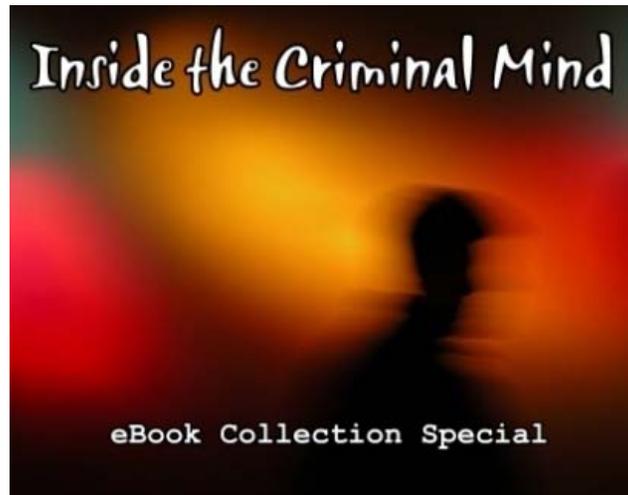


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Presents

**Criminal Profiling:  
A Viable Investigative Tool Against Violent Crime**

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## **FOREWARD**

Inside the Criminal Mind: A Forensic Psychology eBook Collection Special

In the early 1970s, Special Agent Howard Teten and others in the FBI began to apply the insights of psychological science to violent criminal behavior. In 1972, the FBI Academy launched a Behavioral Science Unit—later called the Behavioral Analysis Unit—which began looking for patterns in the behavior of serial rapists and killers. Agents John Douglas and Robert Ressler conducted systematic interviews of serial killers like John Wayne Gacy, Ted Bundy, and Jeffrey Dahmer to gain insight into their modus operandi, motivations, and backgrounds. This collected information helped agents draw up profiles of violent criminals eluding law enforcement.

By the 1980s, the concept of criminal investigative analysis was maturing into a full-fledged investigative tool for identifying criminals and their future actions by studying their behaviors, personalities, and physical traits. Accordingly, in July 1984, the Bureau opened the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) on the campus of the FBI Academy to provide sophisticated criminal profiling services to state and local police for the first time.

The aim of Inside the Criminal Mind: A Forensic Psychology eBook Collection Special is to showcase all the major articles written by members of the Behavioral Science Units, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, at the FBI Academy.

Criminal Profiling: A Viable Investigative Tool Against Violent Crime is the first article in this collection.

Quickly apprehending a perpetrator of a violent crime, rape, homicide, child abduction is a major goal of all law enforcement agencies. Unlike other disciplines concerned with human violence, law enforcement does not, as a primary objective, seek to explain the actions of a violent offender. Instead, its task is to ascertain the identity of the offender based on what is known of his actions. Described by one author as an emitter of signals during commission of a crime,' the criminal must be identified as quickly as possible to prevent further violence. While studies explaining why certain individuals commit violent crimes may aid them in their search, law enforcement investigators must adapt the study findings to suit their own particular needs. Criminal profiling is a tool law enforcement 'may use to combine the results of studies in other disciplines with more traditional techniques in an effort to combat violent crime.

### **The Profiling Process**

The profiling process is defined by the FBI as an investigative technique by which to identify the major personality and behavioral characteristics of the offender based upon an analysis of the Crime(s) he or she has committed. The process generally involves seven steps.

- 1) Evaluation of the criminal act itself.
- 2) Comprehensive evaluation of the specifics of the crime scene(s).
- 3) Comprehensive analysis of the victim.
- 4) Evaluation of preliminary police reports.
- 5) Evaluation of the medical examiner's autopsy protocol.
- 6) Development of profile with critical offender characteristics.
- 7) Investigative suggestions predicated on construction of the profile.

The process used by the person preparing a criminal personality profile is quite similar to that used by clinicians to make a diagnosis and treatment plan: Data is collected and assessed, the situation reconstructed, hypotheses are formulated, a profile developed and tested, and the results reported back. Criminal personality profiling has been used by law enforcement with success in many areas and is viewed as a way in which the investigating officer can narrow the scope of an investigation. Profiling unfortunately does not provide the identity of the offender, but it does indicate the type of person most likely to have committed a crime having certain unique characteristics.

