

Assessment of the Extent and Prevalence of Serial Murder through Criminological Theories

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Abstract The purpose of this paper is to attempt an assessment of the extent and prevalence of serial murder through possible criminological theories. Each of the main theories is discussed to evaluate whether a successful explanation for serial killing can be provided. For the purpose of this piece of work we have concentrated primarily on America as it has the highest rate of serial killings and hence they have produced most of the research into this subject area. Britain is following America's example; investigative techniques and the development of a profiling system. There are four parts for better understanding and exploration in terms of an assessment of the serial murder. First part looks at the legal definitions of murder, the categorisation of types of multiple murder and the common elements within serial murder. In second part various definitions of serial murder are examined and the many differing typologies of serial killers are looked at. Third part addresses the historical and modern-day extent of serial murder and questions the validity of research into its current prevalence. The discussions are that biological, psychiatric, psychological, and sociological theories are discussed and their applicability to the existence of serial murder evaluated. At the end of present paper, a multi-dimensional model of the serial killer is described.

Keywords Assessment, Extent, Prevalence, Serial Murder, Criminological Theories

expand upon the fundamental classifications of murder.

The classification scheme adopted by the FBI in America when dealing with homicide categorises by type and style: "A single homicide is one victim, one homicidal event; double homicide is two victims, one event, and in one location; and a triple homicide has three victims in one location during one event. Anything beyond three victims is classified as a mass murder - that is, a homicide involving four or more victims in one location, and within one event [1]."

This paper sets out to examine whether it is possible to ascertain the true extent and prevalence of serial murder and aims to assess the main theoretical explanations of the aetiology of serial murder. Each of the main theories is discussed to evaluate whether a successful explanation for serial killing can be provided.

For the purpose of present paper, it concentrates primarily on the America as it has the highest rate of serial killings and hence they have produced most of the research into this subject area. Britain is following America's example as regards investigative techniques and the development of a profiling system. The paper explores the general standard of serial murderers to explain, assess and understand by researchers through the possible criminological theories. Research methods selected by us, for this paper, is literature reviews. The paper further argues in terms of the aspect of critical points about criminological explanation of serial murderers.

1. Introduction

In English Law there are two major classifications of unlawful killing: murder and manslaughter. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines murder as "the unlawful premeditated killing of a human being by another", manslaughter being the taking of another's life without malice aforethought.

Murder in general ordinarily implies the involvement of one murderer and one victim. However, in cases of multicide where more than one victim is involved, it is necessary to

2. Legal Classifications and General Characteristics of Serial Murder

2.1. Types of Multiple Murders

There is a general consensus among academics and law enforcement professionals that multiple murder can be separated into three main forms: mass murder, spree murder and serial murder. Firstly, mass murder can be further subdivided into categories: classic and family. The taking of

a number of lives (at least three) by an individual in a short space of time in the same location is termed classic mass murder. An example of a classic mass murderer is James Huberty, who killed 21 people and wounded 19 in a fast food restaurant in California in 1984, before being shot by a SWAT team [2]. Family mass murder is committed when an offender kills four or more members of his/her own family. Jeremy Bamber who in 1985 killed his father, mother, sister and her two children in order to collect inheritance money is an example of this type of murderer.

Secondly, a spree murder involves the slaying of three or more people in at least two locations within a short period of time. This offence is usually accompanied by another crime, predominantly robbery. The murder on impulse does little to escape detection. The spree murderer is unlikely to re-offend as many do not survive; there is a high likelihood of suicide or being shot by the police. With spree murder there is no 'cooling off period' between each killing [3]. An example of a spree murderer is Michael Ryan who murdered 16 people in 1987. After killing a female he drove to another location and shot at a petrol station attendant. He then travelled to another town in close proximity, e.g. Hungerford, where he indiscriminately killed the rest of his victims, before committing suicide.

