

Ted Bundy on the "malignant being": An analysis of the justificatory discourse of a serial killer

Amelie Pedneault

Abstract. Sykes and Matza (1957) theorized that techniques of neutralization (denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners and appeal to higher loyalties) play an important role into a youth's decision to commit delinquent acts. The present research project investigates the presence of such techniques of neutralization in the discourse of Ted Bundy, a serial killer. Using publicly available interviews, discourse analysis investigative techniques were used to analyze Bundy's construction of his victims, his actions, and the root cause of his behaviours. The results indicate evidence of justificatory rationalizations in his discourse.

Introduction

The stories of Gilles de Rai (i.e., Bluebeard), Elizabeth Bathory (i.e., the Blood Countess), and Jack the Ripper report historical accounts of serial killings. As Delisi and Walters (2011) pointed out in a recent article, the most common occurrence of multiple homicides is domestic murder and murder-suicide events. However, medias are not interested with that type of multiple killings (Duwe, 2000; Chermak, 1994). The "serial killer" is constructed more narrowly than the multiple-homicide offender. This offender commits a "string of four or more homicides [...] that spans a period of days, weeks, months, or even years" (Fox & Levin, 1998, p. 410). Their typical victims are white females that are either very young or very old (Warren, Hazelwood, & Dietz 1996; Hickey 1997). This type of serial killer gathers much attention and creates high level of public fear.

Serial killings are rare occurrences. Meloy (2000) estimated serial sexual homicides to consist less than one percent of all homicides in the US. Nevertheless, the study of serial killers is important considering their high number of victims, the important strain they impose on law enforcement resources to investigate their crimes, and the resources required from the criminal justice system to tried and imprisoned them.

Ted Bundy killed numerous female victims in the 1970's, terrorizing Americans as he migrated east from the state of Washington to Florida, women going missing along his path. A seductive killer, he lured his victims to him, a lot of them being last seen helping a guy with a cast or a sling (Rule, 1980). Caught, he managed to escape twice, until he was finally tried and sentenced to death for three murders. He fought his convictions in appeal, but was put to death on the electric chair on January 24, 1989, a few days after confessing to the murder of 28 females. Some authors argue that this number greatly under-represent the actual count and evaluate it instead at more than one hundred victims (Rule, 1980; Keppel, 2005). The present paper is interested with Bundy's discourse, specifically his construction of his victims, the pain and suffering he caused, and the identified source of his behaviour.

Theoretical framework: Neutralization techniques

According to Sykes and Matza (1957), one key concept into explaining an offender's decision to commit crime is his ability to neutralize or rationalize his¹ behaviours. Neutralization occurs when an offender constructs a reasoning that sanitizes his behaviours and their impacts (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2011). Most particularly, five techniques of neutralization are identified: denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Generally, denial of responsibility occurs when an offender attributes the causality of his behaviours to forces outside of his control (e.g., it was an accident). Injury is denied when the criminal behaviour is considered to be victimless (e.g., nobody was hurt). Denial of the victim occurs when the victim is depicted or constructed in way that negates his/her victimization (e.g., the victim's clothing are responsible for her sexual assault). Finally, condemnation of the condemners points to the torts of those prohibiting the behaviours and appeal to higher loyalties invokes arguments of a superior morality for the offender then that of the rules prohibiting the behaviours.

These neutralization techniques were first theorized to explain adolescents' choices to engage in delinquent activities. However, their formulation as broad statements suggests they can be generalized to a variety of criminological situations not restricted to low seriousness offences. In the present research project, Bundy's discourse is examined closely in light of these neutralization techniques. It is recognized that Bundy's crimes are atypical and present an extreme case. However, the generalizability of Sykes and Matza's typology defining techniques of neutralization can benefit from an investigation of the presence of such techniques in situations as extreme as Bundy's horrific crimes.

