FREQUENCIES BETWEEN SERIAL KILLER TYPOLOGY
AND THEORIZED ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS

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By

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AND THEORIZED ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS

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DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

FREQUENCIES BETWEEN SERIAL KILLER TYPOLOGY
AND THEORIZED ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS

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This study examined the association between serial killer typologies and previously proposed etiological factors within serial killer case histories. Stratified sampling based on race and gender was used to identify thirty-six serial killers for this study. The percentage of serial killers within each race and gender category included in the study was taken from current serial killer demographic statistics between 1950 and 2010. Detailed data was gathered about each case, including past experiences and details of their crimes using publicly available primary and secondary source material. Etiological factors identified for this study include military experience, alcohol use, drug use, whether or not the subject was bullied as a child or sexually abused, whether they displayed assaultive behavior as an adolescent, whether they were physically abused by their maternal figure, and whether they had engaged in animal torture or engaged in fire setting in childhood or adolescence. The presence of these factors was coded dichotomously (present = 1; not present = 0) for each case history. Cases were then divided by inclusion in two typologies: the FBI’s organized/disorganized typology and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typology. The etiological factors were examined for interrelatedness and prevalence in the designated serial killer
typologies. Results of crosstabulations and chi-squared analysis showed that military experience was significantly associated with the organized/disorganized typology (p<.01). Thus, serial killers within the organized typology were more likely to have prior military experience, while those in the disorganized typology were not. No other statistically significant findings between etiological factors and serial killer typology were found. Statistical analyses indicated that there might be other associations between etiological factors, but not at a statistical significance level with this population size. Considerations for future research are discussed. The electronic version of this dissertation is available free at Ohiolink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Serial murder has fascinated the public and frustrated law enforcement for decades, if not centuries. The term is thought to have been coined by criminologist James Reinhardt in his book *Sex Perversions and Sex Crimes* published in 1957 where he labeled those who left a chain of victims behind them over time “chain killers” (Newton, 2006, p. 237). Claims have been made that some of the first documented serial killers existed in the 14th and 15th centuries. One of the first serial murderers acknowledged was Gilles de Rais, a companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc, who was executed for murdering approximately 100 children (Castle & Hensley, 2002). It was not until Jack the Ripper struck London in 1888, however, that cases of serial murder began to capture the public’s eye (Stone, 2001). Serial killers still operate throughout the United States to this day. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has estimated that between 35 and 100 serial killers are operating in the United States during any one point (Hickey, 2013).

There has been a plethora of theories about what makes a serial killer. It is a phenomenon that is fascinating to the media and terrifying to the public—especially during the rise of the serial killer in the 1980s and 1990s. Serial killers continue to operate today, and researchers and law enforcement have just as much of a scientifically grounded understanding of the etiology of a serial murder as they did thirty years ago. The FBI, as well as academic researchers, have created typologies of serial murders to better understand the phenomena and to profile the suspected individuals. These typologies are based on either crime scene details (e.g., from the FBI) or the belief that serial killers hold specific intrinsic motivations. While theories and beliefs abound regarding what may create these murderous individuals, a comprehensive definition cannot even be agreed
upon between researchers. The myth of serial killers as being white males, usually in their 20s or 30s, coming from unstable homes, having abusive mothers, being sadistic sexual killers only, and having histories of using or abusing alcohol and drugs continues to permeate public opinion and pop-culture (Holmes and Holmes, 1999; Hickey, 2013). As time goes on, the definition has opened itself to be more inclusive, allowing healthcare killers, comfort-oriented murderers, schizophrenic killers, and females to be incorporated. While research has been conducted in an attempt to identify any possible developmental events, and typologies have been created to try to identify through lines in motivation, these two camps have rarely intermingled.

**Rationale for Study**

There exists an abundance of research on serial killers much of which was created to create typologies, find motivation, and attempt to determine etiology. The majority of single case studies on serial killers (Kraus, 1995; Martens, 2011; Silva, 2002), cases with smaller sample sizes of serial killers (Wright & Hensely, 2003; Martens & Palermo, 2005; Beasley, 2004), and even those with larger sample sizes (McKenzie, 2005; Warren, 1996), focus solely on Caucasian male serial murderers. Other larger studies include a smaller, limited percentage of African American serial killers: Arndt, Hietpas, & Kim (2004) had 16% African American cases within their sample of 285; Salafti & Bateman (2005) had eight cases of African American subjects in their sample of twenty-two serial killers; and the FBI’s study by Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglas, & McCormack (1986) included only three African American subjects out of their total population of 36. This latter study by Burgess et al. (1986) was used by law enforcement in the formulation of both a typology for profiling serial murderers as well as a model of development.
It would appear that, in trying to understand this phenomenon of serial murder, criminologists, social scientists, and law enforcement have attempted to define different criteria to fit different motivations as they were discovered. To date, research has provided scientifically proven insight into the root causes for individuals, both male and female of various ethnicities, who develop into serial murderers. Hinch (1998) states that “excluding female serialists from either the definition of serial murder, or even from study samples, has resulted in an unnecessary and unscholarly limitation of inquiry” (para. 8). While it is believed by some that the majority of serial killers are Caucasian males, studying this specific demographic does not assist in developing any motivations or developmental events that include female, African American, or Hispanic serial killers. How can a phenomenon be studied while excluding portions of the sample? Can the models and theories of serial killer development, thus far, also provide hypotheses into why women, African American males, and Hispanic males also become serial killers? Serial killer scholars Holmes, Tewksbury, and Holmes (1999) state: “There is no theory, sociological, psychological, or constitutional, that adequately addresses the question of the etiology of the serial killer. What are currently passing as theories are little more than listings of alleged serial killer traits or characteristics” (p.265).

Statement of the Problem/Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine a diverse group of case histories of serial killers, which match currently believed racial and gender demographics, and explore specific etiological factors to better understand frequency between typology and previously proposed life events. The specific group of case histories will encompass only serial killers that operated in the United States. Could certain experiences within the life of
a serial killer determine what type (typology) of murderer they will become? Do prior theories or models of development hold any truth for an accurately demographic population of serial killers within the two most proposed typologies?
Chapter II: Literature Review

Definition of Serial Killers

While there has been a moderate amount of research done on serial murder since the 1980s, much confusion continues to exist over an agreed upon definition that separates this type of multiple murder from others. There are three distinctly identified types of multiple murders: serial murder, spree murder, and mass murder. To research serial murder, an operational definition must be appropriated to distinguish between these three categories. Dietz (1986) referred to cases as serial murder when they consisted of a single offender killing in five or more separate incidences with a “cooling-off-period” between homicides. Many definitions of serial murder concur that a “cooling-off-period” must occur between murders to classify it as serial, but disagreement exists in regard to several other variables including the number of victims, motivation, and other areas. Mass murder can be defined as a murder with multiple victims that occurs in a single incident. The number of incidents then would differentiate mass murder from serial murder, but cannot differentiate mass murder from spree murder. An example of a mass murder would be that of James Holmes, who opened fire in a crowded movie theater screening of The Dark Knight in Aurora, Colorado, in July of 2012, killing twelve people and injuring 70 more (Associated Press, 2013, para. 12). Spree murder, as defined by Keeney and Heidi (1995) consists of “the killing of three or more victims in different locations but within the context of one event” (p.301). This definition of spree murder varies the occurrence from serial murder in that one event, instead of multiple events with a cooling-off period. An example of a spree murder would be that of ex-police officer Christopher Dorner who
killed three individuals in southern California within a two-day crime spree (Goffard, Rubin, & Streeter, 2013).

While serial murder has existed for centuries around the world, serious literature and media attention on serial killers did not exist in the United States until the mid-1970s and early 1980s (Holmes & DeBurger, 1998). Serial murder was previously considered to be multicide and was grouped with other forms of multiple murder. It should be noted that law enforcement and scholars in the United States also began to look earnestly at the phenomenon of serial murder during the 1970s and especially in the 1980s as well. The designation between types of multicide led to additional research into each type of multiple murder. Within the literature on serial murder and serial killers, an agreed-upon definition has consistently lacked uniformity and consistency (Keeney & Heide, 1994; Keeney & Heide, 1995; Castle & Hensley, 2002; Knoll, 2006; Farrell, Keppel, & Titterington, 2013). This lack of an agreed-upon definition has led to skewing in the literature, crime rates, and study of serial killers since the lack of a conclusive definition leads to changes in the prevalence rates and individuals included in study (Ferguson, White, Cherry, Lorenz, & Bhimani, 2003). Criminologists, law enforcement personnel, psychologists, and other researchers seem to have difficulty coming to a consensus about what defines a serial killer in a number of areas: (1) how many kills constitute serial murderer; (2) relationship between victim and attacker; (3) time period between murders; and (4) inclusive motivations for committing serial murder. This is illustrated when looking at scholarly responses to the rise in serial killer research during the mid-1980s. One of the first academic definitions from Egger (1984) states that:
Serial murder occurs when one or more individuals – in all known cases, male – commits a second murder and/or subsequent murder, is relationshipless (victim and attacker are strangers); occurs at a different time and has no connection to the initial (and subsequent) murder; and is frequently committed in a different geographic location. Further, the motive is generally not for material gain but is usually a compulsive act specifically for gratification based on fantasies. (p.348)

Two years later Douglas, Ressler, Burgess, and Hartman (1986) proposed a different definition of serial murder for use by the FBI. It was here that the “cooling-off-period” was first identified:

Serial murderers are involved in three or more separate events with an emotional cooling-off period between homicides. This type of killer usually premeditates his crimes, often fantasizing and planning the murder in every aspect with the possible exception of the specific victim. Then, when the time is right for him and he is cooled off from his last homicide, he selects his next victim and proceeds with his plan. This cool-off period can be days, weeks, or months, and is the main element that separates the serial killer from other multiple killers. (p.409)

It is important to clarify that this definition was created for use by the FBI and may be intentionally non-specific to allow resources to be dispatched to areas where they believed a serial killer was operating.

Two years after the FBI definition, psychologists Holmes and DeBurger (1988) described five elements that should be included to distinguish serial murder from other types of multiple murder. These included: (1) repetitive homicides over months or years; (2) the murders occurred, typically between the murderer and his victim—although there
was capacity for “team killers” to exist; (3) the murderer and his victim were not intimates; (4) the killer felt an internal compulsion to kill; and (5) that financial gain was not a reason for the murder (Castle & Hensley, 2002). Although it was not directly stated in the definition, it implicitly indicates that males are the only ones committing serial murders. The definition begins to develop a greater understanding of an internal motivation occurring with these individuals, but continues to limit the definition to male killers who had no close relationship to the victims. While this definition may seem to become more inclusive of the population to be studied, a number of African American serial killers, such as Anthony Sowell and Benjamin Atkins, victimized drug-addicted prostitutes with whom they were acquainted in their area.

In response to these previous definitions of serial murder, and after years of researching the topic, Hickey (1997) proposed that the definition of serial murder begin to include anyone who committed multiple murders over an extended period of time. While more inclusive, this definition may be due to female reform in the 1990s as Hickey expanded the definition to include female killers, whose motives for serial murder are thought to be primarily for profit (Castle & Hensley, 2002).

While definitions of what constitutes a serial killer today still lack consensus, most definitions used by researchers, law enforcement, and professionals are consistent in stating that a serial killer must murder a minimum of two to four victims, with a cooling-off period in between, that the “killer is usually a stranger to the victim,” and “the murders appear unconnected or random” (Labrode, 2007, p. 154). Some literature states that there must be three to four murders (Labrode, 2007), while others state that the minimum is two (Knoll, 2006) for an offender to be considered a serial killer. There continues to be much
debate over whether murder for hire, murder for profit, female, infanticide, or health care killers (doctors or nurses who kill their patients intentionally) should still be considered applicable to the definition. Some researchers who study serial killers include them, while others do not, continuing a decades-old lack of consensus and uniformity in the study of all serial killers.

