

# Family Environment Decides Motives of Serial Killers

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**Abstract:** Serial killers are known to be produced by the interaction of genetic and environmental factors. Especially, environmental factors are considered to influence the perpetrator’s expression of their murderous acts. This paper tries to clarify this relationship between family environments and the motives of serial murder acts.

**Keywords:** serial killer, serial murder, motive, family environment, motivation, childhood background, mass murder.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Abe proposed in 2015 that *Serial Murders* are caused by *Abuse* while *Mass Murders* are caused by *Neglect* [1] [2]. This paper seeks to explore further what types of family environments lead to what types of motives of serial killers. The motive types were adapted from the table Prof. Aamodt introduced in his lecture at Radford University, which includes Holmes and Holmes’ well-known typology [3]. I added one other type: *Avoid Loneliness*. Here I would like to emphasize again that the core of all these early family environments of serial killers is always *Abuse*—unnatural external force(s), either physical, sexual, or psychological, which plants the seeds of anger without affinity to the subject’s natural feelings, and never *Neglect* singularly.

**Table 1: Early Family Environments and Serial Killer Motives**

\* Japanese

Motive	Early Family Environment
Sex—Having sex/rape is their major motive. They kill their victims to get rid of the witnesses.	Exposed to sex/sexual materials in early childhood, which are imprinted deeply into their minds [4]. Killing is not their initial motive. <i>Examples</i> Paul Bernardo[5][6][7], Kiyoshi Ookubo*[8]
Lust [3]—For sexual gratification even after death ( <i>could include strangulation and acts of sadomasochism</i> ).	Raised by an aggressive mother, who can be the source of both love and hate, or by a violent volatile father, who severely abused not only the subject but also their mother/other members [1]. <i>Examples</i> Ted Bundy[9][10], Ed Kemper, Gary Ridgway, Jerry Brudos
Thrill [3] — For thrill of killing. Loses interest when victim dies ( <i>could include strangulation and acts of sadomasochism</i> ).	Grew up extremely introverted and with difficulty communicating with others due to excessive pressures by parent(s), severe handicaps, early hospitalization/operation for serious disease, etc. <i>Examples</i> Robert Hansen, Coral Watts[11], Zodiac Killer[12]
Power/Control [3]—Enjoys feelings of playing God, not into sexual act.	Raised by mother, who is highly controlling, including suppression of natural sexual desire. Sometimes repeats act of killing and resuscitating to enjoy power position longer. <i>Examples</i> Donald Harvey [13] [14], Harold Shipman, Neils Hogel [15]

Revenge—More often perpetrator is female/feminine, revenging directly on those very close to her for harm they have done in her earlier or present life (such as family members, coworkers, etc.).	Living through highly stressful childhood, cannot anymore stand those who burden them or are in their way. <i>Male perpetrators who kill those reminding them of their hostile mothers are included in Lust Killer, not here.</i> <i>Examples) Martha Wise, Ellen Etheridge, Anthony Garcia</i>
Hate (Mission) [3]—Kills certain group of people to improve society.	Either absorbed aggressive religious fundamentalism, radical philosophy, Satanism, etc. to fight against their suppressive or stressful environment, imprinted with fixed philosophy by rigid or aggressive parent(s) since childhood, or has had unpleasant contacts with certain group of people. <i>Examples) Ted Kaczynski [16], Joseph Franklin [17][18], Manuel Pardo</i>
Psychosis (Visionary) [3]—Fixed with certain psychotic idea detached from reality, sometimes hearing voices.	Has developed paranoid schizophrenia, growing up under extremely high pressure usually by both parents and often using hallucinating drugs during adolescence (such as LSD, marijuana, etc.) to escape such pressures. The type of paranoia seems to reflect the type of parental control they were placed under. <i>Examples) Richard Chase [1], Herbert Mullin [1]</i>
Money (Comfort/Profit)—Kills for financial gain, including insurance money. In case of female killers, often those very close to them (lovers, family members, tenants, etc.). Usually does not show interest in process of killing [19].	Mainly those neglected both physically and emotionally develop strong obsession with money in place of love. In case of female killers, high control by force could also lead to killing for money/property as form of ultimate control. Subjects are often conditioned early to attach to money. <i>Examples) Dorothea Puente, Nannie Doss, H. H. Holmes, Kanae Kijima*, Chisako Kakei*, Takahiro Shiraishi*, Kiyotaka Katsuta*[20]</i>
Attention—Typically, nurses/caregivers who kill their patients ( <i>Angel of Death</i> ) or mother who kills her own children to attract attention to herself ( <i>Munchausen-by-Proxy</i> ) [19] [21].	Mainly females who could not get desired attention growing up, intentionally or unintentionally, from parent(s). This typically happens when parent(s) prefer her sibling(s) or compare them. <i>Trying to attract attention by hurting oneself is called Munchausen Syndrome.</i> <i>Examples) Gene Jones [19], Beverley Allitt [19], Sandy Gregory [19]</i>
Avoid Loneliness*—Kills those they bring home to not be alone.	Left alone, abandoned, or bereaved by their parent or parental figure. In some case, parent chose to take only their sibling with them. <i>Examples) Denis Nilsen [22] [23], Jeffrey Dahmer [24]–[27]</i>
No Motive—Killing is their usual practice when angry/frustrated or to get what they want. This has nothing to do with the excitement.	Grew up in highly turbulent childhood environment to be anti-social by nature and could not develop normal problem-solving skills. <i>Examples) Donald Gaskin [28], Henry Lucas, Aileen Wuornos [19]</i>

The subjects' motives basically reflect how they were raised, especially in early childhood. We must also know that there are many hybrid cases, in which more than one motive is mixed with others due to hybrid family environments. This is likely to happen especially among Lust, Thrill, and Power/Control and among Money, Attention, and Avoid Loneliness.

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