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The Development of Serial Killers: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

The worldview that portrays a serial killer as being a white male, an evil monster with unusual appearance, having dysfunctional relationships (Yaksic, 2015), engaging in animal torture or being sexually or physical abused in childhood, and therefore, sadistically killing for sexual gratification should be challenged (Beasley, 2004). Leyton (1996) and Skrapec (2001) suggested researchers should approach with open minds while searching for knowledge relating to this phenomenon without preconceived assumptions or hypotheses. Furthermore, every serial killers' drive to kill multiple victims may be unique, dependent on his/her history and experiences, and is therefore difficult to quantify (Yaksic, 2015). The current study set out to compare detailed and descriptive accounts from the lives of 3 serial killers (Gary Ridgway, Ted Bundy, and Richard Ramirez) without keeping in mind assumptions and hypotheses, in order to find possible commonalities or differences between them as a route to identifying possible life events and factors leading to serial killing. For this purpose, the grounded theory method was utilized. Majority of the data has been taken from books written about each serial killer. The following factors were identified: stress/trauma, power/control, need for belonging, loneliness, low self-esteem, sexually sadistic and violent pornography, the American culture, peer influences, Satanism, parent relationship patterns, and neurodevelopmental complications. Explanation of factors and the interrelationship between them are discussed. Factors such as need for belonging, loneliness, power/control, stress/trauma, and low self-esteem seem to be inter-related in a process. Unable to control and deal with their life situations including stress and loneliness; sexual violence and serial murders were the solution and coping skills used by the three serial killers.

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Introduction

Television shows like *The Fall*, movies like *The Perfume*, and songs like *The Ripper* by Judas Priest, provide evidence of a widespread fascination with serial killers. Serial killers have operated throughout history and around the world. Even though the majority of the people do not kill, the general public seems to have a fascination with serial killing (Miller, 2014).

Newton (2006) identified Locusta, a professional killer from Rome, best known for poisoning Emperor Claudius, his son Britannicus, and 6 other unnamed victims in the first century CE, as the first documented serial killer. Newton also described the case of Gilles de Rais, a leader in the French army, a companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc, and a confessed serial killer, best known for killing a large number of victims (100 children) in the 14th and 15th centuries.

In the United States, documented serial murder cases date back to the 1800s (Wright & Hensley, 2003). One of America's first and most famous serial killers was H. H. Holmes. Reports confirm that he killed at least 12 people including men, women and children during the 1800s, although he claimed to have killed 27 (see Benzkofer, 2014; Cipriani, 1937; Larson, 2003). Hickey (1997) recorded 337 serial murder cases in the United States from 1800 to 1995, the majority occurring between 1980 and 1995. A more recent example of an accused serial killer is that of William Devin Howell, who confessed to killing seven people in Connecticut in 2003 (Stewart, Murray, Moller & Jvittalfoxct, 2015).

The present study used qualitative methods to address two questions about serial killers: what leads serial killers to commit murders? and what are the underlying

motivations of a serial killer? Grounded theory was used to study the lives 3 serial killers. Such an analysis provided a detailed understanding and description of the offenders' childhood, adolescence and adulthood; studying commonalities and differences in the experiences of serial killers led to the identification of etiologies that have not been thoroughly examined previously.

Definitions

Serial killer. There is little consensus on the general definition of serial murder (Ferguson, White, Cherry, Lorenz, & Bhimani, 2003). Reinhardt (1957) coined the phrase "chain killers", and described them as killers who would slaughter and leave a "chain" of victims behind them (as cited in Newton, 2006, p. 237); in the 1970s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Robert Ressler was the man to first coin the term, 'serial killer' (Lefebvre, 2005). Holmes and Holmes (2010) defined a serial killer as an individual killing three or more people, while Dyer (1997) emphasized the serial nature of the killings: "Serial killers kill serially: one murder after another, each a variation and continuation of those before, each an episode in a serial" (p. 14).

In 1988, the FBI defined serial killing to include three or more murders committed separately with a cooling off period between them (Gerberth & Turco, 1997). Dietz (1986) also included a "cooling off period" in his definition, although he required five or more killings by a single offender to count as a serial killer. Hickey (1997) proposed that the definition of serial murder should embrace anyone who commits multiple murders over a lengthy span of time. More recently, the Serial Murder Symposium held by the Behavioral Analysis Unit-2 of the U.S. Federal Bureau of

Investigation (2005), defined serial killing as “the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events” (p. 9).

Serial killing should be distinguished from two other forms of multiple homicide (Levin & Fox, 1998). Mass killing is defined as the slaying of four or more victims in a single event, by one or more offenders, lasting for a few minutes or hours (Levin & Fox, 1998; see also Dietz, 1986). For example, in October 1991, George Hennard opening fire at the Luby’s cafeteria in Killeen, Texas killing 23 people before committing suicide, is categorized as a mass murder, because the incident occurred in a single event killing multiple victims (Keeney & Heide, 1995).

Spree killing involves the killing of three or more victims within the same event but in different locations (Gebreth, 1986). An example of spree killing would be the killing of six people by William Cruse of Palm Bay, Florida, who killed his victims without a cooling off period and at different locations (Keeney & Heide, 1995).

Holmes and DeBurger (1988) proposed five elements to further differentiate serial killing from other multiple murders: (1) a serial killer continues to kill during a span of months or years; (2) the murders involve a single perpetrator; however, at times, partners do exist; (3) no previous relationship exists between the offender and victims; (4) the murders are not based on victim precipitation or crimes of passion, which means a victim’s interaction with the offender does not contribute to the crime being committed; (5) fiscal motivations are absent in most cases of serial murder.

A common stereotype is that serial killers are white males in their 20s or 30s. Even researchers in the area seem to make this mistake. Allely, Minnis, Thompson, Wilson and Gillberg (2014) did a systematic review of the literature on serial killing, and

reported that most papers reviewed included single case reports and almost always focused only on Caucasian males, disregarding female, African American, Hispanic, African and Asian serial killers. However, the arrest of Aileen Carol Wuornos in 1991 (Smothers, 1991) created a media frenzy that brought the idea of female serial killers out into the open. In percentages, female serial killers make up to 12%-15% of caught serial killers (Newton, 2006; Jenkins, 1993), and 10% of all serial killers between 2004 and 2011 were females (Hickey, 2013). There are also exceptions to the stereotype of serial killers as whites. It was noted by Jenkins (1993) that 13% of serial killers in 1993 were African Americans, growing to 21.8% by 2005 (Walsh, 2005). It is unknown what percentage of serial killers come from other races or ethnicities.

For the purpose of this study, the FBI's (2005) definition of serial killing -- "the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events" (p. 9) -- was adopted. No limits based on race, gender, or motivation were included.

Serial Killer Typologies

Researchers have come up with a plethora of etiological theories and typologies to determine the making of a serial killer. Along the way, criminologists, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals and social scientists have attempted to include various criteria for the underlying motivations of serial killers. The aim of classifying serial killers into these typologies is to gain information to further assist law enforcement agencies in profiling, investigating and eventually apprehending violent serial murderers. **Organized and disorganized killers.** Special agents from the FBI Training Academy at Quantico (Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, & D'Agostino, 1986) developed a system designed to categorize serial killers as organized or disorganized based on information

from the crime scene itself. Ressler et al. (1986) suggested that, "... facets of the criminal's personality are evident in his offense. Like a fingerprint, the crime scene can be used to aid in identifying the murderer" (p.291). They proposed that by classifying the crime scene as organized or disorganized, an offender's characteristics and behavior can be identified.

The organized killer. According to this model, organized offenders lead methodical lives that are also replicated in the way they commit crimes. They are likely to kill after experiencing some sort of trigger coming from an intimate relationship, finances or employment problems. These offenders, it is claimed, are likely to have skilled employment, be between an average to high level of intelligence, and be socially proficient. Organized offenders are said to premeditate offenses, bring weapons to commit the murder and to take them away after committing murder. Often, they restrain victims and reflect a level of control in the situation. Mostly, organized offenders' crime scenes are controlled as a consequence of them being socially skilled and being able to handle interpersonal interactions. Therefore, organized offenders are more likely to communicate or use a verbal approach with their potential victims before the violence. They choose their victims based on common characteristics such as age, physical appearance, gender, hairstyle or hair color (Vorpagel, 1982; Ressler et al., 1986; Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992; Canter, Alison, Alison and Wentink, 2004; Hickey, 2010). Borgeson and Kuehne (2012) added that most organized offenders live with a partner, are sexually competent, follow media reports of their crimes, and are mostly in a controlled and stable mood.

The disorganized killer. In contrast to the organized killers' methodical and controlled crime scenes, disorganized killers' crime scenes and characteristics suggest chaos and little premeditation before the offense. The disorganization may include evidence such as semen, blood, fingerprints or the murder weapon. Disorganized offenders are likely to be socially incompetent, have below-average intelligence and often display the body in open using minimal restraints. These offenders kill opportunistically and live close to the crime scene. The disarrayed crime scene reflects the offenders' incompetence to carry out and maintain social relationships or interactions. This lack of healthy intimate relationships increases the chances of potential sexual or sadistic acts as a part of the murders (Vorpapel, 1982; Ressler et al., 1986; Douglas et al., 1992; Canter et al., 2004; Hickey, 2010). Additionally, Borgeson and Kuehnle (2012) highlighted that most disorganized offenders live alone, are sexually incompetent, don't follow their crimes in the media, and are mostly in an anxious mood.

The mixed killer. The mixed offender classification was introduced by Douglas et al. (1992) to classify those offenders who cannot be easily identified as organized or disorganized. A serial killer falling under this classification is said to have both organized and disorganized characteristics. This type of offense may involve more than one offender, and even though there must have been some sort of planning, there may be unforeseen events. This might include a victim resisting or the offender escalating into a different pattern of violence. It is suggested that the crime may be messy with extreme violence committed against the victim. The offender might leave the victims' body poorly covered, and may be young and/or involved in drugs or alcohol. However,

numerous doubts and questions have been raised on the effectiveness and validity of the organized/disorganized/mixed typology (Canter et al., 2004).

Other typologies. Apart from the organized/disorganized typology, there are others that have been proposed to facilitate the understanding of these heinous crimes. Holmes and DeBurger (1988) classified serial killers according to the presumed psychological reinforcers and intrinsic motivations for their crimes. They identified the following types of serial killers:

1. *Visionary Type*—these offenders, believing in their psychotic symptoms, kill as a result of obeying auditory and/or visual hallucinations and/or delusions.
2. *Mission-Oriented Type*—these offenders believe that it is their sole duty to help the world get rid of certain populations. For example, prostitutes, immigrants, people of certain ethnicities, age groups, gender and so on.
3. *Hedonistic Type*—these type of offenders are divided into two categories (Holmes & Holmes, 1999):

- *The lust killer*—these types of killers obtain some sort of sexual gratification from their murders. However, their murders do not always involve traditional sexual acts, and such a killer can gain pleasure from committing the murder itself. Other ways to obtain sexual pleasure are from masturbating, cannibalizing, dismembering, indulging in necrophilia, and other such acts after killing the victim.
- *The thrill killer*—these killers are motivated by feeling the excitement during their murders. This is why their murders involve

extended periods of torture and sadism. Once they realize the victim is dead, the offender loses interest in the murder.

4. *Power/Control-Oriented Type*—these offenders derive pleasure from exerting their power, control and dominance over their victims. Their primary motive is not sexual in nature, but to make their victims feel helpless and thus, make themselves feel in control of the situation.

Canter et al. (2004) suggested that the above-mentioned typology entails the organized and disorganized typology in the form of a continuum with the visionary killer reflecting the disorganized end of the spectrum (anxious; the crime scene being disarrayed), and the power/control oriented killer reflecting the organized end (in control; planning the crime in advance).

Etiological Theories of Serial Killing

Theories about the etiology of serial killing can be generally broken into two groups: biological perspectives and psychosocial perspectives (Siegel, 2005). Biological perspectives include brain abnormalities, genetic predispositions and other factors, whereas, the psychosocial perspectives generally revolve around mental disorders, childhood trauma, and social learning related influences.

Biological perspectives. One form of biological perspective on serial killers focuses on malformations of the brain. Siegel (2005) reported that brain dysfunction levels are higher in chronic criminals as compared to non-criminals. He further described a condition called Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD), where an individual abruptly but episodically engages in maladaptive behaviors such as volatile rage, but also incorporates

kind and neutral states between episodes. MBD may result in cases entailing aggressive behavior, suicide, abuse and motiveless homicide (Siegel, 2005)

In their study of 165 motiveless murderers from all over the world, Lange and DeWitt (1990) found that many serial killers had some form of head injury or organic brain abnormalities. They concluded by stating that because of the neurological dysfunctions giving rise to seizures, serial killers act out during periods of uncontrollable brainwave activity, further causing compulsive behaviors.

Allely et al., (2014) also suggested head injury as a cause, but added other conditions affecting the brain (e.g., meningitis), during the serial killers' early years (Stone, 2009). Brain damage is suggested as a factor contributing to aggressive behavior (Nachson & Denno, 1987). Significant head injury during childhood or prenatal years may result in a deformed prefrontal cortex or dysfunctions in dopamine and/or serotonin levels, thus, leading to a predisposition to serial killing.

