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# Western Culture and the Spread of Serial Murder

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WESTERN CULTURE AND THE SPREAD OF SERIAL MURDER  
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BY

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## INTRODUCTION

Serial murder is defined as the killing of more than two people over a period of time; the period of time must include a “cooling off” period (Knight). Psychologists have focused years of study on the individual motives of serial killers and how the individual reacts to his or her environment, which seems to cause the individual to commit murder several times. Serial murder is a worldwide phenomenon, but most research is conducted on the murderers from Western cultures, leaving significant holes in the research for non-Western serial murders. Although the most debated psychological question, nature vs. nurture, comes into account when discussing personalities, one other question has been largely ignored. That question is whether or not serial killers are formed and created by Western culture and its influences.

The two main influences of behavior are nature and nurture. Nature is defined as the biological and innate genetic factors that influence behavior. Nurture is defined as the environmental factors that influence behavior.

The studies and research available today and the lack of research on non-Western serial murderers raise certain questions about how much Western culture can influence an individual. My findings have revealed a widening chasm in cultural research. In plain terms, the answer to this question, whether or not Western culture has created serial killers, has two possible answers. Either Western culture has indeed created serial killers, or Western culture has made the populace of non-Western cultures more aware of serial murders and has forced natives of those non-Western areas to address and execute the capture and prevention of serial murders (assuming serial murder is an event in the non-Western culture that has heretofore gone unreported and undiagnosed).

Serial murders may have occurred in non-Western cultures, like Japan, South Africa, and Pakistan, before the introduction of Western ideals. These murders would have gone unnoticed and unreported if the populace did not know or understand the significant differences between serial murder and other types of violence and death. The people and authorities in non-Western cultures would not know of these differences unless they were made known to them or if they started to investigate the murders more closely. People from Western cultures who move to non-Western areas or communicate with non-Western natives may introduce these differences and familiarize the native population with the distinctions between serial murder and other types of murder, violence, and death.

There is a correlation between the amount of Western cultural influences in non-Western nations and the increase of serial killers, but the question of causation is yet to be determined.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The themes within the existing scholarship on serial killer psychology divide into two main categories: nature and nurture. The literature available that addresses the disparity in influence between nature and nurture mainly deals with the nurture category. This category of scholarship argues that the environment a person is reared in is the largest influence upon him or her for becoming a serial killer.

Researchers who investigate this type of categorical influence subsequently look into more specific factors. These factors include geographical location, exposure to violence, social-economic relationships, clashes between Western and existing cultures, and isolating childhood experiences. Within these substructures are layers and layers of factors that researchers explore and investigate, hoping to find a solid answer to what causes a person to commit serial violence.

Serial murder is defined as “the separate killings of at least three persons by an individual over a certain length of time” (Bartels & Parsons, 2009, p. 267). Serial murder criminal investigations have developed over the decades, mostly in Westernized cultures. These cultures have the resources and the societies’ approvals to study, capture, and punish serial killers. Serial murder is not an ignored event in Western culture and people who are native to Western cultures expect the authorities to investigate the murders and treat them as the highest priority.

One of the most disturbing cases that persuaded crime investigators to focus on catching serial killers was Jack the Ripper and the Whitechapel murders in London, England in 1888 and 1889. Prostitutes were being murdered in extremely brutal ways that left the city terrified. The women would be found with bodies slashed open as if on a surgeon’s table. The people in the city were frustrated with police efforts and compelled investigators to solve the murders (Warwick, 2006). The newspapers inflamed citizens’ anger and some of the papers mocked

police efforts. The society forced police to pay attention to the murders and to try and solve them quickly. The sociological fear of a murderer who could so easily escape police spread and forced investigators into action.

Although Jack the Ripper is one of the most famous serial killers, he may not have been the first, and he was certainly not the last. The research on serial killers is extensive, but the overwhelming majority of research focuses on serial killers in Western cultures like the United States and the United Kingdom. Other non-Western nations that have serial murders, like Japan, South Africa, and Pakistan, have only recently started monitoring and policing such crimes (Hodgskiss, 2004).

One of the main arguments among scholars is between the influence of two of life's most basic influences: nature vs. nurture. "Nature" is the influence of a person's biological and psychological presets. People's DNA influences their behaviors, thoughts, and lifestyles. "Nurture" is the influence of a person's environment, family life, childhood, and social interactions from infancy to adulthood on his or her behaviors and thoughts. This argument is highlighted in many articles that discuss the creation of serial killers.

Some academics have come to conclusions that point to both environmental and biological influences as causes for serial killers, but many have found the majority of influences to be environmental. Alexandra Warwick (2006) researched Jack the Ripper's crime scenes and determines that a large part of understanding a serial killer is through his/her living conditions and past. Alexandra Warwick, Brin Hodgskiss, Dirk Gibson, Keith Soothill, David Wilson, Willem Martens, George Palermo, Michael Herkov, and James Beasley have all reached conclusions that point to nurture as one of the main influences in the creation of a serial killer.

