Profile of a Serial Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story

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The United States has a greater number of serial killers than anywhere else in the world. America has around 85% of the world’s serial killers in its midst. The number of serial killers has dramatically increased. The estimated number of serial killers is between twenty and fifty at any point in time. It’s hard to estimate correctly since many serial killers are never caught due to changing methods of killing or the types of victims. It’s hard to say what happens to those murderers that are never apprehended. It’s possible that they change location or they might be arrested for other crimes. They might commit suicide, stop committing murder, are in mental hospital, or maybe, just a few, turn themselves in. The following example of a serial killer is just one of many that have occurred in America (True Crime and Justice, 2006).

The serial killer that I chose to profile is Jeffery Dahmer. Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer was one of the most famous serial killers of our time. He was cunning, persuasive, and extremely manipulative. These factors were the main reason it took so long for him to be brought to justice. Dahmer was born in 1960 on the 21st day of May in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He died in 1994 on the 28th day of November in Portage Wisconsin. He murdered a total of seventeen men between the years of 1978-1991. He was eighteen years of age when the first murder occurred and thirty-one at the last murder. His nicknames were Milwaukee Monster and Milwaukee Cannibal, which are quite fitting considering his methods of murder. These included strangulation, bludgeoning, necrophilia, drugging, cannibalism and dismemberment. He also kept trophies, like many serial killers do, to remind him of each murder. These included skeletons, skulls, torsos, heads, scalps hands, genitals, skin, internal organs and photographs. Dahmer was quite proficient in the use of acid to dispose of unwanted body parts that he did not want to keep or eat. Dahmer was eventually caught and brought to justice for his crimes. He was beaten to death by another inmate after he was convicted and sent to prison (The Serial Killer Database, 2007).

Problems started for Jeffrey Dahmer before he was even born. His mother Joyce Dahmer had quite a few problems during her pregnancy with her son. She had constant morning sickness and even the smell of food cooking seemed to bother her immensely. She developed muscle spasms and started taking powerful drugs to try to lessen them. Nothing seemed to work and she would sometimes take up to twenty-six pills a day. After the long trial of Joyce Dahmer’s pregnancy and a move to her husband Lionel Dahmer’s parent’s house in West Allis, Wisconsin, Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer was finally born on May 21, 1960.

There was a lot of tension living in Lionel Dahmer’s parent’s house so the Dahmer’s moved into their own place, on the east side of Milwaukee, with their son. The family seemed relatively happy after this move. When Jeffrey Dahmer was two, his father noticed how his son violently pushed blocks down and like to fiercely rip up leaves. This might have been the first slight sign of what was to come.

In 1962, the Dahmer’s moved once again after Lionel Dahmer got a better job working as a research assistant in Ames, Iowa. He began working with chemicals and lab equipment to obtain his PhD at Iowa State University. During this time his son seemed to get sick all the time with one infection or another. He received countless injections for this problem. Despite this fact, Jeffrey Dahmer seemed like a happy child and even helped his father nurse a hurt bird back to health.

When Jeffrey was four, his father noticed an odd smell coming from under the house. He investigated and found a mass of dead animals in various stages of decay. He retrieved the bones and noticed how Jeffrey put his hand in them to crack them in pieces. He seemed to enjoy this immensely. Soon after this incident, Jeffrey’s father took him to the lab where he
Jeffrey seemed to show no interest in the various chemicals and tubes. He seemed to like the bones he had touched much better. This should have been a sign that everything was not as it should be.

Over the next year, Jeffrey Dahmer’s father grew increasingly preoccupied in finishing his PhD. He barely spent any time with his son and when he did see him he noticed how Jeffrey shied away from competitive or physical games. Instead, Jeffrey seemed to focus on games like hide and seek or games that involved stalking or concealing.

In 1964, Jeffrey grew sick and had to have a hernia operation. It took him quite awhile to recover. He seemed to grow sadder and sadder during this period. By the year 1966, Jeffrey Dahmer’s appearance had changed dramatically. His hair grew dark and his eyes changed to a deeper shade. He seemed to spend a lot of time just sitting silently, almost without moving. He smiled less and less and seemed isolated and withdrawn.

Jeffrey’s parents moved to Akron, Ohio in 1966. His father received his PhD and found a job as a research chemist. Joyce Dahmer was pregnant when they moved and had problems once again with her pregnancy. She took medicine for her nervous condition, but it did not seem to help. Her son, David Dahmer, was born in December of 1966.

Just before Jeffrey Dahmer’s brother was born, he entered first grade. He immediately had problems. He was terrified to go to school and did not like to be around people. His teacher notified his parents after only one month of Jeffrey being in school that he was not interested in school assignments and was shy and reclusive. She suggested that he receive some type of help, but he never got it. He grew increasingly isolated and had no friends.

