

## A Killer's Politeness: A Discourse Analysis Of Jeffrey Dahmer's Interview

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**Abstract:** *Politeness strategies are important in shaping the public impression of a personality, especially in criminal interviews. This paper applies Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory in 1987 to evaluate how Jeffrey Dahmer (a high-profile serial killer) employed politeness strategies in an interview to shape his public image, deflect responsibility, and manipulate audience perception. The study conducts qualitative research on the interview to examine Dahmer's use of positive and negative politeness and face-threatening acts that alter discourse. Results show that Dahmer deliberately chose words that soften the perceptions of his crimes; positive politeness creates relatability and introspection while negativity strives for indirect blame avoidance. This study will contribute to media discourse analysis by demonstrating how politeness strategies interact with identity construction and perception formation in criminal interviews.*

**Keywords:** Politeness Theory, Jeffrey Dahmer, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Interview, Public Perception

### 1.0 Introduction

Media is a very important factor that shapes social views, affects public opinion, and creates the stories through which people interpret their surroundings (Chaiuk & Dunaievska, 2020). Interviews are one of the many tools that the media use, but they remain one of the most powerful tools in shaping public perception and building narratives. Unlike other forms of media communication, interviews provide a formal yet vibrant space for people to express opinions, clarify positions, and respond to public questioning (Rinaldo & Guhin, 2022). Interviews with controversial individuals are much more interesting to consider, especially when serial killers are involved. Such interviews go beyond storytelling; instead, they become a struggle over issues related to power, influence, and public spectacle. In interviews with serial murderers such as Jeffrey Dahmer (one of the most notorious criminals in modern history), their language becomes a focal point of analysis, revealing how they construct their self-image and justify their actions. Serial killers shape public perception by narrating their stories, explaining their motives, or expressing remorse. The choice of words, tone, and presentation style humanizes or dehumanizes them in the eyes of the public and alters the interpretation of their actions (Aviram, 2020). This verbal aspect pertains not only to what is spoken but also to the psychological and emotional connotations attached

The inconsistencies in serial killer interviews become grounds for discussing the parameters of politeness in communication. Politeness here is not restricted to polite language or avoidance of rudeness but has deeper connections to enactments and negotiations of self-image and other people's images in interaction (Guo & Ren, 2020). The serial killer often uses politeness strategies to soften their

image, deflect criticism, or even evoke sympathy from their audience (Maracinskaitė, 2021). In so doing, they negotiate between their self-presentation and the societal judgment that hangs over their identity (Daffin & Lane, 2021). Maintaining a composed, rational facade adds layers of intrigue and complexity to their interviews.

Politeness strategies and their role in the construction of identity bring to mind controversial figures like Jeffrey Dahmer, who, in using these strategies in media interviews, can be said to construct an intended public identity. For Jeffrey Dahmer, a remorseless serial killer who committed horrendous crimes, calm and polite conversation on camera opens the chance to change the story about him. By presenting himself as composed, rational, and non-violent, he sharply contrasts with the wild and gory aspects of his crimes. This discordancy created by strategic language use gives him an edge to shape his perception; meanwhile, it shifts public focus gradually from his monstrous deeds to his humane characteristics that seem relatable. By using subtlety in politeness strategies, Dahmer may try to portray himself as more humane and get the audience's sympathy to have a bigger impression of his personality (Packard & Berger, 2021). As positive politeness strategies involve expressing regret or vulnerability, they become empathetic, while negative politeness strategies avoid confrontation and show humility; thus, people will not be hostile to him (Ramzan & Khan, 2024). All these are not just damage control strategies but also allow him to manipulate the audience by directing their thoughts toward a complex narrative rather than sheer villainy (Landone, 2022). This strictly polite approach brings attention to communication's complex dynamics in forming identity—even for those acting as deviant from social norms.

This study describes the politeness strategies applied by Jeffrey Dahmer in one of the media interviews. The analytical framework for this study is drawn from Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, published in 1987. The analysis will therefore examine the different types of politeness strategies that are used by Jeffrey Dahmer to construct his identity through language at the same time.

## **1.2 Statement of Purpose**

Media greatly influence public perceptions, particularly in reporting on controversial figures, like serial killers. Televised interviews with such individuals provide an insight into their psychological makeup and offer a platform where language becomes a powerful instrument in shaping one's identity and managing one's image. This study attempts to explore the televised interview conducted with Jeffrey Dahmer; particularly concerning politeness strategies employed by Dahmer. The analysis framework will rely upon Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), thus illuminating the linguistic choices made by Jeffrey Dahmer. This study analyzes Jeffrey's application of politeness strategies as a means to create his public persona about serial killers' positive and negative politeness, mitigation, and face-threatening acts.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the politeness strategies used by Jeffrey Dahmer in his televised interview concerning face-threatening acts and self-presentation.
2. To explore how the language choices of Jeffrey Dahmer affect the perceptions of the audience and the construction of their identity.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What politeness strategies does Jeffrey Dahmer utilize during his televised interview?
2. Why are these politeness strategies significant for understanding audience perceptions and identity construction?

## **1.5 Delimitation**

This study is delimited to a single televised interview of the serial killer Dahmer and the focus is on the

question-answer session. Although the interview is in a documentary style and has a narrator, this study will not include the narrator's voice or other contextual elements. It will also not take into account the interviewer's dialogue.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study may provide insights into explaining how politeness strategies shape public perception of highly deviant individuals, such as serial killers. Using Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, as applied to Jeffrey Dahmer's televised interview, this study highlights the role of language in shaping identity and managing image publicity in high-stakes contexts. Implications of findings contribute to media studies by exploring the intersection between politeness, media framing, and audience interpretation. Additionally, it furthers understanding of how strategic language use shapes narratives about crime and morality; thus, it has wider implications for media discourse, communication scholarship, and societal perceptions of contentious figures.

### **2.0 Literature Review**

The case of Jeffrey Dahmer has attracted much attention from scholars and the general public, making it an excellent subject for interdisciplinary study.

In the case of Jeffrey Dahmer, Veronyka James researched 2019, serial killers' techniques of neutralization. Through a content analysis of interviews and clinical cases, James observed that Dahmer might have employed techniques that protected him from the perception of owning up to his wrongdoing by often portraying himself as a victim or claiming that his actions were self-defense. These methods enabled him to present himself as an ordinary person even though he was a serial killer. The study concludes by saying how important neutralization was in aiding Jeffrey Dahmer to manipulate society's perception and control his narrative over what happened.

