Module 1   An Introduction to Profiling Criminals

Psychological Profiling

Learning Objectives

- To understand what is meant by Crime Scene Analysis
- To understand the differences between Mass Murder, Spree Killing and Serial Murder
- To understand what is meant by Investigative Psychology
- To understand what is meant by the narrative of crime
- To utilise learning and information to produce a basic psychological profile of the murderers portrayed in this course.

Crime Scene Analysis

Ault et al (1980) maintain that profiling is not a new concept. It was used during World War II by William Langer a psychiatrist employed by the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) to profile Adolf Hitler. Using all that was known about Hitler at that time, Langer attempted not only a profile but also tried to make predictions about how Hitler would react to defeat.

It was another psychiatrist James A. Brussel, who by combining identifiable behavioural characteristics with statistical probability, intuition and his own professional skills, played a major role in the apprehension of George Metesky known as the Mad Bomber of New York.

The Bomber operated between 1940 and 1956, declaring a truce during the war but renewing his bombings in 1950. He planted around thirty bombs in New York City during his reign of terror. Without benefit of computers, Brussel was able to produce an incredibly accurate profile in terms of the age, sex, religion, health and domestic circumstances of the offender. He was even accurate on the way the bomber would wear his double breasted suit; with the jacket buttoned. The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) developed and built upon the work of Langer and Brussel. According to Ault et al (1980) in the early 1970s the FBI began to apply psychological principles to criminal behaviour with the launch of a Behavioural Science Unit by the FBI Academy. This later became known as the Behavioural Analysis Unit, which was given the remit of looking for patterns in the behaviour of serial rapists and killers. Interviews with serial killers such as John Wayne Gacy, Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer provided an insight into their M. O. (modus operandi), motivation and backgrounds. The information collected assisted in the construction of profiles of violent criminals. It eventually formed the basis of the national data base known as VICAP (Violent Crime Apprehension Programme).

The Criminal Investigative Analysis Programme devised by the Unit is claimed by Wilson and Seaman (2007) to be the most advanced systematic profiling technique in use today.

The profiling process is divided the into seven steps, these are;

i. Evaluation of the criminal act itself (i.e. modus operandi: what the offender does to effect the crime; why he does it, the thing that fulfils him emotionally)

ii. Comprehensive evaluation of the specifics of the crime scene(s)

iii. Comprehensive analysis of the victim or victims (victimology)

iv. Evaluation of the preliminary police reports

v. Evaluation of the medical examiner's autopsy protocol

vi. Development of a profile with critical offender characteristics

vii. Investigation suggestions predicated on the construction of the profile.

Using this technique, expert crime scene interpretation is used to produce a profiling strategy based on profiling inputs which includes information collected by investigators such as;

- Complete photographs of the crime scene, including photographs of the victim in the case of murder
- Any physical evidence
- The autopsy report including pictures and any results of laboratory tests carried out on the victim,
- A complete incident report
- Any police reports
- Witness statements
- An extensive background report on the victim to include;

  - Occupation (former and present)
  - Medical history, physical and mental
  - Address (former and present)
  - Fears
  - Reputation, at work and in his/her neighbourhood
  - Personal Habits
  - Physical description, including dress at the time of the incident
  - Social Habits
  - Information and background of victims family and parents, including victim's relationship with parents
  - Marital status, including children and close family members
  - Educational level
  - Use of alcohol and/or drugs
  - Financial status, past and present

- Hobbies
- Friends and enemies
- Recent changes in lifestyle
- Recent court actions

After examining the evidence the profiler applies the rule known as 'Ockhams Razor', a medieval rule, which states that;

'plurality should not be assumed without necessity'

(translated in modern parlance to the KISS principle, *Keep It Simple, Stupid*). As Sherlock Holmes would have said;

'when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth' .

This wealth of detailed information is studied with a view to formulating the decision process . This involves organising the input into meaningful questions such as;

1. What type of murder has been committed?. (mass murder, spree murder, serial murder)
2. What is the primary motive for the offence? (sexual, financial, personal, emotional disturbance)
3. What level of risk did the victim experience?
4. What level of risk did the murder take in killing the victim?
5. What was the sequence of acts before and after the killing?
6. How long did these acts take to commit?
7. Where was the crime committed?
8. Was the body moved?
9. Were the murder site and discovery site the same?

Using this information the profiler attempts to reconstruct the behaviour of victim and killer.

Questions are asked to further categorise the offender, these might include;

a) Was the murder organised ?(suggesting a killer who carefully selects victims in order to act out a particular fantasy)
b) Was the murder disorganised? (suggesting a killer an impulsive, possibly psychotic killer).
c) Was the crime staged to mislead the police?
d) What motivations are revealed by details such as:

- cause of death
- location of wounds
- position of the body

In the use of this model it is accepted, as a general rule, that brutal facial injuries point to a killer who knew their victim. Murders committed with any weapon that comes to hand reflects greater impulsiveness and the possibility that the killer lives close to the victim, whereas use of a gun as a murder weapon suggests less impulsiveness. It is also accepted that murders committed in the early morning do not usually involve alcohol or drugs.

The FBI admit that the profile is not a perfect tool and the information gleaned can vary from one profile to another but suggests that the information gathered in a profile may include;

- The offender's race,
- Sex,
- Age range,
- Marital status/domestic arrangements ,
- General employment,
- Psychological characteristics, beliefs and values
- Reaction to questioning by police
- Degree of sexual maturity
- Whether the individual might strike again,
- Criminal record checks including possibility of the commission of similar offences.   (Ault et al 1980)

The profiler then checks that their predictions match the original data before submitting a written report to the officers investigating the crime. This technique allows for the identification of a type of offender as opposed to identification of an individual, thus dramatically reducing the number of potential suspects and allowing investigators to focus on suspects who match the profile. If new evidence is disclosed the profile will be reviewed and if necessary, revised. After arrest an in depth interview with the suspect allows for study of the influences exerted by his/her background and psychological make- up.

Whereas an intelligent offender can remove or eliminate material evidence from the scene of the crime, behavioural evidence cannot be hidden.

In the crime scene analysis model, the crime scene usually includes;

1. The scene of the crime
2. The victim of the crime, e.g. the rape victim in a crime of rape, and all other locations involved in the crime, including such areas as the recovery site, i.e. when a murder is committed at one locus and the body or parts of the body are recovered in other places.

The victim is an important aspect of the offender profile and this is particularly true of a surviving victim and especially so in cases of rape. If there was any conversation between offender and victim this can be of immense help in constructing a profile.