ELSEVIER

Recidivism among four types of homicide offenders: An exploratory analysis of 336 homicide offenders in New Jersey

Albert R. Roberts [a,*], Kristen M. Zgoba [b], Shahid M. Shahidullah [c]

[a] *Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Livingston College Campus, Lucy Stone Hall, B wing-261, Piscataway, NJ, 08854, United States*
[b] *Office of Policy and Planning, New Jersey Department of Corrections, Trenton, New Jersey, United States*
[c] *Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice, Virginia State University, United States*

Available online 20 February 2007

Abstract

Despite a great deal of information on various types of offenders, there is only limited longitudinal research on the offending patterns, typologies, and recidivism of different types of homicide perpetrators. A random sample of 336 homicide offenders who were released between the years 1990 and 2000 from the New Jersey Department of Corrections were identified and followed for a minimum of 5 years. These offenders were tracked to determine if incarcerated homicide offenders who had no criminal histories prior to their homicide conviction recidivated less, and which specific variables correlated with recidivism. As a result of our analysis, we conceptualized a new four-fold typology of homicide offenders: 1) homicide that was precipitated by a general altercation or argument, 2) homicide during the commission of a felony, 3) domestic violence-related homicide, and 4) a homicide after an accident. In conclusion, none of the 336 homicide offenders committed another murder. However, we found the highest recidivism for new violent or drug crimes occurred in the felony homicide group (slightly over one-third), followed by the altercation precipitated homicide offenders (27%), which was in sharp contrast to the domestic violence homicide offenders with less than 10% recidivism due to a new violent or drug offense.
© 2007 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Homicide; Typology; Recidivism; Offender; Domestic violence; Reentry

Contents

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail address: Dr.albertroberts@gmail.com (A.R. Roberts).

1. Introduction

Homicide – the intentional and sometimes unintentional or accidental killing of another person – has been a tragic phenomenon which has aroused great public and professional interest for decades. Homicide is one of the most violent forms of crime, and it is probably one of the oldest puzzles in criminology and criminal justice (Everitt, 1993; Nash, 1993). We have come a long way since Marvin Wolfgang's doctoral dissertation and the book was completed at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1950s. For those criminologists like the authors studying offender typologies based on the victim–offender relationship, we owe a great debt to Wolfgang's classic study. Dr. Wolfgang provided the first sociological and statistical analysis of 588 homicide victims and 621 homicide offenders in the city of Philadelphia between 1948 and 1952 (Wolfgang, 1958). Our new typology of homicide offenders and recidivism builds on the early classification of homicide by Wolfgang. He conceptualized the term "victim-precipitated homicide" since the majority of the homicide offenders in his study were acquaintances or close relatives of the victims. In our research we learned that there is no excuse or rational reason for almost all homicides. However, the interaction and distorted perceptions of many of the homicide offenders does result in lethal outcomes. Despite the unique characteristics, circumstances and criminal history of each of the 336 homicide offenders, as a result of our longitudinal analysis we were able to document four patterns and types of homicide: Stranger to Stranger/Felony homicide; Domestic Violence; Accidental (usually DWI related); and Altercation/Argument Precipitated.

Despite a great deal of information on various types of offenders, there is only limited longitudinal research on the offending patterns, typologies, and recidivism of different types of homicide perpetrators. There is also limited knowledge of the underclass and lower socio-economic class type of homicide offender included in our study compared to notorious middle-class serial killers. A random sample of 336 homicide offenders who were released between the years 1990 and 2000 from the New Jersey Department of Corrections were identified and followed for a minimum of 5 years. These offenders were tracked to determine if incarcerated homicide offenders who have no criminal histories prior to their current homicide conviction recidivated less, and which specific variables correlated with recidivism. As a result of our analysis, we were able to conceptualize a new four-fold typology of homicide offenders: 1) offenders who committed a homicide that was precipitated by a general altercation or argument, 2) offenders who committed a homicide during the commission of a felony, 3) offenders who committed a domestic violence-related homicide, and 4) offenders who were charged with a degree of homicide after an accident. Statistical analysis was completed to determine which variables correlated with the different types of recidivism and which of the four types of homicide offenders recidivated. In conclusion, none of the 336 homicide offenders committed another murder. However, we found that the highest risk of recidivism for new violent or drug crimes were the felony homicide group (slightly over one-third), followed by the altercation precipitated homicide offenders (27%), which was in sharp contrast to the domestic violence homicide offenders with less than 10% recidivism due to a new violent or drug offense, and the accidental homicides with 17% recidivism due to a new violent or drug offense. This exploratory study shows that a homicide typology can be a good indicator of homicide offender recidivism if it is structurally grounded to examine the complex articulation of relations between offender characteristics and their post-incarceration behavior.

2. Scope of the problem

The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines homicide to include murder, and non-negligent manslaughter, which is the willful killing of one human being by another. In 2005, according to the UCR, approximately 16, 692 people were murdered in the U.S., an increase of 2.4% from the 2004 figure of 16, 148. In 2005, there were an estimated 5.6 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. The U.S. homicide rate steadily decreased throughout the decade of the 1990s. In 1991, the homicide rate was 9.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2000, it was reduced to 5.5 per 100,000 inhabitants. But it started increasing again from the beginning of the year 2001. In 2001, the nation's homicide rate was 5.6, and it remained at 5.6% in 2005 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006). Between 2004–2005, homicide in the United States increased at a rate of 2.4% (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005). The rate of increase,

however, was much higher in many states, such as Alabama (+46.0) Rhode Island (+31.2), Delaware (+30.0), Wyoming (+26.6), Wisconsin +25.2), Tennessee (+19.3), Utah (+19.3), West Virginia (+17.4), Virginia (+16.9), Pennsylvania (+16.0), Ohio (+15.5), Missouri (+12.8), South Carolina (+8.7), and New Jersey (+6.0).

The FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports 1980–2004 estimated that there were 13,137 known homicide offenders in the U.S. in 2004. Out of them, 8390 offenders (63.7%) acted alone and 4741 offenders (36.13%) acted with others. In 2002, there were estimated 624,900 offenders who were in state prisons for committing violent crimes. Out of them, 165,200 inmates (about 13.4%) were sentenced for committing murder and manslaughter (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005).

These homicide offenders, in comparison to other forms of violent crime, serve longer prison terms. One study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998) on prison sentencing in 1994 shows that the average sentencing for homicide offenders in the U.S. was 266.4 months (slightly over 22 years) in comparison to 123 months for rape, 88.8 months for robbery, and 47.8 months for assault. After the enactment of the Violent Offenders Incarceration and Truth-in-Sentencing Act of 1994, the average length of sentencing given to and average prison time served by homicide offenders further increased in almost all states (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995; Illinois Department of Corrections, 2002; Washington Institute For Public Policy, 2004). In Iowa (Iowa Legislative Services Agency, 2003), for example, between 1996 and 2003 – after the enactment of new states statutes on Violent Offenders Incarceration and Truth-in-Sentencing Act – the average length of stay for second-degree homicide offenders increased from 190 months to 510 months (168%), for attempted homicide from 85 months to 255 months (200%), and homicide by vehicle – Class B from 85 months to 255 months (200%). Between 1986 and 2003, the average length of stay in prison by homicide offenders in the state of Washington increased by about 116% (Washington Institute for Public Policy, 2004). These trends of growth in sentencing and time served by homicide offenders in recent years have significantly impacted, not just state correctional budgets and population, but also on issues related to their reentry and reintegration to society.

It is estimated that every year more than 600,000 sentenced prisoners are released from state and federal prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). In 2000, State and federal prisons released 604,858 inmates. In 2002, the number of prisoners released by federal and state prisons was 632,183 — an increase of 4.5% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). The percentage of released prisoners from 2000 and 2002, however, was much higher in many states including Montana (47.2), West Virginia (43.3), South Dakota (35.4), Iowa (31.3), North Dakota (28.8), Oregon (28.7), Oklahoma (26.4), Illinois (25.2), Nebraska (22.4), Arkansas (21.1), and Indiana (20.7). It is this increased growth in released prisoners every year from the beginning of the late 1990s, that has led to the growth of recent initiatives for prison reentry by most of the states. In 2004, President Bush initiated a four-year $300 million prisoner reentry initiative. The decade of the 1990s began with strategies and initiatives for more incarceration and more expansion of prisons. The decade of the 2000 seemed to have begun with new thoughts and ideas for prison reentry and social reintegration (La Vigne & Mamalian, 2004; NGA Center For Best Practices, 2004a,b,c; Travis, Keegan, & Cadora, 2003; Travis & Visher, 2005).

One of the significant challenges for prison reentry is the high rate of recidivism and re-incarceration. Out of the more than 650,000 released prisoners from federal and state prisons every year, about 67% (435,500) are rearrested and 50% (325,000) are re-incarcerated within 3 years (NGA Center For Best Practices, 2006) One of the major studies done on recidivism by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, that tracked 272,111 prisoners for three years after their release from prisons in 15 States in 1994, found that the rate of recidivism among homicide offenders was about 40.7%. Out of 19, 268 homicide offenders released, 3051 committed homicides again within three years. The study also finds that the released homicide offenders were accounted for about 7.7% of other crimes committed in between 1994–1997. The homicide offenders committed 10% of other crimes within a year after their release (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).

The National Governors Association's Best Practices is currently running seven Prisoner Reentry Academies in six states — Georgia, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Virginia. Predicting recidivism and understanding the social ecology of the returning prisoners is one of the major issues being raised and studied in these academies. The present study is concerned with this problem of recidivism among homicide offenders. Is homicide typology a good predictor of assessing the risk of repeat offending by homicide offenders? Do we know what configuration of offender characteristics can predict whether a particular homicide offender will re-offend? In other words, do we have a homicide typology that can make reasonably valid predictions about the nature of re-offending by homicide offenders? These and other related questions have been explored and examined on the basis of the study of 336 homicide offenders released from 14 correctional institutions between 1990 and 2000 in New Jersey. The major objective of this research is to determine which offender characteristics correlate with recidivism vs. non-recidivism among a diverse group of homicide offenders released throughout the state of New Jersey.

3. Homicide typology and recidivism: review of literature

Criminal profiling and typifying criminal personalities is one of the enduring scientific passions in criminology and criminal justice — a passion that goes back to the study of Cesare Lombroso's *Criminal Man* published in 1876. Very few criminologists today lend scientific credence to Lombroso's physiognomic approach to the understanding of criminality, but the search for a typology of criminal offenders, particularly homicide offenders, has remained as a genuine curiosity. During the last decades, particularly after the formation of the Homicide Research Working Group (HRWG) in 1991, a considerable amount of literature has emerged on issues of understanding the social and demographic characteristics of homicide offenders, and their behavioral peculiarities, motivational contexts, crime scene behavior, and typology (Canter, 2004; Douglas, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992; Fox & Levin, 2005; Hickey, 2002; Holmes, 2002; Holmes & Holmes, 1998; Holmes, Salfati, & Grey, 2002; Owen, 2004; Petherick, 2005; Salfati, 2001).

3.1. Demographic correlates and homicide offending

The demographic variables most consistently examined in homicide research are race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, age, and victim-offender relationship (Fowles & Merva, 1996; Fox & Zawitz, 2004; Gottredson & Hirschi, 1990; Neapolitan, 1998; Pridemore, 2002; Zimring & Hawkins, 1997). The FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports 1980–2004 show that Blacks represented 48.38% of the homicide offenders in 1980. This high representation of Blacks among homicide offenders remained consistent through the last 24 years. In 2004, Blacks, who constitute about 13% of the U.S. population, represented 49.42% of the homicide offenders. In between 1980 and 2004, Blacks committed 50.50% of all total homicides reported to law enforcements as opposed to 46.29% by Whites, 1.24% by Asians, and less than 1% by Native Americans.