Allely et al. (2014) concluded that there exists a complex interaction between predisposing neurodevelopmental complications (such as head injury), stressful and/or traumatic environmental incidents and serial killing. They stressed that neurodevelopmental problems were not a single factor etiology for serial killing, and said there exists an interaction between neurodevelopmental and environmental factors such as sexual, psychological or physical abuse, leading to an individual being prone into becoming a serial killer.

Another biological perspective traced violence and criminality to biochemical imbalances—both neurochemical imbalances and non-neurochemical imbalances. For example, a condition like hypoglycemia, which arises when blood and sugar levels fall

down resulting in abnormal neurological functioning, has been associated with antisocial and violent behaviors (Fishbein, 2000). Aggressive behavior has also been associated with irregular levels of male sex hormones, such as androgens, specifically, testosterone (van Goozen, Matthys, Cohen-Kettenis, Thijssen & van Engeland, 1998).

Serial killers may be born with a need for greater stimulation as compared to the average person. Ramsland (2006) stated that with low dopamine levels, “the person seeks more stimulation and new avenues of reward” (p. 18), thus being susceptible to addictive and compulsive pleasure-seeking behaviors (Johnson, 2004). This, combined with a dysfunctional prefrontal cortex (whose primary function is to regulate complex cognitive, emotional and behavioral functioning), may result in the increase in desire and reduction in control of pleasure-seeking behaviors (Ramsland, 2006). A serial killers’ need for stimulation increases as evidenced by an increase in the rate of his or her killings over time, reflecting a compulsive and addictive pattern of behaviors (Simon, 1996; Giannangelo, 1996).

Research also suggests that low levels of serotonergic activity indicates impulsivity and self-destructive violence (Söderström, Blennow, Manhem, & Forsman, 2001), while increased levels indicate aggression (Baron-Cohen, 2011; Bell, Abrams, & Nutt, 2001; Raine, 1993; Raine, Lencz, & Scerbo, 1995; Volavka, 1995, 1999). Heide and Solomon (2006) stated that men with low levels of Monoamine oxidase A (MAO-A), an enzyme involved in the breakdown of neuroepinephrine, dopamine and serotonin, are more likely to be sentenced with a violent crime by the time they reach 26 years of age as compared to men with high MAO-A activity.

Theorists have also speculated about genetic components of criminal behavior/serial killing. Mednick, Brennan and Kandel (1988) discovered that male adoptees whose biological fathers were criminals and adoptive fathers were non-criminals, displayed a higher rate of criminality compared to male adoptees where both their biological and adoptive fathers were non-criminals. When both the biological and adoptive fathers were criminals, rate of criminality was higher still. More adoption studies provide evidence of how a combination of genetic and environmental risk factors contribute toward individuals indulging in criminal behavior. One such study found that if a child's biological and adoptive parents are both violent, 40% will end up being criminals as compared to 12.1% who will be criminals only because of the presence of the genetic factor. Only 6.7% are at risk if they experience a violent environment, and only 2.1% if they experience none of the aforementioned risk factors (Cloninger, Sigvardsson, Bohman, & von Knorring, 1982).

Psycho-social perspectives. Research on the psychosocial causes of serial killing points to the likelihood that childhood experiences – particularly abuse, loneliness and abandonment --lead serial killers to commit their crimes. Mackey and Immerman (2004) claimed that the presence of a father or a father-figure during childhood prevents/reduces violent and aggressive behavior during adulthood; Holmes and DeBurger (1985) suggested that most serial killers are born to parents out of marriage, presumably increasing the rate at which the killers were raised without one of their parents. Hickey (1997) found that among a group of 62 male serial killers, 48% faced some kind of rejection by either parent or another important person in their life.

Apart from rejection, other psychosocial factors such as childhood humiliation (Hale, 1994), neglect, early adoptions, and abandonment during childhood (Whitman & Akutagawa, 2004) have been found to relate to serial murder. These unstable and unhealthy relationships may result in the incapability of forming emotional attachments during childhood.

Research also supports the notion that physical and psychological abuse contribute to the development of serial killing. Cleary and Luxenburg (1993), in their study of more than 60 serial killers, found that a prevalent part of serial killers' childhood consisted of physical and/or psychological abuse (see also Holmes and DeBurger, 1985). Further research studying the impact of childhood abuse and neglect on adults who became serial killers concluded that adults who were emotionally, physically and sexually abused during their childhood were three times more likely than non-abused adults to act extremely violently during adulthood (Dutton & Hart, 1992).

Kesner and McKenry (1998) discovered evidence for the theory that parent-child attachments influence violent behavior. Their results showed that individuals who developed insecure and fearful attachment styles were more likely to be violent. The childhood experiences of serial killers would almost certainly lead to the development of these non-secure attachment styles. These processes would likely lead to difficulty in forming relationships, and to the development of loneliness in both childhood and adulthood. Loneliness experienced by most serial killers can be counted as a contributing factor to the motivation of controlling victims (Ramsland, 2006; Martens & Palermo, 2005). Martens & Palermo (2005), defining loneliness "as a feeling and a state of separation from others" (p. 298), suggested that there exists a link between loneliness and

violent and antisocial behavior. Based on their case reports, they concluded that serial killers who have experienced limited positive interactions or have faced rejection, neglect, or abandonment, have indulged in antisocial and violent behaviors.

The pattern of abuse and abandonment may also lead to the development of mental illness. Weatherby, Buller, and McGinnis (2009) suggested a substantial relationship between mental disorders and violent crime. Silva, Leong, and Ferrari (2004) proposed a link between Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and serial killing, however, various follow-up studies suggest that people with ASD are not likely and are maybe less likely to commit violent crimes as compared to the general population (e.g., Mouridsen, Rich, Isager, & Nedergaard, 2008). Nonetheless, Fitzgerald (2010) suggested a new diagnosis of Criminal Autistic Psychopathy, as a subcategory of Asperger's syndrome. Weatherby et al. (2009) further proposed that schizophrenics' inability to identify emotional facial expressions, among many other symptoms, influences social functioning, thus increasing the likelihood of criminal behaviors. In their study, Weiss et al. (2006) found that individuals with both schizophrenia and high numbers of arrests, performed poorly on emotional recognition tests because of their inability to recognize angry and fearful expressions. Therefore, individuals suffering from such disorders, including ASDs, are impaired in their social functioning which increases their likelihood to indulge in criminally violent behaviors. Another symptom of schizophrenia to be kept in mind are the delusions. These delusions may also play a role in the serial killing behavior.

Other disorders such as Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) have been

linked to the development of serial killing behavior. Researchers have also established that serial killers are manipulative, charming but deceitful, impulsive and lack empathy, and some of the aforementioned traits are the symptoms of ASPD and related disorders (see Egger, 1984; Krafft-Ebing, 1965; Fox & Levin, 1998). A study by Leichsenring, Kunst, and Hoyer (2003) linked borderline personality disorder to antisocial behaviors.

Cognitive rehearsal and the role of fantasies. Regardless of whether childhood experiences of stress and trauma lead to the development of a diagnosable mental disorder, Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglas, and McCormack (1986) proposed that unresolved stress feelings and the view of the world arising from experienced trauma, may cause a child to seek comfort in fantasies revolving around themes of domination and control, leading to sexual violence stemming from sexual and aggressive fantasies (Ressler & Shachtman, 1992). Similarly, Hickey (2010) proposed that obsessive fantasies of torture, control of a victim, and murder function as a coping strategy, and thus, the individual longs to act on it. Person (1995) suggested that murder fantasies stem from some sort of conflict with someone, and that murder can serve as a solution to certain problems.

Eventually, however, the fantasy is not enough to fulfill the need. Thus, when serial killers mature from their remote fantasies, their fantasies become a cognitive staging ground for actual crimes (Hickey, 1997, 2010; Simon, 1996). Some fantasies include a cognitive rehearsal for sexual murder, but, because of its constant repetition, the fantasies' cognitive rehearsal power diminishes, and that is when an individual seeks to act on them (Stein, 2004). For those who have an impaired prefrontal cortex and experience such fantasies repeatedly, it becomes additionally difficult to control

behaviors, and acting upon their fantasies seems like an easy way out. Ressler, Burgess and Douglas (1988) suggested that fantasy can be a contributing factor leading to serial killing. Moreover, if the victim does not cooperate enough or the criminal act is hindered because of unanticipated circumstances, the serial killer's fantasy is unsatisfied, leading him/her to develop new and more violent fantasies in order to reach the same level of satisfaction. As suggested by Miller (2014):

perhaps some of us have secret fantasies that resemble those of the murderer; yet, we retain control of our actual behavior and remain law-abiding members of society... whereas our involvement in such mayhem begins and ends at the level of fantasy, the perpetrator of *serial killing*, or *serial murder*, or *serial homicide* (the most common terms) goes further. For the serial killer, such fantasies are not cathartic, but facilitative, the first step, not the last. His fantasies build, along with a neuro-psycho-dynamically driven hunger that only the orgiastic release of torturing and murdering another human being will provide. What for most people (typically men) may constitute a momentary journey into cruelty during the 'heat of battle,' as, for example, in military service, becomes for the serial killer his life's guiding purpose and mission. That is why he is so relentless. That is why he will always continue to kill until he is dead or securely confined (p. 2, emphasis in the original).

The Present Study

To determine reasons as to why a person would engage in committing multiple murders, many aspects from the lives of these perpetrators' have been studied (Pincus, 2001). However, the worldview that portrays a serial killer as being a white male, an evil

monster with unusual appearance, having dysfunctional relationships (Yaksic, 2015), engaging in animal torture or being sexually or physical abused in childhood, and therefore, sadistically killing for sexual gratification should be challenged (Beasley, 2004). As contemporary research shows, serial murderers do not always encompass the aforementioned traits or behaviors (Fox & Levin, 1999; Hickey, 2015). Levin and Fox (2012) further point out that warning signs for most serial killers are not evident, and that most serial killers can go undetected. On the other hand, MacDonald (1963) proposed a triad which suggests cruelty to animals, fire-setting and recurrent bed-wetting or enuresis during childhood. This triad does not predict criminal or serial killing behavior, but offers visible warning signs of a child facing significant stress (Weatherby et al., 2009). The maladaptive behaviors included in this triad are unhealthy coping strategies as a result of the significant stress experienced by children. Hickey (2010) suggested that not all children who face stress and indulge in these maladaptive behaviors go on to become serial killers, but such behaviors have been noted in the childhoods of recognized serial killers. Weatherby et al. (2009) suggested that the MacDonald Triad be considered as cautionary signs to parents, teachers and other authority figures, indicating a need to help children presenting such behaviors.

Borgeson and Kuehnle (2012) pointed out that the current typologies being used by criminologists are based on limited data and sample size, which serves as a limitation to form theories and generalize findings to larger criminal populations. Using the same strategies, theories, and reasoning to investigate serial offenders limits law enforcement officials' and researchers' way of looking at this phenomenon. Because of the aforementioned reason, Borgeson and Kuehnle (2012) suggested that researchers treat

such typologies, theories and hypotheses as tools and not definitive facts when attempting to understand a serial offenders' behavior. Likewise, Leyton (1996) and Skrapec (2001) suggested researchers should approach with open minds while searching for knowledge relating to this phenomenon without preconceived assumptions or hypotheses.

Furthermore, every serial killers' drive to kill multiple victims may be unique, dependent on his/her history and experiences, and is therefore difficult to quantify (Yaksic, 2015).

Any determination of the motives of these killers should be concluded from an examination of observable behavior (Kraemer, Lord and Heilbrun, 2004).

In other words, this topic of study is well-suited to the use of qualitative methods, which focus on drawing inductive conclusions from the analysis of data, and emphasize the meaning of behaviors for each individual. The present qualitative study attempted to understand serial killing with a thorough analysis of the lives and behaviors of a small number of killers.

The aim of the current study was to compare detailed and descriptive accounts from the lives of 3 serial killers without keeping in mind assumptions and hypotheses, in order to find possible commonalities or differences between them as a route to identifying possible life events leading to serial killing. Starting from scratch allowed the data to speak for itself.

The Grounded Theory Method

Within the qualitative research approach, the grounded theory method was used to generate and analyze data. The term 'grounded theory' incorporates two interconnected meanings. It firstly refers to a type of theory that emerges from or is grounded in inspection and analysis of a complex amount of qualitative data. Secondly, it denotes a

method of analysis first developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967), which was further developed and adopted by researchers from an array of social sciences disciplines. Because of its theory building technique, grounded theory has gained a contemporary widespread appeal (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006; see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Charmaz (2008), the grounded theory method assembles sociological reality by conceptualizing and analyzing the constructed data. Grounded theorists analyze data gathered early in the data collection process. Unlike most traditional approaches that derive their hypotheses from existing theories, grounded theorists, being continuously involved in data collection, use the emerging theoretical categories to shape data collection, thus studying analytic categories established while studying the data. Because of grounded theorists' continual involvement in data collection, they may face the need to follow up on recurring themes, which may lead them in unanticipated directions.

For the purpose of the present study, descriptive accounts of offenders' lives (childhood, youth, and adulthood) were examined to determine potential theoretical categories which were used to analyze relationships between the key categories. This process integrated theories regarding possible etiologies of the serial killing behavior. This was achieved by keeping an open approach towards data collection, considering information from previous literature but not assuming the same. As the population being studied was either dangerous, deceased, or incarcerated, a major way to collect data was from publicly available information.

