

Contemporary serial murder in a digital world

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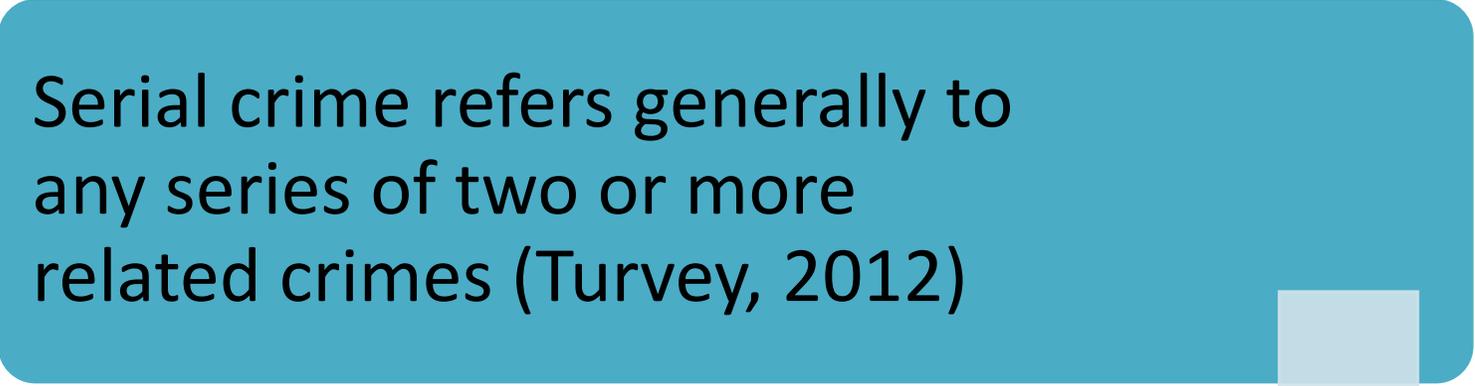
What are we
going to
cover.....?

Defining serial crime

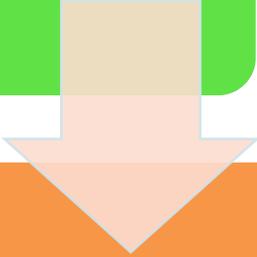
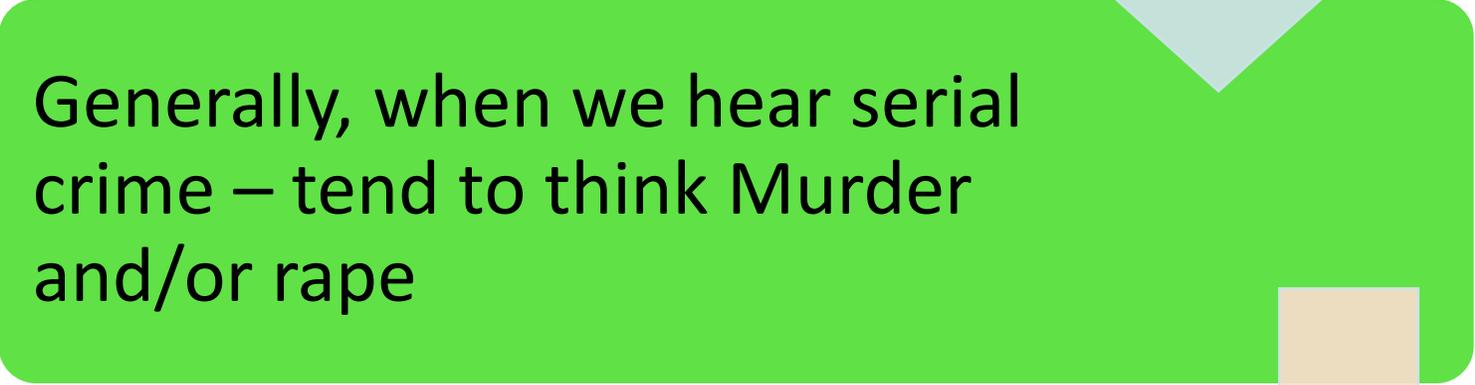
Serial homicide
characteristics / typologies

Serial offenders in a digital
age

Serial crime refers generally to any series of two or more related crimes (Turvey, 2012)



Generally, when we hear serial crime – tend to think Murder and/or rape



However, many serial offenders are not just murderers or rapists or arsonists



Serial Crimes

Serial Crimes

- What makes something serial in nature?
- The term serial killer was first coined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) profiler Robert K. Ressler (Miller, 2014a)
- Describes offenders who are obsessed with fantasies that go unfulfilled, pressing them onward to the next offense (Turvey, 2012).



