

MASS, SERIAL AND SENSATIONAL HOMICIDES*

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MY task today—that of conveying information about three understudied classes of offenses—compels me to speak to you without the quantitative cloak of social science with which I would prefer to dress this gruesome subject. Of necessity, I rely on case examples and fragments of research, because no quantitative data are available on most of the topics addressed here. My approach is to describe the elements common to these three classes of offense, to describe examples of each class, and to suggest the subtypes most often observed for each class.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF MASS, SERIAL AND SENSATIONAL HOMICIDES

Mass, serial and sensational homicides all evoke a high degree of publicity. The predictably high publicity attending these crimes is among the motives of their perpetrators. Like John Hinckley, offenders in each of these categories see headlines as one of the predictable outcomes of their behavior, which they pursue in part for this purpose. The American preoccupation with celebrity is no secret. A recent issue of *TV Guide*, the weekly index to American preoccupations, offers the following network and cable experiences: “Eye on Hollywood,” “Hollywood Insider,” “Star Search,” “Celebrity Chefs,” “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous,” and “You Can Be a Star.” The celebrity industry is of such compelling interest to the public that it has even spawned a secondary industry of celebrity “news” programs in the form of “Entertainment This Week,” “Entertainment Tonight,” “Show-

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biz Week,” “Showbiz Today” and “This Week in Black Entertainment.” In the midst of such strong cultural endorsement of the goal of becoming famous, only one show, “Fame,” regularly carries the message that becoming famous requires work.

Offenders vary in the degree to which publicity is a motivator. At the one extreme are those whose suicide at the conclusion of the offense precludes seeing themselves in the news, but even they, like other suicides, may expect to witness the aftermath. (Some suicide notes refer to the joy the decedents expect to experience in watching the mourners suffer.) At the other extreme are those who enhance the probability of apprehension for the sake of publicity. Lust murderers whose victims have not been discovered have been known to return to the scene of the murder and move the body to insure its discovery.¹ Having followed newspapers and media broadcasts carefully and heard nothing of the crime, the killer is disappointed. His crime is incomplete: a woman died, but the community escaped. By insuring publicity for the crime, he reveals his desire to terrorize the community as a whole.

Publicity can aid or hinder the investigation of these crimes. The fingerprint identification of Richard Ramirez and broad dissemination of his photograph as a suspect in the Nightstalker murders led to an earlier arrest than might otherwise have been expected. Unknown to the public, however, are those instances in which politicians under fire from the press to produce results in headline cases have revealed investigative information and police strategies, thereby hindering investigations or destroying promising operations.

Mass, serial and sensational homicides are understudied because the frequency of these offenses is too low to permit the desirable research—requiring interviews, primary source documents or both—to be conducted within a single institution or city. That difficulty is remediable only through collaborative research or centralized data collection. The latter approach is the basis for work at the F.B.I. Academy’s Behavioral Science Unit, where studies of lust murder, sexual homicides, autoerotic fatalities and other low-rate phenomena have already been completed, and within the unit’s recently developed National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, which Mr. Geberth discusses. Headquartered at the F.B.I. Academy in Quantico, Virginia, the Center makes it possible for low-rate offenses to be studied by systematically interviewing offenders and collecting offense, offender and victim data from the nation as a whole. Current studies focus on serial killers and serial rapists.

Mass, serial and sensational homicides tend to elicit a premature conclusion that the offender must have been mad. The tendency of the press, public and public officials to regard such individuals as mad solely on the basis of their crimes reflects widespread needs to attribute such behavior to alien forces. As with the mythical werewolves and vampires and the demons of the middle ages and of contemporary Pentecostals, the attribution of unacceptable human conduct to possession by madness reassures the believer that people like him are incapable of such evil. Even those with a greater factual basis for judgment—such as evaluating clinicians, jurors and judges—are at unusually high risk of drawing the wrong conclusions in these cases.