Homicide offending also shows a consistent pattern of variations in terms of gender, age, victim–offender relationship, and weapons used in the commission of homicide. Homicide is primarily a male crime. According to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports 1980–2004, males in the year 1980 represented 86.10% of the homicide offenders. In 2004, males accounted for 90.20% of the homicides, and females accounted for 9.80% of the homicides. In between 1980 and 2004, males accounted for a total of 88.81% of the homicides. In terms of age, most homicide offenders are relatively young, but are not juveniles. In 2004, juveniles between 12–17 accounted for only 8.42% of homicides. Adults between 18 and 34 were responsible for 44.44% and those between 25 and 59 accounted for 42.09% of the homicides. In most highly populated cities, acquaintance homicide is consistently the most frequent, with stranger homicide a close second, followed by family-related homicides. The FBI's Supplementary Report indicates that in 2004, 43.75% were acquaintance homicides, 18.96% were stranger homicides, and 14.89% were family-related homicides. Additionally, the firearm is the weapon used in most homicide cases. In 2004, firearms were used in 62.77% of homicide cases. This has remained consistent since the 1980s. In 1980, firearms were used in 63.62% of cases.

A large amount of literature in recent years has empirically substantiated these variations in homicides in terms of race (LaFree & Drass 1996; Sampson & Wilson, 1997), gender, age (Blumstein, 1995), victim–offender relationship (Zahn & Mccall, 1999), and the use of weapons (Zimring & Hawkins, 1997). LaFree and Drass (1996) indicated that race combined with social class has a strong correlation to homicide. They found that disadvantaged minority group members were overrepresented as both perpetrators and victims of homicide. Rogers, Rosenblatt, Hummer, and Krueger (2001) examined black–white differentials in adult homicide mortality and found that blacks living in the inner city had a 6.3 times higher risk of homicide compared to whites living in the inner city, despite controlling for age and gender. Much of the racial gap seems to be highly correlated with socio-economic status, especially low marriage rates, low educational attainment and high unemployment rates (Murphy, 2000; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). Disadvantaged communities with large amounts of social disorganization, economic and social distress, drug use, and street gang membership have a large number of homicides (Loftin & Hill, 1974; Sampson & Wilson, 1997).

4. Homicide typologies

In addition to their efforts to understand the nature of homicide offender characteristics and the socio-demographic contexts of homicide offending, criminologists and criminal justice researchers in recent years have also developed a number of homicide typologies or classificatory schemas in order to profile and explain the personality and the inner

motivations of homicide offenders. One of the oldest and widely known typologies is between organized and disorganized homicides used by the FBI. The typology was created by John Douglas, Patrick Mullany, Howard Teten, Robert K. Ressler, and Ann Burgess and others associated with the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit in Quantico, Virginia, and the FBI's National Center For Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) in the 1970s. The typology was derived from the understanding of crime scene behavior. The logic of the typology is that disorganized crime scenes represent those homicide offenders who lack social competence and a stable family, and who are emotionally abused and withdrawn. They are most likely to be high school dropouts with a below average IQ. Organized crime scenes, on the other hand, suggest the presence of those offenders who have all the hallmarks of a psychopathic personality — above average IQ, socially skillful, educated, urban, mobile, and sexually promiscuous. Disorganized homicide offenders leave a chaotic crime scene, and they depersonalize their victims; organized homicide offenders leave a controlled crime scene and develop more personal relationship with their victims.

The FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) developed a four-fold typology of homicide motivations. This typology is also primarily based on crime scene indicators. The four types are: 1) criminal enterprise homicides (contract murders, gang motivated murders, insurance/inheritance related killings, and felony murders), 2) personal cause homicides (domestic violence-related murders, political and religious murders, or mercy killing), 3) sexual homicide (rape and murder, child rape and child serial killing), and 4) group cause homicides (cult related homicides, and homicides related to extremism and terrorism). The *Crime Classification Manual* (Douglas et al., 1992, 2006) used by the FBI classifies homicides into six categories: single homicide, double homicide, triple homicide, mass murder, spree murder, and serial murder.

Later Holmes and Holmes (1998, 2001) classified homicide offenders, particularly serial killers, in terms of four categories: visionary killer, mission killer, hedonistic killer, and power or control killer. The visionary killers kill in the name of god, a devil, or an angel. They think that they got commands from some supernatural powers to kill. The mission killers are driven by earthly missions to establish a just regime or a group. They are driven by their own constructed rationality of removing the ills of society. The hedonistic killers, on the other hand, kill for thrills, lust, and pleasure. Killing for them is the expression of their pleasure principle. The power killers kill to symbolize their power and control on the victims. Killing for them is a way of regaining the control of their fractured mind and personality.

A considerable number of homicide studies have been generated in recent years on the basis of a model developed by C. Gabrielle Salfati of the Center for Investigating Psychology of the University of Liverpool, England. Salfati (2002, 2001) classified homicides into two categories on the basis of 36 crime scene indicators: expressive homicide and instrumental homicide. Expressive homicides are anger-induced and linked to rape, arson, or physical attack. Extreme violence, multiple wounds, and the use of multiple weapons, suffocation, and dismemberment of the bodies of the victims characterize expressive crimes scenes. Instrumental homicides are linked to violence, theft, robbery, and burglary where the offenders are motivated by some ulterior aims for money or sex. In instrumental crime scenes, bodies are not hidden, and the offenders leave traces of weapons, blood, clothes, semen, and shame and guilt.

