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# WOMEN AS SERIAL KILLERS:

# Literature review

**DEGREE'S FINAL PROJECT.**

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## 1. *Abstract and Keywords:*

### *Abstract:*

Nowadays, society knows about serial killers; but unconsciously, we still figure them always as men. The main goal of this work is to know more about female murderers, specifically the criminal profiling of murderesses.

Sources of information consist of published case law, news media, scholarly articles, manuals of criminal profiling and expert studies and publications.

### *Keywords:*

## 2. *Summary:*

Society does not see women capable of murder. People believe that serial killers are male, because we grow up with the role model of women been submissive, calm, and sweet. On this role model, women aren't capable of aggressive acts against their relatives; women are tender and reliable to take care of others. But reality shows that women can kill with the same cold-blooded attitude as men. On the other hand, compared with the general kind of action that male serial killers have, women prefer to use venom or drugs to achieve their goals: economic gain, revenge, lust. They kill their children, their husbands, people who rely on them. Detected crimes committed by women show us that they are more difficult to arrest: the methods are subtler; and with the general predisposition to believe that a mother can't kill her son, society hid female crimes for a long time. Over the last thirty years, the number of women arrested for serial murder increased, making a reality for experts the necessity to study why those women kill without remorse. Despite that, the lack of information is huge, and the general belief of women as non-aggressive people make it difficult for detectives and experts to detect and stop those kind of killers. This work is a research that tries to answer some questions: Why nobody noticed until the last few years that women are capable of serial murder? Why it's so difficult to discover a woman who is a serial killer? What made it possible for those women to become serial killers, what motivates them to commit those crimes? Can science and detectives fight against this "new kind" of human hunters?

## 3.  INTRODUCTION

People kill people, that's a fact. Everybody knows the Latin proverb "Homo huminis lupus est" which means "man is a wolf to man". Even Sigmund Freud said that men (plus women) are not gentle creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness (FREUD, 1929). But, why do they commit these crimes? How can they live between us, hiding themselves until the monster attacks? A lot of theories and studies try to answer these questions; even if it's difficult to do it because the lack of subjects that we can study: arrested killers and databases about past cases (HARE, 2003).

The woman who kills is an interesting monster, maybe more than the male one. The common belief is that only a man can kill. When we noticed about a woman who kills the shock is bigger: in our society, a woman capable of the most terrifying crime – take another live – is far away of our mind. But women can kill, and they can do it better than men: women usually make plans, they have a tendency for non-violent murders and that make possible to hide their participation (PÉREZ ABELLÁN, 2004). Even if they are caught, it is so difficult to prove that those women are guilty. Poison, drugs… Women prefers a silent way to kill, hiding their homicidal tastes after a preoccupation and caressing mask (FARRELL, KEPPEL &TITTERINGTON, 2011). This is even more interesting for us than a "normal" serial killer: the existence of a monster like these fills us with curiosity and fear. That is the reason to study serial killers: we want to know more about the evil walking between us.

Why are serial crimes so attractive, in a morbid way, to us? These cruel acts inspire the fear in us. Seems people loves horror. And truth is we live immersed in fear. Maybe it's not obvious, maybe people said for themselves "No, I am not terrified; we have zero reasons to feel scared". But the reality is that we love to live with the chill of awe on our backbone: we read terror stories, watch horror and thriller films (remember the Hitchcock film *Psycho*? Or Hannibal Lecter?). The world has monsters for us. Even if we grew up believing that we are safe, all of us know the truth, we have nightmares, we aren't safe on our homes, our cars, the train. Because monsters can be hidden; they resemble normal people. Anybody can be one of these "human monsters", our neighbour, our boss, our lover. Yourself. And that is the most terrific truth about killers. Anybody can be one: fear is around us, waiting. Smelling blood.

But, as the famous serial killer Ted Bundy said: "Some people are worst prepared to bear up the failure than others". Serial killers commit the worst failure of all: they fail being humans. They want to be another person; someone who can influence other people; a new and powerful identity. This allows the murderer to camouflage, as a chameleon. The new identity, the killer, becomes the *real one*, and the first identity, the normal one, covers the truth behind the mask (GARRIDO, 2007).

## *4. Project goals and questions*

The main goals of this work are to study the characteristhic of female murderesses and to analyse the criminal conduct of these women:

Female criminality has always been object of forgetfulness but, last decades, this female crime rate has been increasing, and women have been involved in a huge variability of crimes and that makes some questions to solve:

- Why nobody thinks about women as serial killers?
- Why the major part of crimes committed by female serial killers are non-solved?
- Why is so difficult to detect and arrest a murderess?

## *5. Method*

This project is a bibliographical review so it is constructed with the research of articles, books and handbooks referred to criminology and psychology through bibliographic services offered on the University Jaume I website.

We reviewed sources of different kinds, both primary (books and magazines in the library) and secondary (databases), specifically Dialnet, PsycArticles and PsycNet.

The methodology used for this study was a review of the literature published from 1960 through 2016 on the issue discussed above, women as serial killers. It has used the databases Dialnet, PsycArticles and PsycNet for scientific studies on the subject and updated to respond. In this database were searched for items that had to meet certain inclusion criteria to be used in this study, which are: publications between 1960 and 2016, the issue of those articles should revolve around women as serial killers and these items have to be reliable and valid.

The search procedure was completing the criteria: "women who kills", "female serial killers", "criminal profiling" and "münchhausen syndrome by proxy" (as keywords), place (abstract), type of study (review, article and book) and areas (Criminology, Psychology).

With this method, in the first research 130 papers were obtained of which were selected 10 for the content of the title. In a second research, these papers increased until 54 and offered information to expand the review, that is to say, the profiling of female serial killers and their victims, the parallelism with male serial killers and the situation of the murderesses in our country.

## 6. "SERIAL KILLER", THE HIDDEN MONSTER.

To be prepared, we must know the difference about the kinds of killers that exist, specifically the types that we study on this project. Because this project is focused on female serial killers, all the generic definitions will be treated by the point of view of women as the subject. First of all, we have to declare a definition of "serial killer": Many authors agreed with the concept that a serial killer is someone who kills three or more people in different moments, which means that a time space between murders are demanded ("cooling-off period"), in which the murderess doesn't feel the urge to kill (or at least, that she can control the impulse of killing) (GARRIDO, 2007). But, as some killers are stopped before the third murder, investigators started to define a serial killer as somebody who kills two or more people. It's so important to clarify this; because we can find difficulties to diferentiate between serial killers and "mass killers" and "spree killers". In each case, the murderess slays two or more victims; but to absolutely see the divergence of these kinds of killers, we can describe the "mass killer" as someone who kills four or more victims at the same moment and place without the cooling-off period that the serial killer does. The "spree killer" also known as "rampage killer" can be defined, according to the FBI definition, as the murderess who acts killing two or more victims without the cooling-off period, but usually the killing ends with the arrest or the death of the criminal. The difference between the spree killer and the serial killer are the most difficult to establish (JIMENEZ SERRANO ET AL, 2012).

Serial murder is a rare event. McNamarra & Morton stated "It is estimated that serial murder account for about 0.5 – 1.0% of all murders or about 70 – 140 victims per year" (PERRI & LICHTENWALD, 2010). These statistics, plus the fact the different categories in which serial killers can be classified are for sure the most difficult reason to profile properly these kind of murderers. Despite this, we must consider an important point:

Serial killers are successful because they are obsessive, meticulous planners and cold-blooded, often have a psychopathic personality that enable them to operate without detection over many years (RESSLER & SHACHTMAN, 2005). A serial killer is not detected because she doesn't resemble a monster, she can appear perfectly normal. Innocent. It is just as the *Wolf in Sheep's Clothes* short story, a hunter covered with prey's skin. She maybe has family, a job, friends. Maybe she is a member of a community group, such as a Neighbourhood Association.

