

recorded by the Columbine mass killers, Dillon Klebold and Eric Harris, the boys

discuss precisely whom they want to kill, how, when and where they will carry

out their attack and why. The videos show Klebold and Harris as rationally

disconnected. They display an inappropriate demeanor and emotional responses:

arrogance, superiority, and vengefulness toward their peers.

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Creating video's and journals of their vengeful plans appears to give the boys a sense of power and control, and justification while fantasizing their revenge. For instance, in Dillon Klebold's journal he wrote that he and Harris were god-like and more highly evolved than every other human being. In a journal entry on (04-12-1998) Eric Harris, as well espouses his superiority, *"no one is worthy of shit unless I say they are, I feel like GOD and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me. I already know that I am higher than almost anyone in the fucking welt in terms of universal intelligence and where we stand in the universe compared to the rest of the UNIV"* (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site).

However, Harris is merely espousing a false sense of superiority to mask his low self-esteem. Just a few sentences prior to this statement, Harris ponders his complete lack of any real self-identity: "*I always try to be different, but I always end up copying someone else. I try to be a mixture of different things and styles but when I step out of myself I end up looking like others or others THINK I am copying*" (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site). The bulk of the 'Columbine Killers' secret writings actually are filled with dark, self-loathing and suicidal rumination—hardly the work of two powerful and self-controlled individuals. The boys' journaling provides a temporary escape from feelings and circumstances far different from their supposed greatness.

Likewise, the Virginia Tech murderer Seung Hui Cho (23-years-old) exhibited this same sort of rational and emotional imbalance in his 23 self-recorded videotapes, 1,800-word manifesto and pictures. In several photos and videos,

Cho portrayed himself as a defiant and powerful figure. He wore combat fatigues and posed with two semiautomatic weapons, magazines of ammunition, hollowed out bullets, and a knife (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). In one photo, Cho slings a hammer over his shoulder like he's about to hit someone. He has a vicious scowl on his face and appears deeply and inappropriately enraged.

Despite such an intimidating and aggressive posturing, Cho's words reveal that he believed "he was the one who was victimized" (Martin, NPR News, April 19, 2007). In one of his rants, he states: "*You just loved to crucify me. You loved inducing cancer in my head, terrorizing my heart, and ripping my soul all this time*" (Martin, NPR News, April 19, 2007). Cho justifies to himself, his anger and impending actions: "*You had a hundred billion chances and ways to have avoided today. But you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off*" (Martin, NPR News, April 19, 2007). Cho clearly had lost touch with reality by this point.

Yet it is obvious he is capable of premeditation. Cho, in his own way, understands and articulates why he will carry out the shootings and who (even if very generally) in his eyes is to blame. Moreover, Cho understands the ramifications of his plans.

The LA Fitness shooter, George Sodini (48-years-old) similarly left a record revealing his distorted thinking and social ineptitude. In his You-Tube video and blog, Sodini came across as a rage-filled, social misfit. He implicitly sought from viewer's pity, as he recounted a lifetime of rejection by women, approval and

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commiseration for the "justified" anger he expressed towards his family and women generally.

Another example of this careful and elaborate planning involved a workplace-related killing in a 1987 attack by David Augustus Burke (35-years-old). Burke is implicated in the crash of a PSA commuter flight en route from Los Angeles to San Francisco. All forty-five people on board died (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003).

Just days before the crash, Burke had lost his job as airline ticket agent due to allegations of theft (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003; Fox & Levin, 2005). This event led Burke to seek revenge against his supervisor (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003; Fox & Levin, 2005). He boarded the same flight as his former boss and confronted the man. Evidence from cockpit radio transmissions, indicates that Burke shot his former supervisor and then shot one or both pilots causing the plane to crash (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003). Among the wreckage investigators found a note on a burned airsickness bag that read, *"Hi, Ray, I think it's sort of ironical that we end up like this. I asked for some leniency for my family, remember. Well, I got none and you'll get none"* (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, pp. 122). Unlike some of the killers discussed above, Burke left a scant record by comparison. It is telling nonetheless.

This incident was not a spontaneous act of rage. Burke had to gain information about his ex-bosses itinerary, purchase a ticket for himself and get the .44 Magnum he used past airport security. These tasks required forethought, patience and time to work out.

The record these killers leave behind reveals that they see massive destruction

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of property and life as an "accomplishment"—it gives them a sense of personal pride, satisfaction and delight in their self-assertion (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1239). For an event the scale of mass homicide to "successfully" transpire, not only must it be "meticulously planned" (*i.e., targets identified, weapons secured and logistics worked out*), but also various "facilitating factors must first exist to transform deadly imagination into a terrifying reality" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1239).

Unfortunately, much of the information and materials produced by mass killers are not found or disseminated publicly until post-massacre. This is due in a large part to the meticulous and secretive nature of the killer's planning. Most mass killers in no way intended their records as a plea for help; rather, in the killer's mind, these articles are designed to instill a shock reaction by the public and secure fame (infamy, really) for themselves post-massacre. Thus, the detailed, compelling evidence that could potentially warn associates (and could potentially help authorities de-rail an attack) often lies undiscovered until it is too late.

It's in the details. Mass murder is the result of a conflation of social dysfunction and extreme emotional deviancy. Adults and teenagers who go on a violent rampage at work, in the family or at school are almost always socially lacking in conventional social bonds (Fox & Levin, 2005). Yet, in the midst of the killer's dysfunction, there remains a degree of sophisticated, deviant intellect at work. "A mass murder is not a simple criminal act to perpetrate" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). The planning (fantasy) process can be "involved and often lengthy," as the event must compensate for the killer's failed existence

(Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). The killer usually knows that this is a one-time, finite opportunity. Thus, the massacre is a way to finally assert one's power. And the mass murderer fantasizes in detail about having the *final say* (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237).

Evidence shows that many mass shooters plan extensively for months before carrying out their shooting spree. "For example, the Columbine killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, spent more than a year preparing their attack" (Larkin, 2007; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). Every detail was planned (imagined and fantasized) well beforehand. "The assault, which if executed as intended, would have included numerous additional fatalities from bombs and explosives" and it was purposely "timed to coincide with the anniversary of Hitler's birthday in April" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). The "elaborate and lengthy planning" and symbolism implies rational premeditation; this act was not impulsive or spontaneous (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237).

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold plotted extensively while amassing an arsenal of weapons. They enjoyed this process, as evident from their self-made video recordings between late March to early April, 1999. In these videos, one sees numerous pipe bombs scattered on a basement floor, including three that Eric refers to as the *"Charlie batch,"* (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site). He discusses them proudly in detail, also on the floor is Eric's sawed-off shotgun (he calls it *"Arlene"*—the name can be seen etched on the side of the gun in the video). He identifies another gun on the floor - a long black one - as a *"Carbine,"* (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site).

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There are thirteen clips on the floor, which Eric says they were purchased at Green Mountain Guns. *"Yes, they did have the right number,"* he notes (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site). The boys exhibit an extreme, almost pathological fascination with weapons and destruction in these videos.

Similarly, a Virginia State investigative panel found that Seung Hui Cho spent nearly 2½ months, preparing for the coming massacre. Cho first purchased a .22 caliber Walther P22 handgun on-line; he waited 30 days and then purchased a 9mm Glock 19 handgun along with ammunition. He secured additional ammunition at Wal-Mart and Dick's Sporting Goods. He rented a van from Enterprise Rent-A-Car for nearly a month; in order to store his weapons and other equipment, and he even used the van to privately videotape some of his diatribes (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). About a week before the massacre, Cho practiced shooting at an indoor pistol range. He purchased chains from Home depot; and two days prior to the massacre there is evidence that he may have practiced chaining the doors of Norris Hall (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). One-week prior, Cho spent the night at a Hampton Inn Hotel in Christiansburg, Virginia, and "video taped more segments for his manifesto-diatribe" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 24). In a little over 60 days, Cho had amassed high-powered weapons and "almost 400 bullets in magazines and loose ammunition" before he walked into Norris Hall (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 74).

Cho began his rampage at about 7:15 AM by shooting 2 students in West Amber Johnson dormitory (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Police

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initially thought the incident was a domestic violence dispute and began pursuing the female victim's boyfriend, who attended school at nearby Radford University (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). It soon became clear that the situation was drastically not like the investigators assumed, when the next call for help came.

Within minutes Cho had exited the dormitory, went back to his dorm, changed out of his bloody clothes; accessed his e-mail and erased all the files; and then mailed his self-made videos, manifesto and pictures to NBC News. Cho finally arrived at Norris Hall around 9:15 AM (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). He proceeded to chain three of the building entry doors to prevent escape or entry by police. Cho then began shooting his victims at 9:40 AM. It only took him 11 minutes, on that fateful day in Norris Hall, to kill 30 people and injured 17 more before authorities could intervene (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Cho killed himself shortly before officers stormed the Hall. Once inside, police discovered a horrific scene, a "sea of black"—a term used to alert rescue teams that there were a lot of dead bodies (This World Documentary, Virginia Tech Massacre). Cho managed to fire a total of 174 out of the 400 rounds of ammunition in his possession.

By contrast, Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum and Modzeleski (2004) argue that "most school shooters" engage in a very brief (at least 2 days prior) planning period (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). This fact may have been true in other cases, Vossekuil et al. (2004) surveyed prior to Columbine. It was, however, the meticulousness, secretiveness and isolation of perpetrators such as the Columbine

Killers—and much later the Virginia Tech Shooter— which enabled these teens to kill and injure so many victims in a single attack.

Murder-by-proxy: The stand-in victim. A crucial part of the revenge fantasy is determining just who the target will be when the killer unleashes his rage. George Sodini, previously discussed in terms of his sexual frustration with women also is a murder-by-proxy killer. Sodini did not personally know the women he gunned down at the LA Fitness Center. It was a gym that he frequented; however, the women there were simply representative of all the women that rejected him over his life span.

Although Sodini made reference that the final strain was, (be it real or imagined), that the potential loss of his job was imminent. In his blog, Sodini made statements such as, "*I predict I will not survive the next layoff. That is when there is no point to continue*" (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). Interestingly, even though the impending loss of his job was the final among several facilitating events, Sodini did not direct his anger towards his workplace. He states, "*Most people there are OK and I would never have a shoot' em up there. They paid me for 10 years, so far*" (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). Sodini chose instead to direct his anger at women in general. The work place was all that he had left, in his distorted worldview.

The Virginia Tech Shooter, Seung-Hui Cho, also may have been motivated by a misplaced anger. It is entirely possible "Cho's real enemies were not at Virginia Tech but in the public [elementary and secondary] schools" where he endured

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teasing and harassment (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1240.) Although it would have been impossible for Cho to target childhood bullies, on Virginia Tech's campus "Cho was able to commit *multiple, murder-by-proxy*" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1240).

Cho experienced stressors early in life that could have accounted for, or have aggravated, his poor social development. He moved with his family from Seoul, South Korea, to the United States in 1984 (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Cho was 8 years old at the time and learning to assimilate into a new culture and to speak a new language (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Cho's elementary school classmates "made fun of his flat affect, his extreme shyness, and his lack of fluency in English" (Cho & Gardner, April 21, 2007, *The Washington Post*, p. A1; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1240). However, Cho's older sister, Sung Kyung Cho downplayed the effects of harassment that occurred early in Cho's life. She stated, "that both of them were subjected to a certain level of [teasing] when [the family] first came to the United States, and throughout their school years; but she indicated [that the teasing] was neither threatening or ongoing" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 37).

Cho's older sister may have been able to contend very well with schoolyard bullies, because she was four-years-older and better adjusted socially. Facts about her adult life support this possibility. Sun Kyung Cho attended Princeton University and then obtained employment as a contractor for the State Department (FoxNews.com, April 19, 2007; Cho and Gardner, April 21, 2007, The Washington Post). After the massacre, his sister was quoted as saying, *"Now*

I feel like I didn't know this person. My brother was quiet and reserved, yet struggled to fit in" (Cho & Gardner, April 21, 2007, *The Washington Post*, p. A1).

For a child like Seung Hui Cho, suffering from undiagnosed mental health issues early in life, the schoolyard teasing likely was something he was ill-equipped to handle—and he may have perceived it as more traumatic than it was in reality. The Virginia Tech Review Panel (2007) offers support for this observation. The panel suggested that, "rejection, real and imagined, became an early theme of Seung-Hui Cho's life and might have helped precipitate" his "psychological unraveling during his final years at Virginia Tech" (Adams, August 31, 2007, *The Roanoke Times*).

Conclusion

Although crime in general has gone down in the past several years, mass killings have been on the rise. Over the past century, there is evidence of a spike in mass killings during economic downturns. This pattern was present in the Depression years of the 1930s, the unemployment/inflationary period during the 1970s and is expected, as shown by statistical trends, to continue during our current economic meltdown.

What, then, explains the genesis of mass murder? The phenomenon is caused by multiple variables (*i.e., pre-dispositional factors, facilitators and one or more precipitants)* all of which must be present within an individual's social, emotional and psychological make-up. One factor, alone, cannot be pointed to as the cause of mass killing.

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First, the perpetrators are deeply disturbed, having "a long history of real and perceived frustration and failure, concomitant with a diminishing ability to cope" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 438). The pattern begins early in the mass killer's life with multiple, chronic destabilizing events *(i.e., unstable home life, death of a parent(s), divorce of parents, corporal punishments, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and severe alcoholism or drug abuse by caregivers, etc.)*. Although these chronic stressors or traumas may cement a "predisposition to mass murder," in one's character, no single factor alone can be pointed to as the cause. Many people experience childhood losses or traumas and survive to be productive members of society. As Hickey's trauma control model shows, it is the combined effects of multiple traumas over extended periods of time that differentiate the mass killer from normal persons.

Repeated trauma leads to the formation of several facilitators—dysfunctions that become incorporated into the killer's personality. Mass killers commonly exhibit pathological feelings of "inadequacy, self-doubt, and worthlessness" (Hickey, 2010, p. 108). These individuals "do not cope constructively with early traumas(s)" (Hickey, 2010, p. 108-109). Often, these facilitating factors coexist with psychological disorders, personality disorders or physical illnesses that only compound the strain (Hickey, 2010). As a result, normal psychosocial development is interrupted beginning in childhood and continuing well into young adulthood. The individual becomes increasingly isolated—and lacking normal social bonds he withdraws and dissociates from reality as a coping mechanism.

Fantasy (dissociation) interacts in such a way in the individual's development process, so as to continually increase in magnitude over time, one's distorted thinking and perception. Eventually, one or more precipitant events *(i.e., loss of a relationship, loss of employment or money, loss of residence or place, and a general perceived loss of control over, or perceived sense of being unjustly wronged in, one's life etc.)* set off the killers downward spiral into a "second world" of violent, vengeful fantasy and planning. Whatever that catalyst may be, it pushes the killer toward committing mass homicide.

A substantial amount of documentary evidence via videotapes, blogs, letters and anecdotal evidence of family/friends' accounts demonstrates how—through their imagination—mass killers plan, justify and perfect their homicidal revenge. Fantasizing allows the killer to project onto others blame for the killer's own real or imagined shortcomings. Moreover, violent rumination gives the killer purpose and confidence to commit mass homicide.

Moreover, in the midst of the killer's dysfunction, there remains a degree of sophisticated, deviant intellect at work. Evidence shows that many mass shooters plan extensively for months before carrying out their shooting spree. "A mass murder is not a simple criminal act to perpetrate" (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). It requires meticulous and secretive planning, which is often recorded in detail by the killer in various kinds of media materials. The planning (fantasy) process and the actual event must compensate for the killer's failed existence (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). The killer usually knows that this is a one-time, finite opportunity. Thus, the massacre is a way to finally assert one's power. And

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the mass murderer relishes in the thought of having such a final say (Levin &

Madfis, 2009, p.1237).

The killer—immersed in fantasy—comes to view murder as a justifiable act.

Violence is a normalized response through repeated visualization and rumination.

Generally, the motivation behind the violence often is to "get even"—to punish

particular or representative victims, or to upend social systems. Although in some

familicides, the motivation is a distorted sense of benevolence—in that, the killer

narcissistically believes he is delivering his family from tragedy or hardships

worse than violent death. Whatever the underlying delusion, mass murderers

perceive their behavior as a legitimate response to a cruel and unforgiving society

that misunderstands them. And in the end, these killers greet destruction and loss

of life (including their own demise) with a hubristic sense of accomplishment.

Chapter 5

The Role of Sexual, Sadistic and Misogynistic Fantasy in

Mass and Serial Killing

A subset of violent criminals, fixate on deviant (and often grossly

misogynistic) sexual fantasies or engage in sexually sadistic behavior toward

victims. Although the role of psychosexual deviancy is not a motivating factor

for most mass killers, it is quite common among many notorious serial killers

(e.g., Ted Bundy, Gary Ridgeway, Jeffery Dahmer). However, there are a few

notable instances of mass homicide, where evidence indicates that the killer's

psychosexual issues were a motivating factor (e.g., Richard Speck, George

Sodini, George Hennard) in the assault. This chapter will compare and contrast

the role and influence of a deviant sexual fantasy formation process for mass and

serial killers.

Commonalities and Differences in Serial and Mass Killing

Mass and serial killers exhibit some commonalities in terms of the motivation,

preparation and the culmination of what are horrific crimes. A brief comparison

and contrast of several cases of mass and serial murder explicates the similar

theories on influences and typologies to these forms of especially violent

homicides.

The FBI's Behavioral Science Unit's (BSU) definition of "serial murder"

requires a minimum of three victims, whom the perpetrator may kill "over a

period or months or years" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 17). There can be substantial

lapses of time (i.e., a cooling off period) between homicides; and during this

time, the killer may maintain the appearance of a more or less ordinary, unassuming life (Fox & Levin, 2005). "Mass killings" or "massacres" are defined as the killing of four or more victims, by a lone assailant (or a few assailants), usually in a single location, or in several locations in close proximity; the incident only lasts from a few minutes up to several hours (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009, p. 8; Fox & Levin, 2005; Holmes & Holmes, 2001). Thus, the main differences between "serial killing" and "mass killing" lies in the temporal and spatial "relatedness" of the criminal conduct, whereby "relatedness" means how each kind of killer goes about targeting and assaulting victims.

There is some overlap between predispositional factors, facilitators and the typologies with these particular crimes. One such facilitator is the use of a sadistic sexual fantasy. To be sure, "[m]ass and serial murder may or may not be sexual in motivation, and serial . . . murder may or may not be sadistic" (Proulx, Beauregard, Cusson, & Nicole, 2007, p. 10). For instance, a number of serial murder cases better fit a mass killer typology and certain mass killers reflect motives more common to sexually motivated serial offenders (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 19).

One such example of this overlap in typologies is the case of Richard Speck. In Chicago, in 1966, Richard F. Speck committed a sexually motivated mass murder of eight nursing students. Speck systematically tortured, raped and murdered the eight women over a period of several hours. Once apprehended and after his trial, Speck said his primary objective was "*thrill-seeking or hell-raising*" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 19; Hickey, 2010).