The thesis of Alfan Setya Yuana (2023) explains how Jeffrey Dahmer applied deceptive language to mislead people in the documentary series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. This documentary employs qualitative methods to uncover thirteen deceptive language techniques, among which are masking and half-truths, thereby illustrating that Dahmer operated complex strategies of language in his communication. This research reveals the importance of language in portraying a serial killer. Concentrating on the documentary aspect, Yuana emphasizes the need for further exploration of deception in real-life contexts and its implications in criminal narratives.

Bravo Flores et al. (2023) explore the case of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's confession as a particular example of pragmatic discourse analysis and compare it to existing works on confessions that are obtained forcefully. By employing the taxonomy of questions and responses by Chandia et al., they analyze the power and positive engagement in the behaviors of the FBI agents and Dahmer, during Dahmer's interrogation. Their results revealed that Dahmer responded to the FBI questions in a very detailed and cooperative manner. This differs significantly from typical coercive interviews. Their study provides a deeper understanding of the different linguistic and psychological aspects of criminal confession processes.

Firdausi and Suhandoko (2024) take a directive speech act to be a form of linguistic manipulation in the "*Dahmer–Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*", by portraying how Jeffrey Dahmer interacts with his victims. In this case, Speech Act Theory is used to analyze the commands, requests, and invitations that exist within the selected episodes of the series to reveal what Dahmer does to exert psychological control. It discovered that subtlety in directive acts of asking and inviting paired with particular intonation and word stress helped Dahmer keep power over his victims yet still manipulate them without exposing any evil intention.

Fazio (2024) conducts a linguistic analysis of serial killers with antisocial personality disorder and psychopathy using the interview transcripts of John Gacy, Ted Bundy, David Berkowitz, and Jeffrey Dahmer. Some of the common linguistic features identified in this corpus-driven study are self-referential language, high negation frequency, and fixation on crime and violence. Among the distinctive linguistic features noted are an idiosyncratic use of "you" for self-reference and patterns observed in experiential verbs. The thematic analysis brought out unique emphases for each individual; crime, substance use, and anatomical references formed much of the focus in Dahmer's speech.

The literature review provides an adequate base for analyzing the Jeffrey Dahmer case from different scholarly perspectives. Although there is plenty of research on the psychological and linguistic aspects of Jeffrey Dahmer, interviews with him have not been studied using politeness theory. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by studying how the communication strategies used by Dahmer affect his public perception and media representation.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The orientation of this research will be based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory from 1987. This is a qualitative study that examines how linguistic choices made by Dahmer shape his public persona, affect the process of identity construction, and impact the audience's interpretation.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study applies qualitative research design in exploring the use of politeness strategies in the televised interview with serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. The analysis stresses the identification and classification of politeness strategies employed by Dahmer according to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, 1987. It reveals, through a focus on language, how Dahmer constructs his public persona and negotiates the power dynamics in an interview context.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

In the course of this research, the information was derived from a YouTube video where Jeffrey Dahmer was being interviewed on a Television station known as "Inside Edition" (Inside Edition, 2018). The interview will be transcribed for further linguistic analysis. Although YouTube offers an automatic transcript of the video, this feature's accuracy and completeness are highly questionable. To ensure correct transcription, the text will be proofed and manually corrected to reflect every verbal and non-verbal nuance.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

This study will apply Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory of 1987 to an interview with Jeffrey Dahmer, analyzing verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. It starts from a detailed transcription analysis, in which intonation, pauses, and self-repair show effectively when in need of accuracy. Within the broader context of the conversation, the following key politeness strategies, which include the positive and negative face, positive and negative politeness, bald-on-record, and off-record communication are identified. The study also looks at face-threatening acts and various sociological variables. It also takes into account how the language used by Jeffrey Dahmer manipulates or shapes the perception of the audience watching the interview.

#### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

This research will use Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) to analyze the televised interview of Jeffrey Dahmer. It will take into account the following main aspects of the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) while analyzing the interview.

##### **3.4.1 Positive and Negative Face**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a positive face is a concept that relates to a person's need to be liked, valued, and accepted by others. It has to do with the requirement of one's social identity or self-concept to receive recognition and validation in interactional processes. A negative face is about a person's independence, autonomy, and freedom from any kind of shackles imposed by others. It touches on the necessity to act independently, unrestrained by the pressures or restrictions laid down by other people.

### **3.4.2 Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)**

Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) refer to any communication behavior that threatens a person's positive or negative face. Such acts influence a person's self-identity or their quest for autonomy in social relationships (Brown and Levinson, 1987). While the desire for approval (positive face) can be undermined by such behavior, the need for independence (negative face) can also be compromised.

### **3.4.3 Politeness Strategies**

Brown and Levinson (1987) identify four primary categories of politeness strategies.

*Bald On-Record*: An utterance produced directly by the speaker without politeness strategies or efforts to mitigate the impact of the message. It is crystal clear and explicit and does not aim at softening any possibly face-threatening implications.

*Negative Politeness*: Negative politeness is a communicative strategy through which the speaker tries to minimize the imposition or threat to the interlocutor's negative face, that is, to their desire for autonomy and control over their circumstances. Negative politeness, in this respect, evokes respect for the addressee's wish not to be disturbed or annoyed.

*Positive Politeness*: Positive politeness as the communicative approach is created to perform the function of recognizing and protecting the positive face of an individual, which is concerned with his/her desire to be liked, valued, and accepted by other people. It involves using words and behavior that are aimed at making the addressee feel valuable, included, or respected.

*Off-record (Indirect)*: Off-record refers to a communicative strategy in which the speaker relies on implication or suggestion rather than stating explicitly what he or she means. This allows the hearer to interpret the message, and it enables the speaker to not commit fully to the claim.

### **3.4.4 Sociological Variables**

In Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), sociological factors are among the most important determinants of politeness strategies.

*Power (P)*: The relative authority between the interactants. Higher power differences should lead to more ritualized strategies from the less powerful party.

*Social Distance (D)*: The concept of closeness or distance between interlocutors. The more distant the relationship, the more elaborate politeness is expected.

*Imposition rank (R)*: The burden associated with a request or action. For higher imposition, more politeness is required.

