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## ARE SERIAL KILLERS BORN PSYCHOPATHS OR PUSHED TO THAT LIMIT?

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### Abstract

Serial killers are individuals who have committed three or more murders over a period of time, usually with a cooling-off period in between each murder. They often have a psychological need or compulsion to kill, and their victims are usually chosen randomly or based on certain characteristics that the killer finds appealing or desirable. Serial killers often have a specific modus operandi, or method of operation, that they use to carry out their crimes, which can help law enforcement identify them and track their movements. The study of serial killers is a complex field that involves understanding the psychological, social, and environmental factors that contribute to their behaviour. Television shows like *The Fall*, movies like *The Perfume*, and songs like *The Ripper* by Judas Priest, provide evidence of a widespread fascination with serial killers. Serial killers have operated throughout history and around the world. Even though the majority of the people do not kill, the general public seems to have a fascination with serial killing (Miller, 2014). Newton (2006) identified Locusta, a professional killer from Rome, best known for poisoning Emperor Claudius, his son Britannicus, and 6 other unnamed victims in the first century CE, as the first documented serial killer. Newton also described the case of Gilles de Rais, a leader in the French army, a companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc, and a confessed serial killer, best known for killing a large number of victims (100 children) in the 14th and 15th centuries. In the United States, documented serial murder cases date back to the 1800s (Wright & Hensley, 2003). One of America's first and most famous serial

killers was H. H. Holmes. Reports confirm that he killed at least 12 people including men, women and children during the 1800s, although he claimed to have killed 27 (see Benzkofer, 2014; Cipriani, 1937; Larson, 2003). Hickey (1997) recorded 337 serial murder cases in the United States from 1800 to 1995, the majority occurring between 1980 and 1995. A more recent example of an accused serial killer is that of William Devin Howell, who confessed to killing seven people in Connecticut in 2003 (Stewart, Murray, Moller & Jvittalfoxct, 2015).

### Review of literature

#### **Modern serial killers; Kevin D. Haggerty; 2009;**

The study of serial killing has been dominated by an individualized focus on the aetiology and biography of particular offenders. As such, it has tended to downplay the broader social, historical and cultural context of such acts. This article addresses this lacuna by arguing that serial killers are distinctively modern. It highlights six modern phenomena related to serial killing: (a) the mass media and the attendant rise of a celebrity culture; (b) a society of strangers; (c) a type of mean/ends rationality that is largely divorced from value considerations; (d) cultural frameworks of denigration which tend to implicitly single out some groups for greater predation; (e) particular opportunity structures for victimization; and finally (f) the notion that society can be engineered. Combined, these factors help to pattern serial killing in modernity's own self-image, with modernity setting the parameters of what it means to be a serial killer, and establishing the preconditions for serial murder to emerge in its distinctive contemporary guise.

**Serial killers: ordering caspase activation events in apoptosis; EA Selle, SJ Martin; 1999;**

Caspases participate in the molecular control of apoptosis in several guises; as triggers of the death machinery, as regulatory elements within it, and ultimately as a subset of the effector elements of the machinery itself. The mammalian caspase family is steadily growing and currently contains 14 members. At present, it is unclear whether all of these proteases participate in apoptosis. Thus, current research in this area is focused upon establishing the repertoire and order of caspase activation events that occur during the signalling and demolition phases of cell death. Evidence is accumulating to suggest that proximal caspase activation events are typically initiated by molecules that promote caspase aggregation. As expected, distal caspase activation events are likely to be controlled by caspases activated earlier in the cascade. However, recent data has cast doubt upon the functional demarcation of caspases into signalling (upstream) and effector (downstream) roles based upon their prodomain lengths. In particular, caspase-3 may perform an important role in propagating the caspase cascade, in addition to its role as an effector caspase within the death programme. Here, we discuss the apoptosis-associated caspase cascade and the hierarchy of caspase activation events within it.