As popular beliefs represent serial killers as white men we are not prepared to see one sweet mother killing her husband and relatives. Or the beautiful girl who smiles at us when our eyes meet but kills every male who tries to flirt with her. The gentle teenager who help us babysitting, slaughtering our little baby. Serial killers span all racial groups and both sexes (FBI PUBLICATION, 2005).

That is one of the myths around serial killers that can be found in society. There are more as we can see on the point 7 of the project, *Criminal profiling of the serial killer*. Only remember that a serial killer is a hidden monster because she has the perfect camouflage: an identity to show to the world, a long away from the real person inside; and the patience to wait until they find the perfect prey and time. That is the real danger: even if she chooses a victim, she can wait until the perfect time to act. For some serial killers, the fact of planning and trying to catch the victim on their spider-web of lies and falsity are as exciting as the killing itself (GARRIDO, 2007; 2012).

### 6.1. Locusta and Erzsébeth Bàthory: how society sees the woman who kills.

Rome, late 1st century. Agripina the Young wants to see her son as the new emperor. For that reason, she hired a woman who knews about poisons. The target was her husband: Emperor Claudius. The hired woman, who was a slave of Rome, made a drug, and the food-taster of the Emperor put it on a dish of mushrooms. The name of the drug-maker was Locusta (MOOG &KARENBERG, 2005). Years after, Locusta was hired by Nero, Agripina's son, to kill the other son of Emperor Claudius, Britannicus. Covered by Nero, who gave immunity to her, Locusta prepared tons of drugs and venoms, until Pretorian Guard abandoned Nero and he commited suicide. Galba became Emperor and he condemned Locusta the poisoner to death damnatio ad bestias (killed by beasts). She is considered the first woman as serial killer of history attending to the characteristics of serial killer that are accepted nowadays (PÉREZ VAQUERO, 2013).

The Hungarian countess Erzsébeth Bàthory (1560 – 1614), also known as Elizabeth Bàthory or The Blood Countess has been labelled by The Guiness World Records as the most prolific female murderer (TROCCHI, 2006). Even if it isn't proved, legend says that the countess, after her husband's death, discovered that the blood of the virgin adolescent daughters of the peasants could preserve her beauty. The Hungarian Government accused her in 1610 for torturing and killing nearly 650 girls. She was condemned to be imprisoned and placed in solitary confinement in one of the castles that the countess had. From 1610 until her death, she was kept bricked in her rooms, only small slit open for the passing food and ventilation. Popular opinion and folklore transformed her into the Vampiress Countess or Countess Dracula (HORNE, 1997).

These two examples are the most famous historical murderesses, and both of them describe one terrible, dark truth: women kill, and they do it better. Why can we say this? Both of them, Locusta and Erzsébeth, have on their counts more than one hundred victims. Both of them acted without any barrier for years. And both of them realized their crimes without no one suspecting for years, even if at the end it was known to all that they are monsters. Finally, both of them are considered monsters (LINARES, 2010).

### 6.2. *Why nobody thinks about women as serial murderers?*

According to psychologists and law officers, it is a "deadly mistake" to accept the cultural assumption that women are, by nature, incapable of being serial murderers. They are nearly 15% of all serial killers. That means that, at least, one in six serial killers are female (HARRISON, MURPHY, BOWERS & FLATHERTY, 2015).

Despite that, society continues to believe that women are not capable of terrific killings. News and entertainment have given us the "Black Widow" profile, a woman who murders her partners to gain money. *Black Widow* is defined as a woman who kills three or more husbands/lovers for material gain. We, as society, are focused on this image and unconsciously blind ourselves to see women as murderers if they aren't the *black widow* that we assume they are (LÓPEZ MARTINEZ, 2005).

That it's part of the camouflage women have. This unconscious lack of visibility that society imposes on itself is an advantage that females have over male serial killers: violent crime is still considered the province of men (PERRI & LICHTENWALD, 2010). Historically supported by a patriarchal society, we believe that men express dominance using aggression and that women are not capable of acting with aggressiveness. In fact, the popular representation of women who kill, without considering *black widows*, is related to representations of women's violent deaths. On the other hand, society uses these gender roles to cover females: abortion; postpartum depression, hysteria... These are some of the excuses that historically has covered female crimes (LORD & BURFOOT, 2006).

Women serial murderers kill victims in plain view. The entire world can see the crime, but as no one believes that women can be multiple killers, the deaths are categorized unsolved or undetermined. And this coverage makes female serial killers more dangerous that male serial killers: women kill without anyone noticing what happens, without being arrested (HARE, 2003). But as investigation, science and society are improving so far and fast now we can change this. Now we can detect serial killers, learn about them, and finally, stop them.

## 7. CRIMINAL PROFILING OF THE SERIAL KILLER.

The story of criminal profiling is relatively new. As the current definition says, "criminal profiling" is any process elucidating notions and characteristics of the criminal ones. We use the scientist method on the profiling: observation, formulation of theories and then proving these theories. For that, it's important to be impartial and non-judging: after seeing the particularities of the case, make a theory about the profile the offender has; and then, proving if it's correct. If the profiler contaminates the profiling with own ideas or suppositions, the profile will be incorrect and will make it more difficult to work for arresting the murderess (JIMÉNEZ SERRANO ET AL, 2012).

The development of the criminal profiling begins with the tries of approaching to the serial murderers; starting on the biological field until the development of the psychological theories. One of the most important biological approaches to the serial killer was the Jacobs *et al.* on 1965: after evaluating 197 patients with violent conduct, they found that 7 of the subjects had an altered chromosome: concretely, they presented the XYY chromosome. People started to talk about the "crime chromosome" even if statistics and, most important, the major part of the serial murderers had normal chromosome. Later, this study would be discarded because the criminals with the XYY chromosome, as the non-XYY chromosome ones, have psychological factors that could influence on their criminal acts. The Jacobs's study was the start of the "biological predisposition" theories. Doctor George B. Philips, at Gran Britain, investigating Jack the Ripper's murders (1888) developed the paradigm of offender behaviour is manifested in the physical evidence (the injuries and wounds suffered by the victim) as interpreted by an expert of wound pattern analysis (TURVEY, 2008). Then, Cesare Lombroso (Italy, 1870), often referred to as the father of criminology, studied from the point of view the evolutionary and anthropology imprisoned offenders. He made a list of physical characteristics; and Kretschmer seconded him in 1955. The German psychiatrist did a study of 4.000 cases and his conclusions classified criminals with physical characteristics (KRETSCHMER, 1997).

Years after, these kind of biological theories were discarded as being useless. Was time for the psychologic theories for being developed. Joel Norris, psychologist, published at 1990 some phases of the "violence cycle" after interviewed killers (NORRIS, J. 1990). These phases can be resumed as: first, the killer separated himself of reality, living on

fantasies. After that, starts looking for a victim, and the cortege with lies and manipulation to capture the victim. Comes now the killing, that Norris describes as the recreation of the childhood traumas of the killer on the victim; the emotion lapse-time after the murder, including the possibility of taking a "souvenir" (one of the victim's belongings, or a part of the body to revive the assassination), and finally; the depression after losing the euphoria of the killing before restarting the cycle.