## **4.0 Analysis**

This study analyzes the language choices made by Jeffrey Dahmer in his televised interview (Inside Edition, 2018). The main focus will be on how Jeffrey Dahmer employs various politeness strategies to manipulate the public perception when it comes to his image. Applying Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), this paper demonstrates linguistic behavior related to the context of the televised interview.

### **4.1 Positive Face**

As Brown and Levinson state in their theory of Politeness (1987), a positive face is the desire to be accepted or approved by others. In the interview, Jeffrey Dahmer applies positive politeness techniques to manage his reputation while reducing the audience's reaction to his crime.

**Dahmer:** *"I desensitized myself to it. I—I don't know—I went to great lengths."*

Dahmer uses a positive face strategy in this statement by claiming his desensitization was gradual and grueling, thus appealing to their perception of human vulnerability. The phrase *"I went to great lengths"* implies struggle and inner conflict, which humanizes him and makes his actions be seen as the outcome of a failing moral standard rather than wickedness in essence. His doubts and hesitation in phrasing- *"I-I don't know"*, contribute further to this strategy by making him reflective and uncertain. These traits may momentarily divert the audience's attention from his criminal acts to his mental state.

**Dahmer:** *"I always knew, though, that it was wrong."*

Dahmer's claim of his awareness of moral consciousness adopts a positive face strategy by associating himself with social standards that demand accountability and ethical reflection. When he claims that he *"always knew"* his actions were wrong, he sets himself in a position to be considered more human, while possessing no conscience or humanity, despite the enormity of his offenses. This admission creates psychological proximity between him and the audience by appealing to their common belief in the necessity for moral recognition. It humanizes Dahmer by making him seem capable of understanding right from wrong; this softens his image as someone who is beyond redemption.

**Dahmer:** *"I felt so hopelessly evil and perverted that I derived a sort of pleasure from watching that tape."*

Dahmer's confession shows his internal struggles with his self-consciousness and ethical understanding. Referring to himself as *"hopelessly evil and perverted,"* he conveys his deviance while simultaneously portraying himself as an individual who is experiencing struggle with his inner self as well as self-recognition. This is the type of vulnerability that makes him human, for it shows the struggle between some of his basic instincts and his better judgment of the situation. The confession of *"a sort of pleasure"* illustrates self-understanding that further depicts the complexity of his character where an uneasy mix of shame and delight can be seen in his confession. To pity him, one has to put aside such preconceived notions, so with this acknowledgment, he denotes further complexity.

**Dahmer:** *"And the person to blame is sitting right across from you."*

This quote appeals to the positive face in that Dahmer explicitly acknowledges full responsibility for his actions. His confession makes him answerable to the social norms relating to accountability and moral reflection, which could in turn elicit respect or recognition from the audience. By claiming sole responsibility for his actions, Dahmer positions himself as candid and contemplative, which conforms to the principles of honesty and personal accountability.

**Dahmer:** *"There were times. There were times. But the compulsive obsession with doing what I was doing overpowered any feelings of revulsion."*

Dahmer's confession employs a positive face strategy by confessing that he had been compulsively driven to kill yet had experienced moments of revulsion. The very confession brings out the aspect of dualism; he was not wholly given over to his compulsions but still possessed an ability for moral recognition which again emphasizes the fact that his 'compulsive obsession' eventually overpowered these feelings when he turned to portray his actions as resulting from forces beyond his control. This psychological struggle adds a subtle understanding of the audience to empathize with in portraying life problems.

## 4.2 Negative Face



A negative face refers to the desire for independence and freedom from interference (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Throughout the interview, Jeffrey Dahmer uses negative politeness strategies to keep his freedom and avoid conflict in the tense context of talking about his crimes. Hesitant language, conditional phrasing, and deflective statements help impose no absolute interpretations but rather open space for the audience to form their views. It is these techniques that allow him to avoid difficult questioning while taking charge of his narrative, thereby blurring the effect of his confessions and minimizing direct scrutiny over his intentions and actions.

**Dahmer:** *"To this day, I don't know what started it."*

This statement reflects a negative politeness strategy in that it avoids the expectation of an elaborate justification. By admitting his inability to pinpoint any particular cause for his actions, Dahmer avoids becoming defensive. This is a negative face in that it allows him control over the account he provides while not imposing on him a detailed explanation thereof. By leaving the question open, he shifts attention from himself to ontological or situational factors that might have invoked his behavior, allowing for a less confrontational interpretation.

#### **4.3 Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)**

Face-threatening acts (FTAs) refer to any utterance or behavior that threatens or undermines a person's face, positive or negative (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The interview is filled with face-threatening acts used by Jeffrey Dahmer which challenge social conventions and the expectations of the spectators regarding ethics and humanity.

**Dahmer:** *"It's a process that doesn't happen overnight. When you depersonalize another person and view them as just an object—an object for pleasure instead of a living, breathing human being—it seems to make it easier to do things you shouldn't do."*

Dahmer's statement is a face-threatening act in that it violates ordinary expectations by informing the audience how he lacks humanity. Objectifying his victims, he plays with the good face of his audience by making them confront an attitude that is very much at odds with human dignity. Such blunt narrative breaks conversation conventions in not providing any softening or acknowledgment of horrified feelings taken from it. This uncensored language captures Jeffrey Dahmer's state of mind quite vividly, thereby adding to the emotional impact on his listeners.

**Dahmer:** *"It was almost addictive. It was almost a surge of energy. I wouldn't have to worry about any of their needs or anything. I just had complete control of the situation."*

It is a face-threatening act in that it not only reveals Dahmer's emotional disconnect but also his enjoyment of what he did. It confronts the audience's positive face by erecting total irreverence and indifference, making it impossible to relate or comprehend his logic. The very nature of his appeal to the experience as "addictive" and pleasurable stands in direct contradiction to societal expectations that one should feel guilt or shame. This honesty is highly disturbing because it speaks beyond acceptable standards and conversational boundaries, forcing listeners to deal directly with the bare reality of his actions.

