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They Have Names, Too:

A Case Study on the First Five Victims of the Green River Killer: Examining the Construction of
Society and Its Creation of Victim Availability

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13 June 2020

Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice with Departmental Honors

Bachelor of Arts in Women and Gender Studies with Departmental Honors

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I. Abstract

This case study follows the example of Rubenhold (2019) to examine the lives of the first five women killed by the Green River Killer, to give the victims a voice to tell their stories that Ridgway robbed from them, and to identify the social constructs that influence victim availability. To explore this issue, the study analyzed multiple sources of information: archival sources, monographs, articles, websites, and newspapers. In analyzing the effects of their upbringing—family history, educational backgrounds, and personal lives—this research will clarify the role that these factors played regarding where they spent their last day alive.

Using an intersectional lens helps interpret how these young women's race, class, and gender were affected by the social system and their vulnerability in society. The qualitative data was beneficial as an explanatory means of the theoretical social constructs and to understand the themes that emerged from this data. This interpretation of these sources helped recognize the constructs that make up for the vulnerability of marginalized populations and why they are high-risk victims. Analyzing individual bodies, experiences, and lives will answer many questions regarding how identity is crucial for how one experiences life.

Keywords

Green River killer's victims, discipline and punish, environment, intersectionality, disregard, labels, gender, social construction, worth, constrained choices, strained family issues

II. Introduction

Wendy Lee Coffield, Deborah Lynn Bonner, Cynthia Jean Hinds, Opal Charmaine Mills, and Marcia Faye Chapman are not well known outside their immediate families. But they are more than just the names of five women from Washington State: They were killed in the summer of 1982, the first of dozens of women killed by the same man over the course of two decades.

Serial killers are a source of fascination among scholars and the public at large. Among this well known and disturbing group of psychopaths and sociopaths, Gary Ridgway holds a special place in the minds of people living in Washington State. Between 1982 and 2001, he killed at least 49 women, the first five of them he dumped in or on the banks of the Green River, located 20 minutes driving south from Seattle, giving Ridgway the nickname: The Green River Killer. These killings generated a massive body of research by criminal justice and legal scholars and was reported on by journalists and sensationalized by novelists. But, all of this research does not take into account the individual life stories of the victims themselves.

This research project is a first foray into redressing this neglect. The victims of most crimes are rarely mentioned, and this is particularly problematic in the case of serial killers. This project is informed by research into victim availability interpreted through a feminist perspective by decentering the male subject, and it focuses on both the victims and the social influences of their death. Our society has learned to disregard victims, especially when it is found that they are women who we do not count as valuable, who are further denigrated because they experience homelessness, engage in sex work to provide for themselves and their children, use drugs or are drug addicts, and/or are runaways. The issues around these omissions are complex and researching why serial killers kill does not address why specific victims are consistently targeted.

III. Methodology

This case study was designed to: 1) follow the example of Hallie Rubenhold (2019) to examine the lives of the first five women killed by the Green River Killer, 2) give the victims a voice in order to tell their stories that Ridgway robbed from them, and 3) identify the social constructs that influence victim availability. To explore this issue, the study analyzed multiple sources of information: 1) archival sources, 2) monographs, 3) articles, 4) websites, and 5) newspapers. This section will outline a description of the qualitative content analysis used to understand the meaning of the victim's narrative in relation to their deaths.

Archival documents sourced from King County's Public Records Office and the Medical Examiner's Office provided documentation on the young women's birthdate's, dates they were reported missing and found, location where their body was found, the method of their identification, death certificates, and news articles that directly pertained to each individual.¹

This research explored the multiple sources of information to critically analyze social factors that influenced the lives of these five young women. Though there is a surplus of information pertaining to Ridgway and the Green River murder case, there are hardly any scholarly analyses of the victims; this is not unlike victims of other high-profile serial murder cases. *Serial Killers: Issues Explored Through the Green River Murders* by Guillen (2007) and *Defending Gary: Unraveling the Mind of The Green River Killer* by Prothero and Smith (2006) are texts which can elucidate Ridgway's thought process that was influenced by patriarchal cultural norms. *Green River, Running Red* written by investigative journalist, Rule (2004) and *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* by Rubenhold (2019), are

¹ Due to the unprecedented times during COVID-19, government agencies that were contacted for public records were unable to provide documentation. Prioritization of COVID-19 related issues limited the ability to get public records in a timely manner.

non-fiction texts that delve into greater detail about the victims of famous serial killers, Ridgway and Jack the Ripper.

Rule (2004) and *The Search for the Green River Killer* by Smith and Guillen (1991), are primary sources that were used as a means of developing profiles for the young women.

Information regarding substance use, relationships, economic status, family background, and education were sought through websites, newspaper articles, and the above-mentioned books. These sources provided reports of interviews that were conducted with close family members, friends, acquaintances, and social service workers to assess who these women were. In analyzing the effects of their upbringing—family history, educational backgrounds, and personal lives—this research will clarify the role that these factors played regarding where they spent their last day alive.

Using an intersectional lens helped interpret how these young women's race, class, and gender were affected by the social system and their vulnerability in society. The qualitative data was beneficial as an explanatory means of the theoretical social constructs and the themes that emerged from this data. This interpretation of these sources helped understand the constructs that make up for the vulnerability of marginalized populations and why they are high risk victims. Searching for specific details and greater information of these young women's lives proved to be quite difficult. The lack of information available is an indicator of how we as a society care for marginalized individuals in society and particularly for the victims of violent crimes. Some of the young women did not have as much information as the others. The fact that we do not know much about some victims indicates who matters enough in society to have information on them and who is remembered. And, complicating data collection, most of these young women were unremarkable, as many are. They lived average lives where they went to school, work, family

events. They left only the barest trail of documentation. The minimal information that is presented for a few of the young women is not out of neglect, but rather an issue due to the lack of documentation that was available tracking their lives.

Socially constructed forces of power and control—class, gender, family structures—will be analyzed in the reflections of how the five young women experienced life. Following the narratives of the young women, the impact of the social and economic forces will be discussed in how that led to their victim availability. This research poses as an important case study through which one can examine the greater issues that are influenced by patriarchy as they continue to impact society today.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Construction of a Patriarchal Culture

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that society is created by humans and human interaction. The social construction of a patriarchal culture in Western civilization has designed a social hierarchy of power relationships that have traditionally served to cater to and benefit men, maintaining the subservience of women to a certain extent (Hunter, 1988). In 1986, Lerner, an American historian, defined patriarchy as the “manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general” (Hunter, 1988, p. 239-240). Patriarchy is derived from ancient Greek, *patri* (“father”) and *archi* (“authority”), known as the “rule of the father” describing the power men hold in society as a level of privilege which women are not granted (Hunter, 1988). As men dominate in a patriarchal society, cultural constructs such as labor, governmental institutions, laws, and violence become gendered (Dasgupta, 2019). The power dynamics present in the social institutions and the effects it has on women become noticeably visible. For example, gendered acts of violence suggest that male sexuality is socially constructed to be more powerful than the sexuality of women (Overall, 1992). Likewise, the majority of victims of rape, sexual assault, and incest are females. Patriarchal culture diminishes the role of a woman's life and the use of demeaning words, such as *whore* and *slut*, are reserved for girls and women, not men. Therefore, women as a whole, fall victim to the patriarchy (Smith & Mac, 2018).

Individuals who do not fit the typical ideal of the White, middle class, American cisgender male are at a disadvantage and face life with levels of greater difficulty. The patriarchal social structure has a vexing and historically complex and deep-seated hierarchy of privilege in which White men with high socioeconomic status have the most power. The

existence of male supremacy operates at the expense of women because the societal structures, which were constructed by men, are for the sole benefit of men (Overall, 1992). Men are the majority of individuals who have constructed the foundation of the current social structure that we live in, shaping the perceptions in which society views and handles current issues, establishing a form of social control. Maintaining social control is sustained by persuading people to abide by the dominant values of society and meeting social expectations. Kiremire (2007) describes the hierarchy of genders and forms of control to perpetuate the inequality of women. This insinuates that women are subject to direct or indirect sexual crimes as part of a system which individual and collective masculinity of male intimidation keeps women living as societal subordinates.

Women, people of color (POC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals, disabled individuals, and others, face many obstacles and barriers that would provide them with comfortable (even basic) necessities for survival, along with basic human rights that are naturally given to white men. Most marginalized people are disadvantaged because of what Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) dubbed “intersectionality.” By this, she means that they fall victim to the intersection of oppressive social categorizations such as race, gender, class, and ability that marginalize individuals. These oppressive forces are interconnected and women, particularly women of color, are disadvantaged by systems that benefit those who are male and white. Anyone not possessing unearned forms of power and dominance that bestow male privilege and/or white privilege will have to work harder to obtain the barest minimum of dignity and respect. Many of them live in endless cycles of systemic injustices such as poverty and sexism, and they face an abundance of barriers that are kept in place to preserve the power and control that the white men dictate who should benefit. Barriers that one faces in life makes it

difficult to achieve a better lifestyle, and those who are not able to get out of highly vulnerable positions remain in a place of greater vulnerability. These individuals face many barriers and obstacles that limit the options for advancements in social and engagement improvements (Crenshaw, 1989).

Along with patriarchal social constructs, a strong view of an individualistic culture is prominent in America and facilitated by a capitalistic economic financial system. Americans are notorious for caring about their social economic status in society and disregarding other people. The focus is on having a prosperous materialistic life that fulfills their own desires, and the lives of others are disregarded due to the beliefs of personal responsibility and willful ignorance. Conservative activist, Ben Shapiro, while giving a talk at Marquette University said, “Life is what you make of it,” and there are three rules to guarantee a middle class status: finish high school, do not have children out of wedlock, and get a job. One may assume that his argument indicates if one does not get ahead, if one does not make it, it is one’s own fault. He focused on America’s current state as being an even playing field with no systemic obstacles to one’s advancement (Massingale, 2017). However, many who are disadvantaged and work hard to advance know it is not as simple as those three rules for guaranteed success. There is no obligation to help others since it is one’s personal responsibility to work there way up to success (“bootstrapping”).

In the grand scheme of society, individuals do not live unique lives and they do not matter unless they make an eye-opening, wondrously important contribution in society. However, each life is inherently worth more than society deems worthy. As individuals in society operate on a day-to-day basis, the combination of social structures, attitudes, and beliefs affix labels on individuals based on their life circumstances, thus drastically disadvantaging

many. These labels and perceptions of individuals rank them hierarchically, establishing their worthiness. This, in turn, dictates how much attention from society they are believed to deserve, all because they were deemed “worthwhile” or “welfare queens.” Marginalized communities rank lower in perceived social worth and are often labeled with negative descriptors, controlling images, and stereotypes based on where they came from, their occupation, and the position they hold in society. A single aspect of one’s life is not and should not be what defines them as human beings, especially as a determinant factor in how they are talked about and remembered, if anyone remembers them. It is irrational to define a person by a single action that they did or that has happened to them. The complexity of their lives, of who they are, goes far beyond the outward persona people tend to know and see. Such as the lives of the five women. They had lives, but in the media, they were simply reported and generalized as “prostitutes” who were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Intersectionality is of the utmost importance for the bulk of this project to analyze individual bodies, experiences, and lives and how the social worth of the young women put them in a position to be more vulnerable to victimization.

Sex Work: The Intersection of Misogyny and Capitalism

For the purposes of this paper, the term *sex work* and *sex worker* will be used rather than *prostitution* and *prostitute*. *Prostitution* and *prostitute* are terms that are charged with emotional descriptors and have a negative connotation; they are derogatory terms that are often linked with perceived immorality and criminality (McMillan, Worth, & Rawstorne, 2018). The terms prostitution and prostitute demean women in the sex industry, creating a social status in which they are a marginalized group in society. When the Green River Killer was asked why he picked the specific women he murdered, he replied, “I picked prostitutes because I thought I could kill

as many of them as I wanted without getting caught” (McMahon, 2003, p.1). He believed that these females would be among the “missing missing”—missing persons never reported as missing and some of whom may be serial murder victims—implying that society, families, and law enforcement would not notice or care that these women disappeared (Quinet, 2011; Quinet, 2007; Smolowe & Chiu, 2003). The idea that some people matter less than others, such as individuals who experience homelessness, are drug users, and are street sex workers are dubbed the “less dead” (Hickey, 2010; Quinet, 2011). Because Ridgway believed that the women, he brutally murdered did not mean something to anyone else, he was able to dehumanize these women since they belonged to a less valuable group in society (Quinet, 2011).

