



The Role of Sexual, Sadistic, and Misogynistic Fantasy in Mass and Serial Killing

Jennifer L. Murray

To cite this article: Jennifer L. Murray (2017) The Role of Sexual, Sadistic, and Misogynistic Fantasy in Mass and Serial Killing, *Deviant Behavior*, 38:7, 735-743, DOI: [10.1080/01639625.2016.1197669](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2016.1197669)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2016.1197669>



Published online: 09 Nov 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 5887



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 7 View citing articles [↗](#)

The Role of Sexual, Sadistic, and Misogynistic Fantasy in Mass and Serial Killing

Jennifer L. Murray

Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

ABSTRACT

A subset of violent criminals fixates on deviant (and often grossly misogynistic) sexual fantasies, or engages in sexually sadistic behavior toward victims. Although the role of psychosexual deviancy is quite common among many notorious serial killers (e.g., Ted Bundy, Gary Ridgway, Dennis Rader), it appears to be a motivating factor for some recent mass killers as well. Evidence indicates that the killer's psychosexual issues were a motivating factor for mass killers (e.g., George Sodini, Jared Lee Loughner, and Elliot Rodger) in their assault. This article will compare and contrast the role and influence of a deviant sexual/misogynistic fantasy formation process for mass and serial killers.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 23 October 2015

Accepted 1 April 2016

Introduction

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 mindset.

The common (grossly misogynistic) and sexually sadistic behavior of many serial killers has been studied for well over half a century. This type of deviancy was a prime motivator for notorious serial killers (e.g., Ted Bundy, Gary Ridgway, Dennis Rader). However, the role of (grossly misogynistic) and psychosexual deviant fantasies fueling the mass killers' behavior is a relatively new phenomena. By conducting ethnographic content analysis on the cases of mass killers (e.g., George Sodini, Jared Lee Loughner, and Elliot Rodger) this research unearths similar fantasy propulsion full of rage, hatred, and sadistic revenge toward women.

The psyche for both serial and mass murderers 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 and for some a lack of sexual relationships. Over time, as distorted perceptions become ingrained thought patterns, this potentially violent criminal goes deeper and deeper into a mordant fantasized 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. 2007:31).

Sadistic serial killers tend to have particularly detailed and elaborate fantasies—"scripts of violence," rich with themes of abuse, control, and dominance (Skrapac 2001). Killing is typically, but not always, a means of sexual arousal and gratification for this offender. This type of serial killer is 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 sadistic violence, control, and domination.

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").

Defining serial and mass murder

"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 [FBI] 2009:8; Fox and Levin 2015). As for "serial murder," the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit's definition requires a minimum of two victims, whom the perpetrator may kill "over a period of months or years" (p. 9). 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 and Levin 2015). Thus, the main differences between "mass killing" and "serial 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.

Methodology

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 researchers.

This research method systematically dissected the portrait that the killer has painted of "himself and his world" (p. 50; Hickey 2010:353, citing Skrapec 2001). One's thought and behavior always "has context and subjective meaning" (Hickey 2010:354). 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 2010:354). Accordingly, this project had to "identify the principles that organized" the killer's feelings, perceptions, thinking and finally his or her behavior (Hickey 2010:35; citing Kluckhohn and Murray 1953:55). This research, 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 2010:354).

With respect to understanding a semiotic approach, Altheide (1996:8), 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." "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 2001:169). Reality, as expressed in these research documents displays a range of emotion behind the texts—neutral and dispassionate observations, angry or rageful tirades, humorous or ironic musings and morose, self-pitying obsessions.

The role of deviant sexual fantasy: Influences on serial murderers

Researchers associated with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 1979–1983 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 day-dreams" (Prentky et al. 1989:889; see also Burgess et al. 1986). They additionally put forward *fantasy* as the principal motivator in serial sexual homicide (Prentky et al. 1989). These researchers further hypothesize that these men are motivated to murder by their way of thinking. Over time, their thinking patterns emerged from, or were influenced by, unrelenting traumatic early life experiences (Burgess et al. 1986).

