



Book Review of *The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder*

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The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder. Fourth Edition. (2012) James Fox, Jack Levin, and Kenna Quinet, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 288 Pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-13-137567-3

There is a vast amount of textbooks associated with a number of critical aspects within the discipline of criminal justice. From a fundamental standpoint, a few of these publications offer a comprehensive look into the role of policing (*Policing America: Challenges & Best Practices, 7th Edition*; Peak, 2012 or *Law Enforcement in the 21st Century*; Grant & Terry, 2004), others examine various aspects related to law (*Basic Criminal Law: The Constitution, Procedure, and Crimes, 3rd Edition*; Davenport, 2012) and the significance of probation and parole (*Probation and Parole: Theory and Practice, 11th Edition*; Abadinsky, 2012).

Within the arena of criminal justice textbooks, a number of books are related exclusively to the commission of certain offenses. This includes a wide range of crimes that may include computer crimes (*Digital Crime, Digital Terrorism, 2nd Edition*; Taylor, Fritsch, Liederbach, & Holt, 2011), white-collar crime (*Trusted Criminals: White Collar Crime in Contemporary Society, 4th Edition*; Friedrichs, 2010), and gangs (*Youth Gangs in American Society, 3rd Edition*; Sheldon, Tracy, & Brown, 2004). A few textbooks have explored the existence of certain criminal acts that may be considered a growing epidemic during the past few years. This includes, but is not limited to human trafficking (*The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today*; Bales & Soodalter, 2009) and identity theft (*Economics of Identity Theft: Avoidance, Causes and Possible Cures*; Camp, 2010). Finally, there is text that is associated with a crime that is both universal and constant; *the act of killing*.

In *The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder, Fourth Edition*, Fox, Levin, and Quinet explore the various circumstances associated with the act of homicide. This includes contextual factors associated with theories, trends, and legislative policies. In addition, they also examine the extent of homicide within a number of settings as well as the numerous responses enacted by the criminal justice system.

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Specifically, their text examines:

- the fascination and legal aspects associated with homicide
- various rationales associated with homicidal behavior
- the characteristics of perpetrators and victims of homicide
- the social dynamics of homicide within intimate and family relationships
- the occurrence of homicide committed by youth
- the rationale and prevention of homicide within school settings
- the extent and motives of serial killers
- the factors associated with homicide committed by medical practitioners
- homicidal behavior within the context of mass murder
- instances of homicide motivated by hate
- the extreme instances of homicide through the acts of terrorism
- homicidal occurrences within the context of cult activities
- the apprehension of individuals accused of engaging in homicidal behavior
- the perception of failure within the criminal justice system in relation to those accused of homicide

In chapter 1, titled “The Lure and the Law of Homicide,” the authors present a number of reasons (i.e., individual, cultural, etc.) which attempt to explain the public’s general fascination with homicide. This includes a growing trend within media towards the glorification of homicidal behavior (i.e., murderers, etc.). Various legal distinctions associated with homicide are discussed in detail, this includes the terms murder and manslaughter. Finally, the authors identify a number of factors related to the legal defenses associated with the act of homicide as well as the various factors (i.e., cultural, political, etc.) relevant with the practical use of homicide law.

Chapter 2, titled “Explaining the Will to Kill,” the explanations of homicide are discussed. The beginning of the chapter explores the existence of the supernatural and rational choices. Examples of such include demon possession as well as the perceived individual benefits associated with the act of murder. The authors then examine the influence of scientific investigation (i.e., biological, psychological, etc.) and explanation in relation to behaviors that are associated with homicide. Within this discussion, theoretical definitions and traditions, epistemological approaches, relevant examples, and controversies associated with each viewpoint are identified.

In chapter 3, titled “The Killers and their Victims,” the authors present a comparable analysis of the murder rate in the United State in relation to other countries. Certain conditions associated within American culture (i.e., violence, media-based technology, etc.) are emphasized as the probable origins of homicidal behavior. Demographics (i.e., race, gender, etc.) in relation to the act of homicide as well as the impact of geographical location (i.e., urban, rural, etc.) is presented. The chapter is concluded with a discussion regarding the impact of firearms as well as a display of changing trends in relation to the occurrence of homicide in the United States.