**Introduction**

Serial killers have long been a subject of fascination and horror for society. These individuals, who commit three or more murders over a period of time, often with a particular modus operandi, leave a trail of death and destruction in their wake. Their crimes not only devastate the families and loved ones of their victims but also strike fear into the hearts of entire communities. The study of serial killers is a complex and multifaceted field, involving psychology, criminology, and forensic science. Understanding the motivations and behaviors

of serial killers can help law enforcement better identify and apprehend these individuals, as well as provide insights into the darker aspects of human nature. Despite the fear and fascination that they evoke, serial killers represent a tiny fraction of the overall population, and their behavior is not representative of the majority of people. However, the impact of their crimes is immense, and the study of serial killers remains an important field in criminal justice and psychology. There is little consensus on the general definition of serial murder (Ferguson, White, Cherry, Lorenz, & Bhimani, 2003). Reinhardt (1957) coined the phrase "chain killers", and described them as killers who would slaughter and leave a "chain" of victims behind them (as cited in Newton, 2006, p. 237); in the 1970s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Robert Ressler was the man to first coin the term, 'serial killer' (Lefebvre, 2005). Holmes and Holmes (2010) defined a serial killer as an individual killing three or more people, while Dyer (1997) emphasized the serial nature of the killings: "Serial killers kill serially: one murder after another, each a variation and continuation of those before, each an episode in a serial"

**Research questions**

- What are the common psychological, social, and environmental factors that contribute to the behavior of serial killers?
- How has the study of serial killers evolved over time, and what have been the major breakthroughs in understanding this phenomenon?
- What are the most effective investigative techniques used by law enforcement to identify and apprehend serial killers?

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To gain a deeper understanding of the psychology and behavior of serial killers, including the factors that contribute to their actions and the methods they use to commit their crimes.

- To explore the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which serial killers have emerged, and how these contexts have shaped our understanding of this phenomenon.
- To identify effective investigative techniques that can be used to identify and apprehend serial killers, and to evaluate the impact of these techniques on reducing the incidence of serial killing.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

- The study of serial killers is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the darkest aspects of human nature and the extreme behaviors that some individuals are capable of. This knowledge can help us better understand the causes of violent behavior, which can be used to develop effective strategies for prevention and intervention.
- Secondly, the study of serial killers is important for law enforcement and criminal justice. By understanding the modus operandi and patterns of behavior of serial killers, investigators can develop strategies for identifying and apprehending these individuals, potentially saving lives and preventing further violence.
- Thirdly, the study of serial killers has significant implications for the survivors and families of victims of serial killers. By exploring the impact of these crimes on survivors and families, we can identify strategies for providing support and healing to those affected by these traumatic events.
- Finally, the study of serial killers has important social and cultural implications. The media's representation of serial killers can have a significant impact on public perception, shaping attitudes towards crime and violence.

**SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

- The scope of the study for the topic of serial killers is broad and multi-disciplinary. It encompasses a range of fields, including psychology, criminology, sociology, forensic science, and media studies.
- The study of serial killers involves examining the patterns of behavior, motivations, and psychological characteristics of individuals who commit multiple murders. This includes understanding the various typologies and classifications of serial killers, such as organized and disorganized killers, and exploring the different factors that may contribute to the development of violent behavior, including childhood trauma, mental illness, and social and environmental influences.
- In addition to the psychological and social aspects of serial killing, the study also encompasses forensic science techniques used to investigate and analyze evidence related to these crimes, as well as the legal and ethical considerations associated with studying and reporting on serial killers.

**Research methodologies****✓ Research design**

- Case studies: This involves an in-depth analysis of a particular serial killer or set of cases. Case studies allow researchers to explore the unique characteristics and circumstances surrounding a particular case or individual, providing rich qualitative data.
- Surveys and questionnaires: Surveys and questionnaires can be used to collect data from a large sample of individuals, including survivors of serial killers, law enforcement officials, and mental health professionals. These methods allow for the collection of quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically.

**✓ Sources of data**

- Law enforcement records - Police reports, court documents, and other legal records can provide valuable data about serial killers, including their methods of operation, the number of victims, and other important details.
- Psychological and criminological research - Psychological and criminological research can help provide insights into the underlying motivations and risk factors associated with serial killers.

