

Examining murder and unlawful killing on people criminology essay



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Investigative psychology is an approach the police take in order to inspect criminal behavior. This form of psychology is mainly used to answer important questions that arise during the process of criminal investigations. When checking a crime scene there are three main questions running through the minds of the detectives: what are the behavioral features of the perpetrator, what are the characteristics of the offender, and is it possible that there are other crimes committed by the same offender. According to Jillian Robbins (Stone, 2009) the behavior of the criminal at the time of the incident is one of the best forms of evidence to a case. She reports that there are three important behavioral traits that all detectives look out for while inspecting a crime scene: the modus operandi, the signature and the typology of the offender.

The modus operandi or MO refers to the way the offender behaves or acts while trying to carry out his crime successfully. Offenders usually have a strong desire to perform the “ perfect crime”, or to commit a crime without getting caught. As the offender gains experience with each crime he commits, the MO will also change until the effective method is found. This means that an offenders MO will change through a series of learned behaviors. Richard Quinney points out that police investigators are trained to recognize the MO of the offender but not to solely use the MO to link crimes together. (Clinard, Quinney, 1973) He admits that it is difficult not to jump to conclusions when dealing with identical MO's, especially when the crimes are close in location, but states that including any evidence without unreasonable doubt is a serious police error.

A signature, commonly referred to as personation, describes any unusual details at the scene of the crime other than the ones actually needed to commit the crime. Most offenders will leave identical marks at the scenes of each crime they commit. The mark could range from anything like writing on the walls at the scene of the crime to placing the victims body in unusual positions. The signature has a higher level of importance to the investigator because it is directly related to the cognitive process that is unique to each offender. (Stone, 2009)

The typology is the last major behavioral pattern used to identify the offender. There are three main categories of typologies: undoing, staging and trophy. Undoing is when the offender psychologically tries to “undo” the crime scene. This behavioral pattern is most commonly found in offenders who get distraught after the death of their victim. There are many different ways that the offenders will try to deal with the psychological impact or realization of their crime. Some offenders try to return the victim back to a naturally looking state such as laying them down in bed with a pillow under their head or dressing them in clean clothes. Other offenders may try to dehumanize the victim by either beating the victims face in, covering the face with material or rolling the victim facedown. In these examples the offender is trying to veil the identity of the victim in order to make the crime less personal. (Akers, 1994) The second category of typology is staging. Staging is intentionally altering the crime scene in hopes to distract the investigators. Michael Stone (Stone, 2009) points out that staging is committed by someone other than the offender to either mislead the investigators away from the suspect, or to protect the victims’ family. The

most commonly reported reason for staging is to cover up autoeroticism or “the self-arousal and self-gratification of a sexual desire without a partner”. (Ellis, 1906) The four types of autoeroticism are autoerotic hanging, aqua eroticism, chemical eroticism and self-suffocation. All forms result in a lack of oxygen that increases sexual stimulation. Two-thirds of the families of these victims stage the crime scene and reposition the body for the victim to look more presentable to authorities. (Ellis, 1906) The last typology is trophy. Offenders who are typed with a trophy typology are those who take a meaningful souvenir from the victim to either remember or to control the crime scene. The trophy could be anything from a picture of the victim to a body part. It is important to note that a trophy typology could be part of the offenders' signature.

The next evidence the investigators look at while inspecting the crime is the organization of the scene. The way the crime scene looks after a crime tells a lot about the offender. There are three types of crime scenes: organized, disorganized and mixed. An organized crime scene shows that the offender maintained control during the murder. Profilers conclude that an offender of an organized crime scene most likely selected his victim on a specific basis. An example would be a serial killer who selected only victims' with blonde hair and blue eyes. Offenders of organized murder crime scenes have been profiled and interestingly have been classified with specific character traits. These offenders usually have above average to genius IQ levels, are socially adequate, sexually competent, had inconsistent childhood discipline, maintained control during the crime, used alcohol during the crime, live with a partner and have a car that runs in good condition. These offenders plan

their crimes methodically. They abduct their victims and kill them in one locations and dispose of the body elsewhere, they are likely to lure their victims with ploys of sympathy, they commonly target prostitutes, they demand submission from their victim, they have a high knowledge of forensics and are able to cover their track and they take pride in their actions and follow their case in the media. When questioned, friends and family often describe the offender of organized crime scene as kind and unlikely to hurt anyone. (Bordua, 1962)

