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**“What's one less person  
on the face of the Earth, anyway?”:  
Linguistic Manipulation and Nonverbal  
Communication taking Ted Bundy's 1977 and 1989  
Interviews as Case Study**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present thesis focuses on the linguistic manipulation employed by the infamous serial killer Ted Bundy, who was able to deceive many people with his charm both in the years he operated and nowadays. The thesis takes into consideration his language, through a discourse analysis, as well as his nonverbal communication, through a visual analysis of two major interviews that symbolize Ted Bundy's manipulation skills; the first interview was conducted on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1977, when Ted Bundy was still pleading innocent, while the second was recorded on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989, which was the day before his execution, when he had already confessed of having murdered at least 30 women. The thesis also examines some of the theoretical insights from pragmatics and psychology (mainly discussing Ted Bundy's mental evaluations), and it includes a short biography of the serial killer, narrating some of the events which could have potentially led Bundy to become such a cruel and heartless murderer. The main findings of the analysis reflect Ted Bundy's manipulatory behavior and show the charm and charisma which managed to trick and deceive his victims and many people involved in the case. For this reason, the present thesis also includes some considerations on how Bundy was perceived by the public and how he was able to operate in plain sight for many years; furthermore, the thesis also shows how the media influenced the case and discusses how the Ted Bundy case is still incredibly popular even among young people. Future research could focus on the manipulation skills of other serial killers such as Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy or Richard Ramirez and therefore compare them with Ted Bundy so as to study how these people think and operate, hence trying to detect this kind of behavior in advance in the future.





## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a very powerful tool that allows people to express feelings, ideas and opinions, but it can also be used in a deceptive way in order to manipulate the conversation. Words possess the ability of conveying a meaning that could be different from their surface appearance: the study of pragmatics involves much more than the literal meanings found in sentences; it takes into consideration the intentions of the speaker and the context, providing a more in-depth understanding of how meaning is created and conveyed in conversations.

This dissertation is an analysis of the linguistic manipulation and nonverbal communication of one of the most notorious serial killers of history, Ted Bundy, who is known for the murder of at least thirty women between the 1970s and the 1980s. The idea for the topic of the present thesis stems from Ted Bundy's ability in manipulation: in two major interviews, Ted Bundy can be seen using language to his convenience, trying to make his interlocutor – as well as the public – believe his lies. The interviews date back to March 17<sup>th</sup> 1977 and January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989 and are particularly relevant for the understanding of his manipulative tactics; in 1977 he was still pleading innocent, while the second interview was recorded the day before his execution, after he admitted his crimes. His manipulation skills were not only confined to the interviews as he was able to deceive his victims, often using his charm and charisma to lure them to his car, as well as people involved in his case and the public opinion. He also managed to trick the people around him for years, including his own girlfriend who did not suspect anything for years.

The aim of this analysis is to shed light on the strategies he employed through a discourse analysis of the two interviews and to understand how he managed to deceive so many people for years before he was caught. Furthermore, a visual analysis will be conducted in order to examine his nonverbal cues and to see whether they reflect what he is trying to convey (for example, the emotions of regret and sorrow in the second interview).

The present thesis employed a qualitative analysis approach: this methodology is appropriate as the study focused on two interviews only, aiming at the interpretation

of the manipulative techniques employed by Ted Bundy and at gaining an understanding of his language use and his nonverbal communication. What is important to notice is that a qualitative analysis investigates a limited amount of material, thereby reducing the possibility of generalization to other texts.

In **Chapter One** the theoretical and methodological approaches are discussed; in particular, the thesis sheds light on pragmatics and includes a focus on contextual meanings, speech acts and theories of important scholars such as Grice, Sperber & Wilson and Brown & Levinson to provide theoretical foundation for the succeeding chapters. Furthermore, an insight into linguistic manipulation is provided, laying the groundwork for understanding how Bundy used language to deceive his victims and manipulate public perception. Lastly, this chapter presents a description of the approaches used for the present thesis: discourse analysis and visual analysis.

**Chapter Two** delves into psychological insights aimed at understanding the nature of psychopathy and sociopathy, distinguishing the two concepts. The chapter explores some of the key characteristics of psychopathic individuals and links them to Ted Bundy, focusing therefore on some of his mental evaluations, shedding light on his psychological profile. Furthermore, this chapter tries to understand how the psychopathic traits he was diagnosed with influenced his thought and decision-making process; additionally, the chapter tries to unravel the reasons why he was able to commit the crimes for so long before being captured.

Moreover, **Chapter Three** focuses on Bundy's biography, hence narrating some of the events of his childhood and adolescence which could have possibly led him to become a serial killer. Subsequently, this chapter delves on the effects Ted Bundy had on people both in the years he operated and nowadays, and it also focuses on how the media narrates his case influencing public perception.

Lastly, **Chapter Four** delves into the analysis of two crucial interviews in the case of Ted Bundy: the 1977 interview, where he still tried to manipulate people into believing his innocence, and the 1989 interview, recorded the day before his execution where, while being confronted with the inevitability of his impending death, he chooses to admit his crimes while still trying to appear as innocent as possible by shifting the blame somewhere else. This chapter aims at analyzing both his language (through a discourse analysis) and his nonverbal communication including facial

expressions, body language, and gestures (employing a visual analysis) in order to understand if the words he uttered were honest and to detect if the feelings he was displaying were genuine. This is a pivotal chapter for the present dissertation as it tries to shed light on the intricate interplay between language and manipulation in the case of Ted Bundy.

However, the objective of the present thesis is also to try and learn from the madmen like Ted Bundy, who committed these heinous crimes, in order to learn how to catch them and try to avoid future victims caused by awful individuals such as Bundy. Study, history, and perception play a huge part in the catching of a serial killer.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Theoretical and Methodological Approaches**

The present chapter aims at describing several key linguistic concepts and their relevance in understanding communication, particularly in the context of linguistic manipulation. It explains how pragmatics influences the communication and introduces discourse analysis as a tool to study the language beyond its literal meaning. Moreover, it presents the concept of visual analysis, which will be conducted on Ted Bundy's nonverbal communication in both interviews.

#### **1.1. Pragmatics**

##### **1.1.1. Uncovering Contextual Meanings**

Every language is characterized by different components that contribute each in different ways. Linguists have identified five different components: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and, most importantly for the present research, pragmatics.

According to Yule (1996: 3), “pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said”: it is the study of how context influences the communication, emphasizing that a complete understanding of language requires the consideration of pragmatics, which enables the interpretation of utterances beyond their literal meaning. Unlike the other linguistic components mentioned above, which primarily deal with the form and structure of language, pragmatics examines the functional and social aspects of language use.

While being considered one of the newer branches of linguistics, pragmatics is particularly interesting due to its distinct focus on incorporating human behavior into linguistic analysis, argues Yule (1996: 4). Studying language through pragmatics is useful because people's assumptions, purposes, meanings can be inferred, given the fact that the explicit meaning of certain utterances is known only to the speakers: “the advantage of studying language via pragmatics is that one can talk about people's intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions (for example, requests) that they are performing when they speak” (ibid.).

However, one of the challenges in analyzing language pragmatically is analyzing the utterances objectively and consistently, because it focuses on the non-literal meanings produced in sentences: pragmatics can be challenging because it engages with the subjective nature of human thought. According to Wiyono (2015: 18) “knowing who the speakers are, their backgrounds, statuses, and occupations will help us tremendously in interpreting the meaning of their utterances”, because knowing the subject who is uttering that information, it is easier to infer and discern the truth from the lies: for example, if a convict utters the statement I AM NOT GUILTY, it is far less credible than the same statement uttered by a person who has never been accused of any crime.

To better understand this concept, the following example provided by Yule (1996: 4) could be useful. To understand what the two are talking about it is fundamental to know the context and the speaker:

A: SO, DID YOU DO IT?

B: OF COURSE I DID, WHO WOULDN'T?

Indeed, figurative expressions play a crucial role in communication, and it is essential to understand them in order to properly interpret language.

A: GOOD LUCK! BREAK A LEG!

A literal interpretation of the sentence above would be alarming, as it would mean that someone is wishing someone else to break their leg, when in reality it is an idiom used to wish someone good luck, and it conveys a meaning of success rather than a literal injury.

A: IT'S REALLY HOT IN HERE. CAN YOU CRACK OPEN A WINDOW?

In this case instead, TO CRACK OPEN A WINDOW does not mean to break it, damage it, but to open it slightly. It is a figurative expression used to convey the request of lowering the temperature in the room or letting some air in.

Therefore, discourse is always produced in a certain context, and it is important to considerate carefully that during its analysis the meaning conveyed is not always fixed and objective; on the contrary, it is influenced by a range of different factors like the speaker's beliefs, the cultural and educational background, social and political context.

### **1.1.2. Understanding Speech Acts**

According to Yule (1996: 47), “actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and, in English, are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or requests”. In other words, an utterance transcends being merely a sentence formulated to convey a specific statement, but it is, more specifically, a speech act that has a specific meaning and function and performs a particular action.

A: COULD YOU PLEASE PASS ME THE SALT?

B: THIS SERVICE IS TERRIBLE.

C: YOU ARE GLOWING TODAY!

Each of the three examples above has a different function and conveys a different message. In fact, example A is a request, B is a complaint while C suggests a compliment.

As Yule (1996: 48) argues, speech acts have three dimensions: there is a first locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the third dimension, the perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the production of meaningful statements: for example, a simple sentence such as “I’VE JUST MADE SOME COFFEE” (ibid.) is first of all uttered with the intention of creating meaning; the same sentence produced in French addressed to a person who does not understand the language would not be considered as a locutionary act, as it fails to create meaning, whereas in France it would. The same sentence, besides informing the interlocutor, could also aim, for instance, at offering the freshly made coffee: this is the illocutionary force of the sentence. The illocutionary act, as stated by Wiyono (2015: 14) is certainly more difficult to detect, as it requires the attention of the listener who must infer what the speaker is trying to

communicate. Moreover, when we utter a statement, we intend it to have an effect which in the abovementioned example could be to get the hearer to drink some coffee; if the listener reacts to the utterance of the speaker by doing something, “it means that the utterance has a perlocutionary effect to the listener” (ibid.).

According to Fairclough (1989: 11), the mere ‘decoding’ of the utterance is not sufficient for its comprehension. Instead, it involves an active engagement where one aligns elements of the utterance across different levels with the knowledge stored in the long-term memory; “the main point is that comprehension is the outcome of interactions between the utterance being interpreted” (ibid.).

### **1.1.3. The Theories of the Scholars**

Grice’s theory of implicature claims that what the speaker wants to communicate is divided into what he ‘says’ and what he ‘implicates’. During a conversation, what we want to say to our interlocutor is often alienated from the literal meaning of the words, and, with a sentence, we say more than what the literal words mean. In other words, if someone asks if one has the time, one does not only say YES but he interprets the question as a polite request for relevant information, namely WHAT TIME IS IT?.

There are two types of implicatures, conversational and conventional:

Conversational implicatures are tied to general features of the discourse. Read the following example given by Grice (1989: 24):

A: HOW IS C GETTING ON IN HIS JOB?

B: OH QUITE WELL, I THINK; HE LIKES HIS COLLEAGUES, AND HE HASN'T BEEN TO PRISON YET.

From this dialogue we can understand that B thinks that C is a person that is likely to be tempted by the opportunities provided by his occupation, and that C’s colleagues are unpleasant or treacherous people, hence one can assume that what B said was not what he implied. According to Grice (1989: 26), conversational implicatures are cooperative efforts, because they need each participant to recognize a common purpose or accept a mutual direction. There is a contrast between what is said and a further element that has been communicated, which is the implicature.



Grice (1989: 39) states that conversational implicatures, by their nature, possess certain characteristics:

- They can be canceled, since one could choose not to adhere to the Cooperative Principle. It can be explicitly canceled, “by the addition of a clause that states or implies that the speaker has opted out” (ibid.) or contextually canceled by employing the utterance in a different context, signaling that the speaker is opting out;
- Since what is important in the conversation is what one says rather than how he/she says it, the manner of expression does not influence the implicature; that is to say that it is unlikely to find an alternative to a sentence maintaining the same meaning. Grice (ibid.) suggests therefore that generalized conversational implicature carried by a common, non-special phrase has a high degree of nondetachability.
- Conversational implicatures, despite being possible for them to become conventionalized over time, do not have – initially, at least – conventional force. For them to become conventional implicatures there has to be an adequate justification.
- The truth of a conversational implicature does not depend on what is said but on what is implicated; in other words, the implicature is not conveyed by the content of the statement itself but by the manner in which it is expressed, by what it implicates.
- When people try to figure out the implied meaning behind a statement, they are essentially trying to understand what needs to be assumed so as to follow the Cooperative Principle; sometimes, there could be several possible valid explanations, leading to uncertainty.

Conventional implicatures, on the other hand, are determined by the conventional meaning of the words, which influence what the speaker says and what he implies. Conventional implicatures consist in the agreement of a certain community of people to behave or to think; each language has its own specific conventional elements: for

example, a red object is referred to as red because that is its conventional name. Read the following example given by Grice (1989: 25):

A: HE IS AN ENGLISHMAN; HE IS, THEREFORE, BRAVE.

From this dialogue we can notice how the speaker implies that the bravery is a consequence of being an Englishman, and that every Englishman is brave. At the same time, conventional implicatures can be observed what two sentences are uttered with two different terms which have the same meaning. Grice (ibid.) provides the following examples:

HAROLD WILSON IS A GREAT MAN  
THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER IS A GREAT MAN

Both sentences would have had the same meaning – when the book was written – because both subjects referred to the same person.

When developing the theory of implicature, Grice theorized the Cooperative Principle, according to which there is an implicit cooperation between two people, during a conversation, that makes the exchange of information work. “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”, states Grice (1989: 26), explaining what is needed for an effective conversation. Without realizing it, we and our interlocutors are conversationally cooperating in order to achieve mutual conversational ends. According to Grice (1989: 29), cooperative transactions are characterized by specific features, which are:

1. The interlocutors aim at the same immediate objective even though the final aim could be different or even clash with each other.
2. The contributions to the conversation should be dovetailed and mutually dependent.
3. The communication should continue with the appropriate style unless both interlocutors agree that the conversation can end.

Grice (1989) wrote that there are four maxims of conversation:

- Maxim of Quantity: the quantity of the discourse has to be appropriate (neither less nor more than required). The contribution of information has to be adequate.
- Maxim of Quality: what the speaker says has to be the truth and has to correspond to the reality: “try to make your contribution one that is true”, states Grice (1989: 27), and then proceeds to say that one cannot say what he believes to be false and what he lack evidence for.
- Maxim of Relation: the speaker should say something relevant to what has been said before.
- Maxim of Manner; the message has to be communicated clearly and without ambiguity or obscurity, being brief and orderly.

Despite the existence of these maxims, people always violate them; as Grice (1989: 30) clarifies, sometimes a participant of a conversation may fail to fulfil a maxim for various reasons. They might subtly violate a maxim but without drawing attention to it, potentially leading to misunderstandings; they could choose not to respect the maxims or the Cooperative Principle altogether, to opt out, indicating their unwillingness to cooperate; there could be a clash between maxim that forces the interlocutors to violate one in order to fulfil the other; lastly, they might deliberately disregard a maxim, flouting it.

On the other hand, Sperber and Wilson (1986) contributed to this research elaborating the Relevance Theory. In their book *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, they agree with Grice in some parts; as a matter of fact, this theory was originally inspired by his work, developing his ideas. For example, they agree with the fact that the communication consists in the expression and the understanding of the intention of the speaker. They also believe that the unsaid intention must be analyzed through an inference process and must be decoded. Despite this, Sperber and Wilson question the necessity of the principle of cooperation and its maxims; they argue that Grice focuses on the implicit part of the discourse forgetting the explicit. According to

them, the audience searches meaning in any communicative situation, and once found a meaning that fits their expectations of relevance, they will stop processing.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 3-4) summarize the framework of maxims that underlie the implicatures; Horn (1984) suggests that Grice's four maxims can be reduced by three: Quality, Quantity and Relevance (the latter incorporates the remaining maxims Grice lists). On the other hand, Leech (1983) approves Grice's theory and adds to the Cooperative Principle also the Politeness Principle, which consists of six (or more) maxims. Leech (1983: 80) claims that people would make erroneous predictions employing the Cooperative Principle without the Politeness Principle, since the latter clarifies why individuals occasionally utter statements that are not true or less informative than what is necessitated, notwithstanding the Maxims of Quality and Quantity.

However, Brown and Levinson (1987: 4) argue that "if we are permitted to invent a maxim for every regularity in language use, not only will we have an infinite number of maxims, but pragmatic theory will be too unconstrained to permit the recognition of any counter-examples", implying that people should not try and define every element of utterances, since by doing so it will become difficult to identify instances that contradict or challenge principles, besides creating too many maxims to follow. The authors state that Grice's Cooperative Principles "defines an 'unmarked' or socially neutral (indeed asocial) presumptive framework for communication", while arguing that Politeness Principles are "principled reasons for deviation" (1987: 5). Nonetheless, Brown and Levinson (1987: 8) claim that the process of understanding communication is based on deciphering the intentions of the speaker, working backwards in order to reconstruct the underlying reasoning of the speaker, the thought process behind the communication.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) state that all adult members of society have a "face", which they define as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself". They proceed to say that it depends on the interactions and in people's cooperation in maintaining, enhancing or losing it. This can be tied with the present thesis because of Bundy's attempt to appear innocent and an honorable individual. There is a distinction between positive and negative face: positive face consists in the longing of an individual of having something desired by

others; negative face is people's desire of actions being unimpeded by others (1987: 62).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 65), it is clear that "certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker". The first distinction that the authors make is about the kind of face threatened (*ibid.*): acts which threaten the negative face are orders, suggestions, reminders, threats which push the listener to do or refrain from doing something; even offers or promises may put some pressure on the addressee, as well as expressions of positive emotions (compliments and admiration) or negative emotions (hatred, anger, lust) referred to the listener's possessions, which could prompt him to behave in certain ways. On the other hand, there are also acts that threaten the positive face: expressions that for example show disapproval, insults, contradictions or disagreements, as well as expressions which depict indifference or lack of concern regarding the listener's positive face. The second distinction that the authors (1987: 67) make is between the acts that primarily offend the addressee's face or the speaker's face.

As Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-69) state, individuals try to steer clear of actions that could potentially damage face and employ certain strategies to reduce this risk: "positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of H, the positive self-image that he claims for himself" – where H stands for the addressee. On the other hand, negative politeness is essentially an avoidance-based strategy, which respects boundaries and self-determination of the addressee, therefore satisfying his negative face.

It is worth mentioning that the term strategy, to refer to the above mentioned acts, does not necessarily indicate consciousness: "for the most part they do not seem to be [conscious], but when interactional mistakes occur, or actors try to manipulate others, they may very well emerge into awareness", argue Brown and Levinson (1987: 85) therefore explaining that these unconscious strategies are both innovative plans of action and routines that originally developed with rational intent, later becoming automated and unconscious. Essentially, the term "strategy" allows people to convey an idea of a purposeful action that, whether conscious or not, is guided by rational thought or intention (*ibid.*).

## **1.2. Linguistic Manipulation**

According to Wiyono (2015: 3), “manipulation is the act of concealing truths in as undetectable as possible ways in order to cover up one’s stories for certain purposes”. Similarly, as stated by Akopova (2013: 1), linguistic manipulation occurs when the intentions concealed behind the speaker’s words are not clear to the listener, and the speaker can stimulate a reaction through a great range of linguistic choices, shaping the desired behavior of the listener, as intended by the speaker. In other words, manipulation occurs when people aim at achieving a certain goal employing every possible mean and strategy, notwithstanding of the potential harm or damage it may inflict upon others.

Manipulation has been a subject of investigations conducted by socio-psychologists since the late 1960s, claims Sorlin (2017: 132), which led to the studies of certain strategies which possess the ability of controlling human behavior, particularly in the fields of politics and advertising. The manipulator exerts influence over someone and it is often a practice which is against the interlocutor’s will or best interest, as thoroughly explained by Van Dijk (2006: 360):

manipulation not only involves power, but specifically abuse of power, that is, domination. That is, manipulation implies the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated.

As stated by Van Dijk (2006: 361) the negative outcome of this strategy occurs when the recipients of the manipulative message are incapable of discerning the true intentions and the real purposes of the speaker. That is to say, the same message could manipulate some people while having no consequences on some other individuals, if the latter have for example specific knowledge that helps them in avoiding being manipulated.

Nevertheless, manipulation is nowadays extremely common in various contexts, owing its popularity in part to the growing awareness among individuals regarding the potent impact of language. However, Wiyono (2015: 21) argues that there is not only illegitimate manipulation and provides the example of what is considered to be a

positive social influence, that is the doctor who advises his patients to consume healthy medicines: this is regarded as a positive social influence rather than manipulation, as the doctor is persuading people to adopt beneficial practices.

This kind of legitimate persuasion – as Van Dijk (2006: 361) calls it – also occurs within the fields of politics, when, for example, politicians during their inaugural speech try to improve their image and create a sense of community, bringing the audience closer using the pronoun WE instead of the first person singular, as stated by Fairclough (1989: 15).

Additionally, the field of advertisement also employs many strategies in order to attract consumers, and as claimed by Danciu (2014: 25), linguistic manipulation in advertising consists in subliminally seducing the audience: “the basic concept of subliminal seduction in advertising makes possible for consumers to receive information on an emotional level without even being aware of it”. However, it is worth mentioning that the boundary between positive (legitimate persuasion) and negative (illegitimate) manipulation is unstable and depends on the context and circumstance, as claimed by Van Dijk (2006: 361).

As previously stated, Grice's (1975) conversational maxims instruct that the contributions to conversations should be appropriate, truthful, relevant, relatively complete, and communicated clearly; however, Van Dijk (2006: 363-364) argues that in real-life conversations, adhering to these maxims can be challenging: manipulation is not solely considered wrong because it breaches conversational maxims or other conversational norms and regulations, but it also has the potential to cause social inequality, as it primarily serves the interests of powerful groups and speakers while detrimentally affecting less powerful groups and speakers, being therefore illegitimate in a democratic society.

According to Wiyono (2015: 21), pragmatics and psychology complement each other:

[...] pragmatics analyses not only the linguistic expression, but also the people who express their thoughts via language. That being said, pragmatics and psychology can go side by side and support each other when it comes to the use of language in a relation to speakers and their intentions.

As a matter of fact, pragmatics and psychology are the foundational framework of this thesis and will be used to demonstrate how Theodore Robert Bundy used language to manipulate. Indeed, linguistic manipulation is common among criminals, as the present research will demonstrate, and according to Wiyono (2015: 22), “criminals use manipulative language for one general purpose, that is to cover up their faults and hence to be freed up in the eyes of law”. In particular, an interesting study has been carried out by Porter and Woodworth in 2006 where they analyzed how fifty different offenders (psychopaths and non-psychopaths) described their homicides, only to find out that “psychopaths use manipulation and deception as ‘useful tools with which to promote their own interests’” (Porter and Woodworth 2006: 104, cit. in Smithson 2013: 3).

### **1.3. Discourse Analysis**

The term **discourse analysis** was initially introduced by the linguist Zellig Harris in his 1952 article titled *Discourse Analysis*. According to Harris, it is a technique employed to examine connected speech or writing: through this method, we can discover unique interrelations among morphemes within a specific text, shedding light on the text's structure and what it conveys (Harris 1952: 1). This allows to identify specific patterns and structural differences, considering furthermore the relationship between language and the various contexts in which the language is happening, for example linguistic, situational and cultural context, as stated by Yang and Hu (2022: 220). Numerous utterances, depending on the context, carry distinct meanings and linguistic attributes: the main objective of discourse analysis is uncovering these nuanced meanings.

According to Yang and Hu (2022: 223), in certain situations, utterances can appear illogical at first, but linguistic and situational contexts can serve to help individuals fill in missing information. As a matter of fact, “context includes the physical setting in which the communication takes place and everything in it”, argues Gee (2014: 12); the following example provided by Yang and Hu (2022: 223) shows the importance of inferring meanings in certain circumstances:

A: WHAT ARE THE POLICE DOING?



B: I'VE JUST ARRIVED.

At first glance, as stated by Yang and Hu (2022: 224), this exchange may seem illogical, as there appears to be a lack of connection between the question and the response; however, taking into consideration the situational context, the dialogue becomes clearer and easily understandable. At the arrival of A at the location he observes that there is the police present, and since he does not know what they are doing, he prompts the question, *WHAT ARE THE POLICE DOING?*. B, who has just arrived as well, is also uncertain about the ongoing police's activities and therefore answers, *I'VE JUST ARRIVED.*, which is indicative of his lack of knowledge about the situation: in essence, this reply functions as a negative response, state Yang and Hu (ibid.), reformulating the previous dialogue as follows:

A: WHAT ARE THE POLICE DOING?

B: (I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING EITHER BECAUSE) I'VE JUST ARRIVED HERE.

“Discourse analysis, also known as discourse studies, means the analysis of spoken, written, or sign language use, as well as any major semiotic event”, states Yang (2022: 224). In the realm of discourse analysis, linguistic context acts as a tool that eliminates ambiguities, addresses omitted information and anticipates content; simultaneously, situational context helps by facilitating the comprehension of seemingly illogical sentences interpreting illocutionary force, whereas cultural context has another important role, which is clarifying the cultural connotations and establishing overall coherence within the discourse (ibid.).

Discourse analysis, according to Gee (2014: 1), “is the study of language at use in the world” which serves a multitude of purposes for individuals: language functions as a mean of communication and collaboration but it is also a tool to build various aspects of life. Contrarily, it can be also used in deceptive ways, for personal gains and to cause harm, as we will see throughout the present research. Discourse analysis investigates the underlying meaning beyond the literal interpretation, even considering the context in which the sentences were uttered.

To sum up, discourse analysis is the study of the language beyond the literal words, the study of how language is used by people when communicating. Several utterances have specific underlying meanings that this type of analysis aims at discovering, without focusing on the single element of the sentence, rather on the whole text, being it spoken or written.

### **1.3.1. The Methodologies to Conduct a Discourse Analysis**

In order to produce a discourse analysis, Gee (2014) offers valuable insights regarding the tools that one has to employ; he argues that a set of tools is necessary to unveil the intricate layers of meaning embedded in every language: as a matter of fact, “a tool for discourse analysis is a specific question to ask of data. Each question makes the reader look quite closely at the details of language in an oral or written communication” (2014: 2). In the present research several of these tools were employed in order to conduct the discourse analysis of Ted Bundy’s interviews.

The first tool is **The Deixis Tool**: Gee (2014: 14) argues that people sometimes use some words, called deictics, whose reference must be inferred from their context: “communication and culture are like icebergs. Only a small “tip” is stated overtly. A vast amount lies under the surface, not said, but assumed to be known or inferable from the context in which the communication is occurring”. For example, if the speaker does not specify the subject and object of the sentence, but he only uses pronouns, the topic of the sentence is probably known by the listener: HE LIKES IT could be incomprehensible if the speaker does not consider the context either on what was previously said or what or who is present when the sentence is uttered (ibid.). Even in non-deictic words like ‘drinking’ the context has to be considered; comparing the two sentences provided by Gee (2014: 15) “John had been drinking, so I drove him home” and “John was drinking too fast and dribbled it all down the front of his shirt”, it is clear that in many occasions, the verb ‘to drink’ has to be associated with alcoholic beverages, such as in the first sentence, whereas in the second sentence the verb could refer to any drink; “if listeners do not correctly figure out what deictics refer to (using contextual information), then they do not understand what is meant or they can misunderstand it” (ibid.).

Given what has previously been said about deixis, we can conclude that the listener needs to infer what is not being said and make assumptions based on the context to which the speaker was referring when using deictic terms. To do so, one can employ **The Fill In Tool** in order to “fill in or complete what the speaker has said, since speakers always leave a good deal unsaid” (2014: 18). People’s language does not usually have a narrow sense, restricted to the superficial meaning of the word; instead, it is necessary that the recipient of the message makes various assumptions and inferences in order to achieve clarity and understand fully the real intention of the speaker.

However, the third tool, **The Making Strange Tool**, is helpful in order to use The Fill In Tool: for any communication, one has to think of himself/herself as an outsider, as one that does not share the same knowledge as the listener. An insider to certain data could on one hand consider too many things as ‘familiar’, therefore missing out on certain key elements to analyze; on the other hand, an insider has a deeper knowledge of the context in which the conversation is taking place and could as a result make better judgements and assumptions. Conversely, an outsider could detect some elements as strange and analyze them more carefully. Outsiders and insiders to the context could work together in order to see old things as new and strange again, and at the same time use context more deeply to make judgements.

The fourth tool that Gee illustrates is called **The Subject Tool**, and it refers to the choice of the speaker: why did he/she choose the subject? Could he/she have made another choice? It is interesting to notice why certain subjects were selected and how the speakers refer to them, in order to conduct a detailed discourse analysis.

Moreover, intonation is an important part of the meaning of an utterance and also a focal point in the interpretation of discourse: Gee (2014: 31) argues that English speakers use stress as a tool to put emphasis on a specific part of the sentence: “stress is physically marked by a combination of increased loudness, increased length, and by changing the pitch of one’s voice (raising or lowering the pitch, or gliding up or down in pitch) on a word’s primary (“accented”) syllable” (ibid.). The stressed words in a sentence are the most relevant, salient, unpredictable and non-redundant. Moreover, when aiming at contrasting or emphasizing something, one can use the “emphatic

stress”, which is characterized by a more dramatic pitch change and gives extra stress to the word or phrase (2014: 34).

Hence, speakers can choose to put emphasis on certain aspects or downplay the importance of specific words or phrases through intonation, overlooking certain aspects of a sentence making assumptions on the listener’s knowledge. Gee (ibid.) states that “this is part of how speakers actively create or manipulate contexts, rather than just simply respond to them”; however, excessive manipulation can lead to statements that appear odd or out of context.

**The Intonation Tool**, which is the fifth tool that Gee suggests in the analysis of discourse, consists in the consideration of how certain words or phrases were stressed and why: “for any communication, ask how a speaker’s intonation contour contributes to the meaning of an utterance”, affirms Gee (ibid.), suggesting that the intonation contour provides some important information to the listener, such as clues on how to interpret the speaker's message, offering valuable insights into the speaker's attitude and emotions toward the message.

Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging the existence of the Frame Problem: Gee (2014: 39) argues that due to the relatively large nature of context, aspects such as body language, eye gaze, the individual’s beliefs and cultural, institutional, historical frameworks, one could come in contact of new contextual information that alters the interpretation one gives to a certain sentence or phrase. To address this issue, people give greater consideration to context when the communication is becoming ambiguous or unclear, choosing to focus on relevant contextual factors in a given situation.

For this reason, the sixth tool (**The Frame Tool**) is useful to understand whether our research was conducted thoroughly, taking into account every relevant contextual information: if, by incorporating more context, the analysis does not change and the meaning of the language remains the same, then one could believe that the analysis was conducted meticulously; on the other hand, if the analyst observes that the meaning changes, then there is still some work to do. “Always push your knowledge of the context as far as you can”, states Gee (2014: 44) encouraging analysts to discover new aspects of the various contexts that could influence communication and its meaning.

The seventh tool is **The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool** is crucial because it indicates that one has to remember to take into consideration even what the speaker intends to do with the language, besides what he is trying to say. Gee (2014: 52) provides us with a clear and exhaustive example:

if you and I are fellow lawyers and you say to me, after a tennis match, “You are not so great at tennis” and I say “But I am a better lawyer than you are,” my remark can be, depending on how we read the context (see the Fill In Tool and The Frame Problem Tool), performing different actions (some of them even all together): informing you I think I am a better lawyer than you; bragging; getting back at you for insulting my tennis; correcting my feelings of being inferior to you at sports; needling you; joking with you; acting out further our competitive relationship; threatening your face (that is, your identity as a good lawyer), and others.

In other words, when uttering a sentence one could also be trying to do something that has to be inferred by the recipient. The example provided by Gee illustrates that a single statement can serve multiple purposes, which are implied by speaker who intends to achieve them indirectly. It is therefore essential for discourse analysts to take those aspects into account.

A further tool for discourse analysis is **The Vocabulary Tool**. Gee (2014: 60) declares that despite being a Germanic language, English contains a great number of words borrowed from Latin or French, and today Germanic words and Latinate words are part of two different groups of vocabulary. Germanic words (such as ‘think’ and ‘see’) characterize a less formal and colloquial lexicon, while the presence of Latinate words (such as ‘conceive’ and ‘perceive’) signals a more formal style. The Vocabulary Tool warns discourse analysts to consider what kind of lexicon is employed (if there is a prevalence of Latin or Germanic words) and to think of how it shapes the communication in terms of style.

Closely related to The Fill In Tool or the Doing not Saying Tool, Gee (2014: 63) presents **The Why This Way and Not That Way Tool**. As previously stated, when producing an utterance individuals convey implicit meanings and have clear purposes they want to pursue: through The Why This Way and Not That Way Tool the discourse

analyst could consider why the utterance was built and designed in that specific way and why an alternative approach was not chosen.

Gee (2014: 68) states another grammatical tool, **The Integration Tool**: when analyzing any communication, the analyst could inquire about what was integrated in the utterances, considering what was included or omitted with regard to optional arguments. It is also helpful to examine the structure of the sentence (main, subordinate, and embedded clause) and the meaning that is being conveyed through the choice of that specific structure.

The eleventh grammatical tool provided by Gee (2014: 74) is **The Topic and Theme Tool**: for any communication, one should analyze the choices behind the topic and the theme of each sentence. For instance, an individual could decide to put an element of the sentence in the first position instead of the end so as to put emphasis on that specific element. Gee (ibid.) provides a clear example (capitalization and symbols as in the original) “LAST YEAR / Mary Washington / who is our curriculum coordinator here / had a call from Sara //” – in order to fully comprehend the given example, Gee (2011: 16) explains that the capitalization indicates empathetic stress; the symbol “/” indicates a “non-final intonation contour”, which is similar to a comma in speech, the symbol “//” indicates a “final intonation contour” that could be defined as a period in speech). By choosing “last year” as the focal point of her opening clause, the speaker aims at emphasizing that her efforts have endured for an extended period without academic intervention (which would have been Sara’s intervention), states Gee (2014: 73).

As argued by Gee (2014: 80), communication, when long enough, can be catalogized into idea units which all focus on a single topic, situation, theme, perspective; as soon as they change topic, a new stanza has started. Stanzas themselves all cluster into larger blocks, and the narratives they form usually follow the same pattern despite the different cultural backgrounds: setting, catalyst, crisis, evaluation, resolution and coda (2014: 83). **The Stanza Tool** is an aid to systematically organize information into clear and distinct units, the stanzas: it is not always easy to detect them and divide the text but this technique is useful for an effective and correct interpretation of data.

The thirteenth tool suggested by Gee (2014: 90) is **The Context is Reflexive Tool**:

context includes the physical setting in which the communication takes place and everything in it; the bodies, eye gaze, gestures, and movements of those present; all that has previously been said and done by those involved in the communication; any shared knowledge those involved have, including cultural knowledge, that is, knowledge of their own shared culture and any other cultures that may be relevant in the context.

Occasionally the classic definition of context, which is provided by Gee (ibid.) above, is too static, because it does not consider the possibility of the speaker to shape how listeners perceive the context and it also fails to acknowledge the power of listeners to decide what aspects of the speech are deemed relevant. In other words, the context can either define the language or be defined by it. When using The Context is Reflexive Tool and the other tools that expect the analysts to consider the context, Gee (2014: 91) suggests that it is important to ask and take into consideration: if the language is shaping or even manipulating the context; if the context in which the communication exists and is being reproduced (e.g. class sessions in a university); if the speaker is unintentionally reproducing the aspects of the context that, if consciously considered, they might not want to perpetuate; if the speaker is introducing some level of transformation or change or merely replicating contexts.

Language, besides being employed to say and do things – as previously stated, is a tool that allows people to build and create things in the world: “Whenever we speak or write, we always and simultaneously build one of seven things or seven areas of ‘reality.’”, argues Gee (2014: 94). Each of these seven building tasks that he suggests (which are Significance, Activities, Identities, Relationships, Politics, Connections, Sign Systems and Knowledge) provides us with seven useful new tools for the conduction of a discourse analysis.