**Demographic Myths and Reality**

**Gender.** A myth about serial murderers is that they tend to be male, but as long as serial killings have been documented, there have also been female serial killers. One of the first historically documented serial killers was Erzebet Bathory, a Hungarian Countess who in the early 1600s would have her servants bring young female peasants from the neighboring countryside for the Countess to torture and kill (Newton, 2006; Hale & Bolin, 1998). The arrest of Aileen Wuornos in 1990 launched a media frenzy and first opened up the minds of the public, and some researchers, to the fact that serial killers are not always male. Studies have speculated that female offenders make up 12-15% of all caught and noted serial killers statistically (Newton, 2006; Jenkins, 1993). Hickey (2013) estimated that 10% of all serial killers between 2004 and 2011 were female. As these percentages show, female serial killers may be rarer, though there is less empirical support as to why this is. Social learning theory proposes that female serial killers are rarer due to rates of less aggression as caused by social roles imposed on women (Hale & Bolin, 1998). Biological theories of violence and aggression hypothesize there are fewer female serial killers due to reductions in the hormonal influences in testosterone and progestin (Hale & Bolin, 1998). Holmes, Hickey, & Holmes (1998) note that studies on female serial murderers found that victims are family members or lovers, are often non-violent (use of
poison), and occur within the home. Women serialists were often excluded from the
definition of serial killer since the murders lacked a sexual nature, so the rarity of female
serial killers may also be the newer definition retrospectively playing catch-up to include
older cases.

Academic discussions exist regarding motivational variations for female serial
killers. As opposed to male serial killers who average 8% in stationary murder trajectory,
female serial killers average 29%, indicating a preference to kill in the same location
(Newton, 2006). The deciphered reasoning for why women kill is usually attributed to
victimization (Arrigo & Griffin, 2004). Motivation and method of killing is also believed
to be generally different than that of male serial killers. In a study by Hale & Bolin (1998),
the preferred murder method was poisoning, which was found to be used by 59 of the 184
female serial killers used in the study.

While sexual gratification and power appear to be primary motivational factors
found with male serial killers, female serial killers are believed to be motivated primarily
by comfort (Holmes et al., 1998). In the same study by Hale and Bolin (1998), it was
found that 53% of females who committed serial murder were motivated by money or
comfort. Other highly correlated motivations were power and thrill. This inclusion of
female serial murderers has caused previously established typologies of serial murder to
become more comprehensive.

A final difference found between male and female serial killers is that of race. In
two separate studies, it was found that 97% of female serial killers were Caucasian
(Holmes et al., 1998) while Caucasian male serial killers totaled 55% of Hickey’s (2013)
study of 146 serial murderers. Independent research from Aamodt (2015) at Radford University concluded that 52% of all serial killers are Caucasian and 92% are male.

**Race.** As previously described, one popular myth about serial killers is that they are predominantly Caucasian. When the general public hears the term “serial killer” they may think of people like Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy Jr., Ted Bundy, David Berkowitz, and Henry Lee Lucas—all of whom are Caucasian. There are lesser known, more ethnically diverse killers like Andre Crawford who strangled 11 women in Illinois by luring them with drugs, then killing them out of his hatred for prostitutes (Walberg, 2009); Juan Corona, a Mexican migrant worker who was linked to the death of 26 drifters in 1978; Javed Iqbal, a Pakistani man who was arrested in 1999 and confessed to the murder of 100 children whose bodies he had afterwards dissolved in acid; and Hong Kong-born Charles Ng who, with his accomplice Leonard Lake, killed 13 victims in California (Newton, 2006). These cases would indicate that serial murderers do not fit a specific racial stereotype; the murderer can be Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, or Asian; serial killers can be from any race or racial mixture around the world, not just an American phenomenon.

While the myth that most serial killers are predominantly Caucasian has been true in the past, it has also been described as being a reflection of the racial percentages in the United States (Egger, 2002). In 1993, it was approximated that 13% of serial killers were African American (Jenkins, 1993) and 21.8% in 2005 (Walsh, 2005). This seems to only be a mirrored reflection of the racial diversity in America at the time (Kraemer, Lord, & Hielbrun, 2004).
Yet, the literature indicates there is much discrepancy with this belief as well. An article by Branson (2013) states that African American serial killers exist, but are under exposed due to the media’s relationship with law enforcement. Branson’s argument is that African American serial killers as a whole are in fact overrepresented in their killings, but they are not made into public icons as are Caucasian serial killers. Although African American serial killers have periodically been a focus of police investigations, rarely do they have a media presence as the majority of the murders were of minority victims committed in lower socioeconomic locations. While Caucasian serial killers Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer are well known to the public, African American serial killers such as Chester Turner are not, even though Turner’s most recent trial was in 2014 and he was convicted for killing as many victims as Dahmer.

Hickey’s (2012) study, as previously discussed, indicates that the perception of serial killers being primarily white is no longer factual. He stipulates that this newer and more accurate representation of serial killers is due to society failing to “recognize poor blacks who kill poor blacks” in media and serial killer research (Hickey, 2013, p. 227). Hickey (2013) also stipulates that “the rise in African American serial killers is also directly related to how the FBI now defines serial murder as constituting two or more killings where a pattern of murder has been established” (p. 229). As has been the norm in serial killer research, the definition used can greatly change the perspective on what constitutes a serial murderer.

Serial Killer Typologies

Although many have attempted to classify various types of serial killers, two main typologies continue to be used in the research: the first is the FBI’s organized/disorganized
typology while the other is Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typology. The objective of both typologies in classifying serial killers is to gain information to aid in investigation, profiling, and apprehension. While both types of grouping have their strengths, each also have their weaknesses in validity and reliability which can limit their practical use.

**FBI organized/disorganized typology.** This typology of serial killers was originally developed by FBI agents Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) to describe lust murderers, and is delineated by organized and disorganized features found at the crime scenes. “This dichotomy is claimed as the foundation on which personality characteristics of offenders can be determined from crime scene investigation” (Canter & Wentink, 2004, p. 490). The typology was originally developed through interviews and case information of 36 murderers and is considered the most widely used classification system for violent offenders, especially serial murderers, to date (Canter, Alison, Alison, & Wentink, 2004). The characteristics can be seen below in Table 1 and Table 2 as taken from Ressler, Burgess, and Douglas’ (1992) book based on their studies, which explains their organized/disorganized typology.

**Organized killer.** Organized offenders are alleged to use forethought in their murders and kill after an inciting or triggering incident (LaBrode, 2007). The profile of organized killers, developed by the FBI, credits them as being of average intelligence, with good social normalcy, they tend to bring their restraints and weapons with them, remove the weapon from the scene of the crime, and have a plan to take the victim to another location or destroy evidence (LaBrode, 2007). As described by Egger (1984) the “organized nonsocial is seen as a totally egocentric, amoral individual who can be
superficially charming and manipulative of others” (p.351). This definition by Egger
seems to be similar to the examples of traits that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of
Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5) includes under Antisocial Personality Disorder

Canter et al. (2004) described the organized offender “to be of average to high
intelligence, socially competent, and more likely than the disorganized offender to have
skilled employment” (p. 293). Organized offenders are also thought to kill primarily after
stressful life events. They plan the murder with order and control to regain a sense of
control or to expel the stressful feelings. The crime scene tends to reflect this level of
planning and precision.

This profile also attributes organized killers to being of high birth ranking, the
father typically having stable work throughout their childhood, and believes they
experienced inconsistent childhood discipline. This profile suspects that organized killers
are able to control their mood during a crime, have a precipitating event prior to their
crime, and also utilize alcohol to help them commit the act. Crime scene characteristics for
organized killers are noted to show planning and control prior to and during the criminal
act, targeting of a stranger for the victim, personalization of the victim, use of restraints,
and ability to transport and hide the body after the murder is complete (Ressler, Burgess,

**Disorganized killer.** Disorganized killers are thought to murder opportunistically
and spontaneously, leave evidence at the scene, refrain from restraining the victim, and
leave the body out in the open (LaBrode, 2007). They are also thought of being below-
average in intelligence and without competence or caring in social normalcy (LaBrode,
2007). They are believed to be lower in birth order status, with a father who has unstable employment throughout their youth, and received harsh discipline as a child (Ressler et al., 1992). Egger (1984) defines the disorganized type as “a ‘loner’ with feelings of rejection who has great difficulty in interpersonal relationships” (p. 352). The killings are also theorized to be more impulsive and opportunistic (Egger, 1984). Canter et al. (2004) hypothesize that indicative of this typology, the killer will usually live in close proximity to the murder site and victim and that the crime scene would reflect the disorganized, chaotic nature of the murder itself which “mirrors the offender’s social inadequacy and inability to maintain interpersonal relationships” (p.294). The FBI’s profile of disorganized killers also includes the belief that they are receiving minimal situational stress prior to the murder, use little to no alcohol to help bolster themselves to commit the crime, often feel anxious during the act, violence towards the victim is often sudden, and the killer typically engages in sexual acts after the victim’s death (Ressler et al., 1992).

**Critique of the organized/disorganized typology.** Canter, Alison, et al. (2004) state in a critique of the organized/disorganized typology that one major weakness of the theory is the lack of structure of the interviews given to develop the typology and the selection of the sample for it.

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

The typology was never tested against another group, therefore it may have low validity when compared to another group or a larger population. It should also be noted
that the majority of the sample used to create this typology was Caucasian, thereby creating a potential inability for generalization regarding other races, although various academic sources do so in spite of the lack of solid research.

**Holmes, DeBurger, and Holmes intrinsic motivation typology.** Another type of classification for serial killers was developed by R. H. Holmes, DeBurger, and S. T. Holmes, that focused on internal motivations. R. M. Holmes and DeBurger originally developed four typologies of serial killers, which was published in the journal *Federal Probation* (1985) and later published in their book *Serial Murder* (1992) with S. T. Holmes. The four proposed typologies are: (1) visionary; (2) mission; (3) hedonistic; and (4) power/control-oriented. The development of these typologies arose from case material on 110 serial murders and interviews the authors had with selected offenders (Canter & Wentink, 2004). The typologies were originally made to be specifically inclusive to males since female serial killers were not believed to have existed or, if they did exist, to be very rare phenomena that was on the brink of being researched (Egger, 1984; Arrigo & Griffin, 2004). All of R. M. Holmes, S. T. Holmes, and DeBurger’s typologies arise out of the multiple murderers own intrinsic needs that he fulfills through the act of selecting a victim and proceeding to kill (Pollock, 1995). The characteristic of each can be seen below in a table reorganization by Canter, Alison, et al. (2004) in Table 1.
Table 1

Reorganization of Holmes and DeBurger’s (1988) Classification of Serial Killers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Visionary</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Lust</th>
<th>Thrill</th>
<th>Power</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Act-Focused</td>
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<tr>
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**Visionary killer.** While most serial killers are not considered to be psychotic, multiple murderers that believe voices or visions are commanding them to kill would fall into this category. The visionary killer is “impelled to murder because he has heard voices or has seen visions which demand that he kills a certain person or a category of persons” (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985, p. 31). An example of this type of killer would be Herbert Mullin who killed 10 people in California in the early 1970s because he believed these sacrifices would help to ward off earthquakes (Newton, 2006). David Berkowitz (the “Son of Sam”) is often thought to fall into this category as well (Simons, 2001), although he later recounted his claim that his dog told him to commit the murders and admitted to using this claim to attempt an insanity defense.
Visionary killers are thought to purely operate and kill by decree of hallucinations that are usually God-mandated or demon-mandated. Schizophrenia is the mental illness most associated with these types of killers and they often use the insanity defense (unable to distinguish between right and wrong due to mental defect) in their trials when they are caught. These individuals are often out of touch with reality and are considered the most uncommonly seen in the typologies of serial killers (Simons, 2001). Visionary murders are typically considered to be disorganized and spontaneous, with random victims chosen, and the murders are act-focused instead of process-focused (Canter & Wentick, 2004).

Mission-oriented killer. The mission-oriented serial killer’s focus lies in eliminating a specific group of individuals, usually prostitutes, minority groups, or homosexuals. The motivation for murder is the killer’s desire to “do something about a situation needing correction” (Egger, 1990, p. 27). The kill is purely mission-based to rid the world, city, or town from a particular type or group of people. Mission-oriented killers are believed to choose their victims at random (as long as they fall into the in-group the killer is targeting), and the murder is act-focused, organized, and planned (Canter & Wentick, 2004).

