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Title: Evaluating Differences in Serial Murderers on a Global Scale

Scholars often analyze serial murderers from perspectives that exclude the sociological and/or environmental factors that often contribute to their motives for committing their crimes. This paper traces the cultural and societal differences that mold serial murderers in divergent cultures.

Increasingly sociologists and researchers such as Eric Hickey have begun studying the factors that go beyond the common biological and psychological explanations that researchers often consider. Laurence Alison, Craig Bennell, Andrea Mokros, and David Ormerod have argued that offender profiling assumes that people who commit crimes in a similar style have similar background characteristics; this misconception has led to many studies that show the perpetrators' motivations but exclude their characteristics, as they are understood as almost irrelevant (Fujita, 296). In order to stereotype serial murders in certain ways, many researchers base their judgments off of a distortion of the truth to fit their own cultural, historical, or religious beliefs. Hickey's Serial Murderers and Their Victims (2015) helps clear up misconceptions about why serial killers are driven to commit monstrous acts through the review of numerous profiles of case studies of infamous serial murderers and deeply analyzing the specific characteristics of the aforementioned serial murderers.

Hickey's global, cross-cultural study of serial murder challenges the common assumption that only two kinds of killers exist: those who lust for blood and those who are mentally ill. Although Hickey agrees that most serial murderers suffer from some form of mental disorder or illness (e.g., psychosis or dissociative identity disorder), he disagrees with the notion that some serial killers are simply "blood thirsty" (Hickey, 376). He asserts that many serial murderers, if not mentally ill, have experienced severe psychological stress themselves, and have thus become incapable of coping. As a result, they become hostile and long to live in a fantasy—both of which accelerate their capacity for violence—in hopes of living out the feeling of conquering their emotional stress in other ways. These serial murderers eventually become so disconnected from society and their own friends and families that they perceive violence as a seemingly viable—and oftentimes rational—option (Hickey, 376). Hickey describes how juvenile mass murderers fit this profile of feeling disconnected from their lives and the people around them, thus possibly resorting to violence as an outlet for their pent-up emotions. Hickey's work suggests that serial murderers' methods and motives for their actions differ based on the culture and society in which they were raised (Alison, 2002; Fujita, 2016).

SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Travis Hirschi's social control/bond theory focuses on the idea that deviance is not a response to learned behavior or the negative stimuli surrounding an individual. He argues instead that deviant behavior is actually a facet of human nature, not an anomaly; rather, the absence of deviance is the abnormality that needs to be explained (Bates, 286). Hirschi concludes that individuals do not engage in criminal activity because they have distinct bonds to social conformity that prevent them from engaging in socially unacceptable activities (Bates, 287). This research further enumerates four different social bonds that individuals either "strengthen or weaken in relationship to the society in which they live": attachment, commitment, involvement, and common values or beliefs (Hickey, 126). An example of attachment would be a case in which an individual is under strong parental

supervision and does not want to deviate from social norms and risk disappointing their family. The second element commitment means that the more committed an individual is to conventional forms of action, the less likely they are to engage in deviant behavior. Similarly, the element of involvement suggests that if an individual is more involved in conventional activities, they will be less likely to deviate from social norms. The final element, common values, suggests that if an individual has a sound understanding of right and wrong or has a respect for authorities or the laws, they will also be less likely to deviate from social norms (Hickey, 126).

A CROSS-NATIONAL APPLICATION OF SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Hickey highlights three main issues that surface when studying serial murder on a global perspective: "(1) serial murder is defined or viewed differently in other cultures; (2) cultural differences influence the methods and motives for serial murder; and (3) serial-murderer profiles constructed in the United States are often contradicted by profiles created by law enforcement agencies in other countries" (Hickey, 378). Studies of serial murderers in various countries show how different cultures have unique views and display different trends in murder that fit their communities or backgrounds. Social control theory will be utilized to explain how one's involvement with their society has an impact on their views and morals, thus influencing them to—or not to— commit these heinous crimes in two very different countries: Japan and South Africa.

Japan

Japan is known for having a more group-oriented, rather than individualistic, society. This social organization can potentially spark a desire for individualism (Fujita, 299). In some instances, this shedding of societal attachment may lead to aggression, resulting in serial murders and violence in general. The strong sense of community deeply embedded in Japanese culture leaves community members committed to the norms of society. Because of this instilled group-oriented behavior, nearly half of Japan's offenders have at least one accomplice. In The U.S. on the other hand, only 26% of the U.S.'s offenders having accomplices (Hickey, 403). This proportional disparity shows why it is essential to study serial murders across cultures and countries, as certain aspects and characteristics of serial murderers that differ country-to-country are sociological effects of their environments.