**Dahmer:** *"I was branching out. That's when the cannibalism started—eating of the heart and the arm muscle. It was a way of making me feel that they were a part of me."*

Dahmer's blunt admission of cannibalism is a face-threatening act because it exposes the audience to one of the most revolting facets of his crimes. This statement challenges the positive face of the audience by contravening the relevant social convention standards in morality and decency. In making his act of cannibalism a means through which he relates to his victims, he contradicts human nature's expectations and no sympathy for mankind makes his acts viler. And with no mitigatory or emotional distance added, that shock value is right on the spot: leaving the audience to think about a perspective that opposes their

initial assumptions about human behavior and morality.

**Dahmer:** *"I kept the mummified head and skull of one of the victims in a carrying case in my locker at work."*

Dahmer's direct confession is indeed a face-threatening act as it confronts the audience with the horrifying and grotesque reality of his criminal acts. By casually suggesting that he had human remains in his work locker, Dahmer directly highlights any unpreparedness for a hint of remorse or shame, making it all the more chilling for those who are listening. The shock value is not to be mitigated or emotionalized; thus, directly challenging the audience's capacity to comprehend such behavior and threatening their positive face by violating moral and social conventions.

**Dahmer:** *"It was the only thing that gave me any—any satisfaction."*

Dahmer's statement is a strong FTA because it attacks the audience's positive face. If he claims that his horrific crimes bring him some emotional fulfillment, then he directly challenges society's expectation of guilt, remorse, and moral revulsion over what he has done. This confession makes his actions psychologically gratifying and forces the audience to face the horrendous idea that such extreme deviance could be perceived as satisfying on a personal level.

**Dahmer:** *"If this hadn't happened, there's no doubt I probably would be."*

Dahmer's outright confession is a face-threatening act because, in that act, he contradicts the societal expectations that require him to be rehabilitated or at least have some moral transformation. By saying that his urges were uncontrollable without intervention, he makes the audience confront the fact that his actions were inevitable, thereby negating any hope for personal change or redemption. This puts an audience in a bad face by showing them a grim and unsettling reality that challenges their expectations of accountability and recovery.

#### **4.4 Politeness Strategies**

##### **4.4.1 Bald On-Record**

A bald-on-record politeness strategy refers to the use of straight, uncompromising language that offers no softening for the impact of an utterance (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Dahmer employs bald on-record techniques to present his actions completely unvarnished, showing his distance and detachment with no emotional response

**Dahmer:** *"There just wasn't an opportunity to fully express what I wanted to do."*

Dahmer openly admits that his killing was paused due to a lack of opportunity and not because of any moral restraint. In this statement, he offers unabashed clarity into his mind, for he speaks freely about the effects of external circumstances on his actions. The plain admission bypasses any form of softening over the seriousness of his impulses and presents a stark narrative account of his deviance. Dahmer's unhesitating and unsought explanation forces the audience to confront the ugly reality of his compulsion.

**Dahmer:** *"I started reading pornography, going to the bookstores. Eventually, that led to frequenting the gay bars."*

This statement describes the development of Dahmer's behavior in an almost simplistic, unadorned manner. In detailing the practices that preceded the escalation of his crimes, Dahmer makes no use of euphemisms nor does he place moral context around his actions. The absence of defensive language only speaks to his disassociation and further chills the recounting of his story. His frank admission of behaviors involved in his crimes yields a calculated approach, permitting no room for the audience to justify or excuse his actions.

**Dahmer:** *"I was branching out. That's when the cannibalism started—eating of the heart and the arm*



*muscle."*

Dahmer's admission to cannibalism is shockingly blunt and unapologetic. Since he makes the early onset of this behavior seem a natural progression from his earlier crimes, he thereby sidesteps any form of emotional involvement with his audience and simply aims to be clear. The clinical tone of this statement renders it utterly devoid of sorrow; the hearer is thus confronted with the full horror of what he has done. That stark, bald on-record confession offers an unvarnished view of his mental state, which further distances him from conventional standards and magnifies the discomfort experienced by anyone trying to fathom his deviance.

#### **4.4.2 Positive Politeness**

As Brown and Levinson (1987) describe, positive politeness strategies are meant to reduce the distance between interactants while enhancing their connection by appealing to the addressee's want to be accepted. In the interview, Jeffrey Dahmer uses positive politeness strategies to soften the blow of his confessions and make himself seem relatable.

**Dahmer:** *"Not because I was angry with them, not because I hated them, but because I wanted to keep them with me."*

In this statement, Dahmer reduces social distance by providing a motive for his actions that is not rooted in anger or hatred. Instead, he focuses on attachment and the desire to *"keep them with me,"* framing his behavior in terms of emotions that are publicly relatable, thus connecting with an audience. This human relational instinct is subtly appealed to as a positive politeness strategy, minimizing face threats and creating some degree of empathy.

**Dahmer:** *"When you depersonalize another person and view them as just an object—it seems to make it easier to do things you shouldn't do."*

Dahmer uses positive politeness by broadening his account and referring to his audience with the inclusive *"you"*. This captures the audience in a common view, making the notion of desensitization and detachment almost universal. By setting his actions as part of a psychological process that is potentially normal for anyone, he minimizes the moral distance separating him from his audience. It is this strategy that softens the impact of his admissions and allows his crimes to be placed in quite a larger frame of reference: human vulnerability to such processes.

**Dahmer:** *"It was not a racial preference. It was just to find an obsession with the best-looking young man I could find."*

When Dahmer explains his choice of victims, he applies positive politeness and thereby avoids being accused of racism. Because he presents his actions as an outcome of aesthetic preference rather than a racial bias, this would further deflect criticism and align his motives with neutral standards. Providing such an explanation pacifies the audience's reaction by offering, however disturbingly, a rationale that conforms to common human inclinations like subjective taste preferences, even in an instance that is extremely morally reprehensible.

**Dahmer:** *"I started having these obsessive thoughts when I was about 15 and 16, and they got worse and worse."*

Dahmer employs inclusive language to create relatability, implying without explicitly stating that his struggle with obsessive thoughts commenced during adolescence, which most people would consider a vulnerable period. A gradual buildup shifts the focus from his criminal activities to a narrative of inner turmoil. This is a positive politeness strategy, as it invites the audience to perceive his actions as the product of uncontrollable psychological forces rather than intentional malice.

**Dahmer:** *"I thought the best route was to help—help the police identify all the victims."*

Dahmer frames his post-arrest actions as beneficial by pointing out what he assisted the police with and how he helped give closure to the families of the victims. This positive politeness makes him a responsible figure contributing to societal justice despite his wrongdoings. His offer of help as a solution allows him to fit in with the audience's values connected with resolution and accountability. Ruining his confession into a proactive act toward aiding others disperses anger yet simultaneously creates an aura of moral legitimacy; consequently, his narrative becomes less confrontational and more harmonious with social norms.