Hedonistic killer. The hedonistic killer is divided into three subcategories: lust-oriented, thrill-oriented, and comfort-oriented. The overall motive is to kill for the pleasure they intrinsically receive by the deed. These types of killers tend to be the most striking since they kill because they like it and typically are above average in intelligence (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985). This increase in intelligence shows in the planning of the murders as well as their ability to evade capture. Holmes and DeBurger (1985) state that while the method of killing is immensely pleasurable to these types of killers it also
“makes investigation difficult for law enforcement professional(s),” especially if the
hedonistic killer is transient (p. 32).

*Lust-oriented killers.* This subcategory of killers is thought to murder for the
sexual gratification that they receive. Sexual pleasure is the main focus of the murder.
“Various acts, such as cannibalism, necrophilia, and dismemberment, are prevalent in this
type of murder” (Canter & Wentink, 2004, p. 491).

*Thrill-oriented killers.* The second subcategory of hedonistic killers is thought to
kill for the thrill and excitement brought on by the deed. It is thought that the victim is
kept alive during the encounter and is usually tortured and degraded before the act of
murder itself (Simons, 2001). The thrill is in the process of the murder as well as the act
itself. Once the victim is dead the thrill is gone and the killer loses interest.

*Comfort-oriented killers.* The third subtype of hedonistic killers are the most
debated among serial killer experts. This type of killer is thought to murder in order to
profit economically through theft, inheritance, property, and other material gains (Simons,
2001). There is no intrinsic reason for the murder other than the comfort the killer will
receive by the material gains obtained after the kill. The motivation for killing in this
subtype is to obtain the resources to enjoy life (Egger, 1990). Since internal motivation is
the central theory to this typology system, the idea of the extrinsic, material motivation
often causes this subgroup to be removed from discussion of the typologies from literature
on serial killers. When Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger opened their typologies to include
women, many were believed to fit into this category.

*Power/control-oriented killer.* Serial killers within this category murder to exert
control over the victim. While it has been debated that many of the serial killer typologies
achieve a secondary gain by having control during the act of killing, this type of serial
killer’s narcissistic need for power and control constitutes the primary gain of the killing
(Pollock, 1995). It is the serial killer’s need to exert ultimate control, the power of life or
death, over the victim that fuels his or her continued desire to repeatedly kill. Most “Angel
of Death” killers, such as Charles Cullen and Kristen Gilbert, both nurses who killed their
patients, are typically considered power-oriented killers.

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

The serial killer is, in essence, like a God with the power to determine who will
live or die.

While thrill-oriented and power-oriented may seem very similar, Canter and
Wentick (2004) clarify that the major difference comes within the need to plan the
murderous act. Thrill-oriented murders do not need to plan; it is less about the control and
steps taken, but rather what occurs in the moment. Power-oriented killers fuel their
intrinsic need through planning are believed to be more methodical.

Critique of the Holmes and Holmes intrinsic motivation typology. Canter and
Wentink (2004) point out in their critique of this typology that Holmes, Holmes, and
DeBurger have never given a “systematic account of exactly how the material was used to
devise their system of classification” (p. 490). Essentially, the ways in which the typology
creators used their interview and case material from the 110 serial murders to create the
typology was never discussed, which affects repeatability, validity, and reliability in using the typologies to distinguish which categories later offenders would fall into. Canter and Wentink (2004) also state that there are some cases that can fall into two types of categories due to the characteristics the offender possesses. Since Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger did not identify the method they used to classify the typologies when various characteristics are present, it is difficult to replicate when new cases are available. Since few criteria exist to definitively put killers into certain categories, a lack of direct empirical testing can be done to validate the reliability of this typology (Canter & Wentink, 2004). If a crime scene were to contain a victim that was tortured and also raped, it is difficult to make the inference at the crime scene before interviewing the killer as to the motive behind the act being lust-oriented, thrill-oriented, or power-control-oriented. There is often confusion and lack of agreement between researchers as to what motivation typology many serial killers fit into as sexual assault can occur within a power or thrill-oriented murder since the killer may believe he takes more control over the victim, or uses sexual torture, though this encounter.

Theories of Serial Killer Development

A plethora of theories exist as to serial killer development and are inclusive of a wide range of schools of thought; however, few theories have ever examined a correlation between developmental trajectories of serial killers and specific typologies.

**Contemporary trait theories.** Contemporary trait theory proposes that abnormal biological or psychological traits lead to criminality, including serial murder (Weatherby, Buller, & McGinnis, 2009). “Trait theory conceptualizes personality as a hierarchical organization of stable patterns of affect, cognition, and behavior traceable to endogenous
basic tendencies that from birth set the potential of what one person may become”
(Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, & Alessandri, 2012, p. 145). Essentially, theories that
fall under the heading of contemporary trait theory deem biological influences such as
brain development and genetic predispositions as being behaviorally stable trajectories.
Contemporary trait theory also includes sociological influences such as socioeconomic
status, to be a primary influence on serial killer development.

Specific biological theories. One biological theory for serial killer development
states that males who are more prone to violence have an extra Y chromosome (Weatherby
et al., 2009). Medical tests performed on serial killer Arthur Shawcross by Dr. Richard
Kraus (a rural psychiatrist from New York who studied Shawcross while he was
incarcerated) indicated that Shawcross had a 47, XYY karyotype chromosome as well as
ten times the normal level of kryptopyrroles (which can lead to more aggressive and violent
behavior in men; Kraus, 1995). Beyond this finding, little empirical support exists for this
theory, but research continues to examine this and other possible genetic traits that could
result in violent behavior that could assist in an individual becoming a serial killer.
Psychiatrist David Lunde dismissed any possibility of the XYY karyotype when he
assisted in performing psychosurgery on serial killer Edmund Kemper, although it is
unknown what type of testing was done or not done for Dr. Lunde to come to this
conclusion (Giannangelo, 1996). In the literature, there is little mention of similar genetic
testing done for the XYY karyotype in the majority of serial killers. The XYY karyotype
theory also does not yield itself to explaining female serial killers like Aileen Wuornos as
it can only occur in males.
Another biological theory on the development of psychopaths (individuals whom are viewed as having little empathy for how their behaviors negatively affect others) proposes that these individuals have deficits in the amygdala and prefrontal cortex areas of the brain (LaBrode, 2007). Findings have shown that psychopaths have reduced volume in the amygdala, the area of the brain responsible for aversive and instrumental learning, as well as emotional expression and identification, which could affect socialization among this population (LaBrode, 2007). Individuals who develop lesions on the orbitofrontal cortex during their lifetime have also been found to have “acquired sociopathy”; in which behavioral patterns consistent with sociopathy emerge after the lesions in these specific areas of the brain develop (p. 153). While MRI studies have been done on psychopaths within a prison population, no purely neurological studies have been done on a population of serial killers specifically. The association between neurological deficits in a larger population of criminals diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder (also referred to as unsuccessful psychopaths since they were caught doing criminal behavior and are therefore incarcerated) and the comorbidity of sexually sadistic behavior is still questionable.

A study of 99 autobiographies on serial killers by Stone (2001) found that 10 (9.9% of cases) mentioned head injury or medical conditions that affected the brain including lesions, high fever in childhood, or meningitis. Efforts are still being made to study the role of brain injury early in the lives of serial killers to assess if brain injury may also provide a biological explanation to the actions of these individuals. It is difficult, however, to differentiate between an environmental factor and a biological factor, as the cause of brain injury in many serial killers may result from childhood abuse. As Hickey
(2013) states, “Although head trauma may well be correlated with serial murder, I suggest that the trauma is most likely exacerbated by social and environmental issues” (p. 136).

**Norris “disease” model.** In his book, *Serial Killers*, Norris (1988) proposed a “disease” model for serial killers (DeHart, 1994). Norris proposed that environmental factors, traumatic events, and negative parenting only partially can explain how an individual develops into a serial killer, but also that “chemical imbalances induced by alcohol and drug use, prolonged malnutrition, and poisoning from environmental toxins,” as well as head injury, could also “cause damage to aggression-related neural regions, thereby intensifying the potential killers’ dysfunctional behavior” (DeHart, 1994, p. 41). Norris claims that serial killers suffer from a “disease” transmitted from social, genetic and familial sources. In his study, Norris defends the neuropsychological “disease” elements of serial murder by stating that PET and CAT scans would show limbic damage in the brain (DeHart, 1994). To date, there has been no specific neuropsychological testing exclusively on serial killers to support this theory, although a great deal of neurological study has been completed on incarcerated violent psychopaths.

**Psychological and sociological theories.** One psychological diagnosis included in the discussion of serial killers is that of personality disorders involving lifelong pervasive pattern of behavior, which causes significant impairment to social and interpersonal responses, causing maladaptation and distress. Some personality disorders commonly linked to serial killers are those of antisocial personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and borderline personality disorder (Weatherby et al., 2009). The belief is that early developmental experiences, introductions to paraphilia, parental and peer behavioral
observances, and traumatic experiences warp the child or adolescent’s psyche into that of a serial killer with a need to kill to fill a void caused by experience.

**Triad of Sociopathy.** The triad of sociopathy is less a theory of serial killer development than a theory about warning signs in children and adolescents, that they have the potential to become serial killer. In 1961, psychiatrist J. M. MacDonald proposed that there was a triad of behavior that occurred in children that were predisposed to becoming multiple murderers later in life. The triad of sociopathy (also known as the MacDonald triad) consists of persistent bed-wetting past the age of five, obsession with fire, and cruelty to animals (Wright & Hensley, 2003). Bed-wetting was thought to show lack of control for the child over himself. Fire setting could be thought to represent the child’s desire for destruction, propensity for dangerous behavior, and aspiration for control over the uncontrollable. Researching the triad, Macht and Mack proposed in 1968 that “the act of fire setting was intended to recapture a lost relationship with a father figure and to achieve distance from an overpowering mother figure at a time in the boy’s development when Oedipal conflicts are resurgent (Felthous, 1980, p. 174). Theories on animal cruelty during childhood continue to indicate this behavior as a warning sign towards a child’s inclination for aggressive or callous behavior. The graduation hypothesis states that a child who tortures or kills animals (who are essentially helpless) will eventually progress to hurting humans. In studies conducted on aggressive criminals (crimes in which the individual caused injury or had intent to injury another physically) and nonaggressive criminals, it was found that aggressive criminals were more likely to have committed cruelty to animals in their youth than nonaggressive criminals (Merz-Perez, Heidi, &
Silverman, 2001). It is believed that serial killers will display these “warning signs” of fire setting, enuresis, and cruelty to animals in childhood or adolescence.

**Childhood experience.** The data collected in the landmark FBI study by Burgess et al. (1986; the academic article for the FBI study’s findings) gives a picture of what the majority of childhood experiences, as well as the behavioral and psychological traits, were for the 36 apprehended killers involved in the study. “Over 80% of the offenders described their family socioeconomic levels as average (self-sufficient) or better” with the majority of their mothers raising them at home while their fathers worked stable jobs (Burgess et al., 1986, p. 254). Fifty percent of the subjects in this study stated that their parents had criminality in their background, 53 percent indicated that one of both of their parents had psychiatric issues, and 69% listed that their parents had issues with alcohol abuse (Burgess et al., 1986). Approximately 50 of the serial killers interviewed for this study stated that their father left the house before they were 12 years old (Burgess et al., 1986). In the biographical study by Stone (2001), one-fourth of the childhood histories of the serial killers he examined were raised without their father in the home. It was also found that “over 50% of the murderers reported the following present in childhood: daydreaming (82%), masturbation (82%), isolation (71%), chronic lying (71%), enuresis (68%), rebelliousness (67%), nightmares (67%), destruction of property (58%), fire setting (56%), cruelty to children (54%), and poor body image (52%) (Burgess et al., 1986, p. 255).

