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Are Psychopaths Born or Made?
A Comparative Study of Some American
Thriller TV Series

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirement for an M.A. Degree in English Literature and Civilization.

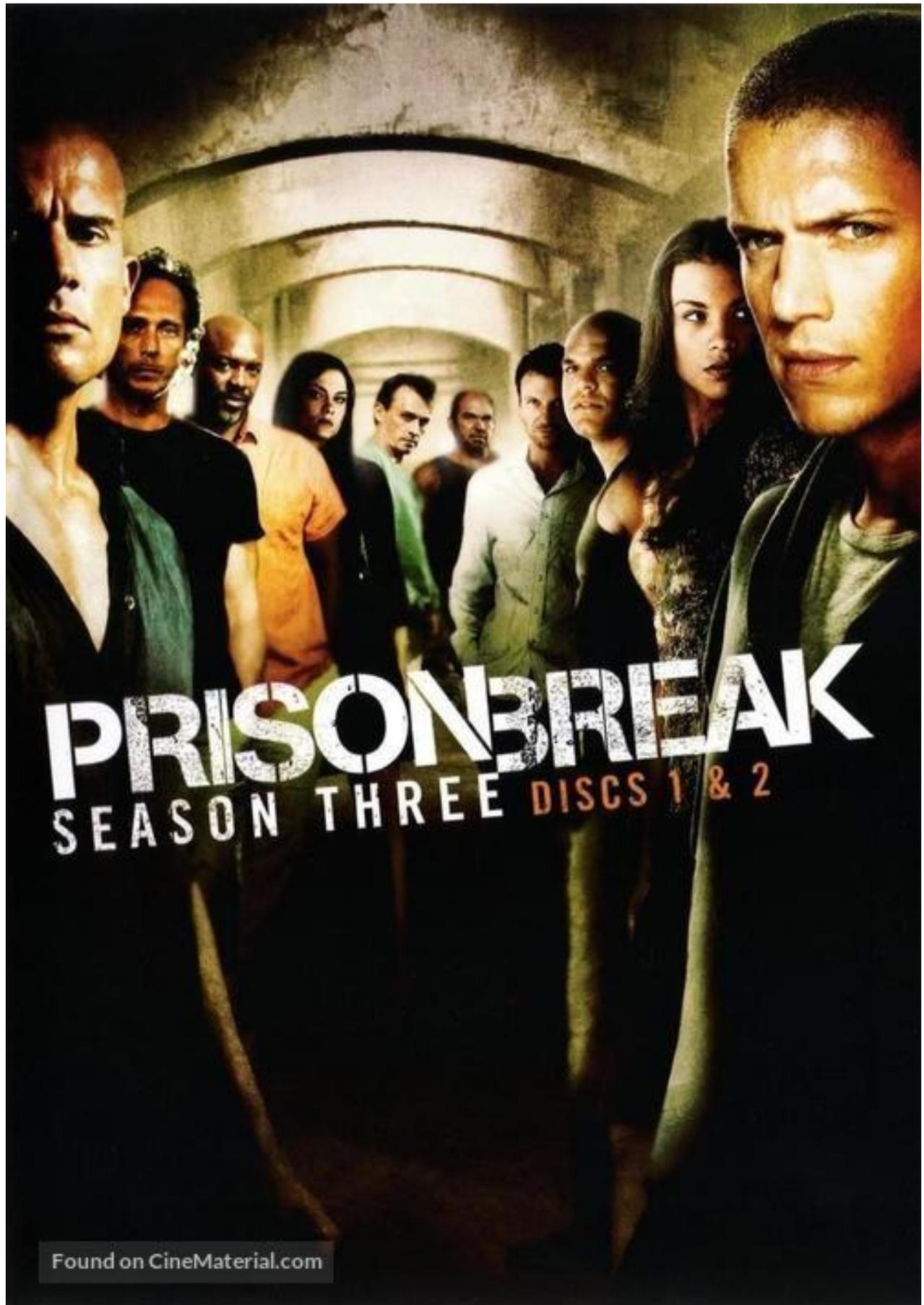
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("Prison Break" (2005) Movie Cover).

A NETFLIX LIMITED SERIES

DAHMER

MONSTER: THE JEFFREY DAHMER STORY

SEPT 21 | NETFLIX

(Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story).

Abstract

Nowadays, the issue of psychopathic behavior has arguably been one of the most recurring/intense topics in film studies, and its origins became highly questionable as either being a genetic or environmental disorder. The present dissertation is concerned with the analysis of two selected psychopaths in TV-Series: Theodore Bagwell in *Prison Break* (2005) and Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022), to reveal the nature of psychopathy and understand the way psychopaths think and feel by emphasizing the characters' agonizing past-life experiences and their tormented effects on the present. In order to do so, we relied on the theories of psychopathy as they are explained in Harvey M. Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and Robert D. Hare's *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (1999) as well as Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory in his famous book *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1991) to provide a clear answer to the questions raised in the present research: Are psychopaths born or made? What is it like to be a psychopath? And how do psychopaths think and feel? After we have analyzed the psychopaths' character traits, we have come to the result that psychopathy is a mixture of genetic factors and social forces. In other words, the present research revealed that childhood abuse and trauma, poor upbringing, loneliness, and abandonment, as well as genes, play an equal role in nourishing and sustaining psychopathy.

Key words: Psychopathy, born, made, Genetic factors, Environmental and Social Forces, Psychoanalysis, Childhood Trauma, Abuse, Upbringing, Theodore Bagwell and Jeffrey Dahmer.

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Dedication

Besides my respectful teachers, I would like to thank the strongest person in my life: my mom. I love you and I am grateful for having you. Even though I never expressed it out loud, you mean the world to me, you inspire me every day to become the best person I could be. I never told you this before, and probably never will, but it is thanks to you that I am where I need to be. Equal thanks go to my father who raised me, and provided the things I needed for me. I might sound ungrateful sometimes, but know that it is the exact opposite. You continue to inspire me. I thank my closest friends who have always been supportive. You made my days more cheerful in your ways. I love you guys.

I dedicate this to those who inspired it and will definitely not read it and to my little brother. I hope you'll accomplish bigger things. Make us proud. Make *me* proud. Last, but not least, I would like to reserve this work and dedicate it to all the children who have had and still have difficult upbringings. It inspired me to write this amazing work hopefully it'll do the same for you...

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Narratives are known to follow a particular standard structure that focuses mainly on the hero (protagonist) being irritated by the villain (antagonist). In other words, they depict the clear fight between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ guys by naturally shedding light on the first and foreshadowing the second. However, what if the roles were reversed? In the last few years, the typical focus of a story’s structure has shifted. Whether in books, movies, or TV series, the villain’s point of view has become central and dominant in recent works. This bold technique in storytelling turned out to be the heart and driving force of a story (Cotroneo, 2022). In the cinema industry, a lot of movies are represented from the villain’s point of view. In this case, the villain becomes the protagonist of the story, and those who oppose become the antagonist(s).

Films like *American Psycho* (2000), *No Country for Old Men* (2007), *Lucifer* (2016) and *The Joker* (2019) are stories told from the villain’s perspective. They, all, explore human psychology and make the audience question the difference between what is right and what is wrong, good and evil, and normal and abnormal; consequently, confusing the difference between sickness and madness, and looking at the following dichotomies with suspicion: offended/offender, traumatized/traumatizer, attacked/attacker, raped/rapist, dehumanized/dehumanizer, superior/ inferior, and so on. Following the same direction, villains are known to have multiple subtypes; psychopaths are the ones given special attention in the present research. On this occasion, Theodore Bagwell in *Prison Break* (2005) and Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022) are going to be examined. It aims to find out whether psychopathy is primarily influenced by genetic predispositions or social and environmental forces.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines psychopaths as being mentally unstable. Their egocentric and antisocial personalities are marked by a lack of remorse and empathy for others, which are often followed by delinquent and violent behaviors. In other words, psychopaths suffer from a grave and serious mental illness that causes them to behave aggressively towards other people by totally disregarding their feelings and emotions, and not caring for the damage they might have done.

The issue of psychopathic behavior has arguably been one of the most recurring and intense topics that has to be addressed. Its origins became highly questionable as either a biological, psychological, or developmental disorder. This argument never seems to end as each theorist, psychologist, and specialist has his or her perspective. Although psychopaths occupy a very small percentage of the entire human population, in the case of psychopaths with criminal tendencies, it is high time one considers their active and passive violent effects as a serious threat. Further, until the last decade, psychopathy was viewed as a "*unitary construct*" (Cook 1); however, advances in theory and research suggest that there are variants and different causes of psychopathy.

American cinema, audiences, newspaper columns, and readers worldwide have been mesmerized and abhorred in equal measure by such mysterious dark characters that are exceptionally dreadful and insensitive; consequently, psychopaths became an obsession for those who are trying to understand them. Regardless of the degree of complexity of psychopathy as well as the strenuousness of understanding it, we intend to reveal the functioning of the psychopath's mind and the roots of the disorder. To back up this humble research, the following research questions need to be addressed: Are psychopaths born or made? What is it like to be a psychopath? And how do they think and feel?

As a mental disorder, psychopathy is considered to be the focus of this study. According to Martin Kantor (2006), psychopathy is a serious, widespread psychological disorder and a social threat that endangers individuals' lives and the entire civilization (1). In *The Mask of Sanity* (1988), Cleckley originally hypothesizes that psychopathy is a unique personality profile consisting of sixteen personality features, including superficial charm, absence of delusions, lack of empathy, shallow emotional responses, impulsivity, an increased likelihood for antisocial behavior, as well as a tendency to make destructive life choices (341). It is a personality disorder characterized by deficits in affective and interpersonal functioning (397). This conceptualization generally describes psychopathy as a group of personality features that include remorselessness, callousness, deceitfulness, egocentricity, failure to form close emotional bonds, low anxiety propensity, and externalization of blame (Davies and Feldman 330). It has been claimed that psychopaths are responsible for an inordinate proportion of crimes committed, and their cunning, manipulative interpersonal style typically has a broad, destructive impact on individuals' lives, work, and relationships.

This investigation aims to find out the original causes that influenced Theodore Bagwell in *Prison Break* (2005) and Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022) to become such crucial dark monsters. Since psychopathy is an endless and vastly controversial debate, our focus is narrowed down to discussing its nature and stages of development only in the lives of the previously mentioned characters. In other words, throughout this research, the reader will be able to identify and recognize how psychosis¹ is developed, as well as discover the burden of being a psychopath. In this way, this research foregrounds genetic, environmental, and developmental psychopathy in the films under study and their impact on the characters' psychology and social stability.

¹ Psychosis is a mental disorder with a high prevalence and marked functional impairment in decreased psychomotor activity, blunted affect, and cognitive decline. It sometimes leads to heightened social isolation or disconnection, which consequently contributes to poor quality of life, and requires dedicated and ongoing treatment.

The present study examines two different but interrelated psychopaths in the field of film studies through the use of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1991), in addition to the theory of psychopathy elaborated by Harvey Cleckley in *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and Robert Hare in *Without Conscious: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths among Us* (1999). The choice of these theories stems from the belief that they are the appropriate approaches to point out the double consciousness of the characters and a suitable interpretation of mental disorders. The study also analyzes the life histories and character traits of Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022) and Theodore Bagwell in *Prison Break* (2005) in an attempt to understand the way they think and feel.

The choice of this research springs from a personal interest in villainous characters, mental disorders, and a desire to understand psychopaths in general. I have always been drawn to characters such as Death in *Supernatural* (2005), Damon Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009), Nicklaus Mikaelson in *The Originals* (2013), and Joe Goldberg in *You* (2018). Once the *Dahmer* series first came out, I knew it was the perfect opportunity to join a real-life problem (psychopathy) and fictional characters. Moved by this phenomenon, I find it both necessary and interesting to investigate this theme. Moreover, having a strong interest in American cinema and the way villains were portrayed in such an exquisite and astonishing manner, I decided to dig deep and look for similar characters that I have already encountered in my watching list. With *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* and *Conversation with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes* in hand, the following questions interrupted my train of thought: Can all human beings become psychopaths? Is psychopathy innate or developmental? And how does such a phenomenon affect the psychopath's individual life?

The Review of Literature

The phenomenon of psychopathy is a controversial debate that never seems to end. As an attempt to discover its nature and first-stage developments, the exquisitely chosen TV series, *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* and *Prison Break*, will be analyzed thoughtfully. The following reviews will summarize the relevant literature relating to this analysis. Psychopathy has not been previously analyzed as an essential component in the selected variables, which means that particular focus will be given to those studies, reviews, and critics gathered on both TV series.

It has been mentioned in an online podcast that despite its recentness, Ryan Murphy's *Monster* has been considered one of "Netflix's most originals", with its massive lunches in the platform's history (Sanders 16:30). However, the launching of this harrowing autobiographical true crime genre reveals many controversies about the central focus of the series, the fact that it humanizes a killer, as well as its negative outcomes, especially on the victim's families (Goldberg 3:12). Such controversies led the critics and the public as well to raise questions like: Should people be watching true crime for entertainment? What benefits does recalling such a story once again bring for the victims? Should such shows no longer exist? (4:20) and most importantly, does this show accomplish what Ryan Murphy said it would?

Speaking of the controversies brought up by the show, Goldberg claimed that while the series should focus on retelling the victims' experiences, as producer Ryan Murphy said it would be), it does the exact opposite by shedding more light on Jeffrey Dahmer as an attempt to glamorize killers and humanize them by providing "context" to explain the terror that they caused (2:57). In a podcast entitled "'Dahmer' and the Ethics of True Crime" (2022), Jen

Chaney states that the title of the series, itself, suggests that Jeffrey is the one being centered since his name was mentioned twice in “*Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*”.

Despite the pleasant reviews of the actors’ performances, the sound effects, and the astonishing plot, critics have become “*swift and strong*” regarding the topics that the series highlights the most and/or neglects (Sanders 17:14). One of the topics it presents is the role of appearance in deceiving people; thanks to Dahmer’s good appearance, he easily got away whenever the authorities cornered him. The show exposes the way people in the sixties often abused their white privileges; it highlights the deficiency and inadequacy of the justice system and the role it played in sustaining Dahmer’s crimes for a long period (Almeida, 2022).

Furthermore, in an online article entitled “*Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story Season 1 Review*”, Almeida points out the fact that “Jeff’s transformation into a serial killer was significantly influenced by his environment.” Later on, she suggests that both biological (anti-depressing drugs taken by his mother) and environmental factors (trauma, including his double hernia surgery) contributed mutually to the development of Dahmer’s deviant psyche (Almeida, 2022). However, the New York Times best-selling author, Chris Jerico, clearly opposes such statements by ironically saying that lots of surgeries in America were held ordinarily, and none of the patients grew up to become serial killers. Throughout the course of his podcast, he then continues to discuss further the horrific deeds of Jeffrey Dahmer, his amazement of how guys like him never get caught, and his confusion towards how such a human being ended up being a dissecting cannibal when so many people have been through the same experiences, and sometimes even worse.

All of Dahmer’s retellings including the 2017 film *My Friend Dahmer* starring Ross Lynch, 2002’s *Dahmer* starring Jeremy Renner, and 2022 *Monster* starring Evan Peters, are

Dahmer-based. They partly neglected or foreshadowed discussions like racism and white supremacy; instead, they highlighted them so bluntly.

Contrary to the *Dahmer* series, *Prison Break* is not that recent. First published in 2005, the series was immediately considered one of the best classics in the history of movies. The series' unrealistic plot blended with a mixture of fantasy and realistic touches was fascinatingly brought to life (Stanley, 2006). Although the plot follows the two brothers, Michael Scofield and Lincoln Burrows, T-Bag's role in the show and in the plot itself as the embodiment of evil is undeniable. Many viewers claim that they could not have watched the series if there were no T-Bag in it. As the most notorious and villainous character depicted in the series, a white supremacist and a rapist, T-Bag is the one who captures the hearts of the viewers the most.

