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# Contribution of Psychoanalysis Regarding Serial Killers



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## Abstract

The Psychoanalysis, through the discovery of concepts such as the unconscious, contributed to the construction of critical thinking in Criminology. For psychoanalysis there are clinical structures: neurosis, psychosis and perversion. The subjects of the psychosis clinical structure commonly present delusions and hallucinations. However, there are other ways for these subjects to arrange themselves. One of these ways, can set in the sadistic practices performed by serial killers.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis; Psychosis; Serial killers; Sadistic

## Introduction

Crime, madness, criminal responsibility, psychosis, perversion are pertinent themes in Criminology and psychoanalysis. If the first was born under the aegis of positivism, the second brings, with the discovery of the unconscious, an epistemological cut to positive atavistic reductionism. Criminology as a science emerges in the second half of the nineteenth century on a totally positivist basis. It aimed at an explanation the offense and delinquent's causes [1]. The positivist paradigm is the etiological and aims to determine biopsychological causes to the detriment of the individuality of each being. Sigmund Freud created psychoanalysis in the hegemonic context of positivism by moving away from it. The discovery of the unconscious brings the possibility of a view of Criminology not under an etiological paradigm and using the causal-explanatory method, but for a subjective interpretation of the criminal matter [2]. Concepts such as unconsciousness, repression, superego and guilt led to a questioning of the traditional concept of guilt. Psychoanalysis has greatly contributed to the construction of critical thinking in Criminology. The explanation of crimes based on a clinical framework is of paramount importance to forensic practice. Psychoanalytic knowledge has been influencing criminological theories. An interpretation based on the psychoanalytic theory of serial killings can contribute to an adequate judgment of these subjects, as well as assist in the investigation of crimes of this order.

## Organized and Disorganized Serial Killers

Serial killings have a major impact not only on the population, but also on legal, public safety and mental health professionals. These professionals - delegates, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, forensic psychiatrists - and the general population seek explanations that make sense out of these extremely serious crimes. In order to a perpetrator be considered a serial killer, he or she must commit a series of murders over a period of time and at least a few days apart [3]. In addition, the murders must have the same modus operandi. It is the modus operandi that makes it possible to identify the criminal as the same perpetrator of various crimes. Thus, it is not enough that the same individual commits several murders to be considered a serial killer, there must be a pattern in the commission of crimes. According to the criteria of criminal prosecution, serial killers are classified into two types: organized and disorganized. When arrested, perpetrators of serial homicides have their sanity questioned, which requires a psychiatric investigation. Those who are classified as disorganized people have a strong inadequacy to social life, as well as typical phenomena of a psychotic structure. The disorganized killers are considered by psychiatric reports to be mentally ill, that is, unsound mind. They usually have obvious delusions and are easily diagnosed by forensic psychiatry. Those classified as organized have a seemingly "normal" life, as they behave as if they were integrated with current social values: they have jobs, family and social life. When they are discovered,

it usually comes as a big surprise to family members and co-workers who were unaware [4].

## The Clinical Structure Psychosis and Sadistic Practices

In psychoanalysis, according to the teachings of Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, there are clinical structures. Assuming that each subject is unique and taking into account the concept of structure in psychoanalysis, many of these organized serial killers can be structurally psychotic who use sadistic practices to stabilize themselves. Psychotic subjects are understood a priori with those who are unstructured and destabilized with delusions and hallucinations. However, the psychotic structure in psychoanalysis allows us to think about psychosis from other mainly bodily phenomena and from the disruption of the self. According to Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, delirium is an attempt of healing. Cure in the sense that if there is a mental disorder, the subject will try to arrange himself to try to remedy this disorder. For many psychotic subjects, however, delirium is not enough to cope with the overwhelming anguish that invades them. So, faced with a psychosis, and its hardships, the subject needs to invent a way of inserting himself into the world and stabilizing himself. The outputs found by these subjects may be through the art, as writers James Joyce and Fernando Pessoa, stabilization via alcohol use; excessive food intake; interventions in the body itself may lead to excessive masochistic practices that include mutilation. All these, except art, are harmful to the subject. But there is another way out that is harmful to society: sadistic practices [5].

Sadistic practices include assaults and mutilations of others' bodies that culminate in murders. Since these subjects use these practices to stabilize themselves, they have no obvious delusions and hallucinations, and need to repeat them over and over to stay stabilized. Stabilizing in psychoanalysis is about not presenting the disruptive phenomena commonly found in psychosis [6-8].

## Conclusion

Jacque Lacan, in the text Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology (1950), questions: "It would not be the search for truth that constitutes the object of criminology in the order of judicial things, and also what unifies its two faces: the truth of crime on its police face, the truth of

the criminal on its anthropological face?" [9]. What psychic truth for the serial killer? Lacan goes on Premises to every possible development of criminology (1950) and states that there are crimes that "only make sense if they are understood within a closed structure of subjectivity". From psychoanalytic theory we can think of the possibility that serial killers are psychotic who use sadistic practices to stabilize themselves. Commonly these subjects may present other phenomena that psychoanalytic theory takes into account when refers to psychotic structure as disruption of self and body. In the investigation, psychoanalytic theory can help to find possible indicatives in apparently stable subjects who turns out to be psychotic instead, who use sadistic practices to keep stable. Finally, I point out that it is not possible to state that any clinical structure tends to be more or less prone to crime. What is noteworthy is that a number of subjects who committed serial crimes under psychoanalytic listening may perhaps be considered as structurally psychotic subjects whose sadistic practices allowed them to stabilize [10,11].

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