The Impact of Social Interest and the Connection with Serial Murder

A Literature Review

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Abstract

For centuries there has been a darkness in humanity that has manifested itself for the lust for blood. As a fabrication of life in ancient times murder and revenge was communal in the course of everyday life throughout all societies. Murder has been part of our history for centuries dating back to Cane murdering Abel and Romulus slaying Remus (Meyer, 2011). Since the middle of the Twentieth Century and post-World War II, the serial killer soon became a horrific figure in our society. Hiding behind the mask of bland and normality, the serial killer has both terrified and fascinated us. Haunting the lives of innocent civilians for centuries and trying to understand the minds of serial killers has also been a mystery. Many hypotheses have been discussed throughout the years on why serial killers are able to commit such horrendous crimes as they do. The question being asked is what possesses the minds and actions of these killers to follow through, taking the lives of innocent victims? The struggles to find evidence on the psychological patterns established by past serial killers, has been challenged considerably due to the continuous transformation our society endures. The paper focuses on how Social Interest is a prophylaxis to psychopathy and how lack of Social Interest leads to psychopathy. Included are four case studies and the direct impact Social Interest or lack of Social Interest had on the serial killer, leading them to display horrendous behavior and criminal acts.
This paper is dedicated to those who inspired and encouraged me

My Family,

My Friends,

The Faculty at Adler Graduate School
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The Impact of Social Interest and the Connection with Serial Murder

The term ‘serial killer’ was coined by Robert Ressler a former FBI agent during the 1970’s. Ressler replaced the label of ‘stranger killings’ in order to reflect the repetitive (in series) nature of victims being murdered (Serge-Moses, 2004). Serial killers are described as a person or persons who murder three or more people over a period of more than 30 days. The killers are known to take a cooling off period between each murder and that their motivation for killing is largely based on sexual gratification or internal psychological gratification (Gao & Raine, 2010). Some cases have shown that sexual gratification and internal psychological gratification are both present.

Alfred Adler concluded that most criminals have minimal to no concern for other human beings and do not conduct themselves in a useful way. Criminals’ approach to achieve social status comes in different forms but will result with the common need for superiority (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964). These criminals, murderers, feel a sense of power by horrifying their victims. Serial killers accomplish this by committing a series of events that eventually leads to their victim’s death. There are many hypotheses why serial killers commit such horrendous crimes including intense anger toward women, resentment of authority, feelings of inferiority, inability to develop meaningful relationships, power, revenge, and feelings of inadequacy (McGreevy, Newbauer, & Carich, 2001). Striving for acceptance has and will always be a necessity for every individual to attain a sense of belonging. When an individuals’ sense of belonging is threatened, they may commit unspeakable crimes to gain an erroneous sense of superiority.

An area lacking discussion is; what impulses a trigger an individual to cross the final threshold to commit such horrifying crimes? The horrific crimes committed by serial killers
disrupt individuals’ everyday routines. Individuals’ involuntarily change their own characteristics helping to dampen the potential acts of crime. Walking trails during a beautiful day or evening, helping someone struggling with objects to their destination, and initiating, responding, and trusting a stranger in conversation is violated. Discovering the core trigger that arouses a sense of danger within an individual is crucial to one’s survival. We all strive for superiority, but when individuals disrupt our path towards our goals; we develop insecurities that hold us from succeeding. We also know that individuals need that sense of belonging and are willing to sacrifice their own freedom, even resulting in death, to attain this.

Social Interest was coined by Alfred Adler. Adler uses the term to display community feeling as opposed to one’s private interests or concerns. These private interests or concerns can lead an individual to have differential interests from those adapted by the society to which they live. The style of life is a set of construals and personal narratives one has devised in order to cope with being-in-the-world (Kronemyer, 2009). If an individual has Social Interest then one endorses a useful style of life, but if one does not have social interest, then one is self-absorbed and concerned with one’s self (Kronemyer, 2009). Hence, Social Interest refers to an individuals’ awareness and the sense of belonging in a community. The more developed the Social Interest, the more diminished the individual’s feelings of inferiority, alienation, and isolation.