Fox and Levin (2006, 2005, 1996) have been studying the issue of homicide typology for more than a decade. They divided homicide into three main categories: serial murders, mass murders, and spree killing. On the basis of these three categories, they developed a five-fold motivational typology: power-based homicides, revenge-based homicides, loyalty-based homicides, profit-based homicides, and homicides based on terror.

These typologies, used as tools in much empirical analysis, have considerably improved our knowledge of the nature of homicide offending and homicide offenders (Fig. 1). What is missing in most of these typologies, however, is an analysis of how and whether they can predict homicide recidivism. The core concern in most of these typologies is to be able to grapple the inner mind of the homicide offenders — the complex trajectories of motivations for homicide. The search for homicide motivation is a genuine intellectual challenge in criminology and criminal justice. But the extent to which motivational understanding can help us develop an understanding of the social trajectory where the offenders live and commit the crime, and the degree to which the complex nature of homicide motivations are amenable to empirical analysis are open to questions (Goodwin, 2002, 1998; Canter & Wentink, 2004). Most typologies based on motivational understanding are drawn from the Freudian theory of psychodynamics — the theory that is based on assumptions that most homicide offenders are driven by the unconscious, and their psychopathic personalities are the by-products of childhood trauma and victimization. It seems that to use homicide typology as predictors of recidivism, and to develop evidence-based reentry policies, we need a typology that is based on a more

Author/ Origin	Nature Homicide Typology	Homicide Categories	Core Focus
Behavioral Science Unit, FBI. 1971	Two-fold Typology	Disorganized Homicides Organized Homicides	Homicide Motivations
NCAVC, FBI, 1978	Four-fold Typology	Criminal Enterprise Homicides Personal Cause Homicides Sexual Homicides Group Cause Homicides	Homicide Motivations
Holmes & Holmes (1998; 2001)	Four-fold Typology	Visionary Killers Mission Killers Hedonistic Killers Power Killers	Homicide Motivations
Salfati (2001)	Two-fold Typology	Expressive Homicides Instrumental Homicides	Homicide Motivations
Fox and Levin (2005)	Five-fold typology	Power-based Homicides Revenge-based Homicides Loyalty-based Homicides Profit-Based Homicides Terror-based Homicides	Homicide Motivations

Fig. 1. Samples of existing homicide typologies.

structural (Sampson & Wilson) understanding of the social ecology within which the offenders live and where offender will return after they are released. A typology is needed that can provide a more empirically grounded analysis of the offender characteristics and their complex relations with homicide offending and recidivism. The present empirical analysis of 336 homicide offenders drawn from New Jersey aims to contribute to this end through the development of a new typology and an analysis of its application and relevance to homicide reentry and recidivism.

5. Methodology of the study

A random sample of 336 homicide offenders who were released between the years 1990 and 2000 from the New Jersey Department of Corrections were identified and followed for a minimum of 5 years. The sample was followed until December 2005, providing a variable follow-up time period. The sample of homicide offenders included primarily male offenders due to the low number of female homicide offenders incarcerated or released from New Jersey institutions. The New Jersey Department of Corrections is comprised of fourteen institutional facilities throughout the State of New Jersey. The 336 homicide offenders sampled for this study were released from any of the institutions for the respective time periods. Thirty percent of the sample was released from the female prison, Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, the only female prison in New Jersey. The remainder of the sample was distributed among the remaining male facilities.

The data used were drawn from the New Jersey State Police Computerized Criminal History System and the National Crime Information Center's Interstate Identification Unit. Through these sources, offending information was obtained for New Jersey as well as other U.S. jurisdictions over the follow-up period. Offending histories were also abstracted from New Jersey Department of Correction's Offender Based Correctional Information System (OBCIS) to ensure that parole violations were counted accurately.

Individual inmate case-record reviews were conducted and over sixty variables were extracted on each homicide offender. The examined variables included, but were not limited to, age of the offender at the time of release, race, gender, marital status, alcohol and drug abuse, employment and educational status, sentencing information, prior criminal history, victim/offense characteristics and recidivism details. As stated, the number of re-arrests, re-convictions, and re-incarcerations was disaggregated by type of re-offense. In addition, the date of the re-arrest was recorded in order to analyze the time elapsed between release and re-offense.

This analysis is exploratory in nature. As such, the statistical analyses are exploratory. The initial examination includes only descriptive and bivariate statistics, which will allow for a detection of correlations and meaningful group

differences. Subsequent analyses and studies will include multivariate regression models and survival analyses to facilitate a better understanding of re-offending prediction for homicide offenders.

6. Toward a new homicide typology

Homicide research is disproportionately dominated by intellectual passion and scientific curiosity to understand the mind of the serial and brutal killers – "the high class of the murderers" – who make headlines, create terrors, and generate a collective sense of national traumas (Fox & Levin, 2005). Many even believe that the classification of serial killers is a misleading venture (Hickey, 2002). There are hundreds of thousands of homicide offenders who do not make headlines and who do not raise any collective sense of terror and tragedies. They commit the crime, serve the time, and get back to the community only to return to prison committing new crimes. The understanding of the nature and peculiarities of this "underclass" of homicide offenders is far more significant from the point of view of increased stress and strains on criminal justice. In this study, we have sampled 336 homicide offenders who fall largely within this group of "underclass" homicide offenders. They commit violence and kill people for few dollars, and over few stretches of arguments. They come from a fragile social ecology, fragmented families, and failed communities. They come from communities where some even glorify and justify a culture of violence. (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls 1997; Sampson & Wilson, 1995).

