



Karl Brandt: Application of Serial Murder and Mass Murder Models to a Genocidal Actor

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Objectives

- To bridge the gap between Criminology and Genocide studies by applying serial and mass murder models to a genocidal actor.
- Testing the applicability of Fox and Levin's (2015) mass murder correlates model to Karl Brandt
- Testing the applicability of Holmes and Holmes (2010) serial killer typology to Karl Brandt
- Testing the presence of macro-level contributing factors to Karl Brandt's actions, including:
 - Culture of medicalization
 - Globalization as facilitator of authorization, routinization, and dehumanization
 - Exclusivist ideology
 - Persistent and societal-level strain
 - Totalitarian regime type

Literature Review

Criminology and genocide studies have both attempted to understand multiple homicide and although both have produced significant contributions this area of research, they have done so in separate and parallel paths.

Both disciplines share similar difficulties in: conceptualizing, defining, and operationalizing key terminology; methodological issues of gathering data, reliance on secondary sources, and insufficient statistical analyses; political influences on funding; lack of a unified theoretical or methodological approach; theorizing the phenomenon; and the development of testable frameworks (Yaksic, 2015; Verdeja, 2012; Hiebert, 2008; Dowden, 2005).

Perhaps the largest commonality among the two disciplines is the theoretical foundation upon which scholars build on to develop specific frameworks and models to describe serial murder, mass murder, and genocide (Verdeja, 2012; Hiebert, 2008). These theories include, but are not limited to: general strain theory (Agnew, 1992), general theory of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), and differential association theory (Sutherland & Cressey, 1984).

Despite this clear indication that both disciplines have much to learn from and contribute to each other, current literature on serial and mass murder does not entertain the inclusion of crimes against humanity into its research or theory development. Thus the purpose of this work is to bridge the gap between criminology and genocide studies by testing strictly criminological theories on a convicted war criminal.

Karl Brandt was a high-ranking Nazi doctor, described as a true ideologue, and acted as Adolf Hitler's personal escort physician, a Major General in the SS, and the Commissioner for Sanitation and Health Services throughout the Reich (Schmidt, 2008). During his time in power, Brandt was the co-director of the T4 Euthanasia program, responsible for its planning and the development and testing of efficient and "humane" mass killing methods. Additionally, Brandt commissioned and was involved in several medical experiments on prisoners that caused significant trauma, suffering, torture, and death, including experiments on: hypothermia, malaria gas, sulphur drugs, typhus, infectious hepatitis, surviving off seawater, and bone, muscle, and nerve transplantation and regeneration (Schmidt, 2008). Brandt was the name defendant in the Doctors' trial at Nuremberg, prosecuted by the Allied Forces, and was convicted of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and membership in a criminal organization (Schmidt, 2008). Brandt was sentenced to death by hanging; this sentence was carried out on June 2nd, 1948 (Schmidt, 2008).

Methods

This thesis used directed content analysis in its examination of Karl Brandt, as it is well suited to validating and improving on an existing theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The primary source of data collection was Ulf Schmidt's *Karl Brandt: the Nazi Doctor* (2008); supplemental information was also provided by Alfred Pasternak's *Inhuman Experimentation* (2006) and Robert Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors* (2000). These sources were picked because they: are written in English, are attainable to a student in an undergraduate program, are attainable within the time limits present for an undergraduate thesis, and include details of Brandt's life, not just descriptions of events during World War II.

The **mass murder model** tested here was developed by Fox and Levin (2015) and operationalized in the following way:

- Chronic and persistent frustration defined as a history of frustrations, failures, depression, and failure to cope.
- Othering, defined as externalizing blame on others, frequently specific groups of people
- Reduced social supports are defined as insufficient emotional support from friends or family.
- Catastrophic precipitating event
- Access to and familiarity with a weapon that can accomplish their goals.

The **serial killer model** tested here is Holmes & Holmes' (2010) typology; the offender, offence, and crime scene characteristics are summarized in tables 2, 3, and 4, found in the Results section.

In line with previous genocidal research emphasizing the importance of studying this phenomenon within the context of macro-level factors, the presence of the following contributing factors was also tested:

- Culture of medicalization
- Globalization as facilitator of authorization, routinization, and dehumanization
- Exclusivist ideology
- Persistent and societal-level strain
- Totalitarian regime type

Results

Table 1: Presence of Fox and Levin's (2015) mass murder correlates in the life of Karl Brandt

Variable	Confirmed	Partially confirmed	Not confirmed
History of frustration, depression, failure to cope, failures		X	
Othering = externalizing blame	X		
Reduced social supports			X
Catastrophic precipitating event		X	
Access to & familiarity with a weapon that can accomplish goals	X		

Table 2: Offender motivations & characteristics – a comparison between Holmes and Holmes' (2010) serial killer types and Karl Brandt

Variable	Visionary	Mission-Oriented	Hedonistic: Thrill	Hedonistic: Lust	Hedonistic: Comfort	Power/Control	Karl Brandt
Motivation:							
Response to voices or visions	X						
Eliminate "undesirable"/ "unworthy" people		X					X
Power over life and death			X			X	S
Intrinsic anticipated gain	X	X	X	X		X	X
External anticipated gain					X		S
Sexual gratification			S	X		S	
Sadistic gratification			X	S		X	
Murder as enjoyment			X	X			
Characteristics							
Rational		X	X	X	X	X	X
Psychotic	X						
Nomadic – travels to kill			X			X	I
Non-nomadic – kills locally	X	X		X	X		I

