Criminal Profiling

PROFILING BASICS

(1) **input:** collecting crime scene information

(2) **decision process:** arranging the input into meaningful patterns and analysing victim and offender risk

(3) **crime assessment:** reconstructing the crime and the offender motivation

(4) **criminal profile:** developing these specific descriptions of the offender

(5) **investigation:** using the profile as an aid or adjunct in investigation

(6) **apprehension:** checking the accuracy and the description against new info that emerges in the investigation and changing the profile accordingly.
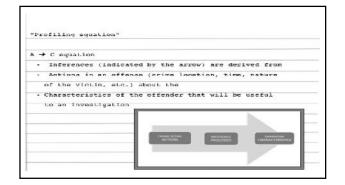
PROFILING BASICS (cont'd)

The profiler...

...assesses all of the crime scene and forensic evidence influencing autopsy reports, crime scene photos, and other forensic information.

...does not review the suspect list, which could unwittingly influence his opinion.

...focuses on several specific areas which are important in constructing a psychological profile of the unidentified offender...

"Profiling equation"

A → C equation

- Inferences (indicated by the arrow) are derived from
- Actions in an offense (crime location, time, nature of the victim, etc.) about the
- Characteristics of the offender that will be useful to an investigation

ESCALATION

Most individuals who commit crimes begin with less serious offenses and, over the years, their level of criminality increases.

Ex: An offender may begin with voyeurism, progress to burglary, then assault, rape, and murder.

TIME & LOCATION FACTORS

Various time elements in criminal conduct are revealing of the unidentified offender's lifestyle or occupation.

How long the offender spent with the victim provides additional insight into the crime and the criminal. The longer an offender spends with the victim, his risk of apprehension increases.

Factors: Where the offender apprehended the victim
How the offender got the victim to go with him
Where the victim was killed
Body disposition
Was a vehicle used

MODUS OPERANDI (M.O)

: the method or technique of carrying out of the crime.
The offender's M.O. can change over time.

As an individual gains more experience, he often adapts his criminal technique to increase his efficiency.

Since the offender's M.O. can change it is often not a useful method for linking (or connecting) a series of crimes to the same offender.

Instead, examination of the offender's engagement in repetitive-ritualistic behavior at the crime scene is often more important in linking crimes to the same offender.

SIGNATURE

: a unique set of acts an offender engages in with each victim.

Many serial offenders engage in repetitive-ritualistic behavior at the crime scene since the offense itself is insufficient in providing enough psychosexual gratification.

Thus, an offender have a signature or calling card.

Ex: Postmortem body positioning
Mutilation
Symbolic gestures
Written statements left behind

CRIME SCENE PATTERNS

The crime scenes of violent sex offenders and sexual murderers can be divided into two general groups:
- Organized: Reflects a great deal if planning in which little evidence is left behind
- Disorganized: Reflects an impulsive, unplanned crime with a lot of evidence left.

Individuals who leave high organized crime scenes seem to have distinctly different personality characteristics and behavioral patterns than those who leave notably disorganized crime scenes.

PERSONALITY INFERENCES

ORGANIZED CRIME:
Organized crime scenes reflect a high level of control. Restraints are used and the body is disposed of in a thought-out manner, often transported to another location from where the murder took place.
TRAITS OF AN ORGANIZED OFFENDER:
- socially competent and intelligence
- lives with a partner
- follows the crime in the media
- changes location after the offense
- psychopathic, narcissistic, or manipulative personalities
- charming, neat in appearance, physically attractive
- can talk with members of opposite sex

PERSONALITY INFERENCES (cont'd)

DISORGANIZED CRIME:
Disorganized crime scenes reflect impulsivity and lack of planning. The victim is often known to the offender and bodies are left in plain sight. A weapon of opportunity is used.
TRAITS OF AN DISORGANIZED OFFENDER:
- poor work history
- lives alone and near the crime scene
- has little interest in media coverage of case
- does not change lifestyle following case
- schizoid, schizotypal, borderline, schizophrenic
- physically unattractive
- little experience with members of opposite sex

PERSONALITY AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE

ORGANIZED CRIME:
Offenders who commit planned offenses typically have personality disorders that do not disorganize their thinking. They are manipulative and deceptive by psychopathological symptoms like hallucinations and delusions.

DISORGANIZED CRIME:
Offenders who commit unplanned, impulsive offenses have more obvious psychopathological disturbances. Their disorganized personalities can prohibit thoughtful planning. They may lack the control and defenses needed to contain their behavior. If their fantasies grow to the point of compulsion, they can act out in a thoughtless manner likely to get them caught.

PERSONALITY AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE (cont'd)

EXCEPTIONS TO THE GENERAL NOTION THAT SEVERE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY LEADS TO UNPLANNED CRIMES.

Paranoid personality disorder and paranoid form of schizophrenia do not disorganize one's thoughts. Behavior of individuals with these types of disorders is organized, systematized, and thoughtful.

Also, individuals with intact personalities can act impulsive when intoxicated.

Note: Most crime scenes are neither highly organized or disorganized, but rather fall on a normal distribution with highly organized/disorganized as the extremes.

INDUCTIVE VS. DEDUCTIVE PROFILING

Both assume that the crime and crime scene reveal info about the offender.

Profilers using the **inductive approach** examine research based on identified offenders of a particular type of crime. The profiler uses research on similar types of committed crime to determine possible characteristics of the offender.

Profilers using the **deductive approach** incorporate each piece of evidence in a case to create the offender profile. They use education, experience, and logic to analyze the crime scene and create a unique offender profile for each crime.

CHALLENGES TO PROFILING RESEARCH

Profiling equations — information from controlled conditions are not what people actually do in their daily lives.

Difficulty in obtaining information about what actually happens in crimes.

Police databases are notoriously inaccurate, patchy, and unreliable.