The environment and other social interactions created the serial killer. Unfortunately, they do not address nor explore Western culture as a dominating influence within nurture.

Ross Bartels, Ceri Parsons, and Wade Myers have, on the other hand, found nature to be the most dominating influence, but fail to investigate into which specific aspects of nature are more influential and how those links to biological influences stand alone without any additional influence from nurture.

Warwick (2006) studied the Whitechapel murders and focuses on the details of the crime scene, which is called geographical profiling. Geographical profiling involves the whole area of a killer's movements. Warwick concludes that "Jack the Ripper, the embodiment of Whitechapel, imagined to have been created by its conditions, yet in turn seen as mastering the area according to his own psychological map" and that he "provides a means of understanding a particular experience of modernity, of living in a densely populated, industrialized, urban space with its new and complex distributions of public and private existence" (p. 565).

Essentially, because Jack the Ripper lived in a modernized and industrialized city, he became a killer. This perspective of the creation of serial killers points more toward the killer's environment than his or her nature as the cause of the murders. Warwick quotes another expert, Keith Soothill, and reiterates that there is a serial killer industry growing and gaining strength from the societal fear of serial killers (p. 566). The serial killer industry is described as the rise of serial murders and serial killers within an area and as the media's and the populace's attention around it. Warwick adds that the industry is growing not just by fear, "but rather by an ambivalent motion that holds out the inexplicability of the crime at the same time as it offers to explain it" (p. 566). The reasoning for the crime's heinousness is that it is inexplicable—the

explanation for the crime is in the lack of understanding why it occurred. This way of thinking is circular and gives no real explanation for why the serial killer industry grows.

Soothill not only argues that the serial killer industry is growing, but offers a explanation for why. He says that social breakdowns may cause serial killers' behaviors. These social breakdowns stem from a breakdown of classes. The emerging bourgeoisie creates a hierarchy of wealth in the society. At the top are the wealthy and noble, below are the middle class members who are not as rich and work for a living, and then there is the lower class made up of uneducated men, single women, prostitutes, and orphaned children.

Soothill and Wilson (2005) researched and studied the case of Harold Shipman (1946-2004), a serial killer from the United Kingdom. Shipman murdered his patients and wrote himself into their wills; the victims were usually older women. Soothill and Wilson speculate that the methods and circumstances of the crime may suggest a financial motive instead of an innate psychological problem. They also employ the Freudian approach that insists that "on the importance of the unconscious, one still may not be aware of the wider social forces that may drive one in a particular direction" (p. 693). Soothill and Wilson also consider how society may help track which social groups are more vulnerable to a particular phenomenon than other social groups (p. 693). They argue that the victims of serial killers are more commonly from the more vulnerable classes, specifically women, children, young adults, and gay men; Soothill and Wilson also include an aside that the women involved in the sex industry are more vulnerable to attack (p. 694).

Soothill and Wilson conclude that there is some evidence of socio-economic frustration among a few British serial killers; therefore, these serial killers attack because they are afforded the opportunity and the availability of victims, who are the poor and vulnerable of society. These

theories help support Warwick's theory that living in a densely populated city that was modernized and impoverished gave Jack the Ripper the opportunity to kill more than once. He was able to kill the lower-class victims because there were so many of them due to a rise in population and a wide social class gap. Victims of this class would not receive as much attention in media or in society than would a well-known public figure, like one of the wealthy nobility. These serial killings can also help identify social breakdowns, which, in their improvement (mainly, making the gaps between classes smaller), can possibly help prevent the continuation of serial murder (p. 697). The research on social factors can be applied in other cultures as Brin Hodgskiss discovered.

Brin Hodgskiss (2004) researched serial murders in South Africa. South Africa has a very different culture than most Western nations, but it has recently been more and more influenced by the Western world. Although South Africa has had European influences for centuries, certain events, like apartheid, an increase in foreign aid relief efforts, and an influx of media attention, have increased the exposure of natives to Western culture. Most members of the South African population are black and are not well educated (Lindow, 2006). Hodgskiss reports that there have been 50 serial murderers in the past two decades, allowing for a more in-depth study of serial murders in the area.

This sudden rise in serial killers allows researchers to question whether the serial murders are a new phenomenon or if they have just been ignored or unidentified. Hodgskiss states that, although it may seem to be a new phenomenon (in South Africa), it has most likely gone unrecorded (p. 68). Some reasons it has gone unrecorded are the lack of forensic technology, the lack of citizens' abilities to recognize this phenomenon as serial murder, and the lack of stable

government (p. 68). He says, “A previous global assessment of serial murder has found that serial murder is viewed, or defined, differently in other cultures” (p. 68).

