

## Serial Killers

*mass murderer- kills many people at once eg. Charles Whitman*  
*serial killer- kills many people over a period of time*

### Common Characteristics

- most often male, white, upper-middle class, above-average intelligence
- usually look extremely average
- excellent liars ("con-men") who believe they won't be caught
- calm-never seem to lose temper, but...

### Motivations/Techniques

- have a desire for **power**- even in sexual crimes this is the primary motivation
- don't kill spur of the moment-usually systematically seek out their victims
- usually select victims weaker than themselves (women and children)
- enjoy watching victims beg for mercy
- see humans as **objects** to fulfill their desires
- collect "trophies"- clothing/etc. from crime
- thrive on attention- constantly follow coverage of their crime in the media- often write to police and taunt them etc.
- often at or near the scene of the crime when it is discovered

### Tripod Symptoms

**Serial killers often show three signs of instability during their childhood, some of which are connected to violent sexual fantasies:**

1. *pyromania- setting fires*
2. *bed wetting-60% of convicted serial killers are known to have done this*
3. *animal torture-usually escalates to humans*

### Explanations

controversial-none of these are definitively proven beyond a doubt:

1. **Psychopath/Sociopath** don't feel guilt problem all serial killers are psychopaths, but not all psychopaths are serial killers
2. **Elliot Leyton quote** "These people are social outcasts whose career or class ambitions haven't been fulfilled. They blame this on a particular group" First they have violent fantasies against this group, then in a tiny proportion of cases act them out. The reason there are more serial killers today may be because society is changing so fast. problem only a partial explanation-most "social outcasts" don't kill and what exact factor makes them kill is not here
3. Ted Bundy quote "**Media violence and pornography**" problem millions of people have seen and are influenced by this and most aren't serial killers
4. **Nurture plus Nature** Almost all were mentally, physically and sexually abused as children plus deficient nature (chemical imbalance etc ??) problem no "violent" gene has ever been discovered
5. **Copycat Theory** many crimes are copied by unstable individuals (murder, suicides etc.) problem too simplistic ?
6. others ? (discuss)