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 2010:12). The lust murderer possesses a particular urge not simply to kill, but to sadistically ravage his victim(s) either pre- or post-mortem (Purcell and 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 and Arrigo 2006:26). The sadistic killer is engrossed in a disturbing fantasy world of compulsive fixation on the absolute control over, objectification of, and the infliction of pain onto the victim.

An example of this type of sadistic murderer is serial killer Dennis Rader; also self-named the BTK, which stands for bind, torture and kill. Rader murdered 10 people (mostly women) in Wichita, Kansas from 1974 to 1991. Wanting full credit for his murders and a form of serial killer celebrity status, Rader taunted the police by sending letters describing his torturous killings. A sample of one of his letters espouses his sexual gratification through his sadistic acts of horror:

The victims are tie up-most have been women-phone cut-bring some bondage mater sadistic tendencies-no struggle, outside the death spot-witnness except the Vain’s Kids. They were very lucky; a phone call save them. I was go-ng to tape the boys and put plastics bag over there head like I did Joseph, and Shirley. And then hang the girl. God-oh God what a beautiful sexual relief that would been. Josephine, when I hung her really turn me on; her pleading for mercy then the rope took whole, she helpless; staring at me with wide terror filled eyes the rope getting tighter-tighter. (Frater 2007)

Rader typically did not rape his victims while alive; rather, what excited him was the power, thrill, and control he had over his victims while he killed them. His favorite modus operandi was to strangle his victims near death, release his hands so they could regain consciousness and awareness of their fate, only to strangle them again. Their suffering empowered and aroused him; once the victim was dead, he would often masturbate into his female victim’s underwear.

In a sample of twenty sadistic serial killers analyzed by Hazelwood, Dietz, and Warren (1992), 80% reported having violent fantasies (Fox and Levin 1998:417). 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 et al. 1992). 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. 2007:43; Purcell and Arrigo 2006).

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 2003:125).

The fantasy works as an “internal” driving force to normalize recurring acts of sexual brutality (Purcell and Arrigo 2006:23). Moreover, “the nature and frequency of the deviant sexual fantasies are good predictors of the severity of the offence” (Proulx et al. 2007:43). Through violent sexual abuse and murder, the lust killer literally chases his dreams (Fox and Levin 1998:417).

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 2010:153). Bundy “raped most, if not all, of his victims,” and many “were subjected to sodomy and sexual mutilations” (Hickey 2010:153).

The role of deviant sexual fantasy: Influences on mass murderers

Dying for company and intimacy

The sexualized aspect to mass killing, by contrast, tends to involve misogynistic themes of anger or revenge toward women for real or perceived rejection. In some cases, there maybe an element of

eroticizing violence and sadistic fantasy, but probably not to the degree as observed with the sadistic serial killer. The mass killer externalizes blame for his own personal psychosexual shortcomings and social deficits onto women.

George Sodini (48 years old) appeared to harbor such odium toward women. On August 5, 2009, Sodini walked into an LA Fitness Center that he had frequented near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, turned off the lights, and opened fire on a women's aerobics class. Sodini killed three women, himself and badly injured nine other women (CNN.com/crime 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 U.S. (my estimate) and I cannot find one." In another entry, he writes: "Flying solo for many years is a destroyer" (NYPOST.com 2009, Blog Full Text Source).

Sodini was angry and isolated, and craving an intimate relationship that he believed he could never achieve. A violent, misogynistic revenge fantasy appeared to temporarily replace the lack of intimacy, and the inability for Sodini to obtain a female partner. Because of this painful emotional void with the opposite sex, he chose to strike out violently against them. His victims served as representatives, who could be blamed for Sodini's own feelings of anger, inadequacy and humiliation. Here, too, though it is possible that Sodini attained some form of sexual gratification from inflicting a sort of violent revenge against the female gender. 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 sadistic mass killer: Elliot Rodger: Flay them alive

More recently, Elliot Rodger (22 years old) wrote a 141-page manifesto titled "My Twisted World," describing his childhood, family problems, frustration over not being able to find a girlfriend, and hatred for women and their boyfriends before going on a rampage through the University of California–Santa Barbara campus. Rodger killed six people, himself, and injured 14 others on May 23, 2014. His onslaught began by stabbing his two roommates and a third man to death in his apartment, he then drove to a sorority house and shot three women outside, killing two of them, next he drove to a deli where he shot to death a male student. Rodger continued to speed through the streets injuring others by both shooting and hitting people with his car. Eventually he crashed his car and shot himself to death.