Research shows that Social Interest can have an impact on an individual. Whether male or female, how one is raised and the environment that they have been nurtured in may contribute to an already struggling individual searching for that sense of belonging. What if an individual was taken out of an unhealthy environment? What defines an unhealthy environment? Can other contributing factors such as serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) have an impact?
How can these circumstances have an impact on the already dissolving world in which an individual exists? No one can predict if an individual who has been nurtured in an unhealthy environment will become a predator or if a predator is evolved because of an undeveloped Social Interest. This paper will discuss the probability that these possible hypotheses could heighten the confusion and anger that an already struggling individual obtains. An individual looking for that sense of belonging along with contributing factors could accelerate them to commit ineffable acts of crime. It is evident that society would benefit if we could learn more about what triggers the serial killer. Recognizing early signs could help eliminate potential danger by providing the necessary tools needed for proper functioning without terrorizing and hurting others.

**Criminal Biographies**

**Ted Bundy Criminal Biography**

Born Theodore Robert Cowell on November 24, 1946, to Eleanor Louise Cowell, Ted was an American serial killer who confessed to taking the lives of 36 young women (A&E Biography Ted Bundy, 2004). These numbers are inconclusive since the numbers range from 28 to 36 from several different sources but authorities estimate that he had committed hundreds of murders during his rage. He committed rape, kidnapping, and necrophilia with his victims across six states between 1974 and 1978 (Rule, 2000).

Bundy grew up to be a handsome, educated, and intelligent man who was not suspected by friends and colleagues of the heinous acts he had committed. With his charismatic traits, Ted convinced young women to help carry his books, packages, or removing his canoe from his car (Rule, 2000). Ted occasionally targeted women in public areas by feigning injury, disability, or impersonating an authority figure. Once he got his victims to the car, he would hit them with a blunt object and then stuff his victim’s body into his car. If his victims gained consciousness
Ted would strangle them to near death and take them to a secluded area deep in the woods where he would perform his acts (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). He would sometimes revisit his crime scenes for hours at a time, grooming and performing sexual acts with the decomposing corpses until nature made it impossible for him to continue. For a memento, Ted decapitated at least four victims and kept the severed heads in his apartment. If Ted was unsuccessful gaining a victim from a public place, he simply broke into dwellings bludgeoning his victims, dressed them, and carried them out to his car (Ressler & Schachtman, 1992).

Ted was captured in 1975 only to escape twice and was finally caught in Florida in 1978 where he committed at least three additional murders and several violent assaults (A&E Biography Ted Bundy, 2004). He received three death sentences in two separate trials and was executed in the electric chair at Raiford Prison in Starke, Florida, in January 1989 (Nelson, 1994).

**David “Son of Sam” Berkowitz Criminal Biography**

David Richard Berkowitz was born Richard David Falco on June 1, 1953 and terrorized New York City from July 1976 until his arrest in August 1977 (Press). David would use a .44 caliber Charter Arms Bulldog gun and walk around late at night targeting young lovers sitting in their cars. Upon his capture, the “Son of Sam” committed eight shootings in New York City. Berkowitz would finally confess to the murders of six people and wounding seven others (A&E Biography- David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, 2004). Citizens of New York were, so horrified, that venturing out after dark was unthinkable. Women changed their hair color to blond when rumors erupted that “Son of Sam” was targeting brunettes (Press). New York City’s mass media initiated news that spread nationwide for the immense man hunt and capture of the “Son of Sam”.
Berkowitz claimed that he was possessed by demons and that he was being told to commit these crimes by voices in his head (Berkowitz, 2009). On December 24, 1975, Berkowitz stabbed a woman in the back after being told to do so by the voices. He was startled when she began to scream and fled the scene. He would soon come across a fifteen year old girl named Michelle Foreman. Berkowitz stabbed her six times fleeing the scene and leaving her seriously injured. Michelle survived and authorities are convinced that David was so distraught about his unsuccessful attempt, that he started using a gun (A&E Biography- David “Son of Sam” Berkowitz, 2004; Fox & Levin, 1998).

July 29, 1976, David claimed his first victim and injured another by using a .44 caliber Charter Arms Bulldog handgun (Press). He would continue his shooting spree killing two and injuring five victims during the next seven months. On April 17, 1977 he would take the lives of two more victims (Press). This time David left a letter for the police stating that he was the “Son of Sam” and that he needed to be caught or he would continue to kill because Sam needed blood. A little over a month later Berkowitz sent another letter to a columnist of the New York Daily News and shot four more victims killing one (Terry, 1987).