Disorganized crime scenes prove that the offender most likely committed the crime without premeditation. This shows that the crime was committed under impulse or out of extreme rage. This offender likely murders whenever the opportunity arises having no specific criteria in picking a victim. This offender may have a history of mental problems and is in almost all cases socially inadequate. Often the body is left at the place of death and there are no signs of the offender trying to cover their tracks. Profilers report that disorganized crime scene offenders have below average IQ levels, do not hold down jobs, are sexually incompetent, are anxious during the crime, live alone, work or live near the crime scene, have a minimal interest in following the crime in the news, leave a random/sloppy crime scene, commit sexual acts after the death of the victim, leave the body in view of others to see and often leave the weapon behind.

A mixed crime scene is one in which there are evidence of an organized is and a disorganized crime scene. The offender usually starts off with an organized intention but when something unplanned interrupts, strays away

from his plans and becomes disorganized. Not all crime scenes have the same level of organization to them, it varies for every scene.

After the investigators collect all information based on the characteristics of the crime, they then use the information in a process of profiling. There are two approaches to profiling, the nomothetic approach where statistics from a large number of previous offenders are taken and profilers look for a pattern, or the idiographic approach where the profiler takes once case study and intensely analyzes it. One type of profiling is criminal profiling. Criminal profiling analyzes the personality traits, habits, features and behavioral patterns found at the crime scene in order to develop a description of the offender. This practice is also known as crime scene analysis. When using a nomothetic approach to criminal profiling the investigator is able to see more details because of the normal distribution, but less about the offender themselves. When using the idiographic approach to criminal profiling the investigator comes up with detailed information on the offender. It is almost as if the investigator knows the offender inside and out. A flaw to this method is that the investigator is unable to compare the offender to other offenders which leads to the possibility of forcing a profile on an offender it does not belong to. This phenomena is known as confirmation bias or fitting the pieces that work and ignoring the ones that do not work. Another form of profiling is geographic profiling. Geographic profiling is used to determine either the area of residence of the offender or to predict the area of the next possible crime. This form of profiling is basically done to find which geographic location the offender feels most comfortable in and prefers to take victims in. (Beauregard, Proulx, & Rossmo, 2005) Profiling is extremely

usefully to investigators especially in multiple murder crimes. With the use of this system, authorities are able to narrow down people and locations in catch the offenders before they strike again. Dr. Grover Godwin believes that obtaining the dumpsite plus the abduction site drastically improves the ability to pin point the offenders' place of residence. The downfall to geographical profiling is that profilers need at least five crimes to find a pattern. This means that the offender continues to take lives before this process can take effect. Many profilers argue that when the offender exhibits some form of mental illness at the scene of the crime such as sadistic torture, evisceration, postmortem slashing and cutting, and other mutilations, the profiling of serious offenders is more successful. This is a result based from the theory that when a person is mentally disturbed they demonstrate the greatest consistency in behavior from situation to situation.

Another strategy the investigators use to determine the offender is the psychological autopsy. This is a reconstructive psychological evaluation that differs from profiling. Here the profiling is done on a dead person, and the identity of the person is already known. There are two types of psychological autopsies. The first type is suicide psychology autopsy and it is used to understand and identify factors that contribute to the suicide. The second type is the equivocal death psychological autopsy and it is used to determine the reason of the death.

In both the suicide psychological autopsy and the equivocal death psychological autopsy, a forensic psychologist is hired. The forensic psychologist looks at the lifestyles, behavioral history, personality traits, and the amount of psychological pain the victim was in. They conduct interviews <https://assignbuster.com/examining-murder-and-unlawful-killing-on-people-criminology-essay/>

with family, friends, and people who knew the victim. The forensic psychologist also looks through the victims personal documents in order to get a better understanding of the cause of death. Once the investigators know the reasoning behind the murder they are able to start narrowing down suspects.