## CHAPTERS

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE LAWS AND PROTECTION OF THE SERIAL KILLERS

Serial killers are individuals who commit multiple murders, usually targeting strangers, over a period of time. They are often seen as the epitome of evil, and their crimes are the subject of much fascination and horror in popular culture. While the motives and methods of serial killers vary widely, there are some common traits that are often present. One of the most common traits of serial killers is a lack of empathy for their victims. They see their victims as objects, rather than people with lives and families. This allows them to commit horrific acts of violence without feeling remorse or guilt. Another common trait of serial killers is a need for control and power. They often enjoy the feeling of dominance that comes from taking another person's life, and may use torture or other forms of sadism to assert their control. Many serial killers also exhibit patterns in their crimes, such as targeting victims of a certain gender, race, or age group. These patterns can be helpful in identifying and capturing serial killers, as law enforcement can use them to develop a profile of the killer and narrow down their search. Some of the most infamous serial killers in history include Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and John Wayne Gacy. Bundy was a charming and charismatic man who lured young women to their deaths, while Dahmer was known for his cannibalistic tendencies and brutal killings. Gacy, also known as the "Killer

Clown," targeted young boys and buried their bodies under his house. While the crimes of serial killers are undoubtedly horrific, they can also provide insights into the human psyche and the factors that can lead individuals to commit such heinous acts. Many serial killers have a history of childhood abuse or trauma, and may have struggled with mental illness or substance abuse. There are many authors who have written extensively on the subject of serial killing and serial killers. Some notable authors include:

- John E. Douglas: A retired FBI special agent and criminal profiler who has written several books on serial killers, including "Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit."
- Ann Rule: A true crime author who wrote extensively about serial killers, including Ted Bundy, who she knew personally. Some of her notable works include "The Stranger Beside Me" and "Green River, Running Red."
- Harold Schechter: A true crime author who has written several books on serial killers, including "The A to Z Encyclopedia of Serial Killers" and "The Serial Killer Files."
- Robert Ressler: A former FBI agent who is credited with coining the term "serial killer." He wrote the book "Whoever Fights Monsters: My Twenty Years Tracking Serial Killers for the FBI."
- Jack Levin: A sociologist and criminologist who has written extensively on the subject of serial killers, including "The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder."
- Katherine Ramsland: A writer and criminologist who has written several books on serial killers, including "The Human Predator: A Historical Chronicle of Serial Murder and Forensic Investigation."

These authors have provided valuable insights into the minds of serial killers and the factors that can lead individuals to commit such horrific crimes. Their work has helped to shed

light on the dark and disturbing world of serial killing, and has contributed to our understanding of the motivations, patterns, and psychology of these killers. Medical scientists have studied serial killers extensively, and have identified several critical concepts related to their behavior and psychology. These concepts include:

- **Psychopathy:** Psychopathy is a personality disorder characterized by a lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse. Many serial killers are psychopathic, and this trait is often associated with their violent and sadistic behavior.
- **Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD):** ASPD is another personality disorder that is commonly associated with serial killers. Individuals with ASPD have a disregard for the rights and feelings of others, and often engage in impulsive and aggressive behavior.
- **Childhood Trauma:** Many serial killers have a history of childhood trauma, including physical and sexual abuse. This trauma can lead to a range of psychological and emotional problems, and may contribute to the development of violent and antisocial behavior.
- **Brain Abnormalities:** Medical scientists have also identified certain brain abnormalities that may be associated with serial killing. For example, some studies have found that serial killers may have reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for regulating emotions and impulse control.
- **Social and Environmental Factors:** While there is no single cause of serial killing, social and environmental factors can also play a role. For example, poverty, unemployment, and social isolation have all been linked to an increased risk of violent behavior.

By understanding these critical concepts, medical scientists can develop better strategies for identifying and treating individuals who may

be at risk of engaging in violent and antisocial behavior. They can also help to educate the public about the complex and multifaceted nature of serial killing, and the importance of addressing the underlying factors that contribute to it. Psychologists have developed a range of measures to understand and prevent serial killing. These measures include:

- **Risk Assessment:** Psychologists use risk assessment tools to identify individuals who may be at risk of engaging in violent and antisocial behavior. These assessments consider factors such as past criminal behavior, mental health history, and social and environmental factors.
- **Treatment:** Psychologists can provide treatment to individuals who exhibit violent or antisocial behavior, with the goal of addressing underlying issues and preventing future harm. This may include therapy, medication, or other interventions.
- **Profiling:** Profiling involves developing a psychological profile of a serial killer based on their crime scenes, victims, and other evidence. This can help law enforcement identify and capture the killer, as well as better understand their motivations and patterns.
- **Prevention:** Psychologists can work with communities to develop prevention strategies that address the underlying factors that contribute to serial killing, such as poverty, unemployment, and social isolation. These strategies may include education and awareness campaigns, community outreach programs, and mental health services.
- **Research:** Psychologists conduct research on the psychology of serial killers to better understand their motivations and patterns. This research can inform prevention and treatment strategies, as well as provide insights into the complex nature of violent and antisocial behavior.

