

U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation



# Serial Murder

Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives  
for Investigators

BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS UNIT  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE ANALYSIS OF VIOLENT CRIME



# **Serial Murder**

**Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives  
for Investigators**



Behavioral Analysis Unit-2  
National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime  
Critical Incident Response Group  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

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## Message from Director Mueller



Every day, law enforcement officers across America are called to respond to murders. Each homicide case is tragic, but there are few cases more heartrending and more difficult to understand than serial murder.

For years, law enforcement investigators, academics, mental health experts, and the media have studied serial murder, from Jack the Ripper in the late 1800s to the sniper killings in 2002, and from the “Zodiac Killer” in California to the “BTK Killer” in Kansas. These diverse groups have long attempted to understand the complex issues related to serial murder investigations. Until the Serial Murder Symposium, however, there had been few attempts to reach a consensus on some of these issues.

This monograph presents the findings and collective wisdom of a multidisciplinary group of experts, who brought their individual experience and insights to the same table. Our hope is that it will give you new ideas and new resources as you continue your important work.

The FBI is committed to contributing to the understanding of these horrific acts. The FBI’s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime stands ready to assist our state, local, and international partners. We believe the best way to combat any threat — be it terrorism, gang violence, or serial murder — is to combine our knowledge and resources with those of our partners, and to work as a team. I am grateful for the partnerships that helped spur this symposium, and for the partnerships that were formed as a result.

I deeply appreciate the work that went into this publication. I would like to thank all those who participated for their willingness to share their dedication, time and expertise. I believe it will be invaluable to our collective ability to understand, respond to, and hopefully prevent, serial murder.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert S. Mueller, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "R" and "M".

Robert S. Mueller, III

## **Acknowledgments**

The NCAVC would like to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals, without whose efforts the Symposium and this monograph would not have been possible:

- The members of the Serial Murder Symposium Working Group, for their assistance in planning the Symposium. The names of these individuals are listed in Appendix B.
- The Symposium attendees, for their generous sharing of time and expertise in the area of serial murder. The names of these individuals are listed in Appendix C.
- Pamela Hairfield and Wilma Wulchak, Management and Program Analysts, FBI, NCAVC, for their skill, dedication, and perseverance in successfully handling the countless administrative tasks associated with the Symposium.
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- Assistant Director Michael J. Wolf (retired) and Executive Assistant Director J. Stephen Tidwell for their support of this project and for their willingness to dedicate the resources necessary for its successful completion.

## Foreword

The topic of serial murder occupies a unique niche within the criminal justice community. In addition to the significant investigative challenges they bring to law enforcement, serial murder cases attract an over-abundance of attention from the media, mental health experts, academia, and the general public. While there has been significant, independent work conducted by a variety of experts to identify and analyze the many issues related to serial murder, there have been few efforts to reach a consensus between law enforcement and other experts, regarding these matters.

In an effort to bridge the gap between the many views of issues related to serial murder, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hosted a multi-disciplinary Symposium in San Antonio, Texas, on August 29, 2005 through September 2, 2005. The goal of the Symposium was to bring together a group of respected experts on serial murder from a variety of fields and specialties, to identify the commonalities of knowledge regarding serial murder.

A total of 135 subject matter experts attended the five-day event. These individuals included law enforcement officials who have successfully investigated and apprehended serial killers; mental health, academic, and other experts who have studied serial killers and shared their expertise through education and publication; officers of the court, who have judged, prosecuted, and defended serial killers; and members of the media, who inform and educate the public when serial killers strike. The attendees also reflected the international nature of the serial murder problem, as there were attendees from ten different countries on five continents.

The agenda encompassed a variety of topics related to serial murder including common myths, definitions, typologies, pathology and causality, forensics, the role of the media, prosecution issues, investigative task force organization, and major case management issues. Each day included panel discussions, case presentations, and discussion groups addressing a range of topics related to serial murder.

This monograph is a culmination of the input and discussion of the attendees on the major issues related to serial murder. The contents are based upon the notes taken during the presentations, panel discussions, and break-out group sessions. The goal in publishing this monograph is to outline the consensus views from a variety of disciplines on the causality, motivations, and characteristics of serial murderers, which will enable the criminal justice community to generate a more effective response in the identification, investigation, and adjudication of these cases.

## **National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime**

The National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) is a component of the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), located at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. The primary mission of the NCAVC is to provide behaviorally-based, operational support to federal, state, local, and international law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation of unusual or repetitive violent crimes, communicated threats, terrorism, and other matters of interest to law enforcement.

The NCAVC is comprised of four units: Behavioral Analysis Unit-1 (Counterterrorism/Threat Assessment), Behavioral Analysis Unit-2 (Crimes Against Adults), Behavioral Analysis Unit-3 (Crimes Against Children), and the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP).

NCAVC staff members conduct detailed analyses of crimes from behavioral, forensic, and investigative perspectives. The goal of this analysis process is to provide law enforcement agencies with a better understanding of the motivations and behaviors of offenders. The analysis is a tool that provides investigators with descriptive and behavioral characteristics of the most probable offender and advice regarding investigative techniques to help identify the offender.