Goro Fujita claims that serial murder in Japan is most closely related to Akers' social learning theory, which adds a psychological conditioning aspect to study of behavior and crime (Fujita, 296). Fujita believes that people would be more likely to commit murder if they experience some sort of reward or gain as a result, whether that be support from friends and family or an internalized feeling of satisfaction; however, they would be less likely to take a human life if everyone around them looked down on the act or despised them for committing the act (Fujita, 296). Fujita's arguments closely relate to Hirschi's element of attachment, in which someone closely attached to others is less likely to commit a crime, as they take into consideration what those people will think of the act. However, Fujita's perspective that psychological conditioning can lead people to commit crimes lacks a deeper understanding of Japanese socio cultural emphasis on collective welfare over individual satisfaction. The Japanese commitment to community is a main contributing factor to whether one deviates from the norms or not, not the sense of acceptance one receives from doing or not doing the acts; it is instead one's commitment to their culture and way of life that prevents them from committing crimes.

South Africa

Gerard Labuschagne, Gabrielle Salfati, and Marina Sorochinski tested the applicability of a homicide crime scene classification framework in South Africa that had been recently developed in the United States. The difference in how perpetrators plan their murders, along with the violent behavior that offenders engage in in the United States versus South Africa, is thoroughly analyzed in this study. These three scholars argue for the "importance of the awareness of national differences and the need to further explore how these differences may be manifested in the [behaviors] offenders engage in;" cross-national research enables the exploration of background differences in tool availability and physical environment, along with psychological factors (Labuschagne et al., 70). They further expand this by claiming that tool availability and one's physical environment can impact how he or she goes about committing the act, and the physical environment of where the crime occurs can influence how the perpetrator disposes of the body or murders in the first place, such as whether a large and deserted place is easily available. (Labuschagne et al., 70).

In another study, Amber Horning finds that South African serial murderers and those in the United States are comparable when it comes to age, marital status of the offender, criminal history, and victim-offender relationship, but differed in areas that included "weapon[ry], where the crime occurred, and the race of the offender and the victim, which reflected the geographical and sociological landscape of South Africa." This directly correlates with the points made in Labuschagne's work regarding cross-cultural differences (Horning et al., 40). Hickey also discussed the differing factors between South African serial murderers as opposed to those in the United States. For example, out of the 50 cases that he studied, 22 of the South African offenders murdered interracially, but this is not as prevalent in the United States (Hickey, 410). Along with this, 34% of South African offenders may have both male and female victims, showing no preference in gender, which is the opposite of what is typically seen in methodology of serial killers in the United States (Hickey, 410). Further research has found that serial murderers in South Africa also engage in mutilation of their victims, what they call "muti murder," as "muti" is a Zulu word that implies intentionally gathering body parts for use in traditional African medicine (Hickey, 412). In certain African traditions, it is believed that people innately have a certain amount of luck; thus, the removal of human body parts (while the victim is still alive) is an exceptionally powerful way to obtain this luck and will help in achieving their goals (Hickey, 413).

CONCLUSION

Serial murder varies in different cultures and countries, with varying cultures cultivating dissimilar beliefs and/or raising individuals to be more or less connected to the people around them. The emergence of new studies from sociological researchers is crucial in examining these differences. Travis Hirschi's social control theory concentrates on why people do not engage in criminal activity, rather than why they do. He believes that his four social bonds are reasons why someone does not deviate from social norms: attachment to people around them, commitment to other aspects of life (such as extracurricular activities), involvement in conventional activities, and common values and belief in authorities or the laws. Eric Hickey's studies demonstrate how serial murder can vary in methods across different cultures and countries. Such cross-cultural findings highlight the differences between serial murderers overseas and in the United States; for example, most Americans would believe that bodily dismemberment (either pre- or post-mortem) is an extremely heinous crime, but in South Africa, this is a more common occurrence due to some of their cultural and traditional beliefs. The way South

African society was constructed is entirely different from ours, which reflects in their beliefs and common values.

Living in the United States, it is essential that researchers study serial murder cross-culturally, as this can assist in the crucial capture of perpetrators. Eric Hickey's assertion that violent behaviors result from sociologically differing cultural environments (and not simply biological and/or psychological) is supported by his research. He exposes the readers to the racial and cultural differences that lead to serial murder, allowing for a better understanding of the different methods, motives, and targets of serial murderers around the world.

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