Thirdly, serial killing involves the taking of three or more lives on separate occasions usually over a long period of time. The serial murder adopts a repetitive cycle and there is a 'cooling off period' between each murder. The murders are premeditated and specific types of victim are chosen. Serial murderers have no relationship to their victims and they rarely commit suicide [2]. An example of this type of murder is John Wayne Gacy, who between 1975 and 1978 sexually assaulted, tortured and murdered 33 boys and young men and then buried them in the crawlspace under his house. Gacy was sentenced to death in 1980 and was eventually executed by lethal injection [3].

Table 1. Five fundamental elements in serial murders

Section	Contents
1	The central characteristic of serial killing is the frequency and repetitiveness of the murders.
2	Ordinarily, serial crimes are one-on-one due to the safety aspect in that there is less likelihood the serial murderer will be discovered.
3	Serial murderers tend to concentrate on victims with whom they have no relationship, hence the term 'stranger-to-stranger' killings.
4	The motivation to kill present in the serial killer is unlike motives in traditional criminal acts of passion.
5	Serial killers show no clear modus operandi or motive for their acts.

Some researchers have pointed out there are complications within the categorisation of types multiple homicide [2][3][4]. There sometimes exists a degree of merging or overlap between serial and mass murder, these are not clearly defined, absolute distinctions. Certain motives adopted by

mass murderers could pertain to a serial murderer, and some serial offenders are more adequately suited to the traits of a mass murderer.

2.2. Common Elements within Serial Murder

Holmes and DeBurger put forward five fundamental elements which all serial murders have in common [5]:

About section 1 in Table 1, the serial killer will not cease until he is prevented from committing more crimes by either capture or death. His activities may continue for a considerable length of time. About section 2, one victim reduces the chance of victim escape. The offender is not likely to be willing to share the pleasure of the kill with others. However, there are exceptions to this with the existence of 'team killers' who kill together such as Bianchi and Buono, the 'Hillside Stranglers'. About section 3, their attacks are motiveless and the serial murderer often shows a lack of regret for the suffering caused. About section 4, serial crimes are not victim-orientated and the victims have no control in the situation. About section 5, Egger argued that the motive is generally not for material gain but is usually a compulsive act specifically for gratification based on fantasies. The key element is that the series of murders do not share in the events surrounding one [6]. These 'motiveless' acts make detection by the police difficult, and connections between murders at times do not become clear until the killer is captured.

Lane and Gregg offer two additional characteristics which distinguish serial killing from other types of multiple murders [7]:

Table 2. Two additional distinguish serial killing styles from other types of multiple murder

Section	Contents
1	In an increasingly mobile society the serial killer can leave the town where the crime was committed before the murder is noticed.
2	During a serial murder high levels of violence or overkill are often inflicted upon the victim.

About section 1 in Table 2, the serial killer can travel between towns with ease this is particularly the case in the United States, comparisons between murders will therefore not be noticed until precise patterns arise. About section 2, as the motivation for the serial murderer is the act of killing itself, the feelings of pleasure can be prolonged by torturing the victim over a lengthy period of time and overkill may also be adopted.

Other typical traits of serial murderers include the age group to which the majority of murderers belong, generally 25 to 35 years. Most serial killers appear to be unobtrusive, seemingly 'normal' members of society, they show no age preference towards victims though they tend to prey on vulnerable groups. Most serial murderers are males who offend against female victims. Serial killing tends to be interracial, i.e. being committed by white males upon white

females or black males on black females. There is an alarmingly high proportion of white male serial killers [8]. As can be seen Table 3, the various stages a serial killer may go through were identified by Norris [9]:

Table 3. The various stages of a serial killer

Section	Types	Contents
1	The Aura Phase	This occurs as the urge to kill grows, the killer moves from reality to fantasy.
2	The Trolling	The serial offender visits various venues in search of intended victims.
3	The Wooing Phase	This involves gaining the victim's confidence by using charm.
4	The Capture	Physical force or restraints may be used by the killer to render the victim incapable of escape.
5	The Murder	The moment of ultimate pleasure for the serial murderer.
6	The Totem Phase	A way of continuing the emotional high by taking souvenirs or trophies from the body to enable the fantasy to be re-enacted at a later date.
7	The Depression Phase	The reality of what the serial offender has done sinks in causing depression and torment. Eventually, the compulsion to act out the fantasy takes over as the urge to kill again increases.

