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**An Analysis of the Connection Between Insecure Attachment Style and Bodily Disposal
Methods in Serial Homicide Offenders**

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School of Professional Advancement
Regis University
Program of Criminology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

By,
Emmaleigh Deanna Welka

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to connect behaviors based on John Bowlby's Attachment Theory to bodily disposal methods utilized by serial homicide offenders. In this thesis, insecure attachment styles were the primary focus due to their translation into criminal behavior. The attachment styles analyzed within this study were anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. The bodily disposal methods that were analyzed were set forth by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crimes and are the primary disposal methods utilized by serial homicide offenders. The disposal methods analyzed were transport/concealment, transport/dumping, no-transport/concealment, and no-transport/as is. The approach utilized for this thesis was a grounded study approach, focusing on making conclusions from the already published data set. Results indicate that serial homicide offenders with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style are likely to utilize transport/concealment and no-transport/concealment bodily disposal methods, individuals with dismissive-avoidant attachment styles will utilize transport/dumping bodily disposal methods, and individuals with fearful-avoidant attachment styles will utilize no-transport/as is. Three offenders were utilized to exemplify the findings of this study, Jeffrey Dahmer represented the anxious-preoccupied attachment style, Donald Henry Gaskins represented the dismissive-avoidant attachment style, and Dennis Rader exemplified the fearful-avoidant attachment style.

Introduction

Law enforcement is tasked with the endeavor of “protect and serve,” working both internally and with their respective communities to provide meaningful crime prevention strategies that can be utilized by a large audience. Since 2017, violent crime has been decreasing steadily, according to the Universal Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (FBI 2019). From the total number of violent crimes reported in 2019, about 0.12% of those crimes are categorized as homicide/manslaughter (FBI 2019). The FBI also maintains that of the reported homicide/manslaughter cases, about 1% of those cases can be attributed to serial killers, however recent events have given cause for speculation, such as the unsolved murders of indigenous women and girls and serial killers acting in smarter ways to avoid detection, meaning that the total number of homicide could actually be higher than originally thought (Dimond 2020). In a recent survey completed by and reported on by NPR, 30% of homicide cases, regardless of the involvement of a serial killer, will go unsolved (NPR 2015). Given this information, the identification and subsequent apprehension of serial killers has become increasingly difficult, also resulting in the inability to prevent serial murders as a whole.

From both a criminal justice and criminological standpoint, understanding how violence manifests in individuals, and how it can be so strong that it urges these individuals to harm others, is an important question to ask. Regardless of the type of offender, behavior is a driving force that compels individuals to act and react in a certain way. This is still the case for serial killers, who through their crimes, exhibit specific behavioral tendencies and patterns. Understanding behavior can take different routes, but childhood treatment and relationships have been proven to be strong indicators of how an individual will act and form relationships in the

future. John Bowlby originally founded the study of attachment styles between primary caregiver and child, explaining that children will establish relationships with others in a way that reflects their original relationship with their primary caregiver (Cozolino 2014). Childhood maltreatment presents itself as a unique stressor that greatly influences individuals' ability to regulate emotions and cognitive abilities. This has become evident in violent offenders that specific attachment styles are more prone to violence compared to a securely attached individual (Schimmenti 2014). Overall, an understanding of childhood maltreatment can shed light on how violence manifests in individuals later in life.

This study hopes to establish a link between attachment styles of serial murderers and their body disposal methods. By having a clear connection between attachment styles and deliberate actions, there is the anticipation that these individuals will adhere to their original behavior and become easier to apprehend. While there is still no direct sight into the future regarding crime, individuals have a strong tendency to adhere to certain behaviors unless circumstances arise that forces them to change their behavior. This research can also be applied in an academic setting as supplemental research in the field of criminal psychology, in an effort to understand the liminal factors that may be completely obvious to serial homicide offenders, but obscure to those seeking to understand these offenders. Application of this research would be most well received in a setting that assesses childhood risk and can act in a way to protect those children from present risk factors.

To fully understand the behavior of serial killers, organization of different types of serial killers is critical. Under the umbrella term of serial killers, the original understanding of serial killers fell under the dichotomy of organized or disorganized. The classifications for organized crime indicated that the offender brought their own weapons, had planned the actions in advance,

and took precautions when leaving the crime scene as to not leave behind trace amounts of evidence. A disorganized killer may have no prior planning and will choose weapons and victims of opportunity, with little regard for who they are harming (Ressler 1986). This was the original understanding of serial killers set forth by Robert Ressler, John Douglas, and Dr. Ann Burgess in 1986. Ressler and Douglas were two FBI agents who pioneered the science of profiling with the professional help of Dr. Ann Burgess. These three individuals developed the original methods used by federal law enforcement in an attempt to understand the behavior and thought processes of serial killers (Ressler 1986). Since then, the field of forensic psychology and criminal psychology has expanded dramatically.

The language of organized versus disorganized has been most recently replaced with a new description system that encapsulates a more holistic view of how serial killers have evolved since the originally published research by Ressler, Douglas, and Burgess in 1986. One of the prevailing typologies that exist divides serial killers into four groups: the visionary, the mission-based, power/control types, and hedonistic types (Morton 2020). The visionary is the individual that hears voices and describes how they are called by a higher power to commit their murders. The mission-based serial murderer is the individual that feels that they need to rid society of a certain type of individual. The power/control type are individuals that need to exhibit dominance over others. Finally, hedonistic serial murder can be divided into three groups: lust orientated, thrill orientated, and comfort killers who act for monetary gain (Morton 2020). However, despite the research that has been presented to try to categorize the motivations of individual serial killers, law enforcement has not been able to implement these typologies in a way that helps them to apprehend active serial killers. Law enforcement relies heavily on what they can discover at crime scenes that can then lead them to an offender. Of the things discoverable at a

crime scene, body disposal is the most obvious piece of evidence, along with the presence or absence of a weapon, or if personal belongings from the victim were taken or left behind. Body disposal methods can include concealed after transport, dumped after transport, concealed without the use of transport, and left "as is " without the use of transport (Morton 2020). The development of this typology is specifically important to law enforcement because it is information that is readily available to them at a present crime scene. Commonly, the typologies and descriptors of serial killers by researchers are done post-arrest, which is of little help to law enforcement when trying to apprehend currently active serial killers.

Body disposal and autopsy findings are crucial data points that allow law enforcement to make assumptions about the offender. For example, wounds on the body can indicate weapons used and other wounds can indicate if the victim tried to defend themselves. Body disposal can indicate behavioral tendencies of the offender as well, such as if the victim was caught in a blitz attack or was taken from a secondary location and how this relates to the offending pattern. This readily available information is pivotal to law enforcement but also displays the behavior of the serial murderer.

Literature Review

Bodily disposal methods are a key indicator of offender behavior in the case of serial homicide. While how the body was left for law enforcement may seem like an arbitrary detail, there are several behavioral patterns that can be established from this action. However, behavior is very complex and overall it is impossible to determine the origins of certain patterns of behavior. Given this statement, bodily disposal methods of serial murderers will be analyzed under the Attachment Schema Theory originally established by John Bowlby (Cozolino 2014) in an effort to assess why serial murderers dispose of victims in the manner that they do so. Attachment Schema has not previously been applied in this setting, requiring analysis of the established literature concerning attachment styles as well as established bodily disposal methods of serial murderers. For attachment style to be a reliable origin for serial murderer behavior, incorporation of family histories of serial murderers will also be explored for credibility purposes.