Methods

Selection of the subject and sources of information

The present study focuses on Ted Bundy, an American serial killer who confessed murdering 28 female victims. Two sources of information were used to get access to Bundy's discourse. First, I used a book entitled "Ted Bundy: Conversations with a killer - The death row interviews" written by Michaud and Aynesworth (1989). This book comprises interviews that were conducted during 28 different days from January 1980 to March 1981. This specific book was chosen because it presents the verbatim interviews (e.g., question and answer format). At that point in time, Bundy had been convicted of three murders and sentenced to death. However, he denied any involvement in those crimes and was fighting his conviction in appeal. To get him to talk, the interviewers allowed him to use the third person ("he") to speculate about a hypothetical offender that would commit such offences and his mental reasoning. Considering that Bundy confessed to committing those murders some years later, the information he gave at this first point in time is considered confirmed. The second source of information was the final video interview given by Bundy a few hours before he was executed in January 1989. The interviewer was James Dobson, a journalist representing a religious organization. The entire interview was retrieved from YouTube (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d). It should be noted that the two sources of information were chosen because they allow reading the exact words of Bundy, and, in the case of the video, seeing and hearing Bundy directly.

¹ For ease of reading, the masculine form is employed from now on when talking about the offender.

The research process

My research interest was to analyze the discourse of a serial killer. After all, as Bundy himself said: "*I know what I'm like, and I know... I, uh... I know what's happening to me*" (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 162). My approach was different than the literature looking at the "creation" of serial killers. Basically, the idea there is to look at all important aspects of the development of known serial killers and identify what went wrong with them (i.e., establishing meaningful distinctions in comparison to a "normal" development). Such approaches are limited to the known facts about serial killers, and they tend to establish "truths" about what went wrong. However, the difficulty to establish such truths is a serious limitation, especially considering that similar life experiences might impact life in very different ways between two people, considering the role of human agency. For example, the way the experience is lived, perceived and the importance and meaning that is given to it can change the impact of a given developmental event.

I started this research project wanting to conduct a case study analysis and to look for those "developmental truths" in the history of Ted Bundy. After reading a lot of materials, it became clear that this approach was flawed, especially considering the discrepancies between the stories. For example, the work of some investigative journalists dwelling into the past of Ted Bundy presented him as a child of incest who was submitted to serious physical abuse as a child (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1999). However, Bundy always refuted that statement, even qualifying his familial environment as a "wonderful home" (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010a). Considering that Bundy is now dead and that his mother has refused to speak about that for more than 25 years, triangulation was impossible. There is little evidence that such "truth" about Bundy's development could be uncovered at this point. Therefore, any conclusion reached about significant developmental cornerstones building on the assumed occurrence or non-occurrence of such abuse would have had important limitations. Another consideration in my decision to move away from a case study analysis relates to psychopathy. Bundy, as a psychopath, possesses such traits as narcissism and compulsive lying (Hare, 2003). Even without anything to gain by lying, he might have done it simply because of his psychopathic traits.

Considering the impossibility to get access to triangulated information, I decided to conduct a discourse analysis. My focus of interest went from looking at steps in his development to analyzing the way he constructed those developmental steps. The nuance is subtle but meaningful. This allows me not to be concerned with the issue of veracity. The truth of the discourse analyzed here is not interesting as much as the meaning constructed from this discourse. The focus of the present study is not concerned with finding the "true" nature of Ted Bundy by looking into the every detail of his life. Instead, my approach looks at the discourse and words of Ted Bundy as conveyor of intrinsic meaning about himself, his crimes and his victims, whether this representation is accurate or not.

On discourse analysis and establishing triangulation

Content analysis is a nonintrusive research method that focuses on the examination of "artifacts of social communication" (Berg, 2004, p. 267). My approach was interpretative and I was looking for "layers of meaning" revealed by Bundy's discourse (Berg, 2004, p. 266). The core of this investigative technique is to "[make] inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1968, p. 608). Precisely, discourse

analysis is concerned with the use of discursive tools to give meaning. Discursive tools consist of words, figures of speech, rhetorical devices, descriptions and stories. MacMartin (2004) identified three characters of discourse; discourse is situated, action-oriented, and constructed. In the case of Bundy's discourse, it is situated in a larger context of him having been found guilty of three gruesome murders after a trial that received incredible media coverage. This context is important to consider, especially with regards for my research interest looking for evidence of justification in his discourse. Once this larger context is considered, it is also crucial to consider Bundy's discourse as action-oriented towards neutralizing or not his actions. Finally, Bundy's discourse, independently of its truth, constructs a version of himself, his crimes, his victims and society that is worth analyzing.