3. Definitions and Typologies of Serial Murder

3.1. Definitions of Serial Murderers

There is no comprehensive definition of a serial murderer, indeed the term itself did not become frequently used until the 1980's. There has been only limited research undertaken into this area partially due to this being a relatively new subject. What is arguably the most thorough definition of serial murder to date is provided by Egger in 1988 who believed: "A serial murder occurs when one or more individuals (males, in most known cases) commit a second murder and / or subsequent murder; is relationshipless (no prior relationship between victim and attacker); is at a different time and has no apparent connection to the initial murder; and is usually committed in a different geographical location. Further, the motive is not for material gain and is believed to be for the murderer's desire to have power over his victims. Victims may have symbolic value and are perceived to be prestigeless 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 (such as vagrants, prostitutes, migrant workers, homosexuals, missing children, and single and often elderly women) [10]."

Hickey seeks to broaden this definition of serial murder as it results in the exclusion of many offenders. The

presumption by police authorities that serial murder usually involves a sexual attack is challenged by Hickey: "Although many offenders actually fall into the serial killer classification, they are excluded because they fail to meet law enforcement definitions or media-generated stereotypes of brutal, blood-thirsty monsters [11]."

Hickey believes the definition of serial murder should be expanded to include offenders who kill for material gain, females who kill three or more people, and should include not only stranger-to-stranger killings but also the killing of relatives [11]. Therefore, all premeditated killings of three or more victims over an extended period of time regardless of the perpetrator's gender should be included in operational definitions of serial murder.

With serial murder becoming an increasingly popular subject the mass media have formulated their own definitions of serial murder, although the criteria used may vary dramatically causing confusion between mass and serial murder. The media tend to use generalised definitions which are somewhat basic [12]. Even academic researchers definitions rely heavily on information gathered from interviews with serial offenders, such information is highly speculative rather than sound empirical research. Before a clear definition can be arrived at the criterion needed must be generally agreed upon.

3.2. Typologies of Serial Murderers

3.2.1. Geographically Stable and Transient Killers

One of the first typologies to be presented addresses the issue of geographical mobility. A major contrast has been drawn by Holmes and Deburger between two differing types of serial murderer: the geographically stable, the geographically transient killers [8]. The geographically stable killer preys on victims within the area in which he resides, victims' bodies are also disposed of in the surrounding area. John Wayne Gacy is a well-known example of a geographically stable killer. The bodies of his victims were buried in various places around his home such as the attic, under his driveway and patio, between walls, and in the crawl space of his house [12]. The geographically stable killer is typically a well-respected member of the local community whose killings may go undetected for a number of years.

The geographically transient killer continually travels from place to place throughout his criminal career. Ted Bundy provides a good example of this type of killer. Bundy murdered numerous women whilst travelling from state to state in America, killing in one police jurisdiction and then moving on to another. The geographically transient killer may successfully avoid detection by the police due to the obvious difficulty in tracking the offender down [13]. Information regarding offences may not be passed between police departments, thereby reducing the likelihood of a link being formed between murders.

As seen in Table 4, Hickey specifies three categories in

his study of the geographical mobility of serial killers,[11]:

Table 4. The geographical mobility of serial killers

Section	Types	Contents
1	Travelling/Mobile Killers	Killers who journey with ease from city to city murdering victims upon their travels.
2	Local Killers	Killers who commit all their murders in their own familiar territory.
3	Place-Specific Killers	Killers who rather than hunting their victims, repeatedly kill in the same environment, i.e. place of work or at home.

