

Chapter 1

The Phenomenon of Serial Murder

1.1 The Concept of Serial Murder

Murder, namely the act of taking another's life, has been with us since the birth of mankind. People kill to protect their shelter or food source, to gain power, or out of sheer hatred. Today, murder is a criminal act in every legal system in the world because the right to life, as the predominant value, is protected to the highest degree. Murder is a material crime, and therefore for an act to be recognized as such a crime, its effect has to constitute the taking of another's life.¹ In the current wording of the Polish penal code of 1977, Article 148 defines basic murder ("the killing of another person"), qualified murder ("murder carried out with particular cruelty; murder involving abduction, rape, or robbery; murder earning particular condemnation; murder with the use of firearms or explosive materials), and in the third paragraph the penalty determined as a minimum of 12 years imprisonment, 25 years imprisonment, or a life sentence for "one who kills more than one person in a single act or has a previous murder conviction." However, the said third paragraph does not cover all the possible types of multiple murders that exist in reality. As a matter of fact, the legal norm included in this provision refers to mass murder or a repeated act of murder.²

However, outside the sphere of mass murder, which borders on multicide, there is also a distinction to be made between a killing spree and serial murder.³ While these concepts have been defined in the jurisprudence, they are not reflected in separate provisions in the Act. The few types of murder mentioned under the category of multiple murder are only qualified insofar as how they affect the sentencing of the perpetrator, but there is no independent, codified legal concept.

¹A. Urbanek, *Doświadczenie napięć w relacji z ofiarą na podstawie wypowiedzi sprawców zabójstw* [The experience of tension in relation to the victim, based on interviews with murderers] publ. ATUT Oficyna Wydawnicza, Wrocław 2010, p. 11.

²K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotnie: profilowanie kryminalne* [Multiple Killing: Criminal Profiling], publ. Wolters Kluwer, Warsaw 2010, p. 21.

³B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia* [Criminology], publ. LexisNexis, Warsaw 2009, p. 325.

The National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), an FBI Department, has defined mass murder as the murder of at least four people in the same location, constituting one and the same event. Here, there is a similarity to the definition of murder spree, differentiated only by the fact that murder spree may be carried out in a variety of locations, provided the entire event takes place within a short time period.⁴ Nevertheless, such a brief and narrow definition has provoked calls for its modification. According to two academics known as the Holmes brothers, mass murder is “the killing of three or more people at the same time and in the same place.”⁵ Although in the jurisprudence and practice there is obviously discord among the followers of both theories, it has been agreed that there is a certain continuity of approach—for there is no clear cooling off period between the murders carried out by the perpetrator.

As mass murder is a relatively common occurrence, often concluding with an act of suicide, a certain typology of perpetrator has emerged, distinguishing the *Set and Run* killer (who plans the entire event in such a way so as to enable their future escape), the *Pseudo-Commando* (who is fascinated with firearms and controlling others), and the *Mentally Disordered Killer*.⁶ Irrespective of which of these categories a murderer may be classified in, there are also other factors that come into play, including: the killer’s long-term frustration with their material or political status; a tendency to over-internalize negative emotions and to lay the blame for their own misfortune on others; and finally, the occurrence of the so-called trigger, namely a situation leading to the perpetrator’s emotional breakdown, provoking him to commit an act of mass murder.⁷

With the aid of the categories developed by the FBI, another narrow group of perpetrators can be identified, namely hired killers. In the FBI’s definition, these are people who take the life of another in exchange for an appropriate material benefit, and usually have no relationship with the crime victim. The academic Zbigniew Lasocik places particular emphasis on the profit factor, which for some constitutes sufficient justification for horrific acts carried out for financial gain.⁸

The term “serial murder,” is relatively new, despite the incidence of such crime as an act per se throughout the history of mankind.⁹ As Professor Hołyst states in his publication “Criminology,” “a serial murderer kills at least three victims in various locations and within such time intervals that each murder constitutes an independent act making up part of a series.” The essence of this definition was also accepted by the scholar T. O’Reilly-Fleming, who further added that it can take place over the space of several days, weeks, or even years. The modern definition of serial murder devised by the FBI rejects the idea of three murders being sufficient to qualify as

⁴B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 325.

⁵K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne..* [Multiple killing...], p. 26.

⁶id., p. 28.

⁷J.A. Fox, J. Levin, *Extreme Killing: Understanding Serial and Mass Murder*, publ. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 2011, p. 19.