On August 10, 1977, the horror ended as David “Son of Sam” was apprehended by police just outside of his apartment when attempting to leave in his car. His words upon his arrest were reported to be, “You got me. What took you so long?” (Terry, 1987). The “Son of Sam” was sentenced to six 25 years-to-life in prison and is currently serving his 365 years at the New York State Department of Corrections (Press).

**Aileen Wuornos Criminal Biography**

Aileen Carol “Pittman” Wuornos was born on February 29, 1956 in Rochester, Michigan to Diane Wuornos (Macleod, 2012). Aileen was not a stranger to the criminal justice system and
her first recorded arrest came on May 27, 1974 when she was arrested for DUI, disorderly conduct, and firing a .22 caliber pistol in the air. She later was charged for failure to appear in court (Reynolds, 2003). Even when Wuornos married in 1976 to Yacht Club president Lewis Gratz Fell, she couldn’t maintain a normal life and would visit bars frequently, involving herself in confrontations only to find the jail cell again for assault. Fell filed a restraining order against her that same year because she was striking him with his cane. Their marriage was annulled after only nine weeks together (Russell, Lethal Intent, 2002). She fled back to Michigan and on July 14, 1976 she was arrested and charged with assault and disorderly conduct after she threw a cue ball at a bartenders head (Reynolds, 2003).

Criminal charges continued to plague Wuornos: On May 20, 1981 when she served a prison term of a little over a year for armed robbery in Edgewater, FL. Less than a year later she was charged for attempting to pass forged checks in Key West, FL (Reynolds, 2003). Once again on January 4, 1986, Wuornos would find herself serving time for grand theft auto, resisting arrest, and obstruction of justice for passing off her aunt’s identification as her own (Reynolds, 2003). On several occasions Wuornos had been said to either have a .22-caliber pistol or a .38-caliber revolver with her at all times. Most of her confrontations didn’t involve a weapon such as a gun but on June 2, 1986 deputy sheriffs detained Wuornos after a male companion reported that she had pulled a gun on him demanding $200 from him. No Charges were pressed (Reynolds, 2003).

Wuornos would claim her first victim on December 1, 1989 shooting Richard Mallory several times and deserting his body in a wooded area several miles away from his abandoned vehicle (Attorney, 2008). Thus started Wuornos’s rampage and six months after her first known victim, Wuornos would take the lives of four victims during a three month span. David Spears
was found shot six times on June 1, 1990, Charles Carskaddon shot nine times was found on
June 6, 1990, Peter Siems’s vehicle was found with Wuornos’s palm print on the interior handle,
his body never found on July 4, 1990, and Troy Burress was found shot twice on August 4, 1990
(Attorney, 2008).

Wuornos’s rampage soon came to an end when she committed two big mistakes. Her
first mistake was taking the life of former Chief of Police Charles “Dick” Humphreys whose
body was shot six times in the head and torso. His body was found in a different county than his
vehicle on September 12, 1990 (Attorney, 2008). Her last victim, Walter Jeno Antonio, was
found shot four times and nearly nude on November 19, 1990. Her victims’ ages ranged from 40
to 65 years old (Attorney, 2008). On January 9, 1991, Wuornos was arrested on an outstanding
warrant at The Last Resort, a biker bar in Volusia County, FL. Three days later she would
confess to shooting and killing seven victims during the periods of 1989-1990 in self-defense,
later proclaiming it was murder (Kennedy & Nolin, 1994). On October 9, 2002, Wuornos was
executed by lethal injection at Florida State Prison, in Bradford County, Florida (Attorney,
2008).

Richard Ramirez Criminal Biography

Known as the “Night Stalker”, Ricardo “Richard” Muñoz Ramirez was born on February
29, 1960, in El Paso, Texas (Carlo, 1996). For five months, Ramirez would terrify cities
throughout California by raping, sodomizing, and murdering several victims. Ramirez would not
only encounter his victims on the streets, he would also break into, and burglarize, several houses
to finance his drug addiction (Montaldo, 2012). Nothing would stop Ramirez as he made
himself known around the Los Angeles area, deeming the name “The Night Stalker”.
April 10, 1984, the horror began when the body of nine-year-old Mei Leung was found dead in the basement of a hotel where Ramirez was residing. Ramirez would not be charged for the murder until several years later (2009) when his DNA matched the sample taken from the crime scene in 1984 (Bruno, 2011). Two months after murdering Leung, Ramirez would strike again, the 79-year-old Jennie Vincow was found dead in her apartment on June 28, 1984. Her body was stabbed repeatedly and her throat was slashed so severely that she was nearly decapitated (Carlo, 1996).