**The Significance Building Tool** is used in order to increase or diminish the significance of a particular communication through words and grammatical devices. Since items of language never possess a level of triviality or importance by themselves, humans attribute these qualities to them, choosing for example if using a main clause or a subordinate clause to utter a concept: Gee (2014: 98) provides a clear example:

“in a sentence like, “while I know I did wrong, I am basically a good person” the clause “I am basically a good person” is the main clause.”, explaining that the focus is on the speaker being a good person. Then he goes on to say: “while I know I did wrong” is a subordinate clause and, thus, is not asserted, but just assumed as background information” (ibid.).

As previously stated, through language humans are able to create actions. But there is a difference between actions, which focus on the act of doing something in that specific moment, and activities, sets of actions which support a social group, an institution, a culture: in order to fully comprehend the difference, Gee (2014: 95) offers a clear example: “encouraging a student is an action, mentoring the student is an activity. Telling someone something about linguistics is an action (informing), lecturing on linguistics is an activity”. For the building task of Activities, Gee (2014: 104) introduces **The Activities Building Tool**, which asks discourse analysts to detect in any communication the attempt of the speaker to build or enact an activity. According to Gee (2014: 108), “the Activities Building Tool tells us to ask how people are building a socially recognizable activity, what actions this takes, and what actions they manage to accomplish within the activity that realize their own goals and agendas”, because even apparently trivial communication could hide substantial social contributions and social value.

Through communication people build identities and roles, and as members of specific institutions and cultures, individuals talk with the purpose of being acknowledged and identified as integral parts of a particular community or group, even though there are contexts where one can simply be an “everyday person”, as explained by Gee (2014: 113). Discourse analysts have to monitor how people express their sense of self, inviting listeners to acknowledge their position, how they treat other people’s identities: this, according to Gee (2014: 116), can be done through the use of **The Identities Building Tool**. Since people employ language to create different identities to use in different contexts, inviting therefore people to adopt specific roles, this fifteenth tool can be used in order to study both how the identity is shaped by the speaker and how he/she uses it (ibid.).

**The Relationships Building Tool** is strictly connected to The Identities Building Tool, since, as argued by Gee (2014: 120), the identities we shape for



ourselves are often influenced by the relationship we have with other people, social groups, cultures and institutions; for example, one would interact differently with a person if they were a colleague from work, rather than a close friend. “Identities set up parameters for a relationship”, states Gee (2014: 121), because although being obliged to behave in a certain way due to one’s identity, there is the possibility of having different sorts of relationships with people. For any communication, thanks to The Relationship Building Tool, one can analyze words and grammatical structures to see how a relationship is built and maintained.

Regarding the concept of politics, the author does not allude to political parties and government, but he refers to the concept of social goods, which refer to “anything a social group or society takes as a good worth having.”, argues Gee (2014: 124); social goods encompass intangible aspects, such as the respect of other people. With **The Politics Building Tool** discourse analysts can see that, depending on the structure of a sentence and on the chosen words, people build and destroy social goods.

To fully comprehend the concept of social goods, we can see below three sentences provided by Gee (2014: 96) that convey the same message but with different implications:

- MICROSOFT LOADED ITS NEW OPERATING SYSTEM WITH BUGS,
- MICROSOFT’S NEW OPERATING SYSTEM IS LOADED WITH BUGS,
- LIKE ANY HIGHLY INNOVATIVE PIECE OF NEW SOFTWARE, MICROSOFT’S NEW OPERATING SYSTEM IS LOADED WITH BUGS,

The first sentence withholds social goods such as respect, as it blames Microsoft to have put a bad product on the market. The second sentence, instead, while portraying Microsoft as less responsible and therefore withholding less social goods, it suggests that the product is still non intentionally bad. On the other hand, the third sentence attributes to Microsoft social goods such as being innovative and not responsible for the bugs.

**The Connections Building Tool** assists analysts in the study of the connections between things using language. Sometimes connections are implicit because the speaker assumes that the listener will make inferences and understand; for example, the sentence offered by Gee (2014: 132) “LUNG CANCER DEATH RATES ARE CLEARLY

ASSOCIATED WITH AN INCREASE IN SMOKING”, despite the clarity in the association, does not state any explicit connection between smoke and death: it connects the two items of the sentence but it does not articulate the nature of the relationship between them. Furthermore, The Connection Building Tool can be employed to detect whether the words used in a sentence establish relevance between elements in the utterance or not: this tool, like the others, aids in unraveling the intricacies of language, because as previously demonstrated connections may not always be explicitly stated but are crucial to understand the real meaning of the utterance.

Clauses are connected to sentences, and sentences are connected to whole texts through cohesive devices. According to Gee (2014: 134) these devices serve to indicate to the listener or reader the connections within the communication, which contribute to the overall coherence of the text. There are six types of cohesive devices: pronouns, determiners and quantifiers, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion, and lastly conjunctions, adjunctive adverbs, and other conjunction-like links. In order to understand what the speaker is trying to convey by using specific cohesive devices, Gee (2014: 137) offers analysts **The Cohesion Tool**, useful also to see how cohesion works in the text.

Through language, people can build up or devalue various sign systems (communicational systems such as languages and varieties of languages) and different ways of understanding the world. As stated by Gee (2014: 141) there is a big variety of sign systems: as previously stated, languages, dialects or specific varieties of language employed for academic reasons (such as language used by lawyers) are sign systems; notwithstanding that, there are also sign system which are not language (such as graphs, images) or at least partially language (such as art like poetry and ads). Indeed, the sign systems employed in the communication holds significance for the people who use them and they might play a role in the definition of their identity. Moreover, different sign systems embody the different perspectives of people, in the sense that individuals believe in the value of their sign system, argues Gee (2014: 142). **The Sign Systems and Knowledge Building Tool** is used by discourse analysts to define how specific words or grammatical structures give value or discredit specific sign systems, and how through style of language they represent specific ways of knowing the world.

When communicating, two people talk about the same topic, but when they switch topics they should signal it in some ways, establishing a connection between the previous topic and the new one, states Gee (2014: 148). Generally, subjects are placed at the beginning of the sentence and play the role of both topic and theme; the comment follows the subject, in which the subject is now old information, and whenever a new topic is started, the subject/topic is new information, declares Gee (2014: 149). He then proceeds to say: “in doing a discourse analysis it is always a good idea to map topics [...], since topic flow or topic chaining is one key way speakers and writers create a perspective and seek to control their listeners and readers attention” (2014: 151). **The Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool** serves this purpose: it supports analysts in detecting chains of topics that are linked by a general theme, predominantly in main clauses rather than subordinate.

The next six tools shift focus on different theories which concern the connection between language, the world and culture.

According to Gee (2014: 157), meaning is a complex concept that can be divided into two main distinctions: general meaning (also known as the “utterance type meaning”) which refers to the overall meaning of the word or statement, and specific meaning (also known as “utterance token meaning”), which represents the meaning a word or statement takes in a particular context of use. As a matter of fact, a word or a linguistic structure possesses a “meaning potential”, the range of possible meanings it can convey in various contexts (ibid.): for example, the word cat could refer either to the animal, to a lion or tiger (big cats), or even to an object (for example a statue, when uttering the sentence THE CAT BROKE). Hence, words “have different and specific meanings in different contexts in which they are used and in different specialist domains that recruit them” (2014: 158). Through **The Situated Meaning Tool** people can analyze how listeners infer the meaning of certain words and phrases: they have to assign a specific meaning to what they hear according to the context and the overall situation; moreover, assumptions can be made in accordance with the shared experiences and knowledges, since if one lacks the knowledge about certain topics, he/she cannot attribute a meaning to specific terms (ibid.). Lastly, it is worth noticing the resemblance between The Situated Meaning Tool and The Filling In Tool: people fill the gaps in the communications by using contexts.

Whenever communication happens in a social context, the speaker must embody a particular identity (as previously stated with **The Identities Building Tool**), and at the same time use social languages, which have each its own distinctive grammar. Listeners need to understand the purposes of the speakers and their social language. For example, the question **HAVE YOU BEEN STRESSED LATELY?** has two completely different meanings and targets if uttered by a friend or by a doctor, states Gee (2014: 164). In fact, social languages – which Gee (2014: 162) defines as “styles or varieties of a language (or a mixture of languages) that enact and are associated with a particular social identity” – have to follow some rules, the association of different grammatical units which create a pattern that makes social languages recognizable: these patterns are called “collocational patterns” (2014: 164). With the use of **The Social Languages Tool** words and grammatical structures are analyzed in order to detect which social languages – which can be more than one – were employed and to recognize the identity of the speaker (2014: 167).

According to Gee (2014: 171) intertextuality happens whenever someone in their text mentions, refers to, or alludes to another text or media content. One employs intertextuality even when quoting, directly or indirectly, both one of his/her acquaintances or famous authors (e.g. Shakespeare). Texts can even refer to social languages which are not their own by mimicking grammatical structures, phrases, in order words the style of language. **The Intertextuality Tool** is provided by Gee with the intention of detecting how other texts of social languages are used within the communication.

When people interact, they use some sorts of typical pictures, general meanings that refer to a situation in the world in order to communicate without having to be explicit, omitting basic information that is known by the interlocutor. These typical pictures or stories have different names with different nuances of meaning, but Gee (2014: 176) chose the definition “figured world”, which “is a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal”. To provide an example, if one imagines the environment of a classroom the same typical image comes to mind; however, it is not uncommon nowadays to see the student teaching the professor something about digital technology, but this element violates the typical story people have in their mind, the figured world. For this reason, **The Figured World Tool**

facilitates the observation of the above-mentioned figured worlds and in the investigation of what they are composed of. According to Gee (2014: 177), it is clear the correlation of the present tool with the Filling In Tool, given the fact that assumptions have to be made because the figured worlds are unconscious or taken for granted.

“A Discourse with a capital “D” (I will use “discourse” with a little “d” just to mean “language in use” or stretches of oral or written language) is composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, distinctive ways writing/reading.”, states Gee (2014: 183), emphasizing that to be acknowledged as a member of a specific group, with an identity, an individual should act, interact, dress, and think in a certain manner, since language is not enough. To convey anything it is necessary to communicate one’s identity and role in that given context, and at the same time one has to express his/her intention in terms of the enacted social role. Hence Discourses, which encompass both identity and action, also serve to facilitate the performance of certain activities, which are tied to the social role being enacted (ibid.). Despite existing a huge quantity of Discourses, people learn at the beginning of their life a culturally distinctive way to embody the role of the “everyday person” mentioned previously, which Gee calls “primary Discourse” (2014: 184), which shapes people’s self-perception and establishes the basic language they use during their everyday life as non-specialized people. Gee (ibid.) proceeds to say that during the course of people’s life, “secondary Discourses” can be developed, acquired within institutions. It is important to know that Discourses can be in conflict with each other, mixed or be ambiguous. Using **The Big D Discourse Tool**, analysts can understand how individuals enact socially recognizable identities and how they engage in socially recognized activities by considering actions, interactions, values, beliefs, objects, objects, tools, technologies, and environments (besides language), argues Gee (2014: 186).

Lastly, the twenty-eighth tool provided by Gee is called **The Big C Conversation Tool**. Conversations with a capital C refer to public debates and arguments which involve two or more points of view; these viewpoints may stem from differences in religions, different political ideologies, or major societal issues such as abortion and smoking where the public opinion is divided, as described by Gee (2014:

189). In the investigation of any communication, the author (ibid.) encourages analysts to observe if it engages in a historical or well-known debate; additionally, they could assess whether listeners have to infer some issues, sides or claims, hence identifying the social context that shapes the exchange of opinions.

#### **1.4. Visual Analysis**

Besides analyzing the words uttered by Ted Bundy on two important interviews, the present research also aims at examining his nonverbal communication in the two recordings; this will be done through visual analysis.

Visual analysis involves the meticulous examination and interpretation of characteristics of certain material in relation with the context to which they pertain and the circumstances in which they are encountered. This process allows a deeper understanding of the intricate ways in which visual elements are used to convey messages, influence sentiments, or set the tone (<https://www.monash.edu/student-academic-success/excel-at-writing/annotated-assessment-samples/art-design-and-architecture/mada-visual-analysis>). Visual analysis could be conducted on art pieces, on architecture or on advertisements, but for the sake of the present research, it will focus solely on Ted Bundy's nonverbal communication and body language.

Body language, according to Segal et al., "is the use of physical behavior, expressions, and mannerisms to communicate nonverbally, often done instinctively rather than consciously" (<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/nonverbal-communication.htm>). Even without being aware of it, people always engage in a constant exchange of unspoken signals: gestures, posture, tone of voice, and the level of eye contact can carry significant messages which can convey different meanings and emotions to the interlocutor (ibid.). Given the fact of these signals being unspoken, even without the use of spoken language people communicate and continue to convey messages.

In some cases, especially in some instances of the two interviews analyzed in the present research, the words uttered have a completely different meaning than what your body and nonverbal signals convey, and sometimes the difference between the two communications and these mixed signals can be noticed by the audience and therefore communicating an impression of dishonesty.

Nonverbal communication has five main components, which are repetition – it consists in repeating the same concept in order to reinforce it; contradiction – unspoken signals may contradict the original message communicated verbally, thus indicating that the speaker might not be completely honest; substitution – sometimes nonverbal signals could substitute the spoken language: for example, a facial expression often conveys a more vivid image than words. Another component is complementing – nonverbal communication can be an addition to the words one utters (for example, a pat on the shoulder is an addition to a praise or compliment). Lastly, accenting: nonverbal cues could help in emphasizing one specific part of the discourse (Wertheim cit. in Segal et al.).

Ted Bundy was an incredibly skillful manipulator, as the present research will illustrate, and therefore he was able to appear confident and calm even without telling the truth.

#### **1.4.1. Insights into Visual Analysis and Nonverbal Communication**

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 19), both language and visual communication can be used to accomplish the same meaning, but they do so independently, by their own specific means. For example, the distinction between objective and subjective approaches can be made using language: the verb ‘believe’ creates a subjective perspective in a sentence, and “visual representation, too, can realize both subjectivity, through the presence of a perspectival angle, and objectivity, through its absence, [...]. Mental process clauses and nominalization are unique to language. Perspective is unique to images”, state Kress and Van Leeuwen (ibid.). It is also worth mentioning that the visual analysis on the Ted Bundy’s interviews is conducted so as to understand the meanings that could not be expressed verbally or – in the case of the present research – to detect those that the speaker did not want to express verbally. As a matter of fact, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 41) highlight the multi-dimensional nature of language, which goes beyond the mere literal meaning of words:

[...] language, whether in speech or writing, has always existed as just one mode in the ensemble of modes involved in the production of texts, spoken or written. A spoken text

is never just verbal, but also visual, combining with modes such as facial expression, gesture, posture and other forms of self-presentation.

The elements of an image are called participants: but there are two distinctions to make; the first one is about the represented and interactive participants, while the second one refers to the parts of actors and reactors<sup>1</sup>.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 114) proceed to claim that visual content makes a distinction between represented participants, which encompass the people, places and objects depicted in the image, and interactive participants, referring to the people who engage actively through the visual media, such as the producers and the viewers of an image. According to the authors (*ibid.*), interactive participants are those that generate meaning from the visual content:

interactive participants are therefore real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions which, to different degrees and in different ways, regulate what may be ‘said’ with images, how it should be said, and how it should be interpreted.

When there is only one participant, the latter is probably an actor. They often stand out prominently due to factors such as size, place in the frame, contrast against the background, color saturation, focus on the subject and through the so-called psychological salience which, for example, human figure and human face have for viewers, as argued by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 63). They proceed to explain the role of the reactors, who must be humans or human-like creatures, and whose main task is taking part in the process of another participant by reacting in some way (2006: 67).

However, the present research will focus on the visual analysis of Ted Bundy’s nonverbal communication in two crucial interviews; for each interview various frames have been taken and analyzed in order to detect which message he was unconsciously conveying, contrarily to what he said with his words, because, as Navarro and Karlins (2008: 4) state, nonverbal language constitutes around 60 and 65 percent of the

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 67), a reactor is “the participant who does the looking” who must necessarily be a human being or a human like figure with eyes, pupils and facial expressions.



communication, and it typically happens without the speaker's awareness; it is therefore a more honest reflection of one's inner thoughts and feelings.

According to Pease and Pease (2004: 12), "the key to reading body language is being able to understand a person's emotional condition while listening to what they are saying and noting the circumstances under which they are saying it", arguing that people can, by studying body language, separate the truth from the lies. The authors also claim that one has to read gestures in clusters because each one has its own meaning; this means that, just like verbal communication, one single word or gesture by itself could have many different meanings and the surrounding context has to be considered (2004: 21). Pease and Pease (2004: 27) proceed to argue that people cannot fake body language, because if one tries to, there will be incongruence between the verbal communication, the gestures and micro-signals, such as pupil contractions, eyebrow raising, or twitching of the mouth corners, that may reveal their deceit. According to Pease and Pease (2004: 147), lying is challenging because of people's automatic operation of their subconscious mind: it communicates independently of our verbal lie, revealing therefore our true intentions through nonverbal communication: "the moment they begin to lie, their body sends out contradictory signals, and these give us a feeling that they're not telling the truth" (ibid.).

According to Navarro and Karlins (2008: 166) some people such as world-class actors can show any type of emotion and expression even if in that moment they are feeling somethings completely different; what is important to mention is that just like actors, criminals and other malevolent people can deceive people, as stated by Navarro and Karlins (ibid.):

unfortunately, many people, especially con men and other more serious social predators, can do the same thing. They can put on a false face when they are lying, conniving, or trying to influence the perception of others through false smiles, fake tears, or deceiving looks.

For this reason, it is important to recognize when people use nonverbal communication in order to lie and what their actual intent is.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Psychological Insights: Inside the Mind of the Killer**

This chapter focuses on introducing various psychological studies, delving into the intricate mental state of the serial killer, with a specific focus on how Bundy was able to deceive people for many years before his arrest. These studies contribute significantly to understanding and interpreting more effectively the findings presented in Chapter Four.

#### **2.1. Psychology**

By definition, psychopaths are “social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life”, as stated by Hare (1999), who goes on to say they act according to their will, disregarding others: “completely lacking in conscience and feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret” (ibid.). It differs from the definition of sociopath, as they do know and understand the difference between right and wrong but they choose to satisfy their own needs disregarding the consequences, as stated by Levin (2005:26).