In a podcast entitled "Prison Break S: 5, Robert Knepper Guests on Behind the Eyes E: 9. After Buzz TV After Show" (2017), Robert Knepper, the performer of T-Bag's character, confessed that people while watching the series during the first few episodes, despised him (T-Bag) and wanted him to be killed as soon as possible. But after a while, they just did not. They still "hate him", yet there is this curiosity about "this train wreck" that they are about to watch and the urge to know and understand him as one of the vilest characters in the history of television (3:30).

The concept of dramatizing, humanizing, and victimizing predators stems from an attempt to gain the viewers' sympathy for those characters. Like Dahmer, it is also believed that Theodore Bagwell's psychosis was influenced by social and environmental factors. Furthermore, in "Finding Some Charm in a Character Most Vile", Knepper testifies again that the abuse in T-Bag's life is reflected and can be seen all over his face. He adds that "the terrible family dynamics" were the main reason that influenced his creation (Wyatt).

The unique features of psychopathy, as well as the impact of the disorder on society as a whole, continue to spark interest and fear. The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of society as well as the individual because psychopathy, as a mental illness, is such a difficult phenomenon to understand and treat. Despite the insufficiency in their quantity in the whole world's population, there is a great necessity to analyze this topic and identify its roots. Through the theories of psychoanalysis and psychopathy, two selected characters, Theodore Bagwell and Jeffrey Dahmer, who show psychopathic traits, will be analyzed to answer the main question of the present study, which is whether psychopathy as a disorder is genetically, psychologically, or environmentally influenced. It serves as a tool for a better understanding of their psyche and how their thoughts, feelings, and emotions function. It also examines how their adult lives and decisions are determined and affected by their childhood traumas. The latter is also suitable for our study as it introduces other related concepts such as narcissism, trauma, and abuse.

The chosen research topic is partly new. The phenomenon of psychopathy has been repeatedly discussed, whether by analysts, psychologists, or researchers. What makes it unique is that it relates a real problem to a world full of fiction and imagination. It is a compass between the sciences of psychology and the production of films. Besides, the two series have never been studied before. The primary beneficiaries of this research are: it serves all kinds of people everywhere in the world to understand psychopathy, identify its roots, and be able to detect psychopaths in everyday life through some of the characteristics provided by this study. Throughout the psychoanalytic and psychopathological approaches, an exclusive understanding will be introduced, including the idea that psychopaths are victims of their psyche.

In terms of structure, this dissertation will be divided into a general introduction, three separate chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction presents the phenomenon of

psychopathy in general, briefly suggesting its relation to films, with a particular focus on Paul T. Scheuring's *Prison Break* and Ryan Murphy's *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* in the literature review.

The first chapter entitled "What Lies Behind the American Screen: Contextualizing *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* and *Prison Break*" covers the following ideas: the socio-historical context of the TV series; the creators' biographies; a summary of the two films; as well as a brief overview of the theories: psychopathy and psychoanalysis. In the historical and social context, more focus will be devoted to the discussion of the American Civil War, the role of America in the Vietnam War, and racism as the major 1960s social issue.

Meanwhile, in the second chapter entitled "The Portrayal of Psychopaths in TV Series: Examining the Characteristics of Psychopathy in *Prison Break* (2005) and *Monster* (2022)", our analysis will be based on the theory of psychopathy developed by Harvey Cleckley in *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and Robert D. Hare in *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (1999). In this chapter particularly, some psychopathic characteristics will be profoundly discussed in relation to Jeffrey Dahmer and Theodore Bagwell by using screenshots to help the reader better associate each trait with a live picture.

The third chapter entitled "From Childhood to Adulthood: Analyzing T-Bag and Jeff's Psyches & Identifying the Roots of Psychopathy in the TV Series" is dedicated to examining the psychopaths' id, ego, and superego. It also reveals the origins of psychopathy and how the selected variables become psychopaths by analyzing the life histories of the characters and their childhood traumas. All of which will be done depending on Freud's psychoanalytic approach in his translated book *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1991) and Hare's

Without Conscious (1999). In other words, trauma, childhood abuse, neglect, and loneliness are key concepts in this chapter. Finally, the general conclusion will restate the main issue, which is whether psychopathy is influenced by nature or nurture, and then deliver the final resolution.

CHAPTER ONE

**What Lies Behind the American Screen: Contextualizing
Prison Break (2005) & *Dahmer-Monster: the Jeffrey Dahmer Story*
(2022).**

Introduction

As already announced in the general introduction to this research paper, the following chapter is concerned with theoretical and hypothetical discussions. That is to say, it is dedicated to exploring the theoretical framework underlying the production of the two selected series: *Prison Break* (2005) and *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022). These discussions incorporate America's most notable historical and social events that fashioned the destiny of such a powerful and resilient nation. These events cannot be passed by, or ignored, such as the American Civil War and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement Vietnam War and the role of the U.S. in it, and racism as a social and political issue that is still evoked even nowadays. It also covers the biographies of the creators as well as summaries of the two TV series. To reach our objective through this research, it is worth providing some relevant information about the theories of psychoanalysis and psychopathy as they are referred to in Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1991), Harvey Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and Robert D. Hare's *Without Conscious* (1999).

1. The Socio - historical Background

1.1. The Role of History in Shaping the American Identity

The significance and impact of history in the establishment and development of America, particularly the United States, cannot be overstated. The history of the country includes a variety of events, ideas, and people who impacted its identity and institutions. The finest examples are the American Civil War and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War which was followed by the Antiwar Movement.

On the one hand, the American Civil War, lasting from 1861 to 1865, was a bloody and significant conflict between the North and South. It was fueled by religious and political

disagreements, and later turned into an armed conflict between the two nations. Some historians argue that sectionalism, tariffs, state rights, abolitionists, and Abraham Lincoln were the main causes of the war. However, the unjust treatment of slaves from the trans-Atlantic slave trades further widened the gap between the North and South (Elliot and Hughes, 2019).

After Lincoln's election, he sought to unify the nation by abolishing slavery. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which allowed both free blacks and escaped slaves to join the Union Army. The end of the war marked the beginning of the reconstruction era, which included amendments to the American Constitution, allowing the freedom of slaves, citizenship, equal protection, and voting rights. However, racial segregation continued in the South, leading to Jim Crow Laws restricting black freedom and voting rights.

The Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) emerged as a peaceful protest, led by prominent black figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglass, Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted the federal government and private individuals the legal power to take a firm stand against racial discrimination (Friedman 56). This protracted struggle was painful and vital to African Americans, but its importance in shaping their lives and histories is unquestionable.

On the other hand, The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War or the "American War," was the longest and most costly war in U.S. history, spanning from 1955 to 1975. It was fought between the communist government of North Vietnam and the democratic government of South Vietnam, with the U.S. being a supportive ally. The war's origins can be traced back to the U.S. government's fear of the domino theory, which feared that if Vietnam fell to communism, other Southeast Asian countries would follow. The conflict was also influenced by geographical and religious drives, as the U.S. sought to prevent communism's expansion.

The U.S.'s commitment to the war despite challenges was based on its “definitions of containment², dominos³, intervention, and linkages⁴” with other countries (Kolko qtd. in “Vietnam and America: An Introduction” 24). The war caused significant economic, political, social, and cultural consequences, leading to inflation and budget deficits. It also divided the nation as protests and civil disobedience arose.

Overall, it may be said that the Civil War and the Vietnam War significantly shaped American identity by promoting and accentuating the notions of freedom, equality, and national unity. They marked a turning point, challenging assumptions and exposing deep divisions. They also impacted race relations and civil rights in the U.S.A. The two wars, specifically the Vietnam War, taught valuable diplomacy and negotiation lessons.

1.2. Racism in America during the 1960s

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights 2).

As important factors in American history, racism, and racial segregation expanded beyond expectations during the 1960s, when the country was plagued by issues of intolerance toward marginalized groups, consequently causing criminal offenses; inciting hatred, violence, discrimination, and unpleasant treatment. Racism and anti-racism created a battle of ideas based on the impossibility of coexistence as there was always the belief in white

² It is known as the Containment Doctrine, or Truman Doctrine, which was adapted by President Harry Truman in 1947. It refers to the containment of communism. It is also known as Truman Doctrine, which was adapted by President Harry Truman in 1947.

³ It was a theory adapted by the U.S. after WWII. It was believed that if a community, country, or continent fell into communism, others would follow.

⁴ The U.S.'s relations with other countries and continents.

superiority and dominance, and the characterization of “Africans and their African American descendants as lesser human beings” (Smedley).

The sixties were marked by great social, political, and cultural changes; emancipation, imperialism, and thriving nationalism contributed to the escalation of the ideological racism of blacks and overly racist regimes that believed in extreme racist propaganda. This led to the segregation of the black communities from the whites throughout the separation policies when it came to housing, schools, bars, libraries, toilets, hospitals, parks, and all kinds of public and personal facilities. As the inferior race, the blacks were also not given the same opportunities as the whites.

When African Americans were brutally mistreated and abused in the U.S., a civil rights movement was created to support segregated groups. However, instead of diminishing the issue, the consequences of these reforms became more intense, and racial minorities were under increasing attacks, which were legally permitted at the time (Jim Crow Laws). In his web article entitled “The Historical Origins and Development of Racism”, professor George M. Frederickson (2003) wrote “The Darwinism emphasis on “the struggle for existence” and concern for “the survival of the fittest” was conducive to the development of a new and more credible scientific racism in an era that increasingly viewed race relations as an arena for conflict rather than a stable hierarchy.” (1).

All in all, the struggle for equality and eliminating racial discrimination is still a predominant issue in our day. Accepting the deepest forms and degrees of divisiveness and discrimination cannot be easily transcended or erased. Accordingly, constitutions and rules cannot change people’s attitudes and mindsets, but acceptance and humanity can.

2. The Creators' Biography

2.1. Paul T. Scheuring

As an expert artisan who mastered the art of tense action dramas, Paul T. Scheuring, known as Paul Scheuring, is an American screenwriter, producer, and director of films and TV shows. He is ascribed to be the head writer, creator, and executive producer of the hit TV series *Prison Break*, which has been aired on Fox Broadcasting Company since August 2005. Out of its seventeen nominations, the show won four awards, including an Alma Award and People's Choice Award in 2006; an Australian Film Institute Award in 2007; and a Leo Award in 2018.

Born in Aurora, Illinois, USA, on November 20th, 1968, Scheuring moved with his family to Davis, California, at the age of five, where he grew up and graduated from the Los Angeles School of Theater, Film, and Television at UCLA with a B.A. in Film and Television. Before his success, he worked a series of odd jobs, such as a courier, cable installer, and factory worker. However, in 2000, Paul Scheuring finally tackled the film industry and started his first moviemaking career, when he wrote, produced, directed, and even edited *36K*, a low-budget crime thriller that did not receive much credit. But his next script did. Co-written with Christian Gudegast, Scheuring's drug cartel drama, *A Man Apart*, was quickly produced in 2003.

In the same year, he received an opportunity to develop *Prison Break*, an idea of a female colleague, into a miniseries script for the FOX network. The draft was immediately turned down due to the unconventional storyline. Scheuring claimed that it was *unorthodox*⁵, so no one knew what to do with it. After that, Scheuring launched more unconventional serial

⁵ Scheuring meant that the series was unusual and untraditional.

shows like *Lost* and *The 4400* in the 2000s, which made Fox Studios call him back immediately. When *Prison Break* stayed on shelves for nearly one year, the first episode of the show was finally aired after Scheuring had written the script. As his first “foray in television”, Scheuring admits that *Prison Break* was a “huge learning curve” for him (Idato).

Following the completion of *Prison Break*, Scheuring began the production of *AR2* (2008), a drama series co-developed with *The West Wing* director and executive producer Thomas Schlamme; subsequently wrote and directed *The Experiment* (2010), starring Oscar and Academy Award winners Adrien Brody and Forrest Whitaker; and produced *Klondike* (2014), a series that he created and co-wrote; and was also confirmed to be *Halo: Nightfall*'s (2014) writer, a five-episode series based upon the video game franchise connecting the storyline between *Halo 4* (2012) and *Halo 5: Guardians* (2015).

Additionally to the previously stated films, TV shows, and series, Paul Scheuring continued making and writing others, such as *Briar & Graves* in 2005 (creator and writer); *Mexicali* in 2010 (writer); *Zero Hour* in 2013 (creator, writer, and executive producer); and *Den of Thieves* in 2018 (writer), and so on.

Despite his success in Hollywood for twenty-five years, Scheuring has always wanted to write novels, and that is exactly what he did. His very first novel was *The Far Shore* (2017), an “ambitious, sprawling literary project” that evolves between WW II and contemporary times, “featuring diverse prose styles about a man in search of spiritual peace and the granddaughter who needs to find him” (Kirkus Reviews 1). And in April 2022, his second book, *The Resurrectionist*, was published. Set in London, the novel follows body snatcher Job Mowatt, anatomist Percival Quinn, and Beauchamp and Gray, a pair of opium eaters, in which Scheuring explores relevant issues, such as class, commodification, and scientific ethics.

It is a moment of triumph to witness his involvement in both cinematography and narratology. Paul Scheuring, now, lives in Mill Valley, California, with his wife and two kids. And as he changed his career, it turned out to be something he loved and enjoyed, something he did not have “the luxury of doing as a screenwriter.” (Jernigan).

2.1. Ryan Murphy

Ryan Patrick Murphy is an American screenwriter, filmmaker, director, and producer. He is the most powerful man in TV, who produced “an unusually string of commercial and critical hits: audacious, funny-peculiar, joyful destabilizing series nearly in every genre”, and a lot of his shows have been “critically divisive” (Nussbaum 4).

Born in November 1965, in Indianapolis, Indiana, Murphy attended a Catholic church from his youngest age until the eighth grade. He graduated from Warren Central High School of Indianapolis and went to Indiana University Bloomington, where he majored in journalism. Before transitioning to show business, he started as a freelance journalist at the Washington Post in 1986 alongside reporter Kara Swisher. He worked for *the Miami Herald*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Knoxville News Sentinel* and *Entertainment Weekly*. He began screenwriting in the late 1990s when his script “*Why Can't I Be Audrey Hepburn?*” was purchased by Steven Spielberg. His first program, *Popular*, an American teen comedy-drama television program, was launched in 1999, followed by “the satirical melodrama” *Nip/Tuck* in 2003, which was the turning point of his life and career (4).

Nip/Tuck is an American medical drama series and psychological thriller created by Ryan Murphy that aired on FX in the United States from July 22nd, 2003, to March 3rd, 2010. Set in a plastic surgery center, McNamara/Troy, the show focuses on the two doctors who own it: McNamara (Dylan Walsh) and his partner Christian Troy (Julian McMahon). In one of the Behind the Scenes panel discussions (2004), Murphy (creator and executive producer of the show) expressed his long fascination with plastic surgery, which stemmed from the

1973 film *Ash Wednesday*, starring Elizabeth Taylor as a woman who transformed her life with plastic surgery. The film was “haunting” him for years, he claims, and he kept wondering how people “thought they could be happier by changing their face” (Roberts). This incident was later augmented in his life when he was a journalist researching for an undercover story in which he interviewed past patients of plastic surgery. In an online article entitled “The Inner Beauty of Nip/Tuck”, Roberts Terri wrote that Murphy confessed that he went there thinking he “was going to write a very snarky, sarcastic story about plastic surgery”. Instead, he found himself “moved by these people and why they wanted to change their lives, and how they thought they would find love or better jobs or things like that.” The story was never written, and a “career crisis eventually led Murphy out of journalism and into television production”.