The presentation of articles begins with establishing bodily disposal methods that have been previously explored by law enforcement, both on the local and federal levels. This will cement what is already available to law enforcement as information in the event of a serial murderer. Secondly, attachment schemas and application of the attachment theory will be analyzed, specifically for maladaptive caregiver roles. For the scope of this study, it will be assumed that individuals that had caregivers that were present and secure will not mature to become serial murderers. This is assumed due to the healthy emotional coping mechanisms that are developed within secure attachment styles and that most serial homicide offenders will develop insecure attachment styles (Cozolino 2014). While this is not always the case, it will facilitate research and maintain a narrow scope for this study. Since the primary focus of this thesis is attachment and its implications, there will be a strong emphasis on not only the adverse

effects of poor attachment styles in infants and young children but also on how this attachment style can influence brain structure and function over time. This information can then be compared to brain abnormalities or functional discrepancies that arise within convicted serial homicide offenders. The comparison will be made primarily to show a connection between the evidence, allowing for the further argument that attachment style can dictate bodily disposal methods at crime scenes. Overall, the literature presented will explore established bodily disposal methods with an exploration into the adverse effects of maladaptive attachment schemas.

Attachment schemas were originally analyzed by John Bowlby, in an effort to understand current behavioral patterns in relation to infant care. He believed attachment schemas were the sum of all experiences an individual has with a primary caretaker and how those experiences can be predictive of later life behavior (Cozolino 2014). Bowlby analyzed attachment through a series of interactions between mother and child in different settings. The first setting was at home, where interactions between mother and child could be observed in its natural setting. From there, Bowlby noted four categories of mother-child attachment patterns: free/autonomous, enmeshed/ambivalent, disorganized, and dismissive. Free/autonomous mothers were sensitive to their children's needs and available when needed, but were not hovering over the children's every move. The enmeshed/ambivalent mothers were inconsistent in how available they were to their children. Some of the time, these mothers were overinvolved in their child's life, invoking the term helicopter parent, and other times they were dismissive and unresponsive to their child's needs. Disorganized mothers were often observed to create conflict and were observed to be both frightened by and frightening to their children. These mothers were also noted to have experienced trauma, unresolved grief, or had been diagnosed with mental illness. Lastly,

dismissive mothers were overall observed to be rejecting and distant from the children with little to no variability in these behaviors (Cozolino 2014).

The second portion of Bowlby's observations involved placing the mothers and their infants in a controlled setting. The objective of this observation was to witness what the child would do once a stranger was introduced and the mother was removed from the room. After a short time away, the mothers were re-introduced to the room to observe how the infant reacted to their mother's. Overall, the goal was to observe how the infants were able to handle stress in the absence of the primary caregiver (Cozolino 2014). In infants with free/autonomous mothers, the infants would seek proximity when the mother returned and was quickly soothed and returned to play, indicating that they saw their mothers as a source of comfort. These infants were labeled as secure.

Infants with enmeshed/ambivalent mothers were labeled as anxious/ambivalent attached. These infants would seek proximity to their mothers upon their return, but would not be easily soothed and took longer to return to play. Observers determined that since the mothers were inconsistently available to their children, their stress would be compounded by their mother's own distress. Due to this lack of safe haven in the primary caregiver, these infants experienced higher levels of emotional dysregulation, and tended to be clingier to mothers, and were less exploratory in their surroundings.

Infants with disorganized mothers were also labeled as disorganized. These children often engaged in self-injurious behavior and chaotic mannerisms upon the mother's return. They were observed to fall down, spin until disorientated, hit themselves, and would not know how to calm themselves. Observers noted that these children would contort into strange body positions or would be frozen in place. It was determined that these children both wanted to be comforted by

their mothers, but also wanted to avoid her for their own safety. This stark dichotomy caused intense inner turmoil in the children, causing their emotional and motor capabilities to fall apart (Cozolino 2014).

Finally, infants with dismissing mothers had little reaction to their mothers when they returned to the room. Despite the anxiety of the stranger present in the room, these children did not seek out their mothers, indicating that they do not believe that their mothers will be a source of security or comfort. These infants were labeled avoidantly attached and were determined to believe that they were better at regulating their emotions on their own rather than involving their mothers, who would not provide any emotional comfort (Cozolino 2014).

These findings have been the basis for attachment studies and their expansion into other topics of behavior that involve human interaction. While these observations strictly focus on young children, further expansion has been done on how attachment styles in young children can affect later relationships that the individual may have. The arguments that are established in Bowlby's work are supported by experimental and observational data. This study was included because it was the first exploration of attachment between the primary caregiver and their young child. This study has since been the inspiration to further explore attachment and the effect that it can have on other facets of an individual's life. While this article is the pioneering study done on attachment, it only analyzes the role of the mother in the raising of young children. There was no investigation into how a nanny or babysitter would be regarded as the primary caregiver of the child or how the role of the father would be interpreted by the child. The role of the mother in raising children is important but is not the only relationship that the child may have at a young age. This perspective would give a holistic view of who the child considered to be their primary caregiver and how the child regarded each of their parents. Despite the shortcomings of this

study, Bowlby did initiate a long line of investigation into differing attachment schemas in varying age groups.

In a more recent study published in the *Journal for Child and Family Studies* (2012), Roelof et al analyzed if there was a connection between attachment insecurity, maladaptive cognitive schemas, and psychopathological symptoms in a sample of adolescent individuals. Roelof et al separated psychopathological symptoms into emotional disorders e.g. anxiety and depression and behavioral disorders e.g. ADHD and focused on peer and parent attachment schemas. Maladaptive schemas were determined to be the mediator between insecure emotional attachment and peer and emotional problems. Maladaptive schemas are established early in the individual's life when there was not a secure attachment made between the individual and their primary caregiver. Due to this, emotional regulation could not be achieved for the individual and emotional connections between parents and peers could not be properly established. When analyzing the background of the adolescents, Roelof et al found that there was a clear connection between attachment insecurity between parents and peers and psychopathological symptoms. It was also established that different maladaptive schemas correlate to different underlying cognitions. Roelof et al determined that, concerning emotional disorders, the individual does not believe that their needs will be met by either their parents or their peers. As a result, disorders such as anxiety and depression occur from this stress. Results indicated that individuals with insecure attachment to their parents tended to exhibit behavioral disorders, while individuals with insecure attachment to their peers exhibited emotional disorders (377-385).