⁸K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne...* [Multiple Killing...], p. 24.

⁹J.A. Fox, J. Levin, *Extreme Killing...*, p. 19.

serial murder. According to the new definition, a serial murderer “takes the life of at least four people over a time period of more than 72 h, with cooling-off periods between the murders.”¹⁰

The Holmes brothers, however, recognized that in order to differentiate between a serial murder and a murder spree, such cooling-off period, in which the perpetrator feels no inclination to kill, should span at least 30 days. In effect, such approach can result in some murders being included in the so-called dark figure, namely undisclosed crimes, in particular when a perpetrator who is motivated to kill is not captured and, like Ted Bundy, kills his victims over a period of just a few hours. Nevertheless, a decided majority of researchers agree that serial murder comprises the killing of at least three or four people. As regards the cooling off period, the developing consensus is that the determining factor distinguishing a murder spree from a serial murder is a period of 24 h.¹¹

For the purposes of his publication, Kacper Gradoń created his own synthesis of the existing definitions of serial murder, focusing on the fact that since the perpetrator most often ploughs a lonely furrow, establishing a connection between the victim and murderer is not possible. The characteristic cooling-off period (when the perpetrator is not killing) also comes into play here, where a rational explanation of the motive for the murder is unfeasible.¹² Classifying murderers according to the criteria of the number of victims is very imprecise because many murderers are excluded from the categorization of serial murderers (due to killing an insufficient number of victims), whereas in reality they may have intended to kill again, had they not been thwarted by law enforcement agencies. Neither is the distinction of serial murderers as those without motive completely correct since the reason for carrying out the murder may have been totally justifiable to the murderer himself. When discussing serial murder, one of the elements that most captures the public imagination is the characteristic *modus operandi* used to carry out the murder. According to Mary Dietz, Professor at Windsor University, the perpetrator’s use of torture, dismemberment of a cadaver, or sexual activity accompanying the murder are nevertheless not elements distinguishing serial murders from others; they simply occur more often in such cases.¹³ It is usually the case that the perpetrator commits subsequent acts in a similar fashion, but this does not mean that it is a fundamental issue in their classification as serial murderers.

John Douglas, a prominent FBI lawyer, draws attention to the fact that in practice, recognizing which kind of multiple murder applies to a given case is far from simple, and even the best make mistakes. According to Douglas, serial murderers prey on people in order to satisfy a desire, whether sexual or influenced by other deviant behaviors, where the urge is satisfied through the very fact of taking another’s life. Murder sprees involve the killing of many people within short time inter-

¹⁰K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne...* [Multiple killing...], p. 39.

¹¹W. Petherick, *Serial Crime: Theoretical and Practical Issues in Behavioral Profiling*, publ. Elsevier Inc., San Diego 2011, p. 313.

¹²K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne...* [Multiple Killing...], p. 40.

¹³id., p. 41.

vals (a few hours) in separate locations. Mass murder, according to the FBI lawyer, is defined as involving a completely different category of perpetrator who feels too weak to flee justice and is prepared to die immediately after carrying out a premeditated execution.¹⁴

Over the last three decades, many varying definitions of serial murder have been used by law enforcement agencies, doctors, and academics. Although such definitions have many aspects in common, they differ in their particular requirements, such as the number of murders participated in, the type of motivation, and the time period between the murders. In order to resolve such discrepancies, the participants of a 2005 symposium entitled “Serial Murder” from the aforementioned *National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime* examined the different definitions with the aim of developing a unified definition of serial murder.

Previous definitions of serial murder included a specified number of victims, ranging from 2 to 10. That quantitative demand distinguished serial killers from other categories of perpetrator (single, double, triple murders). The majority of definitions also require a certain time interval between the murders. This period is used to differentiate mass murder from serial murder. Serial murder requires a temporal separation between particular acts (murders), which has been determined as a cooling-off period and an emotional cooling-off period.

The participants in the symposium reviewed the preexisting definitions and the advantages and disadvantages of their numerous variations were broadly discussed. By consensus, a simpler, albeit broader definition was established, mainly intended for use by law enforcement agencies. The issue under discussion was the determination of the number of murders constituting serial murder. The academics focused on the number of murders as part of the definition of serial murder, in order to establish clear criteria for their research on serial murderers. However, as the definition was supposed to be used by law enforcement agencies, a lower number of victims would allow for a greater flexibility in investigations.