After an eight month cooling off period, Christina and Mary Caldwell aged 58 and 71 were found dead in their home on February 21, 1985. They had been brutally stabbed to death (Geringer, 2012). Ramirez’s rage would heighten and some suspected it was due to his drug addiction. Within one hour Ramirez would murder two victims and an attempt another on March 17, 1985 (Montaldo, 2012). 22-year-old Angela Barrios was shot but a set of keys that she was shielding against Ramirez saved her life. 34-year-old Dayle Okazaki wasn’t as lucky as Ramirez shot him immediately after entering the house. An hour later 30-year-old Tsai-Lian Yu was pulled out from her vehicle and shot several times whereas Ramirez fled (Geringer, 2012).

The two attacks happening within an hour from each other caused immediate panic and fear among citizens surrounding Los Angeles. Because of the bolstered media attention, the hunt for the Night Stalker began (Geringer, 2012). The buzz around the communities didn’t slow down Ramirez and from March 27, 1985 to August 24, 1985 he would rape, sodomize, and murder 12 victims and also raped and attempted murder on 13 other victims (Bruno, 2011). Surviving victims were able to successfully identify Ramirez’s stolen vehicle where law enforcement lifted a print off the mirror. They were able to make a match to the fingerprint that belonged to a Richard Munoz Ramirez (Bruno, 2011).
On August 31, 1985 Ramirez was identified, surrounded, and severely beaten by an angry mob of citizens before authorities arrived to take him into custody. Ramirez is currently awaiting his execution by the gas chamber at San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, California (Ramirez, 2012).

**Early Life History**

**Early Life of Ted Bundy**

Theodore Robert “Ted” Bundy was born to Louise Cowell on November 24, 1946, at the Elizabeth Lund Home for Unwed Mothers in Burlington, Vermont. After eight weeks at the home Louise returned to her parents’ house in Philadelphia to raise her son. The identity of his father has never been determined with certainty. Louise claimed that Ted was not the son of a salesman and Air Force veteran named Lloyd Marshall but to a sailor whose name may have been Jack Worthington that seduced his mother (Rule, 2000). Bundy’s grandparents, Samuel and Eleanor Cowell, raised him as their own to avoid the social stigma that accompanied his illegitimacy. Family, friends, and even young Ted were told that his grandparents were his parents and that his mother was his older sister (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). Ted’s grandfather Samuel was a violent abusive father who was said to have thrown one of his daughters down the stairs for over sleeping (Rule, 2000). Not able to take his abuse any longer, Louise took young Ted to Washington State where she lived with cousins. This is where she would meet Johnny Culpepper Bundy a military cook. They were married and Johnny Bundy formally adopted Ted (A&E Biography Ted Bundy, 2004).

Bundy was well behaved and grew into an attractive teen who was generally liked and who performed well in school. However, Ted felt uncomfortable around his fellow peers who were predominantly wealthy. He would later claim that as an adolescent he chose to be alone.
because he was unable to understand interpersonal relationships (Rule, 2000). He said that he didn’t know what made people want to be friends and that he didn’t know what underlaid social interactions (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). Suffering from acute shyness that resulted in his appearing socially awkward, he would rarely include himself in social activities that others’ were doing. But in 1967 Bundy would meet the woman of his dreams and he fell head over heels in love going to extremes to impress her. By 1968 she ended the relationship and broke Ted’s heart. His obsession with her haunted him for years (A&E Biography Ted Bundy, 2004).

Bundy suffered extreme depression over the break up and dropped out of school in Washington (Rule, 2000). He returned to Philadelphia where he would learn the truth about his sister being his mother and that his parents were actually his grandparents. Ted did not find unequivocal proof until he tracked down his original birth record in Vermont in 1968. This would change the heretofore shy Bundy as he substituted a false bravado façade. This substitution of character would enable him to excel in his studies (Sullivan, 2009).

