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# A Façade of Normalcy: An Exploration into the Serial Murderer's Duplicitous Lifestyle

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A FAÇADE OF NORMALCY: AN EXPLORATION INTO THE SERIAL  
MURDERER'S DUPLICITOUS LIFESTYLE

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

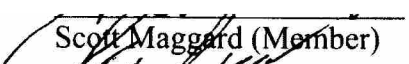
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## ABSTRACT

### A FAÇADE OF NORMALCY: AN EXPLORATION INTO THE SERIAL MURDERER'S DUPLICITOUS LIFESTYLE

Maryann Stone White  
Old Dominion University, 2014  
Director: Dr. Dawn L. Rothe

The crime of serial murder both fascinates and repulses a myriad of academic disciplines, law enforcement agencies, news media, and popular culture. Despite the vast attention the phenomenon of serial murder has received, serial murderers are poorly understood. The current study used an interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from criminology and psychology to explore what mechanism(s) allow serial murderers to maintain a seemingly normal existence, frequently maintaining personal relationships, steady employment, and reputable social networks.

The data were analyzed using a deductive approach guided by a set of research questions as well as an inductive approach, which allowed emergent themes and patterns to be identified. Findings indicate that these offenders demonstrate some psychopathic traits and show some evidence of learning and neutralizing their behavior. The results suggest, however, that these criminological and psychological elements do not sufficiently explain how serial murderers are able to deceive others into believing that they live a normal existence. Overall, the findings suggest that while it appears that serial murderers are able to live a duplicitous lifestyle, there are typically red flags that could alert others to their criminal behavior. Limitations of the research, as well as implications for prevention, intervention, and future research are also discussed.

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This dissertation is dedicated to those who have lost their lives to the violence of serial murder.

“We serial killers are your sons, we are your husbands, we are everywhere. And there will be more of your children dead tomorrow.”

-Ted Bundy

“Do I look like the Green River Killer?”

-Gary Ridgway

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since the initial study of serial murder by the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit more than 20 years ago, fact has blurred with fiction as popular culture and the media have sensationalized this phenomenon (Beasley 2004). Over the past few decades, our society has become intrigued with the crime of serial murder as evidenced by the many books, movies, and television shows that have emerged on the subject (Egger 1990; Egger 1998a; Jenkins 1994; Surette 1998). For example, the Jekyll and Hyde story is a fictional account of a person who, through ill-advised biochemical experimentation, becomes transformed into two separate entities, each with his own set of realities, and each having diametrically opposed intentions (Stevenson 1886/2010). Although a work of fiction, this story is frequently used as a simile to describe the conflicting personality states of offenders whose violent acts appear incongruent with the image others have of them (Carlisle 1993).

Despite the vast attention this phenomenon has received, serial murderers are still not very well understood (Ferguson, White, Cherry, Lorenz, and Bhimani 2003). This is primarily due to the fact that serial murder is an event with an extremely low base rate, making it a topic difficult to study empirically (Dowden 2005; Jenkins 1994; Keeney and Heide 1993; Knoll 2006). While most researchers will acknowledge that serial murder is relatively uncommon, most will also agree that it demonstrates an extreme form of ruthless humanity. The need to comprehend serial murder, then, is no different than the desire for criminologists and researchers to better understand single murder and other

more common violent crimes.

It has been estimated that anywhere from 35 to 100 or more serial murderers are active in the U.S. in any given year, with the total number of victims estimated between 120 and 180 (Hickey 2010). Determining the actual number of serial murderers and victims is difficult, however. Most serial murderers give the appearance of being socially responsible, frequently holding jobs and maintaining personal relationships. They do not portray a sense of “craziness” and tend to maintain a low profile, for drawing attention to themselves could lead to detection and apprehension. The full extent of the serial murderer’s crimes can only be derived from cases in which the perpetrator is convicted or, in cases where no suspect is formally charged, the count of victims can only include those cases that can be linked with relative certainty. For example, an offender already convicted of other murders may admit to additional murders, but never be formally tried for those cases (Fox and Levin 2005). Such cases, however, must be considered with caution because of the possibility of false claims (see also *Limitations*). Ultimately, understanding the true incidence and prevalence of serial murder continues to be hindered by the lack of universal definition of serial murder and the fact that the number of known murders does not necessarily equate to the number of actual murders (Fox and Levin 2005).

In an attempt to distinguish between myth and reality, criminologists, psychologists, and other researchers have undertaken this subject for further analysis. Therefore, the study of serial murder is undoubtedly a multidisciplinary effort. It both fascinates and repulses a myriad of academic disciplines, law enforcement agents, news media, and popular culture.

Although research on serial murder is steadily increasing, empirical studies by criminologists have focused largely on the spatial behavior of serial murderers (e.g., Lundrigan and Canter 2001; Snook, Canter, and Bennell 2002), patterns in crime scene behavior (e.g., Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, and D'Agostino 1986; Schlesinger, Kassen, Mesa, and Pinizzotto 2010; Trojan and Salfati 2011), and attempts at classifying offenders into rigid typologies in order to develop psychological profiles (e.g., Holmes and Holmes 1998; Kocsis, Cooksey, and Irwin 2002a; Kocsis, Cooksey, and Irwin 2002b). Additionally, research on these offenders has often lacked theoretical construct uniquely fitting the lifestyles and behaviors of serial murderers. Even more, criminologists tend to focus specifically on the murders themselves (e.g., crime scene aspects, modus operandi, victim selection), often paying little attention to the characteristics and behaviors of the offenders. While they acknowledge that serial murderers go through a cooling-off period in between the killings, they have failed to examine why or how these offenders are able to maintain a secretive double life over a period of time.

Psychologists, on the other hand, tend to address mental and personality disorders of serial murderers and other offenders, neglecting to examine whether these disorders contribute to their duplicitous way of life. Despite the variety of psychological explanations available, however, it is unclear whether behavioral patterns of serial murderers represent distinct psychological phenomena (Drukteinis 1992). "The pathological process that leads to the development of an obsessive appetite (and possibly an addiction) to kill is still one of the most perplexing psychological mysteries yet to be solved" (Carlisle 1993:24).

Researchers, then, have failed to examine serial murder using an interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from criminology and psychology to explore what mechanism(s) allow serial murderers to maintain "normal" intimate relationships and/or families while simultaneously committing these crimes—killing victims that are often demographically similar to their own spouses/partners and/or children. There remains a need to merge knowledge from multiple disciplines in an attempt to understand how and why these individuals are able to maintain such deceitful lifestyles. The current study is an attempt to fill this gap. It is an examination of serial murder from a new perspective.

According to Wellford (1989), because of the intricacy of human behavior and the variety of causal factors identified in prior research, the best way to advance the field of criminology is through multi-level and multi-disciplinary integration. Further, some argue that theoretical integration is the only way to increase the understanding of and to adequately account for the complexity of crime and criminal behavior (Elliott 1985; Wellford 1989).

Unfortunately, there is nothing that can tell us for certain when or where a violent murder will take place. There are only observations and likelihoods supported by facts about human behavior (Fox, Levin, and Quinet 2008). Furthermore, there remains skepticism among some researchers who regard the study of serial murder as more of a "pop culture pursuit," rather than an area of serious academic inquiry (Fox, Levin, and Quinet 2008:19). Because of these reasons, research on serial murder continues to be exploratory rather than explanatory.

Therefore, the current study is an exploration into the duality of human nature, the idea that good and evil exist in all. Some individuals seem to lead rather "normal"

exterior lives with no observable hints of the dangerous, violent psychopathology that lurks deep in their subconscious minds. This research explores the serial murderer's cooling-off period where he is often able to maintain intimate relationships (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, children) with individuals who are similar to his victims. Using an interdisciplinary approach, I investigate the potential relationship between serial murderers and psychopathy, dissociation, social learning, and neutralization. I seek to answer the following:

What mechanism(s) allow(s) serial murderers to maintain 'normal' intimate relationships and/or families with individuals demographically similar to their victims, while simultaneously committing these crimes?

More specifically, I am seeking to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Do serial murderers possess the attributes of psychopathy?
- (2) Do serial murderers experience symptoms of dissociation?
- (3) Do serial murderers show positive and/or negative definitions associated with their crimes?
- (4) Are serial murderers regularly exposed to violence or other criminal behavior?
- (5) Do serial murderers receive positive reinforcements for their conforming behavior?
- (6) Do serial murderers receive positive reinforcements for their criminal behavior?
- (7) Are serial murderers imitating behaviors that they see elsewhere?
- (8) Do serial murderers neutralize their crimes?

If so, do they employ:

- (a) Denial of responsibility?

(b) Denial of the victim?

(c) The condemnation of the condemners?

The current study offers a novel angle of inquiry and proposes a renewed interpretation of current theories to explain the double lives of some of the most violent criminals by combining insights from psychology and criminology. Several studies have criticized the applicability of a single theoretical model in explaining crime and delinquency (Cohen 1962; Glueck and Glueck 1950; Hirschi and Selvin 1967; Sutherland 1924; Tittle 1985; Tittle 1989). Thus, the application of a sole theory to explain serial murderers limits the potential to offer a more complete understanding. Specifically, I propose that examining serial murder from an interdisciplinary perspective—using theoretical concepts from both criminology and psychology (i.e., learning theory, neutralization, psychopathy, and dissociation) will offer a more cohesive understanding of the homicidal personality.

This study distinguishes itself from previous studies, which have essentially investigated murder from other, largely atheoretical standpoints. Theoretical propositions from an interdisciplinary perspective have yet to emerge to advance a more complete understanding of the duplicitous lifestyle of serial murderers. It has become apparent that more research is needed to comprehend the complexity of not only the crime itself, but also the individuals involved (e.g., offenders, victims).

This study was designed to contribute to the existing body of research in several important ways. First, it is capable of producing a stronger and more comprehensive understanding of serial murderers and their behavior. It will provide scholars, researchers, and law enforcement agents with insights into the phenomenon of serial murder. Second,

it can provide implications for crime preventive measures and offender profiling. Further, as much of the previous research has focused on the creation of typologies, these typologies can then be challenged and recreated to better reflect the personality and behavior of serial murderers. Additionally, this study will contribute to the research that is still needed to determine exactly what combination of traits are present in individuals who are apprehended for serial murder, rather than looking for the one imaginary trait that was once assumed to be present in all serial murderers.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Serial murder may be a relatively new term, but its occurrence is not. In fact, the U.S. has documented cases as far back as the 1800s (Knoll 2006). Traditional, academic, and empirical research has been meager, however, due to the relatively rare occurrence of this phenomenon and the limited access to these offenders (Heide and Keeney 1995; Jenkins 1994; Keeney and Heide 1993). Additionally, research has been hindered to some extent by the lack of a universal definition of serial murder (Knoll 2006). Moreover, descriptions of serial murder and offenders typically vary according to the definition used, often making generalizations across samples problematic (Ferguson et al. 2003).

Currently, there appears to be no standard in the literature or in the media for distinguishing which homicides fit under the umbrella of 'serial murder' (Ferguson et al. 2003; Geberth and Turco 1997). The principal distinction between varying definitions seems to be the victim count, with researchers using conflicting cut-off points (Dowden 2005). An additional problem is that writers frequently do not provide a definition of serial murder at all in their manuscripts, sometimes simply expecting law enforcement personnel and practitioners to do so in other forums. Still others appear to assume that the definition is so obvious that there is no need to operationalize the term (Heide and Keeney 1995).

When definitions of serial murder are provided in the literature, they tend to be so narrow and exclusionary as to not adequately represent the totality of this crime (Heide and Keeney 1995). In fact, prior to 1980, serial murder was classified more broadly as

mass murder. Since then, however, researchers have agreed that multiple murder should be separated into three distinct categories: mass, spree, and serial murder, which are distinguished by temporal and spatial dimensions of the definition (Heide and Keeney 1995).

In an attempt to better understand and classify serial murder, Meloy and Felthous (2004:289) presented a general definition, describing it as "...the intentional killing of individuals in a series, with a latency, or 'cooling off' period, in between the killings." Holmes and Holmes (1998:18) defined serial murder more narrowly as "...the killing of three or more people over a period of more than 30 days, with a significant cooling-off period between the killings." Keeney and Heide (1994:384) were even more precise, defining serial murder as "the premeditated murder of three or more victims committed over time, in separate incidents, in a civilian context, with the murder activity being chosen by the offender." Egger (2002:5) presented possibly the most comprehensive definition including seven factors that encompass the various aspects of serial murder while eliminating other characteristics that could best be examined under different headings:

- (1) One or more individuals commit(s) a second and/or subsequent murder; (2) there is generally no prior relationship between victim and attacker (if there is a relationship, such a relationship will place the victim in a subjugated role to the killer); (3) subsequent murders are at different times and have no apparent connection to the initial murder; and (4) are usually committed in a different geographic location. Further, (5) the motive is not for material gain but for the murderer's desire to have power or dominance over his victims. (6) Victims may have symbolic value for the murderer and/or are perceived to be without prestige and, in most instances, are unable to defend themselves or alert others to their plight, or are perceived as powerless given their situation in time, place, or status within their immediate surroundings. Examples include (7) vagrants, the homeless, prostitutes, migrant workers, homosexuals, missing children, single women, elderly women, college students, and hospital patients.

Similarly, Ferguson, White, Cherry, Lorenz, and Bhimani (2003:290) suggest including three elements in a definition of serial murder to recognize serial murderers as a distinct group of offenders:

(1) Three or more victims killed during multiple and discrete events. (2) Causing death to the victim, at the time of the killing, was considered pleasurable, stress relieving, or otherwise consistent with the perpetrator's internal set of values. The attacks themselves did not fulfill only functional purposes. (3) The murders did not occur under the discretion or blessing of any political or criminal organization.

As the definition of multiple murder—and more specifically serial murder—evolved, Heide and Keeney (1995:301) found that “the killings of multiple victims spaced over time was a core element in the definitions of serial murder frequently cited in the professional literature. The killings occurred over a period of days or weeks to months or years.” The number of murders required for serial murder, however, varies greatly among both researchers and law enforcement agencies. While some seem to define serial murder very narrowly and others very broadly, most experts agree that to be classified as a serial murderer, an offender must murder at least two victims in two separate incidents. There is, undoubtedly, a lack of consensus among both researchers and practitioners as to the number of killings necessary to define serial murder. In both literature and in practice, the number of victims has ranged from two to ten (Kraemer, Lord, and Heilbrun 2004; Meloy and Felthous 2004).

The current study used three primary criteria based on the definition established by Ferguson et al. (2003) to identify the population of serial murderers from which the study sample was drawn: (1) three or more victims were killed during multiple and separate events, where the killer underwent a cooling-off period between the murders; (2) causing death to the victims was considered pleasurable in some way and did not fulfill

only functional purposes; and (3) the murders must not have occurred under the direction or orders of any political or criminal organization, also eliminating the inclusion of contract killers.

While a universal definition of serial murder is yet to be agreed upon in the literature, most definitions agree that there is a cooling-off period that takes place between killings. The emotional cooling off or refractory period is the state of the murderer returning to his or her usual way of life between killings and varies in length for each individual offender, lasting days, weeks, months, or even years (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler 2006; Kraemer, Lord, and Heilbrun 2004; Salfati and Bateman 2005). This latency period is an essential part of the definition as it is a primary element that differentiates serial murderers from spree killers. Researchers, however, have failed to examine this refractory period when killers revert back to their “normal” lifestyles and where they often maintain intimate relationships.

Many serial murderers are able to carry out a relatively high level of everyday functioning while committing the crimes. Those closest to them oftentimes see no indication of mental illness or even violent tendencies and are shocked when an arrest is made. Although labeling the behavior of serial murderers as psychotic or insane may be tempting, the available research typically conflicts with such a conclusion (Carlisle 1993; Ferguson et al. 2003; Fox and Levin 1998). In fact, fewer than 4% of apprehended serial murderers have attempted to use insanity as a defense; only 1% of those who tried were successful in using this defense (Castle and Hensley 2002). While most serial murderers are not legally insane, it is common belief that some deviant or pathological process within them is directly related to the commission of multiple murders (Carlisle 1993).

Personality is said to differentiate individuals by their established patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Accordingly, one's personality displays the various ways that individuals respond to strains and challenges. In other words, one's behavior is a function of how his or her personality facilitates analysis of events and the choices made in reaction to such events (Senna and Siegel 2002). Psychological research has found that, when investigating the relationship of personality and crime, even aggressive adolescents have been shown to have unstable personality structures. In one study, Steiner, Cauffman, and Duxbury (1999) found personality traits to be predictive of both past and future criminal behavior, even after controlling for age, length of incarceration, number of previous offenses, and the seriousness of offense.

There is growing suspicion that heredity is largely responsible for one's personality. It appears that siblings tend to share comparable personality traits, suggesting that genes play a greater role in personality development than do common experiences. Currently, researchers have begun to concentrate not on whether genes have an influence on personality, but to what extent and in what ways they play a role (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). It remains likely, however, that some personality traits are determined by genetics while other traits are learned through experience (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). According to those who trust in the learning process, individuals are able to create any type of personality through manipulation of rewards and punishments. Accordingly, these theorists believe that personality is malleable and can be influenced by an individual's choice of methodically manipulating rewards and punishments for behavior (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007).

Over a half century ago it was suggested that the basic components of personality

are temperament, intelligence, and physique (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). It was also contended that all three elements are genetic and that temperament is the emotional element of the personality. Allport defined each trait as “a neuropsychic structure having the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide equivalent (meaningfully consistent) forms of adaptive and expressive behavior” (Allport 1961:347 as cited in Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). Thus, traits are what lead a person to behave in the same ways during similar situations. People act differently from each other in comparable situations because each individual possesses a unique set of traits. Because individuals react to situations in terms of their traits, life experiences are said to be managed by their personal traits (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007).

Additionally, research has shown that the general population has the same personality structure as patients in psychiatric facilities; the same aspects of personality explain human behaviors in both populations. It has further been found that personality plays an important role in psychopathologic vulnerabilities (Cloninger, Svrakic, and Przybeck 2006). According to the DSM-IV-TR, personality traits are defined as “enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal context” (Association 2000:686).

Serial murderers are said to be much like most others during the primary years of personality development (Holmes, Tewksbury, and Holmes 1999). It has been suggested, however, that perhaps a fracturing of the personality occurs as a result of a social event, or series of events, often occurring during the adolescent years. This small break in personality is typically not visible to others and is only felt by the individual. “Serial

killers have exerted great amounts of energy to keep their fractured identities secret. A managed identity is constructed and consistently presented in social encounters; this virtual social identity presents the individual as a regular or normal member of society. The fractured identity is hidden from public view” (Holmes, Tewksbury, and Holmes 1999:269).

Although many researchers now consider the work of Sigmund Freud obsolete and irrelevant, and contemporary psychoanalysts and psychodynamic therapists rarely discuss ids, egos, and superegos, psychodynamic thinking has, in actuality, continued to thrive in the last decades (Westen 1998). Still,

...Most psychosexual hypotheses are obviously difficult to test in the laboratory, and many are, no doubt, too sweeping or simply wrong. One should not, however, ignore the myriad of instances in which Freudian theory can provide a compelling explanation, especially where other theories can offer no rival explanations. (Westen 1998:355)

Instead of a primary focus on sexuality, however, psychodynamic theorists now focus on the capacity for forming and maintaining intimate relationships and typically follow five propositions (Westen 1998). First, they acknowledge that most mental processes (e.g., thoughts, feelings, motives) are unconscious. In other words, people can behave in ways that are incomprehensible, even to themselves. Second, mental processes function in parallel with one another, causing individuals to have conflicting feelings that motivate them in opposing ways, frequently leading to compromise solutions. Third, personality patterns are established during the childhood years, and childhood experiences play an important part in personality development, especially in the ways people form social relationships later in life (i.e., becoming attached to and intimate with others). Fourth, interaction with others is influenced by mental representations of the self,

others, and relationships. Finally, not only does personality development involve learning to regulate sexual and aggressive feelings, but it also involves moving from an immature, socially dependent state to a mature, interdependent one (Westen 1998:339).

In 1978, John and Helen Watkins identified the presence of 'ego states' (a term first used by Paul Federn, an early follower of Freud). Ego states are described as segments of the personality that have separated from the main personality (Watkins 1978). As Berne (1957:295) stated, "An 'ego state' may be described phenomenologically as a coherent system of feelings, and operationally as a set of coherent behavior patterns; or pragmatically, as a system of feelings which motivates a related set of behavior patterns." Researchers have observed "these fractionated personality states to be fairly common in many people, to be somewhat independent from each other and to have a strong controlling effect on the person" (Carlisle 1993:25-6). Psychologists often refer to this split in consciousness as dissociation.

Dissociation, a normal psychological process, allows a person to block out or avoid the presence of memories or feelings. Dissociation exists on a continuum, ranging from ignoring events going on around us (such as when listening to a lecture in a crowded classroom), to multiple personality disorder (MPD) and dissociative identity disorder (DID), where distinct personalities become separate entities, representing the extreme maladaptive end of the continuum. In an extreme dissociative experience, it can be for the individual as though the experience never even occurred (i.e., dissociative amnesia). For most people though, ego states are not as distinct and autonomous as alter-personalities (i.e., the boundaries between ego states are more or less permeable), although they do lie on the same continuum (Zinser 2010). For example, a "child is quite



aware of her/himself in a playground situation. Playground behaviors and feelings, however, are not as easily activated when in the classroom. There is some resistance at the boundaries. These less clearly differentiated ego states are usually adaptive and are economic in providing appropriate behavior patterns when needed” (Watkins 1993:234; Watkins 1978).

The DSM-IV-TR describes dissociation as the disruption of memory, perception, or identity—the functions of consciousness that are usually integrated (Association 2000). Freud described dissociation as a type of defense mechanism that essentially allows individuals to protect themselves from traumatic experiences. When individuals use dissociation as their primary coping mechanism, however, what was once probably quite adaptive becomes maladaptive. When an individual dissociates in this way, experiences are not acknowledged, accepted, or brought into consciousness, ultimately preventing the development of a well-organized coherent self (Kirby, Chu, and Dill 1993).

The process of dissociation allows for an individual to automatize behavior, reduce emotional pain, depersonalize, and to isolate traumatic experiences (Putnam 1991). Dissociation is often assessed with the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES; Bernstein and Putnam 1986), a questionnaire used as a measure of dissociative symptoms (see Appendix A). The DES is a self-report index on which respondents indicate whether they have experienced a range of dissociative experiences generally subsumed under the subcategories of amnesia, depersonalization-derealization, and absorption. Experiences range from finding oneself in a place and having no idea how one got there to becoming so involved in a fantasy or daydream that it feels as though it were really happening.

Amnesia refers to a disruption in the integration of adaptive memory, sense of identity, and regulation of emotions (Weber 2008). Factors to investigate for this variable include autobiographical forgetfulness, recurrent missing blocks of time, fluctuations in access to knowledge, and blackouts.

The subcategory of depersonalization-derealization involves disorganization in one's sense of self and personal identity (Chu and DePrince 2006). This includes referring to oneself in third person; talking about inner voices, dialogues, and arguments; the discussion of other parts taking over control of oneself; highly disjointed or dissimilar responses and relatedness; and suggestions of multiplicity made verbally or in drawings (Haugaard 2004; Silberg 2000).

Absorption includes trance states, which are inconsistent levels of consciousness, attention, and concentration (Weber 2008). Symptoms include appearing to be in a daze, being out of touch with what is going on in one's environment, intense daydreaming and/or spacing out, having the tendency to become intensely absorbed in an activity, withdrawing, having blackouts, being in a state of confusion, and staring blankly (Haugaard 2004; Hulette, Freyd, Pears, Kim, Fisher, and Becker-Blease 2008).

Serial murderers may have a strong desire to be seen as capable and in control when in fact they are socially inept and plagued with feelings of inadequacy. These dissociative states can provide the individual with the illusion of strength and normalcy that they need in order to cope with stress. These illusions may become the only thing helping the individual to function.

While in the typical process of dissociation memories are suppressed, some people alternatively create fantasies as a way of avoiding negative emotions. According

to Carlisle (1993:26), “A fantasy is an imagery process in which a person attempts to obtain vicarious gratification by engaging in acts in his mind which he currently isn’t able to do (or doesn’t dare do) in reality.” When a person has submerged him or herself in a fantasy, he or she dissociates from other surrounding events.

Through fantasy, a serial murderer can create an imaginary world wherein he or she can act in the fantasy as he or she cannot or should not act in reality, oftentimes arousing an appetite for the real thing. This can ultimately lead to a dual identity, one of reality and the other a secret identity where the individual can manifest the desired power and control over others (Carlisle 1993).

As the person shifts back and forth between the two identities in his attempt to meet his various needs, they both become an equal part of him, the opposing force being suppressed when he is attempting to have his needs met through the one. Over time, the dark side (representing the identity or entity the person has created to satisfy his deepest hunger) becomes stronger than the “good” side, and the person begins to experience being possessed, or controlled by this dark side of him. This is partly because the dark side is the part anticipated to meet the person’s strongest needs, and partly because the good side is the part which experiences the guilt over the “evil” thoughts, and therefore out of necessity is routinely suppressed. Thus, the monster is created. (Carlisle 1993:27)

By acting out the deviant fantasy, this dark side of the serial murderer becomes a more permanent part of the personality structure. During the criminal act, the offender may partially, or even completely, dissociate the crime. Following the criminal act, the mind then returns back to the individual’s reality, where the offender may experience feelings of surprise, guilt, and anguish concerning the act that just occurred. However, “within the offender there is a revulsion of the act, but there is also a sense of excitement, satisfaction and peace. If the feeling of peace is profound, as if a great load has been taken off the person’s shoulders, he is especially likely to become a serial killer” (Carlisle 1993:30). Further, in order to manage the guilt, the offender may compartmentalize it so as to no

longer consciously experience it. The guilt does not go away, however, and this new life becomes a secret existence, frequently known only to him (Carlisle 1993).

