

O N E

The Problem

No one notices a sixteen-year-old until he picks up a gun and starts shooting.

— remark made by a 16-year-old after the Springfield, Oregon school massacre.

My meeting with Duane was my first encounter with a killer. He showed up at my office late, out of breath, pupils dilated and reeking of alcohol. In my work as a forensic psychologist, I had met many patients who claimed to feel homicidal, suicidal or both, but until then none of my patients had gone on to commit murder.

Duane had been referred to me by the state disability office. My job was to perform a psychological evaluation that would determine if this seventeen-year-old was mentally able to work. I should have known something was wrong when his mother phoned me before his appointment and asked, “Do I really need to be there?” She was obviously afraid of him. I already knew from dealing with violent teens that when they frighten their own mother, it is bad news. At the scheduled time, Duane’s

mother showed up at my office and we began the interview. She was teary-eyed while telling me of Duane's mood swings and violent temper. A few minutes later, Duane showed up. He was a tall teenager who looked as if he did not want to be at the interview at all. Alarm bells immediately went off in my head as I noted his glazed eyes and withdrawn stance. Immediately, I put myself on guard, a response I've acquired from years of working with unstable people. After doing a clinical interview and clinical testing including a Rorschach Inkblot Test, it became obvious that this teenager was not only violent but homicidal. The Rorschach, a test often used by psychologists, asks the client to tell the examiner what types of visual images he or she sees in inkblot cards (the psychological term for this is "projection"). The psychologist can then gain access to the client's inner world and personality processes. (Many people and TV shows make fun of these tests, but the truth is, they really work). This particular young man saw a number of violent images during the testing, and from his other responses he appeared to be involved in gang-related activities. I also noted his long list of felonies, for which he had spent only days or weeks in detention. The young man described his view of the rights of others: Mainly they had none. People were instruments important only for their ability to provide him with what he wanted. The apathetic tone in his voice reflected his lack of reverence not only for others' lives, but for his own.

As I watched him leave my office, I cringed at the thought of this loose cannon out in society. I knew it was only a matter of time before his short fuse would dangerously ignite. I couldn't call the police because psychologists and psychiatrists aren't allowed to call authorities unless a patient names a specific victim or victims. This kid wasn't a threat to anybody specific: he was a threat to everybody, an unguided missile. Two weeks later, I got the news that my patient had fulfilled my premonition: He shot and killed a man with a .38 special. The argument had been over something trivial—the victim had asked the teen to leave his house during a party that had gotten

too rowdy. Knowing what I knew about this teen, I wondered if there was anything I could have done to prevent such a tragedy or anything our society could do to prevent something like it from happening in the future. Although I have always been interested in the reasons that kids kill, this encounter with Duane was in some sense the initial impetus for writing this book. I knew in my heart that there were countless Duanes out there ready to take the life of the next innocent victim or victims who crossed their path.

This book is my effort at understanding the mind of the teenage killer. While I initially believed that my interest in young murderers had started after the future killer kid, Duane, left my office, on further reflection I realized that my quest had actually begun many years before. When I was a pre-teen, in seventh grade, my journalism teacher had us keep a journal. In that journal I wrote about my innermost thoughts and reflections about life. I had many questions that I kept asking myself over and over but one theme kept coming back to me: "Why do people kill? Why is it that murderers act on their impulses while the rest of us may go through life feeling enraged yet are able to restrain ourselves? What is going through someone's mind when they decide to take a life that you and I are able to control? What is the difference?" I still wonder about these things. I think that if we can understand that difference then we can start toward preventing some murders from happening. Is it an impulsive snap decision stemming from spiraling thoughts and feelings that happen to culminate in murder? Or is there something more logical and calculated that goes on in the teen's brain prior to killing?

The only way to answer these questions was to go to the young criminals themselves and find out. So many times, experts expound a theory with a "one size fits all" theme. These themes include factors such as biology, environment, the way the kid thinks, or the fact that he or she was not "attached" to their primary caregiver. These theories make for good television sound bites, but in truth, one size does not fit all. In my work, I have found that there are as many reasons why kids kill

as there are killers. At the same time, there are similarities in the types of characteristics and motives that these kids share. The major portion of this book is devoted to bringing to life the stories of these killer kids and to giving the reader some insight into the psychological make-up and profiles of these kids. I have had numerous phone calls to my office from distraught parents asking for recommendations on how to handle their angry, aggressive child, but what they do not realize is that to answer that question, we must ask a series of other ones.

As a psychologist, I have learned that the way to solve a problem is to ask the right questions. Unfortunately, mental health professionals, those in the criminal justice system, and those in the media seeking to answer questions about juvenile crime often ask the wrong ones. For example, after the teenage patient, Duane, had shot and killed a man, I spoke to a colleague about the situation and my feelings of helplessness. Her only response was, “Where did he get the gun?”

I was stunned at the way her reaction missed the point. Her solution looked outside of the juvenile to an inanimate object, placing no emphasis on what had made this boy decide to kill in the first place. The right question here is not “Where did he get the gun?”, but rather, “What are the characteristics of this teenager that made him kill in the first place?” As stated by Dr. Stanton Samenow, author of *Inside the Criminal Mind*, “crime resides within the person and is caused by the way he thinks, not by his environment.”¹ While I do not necessarily believe that environment plays *no* part in the tendency toward criminality, in the next chapters the reader will come to see that it is typically the predisposition to become violent or homicidal that causes a juvenile to kill, not just the availability of a weapon or exposure to a violent movie. Often, the kids who murder after watching a violent show or joining a Satanic cult have already had a number of violent thoughts and feelings well before the so-called triggering event that “made” them go over the edge. It appears to me after interviewing numerous teen killers that it is the way that they *think about their environment* that typically sends them on a killing spree, not the environment itself.

This would explain why not all kids who are in a bad environment resort to murder; it is usually those kids who perceive themselves to be in a bad environment with no escape who wind up engaging in death and destruction. This bad environment can be something as simple as feeling that school is a jail sentence for them. It seems that some kids are able to rise above their environment and have better coping skills and thinking processes as a result; others cannot. As the next section will explain, there are a number of contributing factors that predispose a child to kill.

Background Of Kids Who Kill

It is not ordinary kids who kill. People often think otherwise, at least where inner-city gang killers aren't concerned: almost any rural or suburban kid who kills will be described in press accounts as the boy or girl next door. But really, it's just that the rural and suburban killers are better at putting on a facade of normality that fools reporters. Inner-city kids, with whom journalists have less in common, cannot pull this off as well. But kids who kill, regardless of setting, are seldom normal.

