

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SERIAL KILLERS WITH MILITARY  
EXPERIENCE: APPLYING LEARNING THEORY TO SERIAL MURDER

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Tammy Castle

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Arts degree.

Christopher L. Kelly  
Director of Thesis

Master's Committee: Christopher L. Kelly, Chair  
Paul Becker  
Rebecca Skoff

4/2/01  
Date

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SERIAL KILLERS WITH MILITARY  
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Tammy Castle, M. A.  
Morehead State University, 2001

Director of Thesis: Charles R. Hilly

In the last two decades, public awareness of serial murder has heightened due to escalating sensationalization by the mass media in the form of books, movies, and news coverage. Although serial murder has existed for hundreds of years, the United States saw a dramatic increase in the number of serial murders beginning in the 1970s. However, serial murder remains a relatively rare phenomenon.

The study of serial murder remains in its infancy. Scholars have endeavored to study the motivation and causality behind serial murder by researching biological, psychological, and sociological variables. Some of these studies have provided support for the relationship between these variables and serial murder. However, the study of serial murder continues to be an exploratory, rather than explanatory, research topic.

The present case study analysis examines the observed link between serial killers and military service. A random selection of 10 case studies, each one

representing one serial killer, were taken from 354 cases of serial murder. However, some cases were excluded from the initial selection due to the varying definitions of serial murder used in the sources. Additionally, the case studies were limited to those serial killers who operated within the United States.

The case study analysis provided a relationship between serial killers and military service. Citing previous research using social learning theory for the study of murder, the analysis showed how serial killers learn violence, aggression, and murder in military boot camps. Serial killers learn the attitudes and techniques of murder, in addition to compartmentalization and dehumanization, which helps to neutralize guilt and remorse for their crimes.

As with other variables considered in serial killer research, military experience alone can not account for all cases of serial murder. However, the military does provide one social context where future serial killers learn the skills necessary to commit murder. Future research should continue to examine this connection.

Accepted by:

Christy L. Hilly, Chair  
Paul Baehin  
Rebecca O'Keefe

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The term serial murder was first introduced in 1980 to differentiate between individuals who killed over a prolonged period of time and “mass murderers” who killed several victims in one episode. Although the term was not popularized until the 1980s, serial murder has existed for hundreds of years. The first documented case of serial murder occurred in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Gille de Rais, a French nobleman and friend of Joan of Arc, was executed for torturing and murdering approximately 100 children (Newton 1990).

Although serial murder remains a relatively rare phenomena, serial murder has risen in the United States in the last twenty years. Hickey (1997) profiled 337 cases of serial murder that occurred in the United States from 1800-1995. The majority of these cases (302) occurred between the years of 1980-1995. Scholars continue to debate the cause of the dramatic increase in serial murder experienced since the 1970s and 1980s. Although serial killings appear more frequently, a portion of this increase may be due to enhanced technology that allows law enforcement officials the necessary information to link possible serial homicides. In addition, media attention has played a large part in increasing the public awareness of serial murder. However, media attention alone can not account for the increase in serial murder over the last couple of decades. Regardless, serial murder remains a rare occurrence. The F.B.I. estimates that at this time, approximately 35 serial killers may be operating within the United States in a given year (Hickey 1997).

The United States produces the majority of serial killers, claiming 75% of the world's total. However, serial murder is not confined to North America. Europe follows close behind with the majority of the remaining 23% in England (36%), Germany (29%), and France (11%). Communist nations contribute only 1.8%, but this small percentage may be due to cultural differences and government-owned media (Newton 1990).

Hickey's (1997) study provided the most detailed profile of a serial killer operating within the United States. Although different definitions of serial murder determine the number of female serial killers, serial murder remains a predominately male phenomena. Male serial killers tended to be in their late twenties, with an average age of 27.5 years. Although the population in the United States is more heterogeneous than in other countries, serial killers were predominately Caucasian and comprised 73% of Hickey's sample. The remaining 27% consisted of 22% African-American, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% specified other. Hickey (1997) noted that the emergence of the African-American serial killer parallels the dramatic increase in serial murder occurring within the last 20 years. Due to differences in the social experiences of Caucasians and African-Americans, the motivations of the serial crimes may be different. However, with the recent increase in African-American serial killers, within the next 10 years, they may come to reflect their racial representation in the United States (Hickey 1997).

Other commonalities among serial killers were represented in their educational and occupational backgrounds. The majority of serial killers educational background



was high school or less, some vocational training, or some college. Very few offenders held college degrees. Additionally, the majority of serial killers were blue-collar workers or unskilled laborers (Hickey 1997).

The study of motivation and causation in serial homicide remains the least developed research area. The study of causation encompasses biological, sociological, and psychological factors. Scholars have examined whether the propensity for serial murder is the result of heredity, head trauma, environmental factors, parental influences, or mental illness. If causation can be determined, then it may be possible to intervene and prevent serial homicide.

Some scholars have attempted to apply learning theory to serial murder. They contend that overcoming the inhibition to killing one's own kind, with little remorse or guilt, is a learned behavior. Fox and Levin (1994) suggest that compartmentalization (creating two separate selves) and dehumanization (viewing others as less than human) are two learned, psychological processes that help to neutralize guilt and remorse. These processes are used by many individuals in their everyday lives. However, serial killers use them so that they may continue to murder without remorse, while leading somewhat "normal" lives.

While serial killers learn the methods of compartmentalization and dehumanization to neutralize guilt and remorse, they also must learn to overcome their natural inhibition to killing another human. Grossman (1996) has suggested

that the military is a social context where individuals learn to kill. The focus of this thesis is to explore this area of study and contribute to current literature regarding serial murder.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Definitions of Serial Murder

Serial murder is a term generally used to describe murders that are committed sequentially or in repetition. Serial murder was originally referred to by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) as lust murder (Hazelwood and Douglas 1980). In the early 1980s, F.B.I. officials first used the term serial murder to define this phenomenon and distinguish this type of murder from mass murder. Serial murder was defined by law enforcement officials as the sexual attacks and resulting death of young women, men, or children committed by a male killer who tended to follow a physical or psychological pattern (Egger 1998).

In 1988, the F.B.I. revised their definition, describing serial killings as three or more murders, committed separately, with an emotional cooling off period between the homicides (Gerberth and Terco 1996). In the same year, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) published a report offering a more detailed definition of serial murder. The NIJ report defined serial murder as “a series of two or more murders, committed as separate events, usually, but not always by an offender acting alone. The crimes may occur over a period of time ranging from hours to years. Quite often the motive is psychological, and the offender’s behavior and the physical evidence observed at the crime scenes will reflect sadistic, sexual overtones” (Newton 1990: p. 1 ).

Holmes and DeBurger (1988) described five elements that further distinguished serial murder from other types of multiple homicide. The first element contained

repetitive homicides. The serial killer would continue to kill over a period of months or years. The second element explained that these murders were typically one-on-one, although some “team killers” did exist. The third element suggested that serial murder rarely occurred between people who were intimates. Typically, no prior relationship existed between the victim and the killer. The fourth element implied that the serial killer felt a compulsion to kill, thus the murders were not crimes of passion, nor did they stem from victim precipitation. The fifth element suggested that economic motives may have been missing in most cases of serial murder.

In 1990, Egger expanded the definition of serial murder to include seven major components. The first component of serial murder is when one or more individuals commit a second murder and/or subsequent murder. The second component asserts that there is generally no prior relationship between victim and attacker. Third, the subsequent murders are at different times and have no apparent connection to the prior murder. The fourth characteristic is that the murders are usually committed in a different geographical location. Fifth, the motive is not for material gain. Rather the motive is for the murderer’s desire to have power or dominance over his victims. Sixth, the victims may have symbolic value for the murderer. The murderer may also perceive the victims as powerless given their situation in time, place, or status within their immediate surroundings. For this reason, the seventh component is that the victims tend to be those who are most vulnerable, least valued or marginalized by our society. These include the homeless, prostitutes, homosexuals, vagrants, missing

children, individual women out alone and moving in isolated areas, college students, elderly women and migrant workers (Egger 1998).

Some researchers suggest that Egger's definition is too type specific and that a broader definition of serial murder should be used. Hickey (1997) argues that the definition of serial killers should include anyone who commits multiple murders over an extended period of time. Many women who commit multiple murders often kill acquaintances or were motivated by profit. Hickey's definition of serial murder would encompass more females for this otherwise predominately male phenomena.

### **Typologies of Serial Killers**

Typologies and classifications of serial killers vary among researchers and law enforcement officials. An early classifications system by Wille (1974) categorized ten different types of killers including; psychotic, depressive, alcoholic, organic brain disorder, psychopathic, juvenile, hysterical, passive-aggressive, mentally retarded, and sex killers (Hickey 1997). However, since the 1980s, researchers have attempted to more accurately define specific types of serial killers based on different criteria.

In 1983, Holmes identified one specific type of serial killer known as the mysoped. The mysoped connects the violent sexual victimization of children, including fatal violence, with sexual gratification. Holmes noted that these individuals often initiated their offending as pedophiles, but progressed to torture and mutilation and eventually to the murder of their victims (Holmes and DeBurger 1988).

Schreiber (1984) described another type of serial killer known as the psychotic killer. The psychotic offender crossed several offender types and had often lost touch

with reality. These killers often reported experiencing hallucinations and hearing voices which commanded them to kill. This type of serial killer was usually diagnosed with a severe psychological disorder that contributed to the killer's violent attacks. However, this type of disorder is rare among serial killers (Hickey 1997).

Building on these typologies, Dietz (1986) proposed five different categories of serial killers. The first he termed the psychopathic sexual sadists (including killers such as Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy). The second category consisted of crime spree killers such as Bonnie and Clyde. The third category was known as functionaries of organized criminal operations. This type included contract killers and gang members. The fourth category consisted of custodial poisoners and asphyxiators which included nurses and physicians who killed their patients. The final category was designated probable psychotics and included David Berkowitz, who claimed to have heard voices that commanded him to kill (Holmes and Holmes 1998).

Holmes and DeBurger (1988) developed the most extensive typology of serial murder which was based on the motivations of the killer. These four types include the visionary, mission-oriented, hedonistic, and power/control serial murderers. The first type of serial killer, known as the visionary, has lost touch with reality. Due to hallucinations or hearing voices that command them to kill certain people or categories of people, the visionary type is compelled to murder. Two subtypes of the visionary killer include god-mandated and demon-mandated. Some visionaries claim that God told them a certain group of people were "bad"; thus, the killer was instructed to

murder them. Others claim that they are possessed by demons which command them to kill. This type of serial killer is rare and in psychiatric terms would be considered psychotic.

The second type, known as the mission-oriented killer, has a conscious goal to eliminate a certain group of people from society. The killers choose people who they consider “undesirable” or “unworthy” to live with other human beings. The mission-oriented killers typically prey on prostitutes, homosexuals, the homeless, or any other subgroup that they feel do not deserve to live. However, their choice of victims merely reflects the devalued status of the subgroup by society. This type of killer is not psychotic and does not claim to experience auditory or visual hallucinations.

The third type, known as the hedonistic killer, murders for pleasure. However, that pleasure is derived in a variety of ways. This category is divided into three different subtypes including the lust killer, thrill-seekers, and comfort killer.

The hedonistic lust killer has made a connection between sexual gratification and fatal violence. The lust killer is a sexual sadist, and sex plays an integral part of the murder itself. The gratification comes from the sexual activity with the victim pre- and post-mortem.

Sex is also a component with the hedonistic thrill seeker. The thrill seeker has also made the connection between sexual gratification and fatal violence. However, unlike the lust killer, the thrill seeker is only interested in pre-mortem sexual activity. Once the murder is completed, the killer loses interest and prepares to dispose of the body.

The hedonistic comfort killer murders for “creature comforts” including money, business gains, or other material rewards. Holmes and DeBurger (1988) noted that women who were serialists and professional assassins typically fell into this category. To the comfort killer, the act of murder is incidental to the pursuit of goals that may be reflected in material gains.

