



THE 9<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
**EUROPEAN INTEGRATION  
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

## **Notorious Cases of Serial Killers**

**Iosub Elena-Cătălina<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The reconstruction of a death scene provides an overall picture of the crime and will indicate the murder as an event or one of a series of events and also the criminal. But when the criminal is declared a serial killer, many questions are raised up. How could a person kill some else without a reason or why people react in such a disorganized way and become so brutal or what made them act like that and so many questions with also so many answers. This project explains the psychology of a murderer, his own way of thinking and acting by presuming that we may accurately discover what is in their minds when they kill. It is about a very complex issue regarding murder investigations, biological factors and psychological profile of a serial killer. Dealing with this problem we will at last reach to the question that could solve finally the puzzle: “Are serial murderers distorted reflections of society's own values?”

**Keywords:** serial killer; murder investigation psychological profile; biological factors; serial murderers

### **1. Introduction**

We have long attempted to understand the complex issues concerning the serial murder investigations. I have always been passionate to find out the real truth behind them, the life they had and the most important thing, what made the impact so brutally towards other people. We are sure that it was not their purpose to murder people or to behave in such a disorganized way, it must have been the environment they grew up in or the entourage they might have had or cruel and harsh conditions in childhood. Our reckoning is that they are also victims of their families, society and life, in general, misfortunes might have piled up in their existence and outburst into such violent forms. It is not a simple thing to analysis their behavior, psychology or acts. Despite the fact that it is a very difficult issue, it is also very complex to admit exactly what happened in their minds and what caused their reactions. Going into the mind of a serial killer was a real challenge for me, but I really think that all my work had a good purpose, to discover the human being part behind a murder.

### **2. Criminal Psychology**

Before a person is entitled as “a serial killer” a question must be asked: How did this person become a murderer? The answer lies in the development of the individual from birth to adulthood, his behavior being influenced by life experiences and certain biological factors. Serial murderers, like all human beings, are the product of their heredity, their upbringing, and the choices they make throughout life. Soit is important to see whether there were clues early in their lives that would have helped us to identify their homicidal tendencies before they had committed violent crimes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Law, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd, 800654 Galati, Romania, Tel.: +40372361102, Fax: +40372361290, Corresponding author: catalina\_iosub7@yahoo.com.

- *The physiological profile:* 90% of them are men (15% - 30-34 age group/ 12% - 25-29 age group/ 8.7% - 18 years old). They are generally white males, but contrary to the popular belief, serial killers span all racial groups as they are especially African- American, Hispanic and Asian.
- *The psychological profile:* Antisocial personality disorder which is characterized by a 'pervasive pattern of disregard for, a violation of the rights of others;it begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues through adulthood' and includes irresponsibility, unstable interpersonal relationships, deceitfulness, manipulations, erratic work histories and unlawful behaviors.

The psychopathic syndromes is involving distortions of feelings and affections, possessing strange habits, desires and moral dispositions, as well. A psychopath has an unstable lifestyle, leads a separate life even within family unit and has the inability to develop warm, responsive and affectionate relationships and a general lack of empathy, as he finds it difficult to understand pain or suffering in others.

A serial killer has a general tendency for fantasy and aggression and obsession on with violent entertainment and porn. This fantasy and obsession development comes from an initial fleeting thought, through a period of increasing frequency and refinement and finally to aggressive actions.

Alcohol and drug use: The consumption of these substances leads to an aggressive and violent behavior and antisocial stance because when someone is in an inebriated state or under drugs influence, he has difficulties in thinking clearly, making it harder for him to exercise sound judgment and substitute more acceptable behaviors and also there are limits imposed on rationality and decision-making skills.

It does not mean that serial killers are all dysfunctional loners, insane or evil geniuses. They often have families and homes, are gainfully employed and appear to be normal members of the community, as they usually hide in plain sight within their communities.

We can discover the tendency of a person for killing from the major personality and behavioral characteristics in his childhood, because a murderer was once in his life a victim too. A serial killer usually comes from dysfunctional families with an absent father or from families where he suffered severe physical abuse and violent acts. He was often considered to have been abused and neglected by his parents, like beaten with a stick, board, pipe, or belt buckle, cut, burned, thrown downstairs or across a room or even multiple sexual assaulted. Because of these factors in their childhood, more than 60 % of them wet the bed beyond the age of 12, have few social connections and in some cases are recruited by extremist religious cults or gangs and hate groups. They begin by torturing animals and hurting themselves, especially trying to commit suicide and ended by killing different people.

