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PREDICTING MURDERS BASED ON OBSERVED AND KNOWN CHARACTERISTICS

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PREDICTING MURDERS BASED ON OBSERVED AND KNOWN CHARACTERISTICS

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University

by

Johnathon David Harris

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

June 2017

American Public University

Charles Town, WV
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Maritza and daughter Rilyn. Without their love, enthusiasm, and never ending support, I would not have been motivated or dedicated enough to accomplish this work.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

PREDICTING MURDERS BASED ON OBSERVED AND KNOWN CHARACTERISTICS

by

Johnathon David Harris

American Public University System, June 30, 2017

Charles Town, West Virginia

Professor Ekwuniru Norbert, Thesis Professor

This paper examines the idea that criminologists can predict murders based on observed and known characteristics of murderers. The purpose of this research is to bring down the murder rate in the United States which has been relatively high compared to other countries. The methodology of this research will consist of using a mixed method approach to obtain data from secondary sources that list characteristics of convicted criminals. These characteristics can then be compared to other high risk individuals in our prison system to determine the likelihood of that person committing murder. The findings of this research conclude that common characteristics of murderers can be identified and then used to help identify potential murderers before they kill. These individuals who have been identified as a possible murderer should attend educational classes and counseling in prison to reduce their likelihood of killing in the future. In conclusion, this thesis should be used only as a tool to further law enforcement’s understanding of criminals and not as proof of future murderers.
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Chapter I. Introduction

This thesis examines the idea that criminologists can predict murders based on observed and known characteristics of murderers. The main goal of this research is to further our understanding of the behaviors and traits associated with convicted murderers so that law enforcement can be better prepared to stop the tragedy. A problem with current law enforcement techniques is that police officers are only taught how to deal with a crime such as murder after it has been committed. There is not much attention paid to teaching an officer how to intervene in a situation such as a potential murder before the crime occurs. This research will investigate whether characteristics of known murderers can be used to identify future killers so that police can help educate those individuals and stop the crime before it occurs. Almost half a century ago, the Federal Bureau of Investigation realized that a criminal’s behavior could be an important key in solving crimes (Federal, n.d.). In the early 1970’s, the FBI started the behavioral science unit in hopes of understanding who commits crimes and why the crimes are committed (Federal, n.d.). Since then, much research has been collected on the characteristics, traits, and behaviors of known murderers.

Statement of Problem

Murder has been a constant problem in the United States since there was a sharp rise in gang violence and the murder rate back in the 1970’s (Federal, 2015). Since then, murder rates have remained high and have even spiked in the last two years (Federal, 2016). Table 1 shows the most current data on murder rates in the United States.

Table 1

Murder Rates in the United States
Even with the small dip in the murder rate from 2013-2014, the United States still has a high rate of murder. Compared to other countries around the world, America’s murder rate is enormous. The rate of murders in the United States is much higher than most other first world countries and is actually more comparative to third world countries. Table 2 shows the most current data on murder rates around the world.

Table 2
Murder Rates of Countries around the World in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Murder Rate (per 100,000 people)</th>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
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Source: UNDOC (2013)
As one can see, the United States has a long way to go in order to reduce the murder rate and get it closer to other countries around the world. One of the main problems is that police officers are taught what to do after a murder occurs instead of being taught how to stop murders from occurring. This shift of focus needs to occur if America wants to reduce the rate of murders in their country. This thesis will examine the problem of high murder rates and try to find a solution based on attaining a better understanding of what characteristics might influence a person to commit murder.

**Purpose of Study**

Government agencies and independent scholars have accomplished a lot of research on the subject of murderers around the world. One aspect that has not been researched enough in regards to murderers is their characteristics. Today, law enforcement officers are taught to discover the physical, social and demographic traits associated with a murderer based off of the crime scene (Keppel & Birnes, 2008). This information is used to help law enforcement find suspects and ultimately bring justice to the deceased. The problem is that there has not been a lot of research done specifically on the physical and mental traits of convicted killers. Labeling the known and observed characteristics is always a secondary piece of data that only makes it into a report if the characteristic was pertinent to the murder. This means that it is difficult to build a characteristic profile of different murderers because research only brings about the most significant features of the individual. That being said, reports do often list a characteristic of the murderer somewhere in the report which can be compared to other research for analyzation.

Research done on non-psychopathic killers showed that these individuals were often passionate and spontaneous (Woodworth & Porter, 2002). These characteristics are similar to research done on terrorists describing Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab Zarqawi (once the most
wanted man in Iraq) as both passionate and driven (Napoleoni, 2005). Some characteristics that have been researched in regards to serial killers are their intelligence level, temperament, employment status and area of operation (United States, 2005). Holmes and Holmes (1996) accomplished research that broke serial killers into categories based off of their motives to help profile these types of killers (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014). Before that research, Douglas, Burgess, and Ressler (1992) completed research that categorized killers based on how they murdered their victims (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014). Overall, this research has not been useful in solving crimes because it is being used for the wrong purpose. Instead of using this research to solve a crime that has already occurred, law enforcement should be using the information to identify possible future criminals. This research should further law enforcement’s understanding of what makes a murderer commit their crime.

**Research Questions**

This thesis will use a mixed methods approach to attain both qualitative and quantitative research. The research will start by using qualitative methods to gather historical data that has been published on the subject. As stated previously, organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation have accomplished some research on the characterization (or profile) of killers such as serial killers. Qualitative research will also be accomplished using case studies since a lot of research has also been completed on high profile killers like Osama Bin Laden. Quantitative research will be used by gathering data that helps categorize the convicted killers into groups. Data such as the number of victims each individual killed and the time between murders will be attained to try and place certain characteristics with a specific groups of killers. This data will then be compared to characteristics of known murderers to see how likely the profile is to
identify a future murderer. To focus this research, three specific research questions have been identified and will be tested throughout the thesis. These questions are as follows:

1. *Can known characteristics of murderers be identified?*

   To answer this question, research will need to be done to see if there are specific characteristics of murderers that can be associated with a particular group of individuals. If certain characteristics can be identified as being common in a group of murderers such as violent tendencies or past problems with the law, then it will be concluded that known characteristics of murderers can be identified.

2. *Can known characteristics of murderers be used to identify future murderers?*

   The second question builds off of the first question and tries to determine if these known characteristics can be used to recognize future killers based off of similar tendencies. In essence, characteristics of at risk individuals such as those already in prison for smaller crimes should be observed and then compared to the known characteristics of past murderers to see how likely the individual is to commit murder. This question assumes that characteristics of killers can be identified.

3. *Can educating at risk individuals stop those people from murdering in the future?*

   The third question builds off of the second question to determine if we can stop murders before they occur. For this question, any individual who is identified as a potential future murderer would have to go through educational classes and counseling while in prison to hopefully change their lifestyle before a worse crime occurs such as murder. This education and testing would only be used on inmates at correctional facilities to help keep the offender out of prison once the individual is released. This question assumes that we can identify characteristics of known murderers and then compare these qualities to other individuals to determine if the
person is a likely candidate to commit murder. Once these three questions have been answered, law enforcement officers could have the information that they need to educate themselves on murderers and be able to identify and positively influence potential future murderers.

**Hypothesis**

To test the research questions that have been identified, the following hypothesis statements have been developed:

**H1: If personality and trait data are collected on all convicted murderers, then there will be similarities in the characteristics of all murderers.**

In this hypothesis, the independent variable would be the personality and trait data collected while the dependent variable would be the characteristic similarities between murderers. This hypothesis will be tested using case studies and historical data. Future studies should include survey research.

**H2: If a characteristic profile of murderers can be made, then law enforcement will be able to predict who is at risk of killing other citizens.**

In this hypothesis, the independent variable would be the known characteristics of a murderer and the dependent variable would be the identification of future murderers. A typical killer profile will be made out of the characteristics gathered in the research. This profile will then be compared to prison inmates to get a similarity score. The higher the similarity score, the more likely a person is to kill. To check this hypothesis, case studies will be used to test the profile against convicted murderers who were not in the test sample to see if the profile would have predicted that person to be a killer. This should prove whether or not the profile can be effectively used to predict future criminals.
**H3: If law enforcement personnel can educate individuals who are at risk for committing murder, then these selected individuals will not kill.**

In hypothesis three, the independent variable is education and the dependent variable is whether the individual commits murder. The above hypothesis will be tested using case studies and previous research on the success of criminal rehabilitation through educational methods.