The two previously mentioned works were only the beginning of his outstanding, productive, and rich career. As the creator, writer, and executive producer of the *Monster* series, Murphy was also responsible for creating, directing, writing, and executing numerous films, TV shows, series, and documentaries, such as *Running with Scissors* (2006), *Glee* (2009), *Eat Pray Love* (2010), *American Horror Story* (2011), *9-1-1* (2018), *The Politician* (2019), *Circus of Books*, *Hollywood* and *Ratched* (2020), *The Watcher* (2022), and so many others. In February 2018, Murphy rose even higher by signing a three- hundred-million-dollar, five-year contract with Netflix.

Ryan Murphy was nominated thirty-six (36) times as a producer, writer, and director for Emmy Awards, for which he won six Primetime ones; six times for the Golden Globe Awards, for which he won one; two for the Tony Awards (in which he won one); and two other nominations for Grammy Awards. Raised in an Irish Catholic family with his parents (Jim and J. Andy Miller) and his brother Darren Murphy, Ryan Murphy has been married to

photographer David Miller since 2012, with whom he has one son, Logan Phineas Miller, born through surrogacy.

3. Summary of the TV Series

3.1. *Prison Break* by Paul Scheuring

After being originally turned down by Fox in 2003 due to concerns about how such a series could be developed, *Prison Break* successfully grew to become one of the best classic drama thriller series of all time. Executive produced by Matt Olmstead, Kevin Hooks, Marty Adelstein, Dawn Parouse, Neal H. Moritz, and Brett Ratner, who directed the pilot episode; the American crime drama revolves around two brothers: Lincoln Burrows (Dominic Purcell) and Michael Scofield (Wentworth Miller).

Through the captivating plot twists and the difficult-to-love characters, creator Paul Scheuring flawlessly illustrates the moral war inside each one of the characters, especially Michael's. As a brilliant structural engineer, Michael Scofield devotes the rest of his life to getting his only brother, Lincoln Burrows, out of Fox River Prison. Contrary to Michael, Lincoln is a high school dropout and an ex-convicted felon. By having such a shady background, he was the perfect prey to be framed for the homicide of Terrence Steadman, the brother of the Vice President of the United States, Caroline Reynolds. In order to alter this wrongdoing, Michael formulates a deadly escape plan. With a Master Degree of Science in Civil Engineering, and as a flourishing worker in the company that built the Fox prison; Michael easily got access to the prison's plan design in the archives. He desperately needed to see it. He could not keep it with him, so he managed to establish a way that allowed him to keep the plan closer and reachable for future needs, so he tattooed it all over his body. After that, he planned a bank robbery to get himself arrested.

While Burrows is on death row and scheduled for execution within the month, he suddenly notices his brother. Michael informs him about the crazy plan of his and the necessity to follow his instructions step-by-step to break both of them out with his full-body tattoo acting as his guide, a tattoo that hides the scheme of the prison facility and important tricks and clues vital to the escape. Along the way of executing his genius layout, the brothers pick up some unlikely friends and enemies like Sara Tancredi (Sarah Wayne Callies) and Brad Bellick (Wade Williams), who either slow or fasten their breaking plan.

The series as a whole contains five seasons, in which each one presents or follows a certain problem. The first season for example is about breaking Lincoln out of prison; the second one focuses on the eight escapers known as the Fox River Eight: the two brothers, Fernando Sucre (Amaury Nolasco), Theodore Bagwell “T-Bag” (Robert Knepper), Benjamin Miles Franklin “C-Note” (Rockmond Dunbar), David Apolskis “Tweener” (Lane Garrison), John Abruzzi (Peter Stormare), and Charles Patoshik “Haywire” (Silas Weir Mitchell); the third season depicts the reversed roles of the two brothers with Lincoln’s declaration of innocence, and with Michael being captured in Sona prison; The fourth season is about a series of actions done by the brothers in order to take down “the Company” which was responsible for the Lincoln’s framing and the multiple attempts to murder the brothers. The season ended with Michael’s death, with his wife and kid putting flowers on his grave. It was supposed to be the last season of the show. However, later on, Paul Scheuring was announced to officially come back as the series’ creator in an attempt to revive Michael and assemble the main characters together once again to give it a separate and logical continuity.

Prison Break was a complex and intense show that thrived at demonstrating “the grey areas of life” (Peterson). Throughout its theme “Good vs. Evil”, the generous Scheuring managed to explain that not all “good guys” are good and not all “bad guys” are bad; however, each one of them has good and bad within their nature and personality. Theodore

Bagwell, the main focus of this study, is a great proof of that, despite the fact that he is a psychopath. Furthermore, the overall success of the TV show paved the way to several tie-ins, including a videogame, the spin-off series *Prison Break*, Proof of Innocence for mobile phones, online web episodes, an official magazine, and a novel.

3.1. *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* by Ryan Murphy

Alongside Ian Brennan, Alexis Martin Woodall, Eric Kovtun, Peters, Janet Mock, and Carl Franklin, Ryan Murphy, *one of the most powerful men in TV*, created, produced, and co-executed Netflix's latest true crime blockbuster, *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022), the second most watched English series on the platform, in which he intended to tell "a complicated human story" because, for him, people became so interested in mental health after the COVID pandemic (Rice, 2022).

Being nominated four times at the 80th Golden Globe Awards, including for Best Limited or Anthology Series or Television Film, the American horror story *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* is a recent addition to a series of media adaptations about the infamous serial killer, sex offender, cannibal, and necrophiliac Jeffrey Dahmer, also known as the Milwaukee Monster. In ten episodes, the series follows the life of Jeffrey Dahmer and how he became the most notorious serial killer in America. The story's plot is built upon Jeffrey Dahmer, starring Evan Peters; his father, Lionel Dahmer, played by Richard Jenkins; his stepmother, Chari (Molly Ringwald); his grandmother, Catherine (Michael Learned); and his black neighbor, Glenda, as the most important opposing character in the series, starring Niecy Nash.

Dahmer's childhood was tormented by emotional injury and misery. In his infancy, nothing strange was evident. He was portrayed as any normal child. The shift in his psyche, personality, and life as a whole became noticeable in the series when Dahmer was diagnosed

with a double hernia injury. Furthermore, throughout the depiction of Dahmer's parents' unstable relationship with the constant verbal and physical abuse between them, the traumas and neglect he had been through before and after his brother was born, as well as Dahmer constantly witnessing his mother Joyce Anette Flint in chaotic states because she was mentally ill (postpartum psychosis), Murphy highlights the fact that Dahmer's environment was intensively toxic and influential.

Consequently, Jeffrey Dahmer became a loner who began showing interest in dissecting animals, which was frequently practiced later on in the show with the help of Lionel Dahmer, his father. Being a failure at school, Lionel was happy to see his oldest son finally finding his passion. As a research chemist who was preparing for his PhD, Lionel thought that his son will grow to become a chemist like him. Less he did know that he was just helping him to become something or someone no one ever expected him to be, the Milwaukee Cannibal. Driven by his blood fascination, this new hobby of his was like a call to his wild fantasies. Fantasies where he could murder, dismember, and dissect people that were brought to life in his adulthood. He started as an animal dissector and ended up as a mass cannibal murderer.

Additionally to Dahmer's life, the show focuses on the victims too. Steven Hicks (eighteen), Steven Tuomi (twenty-four), Jamie Doxtator (fourteen), Richard Guerrero (twenty-five), Anthony Sears (twenty-six), Raymond Smith (thirty-three), Curtis Straughter (eighteen), Errol Lindsey (nineteen), Anthony Hughes (thirty-one), Matt Turner (twenty) and many others were all Dahmer's victims. He mostly preyed on minority groups. By doing so, he followed a certain methodology: first, he targeted them in gay bars, shops, malls, or bus stops. After that, he lures them back to his home, grandma's home, or the bath-town club. Then he provides them with drugged alcohol and kills them. After their deaths, he sometimes consumes some body parts (cannibalism) and practices necrophilia over them. To dispose of

his victims' bodies, Jeff followed a variety of methods: after he had killed them, he dismembers their bodies and dispose of the parts in various locations. He even used acid and other chemicals to dissolve his victims' flesh and bones. In some cases, Dahmer buried his victims' remains in his backyard, in others, he simply left them in his apartment for a long time before disposing of them.

The true crime anthology series does not only follow Jeffrey's life individually, but also the consequences of having such a life, and the crucial chilling and horrible acts committed towards seventeen boys and men that he murdered and dismembered with cold blood between 1978 and 1991 in Bath Township, Ohio, West Allis, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee. Even though the show received heterogeneous reviews, it perfectly depicts some fact-based realities of the twentieth century since it highlights some key aspects such as poverty, racism, and homophobia, as well as the police institution and its failure.

4. Theories and Approaches

4.1. The Freudian Psycho-analytic Theory

Psychoanalysis is a field of psychology specialized in the depth exploration of the human mind and its processes, and a method used in treating mental disorders. First developed in the late 19th century by the Viennese neurologist and psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, the term originally came into use during Freud's collaboration with physiologist Joseph Breuer in their clinical observations and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), a condition marked by uncontrollable emotional outbursts. Soon after that, the approach became widely known as a distinct field of psychology, with its massive impact on literature, cultural studies, and art. The emergence of psychoanalysis did not only become more acknowledged throughout Freud's studies on Hysteria, however, his theories of the dream work, slips of the tongue, and sexuality were also notable and of high influence during that period (Pick 21).

As a diagnosed psychological disorder that developed in the suppression of unpleasant emotions on account of traumatic events in the patient's life, Freud (1920) based his treatment on psychoanalytic processes that often involve free association, transference, and interpretation by the analyst in order to treat hysteria (230). In his attempts to do so, he found himself developing a new constructive comprehension of the theoretical model of the mind (1900-1905) which explains how the unconscious is an instinctually driven process that underlines most psychological activity.

In this systematic theory, Freud used the analogy of an iceberg featuring a mind's structure and functioning. He described it on three levels: The conscious mind, which is seen at the tip of an iceberg, comprises the conscious mental processes (Freud, 1915); the preconscious, which exists just beneath the conscious and previous to the unconscious mind, contains thoughts and feelings that a person is not currently aware of, but can easily draw attention to the conscious. The unconscious mind, existing at the bottom of an iceberg, is considered to be the most important part of the Freudian theory, and it is responsible for human behavior as it consists of all the locked away fears, unacceptable desires, violent motives, immoral urges, selfish needs, and shameful traumatic experiences, that may happen through the process of repression.

In 1923, Freud published *The Ego and the Id*, where he developed his theory of personality and self, and distinguished between three different psychic agencies: the id, the ego, and the superego. According to Freud (1920), the id is the primal and innate part of personality that we are born with, and the one that consists of all the drives and desires (including the libido), as it operates only on the pleasure principle. While the id is chaotic, the ego works with reason. It is "the part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world" (Freud, 1920; 25), and begins to develop during the first three years of a child's life. Freud described the ego as "a man on horseback, who has to hold in

check the superior strength of the horse” (Freud, 1920; 15) because it considers social norms, realities, and rules. Contrary to these two, the superego is part of the unconscious that speaks out of consciousness. This means that it acts as a moral compass by incorporating the values of society learned from others controlling the id’s impulses to strive for perfection and be more realistic. Furthermore, a balance between the three stages should be maintained, or controlled by the ego to prevent any disturbing anxieties in case of any conflict; otherwise, it could become maladaptive, eventually leading to *psychopathology*⁶ (Safran and Gardner-Schuster 341).

Speaking of the possible damage that could be caused by the instability of the two previously mentioned agencies (the id and superego), Freud introduced various ego defenses, which he referred to as defense mechanisms, as a way to preserve a person’s anxiety emerging from inappropriate and disturbing thoughts or feelings. These psychological strategies are unconsciously used to distort realities and help the person cope with a situation or even with him or herself. These include denial, displacement, projection, rationalization, repression, regression, and sublimation.

In addition to the theory of personality, Freud proposed five psychosexual stages responsible for developing a healthy personality, in which each stage is linked to a specific pleasure area that becomes a focal point in adult life. The first stage is known as the oral stage (from the day of birth to eighteen months). In this stage, the infant seeks immediate gratification of needs, and the primary focus of the libido is on the mouth and oral sensations (sucking). Too little, or too much satisfaction, leads to oral fixations in adulthood, such as nail-biting or smoking. The second stage begins from age one to three years old, when the child’s pleasure focuses on the anal, and shifts to retaining and eliminating feces, and learning

⁶ In this conception, it is a neurotic problem that results from the constant struggle between the id and ego. In other words, when conflicts between aggressive and controllable instincts arise, psychopathology develops.

self-control. After that, the phallic stage follows up immediately, stretching to the age of six when the infant's libido centers open genitalia as the erogenous zone and becomes familiar with biological and constitutional sex differences. It is during this stage that the child starts to develop sexual desires towards the opposite-sex parent and becomes hostile to the same-sex parent, resulting in what Freud called the Oedipus (boys) or Electra (girls) complex. When this happens, the child's sexual desires become silenced and dormant during the latency stage (six to adolescence), and more importance is given to friendships and intellectual development. While sex urges remain depressed in the latency, they are again awakened in the genital stage (adolescence to adulthood) and tend to be directed toward the opposite sex peers with the libido centered on genitals.

In general, it can be said that psychoanalysis has brought massive knowledge to its way of explaining the human psyche as well as treating and analyzing all sorts of mental disorders. Originally, the discipline of psychoanalysis was developed by Sigmund Freud with several colleagues like Carl Jung, Wilhelm Stekel, and his daughter Anna. Yet, the movement soon grew internationally after Freud's death in 1939, with important centers in Vienna, Zurich, Berlin, Budapest, Italy, France, England, the United States, and Latin America. Each contributed its unique influence to the development of different schools and theories of psychoanalysis, all of which are interpreted and used differently. After providing the reader with some general information about psychoanalysis as it is explained by Freud, it is convenient to refer to some concepts in psychopathy that will be adopted in our study.

2. The Prevalence of Psychopathy in Harvey Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and Hare's *Without Conscience* (1999)

It is a different kind of abnormality from all those now recognized as seriously impairing competency... The first and most striking difference is this: ... The observer is confronted

with a convicting mask of sanity. All the outward features of this mask are intact... (Cleckley 370).

Psychopathy is a psychological construct that describes chronic immoral and antisocial behavior, as well as dysfunctional personality traits, including a lack of consciousness, remorselessness, guilt, and the ability to lie and deceive (Cleckley, 1988). The emergence of psychopathy as a theory can be traced back to Harvey M. Cleckley, who was one of the first authors to provide a fine-grained and complex conceptualization of psychopathy. In his book entitled *The Mask of Sanity*, he extensively presents a series of vignettes that contain typical features and character traits of psychopaths whom he interviewed in a locked institution back in the 1940s.

In the first section of his book “An Outline of the Problem”, Cleckley interchangeably employed the terms “psychopath”, “psychotic”, and “insane” to indicate that they present a similar personality, which he claimed “though certified automatically as sane by the verbal definitions of law and medicine, their behavior demonstrates an irrationality and incompetence that are gross and obvious” (14). The term psychopathy is also often associated with sociopathy, dissociative, and antisocial personality disorders and shares many features with histrionic and narcissistic personality disorders (Blackburn, 2005). Even though the various terms are defined and measured in slightly different ways, the concepts are highly interrelated (Hare and Neumann, 2008).

Elsewhere in his book, Cleckley presented some examples of psychopathic individuals who managed to achieve and maintain successful functioning in the community, such as “the psychopath as a businessman” (199), “the psychopath as a scientist” (208), and “the psychopath as psychiatrist” (214). After that, he suggested that psychopathy, or the so-called masked pathology (377), was originally a clinical profile consisting of sixteen characteristics (341). Furthermore, the book captures Cleckley’s concept of psychopathy as masked

pathology, which characterizes psychopathic individuals who show ostensible healthy “verbal and facial expressions, tones of voice, and all the other signs... implying conviction and emotion and the normal experiencing of life”, along with verbal “judgments of value and emotional appraisals [that seem] sane and appropriate” (371). In other words, Cleckley “considered the most salient feature of psychopathy as a major psychiatric condition that entails a highly credible appearance of psychological normality, or “sanity” that operates to conceal “mask” a severe underlying pathology that is manifested in reckless, unrestrained behavior across multiple areas of life” (Patrick 3). He amplifies this “mask” conception by identifying it as a defining feature of psychopathy since it is a positive social demeanor, and he relates it to the primitive-instinctual “id” or “shadow” side within every person that is responsible for reasoning, sensibility, empathy, generosity, and others.