As a first step, the methods used consisted on familiarization with the two sources of information by reading the book and watching the video. Then, important themes were coded using NVIVO version 8. According to the content analysis method, I was looking for various themes to emerge. My investigative methods were not limited to the manifest content of Bundy's discourse. I looked at the specific words used, but my work was mostly interpretative and focused on the deeper meaning of those words, specifically with regards to their justificatory or rationalizing content. Therefore, my analytic process was concentrated on latent content, defined as my "interpretative reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data" (Berg, 2004, p. 269).

Patterns or repetitiveness of common discursive thematic devices were investigated. As an example, the consistent use of a specific metaphor to deny responsibility would be considered an interesting pattern to investigate further. However, I also considered Lindsmith's recommendation (1952) to look for negative evidence: "The principle which governs the selection of cases to test a theory is that the chances of discovering a decisive negative case should be maximized." (p. 492). Therefore, importance was also given to Bundy's use of discourse that would nuance or contradict his position.

A strength of the present research project is that the two sources of information considered are separated by a number of years. The earlier interviews provide good insight on Bundy's thoughts at the beginning of his time in death row, while he denied being involved in any crime and was in the process of appealing his conviction. The last interview was conducted only a few hours before he was put to death on the electric chair. He had just confessed to the murders of approximately 30 females. A prominent theme that is enduring and consistent in both periods of times was considered validated. On the other hand, themes that were nuanced or contradicted would be given less credit. This was considered as providing some type of triangulation of the information, not in the traditional sense where triangulation is obtained through multiple data sources (Berg, 2004, p.5), but in the sense of ascertaining the validity of a theme through its recurrence.

Discourse Analysis and Discussion

The present analysis focuses on Bundy's construction of himself, his crimes, his victims, and the larger societal environment. Particularly, the language and discursive devices used are analyzed in detail. The basic idea is that Bundy's constructions of this hypothetical offender²,

² At the time of the first interviews, Bundy denied being the perpetrator of the crimes he was found guilty of and only accepted to comment by talking about a hypothetical serial killer at the 3rd person ("he").

even in its seemingly neutral and descriptive form, are important into his construction of attribution of blame. The analysis aims to analyse how his use of language stands in a justificatory and neutralizing context. For the purpose of presenting the major themes in a logical order, I will first analyze Bundy's construction of his victims, then of his crimes, and finally, I will review the causes of it all according to him.

Women as images and objects of consumption

The first relevant theme to explore relative to Bundy is his choice of victims, and the way his discourse constructs meaning around their role in his story. Most of his known victims were young females in their twenties, while his very last victim was only 12 year old. One topic that recurred often in his discourse is the metaphor of "women as images".

Excerpt 1 - March 27, 1981

"We sent men to Viet Nam and they were able to kill, because the tactics taken by their leaders was to depersonalize the enemy. You're not killing a man; you're killing a "gook," a Viet Cong. Under those circumstances, men kill very easily. Certainly the situation we're discussing does not have the legitimacy or atmosphere of war. And yet, the same psychological mechanisms are used by a person who kills indiscriminately - except he is not killing a person. He is killing an image." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 69)

This excerpt constitutes a clear illustration of dehumanization of the victim. His victims are no longer living and breathing human beings they are images. This objectification of his victims presents the use of a first neutralization technique - the denial of the victim. Also, his use of an analogy comparing the situation of a serial killer to that of soldier going at war for his country is explicit. By the description of a situation that the reader can relate with (i.e., war), he invites the reader to a deepened understanding of his own situation.

In addition, when asked about what type of images he was referring to, Bundy identified the "idealized woman" as the source of his focus: "A class not of women per se but a class that has almost been created through the mythology of women and how they are used as objects" (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 84). The objectification of his victims is clear from his discourse.