MASS MURDER

The term “mass murder” has been applied to events as dissimilar as the Whitman Texas Tower shootings, the series of lust murders attributed to Jack the Ripper, the mass poisonings in Jonestown, current abortion policy in the United States, the Holocaust and the Bhopal industrial disaster. Without taking issue with any of the political or metaphoric uses of the term, I would adopt a narrower meaning for purposes of behavioral science approaches to criminal homicide. For these purposes, mass murder should be defined as offenses in which multiple victims are intentionally killed by a single offender in a single incident. For the definition to be operational, we must also specify the meanings of “a single incident” and of “multiple victims.”

In specifying that the killings occur within a single incident, we seek to distinguish mass murder from serial murders in which murders occur in separate incidents, sometimes separated by long time intervals and great distances. Thus, both time and distance are possible limiting criteria for the concept of a single incident. With respect to time, we can achieve the desirable distinction by limiting mass murder to offenses occurring within a 24-hour interval. With respect to distance, however, we encounter greater difficulty. Surely a murderer who kills half the requisite number of victims at one site and then travels directly to another site where the other half are killed ought to qualify as a mass murderer, as would one who killed a sufficient number of victims while shooting from a moving vehicle or traveling aboard a train, ship or aircraft. I would therefore ignore location or distance in the definition of mass murder.

The number of victims required for the designation mass murder is a more arbitrary matter, but one with important implications for the characteristics of the class so defined. For example, the proportion of mass murder victims who are relatives of their killers is determined by the number of vic-

tims required in the definition. If the cutoff point is set at 10 or more victims killed in a single incident, the cases become rare and the majority of victims are strangers, as in Charles Whitman's Texas Tower killings (two family members and 14 strangers killed, 30 others wounded) and James Huberty's MacDonal's massacre (21 strangers dead, 19 wounded). Indeed, by this definition the only mass murder in American history in which most of the victims were family members was the killing of 13 people in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, by former prison guard George Banks. Banks had had children by four women and lived with three of them and their children on a rotating basis, making it possible for him to kill enough family members to set such a record.

Given the small number of cases in which there have been 10 or more victims, the cutoff point should be fewer than 10. One way to select a lower cutoff point is to choose one that will maximize the number of cases defined as mass murder (so that there will be enough to study) while minimizing the odds that the cases so defined will be murders occurring as a byproduct of other crimes (which would otherwise confound research findings). The Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes annual survey data on criminal victimization other than homicide, including the number of victims per incident up to the category of four or more victims. For all violent criminal incidents in 1983, 88.5% involved one victim, 8.9% two victims, 1.7% three victims and 1.0% four or more victims.² A threshold for mass murder of three victims would exclude the possible byproducts of more than 95% of violent crimes. A threshold of five victims would exclude the byproducts of more than 99% of violent crimes. We can take notice of these data without unnecessarily restricting the definition if we define mass murder as the willful injuring of five or more persons of whom three or more are killed by a single offender in a single incident.

Paranoid symptoms of some kind have been evidenced by all of the men who have killed 10 or more victims in a single incident in the United States. James Huberty and his wife, who routinely abused one another, treated their home as an armed fortress. Mrs. Huberty once threatened neighbors with a gun, and James Huberty, an admirer of Hitler, blamed President Carter for the economic conditions that caused his unemployment. Depressive symptoms predominate among those who kill more than three but fewer than 10 victims in a single incident. The commonest of these cases are those in which depressed men, sometimes drinking excessively, kill their families and sometimes themselves. In any community in America, ask an old timer if there's

ever been someone in the area who has killed his whole family. More likely than not, he'll say something like this: "There was a time this man I knew, a regular guy—hard worker, wife, kids, went to church—sudden-like up'n killed the whole family. They say he was drinkin' real heavy, but I always thought he must've went crazy. Seems he even killed the dog. It was all in the papers, but then you never heard no more about it." These cases rock the local community and create lifelong memories that something terrible happened there. In the less migratory years of American history, the houses where such things occurred sometimes came to be regarded as haunted—if they were not burned to the ground, as was George Banks' house. If these cases make the national news, it is a brief appearance. Even when the man does not kill himself, thereby allowing for his story to become public at the trial, these cases do not capture the national imagination. I think they are regarded as family business. They are too close for comfort.