3.2.2. Visionary, Mission-Oriented, and Hedonistic Type

Visionary Type of offenders is the least common of the serial killers. Visionary serial killers are compelled to commit murder as a result of hearing voices or experiencing vision and hallucinations which direct him to murder identified individuals or specific groups of people. These voices or visions are perceived by the killer as representing angels or demons. When under their command the killer loses touch with reality and single-mindedly focuses upon carrying out his killings [12]. The visionary serial killer is generally termed psychotic. The crime scenes of this particular type of killer are chaotic: from the excessive physical evidence left at the scene the visionary's personality can be identified. Although the activities of the visionary can be seen as bizarre, sometimes the visionary may conform to societal norms and adequately operate within the rules of society. The visionary serial killer is geographically stable and tends to prey on victims in the local area [14].

The mission-oriented killer perceives his mission in life is to rid society of a particular group of people. The group to be exterminated is identified by the killer himself as being undesirable or immoral; typical targets include prostitutes and drug addicts. Although the mission-oriented killer may show psychopathic tendencies he is not psychotic, as he is not compelled to kill by visions or voices [12]. This type of killer is more likely than not to be acting upon his previous experience with the target group. The killer makes a conscious decision to rid the world of the group and improve the quality of life for himself and others. The injustices he feels the 'undesirable' group cause will then be eradicated. The mission-oriented killer is not out of touch with reality and functions well within the community. Unlike the visionary killer, the mission-oriented killer is more focused and purposeful, as a result of which the crime scene is more organised with no evidence of a murder weapon [15].

The mission killer is geographically stable, often residing in the same area long term and holds down a steady job. He adopts the process of fantasising, stalking and killing as a result of which the victim is murdered and disposed of at the same site [16]. The site at which the body is dumped is familiar to the killer and has been used successfully before. The killer does not mutilate or sexually assault the body

since once the victim has been killed the killer's mission has been completed [14].

Hedonistic type of killer is pleasure-oriented, he/she murders for the thrill of it. The hedonistic serial murderer can be separated into three categories: the Lust Killer, the Thrill Killer and the Comfort Oriented Killer. First is the lust killer. The primary goal for this type of killer is sexual gratification. With the lust killer, the victim is viewed simply as a means of satisfying a pleasure therefore there tends to be a high level of brutality and mutilation [17]. The lust killer murders for no other reason than to fulfill his sexual satisfaction, he is in touch with reality; he is not termed psychotic.

The full episode must follow a ritualistic pattern which the killer follows. With the lust killer there is a need for skin-to-skin contact, lust killings often involve various acts of paraphilia such as object penetration and necrophilia [17]. The lust killer adopts a high degree of planning and organisation achieved through the rehearsal of fantasy over a lengthy time, such planning is reflected in the crime scene. The lust killer is geographically stable but may travel to dispose of bodies in different locations in order to confuse police departments and reduce the chance of capture.

Like the lust killer, the thrill killer has made a connection between sexual gratification and fatal violence. He kills for the thrill of it. The thrill killer seeks pleasure but his pleasure can only be derived from the pain and suffering for his victims. Therefore, his victims need to be alive for as long as possible to achieve the most satisfaction [17]. The thrill killer chooses victims whose characteristics fit his particular fantasy of control and domination. After the death of the victim, the killer's interest rapidly decreases and disposal of the body becomes of paramount importance. The thrill killer remains in total control of the situation as the crime scene is in familiar surroundings to the killer [12].

The thrill killer is distinguishable from the lust killer in that the bodies do not display overkill. The crime scenes are organised with no evidence of post sexual activity as torture is inflicted before death [17]. Weapons will not remain at the crime scene as the killer meticulously looks after them. Thrill killers are geographically transient and tend to dispose of victims away from their comfort zone. Generally thrill killers are single, allowing greater geographical mobility [14].