Excerpt 2 - March 27, 1981

"Sure we're talking about images. We're talking about anonymous, abstracted, living and breathing people... but the person, uh, they were not known. They were just, uh, uh, symbols. To a point they were symbols, uh, but once a certain point in the encounter had been crossed, they ceased being individuals and became, well, uh (sighs), you could say problems—that's not the word either. Threats. Now, once a certain point in the encounter was passed, they ceased to have any symbolic value at all. And they ceased also to have at that point, once they'd, once they became flesh and blood and once they ceased being an image or a dehumanized symbol, uh, that's when the rational self—the normal self— would surface and, and, react with fear and horror, and so on." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 83)

His terminology is revealing. His recognition of his victims as "living and breathing people" and "flesh and blood" could be considered a negative case, but it is attenuated by their qualification as "anonymous [and] abstracted". This contrast creates a particularization that nuances the status of his victims as human beings. Also, his subsequent qualification of his victims as "problems" or "threats" also contributes to their dehumanization.

This idea of "possession" of women is often mentioned by Bundy. The simple choice of the word "possession" is indicative of the objectification of his victims. Possession, in a legal sense,

refers to "exercising dominion over property; having custody and control of property" (Wiley Publishing, 2010).

Excerpt 3 - June 24, 1981

"[I]n the beginning—the act of killing—we would not expect it to be the goal. Remember, it was the possession of this desired thing, which was, in itself—the very act of assuming possession was a very antisocial act—was giving expression to this person's need to seize something that was, uh, uh, highly valued, at least on the surface, by society. Uh, sought after, uh, a material possession, as it were. I mean, had he been raised in a different background, maybe he would have taken to, uh, stealing Porches and Rolls-Royces. " (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 201)

The lexical choice "desired thing", "seize something" and "material possession" all give into the idea of women as objects of consumption. In addition, the analogy of women with luxury cars also reinforces the objectification of his victims, and their use to his satisfaction. Even if he does not go as far as to attribute blame to the victim, the negation of their status as equal human beings is evident and has clear justificatory undertones. Bundy's objectification and dehumanization of his victims not only deny the victims themselves, but also deny their injury - a second neutralization technique. In effect, images cannot be hurt and objects cannot bleed or suffer. Images and objects are simply produced for the satisfaction of its consumer.

Rape, torture, and murder as "accessory", "rationale", "aberrant" and "non-significant"

This second theme builds on the first one by looking at Bundy's construction of his crimes against his victims to investigate if the injury he caused is denied. Excerpt 3 also presents another strong denial of injury in the mention of the killing not being the goal, but only instrumental to the "possession", which negates the seriousness of his behaviours

Excerpt 4 - April 29, 1981

"The act, for this person the act of—more often than not the killing of the victim—was done out of, sort of... On the one hand, that act would be, uh, accomplished because of his perceived need to reduce the probability of detection. Another factor was that this was a means to an end—that is, of accomplishing ultimate possession of the victim, so to speak. " (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p.130)

There is also a rationalization that takes place in his discourse. He justifies the killing of his victims to avoid getting caught. This appeal to reason is a strong discursive tool. His denial of the killing aspect of his crimes is constant throughout his interviews during the first period (1980-1981), along with the denial of the torture and pain he submitted his victims to, as can be seen in the three following excerpts.

Excerpt 5 - April 2nd, 1981

"He received no pleasure from harming or causing pain to the person he attacked. He received absolutely no gratification from causing pain and did everything possible, within reason—considering the unreasonableness of the situation—not to torture these individuals, at least physically. " (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 84)

Excerpt 6 - April 14, 1981

"We still have to remember that the individual—at least not on a conscious level—has no desire or implements no design with the goal of terrorizing or torturing the person. And he ordinarily would

not want to inflict any unnecessary violence or pain to the girl." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 104)

Excerpt 7 - April 29, 1981

"The actual act of killing the victims was just a necessity. He would not linger or relish the killing, since it was only a means to an end, to avoid detection." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 141)

In excerpt 8, he poses an argument differentiating between his own actions and those of the Marquis de Sade (one of the first documented sexual sadist). A three-part list describes the actions of such an offender: "torture, humiliate, and terrorize". However, he particularizes his situation by removing the horror of those actions, therefore defining himself as intrinsically different by the use of rhetorical symmetry, a discursive tool that considers the implied definition of the counterpart in a contrast.