“Intimate and Family Murder,” the title of chapter 4, explores a number of factors which encompass both family and intimate settings in relation to homicide. Numerous motives associated with the act of killing are examined. Examples of such include profit, jealousy, power, and abuse. Different types of family homicide are presented which includes massacres, parricide, filicide, and infanticide. The authors then uncover a series of

disturbing behavior by women in relation to the role of motherhood. This includes abductions, murder, and kidnapping by Cesarean section. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the extreme emotional reasons associated with homicide (i.e., killing for love, murder-suicide, etc.) and prevention factors.

In chapter 5, titled “The Young and the Ruthless,” the authors initiate the discussion of killing among youth through the use of identifying the various rates of youth homicide between 1976 and 2009. Potential aspects associated with such behavior are explored which include drugs, violence, and gang activity. The subculture of violence is discussed with an emphasis on the various developments associated with the existence and influence of gangs among youth. The authors’ then attempt to identify a number of plausible explanations associated with the decrease in youth-related homicide during the 1990s. This involves the existence of community based efforts (i.e., public schools, churches, etc.) as well as law enforcement efforts. A thorough investigation of preventive measures in which certain factors (i.e., media, video-game, etc.) may be associated with homicidal behavior among young is presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the complexities and challenges that exist within the juvenile justice system in relation to homicide committed by youth.

Chapter 6, titled “Well-Schooled in Murder,” an exposition of youth violence and murder within school settings is provided. Utilizing various databases, the risk of school-related homicide is identified along with numerous factors related to both victims and offenders as well specific types (i.e., single-victim, multiple victim, etc.). In an attempt to explain the occurrence of such, the media is recognized as a viable source of influence. The existence of adult shootings within institutions of learning is discussed along with a thorough explanation of school-related massacres. Numerous responses related to homicide are addressed including the role of parenting as well as the prevalence of fear. School-related responses, such as zero-tolerance policies and law enforcement security measures, are review with an emphasis on the recognition of warnings signs and the prediction of behavior. The chapter is concluded with a discussion regarding the impact of school-related safety measures that emphasize the deterrence of violence (i.e., bullying, etc.) and the unique existence and challenges associated with of security within colleges and universities.

In chapter 7, “Serial Killers,” the authors begin their discussion regarding the occurrence of homicide by revealing the distinction between spree and serial killers. This includes a differential component primary based upon motives and contextual factors. Trends regarding the act of such murderous behavior were examined in order to extrapolate various profile characteristics. Many of these individual factors defy numerous myths and stereotypes held by the general public. This includes general appearance, demeanor, race, and psychological status. In an effort to explain such behavior, the latter part of the chapter offers a general overview of the serial killer’s background. This involves in-depth details regarding the extent of various childhood experiences (i.e., abuse, trauma, violence to animals). The chapter is then concluded with a discussion associated with factors related to the process and potential motives associated with the selection of victims.

Chapter 8, titled “Medical Murder,” the occurrence of homicides committed by medical professionals is discussed. Due to the existence of death within various medically-related settings (i.e., hospitals, etc.) the assessments (i.e., frequencies, etc.) of such behavior are explored. This includes the revelation of numerous homicidal factors such as behavioral and reporting aspects. Motivations (i.e., power, attention, etc.) and categories

are examined which reveal the prevalence of female perpetrators. Parental acts of harm directed towards children, commonly referred to as Munchausen syndrome by proxy, is discussed with an emphasis on the initial assessments and the potential implications of such behavior. With respect to accountability, the idea of apprehension and negligence among medical professionals is suggested. This includes the lack of competence as well as the facilitation of such behavior through cover-ups and potential litigation. Finally, the notion of intervention and prevention measures is explored, which may involve the use of various surveillance and monitoring systems.

In chapter 9, titled "Rampage," the reality of mass murder is explored. The attributes of this type of homicidal behavior are discussed. This involves a description of the well calculated as well as the indiscriminate occurrences of such behavior. Various individual aspects (i.e., location of victim, mental state, etc.) associated with the killer's motivation is identified. Many of these acts stem from perceived losses and frustrations, especially in the area of employment and family-related circumstances. An extensive and thorough analysis of then presented regarding the existence of workplace murder. Factors associated with perpetrator are revealed, which includes the act of suicide and the use of firearms. The chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the act of murder among customers. Both motives (i.e., revenge, etc.) as well as the various individual factors (i.e., isolation, frustration, etc.) are identified.