When he was seven, the Dahmer family moved to Barberton, Ohio. There was once again a lot of tension in the household. The baby, David, had colic and kept Joyce and Lionel up at night and Joyce grew progressively more depressed. This meant that Lionel Dahmer had to take over more responsibilities with the children and house since his wife did not seem capable. The arguments between Joyce and Lionel grew worse. During this time, Jeffrey befriended a neighbor boy named Lee. They started playing together and even dressed up as devils for Halloween. They went to the same school and had the same assistant teacher. Jeffrey Dahmer grew fond of her even caught some tadpoles to give to her. He found out that she had given the same tadpoles to his friend Lee. In an act of revenge he found the tadpoles at Lee’s house and killed them by pouring motor oil in the fishbowl. This was Dahmer’s first real act of violence. His dark side was beginning to show and it would only grow throughout his teenage years (Dahmer, 1994).

Around age ten, Dahmer began collecting dead animals and conducting experiments on them. He would take off their heads, use acid on the bones and even mounted a dog’s head on a stake (Fisher, 2006). As he got older, he began to drink heavily. He did not do well at schools and spent quite a bit of time alone. Dahmer eventually graduated high school and was left to his own devices in his parent’s home. Jeffrey Dahmer’s parents went through a bad divorce and custody battle involving Dahmer’s brother, David, who was eleven at the time (“World of Criminal,” 2005-2006).

In 1978, Dahmer decided to stop with the experiments and move on to murder. The victim’s name was Steven Hicks and he was a hitchhiker that Dahmer encountered and lured home. After drinks, Hicks tried to leave and Dahmer hit him on the head with a barbell. He then proceeded to strangle him and bury him (Fisher, 2006).

This first murder seemed to shock Jeffrey Dahmer. He tried to behave normally by attending college at Ohio State University. This was done at his father’s insistence. He flunked out after one quarter since he did nothing but drink. His father then insisted that he join the military. Dahmer did seem to improve for a short period due to the military’s discipline. After he was sent to Germany, he was discharged for being repeatedly drunk (Fisher, 2006; “St. James Encyclopedia,” 2005-2006).
Dahmer’s father did not know what to do at this point. Every attempt to counsel the boy was a failure. He finally sent Jeffrey Dahmer to live with his grandmother, near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1985. He tried to keep a job at Ambrosia Chocolate Factory but was fired because he missed too much work. His behavior became weirder and weirder. He managed to kill three people while staying at his grandmother’s house. In 1987, he killed Steven Tuomi, in January of 1988, he killed James Doxtator and in March of 1988, he killed Richard Guerrero. He had a mannequin in his closet that his grandmother eventually found. He tried to explain that he just stole it to prove he could do it. She also found a gun under his bed. Dahmer tried to convince her and his father that it was a shooting pistol. Dahmer’s father made him sell the gun since it was obviously a real gun. Jeffrey Dahmer’s grandmother noticed odd smells coming from the basement. Jeffrey tried to explain this away by saying he was conducting experiments on dead animal using chemicals. His grandmother decided to kick him out in 1988, because of Dahmer’s drunkenness and because of unpleasant orders in the basement (Fisher, 2006; “World of Criminal,” 2005-2006).

He moved into his own apartment on September 25, 1988. On that same day he was arrested for the molestation and drugging of a thirteen year old Laotian boy. He had lured the boy to his apartment with the promise of money for posing for nude pictures. The child’s parents pressed charges and Dahmer was sentenced to five years of probation with a suspended sentence of eight years in prison on May 23, 1989. He did not have to go to prison but did have to participate in one year of work release. This was done in the House of Correction. He was released after serving ten months, but had to meet with a probation officer twice a month. Unfortunately, the officer never visited Dahmer’s home for the visits since she was busy and did not like the neighborhood. Dahmer’s father tried to get his son into treatment but it never happened.

In the following months, before Dahmer’s final arrest, he was able to kill as much as he liked. He was living on his own so it was easier to get away with the killing. The victims were usually chosen because of their sexuality. Dahmer would hang out in gay bars and just pick up on the homosexuals that would inhabit them. It seems that Dahmer was particular to the African-American race, but that did not hold true for all the cases. At the crime scene, there were parts of bodies that were dismembered. Dahmer would lead the victims back to his house, drug them, sexually assault the victims, and then dismember them. Dahmer would use acid to take away the skin from the skulls of the victims and then keep these skulls as trophies. Dahmer would also dismember the bodies of the victims and keep them in his apartment for safekeeping. When the police discovered Dahmer’s apartment, they found, not only skulls kept as trophies, but also an entire industrial size bin full of human bodies. They also found a human head in the refrigerator of his apartment. When the police arrived at the scene of the crime they smelled a very foul smell, which would be later learned to be the stench of the dead bodies that had been decaying in his apartment. Dahmer had built a shrine to himself to remind him of all the victims that he had killed (Fisher, 2006). These victims included Anthony Sears, Edward Smith, Raymond Smith, Ernest Miller, David Thomas, Curtis Straughter, Errol Lindsey, Anthony Hughes, Konerak Sinthasomphone, Matthew Turner, Jeremiah Weinberger, Oliver Lacy, and Joseph Bradehoft (The Serial Killer Database, 2007).