**Definitions**

As of now, key variables and definitions in this research will include killers, serial killer, mass murderer, terrorist, and characteristics. These terms are defined as follows:

**Killer.** A person who has taken another individual’s life (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In this thesis, a person will only be considered a killer if they are convicted of murdering two or less individuals.

**Psychopathic Killer.** A killer who suffers from a mental or psychological disorder (Merriam-Webster, 2015). This research will consider any killer who has been diagnosed with a mental or psychological disorder that directly affected the murder to be a psychopathic killer.

**Serial Killer.** A person who kills at least three or more individuals in a specified length of time (Merriam-Webster, 2015). For this research, a serial killer is considered someone who is convicted of at least three murders in their life time.

**Mass Murderer.** An individual who has murdered multiple people (Merriam-Webster, 2015). This research will consider an individual a mass murderer if the person is convicted of at least three murders at the same time or within one day.

**Terrorist.** The planned use of an attack or fear as a means of persuasion (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In this research, a terrorist will be considered a person who has planned and orchestrated the murder of three or more individuals as a way to promote change.
**Characteristic.** A feature, property or quality that can be used to identify someone, especially into a category (Merriam-Webster, 2015). This research will consider a characteristic to be any physical, mental or environmental trait that might be used to classify a murderer into a specific grouping.

**Thesis Statement**

This thesis will argue the following thesis statement: Law enforcement needs to research and then identify known and observed characteristics of convicted murderers to help stop future murders. Once known characteristics are identified, law enforcement should look for these features in prison inmates to ensure these individuals receive help before they commit murder. This research is very important because in 2012, there were almost 440,000 people murdered around the world and of those, 36% of the murders occurred in North and South America (United Nations, 2013). Here in the United States, the FBI reported that there were just over 14,000 murders three years ago (Federal, 2015). In an independent study, Wagner and Sakala (2014) estimated that there are over 166,000 individuals who are currently in U.S. prisons after being convicted of murder. This research is determined to bring those numbers down by providing the background needed to identify and educate those who might kill in the future.

**Discussion**

One of the biggest limitations of this research will be using secondary sources such as published government documents and research conducted by other professionals as one of the main means of data collection. Since research involving human participants must be approved by American Public University and is not recommended, there will not be any human participant research conducted for this thesis. This will limit the applicability of the thesis since data will not be the most up to date information. Only data collected from high profile or well known cases
such as famous serial killers or terrorist will be used along with data collected from previously published works on the subject. For future studies on this subject, a survey can be used to gain real time data from human volunteers or prison inmates. This thesis recommends that future research use a survey to gain the most current data on the subject.
Chapter II. Literature Review

Government agencies and independent scholars have accomplished a lot of research on the subject of murderers. Although these individuals are highly studied, there has not been as much research done specifically on the characteristics of these people. Law enforcement officers try to understand why and how a person commits a crime but they are looking in the wrong areas. The factors that make a person carry out these hideous tasks are often reported but are considered secondary information to the primary facts such as motives. When these factors or characteristics of the individual are reported, the information is usually incomplete and a full characteristic profile of the individual cannot be made. This makes it difficult for research to be accomplished on the subject since there is not a great foundation to start.

To change this problem of incomplete research information, there has to be a change of processes with those on the front line of data collection: the law enforcement officer. Today, law enforcement officers are taught to discover the physical, social and demographic traits associated with a murderer based off of the crime scene (Keppel & Birnes, 2008). This information is used to help law enforcement find suspects and ultimately bring justice to the deceased. After the case is closed, law enforcement needs to take these characteristics and put them into a database with other known criminals so that a greater profile of the average killer can be formed. Although this data is collected just for the specific case, this thesis will try and prove that the information has secondary purposes than can be just as important as the primary purpose of collection.

Justification for Research

Killers have a natural edge over law enforcement for two main reasons. First, police officers have to follow set rules that are laid out by the Bill of Rights and the Constitution. If police officers break these rules, the killer can be set free in the court of law based off a mistrial
Killers do not have rules to follow since they have already proved that they do not follow the rules of society by committing a crime. Secondly, killers will usually win psychological battles because their survival depends on it (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014). Law enforcement officers will investigate each case during their day job but they will leave the work when they go home. This means that officers treat cases as a part time job to the rest of their life. Killers treat killing as a full time job because their life could be over if they are caught.

Understanding the disadvantages that law enforcement has with killers can help one to understand why law enforcement needs to find better systems to create more advantages. One of these systems would be creating a characteristic profile of killers that is taught to all law enforcement officers who are entering the crime scene detective courses. Overall, research into the characteristics of murderers has not been useful in solving crimes because it is being used for the wrong purpose. Instead of using this research to solve a crime that has already occurred, law enforcement should be using the research to identify possible future criminals.

Can Known Characteristics be Identified?

To help guide this research, three research questions were proposed in the introduction of this thesis. The first research question deals with finding similarities between groups of murderers:

1. Can known characteristics of murderers be identified?

Although there has not been a lot of research regarding the specific study of known and observed characteristics of killers, there has been some research that furthers the study of this thesis. Garofalo and Wright (2017) have just released research showing a link between personality disorders and aggression among other things. This research also helped identify characteristics of past psychopathic killers and non-psychopathic killers. These findings were
attained by accomplishing a literature review of all of the available information to propose a possible future course for the subject (Garofalo & Wright, 2017). The biases in this literature are caused by the fact that this research centered on aggression instead of murderers. Although the aggression included killers, the primary focus was on any hostile act instead of just murderers.

In regards to mass murderers, Auxemery (2015) introduced many important characteristics of the individuals. To start, mass murderers will attack their victims but will not stay to make sure they victims are killed (Auxemery, 2015). A mass murderer was portrayed as a person who kills both at randomly but also selects some of their targets. Characteristics of people who murder their family are often considered depressed, alcoholics and can sometimes be fascinated with weapons (Auxemery, 2015). Mass murders have also been found to be angry and full of resentment over a perceived mistreatment (Auxemery, 2015). These findings were attained by multiple research teams that studied the social and physical characteristics of those who commit mass murderers (Auxemery, 2015). All of the research in this section was accomplished using secondary sources of research. The bias in this article was attributed to the fact that no additional research was accomplished by the author other than the secondary research. This means that the information does not include all of the data possible and the only characteristics present are those that stood out to other researchers who might be biased.

The third most important peer reviewed study regarding characteristics of murderers came from Dutton and Kerry (1999). These researchers studied the characteristics of murderers with personality disorders who have already been incarcerated for their crimes. This research was important because there was not a lot of literature done on killers in regards to their characteristics. The findings of this research showed that there are some identifiable characteristic similarities between the different killers (Dutton & Kerry, 1999). This study was
accomplished using primary research that incorporated both surveys and interviews to attain their data. The problem with this research in regards to this thesis is the fact that it did not focus on characteristics of murderers that had nothing to do with their actual murder. This research included characteristics such as why the killer murdered their spouse, and how much force was used. These characteristics are not a factor in this thesis because the purpose of these characteristics is to identify an individual before they commit murder. The biggest bias in this research came from the fact that the researchers only studied individuals who murderer their spouse and focused mostly on men who killed women (Dutton & Kerry, 1999).

**Can Known Characteristics Identify Future Murderers?**

The second question tries to determine if known characteristics can be effectively used to identify future criminals. The question is as follows:

*2. Can known characteristics of murderers be used to identify future murderers?*

Past literature has been accomplished on trying to identify murderers based on known characteristics. In regards to known characteristics of serial killers, Keppel and Birnes (2008) had the most significant study of the characteristics of this group of killers. Keppel and Birnes (2008) found that serial killer cases could be linked together by studying the characteristics of these individuals. They determined that most serial killers murdered in the same way each time. These individuals often followed rituals, had a plan, and acted out their plan on a predetermined victim (Keppel & Birnes, 2008). These types of killers have proved to be very cunning and because of that, serial killers have been thoroughly studied. Since the two authors of this book were both criminologists, these findings were obtained by first-hand accounts of crime while working for the police force and from research accomplished as professors of criminal justice. The authors also interviewed different serial killers to further understand the characteristics
associated with these killers. The bias in this research occurs from the fact that this research was accomplished to solve crime and not to gain a characteristic profile of these killers. In other words, there is not a full profile of the killers because the only characteristics that are noted are of those that had a direct link to solving the crime. This means that many of the characteristics that could be important to identify future serial killers might not be described in the research.