Criminal justice researchers often use the word prostitution and prostitute in published research. Because of the roots of the terms prostitute and prostitution are insulting and representative of dishonor, many sex work rights advocates now argue for the term sex work or sex worker to be used. Not only is it more descriptive, but also it focuses on sex work as an occupation rather than a dehumanized and dishonored state of being. However, the choice to use the words sex work and sex worker throughout this paper works toward humanizing these women and honoring their lives, as many who engage in sex work do so because they are out of a lack of choice, a constrained state, survival.

The term *sex work* was coined in 1978 by sex worker Carol Leigh, in order to encompass a variety of jobs: stripping; camming (performing sexual activities in front of a webcam for paying clients); phone-sex chatlines; and bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism (BDSM) (Smith & Mac, 2018). Nonetheless, the definition of sex work constitutes the exchange of sex for money is labor and the change in terminology, from prostitution and prostitute to sex work and sex worker, is a step towards destigmatizing sex work. Destigmatizing sex work and

acknowledging it as a respectable profession suggests that the job may come with work-related rights, entitlements, and services for harm reduction, sexual health, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention (McMillan et al., 2018). Greater services and benefits available to those who pursue work in the sex trade would imply there is less stigma for the sex worker, and sex work is viewed as legitimate labor; a business. Most jobs do not have a negative connotation; therefore, sex workers should not be marked as a population of low social worth.

Women who are pushed to the outskirts of society, sometimes engaging in sex work, are vulnerable to all kinds of possible violence and are not protected in any way (McMillan et al., 2018). This is a result of the lack of resources and support for marginalized communities, and the lack of support for sex work stems from societies' perception of the sex worker (McMillan et al., 2018). Sex work is an example of gendered labor. The relationship of power between the buyer and the seller shows the buyer, who is typically male, holds more power in the transaction (Dasgupta, 2019; Overall, 1992). Men have the privilege of buying sex whenever they choose, reinforcing heterosexual male supremacy (Overall, 1992). While it is thought that men are naturally and biologically aggressive and have an uncontrollable sexuality, sex work helps sustain the man's family structure as men conduct sexual business outside of primary relationships with a sex worker. Capitalism, an economic system in which private individuals own and control property for their best interests and make a profit, can explain the existence of sex work. Sex work caters to the needs of men in which they seek sexual gratification. Capitalism may be described as a theory of privilege and oppression for our social structure. As men dominate society, women are victims of a patriarchal state signifying their value, which includes their role in the social, sexual, and economic conditions (Beloso, 2012).

However, sex workers working on the street are chastised by society, maintaining a hypocritical perspective of the morality and decency of the work in which they take part (D'Cunha, 1987). Sex workers are devalued because not only is the work being performed by women, but also selling one's body is considered a misuse and disloyalty of one's self and integrity (McMillan et al., 2018). Although it is deemed immoral that women sell their bodies, a patriarchal ideology will continue to assume that women are supposed to be sex workers, rarely including men as workers in the sex trade (Overall, 1992). Sex work is affiliated with both the patriarchy and capitalism, in which sexual services are exchanged for money (Beloso, 2012). The ramifications of the doubly oppressive forces of capitalism and patriarchy create a power imbalance that suggests that forms of sex work will still exist in which women will still be oppressed and sexual equality will not be reached. Women who are sex workers are typically not there willingly. This marginalized community is working in the sex industry as a last resort for economic opportunities, and men take advantage of the women who are subordinated and degraded, to fulfill their sexual needs.

The United States has functioned under a patriarchal framework for so long that men do not see that the women who are working in the sex industry are victims of a larger systemic structure, and thereby feel free to continue exploiting women's bodies. While women lack the collective and individual agency that men are so easily granted, male privilege becomes prominently visible in a patriarchal country (Beloso, 2012). For the benefit of men, the exploitation of vulnerable populations becomes justified as they believe that women are there to provide and please men. This is true even with high-priced escorts, who are typically young women who make around \$300 an hour to \$25,000 for two days, but they operate more privately and are generally found through websites. Though they may be working independently or

through an agency, but at the end of the night they keep an average of 40% of their listed fee. The rest of the earnings go to paying for advertisements, the listing on a website, paying a driver, and usually the owner of the agency (Sherman, 2008). Other individuals are profiting and keeping the majority of the women's earnings, hence they young women are exploited. The stigma and illegality of this work is dangerous and escorts lives are at risk.

The construction of patriarchy provides a social expression in which fails to view street sex workers as performing work; the women are seen as victims of the patriarchal system. Approximately 80% of sex workers are women and women who are sex workers are 40 times more likely to be assaulted and murdered than other disadvantaged women (Farley, 2017; Get Statistics, n.d.). Sex workers are known as silent victims, the "less dead," who are part of an invisible group in society making them a population of higher risk (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007). Belonging to marginalized communities, the women are highly vulnerable to violent attacks and are rarely given any attention when something does happen to them. Those that are considered "less dead" to society, as easily disposable, which is why sex workers are 40 times more likely to suffer from a violent act than women in other marginalized groups (Hickey, 2010). Justifications for violence committed on marginalized groups, such as sex workers deserving the crimes committed against them, implies that these human beings are not granted the same basic human rights of others (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

The Scholarly Literature on Victims

The literature on serial murder victimization is primarily restricted to quantitative research addressing the demographics of the individuals targeted. Most of the research also focus on the selective process of victimization and the victim's role in the predatory process of the

serial offender (Hickey, 2010). The majority of the studies on victims of violent serial crimes lack an in-depth analysis on the intersection of the victim's social facts and the social forces that influenced their death. There is also a lack of literature on how the patriarchal social structure plays a part in victim availability. Researching further the role that systemic social structures play in the availability of vulnerable individuals of violent serial crimes may help explain why specific victims are targeted. The 49 women that Ridgway was charged for murdering, were assumed to be sex workers, a highly vulnerable and powerless population. While scholars tend to focus on the offender's body count, the details of the lives of the young women are often overlooked and neglected due to their low social worth (Holmes & Holmes, 1998).

Rubenholt (2019), Kolker (2013), Brown (2016), and authors Rodriguez, Montané, and Pulitzer (2007) are some of the first and most recent authors dedicating novels and non-fiction to women who were killed by serial killers. The authors write true stories that describe the missing young women and their deaths. Though these books focus on the investigation aspect of finding the serial killer(s), the authors include some information on the victims. The communities in each of the cities, London, Long Island, N.Y., Jennings, Louisiana, and Juárez, Mexico, understood on a basic scale how gender, poverty, and class division were forces that affected the victimization of the young women. Because of these forces and the impact on the young women's [constrained] choice of employment as sex workers, law enforcement and some families did not bother looking for these missing women. Kolker notes, "There is a story our culture tells about people like them, a conventional way of thinking about how young girls fall into a life of prostitution," and the stories that are told tend to be limited and frequently neglected (Collins-Hughes, 2013, p. 1).

Rubenhold (2019) meticulously researches the lives of the five young women killed by Jack the Ripper in nineteenth-century London. She creates a narrative in which she analyzes all the forces at play in their lives and how these forces put them on the streets the night they were killed. The women were affected by patriarchy and popular literature that conceptualizes the domino effect of unfortunate events that many individuals experience as a result of patriarchal social constricts, such as stressors, is minimal.

The monographs analyze the upbringings of sex workers which include: parental neglect, drug abuse, poverty, and violence as intersecting oppressive forces in the lives of these women. Like the women that Kolker described in his book, the young women's families were "a parade of tragedy" (Kolker, 2013, p. 67). Kolker notes that law enforcement in Long Island, N.Y. were negligent in investigating the murders of the young women who were escorts found online websites. Rodriguez, Montané, and Pulitzer (2007) convey a story of young girls who disappeared in the city of Juárez, Mexico where the police also disregarded the cases of the disappearing women because they were poor and were assumed to be involved working in the sex industry. Since Mexico is a male-dominant culture, these girls were quickly assumed to be sex workers who often ran away with men. Since the early 1990s, as there was an increase in female workers in the *maquiladoras*—a factory in Mexico run by a foreign country—there was also an attack on gender roles. This is a key reason some linked to the deaths of these young working women. When families reported their young girls missing, authorities claimed that because these girls worked in nightspots, something bad was expected to happen to them. However, many of the families claimed that the reason for their disappearance was because "people with power and money [view these] poor girls as disposable" (Rodriguez et al., 2007, p. 206). The root of violence appeared to be a situation centered on gender-based violence that

included the disappearances, brutal sexual crimes, and murder of these girls. Nevertheless, the citizens of the state of Juarez blamed the dead girls for their own attacks due to being alone at dark and dressing provocatively. Since the victims are women, it was not deemed as a national emergency to look for them. Women are seen as disposable, and a man that was responsible for killing a girl said as a celebratory measure, “adrenaline is so high that you want to celebrate by killing women” (Rodriguez et al., 2007, p. 256).

Power and control, therefore, are at the center of victimization of young women, specifically individuals who live certain lifestyles that make them more prone to victimization, such as those involved in sex work. Publications stress that sex workers are among the group that serial killers typically consider as ideal victims, “the less dead” (Hickey, 2010) The victims “lack prestige,” therefore they are easy targets and there is no serious public outcry when they go missing or are found dead (Egger & Egger, 2001, p. 2).

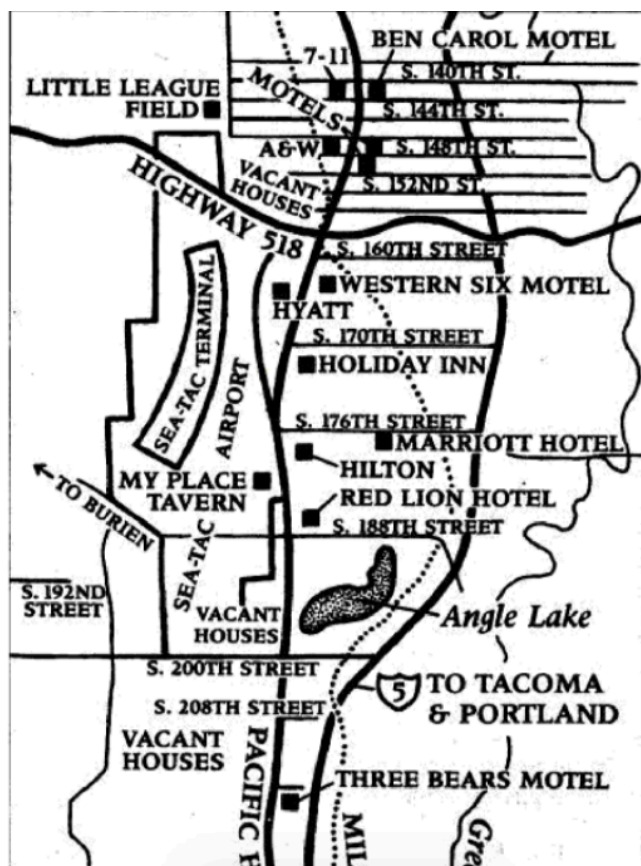
The research will analyze Gary Ridgway’s first five victims in determining patriarchy’s role in the availability of women. This research looks at how social facts of the women’s families impact their lives and experiences and how the justice systems fail to address the needs of the vulnerable young women. This paper will seek to incorporate the criminal justice aspect of the Green River Killer case with the greater insights of a feminist perspective that questions the workings of power that maneuver its ways into the lives of individuals. Key questions that underpin this study are: How does living in a capitalist and patriarchal society impact those who do not benefit from those systems? How does this system influence the vulnerability to assault and homicide for women? Social problems are not particular to an individual but are more widespread like domestic violence, poverty, and parental neglect. An analysis of the lives of the first five women killed reveal patterns that suggest that these issues make women more

vulnerable because the social safety net is frayed and does not support them. The situations that these young women were placed in, because of how society is constructed affects them, was detrimental in the sense in which they have to make choices out of constraint. Four of the five victims had to resort to sex work to provide sustenance and shelter for themselves and their dependents. These young women died at very young ages: they did not get to experience life, they were robbed of their livelihood, and they were left without a voice. An important intention of this research is to give these women voices, and get society to listen, to acknowledge how social structures in place are truly working against, and not for, the betterment of society.