Multiple definitions of serial murder have been used by law enforcement, clinicians, academia, and researchers

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graph TD; A[Multiple definitions of serial murder have been used by law enforcement, clinicians, academia, and researchers] --> B[Most definitions of serial murder specified a certain number of murders, varying from two to ten victims.]; B --> C[They also required a period of time between the murders. This break-in-time was necessary to distinguish between a mass murder and a serial murder (Morton & Hilts, 2008).];
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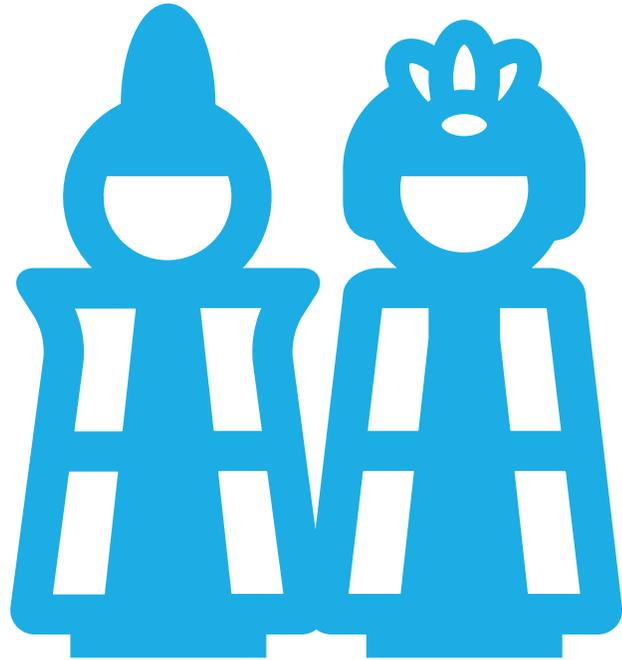
Serial Homicide
/ Murder

Serial Homicide / Murder



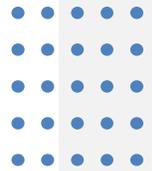
- Generally accepted definition - **The unlawful killing – include any offender male/female - of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events.**
- Issei Sagawa
- Would he be classified as a Serial Killer?

Serial homicide characteristics



- **Demographic and descriptive features**

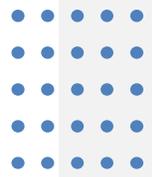
- The typical serial murderer is a white male in his 20s to 40s
- The individual is often a loner, although many are married or live in relatively stable relationships
- Appears to others as intelligent and charming.
- He may be stably housed and employed (Miller, 2014a)



Serial homicide characteristics

- **Criminal history**

- Although many serial killers are found to have no prior criminal record
- Studies have found that more than half of serial killers and other multiple homicide offenders have a past criminal history – burglary and rape (Miller, 2014a)



Serial homicide characteristics

- **Victim characteristics**
- The victims of serial murder are predominantly female, (white), and young adults,
- Same-sex murders are not uncommon, and some serial killers target children
- The majority of crimes are interracial in nature



