

Psychological Profiling

Forensic Science

- ◆ As a branch of criminal science, psychological profiling is better known in practice than by name. Although no solid evidence can be obtained from this process, it provides an accurate way of guiding the direction, in which an investigation heads toward.

What is Psychological Profiling?

- ◆ Psychological profiling involves investigating an offender's behavior, motives and background in an attempt to further guide an investigation. Research shows that offenders that repeatedly rape or kill are driven by a heightened public fear for their actions and media attention, which could eventually lead to their arrest. Analyzing the criminal's habits and rituals allows investigators to trace similarities between previous crimes. When these details of their lifestyle are made public, friends, neighbors and colleagues may recognize them.

The Facts

- ◆ The process of psychological profiling began over a century ago, but was first distinctly used as a method in America during the 1950's. Investigators discovered through research, intriguing patterns and similarities between serial killer's behavior. Some of the patterns discovered include the killers having suffered from child abuse as youngsters, whether it is sexual or physical and that this kind of abuse led to abnormal behaviors later on. As children and teenagers, they started fires, were cruel to animals or children and then in the late teenage years to early twenties, were engaging in petty crime and defying authority.

Why Criminals Commit

- ◆ Committing serious crimes usually start at around the mid to late twenties. Being able to manipulate victims and show a sense of power and domination is a main drive for criminals, as well sexual motives. Murdering victims gives them the sense of success and control that they have never felt in their lives. Some criminals have also found that they need to relive that sense of victory that was felt during the committing of the crime, so they take something from their victims, for example, jewelry, clothing and even body parts.

Inductive Profiling

- ◆ Investigators putting together a profile use either inductive or deductive approaches. Inductive profiling involves assuming that when a criminal commits a crime, he or she will have a similar background and motive to others who have committed a similar crime. An example of this is a re-offending rapist whose target are white women, is not likely to be black, because crimes of the past that have been similar to this one have rarely crossed racial lines. However, these statements have been questioned and have experienced a lot of publicized drawbacks.

Deductive Profiling

- ◆ Deductive profiling involves a process that avoids generalizations and averages. This method involves intently studying suspects in extreme detail and adapting findings in which new evidence surfaces. A deductive profile is set up based on the offender's actions before, during and after committing the crime. For example, if the murderer used a makeshift weapon, investigators are then able to deduce that the crime was probably spontaneous. Another example involves serial murderers. Investigators are able to find out whether the murder was organized, which means that the killer carried out a planned, premeditated attack on a victim, or if the attack was disorganized, meaning that the murder was unplanned and the killer behaved in an uncertain way. Organized and planned killers often carry a tool kit containing duct tape and rope to bind their victims and gloves and a mask to hide their identity.

Serial Killers

- ◆ Serial killers are also known to stick within their 'comfort zone', for example, their own neighborhood, before traveling further as their sense of power and domination heightens. A serial killer often leaves behind a signature or trademark of their work that is usually unnecessary, but emotionally fulfills the killer. There are usually also similar aspects, which will link the crimes together, for e.g.. the method of murder or the victims may all have some form of similarity. Profilers use this to trace and link crimes committed earlier together.