FBI PROFILING OF SERIAL KILLERS: FORWARD LOOKING OR FORTUNE TELLING?
Learning Objectives

• Define the concept of FBI profiling
• Review several cases of serial killers
• Explore the utility of FBI profiling
Dear Dr. Scott,

“My name is Mary and I am in the 7th grade at Pleasant Heights Junior High. I saw on the UC Davis website that you were a local forensic psychiatrist and I want to learn how to be a profiler just like you.”
Do forensic psychiatrists have any role in “profiling?”
THE “MAD BOMBER” CASE

• 1940—Bomb in Con Ed building
• “Con Edison crooks…this is for you”
THE “MAD BOMBER” CASE

• 1950s
  • Nearly 40 bombs
  • Inspector Finney needed help!
  • Contacted Dr. Brussel
Goals and Objectives

• Key definitions
• Origin and application of FBI typology
• Female serial killers
• Childhood serial killers and childhood development
• Forensic issues
Mass Killer

• Four or more killings at one time
• Often use firearms
• Expect to die or be killed
Spree Killer

• Murders a string of people in different locations
• No “cooling off” period
Serial Killer

- Three elements in most definitions:
  - Number of victims
  - “Cooling off” period
  - Sexual or psychological gratification
Does not include...
Serial vs. Single Homicides (Kraemer et al 2004)

• Serial killers:
  • More likely killed strangers
  • Killed women
  • More planning
  • More “hands-on killing”
  • Had sexual motivation
“PROFILING”
Types of “Profiling”

• Psychological assessment
• Equivocal death analysis
• Motive
Profiling the “unknown” offender

Richard C. Ford, MD
Definitions

• Profile
  • Description of anticipated traits that match other offenders

• Crime scene profiling
  • Using crime scene information to describe likely offender
Psycho-Geographical Profiling

- David Canter, PhD
- Definition: **Two or more** murders with "cooling off" period
Spatial Patterns
(Lundrigan and Canter 2001)

• Sample:
  • 126 U.S. serial killers
  • 898 victims
• Killers’ home addresses plotted against disposal site addresses
Circle Hypotheses

- Median distance traveled = 9.3 miles

89%
FBI “PROFILING”

• Serial killer definition:
  • Three or more murders
  • Have emotional “cooling off” period
  • Occur at different locations
Robert Ressler

•“Facets of the criminal’s personality are evident in his offense. Like a fingerprint, the crime scene can be used to aid in identifying the murderer.”
What-Why-Who Method

- What
  - Crime-related information
- Why
  - Motivation for crime
- Who
  - Likely person to do crime
FBI “Profiling”

• 1979–1983—detailed interviews with 36 convicted sex murderers
  • 29 were serial killers
  • Interviewed collaterals
  • Detailed study of 118 dead victims
OFFENDERS
N=36

ORGANIZED
N=24

DIS-ORGANIZED
N=12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZED</th>
<th>DISORGANIZED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted stranger</td>
<td>Victim/location known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalizes victim</td>
<td>Depersonalizes victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restraints used</td>
<td>Minimal restraints used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression prior to death</td>
<td>Sexual acts follow death</td>
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</table>
“BTK”
CRIME #1

January 1974
BTK Crime Scene #1

• Each victim bound with pre-cut & knotted Venetian blind cords
BTK Crime Scene #1

• Victims suffocated with plastic bags or strangled
BTK Crime Scene #1

- Josie found bound and hanging, wearing only a sweatshirt and socks
- Semen found near Josie’s body
BTK Crime Scene #1

- Telephone lines cut outside home
- No sign of forced entry or struggle
BTK Crime Scene #1

- Parents’ dresser drawers ransacked
- Julie Otero’s purse contents strewn about living room
- Joe Otero’s wallet emptied and left on stove in kitchen
BTK Crime Scene #1

• Dog left in the back yard (outside typically when visitors present)
• Car missing, but found at nearby grocery store
Organized vs. Disorganized

• What organized criteria are present?
  • Planned offense
  • Submissive victim
  • Restraints used
  • Aggressive acts prior to death
  • + Controlled crime scene
Organized vs. Disorganized

- What disorganized criteria?
  - Sexual act after death
  - Evidence at scene (cords, semen)
  - Body left in view
  - Body at death scene
  - Sloppy crime scene
FBI Terminology

• Modus Operandi
  • Method used to carry out crime
• Signature
  • Unnecessary element in carrying out crime, but idiosyncratic to the criminal
Categorize Crime #2

- Organized vs. Disorganized
- Modus Operandi?
- Signature?
BTK Crime Scene #2

• BTK broke in the home of Kathryn Bright
  • Broke glass door panel
  • Swept up glass
  • Waited for victim
BTK Crime Scene #2

- Pretended to be a “wanted man” needing a car, food, and money
- Threatened Kathryn and brother Kevin with a gun when they returned home
BTK Crime Scene #2

• Kathryn and Kevin were bound with articles of clothing from the residence
• Kevin was forced to bind Kathryn, then in turn was bound by BTK
Kevin struggled against BTK, was shot twice, but managed to escape and look for help.
BTK Crime Scene #2

• Bound with her hands behind her back, feet together, and tied to a chair
• Fully dressed, in a pool of blood, multiple knife wounds, strangulation marks
Categorize Crime #2

- Modus Operandi?
- Signature?
- Organized or disorganized?
Based on these two crime scenes, what FBI personal profile would you expect?
Early Life