Serial homicide typologies

- There are a plethora of typologies has been developed to classify different types of perpetrators.
 - Typologies generally classify offenders based on a combination of factors.
 - These factors or elements include inferred motives, crime scene evidence, and the background characteristics of the aggressor (Kocsis, 2008)
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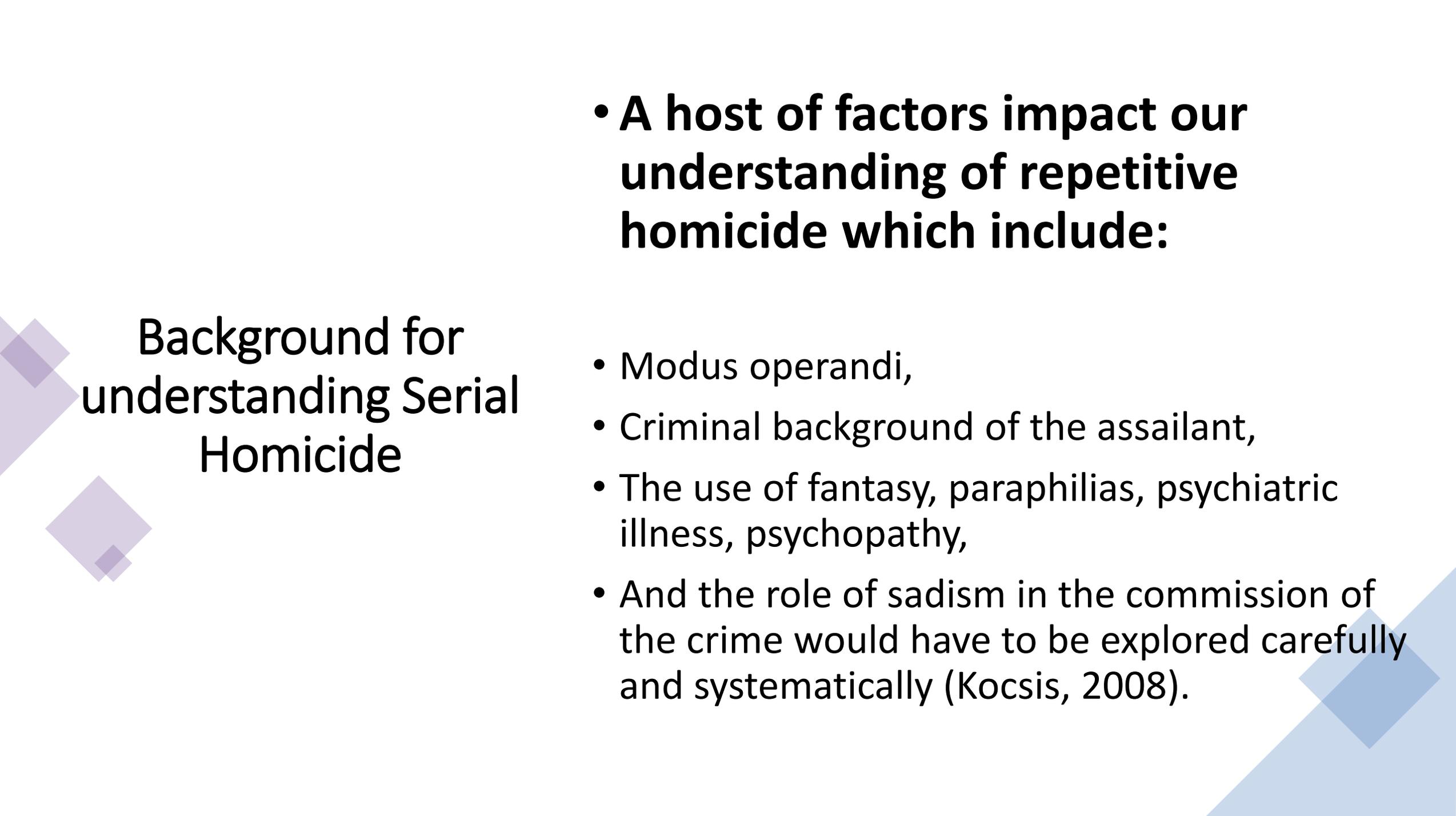
Serial homicide typologies