Kids who kill are usually those with subpar intelligence, mental disorders and a history of cruelty to animals and siblings. A 1996 Harvard study of guns and gang murders found that both juvenile and adult murderers tend to have long records of serious crimes. Substance abusers, people with low intelligence and those with major mental disorders are several times more likely to commit crimes than are ordinary citizens.² However, this is not to say that teens without any of these traits will not kill. The backgrounds of suburban and rural types of killers are different from that of the inner-city killer. There appear to be particular types of killing—typically school killings as in Paducah or Pearl, Mississippi—in which the teen killers do not have juvenile records and may even be considered good students. But these kids are still not ordinary. On closer inspection, they share a common characteristic with all teen killers.

They tend to have a very narrow view of other people's rights: that they have none. They also share another characteristic. In one way or another, they have come to feel that the only way to deal with their frustration, despair or malaise is to bring it to a climactic conclusion.

The process of understanding these suburban and rural killer kids (or any killer) is an extremely complex one. I liken it to finding the cause of cancer. Initially, researchers thought there was one single point of failure that caused a cell to become cancerous. Unfortunately, the problem is far more difficult. Cells become cancerous after a sequence of failures—each probably harmless in itself—strips away layer after layer of defenses and safeguards. The best way to address cancer is to stop this process before it reaches the point of danger. Like the cancerous cell, many teens become killers after a number of complex variables come together and there is a long process of one safeguard after another failing them that leads these potential killers to their final, lethal stage. And, as with cancer, the best approach is probably to prevent things from going that far to begin with. But how do we do that? The first step would be to understand in their own words what is going on in the thoughts and minds of these teen killers. I turned to the literature to search for some answers to my questions.

However, as I researched the question I became increasingly discouraged. The books and articles that I read gave descriptions of these teen killers but offered no insight or understanding of how these killers were thinking or feeling. Most newspaper articles or books seemed to miss the point. They blamed the influence of movies, the Internet or Satanic cults for turning our young people into killers. Sometimes they blamed a gun: If only the teenager hadn't had one, this wouldn't have happened. Occasionally, they even blamed board games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. But none of these explanations holds much water. Perhaps they aren't meant to. Their real role is to let us breathe a sigh of relief. At last, we have an explanation for this horrible event: It was that awful Internet, those violent movies, whatever. Like primitive peoples who

attributed natural disasters to evil spirits, blaming these forces gives us the illusion of control. And as with the primitive peoples, it gives our modern-day shamans power and prestige as they promise to protect us with V-chips, teen curfews, "zero tolerance" programs, or whatever it takes to prevent evil influences from possessing normal, healthy teenagers and turning them into killers.

For primitive tribes, this approach probably did little harm. They couldn't do anything about volcanoes or hurricanes anyway. But in our modern society we can and should do more. Focusing on symbolic solutions may provide some momentary comfort, but it distracts us from the real problem: These are not normal, healthy teenagers, and they don't become killers because of evil spirits. They become killers because they are already deeply disturbed individuals who are so close to the edge that they can be sent over the brink by all sorts of innocuous influences. (Charles Manson, after all, claimed to find inspiration for his crimes in a Beatles song.)

But sometimes they can be stopped before they go over the edge. Sometimes it is the coming together of heredity, personality, and circumstances that leads a kid to kill. If we are lucky (or observant) enough to spot the warning signs, we can use that to provide some type of intervention. We need to understand that we as a society can make a difference. The first step is understanding the problem of killer kids and why ignoring them or focusing totally on external forces outside of the child will not help.

This is not a call to go soft on kids who kill: Frequently, people feel that mental health professionals are too lenient on these cold-blooded murderers and that their namby-pamby approaches do nothing but put criminals back on the streets. The call to "understand" these killers is often seen as a call to let them off scot-free. But we don't make our enemies go away by ignoring them – and even if we choose to declare a "war" on teenage killing, only a fool begins a war without understanding the enemy. In fact, it is only through understanding these kids' world view and the circumstances they come from

that will lead us to the best possible solution—that of prevention. Such a strategy benefits not only the children, but those who would otherwise become their victims. It is far better to save a life than to avenge a death. Unless, perhaps, you are a politician looking to capitalize on tragedy.

Apparently, I am not the only one interested in what can be done to prevent killer kids from reaching their final, lethal stage. I found this out after I wrote an article about a teenage patient I had that was published by the *Christian Science Monitor*. Later on, I wrote a couple of articles for the *Los Angeles Times* on the tendency of Americans to blame the media and outside forces for juvenile murder. With each article, I was overwhelmed with letters and phone calls from people around the country asking where they could get more information about teenage murderers, particularly those killers who appear to have no motive. School-related killings are always front page news, and I have been a guest on radio talk shows and done numerous interviews with the media to discuss some of these teenage killers and their characteristics. On the talk shows, desperate parents and concerned citizens called in to ask questions and get help. I have testified at legislative hearings on school-related violence and found that even politicians are struggling to understand the psychology of kids who kill before drafting laws that pertain to juveniles. Lawmakers and politicians know little about the development of adolescents, for if they did, they would reconsider some of the restrictive laws that pertain to juveniles. I will discuss in later chapters how some of these laws along with cultural changes in our society have exacerbated the violent traits of kids already on the edge.

In 1997-1999, a series of school shootings were front page news. Inner-city school killings barely made the papers, even though there had been far more people killed in urban schools during the previous school years. But such violence in the inner cities was old news. People could not fathom that it was happening in rural areas, and in the suburbs: places people go to *escape* crimes of violence. But this was a different kind of violence. The kids who are doing this kind of killing are (we

are told) supposed to be the ones we are protecting, not the ones we need protection from. How did life in the late twentieth century go so awry that some teenagers believe it is better to blow their classmates away than to go to school or cope with their community one more day? We have all seen the headlines: *Sixteen-year-old Luke Woodham kills two girls in Pearl, Mississippi after stabbing his mother to death; four students and a teacher are killed in an ambush at Jonesboro, Arkansas by a thirteen year old and an eleven-year-old. Four students shot at Oklahoma School by a thirteen year old boy.* Of course, one of the most horrendous acts of mass murder in U.S. history took place in Littleton, Colorado on Adolph Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1999. Eric Harris, age 18, and Dylan Klebold, age 17, took an arsenal of weapons and bombs to Columbine High School where they massacred twelve of their fellow students and a teacher before ending their own lives. The teens left death and destruction in their wake, and at the time, terrorized the nation. Yet I've noticed many people are barely reacting anymore when they hear the news of similar crimes. To them, it's now just another typical day when a school shooting or mass killing takes place. We are becoming desensitized to this type of violence because now it is becoming part of the American landscape. Recently, a man in our town killed his wife and his two young children because he thought his wife was having an affair. There were crisis teams sent out to the neighborhood where it took place and people were consoled about the tragedy but the event was treated like a natural disaster: as if it just happened on its own without a perpetrator. No one mentioned what a horrible paranoid narcissist this man must have been to commit such a violent crime. He must have felt justified to kill his family but the most selfish and cruel among us always feel justified by what they want and expect others to be. How could such thoughts lead some disturbed people—especially kids—to kill? I will explore this question in the following chapters.

