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Relationship between childhood traumas and serial killers

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo de investigación, se analiza la posibilidad de una relación entre traumas de la niñez ya la creación de un asesino en serie. Es decir, se busca responder a la pregunta: ¿los asesinos en serie pasaron por un trauma en su niñez que provocó su futuro tan violento? Se considera un asesino en serie a una persona que ha matado más de tres personas con un mes o más de tiempo entre cada víctima. Hay muchos factores que se pueden considerar al investigar sobre los asesinos en serie y buscar el por qué de sus acciones. Esta investigación destaca la importancia de la etapa de la niñez y los factores de riesgo que pueden existir para moldear a un asesino en serie. Algunos de estos pueden ser abuso, violencia o trauma, entre otros. Tras hacer una extensa investigación tanto de los asesinos en serie más reconocidos como de los conceptos básicos de la psicología, tales como de psicología del desarrollo, la importancia de las experiencias tempranas y el efecto de traumas de la niñez, se pudo concluir que efectivamente los asesinos en serie estudiados para este trabajo tuvieron una niñez difícil que pudo haber generado traumas en ellos y desencadenado la juega de matanzas.

Palabras clave: asesinos en serie, matanzas, trauma, desarrollo, niñez, abuso

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the possible relationship between childhood trauma becoming serial killer. It seeks to answer the question: did serial killers experience trauma during their childhood that could have provoked their violent future? A serial killer is considered to be a person who has killed more than three people with a month or more of a time period in between each victim. There are many factors to consider when investigating serial killers and searching for the reason behind their actions. This research highlights the importance of the stage of childhood and the risk factors that may exist to mold a serial killer. These may include: abuse, violence or trauma, among others. After carrying out an extensive investigation about the most infamous serial killers as well as basic psychology concepts, such as developmental psychology, the importance of early experiences and the effects of childhood traumas, it could be concluded that, indeed, the serial killers examined for this project had difficult childhoods that could have generated trauma within them and detonated their killing sprees.

Key words: serial killers, killings, murders, trauma, development, childhood, abuse

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND THE

CREATION OF A SERIAL KILLER

Introduction to the problem

A person who commits a series of murders, often with no apparent motive and typically following a characteristic, predictable behavior pattern: this is the definition of a serial killer (Seltzer, 2013). This term has been widely used over the years to describe many different people, both men and women. Years pass, different serial killers are caught and convicted, but there is one question that always seems to live in everyone's mind: why? Although the definition of the term serial killer may say "no apparent motive", an analysis of that small fraction of the definition is necessary in order to even try to answer that question. "No *apparent* motive". As anyone other than the actual serial killer himself, the killings seem completely random and with no connection between the victim and the perpetrator, which more often than not is actually the case, but if someone were to dig a little deeper, we could see that there actually could be a connection, at least for the killer, and he may not even know or realize it himself. Killings may seem completely random and the question of *why* they happen has been present far too long. The answer may lie in psychology. Usually what people tend to say about serial killers, maybe as a defense mechanism against fear, is that they are crazy and that's why they do it. That is the simple way to look at it, but it still doesn't quite answer the question of why they do what they do.

Developmental psychology is the scientific study of how and why human beings change over the course of their life (Hogan, 2000). The core concept of this branch of psychology is that experiences people go through as early as infancy may influence the manner in which a person develops physically, mentally, emotionally

and psychologically (Hogan, 2000). For example, studies have shown that people who were not well fed as babies and did not receive the necessary nutrients have a lower IQ than babies who had a proper diet (Jacobsen, 2002). Other studies have shown that people who were breastfed by their mothers tend to have a better and closer relationship with them and are more socially active than people who were not breastfed as babies (Rapley, 2002). These examples go to show that early experiences have a big impact on how people develop, so it is reasonable to believe that serial killers become who they are because of early experiences. What the experiences are can vary, and there really isn't one experience that marks a person enough to become a serial killer, but investigation may be able to help.

There are certain characteristics that are commonly found in serial killers. Some may have a certain degree of mental illness, such as schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder and psychopathy (LaBrode, 2007). In the case of mental illness, the person may have a lack of remorse or guilt, paranoia (which leads them to kill), the need for control or addiction to the rush of killing (LaBrode, 2007). Other causes may be due to abuse by a family member, whether it's emotional, physical or sexual (Kocsis, 2008).