Another work of literature on the subject came from Bennell, Bloomfield, Emeno & Musolino (2013) who attempted to classify serial sexual murderers to be used in offender profiles. This research was based off of Keppel and Walter’s research in 1999 and tried to present a theoretical application after arguing that parts of Keppel and Walter’s research were invalid (Bennell et al., 2013). These researchers took a sample of 53 serial murderers and studied them to determine their behaviors and characteristics. The subjects were compared to the characteristics in each category from Keppel and Walter’s 1999 research and found that there was no evidence of co-occurring behaviors or characteristics (Bennell et al., 2013). These finding were obtained from first hand research into the circumstantial and specific murders of all 53 of the individuals in this study (Bennell et al., 2013). The biases in the research came from the fact that these researchers were trying to prove Keppel and Walter’s research invalid instead of proving it valid. This means that these individuals could have focused their research on the thousands of characteristics that are not similar in each specific case instead of the one or two characteristics that are similar between the murderers. This research was significant because it stated that there is no evidence to support characteristic links between serial killers.

A third peer reviewed study regarding the identification of murderers was written by LaBrode in 2007. This research focused on the psychopathic serial killer and identified many characteristics associated with these individuals (LaBrode, 2007). One of the major findings in
this research dealt with personality characteristics and the etiologies that can be used to determine why serial killers commit their crimes (LaBrode, 2007). This research directly applied to identifying future murderers by giving the basis of what characteristics make up a serial killer. These findings were obtained through secondary and primary research. The greatest bias in this research came from the fact that most of the data collected was from secondary sources. This meant that the researchers were processing data that was published for a different subject and could in itself be biased for that research.

**Can Education Stop Future Murders?**

The third research question deals with preventing future murders. Once an individual has been determined to be at risk for murdering, law enforcement should intervene with education and counseling. The question proposed is:

3. *Can educating at risk individuals stop those people from killing in the future?*

Although there has not been much if any research accomplished on educating possible murderers to stop them before they start, there has been a lot of research accomplished on prison rehabilitation programs. Since the only people who would be tested to determine the likelihood of them becoming a killer would be prison inmates, this previous research on other rehabilitation programs will be the basis for answering this question. Past literature on rehabilitation programs which would be very similar to the education program made to educate possible killers, has shown to be effective overall. Specifically, academic education and vocational education has been the most effective way to stop repeat offenders from going back to jail (Miceli, 2009). Future educational programs aimed at thwarting future murderers should be based off of the rehabilitation courses already in existence.
As stated above, Miceli (2009) accomplished research to analyze the effectiveness of prison rehabilitation programs. Since many prisoners are re-offenders, the theory behind prison rehabilitation programs is that educating these individuals might make them less apt to return to prison after an educational program. Miceli (2009) found that certain types of rehabilitation programs have been extremely successful. Of the successful rehabilitation programs, vocational and academic educational programs seemed to be the most effective (Miceli, 2009). This research is significant to this thesis because it shows that educational programs can be effective in stopping a criminal from committing another crime. The bias in this research comes from the fact that it was made specifically for the State of Rhode Island. Most of the studies and subjects regarding this research came from that one state so it might not be as applicable to the whole country as other research.

The second most important literature on the subject came from Phelps (2011), who also did a study regarding rehabilitation programs in the U.S. prison system. In this research, it was found that rehabilitation programs never really affected the recidivism rate of prison inmates who are released (Phelps, 2011). These findings came from research that included census data from the federal government and surveys given to prison inmates. In essence, data was obtained from 1974 to 2005 to see if there were any major spikes or declines in the number of U.S. prisoners after the push to install rehabilitation programs in the U.S. prison system (Phelps, 2011). Although there were some outliers in the data, most of the results stated that there was not a significant change in the recidivism rate of inmates based solely on rehabilitation programs (Phelps, 2011). One of the main problems with this research is that the goal was to see if the rehabilitation programs affected inmates after the transformation of prison systems from places of punishment to places of corrections. This meant that a lot of the research focused on the
1970’s (when the transformation occurred) and 1980’s (Phelps, 2011). The research in this work is now almost four decades old and a lot of the rehabilitation programs have now changed.

The third important study on this subject dealt with the success rate of those who engaged in the prison rehabilitation programs. The research conducted by Bosma, Kunst, Dirkzwager and Nieuwbeerta (2015) stated that rehabilitation programs in the penial system can be advantageous to the offenders who enter the program. That being said, the success rate of these individuals differed greatly by the different situations. This study found that almost 80% of offenders enter some type of educational program in the prison system but of those, only 20% of the individuals actually completed the programs (Bosma et al., 2015). This finding is significant because it suggested that even with the programs installed to help these inmates, only the motivated inmates see the program through to completion. One of the biggest biases in this section dealt with the location of the research. This research was accomplished on a program in the Netherlands and because of that, its’ results might not be able to be generalized towards the United States penal system as a whole.

**Literature on Characteristics of Murderers**

Across the world, murderers have proven to come from all different financial, educational and even spiritual backgrounds (Cullen & Agnew, 2002). There is not one stereotype that fits all murderers. That being said, much research has been done on the characteristics of known murderers to help understand why a person kills. To help differentiate between killers in this research, the category of murderer has been broken down into five separate groups.

**Non-psychopathic killers.** Non-psychopathic killers are the most under-researched group of killers. Law enforcement officers will be called to a murder scene and their task is simply to try to connect the crime with an individual. If an individual cannot be linked right
away, the officer will try to find a motive that could have been a reason for the victim to be killed. Often times, law enforcement will find a motive to a murder that points the officer to the killer and then they will stop the investigation. Since this category of people are one-time offenders, it is often assumed that the event was an isolated incident that occurred under very specific circumstances. Not a lot of research goes into the characteristics of these individuals since they are not repeat offenders. That being said, the limited research accomplished on these individuals point to some specific characteristics. Recent research has shown that non-psychopathic killers were often passionate and spontaneous (Woodworth & Porter, 2002).

Non-psychopathic killers have proven to be more emotional, and unable to control their impulses (Garofalo & Wright, 2017). These individuals have also proven to be more aggressive and have personality traits that do not allow them to easily adapt to new situations (Garofalo & Wright, 2017). Instead of these people handling stressful situations with calmness and logic, they act out with deadly consequences. These killers often times show signs of shock and disbelief after the act has been committed. Non-psychopathic killers are often characterized by remorse for their actions (Garofalo & Wright, 2017).

Psychopathic killers. Although one might think that psychopathic killers would be the most diverse of all the killers when considering characteristics, research has shown that there is a surprising amount of similarity between these types of killers. Dutton (1999) took a sample of legally psychotic killers and found that 66% had a history of domestic violence before the murder. Other research has shown that most psychopathic killers are anti-social and deceitful (Perri, 2011). Psychopathic killers can also be manipulative such as in the case of Christopher Porco who slaughtered his father using an axe and then tried to murder his mother (Perri, 2011). In that case, Christopher asked his father to co-sign a $2,000 loan but instead he fraudulently
pulled out a $40,000 loan and then killed his father before it could be reported (Perri, 2011).

Often times, psychopathic killers will kill to maintain a certain lifestyle or to advance themselves in life. Douglas, Burgess, and Ressler (1992) completed research that categorized killers based on how and why they murdered their victims (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014).

**Serial Killers.** One of the most researched type of murderer is the serial killer. In part due to America’s fascination with people who murder over and over again, criminologists have investigated the characteristics, personalities, and behaviors of these individuals (LaBrode, 2007). Some characteristics that have been researched in regards to serial killers are their intelligence level, temperament, employment status and area of operation (United States, 2005). Holmes and Holmes (1996) accomplished research that broke serial killers into categories based off of their motives to help profile these types of killers (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014). In most instances, serial killers had many commonalities with other serial killers that could not be overlooked. To start, almost all serial killers had unusual or inappropriate relationships with one of their parents (LaBrode, 2007). Often times, this lead to personality problems such as anti-social personality disorders and in many cases the serial killer showed signs of violence at an early age (LaBrode, 2007).

