The Common Traits Among the Serial Killers From Criminal Profiling

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ABSTRACT *'Criminal Profiling' is an important technique for targeting offenders who commit serial offenses –homicides, rapes or murders – where one person is committing the same crime repeatedly. Profiling does not solve the crime itself but is used as an investigative aid. Apart from narrowing the offender types it also assists in lowering the number of victims. This study aimed to explore the common traits of the serial killers by reviewing the case studies of 10 serial killers. The most common demographic, psychological and crime-related factors were identified.*

Introduction
Criminal Profiling:
Criminal Profiling is relatively new to the police forces, although the general idea of Criminal Profiling has been around for centuries. In 19th century, Cesare Lombroso created his 'born criminal' theory which posited that criminality was inherited and that criminals could be identified based on certain physical features. Lombroso believed that different types of offenders could be identified by different physical characteristics. (Flowers, 2000). Criminal Profiling was first used in New York in 1956 where the "Mad Bomber" had been terrorizing the city since the 1940's. Dr. James Brussel, a criminologist and psychiatrist created a profile to apprehend George Metesky. From the success of the case, Criminal Profiling was taken up and adapted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and then the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). (Winerman, 2004).

Criminal Profiling is a behavioral and investigative tool that is intended to help investigators accurately predict and profile the characteristics of unknown criminals. It helps the law enforcement with a social and psychological assessment of the offender, provides with a 'psychological evaluation of belongings found in the possession of the offender'. It also helps in giving suggestions and strategies in interviewing process. If a lot is known about the offender, one can also know when and where they will repeat their crimes. When there is not much physical evidence, psychological evidence proves useful. (Veeraraghvan, 2009).

Creating a Criminal Profile:
Profiling units examine criminal behavior to understand the characteristics of the offender and the causes of their crimes. Profilers look for verbal, physical, and sexual interaction with victims. To create a criminal profile, profilers consider basic psychological principles, crime scene behavior, victimology, location, timing, and their own experience. Profilers also look for any indication of violence or intelligence. (Pierre, 2007).

Materials used by profiling units are dependent on the crime scene, but the most common information sought is – synopsis of the investigation, relevant reports, witness statements, victimology, maps, photography and videos of crime scene, exhibit lists, crime scene analysis and diagrams, media releases, theories that the investigators may have, medical and autopsy results. Unknown offender profiles includes information like – age, race, gender, intelligence, occupation and work habits, area of residence, sexual orientation, hobbies and skills, signs of mental illness or mental disorder, grooming and appearance. (Petherick & Ferguson, 2010).

Ressler et.al. (1995) conducted a study involving 36 incarcerated serial killers to identify common traits in their childhood. It was found that serial killers tend to prey on women and children of their same race; however some homosexual killers enjoy hunting gay men. Prostitutes, drifters, male hustlers, and hitchhikers seem to be their victims of choice. Most serial killers grew up in violent households, tortured animals, and had a history of bed- wetting. As adults many serial killers enjoy setting fires, have some sort of brain damage, and are addicted to alcohol or drugs. Most of them showed frequent daydreaming, compulsive masturbation, isolation, chronic lying, cruelty to children, running away, and cruelty to animals. (Ressler et. al., 1995).

Kocsis & Irwin (1997) (as cited in Vettor, 2011) conducted an analysis of the spatial patterns in serial rape, arson and burglary. They found that the serial killers select the victims, they would fantasize about the murder until the fantasy is no longer enough to bring about pleasure, and he must commit the crime. The serial killer would survey the location, and take every precaution to not get caught. Then they would seek out the victim and murder them.

Case 1: Jack the Ripper
He was active in and around Whitechapel district of London during 1888-1891. Attacks typically involved female prostitutes from the slums whose throats were cut prior to abdominal mutilations and removal of internal organs from the victims.

Case 2: Dennis Rader
Murdered ten people in Sedgwick County between 1974 and 1991. He is known as the BTK killer. "BTK" stands for "Bind, Torture, Kill", which was his infamous signature. He stabbed his victims with knife. He was sadist and fetishist. He sent letters describing the details of the killings to police and to local news outlets.