From these results, Roelof et al determined that treatment for behavioral and emotional disorders should start with analyzing the peer and parent relationships the individual has and have an active role in strengthening those attachments. They also emphasized that these

relationships would need to be protective in nature and benefit both parties of the relationship (Roelof 2012). The limitations of this study come from the data, which was established as being self-reported by the adolescent individuals, which does not guarantee that the information given to researchers was unbiased. The sample size was also relatively small (N=82), with little information given about the demographics of the sample. Despite these shortcomings, the inclusion of this article was done because researchers provided insight into how attachment schemas have lasting effects on individuals past the age of a young child. They also implied that the behavior of adolescents and even adults can be determined by attachment styles and schemas that establish from those attachments. This article aids in establishing the claim that criminal behavior can therefore also theoretically have its roots in the attachment style between the offender and their primary caregiver.

Compared to the previous article, another study was performed in May 2021 to determine if aggression had any correlation to specific attachment styles. The article was published by the *STED Journal* (2021) and Samardzic et al focused on if there was a clear connection between aggression in non-psychotic offenders and what attachment style they had developed from childhood. In a sample size of 62 convicted, non-psychotic offenders, aggression was quantified by utilizing the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) and comparing that information to survey answers evaluating patterns of family affective attachment (PAV). A control group of safely attached individuals (N=25) was utilized to compare violent offenders. Samardzic et al found that those within the control group had the lowest scores for aggressive behavior. Offenders with preoccupied attachment schemas had the highest scores in hostility with offenders with timid attachment schemas had high scores in anger, hostility, and overall aggression (Samardzic 2021).

The inclusion of this study is critical to establishing that criminality can be influenced by the attachment styles of the mothers of offenders. The presented data indicates that behavior is influenced by attachment schemas established by the individual. Criminality is another behavior displayed by an individual, often rooted in aggression among other emotions. Establishing the attachment theory within the behavior of crime is critical to asserting the claims that criminal behavior is based on attachment theory and the schemas that are developed by offenders. While this study does assess aggression overall, Samardzic et al did not specify what violent crimes were being surveyed. Aggression levels have the possibility to vary between those charged with drug crimes to those convicted of serial homicide. Having specific groups of each violent crime could aid in better understanding levels of aggression as well as what attachment styles are prevalent under each crime.

In a study done in 2019 by Mora et al, the attachment style of the offenders of sexual crimes was analyzed to determine if there were any patterns or connections that could be made. Mora et al wanted to establish if there was a connection between attachment style and mentalization of sexual crime offenders. Utilizing a correlational and cross-sectional study, 50 men convicted of sexual crimes were divided into six categories of offenses. These groups were also determined by different demographic factors such as race, age, and socioeconomic status. Out of the six groups, insecure attachment was the reoccurring attachment style among the offenders. It was also found that these individuals, along with presenting insecure attachments, also exhibited resentment towards their parents and felt an overall lack of autonomy growing up (Mora 2019). The inclusion of this article was done to highlight how criminality can be influenced by attachment styles. It does not mean that everyone with an insecure attachment will become a criminal, but it sheds light on how parenting styles can influence the behavior of the

individual later in life. With this study as well as the other articles that were presented, the intention is to highlight how maladaptive attachment styles can be connected to behavior overall. The presented article provides strong evidence that behavior and attachment styles are connected in an intricate way.

Along with behavior, there has also been evidence that psychological disorders have been linked to attachment styles. The connection between psychopathy and attachment styles among violent offenders was analyzed by a team of Italian researchers. They surveyed 139 Italian inmates utilizing the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PC-R), which measured different symptoms of psychopathy in a self-survey. The 10 inmates that displayed the highest scores on the PC-R were then administered a follow-up survey, which assessed childhood experiences, current representations, and attachment styles. From these survey results, it was indicated that severe childhood abuse and disorganized attachment were most prevalent (Schimmenti 2014). What this study represents is that along with attachment styles, there is a critical need to understand previous and present relationships and how they relate to violent behavior. Current relationships can indicate not only violent tendencies but also can be used to understand how attachment styles can reflect in those relationships, such as how abuse manifests in those relationships, how victims are chosen, and how long the abuse occurs in the relationship.

It has also been found that attachment styles can be reflected in domestic violence and conflict resolution techniques. In an article published by *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Bonache et al surveyed 216 Spanish undergraduate students, analyzing specifically how many individuals experienced violence in their relationships and if the violence could relate back to insecure attachment styles. Bonache et al also analyzed the attachment style of the victims and how that can have an influence on destructive conflict resolution. Bonache et al found that

anxious and avoidant attachment styles are closely linked with victimization and that anxiously attached individuals are more likely to initiate conflict and escalate to violence. What this study illustrates is that certain attachment styles may be more likely to engage in violence versus others, and it also demonstrates that there are attachment styles that are more likely to be victimized through domestic violence. Having an understanding of how violence initiates is also just as important as understanding behavior that leads to violence. Human behavior is highly attached to relationships, as has been demonstrated by the previous articles on attachment styles, and it also has been linked to criminal activity and criminal behavior. Childhood experiences are highly involved in how humans make connections later in life, regardless of if these connections are criminal or not.

Childhood maltreatment is another aspect of attachment styles that has not previously been discussed, however, it also has an influence on how attachment styles are established. In a recent study (2021), the connection between childhood maltreatment, attachment styles, and sexual offending was analyzed. Grady et al wanted to determine if abuse caused anxious/ambivalent attachment styles or anxious/avoidant attachment styles. Grady et al also wanted to determine if these two attachment styles were also associated with the inability to regulate emotions, behaviors, or cognitions. Lastly, Grady et al wanted to determine if childhood experiences influence sexual offending. In a survey of 200 male youths, Grady et al determined that childhood abuse contributed to the development of both anxious/avoidant and anxious/ambivalent attachment styles. It was also determined that early and prolonged sexual abuse contributed to later sexual offending, regardless of the established attachment style. Dysregulation was also found with both attachment styles (Grady 2021). This study further demonstrates that attachment styles have an influence on the future behavior of the individual if

they do not establish a secure attachment to a caregiver. While this study does not focus on violent offending, it further illustrates the connection between attachment styles and future criminal behavior.

The focus of this research is on bodily disposal methods and how it is a definable behavior exhibited by serial murderers, so much so that it can be linked to attachment styles. Bodily disposal methods have been studied by federal law enforcement because it is the most prevalent form of evidence available at a crime scene. In a recent article published in 2020 by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Morton et al put forward a comprehensive view of what are the most likely bodily disposal methods, as well as victim demographics. Morton et al established that offenders will either transport their victims to a new location or leave them where the crime occurred. At these locations, offenders will either conceal their victims or leave them as they are. If they are concealed, victims will either be buried in a clandestine grave, buried underwater, or covered by available material. Morton et al also noted that opportunity was a factor in how victims were left, meaning that offenders may change their bodily disposal methods if they are unable to carry out their original plan. However, Morton et al also indicated that offenders adhere to their chosen disposal method out of comfort and routine (Morton 2020). This article establishes the basis for continued research in bodily disposal methods due to asserting how and why offenders may choose to leave their victims. Morton et al also assert that bodily disposal methods are a behavior of the offender and not entirely left up to chance. If the action of bodily disposal methods are not entirely random and are rooted in behavior, the application of attachment style has some merit in explaining this behavior.