Hickey, 2002, presented one of the most famous studies of serial killers: The Trauma-Control model. This model consists of biological, psychological and sociological predispositions and traumatic episodes when the subject is growing up (PETHERICK, 2006). It's habitual to read about dysfunctional families, child abuse, alcoholic parents, etc. on profiled killers. Hickey established that these kind of traumas can impulse the murderer to kill as a way to gain a kind of equilibrium and reduce stress and anxiety. At the study, he makes the point that these combined traumas defined the *modus operandi* of the killer, and the signature and the victim's way of selection.

Godwin (2000) published an interesting research after analysing 107 serial killers from EE.UU. who committed 728 murders. The most interesting data after analysing the cases are:

- 67% of them had a job at the time the crimes were committed, contrary to the popular belief of the serial killer as someone who is looking for victims at every moment.
- 56% never finished high school. Even if entertainment media sell the image of the serial killers as psychos and brilliant minds, that it's far away from reality (We continue talking about the relation between psychopathy and serial killers later).
- A 5% of the total amount were women.
- The average age (53%) was between 26-42 years old.
- The major part of the victims were unknowns without previous relation with the offenders.
- 86% of them planned the killings.

The last point corroborates an important point: analysing the modus operandi (MO) is a way to know about the psychology of the killer. The modus operandi gives information about intellectual level, or if the criminal act is continuing in time, or a possible relationship between offender-victim… So it's a valuable tool to create a criminal profiling, because the

MO can offer information about the motivation behind the crime (JIMÉNEZ SERRANO ET AL, 2012).

Despite all this cognizance, it is so hard to do a correct criminal profiling; and do it about women is a little more difficult indeed. As it is hard to realize a criminal profiling of male serial killers, the lack of information and predisposition to believe that women are not capable of these kind of attacks only make harder the creation of the profiling.

### 7.1. Why nobody saw this coming? Behaviour pattern indicator: Profile of a woman serial killer.

To detect a serial killer is hard work. It is so difficult because, as we said, these kind of murderers can hide their most terrific face, showing a normality mask. Truth is that a generic profile of serial killers doesn't exist. That is something on which all investigators (considering police detectives, psychologists, psychiatrists, criminologists, etc.) agree. Motivations and behaviour differs from one serial murderer to another (HARE, 2003).

Another important reason for being unseeing is that on normal homicides the killer is related with the victim but serial killers usually don't have any relation with their victims. Although the most common victim of women serial killers are familiar or close people, the ways those criminals use to kill hide themselves (WILSON & HILTON, 1998).

First of all, we must explain what is a "criminal behaviour", even if non definition of criminal behaviour is satisfactory anyway, because the behavioural content of the unmoral, illegal and antisocial categories is neither temporally stable nor universal, variating across cultures and time. But to establish an empirical criterion made work easy, and understandable the concept, methods and work that are used on this field (TURVEY, 2008).

Ullmann and Krasner established that: "Criminal behaviour refers to antisocial acts that place the actor at risk of becoming a focus of the attention of criminal and juvenile justice professionals" (ULLMANN & KRASNER, 1976). After that, the most important thing to say: *Every serial killer has her own behaviour.* That means, every woman has her own kind of conduct and her own personality, so saying that only one behaviour pattern exists will be an extremely huge error. Consequently, when we talk about a behaviour pattern indicator was a general pattern after collect together the most habitual conducts that these murderers have.

According Steven Egger, Criminology's professor at Illinois University, serial killers (including both sexes) have the next characteristics to fit on the description:
- They kill between 3 or 5 victims at least, with a cool-off time-lapse between each kill.
- They reflect their sadism in each murder and their supposed "superiority" over the victims.

- At general, victims and killers have zero relation.
- The motivation is psychological: victims have a symbolic value.
- Usually, the murderess chooses a vulnerable person as a victim.

(EGGER, 1990)

And, according to experts on the serial killer's studies, the mean serial killer got some similarities:

- They have a traumatic childhood; or have been traumatized by some relevant event. Some of them were emotionally or psychologically abused by their parents.
- They have pyromaniac records and bedwetting since childhood; and felt pleasure torturing and killing animals (usually little animals and pets).
- They manipulate the victims with a false perception of empathy, because like the psychopaths, they cannot feel it.
- They show a relaxed behaviour in front of people. Can be considered as "charismatics".
- Nearly 95% of the arrested serial killers presents damage on the prefrontal brain zone; indicative of a high aggressiveness level.
- Disproportion between stimuli and responses: the murderess's answers in an exaggerated way to a minim stimulus, or doesn't answer to a big one.
- Inadaptability. The murderess doesn't feel comfy in any place: she overestimates or underestimated herself, either because she idealizes others, or wants to be admired by these others. Or she feels rejection, despise or assault. This creates a constant discomfort, so she discusses with people and changes continuously of place, work, friends and couples.

(JIMÉNEZ SERRANO ET AL, 2012)

So, the mean profile is a woman with problems to be adapted to one place, job, couple and friends; with a distorted perception of herself and the world around her, with big possibilities of having a high level of aggressiveness, and in the major part of cases, with problematic childhood records. Another common characteristic is the facility those women have to be dishonest and irritable: they usually have problems to plan their future, and have a lack of remorse about their acts (SCHURMAN-KAUFLIN, 2000).

But, are serial killers born or made? Both.

Biologically, it isn't as Lombroso sentenced (physical signs that show the criminal disposition of the subject), but by the studies of Adrian Raine (British psychologist and

Criminology professor). Raine was the first person to conduct a brain imaging study on murderers. His research has convinced him that while there is a social and environmental element to violent behaviour, there's another side that is biology. The studies he and his team did show similar brain changes on murderers' brains. There was reduced activity in the pre-frontal cortex, the area which controls emotion impulses (increment of the violence and impulsiveness) and over activation of the amygdala, the area which generates our emotions. When a murderess has these brain changes it means that she is prone to rage and anger and less able to control herself (KOCSIS, 2000).

The study of Raine *et al.* says that a probable cause for these modifications may be child abuse by causing brain damage (RAINE & SANMARTÍN, 2000).

Genetic is another factor: One gene produces an enzyme called MAOA (monoamine oxidase A). This enzyme regulates the levels of neurotransmitters involved in impulse control. The lack of MAOA (lack of the gene or have low-activity variant of the enzyme, named as MAOA-L) is known as "The Warrior Gene"; but the correlation between MAOA and criminal behaviour was reportedly stronger if carriers had experienced some sort of trauma as children. That means that having lack of MAOA or the MAOA-L variant doesn't mean that someone will be a criminal: it is necessary an environment which propitiates the criminal behaviour. A remarkable point about MAOA is that control of the levels of this enzyme on women is so difficult because the gene is associated with the X chromosome, and as women have double X chromosome, the measurement of lack or non-existence is more troublesome than on males (MCDERMOTT, TINGLEY, COWDEN, FRAZZETTO & JOHNSON, 2008).

Another important factor for the making of a killer - serial or not - is the intoxication, either alcohol or drugs, principally if they grew up with an alcoholic or a drug addict example in family.

The serial killer childhood isn't easy: the child usually lies, steals, destroys property and shows cruelty with animals or other child. Many of them have a strong family history of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse and legal problems. But, in the major case of the women who grew up and became serial killers, that isn't the case: they grew up in relatively stable homes with both parents present and did not describe any abuse story (TURVEY, 2008).

