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Psychological and Societal Factors in the Development of Serial Killers

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, academics have created a significant body of work in an effort to identify the factors that lead serial killers to commit repeated acts of lethal violence. As basic explanations for the motivations, psychopathology, and causation of serial killing, traits such as psychopathy, biomarkers such as unusual dopamine concentrations, and other developmental factors, including early familial environment have all been offered as explanations. Unfortunately, these conclusions are significantly too constrained from the perspective of developmental psychology. Throughout a person's lifespan, intricate reciprocal interactions between the individual and their environment produce human thought, functioning, and behavior. Using lifespan developmental psychology as an outline, this research explores the developmental mechanisms that come together to shape serial killers' lives and criminal paths.

Introduction

A congressional hearing was called in the early 1980s to discuss worries about the rise of serial homicide after a string of widely publicized random killings across North America. Paula Hawkins, a senator from the United States, deemed serial killing to be “an epidemic.” (United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, 1984, p. 11) Government officials, including senators and congressmen, judges, law enforcement, and academics, swiftly agreed that serial homicide had turned into an epidemic. The media, which took advantage of people's anxieties, furthered this message by releasing dramatic news articles with names such as “Serial Killers - The New Epidemic” and “Random Slayings by Serial Killers on The Rise.” (Bayles, 1984, p. 28; Lindsay, 1984, p. 13A).

The idea that serial killing had reached epidemic levels was unfounded, despite the fact that public exposure to images and media discourse on serial killers was on the rise. Similar to the hysteria about supernatural predators in the 1990s and the pervasive concern about the occurrence of Satanic ritual abuse in one's society in the 1980s. Serial homicide has been a well-known but ill-defined phenomenon since at least the fifteenth century, according to a review of its history and evolution, the changing geospatial landscape of its perpetrators, the diversification of their methods, and the development of investigative techniques used to solve these crimes (Jenkins, 1994; Ramsland, 2006).

Up to the early years of the twenty-first century, interest in the study of serial killing persisted, although it waned after the September 11th attacks of 2001. Following these attacks, there was a financial and intellectual shift away from serial killings and onto a more recent, global threat: terrorism and political extremism (Macdonald, 2013; Schmid, 2006). Serial homicide was less often studied in academia during this time. The field of serial homicide was abandoned as a result of the shrinking intellectual networks of scholars in the subject and the departure of specialized law enforcement personnel to other disciplines, such as terrorism and violent crime more broadly. A small percentage of academics have published multiple studies on serial killers since 2001, and very few have done so since 2001 (Dowden, 2005).

Increased police awareness and comprehension of serial homicides have clear practical benefits, but there is an issue with the lack of academic interest in the topic. Modern researchers have made it difficult for future generations to pursue this field by avoiding this subject. The public has been compelled to rely on old information as a result of this absence from the field of serial homicide research. People learn the majority of what they know about serial killers through sensationalized media like real crime television series.

There are several intellectual advances currently needed in serial homicide study. The value and viability of criminal investigative analysis and crime linkage analysis in the current era require more recent research. In-depth research is required to estimate the prevalence and frequency of serial homicide. The issue of female serial

killers needs to receive a lot more attention as well. The developmental processes that lead to the motivations and psychopathology of serial killers is another interesting area of research that has long been examined but hasn't received enough attention, which will be expanded upon in this research.

History of Serial Killers

15th Century

The notion of evil monsters can be traced back to early civilization. In the past, many explanations for murder were derived from demonology. In Matthew 8:28-32, two people who were exceedingly violent were referred to as possessed. The men were so violent that others could not pass by them, and only Jesus could intervene with the Devil. They were transformed into pigs and sent to drown in the river (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Matthew 8:28-32).

Serial killers began to emerge more frequently in historical writings during the 15th century with the crimes of Gilles de Rais (McCoy, 2015). Gilles de Rais was a 15th-century French Baron, a high-ranking officer during the Hundred Years War, and the Marshall of France. Despite his honorable military service and accomplishments, de Rais is remembered for his fall from grace during which he practiced devil worship and sadistically murdered over 100 children (Reid, 2019). De Rais earned his reputation in 1440 when allegations were made that he had committed several crimes including sodomy, child murder, and torture (Fudge, 2016). De Rais confessed to the crimes and was put to death. At the trial he said:

> …because of my passion and sensual delectation, I took and caused to be taken a great number of children-how many I cannot say precisely, children whom I killed and caused to be killed…I have inflicted various kinds and manners of torture on these children (Vronsky, 2004).

De Rais is regarded by some to be the world's first serial killer; although during de Rais' lifetime, there was no term for his behavior. At the time, the public's understanding of people like de Rias was contingent on religious beliefs, specifically the Catholic interpretations of sin (Reid, 2017). Consequently, serial killers were deemed evil, sometimes even viewed as a personified form of the devil. The nicknames de Rais earned during the trial and after his conviction demonstrate the religious environment during the time. He was referred to as *bete d' extermination* (the devouring beast); *diable* (the devil); and *vampire* (Reid, 2017). Such nicknames are a representation of the ideologies of the fifteenth century, as well as the idea that evil grew from the supernatural. The classification of serial killers into the simple, moralistic category of evil is still used with modern serial killers. For example, the Angel of Death (Donald Harvey), the Witch of Corregio (Leonarda Cianciulli), and the Beast of Bastille (Guy Gorges) are all modern killers with nicknames that reference early Christian beliefs.

Although de Rais was convicted, it is important to note that many have held doubts about de Rais' guilt (Reid, 2019). First, no bodies were ever recovered. Second, no physical evidence from any of the victims was ever found in de Rais's possession. Lastly, some believe that de Rais's confession may have been due to threats of torture and ex-communication from the church (Morgan, 2007). The threat of ex-communication would have heavily influenced de Rais, as he was a devout Catholic. De Rais's guilt was contested enough to earn a retrial. In 1992, de Rais was

posthumously exonerated at a retrial at the Court of Cassation, the highest court of appeals in France (Morgan, 2007). Despite his full pardon, de Rais remains a crucial part in the history of serial murder. Much of today's understanding of the origin of violence are based on the legends that surround him.

16th and 17th Centuries

The religious beliefs and superstitions of the 15th century permeated into the philosophical structure of the 16th and 17th centuries. However, during this time, thoughts of the devil himself being present in a person were slowly replaced with the invention of monsters; creations of the witch and lycanthrope (werewolf) emerged during this era (Cromby, Harper, & Reavey, 2013). The belief in lycanthropy can be traced back to at least 600 B. C. when King Nebuchadnezzar believed he suffered from such an ailment. However, worldwide fear of animal-like demonic possessions did not become regular until much later (Hickey, 2016).

Superstition and fear ran rampant across most parts of the world. Throughout Western Europe and Colonial New England, Puritan settlers lived in a constant state of fear of bewitchment and other attacks by the devil; these same fears propelled the Salem Witch Trials (Reid, 2019). In France and Germany, people feared the lycanthrope, and some, such as Jean Fernal, a French physician, believed lycanthropy to be a valid medical phenomenon (Hickey, 2016). Citizens in Scotland and England were overcome with fears of sorcery, and as a result, thousands were executed due to accusations against them. The notion of monsters was a stronghold of societal norms at the time and validated the belief that heinous murders were committed by literal monsters (Thomas, 2003).

