

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE SERIAL MURDERERS

WILLIAM B. ARNDT†

University of Missouri at Kansas City

TAMMY HIETPAS

University of Missouri at Kansas City

JUHU KIM

University of Missouri at Kansas City

ABSTRACT: *Difficulties that have limited research on serial murder (i.e., definition, data, and conceptual framework) are addressed by the current study. Hickey's Trauma-Control Model is utilized as a conceptual framework that is particularly helpful when sexual activity is involved. This study provides a rich description of male perpetrator characteristics (criminal history, age, and ethnicity), killing career characteristics (number of victims, length of career, solo or team killer, venue, weapons, and murder rate), and victim characteristics (relationship to killer and victim sex). Relationships among these characteristics are also examined.*

INTRODUCTION

Despite widespread interest in serial murder, research on the topic remains in its infancy (Jenkins, 1994; Keeney & Heide, 1995; Mott, 1999). Several factors hinder our knowledge of this topic. First, there is a lack of agreement on the term's definition, complicating the criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion of murderers. The second impediment is the paucity of reliable descriptions of the perpetrator, the crime itself, and the victim. The last problem stems from the virtual absence of a conceptual framework that organizes what information exists and points the way to further research efforts.

These issues are addressed in the current study. Thus the purpose is twofold. The first is to provide rich, descriptive information from an extensive source pertaining to the characteristics of the murderers, the crimes, the victims, and pertinent relations among these variables. The second purpose is to utilize Hickey's (2002) Trauma-Control Model to

† Direct all correspondence to: William B. Arndt, 5822 Locust Street, Kansas City, MO, 64110. Email: arndtjrw@aol.com.

further our understanding of serial murder with specific emphasis on murders that involve sexual activity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is little agreement in the literature on the definition of serial murder (Godwin, 2000; Harbort & Mokros, 2001; Hickey, 2002). Many researchers give no definition and those that do fail to adequately describe the phenomenon (Keeney & Heide, 1995; Skrapec, 2001). These varying definitions make comparisons across such studies difficult (Hickey, 2002). Definitions of serial murder contain two elements. One is the time period between killings. This ranges from more than 72 hours (Jenkins, 1993) to more than 30 days (Holmes & Holmes, 1998), usually including a stipulation of a cooling-off or refractory period to distinguish serial from spree and mass murder (Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Jenkins, 1994). The other element is the minimum number of required victims which varies from two (DeHart & Mahoney, 1994; Egger, 1998; National Institute of Justice, 1988) to three or more (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992; Geberth & Turco, 1997; Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Jenkins, 1994; Lester, 1995; Mott, 1999; Skrapec, 2001). This lack of agreement on the criteria of serial murder is disquieting (Skrapec, 2001).

Definitions vary from broad and inclusive to those that are detailed and restrictive. One example of a broad definition is "murder of at least three individuals in which each lethal act is separated from the next by a discrete cooling-off period" (Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998, pp. 7-8). Other broad definitions are offered by Hickey (2002), Jenkins (1993), Keeney and Heide (1995), and Mott (1999). Some definitions add the requirement that the killings take place in three or more separate locations (Douglas et al., 1992; Myers, Burgess, Burgess, & Douglas, 2000). Similarly, Godwin (2000) limits his sample to transient killers who have murdered three victims over time. One of the most detailed and exclusionary definitions is Egger's (1998) which includes specification of the victim-killer relationship, the killer's motivation, the location and times of killings, the apparent lack of connection between killings, and the victim's symbolic value for the killer.

Rather than defining the crime itself, some researchers focus on the murderer's motive, thus blurring the distinction between definition of the crime and description of the perpetrator. Some serial murders stem from seemingly obvious, extrinsic incentives such as profit. However, murders motivated by politics or profit are often excluded (Jenkins, 1993; Leyton, 1986; Linedecker, 1988) as are those committed by military or terrorist groups (Keeney & Heide, 1995).

Skrapec (2001) emphasized that the intrinsic motive of personal gratification is the essential component in the definition of serial murder. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual gratification, a position consistent with the original meaning of *Lustmord* (i.e., a personal desire to kill). Ressler and Shachtman (1992) are confident that the motive of serial murder is always sexual. In fact, they "characterize serial murders as sexual homicides, even when physical penetration or other sexual acts do not appear to have been perpetrated on the victim" (pp. 97-98). Others who feel that serial murder is always sexually motivated are DeHart and Mahoney (1994), Giannangelo (1996), Lester (1995), and Schechter and Everitt (1997).

