

THE PERSONALITY PROFILE OF A SERIAL KILLER

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Serial killers have a definitive and common personality profile. When serial killers are profiled, the reasons behind their aggression are normally apparent. There are many types of serial killers and each type has its own agenda and reason for killing. Nevertheless, there are common traits found among all serial killers. Some behaviors can be found as early as childhood. Typical signs of danger in children include bed wetting, setting fires, and abusing animals. As these future killers grow older, there are other signs such as the desire to be alone, the inability to do well in school or hold a job, and family problems at home that indicate a future of aggression.

A serial killer is defined as a person who attacks and kills victims one by one in a series of incidents. These individuals usually kill more than three people on different occasions within 14 days. Murderers kill many innocent individuals for their own personal satisfaction, and each kill in their own horrendous ways. There are different types of serial killers. One type of serial killer is the *Visionary Serial Killer*. People in this category usually hear voices that instruct the killer to execute other human beings. These killers are usually psychotic or schizophrenic. David Berkowitz, also known as the Son of Sam, is an example of a visionary serial killer. A second type of serial killer is the *Missionary Serial Killer*. This type of killer often feels as if he or she has a responsibility or a special mission to rid the world of a certain specified group of people. Charles Manson would be classified under this category. A third type of serial killer is the *Lust Killer*. The lust killer is often driven to kill due to a sexual motivation. A fourth subgroup of serial killers is known as a *Thrill Killer*. A thrill killer takes lives because they enjoy the experience of killing. A fifth sort of serial killer is the *Power Seeker Killer*, a person who enjoys having total control over the fate of their victim. One of the last kinds of serial killers is the *Gain Serial Killer*. A gain killer is one who kills to gain money or items they believe to be valuable.

Approximately 90 percent of known serial killers are Caucasian males between the ages of 25 to 35. These people have high IQs ranging from 105 to 120. There are some, for example Ted Bundy, who even have an I.Q. of 140, who are considered to be geniuses (The Holmes Typology of Serial Murder, 1). Although these people are highly intelligent, they often have poor school performance and are socially inept. They prefer solitude to social environments. They also have trouble holding a job (Serial Killer Characteristics and Profile Definitions, 1).

Some serial killers have a preference of a certain group as prey. In this scenario, the goal of the killer is the elimination of the entire group (Serial Killer Characteristics and Profile Definitions, 1). Most heterosexual serial killers tend to prey on women and children in contrast. Similarly, most homosexual serial killers focus on harming gay men, prostitutes, and hitchhikers. Most serial killers that kill out of sexual motivation do so because they have ties to sexual bondage. In an interview with Ted Bundy, he stated that he and many other serial killers had a strong addiction to pornography. (Bundy, 1)

Frequently, serial killers come from dysfunctional families, where the parents may be divorced, or one parent may have abandoned the family. In the cases where the parents are together, one parent may be excessively domineering. Often, the serial killer has suffered sexual or physical abuse as a child, usually from their members of the family as opposed to strangers.

A study was performed by R. Ressler, A. Burgess, and J. Douglas to learn about the histories of several serial killers. They surveyed 36 incarcerated serial killers and found that there were many similar childhood character traits among them. They found that 82% of the serial killers they interviewed daydreamed and masturbated. They also found that 71% were isolated and had a habit of lying. About 68% were bed wetters as children and 67% were rebellious and had nightmares. About 58% destroyed property, set fires, and stole (Serial Killer Characteristics, 1). There were also many other character traits that these serial killers shared. Ted Bundy claimed that Pornography made him kill (Bundy,1) . Pornography was not listed as one of the childhood habits but sexual fixation is a general problem that many of these serial killers had, so it this survey was an accurate assessment of the personality characteristics of a serial killer. The survey however, is not a strong assessment as it only involved 36 incarcerated serial killers, but it is understandable given that many of the serial killers receive the death penalty so they can no longer be studied.

The study shows that the serial killers had many unordinary behaviors as a child but Jeffrey Dahmer has been quoted saying that he was just like any other kid as a child (Dahmer,1) . This shows that

there are exceptions and that the personality profile of serial killers is not always that accurate because not every serial killer fits that profile.

There have been many serial killers throughout history who have committed horrible crimes by torturing and murdering innocent bystanders who were simply just at the wrong place and at the wrong time. Many character traits can fit a serial killer's personality profile. The three most common traits seen in childhood are wetting the bed, setting fires and abusing animals. They are all motivated to kill in different ways, some kill for the pure pleasure of killing, some kill for power, some kill for a mission, some kill because they believe they are told to and some kill because they think they have a responsibility to. Whatever the reason, these individuals have destroyed many innocent lives. The personality profile of a serial killer is not always accurate as Dahmer stated that he was perfectly normal as a child. It will always be a mystery as to whether or not their actions were due to psychological or environmental influences. Although some of the notorious serial killers cannot be found, many have been rightly punished for their crimes. The burden is not on the perpetrators but on the families who have to face the untimely and horrifying death of their loved ones and who have to live with this fact for the rest of their life.

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WHAT IS THE PERSONALITY PROFILE OF A SERIAL KILLER?

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