After examining the statistical findings of our longitudinal retrospective study and after a comprehensive and open-ended analysis of the circumstances surrounding each of the homicide cases, it became apparent that there

Homicide Types	Nature and Characteristics	Case-Based Data and Homicide Circumstances
1. Altercation or Argument Precipitated Homicides	Magnified perception of money or property loss; argument over money or property; dispute over relatively small amount of money or possessions; verbal disputes escalates into fight, and fight into stabbing and shooting. In this category, homicides are driven by what Salfati (2001) called instrumental expressions.	#282 "Argument and fight over $4.00. Victim died from beating." #347 "Defendant hit victim in the head with a 2X4 because they were fighting over a bike." #142 "Shot victim over argument over dog." #270 "Shot victim after argument over glasses." #361 "Victim was shot after argument over money." #348 "Beat victim with a bat and dumped his body in the woods. Argued over drugs." #366 "Defendant shot victim after some altercation they had earlier in the day." #358 "Beat victim with baseball bat over money."
2. Felony Homicides	Perpetrators kill their victims during the commission of a felony crime. Homicides are committed in the way of or as means to committing other crimes. Most felony offenders have records of past criminal histories	Robbery, burglary, grand theft, kidnapping, and other felony crimes induce homicides.
3. Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence induced homicides	Perpetrators are family members, current or ex-spouses, cohabitating intimate partners, or girlfriends or boy friends. This category of homicides is mostly precipitated, not because of intentions to commit a felony crime or achieve any instrumental goals, but because of complexities and fragilities in relations involving sex, love, and emotion.	#22 "Shot victim. He believed she was unfaithful." #44: "Shot wife after the she left him." #64 "Stabbed his wife to death because he thought she was cheating on him." #151 "Defendant used car to run over and kill husband who had beaten her badly in the car." #214 "Shot and killed victim after years of emotional abuse." #222 Stabbed victim in back twice. Claimed unable to take abuse any longer. Defendant stabbed boyfriend in chest with kitchen knife after argument.
4. Accident Homicides	Perpetrators cause death of victims usually by automobiles	Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs; Driving after binge drinking

Fig. 2. A new four-fold homicide typology and their characteristics: based on homicide offenders and offending data from new jersey.

Table 1
Full sample homicide offender descriptives

Categorical offender characteristics	Full sample N=336
Gender	
Male	238
Female	98
Age group at release	
≤20	6
21–30	107
31–40	126
41–50	67
51+	30
Race	
White	90
Black	209
Hispanic	37
Homicide type	
Accident	45
General altercation	450
Commission of felony	47
Domestic violence	84
Education level	
Grade school	52
Some high school	159
High school graduate	95
Some college	23
College graduate	7
Employment status	
Employed	167
Not employed	169
Marital status	
Never married	239
Married	48
Divorced/separated	40
Widowed	9
Drug abuse history	
History	184
No history	152
Alcohol abuse history	
History	180
No history	156

Frequencies that do not equal the total sample size are due to missing data.

were many diversities in our sample of 336 released homicide offenders, and these diversities cannot be clearly captured with the existing typologies aimed primarily to explore the minds of the serial killers. As a result of this discovery, the authors conceptualized a new four-fold typology and then examined the varying offense and victim related characteristics associated with them. These categories were examined in terms of their relations with offender characteristics because offender characteristics are relatively more amenable to empirical analysis than motivational sources and peculiarities, and a typology grounded in the context of structural and objective offender characteristics can be a better predictor of recidivism. The new four-fold typology includes 1) altercation or

Table 1a
Full sample homicide offender descriptives — continuous variables

Continuous offender characteristics	Mean
Age at release	36.28 (sd=10.3)
Sentence length	17.21 (sd=10.9)
Time served	7.75 (sd=6.1)
Age at 1st arrest	20.28 (sd=9.7)
Prior arrests	5.08 (sd=6.1)
Prior convictions	2.61 (sd=3.4)
Prior incarcerations	.83 (sd=1.7)
Prison disciplinary infractions	4.89 (sd=7.8)

argument precipitated offenders, 2) felony offenders, 3) domestic violence or intimate partner related offenders, and 4) accidental offenders (see Fig. 2).

7. Homicide typology and offender characteristics

The majority (70.8%) of the homicide offenders in the random sample are males (Tables 1 and 1a). Almost seventy percent of the homicide offenders were released between the ages of 21 through 40 (M=36.28). Less than ten percent (8.9%) of homicide offenders were released beyond the age of 51. As compared to white and Hispanic offenders, black offenders had disproportionately committed homicide offenses, as they comprised 62.2% of the total sample. This finding is consistent with the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report 1980–2004. Almost half of the homicide offenders in the sample did not complete high school, while 28.20% graduated high school and almost 10% went on to college.

Table 2
Full sample homicide victim/circumstance characteristics

Victim/circumstance characteristics	Full sample N=336
Gender	
Male	248
Female	85
Race	
White	98
Black	165
Hispanic	42
Victim/offender relationship	
Stranger	97
Family	88
Acquaintance	144
Method of homicide	
Knife	74
Gun	112
Fist fight/strong arm	36
Car	42
Neglect	19
Arson	8
Crow bar, pipe, bat	24
Racial make-up	
Inter-racial	82
Intra-racial	228
Mean age of victim	31.28 (sd=18.7)

Frequencies that do not equal the total sample size are due to missing data.

An almost equivalent division of offenders existed between those who held a job prior to incarceration and did drugs and alcohol, compared to those who did not. On average, the homicide offenders served only 45.03% of their sentence, or the equivalent of almost 8 years out of a 17-year sentence. At the point of their homicide, the offenders were already well versed in the criminal justice system with an average of slightly more than 5 prior arrests and 2.61 prior convictions. Over seventy percent of the sample had a prior arrest. This behavior continued while incarcerated, with an average of almost 5 prison disciplinary violations. The modal categories of New Jersey homicide offenders include black males who have never married, between the ages of 21 and 40, with less than a high school education and a lengthy prior criminal history.

Looking at the victim and offense characteristics in Table 2, the findings closely mirror those from the offender characteristics. Almost 75% (73.8%) of the victims were male and 49.10% were classified as black on the pre-sentence investigation report. When the race of the victim was compared to the race of the perpetrator, the findings indicate that almost 70% of the cases were intra-racial homicides. The victim and offender relationship was broken down into three types, 1) no relationship or a stranger, 2) a family member or a domestic, and 3) an acquaintance. While the majority of the relationships were indicated on the pre-sentence investigation, it was stressed to the two individuals coding to read the description before making a final determination.

