

Eight Types of Family Backgrounds that Actually Produced Serial Killers Based on the Information in Lay Literature and on the Internet—Revised

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Abstract: The interactions of both genetic and environmental factors produce serial killers. Environmental factors are especially known to affect how killers express their murderous acts. This paper, a revised and updated version of the paper presented in 2015, attempts to further clarify which types of family backgrounds actually produced serial killers.

Keywords: serial killer, serial murder, mass murder, family environment, childhood background, Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, I presented *Eight Types of Childhood Environments that Actually Produced Serial Killers Based on the Information in Lay Literature and on the Internet* [1] and *Nine Types of Childhood Environments that Actually Produced Mass Murderers Based on the Information in Lay Literature and on the Internet* [2]. In these works, I proposed eight different types of abusive childhood family environments for serial killers and nine different neglect-types of childhood family environment for mass murderers. In the years that have passed since then, more information has become available while new incidents have occurred, against which my proposals could be tested for their accuracy. I thus judged that some improvements and adjustments should be made to the work I presented in 2015. Here I present *Eight Types of Childhood Environments that Actually Produced Serial Killers Based on the Information in Lay Literature and on the Internet*.

Note 1. Here, the term *abuse* refers to unnatural external forces that plant the seeds of anger without affinity to the subject's natural feelings.

Note 2. The information used in this preliminary research was based on what could be obtained from lay literature on true crimes and internet sites such as Wikipedia, radford.edu, and YouTube, which contain as much inside information as can be considered helpful in knowing exactly what happened during the early lives of the subjects (some information is based on personal interviews that I conducted and letter correspondences).

Note 3. M = mother; F = father; GM = grandmother; GF = grandfather; GP = grandparents; ▼ = abuse (unnatural offensive forces); Φ = neglect; ab = abuse; ng = neglect; * = Japanese serial killer; com = communications; *letters* and *interview* were exchanged and conducted directly with the author; → indicates that the incidents happened in the chronological order

II. EIGHT TYPES OF FAMILY BACKGROUND THAT ACTUALLY PRODUCED SERIAL KILLERS—REVISED

Type 1—▼ by mother (mother figure)

① Anger-prone, hysterical, and/or overbearing mother

- ✧ Andrei Chikatilo
- ✧ Edmond Kemper
- ✧ Gary Ridgway
- ✧ Henry Lee Lucas,
- ✧ Cleophus Prince Jr.—M belted him while F was incarcerated for murder (*from letters*)
- ✧ Tommy Lynn Sells—Mother allowed repeated sexual ab by neighbor in exchange for money at age 8 (*from letters*)
- ✧ Chester Turner—Disciplinarian M, who belted him and stressful complaining wife (*from interview*)
- ✧ Robert Yates—M was hysterical because of the abuse she had been subjected to by her sister. Sexual ab by an older boy from his neighborhood at age 6 (*from letters*)
- ✧ Angelo Buono—Overbearing M; developed deep disdain for women [3]
- ✧ Ottis Toole—Alcoholic F abandoned family; extreme Christian M called him “Susan”; sexual ab by sisters and neighbors; satanist GM called him “Devil’s Child”; all the abuse started after his coming out as homosexual [4] [5] [6].
- ✧ Leonard Lake—Parents divorced at age 6 → lived with GM, who encouraged him to take nude photos of his sister → obsessed with porn and incest with sister → dissolved mice in chemicals [7] [8].

② Dominating, controlling, and/or sexually oppressive mother

- ✧ Ed Gein, Harold Shipman
- ✧ Donald Harvey—Over-control by M and GM (*from interview*); flatters teachers; sexual ab at age 4 by his uncle → practiced an occult ritual to select his victims [8] [9].
- ✧ Michael Swango—Dominating M pressured him toward academic success (*from letters*)

Type 2—▼ by father (or father figure)

- ✧ Charles Ng
- ✧ John Wayne Gacy
- ✧ Robert Hansen
- ✧ Richard Ramirez
- ✧ Paul Bernardo—F was charged with child molestation and even molested his own daughter /hysterical and depressed M revealed that F is not his real father; withdrew in the basement [10] [11] [12].
- ✧ Albert De Salvo—Violent alcoholic F broke teeth and hand of M and forced Albert to watch him having sex [13] [14].
- ✧ Danny Rolling—Police officer F told him he was unwanted, and physically abused M, who repeatedly ran away and came back. He was once pinned down on the ground with a chain [15].