Since Cleckley’s work, the study of the phenomenon has expanded significantly with the help of some prominent researchers in distinctive psychological fields. This includes the renowned psychologist Robert D. Hare, who identified several potential causes of the disorder in his book *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*. Before we move on to the discussion of those commonly occurring causes, it is important to note that Hare also developed the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL, 1980), later modified as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R, 1991). Often referred to as the “golden standard” for measuring psychopathic behavior in clinical and forensic settings, the PCL-R has mainly been used in numerous scientific studies, especially studies of criminal behavior; Cleckley’s *The Mask of Sanity* served as a basis for creating the PCL and its updated version. While both Cleckley and Hare recognize the lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse as significant defining traits of psychopathy, Hare’s PCL-R adds more factors to its assessment, such as criminal behavior.

To address the origins and subtypes of psychopathy, Hare, in his book *Without Conscience*, discusses three case scenarios, under which psychopathy can evolve. First, speaking of psychopathy, as a result of nature, Hare claims that one of the many ways to continue the spread of psychopathy is through the deceptive, manipulative, cheating, and misrepresentation the status of the psychopath (165). In other words, many psychopaths tend to “have so many children that some are bound to survive, even if they are neglected or abandoned. Psychopaths supposedly adhere to an extreme version of the latter strategy: “[t]hey reproduce as often as possible and waste little energy in worrying about the welfare of their offspring. In this way, they propagate their genes with little or no personal investment.” (166). Later on, Hare suggested that psychopathy could be directly influenced by early social and environmental factors that are “the result of early psychological trauma or adverse experiences” such as emotional or physical abuse, poverty, and parental rejection (170). Finally, Hare moved to explain psychopathy as a result of a combination of psychological, environmental, and genetic factors. In fact, he even favored this one because he argued that “No amount of social conditioning will by itself generate a capacity for caring about others or a powerful sense of right and wrong” (174). In this sense, it is likely evident that psychopathy is a mixture of biological factors and environmental forces.

Although it remains a challenge in treating psychosis and the ongoing debate about the ethics of treating mentally ill people, psychopathy as a theory has successfully emerged with considerable pragmatic importance to the individual and society as a whole. It led to a better understanding of the disorder by shedding light on the developmental elements predisposing to psychopathy, its characteristics, as well as its risk factors.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered Paul Scheuring and Ryan Murphy's biographies, and a summary of the two films: *Prison Break* as well as *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. As far as history is concerned, it is important to know that this chapter includes some important events which shaped American history and are related to the selected series: the American Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and Anti-War Movement, as well as racism. Furthermore, the two theories that will be applied in the next two chapters are also explained since they are the tools used for the analysis of the main characters: Theodore Bagwell and Jeffrey Dahmer.

CHAPTER TWO

The Portrayal of Psychopaths in American Movies: Examining the Characteristics of Psychopathy in *Prison Break* (2005) & *Monster* (2022).

Introduction

Cinematography has always been a powerful medium to communicate thoughts and ideas, evoke emotions, and arise conversations about multiple social issues. It is an essential part of society, culture, and civilization which auspiciously contributed to personality construction and it sometimes influences one's perspectives. Throughout cinematography, or films, the representation of psychopaths, and the issue of psychopathy as a whole, have become more acknowledged in a sense that a great "proportion of the general population has an impression of how psychopathic persons are from the movies" (Hesse 208). In the following, the psychopaths' most common and frequent character traits, suggested by Harvey Cleckley and Robert Hare in their masterpieces *The Mask of Sanity* (1988) and *Without Conscious* (1999) are going to be analyzed and examined. Personal screenshots are included for better understanding.

Characteristics of a Psychopath in the selected movies

Psychopathy as a mental illness is identified by multiple character traits. In *The Mask of Sanity* (1988), Cleckley suggests sixteen features of psychopathy as an effort to consider traditional concepts of the problem as well as to differentiate broadly the subject of his study from the other personality reactions (341). Similarly, Hare, in his book *Without Conscious* (1999), proposes *the psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R)* as a complex clinical tool for professional use, summarizing the key traits and behaviors of psychopaths that he divided into two types: six emotional and interpersonal characteristics, and six social deviance traits (34). The coming points are believed to be the common psychopathic criterion between Jeffrey Dahmer (Jeff) and Theodore Bagwell (T-Bag), and among the most significant ones which need to be discussed.

1. Early-Behavior Problems

Behavioral problems are a list of manners in which a person's maladjustments are manifested through violent, hostile, disruptive, and sadistic behaviors. In the case of psychopathy, it is important to note that behavioral problems are often exhibited at an early age, mainly between four until the age of sixteen.

These might include persistent lying, cheating, theft, fire setting, truancy, class disruption, substance abuse, vandalism, violence, bullying, running away, [animal cruelty] and precocious sexuality. Because many children exhibit some of these behaviors at one time or another, especially children raised in violent neighborhoods or in disrupted or abusive families, it is important to emphasize that the psychopath's history of such behaviors is more extensive and serious than that of most others, even when compared with those of siblings and friends raised in similar settings (Hare 66).

Speaking of the Milwaukee Killer, Jeffrey Dahmer, his early disruptive behaviors first came to notice when he was around six years old. In the second episode of "*Monster*" entitled "Please Don't Go", creator Ryan Murphy quickly shifts the scene from Jeff's arrest to a series of flashbacks recalling Jeff's childhood memories. Jeff, as a kid, never had any kind of interaction with his classmates at Bath Elementary School; he is always alone (Figure 1), whether on a bus on his way home, at school, or even in his favorite place which seems to be a deserted lake in the middle of nowhere. He was also constantly being called "weird" by his comrades (Figure 2) not only because he is a loner, but because when every kid from his class gave apples to their teacher as an act of kindness, Jeff gave her a jar full of tadpoles that he brought from the lake.



Figure 1: Jeff sitting alone on the school bus.



Figure 2: Jeff is called a weirdo by a classmate.



Figure 3: Jeff's first expressed anger.

The previously mentioned elements do not implicate that Jeff was showing behavioral problems which could influence his future self as a psychopath. However, such odd behaviors were the beginning of other misconducts. Later on in the series, Jeff's repressed anger issues pop out when he noticed his tadpoles (the ones he gave to his teacher) with another kid. Claiming that they were not his, Jeff yells in rage into the other kid's face (Figure 3). After he got out of school, he follows the boy to his house and sneaks in without permission to take back what belonged to him in the first place, his jar. Normally, if a normal child was in his place, he would probably go home and start whining and complaining about it to his parents; but what Jeff did, here, was completely different. In figure 4 and 5, you can see Jeff in the woods, in his usual spot (the lake) where he picks up a can of motor oil and pours it into the jar of tadpoles, blackening the water, and stares down into the jar as they wriggle. This means that he has both anger issues and a wrong way of expressing it. He displaced his anger upon something more vulnerable, the tadpoles, laying his vengeance and anger upon them.



Figure 4: Jeff's first attempts at animal cruelty.



Figure 5: Jeff observes the tadpoles' torture.

Jeff's odd behaviors continue to spark throughout the course of the episode when his fascination with dead animals and dissecting them is revealed. When young Jeff was having dinner alongside his parents, his mother complained about a bizarre smell in the house. The next morning, Jeff and his father, Lionel, went to check it out; they found out that an opossum died beneath their house, spreading the odor all over the house. As Lionel takes out the dead species, Jeff immediately touches it (Figure 6). He was neither scared nor disgusted, he just touched it.



Figure 6: Jeff instinctively touches dead animals.



Figure 7: Another unusual behavior.

Curious about the animal, Jeff began asking all sorts of questions related to the animal's death, and the hole in his brain. Happy to see his son finally showing interest in something after his traumatic surgery, Lionel recounts an experiment of his at the University where his professor told him to take a frog, cut off its head, and take out most of its brain, leaving a small part called the stem, "so he'll keep breathing, his heart will keep beating, but he can't think anything, can't feel anything either. But then my professor showed us, you take a cotton ball, you dip it in acid, and then dab it on the little bit of brain that's left... The frog's hands try to wipe the cotton ball away...which it shouldn't be able to do... it's a fascinating thing, the brain" (12:00).

After this scene, Jeff picks up the dried bones, plays with them, and is left off grinding with fascination. Ever since, Jeff and his dad often go out in search of dead animals, which they later dissect. “It’s macabre, it’s unsanitary” his mother yelled (13:26).

The following scene features Lionel and his son going out in a car drive looking for dead animals. They ended up with a raccoon this time. During nighttime, they wore yellow gloves getting prepared to dissect it. Lionel starts by pulling out some of the raccoon’s inners (Figure 8), and then he digs around in the creature’s gut, pulling them out and asking Jeff to do the same. When there is nothing left off, Lionel pulls out an organ, and putting it in Jeff’s hands. It is the heart (Figure 9). While his father was heading out, the scene ends when Jeff picks up a power tool with a circular tip directing it to the dead animal with an evil eye (Figure 7).

Additionally to the sadistic behavior of cutting off animal’s guts, dissecting them, and actually enjoying it, Jeffrey’s other disruptive manners were developed later in his adolescence years until adulthood: he goes from setting alone at school (no social skills); revealing anger issues at an early age; hunting animals and dissecting them; to collecting their bones; to arising substance abuse of alcohol during his adolescence when his parent got divorced; and later on, to kill, dissect human beings and collecting their bones as well as consuming their flesh (cannibalism).



Figure 8: Lionel and Jeff dissecting animals.



Figure 9: Jeff senses the heart of the raccoon.

Similarly to Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bagwell indulged in disruptive behaviors. Even if the show does not explicitly depict T-Bag engaging in animal cruelty, vandalism, and arson as a child, his behavior towards humans and animals alike in the series hints at a

possible history of violence, enjoyment in causing harm, and disregard for the well-being of other living creatures which brings it up to Hare's suggestion that "Although not all adult psychopaths exhibited this degree of cruelty in their youth, virtually all routinely got themselves into a wide range of difficulties: lying, theft, vandalism, promiscuity, and so forth." (67).

2. Superficial Charm & Good Intelligence

Superficial charm and good intelligence seem to be one of the most significant characteristics of psychopathy. While Cleckley defined charming psychopaths as giving positive impressions when first encountered, having alert and friendly attitudes, easy-to-talk-with kind of person, and well-adjusted happy persons of superior intelligence who show nothing strange but robust mental health and desirable human qualities (342), Hare's psychopaths

...[are] often witty and articulate, They can be amusing and entertaining conversationalists, ready with a quick and clever comeback, and can tell unlikely but convincing stories that cast themselves in good light. They can be very effective in presenting themselves well and are often very likable and charming. To some people, however, they seem too slick and smooth, too obviously sincere and superficial. Astute observers often get the impression that psychopaths are play-acting, mechanically "reading their lines" (35).

These two distinctive and analogous definitions of the same trait character match perfectly with the psychopaths of the current study. Jeff and T-Bag were not portrayed as being academically intelligent in the series, however, they were shown to be both skilled liars and manipulators who are apt at convincing others to do or believe whatever they want. Their intelligence is more about their street meets and ability to manipulate, rather than any

academic achievements. Jeffrey and Theodore are intelligent in the way they successfully attract and charm people around them either through manipulation, lying, or both.



Figure 10: Suspicious T-Bag



Figure 11: T-Bag handcuffs Michael.



Figure 12: T-Bag's dad admits to his drunk peers that he wants his son to become President.

By way of explanation, T-Bag, as an alert psychopath on the one hand, is always aware of what is cooking around him. In the first season for instance, when Scofield and other prison inmates were conspiring against him, in attempts to cut him off of their escape plan, he immediately sensed it (Figure 10), and came up with what he called an “insurance policy”, and then said “I called up my guy on the outside and I told him our plan. And I told him all likelihood I’ll be seeing him next week. But if he does not hear from me five minutes before the escape and twenty minutes after, I told him to call up the warden, blow the whistle on the whole thing.” (“Odd Man Out” 5:52).

Another example of good intelligence can be found in episode 22 of the first season when the Fox River Eight were running out of jail. T-Bag, afraid to be back-stabbed killed, or abandoned in the runaway, handcuffed his hand to Michael’s to avoid John Abruzzi’s attempt of murdering him (Figure 11). Furthermore, Theodore as a kid was portrayed as being smart

and consistent. His father made him memorize a whole dictionary because he believed that one day, his son would become the president of the United States (Figure 12; “Bad Blood” 17:30). He also has a genuine talent for finding and exploiting the weaknesses of others and taking advantage of them.



Figure 13: Dahmer is stopped by the police.



Figure 14: Dahmer manipulates the cops by dropping his parents' divorce to manipulate them.

Additionally, Jeffrey's "superior intelligence" can be seen in the way he has always managed to avoid getting caught by the police. This does not mean that he kept things low and under control, it is the exact opposite due to his recklessness. However, it means that whenever he is stopped or questioned by an officer, he creatively handles it through lying and manipulation which mostly happens because he is good in managing "*quick and clever comebacks*" (Hare 35). To illustrate this, in Figure 13, Dahmer was carrying his first victim in a trash bag on the back seat of his car when some cops stopped him since he was "swerving across the road". When the cops asked him about the drinking and the bag, he immediately made a victim out of himself, lied about it by telling them that they were clippings from his yard, and manipulated them by suddenly bringing up his parents' divorce (Figure 14) to give him a free pass ("Doing a Dahmer" 46:34). This indicates that he is smart enough to get himself out of trouble. He did not possess good intelligence concerning academic performance since he barely passed through high school, and was continuously skipping college and spending all his time drinking alone. Yet in his adolescence and adulthood, he

becomes a charmer and intelligent psycho who targeted minority groups of lesser social interest.



Figure 15: Dahmer offering drinks to some random guys.



Figure 16: fun and social Jeff.

Accordingly, Jeff is a charmer in the way he attracts his victims through his dance moves, offering them alcohol, and bringing up topics that might be of his victim's interest. (Figure 16). He tries to socialize in an attempt to catch his prey. Even though during his first times, he seemed a little bit odd and suspicious *reading out his lines*, after a while he became a perfectionist easily drawing attention from his prays with no sign of odd behaviors; just some random, white, and funny (considered by some of his victims) guy looking for company (Figure 15), and always making good impressions. In the fourth episode, Dahmer is filmed sitting at a bar, looking around for his next prey. While doing so, he focuses on that one guy who seems to be a really good dancer. After that, he bought drinks and headed toward the guy, Steven, offering him one. He began complimenting him about his looks and the fact that he got some "killer dance moves", "Wish I could dance like you" Jeffrey added ("The Good Boy Box"). In this example, one can see how Jeffrey draws attention from the good-looking dancer by using his charming skills.

Similarly, T-Bag is considered to be a social predator (Figure 17) that brilliantly succeeds in attracting many women, including a transgender woman in the prison, Susan Hollander and Denise (Figure 18). He did not feel odd, embarrassed, or cared for whenever he is judged. He only does what he wants, and lives by on his terms. "More than the average

person, he is likely to seem free from social or emotional impediments, from the minor distortions, peculiarities, and awkwardnesses so common even among the successful.” (Cleckley 342).



Figure 17: T-Bag the charming psycho.



Figure 18: Susan Holland.