Whether having utilized a chance encounter or consciously planned the murder ahead of time, serial murderers have been found to rehearse their method of murder and how to avoid detection prior to commission of their crimes. As stated by Hickey (2002:115), violent fantasy is the most significant characteristic shared by serial murderers:

Most people's fantasies generally are perceived as harmless and often therapeutic. Fantasies can involve a continuum of benign to aggressive thoughts that usually generate little or no action on the part of the fantasizer. For serial offenders, however, fantasies appear to involve violence, often sexual in nature, whereby the victim is controlled totally by the offender. The purpose of the fantasy is not the immediate destruction of another human being but total control over that person. The element of control is so intense in the serial killer that in some cases the actual death of the victim is anticlimactic to the fantasized total control over the victim.

These offenders appear to engage in detailed fantasies involving murder and subsequently plan to turn these imagined criminal acts into reality through the commission of murder (Ressler et al. 1986). According to Fox and Levin (2005), male serial murderers select stranger victims based on the sexual fantasy that they plan to satisfy. As the crime may not always go according to plan, serial murderers use each successive victim as an attempt to perfect the act.

The serial murderer's behavior may be an attempt to satisfy sexual sadistic fantasies by turning them into reality. The process often continues even further as the fantasies become more violent and the need for increased stimuli appears. The fantasies continue to become more violent and sadistic, causing the individual's actions to strengthen in violence in order to satisfy the offender (Arrigo and Purcell 2001). Meloy

(2000:9) offered the idea that fantasies supply (sexual) murderers with positive reinforcements prior to committing, or between commissions of multiple, homicides:

(a) It sustains pleasure (through memory or imagination) when coupled with masturbation; (b) it reduces behavioral inhibition while physiologically releasing orgasmic tension; (c) it stimulates grandiosity, since all fantasies are perfect, and thus compensates for any felt sexual or relational inadequacies; (d) it stimulates omnipotence, since the fantasy of omnipotent control of the victim is imagined; and (e) it allows the perpetrator to practice his paraphilia prior to, or between behavioral 'tryouts' and the eventual consummation, or repetition of the sexual homicide.

The offender fantasizes of complete control over another human being, which is most often the primary element of these fantasies. There is often a sadistic aspect to these crimes as well. Sadists' crimes are fueled by their deviant fantasies and thus become aroused by the infliction of pain onto another person (Boudreaux, Lord, and Jarvis 2001). It is possible that sadists choose particular victims because of their apparent vulnerability, allowing for the fulfillment of their interests and motivation of control, humiliation, dominance, and pain. The fantasies of a (developing) serial murderer may help to objectify and dehumanize potential victims, providing a link in converting violent urges into violent behavior (DeFronzo, Ditta, Hannon, and Prochnow 2007).

According to Davis (1998), serial murderers are typically indistinguishable from other individuals in society—the difference between them and everyone else can be found within their fantasy world. Whereas most people experience fear, revulsion, a conscience, or some sort of built-in stop mechanism, serial murderers lack whatever it is that prevents most others from acting out destructive fantasies.

“The heinous nature of serial murder propels many to question the sanity of those who commit such crimes” (Castle and Hensley 2002:455). Mental illness is, however, rare in serial murderers. Nonetheless, some pathological process is often present. The

most common psychological factor experienced by serial murderers is a personality disorder.

Personality disorders are characterized by only those personality traits that are persistently maladaptive and impair function or cause personal distress. The individual's behaviors deviate from society's expectations in at least two of the subsequent areas: cognition, affectivity, interpersonal functioning, and impulse control (Association 2000). Personality disorder is marked by an onset of behavior in adolescence or early adulthood and diagnosis requires the assessment of long-standing patterns of behavior, which often necessitates multiple interviews and collateral information.

Psychopathy, a personality disorder, is characterized by interpersonal traits of remorselessness, manipulation, and grandiosity, along with a lifestyle of antisocial behavior. While this construct intersects with the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder as listed in the DSM-IV (Association 2000), psychopathy is a discrete disorder that has a greater concentration on interpersonal and affective traits. Although psychopathic individuals generally do not show a lack of intelligence, it seems that they are incapable of using their intelligence to learn from their wrongdoings (Brinkley, Newman, Widiger, and Lynam 2004). The emphasis that has been placed on psychopathy in recent literature suggests that this construct is of growing interest for both theoretical and practical applications, probably due in large part to the substantial amount of emotional and physical devastation attributed to individuals with psychopathic personalities.

The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare 1991) is the gold-standard for assessing and diagnosing psychopathy in forensic samples. This instrument is composed

of 20 characteristics, representing a cluster of symptoms in both an interpersonal and affective factor as well as a behavioral and lifestyle factor (see Appendix B).

Though psychopaths may appear charming to others, this appeal is actually quite superficial. An individual who exhibits glibness and superficial charm may often carry on engaging and entertaining conversations while always ready to respond in a skillful, cunning manner. These individuals also appear quite knowledgeable in a variety of subjects and may be rather friendly and pleasant, though their stories often are beyond what is believable to most, and their knowledge is purely contrived (Hare 1991). They are rarely, if ever, afraid to say anything and are quite the opposite from a shy or self-conscious individual (O'Connor 2005).

Individuals with a grandiose sense of self-worth believe they have worth and abilities much greater than they actually do. Their egocentricity allows these individuals to easily preclude embarrassment concerning legal issues and they believe that any legal matters are a result of an unfortunate lack of luck, though they do not consider that these problems may have a negative influence on their future. They may also view themselves as the victim of the crime when they are forced to suffer consequences such as jail time. Individuals with an ostentatious sense of worth frequently aspire to take up careers with status, seek to impress others, and are extremely narcissistic. They commonly believe that they can live in accordance with their own rules and appear unable to comprehend the idea that others may express opinions different from their own (Hare 1991; Hare 1993). Hare (1993:67) explains, "Psychopaths consider the rules and expectations of society inconvenient and unreasonable, impediments to the behavioral expression of their inclinations and wishes. They make their own rules, both as children and as adults."

These individuals also present as arrogant, opinionated braggarts (O'Connor 2005).

Individuals with a need for stimulation and proneness to boredom feel the need to engage in high-risk or exciting activities to maintain stimulation; they are constantly searching for something new and exciting to avoid boredom and monotony. This may include experimenting with or using a variety of drugs. They tend to change jobs frequently and feel that school, work, and long-term relationships are unexciting and monotonous. Any responsibility that seems boring is often eagerly abandoned or simply never attempted (Hare 1991).

A pathological liar's main characteristic is deceit. He or she is willing to lie about his or her past regardless of the fact that others can easily invalidate the story. These individuals lie with such ease that if caught in a lie they simply change their story to obscure the facts and lead others to suppose the facts were merely jumbled to begin with. As a result, the individual leaves "a series of contradictory statements and a thoroughly confused listener" (Hare 1993:46). There also appears to be some inherent worth to the individual in his or her capability of lying to and deceiving others and the individual is left feeling quite pleased with his or her ability to lie so gracefully (Hare 1991).

Individuals who are conning or manipulative use deception and trickery to "cheat, bilk, defraud, or manipulate others" (Hare 1991:20). They often use scams to manipulate others for their own personal gain. The behaviors associated with this characteristic are often illegal, but conning and manipulative individuals also manipulate others without breaking the law. These individuals are willing to use others for gain in areas such as money, status, power, and sex. They are also often, unknown to their partners, involved in many intimate relationships at the same time (Hare 1991).



Someone who possesses a lack of remorse or guilt expresses no trepidation for how the consequences of his or her actions may affect others, especially victims and society, but instead is more concerned with the effects on him or herself. The individual may be willing to admit that he or she does not feel any guilt or remorse for his or her actions. Conversely, he or she may express that he or she feels remorse, but his or her actions show otherwise. He or she often contends that other individuals, society, or the criminal justice system are actually to blame and feel that he or she was not judged fairly by others (Hare 1991).

Those who exhibit a shallow affect often appear unemotional and incapable of showing a variation of emotion. Their emotions may be inappropriately associated with certain behaviors and frequently emotions do not accurately depict the situation (Hare 1991). Hare (1993:27-8) presented Cleckley's view of the psychopath's shallow affect:

The [psychopath] is unfamiliar with the primary facts or data of what might be called personal values and is altogether incapable of understanding such matters. It is impossible for him to take even a slight interest in the tragedy or joy or the striving of humanity as presented in serious literature or art. He is also indifferent to all these matters in life itself. Beauty and ugliness, except in a very superficial sense, goodness, evil, love, horror, and humor have no actual meaning, no power to move him. He is, furthermore, lacking in the ability to see that others are moved. It is as though he were color-blind, despite his sharp intelligence, to this aspect of human existence. It cannot be explained to him because there is nothing in his orbit of awareness that can bridge the gap with comparison. He can repeat the words and say glibly that he understands, and there is no way for him to realize that he does not understand. (Taken from Cleckley's 1941 book *The Mask of Sanity*)

Callous individuals or those lacking in empathy appear self-centered and show a cruel indifference for the feelings and wellbeing of others. Others are simply objects to be used for personal gain and callous individuals rarely show reluctance to ridicule others. As they believe that showing any emotion is actually showing weakness, they simply do

not care what transpires in the lives of anyone but themselves (Hare 1991). Further, they are unable to relate to the feelings of others so they simply have no concern for them, whether it is concern for family members or strangers. They also insist that others who show weakness are, in fact, deserving of manipulation and exploitation.

A parasitic lifestyle describes an existence that is dependent on others for financial means. This person does not maintain a stable job, but instead calculatedly relies on others for financial support, even using intimidation and manipulation to play on others to obtain personal gain. Although these individuals are quite capable of maintaining gainful employment, they purposefully use others for support instead (Hare 1991).

An individual with poor behavioral controls is often seen as quick to react, often becoming angry or even violent. This individual may respond to insignificant events with aggressiveness and threats, which are often seen as being out of context for the situation. Frequently, this individual's short-tempered behavior is also short-lived, and the individual may soon after act as if nothing unusual had occurred (Hare 1991).

Individuals who exhibit promiscuous sexual behavior engage in many casual sexual relations with others. These individuals may have an "indiscriminate selection of sexual partners, maintenance of several sexual relationships at the same time, frequent infidelities, prostitution, or a willingness to participate in a wide variety of sexual activities" (Hare 1991:23). These individuals may also have been charged with or have convictions for sexual assault, as they are not beyond pressuring or forcing others into sexual relations with them.

Early behavior problems are described as problems with a child's behavior before

the age of 12 years. According to Hare (1991:24), “These problems may include persistent lying, cheating, theft, robbery, fire-setting, truancy, disruption of classroom activities, substance abuse (including alcohol and glue sniffing), vandalism, violence, bullying, running away from home, and precocious sexual activities.” As many children may engage in some of these behaviors, Hare (1991) refers to those whose behavior is much more serious than that of siblings or other children and may end in consequences such as police contact or school suspension or expulsion.

Individuals who lack realistic, long-term goals tend to live in the present and avoid plans for the future. They may drift from place to place and change their plans often. They do not appear to be bothered by the fact that they may not have accomplished much in life and also may express that they have not given much attention to the idea of maintaining a stable job or simply are not interested in doing so (Hare 1991). These individuals simply appear to have no direction in life (O'Connor 2005).

Impulsive individuals usually act without forethought or planning and do not contemplate potential consequences to their actions. They often make life-changing decisions on the spur of the moment and do not notify others of their intentions. These individuals may do something simply because an opportunity was presented, without considering the possible effects (Hare 1991).

Irresponsible individuals frequently do not carry out their commitments to others. This irresponsibility is seen in all areas of the individual's life and often puts others at risk. These individuals simply have no sense of duty to anyone or anything (Hare 1991). “The irresponsibility and unreliability of psychopaths extend to every part of their lives. Their performance on the job is erratic, with frequent absences, misuse of company

resources, violations of company policy, and general untrustworthiness. They do not honor formal or implied commitments to people, organizations, or principles” (Hare 1993). Included in this lack of responsibility are children. These individuals view children as a nuisance and often leave them unattended for great lengths of time.

Individuals who fail to accept responsibility for their own actions will usually place the blame on someone or something else, make excuses for their behavior, and attempt to justify or rationalize the behavior. Even if there is an abundance of evidence proving that the individual is responsible, he or she may still deny responsibility. If this type of individual does admit to doing something, he or she often then minimizes or even completely refutes the results of those actions (Hare 1991).

Psychopaths often engage in many short-term marital relationships. Hare (1991) describes a marital relationship as any relationship where the partners live together and there is some level of commitment from either or both partners. Sexual orientation of these relationships is not differentiated, so both heterosexual and homosexual relationships are considered. This item is often omitted in the PCL-R if the individual is either young or has not had sufficient contact with a number of potential partners (e.g., has spent extended periods of time in prison; Hare 1991).

Individuals with a history of juvenile delinquency are those with a history of criminal or antisocial behaviors before the age of 18 years. This category can include both charges and convictions of criminal behavior during adolescence (Hare 1991). This may also include expressions of antagonism, aggression, exploitation, manipulation, or callous, ruthless tough-mindedness (O'Connor 2005).

The category of revocation of conditional release describes an individual who has

violated the terms of conditional release (e.g., parole, probation, mandatory supervision, bail, or restraining orders) during adulthood. Violations may include new charges or convictions or other non-criminal violations that are specified conditions. Also included is escape from an institution. Similar to the “many short-term marital relationships” category, this category is often omitted if the individual is young or if there has been no prior contact as an adult with the criminal justice system (Hare 1991).

The final item on the PCL-R involves the versatility of the individual’s criminal offenses. These individuals have charges or convictions for a variety of different criminal offenses. “Their antisocial and illegal activities are *more varied and frequent* than are those of other criminals. Psychopaths tend to have no particular affinity, or ‘specialty,’ for any one type of crime but tend to try everything” (Hare 1993:68; italics in original). This item may also be omitted if the individual is young or if other offenses are denied or are proven to have not occurred. All offenses found on the individual’s adult criminal record are considered for this item.

While psychopathy is still used as a diagnostic term, it is likely that when laymen use the term ‘psychopath’ they are actually thinking of individuals with some sort of psychosis, a mental disorder different from psychopathy. In fact, serial murderers are typically distinguished by the general absence of mental disorder or illness and the presence of higher degrees of psychopathy (Meloy and Felthous 2004). However, “the common assumption that all psychopaths are grisly serial killers who torture and maim for kicks” is quite inaccurate (Hare 1993:74). Hare (1993) approximates that in North America there are less than 100 serial murderers active at any given time, but two or three million psychopaths. Thus, there are 20,000 to 30,000 psychopaths that are not

serial murderers for every one psychopath who does commit serial murder.

As psychopathy is a personality disorder, psychopaths are in fact sane by both psychiatric and legal standards (Hare 1993). According to Smith (1999), the very ability of the psychopath to execute a complex plan of manipulation and exploitation of others indicates that psychopathic individuals should, at the least, be legally responsible for their behavior. Psychopaths are deemed rational individuals, able to control their behavior and capable of understanding what is right and what is wrong. Though psychopaths are able to grasp the potential consequences of their actions, they appear to simply choose to follow their own rules with no regard to the prospective costs or penalties. As a result, psychopaths are rarely deterred. Still, some argue that they should not be held responsible because their mental processes appear to be impaired and they lack the emotional depth to truly understand the effects their actions may have.

Trait theorists maintain that individual personality traits remain stable throughout time. Further, it is suggested that one will behave consistently throughout life in like situations (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). Thus, it could be argued that psychopaths are often not receptive to treatment simply because their psychopathic personalities are established at a young age and remain stable throughout life. Because they lack feelings of remorse and guilt and view their behavior as acceptable, their personality structure allows them to continue through life believing that their conduct is appropriate to pursue their wants and needs. The manner in which one behaves, relative to the expectations of society, largely establishes which behaviors are viewed by society as normal and which are not (Hergenhahn and Olson 2007). Because those with psychopathic personalities tend to follow their own set of rules, they likely do not consider their behavior as being

abnormal since they are not concerned with society's behavioral expectations.

While most people learn the rules of society and, in effect, build an inner voice that attempts to regulate behavior (i.e., the conscience), it appears that psychopaths never build the ability to resist temptation or feel guilt when rules are defied (Hare 1993). It is the process of socialization, through means such as parenting, religion, and schooling that most people construct their beliefs and values, which then influence the manner in which they interact with others. Because psychopaths never develop a conscience, or if they do, develop quite a weak one, they will usually act in ways that will get them what they want or do what they believe they can get away with. Hare (1993:76-7) speculates as to why psychopaths exhibit such weak, or even nonexistent, consciences and suggests: (a) psychopaths have little aptitude for experiencing the emotional responses—fear and anxiety—that are the mainsprings of conscience, (b) the “inner speech” of psychopaths lacks emotional punch, and (c) psychopaths have a weak capacity for mentally “picturing” the consequences of their behavior.

First, because they lack these emotions, psychopaths do not feel the anxiety that usually presents itself when considering the possible consequences of a particular action; they are not able to experience a sense of fear or anxiety and therefore are not deterred from perpetrating antisocial behaviors. Second, psychopaths are deficient in their ability to communicate with themselves mentally. Consequently, and because having a conscience requires individuals to be able to both envision the consequences and to converse mentally, these emotions and feelings of guilt are not properly sensed by the psychopath. Finally, psychopaths lack their ability to imagine the consequences or punishments for their behavior and thus seek the distinct rewards that are immediately

offered rather than understanding that the costs may actually outweigh the benefits of their actions.

As such, a principal element to psychopathy is the lack of conscience that these individuals possess. Throughout an individual's life there are many experiences that aid in building this conscience while he or she is also learning to follow the system of rules set forth by society. Psychopaths, however, never grasp this concept. While they know the rules and understand right and wrong, they simply choose to do what they want, regardless if these actions are in conjunction with society's expectations. Hare (1993:75) presents a list of reasons why most people follow rules and regulations, including: (a) a rational appraisal of the odds of being caught, (b) a philosophical or theological idea of good and evil, (c) an appreciation of the need for social cooperation and harmony, and (d) a capacity for thinking about, and being moved by, the feelings, rights, needs, and well-being of those around us.

The core personality traits of psychopaths may appear as attractive characteristics—even skills—to others, not only aiding in their ability for a successful career, but they also serve to help psychopaths play on the vulnerability and gullibility of others in order to get what they want (Babiak and Hare 2006). They often seek out those who appear vulnerable to play on weaknesses to further themselves. Although everyone presents some vulnerability, psychopaths often pursue individuals who are especially trusting or gullible. They are unable to empathize with the feelings of others and, therefore, do not care how damaging their actions are. According to Hare (1993:92), "In general, psychopathic violence tends to be callous and cold-blooded, and more likely to be straightforward, uncomplicated, and businesslike than an expression of deep-seated



distress or understandable precipitating factors. It lacks the ‘juice’ or powerful emotion that accompanies the violence of most other individuals.”

Psychopaths are often able to converse with others at a level that appears to be of high intellect. Hare (1993:129) proposed that psychopaths are able to communicate the language, but “a language that is two-dimensional, lacking in emotional depth.”

Psychopaths may have learned the words of the language but are actually incapable of truly understanding what they mean and the feelings behind them. They may be able to act out the feelings by mimicking what they have seen from others in the past but do not actually feel the emotions. Moreover, in laboratory studies researchers have found that psychopaths respond to emotional words with the same level of brain activity as they respond to neutral words. A control sample is more likely to produce a much larger brain response to emotional words than neutral words. Thus, these findings lend support to the case that psychopaths lack emotional depth and are unable to feel emotion in relation to their words (Babiak and Hare 2006; Hare 1993). “This deficiency has fascinating implications, especially when considered in the context of psychopaths’ social interactions—manipulative deceit uninhibited by empathy or conscience. For most of us, language has the capacity to elicit powerful emotional feelings...but to the psychopath, a word is just a word” (Hare 1993:131). This inability to understand their words may be the reason why psychopaths appear to lack a conscience.

Psychopaths are quite often able to obscure the facts in such a way that the “show” they are putting on is actually what draws the attention so that the listener overlooks the inconsistencies. Psychopaths have one goal—to get what they want—and they are usually willing to deceive, lie, and manipulate others to achieve this goal. During

their displays, psychopaths tend to use various hand motions and body language that is often distracting to the listener, drawing their attention away from the actual words being spoken (Hare 1993).

As cunning and manipulative liars, conversations with psychopaths are actually a product of much mental activity, though the manner in which their words come out may make it appear not so. This may represent the possibility that psychopaths exhibit inadequate mental processes, much the same way that their behaviors seem to not follow societal standards (Hare 1993). Many researchers contend, however, that psychopaths do not represent a homogeneous group of individuals and instead may not share the same etiological or pathological processes. It is not clear at this time if there is one common etiology that triggers the expression of psychopathic traits or if there are multiple etiologies that can lead an individual to become psychopathic (Brinkley, Newman, Widiger, and Lynam 2004).

“Perhaps a psychopathic serial killer’s most frightening quality is his ability to live unnoticed among fellow humans. He appears normal. He may even be intelligent and charming – and probably has to be to enable him to lure his victims” (Labuschagne 2009:32). The psychopath exhibits behavior in which the sole aim is to gratify more primal needs and create a lifestyle that is synchronous with these needs.

Psychopaths seem to have an external locus of control and believe their behavior is caused by other people’s actions. Their problems are typically internalized, often being able to fool those around them. Because the psychopath’s behavior is a superficial response, he or she will vary his or her behaviors when interacting with different individuals in different situations. The behavior shown in public situations will appear

authentic; however, the private lives of psychopaths are different from their public persona. The psychopath's lack of affect is likely to become apparent only after someone has been around them for a long time. Shorter interactions with psychopaths lead people to believe that they are everything the spectator expects a 'normal' person to be (Cleckley 1982).

...The character of many of them seems to be shaped by a cold-blooded egocentrism. It's all about them; it's always someone else's fault; it's always the fault of "factors"—such as how they were raised, or that they were drunk and not in their right minds when they killed the baby. Most murderers have some similar sort of jailhouse justification for refusing to accept responsibility for their acts. (Wenzl, Potter, Kelly, and Laviana 2007:360)

In the absence of conscience, a person experiences no anxiety, guilt, or remorse over his behavior. He possesses no empathy for the impact of his behavior on his wife, children, or mistress—and these are persons he allegedly loves. His egocentricity empowers his sense of entitlement. His needs, wants, and desires are of paramount importance, and the needs, wants, and desires of others are insignificant and irrelevant. Thus such a person's pathology allows him to do whatever he wants. (Dobbert 2009:176)

Many people expect serial murderers to stand out from others, to be toothless monsters living in a small shack somewhere. But this is not typically the case—most blend in with society quite well and this is how they are able to avoid detection for so long. They are aware that they must have a façade of normalcy so as not to create suspicion among others.

Popular fiction tends to portray serial killers as deranged, out-of-control loners who kill in an ever-increasing spiral of intensity. Genius is often attributed to serial killers as an explanation for their success in evading justice. Fictional serial killers are almost always white men who kill for sexual gratification. Finally, serial killers are described as committing their crimes in widely dispersed geographic areas to hide their crimes. In fact, the stereotypes of fiction are almost always wrong.

Serial killers do not tend to be reclusive social misfits who live alone. Indeed, they often have families, responsible jobs, and participate in their community – one reason they evade capture is because they seem so normal. ...The killers tend

to be more ordinary than fiction would suggest. It is that very ordinariness that allows serial killers to hide in plain sight and evade detection and capture for so long. (2010b)

Society tends to be surprised by the ordinariness of serial murderers. If we could see them coming, or if there was some obvious sign, it would be much easier in terms not only of detection, but of security as well (2005). For instance, Dennis Rader's ability to mislead people and demonstrate such a façade of normalcy was ultimately revealed in the courtroom as he callously revealed every detail of his crimes. "Unlike fictional TV, which usually resolves everything neatly and quickly, this case unleashed the terrifying unpredictability and murkiness of real life, where little is obvious and we're always working in the dark" (Singular 2006:271). Because of Rader's extraordinary ability to blend in with society, had he not continued to send messages to the media and police, he likely may have never been caught.

People aren't satisfied; they expected Hannibal the Cannibal. There is something reassuring in imagining our killers to be driven by an almost supernatural monstrosity. Perhaps our attempt to make them larger than life is a way of distancing ourselves from them, of making sure that we share nothing in common with these creatures. It is almost too terrifying to think that they are merely a diseased product of human nature, that they are driven by the same forces that are in every human being: aggression and lust. This is the dirty secret of serial killers. They are horribly twisted, but they are us. (Achenbach 1991)

Unfortunately, their appearance does not reflect the evil that lies within them. As soon as a serial murderer is identified, however, some seem quick to comment on the offender's appearance with remarks such as "He looks just like a serial killer" or "He always scared me with the way he looks." But, before the label of serial murderer is attached, most look just like everyone else.

"Look, the problem here is that we expect to somehow be able to detect someone's character or someone's perverse sexual desires from the way they live and the way they look. And we can't do that. Until they tell us, or show us, we're

not going to know what lies inside the mind. And this is a mistake that sucks people in again and again. They think if someone seems harmless, if they seem nice, if they're good looking, that it's safe. And that's not true," said Dr. Park Dietz, Forensic Psychologist. (2009b)

Moreover, although some retrospectively reinterpret the background and appearance of a serial murderer, many others are astonished by the fact that the killer blended in with society just like everyone else, leaving many people feeling dumbfounded. The often-normal appearance of serial murderers continues to intrigue people everywhere (Egger 1998b):

"We're raised to look at guys like that and say, "Well, he couldn't be the one. People who look like that don't kill." Remember what I said about the Disney movies and the nice "Prince Charmings" at the end. He looks like all of them. How do you look at a guy like that and think he could be killing people. It makes – you'd think – he could be your neighbor, your son, your cousin, your brother. It's hard to get your head around the idea that someone who looks like someone close to you could be doing brutal things," said former prosecutor Wendy Murphy. (2009b)

"The lesson is, we should not have stereotyped notions in our brains of what criminals look like" (2009b). Contrary to what many believe, serial murderers come from many different backgrounds. They are usually educated, employed, and seem to be reasonable individuals. Excluding their acts of murder, they are able to behave as normal, law-abiding citizens (Hare 1991; Hare 1993). "A paradox is often presented by serial murderers. 'Normal' society is shocked more by what is often perceived to be an evil cynicism on the part of the heinous murderer – a deliberate 'con' on the part of the 'evil' person that he (it is almost always 'he') is 'normal'" (Moss and Kottler 1999:89).