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Although the Speck incident fits the definition of a mass killing, in terms of the short time lapse, number of victims and proximity of the victims, the incident also contains several characteristics of sexual hedonistic violence typically found in a serial "lust" killer. First, most serial killer's "typically kill for sexual reasons, but the hedonistic murderer "(lust, thrill or comfort) kills because he enjoys it" (Holmes and Holmes, 2010, p. 41). Second, Speck sought to maintain close control and domination over his victims. Using a gun and a knife, Speck corralled the women together into one bedroom (Duwe, 2007). He then meticulously cut strips of bed sheets and bound each woman. While the victims were left waiting their turn to die, one by one Speck took them to another room in the dormitory where he stabbed, strangled, and beat each woman to death. Thus, Speck is a hybrid killer of sorts having committed mass murder in a sexually sadistic hands on manner.

The Role of Deviant Sexual Fantasy: Influences on Serial and Mass Murderers

Researchers associated with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 1979-83 study of 36 incarcerated sexual murderers in the United States have defined the term *fantasy* as "*an elaborated set of cognitions (or thoughts) characterized by preoccupation (or rehearsal), anchored in emotion and originating in daydreams*" (Prentky et al., 1989, p. 889; see also Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglass, & McCormack, 1986). They additionally put forward *fantasy* as the principal motivator in serial sexual homicide (Prentky et al. 1989). These researchers further state: "*We hypothesize that these men are motivated to murder*

by their way of thinking. Over time, their thinking patterns emerged from or were influenced by early life experiences (Burgess et al. 1986, p. 256-257)

A lust murderer is a serial killer who is influenced by violent deviant sexual impulses. This killer primarily seeks pleasure in his crimes by sexually torturing, raping, and murdering his victims. Although this impetus is frequently observed among serial killers, it is a "comparatively rare typology for mass killers" (Hickey, 2010, p. 12). The lust murderer possesses a particular urge not simply to kill but to sadistically ravage his victim(s) either pre- or postmortem (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). "The sexualized persecution of the victim is at the core of the assailant's behavior," and violence "is principally inflicted as a means of sustaining arousal and attaining orgasm" (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 26). Sexual sadism (i.e., an "obsessive and compelling repetition of sexual thoughts, dreams, or fantasies" that involves the mental or physical suffering of a victim) is intensely sexually arousing to a certain type of killer (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 6). The killer is locked in a disturbing fantasy world of compulsive fixation on absolute control over, objectification of, and the infliction of gross pain onto the victim.

The serial killer's behavior is driven by fantasy, much like that of a mass killer. However, for the serial killer the fantasy itself is altered and reinforced through each successive offense. As a result, the lust killer's crimes can increase in severity as he constantly re-imagines and attempts to perfect his fantasy in a relentless downward spiral of "imagination and action" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 417). This process of conditioning and reinforcement typically spans a substantial

amount of time, during which the psychological intensity and physical violence escalate.

Such serial murderers rely on their deviant inner worlds and fantasies for emotional gratification (Proulx et al., 2007, p. 16). Sadistic serial killers tend to have particularly detailed and elaborate fantasies—"scripts of violence," rich with themes of abuse and dominance (Skrapec, 1996). The killer is motivated by violence and objectification of another. The cunningness and ostensible lack of empathy exhibited in such an individual makes this sort of killer an incomprehensible sort of monster.

In a sample of twenty sadistic serial killers analyzed by Warren, Hazelwood and Dietz, (1996), 80 % reported having violent fantasies (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 417). The interviews with these killers captured every detail from the offender's perspective—the imagined criminal act, including the capture of a victim, the infliction of extreme pain and suffering, the actual murder, and then disposal of the body (Hazelwood, Dietz, & Warren, 1996). The conclusion drawn from this and similar research is that repetitive, intense and detailed "deviant sexual fantasies" are a galvanizing event for the killer's actualization to sadistic violence (Proulx et al., 2007, p. 43; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006).

Pornography, Violent Sexual Fantasy and Actualization of Sadistic Murder

Ted Bundy, who confessed to sadistically killing over 30 women from 1974 to 1978, affirmed in several post-incarceration interviews that his fantasies clearly "accompanie[d] and generate[d] the anticipation that precedes the crime [and that such apprehension] is always more stimulating" than the crime itself (Leyton,

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2003, p. 125). Before his execution, Bundy went on to further denounce the role

of violent pornography, which he claimed caused him to slip uncontrollably

deeper "into a world of sexual fantasy that became increasingly violent in nature"

(Hickey, 2010, p. 152). Bundy added that he had been obsessed with

pornography since his youth and that reading about the abuse of female images

inspired him to act out his torture and murder fantasies (Michaud & Aynesworth,

1983). In an interview with Michaud and Aynesworth, (1983) five years prior to

Bundy's execution he went into some detail on this issue, but always speaking in

the third person as to not openly admit guilt: *Maybe he focused on pornography*

as a vicarious way of experiencing what his peers were experiencing in

reality....Then he got sucked into the more sinister doctrines that are implicit in

pornography—the use, the abuse, the possession of women as objects" (p. 17).

Bundy's modus operandi was to attack his victims with a blunt instrument.

Some would die immediately, while others would suffer for "hours or days" until

he would strangle them (Hickey, 2010, p. 153). Bundy "raped most, if not all, of

his victims" and many "were subjected to sodomy and sexual mutilations"

(Hickey, 2010, p. 153).

Bundy's statement concerning the use of pornography is often

misinterpreted—often with feminist social critics citing a pure cause and effect

relationship between viewing pornography and engaging in rape or sexual torture

of victims. But it was not that accessing pornography caused Bundy's deviant

fantasies, rather the pornography fueled "the flame of his fantasies, and aberrant

thoughts [that] already existed in his psyche" (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 12).

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In an article titled, Serial Homicide: We Need to Explore Behind the

Stereotypes and Ask Why, (1996) author Jan Scott attempts to clarify the

relationship between pornography and sadistic behavior further. Scott claims that

"pornography, alcohol and drugs may act as facilitators, but in many cases the

factors that contribute to initial disinhibition are unclear" (1996, p. 2). However,

"once restraints are removed, serial killers frequently engage in increasingly more

accurate behavioral rehearsals of the fantasized murder" (Scott, 1996, p. 2).

The fantasy works as an "internal" driving force to normalize recurring acts of

sexual brutality (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 23). And "the nature and frequency

of the deviant sexual fantasies are good predictors of the severity of the offence,"

(Proulx et al., 2007, p. 43). Through violent sexual abuse and murder, the lust

killer literally chases his dreams (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 417). With each

successive victim, this type of murderer attempts to perfect the fantasy. However,

reality never matches the fantasy; and therefore, the killer must continue in vain

with the cycle of fantasy, arousal and violence—in search for the "perfect victim"

until he is caught and imprisoned (Fox & Levin, 1998; Holmes & Holmes, 2010,

p.58).

Differentiating Normal from Pathological Fantasies

Not all sexual fantasizing is pathological, of course. Sexual imagery is a

component of "normal sexual activity among most males and females," (Bader,

2003; Chodorow, 1994; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 14). But defining "normal"

with regards to any subject matter can be difficult, elusive and often subjective.

With human sexuality, it is important to differentiate between normal, abnormal

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and extreme pathological forms of erotic expression (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 12).

Research conducted by Holmes (1991) describes the four standards, by which any society sets and regulates sexual mores. Individual behavior can then be determined normal or deviant, consistent with those social standards. First, a purely objective *"statistical standard,"* can be applied to measure behaviors across a given population (Holmes, 1991, p. 2). This standard assesses normalcy based on sampling and reporting in a given, statistically significant population or cohort (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). Majority thoughts and behaviors elicited from the sample population can be converted into numeric and graphical representation and would be expected to render a normal (i.e., bell curve) distribution, or something close thereto **(**Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). The second measure is a *"religious standard,"* which is a qualitative method to describe and represent social regulation. This standard is based on an amalgam of mainstream religious beliefs and values within a given society or culture. The regulation of human sexual behavior is obtained, where the majority of society complies with given mainstream religious teachings on sexuality **(**Purcell & Arrigo, 2006**)**. The penalty for transgressing these religious or moral tenets, by engaging in prohibited sexual conduct, then, can range from general public disapproval, individual condemnation or ostracism from one's particular religious sect (Holmes, 1991, p. 2). Third, *"cultural standards,"* also qualitative in nature, are those mores which either encourage or discourage certain conduct by means of "rules, language, ideas, customs, and beliefs that govern a given society" (Holmes, 1991, p. 2;

Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 13; Lancaster & Di Leonardo, 1997). Hickey (2005)

gives an example of a cultural standard in terms of the law. "In California, it is

illegal to have sexual intercourse with someone under the age of 18; yet in the

same state, having sex with a dead body (i.e., necrophilia), does not have a

specific criminal code within the penal system" (Hickey, 2005; Purcell & Arrigo,

2006, p. 15). Lastly, a *"subjective standard,"* involves the role one's own

judgment and reasoning plays in regulating sexual thoughts and behavior

(Holmes, 1991, p. 2). Individuals may turn to this standard first in order to sort

out what he or she personally feels is acceptable (or unacceptable) sexual

behavior. Of course, this subjective standard exists within a larger cultural

framework (which incorporates other beliefs, mores and means of social

regulation), from which individual behavior and decision-making is influenced

accordingly.

   For the vast majority of adults, erotic fantasies and behaviors fit within the

acceptable parameters of the various social regulatory standards. For instance,

normal sexual fantasy is rich with erotic symbolism and ritualizing of consensual

power exchange. Such fantasy may include fetish attire, bondage themes and

"rape" scenes. Even at the outer limits of moral acceptability, most social

scientists would agree that fantasies represent an important (even necessary) way

for one to understand and explore their sexual nature (Holmes & Holmes, 2002;

Purcell & Arrigo, 2006).

   The key behavioral differences between the normal adult and the sexual

psychopath involve consent and moral restraint. When healthy adults act upon

their fantasies, they do so with a willing partner and with an understanding that not every aspect of one's fantasy life can (or should) be actualized. Conscientiousness, empathy and respect guide the healthy individual's behavior. Psychologically healthy, law-abiding adults resist translating patently criminal desires—such as sex with minors or truly violent or brutal conduct—into action. Moreover, for normally adjusted persons, sexual fantasies (of the variety that never would be acted upon) function as a safe outlet for feelings of anger or aggression or for urges that are considered socially deviant (Fox & Levin, 1998).

By contrast, the sexual sadist gains arousal and gratification from "fantasies or acts, in which physical or psychological torture causes" real permanent harm to an unwilling victim. (Proulx et al., 2007, p. 107). For example, the sexual psychopath enjoys non-consensual control and domination over and violence, degradation and sadism toward the unwilling participant/victim (Proulx et al., 2007). The victim has to be "conscious" and must be aware of the inescapable predicament of his or her suffering (Hazelwood, Dietz, & Warren, 1992; Proulx et al., 2007, p. 108). Pathological fantasy and behavior for the lust killer entirely lacks any foundation based upon consent and moral restraint. Not surprisingly, given the sexual psychopath's dysfunction and lack of development in other areas of socialization, the psychopath's understanding of sexual fantasy and behavior represents an extreme deviation from normalcy.

Sexually Motivated Mass Murder

Dying for company and intimacy. For a few mass killers, a sexual aspect influences their motivation—*who, how, where and when*—to kill. The sexualized

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aspect to mass killing, by contrast, tends to involve sexual themes of anger, hatred, or revenge towards women for real or perceived rejection. In some cases, there is an element of eroticizing violence and sadistic fantasy, but probably not to the degree as observed with the sadistic serial killer. For the sexually revengeful mass killer, motivation is found in the fixation on hatred or anger towards women. In this way, the mass killer externalizes blame for his own personal shortcomings and social deficits.

George Sodini (48-year-old) appeared to harbor such a rage towards women. On August 5th 2009, Sodini walked into an LA Fitness Center that he had frequented near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and opened fire on a women's aerobics class. Sodini killed four people, including himself and badly injured nine other people (CNN.com/crime, August, 5th 2009). Extreme loneliness and the lack of ever having a sexual or close relationship with a woman seemed to fuel Sodini's resentment and vengeance.

Prior to Sodini committing these offenses, over a nine-month period he chronicled his feelings of rejection by women and his deep-seated sexual frustration. On a website registered in Sodini's name, he wrote, *"No girlfriend since 1984."* *"Who knows why? I am not ugly or too weird. No sex since July 1990 either (I was 29),"* he writes, *"Last time I slept all night with a girlfriend it was 1982. Girls and women don't even give me a second look ANYWHERE."* Sodini continued about his problems with women, by writing: *"Women just don't like me. There are 30 million desirable women in the US (my estimate) and I*

cannot find one." In another entry he writes: *"Flying solo for many years is a destroyer"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source).

A violent, sexually explicit revenge fantasy appeared to replace the lack of intimacy and the inability for Sodini to obtain a partner. He needed to satisfy the feelings of being desired by women after real or perceived rejection of his romantic overtures. When Sodini was unable to attain emotional intimacy with the opposite sex, he chose to strike out violently against females. His victims served as representatives, who could be blamed for Sodini's own feelings of anger and humiliation. Here, too, there it is possible that Sodini attained some form of sexual gratification from inflicting a sort of violent revenge against the female gender (Hickey, 2010, p. 138-139). It is additionally, thought that by killing these women they, along with their partners would be denied the life and happiness that Sodini desperately craved.

The impact of sexually motivated revenge killing is documented among many theorists. In the book "Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Welmar Germany," Maria Tatar states that, "Women are punished and blamed for the feminization of men, their loss of control, impotence and even castration. In short, to dismember woman allows man to remember himself" (Tatar, 1995). This violent form of murder---whether it involves the physical sexual dismemberment of a victim by a sadistic serial killer, or whether, it involves a large-scale assault on many lives by a mass killer can—at least in part, stem from sexual inadequacy turned into rage.

Misogyny, psychosis and revenge. The following two mass murder cases: 1) the two decades old Luby's restaurant massacre by George Hennard and 2) the

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recent Tucson massacre by Jared Lee Loughner present examples of a more misogynistic sexual revenge infused with some form of psychotic paranoia.

George Hennard—Female vipers. Mass murderer George Hennard (35-years-old), who in October of 1991, rammed his pickup truck right through a "6-foot-high plate glass window" into a crowded Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas, was known for his intense and delusional "hatred of women" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 231-232; Ramsland, 2005, p. 46). The attack occurred at lunchtime resulting in the deaths of 23 people and injury of 19 others (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 232).

Prior to the attack Hennard had engaged in bizarre, though not overtly criminal behavior, directed at the female gender for a period of time. For instance, he once sent two young female neighbors he barely knew an angry letter "about female vipers who were destroying his life" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 232). In June of 1991, Hennard walked into a local Texas "FBI office and attempted unsuccessfully to file a civil rights complaint against the women of the world" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 232). And just day's prior to the massacre, Hennard created a public disturbance at a crowded local restaurant during lunch. Hennard was enraged over Anita Hill's allegations that Supreme Court Justice (then-nominee) Clarence Thomas sexually harassed her. Hennard "complained loudly and publicly that [Hill's] allegations were ludicrous" (Fox and Levin, 2005, p. 232). He believed "the situation signaled how women were being allowed to take over territory that rightfully belonged to men" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 232). While watching the confirmation hearings that afternoon, Hennard began

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screaming at the TV, *"You dumb bitch! You bastards opened the door for all women!"* ("A Texas Massacre," 1991, p. 67; Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 232).

Hennard's "paranoia-induced psychosis" reached its peak that fateful October day in 1991 (Ramsland, 2005, p.46). "With a cigarette dangling from his lips," Hennard calmly stepped from the wreckage of his pickup truck and began methodically gunning down any Luby's patrons in his way (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 231). Witnesses reported hearing Hennard yell while shots rang out, *"Wait till those fuckin' women in Belton, Texas see this! I wonder if they think it was worth it!"* (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 231; Hightower, 1991). Although his hatred was fixated on women, he did not just kill women in the restaurant that day. Anyone in the restaurant—male, female, young and old—became a target for Hennard to satisfy his violent, delusional anger (Fox & Levin, 2005).

Jared Lee Loughner—Women enjoy rape. Another recent incident that may have been partially motivated by sexual psychotic revenge is the massacre in Tucson, Arizona. On January 8th, 2011, alleged mass killer Jared Lee Loughner (22 years-old) went on a rampage at a Safeway grocery store in Tucson, Arizona. Loughner is accused of killing six people (one victim, was Hon. John Roll, U.S. District Court Chief Judge of Arizona) and injuring 14 others (including severely injuring U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords) (NYTimes.com, January 9, 2011). The shooting took place at a constituency gathering or "town hall meeting" that was purposefully held at a commercial location with little or no security, so that Rep. Giffords could meet and talk with the ordinary citizen going about his or her weekend errands. This incident is far too recent to definitively

understand Loughner's motivations. However, based on evidence gathered so far in the investigation, it appears that there are several underlying motivations to Loughner's behavior: sexual fixation and anger directed at women; revenge for the rejection Loughner experienced in social, academic and employment circles; and possibly even the effect, of untreated mental illness or psychosis.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the alleged gunman posted 131 messages between April and June 2010 in a private forum associated with the online game Earth Empires (CBSNews.com, January 12, 2011; WSJ.com, January 12, 2011). On April 24th, 2010, one particularly disturbing rant titled *"Why Rape,"* explained how women in college actually enjoyed being raped (WSJ.com, January 12, 2011). In this posting Loughner incoherently wrote: *"There are Rape victims that are under the influence of substance. The drinking is leading them to rape. The loneliness will bring you to depression. Being alone for a very long time will inevitably lead you to rape"* (WSJ.com, January 12, 2011). Loughner followed up on May 5th, 2010 with an entry titled *"Talk, Talk, Talking about Rejection,"*— the posting appeared to be eliciting other forum members for their stories of rejection by the opposite sex (WSJ.com, January 12, 2011). The next day, Loughner wrote, *"It's funny…when…they say lets go on a date about 3 times…and they don't…go…"* (WSJ.com, January 12, 2011).

Additionally, Loughner posted on the Web a litany of bizarre writings that show the alleged killer's social dysfunction. Loughner's postings touched on various themes including: misogynistic, angry rants about women; generalized feelings of frustration, anger and isolation; disdain for grammar and the

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educational system—which he espoused was "unconstitutional"; paranoid distrust of the government, police and social authority; conspiracy theories pertaining to the currency system; and reflections on the rejections from employment opportunities (after submitting over 65 applications with various employers, including the US Army recruiting station in Phoenix, Arizona) (CBSNews.com, January 12, 2011; WSJ.com, January 12, 2011). These postings are logically disjointed and deeply emotionally disturbing, because they hint at the significance of Loughner's isolation and disconnection from reality.