Bundy had a difficult childhood, a strained relationship with his stepfather and being the frequent target of bullying due to his shyness. Later, however, his intelligence and social skills enabled him to enjoy a successful college career after discovering his true identity. Despite his apparent stability, Bundy’s haunting past would lead him to a life of sexually assaulting and killing several young women across six states (Rule, 2000).

**Early Life of David “Son of Sam” Berkowitz**

David Berkowitz was born Richard David Falco on June 1, 1953 in Brooklyn, NY. Berkowitz’s mother, Betty Broder was one of four daughters of Jewish immigrants and married Anthony Falco at a very young age (Terry, 1987). She had an affair with a successful businessman named Joseph Kleinman, who was married and had three children of his own. Kleinman
strongly suggested that she have an abortion, but, instead, she went to a boarding house for unwed mothers to give birth. Before David was a week old, he was adopted by hardware store owners Pearl and Nathan Jay Berkowitz. The couple reversed the order of his first and middle names in addition to giving him their own surname (A&E Biography- David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, 2004).

David lived a solitary lifestyle at an early age by staying away from other kids. He was bigger than other children his age which caused him some discomfort being around others his own age. He soon found his calling as the neighborhood bully taking money from other children (Berkowitz, 2009). Even at an earlier age, David was hyperactive and he was prone to entirely unpredictable violence. David was constantly looking for attention and would often receive it from his step mother Pearl who he adored dearly. It’s been said that David wasn’t getting the attention from Pearl at a certain time and saw that Pearl was paying more attention to a bird. David secretly poisoned the bird, killing it (A&E Biography- David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, 2004).

When David was 13, he and his step mother got in a fight and David was said to have told her that he didn’t love her anymore. Pearl collapsed at dinner and passed away some time later from breast cancer in 1967 (A&E Biography- David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, 2004). David became emotionally devastated and it was an additional burden that he was suffering most of his early childhood. David was told that his biological mother died giving birth to him. He would have reoccurring nightmares that his biological father would murder him while he slept. David interpreted his mother and step mother’s unfortunate deaths as a conspiracy by higher powers to hurt him. David’s home life became strained particularly because he disliked his
adoptive father’s second wife. He was lost with no sense of direction and felt extremely lonely, thinking of suicide at an early age (Terry, 1987).

Berkowitz strived to feel a sense of belonging. In 1969, the 16 year old Berkowitz attended the Woodstock Festival. Although it was a great adventure, he still felt alone. He joined the Army in 1971 and served on active duty as an excellent marksman until his honorable discharge in 1974 only to return to the Bronx a lost and confused man (Berkowitz, 2009).

Things got worse for David when he discovered, with some encouragement from others, that his biological mother was still alive. David located her in 1974 but was disappointed because he thought that she would be beautiful, strong, and successful. Instead, he found her an ordinary, nervous, and frightened little woman. This would be the turning point in Berkowitz’s life (Press).

Soon after his discharge in 1974 and finding out about his mom, Berkowitz became a pyromaniac, starting an estimated 1488 fires in New York City (A&E Biography- David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, 2004). Fighting depression and alienation Berkowitz turned to a life of satanic rituals. He soon claimed that he would hear voices in his head that would eventually lead him terrorizing New York City on December 24, 1975 (Terry, 1987).

**Early Life of Aileen Wuornos**

Future female serial killer was born Aileen Pittman on February 29, 1956 in Rochester, Michigan to teenaged parents Leo Dale Pittman and Diane Wuornos (Russell, Lethal Intent, 2002). Aileen’s dismal life began rocky as her father Leo Pittman and Diane separated months prior to Aileen being born. Leo was a child molester and sociopath. Serving time in Kansas and Michigan mental institutions, Leo was convicted and sentenced to life for kidnaping and raping a
seven-year-old girl. Separate sources say that Leo had committed suicide by hanging and another source claims that Leo was strangled. Aileen never met her father (Attorney, 2008).

Aileen’s mother Diane deserted her children four years after giving birth to Aileen. Diane was 15 when she married Leo Pittman but divorced him two years into the marriage. Raising Aileen and her brother Keith was a constant struggle for young Diane. Diane later claimed that raising two crying and unhappy babies along with their racket lead her to leave them with her parents in early 1960 (Russell, Lethal Intent, 2002). On March 18, 1960 Lauri and Britta Wuornos adopted both Aileen and her brother Keith as their own. It wasn’t until Aileen was 12 years old that she found out that her parents were actually her grandparents (Macleod, 2012). This would start a rebellious Aileen in the wrong direction.

