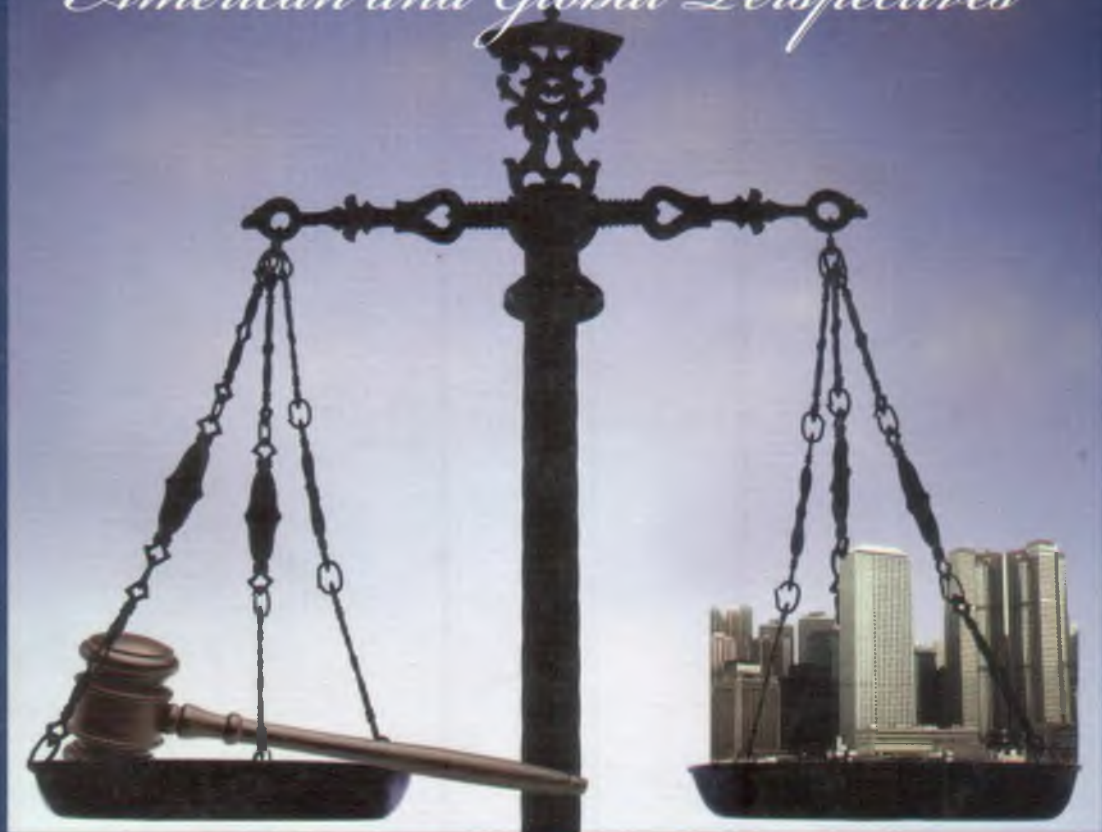


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American and Global Perspectives



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HOMICIDE

Homicide, or one human being killing another, is a general term that may refer to a noncriminal act as well as to the criminal act of murder or manslaughter. Scholars have classified homicides in many ways, including broad classifications using legal and motivational models. These classifications illustrate what for most societies is the most visible and notorious crime.

Legal Model

According to the legal model, homicides divide into those that are nonfelonious and those that are felonious. Nonfelonious homicides, furthermore, may be justifiable or excusable. Justifiable homicides are completely justified, as when a judge sentences a criminal to death or when a jailor carries out a death sentence. In contrast, a person committing an excusable homicide is at fault to some degree but not enough to have committed a felonious homicide.

There are two basic kinds of excusable homicides. First, misadventure occurs when there is death during the commission of an act, lawful or unlawful, where the slayer has no intent to hurt and there is no criminal negligence. Examples include the death of a person who runs in front of a moving automobile, whose driver is unable to avoid the collision, or the death of a person on the operating table during an extremely difficult operation with no fault of the surgeon. Second, excusable homicide involves death resulting from self-defense, where the slayer is not completely without fault. To illustrate, when a sudden brawl erupts, a person may kill another to protect herself.