For Loughner, lacking self-awareness or intervention from outside sources (including the criminal justice system or college academic disciplinary systems, both of which he previously had become entangled in relatively minor ways), these diatribes were cathartic. Loughner, like George Sodini and similar shooters before, described how posting on the online forum "made him feel better" (WSJ.com, January 12, 2011; quoting from Loughner's May 2, 2010 post). Interestingly, by expelling his demons into the online forum, YouTube and elsewhere in cyberspace, Loughner may have made real, justifiable and normal from his viewpoint what others would recognize as a pathological disconnection warranting intervention.

Power, Control and Empathy

The murderer craving ultimate power and control "kills because he is gratified by his ability to hold the fate of another in his hands" (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 41). This appears to be true with both mass and serial murderers. Though, the motivation is expressed differently. With sexually sadistic killers, it is the need

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for "power, dominance, and control," to the degree that "the victim is demeaned and humiliated," thus the "killer is able to feel superior, exalting in the victim's suffering" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 24). "For various reasons, serial killers [and many mass killers] lack whatever it takes to achieve a position of dominance in the legitimate system" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 24). For most mass killers, they see the large-scale annihilation of human lives, as their crowning achievement of power.

While seemingly counterintuitive, the "emotion of empathy" is necessary for a "sadistic killer's" gratification of "their victim's suffering" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 20). Without empathy—an understanding and emotional identification for and with the feelings of another—the killer could not gain the desired psychosexual stimulation from his horrific acts. Furthermore, "violent acts inflicting pain and suffering are more intentional than impulsive" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 20). This fact is evident in the careful stalking and selection process of victims carried out by serial killers and the typically detailed and methodical planning preparations of mass killers. Empathy "promote[s] the arousal and satisfaction of sadistic objectives by enhancing the criminal's awareness of the pain being experienced by his or her victim" (Borgeson & Kuehnle, 2012, p. 20).

Serial killer, Ted Bundy's "main motivation was power and control," however there was an obvious sexual element of torture in his killing's, in order to achieve this feeling of control (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p.49). Bundy wanted to totally

possess his victims, and he gained immense pleasure knowing the victim's life or death depended on him solely (Holmes & Holmes, 2010).

This pleasure and arousal for the killer is rooted in hatred and loathing, as reported by Sears (1991) study on the etiology of the serial killer (Holmes & Holmes, 2010, p. 60). For Bundy, this hatred was focused onto an archetype victim. Unlike most serial killers, who seek their victims from the transient fringes of society, Bundy sought out the *idealized woman*. His victims typically were attractive, upper-middle-class brunettes (Leyton, 2003, p. 125). It is supposed that Bundy's choice of victims stemmed from a turbulent relationship and rejection by his fiancée Stephanie Brooks, who came from a genteel, well-connected background to which Bundy always aspired. Bundy came from a chaotic lower-middle class family, a circumstance he disdained. When the relationship with Stephanie ended, Bundy perceived the loss as also destroying his chance to climb above his roots. Bundy felt this loss deeply; and therefore, he indulged his feelings of hatred and revenge by seeking representative female victims who physically resembled Stephanie and appeared to come from a similar social class from which he so acutely felt rejection.

Another example of this type of power and control serial killer is Gary Leon Ridgway. With 48 serial murder convictions Gary Leon Ridgway (52 years-old) at the time of his arrest in 2001, is perhaps the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history. Ridgway eluded the authorities for over two decades, most likely due to his victim selection and body disposal locations. Ridgway's victims were primarily prostitutes and runaways that were easy to pick up while also remaining

undetected and they were typically not reported as missing right away—if at all. Ridgway, also known as (The Green River Killer) strangled many of his victims during sex," and left the bodies in clusters along banks of the Seattle, Washington Green River (Hickey, 2010, p. 25). Ridgway has stated that he enjoyed choking his victims and that killing prostitutes was a "career" (Hickey, 2010, p. 25). Ridgway furthermore, enjoyed having sex with his victims post mortem and would often revisit the dumpsites days later, brush the maggots off the body and have sex with them again (Hickey, 2010; Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

It is believed that with each of Ridgway's murders "he was reinforcing his own male privilege that he could never express with his overbearing mother whom he was unable to please; the punishment of his victims compensated for his bruised manhood" (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007, p. 82). Like Bundy "he enjoyed the control he had during the encounter and the murder" (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007, p. 82).

Mass killer's have empathy too. Some mass killers—who distinguish "friend" from "foe" while carrying out mass murder—likewise demonstrate empathy. Such emotional awareness, usually the workplace shooter or school shooter, implies that the killer understands that taking a persons life is a cruel and selfish act. If the killer did not have any empathy, he or she most likely would not spare anyone. Other mass murder cases, involving family annihilators or murder-by-proxy, admittedly do not fit this argument. Family annihilators come in two varieties: 1) The revengeful husband that wants to get back at their spouse and thus typically kills everyone close to the spouse—often including their spouse,

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children and at times even their spouses siblings and in-laws.   In those cases, indications of the killer's ability to empathize are rarely seen. However, here too the killer understands to some degree, the value of human life as by killing not just their spouse, but in addition, all those that their spouse loves he is inflicting the worst revenge possible. 2) Altruistic family annihilators are motivated by a distorted sense of empathy. These killers perceive some impending catastrophe (financial or personal loss) as "a fate worse than death for their loved ones" (Holmes & Holmes, 2001; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 1230; Palermo & Ross, 1999). And therefore, the killer dictates an escape—as he determines appropriate—from some fateful misfortune. Murder-by-proxy killers murder readily handy victims that are a representative of those they hate or blame for their own dismal life. Typically, no one is spared in this type of killing, as often the killer has no acquaintances.   The archetype example of the altruistic family annihilator is John List, an accountant in Westfield New Jersey who, on November, 9th 1971, murdered his entire family (wife, mother and three children) in order to save them from the shame of his impending financial and social collapse. Regardless of the type and motivations for mass murder, numerous killers have left statements behind that document or antidotal evidence conveyed during their massacres that they have the ability of empathy for certain people.

The following case examples demonstrate that mass killers have an understanding of the emotional magnitude of their crimes by purposefully sparing a selected few people. Patrick Sherrill (44-year-old) murdered fourteen fellow postal workers in Edmond, Oklahoma, after a supervisor had reprimanded and

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threatened his job (Fox & Levin, 2005). But what was unique about Sherrill is that he made sure ahead of time that the one co-worker whom he liked would not be at work during his rampage. He also deliberately started shooting long before the post office opened for business, so that he killed only "the enemy"; no innocent customers would be injured (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 167-168).

Another workplace shooter Michael McDermott (42-year-old) killed seven of his coworkers at Edgewater Technology in Wakefield, Massachusetts, after learning that his wages were to be garnished by the IRS through an arrangement with the company; he too was very selective of his workplace targets. McDermott targeted only employees in the payroll and human resources departments. In the process, he ignored a number of coworkers whom he simply did not blame for his financial position.

Finally, (47-year-old), Joseph Wesbecker who was proud of his decades of dedicated service to Standard Gravure of Louisville, Kentucky could not believe that he was being treated with so little respect and felt that the company was destroying him, so he would have to get them first (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 190). On the evening of September 14, 1989, he carried out a 20-minute bloody rampage at the company. Wesbecker was seemingly indiscriminately gunning down co-workers, until he came across John Tingle, who was a friend of his for many years. Rather than take his friends life, he urged him to "get back, get away, I don't want to hurt you" (Adams, 1989; Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 191).

It appears that even in the midst of delivering mayhem many of these mass killers are in some ways calm, cool and collected. They are very aware of exactly

what they are doing if they can control just who their targets are and are not. In doing so, they clearly understand the meaning of taking away someone's life and in that sense emphasize with the value of life. This awareness heightens their enjoyment, vengeance and feelings of power, however there is no empathy for those they choose to kill.

   Let's be clear about empathy. It must be further clarified that when some theorists argue that serial and mass killers do exhibit empathy for their victims. This understanding of empathy is better thought of as an appreciation of feelings and emotion of another, or apprehending the gravity of the offense of murder. Unlike true empathy (i.e., where a person is able to identify intellectually and emotionally with the feelings and circumstances of another) killers actually derive a sense of pleasure and power from their victim's predicament. Arguably, the capacity for empathy as expressed by mass and serial killers, is merely the capacity to derive emotional gratification from inflicting suffering and harm on others.

The Roots of Evil: A Psychological Profile

   A motivational model developed by Burgess et al (1986) includes three factors that indicate who is likely to become a predator: repeated traumatic events (such as failure or ostracism in school, exclusion from a peer group and pervasive family dysfunction), developmental failures and interpersonal breakdown (Hickey, 2010, p. 148). These pre-dispositional factors are similar to those observed, beginning early in the lives of mass killers. For both the serial killer and mass killer, various forms of social rejection become cyclical, relentlessly

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self-perpetuating and worsening over time into a complete inability to connect appropriately with others.

Just like the mass murderer, the serial murderer's psyche is marked by low self-esteem; real and perceived rejection; and despair, powerlessness and self-loathing that is projected onto others. Both mass and serial killers direct blame for their real and perceived shortcomings outwardly. During adolescence and on into adulthood, the potential killer uses fantasy and daydreaming as a means to compensate for deficient social relationships. Over time, as distorted perceptions become ingrained thought patterns, this potentially violent criminal goes deeper and deeper into a fantasy world. Eventually it becomes an inefficient coping mechanism, the individual's attempt to re-establish psychological equilibrium must be advanced and the fantasy must be actualized (Proulx et al., 2007, p. 31).

Other common psychological characteristics for both serial and mass killers are feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and worthlessness. "They do not cope constructively with the early childhood traumas(s) and subsequently perceive themselves and their surroundings in a distorted manner. It is during this time of childhood development that *a process of dissociation* may occur." In adolescence, the potential killer seeks solace in fantasy and daydreaming as a substitute for social connections. The killer has "difficulty cultivating [these relationships] because of their [abnormally] poor social identity and depleted self confidence," (Shon & Milovanovic, 2006, p. 81).

Killing for company and intimacy. "Jeffrey Dahmer, responsible for the death and mutilation of 17 young men is representative of the quintessential,

sexually deviant," lust murderer (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 7 & 67). Although

Jeffery Dahmer's victims were males at the root of his sadistic sexual serial

killing was a pervasive pathological loneliness throughout most of his life. Just

like George Sodini—Dahmer wanted for intimacy or at least company with others

as opposed to his estrangement from society (Nichols, 2006). Dahmer was so

desperate for a partner that he fantasized about having a completely obedient,

cataleptic lover who would never abscond (Hickey, 2010, p. 114). He eventually

attempted his ultimate fantasy by drilling holes into the skulls of several victims

in hopes of turning them into "zombies" and "sex slaves that would never leave

him" (Hickey, 2010, p. 114).

David Nichols (2006) illustrates this extreme alienation factor in a detailed

biographical study of Jeffery Dahmer. Using the standard clinical scales of the

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley,

1943), Nichols presents the potential for an "item-centered understanding of the

MMPI protocol" in the case of serial killer Jeffery Dahmer (Nichols, 2006, p.

244). In this manner Dahmer's history and circumstances are

correlated/compared with Dahmer's self-reported "presentation of these matters

as he has been able to relate them to the MMPI item pool" (Nichols, 2006, p.

244). Nichols results found a profile that emphasizes Dahmer's "alienation from

others and from himself, a strongly depressive and hopeless orientation toward the

world and his coinhabitants, and specific paranoid fears of others' hostility"

(Nichols, 2006, p. 246). Many of these same traits are traceable in nearly all of

the misogynistic mass killers and sadistic serial killers discussed in this chapter.

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Gary Ridgway's path to fantasized and actualized murder. Levi-Minzi

and Shields (2007) in their article *Serial Sexual Murderers and Prostitutes as*

Their Victims, trace Gary Ridgway's "life and crimes as documented through

interview sequences recorded within *Defending Gary: Unraveling the Mind of the*

Green River Killer, by Prothero (2006) and *Chasing the Devil: My twenty-Year*

Quest to Capture the Green River Killer, by Reichert (2004)." Together these

authors reveal a childhood infused with abuse, adult sexual inadequacies and a

life of violent abusive fantasies towards women.

Ridgway grew up in a home "dominated by his mother" (Hickey, 2010, p. 24).

His father was frequently subjected to "emotional and physical" abuse at the

hands of Ridgway's mother (Hickey, 2010, p. 24). As a child Ridgway was a

chronic bed wetter, his mother would berate him for the behavior in front of his

brothers and additionally punish him in somewhat sexually inappropriate ways

(Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). His mother was notorious for dressing in a

sexually provocative manner while working in a men's clothing store and told

stories to her son's of men getting aroused when she would measure their suits

(Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). She would even go into detail about the smell of

her aroused customers genitals (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). To complicate his

childhood further, Ridgway was a poor student and his mother often threatened to

put him into a mentally retarded institution (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

Throughout adolescence Ridgway fantasized about having violent sex with his

mother. During this time he also began killing animals and setting fires (Levi-

Minzi & Shields, 2007).

At age 16 Ridgway stabbed a boy in the woods after school, but was never arrested for the offense (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). He additionally, began stalking women in his neighborhood that had previously rejected him (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). Ridgway also began having fantasies of "having sex with someone who is dead" (Reichert, 2004, p. 274). This idea probably came from stories his father would tell about coworkers taking part in necrophilia at the mortuary where he worked (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

Ridgway's first wife cheated on him while he was in the Navy. He was outraged at her and this may have accelerated his negative feelings about women. It was during this time, while still married to her that Ridgway became attracted to prostitutes (Hickey, 2010). His second wife recounted that Ridgway choked her, that he "enjoyed sexual bondage" and having sex in secluded places, like the banks of the Green River (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007, p. 79). Many ex-wives and ex-girlfriends additionally, recounted that he wanted to have sex several times a day, often in the woods and in some cases along the Green River very close to where victims were eventually discovered (Time, 2002). After Ridgway divorced his second wife he began having sex more frequently with prostitutes, but developed a growing hatred towards them because he believed they found him repugnant. (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). At this point he became unable to have sex with a living person and would rape his victims once they were dead (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). In spite of Ridgway's long, infamous killing career he had three marriages (the 3rd considered a good marriage by his wife),

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one son (from his 2nd marriage) and maintained the same job for 32 years (Hickey, 2010).

Tangible Fantasy Reinforcement Tools

Whereas mass killers may reinforce their revenge/sexual fantasies via diaries, manifestos, blogs and videotapes prior to a massacre, serial killers tend to keep an ongoing diary or detailed log of their crimes throughout their criminal career. The mass killer's records serve as a planning tool, as a manifesto justifying their killings, or as a means to ensure their infamy is memorialized. For instance George Sodini stated on his blog that, "Writing all of this is helping me justify my plan and to see the futility of continuing" (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source).

By contrast, the serial killer's records serves as a reminder after the fact of his crimes. The serial killer's record may consist of details such as physical descriptions of victims, where they were murdered, the method used to kill and even the speed of or other facts about how the victim ultimately died (Fox & Levin, 2005). Other serial killers such as Joel Rifkin are able to retain these sorts of minutiae mentally and are able to recall in rich detail facts such as: physical particulars of the victims (i.e., their hair color, clothing, physical appearance, etc.), the method and time of killing and disposal of the victim's remains (Fox & Levin, 2005). Still other serial killers may engage in overt trophy collection— keeping victims' body parts, clothing or jewelry or taking gruesome photos or videotapes of victims being tortured and dying. Ted Bundy was known to keep the bodies of his victims for days and it is believed that he even applied makeup

and shampooed the hair of several of his victims (Hickey, 2010, p. 153). All of these behaviors are tools for the killer to reinforce the fantasy and passion to kill and to re-experience the thrill of killing in an attempt to perfect upon the fantasy (Fox & Levin, (2005).

Lust killer Jeffrey Dahmer was an archetypal, souvenir collector throughout most of his life (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). Fantasies of what it would feel like to take the life of a human being existed long before Dahmer committed his first slaying (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006). Like Ridgway and Bundy his fantasy world was replete with images of abuse of power and domination over an unwilling person. Dahmer's pathological concept of sexual domination went so far as to involve the mutilation of the victim and gaining total possession of another. Dahmer often took photographs of his victims, both while he had them incapacitated on drugs as well as post mortem, in-order to "preserve" and enhance his feeling of "closeness" and fantasy (Nichols, 2006, p. 244). Dahmer dwelt upon this deviant sexual imagery, in order to escape a life of social isolation and hopelessness (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006).

Sadism was "integral to Dahmer's adolescent development" (Martens, 1993; Palermo, 2004; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p.76; Tithecott, 1999). In early childhood, Dahmer was preoccupied with and kept a souvenir collection of dead animals. Then, as a young man, Dahmer's fantasies progressed from homosexual intercourse with a completely compliant, albeit unconscious person to having a dead lover who could never leave. Dahmer even admitted to pleasure in the thought of dismembering and disemboweling victims (Egger, 2002; Flaherty,

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1993; Holmes & Holmes, 2002; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006; Schwartz, 1992). Not surprisingly, Dahmer's souvenir fetishism evolved in adulthood to saving human remains (i.e., his victims' genitals, scalps and skulls) (Flaherty, 1993; Hickey, 1997; 2002; Palermo, 2004; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006;). Dahmer continually used these trophies to reinforce his deviant sadistic sexual fantasy—even keeping some body parts in his locker at work (Flaherty, 1993; Hickey, 1997; 2002; Palermo, 2004; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006).

More generally, mementos from a crime scene allow the serial killer who has "otherwise led an unremarkable life, [to] feel proud and distinguished from others" (Fox & Levin, 2005). The souvenirs are representative of the power they have had over others and serve as a tangible reminder of the sexual arousal and physical thrill that came from each kill. Written records, souvenirs or memory (in a few cases) allow the serial killer to "still get pleasure, between captives, from reminiscing, daydreaming, fantasizing and even masturbating" (Fox & Levin, 2005).

Fantasy Compulsion, Capture or a Final Crescendo

"For the [serial] killer, the cycle becomes a never-ending pursuit of control over one's own life through the total domination and destruction of others' lives" (Hickey, 2010, p. 116). Jeffrey Dahmer (31-years-old) at the time of his capture—sadistically murdered 17 men and boys between 1978 and 1991—with the majority of the murders occurring between 1987 and 1991. Throughout this more recent killing period, Dahmer "devoted increased amounts of time to his fantasies, cognitions and impulses, to the extent that his activities began to

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interfere with his daily functioning" (Flaherty, 1993; Holmes & Holmes, 2002; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 81). During the final months prior to Dahmer's capture, he was "killing at a rate of one victim per month" (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 81). He was literally "hunting another victim even before completely disposing of his most recent victim's corpse" (Hickey, 2010, p. 116). At this point Dahmer was so absorbed in his sadistic fantasy world that he could no longer function in the real world. Just prior to his arrest he lost his job of seven years, he was behind in rent to the point of inevitable eviction and carelessly allowed a potential victim to escape (Purcell & Arrigo, 2006, p. 81).