Method

Sample

A thorough search was conducted on Google by typing search terms such as, “serial killers”, “famous serial killers in America”, “famous serial killers all over the world”, and so on. This generated a list of 48 killers from all over the world including serial killers, cannibalistic serial killers, cannibals with a single victim, people indulging in cultural cannibalism, and people who ate and/or served their own flesh (see Appendix A). From this list, I selected the 3 killers who were the most famous, prominent and had rich data available, who had (a) killed multiple victims, as per the aforementioned definition of serial killers, (b) were arrested in English speaking countries, and (c) did not participate in cannibalism (Table 1).

Table 1

Serial Killers and Their Offense

| <u>Serial killers</u> | <u>Offense</u> |
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| Gary Leon Ridgway | An American serial killer, known as the Green River Killer, convicted of murdering 48 (maybe 49) young female prostitutes and runaways in Washington State between 1982 and 1998 (Kershaw, 2003; Vries, 2003). Sheltering immense rage toward women, Ridgway unleashed his serial killing career on prostitutes. Most times he choked and strangled prostitutes with his bare hands or with the help of items like an extension cord or a towel. He killed them when he was close to ejaculating or in the middle of having sex with them; thus making him ejaculate. His murder sites included his house, |

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| | <p>truck, motels and outdoor areas like forests. After dumping victims, he went back to the sites to engage in necrophilia – have sex with the dead bodies (Prothero and Smith, 2006, p. 298, p. 319, p. 321, p. 322, p. 329; Hickey, 2010).</p> |
| <p>Richard Ramirez (born Ricardo Levya Muñoz Ramirez)</p> | <p>An American serial killer who killed 13 people in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas from 1984 to 1985 (Botelho, 2013). With an aim to burglarize homes, Ramirez also spread fear through his sexually sadistic violent murders. A Satan worshipper, Ramirez killed his victims (women, men, and children) in the late hours of night or right before sunrise. He first murdered the men or boyfriends, raped the women, sometimes made their children see his sexually sadistic acts, and at times, he also molested children. His methods included stabbing, beating to death or shooting the victims. After his murders, he would ransack his victims' homes, and sometimes draw the sign of Satan's pentagram and then run away (Linedecker, 1991; Carlo, 1996; Newton, 2006).</p> |
| <p>Ted Bundy (born Theodore Robert Cowell)</p> | <p>An American serial killer who killed 20-30 young women in Utah, Colorado, and Florida, between 1973/1974 and 1978 (Truesdell, 2017). Whether at university campuses, parking lots or the Lake Sammamish State Park, Bundy adopted an interactive way to kidnap his victims. He would fake a</p> |

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| | fractured arm/leg, ask for assistance with his boat or his books, or dress and adopt a persona of an authority figure. He would then knock his victim unconscious and drive her into the wilderness to be raped, sodomized and strangled (Keppel & Birnes, 1995; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999). |
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Data Collection

As much as possible, all available information about each of the 3 killers was accumulated. I found the majority of the information from books written about each serial killer. These books included their (taped, transcribed, and/or summarized) interviews, parts of trial transcripts (which the authors attended), and secondary information from people who knew the serial killers.

Primary sources. Although a variety of sources were consulted as data, several sources were particularly valuable. Keppel and Birnes (1995) is about how Ted Bundy offered to help Keppel in investigating and finding Gary Ridgway – the ‘Green River Killer’. Robert D. Keppel was the Chief Criminal Investigator for the Washington State Attorney General’s Office. Keppel has been an investigator and/or consultant to more than 2,000 murder cases and over 50 serial murder investigations. Keppel was responsible for investigating and catching Ted Bundy, and he successfully did so. When in 1982, the hunt for the ‘Green River Killer’ began, Bundy wrote from death row to offer his help in catching the killer. The book reports interviews with Bundy where

Bundy was educating Keppel to understand serial killers, and on the other hand, Keppel was trying to obtain confessions from Bundy (Keppel & Birnes, 1995).

Michaud and Aynesworth (1989) is based on more than 150 hours of tape-recorded interviews with Ted Bundy while on death row. With the help of the taped interviews, the book outlines the process of Bundy's urges to his sexually sadistic serial murders. Michaud was a journalist and staff editor and reporter for Newsweek and Business Week magazines. Aynesworth was an investigative reporter for ABC's 20/20, a bureau chief for Newsweek, and an editor for daily newspapers such as The Dallas Morning News and the Dallas Times Herald. The contents of Michaud and Aynesworth's interviews with Bundy helped break Keppel's barriers to gain a confession (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). Michaud and Aynesworth (1999) further explores Bundy's life with the tape-recorded interviews with Bundy while on death row (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1999).

Linedecker (1999) is an account of Ramirez's thievery, rape, torture and murders. Information in this book comes from interviews, and official police and court records. The book is based on and starts from his childhood in El Paso to his crimes in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The author, Clifford L. Linedecker, was a former daily newspaper journalist and an investigative reporter with 18 years of experience at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Rochester Times-Union, Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, and several other Indiana newspapers (Linedecker, 1991).

Carlo (1996) describes Ramirez's childhood in El Paso to his crimes in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The book is based on nearly 100 hours of interviews with Richard Ramirez while on death row. The author, Philip Carlo, was American journalist

and a best-selling biographer for Thomas Pitera, Richard Kuklinski, Anthony Casso, and Richard Ramirez (Carlo, 1996).

Rule (2004) outlines the two decades of intense investigations to catch Gary Ridgway. This book includes information from official police records, transcripts, photographs and maps. Ann Rule did not know Ridgway but he apparently knew her and attended her book signings. A former police officer and a civilian advisor to the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program Task Force, Ann Rule presents and validates a comprehensible account of the hunt and investigation of Gary Ridgway (Rule, 2004).

Prothero and Smith (2006) is an account by Ridgway's co-lead defense attorney (Mark Prothero), who spent years representing Ridgway. Smith is an award winning journalist who contributed as an investigative reporter on the Green River murder case. Information in this book was obtained from various interviews, transcripts, and the authors' personal recollections and notes from conversations with Gary Ridgway (Prothero & Smith, 2006).

Procedure and Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed using methods of grounded theory (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978). This method analyzed data from the beginning of the data collection process. Coding categories were generated in an ongoing process while data was examined, thus, allowing the data to drive the analysis. This initial coding facilitated the constant comparison of data to find similarities and differences within the information collected for each serial killer, and also between serial killers. This process of constant comparison was accomplished by paying attention to and coding important lines/sentences or parts of it from every source that was read.

This helped identify, record and detail important fragments (similar and dissimilar) of data relating to serial killers' lives. Through this, I remained open to the data, paid attention to the nuances, explored leads, identified implicit concerns, and dissected and compared each explicit line or statement within a serial killer's life and/or between serial killers. Lines of data were compared to my conceptualization of previously coded lines from other sources. Thus, line-by-line coding helped me think critically, ask questions about the data and identify significant commonalities, differences, and/or contradictions within the data on a particular serial killer or between serial killers. By using this initial technique, and as a result of coding data, I developed categories. These categories and their inter-relations encompassed possible theories regarding the etiology or causes of these killers' behaviors.

The initial coding phase was temporary, comparative and grounded in the data, which helped me see the world through the offenders' eyes, and facilitated new ideas about the etiology and psychological makeup of serial killers. From the very beginning, while comparing and reviewing information with information, information with code, code with code, codes of information with other codes, codes with categories and concepts with categories, the process of memo-writing was embarked upon. Memos were my notes on developing conceptual relationships and ideas.

During the coding process, *in vivo* codes were formed which included the offenders' special terms that captured significant meaning or experience. These codes reflected offenders' essential assumptions, meanings and their views. While looking for implicit meanings, I looked for how these meanings may have been constructed and acted upon. On one hand, this initiated new categories while further comparing data, and on

another, it focused on which categories a particular code suggests. In short, in vivo codes mirrored assumptions and world-views of the offenders, including meanings that framed their actions. Therefore, studying these helped me explore leads to develop a deeper and better understanding of what they mean.

The next step was to generate focused codes. These were the most frequently occurring or significant initial codes. These significant initial line-by-line codes were studied to synthesize and explain larger fragments of data. As a part of the focused coding process, theoretical codes were highlighted to show possible associations between categories. These theoretical codes further emphasized how essential codes are related to each other as possible hypotheses.

After the formation of theoretical categories, more data was collected to fill in the gaps and further refine these categories. This established differences and relationships between categories, relating to data within and between serial killers. More appropriate and relevant data was collected to elaborate and hone the categories in emerging theories, and when no new properties were found to develop a theoretical category, or no relationships were established between categories, theoretical saturation was achieved. With the help of memos, categories were sorted to fit them into emerging theories (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978).

Using this process without keeping in mind assumptions and hypotheses enabled me to gather information with an open mind. Starting from scratch allowed the detailed and descriptive data to speak for itself. Commonalities and differences between the 3 serial killers served as a route to identifying possible life events and factors leading to serial killing.

Serial Killer Biographies

Ted Bundy. Ted Bundy was born into a stable, loving, lower middle class Methodist family. His mother had him out of wedlock and therefore his grandfather pretended to adopt him. At age 4, Bundy and his mother moved to Tacoma, Washington. Within a short span of time, his mother married an army cook, and Bundy was forced to live in a meager lifestyle, leading him to resent the rich and fortunate. Bundy's classmates remember him to be loving, intelligent and popular. However, as reported by Bundy, things changed in high school and he seemed to have lost his self-confidence, became more alienated and did not perform as well in school. In 1965, he enrolled at the University of the Puget Sound, but Bundy felt lonely and unfamiliar with the surroundings. In 1967, he transferred from University of the Puget Sound to University of Washington's Asian studies program. Here, Bundy met Marjorie, who went to school at the University of Washington and was from a wealthy family in San Francisco; the two became a couple and this was the start of Bundy's first serious relationship. While he was walking around the street one evening, by chance, Bundy watched a woman undress through a window. After this incident, he began to look for more opportunities to see women undress. Bundy was granted a scholarship at Stanford and followed Marjorie to San Francisco. In San Francisco, Bundy's performance in Chinese Language studies dropped, Marjorie broke up with him, and he returned to Tacoma. At this time, he engaged in thievery and voyeuristic activities. Alongside, Bundy entered the world of politics and worked on campaigns. In September of 1971, he was employed at the Seattle Crisis Clinic. Bundy graduated from the University of Washington with a Psychology degree in 1972, and was accepted at the Utah College of Law. He dropped out of law

school and this was the time he began trolling for victims. Ted Bundy was a mobile serial killer who committed his murders in California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. In January of 1989, Bundy was executed in Florida (Keppel & Birnes, 1995; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1999).

Gary Ridgway. Ridgway was born in 1949 in Salt Lake city, Utah, into a working-class family and was one of the three sons born to his domineering mother and submissive father. He graduated from high school in 1969 after being held back two grades. He was a slow learner, committed arson, stabbed a six year old boy and suffocated a pet cat. He joined the Navy in 1969 and decided to go fight in Vietnam and was sent to a duty station in San Diego. It was during this time that he discovered Filipina prostitutes and contracted a venereal disease. He was honorably discharged in 1971. Gary Ridgway was married three times. His first two wives had affairs and divorced him. His first marriage in 1970 ended in divorce in 1972. His second marriage in 1973 lasted until 1981, just one year before he embarked on his murderous career. His son was born to his second wife in 1975. He married for the third time in 1988 and legally separated in 2002. His third wife said they had a happy marriage and that he was a reliable, regular employee at the same job (truck painter in factory) for 32 years. Ridgway eluded police by leaving fake evidence at the crime scenes and made sure to trim the victim's fingernails. DNA technology led to the arrest of Gary Ridgway in 2001, and he admitted to his killing of almost fifty prostitutes (Rule, 2004; Prothero & Smith, 2006).

Richard Ramirez. Ramirez was born in El Paso, Texas on February 28, 1960. He went through difficult times while growing up. He witnessed violence and physical abuse on his brothers by their father, and his cousin, Mike, introduced him to drugs, thievery

and sexually sadistic pictures and stories. Because of these influences, Ramirez always almost indulged in petty crimes and became alienated from his parents. At 12 years old, Ramirez witnessed Mike kill his wife. In 1977, Ramirez was sent to a juvenile detention center for a series of petty crimes. He was also put on probation for marijuana possession in 1982. Soon after this, Ramirez moved to California and continued to commit similar crimes such as burglary, possession of cocaine, and car theft charge – which resulted in a jail sentence. Ramirez committed his murders from 1984-1985. In 1989, Ramirez, aged 29, was convicted of 13 murders, five attempted murders, 11 sexual assaults and 14 burglaries. He was sentenced to die in California's gas chamber (Linedecker, 1999; Carlo 1996).