A couple of months after Dahmer had killed the fourteen year-old boy, Konerak, two Milwaukee police officers were patrolling a very high crime scene near Marquette University and they were blown away at their findings. At about midnight, the two officers sat in their squad car and observed an African-American male with handcuffs on one of his wrists. The two police officers, thinking that this man had more than likely escaped from another police officer, approached the man for questioning. The man questioned, Tracy Edwards, told of a “weird” man who had put cuffs on him and acted in a very bizarre manner. The two police officers hesitated, wanting to stay away from this homosexual affair, but proceeded to check out the situation. Edwards led the officers to the Oxford apartments where a very calm and rational Dahmer would answer the door. The officers questioned Dahmer about the handcuffs, and he gladly went towards the bedroom to retrieve the key. Edwards, remembering the knife in the bedroom that Dahmer had threatened him with, alerted the officers and they proceeded into the bedroom before Dahmer. The officers were shocked when they found not only photographs of dead men, but also dismembered bodies, skulls, and a human head in the refrigerator. Dahmer suddenly turned on one of the officers, but was taken down by the other (Fisher, 2007).
After Dahmer was arrested, he went to court and entered a plea of insanity, which was prompted by his lawyer, but the court was not in favor of this plea. Rather, Dahmer was convicted and was sentenced to fifteen consecutive life terms for a total of 957 years in prison. Dahmer was paired up with two highly dangerous men on a work detail and on the morning of November 28, 1994, Dahmer was beaten to death by these two men, when left alone to do their work (“World of Criminal,” 2005-2006).

Why does a Jeffrey Dahmer happen? How does a man become a serial killer, necrophiliac, cannibal and psychopath? Dahmer was attracted to the bones of dead animals at a very early age, and acted upon these feelings in the violent fantasies that he committed. Dahmer was affected by the divorce of his parents, his moving around, and the operation that he received at an early age. Dahmer graduated from being fascinated by the decaying bones of animals to the sexual, as well as violent fantasies that led to the spree of killings that he committed. I think that Dahmer had a very big problem with the isolation that he faced at an early age in life. Dahmer saw that his parents were never happy, and maybe that’s why he had homosexual tendencies. Dahmer was continuously consumed with necrophilia, which is the fetish with the dead. He not only collected the bodies of dead animals at an early age, but also he had fantasies about killing people (Dahmer, 1994). I think that you have to put Jeffery Dahmer in a class all his own, because of the fascination that he had with the corpses, and the power that they gave him once he had killed them. A lot of serial killers were more worried about what would happen to them, and they would get rid of the bodies of the people that they had just killed. Dahmer kept parts of his victims and did not attempt to get rid of much evidence at all. Dahmer did not try to deny that he committed murder. That is not usually seen among serial killers today. I also believe that he killed out of loneliness. We saw an example of this when he committed his first murder. Steven Hicks was not killed until he tried to leave (Fisher, 2006). Jeffrey Dahmer is a mystery that may never be solved. Hopefully, something can be learned from his life that will prevent future crimes elsewhere.

References


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Serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer was responsible for a series of gruesome murders of 17 young men from 1988 until he was caught in July 1991 in Milwaukee. Over the years, there was speculation that Jeffrey Dahmer may have been involved in the kidnapping and murder of Adam Walsh, son of later TV personality John Walsh. Murder Spree. In September 1987, while on probation on the molestation charges, Dahmer met 26-year-old Steven Toumi and the two spent the night drinking heavily and cruising gay bars before going to a hotel room. When Dahmer awoke from his drunken stupor, he found Toumi dead. Dahmer put Toumi’s body into a suitcase, which he took to his grandmother’s basement. Few serial killers have shocked the nation—even the world—like Jeffrey Dahmer. His numerous crimes were almost unbelievably grotesque and extreme, yet they occurred in an ordinary apartment building, right under the noses of his neighbors. After Dahmer, it became a little bit harder to trust the apparently normal people around us. That mild mannered fellow we see walking his dog every day—does he have a secret? What does he keep in his refrigerator? It would not be an exaggeration to say that something about the story of Jeffrey Dahmer has gotten under our collective skin. In spite of his great