- ✧ Gerard Schaefer—Oldest of three children in a turbulent and conflictual family. Referred to himself as being illegitimate. F was adulterous and verbally abusive, preferring his sister [16] [17].
- ✧ Ted Bundy—Moved into his volatile and controlling GF's house before his first birthday. Expressed a life-long resentment toward M for his birth as a bastard. Addicted to porn [18] [19].
- ✧ David Parker Ray—Violent alcoholic F snaps at and quarrels with M. Moved in with disciplinarian GF. Visiting F provided him with SM magazines. Bullied at high school [20] [21] [22].
- ✧ Kiyoshi Ookubo*—Addicted to sex. Killed eight women who had threatened to report him after he had raped them, especially when they implied their F was police. Was raised by egoistic F, who openly exposed a very young Kiyoshi to sexual scenes. M defended him even for his bad acts [23].
- ✧ Suzuka Hatakeyama*—Killed her own 11-year-old daughter and subsequently her neighbor's 7-year-old son (7) to cover up the first murder. Feigned guilt to the neighbor. Severely abused by her F, who punched/kicked her and pulled her around by her hair [24].
- ✧ Futoshi Matsunaga*—By taking advantage of the vulnerability of people close to him and invading and taking over their families and relatives, he killed seven people to steal their money and enjoy controlling them. He ordered them to do all the harming acts without actually dirtying his hands. Raised under aggressive/controlling F, who abused M. M did not support him emotionally. Showed highly psychopathic signs such as high levels of suspicion, obsession with money/control, enjoying hurting others, and pathologically telling lies [25].

Type 3—▼ by both parents

- ✧ Richard Chase (used drugs in adolescence)
- ✧ Herbert Mullin (used drugs in adolescence)
- ✧ Hadden Clark

Note. Subjects in this category often use drugs, possibly to psychologically escape from higher stresses/frustrations coming from both parents.

Type 4—▼ at orphanage, reform school, or other institution

- ✧ Albert Fish
- ✧ Anatoly Onoprienko

Note. Subjects in this category suffered from daily extreme physical/sexual abuse by other boys, who did not know the limit. They also suffered from corporal punishments inflicted by the institutions' staff.

Type 5—▼ by adoptive parent(s)

- ✧ David Berkowitz—Adopted at 2 weeks by egoistic M, who showed him off to neighbors. His adoptive parents announced at age 7 that he was adopted due to his biological M's death at his birth, causing him to have nightmares that his biological F was coming to kill him. Also had a strong inferiority complex in that he thought he was uglier than other kids throughout his youth [26].

- ✧ **Kenneth Bianchi**—Adopted at 2 weeks. Adoptive M interfered with his acts and physical conditions excessively. Often daydreamed at school [27].
- ✧ **Joel Rifkin**—Adopted at 3 weeks. Continually disappointed his adoptive F, who had higher expectations of him. Was teased at school and nicknamed “the turtle.” Had screaming matches with F → F committed suicide at age 28 [28].
- ✧ **Charles Albright**—Adopted from orphanage before first birthday. Raised by over-controlling and aggressive M, who used corporal punishments. She was allegedly so stingy that she used buttons for the eyes of animal taxidermies [29] [30].
- ✧ **Robert Black**—Adopted at 6 months. Locked in the closet and belted by M for wetting bed. Called “Smelly Robbie Tulip” at school in spite of his foster M’s insistence on hygiene. Developed a deep interest in genitalia at age 5, and inserted objects into his own anus, a practice he carried into adulthood [31]–[34].

Note. Adoptive parents often have high expectations for their adopted children as a result of a strong unfulfilled desire to have their own child. This often leads to frictions between the adoptive parent(s) and adopted child.

Type 6—▼ → Φ → ▼ (abuse → neglect → decisive blow)

- ✧ **Dean Corll**—Strict F/parents quarreled → parents divorced at age 6 → parents get back together → parents separate again → M marries a new partner → Dean becomes a serious child → severe rheumatic fever at age 7 [35]–[37].
- ✧ **Coral Eugene Watts**—Born in Killeen TX (military tank firing center) → F divorced at age 2 → M was a teacher; stayed with GM & GF, who was a hunter → Contracted meningitis/polio and missed entire third grade at age 8 → M remarried at age 9 → received little attention among eight new siblings [38].
- ✧ **William Bonin**—Alcoholic parents and abusive F → severe ng (clothed and fed by his neighbors) → lived with GF, who was known for molesting kids → sexual ab at orphanage between ages of 6 and 9 [39]–[43].
- ✧ **Donald Gaskins**—Born as an illegitimate child to 14-year-old M → severe ng (drinking kerosene and having convulsions between ages of 1 and 3 → M exposed him to sexual scenes; physical and sexual ab by her boyfriends → quit school at age 8 → did not know his name till his first court appearance → raped at reform school between ages of 15 and 18 [44].

Note.

1. In cases where serial killers have experienced neglect, abusive conditions seem to always to precede the neglect.
2. The neglect seems to make the subjects more susceptible to later damaging incidents/accidents [45].