Bundy too seemed to unravel near the end of his killing career. After Bundy's capture and escape from a Colorado Jail he was exuberant while making his journey across the country to Florida. However, once in Florida the high disappeared and he felt alone, insecure and drained (Leyton, 2003). Within 5 weeks from arriving in Florida he violently killed several Chi Omega sorority women while they were asleep in their rooms. He carelessly boasted to his rooming-house mates within hours of the massacre and followed the sorority killings with the murder of 12 year-old Kimberly Leach (Leyton, 2003). It appeared that the high and sense of equilibrium that he normally obtained from killing, would no longer sustain or fill the vast void in his life. "Overcome with depression, paranoia and the inability to make and act on decisions that would allow him to remain free," Bundy was apprehended several days later (Hickey, 2010, p. 153)

For the mass killer their life has been unraveling for years, but they too become consumed by their revenge fantasy world in the days, weeks or months prior to the their massacre and death or capture. Planning, fantasizing and justifying mass murder becomes, in their view, the best viable option to compensate and escape there failed existence (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1237). However, the mass killer must become organized to some degree, in order to secure weapons, prepare, practice and avoid detection—so they can ultimately pull off the final event—with a bang.

Conclusion

The role and influence of deviant sexual fantasies, including sexually sadistic practices, motivates some perpetrators. The theme is particular to a subset criminal typology. Dysfunctional psychosexual issues seem to arise among both mass and serial murderers. Mass and serial killers share many similarities both prior to their fantasy formation stage and during the fantasy conditioning process that spans over a substantial amount of time and increases in intensity and violence. However, the way in which these fantasies are expressed differs for each type of criminal.

Serial killers tend to have particularly detailed and elaborate fantasies— "scripts of violence," rich with themes of abuse and dominance (Skrapec 1996). Killing is a means of sexual arousal and gratification for this offender and in some instances may include gross acts of sexual sadism (Skrapec 1996). Themes of absolute power or immense enjoyment in the suffering of another motivate this killer.

The few mass killers who have a sexual motivation for their crimes likewise derive pleasure from their inner fantasy worlds and behaviors (Proulx et al., 2007). The mass killer, though, is more likely to have generalized feelings of misogyny, anger or hatred toward representative female victims. The mass killer typically lacks an intense need for sexual gratification from the imagined and actual homicides.

Mainstream theories on the moral development of the serial "lust" killer—and to a lesser extent, the mass killer—holds that these perpetrators lack the capacity to feel empathy toward another. The serial killer is conceived of as having utter disregard for the feelings and circumstances of their victim. These killers, in fact, pursue their own emotional gratification. They enjoy the violence of the act and the ability to exert total control over their victims. Other theorists argue that this behavior indicates serial and mass killers do have a capacity for empathy. However, this concept of empathy is better thought of as the killer's ability to comprehend the feelings and circumstances of another or to understand the gravity of their offenses. In actuality, these killers derive a self-centered emotional gratification from thinking about and engaging in violent criminal acts.

Chapter 6

Suicidal-Homicidal Ideation in Mass Killers

This chapter examines the role that suicidal-homicidal ideation plays in influencing mass killers. Repeated suicidal-homicidal fantasy processing normalizes thought patterns involving harm to oneself and others; and when combined with revenge fantasies or other violent fantasy imagery, it provides a sense of temporary respite from the realities of life. All the while, this process leads the killer closer and closer to taking lethal actions. The chapter begins by defining the action of suicide, its prevalence and several basic theories that attempt to explain its causation. Then by exploring theories and case studies on some people (i.e., behavioral health patients actively seeking treatment for an acute mood disorder) that may think about or commit suicide; this inquiry also looks at the patient's suicidal fantasy process as contrasted with the suicidal fantasy process indulged in by some mass killers. An understanding of the differences presented in these two groups shows why and how the mass killer is propelled toward particularly violent acts.

Definition of Suicide

Suicide is the act of "self-murder" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 2). French sociologist Emile Durkheim, in his book *Le Suicide* (1897) defines suicide as, " the termination of an individual's life, resulting directly from a negative or positive act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this fatal result." Suicide "is frequently regarded as the ultimate expression of distress" in individuals suffering from major depression or some other clinical mood disorder

(Hawton & Van Heeringen, 2000, p. 702). These individuals typically report (or clinicians observe) feeling entirely overwhelmed and burdened by an inescapable sense of futility (Hawton & Van Heeringen, 2000). Put another way, suicide is also understood as an "act aimed at obtaining relief from an unbearable" anguish (Michel, 2000, p. 666).

Statistics

Approximately 30,000 people in the United States die by their own hand every year (Holmes & Holmes, 2005). "Suicide ranks 11th as the leading cause of death in the United States, whereas homicide ranks 14th" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 3). Even more alarming, "suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 24" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 3).

"There are about 25 attempts for every completed suicide" and men are more successful than women (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 5). Men are seven times more likely to use a firearm to commit suicide than women (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). Just like with many mass killers it may be that men simply have more familiarity with firearms than women do (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 5). "Single people commit suicide more often than married people" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 6). Also contrary to prior beliefs "there is no significant statistical relationship between suicide and occupation" (Foxhall, 2001; Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 8).

Why People Commit Suicide

Societal Factors. Durkheim, considered the father of sociology, saw suicide as the result of a collective social force much more than the result of individual

factors (Joiner, 2005). Specifically, Durkheim believed that suicide "arose from societal pressures and influences" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 2). Durkheim alleged that a "common denominator in all suicides is a disturbed regulation of the individual by society" (Joiner, 2005, p. 33). In other words, suicide occurs based on "how society interacts with individuals and how individual actions reflect something of the nature and structure of societies" (Pritchard, 1995, p. 24). This theory explains the relationship between one's level of integration within a given social structure, the level of regulation within that culture and how Durkheim's observations on the motives for suicide will be prevalent within the given culture based on that society. These various theories will be explored more fully herein.

Durkheim identified four suicide typologies—*anomic, altruistic, egoistic* and *fatalistic*. An *"anomic"* suicide "is caused by sudden changes [in one's social position] mainly as a result of economic upheavals" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 30; Joiner, 2005, p. 34). This change typically occurs abruptly, with either the gain or loss of significant material wealth. It is the speed and abruptness of this type of drastic change, whether at the societal or individual level, that then implicates "changes in the norms and values of a society" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 30; Joiner, 2005, p. 34). An example of a drastic economic change that led to many suicides was the Great Depression of the early 1930s (Holmes & Holmes, 2005). Many people lost vast fortunes practically overnight, and they simply could not cope with the necessary adjustments in their personal status, or with the nascent social realities created by economic decline (Lester & Yang,

1998). The downward spiral of the American economy also effected lower income families in the 1930s. Employment was difficult to obtain, with the official rate of unemployment near 25%, which plunged thousands of people into destitution and abjectness. Researchers Henry and Short, in conducting a survey on economic history in 1954, observed "that suicide and the business cycle are related by monotonic negative function." Thus, anomie can result in a measurable increase in suicide during times of severe economic crises.

However, not all "anomic" suicides are purely tied to economic factors. The loss of a relationship, as in a separation or divorce, or an abject sense of loneliness from never quite fitting in socially, are other facilitators for an "anomic" suicide. This type of perceived loss is typical among family annihilators.   The family annihilator often feels isolated, misunderstood and helpless, so he or she launches a campaign of violence typically against those who share his home" (Holmes & Holmes, 2001, p.85). This typology similarly tends to fit many suicidal mass killers.

Another typology, the *"altruistic"* suicide (or murder-suicide), is also prevalent among family annihilators and occurs during times of financial distress. In this typology heads of households strike out against their family because of the shame in not being able to provide for their families. This killer believes their families would be better off and that the act of suicide (or more commonly, murder-suicide) is done in the family's best interest or it is the only way the family will be relieved of undeserved material loss. Often, the killer goes further—murdering the entire family first before taking his own life—in order to ultimately save

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everyone. Theorists view the "a*ltruistic"* killer as being motivated by some personal value, which is held to be more important than themselves or their families.

   "Egoistic" suicide, occurs among those people who believe that they are leading a dismal, unrewarding or boring life and they are simply tired of it. This type of suicide is the most inwardly directed or self-centered act. The individual seeks to end her life, not because of any perceived external pressures (i.e., economic ruin or affront to a personal belief, value or perception); rather, the suicidal actor sees living as futile—and in a seemingly contradictory way, he or she feels superior and blames others for their own disappointments in life. An example of this typology is seen in the case of Andrew Joseph Stack III (discussed in prior chapters), the aerial assailant from Texas. Although Stack was attempting mass murder along with his own suicide, reports and interviews following the incident suggest that Stack was motivated by ego-driven irrationality. Stack's personal life was a mess: he was an unemployed software engineer, nearly out of money; his marriage was in shambles and he owed a large sum of money to the IRS. In Stack's 3000 word suicide note posted on his website he showed disdain and blame towards numerous social institutions, but primarily the tax system and big government, for his personal problems (FOXNews.com, Feb. 18, 2010). The egoistic suicidal person never really acknowledges that they have any shortcomings—rather they view life's failings and disappointments as caused by flaws or unjustness from others.

Finally, the "*fatalistic*" suicide occurs when a person of low social integration (i.e., a member of a repressed or disenfranchised group or class or someone otherwise deemed an outsider) is viewed as in a situation from which they deem there is no escape. The person may be terminally ill, in a bad or abusive relationship, or their financial resources are limited. This type of suicidal person lives in an over-regulated environment, in which they have little influence or resources. Their life circumstance leads to an unrewarding or repressive existence, wherein death may be viewed as the only means to exit insurmountable hardships. The fatalistic motive for suicide is seen most drastically with impoverished women from socially repressive Middle Eastern or Southeast Asian cultures, where cases of self-immolation frequently make headlines in US news and feminist-oriented investigative reports.

Durkheim did not spend much time on the fatalistic cause of suicide—given that from his social perspective and time period—he believed fatalistic suicide was quite rare. However, it is a theory that does at times in part seem to apply to some mass killer's. Examples wherein fatalism motivates violent suicidal murder can be seen in many workplace shootings. For example the case of Joseph Wesbecker (discussed in prior chapters), a printing tradesman that had put in decades of service to Standard Gravure of Louisville, Kentucky was disgusted by the perceived lack of "respect" the company had shown him (Ramsland, 2005, p.96). He believed that "the company was destroying him," and so he vowed, "to get them first" which he did in a 20-minute murderous rampage at the printing company (Duwe, 2007; Fox & Levin, 2005).

It should be noted that Durkheim's sociological explanation for suicide (or murder-suicide) can overlap. In other words, an individual's motives often do not fit neatly into only one classification. For example day trader Mark Barton (discussed in prior chapters), who killed his wife and two children at his home before shooting to death nine people and injuring twelve in the day-trading facilities at two Atlanta, Georgia, investment brokerage companies may have fit three of Durkheim's typologies (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010). Barton went on this shooting spree after losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single day (Fox & Levin, 2005). He described the brokerage firms in his journal as "destroying" him (Mendoza, 2002). Barton's mass killing spree and suicide fits the pattern of: an anomic killing—for reasons due to the financial loss; an altruistic killing—out of self-righteous concern for his family's potential suffering due to the financial loss; and to a lesser extent, a fatalistic killing—as there seemed to be no other way out of this plight.

Overall, as far as Durkheim's Social theories it seems that a combination of anomic and egotistic motives are the most applicable to mass killers. Of course, each case is dependent on the particular facts. Additionally, the altruistic theory may be implicated in some cases of familicides. The fatalistic typology, however, is probably the least applicable to most mass killers.

Just as there is no one theory or cause that explains serial and mass killing, there is no one theory or cause that explains suicide (Holmes & Holmes, 2005). People may mortally harm themselves because of converging genetic, neurobiological, emotional and psychological factors as well as the sociological

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factors covered herein. Concerning biological factors—suicide "often runs in families" (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 33). This may also be true for a genetic psychiatric profile that triggers violent behavioral impulse control inwardly or outwardly which in turn could increase the risk for suicide and/or homicide (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 33). With regard to suicidal mass killers, it appears that a specific intertwining of social, emotional and psychological factors predominate in the majority of cases. It is these aspects, along with a more in-depth look at Durkheim's anomie theory that will be discussed further.

   The psychology of self-hate. Some theorists hypothesized that individual dysfunction, rather than sociological factors, are the root cause of suicide. "In almost every case, suicide is caused by pain"—an unbearable sense of failure or self-loathing that "stems from thwarted or distorted psychological needs" (Joiner, 2005, p. 35). Edwin Schneidman (1991) noted the following common characteristics of any suicide: the victim's real and perceived emotional pain, loneliness or isolation, which provides a fertile environment for the individual to nurture distorted beliefs—particularly the belief that death is the only solution (Holmes & Holmes, 2005; Schneidman, 1991). Seligman (1978) notes that "70-80% of all people who kill themselves are suffering from depression" (Henden, 2008, p. 25). While consumed by depression, typical clinical observations can emerge. Certain individuals prone to suicide will exhibit: 1) a markedly diminished ability to solve problems, including inflexibility of thinking; and 2) an erroneous conviction about the futility in living (Pritchard, 1995). It is this

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"inflexible thinking and inability to seek or complete solutions to problems" that ignites a self-destructive cognitive pattern (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 34).

Noted psychoanalyst, Karl Menninger was one of the first practitioners to use Freudian theory in understanding suicide. Menninger, using Freud's ideas about "hostility directed inwardly," identified a cycle of cognitive dysfunction that is commonly observed in most suicidal patients (Holmes & Holmes, 2005, p. 34). For instance, the following passage from noted author and poet Sylvia Plath demonstrates Menninger's theory. Plath infamously and sadly committed suicide in the early 1960s, at a time when established clinical protocols for treating suicidal patients were still in their infancy: "I am accused. I dream of massacres – hating myself, hating and fearing – arms held out in love. It is this perverse love of death that sickens everything" (Plath, 1981; Pritchard, 1995, p. 59). Plath's musings illustrate what Menninger saw as the key unconscious dimensions of thought observed in any suicidal patient. Menninger devised a three-part explanation. There is first seen a revenge/hate cycle—giving birth to a wish to kill; the second phase is marked by depression/hopelessness—spurring a wish to die; and thirdly, there is a rising sense of guilt/shame—which leads to a fervent desire to be killed (Holmes & Holmes, 2005). Each phase shows how progressively lethal, inwardly-directed violence builds to implosion.

The social and psychological influence. Another group of researchers also incorporated Freudian theories into their work on the phenomena of suicide. Henry and James Short (1957) concentrated on Freud's "frustration-aggression hypothesis" and connected this theory to both social and psychological

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determinants. The researchers believed that a combination of psychological and sociological influences results in self-inflicted aggression for a minority of the severely emotionally distressed (Lester and Yang, 1997, p. 23ee). "Their [Short and Short] explanation states that: (a) self-inflicted aggression is often a consequence of extreme frustration, (b) frustrations often arise due to an individual's failure to maintain a constant status, or to achieve a rising status, within a given social hierarchy, and that (c) such frustrations are traceable to or correlate indirectly with fluctuations in an economy's business cycles, wherein financial loss for some individuals means suffering through shame at the loss of wealth and social prestige (Lester & Yang, 1997). Short and Short did not definitively determine what causes a person to so inadequately cope with frustrations; rather, the researchers noted the need and importance of future research into the psychological and sociological impetus for suicides or murder-suicides.

Suicide is viewed by society as indicative of the degree to which there is social "cohesion or dis-cohesion" (Pritchard, 1995, p. 24). Thus, the "ethos of a society can have a profound impression upon its members" (Pritchard, 1995, p. 24). Instrumental to this is that "those involved in suicidal behavior are not only rejecting their plight, but may well be responding to their experience of some longstanding social, and therefore, psychological rejection by others, be it family," schoolmates, co-workers, or society in general (Pritchard, 1995, p. 24). This form of rejection can range from being labeled as—odd, queer, crazy, poor, dumb, looser, or simply a misfit in general to the group with whom the individual

is surrounded with. No matter how individualistic a person is—everyone is

defined by relationships with others (Pritchard, 1995). Thus, painful rejection

from one's social environment—leading to isolation, loneliness, and despair—

eventually overwhelms the already impaired coping mechanisms in some

individuals. Some individuals, as a result, retreat into a world of fantasy.

The Role of Fantasy in Suicide

    Suicidal ideation: Normalizing harm to self. "Anecdotal and empirical

evidence suggests that suicidal individuals daydream as a method of mood

regulation" (Selby, Anestis and Joiner, Jr., 2007, p. 867). "Severely suicidal

individuals" commonly indulge in "intense, vivid, and prolonged ideation about

their death" by their own hand (Selby et al., 2007, p. 867). Suicidal persons often

report imagining their death very clearly—as if they are creating and watching a

vivid film of their own demise (Selby et al., 2007). "For example, Schneidman

(1996, p. 75) reports the case of a woman, "Beatrice," who constantly engaged in

daydreaming about her death: *"Every night before fading off to sleep, I imagined*

committing suicide," she explained. *"I became obsessed with death. I rehearsed*

my own funeral over and over, adding careful details each time" (Selby et al.,

2007, p. 867). "Many severely suicidal individuals have a romantic attachment to

death;" their daydreams, in the short-run, seem to be a pleasant activity to them

(Selby et al., 2007, p. 868). Suicide is contemplated as a positive solution. It is

an escape from the unbearable pain of life. Violent fantasizing may increase the

likelihood of suicide, because ruminating normalizes the idea of inflicting lethal

self-injury (Selby et al., 2007). Rudd, Joiner, and Rajab (2001, p. 175) report the

case of a man who had recently purchased a gun in contemplation of his own death. In an entry in his journal shortly after buying the gun, the man writes, *"I fired my gun today; five rounds. It's really loud. I've been seeing myself do it now, thinking about it, dreaming about it [suicide]."* "This man died" by a self-inflicted gunshot wound "days later" (Selby et al., 2007, p. 868).

Suicidal ideation, while possibly initially cathartic, actually leads to emotional "dysregulation" (Selby et al., 2007, p. 868).   As an individual goes deeper and deeper into the fantasy, he or she dissociates from reality and his or her affect becomes markedly negative. Thus, retreat into a "second world" of violent fantasy increases the likelihood of engaging in self-injurious behavior (Selby et al., 2007).

Suicidal ideation in mass killers. Suicide is often associated with mass murder (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010). In the past, its been estimated that roughly 25% of mass killers plan and do take their own lives or they force a suicide by the hands of the police (Fox & Levin, 2005). However, more recently Hickey (2010) states the rate at 50%. This, of course, happens after the rampage during which the killer attempts to "get even" with everyone deemed "responsible" for the killer's "miseries and failures" in life (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 163).

Most suicidal persons never physically harm anyone else (Fox & Levin, 1998). Suicidal individuals—who suffer from major depression or other mental illnesses or pervasive stressors—see themselves as worthless and blame themselves for their perceived failures in life (Fox & Levin, 1998). Their aggression is "intro-

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punitive;" that is, they turn their anger inward (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439; Henry & Short, 1954).