Rodger, similar to Sodini, wanted to make both women and their male counterparts suffer. He blamed women for depriving him of love and sex, and men because they were the recipients of their affections. In Rodger's words: "I hated all of those obnoxious, boisterous men who were able to enjoy pleasurable sex lives with beautiful girls, but I hated the girls even more, because they were the ones who chose men instead of me" (Rodger 2014:117). Rodger additionally stated, "If I can't have them, no one will" (Rodger 2014:136).

Akin to Sodini, Rodger talks about how he never got to have close intimate experiences with women. Rodger: "I could never have the experience holding hands with a beautiful girl and walking on a moonlit beach, I could never embrace a girlfriend and feel her warmth and love" (Rodger 2014:117). Due to female rejection, Rodger describes women as having sexually starved him and they are "vicious, stupid, cruel animals" (Rodger 2014:117). Like Sodini, Rodger could not understand why women did not like him, and made comments that he was the perfect guy. Instead of taking any blame, Rodger believed that women's sexual attractions were flawed, and that they were attracted to the wrong type of male.

Elliot Rodger writes about his profound frustrations and near explosions toward women and their boyfriends throughout his manifesto, but his recalcitrant and completely out of control indignation did not take a firm hold until he was 19. While at Starbucks, Rodger witnessed a couple kissing passionately and he was in his words, “livid with envious hatred” (Rodger 2014:87). When the couple left Starbucks, Rodger followed them to their car and splashed his coffee all over them. In his manifesto he states: “I had never struck back at my enemies before, and I felt a small sense of spiteful gratification for doing so. I hated them so much” (Rodger 2014:87). Rodger gained a sense of power by physically showing his disdain for the couple. Command over a situation and people had eluded him his entire life; it felt good to be the aggressor.

“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 (Murray 2014:237). However, with the inability of achieving “a solid sense of who they are”—other than the label of misfit, loser, or undesirable—“many mass killers give up on conventional means of recognition” (Murray 2014:237). Thus, over time, extremely violent offenders develop what Lonnie Athens (1995) calls a “barbaric individualism.” The killer is in fact antagonistic to society, the attitude that eventually emerges.

This was a critical turning point for Elliot Rodger; rather than tapping down his anger, he began to release it on others, and dove deeper into a very graphic sadistic fantasy world completely focused on violent retribution. These thoughts permeated his manifesto from this point on. After throwing the coffee on the couple, Rodger further reflects:

I wanted to do horrible things to that couple. I wanted to inflict pain on all young couples. It was around this point in my life that I realized I was capable of doing such things. I was capable of killing them, and I wanted to. I wanted to kill them slowly, to strip the skins off their flesh. They deserve it. The males deserve it for taking the females away from me, and the females deserve it for choosing those males instead of me. (Rodger 2014:87)

Many more incidents of flinging drinks on couples that openly displayed affection and women that rejected him followed. Rodger always felt slighted by couples that were showing their affections. Statements such as wanting to “flay them alive,” and “make them scream in agony as punishment for living a better life” seemed to be at the root of his anger; he so desperately wanted to live their way of life (Rodger 2014:91). At this point, Rodger is not just immersed in a blameful misogynistic fantasy world; he has crossed over into a sadistic fantasy world of both torture and murder, not unlike sexual sadist serial killers.

In his manifesto, Rodger continued to vilify women because they controlled who got sex and who did not. Rodger believes “there is no creature more evil and depraved than a human female. Women are like the plague. They don’t deserve to have any rights. Women are vicious, evil, barbaric animals, and they need to be treated as such” (Rodger 2014:136). He further decrees that all women should be quarantined and starved to death. He additionally states that: “A few women would be spared, however for the sake of reproduction. These women would be kept and bred in secret labs” (Rodger 2014:136). Like a mad scientist, he wants to create a woman he can control and that will love him.