The fourth and final type of serial murderer is known as the power/control oriented killer. This type of killer receives gratification from having complete control over the victim. Although sex may be a component, the pleasure comes from the domination of the victim. The killer experiences a self-inflated sense of importance and power by having total control over the life and death of the victim (Holmes and DeBurger 1988).

Some researchers have debated Holmes and DeBurger’s (1988) typology, based on the fact that the categories are neither mutually exclusive or collectively exhaustive. Concerned with the overlap of categories and the exclusion of murder for profit, Fox and Levin (1999) modified Holmes and DeBurger’s typology of serial killers. They reclassified serial murder into three categories with two subtypes each.

The first category is known as the thrill motivated. The two subtypes in this category are sexual sadism and dominance. Fox and Levin (1999) contend that not all serial murders are sexually motivated. The dominance subtype was developed to include serial murders by hospital personnel and caretakers, where profit is not the motivation.



The second category is the mission-oriented killer, who kills in order to further a cause. The two subtypes in this category are the reformist and the visionary. The reformist murders to rid the world of filth and evil, including prostitutes and homosexuals. The visionary type is rare and driven to murder by delusions and hallucinations. This type of killer often hears voices which command him to kill. Fox and Levin (1999) suggest that this type of killer is usually psychotic and rarely remains on the streets long enough to become a prolific serial killer.

The third category contains those killers motivated by expedience. This type includes the profit-oriented and the protection-oriented killer. The profit-oriented killer is motivated by material gain and includes black widows (women who kill their husbands for money) and bluebeards (men who kill their wives for money). The protection-oriented killer uses murder to cover up other criminal activity, such as robbery (Fox and Levin 1999).

### **Classifications of Serial Killers**

Scholars have attempted to classify serial killers using other criteria. Newton (1990) loosely classified three types of serial killers based on their hunting techniques. The territorial killers stake out a defined area, usually a city or county, and rarely deviate from their selected place. Nomadic killers, on the other hand, travel widely in their search for victims. Due to their mobility, this type of killer often alludes law enforcement officials for long periods of time. Finally, stationary killers committed murders mainly in their home or place of employment including nursing homes, clinics, or hospitals.

Holmes and Holmes (1994) classify serial killers based on the degree of their spatial mobility. The geographically transient killer is a nomadic murderer, involved in the killing of people while they travel from one area to another. The transient killer does not travel to search for victims. Rather, the killer travels in order to confuse and evade the police.

On the other hand, the geographically stable killer usually remains close to their home or workplace. These killers do not feel comfortable traveling out of familiar areas to hunt for victims. For this reason, geographically stable killers are more likely to be apprehended by the police quickly (Holmes and Holmes 1998).

Hickey (1997) also defined three types of serial murderer based on their geographic mobility. The first type is the local offender, who kills only within their city limits. These killers live in urban areas, where their lives are often cloaked in anonymity. The traveling offender crosses state lines and kills in more than one region. Often these crimes are not linked as being serial, due to the mobility of the offender. Finally, place-specific offenders kill at one specific site such as home or work.

Ressler and other F.B.I. agents developed a psychological profile of serial killers in the 1980s that focused on the degree of organization in the behavior of the perpetrator. Organized and disorganized typologies are used in cases of serial rape and murder. Crime scene analyses provide law enforcement officials with profiles that suggest the personality type of the killer (Geberth and Turco 1996).

Based on research by the F.B.I., Fox and Levin (1994) assert that the organized offender is usually of above average intelligence. This type of offender is socially and sexually adequate, methodical, calculating, a skilled worker, and of a high birth order status. The organized offender may have been married, living with someone, geographically mobile, drives a relatively new car, and follows the crime reports in the media. The crimes of the organized offender are well planned and the crime scene itself is meticulous. The organized offender often moves the body from the crime scene, leaving little evidence for the police.

The disorganized offender, on the other hand, is socially and sexually inadequate. This type of offender usually has below average intelligence and poor self-esteem. The disorganized offender is of a low birth order status, an unskilled worker, and a loner often withdrawn from society. This type of offender usually has poor personal hygiene and poor interpersonal relationships. Unlike the organized offender, the disorganized offender has little interest in the media coverage of the crimes. Typically the offender acts on impulse; therefore the crime scene is messy. Usually no effort is made to clean up the crime scene or conceal the body. The offender lacks geographical mobility and kills in proximity to work or home (Levin and Fox 1994). Necrophilia and mutilations of the body are common with this type of offender (Gerberth and Turco 1996).

Recently, a third type of offender has been referred to as a mixed serial killer. The mixed type of offender may have characteristics from both the organized and disorganized offender. A serial killer may begin as an organized offender. As the

serial killer continues to murder, there is less time between the murders. The goal is to satisfy the need. Therefore, the killer spends more time on the victimization itself and becomes sloppy with the crime scene. Some serial killers may possess characteristics of an organized offender such as above average intelligence; however, they may murder in their home which is typical of disorganized offenders (Hickey 1997).

### **Phases of Serial Murder**

Another criterion that sets serial murder apart from other multiple homicides is the reliance of the killer on ritual. Like the act of murder itself, the ritual also becomes a compulsion for the killer. The sequence of ritualistic acts is the killer's way of building up to the emotional "high" that the killer experiences at the time of the murder.

Norris (1988) broke the ritual of serial murder up into seven key phases. The first phase is known as the aura phase. This phase can last for a few moments up to several months. During this initial phase, there is a withdrawal from reality that indicates some type of behavioral change in the killer. Serial killers have reported that during this phase the senses are intensified. Time seems to slow down and colors and sounds became more vivid. The skin became more sensitive to pressure and odors are more intense. The killer then becomes obsessed with the fantasy and compulsion to find a victim. Often during this phase, the serial killer is aware of losing touch with reality and attempts to medicate himself with alcohol or drugs. The killer replays the fantasy of violence over and over again in his head, until he is no longer able to control the compulsion to kill. At this point, the killer moves into the next phase.

The second phase is known as the trolling phase. During this phase, the killer now actively begins searching for the victim. Trolling does not consist of accidental patterns. Rather, the killer begins trolling favorite spots or areas where the killer knows he will find vulnerable victims. The killer then identifies and begins stalking the intended victim. The victim almost always has symbolic value for the killer and the killer looks for victims with certain characteristics. Once the intended victim is identified and stalked, the killer then moves into the wooing phase.

During the wooing phase, the killer gains the confidence of the victim before luring them into the trap. The serial killer often approaches the victim under false pretenses in order to gain their confidence. Often, the serial killer is charming and the victim has no qualms about consenting to go with the killer. Ted Bundy, for example, often used a fake cast to manipulate victims into thinking they were helping a stranger. Once the victim is successfully wooed, the killer moves into the capture phase.

Norris (1988) noted that during the capture phase, the victim then becomes aware of the serial killer's intentions. All means of escape are eliminated for the victim and the killer now has complete control. The killer can now take the time to prepare for the ritual of the murder.

The fifth phase is known as the murder phase. Often there is sexual gratification involved with the serial killings; therefore, the victim is often raped before being killed. The serial killer may also experience a spontaneous orgasm at the time of the murder. For some serial killers, the rape, torture, or mutilation of the victim is

more important than the murder itself. For other serial killers, the sexual gratification comes from sexual activity and mutilation of the bodies post-mortem.

The sixth phase is the totem phase. After the murder, the killer often wants to preserve the intensity and emotional high of the murder. The victims become symbolic of what the killer experiences and the killer will take a trophy to remember the encounter. Common trophies include body parts, articles of clothing, and pictures of the deceased victim. The emotional high of the murder will soon wear off and the killer will move into the final phase.

The seventh and final phase is known as the depression phase. During the previous phases, the killer is simply acting out a ritualistic fantasy and the murders leave the killer feeling unsatisfied and unfulfilled. There are many reasons why the killer initially engaged in murder and none of these issues are resolved with the ritualistic killings. The killer experiences a sense of emptiness and hopelessness, and nothing can recapture the power he had experienced. Sickened by his crimes, the killer will attempt to notify law enforcement officials or the media asking for help. However, the fantasies soon return and the cyclic nature of serial murder continues (Norris 1988).

In 1994, Holmes and Holmes proposed a five-phase model involved in serial murder. They suggest that not all phases of the model are present in all cases of serial murder and this varies among serial killers as well. The first phase is known as the fantasy phase. The serial killer's fantasy will typically mirror the needs, motivations, and anticipated gains of the murder.

The second phase is the stalking of the victim. The complexity of the stalking varies with the killer's compulsivity. The killer pursues his victim according to his personality type and the organization of the crime scene itself. Organized killers may have a complex stalking period, whereas the disorganized offender is more likely to attack suddenly with little or no stalking period.

The third phase of serial murder is the abduction. Abductions vary according to the type of killer. Many disorganized offenders do not have this phase due to their sudden attacks on the victims. The organized offenders, on the other hand, employ different methods to move the intended victims into their comfort zone. Some abductions are simple, while others are quite complex.

The fourth phase is the murder of the selected victim. Holmes and DeBurger (1988) describe two types of serial murder acts: act focused and process focused. In the act focused type, the killing is done quickly. The gains for the killer are not sexual gratification or power, rather the gain comes from the act of killing. The process focused killing is more typical of the lust, thrill, or power/control serial killer. The murder is simply one part of the ritual of killing. Necrosadistic acts are common with this type of killer (Holmes and Holmes 1994).

The fifth and final phase is the disposal of the body. Some killers simply leave the body at the site of the murder. Disorganized offenders, known for their sudden attacks, often leave a messy crime scene and do not go to great lengths to clear the scene of evidence. Other killers go to great lengths to prepare and dispose of the body. Organized offenders are more likely to move the body and clear the crime scene

of evidence, making it more difficult for law enforcement officials to apprehend them (Holmes and Holmes 1994).

Definitions, typologies, and classifications of serial killers differ among scholars. However, most researchers agree that serial killers are not mentally ill. The next section will discuss the legal definition of insanity. Mental illness will also be discussed and the specific types that have been used in the defense of serial murder.

### **Mental Illness and the Insanity Defense**

Many people in society prefer to explain serial murder in terms of the killer's insanity. However, most serial killers are not insane. Using the legal definition of insanity, serial killers know the difference between right and wrong at the time of commission of the crime. Fewer than 4% of serial killers have attempted to use insanity as a defense. Only 1% of those who used this defense were found not guilty by reason of insanity (Schechter and Everett 1996). Compared to other cases of homicide, less than 1% of these used insanity as a defense. Only 25% of these cases were successful (Law and Psychology Review 1993). Although not insane, most scholars agree that there is some pathological process associated with the commission of such crimes (Carlisle 1993). In rare cases, there is evidence of some sort of psychosis or schizophrenia.

Some serial killers have suffered episodes of psychosis, neurosis, and paranoia. Episodes of psychosis involve the individual having some form of break with reality, during which they may exhibit dangerous or violent behavior. Neuroses, on the other hand, are less severe and include many of the behaviors associated with personality



disorders (Hickey 1997). Paranoia is the sense that an individual is being endangered, threatened, or plotted against. Paranoia is symptomatic of many neuropsychiatric disorders including senility, seizures, brain damage, and schizophrenia (Lewis 1998).

Schizophrenia is often first diagnosed in the teenage years or the early twenties. Symptoms include disorganized thought processes, psychosis, hallucinations, delusions, and feelings of being controlled from the outside. There are different subtypes of schizophrenia, however, most fall within the categories of paranoid or nonparanoid (American Psychiatric Association 1994).

Paranoid schizophrenics are often associated with unprovoked bouts of violence. In most cases, the violence is due to hallucinations or delusions (Brizer and Crowner 1989). Some report hearing voices that command them to kill. David Berkowitz, also known as "Son of Sam," tried to use schizophrenia as a defense at his trial. Berkowitz claimed that the next door neighbor's dog commanded him to kill, but later recanted (Newton 2000).