By contrast, the suicidal mass killer never sees himself as at fault. The mass killer externalizes his anger and disappointment, blaming others for the killer's own real or perceived losses (Fox & Levin, 1998; Henry & Short, 1954). When thoughts of anger and revenge are outwardly expressed concomitantly with depression and suicidal ideation, the degree of such disturbance can be measured, thereby providing a statistical assessment of the likelihood of harm (Selby et al., 2007). This statistical model is discussed more fully in the next section.

The Columbine Killers' self-made videos illustrate how these killers externalized blame. Excerpts from Dylan and Klebold's basement videotapes depict them facing their imminent shooting rampage that will culminate in their suicides as well. Eric states, "*It's a weird feeling knowing you're going to be dead in two and a half weeks."* Eric goes on to say *"he can't decide if we should do it before or after prom."* At the end of this section of the tape, Harris says, *"he wishes he could have re-visited Michigan and "old friends.""* He falls silent then and appears to start crying, wiping a tear from the left side of his face. He shuts the camera off (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site).

In this video footage Eric quietly and deeply reflects on his forthcoming death. The behavior is common among suicidal persons, who create and watch mental videos of their own death. Klebold and Harris take things a step further, though. They make actual videotapes to re-play and live out; thereby, they transform their

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fantasy to a new, tangible level. They imagine, create and can then continuously review their plans of revenge.

Engaging in revenge fantasies while suicidal may increase feelings of isolation and emotional numbness (Barber, Maltby, & Macaskill, 2005; Selby et al., 2007). It has been documented, for instance, "that ruminating about revenge" hinders a person's capacity to forgive others (Barber et al., 2005; Selby et al., 2007, p. 877). Thus, for suicidal mass killers the immersion into their revenge fantasy world further disconnects them from reality and diminishes any likelihood for forgiveness of self and others.

Seung Hui Cho exhibited this behavior several years before he attended Virginia Tech. Cho (15-years-old) at the time wrote a disturbing paper for his English class vividly recounting his thoughts about "suicide and homicide," and he indicated, "that he wanted to repeat Columbine," (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 35). Cho deeply identified with the Columbine shooters, Harris and Klebold. He openly expressed admiration for the Columbine Killers' "martyrdom" and for their ability to "stand up" to those who had mistreated them (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 35).

Although Dr. Amy Bishop did not herself commit suicide, she does model the connection between fantasizing of violent revenge contemporaneously with suicidal ideation. Bishop did express thoughts of suicide prior to shooting six colleagues at the University of Alabama. A friend and fellow member of a writing group, which Bishop belonged to during her time in Massachusetts, reported she had penned three unpublished novels. One novel featured a female

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scientist working to defeat a potential pandemic virus, and struggling with suicidal thoughts at the threat of not earning tenure," (Beard, February 17, 2010, *The Boston Globe*). Her literary work is indicative of her mental state shortly before the massacre. The time Bishop spent developing this story line may have been the push she needed to desensitize her to the reality of violence and death.

The "escape" fantasy—A killer's catharsis. Just as the planning (fantasy) stage of suicide is temporarily an emotional regulator or an escape from reality, so is the planning (fantasy) stage of mass murder. Fantasy is cathartic. It temporarily takes the perpetrator away from his or her suffering and allows him or her to externalize the blame for his or her own personal failures.

An example of this temporary cathartic release—along with how the progression of the fantasy promotes the actual outcome—is exemplified in the personal blog and two, hand-written notes by George Sodini the LA Fitness shooter. Sodini writes about contemplating and carrying out, what he referred to as the *"exit plan,"* while also revealing that he *"chickened out"* of carrying out such a shooting earlier in the year. Additionally, Sodini explains how *"writing all this is helping me justify my plan and to see the futility of continuing"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). In a blog eight months prior to the massacre, Sodini further writes that, *"This log is not detailed. It is only for confidence to do this."* He continues, *"I chickened out! I bought the loaded guns, everything. Hell!"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). The written planning process is a method of—over time—building

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confidence in one's twisted plan and normalizing or justifying impending criminal behavior.

Sodini makes several references as to the cathartic nature of his 9-month period of blogging. For instance, he states, *"I enjoy writing these entries," "that felt good,"* and *"[It] feels good to write and get it all out"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). These entries demonstrate the pleasurable experience of existing in his second world of fantasy; how for him imagining revenge or murder by proxy serves as a surrogate for the lack of or minimal interpersonal connections.

Similar to the progression of a suicidal person's fantasy, mass killer, Sodini writes a blog that builds momentum with its rich details. He describes exactly how he will carry out his plan and imagining what it will feel like. Over time, he used the site to build up the confidence needed to carry out such violence, as well as rehearsing mentally the details necessary to pull off the act.

Subsequent events, and even subsequent strains, may change the killer's timing—accelerating plans (or as in Sodini's case) postponing plans, until he builds confidence and perfects the mental rehearsal for violent revenge.

Similarly, the aerial assailant Andrew Joseph Stack III describes journaling as a cathartic process: "If you're reading this, you're no doubt asking yourself, "Why did this have to happen?" The simple truth is that it is complicated and has been coming for a long time. The writing process, started many months ago, was intended to be therapy in the face of the looming realization that there isn't enough therapy in the world that can fix what is really broken" (FOXNews.com,

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Feb. 18, 2010). For Stack, like Sodini, what was perhaps intended to be a temporary respite from a harsh and cruel world, ended up being a tool that validated their feelings of hopelessness, failure and retribution. This form of rumination ultimately justified suicidal and homicidal revenge.

Suicidal-Homicidal Ideation In Mass Killers: Normalizing Harm To Self and Others

Violent daydreaming may increase suicidality because it normalizes the thought of inflicting lethal self-injury, which is "symptamatology" more prevalent in severely clinically depressed individuals (Selby et al., 2007, p. 870). Daydreaming becomes an escape from emotional pain and suffering, paradoxically by ruminating on acts of violent self-injury. In the context of suicidality, where thoughts of anger and revenge are outwardly expressed rather than being inwardly directed as common with most depressed suicidal individuals—psychologists have identified a direct correlation between suicidality, anger and a predisposition, of inflicting harm on self and others (Selby et al., 2007).

This relationship is measured by correlating results of the Thoughts of Revenge subscale of the Anger Rumination Scale (ARS; Sukhodolsky, Golub, & Cromwell, 2001), the Beck Depression Inventory [BDI]), and the Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation (BSS) sub-scale (Selby et al., 2007, p. 874). The ARS sub-scale provides a measure of a subject's tendency to engage in violent rumination; in other words, it measures the tendency to be generally angry. The BDI (BSS) sub-scale is used to assess the degree of suicidality in clinically depressed patients,

thereby providing an objective measure of the likelihood of self-harm (Selby et al., 2007). This tool helps the clinician in developing an objective measure of a patient's self-reported subjective feelings.

Moreover, by analyzing results from the ARS with results from the BDI, researchers have found that the specificity of the Thoughts of Revenge subscale of the ARS reflects a subject's tendency to engage in violent suicidal ideation and violent daydreaming (Selby et al., 2007, p. 874). The correlation, then, offers a more robust assessment of one's likelihood to harm self and others—and provides insight beyond some objective measure of a subject exhibiting generalized anger.

The Columbine boy's video of March 15th, 1999 shows how the convergence of outwardly directed anger, revenge and suicidality is a lethal recipe. The boy's video exudes caustic bitterness toward self and others; they talk about starting a revolution of the dispossessed. Eric: *"We're going to kick-start a revolution."* The teens discuss coming back as ghosts to haunt the survivors, to *"create flashbacks from what we do and drive them insane."* Eric: *"You guys will all die, and it will be fucking soon! I hope you get an idea of what we're implying here. You all need to die! We need to die, too! We need to fucking kick-start the revolution here!"* Dylan: *"The most deaths in U.S. history."* Dylan: *"We're hoping. We're hoping. I hope we kill 250 of you"* (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site).

Particularly in the case of rampage school shootings, evidence shows that victimization, such as bullying and social exclusion over a considerable time

produces an inner sense of hopelessness and vulnerability in the victims (Newman et al., 2004).

This was the case, for example, in Columbine. Key elements in Newman et al.'s (2004) analysis of rampage school shootings show how the combined impact of physical and psychological torment, ridicule, belittling and enforcement of a social hierarchy of exclusion encourage some victims of bullying to see violence as an "escape" from a perceived hopeless situation.

Columbine shooter Eric Harris left behind many more artifacts that revealed his anger and contempt for his tormentors and his sense of hopelessness. In Eric's diary entries he makes references to Nazi's—probably for its symbolism of horrific, destructive power: *"If you recall your history, the Nazi's came up with the "final solution" to the Jewish problem…kill them all, well in case you haven't figured it out yet, I say, KILL MANKIND, no one should survive"* 6/12/98 (Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Columbine Documents, p. 91, JC-001-026010). Another entry begins with *"I hate the fucking world "so much"* (p. 84, JC-001-026003). In his diary on 11/22/98 he lists the weapons and ammunition he had just purchased and then states, *"we…. have…GUNS! We fucking got 'em you sons of bitches: HA! HAHAHA!"* (Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Columbine Documents, p. 97, JC-001-026016). On his Website, Eric "posted images filled with fire, skulls, devils, weapons and diagrams of pipe bombs" (Alvarez & Bachman, 2003, p. 2). Throughout his notebooks, he sketched caricatures of muscle-bound men dressed in combat fatigues and loaded with weaponry (Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Columbine Documents, p. 103, 606,

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JC-001-026022, JC-001-026520). One such picture had the letter "E" and "D,

presumably for Eric and Dylan above the heads of them. The trail that the

Columbine killers left behind reveals a fanatical interest in violence and

homicidal ideation.

Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech Shooter, shared this same ghoulish

fascination with inflicting gruesome violence, death and destruction on victims.

In his last two years of college Cho, had become known to many students and

faculty for his disturbing, hostile and grossly violent writings. He also displayed

inappropriate "violent emotions" and "threatening behavior" when he read one of

his poems out loud in class (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 41-42).

During the fall of 2005, students who took a creative writing class with Cho were

so afraid and intimidated by him that several of them formally withdrew from the

course (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 43).

Cho's disturbing behavior continued unabated. In the spring of 2006, Cho

wrote an alarming short story for another course. The story featured a young

male antihero, Bud, who hates the students at his school so much he wanted to kill

them and himself (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 24). The main

character, not surprisingly, fits Cho's description of himself to perfection. One

telling passage from the story reveals Bud's impressions upon arrival to school:

"Students strut inside smiling, laughing, embracing each other…. A few eyes

glance at Bud but without the glint of recognition." Bud then exclaims, *"I hate*

this! I hate all of these frauds! I hate my life…. This is it…. This is when you

damn people die with me…" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 50).

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Cho, immersed in his homicidal fantasies, is quite explicitly sharing these feelings with his peers and instructors under the guise of schoolwork. This story is literally a blueprint for the massacre that would transpire roughly a year later (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 23).

Writings such as short stories, essays, compositions as well as drawings depicting violence aid some mass killers with realizing their destructive fantasies. Cho additionally, wrote two plays that were dark and violent in their mood and tone. The theme of these works centered on the protagonist's vengeance and the desire to kill. Cho, like Dr. Amy Bishop, had aspirations of being a published author. In both instances, they never realized their goals, which possibly represented one more undeserved rejection by society. Such a distorted perception is then further projected onto the main characters in these killers' writings; the protagonist is always portrayed as the victim, attempting to right some personal injustice with lethal violence.

Conclusion

The causes of suicide and murder-suicide are complex phenomena. Many factors—sociological, psychiatric or psychological and individualistic—conspire to push some individuals to extreme and desperate measures. For both groups, a period of vivid rumination is instrumental to actually advancing their fantasized plans. However, here the motivations to inflict harm upon oneself (or oneself and others) diverge as explained in more detail.

A pattern of vivid, obsessive rumination on violence also is observed in clinically depressed suicidal patients. These individuals report that imagining a

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violent death at their own hand, paradoxically, brings a sense of peace—similar to the way violent revenge fantasies bring a sense of relief to the mass killer. Suicidal patients rarely harm others, and if intervention is sought many tend not to follow through with harming themselves. Part of the reason has to do with the focus of their anger and loss. Suicidal individuals tend to be "intro-punitive." They internalize the blame for real or imagined failures, and they seek primarily to escape from such failures, or to inflict "punishment" on him or herself for the same reasons.

Yet suicide is associated with mass killing. Approximately 50% of mass killers plan and do take their own lives (Hickey, 2010). While suicidal patients are intro-punitive, such a trait is not a part of the mass killer's make up. Mass killers—even those who are clinically depressed and suicidal—externalize the blame for their real or imagined losses. Inevitably, someone or something outside of the killer is responsible for his or her shortcomings. When violent, angry revenge fantasies are directed at others concurrently with the expression of suicidal depressive symptoms, psychologists have shown a correlation between the predisposition to violence and likelihood of inflicting massive harm on both self and others.

Chapter 7

The Mass Killer's Search for Validation Through, Infamy and

Media Attention

This chapter examines the mass killer's fractured self-concept. An inquiry into the personal histories of these killers reveals that most suffered some severe interruption to their psychological and social development. As a result of such impediment, the killer becomes consumed with one or more fantasy themes, which ultimately underlie the crimes: reclaiming masculinity, pride and power; indulgence in a reaction fantasy; or a hubristic drive for media attention and infamy. Fantasies may include imagined reactions of peers, or the general public's reaction and imagined media attention. The actual role of these varied fantasy themes are assumed to be, at least in part, an impetus for homicide.

The Fractured Identity

As discussed previously in the "Theory" chapter, criminologist Lonnie Athens conceived of three concepts *(i.e., phantom others/phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and dramatic self-change)* that are particularly helpful in understanding how a potential mass killer's developmental impairments interact in an incendiary way with the killer's fantasy process. Athens theories on the self and the effects of negative life experiences are similar to the more widely accepted theories of Hickey. Hickey's *trauma-control model* looks into the "destabilizing event(s)" (i.e., what Athens calls fragmentation) that invariably are found in the personal histories of violent offenders (Hickey. 2010, p. 107). These pre-dispositional factors include *having an unstable home life; experiencing the death of one or*

both parents; being subject to harsh physical punishment; enduring physical or sexual abuse; having a caregiver who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted; or experiencing other adverse events etc. (Hickey, 2010). Both researchers focus to some extent on the role that severe psychological or physical traumas (i.e., for Athens it's labeled a "violentization process"; for Hickey it's a wide range of negative external influences) play in derailing the individual. Traumatic events are the root cause in *destabilizing* (Hickey) or *fragmenting* (Athens) the individual. Athens theory of fractured identity maps the process in terms of a renewed or reinvented concept of self or a whole/integrated self.   In some instances such developmental gestalt is not possible and an individual emerges with a permanently fragmented identity.

When an individual cannot assimilate socially and has a defective internal reference (i.e., *phantom community*) point to guide them, then "conflicting thoughts and emotions" will overwhelm the individual. He or she will reach a point of complete helplessness, vulnerability and internal division (Athens, 1995 p. 574). First, let us briefly review Athens' definitions of the above three concepts.

The *"phantom self/phantom community"* idea purports that violent killers "attach different, violent meanings to their social experiences" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 83). Athens' contends that all individuals are in conversations with *"phantom others,"* which he defines as "our past significant social experiences" (Athens, 1997, p. 130). These "voices" stay in our thoughts and go wherever we go; lying "far beneath our normal level of conscious awareness" (Athens, 1997, p. 139;

Rhodes, 1999, p. 83). Together these voices of past experiences form a *"phantom community,"* an amalgam of past social experiences. It is from this internal repository that a killer generates "hidden sources of emotions" such as "fear, anger and hate" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 83 & 275).   The potential killer, however, has a fractured self, arising from the exceptional history of social experiences. It is this distorted phantom community—not some generalized sense of otherness— through which violent criminals find justification for their acts (Athens, 1999).

Related to this concept of *phantom self /phantom community* is Athens' concept of the *"self as soliloquy."* According to Athens, "the self should be viewed" as dynamic, reinterpreting and re-applying the lessons of one's phantom community. But the self is constrained by the stability of the 'other' (Rhodes, 1999, p. 274).   The 'other' with whom the self soliloquizes "must account for both conformity and individuality" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 274).

It is from this soliloquy with *phantom communities* (ourselves) that we build our own "self-portraits" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276). Our past social experiences (i.e., phantom selves) shape our perceptions. If our *phantom community* is fragmented—that is, there is dissonant internal dialogue—then formation of the self is not completed or clear. This dissonance causes one to become a riddle to [him or herself], having a contradictory, divided self (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276).

For the killer, it is the distorted subconscious dialogue with their phantom community that forms their inaccurate perceptions of themselves and society. Ultimately, the killer's self concept is at odds with their understanding of individuality and social conformity.

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Lastly, Athens' concept of *dramatic self-change* focuses specifically on this fragmentation or dissonance. *Dramatic self-change* is a result of a person undergoing a social experiential process that has five distinct stages: (1) fragmentation, (2) provisional unity, (3) praxis, (4) consolidation, and (5) social segregation (Athens, 1995, p. 573). This process is evolutionary, occurring over time until the old self disappears and a new self replaces the old (Athens, 1995). In the case of violent offenders, the new self is not a better one; it is a fragmented one.

Fragmentation. Fragmentation occurs when "people's selves" undergo a "traumatizing experience that is so utterly foreign to them that they cannot" absorb it (Athens, 1995, p. 573). The experience is devastating because what the individual thought to be true about their world is negated. The result of such disturbance propels the individual into total emotional and psychological disarray (Athens, 1995, p. 573; Marris, 1975, pp. 7-25). Athens observes that trauma (including various forms of brutality or personal horrification) which leaves its victims psychically wounded, is among the main causes of fragmentation. Violent subjugation—generates emotions of "rage" in a victim. This rage is sometimes expressed during childhood as severely "maladaptive behaviors such as, torturing animals; enuresis, or chronic bed-wetting; and fire-setting" (Hickey, 2010, p. 97). Such subjugation creates a sense of powerlessness, whereby the individual seeks refuge in an inner world. This type of internalized *personal horrification* can occur at a very young age. The brutalized child becomes deeply introverted over time, so as to lose any meaningful sense of connection and

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empathy by adolescence or young adulthood. For the potential mass killer, such introversion eventually manifests into a progressive inability to interact in pro-social ways.