What Morton et al do not acknowledge directly is if the victim is staged or posed in a certain way. While Morton et al do highlight the overarching patterns of bodily disposal

methods, articulating on unusual bodily disposal methods also establishes behavioral patterns exhibited by the offender. In an article published in *the Journal of Forensic Sciences*, unusual bodily disposal methods were analyzed to determine patterns for both offenders and victims. Previous to establishing any evidence, Weis et al asserted that bodily disposal methods are accepted by the court system as a definable phenomenon, as they can reveal characteristics of the homicide, and are therefore accepted in a court of law (Weis 2004). Analysis of a series of serial homicides and their bodily disposal methods indicated that unusual body staging or posing is highly rare, only present in 1.3% of homicides. Cases where the victims were posed only occurred in 0.3% of homicides, and cases involving staging were the rarest, only occurring in 0.1% of homicide cases. Posing is defined as manipulating the victim into a different position than the one they died in, while staging is manipulating the crime scene in any way, such as removing items or bringing items to leave behind (Weis 2004). In these cases, the offenders were typically male and older and victims were typically young females. Weis et al also noted that posed victims indicated an element of sexual assault compared to stage victims who had no evidence of sexual assault. Posing and staging the bodies also indicated a “hands-on” element in the homicide itself, such as utilizing stabbing or cutting weapons, or bludgeoning the victim (Weis 2004). This article was critical to include because it gives traction to the argument that behavior is admissible in court, which is exemplified in the fact that bodily disposal methods are utilized in court proceedings. It also indicates that the details found at crime scenes, specifically how the victims were found, carry important information about the homicide. While this does not take into account how behaviors change due to stress, it does assert that behaviors are stable enough to investigate within homicide cases.

Of the literature presented, the most important aspect is the assertion that attachment styles will give an indication of future criminal behaviors. This was highlighted in a number of different sources analyzing a variety of different crimes. Alongside future criminal behavior, attachment styles also indicate the nature of future relationships and the overall behaviors of individuals. Overall, studies are indicating that attachment is critical to understanding behavior as a whole and can have lasting effects on individuals into their adulthood. The current literature also supplies research linking attachment style to violence, both towards partners and towards strangers. Finally, there have also been studies as to how attachment affects psychopathy and other mental health disorders. The literature makes a strong case that attachment styles are the key to unlocking certain elements of behavior. What the literature is lacking is how attachment style can influence decision-based behaviors, such as the scope of this thesis. Further investigation into choice-making and how that is influenced by behavior is critical to moving forward into the investigation of the connection between bodily disposal methods and attachment style in serial homicide cases. While not all behavior can be influenced by attachment styles, further investigation on the elements of attachment style and how it affects behavior is critical to further investigation into criminal behavior.

Methods

The goal of this research is to establish a psychological connection between attachment styles and bodily disposal methods in serial homicide cases. There has already been profound research surrounding attachment styles as the basis for many different behaviors and relationships that individuals may display in their lifetimes. This research has also extended to include criminal behavior as having a connection with attachment style. The established research contains both qualitative and quantitative studies, creating a strong data pool as well as linking new concepts to attachment styles and criminal behavior.

A large portion of the research connecting attachment style and bodily disposal methods will primarily be done through the analysis of current data and results that have been published. A qualitative studies approach will be taken as opposed to a quantitative study due to the magnitude of the research that would follow a quantitative study. Bodily disposal methods and attachment styles have not been previously connected directly and would require a large number of participants and data sets to connect them directly. Current research on attachment styles and bodily disposal methods is substantial enough that for the purpose of this research, there is no need to have a large quantitative study.

Within a qualitative studies approach, much of the research being done will be secondary as no new data sets will be generated and there will be no survey input from individuals. Due to this, research for this project will be through a grounded studies approach, which is an analysis of the already published results on separate topics with the goal of finding a connection or pattern. The goal of this research project is to establish a connection between attachment styles and bodily disposal methods. A grounded studies approach will allow for the establishing of new conclusions and theories based on current published results and evidence. Having a grounded

studies approach also allows for other concepts that may arise throughout the research process to be properly analyzed. Grounded studies theory does not require the need for input of new data to establish new conclusions. Since the scope of this project is very specific, having large data sets and surveys are not entirely necessary.

Within the grounded studies theory approach, a strong analysis of present attachment styles will be the cornerstone of this research. Secure attachments will be considered the control group because of the adult behavior that result from it, being strong social and cognitive skills as well as the ability to form and maintain healthy relationships. Secure attachments will also not be included in the analysis of bodily disposal methods because, based on the present results surrounding attachment style, individuals with a secure attachment are highly unlikely to commit serial homicide. The experimental groups are therefore the avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and disorganized attachment styles, which are considered insecure. From the childhood attachment styles, characteristics and behaviors associated with each are established.

The presence of bodily disposal methods at serial homicides is one of the defining features of the crime and is one of the forms of information most readily available to law enforcement. Disposal methods are behavioral characteristics that are displayed by serial homicide offenders and can theoretically be connected to an individual's behavior through attachment style. Not all behaviors are able to be linked through attachment, but most encounters and relationships that adult individuals have can be connected to attachment styles.

How serial homicide offenders leave their victim is a behavior that remains stable enough to connect to attachment style. Along with the analysis of attachment styles and how they might relate to bodily disposal methods, three case studies will be presented to illustrate the analyses. This provides a real context for the analysis results and allows for important details to be

explored that may not be present in overarching data analyses. Not all insecurely attached individuals commit serial homicide, the data presented is only to be used in the case of serial homicide. Reflecting insecure attachment in the three presented case studies also allows for in-depth details to be explored.

Connecting childhood attachment to bodily disposal methods requires an in-depth analysis of not only the behavior of the child but also how they were able to attach to their primary caregiver. These behaviors will then have to be correlated to adult attachment styles. This will allow for an understanding of how adults with varying insecure attachment styles can present themselves as adults and in adult behavior. Once adult behaviors are established, these can be linked to common behaviors in serial homicide offenders. Once behaviors are linked to specific serial homicide offenders, the bodily disposal methods can then be linked to the attachment style.

In tandem with the grounded studies approach for the overarching analysis occurring in this project, there will also be the utilization of smaller-scale case studies to apply that data in a real setting. These case studies will be of three convicted serial homicide offenders throughout history with varying bodily disposal methods. Each subject will be analyzed and determined to have a specific insecure attachment style. Once their childhoods have been evaluated and attachment style has been determined, their bodily disposal methods will be analyzed. Each individual will have a different bodily disposal method to illustrate how bodily disposal methods can either overlap with different attachment styles or if they are highly specific to each attachment style. The three case studies that are going to be utilized are analysis of serial homicide offenders Jeffrey Dahmer, Dennis Rader, and Donald Henry Gaskins. Each individual had a very specific bodily disposal method, allowing for a broad analysis of different sample

types. Each individual also has a different attachment style, allowing for an inclusive look at how attachment styles and bodily disposal methods can be connected.