Any sort of abuse from any person can always lead to trauma, but studies have shown that when it comes from a family member, the repercussions are stronger and more intense because of the closeness and familiarity between the two people. No one ever expects a family member, who is supposed to love, support and protect family, to be the source of something so negative. Hence, the negative consequences people develop in the future. Bullying is also one of the antecedents some serial killers have (Carr-Greg, 2011). Being bullied and social isolation as children can have an enormous impact in many ways. Social psychology states that human interaction is

crucial for the well being of any human (Gergen, 1973). Being socially active helps develop skills that apply in any area of every day life. Interpersonal relationships lead to learning how to regulate emotions, emotional intelligence, establish relationships and friendships, along with other basic norms of social conduct (Allport, 1985).

Being deprived of such an important part of life has serious consequences. People who are bullied or socially isolated may never correctly learn how to form bonds with other people, what is socially acceptable or how to react towards certain situations (Allport, 1985). Also, being bullied during childhood may generate resentment and negative emotions in the person towards the bullies and anyone that resembles them in any way. People who were bullied may over generalize and not want to develop any kind of bond with any person, but instead have the adaptive belief that all humans have negative intentions, resulting in more social isolation in the future and becoming a never-ending cycle.

As mentioned before, there isn't one specific reason or cause that gives any explanation to how people become serial killers. There are many theories that can be attributed to psychological reasoning or psychiatric diagnostics as to how they turn into serial killers, but further research needs to be done on many different aspects of the killings. Like the definition states, serial killers often have patterns to their behaviors and killings. Not only is it important to know the story behind why they kill, but also why they kill the people that they do, in the way that they do and in the places that they do. Every serial killer's display of victims may seem random, but they usually have similarities between them.

Antecedents

History of serial killers

In order to explain the behavioral patterns of serial killers, a look into the most famous killers is needed. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer. This particular killer was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder and psychotic disorder, but was found legally sane (Silva, 2002). The word “sanity” in criminal and mental health law means that a person is of sound mind and is capable of being held responsible for their actions (Ochberg, 2003). It has been stated that he was deprived of attention from both his parents and it began to show later on in his school years. During the first few years, Dahmer was a happy child, but at around 5 years old he began to change. Jeffrey became a more introverted person, isolated himself from peers and limited social interaction to a minimum. He then developed an interest in animals and their carcasses. As he reached puberty, Dahmer discovered he was homosexual and did not share this information with his parents. After graduating high school, Dahmer picked up a hitchhiker and lured him to his house to supposedly have a few drinks. When the hitchhiker wanted to leave, Dahmer said he didn't want him to leave and killed him. This was the beginning of Jeffrey Dahmer's killings. He killed 17 people-all men, in a very similar way. He would befriend his victims in order to lure them back to his house, where he would eventually drug them and kill them. After killing them, Dahmer would dismember the victims and save their body parts, some for sexual use and some as part of a museum display he wanted to create (Silva, 2002).

Another famous serial killer with a very clear pattern in his killings was Ted Bundy. His strategy was to be charming and appear vulnerable, so he would often have a sling or use crutches in order to get his victims - all of whom were women

between the ages of 15 and 25 - to help him carry something to his car (Michaud, 2000). His method of killing was usually either blunt force trauma or strangulation. He would then dispose of the bodies with no traces of anything linking him to the crime. He stated that he would need to get heavily intoxicated in order to lower his inhibitions and prevent anything internal from stopping his impulses (Michaud, 2000). Bundy would take pictures of his victims, much like Jeffrey Dahmer, as mementos of his actions. Evidence show that all of his victims, apart from being women and similar in age, had similar physical features. They had long straight hair that was parted down the middle. Some believe it's a resemblance to a former girlfriend who had rejected him and it was his way of getting revenge.

Aileen Wuornos is another well-known serial killer. She killed seven people, all of whom were men, by shooting them at point-blank range. Her method and choice of victims were all the same, and the reason she said she killed them was that they had tried to rape her, so it was self-defense (Arrigo, 2004). These are just a few examples of famous serial killers and their patterns in their killings and behavior. There are countless amounts of serial killers, many of which we may not even know exist yet, that have certain strategies and patterns, but why?

Problem

This project will focus on the relation between the upbringing during childhood and the patterns that serial killers show. In order to find the correlation between the two, first certain aspects of great importance during a person's childhood will be analyzed to know the impact, whether it be positive or negative, it has during adolescence and adulthood. Later, a further analysis of different serial killers and their methods will be studied. With this information, we will be able to find the correlation and predictability between childhood traumas and killings. There are many aspects

that can be considered risk factors to generating any sort of trauma. Each person acts, feels and thinks differently, so there is no scale or point of reference that firmly explains cause and effect of serial killers, but an explanation as to why serial killers have these patterns can be offered.

Research Question

What is the relation between childhood traumas/events and becoming a serial killer?

