I10 The Genesis of Serial Killing Behavior in the Case of Joel Rifkin Using the Combined BRACE/NDM Approach

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The goals of this presentation are to acquaint the forensic community with the use of the BRACE and NDM models as a potential pathway to further understanding serial killing behavior.

The study of serial killing behavior continues to be the subject of considerable discussion and intense study. However, serial killing behavior has traditionally been studied from psychiatric and criminological perspectives and rarely from neuroscientific perspectives. More specifically, impressive progress has been witnessed in the study of serial killing behavior by means of behavioral classification and profiling. In this presentation, the authors make use of two paradigms that are seldom integrated in the study of serial killing behavior, namely behavioral profiling and neuropsychiatric characterization. The first approach makes use of a highly sophisticated model of behavioral analysis known as Behavioral Relativity And Cognitive Economics (BRACE). BRACE is a comprehensive cognitive-behavioral-existential model of human nature developed in 1984 by Russell L. Smith, MS. The BRACE model extends the functional analysis of behavior, including the domain of cognitive psychological constructs involving the imagination. A basic premise of the BRACE model is that humans strive to diminish uncertainty and to seek control. BRACE contends that this "drive" is directed and expressed through the equally powerful, complementary, mutually exclusive cognitive forces of generalization (similarities) and discrimination (differences) the "I am ... not" of human experience. Fundamentally, the BRACE paradigm, aims to understand human nature by combining the drive or need to diminish uncertainty and to seek control with the natural desire to increase pleasure/comfort and decrease pain. The BRACE Character Profile applies the BRACE model to core aspects of human nature to reveal an individual's cognitive-behavioral-existential character. The character profile in the BRACE model consists of 75 randomly ordered maladaptive characteristics, which are rated on a 5-point scale (0 to 4). The scoring key orders the 75 items into three character types (Type A, Type B, and Type Q). These constructs are based on 8 cognitive variables, 8 behavior variables, and 8 motivational or existential variables. The resulting profile reflects the degree to which an individual's thoughts, behavior, and desires are consistent with the three character types. The character profile in the BRACE model has the potential for wide application in the study of many categories of individuals such as serial killers, serial rapists, terrorists and many other categories of individuals who may be associated in different types of criminal behaviors.

The second paradigm is known as the Neuropsychiatric Developmental Model (NDM), and focuses of the characterization of serial killing behavior as a function of neurodevelopmental parameters, aggression, personality psychopathology variables and sexual factors. The model also takes into account ecological factors that interact with the above named components. The NDM has been applied to both cases of sexual serial killers such as Jeffrey Dahmer and to serial killers who do not present with a prominent sexual component to their homicides.

In this presentation, the case of convicted serial killer Joel Rifkin is used to highlight the potential utility of the **combined BRACE/NDM paradigms** in the characterization of sexual serial killing behavior. Although convicted of killing 9 females, mostly prostitutes, he has been thought to have killed at least 17 people. He was an adopted child who was raised in an intact family in New York State, Rifkin was known during childhood and adolescence to have displayed longstanding difficulties with social peer interactions. He has been described as having fundamental difficulties appreciating and understanding other human beings. Although his capacity for empathy was severely compromised, it is improbable that such deficit can be simply explained via his level of psychopathy. Psychosexually, he failed to develop healthy intimate sexual relationships with females, and eventually gravitated to satisfying his sexual desires with prostitutes. Although his case received considerable media attention (from daily periodicals to books), many fundamental questions remain unanswered, including potential interactions between behavioral variables and any atypical neurobiological substrates. In this presentation, besides describing the BRACE and NDM models, potential future uses of the BRACE model in regard to forensic psychiatric questions are explored.

Forensic Psychiatry, Violence, Serial Killers