LaBrode (2007) went on to prove that most serial killers lack remorse for others, were apathetic, and many times they blamed others for past events. Research has also shown that serial killers are quite cunning in their work, often times manipulating their victims or tricking them into an unfavorable situation (Keppel & Birnes, 2003;2014). The problem is that these individuals can usually get away with their crimes due to another important characteristics of serial killers: they are often charming and able to conform to social norms (LaBrode, 2007). In other words, serial killers have an acute ability to blend in with their surroundings. Serial killers
are one of the most well researched types of killers but they are also some of the most dangerous due to their peculiar characteristics.

**Mass Murderers.** Mass murderers are starkly different than other murderers when comparing their known characteristics. To start, most mass murderers are not delusional and do not commit their acts based on mental illnesses (Auxemery, 2015). Instead, these individuals fall under the rational choice theory of crime and act out their emotions after making a coherent decision to kill. Surprisingly, research has shown that many mass murderers do not have prior history of violence and are not always anti-social (Auxemery, 2015). To the contrary, many of the school shootings that have occurred in America were committed by individuals who tried to fit in with others but could not for different reasons. Significantly, a lot of young school shooters were found to be both depressed and paranoid (Auxemery, 2015).

In some instances, the mass murderer’s emotions and anger built up enough until one day it exploded into a crime that is seen around the world. Research has shown that the number of victims in a mass murder incident directly correlates to the likelihood of the mass murderer committing suicide (Auxemery, 2015). The more victims that are killed, the more likely the individual is to commit suicide after the tragedy is over. This could be due to the fact that most mass murders occur after the individual comes to a breaking point mentally or physically. One of the biggest characteristics of mass murderers was that they usually commit their crime to make a statement against what the individual sees as a problem (Declercq & Audenaert, 2011). In these cases, the mass murderers take out their fundamental problems on the world by attacking those who they see as the source of their problem.

**Terrorists.** In some instances, terrorist can be very similar to mass murderers. Like mass murderers, terrorists will usually attack victims who they see as a problem to help incite change
to that problem. Violence is used as a means of change, normally in the political realm with terrorists. That being said, terrorists are usually considered to be both deceptive and in some cases can be intelligent individuals (Napoleoni, 2005). Research done on terrorists such as Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab Zarqawi (once the most wanted man in Iraq) describe the men as both passionate and driven (Napoleoni, 2005). These individuals built elaborate schemes and have been known to plan out attacks for many months before actually enacting those plans.

Another common characteristics of most terrorists is their relatively high levels of patriotism for their country (Radu, 2011). Terrorist have been associated with almost every country and religion. These individuals comprise the broadest grouping of people because these individuals can fight for almost any cause. What one group of people calls a terrorist, another group calls a religious fighter. These individuals fight for different reason but they are all extremely committed to their cause (Radu, 2011).

**Discussion**

As one can see, research has been accomplished on the characteristics of criminals. Violent crimes such as murders often capture the hearts and minds of the public and because of that, a lot of research is accomplished to determine why these events occur. A major problem in this research is that the term ‘murderer’ is a very broad term that encompasses many different types of people. Knowing this, murderers have been broken down into five main sub groups that include killers (psychopathic and non-psychopathic), serial killers, mass murderers, and terrorists. Although characteristics of these groups of murderers have been documented, there has not been much use for this data because the information has not been brought together for a bigger purpose. All of the characteristics of these individuals needs to be collected and recorded in a federally maintained program that tracks this information. From there, logical conclusions
can be made on a criminal’s likelihood to commit murder before the individual actually commits
the crime. This thesis should prove that known characteristics of murderers can be used to
predict future killers in hopes of educating and changing the individual before any future crime
occurs.
Chapter III. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how this research will be accomplished, one must first understand the theoretical framework that will be employed to capture and analyze the large amount of data. After an extensive literature review, it was determined that there are many gaps in current research regarding characteristics of murderers. Character profiles are not commonly documented with every murder (Federal, n.d.). Character profiles are made for high profile cases and unsolved criminal cases but not for every case. Knowing this, it is hard to attain all of the characteristics of each murderer for analyzation. Using an organized procedure to attain as many important characteristics as possible from the data available should help build connections between the gaps in characteristics of murderers. Analytical methods also will be an essential part of the analyzation in this research. Statistical analysis will be used to help the reader understand that data that is presented. This type of analysis can help one draw conclusions from the data by determining how likely an individual is to commit a crime based on their characteristics. Measures will be used to test the hypotheses along with determining the reliability and validity of the information collected (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). Using this method, this study will answer the research questions posed in the beginning of the thesis.

Theories of Crime

Before a criminologist can grasp the reasons why a characteristic profile of murderers must be made, one must first review literature on criminal justice theories. Since researchers first started to study crime, scholars have put forth theories to try and determine why crimes occur. For this thesis, three main theories will be used to help readers understand the importance of a characteristic profile of murderers. Cullen and Agnew (2002) defined the rational choice,
biological positivism, and psychological theories. All three of these theories will play an immense role in this research.

**Rational Choice Theory.** The rational choice theory suggests that crime is a decision one makes after examining all of the available options and understanding the consequences (Cullen & Agnew, 2002). This theory of crime is based off of the classical theory of crime that implies crime occurs because the benefits outweigh the costs (Cullen & Agnew, 2002). This theory applies to this research by assuming that certain characteristics of a person will make the individual more inclined to commit a crime. Characteristics such as aggression and anger can be a factor in one’s rational choice to undertake a crime. Although not everyone who is aggressive and angry will become a killer, these features can influence the individual’s decision.

**Biological Positivism.** Merriam-Webster (2015) defined criminal positivism as being the theory that all crime is based off of natural events or phenomena. Therefore, biological positivism is the belief that crime occurs because of natural events inside of the human body. The theory of biological positivism was one of the first criminology theories, but it was largely discredited in the early 1900’s due to the lack of evidence and findings on the subject (Siegel, 2000). In the 1970’s, support for this theory started to rise after Edward O. Wilson released publications on sociobiology that linked crime with factors such as hormonal imbalances and biochemical issues (Siegel, 2000). This means that biological characteristics such as being moody or even having high blood pressure could possibly affect one’s decision to commit a crime.

**Psychology Theory.** Psychology is the study of a person’s mind and how it interacts with its surroundings (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The psychology theory of crime tries to explain crime using the human brain as the main culprit of crime. In the late 1800’s Henry Maudsley, a
well-known British psychiatrist, adapted a theory of psychology to explain crime (Siegel, 2000). Maudsley hypothesized that all criminals were either completely insane or they were mentally damaged to some degree (Siegel, 2000). Although Maudsley’s theory has been criticized and transformed over the years, the psychology theory of crime has adapted to a more modern approach. Recent research has shown that brain disorders and neurophysiological elements can affect one’s decision making capabilities (Siegel, 2000). These psychological characteristics could be a large factor in crime.

Theoretical Model

This research will be accomplished using a very simple method of research and analyzation. To start, research will be conducted using secondary information from peer-reviewed and federal sources. Enormous amounts of information has been officially documented regarding the characteristics of known murderers. These secondary sources have produced reliable information that allow readers to determine the main characteristics of a murderer that contributed to their crime. In some instances, anger and past violence were the main qualities that made the crime occur (Dutton & Kerry, 1999). Once these main characteristics are identified from each crime studied, the author will transcribe these qualities into a table of characteristics. A sample of 25 of the most influential characteristics of killers will be used as a population of known murderer characteristics. This information will be further broken down into categories that describe which type of killer exhibited those specific traits. Figure 1 shows a model of this process.