What is going on in the mind of a suburban or rural youth who kills? This is one of the puzzles our society must struggle with if we are to understand how to find a solution to the recent

wave of suburban and rural killings. Politicians would have us believe that if we could pass new and better laws, we could cut down on juvenile crime. But this is not the case. Is there a new kind of middle-class kid who is bred with a gene for violence, or is it today's society that plays a part in exacerbating the traits these "bad seeds" already have? Many people believe in the bad seed theory, that kids who are violent are just "no darn good" (NDG) but why are these kids growing exponentially? I do not believe in the bad seed theory. If their violence is genetic, why weren't their parents gunning down schoolmates? There is more to the story of these suburban and rural kids who kill than we are told by the newspaper and television reports. Lurking behind the sometimes quiet, unemotional facades of these teen killers, there was more brewing than met the eye.

He Was Such A Nice Polite Boy

You can fake your way through a neighborly hello, but you can't fake your way through life.

—Hanna Rosin and David Plotz, 1999.³

As many readers have probably noticed, when people are interviewed about the suburban or rural killers after the fact, they say they seemed to have no problems, "they were good kids, the boy or girl next door." I even saw a recent interview in which a friend of a serial killer kept telling the reporter that this serial killer was "such a nice guy," aside from the fact that he was axe-murdering people. Despite Michael Carneal showing several classmates a gun days before the shooting in Paducah, Kentucky, they thought he would never have shoot anyone; "Because of the personality of Michael. He wasn't a guy who would do it. He wasn't a person who would do something like this."⁴ Michael's own parents said prior to the shooting that Michael was a passive, happy person who was not aggressive. That's why these kids are portrayed as normal. But on closer inspection that facade of normality is paper-thin. It's

like the old *Saturday Night Live* "Shooting of Buckwheat" episode. Over and over again people who knew the killer said "he was a nice boy, quiet and well-behaved." But when asked if they were surprised that he shot Buckwheat, they responded "Oh, no. It's all he ever talked about."

The *Saturday Night Live* sketchwriters were onto something. These kids do not strike without warning. Look beneath the surface and you will find that, all along the way, these teens have been giving signals that others ignored. What is amazing is that most adults are willing to look the other way even when the signals are obvious. Why would normal people choose to ignore the blatant signs of the next mass murderer? Hanna Rosin and David Plotz believe that neighbors attribute decency to the killer next door because the standard of behavior required for being a good neighbor nowadays is so low. However, it is usually only the adults who are fooled. The grown-ups in the neighborhood remember Andrew Golden (one of the murderers from the Jonesboro massacre) as "a beautiful young kid." These are kind words, made dubious by the fact that Golden threatened other neighborhood kids, fired shots at his neighbor's houses and threw punches at girls. Only the kids who played with Golden knew the truth: the boy was vicious and full of rage. It doesn't take much to fool adults, even if you're Eddie Haskell with an Uzi. Kids, on the other hand, usually know about their angry peers long before adults do. For example, many if not most school shooters told others of their intentions up to a year before they occurred. It wasn't like they were trying to hide it from their friends either: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold touted their murderous feelings all over the Internet. As you will see in the stories of these kids, teen killers usually leave us very good clues, and tell us what they are planning, well in advance of their crimes. The problem is that, all too often, no one is listening.

This book is about how teen killers' minds work, and the way they think and feel, and in turn prey upon us because we have turned a deaf ear. How do I know this? I have met these killer kids. In my work as a forensic psychologist, I have

evaluated over 5000 adults, children, and adolescents through the years and have had extensive interviews with individuals who have been homicidal and violent.

Why Is This Book Needed?

I realized the need for a book that would give people the information they have to have to be able to intervene when they spot a teenager who appears troubled. Unlike many of the other books on murderers, this book will look at the complexity of the teenage killer's lifestyle and personality, and the way in which these combinations can lead to disastrous results. But don't expect some magical solution. As I mentioned before, there is no one approach I can offer that will stop all children from the act of murder. Many books on the topic of teenage murderers seek a single explanation: a neglectful or abusive environment, or violent entertainment, or heredity. As noted earlier, one popular theory for why kids kill has been "attachment theory." Attachment theory attributes violence to the lack of attachment during the infant years to the mother or primary caregiver. However, recent studies have debunked this theory. Researchers have found that a baby's degree of attachment does not predict how well-adjusted he or she will be later on. Rather, they have found that life-altering events, such as parental divorce, have turned out to be much more influential.⁵ However, in addition to life-altering events, I believe it is also the predisposition to see violence as a solution coupled with no outside intervention that can lead to murder. Where do kids learn the lesson that murder is a solution to what ails them? In later chapters, in addition to internal factors, I will also explore outside influences, such as the home and school environment that strongly influence kids who are already on the edge.

Another mistake that other writers on juvenile violence have made is that they lump together all types of juvenile killers as if they are the same kid. For example, *Superpredators* by Peter Elikann (a criminal defense attorney), discusses the connecting

thread of violent criminals. "Almost without exception, they have been raised in brutal or abusive situations, lived with extremely deep shame and lashed out at others in a futile attempt to gain respect."⁶ Elikann speaks of Michael Carneal, the school killer in Paducah, Kentucky (whom he has researched so well that he calls him David) and Kipland Kinkel, the school killer in Springfield, Oregon as having similar characteristics to typical juvenile delinquents who kill in the course of a robbery or gang-related crime. But this is wrong. I have found that the school killers have very different qualities and motives than inner-city killers or from other juvenile delinquents in general. These differences will be highlighted in later chapters (particularly Chapter Six on profiling dangerous kids). The problem with many of the previous theories on juvenile violence is that they do not take into account the different motives and characteristics of the various types of juvenile killers. Because of this, they promote policies and programs that are just plain wrong. To prevent fires, you have to understand fire. In order to work toward prevention of juvenile violence, we must first truly understand the dynamics behind the crimes of these young people.

