

Introduction to Forensic Science



Serial Killers

Serial Murders

Serial murders - repetitive homicides, nearly always **one-on-one murders**, where the perpetrator is usually a stranger or has a slight acquaintance to the victim.

Serial Murders

- The serial murderer's motivation to kill is not based on crimes of passion, victim precipitation, personal gain or profit.
- Serial murderers are nearly always males prompted by sexual or aggressive drives to exert *power* through *killing*.

Modus Operandi

- ▣ Object - kind of property taken, such as bras and panties
- ▣ Time - time of day or night, weekdays, non-work days, holidays (when people would not miss the perpetrator at work)
- ▣ Style - the description the criminal gives the victim to gain entrance (plumber, cable TV repairman)
- ▣ Tale - any disclosure the criminal makes as to his business/purpose
- ▣ Pals - any co-conspirators
- ▣ Transport - what type of vehicle was used in connection with the crime
- ▣ Trademark - any unusual act committed by the suspect while in the commission of the crime (i.e. poisoning the cat, eating at the scene after murdering the grandmother)

Signature

Signature - the murderer's psychological calling card, *unusual characteristics* of a murder that are *repeated* at several crime scenes:

Intentionally displaying victims in a spread-eagle position. This behavior reinforces the perpetrators underlying psychological needs.

Difference Between Modus

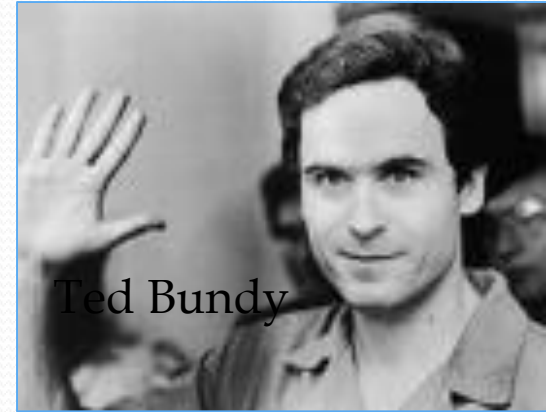
Operandi and Signature

Two murderers both burn their victims by dousing them with gasoline.

- The first murderer does so as an anger-retaliatory act.
- This is a signature behavior.
- ▣ The second murderer douses the victim with gasoline to cover up the crime.
- ▣ This murderer does so to evade detection.
- ▣ This therefore is a precautionary act, and as such is a modus operandi behavior.

Characteristics of Serial Killers

- Usually intelligent
- Good appearance
- Superficial charm
- Able to differentiate right from wrong
- Have no conscience
- Enjoy victim's terror



Serial Killing Versus Mass Murder



- Charles Whitman, the man who shot multiple people from the tower at the University of Texas, was a mass murderer, not a serial killer
- Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the shooters responsible for killing 12 classmates and a teacher in the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history, are also classified as mass murderers, not serial killers

Organized Serial Killers

- ▣ Perpetrator plans the murder for months or years beforehand.
- ▣ Offender is normally married, has steady employment, and is thought to be a good member of society (ex., BTK-Dennis Rader)
- ▣ They bring the instruments of the crime (knives, guns, tape) to the scene with them.
 - When Ted Bundy was pulled over for driving suspiciously (in 1975), police found an ice pick, ski mask, rope and handcuffs in his trunk.
- ▣ These murderers are often highly intelligent and are knowledgeable about forensic evidence and law enforcement's investigative capabilities.

Disorganized Serial Killers

- They do not plan their crimes in advance.
- The disorganized murderer commits the crimes spontaneously.
- They are often unemployed and without transportation.
- They are more often of low intelligence or psychotic.

Psychological Types of Serial Killers



- ▣ Power Oriented – Ted Bundy and Dennis Rader enjoyed watching terror of their victims



- ▣ Mission Oriented - killers feel they are improving the world by getting rid of undesirable people such as prostitutes, i.e. Green River Killer Gary Ridgway



- ▣ Visionary - those who kill because they are directed by hallucinations, i.e. David Berkowitz - "Son of Sam"

Psychological Types of Serial Killers

- Hedonistic - gain sexual satisfaction from raping, killing, mutilating, and sometimes eating the victim, i.e. Jeffrey Dahmer
- Comfort - those who kill for financial gain, such as insurance benefits, real estate, i.e. Golay & Rutterschmidt
- Disciple - those killers who kill under the influence of a charismatic killer, i.e. Leslie Van Houten and Lynette Fromme of the Manson family



Psychological Profiles of Serial Killers

- A psychological profile is a submitted report utilizing information and approaches from various social and behavioral sciences, focusing on a specific type of violent crime
- According to the FBI, a typical serial killer is a Caucasian male between the ages of 18-32 who has been a victim of child abuse and who has exhibited signs of the McDonald triad
 - McDonald triad – bedwetting after the age of 12, setting fires, killing small animals

Psychological Profiles of Serial Killers – McDonald Triad

- ▣ Most serial killers exhibit at least one of these behaviors
- ▣ According to Robert Ressler (FBI), more than 60% of serial killers wet the bed past the age of twelve
- ▣ The Son of Sam, David Berkowitz, set 1,412 fires but switched over to killing because it gave him more excitement and TV news coverage
- ▣ Keith Jesperson, a serial killer from British Columbia who murdered more than 160 victims, started with dozens of cats and other small animals, before he moved on to human beings