Most have grown up lonely, highly sensitive children; with feelings of being rejected, unloved and harboring a baseline hostility toward specific persons or the world at large. On the other hand, a few have reportedly been gregarious, extroverted conversationalists; but the behaviour they show is incongruous with their inner feelings. Most would meet some (or all) of the criteria for conduct disorder as children, and for narcissistic, schizoid and/or antisocial personality disorder as adults. These women grew up with an inner hostile emotional state because their feelings of being rejected or not being treated by others as well as they value themselves (HARE, 2003).

Another interesting point: it's usual, if the murderess had suffered abuses in her childhood, that the antisocial behaviour starts on her adolescence, and it's commonly attributed to a sexual promiscuity as a way to gain influence and privileges from the others. But even this is not an exact sign of future criminal behaviour: the only thing that we can consider as absolutely true is that, excluding psychotic serial killers (considering their mental pathology/disorders as non-questionable), nothing can be considered the origin or the cause for becoming a serial killer. It's necessary to have a psychopathic basic personality (incapacity to feel the fundamental moral emotions: love, empathy, compassion and guilt) and a particular distorted way to construe their life events that introduce the murderess into the fantasy of total control about life and death of others as the perfect way to interact with the world, and the compulsion to kill as the perfect answer because it is the way she decides to define her presence on the world (HARE, 2003; VRONSKY, 2004 & 2007).

### 7.2. Characteristics, types and motivations of serial murderers.

What differentiates the diverse types of the serial killer is, principally, the motivation of the crime. But we can find some significant differences between males and females murderers.

| MALE | FEMALE |
|---|---|
| Commonly travel/changes the place where the crime is committed. | Usually do the crime on a concrete place. |
| Usually tortures | Doesn't use torture |
| Usually is motivated by sexual behaviour | Commonly motivated by gain, or attention-seeking. |
| Kills with physical methods (stab, strangulate, shot…) | Usually despises physical methods, prefers to use venom or drugs. |
| Usually uses the same pattern and knows nothing about the victim (no relation with the victim) | Usually murders close people, relatives or especially vulnerable people. |

Other divergences with male serial killers are that female serial killers have a tendency to start later than men, usually around age 30, and the homicides committed by females rarely require the kind of behavioural profiling applied to more traditional male cases (KEENEY & HEIDE, 1994).

After knowing this, we can start to explore the types of serial killers on which women are classified.

Holmes & Holmes (HOLMES, HOLMES & HICKEY, 1991) elaborated a typology of male serial killers and then created another one for female serial killers which is parallel to the male one.

- **Visionary:** The woman in this category often suffers from a psychotic illness or has a severe disorder. The murder was the response of woman to delusional beliefs or hallucinations.

- ***Comfort-oriented:*** The motivation is material gain. This category will be the "Black Widow" category on the Kelleher & Kelleher's typology.
- ***Power-seeking:*** The woman murders for the thrill and power gained through having full control over life and death of the victim (related with the "Angel of Death" category on the Kelleher & Kelleher's typology), and when the killer also targets disabled family members, the material gain is intertwined.
- ***Hedonistic:*** Sexual gratification as a motivation. Is a rare primary motive in female serial killers. It Is related with the "Disciple" category, also.
- ***Disciple:*** Woman who kills under the command of a leader. This category is rare, may occur in a cult or out of personal allegiance to a charismatic man.

Another classification was made by Jenkins (1990), about the types of partner or group female serial killers. This typology is included because, even if the leader is a male, it is usual for women to appear on these criminal associations (for example, the crimes of the Manson's family, in which some women were condemned for the killings too) (MILLER, 2014).

- ***Dominant-submissive pairs:*** One member, usually the male, is the dominant partner ("Disciple" in Holmes & Holmes's typology). The woman participates in the murders to please the dominant one; and even if she doesn't participate in the torture and killing of the victim, she observes and covers it.
- ***Equally dominant teams:*** Both members participate and derive satisfaction from the killings. Usually, the woman participates in the capture of the victim and enjoys more witnessing the murder than doing it. It is common that the couple aided photographs, videos and objects or body part trophies to enhance their sexual activity.
- ***Extended family or group:*** The range from biological families to cult-families in which unrelated people formed a commune or tribal group that participates in murdering. The typical reasons are loosely-articulated philosophy or ideological reasons, robbery or sexual gratifications or a combination of these.
- ***Organized or ceremonial social groups:*** Political and ideological reasons are the primary motivation. Often these groups are quasi-religious cults who commit mass murder.

Kelleher & Kelleher published in 1998 one of the most accurate classifications about women as serial killers. There are nine categories in which are included mental illness and the non-solved crimes (for being without any clues but with the suspicion of a woman being the offender).

1. **Black widows:** The more frequent victims are relatives, husbands or people with a close relationship with the Black Widow. Usually starts her criminal career at 25. The most common way she uses to murder is poison; and this makes it more difficult to incriminate her for the homicide as the law officers have to prove the use of the poison. The motivation is economic gain.

2. **Angel of Death (or Angel of Mercy):** Usually starts to kill after 21, on a concrete localization, commonly a hospital or infirmary. This kind of murderess acts, in general, at her work-place (is associated to the medical field). The motivation is the sense of power she feels, knowing that a person's life or death is in her hands. The Angel of Death acts impulsively to answering the necessity of killing; and usually talks about her crimes as a way to show herself as a heroine. One of the most common ways to kill is to use potassium chloride to make fake heart attacks.

3. **Sexual predator:** One of the rarest cases, perhaps the most infrequent of all the types. The sexual predation is one of the typical "male motivations". By the way, when a murderess pertains to this category, it is because she tries to realize a sexual fantasy in which death is involved. The woman's age is 30 or older. As a curiosity, is more frequent in Europe than on EE. UU.

4. **Revenge:** Is the motivation behind the jealousy/crime of passion. The homicide is caused by obsessive impulses based on jealousy. When a woman fits this category, she usually is in her twenties and kills close people.

5. **Gain/Profit:** The woman looks for specific gain, frequently a business profit or economic gain. The difference from the Black Widow is difficult to see at first seeing, but the crime by gain is near to the contract killing. Indeed, in some cases a woman hires a hitman to kill the victims.

6. **Group:** An association between killers. Usually is a team of males and females; two women or killer families (two or more people of the same family group). With the man-woman case, it's common to see the man as the dominant

figure and the woman follows him (as in the case of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley) as we will see on the explanatory files.

7. ***Mental illness or other disorder when the offence is committed:*** All the women who commit a crime caused by a mental disorder, with their cognitive and volitional capacities being affected. This category doesn't include the psychopath killers, because psychopaths have capacity to distinguish between good and evil, as we will see.

8. ***Without explanation:*** All the cases that do not fit on any other motivation category or the motivation is unknown.

9. ***Non-solved:*** Unsolved killings that may be attributed to a woman or women.

(KELLEHER & KELLEHER, 1998).

In 1997 Hickey analysed 34 cases of women as serial killers on EE.UU. who acted between 1795 and 1988. He found that half of them acted with a male partner, making a big difference compared to males who usually act individually. The victims were another difference between men and women: females kill people without defence capacity, as children or elders, and very unsuspecting victims, as lovers (HICKEY, 1997). The most common way to murder was with poison. Years after, another study confirmed that poison was the favourite choice of murderesses (WILSON & HILTON, 1998), and in this new study an important data was released: women choose poison because it takes longer to be detected than using other methods.