One infamous monster during this era was Peter Stumpp, a German serial killer during the 16th century. His crimes wreaked havoc for 25 years, and he amassed 18 victims. Known as the “Werewolf of Bedburg,” Stumpp was accused of cannibalistic homicide, mutilation of animals, incest, and other charges (Impara, 2016). During his trial, Stumpp explained he had been practicing black magic since the age of 12 and made a pact with the devil in order to transform into a wolf with powers. He claimed the devil gave him a magical belt, and when he wore it he transformed into a werewolf and he could return to his human form after removing the belt (Reid, 2019). During his trial, Stumpp suggested that he, “took such pleasure and delight in shedding of blood and evidence emerged that he was ‘greatly inclined to evil and the practicing of wicked arts’” (Otten, 1986, p. 86).

Since some people recognized lycanthropy as a valid medical phenomenon, Stumpp used this as his defense at trial. While not a sufficient defense in modern times, lycanthropy was used as a legitimate exculpatory factor to violence in medieval times (Impara, 2016). Despite this defense, Stumpp was convicted and executed for multiple homicides, rapes, and incest. Stumpp was accused of having an incestuous relationship with his daughter Beele (Sybil), and after his conviction, she was executed alongside her father (Vronsky, 2004).

While stories of werewolves were spreading across the globe, the fear of witches was traveling along as well. The witch was a more tangible threat to the public and added fuel to the fire, causing more fear to spread. Unlike werewolves, who were usually social outcasts and avoided the public light, witches were known members of society, living amongst everyone else (Thorne, 1998). The first female serial killer,

Countess Elizabeth Bathory, was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted as a witch for her murders (Hickey, 2016).

Countess Bathory was a member of the famous Hungarian noble family of Transylvania. Legends portray Bathory as a vampire, bathing in the blood of virgins to keep her skin and hair beautiful. However, these claims are unfounded, as there is no documented evidence that Bathory ever bathed or consumed blood like a traditional vampire, and these legends came about long after her death (Thorne, 1998). Additionally, the term vampire did not exist at the time, thus her society would not have referred to her as such. Regardless, Bathory was infamously cruel. For example, Bathory tortured and punished her female servants by stabbing them with sewing pins, breaking their bones, and sometimes cutting off their fingers (Thorne, 1998). It is documented, at least occasionally, that Bathory took one of her servants outside, threw a bucket of water on her, and left her outside to freeze for hours in the middle of winter (Redi, 2019). Due to her noble status, Bathory was never condemned for her actions. After her husband's death, rumors surfaced that she had killed young girls from other noble families, and an investigation was launched (Thorne, 1998). On December 29, 1610, Bathory's castle was raided by authorities, and mutilated bodies were discovered. She was convicted of witchcraft but due to her noble status was sentenced to be walled up in a castle, rather than sentenced to death; she died four years later.

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, legislators blurred the lines between 'crime' and 'sin'. Consequently, explanations for crimes, especially violent ones, were often based on religious superstitions and supernatural beliefs. This is what caused murderers to be labeled as "witches," "werewolves," and "demons" (Impara, 2016).

18th Century

Due to economic struggles that plagued most of the 18th century, crimes with financial gain became more prominent than in earlier years; robberies and property crimes spread like the common cold (Snell, 2007). Retrospective analyses of criminal activity during this time show that while homicides were reported, the majority were "sparked by the most mundane disagreements that escalated out of control" (Snell, 2007, p. 29).

Previously, most people resided in smaller settlements and villages, limiting the number of people in a given suspect pool. However, with social developments beginning in the 18th century, cities flourished with business and population growth, and even small towns became denser than they were in previous years (Reid, 2019). Industrialization caused a shift towards major urban development, causing most identifying patterns in multiple homicides to become lost among the masses (Snell, 2007). Exacerbating this problem, most governments in the 18th century, including large metropolitan areas like London did not keep a record of crime statistics or convictions, making pattern identification in homicide very difficult (Landau, 2010).

Unlike previous centuries, the social climate of the 18th century did not appear to have a vendetta against any one particular group, such as witches and werewolves. The 18th century was not a remarkable time in regard to developments in the criminal theory of serial murder; however, a rapid intellectual shift impacted the study of serial murder in future centuries (Mass, 1973). The Enlightenment that had started in the late 17th century was flourishing by the 18th century. Enlightenment thinking challenged the current religious beliefs and superstitions that influenced criminal proceedings. This new

thinking gave way to more rational thinking that could be based on observable events (Mass, 1973). Consequently, theories about crime and criminals began to include non-religious theories, and criminology became a field of study. ‘The Classical School’ of criminology was born during the 18th century, and philosophers, such as Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria, introduced ideas that are still studied in modern times (Mass, 1973).

The 18th century was a time of tremendous social change, intellectual growth, and scientific advancement. The philosophy of this era disputed religious superstitions and aimed to implement a scientific-focused worldview (Reid, 2019). The influence of this new scientific worldview had a powerful impact that molded the study of criminology in future centuries.

19th Century

The concentration of scientific thinking in the 19th century brought about new theories of crime and deviance. Benedict Augustin Morel developed the theory of degeneration and expressed these ideas in his 1857 text, *Treatise on the Degeneration of Human Species* (Reid, 2019). Morel applied already-established theories about heredity to the concept of mental illness (Felthous & Sass, 2008). He argued that if the first generation was infected by a ‘poison,’such as alcohol or air pollutants, these illnesses would be passed on to the second generation. According to Morel (1857), this second generation would be prone to illnesses like hysteria. The third generation would then go on to develop insanity, and by the time the fourth generation developed, they would be blighted to congenital lunacy (Felthous & Sass, 2008). Morel (1857) argued that pathological conditions, including criminality, were due to abnormal development;

suggesting that subsequent generations were already doomed. According to Morel (1857):

> The degenerate human being, if he is abandoned to himself, falls into a progressive deterioration. He becomes…not only incapable of forming part of the chain of transmission of progress in human society, but he is the greatest obstacle to this progress through his contact with the healthy portion of the population (Shorter, 1997, p. 94).

The belief that mental health deteriorated from generation to generation formed the base of Morel's (1857) theory of degeneration. His theory was influential throughout the 19th century and was used as a model of pathology by several other medical disciplines (Felthous & Sass, 2008). The theory of degeneration became the primary explanation for crime causation up until the 20th century.

Morel's theory of degeneration paved the way for future criminologists. Cesare Lombroso developed the theory of atavism as an offshoot of degeneration (Reid, 2019). The atavism theory correlated abnormal biological features, such as large foreheads and wide cheekbones, to psychological defects to be indicative of one's developmental failures (Knepper & Ystehede 2013). Lombroso was influenced by Morel's theory due to his studies in phrenology. Phrenology, now a discredited theory, made assumptions about bumps on the skull and how they represented a person's personality traits, which aligned with parts of Morel's theory (Reid, 2019).

Lombroso was the first criminologist to offer a neurobiological perspective to explain the behavior of serial killers (Hickey, 2016). During the 1880s, Vincent Verzani was convicted of sexual assault, murder, and mutilation of three women (Wilson, 2015). After Verzeni's execution in 1883, Lombroso was asked to examine the skull. Lombroso

approached the examination under the influence of phrenology and concluded there were abnormalities in the right frontal lobe (Reid, 2019). While these medical conclusions would not be supported in modern medicine, Lombroso's examination would have fit in with 19th-century medical practices (Wilson, 2015). Lombroso's identification of a neurological abnormality in Vincent Verzani made him the first person to provide a biological explanation for the etiology of serial killers.

