

The continuum hypothesis: From serial murder to mass murder

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The researcher has communicated with 16 multiple murderers. Depending on the subject the way of contact has differed. It is by letter, phone, or in person, or combinations of these two or three. The period of contact has also changed. With some for four years. With others for a year as of the time of writing this paper. With some the communications are still on-going. Among them serial killers (SKs) are 13—Richard Ramirez, Ted Kaczinski, David Berkowitz, Dennis Rader, Michael Swango, Donald Harvey, Robert Yates, Randy Kraft, Patrick Kearney, Kenneth Bianchi, Cary Stayner, Tommy Lynn Sells, Ivan Milat. Mass murderers (MMs) are three—Eric Houston, Richard Farley, and Nidal Hasan. There are also two other Japanese murderers, who killed two people and severely injured one. These two actually do not meet the minimum requirement of three murdered victims set by Dietz (1986). However, considering that their intents were clearly to kill the other injured victims, they were used as mass murderers for this preliminary nature of study.

Although the researcher's initial purpose

was to understand their childhood environments, in the process the researcher noticed that there are three distinct characteristics among certain SKs. The first characteristic is that some admit that they did wrong acts and are now feeling guilty of what they did. On the other hand, there are those who even deny the fact that they committed murders they were convicted of. The second characteristic is that some write letters by impeccable handwritings that we do not usually see with ordinary people we see in daily lives, which could even be considered a sign of obsessive compulsive disorder. On the other hand, others write letters by very poor handwritings, which are even difficult to identify each letter of and read. The third characteristic is that there indeed seem to be two different types of serial murders, sadistic and non-sadistic types, which was suggested by Levin and Fox (2008). And interestingly those who are sadistic seem to be the ones who write by impeccable handwritings and also are feeling guilty, or at least clearly admitting what they did. However, those who are not feeling guilty at all or are not even admitting their murders seem to be poor

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hand-writers. They usually killed their victims right away without spending much time in the process of their murders. These latter types typically ask the researcher to send pornographic materials or of this sort even after decades of their incarcerations. Thus, there seem to be the following patterns among serial murderers:

Table 1

Types of Serial Killers, their Handwritings, and Feelings of Guilt

Sadistic (Torture victims)	Non-Sadistic (Kill victims right away)
Impeccable handwritings	Poor handwritings
Admitting murders and/or feeling guilty	Not feeling guilty and/or not even admitting their murders

What is supposed to be behind these possible patterns? As Levin and Fox (2008) suggest, sadistic SKs are assumed to have well developed empathy to enjoy what the victims are supposedly feeling. This well-developed empathy could also lead them to feeling guilty of the agonies they caused to their victims. Though both sadistic and non-sadistic subjects seem to have a strong desire to control, this tendency is supposed stronger with the sadistic SKs, who spend more time and enjoy doing things to the victims who cannot avoid. Thus, it is possible that their impeccable hand-writings could come from their high levels of controlling desire.

On the other hand, their non-sadistic opponents have not developed the same empathy level (Levin and Fox, 2008). They are not interested in how their victims are feeling and consequently kill them right away. Because of their lack of empathy they cannot feel guilt and even admit their wrong doings at the same time. It is possible that their poor handwritings could come from their insensitivity and resulting sloppiness. In this sense, non-sadistic SKs could be called psychopathic SKs.

According to Abe (2014), there are seven

possible types of SKs' childhood environments:

Table 2

Seven Types of Serial Killers' Childhood Environments

Type 1: Domination and Aggression by Mother
Type 2: Abuse and Home Terrorization by Father
Type 3: Hostilities by Both Parents
Type 4: Bully at School
Type 5: Abuse at Orphanage
Type 6: Neglect + <i>a</i>
Type 7: Adoption + <i>a</i>

Generally, childhood environment is not always clear cut, and could be mixture of multiple factors. Thus, it is not always easy to identify which environment causes the sadistic type and psychopathic type. However, based on the researcher's own experiences with multiple SKs, the sadistic type seems to be caused more by maternal abuse, and type I trauma, which is characterized by a single shocking incident (Terr, 1994), such as someone's death, disease, molesting incident, and so forth. On the other hand, the psychopathic type seems to be more from high levels of type II trauma, which is characterized by a longer lasting stressful condition (Terr, 1994).

Hickey (1997) says:

Thought processes... are influenced by life experiences that ultimately can affect the type of fantasies developed by individuals. Thus, negative experiences give rise to negative thoughts and fantasies, and positive experiences lay the foundation for positive thoughts and constructive fantasies. (p. 70)

If this is indeed true, it is inferred that in order to develop sadism, which has both normal affects and aggression, the subject needs to grow in a communicative environment but, at the same time, have cause(s) of anger. To meet these conditions, it is supposed that the subject either

has to be raised in a normal loving environment with an acute shocking incident/incidents by accident, or in a communicative environment, whose frustration and stress levels are just enough to both develop emotions and cause anger. Under dominant mother's control, it is possible that the subject continuously feels frustration/stress while developing basic affects.