A broad definition of serial murder would include two types of killings — crimes where there was evidence of sexual activity and crimes with no such evidence. The sexual activity category is not homogeneous (Brittain, 1970) since it includes those motivated by lust, those who kill in an attempt to escape the charge of rape, necrophiles, and sadistic murderers. The group where no sexual activity is present is also heterogeneous as it encompasses such diverse cases as lust with no sexual activity, bluebeards, felony murder, and health care murderers.

The scarcity of systematic studies insures the unreliability of existing information (Gresswell & Hollin, 1994; Keeney & Heide, 1995). The few quantitative studies that have been conducted are those by Dietz, Hazelwood, and Warren (1990), Godwin (2000), and Hickey (2002). A study yielding both quantitative and qualitative data was the FBI's examination of 36 incarcerated sexual murderers (Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1992). Most researchers obtain data from interviews with convicted murderers or through newspaper accounts (Cameron & Frazer, 1987; Gresswell & Hollin, 1994; Jenkins, 1994; O'Reilly-Fleming, 1996). Interview data is often questionable because of sample bias (Godwin, 1998) and the unreliability of the perpetrator's accounts which may contain exaggerations or omissions (Hickey, 2002). This lack of accuracy in the basic data sources compromises knowledge of serial murder (Skrapec, 2001).

Trauma-Control Model

A viable theoretical construction must encompass a multitude of factors contributing to the deviant process, none of which are directly responsible for the outcome. Such a framework is provided by an elaboration of Hickey's (2002) Trauma-Control Model which traces the career development of the serial killer from onset to the end of his killing career. Although Hickey's sample included all varieties of serial mur-

derers, his Trauma-Control Model applies best to sexually motivated murderers.

The process begins with predispositional factors which may be biological (genetic, fetal alcohol and drug exposure, head injury, and brain pathology), psychological, and/or sociological. During his formative years, the future killer is traumatized by such factors as physical and sexual abuse, negative parenting, divorce, or the death of a parent. The combined effect of these traumas is greater than the influence of any single trauma. The consequences of these traumas are mistrust of others, feelings of being rejected, worthlessness, and an inability to cope with stress. This sense of inadequacy is hidden behind a façade of self-confidence and self-control. These destabilizing influences are split off and a dark side is erected as represented by fantasies whose compensatory theme involves violence, total control, and domination of the victim. These fantasies of sexualized aggression are the “critical common factor to serial killers” (Hickey, 2002, p. 114). They are ritual enactments of the original childhood traumas which produce a balance of opposites within the person.

Various facilitators such as violent pornography and excessive use of drugs and alcohol further the deviant process and expedite the urge to kill. The fantasies become addictive, but even with escalating violent content they eventually lose their potency. In the next step, the individual engages in tryouts, acting out portions of the fantasy such as stalking and breaking and entering, which may be precursors to the first killing. As in substance addiction, these tentative acts lose their potency and stronger ones become necessary. For example, Westley Allan Dodd reported that “[Exposing myself] wasn’t fun anymore. I needed more physical contact. I started tricking kids into touching me. Then that wasn’t fun anymore, so I started molesting kids” (Fox & Levin, 2000, p. 36).

In the next phase, fantasy becomes reality. Murdering, especially using hands-on methods, becomes an addiction with the victim serving as proxy for the early traumatic episodes. The murders may be triggered by a sense of personal failure or rejection. Because the killing does not completely assuage negative feelings, the process is cyclical, a never-ending pursuit of alleviating a feeling of emptiness by the domination and destruction of others. As habituation sets in again, the murders fail to provide the sought after relief. To compensate, there is an escalation in the severity and frequency of the acts. Finally, decline and fall set in with spiraling deterioration, sometimes manifested by a final frenzy.

Perpetrator Description

Criminal and Psychiatric History

To coincide with the severe childhood trauma postulated by the Trauma-Control Model, it is expected that serial murderers would have an extensive criminal history. In the sample studied by the FBI, 84% admitted to assaults on adults during adolescence, 62% to destruction of property, and 52% to fire setting (Ressler et al., 1992). Sixty-one percent of Godwin's (2000) sample had been convicted of burglary, theft, or robbery and 45% had a record of sex offenses. Hickey (1991, 2002) found that 21% of his sample reported a history of burglary, 23% robbery, 24% theft or stealing, and 37% sex-related offenses. Twenty-eight percent of Godwin's (2000) sample also had a history of being treated for some mental health problems and 21% were treated for alcohol or drug abuse.

