

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Profiling Violent Crimes: An Investigative Tool*

REFERENCE: Holmes, R. M., *Profiling Violent Crimes: An Investigative Tool*, Sage Publications, 2111 West Hillcrest Drive, Newbury Park, CA 91320, 1989. 136 pp.

Dr. Ronald Holmes, a professor of criminal justice at the University of Louisville School of Justice Administration, has written a diminutive book which expands the profiling chapters in his coauthored previous work *Serial Murder* (Sage, 1988). This newest book is intended to be read by law enforcement personnel and is written in a simple, engaging style.

Profiling is defined as "another forensic tool to complement a thorough investigation by competent and educated law enforcement agencies" (p. 7). Dr. Holmes is careful to limit psychological profiling to certain crimes, such as sadistic torture, motiveless fire-setting, lust and mutilation murders, rapes, and cult murders; he also acknowledges both the artful and scientific characteristics of the endeavor. Three basic assumptions are implicit in psychological profiling: the crime scene reflects the psychopathology of the perpetrator; the offender will not change his or her personality; and the behavior of the offender at subsequent crime scenes will remain similar.

The two chapters devoted to serial homicide are a recapitulation of the FBI's "disorganized asocial" and "organized nonsocial" serial murder categories, and an expansion of the author's own typology of the visionary, mission, hedonistic, and power/control serial murderer. The newest and most original portion of these chapters is the analysis of the crime scene to yield information suggesting the motivation of the murderer.

The chapter on satanic and cult-related murders is the most fragmented in the book. An attempt is made unsuccessfully to distinguish levels of personal involvement in satanic and devil worship, and I found this both a distraction and a confusion. The chapter on the psychological profiling of rapists is a nicely done exploration of the empirical typology of Knight and Prentky² concerning the power reassurance, anger retaliation, exploitive, and sadistic rapists. A final chapter emphasizes the importance of the role of the victim in psychological profiling.

Although this monograph will be helpful to law enforcement agencies, I cannot recommend it to colleagues in the behavioral sciences. The author makes intermittent state-

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²Knight, R. and Prentky, R., "The Developmental Antecedents and Adult Adaptations of Rapist Subtypes," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 14, 1987, pp. 403-426.

ments that are extremely outdated or completely wrong, thereby casting a shadow of doubtful credibility over other portions of the book. For instance, his mistaken conclusion that data suggest that there are “no real personality differences between those who exhibit psychopathic behavior and those who do not” (p. 29) is based on a 1943 study. His psychoanalytic comment,

the criminal may have either an overdeveloped or underdeveloped superego. In either instance, this leads to a psychological state of guilt and anxiety

(p.30) is contradictory and wrong. His proclamation that “no act of violence can be executed without a fantasy” (p. 70) is a grossly inaccurate generalization. And I could not find his suspicious quotation from Gerold Frank’s book on Albert DeSalvo (*The Boston Strangler*) because it was listed on p. 379, and the original text has only 364 pages!

Such sins of omission and commission are particularly troublesome, since those most likely to read this book will assume its authority because they will not have the behavioral science background to question it. I commend Dr. Holmes for his efforts to reach law enforcement through the psychological and social sciences, but hope that he will be more circumspect and thorough in subsequent writings.