Third is the comfort oriented killer. The main motivation of the comfort killer is personal material gain. This enables the killer to enjoy 'the good life' and 'creature-comforts'. The victim is seen purely in terms of financial worth. The majority of this killer's victims are familiar unlike other types of serial killer. This type of killer plans his murders in advance, the selected method of murder and victims are carefully chosen. This killer takes no pleasure from the actual act of murder; it is merely a means to an end. The crime scene is particularly organised thereby causing difficulties in investigation, also in order for the killer to maintain his opulent lifestyle he must be relatively successful.

The comfort killer is geographically stable and remains

resident in one area and the murder and disposal of the body are confined to this local area. There are two kinds of comfort killers: those who murder familiar victims and those who murder strangers. The most prevalent kind of comfort killer is the one who kills family members. Comfort killers are typically female. Some comfort killers kill strangers, an example of this would be the professional contract killer whose motive is purposeful and who obtains a financial reward [14].

It can be argued that four typologies have been criticised by Gresswell and Hollin as being not mutually exclusive [18]. There are great similarities between the visionary and mission-oriented types with the main difference being the level of psychosis. The typologies are not flexible enough to allow for killers who possess differing motives throughout their killings, or change their *modus operandi* with the passage of time.

4. The History of Serial Murder

It is widely assumed that serial murder has only recently emerged in the last two decades, yet this is a mistaken belief as the enigma of serial murder is by no means a contemporary phenomenon. Hickey discovered even as far back as the early 1800s there existed 117 serial murderers in the United States of America. He summarises: "First, the date unequivocally contradicts the assumption that serial murderers are a recent phenomenon. Regardless of their typologies, serial murderers can be traced back 200 years. Secondly, the emergence of serial murderers to the public view is made possible by our advancing technology, but they probably have always existed and operated in the United States [11]."

Wilson and Seaman assume serial murder is a relatively new concept. They believe before the mid-19th century murderers killed for financial gain rather than sexual gratification, hence there were no sex murders [19]. Yet, as sexually sadistic killer name Gilles De Rais is known to have existed in the 15th century. He mutilated, tortured, raped, and killed more than 800 children. Also an example of a serial killer of the early 19th century is Joseph Briggen, who hired homeless transients to work on his farm. When his employees demanded payment he killed them, dismembered their bodies and fed them to his hogs [14].

Throughout the late 19th century there was an increase in sex crimes, one example of this being Fritz Haarmann, who sodomised and murdered 27 boys and men. After he had killed them he cut up the bodies and sold the meat on the black market. Probably the most infamous serial killer of this period was Jack the Ripper, who sadistically murdered prostitutes in the London area. He became a household name and instilled terror into local inhabitants. Although great speculation has occurred over time, his true identity has never been discovered [20].

In the early 1900s there were also many celebrated cases of serial murder. Jenkins conducted a historical study into the

prevalence of serial murder during the present century. He found there were at least one hundred cases, if not more, of serial murder between 1900 and 1940. The media would report on an extreme case of serial murder at least every twenty months. Serial murder was a common offence in this period in the USA and often became headline news [21].

Henry Lee Moore who slaughtered more than 20 victims in separate axe attacks, made a nationwide impact in the national news of 1917 [21]. In 1934 Albert Fish also achieved national notoriety for heinous crimes. His abduction and cannibalism of a young girl Grace Budd, as well as of numerous other children made him renowned throughout the world [22].

The major public concern at the time ensured a swift police response. During the first four decades of the century the public grew familiar with serial murder cases, not unlike the public of today [15].

When Jenkins looked at the period 1940 to 1965, he found the rate of serial murder had decreased rapidly in the USA. He discovered only 50 cases of serial murder in America between 1940 and 1969. Jenkins suggests reasons for this decline may include the tightening up of immigration laws reducing the number of transients and the introduction of civil commitment laws removing potential offenders from public circulation. With very little reports of serial killing in the media it appeared the phenomenon had become part of American history [21].