Chapter 10, "Hate Homicides," begins with a discourse regarding the definition and the existence of contextual factors and interpretations associated with the hate within the framework of the term hate crime. This leads into a discussion regarding the characteristics of homicide motivated by hatred. Prevalence, motivations associated with reporting, as well the relative impact of media-based publicity is identified. Various kinds of hate-based homicide are presented which includes defensive, thrill-related, mission, and retaliatory offenses. Hate crimes committed by groups are examined along with a discussion regarding the role and influence of the military. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the hate crime laws that exist in the United States.

In chapter 11, titled "Murderous Terror," the unfortunate reality of terrorism is addressed. Numerous types of terrorism (i.e., international, domestic, etc.) are identified as well the various responses associated with such behavior. An overview is provided regarding the development of terrorism within the United States. This includes a host of factors such as prospective motives, international origin, and the methods in which such calamitous acts are achieved. Within the area of domestic terrorism, the notion of adult prisons as places of recruitment is discussed. In an effort to negate the prevalence of extremist stereotypes, the authors reveal a clear distinction among the various types and behaviors of American Muslims. In a similar fashion, another degree of distinction is presented between the existence of left and right wing terrorists and their behavior. The chapter concludes with a review of the relative impact of terrorism that took place on September 11, 2001. This analysis emphasizes both the immediate and long-term responses as well the vulnerability of the United States.

Chapter 12, titled "Cult Killings," examines the extent of homicide within the context of unconventional religious group settings. Various characteristics and definitions of these dangerous organizations are identified. This includes methods of persuasion as well as relative conventional group comparisons within society. The authors explore the appeal of these followings which is heavily associated with periods of increased social change and religious prophecies. Within these settings, the reality of death is discussed; which often

takes place at the expense and charismatic influence of its leader. The power of these groups is often based upon its attractiveness among the vulnerable (i.e., adolescents, marginalized, etc.) as well as the affluent. To attest to this reality, accounts of how normal individuals have fallen victim to such influences is presented. The chapter concludes with a debatable notion of whether killings are considered suicide or homicide within such settings. This involves an analysis of certain persuasive techniques within the context of extreme social behavior.

In Chapter 13, titled “Catching Killers,” the apprehension of murderers is discussed with an emphasis on the use and reliance of forensic evidence. Details regarding the process of forensic investigation is presented with a detailed description of certain factors (i.e., atmospheric conditions, bone structure, etc.). Within this procedure, a considerable amount of information regarding the significance, contributions, and challenges associated with the use of DNA is explored. Despite the advancement and availability of forensic methods, the authors examine the decrease in homicide clearance rates. Factors associated with types of killings (i.e., spousal, stranger, etc.) as well the challenges associated with serial killers are offered as possible explanations. In effort to catch murderers, the use of an FBI computer databases is introduced. This lends itself to an overview of the strengths and weakness of this tool in relation to the art of establishing criminal profiles. Finally, the efficacy of eyewitness testimony accounts and the role of media in the apprehension of killers are presented.

In the final section of the text, Chapter 14, “Getting away with Murder, or Not,” the perceptions regarding the failure of the criminal justice system are explored. Within this analysis, the deficiencies and short-comings of legislative efforts are presented. This includes a number of examples and prospective rationales with an emphasis in the area of being mentally ill and criminally responsible. A thorough and revealing discourse associated with the efficacy and challenges related to the use of the insanity plea are discussed. The use of capital punishment is explored in which public opinions, political ideologies, and legislative mandates are described. Various additional factors are revealed which include life imprisonment, the application of the death penalty within respect to racial discrimination (i.e., offenders, victims, etc.). The punishment of youth offenders is discussed with a discussion regarding the extent and efficacy of life without parole in within various jurisdictions. The chapter concludes with the media-based influence of general attitudes regarding the occurrence and severity of criminal behavior. This often results in the development of stringent criminal justice approaches which may stem from anxiety among the public. With an emphasis on paranoia and sensationalism, the authors attempt to underscore the use of caution and skepticism when confronted with statistics and accounts of isolated criminal acts.

Considering the aforementioned specific topics, Fox et al. offer a unique insight to criminal justice literature. For those interested in discovering the significance of homicide in the United States, *The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder*, provides a comprehensive source of theoretical and practical information and perspective. This text is well written and may be used as a primary or supplemental text in an upper-level undergraduate or graduate level course in criminal justice.

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