Objective

The objective of this study is to obtain all the possible information regarding early experiences, traumatic events and future consequences in order to find a relationship with the patterns that serial killers show and answer the question why do they do it? As a result of this investigation, an analysis of possible treatments or protective factors in order to prevent first or subsequent offenses would not only provide explanation, but also a solution to this type of violence.

Significance of the study

This project is meant to provide a deeper understanding of serial killer's motives and the reason behind their way of being. As human beings, we are extremely quick to judge when somebody does something out of the ordinary, even more so if it's something negative or frowned upon by society. The easy thing to do is criticize and place blame, especially if it's about something as horrifying as murder, but there's always more to a story.

It's important to find possible causes in order to better understand these crimes learn how to prevent them. Violence has become more and more common as years have passed. With how technology has advanced, enough studies and prevention programs should have been put into action in order to raise awareness, but instead it is

only being used for psychological tests and medical examinations once the damage has already been done. With this research, hopefully a better understanding behind the importance of mental health and what influences it during childhood will increase knowledge of serial killers patterns and how to prevent these actions.

This research will be divided into three sections: analysis of early experiences, analysis of patterns in serial killers and possible risk and protective factors. This will be followed by the method applied in the investigation, an analysis of the data, discussion and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction to developmental psychology

Developmental psychology focuses on the different changes a person goes through throughout their lifespan. This includes ways of thinking, behavior, conduct, personality and biological changes (Hogan, 2000). There is special attention towards childhood, given that this is the portion of a person's life in which the most changes occur. This branch of psychology aims to describe, explain and optimize development. Two views of developmental psychology are normative development and the discontinuity view. Normative development states that children reach adulthood in a gradual way, as if a child is walking towards the top of a ramp. The latter states that children go through more of a stage-like process, with abrupt changes at different points in the person's life (Hogan, 2000). In this case, it's as if a child were walking up a staircase towards adulthood, rather than a ramp.

One very important question that developmental psychology seeks to answer is how important nature and nurture are in the upbringing of a child. Psychologists also study the interaction between these two factors. When speaking of the nature of a person, it is referring to the biological aspects and genetic factors that influence in

development. Nurture, on the other hand, refers to more environmental factors, such as attachment, socioeconomic status, culture and many other aspects that could be taken into consideration as part of the environment that a person is surrounded and could be influenced by (Hogan, 2002). For example, there have been studies in which the impact of nature versus nurture has been observed in adopted children. Results showed that similarities with the biological family supported nature, while similarities with the adoptive family supported nurture (Jacobsen, 2002).

Another theory that forms part of developmental psychology is stability versus change. Stability theorists state that certain characteristics that are present during infancy will remain throughout the person's life. Change theorists, on the other hand, refute this theory stating that people's personalities change depending on social and family interactions that mold them with each experience they go through (Hogan, 2000).

There are many factors that can contribute to the way a person is during adulthood, as it has been mentioned before. Part of developmental psychology is to study not only the factors that are present under normal circumstances, but also ones that are present in abnormal, dysfunctional and less than ideal situations (Burman, 2016). In other words, there is also grave importance given to aspects that could disrupt the developmental process and which these could be. Each person's childhood marks many patterns that will most likely be present during adulthood, which is why these early stages are so important and should be handled correctly (Burnman, 2016).

Importance of early experiences

During early childhood, the most changes occur in cognitive, physical and emotional growth. Neurologically speaking, during the child's development the brain goes through a wiring process in which certain abilities are established called

“sensitive periods” (Burman, 2016). During this time, it is imperative to provide stimulating and nurturing experiences that could help establish the creation of these connections in the brain. When a child is nurtured intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially, there will be many well-formed connections in the brain that will benefit the person throughout their lifetime. People who throughout their childhood were not supported or nurtured enough in these areas show deficits that affect their adult life, such as traumas or underdeveloped skills that are crucial for normal functioning in day-to-day life.

Children are very curious beings, who are very interested in discovering the world and everything it has to offer. It is through experimenting, trial and error and simply exposing themselves to different stimuli that they form new neural connections and acquire skills (Hogan, 2000). Therefore, if a child is in an environment where there is a lack of stimuli, has a monotonous upbringing or in a dangerous environment, there will be psychological, mental and emotional consequences that will reflect on the child’s future. In order to have an optimal childhood, children need to have access to stimuli that will benefit their development. Studies have shown that different aspects of a child’s life is established by early brain development, such as social competence, emotional well-being, literacy skills and physical abilities, all which have a direct effect on academics and life resiliency (Hogan, 2000).