### **Profile Applications**

One area in which criminal profiling (personality assessment) has been useful is in hostage negotiation. Law enforcement officers need to learn as much as possible about the hostage taker in order to protect the lives of the hostages. They must be able to assess the subject in terms of his probable course of action and his reactions to various stimuli. In such cases, police obtain information about the offender through verbal contact with the hostage taker and possibly through access to his family and associates. Criminal profiling techniques have also been used in identifying anonymous letter writers and persons who make written or spoken threats of violence. In cases of the latter, psycholinguistic techniques have been used to compose a "threat dictionary," whereby every word in a message is assigned, by computer, to a specific category. Words as they are used in the message are then compared to those words as they are used in ordinary speech or writings, and the vocabulary usage of a particular author or speaker may yield "signature" words unique to that

individual. In this way, police may not only be able to determine that several letters were written by the same individual but also learn about the background and psychology of the offender.

Rapists and arsonists also lend themselves to criminal profiling techniques. Through careful interview of the rape victim about the rapist's behavior, law enforcement personnel may be able to build a profile of the offender? The theory behind this approach is that behavior (sexual, physical, verbal) reflects personality, and by examining the behavior of the rapist during the assault, the investigator may be able to determine what type of person is responsible for the offense. Common characteristics of arsonists have been derived from an analysis of the Uniform Crime reports. Knowledge of the arsonist's psychodynamics can aid the investigator in identifying possible suspects, predicting location of subsequent arsons, and developing techniques and strategies for interviewing suspects.

Criminal profiling has been useful in investigating sexual homicides because many of these crimes appear motiveless and thus offer few obvious clues about the killer's identity. In murders that result from jealousy or a family quarrel, or take place during commission of a felony, the readily identifiable motive generally provides vital information about the identity of the killer. Because many sexual homicides fail to provide this information, investigators must look to methods that supplement conventional investigative techniques to identify the perpetrator.

## **Case in Point**

Criminal profiling uses the behavioral characteristics of the offender as its basis. Sexual homicides, for example, yield much information about the mind and motivation of the killer. A new dimension is provided to the investigator via the profiling technique, particularly in cases where the underlying motivation for the crime may be suddenly hidden from even the more experienced detective. The following case will illustrate this point.

During the fall of 1982, an urban Midwest police department detective telephonically contacted the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI Academy asking for some assistance. The detective described in detail the rape/murder of a 25-year-old white married woman. The detective advised that the apartment where the victim was killed had been ransacked, but they were unable to determine at that time if anything was taken by the killer. In view of the fact that many leads were still outstanding and information concerning the autopsy, laboratory examinations, background of the victim, previously reported neighborhood crimes, etc., was still pending, the detective was advised that a profile could not be provided at that time. After approximately 1 week, the detective forwarded the necessary information to the local FBI field office criminal profile coordinator. After reviewing the case for completeness, the profile coordinator forwarded the materials to the Behavioral Science Investigative Support Unit at the FBI Academy for analysis.

Color 8 x 10 crime scene photographs re-created the crime and revealed that the victim was killed in her living room, with no evidence

of any struggle or defense attempts by her. The victim was lying face up on the living room floor. Her dress was raised up over her hips exposing her genital area, and her panties were pulled down to her knees. The murder weapon (hammer) belonging to the victim was found in kitchen sink, and it appeared that the victim's blood had been washed off the hammer by the subject. Crime scene photographs further revealed that the subject opened dresser drawers and closet doors. Investigative reports indicated the victim's husband advised that jewelry belonging to victim was missing.

The victim and her husband had lived in the apartment for approximately 6 months, and neighbors and associates reported they were friendly and quiet and kept to themselves. The medical examiner concluded in his protocol that there was no apparent indication that the victim was sexually assaulted. Laboratory reports indicated that the victim had been drinking at the time of the assault, and there was no evidence of semen present in or on the victim or her clothing.