X = confirmed, S = some supportive evidence exists but not enough for confirmation, I = evidence is inconclusive or contradictory evidence exists

Table 3: Homicidal behavioral patterns – a comparison between Holmes and Holmes' (2010) serial killer types and Karl Brandt

Variable	Visionary	Mission-Oriented	Hedonistic: Thrill	Hedonistic: Lust	Hedonistic: Comfort	Power/Control	Karl Brandt
Victims							
Nonspecific type	X				X		
Specific type		X ¹	X ³	X ²		X	X ¹
Random selection	X	X					X
Non-random selection				X	X		
Stalked		S	X	X		X	
Stranger	X	X	X	X	S	X	X
Affiliated with killer					X		
Methods							
Focus – Act	X	X			X		X
Focus – Process			X	X		X	
Planned		X	X	X	X	X	X
Not planned	X						
Organized		X	X	X	X	X	X
Disorganized	X						
Location of murder							
Concentrated	X	X		X	X		X
Dispersed			X			X	S

X = confirmed, S = some supportive evidence exists but not enough for confirmation, I = evidence is inconclusive or contradictory evidence exists
¹Type depends on killer's perception of a common visible trait and may include: occupation, race, sex. This common trait may be real or imagined. May also be termed "ideal victim type" or IVT
²IVT depends on what killer perceives to be sexually appealing
³IVT depends on what killer perceives to be an "appropriate victim"

Table 4: Crime scene characteristics – a comparison between Holmes and Holmes' (2010) serial killer types and Karl Brandt

Variable	Visionary	Mission-Oriented	Hedonistic: Thrill	Hedonistic: Lust	Hedonistic: Comfort	Power/Control	Karl Brandt
Chaotic (physical evidence)	X						S
Organized (physical evidence)		X	X	X	X	X	I
Murder & disposal sites the same	X	X	X	X	X	X	I
Murder and disposal sites different		X	X	X	X	X	I
Brings weapon to murder site		X	X				X
Takes weapon from murder site		X	X				X
Uses tools available at murder site as weapon	X						X
Leaves weapon at murder site	X				X		X
Body moved			X	X		X	X
Overkill	X		X				X
Sexual characteristics							
Penile penetration			X	X		S	X
Object penetration			X	X			
Necrophilia			X				X
Aberrant sex			X	X			X
Strangulation of the victim			X	X			
Evidence of torture			X	X		X	S
Weapon of torture			X			X	S
Body mutilation after death				X			S
Evidence of signature			S				I
Evidence of trophy taking			X	S			I
Evasive measures		X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 5: Presence of macro-level factors facilitating crimes against humanity

Variable	Author	Present in Brandt's Life?
Culture of medicalization	Taylor (2002)	X
Globalization as facilitator of authorization, routinization, and dehumanization	Bauman (1989)	X
Persistent and societal-level strain (danger, insecurity, political instability, economic depression, and/or threat of war/revolution)	Maier-Katkin, Mears, & Bernard (2009)	X
Exclusionist ideology	Verdeja (2012) Hiebert (2008)	X
Totalitarian regime type	Rummel (1995, 1997)	P

X = confirmed, P = partially confirmed

Conclusion

The deviation in results seen for Fox and Levin's (2015) mass murder model can, in part, be explained by the difference between individual action and criminal acts committed by state actors. The political elite do not become powerful without significant social support; it is this same support that heavily contributes to the ability to spread ideology. Fox and Levin's (2015) model may need to be adjusted to account for this variation, perhaps by collapsing the history of frustrations and reduced social supports factors into persistent societal-level strain and reducing inclusionary ideology, as both of these latter factors have been demonstrated to be significant factors in facilitating crimes against humanity. It should be noted that while this author believes sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that a precipitating catastrophic event did occur in Brandt's life in the form of the widespread poverty, economic depression, and political instability following Germany's defeat in WWI, this cannot be confirmed without records that would demonstrate that Brandt was personally affected.

With regards to Holmes and Holmes' (2010) typology, Brandt is most consistent with the mission-oriented type of killer for offender characteristics and homicidal behavioral patterns. However, as expected, there is a significant overlap between categories and Brandt fits the majority of offender characteristics for the visionary, hedonistic-comfort, and power/control types. Brandt also fits the majority of homicidal behavioral patterns for the hedonistic-thrill and power/control types. Crime scene characteristics are difficult to discern for Brandt due to his detached leadership, the destruction of records prior to capture by Allied Forces, and the inability to determine which, if any, victims Brandt killed himself.

Finally, as per the extant literature in genocide, culture of medicalization, globalization, exclusionist ideology, and persistent societal-level strain were confirmed to be present in Brandt's life. It was difficult to confirm a totalitarian regime type as Germany was formally a democracy; however, significant aspects of a totalitarian regime were definitely present.

Several limitations exist including the limited number of data sources, inability to access existing records due to a language barrier, and the nature of the models used.

Future research should continue to aim for interdisciplinary cooperation between Criminology and Genocide studies. Perhaps the model of multiple homicide should be expanded to include mass and serial murders committed by members of the ruling party.

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