Serial offender behavior can vary greatly across cases, but one of the defining features available to law enforcement are bodily disposal methods. Through the analysis of different bodily disposal method behaviors, the origin of this behavior can be linked to attachment styles as well as other childhood defining features. Behavior is a stable subject that can be analyzed to determine the origin and enhancing factors. In this case, the behavior is bodily disposal methods. Attachment style has been shown to be a defining factor in behavior later in an individual's life. In the case of serial homicide offenders, bodily disposal methods have every possibility of being connected to attachment styles.

Results

Attachment style of an individual is a key determining factor of later behavior of an individual. Attachment style is defined as the relationship between a child and their primary caregiver, e.g. their mother, father, nanny, grandmother, etc. (Cozolino 2014). One facet of attachment style that has not previously been evaluated is the influence it may have on the bodily disposal methods of serial homicide offenders. Stable behavior is a large component of a repeatable action, and in the case of serial homicide offenders, this repeatable action is the cornerstone of how they behave after their crimes have been committed. Attachment style, both secure and insecure, are also highly stable behavioral facets and have an influence on outside behaviors. The attachment styles analyzed were anxious preoccupied attachment, fearful avoidant attachment, and dismissive avoidant attachment. These three attachment styles are all considered insecure attachments resulting in abnormal behavior and the lack of effective emotional coping mechanisms. Based on the behaviors that are common with each attachment style, the origin on the behavior behind bodily disposal methods can also be examined under the scope of attachment theory. Alongside this analysis, there will be a secondary analysis of three well known serial homicide offenders to exemplify that findings. These offenders will be Jeffrey Dahmer, Dennis Rader, and Donald Henry Gaskins.

The two categories that exist under bodily disposal methods are transport and no-transport. Under each category is the subcategory that consists of concealment or dumped/ "as is." Under the transport category and the concealment subcategory, the attachment style behavior most aligned with this bodily disposal method is anxious preoccupied attachment. This attachment derives from a primary caregiver who was inconsistently available to their children, creating a strong fear of abandonment and neglect in their children. These children seek constant reassurance and proximity, even when it is not readily available. As adults, these individuals are

hyper clingy in their relationships and have a continued fear of abandonment and rejection (Cozolino 2014). Linking anxious preoccupied attachment to this bodily disposal method is based on the individual's need to have close proximity to who ever their perceived target is. In the case of serial homicide offenders, their targets are their victims. The bodily disposal method will most likely contain an element of preservation of the victim after the crime has been committed. This can include burial or keeping the victim in an area where they will not be discovered by law enforcement or anyone else. The offender may choose to revisit crime scenes later as well. This type of attachment style can also potentially involve keeping personal items of the victims or other mementos of the crime that the offender can then utilize to remember the crime. Overall, this attachment style has a fear of abandonment and neglect which will manifest in their inability to leave their victims, involving behaviors such as revisiting crime scenes or interacting with the victims post-mortem.

Under the second subcategory of transport is dumping, which is categorized as transporting a victim to a secondary location and then leaving their victims in view of anyone who happens to find them (NCAVC 2020). Dumping indicates a complete lack of concern for the victim after the crime has been committed, even in the regard of them being discovered by law enforcement. This indicates that the offender has a primary focus on the crime itself rather than the individual victim of the crime. The attachment style with behavior patterns most closely associated with this bodily disposal method is the dismissive-avoidant attachment style. This behavior stems from a highly dismissive and neglectful mother, a primary caregiver who was overall uninvolved with the care and well-being of their child (Cozolino 2014). This behavior is then reflected by the offender in their crimes. The dismissive nature of the offender towards their victims reflects the offender's primary goal of the crime itself, not anything to do with the

victim. This dismissive behavior is then reflected in the bodily disposal methods, in that there is no time or energy expended on the part of the offender to conceal their victims. The victims are dismissed just as quickly as the crime is committed.

The second category of bodily disposal methods is the no-transport category, under which are the subcategories “concealment” and “as is.” Something worth noting about concealment under the no-transport category is the environmental ability to do so. For example, concealment within a body of water without transport indicates that an individual must already be near a body of water. Overall, the concealment actions are highly dependent on the environment of the crime. Regardless of the dependency of this method of bodily disposal behavior, there are still consistent behavioral traits that are present. The act of concealment, whether to return to the victim later or as a forensic countermeasure towards law enforcement, this behavior is consistent with an individual that primarily does not allow for their victim to be found, but also gives them the option to return to the crime scene for whatever reason. This behavior is most consistent with an anxious preoccupied attachment style. The behavioral aspects are highly consistent with the behaviors of individuals who transport their victims before concealing them, the only difference in this instance is that there is no need to transport a victim because the environment allows for concealment.

The final form of bodily disposal method described by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crimes is leaving a victim as is at the scene of the crime. In this bodily disposal method, there is no element of concealment and no forensic countermeasures are taken, the victims are left in the positions in which they died. The attachment styles that connect the most clearly with this disposal method are fearful avoidant attachment style and avoidant dismissive attachment style. In the case of fearful avoidant attachment styles, primary caregivers

exhibit frightening behaviors towards their children and could easily change behaviors between comforting and threatening. This behavior creates a sense of avoidance within their children, who want to be comforted by their mother while simultaneously wanting to avoid her for their personal safety (Cozolino 2014). In adults, this attachment style creates a lack of cohesion in emotional regulation and can often lead to substance abuse or physical/sexual abuse of their partners or their children. Overall these individuals cannot properly regulate behaviors or actions that they might exhibit. This behavior is evident within the “as is” bodily disposal method. There is no regulation of forensic countermeasures or surveyance of the scene of the crime by the offender. There is a lack of foresight after the crime has been committed and a lack of personal regulation that allows an individual to prevent detection by tampering with the crime scene. This is consistent with fearful avoidant attachment styles because of their lack of emotional and physical coping mechanisms. They are unable to employ forensic countermeasures or post-mortem behaviors because of the lack of emotional capability.

The other attachment style that connects well with the “as is” bodily disposal method is the dismissive-avoidant attachment style. The reasoning behind this is highly similar to the dumping subcategory of bodily disposal methods. The concern is not towards the victim for the offender, but instead for the crime itself. There is a lack of regard for who the victim is, as to the offender, they are strictly a means to an end.

Each attachment style has specific behavioral elements that are present in the adult. In the case of serial homicide offenders, this behavior is most present in the *modus operandi* of their crimes, and more specifically, within their bodily disposal methods. While the information may seem distant and not applicable, several true cases exemplify how attachment style can have an

influence on criminal behavior. Presented in these results are three offenders that exhibit different attachment styles and thus different bodily disposal methods.

A well-known individual that exemplifies an insecure attachment style was Jeffrey Dahmer. Due to the media coverage of his crimes, Dahmer has become a household name, with many individuals having a vast knowledge of his actions. What individuals may not immediately know is how Dahmer grew up and, most importantly, how he bonded with his primary caregiver. Dahmer was the eldest of 2 children and grew up in a two-parent household. His father was a chemist who was actively pursuing a Ph.D. at Iowa State University and his mother was a stay-at-home mom (Higgs 2012). Dahmer's father was largely absent during his infancy and early childhood, due to his occupation. Dahmer's mother, Joyce, suffered from mental illness, and was although she was home more often than her husband, she was not very caring or motherly. When Dahmer was an infant and young child, Joyce refused to hold him and also did not allow others to hold him. The only physical interaction that Dahmer had as an infant and young child was when he was handled to change his diaper (Janos 2021). When Dahmer was a teenager, his parents divorced and he was unable to see his mother and younger brother. Dahmer describes this time as when he felt extreme abandonment and neglect (Higgs 2012). Overall, Dahmer was unable to form secure relationships with his mother or father, resulting in an insecure attachment style.

