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**Event Analysis; Analysis of Jeffery Dahmer (A.K.A  
Milwaukee Cannibal)**



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## **Event Analysis; Analysis of Jeffery Dahmer (A.K.A Milwaukee Cannibal)**

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### **Abstract**

Sexual homicides, although rare attract a great deal of attention from the media, the general public, and, more recently, the academic community, they are devastating crimes and have the potential for repetition. A case study of Jeffery Dahmer, Milwaukee Cannibal sexual homicide was analyzed for the purpose of this research. Clinicians are often caught in the dilemma of helping offenders succeed in a society that will not allow them to achieve success and may actively conspire against successful reintegration. Despite the vast knowledge about serial killers, it is still uncertain why they kill. Undoubtedly, many factors enable individuals to perform such acts without remorse, including biological and neuropsychological factors, such as being bombarded by images that glamorize violence daily. Thus, the clinician/ social workers must struggle to find ways to help his or her clients practice their new skills in a society that does not want the offender and takes active steps to ostracize and humiliate offenders, which in turn leads to former offenders experiencing further isolation and a loss of hope.

**Keywords:** *Sexual homicide, Jeffery Dahmer, sexual criminals, social work.*

## INTRODUCTION

Jeffery Dahmer, also known as the Milwaukee Cannibal, was one of America's most prolific serial killer and sex offenders who committed the rape and dismemberment of 17 men and boys between 1978 and 1991. Born on May 21, 1960, his family moved to Ohio due to his father's job. Jeffery attended the Ohio State University and later worked at the Ambrosia chocolate factory. His insecurities deepened further when his parents got divorced. He started drinking heavily in his high school years and was later kicked out of the army due to alcoholism. Dahmer was fascinated with dead animals so much that terrible smells started coming from the basement when he was a teenager. (Ratcliff, et.al., 2006). Dahmer told his father that he had dissolved a dead squirrel in chemicals. By the summer of 1991, Dahmer was killing one person a week, Matt Turner on June 30, Jeremiah Weinberger on July 5, Oliver Lacy on July 12, and finally Joseph Brandehoft on July 19. If the police had run background checks on Dahmer, they could have saved the life of Konerak Sinthasomphone. (<https://www.slideshare.net/charlottekirby86>) He was caught when he lured Tracy Edwards into his home, and she ended up escaping and getting the police. Upon searching the apartment, police found several pictures of Dahmers' victims and their remains, three severed heads, and photographs of dismembered body parts in the refrigerator. Dahmer committed all of these murders over 13 years and was finally caught on July 22, 1991, after 17 killings. Convicted of 15 of the 17 for a total of 957 years in prison murders committed in Wisconsin, Dahmer was sentenced to 15 terms of life imprisonment on February 15, 1992. During his trial, he changed his plea to guilty by virtue of insanity at the Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage, Wisconsin. On November 28, 1994, after being beaten by a fellow inmate at the Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage, he died on his way from prison to the hospital on November 28, 1994. (<https://slideplayer.com/slide/9669226/>)

## Media Analysis

Collectively, the news media are a powerful and influential set of actors in evil's social construction. Crime news coverage is sometimes exaggerated to entice a wide public audience. Journalistic hyperbole makes them appear to be much more threatening to society than they may actually be.

One of the most sensationalized and hyped serial killer stories in U.S. history was Jeffrey Dahmer, who was depicted as the "Milwaukee Cannibal" by the entertainment news media. Dahmer raped, murdered, dismembered, and ate seventeen men and boys between 1978 and 1991 in Wisconsin.

The unrivaled gruesomeness of the case virtually ensured that it would become one of the best-known serial homicide stories of all time. Although the crimes took place in Milwaukee, media interest was a nation- and worldwide. *The New York Times*, for example, ran either a half- or full-page feature article on the case for ten consecutive days following Dahmer's arrest in July 1991.

There were numerous features and interviews on all major network television talk shows and news programs such as ABC's 20/20 and CBS's 48 Hours. According to news reports in the *Milwaukee Journal*, an estimated 450 journalists came to Milwaukee to cover the case and the ensuing trial of Dahmer. A typical news headline about the killer at the time asked the question, "Jeffrey Dahmer: Man or Monster?" Shortly after Dahmer's capture, the front cover of *People magazine* published on August 12, 1991, read: Horror in Milwaukee: He was a quiet man who worked in a chocolate factory. But at apartment 213, a real-life "Silence of the Lambs" was unfolding. Now that Jeffrey Dahmer has confessed to 17 grotesque murders, his troubling history of alcoholism, sex offenses, and bizarre behavior raises a haunting question: Why wasn't he stopped?

The blockbuster film *The Silence of the Lambs*, which starred Anthony Hopkins as Lecter, was at the very height of its popularity and cultural impact at precisely the right time for this connection. It had been released to U.S. audiences on January 30, 1991, only six months prior to Dahmer's capture. By linking him to Hannibal Lecter, the news media dehumanized Jeffrey Dahmer and framed him as a stylized super predator and cannibal.

This particular case's vast impact is evidenced by the wide appeal of morbid cannibalism-themed jokes and atrocity tales based on Jeffrey Dahmer that remain popular today, even though he was killed in prison by a fellow inmate in 1994.