Violence in schizophrenics is often committed during a psychotic episode. However, few believe that this explanation holds true for serial murderers. Some single episodes of homicide can be accounted for by temporary insanity due to schizophrenia, but there has never been an authenticated case of a schizophrenic committing serial murder (Hickey 1997).

Other types of mental illness that have been used as an explanation for serial murder fall into the category of Dissociative Disorders. One of these illnesses is referred to as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), also known as Multiple

Personality Disorder. DID is characterized by the existence of two or more different personalities or personality states (American Psychiatric Association 1994).

Psychologists believe that DID develops in response to some traumatic experience in childhood. The personalities develop as a way to dissociate from the pain of the experience. Kenneth Bianchi, also known as one of “The Hillside Stranglers,” attempted to create an alternate personality named Steve. Bianchi, however, was faking DID and was found competent to stand trial. DID has been used successfully as a defense in one instance of a single homicide. However, it too has never been authenticated in any serial killer (Hickey 1997).

Dissociative amnesia is a loss of memory due to psychological stress. This type of amnesia is thought to be triggered by highly stressful events, outside the range of normal human experience. Dissociative amnesia has been given more attention in cases of serial murder. Some serial killers claim to have no recollection of the actual murders. Some psychologists believe that they may be suffering dissociative amnesia brought about by the murders. However, the amnesia is a result of the murders and not the cause. Therefore, dissociative amnesia is rarely used as a defense in the case of serial murder (Hickey 1997).

Dissociative fugue involves a loss of memory, similar to dissociative amnesia. However, with dissociative fugue, the individual travels away from their place of residence. They can recall nothing about their past, including who they are. Dissociative fugue is considered very rare, and has never been used as a defense in serial murder (Hickey 1997).

Depersonalization disorder is also a rare dissociative disorder. This involves the individual feeling detached from their physical body. This is often described as an “out of body” experience. Although never used as a defense in serial murder, this disorder has been used successfully in single episodes of homicide (Hickey 1997).

Rather than focus on emotional trauma and psychological disorders, Norris (1988) took a more biological approach to serial murder. In his book, *Serial Killers*, he suggested that some serial killers may be suffering from a neurological disorder. This is often due to head trauma they had experienced in childhood. The head trauma may damage certain areas of the brain, causing episodic aggressive behavior.

Although Norris (1988) focused on structural brain abnormalities, he acknowledged the contributions of environmental and psychological factors. Norris noted twenty-one patterns indicative of episodic aggressive behavior including: ritualistic behavior, masks of sanity, compulsivity, search for help, severe memory disorders, chronic inability to tell the truth, suicidal tendencies, history of sexual assault, deviant sexual behavior and hypersexuality, head injuries or injuries that occurred at birth, history of chronic drug or alcohol abuse, alcohol or drug-abusing parents, victim of physical or emotional abuse, cruel parenting, result of an unwanted pregnancy, product of a difficult gestation period for the mother, interrupted bliss or no bliss in childhood, extraordinary cruelty to animals, arsenal tendencies without obvious homicidal interests, symptoms of neurological impairment, evidence of genetic disorders, or feelings of powerlessness or inadequacy (p. 222-3).

Despite the fact that these disorders are rare, serial killers have attempted to plead insanity. The history of the insanity plea began in the United States in 1843. The M’Naghten Rule set the standard for determining legal insanity. The M’Naghten Rule stated that a person could be found not guilty by reason of insanity if the party acted from a defect or disease of the mind. This defect caused the party to not fully comprehend the nature of the crime or that the behavior was wrong (Law and Psychology Review 1993).

Due to the controversy surrounding the M’Naghten Rule, an irresistible impulse test was added to modify the rule. This test added that the person could not be held responsible for the crime if the defect eliminated their power to choose between right and wrong. Although the individual may know the difference between right and wrong, they had lost the ability to make the right decision (Law and Psychology Review 1993).

In 1954, the Durham Rule was enacted in many states. This was broader than the M’Naghten Rule and stated simply that a person could not be held responsible if the act was committed because of a mental disease or defect. In 1964, the American Law Institute established another test of insanity that stated a person was not responsible for a crime if they lacked the ability to understand the wrongfulness of the crime or conform to the requirements of the law. States differ in which rule they use to test insanity (Law and Psychology Review 1993).

Some states have adopted the mens rea approach which permits mental disease as a factor only in the mitigation of punishment. Others are now using the Guilty but

Mentally Ill approach which does not eliminate responsibility and acknowledges some mental defect. This plea results in sentencing to a mental institution, where the individual remains until deemed healthy enough to finish out their sentence in a correctional facility. Regardless of the type of insanity defense used, serial killers rarely escape punishment by using this defense. One notable exception is Ed Gein, who was found not guilty as a result of insanity and sent to a mental institution where he eventually died (Newton 2000).

In “The Insanity Plea: A Futile Defense for Serial Killers” (1993), researchers suggest that there are six factors that make it difficult for serial killers to establish the insanity plea. The first factor is that serial killers do not typically suffer from mental disease or defect. Second, the heinousness of the crimes does not automatically equal insanity. Third, the meticulous nature of serial killers also does not support a defense of insanity. Fourth, the community places pressure on the jury to convict the serial killer. Fifth, the community fears that if the serial killer is found insane, he will be released back into society to kill again. Finally, it is difficult to accept that a serial killer is not responsible for their crimes (Law and Psychology Review 1993). In order to evaluate responsibility, the serial killer’s intentions and awareness of consequences must be examined (Palermo and Knudten 1994).

Although the insanity laws are continually being revised, they remain useless in the case of the serial killer. Temporary insanity may be supported in some instances of single homicide. However, the cycle of the serial killer suggests that an emotional cooling off period exists between each murder. During this time, the killer relives the

killing through fantasies and then goes on to kill again. Most people agree that this behavior is not indicative of insanity. Serial killers are more likely to exhibit other serious but non psychotic forms of mental illness, usually classified as personality disorders.

### **Personality Disorders**

In 1963, psychiatrist John M. Macdonald first suggested three factors that may predict violent behavior, known as the “Macdonald triad.” He suggested that bedwetting, fire-setting, and torturing small animals were common to the childhood histories of murderers. Most psychologists agree that the triad is not a cause of homicidal behavior, rather it represents a set of symptoms. These symptoms often accompany early psychological, biological, or environmental trauma, and may contribute to the development of a personality disorder in adulthood (Levin and Fox 1985).

Psychologists define personality as the relatively stable traits possessed by an individual (Lion 1974). A personality trait is a distinguishable feature, quality, or disposition of the mind or character (Bynum and Thompson 1999). Often individuals, for whatever reason, fail to internalize the values or norms of society. This may lead to a flawed personality, or if extreme, a personality disorder.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV)* is the guidebook, used by psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers to assess and diagnosis a mental disorder. The *DSM-IV* describes personality disorders as “enduring patterns of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the individual’s

culture”(American Psychological Association 1994: p. 629). In order for a personality disorder to be diagnosed, the *DSM-IV* states that two of the following four areas must be affected: cognition (perception and interpretation of self, others, and events), affectivity (intensity, range, and appropriateness of emotional response), interpersonal functioning, and impulse control (Hickey 1997).

Personality disorders, unlike severe mental illness, are often difficult to detect. Individuals with personality disorders do not show any overt symptoms, such as those associated with psychoses or schizophrenia. Personality disorders are insidious and often present as simply aspects of an individual’s character (Wishnie 1977).

The *DSM-IV* describes the following personality disorders: paranoid (a pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others), schizoid (a pattern of detachment from relationships with limited expression of emotion), schizotypal (social and interpersonal deficits, eccentric behaviors that inhibit close relationships), antisocial (extreme disregard and violation of others), borderline (instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, and impulsivity), histrionic (excessive emotionality and attention-seeking), narcissistic (grandiosity, lack of empathy, need for praise), avoidant (social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, hypersensitivity to criticism), dependent (fear of abandonment, clinging behavior, need to be cared for), and obsessive-compulsive (preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and inflexibility) (American Psychological Association 1994: p. 640). The most common personality disorder linked with serial killers is antisocial personality disorder (Johnson and Becker 1997).

Historically, the term psychopath was used to describe someone that today would be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder. In the 1960s, a psychopath was characterized by a lack of feeling to other humans, emotionless, no remorse, acting on impulse without thought, and lacking drive or motivation. Psychologists also acknowledged the lack of any psychoses or mental deficits (Craft 1966).

In 1976, Hervey Cleckley released a publication called "The Mask of Sanity." In this publication, Cleckley devised a checklist of symptoms of the individual suffering from a psychopathic disorder. These symptoms included: superficial charm, intelligence, unreliability, malingering, lack of remorse and shame, lack of motivation, lack of delusions, narcissism, trivial sex life, and lack of long-term goals. Many scholars agree that not all serial killers exhibit all of these qualities. To the contrary, some serial killers actually do experience remorse. In order to extinguish the guilt, they negate their feelings or rationalize their behavior (Fox and Levin 1994).

Based on Cleckley's observations, Hare (1991) revised the psychopathy checklist. He argues that psychopaths exhibit superficial charm, narcissism, pathological lying, manipulation, lack of remorse and guilt, shallow affect, lack of empathy, and failure to accept responsibility for their actions. The psychopath's lifestyle is described as parasitic, prone to boredom, poor behavioral controls, lack of long-term goals, impulsivity, irresponsibility, juvenile delinquency, promiscuous sexual behavior, short-term marriages, and criminal versatility.

Current scholars contend that serial killers may exhibit some of these traits, but not all of them. Psychopathy is a broad category that should not be used to describe



serial killers, due to the variety of the types of offenders. Today, psychologists have replaced the use of the term psychopathy with antisocial personality disorder. The common pathology among serial killers tends to reflect a high degree of anger, hostility, frustration, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy. Organized and disorganized serial killers differ among their characteristics, but they all have these factors in common (Hickey 1997).

Some serial killers experience syndrome overlap, in that they may have more than one personality disorder. Serial killers may exhibit traits of several personality disorders, including; antisocial, obsessive-compulsive, narcissistic, and paranoid (Hickey 1997). Also, sexual sadism and acts of sexual deviance often accompany personality disorders (Money 1990). The next section will discuss the various paraphilias and sexually deviant acts common among serial killers.

### **Paraphilias and Sexual Deviance**

The *DSM-IV* lists paraphilias as a general category consisting of a variety of types of sexual deviance. The *DSM-IV* describes paraphilias as deviant or bizarre acts and images that cause sexual arousal and continue over a period of time. “The essential features of a paraphilia involve recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, urges, or behaviors generally involving 1) nonhuman objects, 2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one’s partner, or 3) children or other nonconsenting persons, that occur over a period of at least six months” (American Psychiatric Association 1994: p. 522). A sexual disorder may also be diagnosed if the paraphilias are episodic,

but result in impairment in important areas of one's functioning. Individuals may engage in multiple paraphilias, but one usually remains dominant.

The *DSM-IV* also notes that personality disturbances are frequent in those diagnosed with a sexual disorder; therefore, a personality disorder may also be diagnosed. Sexual deviations are not always associated with personality disorders. The literature does suggest, however, that individuals with more manifest sexually deviant behavior have more severe character pathology (Lion 1974).

The *DSM-IV* maintains that paraphilias must be distinguished from the nonpathological use of sexual fantasies, behaviors, and objects. Often times unusual sexual behavior may be symptomatic of other illnesses including substance abuse, schizophrenia, manic episodes in Bipolar Disorder, dementia, and mental retardation. In the case of serial killers, most appear to have both paraphilias and personality disorders. This discussion of paraphilias includes those that have been previously associated with serial murder.

The *DSM-IV* lists only pedophilia, exhibitionism, fetishism, transvestic fetishism, and sexual masochism as paraphilias. Transvestic fetishism, if associated with gender dysphoria, receives an additional diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder. The category of Paraphilia (Non-Specific) is a catchall category that would include many of the other paraphilias discussed in this thesis (American Psychiatric Association 1994).