During the 19th century, the term 'the ripper' became a part of criminal vocabulary (Reid, 2019). The ripper referred to a specific type of sex criminal and was often defined as a sexually motivated male who violently targeted women, often mutilating the genitals, breasts, and buttocks (Caputi, 987). Jack the Ripper, possibly the best-known ripper, was a 19th-century serial killer who terrorized London's East End during the 1890s. While Jack the Ripper was never caught, he was connected to the murder and mutilation of five female prostitutes (Caputi, 1987).

While Jack the Ripper is generally considered the first modern serial killer, experts had not yet identified these offenders as a unique category of criminal. The term ripper allowed for a new class of criminal and was a step towards identifying serial killers as their own category (Caputi, 1987). Rippers were not specifically serial killers, nor did all rippers fatally wound their victims; the ripper classification was reserved for sexually motivated criminals (Reid, 2019). With the lack of classification for serial killers, there are no studies targeting the analyses of serial homicide during this era; but the onset of scientific criminology started to develop questions about the biological nature of homicide and violence (Starr, 2011).

20th Century

Throughout the early 20th century, terms such as ripper, slayer, and butcher were common descriptors of criminals who committed horrendously violent sexual crimes (Reid, 2017). Despite significant scientific advances in redesigning the image of a serial killer, from demon to degenerate, the social image did not progress as quickly. Lombroso and Morel have launched the idea that scholars could identify these criminals based on appearance and some physical deformity. This idea was fairly well acknowledged amongst the general public by the 20th century, albeit the ideas were flawed (Reid, 2019). Thus, the scientific conclusions held that these criminals were diseased human beings, but the public's image did not accommodate this conclusion (Reid, 2017).

These beliefs that a homicidal criminal was visually distinct were shattered after the capture of serial killer Peter Kurten. A German serial killer, Peter Kurten committed a series of sexual assaults and murders between February and November of 1929 in Dusseldorf (Bowling, 2012). Prior to his arrest, the media labeled him the 'Vampire of Dusseldorf' and 'Dusseldorf Monster,'effectively drawing on old criminological views. While likely used only for media sensation, these titles demonstrated a lack of advancement amongst the general public (Reid, 2019).

Peter Kurten's arrest caused people to rethink their long-held beliefs about the image of serial killers. Kurten was well-dressed and cool-tempered, even almost friendly (Bowling, 2012). He did not fit the established image of a criminal. He did not have a misshapen skull, a wide forehead, or crooked teeth. Kurten simply did not resemble the image Lombroso and other criminologists had depicted. Kurten's case caused a crisis in

belief; people had become comfortable with the idea criminals could be singled out easily for their appearance, but now this thought had been challenged (Reid, 2019).

Kurten's appearance was not the only upsetting piece of this case; his social background began to cause a commotion as well. Kurten had been an unremarkable person from an equally mundane social background. After being born into poverty, he gained some financial ground and became a married man (Bowling, 2012). Most early serial killers had either been from wealthy families or nobility, such as Gilles de Rais and Elizabeth Bathory, or were social outcasts like Peter Stumpp (Reid, 2019). Kurten's case sparked discussion about how to conceptualize a serial killer and caused many to rethink the supernatural display, or monster-like depictions, of serial killers (Bowling, 2012).

Beginning in the 1960s, the United States saw a rapid increase in violent crime, as well as an increase in literature attempting to explain violent crimes. One of these scholars was Canadian psychiatrist Bruno Carmier (Lagier et al., 2001). Carmier spent his career studying the pathology of violent offenders and presented his thoughts at the first International Symposium on Victimology in 1973. Cormier argued that to effectively study criminals, murderers could not be lumped into one group but rather needed to be divided into subgroups (Lagier, et al., 2001). Cormier's first distinction was introducing the term 'multicide.' Multicide was defined as: "a number of homicides committed by one person but spread out over a longer period of time…months or even years" (Lagier et al., 2001, p. 151). This new term helped to distinguish these types of murders from other types, such as genocides, mass murderers, and career hitmen (Reid, 2019).

During this time, Cormier was not the only scholar making advancements. After joining the FBI in 1970, Robert Ressler coined the term ‘serial killer.’ He used this to describe a criminal with a need to kill (Reid, 2019). Ressler began to conduct informal interviews with previously convicted serial killers in the early 1970s, simply questioning why they thought they had killed their victims (Vronsky, 2004). Ressler faced resistance from his superiors at the FBI for several years, as they thought his interviews should not be a priority. However, Ressler’s persistence paid off in 1978 when the FBI launched its initial project on serial killers (Hickey, 2016). The purpose of this project was to conduct interviews, much like Ressler had been doing, and identify how these killers eluded authorities for as long as they did. This work proved to be highly valuable; it classified serial killers into two subgroups, organized and disorganized typologies, which influenced future serial murder investigations (Hickey, 2016).

The 1980s brought about the ‘golden age’ of research in regard to serial killers, and this lasted until the early 2000s (Reid, 2019). During this time, serial killers became icons, almost a type of celebrity. Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, amongst others, were household names and on the front page of newspapers. Due to their complexity, serial killers became popular among larger audiences. (Jenkins, 1992). In contrast to 19th-century criminologists, whose work indirectly studied the etiology of serial killers, 20th-century scholars studied serial killers with specific intent. This laser-focus was a result of the official and unique classification for this type of homicide (Reid, 2019). During this time, serial killing was officially defined by the FBI as: “ three or more separate events in three or more separate locations with an emotional cooling off period in between homicides” (Hickey, 2016, p. 47). The majority of what is currently

known about the etiology of serial killers is from research that was conducted during these two decades.

Biological Factors

The biological perspective focuses on physiological design and imbalances, as well as genetic makeup (Weatherby et al., 2009). According to this perspective, there are several dispositional factors that can trigger violent acts and be framed by environmental events (Malmquist, 2006). Also known as contemporary trait theorists, theorists in this perspective have researched many aspects, such as heredity and genetics, frontal lobe development and hormone levels. These aspects are used to explain why some people have more violent tendencies when compared to others. Scholars developed a “disease model” for serial killers; a model that included environmental factors when considering why these offenders became serial killers (DeHart & Mahoney, 1994). They proposed that environmental factors, trauma, and negative parenting can only partially explain how an individual develops into a murderer. Also, that “chemical imbalances induced by alcohol and drug use, prolonged malnutrition, and poisoning from environmental toxins,” along with head trauma, could “cause damage to aggression-related neural regions, thereby intensifying the potential killers’ dysfunctional behavior” and possibly causing their murderous behaviors. (DeHart, 1994, p. 41). Scholars propose serial offenders suffer from a disease that is essentially transmitted through social and genetic sources (Messori, 2016). They support their disease standpoint by noting that limbic deficits in the brain could be shown in PET and CAT scans.

Twin studies have established a possible link between genetics and homicidal behavior, but these same studies have yielded mixed results; both confirming and denying this possible linkage. These disparities are likely due to other factors, including environmental differences. Many studies have shown if both biological parents and the adopted parents have criminal records, then the child would be 40% more likely to develop a criminal record (Bohman, 1995). However, if only the biological parents had a criminal record and the adopted parents had no criminal record, the child would have a 12% chance of developing a criminal record (Bohman, 1995). Additionally, researchers concluded genetics may lead some people to perform violent acts more often than those who do not experience a genetic component. However, a direct conclusion cannot be drawn, and it appears the environment plays an influential role (Bohman, 1995).