- A widely-used typology of serial killers is Homes and Holmes (1996) typology
 - Visionary serial killer. This type of killer is induced to murder by delusions and/or command hallucinations which impel him to act
 - Mission serial killer. This may represent a type of killer, who is following a religious or political imperative to eradicate a certain group of people
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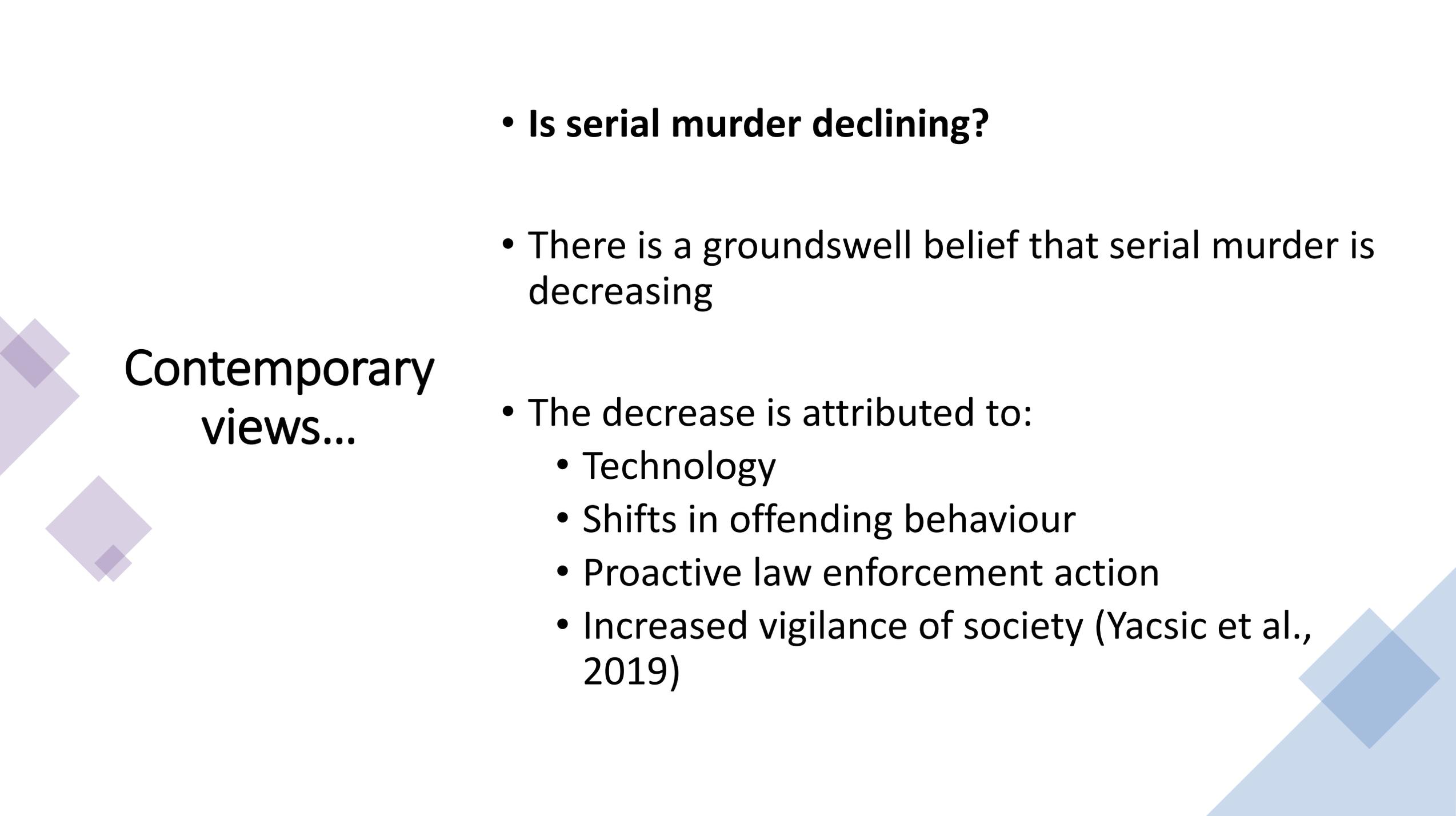
Serial homicide typologies