A past history of animal abuse and torture is one type of paraphilia that is very common among serial killers. Mutilation and dissection of animals, in some instances,

leads the individual to become sexually aroused (Newton 2000). Many serial killers begin the practice of animal abuse in childhood. Many also claim that the killing of animals often leads to the killing of their first human (Hickey 1997).

Another paraphilia that has been associated with serial killers is transvestism or cross-dressing. Cross-dressing involves wearing the clothes more commonly worn by the opposite sex. Men more frequently perform the act of cross-dressing than women (Thio and Calhoun 1995). Not only did Ed Gein dress up like a woman, he attempted to make a woman's dress out of human skin (Schechter and Everett 1996).

Autoeroticism is sexual arousal through self-stimulation. Although masturbation falls into this category, other forms of autoeroticism are dangerous. Autoerotic asphyxiation involves cutting off the oxygen supply to the brain, at the time of orgasm, to enhance sexual gratification. Many people die from this type of paraphilia and their deaths are often ruled as suicides (Hickey 1997).

Anthrophagy is common among serial killers. This is the act of slicing off parts of the flesh and engaging in cannibalism (Hickey 1997). Some serial killers have been known to cook and eat their victims, including Jeffrey Dahmer and Albert Fish. Others, like Andrei Chikatilo, simply cut off parts of the body and consume them raw (Newton 2000).

Some serial killers have also admitted to engaging in bestiality. Bestiality is when an individual engages in sexual activity with animals. Serial killers have reported engaging in bestiality with live animals and ones that they have slaughtered (Hickey 1997).

Fetishes involve obtaining sexual gratification from objects. Many men may have fetishes for women's underwear or shoes. Serial killers, however, tend to have unusual fetishes. Often the killer takes a trophy of his fetish from the victim. Partialism is the obsession with a body part, instead of an object. Partialisms common to serial killers include feet, eyes, breasts, and heads. Charles Albright, for example, surgically removed and kept his victims' eyes (Hickey 1997).

Mysophilia is the sexual gratification from filth or dirt. There are three categories under mysophilia. The first is unidism which is the sexual interest in urine. Typically, these individuals will have someone urinate on them. The second is coprophilia which is sexual interest in feces. The third category has not been named, but involves sexual gratification by having someone vomit on you (Hickey 1997).

Infibulation is sexual gratification through self-torture. This may involve cutting or piercing one's body parts. One of the many deviant acts that Albert Fish engaged in was to stick sewing needles in his genitals and would leave them there. His autopsy revealed nearly thirty needles in his genitals (Hickey 1997).

Gerontophilia is sexual gratification through intercourse with the elderly. Scholars believe that serial killers that seek out the elderly harbor hate towards them. Criminologists suggest that the elderly are the fastest growing population of victims by serial murderers (Hickey 1997).

Pedophilia is sexual gratification through intercourse with children. Several serial killers had a specific attraction to children including Albert Fish. Pederasty is a form of pedophilia where adults have anal intercourse with children (Hickey 1997).

Pyromania is sexual arousal through intentional fire setting. Although pyromania is symptomatic of Conduct Disorder in children, many serial killers report fire setting as sexually arousing. The MacDonald triad lists fire setting, along with enuresis and animal abuse, as one of the behaviors common among serial killers (Hickey 1997).

Sadomasochism is sexual gratification through receiving or inflicting pain on others. Sadism is common among serial killers. Many serial killers receive sexual gratification through inflicting pain on their victims. Although masochism is not common among serial killers, Albert Fish also delighted in having others inflict pain on him (Hickey 1997).

Necrophilia is having sexual intercourse with dead bodies. This form of paraphilia is common among disorganized serial killers. Often a killer will have sexual intercourse pre- and post-mortem. Necrofetishism is having a fetish for dead bodies (Hickey 1997).

Several types of sexual deviance are less serious, but are considered paraphilias if continued over a six-month period. Exhibitionism is the exposing of one's genitals to a stranger. Scatophilia is sexual arousal through making obscene phone calls. Frottage is receiving a spontaneous orgasm through rubbing up against a stranger. Often the victim is unaware of the incident, since frottage frequently occurs in crowded areas. Scopophilia, also known as voyeurism, is gratification from watching people without their knowledge. Also known as "peeping Toms," some serial killers

have reported initiating offending as a scopthiliac and gradually progressing to rape.

Ted Bundy reported that he originally began as a “peeping Tom” (Hickey 1997).

This is not an exhaustive list of paraphilias. However, the ones mentioned have been associated with serial killers. Many of the murders committed by serial killers are sexually motivated. Some form of power, control, and sexual arousal is present during the murders. Law enforcement officials and investigators use evidence at crime scenes to develop profiles on the offender. These investigators often use paraphilias to help develop the profile. Paraphilias common at more than one crime scene are also helpful when attempting to establish evidence of serial murder (Hickey 1997).

Although personality disorders and paraphilias have commonly been linked with serial killers, scholars agree that they do not provide causal explanations for serial murder. Therefore, other areas must be examined to determine why serial killers are able to murder with little or no remorse for their victims. The next section will discuss dehumanization and how some scholars contend that the military provides a training ground for murder.

### **Compartmentalization and Dehumanization**

For most serial killers, guilt does not seem to regulate their behavior as it does with most individuals. Scholars agree that many serial killers can typically be described as sociopaths. In *Overkill: Mass Murder and Serial Killing Exposed*, Fox and Levin (1994) define sociopaths as lacking a conscience, feeling no remorse,

incapable of feeling empathy and warmth for others, and caring exclusively for their own needs and desires.

Although serial killers are typically described as sociopaths, Fox and Levin (1994) question whether sociopathy is present in all cases of serial killers. As mentioned earlier, many serial killers suffer from less extreme personality and sexual disorders. The authors suggest that rather than suffer from sociopathy, many serial killers possess psychological facilitators for neutralizing guilt and remorse. “They are able to compartmentalize their attitudes by conceiving of at least two categories of human beings—those whom they care about and treat with decency, and those with whom they have no relationship and therefore can victimize with total disregard for their feelings (Fox and Levin 1994: p. 44).”

Fox and Levin (1994) assert that compartmentalization is a method used by serial killers to separate themselves from their crimes. However, compartmentalization is learned and used by individuals in their everyday roles. Individuals create two separate selves, one who may be a cutthroat businessman at work, while the other is a loving husband and father. The authors cite a book by psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton (1986) called *The Nazi Doctors*. In this book, Lifton examines how the Nazi physicians were able to conduct horrendous experiments on Jews in the concentration camps. Through his research, the author suggested that the doctors similarly compartmentalized (Lifton referred to as “doubling”) their activities and attitudes. They developed one self for conducting the experiments, and another for their lives outside of the camps (Fox and Levin 1994).

Fox and Levin (1994) contend that along with compartmentalization, dehumanization is another neutralization method learned by serial killers. Dehumanization is another psychological process that effectively permits killing without guilt. Lifton's (1986) study concluded that the physicians were also able to convince themselves that their victims were less than human. Jews were viewed as subhuman and the world needed to be rid of them. Therefore, these nonhumans were expendable and could be sacrificed for the sake of scientific inquiry. In the United States, similar collective definitions of subhumanity were used as justifications for the enslavement, segregation, and violence against African-Americans.

In the case of serial killers, dehumanization is often used when selecting the victims. Prostitutes, homosexuals, and the homeless are viewed by serial killers as subhuman elements of society. The killers then see themselves as doing the world a favor by ridding it of filth and evil. However, in some cases, dehumanization does not occur until after the victim has been captured. The victim then becomes an object that the serial killer can rape, torture, mutilate, and eventually murder (Fox and Levin 1994).

### **Military Violence**

The study of violence in the United States military has focused specifically on domestic violence in military families. The abuse of spouses and children by soldiers began to receive public attention in the early 1990s, with the publicized deaths of family members by 5 soldiers in various branches of the military. In 1992, Pentagon records confirmed that reported cases of violence in military families had doubled since



the previous decade. A confidential Army survey revealed that abuse occurred in one out of every three Army families each year, which is double the civilian rate (Thompson 1994). Another study revealed that these numbers continued to increase each year. By 1996, the reported cases of violence in military families was 5 times higher than in the civilian population (Mercier and Mercier 2000).

Although inside information on military life is limited, these publicized records have forced the branches of the military to spend money on extensive prevention and treatment programs for domestic violence. Military officials have addressed possible causes of the increased risk of domestic violence in the military families, including: separations, financial pressures, frequent moves, and isolation from family and peer support groups. They also contend that the demographics of the majority of military personnel (younger adults with low socioeconomic and employment status) closely resemble those of civilian families with more frequent incidents of domestic violence (Mercier and Mercier 2000). In addition, alcohol abuse is relatively high, pay tends to be low, and the military attracts men who have authoritarian tendencies (Thompson 1994).

Scholars have suggested, however, that the military ignores other factors when attempting to determine causation. The social structure of the military legitimizes, facilitates, and teaches violence and aggression. This violence is transferred to their families in the forms of abuse and sometimes murder (Thompson 1994).

Some scholars propose that the military provides the social context where soldiers learn aggression, violence, and murder. Grossman (1996), a military expert

on the psychology of killing, discusses these methods in *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Grossman coined the term killology to describe a new interdisciplinary field; the study of the methods and psychological effects of training military recruits to circumvent their natural inhibitions to killing fellow human beings.

Grossman (1996) noted that previous military research showed that soldiers were not very inclined to kill. During the Civil War, only a tiny percentage of soldiers fired to hit while the vast majority fired over the enemy's head. A team of researchers, studying what soldiers did in battle during World War II, discovered that only 15 to 20 percent of individual soldiers were able to fire at an exposed enemy. Considering this unwillingness to kill in battle a "problem," the military adopted different techniques in an attempt to increase this percentage. By the time of the Korean War, the percentage of soldiers willing to fire to kill increased to 55. During the Vietnam War, the rate had risen to over 90 percent (Grossman 1996).

Grossman (1996) states that today the military uses various training methods to increase the killing rates of soldiers, including: brutalization, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and role modeling. Brutalization and desensitization to violence are first encountered at boot camp. Cadets are verbally and physically abused by superiors for the entire duration of boot camp. Cadets also lose all individuality by being forced to act and dress alike. The author reports that this brutalization is designed to break down your existing mores and norms and to accept a new set of

values that embrace violence and death as a way of life. The cadet eventually becomes desensitized to violence and accepts it as a normal and essential survival skill.

Classical conditioning is also used by the military so that soldiers learn to associate violence with pleasurable consequences. Grossman (1996) provides an example of the Japanese using classical conditioning during World War II. The Japanese placed Chinese prisoners in a ditch with their hands bound. A few Japanese soldiers would go into the ditch and kill their prisoners with a bayonet. Groups of young soldiers were placed on the banks to watch and cheer on the other soldiers. Afterwards, the soldiers who watched were treated to nice meals and prostitutes. The Japanese found these techniques to be effective in enabling very large numbers of soldiers to commit atrocities, thus, associating pleasure with death and suffering.

Operant conditioning, the procedure of repetitive stimulus-response, is also used by the military to condition the soldiers to react a certain way. An appropriate example of operant conditioning by the military is the use of flight simulators to train pilots. When the pilot is flying and experiences a problem, he or she will react reflexively due to the hours of training on the flight simulator (Grossman 1996).

Grossman (1996) also suggests that conditioned responses are beneficial in various ways. However, the military and law enforcement have made killing a conditioned response. Soldiers and police officers are trained to shoot at man-shaped targets. This is the stimulus. The conditioned response is to shoot the target. The trainees repeat these procedures many times. Later, the soldiers and police officers will reflexively shoot to kill when faced with the same situation.

According to Grossman (1996), role models are also used by the military. The soldier is provided an immediate role model, their drill sergeant. The drill sergeant personifies violence and aggression, and the soldier strives to be like the role model. Military heroes are also violent role models that are presented to the soldiers.