Moreover, both predators seem to be socially genuine: they know exactly what to say, and how to act with people, rightfully using their weaknesses for their own sake. In “*Monster*” for instance, Jeff tricks Konerak Sintasomphone, a fourteen years old kid, by drawing him to his apartment where he offered him alcohol additionally to some extra cash in exchange for taking nudes (Figure 19 & 20). In this case, Jeff knew Konerak was an underage boy who could not shop for himself, and that he required money. So, he took advantage of his needs and weaknesses for his selfish benefit. He later, drugged and molested him, and even pretended that he was his boyfriend when neighbors found him out in his apartment. To associate this example with the characteristic of superficial charm, it is important to describe a scene when Konerak ran from Jeff’s apartment to save his life. Not being able to talk since he was drugged, the neighbors found him and called the police. When Jeff came back, faced with such a stressful situation he lied again to the present people, and told them that the kid was his nineteen-year-old boyfriend. Attempting to convince them, he kept apologizing (Figure 21), and sweet talking by acting all polite and making himself seem like the victim who was forced to bring in more booze.



Figure 19: Jeff uses bate to catch his next prey. Figure 20: Konerak falls into the trap.



Figure 21: Jeffrey, the superficial good boy.

The previous point proves the fact that “psychopaths may ramble and tell stories that seem unlikely in light of what is known about them. Typically, they attempt to appear familiar with sociology, psychiatry, medicine, psychology, philosophy, poetry, literature, art, or law.” (Hare 35). This signifies that they pretend to be specialized in fields that they do not have an idea about which perfectly matches Theodore’s situation when he was working as the top salesman for the gate corporation in season four. He tricked them to believe he was a specialist when he was only a con artist improvising in doing the things he was doing and enjoying it.

3. Impulsivity & Need for Excitement

Mainly, impulsive behavior and the need for excitement are two separate characteristics suggested by Hare in his clinical list (PCL-R). However, in this study, they are put together since we strongly believe that they complete one another. In other words, the constant search for excitement and adrenaline in the psychopath’s life is what results in irrational, impetuous, and impulsive behaviors followed by selfish needs and desires.

In *Without Conscience*, Hare (1993) argues that psychopaths do not think; consider the pros and cons of a situation, or decision, nor plan; they just do, jumping straight ahead to action, all of which is done to bring about instant gratification, satisfaction, pleasure, and relief, need for excitement. In the same work, psychopaths were compared to infants that are constantly driven by their libidinal urges and impulses. The only difference is that infantile satisfactions are postponed by external and environmental factors (parents for example), whereas psychopaths “do not modify their desires; they ignore the needs of others.” (58).

If we apply this conception to the variables under study, we can suggest that Jeffrey and Theodore are both impulsive, and are constantly in “an ongoing and excessive need for excitement – they long to live in the fast lane or “on the edge”, where the action is”, and they often accomplish it by “doing crime” (Hare 61). If we carefully observe the way their crimes were committed, it is evident that they never planned them. Instead, they were primarily driven by instinctively and impulsive feelings (anger, revenge, and hate in T-Bag’s case; loneliness, neglect, and vulnerability in Dahmer’s case as well as trauma in both cases) and excitement in both cases.

From one standpoint, Dahmer was always driven by his sexually needy drives; he undeniably tried to stop the criminal behavior, or at least suppress it, yet he could not. The sudden urge that screams inside his head, the fantasies that never seem to end and his strong desire of accomplishing those gratifications manifested to make what was originally a fantasy and an inescapable reality. Each time he goes to a hunting zone, he never strategizes it. His method can be summarized as follow: first, he goes to a hunting zone (bathhouse, club, street, or anywhere); second, he takes a few drinks then searches for his prey; he chooses one; offers them some drinks then probably puts drugs in it; and finally, he charms and invites them home. The only thing he knows is the previously mentioned points, he never had a backup plan in case something unusual for him happens. All his crimes were not previously planned.

The perfect example to illustrate Dahmer's impulsive behavior could be seen in the third episode "Doing a Dahmer". Months after he was abandoned by his parents, Jeff was always portrayed to be home alone. Whether on his way back home or while he is going out, Jeff often encounters a young shirtless jogger running in the tree-covered road. In daylight, Jeff opens his outside mailbox. He pulls out envelopes and a lifestyle magazine which has a picture of two joggers – a man and a woman – on the cover, then touches the man's exposed chest. Triggered by the act, Jeff rushes and puts a pair of sneakers on. The next thing you see, Jeff jogs in the tree-covered road carrying a basketball bat. He looks back and hides in the bushes on the side of the road waiting for his prey to arrive (Figure 22). As soon as the jogger arrived, Jeff crosses his road with the bat in his hands in attempt to knock him off and take him home (Figure 23).



Figure 22: Jeff waiting for his prey.



Figure 23: Jeff's first attacking attempt.

Another example could also be found in the same episode. While Jeff was driving on the same road, something catches his eye. Another shirtless man, with black hair and wearing short shorts, extends his thumb to the side of the road. As Jeff passes, he admires his masculine figure across the rearview, and suddenly stops. Later, the man informs him that he was heading to a concert in Chippewa Lake Park and that he needed a lift (Figure 24). Jeffrey suggests giving him one right after offering him some beers at home, then Steven accepts. After spending some time in Jeff's house, Steven notices that Jeff had no attention in taking him to the concert, however; he kept asking him to stay with him and hang out. Steven yells at him and on his way out to the door, Jeff in a minute of rage, grabs a weight and bashes Steven

with it whom he murders later on in the episode (Figure 25). As you can notice, Jeff at first was driven by the tempting desire of excitement which later on became an impulsive behavior leading to a murder.



Figure 24: Steven asks Jeff to give him a ride.



Figure 25: Jeff murders Steven because he refused to stay with him.

The same is applied to T-Bag. It is likely to say that he is moved by his emotions and excitement. Whenever he is angry, sad, mad, bored, excited, happy, lonely... or nervous, which never happens, his first response or instinct is to kill either the person who caused such feeling (concerning negative emotions) or someone else who might be related to the first person, or more accessible than him, no matter what consequence it could bring. In one of *Prison Break's* episodes, T-Bag encounters a man on the road that suggested giving him a ride. The man had great respect for ex-militants because his father was one too, so he offered to help out of respect. However, since T-Bag saw the man's little daughter, he set his eyes on her. Moved by his need for excitement and desires, T-Bag went with them having evil intentions (Figures 26 & 27).



Figure 26: T-Bag sees the little girl.



Figure 27: T-Bag's excitement could be seen all over his face.

In “Riots Drills and the Devil Part 1”, when T-Bag entered Michael’s cell with the cop he took hostage, other prison inmates involved in the escape plan, including Abruzzi and Michael warned T-Bag not to kill or harm the cop. However, T-Bag kept scaring the cop and warning him about the fact that he is going to pay a visit to his house and meet his young daughter (Figure 28). Right after the inmates were gone, he sneaked to the other cell and killed the cop. As a result, you may conclude that T-Bag was instinctively moved by his constant search for thriller, troubles, and excitement only as an excuse to harm people and kill them.



Figure 28: T-Bag threatens the officer by



Figure 29: T-Bag’s undoubted ability to kill without having to think about it.



Figure 30: T-Bag belittling people’s worth.

Additionally, in the second season Michael, Lincoln, and Theodore were in Utah to claim Westmoreland’s hidden money. The three are surprised by the fact that the deserted place is now full of houses all over the place. When they managed to identify which house it was, Theodore immediately suggested eliminating the house’s owner. “People die all the

time, boys. Five million dollars comes once in a lifetime.” He said (Figures 29 & 30). T-Bag moves from place to place searching for “a fresh buzz”, or trouble (Hare 61).



Figure 31: T-Bag recklessly cuts Abruzzi’s throat using a blade after being beaten.

In an episode entitled “Odd Man Out”, Abruzzi attacks T-Bag and beat him so that he drops out of the escape plan. Enraged, not sad, by the fact that Abruzzi killed his cousin and nephew, and neglected his desperate need of him as he is an essential element in providing an escape vehicle, T-Bag cut his throat using a blade, careless of the damage it could bring to the final escape plan (Figure 31). His Irrational thinking, the desire for revenge, and the satisfaction of killing Abruzzi are all considered to be his driven inners that caused such an impulsive and reckless response.

Furthermore, “psychopaths tend to live day-to-day and to change their plans frequently. They give little serious thought to the future and worry about it even less. Nor do they generally show much concern about how little they have done with their lives.” (59). To illustrate this, through a conversation conducted between T-Bag and the veterinarian, Dr. Marvin Gudat, in an episode entitled “Otis”, he brings up religion, when T-Bag was going to kill him, by saying that he believes people’s committed acts in this life determine where they will go in the next, and those who commit evil can never hope for eternal happiness and redemption (12:45). T-Bag answers that he was never interested in the afterlife and that he

never thinks about the future, instead, he just lives and enjoys the moment. “Never been a goal of mine, doc. I’m more a here and now type.” (Figure 32) T-Bag answered (“Otis” 12:45). Meanwhile, Jeffrey did not testify or claim a such thing in the series, but he spoke them loud throughout his actions.



Figure 32: T-Bag confesses that he is not someone who plans for his future.

To sum it up, all Jeffrey and Theodore’s offenses are a manifestation or externalization of their darkest internal needs. Those could be either positive, such as excitement, superiority, love, and happiness; or negative like anger, self-pity and arrogance, sadness, and so on. On top of that, impulsivity and a constant need for excitement in doing crazy and dangerous things for fun are key characteristics as it is impossible to tolerate self-containment and psychopathic tendencies. And the fact that both Dahmer and Bagwell try to do so, proves the accuracy of the previously alleged claim.

4. The Paradox of a Psychopath’s Feelings & Emotions

The paradox of a psychopath’s feelings and emotions is not a real characteristic that is present whether in Cleckley’s work or Hare’s. It is a recreated element that describes the complexity of the psychopath’s feelings and emotions. Just like a paradox, psychopaths are difficult to understand. Sometimes they seem to smile and show affection, while in other times they are dreadful, brutal, and emotionless. As an attempt to rightfully address and explain this unique paradox, we divided this part into three important sections: the first part

explains the egocentricity, grandiose and narcissism of psychopaths; the second shows how these monsters are incapable of love; and finally, how psychopaths are emotionally poor. To do so, this part will explore and join eight traits. This includes Cleckley's lack of remorse and shame, pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love, and general poverty in major affective reactions, in addition to Hare's egocentricity and grandiose, lack of remorse and guilt, lack of empathy and shallow emotions.

Speaking of psychopaths as egocentric human beings, Cleckley claimed that "Psychopaths have a narcissistic and grossly inflated view of their self-worth and importance, a truly astounding egocentricity and sense of entitlement, and see themselves as the center of the universe, as superior beings who are justified in living according to their *own rules*."(38). In other words, psychopaths believe that they are of higher importance compared to other human beings. Speaking of Dahmer and Theodore, they both are self-centered, arrogant, dominant, and cruel narcissists who believe that everyone else is an object made for their satisfaction.

Jeff sees himself as superior and he wants to be the dominant and oppressor when it comes to his interactions with other people, mainly his victims. Contrary to other psychopaths and mass murderers, Jeff prefers to drug his victims first. Some audiences think that he does it to reduce their pain, Jeff also claimed the same thing during his testimony in court, but we believe that he does so because he wished and desired to be in full control of his victims' bodies, even when they were completely submissive. He loves making *zombies* out of his victims. In "Please Don't Go", After Jeff drugged and molested young Konerak, he tells him that he is so tired of everyone trying to leave him which is the reason why he is going to make him his zombie (Figure 33 & 34); zombie slaves for his grandiose and selfish need of pleasure as well as his fear of abandonment.



Figure 33: The Effects of abandonment on Jeff. Figure 34: Jeffrey's zombies (Konerak).

Moreover, T-Bag is a racist narcissist who always classifies himself as being of a superior race. He often belittles his prison inmates of different races (Figure 35). Similarly to Jeff's zombie slaves, T-Bag, too, has his own suppressed slaves. Known as T-Bag's prison slaves, they are usually either targeted by him or given to him by his guys as a birthday present in Fox River. They are often young, pretty, weak, and defenseless convicts (Figure 36) who would grab T-Bag's pocket to ensure safety and control (Figure 37). The pocket is of great importance as it refers to T-Bag's superiority and the slave's inferiority and submissiveness (Figure 38).



Figure 35: Racist T-Bag.

Figure 36: A defenseless young convict.



Figure 37: T-Bag's pocket.

Figure 38: T-Bag's pocket a symbol of dominance

Additionally to grandiose and pathologic egocentricity which is revealed in unmodifiable self centeredness, the psychopath is incapable of object love;

He is plainly capable of casual fondness, of likes and dislikes, and of reactions that, one might say, cause others to matter to him. These affective reactions are, however, always strictly limited in degree. In durability they also vary greatly from what is normal in mankind. The term absolute is, I believe, appropriate if we apply it to any affective attitude strong and meaningful enough to be called love, that is, anything that prevails in sufficient degree and over sufficient periods to exert a major influence on behavior. (Cleckley 350).

This means that psychopaths may seem like they know how love feels, how caring feels, and how being happy feels like, and they may also show all these positive emotions to other people, yet deep down in their own inner self, it is all superficial. In the sixth episode of *Monster* entitled “*Silenced*”, the audience is tricked to believe Jeff has changed, that he was in love with Tony Hughes, and that whatever terrible crimes he committed before, he could now stop since he found the only person who truly stuck around and cared for him and loved him (Figure 39). However, at the end of the episode, Jeff kills him just like everyone else, and eventually consumes his heart, proof that whatever positive feelings he had for him were more of “a strong impression of being self-love” (351), nothing else; he liked the way he felt around him, the way he was treated, and the fact that he no longer feels alone.



Figure 39: Jeffrey, the loving psychopath.

Moreover, many psychologists and analysts suggest that “psychopaths suffer a kind of emotional poverty that limits the range and depth of their feelings” (Hare 52). They display shallow feelings that show them as being the most cold-blooded monsters. Besides, they lack all capacities of experiencing normal emotions such as remorse, shame, guilt, and empathy. In other words, “the emotions of psychopaths are so shallow as to be little more than proto-emotions: primitive responses to immediate needs.” (53). In “*Doing a Dahmer*”, Jeff was discussing his future with the counselor. When she asked him about his dream, Jeff mentioned the fact that he has been interested in exploring physical fitness “but it’s not my dream, you know. I think that’s just something people say. Like, I don’t think everybody gets to have a dream. At least not people like me.” (Figure 40) Jeff adds (32:00). Here, it is clear that Jeff himself classifies his feelings and needs as being separate and different when compared to others.

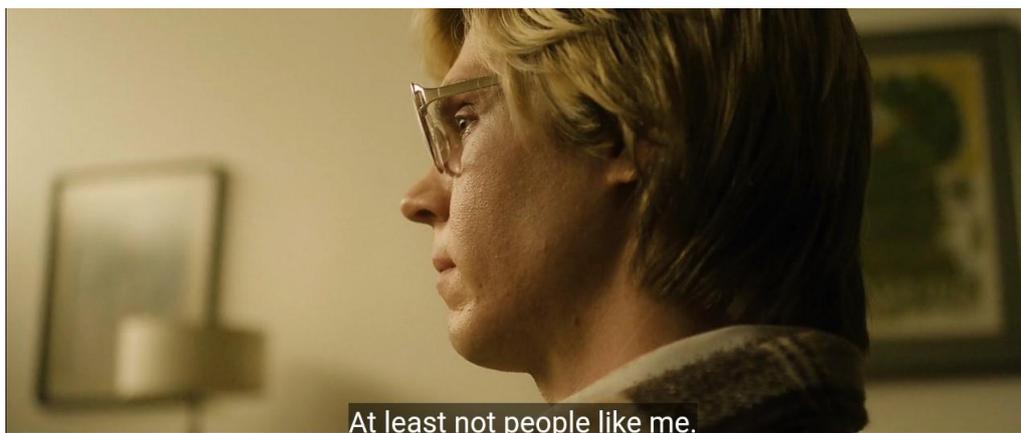


Figure 40: Jeffrey recognizes himself as being different
Comparing to other ordinary people.