Felonious homicides are criminal in nature. They include murder, where the killer commits the act with "malice aforethought," and manslaughter, where there

are mitigating circumstances, but not enough of them to make the killing justifiable or excusable homicide.

Motivational Model

Although the legal model varies in detail from country to country, it is necessary for national and local law enforcement authorities, especially judges, in meting out punishments. Motivational models, alternatively, are useful to homicide investigation teams. In the motivational model, homicides are classified according to the motive that animated the killer. This model helps the investigator to narrow the field of likely suspects. This classification developed in the United States in the 1980s with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. It is widely used all over the world today.

All homicides fall into four broad categories within the motivational model. First, criminal-enterprise homicides involve murder committed for material gain. Second, personal-cause homicides occur when murder is committed for a personal reason and ensues from interpersonal aggression. Third, sexual homicides involve a sexual element in the murder. Finally, group-cause homicides occur when two or more people, with a common ideology, sanction a murder, which one or more of the group's members then actually commits.

All four categories have subcategories. Criminal-enterprise homicide has eight subcategories. A person who agrees to take the life of another for profit commits contract killing. A gang-motivated murder may involve the extortion and murder of a businessperson. Criminal competition occurs when a homicide results from intragroup or intergroup conflict and rivalry, usually over control of territory. Kidnap murder involves a kidnapping followed by murder if a victim or her family does not meet ransom demands. Product tampering involves a murderer who alters a product, usually a medicinal capsule, with intent to cause a person's death. To mask motives, the murderer may kill other innocent persons, such as Stella Nickel's 1986 lacing of her husband's Excedrin capsules with cyanide. Drug murder intends to eliminate an individual viewed as an obstruction (such as a judge or police officer) to illegal drug business. Insurance-motivated

murder is killing a person to benefit from insurance or inheritance. Finally, felony murder occurs secondary to property crime, usually burglary or robbery.

Personal-cause homicide has eleven subcategories. Erotomania killing results from an offender's fixation or offender-victim relationship. For instance, homicide may occur from rebuffed advances when the killer has a fantasy of idealized romantic love about the victim rather than a sexual attraction to the victim. Domestic homicide occurs when a family or household member kills another member of the household. Argument homicide results from a verbal dispute between persons, excluding family or household members. Conflict homicide occurs where death results from personal conflict between the victim and the offender. Authority killing involves a victim who has wronged a subordinate (the killer) in some real or imagined way. To illustrate, the wrong may be actual, as in the case of a fired employee, or imagined, as in the case of a person with a psychotic or paranoid delusion of conspiracy. Revenge homicide involves a person, not in authority, whom the offender kills in retaliation for a perceived wrong, real or imagined. Extremist homicide is committed on behalf of an ideology based on a particular political, economic, religious, or social system. Although the offender's beliefs may be associated with a particular group, the group does not sanction the murder. Mercy homicide occurs where the offender believes that the victim is suffering and feels a duty to relieve the suffering. Hero homicide involves an offender who creates a life-threatening condition for the victim. The "hero" then unsuccessfully attempts to rescue or resuscitate the victim to appear valorous. Usually, death results unintentionally. Hostage murder takes place within the context of a hostage situation. Finally, nonspecific motive killing outwardly appears irrational. Only the offender knows the reasons, if there are any.

Sexual homicide divides into four subcategories. Organized sexual homicide involves an offender who targets his victims and plans their murders in a clinical fashion. He often displays self-control at the crime scene. Disorganized sexual homicide is unplanned and spontaneous. It may result from the offender's youthfulness, lack of criminal sophistication, use of drugs and alcohol, or mental abnormality or deficiency.

Mixed sexual homicide involves elements of the two previous categories. Finally, sadistic murder involves a killer who derives sadistic sexual satisfaction from torture and killing.