The Banks case is familiar to me and less familiar to most than Whitman or Huberty, so I describe it briefly here as an illustration of mass murder. Although he had served time for armed robbery, Banks was employed as a correctional officer at the correctional facility at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. One day he told coworkers that he was thinking of shooting inmates from the tower. He was taken to a mental health center which recommended that he take some time off from work and referred him to a mental health center in his home town of Wilkes-Barre. He went to the mental health center with one of his women, whom he presented as his wife without acknowledging his unusual living arrangements. He did not become engaged in treatment.

Unbeknownst to those who evaluated him, Banks had long been fascinated by weapons and survivalist themes. In his home was a collection of *Soldier of Fortune*, *Commando* and *Gung Ho!*, three magazines devoted to the imagery of warfare and glamorous portrayals of military and paramilitary weapons. He had purchased equipment and materials of the kind advertised and promoted in these magazines, including a Colt AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, the civilian equivalent of the M-16 and a manual offering instruction on the crafting of silencers in home workshops. Over the years he had devised plans for the protection of his family in the event of warfare or civil disaster. While working in a state job that gave him access to such information, he had charted the locations of mountain sites of fresh water where he might take his family in the event of disaster.

One day in September 1982 Banks drank alcohol at a party, napped, awakened and ordered the two women with whom he was then living to re-

trieve his AR-15 magazine and ammunition from the two locations at which they were stored. He had them dress him in a fatigue-like jumpsuit, and he donned a Civil War cap. In the course of the next few hours he shot and killed eight women and children in his home, killed one bystander in the street and wounded another, commandeered a car at gunpoint, and drove to a trailer where another of his women and their son lived, and at the trailer killed their son, the woman, her mother and another little boy who was spending the night. He eventually locked himself in an abandoned house and held the police at bay for seven hours before surrendering.

Five psychiatrists testified at his trial, including Dr. Robert Sadoff, who has already spoken at this symposium, and each of us diagnosed him as suffering from paranoia. The defense and its witnesses contended that Banks' paranoia caused him not to know the nature and quality of his act and not to know that what he was doing was wrong. The state and its witnesses contended that Banks' behavior and statements at the time of the offenses showed that despite his psychosis, he knew the nature, quality and wrongfulness of his acts. Banks himself testified—over his attorneys' objections—that the police had tried to make it look bad for him by moving the bodies and inflicting additional gunshot wounds on his victims. He even circulated to the jury the full-color scene photographs of his dead children—which the defense had managed to keep out of evidence—to prove to the jurors the depravity of the police conspiracy. Banks was convicted and sentenced to death.

I have seen no typologies of mass murder that I think warrant review. The mass murderers of which I am aware have fit unambiguously into one of the following three categories: *Family annihilators*, usually the senior man of the house, who is depressed, paranoid, intoxicated or a combination of these. He kills each member of the family who is present, sometimes including pets. He may commit suicide after killing the others, or may force the police to kill him. *Pseudocommandos*, who are preoccupied by firearms and commit their raids after long deliberation. James Huberty carried a rifle, a shotgun, and a pistol and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.³ Charles Whitman hauled to the top of the tower a footlocker containing a rifle, a shotgun, two pistols, a revolver, 700 rounds of ammunition, food, water, a radio and toiletries.⁴ The murderer may force the police to kill him. *Set-and-run killers*, who employ techniques allowing themselves the possibility of escape before the deaths occur. Examples include those who bomb

buildings or vehicles on which they are not traveling, who set arson fires, or who tamper with food or products, as in the Tylenol poisonings. While the offender may have one or more particular victims in mind, he considers the indiscriminate killings of bystanders an unimportant cost in relation to the enhanced probability of escape provided by these methods. As with bombings generally,⁵ the most common motives are anger or revenge toward people or institutions, but extortion, insurance fraud and ideological motives are also observed.