During the 1960's there was increased activity as regards serial murder in the United States, most writers perceived this as a 'murder wave'. Jenkins argues: "The phenomenon did exist, but it was a return to earlier historical patterns rather than a wholly new phenomenon; and it only seems new and dramatic when considered against the immediately preceding period [21]."

The population of the day saw this 'murder wave' as being original and previously unheard of, which it was not [17].

From the mid 1960's onwards there was a dramatic increase in violent crime, particularly multiple murder, a fact which was not lost on the media of the day. The media proceeded to glorify the serial killer, a good example of this is the case of the Boston Strangler. Albert De Salvo, the Boston Strangler raped and strangled 13 women between 1962 and 1964 in Boston, USA. De Salvo was convicted of rape and robbery and only confessed to the murders whilst in Boston State Hospital. Another case frequently remarked upon in the popular press was that of Richard Speck, who captured, stabbed and strangled 8 nurses in 1966 in Chicago. He maintained his innocence until 1978 when he confessed to a newspaper reporter [22].

This apparent murder wave continued throughout the late 1960's, reaching new heights of notoriety with the Manson family murders in 1969. Members of the Manson family went on a killing spree and brutally butchered Sharon Tate and four others. Two nights later the group stabbed to death Leno Labianca and his wife. Manson the cult leader, who had instigated the murders was sentenced to life imprisonment along with the killing group [23]. This upward spiral of

violence which began in the late 1960's, continues to increase to the present day [15].

It can be argued that the actual extent of serial murder in previous decades is unknown due to the unreliability of record-keeping in earlier times and the investigative techniques used by law enforcement agencies were much unsophisticated. The fact remains, however, that the serial murderer has undoubtedly always been present.

5. Possible Explanations of Serial Murder

5.1. Biological Approaches

As early as the 19th century criminologists addressed the idea that criminality could be inherited. By examining the skull for abnormalities phrenologists believed they could detect distinct criminal types. Lombroso examined the physical characteristics of Italian criminals to further his belief that ancestral traits can be passed down through generations [24]. Criminal tendencies, he believed, were passed on by degenerate families. These 'Born Criminals' possessed specific characteristics such as coldness and cruelty, they tended to be loners, and showed a lack of remorse for their actions. These early theories have since been discredited by other researchers in favour of more scientific research.

Norris composed a list of 23 physical abnormalities which he perceives to be indicative of genetic abnormalities and hence, point to a dormant serial killer. These physical disorders include: upper or lower eyelids that join the nose, a curved fifth finger, and a speckled tongue with smooth or rough spots. Norris predicts if three to five of his list of 23 disorders are present this indicates a genetic brain disorder, however Norris does not provide referenced sources for his work. Norris offers the example of Carlton Gary who killed several elderly women as a serial murderer who had such physical disorders. Carlton Gary suffered from an elongated middle toe and webbed skin between his fingers [9]. Canter criticises these genetic explanations as there is no evidence to support them and the concept of a 'born criminal' has been discredited as far back as 1913 by Goring [25].

Damage to the brain may be present at birth or may be caused by trauma to the head. Norris found many serial murderers he studied had suffered head trauma, either from childhood injury or accidents in later life. He viewed the high frequency of head trauma as advancing the chance of brain damage and therefore increasing the likelihood of violent behavior [9].

Lester cites the example of Robert Long who in 1984 murdered ten women in Florida, USA. Long suffered various childhood accidents followed by a motorcycle crash in which his skull was fractured, leaving semi-conscious for a lengthy period of time. Long continued to suffer from sight problems and headaches throughout the remainder of his life. His murderous activities began after his crash. After his arrest,

brain damage was discovered in his left temporal lobe [26].