Self-regulation is a critical skill that is acquired from early experiences (Uzgiris, 1975). It is defined as the ability for a child to regulate his emotion, behavior and attention. Children are able to achieve a satisfactory self-regulation when they have been exposed to situations in which their emotions and conduct have had to take over. With experience, a child will be able to learn how to correctly act and react in

certain situations. For example, a 3-year-old girl might have a fit when not given a cookie before dinner and gets grounded. Later on, she will learn that this behavior has negative consequences and will control (or self-regulate) herself. Using the same situation, if the girl were to get the cookie after throwing a fit, she won't feel the need to regulate herself and will grow up thinking that this is the way to socially interact. Therefore, her self-regulation will be at a low level and she will most likely have issues in her future establishing relationships or having a normal social conduct.

Traumatic experiences during childhood

There are many types of experiences that cause children to form traumas during their upbringing that can have a grave effect reaching and during adulthood. As mentioned before, early childhood experiences are crucial for an optimal development. Therefore, traumas generated during this time can cause detrimental consequences. Between the ages of 0 and 6 is the stage in which a negative experience can be considered an "early childhood trauma" (Eth, 1985). Many people believe that because of this young age, children are somehow protected from the impact of said experiences due to their limited ability to verbalize their feelings and thought on certain events. Unfortunately, studies have shown that the truth is, in fact, the complete opposite. Children are much more sensitive to the exposure of negative experiences because of the malleability that the brain has at the beginning of a person's life, which means that positive and negative situations involving a child have the power to engrave themselves in a child's conscious and subconscious in an equal manner (Eth, 1985). Traumas that a child may go through can include intentional violence (being a victim or witness) such as physical or sexual abuse and domestic violence, bullying, war or accidents.

A child's sense of protection or safety can be completely destroyed in the presence of strong stimuli (loud noises, visual, violence, etc.). Children during this stage don't understand the cause-effect relationship. Therefore, a two-year-old may process the experience of his mother being beaten differently than an eleven-year-old would. Because of the vulnerability of a child's brain, any kind of traumatic experience during these ages has been proven to reduce the size of the brain cortex, resulting in deficiencies in IQ, regulating emotions, excessive awareness and feeling defensive (Eth, 1985).

The presence and quality of a parent, guardian or caregiver in a child's life is crucial. This means that if a certain negative experience also impacts this person, the child may be able to feel unprotected, isolated and defenseless, which can also have consequences in the relationship between mother and parent/guardian/caregiver. This causes different types of symptoms and behaviors that many adults don't understand or know how to handle (Gergen, 1973). For instance, children between the ages of 0 and 2 who are exposed to trauma may show poor verbal skills, memory issues, excessive screaming and crying and low appetite. Between the ages of 3 and 6, academic issues (focusing or learning), learning disabilities, poor skill development, low self regulation skills, imitation of the traumatic event, verbal abuse, social difficulties and self esteem problems can be observed as some symptoms that a child might present (Gergen, 1973). All of these symptoms and behaviors may continue to manifest themselves, but in different ways as a child grows older. They may, in fact, cause such a negative effect in a person that he or she may become of violent nature in the future, such as a serial killer.

Links between abusive childhood and becoming a serial killer

Criminologist Dr Adrian Raine states that biological factors as well as social factors play a role in the creation of a killer (Raine, 2008). Dr. Raine affirms that people who have a specific variant of the enzyme monoamine-oxidase-A gene are more likely to manifest violent behavior if they had an upbringing with traumatic or violent experiences (Raine, 2013). A study, in which 68% of the serial killers studied were found victims of some kind of childhood abuse or trauma (Merryweather, 2018), was done in order to categorize and analyze how and which different types of childhood abuse can shape serial killers. This investigation was done with researcher Abbie Morono and ex-FBI profiler Joe Navarro. Within this study, serial killers were classified in terms of the motivation behind their killings. They included the following categories: anger, financial gain, power/lust and rape. Furthermore, there were three categories of child abuse: physical, psychological and sexual.

Results of this study showed that, firstly, rape/lust killings are among the most common in serial killer's practices (Marono, 2018). Serial Killers who had been sexually abused in their childhood showed tendencies towards rape/lust and anger murders. Sexual abuse was also linked to overkill, necrophilia and changing the corpse's location from where the killing occurred. Rape/lust as well as financial gain were also linked to serial killers who had been exposed to psychological abuse. These types of murders were associated with a pattern of torturing their victims (Marono, 2018). In other words, serial killers who were psychologically abused found pleasure or showed a tendency to torture their victims before actually killing them. Lastly, serial killers with a history of physical childhood abuse showed rape/lust type of killings. These types of killings typically involve a quick murder, binding the body

and, in contrast to sexually abused serial killers, leaving the body in the same place where the murder took place (Norris, 1989).