It's unusual for women who commit multiple homicides to show sadism; torture is a rare event. The exception, as we will see on the explanatory cases, is when, according with the Kelleher & Kelleher's typology "group", she acts with a male partner who is the dominant one (FARRELL, KEPPEL & TITTERINGTON, 2011).

### 7.2.1. The "marauder" and the "commuter" serial murderer: Killers according to their hunt zones.

Even if the majority of women who kill commit their crimes with their close ones (that is to say, at their homes or their workplace) it's not rare to hear about murders that women commit far away from their homes.

David Canter published in 2003 his studies about geographical profiling. He combined for the first time the environmental psychology with space research and made a geographical profiling to solve John Duffy and David Mulcahy's crimes[1] (CANTER, 2003). After the success of this profiling, and numerous other demonstrations, the geographical profile became an important field of the criminal profiling science. Is commonly used with male serial killers, because men have a tendency to attack unknown victims and travel to look for them or to abandon the corpses, but, as far as the crimes committed by women starts to be visible for society, we start to see women who travel to commit those killings also.

Two are the most common models used in this type of profiling.

The first one is known as "Circle Theory" (CANTER & LARKIN, 1993). This hypothesis says that if we draw a straight line connecting the most remote locations of a same author's crimes and, using the line as a diameter, we draw a circle, the murderess's house will be inside of the circle.

The second one, another model developed by Canter, divides the killers according with the "hunter zone", according with the area in which they catch the victim (CANTER, 2003). The two categories of this model are the *marauder* killer and the *commuter* killer. The marauder is the murderess who travels from a central base, and after committing every murder she comes back to this base. The commuter is the woman who travels to another zone to kill and then comes back home; as we can see on the diagram (crime is symbolized as ◯) : *(Fig.1, Annex)*

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[1] They are known also as the *Railway Killers* or the *Railway Rapists*. Together, they attacked numerous women at railway stations in the south of England through the 1980s.

### 7.3.    Psychopathy and serial killer: "all serial killers are psychos"


Serial killers aren't the image that news and entertainment media suggest. They haven't got a debilitating mental illness or be evil and demented geniuses. Neither of these stereotypes are accurate; they are more likely to exhibit antisocial personality disorders such as psychopathy or sociopathy (GARRIDO GENOVÉS, 2000; GARRIDO GENOVÉS & ANYELA MORALES, 2003). It is remarkable the fact that none of these are considered as mental illnesses by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). In the last edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) released by the APA in 2013, both of these personality disorders are listed under the heading of Antisocial Personality Disorders (ASPD). The common behavioural of these disorders are:

- Disregard for laws and social mores.
- Not taking consideration for the rights of the others.
- Incapability of feeling guilt or remorse.
- Violent behaviour tendency.


That means that, despite the fact they have a ASPD, they are capable of understanding their acts, the criminal behaviour and difference between right and wrong, so they decide to act freely. They can't be excused as mentally incompetent when they are apprehended; because at every moment they know exactly what they are doing. That is one of the most terrific things: when a psycho became a criminal, it's because she choses to be one.


But psychopathy and sociopathy aren't the same, even if the news uses the words as synonyms of each other. Experts (HARE, 2003) clarified that a sociopath is someone without biological predisposition but influenced by the environment since childhood, a psychopath is the woman who has that biological predisposition plus (or not) had grown up in an influent environment that can propitiate the criminal behaviour.


Robert Hare developed an objective assessment instrument based upon structured interviews and file reviews, named Psychopathy Cheklist-Revised (PCL-R) that was published in 1990 and revised in 2003 (HARE, 2003). Some differences exist between the

definition of psychopathy in DSM and PCL-R; which the essential one is on the emotional-interpersonal dimension measured by the PCL-R:

DSM-V Criteria for APD:

| 1. | Disregard for the rights of others, at least three of: | a) Behaves in a way that is grounds for arrest. |
| | | b) Deceitful and manipulative. |
| | | c) Impulsive. |
| | | d) Aggressive. |
| | | e) Irresponsible. |
| | | f) Lack of remorse. |
| 2. | Age 18 or more. | |
| 3. | History of childhood conduct disorder. | |
| 4. | Antisocial behaviour not a product of schizophrenic or maniac episode. | |

PCL-R Criteria for APD:

| 1. | Superficial charm / glibness. | 12. | Early behaviour problems. |
| 2. | Grandiose sense of self-worth. | 13. | Lack of realistic, long-term. |
| 3. | Prone to boredom / need for stimulation. | 14. | Impulsivity. |
| | | 15. | Irresponsibility. |
| 4. | Pathological lying. | 16. | Failure to accept responsibility for own actions. |
| 5. | Manipulative / conning. | | |
| 6. | Shallow affect. | 17. | Short-term relationships (many marital relationships) |
| 7. | Lack of remorse. | | |
| 8. | Lack of empathy / callous. | 18. | Juvenile delinquency. |
| 9. | Parasitic life style. | 19. | Revocation of conditional release. |
| 10. | Poor behavioural conducts. | | |
| 11. | Promiscuous sexual relations. | 20. | Criminal versality. |

Some of the differences between these two criteria are that the DSM's APD is not the same as psychopathy (it's used for sociopathy too, and clinicians and experts tend to use the two terms interchangeably), also the diagnosis relies on behavioural antisocial history, measuring persistent criminality more than personality characteristics; and this made many clinicians and forensics and researchers to rely on the PCL-R assessments. The PCL-R, after the 2003 revision, adopted a four-factor model [Factor 1, called Interpersonal (glibness, pathological lying); Factor 2 is Affective (callous, lack of remorse); Factor 3 also known as Lifestyle (impulsivity, irresponsibility); and Factor 4 or Antisocial (criminal versatility, juvenile delinquency)] as far as psychopathy is being conceptualized into diverse domains that could serve as treatment targets (ANDREWS & BONTA, 2006; ORTIZ-TALLO, FIERRO, BLANCA ET AL, 2006)).

According with the WHO (World Health Organization, known as Organización Mundial de la Salud or OMS on Spain) roughly the 2% of the Spanish population have diverse grades of psychopathy (GARRIDO GENOVÉS, 2012). But not all the psychopaths are criminals: only a little percentage of them have a criminal activity. However, all the serial killers are considered psychopaths because they show all the characteristics associated to these antisocial personality disorders. So, it's correct to say that all the serial killers are psychopaths? Not really, even if they show some psychopathic characteristics. Anyway, it is usual to consider all serial killers as psychopaths, even the major part of the experts on this field affirm that "all the serial killers are psychopaths". The discussion is open depending which expert you ask (HARE, 2003).

Coming back, not all the psychopaths are criminals, known as "integrated psychopaths" because they have a normal integration with others. For example, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol. Society recognized them as international genius artists, and they were psychopaths and they never committed a crime (as far as we know) but show their psychopathy in their art (DUTTON, 2012). On the other hand, we can find integrated psychopaths who are criminals and another type of integrated psychopaths, according to professor Vicente Garrido (Psychology and Criminolology professor at Universitat de Valencia), authority people as politicians, too. Those two types can change and become a recognized criminal (GARRIDO GENOVÉS, 2004).

Concerning the woman, an interesting point is that by social and biological reasons, psychopathy appears in a proportion 1:5, means that for every woman who is a

psychopath, five men have this personality disorder. But despite the lower number, those women have the same capacity as the male psychopaths to hurt, even if their use of extreme violence is rare (GARRIDO GENOVÉS, 2004; HARE, 2003).