Both psychopaths and sociopaths fall under the category of the antisocial personality disorder: they are people who always try to justify their wrongful behavior, they try to hold the victim responsible for their vulnerability and show no empathy toward the harm caused by their actions on others. (<https://www.msmanuals.com/professional/psychiatric-disorders/personality-disorders/antisocial-personality-disorder-aspd>).

According to Zimmerman (ibid.), the antisocial personality disorder is influenced by a combination of factors:

both genetic and environmental factors (e.g., abuse during childhood) contribute to the development of antisocial personality disorder. A possible mechanism is impulsive aggression, related to abnormal serotonin transporter functioning. Disregard for the pain

of others during early childhood has been linked to antisocial behavior during late adolescence.

According to the DSM-5 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK546673/>), the symptoms for the antisocial personality disorder are four, listed below – the first one having seven subcategories:

1. A pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, since age 15 years, as indicated by three (or more) of the following:
  - Failure to conform to social norms concerning lawful behaviors, such as performing acts that are grounds for arrest.
  - Deceitfulness, repeated lying, use of aliases, or conning others for pleasure or personal profit.
  - Impulsivity or failure to plan.
  - Irritability and aggressiveness, often with physical fights or assaults.
  - Reckless disregard for the safety of self or others.
  - Consistent irresponsibility, failure to sustain consistent work behavior, or honor monetary obligations.
  - Lack of remorse, being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another person.
2. The individual is at least age 18 years.
3. Evidence of conduct disorder typically with onset before age 15 years.
4. The occurrence of antisocial behavior is not exclusively during schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Joshua Buckholtz, professor of psychology at Harvard University in Cambridge, conducted extremely interesting research scanning the brain of 49 incarcerated individuals with psychopathic tendencies. The aim of the study was to unravel the neural process involved in decision-making, shedding light on the brain regions which are engaged in the process, analyzing how they communicate and delve into aspects such as reaction times and impulsivity. The focus was also on comprehending how these individuals weight the pros and cons of their actions: “we’ve been trying to understand what goes on in their brains when they make decisions that involve trade-offs between the costs and benefits of action”, stated Buckholtz in Reuell’s article

(<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/07/why-psychopathic-brains-overvalue-immediate-rewards/>). The inmates were asked to choose between two options: they could either receive some money immediately or wait and receive a larger amount of money at a later point in time. This study revealed that, as described by Buckholtz, individuals who suffered psychopathy exhibited greater activity in a brain region called ventral striatum. This part of the brain is known for its involvement in assessing subjective rewards, particularly in cases where the more immediate option was chosen. Crucially, Buckholtz emphasized that when linking the ventral striatum to other areas of the brain engaged in decision-making, the connection revealed to be weaker in individuals affected by psychopathy. This weaker relation is significant as it is important for “mental time-travel”, which allows people to imagine the potential consequence that one’s actions could have. (ibid.).

Similarly, Decety conducted a similar experiment, scanning the brain of 121 inmates affected by psychopathy, in order to prove that they are lacking the ability to feel empathy, that their brain “is not ‘equipped’ for empathy”, as stated by Sandoiu (<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321839>). The participants were shown some images of painful situations and were asked to imagine themselves under those circumstances; secondarily, they were asked to imagine someone else being inflicted with the same pain. The differences were significant: in the first case, “the relevant brain areas known to be linked with emotion processing and empathy for pain did “light up” in the functional (MRI) machine” (ibid.); on the contrary, the same brain regions did not respond in the second case, proving therefore that neural circuits fail under certain conditions in highly psychopathic individuals, resulting in a deficiency of that basic human emotion that is empathy (ibid.).

These studies offer valuable insights into understanding why certain individuals, such as Ted Bundy, act in some incomprehensible ways, providing a scientific basis for addressing questions that the public could have.

## **2.2. The Mental State of Ted Bundy**

When the expression **serial killers** first entered the language, it was used to describe people like Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, who had psychopathic personalities, who had no capacity for empathy and did not possess a conscience,

points out Schechter (<https://youtu.be/1jXjwANXdOQ>). Their characteristic is that they are extreme sexual sadists: they employ their rational side of thinking for evil purposes; moreover, many of them like Ted Bundy, have very dysfunctional backgrounds and have been subjected to various kinds of humiliation as children and they grow up “inflicting pain and exerting power over helpless victims with pleasure”, states Schechter (ibid.).

Ted Bundy has been the subject of significant research and analysis, which shed light on various aspects of his psychology, diagnosis, and societal impact. He received a mental health evaluation by Hervey Cleckley, a psychiatrist who is considered to be a pioneer in his field of study, psychopathy. He diagnosed Bundy as a psychopath; according to Hancock et al (2011: 2), “psychopaths typically are skilled conversationalists and use language to lie to, charm, and ultimately ‘use’ others for material gain”. Hence, Ted Bundy’s final interview is particularly interesting because he uses “manipulative conversational skills as weapons”, aligning with the behavioral patterns observed in psychopaths, according to Hancock et al (2011: 109).

On the other hand, William C. Levin, professor of sociology at Bridgewater State University, argued that Ted Bundy perfectly fits the model of the sociopath: sociopaths only care about satisfying their own needs or desires, without concern for the consequences that their action could have on others: in other words, excessive selfishness. He points at the difference between psychopath and sociopath, stating: “a psychopath may lack the ability to form intent, and cannot, therefore, be held responsible for his or her actions” (2005: 26). In contrast to this definition, “a sociopath is a person who does recognize the difference between right and wrong” (ibid.): despite understanding the difference, they intentionally select wrongful behaviors.

A group of 73 psychologists participated in a study conducted by Samuel and Widiger that aimed at identifying the personality structure of Ted Bundy: “the most commonly diagnosed personality disorder was antisocial, which was endorsed by almost 96% of the sample”, stated Samuel and Widiger (2007: 2). It is also worth mentioning that 95% of the psychologists selected gave the diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder. More than half of the sample believed that Bundy also suffered of the borderline personality disorder and schizoid personality disorder.

Contrarily, Dorothy Otnow Lewis, a psychiatrist who interviewed him the day before the execution, tried to save him from death row: she diagnosed the serial killer with bipolar personality disorder that caused him to have violent mood swings.

In the two interviews that will be analyzed in the present thesis, especially in the 1977 one, where he is trying to defend himself and deny every kind of accusation against him, Ted Bundy is not showing any type of emotion such as fear, sadness, anger or anxiety, despite knowing very well that the allegations are true. This is, according to Dr. Garrison, because in individuals like him the limbic system is underdeveloped, causing him not to feel any particular emotion, therefore including empathy and compassion for their victims. To further prove this statement, Dr. Rhonda Freeman, a clinical neuropsychologist, argues that psychopaths and narcissists lack of affective resonance, which “is basically the unspoken social connection and interaction that takes place between brains”, therefore they are unable to deeply connect with other human beings. (<https://neuroinstincts.com/affective-resonance-cant-get-emotionally-narcissist-psychopath/>).

### **2.3. Inside the Mind of Ted Bundy**

To begin the description of Ted’s mental condition, the fact that he defined himself as “the most cold-hearted son of a bitch you’ll ever meet” is really thought-provoking, demonstrating how disturbing he actually was in order to talk about himself in that way.

What is interesting to notice about Ted Bundy is that, as previously stated, he was always determined to choose his victims based on a specific profile: it is common among serial killers to have the ideal type of person to target for their crimes: “most serial killers tend to have a kind of profile victim and many of them focus, for instance, on prostitutes. Some of them focus on old people, Ted took what he likes to think of high value targets”, declares Michaud (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>). “These were, for the most part, college coeds” (ibid.). As a matter of fact, Ted Bundy’s type was that of an attractive young woman (in her twenties of teenage years) who had brown, long hair, parted in the middle, who was white and who maybe wore loop earrings. De Marco (<https://youtu.be/hAJuLTEB49Y>) speculates that Ted Bundy targeted individuals which resembled his ex-girlfriend, Diane Edwards, potentially as a form

of revenge for their separation and the emotional impact it had on him. He idolized that relationship and Diane was to him the perfect woman, only to remain devastated to the point that he abandoned his studies as he could not handle the termination of the relationship. Ted himself expressed his seemingly genuine feelings regarding this situation in an interview (ibid.):

throughout summer Diane and I corresponded less and less. And then Diane stopped writing me and... and I started to get fearful about what she was up to. I had this overwhelming feeling of rejection that stemmed not just from her, but everything. [...] In there somewhere was the desire to have some sort of revenge on Diane.

The first step in getting revenge was to reenroll in university and therefore start again his studies: his plan was to become a successful man, in order to gain Diane's attention and win her back, only to make her pay by never speaking to her again, argues De Marco (ibid.).

He followed a modus operandi which ended in him murdering his victims, and it circled around objectification and control: his blandness and charming personality helped him in his objective, as Michaud argues (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>): he wanted to appear friendly and mild. People trusted him and the ones who personally knew him were absolutely sure that he could not have done what he was accused of, because of his incredible manipulative skills.

However, there is one important thing to mention, which is the fact that Bundy's victims were all strangers to him, his approach was characterized by a type of calculated coldness. There were two sides of Ted Bundy: there was the charismatic and seemingly ordinary Ted, the face that the world saw, but beneath this mask there was a rather sinister and diabolical side, which only his victims would ever witness, states Sullivan (<https://youtu.be/qGetH0PBKkI>).

His strategy was that of dehumanizing his preys, and his objective was that of controlling and possessing them: "Ted notably said to me one time that the object of what this person was doing was possession, [...] and he said as you might possess a potted plant, or a painting or a Porsche", states Michaud (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>), proceeding to say that Bundy would not talk with them but he only did the bare minimum to lure them toward him or directly kill them. As a matter of fact, as Michaud



points out, if he exchanged conversations with them for longer than he predicted “they would start emerging as a human, as a real person, and would screw up his fantasy” (ibid.), and it would therefore become a problem. In his mind, maintaining a certain level of distance and therefore having some sort of control over his victims was crucial for his awful plans.

“Women are possessions, beings which are subservient, more often than not, to males. Women are merchandise. From the pornographic, through Playboy, right on up to the evening news”, stated Ted Bundy himself (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>), “so there’s no denying the sexual component. However, sex has significance only in the context of a much broader scheme of things. That is, possession, control, violence”. This is a statement which reflects how little consideration this heinous serial killer had for people. His words not only reveal his extreme misogyny but also highlight the extent to which he dehumanized his victims: by reducing women to mere objects Bundy demonstrates a complete lack of empathy and disregard for the lives of his victims, which he had to have complete control over.

To further elaborate and analyze this statement, Bundy engaged in necrophilia, and in doing so, he had the ability of controlling his victims and doing whatever he wanted to do exerting complete control over them, shaping the bodies into whoever he wanted, as argued by Pement (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/blame-the-amygdala/201902/ted-bundys-necrophilia>). His actions were not driven by lust, rather by the control he could have upon people: according to Bonn (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wicked-deeds/201912/examining-serial-killer-ted-bundy>), rape was another method he used to dominate and control his victims, and even after their deaths, Bundy was still obsessed with them. This morbid continuation of his actions served “to perpetuate his domination and control of the deceased” (ibid.), as previously argued: this reiterates the idea that to him this was just another mean to feel powerful. Bonn (ibid.) observes that Bundy was afraid of the rejection he felt with his first girlfriend Diane – “I had this overwhelming feeling of rejection that stemmed not just from her, but everything” (<https://youtu.be/hAJuLTEB49Y>) – and he therefore explains Bundy’s behavior and emotions:

because necrophilia totally eliminates the possibility of unwanted rejection, a power/control killer like Bundy can return to violate the victim whenever he pleases. This afforded the psychopathic Bundy with a tremendous sense of empowerment while avoiding the disturbing prospect of rejection and disappointment by a living person.

Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that Bundy kept objects that belonged to the victim as if they were trophies or souvenirs; “the former FBI profiler John Douglas has said that keeping mementos from a victim such as a lock of hair, jewelry, ID card or a newspaper clipping of the crime helped to prolong and even nourish Bundy’s secret fantasy”, states Bonn (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wicked-deeds/201912/examining-serial-killer-ted-bundy>): these mementos played a fundamental role in fueling his violent fantasies and allowing him to relive those memories again. When he was asked the reason of the Polaroid photos he took of the victims, Bundy responded, “when you work hard to do something right, you don't want to forget it” (ibid.), which is chilling and unsettling to think about considering that Bundy was referring to the heinous murders when he mentioned the so-called ‘hard work’, and that he went to such extreme lengths that the items he took with him as mementos were sometimes the heads of the poor victims.

It is interesting to mention than Bundy sometimes gifted these objects to some of his female friends, just like a cat that catches a mouse or a bird and takes it to his owner. Bundy would give these objects, sometimes pieces of jewelry, to the women in his life who were clearly unaware of his double life, stating that he found them on the streets, and in the moment of the sighting of her with his trophy that, according to him he worked hard to obtain, it fueled his fantasies by recalling the circumstances in which he obtained it. “If she only knew that the necklace she is wearing came from someone I murdered”, Ted Bundy declared to have thought, showing once again how deviated and sadistic his mind was. In the field of psychology, this act is recognized as the "cat-and-mouse effect", states Kaplan (2021: 3). Essentially, it involves individuals to be so proud of their heinous acts to the point that they feel the urge to showcase them to other people as a symbol of their dominance and control, as these individuals often use their actions as means to establish superiority, feeding their distorted sense of self-worth and narcissistic side (ibid.).

In addition, Michaud (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>) states “he, as is typical of these guys, was a narcissist and he was paranoid. And those two personality flaws, or personality disorders, interplay very closely across his life”, hence explaining Bundy’s decision to represent himself in court. He was paranoid to the point that he doubted everyone and thought that every lawyer was not the right one for the job as they were already convinced of his culpability and, therefore, could not be trusted to defend him adequately; this level of distrust was so pervasive that it pushed Bundy to take matters into his own hands, despite having no formal legal training. On the other hand, his narcissistic side “drove him to make a spectacle of himself”, points out Michaud (ibid.), as shown in figure 1, and to always seek to be in the spotlight during the trial. The narcissistic side of his personality was characterized by an inflated self-image and an intense need for admiration and attention, and his desire for self-glorification and the chance to manipulate everyone to his liking were central to his decision of representing himself.



*Figure 1: Ted Bundy in court. Source: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/tv/a27397642/ted-bundy-quotes/>*

The interplay between these personality traits was a manifestation of his need for attention which led to his decision of representing himself in order to maintain power and draw the eyes of the public and the media to himself; moreover, this choice

was motivated by the paranoid belief that anybody he hired would ultimately act against his interests.

#### **2.4. The Serial Killer Who Operated in Plain Sight**

The expression **serial killer** did not exist yet in the years that Ted Bundy operated, and as argued by Kaplan “the term serial killer was first conceptualized in the 1970s by Robert Ressler of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Behavioral Science Unit (BSU)” (2021: 1). Furthermore, the fact that he always chose strangers was really misleading for the authorities who were trying to find the person (or persons) responsible for these crimes. As a matter of fact, as thoroughly explained by Michaud (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>), at that time detectives believed that people killed for a specific reason such as anger or money and, above all, there was a connection between victim and perpetrator: “either blood or familial connections, or the obvious motive is what you have to follow when you are trying to solve a crime” (ibid.).

This common belief is what prevented the police to even consider Bundy as a suspect because people like him did not fit any of their models of criminals: Kaplan argues that “being a successful law student with a long-term girlfriend and no criminal record whatsoever, he certainly did not fit the serial killer profile” (2021: 1).

It is also worth mentioning that he was careful of the evidence that he left behind and always hid the bodies of his victims, therefore denying the authorities to have access to forensic evidence that would have been crucial to charge him of the crimes he committed, as stated by Grande ([https://youtu.be/Uxp\\_gZN8H5k](https://youtu.be/Uxp_gZN8H5k)).

What is more, technology in the 70’s was significantly less advanced than what we have today and authorities had limited tools at their disposal, lacking modern devices like smartphones, surveillance cameras, and computers, which had not yet been developed, and reliable means of disseminating information to a wide audience, such as the internet and social media, were also absent in those years, argues Grande (ibid.), explaining therefore why potential victims that lived nearby the serial killer may not have heard of the crimes, as information did not spread as rapidly or widely as it can in today's interconnected world.

Grande (ibid.) mentions another important aspect to consider: the lifestyle that was common in the 70’s along with societal norms were different and people lived

freely, most people did not even lock their doors at night, factor which could have helped Bundy in luring and abducting victims. It is important to remember that the 70's were years much more different than those we live in now.

All these elements were obviously beneficial to Bundy, who was able to hide in plain sight: no one could ever imagine that someone could go around the country killing people without a rational motive. Moreover, Ted used to have a number of disguises that he changed multiple times when committing crimes, factor which did not help to identify him and connect all the crimes to him, moreover, he changed his appearance in different occasions in order to be less recognizable to the police.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Profiling of the Killer and Public Perception**

The present chapter delves into the formative years of Theodore Robert Cowell, renowned as Ted Bundy. Born under enigmatic circumstances, Ted's childhood was marked by complex family dynamics: the present chapter sheds some light on his troubled life and the aspects which led him to become one of the most notorious serial killers in history. Furthermore, this chapter aims at exploring the effects that he had on future generations, considering the various books, films and documentaries which focus on him.

#### **3.1. Ted Bundy's Profile: the Enigmatic Charisma of the Serial Killer<sup>2</sup>**

Theodore Robert Cowell, widely known as Ted Bundy, was born on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1946 in Burlington, Vermont. His mother Eleanor Louise Cowell was unwed and gave birth at a facility called *Home for Friendless Women* – later renamed *Home for Unwed Mothers*. This institution provided a discreet environment for women to deliver their babies, shielding them from societal judgment against illegitimate children (<https://daily.jstor.org/inside-a-home-for-unwed-mothers/>). The true identity of Ted's father was never confirmed: his original birth certificate attributed paternity to Lloyd Marshall, an Air Force veteran, but a different copy of the certificate indicated an unknown father; Louise, his mother, declared that the father was a war veteran called Jack Worthington but the truth remains undisclosed.