Childhood experience is taken into account in the majority of models intended to hypothesize why certain individuals develop into serial killers, including learning theory, psychodynamic model, object relations model, motivational model, and trauma-control model of serial killer development.
Learning theory. Learning theory, in regard to the phenomenon of serial killing, states that the killings come from a learned response in regard to a humiliation or rejection that occurred to an individual who internalized the event (Hale, 1993). The nonreward of the humiliation or rejection that occurs during a time the individual was expecting a reward situation produces an unconditioned response of frustration that becomes anticipated to occur later. “The anticipatory frustration response also produces a distinctive internal stimulus which motivates the individual to avoid potentially humiliating situations (as indicated by similar cues) in the future” (Hale, 1993, p. 40).

Using the Hull-Spence’s theory of discriminatory learning, Hale proposed that the individual would not be able to discriminate between situations in which the humiliation will occur again when cues are present, and thus the frustration response builds internally. In regard to serial killers, an example could be how serial killer Ted Bundy was rejected by his girlfriend in college when he asked her to marry him. In response to this rejection and humiliation, Bundy’s victims mainly included college-aged brunette women, with hair parted down the middle that looked much like his ex-girlfriend. Hale (1993) hypothesizes that “the killer remains under the control of the person who originally forwarded the humiliation” p. 42) but stops the killer from approaching the initial person who caused the insult and rather, has them transfer the negative internalization of the rejection or humiliation onto others that are seen as more vulnerable.

Castle and Hensely (2002) suggest that the military may be a location that serial killers could gain exposure to killing. The exposure to brutalization and desensitization to violence that begins in boot camp could aid in the classical conditioning used by the military to assist budding serial killers to begin to “associate violence with pleasurable
consequences” (Castle & Hensley, 2002, p. 460). Cited in this same study, Castle reports that 7% of a total population of 354 serial killers was identified as having military experience as found in her unpublished thesis. No study to date has continued to examine this theory of military experiences with serial killers as proposed by learning theory.

A Freudian psychoanalytic view. An article by Whitman and Akutagawa (2003) took a look at the possible origins of serial killers’ behavior from a psychoanalytic standpoint, noting that “Formative events and experiences within the backgrounds of the killers had culminated in a cognitive structure necessary to commit murder” (p. 694). This psychoanalytic perspective seeks to look at the parapraxes of serial killers to understand the psychological roots behind their behavior. Citing the works of Anna Freud, this article focused on how failed attachments between infants and their mothers in early childhood can create an absence of healthy understanding of how to create social connections for the individual to function in society. Since an infant’s first relationship is with his mother, the infant’s needs of food, sleep, security, warmth, and comfort must be met at this time. “Her responsiveness fosters the shift in his (the child’s) self-centeredness to an attitude of emotional interest in his environment and he becomes capable of loving – first the mother and after her the father and other important figures in his external world” (Whitman and Akutagawa, 2003, p. 695). If this bond is not achieved, the infant may lack the ability later to form these bonds and understand a loving attitude. They that the consequences of not achieving this bond can result in aggression and frustration from the child and can result in a long felt emotional starvation and “independent destructiveness” (p. 695). Quoting Anna Freud,
What happens then is that the half-playing, provoking, self-willed attitudes of the toddler become fixed in the personality as quarrelsomeness, and a preference for hostile rather than friendly relations with fellow beings. More important still, aggression in this defused form is not controllable, either externally by the parents or internally by ego and superego. If fusion is not re-established through strengthening of the libidinal processes and new object attachments, the destructive tendencies become a major cause for delinquency and criminality. (Whitman and Akutagawa, 2003, pp. 695-696)

If this fusion is not achieved, then failure will occur with this libidinal developmental stage as it will with the following stages that are based upon its success. If the mother or caregiver is the one who is abusing the child, misconceptions about attachment may occur unconsciously to the child. Isolation will occur, and anxiety will be created for the child and for its place in the world. As the child grows into adolescence, he or she seeks to find ways to reduce this anxiety.

The methods of this anxiety reduction can manifest as autoerotic activities that are meant to sooth the child’s own need independent of the mother. These autoerotic activities can turn into violent fantasies especially if the child has been exposed to violence at an early age. “Violent fantasies are established early in the lives of those who go on to become serial killers, emerging as an important escape and a place in which to express emotion and control regarding other people” (Whitman and Akutagawa (2003), p. 696). Due to an impaired attachment with the mother, the child is halted in its development of creating emotional attachments to others. This impaired attachment and resulting anxiety in the child assists the child in developing a sense of self that is “unacceptable, unwanted,
and without value” (p. 697). If the child has been abused by the parents physically, sexually, or psychologically, this can also help shape the child’s view of what a loving relationship should entail. Essentially, the emotional attachment to others begins to be seen as consisting of dehumanizing the individual and creating pain for them instead of love. Whitman and Akutagawa (2003) quote an article published by Douglas and Olshaker in 1999 that states:

Being able to dominate, manipulate and control a victim, to decide whether the victim lives or dies, or how that victim dies, temporarily counteracts, for some, their feelings of inadequacy and speaks to the other side of the psychological equation. It makes them feel grandiose and superior, as they believe they are entitled to feel. In other words, raping and murdering sets the world right with them. (as cited in Whitman & Akutagawa (2003)., 2003, p. 697)

It is the belief in psychology that personality can be shaped through the environment in which an individual develops. The way that a child learns how to maneuver in the world with his or her social relationships begins with the relationship of the child to parental figures. But “the insufficiency of nurture chronically fosters frustration and rage” (Whitman and Akutagawa, 2003, p. 699).

An object relations perspective. An article published by Knight (2006) takes a look at the psychological origins of serial killers from an object relations point of view. Similar to the above Freudian perspective on the behavioral origins of serial killers, the object relations view focuses on the “disturbance of their self-regard in connection to a specific disturbance in their object relations” (p. 1193) in regard to the establishment of self as an infant through the caregiver. In this view, the infant learns that he is worthy of
care and attention through the attachment bond with the caregiver. “This mirroring experience is internalized and forms a sense of healthy self-esteem and can be described as ‘I am perfect’” (p. 1194). This idealized view of the self and the caregiver supports the child’s sense of self and self-esteem creation. The mother (or parents) thus become self-objects that support the development of self in the child which aid in a formulation of idealized self. Eventually the child will take over as his or her own self-object in defining himself or herself in the world. Knight (2006) further explains that “if there are deficient self-objects experiences of mirroring either the infant’s grandiosity or idealization, a developmental arrest occurs and this results in damage to the self-structure” (p. 1194), thus creating a sense of inadequacy in the child where they feel they are not significant. This damage to the self-concept translates later in life as being unworthy of others’ attention and may include feelings of emptiness, rage, and envy. Many serial killers isolate themselves in adolescence and tend to have very few friends, as noted in the histories of Ed Gein, Jeffrey Dahmer, and Kendall Francois. Theory speculates that to acquire a sense of control, these individuals begin to rape, torture, and kill victims since they cannot have control of self or feelings of power in themselves without being in control of another being’s life.

Models of Serial Killer Development

FBI motivational model. The FBI study completed by Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, and McCormack (published for academia by Burgess et al. in 1986 and later reprinted in the book by Ressler et al. in 1988 and again in 1992) used archival data, past and present interviews, and other resources to come up with an accurate psychosocial history of 36 serial killers. Data was collected between 1979 and 1983. The majority of the
subjects in the study were white and all were male. By more current definitions of serial murder, only 29 meet criteria as they killed more than one person; the rest were convicted of only one murder. It is unknown whether the males convicted of only one murder were indicated or confessed to others to meet serial killer definition criteria. All subjects were found to be fairly intellectual with 29% rated as being of average intelligence, 36% being of superior intelligence, and 15% being in the very superior range (Burgess et al., 1986). As previously referenced, this study created the opportunity for the FBI to develop the organized/disorganized typologies, as well as this motivational model of serial killer development.

Burgess et al. (1986) proposed a five phase model of factors that can influence offenders’ conduct and proclivity toward serial murder specifically those with sexual motivations. This model focuses mainly on psychosocial and cognitive factors (Arrigo & Purcell, 2001). Specifically examined for this model was the way the early childhood environment may have fueled the individual into becoming a serial murderer. Burgess et al. took the role of the child’s attachment to the caregivers as being a significant factor in the way the child develops a view of the world and the strength (or lack thereof) social bonds the child feels to society (Arrigo & Purcell, 2001).

Burgess et al. (1986) also stated there were three factors in regard to formative events that influence a child’s view of self and others during development: trauma, developmental failure, and interpersonal failure. Trauma can either be normative (illness, death of a family member, etc.) or nonnormative (abuse) and either directly or indirectly affect the child (Arrigo & Purcell, 2001). Abuse that occurs in childhood can promote
daydreaming, the development of fantasies to “escape the reality in which they lack control” (p. 13).

Developmental failure can occur when there is a lack of attachment and bonding between the child and his caregivers or the interactions between the two are primarily negative or abusive. If the child’s primary caregivers provide inappropriate and negative role models for the child, it can change the course of the child’s upbringing and bring about a sense of interpersonal failure within the child. Negative personality traits can develop if these three factors exist for the child. The child then may become socially isolative, which can assist in maturation of a fertile fantasy life.

Burgess et al. (1986) believes that the budding serial killer would be born and raised in an ineffective social environment, defined as difficulty with attachment due to caretakers either ignoring, rationalizing, or normalizing “various behaviors in the developing boy or, through their own problems (e.g., criminal behavior or substance abuse), and support the child’s developing distortions and projections” (p. 261). People important to the child do not provide the required safety, support, and nurturance, rather becoming non-protective or imposing adult responsibilities onto the young child. This “ineffective social environment” then supports the deviant child’s distortions of the world and others as uncaring. It is proposed that formative events would arise in the child’s life that also have an impact on the developmental trajectory.

The model’s concept of formative events refers to three contributing factors that can occur to help perpetuate the future serial killer’s distorted view of the world and others. This usually occurs through a trauma (physical or sexual abuse), which frightens the child and shapes their thought patterns. This belief, that all serial killers are driven to
kill due to being sexually abused as children, also permeates popular culture (Hickey, 2013). The FBI’s belief is that the child is neither protected nor assisted in healing from the trauma and begins to disassociate into a fantasy world. The final aspect of the formative events includes an interpersonal “failure of the caretaking adult to serve as a role model for the developing child” (Burgess et al., 1986, p. 264). The third factor in the motivational model of sexual homicide is that of patterned responses that includes negative personal trait development and cognitive mapping and processing that occurs within the early years of the child. These lead to interference in the development of social relationships, which reinforces isolation and dependence on a fantasy life that bolsters the sense of self of the future murderer. The model believes that critical personal traits develop in the young serial killer, including the development of fetishes, rebelliousness, aggression, lying, social isolation, and preference to autoerotic activities. Intertwined with these developing personal traits, the child also begins to daydream and live in their fantasies (both good and bad), developing a strong internal dialogue that vacillates between absolutes and generalizations. Themes within these cognitive processes focus around dominance, revenge, violence, power, death, torture, mutilation, and rape. Aggression begins to kinesthetically arouse the young serial killer (Burgess et al., 1986). Resultant actions of these patterned responses, personal traits, and cognitive mapping manifests in the child’s projection onto others of their internal worldview. At this time, if early expressions of violence towards other children and animals are not given negative consequences, the child instills deeper within himself a sense of entitlement and inability to control impulses or develop empathy. The last factor in this model is that of the feedback filter. The reactions and actions of the budding serial killer “both feeds back into
the killer’s patterned responses and filters his earlier actions into a continued way of thinking” (Burgess et al., 1986, p. 267). The murderer achieves increased arousal states due to fantasy that is reinforced by the violent actions. This feedback filter nourishes the personal traits and cognitive mapping, which in turn increases the actions towards other and self, feeding back into the filter.