- Comfort-oriented serial killer. This killer's motive for murder contains at least some utilitarian purpose
 - Hedonistic serial killer. This is the type of serial murderer who derives sexual pleasure from the act of killing, which is usually prolonged and contains acts of mutilation, torture
 - Power/control serial killer. Similar to the above type, this murderer derives pleasure from the prolonged torture and killing – more about control than sexual component (Kocsis, 2008; Miller, 2014a)
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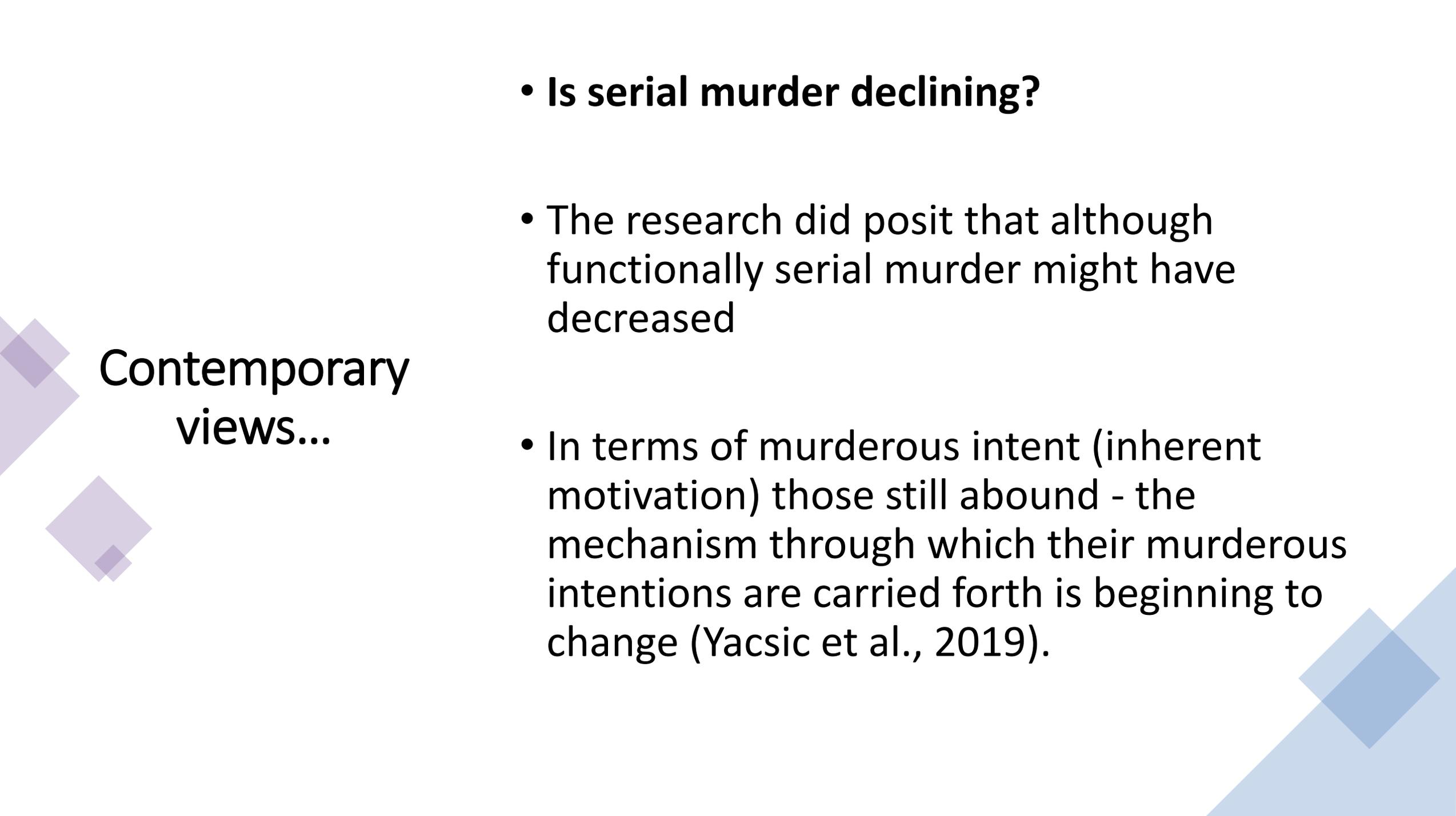
Background for understanding Serial Homicide

- **A host of factors impact our understanding of repetitive homicide which include:**
 - Modus operandi,
 - Criminal background of the assailant,
 - The use of fantasy, paraphilias, psychiatric illness, psychopathy,
 - And the role of sadism in the commission of the crime would have to be explored carefully and systematically (Kocsis, 2008).