SERIAL MURDERS

As in the case of mass murder, the most homogeneous class of offenders results from a definition limited to the most extreme cases. Those who kill others in 10 or more separate incidents, without exception, kill more strangers than familiar people. This fact is almost tautologic, however, because it is nearly unthinkable that one could kill 10 family members, one at a time, without someone noticing a pattern. Serial killers who are able to reach the 10-victim level are able to do so because they manage not to be caught, which generally requires either careful execution and an acceptable public persona (as in the John Wayne Gacy case), or high mobility (as in the case of Lucas and Toole), or both (as in the case of Ted Bundy). While every serial killer is mentally disordered, nearly all are psychopathic sexual sadists, and few, if any, are psychotic. Psychotic offenders rarely have the wherewithal repeatedly to escape apprehension.

In contrast to murder generally, the victims of serial killers are most often strangled, beaten or knived, rather than shot. I attribute this to the greater intimacy of contact weapons over projectile weapons, reflecting the sexual component of the killers' motivation. Like other sexual sadists, they often pursue occupations and hobbies that bring them in contact with injured and suffering people or people over whom they have control. Ambulance services, hospitals, mortuaries, correctional facilities, police agencies and specialized military combat units prove attractive to them but sometimes have standards that they cannot meet. The single most prevalent job is probably that of a security guard. Their interest in police-related activities and their inability to become legitimate police officers (due to a criminal record, lack of discipline or other factors) reveals itself in such behavior as collecting police paraphernalia, using police badges or equipment to gain access to victims, monitoring police radio frequencies and, most strikingly, inserting

themselves into the investigation of their own crimes. Many of the elements common to serial killers are illustrated in a case that has been described in greater detail elsewhere.⁶

A white man in his mid-30s was charged with approximately a dozen murders in several states. His father, whom he had never known, had been executed for murdering a police officer and had also killed a correctional officer during an escape. Shortly before being executed, the father wrote: "When I killed this cop, it made me feel good inside. I can't get over how good it did make me feel, for the sensation was something that made me feel elated to the point of happiness. . . ." Often told of his resemblance to his father, he came to believe that his father lived within him.

His mother, who had been married four times and brought home a succession of short-term extramarital sexual partners, frequently told her son that she had been raped by her father when she was nine. She ridiculed her son's bedwetting, which persisted to age 13, by calling him "pissy pants" in front of guests; he was beaten for the bedwetting and night terrors. For as long as he could recall he had had recurrent nightmares of being "smothered" by nylons and being strapped to a chair in a gas chamber as green gas filled the room. One of his stepfathers beat him relentlessly. For leaving a hammer outside, he was awakened by this stepfather burning his wrist with a cigar. For playing a childish game while urinating, he was forced to drink urine. When his mother once intervened, the stepfather pushed her head through a plaster wall, after which she, too, actively abused the children. His hostility toward her was unconcealed, as he said: "Sometimes I [think] about blowin' her head off. . . . Sometimes I wanta' put a shotgun in her mouth and blow the back of her head off. . . ." For years, his favorite sexual fantasy was of torturing his mother to death.

He had been knocked unconscious on multiple occasions and had remained comatose for over a week after a head-injury at approximately age 20. A CT-scan of the brain showed abnormally enlarged sulci and slightly enlarged ventricles. Results of the Halstead-Reitan Neuropsychological Battery and the Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery were interpreted as showing damage to the right frontal lobe.

He had juvenile police contacts for vandalism, malicious acts, running away and multiple burglaries. Apprehended for lewd contact with a seven-year-old girl at age 13, he was sent to reform school for a year. At age 16 he was arrested for armed robbery. At age 18, two weeks after the birth of his first child, he married the child's mother. Despite subsequent arrests for armed robbery, beating his wife, assault, burglary, auto theft, theft, parole

violation and other offenses, he was awarded custody of his daughter after divorcing his first wife. His second and third marriages ended in divorce after he beat his wives, and his fourth marriage ended in divorce for unknown reasons.