Age of Onset

Age of the killer is rarely discussed in serial murder literature (Godwin, 2000). When stated, the age range is from early or late 20s to mid 30s (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Ressler & Shachtman, 1992; Sears, 1991; Warren, Hazelwood, & Deitz, 1996; Wilson & Seaman, 1991). The reported median age of the first murder was 27 years in one study (Geberth & Turco, 1997). Similar findings have reported a mean age of 27.5 for the first murder (Hickey, 2002; National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, 1992). The majority of sexually motivated killers were in their 20s, ranging from 16 to 48 with an average age of 28 years (Hickey, 1991).

Ethnicity

Jenkins (1993) took exception to the stereotype that excludes African Americans from the ranks of serial killers, claiming that they have been well represented. Estimates of African American serial murderers vary from 13% (Jenkins, 1993) to 20% (Hickey, 2002). Seldom are the instances of Hispanic or Asian serial killers reported.

Killing Activity

Number of Victims

Estimating the number of victims is problematic. Many are never identified as victims of serial murder, sometimes due to a failure of various agencies to coordinate investigations of possible serial murder cases (i.e., linkage blindness) (Egger, 1984). Some studies include unsolved

cases (Egger, 1998), whereas others use solved cases only (Godwin, 2000). Victim count has several different bases — number confessed, suspected, cleared, or convicted. Reported number of victims per offender ranges from 3 to 13 (Burgess, Prentky, Burgess, Douglas, & Ressler, 1994; Egger, 2003; Geberth & Turco, 1997; Godwin, 1998; Holmes & DeBurger 1988; Jenkins, 1994).

Length of Career

Career length is estimated at four to five years (Jenkins, 1994; Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998) with a median of 4.3 years (Hickey, 1991). These estimates are often inflated because they include time in prisons or mental health facilities when killings could not have occurred. Therefore, using adjusted career length is more accurate.

Consistency: Murder Rate and Crime Scene Behavior

The Trauma-Control Model proposes that at the end stage of the killing career there is a disintegration of behavior manifested by an increased killing rate and sloppiness at the crime scene (Carlisle, 2000). The time interval between killings is “an objective fact and a meaningful referent” (Skrapeč, 2001, p. 16). As habituation occurs, the interval between each murder shortens, facilitating apprehension. Mott (1999) found that the higher the murder rate, the greater the probability the offender would be apprehended. Mean rate for solved cases was 5.08 and for unsolved it was 4.26. Another form of consistency is crime scene behavior. Contrary to the prediction from the Trauma-Control Model, Godwin (2000) found a definite consistency in crime scene behaviors from first, middle, and last offense.

Type: Solo or Team

While most serial killers are loners (Gresswell & Hollin, 1994; Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Wilson & Seaman, 1991), from 10% to 37% of cases are team killers (Dietz et al., 1990; Godwin, 2000; Hickey, 2002; Jenkins, 1994; Kelleher & Kelleher, 1998; Myers et al., 2000; Norris, 1988). One team member usually plays the dominant role. Thirty-eight percent of teams involved at least one female. Male members tend to be two years older than their female partners (30 to 28 years, respectively) (Hickey, 1991, 2002). According to Wilson and Seaman (1991), female partners first appeared in the 1960s and have become more frequent with the emergence of the lust killer. Compared to solo killers, teams are more likely to operate within a limited geographic area, kill fewer females, and use firearms more often. However, they have about the

same number of victims and are no different in terms of sexual motivation (Hickey, 2002).

Venue: Stable or Transient

Serial killers are described in terms of their geographic mobility (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). Geographically stable killers reside in their killing comfort zone. Hickey (2002) included a place-specific category in which the killings take place in one particular site. Geographically transient killers roam over several states during their killing career. They are difficult to apprehend and it has been suggested that they travel great distances in an effort to escape detection and capture (Egger, 2003; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1983). Approximately 60% to 75% of serial killers are stable (including place-specific) (Fisher, 1997; Hickey, 2002; Jenkins, 1994; Wilson & Seaman, 1991). Average number of victims per offender was six to eight for stable, nine to 11 for place-specific, and six to 12 for transients (Hickey, 2002).