The theoretical model will follow framework that was first proposed by Dr. Desjardins (2010). This approach lays out the main concepts of the thesis and compares them to a secondary
factor which directly relates to the end goal of attaining the final outcomes. Figure 1 shows this theoretical model.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Model

In this model, the main concepts are considered the independent variables of each hypothesis. The intermediate variable is a variable that is affected by the independent variable and affects the outcome (Desjardins, 2010). The outcome of this model is considered to be the dependent variable. The factors are simply variables that affect the dependent variable but are not necessarily what is actually being measured in the test. This model seems very simple but it is justifiably simple because the biggest part of this research is taking already known data and recycling it for a new purpose. There have been many studies accomplished to build a criminal profile, but there have been few if any attempts to take this information and try to predict future criminals based off of the characteristic profile. After a profile is made, a comparison will be accomplished to show the likelihood of a person to become a murderer based off of their own
characteristics. Analyzation using the characteristic commonalities can be accomplished to show how likely the person in question is to become a future murderer based off of the characteristics of known criminals.

**Research Questions**

To answer the first research question, *whether known characteristics of murderers can be identified*, an examination will be accomplished to see if there are common characteristics between each group of murderers. This will be completed using case studies of literature that identify the most important characteristics of each murderer. If common characteristics can be identified, then a criminal profile of each type of murderer will be made to help answer the second research question. The second question regarding *the identification of other murderers using these common characteristics* will be answered by comparing the profile that is built to convicted murderers who were not in the original sample to see if the profile would have predicted the individual to be a murderer. The final research question which tries to determine if *educating at risk individuals can stop these people from killing in the future* will be answered using more case studies. These case studies will include murderers who were sent to a rehabilitation program in prison and then released to see the average recidivism rate. Answering these three important questions could possibly bring America’s murder rate to an all-time low.

**Hypothesis**

As stated in the introduction, there are three main hypotheses to be tested. The first hypothesis states: *if personality and trait data are collected on all convicted murderers, then there will be similarities in the characteristics of all murderers.* To test this hypothesis, research will be accomplished to gather as much data as possible on the known or observed characteristics of murderers in each of the five different categories. From there, the information will be
reviewed to determine if there are similarities in the known or observed characteristics of murderers. If there are similarities in the characteristics of each group of murderers, then the hypothesis will be confirmed.

The second hypothesis builds off of the first hypothesis as follows: *if a characteristic profile of murderers can be made, then law enforcement will be able to predict who is at risk of killing other citizens.* To test this hypothesis, a characteristic profile of known and observed traits must be made. After the profile is built, it will then be compared to other known murderers who were not in the original characteristic research to determine if the profile would have identified the known murderer as a potential murderer. If the profile does come close to matching other known killers, then the hypothesis will be confirmed. The third and final hypothesis states: *if law enforcement personnel can educate individuals who are at risk for committing murder, then these selected individuals will not kill.* This hypothesis will be best tested using case studies. Since there is no way to look into the future and determine if an education helped an individual, researchers must look to the past. This hypothesis will be confirmed or denied by researching past murderers who have received an education in prison and were later released to see if the individuals committing the crime again.

**Measures**

In the theoretical framework of a thesis, it is important for the scholar to consider the measures of their work. Three important measures in every experiment are the generalizability, the reliability and the validity of the research. The generalizability of a design is the ability of researchers to take the results of the experiment and apply them to the greater population (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). Since almost all experiments conducted use a specific population, it is very important that the data be applicable to more than just the small population otherwise the
research is worthless. Reliability and validity are also very important. If the research is biased in
anyway, the experiment might not be useful. Without considering all of the different angles
associated with the experiment, this research would be accomplished in vain.

Reliability. Reliability is the likelihood of this research being accomplished again by
another researcher and attaining the same results (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). To ensure this
research is reliable, the theoretic framework must be thoroughly discussed. A step-by-step model
has been identified and should be followed during future studies to further this research. One
problem with the reliability of this thesis is the fact that most of the data obtained is through
secondary research. This means that an educational scholar who tries to duplicate this research
might have slight variations in the results because the individual would be studying different
literature that might list small variations in the most important characteristics. The overall
characteristic profile of each group should help ensure that the research is reliable and take into
account small outliers in the different characteristics of each murderer.

Validity. The validity of this research will ensure that the research actually measures
what is intended to be measured (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). It will also ensure that the research
has meaning. For this thesis, the main variables being measured are the known and observed
characteristics of murderers. This means that the only variables that should be measured are the
specific characteristics and not items associated with the characteristics. One way that
researchers might fall into this trap is by measuring qualities of murderers that would only be
known after the murderer has committed their crime. An example of this would be whether the
murderer has a signature or poses the body after the murder occurs. Although this is a
characteristic of the murderer, it would not help identify future murderers since these individuals
have not committed the crime and so it would be worthless to measure this characteristic. The research accomplished in this experiment should be valid under all circumstances.

Discussion

In this chapter, the methodology of this experiment was thoroughly discussed. This research is set up on a simple model of research and analyzation because no new data is being collected. This thesis is based off of taking old data from research and combining it to prove a new idea about criminal profiling. All three hypothesis will be tested through data analyzation while ensuring the experimental measures are not discarded. Both the reliability and validity of this research have been explained to prove to the reader that this research is not only dependable, but also required to bring down the murder rate in the United States. Although the data in this research is from a small population, its generalizability will be ensured so that the results will apply to the greater population. Since the theoretical framework of this research has been discussed, the next step in this experiment is to set up the research design and methodology.
Chapter IV. Research Design / Methodology

In this section of the thesis, the research design will be further explored so that follow on research can repeat the test. To start, a mixed methods approach will be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data for further examination. This research considers a characteristic to be any physical, mental or environmental trait that might be used to classify a murderer into a specific grouping (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Qualitative data will be used to describe the characteristic traits of convicted murderers that cannot easily be quantified. These traits might include the killer’s known connection to their victim (stranger, family member or friend) or non-physical traits such as their attitude or aggression towards others. Quantitative data will also be essential to this research by providing statistics that can bring meaning to the qualitative data. The number of victims, time between murders, and even the amount of stabs or shots a killer used can provide insight into the killer’s specific characteristics. Once the data is collected, it can be analyzed to draw conclusions and make sense out of the otherwise random information.

The variables in this research will be identified and the measures for testing those variables will also be introduced. This chapter will also explain the case studies used throughout the research, while giving the reader justification as to why those specific case studies were used. In accomplishing this, the sources for data collection will be reviewed and rationalized. The method of this research will follow a simple format outlined in the theoretical framework (Chapter III) of this thesis. Data will be collected from various peer-reviewed and federal sources to provide the bulk of the information that will be used for analyzation. Anytime an important characteristic of a murderer is discussed in the literature reviewed, it will be recorded under the category of the murderer that possessed the trait. This will slowly build a characteristic profile of each type of murderer.
Research Design

The most important part of this research is the data collection phase. As noted above, the known and observed characteristics of convicted murderers will come from peer reviewed literature and from federal sources such as the FBI. FBI profilers have listed known characteristics of convicted murderers, but this information is used to identify a person based on a murder that has been committed (Federal, n.d.). Knowing that, the profiles already created are not helpful for the purposes of this research because this research is trying to identify an individual before they commit the crime. This means that characteristics such as motives, the way the person was killed, and how the body was placed after the murder does not apply. Data collection will be accomplished by amassing all of the characteristics noted in the peer reviewed literature and federal documents and then dividing the characteristics into the groups of killers that possessed those traits. As an example, the characteristic of being depressed might be associated with non-psychopathic killers but not associated with terrorists or serial killers. Once all of the data is collected and split into the five different categories of murderers, a characteristic profile will be made. This profile can then be compared to other individuals to see if they possess many of the traits commonly associated with murderers and thus determine the likelihood of that person becoming a murderer.

Qualitative

Most characteristics of an individual cannot be translated into statistics simply because a characteristics describes a person. Descriptions are not easily quantified in many circumstances which leads researchers to require qualitative data in gathering their information for research. Qualitative data is most often used to describe things that cannot easily be represented by numbers (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). This data can describe the way the individual acts, presents
themselves in public, and even the way the individual thinks. Although this information is not easily attained in all situations, it is essential when studying the reasons why a murderer commits their crimes. This thesis will use qualitative research to understand the historical data and independent research presented by other scholars in order to attain the most accurate descriptions of what characteristics played a fundamental part in a killer committing a murder.