Ted lived the first years of his life in Philadelphia, in the home of his grandparents, Samuel and Eleanor Cowell, who assumed the roles of their parents: to protect themselves from the social stigma of the illegitimate child and to avoid shame, they presented him Louise (his mother) as his older sister. Furthermore Samuel, his grandfather, was abusive: he physically abused Ted, his wife, and even his dog. While

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<sup>2</sup> The information contained in this section is taken from the YouTube video “IL CASO DI TED BUNDY” (2023) from the channel “Elisa True Crime” led by Elisa De Marco (<https://youtu.be/hAJuLTEB49Y>). Last accessed April 2024. The video was chosen as it reliably and accurately presents the life of Ted Bundy. Furthermore, the information has been verified through other reliable sources.

any other person would refer to this part of his life as troubled and traumatic, Ted Bundy stated that his childhood was normal: “with most of my close friends we would play football [...], we went skiing every weekend, I was one of the boys! Nothing in my past that could lead one to believe that I was capable of committing murder” (<https://youtu.be/hAJuLTEB49Y?t=635>), perpetuating this fantasy that he had a perfectly ordinary childhood. However, it is worth mentioning that there are individuals who hold the belief that the narratives surrounding Bundy's grandfather and troubled childhood are fabrications of some people, created just to provide a motive behind the crimes he committed and to find a reason behind the emergence of a serial killer, arguing that this stems from the fear that an individual could take the lives of over 30 people without an apparent reason.

In 1950 Louise and his son Ted relocated to Tacoma, Washington, where Louise met and subsequently married Johnny Culpepper Bundy: Johnny adopted Ted, leading him to become Theodore Robert Bundy, but the two never bonded, as Ted struggled with social relationships and did not like him. As a matter of fact, Ted almost despised Johnny because he did not earn enough money to satisfy his needs and would even specify in public that he was not his real father, as if he was ashamed of him. Moreover, Ted, growing up, believed that he was much cleverer than the rest of the people, scorning his stepfather also for his intelligence.

His social life improves during the last year of high school, when he volunteers in political campaigns: this helps him because he starts to interact with other people and socialize. However, together with his social life, in this period also begin his criminal activities: allegedly, he starts to steal, but the documents regarding these crimes are lost, maintaining therefore his clear criminal record.

Bundy enrolled in the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, but he later transferred to the University of Washington to study Chinese, where he met his first girlfriend Diane Edwards. He was deeply in love with her but one year later, in 1968, the relationship ended: devastated by the separation he eventually discontinued his studies. Later, he decided to reenroll in university, this time pursuing a degree in psychology, and excelled in his studies. On September 1969 Ted Bundy met Elizabeth Kloepfer and started an intimate relationship with her, as can be seen in figure 2, becoming a father figure to Elizabeth's daughter. In 1971 Bundy started to work in



Seattle's Suicide Hotline Crisis Center, helping those who were facing difficulties and contemplating suicide, where he met and befriended Ann Rule, a former police officer and true crime author. After graduating in 1972, Bundy delved into politics and in 1973 he was admitted in the Universities of Seattle and Utah to study law; his acceptance was facilitated by letters of recommendation from politicians he had worked with and from professors at the University of Washington: everyone liked and appreciated him as a person. "Ted Bundy was described to me in glowing terms as an up-and-coming politician. People I talked to said he was intelligent, organized, very ambitious, and that he worked well as those who worked alongside him. He was a team leader", claims Carlisle (2013: 93).

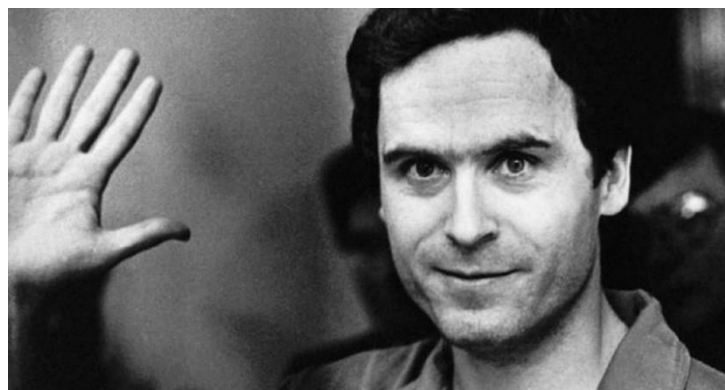


*Figure 2: Ted Bundy and Elizabeth Kloepfer.  
Source: <https://www.the-sun.com/news/333527/elizabeth-kendall-ted-bundy-girlfriend/>*

The first confirmed victim of Ted Bundy was a girl named Karen Sparks Epley, a student at the University of Washington; however, there may have been other victims before her. On January 4<sup>th</sup> 1974, she was attacked by Bundy with a bed frame. She miraculously survived this attack but lost her memory and was left with serious injuries. From this point onward, long-haired brunettes in their late teens or early twenties kept disappearing and being murdered: Ted Bundy used fake casts in his legs or arms, asking for help with his luggage in order to lure women into his car, or he would dress himself as a police officer. His victims were more than 30: the exact number is still unknown, considering the fact that when he was asked by the authorities the number of girls that he killed, he responded: "add one digit to that, and you'll have

it”, which is truly horrifying and disturbing to think about, let alone to discuss openly like he did.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> 1975, Ted Bundy was stopped for a driving violation by a police officer, who decided to arrest him because of suspicious items found inside his car, such as handcuffs and a crowbar, and he was later found guilty of the attempted kidnapping of Carol DaRonch, a young woman who had managed to escape Ted and who was able to recognize him immediately out of a lineup of criminals. During his trial, Ted was calm and collected, confident, well dressed: he tried to manipulate and charm the judge, who fortunately did not fall under his spell and sentenced him to 15 years in prison. One year later, Bundy was put to trial for the murder of Caryn Campbell, and given his decision to represent himself in the trial (a decision that highlighted his proficiency in language and linguistic manipulation), he was allowed to spend time in the library of the prison to prepare for his defense: “he had an exceptionally good ability to convince people he was dealing with that he was perfectly cooperative. [...] Only his victims saw the real Ted Bundy”, stated Carlisle (2013: 98). As a matter of fact, he managed to escape there, seizing the opportunity of an open window, and jumped out of it in June 1977. After four days, he was found and transferred to a more secure prison. Nevertheless, in December of that same year he managed to escape a second time, broke into a sorority house in the University of Florida, attacked five young women killing two of them. On February 9<sup>th</sup> 1978, Bundy killed for the last time. Kimberly Leach, his youngest victim who was only 12 years old, was kidnapped, assaulted and murdered.



*Figure 3: Ted Bundy declaring his innocence in February 1978.  
Source: <https://www.insider.com/the-full-timeline-of-ted-bundys-murders-2019-2>*

As can be seen in figure 3, on February 15<sup>th</sup> Ted Bundy was finally arrested and went on trial for the murders of the sorority house on June 25<sup>th</sup> and despite having a team of lawyers he decided to be his own attorney, as depicted in figure 4, and continued to plead not guilty.



*Figure 4: Ted Bundy representing himself in court. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/05/us/dylann-roof-killers-defense-lawyers.html>*

He was sentenced to death on July 24<sup>th</sup> 1979. During the trial he married Carol Boone, who was friends with Ted, proposing to her while she was on the witness stand taking advantage of a law of the State of Florida, and later he had a baby with her, named Rose. Only after his sentence, Bundy started to admit many crimes and told the details of the murders. He was executed by electric chair, and on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1989, Ted Bundy was declared deceased at 7:16 a.m. while people celebrated outside the prison with t-shirts and posters for the occasion, as depicted in figure 5.



*Figure 5: people rejoicing after Ted Bundy's execution on January 24th 1989 at sunrise. Source: <https://www.thesun.ie/news/3633808/who-was-ted-bundys-wife-carole-ann-boone-and-when-was-their-daughter-rose-born/>*

### 3.2. Media Influence

The fact that true crime and crime literature have always exerted a constant magnetic attraction on the audience derives from the profound curiosity of humanity about the nature of evil, as stated by Andreoli (<https://www.dottstefanoandreoli.it/single-post/viaggio-attorno-alla-psicopatia-psicologia-eziologia-antisocialit%C3%A0-il-problema-del-male#viewer-78vsi>). People are fascinated by this topic because the awful things they are reading about are not happening to them but they can watch them feeling safe, through a barrier which is the book or device they are using. In other words, according to Andreoli (ibid.), true crime stories provide the possibility of coming into contact with gruesome stories, yet engaging with them from a safe distance, without real life repercussions. Dr. John Mayer declared that being interested in true crime does not necessarily have negative implications: “there is a psychologically healthy mechanism to watching crime shows” he argues. “The healthy mechanism of watching disasters is a coping mechanism. It [gives] us information on the dangers to avoid and flee from” (<https://www.mtv.com/news/tm3zi4/tiktok-has-a-ted-bundy-problem>).

Bundy's heinous crimes have been portrayed in books, documentaries, films, and other forms of media; he began captivating the public's attention from the moment he started perpetrating these crimes and continues to do so today. As a matter of fact, the first cinematic portrayal was the 1986 film titled *The Deliberate Stranger*, starring Mark Harmon in the role of the killer, and was released while Bundy himself was still on death row. In addition, on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2019, the 30th anniversary of the serial killer's execution, Netflix released a documentary called *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*, which narrates Bundy's life and crimes, featuring real footage and interviews with people involved in the case. On that same year, the film *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* was released, starring Zac Efron who plays a charming Ted Bundy that impacted on the public's fascination toward him, causing the film director to receive criticism for potentially glorifying or romanticizing such a horrible person. The film under discussion was based on a book written by Elizabeth Kendall (pseudonym of Elizabeth Kloepfer), one of the serial killer's partners, called *The Phantom Prince: My Life With Ted Bundy*, in which she unravels their six-year long intimate relationship. In an interview she declared: “when I would think about

our day to day relationship, there was nothing there that would lead me to think that he was a violent man, capable of doing something like that, and that's the split that I think had everybody baffled" (<https://youtu.be/3O31g4R2Gb8>). The adaptation of Kendall's book into a film further contributed to the public's fascination with Bundy and sparked discussions about the ethical implications of portraying a serial killer in popular media. However, films and documentaries are not always to blame, as Ted Bundy has always been idealized by women despite his heinous crimes since his face has started circulating in the media, as absurd as it may sound.

The fact is that so many people have been idolizing Ted Bundy since the beginning: some did not believe that he could be guilty and remained by his side during the trial, while others were fully aware of his convictions but still adored him. One of these admirers, Carol Boone, even managed to marry Ted Bundy while he was in court testifying; she was sure of his innocence and she claimed he was being framed, stated Ramsland (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shadow-boxing/201910/girls-who-love-ted-bundy>).

As a matter of fact, this group of girls who adored Bundy was present from the beginning. Ramsland (ibid.) believes that this was due to his incredible charm and to his presence:

according to those who encountered Bundy when he was alive, he was charismatic, he projected confidence, and he knew how to act as if he were in charge. This, alone, commands attention, but then add notoriety, high energy, and an undertone of vulnerability. It's a magnetic package.

Consequently, these girls even developed an obsession or hyper-fascination for this monstrous serial killer which started from his handsomeness and was fueled by media portrayals of him. Stephen Michaud, one of the two authors of *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*, stated that Bundy received all kinds of mail while in jail, from pictures to marriage proposals. They would even come to court prepared to look like Bundy's victims, which were long haired brunettes with their hair parted in the middle and hoop earrings: "a couple of them even dyed their hair the right kind of brown, so they... they wanted to appeal to Ted", states Michaud

<https://www.tiktok.com/@truecrimewendy/video/7100380528263695622? r=1& t=8fu6Kr7WE4X>).

To further prove this point, Ann Rule, a former police officer who was friends with Ted Bundy before knowing about his crimes, stated that the media contributed in creating an image of Ted Bundy which would potentially have never existed otherwise: “Ted was never as handsome, brilliant, or charismatic as crime folklore has deemed him... A virtual nonentity before he was suspected of a series of horrific crimes, he somehow became all of those things as the media embraced him” (Rule, cit. in <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shadow-boxing/201910/girls-who-love-ted-bundy>).

However, it is common to find admirers of criminals, even serial killer, who push themselves so far to even marry the convict: besides Ted Bundy, also Richard Ramirez, the Menendez brothers, Charles Manson and many others united in matrimony while serving their sentence.

Subsequently, with the release on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the killer’s execution of the Netflix documentary and film, the interest of many teenage girls on the topic sparked again – as stated previously – inspiring therefore new young admirers. It is interesting to notice how this generation faces true crime and these topics: there is a portion of users who create unrespectful and careless content, such as videos where they are “pretending to put on makeup as they get ready for a “date” with a known murderer, only to lay on the floor and be dragged off the screen as if they’ve been killed in the following frame”, reports Hood (<https://www.mtv.com/news/tm3zi4/tiktok-has-a-ted-bundy-problem>). On the other hand, as stated by Michaud (<https://youtu.be/jFprsh-xeCA>), some people who did not live through the years in which Ted Bundy operated are newly aware of what went on, therefore there are true crime consumers who are genuinely interested in the topic and respectful toward the victims and their families.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that this kind of fame is not restricted only to Ted Bundy: it is a phenomenon often observed among serial killers and criminals, where there are people who support them and believe in their innocence. Furthermore, despite the awareness of their culpability, the media sometimes influences people in engaging in some temporary trends, for example the *Serial Killer Exhibition* which

took place in Milan in April 2023: it has been highly criticized for the glorifying the perpetrators and for the lack of respect toward the victims. Another instance of this phenomenon is evident in the response to the Netflix series about Jeffrey Dahmer; it resulted in people choosing to dress as the awful serial killer – responsible for the particularly gruesome murders of seventeen people – for Halloween parties, for their own entertainment. This shows a profound lack of respect toward the victims and an evident disregard of the suffering of the grieving families, which still have to deal with the pain that Dahmer caused them.





## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Analysis of the Interviews**

The discourse analysis of the two interviews will be conducted by selecting some highly representative phrases uttered by the infamous serial killer. This analysis goes beyond merely transcribing his words; it delves deeper into the underlying meaning of what he said. As mentioned in the previous chapters, this meaning is often not immediately apparent and requires thorough examination. In this process, the present research aims at uncovering the subtleties, implications, and intentions behind his utterances, shedding light on the complex web of language, psychology, and communication that shaped these interviews.

The chosen interviews are representative of two different situational contexts: the first one was recorded in Glenwood Springs Jail in Colorado on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1977, while the second one was recorded at Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida, on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989.

Both interviews share a common objective of attempting to manipulate the audience and anyone who comes into contact with his interviews, whether it was in the past or today. In both interviews Bundy sought to exert control over how he was perceived and aimed at influencing people in believing his narrative. On the other hand, it is important to draw attention to the huge difference between the two recordings: the nature of the manipulation and Bundy's ultimate objectives, as well as his attitude toward the interviewer and the audience.

In 1977 Bundy felt invincible and convinced he could avoid the responsibility of his crimes. He was trying to convince everyone of his innocence after being arrested and charged with the aggravated kidnapping and attempted criminal assault of Carol DaRonch and with the murder of Caryn Campbell. However, it can be inferred from his attitude that he felt invulnerable and superior to the public, to justice, to law enforcement – considering for example the smirk he gave to the interviewer while answering “legally, sure” when he was asked if he was thinking about going out of jail, just a couple of months before he succeeded in evading from prison. It was clear

that he felt powerful and was determined to manipulate everyone with his charm, in order to distance himself from the atrocities he committed.

On the other hand, in the 1989 interview, Bundy had resigned himself to his impending execution. Nevertheless, he still did not accept the verdict and acted almost like a victim; his demeanor was submissive and somber, conveying a sense of helplessness. He admitted his crimes, but this confession was far from a straightforward acceptance of guilt: he shifted the blame of his actions on external factors, such as pornography which, according to him, drove him to commit those awful actions due to the violent nature of it. Clearly, this was probably another attempt to clear his name and, above all, to try and manipulate his interviewer, James Dobson, into believing that he was just a victim of pornography. His attempt was driven by the fact that Dobson, an evangelical Christian against pornography, would be easier to manipulate; it is likely that his aim was to move his execution date, arranged for the day after the interview, by convincing Dobson of his supposed victimhood of pornography's influence. This could have delayed the arranged day for the execution, possibly allowing an attempt of eventually escaping the death penalty.

#### **4.1. Analysis of the 1977 Interview**

##### **4.1.1. Discourse Analysis**

In the first interview of 1977, Ted Bundy has the main objective of proving his innocence, after having represented himself in court, using the charisma he is known for and looking for approval in the audience. Contrarily to the second interview, recorded in 1989, nobody was aware of the monster he was and of the atrocities he had committed.

He starts the interview smiling, showing emotions and trying to bond with the audience using his well-known charm in order to gain people's support. According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>), in that interview Bundy was aware of the fact that he was in control of the situation, as media in that time depicted him as this charming and handsome gentleman, and used this to corroborate the fact that he was innocent.

- 1) Reporter: So you're not guilty?

Ted Bundy: I am not guilty? Does that include the time when I stole a comic book when I was 5 years old?

In this first example, a very important one for the sake of the present research, Ted Bundy is answering the interviewer's question "So you're not guilty?" laughing and using sarcasm, by stating that throughout his whole life his most serious crime has been stealing a comic book when he was 5 years old; uttering these words, Bundy implies that he is innocent of the crime he has been accused of. This statement helps to build the image of the trustworthy and genuine person: "by saying that you did something, by acknowledging "I'm not perfect", that's going to make you seem more believable", states Garrison (ibid.); by telling what could seem to be the truth, that is stealing a comic book as a child, he shows he is capable of admitting his wrongdoings, therefore leading the majority of the audience to believe he is actually telling the whole truth. This is a calculated attempt to minimize his culpability and maintain his innocence while also admitting minor crimes which displays him as a normal individual, therefore controlling the narrative as he will try to do for the whole interview (<https://youtu.be/5zoHyOHWhCM>). Similarly, the same technique is employed in examples 2, 3 and 4.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that he laughs even while answering this question: Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>) argues that he can talk about this matter freely, lightheartedly, without showing anger or fear because "his limbic system, the part of us that feels anxious is underdeveloped for folks like him. [...] generally speaking, he is the one that is in control of a lot of the emotions that he shows" (ibid.). According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) "he is really good at mimicking emotions he is not actually feeling".

2) Ted Bundy: I've been impolite and I've done things I regret having done in my life, but nothing like the things that you're referring to.