Results

The grounded theory method was utilized to find commonalities and differences between the lives of 3 serial killers as a route for identifying life events leading to serial killing. Without hypotheses or assumptions, I began collecting data with only one question in mind: what has led these offenders to commit such crimes? Analyses began early on in the data collection process. Unlike processes in quantitative data collection which use established codes and categories, I created codes by defining and giving meanings to data (Charmaz, 2008). Initial line by line coding involved the naming of each line of data (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978). Taking the smallest statements/lines apart and studying their implicit and/or explicit meanings enabled me to better understand and shape emerging analytic categories (Charmaz, 2008). Initial line by line coding was followed by focused coding which incorporated significant initial codes, which were then developed into categories to formulate factors. For example, one of the categories –

stress/trauma – came into being with the help of the following few line by line codes for each serial killer:

1. Ted Bundy: Failure in law school and attending a “second rate” law school, a repeat of his 1967 Chinese studies (giving up on his Chinese studies), failure and inability to succeed (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 82, lines 1-29). Vent tension and frustration (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 138, lines 24-27). Need to kill depending on several factors – principally stress (in vivo code) (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 143, lines 13-15). Stress and its long term effect on Ted Bundy’s personality (in vivo code) (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 60, lines 1-28; p. 61, lines 1-5).
2. Richard Ramirez: Observed physical abuse on brothers (Carlo, 1996, p. 197, lines 7-12; p. 198, lines 3-10). Observation of father’s anger and self-harm (Carlo, 1996, p. 198, lines 4-34). Witnessing sister-in-law’s murder (Carlo, 1996, p. 211, lines 3-4, lines 12-13). Effect and negative (violent) influence of witnessing sister in-law’s murder (Carlo, 1996, p. 211, lines 17-19, lines 22-23, line 31).
3. Gary Ridgway: Dissolution of first two marriages leading to stress (Prothero and Smith, 2006, p. 113, lines 5-38). Stress and adjustment issues after first wife left him (in vivo code) (Prothero and Smith, 2006, p. 118, lines 18-26). Stress and adjustment issues after second wife left him (Prothero and Smith, 2006, p. 120, lines 27-33). Pressure and stress to

perform sexual acts in a hurry (Prothero and Smith, 2006, p. 298, lines 15-22).

As a result of the two phases of the coding process, the following factors were identified:

1. Stress/trauma
2. Power/control
3. Need for belonging
4. Loneliness
5. Low self-esteem
6. Sexually sadistic and violent pornography
7. The American culture
8. Peer influences
9. Satanism
10. Parent relationship patterns
11. Neurodevelopmental complications

Stress/trauma. Researchers (e.g., Whitman & Akutagawa, 2004) have focused on how neglect, early adoptions and abandonment contribute to the lack of emotional attachments in early childhood relationships, directly leading to serial killing. Even though research on the psychosocial causes of serial killing have focused on childhood experiences – particularly abuse, loneliness and abandonment leading serial killers to commit their crimes, I found patterns of life events where two of the serial killers were abandoned/faced rejection in their romantic relationships in adulthood, and the other was repeatedly exposed to significant violence since childhood (Rule, 2004; Prothero &

Smith, 2006; Linedecker, 1991; Carlo, 1996; Keppel & Birnes, 1995; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999). This partly constitutes the first factor – stress/trauma.

For example, in 1967, Bundy attended an international affairs lecture on mainland China, and decided to transfer from University of the Puget Sound to University of Washington's Asian studies program. Here, he met his first serious girlfriend – Marjorie Russell (a pseudonym). In order to please and sway Marjorie, Bundy spent the summer following his sophomore year at Stanford University's intensive Chinese language program. However, Bundy underestimated the workload and found it hard to keep up. As he fell behind in his Chinese language studies, Marjorie ended their relationship on the basis of Bundy's immaturity. For example, he would sneak up on her, tap on her shoulder and then disappear. Marjorie later told investigators that incidents like the aforementioned annoyed her and that she advised him to grow up.

These events were highly stressful for Bundy. He described the year after Marjorie left him, and his simultaneous lack of success in his Chinese studies, as “absolutely the pits for me – the lowest time ever.” As Bundy's brother said, “[Marjorie] screwed him for a while. He came home and seemed pretty upset and moody. I'd never seen him like that before. He was in charge of his emotions.” Bundy's mother reported, “As I understand it, she told him she couldn't wait around for Ted to have it made. If she found somebody else, she'd go that way. He was pretty hurt by that” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 67-69).

Richard Ramirez witnessed violence from a young age. For example, Ramirez observed physical abuse by his father on his older brothers (Carlo, 1996, p. 197, p. 198),

he observed his father's anger and saw his father use a hammer to hit his (his father's) head until it bled (Carlo, 1996, p. 198); he also witnessed the murder of his cousin's wife, at the hands of his cousin (Carlo, 1996, p. 211).

The hurt Gary Ridgway experienced while separating from his ex-wives was a likely contributor to his decision to kill prostitutes. This is evidenced by Ridgway's response when he was asked about why he wanted to kill prostitutes: "Because women hurt me and I was just..." (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 369). When specifically asked about which women hurt him, Ridgway mentioned his ex-wives' names (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 370, p. 273 & Rule, 2004, p. 590). Ridgway also found it difficult to adjust to his life after both divorces:

I felt like my life was going down the tubes. I had my weekends free, but I had nothing to do. A friend of ours called me a week later and told me he'd seen Claudia with a black guy... I was hurt. I would much rather have had her tell me that she was going with another guy. I still loved her and loved her for years afterward. I never got over it. I was stupid and called her a whore. Deep down inside, I knew she didn't like black guys. For years, if people asked me about her, I'd say she was a whore (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 118).

It was terrible for me, missed the boy [Ridgway's son]... She [second wife] moved into an apartment in Kent. Several times, I'd go over there, and I didn't want to harass her... I'd just go over and sit in the car a ways away. Didn't have the nerve to go and talk to her. Probably for a month, I'd go over, three hours a night. I didn't want to pressure her... I wanted to be close to her. Kind of

hard to explain to my parents... It was hard to tell anybody (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 120).

When confronted about how the killed prostitutes were not related in any way to what Ridgway's ex-wives did to him, Ridgway justified killing the prostitutes by saying that they were his "... escape goat" ([sic], Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 370).

Many authors (Canter et al., 2004; Douglas et al., 1992; Hickey, 2010; Ressler et al., 1986; Vorpapel, 1982) have argued that the lack of healthy intimate relationship patterns increases chances of sexual or sadistic acts as a part of serial killers' murders, and all three serial killers indulged in sexually sadistic acts (See Table 1).

Bundy's and Ridgway's experiences are part of the roughly half of the male serial killers studied by Hickey (1997) who faced some kind of rejection by an important person in their life. Ramirez's early environmental exposure to aggression and violence is in consistent with adoption studies which provided evidence of a combination of genetic and environmental risk factors contributing toward individuals indulging in criminal behavior (e.g., Cloninger et al., 1982).

Kesner and McKenry's (1998) evidence for the theory that parent-child attachments influence violent behavior stands true for Richard Ramirez. Their results showed that individuals who developed insecure and fearful attachment styles were violent. From when Richard was two years old, his father mercilessly cursed and beat his older children for stealing, breaking into houses and getting arrested. While his father took out his physical aggression on himself and on Richard's older siblings, Richard would hide, shiver and cry in the arms of his sister (Carlo, 1996, p. 196-198). Kesner and McKenry (1998) predicted that such childhood experiences of serial killers would almost

certainly lead to the development of non-secure attachment styles, and that these processes would likely lead to difficulty in forming relationships, and to the development of loneliness in both childhood and adulthood – as experienced by Richard Ramirez.

Ramirez also said:

More than him actually hitting me, I was afraid of it in my mind. I'd seen him beat Ruben and Robert, and I'd seen him lose his temper over the television not working right when he wanted it to. They say it's worse to see someone you love getting tortured or hurt than being tortured or hurt yourself. I don't know if that's true or not, but I was real frightened of my father. When he lost it, I ran and hid, scared shit (Carlo, 1996, p. 201).

Combined with the stress/trauma category, the effect and sense of failure in life also seems to have played a role in the lives of Bundy and Ridgway. Bundy's failure in Chinese studies in 1967 (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 69) is a pivotal example for the stress he experienced. After giving up on Chinese studies and going through a hurtful breakup, Bundy switched his academic focus to urban planning; here, too, he failed, creating another stressor. (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 69). Bundy partly blamed his family for not preparing him enough "...to totally avoid failure", thus resulting in his urges to kill as a coping mechanism (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 62; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 158).

Ridgway explained his own failures as related to how he was controlled by women and could not stand up for himself or even support himself (see Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 329). As expressed by Ridgway (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 382), women being preferred over men at work in terms of shift hours seemed unfair to him.

The woman got preferential treatment to stop working night hours and that made Ridgway mad – thinking that he had been taken advantage of by being “stuck” working the night shift (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 382). Killing prostitutes was a way of Ridgway settling scores with women (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p.383). Another part of failure resulted from how pressurized and stressed Ridgway felt in doing his job the right way; for example, he felt like physically hitting someone at work when stressed out or murdering a prostitute after work (see Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 354, p. 355). However, as expressed by Ridgway, on less stressful days, where he performed well or was appreciated for his good work, he did not experience the need to kill (Rule, 2004, p. 583).

Later on in Bundy’s and Ridgway’s lives, daily stress and hassles – jobs, losing money or wallet, financial difficulties, relationship issues, failure or pressure to perform sexually – became natural triggers to relieve frustrations by killing other people (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 138; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 194; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 250; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 336; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 273; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 298; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 319; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 321). For example, Bundy, speaking of himself in the third person, said:

It is clear that the Sammamish incident (see Table 1) was either the result of the venting of a great amount of tension, or frustration that had accumulated over a long period of time. Or it was an attempt to indulge in a different MO (Michaud and Ayncsworth, 1999, p. 138).

and

Oh, surely. Again, 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 and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 194).

and

Well, we talked again, about... we have to go back to the root causes of the person – the causes we can identify in trying to determine why any individual would undertake to kill persons in this way. And we said that this person was reacting inappropriately to stress from his own environment. We're talking about stress as an umbrella label for any number of things. Uh, stress in his personal life. Let's say, a financial situation... uh, his own sense of self-esteem and fulfillment. The failures in his life... other forms of anxieties. You might be talking about conditions even after environmental stresses we've talked about. Sexual stimuli in the environment that he may be paying attention to on TV...or even a highly violent stimulating kind of movie (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 250).

When Ridgway was asked if he just woke up on a day and decided to kill his first victim, he said, "No, I think when I picked her up, I was going to kill her." When asked about "what clicked?" Ridgway said:

Probably worked up to that. It wasn't probably just all at one time.

Worked up from the stuff that happened to me at the house. Stuff that happened to me at work. Happened from me getting my wallet stolen. It could have been the day before that, that women stole my money, eighty bucks. It was in the backseat of my truck, behind the seat. I had money in there they stole, and somebody might

have pissed me off at work that day. I screwed up (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 336).

In another conversation when the author asked Ridgway about why he killed these women, Ridgway blamed his second ex-wife and said, “I was just so mad at Marcia. She treated me bad during the divorce. I just wanted to kill her” (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 273). When questioned about why he killed prostitutes instead, Ridgway said:

If I had killed Marcia, I would have been the number-one suspect. I guess I just hated all women. I hated them [prostitutes] if all they worried about was their money and time. Like, ‘hurry up. I gotta get back.’ That kinda stuff. You know, that would kind of set me off into a rage. Those were the ones I killed. But if she was nice and treated me like we were on a real date and not so worried about time and money, then I wouldn’t kill her (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 273).

Ridgway also mentioned that he killed his victims in the middle of his “date.” The following quote implies stress and anxiety experienced by him right before he killed the victims:

Well, I had so much uh, hate in my, in myself that, that I’d uh... cause I had a lot of things I didn’t stand up for, so I... I dated a woman. If she would have sex – if it was a motel or whatever – if she... lied to me about...anything, or hurrying me and not enjoying the sex, um... a culmination of all those, or, or some of ‘em, uh, during the middle. And... and a lot of ‘em were over by the airport – the, the uh, noise set me off. I know one of ‘em... like a truck came by and, and it set me off. And plus, the, the women lyin’ to me (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 298).

In another quote about another victim, Ridgway said, "... She liked me touching her. She liked me... she um...she would make me come on top of her and this last time when I killed her, I couldn't come because of the hurryingness and...[Ridgway was interrupted by the interviewer]" (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 321).

Power/control. The process of possessing victims, having the power over someone else's life, and eventually possessing their lives by killing them, immensely stimulated these serial killers. This brings us to the next factor – Power/control. Possessing physical and psychological power and control over the victims is what gratified the three serial killers (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 124; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 128; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 137; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 143; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 145; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 316; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 326; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 335; Keppel & Birmes, 1995, p. 289; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 202; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 248; Carlo, 1996, p. 28; Carlo, 1996, p. 60; Carlo, 1996, p. 215; Linedecker, 1991, p. 8; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 146; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 273; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 319; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 329; Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 370; Rule, 2004, p. 167; Rule, 2004, p. 592; Rule, 2004, p. 636).

For example, after failing his first serious relationship and Chinese studies, Bundy was left in uncertainty about what to do next in his life. He did not want to return to school as he developed a fear of bumping into Marjorie. From whatever money he had saved, he took a flying trip around the country, and still unable to face Marjorie and return to the classes he failed in, Bundy withdrew from school. He said,

I absorbed all this uncertainty, and all this confusion about why I was doing what I was doing, wondering where I was going, all by myself. Because I'm not the kind of person who socialized a lot, there was no way to let off steam (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 70).