**Trauma-control model.** Hickey’s (2013) trauma-control model takes into account both the research on cognition and motivational elements of serial murder, but also a possible presence of certain predispositional factors which may assist in an individual becoming a serial murderer. Hickey proposes that individuals with pre-dispositional factors have a trauma event or traumatization occur in childhood or adolescence. These traumatic events include “unstable home life, death of parent, divorce, corporal punishment, sexual abuse” or other negative events (p.136). He goes on to state that while predispositional elements may have existed in the individual, it is the trauma events which cause a destabilization in the individual and influences the person to kill. These traumatic events that occur during an individual’s developmental years reduce self-esteem and assist in the development of violent fantasies, especially when fueled by drugs, alcohol, and pornography (Arrigo & Purcell, 2001). These violent fantasies eventually do not satisfy the individual and they begin to act out on them in the real world. Escalation and repetition must occur then to continue to satisfy these desires and the sexual violence continues.

Much like Burgess et al.’s (1986) motivational model, Hickey’s (2013) trauma control-model takes into account the effect that traumatic events have on a child during the formative stages of development. Trauma is viewed exponentially and may possibly come
from various sources outside of the immediate caregiver such as ostracism in school, and peer relationship failures (Hickey, 2013). The trauma-control model proposes that the rejection of the child by the caregiver can lead to the youth becoming more isolative, and substituting social relationships for a fantasy world the child has cultivated and can control. The child may dissociate after physical, sexual, or psychological abuse has occurred and their view of the world can become distorted. The fantasy world they create and disassociate into puts them in control of the world and helps them to regain psychological balance (Arrigo & Purcell, 2001). Facilitators, such as drugs, alcohol, and pornography, can be used later in adolescence and into adulthood that help spur the violence of the fantasies into becoming reality. Hickey (2013) also specifies that “a common characteristic of most, if not all, sexual offenders is feelings of inadequacy self-doubt, and worthlessness” (p. 137).

Critique of theories and models. There are even more theories and models of serial killer development in the literature. As shown above, many look for predispositional factors such as parent’s temperament and history of mental illness and violence, genetic factors, and even brain injury. Most theories and models state that there is a lack of secure attachment, care, and availability between one or both parents, and the young serial killer which may create a disconnect for the youth with others, laying the groundwork for a lack of empathy that assists them in their crimes. Also as discussed, there are a number of different types of motivations for serial murder. These theories may not be able to shed light on all of them. Perhaps factors within the theories may be able to illuminate the development of certain types of serial killers, be them organized, missionary, thrill-oriented, disorganized, etc. Maybe looking at the whole of serial killers is too expansive to
see the details since motivations and development can be very different for each. Can factors in these theories and models also explain serial killer development for the less represented African American murderers, female murderers, and Hispanic murderers, as well as the notorious Caucasian male murderers?
Chapter III: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

As previously stated, direct research with serial killers, in the forms of interviews and psychological testing by an individual, is often impossible for a variety of reasons. The majority of academic and scholarly research on this population is usually conducted through secondary sources and case studies. While many reports look at characteristics or etiology of serial killers, none have looked at a direct correspondence between an ethnically diverse population of serial killers and associations between etiology and typology.

Rationale for Research Approach

According to Yin (2009) a case study should be used in the research setting when the behavior of the subjects cannot be manipulated, when the conditions of the material is primarily contextual, and when the boundaries between the content and the phenomenon being studied are blurred. For this study, the contextual events that may have assisted in shaping the subject’s need to murder occurred in the past and are no longer able to be manipulated. The constructivist paradigm is stated to be specifically relative to case study research by both Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) and is “built upon the premise of a social construction of reality” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). To properly represent the constructivist nature of these individuals, and in line with intensive case study research design, multiple sources of data were compiled to develop a representative case history for each individual included in this study (Cunningham, 1997). While the data collection design may have been more constructivist, the data analysis falls more in line with postpositivist philosophy. “The problems studied by postpositivists reflect the need to
identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 7).

Essentially, the events that helped shape the nature of the subjects were collected, then dichotomous variables were used to assess if different groupings of serial killers experienced the events.

Many of the factors included in etiological theories of serial killer development consist of historical elements in the serial killers’ past including social and familial experience. It is speculated that the nature of social and individual development (along with the possibilities of brain trauma, abuse, social isolation, etc.) assisted in these individuals becoming killers. Various sources of previously published material were used to create a detailed case history (or biographical sheet) for each of the subjects selected for this study. Data points within the biographical sheets could then be examined to look at previously proposed causes of serial killer development.

Pulling from the previously described theories and methods, a number of etiological factors were examined: military experience; alcohol and drug use; sexual abuse; assaultive towards others as an adolescent; engagement in animal torture and fire setting; and maternal physical abuse. The author of this paper also proposes that bullying by peers may be an additional etiological experience by serial killers, although these events may coincide with humiliation incidences as proposed within learning theory.

Descriptive, quantitative methods were used for this study as they can perform a cross-sectional analysis of groups of cases to identify if prior etiological theories have higher frequencies within certain typologies. The frequency distribution and associations between the variables were analyzed using the chi-squared goodness of fit test ($\alpha=.05$).
Research Sample and Data Sources

While most quantitative analyses require large sample sizes, this was a difficult task when conducting this type of data collection methodology. In order to detect a moderate effect size at the .05 level of significance with adequate power ($1 - \beta = .80$) however, a sample of only 30 cases was sufficient. Other issues with data collection occurred that prevented a larger sample size while staying within the demographically required boundaries for this study. These issues will be discussed later in this paper.

Gaining access to the population needed for this study is a problem for many researchers in this field for various reasons, such as limited access due to the subject’s dangerousness, status as a protected population when incarcerated, restrictions by the institution housing them, lack of subject’s desire to participate in research, and limited trustworthiness when they grant interviews (Hinch, 1998, para. 16). Many of the issues associated with directly interviewing these subjects for a study can be negated by using prior biographical information that has been published and is part of public knowledge. Biographical research was used in context with a multiple-case study methodology to create informed and factually based case histories of the subjects.

As Canter and Wentink (2004) state regarding the use of published material on serial killers for research:

All data are open to bias, but published material whether produced by academics, journalists, or others, is not created for the purposes of this particular research, and consequently, such data are less open to biases that are weighted in favor of the hypotheses examined in this study. (pp. 496-497)
Previously published literature on serial killers has used secondary sources of information, such as court records, videotaped or written interviews, correspondence, news articles and biographical material (Arrigo & Griffin, 2004; Beasley, 2004; Castle & Hensley, 2002; Canter & Wentink, 2004; Hickey, 2013). This secondary source material was used to develop the case study biographical sheet as seen in Appendix A. This biographical sheet was adapted from the serial killer timelines used for similar purposes by Dr. Michael Aamodt and Radford University (Aamodt, n.d.) while collecting secondary data.

The selection of serial killer cases is based on variables from a specific working definition of serial murder created for this study. For this study, a serial killer is defined as an individual (1) who is convicted of murdering three or more people, or is reportedly tied through DNA to direct murders of three people; (2) who targets victims that are primarily not of blood relation; (3) who kills during separate incidences with an emotional “cooling-off-period” of more than 24 hours between killings; and (4) who kills from some form of internal need, desire, or delusion—with financial gain coming only from the victim of the murderer and not an outside source that pays the murderer (to eliminate hit men and gang related multiple murders).

The statistical demographics of African American males, Caucasian males, Caucasian females, and Hispanic males were used to compile a sense of what case histories would be needed. To avoid bias, these demographics were proposed by Aamodt (2015), the manager of Radford University’s serial killer database, who has not published any proposed theories of serial killer etiology. Reproduced below in Table 2 and adjusted to only take into consideration the decades of 1950-2010, from which the sample was
selected, it was found that 53% of serial killers were Caucasian, 40% were African American, and 6% were Hispanic. With a sample population of 36 cases, the closest the study could equate was 21 of the subjects being Caucasian (58%), 13 being African-American (36%), and two of Hispanic race (6%). Demographic representation was skewed due to difficulties in the data collection phase of the study, changing the percentage amounts. This difficulty arose in obtaining the same breadth of information about African American serial killers as Caucasian serial killers.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used in Study</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

**Frequency of Serial Killers Gender by Decade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>% Male</th>
<th>% Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As seen above in Table 3, using Aamodt’s (2015) data on frequency of serial killers’ gender by decade, it was found that 93% of serial killers between the decades of 1950-2010 were male and 7% were female. Utilizing a sample population of 36 cases, this would translate to 33 of the subjects being male and 3 being female. To summarize, the sample for the study was 18 Caucasian male serial killers, 13 African-American male serial killers, three Caucasian female serial killers, and two Hispanic male serial killers, equaling 36 serial killers for this quantitative multiple-case study. A list of the serial killer cases, demographic information, number of murders, and typology can be found on the following page in Table 6.

Individual cases were chosen using stratified sampling based on the needs of the population demographics and information availability. Internet searches were utilized to ascertain breadth of information on serial killers, although only reputable newspaper sources, books, interviews with the subject or family, and court documents were used to
create the biographical sheet. Published books that included biographical data points, written by noted serial killer experts were also used. Typology of the case history was only taken into account to guarantee that all types of typologies (organized/disorganized and intrinsic motivations) would be represented.

Typology for each case was determined after the biographical sheet was completed through the qualifications of both the FBI’s organized/disorganized typology and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typology (as seen above in Table 1). When possible, typology was triangulated through Radford University’s serial killer timelines, other publications, or though works by the FBI and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger. When triangulation could not be achieved to determine typology, noted qualifiers for each typology as cited in the literature were used.
Table 4

Subject List and Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Serial Killer Case</th>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Convicted Murders*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jeffrey Dahmer</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>John Wayne Gacy</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ed Kemper</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Arthur Shawcross</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gary Ridgway</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Randy Kraft</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Anthony Sowell</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Morris Solomon Jr.</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>William Choyce</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>David Middleton</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chester D. Turner</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Lust</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Henry Lee Lucas</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Lust</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Michael B. Ross</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Lust</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Derrick T. Lee</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Lust</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>George W. Russell</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Lust</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Theodore Bundy</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dennis Rader</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>David Berkowitz</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Charles Cullen</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cleophus Prince Jr.</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Kristen Gilbert</td>
<td>Caucasian Female</td>
<td>Organized Power</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Keith Jesperson</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Power</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Carroll E. Cole</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Mission</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kendall Francois</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Mission</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Benjamin Atkins</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Organized Mission</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Andre Crawford</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Mission</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>James C. Vaughn Jr.</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Visionary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Herbert Mullin</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Visionary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Lemuel Smith</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Visionary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>John E. Armstrong</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Organized Thrill</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Aileen Wuornos</td>
<td>Caucasian Female</td>
<td>Organized Thrill</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Carl E. Watts</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Thrill</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Richard Ramirez</td>
<td>Hispanic Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Thrill</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Robert Berdella</td>
<td>Caucasian Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Thrill</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dorothea Puente</td>
<td>Caucasian Female</td>
<td>Organized Comfort</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Angel Resendiz</td>
<td>Hispanic Male</td>
<td>Disorganized Comfort</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Convicted murders does not account for all confessed or proven murders committed, just the convictions. All subjects are empirically believed to have killed or confessed to killing at least 3+ victims.
Data Collection Methods

For this study, since the population being examined is both protected and
dangerous, or deceased, the main method of data collection was that of biographical
research via published, publicly available information. Dryer-Beers (2012) verifies the use
of this data collection method for her own serial killer study by saying, “Through the use
of existing data in the form of books, journals, websites, and documentaries it has been
possible to build a unique platform on which to base this project” (p. 5). Records and
accounts, both primary (such as autobiographies, court reports, and taped interviews of the
serial killers that are reputably accurate) and secondary sources (such as reports from
eyewitnesses, news reports, or interviews with those who knew the subject) were used in
this study to create biographical sheets (an example of which is shown in Appendix A).
Biographical sheets are similar to the publicly available timelines Radford University used
for their database with some changes and additions specific to factors being evaluated for
this study. Sources, including the Radford University timelines, were screened for
authenticity and credibility by triangulating data with more than four sources of
information in each case study. Using multiple data sources to develop the case study
helps enhance both the credibility of the data as well as the historical accuracy of the case
(Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009).