Table 3
Descriptives for homicide typologies

Offender characteristics	Homicide typologies				
	Accident $n=45$	General altercation $n=150$	Felony commission $n=47$	Domestic violence $n=84$	X^2 (df)
Gender					81.16 (3)*
Male	36	124	45	29	
Female	9	26	2	55	
Race					9.45(3)***
White	18	31	10	28	
Non-white	27	119	37	56	
Drug use history					10.09(3)***
No	26	64	14	45	
Yes	19	86	33	39	
Alcohol history					4.27(3)
No	15	76	21	38	
Yes	30	74	26	46	
Education					11.84 (6)***
Grade school	4	23	11	13	
Some high school	16	75	25	39	
High school and above	25	52	11	32	
Marital status					10.34(6)
Never married	30	112	36	53	
Married	8	21	7	10	
Divorced	7	17	4	21	
Employment					2.25(3)
No	20	78	27	39	
Yes	25	72	20	45	
Release type					7.75(3)***
Parole	30	95	26	65	
Max-out	15	55	21	19	

*$p \le .001$.
**$p \le .01$.
***$p \le .05$.

An interrater reliability score was calculated from this variable to ensure accurate classifications; the score was $r=.94$. The majority (42.8%) of the sample included cases where the victim and the offender were acquainted with one another. Coders were instructed to operationalize the term "acquaintance" to include anyone who was not a stranger to the victim, any friend, or any individual that was part of the victim's group or neighborhood or that he/she was familiar with through other friends. The most common method of homicide was a gun (33.3%), with a knife being the second (22.02%). Together these two weapons account for 55.32% of the method of homicide. From there, the frequencies on the weapons are disparate. The mean age of the victim (31.28 years) was older than anticipated, but close to the average age of the offender upon committing the crime (28 years old — not in table).

Table 3 indicates that there are noteworthy differences between the offender typologies and the offender characteristics. Interestingly, there was a significant difference between the gender of the offender and the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=3)=81.16, $p=.000$). Females committed 65% of all of the domestic violence homicides, while males dominated the remaining three categories. Most notably, males committed almost 96% of all homicides during the commission of a felony. There was also a significant difference between the race of the offender and the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=3)=9.45, $p=.02$) and a drug abuse history and the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=3)=10.09, $p=.018$). Black homicide offenders were most often involved with general altercations, while those reporting drug abuse histories were also involved with general altercations. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the level of education of the offender and the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=6)=11.84, $p=.047$). Upon review of Table 3, those committing general altercation and domestic violence homicides did not complete high school. While it is a small frequency, the majority of college graduates were involved in accident related homicides. Finally, there was a significant difference as the variables of release type and types of homicide committed were shown not to be independent of one another (X^2 (df=3)=7.75, $p=.048$).

Table 4
Victim/offense characteristics for homicide typologies

Victim/offense characteristics	Homicide typologies				
	Accident $n=45$	General altercation $n=150$	Felony commission $n=47$	Domestic violence $n=84$	X^2 (df)
Gender					26.34(3)**
Male	26	121	42	50	
Female	19	26	5	34	
Race					12.26(3)***
White	19	31	18	30	
Non-white	26	119	29	54	
Victim/offender relationship					350.85(6)**
Stranger	24	41	30	0	
Family	1	0	0	84	
Acquaintance	20	106	16	0	
Homicide Method					181.12(6)**
Weapon	9	111	40	48	
Non-weapon	3	28	6	31	
Automobile	33	6	1	2	
Racial make-up					12.39(3)***
Inter-racial	11	30	20	18	
Intra-Racial	27	109	22	64	

Note: weapon category includes knives, guns, crow bars, pipes and bats. Non-Weapon category includes fist fights, strong arms, negligence, fire and an overdose.
*$p \le .05$.
**$p \le .001$.
***$p \le .01$.

Table 4 yields interesting and noteworthy differences among the homicide typologies and the victim and offense characteristics. First, the overwhelming majority of victims in the general altercation homicide (80.6%) and felony commission homicide (89.3%) were male (X^2 (df=3)=26.34, p=.000). Additionally, consistent with the finding that the majority of domestic violence homicide offenders were female, the majority of domestic violence victims were male (60%). Race of victim yielded significant differences when cross-referenced with the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=3)=12.26, p=.01). White victims were divided almost systematically across the homicide types, while black and Hispanic victims largely participated in the general altercations. Almost 60% of the Hispanic victimizations were the result of a general altercation that led to a homicide.

The victim/offender relationship and the type of offense committed demonstrated a lack of independence from one another (X^2 (df=6)=350.85, p=.000). It was expected that the family relationship would fall under the domestic violence homicides, as it did, however, the majority of general altercation homicides were acquaintances. Conversely, 64% of the felony commission homicides that occurred were stranger relationships. The method of homicide, or the weapon used, was associated with the type of homicide committed (X^2 (df=6)=181.12, p=.000). Knives were most often used in general altercations and domestic violence homicides, while an automobile was the weapon during an accident. Guns were used in 43.3% of general altercations.[1] The overwhelming majority of homicide cases were intra-racial, however the racial make-up and the type of homicide were not independent of one another (X^2 (df=3)=12.39, p=.006).

8. Homicide typology as indictors of recidivism

Recidivism is classified for this study into four distinct categories including, parole violations, new property offenses, violent offenses and/or drug offenses. Therefore, the homicide offenders did not have to commit the same type of offense (as the initial offense) to be classified as a recidivist. Each of the four types of recidivism is considered mutually exclusive. Recidivism is examined in terms of the rates of re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration. The analysis of the results shows that the overall recidivism rate for 336 samples homicide offenders in New Jersey was 51.2%. The average number of re-arrests for the full homicide sample was 2.18 (sd=3.82) and the average number of re-convictions was 1.33 (sd=2.66). None of the 336 homicide offenders in the sample committed another homicide during the follow-up period.