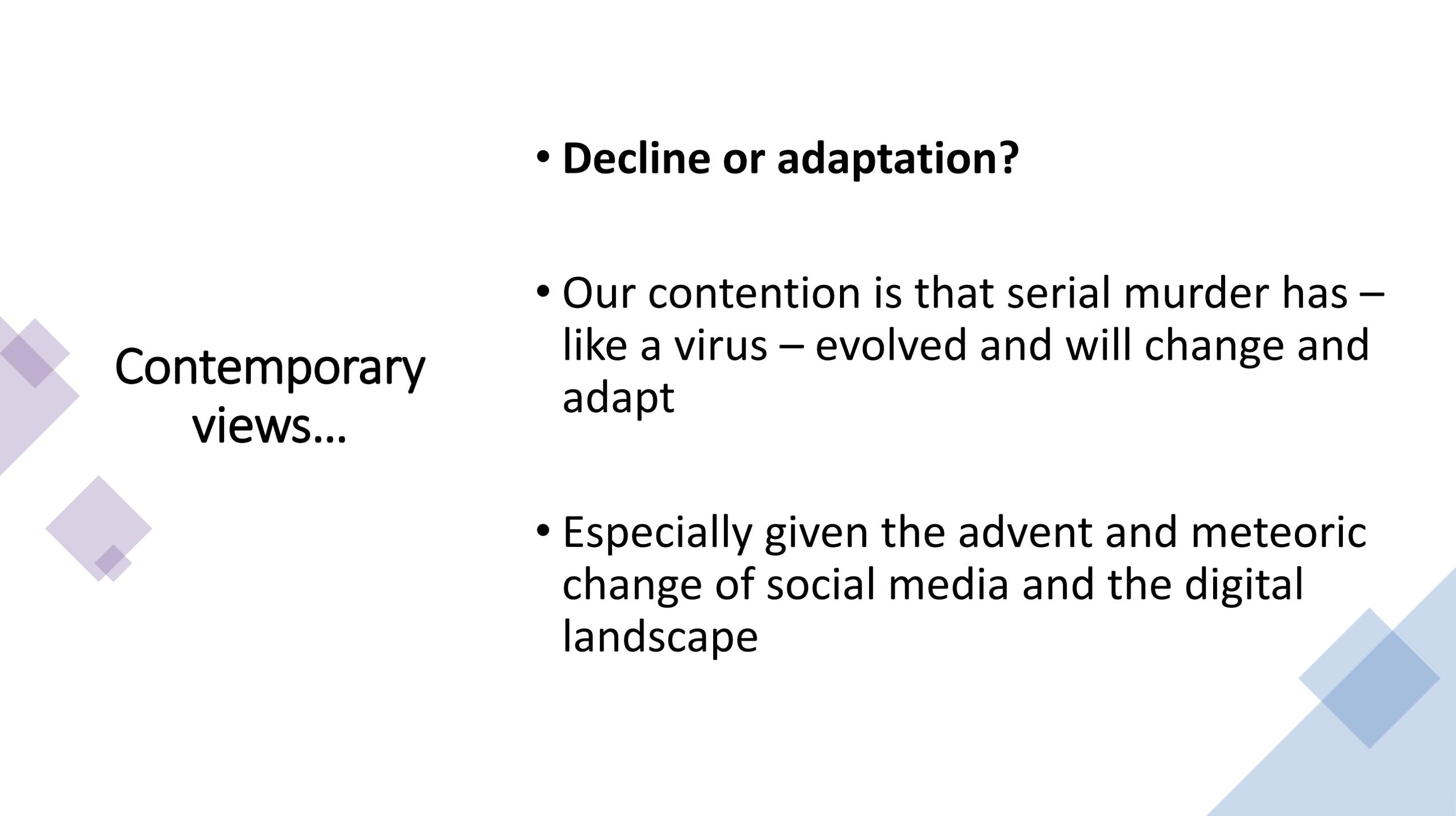
Contemporary views...

- **Is serial murder declining?**
- There is a groundswell belief that serial murder is decreasing
- The decrease is attributed to:
 - Technology
 - Shifts in offending behaviour
 - Proactive law enforcement action
 - Increased vigilance of society (Yacsic et al., 2019)