After many more arrests and a jail escape, he was eventually sentenced to prison on conviction of armed robbery. He initiated sexual contact with his seven-year-old daughter during a conjugal visit on the prison grounds. Prison records from his early-20s document a psychotic episode with paranoid delusions and suicidal ideation following the death of a brother. After he was paroled from prison he impregnated one woman and married another (his fifth wife). He separated from her after he was released from parole. His second through fifth wives appeared young enough to pass as teenagers.

In his early 30s he lived as husband and wife with his 13-year-old daughter, whom he impregnated. The pregnancy was aborted. He continued to molest his daughter, who reported one of his rapes. He also sexually assaulted one of her girlfriends. He celebrated one of his birthdays by sodomizing his then 14-year-old daughter. Eventually she moved to her grandparents, and he began living and traveling with another woman, who became his sixth wife and his partner in a two-year series of rapes and murders.

His wife knew of his fantasies of torturing young girls and his desire for women he could control and abuse, and she assisted him in each of his known murders by selecting the victim, orchestrating the abduction and concealing the evidence. He beat, tortured and raped his victims, whom he forced to play the role of his daughter in fantasy scenarios that he directed. Although he would not describe this scenario, he did reveal that his favorite sexual fantasy involved the killing of a woman. In the early years in which he employed this fantasy, the woman killed was his mother, which he associated to her having turned his father in to the police after a prison escape: "I was gonna' string her up by her feet, strip her, hang her up by her feet, spin her, take a razor blade, make little cuts, just little ones, watch the blood run out, just drip off her head. Hang her up in the closet, put airplane glue on her, light her up. Tattoo 'bitch' on her forehead. . . ." This fantasy gradually changed and came to include forced sexual activity and other forms of abuse and torture. After his first wife left him, she replaced his mother in the fantasy; eventually their daughter replaced her.

His early victims were all teenaged girls; his later victims included adults. After his initial murders, he again raped his daughter and her friend. They reported these offenses, and an arrest warrant was issued. The offender changed his identity, as he had on previous occasions, using falsified iden-

tification papers. A gun enthusiast, he bought and sold various firearms; shortly before his last arrest, he possessed two revolvers, a semiautomatic pistol, a derringer, and a semiautomatic assault rifle. Those of his victims whose bodies have been located died by gunshot wounds or blows to the head. Some of the bodies were still bound.

Masturbation he regarded as shameful, dirty and unmanly. The first sexually explicit pictures he could recall having seen were photographs of his mother with a man he did not recognize. He had never been to an "adult book store" or an X-rated movie "because I didn't want anybody to think I was in that category." He considered *The Exorcist* and *Psycho* influential in his life. He mentioned "sadism-masochism" (sic), but denied that he was sadomasochistic, saying, "sadism-masochism is where you like to be hurt while you hurt, and I don't think that's it. Maybe one half of it, 'cause I think I've been hurt enough." The imagery characteristic of bondage and domination pornography disgusted him: "That ain't me. . . . The ball in the mouth, the excess rope, I think what they've done is taken a fantasy and overdo it. The mask makes somebody look like out of Mars. . . You're in a room and a girl walks out with a rubber suit or whip and she's subject to get shot." The covers of detective magazines were the source of fantasy material most congruent with his preferences.

He insisted on representing himself at trial and fired his attorneys. He was sentenced to death for the first two murders for which he was brought to trial. Out of concern for the fact that the state in which he was sentenced is slow to execute its death-row inmates, the citizens of one area in which he had murdered made private contributions to the prosecutor's office in another state known to execute death sentences more rapidly to facilitate his extradition and prosecution there. He currently awaits trial in the second state for additional murder charges.

Highly inflated estimates of the number of serial killers and their victims have appeared in the press. Claims to the contrary notwithstanding, there is no empirical evidence that the frequency of serial killers is increasing or is higher in the United States than in other countries. Improved communications among police agencies, new recognition of the phenomenon, and centralized reporting to the F.B.I. Academy Behavioral Science Unit in recent years all increase the probability that a series of murders will be attributed to a single offender, leading to increased detection. The true rate of occurrence is not known for any country at any time, so it is not yet possible to study temporal trends or to make international comparisons.