In order to "let off steam" resulting from the above-mentioned life situations, Bundy engaged in compulsive and impulsive thievery (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 70). Michaud and Aynesworth (1999) suggest that it is also possible Bundy treated his victims as his stolen possessions (p. 326). Bundy, again referring to himself in the third person, stated:

One element that came into play was anger, hostility. But I don't think that was an overriding emotion when he would go out hunting. On most occasions, it was a high degree of anticipation, of excitement, or arousal. It was an adventuristic kind of thing. The fantasy is always more stimulating than the aftermath of the crime itself. He should have recognized that what really fascinated him was the hunt, the adventure of searching out his victims. And, to a degree, possessing them physically, as one would possess a potted plant, a painting, or a Porsche. Owning, as it were, this individual (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 124).

and

I think we see a point reached – slowly, perhaps – where the control, the possession aspect, came to include, within its demands, the necessity... for purposes of gratification... the killing of the victims... Perhaps it came to be seen that the ultimate possession was, in fact, the taking of the life. And then purely...

the physical possession of the remains... (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, Ted Bundy Talks about Himself section, para 1)

Lastly, Bundy indicated that his failure to control his life served as an additional attribute for him committing such “illegal” and “immoral” acts (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 248).

What happened was that this entity inside him was not capable of being controlled any longer, at least not for any considerable period of time. It began to try to justify itself, to create rationalizations for what it was doing (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 124).

Common factors such as thievery and power/control were also found in Ramirez’s crimes. Shortly before Mike had killed his own wife, Jessie, Ramirez was breaking into houses when no one was there and stealing whatever he wanted. This gave him a feeling of power (Carlo, 1996, p. 215). Therefore, Ramirez’s future crimes of breaking into houses, stealing, and finally murdering occupants in the homes is explained by the sexual stimulation and power he experienced (Carlo, 1996, p. 215, p. 220; Linedecker, 1991, p. 8). Ramirez said, “It’s like nothing else; you can’t explain its intensity in words. To have that power over life – nothing is more sexually exciting; it’s the ultimate, something very few people experience” (Carlo, 1996, p. 60).

In contrast to Bundy and Ramirez, there is no evidence of Ridgway engaging in thievery. Ridgway desired to control and kill prostitutes (Rule, 2004, p. 592, p. 636) because they (women in general) always controlled him otherwise. Ridgway said, “...Back then I was just a... I was just a wimp, and then when I was... I had control when I was... when I killed the women. I got my rage out for the time” (Prothero & Smith,

2006, p. 329); "Pleasure in killing is to uh, get ... you know, be [in] control. To ha... have sex with 'em if I wanted afterwards, and to uh, take away uh, uh, another woman that, so she won't hurt anybody else" (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 370). If Ridgway's meetings with a prostitute did not go as planned -- for example, if she would not take a shower with him if he wanted to, or if she was indifferent during sex and in a hurry -- he ended up killing her (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 322 & Rule, 2004, p. 606). Ridgway wanted to at least be free from control by prostitutes, especially when he felt out of control from his work. He said,

Oh, uh, jus uh, anybody that uh, you know, kidded me during the... for some reason, you know, kidded me or, or uh, I had problems with 'em, putting the right formulas in and so my da... back there I had to have a lot of uh, things just didn't si – sink in my mind... memory, and I'd put the wrong chemicals in and put the wrong combinations of it, and I ruined about three or four trucks during the day. So that made me mad, and I didn't have no way of uh, controlling that 'til later on, when uh, was around a prostitute. That's when I started killin' prostitutes, about that time (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 355).

The aforementioned examples from the data exhibit the origins, importance and reasons for all three serial killers' need to exhibit power and control over their victims. This finding brings to mind Holmes and DeBurger's (1988) power/control-oriented killer who derives pleasure from exerting power, control and dominance over victims. Making their victims feel helpless makes these killers feel in control of the situation.

Need for belonging. Apart from feeling powerful and in control of their victims, Richard Ramirez felt connected to victims by going through their things, Gary Ridgway

felt comforted while in the company of prostitutes, and Ted Bundy felt like he was a part of his victims. For example, Special Agent Bill Hagmaier from the Behavioral Science Unit, after interviewing Bundy, said the following to Michaud and Aynesworth (1999, p. 335):

He [Bundy] said, that after a while, murder isn't just a crime of lust or violence. 'It becomes possession. They are a part of you. After a while, when you plan these, that person becomes a part of you and you are forever one.' He [Bundy] said that even after twenty or thirty that it's the same thing, because you're the last one there. 'He [Bundy] said, You feel the last bit of breath leaving their body.' And he [Bundy] said, 'You're looking into their eyes and basically, a person in that situation is God! You then possess them and they shall forever be a part of you. And the grounds where you kill them or leave them become sacred to you, and you will always be drawn back to them'.

As for Richard Ramirez and his future crimes of breaking into houses, stealing and murdering occupants – it all began when Ramirez was 12 years old and witnessed his cousin, Mike, killing his [Mike's] wife. Mike murdering his wife in front of Richard left Richard traumatized, troubled and shocked (Carlo, 1996, p. 211-212). But when Richard returned to the apartment with his parents to pick up his dead sister in law's jewelry, he felt something for the very first time:

That day I went back to the apartment, it was like some kind of mystical experience. It was all quiet and still and hot in there. You could smell the dried blood. Particles of dust just seemed to hover in the air. I looked at the place where Jessie had fallen and died, and I got this kind of tingly feeling. It was the strangest

thing. Then my father told me to look in her pocketbook for this jewelry my cousin wanted, and I dumped Jessie's pocketbook on the bed and looked through her things. It gave me the weirdest feeling – I mean, I knew her, and these were her things, and she was dead. Murdered. Gone. And I was touching her things. It made me feel... in contact with her (Carlo, 1996, p. 212).

As a child, Ridgway was bullied in school (Rule, 2004, p. 130) and in adulthood he was bullied at work as evidenced by co-workers teasing him for his bad ideas and calling him names. In response to Ridgway feeling rejected and being teased/bullied by co-workers, Ridgway's need for comfort was met by him paying prostitutes for it. He said:

You learn to take it and you learn to give it out, too [feeling unaccepted and teased/bullied by co-workers], but it did bother me. I had the problem with prostitution, and I didn't have anyone to go to. There was no way out, I paid for the warmth and someone to talk to (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 145-146).

and

Well, I hated them if all they worried about was their money and time. Like, 'hurry up. I gotta get back.' That kinda stuff. You know... that would kind of set me off into a rage. Those were the ones I killed. But if she was nice and treated me like we were on a real date and not so worried about time and money, then I wouldn't kill her (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 273).

The above-mentioned data for each serial killer indicates some kind of connection or a sense of belongingness between them and their victims.

Loneliness. I found little evidence that suggests a solitary life led by Richard Ramirez during his serial killing career (Carlo, 1996, p. 25). Ramirez did not ever have

an honest job and his days started by waking up in a hotel, going out for breakfast, gambling, using drugs, and then either going to a theatre that showed pornographic movies twenty-four hours a day or looking at magazines involving sexual bondage. The only time he would make an effort to socialize was when he had to sell the goods and/or jewelry that he stole from houses, or engage in sex with a prostitute (Carlo, 1996, p. 52, p. 60, p. 127-128, p. 154; Linedecker, 1991, p. 112, p. 133, p. 138).

Bundy described his youth as being self-contained, where his favorite pastime was to listen to late-night talk shows – feeling comforted, as if people were talking to him (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 61; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 11). Bundy said:

In junior high school, everything was fine. Nothing that I can recall happened that summer before my sophomore year to stunt me, or otherwise hinder my progress. But I got to high school and I didn't make any progress. How can I say it? I am at a loss to describe it even now. Maybe I didn't have the role models at home that could have aided me in school. I don't know. But I felt alienated my old friends. They just seemed to move on, and I didn't. I don't know why, and I don't know if there is an explanation. Maybe it's something that was programmed by some kind of genetic thing. In my early schooling it seemed like there was no problem in learning what the appropriate social behaviors were. It just seemed like I hit a wall in high school (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 64).

Bundy also felt completely isolated in his freshman year – “my social life was a big zero. I spent a great deal of time with myself. It was a lonely year for me, and it was worse

because I didn't have my old neighborhood buddies around" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 67-69). Bundy also said that he never spoke about any of the issues he faced in school with his mother or a counselor because he thought there was nothing wrong (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 64). Throughout Bundy's life, he questioned social interactions and relationships, and felt he would never be socially adept (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 66-67; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 12; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 14). Instead, he invested his time in academics in the school classroom (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 14), and later in adulthood in Chinese studies, law, and urban planning – but he failed at all three (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 69, p. 70, p. 72, p. 82).

While in school, Gary Ridgway was far behind everyone else in social interaction and this was because he moved from city to city with his parents (Rule, 2004, p. 164). Ridgway's inability to engage in social relationships is also highlighted by the fact that he sometimes paid prostitutes to only talk to him (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 132, p.145-146).

Loneliness and the need for power/control have been common themes in the lives and crimes of all three serial killers. Loneliness experienced by most serial killers can be counted as a contributing factor to the motivation of controlling victims (Ramsland, 2006; Martens & Palermo, 2005). This suggestion serves as an important link between loneliness and power/control factors. Martens & Palermo (2005), also said that loneliness may be harmful for people who are at risk for antisocial behaviors, especially when other facilitators come into play, such as substance use, a violent, criminal or indifferent environment, and lack of self-esteem. Both, Bundy and Ramirez used substances before,

during and after their crimes of exerting power/control over their victims (Carlo, 1996, p. 25-26, p. 216, p.218, p. 220, p. 229, p. 235-237; Linedecker, 1991, p. 131, p. 133; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 121, p. 137, p. 147, p. 220-221, p. 232, p. 234; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 30, p. 71. p. 260); and Ramirez was raised in a criminal and violent environment.

Low self-esteem. Both Ted Bundy and Gary Ridgway experienced low self-esteem but there is no evidence of the same for Richard Ramirez.

Bundy counted low self-esteem as one of his stressors, saying:

When people have – are – unable to cope with some part of their life – the feelings of discontent, loneliness, alienation, self-esteem, or whatever it is – they usually attribute their state of mind to one degree or another to society at large.

And they finally choose some way of venting what they have inside (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 203; see also Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 194; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 250).

Bundy stated that he never found the support at home or in his family to help him out with sports (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 11-12). And when he was not selected for the school basketball and baseball teams, Bundy thought it was something personal (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 61-62; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 12). He said, “I always felt I was too small. This feeling began to emerge in junior high school. That I didn’t have the weight or physique for sports. It wasn’t true, hut I never pushed myself” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 11). Bundy emphasized the fact that he did not find himself attractive and was insecure about this (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 65). He said:

I don't think people perceived me this way but I saw myself as meek. I perceived myself to be easily intimidated. And somewhat unsophisticated. Uninteresting...even unattractive. Not in a gross, accentuated way that would keep me shuddering in my apartment all day, but in a mild way that sort of took the edge off things. When people were genuinely interested in me, I seldom picked up on it. Simply, I just didn't appreciate my worth. It's strange, isn't it, that under these circumstances, today I probably have a stronger self-image that I ever did before? (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 24).

Ridgway found it hard to play sports with students ahead of his grade, and graduating from high school at the age of 20 seems to be a contributor to his low self-esteem (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 105). According to Prothero and Smith (2006), in his adulthood, Gary Ridgway was left distraught with a sense of self-doubt after being abandoned and divorced by his ex-wives who cheated on him (p. 117-118, p. 120). Ridgway also articulated that he paid to meet and be with thin prostitutes because he thought he would never be able to spend time with thinner women otherwise:

The women I tend to love are heavysset people. Claudia was pretty slim but... maybe I had a guilt complex about...the only thing I could pick up was a heavysset woman...that's why I paid to have the (thinner) women love me. Even just being in the car with them. I couldn't pick one up naturally. That was one of the reasons I went out with them. I've got something penned up inside (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 132).

He further went on to say, "You don't see two big heavysset people getting together... the [thin women] ones I could never get, it's always Tom Cruise and the slim woman"

(Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 134). In other quotes, Ridgway emphasized how his low self-esteem and hatred for himself for not standing up for himself played a role in his killings. He expressed that he was not strong enough to stand up for himself when women often controlled and took advantage of him (for example, at work and experiences with his ex-wives) which resulted in him exerting power and control over his victims (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 329, p. 370, p. 273, p. 382, p. 383 & Rule, 2004, p. 590). He mentioned dissatisfactions such as the prostitute lying, being in a hurry and/or asking for money, not enjoying the sex, not satisfying him, and/or noise from the airport or trucks as reasons for killing them (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 298, p. 319, p. 321 & p. 322).

Hickey (2002) stated that childhood traumatization tends to manifest as rejection, mistrust, anxiety, confusion and results in loss of self-esteem. Although I did not find much evidence of childhood trauma for Bundy and Ridgway, they did experience trauma and stress as a result of abandonment from their serious romantic relationships in adulthood. It is possible that these events triggered underlying feelings about past experiences of low self-esteem and confusion about social interactions from adolescence. The abandonment experience for both these serial killers seems to have refueled their low self-esteem, possibly making it worse, and thus resulting in serial killing as a coping mechanism. Hickey's (2002) finding is also evidence for why Ramirez's early and continued exposure to violence and aggression resulted in him being mistrustful of people in general.