Type 7—no physical intimacy during infancy + ▼

- ✧ **Jeffrey Dahmer** —Φ due to M’s postnatal psychological conditions → went through double-hernia surgery at age 4 → became highly introverted → exposed to constant quarrels between parents → obsessed with keeping company with the males he brought home as his sexual partners in a zombie-like state (dead) [46]–[49].
- ✧ **Cary Stayner**—Φ under highly controlling F (who later molested his own daughters) → pulling out his hair at age 3 → molested by uncle; his brother was kidnapped at age 11 → developed special obsession with his own idiosyncratic numerical patterns (*from letters*) [50] [51].
- ✧ **Gerald Stano**—Almost unadoptable due to severe ng at orphanage → adopted by highly disciplinary parents at age 1 → addicted to killing women [52].

- ✧ **Ted Kaczynski**—Developed severe hives at 9 months old and hospitalized for 10 days; subsequently required a long recovery time → became highly introverted → strongly pressured academically by M → developed obsession with nature (in opposition to civilization) after his secret natural field was destroyed by road construction [53].
- ✧ **Dennis Nilsen**—F absent due to engagement in Free Norwegian Forces; aggressive and neglectful M → parents divorced at age 3 → caretaking GF dies at age 6 → obsessed with corpses [54] [55].
- ✧ **Dennis Rader**—M not interested in children → left Dennis with GP. Mistrusted and did not feel close to M who judged him and told everything to volatile GF (GM neglectful) → M's hand was caught in a sofa spring at age 3–4. M also beat him with a belt for soiling his underwear at age 10–11 (he liked both incidents sexually) → obsessed with his *signature* (his specific idiosyncratic feature of murder acts of *Bind, Torture, Kill*. Because of this, he called himself *BTK*) [56].
- ✧ **Joseph Franklin** → abusive butcher F left family at age 8 → raised by aggressive alcoholic M who deprived her children of necessary care and food and was jailed twice → was beaten during occasional visits to F → strongly influenced by Nazism → murders targeted at those he considered inferior, especially blacks and Jews [58] [59]
- ✧ **Tsutomu Miyazaki***—Both parents working, raised by a mentally retarded live-in helper and GF → controlling F/ no communication at home among cold family members – strong inferiority complex about his handicapped hands → carer GF dies at age 26 (lost only person who cared about and listened to him) [60].
- ✧ **Issei Sagawa***—After a failed murder attempt in Japan, he murdered and cannibalized a Dutch female student while studying for a degree in France → developed severe enteritis at age 1 (possibly due to misdiagnosis by his doctor) → highly controlling F → uncle once play-acted catching, boiling, and eating children → obsessed with cannibalism [61]
- ✧ **Naohide***—Killed an elderly woman after breaking into her home; later said he had a strong desire to experience murder regardless of who the victim was → highly controlling GF separated him from M after parents' divorce at age 1.5 → GF subsequently completely blocked contact with M → became highly introverted → obsessed with killing/death, saying “I wanted to try killing a person.” [62]
- ✧ **Sakakibara Seito***—Killed two and injured three children of both sexes at age 14, sending provocative letters to mass media. Decapitated one boy and put the head on a school gate post. Also drank one boy's blood, and ejaculated when decapitating and when combing the hair of the boy's head → everyone specially doted on as the first child during his first year → attention shifted to his sickly younger brother at age 1 → constant, excessive denial and interference by M fixed with her strict parenting idea → influenced by Satanism and obsessed with killing/death [63] [64].
- ✧ **Kiyotaka Katsuta***—Killed eight people for money, later saying he could not stop his murderous acts in spite of strong guilt after each murder → constant ng while both parents worked since early childhood; aggressive/controlling F → obsessed with money to compensate for the lack of M's love (addicted to going out to buy snacks with the small amount of money M left before her going to work) [65]
- ✧ **Miyoko Tsunoda***—Killed over 10 people for money and control by invasion and take-over; victims were family members of those she met in her neighborhood. Typically invented a pretext to edge into those people's lives. Had a lonely childhood; was passed around her relatives during early childhood → obsessed with money and control [66].

Note.

1. The subjects who were lacking in close human interactions during early childhood (critical period approximately 0–2 years) seem to develop somewhat inorganic, machine-like personalities due to not developing emotional synapses through human communication.
2. The subjects who lacked opportunities to develop emotional attachments seem to develop specific obsessions (i.e., with money, ideology, fetishism, control, killing method, etc.) to replace the love, human interaction, or emotion they missed as children.