VI. Who Are the Five Young Woman?

All of the women I'm going to discuss have two things in common, the first one is Pacific Highway South (PacHiWay)—previously called Old 99 and Highway 99—located 10 miles south of downtown Seattle, next to the Sea-Tac airport. The residents of King County typically know this highway as the Sea-Tac Strip (Parrish, 1990). The land on which the Strip is located, from S. 139th St. to S. 272nd St., was paved and built in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s the Sea-Tac airport grew, and motels and hotels thrived in order to accommodate those flying in and out of Seattle. Businesses boomed and the 24-hour a day nightlife flourished; the Strip's name was in reference to the similar action on the Las Vegas Strip (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Sex workers were known to infiltrate Pacific Highway South in the 1970s, and people who were familiar with the Strip knew they could go there for sexual services. Sex workers proliferated the Strip in the 1980s and there were many women shouting, waving, and on the side of the street looking for buyers (Smith & Guillen, 1991). The Strip had a reputation. It was known as “the motorized den of iniquity” (Prothero, 2006, p. 32).

Along the Strip, a set of opposing social and economic forces intersected to shape the lives of Ridgway's victims. These forces—race, gender, and class—influence the choices these women had. All five of the women who will be discussed share a set of common issues that resulted in choices of work and personal relationships. Strained family circumstances, teen-age angst, dropping out of school, socio-economic status (SES), and the need for a sense of belonging and attachment put these girls in positions where they had to make constrained choices for fulfill their needs of survival, later facilitating their death. For some of them, strained family circumstances resulted in pursuing survival sex, exhibiting an example presented as a constrained choice (Schwarz, Kennedy, & Britton, 2017). There is a reason and a story behind



why each one made specific choices, and individual circumstances dictated their unique needs and abilities.

These young women were picked up because they were young and attractive. A predominant assumption that streetwalkers were sex workers was common, and one of the reasons why Ridgway would approach and pick up young girls on the streets of the Strip. At the time, and occasionally now, the term prostitute was used to facilitate a negative

descriptor of people selling sex. This label can result in assessing one's social worth in society and deem sex workers as low worth. In this case, the five young women who were found in or on the banks of the Green River were generalized as sex workers because of where they were at the time of their disappearance.

The second thing they have in common is a man, the embodiment of white male privilege who used his privilege to murder young women: Gary Ridgway. Unlike the women he killed, there is a disproportionate amount of information about him. Born in Utah and raised in South King County, Ridgway (b. 1949) grew up living with a domineering and violent mother, and his father, who was employed as a funeral director, did not stand up to his wife, and two brothers. From a young age, Ridgway became fixated with sexual fantasies to fulfill a sense of control he did not have with his mother.

When Ridgway was young, he would wet the bed and his mother, while wearing little to no clothing, would clean his genitals and humiliate him in front of his brothers. Ridgway's mother, who often dressed provocatively, became a significant influence for Ridgway's perspective on women who resembled her. She would tell Ridgway stories about her time working in the suit section at J.C. Penny and how men would become aroused when she measured the inseams of men's suits while she would take a whiff of their genitals. In addition, his father habitually told Gary many stories about how his coworker would engage in necrophilia—sexual intercourse with a corpse—at their place of work, the mortuary (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

With the constant degradation that came from his mother, his inability to please her, and the lack of control he had in life, he developed the fantasy of violently hurting his mother due to the frustration he held towards her, developing a *bruised manhood* (Murray, 2017). In a patriarchal society such as the United States, some males believe they are entitled to women and sex. Ridgway's form of revenge demonstrated his need to reinforce his male privilege to gain power and control of his own agency, from situations that feminized him (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007; Murray, 2017). The constant rejection and humiliation Ridgway faced from women led him to begin stalking women in high school. Ridgway experienced years of degradation, humiliation, and rejection from multiple women. The abasement he experienced from his mother, and the constant rejection he received from women he wanted to date, formed his hatred of women who viewed them as less than human, which led to the brutal rape and killings of many women (Prothero, 2006; Murray, 2017).

Living in a patriarchal society implies there is a natural dominance over women. Therefore, the outcomes of romantic relationships he pursued did not amount to what he believed

he was entitled to, lacking power and control. Men who are raised in a society with a strong patriarchal ideology believe that they should conform to traditional masculine ideals, such as inflicting violence as an indication of power. As Ridgway displayed during his 19-year murder spree, he lived out his sexual fantasies filled with rage, hatred, and sadistic retribution by raping and murdering women. Some men who experience a bruised manhood may reinforce their male privilege by murdering individuals who they believe they can have control over and justify their actions to compensate for one's lost manhood (Murray, 2017). Tatar (1995), author of *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* states, "Women are punished and blamed for the feminization of men, their loss of control, impotence and even castration. In short, to dismember woman allows a man to remember himself." Men will become enraged when they are degraded, seeking to attack those in which they feel they are greater than (Murray, 2017, p. 741).

Ridgway's rage and lack of control led him to engage in sexual sadistic behavior, murdering a woman, Wendy Lee Coffield, in July 1982. Just one month later in August, four more bodies appeared: Debra Lynn Bonner, Cynthia Jean Hinds, Opal Charmaine Mills, and Marcia Faye Chapman. Though Ridgway claimed to have killed upwards of 80 women, he ultimately pled guilty to 49 murders (Levi-Minzi & Shields, 2007).

Wendy Lee Coffield

Wendy Lee Coffield was born on April 17, 1966 to Virginia and Herbert Coffield and was the second of two children; her sister Patsy was fourteen months older than her (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0802; Smith, 1984c). Virginia and Herbert married on February 26, 1965, and divorced in 1979, when Wendy was around 12 or 13 years old. The children were split amongst the parents; Patsy went on to live with her father, while Wendy went to live with her mother. This decision was made because Wendy's personality and behaviors resembled that of her mother, and Herbert was not equipped to take care of Wendy, but he found out later that Virginia would also not be able to properly take care of Wendy (Smith, 1984c).



Virginia Coffield, Wendy's mother, who also went by Ginny, grew up in Eastern King County and was one of eight children. Ginny had a difficult childhood marked by parental neglect and sexual assault. Her father was rarely around and there was no mention of her mother. Ginny disclosed that she was molested by her grandfather, and her father molested her sisters and stepsisters. Ginny acted out and ran away due to the conditions at home, saying, "I kept refusing to go home," and was locked up at Centralia's Maple Lane school in the early 1960s (Smith, 1984a). "I enjoyed being locked up for two years. That was the most safe, secure feeling I ever had" (Smith, 1984a). When Wendy became older and began to act out, Ginny saw herself in Wendy and believed that Wendy was headed in a similar direction. While Ginny saw similar aspects of her personality in Wendy, she believed that her insight would help her care for her daughter.

There was hardly any information regarding Wendy's childhood from birth to 11–12 years of age, therefore, there is no certainty whether she experienced a form of trauma during her childhood years. The Coffield family moved to Colorado for some time, and when they returned to South King County in 1978, Wendy's troublemaking began. When she was 12 years old, Wendy and a friend ran away to a truck stop near I-5 and Highway 18 at the Auburn-North Bend connection, hoping to catch a ride. Although the reason for running away was never disclosed, that was the first and last time Wendy's mother filed a missing person's report. Her parents were coming to terms with Wendy's behavior and began setting punishments. Ginny would disagree with some of the forms of punishment that Herbert would bring to the table, such as setting a 4:30 pm curfew. Wendy was strong-willed, short-tempered, and impulsive; therefore, the punishments did not suffice, and her parents felt that they were inept to control her (Smith, 1984c).

Ginny and Herbert divorced in 1979. Ginny said, "I grew up all of a sudden and I didn't want to take—I didn't want to take orders anymore. I wanted to stand on my own two feet" (Smith, 1984c). The divorce took a particularly harmful toll on Wendy and she began to act out, with her mother describing her as, "wild in a lot of ways but I don't think it was a harmful kind of wild. The only one it hurt was herself" (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982b). Wendy dropped out of Kent Junior High and later enrolled into the Kent Continuation School to catch up (Rule, 2004).

Wendy and her mother lived in many low-income housing units and tents due to their lack of financial resources. Both would pick blackberries in the fields during the summer in order to afford food (Rule, 2004). In August 1979, Wendy and Ginny moved to the Springwood Apartments, a King County Housing Authority low-income housing project on Kent-Kangley

Road southeast of Kent. Wendy spent quite a bit of time hanging out in the laundry room of the apartment complex, transforming it into her social center where she got into further trouble. She was arrested by King County police for stealing a pair of pants from the laundry room. She was sentenced to complete a diversion program that aided her in paying restitution along with attending a single counseling session. In the laundry room, she met her cousin Linda Sue and Linda's friends. Ginny knew who Wendy was spending her time with and what they were up to, recalled that "everyone else was getting tattoos and she wanted some, too, and her and her cousin, Linda Sue, went and got them together" (Smith, 1984c). Wendy had multiple tattoos: a red and black butterfly on the side of her left breast, many other butterflies around her body, a unicorn, and a pair of wings with the word "Harley" in the middle (Guillen & Smith, 1992). The tattoos would then be of great importance in the identification of Wendy's body.

Ginny described Wendy as a chronic runaway, someone who was running away from unhappiness or seeking excitement. Ginny understood the dangers in running away and partaking in dangerous activities, since Ginny had been in Wendy's shoes. Ginny mentioned that when Wendy was 14 or 15 years old, she came home upset and disheveled, telling her that a man had raped her when she was hitchhiking. Ginny was quick to dismiss her, saying that that is what happens when one hitchhikes (Rule, 2004). Ginny stated that Wendy had expressed multiple times that "she wanted to be put in an institution because she didn't like having to deal with the world outside" (Smith, 1984c). Her mother was aware of the outside world that Wendy was encountering. She reported her understanding of Wendy's drug use and involvement in sex work to earn money in Tacoma and near the Sea-Tac airport. (Guillen & Smith, 1992). A pimp and a young woman, both who wanted to stay anonymous, disclosed that they knew who Wendy was. The pimp stated that he used to see her standing outside the U & I Café on 1314 Pacific Avenue

in downtown Tacoma. The pimp and the young woman both knew Wendy had a reputation for stealing from men she slept with; he called Wendy a “trick.” Wendy was known to frequent places where sex work proliferated and had been arrested for soliciting sex in the South County area (Smith & Guillen, 1991; Times Staff, 1982).

At about age 13, it is presumed that Wendy was sexually active. She met a young man from Auburn, who may have been between the ages of 19 and 21, who she had liked (Guillen & Smith, 1992; Smith, 1984c). His name was never mentioned in any publication. Ginny knew that he and Wendy were seeing each other and had slept together. Wendy was encouraged by her mother to take birth control pills. Ginny exclaimed, “it’s better to be safe than sorry,” yet Wendy did not want to go to the clinic alone, therefore she was unable to obtain pills and medical advice on sexually transmitted diseases, later getting gonorrhea (Smith, 1984c). The circumstances regarding Ginny, Wendy, and the young man got much worse. Ginny had also engaged in sexual relations with this young man. This angered Wendy because he was her boyfriend at the time, and she did not want her mother to sleep with him. Ginny claimed that she had slept with him first, and when Ginny and Herbert’s divorce was finalized in November of 1979, this young man moved in with them. The boyfriend and Ginny were alcoholics which heightened the amount of conflict that was present in their home. This young man was physically abusive towards both Ginny and Wendy, and he controlled the household. With all that was happening at home, Wendy began to drink heavily and often stayed out all night. Ginny and her boyfriend were stuck in a cycle of splitting up and getting back together; these separations did not benefit the relationship between Wendy and Ginny (Smith, 1984c).