A malfunction in the limbic system in particular the hypothalamus can cause hormonal imbalances, which in turn can lead to episodes of violent behaviour [27]. Also other researchers have attempted to link testosterone, the male sex hormone to violence, but with little success. There is also no evidence of aggressive tendencies in females with high levels of estrogen or progesterone [11].

More modern research addresses the subject of neurobiology, specifically the effect of serotonin which is a chemical designed to hinder the secretion of stomach acid [28]. Serotonin serves as a neurotransmitter in brain functioning and has an influence upon the central nervous system [27]. Serotonin has been found to subdue aggressive behaviour, therefore increasing serotonin levels will bring about a reduction in violence. In some violent offenders the transmission of serotonin may be defective, thereby accounting for their aggressive tendencies [11]. More research into serotonin is necessary to gain a better understanding of violent behaviour.

5.2. Psychiatric Views

Typical symptoms of psychotic disorders are disorganised behaviour, hallucinations and delusions. These disorders can be caused by substance abuse, physiological malfunctioning and environmental stressors [28].

The public's perception that psychotic people are a danger to others is invalid as those who are insane commit only a very small percentage of crimes. Indeed, psychotics are more likely to self-injure than hurt others. Very few serial killers are found to display psychotic behaviour contrary to public opinion. A rare example of a psychotic serial killer is Joseph Kallinger. Kallinger murdered numerous people in his local area including his son after experiencing delusions and hallucinations [12]. Kallinger was committed to a psychiatric institute where he is liable to remain as he still has the urge to kill.

The symptoms of schizophrenia are both wide and diverse [27]. Most schizophrenics suffer from some but not all of the primary symptoms. Hollin suggests the main traits of schizophrenia are disturbances of thought, perception, affect, and motor behaviour. Thought disturbances indicate a disjointed thought process, perceptual disturbances include seeing visions or hearing voices, affect may be inappropriate behavioural response, and motor disturbances refer to gesturing and strange facial expressions [29].

When a serial killer pleads a defence of insanity, paranoid schizophrenia is frequently claimed as the form of mental disorder. Although there is a small likelihood that schizophrenics will commit more violent crime than other mental illness sufferers, most schizophrenics lead law-abiding lives [27]. Peter Sutcliffe, the 'Yorkshire Ripper' claimed paranoid schizophrenia as a defence for his killing of thirteen women. The jury at his trial decided that due to the insight he used in avoiding detection during his killing spree, even if he did suffer from paranoid schizophrenia this

did not impair his mental responsibility. His insanity plea was therefore rejected.

Much research has been conducted into the area of violent behaviour and its connection with the psychopathic personality. Cleckley identifies 16 personality traits of the psychopath: intelligence, rationality, calmness, unreliability, insincerity, lacking shame or remorse, having poor judgment, without capacity for love, unemotional, having poor insight, indifference to the trust of kindness of others, over-reactivity to alcohol, suicidal, impersonal sex life, lacking long-term goals, and inadequately motivated antisocial behavior [30].

Psychopaths tend to be very manipulative. They will act in a vulnerable fashion to attain their own personal goals. Behind their 'Mask of Sanity' lies a deeply disturbed individual [31]. They only become intimate with people whom they feel they can control. A psychopath's need to control a situation makes them dangerous as if they are unsuccessful in their quest to control, they can become violent [12].

The majority of serial killers do not suffer from any mental disorder, they are focused and fully understand that the crimes they commit are wrong. The psychiatric research undertaken into serial killing is primarily based on individualistic case studies on serial offenders. Therefore, characteristics derived from these studies which are used to define serial murderers cannot be applied to the whole of the serial murderer population [28]. The psychiatric medical model plays an important role in explaining serial murder, though psychiatric theories can only account for why a small proportion of serial murderers kill. It is one of many factors which could be employed alongside other factors such as biological or environmental variables.