Dehumanization also contributes to soldiers learning to kill. The soldiers are taught that no individuals exist, only enemies. The enemies are viewed as subhuman and become objects. The learned, conditioned responses take over and the soldier then becomes a killer (Grossman 1996).

## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### The History of Social Learning Theory

Over the years, sociologists have attempted to use different types of learning theory to explain crime and deviance. One of the first formulations of learning theory to crime and deviance was undertaken by French social theorist, Gabriel Tarde in the late 1800s. Tarde's theory was known as the theory of imitation and suggestion. Tarde suggested that deviance was a socially learned acquisition, governed by three laws of imitation (Tarde 1912).

The first law of imitation was the law of close contact. Tarde contended that individuals were more likely to imitate the behaviors, ideas, and customs of those people they had the most contact with. According to Tarde, this contact did not have to be direct. Tarde also claimed that indirect contact through the media fostered more deviance. Writing in the nineteenth-century, Tarde believed that the media played a role in the rise in mutilations of women, the rash of "Jack the Ripper" type murders, and the practice of women disfiguring the faces of their male lovers. However, Tarde did not develop a more detailed explanation as to how the media contributed to these crimes.

The second law was the law of imitation of superiors by inferiors. Tarde suggested that people of higher social status were more likely to be imitated. People were more likely to imitate these behaviors to obtain the rewards associated with

being in a superior class. Crime and deviance by government officials and corporate executives increased the chances of others imitating their behavior.

Tarde's third law was the law of insertion. This law suggested that when two different behaviors came into conflict, people were more likely to choose the behavior that was new. Tarde cited the replacement of the knife by the gun as an example of the law of insertion (Tarde 1912).

Although Tarde's theory of imitation and suggestion was highly criticized, it set the background for the development of learning theories and their application to crime and deviance. In 1934, Edwin H. Sutherland developed his theory of differential association. Sutherland's early hypotheses suggested that people could be trained to follow a pattern of criminal behavior. This research focused on social disorganization as the reason why individuals turned to crime. Over the years Sutherland reformulated the theory and developed a process through which a person came to engage in criminal behavior.

In 1947, Sutherland published *Principles of Criminology*. In his book, Sutherland outlined nine proponents of differential association theory that remain unchanged today. They include:

- 1) Criminal behavior is learned.
- 2) Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
- 3) The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups.

- 4) When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes:
  - (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple
  - (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.
- 5) The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
- 6) A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law.
- 7) Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
- 8) The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
- 9) While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since noncriminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values (Sutherland 1947:6-8).

According to Sutherland (1947), criminal behavior is not hereditary.

Individuals learn criminal behavior through a complex process. Criminal behavior is learned through interaction with other individuals in the process of communication.

The communication can be verbal or physical and occurs in intimate personal groups. Unlike Tarde, Sutherland felt that the media, primarily movies and newspapers during the time of Sutherland's writing, played a minimal role in the learning of criminal behavior.

Individuals learn techniques of committing crime, as well as the direction of the motives and drives. Motives and drives are learned from intimate personal groups. These groups either choose to observe the legal codes of their society or favor violating them. The individual learns to define legal codes as favorable or unfavorable, depending on the attitude of their primary group (Sutherland 1947).

Sutherland's sixth proponent is the principle of differential association. This principle states that a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law. Neutral associations produce little or no effect on the individual when relating to criminal patterns. Criminal associations produce criminal behavior, especially when the individual is isolated from anti-criminal associations. These associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. Priority means that lawful and unlawful behavior developed in early childhood may persist throughout life. Intensity refers to the prestige of the source of learning and the emotional reactions related to the associations (Sutherland 1947).

Sutherland's (1947) eighth proponent suggests that the learning of criminal behavior includes all the other mechanisms of learning and is not limited to the process of imitation. He concludes with a statement about the general needs and values of



criminal behavior. He suggests that the general needs and values of criminal behavior are not sufficient to explain it because the needs and values may be the same for noncriminal behavior. Thieves steal in order to acquire wealth (a criminal activity), while laborers work to acquire wealth (a noncriminal activity). Therefore, theories should differentiate between criminal and noncriminal behavior.

Sutherland's theory is still used today to explain how certain types of deviance and crime can be learned behavior. Other theorists attempted to modify Sutherland's theory to provide a more detailed explanation of crime as learned behavior. Daniel Glaser (1956) developed the principle of differential identification. Glaser found that intimate contact with deviant people was not necessary to learn deviant behavior. He suggested that people could be socialized indirectly by the media and other distant reference groups. This indirect socialization could affect an individual's definitions of the world and ultimately their behavior. Glaser contended that interpersonal association was not necessary for deviant learning (Glaser 1956).

Another modification to differential association theory was made by Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza (1957). They contended that deviants could live in both worlds, conformity and nonconformity. These deviants developed, what Sykes and Matza termed, techniques of neutralization to justify their actions to the normative social world. Sykes and Matza suggested five neutralization techniques. The first technique of neutralization was denial of responsibility. The deviant denies responsibility by claiming they are being pulled or pushed by uncontrollable social forces. The second technique is denial of injury. The deviant admits the choice to do

something but claims that the act was not harmful. The third technique is denial of victim. The deviant accepts responsibility for the act and the harmful consequences, but suggests that the targeted victims are not really victims because they asked for it. The deviant labels the victim as a rationalization for the behavior. The fourth technique is termed condemning the condemners. With this defense the deviant attacks those who have authority by ridiculing them and undermining their power. The last technique is the appeal to higher loyalties. The deviant admits the act but claims the motive is unselfish. The deviant believes that the act should be excused because it was done to help out someone else (Sykes and Matza 1957).

### **Modern Social Learning Theory**

Rather than criticizing the work of Sutherland, Ronald Akers and Robert Burgess (1965) reformulated his theory by combining the disciplines of psychology and sociology. Their theory is accepted as a general social learning theory and continues today to be used in empirical studies. In 1966, Akers and Burgess published the article "A Differential Association: Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior." In this article, the theorists base their learning theory on B.F. Skinner's operant psychology. Skinner, a psychologist, developed the idea of operant conditioning. In this learning process, a behavior at one point in time (response) elicited an effect (stimulus). This effect increased or decreased the likelihood that the behavior would be reproduced in the future (response). Positive and negative reinforcement governed whether the behavior was likely to be repeated. However, Skinner's theory follows a strict behavioral approach. Burgess and Akers's work is described as "soft

behaviorism,” similar to psychologists such as Albert Bandura and Richard Walters. Burgess and Akers’s emphasized the importance of reinforcement and punishment, while also recognizing the role of cognitive processes.

Following the logic of operant principles, Burgess and Akers reformulated differential association into differential reinforcement. They offer seven proponents of this theory. First, deviant behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning. Second, deviant behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminating and through that social interaction in which the behavior of other persons is reinforcing or discriminating for such behavior. Third, the principle part of the learning of deviant behavior occurs in those groups which comprise or control the individual’s major source of reinforcements. Fourth, the learning of deviant behavior includes specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures. Fifth, these are a function of the effective and available reinforcers and the existing reinforcement centerpieces. Sixth, the probability that a person will commit deviant behavior is increased in the presence of normative statements, definitions, and verbalizations which, in the process of differential reinforcement of such behavior over conforming behavior, have acquired discriminative value. Finally, the strength of deviant behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement. The modalities of association with deviant patterns are important, insofar as they affect the source, amount, and scheduling of reinforcement (Burgess and Akers 1966).

In 1998, Akers elaborated on his earlier work by proposing a new general theory of crime and deviance. The Social Structure-Social Learning theory (SSSL) attempts to integrate the macro-level social structure theories with the micro-level social learning theories. Akers contends that the two theories are compatible when studying the social context in which an individual is more likely to commit crime. He argued:

“Its basic assumption is that social learning is the primary process linking social structure to individual behavior. Its main proposition is that variations in the social structure, culture, and locations of individuals and groups in the social system explain variations in crime rates, principally through their influence on differences among individuals on the social learning variables—mainly, differential association, differential reinforcement, imitation, and definitions favorable and unfavorable and other discriminative stimuli for crime”  
(p. 322).

Learning theorists contend that deviant and criminal behavior that can be learned, can be unlearned as well. Although there are many criticisms of learning theory, it is still used today by researchers. Serial murder is one area which scholars have attempted to apply learning theory. In 1993, Robert L. Hale published “The

Application of Learning Theory to Serial Murder.” In his article, Hale suggests that serial murder is a crime that can also be learned.

Hale (1993) notes that the internal drives of a serial killer are often overlooked as motivation. Previous case studies of serial killers suggested that the killer’s victims often resemble someone who caused the killer humiliation in his life. Hale proposes that an early humiliation in the life of a serial murder can eventually translate into criminal behavior. This happens, however, only if the killer recognizes and internalizes the humiliation as a motive.

Hale (1993) uses Abraham Ansel’s frustration theory (1958) to explain how the killer internalizes the perceived wrong and uses it as a justification for murder. Based on this theory, the killer associates certain cues from the situation in which the humiliation initially occurred, with the later humiliation. The later or current humiliation is referred to as a “nonreward” situation. Nonreward presented in a situation in which reward previously occurred produces an unconditioned frustration response. The cues which were present during the humiliation become conditioned to produce an anticipatory frustration response. This response also produces a distinctive internal stimuli which motivates the individual to avoid potentially humiliating situations in the future (Hale, 1993).

The Hull-Spence theory of discrimination learning (1943, 1936) explains why the killer is not able to discriminate one instance of humiliation from another. Situations where the killer has experienced a reward (reinforcement) allow the killer to discriminate between stimuli and choose the behavior that produces the reward.

However, the killer has experienced very few, if any, situations which produce a reward. Therefore, in all situations which the cues indicate a potential humiliation to the killer, the killer associates them with a nonreinforcement situation. The abundance of these nonreinforcement situations do not allow the killer to discriminate one situation from another (Hale 1993).

Hale also uses Dollard and Miller's (1939, 1950) theory of learning to explain why the killer "instigates" a certain behavior. An instigated behavior is a behavior where the predicted response is the consequence. This consequence has been observed or inferred by the individual. The behavior may be instigated to seek approval or some other desired goal. Frustration occurs when a barrier prevents the individual from reaching the desired goal (Hale 1993).

This frustration causes an aggressive drive, basis impulse or drive, to be blocked. The aggressiveness is blocked, but must eventually be released. The aggressive impulses may be released indirectly through displacement to less threatening objects. Using Freud's idea of "transference," Dollard and Miller (1950) suggest that responses may be transferred from one object to another through generalization.

In the application to serial murder, the killer is under the control of the individual who originally caused the humiliation. The killer may release the frustration and aggression on the original individual. However, the control and humiliation often prevents the killer from doing this. Therefore, the humiliation becomes internalized

and is not corrected. Through generalization the killer transfers this internalized humiliation to his victims, in an attempt to rectify the past humiliation (Hale 1993).

Hale, like other learning theorists, contends that serial murder can be unlearned. The killer is unable to discriminate, or specify the differences and similarities, between comparable stimuli. The serial killer is confusing cues from the past with ones in the present. Therapy may be able to help serial killers identify these faulty generalizations and expand their learning processes (Hale 1993).

If serial murder can be learned, it is possible that some killers may have learned how to kill from their past military experience? Grossman's (1996) research, discussed previously in the second chapter, suggested that many techniques are employed to teach soldiers to kill. While serving in the military, the soldier has some outlets for the skills he has learned. However, once the soldier becomes a civilian, is it possible that brutalization, desensitization to violence, classical and operant conditioning, and internalized humiliation combine to help create a serial killer?

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the purposes of this thesis, a case study design will be used. A case study is an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin 1989: p. 23). The case study is also the preferred research strategy when the investigator has little control over the events. The major purpose of using case studies as a methodological skill is to identify any themes or patterns that may exist in the literature (Yin 1989).