#### 4.4.3 Negative Politeness

Negative politeness strategies are employed to safeguard the addressee's wish to stay autonomous and avoid imposition. In Jeffrey Dahmer's interview, he applies many negative politeness strategies to keep control of the conversation while rejecting his responsibility or the direct imposition on others' perceptions of him.

**Dahmer:** *"I wish I could say that it just left completely, but no."*

In this quote, Dahmer directly addresses the audience's likely expectation that he might be rehabilitated. He acknowledges their hopes while at the same time softening the impact of his admission by saying *"I wish I could say"* and expressing regret. This aligns him briefly with societal values and thus creates an illusory common understanding. The denial of *"but no"* brings immediately the disturbing reality that his compulsions are still there. Such words minimize the struggle to uncover an unpleasant truth while still being respectful to the listener in terms of processing this information.

**Dahmer:** *"To this day, I don't know what started it."*

This statement embodies negative politeness by introducing ambiguity and diversion, thereby relieving the audience of the expectation burden in elucidating Dahmer's actions. While he weakens his authority, he does not offer any plausible explanation that would engage further curiosity or moral condemnation. He does not impose a closed narrative to explain what transpired; thus, he renounces the listener's freedom. This approach to describing his crimes is less face-threatening because it ignores personal shame and centers instead on an abstract concept, a problem related to behavior comprehension.

#### 4.4.4 Off-Record Politeness Strategies

Indirect communication in off-record politeness strategies enables the speaker not to commit to a specific utterance and at the same time to mitigate the harsh effect of face-threatening acts FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In the interview with Jeffrey Dahmer, off-record strategies were employed where vagueness helped avoid confrontation or accountability.

**Dahmer:** *"I don't know how to put it—possess them permanently."*

Dahmer's hesitation and ambiguous words conceal the full weight of his actions. He states that he wanted to *"possess them permanently,"* but not how leaves an interpretive void that diminishes the direct impact of his confession. The listener is made to shape his motivation in an abstract, almost insubstantial manner, instead of the visceral reality of his crimes. This ambiguity sidesteps confrontation, allowing Dahmer to distance himself from the horrific part of his actions.

**Dahmer:** *"Uh, as a sort of memorial point where I could—I don't know—it's, it's so bizarre and strange, it's hard to describe."*

Dahmer's incomplete explanation of the purpose of his altar redirects attention away from the explicit act by making his behavior seem beyond knowledge, even to himself. The hesitance and fragmented expressions diffuse the grotesque reality and leave the audience to connect with their interpretation. Describing the idea as *"bizarre and strange"* creates a distance in Dahmer from the full horror of the act because he implies that he cannot fully rationalize it. This anomia reduces moral outrage that could have been evoked by a clearer explanation.

**Dahmer:** *"It was my way of remembering their appearance—their physical beauty."*

By describing his actions as an effort to *"remember their physical beauty,"* Dahmer shifts the attention from the horrific aspect of his crimes to an almost artistic or nostalgic justification. This choice of words minimizes the harshness of his behavior by implying that it is rooted in appreciation rather than anger. The term *"physical beauty"* again softens the aim of his actions and brings forth concern for form rather than the horrible reality of body parts scattered about.

#### **4.5 Sociological Variables**

According to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), sociological variables are crucial in determining the communication strategies used in situations of high interaction. The variables are power (P), social distance (D), and imposition rank (R).

##### **4.5.1 Power (P)**

Power, as defined by relativity between interactants (Brown and Levinson, 1987), is not evenly distributed in this interview. Jeffrey Dahmer employs specific language techniques to manipulate the power imbalance that naturally exists within an interview context.

**Dahmer:** *"To this day, I don't know what started it."*

In this statement, Jeffrey Dahmer uses vagueness as a tool to alter the interview's conventional power dynamic. According to him, he doesn't know the reason behind his actions; thus, he avoids giving a concrete answer that would lead to more probing questions or moral judgment from others. Moreover, this answer shifts the power dynamic subtly because it makes it an interaction in which even Dahmer cannot articulate enough to clarify what made him act as he did. The shift of roles is made explicit by his crimes, which are described as part of an enigma rather than something purposive or born out of conscious thought.

**Dahmer:** *"The person to blame is sitting right across from you. That's the only person—not parents, not society, not pornography."*

In this statement, Dahmer assumes full responsibility for his actions, which might at first glance seem to yield him to the societal judgment process. Yet confession simultaneously becomes a tool for reclaiming power. Shunning influences from upbringing societal expectations, or even external stimuli like pornography, he then claims control over his behavior. His refusal to operate within conventional explanatory frameworks makes him actively position himself as someone who cannot be a victim or attributed to external forces; this quietly subverts the interviewer's attempts to elicit those factors through her questioning.

**Dahmer:** *"I wish I could say that it just left completely, but no."*

Dahmer's claimed regret about his compulsion fits societal expectations of expressing remorse and reflection but also serves to keep his control over the conversation. The very claim humanizes him and frames his compulsion as a problem established rather than an easy solution. In this very strategy, he shifts the focus from moral condemnation to psychological complexity, which weakens the questioner's ability to assert authority through direct disapproval.

**Dahmer:** *"I started having these obsessive thoughts when I was about 15 and 16, and they got worse and worse."*

In this statement, Dahmer shifts his deviant behavior from inactive, intentional acts to a struggle for development. He connects his compulsions to adolescence, a period generally viewed as vulnerable and confused, thus lowering the pressure of moral blame while elevating the so-called uncontrollable nature of his urges. His statement creates a focus on internal torment which shaped his behavior. This framing invites a more sympathetic reading and simultaneously challenges subtly the interviewer's position to

pass moral judgment.

#### 4.5.2 Social Distance (D)

Social distance is a measure of closeness or distance in relation among participants in an exchange, which affects the strategies for politeness in discourse (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Jeffrey Dahmer employs several linguistic strategies to reduce the social distance between the interviewer and the audience.