Perhaps we cannot change heredity or totally put a halt to the abuse that a child suffers at home, or even change the way the child thinks, but we can be on the lookout for psychological signs and signals that are displayed by many dangerous kids in certain settings. And where we see those signs we can intervene in a number of ways that will be discussed in later chapters. It is important to remember that society's job is not to turn these killers into saints, or even admirable citizens, but simply to prevent them from killing. It is enough of an achievement, if we can pull it off.

As a result of the recent school killings and the onslaught of seemingly random juvenile murder committed by rural and suburban teens, many people who come in contact with children and teenagers need to have information and understand the psychological make-up in order to intervene in a way that can make a difference. Rather than speculating about these

young murderers in abstract theoretical terms, I have tried to go directly to the actual sources themselves to learn about their worldview. Before moving to Tennessee, I worked with teenagers in gang-infested New York schools. Then later, my travels around the South led me to interview kids who have been involved in some very horrific murders. I was fortunate that many of them agreed to meet with me and share their intimate feelings about themselves. Some of them did not want to be interviewed and I respected their privacy. I will share some of the case studies from my travels that will highlight several different types of the kids who kill or are violent; there will be an inner-city killer who was a mere twelve years old when he killed his victim, a cult-related killing and a school-related incident of a boy who threatened to bomb his school after the Columbine tragedy. But first, the next section will present a short summary of the different kinds of teenage killers. These types include inner-city killers, cult-related killers, parricidal killers and finally, the new 1990's breed of killer: the school killers. As you will see, they come in distinct varieties, each with very specific characteristics.

* * * * *

Inner - City Killers

It's not about shooting and committing crimes. It's about honor and loyalty and working for something bigger than yourself. In a gang, you feel welcomed, they open up to you, you are part of something, you are committed, you have power. A drive-by isn't like a murder where you get up in someone's face and stab them or something. That's too cold-blooded. I could never do that. That's wrong. In a drive-by you don't see what happens. Maybe you hit someone, maybe not. It's not like you aim at someone in particular. It's not murder. If you don't see it happen, how can it be murder?

—Carla, teenage gang member in Los Angeles.⁷

The above female gang member, Carla, was interviewed for the book, *No Matter How Loud I Shout*, which explored a year in the life of juvenile court in Los Angeles where gangs are prevalent. Believe it or not, Carla's positive view and feelings of being powerful because of her gang membership are consistent with research on the feelings of female gang members. In short, they feel much the way male gang members do. Research investigating the feelings during the act of violent behavior of females, many whom were involved in gangs, has shown some interesting results. In a study of urban high school females between 14 and 19 years, those who were violent felt "pumped up" and "powerful" during the act of violence and when they were exposed to community violence. When committing violent acts, the girls did not experience sadness, helplessness, care about the future, or hatred for victim's weakness. Instead, during the act of gang verbal and physical violence female adolescents are most likely to report feeling powerful, pumped up, and respected by friends. They also reported not feeling at all weak, helpless and sad. The subjects in the study used violence to feel powerful while combating hopelessness.

Many of the girls did not expect to be alive at 25 years of age.⁸

Typically, we think of using violence to feel powerful as a masculine trait, but many female gangs are adopting certain traits that traditionally have been considered male. Cultural norms for gang members (both male and female) are courage, willingness to be heroes if need be, being properly masculine, strong and not a “wimp.” Maintaining some semblance of social order is another cultural value that most gang members hold, yet often they do not know how to do so except through the use of violence. Reasons why gangs engage in violence are numerous and include protecting or expanding the gang’s turf, recruiting new members, keeping members from leaving the gang, gaining respect or dominance over others, enforcing rules, and serving as a counterpoint or check on moral restraints or a moral conscience.

That’s right: as a *check* on moral constraints. It is beneficial for gangs to see normal moral restraints on violent impulses as weak or dysfunctional. This is because if a member had to sit and ponder on his/or her decision to harm someone, it would be too risky. As a result of this peer pressure to be violent, a gang member can often develop “psychic numbing” regarding acts of brutality. This programming for violence might be why gang members kill without feeling remorse, and actually take pride in their violent actions.⁹ Such a glorification of violence might also account for why gang members often appear to be smirking or acting cocky in the courtroom: they genuinely feel that they have done nothing wrong. It also explains why so many gang-related killers can’t seem to resist bragging about their crimes—even when it means being caught by the police. If you view murder as an accomplishment, one that commands respect, then what’s the point if others don’t know about it?

There are various estimates, all unreliable, as to how many gangs there are nationwide. Captain James Mulvihill, of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, estimated that there were about 1250 violent gangs with about 150,000 members in Los Angeles County alone in 1997. Nationally, gang mem-

bership is estimated to be about 652,000. Research on gangs has been limited in the past, mainly because researchers have no real consensus on the definition of a gang or gang incident and therefore the seriousness of gang violence is difficult to discern. For example, in Chicago, homicides are considered to be gang-related only when they can be tied to “organized gang activity” but in Los Angeles, any killing committed by a gang member is classified as gang-related. Whatever the definition of gang-related crime, youth gang membership has been found to be associated with significantly higher level of delinquency and crimes. The rate of violent offenses for gang members is three times as high as for nongang delinquents. Gang homicides in Los Angeles have ranged between 25 and 35 percent of all of the city’s homicides in recent years.

Gang killers, unlike many other types of juvenile killers, appear to murder more for socially-motivated reasons than from an inherent psychological disturbance residing in the child. They kill because they’re gang members, not because they’re mentally disturbed. So why are they gang members? Youth gangs develop and flourish where you find rapid urban population change, community disintegration, increasing poverty, and social isolation. When things are chaotic, and people feel helpless, gangs seem to offer a source of stability and mutual support. The seriously deviant gang groups may result because of the interplay between social disorganization and lack of access to legitimate resources: the less there is in the way of constructive alternatives, the more appealing gangs, especially violent and criminal gangs, become. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) in Washington D.C. has found that families, schools, politics, organized crime, and prisons also impact gang patterns. In a research study, OJJDP found that family disorganization, such as single-parent families or conflict between parents did not predict gang membership. There had to be a number of other variables present in addition to a “weak” family structure to produce a “gang problem youth,” including the availability of a peer group that did not fully support family and school, and the family condoning or approving

of gang participation. Gang membership might even be traditional among certain inner-city families. Youth gang members are also more likely to do poorly in school and to have little identification with school staff. Often, they might use school more for gang-related than academic or social-learning purposes.¹⁰ As we will see, the importance of school and what goes on there is one way in which the suburban killers are different than the inner-city ones.

