

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *Hunting Serial Predators*

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**REFERENCE:** Godwin GM. *Hunting Serial Predators*, CRC Press, Boca Raton Florida, 2000, 310 pp., \$79.95.

Violent criminals, lamentably, do not suffer from a shortage of numbers. Well-crafted research tools which may assist investigators in their unrelenting efforts to ensnare serial predators constitute an invaluable commodity. In his meticulously-researched book, *Hunting Serial Predators*, Dr. Grover Godwin proffers an expertly critical analysis of the extant academic literature appertaining to serial murder, and further introduces analytical research tools which may potentially enable police investigators to more effectually classify serial predators.

Godwin is a highly-disciplined, probing researcher who is not wont to mince his words. In his lengthy overview of the research literature on serial murder, he skillfully cuts deep to the core, and makes plainly manifest his belief that present approaches to profiling serial killers are empirically weak, thus compromising their practical value to investigators. What Godwin earnestly covets is to move the investigation of serial murder cases far away from the morass of flawed methodology, anecdotes, and unsubstantiated conclusions, and strongly towards empirical vigor, first-rate research, and crisp, disciplined analysis.

The mantra of Godwin is that the classification of crime scene actions in serial murders must be strongly empirically based. As an alternative to badly-flawed, current serial murder classifications, Godwin prescribes an empirical method for classifying crime scene

behavior called the Facet Classification Model of serial murder. It is his belief that an empirically robust Facet Classification Model may provide investigators with a solid foundation for classifying serial murders. And, further, that the empirical Facet Model may possibly provide information pertinent to linking crime scene behavior and background characteristics that might help investigators construct more accurate offender profiles.

Attempts to classify serial predators, however much energy is put into the effort, can be problematic and yield modest successes. To his credit, Godwin does not shy away from a frank appraisal of possible difficulties encountered in attempting to profile serial murderers. The empirical Facet Model so earnestly expounded by Godwin may potentially help police investigate violent predators. But many germane questions remain unanswered. For example, can the Facet Model of serial murder be applied to solved serial murder cases? Unsolved cases? Does the Facet Model reliably enable the profiling of a serial murderer and his or her offenses? Can the Facet Model be used successfully to link crimes in unsolved cases? Will police investigators actually use an empirical Facet Model? In the end, it cannot be gainsaid that the research results of Godwin must be replicated by other researchers in order for the author's results to attain validity and broad acceptance and application by law enforcement professionals.

The dry, academic style of writing, coupled with the esoteric and abstruse nature of the material covered, render this book unsuited for the lay reader. However, it has a great deal of intellectual energy to offer to police investigators and researchers in the field of criminology.

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