Emotional security for a child is integral to formation of a healthy self-identity and pro-social relationships (Crenshaw & Garbario, 2007). Research confirms that children who begin life with disrupted attachments are frequently predisposed to "destructive future relationships, failure of empathy, problems trusting others and difficulties in relating to authority figures" (Crenshaw & Garbario, 2007, p. 165). The Virginia Tech Review Panel (2207), which attempted to thoroughly dissect the life and events leading up to Seung Hui Cho's campus massacre, detailed such a history of childhood trauma caused by early and pervasive health problems. "When Cho was just 9 months old he had developed whooping cough and then pneumonia" (p. 31). He was hospitalized and diagnosed with either a "heart murmur" or "a hole in his heart". Then at the age of three, Cho underwent invasive and painful medical testing, in order to diagnose the problem further (p. 32). Cho's family members observed "from that point on" the boy did not want to be touched. Cho was "generally perceived as frail," cried often and was sick a lot (p. 32). When the family still lived in Korea, Cho had very few friends and he was extremely quiet. Cho's introverted personality was so severe that his family expressed alarm—even in a culture where quietness is favorably perceived as a sign of intelligence and scholarly abilities.

Creation of the provisional self. In light of the deficient or brutal personal experiences endured, usually very early in an individual's life, he or she is left ill

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equipped to engage in normal social relations. To compensate, this wounded

subject develops a provisional self (Athens, 1995 p. 575). Then, the individual

desperately seeks out people with similar experiences (successfully or

unsuccessfully) in an attempt to form a temporary, "unified" self (Athens, 1995 p.

575). This was evident in the union of two outcast boys, the Columbine shooters

(Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold).

In an attempt to get at the cause of the massacre and better understand the

profile of these killers, the FBI convened a summit in Leesburg, Va., that included

recognized psychiatrist Dr. Frank Ochberg of Michigan State and Supervisory

Special Agent Dwayne Fuselier" (Cullin, 2004). After reviewing the dossiers on

the Columbine shooters, Fuselier and Ochberg concluded that Eric Harris and

Dylan Klebold were "radically different individuals, with vastly different motives

and opposite mental conditions" (Cullin, 2004). Klebold was described as

hotheaded, depressive and suicidal—essentially tending toward a self-punitive,

self-blaming nature (Cullin, 2004). Klebold fit the profile of any severely

emotionally troubled teen, but he was unfortunate on two counts: the lack of

insight into the severity of his psychological problems; and the company he chose

to keep. According to Ochsberg and Fuselier, Eric Harris was the diabolical

figure out of the two boys. Harris on the surface appeared to be a "sweet-faced

and well-spoken," boy; but digging further into the evidence revealed Harris' true

nature to be "cold, calculating, and homicidal" Cullin, 2004). Harris was not

merely a troubled kid like his buddy. The FBI's psychiatrists concluded that this

boy was undoubtedly a psychopath (Cullin, 2004). "Ochsberg theorizes that the

two killers complemented each other," with the calculating, emotionally vacant Harris calming "down Klebold when he got hot-tempered" (Cullin, 2004). "At the same time, Klebold's fits of rage served as the stimulation Harris needed" (Cullin, 2004). Harris and Klebold could relate to each other's misery and isolation; and therefore, they came together in a kinship of dysfunction. Seung Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter, found no such friend with whom to commiserate. That fact may explain Cho's self-professed admiration of the Columbine shooters, who in Cho's eyes were united by rebellion and anti-hero status.

Praxis. Where early childhood traumatization causes an individual to pass through a negative praxis, the individual moves ever closer to solidifying a defective concept of self. Depending on how the individual interprets this experience, the outcomes are: 1) development into a ruthless aggressor; or 2) development of severe psychiatric issues (Athens, 1995, p. 578). Despite such emotional handicaps, many mass killers desperately try to fit into society and their immediate social groups, be it school or work. Some search for an individuality that will bring them favorable attention from their peers. For instance, George Sodini attempted to develop social skills by taking a course and reading books etc. by self-proclaimed relationship guru, R. Don Steele (CBSnews.com, August 10, 2009).

Being unable to achieve a solid sense of who they are—other than the label of misfit or looser—many mass killers give up on conventional means of recognition. Thus, over time, extremely violent offenders develop what Athens

calls a "barbaric individualism." The killer is in fact antagonistic to society, and this attitude eventually emerges. In serial Killer Ted Bundy's quest for identity he became a man of many disguises—always putting on a dynamic and charismatic performance (Hickey, 2010). In truth, Bundy saw himself as worthless and a nobody (Hickey, 2010). He admitted to his inadequacies in an interview given after his capture and conviction: "*I didn't know what made people want to be friends. I didn't know what made people attractive to one another. I didn't know what underlay social interactions*" (Michaud & Anesworth, 1983, p. 68). Ill-equipped to make any real social or emotional connections, Bundy created facades in-order to blend in with the right groups (Hickey, 2010). Bundy failed, though, in maintaining whatever persona he adopted and thereby failed to maintain the social connections that gave him self-validation.

   Consolidation and segregation. If the individual's temporary self becomes solidified, then the new self will be recognized and thus reaffirmed by society. This possibility leads to further individual transformation. According to Athens, "people with highly reprobative selves on the horizon may well conclude that it is far better to be known for something bad than not to be known for anything at all (Athens, 1995 p. 579). This stage corresponds to *virulency*, the final stage of Athens' *"violentization"* process. As Athens observes, some people "will all too gladly embrace their "malevolent" selves" (Athens, 1995 p. 579). Once the new unified self is solidified, the individual will move to the segregation phase. He or she migrates to new social groups, where their new self is a comfortable fit.

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On the other hand, if the individual's temporary self remains shattered, fractured and disorganized, then no positive social recognition is received. The end result will be social obscurity. In other words, the individual with a fractured self does not move through consolidation and segregation phases; and correspondingly he or she does not complete the *virulency* phase of the *violentization* process.

Mass Killers in Athens Dramatic Change Theory

This behavior was exhibited by Seung Hui Cho, (23-years-old), the Virginia Tech shooter. He saw himself as invisible to his peers and society, yet he was incapable of—and made little attempt to—fit in. In class, Cho would sometimes sign his name and identify himself as *"question mark"* (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 42). Often, Cho would show up in class wearing "reflector" sunglasses and a "hat pulled down to obscure his face" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 42). His attempt at disguise was nothing but a passive-aggressive form of antagonism, a way to draw more attention to himself as a misfit. It is this duality of conformity and individuality that the mass killer cannot achieve and they simply cannot deny nor escape their fragmented identity and relentless self-talk with their phantom community, which creates a sustained internal crisis.

The artifacts (blogs, essays, manifestos and videotapes) left by some mass killers prior to their massacres confirm aspects of Athens' theory. These mass killers speak in very tangible terms of their incompleteness, their inability to cope,

their unsatisfactory social experiences and self-aggrandizement meant to mask their true image of themselves as a misfit or looser.

For instance, the Columbine shooter Eric Harris ponders his complete lack of any real self-identity: *"I always try to be different, but I always end up copying someone else. I try to be a mixture of different things and styles but when I step out of myself I end up looking like others or others THINK I am copying"* (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site). At the same time, his journal writing espouses his false sense of superiority, *"no one is worthy of shit unless I say they are, I feel like GOD and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me. I already know that I am higher than almost anyone in the fucking welt in terms of universal intelligence and where we stand in the universe compared to the rest of the UNIV"* (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site)

The killers' narratives attest that both conformity and individuality are unachievable, and there is, a recognition of oneself as being incomplete or enigmatic. This process did not happen overnight—some document well their many attempts to reinvent themselves in-order to fit in. When multiple attempts have failed to build a unified self, this then plays out further in full detail as they muster up a final provisional self under the un-relentless strain of a socially obscure life that's no longer worth living.

Many mass killers will plod along with their injured and splintered un-unified self for years until the last final blow shatters them completely. Their final provisional self, that they have enough will to create, will sustain them

temporarily while plotting their revenge and infamy. During this time period of planning a massacre, the "self" may actually feel more unified than ever before in their lives. Like Cho, their new phantom others may even be derived from previous read about experiences of infamous mass killers that have gone before them. There could be a kinship developed with other mass killers defiant acts, especially if it appears that they have suffered similarly to them. This then becomes their new soliloquy up until the bitter end.

The Stratified Culture in Schools: Damaging Effects on Identity Formation

School is one arena, where early on students find themselves confronted by the complexities of social hierarchy. "Schools contribute greatly to the development of selves" and at many primary and secondary schools today, the culture reflects a "deep lack of respect for others" (Tonso, 2009, p. 1282). Columbine was one such place, where an oppressive social hierarchy thrived. Research, interviews and other anecdotal evidence indicate that the culture within this suburban high school created a "profoundly oppressive situation for many students" (Larkin, 2007; Tonso, 2006). The very nature of an oppressive social structure places most students in a subordinate role to an elite and subjects some students to "heinous mistreatments" that often cross the boarder of inhumane (Tonso, 2009, p. 1282).

Currently, much is being done to raise awareness about the repercussions of bullying in American schools. Despite the specter of school shootings, it is far more common for a victim of school bullying to commit suicide. For instance, "Gains (1998) explains in "Teenage Wasteland" that some bullied kids, due to

their fragility and the oppressiveness of their experiences, perceive no other way out" (Klein, 2006, p. 67). He cites in support of this hypothesis, an incident involving four students ages 16 to 19, who lived in a small suburban town of Bergenfield, New Jersey. The teens, all of whom were treated as social misfits by their school classmates, drove a 10-year-old Camaro into the garage of an apartment complex, enclosed themselves therein and gassed themselves to death. Gaines explains that these kids . . . were the "burnouts" who could only relate to one another, more less as an alternative to total isolation. The kids all "shared the same taste in music, similar views on life, and comparable family structures" (Gaines, 1991, p. 9). The suburban high school, either in reality or perception, became a prison for these outcast kids, as it does for many similarly-situated others. They saw no other way to escape their plight and can "hardly imagine life being different" (Klein, 2006, p. 67). Ultimately what Gaines questions, is not why such kids kill themselves; but rather how so many of them resist doing so (Gaines, 1998)."

Researchers, psychologists and school counselors have demonstrated that marginalization does impede children's self-development (Tonso, 2009). Such continual mistreatment, in the extreme, can influence some school shooters "to borrow from violent masculinities, common socially produced images, tropes, for acting" and administer "deadly violence to assert and reclaim the "rightful" respect that "they felt denied" (Tonso, 2009, p. 1266). Such motivation, for example, has been attributed to the Columbine massacres, based on artifacts left by the shooters and by victim interviews. In an attempt to counteract this

insidious environment and avert violence a unique program was implemented in 2008 called *"Jocks Against Bullies,"* with the goal of sensitizing "school leaders to the concerns of "outsider" students, (Altheide, 2009, p.1365-1366; Roberts, 2008).

Symbols of belonging: How identity is expressed by school cliques. In *"Cultural Capital and High School Bullies: How Social Inequality Impacts School Violence"* (2006), Jessie Klein looks at the representations of "modern-day socioeconomic divisions leading to social inequality" in America's schools (Klein, 2006, p. 55). Klein uses Max Weber's notion of *"status-power"* in this analysis (p. 55). Accordingly, those students who are perceived by their peers to be the popular "jocks or preps" *(i.e., those students known for their superior athletic ability, physical attractiveness and stylish appearance, or who come from a family having relative material wealth)* all occupy a higher caste (Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 188-189; Klein, 2006, p. 55). Should these popular kids come into "contact with "lower-caste" members," the interaction is seen almost as "a stigma to be removed almost ritualistically" (Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 188-189; Klein, 2006, p. 55). Thus, the lower caste students form their own outcast communities in response to, and as a collective defense against, the threat of emotional or physical bullying perpetrated by some higher caste classmates (Gerth & Mills, 1946; Klein, 2006, p. 55). This sort of grouping of outsiders happened at Columbine.

The *"Trench Coat Mafia,"* was an outcast group that received much publicity following Harris and Klebold's attack. The group was an attempt by some

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students to "carve out a new social order, a new notion of "normal" and identity for themselves (Klein, 2006, p. 67-68). In this way, the members could attain a sense of personal strength and prestige," (Klein, 2006, p. 67-68). A substantial amount of media reporting focused on the clique. Much of the reporting was erroneous and sensationalized, as will be discussed later.

In addition to serving as a refuge community for its members, the *"Trench Coat Mafia"* symbolically indicated resistance against the dominant social order. The group had its own distinctive style of rebellious Gothic dress to signify membership, just as the jocks and preps had their varsity jackets and expensive logo-bearing clothing to indicate conformity and high status (Ogle & Eckman, 2002, 172). Clothing is perhaps the most common and most obvious way to establish one's self-definition as well as group definition (Ogle & Eckman, 2002, p. 162).

As Ogle and Eckman (2002) observe everyone "use[s] appearance . . . to assign identities, to formulate behavioral expectations and to guide their interpersonal interactions" (p. 184-185). Sometimes these assumptions based on appearance are wrong. For instance, in-depth research shows that—despite the popular media depicting the *"Trench Coat Mafia"* as delinquents obsessed with darkness, violence and revenge—the group did not espouse such views much less support the Columbine shooters! The group was "not only demonized from the start" by popular media reports, but also implicated in the shootings (Frymer, 2009, p. 1395).

Although Harris and Klebold had loose associations with members of the *Trench Coat Mafia,* the boys never became full members of the clique (Frymer, 2009). Furthermore, the "Trench Coat Mafia" was a subculture banded together to counteract the threat of psychological and physical bullying that its individual members otherwise would have been exposed to at the hands of more popular cliques (Frymer, 2009, p. 1395). This outcast clique had nothing to do with the Columbine shootings (Frymer, 2009, p. 1395). In actuality, the Columbine shooters were outsiders on the fringes of outcast school cliques.

This false association is what Altheide (2004) identifies as "double victimization" of communities that suffer rampage shootings. Often, when the media picks up the news of a rampage shooting, reporters converge onto the scene to report the incident; and given the chaos following such incidents, reporters are under pressure to immediately deliver. They do so having comparatively little time or motivation to verify the facts. As Frymer (2009) puts it, from the very beginning of the media spectacle at Columbine, the story "revolved around the. . . desperate, anxious search for explanations" which then devolved into a series of over-simplified and fallacious platitudes about the shooters' motivations (p. 1393). In essence, these emotionally driven and sensationalistic reports inflict fatal wounds a second time in merely an effort "to get a story' (Larkin, 2009, p. 1322).

It is reasonable to assume, however, that the Gothic attire adopted by Harris and Klebold was an attempt at outwardly expressing a rebellious "provisional self" consistent with their fantasy. The boys did sketch of themselves wearing the

generic Gothic look, but they also depicted themselves in the stereotypical hyper-masculine attire of army fatigues draped with ammunition (Shepard, 1999, Handwritten Journal Entries, A Columbine Site). Ultimately, the Columbine assault was an actualization of a deeply-disturbed hyper-masculine, violent and rebellious fantasy self.

Reclaiming Masculinity, Pride & Power

Reclaiming masculinity, pride and power seems to be at the heart of many vengeful mass killings. This theme appears very evident for high school and college campus shootings. In fact, males have committed nearly all school shootings—"masculinity" is at the forefront and perhaps "the single greatest risk factor in school violence" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1442). According to Kimmel and Mahler (2003) it is the risk of falling prey to a form of "cultural marginalization" structured around "criteria for adequate gender performance, specifically the enactment of codes of masculinity" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1445). This is more about "the fear that heterosexuals have, that others" might incorrectly *"perceive them as gay,"* than it is about actually being gay (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1446).

If you appear different, weird and do not "measure up to the norms of hegemonic masculinity," you could become a prime target for harassment. Studies show that many school shooters, prior to carrying out their massacres, were—"gay-baited"—for inadequate gender performance (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1445). Dylan Klebold, one of the Columbine killers, for example, was constantly—"gay-baited"—by "being pushed into lockers, grabbed in the

corridors and cafeteria and harassed with homophobic slurs" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1448; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1231).

School shooters overwhelmingly tend to be isolated, social outcasts who were "physically bullied, teased, humiliated, or ignored by their schoolmates" repeatedly (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Larkin, 2007; Levin & Madfis, 2009, p.1231; Newman, Fox, Roth, Mehta, & Harding, 2004; Vossekuil et al., 2004). In his book Comprehending Columbine, Larkin (2007) says that bullying is perpetuated by peer elite groups, such as athletes in the protection of their own social advantage and appearance. Kimmel and Maher (2003) and Newman et al. (2004) have noted the function of school shootings as an, acting out of a distorted masculine gender role (Levin & Madfis, 2009). Commonly, school rampage shootings, including those at Columbine, are "retaliatory violence by the victims of physical and/or psychological violence" (Giroux, 2009, p. 227). Thus, a final catastrophic show of force redeems the continually humiliated, ignored or "emasculated" teen.

In some cases "it could be argued that these boys are not psychopathological deviants but rather over conformists to a particular normative construction of masculinity, a construction that defines violence as a legitimate response to a perceived humiliation" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1440).

Here again, one can trace predispositions or stressors reflecting the shooter's social or psychological maladjustment. Often with school shooters, the "catalyst" is some sort of final humiliation *(i.e., rejection by a girl, loss of academic standing, ostracism from a community of peers or lack of social integration*

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generally, or even a major illness) (Levin & Madfis, 2009, 1235; Madfis &

Arford, 2008; Vossekuil et al., 2004).

Life at Columbine was one such place that tragically failed its student's

(Tonso, 2009). This failure likely was due to lack of awareness, rather than

intentional oversight. Today, unlike twenty or so years ago, anti-bullying efforts

receive significant attention among school administrators, school resource officers

(i.e., specially-assigned police officers), teachers, parents and the students

themselves. The Columbine incident instructs of the dangers in failing to identify

and in letting flourish a culture where "some [children] are [perceived as] more

worthy than others, and those . . . who for whatever reason, would not or could

not conform to the dominant mode, deserve predation, get what they deserve and

have no claim to dignity" (Larkin, 2007, p. 120).

According to Tonso (2009) this *"systemic subordination . . .* allowed things to

not only get out of hand, but also to remain that way" (Tonso, 2009, p. 1276).

The perpetuation of such a culture ultimately led Harris and Klebold to a very

dark place of vengeance and vigilantism. Believing they could not get help or

attention from school authorities or their own parents, the boys sought to reclaim

their power and pride by assuming the identity of a hyper-masculine, violent anti-

hero. The theoretical reasoning underlying such a development is considered

further.

As explained earlier, it is a common for some victims of bullying to retreat into

a fantasized world of revenge, as a means to reclaim their personal power. The

fantasy provides a temporary sanctuary and way of rebuilding a stronger

provisional self that is able to cope. Unfortunately, for some of these victims the

provisional self they conceive is not always constructive. Moreover, they do not

inhibit acting on such fantasies. This, of course, was the case of the Columbine

shooter's. Tonso (2009) explains how the provisional selves, re-created by Harris

and Klebold were the product of the boys' psychological derailment:

> With the notion of supremacy, being better than others, more capable and
>
> more in power, the two shooters hoped to take over the empowered high
>
> ground from those currently in favor at Columbine and to subjugate
>
> students in ascendance or destroy the school. Through complicated
>
> mental gymnastics, the Columbine shooters developed a way to think of
>
> themselves as people with a righteous mission, people who were not
>
> subjugated victims of an unjust system but who could instead engage
>
> another identity. (p. 1277)

On April 20, 1999 (or *"Judgment Day"* as the killers called it), Harris and

Klebold, who were unpopular students and frequent targets of bullying, stormed

their high school in Littleton, Colorado. The boys' goal was to kill hundreds, but

the explosives they placed throughout the school, thankfully did not go off.