A closer look at famous serial killers

Richard “The Night Stalker” Ramirez- Richard Ramirez was born in Texas into a family of seven, as the youngest of five children. Julian Ramirez, Richard’s father, who was a Mexican policeman and later worked on the Santa Fe railroad, was known to have anger management issues, which led to physical abuse towards his family (Henson, 2010). Richard had an older cousin, Miguel Ramirez, who was a U.S Army combat veteran and liked to give detailed descriptions of the gruesome killings of his victims, as well as showing Richard Polaroid pictures of the killings and women he had raped. Cousins Richard and Miguel bonded over war stories and practicing how to kill with stealth and efficiency (Henson, 2010).

Richard began sleeping in a local cemetery to escape his father’s rage and violence. During this time, he witnessed his older cousin Miguel shoot his wife in the face due to a domestic fight. After this encounter, Richard isolated himself from his family and friends and moved in with his older sister and her husband, Roberto, who was considered a “peeping Tom” and included Richard in his exploits (Henson, 2010). Towards reaching his teenage years, Richard indulged his sexual fantasies through bondage and rape (Stone, 2001). Ramirez took up a job at a local Holiday Inn, which he got fired from after a guest walked into his hotel room and found Richard attempting to rape the guest’s wife. The guest gravely beat him, but charges against Ramirez were later dropped. In the ninth grade “Richie” dropped out of school, and at twenty-two years old he moved to California where his killing streak began (Stone, 2001).

His first victim was a nine-year-old girl named Mei Lung in April of 1984 who was killed in a hotel basement where Ramirez was living. He first beat and raped the girl and later stabbed her to death. He then hung her mangled body from a pipe at the scene of the crime (Newton, 2006). Two months later, in June, a seventy-nine-year-old woman named Jennie Vincow was found dead in her bed from a brutal stabbing and a deep cut in her throat that nearly decapitated her. Ramirez tried to take his next victim on March 1985, when he shot twenty-two-year-old Maria Hernandez in the face in her own home. Luckily, Hernandez had lifted her hand with her keys where the bullet ricocheted off of to protect her face. Maria had a roommate, thirty-four-year-old Dayle Okazaki, who was hiding behind the counter after hearing the gunshot and someone entering the kitchen. When she raised her head to look around, Ramirez fatally shot her in the forehead. On the same day, Ramirez pulled a thirty-year-old woman out of her car, shot her twice and fled the scene (Newton, 2006). She died in the hospital later on that day.

Later on that same March, Ramirez broke into a house and killed a forty-four-year-old man with a shot to the head. The wife was then beaten and bound while Ramirez ransacked the house. During this time, the wife was able to escape the bonds and reach an unloaded gun. Richard then shot her three times and stabbed her, all before gouging out her eyes and storing them in a jewelry box, which he took with him as a memento (Allely, 2014). In the month of May, Ramirez had four women victims, which he tortured and raped, one of whom died in the hospital because of her injuries. Two months later, Ramirez broke into many homes and took their valuables after killing the husbands and torturing and sodomizing his women victims (Allely, 2014). On this burgle spree, Ramirez unwantedly entered the lives of eight people, five of which he killed (two being men), and three women who were able to survive

their injuries. During the first half of August, Richard Ramirez broke into more homes, shot the men and raped the women. One man who was shot in the temple was able to survive a shot in the temple and fight off Ramirez in an attempt to protect his wife (Stone, 2001), causing Ramirez to flee the scene.

Richard became a person of interest in the city (Newton, 2006), which caused him to move from the Los Angeles area to San Francisco temporarily. There, he broke into a family's home where he shot the husband, then beat and raped the wife before fatally shooting her in the head (Henson, 2010). After moving back to Los Angeles, Ramirez broke into a couple's house, shot the man in the head three times, beat and raped the woman before binding her and stealing the valuables. Ramirez had told the woman to "tell them the Night Stalker was here" (Henson, 2010) before leaving the house. Fortunately, both the man and woman survived their injuries.

The Night Stalker has many observable patterns in all of his killings. Firstly, the majority of his victims are women, who he rapes and tortures, while the men that he killed were not tortured (Allely, 2014). Also, all of his murders (with women) contained more or less the same process or factors: beating, bondage, torture, rape. In many cases, he would make his victims "swear on Satan" (Henson, 2010) that there were no more valuables, that they would not scream or that they would tell the police about "The Night Stalker" (Newton, 2006).