**Dahmer:** *"I always knew, though, that it was wrong."*

In this statement, Dahmer implies that he knows his actions are wrong, thereby employing a tactic to reduce his social and moral distance from the community. His claim to possess an understanding of right and wrong atoned for his sins and placed him in alignment with one of the predominant expectations of society: moral responsibility. It is this very acceptance that humanizes him, albeit briefly; it paints him as someone capable of sensible thought rather than outright ignorance when it comes to morals. This technique softens the audience's view of him because it presents his actions as a violation of norms he knowingly recognized.

**Dahmer:** *"Not because I was angry with them, not because I hated them, but because I wanted to keep them with me."*

Dahmer frames his crimes as acts of attachment rather than malice, thereby humanizing his behavior and reducing the audience's social distance from him. By refusing to claim anger or hatred as a motive, he separates himself from the typical portrayal of violent criminals. Instead, his narrative construction offers his actions as misled efforts in connection and control. *"Wanted to keep them with me"* brings in possessiveness that feels disturbing yet relatable through human emotions; attachment and fear of losing someone. The strategy above reduces the moral gap between Dahmer and society; it makes his deeds less monstrous and an outcome more of an obsessive illusion.

**Dahmer:** *"I thought the best route was to help—help the police identify all the victims."*

Dahmer uses these words to portray himself as cooperative and willing to assist in resolving the aftermath of his crimes. By representing his actions after the arrest as an endeavor to help law enforcement and the victims' families, he attempts to position himself rightly with societal expectations of accountability and justice. This technique reduces the social distance between Dahmer and society by introducing him as someone who, despite his misdeeds, recognizes the necessity for closure and restitution. It humanizes him by making it credible that he has some remorse or at least a wish to be corrected.

**Dahmer:** *"It was not a racial preference. It was just to find an obsession with the best-looking young man I could find."*

In this statement, Dahmer directly confronts the societal assertion that his crimes were racially motivated by offering a bland and factual answer in an attempt to diffuse anger and decrease social distance. By stating that his actions were driven by an aesthetic preference and not racial hatred, Dahmer seeks to take attention away from institutionalized prejudices and bring it onto personal motivations which are horrifically troubling instead. Addressing sensitive issues with calm and non-explosive language reduces audience animosity likely to be generated by the approach itself.

#### 4.5.3 Imposition Rank (R)

Imposition rank refers to the burden or sensitiveness associated with any act of communication, and it usually determines the degree of politeness that is expected (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Jeffrey Dahmer uses several strategies for coping with the high impositional pressure that is associated with sensitive topics in the interview.

**Dahmer:** *"Uh, as a sort of memorial point where I could—I don't know—it's, it's so bizarre and strange, it's hard to describe."*

In this statement, Dahmer employs hesitant and fragmented speech as a defense while confessing to having planned an altar. Such hesitation and qualifiers like *"sort of"* and *"I don't know"* draw attention away from the horrific reality of his actions; thus, they minimize the emotional impact on the listener. By using the terms *"bizarre and strange"* to describe his behavior, Dahmer shifts perspective. This vagueness in subject matter gives less emphasis to intrusion because it removes the conversation from cycles of judgment or condemnation, allowing the audience to perceive his admission as part of a complex psychological state.

**Dahmer:** *"It was my way of remembering their appearance—their physical beauty."*

Dahmer reconstructs his crime as an act committed out of a love for beauty, thus stripping his crimes of moral and emotional significance. When he says that he intended to *"remember their appearance"* and *"physical beauty,"* he shifts the focus from the horror of what he has done to a goal-oriented approach that seeks to preserve. This artistic framing softens the audience's perception, thereby shockingly perceiving his actions in a context that, though disturbing, relates to a normal human inclination to preserve memory.

**Dahmer:** *"I felt so hopelessly evil and perverted that I derived a sort of pleasure from watching that tape."*

In this statement, Dahmer reveals his internal conflict by describing what he did as shame mixed with gratification. Accepting responsibility for feeling *"hopelessly evil and perverted,"* Dahmer makes himself the person who is struggling with his moral values, overpass humanizing his deviancy. The words *"derived a sort of pleasure"* have given mildness to the harshness of his confession because it presents his enjoyment as problematic and multifaceted rather than purely maleficent. It gives room to the audience to frame his deeds in terms of personal conflict, which minimizes immediate ethical confrontation and creates some sympathy for his confused mentality.

**Dahmer:** *"If this hadn't happened, there's no doubt I probably would be."*

Dahmer employs a hypothetical structure to claim that his actions were inevitable, thus escaping the overt coercion of his confession. By casting his narrative in the form of speculation, he steps aside from an explicit admission of his ongoing menace, thereby nullifying the effect of his words. With the conditional clause *"If this had not happened"*, he shifts the onus to the tragic circumstances wherein he implicitly suggests that what he did was beyond some consummate control. This technique allows the audience to think about behavior in a wider, less condemnatory framework.

## **5.0 Discussion**

Politeness strategies in the interview with Jeffrey Dahmer on television were important in determining how the public viewed his crimes. Based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), he used both positive and negative politeness strategies to take control of the narrative, thus softening the terror of his deeds and portraying himself as composed, reflective, and introspective rather than a monstrous person. His lexical choices played gently but firmly in shaping audience perception, creating a striking contrast between his calm demeanor and the savagery of his actions.

Positive politeness strategies are apparent in Dahmer's efforts to portray himself as relatable and introspective. He admitted to his crimes and was even remorseful at times, thus creating a more humanized persona and not an irredeemable villain. Through a selective self-disclosure strategy, he talked about his psychological struggles while committing crimes which shifted the attention from his illegal acts to his inner turmoil. For example, he shunned graphic language and instead spoke in euphemisms, describing his actions as simply *"wrong,"* thus framing his narrative as tragic rather than

evil.

Negative politeness allowed Dahmer to distance himself from the responsibility of his actions. Passive voice, conditional clauses, and hedging characterized much of his speech, as in "I don't know what started it" and "I wish I could have stopped," where he subtly shifted the blame away from himself. By not giving graphic details of his crimes, he dampened the emotion associated with those crimes and kept a calm, neutral tone, which helped focus on his psychology rather than his atrocities.

Dahmer's deliberate use of politeness strategies creates audience perception through the resulting cognitive dissonance. His calmness was rather at odds with his crimes and made him come across as a psychological case study rather than an evil villain. Unlike the stereotypical serial killer, who is aggressive or unstable, his composed manner of speaking and absence of emotional outbursts made it impossible for the audience to reconcile his behavior with his horrific history.