Excerpt 8 - April 23, 1981

"I think we could read a book about the Marquis de Sade and other people, who take their victims in one form or another out of a desire to possess and would torture, humiliate, and terrorize them elaborately— something that would give them a more powerful impression they were in control. But with this person, we don't see that kind of act." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 127)

This is not a research project about what other authors made of Ted Bundy. However, it should be noted that forensic evidence looking at the skeletons of some of his victims showed evidence of torture, such as severance of the head and insertion of blunt objects in the vagina (Rule, 1980). Considering the extreme severity and violence of his actions on his victims the use of denial of injury is particularly revealing of Bundy's ability to compartmentalize (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). When specifically confronted by the interviewers about the acts of torture his victims were submitted to, his only answer was that those behaviours should not be considered significant.

Excerpt 9 - April 23, 1981

"Q³: What about the evidence of mutilation, the suggestion of mutilation, in some of the cases? Use of foreign objects and that sort of thing?"

TB: Well, I think that, assuming this personality was capable of, you know, committing a whole spectrum of crimes, you'd expect that he would—in the course of this behavior—experience aberrations. They're going to perform some sort of aberration, which may not be significant of anything—except just something spontaneous." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 128)

The lexical choice "aberration" is powerful at denying injury. The definition of aberration indicates it is a "departure from what is normal, usual, or expected, typically one that is unwelcome" (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005). More striking is the fact that Bundy basically interprets the meaning of such an aberration for the reader with the indication that this is not significant. Similarly, in excerpt 10, he classifies the mutilation of a victim as an exception to a rule. This qualification of a behaviour as an exception indicates that it is meaningless and irrelevant.

Excerpt 10 - October 10, 1981

"HA: Why would he mutilate a young girl? [.]

³ In excerpts with Q and TB, Q indicates the question asked by the interviewer, and TB indicates the answer given by Bundy

TB: It seems to me that that kind of behavior would be an exception as opposed to the rule here."
(Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 243)

The characterization of serious offending behaviours as aberrations or exceptions to a rule and their further qualification as non-significant events presents clear evidence of Bundy's neutralization of injury and pain he caused his victims.

Another aspect of Bundy's conduct that is also neutralized by the way his discourse is constructed concerns the sexual aggression of his victims. Asked to comment about the fact that his victims were females, he indicated that the nature of his behaviours must not be understood as hate or sexual issues (see excerpt 11). By removing meaning to the gender of his victims, he denies the sexual aggressions that took place.

Excerpt 11 - June 24, 1981

"It was channeled for some reason toward women. Young women—and in a particular way. That does not mean that what he was suffering from was, in fact, a sexual problem or that he hated women." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 193-194)

His negation of the sexual aggression component of his crimes is particularly evident throughout his discourse. The first way by which he denies the sexual aggression is by removing the gratification that comes with sexual behaviours.

Excerpt 12 - April 23, 1981

"Not in itself, you know, the sexual act was not the, the ... the principal source of gratification."
(Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 126)

Another way in which he denies the sexual component to his crimes is by his absence of the use of the word "rape" in all but one instance when he talks about the nature of his crimes. "Sexual assault" is limitedly used. Instead, the use of words such as "sex", "sexual behavior", "sexual condition", "sexual conduct", "sexual activity", "sexual encounter", "sexual needs", and "sexual act" gives to the nature of his actions an air of consent. This discursive construction presents a strong euphemism of the sexual abuse of his victims, and is a clear example of the denial of their sexual injury.

