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Case Study

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

Patrick Kearney- "The Freeway Killer"

The Scenario

The term "Freeway Killer" was a name that the media coined and was adopted by the security agencies. Noticeably, the term was created because of the nature of the killings that were distinct in the 1970's. According to media reports and the police, in the 1970s, there had emerged a type of killers that concentrated on murdering the victims and in most cases throwing the bodies in freeways. Although "freeways killings" were defined through the habit of leaving bodies along freeways, it was later discovered that three persons operated independently. Apparently, the perpetrators of these actions happened to be picking victims from similar actions. After the investigations, three persons were found culpable for these killings, and they included Patrick Kearney, William Bonin, and Randy Steven (Wilson & Seaman, 2007). However, in this research paper, the focus is on Patrick Kearney's involvement in the 'Freeway Killings.'

Patrick Kearney

He was from a family that was economically stable. Physically, it appeared that he had slowed growth as such most of his peers ended up bullying him at school. In his teenage stage, Patrick Kearney had developed conceptions about killing (Wilson & Seaman, 2007). Another distinct part of Kearney is that he had publicly chosen gay as his form of sexuality. Subsequently, he had married David Hill. However, it appeared that their relationship was troublesome and as a way of relieving himself from the pressures of his marriage, he used to seek peace from male prostitutes from social places. However, it appears that the stress could not only be solved through sexual activities with the male prostitutes, but he also ended up killing them. According to Wilson and Seaman (2007), the first person to endure the evilness of Kearney was

a 19-year-old teenager in the year 1962. Investigations indicated that Kearney had killed this young man and then had some sexual experiences with the dead body; this is referred to as necrophilia. After this incident, he went ahead to kill more victims in the same way. However, because of increased cases of such characterization, the police launched investigations to unravel the mysterious killings. In their investigations, the police created the names “The trash bag killer” and the “Freeway Killer” in the process of profiling the cases. It is important to note that during this time killings of such a nature were rampant and therefore security agencies wanted to investigate these cases and find the exact culprits. In their investigations, the detectives found a body of a person. According to reports, Kearney and Hill had last been seen with this latest victim. Therefore, the police had found some ground for suspecting either Hill or Kearney as the accused persons in these killings. After realizing that the police were looking for them, Hill and Kearney decided to escape to Texas. However, their relatives pleaded with them to face the charges. Upon being arrested, it was realized that Hill was not involved in the deaths. On the other hand, Kearney pleaded guilty to the 38 cases, but he was prosecuted with 21 of them. In avoiding a death sentence, he pleaded guilty, and he was jailed in the California State Prison (Wilson & Seaman, 2007).

Period

In the 1970s, homicide cases were on the rise. However, Nagin, Solow, and Lum (2015) note that rate of homicide cases was not the issue, but detectives were concerned about the clearance rate that had been exhibited in the 1960s. According to Nagin, Solow, and Lum (2015), the clearance rate entails the occurrence of homicides cases where the culprits go unnoticed. Although some murder cases go unresolved, the rate in the 1960s was alarming. Most experts have considered the clearance rate in the 1960s to be 90% (Nagin, Solow & Lum, 2015).

Therefore, in the 1970s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had instituted plans of scaling down this clearance rates. Considerably, this is the reason why Kearney's murders were discovered before he had killed other people in the American community. The relevance of this information is important in understanding the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in the present. Noticeably, experiences such as clearance rates are not favorable in a setting where unusual persons of the character such as that of Kearney are present. Therefore, with this information, the current society is in a position to understand the history of criminal justice departments such as the FBI. Stakeholders in the criminal justice sector are likely to benefit from such information, as they will be in a position to unravel some of the highly mysterious killings in the society.

Setting

Kearney's killings were mainly done in California State. Markedly, in the 1970s, California appeared to have recorded several deaths that arose from psychological issues. Apart from what was profiled as the 'Freeway Killers,' Simon (2012) indicates that California experienced other historical murders. First, Simon (2012) addresses the case of Edward Kemper who focused on killing his relatives, and this happened in the 1970s. The killings in California were so much that and these raised concerns regarding what had happened to the once peaceful life in the area. Considerably, such information is important in future to state authorities concerning crime cases that arise because of psychological problems.

Mode of Operation

In perpetrating his activities, Kearney would visit places that had gay prostitutes. With these unsuspecting victims, Kearney would form a relationship and take them to other places apparently for sexual activities. Subsequently, he would kill them using a gun. Wilson and Seaman (2007) indicate that most of the victims of Kearney activities were killed unaware of the

situation; they were either inebriated or under distraction. After killing his targets, Kearney would use the bodies for necrophilia purposes and further take them home to sodomize these bodies using X-Acto Knives (Wilson & Seaman, 2007). After the sodomy exercise, he would mutilate the bodies. In a bid to conceal his whereabouts, he extracted the bullets from the bodies of his victims. Later, Kearney disposed of the bodies in landfills or freeways (Wilson & Seaman, 2007). In some cases, the bodies were found wrapped in trash bags and hence the name the “Trash Bag Killer.”