More often than not, individuals who commit rape and murder lead solitary, isolated lives. Often acquaintances are shocked to learn of their crimes because they viewed these individuals as unusually quiet and socially withdrawn, with no outward signs of aggressivity. Though usually solitary individuals, some are married and live with their wives and children. Often their family serves as a cover for their secret double life. This type of sex offender may go to great

lengths to conceal his activities. However, on some level, his wife may be aware that something is dreadfully wrong. A man with this problem may show little to no sexual interest in his wife. He may possess relics or keepsakes of his crimes, which he may use during masturbation while fantasizing about past violent acts. He may have an extensive collection of pornography and sadomasochistic materials. And he may disappear all night long or for days at a time without explanation. (2001)

## THEORY

Based on the existing research, learning theories and neutralization theory will be used in the present study to better understand how potential or future serial murderers may learn the skills and neutralization techniques related to maintaining the double life associated with many serial murderers.

Learning theorists contend that criminal behavior can be learned and unlearned just like any other behavior. According to Akers (1998:51), "Deviant and criminal behavior is learned and modified through all of the same cognitive behavioral mechanisms as conforming behavior." Therefore, it remains possible that the duplicitous lifestyle of many serial murderers is a result of learned behavior. In the early 1900s, the behaviorist revolution replaced the ideas of mental images and consciousness with observable stimuli and responses, yet maintained the basic idea that learning is achieved through association (Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 2002). Watson (1994:249), criticizing the idea of the unconscious mind, suggested "discard[ing] all references to consciousness" and advised psychology only concern itself with the prediction and control of human behavior using only that which is observable. He assumed that after observing behavior, causal relationships could be formed and all actions could be deduced to the relationship between stimulus and response; an organism learns to react discriminatively to the world

around it under certain contingencies of reinforcement (Watson 1994). “As the most comprehensive experimental alternative to psychoanalysis, behaviorism dominated academic psychology (particularly in the United States) through the 1950s and rejected the notion that unconscious processes (or even conscious processes) could play any causal role in human behavior” (Westen 1998:335).

Skinner (1938; 1958; 1969; 1984) agreed that psychology should only be concerned with the behavior of humans. In saying that we need to use what is observable to understand the human mind and mental processes, Skinner is associated with operant conditioning, which uses rewards and punishments to reinforce behavior—another way of learning by association.

As a forerunner of modern-day learning theorists, Tarde (1903) rejected popular biological theories of crime causation and initiated an offensive against the idea of the born criminal (see Lombroso-Ferraro 1979; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 2002). He believed that criminality was a ‘profession’ learned through interaction with and imitation of others (Tarde 1903). He thus developed three laws of imitation as the premise of his nineteenth-century social learning theory: (1) The law of close contact—people are more likely to imitate one another if they are in close contact; (2) The law of imitation of superiors by inferiors—crime originates in higher ranks and descends to the lowest ranks; and (3) The law of insertion—when two fashions come together, one can be substituted for another (Tarde 1903; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 2002). Accordingly, criminality is a function of association with criminal types; criminals learn their behaviors from other persons and imitate them (Tarde 1903; Tarde 1969).

Before Sutherland developed his criminological theory, the dominant explanation

for crime was a multiple factor approach. Criminal behavior was believed to be determined by a variety of factors including age, race, social class, and inadequate socialization (Matsueda 1988; Tarde 1969). Sutherland's dissatisfaction with the non-scientific multiple-factor approach led to his attempt at the development of both a thorough definition and a satisfactory causal explanation (Cullen and Agnew 2006). Sutherland's theory of differential association was the first and most prominent formal statement of micro-level learning theory (Matsueda 1988). In 1939, Sutherland stated that the specific causal process in the development of criminal behavior is the differential association with people who commit crime and those who do not (Cullen and Agnew 2006). In 1947, Sutherland released the final version of this theory; nine principles contended that criminal behavior is learned through social interactions and communication within intimate personal groups (Cressey 1960; McCarthy 1996). It is the element of interaction that is so imperative to the determination of behavior learned (Cressey 1952; Sutherland 1979).

Ultimately, a person will become delinquent when exposure to definitions (defined as motives, attitudes, and rationalizations) favorable to law-breaking are greater than exposure to definitions favorable to conventional behavior (Akers 1998; Sutherland 1979). Sutherland also identified four dimensions along which associations may vary, contending that frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of criminal influences determines the likelihood of whether a person assumes crime as an acceptable way of life (Akers 1998; Cressey 1960; Cullen and Agnew 2006; Sutherland 1979; Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill 1992; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 2002).

The basic elements of Sutherland's theory come from Mead's theory of symbolic



interactionism, or the idea that the self is determined through social interactions and symbolic definitions (Blumer 1969; Cressey 1960). As Mead argued that “meanings” determine behavior, Sutherland similarly alleged that the primary determining factor for why people commit crime is the meaning they give to the social conditions they experience. Ultimately, whether a person engages in criminal behavior or not depends on how he or she defines his or her situation (Sutherland 1979; Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill 1992).

Although Cressey (1952) found empirical support for Sutherland’s hypothesis that validation of criminal behavior is a learned process, he found it impossible to test and determine the originality of the source that the individual associated or interacted with to equate criminality as beneficial to that individual. Cressey (1952) therefore argued that while the originality of Sutherland’s work should be kept intact, certain changes were necessary to increase its empirical use. Short (1958; 1960) argued that the theory was not useful, stating that the definitions lacked the ability to be put into a context that would be quantitatively acceptable. Burgess and Akers (1966) similarly stated that there was a lack of empirical testing of differential association theory and argued that its testability is negated as the theory is often vague and results in inconsistencies in operationalizing elements. They also maintained that differential association was unsound in its explanation of how association was a direct cause of delinquent behavior (Burgess and Akers 1966). The researchers agreed, however, that the elements of differential association were imperative, but needed to be developed into functional connotations (Burgess and Akers 1966; Cressey 1952; Short 1958). Consequently, differential association theory has, through the years, instigated theoretical refinements and revisions,

empirical testing, and policy implications (Matsueda 1988).

The concept of learning has been in existence for a number of years (see Skinner 1938; Watson 1913), therefore demonstrating that learning theories are amenable to definitions that can be methodologically employed in terms of operationalization (Burgess and Akers 1966). Burgess and Akers (1966) proposed that incorporating learning concepts from psychological testing with the principles of differential association would result in increased consistencies of the terminology, thus increasing its testability (Rebellon 2006).

Burgess, a student of behavior theory and operant conditioning and strongly influenced by Skinner (see Skinner 1938; Skinner 1945; Skinner 1969; Skinner 1984), and Akers, interested in the process of interaction and impelled by the work of Bandura (see Bandura 1965; Bandura 1969b; Bandura 1978), became convinced that Sutherland's ideas of differential association could be integrated with psychological behaviorism (Akers 1998; Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 2002). They then revised the nine principles of differential association to include behavioral concepts, and thus proposed the differential association-reinforcement theory (Burgess and Akers 1966).

Burgess and Akers (1966) contended that Sutherland's theory incorporated the idea that criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning, but he never defined his terms or discussed the mechanisms of learning (Akers 1998; Cullen and Agnew 2006). Therefore, they specified the learning mechanism as being:

- (1) Operant conditioning, differential reinforcement of voluntary behavior through positive and negative reinforcement and punishment;
- (2) respondent (involuntary reflexes), or "classical," conditioning;
- (3) unconditioned (primary) and conditioned (secondary) reinforcers and punishers;
- (4) shaping and response differentiation;
- (5) stimulus discrimination and generalization, the environmental and internal stimuli that provide cues or signals indicating differences and

similarities across situations that help elicit, but do not directly reinforce, behavior; (6) types of reinforcement schedules, the rate and ratio in which rewards and punishers follow behavior; (7) stimulus-response constellations; and (8) stimulus satiation and deprivation. (Akers 1998:57)

The term ‘operant conditioning’ was used to designate differential reinforcement as the basic mechanism around which the others revolve and by which learning is generated. Moreover, imitation is viewed as a distinct learning mechanism, described as modeling one’s own actions on the observed behavior of others and on the consequences of that behavior (Akers 1998; see also Bandura 1965).

Burgess and Akers (1966) contended that Sutherland’s theory failed to explain criminal behavior over time, so they argued that the sustainability of criminal behavior could no longer be explained through learning and imitation of others, but instead through sole operant conditioning—if behaviors are being reinforced, both negatively and positively, then acts of criminal behavior will continue. “Although the specific reward changes, serial killers murder because it provides them with some kind of reinforcement” (Castle and Hensley 2002:463). It is important to note that while Burgess and Akers (1966) criticize parts of Sutherland’s theory, they also incorporate some of the same elements of differential association (e.g., symbolic interactionism):

This theory takes the concepts of differential association and definitions from Sutherland’s work but it conceptualizes them in more behavioral terms and combines them with differential reinforcement, imitation, discriminative stimuli, and other concepts from behavior learning theory. (Akers 1998:60)

Differential association-reinforcement theory maintains that people learn to assess their own behavior through interaction with significant people in their lives, which parallels Tarde’s law of close contact. The more individuals learn to characterize their behavior as acceptable, or at least justified, the more likely they are to engage in the behavior

(Burgess and Akers 1966).

Following up on his work with Burgess, Akers developed the theory of social learning, expanding the ideas of differential association and focusing on the psychological notions theorized by Bandura (1963; 1965) and Skinner (1938; 1958) (Cullen and Agnew 2006). Delineated as a general theory of crime and deviance, social learning theory (SLT) retains concepts from symbolic interactionism, Sutherland's focus on primary group interaction, and the idea of learning through association. Akers (1998) argues it is a broader theory that incorporates some of the same elements of Sutherland's theory along with differential reinforcement and other principles of behavioral acquisition, continuation, and cessation. SLT is, in fact, an integration of Sutherland's sociological theory of differential association with behavioral principles from psychology. Akers (1998) focused on four primary concepts: definitions, differential association, differential reinforcement, and imitation.

Definitions represent an individual's antisocial or criminal attitudes and beliefs. These attitudes and beliefs can be general (i.e., broadly approving or disapproving of criminal conduct) or specific (i.e., an explicit view of a particular criminal behavior) to a particular act or situation (Akers 2001). Definitions may also be positive (i.e., favorable view of criminal behavior), negative (i.e., oppositional to criminal behavior), or even neutralizing (i.e., perceiving criminal conduct as permissible) (Pratt, Cullen, Sellers, Winfree Jr., Madensen, and Daigle 2010).

Differential associations are the direct or indirect interactions and/or exposures to different attitudes and behaviors (i.e., definitions) in various social contexts. Primary groups (e.g., family, peers) tend to be the most vital social groups whereby differential

associations have strong influence on the individual's behavioral learning process. Secondary and other reference groups (e.g., school system, colleagues and work groups, mass media, Internet) can also contribute greatly to the normative definitions in the learning process (Akers 1997; Hwang and Akers 2003; Warr 2002). The most significant associations for adults are typically generated from spouses, friends, and coworkers (Akers 2008).

Differential reinforcement refers to the net balance of anticipated social and/or nonsocial rewards and costs associated with different types of behavior (Akers 1997; Krohn, Skinner, Massey, and Akers 1985; Sellers, Cochran, and Branch 2005). Akers (2001) argues that the imperative reinforcers are social in nature (e.g., consequences resulting from the social interaction with one's intimate social group). Social reinforcement involves "not just the direct reactions of others present while an act is performed, but also the whole range of tangible and intangible rewards valued in society and its subgroups" (Akers 1997:55), such as financial rewards, positive facial expression, and verbal approval from significant others. Nonsocial reinforcements are "unconditioned positive and negative effects of physiological and psychological stimuli" (Akers 1998:71), such as psychophysiological effects of a stimulant. Acts that are reinforced, either positively or negatively, are likely to be repeated, whereas acts that draw punishment are less likely to be repeated.

Imitation is the modeling of a behavioral an individual observes others doing (Akers 2001). Important sources of imitation are usually from primary social groups, such as family and peers, whom the individual admires and with whom he or she has personal or intimate relationships (Sellers, Cochran, and Branch 2005).

Borrowed from Sutherland, differential association is the notion that people are exposed to various 'role models' and assorted attitudes and values, and some will model criminal behavior and convey values that are consistent with such behavior. Akers (1998:78) also uses definitions as a major concept of SLT and defines them as "normative attitudes or evaluative meanings attached to given behavior...that label the commission of an act as right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, justified or unjustified." He also adds the idea that behavior is a function of the frequency, amount, and probability of anticipated or actual rewards and punishments (i.e., differential reinforcement) and that the behavior of others and its consequences are observed and modeled (i.e., imitation) (Akers 1990).

Social learning theory assumes individuals are rational beings who will weigh the risks and rewards of an action based on previous reinforcement or stimuli presented in a learning environment. SLT's basic assumption is that both conforming and deviant behavior follow the same learning process, which functions in a context of situation, social structure, and interaction (Akers 1998). "The theory embraces factors that operate both to motivate and to control or prevent criminal behavior and both to promote and to undermine conformity" (Akers 2008).

SLT suggests that "the definitions themselves are learned through reinforcement contingencies operating in the socialization process and function less as direct motivators than as facilitative or inhibitory 'discriminative stimuli,' cues signaling that certain behavior is appropriate and likely to be punished" (Akers 1998:84). SLT calls attention to the notion that behavior may be reinforced not only through rewards and punishments, but also through expectations that are learned by watching what happens to others (Vold,

Bernard, and Snipes 2002). Similarly, Bandura (1969a:118) maintained that “virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experiences can occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other persons’ behavior and its consequences for them.”

Since it is a general explanation of crime and deviance of all kinds, social learning is not simply a theory about how novel criminal behavior is learned or a theory only of the positive causes of that behavior. It embraces variables that operate to both motivate and control delinquent and criminal behavior, to both promote and undermine conformity. It answers the questions of why people do and do not violate norms. The probability of criminal or conforming behavior occurring is a function of the variables operating in the underlying social learning process. (Akers 1998:51)

Research exploring a relationship between learning theory and serial murder suggests that when an individual is exposed to severe humiliation (e.g., a high number of non-reward situations) the humiliated experience(s) can lead to intense feelings of frustration. These feelings may persist for a long period of time, with the individual ultimately turning to alternative methods of aggression in an attempt to get rid of the frustration and return to a normal state of self-worth (Hale 1993).

When in a hostile environment, children frequently mimic their parents’ abusive behavior and, through imitation and reinforcement, become abusive to others as well (Petersen and Farrington 2007). In addition to witnessing parental aggression, personal experience with family violence (i.e., physical and sexual abuse) may increase one’s tolerance for violence and the propensity to use violence as a coping mechanism (Burgess, Hartman, and McCormack 1987). The media has also been blamed as an influential imitation medium of violence. Long-term exposure to violent materials (e.g., television shows, movies, video games) may increase the tolerance for aggressive or violent behavior.

The learning process and behavior are related to the imitation and modeling of

others with whom the individual is associated, as well as the frequency, amount, and probability of perceived or experienced rewards and punishments (Akers 1998). Since serial murderers go back and forth between their usual way of life and murdering their victims, it remains possible that some people not only learn criminal behavior, but also learn how to maintain a “normal” life in society. They may imitate and model others in the workplace and at home with their families and intimate others, with the reward of avoiding detection as a serial murderer. These behaviors, then, continue to be reinforced, allowing the serial murderer to maintain a duplicitous lifestyle.

Additionally, it is believed by many scholars that some serial murderers actually experience feelings of remorse. To remove the guilt, they negate their feelings or rationalize their behavior (Castle and Hensley 2002). Fox and Levin (1994) suggest that serial murderers may possess psychological facilitators for neutralizing remorse and guilt. “They are able to compartmentalize their attitudes by conceiving of at least two categories of human beings—those whom they care about and treat with decency, and those with whom they have no relationship and therefore can victimize with total disregard for their feelings” (Fox and Levin 1994:44).

Building upon Sutherland’s theory of differential association, Sykes and Matza (1957) developed a theory of delinquency using techniques to rationalize or justify criminal behavior. They rejected the notion that delinquent subcultures maintain their own set of values independent from that of the dominant culture. Instead, Sykes and Matza (1957) believed that most delinquents hold conventional values and are only able to violate these social norms by developing a set of justifications to neutralize their behavior. The rationalizations make the delinquent behavior possible by allowing



delinquents to avoid the guilt that might otherwise result from their behavior.

...If there existed in fact a delinquent subculture such that the delinquent viewed his illegal behavior as morally correct, we could reasonably suppose that he would exhibit no feelings of guilt or shame at detection or confinement. Instead, the major reaction would tend in the direction of indignation or a sense of martyrdom. (Sykes and Matza 1957:664)

In other words, the techniques of neutralization allow individuals to engage in deviant behavior while still protecting themselves from guilt, shame, or a negative self-image.

Society has certain expectations of how we are supposed to act. As part of the process of socialization, we internalize these norms. When the moral code is broken, then, we need a way to justify our actions so that we can see ourselves—and present ourselves to others—as moral members of society. Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization do just that—provide us with a rationale for norm violations. While excuses are typically used to justify behavior after the fact, neutralizations, they contend, precede deviant behavior (Sykes and Matza 1957).

This theoretical model is based on four facts observed in society:

- (1) Delinquents express guilt over their illegal acts.
- (2) Delinquents frequently respect and admire honest, law-abiding individuals.
- (3) A line is drawn between those whom they can victimize and those they cannot.
- (4) Delinquents are not immune to the demands of conformity.

The effect of neutralization on delinquency...may be conditioned by a number of variables...[and] is most likely to lead to delinquency among those who (1) believe they are in situations in which the neutralizations are applicable, (2) have some commitment to conventional beliefs (i.e., disapprove of delinquency), (3) encounter opportunities for delinquency (i.e., situations in which the likelihood of reinforcement for delinquency is high and the likelihood of punishment is low), and (4) have, in the words of Minor (1981:301), a "strong need or desire to commit the offense." (Agnew 1994:562)

Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization theory includes five techniques that may

be used by offenders to excuse unconventional behavior (the denial of responsibility, the denial of injury, the denial of the victim, the condemnation of the condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties). Offenders who justify or neutralize their criminal conduct are still able to view themselves as normal and conventional, but are able to offset any guilt or shame they feel about committing their crimes. While Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization have been applied to a wide variety of crimes, Maruna and Copes (2005) contend that studies using neutralization techniques should make the techniques crime specific. Therefore, all of Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization (i.e., denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, the condemnation of the condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties) may not be applicable to the current study.

(1) *The Denial of Responsibility*—"It was not my fault."

In this first technique, the individual acknowledges the behavior, but claims that he or she had to do it or was forced to do it. This is not unlike the legal claims of diminished capacity. Additionally, "from a psychodynamic viewpoint, this orientation toward one's own actions may represent a profound alienation from self, but it is important to stress the fact that interpretations of responsibility are cultural constructs and not merely idiosyncratic beliefs" (Sykes and Matza 1957:667). Although it remains unlikely for serial murderers to claim that the killings were unintentional or accidental, they may contend that the murderous acts were "beyond their control."

(2) *The Denial of Injury*—"No one got hurt."

In using this strategy, the individual acknowledges the behavior, but says that no one was harmed or the harm was not intended and it therefore should not be of concern.

This is an attempt for the offender to negate the harm that was done to the victim. It is unlikely that this technique is applicable to serial murderers, as they cannot contend that no one was hurt by their crimes.

*(3) The Denial of the Victim—“They deserved it.”*

When using this technique, the offender agrees that deviant action was taken and somebody was hurt, but believes the action/injury was not wrong. The victim is said to have brought about or otherwise deserved the behavior. This is, once again, a way for the offender to excuse his or her behavior. This technique may be used in cases where the serial murderer asserts that the acts are justified because of *who* the victims are. The offender may even argue that the victim deserved to be killed. Examples may include victims who are homeless, drug addicted, or prostitutes.

*(4) The Condemnation of the Condemners—“You are all hypocrites and have no right to judge me.”*

The use of this technique is not necessarily to show that the behavior was wrong, but rather to deflect from the wrongfulness of the actions by shifting the focus to those who are doing the condemning. By using this technique, delinquents claim that those who condemn them engage in questionable behavior as well. This technique shifts the attention away from the offender and onto those who disapprove of the criminal actions. Serial murderers may attempt to cast a negative light on significant others and/or the police by claiming their needs were not being met or that the police were not doing their jobs.

*(5) The Appeal to Higher Loyalties—“I am loyal to a higher purpose.”*

In this technique, the delinquent claims, “I was just helping a friend” or “I am

loyal to a higher purpose.” While it is acknowledged that some social norms were violated, the individual claims to have been adhering to other norms or loyalties, and these higher principles justify the behavior. In other words, loyalty to someone or something else may sometimes necessitate criminal behavior. This technique is likely not applicable to serial murderers.

“Theoretically, neutralization or rationalization should only be necessary when a potential offender has both a strong desire to commit an offense and a strong belief that to do so would violate his personal morality [sic] ... If one’s morality is *not* constraining, however, then neutralization or rationalization is simply unnecessary” (Minor 1980:115). Additionally, Sykes and Matza believed that delinquents know their behavior is wrong and therefore do not victimize certain groups:

Certain social groups are not to be viewed as “fair game” in the performance of supposedly approved delinquent acts while others warrant a variety of attacks. In general, the potentiality for victimization would seem to be a function of the social distance between the juvenile delinquent and others and thus we find implicit maxims in the world of the delinquent such as “don’t steal from friends” or “don’t commit vandalism against a church of your own faith”... The fact that supposedly valued behavior tends to be directed against disvalued social groups hints that the “wrongfulness” of such delinquent behavior is more widely recognized by delinquents than the literature has indicated. When the pool of victims is limited by considerations of kinship, friendship, ethnic group, social class, age, sex, etc., we have reason to suspect that the virtue of delinquency is far from unquestioned. (Sykes and Matza 1957:665)

Although Sykes and Matza originally developed neutralization theory with regard to juvenile delinquency, techniques of neutralization may explain many types of deviant and criminal behavior, including violent crime (Agnew 1994). Further, there is evidence to suggest that the techniques of neutralization may be crime specific (Agnew 1994; Byers, Crider, and Biggers 1999; Tomita 1990). As asserted by Minor, all techniques may not be applicable to all crimes or all offenders: “Specifically, I have emphasized

that not everyone who engages in crime needs to neutralize, since some people have little moral inhibition against certain offenses” (Minor 1980; Minor 1981).

Hickey (2006:101) stated:

The problem with neutralization theory as an explanation for serial murder is its verifiability. One would have to be able to demonstrate that an offender first neutralized his moral beliefs before drifting into violent behavior. As it appears now, serial murderers who rationalize their behavior are believed to construct explanations *ex post facto*, or after the homicides have occurred. Given the current understanding of serial-murder behavior, empirical evidence of neutralization will not likely appear in the foreseeable future.

Matza (1964) later discussed the idea that many delinquents go back and forth between conventional and criminal behavior, a concept he termed ‘drift’. He maintained that people live their lives on a continuum, somewhere between complete freedom and complete restraint. Once an individual commits a crime, he or she feels guilt for the act and must balance his or her behavior by returning to law-abiding behavior.

Similarly, Fox and Levin (1994) contend that serial murderers use compartmentalization as a way to separate themselves from their crimes. Compartmentalization, though, is something that is learned and used by individuals in their everyday lives. “Individuals separate the positive and negative aspects of their personalities and create two separate selves, one who may be a cutthroat businessman at work whereas the other is a loving husband and father” (Castle and Hensley 2002:458). In addition, Fox and Levin (1994) state that serial murderers use dehumanization as a method of neutralization. This psychological process effectively allows for committing these crimes without guilt (Castle and Hensley 2002). Serial murderers often use dehumanization when selecting their victims. Individuals viewed as subhuman elements of society (e.g., prostitutes, homeless) are sometimes targets of these offenders.

However, little has been written on serial murder victimization for a variety of reasons. First, the victim may be unknown or unable to be identified. Second, the victims far outnumber the perpetrators. It is possible for one serial murderer to end the lives of numerous individuals; therefore, it is often easier to focus on the offender instead of the group of victims. Third, the victims may be among groups such as prostitutes, the homeless, and drug addicts; as marginalized members of society, their deaths do not warrant much media attention or attention from researchers. Although victim discussion has been neglected, it remains important to continue investigation into this area of research. In doing so, future murderers may be apprehended more quickly, which will ultimately save lives.

Demographic information pertaining to victims can provide a beginning to the understanding of serial murder victims. Looking at the relationship between victim and offender demographic characteristics may also aid in understanding at-risk populations and the differential hunting patterns of serial murderers. Further, theoretical speculation on serial murder characterizes victims as being meaningful to the offender, even if they are not acquainted (Canter 1989). According to Cormier, Angliker, Boyer, and Mersereau (1972:336):

The main characteristic of such homicides is the meaning the victim has for the offender, the former being unaware of this meaning. In other words, the murderous attack on the victim is mainly determined by the psychological state of the offender. The victim does not consciously foster this meaning for the aggressor nor is [s]he necessarily acquainted with him.

Evidence has demonstrated that most serial murderers do not randomly select their victims (Fattah 1993). While serial murderers usually choose stranger victims, it is possible that their choice in victims may be in large part due to opportunity, low risk, and

high gain (Clarke and Cornish 1985; Kocsis 2008). At least some serial murderers acknowledge that killing marginalized members of society is advantageous to avoiding apprehension. As serial murderers tend to prey upon those who are weaker or they feel they can dominate, these marginalized individuals, including prostitutes, the homeless, and drug addicts, may appear as easy targets. However, this target selection is typically a decision made after careful consideration and in a cautious manner (Fattah 1993). Consequently, the conscious decisions of serial murderers in selecting certain victims are part of the premeditation process of these offenders.