In the *Los Angeles Times* article on February 18, 1992, Dahmer is said to be suffering from "the psychological disorder of necrophilia" this claim by his attorney and court-appointed psychologists support the claim that he was sick even though Dahmer was found to be sane and cognitive at the time the crimes were committed, newspaper articles at the time used the simple fact Dahmer was homosexual to drive home the argument that he was sick and in a way depicting a certain bias against the gay community, one wonders if the same would be said if this case were tried today, in a time where more awareness is made about the gay community and people are being held accountable for any action taken whether good or bad, questions about whether Dahmer's case gave journalists the opportunity to comment on queer identity, individuals and relationships? The strengths and weaknesses of these reports are the agreement that a human being committed such gruesome crimes against humanity when was legally sane at the time, crimes were, these crimes have nothing to do with his pathology, and even if they have to do with his pathology, they were not as a result of his sexuality as the DSM 5 had removed homosexuality from its criterion as a mental illness in 1973, (<https://www.academia.edu/31918102/>).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual homicides attract a great deal of attention from the media, the general public, and, more recently, the academic community. Although rare, they are devastating crimes and have the potential for repetition (Greenall, 2013; Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988). The discrepancy in sexual homicide reported cases are partly due to inconsistency criteria used to define sexual

homicides. Although criteria suggested by FBI are widely adopted, there exist many other definitions proposed by various researchers and experts in classifying sexual homicides (Chan 2015). Sexual homicide is still a relatively new psychological inquiry area compared with other forms of sexual offending. Researchers have only taken an academic interest in the field in the last 30 years, although a few key papers existed before this time. (Kerr and Beech, 2016). "Virtually everyone has uttered language that conveys some elements of homicidal ideation (e.g., I could have killed him).

In most cases, this language is merely a figure of speech and should not be taken seriously. For others, homicidal ideation is more substantial and enduring". Although homicidal ideation among the general population is relatively prevalent, it is usually a matter of pure fantasy that quickly occurs in the context of an interpersonal dispute and then dissipates. (Delisi, et al., 2017). Most psychologists say Dahmer knew right from wrong and was consciously aware of what he was doing. Psychologists agree Dahmer killed to satisfy his need for a totally submissive partner.

Motives are predominantly formed out of thoughts, although feelings and physiological states also contribute (Reeve 2009). Convict mentality, mindset, rationale, justification, mental illness, the purpose of control, adaptive response, taking responsibility and conditional ownership of behavior, mental status, views of authority, and no intent to harm, all represent facets of the offenders' cognitive processing, (Daniels,et.al., 2016). The environment is considered any external influence on the individual, such as the community, family, or social networks.

## CONCLUSION

Social workers work with individuals/groups dealing with problematic social constructs in practice settings using evidence-based practice skills with consistent efforts geared towards bringing together people across the divide while understanding that every life matters and is essential. Working through competence and professionalism while keeping an open mind to Bias, the National Association of Social workers (NASW) code of ethics is a standard and value set that is sometimes hard to go by, especially when trying to eliminate personal Bias and work objectively, addressing each case with the urgency required is recommended for better service as missing any one of these core values amounts to incompetency. Notwithstanding, dilemmas still occur that are unavoidable (Grady & Strom-Gottfried 2011) posit that clinicians' therapeutic work with clients is often focused on increasing assertiveness, conflict resolution, and other social skills (McGrath et al., 2003). Yet, the current laws create a climate of shame and intense negativity, often driving former offenders into isolation and depression and constraining them from putting into practice the skills they have worked hard to develop. Clinicians are often caught in the dilemma of helping offenders succeed in a society that will not allow them to achieve success and may actively conspire against successful reintegration. Thus, the clinician must struggle to find ways to help his or her clients practice their new skills in a society that does not want the offender and takes active

steps to ostracize and humiliate offenders, which in turn leads to former offenders experiencing further isolation and a loss of hope.

Despite the vast knowledge about serial killers, it is still uncertain why they kill. Undoubtedly, many factors enable individuals to perform such acts without remorse, including biological and neuropsychological factors, such as being bombarded by images that glamorize violence daily. (Alvarez and Bachman 2020) (p. 108).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

What are we as social workers doing about protecting and educating people about violent sexual criminals? (Alvarez and Bachman, 2010) in their text, explain the complexities about serial killers and their preference for killing strangers; in Jeffery's case, he targeted young gay boys /whom he knew were defiant, and there was not much acceptance of the gay community, Gary Ridgeley specifically asserted that "they wouldn't be missed" "they are not as valuable as a college person or a business-person" (p. 106). What are we doing about perpetrators of these violent crimes? The social cognitive theory posits that moral agency is a self-regulatory process (Bandura, 1991). This process works to uphold the moral standards developed throughout a person's lifespan, and moral standards are constructed through several processes, including observation of guidance from trusted others. Once these standards are developed, they serve as behavior. They also work to discourage any behavior outside of the norm, people monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it occurs, judge it in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances, and regulate their actions "by the consequences they apply to themselves" (Bandura, 2001). Individuals operate within the established moral standards to promote self-worth and personal satisfaction and avoid negative repercussions.

Behavior that falls outside of the established set of moral standards brings about consequences, such as self-censure or disapproval. Additionally, acting outside of the conventional moral standards may bring about external sanctions. External sanctions include judgment by others or being ostracized for acting outside of the social norm. According to (Grinnan, 2016) the social cognitive theory of moral agency proposes that the reason most people refrain from transgressing from moral standards is that they have internalized societies standards of conduct: acts of wrongdoing risk not only external sanctions but also internal sanctions (Shulman, et.al.,2011). The importance of human relationships will help foster positive relationships and create awareness of pertinent issues so that people can come together for the common good; more and more issues are becoming globalized, in the same vein, people need to get involved in the things that affect and create setbacks for other people when we see each other as equally important. Should Dahmer's disturbing behavior have been picked up on, and if so, would he have stopped the gruesome killings? Not much is said about his family or upbringing in most reports; one wonders what kind of childhood he had, what type of friends he kept, and his growing up years in general. Murder is

the most serious of all crimes. Therefore, the knowledge that can help to predict and thus potentially prevent extraordinary violence is worth reporting (Lewis et al., 1985).

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