• Born the first of four sons
• Father was a U.S. Marine, who later worked for KG&E
• Raised in Wichita
• Joined the Boy Scouts
Childhood Upbringing

- Discipline unknown
- Cruelty to animals
- Early violent sexual fantasies
Education/Training

• Wichita Heights High School (1963)
• Small arms expert marksmanship ribbon while in the Air Force
Education/Training

• Associates degree in Electronics
• Bachelor’s degree in Administration of Justice from Wichita State University
Social Life

- Loner with little sense of humor
- Described as studious and focused
- Married Paula Dietz in May of 1971
- Raised two children, Brian (born 1975) & Kerri (born 1978)
Situational Stress

- No reported marital stressor
- No reported work stressor
- No reported social stressors
Social Life

- Boy Scout leader for almost 20 years
- Active member of Christ Lutheran Church; actually held several administrative positions
Employment History

- Steady employment throughout life
- Two most significant jobs were:
Crime Behavior

- Lived and worked near crime scene
- Helped calm victims
- Minimal use of alcohol during crime
- Car was in good condition
Sexual Competency

- Produced two children
- Severe sexual sadism
- Recreated crime scenes to achieve orgasm
BTK Follows Media

• One confession linking three people to Otero crime
• BTK phoned to set the record straight
• Left a letter left at the Wichita public library
Organized vs. Disorganized Profile?
Organized?

• Average or above intelligence
• Socially competent
• Skilled work
• Sexually competent
• High birth order

• Controlled mood
• Living with partner
• Car mobility
• Follows crime in media
Disorganized?

• Minimal use of alcohol
• Minimal situational stress
• Lives/works near crime scene
BTK...in his own words
FORENSIC ISSUES
Role of Psychiatrist

- Familiarity with profiling
- Careful evaluation of paraphilias and sexual sadism
- Accurate assessment of psychopathy and future dangerousness
Outpatient Psychiatric Note
“If I were seeing this patient without having any history available or without getting the history from him, I would think that we’re dealing with a very well-adjusted young man who had initiative, intelligence, and who was free of any psychiatric illness.”
“It is my opinion that he has made a very excellent response to the years of treatment and rehabilitation and I would see no psychiatric reason to consider him to be of any danger to himself or to any member of society.”
“Many of these guys are quite charming, highly articulate, and glib….and that is why psychologists and judges and parole officers are fooled so often…”
Limitations of FBI Profiling

• No real theoretical basis
• All male; 92% white
• Crime scene variables not weighted
• Variations in mode and style likely
Profile Testimony
State v. Haynes
Ohio Ct. App. 1988

- Haynes charged with murder and alleged self defense
- Expert testified that profile showed anger-retaliation
- Appellate court overturned
  - Testimony was prejudicial character evidence
United States v. Meeks  
35 M.J. 64 (C.M.A 1992)

• Meeks charged with double homicide  
• Bodies found mutilated  
• FBI Special Agent offered testimony regarding crime scene analysis under Rule 702  
• Allowed to testify regarding killer’s purpose (but not any individual perpetrator)
Testimony:

“The person that was responsible went there with sex and killing on his mind.”
Alabama v. Clarence Simmons 1997

• Simmons brutally murdered an elderly woman
• Charged with capital offense
  • Sexual gratification required element
• FBI profiler testified that killer committed murder for sexual gratification
• Court allowed testimony
Admissibility in Court

• Daubert Factors:
  • Generally accepted?
  • Peer reviewed?
  • Methodology acceptable?
  • Standards controlled?
Profiling Outcome Study
(Pinizzotti and Finkel 1990)

• Aim: Are professional profilers more accurate than others?
• Examined performance by four groups
Profiling Outcome Study
(Pinizzotti and Finkel 1990)

• Two crime scene investigations of “closed cases”
  • Homicide case
  • Sex offense case
Profiling Outcome Study
(Pinizzotti and Finkel 1990)

• Material for one case given
• Write down material recalled
• Write down important details and why important as to kind or type of person
• Write profile of person
• Answer multiple choice questions
• Line up task
Profiling Outcome Study
(Pinizzotti and Finkel 1990)

• Results:
  • Sex offense case: Profilers more accurate than non-profilers
  • Homicide case: Profilers were not more accurate than non-profilers
Content Assessment
(Kocsis 2003)

• Conducted empirical assessment of content in criminal psychological profiles
• Are profilers “better” than other groups in providing detailed information?
Content Assessment
(Kocsis 2003)

• Detailed information provided regarding solved murder case
• Reports coded regarding:
  • Physical aspects
  • Nonphysical aspects
  • Crime aspects and offender’s crime behavior
“No amount of education can replace the experience of having investigated crimes.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Phys</th>
<th>Non Phys</th>
<th>Crime scene</th>
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<td><strong>Crime scene</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phys</strong></td>
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Summary

• Psychiatrists can play a valuable role
• Know limitations of FBI database
• Be familiar with various types of “profiling”
• Use caution in making “predictions”
Which of the following statements regarding serial killers is true? Serial killers are more likely to:

1. Kill strangers
2. Kill women
3. Undertake more planning
4. Have more “hands-on killing”
5. Have sexual motivation
6. All of the above
According to FBI Profiling the definition of a serial killer includes:

1. Three or more murders
2. Have an emotional “cooling off” period
3. Occur at different locations
4. 1 and 2 only
5. 1 and 3 only
6. All of the above