It is also possible that serial murderers choose particular victims because of their apparent vulnerability, allowing for the fulfillment of their interests and motivation of control, humiliation, dominance, and pain. Their fantasies may help to objectify and dehumanize potential victims, providing a link in converting violent urges into violent behavior and helping to neutralize their behaviors (DeFronzo, Ditta, Hannon, and Prochnow 2007).

Research regarding the victim's role in the crime event resulted in the emergence of the concept of victim precipitation. According to Wolfgang (1958), victim precipitation occurs when the victim is actively involved in the offense and provokes the eventual offender to commit violence. More recently, victim precipitation has been expanded to include more passive forms of precipitation, which can refer to any provocation of the crime by the victim, including negligence or vulnerability.

The actual prevalence of female prostitutes as targets of serial murderers in the U.S. is relatively unknown. Quinet (2011) found that in cases with only female victims from 1970 to 2009, 32% involved prostitute victims and 8% of cases involving both

female and male victims included prostitute victims. It is interesting to note that between 2000 and 2009, 43% involved prostitute victims. Other research suggests that from the offender's standpoint and to some extent public perception, the social class (or lack thereof) of a prostitute may allow the offender to downplay the death and dehumanize the victim (Fox and Levin 1994).

The killer in these cases denied the human identity of the victims. Having converted the "whores" into non-human refuse in his mind, he consistently refused at the time of the crime, or later, to have any personal identification with the victims. They were no longer human from the moment he sprang his trap, they became objects after he had discarded them, and he then viewed them with detachment and withdrawal. (Keppel and Birnes 2009:91)



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The study of serial murder carries with it some inherent difficulties concerning data collection. It is virtually impossible to observe in a natural setting or manipulate its occurrence through any type of experiment. Because of the limitations involved with studying this phenomenon quantitatively, qualitative methods are most frequently used (Singer and Hensley 2004). By characterizing data into themes and patterns as the primary basis of organizing and reporting results (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996), qualitative research can often provide a more in-depth understanding of social phenomena than can be afforded by the manipulation of numbers (Silverman 2001).

The current study utilized a qualitative research design, which involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the variables that may guide this behavior (Berg 2001). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior; it investigates the why and how of decision making, as compared to the what, where, and when of quantitative research (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996). "Qualitative data include open-ended textual data found in the words and phrases of the study population. They are used to provide information on the language, behaviors and belief systems of the study population from an insider's point of view, in an attempt to describe, characterize, analyse [sic] and synthesize information" (Organization 2009:25).

More specifically, this study used a collective case study approach. Collective case study research is a qualitative approach where the researcher explores multiple

bounded systems (cases) over time. This type of research requires detailed data collection drawing on multiple sources of information, allowing for case descriptions and the extraction of case-based themes (Creswell 2007). Case studies are often used in the social sciences when there is little data available on the research subject. This type of research is the preferred type when posing how and why questions, when the researcher has no control of the events, when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with a real-life context, and when investigating and learning more about little or poorly understood situations (Yin 2002). The use of case study analysis also allows for data examination across a broader time span and evaluation of case histories through compiled literature (Singer and Hensley 2004). “This is increasingly important when dealing with an event that is not common, such as serial murder, so that common characteristics between cases are not overlooked simply because of a large time gap between occurrences” (Singer and Hensley 2004:467).

In case study research, critics frequently warn that single case studies do not present a solid basis for generalization beyond the immediate case study (Yin 2002). A multiple, or collective, case study allows for similar cases, unique individuals with common qualities, or specific events to be studied in depth and also provides for elements of comparison and generalizations that would not be possible with a single case study. The ability to obtain results that are generalizable provides external validity. Accordingly, the current research will be a collective case study, focusing on a particular issue (i.e., the dual-natured lifestyles of serial murderers), using multiple cases to explore this issue. The use of the multiple case study approach permits replication of the findings through the use of different offenders and multiple cases. Consequently, this analysis will

provide findings that are more robust than a single case study. In this approach, each individual case is reviewed and assessed as a separate study. Cross-case synthesis aggregates findings across the series of independent studies. The common and repeating themes will then provide an understanding of the serial murderer's duplicitous lifestyle.

The lack of a universal definition of serial murder can create problems for researchers who must be mindful that specific cases may or may not qualify as serial murder depending on the definition used (Geberth and Turco 1997). Although the fascination with the phenomenon of serial murder has led to increased research on multiple murder, the initial challenge for this study was to isolate a specific population from a literature based upon research that uses a number of different operational definitions of serial murder.

The cases used in this study were selected based on the specific nature of their crimes and the availability of public accounts of them. A base population of 168 American serial murderers active from 1960 to 2010 was first identified through an extensive search drawing on information from secondary sources (e.g., the Internet, books, news media). For the purposes of this study and because of the absence of a universal definition for serial murder, however, the following criteria were then selected (based on the definition developed by Ferguson et al. (2003)) as a way to identify a specific population of offenders (i.e., serial murderers):

- (a) 3 or more victims were killed during multiple and discrete events;
- (b) Causing death to the victim, at the time of the killing, was considered to be pleasurable, stress relieving, or otherwise consistent with the perpetrator's internal set of values. The attacks themselves did not fulfill only functional purposes.

(c) The homicides must occur without the direction or orders of any political or criminal organization, which would also eliminate the inclusion of contract killers.

Based on the operational definition of serial murder to be used in the current study, the population of serial murderers reduced to 81.

It is important to note that a working definition should establish the number of victims attributable to the offender and the temporal element among offenses. Because much of the prior research on serial murder has examined motivational typologies, motivation may be considered in the definition; however, due to the lack of previous empirical verification of these taxonomies, the researcher determined it may be better evaluated as a variable rather than included as an element of the definition (Geberth and Turco 1997).

Purposive, or purposeful, sampling allows the researcher to choose the person(s)/characteristics to study because the case exemplifies a feature or process in which the researcher is interested. This type of sampling requires the researcher to select the sample case(s) after carefully considering the parameters of the population of study (Silverman 2005). Contrary to probabilistic statistical sampling, which relies on selecting a random and generalizable sample, purposive sampling depends on the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton 1987). Additionally, qualitative research necessitates smaller but more focused samples, rather than larger, random samples.

Using a purposive sampling strategy, the following criteria were used to determine the sample of serial murderers for the current study:

(a) 5 or more victims—This number was selected mostly as a pragmatic decision

because the sample needed to be reduced (i.e., 81 serial murderers would be too large of a sample) due to time constraints.

(b) Active between 1960 and 2010—Throughout the 1960s to 1970s, popular cases of serial murder began to dominate the headlines; the sensationalism propagated a sense of urgency for the study and understanding of this phenomenon. Moreover, these cases are the most thoroughly documented, especially after the FBI first introduced the concept of serial murder in the 1970s.

(c) Married and/or cohabitating/living with a significant other (in order to examine the duplicitous lifestyle).

(d) Victims were demographically similar to offender's family members/intimate others (e.g., spouse, partner, children).

(e) Team killers only remained in the sample if they were in a committed relationship with each other and met all other criteria.

A sample of 23 serial murderers met these selection criteria and were originally set to be included in the analysis. After all data were collected, however, two serial murderers were eliminated from the sample because of a lack of available data on these offenders (N = 21). Thus, 21 serial murderers met the selection criteria for inclusion in the data analysis (see Table 1; see also Appendix C). It is interesting to note that even though female offenders were not purposely excluded, all offenders in the final sample were male.

Table 1. Sample of Serial Murderers

Name of Serial Murderer
Rodney James Alcala
John Eric Armstrong
Arthur Gary Bishop
David Joseph Carpenter
Nathaniel R. Code, Jr.
Richard Francis Cottingham
Thomas Lee Dillon
Paul Duroseau
John Wayne Gacy, Jr.
Donald Harvey
Keith Hunter Jespersen
Patrick Wayne Kearney
Roger Reece Kibbe
Randy Steven Kraft
Dennis Lynn Rader
Gary Leon Ridgway
John Edward Robinson
Dayton Leroy Rogers
William Lester Suff
Henry Louis Wallace
Robert Lee Yates, Jr.

#### DATA

The public fascination with serial murder has resulted in an abundance of published material on the subject. Highly detailed descriptions of both the offenders and their crimes are available in published accounts and public records (Canter and Wentink 2004). Because of this, as well as due to time constraints and the limited access to these

offenders (e.g., incarceration in maximum security prisons and/or on death row, deceased), the material analyzed consisted of secondary sources such as U.S. newspaper articles (usually published during arrest and/or trial), news media interviews, documentaries, periodicals, peer-reviewed journal articles and other academic publications, true crime magazines/books, biographies, trial transcripts, and case history narratives. Additionally, the use of multiple online library databases and Internet searches of national media using multiple search engines and multiple key words allowed for a comprehensive review of various newspapers, journals, and magazines. For example, the Lexis-Nexis database covers over 140 newspapers. The current research did not include interviews with offenders or access to any existing serial murderer databases.

The variety of sources provided a substantial body of information, allowing me to triangulate facts. It should further be noted that I used a high degree of source exhaustion and precision in collecting and analyzing the secondary data in order to obtain personal and in-depth information on each serial murderer. Furthermore, archival data is often the only or main source to obtain a clearer understanding of this type of offender (Delisi and Scherer 2006). Effort was made to locate as many sources as possible to obtain relevant and reliable information. Thus, I was able to verify information on most variables by finding such information in more than one source, therefore triangulating the information and greatly increasing the validity and veracity of the data (Berg 2001).

To be more specific, more than twenty books, hundreds of newspaper articles, dozens of biographies, and several news media reports and interviews were collected and analyzed for the study. Although a multitude of data that required extended amounts of time to review was collected, it must be noted that much of the data did not supply the

information necessary to explore and answer the research questions specific to this study. Although I did read every piece of data collected, much of it turned out to be irrelevant to the study. It therefore proved difficult to find all of the information necessary to effectively explore the duplicitous lifestyle of serial murderers. Nevertheless, the variety of secondary sources used did furnish a necessary wealth of analytic and interpretive resources for the cases in the study. In addition, I used multiple sources for comparative analysis and interpretation. Any information used in the study that contributed to the findings was corroborated by at least two different sources.

Although the methods used to demonstrate validity by qualitative researchers may differ from those used by quantitative researchers, it remains possible for qualitative researchers to establish that their accounts of the data are valid. One way to do this is to incorporate validity checks, such as triangulation, into the research design (Richards 2005). Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity by investigating a research question from multiple perspectives. “Triangulation can be broadly defined as the synthesis and integration of data from multiple sources through collection, examination, comparison and interpretation. By first collecting and then comparing multiple datasets with each other, triangulation helps to counteract threats to the validity of each data source” (Organization 2009:6). With the use of triangulation, researchers can deepen their understanding and obtain a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study (Rothbauer 2008).

More specifically, data triangulation allows researchers to draw on multiple sources of data to add depth to the results, thereby increasing the validity of the findings (Mathison 1988). Triangulation of data sources allows the researcher to make use of pre-



existing data sources as well as discern similarities and discrepancies in the data (Bauwens 2010). "...As the information examined is collected by different methods, by different persons and in different populations, the findings can be used to corroborate data received from different sources, thereby reducing the effect of both systematic bias and random error that may be present in a single study" (Organization 2009:4).

Reliability, however, has been a highly debated issue in qualitative research. When taking a positivistic approach to data collection, random sampling is ideal. There is an emphasis on empirical data collection and a primary goal tends to be to understand causal relationships. The data collection is largely quantitative and scientific in nature so the data can be replicated (Creswell 2007). In contrast to quantitative studies, very few qualitative projects can be replicated in a controlled manner. Thus, the use of standardized procedures to obtain consistent measurement is clearly contradictory to the aim of qualitative research. Instead of seeking consistency in a controlled setting, Richards (2005) suggests qualitative researchers strive for results that the audience can trust, rely on, and have confidence in. Further, the best way to demonstrate reliability in qualitative research is to consistently use well-validated methods, assuring the reader that you have set a standard where you will only provide results that can be relied upon via reliable methods.

Similarly, construct validity has provided significant criticism claiming the researcher may fail to develop a significantly operational set of measures and potentially uses subjective judgment in the data collection (Yin 2002). To increase construct validity it is recommended to use multiple sources of evidence and well-established criteria. The data in the current study were collected from a variety of public sources, including court

documents and published documents such as true crime books and journal articles. This provides for a level of objective judgment in the data collection process to assure construct validity.

This study considered a combination of existing criminological and psychological theories for the purpose of better understanding how these offenders continually convince others of their conforming behavior while they are in fact committing some of the most heinous crimes. In addition to these initial categories, I also allowed for the identification of emerging themes and patterns. The goal of categorization was to help in identifying repeating patterns within the data. Specifically, important to this dissertation was identifying themes that gave insight into (1) victim selection, (2) the killer's lifestyle and personality, (3) familial relationships, and (4) the ability to hide a double lifestyle (i.e., alternating between conventional behavior and murderous acts).

The data were read, line-by-line, and segmented by dividing them into meaningful analytical units. A coding system was employed in analyzing the data, in addition to taking detailed notes and/or highlighting key data that met certain defined criteria related to the research questions and the elements of the theoretical concepts associated with this study (e.g., psychopathic traits, etc.). Meaningful segments identified within the data were coded, using both a priori and inductive coding. More specifically, based on prior knowledge and the research questions, an initial set of categories/themes was developed before examining the data. Alphanumeric codes were created for each category and a codebook was designed to explain each category (i.e., a priori coding). As data analyses progressed, additional themes began to emerge and more categories and codes were added to the codebook (i.e., inductive coding).

I continued the process of finding meaningful segments of text within the data and assigned codes or category names to signify the particular segments until all data had been segmented and initial coding was completed. After finishing the initial coding, I summarized and organized the data and then continued to refine and revise codes.

The data were thematically analyzed to explore the central issues and identify the reoccurring themes that emerged from the data. “Thematic analysis involves the searching *across* a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun and Clarke 2006:15; italics in original). This process involved reading and re-reading the data to connect the coded data between sources to identify significant patterns, similarities, and differences. Ultimately, through this systematic process, the hope was that a reliable depiction of serial murderers would emerge.

Guidelines for thematic analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to (1) familiarize myself with the data, (2) generate initial codes, (3) search for themes, (4) review themes, (5) define and name themes, and (6) produce the report. Themes derived from the research questions – psychopathy, dissociation, learning, and neutralization – were identified first within the data and highlighted as such. The data were then revisited to identify patterns and themes not addressed by the research questions. Specific extracts were then selected and used to bring context to, and provide examples of, the themes.

## VARIABLES

### *A Priori Themes and Categories*

Based on my research questions, I chose to look for and include measures that could be useful in understanding serial murderers. More specifically, I looked for key words in the data related to the theoretical constructs of psychopathy, dissociation, social learning theory, and techniques of neutralization to see if these concepts were present in the sample. Once these concepts were delineated, I searched for patterns and themes within them.

*Psychopathic Traits.* To analyze my first research question regarding psychopathic traits, I used the 20 characteristics of psychopathy found in the Psychopathic Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare 1991; see Appendix B). The items assess both the core personality traits of psychopaths (e.g., callousness, grandiosity, lack of empathy) and the antisocial behaviors associated with psychopathy (e.g., parasitic lifestyle, poor behavioral controls, irresponsibility). It is important to note that it is not the intention of the researcher to make any clinical diagnoses. The researcher is not trained in the PCL-R, or any other psychological or psychiatric evaluation. Because of this, time restrictions, and other limitations (e.g., the need for in-depth interviews and collateral information), no attempts at any diagnosis were made. Instead, I examined the data to see if the characteristics of psychopathy were found among my sample. If these characteristics were identified, the prevalence was examined and I looked for the presence of any patterns or themes.

*Dissociation.* Since the current study is using secondary data and the DES cannot be directly administered to the sample, I looked for key words related to dissociation to

explore whether serial murderers experience dissociative symptoms (i.e., amnesia, depersonalization/derealization, and absorption). Again, no attempt was made to make any diagnoses (e.g., dissociative disorders); I simply looked to see if dissociative experiences or symptoms could be identified in the sample of serial murderers.

*Learning.* To answer research questions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, variables were based off of social learning theory's four primary components: definitions, differential association, differential reinforcement, and imitation. I looked to see if these four components were identifiable in the sample. I investigated whether serial murderers show positive and/or negative definitions associated with their crimes by looking for key words and patterns regarding their approval or disapproval of the killings (e.g., believe that killing is ok, believe that killing is not ok) and their attitudes towards the law. I looked at their differential associations by looking at their exposure to violence and criminal behavior by answering questions such as: Are their intimate others involved in criminal behavior? How do their peers feel about criminal conduct? I will also look at the conventional behavior of their social networks: Are their friends/coworkers/family members married or in committed relationships? Do they maintain stable employment? Additionally, evidence of behavioral conditioning and reinforcement were also being examined. The certainty of punishment (i.e., perceived likelihood of detection) and severity of punishment (i.e., believed penalty if caught) will aid in the examination of reinforcement. The element of fear was also explored in relation to behavioral reinforcement: Does the serial murderer fear losing his or her family or job? Is there evidence of a previous divorce or relationship problems or loss of job? Are the serial murderer's parents divorced? Also, reinforcement will be explored through the expression of feelings. Do the

killings and/or intimate others provide a sense of calmness or relief? Are the serial murderers receiving satisfaction by acting out fantasies? Finally, the component of imitation was explored. Although it remains unlikely that serial murderers are surrounded by others who also kill, I looked for evidence of imitation regarding the behavior in relation to mention of imitating or emulating behaviors and/or characters in television programs, movies, video games, etc.

*Neutralization.* Since all of Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization are not applicable to the current study, I looked for evidence of the serial murderers applying the techniques of (1) the denial of responsibility, (2) the denial of the victim, and (3) the condemnation of the condemners. For serial murderers to show evidence of denying responsibility, they may maintain that the acts were beyond their control. Thus, I looked within the data for results of mental evaluations, assertions of mental illness or incapacity, in addition to legal claims or pleas of insanity. For denial of the victim, I attempted to identify cases where the serial murderers claimed that the victims deserved to be killed because of who they were (e.g., prostitutes). Evidence of the condemnation of the condemners included negative speech regarding others and casting a negative light on others. For example, the serial murderers may claim that their needs were not being met by their intimate others or that the police were not doing their jobs. In addition to identifying the employment of these techniques of neutralization, I also looked for themes and patterns within the data.

## METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that this study is not without methodological limitations. It is

important that these limitations be acknowledged from the onset of the study. First, there are a variety of difficulties involved in putting together a list that claims to be comprehensive. Apprehended serial murderers represent an essentially self-selecting sample, though they may not be representative of serial murderers as a group (Kraemer, Lord, and Heilbrun 2004). There may be murders that take place that are not recognized as such, or which are not attributed to a series linked to a single offender (i.e., linkage blindness). Conversely, there may be murders that are attributed to a specific offender, but that the offender did not actually commit, or crimes associated with particular offenders that may either exaggerate or understate the offender's criminal career. Even confessions must be taken with some caution, as there are many motives, rational or not, that might drive an offender to admit to more or less murders than he or she actually committed (Jenkins 1994). Additional limitations include the lack of accessibility to these offenders due to death or incarceration and the fact that many of the detailed reports remain in the custody of law enforcement and thus are unavailable to researchers (Kraemer, Lord, and Heilbrun 2004).

Additionally, the small number of serial offenders used in the current study and the fact that cases could not be drawn randomly means that the sample may be unrepresentative. Although serial murder is a rare event, 21 is an admittedly small sample size and may limit the generalizability of the findings. Any results should be taken with some degree of caution pending replication with a larger sample before generalizing to serial murder and serial murder offending.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

In this chapter I explore the findings relevant to each of the eight research questions regarding psychopathy, dissociation, social learning, and neutralization. Overall, the data revealed some predictable and interesting findings, some of which support previous theoretical propositions and others that do not. These findings are presented below.

To begin, a demographic description of the sample ( $N = 21$ ) is presented in Table 2. The sample of serial murderers consisted of all males, with 18 of them being white and three being black. The serial murderers ranged in age at the time of their first murder from 18 to 49 years. The age at the time of arrest ranged from 25 to 60 years. All of the serial murderers included in the current study were involved in a stable relationship (e.g., married, cohabitating with partner). In addition, the majority of the sample ( $n = 15$ ) had at least one child.



Table 2. Demographic Description of Sample

Offender name	Age at first murder	Age at time of arrest	Sex	Race	Marital status	# of children
Alcala, Rodney	33	35	M	W	Relationship	0
Armstrong, John	20	25	M	W	Married	2
Bishop, Arthur	28	32	M	W	Relationship	0
Carpenter, David	49	52	M	W	Engaged	3
Code, Nathaniel	28	31	M	B	Married	0
Cottingham, Richard	31	33	M	W	Married	3
Dillon, Thomas	39	42	M	W	Married	1
Durousseau, Paul	32	32	M	B	Married	2
Gacy, John	30	36	M	W	Married	2
Harvey, Donald	18	35	M	W	Relationship	0
Jespersen, Keith	35	40	M	W	Relationship	3
Kearney, Patrick	25	37	M	W	Relationship	0
Kibbe, Roger	36	50	M	W	Married	1
Kraft, Randy	27	38	M	W	Relationship	0
Rader, Dennis	29	60	M	W	Married	2
Ridgway, Gary	33	52	M	W	Married	1
Robinson, John	41	55	M	W	Married	4
Rogers, Dayton	30	34	M	W	Married	1
Suff, William	36	41	M	W	Married	3
Wallace, Henry	27	28	M	B	Relationship	1
Yates, Robert	23	36	M	W	Married	5

Table 3 presents frequencies and percentages for the presence of psychopathic traits in the sample of serial murderers. As can be seen, approximately half of the serial murderers (48% - 57%) showed each of six of the attributes of psychopathy (glibness and superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, conning and manipulative, lack of remorse, callous or lacking in empathy, and promiscuous sexual behavior). More specifically, Table 3 shows that 10 serial murderers (48%) were glib and superficially

charming, 11 (52%) had a grandiose sense of self-worth, 11 (52%) were conning and manipulative, 10 (48%) lacked remorse, 12 (57%) were callous or lacking in empathy, and 12 of the serial murderers (57%) exhibited promiscuous sexual behavior. With the exception of two traits (parasitic lifestyle and many short-term marital relationships), at least one serial murderer showed evidence of possessing each of the twenty psychopathic traits (range = 0 – 12). Interestingly, no more than 12 of the 21 serial murderers exhibited any one of the psychopathy attributes explored.

Table 3. Psychopathic Traits in Sample

Trait	(n)	Percentage
Glibness and Superficial Charm	10	48%
Grandiose Sense of Self-Worth	11	52%
Need for Stimulation and Proneness to Boredom	4	19%
Pathological Lying	7	33%
Conning and Manipulative	11	52%
Lack of Remorse or Guilt	10	48%
Shallow Affect	6	29%
Callous or Lacking in Empathy	12	57%
Parasitic Lifestyle	0	0%
Poor Behavioral Controls	8	38%
Promiscuous Sexual Behavior	12	57%
Early Behavioral Problems	2	10%
Lack of Realistic Long-Term Goals	2	10%
Impulsivity	2	10%
Irresponsibility	2	10%
Failure to Accept Responsibility for Own Actions	3	14%
Many Short-Term Marital Relationships	0	0%
Juvenile Delinquency	3	14%
Revocation of Conditional Release	7	33%
Criminal Versatility	8	38%

Table 4 depicts the symptoms of dissociation found in the sample of serial murderers. None of the serial murderers exhibited any evidence of amnesia or absorption. Four of the serial murderers (19%) showed depersonalization-derealization. The majority of the serial murderers in the sample, however, did not display any symptoms associated with dissociation (i.e., amnesia, depersonalization-derealization, or absorption).

Table 4. Dissociation in Sample

Dissociation Variable	(n)	Percentage
Amnesia	0	0%
Depersonalization-Derealization	4	19%
Absorption	0	0%

When reviewing the data, there was no mention of positive or negative definitions or specific attitudes towards the law (see Table 5). A significant portion of the sample (62%) did, however, exhibit elements of differential association (i.e., exposure to violence). As can be seen in Table 5, 43% of the serial murderers received satisfaction by acting out or fulfilling fantasies (i.e., differential reinforcement). Further, no offenders (0%) showed evidence of imitation by emulating the behavior of another.

Table 5. Characteristics of Learning in Sample

Learning Variable	(n)	Percentage
Definitions	0	0%
Differential Association	13	62%
Differential Reinforcement	9	43%
Imitation	0	0%

Table 6 presents the occurrence of neutralization in the sample of serial murderers. As can be seen, some of the serial murderers demonstrated each of the three techniques of neutralization examined in the study. Six (29%) showed a denial of

responsibility via legal claims or pleas of insanity. Five (24%) of the offenders contended that the victims deserved to be killed (denial of the victim) and five (24%) of the serial murderers also demonstrated condemnation of the condemners by casting a negative light or speaking negatively about others as a means of neutralizing their crimes.

Table 6. Techniques of Neutralization in Sample

Neutralization Technique	(n)	Percentage
Denial of Responsibility	6	29%
Denial of the Victim	5	24%
Condemnation of the Condemners	5	24%

Four additional themes were identified within the data during analysis. These themes were labeled *expectations of a monster*, *red flags*, *victim and partner selection*, and *denial*. In addition to the theoretical concepts regarding psychological and criminological attributes, these emergent themes will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

There have been no previous studies that have specifically investigated the ability of serial murderers to look and appear as utterly normal human beings, maintaining an outward appearance of a neat and orderly existence. This chapter will further discuss the criminological and psychological characteristics found within the sample, as well as additional themes identified during analysis in an attempt to better understand how serial murderers appear to maintain a conventional lifestyle during their cooling-off periods.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*Do serial murderers possess the attributes of psychopathy?*

The serial murderers in the current study showed consistent evidence of only six of the characteristics of psychopathy listed in the PCL-R. These offenders were characterized primarily by exhibiting glibness and superficial charm, a grandiose sense of self-worth, conning and manipulative, a lack of remorse or guilt, callous or lacking in empathy, and promiscuous sexual behavior.

