Abstract

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING BEHAVIORAL LINKAGE REVISITED: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO ASCERTAINING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENTIATION AND CONSISTENCY IN SERIAL RAPE

by

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While investigative use of behavioral evidence to help link and solve serial offenses has been in use for centuries, the empirical and theoretical grounds for whether and how to use this evidence effectively has begun to emerge only in recent years. In order for behavioral crime linking to be validated, two base assumptions must be met: individual differentiation (i.e., that offenses committed by one offender will be distinctly different from those committed by another offender) and consistency (i.e., that a degree of similarity will be apparent across crimes committed by the same offender). The present study empirically tested (a) the potential for effectively differentiating between rape offense crime scenes using quantitative and qualitative distinctions within the behavioral dimensions of control, violence, and sexual activity, and (b) the extent to which redefining behavioral consistency more broadly to include dynamic trajectories of behavioral change may be more effective than limiting this definition to behavioral stability. Results of the individual differentiation analysis confirmed that sexual offenses can be successfully differentiated based on the specific degree and subtype of these behavioral dimensions present in each crime scene. In the subsequent analysis of consistency and behavioral trajectories within and across these dimensions, it was determined that while none of
the offenders exhibited complete consistency across behavioral dimensions, a subsample of
offenders remained fully consistent in at least one. Furthermore, of those who were not
consistent, the vast majority followed an identifiable trajectory of change. Findings are discussed
in the context of psychological theories of behavioral consistency as well as practical aspects of
advancing the utility of behavioral linkage.