Hodgskiss discusses how many European historical figures could be defined as serial murderers. He provides an example from South African history—Zulu king Shaka was a warrior, a leader, and was incredibly cruel. Some people could argue that his methods were overly sadistic and parallel to characteristics of a serial murderer (p. 69). The discrepancies between cultural understandings of serial murder must be clearly defined and universal. In this example, Shaka is acceptably cruel and harsh because he is a war leader and nation-builder, but serial killers are not viewed as acceptably cruel, thereby outlining one of the many cultural differences and taking a step toward a universal definition.

Another possible cause for the rise in serial murders is the “escalating clash between indigenous and Western culture, and the consequently turbulent political history” combined with the rise in urbanization (p. 69). The increase in urbanization is similar to Warwick’s explanation for the Jack the Ripper murders.

The sudden industrialization of an area creates social gaps and breakdowns that bring about a great influx of lower class people who are viewed as weaker into that area. Women and children are often portrayed as frail, weak, and unable to protect themselves in many cultures but specifically in Western culture. This social breakdown was also present during the Whitechapel murders—poor women often turned to prostitution to survive and orphaned children often became thieves to live. These classes of people had no stature or money or nobility to protect them from predators.

The invasion of Western ideals into the indigenous culture creates social unrest, violence, and poverty in South Africa. It’s possible the people from Western culture have pressured

authorities in the area to pay more attention to homicides that appear to be the works of serial killers; the invasion of Western culture could also be the cause of some people becoming serial killers.

The rise in urbanization, the political turmoil, and the widespread violence from political and cultural clashes may have caused the rising percentage of identified serial murders in South Africa that occurred after 1990 (p. 70). Hodgskiss mentions other studies that focus on links between serial killers and the society. He states that these studies call attention “to the relationship between the social and psychological in the serial murderer’s development” (Hodgskiss p. 72). Therefore, Hodgskiss states that this viewpoint calls into question the role cultures play in creating serial killers.

Serial murder may also be a symptom or effect of “highly disruptive or badly managed social change” (Hodgskiss, p. 72). South Africa went through many social changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: widespread urbanization, apartheid (social and racial inequality based in class structures), political unrest, and unstable infrastructure. This type of social change was evident in the industrial revolution in London during the 1800s, the same period of Jack the Ripper.

Although these social factors may influence the rate of serial killers in some non-Western areas and non-Western cultures, these environmental factors are similar to the ones that occur in Western culture. Hodgskiss refers to a study that found similar environmental factors during the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, two time periods marked by political unrest (p. 71). The similarities between how people in a Western culture and people in a non-Western culture react to political upheaval and social change may be stepping stone toward discovering what factors of Western culture have caused serial murder.

Dirk Gibson (2006) also thought that culture affected serial killer behavior, but a culture's focus on thanatourism was what influenced the culture to accept the presence, but not condone the acts, of serial killers. Gibson analyzed the way serial murder usually decreases general business activity, but increased thanatourism, or death tourism. Death tourism is tourism "involving locations associated with death and great suffering" (p. 47). During the era of industrialization, capitalism became a common and widespread economic system. Unregulated capitalism encourages citizens and businesses to generate greater and greater profits. The theories behind this economic system allow for thanatourism to exist. The rise in thanatourism is an accurate example of people capitalizing on a human desire of fear and a curiosity of death (wound culture theory).

After further research, Gibson found that serial murder had the ability to increase general tourism instead of decreasing an area's business economy. He explores wound culture theory, which essentially argues that people want to see the human body ripped apart literally and figuratively (p. 48). This theory supports why people are drawn to a serial killer's crime scene and will pay for artifacts from the scenes; it becomes a public spectacle. Gibson uses wound culture theory to explain why people participate in thanatourism: People want to "engage in wound appreciation" (p. 48). Gibson quotes Mark Seltzer, the creator of wound culture theory, to explain why people want to engage in this type of behavior:

"One discovers again and again the excitations in the opening of private and bodily and psychic interiors; the exhibition and witnessing, the endlessly reproducible display, of wounded bodies and wounded minds in public." (p. 48)

Gibson cites multiple sources that detail events in which people flocked to the site of a serial killer's community just to view the homes, graves, and other possessions of both killer and

victims. The media's publicity and attention received from tourists of these crimes only increased the likelihood of more serial killers. Once a phenomenon becomes a way to gain attention, it becomes a more likely choice for those seeking social acknowledgment; the media attention also allows other people to learn about new violent acts and methods, in which the media attention sometimes cause copycat crimes.

Two cases that also revolve around a lack of social acknowledgment are the cases of Jeffrey Dahmer and Dennis Nilsen. Dahmer's parents reportedly did not have a good marriage, and his mother had severe depression. He began to dissect dead animals and placed the skulls of animals on sticks in his neighborhood. He began to drink and he started acting out, faking epileptic seizures; he also began fantasizing, entertaining homosexual and necrophilic desires. When he was 18, he killed a hitchhiker in his home after the man refused to have sex with him. Dahmer killed 16 more men, each time becoming increasingly violent; he'd save body parts and take pictures of corpses. He also tried to "make zombies out of some of them: He gave them alcohol in which sleep-inducing drugs were dissolved, and when they were half-asleep, he drilled holes in their skulls and injected muriatic acid into them to liquefy the brain matter" (p. 301).