*Glibness and Superficial Charm.* Of the 21 serial murderers in the study, 10 (48%) demonstrated a glib personality and appeared as superficially charming. The data indicate that these offenders need to feel that they are in control. They have a narcissistic self-concept, with little belief in the worth of others. Those in the sample who were glib and superficially charming often appeared very friendly and engaging, seeming very genuine to others. They were well-spoken, making sure to cast themselves in the best

light, and were able to easily draw others in due to their exuberant charm and charisma.

For example, Rodney Alcalá was described as:

...A con man so slick and persuasive he was once even a winning contestant on The Dating Game. "He looked really young, and he told me he was 24," recalls Libby, a pet groomer in El Monte, Calif., who appears in three of the photos. "He was so easy to trust. He had a way of talking to people that really put them at ease." (Tresniowski and Breuer 2010)

Dayton Rogers' victims were said to be unsuspecting of his sadistic desires and tendencies until they had already agreed to engage in bondage with him. His gregarious personality put his victims at ease, allowing him to get his targets in a position where he could easily carry out his crimes (Dobbert 2009). Similarly, Keppel and Birnes (2009:65) describe how Richard Cottingham and similar offenders are able to engage their victims, luring them into their final demise:

The victim's pain and terror are a stimulus to the killer, driving him into a greater frenzy that only serves to intensify the level of the victim's torture until the killer's lust is momentarily satisfied. To get to this level of sexual gratification, torture-killers are most adept at luring victims, capturing them, and then springing their traps. Most are smooth talkers and beguilingly charming, but deceitful and ultimately lethal. Torture-killers use all sort of conventional and innovative approaches to con their victims into a false feeling of safety.

In addition,

When asked about his initial meeting with Robinson, one employer said: "He gave a very good impression, well dressed, nice-looking... seemed to know a lot, very glib and a good speaker. He defrauded tens of thousands of dollars from various companies to help him along the way." (Berry-Dec 2009:11)

Gacy was a man who thrived on power and control. He was a sexual sadist who reveled in the pain of others. He was absolutely brutal and merciless with his victims and yet could be incredibly charming when he chose. He was an expert manipulator, choosing victims who were emotionally weak, sexually confused, and vulnerable. (Moss and Kottler 1999:29)

Overall, the serial murderers who were found to be glib and superficially

charming could often carry on engaging and entertaining conversations, appearing quite

knowledgeable in a variety of subjects. They tended to appear as friendly and pleasant, though their stories were sometimes beyond belief to others and their knowledge was phony. These individuals were typically outgoing and sociable.

*Grandiose Sense of Self-Worth.* Many (52%) of the serial murderers seemed to believe they were owed something and carried with them a sense of entitlement. They appeared to create a world in their own mind where they were quite important and untouchable by others. Most presented with extreme narcissism and egocentricity:

“He’s an egomaniac,” said Ron Breuss, a cold case detective with the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office. A prison official who knows Jespersion once said, “He put the ‘n’ in narcissist.” Jespersion has boasted of more than 100 killings, but Breuss said all but about 10 or 12 are doubtless fabrications. (Reed 2006)

JR [John Robinson] has always imagined that he is more intelligent than anyone else. It is an ego thing, a state of mind not uncommon among the more learned, and ‘intelligent’ of the serial murderer breed. One might imagine that an ‘intelligent’ person might learn from previous errors of judgment but, alas, the true sociopath does not. (Berry-Dee 2009:61)

Such was the intensity of the spotlight that shone on Gacy that he forgot at times that it was his *crimes* that had made him famous. Rather, he convinced himself that it was the force of his personality or his intellect that had won him all this attention. Even though he was about to die for his actions, I don’t think he ever had a single regret. He absolutely loved the attention he was getting, the hundreds of requests for interviews, and all the fan mail. (Moss and Kottler 1999:100)

In a 1991 interview with a reporter from the *Columbus Dispatch*, Harvey gave a rare glimpse into his mindset:

"Why did you kill?"

"Well, people controlled me for 18 years, and then I controlled my own destiny. I controlled other people's lives, whether they lived or died. I had that power to control."

"What right did you have to decide that?"

"After I didn't get caught for the first 15, I thought it was my right. I appointed myself judge, prosecutor and jury. So I played God." (Lohr n.d.)

Often they would brag to others and fabricate their importance and accomplishments:



When Dennis Rader talks about his hit kits and his hit clothes, what he's trying to do, again, is convince you that he's extremely intelligent. It's really – if you could just see the subtext of what he's really saying is, he's saying, look at how smart I am. Look at how well organized I am. Look at how successful I was. I thought this out and that's why I got away with it for a very long time. (2005)

On each of the next four pages, he created another type of chart, comparing himself with other serial killers, the ones with whom he yearned to share equal billing. This was another example of Rader's bloated ego at work. His murders made him somebody, although he seemed to have forgotten that they started out as a secret, something he wanted no one to know about. But the moment he realized how much attention his crimes were receiving from the media, he reveled in the notoriety. (Douglas and Dodd 2007:290)

He told his peers that he was planning to become a priest and to someday work in Rome, but no one, probably not even John [Robinson] himself, knows whether this was what he truly wanted to do with his life or this was just his way of getting attention... True to form, JR never finished his training but this did not prevent him from getting a job at a children's hospital where he papered the walls of his office with fake diplomas and certificates. (Berry-Dee 2009:7)

For many of the serial murderers, their sense of self overshadowed any consideration of other people. Their own gratification was paramount to the needs or consequences of anyone else:

Now that he was about to turn fifty-nine, he'd more or less put BTK into retirement, but this article was stirring something from within. Over the next few years, he'd planned to take all of BTK's drawings, pictures, and writings, transfer them onto CDs, and place everything in a safe-deposit box for others to find after his funeral. On the CDs, he'd have laid it all out just like the credits at the beginning and end of a movie, listing the names of the people who'd played a part in the criminal drama, describing their roles, thanking some of them, and calling the whole thing BTK Productions. Wouldn't that be a kick—not just to his wife and children and then people at Christ Lutheran, who thought they knew their husband and father and fellow worshipper, but to the entire city of Wichita and its incompetent police department! The bogeyman had been living right next to them all along, going to his job each day, coming home and watching BTK reports on the evening news with his wife, and praying at one of their churches. They'd only get the satisfaction of solving their grand mystery after he was gone—and he'd get the satisfaction of never having spent a day in prison. (Singular 2006:12)

This subgroup of serial murderers believed that they had worth and abilities much greater than they actually did. Their egocentricity sometimes allowed them to preclude

embarrassment concerning legal issues and believed that any involvement with the law was a result of bad luck. These individuals with an ostentatious sense of worth were often involved in careers with status or control and were exceedingly narcissistic.

*Conning and Manipulative.* More than half of the serial murderers (52%) presented themselves as conning and manipulative. They often used deceit and fraud to cheat and manipulate others. Those who appeared as conning and manipulative would remorselessly steal from or use other people, putting their own personal gain above all else. They could easily get others to believe what they wanted them to:

He was later characterized by friends and others as one who would manipulate situations and people to his advantage and try to place them under his control. The county attorney in Waterloo, Iowa, attributed Gacy's prominence in the community to a "unique ability to manipulate people and ingratiate himself." (Egger 1998b:111)

"A look at his past suggests he also can be called a serial user – a narcissistic man who didn't hesitate to take advantage of a slew of people in his often grand-scale cons" (Smith 2000).

"A liar, scrounger and a cheat on the run for misrepresentation and commercially ritualized fraud" (Berry-Dee 2009).

John Robinson was described as an individual who consistently scammed and cheated others, while still appearing kind and sociable:

I believe him to be a con man out of control. He leaves in his wake many unanswered questions and missing persons...I have observed Robinson's sociopathic tendencies, habitual criminal behavior, inability to tell the truth, and scheming to cover his own actions at the expense of others. I was not surprised to see he had a good institution adjustment in Kansas considering that he is personable and friendly to those around him. (Berry-Dee 2009:31)

David Carpenter was similarly described as someone who could continuously manipulate people while maintaining a façade of credibility:

"Carpenter was the kind of guy," recalled one prison guard, "who could be standing in a rain storm and lie about the weather...he could also get people to do

things for him under the guise of innocent assignments. He had the habit of creating a colorful and dramatic cover story to hide his dealings, no matter how innocent, with these people.” (Graysmith 1991:44)

As such, Carpenter would use his disability as a means to further manipulate and gain compassion from others:

They not only liked him but all seemed to feel sorry for him. It might have been because the man suffered from both poor eyesight and a crippling stutter...Roberta thought Carpenter was liked because he had an ability to gain sympathy and had a talent for manipulating people. (Graysmith 1991:11)  
After committing a brutal crime, Rodney Alcala used his ability to cheat and

manipulate others to evade authorities:

Alcala, who claimed he had a genius-level IQ, earned a fine-arts degree from UCLA and studied film under Roman Polanski before his first brush with the law. In 1968 a motorist in Los Angeles saw him lure an 8-year-old schoolgirl into his Hollywood apartment. When police officers broke in, they found the girl—nearly beaten to death with a steel bar—but just missed Alcala, who escaped.

After that, he showed a remarkable flair for deceiving people. Alcala fled east and worked as an arts-camp counselor in New Hampshire, even as the FBI was putting him on its Ten Most Wanted list. He also persuaded dozens of women that he was a fashion photographer. (Tresniowski and Breuer 2010)

Likewise, Gary Bishop remained a fugitive by conning and manipulating others:

Gary Bishop was on the lam, an unlikely fugitive who would spend the next five years living under pseudonyms, finding work where he could, stealing money when it suited him. The arrest warrant issued for his probation violation would never be served.

Bishop did not run far when he went into hiding. A simple name change was enough to throw police off his track, and Bishop remained in Salt Lake City, reborn as "Roger W. Downs." He used that name to join the Big Brother program, thereby placing himself in close proximity to boys craving a sympathetic father figure. (Newton n.d.)

These conning and manipulative offenders frequently used scams to manipulate others for their own personal gain. They were willing to use others to their benefit in areas such as status, money, sex, and power.

*Lack of Remorse or Guilt.* The sample of serial murderers showed a strong pattern of lacking any remorse or guilt for their crimes. Ten (48%) of the offenders in the sample showed no care for how their actions affected others. They often saw themselves as the victims and would use countless excuses for their actions, frequently blaming others.

For example, Keith Jespersen's daughter described her father's lack of conscience: "I realized that he doesn't feel guilt," said Jespersen's daughter. "My dad is sick, and I don't have a relationship with somebody who is sick" (Mari 2008). "My dad did not feel any regret, remorse, compassion or shame for what he had done. He didn't take any emotional accountability; he had no conscience. It was a big joke to him" (Moore and Cook 2009:179).

Some of the serial murderers would consistently feel and express no remorse for their crimes, while others verbalized remorse but their actions seem to show otherwise. Their inability to empathize with others allowed for the minimization of the impact of their actions on others:

Following his arrest, Gacy seemed to feel no remorse or concern for his victims. During his confession, he spoke continuously about his murderous actions, reflecting no emotion. He discussed his victims with the police in an almost clinical fashion with no show of remorse. (Egger 1998b:111)

Keith Jespersen was quite transparent with his lack of remorse: "I laughed. I didn't feel remorseful at all. To me she was just another bitchy woman, better off dead," he callously admitted (Olsen 2002:185).

The objectification of victims often precluded any remorse about their actions. Psychopaths are incapable of accepting blame and lack any remorse for the harm they inflict upon others. They frequently show no sense of shame, humiliation, or regret (Cleckley 1982). A few of the serial murderers in the sample even gave detailed and

graphic confessions, describing their crimes with no sense of remorse or guilt present:

“Harvey described details of his murders matter-of-factly, ‘Like he would tell you that he had gone out to get a sandwich for lunch. He was incapable of feeling the things most of us do – remorse, compassion, empathy’” (Kiesewetter 2012).

“During his confession, Ridgway proved to be proud of his crimes. He told investigators that he considered killing prostitutes his ‘career’ and the thing he was good at” (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler 2006).

Conversely, some of the offenders in the sample expressed remorse for the crimes they committed. Whether this remorse was sincere or not remains unknown.

Armstrong, who told police in a written statement last April that he was "guilty, sorry and angry" for strangling Jordan, also is charged with strangling four other prostitutes and assaulting three others. (Lewis 2001)

"He expressed remorse several times and was crying like a baby," said Assistant Police Chief Marvin Winkler. "Basically, he told us he either killed or tried to kill every prostitute he'd ever had sex with." (Gribben n.d.)

[Arthur Bishop] [a]pologized to the victims’ families and begged their forgiveness. On several occasions he expressed his deep regrets and sorrow. To prove sincerity and to show his willingness to do anything to help right the wrongs he committed, Arthur Gary Bishop stopped his appeals process to allow himself to be executed. Although his remorse appeared to have been sincere, Bishop recognized that what he had become had completely engulfed him. Shortly before his execution, he commented that even though he was deeply sorrowful for his deeds, he knew that if he were released he would continue to kill. (Hickey 2006)

Reading from a prepared three-page statement, Mr. Wallace expressed remorse for what happened and said he wished he could bring all the women back to life if that meant giving up his life.

“What words in any language can I say to you to comfort you or free you from this mental prison I put you in?” he said, addressing the gallery. “I'm sorry. I apologize I didn't mean to do it....

“None of these women, your daughters, your sisters or your children, in any way deserved what they got. They did nothing to me to warrant their deaths.” (Press 1997)

While many of the offenders in the sample expressed no trepidation for how the

consequences of their actions affected others, several of the offenders did, in fact, convey a sense of remorse or guilt. As the majority of serial murderers in the sample ultimately confessed to their crimes, it remains possible that the remorse expressed was simply an attempt to mitigate their crimes and receive a lesser sentence.

*Callous or Lacking in Empathy.* Another psychopathic trait found to be abundant in the sample was a characteristic of being callous and/or lacking in empathy. Twelve (57%) serial murderers were egotistical and self-absorbed. They frequently showed no care for what happened to others and were unable to relate to the feelings of others. These offenders showed a tendency to believe that others who showed weakness were deserving of manipulation. The serial murderers presenting as callous or lacking in empathy ultimately displayed a disruption in personal emotional reactions to others and a true sense of cold-heartedness.

Oh, I think that most of the detectives who had an opportunity to look him in the eye really were, I think, more than anything, shocked at his lack of emotion. He was to me just a stone. There's no compassion. There's no remorse. There's no feeling for these girls at all and these young women at all. They were garbage to him, said Reichert. (2004)

For a half-hour, he listened in court with an utter lack of expression as his own accounting of how he picked up each victim and where he dumped the body was read aloud. In the most matter-of-fact way, he confirmed the details, responding "yes" over and over in a clear but subdued voice, as victims' relatives wept quietly in the courtroom. (Johnson 2003)

Keith Jespersen's daughter repeatedly expressed her father's capacity to be insensitive and cruel:

From the time of his arrest, my dad seemed determined to haunt everyone, including us, with his callous behavior toward his victims and with details of the crimes he had committed. During his many letter-writing campaigns to reporters and website authors, he sometimes referred to his victims as "piles of garbage." (Moore and Cook 2009:178)

I always knew that my father had a bizarre sense of humor, but when I read Julie's name included in the description—that he could write something so cold and callous about the woman he had told me he wanted to build a life with—it floored me. Despite my father's generous qualities, he absolutely lacked boundaries, and he lacked compassion. (Moore and Cook 2009:178)

These individuals do not give any thought to the needs, feelings, fears, or rights of others.

Mike Miller, who served as special prosecutor in Dillon's case, doesn't mourn him. "He killed purely for the pleasure of killing. He wanted the thrill. He was an evil man. I can't say I have any sadness about him departing this Earth." Miller's most-chilling memory of Dillon came when the defendant was being questioned about fatally shooting a man who had very long hair. Dillon was asked if he had considered the possibility that his victim could have been a woman. "He said, 'What do you think? I couldn't care less. It wouldn't have made a difference to me,'" Miller said. I'll just say, "Adios." (Bennett n.d.)

Many of these offenders simply did not seem to care what transpired in the lives of others or how their actions affected the families and loved ones of their victims. It is interesting to note, however, that while callous individuals typically are unable to relate to the feelings of others and simply have no concern for them, the serial murderers in the current study were all maintaining intimate relationships with others, some for many years. Further, many of them did appear to have genuine feelings and emotions concerning their partners, spouses, and/or children. Interestingly, it was some of the same offenders who expressed extreme callousness or a lack in empathy towards their victims who also expressed what appeared to be sincere affection towards their families.

*Promiscuous Sexual Behavior.* Fifty-seven percent of the sample exhibited promiscuous sexual behavior. More specifically, a large number of the offenders in the sample had a history of sex crimes. Many also had a history of visiting prostitutes with some contracting sexually transmitted diseases. For example, John Gacy was arrested and convicted in Waterloo, Iowa in 1968 for sodomy on 15 and 16-year-old youths; he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was also arrested in Illinois in 1972 for aggravated

battery and reckless conduct, which was a sex-related offense (1984).

Similarly, Dayton Rogers' first known attack was at the age of 18 in 1972 when he stabbed a 15-year-old girl after taking her to a wooded area to have sex. He was sent to the state mental hospital in 1973 after striking two girls. He was released in 1974 and continued his crimes for more than a decade. During his murder trial, jurors heard graphic stories of how he would pick up prostitutes and drive them to secluded areas where he would stab and torture his victims (Bella 2012; Duara 2012).

Rodney Alcala had a long history of violence against young women. In 1972, he was convicted of kidnapping, raping and beating an 8-year-old girl in Hollywood but was paroled only two years later. At the time he abducted and killed his first victim, he was awaiting trial on charges of beating and raping another girl, for which he was convicted in 1980 and sentenced to a nine-year prison term (Esquivel and Goffard 2010).

His juvenile records show an embittered, incorrigible teenager with five arrests on sex charges, a history of one escape from Juvenile Hall, and an additional two walkaways from the same facility. Carpenter often bragged to the other inmates that he had spent his teen years getting into trouble raping girls. "By the time I was eighteen I had had intercourse fifty times, sometimes with consent, but most often by force," he said. (Graysmith 1991:39)

Roger Kibbe had gotten a sexually transmitted disease from one of his victims, which his wife knew about (2008), while Gary Ridgway's wife did not know until years later that her husband regularly worried about sexually transmitted diseases because he had contracted numerous in the past and used genital washing as a means of "prevention" (Morehead 2007).

In some, their sexual relationships were described as casual and impersonal. Paul Dourousseau testified in the guilt phase of his trial that he had a very active sex life with a significant number of partners. He fathered four children from three different women



(2010a). He admitted to having sex with at least 20 women, despite being married since 1995 (Schoettler 2007). Likewise, John Robinson had met and had relationships with a number of women during his marriage (Berry-Dee 2009). Henry Wallace had a child from a previous marriage, was estranged from a previous wife, and lived with a girlfriend until his arrest. Another woman was pregnant with his child at the time of his arrest, and he claimed to be having consensual relations with about 10 other women (Albarus 1996).

David Carpenter was first incarcerated in 1947 at the age of 17 for allegedly having oral sex with a three-year-old girl. He denied the charge but spent three months in Napa State Hospital. In 1950, he was arrested on charges of raping a 17-year-old girl, but the charges were dropped. Ten years later, he was arrested a third time. A military policeman shot and wounded Carpenter when the officer found him using a hammer to beat a secretary who had refused his sexual advances. He went to federal prison for nine years (Mitchell 2010).

In 1969, ten months after his release, Carpenter sexually attacked two women and stole a car. He then robbed and kidnapped one of them. He was eventually convicted of robbery, kidnapping, and rape and went to state prison for seven years where he escaped for a brief period of time. After getting out in 1977, he returned to federal prison for violating his parole. In 1979, Carpenter was placed in a halfway house while awaiting parole. Three months later, the first trailside murder occurred (Mitchell 2010).

It is important to understand that while more than half of the sample exhibited promiscuous sexual behavior, a large number of these serial murderers did not. Some were married for several years, committed to their partners and families. However, even as these individuals were seemingly maintaining monogamous relationships during their

cooling-off periods (e.g., not visiting prostitutes, not involved in other sexual relationships), they were still brutally murdering their victims, sometimes involving some sort of sexual component to the crime.

Ultimately, the serial murderers in the current study only demonstrated a pattern of some of the traits associated with psychopathy. Although no attempt was being made to diagnose any of the offenders with psychopathy, the findings suggest that many of the offenders do not overwhelmingly fit the profile of psychopathy. While some of the traits are present in many of the serial murderers, psychopathy does not appear to be a comprehensive explanation for the duplicitous lifestyle that these offenders maintain.

*Do serial murderers experience symptoms of dissociation?*

There was little evidence that any of the serial murderers experienced dissociation (i.e., amnesia, depersonalization-derealization, or absorption). As such, it appears that these serial murderers are not blocking out or avoiding memories or feelings. A few of the offenders did claim that they had multiple personalities or that another personality was responsible for the murders. For example:

Rader himself, talking frankly with the detectives during his thirty-three-hour interrogation, said there was nothing in his family or his past that made him what he was. He argued that his own explanation—that there was a demon within, a monster that controlled him. “Factor X” as he sometimes called it—was the only one that made sense. How else do you explain a man who made many friends but strangled people, who lovingly raised two children but murdered children? (Wenzl, Potter, Kelly, and Laviana 2007:359)

Keith Jespersen provided an example of a time during childhood when he turned violent with another child. He claimed that another part of him took control as he watched:

For a while Keith had problems with a mischievous boy named Martin. “His parents would bring him over when they visited and he was always getting into

trouble and blaming me. Dad would punish me in front of everybody. One day I'd had enough. I cornered Martin behind the garage and yelled, 'I'm gonna kill you, you son of a bitch.' When Dad pulled me off, Martin was unconscious. I would have killed him if I hadn't been stopped—not a doubt in my mind. I wasn't surprised to get the belt. That was one time when I was guilty.”

Looking back, Keith considered the incident as a watershed in his early development. “That’s when I began to think of myself as two people, one watching the other. When I was kicking Martin’s ass, a gentler part of me stood by and watched. Maybe I’m still that way. When I’m taking care of a serious problem, I feel like I’m on the outside looking in. I can honestly say that the person that beat Martin was not the real me. I would never hurt another kid, no matter what he did. It wasn’t my nature. But that day I just kind of stepped aside and let the bad side take over. It was the same with the women I killed. My murders happened in slow motion and later I would fantasize about what I *should* have done. I’d be thinking, *If only I could do it all over, I would do it different.* But the girls ended up just as dead.” (Olsen 2002:49-50)

It seems, however, that these were only statements made in an effort to avoid culpability and conviction. At no time were any of these serial murderers found to be mentally ill, or truly suffering from any type of dissociation or dissociative disorder. This finding indicates that these offenders do not dissociate in order to maintain both a conventional existence and a murderous one.

### *Learning*

*Do serial murderers show positive and/or negative definitions associated with their crimes?* There was nothing within the data discussing positive or negative definitions or approval or disapproval of murdering. They were not exposed to motives, attitudes, or rationalizations favorable to law breaking. There was no particular mention by any of the serial murderers as to their attitudes towards the law. By definition, serial murderers are able to avoid detection for periods of time, committing multiple murders with cooling-off periods in between killings. As such, it is not surprising that their criminal attitudes and beliefs were not specifically mentioned in the data. Therefore, this

component of learning was deemed invalid to the current study.

*Are serial murderers regularly exposed to violence or other criminal behavior?*

Findings from the current study demonstrated that the majority (62%) of the serial murderers were regularly exposed to violence or criminal behavior (i.e., differential associations). For all of these offenders, the exposure took place during their childhood or adolescence and generally involved witnessing and/or suffering abuse (physical, mental, and/or sexual). None of the offenders were regularly exposed to violence during the time of their crime series. For example, Henry Wallace was a victim of child abuse and was also exposed to other factors that may play a role in development:

Along with the physical and psychological abuse, his mother reportedly exposed him to true crime detective magazines and hardcore sexual pornography which, according to some psychiatrists, impacted Wallace's psychological and sexual development. As a young boy he sometimes served as a sex toy for young girls in the community, and his need for affection was reportedly so severe "that he mistook sexual exploitation for affection." (Albarus 1996)

Although many of the offenders in the sample witnessed or suffered abuse during childhood, they did not surround themselves with others involved in criminal behavior during the time of the murders. In fact, peers tended to not be supportive of any criminal behavior in general. Moreover, many of the serial murderers were exposed to others in committed, healthy relationships and did not witness acts of violence or aggression by others.

John Wayne Gacy, for example, a man who murdered thirty-three boys and men in suburban Chicago was severely abused by a domineering father who beat him and his mother. Ultimately, Gacy identified with his aggressive father and grew up to crave power. His next-door neighbor explained to me that Gacy dominated a conversation, dominated his wife, and dominated his victims. He was obsessed with a need to control the course of each and every situation in which he participated. (Levin 2008:30)

However, John Gacy was friends with many of his neighbors and they frequently

gathered together for drinks or a game of poker inside their homes (Office n.d.).

Dobbert (2009:145) contends that the crimes of Dayton Rogers were a product of him witnessing and enduring abuse by his father:

The etiology of Rogers' pathology is directly related to his father's cruel abuse of him and his siblings and his father's insatiable need for sexual activity with his wife. His father's behaviors of being entitled to sex created the model that Rogers adopted and developed. Being the subject of cruel abuse forced Rogers to rely only upon himself, and thus to develop a pathological level of egocentricity that precluded consideration of others.