Overall, psychologists play a critical role in understanding and preventing serial killing. By identifying risk factors, providing treatment, and developing prevention strategies, psychologists can help to reduce the incidence of these horrific crimes and promote a safer and more compassionate society. Serial killing is a heinous crime that violates basic human rights and is universally condemned. As such, several international conventions and agreements have been developed to address this issue. These include:

- **United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime:** This convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 and includes provisions to prevent and combat transnational organized crime, including serial killing.
- **The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court:** This statute was adopted by the International Criminal Court in 1998 and provides for the prosecution of individuals for crimes against humanity, including acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, such as serial killing.
- **Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials:** This convention was adopted by the Organization of American States in 1997 and includes provisions to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking of firearms, which are often used by serial killers.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:** This covenant, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, recognizes the inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals and prohibits the arbitrary deprivation of life, which is often the result of serial killing.

These international conventions and agreements demonstrate the global commitment to preventing and punishing serial

killing. They provide a framework for cooperation and collaboration among countries, and promote a unified approach to combating this horrific crime. Serial killing is considered a serious violation of international law, particularly human rights law and criminal law. International law provides a framework for addressing and preventing serial killing, as well as prosecuting those who engage in this heinous crime. The most relevant areas of international law regarding serial killing are:

- **International Criminal Law:** International criminal law provides a framework for prosecuting individuals who commit serious crimes, including crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes, and other international crimes. Serial killing is often considered a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.
- **Human Rights Law:** International human rights law protects the basic human rights of all individuals, including the right to life, liberty, and security of person. Serial killing is a gross violation of these rights and is universally condemned.
- **International Law Enforcement Cooperation:** International law enforcement cooperation is critical for preventing and prosecuting serial killing. International cooperation can include sharing information and intelligence, extradition of suspects, and joint investigations.
- **International Criminal Tribunals:** International criminal tribunals, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, are established to prosecute individuals who commit international crimes, including serial killing.

Serial killing is a rare but alarming phenomenon in India. While the exact number of serial killers in India is not known, there have been several



high-profile cases in recent years. Here are some notable examples of serial killing in India:

- Raman Raghav: Raman Raghav, also known as "Psycho Raman," was a serial killer who operated in Mumbai during the 1960s. He was known for his brutal attacks on homeless people, and is believed to have killed at least 41 people.
- Thug Behram: Thug Behram was a notorious serial killer who operated in India during the 19th century. He was part of a group of robbers known as the Thugs, who were known for their ritualistic killings of travelers.
- Auto Shankar: Auto Shankar was a serial killer who operated in Chennai during the 1980s. He was known for luring young women into his car and then killing them. He was eventually caught and sentenced to death.
- Cyanide Mohan: Cyanide Mohan was a serial killer who operated in Karnataka between 2003 and 2009. He targeted young women and lured them into relationships before killing them with cyanide.
- Nithari Killings: The Nithari Killings refer to a series of murders that occurred in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, between 2005 and 2006. The murders were committed by Moninder Singh Pandher and his domestic help, Surinder Koli. They targeted young girls and women, and were convicted of killing at least 19 people.

The Indian government has taken steps to address serial killing, including increasing the resources and training provided to law enforcement agencies. However, more needs to be done to prevent these heinous crimes and bring perpetrators to justice. In India, serial killing is a heinous crime that is dealt with severely by the legal system. The punishment for committing murder in India is life imprisonment or the death penalty, depending on the severity of the crime. If the crime is classified as a "rarest of rare" case, then the

death penalty can be awarded by the court. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) provides the legal framework for dealing with serial killing. The IPC defines murder as the intentional killing of a person with the intention of causing death, or with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death. The punishment for murder in India is life imprisonment or the death penalty. In addition to the IPC, there are other laws and provisions that are relevant to serial killing in India. These include:

- The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC): The CrPC lays down the procedures to be followed by the police and the courts in the investigation and trial of criminal cases. It also provides for the rights of the accused, such as the right to a fair trial.
- The Indian Evidence Act: The Indian Evidence Act lays down the rules for the admissibility of evidence in court. This includes the admissibility of confessions made by the accused.
- The Protection of Human Rights Act: The Protection of Human Rights Act provides for the protection of the human rights of all individuals, including the victims of crime. This includes the right to life and the right to a fair trial.