Hare also used two psychologists’ quotes to attest that a psychopath “knows the words but not the music” in the sense that the psychopath looks thrilled and excited “and shouts in rage or seems to exult in enthusiasm and again weeps in what appear to be bitter tears or speaks eloquent and mournful words about his misfortunes or follies... here we deal with a readiness of expression rather than a strength of feeling.” (Cleckley 351). After Jeff killed Tony Hughes, there was a scene that portrayed him being angry (Figure 41). It is frustrating

and deceiving because one might think that he was experiencing sadness, yet after learning about the way psychopaths feel and function, it is evident to say that they are more capable of expressing irritation, frustration, and anger than any other feeling. But, in case they did express sadness, it is worth remembering that they are perfect reactionists and superficially able to act it out and put on a performance. This could be illustrated throughout T-Bag who gave the impression of being affected by his cousin and nephew's deaths (Figure 42). In reality, he only faked it to get away with whatever Abruzzi prepared for him; it was his way of manipulating him to change the outcomes. This conception also suggests that psychopaths often confuse sadness with madness. Without any sort of knowledge of the psychopath's characteristics and incapacity for love that comes with what Hare calls "an inability to construct a mental and emotional "facsimile"⁷ of another person" (44).



Figure 41: The angry and frustrated psychopath, Jeffrey Dahmer.



Figure 42: T-Bag acting sad to manipulate Abruzzi.

Furthermore, Hare notes that psychopaths are unable to "“ get into the skin” or to “walk in the shoes of others” ... The feelings of other people are of no concern to the psychopath.” (44); Jeff and T-Bag are often incapable of connecting with other people's feelings. They do not relate in any way. Instead, they disregard them, and they are pretty good on turning situations for their own sake. So often, Ryan Murphy portrays Jeffrey in some scenes repeating the same discourse and claims that everyone wants to leave him to excuse Dahmer's choices. Although this expression shows how deeply traumatized Jeff is, it also

⁷ In this sense, it means that psychopaths are incapable of relating to other people's feelings and emotions. If you take joy as an example, psychopaths cannot experience the same kind of joy that normal people do, instead they copy and imitate it. Hence, it looks the same on the surface, but deep down it is never similar to the original one.

signifies that he casually uses his traumas to excuse himself; and to make the audience somehow sympathetic toward him. His trauma is undeniable, but does that mean it is excusable? All his victims were killed because he developed abandonment issues, but he did not think about the fact that those victims too abandon their families. He did not consider their status, nor think about the horrifying and traumatic experience both the victims and their families have been through; a total disregard for their feelings and lives because he is a self-centered psychopath who only thinks about his needs and drives. When he was also about to get cut by the cops, Jeff brought up the divorce card to get himself a free pass (Figure 14, p 45). These psychopaths always seem to turn the situation for their benefit, as already mentioned.

Similarly, in *Prison Break*, T-Bag aggressively takes whatever he wants, neglecting the physical and emotional damage that he may cause. His callousness could be seen through the way he oppresses the prison slaves; at first, he makes them feel comfortable thinking he is going to make them safe. After a while, he feeds on them, not literally, but figuratively. Always speaking of the prison slaves, T-Bag makes them follow him wherever he goes. Not only that; among the young slave prisoners, one hung himself up and committed suicide after what seemed like T-Bag raped him (Figure 43). When he died, T-Bag neither cared, nor felt guilty about it. He immediately moved to look for the next slave (Figures 44 & 45).



Figure 43: T-Bag's slave commits suicide.



Figure 46: T-Bag victimizes himself.



Figure 44: New and young inmates.



Figure 45: T-Bag observing the new inmates.

Another example of lack of empathy, shame, and guilt is seen when Susan Hollander went to Fox River prison to visit T-Bag. Primarily, she went there not because she wanted to, but because her psychologist sent her to confront the manipulative psychopath who lied to her. In her attempts to express her feelings, and confront him, T-Bag immediately dismisses her feelings, and starts talking about how betrayed and hurt he was because he was deceived by the only person he loved. He successfully turned the situation against her by playing the role of the victim (Figure 46). He was not ashamed because he lied to Susan and kept pretending like he was this sacred person, while all he was is none but a sick murderer who raped and killed innocent children and even molested them (Figure 47). This shallowness of feeling can be associated with the fact that these psychopaths are poorly concerned about the people around them, and the devastating impacts their actions have on others. They are usually “forthright about the matter, calmly stating that they have no sense of guilt, are not sorry for the pain and destruction they have caused, and that there is no reason for them to be concerned.” (Hare 41). This means that psychopaths never assume blame for the hurt, misery, and sadness they brought to others. They deny full responsibility and displace the blame on others.



Figure 47: T-Bag, a narcissist, psychopath, killer, sex offender, and a racist monster.

Because of their inability to recognize the emotions of others, Jeff and T-Bag are efficient in conducting behaviors that repel and nauseate other people. They can both torture, and mutilate their victims with no pity, empathy, or concern. It is as if they are carving a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner (Hare 45).

5. Pathological Lying and Manipulative Behavior:

Even though psychopaths most likely give impressions of sincerity, reliability, truthfulness, and trustworthiness, lying, deceiving, and manipulating people runs through their blood and veins. Psychopaths are naturally gifted with these qualities and are rarely ashamed or baffled when they get caught. On the contrary, they appear consistent and insist on the lie, so they tend to immediately interchange facts and come up with new stories. “With their powers of imagination in gear and focused on themselves, psychopaths appear amazingly unfazed by the possibility- or even by the certainty of being found out.” (Hare 46).

Both Jeffrey in *Monster* and Theodore in *Prison Break* carry out their actions through their ability to lie and deceive their victims as well as the people surrounding them in general. If we start with Jeff, the first person who comes noticeably, the one who had been

manipulated and lied to in Jeff's entire life is his father, Lionel. In the first episode of the series, soon after Jeff was imprisoned, the police called his dad for investigation in the middle of the night. In daylight, Jeff's dad, Lionel, goes to the station and is immediately interrogated about the childhood and general behavior of his son in attempt to find out any early behavioral problems, or what is called his "red flags". Lionel was worried and asked the cops if his son is at least alive. When the police explained the situation to him, he was in shock. After that, he said when they called him, he thought Jeffrey was the one in danger, not the opposite (Figures 48 & 49). Beside his neglectful father, this could also explain Jeff's success in manipulating and tricking his dad to think he is someone that he was not.



Figures 48 & 49: Lionel Dahmer thinks that his son was the victim of a homicide, not the killer himself.

The second deceived person is his grandmother. After Jeffrey was continuously kicked out of school and even from the army, his father took him to Milwaukee to his grandmother's house. Since he was in-between jobs, and he had problems with drinking, Lionel thought it was the best place to keep him in check so that he could stay away from alcohol, but little did he know that most of his victims had been dismembered there. During the first few days, Jeff was miraculously normal. Jeff could maintain good behavior; but, as more time passed by, he lied more and more to his grandmother and used her basement for his insanitary experiments (Figure 50). He did not care about his grandma, nor about the way she would feel in case she ever finds out, or even in which state she would be considering her age.



Figure 50: Jeff drags a bag stacked with one of his victims.

Except for Jeff's family members, all his victims were completely played, misled, and lied to. Starting from Steven Hicks who thought Jeff would give him a ride; to the fourteen young boy Konerak who was triggered to Jeff's house for money; to Steven Tuomi who believed he is meeting with a fun guy; to poor Tony Hughes who sincerely loved him; to all the other victims, who were invited to the Bathhouse, his grandma's home, and his apartment.

Although Theodore had no family (except for his son whom he discovered in the last season) to manipulate, he perfectly managed to lie and deceive others; he continuously lied about his identity either by making up a new name or stealing it from a person he recently killed. These identities include: Erik Stammel, a psychologist who looked similar to T-Bag in appearance, and was manipulated to think T-Bag went for therapy while all he wanted was to kill him and consume his identity; Brett Benson; Sam Webster; Clyde May and Cole Pfeiffer. After he run out of Fox River Prison, his hand was bleeding since it was chopped by Abruzzi. T-Bag urgently needed medical assistance, so he stopped by Dr Gudat's clinic, an Indian vet, whom he threatened his life and his wife's to get the proper assistance needed (Figure 51). He said again lied and said he would let him go as soon as his hand gets attached. Dr. Gudat believed him and managed to get his hand back on. Soon after Theodore felt better, he confessed he had no choice but to kill him because he will eventually call the police. Somehow each time T-Bag manipulates or lies to someone, they either end up hurt physically or emotionally which is the case of Susan Hollander.



Figure 51: T-Bag threatens Dr. Gudat's life to save himself from bleeding.



Figure 52: The noble psychopath, Theodore.



Figure 53: The psychopath's happy family.



Figure 54: Susan Hollander sees T-Bag on TV as a wanted criminal.

Before he was imprisoned, T-Bag dodged the authorities and hid in Susan's house where he pretended to be a charming, and noble man (Figure 52). As a single mother of two, Susan thought she had found the one for her. The Hollander family adored Theodore (Figure 53). He seemed caring, loving, and helpful when it comes to her kids. She did not know that she welcomed a predator to her house who was lying to her entire family by pretending he is someone else. Soon after Susan discovered her family had been living with a wanted murderer and rapist on a television show called *America's Most Wanted* (Figure 54), she was traumatized and shocked. As a result, she called the police and informed them about the situation. Sometimes psychopaths salt "the mind with a nugget of truth" only to make their lies more believable (Hare 47). It is easy for the psychopath to con, manipulate and deceive friends and foes alike (Hare, 1999).

To conclude, the ability to lie, deceive and manipulate others is often a trait associated with psychopathy. This does not emphasize that every liar, cheater, and deceiver is a psychopath, but whenever the trait is followed by other psychopathic characteristics, one could say that it definitely should be associated with psychopathy. Psychopaths are charming, charismatic, and skilled liars who create a false sense of trust to exploit others for personal gain, and they do so with no shame, remorse, or guilt to gain an advantage over people.

Conclusion

All in all, the previously discussed characteristics are among the most necessary ones that needed to be covered to provide the reader an insight into the mind, feelings, and overall functioning of the psychopaths' psyche, specifically that of Jeffrey Dahmer and Theodore Bagwell. Their remarkable early problems behavior, in Dahmer's case, and their lack of general affection (empathy, guilt, sorrow, and shame) have resulted in a cunning, manipulative, unreliable, and impulsive adulthood that disrupted people's life. In this conception, one cannot help but notice the fact that both T-Bag and Jeff show a conspicuous and striking inability to stick to any sort of life plan persistently, no matter how *good* or *evil* it was that plan was. They do not maintain an effort toward any far goal at all which made it impossible for them to be committed in their relationships and jobs.

CHAPTER THREE

From Childhood to Adulthood: Analyzing T-Bag and Jeff's Psyche & Identifying the Roots of Psychopathy in the Two TV-Series.

Introduction

At its profound and vital level, psychopathy, also known as Antisocial Personality Disorder, is a severe mental illness identified by a range of affective, interpersonal, and behavioral characteristics (Hare, 1996). “[W]ith about 1% prevalence in the general population and 10-30% among incarcerated criminal offenders”, the factors that account for the development of psychopathy and psychopathic traits remain frustrating and unclear (Tiihonen et al 1). Since the reader had already been provided with some acuteness and definitions of psychopathy as well as its identifiable characteristics, it is high time to review and explore its original causation. While some researchers argue that psychopathy results from genetic and hereditary factors, others note that environmental forces are also of significant contribution. The debate of *Nature* vs. *Nurture* is an endless one. In this chapter, we will primarily account for Robert Hare’s theory of psychopathy and Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis to look over each aspect separately in relation to the selected characters: Theodore Bagwell and Jeffrey Dahmer.

1. The Psychopaths’ Id, Ego and Superego

Previously, some very common and significant psychopathic traits have been examined and reviewed concerning Theodore Bagwell and Jeffrey Dahmer to provide insights on how to detect such mentally ill and disruptive people. Additionally, the present section is devoted to explaining the functionality of the psychopaths’ id, ego, and superego to provide a better understanding of the constitution of their psyche and the way it works compared to normal human beings or others who have different mental disorders.

1.1. The Psychopath’s Id

Freud (1923) argued that the id is the driving force behind our desires and impulses. In other words, it is “the great reservoir of libido” (14). It constitutes primitive and instinctual

parts of the mind that are present from birth. Speaking of psychopaths, both Theodore and Jeffrey are “id-oriented” (Kantor 145). They are always driven by their darkest instincts, impulses, and needs. They are always sexually hungry. They are impulsive, reckless, and irrational. Throughout *Prison Break* and *Monster*, Jeff and T-Bag were portrayed as instantly chasing immediate and short-lived gratifications. They only live in the present moment and do not consider the consequences of their actions or their effects on them or the people surrounding them. Their constant need for excitement takes over their behaviors and controls their actions. On the one hand, Jeffrey is moved by his desperate need to fill in the void left by his parents’ abandonment, along with his loneliness and constant boredom. On the other hand, T-Bag’s behaviors are primarily moved by his immediate need for thrills and action, spreading chaos around him and his passions. He gets pleasure from spreading terror, torture, and fear. Furthermore, Jeff and T-Bag are motivated by their sexual desires and drives. They do not make the difference between reality and fantasy or between what is right and wrong. However, even if they knew the difference, they did not care, mainly because they lack empathy, guilt, and are remorseless.

1.2. The Psychopath’s Ego

Contrary to the id, the ego is the part of the psyche that controls one’s drives and impulses. Freud (1923) compares the ego to a man on a horseback who has to “hold in check the superior strength of the horse” (11). In this conception, the horse represents the irresponsible and reckless “id” which needs to be supervised. The difference between psychopaths and other normal people is that they are not able to manage and keep their needs in check. Similarly, Jeff and Theodore’s id is so persistent and strong that their ego is not capable of controlling and modifying their urges. They usually get satisfaction from hurting others. They tend to do whatever they want, whenever they want, and to whomever they want.

Anyone who interferes becomes either ignored or their following victim. Additionally, some works of literature suggest that psychopaths are anxiety free.

What we hear is that psychopathy, is not primarily a disorder of excessive, maladaptive, and poorly handled anxiety and fear. Rather, it is a disorder at all, it is, unlike the neuroses, one characterized by an absence of anxiety and fear, so that the psychopath can freely be as immoral as he or she might like, and be that way entirely without compunction. (Kantor 147-148).

Throughout the series, Jeffrey is neither afraid of getting caught by the police nor anxious before committing his crimes. On the contrary, he seems to be very relaxed and calm. Similarly, although Theodore was worried about being caught, signs of fear, anxiety, stress and, terror were never evident. They carelessly always act out, selfishly disregard others' hurt and suffering and enjoy doing so.

1.3. The Psychopath's Superego

The superego refers to moral conscience or the internalized moral and social standards that individuals acquire through environmental influences, such as upbringing (Freud, 1923). It is a moral guide that keeps a balance between one's desires and social expectations. These include parental expectations, cultural values, and religious beliefs. However, psychopaths are known not to be able to relate to social norms and values like other people because they break the law for their benefit. People breaking the law are not normally classified as psychopaths. It is only used here to explain that psychopaths tend to live by their own rules, disregarding all that is related to their "entourage". Jeff and T-Bag do not relate to others' definitions of right and wrong, or good and bad. Jeff thinks it is bad to be abandoned by his parents, but somehow right when his victims leave their families because he took away their lives. It is good killing other people, but bad to be ignored or left alone. In the same way, T-Bag thinks it

is acceptable for him to abuse, rape, molest and even kill other people; however, if anyone tries to kill him, or do him wrong, it is suddenly not a good and acceptable thing. He does not feel guilty or bad about manipulating and misleading the people around him, yet somehow he always seems to be the one who first starts playing games and betraying them. When Susan Hollander called the police on him, he felt betrayed and wrongly treated and did not consider the fact that he lied about his identity. Bagwell and Dahmer's behaviors and way of thinking are somehow paradoxical; they are self-contradictive and inconsistent.