**Historical Data.** As one can see from Chapter II of this thesis, the characteristics of convicted murderers have been extensively documented throughout the years. Psychopathic and non-psychopathic killers have been known to be impulsive, passionate, and sometimes aggressive (Garofalo & Wright, 2017). Serial killers are less spontaneous, but they also lack remorse for others and are less often apologetic for their actions (LaBrode, 2007). To account for all of these characteristics, qualitative data will be retrieved on the historical accounts that are published regarding murders. These historical accounts will include past research on criminal characteristics, case studies on specific individuals, and information published by federal sources for use by professional law enforcement and scholars. The historical data written on past murderers will be essential in unveiling whether prominent characteristics can be identified to highlight future killers.

**Quantitative**

Although the research accomplished will be focused greatly on the description of individuals and thus use qualitative data, quantitative data will also be pivotal to this research. To start, collecting data on aspects such as the number of victims and the time between murders will be used to help categorize the murderers. This quantitative data is required to be able to classify the murderers into different groups for further analyzation. Since the term murderer is very broad, it must be broken down into sub-groups in order to make sense out of the seemingly
random data that is collected. Otherwise, the broad term would have so many different variables
that there would be no way to draw correlation from the data. Historically, breaking criminals
into smaller groups has been common practice in the field of criminology. Keppel and Birnes
(2003;2014) accomplished studies that used a killer’s motives as a way to divide them into
groups. Breaking down the criminals into specific groups allows researchers to find
commonalities between qualities and characteristics of the different groups of murderers.

Identification of Variables

To identify the variables that will be tested in this thesis, one must first recall the
hypotheses that will be applied. The first hypothesis says if personality and trait data are
collected on all convicted murderers, then there will be similarities in the characteristics of all
murderers. In this hypothesis, the independent variable is the characteristic and trait data. The
dependent variable would be whether or not there are similarities in the characteristics between
murderers. To test this hypothesis, research must be done on each category of murderer to
determine which traits are associated with the different individuals. If the different murderers in
each category have overlapping traits with one another, then this hypothesis will be confirmed.

Hypothesis two stats that if a characteristic profile of murderers can be made, then law
enforcement will be able to predict who is at risk of killing other citizens. The independent
variable in this hypothesis is the characteristic profile while the dependent variable is the
identification of other potential murderers. To test this hypothesis, the characteristic profile
should be put up against other known murderers in the same category to determine if those
killers fit the profile. If the characteristic profile fits other known murderers, it can be assumed
that it would also fit future murderers and the hypothesis will be confirmed. The last hypothesis
declares that if law enforcement personnel can educate individuals who are at risk for
committing murder, then these selected individuals will not kill. In this hypothesis, the independent variable is the educational process while the dependent variable is the reduction of murderers. Since there is not enough time to actually educate a potential murderer and then see if that person murders later in their life, this hypothesis will be tested using past recidivism rates of offenders who were put in rehabilitation during prison. The next step in this process is to measure the variables.

**Research Model**

The methodology of this thesis will take the research model from the theoretical framework section (Chapter III) and apply the model towards all three hypotheses. Figure 2 shows an example of this model applied to the first hypothesis.

Figure 2

Research Model applied to Hypothesis 1
For this model, the first concepts or independent variables are the known and observed characteristics of each type of murderer. These variables will have an effect on the daily life of each murderer (side effect), but the overall outcome being measured or the dependent variable is whether or not there are any matching characteristics between the murderers. A factor that might affect the dependent variable but that are not specifically being measured or recorded is the personality of each murderer. Dr. Desjardins’ (2010) theoretical model was essential in testing all three of the hypotheses.

**Measurement of Variables**

The measurement of variables, or operationalization, will help future research understand the methods used in this experiment. Operationalization is the process in which variables are defined in a way that allows them to be tested (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). Again, the independent variable in the first hypothesis is the personality and trait data while the dependent variable is the similarities of known characteristics between murderers. To measure the variables, the personality and trait data in this hypothesis will be defined as the characteristics (defined in Chapter I). The dependent variable of similarities will be each murderer in a category matching five characteristics with the other murderers in their category. In the second hypothesis, the independent variable is the characteristic profile and the dependent variable is the prediction of other murderers. To measure these variables, the characteristic profile should contain at least ten characteristics for each category of murderers while the predicted individual will be considered a match if they comprise five or more of these characteristics. The final hypothesis has an independent variable of education while the dependent variable is murder. For this test, education will be considered any rehabilitation, counseling or classes that an inmate takes while at prison in order to stop the offender from re-offending. The dependent variable will be
measured as the individual murdering one individual after the education. If the individual murders anyone, then that case will prove the hypothesis wrong. To accomplish these measurements, a study population will be required.

**Sample Plan**

In answering the research questions, known and observed characteristics of murderers must be identified and then categorized. There is an unknown number of individual characteristics in the world so there is no way to determine a probable population study that would help with the generalizability of this research. Knowing that, each category of murderer will have a minimum of ten characteristics associated so that comparisons can be made. These ten characteristics will be the most important characteristics that have been associated with these individuals that directly affected their murders. These characteristics will come from as many case studies and previous research on the subject as possible. Since no actual human study was accomplished in this research, there will not be a study population of humans. All data came from peer-reviewed research and case studies.

**Case Studies Justification**

As many cases as possible were studied to get the most important characteristics of each murderer. These studies were chosen at random by searching through all of the peer-reviewed articles available through the school library and other online sources. Anytime an important characteristics was documented in the literature reviewed, it was recorded under the category of those murderers who possessed the trait. This allowed the researcher to compile a list of common characteristics of known killers. Although these case studies were chosen at random, any peer-reviewed literature that was found to have documented important characteristics of murderers was taken into consideration. Along with these case studies, other research that directly
investigated certain characteristics of murderers such as that of Hanlon, Brook, Stratton, Jensen and Rubin (2013) who studied the intellectual differences between different types of murderers were researched. This allowed the author to gain as many characteristics as possible.

**Killer.** As stated earlier, the two classifications of killers in this research are non-psychopathic killers and psychopathic killers. The main difference between the two is that one killer had a diagnosed mental disorder that directly affected the murder while the other did not. Although these individuals only murdered one time, they share many common but also many have many different characteristics from each other. The most important case study involving killers came from Garofalo and Wright (2017) who listed many important attributes of both psychopathic and non-psychopathic killers. This case study was used because it gave clear descriptions of the characteristics of both psychopathic and non-psychopathic killers. Garofalo and Wright (2017) described these individuals as emotional, impulsive, and often aggressive.

**Serial Killers.** Serial killers are one of the classification of murderers that are highly studied. Knowing this, many characteristics of these individuals were available due to the high levels of research. The most important case study came from Keppel and Birnes (2008) who helped build a classification of murderers based on their specific characteristics. Before that, Keppel and Walter (1999) composed a classification model for serial sexual murderers that is currently used to create criminal profiles (Bennell, Bloomfield, Emeno, & Musolino, 2013). These case studies were used due to the high volume of criminal characteristics that were contained in the works. The characteristics retrieved from this research were compared to characteristics from other case studies to make the profile of serial killers.

**Mass Murderer.** The biggest case study used for mass murderers came from the research of Auxemery (2015). This case was used because of the specialty research accomplished on mass
murderers that included many of the characteristics now associated with these individuals. Auxemery (2015) broke down these individuals into different classifications based off of their motives and their desires. This work was essential in determining certain characteristics of mass murderers such as their anger, resentment, and the occasional past offense (Auxemery, 2015). Since mass murder is a more recent phenomenon that has becoming increasingly more common, there has not been as much research accomplished on the different individuals who commit the crime. This means that Auxemery’s research which lists many of the characteristics possessed by these individuals is very essential to this thesis.

**Terrorist.** Terrorists are the broadest groups of murderers compared to the other three categories. This individuals are diverse in that they use knives, guns, explosives and attack as lone wolves or as groups (Van Dongen, 2014). This makes building a characteristic profile difficult because all of the individuals are very different. Overall, the case study of Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab Zarqawi by Napoleoni (2005) is very important because it helps to build a characteristic profile of two notorious terrorist leaders. The traits of these individuals are compared to other known terrorists to better understand the most important traits associated with terrorists. Case studies like this are required because terror attacks are not frequent. This means that the few terror attacks that do occur must be studied to gain the appropriate knowledge.

