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MURDERERS, VICTIMS AND 'SURVIVORS': The Social Construction of Deviance

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Abstract

Two visions of homicide, murderers and victims are contrasted. One, conventional in criminology, has it that murders are the culmination of

drawn-out, acrimonious transactions occurring within demographically homogeneous sectors of the population. It leads to a blurring of moral identities and causal relations. The other is championed by homicide 'survivors' organizations, and it claims an existentially validated authority. Homicide is experienced by 'survivors' as a chaotic episode which gives way to strong, antagonistic archetypes of victim and offender. The two visions are examined, in part, to promote an appreciation of the analytic complexities of the phenomenon of murder; in part, to point to the fraught politics that are beginning to emerge around resolving the character of murder.

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