To conclude, the functioning of Jeffrey and Theodore's id, ego, and superego is different compared to others. They are mainly driven by their urges, desires, and needs. Their ego fails to control their need for excitement and impulsivity, and their superego is unable to work according to social demands. This means that their psyche is unstable and malfunctioned as their id, ego and superego are always in constant fight. The power of their id overcomes the ego, and superego. Uncontrollable urges lead to uncontrollable life decisions and recklessness, consequently disrupting the psychopaths' lives as well as the people around them.

2. Nature of Psychopathy

According to Robert D. Hare, there are many controversies regarding the roots and causes of psychopathy. However, he personally views psychopathy as a combination of both genetic and developmental factors that blended perfectly into the formation of this mental disorder. He argued that the mixture of both organic (nature) and influential (nurture) elements is "the "truth" and doubtless theory" which influenced the creation of such narcissistic and cold-blooded psychopaths (165). These two forces are going to be analyzed thoughtfully to discover whether the previous conception (Hare's argument) is true, or not, in Dahmer and Bagwell's cases. To do so, Jeff and T-Bag's life histories are treated to provide

an in-depth analysis of the issue. In addition, screenshots will be included to provide a better illustration and understanding.

2.1. The Role of Genetic and Hereditary Components in Developing Psychopathy

Genetics refers to those biological components that deal with the heredity and modification of organisms leading to the formation and makeup of a certain phenomenon, which in this case is psychopathy. This does not imply that the so-called psychopathy gene exists, however; it refers to those materials that are passed from one generation to another that carry one or more genetic variants which increase their child's chances of developing psychopathy. But, the most confusing question is: How can these variants enforce the creation of such a phenomenon?

In his book entitled *The Psychopathy of Everyday Life*, Kantor (2006) describes psychopaths as being “organically damaged” because they are “*incorrectly wired*” in the vernacular; it is as if they were born “with certain chips missing” (139). To back up this conception, Hare asserts that the main reason why many children obtain a “genetic immorality” is due to the genes passed over by their psychopathic parent(s). T-Bag perfectly matches this description. In the second season of *Prison Break*, there is this one episode that discloses T-Bag's childhood for the very first time, giving glimpses into what his family was like. The thing that attracted my attention the most is the title of the episode *Bad Blood*, which in itself suggests that T-Bag's nature is a result of his father's genes being passed over to him. When Mr. Bagwell, T-Bag's father, was sitting around his drunk friends discussing

IQ⁸ intelligence, one of them mocked him (Mr. Bagwell) attesting that he is as stupid as the rest of the family pointing out to Mr. Bagwell's wife and son (Figure 55 & 56).



Figures 55 & 56: The role of genes in shaping T-Bag.

Similarly, in “Drills and the Devil Part 1”, during an interaction that happened between Theodore and the prison guards, officer Bellick told him that he was disappointed by him regardless of the environment that he came from; “Teddy, you really let me down. And that’s hard to do because I don’t expect much from the inbred child of a retard... I read your psyche records about how your daddy raped his mongoloid sister and then nine months later, little Teddy pops out.” (20:50) (Figure 57); therefore, it matches the well-known saying “like father like son” since T-Bag himself grew to become the same rapist/abuser as his father. Although he did turn out to be as illiterate as his father, he did become as psychopathic as him, if not more. The two scenes proved the authenticity of both Kantor and Hare’s acclaims.



Figure 57: Like father, like son. Both are rapist pedophiles.

⁸ Short form of “Intelligence Quotient”. It is a measure of an individual’s intelligence acquired from particularly designed assessments.



Figure 58: Joyce admitting that she never enjoyed her pregnancy. Figure 59: Joyce taking 26 pills per day.

Furthermore, psychopathy could also be developed due to prenatal alcohol syndrome. It could be manifested as a result of the mother's addiction to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, seriously damaging the child's brain (fetus); and consequently affecting his personality development (Kantor, 2006). While psychopathy was confirmed to be running in the Bagwells' blood, Joyce Flint, Jeff's mother, could be considered as the main cause that affected her son's genes. Jeffrey's mother and her addiction to medications during her pregnancy are worth acclaiming for. In the third episode of the *Dahmer* series, Joyce Flint was often portrayed as being mentally ill and unstable. During her pregnancy with Jeff, she suffered from a lot of difficulties. Unlike any normal mother, Joyce never enjoyed her pregnancy, and constantly expressed her guilt about it (Figure 58).

While Lionel and Joyce were visiting a doctor, it has been announced that she takes 26 pills per day. These include Equanil, Laxatives, Valium, and Morphine, and even had injections of Barbiturates (Figure 59). And the real issue is that she had gone through "refill after refill" (Lionel Dahmer 2:00). Lionel Dahmer, Jeff's father, expressed his worry and fear over the consequences that could be brought by such addiction, and the probable effect it could have on the child's fetus. He was also frightened that what happened to Thalidomide victims in England could have the same impact on his unborn son. Speaking of the Thalidomide medication, it was one of the most important drugs of the twentieth century that was widely used for the treatment of nausea in pregnant women (Moro and Invernizzi 1). It

was a scandal that resulted in not only birth defects but also because of “the peripheral neuropathy⁹ (sometimes irreversible) in the patient and the potential effects a biologically active drug could have after treatment of pregnant women” (Kim and Scialli 1). Even though Joyce protested that she took none of it, the 26 pills that she took per day could have brought the same effects, eventually creating a psycho. When Jeff was imprisoned, Lionel blamed Joyce’s addiction (Figures 60 & 61).



Figures 60 & 61: Lionel asserts that it was Joyce’s addiction that led his son to become the person he is.



Figure 62: Lionel admitting his part in influencing his son’s creation.



Figure 63: Lionel reveals the fact of having fantasies when he was his son’s age.

Besides Joyce’s medication, Lionel blamed himself too. He claimed that Jeff inherited his genes from him. “Half that boy is me.” (“Lionel” 9:30) (Figure 62). He also told his wife, Shari, that he used to have similar thoughts; “I had fantasies like him too” Lionel adds (Figure 63). He added there was a girl who lived nearby whom he tried to hypnotize many times to get her to do whatever he wanted, to control her (Figure 64). When Jeffrey was admitting his crimes to the police officers who were investigating his murders, he also said that whatever he

⁹ It is a condition that brings internal damage to the peripheral system responsible for sending signals between the central nervous system and other parts of the body.

did to his victims (Figure 66), he did it to control them because everyone else was always telling him what to do (Figure 65). Again, this explains the effect of the gene factor.



Figure 64: Controlling Lionel.



Figures 65 & 66: Controlling Jeffrey

Speaking of mental disorders in general, “gene variants play an important role in increasing or decreasing a person’s risk of developing a disease or condition.” (National Institute of Mental Health 2). A meta-analytic study that includes 51 twins reveals an account for 41% of the total variance of antisocial behavior (Rhee and Waldman, 2002). Another study based on analyzing nine case studies estimates an influence of 49% of the total variance in psychopathic personality (Waldman and Rhee, 2002). Nevertheless, do these studies add to our previous analysis signify that psychopathy is primarily based on genetic and hereditary factors? Or, do they suggest something else? To find out the answer, we will continue to examine developmental and environmental factors in the following section.

2.2. The Role of Social and Environmental Factors in Nourishing Psychopathy

While the previous section aimed to review the natural causation of psychopathy in Jeff and T-Bag's lives, this one focuses on examining the social and environmental components that may have contributed to the formation of such monsters and mentally-ill predators. Hare claims that according to Calvin's reflection on psychopathy, early psychological trauma, or adverse experiences such as poverty, emotional, physical or sexual abuse or deprivation, parental rejection, and inconsistent disciplinary techniques are what may result such in illness. He adds that psychological damage is often associated with those who suffered from neglect and abuse during their childhood.

Children damaged in this way often have lower IQs and an increased risk of depression, suicide, acting out, and drug problems. They are more likely than others to be violent and to be arrested as juveniles. Among preschool children the abused and neglected are more likely than other children to get angry, refuse to follow directions, and to show a lack of enthusiasm. By the time they enter school, they tend to be hyperactive, easily distracted, lacking in self-control, and not well liked by their peers. But these factors do not make them into psychopaths. (Hare 170).

On this occasion, environmental influences may either increase or reduce the possibility of developing antisocial behavior. One could also say that trauma, abuse of all sorts as well as parental upbringings are risk factors of high impact. In other words, each of these factors likely has a nourishment role for psychopathy development, all of which are going to be separately treated in the following points.

2.2.1. Childhood Abuse

Abuse comes in many shapes and forms. It brings long-lasting effects and damages individuals of all ages, races, socio-economic statuses, religious backgrounds, and sexual

orientations. Abused children mainly encounter such treatment from members of their environment. This includes their parents, family members, or those who are close to them. It includes any kind of assault, intimidation, battery, sexual assault, or any criminal offense committed by a relative or a person living in the same house as the victim which has caused him or her, the victim, harm (Bartol and Bartol, 2011). Abuse often becomes evident in the adolescent years of many psychopaths, and like any other victims of abuse, they will continue “the cycle of violence” (Finkelhor et al., 2009) and generally the abused occasionally become the abuser.

In the case of Dahmer and Bagwell, both of them witnessed abuse during their childhood and adolescence. Child abuse is defined as “any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, the potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child” which could physically, emotionally and psychologically traumatize the well-being of a child for the rest of his remaining life (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1).

The first form of child abuse covered in this analysis is emotional abuse. It is considered to be the hardest form of abuse because it always comes with other types. In this sense, emotional abuse is any psychological mal-sentiment caused by another individual. It is “a pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.” (Child Welfare Information Gateway 3). Emotionally abused children are more likely to encounter “physical, psychological, behavioral, academic, sexual, interpersonal, self-perception, and/or spiritual consequences” (Higgs 7).

In *Prison Break*, for instance, the immoral and complex antagonist of the series, T-Bag, was depicted as both a perpetrator and a victim of various forms of abuse, including emotional abuse. One of the frequent forms of emotional abuse seen in the series is

upbringing, which played an important role in inspiring and sustaining psychopathy. Thus T. Millon suggests that there are two types of psychopaths: the indulged and the deprived (7).

Indulged psychopaths are those who are fully supported by their parents. Whatever harm and chaos they might have caused, and no matter what damage and lies they have said and made, their parents are always supportive. Some parents even support such bad behaviors. Cleckley (1988) perfectly illustrated those kinds of psychopaths in his case studies, in which he claimed that a high proportion of individuals who have shown psychopathic tendencies were fully rescued by their parents from the consequences of their actions, either by bribing or welcoming them back home instead of sending them away to receive the proper treatment. In contrast, deprived psychopaths are those who were deprived of affectionate and emotional interactions with their parents. In this conception, it is “excessively harsh depriving parenting that can account for such aspects of psychopathy as psychopathic rebelliousness and contrariness.” (141).

Speaking of T-Bag, he is both an indulged and deprived psychopath; he is an indulged psychopath in the sense that his father, Mr. Bagwell had always provoked and encouraged his child, Theodore, to behave in an antisocial manner. Contrarily to other children who normally play and have fun with their friends, siblings, and neighbors, T-Bag was forced to stay home. He could never go out and play, or enjoy his years of innocence like any normal kid. On the opposite, all he could do was obey his father by staying at home trying to learn new English words. He is also a deprived psychopath because he was starved of affection from both his parents. On the one hand, his mother was a mongoloid; even though she was always at home, she was emotionally distant and never even spoke to him. She cannot be blamed due to her inability to show normal feelings and interactions, however, his father, on the other hand, emotionally abused him through manipulation and isolation. He was the harshest parent one could ever get. He never treated him as other parents normally treat and love their kids. He

was not a good model of parenting. Hence, T-Bag's lack of parental affection is one of the many reasons that influenced his future self.



Figure 67: Jeff witnesses domestic violence between his parents.



Figure 68: Jess, the deprived child.

Likewise, Jeff was emotionally abused by both his parents. When growing up, he was a happy infant with a family that seemed loving and giving. Nevertheless, after watching the first few episodes of the series, it is undeniably clear that several family issues may have inevitably and psychologically harmed Jeffrey Dahmer. The most significant factor that one could observe was domestic violence and abuse. Jeffrey regularly witnessed numerous verbal fights and disputes between his parents. In one of the second episode's scenes, Jeff saw his mother pointing out a knife toward his father when they were in the middle of an altercation which must be traumatizing (Figure 67). Additionally to this, Jeffrey is like T-Bag, a deprived psychopath. His parents were always self-involved; his father was always absent, and he spent lots of time working on his Ph.D. at Iowa State University, whereas his mother, Joyce, was emotionally unstable and unavailable. Her postpartum crisis and addiction to anti-anxiety and anti-depressant drugs were the reason that triggered arguments between her and Lionel. While Lionel complains that their son never knew what is meant by a mother's love because Joyce never even held him between her arms (Figure 68), Joyce yells that he is always absent, not caring for their son's well-being. Yet, the truth is they both have done things in the wrong way. Jeff being deprived of his mother's affection from a very young age grew up to feel isolated, abandoned, and alone, especially after his brother David was born.



Figure 69: Jeff being abandoned by his mom.



Figure 70: Joyce leaves Jeffrey while she takes her younger son, David, with her.

Benjamin B. Wolman highlights the fact that the lack of guidance and misguidance “on the part of the parents” (14) and the lack of supervision lead to the formation of a “teenage culture” (15). When Jeff’s parents got divorced, his mother took his brother David and decided to take off. She abandoned Jeffrey claiming that he never loved her, so she was leaving him to rot beside his father (Figures 69 & 70). Meanwhile, his father was already gone, staying in a hotel that no one knew of. Hence, Jeffrey found himself alone in the house for nearly four months, all of which happened before he could turn eighteen. With a distressed childhood background and abandonment on behalf of his parents, Jeff displaced his feelings and turned out to become an alcoholic at a very young age (Figures 71& 72). As a result, he abandoned his studies and lifestyle. Sometimes the damage occurs because the mother is emotionally and physically distant and the father is working to support the family; a devastating combination that resulted from the absence of “stable social relationships in childhood” (16). Severe abuse, abandonment, mistrust, and isolation of the child may prompt “feelings of mistrust that can lead to sociopathic justification of hostile behavior” (17), a misprision to “identify with the parent ... to internalize the parents’ values” (18).



Figure 71: Jeff always buying alcohol.



Figure 72: Young Jeff as an alcoholic.

The abuse and neglect which Jeff experienced both as a child and adolescent, additionally to the multiple hectic disputations between his parents cannot be denied. Unlike Jeffrey who only suffered from emotional abuse and neglect, Theodore was emotionally, physically, and sexually abused by his father. It has already been mentioned that T-Bag was kept at home and made to memorize all existing words in a dictionary to realize his father's dream and become president of the United States. What was not revealed is that Teddy followed his father's instructions out of fear of being beaten or sexually harassed.

As the second type of abuse discussed in this study, physical abuse is defined to be any use of non-accidental force that may result in "physical injury to a child caused by a parent, caregiver, or another person responsible for a child and can include punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other objects), burning, or otherwise causing physical harm" (Child Welfare Information Gateway 3). By comparison, sexual abuse is forcing a child to engage in any sexual activity. This enforcement could occur by a parent, a caregiver, and even strangers. The abuse of underage children "includes ... fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials." (3).