Reporter: Have you ever physically harmed anyone?

Ted Bundy: Ever physically harmed anyone? [long pause] No, no. You know, again, not in the context I think that you're speaking of.

- 3) I'm perfectly happy with the person I am and will always be. There's nothing that... I mean yeah, I don't pay my telephone bills on time and I don't write my mother as many letters as I should, there are all kinds of things I can improve about myself...

Manipulators like Ted Bundy try to acknowledge the fact that they committed some mistakes in their life, that they are not to be seen as perfect individuals from the public. Many people fall in this trap and do not believe he is actually guilty of all the crimes, even nowadays after more than 30 years: that indicates how manipulative the tactics discussed in the present thesis can be. As a matter of fact, in example 2 Bundy is stating his innocence while also trying to be honest and admitting that he harmed someone in a certain way. Once again, in example 3, Ted Bundy is relating to the everyday person and stating his faults, states Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>).

- 4) [...] I'm satisfied with my blanket statement that I'm innocent. No man is truly innocent, I mean we all have transgressed in some way in our lives.

Similarly to the previous examples, in example 4 Bundy utters another statement with which he wants people to think about their own flaws and mistakes, shifting the attention from his accusations to the transgression of the audience, attempting once again to normalize himself. According to Garrison (ibid.) many serial killers try to bring other people to their level by statements similar to example 4, and the aim is that of making the audience feel guilty for their wrongdoings rather than accusing the offenders of their crimes; on the other hand, another objective could be making the public question whether they should be forgiven or not, given that everybody makes mistakes.

- 5) Reporter: Do you ever worry about what some of the parents of these women who think that you are guilty, that they might come after you?

Ted Bundy: I don't worry about it. There are crazy people anywhere. I've been told that, you know, the parents of these girls are fairly decent people, I don't know... and I really feel for them because they suffered an incredible

tragedy in their lives, the loss of a loved one is probably the most extreme kind of loss that you can suffer in this life, and I feel as much for them as anybody can, not having gone through that myself. But as far as worrying about that hate, if someone's crazy enough to do something like that, I can't stop them. There's nothing I can do.

In example 5 Bundy can be seen uncertain about the right answer to give, and his hesitation suggests an attempt to elicit empathy from the public (in the next paragraph his facial expressions will be analyzed, detecting how he might be feeling a sense of self-doubt because of how he will appear while answering this question). As a matter of fact, his response is sympathetic with the victims' families, as he is strategically trying to gain trust and once again manipulate the public into thinking he is innocent, before answering the interviewer's question. Furthermore, Garrison (ibid.) argues that Bundy is trying to appear as relatable as possible by telling that he cannot do anything if someone will try to harm him unjustly, acknowledging his vulnerability, because there are crazy people everywhere, he says.

6) Reporter: Ted do you believe that we created you, that it is our fault that we created this image of the mass murderer? Is that what you're saying?

Ted Bundy: Well, I think in the course of doing your job you did, not in a malign way, not in a personal vendetta against me, but in the course of publishing the material, broadcasting material coming out of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's office or the Salt Like County prosecutor's office, you began to plant the seed in people's minds, now that may be your constitutional right and duty as well as, you know, your livelihood [...]

Example 6 is representative of Ted Bundy's personality in two ways: according to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>) people with personality disorders like him cannot be blamed. As the interviewer asks him if all the hustle is caused by the media, he does not lose the opportunity to blame the media and accuse them of making him appear as a monster by broadcasting material (which annoyed him greatly, as can be seen from his facial expressions, which we will analyze in further detail in the next

paragraph of the thesis). This is a classic example of Bundy's attempt to distance himself from his crimes by shifting blame onto external factors, displaying himself as a victim of the media instead of taking responsibility. At the same time, it can be seen how Bundy shows "an odd type of empathy [...], he loves the pain that he caused, he's famous for enjoying inflicting pain and killing and harming other people but he understands people well enough to be manipulative" (ibid.), in other words, he had enough empathy to understand how to be believable and make people be on his side, how to be deceiving, but on the other hand he lacked genuine empathy for the suffering he caused to his victims and their families. This duality in his personality is indeed unsettling, as he could convincingly wear a mask of empathy when it served his purposes, while being completely merciless for his victims.

This example shows how he sought to exploit public opinion and perception to his advantage: this strategy was employed even in court during his trial, since, as previously stated, Bundy chose to be his own attorney. His was an attempt to control the narrative, maintaining a certain level of public support despite the accusations of the media.

7) Reporter: Do you think you have been set up?

Ted Bundy: I don't think there's any broad scheme, but I think one begins to... I would have to infer that, based on some of the police activity following November '75 you have to say that there was a general design amongst police officers and several jurisdictions to do whatever they could. And I think a statement recently made by a sheriff in Utah County I believe, he said he walked out in some of those meetings because it was clear... they had one thing on their mind and they were going to do anything to prove it, and I think this trial will show exactly what they've done.

First of all, in example 7 it is worth noticing how he begins to answer the question rationally, by saying "I don't think there's any broad scheme" he demonstrates that he is not an unreasonable individual, he is logical and responsible. "He knows that telling lies requires that he is a believable historian", states Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>), and he therefore starts to manipulate people by

saying that he believes that he has been framed for something he did not do while not sounding wild, irrational, or accusatory, and subsequently providing evidence, that is the Utah County sheriff's statement: "he is able to weave narratives in a way that is very effective", states Garrison (ibid.).

- 8) [...] as long as they attempt keep their heads in the sand about me, there's gonna be people turning up in canyons and there are going to be people being shot in Salt Lake City, because the police here aren't willing to accept what I think they know, and they know that I didn't do these things.
- 9) [...] I've heard some reports... you know, I remember the incidents between 5 and 8 which are similar to the one the police have had the nerve to try to associate with me. It's going to continue to happen in Salt Lake and Utah until those police start to wise up and stop counting the chickens before they hatch. I think it's a terribly dangerous mentality to try to pin something on somebody who they believe... there's a possibility... could have done it; and as long as they believe that they are not going to find the right man, and the man who kidnapped Carol DaRonch is going to continue to be free and not only her but every other young woman in the Salt Lake Valley is going to be threatened by that person or persons, and it's happening today and it's going to happen in the future.

Through the sentence in example 8 Ted Bundy is trying to appear as a wronged man, trying to make the police officers feel guilty because more people will be killed – since, according to his words and as explained by the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* "the focus of his prosecutors is going to allow real killers to keep on killing" (<https://youtu.be/5zoHyOHWhCM>)<sup>3</sup> – and he is also trying to make the audience feel empathetic toward an innocent man who was wrongly accused. However, the focus here are the alleged mistakes that the prosecutors are making, shifting the attention from the crimes committed to the fact that the serial killer is still on the loose; by doing

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<sup>3</sup> The video linked is owned by the YouTube channel *Crime & Psychiatry* and is led by "a psychiatrist with an interest in true crime and forensic psychiatry and real world experience with criminal trials up to and including murder cases", as claimed by himself, who chose to remain anonymous despite the request of sharing his name. For this reason, from now on he will be referred to as the channel *Crime & Psychiatry*.

this, Bundy is trying to appear selfless and considerate toward the potential victims, trying to save lives without protesting about the wrong accusations (ibid.).

Similarly, in example 9 Bundy is referring to ongoing crimes that are happening while he is being held in prison, implying therefore his innocence and once again shifting the blame of the crimes toward law enforcement who has imprisoned the wrong man: “he uses reports of such incidents to seed doubt about his guilt and criticize the police for prematurely blaming him, aiming to portray himself as a victim of a flawed justice system and discredit the investigation” (ibid.).

Furthermore, Bundy mentions Carol DaRonch in example 9, a surviving victim of the monstrous serial killer who identified him as her attacker, trying to undermine her testimony by saying that “the man who kidnapped Carol DaRonch is going to continue to be free”, belittling her testimony and planting seeds of doubt about her credibility.

The two utterances of examples 8 and 9 serve Ted Bundy to appear as an individual who is concerned for the well-being of the society and also to question the work of the prosecutors who are allegedly letting the real serial killer roam freely, while indirectly declaring himself as innocent.

10) Reporter: Are you angry?

Ted Bundy: Sure I get angry. I get very very angry and indignant. I don't like being locked up for something I didn't do and I don't like my liberty taken away and I don't like being treated like an animal and I don't like people walking around and ogling me like I'm some sort of weirdo, because I'm not.

In example 10 Bundy is once again trying to appear as a normal human being with normal and genuine emotions by emphasizing his irritation toward the circumstance he is in. According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) he tries to normalize himself and be relatable by acknowledging his anger and frustration, and this could be the reason why some people find him charming. Moreover, he proceeds to list everything he does not like about his situation, mentioning things that could be clearly unsettling for every individual, trying therefore to connect with the public on a human



level; this is an attempt to make the people emphasize with Bundy and gain sympathy, support and solidarity. Furthermore, Bundy tries yet another time to manipulate the public displaying himself as a victim rather than a perpetrator, despite the overwhelming evidence against him.

11) Ted Bundy: [...] I need a lot more sun and a lot more fresh air but other than that I'm doing okay.

Reporter: Do you get fresh air, sun? Do you get out?

Ted Bundy: I get to go to the library [laughs]. It's a 50-yard walk from here across the parking lot to the library, that's my fresh air.

Similarly to the previous example, Bundy is trying to be pitied because he is not being treated very well, as any human being needs air and sun and by uttering what has been transcribed in example 11 he implies that he is not granted enough fresh air in order to feel good. This complaint makes Bundy more relatable to the public, as in 1977 he still plead innocent for the crimes, and as a result people believed him because of his charming and charismatic personality.

12) People say, "Ted Bundy didn't show any emotion, there must be something in there." I showed emotion and you know what people said? "See, he really can get violent and angry." There's no one right way for me to act.

By discussing the reactions of others (example 12) Ted is implying that there is no correct way for him to act as people will always find a reason to criticize him: Wiyono (2015: 47) states that his intention was to sarcastically imply that the public was not judging him fairly, and he therefore portrays himself as a victim of unfair judgment. Doing so he was displaying his emotions like a normal person: "this is the kind of language manipulation strategy that could put people in doubt and turn to absorb whatever the manipulator says", argues Wiyono (ibid.), and making it more difficult for the average person to perceive him as a violent murderer. By using this strategy Bundy also aims at making the audience question their own judgments and maybe make them consider the possibility that their opinion may be biased.

- 13) I didn't show any emotion because... you know, what am I supposed to do? Am I going to jump on the table and scream? That's how I felt like doing. I heard my mother cry, it's an emotional time, I don't even like to think of that day. I wasn't going to give these people who went out and built a case around a non-existent eye-witness – an eye-witness identification that was built by the police – I wasn't gonna give them the satisfaction to see me break down.
- 14) I kept it together because there's no point in destroying myself, I have got to keep myself together and I've got to stay calm, I've got to keep my presence of mind because as long as I do that I'm gonna beat these people. That's the way I feel. I showed no emotion but I felt emotion, believe me.

Examples 13 and 14, on the other hand, showcases his ability in appearing a controlled and reasonable individual: Bundy is subtly but cleverly suggesting that he is not impulsive, that he can maintain and manage his behavior. He is describing a scenario of one of his possible reactions in court, one that is violent and reckless, in order to compare it to his actual controlled actions: this extreme contrast paints him as an individual who can contain himself despite the emotionally charged situation. Thanks to utterances like these people are unconsciously being manipulated into thinking that he is a calm and rational person: “he is always planting a seed of the fact that he is the one that is in control, that he would never do these things”, states Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>), counteracting any suspicion of him being an emotionally unstable individual.

On the other hand, by admitting that he is trying to control himself and trying not to show any emotion he is implying that he does not want to appear weak and that he needs to be in control of the situation; his ability to detach himself from what would be a very distressing context for the majority of the population helps to understand that his priority in this interview is how he is perceived, as stated by the channel *Crime & Psychiatry*. (<https://youtu.be/5zoHyOHWhCM>).

15) You can't help but become an advocate for yourself when you're so involved in a case, and being a good defense attorney – and again, I'm not pretending I'm an attorney but [...]

Example 15 is extremely significant to demonstrate how manipulative Bundy could be and persuade people to like him, enhancing his credibility. While talking about advocating for himself, Bundy states “and again, I'm not pretending I'm an attorney but...” in order to downplay his legal skills, therefore depicting himself as honest and humble. This self-deprecating utterance could have been used to avert suspicion and skepticism, making his storyline more convincing. According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>) he knows that utterances like example 15 make the other things he says more believable, as he is admitting his limits and declaring he is not skilled enough to be a real attorney, while “in all reality he is an incredibly narcissistic psychopath, he thinks he is smarter than everybody else in the room, but he'll say these things because it's a very effective manipulation and it's so subtle most people don't notice it” (ibid.). In essence, Bundy manipulates language in order to build an image of himself of a genuine, trustworthy, credible person.

16) I don't know all of what you're speaking about, Lucky, it's too broad and I can't get into it in any detail...

The two reporters who interviewed Ted Bundy on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1977 are Barbara Grossman and Lucky Severson: in example 16 it can be seen how Bundy responds to the interviewer's question by saying his first name. This strategic move can be employed in order to charm and establish a connection with the interlocutor: by saying his name Bundy diminishes the psychological distance between him and Lucky Severson, the interviewer, trying therefore to engage with him on a personal level, as he tries to appear as approachable and friendly. According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) “he wants his interviewer to be closer to him to make sure that when he asks questions there's a connection there, because that could frame whether or not the interviewer's hostile”, suggesting that Bundy's strategy is to create

a sense of cooperation with the interviewer, once again trying to influence and manipulate the direction and the tone of the conversation.

17) [...] I've dreamed about flying over those fences. I've dreamed about climbing over those fences and tunneling under those fences. With every other man in there I've dreamed about being free, because I don't like my liberty taken away and no man does.

18) [...] I'm no fool, I don't like being locked up and I don't think any man does.

In the two examples above Bundy almost manages to make escape from the prison seem an admirable thing, since he is convinced of his innocence: the utterances of examples 17 and 18 suggest that he considers escape to be a natural response to the limitation of his freedom rather than a crime. He is once again able to portray himself as a victim of wrongful imprisonment and he highlights his desire of being free and his resentment toward the confinement. Furthermore, by saying that nobody likes being imprisoned in both utterances, Bundy is trying to be empathized by the audience demonstrating that this is a universally shared feeling. As the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* (<https://youtu.be/5zoHyOHWhCM>) argues,

in summary, Bundy's answer is a carefully constructed narrative that allows him to express a natural human desire for freedom while avoiding any direct implication of intent to escape. It reflects his continuous effort to control the narrative and present himself in a favorable light even while discussing a potentially incriminating topic.

#### **4.1.2. Visual Analysis**

During the course of the interview, in both Ted Bundy's words and nonverbal communication the attempt of displaying himself as innocent is clear and evident, for example smiling and showing emotions. The present paragraph will analyze how sometimes his body language contradicts what he is uttering.



*Figure 6: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIW1jZo>*

As a matter of fact, figure 6 depicts Ted Bundy shaking his head while answering to the interviewer, who asks him if he is innocent. Even though his words say yes, his head is shaking no: according to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>) it is a very common thing among criminals in court. Head nods and head shakes that contradict what the convict is saying can be very subtle but indicate that the individual is trying to hide something. Furthermore, when he smiles and laughs, Garrison (ibid.) believes the smile is genuine as he is feeling powerful because of how he is deceiving people; at that time, the press was describing Bundy as this handsome, charming and charismatic individual, and for this reason he felt empowered by his ability of manipulating others. Garrison's interpretation highlights the complex interplay between Bundy's external behavior and his hidden psychopathic side, shedding light



*Figure 7: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIW1jZo>*



*Figure 8: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIW1jZo>*

on the intricate nature of his actions and the strategies he chose in order to appear normal.

Moreover, throughout the interview Ted Bundy can be seen looking directly at the camera (figure 7) and then immediately after he smiles (as can be seen in figure 8): in those moments Garrison (ibid.) states that Bundy is probably remembering that he is being recorded and wants to appear friendly and approachable to the public, therefore he smiles with the only purpose of manipulating.



*Figure 9: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjW1jZo>*

Garrison (ibid.) argues that psychopaths often close their eyes while speaking as depicted in figure 9: “they are having to soothe themselves at times, so when they get mad at something they’ll close their eyes. [...] he does this consistently when he is actually upset about something”, for example when in the present interview he discusses the testimony of Carol DaRonch, which made him angry, he closes his eyes as he firmly states that she was lying, knowing very well that he attacked her and that she managed to escape. Another example of this particular behavior can be seen when the interviewer asks Ted if he thinks that it is the media’s fault for the portrayal of him as a mass murderer (the transcription can be found in example 6, chapter 4.1.1.) as he closes his eyes while answering, displaying anger and frustration for the broadcasting of material that regarded him.

Furthermore, Garrison (ibid.) argues that Bundy has a certain level of charisma and social awareness so that he is able to have an appropriate amount of eye contact with the interviewer, looking away at times as depicted in figure 10. This is

noteworthy, as most psychopaths do not have this ability and stare at people with a fixed and unsettling gaze which often reveals their nature.



*Figure 10: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpj1W1jZo>*

Subsequently, Ted proceeds to talk about how he was wrongly accused of the crimes, stating that people try to find a culpable because it is convenient, and then he puts his hand over his mouth, as if he wanted stop himself from talking, as depicted in figure 11; Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) states that there are various reasons why people cover their mouths: “often times it is either shock or trying to stifle yourself from saying something”. He believes Bundy is thinking about how to smoothly change the topic of the conversation because he is ready to talk about something else, and not at all because he feels anxious or nervous.



*Figure 11: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpj1W1jZo>*

According to Garrison (ibid.), Bundy is so good at mimicking emotions and displaying himself in certain ways that it is not always clear what he is feeling.



*Figure 12: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIWljZo>*

An example of what Garrison means can be found in figure 12: Bundy's sideways smile could easily denote Bundy pretending to be friendly and pleasant, but it could also indicate contempt. Garrison argues that when people smile sideways, if it is a real facial expression it is a contemptuous one, but since Bundy fakes so many emotions and is a master manipulator, it is highly possible that in figure 12 he is not feeling anything but his smile is just a calculated expression displayed in order to appear charming to the public.