Sexually sadistic and violent pornography. This factor has played a part in initiating and facilitating Bundy's and Ramirez's serial killing careers. For example, Bundy expressed how sexual violence was incorporated in his thoughts on sex in general,

and how violent pornography shaped and directed his crimes which started by peeping into windows and watching women (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 20, p. 75, p. 120, p. 121, p. 123 & Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 63, p. 68, p. 69, p. 250).

He [Bundy referring to himself] was walking down the street one evening and just totally by chance looked up into the window of a house and saw a woman undressing. He began with increasing regularity to canvass, as it were, the community he lived in. He peeped in windows and watched women undress or whatever could be seen during the evening. He approached it almost like a project, throwing himself into it, literally for years. Still, these occasions when he travel about the neighborhood and search out candidates, places where he could see the things he wanted to see, were dictated by the demands of his normal life. So he wouldn't break a date, or postpone an important event, or rearrange his life in any significant way to accommodate his indulgence in this voyeuristic behavior ([*sic*], Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 120)

Bundy's preoccupation with sex and violence rose around 1966 or 1967, when his first serious relationship (Marjorie; see above) commenced (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 120). Bundy said:

This condition, is not immediately seen by the individual or identified as a serious problem. It sort of manifests itself in an interest concerning sexual behavior, sexual images. It might simply be an attraction such as Playboy, or a host of other normal, healthy sexual stimuli that are found in the environment. But this interest, for some unknown reason, becomes geared towards matters of a sexual nature that involve violence. I cannot emphasize enough on the gradual

development of this. It is not short-term (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 118 & Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 66).

Bundy also articulated that before the need to kill, there were fantasies fueled by provocative women's bodies in magazines, X-rated movies or television shows (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 118). Bundy said:

Maybe he focused on pornography as a vicarious way of experiencing what his peers were experiencing in reality. Then he got sucked into the more sinister doctrines that are implicit in pornography – the use, the abuse the possession of women as objects (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 119).

Ted Bundy also mentioned how "...the pressures, tensions, dissatisfactions..." fueled the need to engage in voyeurism and violent pornography, and how this need would re-emerge again and again (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 123).

While burglarizing in Los Angeles, the influence of video and printed pornography fueled Ramirez's interest in sexual violence. Ramirez spent his days watching videos of sexually sadistic and violent porn or looking at magazines involving bondage. He would go to theatres that showed porno movies twenty-four hours a day, and seeing a woman with a pentagram drawn on her body interested and turned him on (Carlo, 1996, p. 25, p. 60, p. 128, p. 234, p. 236). Ramirez also said, "Killing with a knife is very personal; you actually are holding it as it goes in, and when death comes, you can feel your victim dying through the knife. It's like sex" (Carlo, 1996, p. 98).

The American culture. Bundy believed that culture and society were significant contributors to his serial killing nature (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 325 &

Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 262-263). This is best explained in Bundy's own words:

A factor that is almost indispensable to this kind of behavior is the mobility of contemporary American life. Living in large centers of population, and living with lots of people, you can get used to dealing with strangers. It's the anonymity factor, and that has a twofold effect. First of all, if you're among strangers you're less likely to remember them, or care what they're doing or know what they should, or should not, be doing. If they should or shouldn't be there. Secondly, you're conditioned almost not to be afraid of strangers. Mobility is very important here. As we've seen... the individual's modus operandi was moving large distances in an attempt to camouflage what he was doing. Moving these distances, he was also able to take advantage of the anonymity factor (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 326).

and

In his readings and in his observations and what have you – in his fantasy world – he'd imagined for some reason people disappearing all the time. He was aware of how people dropped out and became runaways and whatnot. In devising his scheme, he'd taken somewhat unrealistic conclusion that under the correct circumstances he could select any person as a victim and that there'd be virtually no attention paid to that person's disappearance. People disappear every day. It happens all the time (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 326).

Richard Ramirez gave the following suggestion to people, "...What people can do is not trust someone you don't know and to always be aware of what's going on around

you. When you drop your guard – that’s when a serial killer moves” (Carlo, 1996, p. 550). This highlights the role of the American culture where, in everyday life, people do not suspect each other of wrongdoings and can easily trust each other.

The following two factors apply only to the crimes of Ramirez’s and do not exist in Bundy’s or Ridgway’s experiences:

Peer influences. When Ramirez was young he saw his older brothers sniff glue, steal things, and get arrested multiple times (Carlo, 1996, p. 195, p. 196, p. 197, p. 198, p. 204). Being influenced by his siblings, Ramirez also began smoking marijuana from age 10 (Carlo, 1996, p. 209; Linedecker, 1991, p. 140). However, the majority of influence seems to have come from Ramirez’s cousin, Miguel/Mike. Ramirez was 12 years old when Mike returned from the war in Vietnam. Ramirez was exposed to Mike’s Polaroid pictures which included one photo showing a cocked .45 being held on Vietnamese women who were being forced to perform fellatio on Mike (Carlo, 1996, p. 207). Mike said to Richard, “Having power over life and death was a high, an incredible rush. It was godlike. You’d controlled who’d live and who died – you were God” (Carlo, 1996, p. 208).

Apart from women forced to perform fellatio, Mike’s Polaroid pictures included him holding the decapitated head of a woman who was forced to fellate him. In a way, Mike influenced Richard with his words, pictures, and stories of rape, sexual sadism and killing (Carlo, 1996, p. 208, p. 227). Making Ramirez his novice, Mike taught him ways of the world: that it is them (the poor and uninfluential) against the rich and influential (Carlo, 1996, p. 209), and being strong is the key to survival (Carlo, 1996, p. 227). Mike taught Ramirez how to be unseen and kill with stealth (Carlo, 1996, p. 209). Mike said,

“Watch out for gravel, clotheslines, garbage cans, and dogs” (Carlo, 1996, p. 228). Later, in Los Angeles, Ramirez accompanied his older brother in burglaries where he was taught how to break locks and to look for alarms, dogs, and other impediments (Carlo, 1996, p. 217). Carlo (1996) stated that:

Richard quickly warmed to the idea of getting money so easily. It certainly beat working. He knew stealing was wrong – that it was against the teachings of the Church and the Ten Commandments – but he had seen his brothers and other boys do it regularly for years, and he was extremely adept at getting in and out of people’s houses without being seen or leaving clues (p. 215).

Ramirez’s brother-in-law was another source of influence. Together, peeping into windows and houses to look at women, and sneaking into houses at night with occupants sleeping inside, thrilled them (Carlo, 1996, p. 220). Moreover, after getting a job at Holiday Inn, Richard found himself fantasizing about violent sex, bondage and peeping into windows. He would test his skills of entering rooms without the knowledge of unsuspecting guests and eventually steal their wallets, money, jewelry and/or watches (Carlo, 1996, p. 223-225).

Carlo (1996) reports that Richard Ramirez wanted to make money the quick way, and without telling anyone, he left his hometown in February of 1978 because it was too small and “he couldn’t live the way he wanted to there.” However, throughout his journey, Mike’s teachings – ways of the world and sexually sadistic images of women, occupied his mind and he did not know how to stop thinking about them (p. 232-233).

Satanism. Ramirez had believed in Jesus Christ, but now he also started believing in Satan, and said:

But then, who's to say what is evil? A man's beliefs are his own business. Neither the Church nor anybody else has any right to tell you how to think and how to act; that's what real freedom is about: to be able to be who you really are, not what you're expected or supposed to be (Carlo, 1996 p. 233).

Ramirez's childhood friend, Tom Ramos, believed that at age 13, Ramirez started believing in Satanism after his involvement in Bible studies. Another childhood friend recalled, "He said he could not live the way the Bible wanted him to live." Later in adulthood, Ramirez discovered *The Satanic Bible*, a book that praises the qualities of Satan, written by Anton LaVey, who also founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco. LaVey openly spoke about accepting and recommended Satan. In LaVey's organization of Satan, people could do what they wanted with no burden of sin or guilt. Reading the *Satanic Bible* and getting involved with other Satan worshippers and the *Church of Satan*, provided Ramirez with a sense of where he belonged. Richard felt he could relate to such an organization and people, and thus, he traveled from Los Angeles to San Francisco. When LaVey released more books relating to Satanic worship, Richard read them all and "drew further into himself," believing that Satan was all he had (Carlo, 1996, p. 237-238 & Linedecker, 1991, p. 140). While consuming several drugs such as P.C.P., cocaine, marijuana, and various other hallucinogens (Carlo, 1996, p. 25-26, p. 216, p.218, p. 220, p. 229, p. 235-237; Linedecker, 1991, p. 131, p. 133, p. 140), Ramirez visually hallucinated monsters doing appalling things to people, including having sex with them (Carlo, 1996, p. 229). As a culmination of all these experiences, Ramirez started believing in his relationship with Satan (Carlo, 1996, p. 238 & Linedecker, 1991, p. 130-131), who he believed protected him (Carlo, 1996, p. 18, p. 25, p. 95, p. 241 &

Linedecker, 1991, p. 130-131). He said to his sister, “Nothing bad’s going to happen because I’m protected, okay... [Protected] by Satan. ... Because Satan represents what I feel. I’m not like other people; I’m different” (Carlo, 1996, p. 241).

Ramirez lurked and hunted in suburban areas of Los Angeles and San Francisco for victims to murder and houses to steal from. He targeted houses of upscale suburbanites (Linedecker, 1991). Carlo (1996) concluded that Ramirez was a burglar by profession, and a very good one. He needed money for his drugs, food, and stay in various hotels, and the only way to have this was by ransacking homes of the rich (p. 16-17, p. 25). To be able to commute to his potential victims’ houses, every other day, Ramirez stole cars in broad daylight but he was gratified only by his experiences of killing people in their homes (Carlo, 1996, p. 25-26). According to Linedecker (1991), robbery was the motive of Ramirez’s crimes, but not the only one. A secondary motive was to spread fear and violence such as Ramirez had always been exposed to. Ramirez was different from other burglars: he always chose houses where occupants were home and asleep (p. 8). Linedecker (1991) also says that Ramirez not only killed his victims but also added torture, rape and mutilation (p. 19).

Linedecker (1991) summarized that with every murder and home ransacked, Ramirez’s desire for torture would increase, resulting in rape, fellatio, and sodomy (p. 36). Not fitting descriptions or patterns of “normal” serial killers, criminologists deemed Ramirez as an equal-opportunity serial killer – willing to murder anyone (Linedecker, 1991, p. 49). Believing that Satan is protecting him, Ramirez also believed that committing these crimes and murders would please Satan, leading him to gain Satan’s blessings. This is evidenced by few of Ramirez’s murders where he would call out to

Satan to watch what he was about to do – before bludgeoning his victims. A few times before entering homes, Ramirez would pray to Satan, “By all that is evil, I, your humble servant, invoke Satan to be here and accept this offering.” When confirming with his victims if he had got all of the jewelry and/or money in the house or randomly in the middle of his rape and torture, Ramirez made them swear to Satan instead of God (Carlo, 1996, p. 48, p. 71, p. 108, p. 120, p. 124-125, p. 142-144, p. 162-163; Linedecker, 1991, p. 3, p. 33, p. 117).

Parent relationship patterns. Apart from Bundy recognizing that he did not have any role models to look up to in his family, and his family not preparing him to avoid failures, he also admitted not asking and receiving help for personal matters. Further on, he reported his mother not being open to talk on “intimate, personal terms” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 61; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 7). When asked if he ever shared his high school isolation experiences with mother or a counselor, Bundy said, “It never crossed my mind I didn’t think anything was wrong, necessarily. I wasn’t sure what was wrong and what was right. All I knew was that I felt a bit different” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 64).

In addition to the exposure to violence, criminal activities and sexual sadism from Ramirez’s family, Richard and his father had a distant and unhealthy relationship with frequent arguments. This was one of the main reasons he left his home town for Los Angeles (Carlo, 1996, p. 219, p. 240-241).

Ridgway’s household was dominated by his mother, and it was alleged by other relatives that she physically abused his father (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 64). His mother made Ridgway and his wife move in with her, and would keep his paychecks,

giving him money only when she thought it was appropriate to do so. Ridgway's mother was the head of the family and Gary Ridgway did almost nothing before getting her approval (Rule, 2004, p. 518-519, p. 522). This highlights Ridgway's dependency on his mother, and his mother's control on him and his life. This also highlights a difference between the distant relationships experienced by Bundy and Ramirez with at least one parent, and the control that Ridgway's mother exercised on him.

Neurodevelopmental complications. At two years old, Richard was nearly killed by a dresser that fell on top of him. He remained unconscious for 15 minutes and sustained a concussion. At five years old, a second incident involved Richard getting slammed by a swing, leaving him unconscious. Ramirez experienced his first epileptic seizure in fifth grade, and later experienced more grand mal and petit mal seizures. He was not diagnosed, treated or given any medication. It was only years later, after his crimes, that Ramirez was diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy (Carlo, 1996, p. 191, p. 195, p. 200-202; Linedecker, 1991, p. 137).