**Data Collection Sources**

There are three main sources of data collection. First, secondary literature was studied that included research already done on the subject. An example of this research included work from Keppel and Birnes (2008) who made a characteristic profile of serial killers. This type of research is important as a starting block so that work already done is not re-accomplished. The second source of data collection was from federal reports. An example of this type of research
includes reports published from the Federal Bureau of Investigation that list information about murderers. Research into federal documents did not provide as many characteristics as other research, but it did give a lot of helpful facts and figures used throughout the thesis. The last and most important source of data came from case studies. Case studies included sources such as Perri (2011) who accomplished an interview with a psychopathic killer and documented some important characteristics. Together, these three types of sources made up the foundation on which all of the analyzation occurred.

**Discussion**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the design and methodology that this research will use to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. Case studies, federal reports, and previous research have all been used to gather as much data as possible in regards to known and observed characteristics of criminals. The characteristics gathered from these documents have been compared to ensure that only the most important characteristics have been documented for analyzation. These characteristics were divided among the five different categories of murderers to help build a profile of each type of murderer. The next step in this research is to take these profiles and compare them to individuals who have not committed murder to see how likely they are to commit a murder. The results of this thesis and the profiles compared to other known murderers will be presented in the fifth and final chapter of this thesis.
Chapter V. Results and Discussion

After the research and analzyation was complete, several observations and conclusions could be made. Anytime a known or observed characteristic was found, the author documented it in an excel sheet under the specific category of murderer who possessed that trait. If this trait could be confirmed by another peer-reviewed document, the trait was assumed to be a major trait. If the characteristic could not be confirmed by at least one additional source, it was removed from the sheet. After all of the research was complete, a characteristic profile of murderers were identified. This is significant because it shows that characteristics of murderers can be identified. From there, analysis had to be accomplished to determine if the profile could be used to predict other murderers. After the analysis was complete, all of the hypotheses were tested and the research questions were answered. Lessons learned and areas for improvement have been documented in the following chapter as well as a recommendation for future studies. Although this study was not perfect, it succeeded in furthering the study of murderers and will hopefully be a part in the process of lowering America’s murder rate.

Results

As discussed in the research design section (Chapter IV), the goal was to identify the ten most important characteristic of each category of murderers. If the characteristic could not be confirmed by two separate sources, it was thrown out. If more than ten characteristics were identified, then the characteristics that appeared the most were documented. After combining this information, the following table was made.

Table 3

Characteristics of Murderers

As one can see, twenty-six of the most important factors were identified for the five different categories of murderers. In four of the five categories, ten or more major characteristics could be identified for the different murderers. In one category (mass murderers), only eight major characteristics could be identified. Since it was determined that a characteristic profile could be made of these murderers, the next step is to apply this profile to that of known murderers in each category that were not in the original study group. The first application of this is for the serial killer category with the known serial killer being Ted Bundy. The following table shows the results.

Table 4

Serial Killer Profile Compared to Ted Bundy
In this comparison, Ted Bundy who is the infamous Washington State serial killer matches seven of the ten known characteristics of serial killers. Bundy was known to be very cunning but also manipulative (McClellan, 2006). He was also anti-social but had an exceptional ability to conform to social norms even though he did not enjoy being around other people (Ramsland, 2013). Since Ted Bundy matched five or more of the characteristics in his category, this characteristic profile would have successfully suggested that Ted Bundy might be a serial killer. Next, a comparison was made in the mass murderer category.

Table 5
Mass Murderer Profile Compared to Timothy McVeigh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Lack of Remorse</th>
<th>Apathetic</th>
<th>Blames Others</th>
<th>Impulsive</th>
<th>No Past Violence</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Depressed</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Passionate</th>
<th>Paranoid</th>
<th>Fascinated with Weapons</th>
<th>Drunkard</th>
<th>Resentful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass Murderer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy McVeigh</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Biography, 2017; Madeira, 2014; Stuttaford, 1996

In this comparison, the known mass murderer was Timothy McVeigh. Timothy McVeigh was the infamous Oklahoma City bomber who parked a truck with a homemade bomb outside of
a federal building killing 168 people (Madeira, 2014). He was known to have a fascination with weapons, to be paranoid that the government was trying to take away the Second Amendment, and was openly resentful of the United States government. Comparing McVeigh to the known characteristic profile of mass murderers, there is a fifty percent match. Since McVeigh matches five of the ten known characteristics, this profile would have suggested that McVeigh might be a mass murderer. The last comparison was made in the terrorist category of murderers.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Lack of Remorse</th>
<th>Apathetic</th>
<th>Blames Others</th>
<th>Cunning</th>
<th>Ambitious</th>
<th>Intimidating</th>
<th>Violent</th>
<th>No Past Violence</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Anti-Social</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Passionate</th>
<th>Loner</th>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Well Trained</th>
<th>Resentful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorist</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzhokhar Tsarnaev</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bigg, 2013; Telegraph, 2016

As seen in the above table, the terrorist profile was compared to Dzhokhar Tsarnaev who is better known as the Boston Marathon bomber. Tsarnaev was an immigrant from Chechnya who went to high school in the United States (Bigg, 2013). He was known to be a loner, anti-social and actively spoke out against the United States killing Muslims (Bigg, 2013). Compared to the known terrorist’s profile, Tsarnaev only matches four of the ten characteristics. This means that the profile would not have predicted Tsarnaev to be a terrorist. As one can see, the profiles of psychopathic killers and non-psychopathic killers were not compared to any known killer. This is because research could not produce one real life murderer in those groups who had at least ten characteristics documented. This might be due in part to the fact that individuals who
only kill two or less other people are not as highly researched or studied as individuals who murder multiple individuals.

**Significance**

The significance of these results is that known and observed characteristics of murderers can be identified. Not only can they be identified, but there are likely similarities between these groups of murderers. These results seem to fit very well with the rational choice and the biological positivism theories of crime. Since the rational choice theory states that crime is a decision one makes, being deceitful, manipulative, or having a lack of remorse could help an individual make a rational choice to commit the crime of murder (Cullen & Agnew, 2002). Along with this, being angry or aggressive by nature might also play a large factor in one’s decision to commit crimes. This falls in line with the biological positivism theory of crime which states that a person’s biological differences could affect the individual’s desires to commit a crime such as murder (Cullen & Agnew, 2002).

These results also suggest that a characteristic profile of murderers can be made. Not only could characteristics be identified for each category, the characteristics could be confirmed by multiple sources. Four out of the five categories could meet the requirement of identifying a minimum of ten characteristics that are shared by multiple murderers in each category. These characteristic profiles were then applied to individuals who were not in the original sample of murderers who were studied. In this assessment, two of the three categories were able to identify the individual (who was a known murderer) as a potential murderer.

**Research Questions**

After analyzing all of the available data, each research question was individually answered. To start with the first research question regarding whether *known characteristics of*...
murderers could be identified, this research found that known characteristics could and are regularly identified. As an example, a known characteristic of Ted Bundy was that he was very impulsive but also shy (McClellan, 2006). Furthering this research question, known characteristics could be identified and made into a characteristic profile of the murderer. This characteristic profile was used to answer the second research question. The second research question asks whether known characteristics of murderers can be used to identify future murderers. To answer this question, the characteristic profiles that were made were compared to known murderers in the different category. Only three of the five different categories were tested because there was not enough documented characteristics on the psychopathic and non-psychopathic killers to compare these individuals to the known characteristics. Of the three categories tested, two of the three profiles would have suggested that the known murderer was a possible murderer. With this information, it is confirmed that known characteristics of murderers can be used to identify future murderers.

The third research question turned out to be a more theoretical question. It asked whether educating at risk individuals could stop those people from killing in the future. This question could not be answered directly because it deals with human sources and would take years of research. To answer this question, at risk individuals would have to be identified in the prison systems using the characteristic profile and then be enrolled in education programs. From there, research would have to be accomplished to see if the individual commits murder after the educational programs. Instead of answering this question with actual human subjects, the question will be answered theoretically with research conducted on other rehabilitation programs. Research conducted has shown mixed results on whether these educational programs can stop inmates from reoffending. One source stated that rehabilitation programs were
condemned since they were first started and have never produced the results that were expected (Phelps, 2011). Other research regarding rehabilitation programs that an inmate volunteers for produced positive results of lower recidivism rates (Bosma, Kunst, Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2017). After analyzing the research, this research question remains unanswered because of mixed research. To answer this question, additional research needs to be accomplished specifically on educating potential murderers to see if this stops these individuals from committing the crime.