Dennis Nilsen had a similar social and emotional detachment as a youth and adolescent. His father was often away and Dennis became withdrawn. His mother remarried and neglected Dennis, focusing more on her new children rather than him. He joined the army at 17 and, there, became aware of his homosexual desires. At age 31, Dennis killed a man after sleeping with him, afraid that his one-night stand would leave him. He would continue on to strangle 14 men (p.302).

Willem Martens and George Palermo (2005) investigated how loneliness and associated violent antisocial behavior caused these two serial killers to commit murder. Martens and

Palermo first define loneliness as “a feeling and a state of separation from others” (p. 298). Part of their findings includes the theory that “long-lasting loneliness may lead rather to the painful awareness in the person in question of his or her ability to take part in human experience” (p. 299). Both Dahmer and Nilsen grew up in unstable homes with absent fathers, and suffered from feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and alienation throughout childhood and early adulthood (p. 300-302). Absent fathers may be a more common Western culture phenomenon within a family unit.

This abandonment from close family members and the isolation from other children caused severe loneliness in both serial killers. Both killers also became aware of their homosexual desires later in life, which made them feel even more alienated and lonely (p. 300-301). Because of the severe loneliness caused by environmental and social factors, Dahmer and Nilsen behaved violently and antisocially. The authors conclude that serial murder is a symptom or effect of environmental factors, making nurture one of the most influential causes of the killer’s behavior.

If isolation from children and family can influence a person to murder, the same feelings of isolation and abandonment can most likely be applied to a sudden urbanization and increased population of a city. This theory relates back to Warwick’s conclusions about the Whitechapel murders.

Michael Herkow (1994) studied children’s reactions to serial murder and found that nurture is highly influential in a child’s acceptance of cultural phenomena like serial murder. He concludes that children exposed to serial murder suffer psychological symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder (p. 252). Herkow also revealed that, out of a sample of over a thousand secondary education students, “more than 70% had witnessed a violent act, including

shootings, stabbings, robberies and murders” (p. 251). This trend reveals that a culture that exposes its youth to violence early on will be more likely to deal with serial and single homicide.

Herkow also reports on how the media descended upon the community and increased exposure of the serial murders to children (p. 253). Herkow’s research shows that children who were exposed to serial murder at an early age suffered psychologically and were also less likely to receive proper counseling services. The early exposure also makes the children more tolerant of the phenomenon of serial murder in a culture.

In non-Western cultures, violence may go unregulated; children may be more exposed to violence and therefore may view serial killer type homicides, but not report them because violence has become tolerable and accepted as a part of everyday life. The difference between single-homicide and serial-homicide murders and violence may be indistinguishable to adults who were exposed to violence as children. These children may be more accepting of serial murder, which may explain why non-Western cultures often don’t report serial murders or persecute serial killers as such, instead identifying the murders as a different crime or in a different category (Molitor and Hirsch, 1994).

James Beasley (2004) also found background information that supports the nurture theory. He looked into the cases of seven serial killers and found that five out of the seven came from unstable homes. Unstable family units may be a more common occurrence in Western cultures than non-Western. The two serial killers who did not come from unstable homes were adopted as children, but had difficult childhoods (p. 399-400). All of their childhoods are marked by neglect, isolation, violence, and antisocial behavior. These findings point to how severely nurture affects serial killers and just how strongly their environments can influence their violent behaviors.

Zelda Knight (2006) examined serial killers as narcissists and argues that nurture influences serial killer behavior. She claims that “childhood abuse contributes to the sense of helplessness and rage” (p. 1203). She concludes that these killers “foster feelings of pathological low self-esteem, shame and inadequacy” (p. 1203). Knight uses the object relations perspective; this theory points to how “individuals focus exclusively on their own bodies rather than on the body of another as a love object” (p. 1193). According to this theory, “the development of the self is seen as dependent on preoedipal childhood experiences of caretakers” (p. 1193). In short, a lack of positive interaction between an infant and its mother or caretaker makes the infant feel inferior and that it is unworthy of attention (p. 1194). This perspective reinforces the idea that nurture is highly influential in a serial killer’s behavior.

Although the evidence overwhelmingly points to how nurture is the largest influence in creating serial killers, other scholars argue that it is nature (the biological and psychological problems one is born with) that is the most influential factor in serial killer behavior. But nature is not intrinsic to a Western or non-Western culture. These findings about how nature is the most influential in serial killers can be explained through occurrences in nurture or events common in Western cultures. Simply put, genetic influence on a person’s behavior can be explained easily by his or her experiences growing up.