Based on accounts surrounding Dahmer's infancy and early childhood, Dahmer's attachment style can be described as an anxious preoccupied attachment style. Individuals who develop anxious preoccupied attachment styles as adults will initially develop an anxious ambivalent attachment style (Cozolino 2014). Children who develop this attachment style have primary caregivers who are inconsistent with their availability, meaning that they can be

attentive to their child in one moment and absent in the next (Cozolino 2014). These children will seek proximity to their caregivers despite the inconsistent availability and are not easily soothed when stressed and do not actively explore their surroundings (Cozolino 2014). Adults who mature with this attachment style develop an anxious preoccupied attachment style. Common manifestations of this attachment style are high levels of insecurity and low self-esteem, high levels of fear of rejection or abandonment, and clings in relationships (The Attachment Project 2021). Individuals who exhibit strong senses of abandonment also tend to be extremely jealous of their partners and highly suspicious (The Attachment Project 2021). Interestingly, each of the maladaptive characteristics of a preoccupied attachment style manifests in the crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer.

Without getting into the minute details of Jeffrey Dahmer's crimes, certain nuances of his actions reflect his developed attachment style. Beginning with the crime scene details, police discovered several dismembered body components that had been stored in the refrigerator and the freezer in Dahmer's apartment. Police also discovered a large number of polaroid pictures of the victims throughout the dismemberment process. Within the apartment was also a 57-gallon drum containing corrosive chemicals (History 2021). After his arrest, Dahmer was questioned extensively about the nature and reason for his crimes. Dahmer describes how he had an intense desire to keep his victims in a way that they could not leave him. He explains how he was attracted to each of his individuals and through that attraction, he also had an intense fear of abandonment from these men. In his confession, Dahmer described his desire to create a "zombie-like" individual that would follow his whims without hesitation. Dahmer also admitted to partaking in cannibalism with a number of his victims, stating that doing so allowed them to

become part of Dahmer (Borowski 2017). These crime details reflect back on Dahmer's attachment style and how his bodily disposal methods are reflected in this attachment style.

Based on childhood experiences, Dahmer exhibited an anxious preoccupied attachment style. Dahmer did not dispose of his victims in a more traditional way and instead chose to either dismember them and keep their body parts or dissolve them completely in corrosive chemicals. Dahmer's fear of abandonment and rejection resulted in his complete inability to part with his victims, even to dispose of them. He chose to keep his victims within his apartment rather than transporting their bodies to secondary locations to either dump or be buried. Dahmer's attachment style is also reflected in his cannibalistic urges, compelling him to consume his victims allowed Dahmer to believe that his victims could never escape and therefore would never abandon him. When comparing Dahmer's actions to bodily disposal methods established by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crimes, his bodily disposal methods are most comparable to concealment under the transport category. Dahmer would lure men and boys back to his apartment under false pretenses and then would drug and strangle them (Borowski 2017). Due to the change in location and the homicide being committed at a secondary location, this crime would fall under the transport category. From there the victims were not dumped after the homicide, placing Dahmer's crimes under the concealment category. The three methods of concealment are difficult to apply to this case due to the nature of Dahmer's bodily disposal methods, however, it can be established the category of transport and the nature of the disposal methods, for example, dumped versus concealed.

Another example that reflects how attachment style can influence bodily disposal methods is Dennis Rader and his behavior as a serial homicide offender. As a child, Rader exhibited a disorganized attachment style. This is due to Rader's relationship with his primary

caretaker, his mother. As a child, Rader and his three younger siblings lived with their mother and father on a hobby-style farm in Southeast Kansas. Rader recalls his father being somewhat distant, but not in a malicious way. His father would be present at dinner and at bedtime but worked for much of the day, leaving the mother to care for the children for a large portion of the time. Rader describes his mother as “not a very close friend to me” when recounting his childhood memories. Rader recalls that his mother was usually preoccupied with other things rather than spending time with him or his siblings and she would often express how she was dissatisfied with her life. This behavior had increased after the birth of the last son when Rader’s mother developed post-partum depression (Ramsland 2016).

Rader’s relationship with his mother is the source of his insecure attachment style and his subsequent behavior. As a child, Rader’s mother would often utilize physical punishments on Rader. He recounts one event where she had caught him masturbating and she punished him by beating him with a leather belt, but immediately after, she would hug Rader and say she was sorry and had gone too far. This happened on several occasions creating a bizarre emotional dynamic between Rader and his mother. As the beatings continued, Rader recalls that he would find it fun to run away from his mother when she was trying to punish him and then be emotionally distraught when she would finally catch him and punish him (Ramsland 2016). When she would comfort him immediately after punishing him, Rader recalls feeling confused and worried that his mother would change emotions quickly and lash out at him again (Ramsland 2016).

Based on Rader’s accounts of his childhood and his interaction with his mother as his primary caregiver, Rader developed a disorganized attachment style as a child. Children with a disorganized attachment style develop this type of attachment when their primary caregiver is a

source of fear. These children make efforts to both be close to the mother for security and far from her, for fear of their own safety (Cozolino 2014). In certain cases, children with this attachment style may experience sexual or physical abuse within their childhood homes. Overall, individuals with this attachment style are unable to trust that their caregiver will meet their needs and are unable to adapt to their primary caregiver's behavior, due to its erratic nature (The Attachment Style 2021). In Dennis Rader's case, the unpredictable nature of his mother's behavior is one of the core components of his disorganized attachment style. He was unable to predict her intentions and therefore could not adapt to her whims.

Adults that exhibited a disorganized attachment style as children will continue to behave in a way that is consistent with their childhood coping mechanisms. Adults will seek intimacy with others but will avoid close proximity and fear letting other individuals into their lives. These adults will be highly untrusting of their partners and expect disappointment and rejection even without indication it will occur. Individuals with this attachment style are also more likely to develop mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and may physically or sexually abuse their own children (The Attachment Style 2021). Little is understood about Rader's relationship with this wife, preventing full analysis of how his disorganized attachment style may have manifested in this relationship. Rader was always perceived to be a family-orientated individual, having been an active member in the local Boy Scouts and his church, leading a number of individuals to be skeptical of the charges placed against him as a serial homicide offender (Ramsland 2016).

Concerning Dennis Rader's crimes, they were both sexual and grisly in nature. Without focusing too heavily on the details of his crimes, Dennis Rader followed a strict *modus operandi*, in that he would bind his victims with ropes that he brought with him to the crime scenes, he

would torture his victims utilizing exposed electrical wires, and finally, he would strangle them. Rader states in his confession that over certain victims he would masturbate and take personal items such as underwear, which he called trophies (NBC 2005). Overall, the nature of his crimes were his sexual fantasies played out in extremely gruesome ways.

