FINAL paper

The client I chose to represent throughout this course is Aileen Wuornos. After watching the 2003 movie "Monster" and reading about her upbringing, I was intrigued and saddened by her story. Aileen's childhood was miserable, dark, and filled with neglect and suffering based on documented accounts. Aileen was born in Rochester, Michigan, on February 29, 1956. Aileen experienced things as a child that most adults would have difficulty handling. (Biography.com, 2010).

Aileen's father killed himself in prison while serving time for child molestation and her mother abandoned her. Aileen was raised by their grandparents. Her grandmother was an alleged alcoholic, and her grandfather was fiercely violent. At the tender age of 10, Aileen and her brother began experimenting sexually with each other, and by 14, she was pregnant. Aileen initially claimed her brother was the father, but she later alleged that she had been raped by a neighbor, a much older man (Biography.com, 2010). After she gave birth, Aileen gave the child up for adoption and then left the area to hitchhike across America to work as a prostitute.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition defines Borderline Personality Disorder as "a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity." Aileen's childhood was over the top with instability and interpersonal relationships. Aileen was abandoned as a child by her biological mother. Her father committed suicide while in prison, serving time for child molestation; she suffered physical abuse by her grandfather (who also committed suicide); on top of that, at a young age, she had a sexual relationship with her brother. When Dr. Harry Kropp (hired by the defense) examined Wuornos in the summer months of 1992, which was the year of her court trial, he found her to be suffering from a "fully-fledged delusional system" and having a "Borderline Personality Disorder with Paranoid Features."

According to DeLisi and Schwartz (2019), "A delusion is evident when an individual possesses fixed and generally bizarre-beliefs that preserve even when presented with conflicting evidence" (2.4). Mental health and the contributions that mental disorders have in committing crimes continue to be studied. "Criminal behavior may be attributable to any mental disorder. This is particularly true when a defendant is facing serious criminal charges, and mitigating culpability is the goal" (DeLisi et al.,2019).

In the case of Aileen Wuornos, psychopathy, insanity, and competence to stand trial are significant challenges. My client's delusions may negatively impact her during the court proceedings. Based on my preliminary research, Aileen Wuornos is not competent to stand trial due to the mental disorders she managed to display. Ms. Wuornos believes that the justice system plotted against her by allowing her to "clean up the streets" by killing these men who were deemed unclean by society simply because they sought out to pay for sexual interactions.

The mental disorder that I believe Aileen could have been suffering from is PTSD. “PTSD is hallmarked by recurrent and intrusive memories of the event(s), which cause such intense psychological distress that the individual experiences significant changes in cognition, affect, and behavior.” (DeLisi 2019). I believe that she had PTSD because she was sexually abused as a child and never received the clinical help to assist her in the healing of those traumas so early in life. As an adult when had to turn to prostitution because she probably assumed that because of her childhood, that was her only resort to make money to support herself. Through prostitution, I’m sure came various forms of abuse from those who would pay her for sex. I believe that the similarities between her childhood and adulthood sparked her PTSD that she had suffered from and continued to suffer from. The brain can only protect someone for so long. I believe that when she was sexually assaulted in her adult life for her first murder victim, her brain went through the same intrusive memories and stayed in that mindset by putting her at the scene of her childhood. PTSD is less likely in criminal behavior, however, she had extreme trauma happen to her from such an early age that she may have disassociated herself and became the murderer of her abusers instead of the men she was murdering.

There are four types of homicide offenders, felony homicide offenders, domestic violence homicide offenders, accident homicide offenders, and altercation-precipitated homicide offenders. Based on Aileen's case, I believe she was a felony homicide offender. A felony homicide happens during the commission of another felony, which is usually a crime to gain a reward like cash, objects, or desired goods possessed by another person (DeLis et al., 2019). Violent behavior is a way of attaining a goal. Felony homicide is an unlawful killing with intentional malice element afterthought to cause harm to others. Aileen participated in prostitution and robbery with all her victims. She killed seven men, shooting the first victim as he was trying to rape her. Aileen was sexually abused while child and gang-raped by high school friends. There is a possibility that after killing the first rapist in self-defense, she knew she would be caught, so she became a hunter of rapists. The killing had intentional malice to cause harm to others.

Looking at homicide demographic data, I think Aileen fits in age, social-economic, and access to the weapon. Most of the perpetrators are aged 20- 34 years, and Aileen made her first killing at 33 years. Poverty is another crucial factor in Aileen's criminal behavior. Children who grow up in violent environments have a high chance of engaging in criminal behavior. Aileen was sexually abused while a child, and some of the abusers were close family members, grandfather, his brother, and later chased from home as a teen. She had to get into prostitution to sustain her living. Also, she had a traumatic childhood experience; her father killed himself, her mother abandoned her, her grandparents raised her, grandmother was alcoholic, and her grandfather was violent. The other factor is access to weapons. There is an influential association between weapons accessibility and homicides. The availability of firearms and the law allowing people to carry firearms lead to high gunshot deaths (DeLis et al., 2019).

Aileen had a handgun which she hid in her bag during pick up for prostitution. However, the demographic factors that I do not believe Aileen relates to are race and gender. According to DeLis et al. (2019), most homicide offenders are male. Also, most female homicide offenders' murders are intimate partners or family members, while in Aileen's case, the victims were random prostitute strangers. Besides, according to UCR homicide on homicide data on race, 54.2% of perpetrators are black Americans, but the Florida Department of Corrections identified Aileen as white (DeLis et al., 2019).

The common theme in homicide cases is that most offenders share access to weapons and social-economic factors like violence and poverty (DeLis et al., 2019). Access to guns, be it legal or illegal, is the leading cause of homicide. Also, poverty can lead to homicide, for it causes the desire for criminal activity.