

Serial killers and the media

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Investigative tools and Approaches used by Law Enforcement Law enforcement officers employ numerous tactics in the course of identifying evidence critical in the serial murder environment.

Among the tools used to perform investigations of serial murders is the Offender Profiling. This is a tool used by investigators to create a 'profile' for an unknown offender suspected of having been at a particular murder scene (Seltzer, 1995). In certain contemporary investigative cycles, this is also known as criminal profiling and is a common practice in United States, Europe, Scandinavian, and old soviet bloc nations. For instance, in the United States this is a common practice by the Federal Bureau of Investigations known to have significant expertise in this investigative arena. Criminal profiling involves the critical analysis of the crime scene by taking into account factors like: the execution details of the serial murder and the nature of the event itself. These entail an analysis of the criminal's personality is predetermined using his known personal tastes and preferences.

The available physical details from the crime scene also contribute towards profiling of the criminal suspect. The investigator then proceeds to compile the two types of information into a single characteristic file. The investigator usually has a list of already established criminal personality types or profiles derived from previous criminal personalities (Seltzer, 1995). In addition to this, he or she has a description of the already existing mental health characteristics in the form of occurring abnormalities. The investigator then proceeds to do a critical comparison of all these information in order to develop a description of the offender, which they can successfully give them

a significant lead to the crime. Criminal profiling has a historical background as seen from its constantly evolving mechanism from other forms of investigation available.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, criminal profiling usually consists of seven key steps. These are: evaluating the criminal activity itself; comprehensively evaluating specific details from the crime scene; comprehensively analyzing the victim in the murder case; evaluating the initial police reports of the case; thoroughly examining the medical pathologist's autopsy report on the victims; developing a profile of the suspected offender's characteristics; and use of predictions in constructing the criminal profile (Burgess and Douglas, 1986). However, contradictions exist with regard to the validity of this method of identifying criminals. This is because it is believed that, " serial killers differ in many ways, including their motivations for killing and their behavior at the crime scene" (Morton et al, n. d). Another common approach in serial murder investigation is the development of futuristic topologies.

This involves stereotyping the criminal personalities according to the patterns in which murders are committed. It also attempts to identify the next victim the criminal is expected to attack or the next location the criminal will attack. This primarily involves forecasting the criminal's moves or walking in the killer's footsteps. The investigator's role here is to use the details from initial murders committed, identify the reoccurring tendencies then developing a critique or formula for identifying the killer's next move. This procedure appears similar to criminal profiling in many instances; in fact, the only difference is the tendency to concentrate on the patterns in <https://assignbuster.com/serial-killers-and-the-media/>

which the crime develops. The pursuance of criminal cases using this technique has proved successful in many instances and the only disadvantage is the relative cost involved.

However, as technology continues developing the existing techniques consistently continue evolving and newer trends emerge in the handling of the contemporary crime scene. Effects from Media Pressure/Actions and Public CriticismThe media adversely affects the manner in which the law enforcement officials conduct investigations. In a certain case study, 12 murder cases committed between 1990 and 1990 it was established that the media indeed played a significant role in interfering with the progress of critical murder cases in the American crime scene (Gibson, 2006). It was also established that the influence of the media substantially leads to the aspect of community involvement in the progression of the murder. This gives the public a medium through which they can influence progress by giving their views and contributions. This is especially evident in cases having a specific racial background, for instance, a serial murder in which white or blacks are predominantly the victims.

However, the media's involvement in murder cases is not entirely negative since there are also some positive associations with it. For instance, in a certain serial murder case by the Federal Bureau of Investigations in which three victims were murdered in different circumstances it was found that there was indeed a connection in the case. In this particular case, the connection in the murder cases was primarily established through DNA analysis leading to the offender portraying feeling of anger, preoccupation, and agitation (Birnes & Keppel, 2003). This portrays the fact <https://assignbuster.com/serial-killers-and-the-media/>

that certain serial murder criminals develop the notion that they have successfully accomplished the murder once the first instance goes unsolved. However, when further clues emerge after they have committed the second crime they then become emotionally unstable leading to their arrest. This is because of their preoccupation with the manner in which evidence presented itself all in an attempt to make their future serial murders a success.

As a result, they momentarily avail themselves at the murder scene and without knowing it leave clues. A case in mention in the three victims' serial case, the offender did not expect the Pam Kinamore's body to be found where he had hidden it, so he returned to the Whiskey Bar area (Gibson, 2006). This led to his eventual arrest after further investigation. In this particular case, the offender appears to have followed the investigation closely in the media revelations of the proceedings of investigations. " His attention to the media reports would be consistent with his prior behavior about current events in Baton Rouge, in which he displayed interest" (Gibson, 2006).

The role played by the media is overtly positive with regard to exposing the criminal and relies upon the criminal's psychological and emotional stability. The involvement of media and subsequent public criticisms leads to the increasing complexity of serial murder investigations. The effect of dealing with intense media involvement and subsequent public attention on serial murder case leads to depletion of valuable resources, which are critical in development of the case (Tsokos, 2008). Media reports only serve to reveal the developing trend with regard to solution of the serial case in consideration. Consider criminal profiling, for instance, when the initial

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profile of the case leaks to the media, this only leads to the revealing of the criminal's identity to the offender. This would therefore prompt the offender to go into hiding or alternatively change his or her identity.

This complicates the development of the case since the investigators are forced to make further changes in their investigations. Consequently, the investigators are forced to either dismiss the initial developments and wait for the next clue the offender presents or alternatively begin profiling the victim once more. This only introduces a new element to the case resulting in critical wastage of human and financial resources that have been spent so far in the case.