However, the OJJDP findings differ from other research done at various universities on the problem of gang involvement by youth. For example, in a study done at California State University in Fresno, there was a strong association between low family cohesion (closeness of family members) and gang involvement and weak associations between peer influence and self-esteem. In short, those adolescents with little family involvement and closeness were more likely to join gangs. On the other hand, low self-esteem and peer influence did not result in an adolescents joining a gang.¹¹ Other research has shown adolescents who were involved in crimes including gang related activities to have engaged in less leisure time with their families while growing up than their peers did. Instead of sharing enjoyable activities with their families, they found delinquent activities to be beneficial as they were fun, exciting, gave a sense of belonging and acceptance and were arousing and released energy and stress. Also, the delinquent activities could be planned, anticipated, shared, and reminisced about afterward with the other gang members.¹² This communal sharing would bond the gang members to each other, much like in a family unit or among army buddies.

How much should we rely on this research? It certainly seems to make sense that those teenagers who have little family involvement would be more likely to attempt to recreate some type of a family unit where they felt accepted. Being accepted and feeling part of a family is certainly important to the emerging identity of the adolescent, no matter how much they protest that it “doesn’t matter.” However, when the relationship with parents goes awry, it can often end poorly, even

tragically, as the next section on parricidal killers will show. Although the vast majority of juveniles kill outside their own family, I have included information on parricidal killers because one of the school shooters (Kipland Kinkel in the Springfield, Oregon school massacre) murdered both parents and another, Luke Woodham murdered his mother prior to going on their rampages at school—and because I receive quite a lot of email from parents who fear their own children. Sometimes, with good reason.

Parricidal Killers

He showed no remorse and told detectives he would do it again.

—Michael Holder, sheriff’s spokeswoman in Lakeland, Florida after talking with a 15 year old boy accused of patricide (the killing of one’s father).

This particular fifteen year old boy and two of his friends had killed one of the boys’ fathers as part of a plot that would have left all of their parents dead. Stephen Etheredge, age 15, was charged with killing his father, and his two friends, Jeremy Barman, 16, and Tony Headley, 15, were also charged with first degree murder. The three boys had planned to murder all of their parents and then go on a cross-country murder and crime spree. Investigators said the three boys had waited in Etheredge’s home for the father to return there. While they were waiting, Stephen Etheredge told a New Hampshire girl he had met on the Internet that he was about to kill his father and to call back in 45 minutes. When she called back, he told her they were wrapping the body with black plastic and were going to stuff it in the trunk. Apparently, the boys had jumped Frank Etheredge, wrestled him to the ground and choked him with what appeared to be a belt. They stabbed him twice in the face and wrapped him in black plastic and put him in the trunk of his car. Oddly enough, the teens never carried out their origi-

nal plan to kill all three sets of parents. They all returned to school the next day and began bragging about the killing, which finally got back to school officials who started an investigation. Stephen Etheredge showed up at his grandparents' home in Mobile, Alabama to go fishing with his grandfather the Thursday following the murder and was picked up there by the police.

Another example of a recent parricide is that of the highly publicized case of Lyle and Erik Menendez, the brothers who killed both parents with a shotgun while they were watching television in their Beverly Hills mansion. They fired over fifteen shots from two shotguns into their parents. Both boys alleged that they had been sexually and emotionally abused by their father while their alcoholic mother did nothing to stop him. The first trial for the two brothers resulted in a hung jury and finally, two years later, they were convicted of murder.

What would make these teenagers "go over the edge" and want to kill their parents — and then act nonchalant, and even brag, about the whole gruesome ordeal? It may have seemed as if killing their parents or parent happened out of the blue and without forethought. But more than likely, there have been important details about the lives of these killers and their victims that have been left out of the story. The distress and years of conflicts with parents are usually numerous for many of the children and teens who commit parricide each year. The common thread that experts find in most parricides is that the child has been sexually or emotionally abused by one or both parents. However, the abuse seems to take a different form depending on the sex of the parent. Typically, the abuse by a father is physical abuse while in cases of matricide, the abuse is of a sexual or psychological nature.

Precise figures are lacking, but estimates suggest that parricide accounts for about 2% of all homicides committed in the United States. Parricide, the killing of one's parents, can consist of killing one's mother (matricide), one's father (patricide) or both parents. Typically, parricide perpetrators are in late adolescence, although there have been children as young as

three who have killed a parent. In 1988, in Detroit, Michigan a three-year old boy watched his drunken father beat his mother. His father laid a gun on a nearby table. The three-year old grabbed the gun and shot his father. Police were so stunned that a small child would be capable of committing such an offense that they did not believe it was true until gunpowder residue tests showed that the boy had indeed pulled the trigger. Later, after the incident, the boy told authorities "I killed him. Now he's dead. If he would have hit my mother, I would have shot him again." Charges were not filed against the boy.¹³

It is disturbing that a three-year-old would already have such anger in his heart that he would pick up a gun and shoot his father. Typically, in the mental health field, professionals will see children who tolerate abuse to the extent that they still love and want to stay with an abusive parent rather than live with another family or relatives. Yet, there are those children who feel intense rage against a parent and wish them dead. For every one child who actually kills his or her parents, there is another who has attempted parricide but not succeeded. Youths who attempt parricide and those who commit parricide are close cousins. They share much in common, including an abusive home environment, youth and parental alcohol or drug abuse, a runaway history, problem behaviors and school difficulties. When a victim survives an attempted parricide, it is often due more to luck and weapons choice than to a differing motive in the child perpetrator. Studies *have* shown that one difference for those who attempt parricide is a stronger affective component at the time of the killing — that is, the attempters seem to "feel more" than those who actually commit parricide. The latter tend to have more of a thinking component to their behavior when committing the crime, which perhaps accounts for their success.¹⁴

This would make sense, since someone who gets caught up in the moment and is overemotional would probably not think through their choice of weapons or be as successful at using their weapon as someone who is more calculating and thinks more "rationally." An interesting trend that I have no-

ticed in parricides seems to be that more of these killings are done with a knife or other type of weapon as opposed to a gun. For example, Luke Woodham, the 16-year-old from Pearl, Mississippi, used a knife to stab his mother before going to his high school to open fire with a gun. Perhaps it is more personal to use a knife and to “feel” the actual killing take place with a parent than to distance oneself from the victim by using a gun. Also, it seems that kids usually kill their parents *first* prior to going on any other type of rampage. For example, Kipland Kinkel from Springfield, Oregon murdered his parents in their home and then opened fire at his school, killing two and wounding 24. Perhaps he wanted to spare his parents the pain and humiliation that would result from his murderous rampage against his teachers and classmates. But whatever the reason, his distorted thoughts culminated in a killing spree that may have felt like the only way to calm his inner turmoil and pain.