Five secret, self-made videotapes discovered after the assault revealed the

boys' scorn for and anger toward their peer group. The tapes detailed the boys'

plans to "punish" all who had mistreated them.

The Reaction Fantasy: Infamy and Media Attention

The role of mass media. In today's culture, where round-the-clock breaking

news is valued more for its entertainment factor, rather than impartial accounting

of events, tragedy is sensationalized (Altheide & Snow, 1979). It translates into "viewership, Nielsen points and market share," which is reflected in larger advertising revenues (Larkin, 2009, p. 1322). The media tends to be biased in its coverage of murder cases, deeming certain cases newsworthy because of the social class or race of the victim(s), number of fatalities or the horrifically exceptional nature of the incidents.

For instance, school shootings (where young, innocent promising victims are slain) tend to get more coverage than the far more common familicides (at least those cases involving victims and perpetrators from a lower class background or long, documented history of marital dysfunction). The Columbine and the Virginia Tech massacres are examples in the extreme. Both incidents had all the ingredients for a good news story—an element of disbelief in the likelihood of such an enormous tragedy, the numbers of innocent and defenseless young victims slain or critically injured, and a large and gory crime scene. News media outlets went on a feeding frenzy, "oftentimes compet[ing] with police and emergency medical services for space" and opportunity to interview survivors (Larkin, 2009, p. 1322). This pattern of bias is also observable in media coverage of other particularly reprehensible murderers, the serial killer or sexual psychopath. Cases involving young, attractive, upper-middle class white women (i.e., as in the incidents of torture and murder perpetrated by Theodore Bundy) get far more media attention than serial killings of gays, prostitutes, racial minorities, drug addicts or runaways (i.e., as in the cases of Jeffrey Dahmer or the Green

River Killer, Gary Ridgeway, both of whom preyed on victims from society's fringes).

The killer, being aware of, and influenced by, pop culture sometimes consciously takes media attention into account when plotting his or her crime. For some killers, the extent of media attention seems closely related to who and how many victims are targeted (Larkin, 2009). For example the Columbine shooters wanted to "create a nightmare so devastating and apocalyptic that the entire world would shudder at their power." (Cullin, 2004). Cho, too, wanted to be among the notorious ranks of Harris and Klebold; so much so that Cho had the macabre forethought to chain shut the doors of Norris Hall. This act turned Norris Hall into a slaughterhouse, limiting escape routes for victims and delaying the police tactical units from storming the building.

Media and emotion: The effects of broadcasting—real and fictional violence. In his article *"The Columbine Shootings and the Discourse of Fear,"* (2009) David Altheide discusses how "school shootings are very rare," but very commonly feared events (p. 1355). Altheide explains that the elevated sense of danger is partly driven by media reports of such comparatively rare yet sensational homicides. The media is "the most powerful resource for public definitions in our age" and the media has the means to elicit powerful emotional responses—fear, insecurity and hyper-vigilance—from audiences (Altheide, 2009, p. 1355). In doing so, the media creates an environment where individuals reactively cede their liberty in exchange for an aura of safety (Altheide, 2009, p. 1355). Whether commercial media intentionally manipulates public perception to

favor a political agenda of increased social control, there is an amoral motivation for these corporate conglomerates.

Eliciting a visceral response by the public to media output can be linked to a profit motive. Steven Levy argues this perspective in a Newsweek article titled *"Loitering on the Dark Side"* (May 3, 1999, p. 39). Levy contends that "the more violence is displayed, the more popular it becomes as a form of entertainment" (May 3, 1999, p. 39). And, therefore, media companies have a significant financial interest in delivering what the public will consume.

Levy also argues that consumers bear some responsibility for their choices in news and entertainment, especially where extreme violence (and the pleasure taken in the fear or horror thereby elicited by such violence) is a desired commodity. For instance, in addressing the Columbine incident, Levy observes:

> The week's coverage speaks directly to our fascination with home-bred violence. The killers may have steeped in a crock-pot of fantasy revenge, but now the nation is willingly marinating in its very real aftermath: a tissue-consuming orgy of victim interviews and 911 tapes. As a TV-anchor magnet, suburban-school killers easily outspace a complicated conflict in a consonant-ridden corner of the world. (To be fair, NEEWSWEEK sent its share of correspondents, too.) like it or not, the dramatic personae of Columbine High School were destined to be familiar characters in the ongoing American docu-drama. (p. 39)

It is imperative to acknowledge the power of commercial mass media as a "ubiquitous agent of socialization" (Best, 1987, 1989; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan,

Signorelli, & Jackson-Beeck, 1978; Ogle & Eckman, 2002, p. 155). Clearly, the financial power of the industry allows it to "cultivate or construct audience perceptions of current event[s] and life realities (Best, 1987, 1989; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Jackson-Beeck, 1978; Ogle & Eckman, 2002, p. 155).

    Imagining the aftermath. The media's depiction and characterization of violence—and society's reinforcement in accepting the commodity—creates for some viewers the perception that utter destruction is an acceptable alternative route to power and (in)famous status. An aspect of both suicidal (and homicidal) ideation is imagining the aftermath. Fantasizing the aftermath and how family and community will perceive it is closely tied to power and infamy fantasies. Individuals may speculate about how friends, family or co-workers will react or feel. Some suicidal individuals imagine how their death will hurt those people who the suicide victim perceives have hurt them. A common theme involves imagining those people tearfully saying that they wish they had treated the suicidal individual better. This sort of passive aggression fits the "intro-punitive" nature of a suicide victim. Homicidal individuals, by contrast, might fantasize about wanting society to see them as powerful, clever and superior for pulling off a massacre and making, (in their view) oppressive people pay. This difference fits the homicidal individual's pattern of externalizing anger and blame. Regardless, in both cases, the desire to seek revenge (as expressed through reaction fantasies) is considered an important warning sign and an important piece to their planning fantasy stage (Rudd et al. 2006).

What's in an exit line? Killers put much forethought not only into the mechanical planning of mass homicide, but also into delivering an exit line. Exit lines are meant to be another lasting form of revenge that are often rehearsed and fantasized about profusely. This message is an attempt to impress upon the public just how "clever" and "powerful" the killer is. Additionally, some exit lines are a catchphrase to secure infamy and media attention. Moreover, exit lines often make known exactly where or on whom the killer directs his anger and why.

Exit lines can be delivered in person—anytime during the mass killing or often just before a killer commits suicide at the end of the mass killing—or in a blog, manifesto or in video or series thereof. For example, the Columbine killers took the latter approach by making a videotape on April 20th, 1999 just 30 minutes prior to their attack. In a self made tape Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold are recording their goodbyes. Eric: "Say it now." Dylan: *"Hey mom. Gotta go. It's about a half an hour before our little judgment day. I just wanted to apologize to you guys for any crap this might instigate as far as (inaudible) or something. Just know I'm going to a better place. I didn't like life too much and I know I'll be happy wherever the fuck I go. So I'm gone. Good-bye. Reb..."* Eric*: "Yea... Everyone I love, I'm really sorry about all this. I know my mom and dad will be just like…just fucking shocked beyond belief. I'm sorry, all right. I can't help it." Dylan: (interrupts) "We did what we had to do"* (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site).

Additionally, several days earlier, Eric Harris, had written in his diary about his plans to, "leave a lasting impression on the world," (Healey, July 6, 2006,

Time). Rather than expressing true remorse, the boys' parting words are an attempt to justify the mass homicide and secure infamy for themselves.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, George Hennard, while shooting at the Luby's Cafeteria patrons, shouted: *"Wait till those fuckin' women in Belton, Texas see this! I wonder if they think it was worth it!"* (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 231; Hightower, 1991). Although Henard was shooting at both sexes in the restaurant that day, his words demonstrated a deep-seated hatred and fixation of revenge directed at women.

Other exit lines reveal the killer's more amorphous targets—getting back at an institution. Joe Stack's final words left in his manifesto exposed his hatred for big government and the IRS: *"Well, Mr. Big Brother IRS man, let's try something different; take my pound of flesh and sleep well."* (FOXNews.com, Feb. 18, 2010). Mark Barton's last words were squarely directed at the day-trading company for whom he accredited his demise. Barton's words were tainted with bitterness and sarcasm: *"I hope this won't ruin your trading day"* (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 220). These killers' revenge-fixation is interwoven plainly with their precipitant loss—financial ruin.

Other exit lines are more ambiguous such as Cho's writing towards the end of his manifesto: *"Let the Revolution begin."* Like the Columbine boys, Cho's "revolution" appeared to be an insurrection mounted against social pecking orders and cliques.

What is clear from these examples is that on some level the mass killers believe they are making a powerful impression and effecting change (whatever

that "change" might be is debatable and often tied to the killer's distorted
perception).

The Glorification of Infamy

The publicity and obsessive focus on the perpetrators of multiple murder runs
the gamut from Jeffery Dahmer gracing the cover of People magazine to the
terrible affront to decency that the magazine exhibited by choosing Dahmer as
one of the "100 Most Intriguing People of the 20th Century" (Fox & Levin, 2005,
p. 6). This public fascination extends to both reality-based television dramas and
films that cast handsome stars in the role of the vicious killer. More obscure
niches in the comic book and trading card industries even print works that portray
the actual crimes committed by some of these real-life killers (Fox & Levin, 2005,
p. 6). To societies inflated value of artwork completed by the likes of serial killer
John Wayne Gacy and mass killer Richard Speck (Fox & Levin, 2005). It is not
artistic talent that places a morbid sense of value on their work but rather societies
fascination with their crimes and celebrity. Real-life crime and infamous
characters generate revenue.

The impact of celebrating murderers. "Making monsters into celebrities
only teach our youngsters—especially alienated and marginalized" youth that
killing is an acceptable way to get attention, revenge, and a sense of importance or
belonging (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 13). Some outcast kids maybe inspired by
prior, well-publicized shootings and crave similar anti-hero celebrity status for
themselves. Similarly, this craving of celebrity is noted among captured serial
killers, who boast about more killings than they actually committed (or at least,

more killings than can be proven legally). These criminals perceive their transgressions purely as a numbers game—and the one with the most kills gets to be the most notorious. The media unwittingly (and arguably with disregard for the consequences of doing so) plays into the killers' egos. The industry has its own unrelated motivation in delivering coverage on incidents with high death tolls; and a by-product of reporting sensational events is the elevation of celebrity onto the villains. With this attention paid to the perpetrator(s), sympathy for the victims is lost. The killer, knowing how incidents of graphic and large-scale killings are likely to be portrayed in the media, thereby gets further pleasure and ego gratification from his infamy fantasy (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 14). The killer is sure that his unspeakably brutal deeds will bring him glory.

The "copycat phenomenon" is a result of this quest for power and infamy. The prospect of heightened media attention can influence the killer's plans in the timing of an attack, the location and the method of killing (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 212). Typically, the greatest effect is induced when a "copycat" mass murder takes place within a relatively short window of time after extensive media attention given to a prior type of killing (Fox & Levin, 2005). Copycat killers will mirror the prior incident fairly closely. This type of emulation was clearly demonstrated in the Virginia Tech massacre by Cho's use of weapons and his fatigue attire, however Cho's killing spree was not in close proximity time-wise to the Columbine shooting—it was actually just over 7 years later. The Columbine event took place when Cho was 15 years old, which perhaps may have been a critical time in his identity development. Cho's fixation on Harris and Klebold

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began to appear in some of Cho's writing assignments at school shortly after news coverage of Columbine. Overall "the copycat phenomenon" tends to be strongest when a particular incident or particular criminal receives substantial media attention (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 213).

Craving attention. The lack of any crystallized, positive self-concept may be a precipitant for an individual, who craves affirmation through notoriety, to fantasize about, plan and commit mass or serial murder. Such fantasy, though deviant and dysfunctional, allows the perpetrator to see "themselves as somebody, a person who should have a place in the world and who can act to change what might be wrong in the world" (Tonso, 2009, p. 1277).

Before George Sodini carried out the LA Fitness massacre he left references on his blog speculating about the public's reaction to his plans. He states that, *"Probably 99% of the people who know me well don't even think I was this crazy"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). Sodini additionally states, *"any of the "Practice Papers" left on my coffee table I used or the notes in my gym bag can be published freely. Maybe all this will shed insight on why some people just cannot make things happen in their life, which can potentially benefit others"* (NYPOST.com, August 6th 2009, Blog Full Text Source). Sodini actually seems to think that by randomly shooting and killing innocent people, he is doing good for society. Moreover, he also ruminates on his dismal life, as if this record offers justification for homicide. By contrast though, Sodini also reflects on the fact that people will judge him. He concludes that society's judgment really does not matter, after all Sodini plans on being dead.

In a video from March 15th, 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold discuss their hope that the videos they are making will one day be shown all over the world, when their "masterpiece" is done. Dylan proclaims: *"Directors will be fighting over this story"* (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site). The boys speculate whether Steven Spielberg or Quentin Tarantino should direct the film (Shepard, 1999, Video Tape Transcripts, A Columbine Site). Their desire for fame did come about, though, probably not as they imagined. Klebold and Harris's photo appeared on the cover of Time Magazine under the headline *"The Monsters Next Door,"* (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 13).

Adult readers indeed may have viewed the boys as monsters, but some young teens instead may have seen them as celebrities and anti-heroes (Fox & Levin, 2005). Seung Hui Cho, who later became the Virginia Tech Shooter, was known to have openly admired Klebold and Harris.

Before Columbine, research suggests that school "shooters drew upon cultural scripts drawn from the popular media, particularly film and video games—such as the *Basketball Diaries, Natural Born Killers,* or *"Mortal Combat"*—that glorify the violent male as an alluring antihero" (Newman & Fox, 2009, pp. 1294-1295). "However, after Columbine, it seems clear that the tragedy has itself become a script:" the perpetrators become antisocial icons (Newman & Fox, 2009, pp. 1294-1295). They are admired by social outcasts for their "defiance in the name of upending conformist social pecking orders (i.e., athletes, rich kids, or" other popular teens (Newman & Fox, 2009, pp. 1294-1295).

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This mentality was the case for Seung-Hui Cho. Cho was a complete outcast; he had no friends, no social life and no interest in spending time with people (Dupue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). Cho saw himself as invisible and he was utterly incompetent at fitting in. His college suitemates reported taking him to a few parties, where "he would always end up sitting in the corner by himself" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, p. 42). Cho's self identification as a "question mark" (Virginia Tech Review Panel Review, 2007, p. 42) implies that he was aware of his social incompetence and was an enigma even to himself. His attempt to disguise himself in class only drew more attention to himself. Despite all the protestations of "invisibility" Cho, in fact, craved recognition—either as a published author, or when that didn't work out, as a vengeful mass murderer (Dupue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007, Appendix M, p. 5).

Thus, the fantasy began and he rationalized a plan to kill those that were destined to achieve what he could not (Dupue, in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report, 2007). To do so, he had to demonize his peers as frivolous spenders of their parent's money and partygoers who lived lives of gluttony. Cho vowed to put an end to their "debauchery" and assure his place in history. He was compelled to replicate the Columbine boys, even outdo them. Like Klebold and Harris, Cho was "desperate to make his fellow students take notice of him," so much so, that on the afternoon of April 16, 2007, in the midst of his killing spree, Cho took a break long enough to get to the post office and mail carefully crafted videotapes, photos of himself and a manifesto to NBC News (Levin & Madfis,

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2009, p.1238). These materials depicted Cho as a dangerous and powerful person holding guns and knives in a threatening "V" formation, dressed in combat fatigues, and ranting over his mistreatment. The media and the world were left with plenty to study, adding to Cho's infamy.

Conclusion

By examining the personal histories of many multiple murderers, a common theme of developmental interruption emerges. Most killers exhibit severe abnormalities in their psychological and social development. These developmental difficulties (what Hickey calls *destabilization*; and what Athens calls *fragmentation*) predispose the individual to interpersonal difficulties. Athens work, however, brings to light some key points on the self and gestalt, whereas Hickey's theory of traumatization focuses heavily on the extrinsic factors that shape the potential killer. In this regard, it is preferable to explore Athens work, as it relates to explaining the intrapersonal development and experience of deviant individuals.

A key to understanding developmental anomalies lies in Athens' theories of self. Athens conceived of three concepts *(phantom others/phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and dramatic self-change)* to explain the adversity caused by severe interruption to one's moral development. Athens contends that all individuals are in conversations with *"phantom others,"* which he defines as "our past significant social experiences" (Athens, 1997, p. 130). It is from this soliloquy with *phantom communities* (ourselves) that we build our own "self-portraits" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276). If our phantom community is fragmented—that

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is, there is dissonant internal dialogue—then formation of the self is not completed or clear. This dissonance causes one to become a riddle to [him or herself], having a contradictory, divided self (Rhodes, 1999, p. 276).

For the killer, it is the distorted subconscious dialogue with their phantom community that forms their inaccurate perceptions of themselves and society. Ultimately, the killer's self concept is at odds with their understanding of individuality and social conformity. To compensate, this wounded subject develops a provisional self (Athens, 1995 p. 575). To do so, the individual desperately seeks out people with similar experiences (successfully or unsuccessfully) in an attempt to form a temporary, "unified" self (Athens, 1995 p. 575). If the individual's temporary self becomes solidified, then the new self will be recognized and thus reaffirmed by society. On the other hand, if the individual's temporary self remains shattered, fractured and disorganized, then no positive social recognition is received. The end result will be social obscurity.

Many mass killers will plod along, managing in very rudimentary ways to interact with others, though never being capable to integrate fully and productively into society. Then, some catalyst event shatters the potential killer's psyche. In an effort at re-building his self-image, the killer indulges in one or more fantasy themes (i.e., re-asserting personal power, re-claiming one's (hyper) masculinity, seeking revenge, or realizing hubristic desires for attention, reaction and public infamy). There is a certain dissonance, as fantasy becomes the driving force and key to perpetuating the killer's newly constructed self-image. This image is at odds with the reality of the killer's predicament. And, therefore, the

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killer retreats farther and farther away from those limited connections with family, colleagues, classmates or the like. The impetus for murder then is found in the killer's need to bolster his concept of self, as imagined in his fantasy world.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to "move beyond . . . the framework of a monolithic explanation and toward an amalgam of . . . theories" that explain incidents of mass and serial homicide (Levin & Madfis, 2009, p. 2228). In this vein, this project considered the causes of violent criminal behavior from various scholarly perspectives. The context for this inquiry focuses on intersecting circumstances (psychological, emotional, physical and situational), which lead some offenders to be consumed by obsessive fantasies that propel the individual to commit acts of brutal violence.

