



### I40 A South African Case Study Illustrating Multiple Intimate Partner Murder: Serial Murder or Not?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an understanding of what serial murder is, what intimate partner murder is, and whether a murderer who committed multiple intimate partner murders can be classified as a serial murderer.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how law enforcement officers, psychologists, and profilers will have a better understanding of intimate partner murders and serial murders, and how intimate partner murderers can repeat these crimes and become serial murderers. It will enable attendees to identify danger signals and prevent more tragic incidents.

Intimate partner murders are often referred to as domestic murders or spousal homicide. This occurs when one person is murdered by their current, or ex-, intimate or romantic partner. Motives for such crimes typically include an element of jealousy, which may be due to real or feared abandonment by the victim. While some such perpetrators have a history of physical abuse towards their partner, a significant number of offenders have no history of violence towards their partners, and often there is no escalation of violence preceding the murder.

A serial murderer murders at least two people at different times and for a primarily intrinsic/psychological reason. Motives include anger, ideology, power, thrill, psychosis, and sexually based. Serial murderers tend to stick to one main method of obtaining and murdering their victims. They also tend to keep to a certain victimology in most instances.

The following case study will be presented to illustrate how one person committed three murders, two of which were intimate partner murders, and discuss whether he can be regarded as a serial murderer or not.

A 26-year-old man murdered his high school sweetheart by shooting her seven times in her office at the university where she worked. This occurred when she ended the relationship after eight years and he went to her place of work and murdered her with a pistol he stole from his brother. He was found guilty of the murder and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

After 12 years he was released from prison, and he soon became romantically involved with another woman. The relationship was tumultuous and violent, with alcohol abuse by both parties. After an incident where he assaulted his girlfriend, she denied him any contact with their daughter. When he tried to reconcile with her, it resulted in a dispute after which he murdered his girlfriend by stabbing her twice and her mother three times, with a knife.

When the last two murder cases went to court, arguments were heard at sentencing about the possibility of this person being classified as a serial murderer. These were the second and third murders committed by him. There was a clear, inner psychological motive for the crimes which seemed to stem from his interaction with females he was romantically involved with. There were similar features between the first and second incidents: he followed the same *modus operandi* in the execution of the crimes, the victims were adult females he had close associations with, in the first incident he attempted to murder people who intervened, in the second incident he successfully murdered the mother. While serial murderers tend to prefer strangers as victims, there are numerous cases where people known to him fell victim to the murderer.

**Intimate Partner Murder, Serial Murder, South Africa**