On the other hand, if the subject is raised under a highly scary and/or violent condition, he needs to be psychologically numb or away by using device, such as dissociation (Jacoby, 1991), in order to survive such an unbearable condition. This type of psychological device can block his normal emotional development. Even though he is physically surrounded by people, he could be emotionally desolated and disconnected from them. Thus, regarding the childhood environments of the two types of SKs, it is possible to suppose as below:

Table 3
Two Types of Serial Killers and their Possible Childhood Environments

Sadistic Serial Killers	Psychopathic Serial Killers
A shocking incident/incidents	A continuous highly turbulent condition
A continuous mildly abusive condition	

Interestingly, most of the MMs, whom the researcher has contacted share the similar characteristic of impeccable handwritings to those of some SKs'. Some MMs even show higher levels of order and regularity than what such SKs show. According to Abe (2014), there are six basic types of childhood environments which could produce MMs:

Table 4
Six Types of Mass Murderers' Childhood Environments

Type 1: Cannot Express True Feelings

Type 2: Intentionally Left Out of the Family
Type 3: Highly Rigid Parents
Type 4: Left Alone Indifferently
Type 5: Peculiar Mother
Type 6: Empty Parents

Abe says that because of neglect, fear, and parental rigidity that the MMs went under during their childhood, they all share high levels of control. Neglect creates a situation, in which the subject has to spend the energy he could not spend for human communication for something other than communication. As a result, he obsesses with it. That something could be numbers, patterns, machines, or even computers. Fear and anxiety lead to the subject's dependence on something with absolute power and aggression, which assures him protection from them. It could be guns, knives, military, or radical racial philosophy/religion. The subject tries to get psychological security by obsessing with such sources of power. In case his parent(s) is excessively rigid, the parent(s) more often does not answer the child's emotional needs, and consequently leads to his emotional neglect. Such a parent could also become a good model which the subject will develop his own rigidity on. Thus, neglect, fear, and rigidity could all lead to obsessive mind in the end, which is a typical sign of those who have high levels of control and order. Neglect especially is considered to be also behind the other two.

Interestingly, SKs also share emotional isolation, which is very similar to neglect that MMs go through. The only difference is that SKs choose isolated lifestyles by themselves, knowing very well that they have their dark side that they can never show outside. However, they share similar childhood conditions in that they do not have as many emotional communications with others as normal children do. Depriving

Table 5

Serial Killers, Mass Murderers, Schizophrenia, their Psychopathy Levels, and Possible Childhood Environments

*Paranoid Schizophrenia ↑ SKs		*Paranoid schizophrenia ↑ MMs	
Sadist	Low psychopath		High psychopath
Trauma I/Low Trauma II	High Trauma II	Low Neglect	High Neglect
I) Sexual abuse Shocking incident(s) II) Abuse by parent(s) Maternal control	Bullying Abuse at orphanage High levels of abuse	Parental rigidity Insecure home Scapegoat Over-protection Left home alone	Peculiar mother Cold parents

Note. High Trauma II is not necessarily higher than Low Neglect in terms of psychopathy level.

the subject of the opportunities to communicate with others, simple neglect (differentiated from fear and parental rigidity) is supposed to be the most basic type of condition which causes psychopathy (Weiler, & Widom, 1996; Lang et al, 2002). Thus, MMs, who are raised under such a condition, are the primary suspects of psychopath (Cleckley, 1955). Other MMs, who go through fear and parental rigidity, also have difficulty developing affects normally, and as a result become psychopathic. Likewise, some SKs, who were brought up in highly abusive environments, could also develop psychopathic symptoms, psychologically desolating themselves among people by using a device such as dissociation. This could indicate that there are different types and levels of psychopathy to be found among MMs and SKs, depending on what type of childhood environment they are raised in, and that simply neglected MMs develop purer and higher psychopathy in a sense that they are literally deprived of opportunities of emotional contacts with others. What we have discussed so far are summarized as **Table 5**:

As is shown **Table 5**, all SKs and MMs are hypothesized to be on the same continuum of psychopathy, on which the level is progressively higher towards MMs of High Neglect, which is caused by more thorough neglect starting in infancy. In both SKs and MMs there are higher

and lower levels of psychopathy, depending on the level of communication that was available to the subject. As the subject's psychopathic level gets higher, their levels of obsession gets higher, as is seen in Asperger's syndrome. Both MMs and SKs develop schizophrenia when the levels of their symptom reach extreme. In case of SKs, the dark side, which condenses all the subject's aggression, gets split from the rest of the normal personality. In case of MMs, once the level of paranoia against their assumed enemy gets extremely high, it forms a separate persona and gets split from the rest of the personality. Although these are all hypotheses at this moment, the impressions which the researcher has received from direct contacts with multiple SKs and MMs seem to clearly indicate these directions nonetheless. Further research is recommended to confirm these possible hypotheses in order to understand a chain of symptoms surrounding SKs, MMs, and psychopathy.

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