The media played a crucial role in reinforcing this perception. By broadcasting interviews that emphasized Dahmer's calm and reflective nature, they shaped a narrative that focused on his psychological complexity rather than his brutality. This highlights how language and media framing influence public understanding of criminals.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This case illustrates the importance of politeness strategies in creating public perceptions of cases involving individuals like Jeffrey Dahmer. Dahmer's carefully chosen words created an impression of him as a calm, reflective, and accommodating person, perhaps at the cost of losing the immediate horror reaction to his crimes. His positive politeness strategies established rapport by appealing to common human emotions, while negative politeness strategies enabled him to pass the buck and equivocate on explicit accusations.

## 6.1 Recommendations for Future Research

This research can form the basis for future research by exploring how serial killers use different politeness strategies in their televised interviews. A comparative study among several high-profile criminals could be used to determine if politeness strategies are idiosyncratic or characteristic or if they fall under linguistic norms displayed in various instances. Analysis of different interviews will reveal how language affects people and whether certain strategies are more effective in creating impressions. This kind of research will provide further insight into the relationship between language, media, and public perception, thereby contributing to discourse analysis and media framing theory, a comprehensive rather than peripheral.

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## Appendix

### Interview Transcript

Dahmer: "I desensitized myself to it. I—I don't know—I went to great lengths."

Host: "He is pure evil, but you'd never know it by looking at him. But when you hear him, that's another story. His killing field was Milwaukee, and he got away with murder for more than a decade. But how could any of this happen? For the first time ever, Nancy Glass is here, inside the world of Jeffrey Dahmer."

Interviewer: "Bill, when I sat down opposite Jeffrey Dahmer for this interview, I wondered what he would tell me, how hard it would be to get him to discuss his horrific crimes. What I found was that he was very forthcoming. He volunteered details that may be difficult to hear. I began by asking what he wanted from the men he picked up."

Dahmer: "I had these obsessive desires and—and thoughts. Wanting to control them, to—I don't know how to put it—possess them permanently."

Interviewer: "And that's why you killed them?"

Dahmer: "Right, right. Not because I was angry with them, not because I hated them, but because I wanted to keep them with me. And as my obsession grew, I was saving body parts such as skulls and skeletons."

Interviewer Narration: "Jeffrey Dahmer is recalling his monstrous past. Almost two years ago, in this little apartment in Milwaukee, police discovered the grisly remnants of one of the most horrible crime sprees in American history. Jeffrey Dahmer, an unassuming chocolate factory worker, would eventually confess that he had seduced, murdered, and dismembered 17 young men. He even ate some of his victims' body parts. He instantly became the center of worldwide media attention—a serial killer unmasked. There were protests and press conferences in Milwaukee as people tried to understand how this could have happened in their midst. How did Jeffrey Dahmer get away with murder after murder for 13 years? How did a boy born into a hardworking, middle-class family turn into the worst kind of monster imaginable? In this exclusive interview, we put those questions to Jeffrey Dahmer himself. We met with him at the maximum-security prison where he is serving his sentence of 999 years. For the first time, he talks about his crimes and gives us a chilling look inside the mind of a serial killer."

Dahmer: "It's a process that doesn't happen overnight. When you depersonalize another person and view them as just an object—an object for pleasure instead of a living, breathing human being—it seems to make it easier to do things you shouldn't do."

Interviewer Narration: "The reason why Jeffrey Dahmer was able to get away with his crimes was because of just what you are seeing here. Jeffrey Dahmer is intelligent and articulate. That is what makes him so frightening. But if you listen carefully to his words throughout this interview, you realize it is a thin disguise."

Interviewer: "You do sound, though, like the kind of person who could have said to himself," "This is wrong. I must stop."

Dahmer: "I always knew, though, that it was wrong. But after the—the first—the first killing was not planned. I was coming back from the shopping mall back in '78. I had had fantasies about picking up a hitchhiker and taking him back to the house and having complete control and dominance over him."

Interviewer Narration: "The hitchhiker's name was Steven Hicks. He was just 18. Jeffrey took him to his parents' house. There, he strangled him with a barbell. He dismembered the body and hid it in a drainpipe. It was Jeffrey Dahmer who gave those details to the police in his confession."

Dahmer: “No one—no one—had a clue as to what was happening for—for over a decade.”

Interviewer Narration: “During that time, Jeffrey Dahmer joined the Army and was sent to Germany. He was eventually discharged for a drinking problem and returned to Ohio. Nine years after Stephen Hicks' murder, the killing began again.”

Interviewer: “What happened to you in the nine years in between that you were able to stop, that you were able to control yourself?”

Dahmer: “There just wasn't an opportunity to fully express what I wanted to do. There was just not that—the physical opportunity to do it then. And I started, when I moved to Milwaukee in '81, I started reading pornography, going to the bookstores. Eventually, that led to frequenting the gay bars. And then I, one time, I brought this young man back to the hotel room—the Ambassador Hotel. I was just planning on drugging him and spending the night with him. I had no intention of hurting him. When I woke up in the morning, he had a broken rib here. I was heavily bruised. Apparently, I had beaten him to death with my fists.”

Interviewer: “And you have no memory of it?”

Dahmer: “I have no memory of it, but that's what started the whole spree all over again.”

Interviewer Narration: “Dahmer says he snuck the corpse of his victim, Steven Tuomi, out of his hotel room in a suitcase. Then he took it to his grandmother's house, where he cut up the body and put it in plastic garbage bags.”

Interviewer: “When you killed these men, afterwards, were you repulsed? Were you upset?”

Dahmer: “No, at the time it was—it was almost addictive. It was almost a surge of energy. I wouldn't have to worry about any of their needs or anything. I just had complete control of the situation.”

Interviewer Narration: “But Jeffrey Dahmer was out of control. The urge to kill had overpowered him. As police later learned, he wasn't satisfied with his victims' deaths. He wanted more.”

Interviewer: “Why did you photograph them?”

Dahmer: “It was my way of remembering their appearance—their physical beauty. I also wanted to keep something. If I couldn't keep them there with me whole, at least I felt that I could keep their skeletons. And I even went so far as planning on setting up an altar with the ten different skulls and skeletons.”