The source of Wendy’s anger was directed specifically toward her mother, father, the boyfriend, and the world in general, in ways more than typical for a young girl her age. Her

anger towards them would lead her to “drink, run off, and shoot dope” (Smith, 1984c). Ginny was well versed in the shenanigans. For example, one day Wendy disappeared and returned home to sleep all day. Ginny walked in to wake her up and noticed track marks on her arms. She woke her up to ask what had happened and Wendy admitted that she and Linda Sue were at the home of some people shooting up heroin (Smith, 1984c).

Late March 1980, Wendy and her mother fought once again about the boyfriend. Wendy took off with another friend, stole a pickup truck from a family friend, picked up some boys from Renton, and drove to Spokane. They picked up a couple of other runaway girls in Spokane, then drove to Ephrata, a small city in Washington State where the Coffield’s once lived for a short time, meeting a man they called Uncle Win. The teens spent a few nights at his home when the stolen vehicle, which contained stolen cosmetics, food, and jewelry, was found by the police, who shortly thereafter arrested the teens. Wendy was placed in a jail located in Ephrata and then transferred to King County’s Youth Services Center. She was released to her mother in April and told her probation counselor Barbara Gropper, who works for the King County Juvenile Court, that the jail and service center had “food, a bed, and a roof,” words similar to her mother’s when Ginny was locked up (Smith, 1984c). The conditions of her release stipulated that she serve eight months of probation and see a psychological counselor—though she was not given a counselor immediately—and the requirement of attending an alcohol information class was waived, even though she had a severe drinking problem (Smith, 1984c). Upon her release from the youth service center, Wendy, Ginny, and the boyfriend moved to an apartment in Puyallup where they spent most of their time drunk. Wendy slept in the apartments of other tenants to circumvent being under the same roof where her mother and the boyfriend had sex.

Ginny obtained an insurance settlement from a work injury and bought a car with that money. As the boyfriend was domineering, he drove the car as though it was his; Wendy would start fights to defend her mother and told him that because Ginny bought it, she should be able to use the car. During Thanksgiving of 1981, the relationship between Ginny and the young man went further downhill. Ginny tried to commit suicide in front of Wendy, the young man, and his mother. She cut her wrists and smeared it all over the boyfriend and her car and was later checked into the hospital at Valley General. When Wendy witnessed her mother slash her wrists at Thanksgiving dinner, Wendy did the same and slashed her wrists. There was no information regarding whether Wendy was checked in to the hospital. When Ginny checked herself out the next day, she found out that the boyfriend had spent the night at another girl's home, and Ginny swallowed a handful of pills out of anger. Ginny thought it was best that she went to live with one of her sisters in Sumner, Washington, leaving Wendy to live alone (Smith, 1984c).

Since Wendy was a chronic runaway and acted out quite frequently, her mother realized she was not able to control nor take care of Wendy. Ginny knew Wendy needed strict rules and a secure environment where “she could have a couple of years off the streets to grow up” and it would “give her a chance to mature in a structured environment” (Smith, 1984a; *The Seattle Times* staff, 1982a). Given Wendy’s behavioral history, Ginny knew the life at home could not provide Wendy with a safe place to grow up, and that she was incorrigible:

She was going to do what Wendy wanted to do. Being as Mom could do what she wanted to do, Wendy was going to show me she could do what she wanted to do, but she would also have to pay the consequences. She’d get in trouble. She’d get arrested and she’d have to serve the time. I was not going to baby her and bail her out, because it’s not teaching her anything that way, but she had a tendency to run a lot, and when she was

hurt, she would run, but what she would do is the same thing I used to do, was run to that bottle, and it never helped. (Smith, 1984c).

As long as Ginny was drinking and smoking marijuana, it was okay to her that Wendy did the same. Ginny expected the state to provide Wendy with the same care she received when she was Wendy's age (Smith, 1984a). Though Ginny was not adept in taking care of Wendy, she came from a loving place when stressing Wendy's incarceration. Ginny knew that growing up was a difficult process for Wendy and that she encountered a great deal of pain that followed the divorce, being split up from her sister, and then having to live with her mother. Ginny claimed, "that's why I don't have any pain in my heart now that she's gone," as she knew the difficulties Wendy was met with (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982a). This difficult life that Wendy endured was also acknowledged by her psychologist, Dr. Alvin Sion, who wrote:

Wendy generally did not look at me and was consistently sullen throughout the examination. At times she expressed herself angrily. She generally appeared reluctant to extend herself mentally and tended to give up over-easily. She evidenced a general dysmorphia (unhappiness, opposite of euphoria) and pessimism about herself and her situation. She was an angry, resistant, immature young woman who seems deeply unhappy with herself and with her external world. All in all, I believe Wendy is certainly not capable of managing her own life constructively and in socially appropriate directions (Smith, 1984c).

When her mother went to live in Sumner, Wendy lived alone and took care of herself completely on her own—much as she had been doing that for the past four years. She was found heavily intoxicated in early 1982 by a man from Auburn named Norman Harvey. According to a report made to the juvenile court, he took her home so she could sleep in his bed, while he slept

at a neighbor's home. Wendy woke up and stole Norman's blank checks and wallet. She would visit her grandfather, Lawrence Coffield from Tacoma, and steal his check books. She mastered forging checks, as she practiced forging her grandfather's signature. Wendy was arrested by Auburn police for forging a \$180 check from Norman's checkbook, and served time in the Tacoma juvenile detention center (Guillen & Smith, 1992; Smith, 1984c). Barbara Gropper recalled Wendy stated that theft was "no big deal" since she needed the money for food and other necessities. Gropper claimed that "Mrs. Coffield has had her own personal problems and has been unable to take care of Wendy" which she noticed the urge of survival that Wendy had to face. The Department of Youth Services referred her to a psychologist who reported that Wendy was depressed, angry about her life, felt unloved by her parents, and that she was incapable of changing things for the better (Guillen & Smith, 1992). Smith (1984c) wrote that Wendy was a "young girl who was confused about what was expected of her; who felt that her father did not really love her; who wanted her mother's approval while also denying her the power to influence her." Her home life greatly influenced the life that she had lived and a psychologist added that "because of Wendy's anger, chronic dissatisfaction, pessimism and general discouragement, together with her meager coping skills, I suspect that she could well have self-destructive tendencies which could emerge when she feels highly upset" (Guillen & Smith, 1992).

During March 1982, Wendy was accused of stealing lunch tickets and some money from a school where she was completing her community service. She was then arrested again for violating her probation. By this time, Wendy was known to be a ward of the state (*The Seattle Times staff*, 1983). She was taken to Remann Hall, the juvenile detention center in Pierce County, and was there until April 27 when she was released back to her mother. Four days later,

Wendy stole food stamps from a neighbor in the apartment complex located at 330 3rd S.W. #5, Puyallup. When Ginny found out, she called the Pierce County probation officer Jill LaBrecque to pick up Wendy. She returned to Remann Hall where she spent time until her appearance with the Pierce County Juvenile Court Commissioner Paul Boyle on June 4, 1982. She was sentenced to thirty days on a theft charge, “provided, she is to be released when a group home is found” (Smith, 1984c). By the end of the month, they were unable to find her a group home, so they placed her in a temporary receiving home, similar to the one she ran away from when she was 13 or 14. On July 2, she was released from Remann Hall. Betsey Page, a social worker from the Department of Social and Health Services, noticed that Wendy was anxious to leave the juvenile detention center, as she was happy there. Page took Wendy to the temporary home, owned by Melvin and Jeannie Powers, who lived in West Tacoma. Betsey did mention to the couple that Wendy had some problems with drugs, alcohol, and stealing a vehicle. However, she neglected to mention that Wendy threatened to run away, was involved in petty crime, and occasionally partook in sex work (Smith, 1984c).

Because Ginny never visited Wendy at Remann Hall, and they had not seen each other since early May, Wendy asked Jeannie on July 3, 1982 if she could visit her mother for the 4th of July weekend. With approval from Labreque’s probation order and Page’s placement, Jeannie granted her permission to see her family. Wendy either took a bus or hitchhiked to her mother’s house in Puyallup where she encountered her mother’s boyfriend who had just returned from boot camp. Her arrival and time spent visiting her mother consisted of sitting at the table with her mother, the boyfriend, and relatives drinking, and smoking weed. The next day, Wendy visited her father and her sister Patsy in Enumclaw, where they lived. Herbert mentioned that Wendy seemed excited about her temporary home placement in West Tacoma and that she had found a

small kitten which she carried around with her. Patsy was relieved to know that Wendy was spending the night with them, as she had been worried for her. Wendy had to go back to her mother's the following morning, but Patsy begged her not to leave, "I had a feeling. But Wendy said she had to be on the road," not knowing that it was going to be their last time together (Smith, 1984c).

Page picked up Wendy from Ginny's apartment on July 7, and Ginny did not get to say goodbye because she was still asleep by the time Wendy left. At Jeannie's home, all the children that were temporarily residing there were watching the scary movie, *The Hand*. That night, Wendy asked for and was given permission to visit her grandfather Lawrence in Tacoma Jeannie let her go under the condition that she was to be back home on July 9 by 9 pm; Wendy agreed took off the following morning (Smith, 1984c).

July 8 was the last time anyone who knew her was to see her alive. Jeannie filed a missing person's report with the Tacoma police department on July 8, 1982 (Mulick & The News Tribune, 2003; Smith, 1984c). Jeannie told the police that Wendy had been found drunk in Tacoma's downtown sex district (Guillen & Smith, 1992). LaBrecque paid a visit to Ginny asking her when the last time she saw Wendy. Ginny had not seen Wendy since the 4th of July weekend where they spent about three hours together, and the rest of the time she was with Patsy and her father. Ginny disclosed that Wendy had gone wild; she was drinking, smoking marijuana, and turning tricks—selling sex on the street. Ginny did not want any more visits regarding the disappearance of Wendy; it caused her too much pressure and pain not knowing where she was (Smith, 1984c).

16-year-old Wendy Lee Coffield was found strangled and dumped in the Green River, near Meeker Street bridge in Kent on July 15, 1982, marking her as the first known victim of the

Green River Killer (King County, 2016; Cartwright, Ostrom, & Wilson, 1982; Smith, 1984a; Smith, 1984c). She was found with her green and white blouse and blue jeans tied tightly around her neck, still wearing her socks and shoes, but was completely naked (Guillen & Smith, 1992). The initials W.C. was inscribed in the right front pocket of her blue jeans. In her change pocket, medical examiners found a single penny (Smith & Guillen, 1987). The King County Medical Examiner circulated pictures of her tattoos in hopes of a positive identification. Joseph Yates, a tattooer, called the Kent police department confirming that her tattoos were his work and her name was Wendy, letting them know that her mother lived in Puyallup (Guillen & Smith, 1992).

Wendy had a dark bruise on her left forearm, two broken bones higher up in her arm with a lot of bleeding around the fracture, indicating that her and her killer had been in a violent struggle; Wendy's cause of death was asphyxia due to ligature strangulation (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0802; Guillen & Smith, 1992). The autopsy, in conjunction with algae tests, confirmed that Wendy was killed on July 12, 1982 (Guillen & Smith, 1992).