Inner turmoil and pain are also characteristic of another type of teen killer. We will now turn to another type of teenage killer that appears to spring up in small suburban towns: the cult related killers. Much as gangs give inner-city kids a sense of belonging and power, Satanism and other cults give suburban and rural killers a feeling of control and acceptance that they feel they do not have in their immediate environment.

Cult - Related Killers

I have this vision of them moving around in a circle over those bodies in some kind of ritual.

—District Attorney Berkeley Bell, prosecutor of six young Kentuckians who were accused of murdering Vidar Lillelid and his family near Johnson City, TN.

Did this really happen? We’ll probably never know. There *are* some senseless and bizarre killings that criminologists and those in law enforcement believe are tied to the occult. Charles Ewing states that the extent to which cult activities are implicated in homicide is not known. Some experts have even estimated that there could be as many as 50,000 such killings each year in the United States. However, Ewing points out that this is an improbably high number (there are only 20,000 homicides of *any* kind reported per year) and would mean that *all* of the 20,000 or so *known* homicides as well as an additional 30,000 *unknown* homicides would have to be cult-related.¹⁵ As simple arithmetic demonstrates, these estimates are certainly hype. But figuring out which real killings are cult-related isn’t easy. It is difficult at times to discern whether a murder is cult-related because many teenagers fancy themselves cultists, but are not formally part of a cult. They just seem to make up their own rules as they go along.

The loose interpretation some teenagers (and adults) make of satanic philosophy appears to be a mangled version of the actual information presented by Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey and British Occultist Aleister Crowley, author of *The Book of the Law*. LaVey founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco in 1966 and has written two books on the occult, *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Rituals Book*. Crowley is described as “the most renowned magical practitioner and theoretician of the twentieth century” and wrote the *Book of Law* before World War I. (This reputation may be overstated.

Crowley once attempted to place a curse on poet William Butler Yeats, but was foiled when Yeats' landlady chased him off with a broom). Both Crowley and LaVey have an "if it feels good—do it" attitude to their philosophies, yet neither author admits advocating any type of violence or murder. *The Satanic Bible* actually warns the reader away from violence with such explanations as:

Satanism *does not* advocate rape, child molesting, sexual defilement of animals, or any other form of sexual activity which entails the participation of those who are unwilling or whose innocence or naivete would allow them to be intimidated or misguided into doing something against their wishes.¹⁶

Robert Hickman, author of *In Pursuit of Satan*, describes most teenagers who are interested in the occult as "dabblers in Satanism." These are unsophisticated young adults and teens who play with the occult in bits and pieces. Often, at crime scenes, these teens' signature is Satanic graffiti. However, Hickman warns communities that though it may look like a full blown Satanic ring is operating in their midst (which is extremely rare), Satanic graffiti often derives more from local kids finding new expressions for teenage angst than from true Satanists leaving their mark.¹⁷ The FBI's Kenneth Lanning has also pointed out that "blaming Satanism for a teenager's vandalism, theft, suicide, or even act of murder is like blaming a criminal's offenses on his tattoos: both are signs of the same rebelliousness and lack of self-esteem that contribute to the commission of crimes."¹⁸

Of course, many of the teens who "kill in the name of Satan" make up their own interpretations of various occult literature. They are involved in homemade "Satanic rituals" that they conclude must involve animal and human sacrifice. However, if caught and charged with murder they will often deny being influenced by any Satanic cult, despite evidence to the contrary such as friends and relatives having seen them drink the blood of animals. For example, 19 year old Natasha Cornett, who went on a "killing spree" and was involved in the massacre of a Tennessee family in 1997, was originally a self-pro-

claimed "daughter of Satan." Her own mother had witnessed her drinking the blood of animals. Yet at her trial, she denied being a Satanist and said in an interview that she was tired of being called a monster or a Satanist. Not that this helped her in the sentencing, as the judge in the hearing stated that "I don't know if this was an occult killing or not, don't know for certain if it was the act of Satanists, but you certainly have been preoccupied with the occult and its signature is throughout this trip, wherever this death and destruction went." The prosecutor in the case also did not buy into Cornett's story that the shooting of parents and their two children was not an act of a Satanic ritual. The prosecutor, Berkeley Bell, stated that "Vidar Lillelid and his family were attacked in an occult ritual. I am convinced of that, and I have this vision of them [the six young Kentuckians involved in the murder] moving around in a circle over those bodies in some kind of ritual." Of course, this is only the prosecutor's "vision" of what happened during the murder, and may or may not be reality. Certainly there was no actual evidence of such a ritual. It seems that at times the authorities are more interested in determining whether they have a Satanist or witch in their midst than in the actual murder itself. This official consternation, of course, only makes Satanism more appealing.

What kinds of teenagers and children join Satanic cults? Research shows similar characteristics in those adolescents who become attracted to the occult. Lisa Ladin, a researcher at Pepperdine University, designed an objective measure to assess an adolescent's involvement in Satanism. The instrument was called the Satanic Involvement Survey and measured risk factors associated with youth involvement in Satanism: history of child abuse; trauma symptomatology; chaotic family environment; parental sociopathy and psychopathology; and mental health status. She found that the youth who were involved in Satanism were more disturbed, presented to therapists for treatment with 7 or more symptoms, had suffered some form of trauma, and tended to have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (mainly with avoidant symptoms). There

was also some indication that the teens who were involved with Satanism tended to suffer more from Mood Disorders (e.g. depression, manic-depression) and from Personality Disorders (antisocial qualities, conduct disorder).¹⁹

Individuals with these disorders have a myriad of symptoms. Those with manic depression (called Bipolar Disorder by psychiatrists and psychologists) suffer from an inflated self-esteem, decreased need for sleep, distractibility, and excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences (e.g. engaging in unrestrained buying sprees or sexual indiscretions). These disorders are also treatable — but the treatment may not be offered in time, especially nowadays. Natasha Cornett, the teenager involved in the Lillelid murders, was diagnosed before her crimes with Bipolar Disorder at Charter Ridge Behavioral Health System in Kentucky. Unfortunately, even though further treatment was deemed necessary, she was quickly discharged from the center because her health insurance would only pay for 11 days of treatment. Releasing patients early is typical behavior for insurance companies these days, especially in our era of Jiffy-Pop HMO's. A recent study shows that health insurance overall is now paying 54% less in mental health benefits than it did ten years ago. Unfortunately, we are all paying the price for this "savings." Certainly Cornett's victims did.