During the course of the symposium, it was established that any definition would have to take into account a series of similar factors. These include: one or more perpetrators, two or more victims, the incidents occurring at different times, and the period between individual murders distinguishing serial murder from mass murder. Combining the various concepts put forward at the symposium, the following definition was introduced: serial murder is the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same perpetrator(s), in separate incidents comprising a series.¹⁵

¹⁴J. Douglas, M. Olshaker, *The Anatomy of Motive: the FBI's Legendary Mindhunter Explores the Key to Understanding and Catching Violent Criminals*, publ, Simon&Schuster, New York 1999, p. 3.

¹⁵Behavioral Analysis Unit, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, *Serial Murders: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators*, 2005, pp. 8–9.

1.2 Development of Scholarly and Public Opinion on Serial Murder

“No crime intrigues us more than murder. (...) We have been fascinated by murder since Cain murdered Abel.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is not fascination per se that draws us so strongly to murder. That fascination came about because of a deep-rooted intuition, shaped over centuries and millennia. “Murderous impulses are part of human nature,” they are also strategies that allow us to survive. Crime adapts itself to the environment, and in our transient, throwaway society we have become, to a great extent, strangers to one another. It is only natural that criminals have exploited those changes and will continue to do so; the criminal element in society is inevitable.¹⁷ While murder is harshly punished today, in ancient times it was legal to kill a slave, a criminal caught red-handed or even one’s own child immediately after birth.¹⁸ Caesar’s Rome featured thousands of public executions and an obsessive thirst for the spilling of blood; the death of a human deemed the highest level of popular entertainment. It was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the beginnings of bourgeois law led to the protection of the right to life for all individuals, irrespective of their origin or social status.

Criminal profiling is key from the very outset of any murder or multiple murder investigation. A certain kind of skill is required to compile the psychological profile of a murderer. The first attempt at profiling should be attributed to the early anthropologists, led by the father of criminology—Cesar Lombroso—who put forward the theory of the biological conditioning of the perpetrators of particular crimes. He presented these in his work “The Criminal Man,” where he argued that if criminality is a characteristic of human nature, then man inherits a criminal streak from birth. He spoke about a biological predestination toward committing a given type of crime.¹⁹

The beginnings of comprehensive criminal profiling can be traced back to the case of Jack the Ripper, when the court doctor, Thomas Bond, presented a psychological profile of the offender then terrorizing the Whitechapel district of London. The psychiatrist and surgeon, Thomas Bond, found that the Ripper harbored a deep hatred of women, whom he considered to be cold and callous, but he also discovered (even though court medicine was poorly developed at that time) that the perpetrator mutilated his victims while they were still alive. While there may have been a sexual motive, this was not the perpetrator’s main aim. In all likelihood, it did not come into play, and satisfaction was attained merely through inflicting pain on the

¹⁶D.M. Buss, *The Murderer Next Door: Why the Mind is Designed to Kill*, publ. Penguin Press 2005 [*Morderca za ścianą: skąd w naszym umyśle kryją się mordercze skłonności*, trans. Agnieszka Nowak, publ. Gdańskie Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2007, p. 9].

¹⁷R. Tithcott, *Of Men and Monsters. Jeffrey Dahmer and the Construction of the Serial Killer*, publ. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1997, p. 27.

¹⁸B. Sygit, *Przestępcy i ich ofiary* [Criminals and their victims], publ. Ławica, Poznań 1995, p. 89.

¹⁹W. Petherick, *Serial Crime...*, p. 2.

victim. Thomas Bond also believed that Jack the Ripper felt God-like after executing his “act.” This theory was decidedly flawed and full of holes; nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, it was groundbreaking for the psychological analysis of unsolved cases.²⁰ Around that time, there was also a noticeable interest in solving criminal mysteries through a process of deduction, as illustrated in the Sherlock Holmes stories.²¹

In 1943, a psychiatrist named Walter Langer was requested by the Department of Strategic Services, being part of the American intelligence services, to create a profile of Adolf Hitler. The theory he came up with was that the German evildoer displayed a neurotic–psychopathic personality, bent first and foremost on expressing and emphasizing his masculinity toward his mother. He also predicted that when his personality conflict reached its peak, Hitler would commit suicide, which as we know, was confirmed when Hitler took his own life, 2 years after the theory had been put forward. The psychological profile of Hitler presented by Walter Langer was exhaustive and included numerous theories—from the German people’s perception of Hitler, through the degree to which his subordinates imitated him, to Hitler’s own assessment of himself. The psychiatrist’s work on Adolf Hitler’s profile somewhat paved the way for future academics in their analysis of other non-famous characters.²²