Gary Ridgway was diagnosed with a "diffuse organic brain damage" (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 151) in the frontal lobe region of the brain. As described by his doctor, this kind of brain damage is scattered and can be seen in individuals who are chronically exposed to chemicals and toxins – as experienced by Ridgway being chronically exposed to lead paint and other toxic fumes from his work as a painter (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 151).

There is no evidence of Ted Bundy experiencing neurodevelopmental complications or other conditions affecting the brain.

Brain damage is suggested as a factor contributing to aggressive behavior (Nachson & Denno, 1987). This finding is in correlation with Lange and DeWitt's (1990) study, where they found that many serial killers had some form of head injury or organic brain abnormalities. They concluded by stating that because of the neurological dysfunctions giving rise to seizures, serial killers act out during periods of uncontrollable brainwave activity, further causing compulsive behaviors.

Discussion: Interrelationship between Factors

I approached this phenomenon with an open mind to search for knowledge relating to the development of serial killers. Burgess, et al. (1986) proposed that the unsolved stress feelings and view of the world arising from trauma may cause the child to seek comfort in fantasies revolving around themes of domination and control, thus enabling them to develop sexual violence stemming from sexual and aggressive fantasies (Ressler & Shachtman, 1992). However, the unresolved stress in the lives of all three serial killers arose not only in childhood but also in their adulthood.

Moreover, serial killers seem to operate cyclically, and as evidenced by previously mentioned data, presumably kill while they are facing some kind of stress. Whether it was being constantly exposed to violence and crime (for Richard Ramirez), or the stress/trauma experienced by the loss of an important relationship (for Ted Bundy and Gary Ridgway), these three individuals resorted to serial killing. For example, both Bundy and Ridgway admitted to killing as a coping mechanism – to relieve stress and vent frustrations or rage. On the other hand, Ramirez turned robbery and violently sexual murders into his career. This study's data suggests that these serial killers internalized their stress and/or trauma, and externalized the symptoms as evidenced by their actions;

harming and killing people to relieve feelings of frustration, stress/trauma, and loneliness, and to experience power. In order to relieve themselves, they killed, felt elevated, and went on with their lives. When they were faced with more stress and were unable to cope in healthy ways, they engaged in killing more people, wanting to feel the same or a higher level of elevation. This addictive cycle continued until they were caught. As Simon (1996) and Giannangelo (1996) suggested, a serial killers' need for stimulation increases as evidenced by an increase in the rate of his or her killings, reflecting a compulsive and addictive pattern of behaviors.

For the most part, the interrelationships between factors is explained separately for each serial killer because of different relationships between factors, and the role played by each factor in the lives of each serial killer.

Bundy blamed his family for not preparing him well for failures. Such was expressed by Bundy in relation to his failed Chinese studies, urban planning studies, and simultaneously his first serious relationship. This exhibits a relationship between the stress/trauma and parent relationship patterns factors. Bundy reported being insecure about his physical features after not being selected for basketball or baseball teams. He also said that he did not have the support at home for school sports or any role models to look up to. This associates the low self-esteem factor with parent relationship patterns factor. In one of his quotes, Bundy also counted low self-esteem and lack of sense of fulfillment as a stressor. Bundy's failure in his relationship and studies probably lead him to count low self-esteem as a stressor, thus linking the stress/trauma and low self-esteem factors. This interrelationship can be evidenced by Bundy's withdrawal from Chinese studies after failing in them. Unable to face Marjorie and return to the classes he failed in,

Bundy withdrew from school. As a result of the above life events and to "...let off steam" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 70), he engaged in impulsive and compulsive thievery. Later in his prison interviews, Bundy compared the items he stole to the possession and control of his victims – "...possessing them physically, as one would possess a potted plant, a painting, or a Porsche. Owning, as it were, this individual" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 124). Lastly, Bundy indicated that his failure to control his life served as an additional attribute for him committing such "illegal" and "immoral" acts (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989, p. 248). Therefore, the abovementioned evidence link the stress/trauma, low self-esteem and power/control factors for Ted Bundy.

Kesner and McKenry's findings (1998; see above) are in correlation with Bundy's data in the belongingness, loneliness and parent relationship patterns factors, thus linking the three factors. Bundy reported that he and his mother never spoke of any personal intimate matters in his childhood, adolescent or adulthood years, and that he never had role models at home to aid him in school. According to Kesner and McKenry (1998), this kind of parent-child attachment increases violent behaviors, and such processes would likely lead to difficulty in forming relationships, and to the development of loneliness in both childhood and adulthood – as experienced by Bundy. As a teenager, Bundy experienced comfort while listening to night talk shows and indirectly being a part of speakers' conversations, he reported being socially aloof in high school and freshmen years, and throughout his life he mentioned questioning social relationships and interactions. These serve as examples for loneliness experienced by Ted Bundy. Questioning social interactions, Bundy instead invested his time into academics in both

high school and college, but failed in Chinese, urban planning and law studies and simultaneously in his first serious relationship – thus linking loneliness and stress/trauma factors.

Additionally, as a coping skill, Bundy made victims a part of him by exhibiting his power over them, and therefore, fulfilling his need for belongingness. This links the power/control and belongingness factors. In addition to this, Ramsland (2006) and Martens & Palermo (2005) suggested that loneliness experienced by most serial killers can be counted as a contributing factor to the motivation of controlling victims – and for Bundy, as evidenced by previously mentioned data, controlling his victims and exerting power over them was a crucial part of his killings. This links the loneliness and power/control factors. In one of his quotes, Bundy included sexual and violent stimuli from the environment as a stressor. He also mentioned how “...the pressures, tensions, dissatisfactions...” fueled the need to engage in voyeurism and violent pornography, and how this need would re-emerge again and again (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 123), thus linking the stress/trauma factor with sexually sadistic and violent pornography factor. He further articulated how his inclination toward violent pornography and implementation of sexually sadistic acts was a gradual process which started by peeping into windows and watching women.

There is also a link between power/control, and sexually sadistic and violent pornography factors as evidenced by Bundy saying that, “...he got sucked into the more sinister doctrines that are implicit in pornography – the use, the abuse the possession of women as objects” (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 119). The American culture and power/control factors can be interrelated as evidenced by Bundy’s quote where he

explains how, "...he could select any person as a victim and that there'd be virtually no attention paid to that person's disappearance. People disappear every day. It happens all the time" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1999, p. 326). Bundy's misperception and generalization that no attention would be paid to missing victims probably stems from him objectifying human life, thus also linking the American culture factor with sexually sadistic and violent pornography factor.

Data from the stress/trauma factor suggests that being exposed to father's aggressive violence on himself and Ramirez's older brothers instilled a fear of father within Ramirez. I conclude that this fearful attachment style (Kesner & McKenry, 1998; see above) led to Ramirez's difficulty in forming relationships, and to the development of loneliness in adulthood. This links the stress/trauma factor with the loneliness factor. Fear of father along with the distant relationship between Ramirez and his father also serves as a link between the stress/trauma and parent relationship pattern factors. Therefore, indirectly, Ramirez's inability to form relationships leading to loneliness can be linked with the stress/trauma (fear of father) and the parent relationship patterns factors (distant relationship between father and Ramirez).

Mike's influence of sexually sadistic and violent pictures on a 12 year old Ramirez serves as a major initiation of Ramirez's sexually violent nature. Not only did Mike influence Ramirez with visual stimuli but also by his words. Mike said to Ramirez, "Having power over life and death was a high, an incredible rush. It was godlike. You'd controlled who'd live and who died – you were God" (Carlo, 1996, p. 208). In his youth, Ramirez peeped into windows to look at women undress. This serves as a subtle commonality between Ramirez and Bundy, and possibly highlights a process of sexually

sadistic behaviors. The abovementioned evidence highlights interrelationships between sexually sadistic and violent pornography, peer influence and power/control factors.

During his serial killing career, Ramirez did not have an honest job and led a solitary life during his serial killing career. His days started by waking up in a hotel, going out for breakfast, gambling, using drugs, and then either going to a theatre that showed porno movies twenty-four hours a day or looking at pornography magazines involving bondage. Seeing a woman with a pentagram drawn on her body interested and turned him on. This connects the loneliness, Satanism, and sexually sadistic and violent pornography factors.

The stress/trauma and low self-esteem factors are related for Ridgway. For example, being cheated on and going through two divorces was undoubtedly a difficult time for Ridgway. Being treated badly during his second divorce and expressing that his ex-wives and women at work controlled him and situations, serves as a part of the stress/trauma factor. At the same time, the self-doubt he experienced during both divorces serves as a part of the low self-esteem factor. Ridgway mentions in quotes about how he could not stand up for himself because of being controlled by women, and that he wanted to kill and control prostitutes for how women treated him otherwise. Ridgway's need to control prostitutes was a result of his rage and frustration because of how women supposedly took advantage of him in his personal and work life. Ridgway feeling pleasure by taking his rage out by killing and controlling prostitutes is evidenced in the data. The control that women had over him and other situations, such as work shifts, seems to have refueled his low self-esteem and self-hatred for not being able to stand up for himself, thus linking stress/trauma, power/control and low self-esteem factors.

Oh, uh, jus uh, anybody that uh, you know, kidded me during the... for some reason, you know, kidded me or, or uh, I had problems with 'em, putting the right formulas in and so my da... back there I had to have a lot of uh, things just didn't si – sink in my mind... memory, and I'd put the wrong chemicals in and put the wrong combinations of it, and I ruined about three or four trucks during the day. So that made me mad, and I didn't have no way of uh, controlling that 'til later on, when uh, was around a prostitute. That's when I started killin' prostitutes, about that time (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 355).

The above quote by Ridgway signifies him being teased or made fun of during work. Not being able to put in the right formulae and ruining three or four trucks can also ignite Ridgway's low self-esteem. As he expresses in the above quote, not being able to control those frustrating situations at work led him to take out rage by controlling prostitutes. The above example serves as evidence for a link between the power/control and low self-esteem factors.

You learn to take it and you learn to give it out, too [feeling unaccepted and teased/bullied by co-workers], but it did bother me. I had the problem with prostitution, and I didn't have anyone to go to. There was no way out, I paid for the warmth and someone to talk to (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 145-146).

The above quote by Ridgway signifies him being bullied and made fun of by co-workers and because he did not have anyone to go to, his need to belong with and seek comfort from was fulfilled by prostitutes even if it was limited to just talking. This links low self-esteem, loneliness and belongingness factors.

Ridgway included being hurried during sex, prostitutes not enjoying sex, and him not being able to achieve orgasm because of being hurried as possible stressors. These stressors from the stress/trauma factor can be possibly linked with the low self-esteem and/or belongingness factors because such stressors triggered Ridgway to kill prostitutes in the middle of his date. Presumably, Ridgway's need for belongingness or comfort was not satisfied or the lack of reassurance of a prostitute enjoying sex triggered his existing low self-esteem.

As a working adult, Ridgway being dependent on and dominated by his mother may have contributed to Ridgway's need for power/control over prostitutes and low self-esteem. Thus, also linking parent relationship patterns with the power/control and low self-esteem factors. The stress/trauma associated with being cheated on and divorced by his first two wives might have triggered Ridgway's suppressed feelings related to his mother's control over his life, thus, establishing an interrelationship between the stress/trauma and parent relationship patterns factors.

Allely et al., (2014) stated that, "According to Dr. Ronald Geshwind, a number of people who suffer from temporal lobe epilepsy have altered sexuality and hyper-religious feelings, are hyper graphic (have a compulsion to write), and are excessively aggressive." Ramirez was diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy after being incarcerated. Some of the above may not hold true for Ramirez, but Ramirez's sexually sadistic and violent crimes included him worshipping and praying to Satan to bless him, and drawing pentagrams on walls and some of his victims' bodies. Thus, the aggressively sexual murders, Satanism, and neurodevelopmental complications may be interrelated. Cromer (2012) articulated that brain injury to specific areas of the brain such as frontal and temporal lobes,

amygdala, and hippocampus can cause understated to prominent changes in personality. Such changes can make an individual vulnerable to experience agitation, unstable and explosive emotions, memory impairment, verbal attacks, physical aggression and decreased impulse control.

Ridgway was diagnosed with “diffuse organic brain damage” (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 151) in the frontal lobe region of the brain. This brain damage was from his chronic exposure to lead paint and other toxic fumes. There is a good chance that Ridgway experienced extreme agitation, physical aggression and decreased impulse control. For example, Ridgway expressed being mad at women who got preferential treatment for work shifts, and in general, he was mad at women for controlling and taking advantage of him. Killing prostitutes was a way to take his rage out because of not being able to stand up for himself and to even scores with women. When stressed out because of doing his job the wrong, Ridgway described feeling mad, having the need to hit someone physically at work or murder and control a prostitute after work. Ridgway also said that situations and events at home or work worked him up to kill a prostitute. Ridgway’s quote – “lied to me about... anything, or hurrying me and not enjoying the sex, um... a culmination of all those, or, or some of ‘em, uh, during the middle. And... and a lot of ‘em were over by the airport – the, the uh, noise set me off. I know one of ‘em... like a truck came by and, and it set me off. And plus, the, the women lyin’ to me” (Prothero & Smith, 2006, p. 298) – also signifies his lack of impulse control, extreme agitation, and physical aggression. The above evidence links neurodevelopmental complications with stress/trauma, low self-esteem, and power/control factors.