Many past and present studies on serial killers use historical, biographical, and
textual analysis as the major means of research. The public has been fascinated with the
horror stories of serial murder throughout history. “Often, highly detailed descriptions of
both offenders and offences are available in published accounts as well as public records,
which in many circumstances can be corroborated with investigators” (Canter & Wentink,
Most researchers focusing on serial killers have used this data collection technique for their own case studies to look at various aspects and similarities in this infamous population (Arrigo & Griffin, 2004; Branson, 2013; Canter & Wentink, 2004; Castle & Hensley, 2005; Farrell et al., 2013; Kraus, 1995). As stated by Aamodt and Moyse (2003), “True crime books are useful for researching serial killers” (p.61).

**Data Analysis Methods**

Etiological factors, the independent variables, being examined against the various typologies are almost all taken from previously described theories and methods. Military experience (Castle & Hensley, 2002) is believed to help reinforce the killing experience through learning theory. Alcohol and drug use are described by Hickey (2013) in his trauma-control model as being facilitators which assist in creating a feedback loop with violent fantasies and self-esteem fantasies. Sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence is mentioned as a publicly perceived myth about serial killers by Hickey (2013), but also falls under the heading of general trauma which was considered a nonnormative formative event in the FBI’s motivational model of serial killer development. For this study, sexual abuse is defined as “any sexual activity, practice, or instruction which either meets the criminal definition or is unhealthy for a child considering his/her age and level of development” (Mitchell & Aamodt, 2005, p. 41). Assaultive behavior as an adolescent is pulled from trait theory that believes some aggressive behaviors will be stable over time (Caprara et al., 2012). This assaultive behavior in youth is also included in the literature on antisocial personality disorder which holds that there must be “a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, occurring since age 15 years” (American Psychological Association, 2013). Animal torture and fire setting are both characteristics
listed in the triad of sociopathy as well as part of the graduation hypothesis of increased violence (Wright & Hensley, 2003). Lastly, the relationship between child and parent (also during the time the serial killer is under the age of 18) is used throughout many of the serial killer theories and models. Many theories such as object relations, psychoanalytic, and motivational models all believe that the parents did not provide enough care, support, and structure. The dysfunctional dynamic in this relationship is quantified by presence of maternal physical abuse. Physical abuse is defined as the “causing of allowing of any nonaccidental physical injury” (Mitchell & Aamodt, 2005, p. 41).

The concept of internalization, taken from learning theory, is the reason the author of this study is testing the possible etiology of experience of being bullied as a child, with the serial killer being the target of the aggression by peers. Bullying to be defined as a type of deliberate, aggressive behavior that “involves a broad range of negative actions of a physical, psychological, and/or social nature” by an individual or group (Carrera, DePalma, & Lameias, 2011, p. 481). Bullying can often affect the victim’s self-esteem, make them feel powerless, and angry at individuals around them.

Data collected was separated into dichotomous (present or not present) or unknown variables in the following areas: military experience, alcohol use, drug use, sexual abuse of subject, bullied as a child, assaultive as an adolescent, physically abused by maternal figure, engaged in animal torture, and engaged in fire setting. “The process of converting such archival information into data amenable to analysis requires the identification of criteria that can be used systematically to specify distinct variables relating to the models or hypotheses under study” (Canter, Alison et al., 2004, p.304). Case histories were divided into the specific typologies: organized, disorganized, lust,
power, and thrill based on characteristics described within the typologies. The etiological factors within the mission, vision, and comfort-oriented types lacked enough cases to have any possible reliable statistical finding (mission included four cases, vision included three cases, and comfort included two cases).

To summarize the relationship between the categorical variables of inclusion in one of the typologies versus the other typologies in the above etiological factors, a crosstabulation was used utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics (version 23). Each typology was analyzed through a crosstabulation as well as a chi-squared goodness of fit test to measure if there was a relationship between each etiological factor and each typology.

**Limitations**

In regard to issues of trustworthiness, regarding reliability and validity, this study has a number of limitations that are inherent to this type of data collection and methodology. Biographical data can lack credibility depending on the source of information. Even when the data in a published biography comes from the source, individuals can, purposefully or unintentionally, exaggerate or “make up” information. This population is known for these purposeful exaggerations, clear deceitfulness, or unwillingness to share some facts of their lives of their offenses. The original author of the data source may also have his or her own biases or exaggerations that may color the events depicted in the case material. The triangulation of data collection methods is utilized to reduced some of this issue of credibility in regard to trustworthiness for this study.

During data collection, as previously described, a lack of information was found to exist about a number of serial killers, specifically the African American serial killers. This
lack of information is reflected in unknowns in the data, which effects the case histories that are included within each quantitative crosstabulation and analysis.

Quantitatively, the sample size used in this study, as well as the number of cases delegated to each typology, is below the needed amount to verify generalizability in many of the etiological factors. Utilizing crosstabulation with small sample sizes can increase the chance that the data and resulting chi-squared statistics would not be reflective of the true distributions within the population.

Summary

Utilizing a case study methodology, 36 serial killer biographical sheets were created to represent each subject’s case history. Stratified sampling was used to select the subjects for the case histories based on statistically reported rates of demographics for serial killers resulting in 18 Caucasian male serial killers, three Caucasian female serial killers, 13 African American male serial killers, and two Hispanic male serial killers. Data collected consisted of using publicly available primary (autobiographies, published letters and interviews, and court documents) and secondary sources (biographies, interviews with those that knew the serial killer, Radford University’s timelines, and news reports). Data was triangulated with four separate sources to increase validity of information included in the case histories. Serial killers were also allotted a type both from the FBI’s organized/disorganized typology and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typology based on variables described in Tables 1-3. When available, these typologies were cross-referenced though the Radford University timelines, published material from Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger, or through other sources.
Dichotomous data was cross-tabulated using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 23) based on typology and specific etiological factors described in theories and methods of serial killer development such as military experience, alcohol use, drug use, sexual abuse of subject, assaultive as an adolescent, physical abuse by maternal figure, engaged in animal torture, and engaged in fire setting. Chi-squared analyses were also run to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between the etiological factor and the typology.
Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

Data points in the case histories were used to define typology of serial killer based on descriptions from the FBI’s organized/disorganized typology and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typology. These data points were collected using secondary source material highlighting developmental aspects of the lives of 36 selected serial killers from the United States. This data was then adapted into the biographical sheet shown in Appendix A. To verify fact, triangulation of information was used to differentiate fact from urban fiction.

Case history typology designations were cross-checked against other researchers’ designations when possible to attempt to build validity. Within the organized/disorganized typology, and out of the sample size of 36, 24 cases were categorized as organized and 12 were categorized as disorganized. For the Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger typology, 15 were categorized as lust-oriented, seven were categorized as power-oriented, four were categorized as mission-oriented, three were categorized as vision driven, five were categorized as thrill-oriented, and two were categorized as comfort-oriented.

Quantitative analysis tested whether there was a relationship between any prominent typology and each of the designated etiological factors. Not all case histories yielded each of these data points due to limitations on available information. Difficulty finding etiological data points on African American serial killers is described below. Those serial murderers without the required data point(s) were not included in the analysis. Crosstabulation was used to compare typologies prevalence of etiological factors. A chi-
squared goodness of fit test also analyzed whether the crosstabulation findings yielded any significance at 1%.

**Issues in Data Collection**

As previously mentioned, difficulties in obtaining sufficient data points in African American serial killers’ case histories occurred during data collection. Over 30 African American subjects were identified as possible serial killers on which to complete data collection. Only nine cases provided enough publicly available information to rival the thoroughness the Caucasian male and Hispanic male serial killer’s data points included. Difficulty in data collection was found to exist in obtaining information about many African American serial killers’ childhoods and parents specifically. The lack of information on African American serial killer’s parents included information on the relationships between spouses and children, discipline style, use of drugs or alcohol, criminality, spirituality, and occupations. At other times, as in the prospective cases of Beoria Simmons, Gerald Parker, and Alfred Gaynor, the exact birthday of the African American serial killers were unable to be specifically identified. The issue of having a lack of information never occurred during data collection with over 30 Caucasian case histories. This could give the impression that there is a higher proportion of Caucasian serial killers, when in reality, this difference may simply be reflecting that there is merely more information publicly on them available.

Four cases, those of Kendall Francois, Benjamin Atkins, Andre Crawford, and Chester Turner, yielded barely enough information to complete the 13 cases of African American serial killers needed for this study. Biographical information on Francois did not include any childhood or parental relationship information beyond parents’ occupations,
although Francois’ murders occurred in the family’s residence and the bodies were found in the crawl spaces of the home. Little information on Turner’s childhood was able to be found although he was arrested and convicted in the past decade. This lack of information was found to be very typical in published material on African American serial killers: little to no information was taken on the individuals’ childhood experiences, even when they confessed to the murders. Books, interviews, and news articles all abounded for the Caucasian and Hispanic serial killers, going into intimate details about their childhood experiences: If they had nightmares in early childhood development; when they learned to walk; how they got along with their siblings, detailed minor events; and even when they lost their virginity. Few published biographies on African American serial murderers could be found to include in the data collection phase of this study. At the time of this study, during the trial of the “Grim Sleeper” Lonnie Franklin, Jr., little published biographical information could be found on him as well, although his possible murders have affected the city of Los Angeles for decades. Franklin Jr.’s case bears resemblance to that of Dennis Rader, the “BTK Killer” in that both targeted the same group of victims and both appeared to have hiatuses in their murders which lasted decades. But still, little information exists on the African American killer while a plethora of data points are publicly available for the Caucasian murderer. This lack of available information affected this study’s robustness as many of the etiological unknowns occur due to this lack of information with African American serial killers.

Other believed African American serial killers did not meet the criteria for this study in that they were not convicted of killing or linked through DNA evidence, to the murders of more than three victims. Wayne Williams, the Atlanta Child Murderer, was
only convicted of two murders (both adults) and there are no significant reports of DNA linking him to the child murders in Atlanta. While convicted of killing three victims, believed African American serial killer, Marc Sappington did not experience a cooling-off period and thus should be categorized as a spree murderer. The lines that are made very clear with Caucasian serial killers and reported on extensively, seem to be more blurred and ignored with the African American serial murderers.

**Quantitative Findings.**

**Military experience.** In total, all 36 case histories yielded data in this etiological category.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology and Military Experience Etiology Crosstabulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized/Disorganized Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, it was found that the majority of disorganized case histories (92%) did not have military experience, yet almost two-thirds (63%) of organized case histories did have military experience. This result yielded a statistically significant result ($p \leq .01$) in that serial murderers that are later classified as organized are more likely to have been in the military than disorganized serial murderers. Having military experience
was split in the 15 case histories determined to be lust-oriented (53% not present; 47% present) and the seven categorized as power-oriented (43% not present; 57% present). The majority of thrill-oriented serial murderers (80%) were more likely to not have had military experience. Only five case histories were classified as thrill, so this may not be generalizable to the thrill-oriented population as a whole.

**Alcohol use.** As seen in Table 6, some of the case histories within the typologies were found to use alcohol.

Table 6

**Typology and Alcohol Use Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organized/Disorganized Typology</th>
<th>Alcohol Use</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disorganized types (90%) and lust-oriented types (75%) were the primary case histories that used alcohol. Thrill-oriented (60%), organized (58%), and power-oriented (40%) also were found to use alcohol, but this was split near the middle with cases in which the perpetrator did not use alcohol.

**Drug use.** Shown in Table 7, one typology in particular was shown to predominantly use drugs during their lifetime.
### Typology and Drug Use Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Use</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organized/Disorganized Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized Count</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All (100%) of case histories within the power-oriented typology did not use drugs, although only five out of seven case histories had data points included in the study.

Disorganized types, on the other hand, were found to be more likely have used drugs with approximately to three-fourths (73%) using some form of drug (with the exception of alcohol). Lust-oriented cases were also more likely to use alcohol (64%).