Lastly, group-cause homicide has three subcategories. Cult murder occurs when two or more members of a cult kill the victim. A cult has adherents with excessive dedication to ideas, objects, or persons regarded as unorthodox or spurious, whose primary objectives relate to sex, power, or money. Extremist murder occurs when a group is motivated by ideas they endorse based upon a particular political, economic, religious, or social system. Group-excitement homicide involves two or more individuals in an excited state who cause the death of an individual.

Homicide Investigation

For a proper homicide investigation to take place, officials must visit the scene of a crime. Not only the police and special crime scene investigators (CSIs) or scene of crime officers (SOCOs) must visit, but the forensic pathologist must visit as well. Not all countries have made this procedure mandatory in their legislation, however. In India, for instance, where police and magistrate inquests are the norm, it is not mandatory for the forensic pathologist to visit the scene of a crime. In the United States, on the other hand, a medical examiner system exists, where forensic pathologists known as medical examiners routinely visit the crime scene. Certain clues that may not be obvious to nonmedical personnel, such as onset of stiffness (*rigor mortis*), body cooling (*algor mortis*), and body bluishness (*livor mortis*), are at once obvious to the medical examiner. These facts can help to determine the exact time of death as well as impart other useful information, such as whether a perpetrator has moved the body. These signs vanish if officials transport the body to the mortuary. It is important to appraise these elements at the crime scene.

Punishment

Throughout history and among different nations, punishment for homicide has varied. In the past, officials meted

out barbarous punishments, such as stoning, death by a thousand cuts, live burial, burning alive, roasting alive in oil, breaking on the wheel, and drawing and quartering, especially for political homicides. Today, countries that continue to impose death sentences, usually for murder, use means that are more humane, such as hanging, electrocution, or lethal injection.

Most countries have abolished the death penalty altogether, not only because it is considered inhumane but because criminal proceedings are fallible and death sentences are irreversible. A notable case in point is the death sentence imposed on Timothy Evans for the homicide of his daughter in 1949. Hanged in 1950 at Pentonville Prison in London, officials later discovered that another person was responsible for the killing. In 1965, Chuter Ede, United Kingdom Home Secretary at the time of Evans's execution, said that Evans's case showed how a mistake was possible and that one had been made. The government granted Evans a posthumous pardon in 1966.

—Amil Aggrawal

See also Death Penalty; Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide; Family Violence; Forensic Experts; Gangs; Insanity and Crime; Mafia and Organized Crime; Police; Psychopathy and Sociopathy; Rape and Sexual Offenses; Serial Killers; Violence and Justice

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Nevertheless, one can point to certain problems of honor that afflict legal systems worldwide. Those problems can be usefully broken down into three classes: problems of sexual honor, problems of personal honor, and problems of hierarchical honor. All three involve honor in similar ways: Persons who feel their honor has been attacked commonly feel that they have been degraded or treated as inferior.

There are certain recurrent issues in the treatment of honor by the law. First, honor is regularly associated with violence. Persons who feel that their honor has been attacked frequently lash out violently; the sense of honor and the propensity for violence are closely linked among human beings. Indeed, some scholars have gone so far as to maintain that all acts of human violence are responses to perceived insults or other violations of honor. In some societies, honor is also associated with violence against the self. Persons whose honor has been lost are sometimes expected to commit suicide. Second, when confronted with problems of honor, the law often takes an ambivalent or hands-off approach. Indeed, people frequently assert that injuries to honor should not be repaired through resorting to the law at all, because honorable persons settle their affairs themselves, without relying on the machinery of the state. This attitude is closely associated with the culture of dueling, in particular, but duelists are by no means the only actors who believe that honorable persons must take the law into their own hands.

Sexual Honor

The problems of honor have not received equal attention. Scholars have devoted disproportionate energy to the problems of sexual honor. The best-studied aspects of sexual honor involve what scholars sometimes call the *Mediterranean* pattern of social organization, characterized by male-dominated clans in which women are treated in some sense as possessions. In such societies, threats to the sexual purity of a woman, real or perceived, may be treated as assaults on the honor of her menfolk. These sometimes result in violence against the woman in question, as in the "honor killings" of the Arab world. They may of course also result in violence against the male perceived to have preyed upon her.

HONOR

Honor is a treacherous term, full of ambiguity and difficult to translate from one language into another.



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