Teratogens, environmental hazards encountered by an embryo during pregnancy, can have devastating effects on childhood development. Harvard University has found that cities that use lead pipes in buildings and sewage systems have increased city-level homicide rates, in some cases reaching four times higher than cities that did not use old lead pipes (Feigenbaum & Muller, 2016). There is overwhelming research that supports prenatal exposure correlates with violent tendencies, but specific studies on serial killers is nonexistent.

Some researchers have also found that an extra Y chromosome is indicative of dangerous and violent behavior, especially in males (Giannangelo, 2012). Known as Jacob's Syndrome, researchers have found an extra Y chromosome is associated with antisocial behavior, and these individuals are predisposed to developing personality disorders. While there is limited empirical support for the XYY theory, the theory still

sparks a general interest in the role of genetics and criminal behavior (White, 2018). Even in the 1960s, screenings were still being performed to identify babies with the extra Y chromosome because the little research available proposed it led to criminal behavior. One infamous XYY serial killer is Arthur Shawcross. Shawcross is an American serial killer who killed fourteen women and two children between 1972-1989. Dr. Richard Kraus performed medical tests on Shawcross and found Shawcross had a 47 XYY karyotype chromosome as well as ten times the normal level of kryptopyrroles, a byproduct that is found in urine. Kryptopyrroles decrease zinc and vitamin B6 which help the body make decisions when under pressure. (Kraus, 1995). Shawcross is in the minority of serial killers, and there is little research that analyzes this specific biological factor to only serial killers (Reid, 2019).

Another genetic link is the MAOA gene and its possible mutation. The MAOA gene codes for the production of MAOA. MAOA is an enzyme designed to break down neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine (Ferguson & Beaver, 2009). The MAOA gene is classified into two categories, one gene that contains alleles correlating to low MAOA activity, and one that correlates to high activity. Low MAOA activity levels are not as effective as the high activity alleles in breaking down neurotransmitters (White, 2018). A consequence of low-functioning alleles is the lack of metabolizing serotonin and dopamine, which are considered to be risk alleles for violence (Ferguson & Beaver, 2009).

Since the MAOA gene is located on the Y chromosome, males are more likely to be affected. A study done by Brunner and colleagues (1993), connected the MAOA gene to extreme violence; however, aside from the single-family used in this study, there

are no other documented cases of someone possessing a mutated MAOA gene and engaging in extreme violence (White, 2018). More recent research has tried to examine whether other alleles can be linked to violence, and most have revealed there is no direct correlation between the gene and violence (Ferguson and Beaver, 2009). Regardless of the lack of support in the above studies, there is a large amount of research showing that low MAOA levels can increase violence when combined with detrimental environmental conditions (White, 2018).

Neurobiological theories in violent crime are of growing importance in understanding the dynamics of interactions among biological, psychological, and environmental factors (Hickey, 2016). Many killers who endured abusive childhoods have suffered head trauma and other blunt-force trauma. Research shows the frontal lobe, especially the amygdala, is thought to play an important role in regulating violent behavior (Hickey, 2016). Damage to the frontal lobe can cause deficits in several areas, such as social awareness and the ability to judge future consequences (Brower, 2001). This can cause a person to act inappropriately and participate in destructive behavior, like murder. Findings have also shown psychopaths have a reduced volume in the amygdala, even if no trauma was sustained to the area. Individuals who develop lesions or tumors in this area have also been known to develop “acquired sociopathy,” which means sociopathic tendencies developed after the lesions form in the brain. (LaBrode, 2007). The amygdala is an essential part of the limbic system and is responsible for emotional learning and fear response (Brower, 2001). Damage to this area, whether due to trauma, tumors, or other factors, is related to emotionless traits. While MRI studies

have been done on psychopaths in prison populations, no solely neurological studies have been performed on a strictly serial killer population.

In comparison to trauma sustained as an adult, head trauma during childhood appears to be more severe due to the lack of brain development. Additionally, some studies have shown that frontal lobe damage suffered before age eight can be connected to adult episodes of impulsive, aggressive, and antisocial behavior (Brower, 2001). Frontal lobe damage in children, in addition to other childhood traumas, can severely alter a child's personality and lead them to violent tendencies if they are not given the proper guidance to learn impulse control (White, 2018). Of course, this does not mean brain pathology is proven to be a determinant factor in all homicide cases.

Researchers have also identified hormones as influential factors in violence and aggression. Much of the earlier research focused on testosterone as the general notion was masculinity equaled aggression. For example, Bain and colleagues (1987) compared the testosterone levels of murderers and nonmurderers and failed to establish a significant difference. However, the majority of studies have established some sort of correlation between testosterone and violence, but researchers have been unable to decide if an increase in violence causes an increase in testosterone (Brookman, 2005).

Environments with extreme humiliation and emotional abuse are commonly found in the history of serial killers (Reid, 2019). A 1988 study done by Ressler, Burgess, and Douglas found that 74% of convicted serial killers reported a history of psychological abuse, including humiliation. Children who face peer rejection and alienation are far more likely to lash out aggressively when compared to their accepted

friends. Not surprisingly, children who experienced extreme levels of ostracization were more violent (Hickey, 2016).

Models of Development

Primary and Secondary Psychopathy

Psychopathy does not have one definition, but rather several different conceptualizations that have been developed over years of research. Neuropsychiatrist Hervey Cleckley was the first to propose a contemporary construct of psychopathy influenced by his extensive interviews with his psychiatric patients in 1941(Skeem, et al., 2011) Cleckley's psychopathy construct resulted in 16 identifying characteristics: (1) superficial charm and good intelligence, (2) absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking, (3) absence of nervousness or psychoneurotic manifestations, (4) unreliability, (5) untruthfulness and insincerity, (6) lack of remorse or shame, (7) inadequately motivated antisocial behavior, (8) poor judgement and failure to learn by experience, (9) pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love, (10) general poverty in major affective reactions, (11) specific loss of insight, (12) unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations, (13) fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink and sometimes without, (14) suicide rarely carried out, (15) sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated, and (16) failure to follow any life plan (Skeem et al., 2011). Cleckley argued that although these individuals committed violent acts, these acts were secondary characteristics, almost a side effect, from the above primary characteristics of psychopathy (Boice, 2020).

The Two-Factor Model

Not long after Cleckley's developments, Benjamin Karpman developed his own framework of psychopathy. Karpman was also a psychiatrist working in a hospital and eventually became globally known for his work with criminal offenders (Boice, 2020). Karpman (1948) designed the primary and secondary model of psychopathy based on his clinical interactions. He classified psychopaths according to their motivations and the presence/absence of a conscience. Secondary psychopaths, also known as symptomatic psychopaths, are people who are born with a conscience, but their conscience is blocked by something, likely a lack of love in their life (Karpman, 1948). According to Karpman, secondary psychopaths could be helped, even cured, because their actions are based on an emotional response that can be changed. Primary psychopaths, also known as idiopathic psychopaths, are born without a conscience and cannot be cured (Karpman, 1948). Primary psychopaths are egoistic people; they do not have the ability to love anyone, nor the ability to be taught how to act ethically. Karpman's model argues that secondary psychopaths are created and primary psychopaths are born that way in nature.