When using case studies as the research design, there are five components that are especially important. The first component is a study’s questions. The case study strategy is more likely to appropriate “how” and “why” questions. Therefore, the initial task is to clarify the nature of the study questions. The second component is the study’s propositions, if there are any. Each proposition should direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study. The third component is the unit of analysis. The researcher needs to define exactly what a “case” will be on the individual or group level. The fourth component is linking data to the propositions. The researcher can “pattern-match” the information from the cases to some theoretical proposition. The last component is the criteria for interpreting the findings. Problems exist when trying to determine the criteria for findings with a case study. Currently there is no set standard for case studies, since



statistical analysis can not be calculated. Often the findings may be interpreted by comparing at least two rival propositions (Yin 1989).

The ten case studies were randomly selected from twenty-five serial killers identified with previous military experience. Information regarding the case studies were taken from *Serial Killers* (Norris, 1988), *Hunting Humans: The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers, Volumes I and II* (Newton, 1990), and *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers* (Lane and Gregg, 1992). The combined resources profiled approximately 354 serial killers. However, many of these cases were excluded due to the varying definitions of serial murder used in the books. As mentioned previously, Egger's (1990) definition of serial murder is used in this study. In addition, this study limits the cases of serial murder to American offenders.

### **Research Questions**

The unit of analysis for this case study will be the individual serial killer. Ten case studies will be conducted and two questions will be addressed within each case. The first question is whether each case fits the criteria for a serial killer. Definitions, typologies, and classifications currently differ among scholars and law enforcement officials. However, the cases used for this study will follow a consistent set of parameters. For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of serial murder outlined by Egger (1990) in Chapter II will be used. Cases will not be used that appear more ambiguous, and where the label of serial killer has been argued by scholars to be an inappropriate diagnosis. Excluded will be cases where the motive was profit-oriented or the victims and perpetrators were acquaintances.

The second question addressed in this case study will be whether the serial killer has had some military experience in their past. The purpose of this study is not to assert that military experience alone may be a causal explanation for serial murder. The study will simply note that military experience was documented and a relationship between serial murder and soldiering exists. No single psychological, biological, or sociological theory has successfully provided a causal explanation for serial murder. Most scholars agree that causality is more likely to be a combination of factors in all three of these areas (Giannangelo 1996). Therefore, all known contributing factors will be documented for each individual case. The goal of this thesis is to explore the link that the military experience of boot camp may provide a social context in which the serial killer learns violence, aggression, and murder.

### **Data Analysis**

“The analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies” (Yin 1989: p. 105). Certain analytic techniques can be used to put the data in order prior to analysis. These include: making a matrix of categories and putting the evidence into each category, creating data displays for examining the data, and putting information in chronological order or some other temporal scheme (Yin 1989).

Although case studies may be analyzed in a variety of ways, one general analytic strategy is to develop a descriptive framework for organizing the case studies. The framework can be developed by using repeated observations as a mode of analysis. The repeated observations method differs from the time-series method, in

that repeated observations are made cross-sectionally over different unit of analyses (Yin 1989). Since the purpose of this thesis is exploratory, rather than explanatory, the repeated observations method will be used.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

The following chapter will profile the histories of ten serial killers.

#### *Case Study #1*

It has been reported that Jerry Brudos's shoe fetish began at an early age. Family members reported Brudos's fascination with shoes beginning in infancy. At the age of 5, he brought home a pair of high-heeled shoes he found in a dump. The shoes were burned by his domineering mother, for whom he later developed a deep hatred. By the time he was an adolescent, Brudos began to steal shoes from his sisters and became sexually aroused by women wearing high-heeled shoes. By the age of 16, Brudos had progressed to stealing shoes and undergarments from neighbor's houses. At the age of 17, Brudos was arrested for holding a woman at knife-point and forcing her to remove her clothes while he photographed her. For this charge, he was confined to a mental institution for 9 months, where psychologists diagnosed him as exhibiting symptoms of an early personality disorder (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Despite the confinement, Brudos went on to graduate from high school. Brudos attended college and vocational training before finally joining the *army*. After his medical discharge, he took a job as an electronics technician, got married and had a child. His hobby of collecting high-heeled shoes continued, and Brudos often insisted on his wife walking around the house naked while he took pictures (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Brudos's bizarre sexual behavior progressed to murder in January 1968 when Linda Slawson showed up at his door selling encyclopedias. Brudos took her to the garage where he then bludgeoned her to death. After the murder, he cut off the victim's left foot and kept it in a freezer. He reportedly kept the foot to dress up in high-heels on special occasions (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Brudos killed again in November of the same year, picking up Jan Whitney and strangling her in his car. He then took her body back to his garage where he committed acts of necrophilia and then cut off her right breast as a trophy. In March of 1969, he took his third victim. Following the same pattern, he raped and strangled Karen Spinker. With the rate of murders accelerating, Brudos took his final victim four weeks later. Linda Salee was taken from a supermarket and strangled, after which he reportedly conducted experiments on the corpse by passing currents of electricity through her body (Lane and Gregg 1992).

The bodies of two of the women were found in the river by police. The disappearance of these women caused alarm on the campus of Oregon State University. Interviews with female students produced a description of Brudos, who would hang around campus trying to pick up a date. Police staked out the campus and eventually arrested Brudos on a concealed weapons charge. Once in custody, he confessed to the four murders. Although several other disappearances are attributed to Brudos, he admitted to only three murders. At trial, Brudos's lawyers opted to plea insanity, however, seven psychiatrists testified that he was sane, but suffering from

personality disorders. Brudos was convicted and sentenced to life in Oregon State Prison (Lane and Gregg 1992).

#### *Case #2*

Jeffrey Dahmer's early childhood was marked by the fighting of his parents, who eventually divorced. Dahmer's mother moved away with his younger brother, while his dad remarried. Friends described Dahmer as "weird" and at age 10 he began experimenting with animals, often cutting them open to see what they looked like inside (Giannangelo 1996).

Dahmer eventually took some vocational training, afterwards enlisting in the *army*. Dahmer began to drink heavily and after several years was discharged from the army due to the alcoholism. Dahmer began his criminal career soon after and was arrested on charges of indecently exposing himself to minors, and the abuse of a thirteen-year old boy. He was released on probation for this charge in 1989, although his father pleaded with psychiatrists to get him some help (Lane and Gregg 1992).

After his release from prison, the murders began. Dahmer reportedly picked victims up at malls and gay bars. He would then bring them home, drug, strangle, and finally dismember them. The rapid succession of murders ended on July 24, 1991. A handcuffed teenager alerted police that he had been taken to an apartment where he escaped after his host threatened to kill him with a butcher knife. Police searched the residence and found two severed heads in the refrigerator, seven severed heads in boiling pots, four male torsos in a barrel, and various other body parts scattered

among the residence. While in custody, Dahmer confessed to eleven murders (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Police were still attempting to identify all of the bodies and eventually Dahmer would confess to a total of seventeen murders. Dahmer confessed to his first murder, which happened in Ohio at the age of 18. Dahmer had picked up a man for sex, however, when the man tried to leave he reportedly panicked and bludgeoned him to death. The State of Wisconsin tried Dahmer on 15 counts of murder, due to the one occurring in Ohio and another lacking evidence (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Once news broke regarding Dahmer's murders, the German police were anxiously waiting the results of the trial. They wanted to question Dahmer regarding 7 murders that occurred within a thirty-mile radius of his military post in Mainz, where he was stationed in the army. However, Dahmer never confessed to these murders (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Dahmer's lawyers attempted to plead guilty but insane. After admitting guilt, a trial was held to determine his sanity. Several psychiatrists supported the insanity plea, due to the severe paraphilic disorder Dahmer suffered from. In addition to dismemberment, he also engaged in pedophilia, necrophilia, and cannibalism. By his own confession, Dahmer admitted to conducting experiments on his victims while they were alive. He admitted to drilling holes in their heads in order to create the perfect "zombie" who would never leave him. He also admitted to engaging in cannibalism for the purpose of being close to and experiencing that person (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Due to all of his victims being minorities and some being homosexual, people suggested the murders were hate crimes (Lane and Gregg, 1992). However, Dahmer denied that the crimes were fueled by hate. Instead, he suggested that he wanted a partner that would stay with him forever. He admitted that this was the purpose of the experiments and when they failed he was forced to dismember and dispose of the bodies (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Despite his gruesome acts, the jury found Jeffrey Dahmer sane. He was convicted on 15 counts of murder and received consecutive life sentences. Dahmer was then tried and convicted on the 16<sup>th</sup> murder that occurred in Ohio (Lane and Gregg 1992). Dahmer did not last long in prison and was beaten and killed in 1994 (Giannangelo 1996).

### *Case #3*

Little is known about Ronald Gray's childhood or activities before he joined the *army* at the age of 18. In 1986, he was posted at Fort Bragg, located outside of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Gray's arrival at the Fort Bragg post marked a string of rapes and murders (Newton 1990).

Linda Coats was found dead in her trailer in July of 1986. Coats, soon to leave for commission in the army, was sexually abused and murdered with a gunshot to the head. Several days later, soldiers found the body of Teresa Utley on the military reservation. Utley had been beaten, raped, and murdered using a knife (Newton 1990).



In November of 1986, two women were abducted, raped, and threatened by a black man at gunpoint. Although one of the women later identified Gray, neither reported the attack to the police. The following month, Tammy Wilson, a soldier's wife, was abducted and later found by her husband in some nearby woods. Wilson had been raped and shot. Three days later, Sgt. Michael Clay came home from duty to find his home burned and his wife, Laura, missing. Five weeks passed before her body was recovered from the woods (Newton 1990).

After the disappearance of Laura Clay, another female soldier was attacked but managed to survive. Four days later, Kimberly Ruggles's cab was found abandoned on a city street. Raped, beaten, and murdered, her body was eventually located in a search at Fort Bragg. This murder prompted two surviving victims to come forth and Ronald Gray was identified. Gray was formally charged with 23 felony counts, including four murders and two attempted murders on a military reservation. In November of 1987, Gray pleaded guilty to all charges in Fayetteville and was sentenced to three consecutive life terms. In April of 1988, Gray was convicted on the other counts at his court-martial. For the crimes committed at Fort Bragg, Gray was sentenced to death (Newton 1990).

#### *Case #4*

Patrick Kearney's story begins while he was stationed in the *air force* in Texas in 1962. Kearney met an ex-army man named David Hill who left his wife and became Kearney's live-in lover. The couple moved in together in Culver City, California and the first murders began (Newton 1990).

Kearney and Hill's murders, nicknamed the "trash bag" murders in California, officially began in April of 1975. The mutilated body of Albert Rivera was found in San Juan. In the next seven months, six more bodies were found in the counties of Riverside, Orange, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Two more victims were discovered by March of 1977, giving the police a pattern to work from. All of the eight victims identified were found nude, shot in the head, and their bodies were mutilated or dismembered. In addition, the remains were tied up in plastic garbage bags, hence the nickname. John LaMay was the last victim, whose remains were discovered five days after he left home to visit a friend named "Dave." Friends of the victim identified David Hill, leading the police to issue a warrant for the arrest of Kearney and Hill. The police could not find the men, but Kearney and Hill turned themselves over to police in July (Newton 1990).

Kearney and Hill originally were only charged with two murders. Hill was released, and the charges dismissed, after Kearney confessed to full responsibility for the crimes. Kearney then led police to the dumping sites of six more victims. Fibers from several corpses, as well as the bloody hacksaw used for dismemberment, were discovered in Kearney's residence. By the middle of July, Kearney had confessed to 28 murders. Twelve of these murders were confirmed by police and in December Kearney was sentenced to life for three counts of first-degree murder. Kearney went to trial again for 18 more counts of murder, 12 being Kearney's confessions that were confirmed by police. Two of the murders were children, along with four victims'

bodies that were never recovered. Kearney pleaded guilty to all charges and received another life sentence. Seven of Kearney's victims remain unidentified (Newton 1990).