Case 3: Gary Leon Ridgway
Known as the Green River Killer, he was initially convicted of 48 separate murders and later confessed to nearly twice that numbers. He murdered numerous women and girls in Washington State during the 1980s-1990s. Most of his victims were alleged prostitutes. The press gave him nickname after the first five victims were found in the Green River.

Case 4: Ivan Milat
The Backpack Murders is a name given to serial killings that occurred in New South Wales, Australia during 1990s. The bodies of seven missing young people aged 19-22 were dis-

covered partially buried in State Forest. Forensic study determined that each victim had suffered multiple stab wounds to the torso.

Case 5: John Duffy

A rapist and serial killer who attacked numerous women at railway stations in south of England through the 1980s. The name of Duffy, a martial arts instructor, was touted as a suspect among thousands of other names as he was a known sex offender, having been previously convicted of the rape of his wife.

Case 6: Adrian Babb

Between 1986 and 1988, seven attacks on women took place in tower blocks in south Birmingham. Women were often followed into the lifts by a stocky young man who overpowered them and took them to the top floor of the tower block, sometimes carrying them up the last two flights of stairs to the landing near the roof. There he raped and killed them and escaped. Consistent patterns appeared to suggest the work of the same man.

Case 7: Robert Napper

A serial killer and rapist who was suspected of carrying out 106 rapes, indecent assaults and other sex offences before he became serial killer. He preyed particularly upon women in parks and commons, but would also stalk them at their homes, watching them for days before choosing his moment to attack. He was a paranoid schizophrenic.

Case 8: Jeffrey Dahmer

Between 1978 and 1991, he murdered 17 men and boys. His gruesome crimes of rape, torture, dismemberment, cannibalism and necrophilia earned him the nicknames of "The Milwaukee Cannibal" and "The Milwaukee Monster." A known sex offender, Dahmer was arrested in 1988 for taking lascivious photos of a 13-year-old minor. He was released on bail a week later. Most of his murders occurred during the next three and a half years.

Case 9: Wayne Williams

An American serial killer who committed the Atlanta child murders that occurred during 1979 to 1981. Williams was found guilty of the murder of two adult men. He was also found guilty of 25 child murders. Forensic Analysis discovered the presence of hairs and fibers on victims. These were later matched to Wayne William's as the originating source of this evidence.

Case 10: Ted Bundy

His killing spree began in 1974 and ended five years later with at least 30 women dead. Estimates on the final number, however, vary. Bundy drew the rapt attention of a nation of on-lookers scratching their heads at the charming and intelligent man who used his good looks and sharp wit to perpetrate widespread murder.

Discussion

The aim of this project was to find out common traits in serial killers based on their Criminal Profiles. The study identified the most common demographic characteristics, psychological factors and crime related factors.

The demographic characteristics suggested that all the offenders were males; between ages 20s to mid-30s during commission of the offence. They were reported to be quite neat in appearance. Most of them had trouble in schooling and were semi-skilled in their occupation. It was found that they were a product of broken homes, families including marital discord, or being raised by single parent. They lacked consistent care and stable adult role model as a child.

The psychological factors indicated that most of the offenders had average intelligence; some of them were found to be psychotic, violent psychopaths and had sadistic behavior. They were shy, introvert, isolated and a history of failed or unsatisfactory relationships. They also possessed insatiable sexual appetite which was the reason most of them committed the crime. Most of them did not have any interests or hobbies as a child.

In factors related to crime, most of the victims were young, attractive women in their 20s. The common modus operandi was torturing, abusing and finally killing the victims by multiple stabs or being shot. Most of the victims were raped to satiate the sexual appetite and then murdered. The offenders spent a lot of time at the crime scene, after the crime. The crime scenes were usually those which the offenders were aware of and they operated at night in secluded places.

Conclusion:

It was found that all serial killers were males between ages 20s to mid-30s. They came from broken homes, families with marital discord or were raised by single parent. They were shy, introvert, isolated, had sadistic behavior and possessed an insatiable sexual appetite. The crime involved use of torture on victims who were young females. They tortured victims to seek pleasure. The offenders usually attacked the victims at night in secluded places which would be precaution for not getting caught.

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