



Case Studies in Multiple Victims' Murder

***Arnon Edelstein**

Kaye Academic College of Education, Beersheba, Israel

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***Corresponding author:** Arnon Edelstein, Kaye Academic College of Education, Israel; Email: arnonede@gmail.com

Introduction

The debate over the use of case studies in searching social as other problems is not new. Its beginning was over Anthropologists study of ancient tribes in Africa. They generalizations just over observing few people were resulted in a criticism by scholars and disciplines. Books with bombastic names as "the history of mankind" or "the annals of mankind" after observing few people for several months or years was criticize as "ridiculous", "pretentious" or "not academic enough" or even "against science rules".

The reason for such criticism is understandable when we think about the generalization ability or power when using case studies. What can we learn about humankind from five or ten persons, from the same culture, tribe, place and time?

The answer will be "almost nothing", or 'a lot with only small ability of generalization about other people from other places, cultures and time.

So as a result of many debates in social sciences, the pendulums turn to the other side. Scholars abandoned the case study as a legitimate research method and started to use mass samples in order to show their ability in "real" generalization of social and personal phenomenon. This was the transfer from qualitative to quantitative research method. Large samples together with new statistics analysis methods were promising that we can learn from our samples much about the populations we want to study.

These studies and methods were very good in areas of understanding general problems or common social factors. This understanding and generalizations were mainly in cause and effect cases as in medicine. Gender, unemployment, poverty, norms, education, suicidal thoughts and attempts-all became much clearer on their effects. We now can understand, and more important, we can forecast who is in danger for clinical

depression, who may act violently against his intimate partner etc. our understanding is based on large samples, so they are "good", "scientific" and "reliable".

But the frightening, strange or interesting phenomenons in human behavior or in medicine are actually rare. For example, cannibalism in modern western world is very rare. Serial or mass murders are rare events, but all are very frightening and the public has a great appetite to understand these phenomenons.

What makes a man a serial killer is known from some quantitative research made mostly in the U.S. But now the generalizations that serial murderers were victims of attacks in their family, or that derail murders cannot develop conscious and that they are suffer ASPD (anti- social personality disorder) is not interesting, it is not enough in order to understand what motivated Dahmer to eat parts of his victims.

Samples of serial murderers does not give us any interesting answer foe questions like what motivated Ted Bandy to help women who suffered from sexual attacks and few hours afterwards, to rape and murder dozens of them.

It is not help us anymore to understand that 40% of all mass murderers kill their families and commit suicide. We want the story, we wish for an intimate acquaintanceship with the murderer. We want "to be in his mind" in order to understand him better. We want to know everything about a school shooter and the statistics does not interesting us anymore.

This is when case studies are making their comeback with the glory that none of the quantitative methods can gives us. As in gossip, we want the details; we want to know everything about the murderer, the victim, the scene, the thoughts, and the feelings of our "heroes". We need case studies in order to get answers to our multiple questions about the rarest human beings.



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