Typically, those juveniles diagnosed with Conduct Disorder would display quite different behavior from those diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. In Conduct Disordered children, there is a persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others are violated— in which, in other words, the child feels others have no rights. They often engage in physical fights, threats, and attempts to intimidate others. They may use a weapon that can cause serious harm to others such as a knife or gun. They may also lie, cheat, destroy property, steal, and engage in fire-setting and animal torture.

These children are often also expert manipulators. Let me give you an example of how a Conduct Disordered child might attempt to manipulate others for secondary gain (in this case,

to obtain money in the form of a Social Security disability check—and yes, these checks are available to children with emotional problems). A ten-year-old boy was brought to my office to be evaluated for disability for emotional problems including Conduct Disorder. After sitting down, he promptly informed me that he had set fires in the past, stolen from others and had carried a gun and had no qualms about using it against another person—including, he implied, me. Without blinking an eye or looking up from my notepad, I shrugged and asked "So, how is the weather outside?" The boy looked surprised, as if he were used to getting his own way through the use of intimidation and instilling fear in children and adults. When he saw I was not buying into his line of bull, he quickly resorted to plan B: being charming and friendly. This is another means by which children with Conduct Disorder can often fool adults. Many children with Conduct Disorder (like many antisocial adults) can appear to be the most charming and likeable people on earth—when they want to get their own way. Yet cross their path if they do not need you, or get them angry, and you will quickly see a side of them you never expected. It is not uncommon for even those who work with these types on a daily basis to be taken in by their charm. I have worked with lawyers and teachers who have told me prior to meeting a child who has stolen or harmed someone that this child is the most wonderful person on earth and can bond with others and truly seems to care about other people. But don't necessarily believe it—it's often a front. Look at the child's actions and not at what they say or it is easy to be taken in by one of these young con artists. Certainly, not all children and teens who join satanic cults are Conduct Disordered, but it becomes clear that those children who wish to have power and to do what they want, when they want, would be attracted to satanic cults.

Depression also seems to play a factor in whether teens join satanic cults. A study conducted at the University of Massachusetts examined the lives of adolescents who were involved with black magic, satanic rituals, and other occult practices. This study found a strong correlation between the involvement

with dark areas of the occult and the loss of meaning, hope, and faith. Many of the subjects in the study had grown up in circumstances that had led to “despairing” beliefs and behavior. If the child despairs because of insufficient family or community nurturance, then the dark, deviant and depraved element of the occult is more likely to manifest itself.²⁰ Other studies have found those adolescents involved in the occult to have more sensation-seeking behavior compared to their peers yet, at the same time, to be more alienated with regard to their schools, towns and social institutions. It is important to keep these psychological traits of cult-killers in mind as we look at the lives and beliefs of the suburban and teen killers interviewed in later chapters. Many of the school shooters in the past few years have been associated with Satanism and other cults. As we will see in the next section, school killers are not as new and different as we might think. What is new is the phenomenon of cable television that can whisk these stories of horror across the United States in a matter of minutes.

School Killers

I am not insane. I am angry. I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. I did this to show society: push us and we will push back.

—Luke Woodham, age 16, charged with murdering his mother and shooting two classmates to death in Pearl, Mississippi.

The most seemingly “senseless” and random acts of violence in recent years have been those of the school-related killers. These are the kids that parents and school personnel fear most, as they appear to strike without warning in an extremely vulnerable and unprotected environment—the school system. Millions of parents who send their children to school each day have fear in their hearts about the violence that now takes place in what used to be thought of as a safe haven for children.

There have been bullies throughout the ages who have picked on kids, but usually this just led to a bloody nose or a busted lip. Now the stakes are much higher as kids walk into schools, pull out an arsenal of weapons, and open fire. Surprisingly, these particular killer kids are usually the ones that other students and teachers describe as meek, even passive. In fact, they themselves have typically been preyed upon and teased by other students. These school killers are also the juvenile killers most likely to leave obvious warnings about what they are going to do in the form of notes describing their homicidal or suicidal feelings, or bragging to others about their planned crime.

Take, for example, the case of Evan Ramsey. Ramsey, age 17, walked through the halls of Bethel High School in Dillingham, Alaska firing a shotgun on February 19, 1997. He killed his principal, Ron Edwards, and a classmate, Josh Palacious, a popular basketball player who sometimes teased Ramsey. Two notes had been left by Ramsey the night before the killings, indicating that he had planned to kill himself and others. In a similar case, 16-year-old Luke Woodham in Pearl, Mississippi stabbed his mother to death and then opened fire at his high school, killing two students and wounding several others. Again, he had been teased and bullied at school and also felt he had been “wronged” by his estranged girlfriend. Shortly before he started blasting away at the school, Luke had given a classmate a note detailing his intentions. The tragedy might have been prevented had someone taken this note seriously.

Many people mistakenly believe that school-related killings such as these take place only in the United States. They could not be more wrong. This unfair view of America’s teenagers is exacerbated by politicians such as Representative Bill McCollum, a Republican from Florida who has called America’s teenagers “the most violent criminals on the face of the Earth.” But—political posturing aside—this is not just an American problem. Surprisingly, many school killings take place in areas of the world that we think of as safe. In a public school in Japan, a junior high school student killed his teacher

in January of 1998. His reason? The boy was upset because the teacher had scolded him for turning up late to class. He stabbed her repeatedly. In another incident in July of 1997, in the Japanese city of Kobe, a fourteen-year-old severed the head of an eleven-year-old student and stuffed two handwritten notes in his mouth. The suspect came from a decent home and appeared to be like “every other Japanese teenager in most respects.”

What is puzzling about all of these school related killings is the discrepancy between the perceived wrong done to the killer (teasing, bullying, or asking them to come to class on time) and their later brutal retaliation. While it is dangerous to generalize too much, there do appear to be some similarities. The common theme in most of these incidents has been that the teenager could not express in words the depth of his true feelings of rage as a result of feeling rejected or hurt (or stressed). It is put well by one Japanese student in response to the student who killed his teacher, “I too get angry, close to *kireru* (a Japanese expression meaning bursting into a rage) when someone who doesn’t know my situation scolds me. While I’ve always managed to control myself... my frustration accumulates... I cannot possibly tell others my true feelings.” In a letter from Luke Woodham, the youth who shot up the high school in Pearl, Mississippi, he indicates the depth of his rage. “I am not insane. I am angry. I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. I did this to show society: push us and we will push back [sic].”