**Bullied as a child.** All typologies included (organized, disorganized, lust, power, and thrill) had data points that endorsed bulling of the serial murderer as a child.
Table 8

**Typology and Bullied as a Child Etiology Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organized/ Disorganized Typology</th>
<th>Disorganized</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within Disorganized Typology</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thrill</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One important finding, is that for every typology, they were much more likely to have been bullied as children than not. For the disorganized and power typologies, there were approximately twice as many who had been bullied than not bullied (64% and 67%). For the organized types, lust-oriented types, and thrill-types, however, they were three to four times more likely to have been bullied than not bullied by peers as a child (79%, 77%, and 75% respectively, please see Table 8).

**Sexually abused.** A common belief in popular culture about serial murderers is that they are sexually abused as children. Table 9 shows the crosstabulation table of the different typologies for this etiology.
Only the thrill-oriented type case histories had more than half of the cases containing sexual abuse. Only three cases within the thrill-oriented typology had specific data points to meet criteria for this category, so the results are not generalizable for all thrill-oriented serial killers. Even though every other typology, besides the thrill-oriented typology, had between 25% and 45% who had experienced sexual abuse as children (approximately 1-2 children in 4). This still represents a much higher proportion than what is found for sexual abuse within the general population. In fact, in the general population, it is estimated that 7-12% of children, or one in ten, are sexually abused (Townsend & Rheingold, 2013). This figure may not take into account all childhood victims of sexual abuse since it is not always a reported offense. The percentage of serial killers overall who have been sexually abused seems to fall above that of the national average.
Assaultive as an adolescent. The crosstabulation (as shown in Table 10) identified that, in all types but organized, the majority of case histories identified the individual as being assaultive as an adolescent.

Table 10

Typology and Assaultive as Adolescent Etiology Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organized/Disorganized Typology</th>
<th>Assultive as an Adolescent</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The disorganized typology had the most descriptions (80%) with power-oriented (71%) following. Lust-oriented also had more than half of the case histories describe the serial killer as being assaultive in his or her youth (62%).

Physically abused by maternal figure. Many theories of serial killer development blame the early relationship between the mother and the budding serial killer. As shown in Table 11, it was found that none of the typologies had a predominant frequency of maternal physical abuse before age eighteen.
### Table 11

**Typology and Physically Abused by Maternal Figure Etiology Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Physically Abused by Maternal Figure</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organized/Disorganized Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the organized/disorganized types, 75% and 92% respectively, did not have indications of physical abuse by the mother in the biographical sheet. Within the intrinsic motivation typology 77% of the lust-oriented murderers, 86% of the power-oriented murderers, and 100% of the thrill-oriented murderers (five out of five subjects) did not experience maternal physical violence.

**Animal torture.** A proposed sign of sociopathy, and part of the graduation hypothesis, it is believed that most serial killers begin with torturing animals.

Crosstabulation identified that approximately 60% of the disorganized, lust-oriented, and power-oriented types engaged in animal torture (60%, 58%, and 57% respectively - see table 12).
Table 12

Typology and Animal Torture Etiology Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organized/Disorganized Typology</th>
<th>Disorganized</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Engaged in Animal Torture</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately half of organized types (42%), lust-oriented types (58%), power-oriented types (57%), and thrill-oriented types (two of five cases) engaged in animal torture. The disorganized type was the only category to have primarily engaged in this behavior (60%).

**Fire setting.** Also part of the triad of sociopathy, fire-starting is believed to be a sign of a possibly budding serial murderer. It was found that no types primarily engaged in this behavior. For all typologies, the proportion who engaged in fire setting was approximately half of the proportion who had engaged in animal torture. In fact, similar to animal torture, the disorganized, lust, and power typologies all had very similar proportions who engaged in fire setting (30%, 31%, and 33% respectively), and the disorganized and lust typologies were similar as well (21% and 20% respectively, see Table 13).
Table 13

Typology and Fire Setting Etiology Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaged in Fire setting</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organized/ Disorganized Typology</td>
<td>Disorganized Count</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Disorganized Typology</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized Count</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Organized Typology</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation Typology</td>
<td>Lust Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Lust Typology</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Power Typology</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Thrill Typology</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V: Analysis and Synthesis

Introduction

The aim of this study was to analyze serial killer typology and previously proposed etiological factors within an accurately proportional diverse demographic group. While most studies have looked primarily at case studies involving Caucasian male serial killers, this study used case material from Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and female subjects. Typologies were taken from the two most researched and discussed versions: the FBI’s organized/disorganized typologies and Holmes, Holmes, and DeBurger’s intrinsic motivation typologies. Etiological factors were pulled from published theories and models and included military experience, alcohol use, drug use, occurrence of bullying by peers as a youth, sexual abuse, maternal figure physical abuse, assaultive behavior as an adolescent, and engagement in animal torture and fire setting. For each of the serial killers in the sample, data related to each of these etiological factors were taken from publicly available case history information and were made into dichotomous variables (present or not present). Difficulties arose in data collection on African American serial killers, specifically regarding childhood and familial data points. Data that was unknown due to a lack of information were not included in the crosstabulation and chi-squared analyses.

African American Serial Killers and Available Information

As found during the data collection phase of this study, there is a disproportionate lack of publicly available information about African American serial killers. Only two case histories on Hispanic serial killers were used in this study and publicly available information for both of those cases abounded as well. It is unknown whether this finding
would be true for a larger sample of Hispanic serial killers as few others were found to be mentioned in the research.

As discussed by Walsh (2005), Jenkins (1993), and Branson (2012), African American serial killers have had less media exposure and visibility, even though current statistics identify their rates of offending as being on par with their Caucasian counterparts. This difference in news coverage persisted despite start similarity between the crimes of some African American and Caucasian serial killers. For example, African American serial killer Maury Travis, who was arrested in 2002 and confessed to 17 murders, was found to have a secret torture chamber in his basement that included bondage equipment, videotapes, and newspaper clippings of the investigation. Dennis Rader, also known as the “Bind, Torture, Kill” or “BTK” killer, was arrested in 2005 for the murder of 10 women. Travis’ case did not receive the same type of media attention as Rader’s, although they both confessed, even after Travis killed himself in his jail cell after his confession.

While this study did not intend to find proof of the disproportionately available information on race in serial killer information, its presence when researching this topic was palpable. Generally, there was a lack of in-depth media coverage on African American serial killers than with Caucasian serial killers, specifically in regard to childhood information and familial relationships. While the media and academic reports on Caucasian serial killers seem to attempt to probe the annals of Caucasian serial killer development, there was far less depth for the African American serial killers as a whole. There may not be a specific reason as to why this has been the norm in cases involving African American serial killers. Perhaps culturally African American families, and the
serial killers themselves, are less prone to discussing details of childhood with the media or researchers due to the negative stigma that will result. Perhaps, as Walsh (2005) speculated:

The media are the gatekeepers of what the public is entitled to know, and the media are very anxious of what the public is entitled to know, and the media are very anxious not to attract accusations of racism by zeroing in on heinous crimes committed by African Americans with the same zealoussness it exhibits when such crimes are committed by Whites. (p.281)

This hypothesis does not take into account why there are fewer books published and fewer interviews with African American serial killers available. Jenkins (1993) proposes a two-pronged reason. He speculates that law enforcement agencies are less likely to thoroughly investigate African American crimes unless the victims are white or of higher socioeconomic status and that publishers may be under the assumption that African American offenders are less likely to appeal to audiences. Branson (2013) speculates that the media and FBI are prone to reinforce the ethnocentric myth of the Caucasian serial murderer through research and reports. While all these beliefs may hold causational reasoning into the lack of publicly available information on African American serial killers, it was found in this study that it continues to be difficult to find the same level of biographical information on African American serial killers as on Caucasian serial killers. There continues to be a racial disparity in the media’s publicly available data.

**Discussion on Quantitative Findings**

**Military experience.** In the literature review, only one study discussed a possible connection between serial killers and military experience. The article by Castle and
Hensley (2002) used the idea of a serial killer in the military to discuss how learning theory could be used for a serial killer to develop a positive internal reward system for murder. It did not test this etiological belief, but found that 7% of one of the author’s previous samples of serial killers had reported having military experience. In this study, the crosstabulation identified 92% of disorganized serial killers did not report having military experience and 63% of organized serial killers did report having experience. This was found to be a statistically significant result ($p > .01$ significance). Within the FBI’s typology, disorganized serial killers are believed to be socially immature, have poor work history, and be sloppier and spontaneous in their murders. Organized types are thought to be more emotionally controlled, able to plan, and be strategic in their murders. The military trains individuals to be thorough, accurate, and effective. It is understandable that disorganized killers would not have accumulated these military traits while organized type killers would. What is not identified is if the murders occurred prior to military experience or after military experience, indicating whether the military training had an impact upon their psychopathy and likelihood to commit murder, and whether organized killers learn to be more organized through their military training. Gaining a better understanding of characteristics of murders before and after military experience may lend insight into the proposal that learning theory has an effect on serial murder.

Within the intrinsic motivation typology, thrill-oriented serial killers were found to not have military experience compared to both lust-oriented and power-oriented. In fact, the proportion of thrill-oriented killers who had military experience was approximately half of the proportion of lust-oriented killers and approximately one third of the power-oriented killers. Thrill-oriented killers are conceptualized as having less planning ability in
their kills than lust or power-oriented murderers. Due to the low sample size of thrill-oriented killers, however, it is unknown how generalizable this finding may be.

**Alcohol use.** It was found that the majority of disorganized type serial killers did use alcohol during their lifetime to the extent it was noted publicly in the data accumulated for their data sheets, while only half of the organized type did. This finding is different than the typology’s listed profile characteristics of organized/disorganized murderers and their use of alcohol. The FBI classified that organized types were more likely to use alcohol during their crime while the disorganized types only used alcohol minimally. It is unclear why the proportions in this study do not appear to match with the FBI findings, but may be of use for future research.

The majority (three-fourths) of lust-oriented serial murderers used alcohol. The speculation with Hickey’s trauma-control model of serial killer development is that alcohol (as well as drugs and pornography) can act as a facilitator to increase violent fantasies and manipulate levels of self-esteem. Alcohol use can act as a behavioral inhibitor, allowing serial killers to boost their feelings of self-worth and lower inhibitions to act out fantasies. Considering that within the intrinsic motivation type of lust, fantasy life is believed to provide a ritual for acts, it could be plausible that more lust-oriented murderers use alcohol as a means to tap into this fantasy life and enact the fantasies. While this study did not show causation, there seems to be logical points of reference regarding alcohol use within lust-oriented and disorganized type serial killers that could be researched further.

**Drug use.** Another facilitator in Hickey’s trauma control model of serial killer development was drug use. Similar to the findings on alcohol use, disorganized types and
lust-oriented types were more frequently found to use drugs. The FBI’s profile characteristics of disorganized murderers does not discuss the use of drugs, but this could be a factor in increased disorganization, depending on the drugs used and if drugs were ingested during or immediately preceding the act of murder.

Although not found to be statistically significant, it is still notable that no power-oriented killers reportedly used drugs (0%). While this sample was only from five cases, it could be reasoned that the use of drugs could take away from the sense of power for which the killer is intrinsically motivated; hence, the lack of use. Drugs can cause an individual to feel like they are less in control of themselves and their actions.

**Bullied as a child.** While this etiological factor could be considered a possible humiliation or rejection experience, as described in learning theory, peer bullying was not specifically discussed in any theory or model of serial killer development. It was found that the majority of all types of serial killer experienced negative aggressive acts by peers, and that these proportions were not statistically different across typologies (ranging from three fifths to three quarters of each typology) is a substantial and important finding. A study by Smokowski, Evans, and Cotter (2014) found that the experience of chronic bullying (in rural adolescents) was associated with “higher levels of anxiety, depression, and aggressive behaviors as well as lower levels of self-esteem and future optimism than non-victims” (p. 1042). All serial killers grow up to become aggressive, albeit with different motivations for the aggression. While this current study was descriptive in nature, it seems important to note this finding as it is the only etiological factor examined that the majority of serial killer case histories endorsed as being present. As another source of future study, it may be important to examine how situations within a serial killer’s home
life as well as rejection or aggression from peers could affect intrinsic self-schema development.