Although crime in general has gone down in the past several years, incidents of multiple homicides have been on the rise. This doctoral dissertation examined how mass and serial murderers—through their imagination—plan, justify, rehearse and perfect their killings, along with the imagined public response. The killer's preparation is typically a long-term, calculated fantasy process—contrary to popular imagery, which portrays mass killers as impulsive lunatics or raving madmen. Specifically, four fantasy scripts were explored: 1) Revenge Fantasy; 2) Sexual, Sadistic and Misogynistic Fantasy; 3) Suicidal-homicidal Ideation; and 4) Search for Validation through Infamy and Media Attention. All of these scripts, more or less, play into the motivations and actions of mass and serial killers. Thus, it is important to understand why and how the killer moves from an imaginative space to actually committing murder.

Several common themes, related to a particular fantasy script, emerge early in the killer's planning stage: revenge and the methodical targeting of specific victims, or murder-by-proxy; sexual, sadistic and misogynistic fantasies; suicidal-homicidal ideation, the effects of normalizing harm to self and harm to others; the catharsis of revenge and violent fantasies, an escape and temporary respite; fractured identity, reclaiming masculinity, pride and power; and reaction fantasy, the drive for media attention and infamy. The killer derives immense pleasure and catharsis from his fantasy script and themes.

The roots of the mass and serial murderer's psychosocial dysfunction come from a combination of variables. Mass murderers and serial murderers suffer from "a long history of real and perceived frustrations and failures, concomitant with a diminishing ability to cope" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 438). This pattern is set early in life through a series of destabilizing events (i.e., unstable home life, death of a parent(s), divorce of parents, corporal punishments, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and severe alcoholism or drug abuse by caregivers, etc.). Losses or failure then continue to be a theme in the killer's adulthood—loss of a relationship, loss of employment or money, loss of residence or place, and a general perceived loss of control over, or perceived sense of being unjustly wronged in, one's life etc., that fuel their fantasized and actual revenge.

Theoretical Perspectives

Determining the cause of such violent crimes as "mass homicide" and "serial homicide" is a complex process. There is no single rationale that explains the perverse moral development of a mass or serial killer. By examining the life

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experiences, biological, psychological and environmental factors presented in the case studies of violent murderers, it is possible to form a better understanding of the perpetrators of violent homicides. By applying theory to case study and to the analysis of primary source documents (the killer's own records, blogs, videos, etc.), this project has unearthed critical behavior markers and fantasy cycle patterns tied to the killer's dissonant concept of "self."

In conducting this research, first all theoretical angles had to be accounted for. Diverse theories were explored in an effort at understanding: 1) Biochemical theories—the affects of substance abuse; psychotropics; hormonal (testosterone and cortisol) and neurotransmitter dysfunction; and genetic, metabolic, environmental and dietary deficiencies; 2) Psychological theories—cognitive dysfunction: mental illness, mood disorders, personality disorders and neurological disease; 3) Structural theories—societal deficiencies, rather than the individual's predilections or shortcomings; 4) Social process theories—criminal behavior as a response to learned socio-psychological interactions; 5) Trauma-control theory—pre-dispositional factors and pervasive destabilizing formative events (i.e., traumatizations) that lead to violent criminal behavior. 6) Violentization process theory—violence as the consequence of sustained "coarse and cruel treatment" by others onto an impressionable young victim, thereby turning the child into to a ruthless opportunist.

After intensive scrutiny of these various hypotheses about the genesis of deviant moral development, the researcher concluded that Hickey and Athens' theories were best suited to explain the development of homicidal personalities.

This decision was based on the following observations: 1) there is simply little hard scientific evidence to account for a biological, neurological or psychological explanations; and 2) similarly, the structural and process theories focused too generally of macroeconomic conditions, social conditioning or learning and institutional bias. The fantasy process and fantasy cycle is a quintessentially internal manifestation of the actor. Thus, the role of fantasy is better accounted by the seminal theories of Hickey (and his cohort) and by a renewed perspective on Athens.

Hickey's trauma-control model offers salient insight into the pre-dispositional factors—unremitting traumas, losses and facilitators—that account for abnormal psychosocial development. Examples of such pre-dispositional factors include (i.e., having an unstable home life, experiencing the death of one or both parents, being subject to harsh physical punishment, enduring physical or sexual abuse, having a caregiver who is severely alcoholic or drug-addicted, or experiencing other negative events etc.) which occur early in an offender's life and form an unrelenting pattern (Hickey, 2010).

A more current hypothesis, Athens' "Violentization" theory contends that the origins of homicidal tendencies are the result of a four-stage aberrant developmental process. Athens observes that the vast majority of violent killers underwent a socialization process marked by phases of: brutalization/violent performance/dominance engagement; and virulency. Such development is the consequence of sustained "coarse and cruel treatment" by others onto a young victim, thereby turning the child from a hapless survivor into to a ruthless

opportunist. This process must be taken within the context of Athens's more esoteric work on "the self" and "other." These concepts explain how the child-victim internalizes "traumatization" or "violentization" which results in an interrupted sense of self. Thus, three of Athens' hypotheses: "phantom others / phantom communities," "self as soliloquy," and "dramatic self-change" are the connections between pre-disposition, fantasy and behavior.

Again, it must be emphasized that no theory (or combination of theories) explains the origins of violent, homicidal dysfunction. Rather, there are multiple an overlapping factors that are the root cause of criminal behavior. The most significant factor, of course, is free will. Regardless of the life challenges one faces, the killer makes a personal decision to choose to commit crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).

Importance of this Project/Implications of the Findings

This project is novel in that the researcher concentrates on the impact fantasy has in the commission of violent multiple homicides. Moreover, I conduct the research in a way few other researchers have previously—by comparing and contrasting the fantasy process of mass killers and serial killers (including the influences of misogyny, sexual sadism and sexual deviancy). Additionally, although numerous researchers touch on the fact that 50% of mass killers commit suicide—few have traced and compared the suicidal persons fantasy process with that of the suicidal-homicidal killer's fantasy process. Finally, this research project takes a new look at the work of criminologist Lonnie Athens (specifically, his theories on phantom others/phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and

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dramatic self-change) in-order to gain a novel perspective on how the killer's psychosocial developmental impairments interact with the killer's fantasy process.

Athens theories on the self and the effects of negative life experiences are similar to the more widely accepted theories of Hickey. Hickey's trauma-control model looks into the "destabilizing event(s)" (i.e., what Athens calls fragmentation) that invariably are found in the personal histories of violent offenders (Hickey, 2010, p. 107). Applying the theories of both scholars provides a more complete picture of the effects of repetitious traumatizing experiences. Essentially, trauma derails normal social and moral development in some individuals, leaving them with a fragmented, unstable self-identity. The individual experiences an inability to connect and to cope; thereby having to retreat further into his fantasy world. One impetus for murder, then, is found in the killer's need to assert his concept of self, as imagined in this fantasy world.

Fantasy process formation is key to the study of mass and serial killers, as it appears to be a significant factor in every single case study addressed in this project. Gaining greater insight into the early behavioral markers, the fantasy process cycle and fantasy themes has the potential for swifter, pro-active intervention. It comes about primarily by breaking the cyclic patterns of fantasy, isolation and lack of coping mechanisms these individuals exhibit.

Since psychosocial developmental derailment typically is a process that takes place over many years, determining where an individual is in the cyclical is critical. Intervention, to be successful, needs to come early in the perpetrator's

life; thereby righting otherwise dysfunctional development and aberrant social modeling or learning.

Methodology Revisited

The research methodology for this dissertation consisted of "ethnographic content analysis." The main objective of this method is "to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning and process" (Altheide, 1996, p. 42). Additionally, this research was influenced to some degree by empirical phenomenology and semiotics—to the extent those schools of thought bear upon ethnographic content analysis.

Data collection and analysis included both documentary and anecdotal evidence. The researcher's sources included materials generated by the offenders prior to commission of their crimes (i.e., diaries, manifestos, blogs, drawings, photographs, and videotapes), official findings of governmental review panels, public documents generated by government investigators, witness or family accounts, news reports, and work conducted by other academics. Data was collected via a progressive theoretical sampling, which consisted of on-going comparison of and investigation into the data. Such work required the researcher to be engrossed in an extensive qualitative data study. The purpose was aimed at uncovering the "relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances" derived from source materials (Altheide, 1996, p. 16; citing Berg, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In applying ethnographic content analysis to this project, the researcher utilized an inductive process known as "emergence." It is oriented toward

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continual discovery, constant comparison and re-interpretation. Emergence may be thought of as a reflexive process—in that, each piece of scholarly criticism and the aggregation of collected evidentiary data informs the next work (Plummer, 2001). By doing so, the researcher has shed further light on accepted themes— and introduced new ones.

Summary of Findings

In pursuing this work, the researcher asked the following questions: What is the role of fantasy and how does fantasy dysfunctionally evolve for mass and serial killers? Are there specific patterns in sexual fantasy that are peculiar to serial killers versus mass killers? How does the suicidal person's violent fantasy process compare in nature and context to the mass killer's violent fantasy? Finally, why do mass killers seek validation through infamy and media attention? The analysis, arguments, and findings supporting these four points of inquiry are reviewed in the following four sub-sections.

The mass killers revenge fantasy. To examine the revenge fantasy and how it evolves is to understand the nature of the killer's loss. Losses dictate just who the targeted victims will be. Case studies reveal a certain personality profile for the revenge murderer. Angry rumination is central to alleviating a self-absorbed sense of suffering, blamefulness directed at others and pathological degree of inadequacy, self-doubt and hopelessness (Hickey, 2010, p. 108). Thus, the killer targets actual or proxy victims who are held responsible, "directly or indirectly, for the killer's life failures and disappointments" (Fox & Levin, 2005, p. 167). Over time, time, fantasies of wrath and retribution take on an obsessive quality

and become a dark alternate reality. It is through a lengthy indulgence in this perverse imaginary world that the killer finds justification and motivation for his feelings and, ultimately, for his behavior. The potential killer needs to strike back at these targets in such a way that he will destroy them completely (Hickey, 2010, p. 17).

The source of loss is viewed as an assault on the killer's concept of self. Whatever is central to that false sense of self dictates who will bear the brunt of the killer's anger. For example, a killer whose identity is tied to his job or to his material wealth (and who loses that anchor) may target victims in the workplace. In some cases, too, financial ruin is a motivating factor in family annihilation; the killer "saves" his family from hardship. Other mass killers fantasize about getting even with specific acquaintances. For instance, retribution for bullying, or reclaiming a sense of pride and masculinity due to bullying, are often motives in school shootings. Retribution also may be directed at proxy victims—strangers unknown to the killer. The outcast with a failed romantic life, or loner with strong misogynistic tendencies, may target women. A perpetrator with a grievance against the government of some other institution may target individuals representative of the entity that brought about the imagined injustice— government workers, financial services employees or bankers or the like. These victims become scapegoats for the killer's feelings of anger, rejection, indignation and worthlessness.

Sexual, sadistic and misogynistic fantasies in mass and serial killers. Questioning the role of sadistic sexual fantasy and pathological misogyny was

another consideration in identifying the role and purpose of the fantasy formation process, especially in understanding cycles of escalation for mass and serial killers. It is important to scrutinize the origins of sexual sadism or other psychosexual issues, because the dysfunction is present in many homicides, although, there are significant differences in expression between serial and mass killers. Sexual sadism is a common motivation for many notorious serial killers (e.g., Ted Bundy, Gary Ridgeway, Jeffery Dahmer). With respect to mass killers, "hybrid" killer, Richard Speck is the only notable sexual sadist. These killers tend to have particularly detailed and elaborate fantasies—"scripts of violence," rich with themes of abuse, control and dominance and utter disregard for his victim (Skrapec 1996). Torture and killing is a means of sexual arousal and gratification for these offenders. This predator is an extreme sociopath, who derives particularly diabolical enjoyment from the suffering of another.

The psychosexual issues are a theme underlying the behavior of some mass killers as well. The themes, though, tend to involve deeply misogynistic feelings, anger or hatred for women—including indignation over having romantic overtures repeatedly rejected. There typically is no evidence of psychopathy or extreme sexual deviancy with the mass killer, although the presence of other personality disorders or psychiatric issues cannot necessarily be ruled out. For instance, George Hennard and George Sodini are representative of this typology. Hennard was deeply misogynistic and possibly delusional. Sodini was angry and isolated and craving an intimate relationship he could never achieve. Sodini blamed this repeated rejection and his loneliness on women generally; and

therefore, he struck at random victims who were merely representatives of his failures. In summary, fantasy scripts involving psychosexual issues are a root cause of violence for both serial and mass killers; however, the underlying themes, motivations and homicidal behaviors are very different.

Suicidal-homicidal ideation in mass killer's. Another point of inquiry looks at the incidence of suicidal-homicidal ideation, again questioning the purpose and prevalence. In undertaking this examination, it was necessary to compare the nature of the killer's fantasy process with the nature of the fantasy process in suicidal persons suffering some mood or emotional disturbance. Essentially, this inquiry delves into the context and motivation for, and actualization of, suicide fantasies.

Statistics revealed that suicide is often associated with mass murder (Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2010). Approximately 50% of mass killers plan and do take their own lives (Hickey, 2010). Thus, it was important to explore how the suicidal mass killer's fantasy process compared to the fantasy process of suicidal behavioral health patients. Just as the planning (fantasy) stage of suicide is temporarily an emotional regulator or an escape from reality, so is the planning (fantasy) stage of mass murder. Fantasy is cathartic. It temporarily takes the perpetrator away from his or her suffering and allows him or her to externalize the blame for his or her own personal failures. For both groups, a period of vivid rumination is instrumental to actually advancing their fantasized plans.

In considering what motivates a person to kill himself (or himself and others), it was also critical to understand what happens to derail the suicidal or suicidal-

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homicidal ideation process, thus sparing lives. The causes of suicide and murder-suicide are complex phenomena. Many factors—sociological, medical or psychological—converge to push some individuals to extreme and desperate measures. A significant part of this inquiry must focus on understanding why suicidal persons are motivated to take only their lives, while suicidal mass killers are motivated to kill others and then themselves.

This difference in behavior, however, has to do with what experts describe as the "intro-punitive" personality of the patient versus the "extra-punitive" personality of the mass killer (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439; Henry & Short, 1954). Both subjects can be described as angry and aggressive. The difference lies in how this anger is interpreted and directed. Suicidal individuals—who tend to suffer from major depression accompanied by or pervasive stressors—see themselves as worthless and blame themselves for their perceived failures in life (Fox and Levin, 1998). Their aggression is "intro-punitive;" that is, they turn their anger inward (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 439; Henry & Short, 1954). By contrast, the suicidal mass killer never sees himself as at fault. The mass killer externalizes his anger and disappointment, blaming others for the killer's own real or perceived losses (Fox & Levin, 1998; Henry & Short 1954). Thus, the combination of anger, severe mood disturbances, a blameful personality and a predilection to indulge in vivid fantasy create a volatile combination highly correlated with likelihood of inflicting lethal harm to self and others (Selby et al., 2007).

The mass killer's search for validation through infamy and media attention. When a killer's fantasy script involves self-aggrandizing or attention-seeking themes, a primary motivator is pleasure derived from imagined infamy. The killer constructs a fantasy image, which he perversely seeks to validate through attention-getting violence. He imagines himself as a folk-hero or anti-hero, in order to get back at a society deserving of his wrath.

This killer (mostly) delights in thinking about public shock, horror and negative judgment about him and his crimes, although he may intellectually acknowledge that he should feel guilt and remorse for the pain and devastation his family will experience. This fantasy script also typically involves an obsession with the media's portrayal of events and whether the murders will be reported extensively in the media. Here one sees a significant element of narcissism created to mask the killer's true feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Infamy—finally getting attention, even negative attention—validates a dissonant, fragmented false identity, which others failed to acknowledge.

Infamy was a primary goal of the Columbine shooters. Tied to their desire for infamy and media attention was the need to reclaim a sense of pride, power and masculinity—a theme evident in artifacts where the boys depicted themselves as hyper-masculine warriors. Columbine killers, as is common with other attention-seeking mass murders wanted to make a grand statement; it was a way to compensate for unrelenting bullying by their peers and validate an imagined self-image of being powerful and deserving of recognition.

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Conclusion and Future Research

After intensive scrutiny of theoretical frameworks and review of various case studies, the researcher conceived of a novel explanation as to the causes of mass and serial murder. This theory synthesizes Hickey's trauma-control theory and Athens' esoteric constructs of "self" and "other" (i.e., phantom others/phantom communities, self as soliloquy, and dramatic self-change) to offer a cohesive and novel understanding of the aberrant developmental and personality traits unique to mass and serial killers.

By examining the personal histories of many multiple murderers, a common theme of developmental interruption emerges. Theorists have slightly different interpretations for the impact of developmental derailment. For instance, Hickey, the leading theorist, looks into the "destabilizing event(s)" in the killer's life. His focus is more descriptive—concerned with identifying traumas and losses and their combined effect over time. A more recent voice on the subject, Athens, considers how a various four-stage violentization process leads to the killer's fragmentation in forming a self-concept. While both Hickey and Athens recognize that certain life challenges predispose one to commit violent crimes, the theorists come about their explanations from different angles. Athens' work critically brings to light the process of internalizing repeated traumas, destabilizing events, and losses as those experiences influence the formation of "self-image" and a concept of "other." The impetus, then, for mass and serial homicide generally lies in the killer's need to bolster his concept of self, as

imagined in his fantasy world. In reality, the killer has a dissonant concept of self and is socially and morally maladjusted.

A closer examination of these markers should be a focus of future research into the causes of mass and serial killing. Such study will yield insight into techniques for early intervention, or better methods of profiling, detecting and apprehending perpetrators. Most killers do exhibit severe abnormalities in their psychological and social development. Too often, others miss the signs and symptoms of violent dysfunction in an individual. The clues are nearly always visible, particularly with a potential mass killer. But the evidence of severe dysfunction is simply misunderstood, dismissed or ignored by family, colleagues or teachers (Hickey, 2010).

A significant body of research focuses on early childhood developmental years of both serial and mass killers. For example, this work accounts for much of the theory laid out herein; it looks at pre-dispositional factors and pervasive destabilizing formative events (i.e., traumatizations) potentially leading to violent criminal behavior. However, most mass and serial killers do not commit horrific acts of murder until well into their adulthood—except for younger school shooters. There is no accounting for the intervening years, or the possibility of spotting behavioral markers and interrupting the cyclical thinking that leads to murder. As Fox and Levin point out, "future researchers need to emphasize the adolescent and adult experiences of multiple murderers in order to identify possible critical variables in their later development" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 449). It is further proposed that these findings may lead to future inquiry into: 1)

methods for early intervention and diversion of an at-risk population; and 2)

where the foregoing is impractical, better methods of detecting, mitigating the

harm caused by and quickly apprehending these particularly violent offenders.

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