Psychopaths don't believe that they have either emotional or psychologic problems so they don't see a reason to change their behaviour to adapt themselves to the social standards that they don't agree. Their acts are the result of a calculated rationality mixed with an incapacity to interact with other people as human beings. Psychologist and psychiatrists talk about "deficient affective experience" referring to the incapacity to feel empathy, either the non-profound emotions and the incapacity to maintain a persistent mood (PERRI & LICHTENWALD, 2010). All of this has an enormous potential for making violence easier as an answer for the psychopath, mixed with intolerance to routine and impulsivity before acting: she will not be psychologically affected by her crime and she only will be thinking about what she wishes and feels.

## 8. PROFILING OF THE VICTIM

On the last section we exposed the profile of the serial murderess: a generic one with the most common characteristhics collected after the study of women serial killers in jail. It is necessary to remember that the profile is only indicative, as far as the serial killers can be any women. Manipulative, irritable, with a distorted perception of herself and dishonest are only signals of a problematic behaviour. Have these traits doesn't mean that a woman is a serial killer: the only one charachteristhic common in every murderess is the facility to be hidden.

But, what happens with their victims?

As we exposed, the tendency of women at killing it is different from men. Women prefers victims without defence capacity, as children or elders, or someone who relies on them, as their husbands or lovers. It is rare to find a murder committed by a woman in which torture, sadism or other signs of physical strength (KEENEY & HEIDE, 1994), on the other hand research shows that poison and arsenic are the most used weapons to kill. To administrate those, they have to be near of their victims to control the doses of the poison and the effects and because the process usually takes a long time, nobody have any suspicion against the woman when the victim dies: they saw the woman taking care of him, every day until the end; so this makes difficult to arrest the offender (GARRIDO, 2007).

In 1964, Hans Von Henting (German criminologist) investigated the risk factors of predisposition to criminality and the consequences that a person have to be a victim. He made a classification of 11 different kinds of victims, but only two of them apply on the subject that we are studying (VON HENTING, 1964).

| CHILDREN | ELDERS |
|---|---|
| Incapability of self-defence | Without physical strength |
| Vulnerability | Reduced mental capacity |
| Relies on the woman | Dependent on the woman |
| Proximity with the woman (close relationship) | Proximity with the woman (close relationship) |

Turvey established six influential factors in the selection of the victim (TURVEY, 2008):

- Possibility: Means the accessibility to the victim.
- Localization: The place in which she can find the victim.
- Vulnerability: The perception of the possibility to attack the victim without risks for the woman.
- Relationship: She chooses the victim for the relationship between them.
- Symbolism: The selected victim has a personal meaning to the woman.
- Fantasy: The woman chooses the victim to satisfy a particular fantasy of her.

The only profile we have to explain now it is the acquaintance one.

Women kill their lovers or husbands to be free of the relationship, or to gain money (as we saw on the Kelleher & Kelleher classification referring to the women who kill for gain or the black widows) (KELLEHER & KELLEHER, 1998).

No more can we say about the profiling of the victims: women kill their closes ones, the general profile of the victim will be someone close to the woman, that relies on her and have no possibilities of defence.

## 9. EXPLANATORY CASES

On this section we will expose some real cases of women as serial killer; according to the typology of Kelleher & Kelleher, as that it is the most complete of the three we exposed it this project.

1. *Black Widow.* Belle Gunness.

Born as Brynhild Paulsdatter Størseth in Norway, emigrates to America in 1881, looking for wealth, money and social status. What followed were a series of insurance frauds and crimes.

Paulsdatter married Mads A. Sorenson in 1884; and after their home burned and theyclaimed the insurance money, Sorenson dies and his two life insurances policies overlapped. Though his family demanded an inquiry, no charges were filed and the death was classified as "heart attack". It is believed that the marriage produced two little children whom Brynhild poisoned for the insurance money too. Then, she married Peter Gunness; and more unexplained deaths followed the first one, including the daughter of Peter Gunness and Gunness himself. She began meeting wealthy men through a lovelorn column, announcing that she was looking for a husband capable of managing the farm she had. Her suitors were her next victims: each of them went to the farm with an amount of cash as "a prove of being solvent" and then, disappeared.

The brother of her last suitor became suspicious, and trying to clear those suspicions, Gunness's farm burnt. Some skeletons were discovered in the ruins and were identified as her adopted children. Another one, decapitated, was believed to be Gunness, but was the body of another woman that Belle prepared to cover her escape. More than forty men and children were exhumed.

The only one arrested was a hired man, Ray Lamphere, for murder and arson, and he was found guilty of arson and cleared of murder. He never revealed about Belle Gunnes, and she was never arrested nor condemned: even her death has never been confirmed (TANI, 2003).

2. *Angel of Death.* Kristen Gilbert.

Convicted for three first-degree murders, one second-degree murder and two attempted murders. She acts against patients at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Massachusetts, convicted in 1998 after being reported in 1996 by three nurses concerned by the high levels of cardiac arrests on her watch and a decrease in the supply of epinephrine.

The method she employed was inducing cardiac arrest by injecting massive doses of epinephrine in the intravenous therapy bags of patients. After creating the situation, she would respond to the coded emergency, often "resuscitating" the patients. The most extended theory at the Medical Center was that Kristen was using the emergency situations (also, playing with the life or death of the patients) to gain the attention of a Veteran's Affairs police officer (VA police officer) who had an affair with her, but the records of Gilbert are older than her story at the VAMC.

According to the court records, she had made violent threats against others since she was a teenager: she used a large kitchen knife in an assault in 1998; tried twice to kill a person by poison on 1995 and another patient at the VA hospital on 1996; causing medical emergency by removing a patient's breathing tube at the VA hospital in January.

Finally, she was convicted by a federal court in 2001; and was sentenced to life in prison upon the jury's recommendation, without the chance for parole plus 20 years (PHELPS, 2003).

3. *Revenge.* Aileen Wuornos.

Born in 1956 in Michigan. As a child, Aileen experienced the suicide of her father while he was serving prison time for child molestation, and had been abandoned by her mother (together with an older brother) to be raised by their grandparents. The grandmother was an alcoholic and the grandfather sexually abused the young Wuornos. She even declared to have sexual relations with her brother too.

As an adult, she lead a vagabond existence, hitchhiking and prostituting herself to survive. During the mid-1970's she was arrested for assault and disorderly conduct. She married a yachtsman in 1976, but the man annulled the union shortly

thereafter when Aileen was being arrested again. A decade later she met Tyria Moore in Florida, and the two started a romantic relationship.

In order to have Tyria close to her (despite the lack of money they had and the drugs they consumed, such as cocaine and also much alcohol), Wuornos had killed at least six men on highways. The modus operandi she used was clear: Wuornos hitchhiked and when a solitary man stopped, admits that she was a prostitute and needed money. When the man was undressing himself she robed his belongings and shot him many times; abandoning the car with the corpse in a deserted place. Although she and Tyria uses aliases, their fingerprints in the crashed vehicles of two of the victims made it possible for police officers to track down the couple. Moore made a deal to avoid prosecution and Wuornos took full responsibility for the killings.

Wuornos asserted that she murdered in self-defence, but she would later retract these assertions and said that she killed those men by a revenge and rage wish when they rejected her sexual offering.

She was executed by lethal injection in 2002 (ARRIGO & GRIFFIN, 2004).