The homicide recidivism rate of 51.2% was comprised largely by parole violations and new drug charges. The average time to failure for the total sample of homicide offenders who recidivated was 2 years and 9 months (sd=30.28 months). While the analysis did not reach statistical significance, the offenders who served the shortest sentences for homicide (less than five years), took the longest time to recidivate. Average time to failure for the shorter time served group was close to 3.5 years. Homicide offenders who recidivated the quickest, within the first year of release from prison, were those who served between 5 and 10 years in prison. When the relationship between the offender and victim and the occurrence of re-offending was examined, the analysis did not reach statistical significance. However, the offenders who were family members had lower levels of recidivism than expected, while stranger offenders had higher levels of recidivism. Additionally, offenders who had lengthier prior criminal histories had higher levels of recidivism (X^2 (df=3)=46.23, p=.000). Homicide offenders who had over 5 prior arrests had the highest level of recidivism; they made up 40% of the overall sample, yet comprised 55% of the recidivism sample.[2]

Turning to the homicide typologies in Table 5, there was a significant difference between the type of homicide committed and whether or not the offenders recidivated (X^2 (df=3)=12.88, p=.005). The domestic violence and accident homicide typologies had lower than expected recidivism rates, while those homicides committed during a felony and an altercation had higher rates. Sixty-three percent of the offenders who committed a homicide during the commission of a felony recidivated. The difference between the rearrest tiers and the homicide typologies was significant (X^2 (df=9)=24.47, p=.013), with general altercation and felony homicides as those having the highest levels of recidivism. Additionally, the type of offense the homicide offender was rearrested for was significantly related to the type of homicide (X^2 (df=12)=24.48, p=.024). Relative to their sample size, domestic violence homicide offenders had the highest proportion (24.0%) of arrests for parole violations, while felony commission homicide

---

[1] Weapon specifics not portrayed in Table 4.
[2] For the sake of space, these numbers not portrayed in the tables.

Table 5
Categorical re-offense information on homicide typologies

Characteristic	Homicide Typologies				
	Accident $n=45$	General alteration $n=150$	Felony commission $n=47$	Domestic violence $n=84$	X^2 (df)
Recidivism					12.88(3)*
Yes	17	87	30	34	
No	28	63	17	50	
Rearrest tiers					24.47 (9)*
0	28	63	17	50	
1	3	22	8	9	
2–3	10	22	7	16	
4+	4	43	15	9	
Type of recidivism					24.48(12)**
Parole violation	6	26	10	20	
Property Violation	3	20	4	6	
Violent Offense	2	16	8	4	
Drug offense	6	25	8	4	

*$p \le .01$.
**$p \le .05$.
***$p \le .001$.

offenders had the second highest proportion (21.2%). Offenders who committed their homicide while completing a felony had the most violent re-offense records at 17.02%.

9. Discussion and conclusion

One of the main findings related to the homicide offender typology and recidivism was that the domestic violence homicide offenders had the highest proportion (24.0%) of arrests for technical parole violations, while felony homicide offenders had the second highest proportion (21.2%) of arrests for parole violations. With regard to criminal histories prior to the homicide conviction, the felony homicide offenders clearly had the highest mean number of convictions at 4.17. The homicide category with the second largest number of prior convictions was the general altercation or argument precipitated homicide offenders, with a mean of 2.84 convictions. Since many convicted offenders are given a second chance through diversion, probation, and other intermediate sanctions, the average number of prior incarcerations provides a better indicator of which group seems more likely to recidivate upon release from their homicide conviction. For example, the commission of a felony homicide type had a mean number of incarcerations of 1.53, and the general altercation precipitated homicide group had almost one or a mean of .91 incarcerations each prior to their homicide conviction. In sharp contrast, the domestic violence homicide type had an average of .48 incarcerations prior to their homicide conviction.

The contributing variables related to the relatively high recidivism rate with new violent offenses for both felony homicide perpetrators (slightly over one-third), as well as general altercation precipitated homicide offenders (almost one-third), seem to be the combination of an alcohol and substance abuse problem, a very low educational attainment, long periods of unemployment, and a non-married status. With regard to the felony homicide offenders, 76.5% were black, 70.2% had a drug abuse history, 76.6% never completed high school or grade school, 57.4% had long-term unemployment, and 76.6% never married. With regard to the general altercation category, two-thirds were black, 57.3% had a drug abuse history, 65.3% never completed high school or grade school, 52% had long-term unemployment, and 74.6% never married. Almost one-third of the general altercation precipitated homicide offenders recidivated for a new violent (i.e. usually aggravated assault) or drug offense, and slightly over one-third of the felony commission related homicides recidivated for a new violent or drug offense. In sharp contrast, less than 10% of the domestic violence homicide offenders recidivated for a new violent or drug offense.

Our study indicates that it is a misconception that homicide offenders released after long-term incarceration are hardly ever involved in violent crimes upon release. This misconception stems from several studies that have found that homicide offenders rarely re-offend with a second homicide. After analyzing a large volume of data, our study found that none of the

336 released homicide offenders committed another homicide, but approximately one-third of both the felony homicide offenders and general altercation precipitated homicide offenders do re-offend with new violent or drug offenses.