Lauri was a heavy drinker and was said to be very abusive to Britta, his wife, and the children. Aileen later claimed that her grandfather would spank them with no undergarments on, make them eat out of the garbage can, and at one time made Aileen watch as he drowned a kitten Aileen had brought home (Russell, Lethal Intent, 2002). Aileen recalls lighting fires with her brother Keith when she was six. Not only did she suffer severe burns scarring her face but she was also strictly reprimanded by Lauri. Soon after the discovery of their true parentage, young Aileen and Keith began rebelling and became incorrigible. Aileen’s sexuality started at a young age where she claims to have had sex with her brother Keith. Regardless of the accuracy to her claims, Aileen was pregnant at the age of 14 and gave birth to boy at the Detroit Maternity Home for unwed mothers in 1971 (Kennedy & Nolin, 1994).

Reoccurring trauma initiated a life which instigated a downward spiral for Aileen. During the same year she had given birth, her grandmother Britta passed away. Britta’s death was blamed on liver failure but Diane believed that her father had murdered Britta. It was threats
that Lauri was going to kill Aileen and Keith if they were not removed from his home which prompted this assumption (Russell, Lethal Intent, 2002). Becoming a ward of the court, Aileen soon dropped out of school and began hitchhiking. She earned a living as a teenaged prostitute and traveled from county to county, getting rides from truck drivers (Macleod, 2012). A few years had passed during which her brother Keith died from throat cancer and Lauri committed suicide. Aileen hitch-hiked to Florida, thus starting a life of crime (Attorney, 2008).

**Early Life of Richard Ramirez**

Born Ricardo “Richard” Muñoz Ramirez on February 29, 1960 in El Paso, TX to Julian and Mercedes Ramirez, Ramirez was the youngest of five children. His father Julian was a Mexican immigrant who was once a police officer in Mexico. Julian was an abusive and strict father like his father before him who believed in corporal punishment (Grise, 2000). If anyone in the Ramirez family would do something that Julian considered wrong they were physically beaten (West, 2012). Mercedes worked in a Tony Lamas shoe factory even during her pregnancy with Richard. All of the children were said to be struggling with medical problems which could have been caused by radiation exposure as a result of nuclear bomb tests conducted in nearby New Mexico (Grise, 2000). Richard may have also contracted other medical symptoms from his mother’s exposure to the chemicals she was mixing while working at Tony Lamas (West, 2012). All of the Ramirez children suffered with medical issues ranging from respiratory difficulty to Collier’s Disease, where bones grow in a curved shape, thus disabling the sufferer (West, 2012). According to some resources, Richard was in the fifth grade when he was diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy and suffered episodes of grand mal seizures. Before reaching middle school, he soon grew out of all medical conditions except epilepsy, but was known to remain hyper and aggressive (West, 2012).
At the age of twelve, Ramirez would spend a considerable amount of time with his cousin Mike, smoking marijuana. Mike, an ex-Vietnam Green Beret, exposed young Ramirez to rape, torture, and murder with horrific Polaroid pictures from his two tour duties. Mike would explain in detail how he would rape, torture, and murder Vietnamese peasant women (Geringer, 2012). Twelve year old Ramirez witnessed the murder of Mike’s wife. After a heated argument with his wife, Mike took out his hand gun and shot his wife in the temple. It was said that Ramirez was sprayed by the blood of Mike’s wife (West, 2012).

Ramirez’s alcohol and drug use escalated and at the age of 18 he moved to Los Angeles. During the first few years he began with petty theft which evolved to home theft and led eventually to murder. As his skills improved with burglarizing, Ramirez began escalating his crimes by killing the male victims, then raping, torturing, and often murdering the female victims (Geringer, 2012). Terrorizing Los Angeles surrounding areas came to an end in 1985 with the capture of Ramirez.