During the 1970s, Robert Hare combined Cleckley's concepts with his own clinical experience. He designed empirical studies and through extensive research designed the Psychopathic Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (Hare & Neumann, 2008). The PCL-R utilizes four main concepts throughout the assessment: interpersonal, affective, lifestyle, and antisocial. The PCL-R is a 20-item assessment used by clinicians to determine a criminal offender's likelihood to re-offend and their ability to be rehabilitated (Hare &Neumann, 2008). The interpersonal traits include (1) glibness or superficial charm, (2) grandiose sense of self-worth, (3) pathological lying, and (4) being conning

or manipulative (Hare & Neumann, 2008). The affective traits include (5) lack of remorse or guilt, (6) shallow affect, (7) callous/lack of empathy, and (8) failure to accept responsibility for one's own actions (Hare & Neumann, 2008). Lifestyle traits include (9) stimulation seeking, (10) impulsivity, (11) irresponsibility, (12) parasitic lifestyle, and (13) lack of realistic long-term goals (Hare & Neumann, 2008). The antisocial traits were Hare's expansion upon Cleckley's concepts. They include (14) poor behavioral controls, (15) juvenile delinquency, (16) revocation of conditional release, (17), and (18) criminal delinquency (Hare & Neumann, 2008). There are two other traits on the PCL-R but they were not placed under any of the categories, (19) promiscuous sexual behavior and (20) many short-term marriages. Each of the 20 items in the PCL-R is scored on a three-point scale, with a rating of 0 if it does not apply at all, 1 if there is a partial match or mixed information, and 2 if there is a reasonably good match to the offender. This scale is used in face-to-face interviews with offenders and is combined with knowledge about their life history, likely from case files, to make an accurate assessment (Boice, 2020).

When Hare initially published the checklist, prior to its revision, the two-factor model was used to combine the four categories into two groups. Factor 1 combined interpersonal and affective traits, and Factor 2 combined lifestyle and antisocial traits. Factor 1 strongly correlated with Cleckley's ideas about clinical psychopathic personality, interpersonal dominance, and low anxiety, and has been linked to planned predatory violence (Harpur et al., 1989). However, Factor 1 did not have any correlation to social class, family background, or education, which lead scholars to believe that Factor 1 traits could not be influenced by one's upbringing (Harpur et al., 1989). Factor

2 traits strongly correlated with self-report psychopathy measures, family history, and diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder. It also correlated with criminal behavior and impulse violence (Harpur et al., 1989).

The Three-Factor Model

The two-factor model was a great first step in demonstrating different correlations; however, when replicated amongst different races, sexes, and ages, its reliability fell apart (Cooke & Michie, 2001). After Cooke and Michie determined the two-factor model was not sufficient, they designed a three-factor model. They separated affective and interpersonal factors while combining all behavioral symptoms to make up the third factor; they also removed the criminality measure (Cooke & Michie, 2001). Their model was statistically supported and proved to be both reliable and valid (Hall, Benning, & Patrick, 2004). The most notable advancement in this model regarded the affective factor. The affective factor was determined to be distinctly different from the other two; it was the only factor strongly associated with predatory violent behavior, even after removing the lack of empathy (Hall et al., 2004). This breakthrough in research paved the way for future research on the affective factor.

The Four-Factor Model

As noted above, the three-factor model lacked a measure for criminality; the four-factor model was designed to address this missing component (Williams et al., 2007). A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted by Williams and colleagues (2007) with a community sample. They discovered the four categories of the PCL-R that comprised the two-factor model were all distinct facets but still related. The main difference they established between the two is that the four-factor model holds each of

the categories as its own unique element, not necessarily dependent on the others. Another factor analysis was conducted by Jones and colleagues (2006) but with juvenile offenders. They found that both the three-factor and four-factor model measured their sample better than the two-factor model. The four-factor model had greater predictability of violence and aggression, which can be attributed to the lack of criminal measure in the three-factor model (Jones et al., 2006). A weakness of this model is that the positive features, such as lack of anxiety, described by Cleckley are not well represented in this model (Patricket al., 2009).

Typologies

The FBI's organized/disorganized typology and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger's intrinsic motivation typology are the two main typologies that continue to be employed in the research, despite the many attempts to categorize different types of serial killers (Messori, 2016). Both typologies for categorizing serial killers aim to collect data that will help with research, profiling, and capture. While each sort of grouping has advantages, they also have limitations in terms of reliability and validity, which can restrict their applicability (Messori, 2016).

FBI Disorganized and Organized Killers

This typology of serial killers was originally developed by FBI agents Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) to describe lust murderers and can be differentiated by the ordered and disorderly elements observed at crime scenes. “This dichotomy is claimed as the foundation on which personality characteristics of offenders can be determined from crime scene investigation.” (Canter & Wentink, 2004, p. 490) The typology is thought to be the most extensively used classification system for violent offenders, notably serial

murders, to date. It was originally developed from interviews and case information of 36 murderers (Canter et al., 2004).

Organized Killer

Organized killers are alleged to kill with premeditation and after a triggering or inciting event (LaBrode, 2007). The profile of organized killers, developed by the FBI, are described as having average intelligence, decent social skills, a tendency to bring their weapons and restraints, remove the weapon from the crime scene, and have a strategy to transport the victim or destroy evidence (LaBrode, 2007). Egger (1984) describes the “organized nonsocial is seen as a totally egocentric, amoral individual who can be superficially charming and manipulative of others.” (p.351) This definition by Egger aligns with the examples of traits that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5) includes under Antisocial Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2003).

Canter et al. (2004) described the organized killer “to be of average to high intelligence, socially competent, and more likely than the disorganized offender to have skilled employment.” (p. 293) Also, it is believed that organized killers typically kill following upsetting life occurrences. To restore control or to get rid of the stressed feelings, they plan the murder with precision. This degree of organization and accuracy is often evident at the crime scene (Messori, 2016).

According to this description, organized killers are also more likely to be the oldest child, have fathers who normally hold steady jobs throughout their children's lives, and inconsistent parental guidance. According to this profile, organized killers are likely to be able to manage their emotions while committing a crime, experience a

precipitating incident just before committing the crime, and use alcohol to aid them (Messori, 2016). The ability to transfer and hide the body after the murder is done, the choice of a stranger as the victim, the personalizing of the victim, the use of restraints, and other characteristics of organized killers' crime scenes are all recognized (Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1992).

Disorganized Killer

Disorganized killers are said to kill spontaneously and at convenient times, leaving behind evidence, failing to confine the victim, and leaving the body exposed (LaBrode, 2007). Also, they are perceived as having below-average intelligence and lacking social skills and empathy. They are thought to be from a lower birth order, had a father who had erratic employment throughout their childhood, and experienced harsh treatment as a young child, including being abused (Ressler et al., 1992). Egger (1984) defines the disorganized type as “a ‘loner’ with feelings of rejection who has great difficulty in interpersonal relationships.” (p. 352) The killings are also thought to be more impulsive and opportunistic when compared to the organized killer (Egger, 1984). Canter et al. (2004) theorizes the crime scene would likely reflect the disordered, chaotic nature of the murder itself, and the killer would typically reside close by to the murder site and victim, which “mirrors the offender’s social inadequacy and inability to maintain interpersonal relationships.” (p.294) The FBI’s profile of disorganized killers includes the perception of low levels of situational stress prior to the murder, the use of little to no alcohol to aid in motivation, frequent feelings of anxiety during the crime, violence toward the victim that is often sudden, and the killer's propensity for engaging in sexual activity after the victim has died (Ressler et al., 1992).