Ginny and Herbert Coffield filed a lawsuit against the state of Washington for their failure to take care of Wendy, as she had been a ward of the state at the time of her death. Due to the overcrowding, understaffed, and underfunded state homes for juveniles, the Coffield's contended that this constituted child negligence, which led to Wendy's death. Court documents accused the state of allowing her to leave the group home a couple of times without verifying where she was going and when she was returning. They asserted that with greater funding allocated toward caseworkers and proper supervision for the juveniles under their care, such accidents would not happen (*The Seattle Times staff*, 1983). However, Pierce County Judge E. Albert Morrison said that the acts of a serial murderer "are so highly extraordinary and

unforeseeable” that the state cannot be held liable, that there should be appropriate attention given to the change in state legislature in the proper handling of children in juvenile agencies (Smith, 1984d; *The Seattle Times* staff, 1984).

Deborah Lynn Bonner

Born Deborah Lynn Bonner, on October 23, 1958; Deborah is known to be the Green River Killer's second victim (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0909). Deborah was the youngest child born to Shirley and Walter Bonner, and had two older brothers, Walter Jr. and Raymond. They all lived together in Tacoma, Washington at 2342 S. Cushman Rd, Tacoma (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0909; Smith & Guillen, 1991; Cartwright et al., 1982). Deborah typically went by the nickname "Dub" and throughout published sources, her name is typically spelled Debra (Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991; n.a., 2003).

When Carol Ostrom, a reporter for *The Times*, went to interview the Bonner family after Dub's death, she noticed that the neighborhood and the Bonner's home was impoverished. As she made her way to the front door of the home, she had to get through an unkempt tattered front yard that was guarded by multiple dogs. The door was open with the screen door unhinged and placed laterally across the bottom half of the entrance to keep the dogs from entering (Smith & Guillen, 1991). One can infer that they may have had a lack of financial resources and that their low socioeconomic status may have contributed to Dub's course of life.

Dub fell in with the wrong group of friends in high school, which influenced her decision to drop out of high school during her sophomore year. Spending time with her friends led her to partake in the abusive consumption of alcohol (Clarridge & Ith, 2003). Shirley reported, "Well, I

tried to tell her you know, to keep going to school, because if you don't finish high school you won't get a job," and the only job she could get was at the Dairy Queen in South Tacoma (Ostrom, 1982). Shirley recalled that another employee was stealing from the company and blamed it on Dub, thus the manager took out his frustration on Dub (Ostrom, 1982). Dub quit (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Her journey to get another job proved to be difficult since she had little education, and it was highly unlikely that an employer would hire someone who dropped out of high school. Dub noticed the importance of a high school education/diploma, therefore, she planned to get her GED (Rule, 2004).

When Dub was about 19 years old in 1978, she met a man named Carlton Marshalls who was 27 at the time. He went by the street name Carl Martin or Robert L. Martin and was known as a drug dealing pimp in the Tacoma area. The community knew Dub as Carl's "ho;" however, to Dub, he was her boyfriend (Smith & Guillen, 1991, p. 48). Dub was enamored with Carl, and he made her happy enough for Dub to willfully work the streets to support him. Soliciting sex made it possible to live a lifestyle of traveling and being able to purchase heroin (Rule, 2004). While Dub would go to the streets looking for business, Carl would spend time lurking in the taverns in Tacoma. They lived together in the Teapot Motel in downtown Tacoma, but when the police officers were onto them, they moved to South King County and spent time at the Three Bears Motel located at South 216th Street and Pacific Highway South, on the Strip. Dub and Carl owned a 1972 maroon Thunderbird with a white top that was registered under both of their names; it was later impounded (Smith & Guillen, 1991; Cartwright et al., 1982). Her brother, Walter, Jr., exclaimed "That car was Debbie. She was class all the way" (Ostrom, 1982).

They traveled up and down the West Coast and throughout the United States and were "freelancing," which was working the "circuit" that runs from Portland to Tacoma to Seattle to

Yakima, and Spokane (Rule, 2004). For months at a time, they drove up and down the West Coast, to larger cities in Washington State, and occasionally stopping in Colorado. They were often arrested for engaging in sex work (Smith & Guillen, 1991; Cartwright et al., 1982; Clarridge & Ith, 2003). Though this line of work provided Dub and Carl with a form of income to maintain their car, modes of living, and sustenance, they accumulated fines which was part of doing business on the street (Rule, 2004). These amounted to a \$1,000 fine to Tacoma's Municipal Court, which Dub was keen on paying off at \$25 a week. She was working with a warrant's officer who worked for the Tacoma Municipal Court, Herbert Schirmer, who disclosed that this fine was from six convictions of soliciting sex. It is unknown if these fines also belonged to Carl (Cartwright et al., 1982). By the summer of 1982, Dub had paid \$225 of her debt (Rule, 2004). On July 18, 1982, she was arrested by the undercover vice squad for engaging in sex work; however, she used an alias, Pam Peek. In the police identification system, Dub was a convicted sex worker and an occasional striptease dancer, who often went by the name Pam Peek. About three weeks before her death, Dub and Carl were arrested and were incarcerated in the Tacoma jail. Dub's parents were worried for her, knowing the trouble she had gotten into, and put their home up as a bond to bail her and Carl out (Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991).

It seemed that Dub and her parents had a good relationship, nonetheless, she would blow up when her parents would speak negatively of Carl and say that he was a bad influence. Though Dub loved her parents, she also thought that she really loved Carl, and she always defended him to her parents. Dub was nevertheless welcomed back home, but she spent most of her time living in motels and working the streets alongside, or some may say for, Carl (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Dub continued to call her mom a couple times a week to check in and stay in touch, always

ending the calls with “I love you” and “Tell Dad I love him” (Smith & Guillen, 1991; Clarridge & Ith, 2003).

Dub’s last phone call was on July 22, 1982 when she spoke to both of her parents and her brother. She called to follow up on an eye operation her father had on July 20 (Ostrom, 1982). She spoke first with Walter, Jr. and said, “Hi Sonny, how are you? How is Dad? I love you,” and Walter, Jr. said that she sounded like her normal self (Ostrom, 1982). Shirley later attested that she thought Dub was on some kind of drug or there was something wrong because her voice sounded a bit higher, but otherwise she seemed fine. Dub told her mother that she had been a sex worker for the past four years. When she spoke with her father, Walter thought that she sounded scared, but told him that she loved him (Smith & Guillen, 1991). When her parents bailed out her and Carl, Dub disappeared on July 25, leaving Carl and her parents extremely worried (Smith & Guillen, 1991).

That was the last time she was seen alive. She was only 23 years old. She had been seen leaving the Three Bears Motel in Des Moines at around 8 pm, hoping to catch some dates (Rule, 2004). Dub left her clothes, her “work tools,” and their car at the motel. Carl called her parents asking if they had seen her; Shirley not having seen nor heard from her daughter, filed a missing person’s report with the Tacoma police department. The Tacoma police department did not accept her missing person’s report because Dub was known to be a transient individual who was old enough to disappear for a few days and later return (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Carl later said that Dub was “missing in action”—she disappeared while working the streets (Smith & Guillen, 1991, p. 49).

Eighteen days later, on August 12, 1982, at approximately 1:30 pm, her body was found in the Green River by Frank Linard, a passerby who stopped near the PD&J Meat Company

slaughterhouse near Kent. He informed the police and it was not long before King County police and the Medical Examiner approached the scene. The examiner took multiple photos of Dub's autopsy and collected and sent her fingerprints to a technician for a positive identification. She was identified by the purplish tattoo on her arm had her nickname "Dub" written inside a heart, which was supplemented by the fingerprints that were in the database from when she was arrested twice for sex work on Pacific Highway South 30 days prior to her death (Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991; Crowley, 2001; Smith, 1985).

Shorty Best, a bartender who worked at *The Lucky Spot*, the bar Dub frequented quite often, was interviewed on August 17, 1982 by Carol Ostrom. He told her that he had last seen Dub come into the bar about a month before. She was disheveled and crying because she had been terrified. Dub told Shorty via a note she had written to him that she needed to raise thousands of dollars to pay off a man who had been following her. The thousands of dollars were to pay off a debt Carl owed Larry Darnell Matthews, who threatened to kill Dub if he did not pay him the money. Best had later given the note to Walter and Shirley, and Dub's parent's both who believed that this debt was drug money (Smith & Guillen, 1991).

Dub was known as an attractive, fun-loving, kindhearted, person who was rich with friends (Clarridge & Ith, 2003). Although she had been in some trouble when she dropped out of high school and began to date Carl, Dub and her family remained close. The people who were closest to Dub had only admiring thoughts of her. Shirley proclaimed, "In the last three or four weeks, I'd get such happy feelings, I could hear her coming or I could see her pulling up and getting out of her car and coming up the sidewalk. And all this time she was dead" (Smith & Guillen, 1991; n.a., n.d.a; Ostrom, 1982). Shirley recounted, "she had so many friends, black and white. She was good-hearted and all that. She loved everybody. She'd do anything for anybody,"

with her father following up with, “There wasn’t no place I could take her wouldn’t somebody come up to her” (Ostrom, 1982). Her brother, Walter, Jr., remembered Dub as a “fun-loving person. Every once in a while, she’d take my dad’s old pickup and she’d take her finger file and she’d crank it up and away she’d go” (Ostrom, 1982). One of Dub’s close friends Helen said, “We used to drink all that Thunderbird and get crazy together,” as they always had a lot of alcohol and marijuana on them. Herbert Schirmer, the warrant’s officer who was responsible for collecting Dub’s fine payments, described her as an intelligent person who presented neat in appearance (Cartwright et al., 1982).

Best described Dub, whom he had known since 1971, as having a “heart of gold—she’d do anything for anybody. She was a really sweet kid” (Ostrom, 1982). He had known her for eleven years and knew that Dub got in some pretty deep trouble once she had dropped out of high school. Best recalled Shirley saying that Dub “liked it a lot [high school], but to me, it seemed like she got in with a wrong bunch and that was it” (Ostrom, 1982). Around June 1982, Dub told Joann Chamberlin, a waitress at another one of her favorite bars, that she failed her test to get into the Navy. Dub had plans to enlist in the Navy and change her life. Unfortunately, she failed her test. If she had not failed, she might have still been alive. Shortly after she received the news from the Navy, she packed her things out of her parent’s house and left their house for good and was last seen on July 25, 1982 (Ostrom, 1982).

Cynthia Jean Hinds

On February 23, 1965, Marilyn Hinds and Robert Williams gave birth to Cynthia Jean Hinds. Cynthia had a sister, Sherry Garrett, and a brother, Terry Hinds (n.a., 2003; n.a., n.d.b). The Hinds family are African American, and they lived in a Rainier Valley apartment at 4233 Tamarack Drive, Seattle (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0927; Rule, 2004). Oftentimes, Cynthia went by her nickname, "Cookie"



(Rule, 2004; *The Seattle Times* staff, 2001). Unlike Wendy's and Dub's stories, it was quite difficult to find additional information about Cookie. The lack of documentation on Cookie's life may be due to the sealed nature of the records for minors. It is highly likely that she did not get involved with activities that required records on her. For example, medical records and arrest records would indicate that there is available public documentation on her.

Cookie attended Nathan Hale High School in North Seattle. Like Wendy and Dub, she dropped out after falling in with the wrong crowd. She was also known to frequently run away from home (Rule, 2004). When she was no longer a student, Cookie gained employment through a private contractor to paint apartments, and worked with a friend, Opal Mills, another of Ridgway's victims. Opal Mills' brother, Garrett Mills, added that they often hitchhiked together to get to work and other places (Rule, 2004). Not only did Cookie make money painting apartments, but also, Mrs. Hinds knew that Cookie had been working as a sex worker since she was 14 years old. Mrs. Hinds added that Cookie was street smart and "a pretty OK girl" (n.a.,

n.d.b). Meanwhile, her father was upset because many people assumed that Cookie was a sex worker since she had been seen on the Strip, “They think, ‘Everybody down there must be a prostitute’ I think that’s a bad implication” (n.a., n.d.b). Cookie did sell sex on the streets; she had a pimp, someone who made her feel safe working the Strip, although he did not offer her much security. Though she had been questioned a few times in the 1970s and 1980s by police on Seattle’s 1st Avenue and Pacific Highway South, both areas known for sex work, she was never apprehended for soliciting sex (Rule, 2004). The King County vice squad knew Cynthia as Cookie because she had a record of assault (Smith & Guillen, 1991). It would have been helpful to have obtained police records of Cookie’s records to analyze the situation that she may have been because if Cookie had been in working in the sex industry for three years, she may have had to engage in assault as a means of protection.