#### *Case #5*

Martin Kipp was a full-blooded Blackfoot Indian, who was raised on a reservation by relatives. Kipp was adopted by them after his mother abandoned him at the age of 22 months. Kipp's adoptive father was an alcoholic, who frequently beat Kipp while in public. After his father's death, Kipp joined the *marines* and eventually won divisional honors in boxing (Newton 1990).

Kipp was reassigned to the base in El Toro, California, where he was charged in June of 1981 of abducting and raping a woman he met in a bar. To avoid charges, Kipp went AWOL but was eventually tried and sentenced to 3 years in prison. After becoming a rape victim himself in prison, Kipp was granted early release after serving only 19 months (Newton 1990).

Kipp's rape progressed to murder when in September of 1983, the body of a college student was found in a bed at the Ramada Inn. Tiffany Frizzell had been raped, beaten, strangled, and left on the bed nude. Antaya Howard was the second victim, found under a blanket in her car. Antaya had also been strangled, however, she was left fully clothed (Newton 1990).

Due to the dissimilarities of the cases and the different races of the victims, police did not initially connect the crimes. Witnesses at a restaurant led the police to Kipp, who was the last person seen talking to Antaya. Fingerprints left on Antaya's car led police to indict Kipp for her murder. Kipp was also indicted for the murder of

Tiffany Frizzwell, although police would not reveal the evidence linking him to the crime. Eventually Kipp was sentenced to death for the murder of Antaya Howard. By 1990, Kipp had not been tried for the murder of Tiffany Frizzwell (Newton 1990).

#### *Case #6*

Randy Kraft graduated college with a degree in economics and then spent a year in the *air force*, before being discharged for homosexual behavior. He was arrested and spent five days in jail for the charge of lewd conduct in 1975. Kraft's next interlude with the police was in May of 1983. Police stopped Kraft's vehicle, suspecting intoxication, and became suspicious when Kraft got out of the car immediately and came up to the cruiser. Police decided to search the vehicle, where they found Terry Gambrel dead from strangulation (Newton 1990).

A search of Kraft's car and home uncovered photographs of several men, whose bodies were found between 1980-83. Fibers and personal items linked Kraft to five more murders, committed in two other states where Kraft traveled while working for an aerospace firm. A notebook was also found that contained cryptic messages. Once certain victims had been identified, police were able to break the cryptic code. Entries such as "Marine Carson" represented a young marine whose body was found strangled in Laguna Hills in 1978 (Newton 1990).

By August 1983, Kraft was charged with six counts of murder. However, the number continued to grow as police linked unsolved murders with the cryptic codes in Kraft's notebook. A month later the count rose to 16 charges of murder, with 22

additional charges being added a year later. At the time of this writing, jury selection had just finished and the trial was set to begin (Newton 1990).

#### *Case #7*

Due to his parents' financial difficulties, Leonard Lake was sent to live with his grandparents at an early age. His grandfather was an alcoholic, and Lake often played the role of hero during his grandparent's arguments. As a child, Lake exhibited some signs of compulsivity and obsessive qualities. Lake was compulsively clean as a child, often taking several showers in a day and frequently washing his hands. During his childhood, Lake conducted experiments with mice during which he traced their life cycle and studied their genetic codes, becoming a self-taught geneticist. Family members report Lake's obsessiveness regarding details when undertaking any such project (Norris 1988).

Lake's mother reported that their family encouraged their children to be proud of the nude body. Lake was encouraged to take pictures of women, a habit which continued throughout his life. During adolescence, Lake began to solicit women for sexual favors. However, his violent tendencies did not emerge until after he served his tours of duty as a *marine* in Vietnam (Norris 1988).

As an adult, Lake made underground pornography videos. Lake would often solicit his wife as a model, acting out the sexual fantasies of the customers. However, at the time the videos were the extent of Lake's activities. Lake's wife divorced him and at age thirty-nine he was discharged from the *marines* for emotional difficulties. Lake had developed a survivalist mentality, obsessed with constructing a compound

for the impending nuclear holocaust. Lake traveled frequently and was eventually arrested on a weapons charge at a survivalist compound in Humboldt County, California. It was there that Lake took his first two victims. The first was Charles Gunnar, Lake's best friend from Vietnam, who he murdered and then assumed his identity. Lake also killed his younger brother Donald, who had gone there for a visit (Norris 1988).

Lake fled while out on bail for the weapons charges, settling in Calaveras County, California. Along the way Lake met Charles Ng, also an ex-marine. Together they secured a cabin on Blue Mountain Road, where they built an underground bunker. Luring victims to the cabin through classified ads, Lake and Ng would murder the individuals and steal all of their possessions. Using the victims' credit cards, driver's licenses, and cars, Lake would assume the identities of his victims (Norris 1988).

The extent of Lake's and Ng's activities at the cabin were unknown until Lake was picked up by police in San Francisco in July of 1985. Ng attempted to steal a vise from a lumber store, but was able to flee from police. However, Lake was apprehended and detained for questioning, although he gave his name as one of his victims. While in custody, Lake swallowed a cyanide pill and died four days later without ever regaining consciousness. Following leads on Lake's car and background, police eventually found the rural cabin on Blue Mountain Road. A search of the premises uncovered the bunker with blood-stained torture devices, videos of the tortures and murders, and Lake's journal. Lake's journal provided the police with an

account of Lake's emotional breakdown after moving into the cabin, and his desire to create a survivalist society with women to provide sex. A search of the property at the cabin yielded 8 unmarked graves and bags of bones that had been boiled into soup. Nineteen shallow graves were also found off of Blue Mountain Road. Identified victims included: Brenda O'Connor, Scott Stapley and her two-year old son Lonnie (neighbors in the community); Michael Carroll and Kathy Allen (Ng's cellmate in jail who bought videos from Lake, and his girlfriend); and Paul Curson and the Dubs family (responded to the ads). Due to Lake's suicide while in police custody, the magnitude of Lake's activities will never be known (Norris 1988).

#### *Case #8*

Charles Chat Ng was born into a prosperous Hong Kong family. After being expelled from a number of schools, Ng was sent to England to finish his education. Classmates recall that Ng was always interested in the martial arts. At the age of 18, he moved to the United States and enlisted in the *marines* in 1979. Ng was arrested two years later for stealing weapons and explosives from the marine armory. Ng managed to escape custody, and while on the run met ex-marine Leonard Lake (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Ng and Lake's activities were discussed earlier, and when Lake was arrested Ng managed to escape. Ng fled to Canada and was arrested a month later for shoplifting and shooting a security guard. Ng was sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment for robbery and aggravated assault. With a warrant for Ng in the U.S. on 11 counts of murder, he was eventually extradited to California following a six-

year legal battle. At the time of this writing, Ng was ready to stand trial and face the death penalty (Lane and Gregg 1992).

#### *Case #9*

Edward Leonski was an *army* private stationed in Australia during World War II. During 1942, three women were found strangled in the streets of Melbourne. The suspicions were placed on American army men after a soldier reported seeing a private returning to base late and in disarray on the night of the last murder. Leonski was identified as also threatening a woman a few days prior (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Leonski was arrested and confessed to all three murders. Another private reported that Leonski had stated previously that he was a Jekyll and Hyde and had killed. Leonski claimed he killed the three women to “get their voices,” and recalled that one of the victims had sang to him (Newton 1990).

Despite a defense of insanity, Leonski was court-martialed and found guilty of all three murders. Leonski was hanged in November of 1942, at the Pentridge jail. After claiming he killed the get the women’s voices, Leonski was nicknamed the “Singing Strangler” (Newton 1990).

#### *Case #10*

David Rogers was a *navy* veteran, married, and a father of two children. In 1977, he moved to California and found employment as a deputy with the Kern County Sheriff’s Department. Rogers worked the streets for five years where prostitutes were numerous. Rogers once reportedly took his son on a tour of the streets so that he would learn that prostitutes were “scumbags” (Newton 1990).



Rogers was fired from the department in 1983, after taking nude photographs of a prostitute in a cemetery. Rogers appealed and was given a 15 day suspension instead, due to the failure of the prostitute to appear at the hearing. He returned to duty three months later, and was back on patrol in 1986 (Newton 1990).

In February of 1986, Jeanine Benintende's body was found in the local canal. She had been shot with a .38-caliber weapon, and killed by the hollow-point bullets often used by police. A year later, Tracy Clark was also found in the canal, having been killed with the same weapon. Both victims were prostitutes and Rogers was arrested soon after a background investigation revealed his previous interest in prostitutes. Rogers admitted to owning the weapon and was convicted on two counts of homicide and sentenced to death. The prostitute who failed to appear at the hearing in 1983 was considered a possible third victim, since she was never seen or heard from again (Newton 1990).

All of the case studies represent serial killers, based on the seven components of Egger's (1990) definition as previously discussed in Chapter II. Although the histories of each serial killer are quite different, each one had some type of military experience. The next section will discuss the findings, as well as the limitations of this research.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

As previously discussed, most scholars agree that the causation behind serial murder is a combination of various factors, including biological, psychological, and sociological. The first section of the discussion will address what, if any, of these factors were evident in the ten case studies provided. Second, the application of learning theory to serial murder will be discussed, as well as how serial killers learn to overcome their inhibition to kill through military training. Third, limitations of this research will be considered. Finally, the conclusion will address the findings and their implications for future research.

#### **Biological, Psychological, and Sociological Factors**

Only 5 (Brudos, Dahmer, Kipp, Lake, and Ng) of the 10 case studies reported on any known childhood experiences. The limited and lacking information makes it difficult to develop an extensive profile that addresses all known contributory factors. Of the 5 case studies providing information regarding childhood experiences, there were no biological factors reported. Psychological factors were reported in the cases of Brudos, Dahmer, and Lake. Sociological factors were present in the case of Kipp. The childhood experiences of Ng were reported, however, none of these factors were present. The next section will discuss the psychological and sociological factors in more detail.

Early psychological factors were present in 3 of the 10 studies. In the case of Jerry Brudos, family members reported that Brudos was fascinated with shoes as early

as infancy. Brudos stole his first pair of shoes at the age of 5 and would continue to do so throughout his adolescence and teenage years. This early shoe fetish progressed to burglary as a teen when he was caught stealing shoes and undergarments from neighbor's houses. His bizarre behavior continued until the age of 17, when he was arrested for holding a woman at knife-point and forcing her to remove her clothes while he photographed her. Brudos was confined to a mental institution for 9 months where psychologist diagnosed him as having symptoms of an early personality disorder (Lane and Gregg, 1992).

Brudos's shoe fetish became a foot partialism by the time he committed his first murder. Brudos's was discharged from the army for medical reasons, although information does not specify the nature of the discharge. Brudos's future paraphilia was evident at an early age. His first murder was committed on impulse, although Brudos probably had already begun to fantasize about killing. Brudos's arrest for holding a woman at knifepoint at 17 suggests that he was already engaging in violent behavior. His military training in the army may have facilitated his future violence. Brudos was a typical lust murderer, as defined in Chapter II (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Psychological factors were also present in the childhood of Jeffrey Dahmer. Dahmer reported instances of animal cruelty as a child, experimenting on animals to find out how they looked inside. Dahmer's first murder was committed before he served in the army, suggesting that Dahmer was predisposed to violent behavior. His developed an alcohol problem while enlisted, which led to his discharge from the army. Although suspected of committing murders on his base in Germany, Dahmer was

never tried for those crimes. Dahmer's alcoholism may have served as a facilitator for his future murders (Lane and Gregg, 1992).