Critique of Disorganized and Organized Typology

Canter, et al. (2004) cites the lack of structure in the interviews conducted to construct the organized/disorganized typology and the method used to choose the sample as one of the theory's main flaws:

> The FBI agents conducting the study did not select a random, or even large sample of all offenders and then explore how they may be appropriately divided into subgroups. They had an opportunity sample of 36 offenders that agreed to talk to them. (Canter, Alison, et al., 2004, p. 296)

The typology was never tested against a different group, hence its applicability to another group or a wider population may be questionable. It should be emphasized that the majority of the population used to develop this typology was Caucasian, which may make it difficult to draw conclusions about other racial groups, but many academic sources do so despite the dearth of reliable research (Messori, 2016).

Holmes, DeBurger, and Holmes Intrinsic Motivation Typology

R. H. Holmes, DeBurger, and S. T. Holmes created a different classification system for serial killers that placed more emphasis on internal reasons. Four typologies of serial killers were initially developed by R. M. Holmes and DeBurger and published in the journal *Federal Probation* (1985) and later published in their book *Serial Murder* (1992) with S. T. Holmes. The four proposed typologies are: (1) visionary; (2) mission; (3) hedonistic; and (4) power/control-oriented. These typologies were created using case information from 110 serial killings and interviews with particular offenders (Canter & Wentink, 2004). Since female serial murderers were thought to have either never existed or, if they had, to be a very unusual phenomenon that was just beginning to be

studied, the typologies were initially made to be especially inclusive to men (Egger, 1984). All of R. M. Holmes, S. T. Holmes, and DeBurger's typologies come from the numerous murderer's own irrational wants, which he satisfies by picking a victim and killing them (Pollock, 1995).

Visionary Killer

Although the majority of serial killers are not thought to be psychotic, this description would apply to several murderers who feel as though they are being directed to kill by voices or visions. The visionary killer is "impelled to murder because he has heard voices or has seen visions which demand that he kills a certain person or a category of persons." (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985, p. 31) Herbert Mullin, who murdered 10 individuals in California in the early 1970s because he thought their sacrifices would help prevent earthquakes, is an example of this type of killer (Newton, 2006). It's frequently believed that David Berkowitz, known as the "Son of Sam," also belongs in this category (Simons, 2001). Berkowitz's standing as a visionary killer has been questioned after he later recalled his assertion that his dog had instructed him to do the murders and acknowledged using this justification to try to get away with the murders.

Mission-oriented Killer

The goal of the mission-driven serial killer is to eliminate a particular group of people, usually prostitutes, members of minority groups, or homosexuals. The intent to commit murder is driven by the killer's desire to "do something about a situation needing correction." (Egger, 1990, p. 27) The kill is solely motivated by the purpose to eliminate a specific type or group of people from the planet, city, or town; such as Jack the Ripper's desire to eliminate prostitutes. As long as the victim belongs to the in-group the

murderer is targeting, mission-oriented killers are thought to pick their victims at random, and the murder is act-focused, structured, and premeditated (Canter & Wentick, 2004).

Hedonistic Killer

The hedonistic killer is divided into three subcategories: lust-oriented, thrill-oriented, and comfort-oriented. The primary motivation for killing is the inherent pleasure that one derives from the act. As they kill because they enjoy killing and are often more intelligent than normal, these killers are often the most striking (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985). Their capacity to elude detection and arrange their murders demonstrates their increased intelligence. Holmes and DeBurger (1985) note that although these killers find the act of murdering to be incredibly pleasant, it also "makes investigation difficult for law enforcement professionals," especially if the hedonistic killer is transient (p. 32).

Lust-oriented Killers.

This particular subgroup of killers is said to commit murder in exchange for sexual fulfillment. The primary motive for the murder is sexual gratification. "Various acts, such as cannibalism, necrophilia, and dismemberment, are prevalent in this type of murder" (Canter & Wentink, 2004, p. 491).

Thrill-oriented Killers.

This subcategory of killers is said to kill for the thrill and excitement it provides. The victim is allegedly kept alive throughout the contact and usually subjected to torture and degrading treatment before the murderous act (Simons, 2001). Both the killing itself and

the killing procedure are thrilling. The excitement is gone once the victim is dead, and the killer loses interest.

Comfort-oriented Killers.

Experts on serial killers tend to disagree the most over the third subtype of hedonistic killers. This kind of murderer is allegedly motivated by economic gain through property theft, stealing from heirs, and other material gains (Simons, 2001). Other than the consolation the murderer will take from the money gained after the killing, there is no inherent cause for the murder. Getting the means to enjoy life is the driving force behind this particular variety of murders (Egger, 1990). The idea of the extrinsic, material incentive often causes this subgroup to be omitted from discussion of the typologies from the literature on serial killers because internal motivation is the primary theory of this typology system. Many were considered to fall under this category when Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger expanded their typologies to include women.

Power/Control-Oriented Killer

This group of serial killers uses murder to exert control over the victim. Although it has been argued that many serial murderer typologies acquire a secondary gain by exerting control during the act of killing, the major gain in this type of serial killer's killing is their narcissistic need for power and control (Pollock, 1995). The urge for absolute control over the victim—the ability to decide whether they live or die—is what drives a serial murderer to keep killing. Most "Angel of Death" murderers, including Charles Cullen and Kristen Gilbert, two nurses who killed their patients, are thought to have been motivated by power:

> By exerting complete control over the life of his victim, the murderer experiences pleasure and excitement, not from the sexual excitation or the rape, but from his belief that he does indeed have the power to do whatever he wishes to do to another human being who is completely helpless (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985, p. 33).

Essentially, this type of serial killer acts like a God and decides which people get to live or who has to die.

Critique of the Holmes and Holmes Intrinsic Motivation Typology

Canter and Wentink (2004) point out in their critique of this typology that Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger have never given a "systematic account of exactly how the material was used to devise their system of classification" (p. 490). In essence, the methods by which the typology creators used the data from their interview and the 110 serial killing cases to create the typology were never discussed, which has an impact on the repeatability, validity, and reliability of using the typologies to determine which categories later offenders would fall into. According to Canter and Wentink (2004), depending on the characteristics of the perpetrator, some situations may fit into one of two groups. It is challenging to duplicate when new cases are available since Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger did not specify the process they used to categorize the typologies when different criteria are present. The validity of this typology cannot be directly empirically tested because there are few factors that may categorize killers with certainty (Canter & Wentick, 2004). It is challenging to conclude at the murder scene before speaking with the perpetrator that the deed was motivated by lust, thrill, or power control if the victim at the crime scene had been tortured or raped. As sexual assault

can happen during a power or thrill-oriented murder because the killer may believe he takes more control over the victim or uses sexual torture through this encounter, there is frequently confusion and disagreement among researchers as to what motivation typology many serial killers fit.

As the study of serial killing evolved into its own science, so did the intellectual backgrounds of those who investigated serial killers. Multidisciplinary analysis' insights considerably broadened the area of etiological study. In reality, the majority of what is currently known about the etiology of serial killers stems from research studies conducted between the 1980s and the early decade of the twenty-first century. Given the volume of research conducted over the last few decades, this review will now move its attention away from the historical and etiological study of serial homicide and toward the methodology of this research.