Historically, the first case to use psychological profiling, which the prosecution authorities requested from a famous profiler, was that of the New York police against the so-called mad bomber in the 1950s. A man had planted approximately 50 explosive devices throughout the city. James Brussel, to whom they had turned to for help, prepared an extremely complex profile of the perpetrator’s personality, which led to the capture of the criminal shortly thereafter. Brussel was not aware of the materials gathered by the police or even the list of suspects, nevertheless, thanks to his work, the group of suspects was narrowed down from over 1000 men to a mere 3. The methods used by the profiler were so effective that he even correctly predicted the clothing that the assassin would be wearing on the day of his capture.²³ Undoubtedly, he had earned his reputation as the father of psychological profiling.

James Brussel was the hero of more than one case. In the 1960s, he created a character profile of the “Boston Strangler,” who had murdered 13 women. The precision and unprecedented effectiveness of the profile the psychiatrist created resulted in the FBI’s interest in cooperating with him. Almost 25 years later, Brussel’s approach was adopted by Robert Ressler and John Douglas. Under their supervision, the FBI’s Department of Behavioral Research was established, which was to result in the capture of numerous criminals, and in 1984 the NCAVC institution (the

²⁰K. Bonda, B. Lach, *Zbrodnia niedoskonała. Największe zagadki kryminalne ostatnich lat rozwiązane przez polskiego profilera* [Imperfect crime. The Biggest Crime Mysteries of Recent Years Solved by a Polish Profiler], publ. Videograf, Chorzów 2012, p. 7.

²¹M. Holmes, S. T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes, an Investigative Tool*, publ. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, London, 2009, p. 18.

²²W. Petherick, *Serial Crime...*, p. 5.

²³K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne...* [Multiple Killing...], pp. 157–159.

National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime) was set up by Ronald Reagan, President of the USA, which was responsible for the identification and localization of many criminals.²⁴ That center of research on violent criminals comprises four main sections, including a research and development department, the identification of offenders, as well as training and profiling. The main emphasis is on serial murder of a sexual nature.²⁵

Although there has been rapid growth in the development of criminalistic and criminological science with reference to serial killers, academics are not fascinated in this phenomenon alone. A search for “serial killer” in the American media comes up with millions of novels, shows, and films on a far bigger scale than the related academic literature. Eric W. Hickey, an American criminologist, notes that between 1920 and 1959, 12 films about serial murders were made, rising to 55 over the next 30 years and 150 in the 1990s. Eric Dietrich and Tara Fox Hall explain the fascination with serial killers as a centuries-old phenomenon of human nature. When something out of the ordinary occurs, people stand and gape (or they would like to stop and stare but a certain convention stops them from doing so). In addition, we often want to simultaneously combine positive and negative emotions, which would explain our love for horror films and roller coasters—we love getting our entertainment through emotional thrills. Thirdly and finally, we can watch blood-curdling stories from the comfort of our own homes in the knowledge that we are not under any threat. We watch the behavior of serial killers from the safety of our sitting rooms, like invisible players in a deadly video game.²⁶

Some of the academics studying human aggression, particularly aggression in children, claim that the violence we encounter on every corner today is a factor distorting the psyche. However, according to David M. Buss, each one of us harbors the simplistic and merciless logic of a murderer. After conducting his university research, Buss noted that over 91 % of men and 84 % of women had thought about murdering someone at least once in their lives.²⁷ The motives for such fantasy were varied—hatred, greed, fear, revenge, jealousy, and even humiliation or heartbreak. Sometimes, our behavior is affected by more than one emotion, but the reaction each emotion provokes or the way it is manifested varies greatly from one individual to another.

The cult of the hero has persisted in pop culture throughout decades and millennia; society has always celebrated those of its members who have reached certain heights and have supported their rise to success. Even murderers who have evaded prosecution for their actions have increasingly become major figures in books,

²⁴ id., p. 162.

²⁵ J. K. Gierowski, *Zabójcy i ich ofiary: psychologiczne podstawy profilowania nieznanych sprawców zabójstw*, [Killers and Their Victims: Psychological Profiling of Unknown Killers] publ. Instytutu Ekspertyz Sądowych, Kraków 2003, p. 17.