Relation of Rader's attachment style to his crimes and bodily disposal method gives insight into a potential reason that Rader behaved in the way that he did. A detail to stress throughout this analysis is that connecting attachment style to bodily disposal methods in no way excuses this behavior, it only provides a small insight into the origin of the behavior. In the case of Dennis Rader, his fearful avoidant attachment acts as an instrumental factor in his serial homicide behavior. Individuals with fearful attachment styles react to stress and anxiety-inducing situations in chaotic and often self-injurious ways. In Rader's crimes, his actions were largely uncalculated, with each homicide containing mistakes that the police described as sloppy (NBC 2005). For example, in the Otero murders, Rader had to try multiple times to tie up the different members and Kevin Bright was able to escape one of Rader's attacks. Without undermining Rader's actions and the lives he took, overall his actions were largely chaotic in nature, and his crime scenes reflected this. He did not make any efforts to conceal the victims or to clean up his crime scenes as a forensic countermeasure (Ramsland 2016). Each victim was left in the position they died in, with Rader leaving the crime scenes shortly after collecting his trophies.

Taking into account the bodily disposal methods established by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crimes, Rader's bodily disposal methods would fall under the no-transport category and the sub-category "as is." Rader entered homes where he committed his crimes without taking his victims to secondary locations, committing the entire act within the primary location: the victims' homes. This indicates that no transport of victims was done,

placing his disposal methods under the no-transport category. When assigning a sub-category, Rader took no forensic countermeasures to conceal his victims. Rader did not move or attempt to conceal his victims after committing his crimes. The victims were left in the homes in the positions that Rader left them. The chaotic nature of Rader's crimes coupled with his "double-life" persona further reflects his fearful avoidant attachment style. While he was able to establish a family and public persona, he kept a large part of his life hidden away from view, indicating a lack of ability to let other individuals in. The sexual nature of Dennis Rader's crimes is also reflected in his fearful avoidant attachment style. Certain individuals are more likely to physically or sexually abuse their children. While there is no evidence that Rader abused his biological children in any way, the post-mortem sexual abuse that his victims endured can be considered a surrogate option that Rader utilized for his sexual impulses. Overall, Rader's fearful avoidant attachment style is consistent with the behaviors established by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime's established bodily disposal methods, specifically the category involving no-transport and the subcategory "as is."

The final individual that will be discussed in this chapter is Donald "Pee Wee" Gaskins, who was a convicted serial homicide offender operating from the 1950s to the 1970s. The inclusion of Gaskins in this chapter is to illustrate the final attachment style, avoidant/dismissive attachment. Gaskins' was born in South Carolina to Eulea Parrott in 1933. Parrott was a single mother and was very absent from Gaskins' life. In addition to being absent, Parrott would also bring men to her house, where some of them would sexually or physically abuse Gaskins (Beaty 1991). When interviewed after his arrest, Gaskins had no regard for his mother and believed her to have no stake in his upbringing or his life overall. One detail that highlights the extent of his mother's neglect was when Gaskins first learned his legal name during his homicide trials (Beaty

1991). While there is no account of Gaskins' mother outright abusing him, her overall neglect and dismissive nature proved to be just as harmful to Gaskins' development.

Based on the details on Gaskins' early life and his relationship with his primary caregiver, who was his mother, Gaskins' attachment style is estimated to be an avoidant/dismissive attachment style. Children with this attachment style largely do not rely on their primary caregiver for any emotional coping. Mothers that exhibit this type of attachment style towards their children are usually rejecting their children's emotional well-being. Due to the overall lack of a primary caregiver in their lives, these children learn how to regulate anxiety and stress in the best ways they can, however, these coping mechanisms are largely inadequate (Cozolino 2014). In the case of Donald Gaskins, his childhood experiences are largely reflected in the avoidant/dismissive attachment style. His mother was highly dismissive of his emotional and physical well-being and did not take much interest in raising Gaskins at all. This attachment style is also reflected by Gaskins' childhood in the constant abuse that he experienced by his mother's partners. The lack of protection provided by the mother reinforced the dismissive attitude that Parrott had towards Gaskins.

In his adulthood, Gaskins committed several homicides before being arrested in 1975. His *modus operandi* was largely inconsistent across his crimes, but his means of bodily disposal methods remained stable throughout his criminal career. His victims varied in age and biological sex, but the disposal methods were overall similar. Gaskins would lure his victims into the woods with him where he would rape them, torture them, and then murder them. Gaskins would either dump his victims in the woods where he lured them to or, in one instance, would submerge them in a nearby water reservoir (Tomlin 1983). Based on the analysis of bodily disposal methods set forth by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crimes, Gaskins' bodily

disposal method would fall under the category of transport and the subcategory dumped. Gaskins did not commit his crimes where he found his victims but instead brought them to a secondary location. While this transport was not done post-mortem, it occurs frequently enough in Gaskins' crimes that it is essential to his signature. He would not leave his victims where he murdered them but would leave their bodies to be found by whomever.

Relating Gaskins' bodily disposal methods to his insecure attachment style is critical to understanding his overall behavior. Gaskins' attachment style is largely based on the lack of connection. His mother was highly dismissive and had no emotional connection to the life of her son, therefore Gaskin lacked a strong emotional connection to his primary caregiver. Overall his primary caregiver was highly rejecting and his childhood lacked any emotional foundation. It can be argued that a similar behavior was exhibited by Gaskin in his murders. Gaskins' bodily disposal methods are based on behavior that exemplifies use and disposal. Gaskin utilized his victims for his own personal gain/pleasure and then discarded them when he felt they had served their purpose. This behavior is reminiscent of how his mother behaved around Gaskin when he was a child, in that she would bring men to the household, engage in whatever actions she wanted, and then the men would leave. This behavior is reflected in Gaskins' behavior concerning the victims and then his disposal of them. The lack of preparation or treatment of the victims after the crime is consistent with the dismissive nature of Gaskins' attachment style. The focus of the crime was the actual crime and not the treatment or relationship with the victim.

Attachment style, both secure and insecure, is a consistent enough behavior within serial homicide offenders that it can manifest within their bodily disposal methods. It illustrates how certain attachment styles may exhibit specific bodily disposal methods and how others may overlap due to the behavioral practices associated with the bodily disposal methods. The

consistent behavior that manifests as a signature within bodily disposal methods has strong connections to how serial homicide offenders create and maintain relationships. The relationship in question is how the offender interacts with their victim post-mortem, exhibiting the attachment style in its raw form in the behavior of bodily disposal.



Discussion

The research purpose of this study was to analyze a connection between insecure attachment styles and bodily disposal methods of serial homicide offenders. Through this analysis, it was found that specific behaviors of insecure attachment styles do correlate to specific behaviors within certain bodily disposal methods. Based on these behaviors, offenders with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style will utilize transport/concealment and no-transport/concealment bodily disposal methods, dismissive-avoidant offenders will utilize the transport/dumping bodily disposal method, and fearful-avoidant offenders will utilize the no-transport/as is bodily disposal method. The results overall indicate that there is sufficient evidence to connect insecure attachment style behavior traits to specific behaviors within bodily disposal methods. This connection is significant because previous to this study, there was no concrete connection made between attachment styles and bodily disposal methods. Attachment style was regarded as a determining factor regarding criminal behavior, but the specific connection to bodily disposal methods had yet to be made.