Now that we have a base understanding of the strategies investigators use to expose offenders, it is time to compare and define each different category of multiple murder offenders. First off, multiple murders are the killing of many people either in the same occurrence or over a period of time. Although these events are rare, they are highly publicized and remain in the memories of many people. There are three classifications of multiple murderers: serial murderers, mass murderers and spree murderers.

A serial murderer is when one person kills a minimum of three people over time. The time period contains a “cooling off” period in which the offender will not kill the next victim for weeks, months or sometimes even years. This cooling off period is the main difference between serial murderers and other multiple murderers. The majority of serial murderers are single white males who are highly intelligent with above average IQ levels. They commonly have trouble holding down jobs and come from unstable homes where typically the father abandoned the family and the mother raised the children. They are often abused physically, mentally or emotionally and the abuse is usually by an older male figure that the offenders’ mother brought in to replace to offenders’ father. As children, serial murderers commonly display what has come to be known as the triad: being fascinated with fire setting, bedwetting after the age of 12, and displaying sadistic activities or the <https://assignbuster.com/examining-murder-and-unlawful-killing-on-people-criminology-essay/>

torture of small animals. They show characteristics of anti-social personality disorder at a young age and they tend to lack empathy and guilt when disciplined and are egocentric and impulsive. The crime scene left by a serial murderers may be organized or disorganized.

Serial murders are known to kill for different motives. Hagan categorizes the motives of the offenders into three groups: visionary, mission oriented and hedonistic. (Hagan, 2010) A visionary motive is when the offender suffers from a psychotic break and believes that another person or even god or the devil instructs them to kill. A mission oriented motive is when the offender justifies his act by saying they are ridding the world of a specific type of person, an example being homosexuals or prostitutes. These offenders are not psychotic they are only out to change the nature of society. An offender with a hedonistic motive seeks thrill and pleasure from killing. They see people as expendable. There are three different types of hedonistic motives: lust, thrill, comfort and power/control. A hedonistic lust motive shows sex as the primary motif. Fantasy plays a large role in these killings. It doesn't matter to the offender if the victim is dead or alive while committing sexual acts. Offenders' report sexual gratification levels raised the more tortured and mutilated the victim is. The weapons of choice are usually those that require close range. The time between each murder decreases as the offender continues to kill. The second hedonistic motive is thrill. Thrill murderers primary motif is to induce pain of cause terror to the victim. They seek adrenalin rushes by hunting and killing their victims. These offenders kill just for the thrill of it and have no sexual aspect to the murder. The victims are strangers although the killer may have followed the victim for a

period of time. These killers can abstain from killing for long periods of time. They refine their murder method after each kill in an attempt to become more successful. The next hedonistic motive is comfort. A comfort offender kills for a material gain or for a more comfortable lifestyle. The victims are usually family members or friends. After the murder the offender usually waits a long period of time before killing again to lower suspicion levels. The offenders are usually females and kill with poison. Most comfort killers have previous convictions for fraud, embezzlement or theft. The last hedonistic motive is power/control in which the offender kills to exert power over the victim. These offenders were usually abused as children, causing an inadequate or powerless feeling as an adult. The offenders often sexually abuse the victims but the abuse is not motivated by lust, it is motivated by domination.

Female serial murderers are classified separately then male serial murderers because of the drastic differences between them. Only one-third of female serial killers killed strangers (Benekos, 1995) compared to males who almost always killed strangers. The victims of female serial killers are almost always husbands, ex-husbands, or current lovers. They murder for personal gain such as insurance benefits, will allocations or estate. Sexual or sadistic motives are extremely rare and psychopathic traits and documentation of child abuse is commonly reported in these offenders. The method of preferred killing is usually poison or low profile. Evidence suggests that females are less violent and less aggressive. Female serial killers are known to have a borderline personality disorder and a lack of empathy. Female

serial murdering is very rare and the rate of re-crime is less often than males.