4. *Gain/Profit.* Pilar Prades.

Pilar Prades Santamaría born on 1926, on Bejís. Her family was poor and she grew up with the wish to increase her social status and her economy. She was ambitious and for that, in 1954 went to Valencia to work at the house of Adela Pascual Camps and Enrique Villanova Iranzo. They had a butcher's shop; and Pilar wanted to supply her boss, Adela, at the house and the business.

With "Diluvión", an ant poison made by arsenic and molasses, she poisoned the tea and soups that Adela ate; and she even showed herself concerned for the strange illness of Adela Pascual. After the death of Adela, Mr. Villanova fired the ambitious servant; so Pilar had to start again.

Recommended by a friend, she entered another house, and tries again to kill her boss's wife. She even tried to kill her friend Aurelia because she was dating a man that Pilar loves. But this time, doctor Manuel Berenguer Terraza noticed something strange on the illness, and he discovered the truth: Pilar was poisoning the women that she considered as "rivals".

She was convicted of consummated homicide and two attempted murders plus an aggravating circumstance of premeditation and abuse of trust. She was sentenced to capital punishment; being the last executed woman in Spain.

As a curiosity, she was executed by "garrotte vil" and the hangman had to be substituted because he refused to hang a woman (TANI, 2003).

5. *Group.* Myra Hindley (plus Ian Brady)

In 1961, Myra Hindley met Ian Brady, who had recently been released from prison. She fell in love with him, and soon gave herself over his total control. Brady, who was a psychopath and a rapist, hatched plans to rape and murder. In July 1963 they claimed their first victim. Over a period of two years the couple caught other victims.

Police were alerted in 1965 by Hindley's brother-in-law, David Smith. Smith had witnessed Brady killing a teenager with an axe, and he was shocked for fear of a similar fate. When police officers started to investigate, they found some bodies on the Moors near the city where some of Brady and Hindley's victims were buried.

Even though they pleaded not guilty at their trial the court found Brady guilty of three murders and Hindley was found guilty of two and for harbouring Brady. They were sentenced to jail for life. But the story continues: in 1970 Hindley cut all contact with Brady, still professing her innocence and started a campaign to regain her freedom. In 1987 she made a full confession, admitting her involvement in five murders.

She died in prison of respiratory failure on 2002, after all her applications for parole were denied (LEE, 2010).

6. *Mental illness/mental disorder.* Isabel Padilla.

Recognized as the clearest example of Münchhausen syndrome by proxy in Spanish criminal history. All neighbours at La Unión, Murcia, described Isabel as a devoted wife and mother: her husband and four of her eight children were

inexplicably ill. Doctors couldn't find a solution for the rare illness: all of them suffered hypoglycaemic crisis even in an extirpated pancreas situation.

After the death of the husband, and two of the children, Doctors José Pedro Arribas and Herminia Pascual started to be suspicious. They found Daonil in Isabel's bag, a medicine composed by glyburide (antidiabetic) but not one of the family was diagnosed with that kind of illness: all they need the opposite of Daonil. Their suspicions were increased when revisiting the files of Isabel's relatives, no one had a clear diagnosis. Then, another of Isabel's daughters had to be hospitalized because a hypoglycaemic crisi; and their suppositions became reality. After isolating the girl in the Intensive Care Unity the crisis disappeared but every time the mother was with her, the crisis appeared.

Despite doctors tried to talk with Francisca, Isabel's daughter, she never believed them; so they report the case to authorities. After the investigation, the Audiencia Provincial de Murcia condemned her to 89 years in prison for three homicides (her husband and two of her children) and two attempted murders. A year after, in 1996, the Tribunal Supremo amended the sentence to 48 years of prison, considering an incomplete exculpatory the mental disorder the woman had (clinicians have defined the Münchhausen Syndrome by proxy as a syndrome in which the patient invents medical symptoms in her relatives (preferable children, or provoke them) until the victims had to suffer surgical interventions and useless medical explorations. It's classified as a factitious disorder at DSM-V) (ARTINGSTALL, 1995).

Years after, her sons and daughters still believed their mother was not guilty of the illness and deaths of their relatives, despise all the proof doctors and prosecutors presented at the trial (MARLASCA & RENDUELES, 2004).

Isabel died in 2008, by a brain tumour (LAVERDAD.ES, 2008).

## 10. SPAIN: MURDER AND LAW.

The Spanish Constitution stablished in its article 14 that "*Spaniards are equal before the law, without discrimination on grounds of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other condition or personal or social circumstance*" (*Fig.2, Annex)*. That means that when a woman commits a murder and she is condemned in a trial, there is no distinction at judge and condemn a woman or a man (CONSTITUCIÓN ESPAÑOLA, 1978).

The Spanish Penal Code condemns the homicide and its forms in the articles 138 and 139 (*Fig.3 & 4, Annex*). The article 138 condemned as guilty of murder with imprisonment of ten to fifteen year anyone who kills another one; and stablished that if the victim is under sixteen or it is particularly vulnerable because age, illness or disability (CP, ART. 140,1º), or constitute an offense of assault by the article 550, the facts shall be punished with penalty in top grade.

The article 139 stablished that anyone who kills another concurring premeditation, or price, reward or promise, or cruelty (deliberately and inhumanly increasing of the pain) or to facilitate the commission of another crime or to prevent discovery will be punished with imprisonment of fifteen to twenty years. It is interesting the second point of the article because stablished that if one or more of the circumstances described before attends in a murder, the penalty shall be imposed in top grade, too.

The Code contemplates attenuating and exculpatory circumstances. In this project, contemplating the classifications of murderesses, we saw that the possibility of suffering a mental disorder or being intoxicated it is a type of woman serial killer (KELLEHER & KELLEHER, 1998) and our Code specifies that if anyone in case of having any anomaly or psychic alteration at the time of committing a criminal offense (it means, who cannot understand that the wrongfulness of the act) is exempted of criminal responsibility but this is not applicable to the transient mental disorder when the offender (the woman, in this subject) had caused it to commit the crime. (CP, ART. 20, 1º).

In a similar form contemplates the criminal who commits the offense in a state of full intoxication (of alcohol, drugs or other substances with similar effects) or abstinence syndrome that makes impossible to discern the wrongfulness of her actions; if she does not plan the intoxication state to commit the crime.

who while committing the criminal offense is in a state of intoxication full consumption of alcoholic beverages, drugs, narcotics, psychotropic substances or others that produce similar effects, provided there has been sought for the purpose of to commit or had not been planned or foreseen because its commission, or is under the influence of a withdrawal, because of their dependence on such substances, which prevents him from understanding the wrongfulness of the act or act on that understanding. (CP. ART.20, 2º). Suffering alterations in perception from birth or childhood, or have severely altered consciousness of reality is an exculpatory circumstance too (CP, ART. 20, 3º)

As an attenuating, Spanish Penal Code contemplates, referring to the exculpatory circumstances exposed when the not met all requirements to hold harmless in their respective cases or when the woman acts because her serious addition to substances listed in the article 20, 2th (CP, ART. 21, 1º & 2º) (*Fig.5 & 6, Annex*).

In April 2016, in the Spanish prisons 290 women of a total amount of 4.678 were in jail condemned by homicide and its forms (*Fig.7 & 8, Annex*).

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## 11. CONCLUSIONS

In the last 50 years we can observe a significant increase in the number of crimes committed by women. For that, researches start to focus on those criminals: the serial killer is not just male territory (HARE, 2003).