Motive for the Crime

At the beginning of various stories that touch on the life of Kearney, it is reported that he was a victim of bullying at school. Further, he chose the uncommon thing of being a gay in marriage. In his marriage to Hill, he was also experiencing issues as this is indicated that he would visit open places for him to calm the pressure of his marriage. In respect to the issue of bullying at school, Sigmund Freud’s psychodynamic theory provides adequate information that can explain Kearney’s condition. The proponents of the psychodynamic approach argue that an individual’s childhood experience is likely to affect their adult behavior. As such, the negative conduct by a person is a remnant of the experiences he or she had in her childhood life. In explaining this aspect, Freud indicates that during the development process, a normal human being experiences growth in his or her id, ego and superego (Martens, 2011). The id is that part of the development process that is considered remote. Here, the body is supplied with the deliberate desire for sex or food. On the part of the ego, it is reported that this involves the activities in development that make a person aware of communal values and traditions. Finally, the superego entails the developmental situation that makes a person to adopt values and morals in his or her community. From the explanations regarding the psychodynamic theory, a serial

killer could have experienced negative experiences at his or her id stage of growth. Here, he or she did not have the opportunity to undergo the full cycle of the id stage. Such a person who did not get the chance to exercise his or her physical energy at the id stage is likely to have problems at the ego stage. In this case, such a person will have a weak ego. First, because of the negative experience at his id, such a person will perceive the society through unfavorable perspectives. For instance, in the case of Kearney, he was exposed to violence while at his id development stage. He was not in a position to protect himself from the bullying. Consequently, he grows with an ego, which perceives the society as a place where violence is the mode of operation. With such a weak ego, he ends up believing that if he was subjected to pain by the same society then his actions of killing become a lesser concern. The indication, in this case, is that Kearney had a weak ego towards values that revolve around lack of violence and the respect for human life.

Elsewhere, it is indicated that Kearney had issues in her marriage. Commonly after a quarrel, he would visit bars to collect gay prostitutes with the intention of having sex with them. However, in the end, he would kill them and dispose of their bodies in the trash. Another action that he performed on the dead bodies is that he removed the bullets to avoid being tracked by detectives. In understanding the conduct of Kearney, it is advisable to explore the theory of disorganized/organized killer. Kerr, Beech and Murphy (2013) theorize that the FBI coined regarding the behavior of serial killers. In this theory, the organized killer is careful with his or her mission. He or she will carry his or her weapon and remove any blood droplets from the scene. According to this type of thinking, an organized killer's actions are because of response to a stressful event. On the other hand, a disorganized killer does not have a defined weapon that he or she uses to kill. Such a criminal is not concerned with cleaning the scene of the crime. The intention for the disorganized killer is thought to be problems with social life. Considerably,

from the explanations about a disorganized/organized killer, it appears that Kearney was an organized murderer. He was careful about the scene of his crime and even the disposing of the bodies. Further, it is revealed that his killing missions were highly executed whenever he argued with Hill. As such, his killing was a way of relieving his pressure that was related to his marriage.

How the case was resolved

Although Kearney had attempted to run away from arrest, he later presented himself to detectives. He pleaded guilty to all the cases, but the prosecution charged him for fewer events that were associated with the 'Freeway Killing.' Apparently, Kearney did not want to engage in long court battles as in the first cases he even accepted cases that were not his. It appears he was ready to be punished for the involvement in the deaths. Evidently, this again brings into the picture the issue of an organized killer who is conscious about his actions when engaging in a misdemeanor. After the trial, Kearney was jailed in the California State Prison. However, it is important to note that his admission for the killings made the prosecution not to sentence him to death.

Reflection on the case study

The events in Kearney's case are essential for stakeholders undertaking the criminology discipline. In most cases, people tend to assume childhood and marital experiences as a contributing factor to some of the rare killings in the society. Most killings have been associated with drug abuse or social problems. However, for anyone reading through the events of Kearney life will realize that one's upbringing is significant in the future conduct of an individual. As such, this introduces the aspect of parental care to children. Considerably, parents should monitor the lives of their children to ascertain any cases of adverse conditions either at school or at home.

The knowledge derived from this story is relevant to sociologists and people within the criminal justice systems as it is essential in protecting such instances and in understanding the minds of serial killers.

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