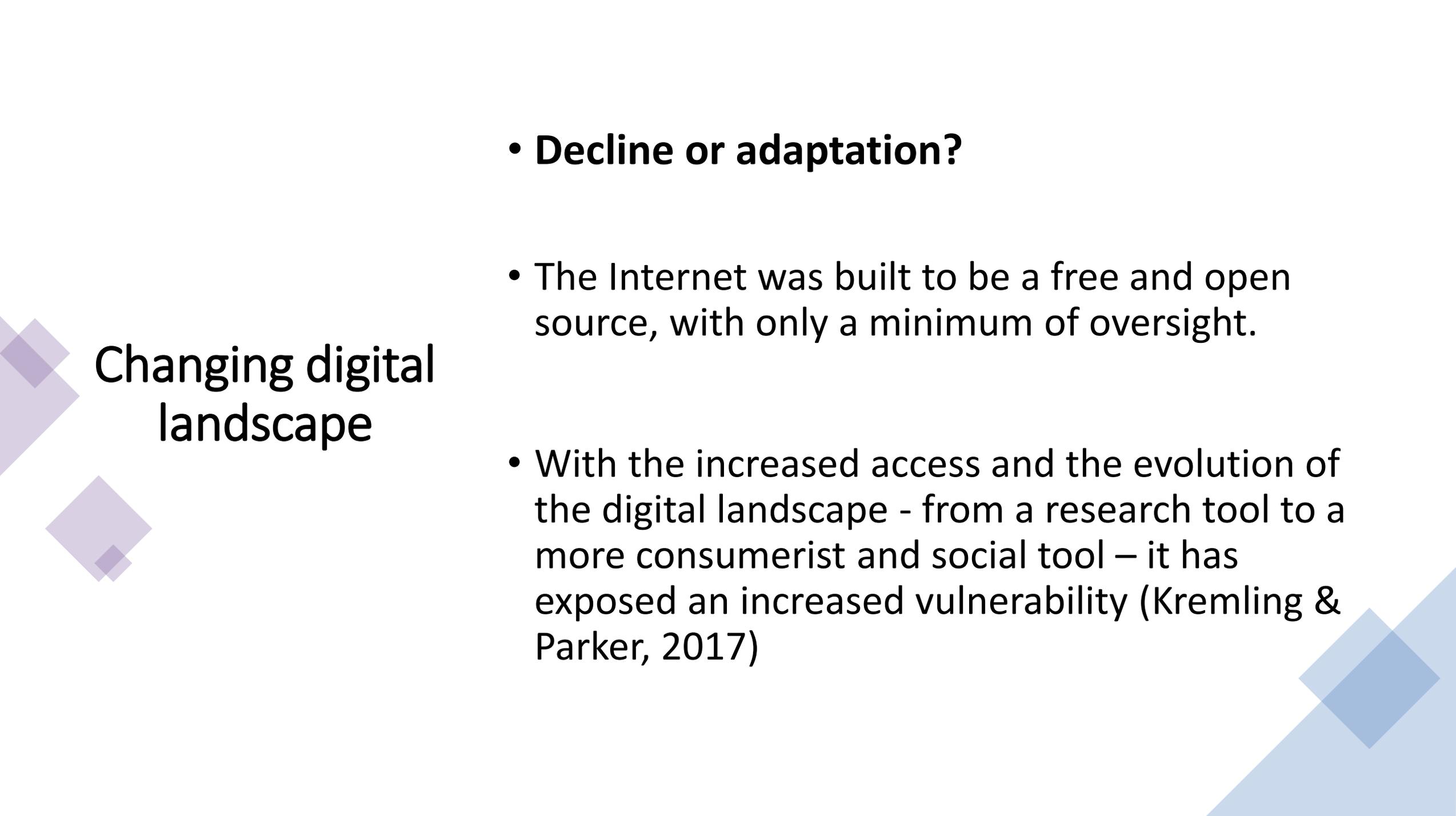
Contemporary views...

- **Is serial murder declining?**
- The research did posit that although functionally serial murder might have decreased
- In terms of murderous intent (inherent motivation) those still abound - the mechanism through which their murderous intentions are carried forth is beginning to change (Yacsic et al., 2019).



Contemporary views...

- **Decline or adaptation?**
- Our contention is that serial murder has – like a virus – evolved and will change and adapt
- Especially given the advent and meteoric change of social media and the digital landscape