At the very end of his manifesto, Rodger becomes even more detailed in his vengeful plans. He describes how on the day of retribution he will begin by luring people one by one into his personal torture and killing chamber, knock them out with a hammer, slit their throats, behead them, and stash their heads in a bag to use later for further shock value when he parades down the streets further massacring everyone (Rodger 2014).

His detailed description of his plans rivals actual killing methods used by numerous sadistic serial killers combined. In his twisted sadistic fantasy world, he wants to use violence to stop the abuse of rejection, gain power and respect, and frighten others.

Misogyny, psychosis, and revenge: Jared Lee Loughner—women enjoy rape

Jared Lee Loughner (22 years old) presents an example of a mass killer with a misogynistic sexual revenge fantasy infused with some form of psychotic paranoia. On January 8, 2011, Jared Lee Loughner went on a rampage outside a Safeway grocery store in Tucson, Arizona. Loughner killed 6 people and injured 14 others, including severely injuring U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords (*NYTimes.com* 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 Representative Giffords could meet and talk with ordinary citizens going about their weekend errands. Based on evidence gathered in the police investigation, it appears that there are several underlying motivations to Loughner’s behavior: sexual fixation and anger directed at women; revenge for the rejection that Loughner experienced in social, academic, and employment circles; and the effect of untreated mental illness or psychosis.

Prior to the massacre Loughner posted 131 messages between April and June 2010 in a private forum associated with the online game *Earth Empires* (*CBSNews.com* 2011; *WSJ.com* 2011). Many of the postings touched on various themes including: misogynistic, angry rants about women. On April 24, 2010, one particularly disturbing rant titled “Why Rape” explained how women in college actually enjoyed being raped (*WSJ.com* 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* 2011). Loughner followed up on May 5, 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* 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* 2011). Through this forum, Loughner could vent his frustration, commiserate with others similar to him, and build justification for his beliefs and fantasized revenge. The forum appeared to become a fruitful fantasy formation tool.

Comrades in arms

Elliot Rodger fed and justified his misogynistic fantasies in a similar fashion by joining the online chat club “Pua-Hate.com,” that in Rodger’s own words is a “forum full of men who are starved of sex, just like me” (Rodger 2014:117). He goes on to describe what the club provided for him:

Many of them have their own theories of what women are attracted to, and many of them share my hatred of women, though unlike me they would be too cowardly to act on it. Reading the posts on that website only confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are. (Rodger 2014:117–118)

The overall theme of this chat room is to find comradeship with other males rejected by women. The members of this organization often refer to themselves as “incels,” which stands for involuntary celibacy (Glasstetter 2014). One of Rodger’s comments in this forum was, “If we can’t solve our problems we must DESTROY our problems” (*NYTimes.com* 2014). In part of another reference about “incels,” Rodger states “Start envisioning a world where WOMEN FEAR YOU” (Glasstetter 2014). Throughout more of Rodger’s statements about the participants in this forum, it is evident that he feels a connection with these men, yet he considers himself as supreme and stronger than they are. Even in an environment most suited for him to connect with others, he still cannot do so completely. Over time, in this forum, Rodger becomes too extreme in his hatred even for their taste.

Bruised manhood

The search for, and destruction of, their idealized woman

Serial killer Ted Bundy’s “main motivation was power and control”; however there was an obvious sexual element of torture in his killings in order to achieve this feeling of control (Holmes and

Holmes 2010:49). Bundy wanted to totally possess his victims, and he gained immense pleasure knowing the victim's life or death depended on him solely (Holmes and Holmes 2010).

This pleasure and arousal for the killer is entrenched in hatred and loathing, as reported by Sears' (1991) study on the etiology of the serial killer (Holmes and Holmes 2010:60). 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 2003:125). 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 despised. When the relationship with Stephanie ended, Bundy perceived the loss as also destroying his chance to climb above his origins. Bundy felt this loss deeply; therefore, he indulged his feelings of animosity 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.