²⁶ P. Waller, *Serial Killers: Philosophy for Everyone*, publ. Blackwell Publishing, 2010, pp. 7–9.

²⁷ M. Buss, *The Murderer Next Door...*, pp. 15–17.

films, and especially in people's imaginations.²⁸ Murderers employing certain formulas for the selection of their victims are often put on a pedestal as figures who are cleansing mankind of its evil elements. A perfect example of this is the TV series "Dexter," in which the main protagonist, being a forensic science technician, mostly kills criminals. Viewers stop seeing him as a serial killer with an urge to kill, and begin to see him as someone with a high degree of morality, even heroic, in a certain sense. They love Dexter for his internal conflicts, which set him apart from run-of-the-mill bloodthirsty murderers.²⁹

The omnipresence of generally senseless violence across the media, with its far-reaching and snowballing effects, clearly originated in American culture. Clearly, it desensitizes us to pain and affects all age groups, from the youngest preschoolers to adults. It emits from our TVs but also from books and the radio. Rock stars appear in video clips with swords and pistols, behave aggressively, and even display a penchant for extreme violence. A US Senate Committee interested in this phenomenon conducted research of children's TV programs and noted as many as 16 violent incidents within 1 h of transmission time. Raising the youngest in society on such material fosters a blind acceptance of violence and is a precursor of aggressive behavior.³⁰ John Douglas, an FBI legend in the field of criminal profiling, concludes, on the basis of his many years' observation and experience, that the media provides criminals with the inspiration to commit subsequent crimes. Douglas believes that after watching a violent film, people can be filled with a desire to leave the house and reenact the protagonist's crimes in reality. Books, TV programs, pornographic films, and other such sources may transform ordinary people into aggressive criminals who, bereft of empathy and understanding of their actions, lose control of their perception of good and evil.³¹

The omnipresence of society's fascination and interest in bizarre and macabre crimes is evident. Of particular note are the bookstores in every corner of the world with their shelves stacked with a new genre of books—nonfiction about murderers and their criminal "heritage," shedding light on the insatiable interest in figures such as Ted Bundy. Dozens of books about such characters have been published, followed by scores of others on John Wayne Gacy, David Berkovitz, and Kennet Bianchi. The glorification of serial murderers has created a market for everything that they do or say. The writings and paintings of Gacy, for example, gained remarkable popularity only after he had been sentenced for 33 murders, whereas earlier they had absolutely no market value, and a song written by Charles Manson became a hit for the rock group Guns N' Roses.³²

²⁸J. A. Fox, J. Levin, *Overkill: Mass Murder and Serial Killing Exposed*, publ. Dell Books, 1996, p. 4.

²⁹p. Waller, *Serial Killers...*, p. 10.

³⁰R. M. Holmes, S. T. Holmes, *Contemporary Perspectives on Serial Murder*, publ. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi 1998, p. 7.

³¹J. Douglas, M. Olshaker, *The Anatomy of Motive...*, p. 92.

³²J. A. Fox, J. Levin, *Overkill: Mass Murder...*, pp. 7–9.

Unfortunately, even today, and particularly in Poland in 2014, many people continue to display a blind fascination in serial killers. In September 2014, in the vicinity of Zakopane, the police arrested a 22-year-old, who had a long-held interest in serial killers—he had read articles and books and watched films about murderers from the 1970s, idolizing Ted Bundy in particular, who was responsible for more than 30 murders. He testified that on the night he abandoned the body of a 16-year-old boy in the woods, he had wanted to kill someone. With this aim in mind, he had picked up some hitch-hikers and selected his victims. He admitted that he had not killed the two previous hitch-hikers because he had at least enjoyed talking to them and the third passenger, being under the influence of alcohol, had fallen asleep in the seat, making him an easy catch. There may well have been more victims if the investigators hadn't come across the corpse of the 16-year-old boy so quickly.³³ This is definitely not an isolated case, particularly considering that the media dazzles its audience with murder, and a significant number of similar crimes still remain undetected. The fascination with TV programs about serial killers, such as “Dexter” or “Hannibal,” has significant implications.

1.3 Criminogenic Factors of Murder

We can label all of the circumstances and conditions strictly related to crime as criminogenic factors; we can even say that they influence its execution. To a certain extent, criminogenic factors help predict the chances of a crime being committed under certain conditions; therefore, they are often referred to as “prognostic” factors. Such factors highlight the significance of a given circumstance on potential criminality.