Henry Lucas and Ottis Toole- Henry Lee Lucas was born in Virginia in 1936 into a troublesome family. His mother was a prostitute who found pleasure in forcing her child to witness her have sex with her clients and cross dress in public (Singer, 2004). Lucas' father had a railroad accident, which severed both his legs. One day, he was going home drunk and collapsed on his way back during a blizzard and died of hypothermia. After this event, Henry dropped out of school in sixth grade

(Singer, 2004). He confessed to having committed his first murder at age 15 when he strangled a seventeen-year-old to death for refusing his sexual advances (Cox, 1991). He was imprisoned for this crime, and managed to escape, but was recaptured and released in 1959. In 1961, Lucas killed his mother during a domestic fight with a stab in the neck (Cox, 1991). She died in the hospital of a heart attack caused by the assault. Henry then began a drifter sort of lifestyle, where he became friends with Ottis Toole and moved in with him and his family (Singer, 2004).

Ottis Toole was born in Florida and son to an alcoholic father who abandoned him and an abusive mother who would dress him in girls' clothing and call him "Susan" (Schechter, 2004). Toole claimed to be a victim of sexual abuse and incest with close relatives (Schechter, 2004), such as his sister. Also, his grandmother from his mother's side was a Satanist who forced Ottis to take part in many satanic rituals that involved self-mutilation and eventually called him "Devil's Child" (Schechter, 2004). Toole stated that these events began to take place after coming out as gay to his family (Vidal, 2014). He was considered to have mild retardation because of his IQ of 75 and to be sexually aroused by fire. Ottis claimed to have been forced by his father to engage in a sexual relationship with one of his father's friends at the age of 5. He later stated that he felt he knew he was gay at ten years old and at twelve he had a sexual relationship with a neighborhood boy (Vidal, 2014). As a teenager he became a male prostitute and later, at the age of fourteen, he committed his first murder by running over a salesman with his own car after being propositioned for sex.

In 1976, Toole met Henry Lucas in a Florida soup kitchen and developed a sexual relationship. Together, they traveled across 26 states claiming their victims, murdering them one by one by luring them away to quiet places (Cox, 1991). For Toole and Lucas, murdering was a way for them to bond and strengthen their

relationship. Both talked about their murders very openly, joking about them and giving details about certain killings, sometimes even nostalgia could be detected from their descriptions of the murders (Singer, 2004). Ottis often ate the mutilated bodies of their victims, while Lucas would make jokes about travelling with one of his victim's head in the backseat of his car. During a private conversation between the two on a prison phone, Toole told Lucas "Some tastes like real meat when it's got barbecue sauce on it" (Cox, 1991), when referring to eating his victim's bodies.

Lucas and Toole were often referred to as "the confession killers" (Vidal, 2014) due to how openly they spoke about the crimes they had committed. Henry, specifically, was very eager to let everyone know about his crimes and give details about them, especially to the police. Toole resisted confessing at first, but after Lucas began to talk, he did so as well. According to Toole, he and Lucas had killed 108 and people, and even argued with the police when they didn't believe him (LaBrode, 2007). Lucas, on the other hand, mentioned that they had killed thousands of people, even though it has been proven that most of them were not true. This confused many people because no one understood why someone that is already on death row would make up crimes. He later admitted that confessing to made-up murders got him extra privileges; police would take him to the scene of the crime and he would be able to eat outside food (Vidal, 2014). Basically, confessing to fake murders got him more time out in the real world.

Even though it is uncertain how many murders were actually committed between these two serial killers, what is a fact is their method of killing. Toole and Lucas would often rape their victims before killing them, sometimes even overkilling (LaBrode, 2007). The victim's bodies would be so mutilated that it was impossible to recognize them. They would sometimes scatter the different body parts in different

places to confuse investigators, or eat their bodies to hide parts of the evidence (LaBrode, 2007). Eventually, both were imprisoned, their relationship broke off and Ottis died of cirrhosis while incarcerated in 1996. Henry Lucas died in 2001 of heart failure, also while serving his sentence (LaBrode, 2007).

Pedro Alonso Lopez- Pedro Lopez is a Colombian-born serial killer, sentenced for raping over 300 girls and killing 110 of them (Greig, 2006). These crimes took place in the countries of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Lopez's father, Midardo Reyes, had a fight with his wife in 1947 and cheated on her with a prostitute named Benilda Lopez de Castaneda, who became pregnant with Pedro because of this encounter (Philbin, 2009). When she was three months pregnant, Pedro's father (who formed part of the Colombian Conservative party during their country's civil war) was killed from a gunshot wound while protecting a grocery store from a mob (Greig, 2006). Pedro was born six months later as the seventh of thirteen children. During his childhood, Lopez was often exposed to his mother's line of work, witnessing acts of prostitution that profoundly disturbed him (Philbin, 2009). Benilda once caught Pedro fondling his younger sister when he was eight years old, so he was thrown out of the house. He then began his journey to Bogota, where a man picked him up and raped him in a deserted house. An American family took him in when he was twelve years old and placed him in an orphan school (Greig, 2006). Pedro was enrolled there for two years, but ran away because he claimed a male teacher molested him. At the age of eighteen, he was imprisoned for stealing cars and selling them to chop shops.