Cookie’s body was found in the Green River on August 15, 1982, along with two other girls, Opal Mills and Marcia Chapman (Smith & Guillen, 1991). The medical examiner concluded that she had been in the river for several days (McCarthy, 2003). Cookie was only 17 years old when she died. Police linked Cookie and Marcia to the same killer because the sperm that was found in both of their bodies was a positive DNA match to Ridgway. Both young women also had similar triangular stones inside their vaginas (Smith, 2006). The police department configured a sketch of her portrait as a useful means for public identification and posted it in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. The police interviewed multiple people regarding when they had seen her last, where, and with whom. On August 22, her father, Robert Williams, shocked, identified her as his daughter, following with, “She might have had problems” (Smith & Guillen, 1991; n.a., n.d.b). He knew that Cookie was unable to break from her bad habits (Rule, 2004). The last few days of Cookie’s life were difficult to reconstruct as there were no

traces as she constantly appeared and disappeared from public view. Her father mentioned that the last time he saw her was at her job at the South Seattle Barbeque restaurant on August 10, 1982 (Ellefson, 2019; n.a., n.d.b). Her brother Terry said that he had not seen Cookie for two weeks. She later returned home to pack her bags, only to leave again for the last time. She did not tell her family where she was going, and on her way out the front door, her neighbors begged her not to go with the man in the red Cadillac. But, regardless, she left with him (n.a, 2001; Smith & Guillen, 1991). Cookie's friends told detectives that they had seen her on August 11, 1982 at a convenience store on the corner of South 200th Street and Pacific Highway South (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Cookie's pimp also told the detectives that he had last seen her get into a black Jeep with a male driver near Pacific Highway and South 200 Ave in SeaTac on August 11, 1982 (Rule, 2004).

Those who knew Cookie described her death as shocking and unforgiving. She was admired by her family; her brother Terry said that Cookie "was a sweet person, a caring person, and that she was loved by a lot of people" (Ellefson, 2019; n.a., n.d.b). Her aunt, Debra York was shattered upon hearing Cookie's passing and favored strongly that Ridgway should get the death penalty, as he does not deserve to live another day (Tizon, 2003).

Opal Charmaine Mills

Opal Charmaine Mills, a sixteen-year-old petite, light-skinned African American, chubby girl was born in Seattle's Harborview Hospital on April 12, 1966. She grew up raised by her White mother Kathy and her African American father Robert, and lived with her brother Garrett, who was two years older, and her most beloved Lhasa-Apso dog, Muffy. Opal was named after Robert's sister who was murdered in Oakland, and the

killer had never been caught, which was a heavy burden on the Mills family. Garrett knew his role in Opal's life, "She was the 'Princess.' From the time she was born, my main job, always, was to look after Opal and keep her safe" (Rule, 2004, p. 20). The family members were devoted to each other, and spent a great deal of time at church, the Church of God in Christ located in Seattle in the Capitol Hill neighborhood (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0929; Rule, 2004; Ervin, 2001). She was frequently recognized and honored in her church because she had read the entire Bible and memorized a plethora of Bible verses (Ervin, 2001).

Opal was known as "Little Opal " because she was barely over five feet tall and had put on some extra pounds. People who knew her said that she was very open, always sharing her problems, but was always happy and had a huge smile. Opal was very optimistic, as she had a great imagination and plans laid out for the rest of her life. Garrett mentioned that Opal wanted to be rich one day so she can take care of their mother and buy her a large house, "Even when

she was seven, she struck me as someone who cared about others more than herself' (Rule, 2004, p. 21). Growing up, Opal was known as a pure, loving child. She was the kind of person who would name all of her stuffed animals that lay on her bed, dreamt of being a fashion model, was outspoken, and frequently challenged authority such as her parents and teachers (Ervin, 2001). Opal went to Cedar Valley elementary school with her brother, they were both involved in boy scouts and girl scouts, and were inseparable (Rule, 2004).

The community believed that the Mills family was the perfect, happy family, who lived at 26457 127th Avenue S.E., Kent (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0929; Rule, 2004). Social perceptions greatly differed to the life at home behind closed doors. Robert Mills became another person, someone with anger issues. He would hit Garrett and use belittling language when talking to Opal. When furious, Robert would kill their dogs, lock up the food cabinets and refrigerator, and turn off the hot water for showers. As this happened often, the children did not see this as abuse. This was normalized behavior and they were used to this treatment. Opal and Garrett would often go to a neighbor's house to shower and get food, since they were left at home with no parental guidance:

We both were kind of mischievous. We were home alone so much that we'd get bored.

My parents had a hard time getting babysitters for us because we had a reputation, but not for anything really bad. We did stuff like dragging lawn sprinklers to the front of a babysitter's door—she lived in our cul-de-sac—and we'd turn it on so it would get her wet when she opened the door. Or we'd coast downhill in a grocery cart. Once our cul-de-sac had a meeting about our pranks and what should they do with us? (Rule, 2004, p. 22).

Garrett and Opal would get to school a couple of hours before anyone else arrived so that they could dance and talk about their future in the cafeteria. They wanted to be in a space where

they were free from worry. Opal, Garrett, and Doris and Eugene, their neighbors that were their age, were the only Black kids at the school, and were bullied for being Black. When Garrett was being mistreated by his acquaintances, Opal would often intervene and not only did she stand up for him against their peers, but also, she stopped his teacher from spanking him (Rule, 2004; Ervin, 2001).

Opal was a bright student who had plans for her future. She knew what career path she wanted to follow and always worked hard to achieve her goals. Opal was attending Kent Junior High until, for an undisclosed reason, she dropped out. This decision may have been a result of escaping the violence that was going on at home. She enrolled into a continuation school in Renton where she met older girls who were working towards their GED. She was known to have tried marijuana with this group of friends. When Opal turned 15, she put on weight and did what every girl at that age would do, she focused on losing weight. She hung up posters that exclaimed, "Flat stomach!" "Size 5," "Skinny," "Drink your water!" "Tight Jeans," and "Shorty Shorts" as motivation to lose weight (Rule, 2004, p. 26). Like her other friends, Opal had numerous crushes on boys, compiling a list of boys and phone numbers that she would often show her friends. This excited Opal: the attention and the romance. Rule (2004) noted that the excitement and her emotional immaturity may have led her down a dangerous track toward adulthood. The fear she had for her father and the life at home, may have led her to seek the promising's of freedom, money, and an adventure; given her naivete, if offered by a pimp, Opal would have been likely to accept these promising's (Rule, 2004).

Garrett grew defenseless against his father's physical abuse, so he moved in with his friends Eugene and Glenn to Capitol Hill. Yet, Opal still spent a lot of time with Garrett, and tagged along on all of their adventures. She had developed a crush on Glenn, and they began

dating and loved each other. Whenever Opal could not get a ride from her parents to go visit Glenn, she would embark on a journey via bus to go see him. While dating Glenn, she was seeing another much older man, someone with whom she wanted to pursue a serious relationship, but he was dating another girl. It angered Opal that she could not be in a relationship with this man, but she hid her feelings from him. Opal was emotionally immature, and it was clearly visible when analyzing how she handled issues such as romance (Rule, 2004). Though the relationship did not work out between Opal and the older man, she and Glenn took their relationship to another level and became engaged, and she had already picked a wedding dress. Kathy approved of the engagement to Glenn later claiming, “there were worse things” than getting married at a young age. Her parents were more worried about her worst habit: hitchhiking. Opal was also known to leave home for multiple days and return, without letting her parents know where she was going (Ervin, 2001).

On the morning of August 12, 1982, Opal told her mother that she was going to paint houses with Cynthia Hinds; they had summer jobs “freelancing,” painting houses through private contractors. Kathy asked Opal if she could ask the painting contractors if there was a job open for her brother Garrett. At 12:55 pm, 35 minutes before Dub’s body was discovered, Opal called home from a phone booth in Angle Lake State Park on South 193rd Street and Pacific Highway South, hoping to get in touch with her mother to let her know there were no more jobs available. There were also reports stating that the phone call she had made was to ask Garrett for a ride home, and because Garrett was asleep, Opal did not get through to him (Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991; Ervin, 2001; Smith, 1985). That morning was the last time Kathy had seen Opal. Garrett has not forgiven himself for not picking up the phone and take care of his sister.

Opal's body was found with those of Cookie and Marcia Chapman on August 15, 1982. Opal was the only victim not placed in the Green River, but rather on the riverbank of the river. Ridgway had placed her on the bank because he said he was going to return and have postmortem sex with her. However, a passerby saw him, and he no longer could return to the Green River and dump other victims (Prothero, 2006). She was killed by strangulation. The medical examiner's office found her blue pants tied around her neck which left ligature marks, her bra was pulled up to expose her breasts, and she had multiple bruises and abrasions (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0929; Smith & Guillen, 1991). Her family identified Opal at the King County Medical Examiner's Office (Rule, 2004). Opal's body had traces of rigor mortis, signifying that she had only been dead for about a day or two (McCarthy, 2003).

There are a few clues available to pinpoint what Opal had been up to during the summer of 1982. Barbara Kubik Patten, a psychic who was a member of the community independently working on solving the Green River case, mentioned that she may have picked up Opal hitchhiking sometime in the summer. Patten also found out that Opal may have spent a few nights at the Economy Inn Hotel on S. 192nd and 28th Ave S., which is walking distance from the Angle Lake State Park. Opal was never registered at that hotel, but Cookie had been (Rule, 2004). The Mills family was troubled, and from time to time, Opal left home for a day or two without letting her parents know, nevertheless, she was never known to be involved in sex work (Rule, 2004). Opal may have just left home to spend some time away from her father who was always very controlling and angry. Leaving home gave Opal agency and freedom, something she would not have had if she stayed at home.

As a way of deflecting blame because of his parenting style, Robert Mills said, “I’ve read the things in the newspaper and she just didn’t fit in. My little kids have had everything,” (Smith & Guillen, 1991, p. 69) denoting the fact that children who are given everything they need to succeed in life would not put them at risk for crimes such as these. His actions and attitude may have been why Opal would leave home, saying that “I don’t know how this happened. I think she was just in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Robert told Carol Ostrom from *The Times* (Smith & Guillen, 1991, p. 69). He added that he suffered a minor stroke because he was protecting Opal from a man in a red Cadillac, possibly the same car that Cookie was seen getting into, who had chased her home for a block and a half (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Her father believed that he was always protecting her and providing only the best kind of life for her, however, that was not the case.

The Mills family had a church service for her funeral, where the pastor described Opal as a “very nice young girl,” and many community members were greatly astounded of the allegations of Opal’s involvement in sex work and petty crimes (Smith, 2001). Her favorite song, “Love Begins with One Hello” was played at her funeral (Rule, 2004). Opal Charmaine Mills was buried on August 27, 1982 at Mount Pleasant cemetery in Seattle, WA (King County Medical Examiner’s Office, Green River Case File #82-0929). Kathy filed a wrongful death suit against Ridgway, not to win money, but to make sure Ridgway would not profit from telling the story of the girls he killed (Smith, 2001). After Opal’s death, Robert drank himself to death and Kathy was not able to do anything she and Opal did together (Rule, 2004).