Nevertheless, many of the offenders were not victims of child abuse and still went on to commit multiple murder. For example, John Robinson did not suffer from an abusive childhood. His folks were said to be decent, hard-working, and of strong Catholic faith (Berry-Dee 2009), but he was ultimately convicted of killing eight people.

Because many of the serial murderers were not exposed to criminal attitudes or behaviors (e.g., abuse, violence) and still went on to commit the very same crimes as those who were exposed to criminal or violent behaviors, differential association also cannot be used as a comprehensive explanation of the serial murderer's duplicitous existence. Furthermore, the offenders in the sample did not surround themselves with others who were involved in any criminal behavior, which also adds to the inference that the ability to hide their crimes from those closest to them is not a learned behavior.

*Do serial murderers receive positive reinforcements for their conforming behavior? Do serial murderers receive positive reinforcements for their criminal behavior?* The findings of the current study are supportive of positive reinforcement for both the conventional behavior and the criminal behavior of the serial murderers in the sample (43%). When examining the relationships of the offenders, a pattern regarding fear emerged. To be more specific, several offenders expressed fear of losing their

family. For example:

“...I realized that whatever else I did in life, I had to be near my kids. They were the world to me, my only real world. They loved me totally, the way I loved them” (Olsen 2002:29).

When asked how he was able to stop killing, Gary Ridgway responded by saying that he was able to stop murdering after meeting his third wife:

Immediately, the tears welled up in Gary’s eyes and his voice choked up, as he struggled to get words out. “I met Judith,” he said again. That was the answer. He broke down and sobbed for a few minutes. The mere thought and mention of Judith brought Gary to immediate tears. He really did love Judith deeply. Unlike the prostitutes, whom he’d had to pay, Judith had accepted him as he was, no-questions-asked, unconditional love. It was an incredible juxtaposition. One minute he was describing his killing spree, rather methodically and matter-of-factly. The next minute, he was sobbing at the thought of the wife he loved so much. (Prothero and Smith 2006:243)

Gary Ridgway’s defense attorney later stated, “When I thought of Gary crying about what he’d done to Judith, I realized that this was by far his worst fear—that Judith would repudiate him” (Prothero and Smith 2006:487).

Conversely, a strong pattern of positive reinforcement was identified regarding fantasy and the murderous actions of the offenders. Some sort of sexual or violent fantasy motivated many of the serial murderers. Through committing their crimes, they were able to act out their fantasies, making them a reality. The satisfaction they received from acting out these fantasies served as reinforcement for their vicious crimes:

Although Mr. Wallace developed an outer shell of niceness and politeness, his inner reality was quite different. His view of reality became distorted. He believed that women were all-powerful and terrifying, that women would hurt and betray others. His fear of women led him into a fantasy world in which he would be all-powerful in regard to women. This fantasy world eventually led to violence, such as the mutilation of an animal and the molestation of a child. When his own mother condoned the molestation, Mr. Wallace got the message that his acting out was acceptable, which led to more powerful fantasies and then more acting out as a learned pattern response. For some people, such as Mr. Wallace, the violent acting out can take on a compulsive quality. (1996:42)

He enjoyed the process of accomplishing the power of control over his victim so

much that he saved his sexual expression for later. That's why he took souvenirs so he could masturbate and satisfy himself sexually at a later time. That's also why he could have an apparently normal sexual relationship with a woman he didn't kill or torture because he had all his little trinkets or trophies, such as the jewelry and clothing of his victims, around him. Unbeknownst to his wife, girlfriends, or other willing sex partners, his fantasy life was driven much beyond what was happening at the moment with that particular partner. In fact, Cottingham would probably say that his fantasies, even during sex in his normal relationships, were always driven by the images of sexual domination of victims and the torture and bondage he inflicted. His sexual satisfaction, even though to his sex partner he appeared normal, was driven by an intensely perverted sexual fantasy interpretation. (Keppel and Birnes 2009:92-3)

Though he robbed most of his victims before he killed them, the hard-line underlying motive for the murders was not theft, however, but sex. He fulfilled his sensual fantasies of power and control. The thefts funded his crack habit, but sex was the initiator. As the months progressed and he had been fired from one job after another, the only way he knew how to quickly get cash was through his friends, unwilling or otherwise. Robbing the women provided a more practical threshold to his more ultimate carnal desires. (Geringer n.d.)

One serial murderer (Arthur Bishop) explained how the use of pornography eventually led to a cycle of fantasy and obsession where he ultimately used his crimes to fulfill his illicit desires:

Pornography was a determining factor in my downfall. Somehow, I became sexually attracted to young boys and I would fantasize them naked. I would need pictures that were most explicit and revealing. Some of the materials I received were shocking and disgusting at first, but it shortly became commonplace and acceptable. Finding and procuring sexually arousing materials became an obsession. For me, seeing pornography was like lighting a fuse on a stick of dynamite. I became stimulated and had to gratify my urges or explode. (Reynolds 1989)

The following was said about another offender in the sample: "Though he robbed most of his victims before he killed them, the hardline underlying motive for the murders was not theft, however, but sex. He fulfilled his sensual fantasies of power and control" (Geringer n.d.). Moreover, one offender had created multiple fantasies throughout his life. Although all of them were not violent or sexual in nature, they did all share a

common theme of power and control:

Smalldon says [Dillon] was living in a fantasy world of his own creation: “He talked on and on about the various fantasy roles that he had envisioned himself in over the years. They ran the gamut from being president of the United States to being lead singer for the Doors, or the Beatles, to being brought out of retirement by the Cleveland Browns to lead his team to the Super Bowl. But they were all linked together by the theme of power, prestige, influence and grandiosity. (Kohn 2009)

Both aspects of the serial murderers’ duplicitous lifestyles (i.e., conventional and criminal) were often reinforced by the rewards they perceived or received after the behaviors. Their conventional lifestyles were frequently reinforced by the fear of losing their spouses or families and their criminal lifestyles were typically reinforced by the successful completion of fantasy. Although differential reinforcement was present in the sample, it is important to note that it was only found in 43% of the sample, making it also an unlikely explanation of serial murderers’ ability to maintain an ordinary existence during their cooling-off periods.

*Are serial murderers imitating behaviors that they see elsewhere?* None of the data indicates that any imitation is taking place on the part of the serial murderers. There was no mention of any of the offenders witnessing violent or aggressive actions or viewing them in any type of media format and then modeling or imitating this behavior in their crimes. The fact that many of these offenders seemed to show true emotions towards their intimate others demonstrates that they are not simply imitating and modeling their behaviors.

Ultimately, there was little support for the idea that serial murderers learn their murderous behaviors from others. In fact, the offenders in the sample seemed to surround themselves with individuals who typically obeyed the law and did not support any type of



criminal behavior. If these individuals possibly learned any behavior, it was likely only those behaviors associated with the conventional side of their lives. Most of the offenders came from loving homes, maintained monogamous relationships and stable employment, and had a reputable social network. Essentially, even though some believe all behavior to be a product of learning, the findings of the current study do not support the theory that serial murderers maintain two separate lives by learning all of their behaviors from others.

### *Neutralization*

*Do serial murderers neutralize their crimes? The Denial of Responsibility.* While a few of the serial murderers claimed mental illness, none was found by the court to be mentally ill (e.g., not guilty by reason of insanity, guilty but mentally ill). The findings do not support the notion of any mental illness in any of the serial murderers, nor do they demonstrate that the acts were truly beyond the control of any of the offenders:

“It was like an out-of-body experience,” he said of one slaying. “It was like I didn’t want to, but something or somebody was taking over my body, and I couldn’t even stop when I tried to stop” (Nowell 1996).

After confessing to the murders, Gacy spoke of four different Johns within himself and told the police that he did not know all of the personalities (1984). He explained that there was John the contractor, John the clown, and John the politician. The fourth person went by the name Jack Hanley. Jack was the killer and did all the evil things (Office n.d.). Gacy was diagnosed as having borderline schizophrenia or borderline personality by one psychologist and diagnosed as a pseudo-neurotic paranoid schizophrenic by another (1984). However, the prosecution’s experts all testified that he was suffering only from a personality defect, that he was never psychotic, and that he was legally responsible for his criminal acts under the law, with which the jury agreed (1984).

Dennis Rader insisted that his acts were eventually beyond his own control, yet admitted that he remembers everything about his crimes:

“I remember every detail from every crime,” he replied. “I remember every detail

like most people do their favorite movie, and I play it over and over again inside my head. That's really how it all started back when I was a child. I had these thoughts and images that played out inside my head. The more I thought about them, the stronger they became. I just got so caught up in them that pretty soon...they took me over. I couldn't fight them anymore." (Douglas and Dodd 2007:301)

Additionally, many of the serial murderers ultimately confessed to their crimes.

This admission of guilt negates any claim of mental illness or plea of insanity. In addition to there being no diagnoses of mental illness within the sample, these confessions invalidate any allegation that the acts of murder were beyond their control.

*The Denial of the Victim.* There was some support for the neutralization technique of denial of the victim in that some of the serial murderers (24%) claimed that the victims deserved to be killed. In many cases the victims were prostitutes, which justified the killings in the offenders' minds.

He said that killing gave him a thrill, and the women he had chosen were all disposable, used only to satisfy his pleasure. He went out at night with the intent to kill, but did not pick the victim until he got to the scene. He also said that he picked prostitutes because he hated them, and they were easy targets because they were accessible and less likely to be reported missing. (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler 2006)

The most distressing aspect of this sordid situation is the defendant's inability to understand or recognize that he did anything wrong. The constant refrain is that the victims were prostitutes. In his opinion, apparently, prostitutes are not human beings but rather objects to be used and abused. He, evidently, cannot draw a distinction between willingness to engage in sexual activity for money and the lack of willingness to be beaten, burned, bitten and carved upon. (1981)

"The whole incident made me decide that if I had to have forced sex, I'd better stick to hookers. They were in no position to blow the whistle. I figured they deserved whatever they got. Most of them were dopers anyway" (Olsen 2002:75).

"Why only prostitutes?"

"They were accessible," Gary said.

"Why did you focus on prostitutes?"

"Because they...they weren't..." he mumbled something we couldn't catch.

"Expendable," he said. "Maybe that was what the word is. Expendable. They

were...have sex with 'em and...I couldn't kill an ordinary woman. I'd kill a prostitute." (Prothero and Smith 2006:339)

In other cases, the victims were blamed for their own deaths because of their behavior or actions:

"...It was always his victims who were responsible for being murdered...they 'pissed him off', tried to 'pussy-whip' him, make unwarranted demands of his generosity." (Berry-Dee 2009)

"I get questions all the time from people asking how is it I picked my victims...and I tell them they picked me. They chose to be with me. It was their decision to push me along to do their will. I was just a person listening to them dig their own graves." (Berry-Dee 2009:168)

"Look," he continued between chews, his mouth working hard on the meat, "it was consensual sex. We fell asleep together. Then I thought he was trying to kill me." "But he was just making you a nice breakfast," I argued.

"He ruined my rug," he said, as if that explained why he deserved to die.

"Besides, he shouldn't have tried to attack me."

"How did it *feel* to kill that kid?" I asked. He shrugged. "It didn't feel like anything. I didn't care. He needed to die." (Moss and Kottler 1999:212-3)

"They all deserved to die," he explained. "If you lead the kinds of lives they did, something was bound to happen."

I just nodded, amazed at his ability to deny responsibility. He seemed to be saying: *Even if I did kill them, it was their fault.*

"They went out in the streets and hustled their asses," he pointed out. "That's why they got fucked over." (Moss and Kottler 1999:225)

Because many of these serial murderers blamed the victims for their crimes, it is possible that they are using victim precipitation as a means of neutralizing their crimes. By "choosing" to engage in risky behavior (e.g., prostitution), the offenders may believe that the victims deserved what they got and essentially provoked their own murders.

Regardless, the majority of serial murderers in the sample (76%) did not attempt to neutralize the murders by denying the victims. This alone demonstrates that this technique of neutralization does not account for their ability to carry out a duplicitous lifestyle.

*The Condemnation of the Condemners*. Finally, although there was some evidence of the offenders neutralizing their crimes by condemning the condemners (24%), the support for this technique was minimal.

“Harvey seemed to cast blame on the hospitals for allowing him to continue to treat patients who angered him and to friends who tried to mess in his life” (Montaldo n.d.-a).

“This transference of blame syndrome somewhat sums up Keith Hunter Jespersen. The man is totally unable to accept responsibility for any wrongdoing whatsoever” (Berry-Dee 2009).

This study provided little support for the contention that serial murderers are able to maintain their duplicitous lifestyles by neutralizing their crimes. Although some of the offenders displayed each of the three techniques of neutralization, most of the offenders did not. Because a significant portion of the serial murderers did not neutralize their crimes, this still does not make clear how serial murderers persist in their conventional and criminal behaviors over extended periods of time.

## EMERGENT THEMES

In addition to the concepts directly related to the research questions, four primary themes were identified and labeled during data analysis: (1) expectations of a monster, (2) red flags, (3) victim and partner selection, and (4) denial.

### *Expectations of a Monster*

The serial murderers in the current study were able to avoid suspicion and detection for long periods of time. What seemed apparent within the sample was that these serial murderers appeared quite ‘normal’ to others during their cooling-off periods. It was as if society expects some obvious sign identifying these individuals as the killers

they are. Instead, they blended in with the rest of society. This theme, identified during analysis of the data, was labeled *expectations of a monster*. Repeatedly in the data there was insistence that someone capable of such crimes could not or would not be able to maintain an intimate relationship—especially for several years, as in some cases—or a steady career or social life without others knowing about their crimes:

There's the wife of 23 years, the religious upbringing, the military career as a respected helicopter pilot, the new job as a \$13.75-an-hour crane operator, the split-level home with forsythia bushes and a backyard barbecue. Yates sent out Christmas cards and won Army medals for meritorious service. "Bobby is a loving, caring, sensitive son; a fun-loving and giving brother; an understanding, generous and dedicated father who enjoys playing ball, fishing and camping with his kids," the Yates family said in their only statement to date. "Bobby is the type of person you would want to have as your best friend." (Hornblower 2000; Turvey 2002)

"What you see on the videotape is someone who looks and presents in a way that seems frighteningly normal, and the reality is that most of the people who commit crimes like those that Dillon committed come across just that way," says Jeffrey Smalldon, who may know the mind of sniper Thomas Dillon better than anyone. He's the psychologist the defense hired to figure out whether Dillon was insane.

Smalldon says that Dillon was "very smart, an IQ of around 135, in the superior range of intelligence" (Kohn 2009). But, Smalldon says, Dillon was not insane, because he knew what he was doing was wrong.

You never would have picked him out of a crowd. He was married with a son, a college education, and worked 22 years as a draftsman. Everyone knew that Dillon liked to hunt; they just didn't know what he was hunting. (Kohn 2009)

With the exception of minor disciplinary action for tardiness and absenteeism in the '70s, Dillon's 22-year work record was good. "Tom is a dedicated and highly intelligent employee, and these qualities are reflected in his work," wrote his supervisor, J.D. Williams, in a Dec. 2 letter to Dillon's attorney after his arrest. "He gets along well with the other employees and his attitude is always positive." (Knox, Limbacher, and McMahan 1993)

According to the Navy, his record contained no hint of psychological or disciplinary problems. In fact, Armstrong earned four promotions—he was a petty officer who supervised the ship's barbershop—and two Good Conduct Medals. Neighbors in Dearborn Heights said he was a nice guy, sometimes assisting a blind woman who lived across the street to go shopping. "He didn't seem like a

killer,” said Cathy Ciantar, who lives next door. “When you talked to him, you didn’t feel like you were going to be harmed or anything.” (Green 2000)

“‘This is a person who looks like anybody who might live on your street. He looks like a working-class person, held a job, had a wife and kid,’ said Detroit second deputy police chief Paul Bridges” (Slevin 2000).

“Dennis Rader truly was the serial killer next door. He had a wife, he had two kids. No one knew. For some 34 years he was married, all the while he had this secret life” (2005).

For many here, one of the most chilling aspects of Dennis Rader’s arrest is just how normal he appears. He was a longtime compliance officer in Park City, a town just north of Wichita. He enforced city codes, citing residents whose grass was too long or who let their dogs run loose. Before that, during most of the years when the murders were committed, he worked for ADT helping install home security systems. Rader was active in the Boy Scouts, first as a young man and later when his son joined the Scouts. He has a wife and two children and was active in Wichita’s Christ Lutheran Church, where he’d been president and usher. (Meadows, Comander, Atlas, Klise, and Isackson 2005; Siegel 2005)

In fact, the following could be stated for many of the serial murderers in the current study: “The only people allowed to see him for who he really was were either dying or already dead” (Singular 2006:71). In addition to portrayals of the serial murderers’ behaviors and lifestyles, some were described by their physical appearance, which seemingly made them blend in with others as well:

Above all I was struck by the ordinariness of the man. He [Gacy] could be anybody – your neighbor, co-worker or friend, or even your father. He was somewhat short (5’8”) and fat (well over 200 lb.) with oily skin and greasy, dishwater hair streaked with gray. He was jolly and likeable ... His demeanor was good enough to get him voted Jaycees Man of the Year, and a minor role in Chicago politics... (Office n.d.)

During the Molalla forest murders trial, Rogers emerged as a man with two faces. At an unimposing 5 feet 9 [inches], with thinning hair, he seemed every bit the quiet lawnmower repairman known to neighbors and acquaintances. (Bella 2012)

As can be seen in the examples above, serial murderers frequently look and present as utterly normal; they are often described as being nondescript. Instead of

exhibiting a discernible indication of their criminality, many serial murderers give an outward appearance of a neat and orderly existence. The following examples demonstrate how even those who were in direct contact with these individuals were often unable to discern them from other members of society.

Detectives talked with Carmen Anselmi at length. She had, after all, ridden in the car with the man suspected of abducting her daughter. She had talked to him [Roger Kibbe] as they drove to the telephone, and she had watched her daughter go off with him in his car. She did her best to remember details that might help the police. But the description she gave was vague, and even on further questioning she couldn't fill it in. He was middle-aged, with graying hair. Maybe his nose was a bit big. She desperately wanted to help, but it was dark and she had been drinking. And the man, she told police, was completely nondescript. (Strand 2012:148)

"Hey next to most of the people we talk with this guy was ideal. As you can see it didn't turn out that way, but there was no way we could know at that point... In many ways he's a very nice man, in many ways he was a very likeable guy. I liked him a lot, see, and this takes some talent. If you met him under different circumstances you could have a very good conversation with him. The only thing he wouldn't talk about is what happened to him in the past because even when I attempted to talk with him about that he was really reluctant to discuss it." [Carpenter's federal probation officer, Richard Wood] (Graysmith 1991:73)

Former neighbors of the serial murderers were often willing to report their observations of the offenders and their families after the arrests and/or convictions for multiple murders. Frequently, these offenders were described as integrating well with others in the neighborhood, or at least not standing out:

"David was always very nice, very neat, very polite. Nicest people you would ever find anywhere," remarked the Carpenters' next-door neighbor Helen Lindt. "They're like you and like me. They're very nice law-abiding people." (Graysmith 1991:200-1)

From outward appearances, the children were well taken care of and seemed healthy and happy. The infrequent times neighbors would see the children, they seemed to be the product of a happy home and a protective father." (Leith 1983:51)

To neighbors, he was the doting, loving father, well aware of the uncertainties that

could befall young children left alone on the streets at night.

The isolation of the family from the friendly neighborhood in Lodi and the extremely private nature of the head of household at 29 Vreeland Street were acceptable characteristics in the strong Italian community. The women of the community who knew of this relatively new family—most of Lodi’s residents were natives or citizens of long-standing—could accept what might ordinarily be interpreted as unfriendliness as long as the children were cared for. The men respected a man’s privacy and desire to protect his home. The fact that few people really got to know the Cottinghams in Lodi was, in a reverse sense, a sign that the family was law abiding and normal. At least that was the community’s perception. (Leith 1983:52)

[Randy Kraft’s] neighbors on Roswell, Pennie De Wees and Willy Sadler did not see anything out of the ordinary with respect to visitors at defendant’s house. De Wees considered defendant a “wonderful neighbor.” (2000)

Although much of society expects serial murderers to stand out from others, the reality seems to be that most of them actually blend in with others quite well. As demonstrated by the sample in the current study, many serial murderers are able to maintain quite the normal existence during their cooling-off periods. Instead of a distinctive physical feature or something blatantly identifying them as killers, the findings of the current study reveal that serial murderers are actually rather inconspicuous, even in their everyday lives.

### *Red Flags*

While the offenders in the sample were able to maintain duplicitous lifestyles for many years, the next theme, which was labeled *red flags*, was most predominant throughout the data analysis. To be more specific, although the spouses and those close to them have not—even retrospectively—admitted to ever suspecting their partner/coworker/friend/family member of murder, in every case there was some indication or forewarning that caused the individual to question certain actions or doubt particular behaviors.



On the surface, it appears as though these serial murderers are continuously able to deceive their families, coworkers, and neighbors. It seems as though their intimate others “never saw it coming” and could not believe that the person they knew was capable of such evil. When delving deeper into the facts, however, it looks as if there is almost always some sense of foreshadowing, some sort of red flag. He was not really that “family man” or that “loving and compassionate father.”

For example, Robert Yates’ wife later admitted in retrospect that there were some clues. She spoke about how her husband would dress up nicely and wear cologne when he said he was going hunting. She admitted that she knew he would not do that to go hunting. She also said that she once confronted her husband after finding evidence that he was having an extramarital affair, but that he always had answers for everything; she believed he had prepared answers beforehand to remove any suspicion (Geranios 2000).

In another case, Dennis Rader told authorities where they could find his “hit kit” and the trophies he collected from his crime scenes—in a large basket inside his house. He explained that it was not easy for a man like him to be married. He said he always had to carefully manage his time and be aware of his wife’s schedule. He said he had spent many years “trying to maintain marital calm” (Singular 2006:183).

In some cases the red flags were glaring:

As the investigation unfolded Yates’ wife, Linda, came forward with information that Yates came home after being out most of the night. There was considerable blood in the rear of the van, she said. According to what Linda told the detectives, Yates had taken his daughter to work around 11 p.m., but did not return home until 6:30 the next morning. When she opened the door of the house for him, he came inside and retrieved cleaning supplies to clean up the back of the vehicle. The rear of the van, she said, contained a fold down bed.

Linda told the detectives that Yates had told her that he had hit a dog that had jumped in front of him while driving toward home, and he had stopped and placed

it in the back of the van and had taken it to a veterinarian. On the way, she said he had told her, the dog bled all over the cushion. He removed the cushion that morning when he got home, she said, destroyed it, and later replaced it with another one. (King n.d.-b)

He [Gary Ridgway] once choked her, she [his former wife] told detectives. Returning home from a party where the couple had been drinking, [she] stepped out of their van and stumbled toward the door. Suddenly she felt hands around her neck, squeezing tighter and tighter. She screamed and fought, not immediately realizing it was her husband. Ridgway finally let go, then darted to the other side of the van and tried to convince her someone else had done it. (Robinson 2008; Rule 2004)

In 1978...Paula walked into the tiny bedroom she shared with her husband [Dennis Rader] and found herself staring at something that just about killed her. Her husband. Dennis had tied a rope around his neck and was hanging himself from a door in front of the bathroom mirror. (Singular 2006)

...One afternoon in 1980, it happened again. Paula walked into the bedroom and caught him with another rope around his neck.

...[She] informed her husband that he had better *never* do it again.

And Rader didn't. At least that's what he told my source. He never again put on a dress and hung himself from the bathroom door. The inside of the Rader home became off-limits for that sort of overt, blatantly strange activity. Instead, he waited for one of his 'motel parties' or when he was alone out in the woods to break out his rope.

He knew that Paula would probably never give him another chance. Even worse, he feared, she might begin connecting the dots that would link his bizarre actions with those of the mysterious strangler everyone in Wichita seemed to be talking about. (Douglas and Dodd 2007).

Co-workers called Harvey the "Angel of Death" because he was often present when patients died (Budd 1987; Johnson 1987; Montaldo n.d.-a; Press 1987). It was also reported that coworkers had told superiors as early as last year that they suspected he might be connected to a string of sudden deaths. Drake Hospital staff members told how Harvey frequently discovered deaths on his ward and joked about them. The hospital sources said they had told this to superiors, but saw no evidence of an investigation by the administration. (Hilzenrath 1987)

In other cases the red flags were a little subtler:

Other ex-neighbors recall odd things about Suff—mysterious nocturnal comings and goings in his van, claims of some hazy law enforcement affiliations (he kept a

California Highway Patrol cap and handcuffs in the van), and a penchant for secrecy that some found vaguely disturbing. “There was something about him that just made me keep my distance,” said Jackie Young, manager of the last of a series of Lake Elsinore apartment complexes where Suff resided between 1984 and 1990. (McDonnell 1992)

Dennis and Paula had watched these reports along with everyone else, and in the past couple of days, she’d glanced at something Dennis had scribbled and noticed for the hundredth or thousandth time during their thirty-three-year marriage that he had difficulty with the written word. “You spell just like BTK,” she told her husband. He didn’t say anything. (Singular 2006)

Sometimes it was a pattern of behavior that caught the attention of a spouse, but the spouse for whatever reason did not investigate further:

He [Rogers] claimed that he was working at his shop during his absences, which ranged from a few hours to all night, and his wife, Sherry, saw little reason, at first, to doubt him. When she would call to check up on him in the early evening, he usually answered the telephone. On the occasions that he didn’t, he always had an excuse. He would explain that he had been in the middle of a project and hadn’t wanted to leave it to pick up the phone. Or, more commonly, he would tell Sherry that he had gone out to get coffee, perhaps a bit to eat, anything that would convince her he was only taking a break to get away from the shop for a while. Often, however, he waited until it was very late, until he was certain that Sherry was in bed and fast asleep, before beginning the prowl. Soon his working late became routine, a way of life, and Sherry’s phone calls became less frequent. Although she began to hear stories about him frequenting the local taverns and bars, she tried very hard to maintain the faith she had always had in him. She might have become suspicious of his activities sooner if only she had taken the trouble to check the mileage on his pickup. But she hadn’t, and he put more miles on the truck in a single week than most people drive in a month. (King n.d.-a)

Gacy began to frequently stay out for most of the night. He claimed to [his wife] that, late at night, he could check out potential building sites for deals that he was making, and have more business conversations with potential clients than he could organize during the day. (Wilkinson 1994)

*Trophies and Souvenirs.* A subcategory identified within the data involved trophies and souvenirs taken by the offenders during their crimes. These items were most often found in their homes during investigation and were frequently found in places where someone could have easily discovered them:

From Yates's closet, police took a jacket identified as the one Smith had been wearing on the night Yates assaulted and robbed her, and from Yates's laundry room, they took a canvas coat that bore a stain later identified by DNA analysis as Mercer's blood. Using Yates's hand-drawn map, police excavated an area on the east side of Yates's house, beneath his bedroom window, and recovered Murfin's body. (2007)

Similarly, Dennis Rader had souvenirs, photographs, and driver's licenses of some of his victims in an unlocked file cabinet in his home (2009b).