Lopez claimed that during his time in prison, he was gang-raped by fellow criminals, so he hunted down and killed the ones that were the most brutal (Greig, 2006). After his jail term, he traveled to Peru, where he was caught by a native tribe trying to abduct a nine-year-old girl. They were going to execute him, abiding by their

law of burying him alive for his crime, when an American missionary convinced them to turn him into the Peruvian police (Greig, 2006). This event was less than ideal, because the police decided to not prosecute him and send him back to his native country, where he began travelling back and forth to Ecuador, claiming his victims. Lopez claimed that he would kill more or less three girls a week, stating, “I like the girls in Ecuador, they are more gentle and trusting, more innocent” (Philbin, 2009).

Because of his crimes and locations of choice, Pedro Lopez became known as the “Monster of the Andes” (Philbin, 2009) in 1980 when he led police to 53 graves in Ecuador, all of which belonged to girls between the ages of nine and twelve. Three years later, 110 additional murders made Lopez guilty in the country of Ecuador. Later on, he confessed to 240 more murders between Peru and Colombia. He served a sentence of 14 years in a psychiatric wing of a Colombian prison, as he was declared insane, and was released on good behavior after eliminating his previous diagnosis and replacing it with a declaration of him being sane (Philbin, 2009). His current whereabouts are unknown and no one has seen him since his release.

CHAPTER 3-

Design

This study uses a retrospective qualitative design. It is qualitative because it focuses on analyzing and exploring motives, reasons and the thoughts that take place behind a certain action, which in this case would be serial killings. A retrospective design was utilized in order to look back at existing data in order to formulate a new hypothesis. In this case, the hypothesis of this study is meant to be answered by analyzing the data on famous serial killers, such as their upbringing, mental health, genetic factors, etc. to find the relationship between childhood traumas and their killings. The information and data will be collected from various sources that explain

and detail the lives and killings that each famous serial killer experienced. After collecting this data, an analysis will be made in order to find a relationship between the upbringing during their childhood and what motivated them, whether it be conscious or unconsciously, to become serial killers.

Population

In order to choose the participants of this study, the sample will need to comply with certain investigation criteria. In other words, the sample must be made up of men or women who have been considered and named serial killers in the past. There will not be discrimination with respect to age, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or nationality of the perpetrator. The demographic of participants who could qualify for this study is due to the fact that childhood traumas and difficult upbringings can take place in any kind of family. Neither race, ethnicity, age, sex, socioeconomic status or nationality exonerates a person from being a victim of perpetrator. Therefore, the only requisite in order to be considered as a participant of this study is that the people that form the sample must be considered serial killers.

Because of the hypothesis and objective of the investigation, there is one exclusion criterion: people who have committed murders but are not considered serial killers will not be taken into account or included in the investigation of this study. Many people in the world have committed murder, but are not necessarily considered serial killers because of the amount of people they have killed (less than three) and the time period in which they took place (less than a month between each killing) (Haggerty, 2009).

Instruments or Materials

The materials that will be needed for this study are somewhat limited because of the study's retrospective nature. There will be no personal interviews with the participants for many reasons. First of all, the level of danger that exists when coming in contact with killers is extremely high. Secondly, many of the famous serial killers are no longer living. Lastly, contacting serial killers and/or their attorneys can be a long and difficult process with possibly no positive outcome. In order to collect data and information, many biographies about specific serial killers will be used. In some of the biographies, excerpts of interviews with police, doctors and reporters are included which serve as a more detailed and personal source of information regarding serial killer's upbringings and killings. Case studies will also be used for a deeper analysis.

Other materials that will be used for this research are studies, books and articles that explain and detail developmental psychology, early experiences, childhood traumas and their effects. This will be crucial to the study because it is the base in order to find the relationship between the effects of faulty upbringings and how they influence a person to become a serial killer. Both types of sources will be needed to be able to find this connection and establish a relationship.

Data collection process

As previously mentioned, the data for this study will be collected from biographies and life stories of serial killers, which may include excerpts of previous interviews. First, every source of information that is either a biography or life story from each famous or well known serial killer will be gathered. This will be done by doing research on the internet from scholarly articles. On Google Scholar, there are

hundreds of articles on different studies that have been done. Therefore, this will be the platform of choice for this project.