There appear to be few case studies specifically looking at the characteristics of teenage school killers, probably because such events have been so rare. With all the recent focus on school killings, I have talked with many graduate students and other professionals beginning to study the phenomenon of school violence. But although they are rare, are school shootings really such a recent phenomenon? It does not appear to be so. Take for example the case of Brenda Spencer, a seventeen-year-old high school senior in San Diego. In January of 1979, she used a rifle her father had given her for Christmas to fire

into a crowded elementary school across the street from her home. The principal and janitor at the school were outside when the shooting occurred and lost their lives trying to shield the children from gunfire. Brenda shot and injured eight children and a police officer before the tragedy ended in a six-hour stand-off with police. When asked why she had committed such an atrocity, the girl shrugged and stated, “I don’t like Mondays. Mondays always get me down.”²¹ Not long after the shootings, the song “I Don’t like Mondays” by the BoomTown Rats was written about the incident. While many people remember this shooting, it certainly did not achieve the acclaim that the school shootings in the 1998-1999 school year received. One would think that the fact that the shooter was a girl would have been given more notice by the media in recent times. Yet I still hear over and over that “girls do not do this type of killing.” We will see in chapter five, on girls who kill, that this statement could not be farther from the truth.

Another school killer, Nathan Ferris, an overweight twelve-year-old, was a seventh grade honor student in Missouri when he killed another classmate and himself in March of 1987. He was tired of being teased by classmates and brought his father’s .45 caliber pistol to school where he pulled it out of his gym bag. A classmate teased him that it was “plastic” and Nathan shot the student and then himself. Nathan had been teased about being overweight and was described as a “loner.” He had warned another student at the school the week before that he was going to “shoot everyone” and not to come that day.²² Unfortunately, no one took his threats seriously.

What are the psychological characteristics of these school killers? Looking at previous research on violent behavior in youths can give us some insight into the school killer’s psychological make-up. For example, researcher E. Megargee identified violent youth offenders whom he called “under-controlled” (impulsive, irritable, overly responsive to threat) and “over-controlled” (anxious, repressed, but angry). The assaultive behavior of the under-controlled youth is more predictable and more frequent, but the risk that an over-controlled youth will

become violent is less obvious, sometimes making them more dangerous.²³ Typically, they look fine until they snap, at least to a casual observer. Turning to our school related killers, it would appear that the majority of them appear to fall into the category of over-controlled youth. Much of the time, they are small (or overweight) bespectacled boys whom people sometimes describe as “good students, caused little trouble at school prior to the shooting, were picked on and teased, and often did not retaliate.” This sounds like someone who would have a great deal of repressed anger, very much like the students in Japan who get close to *kireru*, who attempt to control their feelings but cannot possibly tell anyone the depth of their rage and despair.

There are other distinguishing characteristics that experts have found among the rural school shooters who have made headlines with their rampages. These adolescents tend to 1) kill and injure multiple victims in a single incident. They don't just target one person as part of an individual dispute, but launch into a shooting spree that results in many deaths and injuries; 2) have no secondary criminal motive such as robbery, their primary goal or to kill or harm others; 3) be younger — most youth murderers are 15 or over, but school shooters tend to be no older than 14 (although some experts claim that most of the school shooters are younger than 15, this does not actually appear to be the case. Luke Woodham, the Pearl, Mississippi shooter was 16 when he opened fire and the Columbine killers were 17 and 18. Almost one-half of the school shootings have been committed by those teens 15 and over—see Appendix A at the back of the book for a list of ages of the various school shooters); and finally; 5) have a history of social problems: they tend to feel rejected and feel others are out to get them. Another interesting point some experts make is that rather than a feeling of low self-esteem or self-loathing, it is extreme narcissism that makes these youth more violent. Narcissists have *too much* self-esteem, and often want to punish or defeat anyone who threatens their favorable image of themselves.²⁴ I have found this narcissistic streak to be a common denomina-

tor in teen killers. Even those who often act humble during the interviews show themselves to have an inflated sense of self as reflected by their test results. This grandiose sense of self will be discussed further in the following chapters looking at case studies of teen killers.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of school killings during the 1990's since many studies divide the deaths up in various ways such as all school murders or just murders by shooting. One descriptive case study of violent deaths in schools done by Kachur, et al. in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* estimated that there were 105 school-associated violent deaths including 85 murders occurring at schools during a 2-year period from 1992 to 1994.²⁵ The most recent study I have seen collected data on fatal school shootings by several federal agencies and the National School Safety Center at Pepperdine University. It found that there were 55 school shooting deaths in 1992-1993, 51 in 93-94, 20 in 1994-95, 35 in 1995-1996, 25 in 1996-1997 and 40 in 1997-1998.²⁶ A list of the major school shootings can be seen in Appendix A at the back of the book.

John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, studied multiple-victim public shootings in the U.S. from 1977-1995. These were incidents in which at least two people were killed or injured in a public place and excluded shootings that were the byproduct of another crime such as robbery. The U.S. averaged 21 such shootings per year, with an average of 1.8 people killed and 2.7 wounded in each one. Killings in schools involving other types of weapons or force are also rare. For example, the stabbing death of 16-year-old Demetrius Anderson at Denby High School in February of 1996 was the first in-school killing in more than a decade in Detroit, Michigan. This is certainly a city that we typically think of as being known for its violence. However, as we will see, in addition to killers in the more populated areas of the country, many teenage killers are popping up in small Bible-belt towns that many people used to think of as sanctuaries from the crime-ridden cities.

* * * * *

So now we have some basic understanding of the characteristics of various types of teen murderers. Their traits seem to be different depending on what type of murder they commit, yet at the same time, this book attempts to also find some similarities in their personalities. Understanding these similar character styles will help us think about ways we might be able to intervene in some of the social situations that these young murderers find themselves involved in. Next, we will turn to some actual cases of teenage murderers in order to understand firsthand what it is that these teenagers think and feel that leads them to decide that murder is the only way to quiet their inner turmoil. We will start with the most well-known type of teen murderers, the inner-city killers. In the next chapter, you will see that the inner-city kids have a whole different battle to face than their counterparts in the suburbs and rural areas.

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