To summarize, the data and discussion above suggest that many factors have played a role in the development of these three serial killers. There has not been one sole factor or no one major factor leading to such behaviors, but a combination of various factors and the incapability to cope in a healthy way. For the three serial killers, each factor and cause listed in this document seems to have developed over time, and has been impacted by or linked with other factors. However, even though the factors may be overlapping and interdependent, they do not guarantee each other's existence or guarantee that a person will become a serial killer. Some factors and events may not be experienced by all, or can go unseen. For example, unlike Bundy and Ridgway, Ramirez did not experience rejection or abandonment in a romantic relationship, but experienced limited positive interactions (e.g. his strained and distant relationship with father and mother) and constant exposure to and influence of violent and criminal activities. Likewise, both Ridgway and Ramirez experienced neurological abnormalities – predisposing them to violent and aggressive behaviors; but Bundy did not have obvious neurological abnormalities.

Factors such as need for belonging, loneliness, power/control, stress/trauma, and low self-esteem seem to be inter-related in a process. As evidenced, not feeling a sense of belonging to someone or something and not having enough social support or healthy coping skills to deal with stress or trauma, caused these individuals to suppress their emotions which further led to unresolved stress and frustrations. Having a history of low self-esteem since high school with no support from friends or family, and being abandoned by significant others in adulthood, further led Bundy and Ridgway to doubt themselves. Continued exposure to facilitators such as substance use and sexually sadistic

and violent pornography made it easy for Ramirez and Bundy to exert power and control over their victims. Culture's or society's objectification of women and the submissiveness exhibited in pornography has contributed to violence against women. This objectification and submissiveness has allowed society to exert power and control over women, and therefore, it is no surprise that because of this view of culture/society, it was easy for the three serial killers to exert their power/control over women. Unable to control and deal with their life situations including stress and loneliness; sexual violence and serial murders were the solution and coping skills used by the three serial killers.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the main limitations of this study is that even though verbatim conversations for all three serial killers were found, it was impossible to follow up on the questions or to ask for more details. Having the freedom to initiate questions would have helped provide better analyses.

A second limitation stems from the fact that the sources used were edited and arranged for publication by authors other than the killers. Although I was mindful of not adopting various authors' biases on the etiology of serial killing, the sources used for data collection seem to hold their authors' biases. There may be some events and theories that an author might have focused on more than others, and some that may not have been incorporated in the books, based on these biases. An attempt was made to overcome this problem by focusing on the verbatim words of the killers.

The small size and limited features of the sample serve as the third limitation. Though this study has proven to be thoroughly detailed for two Caucasian serial killers and one Hispanic serial killer, if a larger sample or a sample involving female, African

American, African and Asian serial killers was used, the results could provide a broader picture of the etiology of serial killing.

A fourth and a precautionary limitation recognized is how the language and words used by the three serial killers might have multiple meanings and interpretations.

Interpreting and finding meaning in the data and quotes has been the prime method of this thesis, but, there is always the possibility that I might have read too much into the information or not enough. As mentioned earlier, I did my best to not be biased towards data exhibiting existing theories and focused more on interviews with the three serial killers. Even though the aforementioned precaution was taken, the meaning behind what all three serial killers said may be different from what I interpreted from the same.

Either to get famous, appear more powerful or to fulfill any other personal motive, serial killers are known and assumed to exaggerate their murders, causes, and methods. Therefore, the fifth limitation lies in the credibility of the words and quotes of the serial killers. However, as mentioned earlier, interpreting and finding meaning in the data and quotes has been the prime method of this thesis. I did my best to be aware of and not take in exaggerations from each of the serial killers' quotes. A critical element to note is my knowledge and background of clinical psychology, and how this might have colored my perspective and interpretations of quotes and data. A lay person associates serial killers and their murders as evil and/or monstrous. However, because of my clinical psychology knowledge, I was able to highlight the ineffective and unhealthy coping skills, i.e. serial killing, used by the three serial killers in response to stress/trauma. This finding highlights the clinical aspect of this study.

A final limitation of this study emerges from the technicalities in the grounded theory method itself. When does a researcher stop collecting data? Charmaz (2008) said that when new data no longer generates new categories or no longer builds on existing categories, saturation is achieved. However, there is no consensus among researchers for when saturation may or may not be achieved. Therefore, there is no guarantee that enough data has been collected or if a category has reached its saturation point.

Although the use of grounded theory as a method in this study has helped me outline factors contributing to the development of serial killers, methods and techniques to study this phenomenon seem to be limited. Because a majority of data for this phenomenon comes from secondary sources such as books, databases, non-peer-reviewed sources, and even though verbatim interviews might be included, findings are undoubtedly limited. However, it is challenging to use orthodox quantitative research techniques to study the same. It is obviously impossible to study millions of people for a chance of gathering prospective data on those few who become serial killers. Also, the lack of comparison group studies serves to hinder progress in this area of research. The effect of stress or failure on one person may be different from the effect of the same on another person. The way one individual copes with a stressor or trauma may be different from the way another individual might. Also, what constitutes stress, trauma, failure, and other psychosocial factors for one person may be different from another person's definition of the same. What may be a factor or trigger to kill for one individual, may not be a trigger for another. Therefore, I recommend future studies to aim at understanding and differentiating what leads people to adopt a healthy form of coping, but others end up doing things that are self-defeating or that harm others (like killing). In order to make

better comparisons, I recommend other researchers compare criminals/serial killers to similarly situated others who have not committed similar crimes.

It is impossible not to notice that most etiological theories, typologies, and research focuses on serial killing as emerging from childhood development. Basing the following recommendation from this study's findings of the three serial killers' life events in adolescence and adulthood, I strongly suggest future research to highlight adolescent and adulthood experiences of serial killers in order to identify risk factors from these periods of development. This means approaching typologies and other theories surrounding the serial killing phenomenon as a continuum and not definitive answers. The factors – their occurrence, frequency, intensity and effects leading to serial killing – can exist as a continuum. This will help us learn if certain factors lead to such behaviors or not, discover unique experiences, and similarities and differences among individuals. Giving us the freedom to study variations in factors and related components (occurrence, frequency, intensity and effects), this continuum will serve as a range rather than a definitive yes or no factor for individuals, and will also focus on more than one developmental period of their lives. I vision this kind of an assessment to be used for assessing serial killers after they have been caught.

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Appendix

| Names | Number of Victims | Serial Killer | Cannibal | Arrested | Year of Crimes | Country | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mohammad Arif Ali & Mohammad Farman Ali | Dug up and ate multiple dead bodies | No | Yes | 2011/2014 arrested before for cannibalism | 2011/2014 | Pakistan | (Caulfield, 2014; Robinson, 2014) |
| David Viens | 1 | No | Yes | 2011 | 2009 | USA | (Dillon, 2013) |
| Armin Meiwes | 1 | No | Yes | 2002 | 2001 | Germany | (O'Connor, 2016) |
| Jeffrey Dahmer | 17 | Yes | Yes | 1991 | 1978-1991 | USA | (Waxman, 2016) |
| Timur and Marat G | 1 | No | Yes | 2009 | 2009 | Russian | (Lawton, 2009) |

DEVELOPMENT OF SERIAL KILLERS

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------|-----|----------------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Katherine Knight | 1 | No | Yes | 2000 | 2000 | USA | (Bovsun, 2013) |
| Rudy Eugene | 1 | No | Yes | Killed on spot | 2012 | USA | (Ortiz, 2012) |
| Mao Sugiyama | served his penis to voluntary guests | No | No | Charged | 2012 | Japan | (Cooper, 2012) |
| Cannibal restaurant in Nigeria | Unknown | Unknown | Yes | Shut down | Unknown | Nigeria | (Hooton, 2014) |
| Alexei Gorulenko & Alexander Abdullayev | 1 | No | Yes | Unknown | 2012 | Russia | (Oliphant, 2013) |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------------|-----|------|-----------|---------|------------------------------|
| Moninder Singh and Surinder Koli | 19 | Yes | Yes | 2006 | 2005-2006 | India | (Pandey, 2017) |
| Andrei Chikatilo | 52 | Yes | Yes | 1990 | 1978-1990 | Russian | (Parfitt, 2012) |
| Omaima Nelson | 1 | No | Yes | 1991 | 1991 | USA | (Marcum, 2011) |
| Marc Sappington | Three | Spree killer | Yes | 2004 | 2001 | USA | (Campbell, 2015) |
| Otty Sanchez | 1 | No | Yes | 2009 | 2009 | USA | (The Associated Press, 2009) |
| Gregory Hale | 1 | No | Yes | 2014 | 2014 | USA | (Buncombe, 2015) |
| Tyree Smith | 1 | No | Yes | 2012 | 2011 | USA | (Lohr, 2013) |

DEVELOPMENT OF SERIAL KILLERS

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|--|------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| <u>Jieming Liu</u> | 1 | No | Yes | Transferred to Lemuel Shattuck Hospital | 2012 | China | (Stebner, 2012) |
| Alexander Kinyua | 1 | No | Yes | 2012 | 2012 | USA | (The Associated Press, 2012) |
| Alfred Packer | 5 | Survival/Denied murder | Yes | 1883 | 1874 | USA | (Boyle, 2015) |
| Mauerova family | 2 sons of Klara | Cult-related | Yes | 2008 | 2008 | Czech Republic | (Bingham, 2008) |
| Christian brothers college rugby teammates | Ate their dead friends | Survival | Yes | | 1972 | Uruguay | (Canessa, 2016) |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----|-----|------|-----------|--------|-----------------------------|
| David Playpenz | Ate his finger | No | Yes | N/A | 2013 | UK | (Wetzel, 2013) |
| Ed Gein | 2 | Yes | Yes | 1957 | 1954-1957 | USA | (Newton, 2006) |
| Stephen Griffiths | 3 | Yes | Yes | 2010 | 2009-2010 | UK | (Stokes, 2010, White, 2010) |
| Richard Chase | 6 | Yes | Yes | 1978 | 1977-1978 | USA | (Bovsun, 2010) |
| Leonardo Cianciulli | 3 | Yes | Yes | 1946 | 1939-1940 | Italy | (Rowlatt, 2014) |
| Tsutomu Miyazaki | 4 | Yes | Yes | 1989 | 1988-1989 | Japan | (Ryall, 2008) |
| Alexander Spesivtsev | killed 80, convicted | Yes | Yes | 1996 | 1991-1996 | Russia | (Bennett, 1997) |

DEVELOPMENT OF SERIAL KILLERS

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|----------------------|----------------|------------|------------------|
| | of 19 | | | | | | |
| Ian Brady & Myra Hindley | 5 | Yes | No | 1965 | 1963-1965 | UK | (Krol, 2017) |
| Matej Curko | 2 | Yes | Yes | Killed on spot, 2011 | 2009-2010-2011 | Slovakia | (Summers, 2016) |
| Nikolai Jumagaliev | 10 | Yes | Yes | 1981 | 1979-1981 | Kazakhstan | (Boyle, 2016) |
| John Bunting and Robert Wagner | 10 | Yes | Yes | 1999 | 1995-1999 | Australia | (Dutter, 2000) |
| Dorangel Vargas | 10 | Yes | Yes | 1999 | 1995-1999 | Venezuela | (Kitching, 2016) |
| Ottis Toole | 6 | Yes | Yes | 1983 | Unknown-1983 | USA | (Newton, 2006) |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-----|-----|------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| John Haigh | 6 | Yes | No | 1949 | 1944- 1949 | UK | (Clark, 2013) |
| Javed Iqbal | 100 | Yes | No | 1999 | 1998- 1999 | Pakistan | (Bearak, 2000) |
| Ted Bundy | 30 | Yes | No | 1978 | 1974- 1978 | USA | (Truesdell, 2017) |
| Peter Manuel | 9 | Yes | No | 1958 | 1956- 1958 | UK | (McKay, 2016) |
| Edmund Kemper | 10 | Yes | Yes | 1973 | 1964/ 1972- 1973 | USA | (Schram, 2016; Boyle, 2016) |
| Richard Ramirez | 13 | Yes | No | 1985 | 1984- 1985 | USA | (Botelho, 2013) |
| Gary Leon Ridgway | 48 maybe 49 | Yes | No | 2001 | 1982- 1998 | USA | (Kershaw, 2003; Vries, |

DEVELOPMENT OF SERIAL KILLERS

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------|----|--------------|-----------|-----|---|
| | | | | | | | 2003) |
| The Zodiac killer | claimed 37, police say 7 | Yes | No | not arrested | 1966-1969 | USA | (Newton, 2006) |
| George Hennard | 23 | Mass Murderer | No | 1991 | 1991 | USA | (Keeney & Heide, 1995) |
| William Cruse | 6 | Spree killer | No | 1987 | 1987 | USA | (Keeney & Heide, 1995) |
| H. H. Holmes | 12 | Yes | No | 1896 | 1893-1896 | USA | (Benzkofer, 2014; Cipriani, 1937; Larson, 2003) |
| Gordon Northcott | 20 | Yes | No | 1928 | 1926-1928 | USA | (Rasmussen, 2004) |