Methodology

Although serial killings are uncommon, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there have been more than 3000 serial killers in the United States alone (Aamodt, 2015). It was vital to narrow the research because of the multitude of serial killers throughout history. The criteria used to choose the subjects for this study are described in the next section, along with an explanation of why they were chosen. The selected criteria were based on historical measures, such as the inventory designed by Holmes and Holmes.

1) Sexual elements were reflected in the serial killers' crimes.

Reasoning: Because there is very little doubt about the external motivations of the offenders' misdeeds, those whose crimes were explicitly sexual in nature were chosen

as offenders (Hickey, 2002; Holmes & Holmes, 2002; Knight, 2007). The homogeneity of the offenders' intentions contributed to the creation of a sample of serial killers that were largely consistent. It has been stated that serial killers who commit sexual offenses differ from non-sexual serial killers in terms of their demographics, diagnoses, and etiologies, beyond serving the objective of creating a homogenous sample group (Dietz, 1985). Concentrating solely on serial killers whose actions were explicitly sexual in character helped ensure that the results in this thesis were not influenced by data obtained from researching different groups.

2) The serial killers chosen were male.

Reasoning: Male serial killers largely outnumber female serial killers. Only about 15% of serial killers during the past two centuries have been female (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2010). A higher sample size could be produced by taking into account only male serial killers as opposed to only females. Additionally, between 55% and 81.5% of serial murders have a sexual motivation. Over 90% of serial killers who murder for sexual purposes are men (Hickey, 2002). The viability of data collecting is another justification for restricting this thesis to the study of male serial killers. For instance, the media and academia both largely neglect female serial killers (Keeney & Heide, 1994). Additionally, female serial killers frequently work with male accomplices to carry out their atrocities. Therefore, it is challenging to pinpoint and sort through the fundamental driving forces behind the criminal intentions of female serial killers (Hickey, 2002).

3) Serial killers must have adequate public information.

Reasoning: In-person interviews with serial killers would have been preferred due to the control and standardization that are provided to researchers who conduct their own interviews. This thesis, however, relied on the gathering and interpretation of secondary source material due to geographical practicality, time constraints, institutional barriers, as well as exorbitant financial expenditures. Secondary source data included police interview transcripts, trial transcripts, biographies, and psychiatric records, which were located in several online sources. Due to the impossibility of conducting in-person interviews for this thesis, the decision was made to only include those people whose personal information was so thorough and detailed that the knowledge they provided was comparable to what one would have hoped to learn from an in-person interview.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the developmental characteristics of the chosen serial killers, particularly case studies. The term "case study" describes the gathering and presenting of in-depth data about a specific participant or small group, frequently including the subjects' own accounts. The case study is a type of qualitative descriptive research that closely examines one person or a small group of participants, deriving findings only about that person or group and only in that particular environment. Instead of concentrating on the finding of a single, overarching truth or on cause-and-effect correlations, researchers place more emphasis on exploration and description.

Case Studies

Edmund Kemper

Edmund Kemper, also referred to as the “Co-Ed Killer,” is an American serial killer who murdered 10 people in the early 1970s. When asked why he killed several women, Edmund Kemper gave the following response:

> My frustration, my inability to communicate socially, sexually; I wasn’t impotent but emotionally I was impotent. I was scared to death of failing in male/female relationships (Horvath, 1984).

Kemper had a turbulent relationship with both of his parents ever since he was a little child. He yearned passionately to be loved by everyone around him because he felt emotionally abandoned by both his mother and father (Reid, 2019). Kemper’s parents divorced when he was a young child, and he was brought up by a single mother who was emotionally abusive, making fun of him for his "unnerving" looks and "weird" demeanor. (Schechter, 2003). In order to prevent him from "raping" one of the sisters or even the mother herself, Kemper's mother forced him to sleep in the basement as the lone man in a home with two sisters and a mother. He had reasoned that perhaps the only way to possess someone's affection indefinitely was to die when he was only eight years old. In Kemper's mind, the act of killing gave him complete control over the object's affections—one that he desired it from (Reid, 2019).

For instance, Kemper said in court that he murdered the family cat because he thought it was favoring his younger sister. It seemed that he had killed the cat “to make it mine; to secure its affections.” (von Beroldingen, 1984, para. 23) Kemper referred to his victims, “They were like spirit wives...I still had their spirits. I still have them.” (Gilks, 2014) The idea of the intertwining of ownership and death pervaded much of Kemper's

life, from childhood to maturity. Kemper killed to establish connections or get affection that he could never have in real life. Recalling his motivations, Kemper stated:

> Alive, they [his victims] were distant, not sharing with me. I was trying to establish a relationship and there was no relationship there...When they were being killed, there wasn't anything going on in my mind except that they were going to be mine ... That was the only way they could be mine (Philbin, 2011, p. 129 - 130).

Several of his reflections serve to illustrate this. For example, Kemper said the following about one of his first murders:

> I had that folding knife, and I pulled it out...and locked it into place it clicked. And she said, 'What's that?' That's a quote. 'What's that?' and she was kinda like a naggy kind of thing. "What's that?" And I couldn't figure out why she said that. Like, it's not that big an impact. That little clicking sound behind her. You know, amongst what's going on, and it hadn't been murderous up to that point. It had been an aggravation, and I was, I had her tied up—or, handcuffed.... I stabbed her all over her back...I stabbed her in the side and the stomach once...I stabbed her in the belly...I didn't do it to make it hurt, I was trying to shut her up (Horvath, 1984).

Kemper's emphasis on his victim's "naggy" demeanor and desire to silence her rather than injure her reminds one of his early love for his mother. His long string of killings, which finally came to an end with the killing of his mother, was the result of his fear of failure in relationships, wrath, and the warped love he felt for his mother. Due to Kemper's planning and response after a traumatic event, he would be classified as an organized killer. His need to obtain love would also classify him as a lust killer. Kemper's final and most serious murder, that of his mother, truly illustrates the link between death and ownership. Kemper said the following in regard to the last murder:

> I cut off her head...I knelt next to her...and put my head where hers would have been and felt closer to her then than I ever had before. I loved her then truly as much as she always demanded. Loved her as if she had entered me, possessed me to the extent that I was continuous with her... (Serial Killer Documentaries, 2013).

Killing was the ultimate demonstration of power, mastery, and possession in Kemper's eyes. It served as an emotional tranquilizer. One thing helped to relieve his mental anguish, which had grown through times of anxiety, stress, distress, and irritation. The act not only allowed him to escape from severe psychological distress, but it also made him feel more empowered to obtain something he had always wanted, his inability to obtain love.

Arthur Shawcross

Arthur Shawcross is an example of a person whose objectives were rooted in early experiences of insecurity, emasculation, a lack of authority, a lack of control, and a lack of agency. Also known as the Genesee River Killer, Shawcross was an American serial killer who killed at least 14 people between 1972 and 1989. When describing his early home environment, Shawcross claimed, “what went on in the home I grew up in is better left unsaid, but I cannot do it! I, as a child, had no control on who my sex partner was! (Berry-Dee, 2007, p. 69)

Shawcross remembered his mother having often abused him sexually as a child. When reflecting on his relationship with his father he explained: “Myself and my father never talked personally. He wouldn’t talk to us kids” (Fezzani, 2015, p. 48). Shawcross also spoke of his two sisters' sexual abuse of him over the course of his childhood. His peer relationships were not positive either; as a child Shawcross, “preferred to be by himself, and at the age of seven years was referred to a mental health clinic after hitting other school children with an iron bar on a school bus” (Kraus, 1995, p. 12). In addition to being humiliating for Shawcross, this incident left him with significant feelings of

hopelessness, a loss of autonomy, control, and power over his own physical body. To compensate for his lack of friendship, Shawcross developed imaginary friends, “I had to have these [imaginary] friends because I wanted someone to play with. No one else liked me.” (Martin, 2008) Shawcross described the killing of 8-year-old Karen Hill, one of his earlier crimes:

> She comes sliding down the embankment, and I’m thinking she’s about my age and my sister Jeannie’s age [when we were having oral sex]. I grabbed hold of the girl, and I raped her. After seeing what I did, I killed her (Fezzani, 2015, p. 65).