In searching the [Cottingham] house, detectives had found a collection of mysterious items in a room in the basement of the Cottingham home. As the items were brought out and placed on a table for inspection and identification, the detectives began asking her [his wife] questions. Where did the clothing, the jewelry, the perfume, the motel keys, the purses—where did all these women's items come from? Janet appeared apprehensive. She said, at one point, when some bottles of perfume were brought to her attention, that perhaps some of the items were bought as gifts for her. After all she had been through, Janet maintained a certain protective resistance to telling these men her true feelings. It must have been extremely painful to admit that on their tenth anniversary, May 3, the day before Valorie Street was murdered, her husband went to work and then stayed out until the early morning of May 4. (Leith 1983:64)

In the Robert Yates case, when "...following a map Yates drew in jail, they discovered and dug up the remains of Melody Murfin. She had been buried six to eight inches deep in a flower bed outside Yates's bedroom" (Fuhrman 2000:269).

It is interesting to note that "BTK's habit of collecting souvenirs from his victims led investigators to suspect he was single because they thought he would be unlikely to keep macabre trophies in a home where a wife or children could stumble across them" (Huffstutter and Simon 2005).

A lot of the serial murderers in this study were found to have taken some sort of trophy or souvenir from their victims. These items, frequently kept by the offenders for long periods of time after the killings, were often found inside the homes that they shared with their intimate others. Sometimes these items were kept in all but plain sight, or

places where others could easily have found them. Additionally, sometimes these items were even given to others as gifts. Whether or not others had ever come across these items or become suspicious is unknown in most cases. The fact remains, however, that these items could have been significant red flags, at least enough to provoke some questioning.

*The MacDonald Triad.* Another subcategory of *red flags* was labeled *The MacDonald Triad*. This subgroup includes the three characteristics first suggested by MacDonald (1963) as behaviors that may predict violent or aggressive behavior in the future. These behaviors include enuresis (i.e., bedwetting) past age five, animal cruelty, and fire setting. Enuresis was only briefly mentioned in the data for a few of the serial murderers in the sample, but cruelty to animals and fire setting were prevalent in the sample. These behaviors were observed and noted by many, yet no one brought this information to the attention of authorities:

Keith Jesperson, who beat, strangled, and shot stray cats and dogs, said of his animal crimes: “You’re actually squeezing the life out of these animals. Choking a human being or a cat – it’s the same feeling. I’m the very end result of what happens when somebody kills an animal at an early age.” (Trainor 2004)

I decided to take no prisoners. I killed the pests with whatever I had at hand—hammer, sickle, scythe, screwdriver, shovel, or my bare hands. I’d take a dog into the sagebrush, give him a good kick, then open fire with my thirty-thirty. I tossed the suckers out the window at fifty miles an hour.

I baited trash cans with poisoned meat and collected bodies in the mornings before anybody got up. One night I killed seven cats and kittens. I caught a dog in our garbage and used a hook scythe to cut off his head, but the blade only went halfway and he ran into the woods. I threw cats in the incinerator. I set one on fire and it ran for the barn. Flames everywhere! Another cat got into our burn barrel. I put a piece of plywood over the top, poured in gasoline and threw in a match. The cat howled till it was cooked. It made me hot and hard.

I enjoyed the feeling of power. I liked taking a cat or a dog into my room and poking it with a stick. There was no running away from Keith the Avenger. I

knew it was wrong to hurt dumb animals, but I did it anyway. It was just...an urge. (Olsen 2002:156)

Ridgway's teenage years were said to be filled with warning signs of problems brewing within his psyche. He began killing animals, setting fires, and obsessing over true crime stories. (Levi-Minzi and Shields 2007)

[Dillon] was a gun fanatic who had fired so many times he had lost some of his hearing. His bullets found their mark not just in paper targets and tin cans, but also in windows, street lamps and more than 1,000 dogs, cats and other animals he boasted of killing over the last 20 years. Authorities also believe he could be responsible for many of the reported 108 arsons of barns and abandoned houses since 1988 in Tuscarawas, Harrison, Carroll and Coshocton counties. "I'm a confirmed pyromaniac," Dillon bragged to a fellow hunter in the early 1980s. (Knox, Limbacher, and McMahan 1993; Kohn 2009)

In the year after he killed Alonzo Daniels, Bishop sought a less dangerous outlet for his deadly urges. Instead of children, he decided to kill puppies, adopting 15 or 20 from Salt Lake City animal shelters over the next 13 months, using them as surrogates for children. "It was so stimulating," he later told Detective Don Bell (quoted in the *Deseret News*). "A puppy whines just like Alonzo did. I would get frustrated at the whining. I would hit them with hammers or drown them or strangle them." (Newton n.d.)

Again, these behaviors were frequently observed, yet almost never reported.

Moreover, this triad of behaviors has previously been identified as possibly predicting future aggressive or violent behavior. Even if people were unaware of this research, they would likely be suspicious of this deviant conduct. Nevertheless, many of the serial murderers continued to exhibit cruelty towards animals and a fascination with setting fires, without intervention.

*Criminal History.* An additional subcategory under *red flags* refers to the extensive criminal history of many of the offenders in the sample. In addition to the history of sex crimes noted earlier, several serial murderers had been previously arrested and/or convicted of a variety of crimes.

For example, Henry Wallace had a history of arrests for property crimes (mostly

burglaries) and had served four months in jail. In 1990, he was arrested for an attempted rape of a 16-year-old girl at gunpoint and placed in a nonviolent offender intervention program (Coston and Kuhns III 2004).

When he was 16 years old, Gary Ridgway led a six-year-old boy into the woods, and then stabbed him through his ribs and into his liver. The boy survived and said Ridgway walked away laughing (Montaldo n.d.-b). Moreover, Ridgway was placed on the Green River suspect list because of two encounters he had with the police in the early 1980s. First, in 1980, he was accused of choking a prostitute while having sex with her in his truck near an area where some of the victims had been discovered. Ridgway admitted to choking the prostitute, but claimed it was in self-defense because she had bitten him while performing oral sex. Police did not further investigate. Then in 1982, Ridgway was questioned after he was caught in his truck with a prostitute. Later, police discovered that the same prostitute was one of the Green River serial killer's victims. In 1983 Ridgway was again questioned after the boyfriend of a missing prostitute identified his truck as the one she had gotten into before vanishing. Ridgway was arrested in 1984 for trying to solicit an undercover police officer who was posing as a prostitute. He was brought in for questioning and passed a polygraph examination (Montaldo n.d.-b).

Randy Kraft was arrested in 1966 and again in 1975 on suspicion of lewd conduct. The first case was dismissed and there are no details available. The 1975 arrest, which involved sexual activity with another male, ended with a guilty plea, five days in jail, and a \$125 fine (Hicks 1987).

John Gacy was arrested in 1968 for attempting to sodomize two teenage boys. He was arrested again in 1972 for aggravated battery and reckless conduct, a sex-related

offense (1984). Rodney Alcala also had a long history of violence against women. In 1972, he was convicted of kidnapping, beating, and raping an eight-year-old girl, but was paroled two years later. At the time he was arrested for abducting and murdering his first murder victim, he was awaiting trial for beating and raping a 15-year-old girl. He was later convicted and sentenced to nine years in prison for that crime (Esquivel and Goffard 2010).

The number of warning signs in these cases was abundant. In almost every case, there were indications of unusual behavior. While some partners suspected extramarital affairs, others simply turned their heads the other way. This theme was prevalent in the sample, making it seemingly implausible that someone would not have noticed something in each of these cases. No one, however, brought any of these red flags to the attention of others or investigated any further.

#### *Victim And Partner Selection*

One common characteristic of serial murderers—and something that distinguishes them from most homicides, which usually involve some prior relationship between killer and victim—is that they typically prey on strangers (Haggerty and Ellerbrok 2011). In the current study, the data dictate that most of the serial murderers in the sample were conscious of the fact that they needed to target strangers, as killing people they knew would lead to a better chance of being suspected by authorities and ultimately caught. This was further demonstrated in the sample when some of the offenders moved on from targeting strangers to murdering individuals known to them and were subsequently apprehended for their crimes (e.g., Keith Jespersion and Donald Harvey).

Target selection is sometimes based on the serial murderer's perceived ease of



dominance and the potential strength of the victim, while at other times may be based more on the victim's connection to the offender's lifestyle or fantasies (Hickey 2006; Ressler, Burgess, and Douglas 1988; Ressler et al. 1986). Most of the offenders in the current study selected prostitute victims, or other targets perceived to be vulnerable, because of the greater chance of them not being reported as missing and their level of exposure. Ultimately, it seems these serial murderers are mindful of the selection of their victims, or at least the type of victim they target:

In his statement, Ridgway said he targeted prostitutes "because I thought I could kill as many of them as I wanted without getting caught." "I hate most prostitutes. I did not want to pay them for sex," Ridgway acknowledged. "I also picked prostitutes as victims because they were easy to pick up, without being noticed. I knew they would not be reported missing right away, and might never be reported missing." (Prothero and Smith 2006:496)

*How did he pick his victims?* What Rader really sought were women who were vulnerable. Nothing more. His victims could be any age. All that mattered was that he could bind and dress them exactly the way he wanted. Rader really didn't care what his victims looked like, because once he'd taken their lives, they became virtual entities existing only in his mind, where he could sexually assault them over and over again, embellishing all the details of the crime or their physical features in any way he wanted. (Douglas and Dodd 2007:330)  
Jespersen preyed on people he thought had no family, people at truck stops, wanderers without luggage. (Vo 2006)

...[Dillon] would later tell forensic psychologist Jeffrey Smalldon that he intentionally picked random victims located across multiple jurisdictions in order to make it harder for police to find him." (Ripley, August, Beacon Jr., Roston, Shannon, Tumulty, Weisskopf, Bower, and Morse 2002)

"Unfortunately, he [Armstrong] targeted women who lived the street life and could be missing and no one would really know that they're gone," he said. "He killed the first person here almost a month ago and the person hadn't been reported missing." (Christian 2000)

And his victims helped him go unnoticed: They were poor and black, generally employed at fast-food restaurants, women whose disappearances were unlikely to attract much attention. (1997)

The serial murderers often pursued a particular type of partner as well. As

Douglas and Dodd (2007:313) stated, “Plenty of the killers I’d tracked were married to women all cut from the same cloth—placid, easy-to-please, the kind of woman who wouldn’t snoop around in her husband’s belongings.” Many of the spouses appeared to be naïve, overly trusting, or gullible. These offenders knew what they could get away with and if their partner did start asking questions, always had excuses or a way to quickly ease any concern:

His wife had never looked in any of these places or suspected a thing, even though they’d lived in the same nine-hundred-foot-square house for the past thirty years. It wasn’t her way to pry into his affairs, and if she ever tried to do that, he knew how to brush her off with a glib comment or two. Didn’t take much to steer Paula in another direction. (Singular 2006:13-4)

...He was fairly certain she’d never breathe a word of what she’d seen him doing to a single living soul. Who knows? Perhaps this was the real reason why this always calculating, perpetually plotting psychopath chose Paula to be his wife in the first place. (Douglas and Dodd 2007:321)

Sitting there thinking about Rader stringing himself up made me think about Paula Rader. Plenty of the killers I’d tracked were married to women all cut from the same cloth—placid, easy-to-please, the kind of woman who wouldn’t snoop around in her husband’s belongings. (Douglas and Dodd 2007:313)

Often, the spouses were submissive and afraid of losing their husbands:

Obviously it was her naiveté that Rader found most attractive about Paula. Because even though the cat was out of the bag [after Paula found Dennis hanging himself in their bathroom], Dennis couldn’t have picked a better person with whom to have accidentally shared his secret. She was close to her mother, her two sisters, and a friend in Missouri, but he was fairly certain she’d never breathe a word of what she’d seen him doing to a single living soul. Who knows? Perhaps this was the real reason why this always calculating, perpetually plotting psychopath chose Paula to be his wife in the first place. (Douglas and Dodd 2007:320-1)

Rader claimed that his biggest fear was that Paula would leave him, the source insisted. This made perfect sense. Without Paula, he would have no one running interference for him, no one to cover for him—even though Paula had no earthly idea that this was what she was doing. Rader knew that without Paula, it might be just a matter of time before people began wondering about him, giving him second looks and possibly starting to point fingers at him. Paula’s departure from his life, he guessed, could very well be the beginning of the end. (Douglas and

Dodd 2007:321)

...He concluded that she probably knew very little. After all, she wasn't even allowed in the locked basement room of her own home. That was Richard Cottingham's exclusive domain, what some policemen would begin to call his "Trophy Room." (Leith 1983:65)

Most of the serial murderers seemed to have some sexual motivation or component to their crimes. More specifically, they may have had a type of person they were attracted to that inspired their fantasies. They were often times in a relationship with the same type of person, but could not act out their violent, murderous fantasies with their significant others, so they would find like-victims instead:

He enjoyed the process of accomplishing the power of control over his victim so much that he saved his sexual expression for later. That's why he took souvenirs so he could masturbate and satisfy himself sexually at a later time. That's also why he could have an apparently normal sexual relationship with a woman he didn't kill or torture because he had all his little trinkets or trophies, such as the jewelry and clothing of his victims around him. Unbeknownst to his wife, girlfriends, or other willing sexual partners, his fantasy life was driven much beyond what was happening at the moment with that particular partner. In fact, Cottingham would probably say that his fantasies, even during sex in his normal relationships, were always driven by the images of sexual domination of victims and the torture and bondage he inflicted. His sexual satisfaction, even though to his sex partner he appeared normal, was driven by intensely perverted sexual fantasy interpretation. (Keppel and Birnes 2009:92-3)

Serial murderers typically prey on strangers. It was evident in the sample that most of them did so knowing that this would make it more difficult for law enforcement to connect them to the crimes. Oftentimes the victims are also perceived or believed to be vulnerable or weak or less likely to be reported as missing. Interestingly, these offenders may also choose a certain type of partner as well—someone they believe to be naïve, innocent, or gullible. Knowing that their partner will not question their behaviors or pry into their affairs, serial murderers may seek a particular type of partner in addition to a type of victim.

Moreover, as many of the serial murderers in this study maintained intimate relationships with people who were demographically similar to their victims, it is of interest why most of them did not harm their loved ones as well. This study demonstrated that serial murderers generally make a conscious decision to murder strangers, as killing those close to them would make them a likely suspect. It is possible that serial murderers desire a certain type of individual, maintaining a normal relationship with someone of that type, but acting out their true fantasies of power, control, and murder on a stranger of the same type. Additionally, these offenders tend to enter relationships with partners that are especially naïve or gullible. Knowing that they can keep their partners out of their business and from asking questions, they are better able to continue to hide their murderous counterpart.

### *Denial*

The final theme identified within the data was labeled *denial*. The pattern that emerged from the data indicated that many of those close to these offenders might have been in a state of denial. More specifically, although a variety of red flags were present in the majority of cases, many refused to believe that these individuals were capable of committing such acts of violence. In the case of Donald Harvey, “Some of the nurses nicknamed him the Angel of Death, or the Kiss of Death, and he would often joke of ‘taking care of another one for [them].’ This was just laughed off because nobody could believe one human being could be so inhumane to another human being” (Budd 1987).

Keith Jespersen’s daughter admitted:

“The denial was so thick. I could only see the memories that we had. I couldn’t see the heinous acts that he committed,” she says. “I was aware of [his crimes], but to me it sounded almost like a fictional story.” If there’s anything to be learned from Melissa’s story, it’s trust your gut, Dr. Phil says. “You can’t be in

denial. If your instinct tells you something's wrong, it's probably wrong," he says. "At 10 years old [Melissa] had instincts telling her something is wrong, and she was so right. You've got to trust that intuition." (2009a:321-2)

Dr. Phil says Melissa's attempt to separate her father from the criminal he is is normal but futile. "It's a mechanism of denial. You want there to be this man, this influence [in your child's life]. 'Do I owe my children the opportunity to know their grandfather?' But the point is, he sacrificed that right," he says. "The best thing in the world you can do is keep your children away from evil and that man is evil. It's that simple." (2009a)

"I think it's beyond the imagination of most human beings to think that the guy they've lived with for years is killing people, and more than one, and not doing it spontaneously but planning it out. It's too extraordinary to be real for most people. It's fiction. It might as well be in a novel," psychologist Jack Levin said (2010b).

Similarly, even after Gary Ridgway was arrested and his wife was told of the evidence against him, she still refused to believe he was guilty of murdering dozens of women:

She had accepted in her mind that he was a liar and a cheat. That was fact. And, as a result of that fact, he had broken her heart. But she was still in denial about the killing thing.... There was nothing in her history with Gary that, in retrospect, hinted at killer compulsions. Who would know Gary better than his wife? No, dammit, not Gary! This was a guy who loved their poodles. This was a guy who gently held her grandbabies while she watched Rachel graduate from alternative high school. And this was a guy who had no interest in hunting or fishing. He didn't even want to kill animals for heaven's sake! No. They had to be wrong. She'd wait and see what came out of the trial, but for now, she was certain Gary was no killer. (Morehead 2007:119)

In some instances the partners of the offenders became upset and angry at the authorities for accusing their loved ones of crimes in which they believed they could not possibly have any involvement: "His wife is in denial, officers claim, saying she has proved extremely argumentative and insists they are harassing her husband" (Torode 2000). Similarly, Judith Ridgway "remembered Gary's arrest in 1987 and how it had been a big mistake. And then there was the arrest just a couple of weeks ago when she had to drive to Kent and pick him up. Another mistake. Man, these people were really out

to get her husband!” (Morehead 2007).

Often, the offenders would lie about where they were while they were out committing their crimes. Even if suspicions arose, the partners seemed to deny to themselves that anything was amiss, never looking further into the issue or asking any questions:

At times Sherry found herself wondering what had come over him, seeing him sitting quietly and staring into space, but she never said anything. Even though she had heard rumors about him carousing the nightspots and secretly feared that he may have been seeing other women, she somehow convinced herself that the pressures from his business had become too great, and she didn't want to do or say anything that might add to his troubles. (King n.d.-b)

Additionally, several of the partners would make excuses for their spouses, trying in any way to defend any actions or justify the red flags that arose:

She [Ridgway's wife] explained away troubling incidents in her husband's past. Just two weeks earlier in November 2001, he had been picked up on a prostitution-related charge. His arrest, she said, didn't sound like her husband, who had never talked to her about prostitutes. And she said her husband told her he pleaded guilty to the charge “because it would've cost a whole lot for the lawyers.” (Johnson and Skolnik 2003)

It is difficult to imagine that a human being is capable of taking another human being's life. It is likely even more difficult to come to terms with the fact that someone you know intimately has taken the lives of several others. Denial presented as a rather prominent theme within the data. In general, the spouses, children, and others close to the serial murderers were unable to accept that their loved ones could carry on a normal existence, while secretly committing the most inhumane act. Even when sometimes presented with blatant evidence, many of those close to serial murderers simply could not believe that it was even possible.

## OUTLIERS

In addition to examining the research questions and exploring patterns and themes identified within the data, it is also important to address the cases that were identified as outliers. There were three particular offenders whose behaviors differed in some aspect from the patterns identified amongst the sample as a whole. Although one of the offenders (Henry Wallace) differed in multiple aspects, the primary behavior exhibited by the outliers was the killing of individuals known to the offenders. While the majority of serial murderers in the current sample targeted strangers, these outliers murdered at least one victim with whom they had some type of prior relationship.

### *Henry Louis Wallace*

Henry Wallace is considered an outlier in the current study because he did not target strangers as most serial murderers do. Wallace's victims were all women whom he knew.

Mr. Wallace told Dr. Sultan that he killed women he knew because it was easier for him to get into their homes alone. He said that all of the victims were people who had tried to use him, hurt him, or embarrass him, and that they had treated him with disrespect...He said that he did not kill white women because they had not embarrassed him in that way. He said that each of the victims had done something that had angered him. (1996:43)

Additionally, Wallace was both a drug addict and bounced from one job to another, never holding steady employment for long periods of time. Both of these behaviors also led him to be considered an outlier. "The suspect is a drifter who came to Charlotte three years ago, had no permanent address and worked in various restaurants, Deputy Chief Snider said" (Press 1994).

### *Donald Harvey*

Donald Harvey is also considered an outlier in the current study. Although

Harvey began by killing patients within the healthcare settings where he worked, he later started targeting people he knew, including his own partners and their families.

Throughout the years Harvey was in and out of several relationships, seemingly without harming any of his lovers. But in 1980 this all stopped, first with ex-lover Doug Hill, who Harvey tried to kill by putting arsenic in his food. Carl Hoeweler was his second victim. In August 1980, Hoeweler and Harvey began living together, but problems surfaced when Harvey found out that Hoeweler was having sex outside of the relationship. Harvey began poisoning his food with arsenic as a way to control Hoeweler's wandering ways.

His next victim was a female friend of Carl's who he thought interfered too much in their relationship. He infected her with Hepatitis B and also tried to infect her with the AIDS virus, which failed. Neighbor Helen Metzger was his next victim. Also feeling that she was a threat to his relationship with Carl, he laced food and a jar of mayonnaise she had with arsenic. He then put a lethal dose of arsenic in a pie that he gave to her, which quickly led to her death.

On April 25, 1983, following an argument with Carl's parents, Harvey started poisoning their food with arsenic. Four days after the initial poisoning, Carl's father, Henry Hoeweler, was dead after suffering a stroke. On the night that he died, Harvey visited him at the hospital and gave him arsenic tainted pudding. His attempts to kill Carl's mother continued, but were unsuccessful.

In January 1984, Carl asked Harvey to move out of his apartment. Rejected and angry, Harvey tried several times to poison Carl to death, but failed. Although not living together, their relationship continued until May 1986. In 1984 and early 1985 Harvey was responsible for the deaths of at least four more people outside of the hospital. (Montaldo n.d.-a)

Although Harvey began by targeting strangers, he ultimately murdered or attempted to murder several people close to him. For this reason, Harvey is considered an outlier in the current study.

### *Keith Hunter Jespersen*

Keith Jespersen is considered an outlier because even though he mostly targeted vulnerable women at truck stops, his final victim was his current girlfriend. Moving from transient targets to someone he knew proved to be his downfall. He was soon arrested for murdering his girlfriend and later charged with the multiple murders he had committed



over the years.

## SUMMARY

The present findings are in contrast to the idea that serial murderers are able to seamlessly carry out a double lifestyle—convincing even those closest to them that they are leading conventional lives. Findings from the current study indicate that many serial murderers possess some psychopathic traits, some exhibit elements related to learning, and some neutralize their crimes. Very few serial murderers displayed any symptoms related to dissociation. These concepts are likely not the most appropriate or comprehensive explanations of the serial murderer’s duplicitous lifestyle. Notably, most of the offenders displayed behaviors that perhaps should have been alarming to those close to the offender. Had these red flags been identified as such and reported to the proper authorities, perhaps these deceptive criminals could have been stopped much earlier.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The intent of this study was to fill the gap and add to the body of literature regarding the serial murderer's duplicitous lifestyle. While there remains no universal definition for serial murder, most researchers and law enforcement agencies agree that all serial murderers go through a cooling-off period in between murders. During this time, serial murderers return to their typical existence, and many of them maintain a family and steady employment. The goal of this study was to examine the time between murders when these offenders return to a conventional way of life. More specifically, some of these offenders maintain intimate relationships with individuals demographically similar to their victims, while seemingly expressing an emotional bond quite contradictory to their actions demonstrated upon their victims. A broader insight into the lives of serial murderers could deliver a significant contribution to the understanding of how these individuals are able to carry out a typical life of work and family while secretly committing the most serious crime conceivable. This chapter provides a conclusion to the study, reviews the limitations, and presents implications for policy and future research.

This study took both a deductive and an inductive approach, incorporating multidisciplinary aspects, to explore the duplicitous lifestyle of serial murderers. While there was some support for the presence of psychopathic traits, social learning, and neutralization, no support was found for dissociation among the sample of serial murderers. It should be noted, however, that because of the limitations of this study, the examination of and findings for social learning theory are not particularly applicable to

the study. To be more specific, with the limited data available, it was not possible to accurately analyze all of the components of the theory. For example, because there was no direct contact or communication with any of the serial murderers, it was virtually impossible to determine their approval or disapproval of the killings and their attitudes towards the law (i.e. positive/negative definitions) from the available data. Because of this, and the narrowing of focus that the deductive component of the study generated, it may have been more beneficial to have taken an entirely inductive approach.

That being said, four themes were identified during the inductive analysis of data (expectations of a monster, red flags, victim and partner selection, and denial).

Ultimately, it was determined that serial murderers often target individuals whom they believe to be especially vulnerable, and partners who appear to be naïve or gullible. This conscious selection may aid in the ability of these offenders to maintain their duplicitous lifestyle and avoid suspicion for longer periods of time.