A requirement of 10 murder victims and 10 killing incidents for inclusion

in the category of serial killers is good for the purpose of looking at one extreme and conceptually homogeneous group of offenders, but is too high a threshold for certain other purposes, such as alerting law enforcement agencies to a series of crimes in progress or learning why some similar men get caught earlier. Offenders who have killed a smaller series of victims are more heterogeneous. Offenders who have killed five or more victims in five or more killing incidents fall within five categories:

Psychopathic sexual sadists, the type illustrated by the above case history. Every individual known to me who has killed a series of 10 or more victims in 10 or more separate killing incidents has been male and diagnosable as suffering from antisocial personality disorders and sexual sadism. Although these men have oddities of fantasy and worldview that lead some psychiatrists to label them "borderlines," it is my impression that this most often reflects the psychiatrists' unwillingness or inability to face the fact that these men enjoy killing people, as in the older tendency to label men like Albert Fish "ambulatory" or "latent" schizophrenics. Examples include Ted Bundy, Edmund Kemper, Dean Corll, John Wayne Gacy, Wayne Williams and Henry Lee Lucas.

Crime spree killers, who kill repeatedly during a series of crimes motivated by the search for excitement, money and valuables. The most famous cases in this category are those of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow and of Charles Starkweather. Less familiar examples occur among men who kill repeatedly during robberies less sensational than those of Bonnie and Clyde.

Functionaries of organized criminal operations, including traditional organized crime (La Cosa Nostra), ethnic gangs, prison gangs and street gangs. Contract killers, illegal mercenaries, and terrorists are subsumed by this category.

Custodial poisoners and asphyxiators, most of whom are caretakers of the debilitated, of children or of both. On ample evidence, physicians and nurses have been suspected of serial killings of patients in hospitals in New Jersey, Michigan, Texas and Ontario, occasioning some fascinating applications of hospital epidemiology.⁷⁻⁹ The recent cases in which cause of death has been established have involved the administration of curare-like agents, digitalis compounds and insulin, but analogous cases that would pose greater postmortem detection problems may involve administration of potassium or other electrolytes or various forms of mechanical asphyxiation. Similar cases have occurred in the homes of babysitters, foster parents and, of course, the baby farms of 19th century England.

Supposed psychotics, who claim to be acting at the direction of command

hallucinations or under the influence of compelling delusions. I temper this category with the word "supposed" because I have not yet had occasion to examine a truly psychotic serial killer and because of the contested facts in some of the best known cases. For example, David Berkowitz (known as Son of Sam or the .44 Caliber Killer) was said by some commentators to have maintained that he killed his six murder victims at the direction of a dog and in keeping with the interpreted content of delusions of reference, but by others to have been malingering mental illness. Angelo Buono (the Hillside Strangler), John Linley Frazier and Herbert Mullin are additional examples.

SENSATIONAL HOMICIDES

With respect to the topic of sensational homicides, I am not bound by any customary use of the term. Perhaps a suitably operationalized definition would be that sensational homicides are those that have a higher than chance probability of receiving coverage in tabloids such as the *New York Daily News* and the *National Enquirer* or in the detective magazines such as *Detective World*, *Front Page Detective*, *Homicide Detective*, *Official Detective Stories* and *True Detective*. My impression, based on informal scanning of the headlines of tabloids for the past two years in connection with my research on celebrity victimization and a formal study of detective magazines, is that five types of homicides are overrepresented among those selected for feature-length articles in these periodicals. These five types may fairly be said to represent the five types of sensational homicides other than mass and serial murders: sexually sadistic homicides involving sexual assault, torture, kidnapping or sexual mutilation; homicides followed by significant postmortem injuries, such as decapitation, amputation or disarticulation (for example, the case of Ed Gein) or involving vampirism or cannibalism (for example, the killings by Albert Fish and by Richard Trenton Chase); homicides with elements of occultism, satanism, cults or religious ritual (for example, the Manson Family killings); homicides in which either the offender or the victim is socially prominent or famous (for the example, the killings by Fatty Arbuckle and by Claudine Longet and the murders of Ramon Novarro, Sal Mineo and John Lennon); and infanticide, matricide and patricide.