It is important to consider that during the time period of the first interviews (1980 -1981), Bundy was denying every bit of injury caused to his victims. By refusing to talk of rape, by considering acts of torture as aberrant, and by classifying killing his victims as accessory and rational behaviours, he basically denies all of the ugly in his crimes. If you take Bundy's crimes and remove from them the sex, the violence, and the killing, there is no identifiable injury. It is fascinating to see how the discursive construction of some of the worse crimes ever committed can be neutralized in such a strong way.

This theme of denial of injury is the one that changed the most with time in Bundy's discourse. In his last interview, only a few hours before his execution, the context is set so that he just confessed to the killing of 28 women in the previous days. His discourse presents acknowledgement of his actions with the use of phrases such as "harming somebody" (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010b), "the hurt and the pain I am responsible for", and "the pain and the horror" (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010c). If such expressions might seem weak compared to the actual damage he caused, the denial of injury is attenuated compared to his first interviews. This technique of neutralization is not consistently used by Bundy over time.

***Recipe for disaster:
a defect/cancer/addition, deviant pornography, and the great evil of society***

In this last section, the "why" is explored. Precisely, the language used by Bundy to discuss the causal source of his behaviours is analyzed through the lenses of Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralization (1957). Investigating the causes of somebody's actions can present strong neutralizing effects if the responsibility of the behaviours is externalized; on the contrary, the author can also take full responsibility. Early in the first interview period, Bundy identifies some defect in him as pertinent into explaining his behaviours.

Excerpt 13 - January 10, 1981

"It was not so much that there were significant events (in my boyhood), but the lack of things that took place was significant. The omission of important developments. I felt that I had developed intellectually but not socially. [.]

Maybe it was something that was programmed by some kind of genetic thing. In my earlier schooling, it seemed like there was no problem in learning what the appropriate social behaviors were. It just seemed that I reached a wall [.]" (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 23)

His discourse in this excerpt is important into his attribution of responsibility. First, his analogy with "reaching a wall" presents the image of a wall blocking a way. It is strong at presenting the source of his behaviours as outside his control. In addition, he points to a "genetic" defect. Even if a genetic defect is internal to an individual, it also is something over which the individual does not have any control.

Generally, Bundy hints at the cohabitation of two personalities inside himself, or at least identifies a differentiated part of him that was fascinated with sex of a violent nature. He calls the part of his personality that is interested with violent sexual killing "the entity" or the "disordered self" (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 73).

Excerpt 14 - April 29, 1981

"Q: Would this second self... or other self... by this time be totally integrated into the person's being?

TB: The overexcited, overaroused, driven, compulsive state this person was in. could in no way be integrated with what we characterize as the moral, ethical, law-abiding part of the individual." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 136)

It is particularly interesting to consider the contrast his discourse creates between his reasonable, normal self, and this "other" entity. His use of language shifts the blame outside his core rational self, particularly when considering the three-part list he used to describe this normal self as "moral, ethical, [and] law-abiding".

Excerpt 15 - April 4, 1981

"TB : A certain amount of the need of that malignant condition had been satisfied through the sexual release. That driving force would recede somewhat, allowing the normal individual's mental mechanisms to again begin to take hold. To control the situation, or more so than previously. You'd expect a certain amount of debate, or regret, as it were, that it was faced with a situation. .

Q: Would there be a period of internal debate? Or would this happen fairly instantaneously?

TB: It would vary depending on the strength of the normal self in its responses." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 92-93)

The same neutralization technique can be seen in excerpt 15, where the fault or responsibility is displaced toward some factor external to the offender. Bundy's contrast between his reasonable self and the other entity in him produces the result of shifting the blame. Also, the lexicon "malignant condition" used to describe this other entity is particularly strong. It compares this entity to a cancer. In the medical sense of the term, a cancer is a "disease caused by an uncontrolled division of abnormal cells in a part of the body" (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005). The cancer metaphor indicates the corroding effect of the entity on his rational sane self, requiring of him the fulfillment of some deviant fantasies over which he has no control.