Ross Bartels and Ceri Parsons (2009) state that a serial killer’s psychology forces him to commit his crimes (p. 277). They expand on how, in trial, many serial killers will try to diffuse responsibility onto other factors and that the accounts of “born monster” or “abused child” conflict and “embody a ‘victimization’ paradigm” (p. 276). Essentially, serial killers will pull from their social knowledge and attempt to impose the true blame for their actions onto socially accepted constructs. They will try to blame their actions on their nature, their genetics, or on

mental diseases. They diffuse blame and enter the courtroom as a victim of their own biology. These behaviors, although seemingly born from the killer's biology, may indeed be a learned survival mechanism used to avoid punishment.

Those on trial for wrongdoings will deflect if the punishment is severe enough. Children learn this at an early age, but those children who never learn that the behavior is immoral grow up to be adults who continue to deflect responsibility.

The self-accusations of being a "born monster" suggest that the person on trial has learned through media's focus on serial murder and previous serial murder cases that these supposed causes are acceptable in his or her society, although his or her behaviors were not (p. 273-275). The behavior to deflect blame is, possibly, natural, but most children are taught that it is unacceptable. In any case, the deflection of blame does not provide a plausible explanation for the murders themselves and therefore cannot be used to explain the phenomenon of serial murder.

Another academic who supports the natural, psychological influences of serial killer behavior is Wade Myers. Myers (2004) examined the cases of six child/adolescent serial killers, most of whom were from the United States. About half of these children had difficult upbringings, but only one child was reportedly abused by his father. Of these serial killers, all of them exhibited signs of sexual sadism, a trait usually found in adult sexual and serial murderers (p. 369).

Myers (2004) states that "humans are not physiologically 'wired' to have sexual pleasure during the experience of significant anger" (p. 369). But, children often explore their sexuality and the pleasure/pain spectrum at young ages. Therefore, the physiological trait that draws the line between pleasure and pain is lacking in these young serial killers, possibly leading toward the conclusion that the serial killer behavior is caused by psychological and biological problems.

Myers fails to concede, though, that the sexual pleasure/pain phenomenon can be a learned trait. The blurring of pain/pleasure lines can occur during abuse, exposure to violence, or as psychological training (more often seen in socially accepted sexual masochism and slave/master social circles) (Sandler, 1964, p. 197).

Myers concludes that the murderers' impulses to kill did not seem lessened at all as they grew older; the serial killers also fit into a "predatory" category (p. 372). Due to the limited number of serial murderer children, Myers was unable to further his study. In order to truly define natural and biological traits as the main influence on serial killers, much more study and research would have to be done.

Carol Anne Davis also explored the childhoods of female serial killers and discovered that many suffered from sexual abuse at the hands of guardians and family members. None of the female serial killers she investigates grew up in compassionate and stable homes (p. 402). Davis quotes criminologist Lonnie Athens, explaining "violent people are literally 'violentized,' that is socialized into very aggressive ways" (p. 404). She cites Athens' four stages of violentization: submit to an aggressor, belligerency, the realization of fear and respect from violent behavior, and the decision to use violence to settle other disputes (p. 404-405). The classifications of female serial killers also point to social influences rather than biological ones.

Davis offers her own interpretation of these classifications: Question of Sanity (no reason or caused by insanity), Black Widow (women who kill their lovers), Revenge (women who kill out of revenge), Angel of Death (women who kill for power, to play God), Team Killers (women who kill with a partner), Profit or Crime (women who kill to avoid persecution of a crime and/or to profit from the murder), Sexual Predator (women who kill for sexual pleasure), Thrill Killer (women who kill for the experience), and Unexplained (women who do not fit into any of these

classifications). The women that fall into any number of these categories are more often than not products of violent upbringings.

Female serial murderers, although they make up the lowest number of serial killers, are raised to become violent. These children were not born with violent tendencies. The violence is not always sexually-motivated or even related to sex, but it can become an intrinsic part of violence.

Knight (2007) examined the sexually-motivated serial killers in South Africa and the psychology of aggression. She explored how, although aggression is a human trait, serial killers have lost the control of it and have lost a sense of the boundaries of human interaction (p. 21). But this specific loss of aggression does not explain why people turn to serial murder instead of single homicide, killing sprees, or other forms of violence.

She describes how the various types of causes (sociological, biological, neurological, and psychological) offer a “partial understanding” of the motives behind the murder (p. 22). Knight says, “It is for this reason that there is a consensus that what makes a serial killer is a combination of many complex and interrelated neurological, social, physiological, environmental and psychological factors” (p. 22). Knight describes other theorists’ ideas on additional causes like a predisposition to violence; the interplay between environment, biological factors, and personality traits; and personality disorders. Knight includes the Freudian aspect of the death instinct, defined by psychoanalysts as the force to direct harm toward the self and to destroy the self (p. 27). Knight also references Freud to explain that “if there is no reason or provocation for the aggression (such as war) then reasons will be manufactured so as to relieve the inner pressure” (p. 27).