Mass killer Elliot Rodger was enamored with attractive blond women, and felt that sorority girls epitomized this type of female. These unattainable women had shunned him his entire life. In his attempt to gain a sense of power and control, after violently killing three men in his apartment during the start of his actual massacre, Rodger's next stop was a sorority house. George Sodini thought the women that worked out at the L.A. Fitness Center were a perfect representation of all the attractive women that had always eluded him. Bundy, Rodger, and Sodini all sought out whom they believed to be the unattainable perfect woman.

Internalized feminization of man

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'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. Ridgway has stated that he enjoyed choking his victims, and that killing prostitutes was a “career” (Hickey 2010:25).

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 and Shields 2007:82).

The impact of sexually motivated revenge killing is documented among many theorists. In the book *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Welmar Germany*, Maria Tatar (1995) 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.” 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 for some, stem from sexual inadequacy turned into rage.

Conclusion

Psychosexual deviant fantasies fueling the mass killer's behavior is a relatively new phenomena. A content analysis of three recent mass killers unearths similar fantasy propulsion to that of a sadistic serial killer, full of misogynistic rage, hatred, and sadistic revenge toward women.

Some common psychological characteristics that develop for both serial and mass killers are feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and worthlessness. The potential killer externalizes blame and seeks solace in fantasies of revenge as a substitute for their lack of social connections. Over time their obsessive rumination both conditions and provides justification, in the murderer's mind, to actualize their violent plans.

The murderer that craves ultimate power and control “kills because he is gratified by his ability to hold the fate of another in his hands” (Holmes and Holmes 2010:41). This appears to be true with both mass and serial murderers. However, with sexually sadistic killers, it is the need 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 and Kuehnle 2012:24). For some sadistic lust murderers a sexual gratification is achieved either pre- or post-mortem.

For a few mass killers, a sexual aspect influences their motivation—*who, how, where, when*—to kill. Severe psychosexual issues are a theme underlying the behavior of some mass killers. The themes, though, tend to involve deeply misogynistic feelings, anger, or hatred for women—including indignation over having romantic overtures repeatedly rejected. The mass killer typically lacks an intense need for sexual gratification from the imagined and actual homicides. Mass killers George Sodini and Jared Lee Loughner had a deep-seated hatred for and were continually rejected by women. Their misogynistic fantasies of homicidal payback were directed toward representative female victims.

However, Elliot Rodger had deep-seated misogynistic and sadistic fantasies unerringly like a hedonistic serial killer. He was a fantasy hybrid killer that yearned for enacting systematic torture and murder on a massive scale. He wanted to feel the power and control over a person hands on like a sadistic serial killer, as well as guns blazing like a mass killer and ostensibly wanted to accomplish all of this without a cooling off period.

These sexual fantasy patterns do not just spring up spontaneously out of nowhere; they develop over years and years, and this most likely means that people close to the killer (parents, siblings, former girlfriends/boyfriends, school-mates, teachers) potentially could have seen this pattern developing at earlier stages. This is an important point with policy/response implications and the need to educate the appropriate people about catching these patterns as early as possible. The earlier, the more likely a successful intervention, the later, the more likely a full-blown tragedy and many lost lives.

Notes on contributor

JENNIFER L. MURRAY, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminology at Indiana State University. Her research focus is on mass and serial murder. She has lectured about her work in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe. Additionally, she has analyzed, consulted, and been interviewed nationally and internationally on numerous murder cases. She is an expert commentator on several episodes for the Investigation Discovery Channel’s (ID) television series *Evil Kin*. Recently she taught a course at Scotland’s Stirling University comparing U.S. and British mass killings with regard to prevalence, gun laws, healthcare, and bullying.