In recent years, the Indian government has taken steps to strengthen the legal framework for dealing with serial killing. These include setting up fast-track courts to ensure speedy trials, and introducing stricter laws to deal with crimes against women and children. However, more needs to be done to prevent these heinous crimes and bring perpetrators to justice.

#### **Case Study: Ted Bundy, American Serial Killer**

Ted Bundy was a notorious American serial killer who murdered at least 30 young women and girls during the 1970s. Bundy was born in 1946 in Vermont, USA. He was raised by his grandparents and believed that his mother was his sister until he was a teenager. Bundy was

known for his charm and good looks, which he used to lure his victims.

Bundy's killing spree began in 1974 when he attacked and killed two women at a university in Washington state. Over the next few years, he went on to murder more women in several states, including Colorado, Utah, and Florida. Bundy's victims were usually young, attractive women who he approached in public places, such as college campuses, parks, and shopping malls. He would often pose as a law enforcement officer or ask for their help in carrying something to his car before abducting them. Bundy was eventually caught in 1978 after a traffic stop in Florida. He was charged with multiple murders and went on trial in 1979. Bundy represented himself in court and put on a show of charm and intelligence, but he was ultimately convicted and sentenced to death. Bundy was executed in the electric chair in 1989. Bundy's case is significant because of the extent of his crimes and the way he was able to manipulate and deceive those around him. His case also led to changes in law enforcement practices, including the creation of a national database for tracking violent criminals and the use of bite mark analysis as a forensic tool.

Bundy's case also raised questions about the nature of serial killing and the psychology of the perpetrators. Many experts believe that serial killers like Bundy suffer from personality disorders, such as psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder, which make them unable to feel empathy or remorse for their actions. They also often have a history of childhood abuse or trauma. In conclusion, the case of Ted Bundy is a tragic example of the devastating impact of serial killing on individuals and society. His case also underscores the importance of effective law enforcement practices and mental health interventions to prevent and address serial killing. Serial killing is a rare phenomenon in India compared to other countries, but there have been some high-profile cases of serial killers in the country. The motivations of serial killers in India vary, ranging

from revenge, financial gain, sexual gratification, to mental illness.

One of the most notorious serial killers in India was Raman Raghav, also known as Psycho Raman, who operated in Mumbai in the 1960s. He killed at least 41 people, mostly homeless individuals, using a metal rod or a knife. Raghav was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was declared mentally ill by the court. Another infamous case was the Nithari killings, where a businessman, Moninder Singh Pandher, and his domestic help, Surendra Koli, killed at least 19 young girls and women in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, between 2005 and 2006. Koli, who was described as a necrophile and a cannibal, confessed to the murders and was sentenced to death. Pandher was initially acquitted but was later convicted on appeal.

In recent years, there have been several cases of serial killings of women, especially in the northern states of India. In 2019, a man named Jolly Joseph was arrested for allegedly poisoning six members of her family in Kerala. She had allegedly killed her husband, in-laws, and other relatives over a period of 14 years for financial gain. The legal system in India provides for severe punishment for serial killing. The Indian Penal Code prescribes the death penalty for the "rarest of rare" cases, including serial killing. However, there are challenges in the investigation and prosecution of serial killers, including inadequate resources, lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies, and a slow and overburdened judicial system. Overall, while serial killing is not as common in India as in some other countries, the cases that have occurred have had a significant impact on society and highlight the need for effective law enforcement, mental health interventions, and prevention efforts.

### **Conclusion**

Serial killing and serial killers are a disturbing and complex phenomenon that have captivated the public's attention for decades. The motivations and psychological



characteristics of serial killers vary widely, and the causes of their behavior are still not fully understood. However, through the work of psychologists, criminologists, and law enforcement officials, we have gained significant insight into the nature of serial killing. Despite the rarity of serial killing, the impact on society can be profound, causing fear and uncertainty. It is therefore crucial to have effective measures in place to prevent and investigate these crimes. This includes improving mental health care, strengthening law enforcement practices, and enhancing public awareness and education.

International conventions and laws have been put in place to combat serial killing and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. However, there are still challenges in the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of serial killers, including inadequate resources and coordination. In conclusion, serial killing and serial killers are a disturbing and complex aspect of human behavior that require ongoing attention and study. By continuing to improve our understanding and response to these crimes, we can work towards preventing them and protecting our communities.

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