**Sexually abused.** A belief about serial killers is that they were put onto their murderous developmental trajectory by being sexually abused in childhood or adolescence (Hickey, 2013). The FBI’s motivational model of development (as seen in Figure 1) also lists sexual abuse as a formative event that occurs in the childhood or adolescence of serial killers. In this study it was found that the organized types, lust-oriented types, and power-oriented types did not have sexual abuse present in the majority of cases. Despite this finding, however, it is notable that the proportion of serial killers within each typology that reported having been sexually abused as a child is much higher than the proportion within the general population. Currently, in the general population, it is estimated that one out of seven girls and one out of 25 boys will experienced childhood sexual abuse (Townsend & Rheingold, 2013). Within this predominantly male sample of serial killers, however, two out of every five serial killers reported having been sexually abused (ten times the rate for other boys). This of course varies by typology, with the following approximate proportions of sexual abuse by typology. 1) One in four within the power-oriented typology; 2) one in three within the lust typology; 3) two out of five within the organized typology; 4) one out of every two within the disorganized typology; and 5) two out of every three within the thrill-oriented typology. Although clearly not every serial killer has reported childhood sexual abuse, the rates within this sample are dramatically higher than that of the general population. In addition, this finding may be a misnomer as some individuals do not publicly report abuse and some reports found within data collection were deemed unfounded through the triangulation of source material. A greater sample size and personal
interviews may be a more appropriate way to gather information for this data point in order to gain better understanding of the role of sexual abuse in serial killers’ typology and development.

**Assaultive as adolescent.** Disorganized types of serial killers were found to be most frequently assaultive in adolescence, with 80% having demonstrated physically aggressive behavior towards others. Aggression in adolescence can be considered a diagnostic factor within antisocial personality disorder and it is also found to be a perceived patterned response of personal traits within the motivational model of serial killer development. While many of the cases endorsed assaultive behavior in youth (lust-oriented, 62%, and power-oriented, 71%), only half of organized were found to be assaultive in adolescence. As previously stated, a large sample size and fewer unknown data points within case histories may yield a more accurate result of this etiological factor. It seems logical that the extent of assaultive behavior of a serial killer later in life with his or her victims would begin to be present within adolescence to some degree.

**Physically abused by maternal figure.** This etiological factor has been exploited as truth within popular culture and serial killer mythology (Hickey, 2013). Both psychodynamic and object relation theories of serial killer development focus on the role of the parent, specifically the mother, in positively or negatively aiding in the ego development of the child. This study found that very few case histories on serial killer development noted physical abuse by a serial killer’s maternal figure. In fact, no more than 25% of any typology was found to have maternal physical abuse present in the case history. Physical abuse is only one type of abuse though. This etiological factor did not take into account psychological abuse or neglect by the maternal figure. The lack of
physical abuse present could indicate a variety of possibilities: few serial killers reported or discussed physical abuse occurring; there was little physical maternal abuse in the case histories; psychological abuse or neglect were more present within the lives of these individuals which would still constitute abuse in the history; or that the male figures in the lives of serial killers inflict the physical abuse. Future studies of this etiological factor may benefit from defining and examining the presence of psychological abuse instead of, or with the presence of, physical abuse. It may also be helpful to investigate the role of both the father and the mother in the lives of the serial killer as well as including a large sample size to increase generalizability and statistical significance.

**Animal torture.** Engaging in animal torture in childhood or adolescence is believed to be an indicator of future aggressive behaviors as theorized by both the triad of sociopathy and the graduation hypothesis. While no specific typologies are postulated to engage in this specific behavior, it is posited that animal torture may be an early attempt at control over a weaker being, possibly indicating an association with the power-oriented typology.

No typologies were found to engage in this behavior in a statistically significant higher proportion than any of the others. For the disorganized, lust-oriented, and power-oriented typologies, approximately 6 out of every 10 reported animal torture. For the organized and thrill-oriented typologies, approximately 4 out of 10 engaged in animal torture. It should be noted, however, that animal torture is not necessarily considered to be a normal part of childhood or adolescent development. Further research comparing rates of animal torture in serial killers to that reported by individuals who do not become serial killers may highlight this point in future research.
**Fire setting.** Another theorized characteristic within the triad of sociopathy, fire setting is also believed to be related to an early need for control and power within a child or adolescent. No typologies were found to have a majority who engaged in this behavior as the frequency was found to not rise above 33% in any typology. This etiological factor was also the least prevalently known within the case histories. Fire setting in youth could be accomplished alone and, as long as no larger fires are started, may go easily unnoticed unless reported in interviews or observed by friends or family.
Chapter VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

Serial killer research is fraught with limitations, myths, opinion, biases, unknowns, and blurred lines in spite of the fact that the phenomenon has been studied for decades. From the lack of a specific definition, to the inclusion of new beliefs regarding motivational, racial, and gender factors in the research, to the array of theories, models, and typologies that exist, there is little agreement as what constitutes appropriate and adequate research in this area of study. To pursue expertise in serial killer phenomenology is to be an enigma in oneself: to have looked into the abyss and come back with answers, garnering credit from one’s peers for the feat. There are as many theories as there are critiques, with researchers’ disagreements and lack of cohesion potentially holding back progress of discovery. As stated by Hickey (2013), “Unfortunately, in serial-murder research, everyone wants to be the first to predict causation” (p. 135). Few researchers, especially those who have the privileged opportunity to acquire actual interview data, report their findings and share methodologies without transparency. Those researchers without credentials are left to look at publicly available material, an area fraught with limitations and with vast holes in information that may never be answered. For discovery in serial killer research to occur, those within the field may need to work together and share the information they have to find facts of etiology instead of attempting to propose their own methods. When this occurs, the myths surrounding serial killers can then begin to drop away, and the real facts about the development of this population can surface. While military experience was originally another author’s proposal for development of a serial killer through learning theory, this study shows that it may actually be a crucial
factor that could aid in apprehension, or at the very least, be further investigated to propose treatment interventions for certain individuals.

Gaps in the biographical information on African American serial killers should also be filled. Many of these individuals are still imprisoned and may be willing and allowed to give interviews to credentialed researchers. This information could prove essential to gain deeper understanding surrounding the enigma of serial murder as a whole, and not just as a Caucasian phenomenon. The issues with data collection regarding African American serial killers also identifies that a systemic racism has existed in the interest, information gathering, and possibly the investigations of this group of murderers. It is also with hope that the media begin to report as in-depth about African American serial killers as they do the Caucasian and Hispanic serial killers. Within the past month of the defense of this dissertation (March of 2016) in Los Angeles, California, Lonnie Franklin, Jr., also known as the “Grim Sleeper,” is currently on trial for the murder of 11 female prostitutes. He also happened to have been in the military at one point in his life and was classified as an organized killer. Only time will tell if the media extends coverage of this serial killer to the extent they would another Dahmer, Bundy, or Gacy and if strides continue to be made in research of this elusive phenomenon.

It is important to look deeper into the histories of these individuals, or any individual that has the capacity for this level of atrocity. While much of the findings of this study may not have seemed to be significant from a statistical perspective, it is important to identify that these results did not come from a vacuum. More interventions can occur to individuals that may show a propensity for violence at a young age, torture animals, start fires, suffer from familial abuse, and are bullied by peers that can change the possibilities
of their behavioral trajectories. We are all mammals, interacting in the world from a psyche built from a mixture of our environment, genetics, and interpersonal relationships. A serial killer is bred from this same concoction. Perhaps it is best for researchers to stop trying to put their flag on their answer, but instead for serial killer investigators to work together to define the issue and examine specific etiological factors together to better identify interventions and policy that can make real changes in both the killer and the possible future victim’s lives.
References


## Appendix A: Data Sheet

### General Information
- **Sex**
- **Race**
- **Number of victims convicted**
- **States where killing occurred**
- **Type of killer**

### Childhood Information
- **Date of birth**
- **Location**
- **Birth order**
- **Number of siblings**
- **XYY?**
- **Nightmares?**
- **Raised by**
- **Parent’s marital status**
- **Did serial killer spend time in an orphanage?**
- **Did serial killer spend time in a foster home?**
- **Was serial killer ever raised by a relative?**
- **Did serial killer ever live with adopted family?**
- **Did serial killer ever live with a step-parent?**
- **Family event**
- **Age of family event**
- **Problems in school?**
- **Teased while in school?**
- **Physical defect?**
- **Speech defect?**
- **Head injury?**
- **Physically abused?**
- **Psychologically abused?**
- **Sexually abused?**
- **Father’s occupation**
- **Mother’s occupation**
- **Father abused drugs/alcohol**
- **Mother abused drugs/alcohol**
- **Assaultive Behaviors as an adolescent?**
- **Considered joyless, hostile, or aggressive?**
- **Issues with stealing?**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues with delinquency?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest grade completed in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served in the military?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of discharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw combat duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed enemy during service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in law enforcement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired from jobs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of jobs worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status during series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with his children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociopathy Triad</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal torture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed wetting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health/Drugs &amp; Alcohol Use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abused drugs? Which?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abused alcohol?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been to a psychologist (prior to killing)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in forensic hospital (prior to killing)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forensic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed previous crimes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time in jail?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time in prison?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed prior to series? Age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback Filter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justified Acts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows signs of escalation throughout series?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victims</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of victims (suspected of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of victims (confessed to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of victims (convicted of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of first kill in series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of final kill in series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of killing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Behavior During Crime**

- Rape?
- Tortured victims?
- Intentionally went out that day to kill?
- Overkill?
- Quick & efficient?
- Used blindfold?
- Bound the victims?

**After Death Behavior**

- Sex with the body?
- Mutilated body?
- Ate part of the body?
- Drank victim’s blood?
- Posed the body?
- Took totem – body part
- Took totem – personal item
- Robbed victim or location

**Disposal of Body**

- Left at scene, no attempt to hide
- Left at scene, hidden
- Left at scene, buried
- Moved, no attempt to hide
- Moved, hidden
- Moved, buried
- Cut-op and disposed of
- Burned body
- Dumped body in lake, river, etc.
- Moved, took home

**Sentencing**

- Date killer arrested
- Date convicted
- Sentence
- Killer executed?
- Did killer plead NGRI?
- Was the NGRI plea successful?
- Did serial killer confess?
- Name and state of prison
- Killer committed suicide?
- Killer killed in prison?

**Date of death**

**Cause of death**

**References**

Appendix B: Permissions

Permission rights to Table 1
Permission rights to adaptations to Tables 2 & 3 and Appendix B Data Sheet

Official Copyright Use Permission Request

From: Leryn Doggett
PM
To: Aamodt, Michael G.

Hi Dr. Aamodt,

As required by my university, this will serve as my official copyright permission request. As previously stated, I am a Psy.D. student at Antioch University Santa Barbara who is completing my dissertation. I am asking permission to use the following attached adapted tables and figures that you hold rights for in my dissertation: Frequency of U.S. Serial Killer Gender by Decade, U.S. Serial Killer Percentages by Race and Decade, and the Serial Killer Timeline Template. For my dissertation, all above stated forms have been adapted for use. Attached, you will find a copy of the original content (as created by yourself) and the adapted content which I would like to use in my dissertation. For the timeline, the original and adaptation are separate files. For the gender and race tables, the original is followed by the adaptation in one file.

My dissertation, along with the tables and figure attached, would appear in the following locations: a) the Proquest Dissertations and Theses Database (a print and on-demand publisher) located at http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html; b) Ohiolink Electronic Theses and Dissertation Center (Ohiolink ETD Center is an open access archive) located at https://etd.ohiolink.edu/; and c) AURA, the Antioch University Repository and Archive (an open access archive).

By granting your permission, you would allow me to use the attached adaptations of your original work in my dissertation, which will be published at the above listed locations.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns as well as your response.

Best,

Leryn Messori
Hi Leryn,

You have my permission to include the requested tables in your dissertation.

Take care,

Mike

Michael G. Aamodt, Ph.D. (Mike)
Professor Emeritus
Department of Psychology
Radford University