*Figure 13: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIWljZo>*



*Figure 14: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIWljZo>*



Figure 14 depicts Ted Bundy licking his lips: this gesture could be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, it could indicate that the individual is feeling nervous or uneasy about the conversation or the topic that is being discussed, as stated by Navarro and Karlins (2008: 193): they argue that when an individual is stressed it causes the lips to be dry, which encourages him/her to lick them to moisture them. Moreover, the authors state that “we tend to rub our tongues back and forth across our lips to pacify and calm ourselves” (ibid.), to further explain why one who licks the lips might experience discomfort. However, according to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) in the frame of figure 14 Bundy feels excited rather than nervous, excitement which derives from the lies he is smoothly telling and from the pride he is feeling about himself. Moreover, the timing of this gesture, right after a loud laugh as shown in figure 13, further indicates that he may be experiencing a sense of satisfaction from successfully manipulating the conversation.



*Figure 15: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjlWljZo>*

In addition, Bundy can be seen in the present interview compressing his lips together as depicted in figure 15: “lips convey a lot of information that is often ignored or not even observed”, states Navarro (<https://www.jnforensics.com/post/the-lips-don-t-lie>), suggesting that lips can therefore help us detect emotions in our interlocutors. Ted Bundy might feel stressed or uneasy in the present frame because compressed lips usually indicate that something is bothering the individual and causing discomfort, according to Navarro (ibid.), who states that lip biting and lip compression are methods

used to calm and pacify oneself. “As an FBI special agent, I used these behaviors (lip compression, disappearing lips) to determine what specific subjects stressed the interviewee suggesting there might be ‘guilty knowledge’”, claims Navarro (ibid.), proceeding to explain that in his interrogatories he used to pay great attention to the lip expressions of the suspects, as they usually indicated guilty knowledge. However, Navarro (ibid.) also state that lip expressions by themselves are not indicative of deceptions but they could indicate tension and stress in the subject.



*Figure 16: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjIWjZo>*

Figure 16 shows a frame of the interview where Bundy is talking about how he does not like staying in prison and he does not think that any man does. While uttering this sentence, Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>) highlights the fact that he glances at the camera: he does that many times during monologues, and this is done in order to make sure that the message is being conveyed to the public besides the interviewer and the people present in the room in that moment. Bundy is trying once again to normalize himself and to connect with the public, stating that he should not be there and that he is being mistreated. Garrison (ibid.) claims that psychopaths and people who lie often look directly at their interlocutor while talking in order to be sure that the message is being received; in figure 16 Ted Bundy is making eye contact with the camera, as he knows that people are going to see the interview either on the news or on tv, and he wants to make sure that they understand his perspective and sympathize with him, convincing them of his innocence.

Following the utterance of the sentence “I’m no fool, I don’t like being locked up and I don’t think any man does”, right after glancing at the camera Ted Bundy licks his lips again, and according to Garrison it is yet again another demonstration of excitement: “after all of that the adrenaline is going, he is feeling very satisfied with himself; once again, this is not a lip licking related to anxiety, this is one of satisfaction” (ibid.).



*Figure 17: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjWljZo>*

In figure 17 Bundy is furrowing his eyebrows, showing irritation and anger toward the question he just received from the interviewer. The question “Do you ever worry about what some of the parents of these women who think that you are guilty, that they might come after you?” made him angry, not because he was afraid of the parents of his victims but, according to Garrison (ibid.), because the idea that someone could target him bothers him. However, according to Navarro and Karlins (2008: 195) the furrowed brows could indicate either concentration (for example a cashier counting money) or anger (such as a criminal that is being arrested, as he is in a bad situation but cannot escape), but in this specific case it is highly probable that Bundy felt irritated as the question threatened his necessity of control.

Furthermore, while Bundy answered this question, it is worth mentioning how his eye-blinking rate strongly increased, which according to Pease and Pease (2004: 148) indicates deceit and lies:

Even when your major body gestures are consciously suppressed, numerous small micro-gestures will still be transmitted. These include facial muscular twitching, dilation and contraction of pupils, sweating, flushed cheeks, eye-blinking rate increasing from 10 blinks per minute to as many as 50 blinks per minute and many other micro-signals that indicate deceit.

On the other hand, according to Garrison the intense eye-blinking rate might be caused by some stress related to the answer as the latter must be convincing, being the topic very controversial, and he must be perceived as empathic with the victims and the victims' families. Consequently, given that a major part of the interview is not authentic, Bundy might be feeling self-doubt about how he is appearing to the public, as stated by Garrison (<https://youtu.be/K5LZnS-8Pfk>).



*Figure 18: Ted Bundy Interview 1977.*  
Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpj1W1jZo>



*Figure 19: Ted Bundy Interview 1977.*  
Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpj1W1jZo>

Figure 18 and figure 19 depict Bundy showing a bit of stress while answering the reporter's questions: "You're not guilty?": after a loud laugh he responded by acknowledging that his most serious crime was stealing a comic book when he was 5 years old, utterance analyzed in the previous paragraph. After uttering this lie, Bundy can be seen licking his lips and compressing them right after, and according to Garrison (ibid.) it is possible that in this situation some stress is subtly emerging. However, he is a great liar, for this reason his distress is hard to detect: his genuine feelings are often overshadowed by his manipulation abilities.



*Figure 20: Ted Bundy Interview 1977. Source: <https://youtu.be/USYpjLWljZo>*

Figure 20 depicts Ted Bundy while stroking his chin while uttering the sentence that can be found in example 13, present in the previous paragraph. This gesture, according to Pease and Pease (2004: 58), usually indicates that the individual is going through a process of decision making, whereas Navarro and Karlins (2008: 225) argue that deceptive people often exhibit pensive displays, such as fingers to the chin in order to create the illusion of a genuine retrospection. Moreover, the authors proceed to state that “deceptive people spend time evaluating what they say and how it is being received, which is inconsistent with honest behavior” (2008: 226), and given Ted Bundy’s history of deception, it is plausible that this is another manipulation strategy.

## **4.2. Analysis of the 1989 Interview**

### **4.2.1. Discourse Analysis**

Ted Bundy was then interviewed on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989, by James Dobson, who is “an evangelical Christian with outspoken views against pornography and violence in the media” (Dekle 2011: 219, cit. in Smithson 2013: 3). It is therefore important to mention how Bundy throughout the interview makes various religious references, in order to be perceived in a more favorable light by Dobson, appealing to his religious beliefs, and by the public, trying to elicit sympathy and understanding; he wanted to focus on God’s forgiveness displaying himself as a religious individual who is seeking redemption. Moreover, in this interview it can be noticed how Bundy, besides displaying himself as devout to God in order to appeal to James Dobson’s spirituality,

employs two other strategies in order to try and commute his death sentence, as argued by the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* (<https://youtu.be/YVrPtB3a5dE>)<sup>4</sup>: the first one is helping the authorities in the search of the bodies of his victims, revealing the details of his crimes, and the second one is providing insights into the understanding of how he became a serial killer and how pornography pushed him to commit the crimes, implying that people might not be murdered in the future by individuals similar to him thanks to his help.

19) Is there enough time to explain it all?

At the beginning of the interview, Bundy asks his interviewer the question of example 19. It is interesting to notice because this utterance could be seen as a rhetorical question which wants to indicate that there is not enough time for him to help people understand what happened to him, implying a sense of urgency and complexity surrounding his situation and positioning himself as a potential source of knowledge and understanding of serial killers. By portraying himself as a potentially valuable asset to society and implicitly conveying his desire to contribute positively, the underlying meaning of this question is clarified by the channel *Crime & Psychiatry*<sup>4</sup>: “if only he had more time, he could productively help society by helping it understand the suggested link between intimate imagery and the development of serial killers” (ibid.), aiming therefore at the postponement or even at the annulment of his death sentence in a subtle and charming way.

20) I encountered [...] just softcore pornography.

21) [...] we would come across pornographic books of a harder nature, more graphic.

22) The most damaging kinds of pornography – and I’m talking from hard, real, personal experience – are those that involve violence and sexual violence.

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<sup>4</sup> As stated for the previous one, this video is also owned by the YouTube channel *Crime & Psychiatry* and is led by “a psychiatrist with an interest in true crime and forensic psychiatry and real world experience with criminal trials up to and including murder cases”, as claimed by himself, who chose to remain anonymous despite the request of sharing his name. For this reason, from now on he will be referred to as the channel *Crime & Psychiatry*.

Because the wedding of those two forces – as I know only too well – brings about behavior that is just too terrible to describe.

As previously stated, in this interview Bundy tries to blame pornography and violent media for his actions (examples 20 to 22), in order to manipulate and deceive Dr. Dobson (given that he knew he was a religious man) and the wider audience, taking the role of the victim in order to gain sympathy showing people his vulnerabilities and portraying himself as powerless; this occurs “despite Bundy having dismissed the influence of pornography on his behavior as negligible in the years before – and even the evening before – the interview took place” (Smithson, 2013: 7). Ted Bundy chose to be interviewed by Dobson, a person of faith, among many others in order to portray himself as a changed man who is remorseful and has understood his errors, with the purpose of, once again, commuting his death sentence. By emphasizing the influence of pornography, the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* claims that “he links the combination of violence and sexual content in intimate imagery as catalytic in his development of violent behavior. This aligned with the continued narrative that external factors created this sickness in him which he isn’t responsible for” (<https://youtu.be/YVrPtB3a5dE>). However, Bundy also suggests that he was becoming addicted to this kind of violent material, implying his constant need for stimulus, which pushed him to put in action what he liked to see or read; this pattern aligns with the clinical profile of a psychopath, that is characterized by tendency to become bored when exposed to a static or unchanging stimulus, states the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* (ibid.).

23) [...] well-meaning decent people will condemn the behavior of Ted Bundy while they’re walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to being Ted Bundys.

Moreover, example 23 shows how Bundy tried with all his power to shift his responsibility onto others, in this case the public who condemns his behavior but do not worry about the main cause which led him to commit those crimes. Bundy criticizes the society that sentenced him to death, while highlighting the lack of concern for pornographic magazines that, according to him, led him to become a serial

killer, implying that this could potentially contribute to the emergence of more serial killers. With these words Bundy is trying to blame external factors for his actions, rather than his own psychopathic traits as he will do throughout the whole interview: the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* argues that “his focus on societal hypocrisy also diverts attention from his own guilt and is a manipulative tactic typical of psychopathic behavior” (ibid.).

- 24) It’s because I grew up in a wonderful home with two dedicated and loving parents,
- 25) We regularly attended church. They’re two Christian parents.
- 26) But it was a fine, solid Christian home.
- 27) [...] and as good a Christian home as we had [...]

Furthermore, considering the spirituality of Dr. Dobson, Bundy tries to depict himself and his family as the perfect Christian home (examples 24 to 27), despite the trauma he experienced being an illegitimate child (and not knowing the true identity of his mother until his adolescence) and his grandfather being abusive, as explained in section 2. He pretends to have had a beautiful childhood in order to appear as a mentally stable individual who had a normal life.

- 28) Those of us who have been so much 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.
- 29) [...] I have to remind myself that every one of us will go through this someday [...]
- 30) [...] this is just an experience we all share.

The use of pronouns is interesting considering that Bundy tries to divert the attention from himself as a killer, describing himself as a “part of a wider group of offenders who have been profoundly affected by sexualized violence in the media” (Smithson, 2013: 5).



In examples 28, 29, and 30 the constant use of the pronoun **we** creates a sense of membership and belonging implying shared responsibility; moreover, Bundy chooses the words “your sons and husbands” as to indicate a sense of proximity to Dobson and his interlocutors, as stated by Smithson (ibid): this choice of words aims at connecting with the audience. These careful selections of words reflect Bundy’s manipulative use of language to shape the public’s perception: he blurs the line between himself and the average person, therefore reinforcing the idea that he is not different than anyone else and eliciting empathy.

31) Even all these years later, it is difficult to talk about.

32) I can’t begin to understand the pain that the parents of these children and young women that I have harmed feel [...]

According to Wiyono (2015: 46) Ted Bundy uses a guilt-tripping strategy: he pretends to be empathetic with the families of the victims, trying to deceive the audience into thinking he genuinely regretted his actions and recognized the impact he had on the victim’s loved ones, humanizing himself (examples 31 and 32). Once again, he tries to elicit empathy on the listeners by appearing remorseful and tormented in order to potentially influence public opinion or legal proceedings. However, his honesty is quite uncertain since he was an expert at manipulating people to his favor and denied his crimes for a long time. This is a strategy that he will employ many times during this interview.

33) I can’t really talk about that right now. I would like to be able to convey to you what that experience is like, but I won’t be able to talk about that.

Ted Bundy deliberately chooses not to discuss a particular topic in order to distance himself from his crimes: he was asked about his final murder, that of the 12 year-old Kimberly Leach, but sharing the experience would have certainly exposed him as a truly monstrous person, and that is what he probably wanted to avoid (example 33). The interview occurred just hours before his own execution, so he was aware that there would have not been time to discuss that matter, and as stated by Hyatt “this indicates

he is more interested in perpetuating the myth of himself rather than the truth” (<http://statement-analysis.blogspot.com/2012/10/statement-analysis-ted-bundys-final.html>). In example 33 it can also be noticed how Bundy distances himself from the crime using the word THAT instead of a closer IT or THIS, creating a separation between himself and the topic he is currently trying to avoid, which in this case is the murder of the 12 year-old girl.

34) It’s hard to talk about all these years later because it revives all the terrible feelings and thoughts that I have steadfastly and diligently dealt with - I think successfully. It has been reopened and I have felt the pain and the horror of that.

Example 34 shows Bundy’s attempt to show sorrow and remorse while aiming at evoking sympathy and understanding from his audience. The initial part of his statement, “it’s hard to talk about all these years later”, sets the stage for what seems to be a genuine expression of pain. He portrays himself as a person facing with the emotional aftermath of his actions, besides hinting at the fact that he already went through some difficult times where he struggled with his actions, using the word “reopened”. He decided to carefully craft expressions of difficulty, of emotional turmoil, successfully creating an image of a remorseful individual. It is also worth mentioning that, to him, “it is hard to talk about not because of the deaths of others, but because of his "feelings" and "thoughts" he has dealt with” (<http://statement-analysis.blogspot.com/2012/10/statement-analysis-ted-bundys-final.html>).

35) Basically, I was a normal person.

36) I was essentially a normal person. I had good friends. I led a normal life [...]

37) They looked at me and they looked at, you know, the all-American boy<sup>5</sup>.

As Smithson (2013: 6) states, “Bundy appears to be creating a semantic field of innocence and/or victimhood in his self-descriptive lexical choices, in order to convey

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<sup>5</sup> “If you describe someone as an all-American boy or girl, you mean that they seem to have all the typical qualities that are valued by ordinary Americans, such as good looks and love of their country.” (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/all-american>).

a weak, impressionable, and almost childlike personality type”; he tries to minimize his actions depicting himself as a normal person (examples 35 to 37).

38) I’m not blaming pornography. I’m not saying it caused me to go out and do certain things. I take full responsibility for all the things that I’ve done.

39) Dr. Dobson: Do you remember what pushed you over that edge? [...]

Ted Bundy: Again... when you say pushed... I know what you’re saying, and I don’t want to infer again that I was some helpless kind of victim [...]

On the other hand, Garrison states that Ted Bundy’s behavior in the interview also reflects the desire for acknowledgment and credit for his actions, which is a common trait among criminals when admitting responsibility for certain crimes. Ted Bundy in that interview can be seen struggling with internal conflict, as he appears to agree with Dr. Dobson’s statements when he blames pornography, but he still seeks to be in control of the situation and he seems really frustrated to be addressed as “helpless” (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>); this incongruity in Bundy’s statements can be easily found among psychopaths, indicating, along with other traits, that this serial killer aligns with the clinical profile of psychopathy. This contraposition between conforming to something the society would approve and his internal desire to claim his actions and his need for validation adds one more layer of complexity to Bundy’s manipulative strategies, as shown in examples 38 and 39. These are great examples of his manipulation strategy because, as can be seen by the 1977 interview previously analyzed, Bundy had tried to deny his guilt and plead innocent for as long as possible, and as the channel *Crime & Psychiatry* argues, “now, at the end of his life, has decided to admit it but lay the blame elsewhere as a final throw of the dice to get clemency” (<https://youtu.be/YVrPtB3a5dE>).

40) Dr. Dobson: For the record, you are guilty of killing many women and girls.

Ted Bundy: Yes, that’s true.

As mentioned earlier – in example 33 – Ted Bundy is also seen distancing himself from the crimes he committed, minimizing his connection, and it can be seen from some of his utterances.

Example 40 shows how, instead of directly acknowledging the straightforward statement made by Dr. Dobson, Ted Bundy chooses the word THAT instead of saying “yes, it is true”, which according to Hyatt (<http://statement-analysis.blogspot.com/2012/10/statement-analysis-ted-bundys-final.html>) distances himself from the killings, which behavior aligns with the manipulative pattern observed until now. The use of the word IT in Bundy’s response would have been more personal and direct, more closely connected to the crimes committed.

41) During the past few days, myself and a number of investigators have been talking about unsolved cases - murders I was involved in.

To further contribute to the theory of Bundy distancing himself from the crimes, example 41 indicated how he refers to the murders as “cases” in which he was “involved in” rather than committed, as stated by Hyatt (ibid.), almost presenting himself as an observer or participant rather than the perpetrator. Moreover, the choice of the word “cases” downplays the gravity of his actions. This confirms his manipulative and controlling attitude: his ambiguity, his attempt to be deliberately vague demonstrates Bundy’s ability in manipulation, which provides him with a linguistic escape route to avoid admitting his guilt.

42) Because, I know, and I’m trying to tell you as honestly as I know how, what happened.

It is interesting to notice how Ted Bundy, as argued by Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>), is not “overtly narcissistic” in the sense that he does not show to the public his egocentric personality, which he tries instead to conceal with a sort of honesty and humility which is being faked in order for him to be more credible and manipulative, as shown in example 42.

By adopting this approach, Bundy seeks to distance himself from the image of the cold, remorseless killer. Instead, he attempts to appear as someone struggling to come to terms with his actions and willing to share his perspective openly, and who is making an effort to be straightforward about his wrongdoings. This tactic made it more challenging for people to really see his true nature and lead some to sympathize with him or doubt his guilt.