Profilers report that there are greatest risk areas for serial killers to pick their victims from. Jenkins (1994) suggests that the availability of perspective victims and the attitudes of law enforcement agencies toward those victims play a crucial role when choosing a victim. Reports show that serial murderers pick their potential victims on the basis of easy escape and the vulnerability level of the victim. They prefer killing in a place with easy access and the option to leave the vicinity without causing alarm. Urban subcultures and areas with isolated landscape are the most preferred killing location. Areas that contain high levels of elderly or poor people are the second preferred location. The derelict areas within a city appear to be a common target location, also young women in or near a college campus. Victims are often prostitutes, runaways and homosexuals.

Most serial killing has occurred in the western states suggesting that it is a result of lifestyle, economic conditions and availability of potential victims. Serial killers tend to select victims near their homes or workplaces. “ 14 percent of serial killers use their homes or workplaces as the preferred location, whereas another 52 percent commit their murders in the same general location or region, such as the same neighborhood or city.” (Hickey) All serial offenders are classified as having one of four different hunting patterns: hunter, poacher, troller, and trapper. The hunter chooses his victim near his place of residence. The poacher travels to another location to find his victim. The troller meets his victim in an opportunistic manner and the

trapper has a job which allows him to meet his victim in the area he happens to be working in.

Although it is most common for serial killers to be white, Walsh found that nearly 22% of serial killers in the United States have been black. He points out that there is extensive media coverage of white serial killers in the United States, but black serial killing goes unpublicized. “ The extensive media coverage of Bundy, Gacy, and Berkowitz cases have made these killers almost household names, but African Americans such as Watts, Johnson, Francois, and Wallace are practically unknown, despite having operated within the same general framework (1980’s and 1990’s)”. (Walsh, 2005)

The second type of multiple murderers is known as the mass murderer. A mass murderer is a person who kills three or more individuals’ with-out a cooling off period. These offenders intentionally and indiscriminately kill often trying to exterminate entire groups of communities. The victims are often picked due to their ethnicity or religion. The killing occurs in one single location and the killer often commits suicide after completing the act. Mass murderers are divided into five different groups: perverted love, politics and hate, revenge/workplace, product tampering and school shootings. The different groups pertain to the reasoning behind the offender when killing.

A perverted love offender kills out of depression. There are two different types of perverted love offenders: family murder/suicide and family killing. Family murder/ suicide are when an individual is unable to differentiate between himself and his family. He sees his family members as part of himself. He believes that if he isn’t able to find happiness for himself then his

extended self (family) is unable to find happiness also. This offender will kill his entire family before taking his own life. He truly believes he is saving his family from future suffering. This offender is egocentric and does not allow the family to have a different opinion than he does. The second type or perverted love is family killing. This offender kills to protect his family. The killing does not involve suicide. An example of family killing is a father of his daughters' son killing his entire family when his wife threatens to divorce him. His reasoning for killing was to protect the family name.

The next type of mass murder is classified under politics and hate. This type of murder is more commonly known as suicide bombers. The offenders believe that they are doing well for the world because they are eliminating a number of people who have different views than they do. The offender is usually single, between the ages of 17 and 33 and has some or full high school education. The victims are random. A different, subtype under suicide bombers are set and run killers. They have the same intentions as suicide bombers but instead of taking their own life they set killing devices in motion and flee.

A different reasoning behind mass murder is revenge. These offenders want to payback someone who has humiliated them. They do not accept blame for their actions but instead are irrational and blame others. The revenge offender is known as the disgruntled employee. These offenders see their career as the only meaningful part of their lives. The attack usually formulates when the offender sees his salary or status as disappearing or having no chance for opportunity. They are incapable of coping with their problems by change. The average age of this killer is 38; he experiences <https://assignbuster.com/examining-murder-and-unlawful-killing-on-people-criminology-essay/>

frequent chronic isolation and has no significant criminal record. His assault is planned and his victims are specifically chosen. The victims appear to be either the boss of the offender, a co-worker who recently received a promotion, or a socially adequate co-worker.