There is wide variation in estimates of the geographic status of lust killers. Warren et al. (1996) reported that 75% of their sample perpetrated within a single city, state, or province, whereas Hickey (1991) found only 38% to be stable. Levin and Fox (1985) asserted traveling serial killers are a minority to stable killers, whereas Linedecker (1988) said that sadistic-sexual killers usually cover a wide geographic area.

Weapons: Distance, Hands-on, Combination

According to Hickey (2002), 42% of serial murderers employed several different methods of killing. Firearms were used exclusively by 19% and sometimes by 41%. Various hands-on methods (e.g., bludgeoning, strangulation, suffocation, and stabbing) were used exclusively by 9% to 13% of murderers and sometimes by 26% to 37% (Hickey, 2002).

Whereas about 60% of homicides in general involve firearms (Reidel, 2000), they are rarely used by lust killers because they are too impersonal (Fox & Levin, 2000; Godwin, 2000; Hazelwood & Douglas, 1980). With the emphasis on domination and control of the victim and on the killing process rather than the death itself (Hickey, 2002), it follows that the preferred killing method would be hands-on which is slow and controllable (Brittain, 1970; Harbort & Mokros, 2001; Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Lester, 1995; Levin & Fox, 1985; Ressler & Shachtman, 1992; Schechter, 2003). Warren et al. (1996) reported that nearly 95% of lust killers used asphyxiation and/or stabbing as their primary methods. Additionally, more than one method may be applied

to a single victim who may have been tortured with a pair of pliers, knifed, and strangled (Hickey, 2002).

An analysis of Geberth and Turco's data (1997) for lust serial killers showed 67% used hands-on methods, 11% distance methods, and 22% a combination of methods. These figures are similar for weapons used in non-serial sexual murder. In comparison, for non-sexually motivated murderers, 14% employed hands-on methods, 65% distance methods, and 20% a combination of methods.

Victim Characteristics

Victim Sex

While some maintain that victims are almost always females (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Holmes & Holmes, 1998), Hickey (2002) found that 40% of perpetrators killed females only, 22% murdered males only, and 37% killed both males and females. When sexual activity was involved, 70% of perpetrators murdered females exclusively, 15% males only, and 15% both females and males (Warren et al., 1996). Of 1,246 killers from 1900 to 1999, 65% of the victims were female (Egger, 2003). In an FBI study, 82% of the victims were female (Ressler et al., 1992). Presumably, young females are chosen to satisfy the murderers' dominance cravings (Egger, 1998). Sometimes, the lust killer preys on males exclusively, some of whom are the most prolific of serial killers (Egger, 2003; Newton, 2000).

Relation to Perpetrator

There is considerable agreement that, by and large, victims are unknown to their killers (Douglas et al., 1992; Egger, 1984; Hickey, 2002; Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Norris, 1988). This is especially true of lust killers where 73% of offenders murdered strangers, 8% acquaintances, 1% family, and the remainder a mix of relationships (Hickey, 2002).

Purpose

The wide variation in conclusions from previous studies derives from three problematic areas, including definition, data, and lack of a conceptual framework. The current study improves knowledge in these areas through the use of a reliable and extensive data resource. The variables examined are perpetrator characteristics (criminal and psychiatric history, age at first murder, and ethnicity), murder activity (sexually motivated or non-sexually motivated, number of victims, career length, murder rate and consistency, solo or team killers, stable or transient, and hands-on or distance weapon), and victim characteristics (sex

and relation to perpetrator). Relations among these variables posited in the literature are examined. In addition, the utility of the Trauma-Control Model is assessed by determining differences between sexually motivated and non-sexually motivated offenders.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study came from Newton's *Hunting Humans* (1990) which is considered "by far the most comprehensive listing of serial murders . . ." (Jenkins, 1994, p. 22). Inclusion criteria included: at least three victims; murdered by a male of known identity; in the United States during the 1900s; committed as separate events; and over a time period from hours to years. Newton uses number of murders charged and reports both suspected and convictions. Newton's data were verified and supplemented by other sources (Lane & Gregg, 1992; Schechter, 2003). Cases were assigned to sexually motivated or non-sexually motivated categories on the basis of evidence of sexual activity with the victim or at the crime scene. Also, cases were categorized as stable or transient and team or solo.