Early psychological factors were also reported in the case of Leonard Lake. Family members reported that Lake showed early obsessive-compulsive traits, including: frequent handwashing and showers, excessive cleaning, and excessive attention to detail when undertaking any project. However, Lake did not exhibit any childhood violence. Lake's violent tendencies and survivalist mentality did not surface until after his served tours of duty in Vietnam. His discharge from the Marines for emotional difficulties exacerbated the earlier issues and Lake began to commit his first murders. Although it was not documented it was possible that Lake was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, brought about by his experiences in Vietnam (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Charles Ng also reportedly showed no early signs of violent behavior. He successfully completed boarding school and joined the marines. Ng was arrested after 2 years for stealing weapons from the marine armory. Ng escaped and met up with Leonard Lake. Psychologists suggested that Ng's activities alone may not have been capable of committing murder. However, the combined effect, known as the principle of Gestalt, of Lake and Ng together was an explosive combination (Lane and Gregg, 1992).

Sociological or environmental factors were present in the cases of Dahmer, Lake, and Martin Kipp. Dahmer's childhood was marked by his parent's intense arguing and later divorce. After the divorce, Dahmer's mother took his younger

brother and moved away. This left Dahmer to fend for himself, although he did receive support from his father and his stepmother. However, Dahmer reportedly felt abandoned by his mother and brother.

Soon after, he would commit his first murder. The murder was of a man with whom Dahmer had homosexual relations. When the man wanted to leave, Dahmer reportedly panicked. This instance may have triggered some previous abandonment issues in Dahmer. Dahmer also stated that his future murders were the result of wanting to keep a partner who would not leave him (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Lake was sent to live with his grandparents, due to his parent's financial difficulties. Lake's grandfather was an alcoholic and Lake often played referee during his grandparents many arguments. However, no physical violence was reported by Lake or his family members during this time (Lane and Gregg, 1992).

Kipp was also raised by an alcoholic father, who adopted him after his mother, a prostitute, abandoned him at the age of 22 months. Reportedly Kipp's father often beat him in public, but he remained with his father until his death. The marines may have provided an outlet for Kipp's anger. After joining the marines, he engaged in boxing tournaments and eventually won divisional honors. Kipp committed a rape while enlisted, leading to his incarceration for 3 years. During this time, Kipp was a victim himself of rape in prison. His own rape in prison, in addition to the skills learned in the military, may have exacerbated his anger and contributed to his later murders (Lane and Gregg 1992).

The last case that will be mentioned in this section is David Rogers. The information known regarding Rogers's early life suggested that he finished a successful career in the navy and was married with children. He then took a deputy position in California. Reportedly, Rogers's spent 5 years on a beat where prostitutes were numerous. He took his son on a tour of the area so that he would learn that prostitutes were "scumbags."

Rogers's known disdain for prostitutes, and the use of hollow-point bullets used by police, contributed to his arrest for the murder of several prostitutes. There was no sexual element to the crimes, suggesting that Rogers's was an example of a mission-oriented killer as discussed in Chapter II. The paramilitary style of policing, in addition to his military training, may have contributed to his future murders (Newton, 1990).

The known histories of Lake and Kipp suggest that they were raised in alcoholic homes, where Kipp was a victim of physical abuse. Dahmer was affected by his parent's constant arguing and their eventual divorce. Dahmer, Brudos, and Lake exhibited early traits of personality disorders and paraphilias. Dahmer engaged in animal cruelty, while Brudos showed early signs of a shoe fetish that would eventually progress to theft, burglary, and murder. Lake showed early obsessive-compulsive traits, which continued throughout his military career (Lane and Gregg 1992).

Many individuals experience similar histories yet do not become serial killers. It may be that their military experience provided the training ground and tools to eventually become a killer. Additionally, another question may be posed: Are

individuals who are predisposed to violent tendencies attracted to the military? Future studies should address this important aspect in more detail.

### **Applying Learning Theory**

Hale (1993) focused on the internal drives of the killer in applying learning theory to serial murder. Based on previous case studies that report that the killer's victims often resemble someone who caused them humiliation in his life, Hale suggested that the early humiliation can eventually translate into criminal behavior. The killer internalizes a perceived wrong and uses it as a justification for murder. The abundance of nonreinforcement situations make it impossible for the killer to discriminate one situation from another. Eventually the killer, using generalization, transfers internalized humiliation to his victims. The killer is unable to discriminate between different stimuli. Hale asserted that this transference occurs only if the killer recognizes and internalizes the humiliation as a motive for the murders. However, although most victims have some symbolic value for the killer, not all of the victims resemble someone from their past. Additionally, internalized humiliation would be impossible to ascertain as a motive without extensive interviews and psychological probing with a large number of serial killers.

Due to limited interviews and information, internalized humiliation is difficult to assess with the 10 case studies provided here for analysis. Also, since the study of causation in serial murder remains a relatively new science, extensive testing was not employed during the lifespan of most serial killers. As mentioned previously, the social learning theory as put forth by Burgess and Akers's (1966) is used in this study.

In addition, the work of Grossman (1996) used these principles when researching the military and how they learn to overcome their inhibition to kill.

The common link among the 10 case studies of serial killers is that they all served some time in the military. Burgess and Akers's (1966) theory of differential association-reinforcement follows the logic of operant principles, while acknowledging the cognitive processes that contribute to such associations. The principles of their learning theory, as well as contributions by Grossman (1996), can be applied to serial killers. Although branches, ranks, and types of military service differ among the cases, Grossman contended that the learning originates in boot camp. Military boot camp provides a common social context where soldiers learn how to kill. War and combat experience may help to strengthen or reinforce the behavior, however, the initial learning experiences provided in boot camp are sufficient.

The first principle of Burgess and Akers's theory asserted that deviant behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning. This repetitive procedure of stimulus-response conditions the soldiers to react in a certain way. Grossman (1996) gave examples of how this is used in the military, including training pilots on flight simulators and conditioning soldiers to shoot at man-shaped targets.

The behavior can be learned in nonsocial situations where the behavior is either reinforcing or discriminating and through the social interactions of other persons where their behavior is observed to be reinforcing or discriminating. The likelihood that the behavior will be repeated in the future is governed by positive and negative reinforcement. Killing in the military, or eliminating the enemy threat, is deemed an



essential survival tool. Soldiers are positively reinforced for this behavior. Soldiers also are exposed to the interactions of other soldiers being reinforced for their behavior. Grossman (1996) discussed this in his study, contending that the military uses positive role modeling and the role models usually represent people who personify violence and aggression.

The principle part of learning deviant behavior occurs in the groups that control the individual's major source of reinforcements. When an individual enters the military, that group becomes the individual's major source of reinforcements. As Grossman (1996) reported, brutalization is a technique used by the military to break down the individual's existing mores and norms and embrace violence and aggression as a new way of life. The military then becomes the individual's primary social group.

The specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedures of deviant behavior are learned in reinforcing situations. Soldiers not only learn to accept death and killing as a way of life, they also learn the techniques of killing as well as the attitudes that reinforce this type of behavior. Dehumanization and compartmentalization are also learned as methods to neutralize remorse and guilt. Soldiers are taught that there are two groups of people, fellow soldiers and enemies. Enemies are viewed as subhuman, therefore neutralizing the guilt of killing them.

Fox and Levin (1994) discussed how serial killers used these two techniques. Dehumanization is used by serial killers to objectify their victims. This may occur before the victim is captured, or afterwards to neutralize any guilt associated with torture, rape, or murder. Compartmentalization is also used by serial killers, in order

to allow them to have a life outside of the killing. Some serial killers are able to maintain families or other relationships with people that they do not kill. They are able to separate the two different parts of their life. These skills are learned by serial killers in the military and transferred into civilian life.

The probability that the person will commit deviant behavior is increased in situations where the presence of normative definitions and verbalizations over conforming behavior have acquired discriminatory value. In the military, soldiers learn that killing is a normal and accepted way of life for soldiers. The serial killers learn that conforming behavior in the military is to embrace a way of life that encourages violence and aggression. However, this way of life is not considered conforming behavior in civilian life, but killing is defined as normal in the military. This behavior has been reinforced in the military and the serial killers apply these learned skills in civilian life.

Finally, the strength of the deviant behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement. Violence and aggression is continuously and consistently reinforced in the military. The soldier learns that these values will be positively reinforced. Although the specific reward changes, serial killers murder because it provides them with some kind of reinforcement. However, as Holmes and Holmes (1994) pointed out when describing the cyclic nature of serial murder, the ritual often leaves the serial killer depressed and unsatisfied. The serial killer begins the cycle again believing that this will cure the depression. As the serial killers continue to cycle, very rarely do the murders leave the killers feeling satisfied or

rewarded. Yet, the behavior has been frequently reinforced; therefore, it is more likely to be repeated in the future.

The principles of learning theory as described by Burgess and Akers's (1966), and more specifically Grossman (1996), can be applied to learning to kill in the military. The only consistent pattern in our 10 case studies of serial killers is that each served time in the military. Although the link between military experience and serial killing is explored in this study, there are many limitations to this research.

### **Limitations**

The most obvious limitation of this research is the lack of information on the serial killers. The most extensive profile was on Jeffrey Dahmer, who was more sensationalized by the media during their trial. However, his profile also lacks additional relevant information. A contributory factor to the lack of extensive profiles is due to the fact that the study of serial killing remains a relatively new science. The F.B.I.'s Investigative Support Unit (previously known as the Behavioral Science Unit), which compiles information and profiles serial killers, has only been in existence since the 1980s. Incomplete information is available regarding biological, psychological, and sociological factors on serial killers who murdered before that time. In addition, lack of information may be due to the serial killers' deaths or their failure to disclose any background information. Therefore, any relevant information may remain unknown or unreported. This includes how common military experience is in cases of serial murder, which is the question applicable to this study. Also, lacking in the case studies were more detailed descriptions of military service, including: length of time

served, rank, and military occupational specialty. The known circumstances regarding the discharges from the military of 2 of the case studies also suggests that the military releases certain individuals back into society, knowing that they may be suffering from emotional difficulties.

A second limitation involves the use of a case study analysis for this research. Case study analyses are a qualitative research design that only address patterns evident in the individual cases. Case studies are difficult to conduct and no set standard exists on how to analyze the data (Yin 1989). This research has shown that a pattern of military experience exists among some serial killers. However, military experience is not present in all cases and it can not be used as a causal explanation for serial murder. As mentioned previously, scholars agree that causality is more complex and encompasses biological, psychological, and sociological variables.

A final limitation involves addressing the sexual elements evident in 7 of the 10 case studies. Rape was evident in several of the cases, as well as torture or mutilation pre-mortem. Three of the 7 serial killers mutilated the bodies post-mortem. Although learning theory helps to explain how serial killers learn to kill in the military, it does not address how they came to associate sexual gratification with the murder of their victims. It is possible that a couple of the serial killers murdered their victims in order to escape detection for rape. However, the pattern was repeated and different methods were used in the murders. There is no consistent pattern among victims, methods of homicide, and sexual activity pre- and post-mortem. Therefore, a

theoretical explanation for the pairing of sexual gratification and murder is not provided in this study.

### **Conclusion**

Although serial murder has existed for hundreds of years, the study of serial murder remains in its infancy. Scholars have endeavored to study the motivation and causality behind serial murder by researching biological, psychological, and sociological factors. Some of these studies have provided support in hindsight for these various factors by noting their evidence in the case histories of serial killers. However, none of these factors exist in all cases of serial murder.

The general theory of social learning, as formulated by Burgess and Akers's (1966), was applied to show how the military provided a social group through which the serial killer learns the skills and neutralization techniques of killing. Grossman's (1996) research in the military on the psychology of killing supports the idea that murder, like other forms of crime and deviant behavior, can be learned. One difficulty in using learning theory for this case study analysis was the lack of previous research on the subject. Although researchers have used social learning theory to support crime and deviant behavior, Hale (1993) was the first scholar who attempted to apply learning theory to serial murder.

The goal of this thesis was to explore the observed link between serial killers and military service. However, like other factors previously studied, military experience is not present in all cases of serial murder. Therefore, the military may be just one social group that provides the serial killer with the associations and

reinforcements necessary to learn how to kill. As the study of serial murder remains a new area of research, future studies may wish to examine this relationship further.

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