**Summary of Major Findings**

Ramirez and Berkowitz had a similar family structure which was indicated by having a father and mother. Although Berkowitz was adopted he still had the family nucleus commonly accepted by society. However, both Ramirez and Berkowitz did not have a natural bond with their fathers, and, at some point in their lives, they disengaged with their mothers. Berkowitz, who had a strong bond with his step-mother, lost her to cancer and Ramirez disconnected from his mother because she spent several hours working. With this uncontrolled acquired social environment both searched for a sense of belonging by connecting and bonding to the next closest avenue. Berkowitz began bullying schoolmates who hung out with a rough crowd, while Ramirez connected with his cousin Mike.
Bundy and Wuornos had fathers they never met, and their real mothers’ true identity was suppressed. Both came to realize that their parents were actually their grandparents. Angered by his findings, Bundy spent most of his time alone because he did not respect his step-father, a navy cook. Wuornos began to rebel against her grandfather, and when she was shunned, Wuornos used her early physical development by exposing herself to peers and engaging in sexual acts for money, cigarettes, and simple attention.

Looking into the early childhood of all four serial killers, the similarity was the want and need to feel a sense of belonging. Each had a different approach to achieve this, however. Ramirez, at age 12, and Wuornos, at age 14, turned to the streets. Ramirez would spend most of his time with his cousin Mike, smoking marijuana and listening to the horrific crimes Mike committed while serving his Vietnam tour duty. Explicit Polaroid images, along with graphic stories, would haunt and intrigue young Ramirez. The acts of crime Ramirez committed had several similarities to his cousin’s stories, weaponry teachings, and aggression. Wuornos had no other place to go when her grandfather refused to let her stay at the house. She quickly used her acquired skills of prostitution and traveled from county to county hitching rides with truck drivers. Both Ramirez and Wuornos adapted to new environments as they were quickly abandoned by family due to the life style they chose. Ramirez moved to Los Angeles when he was 18 to continue his alcohol and drug addiction while Wuornos left for Florida shortly after her brother and grandfather passed away.

Bundy and Berkowitz were shy children and preferred to be alone rather than involving themselves with peer activities. Growing up was difficult for them, and each had constant struggles to be accepted and to have the feeling that they belonged. This would go on into early adulthood. Although they took different paths after high school graduation, both were looking
for that feeling of belonging. Evidence shows each latched onto something which occupied their minds momentarily, but soon afterward they would be craving something else that would fill that void of loneliness. Bundy was involved with his studies to prove that he could become that person people pushed him to be and Berkowitz joined the military where he found something he was good at, being a marksman.

Even though they embarked on socially normal paths, both Bundy and Berkowitz felt they were still missing something. There were other discouraging events: Bundy’s college sweetheart ended their relationship and Berkowitz’s military career ended. Each was devastated; his current path would once again have a twisted turn. Within five years of each other, Bundy in 1968 and Berkowitz in 1974, the two would soon discover they were illegitimate children. Bundy would come to find out that his parents were actually his grandparents and his older sister was actually his mother. Berkowitz would find out that his mother did not die giving birth to him, and that she was still alive living near him. They would both discover that the father’s name on their birth certificates were not actually their biological fathers. Soon after discovering that they were illegitimate, both serial killers started acting out their crimes, developing an erroneous sense of superiority. Bundy admitted that he got his superiority watching the expression in his victim’s eyes just upon death. After unsuccessful attempts to murder by knife, Berkowitz began using a handgun. The horror he created throughout New York City, and the inability for law enforcement to capture him, was his perceived superiority.

The anger that Wuornos and Ramirez felt would turn to murder as each one would carry the burdens of early childhood and be acted out on innocent victims. Ramirez’s killing spree began when he realized it was easier to dispose all individuals that stood in his way. Maybe it
was self-defense that forced Wuornos to commit her first murder, but it was that hatred towards men and the need for money which made it easier for her to continue.