From the above information, the criminal profiler advised the detective that he had already interviewed the killer. The surprised detective was presented with the following probable crime scenario.

The victim was drinking with the offender prior to her death. An argument ensued, reaching a threshold where the offender could not take it any longer. Angered, he obtained a "weapon of opportunity" from a kitchen cabinet and returned to the living room where he confronted the victim face to face and repeatedly struck victim about her head and face. After killing her, the offender realized that the police would surely implicate him as the obvious murderer. He then

washed blood from his hands in the kitchen sink and also cleaned blood and fingerprints from the hammer. He rolled the victim over in a face-up position and "staged" the crime to appear the way he felt a sexually motivated crime should look. He conducted the staging by making it appear that the offender searched for money or personal property in the apartment.

Upon hearing this analysis of the crime, the detective exclaimed, "You just told me the husband did it." The detective was coached regarding suggested reinterview techniques of the victim's husband. In addition, the detective was further advised that if the victim's husband were given a polygraph examination, he in all probability would react more strongly to the known fact that he was "soiled" by his wife's blood than to questions concerning his wife's murder. The detective was told to have the polygraph examiner direct questions at the husband, acknowledging the fact that he got blood on his hands and washed them off along with the hammer in the kitchen sink.

About 5 days later, the detective called the criminal profiler to advise that the victim's husband was charged with murder. According to the detective, the husband failed the polygraph and subsequently admitted his guilt to the polygraph examiner.

### **The Profiling and Consultation Program**

The FBI's profiling program has grown considerably since the late 1970's from "informal" analysis and profiling during criminal psychology classes at the FBI Academy to the present formalized program. Currently, the program consists of one program manager

and seven criminal profilers and crime analysts. These Agents were selected primarily for their investigative experience, expertise, and educational backgrounds. The Behavioral Science Investigative Support Unit has found that anyone seeking transfer into this highly specialized program must possess above all other attributes and accomplishments a strong investigative background that includes participating in, supervising, and managing major case assignments.

During 1985, the Criminal Profiling and Consultation Program received over 600 requests for profiling assistance. It is anticipated that once the FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP) is fully operational, the number of profiling requests will nearly double annually.

One key link to the success of the FBI's Criminal Profiling Program is its criminal profile coordinators who are located at every one of the FBI's 59 field offices. These highly trained and selected Agents are responsible for screening cases and for providing preliminary investigative suggestions to investigators. While the field coordinators do not have the authority to provide profiles to requesting law enforcement agencies, they are authorized to prepare preliminary "rough draft" profiles which are reviewed by the profiling staff at the FBI Academy prior to being disseminated to the requesting agency.

Criminal profiling is available to local, State, Federal, and foreign law enforcement agencies or departments. It should be noted that not every violent crime matter lends itself to the profiling process. The criminal profile coordinators in the FBI field offices determine during review of the case whether it can be profiled. However, while a case

may not be suitable for profiling, the coordinator may still submit it to the Behavioral Science Unit for other types of services. Criminal profilers at the FBI Academy may assist the law enforcement community by providing interview/interrogation techniques, investigative suggestions and techniques, establish probable cause for search warrants as a result of National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime violent offender research findings, assist prosecutors relative to prosecutive strategies, and possibly provide testimony as a witness for the prosecution or as an expert witness during the sentence phase of the trial. All cases must be submitted to the local FBI field office for review and administrative handling by that criminal profile coordinator.

Lt. Commdr. Vernon J. Geberth of the New York City Police Department wrote in his book, Practical Homicide Investigation: Tactics, Procedures and Forensic Techniques, "This program has proven to be beneficial to law enforcement and has provided homicide detectives with a viable investigative tool. . . ."

Criminal profiling will never take the place of a thorough and well-planned investigation nor will it ever eliminate the seasoned, highly trained, and skilled detective. Criminal profiling has, however, developed itself to a level where the detective has another investigative weapon available to him in solving a violent crime. The offender, on the other hand, has an added worry that in time he will be identified, indicted, successfully prosecuted, and sentenced for his crime.

THE END

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