The first three of these categories are demonstrably overrepresented among the homicides described in detective magazines. Dr. Bruce Harry, F.B.I. Supervisory Special Agent Robert R. Hazelwood and I recently reported the results of a content analysis of 18 detective magazines.⁶ In a random sample of articles, we found that 38% of homicides involved torture of the vic-

tim, a far higher percentage than is true of homicide generally. Killings of strangers, binding and gagging of victims, stabbings and sexual mutilations accounted for a much larger share of the homicides described in these articles than of homicides as they occur in the United States. Women victims in the articles were almost universally sexually assaulted prior to being murdered, whereas fewer than 2% of all homicides occur in the context of felonious sexual conduct.¹⁰ One fourth of the cover headlines promoting articles in the magazines we studied included some sexual reference, such as: "Grisly Revenge of the Gay Ripper," "Riddle of the Dead Nude in a Closet," and "Fiend Who Raped and Hung His Victims."

Mutilation themes often appear on the cover of detective magazines, even though the proportion of all homicides involving mutilation is low. Illustrative titles include, "Mutilations on Mulberry Street" and "Texas Manhunt for the Knife-Wielder who Mutilated the Pretty Artist in Lovers' Lane." Suggestions to the potential buyer that an article may be about vampirism or cannibalism are highlighted, as in "The Holy Vampire Drank His Victim's Blood," even though most of the titles that suggest these acts refer to something else (for example, use of the word "roast" to refer to burning of victims in "Roast A Family of Six"). Elements of occultism or satanic ritual, even if irrelevant to the crime, are stressed in the promotional material, as in "Case of the Voodoo Hit Man" and "Satanist Smiled as He Snuffed the Snitch."

Homicides of and by the famous and prominent do not occur with sufficient frequency to support the sensational journalism industry. The industry adapts to this through three strategies. First, those cases which do occur are worked and reworked until the last reader has tired of the story. Second, misleading headlines are used to suggest that such a murder has occurred, when the article really refers to the death of a contract, the celebrity's dog or the character portrayed in a new film. Third, noncelebrity cases are used to illustrate the hungered-for themes that overly successful people meet bad ends, powerful people abuse their power to harm others and even the most respected members of the community are evil. Two examples from detective magazines in our study are: "Church Sexton Electrocutes Bride" and "Trail of the Slaying Deacon."

Infanticide, matricide and patricide occur with sufficient frequency to be standard fare for tabloids, but are curiously unexploited by detective magazines, perhaps because the cases are so readily solved that there is not much of a detective story to unfold or because the sexual elements are too subtle. The central element uniting these homicides with the other types that

are regarded as appropriate grist for the sensationalism mill is that they are emotionally arousing, which is by definition the essence of sensationalism. Given the frequency with which the public is bombarded with sensational events of all kinds, one might wonder how anything remains emotionally arousing. We should be thankful that even as so many of our cultural sensitivities erode, we at least do not experience extinction of our aversion to cruelty, mutilation, the diabolical, the fall of angels or the taking of life between parent and child.

SUMMARY

Mass, serial and sensational homicides share several common features. First, they occur with a frequency too low to permit the ordinary research habits of psychiatrists or criminologists to elucidate their characteristics. Second, they typically evoke a premature and sometimes erroneous conclusion that the offender must have been mad. Third, they generate an extreme degree of publicity, leading to unusual media influences, both beneficial and detrimental, on criminal investigation, the processing of cases through the criminal justice system and the behavior of offenders, would-be offenders and others. The most common varieties of mass murder can be described as family annihilators, pseudocommandos and set-and-run killers. Serial killers can be classified as psychopathic sexual sadists, crime spree killers, functionaries of organized criminal operations, custodial poisoners and asphyxiators and supposed psychotics. While the possibilities for sensational homicides through innovations might seem limitless, the varieties observed in the sensational press involve sadism, mutilation, the occult, prominent offenders and victims, and infanticide, matricide and patricide.

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