An excellent example of a criminogenic factor might be an individual's upbringing and their day-to-day life in the company of people from the so-called margins of society. If a given person is exposed to the influence of criminals, they will unknowingly adopt certain characteristics. Bereft of any other prospects, they will choose the path of crime. Theft therefore becomes easier than hard work for a pittance, with aggression being the simplest way to express anger and other negative emotions. Here, it is worth noting that spending time in the company of people “in conflict” with the law is also a factor influencing the likelihood of committing murder. Brawls, antisocial behavior and envy of those who are doing well, can become one of the reasons for taking another's life. Strong emotions that have been bubbling under the surface for a long time eventually have to find their release, and these most often take the form of physical assault or murder. Poverty, lack of social justice, and the influence of the subculture clearly impact on a person's growing sense of

³³ Article found on the website <http://www.tvn24.pl/>, *Murderers Fascinated Him, He Wanted to Kill*.

frustration and desire for bloody revenge against those who represent the status that they themselves would like to have.³⁴

The family situation can be another environmental factor. This may include, for example, growing up in a broken family, where there is a lack of due childcare (often being left on their own), as well as the types of relationship between family members. It is easier to recognize the early symptoms of a teenager's degeneracy if they are under appropriate supervision, allowing for an effective reaction and assistance in giving them a good upbringing.

The parents' criminal history is also significant, as instead of setting a good example for them, those prone to breaking the law are not in a responsible enough state to shape a child's mind, which is so sponge-like in the early years. A young person's deviant or antisocial behavior can have its roots in infancy and early childhood, when one is learning how to function in society.³⁵ Substantial research shows that the most serious emotional disorders, sometimes life-lasting, are brought about by inappropriate care during the early stages of life. Research conducted by the FBI shows that a significant percentage of offenders were victims of certain offenses themselves or were witness to domestic violence. As a result of such experiences, they return to their past roles in the future—violence being an unconscious reflection of the wrongs they suffered in their childhood.³⁶

Poor domestic material conditions, including living conditions, chronic illness, or alcoholism in a parent are triggers for criminal activity in the young. However, as far as criminogenic factors are concerned, external factors are not the only ones to have an impact; often, unfair treatment by the mother or father, their inadequate care or their mutual hostility can bring about a weakening of emotional bonds, a higher frequency of uncontrolled outbursts of aggression and a decreased ability to establish intimate ties.³⁷ Undoubtedly, there is a clear connection between the aforementioned mental characteristics and the risk of future criminal behavior. The most common problematic relationship within the family is the sadomasochistic one, comprising aggression and tension between individuals resulting from the caregiver's use of corporal punishment and cruelty.³⁸ Violence toward children leads to social isolation, learning problems, and a loss of self-control. Parents who are indifferent to their children's abuse of animals may be partly responsible for such children becoming serial murderers. Violence therefore has a negative influence on a child's psyche, changing his or her perception and way of dealing with reality.³⁹

Strictly related to the importance of a child's upbringing is their school environment, as well as their peers, teachers, and the educational institution itself. Starting school is an extremely significant event for a child—not only for play and the

³⁴ E. Leyton, *Połowanie na ludzi* [Manhunt], publ. PWN, Warsaw 1996, p. 21.

³⁵ Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 1204.

³⁶ B. Hołyst, *Kryminalistyka* [Criminalistics], publ. LexisNexis, Warsaw 2010, p. 130.

³⁷ A. Wolska, *Model czynników ryzyka popełnienia zabójstwa* [A Model of Risk Factors for Murder], publ. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2001, p. 51.

³⁸ B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 1210.

³⁹ E. Moran, *Serial Killers Just Aren't What They Used To Be*, 2014, pp. 5–6.

acquisition of new obligations, such as homework or the regular attendance of lessons, but also for the amount of free time they lose once they start school. School is not just a place for acquiring knowledge, but also an environment for the gradual socialization of a child.⁴⁰ The dangers stemming from the inadequate adaptation of a child within the school environment are significant—if there are any learning problems, even in one subject, the greater the risk of truancy, and in extreme cases, also running away from home in an attempt to evade punishment, for example, after a school parents' meeting. An analysis of the biographies of juveniles connected with crime, even to the smallest extent, shows that trancies and running away from home constitute the first step on the path to future criminality.⁴¹