Marcia Faye Chapman

Marcia Faye Chapman, also known as Belinda Bradford, Marcie Woods, Marcia Bradford, and Belinda Jean Chapman on the streets and to local police, was born on July 9, 1951. Marcia was an African American woman who was 5'2" and weighed a little over 100 pounds. Many people called her "Tiny" due to her diminutive stature (Smith & Guillen, 1991). According to her death certificate she was born in Arizona to



parents Ross Grover and Theresa Stillman-Chapman, but there is no other information regarding her move to Seattle. She was never married, but was a mother to three children who were eleven, nine, and three at the time of her death (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0928; Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991). Marcia and her children lived on the Strip in the Puerto Villa apartments, but the address on her death certificate listed, 5031 South 188th #123, Seattle, a nonexistent address where a Motel 6 and the I-5 interchange southeast of SeaTac airport intersected (King County Medical Examiner's Office, Green River Case File #82-0928; Rule, 2004; Smith & Guillen, 1991; Cartwright et al., 1982).

Although her death certificate listed that her occupation was a switchboard operator, Marcia relied on sex work as her way to support herself and her children, frequently working on the Strip. This money was used for rent, food, and clothing for her kids. She worked independently, telling her neighbors, "Why should I give money to another man? I need it for my kids, not for some man" (Smith & Guillen, 1991, p. 76). She typically headed out to work at around five pm; she would go out to the Strip wearing blue jeans, a t-shirt, and a hat. The

anonymous young woman and pimp who knew who Wendy and Dub were, informed *The Times* journalists that they met Marcia through Dub multiple times. They added that Marcia often worked an area near K Street between 15th and 11th Street in Tacoma. Marcia was known to dive into relationships quite frequently (Times Staff, 1982). On June 28, 1982, Marcia was arrested at 8 pm on South 187 and Pacific Highway South for soliciting sex and had to appear in the airport District Court a month later on July 22. She pled not guilty, using the name Belinda J. Bradford, and was going to be tried again the following Tuesday on July 27 (Smith & Guillen, 1991; Times Staff, 1982). In mid-July 1982, someone broke into her apartment in the middle of the night, pistol whipped her, and raped her. She ended up going to the hospital enduring a cut lip and had bruises all over her face (Smith & Guillen, 1991). The timeline is not clear, and this event may have happened during the times that she had to appear in court for her charge.

Nine days after her appearance in court, August 1, 1982, at 8:30 pm Marcia told her kids that she was going to the store, and she never made it back. She was last seen near 30th Avenue South and South 188th Street (Crowley, 2019). Her oldest child called their grandmother, Theresa, who lived in West Seattle, asking if she could take care of them until Marcia came back. The following day, Theresa called the police department to report her daughter missing, she told them “Never has [she] done anything like this. Good mother” (n.a., n.d.c; *The SeattleTimes* staff, 1982a).

Marcia was found on August 15, 1982, along with Cookie and Opal. She had been missing for two weeks and the medical examiner clarified that she had been dumped in the Green River about a week before they had found her (McCarthy, 2003). She was 31 years old at the time of her death and was visually identified by her mother, Theresa, at the morgue. Her fingerprints were in the system, due to the arrests for soliciting sex, and this supplemented the

identification of her body. The same sperm that was found in Cookie's body was found in Marcia's body and Ridgway's DNA saliva sample connected both victims to each other. In addition, Cynthia and Marcia both had similar triangular stones inserted inside their vaginas (Smith, 2006).

Marcia was described by many as a responsible individual who took care of herself and her children, and was outgoing, and cheerful; she was always creating small talk with her neighbors (n.a., n.d.c). She was a friendly face around the community. Her neighbors knew she worked as a sex worker and left her children at home unsupervised when she went in for a shift. Marcia would make attempts to get in touch with her mother, Theresa, so that she could watch her kids while she went out to work. However, Theresa seldomly answered. Marcia's neighbors did not hesitate to say that though she would leave them at home unsupervised, she always came back home to her kids (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Don Moore, a neighbor who lived three doors down from Marcia, recalled a day when Marcia once asked him if salmon was cooked like catfish. Moore depicted her as "a nice girl. She would speak to you, stand and talk to you [...] if she was a prostitute, she was a helluva nice kid" (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982a). Lori Chamberlain, Marcia's friend, a cocktail waitress, supplemented Don's description with, "she was always really happy, really cheerful. She was uplifting. She was really carefree. But she reminded me of a lady who could really take care of herself in a bad situation. She was a little toughy" (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982b). Lori said that some of the men Marcia would entertain were men from their apartment complex. Lori recalled Marcia telling her that she worked on the street to earn a living for her family and to buy cocaine, "she told me that she needed the money for herself and her kids and to hell with giving it to a man. She said she worked strictly for herself" (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982b). However, Chamberlain and the neighbors

acknowledged that Marcia's lifestyle greatly impacted her children, "pretty much everyone in the complex helped take care of them. They just bounced around. They were let loose." (*The Seattle Times* staff, 1982a)

Patterns among the Five Women

The lives of the five young women show evidence that they came from unstable homes. In the analysis of sources, patterns emerged among the young women and the young girls that suggests that they were more connected to each other than society and law enforcement made them out to be. Therefore, it is important to use an intersectional lens to analyze their reasons to leave home and pursue work in the sex industry. Patterns such as a history of parental neglect, family abuse, sexual assault, dropping out of school at a young age, and falling into the wrong crowd shaped the lives of these young women. These social facts strained their lives and limited their options for survival, no matter how personally strong or resilient they were. Engaging in sex work was a forced choice they needed to make in order for survival, and like Robert Mills said, they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. The lack of familial support that most of these girls appeared to have led them to easily trust an average-looking white man who gave them attention. The five young women were put into a position where they had to fend for themselves, leaving their unhealthy home life, and faced the adult world with little guidance or regular supervision. The act of being on one's own at their age gave them the agency that they would have lacked if they were under the roof of an abusive caregiver. When the young women made the choice to find friends who seemed to care about them and left home, they had the responsibility of being agents of their own decisions for survival.

Teenagers Wendy, Dub, Cookie, and Opal were similar in age, with 31-year-old Marcia being an outlier. Ridgway rarely killed young women over the age of 25; he only killed about 5 women that were 25 and older, out of the 49 women he was charged of killing. Race did not particularly matter as he killed White, African American, Hispanic, and Asian women. These young women came from low-income homes where abuse, drugs, and alcohol were present;

many of these young women were underage when they began drinking and partaking in drug consumption, looking for an outlet from the life at home (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Wendy, Dub, and Marcia were known to spend their money on whatever drug they could get, whether it was cocaine or heroin. Wendy and Dub both had similar tattoos of a Kent area motorcycle gang. It was likely they spent time with each other.

All five of them had been seen hanging out around the same spots and some hung out with each other. It is difficult to dismiss the fact that these young women most likely knew each other and their upbringings and lifestyles had striking similarities. Wendy and Opal were the same age and attended Kent Junior High together; one can assume that they may have come into contact with each other. Once they dropped out of that junior high, Opal began to paint apartments with Cynthia. Both Opal and Cynthia were seen either getting into, or being chased by, a red Cadillac. It is highly likely that this was the same car that each girl was seen with. Because they frequently hung out together, undoubtedly, they were together hours before their disappearance (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Marcia, Dub, and Wendy knew each other and were seen to hang out and sit together at the bar in Tacoma, The Lucky Spot. A sex worker in Pacific Highway South disclosed that Cynthia and Marcia were friends. Cynthia and Marcia were the two African American young women who were weighed down by rocks when dumped in the Green River, and they both had triangular shaped rocks in their vaginas (Smith & Guillen, 1991). Ridgway told Detective Jensen that the rocks were a symbol of blocking their vaginas from any other penetrators, so these women would not have sex with other men, just him (Prothero, 2006).

Though there was no information regarding whether Opal was a sex worker, Ridgway claimed that he only killed prostitutes. When questioned by detectives, he said,

Every woman that I had [...] that I killed was a prostitute. We agreed on sex. We agreed on how to do it. I paid her the money or paid it afterwards. And I killed her. Not one of ‘em was a hitchhiker. *They* didn’t want money. They were all into prostitution” (Prothero, 2006, p. 339).

Taking this statement with a grain of salt, as one does not know how truthful he is being, these five young women suffered at the hands of this man simply for being on Pacific Highway South and working to make some money to survive.

VI. Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Women as Victims of Serial Killers

As society has a large role in the construction of social norms to influence perceptions and beliefs of others, the intersection of one's race, gender, and social class are also impacted by the cultural and structural forces present. Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is concerned with asking questions about the structural and systemic systems that produce discrimination and inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). Though her work is focused on critical race theory, the same theories can be applied to the inequalities between men, women, and those who are transgender. The structures follow a capitalistic and patriarchal system where men endure, and others are subordinates.

Much has been written on the social and economic forces that disempower women, but what is distinctive here is that Ridgway was looking for pretty young women to have sex with on the Strip. It is important to understand theories of sexuality to understand women as victims of serial killers. French philosopher Michel Foucault is known to focus on sexuality as having an intimate association with the power structures in modern society. He also analyzes the prison as a "gentler" modern way of imprisoning those who commit crimes, rather than torturing and killing them (Foucault, 1976; Foucault, 1975).

Foucault's hypothesis regarding the machinery of power produces discourses regarding sex to formulate societies uniform truth of sex, visibly present in the perception of sex work (Foucault, 1976). Although Foucault does not talk about sex work per se, an analysis of his work can be carefully applied to discussions on sex work. As society continues to be more progressive in attitudes toward sex in general, the perceptions and beliefs of sex work are modified little by little. However, sex workers continue to be seen as less than human and deserving of criminal acts inflicted upon them. The social construction of power relations in a patriarchal society on

sexuality has developed the idea that men in general, and heterosexual men in particular, have greater power and are more accepted in exercising their power via their sexuality than their subordinate counterparts, women (Overall, 1992). Therefore, while men are not demonized for purchasing sexual services from sex workers, sex workers are disparaged for selling their bodies. Foucault's theory of sexuality portrays the understanding that sex work is a "victimless sexual crime." Though the transaction may be between consenting adults, society denigrates women for selling their bodies, an issue of power that is controlled by the creation of unnecessary laws where police were and are still able to intrude in personal/private sexual affairs. Sexual liberationists argue that sexual behavior is a private matter, that the state should neither intervene nor regulate it (Davies, Francis, & Greer, 2017). However, because the state does intervene and regulate it, Foucault argued that the modern concept of "sexuality" is a configuration of social power (Foucault, 1976).

Sexuality is a relational discourse that in and of itself has been used as a means to distribute certain kinds of power. As sex and sexuality is a taboo subject that is forbidden to speak about freely and publicly, society is aware of what it means to have a "healthy" sexuality, and sexual behavior is closely scrutinized and policed as a form of control. The sexual double standard insinuates that boys and men are praised for being involved in heterosexual sexual conduct, while girls and women are stigmatized and devalued for engaging in the same sexual acts. For a long time and in some areas today, sex work was stigmatized, regulated, and ultimately criminalized, and police officers would go undercover to arrest women soliciting sex, with an aim to clean up the streets (Mac & Smith, 2018). Though sex work is one of the oldest professions, it has been seen as a threat to social order, since women are deviating from the confines of the healthy sexuality (Mac & Smith, 2018). Many believe sexuality is natural, but

sexuality is more than a physical act, it is a construct that is influenced by multiple modes of authority, social order, and control (Foucault, 1976). As a white man who felt entitled to a relationship and sex, but who was constantly rejected, Ridgway did not have the power and control he believed he should have: “I was in charge when all these womens [*sic*] I killed. Why did I hate ‘em? Because I ... they had ... women had control over me and I don’t like being controlled” (Prothero, 2006, p. 328–29). He exercised his privilege and justified the murders of women who have digressed from the socially accepted sexuality. Foucault calls this form of power of control over other humans as biopower (Foucault, 1976). Ridgway took the law into his own hands and gained control over the lives of the young women he killed.