Aggression demands a constant release and may cause the sudden violence from serial killers. Therefore, the serial killer's behaviors would be considered by many psychoanalysts to be caused by something innate, something that they cannot stop or control (p. 27). But again, the loss of control of aggression does not provide a plausible explanation for why these people choose to commit serial murder as opposed to some other type of violence. Other theorists have "characterized aggression as both a reaction and as a defence against anxiety" (p. 28). Therefore, aggression and the behaviors caused by it would be a factor of the person's environment. The aggression becomes a learned response reinforced by a lack of discipline. Knight concludes that it is both nature and nurture that cause serial killers to commit murder, as does Andreas Frei. Frei tries to use the case of a female serial killer to conclusively show that both nature and nurture influence a person to become a serial murderer.

Frei examined the case of a female serial killer who did not fit the usual psychological profile of a female serial killer, PK. PK (an alias to protect the true identity) displayed psychological and behavioral tendencies that did not match the typical serial killer profile. Frei found that, out of many studies of female serial killers, the trends were that they were middle-aged, had male partners, and used poison as a method of killing (p. 169). Frei used information from other scholars like Holmes to categorize the usual female serial killers into "'black widow,' 'angel of death,' 'sexual predator,' 'revenge,' 'profit or crime,' 'team killer,' 'question of sanity,' 'unexplained' and 'unsolved'" (p. 169). PK does not fit into these categories.

Frei also revealed that many studies have concluded that "no one theory can explain the phenomenon" of serial murder (p. 169). Although this is true, the existing research overwhelmingly points to a serial killer's environment as the leading influence for serial murder. Frei concludes that nature and nurture affect serial killer behavior because, in PK's case, Frei

was unable to find any history of abuse, mentally, sexually, or physically (p. 174). Frei does not explore the possibility of any abuse stemming from culture. She does not look into how a specific culture would affect a person's likelihood to become a serial killer. Therefore, Frei's findings may point toward another aspect of the cause of serial killers that involves gender in Western cultures and psychopathology.

The primary arguments of these scholars point to an imbalance of physiological and environmental factors in the resulting behaviors of serial killers. The wide variety of social and environmental aspects studied reaffirms the heavy influence of nurture on the creation of serial killers. Nature is harder to study and analyze, but the current research reveals that psychological and biological factors may also affect serial killer behavior, yet do not conclusively prove that the biological and psychological factors are not themselves products of environmental occurrences. Regardless, there are so many more factors to study and investigate than what has currently been researched. The specific role a Western or non-Western culture plays in the development of the serial killer has not been explored.

The serial murderers from the United States are, naturally, from a Western culture, but mostly all the serial killers from South Africa come from a non-Western culture. Some of South Africa's serial killers were raised in Western areas or raised with Western ideals. South Africa has been heavily influenced by Western culture. The introduction of Western culture into a non-Western culture may have either brought attention to murders that have characteristics of serial murder or it has introduced and spread serial murder itself.

Eric W. Hickey investigated some of the cultural developments of monsters, demons, and evil, which have also led to the cinematic slasher films like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. Hickey said that mental illness was often viewed as a form of possession by an evil spirit. Evil

manifested in stories of lycanthropy, vampires, zombies, and ghouls. One such person who seemed to embody this type of evil is Gilles de Rais who began torturing and killing children to drink their blood; another was the Countess Elizabeth Bathory who would torture and murder young girls and women and bathe in their blood to remain young. These two historical figures were heavily influenced by the Satanist teachings, another product of early Western culture. The existence of these people provide evidence that serial murderer characteristics can exist in areas and times where the term “serial murder” did not exist. Therefore, scholars who have concluded that serial murder can exist in an area, like South Africa, without the populace knowing what another culture calls it must consider a universal definition of serial murder.

Although Hickey might argue that Bathory and de Rais may be some of the first serial killers, he is mistaken; serial killers must fit into a specific definition, one that does not consider socially accepted (or a society’s apathetic response to) mass violence as serial murder. Bathory’s and de Rais’s violent acts were tolerated and known in the communities. This type of mass murder is similar to the mass murder witnessed during the Holocaust in World War II. Many of the townspeople in cities with concentration camps, if not all, knew that millions of people were dying, but did nothing to stop it. Even the soldiers who did not condone these acts and knew that millions were being slaughtered did not prevent it from occurring. The environments between de Rais, Bathory and the Holocaust are different as are the distinct characteristics between the type of violence of de Rais’s and Bathory’s murders and other serial killers’ murders. De Rais’s community knew of his acts, but accepted them, while a serial killer’s acts are not accepted and usually not known.

Hickey discussed the lack of conclusive findings for the correlation between biology and serial murder. He cites several failed experiments to link biological factors to serial murder (p.