Interviewer: “And what was the purpose of the altar going to be?”

Dahmer: “Uh, as a sort of memorial point where I could—I don't know—it's, it's so bizarre and strange, it's hard to describe. A place where I could collect my thoughts and feed my obsession.”

Interviewer: “When the bodies were still in your apartment, there was no time when you would see them and say, “This is grotesque. What have I done?””

Dahmer: “There were times. There were times. But the compulsive obsession with doing what I was doing overpowered any feelings of revulsion.”

Interviewer Narration: “This man, with a quiet, almost shy demeanor, became a master manipulator who was able to lure strangers he met at gay bars to his apartment. He was even able to con the police into returning a 14-year-old boy to him after neighbors called 911, reporting that the child was in the street, naked and bleeding. Dahmer convinced the police that he and the boy were simply having a lover's quarrel.”

Interviewer Narration: “He was lucky to escape because, by then, the killing had become almost routine.”

Interviewer: “Before you went out to pick up a man, was there any kind of ritual you went through?”

Dahmer: “I'd go to the nightclubs, drink, watch the strip shows on TV. And if I didn't meet anyone at the bars, I'd go to the bath clubs and meet—meet someone there, offer them money. And we'd go back to the apartment, have a few drinks. I'd have the sleeping pill mixture already prepared. The person would drink it, fall asleep, and that's when they would be strangled.”

Interviewer Narration: “Watching the movie Exorcist 3 was also part of his ritual. It put him in the mood for murder.”

Dahmer: “I felt so hopelessly evil and perverted that I actually derived a sort of pleasure from watching that tape.”

Interviewer: “Did you like feeling evil?”

Dahmer: “No, no, I didn't. But I tried to overcome the thoughts, and it worked for a while. But eventually, I gave in.”

Interviewer Narration: “While Jeffrey Dahmer may say things today that make it seem like he understands what went on in his mind, he does not. All he can do is tell you what happened, but he cannot stop whatever it is that drove him to kill in the first place.”

Interviewer Narration: “Do you still feel those same urges? Do you still feel that compulsion, that obsession?”

Dahmer: “I wish I could say that it just left completely, but no. There are times when I still do—still do have the old compulsions.”

Interviewer Narration: “Jeffrey Dahmer says as time went on, his mind became more and more warped. And yet, he was clever enough to continue to elude police and lure young men to his apartment. We should warn you, the details are very graphic.”

Dahmer: “I started having these obsessive thoughts when I was about 15 and 16, and they got worse and worse.”

Interviewer: “What were your fantasies about?”

Dahmer: “Uh, they were sexual fantasies of control, power, complete dominance. They became reality.”

Interviewer: “Was there pleasure in that fantasy?”

Dahmer: “There was excitement, fear, pleasure—all mixed together.”

Interviewer Narration: “Jeffrey Dahmer fulfilled his fantasies by murdering and dismembering 17 young men. In time, his desires became more extreme, his deeds more grotesque. Listen to him talk about the most unnatural things in the most matter-of-fact of ways—that's when you realize that none of it has touched him.”

Dahmer: “I was branching out. That's when the cannibalism started—eating of the heart and the arm muscle. It was a way of making me feel that they were a part of me. At first, it was just curiosity, and then it became compulsive. Then I tried to keep the person alive by inducing a zombie-like state by injecting first a dilute acid solution into their brain or hot water. And it never did completely work.”

Interviewer: “Could someone like you be stopped? Could you be helped?”

Dahmer: “No. I was—I was dead set on going with this compulsion. It was the only thing that gave me any—any satisfaction.”

Interviewer Narration: “He became so warped by his evil impulses that he even took a victim's head with him to work at the Ambrosia Chocolate Factory.”

Dahmer: "I kept the mummified head and skull of one of the victims in a carrying case in my locker at work."

Interviewer: "Were you almost flaunting it?"

Dahmer: "Yes. But that's how strong the compulsion was. That's how bizarre the—the desire was. I wanted to keep something of the person with me."

Interviewer Narration: "Jeffrey Dahmer exhibited some disturbing behavior early on. He began drinking heavily as a teenager, dropped out of college, and was arrested for indecent exposure, disorderly conduct, and fondling a thirteen-year-old boy. Tragically, one of his murder victims would be that boy's brother."

Interviewer: "Do you know what started it? Is there any kind of incident that you can remember?"

Dahmer: "To this day, I don't know what started it. And the person to blame is sitting right across from you. That's the only person—not parents, not society, not pornography. I mean, those are just excuses."

Interviewer Narration: "His macabre 13-year crime spree finally ended when this man, Tracy Edwards, brought the police to the infamous apartment. Like the others, he had gone there with the promise of money."

Interviewer: "What was the turning point for you that made you suddenly realize that you had done something terribly wrong—something you should be sorry for?"

Dahmer: "It was the night of the arrest. I have no memory of what happened during the six hours before the last victim ran out of the apartment. They heard a knock on the door, and the police were there with—with the last victim. They asked me where the key was to the handcuffs. My mind was in a haze. I sort of pointed to the bedroom, and that's where they found the pictures. They yelled, "Cuff him!" I was handcuffed, and it was just the realization that there was no point in trying to hide—hide my actions anymore. The best route was to help—help the police identify all the victims and just make a complete confession."

Interviewer Narration: "When it was revealed that most of the victims were Black or homosexual, people in Milwaukee were incensed. Many felt that was why he went after them and why the police didn't seem to care when their families reported them missing."

Interviewer: "Ten of your 17 victims were Black. Were they racially motivated?"

Dahmer: "It was not a racial preference. It was just to find an obsession with the best-looking young man I could find."

Interviewer Narration: "Well, you just heard him say that his sexual preference had nothing to do with the killings. He has not come to terms with his homosexuality."

Dahmer: "Never understood it. There was no use trying to fight it because I couldn't rid myself of it. It was—it was too powerful and persistent."

Interviewer: "Do you dislike it?"

Dahmer: "Yes. It's caused a lot of problems for me—a lot of conflicts and unanswered questions."

Interviewer Narration: "The conflicts remain with him, and so do his compulsions. But in prison, he finally cannot act on his savage desires."

Interviewer: "If you were out on the street now, would you still be committing the crimes?"

Dahmer: "Probably. If this hadn't happened, there's no doubt I probably would be. I can't think of anything that would have stopped me."