43) It was like coming out of some kind of horrible trance or dream, I can only liken it to after... you know... I don't want to over dramatize but... to have been possessed by something so awful and so alien and the next morning wake up from it.

In example 43 Bundy is stating that he felt like he was being possessed when committing those crimes and that he realized what he had done only the morning after. Despite these statements, it is difficult to believe what he is saying because it is widely known what he did after the murders with the bodies of the victims and how many times he repeated these crimes; the narrative he wants people to believe does not coincide with the reality of the facts. According to Portenier (<https://youtu.be/ty4Dr6aGnTo>) Jeffrey Dahmer declared something similar to Bundy:

this is an interesting aspect all the way around it: it could be their brains attempting to form a shell of protection around what they had done, it could be them blowing smoke at us to be able to make us feel like they had some form of reason to do it, even if their reason is that they could not help themselves.

However, Portenier (ibid.) argues that the difference between the two serial killers is that Bundy while blaming himself for what happened is always trying to explain what pushed him to commit those crimes, perhaps in order to give to the public a reason why he did such awful things; moreover, it is possible that he is taking advantage of James Dobson's religious beliefs because he sometimes mentions God and religion in the present interview.

It is also worth mentioning that using his manipulative strategies, he tries to create the 'myth' of Ted Bundy, he attempts to become a sort of celebrity and a symbol

putting himself in the center of the conversation even when the topic are the victims of his heinous actions, for example talking about himself in the third person or referring to other teenage boys who happen to stumble upon pornography as the next “Ted Bundys”. As Hyatt (<http://statement-analysis.blogspot.com/2012/10/statement-analysis-ted-bundys-final.html>) argues,

Ted Bundy may have claimed to have been a new person before he died, but his language showed narcissistic self importance of one who still refused to acknowledge his evil committed on the earth, nor the justice of the sentence pronounced upon him.

Throughout his life, Ted really believed he was superior to everyone, including police officers. Al Carlisle interviewed Detective Jerry Thompson of the Salt Lake Police Department in order to obtain more information about Ted, as he was part of his investigation, and disclosed it on his book (2013: 89); Thompson reported that Bundy was constantly calling him like they were friends and laughing on the phone with him:

[...] I don't know why you're working so hard on me because I'm not the guy you think I am.” And I'd ask him, “Who do you think I think you are?” “Well,” he'd say, “you tell me,” and he'd laugh”. According to Thompson, he wanted to be updated on the information collected by the police, he knew they were watching him and it built his ego. “He *loved* attention. He wanted everybody in the world to think that he was the neatest thing in the world.”

Bundy firmly believes he is powerful, invincible, and it can clearly be seen even in his nonverbal communication, topic that will be faced in the next chapter.

44) Each time I harmed someone, each time I killed someone, there'd be an enormous amount – especially at first – of horror, guilt, remorse afterwards. But then, the impulse to do it again would come back even stronger.

During this interview Bundy can often be seen remorseful and sorrow; notwithstanding this, it can be noticed how in utterances like that of example 44 his behavior shows his true intentions and feelings. According to Portenier (<https://youtu.be/ty4Dr6aGnTo>)

he is trying to display a look of consternation, to therefore appear apologetic, but it is crucial to notice how the speed of his speech changes during the statement of the example above. When focusing on the emotions of guilt and remorse, instead of dwelling on those he swiftly transitions to the actions he would do later, argues Portenier (ibid.).

45) Dr. Dobson: Are you thinking about all those victims and their families that are so wounded? Years later, their lives have not returned to normal. They will never return to normal. Are you carrying that load, that weight? Is there remorse?

Ted Bundy: I know people will accuse me of being self-serving, we're beyond now, I'm just telling you how I feel, but through God's help, I have been able to come to the point, much too late – but better late than never – where I can feel the hurt and the pain I am responsible for. Yes. Absolutely!

Example 45 presents an important utterance of the serial killer where he is admitting that he feels remorse and is sorry for the pain that he caused; this passage of the interview is crucial for the understanding of his manipulative tactics. Although the words uttered seem genuine, conveying regret and sorrow for his victims, it is also important to consider his nonverbal communication, which will be examined more thoroughly in the next paragraph: while saying “Yes. Absolutely!” Ted Bundy can be seen shaking his head no. This is a potential indicator of him lying, because as stated by Pease and Pease (2004: 232), “the Head Shake gesture signals a negative attitude and you would be well advised to be sceptical about it”, and for this reason the discrepancy between his words and his nonverbal cues is striking, as it suggests that Bundy might not have felt remorse despite his verbal admission. Furthermore, it is worth noticing how Bundy mentions God once again, perhaps aiming at convincing James Dobson of his redemption in order to receive clemency: however, the clinical profile of a psychopath is characterized by the lack of empathy and remorse, hence the reason why these words do not feel genuine.

#### 4.2.2. Visual Analysis

The difference in Bundy's attitude between the two interviews is a significant point to emphasize. Back in 1977 he still believed he could evade responsibility and manipulate his way out of the crimes and accusations, attempting to plant doubts on the claims made against him; he displayed himself as this normal, innocent man who has been mistaken with the serial killer who is still out roaming the streets. This is evident in his choice of words and overall demeanor during the interview.

Contrarily, right at the beginning of the 1989 interview his serious and somber face can be noticed he says: “I won’t kid you to say it’s something I feel I’m in control of or something that I have come to terms with, cause I haven’t”, as can be observed in figure 21. According to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>) Bundy tends to close his eyes when he is bothered by something, action which signals a sign of stress.



*Figure 21. Ted Bundy final interview. (1989) Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

As Portenier (<https://youtu.be/ty4Dr6aGnTo>) argues, Bundy is aware that he cannot escape the consequences of his crimes any longer, but he probably still harbors a degree of denial, as he does not want to accept the verdict of the trial. In essence, the difference between the two interviews highlights Bundy's evolving awareness of his impending fate and his inability to manipulate his way out of his condemnation and execution. At the beginning of the interview he is looking very concerned, with his drawn together lowered eyebrows and the pressed lips, and he is also having difficulty speaking, as Portenier argues (ibid.); however, it is hard to state



that the feeling he is displaying is real, but there is a possibility that he is having some type of emotional difficulty.



*Figure 22. Ted Bundy final interview. (1989) Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Despite his somberness, he still shows that he wants to be in control according to Portenier (ibid.), through his hand gesture. Figure 22 shows a power move that is a partial steeple, which is undoubtedly a domination gesture; this demonstrates Bundy's confidence, his desire to exert control and it projects an image of authority with the aim of manipulating others. Despite what has been said on paragraph 1.4.1. regarding the examination of a gesture considering the whole context and as clusters, – as spoken words are studied as sentences – steepling can be analyzed by itself as it often occurs in isolation, argue Pease and Pease (2004: 132). According to the authors, “the Steeple was frequently used in superior-subordinate interaction and that it indicates a confident or self-assured attitude. [...]. People who are confident, superior types often use this gesture and, by doing so, signal their confident attitude” (2004: 133).



*Figure 23: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Throughout the interview it can be seen how Bundy is constantly trying to create a narrative: as a matter of fact, he chose, among many journalists and interviewers who wanted to talk to him, James Dobson, who was a religious leader. This choice was likely strategic: Bundy may have believed that by defining his crimes as a result of exposure to pornography, he could have gained some sympathy or understanding and he maybe could have lived longer. Bundy is trying to convince him that pornography is what pushed him to do the horrible things that he did, but at the same time he appears conflicted with what he is saying, as he, according to Garrison (<https://youtu.be/GgkRWtovZAw>), wants to take credit for his actions, as previously stated. In terms of nonverbal communication, this can be demonstrated by the amount of times Bundy closes his eyes and keeps them closed for a couple of seconds (as depicted in figure 23), he is aware that pornography is not the cause of his actions. Garrison (ibid.) suggests that the reason of his internal conflict is his will to be in control of the situation, and the fact that he does not want to give Dr. Dobson the power of saying what caused all those victims:

people like him like to externalize blame but they also want credit for the acts that they committed. So I think that he really feels conflicted about doing this: I thin on the one hand he likes the idea of blaming something else, on the other he loses credit.

As a matter of fact, when talking about pornography being the main cause of his action he keeps his eyes closed and it is evident that he is conflicted, whereas, saying “and I take full responsibility for whatever I’ve done and all the things that I’ve done, that’s not the question here”, he does not close his eyes: according to Garrison (ibid.) this is a clear sign that the lies he is telling bother him and he is having an internal conflict with himself, but he is uttering those words in order to be pitied by the audience and by Dr. Dobson.



*Figure 24: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

In different frames of the interview it can be noticed how Bundy furrows his brows when Dr. Dobson says that pornography fueled his fantasies, therefore pushing him to commit those awful crimes, shifting blame once again. Furrowed brows may indicate various emotions, but one has to consider the context and the conversation that is happening around that facial expression. According to Garrison (ibid.), in this context his furrowed brows indicate concentration or even anger, as shown in figure 24. “Frowning, by furrowing the forehead (and brow), usually occurs when a person is anxious, sad, concentrating, concerned, bewildered, or angry”, state Navarro and Karlins (2008: 195), interpretation which aligns with what Garrison argued: Bundy might have felt angry because, as a serial killer and a psychopath, he felt proud of what he had done and was conflicted over admitting his crimes and pretending to be regretful in order to be pitied by the public.



*Figure 25: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

It is also important to notice that there are some rare genuine feelings in the interview under analysis, as shown in figure 25. According to Garrison, in those images it can be seen how Bundy's whole body is arching up, and he closes his eyes but for a clearly different reason than before, when he was uncomfortable. He is now reliving the moments of the killings: "now he is actually for a brief moment putting himself back into the excitement of the awful things that he's done" (ibid.). He is genuinely feeling those emotions and this is one of the rare moments when we see his real self (figure 25).



*Figure 26: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Similarly, when Dobson asks Bundy about his last murder, that of the 12 year-old Kimberly Leach (transcription in example 33 of the previous paragraph) Bundy

answers that he is not able to talk about that because it is too painful, but his nonverbal communication suggests otherwise: he seems like he is thinking about that moment and reliving it, almost trying to hold back a smile, as depicted in figure 26.



*Figure 27: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989) Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning Bundy's attempt to appear apologetic and remorseful while answering the previous question: he can be seen wringing his hands, according to Navarro and Karlins (2008: 149) "hand-wringing is a universal way of showing we are stressed or concerned" as it is a low-confidence hand gesture, contrarily to the steeple; then, Bundy is also seen putting his hands in front of his mouth, which is a pacifying gesture; then he looks downwards, he moves sideways, and as Portenier (<https://youtu.be/ty4Dr6aGnTo>) points out these are all indicators of agitation (figure 27).



*Figure 28: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989) Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*



*Figure 29: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989) Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

As previously argued, while answering Dobson’s question Bundy seems to have emotional difficulties and his words seem to convey regret and guilt, as his nonverbal communication shows agitation and nervousness, as stated by Portenier (ibid.) who also argues that there seem to be vocal halting, as if his vocal cords are tensing up because of an emotional reaction to this murder. However, as soon as he finishes to utter “I can’t really talk about that right now. I would like to be able to convey to you what that experience is like, but I won’t be able to talk about that” his eyes change and he looks at the interviewer with a devious gaze to be sure that his manipulation strategies are working on Dobson (figure 28 and 29), as argued by Portenier (ibid.):

the emotional state is not there, the desynchronization between the top half and the lower half of his face is interesting as his eyes are showing more cold, calculated expressions as he checks up to see if Dobson is emoting correctly.



Figure 30: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)  
Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>



Figure 31: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)  
Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>

In figure 30, on the other hand, it can be seen how Bundy gets distracted by some noise in the vicinity of the interview. “To be easily distracted in a point like this, it is a self-conscious feeling thing or a desire to escape, possibly”, argues Portenier (ibid.), explaining that the look to the side could be an indicator of the fact that he does not want to be there, which does make sense considering the situation he is in.

Similarly to the situation of figure 30, Bundy is startled by a phone that suddenly rings in his proximity and glances at it; by doing that he stops to focus on his

manipulation tactics therefore revealing for just a second his real, non-manipulative face expression (figure 31).



*Figure 32: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Something that is extremely interesting is the effort Ted Bundy puts into defining himself as a normal, average person, perhaps with the final aim of distancing himself from the perceived image of the serial killer: according to Portenier (*ibid.*), it is not clear whether he was trying to change the public’s opinion and manipulate people into thinking he was one of them, through statements like those of example 28 (“We are your sons and husbands. We grew up in regular families”) and example 35 (“Basically, I was a normal person”), in order for him to have some sort of acceptance and sympathy amidst the crimes he committed after his death, if he was trying push his execution date further in time or if he was still hoping that he was not going to be executed. Portenier argues that “his nonverbal communication spikes while speaking about him being an average, normal – perceivably average and normal human” (*ibid.*): Bundy enacts a specific gesture as displayed in figure 32, his thumb and index finger touching together, indicating that he is passionate about what he is saying and he is putting much effort into explaining the concept.



*Figure 33: Ted Bundy final interview. (1989)*  
*Source: <https://youtu.be/Kvd9En-Pens>*

Further during the interview Dobson asks Ted Bundy if he is thinking about all his victims, now that he is living his final hours; while uttering these words, it can be seen in figure 33 how Bundy's expression becomes somber and his eyes close displaying sadness, events which make sense considering his alleged attempt to move his execution date or cancel it. Moreover, during this part of the interview, Bundy keeps his finger in his mouth, which according to Portenier (ibid.) can be analyzed as a self-soothing or self-pacifying gesture. Pease and Pease (2004: 154) state that this gesture "is an unconscious attempt by the person to revert to the security of the child sucking on his mother's breast and occurs when a person feels under pressure", hence contributing to the idea that Bundy in this moment needed reassurance and felt distressed.

During this part of the interview it is interesting to notice how he looks down far more often than when he looks upwards, as pointed out by Portenier, who argues that "that dropping of gaze could be related to shame" (<https://youtu.be/ty4Dr6aGnTo>).

In the same part of the interview, succeeding to this specific behavior, Bundy is asked if he feels remorse and if he thinks about his victims (transcription can be found in example 45). As previously mentioned, that utterance is significant because it shows how nonverbal cues can influence the underlying meaning of the statement. Bundy can be seen shaking his head no while saying that he regrets what he has done and feels sorry for his victims and their families. According to Portenier (ibid.), this desynchronization between his words and his head movement, together with the dropping of gaze and the reiteration of the fact that he felt sorry (which had already



been said) may indicate that he wants to emphasize his statement and it may be a signal of the fact that he does not feel any kind of remorse, shame or sorrow.



## CONCLUSIONS

It is interesting to notice that people were susceptible to Bundy's manipulation to the point that even the judge Edward Cowart, who was evidently a victim of his charisma and manipulative personality, in court uttered some words that left a lasting impact: he expressed disappointment toward the serial killer, acknowledging his intelligence and criticizing the path he chose, defining it as a "total waste of humanity", to quote his own words; despite the gravity of the situation, the judge stated that he holds no ill feelings toward the killer and wished him well, complimenting him for defending himself, notwithstanding Bundy's horrific actions.

In summary, the present dissertation analyzed Ted Bundy's use of language in two pivotal interviews for the case and highlighted the manipulative nature of most of his utterances. By focusing on some theoretical and methodological frameworks crucial for the understanding of the linguistic manipulation and nonverbal communication of Bundy in Chapter One and Chapter Two, the thesis laid the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of Bundy's discourse and body language.

Chapter One presented insights on various aspects of pragmatics, subsequently proceeding to introduce manipulative language. Furthermore, a theoretical presentation of the two approaches employed for the present dissertation was provided, so as to understand how the analysis was conducted.

Chapter Two on the other hand offered some theoretical groundwork regarding psychology and Ted Bundy's mental state. It shed light on the factors that contributed to his criminal behavior, and it investigated themes such as Bundy's lack of remorse, impulsiveness, and grandiosity.

Afterwards, Chapter Three presented a description of the serial killer's biography (delving into the details of his upbringing and the events leading up to his infamous crimes) and some observations with regards to the media's portrayal of the serial killer, explaining how this criminal was often sensationalized and romanticized and how this image perdured to this day.

The main findings of the present thesis can be found in Chapter Four, which presents a discourse analysis and visual analysis of two major interviews of Ted

Bundy. The results of the analysis showed that Bundy was a manipulative individual who tried to trick people into believing his innocence for many years until he was convicted and condemned to the electric chair. In the first years of the crimes, he was still claiming to be innocent and he appeared as a charismatic individual who could not have committed the actions he was accused of, since he used language and nonverbal cues to his advantage, as well as his seemingly charming appearance. Contrarily, in 1989 he acted completely different, displaying somber and subdued manners, which proved to be staged and not genuine. He admitted his actions but still tried to strategically shift blame elsewhere, engaging in a psychological game using his intelligence and charm in a desperate attempt to avoid the death sentence, perhaps leveraging the support of James Dobson, hoping that he would intercede and ask for clemency on his behalf.

In conclusion, we might say that the aim of the thesis was successfully achieved, as the two interviews were analyzed in Chapter Four with regards to both discourse and nonverbal communication; what results from the analysis of the data is that Ted Bundy tried to deceive his interlocutor as well as the public that would have watched the recording afterwards. The findings of the present analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of Bundy's manipulative language, as well as his twisted and dangerous personality: his ability in manipulation was not only limited to the interviews but extended to the real life, victimizing young women who unfortunately fell in his trap. The present research also serves as a reminder of the potential danger that language can imply and the importance of recognizing manipulative behavior in various contexts.

However, this dissertation presents some limitations; the chosen interviews were selected because both were relevant to the case of Ted Bundy and they showcased two distinct behavioral patterns, hence providing valuable examples of the killer's strategies. Notwithstanding this, due to constraints of space, this thesis was limited to the analysis of the above-mentioned data; it is worth mentioning that other interviews or interactions with Bundy could provide additional insights into his linguistic manipulation and nonverbal communication, helping therefore to study more thoroughly Bundy's behavior.

Future research could focus on the analysis of more data relevant to Bundy's case, expanding the area of investigation, in order to provide a more comprehensive study of the criminal's tactics.

Finally, future research might take into consideration and analyze the linguistic and nonverbal communication of other serial killers, such as Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy or Richard Ramirez and compare them with Ted Bundy, so as to study if manipulative behavior is common amongst serial killers.



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