The search terms that will be used in order to find articles and information may include the names of infamous serial killers in order to study their life stories and history, information on developmental psychology, psychological effects of trauma during childhood, the importance of early childhood experiences, what influences a child to become an aggressive adult, among other search terms that may emerge as the study advances. Due to the great amount of serial killers that have existed throughout the years, it would take a long period of time to collect data on each subject. Therefore, only the most infamous serial killers active since the year 1950 will be used as a sample for this study.

As the information is gathered, each case will be carefully analyzed. There needs to be special attention towards every and any aspect of these people's lives that may help explain their violent ways. Even going far enough back to explain their parent's childhood that may have caused them to be a certain way or have a genetic influence in their child's upbringing that could influence in the development of a serial killer. Important possible variables will be considered in every case, such as sexual, physical, psychological, emotional or verbal abuse, exposure to violence, trauma, medical factors and anything that could negatively affect the person and their psychological development.

The analysis of basic psychology definitions, theories and ideas will also be included in the data collection process. After gathering all of the information on serial killers and their lives, it will be compared to the previously mentioned psychology bases. This will be done in order to find patterns and relationships, if any, between different types of hardships that each serial killer possible faced during childhood and

how this could have influenced their future behavior. After this comparison, a final analysis will be made in order to develop an answer to the research question about the relationship between childhood traumas and serial killers.

Data Analysis

Because this is a retrospective qualitative study, the analysis of the data that is collected is done almost in parallel with the gathering of information. As each serial killer is studied and compared to psychology information, an analysis will take place in order to concoct a final result. This will be done with each person until the end, where a final, global analysis will be done to create the conclusion of the investigation. In other words, each sub analysis of every serial killer will be gathered and analyzed as a whole for a final explanation regarding the investigation's research question and hypothesis. This will be done by investigating the person's childhood and studying it to find if they went through a troublesome childhood, whether it be socially, biologically, or any other factor that may have had a role in their lives and creating a final conclusion. The objective is to find a theme or pattern between the creation of a serial killer and the presence of childhood trauma as a result of this retrospective qualitative study.

Ethical Considerations

Because of the format and design of said investigation, the potential risk to participants is virtually non-existent. An informed consent is not needed because the data utilized for this study is already publicly available.

Even so, this study will be reviewed by the Ethics Committee of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito to ensure that no ethical codes are being violated. The potential benefits of this study are very important because it may help us identify risk factors that could be useful in the prevention of serial murder.

Discussion

Strengths and limitations of the investigation proposal

This investigation has many strengths that make it a viable and beneficial study. An important aspect of this study is that it represents a novel approach to examining serial killing within the context of childhood trauma which may provide a new perspective on this topic.

The fact that it is based on previously given information makes it possible to conduct this study in a short period of time. Many studies that examine psychological factors over the lifespan are longitudinal or take months or years to conclude, but this study allows data from many years to be analyzed in a relatively brief time period.

On the other hand, this investigation also has certain limitations that may complicate the process of data collection. For instance, the sample of the investigation is limited to the information that is accessible either on the internet or in books, but a personal approach cannot be taken to the gathering of information. In other words, it may provide a different or more accurate perspective to personally talk with and interview serial killers to hear their perspective first-hand, but for safety reasons and the fact that many are deceased, this is not possible. Every famous or well known serial killer is included in this study without discrimination of age, sex, nationality, race or ethnicity, which provides a wide range of data that will take longer to analyze and compare in order to find a relationship between childhood traumas and serial killers.

The third limitation of this study is that, due to the method that will be used, it will not be possible to analyze data from serial killers who are lesser known. This may mean that the findings don't generalize to all serial killers who either have trouble keeping their conflictive behavior hidden, or wanted to get caught.

Recommendations for future studies

In order to expand this study and analyze the topic in a more profound way, it would be interesting to do more research on the emotional effects that took place in each serial killer's minds. In other words, did they feel remorse? If so, why did they continue killing? Did each murder have any kind of negative emotional effect on them? Were they numbed and indifferent to the events? A relationship between childhood traumas and serial killers may have been found, but the emotional effects or factors that take place after every killing has yet to be investigated. Some may have found it gratifying, some may have regretted their actions. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare those two different emotional effects and analyze what causes each of them. Another recommendation for future research is to categorize the participants in terms of gender, race, or other demographic variables, such as belonging to a large family. This could produce more precision in the results and make it possible to draw inferences about the probability an individual may have for becoming a serial killer and establish risk factors.

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