Excerpt 16 - November 12, 1981

"Perhaps the only firm trend I ever ran across in the study of abnormal behavior was that the younger that a person. that he or she was when they manifested abnormal behavior of thought pattern. the more likely it was that there was going to be a condition that would be lasting. And, uh, permanent. A chronic disorder. Persons who suffer such disorders in later years, or a quick onset of the particular abnormal behavior pattern, suffer acute conditions. And it seemed to make sense to me - and the literature is fairly consistent - that the younger it was that a person would develop these problems that more likely, the higher the likelihood that they would continue on with those problems, unless treated, without hope of some kind of remission." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, pp. 255-256)

The cancer metaphor is further reinforced with Bundy's construction of abnormal sadistic sexual behaviour, as a "chronic disorder" presenting "acute conditions" "without hope of [...] remission". Bundy's description emphasizes the slow process of stress building involved into the creation of a serial killer. He describes the building of stress taking its toll on his normal self in the same way a cancer is becoming more physically invasive and aggressive over time.

Excerpt 17 - March 27, 1981

"And as the condition develops and its purpose or its characteristics become more well defined, it begins to demand more of the attention and time of the individual. There's a certain amount of tension, uh, struggle between the normal personality and this, uh, psychopathological, uh, entity." (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 75)

In addition, the cancer metaphor is explored with the choice of the word "struggle". In the same way a cancer is fought against, Bundy's normal self fought and resisted this entity's demands for sexual violence. This metaphor is strong at shifting the responsibility for Bundy's actions outside of himself. A cancer is something that is never wanted and its occurrence is outside the control of the person. Bundy attempts to nuance the cancer metaphor at some point, considering that "malignancy" might not be an appropriate term. In the end though, the strength of his cancer metaphor is intact, as he talks about a "serious sickness":

Excerpt 18 - March 27, 1981

"There are all kinds of words. Malignancy is not exactly a proper metaphor, though I suppose that if malignancy means sickness of a serious sort, it would be apt.

SM: In the sense that tumors sometimes grow and expand and. . .

TB: Yeah, certainly that's an analogy that could be used here. " (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, p. 75)

It is interesting to investigate what happened over time with the cancer metaphor. The "malignant condition" is very much present in the first time period considered. In his last interview before his execution, the cancer becomes addiction.

Excerpt 19 - January 23, 1989

"Q: You had gone about as far as you could go in your own fantasy life, with printed material, photos, videos, etc., and then there was the urge to take that step over to a physical event.

Ted: Once you become addicted to it, and I look at this as a kind of addiction, you look for more potent, more explicit, more graphic kinds of material. Like an addiction, you keep craving something which is harder and gives you a greater sense of excitement, until you reach the point where the pornography only goes so far - that jumping off point where you begin to think maybe actually doing it will give you that which is just beyond reading about it and looking at it.

Q: How long did you stay at that point before you actually assaulted someone?

Ted: A couple of years. I was dealing with very strong inhibitions against criminal and violent behavior. That had been conditioned and bred into me from my neighborhood, environment, church, and schools. I knew it was wrong to think about it, and certainly, to do it was wrong. I was on the edge, and the last vestiges of restraint were being tested constantly, and assailed through the kind of fantasy life that was fueled, largely, by pornography." (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010a)

The lexicon used here such as "urge" and "craving" taps strongly into this idea of an addiction. If the concept changed, its character of uncontrollability is still present through Bundy's discourse. His use of a three-part list to describe the type of material he was addicted to reinforces the strength of the addiction and speaks to his inability to take control, this addiction pushing the "last vestiges of restraints". Later in the interview, he mentions "a compulsion, a building up of this destructive energy" to explain the grasp this addiction had over him (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010b). He also mentions his inability to even describe the force of this addiction over him: "There is no way to describe the brutal urge" (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010b). The lexicon "brutal" defines this addiction as constant and ruthless. The overwhelming strength of his addiction is further reinforced by its comparison with "being possessed" - this idea of being completely under the control or influence of something external (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005).

Excerpt 20 - January 23, 1989

"I can only liken it to (and I don't want to overdramatize it) being possessed by something so awful and alien." (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010b)

This metaphor of "being possessed" is strong. First, it should be remembered that among the hundreds of journalists that wanted to interview him before his execution, Bundy chose James Dobson, a journalist for a Christian religious organization. His intended audience is therefore more likely to believe in the occurrence of demonic possessions for example. In addition, his use of the word "alien" to describe the source of this possession really situates it outside of the realm of his control and constitutes a shift of responsibility.