The original hypothesis was that certain insecure attachment styles could correlate to different bodily disposal methods based on stable behaviors that emerge within both fields. The behaviors that emerged within the different insecure attachment styles revolved around an individual's ability to form relationships with others and to regulate emotions through proper coping mechanisms. The relationship in question within this research is the relationship between the offender and the victim. This relationship is what drives the offender to behave in the way that they do, for example the need to stalk a victim in a certain way. This also explains how certain serial homicide offenders will be highly dismissive with their victims, placing a greater emphasis on the action of the crime itself rather than what the victim may represent to them. The

offender-victim relationship dynamic is most apparent in anxious-preoccupied offenders due to their need to obtain proximity and their strong fear of abandonment and neglect. The offender-victim relationship matters the least in dismissive-avoidant offenders because they are more focused on the dynamics of the crime rather than what the victim might mean to them. Offenders with a fearful-avoidant attachment can have a varying degree of relationship with the victim, maybe exhibiting stalking behavior or having no contact with the victim until the event of the crime. Overall, the offender-victim relationship is where different offender's attachment styles are most evident and why attachment style behaviors may be present in bodily disposal methods.

Previous to this study, attachment styles and bodily disposal methods were studied with earnestness as two separate fields that did not meet. Attachment styles were considered to be foundational pillars within criminal behavior, but were not considered to be influential in the smaller details of criminal behavior, such as bodily disposal methods. Similarly, bodily disposal methods were studied at length because they are one of the primary pieces of evidence available to law enforcement, making a strong understanding of bodily disposal methods critical to apprehending serial homicide offenders. What this study achieves is connecting a small component of criminal behavior to an overarching behavioral trait within serial homicide offenders. Considering that attachment styles were already considered to be important when regarding criminal behavior, making the further connection to bodily disposal methods was warranted.

The results of this study also challenge existing preconceptions regarding criminal behavior. Criminal behavior was previously regarded as having some sort of origin within the offender's previous experiences, but there was no way to determine when or where the behaviors originated from. Multiple viewpoints have been argued, stating that the impulses had to originate

in childhood or early adolescents, while other viewpoints argued that it was not until adulthood that those impulses truly took shape. What this study achieves is giving a more narrow focus on when the behaviors exhibited by a serial homicide offender may manifest. By closely examining childhood and the relationship to the primary caregiver, the behavior of serial homicide offenders can be given a more concrete origin than what was previously considered.

These results should be taken into account when regarding attachment style and its influence on the behavior of adults. On the most basic level, this study exemplifies the deeper relationship that exists between the treatment that infants and young children receive and the behavior they exhibit as adults. On an expanded level, this study helps to argue the treatment of children be taken into careful consideration when evaluating serial homicide offenders. This evaluation is most applicable in the rehabilitation sense. Most, if not all, serial homicide offenders will receive life in prison without the possibility of parole. Taking into account the individual's attachment style and how certain behaviors will manifest within relationships can be applied in a reformatory setting for serial homicide offenders. The results from this support a strong consideration of the offender's childhood and the behaviors that will emerge from it, especially in a rehabilitatory fashion that can be utilized in post-conviction facilities.

Without diminishing the overall findings of this study, limitations within the research did arise within this study. The most prominent limitation within this study was the breadth of this project in its first proposal. Given that this capstone project only had a designated time frame of 15 weeks, there was not enough time to conduct a full-length study. The results of this research were heavily focused on existing data and publications done on serial homicide offender behavior, attachment styles, and bodily disposal methods, all topics that had yet to find common ground. This study would have largely benefitted from human subjects and the ability to survey a

large sample of serial homicide offenders. This survey would have consisted of a two part system, the first being an evaluation of their attachment style and the second portion evaluating their bodily disposal methods. This would have supplied raw data sets that could be compared with already published results. The inclusion of human subjects on this scale would have required several more months to compile and evaluate all of the survey information. Due to the constraints of this project, evaluation of published articles was the most effective route to take when investigating the proposed hypothesis.

Apart from the methodology of this study, there are outside variables that were outside the realm of control in regards to the results generated by this project. The first variable is the capability of serial homicide offenders to change their bodily disposal methods. While bodily disposal methods are considered stable and primarily unchanging behaviors exhibited by serial homicide offenders, there are factors and events that would prompt an offender to change their behavior. The most prevalent factor is to avoid police detection. This behavior is not exclusive to serial homicide offenders, as most criminal offenders do not want to be apprehended by law enforcement. Due to this outside factor, serial homicide offenders are known to change their bodily disposal methods. This change in behavior does affect the results garnered in this study, due to the assertion that specific attachment styles will correlate to specific bodily disposal methods.

Another limiting factor of this study is that it does not address if there is an overlap between attachment styles and bodily disposal methods. This study looks specifically at the most obvious connections between the different attachment styles and bodily disposal methods. It was largely outside of the scope of this study to cross-examine the connections made and whether these connections were just as applicable in the case of other bodily disposal methods or other

attachment styles. Addressing this limiting factor would have to come with further research and the use of human subjects to have a larger and more encompassing view on prevalent insecure attachment styles within serial homicide offenders and their bodily disposal methods.

Finally, the findings of this study are impacted by the use of bodily disposal methods that are not discussed within this study. While the bodily disposal methods in this study are the most prevalent methods utilized by serial homicide offenders, that by no means indicates that they are the only methods utilized. Bodily disposal methods not covered by the extent of this study could shed light on further behavior mechanisms that are present in both bodily disposal methods and in insecure attachment styles.

Further research is needed to establish the smaller details in attachment styles that can be translated into the behaviors associated with the varying bodily disposal methods. This study focused on the larger, overarching themes associated with attachment style in regards to bodily disposal methods, however the smaller details concerning this connection would need to be explored in more depth. These details would include a stronger look at victimology and mechanisms in which each victim was chosen. It would investigate whether the victims were victims or opportunity or if certain victims were stalked or interacted with prior to the crime being committed. This further research would also investigate the rarer forms of bodily disposal methods, such as the methods that involve staging or posing of the victims and whether this is a compulsion of the offender or if it has roots within their insecure attachment style.

Regarding the previous limitations directly, there is a direct need to compare the results of this study with a larger study consisting of human subjects and the generation of new data points. Having current data on the varying attachment styles of convicted serial homicide offenders and their bodily disposal methods would allow for greater corroboration of this study

and propel the analysis of attachment style in regards to bodily disposal methods into new avenues supported by current data.

While this study was largely the first of its kind, the results suggest that stronger notice be taken into the connection of attachment styles and bodily disposal methods. The implications of this research can be utilized outside of strictly an academic setting. Policies such as victim-witness programs and rehabilitation programs can benefit from the results of this study and future research within this scope. Not only does this study benefit academia, but law enforcement, both on the state and federal levels can benefit from a behavioral approach to the analysis of offenders through a developmental lens.

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