Children seek acceptance and understanding, especially if they are neglected at home and rejected by their peers. They therefore join groups, later referred to as “gangs,” as these satisfy their need for a common interest, safety, or a sense of belonging and recognition. Such groups, formed from the earliest age, often result in the abandonment of other obligations and a gradual inclination toward the path of crime. Spending time in the company of disillusioned friends, drinking alcohol, as well as feeling demoralized at such an early age, frequently result in a future criminal lifestyle.⁴²

Alcohol and its influence on crime is a criminogenic factor. Evoked as a reason for criminality so frequently that it appears to lose any meaning, it nonetheless continues to occupy a leading position in the hierarchy. The scholar J. Pinatel carried out an analysis of the relationship between alcohol and crime and drew the conclusion that crimes committed after consuming alcohol should form a separate category, namely alcoholic crime. He noted that offenders under the influence of alcohol can be classified within a specific category of crime, most often manifesting itself in the form of murder, bodily harm, child abuse, or sexual crime.⁴³ Supplementing this thesis on the specific influence of alcohol on crime is the hypothesis that the strains and stresses leading to alcoholism, producing additional frustration, generate the conditions for committing a crime. The use of alcoholic drinks leads to lower self-control, which in its further stages leads to committing a crime.⁴⁴ The same also applies to the excessive use of other sedatives, narcotics, and psychotropic drugs, which cause limited awareness and increased aggression. Drug addicts in the so-called drug withdrawal, will do anything to get hold of even the smallest amount of the substance they are addicted to, even at the cost of another's life.

The criminogenic nature of excessive alcohol consumption in society, and more precisely emotional disorders triggered by alcohol, leads to crime. The combination of negative external circumstances and toxic substances (such as alcohol or drugs) which have an “inhibition-reducing” effect on a person leads to the worst results, such as brutal crime. It has been shown that murder or attempted murder is committed

⁴⁰B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 1210.

⁴¹Ibidem.

⁴²A. Wolska, *Model czynników...* [A Model of Risk Factors], p. 50.

⁴³B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 571.

⁴⁴id., p. 581.

by people in the second stage of intoxication, the euphoric phase—characterized by a blood alcohol content of 1–2 per mille, increased psychomotor speed, loss of critical faculties, and the emergence of impulsive characteristics.⁴⁵ An analysis of case studies shows that the majority of serial killers commit crime after the earlier consumption of alcohol or drugs. A good example is the case of Henry Lee Lucas, a long-term alcoholic, who before setting off in search of his next murder victim, drank a “cocktail” of amphetamines, marihuana, and PCP (phencyclidine or “angel dust”)⁴⁶.

Criminological research conducted by the FBI on 36 offenders, with a combined total of 118 victims, showed a clear link between criminality and alcohol and narcotic abuse in the offenders’ families. Alcohol abuse was evident in 70 % of offenders’ homes, with narcotics being taken in two-thirds of homes.⁴⁷ Polish research carried out in 2008 illustrated the fact that out of 722 murders committed, 58 % of offenders were certified as not sober.⁴⁸ The last significant criminogenic factor is the IQ of potential offenders. Although such theory provokes popular disdain, particularly in light of political correctness, researchers of the phenomenon of crime and its trigger factors have emphasized the impact of intelligence on the risk of a given individual breaking the law. According to academics, there is a strong and consistent link between low intelligence and criminality, corroborated by research conducted over the last 40 years revealing that the results of intelligence tests on criminals were 10 % lower than in the rest of society. Less intelligent people act more impulsively and do not calculate the eventual effects of their actions, being unable to foresee what consequences their impulsive and spontaneous actions may have for themselves.⁴⁹

1.4 The Scale of Serial Murder

Serial murder is not a widespread phenomenon today. For it is a particular form of murder, requiring certain criteria to be met, such as the number of victims or the interval of time between one murder and the next. From this perspective, irrespective of the definition adopted, serial murder is not a commonly occurring crime. The problem arises when it is unclear as to whether a given murder can be deemed as an isolated crime or as part of a series. For these reasons, many serial murders remain a dark figure, namely one which is undisclosed, undiscovered, or invisible in police or prosecutor’s statistics.

⁴⁵D. Hajdukiewicz, *Emocje w stanach upicia alkoholem* [Emotions in a State of Intoxication], *Alkoholizm i Narkomania* 2002, vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 261–269.