5.3. Sociological Perspectives

Sociologists claim the causes of serial murder are rooted in wider social and cultural background factors [32]. Socio-genic explanations concentrate upon the social causes for serial murder such as a general subculture of violence within society, unemployment, poverty, unattainable cultural goals, destruction of the family unit, and the growing influence of pornography and the media [33]. A combination of these ingredients would blend creating a serial murderer. Sociological interpretations must be addressed when working toward any acceptable explanation for the aetiology of the serial murderer. Sociological explanations encompass wider cultural and social factors involving the effect of dysfunctional or unstable families and the negative influences they can exert [16]. The impact of peer group pressure also plays a major role in influencing the individual to break social rules and norms. Since the middle of this century the size of the average family has reduced considerably [33]. Previously, in times of hardship the child would have numerous siblings and other family members to share the burden of family traumas. This is less likely to be the case now.

During recent years there has been increasing instability

within families with a high divorce rate and a growth in multiple marriages resulting in children having many parental figures [34]. The family unit is in danger of breaking down. With families becoming smaller individuals are looking outside the family unit for role models. This causes great difficulty for the serial killer who is predominantly a loner, whose identity could be shaped from negative features of the wider social environment.

It can be argued many serial killers display feelings of un-motivated resentment towards society. They feel justified in their breaking of rules and regulations. Most serial killers murder as they need to feel powerful and dominate their victims receiving recognition for their acts. They self-justify in order to convince themselves they committed no wrong-doing.

Leyton contends serial murderers are class conscious. They are heavily influenced by class, status and power. They achieve their ambition of notoriety when caught, although they believe the position within society they aspire is unachievable leading to frustration. He believes the primary motivation is not sexual gratification but upsetting the status quo by taking revenge on the society which has failed them [35].

Serial murderers are egotistical and have a need for constant praise. This can be attained solely by dominating others. If a confrontational situation arises they resort to violent or aggressive acts and when a negative or stressful life event occurs serial murderers are unable to use normal coping skills [34]. The serial killer's thinking allows him to use emotion instead of reason blaming the rest of society rather than himself.

6. Conclusions

It is not likely that any one prevailing variable is directly responsible for serial murder. It would be reasonable to assume that more than one event or trauma is required to influence an individual to commit homicide. Hickey proposes a trauma-control model of the serial killer: Predispositional factors may exist which influence an individual, which is the biological propensity towards violent behaviour; Trauma events are negative event which take place during adolescence such as abuse and unstable home life; Dissociation may then occur resulting from low self-esteem [11]. The offender constructs a facade in an attempt to restore psychological equilibrium; The fantasy world the offender creates is a coping mechanism enabling him to feel power and control unlike reality; Hostility and aggression towards others build up as he becomes desensitised towards the feelings of others leading to violent fantasies centred upon complete domination; Facilitators such as alcohol, drugs and pornography are utilised to fuel the fantasy and reduce inhibitions; Homicidal behaviour the offender reenacts his fantasy for real; After the high reached during the kill subsides the offender suffers trauma reinforcement and he feels isolated again.

Estimating the extent of serial murder is fraught with difficulties, figures quoted may have been exaggerated due to inconsistencies in reporting and recording, mass media influence and statistical misinterpretations. We have no way of knowing if there is a genuine increase in serial murder or if we are simply uncovering more of it. Assessing the true prevalence depends upon which criteria are employed to define serial murder.

Biogenic, psychogenic and socio-genic explanations have been discussed in this paper along with their respective advantages and disadvantages. It has become apparent that no one single theory can wholly account for the existence of serial murder. There is no common agreement as to why this ultimate form of personal violence occurs, in reality no one knows. This interaction of biological propensities, possible mental disorders, childhood experiences and cultural influences must all be recognised. A greater understanding of the personality of the serial killer can then be attained. Researchers need to combine disciplines in order to reach a better understanding of the aetiology of serial murder. This will hopefully not only help reduce the amount of serial murder but also lessen public fear of personal safety.

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