



Psychiatry & Behavioral Science - 2017

I42 Using Research Methods and Theory to Solve Crime: A Case Study

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand applying social and behavioral theory and research methodology to criminal investigations.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing, in a case study format, an example of how an established social psychological theory and a common research methodology were used to identify an otherwise unknown suspect in a violent rape and murder of a university student case investigated in Oklahoma. This presentation will illustrate how reconsidering behavioral theory from an applied perspective, then employing established research methodologies, can develop innovative investigative techniques for criminal investigations. This presentation should interest academicians in psychology, sociology, criminal justice, political science, and forensics as well as practitioners in criminal/civil investigations, victim services, and the law.

This presentation begins with a brief description of an off-campus rape and murder of an international university student. A victimization profile will be presented. The profile emerges from in-depth interviews with friends of the victim and includes a description of the victim, her social group and setting, and common practices and behaviors. The offense description emphasizes both the physical and behavioral evidence present at the crime scene and how this evidence was used to create a behavioral assessment of the individual responsible for the offense.

This presentation continues with a brief description of the theory of symbolic interaction and explains how this provided additional insight into the possible attitudes, values, and belief systems of the offender and suspect as well as possible suspect-victim interaction. Lacking a suspect through traditional investigative techniques, the use of a questioner is discussed as an investigative technique together with how insights from the behavioral analysis based on symbolic interaction was used to interpret the questioner/survey results.

This case study concludes by discussing how insights from the theory application and research data identified an otherwise unconsidered suspect and, once identified, how this suspect was connected to the crime by available physical evidence.

In conclusion, this presentation will illustrate how a fresh look by academia at theory and research methodology through an applied perspective can yield new and innovative investigative techniques. Operationalization of these techniques can yield investigative evidence that can then support affidavits for search warrants for additional evidence, illustrate further investigative avenues, suggest possible interview/interrogation approaches, suggest testimonial land mines, and provide opportunities for academicians to further contribute to the public good.

Applied Theory, Insightful Interviewing, Applied Behavioral Theory