I now want to turn my attention to Bundy's discursive construction of the cause of this entity with a preference for sexual violence. We saw in excerpt 19 that he identifies pornography as playing a central role into the development of his behaviour.

Excerpt 21 - January 23, 1989

"Those of us who have been so influenced by violence in the media, particularly pornographic violence, are not some kind of inherent monsters. We are your sons and husbands. We grew up in regular families. Pornography can reach in and snatch a kid out of any house today. It snatched me out of my home 20 or 30 years ago. As diligent as my parents were, and they were diligent in protecting their children, and as good a Christian home as we had, there is no protection against the kinds of influences that are loose in a society that tolerates...." (The Jeremy Kyle Show, 2010b)

This excerpt produces a strong impact on the reader. First, it shifts the responsibility away from his family by describing it as a "good Christian home", which is particularly significant considering his audience. Then, it emphasizes his vulnerability as a young boy who encountered pornography and was "snatched". Comparing the impact of pornography in his life to kidnapping is efficient at denying responsibility and emphasizing his powerlessness at resisting. Instead, he points the finger at society as the great evil that allowed for the monstrosity of his actions to being nurtured through violence in the media and pornography. The use of "we are your sons and husbands" is also interesting as a figurative construction. First, "we" identifies serial killers as a group. Also, it symmetrically constructs society as the source and cause of them being this way. Bundy also discusses the role of society into his objectification of women.

Excerpt 22 - March 27, 1981

"It is perhaps not so inexplicable when you understand the position of the women in the United States as they are marketed and used to sell things. Seen as objects of perfection, et cetera."
(Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, page 72)

Even at the last moments of his life, Bundy was externalizing the causality of his own evil and denying responsibility. This constitutes another example of neutralization of what he did, this time through neutralization of what created him. Ultimately, the recipe for disaster is simple: "The continued nature of this stress this person was under - the nature of the law or weakness in his personality, together with other elements in the environment that offer him a logical target for his frustrations or escapes from reality - yields the situation we're discussing" (Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989, page 69). In the end, he attributed the blame to society, condemning his condemners - a fourth technique of neutralization - and held society responsible for the environment which created him.

Conclusion

This paper was dedicated to a qualitative analysis of the discursive tools used by Ted Bundy at two times of his life. The analysis revealed he used four techniques of neutralization - denial of the victim, denial of injury, denial of responsibility, and condemnation of condemners - to present justificatory explanations of his behaviours. Sykes and Matza (1957) presented these techniques of neutralization to explain one's rationalization of engaging in criminal behaviour. Their theory was stated in the context of youth delinquency to address low seriousness crimes. The current findings present clear illustrations of the use of those techniques of neutralization in some of the most serious crimes (rape, torture, and murder). This has important implications about the generalizability of the theory. More precisely, it speaks to the generality of psychological construction of justification. Those rationalizations clearly find applications in a variety of contexts that should be explored more fully in subsequent research projects. For example, having established that this theory finds application to the crimes of one prolific serial killer, it would also be interesting to conduct a qualitative investigation about the use of the denial of the victim and injury in a case where the victim is known to the offender (e.g., incest).

Finally, I cannot conclude this paper without addressing the strong gendered aspect that emerges from the discursive analysis of Bundy. Two of the techniques of neutralization he used (i.e., denial of the victims and denial of their injuries) clearly present a patriarchal construction of the world. Serial sexual killing constitutes one of the most extreme illustrations of female's coerced subordination to male desires, considering the gender of both perpetrator and victims

(Warren et al., 1996; Hickey 1997). The genderization of serial sexual killing is present in the analysis of other serial sexual killers (Bartel & Parson, 2009). If it is part of most serial killers' rationalization process to shift responsibility of their actions towards society, it also raises valid questions about patriarchal views and societal objectification of women.

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