The repression of sex and sexuality in society makes it so that engaging in sex work is seen as deviating from the confines of conventional morality and attributing labels of low social worth to those who work in the sex industry. Repressing discourses of sex and sexuality has been used as a mechanism to maintain political and economic power since at least the 19th century (Foucault, 1976). In a patriarchal and capitalist state, white middle class men hold the power, and the rest of society are disadvantaged to some degree. The workings of power, such as limiting the sexuality of women, belong in categories of repression; the power and control over women’s bodies and sexualities are repressing their autonomy in terms of what society deems acceptable for women to do. For some of the young women who were killed by the Green River Killer, and women who are involved in sex work, sex work is a means of a constrained choice to attain financial survival in a society that is constructed in a manner that makes it more difficult to get the same unearned privileges men have. Four of the five young women who were last seen and picked up on the Strip were in an environment where most of society in the 1980s believed that the women who were walking on Pacific Highway South were sex workers. Like Cynthia’s

father said, “They think, ‘Everybody down there must be a prostitute’ I think that’s a bad implication,” and the social perception of the environment relates to the thoughts one has about the bodies of individuals (n.a., n.d.b). The Strip was correlated with an area in which the young women did not have a healthy sexuality, and this was a factor in the vulnerability of the young women. The emotional turmoil of condemnation and disgust that Ridgway possessed was released when he killed these women, “I had control when I was ... when I killed the women. I got my rage out for the time” (Prothero, 2006, p. 329).

Silencing the discourses on sex and sexuality are fundamental parts of the operations of a culture of secrecy. Secrecy is directly in contrast to the public spectacle of policing and monitoring that individuals participate in pressuring others to conform to the constructed social norms. Foucault (1975) spends quite some time discussing the modern system of disciplinary power. He addresses hierarchical observation, judgment, and examination as forms of social control and disciplinary institutions that should reform individuals that are failing to live by societies standards. The model of Bentham’s panopticon is also addressed, as the panopticon is an architectural concept of a tower placed within a circle of prison cells. Those incarcerated can be monitored at any given time, without ever knowing that they are being watched (Foucault, 1975). In society, there is this an implied set of standards that one should follow, and others simply watch out to keep their neighbors in line. Yet, when individuals are autonomous and engage in sex work, this private choice violates the accepted social norms of society and the public is observant of this aberrant behavior that should be punished (Foucault, 1976; Foucault, 1975). Sex workers are a highly vulnerable population because they violate the acceptable social norms and are the despised minority. When one disrupts the Western feminine image and are

perceived as disrupting an accepted image, women often become disparaged, criminalized, and sadly sometimes killed.

Over the course of decades, the ideas surround sex and sexuality have been liberated, to a degree, from the traditional social conventions. However, sexual freedom has entered into another realm where the experiences of women are still barred with the reframing of what sexual liberation meant in a patriarchal society. The liberation of women's sexuality meant it as the sexual availability for men (Badham, 2018). Men feel entitled to sex with women, and there is backlash when the needs of men are not fulfilled.

The decision to engage in sex work is heavily influenced by an individual's gender and socio-economic status (McMillan et al., 2018). Specifically, in the United States, there is an estimated number of one to two million individuals who are involved in the sex industry. It is a delusion that to consider choosing to be involved in the sex industry is actually a meaningful choice. Sociological, psychological, and education factors are not typically considered when making that assumption. In a patriarchal capitalist society, Marxian feminists examine prostitution as a result of capitalism. One could argue that women have historically occupied the majority of the laboring class while men predominantly make up the ruling class, given the hierarchical and patriarchal structures that make up society. It is difficult for women and marginalized communities to advance in society as easily as men do, therefore constraining their choices for employment that can provide them with livable wages. Sex work is rooted in a lack of economic opportunities and resources and many who do not have many options resort to sex work to survive (Mac & Smith, 2018).

Information that was available regarding the young women's home life and their parents was an indicator of both socio-economic status and the young women's decision to leave home

in the search for a safer and happier life. There was little to no information for Cookie and Marcia's home life such as their parents' behavior, socio-economic status, and the reason as to why they left home or how they ended up working in the sex industry. However, one can assume that the lack of economic opportunities that these young women may have had, presented as a constrained choice, therefore turning to sex work to support one's self. Though there are no details on Marcia's educational attainment, it is highly likely that she dropped out of school like Wendy, Dub, Cookie, and Opal. Dropping out of school posed barriers to obtain employment. Without a high school diploma, Dub found it particularly difficult to find a job after she quit working at the Dairy Queen. Because the sex industry is gendered, and women are typically the ones who sell sex, these young women had to resort to a type of work that could help sustain them. They came from households that were low income and whose parents were particularly harmful to their well-being, prompting each of them to leave.

Wendy's story had the most intricate details to the most important years of her life, so one can acknowledge the harm that she was enduring when she lived with her mom. Her mom was newly single and wanted to live her life with no orders. She drank, smoked weed, and dated Wendy's boyfriend. These behaviors pushed Wendy away and she began to take care of herself as best as she knew how. Pursuing sex and stealing checks was a means of survival, not necessarily economic stability, but enough to live day to day.

Though Dub and her family got along quite well, she dropped out of high school, could not get a job, and then met a man she wanted to please. To live the lavish lifestyle they had, driving up and down the coast in their fairly new Thunderbird car, she had to pick up work where she could, where she would make enough money. Not counting the fines she accrued from arrests, sex work seemed to be an adequate form of employment as she did not have to have a

high school diploma and she made enough money to provide her boyfriend and herself with their means of living.

In the eyes of their community, Opal seemed to have a nice and stable life. Both her parents and her brother loved her, she was an avid church goer, and her parents provided her with everything she needed; it seems that they were an average middle-class family. Behind closed doors. The anger and abuse of Opal's father, however, led her to stray from her family home and pursue the autonomy that all young girls want during the teenage years. Leaving home occasionally was her way of escaping the cruel actions of her father and she was in search for some peace of mind. Though it is unknown if Opal was selling sex, she pursued adventure that excited her, away from the home life that was hurting and hindering her ability to live her life as fully as she deserved.

The young women were driven to Pacific Highway South for the important reasons that were discussed in this research. Their choices were constrained, not choices made from a position of autonomy and based on a wide range of options and had to be made to facilitate their survival in a world that was working against them. Nonetheless, these women did not deserve to be killed.

VIII. Discussion

The complexity of our lives, of who we are, goes far beyond the outward persona that people tend to know and see, and this is patently clear in the lives of the five women that are the focus of this project. They had lives, but through social perceptions they were simply reported and generalized as “prostitutes” who were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Using an intersectional lens was important to analyze the individual bodies, experiences, and lives through social forces and institutions that dictate arbitrarily the social worth of the young women and consider how this put them in a position to be more vulnerable to victimization.

This research was an attempt to decenter the narrative from perspective of the serial killer. Although a portion in the paper was dedicated to the Green River Killer’s life and included some quotes, this information was crucial to better understand his history and how this was fundamental in developing his perception of women who work in the sex industry. Very little research focuses on the understandings of women and subordinate individuals as victims, but rather focuses on a spectacle of serial killers in many different platforms: newspapers, television shows, movies, and a wide range of social media. The majority of the research in this project upends the narrative of the serial killer and focuses on the shift to the five women that were killed. It puts the women in the center and marginalizes the man who led to their demise. Devoting this research to the lives of these five young women is a single effort to give them back their voice and silence the narrative of the killers. Much like the narratives that Moraga and Anzaldúa compiled in *This Bridge Called by Back* (2015), this research was an attempt to give these young women space to be recognized and better understood, to dignify their lives. They do not have a single identity, they were not just young women who were involved in sex work, they were more than that. They had stories.

Women involved in sex work and women who are killed “in action” are more than just statistics. Society’s construction of an ideal victim type fails marginalized individuals who often go overlooked because they have not lived remarkable lives, have not done things that merit a story in a newspaper or social media, and who leave no mark on social service agencies because they do not get the proper help they need. As a result, these individuals may end up victims of violent crimes, such as murder. The “ideal victim” is described as a female gendered, passive, compliant with the traditional modes of justice, and legible as a citizen. Women involved in sex work have deviated from the accepted confines of traditional morality, therefore do not constitute an “ideal victim.” Social services are less likely to draw attention to individuals that are part of highly vulnerable communities and there is less willingness to provide funds, services, and support for them (Schwarz et al., 2017). The intersection of race, gender, and class in America provides distinct experiences for many and there needs to be programs and services that are equitable, affirming, and oriented to the variety of different circumstances that individuals experience. In reconceptualizing what the “ideal victim” looks like and who is worthy of help, the expansion of services will fit the needs of vulnerable individuals who are more likely to fall to victimhood. Butler (2004) writes, “What is most important is to cease legislating for all lives what is livable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is only unlivable for some.” By focusing on the iconic ideal victim type, the lives of young women like Wendy, Dub, Cynthia, Opal, and Marica are unrecognizable and are not deemed worthy enough for help.

Though social service systems exist for those who come from unstable homes and those who experience homelessness, such as the child welfare system, the social service systems tend to be underfunded and do not provide appropriate services that target the needs of these

individuals. Programs for youth and adults should be employed by staff who are appropriately trained to implement services that incorporate an intersectional approach in the social service systems. Current practices are more reluctant to address the distinctive needs that these vulnerable individuals require for their safety and survival as they navigate a violent society. Individuals who are in trouble move in and out of risk of security, thus no “one-size-fits-all” model will function. Society must accept the presented experiences of vulnerable populations as worthy in order for organizations to provide different forms of assistance for their potential to thrive (Schwarz et al., 2017). The lack of adequate social services increases the greater vulnerability of individuals for exploitation. The allocation of funding is reserved for institutions such as incarceration, detention, and deportation, rather than those institutions that focus on preventing vulnerability and investing in education and housing (Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Investing in education and housing would have benefitted these five women as they dropped out of school and were in need of housing where they felt taken care of and safe. While many individuals fight for equality, an equitable approach is essential for survival and safety to address the unique needs of vulnerable communities.

There are lingering questions about whether women would continue to be victims in a society where patriarchal legal norms and social attitudes do not exist. Restructuring the way our society functions as a patriarchal and capitalist society will help address methods of reducing the poverty rates and create equal opportunities in which marginalized individuals such as women are not directly affected by the lack of opportunities, by barriers present that impact their chances of success, and by the gender pay gap. This could be a first step to attain in order for women to turn to sex work out of choice, rather than desperation.

Raising feminist children, in particular raising feminist sons, is important to deconstruct the gender norms which give boys more choices that reflect an empathy and respect for others. Boys and men are taught to be masculine in way that amplify characteristics such as aggression, dominance, and being violent. Men who are feminine disrupt their manhood and are penalized by society with labels such as gay and effeminate. Femininity is equated with lower status in society which is a reason that girls are encouraged to get involved in traditional masculine activities. However, boys have limited options, too, and by imposing strict gender roles on them, society as a whole expects them to live up to this toxic form of masculinity. This is why in society the majority of individuals being involved in violent crime such as serial killing, sex offending, and assault are males. Deconstructing gender roles and allowing boys and men to possess feminine qualities will more likely reduce violence.

The lives of Wendy, Deborah, Cynthia, Opal, and Marcia were important. They may have been placed in categories of low social worth, but they do not deserve to be thrown away and forgotten. They are people who are failed by society, specifically how society is constructed to privilege certain groups based on wealth, occupation, and education. Sex work is a legitimate profession stigmatized by a sexually repressed society. The lives of these young women came to an end because of the stigmatized nature that sex work holds and the perceptions that some have over those involved in the sex industry. The destigmatization of women that are working on the street to secure a roof over their head and some meals is crucial. Destigmatizing sex work may have saved Wendy, Dub, Cookie, Opal, and Marcia and advocating for the destigmatization and decriminalization of sex work now will save many individuals who engage in sex work as a way to survive or as a result of a genuine choice. Generating knowledge about the social construction of a patriarchal society, who the holders of the power and the wealth are, who is being exploited,

and the effects of labels and social worth will increase awareness as to why certain groups of people are targets of violent crime.

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