Theoretical Framework/Thesis Statement

This thesis used a mixed methods approach to attain both qualitative and quantitative data for analyzation. The qualitative data attained was used to characterize the different murderers by their traits. Quantitative data was used to categorize the murderers into different groups. This thesis used a research model that optimized the process of data collection and analyzation while also allowing the process to be continually updated. Along with that, one of the most important aspects of the framework for this thesis came in the measurements of the different variables. These measurements allowed the author to answer the research questions while also testing the hypotheses. For the first hypothesis which stated that there will be similarities between the characteristics of murderers, similarities were measured as having at least two peer-reviewed sources documenting the same characteristic for different murderers in the same category. In all five categories, similarities in characteristics were found which confirmed the first hypothesis.

In the second hypothesis which stated that law enforcement would be able to predict who is at risk of being a murderer, people at risk were measured as having five out of the ten characteristics of a specific category of murderer. In two of the three cases, similarities were found which confirmed the second hypothesis. In the last hypothesis which stated that educating at risk individuals would stop the person from murdering in the future, murdering was measured
as killing any one person after the education process. This hypothesis could not be confirmed or denied due to lack of research on the subject. That being said, the three hypotheses tested along with the answers to the research questions confirm the following thesis statement: law enforcement needs to research and then identify known and observed characteristics of convicted killers to help stop future murders.

**Average Killer Characteristics**

The purpose of this thesis was to determine if known and observed characteristics of murderers could be identified and then used to recognize other possible offenders. After it was determined that known characteristics could be identified, the profiles of each type of killer were tested against known murderers. This research then went a step further to determine if there are certain characteristics common to all murderers instead of just common characteristics between each category of murderer. The following table was made to identify common traits.

**Table 7**

**Most Common Characteristics of Murderers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Killer (Psychopathic)</th>
<th>Serial Killer</th>
<th>Terrorist</th>
<th>Killer (Non-Psychopathic)</th>
<th>Mass Murderer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apathetic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceitful</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Remorse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Auxemery, 2015; Bachman & Schutt, 2014; Bennell et al., 2013; Declercq & Audenaert, 2011; Dutton & Kerry, 1999; Garofalo & Wright, 2017; Hanlon et al., 2013;

As one can see, there was not one characteristic that was present in every category of murderer. That being said, there were a few traits that were common to most murderers. The characteristics of being apathetic and aggressive were present in four of the five main categories. The next most common characteristics were being manipulative, deceitful and having lack of remorse. Each of these characteristics were present in three of the five categories. From there, the rest of the characteristics only occurred in one or two of the categories of murderers.

**Limitations**

There were many limitations to this thesis that should be addressed in future studies. To start, this research did not conduct human studies since it was not recommended at this institution. This meant that only secondary research was gathered and analyzed for this thesis. Secondary research is the summarization, collection and analysis of research that has already been accomplished (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The problem with attaining secondary research is that the scholar is usually going through incomplete data since the only information collected is data that was pertinent to the primary research. This means that some of the characteristics of murderers might not be documented since those characteristics might not have applied to the primary research. Secondary research is also subject to the biases of the primary researcher. Although those biases might not affect the primary research, they might very well affect the secondary research.

The next limitation was based on the fact that no real human studies were accomplished for this thesis. This meant that the researcher could not send out surveys or visit known murderers to try and attain primary information such as the individual’s characteristics. Along
with that, the final profiles created from the secondary data could not be compared to human individuals to start the testing of the third hypothesis. Since no human testing occurred, the final research question and the final hypothesis were left unanswered and unconfirmed. There was also a time limitation on this thesis. Even if the author was able to test real humans to try and determine if the final hypothesis was correct, there would not have been enough time. The final hypothesis dealt with educating an individual and then determining if the individual committed the crime of murder. This meant that the research would literally take a lifetime to see if the individual committed murder. This was not a realistic timeline for this research. Future studies should take these limitations into consideration and try to find mitigations to help continue the research.

**Lessons Learned**

One of the greatest lessons learned in this thesis was that characteristics of murderers are hard to define and can be very subjective. Although the author made every effort to ensure that there was limited bias and only factual information, there were a few areas that contained prejudice. As an example, biographies of Ted Bundy listed many characteristics of the serial killer including characteristics that conflicted with each other. Some sources listed Bundy as being reserved and shy (Ramsland, 2013). Other literature on Bundy from a different individual’s perspective listed Bundy as being popular and outgoing. The problem is that these characteristics are very subjective and they change based on different situations. One’s characteristics could also change based on who is observing the trait.

Along with that, there was not a lot of secondary characteristic research on psychopathic and non-psychopathic killers. Individuals who kill only once do not catch the attention of criminologists and psychologist and because of that, these people are not as well documented.
This means that primary research would be a necessity for future studies. The last main lesson learned is that the third and final hypothesis was not realistically testable. Theoretically, the hypothesis was measurable, testable, and a solid hypothesis. In reality, the third hypothesis would take a lifetime to test because the researcher would literally be watching all of the potential murderers for the rest of their lives after prison to see if they murder someone. Although this is doable, it is not very realistic. A more attainable hypothesis should be conceived in future studies.

Recommendations

The author of this thesis suggests that this research be continued into the future. Scholars should read the information provided in this text and expand upon this foundation taking into account the limitations discussed and the lessons learned. To make this process easier, law enforcement should document the characteristics of all the convicted murderers who are processed into prisons across the United States. This information should be sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for collection and analyzation. This process would be very similar to the way the data regarding the Uniform Crime Report is sent and documented. Doing this would allow all prisons to test their inmates and compare the results to the profiles kept by the FBI.

It is also recommended that all prison inmates undergo characteristic testing to help determine if that individual is at risk of murdering others. These tests would not hurt the inmates at all and the only limitation would be the time it takes for the guards to give the tests. Accomplishing this task would allow for educational programs to start helping those who are at risk and would open up the possibilities for future studies. Once educational programs are started, researchers can study the affect the programs have on the inmates after they are released from prison. Knowing this, this thesis also recommends that educational programs be started at
all prisons around the United States. Even if these programs do not help every individual, they might help some. That means that there will be a few less murders in the United States and a few more innocent civilians will be able to go home and see their families every day.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all of the research questions were answered and the hypotheses were thoroughly tested. To answer the first research question, it was determined that specific characteristics of murderers could be identified. Characteristics such as being aggressive and apathetic appeared in four out of the five tested categories of murderers. The second research question was also answered when it was determined that building a characteristic profile could identify potential murderers. This was done by taking the characteristic profile and comparing it to known murderers who were not used in the characteristic profile originally. In two of the three tests, the profiles suggested that the individual could be or could turn into a murderer. The last question was not fully answered due to lack of research on the subject. Without human testing, the author could not find out the answer and there was little to no research already accomplished on the subject. To answer the question theoretically, research was accomplished on other rehabilitation programs to determine their likelihood of success. Even this research produced mixed results and conflicting data.

The three hypotheses were tested and two of the three were confirmed. The first hypothesis suggested that characteristics of murderers could be identified. This was confirmed by finding characteristics of murderers documented in different pieces of literature and checking these characteristics with other peer-reviewed works. The second hypothesis assumed that police officers could identify future murderers using a characteristic profile built in this thesis. This hypothesis was also confirmed by building a profile of the most common characteristics and then
comparing this profile to known murderers. In two of the three trials, the profile predicted that the individual was or could be a murderer. The last hypothesis was not confirmed due to lack of research and information on the subject. No prior research has been accomplished on the subject of educating potential murderers to determine if they will murder in the future. This meant that primary research would have to be accomplished which was not authorized for this thesis.

Overall, this research was successful in trying to determine if observed or known characteristics could predict future murders. The author recommends that law enforcement continues this research to identify known and observed characteristics of convicted murderers so murders might be stopped in the future.
References