Type 8—spree murder (abuse + outside communications / neglect + outside communications)

- ✧ **Andrew Cunanan**—Killed five people, including Gianni Versace, during a three-month period for reasons such as stealing their cars and low-value possessions. Took his own life in the end → highly demanding M and disciplinary F → homosexual; had a constant craving for attention [67].
- ✧ **Takahiro Shiraishi***—Killed nine people during a two-month period for money and in order to commit rape and necrophilia. Decapitated all victims and kept their heads in cool-boxes in his room. Lured victims to his own room and killed them by hanging → M's attention clearly directed to his younger sister around age 5 → lived life with two faces, hiding suicide desire → M left him in his late teens, taking only his sister with her → obsessed with money, and later with raping unconscious victims. Accepted execution [68] [69].

Note

Spree murder indicates two or more murders committed by an offender or offenders without a cooling-off period, within a relatively shorter period of 30 days or, in some cases, a few months. Those subjected to abuse or neglect as children, and who were not confined to their home and thus could communicate with the outside world, can go on to lead seemingly normal lives well into their adulthood as long as their living base is not disturbed. However, once some accident/incident (*stressor*) occurs to these fragile individuals, they become unbalanced and fall into desperate situations, no longer able to resist their secret violent or materialistic desire. Subsequently, they cannot stop their killing sprees, which result from the acts to satisfy their desire. Such killers can be classified into (1) the anger-release type and (2) the obsessed-with-something-specific type, depending on whether their childhood backgrounds involved abuse or neglect, respectively. In general, those raised under abusive conditions tend not to take their own lives (e.g., Charles Starkweather) while those raised under neglectful conditions ultimately tend to kill themselves (e.g., Andrew Cunanan). Launching themselves directly into felony crimes such as multiple murders, usually without any previous criminal record, the subjects are not ready for it. Therefore, they act with extreme carelessness, without consideration of the consequences, and as a result their murder sprees tend to be short, ending either by arrest, suicide, or police shooting [67] [70].

III. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Maternal abuse leads to mixture of love and hate while paternal abuse plants seeds of aggression, both of which can cause the subject's anger to be mixed into their sexual urges.
2. Most subjects seem to have specific preferences for their type of victim, including certain fetishes. Exceptions are those whose personality was destroyed due to greater stresses, typically inflicted by both parents, highly turbulent childhood environments, and the use of drugs. Exceptions include the *disorganized* type of serial killers. Those whose obsession is with money, or with murder itself (who have not established their sexual identity yet due to their young ages) also tend not to have such specific preferences. Those who kill while still relatively young may also commit acts such as evisceration to satisfy their curiosity about how living beings are composed inside [71].
3. As with direct abuse or witnessing of abuse, constant quarreling between parents can also lead to the subject developing chronic aggression, especially when this occurs during their early childhood [72].
4. Sexual abuse can be the decisive blow to those who are already fragile due to their disadvantaged family environment during childhood [73].
5. Some aggressive mothers called the male subjects by a girl's name, and also treated them as a girl, indicating excessive parental domination and control.
6. Premature access to sexual acts or pornography can cause the subject's addiction to sexual acts, after which they often feel they have to kill their victims to get rid of the witnesses.
7. Being told that they were an unwanted child or having parental attention shifted to another younger sibling can deny the subject's very existence and lethally corrupt the subject's own identity.
8. Having human communication with the outside world while not confined to the family home can lead to the formation of a *secondary psychopath*, who has both the characteristics of a *primary psychopath* (i.e., an egocentric and antisocial

personality) and normal levels of emotional development. As a result, they feel guilt for their murderous habits [74]–[76]. These subjects may be [Type 8], or in some cases, [Type 7] (in which they are exposed to ample human communication after experiencing early years of relatively attenuate human communication).

9. Because of their higher capability for tolerance and different ways of expressing their feelings, female subjects are prone to be either seeking money or attention regardless of whether the their childhood environment was either abusive or neglectful. They also tend to target someone very close to them such as family members, neighbors, and friends, and are usually not interested in the process of killing [77] [78].

10. It is possible that subjects who were bullied at school or in other institutions had already been abused at home and developed interpersonal fears, especially when they were sent/admitted to the school or institution at older ages [79].

11. It seems that when subjects are placed under high external, sometimes dogmatic, control, they tend to become *mission-oriented* serial killers.

12. Some serial killers voluntarily contacted the family of their victims, the police, or the media by letter or phone call (e.g., Jack the Ripper, Zodiac Killer, Gary Ridgway, Albert Fish, Ted Kaczynski, Seito Sakakibara*, David Berkowitz, Tsutomu Miyazaki*, and Dennis Rader). These killers seem to be not satisfied with the control they get from killing their victims and desire further control over the bereaved, the whole city, the police, or the whole nation. This may be because the pressures they were subjected to during their childhoods were so extreme as to require releases beyond those of other serial killers (though not as high as those abused by both parents, who were driven to drugs and developed schizophrenia as a result).

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