The NCAVC also conducts research into violent crime from a law enforcement perspective. NCAVC research is designed to gain insight into criminal thought processes, motivations, and behaviors. Research findings are refined into innovative, investigative techniques that improve law enforcement's effectiveness against violent criminals and are shared with law enforcement and other disciplines through publications, presentations, and training.

The Serial Murder Symposium was conceived, planned, and coordinated by the staff of the Behavioral Analysis Unit-2 (BAU-2). The resources of BAU-2 are focused on serial, mass, and other murders; sexual assaults; kidnappings; and other criminal acts targeting adult victims. BAU-2 staff members have developed significant expertise on the subject of serial murder and regularly provide operational assistance, conduct research, and provide training on issues related to serial murder.

# I

## Introduction













## II

# Definition of Serial Murder







# III

## Causality and the Serial Murderer







# IV

## Psychopathy and Serial Murder







V

**Motivations and Types of  
Serial Murder:  
The Symposium Model**







# VI

## Investigative Issues and Best Practices



















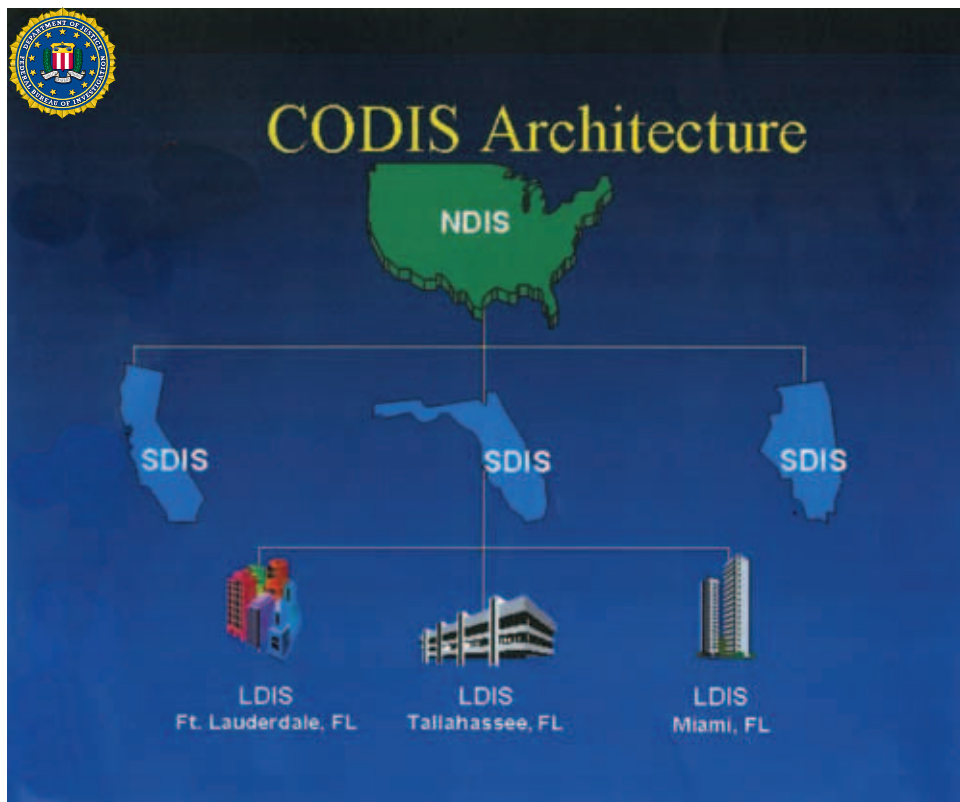
# VII

## Forensic Issues in Serial Murder Cases





The CODIS data bank of these samples is comprised of three different indices or levels: the National DNA Index System (NDIS), the State DNA Index System (SDIS), and the Local DNA Index System (LDIS).



What is important for law enforcement to understand is that the information contained at the LDIS and SDIS levels may not automatically be sent to, or searched against, the NDIS level. There are different legislation requirements for inclusion into NDIS, than to LDIS or SDIS, and not all LDIS and SDIS profiles are sent to NDIS. Even when NDIS is queried, individual SDIS data banks may not be queried. Therefore, when dealing with a serial murder case, investigators need to contact their LDIS or SDIS level representatives to ensure that in addition to the NDIS databank, samples are compared in the individual SDIS data banks of each state that is of investigative interest. In cases where there is only a partial DNA profile, a national “keyboard” search can be requested through the NDIS custodian, CODIS Unit, FBI Laboratory.

AFIS is an electronic databank that compares unidentified latent and patent fingerprints to the known fingerprint file. There have been a variety of local AFIS systems in use since the 1980s. In 1999, the FBI’s Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System, or IAFIS, became operational. IAFIS is designated as the national repository of criminal histories, fingerprints, and photographs of criminal subjects in the United States. It also contains fingerprints and information on military and civilian federal employees. IAFIS









# VIII

## Prosecution of Serial Murder Cases







# IX

## Media Issues in Serial Murder Investigations









# X

## Issues Regarding Talking Heads in the Media









