References

- Altheide, David. 1996. *Qualitative Media Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Athens, Lonnie. 1995. “Dramatic Self-Change.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 36:571–586.
- Borgeson, Kevin and Kristen Kuehnle. 2012. *Serial Offenders: Theory and Practice*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning.
- Burgess, Ann, Carol Hartman, Robert Ressler, John Douglas, and Arlene McCormack. 1986. “Sexual Homicide: A Motivational Model.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 1:251–272.
- CBSNEWS.com. 2011. “Report: Loughner’s Online Musings Bizarre, Sad.” Retrieved January 22, 2011 (http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/01/12/national/main723_9564.shtml).
- CNN.com/crime. 2009. “Police: Gym Shooter Had A Lot of Hatred for Women, Society.” Retrieved October 20, 2009 (http://articles.cnn.com/2009-08-05/justice/pennsylvania.gym.shooting_1_moffatt-gym-aerobics-class?_s=PM:CRIME).
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2009. “Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators.” *Behavioral Analysis Unit. National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime*. U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C.
- Fox, James Alan and Jack Levin. 1998. “Multiple Murder: Patterns of Serial and Mass Murder.” *Crime and Justice*, 23:407–455.
- . 2015. *Extreme Killing: Understanding Serial and Mass Murder* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Frater, Jamie. 2007. *Top 10 Evil Serial Killers*. Retrieved June 20, 2015 (<http://listverse.com/2007/08/22/top-10-evil-serial-killers/>).

- Glasstetter, Josh. 2014. *Shooting Suspect Elliot Rodger's Misogynistic Posts Point to Motive*. Retrieved October 15, 2014 (blog/2014/05/24/shooting-suspect-elliott-rodgers-misogynistic-posts-point-to-motive/).
- Hazelwood, Robert, Park Dietz, and Janet Warren. 1992. "The Criminal Sexual Sadist." *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 61:12–20.
- Hickey, Eric. 2010. *Serial Murderers and Their Victims* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Holmes, Ronald and Stephen Holmes. 2010. *Serial Murder* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kluckhohn, Clyde and Henry Murray. 1953. "Personality Formation: The Determinants." Pp. 53–67 in *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture*, edited by Kluckhohn, Clyde, Henry Murray, and David Schneider. New York: Knopf.
- Levi-Minzi, Micol and Maria Shields. 2007. "Serial Sexual Murderers and Prostitutes as Their Victims: Difficulty Profiling Perpetrators and Victim Vulnerability as Illustrated by the Green River Killer." *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* 7:77–89.
- Leyton, Elliott. 2003. *Hunting Humans: The Rise of the Modern Multiple Murder*. New York: Carroll & Graf.
- Manning, Peter and Betsy Cullum-Swan. 1994. "Narrative, Content and Semiotic Analysis." Pp. 463–484 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Murray, Jennifer L. 2014. "The Mass Killer's Search for Validation Through, Infamy, Media Attention, and Transcendence." Pp. 235–251 in *The Death and Resurrection of Deviance: Current Ideas and Research*, edited by Michael Dellwing, Joseph A. Kotarba, and Nathan Pino. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- NYPOST.com. 2009. "Full Text of Gym Killer's Blog." Retrieved September 2, 2009 (http://www.nypost.com/p/news/.../item_9hd681_zrqYTPxXiALPON).
- NYTimes.com. 2011. "In Attack's Wake, Political Repercussions." Retrieved January 10, 2011 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/09/us/politics/09giffords.html>).
- Plummer, Ken. 2001. *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to Critical Humanism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Prentky, Robert, Ann Burgess, Frances Rokous, Austin Lee, Carol Hartman, Robert Ressler, and John Douglas. 1989. "The Presumptive Role of Fantasy in Serial Sexual Homicide." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 146:887–891.
- Proulx, Jean, Eric Beaugregard, Maurice Cusson, and Alexandre Nicole. 2007. *Sexual Murders: A Comparative Analysis and New Perspectives*. Sussex, UK: Wiley and Sons.
- Purcell, Catherine and Bruce Arrigo. 2006. *The Psychology of Lust Murder: Paraphilia, Sexual Killing, and Serial Homicide*. New York: Elsevier Press.
- Rodger, Elliot. 2014. "My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger." Retrieved May 15, 2015 (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1173619/rodger-manifesto.pdf>).
- Sears, Donald. 1991. *To Kill Again: The Motivation and Development of Serial Murder*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources.
- Skrapec, Candice. 2001. "Phenomenology and Serial Murder." *Homicide Studies* 5(1):46–63.
- Tatar, Maria. 1995. *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Welmar Germany*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- WSJ.com. 2011. "Postings of a Troubled Mind." Retrieved January 22, 2011 (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703791904576075851892478080.html>).