### 3. Notorious Cases

#### Case 1 (Teenage Serial Killer):

**B.** was a 14-year-old Hispanic female who expressed that one of her goals in life was to become the "first teenage serial killer." She had been previously diagnosed with bipolar disorder. It was apparent that she suffered from dysthymia and had low self-esteem and also a history of occasional suicidal intention and cannabis dependence. **B.** reported having a recurrent dream about someone trying to chase her and stab her repeatedly with a knife. In reality, however, she had experienced a significant

history of abuse including being sexually molested by her mother's boyfriend at the age of 6 and raped by an adolescent boy at the age of 13. As a child, she witnessed her father brutally rape and beat her mother including forceful insertion of foreign objects into her mother's vagina and anus. She expressed having fantasies of wishing to “tar and feather” others until they died or tying individuals up to a tree cutting and peeling their skin off with a knife while they were alive and also fantasized about killing people by stabbing.

As a result in July 1987, 27-year old Rebecca Spencer was found stabbed to death in her living room. She had been stabbed repeatedly with a packing knife, more than 60 times.

Two years later, on September 4, 1989 Joan Heaton 39 years old, and her two grandchildren were found murdered. Joan lying beneath blood-soaked sheets in the hallway, her oldest daughter Jennifer was lying nearby and Melissa was on the kitchen floor. The detectives were shocked at the brutality of the crimes. **B** was later arrested and incarcerated and also during incarcerated she has stabbed a prison guard.

### **Case 2 (Woman Serial Killer):**

The most prolific female serial killer in all of history is allegedly **Elizabeth Báthory**, a countess from the renowned Báthory family. After her husband's death, she and four collaborators were accused of torturing and killing hundreds of girls and young women, with one witness attributing to them over 600 victims, though the number for which they were convicted was 80. The atrocities described most consistently included severe beatings, burning or mutilation of hands, biting the flesh off the faces, arms and other body parts, freezing or starving to death

In 1610, the defendants were found guilty and three of them – Semtész, JÓ and Ficko – condemned to death, the sentence being carried out immediately and Elizabeth was imprisoned in the Csejte Castle, where she remained bricked in a set of rooms until she died four years later.

### **Case 3 (Man Serial Killer):**

**Theodore Robert Cowell** was a serial killer, rapist, kidnapper who assaulted and murdered numerous young women and girls. He was regarded as handsome and charismatic by his young female victims, traits he exploited in winning their trust. He typically approached them in public places, feigning an injury or disability, or impersonating an authority figure, before overpowering and assaulting them at a more secluded location. He sometimes revisited his secondary crime scenes for hours at a time, grooming and performing sexual acts with the decomposing corpses until putrefaction and destruction by wild animals made further interaction impossible. He decapitated at least 12 victims and kept some of the severed heads in his apartment for a period of time as mementos.

He received three death sentences in two separate trials for the Florida homicides. Ted Bundy died in the electric chair at Raiford Prison, in Florida, on January 24, 1989.

#### **4. Impact on the Individual Beliefs**

Serial killers have a significant impact on the world media, society and individual beliefs. People are obsessed and intrigued with murder and mayhem, especially when it comes down to serial killers. They thrive on the information about them and this is why the media gives as much information to the public about serial killers as they can. Unfortunately, the media tends to exaggerate their information, causing the public to become worried, yet still intrigued even though they get their information from witnesses, investigators, and statistical records.

The point is that serial killers over the years have impacted our society in many different ways and the media plays on these individuals to make money by writing books and making movies about the tragic events that these people are associated with. This may seem a bad thing because people hold a conventional wisdom of serial killers because of media as the “Serial murderers are distorted reflections of society's own values.” But, on the other hand, everyone can realize the gravity of their acts and they can learn to defend themselves.

Serial killers have always fascinated many people including myself but I never really knew what they truly are and how they impact the rest of the world. Their importance lies on the movies and books that were inspired from the serial killers lives: *Zodiac*, *Being a criminal*, *The only living witness*, *Murderer's daughters* etc.

#### **5. References**

The child before serial killer: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2072934/>.

The characteristics of serial killers: <http://essays4free.wordpress.com/2011/01/07/identify-the-characteristics-of-murders-murderers-and-murder-victims-in-england-and-wales-in-the-21st-century/>.

Encyclopedia of Death and Dying: <http://www.deathreference.com/Py-Se/Serial-Killers.html>.

Criminology: [http://socialscience.stow.ac.uk/criminology/criminology\\_notes/personality.htm](http://socialscience.stow.ac.uk/criminology/criminology_notes/personality.htm).

Crime analysis: <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/9/4/D/%7B94D99128-30C6-4F6A-BFEA-07D92469736A%7Dtandi346.pdf>.

FBI notes and statistics: <https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/serial-murder>.

Criminal psychology: <http://www.epsia.com.br/content/data/244/Hans%20Gross%20-%20Criminal%20Psychology.pdf>

Natural born killers: <http://www.jaapl.org/content/25/3/335.full.pdf>.

John Lennon/ The Beatles/ David Mark Chapman: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).

Great books about serial killers: <http://www.serialkillerscentral.com/serial-killer-books>.

Great movies about serial killers: <http://www.imdb.com/list/RFwseJfj49w/>.