All four serial killers committed criminal acts during their early childhood. Berkowitz and Wuornos committed arson. Wuornos was only six when she displayed pyromania while Berkowitz reported having started over 1,000 fires throughout the New York area prior to his arrest. Berkowitz committed animal cruelty by poisoning his step-mom’s pet bird, and some records have revealed that Bundy had also embarked in animal cruelty. Ramirez, Bundy, and Wuornos all were involved in petty theft at an early age. Ramirez and Bundy burglarized homes to fulfill their needs as Wuornos first murdered her victims before taking their money and vehicles.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The information provided from these four cases clearly indicates a strong correlation between superiority and easily triggered anger is evident. The information provided was based on four cases in which the similarities linked them together. However, many other serial killers who had similar characteristics were not mentioned. These serial killers also had a traumatic childhood and lack of Social Interest, which may or may not have contributed to their acts of horrendous crimes. Reflecting on this limitation, we have to consider other individuals who have had a similar lack of Social Interest but did not commit murder. Other individuals may have experienced similar situations with commission of petty theft, arson, and animal cruelty, but had no impact on society as the serial killers mentioned. Another limitation to be considered is the time frame associated with all four cases. All criminals committed their crimes during an era when illegitimacy, adoption, and dysfunctional family dynamic were a stigma for individuals in our society. This stigma was shown to have
been an additional strain to an already struggling individual wanting to feel that one belonged. It has been long said that children can be cruel and there is no exception here. Each of the four serial killers experienced some form of cruelty from peers, which impacted their already unstable mental health and lack of confidence.

**Conclusion**

The four serial killers were chosen to show the similarities and differences. Although there is a range of behaviors and effects, the end result is still inevitable, murder. As we look at the lack of Social Interest that all four serial killers exhibited, we can conclude that the social environment may have been a contributing factor to their rage, aggressiveness, sexual fantasies, and lack of remorse. The impact of Social Interest is interesting to ponder given the overwhelming research that shows individuals exposed to the same social factors didn’t commit murder. However, researching the areas that have caused these serial killers to commit such horrendous acts brings to light how we can recognize potential individuals subjected to similar environments could acquire the same characteristics. Regardless of their family structure, it is evident that they were all searching for that sense of belonging. Whether it was searching for that sense of belonging with peers, family members, satanic cults, or sexual fantasies, they all acquired a lack of remorse for their victims.

It can also be concluded that all four serial killers were quiet and withdrawn from peers during early adulthood and continued to search for acceptance. They wanted to feel that they belonged and were accepted. The research shows that all killers were struggling through life trying to understand who they were and why they were not like their peers.

Bundy was confused because he could not understand why other children wanted to become friends. Worse yet, he did not know how to even achieve this. Berkowitz was taller and
larger than his peers who would make fun of him. He soon found his place by bullying those
same children for money and power. Wuornos struggled to be accepted by her peers and did
sexual acts to be included. Having a close relationship with her brother would occupy some of
that loneliness but she struggled to connect with fellow peers. Ramirez would find
companionship from his much older cousin who only corrupted young Ramirez with alcohol,
drugs, and horror stories from his term in Vietnam.

Alfred Adler asserted that most criminals have minimal to no concern for other human
beings and do not conduct themselves in useful ways. All four serial killers had a unique
approach to achieve social status developed by their similar but inimitable form to achieve
superiority. Coming from the social environment they did only sparked the already fueling rage
they possessed. These serial killers were vengeful toward society because of the social stigma
that they were placed in. This vengeance created fear nationwide and that gave each serial killer
the superiority they searched for. This superiority provided an adrenaline rush finally giving
them the attention they were so longingly craving.

Analysis of Findings and Connection to Research Question

It is evident here that a fundamental lack of Social Interest has a severe impact on an
individual’s development. The data provided has clearly linked four serial killers and their
motives for committing horrendous crimes. More current data is needed from other cases that
hold similarities for further discussion on the topic. The findings discussed earlier validates that
further research is needed on other serial killers. Finding further concrete evidence that impaired
Social Interest can be a cause to commit murder would help researchers refine the patterns of
serial killers. The research conducted for this paper found evidence that other various
dispositions were evident and separate from one another. How each serial killer handled their
own nature was unique but what was apparent was the escalating anger that they displayed shortly after discovering their true identity while experiencing lack of acceptance from peers. Having a severe and persistent mental illness was vaguely mentioned and needs to be considered for further research.

The field of forensics would benefit by using similar research techniques to enhance the idea of the impact of Social Interest, or lack thereof. The surprising findings between all four cases was that each serial killer felt nobody wanted them after peers discovered they were adopted, who their real family was, or that they were illegitimate. Current day society does not hold the same social stigma as it did when all four serial killers were profiled. But the feelings they maintained should be no different than a person experiencing similar social factors. This area should be considered for further review which would give us the ability to link probable criminals in today’s society. Some of those dispositions not mentioned are only the stepping stones for the direction a criminal may go, or become, a serial killer.
References

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