60-61). Hickey also presents several theories of the social construction of serial killings. One such theory is the social structure theory. This theory suggests that “poor people commit more crimes because they are stifled in their quest for financial or social success” (p. 95). The social class theory suggests that serial killers stem from lower classes and feel left out from the class they wish to be a part of, thereby attacking people who represent the class that rejected them (p. 96-97). Social process theory contends that criminals become so because of situations in society that guide them toward crime like peer-group pressure, family problems, and inadequate performance in education (p. 97). These theories all point to society as cultivating the serial killer.

These scholars have addressed the debate between nature and nurture, but have not examined how different cultures have increased or decreased the likelihood of serial killers. Western culture has by far more documented serial killers than any other culture, but does the Western culture breed them, encourage them, and cultivate them? Or, is it simply that less structured and stable cultures lack the resources to identify, capture, and study serial killers within their own areas?

These academics do not specifically examine the influences of cultures’ broad and narrow aspects. They do not examine how Western culture and other cultures both have serial killers, and they do not review how heavily influenced those non-Western cultures are by Western culture. They also do not expand much beyond the childhood experiences of serial killers. Only a few scholars examine the broader social influences in the creation of serial killers.

### FINDINGS

No researcher or psychologist has investigated and published the specific possible aspects of Western culture that could propagate a serial killer industry in non-Western cultures (but there are existing discussions of how globalization may have played a part in the serial killer industry). No specific aspects or characteristics of the Western culture have been investigated or researched. These scholars have overwhelmingly found that a flawed nurturing environment during infancy, youth, and adolescence is the basis for a person's increased risk to become a serial killer. It is this flawed nurtured youth that creates the highest risk for a person to commit serial murders. Although they've discovered nurture as the most probable deciding cause, they have not looked much further into what aspect of nurture is the common thread, what aspect of nurture links these serial killers together. They focus too much on the microcosms of family and sexual abuse and not enough on the very factors that define those microcosms and the factors that define the deviations from them. The macrocosm, the Western culture of which these microcosms stem, should be what they investigate further.

Based on the overwhelming discovery that serial murder occurs in areas of Western culture or Western cultural influences, more research should be dedicated to finding what particular idea, norm, experience, or combination of these in the Western culture breed serial murders.

Based on research, the majority of serial killers in non-Western culture was raised and committed murder in a time when their nations were already invaded by Western ideals. For example, Japan's first serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki was born in 1962 and became known as The Little Girl Murderer. He killed four girls between 1988 and 1989 (Serial child killer

Tsutomu Miyazaki, 2 others executed, 2008). The Western world began invading Japan long before then and already had many influences in the Asian culture during Miyazaki's youth.

Japan's first brushes with Western culture began with foreign traders and missionaries in the 1700s (Japan). There was also a large growth in the population after 1868, which caused a steady growth in the urban areas. Over the years, the Western influence grew and expanded. These conditions were similar to those of the Industrialized Revolution in Europe during the 1800s and 1900s. There was a surge of urbanization, population, economy, and social class differentiation. Japan had reached the same standard of living as other developed countries by the mid 1980s (Japan). It was in this environment that Miyazaki lived and it was in this environment that he became more and more influenced by Westernized media.

News sources repeatedly say that Miyazaki blamed the murders on a type of alter ego called "Rat Man," a cartoon character not unlike those from a comic book. Miyazaki reportedly often read comic books and watched violent anime videos. Miyazaki delved into the virtual realities of fictional violence and sex. He had a collection of over 8,000 violent and sexual videotapes, comic books, and magazines. When questioned, he readily admitted that he was inspired by the videos to commit these acts and make videos of his own (Yates, 1989).

Japanese officials found this type of violence a trend among juveniles. The Japanese National Police Agency released figures in August 1989 that revealed a drastic increase in violent crimes committed by juveniles; it was the first time in history that the number of crimes by juveniles surpassed those committed by adults and made up more than half of all criminal cases reported (Yates). They realized that such violence was most likely from the increased availability of violent slasher films and films with rape and torture.

Another serial killer who came out of a non-Western nation years after Western cultural invasion is Jimmy Maketta, a man born around 1964 in South Africa and was found guilty of 16 counts of murder and 19 counts of rape (Dolley 2007). He was one of 15 children and psychiatrist Sean Kaliski said, “He often fought with others, set things alight, ran away from home and was involved in incidents of bestiality” (Dolley). Maketta, like Miyazaki, was extremely affected by his environment, which shared similarities with those of Miyazaki and Jack the Ripper.

South Africa was invaded by Britain in the 1800s, the Dutch in the 1600s, making the nation a blended mix of Western and non-Western ideals (South Africa). Soon, the British joined the Dutch and started increasing immigration (thus increasing population) and urbanization by bringing in new technologies and expanding the economy. From the 1870s, urbanization increased rapidly with the construction of railways, mines, and other industries (South Africa).