The fourth categories of mass murders are those involved with product tampering. These offenders sabotage a commercial product usually for commercial gain. “ The offender usually expects financial gain either through litigation on behalf of the victim (wrongful death), through extortion, or through business operations.” (Ressler, 1992) The most common method of product tampering is to inject cyanide into products. Cyanide is the poison of choice because of its potency and availability. When news gets out that there is a problem with a product, many cases are illegitimately filed by false complaints from people seeking monetary claims.

School shootings are the last category of mass murder. School shootings are very rare but highly publicized. Investigations show that there are two common characteristics of school shooters: peer rejection and social rejection. 70% of school shooters were termed “ loners” by fellow classmates. 62% abused drugs or alcohol and 43% were bullied by others. (Bordua, 1962) These offenders have a history of violence including violence toward people, humans and property. They often report having violent fantasies, atypical depression and mixed personality disorders. School shooters typically kill in pairs, have easy access to firearms, and have told at least one person about their plan to kill which is typically very detailed.

Other students usually encourage the attacks. The victims of school shooters are usually students who bullied, harassed or picked on the offender. Almost

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¾ of school shooters made suicidal gestures before attacking. The academic standings of school shooters range from failing to excellent. The family situation or home life of the offender may range from very good to bad, and most offenders engage in some behavior that caused concern of indicated a need for help.

The next type of multiple murderers is the spree killer. A spree offender kills two or more victims in a short duration without a cooling off period. “ They kill at two or more locations with almost no time break between murders”. (US Bureau of Justice Statistics) It is the lack of the cooling off period that marks the difference between spree killers and serial killers.

Lastly is the angel of death. The angel of death is a person who makes a career out of killing others. They are usually drawn to the medical fields. These offenders will take the life of their patient only because they have the power to. They make the death look to others like a natural cause when the reality is that the person would have made it. Something they torture their victims with unusual medications. These offenders have pathological interests in the power of life and death.

Now we are going to make a transition from pre-identification of the offender to a method of understanding the reasoning behind to offenders’ action after they have been caught. The investigator will first ask the offender series of questions relating back to their childhood until the present day. This is to get an understanding of why the offender believes he murdered. This will also show the lifestyles of the offender and aid in future research of early risk factors. Next the offender will be tested for any psychotic disorders and then

will undergo a forensic hypnosis. The hypnosis can bring forward long-forgotten or even repressed childhood memories. This process will either cause hypnotic hyper amnesia which is the enhancement or revival of memory or it will cause non-hypnotic hyper amnesia which is the revival of memories through non-hypnotic methods such as free association, fantasy and recall techniques. The investigator will try to obtain as many specific details as possible from the offender to help with future research.

Unfortunately there is limited research available on and multiple murder situations where the offender commits suicide. This is because the facts and resources are limited to anything left behind by the offender instead of documented reporting straight from the offender himself.

Up to this point we have been discussing the methods of investigation and the characteristics and profiles of each type of multiple murderers. Now we are going to look at a few famous cases of multiple murderers and point out the evidence of crime scene investigation, profiling, and classification into serial killing, mass murder or spree murder.

The first case we are going to look at is Ted Bundy. Ted Bundy fits the typical serial killer classification to a T. He is a white male who is in his 20's or 30's and experienced an atypical childhood. He went on a three year killing spree eventually confessing to 30 different murders. He used his good looks to lure victims and often pretended he was injured to get sympathy. When looking at the personality of Ted Bundy he displays certain early risk factors. He was born to an unwed mother whose parents wanted to avoid the social stigma of having an illegitimate grandchild born to a young mother. As a result

Ted's grandparents claimed him as their own and Ted grew up believing that <https://assignbuster.com/examining-murder-and-unlawful-killing-on-people-criminology-essay/>

his mother was actually his sister. No one knows who his biological father was and he was not told the truth about his mother until his second year of college.