There was no clear scene that showed T-Bag being physically abused by his father, but the fear in his eyes and his father's words mean that he was physically abused when he was not acting like the "good boy" his father ordered him to be. He was forbidden to go out for fear of being beaten or sexually abused. However, the sexual abuse was evident in "*Bad Blood*" which is reflected as soon as his father was shown to be touching his son's legs and attempting to get closer to him while the door is suddenly shut (Figure 73).



Figure 73: Young Teddy being molested by his father.

The unimaginable emotional, physical, and sexual abuse as well as psychological and physical neglect presented both Jeffrey and Bagwell as lucid and memorable examples to what could occur “to children who fail to “attach” or “bond” to their parents or primary care givers during early life.” (Hare 172). Hare further asserts that “Most of the external factors associated with the "failure to bond"- rejection, deprivation, neglect, abuse, and so forth - can indeed produce terrible effects, and *some* of these effects may resemble a few of the traits and behaviors that define the disorder of psychopathy.”(172). This failure to form the parent-child bond could have a direct influence on the stage developments (behavioral and psychological problems) that would therefore lead to psychopathy.

2.2.2. Childhood Trauma

Spiegel (2008) describes trauma as a helpless and stressful state of mind, characterized by a lack of control over parts of the mind, such as identity and memory. In this sense, it is a toxic and poisonous condition that endangers the psyche of the traumatized. Levine (1997) claimed that the unresolved impact is what determines the classification of an event as a traumatizing one. Trauma is identified by those events which are perceived as both “life-threatening” and “overwhelming experiences” (Levine 7; Van der Kolk and McFarlane 6). Freud (1991) described trauma as a “traumatic neurosis”. In the cases of Jeffrey and Theodore, both of them faced shattering, frightening and terrifying events in their early childhood which led to a traumatic fixation.

Freud (1991) also addressed the traumatic state of patients which he called “traumatic neurosis” (314). He described it as “an experience which within a short period of time presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this must result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates” (315). This means that the excessively high-powered events experienced at an early age may have impacted a person’s cognitive systems that are in charge of self-control, which successively might be an adverse condition in the evolution of psychopathological disorders (Bedwell and Hickman, 2022).

From being emotionally abandoned, mistreated, neglected, and abused, emotionally, physically, and sexually, Jeffrey and Theodore seem as if they were trapped in their childhood experiences. According to Freud, traumatized patients “give an impression of having been ‘fixated’ to a particular portion of their past, as though they could not manage to free themselves from it and were for that reason alienated from the present and the future.” (313). Jeffrey, for instance, remained *lodged* in his illness in a way that his traumatized experience of being abandoned at a very young age resulted in the burden of his *ill-fated* victims. In other words, Jeffrey was so fixated on the period when his parents got divorced, the time he was abandoned and left alone; this is the reason why he wanted his victims to stay with him by killing them, and to fill the void that his parents left in him.

In the sixth episode entitled “Silenced”, Jeff seemed to develop an apparent affectionate relationship with Anthony Hughes. After his first night at Jeff’s, Anthony woke up the next day and decided to take off; he had work to do and a usual life to get back to. Jeff looked frightened and asked him when he shall see him again. Anthony answered patiently that they will meet the following week, and told Jeff to trust him. At that time, Jeffrey was fighting his darkest urges. He was in between situations, and confused about whether he should kill him at that moment. He was scared to be abandoned again, to lose the company

that he had again, and to be left alone once more. However, as soon as Anthony came back to the apartment, and told him that he forgot his keys; Jeff, holding a hammer, closes the door, and heads to his bedroom, and the next thing you see is Tony hanging on the bed, bare feet, with a huge blood spot marking the mattress.

One could also say that contrary to Jeffrey, Theodore to some degree was raised in dissimilar circumstances. He was born after his father, Mr. Bagwell, raped his mongoloid sister. This means that his parents are incest. Just imagine being raised in such an environment where one might think he or she is the sin of your father's consequences. Adding to that, his mother's rape was passed onto him. In other words, after T-Bag was born, his father started maltreating, abusing, and molesting him. The fact that his father raped his sister and emotionally, physically, and sexually abused his child is both shocking and traumatizing.

Alternatively, Freud explained that erotic fixations in the first instance are passed off without doing any damage, and it was only some years later that they reappeared (316). Accordingly, T-Bag and Jeff know nothing of their actions being derived from the experiences they had had; they could only reply to the urges and impulses which made them carry out their actions. They had been aware of their issues, the abuse, and neglect, but none of their mental pre-determinants of this effect came to the knowledge of their consciousness. This effect was described as "obsessional neurosis" (Freud, 1991). Hence, they are carrying out what had been unfinished in their childhoods and adolescence, in Dahmer's case.

Accordingly, T-Bag and Jeff did not know where those obsessional actions came from, what they meant, or what motivated them in the first place. However; they were so fixated to the moment of the traumatic accident that they attached themselves to performing and carrying out what was unfinished as "an intention to correct a distressing portion of the past" (317). Jeffrey was not consciously aware of the fact that he was suffering from trauma. Similarly, Theodore did not acknowledge the fact that his father's abuse, especially the sexual

abuse could manifest in a great proportion to create a fixated state of mind. This fixation may have affected his choice of selecting younger boys to molest and abuse. He adopted his father's behavior and made it become his own (Figures 74 &75).



Figure 74: Mr Bagwell sexually touching T-Bag's leg.



Figure 75: T-Bag carrying out his father's actions on others (younger guys and boys & children).

Freud (1991) explained that those who suffer from traumatic neuroses seem as if they had not finished their traumatic situation, a task that had never been dealt with, which is why they somehow tend to recreate what has been unfinished. On this occasion, we notice that whenever someone is about to leave Jeffrey, he unconsciously and automatically asks them his famous question "Why does everyone want to leave me?" (Figure 76) The effect of his parent's abandonment was showing all over his face (Figure 77).



Figure 76: Jeff wondering why everyone want to leave him.



Figure 77: Figure 77: Jeff demands his Victims not to leave.

Except for Jeff's parents abandoning him, he also had other traumatizing events. He did not only see his mother constantly take anti-anxiety and anti-depressant drugs, he also has seen her multiple attempts to take her own life. In the second episode entitled "Don't Go", young boy, Jeff, comes back home from school. Once he is inside the house, he finds his toddler brother, David, crying all alone in his room. Jeff turns around and goes down the

hallway in search of his mother. As he enters his parents' large bedroom, he glimpses a woman laying with her face up across the bed. He gets closer; but the woman is completely motionless with her legs hanging on the edges of the bed. Jeff moves closer, the woman's eyes do not blink. Her mouth hangs slowly open, Jeff pokes her cheeks. She does not react. The woman was his M O T H E R... (Figures 78 & 79).



Figure 78: Joyce taking an overdose.



Figure 79: Jeff finds his mother nearly dead and calls the ambulance.

Several theories of childhood trauma proclaim that children are particularly exposed to severe, long-term behavioral and emotional disturbances, and have been reported to respond differently to adults following trauma (Alistic, Jongmans, Van Wesel & Kleber, 2011). Trauma is thought to be of the greatest negative impact (van der Kolk, Roth, Pelcovitz, Sunday & Spinazola, 2005), which happens due to the children's underdeveloped emotional systems and the burden of trauma. Consequently, it leads to developing problems with aggression, impulse regulation, dissociation, and interpersonal disorders, among others (D'Andrea, Ford, Stolbach, Spinazzola & Van der Kolk, 2012; Van der Kolk et al., 2005).

As shown, poor environment and improper parenting are key points in developing psychopathy. In other words, rejection, deprivation, negligence, lack of parental affection, and guidance, trauma and abuse contribute equally to the nourishment of psychopathy. While many studies argue that psychopathy is the result of childhood attachment difficulties, Hare proclaims that children who fail to bond and communicate with their parents are, in some cases, a "*symptom*" of psychopathy. For him, "[i]t is likely that these children lack the

capacity to bond readily, and that their lack of attachment is largely the result, not the cause, of psychopathy.” (Hare 172).

2.3. Hare’s Interactive Model “Nature and Nurture”

Whereas some analysts claim that psychopathy is a result of genetic components, others note that it is produced due to external environmental forces, however; Hare stands in a position between the two. The position he favored was that psychopathy is the emergence of a complicated and incomprehensible interaction between biological factors and social forces (Hare, 1993).

His main argument is that it is impossible to say that psychopathy is based only on the biological components or the social ones separately. In this context, Hare states:

But it does mean that biological endowment – the raw material that environmental, social, and learning experiences fashion into a unique individual – provides a poor basis for socialization and conscience formation... Although psychopathy is not primarily the result of poor parenting or adverse childhood experiences, I think they play an important role in shaping what nature has provided. Social factors and parenting practices influence the way the disorder develops and is expressed in behavior. (173).

To use simple words, Hare compared psychopathy to a potter, in which he explained that the instruments used in molding pottery from clay are influenced by social elements whereas the characteristics of pottery are also dependent on the type of clay already available, which refer to the natural influences (genetics). In the case of Dahmer and Bagwell, the social factors and parenting practices that they have faced during their childhoods “shape the behavioral *expression* of the disorder, but have less effect on the (individuals’) inability to feel empathy or to develop a conscience. No amount of social conditioning will by itself generate a capacity for caring about others or a powerful sense of right and wrong.” (174). If unstable and violent

childhood is what creates psychopaths, then how can someone explain the fact that not all people with deranged backgrounds become psychopaths, but only a small proportion of them?

It is true that Jeffrey and Theodore's deprived and disturbed backgrounds, where loneliness, abandonment, and abusive behaviors find "a willing pupil" in the psychopaths (Hare 175). However; they are not the only elements that molded to shaping psychopathy. In Hare's words,

the behavior of parents bears sole or even primary responsibility for the disorder... Parenting behavior may not be responsible for the essential ingredients of the disorder, but it may have a great deal to do with how the syndrome develops and is expressed... [Meaning that] poor parenting and unfavorable social and physical environments can greatly exacerbate potential problems ... in molding the behavioral patterns of children. (178).

Conclusion

To sum it up, psychopathy characterized by shallow emotional responses, lack of empathy, impulsivity, unreliability, and an increased likelihood for antisocial behavior (Cleckley 1988; Hare 1996) is a disorder that results in the combination of both social forces and hereditary or genetic components. It is true that in some cases genetics may separately sustain psychopathy without necessarily being accompanied by social influences. However, when it comes to the idea that suggests environmental forces, reflected in neglect, abandonment, abuse, trauma, upbringing, violence and so forth..., are what originally caused psychopathy is not true. Psychopathy, in some cases, is the result of genetic influence, but it often comes as a combination between hereditary components and environmental factors.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Psychopathy is identified as one of the most complex disorders. It is characterized by a range of features that differ from one psychopath to another. Similarly, the nature and stage developments of the phenomenon also vary. They are conditional, and they are controlled by distinctive external factors, such as upbringing.

The psychopaths' inability to identify themselves with others, their unlike-mindedness, lack of culpability and repentance, and their charming identities that always come with untruthfulness and manipulation are the key traits in recognizing them. This, as previously explained, does not designate that every lying, deceiver, manipulator, and cold-blooded person is a psychopath. Some individuals are capable of telling lies and manipulating others for their personal gain; however, when they are in a situation to physically hurt a human soul, they could not do it because deep down they are either feeling guilty about it or could not harm anyone. When you speak about psychopathy, it is more of a state related to the inhumanity of the patients as well as their lean towards violent, antagonizing, and harmful deeds. It is a combination between animosity and ruthlessness.

In recent years, the portrayal of psychopaths in movies, especially American ones, sought an increase. As intelligent sadists and unpredictable evil monsters, the representation of psychopaths as fictional characters is now an obsession for all involved. Movies that are centered on evil characters receive more buzz and welcome from the audience than those that have the standard plot; hero versus villain, or protagonist versus antagonist(s). In this conception, people, adolescents specifically, tend to glorify such fictional characters. They try to normalize their terrifying deeds; they dress themselves up as them (psychopaths); they use funny scenes and make memes out of them; last, but not least, they post Tiktoks, spreading their reactions, mostly fascination, about those characters and movies. All of the mentioned is done as an attempt to advertise such content that will render the audience to be more

accepting and sympathetic. This in itself, the advertisement, could bring about positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, it spreads knowledge and awareness. On the other hand, it might influence the wrong category of people, such as children with unstable homes, to carry out the same horrific acts. As a result, more psychopathic behaviors will be encouraged and developed.

Accordingly, throughout this dissertation, we have argued that the representation of psychopaths in American movies has been on a continuous increase during the last few years, which is due to the self-centredness of atrocious characters more than heroic ones. To prove such a conception, we have selected two of the most notorious portrayed psychopaths in the TV series: Theodore Bagwell in *Prison Break* (2005) and Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022). Contrary to Dahmer who was the focus of the show, Bagwell succeeded in attracting the audience's attention even though he is a supporting character. Our objective has been to divulge the way psychopaths think and feel, as well as identify the roots of psychopathy in relation to the chosen characters.

As a means to do so, the present work firstly has analyzed the most common psychopathic characteristics in the TV shows in light of Harvey M. Cleckley and Robert D. Hare's clinical profiles. After examining each series separately, we have reached to a total of five traits that are worth mentioning. In many ways, both Jeffrey and Theodore seem to have experienced and developed the same features. These involve early behavioral problems such as disruption, substance abuse and, animal cruelty; superficial charm and good intelligence; impulsive behaviors and an excessive need for excitement; pathological lying, cunning and manipulative tendencies; and poverty in general affective emotions that includes lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse. Additionally to the previous characteristics, psychopaths tend to lean towards violent and antisocial behaviors. Both Jeff and T-Bag live by their own rules, totally disregarding the values and prospects of the people surrounding them.

One could also say that poor upbringing, childhood trauma, loneliness, neglect, and abuse combined with genetic and hereditary components passed over from one generation to another are what led Theodore and Jeffrey to become the most notorious psychopaths. Dahmer's relationship with his parents was unstable since his childhood. He was raised by emotionally and physically distant parents, then eventually grew up on his own when they got divorced and abandoned him. His self-centered parents led him to create his own culture about the external world. He was an alcoholic from a very young age and took care of himself in the only way he knew. The genes that he already possessed might have influenced his future self, but the social elements mentioned previously as well as his mother's addiction to medicine during her pregnancy are what nurtured psychopathy and maintained it all those years. Likewise, Theodore's nature is a mixture of his early exposure to sexual abuse as well as his psychotic father who raped his mongoloid sister (T-Bag's mother), and emotionally, physically, and sexually mistreated his son.

This study makes it easier for the reader to recognize psychopaths and become more aware of the disorder as well as its complexity. Unlike any other mental disorder, psychopathy does not start later in life. It, however; stretches from a person's childhood until adulthood. In other words, psychopathy is a stable and unique disorder that has neither a starting point nor an expiration date. And even though multiple studies in psychology and psychiatry have examined and evaluated psychopathy separately, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMD) does not fully recognize it in its formal diagnosis, yet it describes a similar condition known as Anti-social Personality Disorder (ASPD).

In a nutshell, the present work has studied the phenomenon of psychopathy, one of the most intense topics, as represented in Paul T. Scheuring's *Prison Break* (2005) and Ryan Murphy's *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (2022). These have been examined in

light of Harvey M. Cleckley and Robert D. Hare's ideas on psychopathy as well as Sigmund Freud's conceptions of personality constructions and traumatic effects to answer our major concern which is whether psychopathy is the result of natural predisposition or nurture. Together, they have underlined Bagwell and Dahmer's psychopathic characteristics and their traumatic childhood experiences. They have also outlined the equal influence of genetic and social factors in the maintenance of psychopathy and revealed the fact that psychopaths are id-oriented. This means that psychopaths are driven by their uncontrollable desires and impulses. In the present study, we discovered that bad genes being mixed up with poor upbringing, intense abuse, neglect, abandonment, and traumatic events have long-lasting effects, leading to the individuals' breakdown, and pushing the development of severe disorders, including psychopathy.

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