RESULTS

In all, 285 cases met the inclusion criteria. Number of cases varied because of missing data. There was good agreement between two authors on sexually motivated vs. non-sexually motivated groups (88% agreement with a Kappa of .76). The sexually motivated group included sexual-sadistic killers, lust murderers, necrophiles, and those who killed to avoid detection of rape. Reliability of placement in stable or transient, determined on a sample of 176 between one author and Newton (1990), was 91% agreement with a Kappa of .83.

Fifty-one percent of the total sample had been charged or convicted of a crime prior to their first murder. Only 6% spent time in a mental health facility. Mean and median ages of first kill were 26.2 years and 27.2 years, respectively. Regarding ethnicity, 81% of perpetrators were Caucasian, 16% African American, 3% Hispanic, and less than 1% Asian.

The skewed distribution of number of victims yielded a mean of 8.1 and a median of 6.4. Half of the offenders murdered females only, a fifth killed males only, and almost a third killed both males and females. For 87% of the total number of victims, there was no evidence they were known to the killer, 9% were acquaintances, and 4% were family members.

Mean length of career was 4.1 years, whereas adjusted career length mean was 3.4. Over half of the total and adjusted career lengths

were one year or less. A small but significant relationship ($r = .25, p < .01$) was found between adjusted career length and number of victims. Murder rate for the total sample was 4.5 with a median of three victims per year.

Sixteen percent worked with partners. Of these, 71% of the team killers were male, 26% were female, and in 2% of the cases were both male and female. As expected, male members were about six years older than their female partners. Compared to venue stable killers, transient killers were more difficult to apprehend as their careers were longer and they had more victims than geographically stable killers. For the 41% transient killers, adjusted career length was 4.5 years with a mean of 9.2 victims. The 59% who were geographically stable had a mean adjusted career length of 2.7 years with a mean of 7.2 victims. The most used killing method was hands-on (45%), distance (33%), and a combination of methods (14%).

About half (48%) of the perpetrators had engaged in sexual activity with some or all of their victims. The sexually motivated and non-sexually motivated groups did not differ in terms of age at first kill, mean number of victims, career length, solo/team, or in overall murder rates.

Consistent with the Trauma-Control Model, more of the sexually motivated group (63%) were charged or convicted of crimes other than homicide prior to their first murder as compared to the non-sexually motivated group (46%), ($\chi^2 = 9.14, p < .01$). However, in only 4% of the sexually motivated and 7% of the non-sexually motivated groups was there evidence of a history of psychiatric treatment.

Victim selection was strongly associated with sexual activity. For the sexually motivated group, 72% selected female victims, 19% male, and 9% both sexes as compared to 29% female, 22% male, and 49% both sexes for the non-sexually motivated group ($\chi^2 = 70.84, p < .00$). Sexually motivated killers displayed a stronger preference for strangers (94%) than did non-sexually motivated killers (82%), ($t = 14.45, p < .00$). Consistent with the Trauma-Control Model, the change in murder rate between sexually motivated and non-sexually motivated offenders from the first to second half of their careers approached significance ($\chi^2 = 2.92, p < .10$). For the sexually motivated group, 67% increased and 33% held steady or decreased. For the non-sexually motivated group, the corresponding figures were 45% and 55%.

The sexually motivated group tended to be more venue stable than the non-sexually motivated group, a difference which approached significance ($\chi^2 = 3.22, p < .07$). For sexually motivated offenders, 64% were stable and 36% were transient whereas 54% of non-sexually motivated offenders were stable and 46% were transient.

In agreement with previous studies, there was a definite relationship between the weapon used and sexual involvement ($\chi^2 = 44.3$, $p < .00$). For sexually motivated offenders, hands-on methods were the methods of choice for 69%, followed by distance methods with 18%, and a combination of methods at 13%. Of non-sexually motivated killers, distance methods were preferred by 53%, hands-on methods next with 30%, and 17% used a combination of methods.

Within the sexually motivated group, there was a difference between the number of victims for those who killed males or females — 13.46 male and 6.74 female victims ($t = 4.97$, $p < .00$). For the male victim group, the bulk of the distribution ranged from three to 15 with about a third (28%) of the cases accounting for 21 to 33 victims each. For the female victim group, the bulk of the distribution ranged from three to 13, with only 5% between 22 and 34.