Moreover, it seems that society expects serial murderers to be immediately identifiable. In other words, they should significantly differ in appearance or behavior from other members of society inasmuch as we should be able to easily identify these “monsters” simply by looking at them. Often fueled by the stereotypical image of serial murderers portrayed by the media, society seems to assume that a serial murderer will stand out—both in appearance and behavior—as someone capable of committing multiple murder (Egger 1998a). This perception negates the reality that serial murderers are typically skilled in deception, techniques of evasion, and impression management, aiding in their ability to blend in with the rest of society (Hickey 2010; Holmes and Holmes 1998).

Additionally, a multitude of red flags were present in these cases. Since the sample of serial murderers maintained a conventional lifestyle living closely with others, there were a variety of behaviors and actions on behalf of the offenders that should have perhaps caused some alarm or suspicion by others. Had someone considered any of these forewarnings or red flags, perhaps these offenders would not have evaded suspicion for so long.

In many cases, the signs were there. In the least, there were signs of a troubled relationship. Evidence of extramarital affairs, staying out to late hours of the night, coming home covered in blood—these are all behaviors that might cause someone to become suspicious of their partner. Even if it were not apparent that a significant other was committing multiple murders, those closest to these offenders almost always saw signs of something amiss. It may be said that human beings, most who have an emotional presence, often would find it difficult to conceive that the person with whom they are most intimate is committing what may be considered the unthinkable. Of course, even if something does not seem right, most people are not going to assume, or even consider, that their loved one is taking the lives of other human beings. But, as most have confessed in hindsight, they knew *something* was going on; something was just not right. Had some of these spouses, partners, or children delved deeper into their concerns, investigating on their own, or had they even contacted the police or some other authority, perhaps some of these murders could have been prevented. Conceivably, some of these serial murderers could have been stopped much earlier.

It is not necessary to wait for severe violations of law to register concern about individuals' developing pathology. Persons afflicted with psychopathy do not wake up one morning with a plan to commit murder. Rather, they grow into it from less severe behaviors. Unless a person is experiencing a psychotic break,

their behavior has motivation. The motivation that drives all behavior is the acquisition of pleasure or the reduction of discomfort. Each person has a set of pleasures that meet their intrinsic psychological needs, and is motivated to acquire them. In acquiring these pleasures that meet their intrinsic psychological needs, each person evaluates the rewards and punishments associated with acquiring these pleasures. The man who chooses infidelity has determined that the pleasures derived through his intimate relationship with another outweigh the consequences he may have to face if detected. The pleasure he derives is worth the risk, and, accordingly, he carefully plans to reduce the possibility of detection and the ensuing consequences. (Dobbert 2009:176)

It may be, however, that many of those close to the serial murderers did indeed see some of the red flags, but were in a state of denial. Whether it be general denial in that it is incomprehensible that a human being could do something so vicious to another human being, or more specific denial—the disbelief that someone so close is capable of such evil—this denial likely plays a role in the ability of serial murderers to maintain their duplicitous lifestyles for long periods of time.

Because the FBI behavioral unit right now tells us there are 50, maybe 100 active serial killers just like that, active in America right now. If we don't look them in the eye, if we don't hear what they have to say, then how the hell are we going to ever identify them in the future? Because we do think they are the toothless guy living in the van down by the river. They're not. They're living right next door to you. (2009b)

“You absolutely have to have the help of the public in these cases. They are the eyes and ears of law enforcement.” “In your normal homicide, there's a connection between the killer and victim. When you don't have that tool, you have to depend on a friend or loved one to do the right thing” (Cauchon 2002).

In the end, people expect serial murderers to be different—to look different—than the average person. We think we should be able to spot a serial murderer without hesitation. We think that those whom we see as normal citizens could not possibly be violent criminals. We think that we would *know*. We think we would be able to tell just

by looking at someone, or just by having a conversation with him or her. But the fact is, serial murderers do not always behave or appear differently from their 'normal' counterparts. Moreover, they are typically intelligent enough (along with their lack of mental illness) to know that they must adopt a façade of normalcy to avoid any suspicion and remain undetected.

The findings from the current study may lead to the question, "Are serial murders really different from the rest of us?" This study has been the first step in answering this question. As there does not appear to be one all-encompassing profile of the serial murderer, what is evident is that these offenders are not carrying out as seamless of a lifestyle as it may initially appear. In other words, the outward fact of their killings may serve to mask more substantive, underlying similarities between us. When we focus on the carnage of serial murder we are easily disposed to see the crimes as those which must be committed by someone psychotic or insane. When we look more closely at the serial murderer, however, the image tends to be a remarkable likeness of ourselves.

The present study has demonstrated that when serial murderers are continuing both a secret life as a violent criminal offender and a public life maintaining personal relationships and conventional behaviors, there are most often red flags that something is amiss in the individual's life. Continued research in this and similar areas of study is essential in order to gain the knowledge necessary to identify serial offenders as early as possible and to prevent more crimes from occurring. As academics and law enforcement professionals, continued research and education is essential to further the advancement of our field. Part of this research and education involves a better understanding of not only the motives behind the crimes, but also the behaviors and lifestyles of specific types of

offenders.

## LIMITATIONS

Although this study provided some interesting findings, it is not without limitations that must be addressed. While the small sample size has previously been discussed, it is appropriate to revisit the implications of this. First, small sample sizes have inherent problems with generalizability and, therefore, any comparison of the present study's findings to other examinations of serial murder should take the sample sizes into consideration. Secondly, since a larger, random sample was not possible in the current study, the sample may be biased and unrepresentative of serial murderers and serial homicide in general.

In addition, as a purposive sample was used, offenders in the sample may differ from those offenders who have received less media attention and therefore had to be excluded from the sample due to a lack of data. Similarly, another significant limitation regarding lack of access to information should be acknowledged. While I originally had intentions of obtaining court transcripts for the serial murderers in my sample, this task proved to be unfeasible. In many instances, I was told that after 10 years all transcripts are destroyed. Therefore, in the cases resolved more than 10 years ago, there were no transcripts available. Additionally, in at least one case, the transcripts had been destroyed in a natural disaster (e.g., the basement in which they were stored was flooded).

For those transcripts that were available, in most cases I was unable to obtain them due to excessive fees. Nearly all transcripts cost a certain amount per page, and with most having thousands of pages, this cost was simply impractical for a graduate student

to endure. Moreover, many required appearing in person to make physical copies, which also was not realistic for this study.

These limitations do not negate the findings of the current study, which was the first study to address the lifestyle of the serial murderer during the cooling-off period. Therefore, the current study is simply a first step for more in-depth examinations of this and similar issues.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Research into under-studied areas is important as it serves to highlight gaps in knowledge and to test assumptions against facts. One of the limitations noted in this study is a lack of generalizability. One way to address this issue is by conducting similar research or replicating the current study. It is of my opinion that, even if possible, interviewing actual serial murder offenders would prove to be futile. The testimony of these offenders is often unreliable (i.e., exaggerated, untrue). While it may not be helpful to interview offenders directly (due to their frequent desire to be viewed in a certain light), direct contact with those who were closest to these offenders and spent a lot of time with them while they were actively involved in the murders may be fruitful in better understanding serial murderers.

Although it was unfeasible to obtain all court transcripts for the current study, thorough examination of these documents could help to shed more light on this topic. Additionally, future studies should strive to use larger sample sizes, perhaps including offenders from other countries and/or extended time periods, if the availability of data permits. Another suggestion for future research is to compare serial murderers with



different lengths of cooling-off periods and/or by length of crime series (i.e., length of time they went undetected while murdering). This may offer information related to any possible differences when serial murderers go undetected for various lengths of time. Similarly, comparative studies could provide a more complete understanding of serial murder and its offenders. For example, future studies might compare serial murderers who maintain a family or intimate relationships and/or steady employment with those who lead a more solitary, loner lifestyle.

Additional research could also be conducted using samples of other types of serial offenders. For example, a similar study using serial rapists might provide more insight into the pathology of serial offenders. Moreover, this research could also reveal significant differences in these offenders by crime type, allowing for a better understanding of multiple types of offenders.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study illuminates some noteworthy findings regarding the lifestyle and façade of serial murderers. Given that this is the first study to investigate the aforementioned, all inferences drawn from the current findings should be viewed with some caution and require further investigation. That being said, the findings from the current research may lead to future research regarding (a) methods for early intervention and diversion; and (b) where the preceding is impractical, better methods of detecting and mitigating the harm caused by quickly apprehending these particularly dangerous offenders.

While the risk of becoming a victim of serial murder is relatively low, it is

important to examine ways in which the current knowledge base can be applied to practice. The ability of law enforcement agencies and the wider community to understand and manage the risk posed by the serial murderer is intrinsically linked to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and behaviors of serial murderers. Early diagnosis and identification of behaviors consistent with those found to be common among serial murderers could help with earlier identification of those in need of mental health or other services before a potentially controllable problem escalates into violence or some other form of delinquent conduct or criminal behavior.

The findings of the present study provide practical implications, especially from the perspective of criminal profiling and crime prevention. Specifically from the perspective of offender profiling, the likelihood appears significantly high that the serial murderer is someone with a criminal history. This helps to establish the importance of collecting DNA from victims and crime scenes, as well as from criminal offenders (e.g., upon arrest, conviction, etc.). In addition, maintaining DNA databases may be valuable in linking crimes and in the identification and apprehension of offenders. Likewise, many of the offenders in the sample had a history of involvement in crimes of a sexual nature. This finding offers important implications for practice in the area of sex offender notification policy. Certainly, more efforts should be made to reduce the reoffending risk of those who have committed a sexual offense. One such effort would be to enhance the sex offender notification system by allocating more monitoring resources to better supervise sex offenders and perhaps prevent future crimes.

An additional implication related to profiling stems from the finding that many of the serial murderers appeared to have a victim type. In many cases, the victim was

demographically similar to the serial murderer's choice in partner. These findings could be taken into consideration when a series of murders has been linked and law enforcement is creating a profile in an attempt to identify the murderer. A better understanding of the victimology may also lead to a better understanding of the offender. Additionally, drawing from the findings regarding victim selection, murders can potentially be prevented from the outset. In order to attempt to lessen the occurrence of serial murder, crime preventive measures should be undertaken as early as possible in at-risk and vulnerable populations (e.g., prostitutes). For instance, law enforcement could work closely with these populations, providing them with a profile of the serial murderer and other information that could help identify the offender. Since it is possible—even likely—that others in these populations may have come into contact with the serial murderer, providing them with information that may help them identify the offender could prove to be beneficial to potential victims and law enforcement, as well as the community as a whole.

Types of profiling, including criminal, psychological, geographic, crime scene, and victim, need further and continued analysis and integration as investigative tools. Better understanding of the personality of serial murderers, in addition to personality assessments of offenders, will better prepare investigators in conducting interviews. Similarly, it is important for psychologists and other mental health experts to look at the various critical junctures in a person's life where the professional can intervene, endeavoring to break the cycle that may lead to detrimental and criminal behaviors.

Recently, an approach focusing on themes instead of types and behaviors rather than motivations is proving to be more productive in developing classification systems

for serial (sexual) murderers (e.g., Canter, Alison, Alison, and Wentink 2004; Jones, Bennell, and Emeno 2012). The classification system proposed by Jones et al. (2012) found common themes both in the crimes of the offenders and in their everyday lives. Further, similar sorts of themes have been reported in other forms of interpersonal violence, including rape and child sexual abuse. This opens up the possibility that some types of themes characterize interpersonal interactions across a range of situations. Given the strength of these themes across different datasets, this form of classification system may also turn out to be productive in the profiling domain. Investigators need to use extreme caution when applying classification systems in serial murder investigations. The more that is understood about these offenders, the better off investigators will be when profiling these offenders. It is important that research in this area continue to determine if there are empirically defensible approaches for profiling serial murderers.

Between 2009 and 2011, the FBI developed the Highway Serial Killing Initiative to identify victims of traveling serial murderers in the U.S. By linking highway abductions, many murders have been solved, especially when the victims were prostitutes (Hickey 2014). Similar initiatives could prove beneficial in linking murders to an offender and preventing more murders from occurring. This could help lessen the instances of linkage blindness as well as integrate multiple jurisdictions' involvement and understanding of serial murder.

Although outside the scope of this study, constructing a universal definition of serial murder that demonstrates reliability could initiate the standardization of reporting prevalence statistics and would clarify to both criminal justice professionals and the public what is really meant by the term serial murder (Ferguson et al. 2003). This would

allow for a better understanding of and comparison between studies and investigations involving serial murder offenders.

In order to truly understand the personalities and behaviors of serial murderers, the need remains for more interdisciplinary research on these offenders. Because the theoretical concepts explored in the current study did not offer a comprehensive explanation for the serial murderer's duplicitous lifestyle, it is important that researchers continue to investigate these offenders from multiple aspects. In addition, with the prevalence of red flags noted in these cases, it is essential for not only researchers and practitioners, but also for the public, to be better able to recognize potential warning signs. The findings of this study help to demonstrate the importance of the roles played—by the public and by those who maintain personal relationships with these offenders—in identifying key clues for quicker intervention. Douglas and Dodd (2007:332) provided an example of how a simple clue or red flag could ultimately help solve a case:

Several years ago, one of my former profilers working a triple homicide in the Tampa area came up with the idea of plastering a portion of a note written by the UNSUB on billboards in select parts of the city. Within twenty-four hours, someone recognized the handwriting, and the perp was arrested not long afterwards. I strongly believe that Rader's wife and children, his colleagues at work, his friends at Christ Lutheran Church, and other fathers in his Boy Scout troop could have recognized the behavioral characteristics of Dennis Rader had we released this information sooner, in a systematic, controlled way. The problem was that in the 1970s and 1980s, we were still learning. That sort of thing just wasn't done. Today I believe we've accumulated the smarts and experience to nip a serial killer like Dennis Rader in the bud.

The information that is provided to the public can be a crucial aspect of the investigation. By presenting certain facts of a case to an informed public, law enforcement officials may be better able to quickly identify persons of interest and prevent offenders from committing additional murders. In addition to aiding in the recognition of warning signs,

these results may be beneficial to law enforcement when creating suspect profiles and connecting a series of crimes to one offender.

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## APPENDIX A

## DISSOCIATIVE EXPERIENCES SCALE

This questionnaire consists of twenty-eight questions about experiences that you may have in your daily life. We are interested in how often you have these experiences. It is important, however, that your answers show how often these experiences happen to you when you are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs. To answer the questions, please determine to what degree the experience described in the question applies to you and select the number to show what percentage of the time you have the experience. 100% means 'always', 0% means 'never' with 10% increments in between. This assessment is not intended to be a diagnosis. If you are concerned about your results in any way, please speak with a qualified health professional.

Never 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% Always

1. Some people have the experience of driving a car and suddenly realizing that they don't remember what has happened during all or part of the trip. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
2. Some people find that sometimes they are listening to someone talk and they suddenly realize that they did not hear all or part of what was said. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
3. Some people have the experience of finding themselves in a place and having no idea how they got there. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
4. Some people have the experience of finding themselves dressed in clothes that they don't remember putting on. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
5. Some people have the experience of finding new things among their belongings that they do not remember buying. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
6. Some people sometimes find that they are approached by people that they do not know who call them by another name or insist that they have met them before. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
7. Some people sometimes have the experience of feeling as though they are standing next to themselves or watching themselves do something as if they were looking at another person. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.

8. Some people are told that they sometimes do not recognize friends or family members. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
9. Some people find that they have no memory for some important events in their lives (for example, a wedding or graduation). Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
10. Some people have the experience of being accused of lying when they do not think that they have lied. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
11. Some people have the experience of looking in a mirror and not recognizing themselves. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
12. Some people sometimes have the experience of feeling that other people, objects, and the world around them are not real. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
13. Some people sometimes have the experience of feeling that their body does not belong to them. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
14. Some people have the experience of sometimes remembering a past event so vividly that they feel as if they were reliving that event. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
15. Some people have the experience of not being sure whether things that they remember happening really did happen or whether they just dreamed them. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
16. Some people have the experience of being in a familiar place but finding it strange and unfamiliar. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
17. Some people find that when they are watching television or a movie they become so absorbed in the story that they are unaware of other events happening around them. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
18. Some people sometimes find that they become so involved in a fantasy or daydream that it feels as though it were really happening to them. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
19. Some people find that they are sometimes able to ignore pain. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.

20. Some people find that they sometimes sit staring off into space, thinking of nothing, and are not aware of the passage of time. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
21. Some people sometimes find that when they are alone they talk out loud to themselves. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
22. Some people find that in one situation they may act so differently compared with another situation that they feel almost as if they were different people. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
23. Some people sometimes find that in certain situations they are able to do things with amazing ease and spontaneity that would usually be difficult for them (for example, sports, work, social situations, etc.). Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
24. Some people sometimes find that they cannot remember whether they have done something or have just thought about doing that thing (for example, not knowing whether they have just mailed a letter or have just thought about mailing it). Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
25. Some people find evidence that they have done things that they do not remember doing. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
26. Some people sometimes find writings, drawings, or notes among their belongings that they must have done but cannot remember doing. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
27. Some people find that they sometimes hear voices inside their head that tell them to do things or comment on things that they are doing. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.
28. Some people sometimes feel as if they are looking at the world through a fog so that people or objects appear far away or unclear. Select a number to show what percentage of the time this happens to you.

The Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES) is a simple questionnaire widely used to screen for dissociative symptoms. Tests such as the DES provide a quick screening method so that the more time-consuming structured clinical interview (SCID-D) can be used for those people with high DES scores.

The higher the DES score, the more likely it is that the person has a dissociative disorder. The DES is not a diagnostic instrument; it is designed for screening only. High scores on the DES do not show that a person has a dissociative disorder; they only suggest that clinical assessment for dissociation may be warranted. Different studies suggest different cut-off scores for the DES, but a score of more than 45 suggests a high likelihood of a

dissociative disorder alongside a reduced likelihood of a 'false positive'.

Privacy - please note - this form does not transmit any information about you or your assessment scores. If you wish to keep your results, either print this document or save this file locally to your computer. If you click 'save' before closing, your results will be saved in this document. These results are intended as a guide to your health and are presented for educational purposes only. They are not intended to be a clinical diagnosis. If you are concerned in any way about your health, please consult with a qualified health professional.

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*Source:* Serenity Programme. Last accessed September 19, 2012 from <http://www.serene.me.uk/tests/des.pdf>.

(Bernstein and Putnam 1986)



## APPENDIX B

## ITEMS IN THE PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST-REVISED (PCL-R)

Item #	Characteristic description
1	Glibness/superficial charm
2	Grandiose sense of self-worth
3	Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom
4	Pathological lying
5	Conning/manipulative
6	Lack of remorse or guilt
7	Shallow affect
8	Callous/lack of empathy
9	Parasitic lifestyle
10	Poor behavioral controls
11	Promiscuous sexual behavior
12	Early behavior problems
13	Lack of realistic, long-term goals
14	Impulsivity
15	Irresponsibility
16	Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
17	Many short-term marital relationships
18	Juvenile delinquency
19	Revocation of conditional release
20	Criminal versatility

*Source:* Hare, Robert D. (1991). *The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised*. Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems.

## APPENDIX C

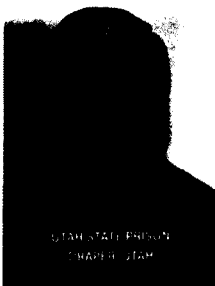
## SERIAL MURDERERS IN THE SAMPLE



RODNEY JAMES ALCALA  
Photographer  
“The Dating Game Killer”  
California, 1977-1979  
5+ victims (females)



JOHN ERIC ARMSTRONG  
Navy sailor  
Seattle, Hawaii, Hong King, Singapore, Bangkok, Virginia, and Michigan; 1993-1998  
5+ victims (prostitutes)



ARTHUR GARY BISHOP  
Big Brother program volunteer  
Utah, 1979-1983

5 victims (boys)



DAVID JOSEPH CARPENTER

Various occupations: ship's purser, salesman, printer

"The Trailside Killer"

San Francisco area, 1979-1981

7 victims (hikers)



NATHANIEL ROBERT CODE, JR.

Unknown; possibly plumber

Shreveport, Louisiana; 1984-1987

8 victims (all black, male and female, 8-74 years old)



RICHARD FRANCIS COTTINGHAM

Computer operator

"The Torso Killer"

New York, New Jersey; 1977-1980

5+ victims (females – mostly prostitutes)

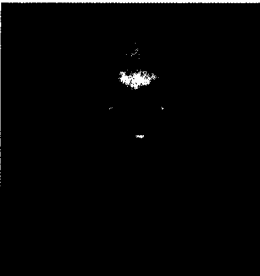


THOMAS LEE DILLON

Draftsman

Ohio, 1989-1992

5 victims (lone men – hunting, fishing, or jogging)



PAUL DUROUSSEAU

Taxi cab driver

“The Jacksonville Serial Killer”

Florida, Georgia; 1997-2003

6 victims (females)



JOHN WAYNE GACY, JR.

Building contractor, construction company owner

“The Killer Clown”

Chicago, Illinois; 1972-1978

33 victims (boys and men)



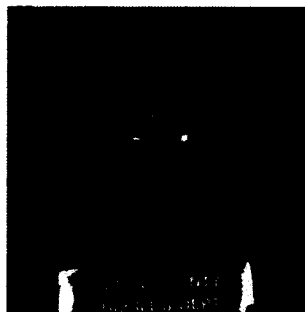
**DONALD HARVEY**

Hospital orderly, nurse's aide

"Angel of Death"

Ohio, Kentucky; 1970-1987

37 victims (mostly elderly patients, then people he knew)



**KEITH HUNTER JESPERSON**

Long-haul truck driver

"The Happy Face Killer"

Washington, Nebraska, Oregon, Florida; 1990-1995

8 victims (mostly truck-stop prostitutes)



**PATRICK WAYNE KEARNEY**

Aeronautics engineer

"The Freeway Killer"

"The Trash Bag Killer"

California, 1965-1977

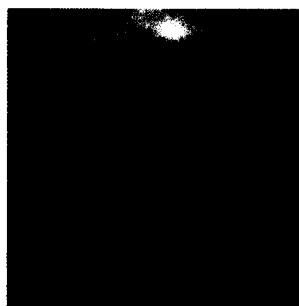
21+ victims (young, single men, many homosexual)



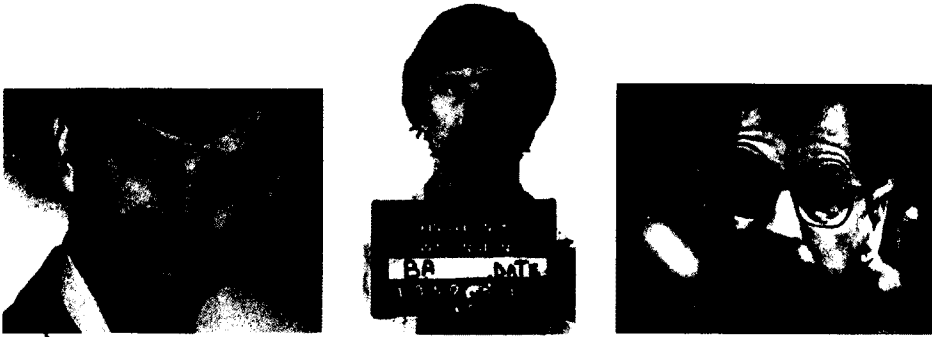
ROGER REECE KIBBE  
 Furniture salesman  
 "The I-5 Strangler"  
 California, 1977-1986  
 7 victims (young females)



RANDY STEVEN KRAFT  
 Air Force, bartender, forklift driver  
 "The Freeway Killer"  
 "The Score Card Killer"  
 Southern California, Oregon, Michigan; 1972-1983  
 24 victims (young, white males)



DENNIS LYNN RADER  
 Compliance officer  
 "The BTK Strangler"  
 Kansas, 1974-1991  
 10 victims (mostly women)



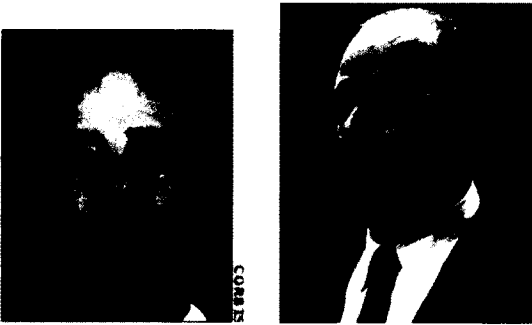
**GARY LEON RIDGWAY**

Truck painter

“The Green River Killer”

Washington, 1982-1998 (possibly 2001)

48+ victims (female prostitutes)



**JOHN EDWARD ROBINSON**

Unknown

“The Slavemaster”

“Cyber Sex Killer”

Missouri, Kansas; 1984-1999

8 victims (females)



**DAYTON LEROY ROGERS**

Small engine mechanic

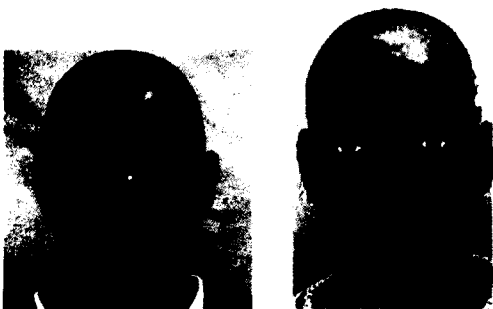
“The Molalla Forest Murderer”

Oregon, 1983-1987

6-8 victims (females – addicts, prostitutes, runaways)



WILLIAM LESTER SUFF  
 County stock clerk  
 "The Riverside Prostitute Killer"  
 California, 1986-1992  
 12+ victims (prostitutes)



HENRY LOUIS WALLACE  
 Navy, fast food restaurant worker  
 "The Charlotte Strangler"  
 North Carolina, 1990-1994  
 9 victims (young, black females)



ROBERT LEE YATES, JR.  
 Army helicopter pilot, aluminum smelter employee, Washington National Guard  
 "The Spokane Serial Killer"  
 Washington, 1975-1998  
 15 victims (females – mostly prostitutes)



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