Changing digital landscape

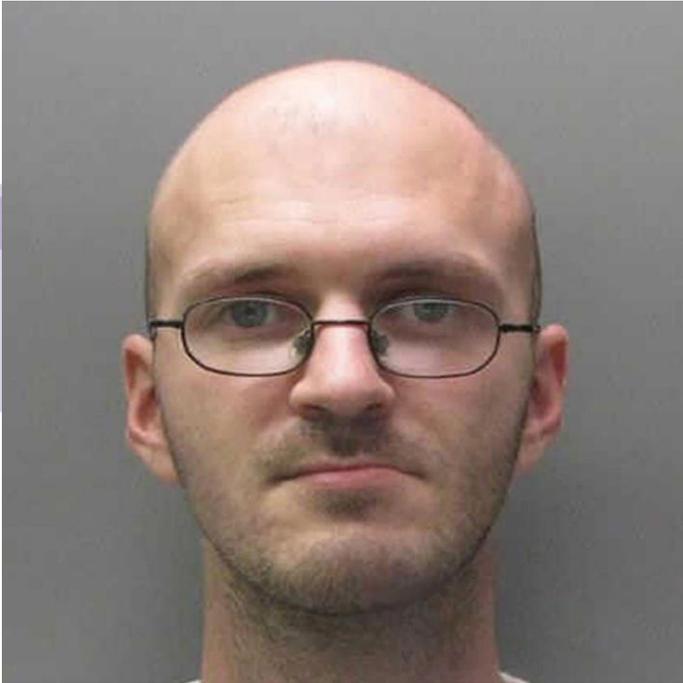
- **Decline or adaptation?**
- The Internet was built to be a free and open source, with only a minimum of oversight.
- With the increased access and the evolution of the digital landscape - from a research tool to a more consumerist and social tool – it has exposed an increased vulnerability (Kremling & Parker, 2017)

- **Philip Markoff – The Craigslist Killer April 2009**



- Markoff was suspected in three robberies, one of which included a murder.
 - Trisha Leffler (an escort) was bound, gagged, and robbed at gunpoint on April 10, 2009,
 - Julissa Brisman (who had posted an advertisement online offering massage services) was found dead on April 14, 2009
 - Cynthia Melton (an exotic dancer offering lap dance services) was the victim of an attempted robbery on April 16, 2009.

- **Peter Chapman - October 2009**



- Chapman is an English convicted murderer who was jailed for a minimum of 35 years in March 2010
- Chapman used a fake Facebook profile, impersonating a teenage boy, to befriend Ashleigh Hall, a 17-year-old student.
- In reality, he was a 33-year-old man living in his car. She met him on 25 October 2009 and according to the prosecution, "When she met him on 25 October last year, he kidnapped, raped and murdered her".

- **Hiroshi Maeue – February 2005 – June 2005**



- **The Suicide Website Murderer** - Maeue suffered from a paraphilic psychosexual disorder which translated into being unable to achieve sexual release in the absence of performing an act of strangulation
- In 2005, after his release from prison, he murdered three people. He was convicted of killing a 14-year-old boy, a 25-year-old woman, and a 21-year-old man, all of whom were members of an online suicide club.



- **Takahiro Shiraishi – Twitter Killer** - August and October 2017
- Takahiro Shiraishi was living in an apartment in Zama - he stalked Twitter and contacted suicidal people asking them to come to his house so he could watch them commit suicide.
- He offered to either assist or watch them kill themselves. Shiraishi claimed his motive was sex.
- He wanted to use his victims' vulnerable states to manipulate and sexually assault them, fulfilling his fantasies and not having to worry about them denying his advances. He killed 9 victims



- **John Edward Robinson The Slave Master/Internet Slave master**
- Roamed online BDSM chatrooms using the name "Slavemaster", looking for women who enjoyed playing the submissive partner role during sex.
- He lured these victims to his home state and would keep them at hotels. Once he got bored he would kill them and place their bodies in oil drums in a shed on a property he.
- He wanted to use his victims' vulnerable states to manipulate and sexually assault them, fulfilling his BDSM fantasies and the use their money and social security checks to enrich himself.
- Responsible for eight homicides, but his total victim tally remains unknown.



Implications

- Five cases small example of serial offenders who still exhibit intrinsic psycho-sexual drives and needs
 - Still fixated on acting on and acting out those psycho-sexual needs and desires
 - Still actively search out and target vulnerable groups / specific target groups
 - But – use the accessibility and scope of the internet - social media / topical chat rooms / darknet – to gain access to viable victims
- 



Implications

- Instead of a completely discounting serial murder
 - What should be the focus is re-conceptualising and adapting existing knowledge bases and theories
 - To account for decisions and choices within current socio-cultural contexts which are indelibly interwoven with an ever expanding digital realm
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Thank you

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