Despite that, it continues to be hard work to find information about women who kill: on our minds we continuous to have the image imposed by years of role models where women are incapable of extreme violence - of taking a life. Although famous crimes as the Wuornos case start to call the attention of people society has started to notice that women are capable to kill, to plan a murder, to be as monstrous as male killers.

It will be necessary for more time to inculcate the idea of those "new" monsters: discovering a mother who killed her sons because they were troublesome it's difficult for the majority of population to understand. Reality is, that women as killers are an enigma for science and society, and all the studies made about them until now are insufficient. After that, even more time will be necessary to develop effective plans to detect and prevent the apparition and activities of women as killers. Nowadays, the lack of information, the low number of studies about male serial killers that only mentioned women as a rare event and the even lower number of studies about women as serial killers mixed with the beliefs of the role-models in our society make troublesome to accept a woman as a murderess. This is the principal difficult that we found at the research of information for this project.

It's significant that an important percentage of the women who kill (in Spain at least) suffered from psychiatric disorders, as Isabel Padilla (or Noelia de Mingo, a doctor who suffered schizophrenia and stabbed some patients and other doctors at the hospital in which she was working) (MARLASCA & RENDUELES, 2004). But murders for gain or seeking attention are increasing too, and poison continues to be the most used way women prefer, despite some crimes as Wuornos (shooting) or Báthory (torture), and this makes it troublesome for authorities to arrest the killer. They are integrated, without external signs of the monster they hide. They can have a family, friends, what people call "normal life". But inside these women, can feels the impulse to kill. An unsatisfactory point of their lives that breaks the boundaries of the monster. With the exception of those

women suffering mental disorders or psychopathology it's impossible to distinguish the origin or the reason for them becoming serial murderers.

Criminals adapt themselves to the complexity of our society but they continue expressing themselves -the real ones- on their crimes. They improve their ways to kill and avoid police officers. Luckily, we have the science improvements on our side, helping investigators to discover the offenders, to prevent crimes with an identification of the risk signs criminals offer; understanding better the mind of those human hunters.

The answers to the questions are clear:

Why nobody thinks about women as serial killers? Nobody thinks about women as serial killers because the role-model on our society has conditioned us to non-believing that a woman can kill: the feminine role stablished that a woman is gentle and tender, not aggressiveness.

Why the major part of crimes committed by female serial killers are non-solved? It is so difficult to prove the participation of a woman in a murder. Women have a tendency to non-aggressive crimes (HARE, 2003), they commonly planned the crime and use poison or other drugs to kill their victims, and that can take a long time, making troublesome to investigate and solve the crimes.

Finally, why is so difficult to detect and arrest a murderess? As we said, women prefer poison or drugs to kill, avoiding physical strength or aggressive crimes (HARE, 2003; KEENEY & HEIDE, 1994). That implies a major difficult to find the culprit and to demonstrate the participation on the crime.

As recommendation for future researches and investigations; I suggested the possibility to interview the imprisoned women condemned as serial killers. After these investigations, we can describe a more detailed and specific profiling of women as serial killers. In addition, the improvement of knowledge and experience collected can be an important and helpfully tool to detect new behavioural patterns or trails of a serial killer.

In my opinion, the researches have to be focused on the profiling of those women, that will make possible the creation of a general behavioural pattern and will be easier to explain to society but that must be do it with the re-education of the population. If science improves our knowledge about women who kill but society haven't got the necessary education to accept the possibility of a woman killing all the improvements on this field will

be useless. It is necessary to inculcate the idea of women being capable of killing and the major collection of data possible to have a real improvement in the fight against the serial killers.

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## 13. ANNEX

The marauder killer.

The commuter killer.

(Fig.1) David Canter models of killers: the marauder and the commuter serial killers (GARRIDO, 2007).

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Artículo 14:

Los españoles son iguales ante la ley, sin que pueda prevalecer discriminación alguna por razón de nacimiento, raza, sexo, religión, opinión o cualquier otra condición o circunstancia personal o social.

(Fig.2) Constitución Española: *Capítulo Segundo. Derechos y Libertades.* Article 14.

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Artículo 138:

1. El que matare a otro será castigado, como reo de homicidio, con la pena de prisión de diez a quince años.
2. Los hechos serán castigados con la pena superior en grado en los siguientes casos:
   a) Cuando concurra en su comisión alguna de las circunstancias del apartado 1 del artículo 140, o
   b) Cuando los hechos sean además constitutivos de un delito de atentado del artículo 550

(Fig.3) Código Penal: *Libro II, Título I. Del homicidio y sus formas.* Article 138.

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Artículo 139:

1. Será castigado con la pena de prisión de quince a veinticinco años, como reo de asesinato, el que matare a otro concurriendo alguna de las circunstancias siguientes:

   1.ª Con alevosía.

   2.ª Por precio, recompensa o promesa.

   3.ª Con ensañamiento, aumentando deliberada e inhumanamente el dolor del ofendido.

   4.ª Para facilitar la comisión de otro delito o para evitar que se descubra.

2. Cuando en un asesinato concurran más de una de las circunstancias previstas en el apartado anterior, se impondrá la pena en su mitad superior.

(Fig.4) Código Penal: *Libro II, Título I. Del homicidio y sus formas.* Article 139.

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Artículo 20:

Están exentos de responsabilidad criminal:

1.º El que, al tiempo de cometer la infracción penal, a causa de cualquier anomalía o alteración psíquica, no

pueda comprender la ilicitud del hecho o actuar conforme a esa comprensión.

El trastorno mental transitorio no eximirá de pena cuando hubiese sido provocado por el sujeto con el propósito de cometer el delito o hubiera previsto o debido prever su comisión.

2.º El que al tiempo de cometer la infracción penal se halle en estado de intoxicación plena por el consumo de bebidas alcohólicas, drogas tóxicas, estupefacientes, sustancias psicotrópicas u otras que produzcan efectos análogos, siempre que no haya sido buscado con el propósito de cometerla o no se hubiese previsto o debido prever su comisión, o se halle bajo la influencia de un síndrome de abstinencia, a causa de su dependencia de tales sustancias, que le impida comprender la ilicitud del hecho o actuar conforme a esa comprensión.

3.º El que, por sufrir alteraciones en la percepción desde el nacimiento o desde la infancia, tenga alterada gravemente la conciencia de la realidad.

(Fig.5) Código Penal: *Libro I, Capítulo II. De las causas que eximen de la responsabilidad criminal.* Article 20.

Artículo 21:

Son circunstancias atenuantes:

1.º Las causas expresadas en el capítulo anterior, cuando no concurrieren todos los requisitos necesarios para eximir de responsabilidad en sus respectivos casos.

2.º La de actuar el culpable a causa de su grave adicción a las sustancias mencionadas en el número 2.º del artículo anterior.

(Fig.6) Código Penal: *Libro I, Capítulo III. De las circunstancias que atenúan la responsabilidad criminal.* Article 21.

| Organic Law | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Homicide and forms | 3.601 | 290 | 3.891 |

(Fig.7) DISTRIBUTION OF PRISON POPULATION BY SEX.

| Gender | Total | % |
|---|---|---|
| Men | 56.948 | 92,41 |
| Women | 4.678 | 7,59 |
| Total | 61.626 | 100 |

(Fig.8) CRIMINAL TYPE OF PRISON POPULATION (ORGANIC LAW 10/1995, 23 NOV. PENAL CODE).