Additionally, homicide is not a homogeneous behavior. Homicide perpetrators are not the same in terms of motivation, environmental factors, demographics, and interpersonal dynamics. Different factors of complex combinations precipitate homicides that range from felony murders in the midst of an armed robbery to murders involving sex, love, and emotion, and murders for money and property to murders because of drug use and alcohol consumption. Our typology was not developed specifically to aid law enforcement and correctional treatment specialists. No typology is also an exact replication of reality. Typologies are created to approximate the reality. It shows that focusing on the homicide perpetrator's socio-demographic factors, substance abuse histories, histories of criminal records, and other precipitating events holds promise for the police and parole officers in terms of surveillance and intervention with parolees, the courts in terms of judicial sanctions and sentencing decisions, and correctional authorities involved in rehabilitation and re-entry programs. The criminal justice and forensic mental health professionals will be in a better position to provide evidence-based interventions and reentry policies if homicide typologies are aimed to predict recidivism in terms of the social trajectories where the offenders live and return after they are released from prison.

Three sets of policy directions on issues of reentry and recidivism can be suggested on the basis of the findings from this study of 336 homicide offenders in New Jersey. The first is for the cohort that comprises the felony homicides. Reentry programs and initiatives can be developed with specific focus on male returnees who had felony convictions, who served longer time, and who had criminal records prior to the commission of a homicide. For example, black offenders and other racially disadvantaged groups with low educational attainment, and living in drug-infested, economically broken communities are more likely to re-offend with felony crimes. The second is for the cohort of domestic violence-induced homicide offenders. Even though the rate of recidivism is lower in this cohort, female victims of domestic violence are increasingly participating in homicide offending. Reentry programs and interventions here can include more focus on violent families, domestic violence reduction programs, and programs for economic empowerment for female victims of domestic violence. The third cohort is the general altercation induced homicide offenders who also have a high rate of recidivism. Community-based reentry programs focusing on education, work, victim–offender mediation training, faith-based interventions, and other restorative justice strategies can help reduce the rate of recidivism for this group of offenders.

References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1995). *Violent offenders in state prison: Sentences and time served (by A. J. Beck & L. A. Greenfield).* Washington DC: Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1998). *Justice in the United States and in England and Wales.* Washington DC: Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2002). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994 (Special Report by P. A. Langan & D. J. Levin).* Washington DC: Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2004). *Prison and jail inmates at midyear 2003.* Washington DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2005). *Prisoners in 2004 (By P. M. Harrison & A. J. Beck).* Washington DC: Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Canter, D. (2004). Offender profiling and investigative psychology. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offenders Profiling, 1,* 1−15.

Canter, D. V., & Wentink, N. (2004). An empirical test of Holmes and Holmes's Serial Murder Typology. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 31*(4), 488−515.

Douglas, J., Burgess, A. W., Burgess, A., & Ressler, R. (2006). *Crime classification manual* (2nd Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Douglas, J., Burgess, A., & Ressler, R. (1992). *Crime classification manual.* Lexington: Lexington Books.

Everitt, D. (1993). *Human Monsters: An illustrated encyclopedia of the world's most vicious murderers.* New York: Contemporary Books.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2005). *Supplementary homicide reports 1980–2004.* Washington DC: Department of Justice.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2006). *Uniform crime report – Crime in the United.* Washington DC: Department of Justice.

Fox, J. A., & Levin, J. (1996). *Over Kill: Mass murder and serial killing exposed.* New York: Bantam Books.

Fox, J. A., & Levin, J. (2005). *Extreme killing: Understanding serial murder.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Fox, J. A., & Levin, J. (2006). *Will to kill: Explaining senseless murder.* Boston: Allyn Bacon.

Goodwin, M. (1998). Reliability, validity and utility of extant serial murder classifications. *The Criminologist, 22,* 194−210.

Goodwin, M. (2002). Reliability, validity, and utility of criminal profiling typologies. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 17,* 1−18.

Hickey, E. (2002). *Serial murderers and their victims* (3rd Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Holmes, R. M., & Holmes, S. T. (1998). *Serial murder* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Holmes, R. M., & Holmes, S. T. (2001). *Mass murder in the United States.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Holmes, R. M., & Holmes, S. T. (2002). *Profiling violent crime: An investigative tool* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Illinois Department of Corrections. (2002). *Statistical presentation, 2001: Part II: Length of stay.* Illinois: Springfield.

Iowa Legislative Services Agency. (2003). *Review of Iowa's 85.0% sentencing laws.* Des Moines, Iowa: State Capital.

La Vigne, N. G., & Mamalian, C. A. (2004). *Prison reentry in Georgia.* Washington DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center.

Nash, J. R. (1993). *World encyclopedia of 20th century murder.* New York: Marlowe & Company.

NGA Center For Best Practices. (2004). *The challenges and impacts of prison reentry.* Washington DC: National Governors' Association.

NGA Center For Best Practices. (2004). *Prison reentry: Massachusetts.* Washington DC: National Governors' Association.

NGA Center For Best Practices. (2004). *Prison reentry: Virginia.* Washington DC: National Governors' Association.

NGA Center For Best Practices. (2006). *Prison reentry.* Washington DC: National Governors' Association.

Petherick, W. (2005). *The science of criminal profiling.* New York: Barnes and Noble.

Salfati, C. G. (2001). The Nature of Expressiveness and Instrumentality in Homicide, and its Implication for Offender Profiling. Paper Presented at the 6th Investigating Psychology Conference, Liverpool, England.

Salfati, C. G., & Grey, J. (2002). Profiling U.S. Homicide. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, November, Chicago.

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: a multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science, 277*, 918−924.

Sampson, R. J., & Wison, W. J. (1995). Towards a theory of race, crime and urban inequality. In J. Hagan & R. D. Peterson (Eds.), *Crime and inequality* (pp. 37−52). Stanford, CS: Stanford University Press.

Travis, J., Keegan, S., & Cadora, E. (2003). *A portrait of prison reentry in New Jersey.* Washington DC: Urban Institute.

Travis, J., & Visher, C. (2005). *Prison reentry and crime in America.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Washington Institute For Public Policy. (2004). *Sentencing for adult felons in Washington [Part 1- Historical Trends].* Washington: Olympia.

Wolfgang, M. E. (1958). *Patterns of criminal homicide.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.