The European population then established a controlling government and began the segregation, which would later become apartheid (South Africa). This separation created extreme social class disparities and increased poverty. The population jumped from 27 million in 1986 to more than 41 million in 1996. Although the AIDS epidemic began around this time and limited population growth, this disease broke the family structures. There were also rapid fluctuations in immigrants: Europeans flooded in around the ‘60s and ‘70s, but began leaving in the late ‘70s and ‘80s. During those two decades, South Africa had more immigrants and refugees from other African nations (South Africa).

These environmental changes and factors are strikingly similar to those of Miyazaki and Jack the Ripper. All three environments are characterized by extreme economic growth and fluctuation, increased Western contact, rapid changes in population, and changes in social

structures. These two nations, though, are the most prominent examples, but another country that is not littered with serial killers (as is currently known) is Pakistan, which shares these same characteristics.

Pakistan has had its own serial killer: Javed Iqbal. He was found guilty of murdering 100 boys with four young male accomplices. Iqbal confessed and then rescinded his confession, claiming it was fake and based on Western detective stories. Iqbal said he wanted to bring child sex to the attention of the government (BBC). These detective stories, along with the political unrest, economic growth, and ethnic conflicts, are the similar factors among all four examples of environmental hotbeds for serial killers.

James Hitchcock wrote an article detailing how true crime novels and detective stories were becoming one of the liberal arts, a popular form of entertainment (Hitchcock, 2001). Within this article, Hitchcock says, “Those who develop a taste for crime stories may after a time want to swim on their own” (p. 284). Unfortunately, Hitchcock did not discuss how these crime novels are increasingly influential in readers’ behaviors.

Pakistan has experienced changes in economy, population, and structure similar to Japan. In the 1960s, the government tried to disperse industries more because of a rapid expansion of urbanization (Pakistan). This expansion led to a deteriorated state of living for many people. There were also large population shifts: Millions of Hindus and Sikhs left and nearly eight million people from India migrated to Pakistan. In the 1980s, millions of refugees from Afghanistan came to Pakistan. The movement to urban areas also increased the population because of better living conditions in those cities, but the rapid growth made finding steady employment extremely difficult, which placed the economy in a rut (Pakistan). The increased Western influences were more subtle, but still present.

Warwick argues that serial murder “is a rare crime, yet it achieves a disproportionate level of representation in both fictional and documentary media” (p. 555). She also adds that crime fiction is not a title that is true to the genre, but the genre should be called murder fiction because of that subject’s dominance in the crime fiction genre. Warwick argues that it is hard to tell whether the law enforcement’s attitude toward serial murder either came before or followed changes in popular culture (p. 556). The truth of the matter is that “the investigative priorities of bureaucratic agencies are formed by public and legislative expectations, which are derived from popular culture and the news media” (p. 556). This type of circular cause and effect makes it almost impossible for researchers to pinpoint what influences come from where, but with the study of environmental factors and cultural changes, researchers can identify what factors may cause certain events and attitudes.

There are two possible explanations for the existence of serial killers in non-Western nations. One plausible reason stems from the possibility that serial murder has always been present, but the introduction of a Western culture and the migration of foreigners from a Western world to a non-Western nation begin to change how the non-Western population thinks about particular events. These events’ characteristics and details are analyzed according to the non-Western and the Western ideology. The event is then categorized into a new subsection of homicide, i.e., serial murder, the very term introduced along with the Western culture.

Another possible reason for the existence of serial killers in non-Western nations is the prospect that Western culture has created and spread serial murder. Although violence is an omnipresent aspect of the human experience, violence, like a culture, can evolve and change. This second possibility rationalizes that the Western culture introduces certain elements and aspects of itself to a non-Western culture. This cultural blending then allows for the existence

and opportunity of serial murder. The population of the non-Western culture is reared in the blended culture and is more at risk for absorbing these elements and aspects that cause them to become serial murderers.

In this sense, serial murder can be thought of as a symptom of a disease. The disease is the still-unknown aspect(s) of Western culture that causes the rare serial murder symptom. This disease may lie dormant until an individual is affected in such a way that he exhibits the serial murder symptom. This method of thinking allows for the dormancy of serial murder in non-Western areas that were exposed to Western culture hundreds of years ago and are only just recently experiencing cases of serial murder. The disease, serial murder, is dormant until triggered by a set of factors in the environment: sudden and drastic population, economic, political, and technological changes. Under the current research, the second explanation seems the more likely reasoning.

The foundation has been laid for further investigation. Researchers and scholars should scrutinize the spread of serial murder geographically and consider the timeline of Western cultural exposure to non-Western areas. Upon these two main components of history will a solid and conclusive answer be discovered. Researchers should test and retest which aspects of Western culture could and are likely to have created and spread serial killer factors in accordance with the geographical spread of serial murder and the timeline of Western exposure. Research conducted in this manner and in similar fashions are the ones that will more than likely find the elusive answer a convoluted question, but one that will forever change how the global population views Western culture and serial murder. If we can definitively say that Western ideals created and spread serial murder, researchers should consider a deeper investigation into what else Western culture could have spread worldwide.

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