DISCUSSION

The results substantiate and enhance the reliability of information reported in the literature and suggest the appropriateness of the Trauma-Control Model. The present sample had a much lower prevalence of prior crimes than other studies (Godwin, 2000; Hickey, 2002) and only a few had a history of psychiatric treatment. Consistent with previous findings, the median age at first killing was confirmed at 26 years with the majority falling between 20 and early 30s. While White males predominated, African Americans received a little more representation at 16% than Jenkins' (1993) estimate of 13%, but less than Hickey's (2002) 20%. Hispanics and Asians are notably underrepresented, a result worthy of future research.

Since both adjusted career length and number of victims are highly skewed distributions, present medians differ from previously reported means. Median number of victims is six, which is midway between the means of the three to 12 reported previously. Median adjusted career length of about one year is considerably less than previously reported means of four to five years. As would be expected, the number of victims increased with length of career. The mean murder rate of 4.5 is somewhat lower than Mott's (1999) 5.08.

For half of the murderers, females were the preferred victims. A fifth of the killers chose males and about a third selected both sexes. This is close to the victim sex distribution found by Hickey (2002). In keeping with the profile of serial killers, the vast majority of victims were unknown to their killers, with the rest about equally divided between acquaintances and family members.

Sixteen percent of the cases were teams, which is between earlier estimates of 10% to 38%. Our finding of 26% male-female teams is considerably less than Hickey's (2002) estimate of 38%. There was no support for Wilson and Seaman's (1991) assertion that female team killers first appeared in the 1960s and increased thereafter.

There was insufficient data to compare team and solo cases statistically. Compared to the total sample, teams displayed characteristics of the non-sexually motivated group. Teams were less apt to engage in sexual activity with victims, they were less likely to use hands-on killing methods, and their victims were more often of both sexes. In keeping with partner age difference in the general population, males were about six years older than their female teammates.

The finding that 60% of killers operated in a geographically limited area is in agreement with the lower estimate of stability found in the literature. Transient killers' career length was almost twice as long as that of stable killers, which may suggest that linkage blindness is still hindering detection.

We classified murders as sexual on the basis of behaviors during the offense rather than attempting to infer offenders' motives. Those who speculate regarding motivation often erroneously assume a one-to-one correspondence between overt behavior and underlying motives. As Hickey (2002) noted, simply because there is evidence of the killer's sexual gratification at the crime scene, "does not mean that sexual gratification is the primary motive for killing" (p. 162). Sex is used to control, to subjugate, and to possess the victim (Egger, 2003), and it may be used to express revenge or hate.

In agreement with Hickey's (2002) estimate, about half of the present sample engaged in sexual activity with their victims. Those variables on which the sexually motivated killers differed from non-sexually motivated killers are pertinent to the Trauma-Control Model. Due to their especially traumatic childhoods, it was expected that sexually motivated killers, more so than non-sexually motivated killers, would have acted out in criminal ways prior to their first kill. Killing methods, sex of victims, and relationship between killer and victim were closely related to the presence or absence of sexual activity. By a margin of more than two to one, the sexually motivated group employed hands-on killing methods and chose female victims. They preyed on more strangers and fewer family members and acquaintances than did the non-sexually motivated group. Within the sexually motivated group, there were more male than female victims per killer. This difference is attributable to a relatively large group of prolific killers of males as suggested by Egger (2003) and Newton (2000).

Our results bear on the controversy concerning the association between sexual motivation and geographic stability. Previous estimates varied widely from a third to about three quarters of sexually motivated killers being stable. In the present sample, there was a tendency for sexually motivated killers to be more geographically stable (64%) than transient, whereas for the non-sexually motivated group the geographic venue was almost equal between stable and transient.

Consistent with the Trauma-Control Model's prediction, there was a trend toward an increase in killing rate over the course of the career. This escalation may be akin to drug addicts who require ever increasing and more frequent doses to satisfy their cravings. Schechter (2003) speculated that this may be a sign of hastening mental deterioration.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided a wealth of descriptive data in three areas of serial murder, including perpetrator characteristics, killing career, and victim characteristics as well as some significant links between variables. This provides a better understanding of the nature of serial murder. The data reported here contribute quantitative information pertinent to the Trauma-Control Model and demonstrate that it is a useful framework in the study of serial murderers. The present findings are limited by the information source. The optimum database is police reports as employed by Godwin (2000) and supplemented with interviews. Studies using case histories and other qualitative methods are indicated when exploring predispositional and traumatizing factors and the evolution of the controlling fantasies as suggested by the Trauma-Control Model.

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