Grass had been shoved in Karen's mouth and nose, and she had been raped and smothered. There is no way to excuse Shawcross' aggression, but one might start to comprehend why he could have behaved that way. Despite the fact that Karen was an innocent eight-year-old girl who had never interacted with Shawcross before her murder, the sight of her was upsetting (Reid, 2019). She represented the sexual and psychological suffering Shawcross had experienced throughout his whole life; to him, she was not an innocent eight-year-old girl. She posed a danger that had to be removed. Shawcross is a disorganized killer because he eaves the bodies exposed and leaves substantial evidence at the scene. Additionally, he is a mission-oriented killer because he feels the need to eliminate all females who represent the women who sexually abused him. The same was true of all other women who sought to steal from him, lied to him, or attempted to emasculate him.

Shawcross saw his mother as a pernicious force that destroyed his feeling of autonomy, mastery, and sexual agency. Shawcross claimed that despite the abuse he was suffering at home, no one ever took him seriously. To him, it appeared as though

his mother was "killing" him, ruining his life, and getting away with it. It is not far-fetched to assume that Shawcross' victim choice and his justification for doing so mirrored his feelings of hatred toward his mother and society for having tolerated the abuse. In fact, when questioned about his thoughts following the murder, Shawcross stated: “I was in a fog...I was in a dazed for a few days.” (Reid, 2019, p. 162)

Ted Bundy

Ted Bundy had an idealized representation of femininity. Women "represented not a person, but once more the image, or something desirable," according to Bundy. (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000, p. 92). He was looking for pure, unvarnished transparency. For a while as a child, Bundy thought his mother was really his sister. He didn't learn the truth about his parentage until later in boyhood; this experience may have made him hate lying. Although he has always said that he loved his mother, he regrets that he was never able to talk to her about "real personal matters."

He says his mother had a "log-jam" that kept her from talking to him. Because of this, Bundy was never able to express many of his emotions in an open way and instead "depended a lot on the radio" to listen to others "speaking their minds." Ted's early practice of listening in on conversations undoubtedly influenced his later voyeuristic behavior (Reid, 2019). Throughout his late childhood and early teens, Ted frequently indulged in voyeurism by peering through windows and observing women undress. Bundy stated, “I wanted to see a real live woman in the flesh!” (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000, p. 42)

One could argue that Bundy's voyeuristic tendencies developed as a result of the psychological and emotional trauma of learning the truth about his true parentage, along with his mother's silence on sensitive personal issues (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000). Bundy fervently yearned for unrestricted disclosure and he may have found the kind of unrestricted transparency he so sorely desired through his voyeuristic pursuits. He had been exploring pornography and sexual fantasies since his early youth, and these were what drove him to move from voyeuristic fantasies to violence and, ultimately, murder. Furthermore, Ted Bundy spent a lot of time fantasizing about his crimes before he ever really hurt a person. Bundy, for instance, described the first time he deliberately turned a fantasy into a planned action. Speaking in the third person Bundy explains:

> He found a piece of two-by-four in a lot somewhere and proceeded to follow and track this girl. And the situation's novel because while he may have toyed around with fantasies before and made several abortive attempts to, uh, act out a fantasy, it never reached the point where actually he was, uh, confronted with harming another individual, or taking possession or abducting or whatever—which really is ultimate, I suppose; one of the ultimate antisocial acts, as it were. And so, it reached a point where he... he'd gotten ahead of this quarry, this girl, and was lying in wait for her, as they say. But, uh, before she reached the point where he was concealed, she turned and went into her house! (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000, p. 78)

Again, the importance of power and control—attributes that Bundy felt he terribly lacked as a child—is highlighted in his portrayal. It is obvious from each of these situations that he had given the act a lot of thought and reflection (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000). Prior to the crimes themselves, many factors were carefully studied, or more accurately dreamt about, including the victim's reaction, their acquiescence, lack of interference, the sort of weapon used, and the location of the crime. Bundy's extensive planning of the murders makes him an organized killer. Bundy would also be classified as

power/control-oriented because that was the primary motivation for his crimes. He enjoyed watching his victims give up in defeat as he overpowered them. Again, speaking in the third person, Ted Bundy said when asked if there had ever been a challenge to refrain from committing murder:

> I mean... we can see that this kind of person, because one of the primary reasons he did this... uh, committed the murders... was a search for a release of stress or feelings of low esteem or anger, hostility, resentment, whatever. It was channeled for some reason toward women. Young women—and in a particular way (Michaud & Aynesworth, 2000, p. 193)

Limitations and Recommendations

There were various methodological flaws at this step. The sample population was not chosen at random. Although random sampling would have increased this thesis' credibility and validity, it was an impractical design choice. The absence of random sampling was merely a minor restriction because this thesis made no claims regarding the generalizability or causality of the findings. Second, it's possible that contradicting biographical information was researched because there was such a large online community of "amateur sleuths" due to the widespread public interest in serial killers. All information gathered during this stage was confirmed across three different sources to mitigate the consequences of conflicting information. For instance, if a news report claimed that a serial killer had been an abused child, confirmation was sought from two different additional sources. The final constraint is that, despite best efforts to cover a broad range of developmentally relevant variables, some will inevitably go unnoticed. This is especially true for variables that seem unimportant and abstract. The age at which bullying began, how long it lasted, along with others, are some factors that might be considered unimportant.

The characteristics presented in the current literature are evident across all three cases studied above, including lack of remorse, poor behavioral controls, and a grandiose sense of self-worth. Currently, the PCL-R is the most widely accepted screening tool to identify the characteristics outlined by Hare in 2008; however, these ideas were heavily influenced by Cleckley's original checklist from the early 1940s. Due to societal changes, particularly regarding how mental health is viewed, it could be beneficial to reevaluate how we classify and screen these offenders. For example, Ryan Scott Blinston murdered three people between May and June of 2020 while working as a tree trimmer (CBS, 2021).

While little is known about Blinston's childhood, he was not a stranger to law enforcement and the court system prior to the murders. In 2006, Blinston had stolen a car, and then in 2013 burglarized a home and stole three guns and another car. During his incarceration, it does not appear he was screened for any of the characteristics. It may be beneficial to consider adding a new section entirely that adds criminal behavior that is separate from juvenile delinquency, as well as a categorization of mental illness that could be scored supplementally.

In looking ahead at future research, it might be necessary to change the criteria in these screening tools. Many of these screening tools were developed in the 1970s and 1980s and societal views have changed since this time. For example, bullying was not recognized as a precursor to violent behavior and was seen as a normal childhood inconvenience. After years of research, the effects of bullying have come to light and brought about awareness and prevention programs across the country. Now is the time

to take this critical information and apply it to other areas of violent crime, including serial killers.

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