Another early risk factor for Bundy was that he began showing violence at only 15 years old. His Aunt Julia recalls an incident of lying down for a nap in her home and waking up to find knives surrounding her and a smiling three year old Bundy at her side. He was assumed to have picked up some of his ways by following his grandfather as a role model. His grandfather was known to have tortured animals, abuse the family dog, and was even said to have swung the neighborhood cats around by their tails. Ted was said to have been fascinated by mutilating animals. He was known to be a habitual liar. He compulsively stole and shoplifter. He later claimed that he was also involved in voyeurism at a young age specifically by peeping into people's windows and was arrested twice as a juvenile. Although it is impossible to predict who will become a serial killer, Bundy portrayed many predictive behaviors including cruelty to animals, bedwetting, lying, drugs and alcohol abuse, and an extended history of violence.

Anti-social personality disorder is a mental disorder defined as “ the essential feature for the diagnosis is a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violations of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood.” (Clinard, Quinney, 1973) Deceit and manipulation are considered essential features in this disorder. The individual must be age 18 or older as well as have a documented history of a conduct disorder before the age of 15. People having anti-social personality disorders are also known as “ sociopaths” and “ psychopaths”. Bundy had many aspects of anti-

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social personality disorder. He failed to conform to social norms. When he began sneaking out of his house and peeping into other peoples windows he reported those behaviors to be sexually arousing and often masturbated while doing them. He was deceitful. He had a disregard for safety of others. He occasionally would disable a woman's car to make her more vulnerable, without actually doing anything to her. (Hickey, 1997) He lacked remorse. He brutally murdered thirty women and was so irrational about it he did not believe he did anything wrong. Bundy suffered from both psychopathic disorders and antisocial personality disorder. He was classified as manic depressive and a narcissopath. He showed symptoms of the psychopathic triad (bedwetting, fire setting, and torturing animals).

Bundy used the same hunting pattern nearly every time. He drove a VW Beetle in which he would remove the passenger seat when he went out "hunting". He used his wit and charm on females to get them to come over to his car and then he would beat each girl over the head with an iron crow bar. The semi-conscious victim was then dragged out of the car and driven to Bundy's murder site, Taylor Mountain. He would then put a mask on and use hand cuffs or rope to give his victims and even more helpless appeal. He chose his murder destination wisely because he knew he would be undisturbed while he raped and killed. After finishing, Bundy would bury the body and drive back home to Seattle to resume his respectable life.

Although Bundy displayed many patterns of hunting, he was classified as a Troller mainly because he would be out and randomly encounter his next victim which he would then stalk until ready to kill. He also showed

characteristics of a trapper by luring young women to his aid with a fake
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cast, posing as a police officer, and using his charm to seduce and take advantage of his victims. Bundy kept body parts to preserve the high he got from killing. This classifies him as a trophy offender. His modus operandi was clubbing women over the head with an iron bar and strangling them.

Having a troublesome childhood and being lied to at an early age put Bundy at risk for conduct disorders. He was then made fun of at school and only dated twice in his life before reaching college. He did not want the companionship of a woman but only the popularity that came along with having one. He walked around with beautiful females just for the attention, just to be noticed. He did not trust women throughout his life. He lacked a good bond with females and combining that with his very stimulated sexual nature took out his anger towards females in the wrong way.

The next case I want to look at is the Columbine High School massacre. On April 20, 1999 two students of Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, led a massacre which killed 13 people and injured 21 others before taking their own lives.

Early warning signs arose when Eric Harris first created a private website on American Online where he posted blogs which told of his anger against society. He included death threats about a former friend of his, Brooks Brown. He also had a blog about his negative thoughts towards parents, school and his friends. He began writing “how-to’s” including how to cause mischief and how to make explosives. He blogged about the detailed trouble that himself and Dylan were causing.

His blogs were very low profile and no one really knew or paid much attention to the boys' writings until Brooks Brown's mother was informed of the website and read the death threats against her son. Brown's mother made multiple complaints to the sheriff department about the site but wasn't taken seriously until it was di