⁴⁶K. Gradoń, *Zabójstwo wielokrotne...* [Multiple Killing...], p. 112.

⁴⁷B. Hołyst, *Kryminalistyka...* [Criminalistics...], p. 130.

⁴⁸B. Hołyst, *Kryminologia...* [Criminology...], p. 587.

⁴⁹A. Moir, D. Jessel, *A Mind to Murder: The Controversial Link Between the Mind and Criminal Behavior* [*Zbrodnia rodzi się w mózgu: zagadka biologicznych uwarunkowań przestępczości*], trans. Hanna Jankowska, publ. Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1998, p. 31].

One extreme research study estimates that there are approximately 5000 victims of serial murder today or just over 20 % of the number of serial murder victims in the 1980s.⁵⁰ It is estimated that there may be approximately 100 serial murderers actively “operating” in the USA alone. Some researchers believe that the number of victims is too high in comparison to the number of murderers, which may result from the fact that often single murders that form part of a serial murder, are not associated with serial murders as such, making it difficult to ascertain the real scale of the problem.⁵¹

The statistics on serial murder speak for themselves—over the last 30 years, the number of criminals in this category has fallen dramatically from over 700 to under 100. What is the reason for such a decline? Many factors are at work here: more advanced technologies, improved in-house standards within the investigative services or an ever-faster response to even the smallest deviation from the norms of desirable behavior in young people. Serial murders reached their peak in the 1980s. Society was as much to blame as the media, which rendered serial killers famous, creating fan groups, for example in the case of Ted Bundy. After his case was concluded, there 13 films and biographies were released, as well as 8 publications. This phenomenon, where killing innocent people became the surest recipe for success, can be ascribed to the snowball effect of media coverage.⁵²

From these heights, the figures fell successively to finally reach a level of less than 100 per year. Improvements in DNA research and the matching of fingerprints to specimens in computer databases undoubtedly had a role to play in the improved statistics.⁵³ Researchers estimate that the number of victims in the USA currently ranges from 49 to 70 people per year, as against up to 180 Americans in the 1980s. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were revealed to be a maximum of 100 serial murderers in the USA, as opposed to the earlier figure of around 200.⁵⁴ The golden era of fascination with serial killers is most probably a thing of the past.

Currently, although the USA is burdened with the greatest number of serial killers (76 %), 21 % of serial murder victims lost their life in Europe. Among European serial murders, the majority were committed in Great Britain (28 % of the serial murders in Europe), 27 % in Germany, and 13 % in France. Originally described as an American phenomenon, today there are still cases of serial murder in Europe. One example is the English case of Fred Shipman, who was sentenced in 2000 for taking the life of 15 of his elderly patients, though it is suspected that there were as many as 400 victims in reality, rendering him one of the most dangerous offenders of all time.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ W. Petherick, *Serial Crime...*, p. 318.

⁵¹ R. M. Holmes, S. T. Holmes, *Profiling Violent Crimes...*, p. 118.

⁵² E. Moran, *Serial Killers...*, p. 4.

⁵³ *id.*, p. 1.

⁵⁴ W. Petherick, *Serial Crime...*, p. 319.

⁵⁵ P. Vronsky, *Serial Killers: the Method and Madness of Monsters*, publ. Berkeley Publishing Group, New York, 2010, p. 32.

One year after the sentencing of Fred Shipman, the Frenchman Guy Georges was sentenced to life imprisonment, without the possibility of parole, for 25 years. Known as the Beast of Bastille—he raped and killed seven women—he was considered to be the incarnation of the devil with a human face, and psychiatric assessors all judged his overpowering need to kill as incurable. The next alarming and dangerous serial murder case is that of Marc Detroux, who kidnapped, raped, and murdered four young girls, which reached court in 2004, meaning that he was sentenced as long as 8 years after committing the crimes.

Although, as mentioned above, only 3% of serial murders take place in countries other than the USA and Europe, this percentage is nevertheless equally alarming. In 1999, the Columbian police arrested Luis Alfredo Garaviato, who was linked to the murders of 140 children, including the grisly discovery of 114 dismembered bodies, mostly boys aged 8–16 years old. Next, in 2000, the Pakistani government sentenced Javed Iqbal to the death penalty for the murder of more than 100 children, also boys of a young age. July 2003 saw the sentencing of two serial murderers from China, who had sought out their victims from among itinerant workers and vagabonds.⁵⁶

⁵⁶id., pp. 34–37.